

An Analysis of Economic Globalization and Occupational Gender Segregation: A Case Study on Garments Women Workers in Dhaka City

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ABSTRACT

The world has become more globalized in the 21st century. As economic globalization has been accelerated very fast, especially after the 1990s, the world started to be more interconnected, and dependency grew. Because of the global interconnectedness, the world economy became globalized. The impact of economic globalization can be observed in various sectors. Among them, the gender dimension is very significant. Globalization at the same time both initiated development and challenges to the women as well. Gender segregation in the economy has always been one of the areas for researchers and academicians. So, how economic globalization has relation to gender segregation is the research topic of this paper. For the study purpose, Bangladeshi garment workers(women)working in Dhaka, the country's capital, have chosen. The first part of the article mainly examines the theoretical perspectives of economic globalization on women's work's occupational gender segregation and income inequality. After that, it will also argue a systematic linkage between the global expansion of production, free trade, and finance involved in the gendered division of labor and income inequality. After that, it will also argue a systematic linkage between the global expansion of production, free trade, and finance involved in the gendered division of labor and income inequality. For the study purpose, authors have followed qualitative methodology based on primary and secondary data analysis. As preliminary data interview of 50 garment workers is taken. Also, secondary data journal article, books, authentic websites, newspapers have been used.

KEY WORDS: Economic globalization, Gender segregation, Feminism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The most highlighted problems in today's globalization era are occupational gender segregation and inequality of women's work. The circulation of free trade, finance, and global expansions of productions creates dynamic occupations for all; however, it fosters disparity in the work sector. Although it argues that women from a rich country never face discrimination in their work, women worldwide face discrimination in the workplace. Therefore, the prejudice against women is growing in the job sector with the massive wage gap and inequality in the male-dominated work sector. The research paper evaluates whether current economic globalization fosters occupational gender segregation and income inequality in developing countries like Bangladesh.

This paper argues that economic globalization significantly expands women's opportunities in the workplace; however, it rapidly fosters the gendered division of labor and income inequality. The essay critically examines how the spread of the labor market and ideologies have provided an environment that can foster income inequality.

Next, the paper includes a brief discussion on the context of globalization and its impact on Bangladeshi perspectives. It will provide a comparative analysis of the Bangladeshi garments industry situation, examine the root causes of segregation, its primary consequences, and possible policy responses, such as measures for desegregation of job evaluation practices to redress imbalances current valuation of women's and men's jobs. This paper will analyze the case study on women workers of Dhaka city in the garment factories. It will demonstrate whether globalization contributes to rising occupational segregation and income inequality.

1.1 The objective of the study

The article's primary aim is to recognize the natural trend of gender segregation and income inequality, mainly in the traditional Bangladeshi garments industry due to the world's globalization process. There are two other objectives of the research paper:

1. To analyze the globalization impact on the Bangladeshi labor market, which cause gender segregation in the occupational levels.
2. To identify women workers' involvement in the garments industry and their response to the impact of segregation and income inequality.

II. Theoretical Perspective of Globalization and Occupational Gender Segregation

In the area of gender studies, liberal feminism initiated the idea of equal participation and opportunities. According to Alison Jagger, liberal feminism focuses on equality in every sphere, including the workplace, education, and politics. On the other hand, while globalization at the economic level implies the intensification of monetary exchange and deepens the linkage among national economies, it has various implications on gender. For instance, the RMG sector in Bangladesh has grown faster over the past 35 years, accounting for 80% of Bangladesh's total exports. Among the garment workers, 85 per cent of them are women. These employment opportunities for women have been created because of globalization and liberalization in Bangladesh. Despite facilitating employment opportunities for women, globalization has some negative impacts upon labors too. The analysis of Shanjida Shahab Uddin in 'An analysis of the condition of Bangladesh female RMG workers" shows a gendered division of work within the industry, like women can access lower-paid jobs. However, they perform the most challenging part of the manufacturing process. Also, the presence of the wage gap between men and women has been discussed in the study.

Besides, feminists claim that in Global South, gendered and racial stereotyping have played a significant role in gendered labor. Also, feminist liberals have contributed to Marxist research by focusing on gender dimension on surplus accumulation like low paid female work or unpaid domestic job, exemplified above regarding the gender dimension of globalization. Radical feminism claims on globalization that masculinist behavior and patriarchal subordination are responsible for social structures like state, capitalism, nationalism, and rationalism.

So, it is rational to claim that the feminist accounts of globalization are most accurate than other globalization accounts. It provides antidotes to gender blindness while political realism overly focuses on state competition, postmodernism knowledge, and liberalism on the market-led extension of modernization. So, the feminist framework is crucial to explain the logic of equal participation of men and women in the working sector by providing the fact that they are intellectually equal and address gender equality in economic globalization.

