

Exploring Gender Imbalance and Sexism in the Garment Sector in Dhaka city

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Abstract

Gender imbalance is a disparity based upon gender. It is seen as constant discrimination in almost all sectors like culture, politics, socio-economic and race etc in Bangladesh. Garment sector is not also except. This study aims to explore the nature of imbalance and the problems like sexual harassment, mental depression, scared of losing job, misbehaviour, low paid salary, no fixed salary, not allowed to leave in need, temporary job, high work load, facing threat, overtime, delay in getting salary and other problem faced by women in Garment sector. This study also attempts to bring out the extra facilities as more salary advantage, taking leave advantages, training advantages form promotion, getting help from superior advantages, going out advantages, no abusive behaviour from superior and so on got by male. Besides, the study discusses the causes of discrimination for example sexual desire of the male member, job insecurity, mentally depressed and subordinated, monetary factor, lack of leadership, lack of training, religious factor, education system, patriarchy factors and barriers on women empowerment from society. This study has been formulated with quantitative method and for collecting primary and secondary data the help of survey interview with semi structure questionnaire and different kinds of books, journals and articles have been taken. Moreover, the study focuses on the help of the authorities who can play an important role to remove gender imbalance from work place like the owner of the company or garments government, the government, media, NGO, and the law enforcers and the study tries to find increasing rate of female education, changing mentality of male, providing several working sector, increasing rate of day care centre, removing religious superstition, taking care of mental health and equal financial value of women's work steps that are to be taken to solve the problems.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Identification, Imbalance, Gender Imbalance, Working Women

1. Introduction

Women are struggling for their equal rights worldwide. So is ostensible in the garment sector in Dhaka city as well. The International Women's Day is an opportunity to call for greater equality. But still the comparative imbalance between the male and female gender is noticed in working place which is considered to be

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gender imbalance. Basically the gender imbalance in work place is the discrimination in several issues on the basis of gender. These issues are the threat to our socio-economy. So in this 21st century, these issues are no longer expected. Still this gender imbalance is obvious in the garment sectors in Dhaka city. The women face a massive problem for it. The nature of the gender imbalance in work place also stretches in many spheres. Gender inequality in the workplace broadly means that male or female employees do not enjoy the same opportunities, working conditions and/or pay as their counterparts of the opposite sex – although women are typically on the receiving end of gender-based discrimination (Bosch, 2021).

Gender inequality in the workplace takes many forms – unequal pay, disparity in promotions, incidents of sexual harassment, and racism. Often, it presents itself in more nuanced ways, like fewer opportunities for women who are mothers and a higher incidence of burnout in women (Wooll, 2021). In terms of employment as well as promotion in work and occupation, women often face greater handicap than men (Amarty Sen). Definitely there are some factors behind the gender imbalance in work place. Organizational structures, processes, and practices (i.e., leadership, structure, strategy, and culture, climate, and HR policy) are interrelated and may contribute to discrimination (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). To trace these reasons are the preconditions to bring out parity in socio-economy.

In Bangladesh, Gender imbalance in workplace is considered to be curse. Therefore it is crucial to take some steps to stop it for sustainable development. Create an employee compensation program that is fair, equitable and transparent. Offer your employees equal pay for equal work, regardless of their gender. This is one of the most obvious and easy ways you can work towards gender equality in your workplace. Offering competitive and fair pay is also a great way to attract and retain top talent (Schooley, 2020). We can start by implementing the below pointers educating the employees about unintentional gender bias, Appointing diverse interviews to hire more deserving women in top positions. By making salaries transparent and equal, giving employees the flexibility to work. Empowering women through sessions, taking care of their mental health, offering paid parental leave, giving honest feedback to leaders on their gender bias attitude (THARWANI, 2022).

The nature, causes and solution of a problem vary from time to time and place to place. Over the gender inequality in a working place many had researched and worked. Still, the gender imbalance in the garments of Dhaka city remains. Under this circumstance, an initiative has been taken in this study to explore the panorama of gender imbalance, the causes and the possible solution of the gender imbalance of garment sectors in Dhaka city.

