STUDIES ON SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED GARMENTS FACTORY WORKER IN DHAKA CITY OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

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A cross-sectional study has been conducted in selected readymade garments (RMG) of Rampura, Mohakhali and Mirpur area of Dhaka during the period of May to August, 2013 to investigate their socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Data were collected on socio-demographic information. All the garments worker working in these garments constitute the population (or may be sample) of the study and ultimately 176 workers were included and interviewed in a face to face situation with an interviewer administered pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. The majority of respondents (63.6%) were within the age group of 17-25 years and predominated (81.8%) by the female workers. In this study the profile of the workers indicates a young group of women, large numbers of whom are married. On average, they had some primary education, although half of them have no education and some have secondary-level education. The most of workers with position of either helper or operator are directly involved with production as front line worker in the garments factory income range from 5000-15000 BDT.

Key words: RMG, women garments worker, semi-structured questionnaire, GDP

INTRODUCTION

Readymade Garments (RMG) manufacturing is the biggest industrial sector of Bangladesh. It is the key export-earning sector and striking force in the field of industrialization for Bangladesh. Around 3.6 million workers are employed in the textiles and clothing industry of which 2.8 million are women (Mahmud 2012). As Bangladesh is gradually making its position better it is using the garments sectors more exhaustively. In less than a decade the country increased its exports, foreign earnings, and contribution to the gross domestic product GDP by 4.39% in the year of 2008 (Ahmed and Hossain, 2009). RMG exports reached a steadfast figure of USD 17.91 billion in the fiscal year 2010-2011, accounting more than 78% of national export earnings, which was about 4-5% of the global total. It further contributes 10% to the country's GDP (Mahmud 2012). RMG products are exported mainly to the United States of America and the European Union. We can realize easily the amount what is mentioned above that how much important became the garments sector. The workers in the garment factories are almost illiterate and they have limited knowledge of human rights, working conditions and labor standards. Studying livelihood of this huge number of people is important for improving their quality and safety of life. Therefore the present research was undertaken to know the socio-demographic characteristics of the workers of the selected garment factories of Dhaka city.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study has been conducted in purposively selected RMG of Rampura, Mohakhali and Mirpur area of Dhaka city. This study was conducted where garments factories situated during the period of May to August, 2013 to study soico-demographic characteristics of garments workers. Data were collected on soicodemographic characteristics. Age, sex, religion, marital status, education, occupation, family income, family member, and service length were considered as socio-demographic characteristics. All the garments worker working in these garments were participated in the study and ultimately 176 were included and interviewed face to face with an interviewer administered pre tested semi-structured questionnaire. Statistical analyses of the results were obtained by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL, USA). The results in terms of values and figures were analyzed and during analysis frequency distribution for all the variables were worked out and produced in tabular form. A two tailed *p* value of 0.05 was considered significant at 95% CI (Confidence Interval) level.

RESULTS

This section deals with the findings of the study obtained from analysis and interpretation of data. The descriptive analyses of the results were presented with relation to characteristics of the sample population and the distribution of the outcome variables. This cross-sectional study involved 176 respondents with minimum age of 17 years. The majority of them (63.6%) were within the age group of 17-25 years (Fig. 1A). Among the total respondents, about one third respondents were within 20 years, another one third were between 21-25 years and rest one third respondents were between 26 to 30 years, 31-35 years and above 35 years. The female respondents predominated (81.8%) in this study with a few number (18.8%) of male respondents (Fig. 1B). Regarding religion, all most all respondents were found the follower of Islam (98.3%) except small proportion from Hindu religion (Fig. 1C). Results presented in Fig. 2A indicated that by the marital status of the garment workers 71.6% were married, 26.1% were unmarried only a few were separated (1.1%) and divorced (1.1%). More than half of the respondents (65.3%) had less than four family member, while nearly one third (29.5%)

