

Gender Inequality and Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Workers in Bangladesh

*Md. Al Amin Pramanik ¹

Pundarik Mukhopadhaya⁺

Abstract: Various trade reform measures considered from 1970s turned out to be the most beneficial to Ready-made garments (RMG) industry in generating employment and income in Bangladesh. RMG industry has provided enormous opportunities to Bangladeshi women to work outside the home for wages. It is opined in the literature that this change has contributed and increased emphasis on women's employment, better work environment, freedom and campaigns to improve their right, equality, and empowerment. This paper investigates the effect of different monetary and non-monetary indicators on the gender inequality and capability among RMG workers in Bangladesh. The methodology is based on 495 primary samples from five different industrial zones in Bangladesh. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) this study developed a new model of gender inequality. It is found that gender inequality is a multidimensional phenomenon: the dimensions found are work environment, freedom, empowerment, and role play. This study also finds that enjoying free leisure time is the most influential indicators of women empowerment while career advancement opportunity and fair recruitment process have significant influence on work environment. Another dimension of gender inequality, freedom, is determined by the making friendship and going out. Role play is emerged as a new determining factor of gender inequality. As a policy prescription the paper suggests that stakeholders including government, owners of the RMG industry should focus attention on making the industry a more worker friendly and sustainable platform for women well-being.

Key words: Gender Inequality, Trade, Capability, RMG, SEM and Bangladesh.

*PhD Candidate, Economics Department, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia. Phone +61 450316364 or Email: alamin.pramanik@mq.edu.au

⁺Economics Department, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia. Phone +61 29850 6476 or Email: pundarik.mukhopadhaya@mq.edu.au