On the whole, gender imbalance and sexism are hindrance for a nation to move ahead. Women face different types of Sexual harassments and domination still they tolerate those for the fear of losing job and as a result, they suffer from mental depression and melancholy. These are the common scenarios which derive from the male's lusty attitude, job insecurity and lack of psychological support for women. Therefore women suggest changing the seductive mentality of male, ensuring job security and mental support for them to remove gender imbalance and sexism from the workplace.

2. Objective

The study has several objects. Among them one is broad objective that is to figure out the nature, reasons and the possible solutions of gender imbalance in garment sector. Beside it, there are some other objectives as well.

- i. The figure out the panorama of problems faced by women who work in garment sector.
- ii. To uncover the causes why the women face gender imbalance and Sexism in garment.
- iii. To find out the ways so that the women can get rid of the gender disparity.

3. Methodology

This study has been framed with the help of quantitative method. Both primary and secondary sources of information have been used in this research. In the quantitative method, semi structure interview questionnaire has been used for collecting data. In order to determine the outcome of this study, the survey interview method has been used. The respondents have replied multiple answers in almost all questions. In addition, secondary data was collected from records as well as published study papers, journal articles, books, newspaper and relevant literature. Moreover, SPSS software has been used for analyzing data. To explore the panorama, the causes and the feasible solution of gender imbalance, 320 women who are working in different garments have been selected for purposive sampling.

A specific area has been chosen for the study's focus in order to perform the investigation. In Dhaka City Corporation, there have been 3607 number of Garments industries. Out of this large number 20 garments has been selected as the study areas. The unit of study was female workers of 20 garments industry. Among them 320 women were selected by the using of purposive sampling method.

4. Review the Relevant Literature

Though the notion of gender inequality is known to all, with passage of time in this 21st century the paragon of the impact of gender inequality on working woman in the globalized society like Dhaka city have not been vividly exposed, how much effect stresses on women have been debated in modern literature. So keeping the aim ahead some reviews of literature are presented below:

Through the analysis of "The Many Faces of Gender Inequality" compiled by noble laureate Amartya Sen several kinds of gender inequalities and these whereabouts have been traced. Among them, mortality inequality, natality inequality, basic facility- inequality, special opportunity inequality, professional inequality, ownership inequality, household-inequalities and so on are remarkable (Sen, 2001). Reviewing the World Bank published "Whispers to Voices: Gender and Social Transformation in Bangladesh" (Muhammad Hasan Sarowardy, 2019) it has been known that the publication has lightened about the comparison of education, health and employment between the male and female. The domestic violence against women (DV) is a significant social problem in Bangladesh. Studies in the context of Bangladesh identify patriarchal norms and beliefs as the main factors behind DV (Khan, 2015).

Women activities does not generate as a direct income. Women's participation in income is usually a function of their poverty. Income may enhance a woman's position in the family and may increase her autonomy in decision making (Islam & Mainuddin, 2015). The female workers reported that working in the factory and meeting the expectations of the families at home has doubled their workload. The doctors indicated that the physical work environment, their low job status and the nature of the job after the health of female workers (Akhter, Rutherford, & Chu, 2019). Women are victims of various abuses including sexual ones, and their overall, gender-related status and corresponding acknowledgement is lower than those of men in Bangladesh (Mahmood, 2020).

The patriarchal capitalism puts women in such a position within their communities that they always remain subordinate under male domination and in many cases this is reflected through violence. Thus a woman commonly has risk of experiencing domestic violence within her family (Khatun & Rahman, Domestic Violence against Women in Bangladesh: Analysis from a Socio-legal Perspective, 2012). Violence Against Women in Bangladesh: Analysis And Action have stated that intervention against violence in Bangladesh may be classified into two major categories. The category one includes the following: Anti-violence campaign and the categories are often overlapping (Jahan & Islam, 1997).

