



2015

Female Employment and Gender Relations: A Case Study of Female Garment Workers in Dhaka District, Bangladesh

Justin G. Bradfield

School of Built Environment and Development Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal

May 2015

Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Master of Development Studies in the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Submitted as the dissertation component in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Development Studies.

*As the candidate's supervisor, I **have**/have not approved this short dissertation for submission.*

Date:

Name: Prof. Daniela Casale

Signature:

Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Development Studies, in the Graduate Programme in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was used and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Development Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.



Student Signature

15th October 2015

Date

Abstract

The impact of female employment on societies where women have traditionally been confined to domestic roles is a dynamic characteristic of a changing global labour landscape. The literature and feminist discourse on this subject note that, for women, the impact has been both positive and negative. In Bangladesh these changes are taking place rapidly, and in so doing, challenging the traditional fabric of a society which until comparatively recently was characterised as culturally and religiously conservative, predominantly rural and deeply paternalistic.

This study aimed to contribute to an evolving perspective of this rapidly changing dynamic and what it means for women living and working in Bangladesh's capital city of Dhaka, a mega-city of over 16 million people. The study sought to gain a better understanding of the impact of wage employment on working women by engaging with female garment workers in two communities, Mohammadpur and Savar, in Dhaka District. Its three main objectives were to: 1) Identify more generally, the positive and negative impacts of employment in the ready-made garment sector on the lives of female garment workers in the research sample, and to provide a context for the more specific objectives outlined as follows; 2) Understand more specifically the consequences of this employment for these women, documenting in particular, changes or shifts in gender relations, and the norms, decision-making ability and status of these women within the household; 3) Understand the impact of waged labour on women's perceptions of their position/status within their community.

In particular the study documents the changing cultural, economic and social impacts on these women, both in their respective communities, and more importantly on their status and bargaining power within the household itself. This is an often underreported area of study. Therefore, it is hoped that the study will provide new insight into how these women are coping with rapid change, and what this means for the future status, equality and welfare of women, albeit within a narrow research window.

Since Bangladesh is projected to challenge China as the world's leading manufacturer of ready-made garments within the next couple of decades, the implications for women and traditional values and attitudes toward working women in Bangladesh are important.

The research consisted of four phases: identification of suitable candidates for the research study, the subsequent development of the questionnaire and methodology for approaching the participant interviews, a qualitative interview phase with participants from two separate factories (located in two separate districts of Dhaka), and finally a process of triangulation of the data to ensure credibility and accuracy. This was particularly important, since the interviews were translated from Bangla to English and conducted remotely via an experienced research assistant.

Through the employment of a constructivist paradigm, the researcher was able to source rich data that was used to test existing theories on the impact of the garment industry in Bangladesh on women. The study found that employment in this sector had largely been beneficial for the participants, resulting in tangible improvements in their quality of life including improvements in the overall ability of the household to save, and to enjoy a better diet including meat and fish. These material improvements often translated into an ability to renegotiate decision making and power relations within the household. However, this should be contextualised within a sobering reality, which is that many women have little choice but to work long hours, for minimal pay, in often dangerous working conditions and without the prospect of the formalisation of their labour or attendant welfare benefits. Therefore, this study argues that while the ready-made garment sector has indeed enhanced the socio-economic status of women, which is empowering, these gains remain fragile, and easily reversible as political and economic conditions within the country, and indeed the forces of globalization, have the ability to unseat these small but positive implications. Hard won freedoms therefore come at a tremendous cost for female garment workers in Bangladesh.

Preface

The work described in this dissertation was carried out in two parts. First, the primary research was conducted in Bangladesh with the assistance of a research assistant. The paper and findings were written remotely from December 2014 to May 2015, under the supervision of Prof. Daniela Casale.

This study represents original work by the author and has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any tertiary institution. Where use has been made of the work of others, it is duly acknowledged in the text and references section.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bradfield', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Signature

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of several key individuals who provided guidance, support and encouragement to the researcher in conducting this study. First and foremost, the constant professional guidance of Prof. Daniela Casale from the School of Built Environment and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was critical in the study's execution. I would also like to thank my research assistant, Ms Prapti Anandita for her tireless and physical efforts to conduct the participant interviews in Bangladesh, and finally, Dr Imtiaz of the University of Dhaka, for his assistance in the triangulation of data and the transcripts from the interviews.

My heartfelt thanks to all concerned.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	01
Abstract.....	02
Preface.....	04
Acknowledgements.....	05
Table of Contents.....	06
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	08
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	10
2.1 Introductory remarks and objectives.....	10
2.2 Discourses on the effects of female wage labour.....	10
2.3 Perspectives on the socio-economic, political and cultural status of women in Bangladesh.....	14
2.4 Power, inequality and gender relations within the household in Bangladesh.....	19
2.5 Perspectives on the impact of the garment sector in Bangladesh on women.....	21
2.6 Concluding remarks.....	29
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Approach.....	31
3.3 Research Design.....	32
3.4 Participant Interviews.....	33
3.5 Interview Schedule Design.....	34
3.6 Limitations and bias.....	36
3.7 Summary.....	38

Chapter 4: Findings	
4.1 Introduction.....	39
4.2 Profile of respondents.....	39
4.3 Key themes identified.....	40
4.4 Detailed analysis of the key findings from the research sample.....	41
4.5 Summary of findings	55
Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks.....	58
References.....	62
Appendix A - Participant Questionnaire and Consent Forms.....	70
Appendix B - Participant list and Interview Schedule.....	75
Appendix C - Overview of participant profiles.....	77
Appendix D -Maps.....	78
1) Country Map: Bangladesh	
2) Dhaka Mega City (including location of respondent interviews)	

Chapter 1: Introduction

In a rapidly globalising world, capital has increasingly turned to the abundant labour in South East Asia. The garment sector is a leading sector in Bangladesh both as employer, and as the country's top earner of foreign exchange (Begum et al, 2008). It produces several ranges of garments including T-shirts, jeans, jerseys and jackets, and other apparel, mainly for export (Pata, 2010). However, the ready-made-garments (RMG) sector in particular has drawn considerable criticism from labour and human rights activists for putting production before the health, welfare and safety of workers (Alam, 2011; Ahamed, 2014).

New markets such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia offer 'cheap' labour, and, it is argued, marginal safety standards, allowing many global clothing brands to produce garments in a cost effective way. Investment in the RMG sector in Bangladesh has grown rapidly in the past decade such that the country is now the second largest producer of garments in the world. Bangladesh has also been in the news because of a series of recent tragedies in garment factories that have claimed thousands of lives, mainly women. Indeed, women make up more than 90% of garment workers, and the RMG sector is the main employer of women in the country (Ahamed, 2014).

The growth of the RMG sector has had profound effects on the socio-economic and cultural status of female garment workers in a traditionally conservative Islamic country where attitudes to working women can be described as conservative and patriarchal (Shehabuddin, 2008). Economic imperatives appear to have shifted the status quo, re-defining gender norms, and a revision in attitudes to traditional female roles is occurring at a steady pace (Sebastio in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005: 17-18).

This study aimed to describe the impact of these often contradictory forces on women working in this sector and, more specifically, to deepen understanding of the impact of waged employment on gender relations within the household and the community. Since the community exercises a strong influence (religious, social, cultural, economic) on women's lives in Bangladesh (Shehabuddin, 2008), it is important to examine this important dimension.

The research was based on interviews with a sample of female garment workers in the Dhaka District of Bangladesh, and was grounded in the broader existing literature on the impact of women's work on gender relations within the household and the community.

With Bangladesh projected to overtake China as the world's largest producer of RMG in the future (Berg et al, 2011), understanding the impact of these forces on women is important from a rights, development, and gender (policy) perspective. In addition, recent claims by both the government of Bangladesh and the garment industry itself that the industry is 'empowering' young women (Hossain, 2011) also require closer scrutiny; this research may provide further data to substantiate or repudiate the validity of this argument.

The study's three primary objectives were, firstly, to identify more generally the positive and negative impacts of employment in the RMG sector on the lives of female workers in the research sample, and to provide the context for the more specific objectives (two and three). Second, an enhanced empirical understanding of the consequences of this employment for these women, documenting, in particular, changes or shifts in gender relations, and norms, decision-making ability and status of these women within the household. Finally, to better understand the impact of waged labour on women's perceptions of their position/status within their community.

Chapter 1 sets out the rationale for conducting the research, as well as a description of the main research objectives. This is followed by a critical analysis of the available relevant literature in Chapter 2 which centres the study within the current literature and also identifies gaps which require attention, description and analysis. A detailed account of the data collection process and research approach is presented in Chapter 3. The rationale for the research methodology chosen to address the research questions and overall problem is discussed and the methodology is explained in detail. The heart of the dissertation, the presentation and analysis of data from interviews with 20 garment workers, is presented in Chapter 4. The study's overall conclusions and observations are captured in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introductory Remarks and Objectives

This literature review aims to achieve four main objectives within the wider context of the dissertation. The first is to explore general theoretical hypotheses relating to the intersection of gender, employment and intra-household relations as a result of female wage employment. Second, the literature review seeks to delimit the boundaries of this discourse with a specific focus on the impact of the RMG sector in Bangladesh on gender dynamics within the household and community. Third, the review will not only establish what is known about the impacts of wage employment on women in the Bangladeshi garment sector, but highlight the context within which these women are born, live and die. Context is significant, since community, family, work, religion, and culture affect almost every aspect of the lives of Bangladeshi women (Efroymsen et al, 2006; Shehabuddin, 2008; Murshid, 1996; Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011; Hossain, 2012; Kamal and Zunaid, 2004). Finally, the review will distinguish “what has been done from what needs to be done” (Hart, 1998 in Randolph, 1999: 2), identifying emerging themes against the research objectives, and critically analysing the existing literature for gaps in its reasoning and theory, in so far as these relate to the research problem.

2.2 Discourses on the effect of female wage labour on intra-household power relations

Bina Agarwal’s paper, *Bargaining and Gender Relations: Within and beyond the household* argues that “[g]ender differences in *intra-household* bargaining power are thus linked with the person’s *extra-household* bargaining power,” especially with regard to access to assets such as land, dowry at marriage and their broader ability to contribute to the family both economically and socially (Agarwal, 1997: 21). The term ‘bargaining power’ is discussed in terms of a woman’s ability to influence the material and non-material outcomes of the household. Agarwal argues that equality or inequality of bargaining power is determined by the individual “person’s fall-back position” in the bargaining process; in other words, the “outside options which determine how well-off she/he would be if cooperation (within the household) failed” (Agarwal, 1997: 4). In the context of intra-household bargaining, an individual’s bargaining power and fall-back position are defined by their ability to survive and thrive outside the family (Agarwal, 1997: 9).

Agarwal identifies three determinants of bargaining power which are highly relevant in this regard. The first is the importance of “economic factors in pushing people to challenge norms; second, the role of groups (as opposed to individuals) in enhancing people’s ability to challenge norms; and third; the interactive nature of bargaining within and outside the household in effectively challenging social norms” (Agarwal, 1997: 29).

However, Agarwal notes that poor women in particular face a dilemma between remaining in the home and seeking work outside of it for “survival needs.” Citing the issue of *purdah*¹ in Bangladesh and Pakistan which is discussed in greater length later in this chapter, Agarwal argues that women’s wage labour in garment factories is a challenge to traditional religious and cultural beliefs (Agarwal, 1997: 21). Women that challenge cultural, economic and social norms face tension and consequences. However, her research indicates that the straightforward issue of economic necessity is sufficient to overcome these obstacles. The following quotation underscores the importance of listening to women’s voices in examining these issues:

Now nobody talks ill of us. They say “they have formed a group (BRAC co-operative for women), and now they earn money. It is good.” Before the village elders and union-council members abused and threatened us for joining the group, now they are silent....Before we did not understand our ways, now we understand profit and loss...Before we did not know our rights to rations and medical services, now we are conscious and exert pressure to receive our due...Before we did not go outside our homes, but now we work in the field or go to the town...Before our minds were rusty, now they shine (Agarwal, 1997, 31 cited in Chen 1983: 177, 165).

In her critique of the wider discourse on the determinants of bargaining power at the intra-household level, Agarwal (1997) remarks that many analyses have underplayed the role of economic inequality in the household as a determinant in the location of the power variables which exist between men and women, and women and women. “Economic inequalities, while not the only influence, do usually play a critical role in structuring power relations, by giving some people greater authority over definitions and interpretations than others” (Agarwal, 1997: 32).

¹ Purdah is a practise of enforced seclusion of women in their homes and/or the necessity of ‘shielding’ women from the sight of men either by means of dress or physically. The practice is typical to South Asia.

The idea of leveraging power relations through wage employment for women is certainly not unique to Agarwal's work. Harkness, for example, cites a growing body of work across different countries which suggests that in households with a female wage earner, inequality in power relations within the household between men and women is reduced over time (Harkness, 2010: 4). Iversen (2003) also argues that "the individual opportunities of household members to achieve well-being will be influenced by power relations, which in turn are influenced by each party's material and nonmaterial endowments" (Iversen, 2003: 111).

At the macro level, Fontana remarks that "Women benefit the most in countries that are abundant in unskilled labour and have a comparative advantage in the production of basic manufacturing" (Fontana, 2006: 2) and, that, "The greater the share of garments, textiles and electronics in a country's exports, the greater the employment-creating impact of trade has been for women" (Wood, 1991, cited in Fontana, 2006: 2). The outcomes for women in countries such as Bangladesh, India and Myanmar are increased access to wage employment, albeit largely low paid and unskilled. However, these opportunities are not uncontested; Fontana identifies "the burden of household chores" and "gender stereotypes" as general barriers to the vertical advancement of women (Fontana, 2006: 4).

Further emerging themes documented by Guy Standing (1999) suggest that while the "feminization" of the labour market is occurring apace, the types of work that women are engaged in tend towards informality, and temporary and low-paid work which results in "vulnerability", and "a trend toward greater insecurity and inequality" for women (Standing, 1999: 600). These processes have led to the 'internalisation' of tensions within the household as modern labour practices collide with traditional gender norms, roles and values. This argument is explored at length by Narayan et al (in Panday et al, 1999) in *Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices From 47 Countries*. The idea that increased female labour force participation has 'deconstructed' gender norms within the household is a highly relevant discourse in light of this study's objectives. Narayan et al (1999: 135) argue that:

Under increasing economic pressure, men in many parts of the world have lost their traditional occupations and jobs, and women have been forced to take on additional income earning tasks while continuing their domestic tasks. These changes have touched core values about gender identity, gender power, and gender relations within poor households, and anxiety about what

is a “good woman” or a “good man” seems pervasive. Values and relations are being broken, tested, contested, and renegotiated in silence, pain and violence.

These concepts are explored in more detail later in this chapter. Narayan et al’s work focuses on households in the developing world. However a recent study by Mader and Schneebaum (2013) suggests that even amongst European women in countries like Germany, decision making and bargaining power within the household remain delineated by gender with significant decisions regarding management of household finances, capital purchases etc., remaining with men, while smaller day to day decisions chiefly concerned with the running and functioning of the household remain the preserve of women.

The study highlights the fact that even with significant female labour force participation in modern European countries, women’s bargaining power and status within the home often remain inferior to that of their partner. Mader and Schneebaum conclude that, “Women across Europe often make decisions which are compatible with traditional women’s roles as mothers and care-takers of family members and the household, indeed their decision making power is often limited to these roles. On the other hand, men are the primary decision-makers when it comes to financial decisions for the household” (Mader and Schneebaum, 2013: 20).

