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by Sanaul Haque

Research Topic

Exploring Women's Perspectives on Barriers to Participation
in Bangladesh's Blue-Collar Workforce: A Mixed-Method
Approach

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Introduction:
Employment is widely divided into white-collar work, which refers to expert, administrative, or office-based functions, and blue-collar work, which requires manual work, technical trades, and skilled physical assignments. In Bangladesh, women have made a lot of progress in professional jobs, especially in the garment sector [1], [2]. However, in blue-collar sectors such as rickshaw pulling, transport service, electrical work, and manual trade work, women are hardly seen. These fields are still dominated by men, while women face family pressure, lack of skills training, unfavorable work conditions and persistent gender disparities in joining these sectors [3].

These barriers need to be studied to ensure not only gender equity but also economic growth in Bangladesh. Existing research largely focuses on white-collar jobs and the garment sector, creating a research gap regarding women in non-garment blue-collar sectors and their personal obstacles. This study clearly focuses on women's perspectives, which are often neglected. This study will foreground their voices, experiences, and recommendations so that changes can be brought about based on what women themselves think as barriers. Through a mixed-method approach, the research will provide both measurable data and personal understanding, which will play a significant role to enhance women's participation in this field and ensure economic development.

Research Question:
1. Why do women show less interest in Bangladesh's blue-collar jobs?
2. What obstacles do women believe are preventing them from pursuing these jobs?
3. Which practical or trade-specific measures would women consider effective to increase female participation in this sector?

Literature Review:
Women's participation in blue-collar sectors in Bangladesh has been the focus of several studies, which explored structural, social, and economic obstacles in this sector. Existing research demonstrates the factors that influence career decisions and hardships, such as skill limitations, access to mobility training, and workplace safety [1], [5]. Survey-based analyses highlight gender segregation across occupations, showing that women are more seen in official sectors such as ready-made garments while remaining belittled in sectors such as construction, transport, and technical manual work [1], [3]. Qualitative studies show the role of social and cultural expectations and economic incentives in forming women's employment decisions. Additionally, a study on cultural and familial influences offers insight into how conventional gender norms restrict women's career choices [2], [4]. Evidence, moreover, points to workplace problems comprising harassment, dangerous conditions, and limited advancement opportunities as significant deterrents [3], [4], [6].

These studies provide significant perception into influences and obstacles. However, they are predominantly quantitative or policy-driven perspectives rarely capturing women's own viewpoints. Few studies worked on why women avoid certain trades, how they experience workplace and social constraints, and what measures they believe could allow their participation. This study will fill those gaps by following a mixed-method approach, conducting both surveys and in-depth interviews, which will voice women's difficulties and needs. This will not only specify the problems more exhaustively but also provide actionable insights to authorities, policies, training programs, and workplace reforms, contributing to establishing gender equity and broader economic expansion in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology:
This study will adopt a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers preventing women from engaging in blue-collar occupations in Bangladesh.

Quantitative Phase:
Systematic surveys will be distributed among women (N=500) in urban and semi-urban regions, incorporating both employed and unemployed women who are qualified for blue-collar jobs. The survey will collect information on socio-demographic aspects, education, skill levels, perceptions of workplace safety and challenges they face.

Qualitative Phase:
For a deeper understanding of this issue, in-depth interviews and group discussions will be conducted with women who have tried to enter or showed interest in blue-collar jobs. These sessions seek to understand their personal experiences, family and social pressures, skill limitations and workplace problems, as well as explore their proposal for structural or policy changes that might help them to enter and remain in these areas.

Data Analysis:
Survey responses will be analyzed using simple descriptive statistics to show overall patterns of women's awareness, attitudes, and barriers toward blue-collar work. Inferential tests like chi-square and logistic regression will then be applied to see how the relationship between the variables, such as education, family background, economic status, and workplace safety, affects the probability of women joining these jobs.

Interviews and group discussions will be coded in themes like stigma, safety or absence of training. Special attention will be given to women's own recommendations for reforms and changes. The both results will then be combined to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Project Practicalities:
The data collection process will be executed over 12 weeks. During this period, major tasks will

be divided into different phases: survey designing, distribution, choosing participants and taking consent of them individually (weeks 4-5), data collection and interviews (weeks 6-8), data analysis and reporting (weeks 9-12). This research will be conducted with the full consent of the participants and following the rules of ethics. Moreover, the data collection will be anonymized and securely stored, ensuring confidentiality. They are allowed to change or withdraw their data anytime.

Conclusion:

This research aims to voice women's viewpoints regarding their involvement in the work market and to highlight the obstacles that continue to restrict their opportunities. By addressing these challenges, this study seeks to provide significant and purposeful insights that can direct policies and interventions promoting gender equity. The inclusion of women in these sectors is not only an issue of social fairness but also a significant step towards the country's economic prosperity, as their contribution can substantially reinforce Bangladesh's workforce. The ultimate purpose of this study is to support the empowerment of women, improve their socio-economic standing, and create opportunities for the establishment of an equitable labor market in Bangladesh.

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