Microfinance is one of the most important issue that played vital role on women's empowerment in society. It is encourage more women to participate development projects (Rahman, Khanam, & Nghiem, 2017). Women of the remote areas have not easy access to credit market. Generally, men deal with local money-lenders in rural areas (Hossain , 2015).In 2005, the former general secretary of the United Nation quoted this statement to address the issue of gender inequality as a barrier in global development. He also emphasized upon the significance of 'Inclusive Financial Sector' to ensure gender economic equality (Bhatia & Singh, 2019).

Some women also face restrictions from their family. The family members inhibit them to go out of the home by the words of religion. Consequently they become used to confine at home and set their mentality that they are born to work only a home. This religious superstition bars them on the way of development. Therefore, removing religious superstition is one of the best steps to remove it.

5. Major Findings and discussion:

By this study many important issues have been evolved. Some are the scenery of gender imbalance, some are the factors and some the possible solution of gender imbalance. So on the whole, the result and discussions are mentioned below.

Table 01: Socio- Demographic profile of the respondents:

In this study all the respondents are girls and women who work in different garments. The age range of the respondents is between 15 to above 41. In this part, the age and educational qualification of the respondents have been collected.

Characteristics	No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Age		
15-20	63	19.69
21-25	68	21.25
26-30	89	27.81
31-35	38	11.88
36-40	29	9.06
41 Above	33	10.31
Total	320	100%
Educational qualification		
Illiterate	46	14.38
Literate	274	85.62
Total	320	100%
Primary to Class Eight	68	21.25
S.S.C	91	28.43
H.S.C	59	18.44
Honors	25	7.81
Masters	21	6.56
Post Graduate	10	3.13
Illiterate	46	14.38
Total	320	100%

Source: field survey, June 2022

The age range and educational qualification of the women and girls have been discussed in the table 1. At the age formation of the respondents of this study, it is found that the highest number of the respondents in the age group is 26-30. Besides, about 21.25% of the respondents are at the age group of 21-25. In addition, almost 19.69% is also at the age group of 15-20. Moreover, at the age group of 31-35, 36-40 and above 41 are very little. On the other hand, in the education qualification more than third fourth of the respondents are literate and a little number is illiterate. Specifically, more than 28.43% of the respondents have completed S.S.C. Almost 21.25% of the respondents have studied from primary to class eight. Besides, nearly 18.44% of the women and girls have completed H.S.C. Furthermore, a little respondents are studying and have studied honors, masters and post graduations.

Women and girls at different ages having different kinds of educational qualifications work in garments and face gender imbalances.

Table 02: Types of gender imbalance in work place

Gender imbalance is considered to be a social stigma. Its nature is too broad to measure completely. Still, some specific traits which are mostly common have been traced. Sexual harassment, scarcity of losing job, mental pressure and low paid salary, high work load, temporary job, work and so on are problematic types which have been analysed and depicted in the following table.

Categories	No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Sexual Harassment	173	54.04
Mental Depression	204	63.75
Scared of losing job	233	72.81
Misbehavior	188	58.75
Paid low salary	197	61.56
No fixed salary	69	21.56
Not allowed for leave in need	89	27.81
Temporary job	129	40.31
High work load	123	38.44
Facing threat	77	24.06
Over time work	78	24.37
Delay in getting salary	79	24.69