Furthermore, research conducted by the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group and cited by Lin Lean Lim (2002: 211) suggests that increased female labour force participation also impacts on women’s fertility and reproductive rates. She argues that an inverse relationship exists between female labour force participation and fertility and reproductive rates, particularly for women working in the industrial sector. These forces are emancipating young women in particular in new ways. “The autonomous migration experience and exposure to work and living conditions in urban areas or other countries tends to influence the attitude of young women toward delayed marriage and family formation” (Lim, 2002: 212). At the heart of this argument is the hypothesis that women’s status, bargaining power and decision making capacity are all enhanced within the household as a result of “Wage employment away from the home – particularly in non-familial enterprises” (Lim, 2002: 204).

2.3 Perspectives on the socio-economic, political and cultural status of women in Bangladesh

The burgeoning literature on women's employment in Bangladesh documents the rapid growth of the garment sector which "first appeared in Bangladesh's town and cities in the 1980s" and "spread rapidly and became the country's major export industry" (Gulhathakurta, 2013: 64). Alam (2011) and Berg et al (2011) provide a situational context for the growth of the industry in Bangladesh which was the result of three primary factors. The first was recommendations by foreign donors and the World Bank following structural adjustment prescriptions for growth, the second, the relatively low cost of Bangladeshi labour situated amid a massive reserve pool of unskilled labour, and the third, rising wages in other more traditional garment and textiles markets including China. Bangladesh was also courted by several foreign clothing brands (mainly from the United States and Europe) which viewed the country as ideal for the manufacture of basic clothing lines (McKinsey, 2011).

The industry now accounts for 80% of Bangladesh's total exports produced in almost 5,000 factories that employ in excess of three million people, 90% of whom are women. Young women between the ages of 18-32 account for the vast majority of these workers (Ahamad, 2014: 1).

The phenomenon of increasing female waged labour points to the dualistic nature of Bangladeshi society with regard to its treatment of women. Baden et al (1994) paint a picture of women in the country as mainly sub-actors, politically, economically, and socially, limited by the Islamic institution of *purdah* from achieving any kind of gender equality in both the private and public space. Feminist writers such as Tazeen Murshid (1996) have also viewed the slow improvement in women's status in Bangladesh through the all-pervasive lens of religion, which often acts as a counterweight to their empowerment, while more general texts such as *Gender and Self in Islam*, help to confront and illuminate contextual issues (Anwar, 2006).

Anwar (2006: 34) argues that Muslim women live within a "social, cultural and religious system that is not friendly to them". Such a 'system' creates layers of patriarchy that transcend the physical to encompass a re-shaping of thought, understanding and ideas along the lines of female submission. In this respect, she suggests that both men and women play a role in the maintenance of gender inequality within Muslim society (Anwar, 2006: 35).

Women's roles in re-shaping civil society and the politicization of gender are also critical to understanding the changing nature of female participation in Bangladeshi society (Shehabuddin, 2008). Emerging from a low base, women's rights are controversial in Bangladesh and continue to be so. Conservative Islamic forces including Jamaat al Islam (a coalition partner of the main opposition party) "have been locked in a struggle both over what women should and should not do and also over what meanings inhere in specific acts they undertake" (Shehabuddin, 2008: 43).

In this regard, tensions and contradictions between a secular government which encourages wage employment for women, particularly in the RMG sector, and a society which frowns upon formal employment beyond the home or family has often defined the feminist struggle in Bangladesh in the past two decades. "For the secularist camp, *purdah* and by extension religion itself represent the primary obstacles to development and modernization. According to this view, the modern woman is one who has cast off that all too visible symbol of tradition, the veil, and a modern society is one in which Islam plays no role in the public domain" (Shehabuddin, 2008: 43). In contrast, Shehabuddin argues for the emergence of an Islamic counter-weight to this secularist view, which views the modern woman as mother, bearer of children, and one who occupies herself with the "transmission of Islamic values" to her children. Women's employment is therefore a source of constant tension in Bangladeshi society, and is often regarded as an unwanted by-product of "Westernization and secularization" (Shehabuddin, 2008: 44).

In their study of gender roles in Asia, Dabby and Poore (2007: 4) argue that culture is "used to justify the status quo of gender inequality and violence against women", and that tradition and culture are often expressions of entrenched patriarchy within Asian society. Moreover, in the Asian context, they identify not only the occurrence of a first (paid employment) and second 'shift' for women (household chores and other household tasks assigned to women in the home) as defined by Arlie Russell Hochschild, but a third shift described as, "the emotional labour invested in parenting, in the intimate relationship, in the family of both members of the couple, in friends of the couple, etc., which is still disproportionately done by women." Women are further disadvantaged in that, unlike men, they are expected to perform both the second and third shifts (from which men are traditionally exempt), while at the same time, "Gender roles are reinforced by the gendered division of labour which gives more value to men's work" (Dabby and Poore, 2007: 7).

With increased access to education, albeit mainly benefitting middle and upper class women, discourses on women's engagement with the economy have become richer and more feminised (Afsar, 2000, 2001; Paul-Majumder, 1993; Paul-Majumder and Begum, 2000). It can be argued that this discourse is heavily influenced by the role of female intellectuals 'imported' by the plethora of international aid agencies, and United Nations organisations that began to flood Bangladesh in the early 1980s (Panday, 2013: 8). This transition reflected the change in perceptions in the country, that women had a role to play beyond the doorstep of the home as productive economically active citizens in their own right (Chaudhuri-Zohir, 2001; Kabeer, 2000).

Panday argues that "women's labour has been recognized as the backbone of its (Bangladesh's) success, as their cheap labour has been critical to debt servicing and to the recognition that Bangladesh continues to receive as an emerging producer of garments for the world market". However, women's wages remain "extremely low", while working conditions remain tenuous at best (Panday, 2013: 9). Gita Sen (1999: 10) argues that the "gendered labour market under globalisation" is characterised by low wages and gender inequality and is a major feature of the "structural inequalities in global trade between South and North".

While women's political representation in Bangladesh has increased, they continue to suffer from discrimination on the part of their male colleagues and "work in adversarial circumstances, in which the majority of the people, including their peers, families, and constituents, appear to be their opponents" (Panday, 2013: 19). Panday cites examples of elected female representatives who suffer from a "strong conservatism among the majority of the population. Despite an increase in their personal mobility, where they might have formerly not been allowed to leave the house at all, women still are required to be accompanied by male family members when they leave the house to do their work as Council members" (Panday, 2013: 18). This underscores the general position of women in Bangladesh. Low paid female garment workers' ability to negotiate personal freedom and individual mobility is likely to be even more constrained.

Thus, despite obvious gains, entrenched discrimination remains a real barrier for women, with well-documented inequalities in access to education, health, employment and wages (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011). The authors argue that gender inequality remains a major challenge to the country's ability to achieve its development goals. For example, the literacy rate among girls in 2010 was 54.8%, as opposed to 61.12% among boys, and the gender

difference is larger in rural areas. More than 75% of students enrolled at higher education institutions are male (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011: 5). This is not surprising considering that “[t]raditionally, female education has been accorded a low priority in Bangladesh due to poverty, social directives for female seclusion and the low value of girls” (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011: 09).

Turning to health, Ferdaush and Rahman (2011: 11) state that women and baby girls in Bangladesh begin life at a disadvantage; “...early marriage, absence of premarital counselling, pressure for early child bearing and poor nutritional status” are some of the root causes of child mortality figures which show that girls are more likely to die than boys (in 2007 child mortality per 1,000 live births for boys was 16, and for girls 20, for children under the age of 16).

The nature of this “structural inequality” is examined at length by Ainoon Naher in her work on the nature of gender relations in rural Bangladesh (Naher, 2005: 104). She argues that gender inequality is all pervasive in the lives of the poor, rural women in her research sample, existing “at global, national, community and domestic levels” (Naher, 2005: i). She also analysed changing gender dynamics as a result of women’s enhanced access to micro-credit through the Grameen Bank in Jiri, her area of study. Both foreign NGOs and the bank targeted women (as the most economically vulnerable members of the community) for eligibility under the micro-credit scheme. Naher found that men seemed “genuinely puzzled”, and “frustrated” by this preference (Naher, 2005: 176). She noted that women’s access to credit and thus their ability to generate income caused the men in the community to feel ‘displaced’ “from their dominant status quo in the society”. The results are that men “feel threatened to lose their control over (the) female of the household”, and therefore try to maintain “significant control over the woman’s income and loan” (Naher, 2005: 177).

The impact of female wage employment in the context of male unemployment is a critical driver of tensions and sometimes violence within the household in Bangladesh. Panday argues that increased female employment means that as the “range of arenas where abuses can take place” is extended; incidents of “gang rape, acid throwing, sexual harassment and violence at the work place” are on the rise. She maintains that gender-based violence in Bangladesh “is deeply associated with the existing patriarchal social structure” (Panday, 2013: 41). This view is echoed by several other authors, including Nazneen et al (2011: 29-30) who argue that when women take advantage of economic opportunities, “their lower

status makes them vulnerable to increased abuse and personal risk”. Thus, Bangladeshi women face both structural and domestic impediments to autonomy and the self-actualisation of their dreams and desires.

More broadly, it is important to acknowledge the contribution of women writing from an Islamic perspective on the relationships between men and women within Islam. This understanding is important in view of the role that religion plays in the lives of women in conservative Muslim countries like Bangladesh which as previously argued, can be all pervasive.

In her book, *Gender and Self in Islam*, Etin Anwar examines the structures within which women seek to operationalize their identity. She argues that, “Muslim women owe it to themselves to dismantle the patriarchal elements of Muslim culture that shape their thinking, life and knowledge”. Anwar defines patriarchy as a complex and multi-dimensional term, explaining that, within the context of Islam, it means, “a society in which older men are in positions of power and authority”, a “male-dominated society.” Interestingly, she goes further to argue that it is more than this; it could be considered an institutionalised “process and a system by which men and women give and participate in the construction of their sense of who they are” (Anwar, 2006: 33).

Citing Johnson’s definition of patriarchal culture, she argues that patriarchy relegates femininity “to the marginal position of ‘other’” (Anwar, 2006: 34). Such is the level to which the “system” has institutionalised thinking about and for Muslim women that Muslim women themselves are responsible for further perpetuating and re-enforcing these structures and beliefs. She notes that, “patriarchal culture depends on both men’s and women’s participation. And this participation beyond doubt shapes everyone’s understanding of (the) gender system, including gender thinking, construction, identity, equality, inequality, hierarchy, and relationship” (Anwar, 2006: 34-35). This is a key point that is relevant in conducting primary research on levels of empowerment amongst Muslim women. Muslim women may have a very different understanding of issues such as personal or economic freedom from, for example, women living in Western Europe. They may not be able to conceive of the limits to their personal freedoms, and may consider existing gender relations dominated by patriarchy and inequality as ‘normal’. In other words, these issues are problematic, and should be considered carefully within the context of the research outcomes.

This discord poses a further fundamental question regarding traditional Islam's collision not only with modernity, but with the forces of globalization which demand 'cheap' labour, which in many respects means female labour. The uneasy choice may therefore be between female employment, on the one hand, and the marginalisation of women as economic beings on the other.

Not all actors within Bangladesh readily acknowledge this conflict. In fact, a common argument in favour of the garment sector is that it has had a positive, emancipatory effect on the status of women in general. Keane and te Velde (2008) argue that while wages remain low, the sector nonetheless provides many women with a better alternative than work in more traditional sectors (agriculture and domestic work). Moreover, within manufacturing itself, work in the garment sector is considered preferable to working in other "manufacturing activities, let alone agricultural activities." They argue that, for poor women, there is little choice but to work in the garment sector when the alternative is "seeking employment in rural areas which is dominated by men and where gender inequalities are higher" (Keane and te Velde, 2008: 2).

2.4 Power, inequality and gender relations within the household in Bangladesh

In her 2012 study of the effects of women's intra-household bargaining power on child health outcomes, Eleanor M. Schmidt examines the nature of gender relations within households, often citing data from Bangladesh to substantiate her arguments. The study dwells on gender and power relations in as much as they affect a woman's ability to influence the health and welfare of her children but does not examine the wider implications of wage income and employment for women. Schmidt (2012: 1) argues that "relations of power between women and men are not easy to grasp in its full complexity. The bargaining power of men and women instrumentally shape allocation decisions households make, and husbands and wives use their bargaining power to convey priorities in allocation".

She rejects the earlier view of economists and policy makers of the household as a unified entity or unit with 'pooled' income and consumption, namely the Beckerian "unitary model" which treats the household as a single unified bloc, where individuals behave in a way that maximises a shared utility (Becker 1965, cited in Chiappori and Lewbel, 2014: 1).

That inequalities with regard to male/female decision making power exist within the household is substantially reinforced by arguments advanced by *inter alia*, Thomas (1990),

Hoddinott and Haddad (1995) and Schmidt (2012). In this regard, Agarwal points out that, “individual preferences” are a key feature of the household that affect the distribution of resources and bargaining power. “Household members cooperate insofar as cooperative arrangements make each of them better off than non-cooperation. However, there exist outcomes which favour one party at the other’s expense, exposing the underlying conflict between those cooperating. Which outcome will emerge depends on the relative bargaining power of the household members” (Agarwal, 1997, cited in Schmidt, 2012: 3).

She concludes that income ‘owned’ by women is 20 times more beneficial for child survival outcomes than for men. Moreover, she emphasizes that women’s bargaining power within the home is dependent on more than merely earned income. A host of additional factors, “especially qualitative ones”, may determine and influence decision making. Critically, she argues that “[w]omen’s bargaining power within the home is clearly associated with their situation outside it” (Schmidt, 2012: 4). This is especially likely to apply in the Bangladeshi context, as religion, culture, tradition and community all play a pervasive role in women’s lives, interceding into the home.

Agarwal (1997, 10) states that, “relative bargaining power within the household perhaps could be revealed in who participates in decision-making and about what. Hence women who participate in decision-making may be said to have greater bargaining strength than those excluded from such decision-making altogether”. These decisions influence child health, purchases for daily household needs, and who makes these purchases.

She points out further that “social norms” (Agarwal, 1997: 2) and custom-based gender discrimination in Bangladesh are another potential cause of inequality in decision making power within the household. In societies with patrilineal kinship and inheritance, women are limited to the domestic sphere and have less bargaining power. Furthermore, “these cultures tend to have stronger son preference and allocate more resources to sons” (Schmidt, 2012: 11). For her part, Gita Sen (1999) argues that “women who earn more cash have more bargaining power” (Sen, 1999, cited in Schmidt, 2012: 13).

Schmidt concludes that, in households where women have more bargaining power and income, improved access to education and nutrition has positive benefits for the household as a whole. Wage income thus becomes the springboard for bargaining ability for women and has beneficial outcomes for their children and the family as a whole. However, this position

ignores the tensions and conflict that accompany a woman's progression beyond the home in what Agarwal refers to as a constant state of co-operation and conflict within the household (1997: 4).

In similar vein, Iversen (2003) acknowledges that households are not simply characterised by inequality, but also "interdependencies", by a 'politics' of gender relations. Women's ability to access opportunities and enhance their well-being is dependent on a combination of economic and non-economic factors which enhance or detract from their bargaining power. Thus, the assumption that, their material or income contribution to the family alone gives women greater decision making and bargaining power is incorrect. Moreover, Iversen questions the very nature of women's sense of 'individuality' within the context of the household, using Sen's argument that, "women in traditional societies may lack a notion of personal welfare because their identities are too closely tied to the interests of the household. This overlap between personal and household interests preserves intra-household inequality" (Gita Sen, 1990, cited in Iversen, 2003: 97).

Such arguments almost completely eclipse the identity of women and their role within the household and should be viewed with caution. That the woman *is* the home, and the home *is* the woman seriously undermines the feminist perspective of a *woman* in her own right. However, it is acknowledged that a woman's position within the household in relation to her spouse and other family members is highly problematic and complex. Ferdaush and Rahman conclude that, "Women in Bangladesh are dominated by a patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system, which enforces the social and economic dependence of women on men, and prescribes the relative lower status of women" (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011: 8).