had 5-7 member and remaining 5.1% had more than 8 members in their family (Fig. 2B). A considerable number of sample population (37.5%) completed primary level of education, many passed the secondary education (29.5%) was at secondary level (Fig. 2C). However, nearly quarter proportion respondents were illiterate. Only 3.4% passed higher secondary certificate examination and 0.6% reached graduate level education. Results presented in Fig. 3A, indicated that, most of the garments worker engaged as helper (43.8%) and operator position (48.9%). Only few workers had the working position of iron man (1.1%), quality man (2.8%) and supervisor (3.4%). On the basis of monthly income of the respondents family, majority (39.2%) had income of 10001-15000 BDT followed by 34.2% with monthly income of 5001-10000 BDT (Fig. 3B). Only few respondents (6.8%) earn less than 5000 BDT but some worker (18.8%) earns even over 15000 BDT per month. Nearly 70% worker had work experience of less than 5 years in garments factory and the remaining 23.3% had 6-10 years and 6.8% had more than 11 years of work experience (Fig. 3C).
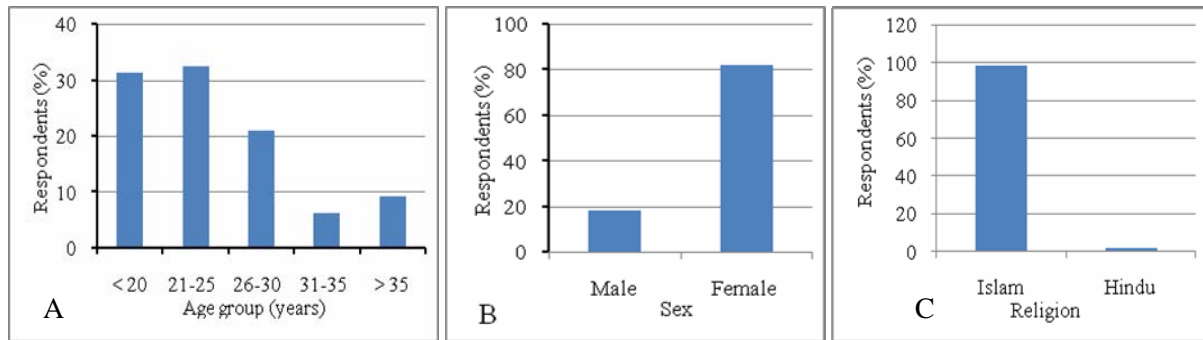

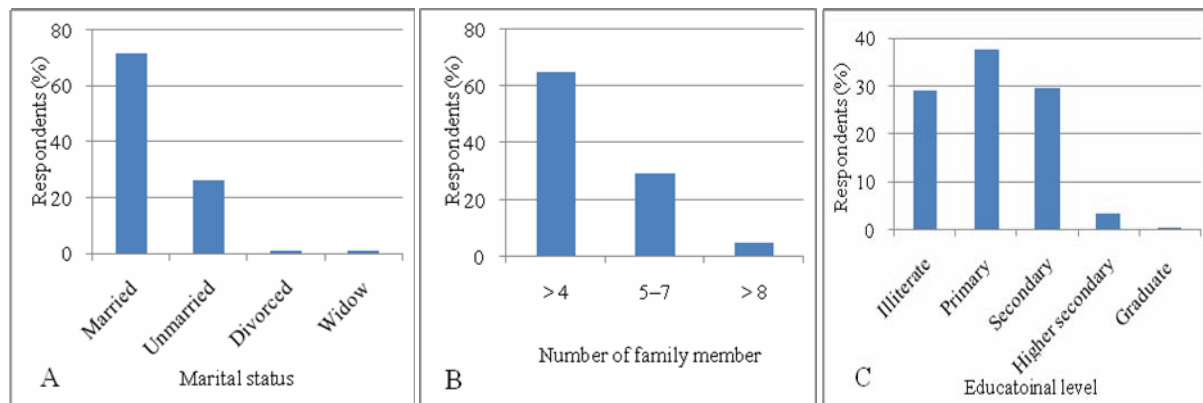Fig. 1. Distribution of the respondents by (A) age, (B) sex and (C) religion (n = 176)

Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents according to (A) marital status, (B) number of family members and (C) educational level (n = 176)
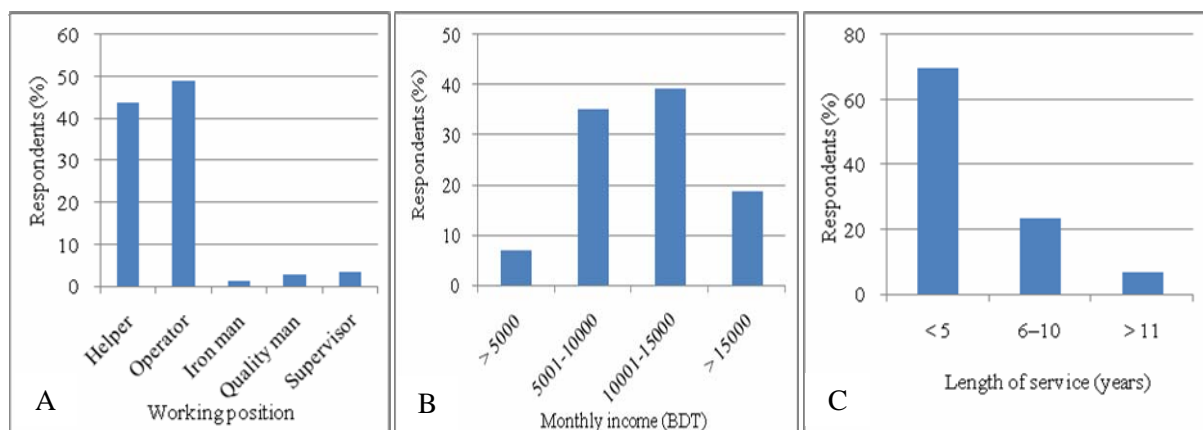

Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents according to (A) working position, (B) monthly income and (C) length of service (n = 176)

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted with the objectives to find out the socio-demographic characteristics of garments workers of five selected garments in Dhaka city. A total 176 garments worker employed in this study and data

were collected through interviewer administered questioner which was translated into local language (Bengali). To date several researchers conducted survey to know the socio-demographic characteristics of the garments workers in Bangladesh (Sikdar *et al.* 2014; Rahman and Rahman, 2013; Hasan *et al.* 2013). However, these characteristics may vary from location to location. Our objective was to explore the sociodemographic features in relation to other aspects of garments worker towards their safety and better life.

The majority of the workers in the sample were between the ages of 17 and 25, with a substantial minority falling below and above this age range (Fig. 1A). As shown by Fig. 1B, of the 144 women workers, 46 are never-married, 126 are currently married, two are separated/abandoned/divorced and two are widowed. According to Readymade Garments sector's information around 4.5 million workers are employed in the textiles and clothing industry of which 80% are women (Majumdar and Chaudhuri, 1994) that are very similar to this study. Since the 1980s, an export-based garments industry has mushroomed in Bangladesh. Perhaps the most notable feature of this industry is its most use of women workers. Studies indicate that many of the women who work in the garments sector had no prior wage work experience (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 1992; Majumdar and Chaudhuri, 1994). Women have emerged as preferred workers in export production factories around the world where employers often cite the lower costs, and the docility and nimbleness of women in comparison to men (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Lim 1990). However, a full understanding of the movement of women into the garments factories of Bangladesh requires us to consider not only the "pull" but also the "push" factors that underlie this trend (Islam 1999; Ullah 2004; Haider 2010).

Most of the worker under this study came from Muslim family (81.8%) with only few are Hinduism. This probable reason is that Bangladesh is mainly pre-dominated by the Muslim peoples. Recently similar results were also found in another research (Sikdar *et al.* 2014). As far as education (2C), 51 workers have no formal education, most of them (66) have primary education of one to five years, 52 have six to ten years, six have 11 or 12 years, and only one have graduate level i.e., over 12 or more years of education. The reasons behind this less education have been outlined as poverty and ignorance of the guardians, easy accessibility to job, social system and also dowry system (Bhuiyan 2012). The present study indicate that most garments (65.3%) worker lead family with up to four members while one third (29.5%) of them had bigger family having 5-7 members and only few (5.1%) have over 8 members. The primary reason of this greater number of family member is the lack of proper knowledge of family planning and management of child health, education and other basic managements.

Most of the garments worker were found as either helpers (43.8%) or operators (48.9%), with very few having job titles such as iron man, quality man and supervisor (Fig. 3A). It is evident that most worker with position of helper or operator are directly involved with production as front line worker in the garments factories. The average monthly family incomes of 39.2% respondents were in the middle category. In the study it was found that around seventy percent (69.9%) respondent's length of service had less than 4 years which indicate that significantly increase in worker employment in last 4 years in garments sector. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of this study were found more or less similar with the researches on the garments sector of Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the collective profile of the workers that emerges is of a young group of women, large numbers of whom are married. On average, they have had primary level of education, although half of them have no education and some have secondary-level education. The most of workers with position of either helper or operator are directly involved with production as front line worker in the garments factory with a range of income of 5,000-15,000 BDT.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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