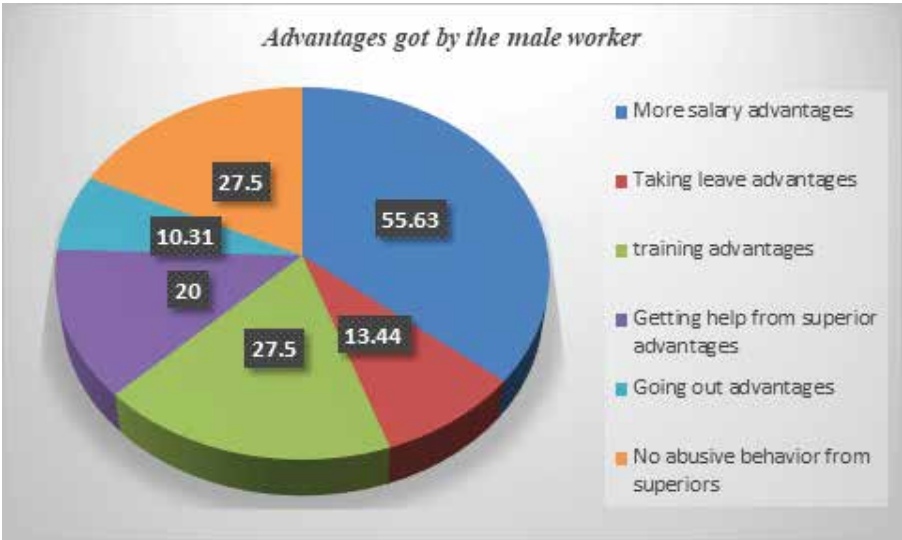
Source: field survey, June 2022

This part is structured with the scenario of the disparity and the problems faced by respondents in work place. Here more than half of the respondents have replied that they face sexual harassment. This harassment varies from place to place and situation to situation. Through slang words, body language, sexual staring, sexual proposal and so on they become harassed. Besides, they suffer from mental disease and more than 63.75% of the women have answered that they are mentally depressed. They need to earn for survival. They can neither tolerate such kind of problems nor raise voice. Because they are scared of losing job and almost 72.81% of the respondents have confessed that they are afraid of losing job. Moreover, the women are misbehaved. Here also more than 58.75% of the respondents have told that they face the misbehavior problems. Nevertheless, more than 61.56% of the women have informed that they are paid low salary and about 21.56% of the respondents have replied that they work but are not paid fixed salary. Moreover, more than one third respondents have expressed that they face problems a lot when they are not allowed for leave in urgency. In addition, almost half of the respondents let the researcher know that they suffer from temporary job and high work load respectably. Additionally, facing threat for complaining and firing job, overtime working and delay in getting salary are also troubles to about one third of the respondents correspondingly.

The above mentioned table shows different types of gender imbalance in work place. Among all of the mentioned problems, the most problematic issue is sexual harassment which results in trauma to the women and girls those who come out of home to work in garments.

Figure 01: More advantages got by the male workers at work place

This part has been designed with the more advantages got by the male workers in garment sector in Dhaka city. Usually the male and the female work together in garment sectors. But comparatively the males are getting more advantages in some issues. These more advantages got by the male have been discussed in the following Pie Chart:



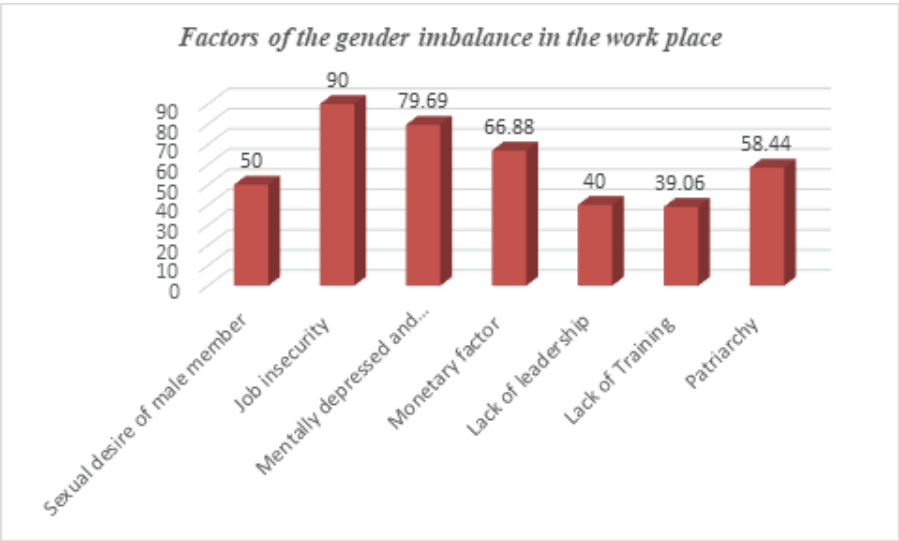
Source: field survey, June 2022

Gender imbalance in work place is vivid and it is measured by many criteria. Many women have mentioned some comparatively more advantages got by male workers in their work place beside their many other problems. Here more than 55.63% of the respondents have told that the male get more salary advantages. Moreover, more than 27.5% of the respondents have expressed that the males do not face any abusive behavior from superior and get training facilities respectively. Furthermore, almost 20% of the respondents have expressed that the male get help from the superiors. Additionally, a few respondents have told that the male get going out advantages and taking leave advantages in need respectively.