Having established the context, the literature is examined for further discussion with regard to the impact of wage employment on women, particularly those working in the garment sector.

2.5 Perspectives on the impact of the garment sector in Bangladesh on women

While some scholars note that the garment sector has played a significant role in decreasing at least economic inequalities between men and women (Ahamad, 2012) there are large disparities between male and female employment statistics in Bangladesh (68.3% for male employment and 22.9% for women in 2007) (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011: 14). Furthermore, while working in the garment sector has had profound impacts on the lives of women in the country, it has not elevated their economic status much above the poverty line.

Lewis (2011) provides a window on the life of a ‘typical’ garment worker in Bangladesh in his book, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*.

A typical garment worker is a young woman recently arrived from a rural village and who lives in rented slum housing near a factory or an export processing zone (EPZ), where she works as a machinist and earns approximately 1USD per day. The garment workplace brings her face to face with the contradictions and complexity of a globalised economy: the factory may be Korean-owned, the fabric may be from Taiwan, the yarn from India and the packaging materials from China, yet the garment that she manufactures will each carry a *Made in Bangladesh*, label (Lewis, 2011: 23).

This ‘typical’ experience is well documented in the available literature. Meghna Guhathakurta and Willem van Schendel (Eds.) offer a similar account in *The Bangladesh Reader* (2013) using the experiences of an 18 year-old garment worker called Shana K as an example:

My duty at Meridian (the garment factory) starts at 8:00am and regularly ends at 10:00pm or 12:00 midnight. There are also 14 to 15 all-night shifts [per month] to 3:00am... I don’t get any weekly day off. On Saturdays, management allows us to leave work at 8:00pm. On average, we can enjoy just one day off in two or three months. I studied up to the ninth grade, but unfortunately, could not continue my studies due to financial hardship. My salary is 3,100 taka (44.60 USD) a month, but I can earn 5,000-6,000 taka (USD 71.94-88.33) including overtime work per week... I haven’t married yet. We are only two in our family. My father died when I was nine years old (Guhathakurta and van Schendel, 2013: 66).

Shana’s mother also works long hours at a garment factory in Savar, outside Dhaka, and the family face a daily struggle to survive the harsh conditions facing the poor in Bangladesh.

We have rented one small room in the Mirpur neighbourhood, which costs 1,500 taka (USD 21.58). The house is very simply, made of corrugated iron sheets. Inside the house it is very hot. There is some garbage around the house which smells bad. We rented this house a few months ago since it was too difficult to pay the 2,600 taka (USD 37.41) rent for our old room. We have a single wooden bed, a mirror, a

hanger for keeping clothes and a rack for keeping plates and glasses (Guhathakurta and van Schendel, 2013: 67).

Shana K goes on to describe her family's inability to afford nutritious food, proper sanitation, or medical care when required. Her life is devoid of "recreation or entertainment", and involves long hours, and low wages which keep the family 'churning' (Hulme & Shepherd, 2003) on or below the poverty line. In addition, her marriage prospects and dowry expectations put an additional burden on the family's already stretched finances, with the cost of a wedding and dowry estimated at between 70,000-100,000 BDT/taka (USD 1,000 - 1,400). She concludes that, "Due to our poor income, our lives are gradually getting ruined" (Guhathakurta and van Schendel, 2013: 70). The family has no access to health insurance and is unable to save, and therefore cannot accumulate assets or access social safety nets which can help in times of crises. "In fact, we sometimes have to borrow money just to eat or for medicine. In truth, we live just from hand to mouth" (Guhathakurta and van Schendel, 2013: 71).

As it became apparent that the growth of the RMG sector was attracting thousands of women from the rural to the urban areas, a burgeoning literature began to appear on the cause-and-effect of this dynamic process (Mahmud and Kabeer, 2004; Sobhan and Khundker, 2001). However, a significant portion of the economic, social and political literature reviewed to date (Quddus and Rashid, 2000; Ali, Begun, Salehin and Farid, 2008; Chowdhury and Ullah, 2010; Nicita and Razzaz, 2003; Uddin, 2008; Keane and te Velde, 2008) tends to focus narrowly on the impact of wage income on the status or *izzat*² of women, while to a large extent ignoring the wider implications of this process, for example, the impact of these wages on a woman's ability to bargain and/or influence decisions at the household level.

In many respects the RMG sector has had a profound impact on the gender division of labour in Bangladesh. Kabeer points out that the highly segmented nature of the Bangladeshi economy means that the "gender segregation of the labour market" has the effect of limiting women's "capacity for choice and agency" (Kabeer, 2012: 57). In this case, segregation means that women participate mainly in the garment and agricultural sectors and even more informally in domestic labour, while other sectors are chiefly the preserve of men (Baden et al, 1994: 9).

² Used in Bengali culture to imply position, values, honour and the prestige of a person within the home or community (Naher, 2005).

Much of this analysis focuses on the nexus between economic empowerment and gender emancipation. However, this may be flawed if it is based on an assumption that women have control over their wages, and can directly use these to enhance their status and decision-making power, particularly in the home, but also in the wider community. Much of the analysis is either dated (as events on the ground overtake the ability to analyse them effectively), or is restricted to an overly simplistic examination of wage inequality and the vulnerability of poor women in the sector to economic exploitation and abuse of power through traditional patriarchal structures (husbands, fathers, employers, etc.) (Efroymsen et al, 2006).

Naomi Hossain (2011) contends that “close observers of gendered social change in Bangladesh have become dissatisfied with the limits of a focus on individualised economic empowerment.” She argues that while wage labour may enable women to enhance their negotiating power within existing patriarchal structures, it does not allow them to challenge the very nature of these structures. She further interrogates the impact of the RMG sector in Bangladesh on “women’s rights and roles”, calling for a more critical evaluation of precisely *how* the sector has advanced socio-economic rights for women, including its effect on women’s access to education, public safety, and right to occupy public spaces free from male chaperones and harassment (Hossain, 2011: 2). She also questions the impact of the industry on policy formation. However, her analysis is limited to an examination of the impact of the sector on the ‘public’ emancipation of women, ignoring the question of whether power relations within the household have also been challenged or revised in favour of greater freedoms and decision making power for female workers.

It is critical to examine feminist discourses in the past ten years which reflect a more nuanced argument on the “re-negotiation” of status and power as a result of formal employment in the garment sector. Writers such as Naomi Anandita (2011, 2012) have looked at the RMG sector as a catalyst for a wider revolution in the position of poor, mainly young, women from rural areas. These writers have also broadened the debate to include an analysis of sexuality and the feminisation of public spaces, politics, marriage and religion within the overall impacts of this sector on women. In effect this is an acknowledgement that the growth of the RMG sector mirrors the changing notions of the role of gender in Bangladeshi society, above and beyond a simple economic equation.

Hossain and Tisdell (2005) pose the important question of what constitutes female ‘empowerment’. They argue that the empowerment of women is a “multi-dimensional” concept requiring not only a detailed analysis of “gender gaps in socio-economic and demographic attributes”, but also “a careful examination of a wide range of socio-economic and cultural issues at the family level as well as in the societal context” (Hossain and Tisdell, 2005: 439).

By way of supplementary analyses, both journalists and labour rights activists have focused on the RMG sector’s exploitation of women. In the context of recent disasters, both foreign and domestic activists (Alam, Blanch, and Smith 2011) are keen to tell a story of exploitation. However, the story is likely to be richer than this. There can be no doubt that the feminisation of labour has also been accompanied by bold strides in the active participation of women in labour movements over time (Anandita and Tisdell, 2005). While still low, female participation in trade unions is increasing, creating a space for female voices in demanding equality in both wages and rights (Kapsos, 2008). This is a significant indicator of the shift in gender power relations, since participation and leadership roles in unions were historically an exclusively masculine domain.

The contradictions between the emancipatory forces of wage employment and the exploitation of workers are well articulated by Feldman (2009) and Khosla (2009). Both argue that wage employment for women in Bangladesh ‘gives with the one hand’ and ‘takes with the other’. For example, it provides certain new freedoms, such as increased mobility outside the home, but offers poor wages and unsafe working conditions in return.

Gita Sen (1999) argues that the relationship between women’s empowerment and women’s employment is complex and is characterised by “contradictory tendencies.” She suggests that several factors should be taken into account in assessing this relationship. These include the individual’s marital status, educational level, number of dependents, the changing nature and “rigidity of gender norms and practises in the community from which the worker comes; the conditions of the work itself” and the characteristics of the particular work environment. For example, she emphasises that young women working in garment factories in Bangladesh may experience harsh working conditions and long hours, but may be grateful for the new freedoms offered by this work, and a chance to escape the confines of the household and constant male attention (Gita Sen, 1999: 10-11).

However, several authors point in the opposite direction, arguing that “capital accumulation may weaken traditional forms of patriarchal control over women and introduce new forms” (Beneria and Sen in Winter, 1981: 289). Beneria and Sen argue that in Southeast Asia, patriarchy within the household has been conjoined with new forms of patriarchy in the work place, leading to ever more repressive layers of male dominance of working women (Beneria and Sen in Winter, 1981: 289). Moreover, the dual effects of colonialism and the unique demands of the colonial economy have resulted in an ever deepening process of separation of women from the “means of production”. New sexual divisions of labour born out of capitalist processes meant that, increasingly, men were yoked into the production of commercial agriculture (cash crops) and a migrant labour system, while women were forced to adopt additional responsibilities in subsistence agricultural production (previously ‘owned’ by men) in order to ensure the survival of the family (Beneria and Sen in Winter, 1981: 288). Thus on the surface, capitalism appeared to offer women fragile gains in autonomy on the one hand, while fracturing the family unit through new divisions of labour and patriarchal structures on the other.

That “[f]emale labour meets the needs of capitalists searching for a disciplined and low-cost labour supply” (Beneria and Sen in Winter, 1981: 289), is an observation that should not be ignored in the Bangladeshi context. In particular, the exploration of “new forms of patriarchy” in the work place as a result of wage employment in the RMG sector is interesting since the argument on the emancipatory nature of the work (Keane and te Velde, 2008) contradicts women’s own experiences cited in the literature and attendant research (Guhathakurta and van Schendel, 2013; Lewis, 2011).

Guy Standing’s (1988) work on the forces constructing the “feminization” of global labour is highly relevant to the Bangladeshi experience. Standing identifies changing patterns of employment driven by globalization which have opened the global labour market to increased participation by women. The drivers of this process include a desire by multi-nationals to enhance competitiveness through low wages and the gradual erosion of social security, income security, and “regular, full-time wage labour, which has weakened the dualistic segmentation of employment in which men have been relatively protected ‘insiders’” (Standing, 1999: 584). Standing argues that, because women are prepared to work for lower wages than men, markets are able to “induce substitution of women for men...” (Standing, 1999: 590) Indeed, this gender ‘substitution’ is reflected in data trends which clearly show

that, “For the past 30 years or so, the trend across the world has been for female labour force participation to rise, while the male participation rate has been falling” (Standing, 1999: 588).

Standing singles out South East Asia in particular in this regard arguing that the average *social wage* is lower than in other regions, making it particularly attractive for industrial development based on an exploitative model of competitiveness anchored in low wages. Thus, the “individual money wage needed to meet a socially acceptable subsistence is lower...” and typically, women working in the region have been “young, single and highly exploitable...” (Standing, 1999: 593) At the time of his research, figures for Bangladesh showed a growth in the percentage of women among production workers in such countries (Standing, 1999: 592). Unsurprisingly, these were mainly young, single (80%) and mobile women that displayed levels of ‘learned’ docility (Naher, 2005: 99) and poor literacy levels (Murayama, 2006: 81), which opened them up to further exploitation by the market and regular physical and sexual harassment both on the street, and within the garment factories themselves (Murayama, 2006: 101).

Standing adds that, under the misguided sense of promoting national competitiveness and foreign direct investment, national governments have “made it easier to dismiss workers and to ‘downsize’. In doing so they have made it easier for firms to alter job boundaries, reducing the rights of existing workers and encouraging resort to external labour markets, enabling employers to substitute lower-cost labour for ‘core’ workers” (Standing, 1999: 585).

These changes in employment and investment patterns have allowed women (albeit under unfavourable terms) to seriously challenge the hegemony of men in the global labour market, as their lower wages and bargaining power are favourable to the needs of many multi-nationals. The impact of their ‘displacement’ or perhaps ‘replacement’ as primary bread winners on men and gender relations in particular give rise to what Narayan et al refer to as growing “gender anxiety” amongst men (Narayan et al, 1999: 135). For example, Panday argues that in Bangladesh, these tensions directly manifest themselves in increased levels of gender based violence both within and external to the home (2013: 41).

The literature thus reflects the very complex nature of the gender transition in society. From secluded domesticity to vocal labour activist, Bangladeshi women are changing and re-negotiating the very nature of their roles and status at every level. There is no doubt that changes are occurring in the very fabric of gender in Bangladesh. Some of these stories are

well documented, but others are new and emerging as the status of women on the ground changes in directions that can be hard to predict.

It is hoped that the current study will enhance understanding of this important and constantly evolving process, and the implications of these changes, with a particular focus on the changing nature of women's status, and gender relations within the household. In this regard, it is important to capture the experiences and observations of the women interviewed as part of the primary data collection process to ascertain *inter alia*, whether their status as wage earners has resulted in the afore-mentioned "gender anxiety" (Patel et al, 1999: 135) within their households. As discussed earlier, this term is used to describe new and emerging tensions within the household as a result of the changing nature of women's roles in response to new economic, cultural and social imperatives. These forces challenge traditional masculine and feminine roles within the home, leading to the creation of new "gender norms", and the re-evaluation of men's role as the 'bread-winner', and women as the "homemaker" (Patel et al, 1999: 136).

Lin Lean Lim's (2002: 204) examination of the impact of employment on women's reproduction, fertility and reproductive rights introduces a variegated dimension to the possible outcomes of large scale employment in the garment sector in Bangladesh, not only for women, but for society as a whole. She argues that while women's employment can be empowering, there exists an inherent "conflict between women's productive and reproductive roles". She adds that in several Asian countries, including Bangladesh, reduced fertility levels can be linked to increased female labour force participation (Lim, 2002: 210). While Lim points to a host of benefits derived from female wage employment including an overall "status enhancing" affect, the fact remains that women in developing countries often face a difficult choice between work and family, which are not easily reconciled. Finally, Kabeer points out that whatever the effects of employment; women are often still subject to the whims of patriarchal structures which must first be negotiated before employment (whether formal or informal) can be entered into:

...some countries impose legal restrictions on women's capacity to make choices, requiring them to seek their husband's permission before they start an enterprise or take up other forms of paid work. In other contexts, custom rather than law invests dominant household members, usually men, with the authority to determine how women use their time. A study of female labour supply decision-making among

Bangladeshi households in London and Dhaka reported both on women who were forbidden to take up paid work outside the home by their husbands and in-laws as well as the prolonged negotiations through which other women obtained permission to do such work from their husbands and parents (Kabeer, 2000, cited in Kabeer, 2012: 24).

2.6 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the existing literature is invaluable in defining some of the key impacts of the feminisation of labour in Bangladesh, with particular reference to women's increasing participation in the garment sector. The complexity of these changes, within a relatively short period of time (20 years) has meant that, as women expand their presence (both economically and physically) within the confines of Bangladesh's patriarchal society, the forces of emancipation and repression are likely to collide. The literature has documented some examples of this, including an increase in gender based violence and abuse of Bangladeshi women mainly played out in the public sphere and less so in private. Moreover, scholars themselves have been deeply divided on whether the garment industry has been 'good' or 'bad' for women, with most concluding the inevitability of the process, whatever the real gains for women. Typically however, the changing nature of women's participation in decision-making and bargaining *within* the home as a result of labour force participation is under-analysed since Bangladeshi society is intensely private. This is an intriguing and important area of study which will shed light on a much under-reported dynamic inherent in the wage labour of women, and garment workers in particular.

The existing literature (with some notable exceptions such as Kabeer, 2003 and to a lesser degree Schmidt, 2012) has largely failed to analyse the relationship between women's employment and the internal dynamics of the home, leaving residual gaps in the holistic nature of analyses of women's labour force participation in Bangladesh. As argued by Beneria and Sen, women's participation in the labour force cannot be effectively analysed without taking into account what is going on *within* the household itself. "We can no longer ignore the questions of what goes on within households, or the interweaving of gender and class relations" (Beneria and Sen in Winter, 1981: 298).

As with many things in Bangladesh, the answers to these questions (Beneria and Winter) are multi-dimensional, nuanced and opaque. What is certain is that there are gaps in our

understanding of the impact of these forces within the household which have not been adequately addressed.

The following chapter discusses the methodology employed to address the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. It also addresses the question of how the researcher dealt with deficiencies in information and understanding as articulated in the literature review.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the approach used to construct the research documented in this dissertation. The research process itself is highlighted and the validity of the findings, including any potential challenges, bias or undue influence which may have affected the research outcomes, is discussed. The chapter also provides the justification for the research method employed.

The study's objectives were to identify both the positive and negative impacts of work in the RMG sector on women's lives, and, more specifically, to understand the consequences for women within the household. Thus, changes in decision-making ability, power relations between household members and the extent to which women are empowered by a wage were examined. The final objective was to understand how the wider community absorbs these changes and the impact on women in this context.

3.2 Approach

For the primary research, a qualitative methodology based on face-to-face interviews with 20 female garment workers was employed. This approach was adopted in order to “address questions about people's ways of organizing, relating to, and interacting with the world” (Guest et al, 2013: 1). The qualitative approach was deemed to be the most effective way to address the research objectives. Utilising purely quantitative data would not have been appropriate in exploring and analysing the complex relationship between female wage labour in the garment sector and gender relations within the household in Bangladesh.

Several approaches can be applied to a qualitative study. A constructivist method was deemed the most appropriate for the primary research in this study. “Fundamentally, constructivism says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences” (Thirteen Ed Online, 2004 cited in Giesen (n.d) Slide 6). Learning is regarded as “an active process”, and the acquisition of knowledge is defined as shaped by “experience” and perspective. Therefore, “Learning is a personal interpretation of the world” (Christie, 2005 and Kruse (n.d), cited in Giesen citation). A constructivist approach therefore enhances understanding through

including experiences, context and personal observations. Critically, content is presented “holistically” rather than in separate parts (Christie, 2005 cited in Giesen (n.d) Slides 7-8).

Another feature of this approach is the interaction between the interviewer and subject/participant. While this interaction could be problematic according to a positivist paradigm, it allows for a dynamism which enriches the quality and quantity of data and allows respondents’ (women’s) voices to be heard, while acknowledging that the data itself always remains a product of perspective and individual subjectivity.

3.3 Research design

A four-stage research design was employed. First, the relevant available literature was reviewed to provide context for the reader, and to frame the study’s problem and research objectives. This phase was critical in supporting the design of the questionnaire in phase two, but also in the construction of relevant research objectives. In other words, the literature informed the process to the extent that it identified which questions needed to be asked and answered by the primary research, including gaps in knowledge.

Second, a questionnaire and interview process was designed in order to conduct the primary research. The schedule was divided into two parts. The first was a limited pilot (as described in Section 3.5), and the second the main body of interviews. The questionnaire used during the interview process needed to respond to gaps in the literature *and* the research objectives. This was a dynamic and consultative process, involving advice and guidance from various people on the ground including the research assistant, Ms Anandita who conducted the face-to-face interviews and Dr Imtiaz, a gender expert living and working in Dhaka. The researcher’s own experiences of living and working in Bangladesh for two years also proved invaluable.

Third, participant interviews were conducted with 20 women working in the garment sector in Dhaka District from two factories, one based in Mohammadpur and the other in Savar on the fringes of the metropolis (see Maps 1 and 2 in Appendix D). The choice of factories was important. Mohammadpur is an established area in the capital city of Dhaka. It is a mixed residential and commercial area, and exhibits a mixed use character. Within the past few years, several buildings have been converted into garment factories that typically employ women from the area or city. Savar was selected as a second research site because it offers a significant contrast to Mohammadpur in character. Located on the periphery of Dhaka, Savar

was once a satellite town that has now been absorbed into the urban sprawl of the metropolis. It is characterised by a mix of agricultural activities, residential areas and, increasingly, large garment factories. Factories here tend to be large, employing on average 1,000 workers, and cater for many of the foreign clothing brands. The area typically attracts workers who migrate from the surrounding districts and further afield to work in the industrial complex. Savar was also the site of the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013 where the collapse of a garment factory producing clothing for several large international brands killed 1,137 factory workers, mostly women (Sebastio, 2015: 19). The choice of contrasting locations was therefore deliberate in that it was envisaged that a diversity of perspectives from two, rather than one research site would strengthen the research findings and the plausibility of the study's conclusions.

Fourth, translations, coding, triangulation of raw data and final analysis of outcomes and emergent themes were conducted. Since the interviews were conducted in Bangla, the original transcripts were translated by the research assistant, and a sample of the interviews were sent to Dr Imtiaz at the University of Dhaka to review and provide oversight for the quality of the translation and interpretation of data by Ms Anandita. Finally, the translated copies of the interviews were sent to the author for coding and analysis.

In summary, the primary methods used in this qualitative approach therefore were the interview questionnaire, the interviews themselves, and a further analysis of the data using coding in order to attain several deductive conclusions.

3.4 Participant Interviews

The participant interviews were conducted between December 2014 and January 2015 at two locations in Dhaka district, Mohammadpur and Savar. The criteria for selecting the respondents are important since they speak to the study's overall objectives. In order to ensure that the respondents represented a 'typical' garment worker, respondents between the ages of 16 and 35 were selected (Khorshed, 2011: 2). The selection process involved the close support of the research assistant without whom it would have been difficult to conduct the interviews. As described in Chapter 2, Bangladesh is both a traditional and a religiously conservative society. Therefore, it is not possible for a foreign man to sit alone with a Bangladeshi woman to discuss issues of a personal or otherwise nature. Moreover, most of the women selected for the study have had little exposure to foreigners and both language and cultural barriers would have sabotaged any attempt to conduct primary research of any

quality. Therefore, it was agreed that the research design would adopt a ‘peer-to-peer’ approach, with a female research assistant who is Bangladeshi and 22 years old.

The interviews were arranged through personal connections established through the research assistant’s family and took place away from both the factory and the home environment to ensure that the respondents were comfortable and that issues of confidentiality were not compromised. Furthermore, the respondents were identified according to a number/location combination rather than according to name. For example, throughout the dissertation the first respondent interviewed at Mohammadpur is referred to as M01, and at Savar, as S01, etc. This was an additional measure to ensure that issues of anonymity and confidentiality were respected. The interview process itself was divided into three phases. First, the student (author) held two remote trainings (via Skype) with the research assistant in order to establish a thorough understanding of the research objectives and methodology, including training on interview techniques, open-ended questions and probing questioning. A ‘mock’ interview was also conducted via Skype where the author (student) posed as the subject and the research assistant as the interviewer in order for both parties to familiarise themselves with the interview scenario prior to the launch of the pilot interviews.

Second, a pilot phase in the first week of December 2014 established a ‘best practice’ baseline for the remainder of the interviews. The research assistant interviewed four female garment workers from one factory in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Data was analysed for rigour, and it was established that the questionnaire and interview technique yielded rich quality data. Third, the remainder of the interviews were conducted from the second week of December until early January 2015 and finally, two sample interviews were sent to Dr Imtiaz at Dhaka University who critically examined the quality of the translations. Each participant signed a consent form prior to the interview which has been retained by both the research assistant and the author in original and electronic copy in secure, password protected files. Appendices B and C list the participants, their age, location and the date of interview.

3.5 Interview schedule design

The interview process itself was structured according to a pre-determined schedule and utilised a questionnaire and consent form (Appendix A) with standardized questions divided into three sections. Both the consent form and questionnaire appear in English in the

appendix, but were later translated into Bangla for the purposes of the interview and the original copies were retained.

Interviews were conducted in two phases. First, a pilot of four interviews was conducted in early December in order to determine the rigor of the process, and any challenges involved in both the actual interview process, and the nature of the questions themselves. The development of both the questionnaire and the schedule involved a collaborative exercise with regular inputs from both Prof. Casale and Ms Anandita on content and the practicalities of the proposed approach. Therefore, the pilot was meant to ‘test’ the overall feasibility of both the approach of interviewing the participants, and the questions themselves, before moving to schedule the main body of interviews (mid-December 2014 to early January 2015). Only after a period of reflection and evaluation of the pilot interviews were the remainder of the interviews conducted.

The interview questionnaire was a mix of pre-coded and open-ended questions designed to both meet the pre-conceived research objectives and to encourage the discovery of new information which might enhance the scope of the study’s conclusions. Therefore, the questionnaire contained three sections. Questions designed to elicit personal information from the participants were recorded in Section A, while questions relating to employment were set out in Section B. Both sections were designed to elicit general and background information on each participant in order to ‘paint a picture’ of the individual and identify any general patterns or commonalities amongst the participants (age, level of education, position within the household, security of employment, living arrangements and standards, etc.).

Section C contained standardized questions; the objective was to answer and inform the primary objectives of this study, that is how employment in the garment sector has impacted on the participants’ status both at home and in the community, and their position and decision-making ability within the household itself.

For example, in Section C, Questions 1-3 gathered intelligence on a participant’s perceptions of whether her employment had increased her status within the home, and community, and the impact of this on her personal freedoms, while Question 4 asked directly who, if not the participant herself, managed her wages. This question was closely linked to Question 12 which asked the participant if she had any overall say in the running of, or meaningful stake in decision making, in the household. Questions 7, 9, 10, 11, and 13 aimed to establish

whether her employment had caused any friction or tension in the home, and the implications of this.

It is important to emphasize that, in line with constructivist principles, the research assistant was encouraged to not simply record the answers to these questions, but, where appropriate, to employ an interrogative or probing style during the interview. These ‘prompts’ were recorded both as an addendum to some of the questions themselves (Please Explain), and in the Notes Columns attached to each section which were meant to encourage the research assistant to delve further. Both assisted greatly in eliciting richer responses.

3.6 Limitations and possible biases

The approach employed in conducting the research was critical in shaping its particular outcomes. The study’s primary objective was to explore the impact of female wage labour on relationships, status and power at the household level. In this respect the study was limited to the experiences of two groups of subjects drawn from two different garment factories in Dhaka. The respondents were chosen through familial networks known to the research assistant, a female Bangladeshi national. The advantage of this approach was that the respondents were interviewed largely on a peer-to-peer basis, that is, by a Bangladeshi woman of similar age to the average respondent. The interview took place in a location that was neither the household nor the workplace, and therefore, the respondents felt comfortable divulging personal details which informed the research outcomes in a way that would have been unlikely utilising any other research method. On occasion, the research assistant actively employed empathy and leading questions to encourage the respondents to talk about their experiences and the impact of their work in the garment industry on both their personal and community lives.

This strongly constructivist approach is justified in terms of enriching the outcomes of the primary research. The result was that the interviews themselves are rich in personal and anecdotal data, with frank disclosures which informed and strengthened the overall outcomes and conclusions presented in Chapter 4.

Having said this, there are also obvious limitations to the approach employed. First, the study is limited by an approach which demanded that the research be conducted remotely, and by a third party, in a language that is largely unfamiliar to the author. Therefore the interpretation of responses and translation from Bangla to English by a third party may have resulted in

some errors or misinterpretations. These issues were addressed as best as possible through the application of a triangulation approach where data was ‘tested’ against quality of translation and accuracy of the interpretation method by an external expert. In both cases, the samples submitted were reported as “satisfactory”.

Second, because the subjects themselves are products of a particular culture in which the position of women is viewed as subservient, the researcher needed to approach the nature of relationships within the household in a sensitive manner. The research methodology lessened the risks of respondents responding in a manner which they deemed ‘correct’ or ‘expected’; however, the interview notes produced by the research assistant on each respondent tell the untold story of women often too afraid to ‘speak their mind’, ‘express an opinion’ or challenge the existing patriarchal order, for fear of breaking some unspoken taboo. As such, the author is left to reflect on the true depth of integrity and honesty employed in responses to the questionnaire. This remains an unresolved challenge.

Third, as already mentioned, the perspective of the interviewer herself should be taken into account. While the triangulation of data helped to minimise glaring anomalies in the recording of responses and their subsequent translation, there is always space for the interviewer’s own perspectives to affect the recording of information. In a similar vein, the researcher’s own perspective will influence the coding and analysis of the data, despite attempts to remain objective. This is a feature of qualitative work more generally.

Finally, potential bias may lie in the choice of the respondents themselves. The research assistant was able to interview women who already possessed a degree of autonomy, allowing them to spend an hour away from either home or the workplace. These tended to be younger women without husbands or children, and this informed their perspectives. A wider and more comprehensive sample of respondents would have perhaps resulted in a different set of findings. Related to this point, the small sample size of 20 women, which may be sufficient given the scope of this study, can in no way be said to be representative of young women working in the RMG sector in general. Nonetheless, these 20 interviews provided rich and interesting information on the lives of these young women, offering a window into their work, home and community lives, that a larger sample of survey data and quantitative analysis would not have been able to provide.

3.7 Summary

The findings from this primary research were limited by the scope of the study and the number of participants (20). Moreover, since the interviews were conducted remotely there may have been instances where the quality of interpretation of responses was problematic. However, as described above, in order to address the research problem the researcher would have found it difficult to adopt an alternative approach, especially given the need for a local female interviewer who speaks the language, etc. Therefore, while rich and layered, as will be shown in the next chapter, the findings are the product of a particular methodology which is not without its limitations.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key themes and findings from the primary research conducted in Dhaka with 20 female garment workers. The results are discussed and analysed against the study's objectives. Where possible, samples from the interviews are included in order to highlight and substantiate the findings. The chapter begins with an outline of the respondents interviewed in order to provide a baseline understanding for the reader. Thereafter, it analyses the results of the primary research and key themes identified.

4.2 Profile of respondents

The sample of respondents in the research was identified according to two set parameters. Young women aged between 16 and 32 form the backbone of the garment sector in Bangladesh (Alam, 2011; Standing, 1999; Hossain, 2012); therefore the respondents were identified according to this age range (and their gender). This choice is not incidental; Alam (2011, 2) claims that employers favour younger women, because they make fewer mistakes than older women, and, because they are unmarried, are less likely to become pregnant, and are therefore more open to exploitation (Standing, 1999: 532).

Second, since the majority of Bangladesh's garment factories are based in and around the capital city of Dhaka and to a lesser degree Chittagong (Berg et al, 2011: 11), respondents from two areas of Dhaka City District (where there are several garment factories) were chosen. No additional 'filtering' criteria were given to the research assistant in order to identify suitable respondents other than they should be in a position to conduct the interviews safely, and should feel comfortable to do so. The results were largely 'typical' in this regard, in that the majority of the respondents were aged below 30 (18 in number), and unmarried (15 in number). Those who were unmarried lived with their parent/s, and those who were married lived with their husband (and children). Of note was their level of education; the majority (16 in number) had not attained Grade 7, with only four having an educational qualification of that level or above.

It is noteworthy that the living conditions of the respondents were almost identical. They lived in a one or two room structure made either of mud with a tin roof, or of tin/iron sheeting. Typically the family shared the living space which was utilized for common

household activities (cooking, eating, etc.) during the day and re-invented with the use of grass screens at night to provide some measure of privacy. Pit latrines were usually communal and based outside of the home.