In garment sectors, the males are getting some more advantages that the female don't get. One of the respondents have mentioned that when she knows and observes that all are working in same position but the male is getting more facilities, she feels herself underestimated. This impacts on work, her mind and personal life as well.

Figure 02: Factors of the gender imbalance in the work place

Gender imbalance has not appeared overnight. Definitely there are some reasons behind it. These reasons vary from working place to place. However, in some different garments in Dhaka city the causes have been detected. These causes are stated below.



Source: field survey, June 2022

On the basis of the respondents' reply the factors have been found among them sexual desire of the male member is the most discussed topic. According to them, they face this problem acutely. The male superiors or colleagues directly or indirectly expose their sexual desire and if the women avoid it, they start facing different kinds of disparity problems from it. About 50% of the respondents have confessed that the sexual desire of the mail is one of the remarkable reasons of gender imbalance in work place. As result, the women become mentally depressed. For survival they need job on the other hand they cannot endure such kind of attitude from the male in work place. Almost 79.69% of the respondents suffer from mentally depression and become subordinated to their superior and all most all respondents suffer from job insecurity. Moreover, the monetary factor is also anoth

er reason behind the gender imbalance. Almost third fourth of the respondents have replied that as the male is in leadership and they earn a lot for the company, they have to be obedient and the male doesn't equalize in responsibilities and opportunities. Besides, about 50% of the respondents have answered that lack of leadership and lack of proper training they face discrimination respectively. Last but not least, patriarchy is also another cause which dominates the female in every issue. More than half of the respondents have expressed that they work well, but don't get evaluated due to the patriarchy mentality of the male.

Several reasons have been selected from the opinion of the respondents. Among all reasons, three reasons are correlated and serious for gender inequality. These three reasons are sexual desire of the male, job insecurity and mentally depressed. According to the respondents, they feel in dilemma. The job is important for their survival but tolerating flirtation or seduction to do job becomes tough. As a result, they start feeling mentally depressed and subordinated.

Table 03: Barriers of women empowerment from society

Women are fighting for their empowerment. But all societies don't support it warmly. Rather in some context the society becomes barrier of women empowerment. In this part, some barriers from society on the way of women empowerment have been picked up.

Categories	No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Male domination	156	48.75
Education system	77	24.06
Religious conservatism	176	55
Fear of social stigma	33	10.31
Family restriction	89	27.81

Source: field survey, June 2022

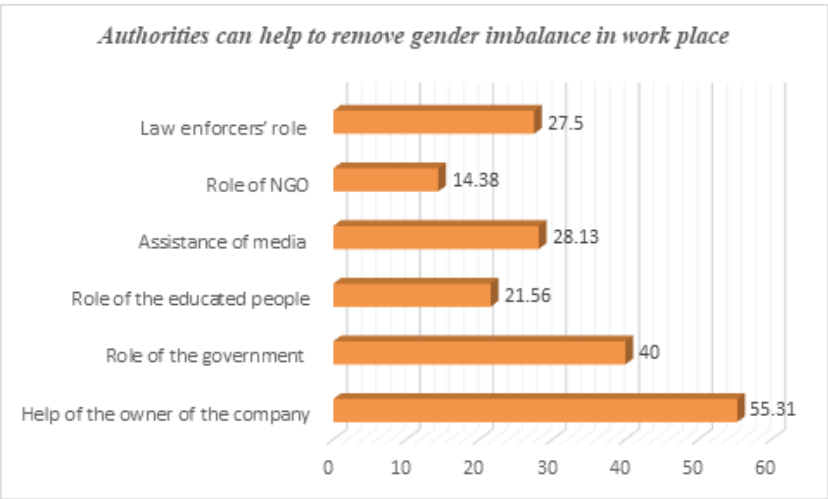
In this part, the respondents have commented about some points created from society which bar women to be empowered. Among some the male domination is of the crucial issues. Almost 48.75% of the respondents have opined that due to male domination they cannot do what they feel better spontaneously. They have to be obedient either their parents or husband and sons though they are wrong. Beside, education system is also responsible and almost 24.06% of the respondents have replied that if the social structure is changed and all are instructed and educated properly, the scenario would be changed. Moreover, more than 55% of the respondents have told that religious superstitions like women should maintain curtain and confine in home and take care of husbands are also a factor that becomes