The average family size was either four or five, typically a mother and father, and two or three siblings, all of whom were generally engaged in some form of economic activity. Only five of the respondents were married and therefore the head of the household was generally the father/mother. In the case of the married respondents, the research indicated that in two cases both partners shared a degree of responsibility and decision making within the household. This was not the case for unmarried women, as the findings below illustrate.

Finally, responding to Lewis's (2011:23) observation that, "A typical garment worker is a young woman recently arrived from a rural village..." it was noted that only one respondent (S-01) was actually born in the place (Savar) where she was currently resident and worked. All other respondents were born outside of Dhaka District, and interestingly, a significant proportion of these (9 in number) were born in urban areas (Mymensingh and Barisal), challenging to a degree Lewis's finding, although it is not within the scope of this paper to examine further why this was.

(Appendices B and C are attached for further detail and reference on respondents).

4.3 Key themes identified

The research identified several key themes and observations which were used to inform the study's objectives and questions. The key themes were identified during the coding process outlined in Chapter 3. In addition, a number of lesser observations are made based on some common responses which emerged in the interviews, but which could not be said to be true of all participants.

The research identified the following recurring and key themes from the interview process, which are discussed in detail in the seven subsections below:

- 1) The vast majority (18/20) of respondents, do not have control over their wages, which are handed directly to the head of the household (whether a man or a woman);
- 2) The overall status and bargaining ability of the respondents has increased in the household as a result of the women's employment, although the study is limited in

terms of what this actually entails in practice, and acknowledges the difficulty in measuring this process;

- 3) The family unit is universally supportive of the respondents' work in the garment industry, and their wages are viewed as integral to the overall welfare and survival of the family unit;
- 4) However this has not translated into substantive increases in their personal freedoms, although several respondents reported a decrease in household responsibilities (chores etc.);
- 5) The respondents' work outside the home has contributed to improvements in the quality of life (Amartya Sen's *capability approach*, 1999 offers one means of evaluating this measure) of both the respondent and her family. In this respect Amartya Sen might argue that work in the garment sector afforded the respondents not only material but also non-material benefits including more choice, and the ability to leave the home, make friends, enhance their freedom of movement etc. That is, their "capabilities" were enhanced by the employment. However despite the tangible, and sometimes intangible benefits accrued from work in the garment sector, when asked, none of the respondents wanted their children to follow in their footsteps as the work itself was often viewed as long, tedious, and dangerous, without the possibility of formal benefits;
- 6) For the majority of women in the sample, work in the garment industry provides the only real alternative to lower paid domestic work, or unpaid work in the home;
- 7) It is clear that in the two geographical areas where the research was conducted (Savar/Mohammadpur) it is now conventional practice for young women to work outside of the home. The community itself is largely either supportive or ambivalent to this practice, with only a few notable exceptions recorded in the interviews.

4.4 Detailed analysis of the key findings from the research sample

4.4.1 Wages and control within the household

The overwhelming majority of the respondents reported that they do not control their wages (12/20). Asked what occurs when they receive their wages, the women responded that they routinely handed over their salary in cash to the head of the household. Typically the head of the household was the father, but at times it was the divorced or widowed mother.

M-04 (Interview respondent 04 from the Mohammadpur factory), was typical in this respect. Aged 17 or 18, she is newly married and lives in a household comprised of four members including her husband and in-laws. At month end, M-04 gives all her wages to the family patriarch (her husband's father). She has no say in how her wages are spent, and savings are made at the discretion of the head of the household, ostensibly in the interests of the entire family who all work (father and husband as rickshaw pullers, and mother-in-law in a garment factory).

In view of the patriarchal nature of Bangladeshi society, it is tempting to assume that the household head is always male. However, female-headed households are common (Joshi, 2004: 2), and in this sample three households were headed by women (two widowed and one divorced). Interestingly, where the head of the household is female, the research revealed that young women can expect little in the way of a cessation or re-negotiation of control over their wages based on the gender of the head of the household. For example, in the case of M-03, aged 17, whose father had died some years earlier, the mother and eldest daughter (M-03) were expected to provide for the younger siblings (two boys and a girl). M-03 therefore gave her wages to her mother and had absolutely no say in how they were utilised.

However, a small minority of older women, aged 30 and over, employed in the RMG sector, actually managed the household income on behalf of the family – they comprised (2/20) of the total respondents interviewed. A limited conclusion from the sample is therefore that there is some correlation between control of wages and the age of the woman, with older women in the sample (aged 30+) having better direct control over how their wages were spent than younger women.

In one exceptional case, that of M-01, the oldest of the respondents (over 30), she controlled all the household income, composed of her husband's (who was a rickshaw puller) wages and her own. Using these pooled funds, she had been able to save and together they had built a simple house for the family of four. In addition, S-01 (24 years old) and S-06 (over 30), were able to jointly manage the household income with their spouses. In the case of respondent S-01, the respondent controlled the household savings. She was saving towards the education of their only child. S-06 also managed the family savings, although with a family of five she was able to save less (what was saved was placed in a bank account in her husband's name; however, she managed access).

Another exception was S-05 who was 18 years old. Her father had recently died and she and her mother/brothers managed the household together. She was able to keep a portion of her salary for herself although it was not clarified during the interview what this money was spent on. The remainder was “handed over” to her mother for the benefit of the family. However, all the other young respondents of her age had almost no ability to retain any portion of their income, which was universally absorbed into the overall joint family income, administered by the head of the household.

This issue is tightly intertwined with what is described as women’s “triple role” in the structural make-up of Bangladeshi society. That is, “institutional and culturally constructed discrimination along with structural constraints (which) add up to women’s vulnerability” (Banu et al, 2004: 2). Within the household itself, one of the most obvious results of this vulnerability is young women’s inability to control their own wages. While women are acknowledged as a “valuable cash resource to the household economy” (Banu et al, 2004: 2), for most, this does not translate into the ability to control their own wages.

The link between ‘capacity’, economy and power in Bangladesh is explored at length by Banu et al (2004). They cite Rowlands (1995), and Rao and Kelleher (1995) to argue that women’s empowerment should be defined as “the capacity of women to be economically self-sufficient and self-reliant with control over decisions affecting their lives, opinions and freedom from violence” (Banu et al, 2004: 30).

In the sense that a woman’s freedom and independence is related to her ability to achieve financial independence and therefore the ability to decide what her spending priorities should be, this research indicates that women’s empowerment as a result of employment in the garment industry in the two factories surveyed is limited.

4.4.2 The impact of employment on status within the household

A second important theme that emerged has immense bearing for one of the main aims of the study, that is, to explore whether employment in the garment sector has resulted in enhanced status or decision-making ability within the household for women.

The research found that the majority of respondents had experienced an increase in their status within the household as a result of their wages (12/20), based on positive responses to Question C.1 of the questionnaire. In this respect, status was defined by the women

themselves as an improvement in their overall relative social standing or station within the household, including a perceptible improvement in rank, decision-making ability, etc. As previously noted, the term, ‘status’, is necessarily problematic and highly subjective. However the nature of the constructivist approach compelled the research assistant to unpack what is meant by the idea of ‘status’ in the interview, and record a conclusion according to her observations.

For example, even the very youngest respondent (M-09 who was 16 years old), said that while much of her wage was given to her parents, she was able to negotiate small concessions with money being retained for personal needs. She cited the use of her wages for an eye-brow plucking treatment. In addition, despite being very young, her contribution to the overall family unit had been acknowledged by her family (although she admitted some measure of negative community stigma, and remarks by the interviewer that the family was “anti-feminist”). As a result, she offered the following observation when asked: *Do you have any say in the running of the household?* (Question C.12), “(My) father is not going to run the household according to (my) say! But my opinion is valued.”

Likewise, M-02 (18 years old) stated that her status had improved. She had no control over her wages (these were handed to her mother who worked as a housemaid in Dhaka), and she admitted that the family was very poor since both her father and brother were unemployed (and living in a distant village). As such, her income was the key to the overall survival of the household. In this context, while she had no control over her wages, she said that, “since I am a wage earner now, everyone appreciates (me) in the family.” While this did not translate into greater freedom per se or even a re-negotiation of household responsibilities (chores), she felt “praised” and valued by her community. The research assistant confirmed in the comments/observations section included in the interview notes, that she is now recognised as the primary income earner for the immediate family. When asked, in Question C.12: *Do you have any say in the running of the household and has this changed since you became a wage earner? Please explain*, she revealed that her father did consult her on the use of her wages, although it was unclear how, and what impact this had on her personally.

Significantly however, while still a minority, a not insubstantial number of women (8/20) reported that their status in the home had remained ‘unchanged’ and had at best subjectively ‘improved’ (12/20). None of the respondents felt that they were worse off as a result of their employment in the garment sector.

Scholars (Narayan et al, in Patel, 1999 and Panday, 2013, for example) have argued that female wage labour has contributed to issues of ‘gender anxiety’, and worse, conflict within the home. This research did not find evidence of this. When asked in Questions C. 9 and 10 whether their spouses or parents objected to their work, and whether their employment caused tensions within the household, all the respondents (20/20) replied that it did not. The reason most commonly given was that their wage was valued since the household was so poor. M-06 had a common response in this respect, stating by way of explanation that, “(My) parents objected at first, but because of poverty they agreed on (*me*) working. (*My*) relatives, who stays at the village, talked ill of (*me*) taking up a job, but now they have stopped talking since (*I am*) a big help for the family.” Remarks made by the interviewer at the end of the interview suggest that M-06 is a “happy, confident person”, who has “control over her life” and sees her status as a married woman who works, with pride. Ergo, the contribution of women (both married and unmarried) to the overall income and thereby the welfare of the family was seen as a critical part of the family’s survival strategy (particularly for people living on or just above the poverty line).

M-03 (aged 17), is a typical case in point. As a member of a tightly-knit family unit of five with a matriarchal family head (it was not established in the interview where the father was), she felt that her family valued and respected her critical contribution to the overall welfare of the unit. Without her wage, her family would clearly be less well off, and her work in the garment industry has given the family much needed income. S-05 touched on the issue of enhanced respect by arguing that only if her parents respected her as a person and valued her, would they allow her the freedom to work outside of the home.

Even in households which afforded very little personal freedom to their children and from the interview can be clearly labelled as conservative, patriarchal and religious, there appears to be improved status for some of the respondents. The case of M-04 is poignant in this respect. Despite a very strict upbringing and a household dominated by the wishes of her father, while she bemoans the lack of personal freedom, she re-iterates that because of her employment her family and her father respect her and value her opinion, although it is not clear to what extent this is manifested. Finally, M-08 who is aged just 16 remarked that through her work, “(*I*) developed a sense of making choices after (*I*) joined the garments. (*My*) point of view has changed, and (*my*) decision-making has increased too.” This was a particularly remarkable

comment from a very young woman in an overtly patriarchal society where it is often thought that young women should have no opinion at all (Shehabuddin, 2008: 22-25).

Therefore, the respondents universally felt that their wage was appreciated by the family unit and that their employment formed a key part of the overall welfare and living standards of the household. Many felt that their status in the household was consequently enhanced, even if they had little say in how the money was spent or no control over their wages. The research found that while in some isolated cases women were given the ability to manage wages, and then make substantive decisions regarding the use and management of those wages, for the vast majority this was simply not the case. Overall, the outcomes were therefore mixed.

A limitation of the research was the inability to easily define what is meant by concepts such as “status”, “bargaining power” and “decision-making ability.” Notes from the research assistant underscore this challenge, since these concepts were often not clear to the respondents themselves and might critically be viewed as discourses alien to Bangladesh, and externally imposed (that is, foreign). However, while greater bargaining power and decision making ability within the household as a result of wage income appears limited, as the next section will show, some women reported an increase in personal freedoms.

4.4.3 Employment and personal freedoms

On the whole the respondents were divided as to whether work in the garment factories had increased their personal freedoms or whether these remained unchanged. Several respondents (07/20) measured the benefit of employment not in terms of its ability to provide economic freedoms (since wages were commonly handed over to the head of the household as identified in Section 4.4.1) but rather in terms of the scope of personal freedom afforded them in their extra-household enterprise.

The ability to move beyond the home and to make friends is a highly valued social commodity for poor women in Bangladesh. Since the majority of the respondents had little economic freedom, the benefits of work might be articulated in totally different terms from arrangements in other countries and this was certainly a fascinating observation recorded time and again in this research. M-03 for example, noted that, though she gives her money to her mother, whenever she needs money her mother provides her with some. She can go wherever she wishes to and she “hangs out with her friends as she wishes to”.

If Standing's (1999) hypothesis on the 'feminization of public spaces' through female employment was to be tested, in this case the results might be ambiguous. He argued that through the displacement of men by women within the context of the demands of unskilled and semi-skilled labour, those public spaces by necessity had become more 'feminine' as they were increasingly occupied by women.

On the one hand, there is no doubt that the garment industry has afforded millions of young Bangladeshi women the opportunity to move beyond the confines of the home for a period of time each day, beyond the often suffocating gaze of their parents and community. M-07 (aged 17) for example, feels that work in the garment factory has given her a certain "economic freedom." As a result of her work, she is allowed to retain a small allowance and she is freed from household chores.

On the other hand, M-06 remarked that, "(I) stay at home most of the time. (I am) a girl, (I) should stay at home all the time. Girls should not have that much freedom. It's not good." In this respect, the comments included at the end of the interview by the research assistant are intriguing: "She belongs to a very conservative family. Her family doesn't believe in women empowerment or value women as a human being. The respondent's mind set is the same as her family, so she is not aware of her rights. She has less or no say in the family. Her parents let her work because it brings money to the family, otherwise they wouldn't have let her work." Interestingly, when asked to describe her relationship with her parent/s (Section C. Question .7), she responds positively by stating that, "(I) have a good relation. If it becomes late at work, (my) father goes to the factory to bring (me) home safely." Similarly, S-02 acknowledged that she was utterly "dominated" by her husband and that she had to seek his permission to work, and even to attend the interview itself (interviewer's remarks). None the less, he was supportive of her work in the garments industry because of the wage contribution.

Several other respondents remarked that their obligation to perform household chores had fallen away as a result of their formal employment. While the questionnaire did not directly address the question of which person carried the burden of household chores after they were 'displaced' from the respondent, M-06; M-07; S-04; M-09 advised that their mother primarily performed this work now, and assistance was sometimes offered where possible by the respondent. Only S-06 stated that chores were now the sole domain of her younger brother and daughter, but since she was married with three children this is hardly surprising. In any

event S-06 was remarked upon by the interviewer as a “very independent and confident” woman who enjoyed good relations with her husband, and who had attained “control over her life”.

However an equal number had to work long hours, and also perform household chores when they returned home, although the consensus was that these had been reduced.

The majority therefore experienced a limited increase in their personal freedoms, that is, their ability to move freely beyond the confines of the home, freedom of movement, and freedom of association. Others, such as the shy, introverted S-03 and the ‘reputation conscious’ bride to be S-10 (interviewers’ remarks), felt that their personal time had been severely curtailed as a result of the ‘double-shift’ of work and chores. Some were even more frank, remarking that “I am a girl, why should girls have freedom?”(S-09)

4.4.4 Levels of family support for garment workers

It was noted in Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 that the respondents’ wages were seen by the household as part of the overall critical survival strategy of the family and that these were typically handed over to the head of the household who managed them on behalf of the family unit. The notion of economic necessity is a universally consistent finding in the sample; the respondents (20/20, but to varying degrees) responded in the affirmative to Question C.11: *Does your family respect/ support your work in the garments sector?*

The finding was linked closely with other questions designed to thoroughly ‘test’ this proposition. For instance Question C.9 (*Does your husband, family, fiancé object to you working?*) and Question C.10 (*Has your employment ever led to any tension within the home?*) were closely linked. Typically the respondents answered *No* to both questions, thereby expressing consistent support for their employment amongst household members, whatever the motivation/reasons for doing so.

Interestingly, M-05 expressed some hesitation in answering Question C. 9 (as noted by the research assistant). After gentle probing, she revealed that her parents had initially objected to her working, but in the end, the family’s poverty overcame these objections. M-01 also described initial reluctance on the part of her family for her to be employed, and also noted that poverty had forced the family to rethink their stance on a young woman working beyond

the home, again suggesting that economic necessity was one of the key drivers of female employment.

The questionnaire was also designed to obtain information on the activities of other household members. Here it was universally evident that every member of the family unit has a role to play in its overall survival. Average family size was four or sometimes five individuals and family members of all ages were engaged in some form of economic activity.

As with everything else in Bangladesh, this issue is a complex one. On the one hand, the majority of the respondents felt that since their wage was critical to the overall health of the household, they gained enhanced status in some form or another. On closer examination however, as shown above, this translated into limited decision-making power or control of income for the individual woman. There is no doubt that their wage was valued by the head of the household. However whether this translated into significant decision making ability, first over their own lives, and second over the key decisions affecting the welfare and direction of the household as a whole, remains a contested point.

Therefore, the traditional perception that women should remain within the confines of the home appears to be challenged by the economic necessity of sending girls to work. Since all the respondents in the sample were part of family groups living on or just above the poverty line it could be argued that in such circumstances, the family unit exercised pragmatism with regard to 'women's work'. It could be further argued that new economic realities are re-defining the essence of the traditional division of labour in Bangladeshi society away from traditional expectations aligned to the view that "a women's role in Islamic society is clearly, at base, to rear children and create a wholesome and happy home" (Anwar, 2006: 31), and that a woman must "[fulfil] all her domestic obligations, the most important of these being the bearing of children" (Shehabuddin, 2008: 44).

Nicita and Razzaz (2003: 5) for example remark that, "[a]s monetary income and higher wages attract them out of unpaid family work, informal activities and unemployment; women are given a unique opportunity to enter the labour force and improve their economic independence". Seen from this point of view, employment in the garment sector is an opportunity for women to transition from unpaid work to paid work, and is based on several assumptions including the choices exercised in doing so, and the outcomes of employment for women's independence. In a sense, Sarkar's findings in a 2007 study seem to suggest that

“T[hrough, education and employment, women (in Bangladesh) prolong their duration of being single” and that “91% of women who do not engage in work married early” (2009: 180).

This said marriage is an important life event for women in Bangladesh as well as their families. Dowry is an important part of the marriage contract, and a woman who brings a larger dowry is more likely to find a suitable and eligible husband. Despite widespread criticism of the practice (Daby and Poor, 2007; Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2000), Efroymson et al (2006: 12) reported that most women involved in their research (86.4%) supported the dowry system. Several respondents (S-10, M-03) argued that they needed to work in order to accumulate a dowry, thereby ensuring a good ‘match’.

It is clear that employment in garment work is fundamentally challenging the composition of the families among whom the research was conducted. By keeping girls and women in the nuclear family much longer (because they have become economic assets) women are marrying later, and having children later. Employed women are therefore perceived as ‘economic assets’ in their own right, and not simply as a burden to be married off as soon as a husband and dowry present themselves.

4.4.5 Improvements in economic wellbeing

It is clear from the interviews that, for many families, life was a struggle. Several of the women admitted that their household income was insufficient to cover primary expenses (rent, shelter, medicine). As a result, several admitted that their family unit required monthly loans from relatives or community members to make ends meet. Several households had fallen into debt.

Others felt that because of their salary the family as a whole was better off in terms of its consumption patterns: “We are able to eat meat and fish now” (M-03). “We had food scarcity when I didn’t have the job. But now, we enjoy better quality of food since there is an extra flow of money in the family due to my job” (M-06). “It’s better than before since after I started working we don’t have to struggle for food now” (M-10). However despite M-10’s contribution the interviewer noted that, “her family don’t believe in women’s empowerment”, and that M-10 herself was completely unaware of the very existence of any inherent rights of women. Her labour was seen as a commodity to be utilised for the economic upliftment of the household as whole.

A minority of households were able to save money for the future, for the marriage dowry for example, or “future safety”, often interpreted by the research assistant as support for the studies of a younger sibling, inevitably male. However a study conducted by the University of Bangladesh in 2008 produced mixed results on whether employment in the garment sector actually boosted the ability of household to save, thereby providing an important safety net in a country where social protection for the poor is limited (Ali et al, 2008).

Begun et al (2008) found that, among the 90 women included in their research (conducted in three areas of Dhaka), only 12.2% of these households had benefitted from an increase in overall savings ability. In contrast, 38.9% noted no change in their overall ability to save, while roughly half of the respondents recorded no substantial improvements in their economic situation, stating that wages simply enabled them to survive rather than thrive (2008: 5).

The issue of increases in the minimum wage in the garment sector has received much attention and has both a political and economic dimension in Bangladesh, with roughly three-quarters of sitting Members of Parliament own garment factories (and are therefore opposed to increases in the minimum wage.) Minimum wages were increased in 2013 (Maihack in Sebastio, 2015: 1) and the situation has improved for many. However, rising inflation and food prices (Allchin in Sebastio, 2015: 14) mean that such gains are often eroded and survival remains a fragile commodity.

4.4.6 Limited opportunities for women outside of garment work

For the majority of the women interviewed, garment work provides the only real alternative to lower paid domestic work, or unpaid work in the home. It is noteworthy that nine respondents would have liked to study further instead of work but it is unclear who would have financed this and whether these remarks were merely aspirational. This suggests, at least from the sample, that early employment may have a negative impact on the ability of the young women in this sample to study further and obtain the skills required to enhance their lives.

Therefore the findings in the research sample point to general acceptance of the economic necessity of young women working outside of the household environment. However, it should be noted that Savar and Mohammadpur are peri-urban and deep urban areas, respectively, while much of Bangladesh remains rural. The story may be very different

several miles away in predominately agricultural areas where women are critically engaged in supporting subsistence based agricultural activities (Baden et al, 1994: 9).

A lack of education, poverty and family pressure were noted as recurrent determinants driving sustained pressure to work. The needs of the individual are therefore subverted to the welfare of the whole, leaving few other meaningful alternatives for these women. The garment industry therefore presents an attractive alternative for young, particularly unskilled women with low levels of education. Khorshed (2011: 4) argues that while, on the surface, the sector appears to emancipate women, this occurs within the context of high levels of exploitation.

In the main, girls in Bangladesh have limited access to education that is sufficient to enable them to enter the workplace. On average 49.4% of girls in Bangladesh do not transition from primary to secondary education (UNICEF website, 2013). As noted in Section 4.2 above, only two respondents in the research sample reported having completed Grade 7 (ages 12-13).

Several reasons have been identified for the premature exit of girls from school in Bangladesh. “Researchers calculated that over the school years, Bangladeshi girls spend 130 hours less time studying than boys do. Possible reasons for these differences in the lives of boys and girls in Bangladesh include social norms favouring sons, early marriage for girls, and higher returns on investments for boys who are educated.” The need for girls to conduct household chores may also be cited as a reason (Halpern, 2012: 255).

All 20 respondents confirmed that all the members of their family were either studying and/or engaged in some other form of active economic activity (informal or formal employment). It can thus be concluded that, while the majority were positive about the impact of garment work on their lives, this was mainly limited to financial benefit (and some increase in personal freedoms), and that due to their low levels of education and limited life choices, the respondents had very few other options other than work in the garment industry.

4.4.7 Community perceptions and attitudes to women’s waged employment

Addressing another of the study’s objectives, this section describes the extent to which formal employment in the garment sector has intersected with the wider community’s views or

perceptions of the women interviewed. The research suggests that the majority of women felt that their community was at best supportive of their work and at worst merely ambivalent.

Question C. 2 asked, *Do you feel that your status in your COMMUNITY has increased OR decreased as a result of your employment? Please explain.* Many of the responses (13/20) recorded ambivalence on the part of the community, for example: “every girl around the community works, so it’s the same for everyone, everyone is respectful” (S-10). In some cases (5/20) an increase in status and respect within the community was reported, while two respondents recorded a mixed reaction (both positive and some negative comments) from the community.

As noted earlier with respect to status within the household, the study was limited by exactly what this ‘increase in respect’ actually means for the women themselves and whether this translated into increased freedoms and decision making ability within the community.

A very small minority experienced negativity from other community members as a result of their employment. However, the two women who identified negative ‘community pressure’ experienced this in very different ways. S-08 twice highlighted the issue of ‘eve-teasing’. In India and Bangladesh this is a euphemism for an aggressive form of sexual harassment conducted on the street. While it is often verbal, it can be a prelude to physical attack (Faruq, 2011: 42). S-08 felt that because she worked outside of the home, and because she needed to take a bus for up to one hour a day, to and from work, she exposed herself to unwelcome attention from men in the community.

In contrast, M-01 felt emotionally chastised by certain members of the community for her work in the garment industry, commenting that, “...many people don’t take working in garments to be a good profession so sometimes some of the community people talks behind my back/ scolds at me”.

However, these are exceptional cases, and the vast majority of respondents (18) felt that community perceptions played little role in their employment. On reflection, this may have much to do with economic necessity among this LSM grouping (The SAARF LSM or Living Standards Measure), and women’s limited choices in choosing their work path. Since the majority of the respondents were young women, still living under the control of their parents, and in their parents’ house, the issue of the degree to which they exercise free agency over their own lives is pertinent. These women could hardly be said by the community to be

accountable for their own actions, if these are dictated by a parent or a guardian on their behalf. Therefore the decision to go to work may be no real decision at all, but rather the product of a set of realities over which the respondents had little control. In this respect, the community could hardly expect to ‘blame’ the respondents for ‘doing as they were told’.

4.4.8 Poor working conditions in the RMG sector

While the women were pleased that their employment brought some benefit to their lives, none expressed satisfaction with their working conditions and job security. Particularly prevalent were the issues raised around safety, hardly surprising in light of the Rana Plaza tragedy (S-07, S-02, and M-01, for example). Long hours and lack of formal contracts (M-04) were occasional complaints.

It is clear that the working environment is hard. In Savar most women rode the bus to work, often spending at least two hours in transit, thereby limiting their personal time and adding to already exhausting working hours (on average 11-12 hours a day, six days a week). As discussed, despite marginal improvements in the minimum wage for garment and textile workers in recent years, this has not translated into a substantial increase in workers’ ability to save, or to accumulate real assets which would provide some degree of social security or a social safety net. On average, the respondents worked 11 hours a day, six days a week, earning on average between BDT 150 and BDT 267 (1.9 – 3.4 USD) a day. Other complaints included the “strict behaviour” of supervisors at work (M-03, S-04). Many worried extensively about the safety of their factories (S-01, S06, and S-09). Only one respondent (S-10) expressed satisfaction with her working conditions, and health and safety regime.

None of the 20 respondents had much security of employment; none had a formal contract, and none had formal benefits such as a pension, etc. All feared for the future in the event of sickness, or injury which might prevent them from working. When asked (Section B: Q.11): *Do you enjoy any formal benefits from your employment e.g. pension, unemployment protection?* the only benefit identified was that the company provided a bonus on Eid/ Puja and for daily attendance.

A combination of difficult working conditions, and the lack of formal contracts and work based compensation or benefits, and the ever present danger of industrial accidents, meant that, when asked whether they would wish their children to become garment workers, the response was overwhelmingly negative. Their employment could therefore be seen as a result

of economic necessity rather than real choice. Without any prospects for a more formal contract, promotion, real inflation-linked increases in wages and the enhanced protection offered by unionisation and formal social security, tangible socio-economic outcomes beyond work as a survival strategy are hard to imagine for the women interviewed. While several respondents (M-07 for example) highlighted the new freedoms offered by the opportunity to spend time beyond the home, make new friends and forge new social relationships, these were couched in limited terms, and de-lined by an industrial process which emphasises production at the cost of worker welfare. Interestingly, M-01 who is now approximately 30 years of age confided in the interviewer that she has been working in the garment's sector for over 20 years and was concerned to see real changes (which should be led by the Government) for better conditions for workers.

In this respect, it can be argued that, while offering more tangible 'benefits' than domestic or agricultural work, employment in the garment sector cannot be seen as a substantial tool for enhanced socio-economic outcomes for the women who participated in this research.

4.5 Summary of findings and concluding remarks

This study had three primary objectives. The first was to identify more generally both the positive and negative impacts of employment in the RMG sector on the lives of the research participants. In this respect, the findings point to a mixed benefit-impediment outcome with clear improvements in standards of living (particularly quality and frequency of meals), a limited ability to save, and overall improvements in the welfare of the family (less clearly the individual). However, these should be balanced with the dangers confronting young women in the garment factories, particularly with regard to long working hours, insecure working conditions, and personal safety (due to unsafe working conditions and factory structures themselves). It is clear that, due to the twin determinants of poverty (economic necessity), and lack of education, the women in the survey had very few alternatives to participation in unskilled garment work. Despite the benefits accrued from their work in this sector, none of the respondents wanted their children to follow in their footsteps.

The study also aimed to enhance understanding of the consequences of employment for these women, documenting, in particular, changes in their decision-making ability, and status within the household. While the limitations posed by the sample size, and by the challenges of defining and measuring change in status and power are acknowledged, several conclusions

can be made with some confidence. The first is that the vast majority (18 / 20) of respondents, do not have control over their wages, which are handed directly to the head of the household (whether a man or a woman). Second, the respondents' overall status and bargaining in the household have increased. Third, the family unit was universally supportive of the respondent's work in the garment industry, and these wages were viewed as integral to the overall welfare and survival of the unit. Finally, the respondents' work outside the home has contributed to improvements in the quality of life of both the respondent and her family; however, this has not translated into substantive increases in her personal freedoms, although several respondents reported a decrease in household responsibilities (chores, etc.)

The third main objective was to better understand the impact of wage labour on the position and status of the respondents in the community. It is clear that in the two geographical areas where the research was conducted (Savar/Mohammadpur); it is now conventional practice for young women to work outside of the home. It is concluded that the community is largely either supportive or ambivalent to this practise, with some (2/20) notable exceptions recorded in the interviews. It is worth noting that while the choice of two research sites/locations was intended to broaden the scope of the paper, it was largely evident that women working in Savar, and those working in Mohammadpur shared broadly the same socio-economic characteristics and cultural and work-based experiences. The origin of the respondents vis-à-vis their immediate location, was therefore of little value in either substantiating or undermining any further deductions.

In addition to these conclusions the respondents exhibited several common traits, characteristics and shared experiences. Their average level of education (Grade 7 and below) was roughly on a par with that of women for the entire country (Sebates, Hossain, Lewin, 2010: 7-8) and the average age was 19.3 years. However, they were substantially different in terms of their single, unmarried and childless status; 15 of the respondents were unmarried/single and only five were married, while the majority (16/20) had no children. In Bangladesh the average age at which women marry is one of the lowest globally at 16.4 years old (www.girlsnotbrides.org), while the age at which women have their first child is typically 18.1 years (CIA World Fact book website, 2015). The study's findings support previous research that suggests that working women in Bangladesh marry later and therefore have children later (Sarkar, 2009: 178-184). However, since the research was conducted in predominantly urban and peri-urban centres, many of these factors could be affected by a

rural-urban differential with women in rural areas exposed to higher rates of early marriage and with a significantly higher predisposition to having children (Rahman et al, 2008: 1).