obstacle for women to be empowered. In addition to it, a few respondents have also expressed that some neighbors are also backbite when they come to work in garments. They feel fear of social stigma. Furthermore, more than one fourth women have opined that they have come from a lower middle class family and their families is restricted for them to come out to work in garments.

We all live in a society. We cannot do everything what we feel good. We have to follow the society’s rules and regulations. So the respondents expect a society that will not be problematic rather it will support the women to be empowered.

Figure 03: Authorities can help to remove gender imbalance in work place

In this part, the respondents have opined that gender imbalance has not emerged overnight and it cannot be removed suddenly as well. Still if some authorities can help, the gender imbalance can be minimized soon. According to their opinion, some authorities have been figured out in the following Bar Chart.



Source: field survey, June 2022

In this part, the respondents expect help from different authorities to remove the gender disparity from work place. More than 55.31% of the respondents have expected help from the owner of the company or garments. According to them, if the owners impose some rules that can ensure equality in responsibility, duty and opportunity, they will be inspired and motivated to be empowered and the owner can help them by making a suitable environment to work, financial and psychological support and equalizing wage and other facilities with the male.

Besides, almost 40% of the respondents have told that like many government sectors if the government take initiative for ensuring some quota or other systems that can ensure their rights, they will be equalized. Furthermore, almost 21.56% of the respondents have replied that the educated people can help by changing the attitude of the male and people in society. A few respondents have told about the assistant of the media. They have told that if the media disclose the disparity and make everyone aware of right, the gender balance can be ensured. Besides, more than 27.5% of the respondents have talked of the help of law enforcers. They have opined that if the law enforcers investigate properly for sexual harassment and arrest the criminals. If the law enforcers ensure security and support physically and mentally, this problems may be minimized. Apart from it, a few respondents have asked for help from NGO. They have shared that if the NGOs make the society conscious about the right and empowerment. The gender discrimination may be diminished and a sound socio-economy can be ensured.

Gender imbalance is not a personal, social or national problem. It is a global problem. So, all from their respective place should come forward to solve this problem. The respondents want to come out of the cursed life. So, they expect help from the authorities those who are in leading position in our country and society.

Table 04: Steps to minimize gender imbalance from the working place

In this part, the women have talked about some steps. They opined that gender discrimination is such a problem that cannot be solved soon. But some steps may be helpful to lessen it. These steps are organized in the following table.

Categories	No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Increasing rate of female education	145	45.31
Job security	288	90
Changing mentality of male	176	55
Providing several working sector	78	24.38
Increasing rate of day-care centre	45	14.06
Removing religious superstition	112	35
Taking care of mental health	79	24.69
Equal Financial value of women’s work	189	59.06

Source: field survey, June 2022

Gender imbalance is a social curse. It is crucial to solve it and ensure the nation disparity free. So some steps should be taken according to the respondents. All most all respondents have expressed their opinion about a job that is secured and more than half of the respondents have opined that changing mentality of the male is prime issue to solve the problems. They have stated that the male tease or

harass the female in many ways. The male assume the female as commodity and tries to dominate. So the male change their mentality and respect as human being, this disparity may be minimized. Besides, more than half of the respondents have told that economic emancipation is vital issue. So equal financial value of women's work will inspire and motivate them to perform their level best. Furthermore, about 45.31% of the respondents have stressed over female education. They have opined that if the women are given opportunities to be educated or trained well, they can hold leadership position and gender inequality can be minimized. What's more, almost one fourth of the respondents have talked about their mental health and willingness. They have talked that they want to work without stress, fear and depression. Furthermore, several working sector opportunities can help them to choose the best place to work. Additionally, almost 35% of the respondents have informed that removing religious superstition can help to remove this problem. The poor women are pious. So the religious superstitions make them mentally weak to work outside. Last but not least, a few respondents have asked for good day care facilities so that they can keep their babies there and they can compete with the male and prove themselves.