Additional observations relating to the respondents' lives show that in Mohammadpur the women lived closer to their place of work and most walked to work, and as such, enabled their family to accrue more disposable income (less money spent on public transport, although several admitted that rents were higher). In Mohammadpur, most women lived in a one bedroom tin shack, sleeping with members of their family in one communal room (with a separate bathroom and kitchen). In Savar, houses were typically made of mud with tin roofs, but like their more urban counterparts, the houses had one main room where the family lived, with separate ablution facilities.

In *The Dynamics of Poverty in Rural Bangladesh* Kutcha (cited in Rahman et al, 2013: 39) observes that “[t]here were significant variations in housing material structure across the economic classes of the sample households”. Chronically poor households tended to favour economically viable materials (mud walls, straw roofing-thatched) while corrugated iron sheets (walls and roofs) were common for those of a slightly elevated economic position, suggesting that the study respondents, while not chronically poor, were certainly economically challenged.

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks

It is clear from the literature review that opinion is divided between two streams of discourse on the impact of the garment sector on young women in Bangladesh. On the one hand, it is argued that garment work provides young women with the ability to move beyond the threshold of the home, and empower themselves both socially and economically and that industry has thus advanced the position of women in a country where the dictates of tradition, culture, religion (and bound by patriarchy) have long held sway over young women's lives. This process has enabled women to occupy public spaces. This is certainly true of the areas adjacent to large factory districts.

On the other hand, many scholars and activists are deeply critical of this view. For them, the garment industry is a multi-layered tool of instrumental exploitation where the interests of young women are subverted to those of a commercial nature, and where women derive very little tangible benefit. They point to poor pay and a lack of formal contracts, work-based benefits, and unionisation, as indicators of this.

This study acknowledges both points of view, and argues that, based on its findings, the reality lies somewhere in between. At the household level it is clear that young women in particular have no control over their wages. Benefits thus accrue in another form. In this respect, many of the respondents recorded mixed feelings about the benefits of work. The majority acknowledged that their wages were instrumental in enhancing their status and respect at home, and in their ability to negotiate limited freedoms which many women in other countries would take for granted. These included the ability to spend their days among their friends away from the direct control of the head of the household and family, to make new friends, and to be released from some household chores. In addition, the research found that many of the young women who participated in the study were unmarried and childless, bucking the overall trend in Bangladesh and re-enforcing the outcomes of research which suggests that waged work results in delayed marriage and childbearing.

However, the most significant economic welfare outcomes were those recorded at the family level and not for the individual. Since many respondents' families lived on or below the poverty line, their employment played a critical role in the overall survival of the family unit. The respondents acknowledged time and time again that their wages had improved the

quality of the food eaten by the household, and in some cases, the ability of the family unit to save or negotiate better terms for its survival. It follows that these women experienced nuanced levels of perceived status enhancement and felt that they had more say in the running of the household or how their wages were spent. However, despite much probing in the interviews, by their very nature, these perceptions were often highly subjective and impossible to substantiate. They certainly did not translate into any meaningful increase in bargaining power in the household or decision-making about their wages and how they were spent, as an outsider may understand these concepts. Furthermore, it is natural to assume that the family adopted a practical stance on these issues, delaying marriage, for example, in order to keep the women working, avoid costly dowry responsibilities, and ensure that the household (as opposed to another household) benefitted from their wages. In the absence of further and real concrete examples, it can be argued that any real benefits to the women in terms of enhanced status and bargaining power were limited at best, and often shallow or insubstantial by-products of a family unit grateful for their wage. The fact that many women articulated the desire to study as an alternative to work is a rare expression of personal interest that has universally gone unsatisfied. If, as Amartya Sen (1999) suggested, freedom is associated with access to opportunity, these women cannot be said to be free.

Nonetheless, the women regard themselves as better off than, for example, women engaged in unpaid agricultural or domestic work, where abuse and even longer hours are the norm (Kabeer, 2012: 36). Therefore, the contribution of the garment sector to the women that participated in this research has been one of loosening, rather than the destruction of, the social, cultural, religious and economic shackles within which they exist.

Positive outcomes from employment in the garment industry for the women in the study could therefore be said to be derived, not necessarily at the individual level, but predominantly at the family level. It was clear that as a whole the family unit was better off because of the additional wage, and therefore the result was a marked 'smoothing' of relationships within the household. In this respect, none of the respondents reported any tension within the household or apprehension of their family members as a result of their employment. Indeed, only two reported any negativity from extended family or the community, suggesting that work in the garment sector, at least in the two areas where the research was conducted, is now common practice and the norm. This may seem an unimportant observation, but bearing in mind traditional notions which dictate that women

should not be engaged in ‘outside’ work, that is work beyond the home (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011: 8), the change is significant.

It is important not to frame arguments for or against the RMG sector in absolutes (as has been done in some of the literature). The garment sector is neither necessarily ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ for women. These positions tend to ignore that women are not isolated actors, but part of a system, an integrated element within shifting relations at the household, community and work levels. These dynamics mean that their position and capability is constantly changing, and perhaps evolving in order to respond effectively.

This echoes Kabeer’s (2004, cited in Khosla, 2009: 5-6) observation that: “the overall impact of the ready-made garments industry on women’s lives is mixed. On the positive side, the industry offers women workers advantages not offered by the other limited and rather arduous avenues of employment available to women such as stone crushing, agricultural labour and paid domestic work” and Siddiqi (2003): “[o]n the negative side, there is gender inequality and sexual exploitation in this industry...[i]t is therefore important to develop a contextualized understanding of Bangladeshi society, economy and the role and position of women in Bangladeshi society in order to fully appreciate the benefits the ready-made garments industry offers to women, despite its exploitative conditions.”

Since this study is primarily concerned with the impact of women’s wages within the household, a brief summary of the overall conclusions derived from this research follows. First, it seems evident that, as a unit, the families of women working in the garment sector exist on or below the poverty line. As noted, economic necessity therefore subverts Bangladeshi’s traditional view of women working outside of the home as *haram* (forbidden).

It has been discussed at length how these wages play a critical role in the overall survival and enhanced welfare of the family unit and that the subsequent effect of this is a ‘perceived’, albeit un-tested, perception by the women themselves that their status within the unit has been improved or enhanced.

In addition, in many cases, the respondents have been freed from additional household chores due to their employment, and in limited cases, have exercised a freedom which is unknown to other women of their social status and standing. This includes the freedom of movement during the journey to and from work, the ability to make and meet friends (and exchange gossip) and, very importantly, the ability to delay early marriage and childbearing.

However, in all but two cases, the respondents did not exercise any meaningful degree of decision-making over the direction and management of household resources, suggesting that their labour has made only incrementally positive changes in their ability to direct their wages in the manner of their choosing. Therefore, the impact of these wages should be measured against the ability of the respondents to effectively ‘operationalize’ their utility through increased ‘bargaining power’ within the home. Agarwal (1997: 4) defines ‘bargaining power’ simply as, “the deal the person gets within the household”. If we accept the more specific definition put forward in the Collins Dictionary definition of ‘bargaining power’, “as the ability of a person, group, or organization to exert influence over another party in a negotiation in order to achieve a deal which is favourable to themselves”, it is clear that, in the main, the respondents do not truly exercise this ability to any meaningful degree.

Finally, these conclusions also reveal the difficulties and the main limitation of this study, namely the challenges in defining and measuring within the parameters of the research, key concepts such as: bargaining power, status, and increases in decision-making ability among the respondents. Without an independent measure, the study relies solely on their ‘interpretations’ of their reality, which can often be disrupted by others’ influence or simply the respondent’s inability to be aware of their own rights and potential freedoms. Therefore, further research is warranted in this area in order to strengthen our understanding of these complex issues.

In conclusion, this study aimed to reveal some of the hidden social relations which exist within the household in Bangladesh, and how these relations have evolved or responded to the impact of female wage labour in the garment sector (in two areas of Dhaka District). Through in-depth interviews with 20 (mainly young) women, it uncovered shifts in the way in which Bangladeshi society is coping with new realities that test the traditional social-cultural and religious foundations of what has always been a deeply conservative society. That change is occurring within the household is evident. That it is affecting the way in which the study respondents perceive, interact and re-negotiate their position within the home is obvious. The outcomes of this process are, however, less clear.

References

- Afsar, Rita. 2000. *Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh: Causes, Consequences and Challenges*. Dhaka. University Press Ltd.
- Afsar, R. 2001. 'Sociological Implications of Female Labour Migration in Bangladesh', in Sobhan, R and Khundker, N. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Gender: Changing Patterns of Women's Employment in Bangladesh*. Dhaka. University Press Ltd.
- Agarwal, Bina. 1997. 'Bargaining and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household.' *Feminist Economics*. Vol. 3(1). 1-51.
- Ahamed, Ferdous. 2014. 'Job Dissatisfaction in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Sector: To what extent (can) HR/IR Practises grow (the) exhilaration of RMG Workers?' *International Journal of Business and Management Review*. Vol. 2 (1). 1-12.
- Ali, R.N; Begun, F; Salehin, M.M; and Farid, K.S. 2008. 'Livelihood patterns of rural women garment workers at Dhaka City.' *Journal of Bangladesh Agricultural University*, Vol. 6 (2). 449-456.
- Alam, Khorshed. 2011. *Stitched Up: Women workers in the Bangladeshi garment sector*. Published by War on Want. 1-9.<http://www.waronwant.org/overseas-work/sweatshops-and-plantations/hidden/inform/17318-stitched-up>. (Downloaded July, 2014).
- Anandita, Naomi. 2012. 'Women's Empowerment Revisited: From Individual to Collective Power among the Export Sector Workers of Bangladesh.' *Institute of Development Studies Working Paper*. Vol. 2012 .(389).1-40.
- Anandita, Naomi. 2011. *Exports, Equity, and Empowerment: The Effects of Readymade Garments Manufacturing Employment on Gender Equality in Bangladesh*. World Bank Development Report 2012. 230.
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/77781051299699968583/7786210-1322671773271/Anandita-Export-Equity-employment.pdf> (Downloaded June 2014).
- Anwar, Etin. 2006. *Gender and Self in Islam*. Oxon and New York. Routledge.
- Baden, Sally; Green, Cathy; Goetz, Anne-Marie; Guhathakurta, Meghna. 1994. 'Background Report on gender issues in Bangladesh.' *Bridge Development Gender*. Report No. 26. 1-206. ISBN: 1858641616.

Banu, Dilruba; Farashuddin, Fehmin; Hossain, Altaf and Akter, Shahnuj. 2001. 'Empowering Women in Rural Bangladesh: Impact of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC's) Programme.' *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Vol.02 (3). Article 3. (Downloaded March 2015).

Begum, R.N. Ali, F; Salehin, M.M; Farid, K.S. 2008. 'Livelihood patterns of rural women garment workers at Dhaka city'. Short Communication paper. J. Bangladesh April. Univ. 6 (2). 449-456. ISSN: 1810-3030.

Berg, Achim; Hedrich, Saskia; Kempf, Sebastian; Tochtermann, Thomas. 2011. 'Bangladesh's ready-made garments landscape: The Challenge of growth.' McKinsey & Company. 3-22.
http://www.mckinsey.de/sites/mck_files/files/2011_McKinsey_Bangladesh.pdf (Downloaded June 2014).

Beneria, Lourdes and Sen, Gita. 1981. 'Accumulation, Reproduction, and "Women's Role in Economic Development": Boserup Revisited'. In *Signs*. Vol. 7(2). Development and the Sexual Division of Labor (Winter, 1981). The University of Chicago Press. 279- 298.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173878> (Downloaded September 2014).

Chaudhuri-Zohir, Salma. 2001. *Gender Balance in the EPZ: a Socio-Economic Study of Dhaka Export Processing Zone in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. 3-73.
<http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/21017/1/A%20Gender%20Balance%20in%20the%20EPZ.pdf?1> (Downloaded July 2014).

Chowdhury, Nazneen Jahan and Ullah, Md. Hafij. 2010. 'Socio-Economic Conditions of Female Garment Workers in Chittagong Metropolitan Area-An Empirical Study'. *Journal of Business and Technology (Dhaka)*. Vol. 5(2). 53-69.

Chiappori, Pierre-Andre and Lewbel, Arthur. 2014. *Gary Beckers "A Theory of the Allocation of Time."* Working Paper. Columbia University and Boston College.
<https://www2.bc.edu/arthur-lewbel/Becker6.pdf> (Downloaded February 2015).

Dabby, Chic and Poore, Grace. 2007. *Engendering Change: Transforming Gender Roles in Asian & Pacific Islander Communities*. Apiidv. 2-20.
http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Engendering_Change-8-2007.pdf. (Downloaded July 2014).

Efroymson, Debra; Fitzgerald, Sian; Jones, Lori. 2006. 'Promoting Male Responsibility for Gender Equality: Summary Report of Research from Bangladesh, India and Vietnam'. *HealthBridge*. <http://www.healthbridge.ca/gender%20summary.pdf> (Downloaded July 2014).

Faruq, Farzana. 2011. 'Eve-teasing: A Social Disaster for Women in Bangladesh'. *Eastern University Journal*. Vol.3 (3). 40-48. ISSN No. 1998-7889.

Feldman, Shelley. 2009. 'Historicising Garment Manufacturing in Bangladesh: Gender, Generation, and New Regulatory Regimes'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Vol. 11(1). 2-17.

Ferdaush, Jannatul and Rahman, K.M Mustafizur. 2011. *Gender Inequality in Bangladesh*. Unnayan Onneshan, Centre for Research and Action on Development, Bangladesh. 1-20. <http://unnayan.org/reports/Gender%20Inequality%20In%20Bangladesh.pdf> (Downloaded July 2014).

Fontana, Marzia. 2006. *Gender in Global and Regional Trade Policies: Contrasting Views and New Research*. Unpublished research paper. Institute of Development Studies. University of Warwick. 1-11. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/events/workshops/2006ws/gender_and_trade/marzia_fontana.pdf (Downloaded October, 2014).

Giesen, Janet. (n.d). 'Constructivism: A Holistic Approach to Teaching and Learning'. Faculty Development and Instructional Design Centre. Northern Illinois University. <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/programs/handouts/constructivism.pdf> (Presentation downloaded February 2015).

Guest, Greg; Namey, Emily.E; Mitchell, Marilyn. L. 2013. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A field Manual for Applied Research*. Sage Publications Inc. 1-36. ISBN 9781412986847.

Guhathakurta, Meghna and van Schendel, Willem (Eds).2013. *The Bangladesh Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham and London. Duke University Press. 44-114.

Halpern, Diane F.2012. *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities: 4th edition*. Psychology Press. New York, NY. 255.

Harkness, Susan. 2010 Revised. *The Contribution of Women's Employment and Earnings to Household Income Inequality: A Cross-Country Analysis, UK* [Online]. Centre for Analysis of Social Policy and Department of Social and Policy Studies, University of Bath.

Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper Series No. 531.

<http://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/95534/1/63826331X.pdf> (Downloaded May 2014).

Hoddinott, John and Haddad, Lawrence. 1995. 'Does Female Income She Influence Household Expenditures? Evidence From Cote D'Ivoire.' *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*. Vol. 57 (1). 77-96, February 1995.

Hossain, Mohammad A. and Tisdell, Clement A. 2005. 'Closing the gender gap in Bangladesh: inequality in education, employment and earnings'. *International Journal of Social Economics*. Vol.32 (5). Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. 439-453.

Hyder, Shaina. (n.d) *Women's Financial Independence Amongst Female Garments Workers in Bangladesh. Research paper Summary*. [http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/shaina_hyder--summary_of_research\(2\).pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/shaina_hyder--summary_of_research(2).pdf) (Downloaded May 2014).

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2012. *Bangladesh: Decent Work Country Programme 2012-2015*. 1-13.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/bangladesh.pdf> (Report downloaded May 2014).

Iversen, Vegard. 2003. 'Intra-Household Inequality: A Challenge for the Capability Approach?' *Feminist Economics*. Vol. 9 (2-3). 93-115.

Joshi, Shareen. 2004. 'Female Household-Headship in Rural Bangladesh: Incidence, Determinants and Impact on Children's Schooling'. *Economic Growth Center*. Center Discussion Paper No.894. Yale University. 1-49. (Paper downloaded , March 2015).

Kabeer, Naila. 2012. 'Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: labour markets and enterprise development'. Centre for Development Policy and Research. Discussion Paper 29/12. London. University of London. 3-55.

Kabeer, Naila. 2000. *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labour Market Decisions in London and Dhaka*. London. Verso Publications.

Kabeer, N., & Mahmud, S. 2004. 'Rags, Riches and Women Workers: Export-oriented Garment Manufacturing in Bangladesh'. In M. Carr (Ed.), *Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets*. Commonwealth Secretariat. 133-164.

Kabeer, Naila and Natali, Luisa. 2013. 'Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is there a Win-Win?' *Institute of Development Studies Working Paper*. Vol. 2013 (417). 3-40.

Kapsos, Steven. 2008. 'The gender wage gap in Bangladesh'. *ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper Series*. 1-22. ISBN: 978-92-2-121337-6.

Kamal, Nashid and Zunaid, K.M. 2004. Education and Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh. Graduate student paper. Dept. of Population-Environment, Independent University, Bangladesh. 1-15.

Keane, Jodie and te Velde, Dirk William. 2008. *The role of textile and clothing industries in growth and development strategies*. Overseas Development Institute. 7th May 2008. 1-72.
<http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/3361.pdf>
(Downloaded , July 2014).

Khosla, Nidhi. 2009. 'The Ready-Made-Garments Industry in Bangladesh: A Means to Reducing Gender-Based Social Exclusion of Women?' *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Vol. 11 (1). 1-07.

Lewis, David. 2011. *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*. New York. Cambridge University Press. 5-60.

Lim, Lin Lean. 2002. *Population Bulletin of the United Nations: Completing the Fertility Transition*. Special Issue No 48-49. United Nations Publication. 203-221. ISBN 978-92-1-151370-7.
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/completingfertility/RevisedLIMpaper.PDF>
(Downloaded, June 2014).

Murayama, Mayumi. 2006. 'Employment in the Readymade Garment Industry in the Post-MFA ERA: The Cases of India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.' IDE-JETRO. *Joint Research Programme Series*. No.140. March 2006.
<http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Jrp/140.html> (Downloaded , July 2014).

Murshid, Tazeen Mahnaz. 1996. 'Women, Islam and the state in Bangladesh. Subordination and Resistance.' *Dossier 16*. 119-134.

<http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/import/english/pubs/pdf/dossier16/D16.pdf>

(Downloaded , July 2014).

Naher, Ainoon. 2005. Gender, Religion and Development in Rural Bangladesh. Ph.D. Dissertation paper. Department of Ethnology South Asia Institute Heidelberg University. 1-212.

Nazneen, Sohela; Anandita, Naomi and Sultan, Maheen. 2011. 'National Discourses on Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh: Continuities and Change'. *Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Working Paper*. Vol. 2011 (368). 1-41. www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp368.pdf (Downloaded, July 2014).

Nicita Alessandro and Susan Razzaz. 2003. 'Who benefits and how much? How gender affects welfare impacts of a booming textile industry'. *World Bank research Working Paper 3029*. April 2003. 2-28. <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-3029> (Downloaded , July 2014).

Panday, Pranab Kumar. 2013. *Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh: Institutional Reforms, Actors and Outcomes*. Springer New Delhi, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London. Springer. 1-58.

Pata, Boier Sesh. 2010 .The Ready Made Garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh. [www.scribd.com. http://www.scribd.com/doc/25704179/The-Ready-made-Garment-RMG-Industry-of-Bangladesh](http://www.scribd.com/doc/25704179/The-Ready-made-Garment-RMG-Industry-of-Bangladesh) (Report downloaded, September 2014).

Patel, Raj; Schafft, Kai, Rademacher, Anne; Koch-Schulte, Sarah. 1999. 'Changing Gender Relations in the Household.' *In Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices from 47 Countries*. Poverty Group, PREM. World Bank. 135-172.

Paul-Majumder, Pratima and Zohir, Salma Chaudhuri. 1993. *Employment and occupational mobility among women in manufacturing industries of Dhaka city, Bangladesh: findings from a survey of employees*. New Delhi. Asian Regional Team for Employment Promotion. International Labor Organization.

Paul-Majumder, P and Begum, Anwara. 2000. 'The Gender Imbalances in the Export Oriented Garment Industry in Bangladesh'. *Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No 12*. Washington. The World Bank.

Quddus, Munir and Rashid, Salim. 2000. *Entrepreneurs and economic development: the remarkable story of garment exports from Bangladesh*. University Press. ISBN 9840515012, 9789840515011.

Quisumbing, Agnes. R and Maluccio, John. A. 2000. 'Intra-household Allocation and Gender Relations: New Empirical Evidence from Four Developing Countries'. *FCND Discussion Paper* No. 84. International Food Policy Research Institute. Washington DC.

Rahman, M; Islam, M; Hossain, M. 2008. 'Female age at Marriage of Rural-Urban Differentials in Bangladesh'. *The Internet Journal of Biological Anthropology*. Vol.3 (2).

Rahman, Motiur; Matsui, Noriatsu and Ikemoto, Yukio. 2013. *Dynamics of Poverty in Rural Bangladesh*. Springer. Tokyo, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London. 1-58. ISBN: 978-4-431-54284-1.

Randolph, Justus J. 2009. 'A Guide to Writing the Dissertation Literature Review.' *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*. Vol. 14 (13). ISSN: 1531-7714.

Sabates, Ricardo; Hossain, Altaf; Lewin Keith M. 2010. 'School Drop Out in Bangladesh: New Insights from Longitudinal Evidence'. CREATE- Pathways to Access. Research Monograph No.49. Centre for International Education, Department of Education. University of Sussex.1-25. ISBN: 0-901881-56-2.

Sarkar, Prosannajid. 2009. 'Determinants and Effect of Early Marriage in Bangladesh, 2007'. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences*. Vol. 4 (5). Medwell Journals. 178-184. ISSN: 1815-932X.

Schmidt, Eleanor M. 2012. 'The Effect of Women's Intra-household Bargaining Power on Child Health Outcomes in Bangladesh.' *Undergraduate Economic Review*. Vol.9: Issue 1, Article 4. 1-21. <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/uer/vol9/iss1/4> (Downloaded, 28th October 2014).

- Schneebaum, Alyssa and Mader, Katharina . 2013. 'The gendered nature of intra-household decision making in and across Europe'. *Department of Economics Working Paper Series*, 157. WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna.
- Sebastio, Filippo. 2015. *After Rana Plaza*. Friedrich, Ebert, Stiftung. Social Europe/Published in cooperation with FES Bangladesh. 1-20. <http://www.socialeurope.eu/hot-topics/rana-plaza/> (Report downloaded , February 2015).
- Sen, Gita. 1999. *Gendered Labour Markets and Globalisation in Asia*. Occasional Paper. UNCTAD/EDM/Misc.133. www.unctad.org/en/docs/poedmm133.en.pdf (Downloaded , 28th October 2014).
- Sen, Amartya (1999). *Development as freedom* (1st ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198297581.
- Shehabuddin, Elora. 2008. *Reshaping the Holy*. New York. Columbia University Press. 18-61.
- Sobhan, Rehman and Khundker, Nasreen. 2001. *Globalization and Gender*. Dhaka. The University Press Ltd.
- Standing, Guy. 1999. 'Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor: A Theme Revisited'. *World Development*. Vol. 27 (3). Elsevier Science Ltd. 583-602.
- Uddin, Md. Gazi Salah. 2008. 'Wage Productivity and Wage Income Differential in the Labor Market: Evidence from the RMG Sector in Bangladesh'. *Asian Social Science*. Vol. 04 (12). 92-97.

Appendix A - Participant Questionnaire and Consent Form:

A. Qualitative Research Questionnaire:

(To be translated into Bangla)

1. Notes:

Design	<i>The interviews will be conducted with 20 female garments workers.</i>
	<i>The interviews will be recorded in writing and via an audio aid.</i>
	<i>The interviews will be transcribed by the Research Assistant/s (RA) into English and checked by an independent third party to ensure accuracy.</i>
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews will be conducted in two phases a) Pilot phase (2-4 interviews), b) Operational Phase (16 interviews); • The interviews will be conducted by a Research Assistant; • The RA will explain the purpose of the interview to the respondent; • The RA shall explain the context for the interview; • The RA shall explain that the interview should last no longer than 45 minutes, a total of three sections in total; • The RA shall explain that the respondent will be paid a total of BDT 200 for the interview in cash, on the completion of the interview; • The RA shall explain that the content and the results from the interview will be <u>confidential</u> in that each respondent will be represented by a unique number and not by name; • The RA must explain that the data will be used for research purposes only and will not be disclosed to a third party other than the University. • The RA must make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers and that the honesty of the respondent is critical; ideally each answer <u>must</u> be completed even if the person responds ambivalently or is unsure; • Each respondent must sign a consent form.
Respondent Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female; • Employed in garments industry directly for a period of more than 3 months; • Between 17- 40 years old; • A mix of ages and marital status is important (ideally 50% single, 50% married).

Form Unique Number: _____

Please specify location (Mohammadpur or Savar) _____

2. **Section A: Personal Information** (*ensure a unique number is assigned to each person e.g. Subject 1, Subject 2 etc.*)

Question	Notes	Response from Respondent
1) What is your age?		
2) Are you married/single/divorced/other?		
3) Do you have any children, if so how many and what ages?		

4) Do your children attend school?		
5) Where were you born and where are you mostly resident now?		
6) Describe your dwelling?		
7) What is your standard of education?		
8) How many years did you attend formal education?		
9) Are you the primary or only income earner in your immediate family?		
10) What is the total income in your household?		
11) Who else lives with you in the same house?		
12) If you are married, is your husband employed?		
13) What kinds of sources of income does your household have?	<i>Try to uncover the various income streams in the household as a whole and who earns what, and how?</i>	

Section B: Your employment

1) Has working in the garments sector had a positive or negative impact on your life? Please explain your answer.	<i>Try to uncover her overall impressions, whether positive or negative, and ask her to explain her answer.</i>	
2) Where do you work, and how far away do you work from your place of residence?		
3) How long have you been a garments worker?		
4) Can you describe the nature of your work there?		
5) Does your monthly salary cover your basic living costs?	<i>If not what is the shortfall and how does she cope with this?</i>	
6) What is your daily wage?	<i>Do not push her if she refuses to answer. If possible see if you can get a general estimate from her.</i>	

7) Do you work full or part time?	<i>Part-time is defined as less than four working days per week (25 hours).</i>	
8) Do you and your family enjoy a better quality and quantity of food since you are employed?	<i>Record examples where possible.</i>	
9) Do you save money?		
10) If so what are you saving towards?		
11) Do you have a formal contract and enjoy any formal work based benefits?		
12) Do you feel secure in your employment?		
13) What were you doing before you were employed as a garments worker?		
14) If you didn't have this job what else would you be doing?		

Section C: Occupational Impact on Socio-Economic status and GENDER within the household

1) Do you feel that your status at HOME has increased OR decreased as a result of your employment? Please explain.	<i>Status is defined as her position in the home. Her <u>decision making capacity over her life and that of her family.</u></i>	
2) Do you feel that your status in your COMMUNITY has increased OR decreased as a result of your employment? Please explain.	<i>Her input into community decisions and decisions affecting others.</i>	
3) Do you feel you have more personal freedom and freedom of movement as a result of your employment? Please explain.		
4) If not you, who manages your wages, and what are they spent on?		
5) What do you like most about your job?		
6) What do you like least about your job?		

7) Can you describe your relationship with your spouse/parents?	<i>Try to establish who is the 'head' of the household and the relationship between the respondent and that person.</i>	
8) Have your responsibilities changed in your household since you started working? Please explain.		
9) Does your husband, family, fiancé, object to you working?		
10) Has your employment ever led to any tension within the home, particularly with the head of your household or the male members of your family?	<i>Try to understand whether the employment has threatened traditional masculine roles as 'bread-winner', or led to any other forms of physical or verbal tension in the household. However, please be sensitive to any disclosures of violence or threats etc.</i>	
11) Do you feel that your family/spouse/parents respect/support your position as a worker in a garments factory?		
12) Do you have any say in the running of the household and has this changed since you became a wage earner? Please explain.		
13) Have the way people treated you changed since you started working?	<i>Try to get specific examples and record these!</i>	
14) Would you be happy for your children (specifically daughters) to work in a garments factory when they reach the age of 18?		
15) Has the garments industry been good or bad for YOUR position overall? Please explain.		

- ✓ Thank respondent for their time.
- ✓ Check all responses have been completed.
- ✓ Pay stipend.

B. Consent Form utilised in the interview process:

(To be translated into Bangla)

Information about the Respondent:

Form Unique Number:	
<i>Date of Interview</i>	
<i>Place of Interview</i>	
<i>Age of participant</i>	
<i>Gender of participant</i>	

Interviewer check list (tick all that applies prior to commencement of the interview):

Inform the respondent of:	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
The nature and purpose/s of the research		
The identity and institutional association of the researcher and supervisor/project leader and their contact details		
The fact that participation is voluntary		
That responses will be treated in a confidential manner		

Therefore, I _____ give my informed consent for the information obtained during the course of this interview/questionnaire to be used in a Dissertation paper compiled by a Masters student (Justin G. Bradfield), of the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. I acknowledge that this information will remain the property of the University and will not be used for any other purpose other than academic study. I acknowledge that the information I am giving is true and given freely, and that my individual identify will not be disclosed.

Appendix B:

Participant list and interview schedule

Respondent Identification	Age of Female Respondent	Interview Location	Date of Interview	Notes
M01	Female, aged 30	Mohammadpur	Early December 2014	Pilot
M02	Female, aged 18	Mohammadpur	Early December 2014	Pilot
M03	Female, aged 17	Mohammadpur	Early December 2014	Pilot
M04	Female, aged 17/18	Mohammadpur	Early December 2014	Pilot
M05	Female, aged 17	Mohammadpur	December 2014	
M06	Female, aged 14-16	Mohammadpur	December 2014	<i>Parental consent obtained in writing</i>
M07	Female, aged 18	Mohammadpur	December 2014	
M08	Female, aged 16	Mohammadpur	December 2014	
M09	Female, aged 15-16	Mohammadpur	December 2014	<i>Parental consent obtained in writing</i>
M10	Female, aged 18	Mohammadpur	December 2014	
S01	Female, aged	Savar	December -	

			January 2014/15	
S02	Female, aged	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S03	Female, aged 24/25	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S04	Female, aged 25	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S05	Female, aged 18	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S06	Female, aged 30	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S07	Female, aged 17	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S08	Female, aged 20	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S09	Female, aged 17	Savar	December - January 2014/15	
S10	Female, aged 18/19	Savar	December - January 2014/15	

Appendix C: Overview of participant profiles:

Description	Quantity
Gender (female)	20
Marital status (single)	15
Marital status (married)	5
Age (above 30)	2
Age (below 30)	18
Education Level (below Grade 7)	16
Education Level (above Grade 7)	4
Children (yes)	4
Children (no)	16
Dwelling type (Semi-permanent tin/brick)	11
Dwelling type (other-Mud)	9
Contract type (permanent)	0
Contract type (temporary or none)	20
Resident (in Dhaka-Mohammadpur)	10
Resident (outside of Dhaka - Savar)	10
Income earner (primary)	0
Income earner (joint)	20
Total Respondents	20

Appendix D:

1) Country Map, Bangladesh.



2) Map of Dhaka District and City, and approximate locations of respondent interviews