Gender imbalance in work place can be minimized if the above mentioned steps are maintained. According to the respondents, three steps are very important for ensuring gender equality in work place. These three steps are: changing mentality of the male, job security and taking care of the mental health.

6. Conclusions

From the above mentioned findings and discussion, we can understand that gender imbalance is a social curse. Women with diversified age and education want to play an important role in socio-economy and go to the garments in Dhaka city but they become victim of gender imbalance. They work at the same of the male but are paid low. Besides the male colleague or superiors try to flirt or seduce in different ways. Sometimes through eyes, sometimes through body language and touching, sometimes through slang words and sometimes through the threatening or complaining and job firing they harass the women. Consequently the women become melancholy and frustrated. They need earnings and at the same time maintain such kind of situations become very challenging for them. Centering these issues, misbehavior, temporary job, no fixed salary, not allowed for leave in need, high work load, facing threat, overtime work, delay in getting salary and so on are imposed over them.

Under this situation, when the women observe their male counterpart and their advantages, they become very helpless. Sometimes the superiors help the

male, the male can go out and take leave when they feel need. The male also gets more salary and training for promotions. On the contrary, if the females are given some opportunities, behind it some bad intension of the superiors remains.

However, some reasons which are the roots of gender imbalance have also been traced in the garment sectors in Dhaka city. Sexual desire of the male member is one of the notable causes. The sexual attitude, gestures, postures of the male impact on the female in work place. With it the job insecurity issue is also related which is another cause of gender inequality in work place. Thus the women become mentally sick and dominated. This mental domination also legalizes disparity in work place. Beside, lack of training, lack of leadership and patriarchy the women gradually forget their own values. They become used to be obedient to their superiors.

Apart from it, the society also doesn't become conducive to the women empowerment in Dhaka city. The women also face a lot of problems on the way of their establishment from society as well. The society in Dhaka city is male dominated society. Though the scenario of the higher educated society is different, the society from where the women come to work in garments are male dominated. The male are used to impose their values over the female which become a bar on the way of women empowerment. Besides the education system, religious views, family restriction of the society are not favorable to the women empowerment. These inhibit women to come out of home and suggest them to stay at home and take care of family members. Despite inhibiting and suggesting, if women come out of the home, become victim of social stigma.

Whatsoever, against the gender inequality and its causes some authorities are needed to take steps on specific issues. In this context, the owner of the garments, the government, law enforcers, NGO, media and the educated people can play a vital role. The owner of the garments in Dhaka city can make sure a good working environment where the women can get financial and mental support so that the males can't harass the females and the females are not to be frustrated. The owner of the company can also make their job secured by signing a fixed time contract paper. Besides, the owner can launch a good day care centre so that the women can keep their children there and work without stress and they can equalize the financial value of work. On the other hand, the government of our country can make quota system at work place and give the women priority in society. The media of Dhaka city can inform all about the problems and to make the female aware of their rights and make the male aware the right and wrong. They can also remove religious superstitions by spreading the light of knowledge. The different NGOs also can help the female by supplying knowledge and lending loans. Moreover, the educated people of Dhaka city can arrange rally and human chain for the female's right and helping them to be educated and socially established.

Overall of the study, it can be seen that there are three major issues which are the most problematic in gender imbalance in working sector. These three issues are: sexual harassment which is caused from sexual desire of the male and to remove it the changing mentality of the mail should be ensured. Another is scared of losing job and it is derived from job insecurity. To minimize it, launching several job sectors and signing a fixed time contract paper should be made sure. The third one is mental depression which is caused from mentally subordinated for sexual harassment and fear of job losing and to solve this problem, a good working environment should be confirmed.

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