III. RELATIONS BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL GENDER SEGREGATION AND INCOME INEQUALITY

Gender income inequality is a worldwide phenomenon since the beginning of the twentieth century, and it is still a contemporary topic among scholars. This paper argues that income inequality between men and women has increased with the processing of globalization. To support the idea of growing inequality, Paula England (2010) argues that women are comparatively not attracted to pursue male-dominated work as paid or unpaid work of women does not evaluate equally as the work of male (Gauchat, Kelly, & Wallace 2012). Several aspects intervene in the connection between occupational segregation and gender income inequality. Leslie McCall (2001) argues that various economic conditions are applicable for wage inequality, as some occupations are worse for men and some are for women (Gauchat et al., 2012). Her demonstration about industrial labor markets are connected with the higher gender inequality, and it becomes complex in the postindustrial patterns. She argued that gender inequality is forced to increase through postindustrial markets (Gauchat et al., 2012). However, feminist researchers who debated the globalization process are motivated to create new job opportunities for women, and the primary consequences of globalization are occupational gender segregation and income inequality (Meyer 2003). Further, Anker (2001) also argues that the consequences of globalization as a gendered process of globalization are always ignored in scholars' research. Thus, the article demonstrates the two main theoretical factors of occupational segregation and the labor market structure of globalization.

What is Occupational Gender Segregation?

First of all, it is significant to understand the meaning of occupational segregation. The occupational segregation mainly demonstrates the methodical focus on the groups of workers, and it concentrates on the creation of inequality in society because of low prestige, low paid and dangerous jobs for specific color type people and especially women (Gauchat et al. 2012). It becomes challenging when disadvantaged groups, such as women from underdeveloped countries, are concentrated in low-paying, insecure, and less autonomous jobs (Gauchat et al., 2012). This idea between occupational gender segregation and income inequality has become the main concern for sociological perspectives and gender stratification (Black & Brainerd 2004).

It argues that globalization and the threats associated with trade openness have denied women access into male-dominated economic occupations that recommend high class and reputation (Black & Brainerd 2004). In developed and industrialized countries, the gender typing of occupations are well recognized (Anker 2001). For instance, the lower-paid and fewer facilities jobs are offered to women. Further, women are always presented in secretarial, sales, and service work, while men dictate invention and managerial occupations (Anker 2001). This condition is a barrier to gender equality in the open labor market. Anker (2001) argues that occupational gender segregation negatively affects free labor market effectiveness, and it would not be undervalued in today's competitive global marketplace.

After that, Meyer (Meyer 2003) argues that the free global economy has expanded opportunities for women entrance into the labour market; however, there is still a barrier to women's advancement as they are still holding low paying and unskilled jobs. In the last few decades, the female labor market is creating rapidly with the globalization process. Further, multinational companies tend to establish their products and industries in less developed countries due to low labor cost, and this labor source is mainly uneducated and non-trained women (Meyer 2003). Then, the increasing numbers of jobs in financial offices are creating a new window for women to join in the globalized economic world. However, the women contribution is still far behind men as these commercial services are considered men's jobs (Meyer 2003). As a result, women from developing countries have become the preferred labor force for lower-paid employment globally.

However, it is argued that the proportion of women holding higher positions in the competitive business world is increasing dramatically as multinational companies are interested in recruiting women for their best and motivational work expertise (Gauchat et al., 2012). Further, the organizations are now more attracted to represent women for creating gender diversity, which is significant in global economic competition (Anker 2001). Although globalization has become an effective way to decrease gender inequality and segregation in professional structures, the inequality and stereotypical perception about women's abilities and qualities still exist in industrialized and developing nations (Meyer 2003).

Furthermore, it is argued that the economic globalization process cannot reduce the women's lower social status and hatred attitude against women in the workplace and the social-cultural attitude against women's abilities and qualifications do not connect with the globalization process (Gauchat et al. 2012). For instance, men have always considered IT sector occupations, although women specialists have the same qualifications (Meyer 2003). Women are always preferred in the textile industry as technological innovation does not incorporate women's ability (Black & Brainerd 2004). Nonetheless, women are still dominating in the software programming occupations while men are in the more productive fields, such as electronics engineering and management (Meyer 2003). Therefore, the requirements to gain a higher position in multinational companies cannot be possible to fulfil by most women as the social structure has created barriers to women's advancement (Gauchat et al., 2012). As a result, occupational segregation still exists in administration and managerial occupations in developed and developing countries.

Globalization of Labor Market and Income Inequality

It is argued that the globalization process has transformed the labor market as the new structuring of the labor market has increased the elasticity and insecurity of labors in the new economy (Gauchat et al., 2012). The labor market structures are shaped by large corporations, industrial and manufacturing based service. These structures always support white male domination in the workplace rather than women and people of color (Black & Brainerd 2004). For instance, the production process is now separated into many steps, and the process is developing in many countries; such as the chemical formula of soft drinks may invent in the USA, manufacture in Brazil, and bottled in Mexico before export to Africa for consumption (Gauchat et al. 2012). This globalization process has created a particular labor market in each condition, and most of the lower-paid labor force are women. Paul Krugman (Gauchat et al. 2012) has identified this process as the value chain. As a result, the situation and better-

paying positions of authority are still held by males, although globalization does not encourage these conditions in the labor market (Black & Brainerd 2004, pp. 542-543). Therefore, the women's labor market is increasing due to the flows of global labor and capital, and it is assisted in reducing gender inequality from society (Meyer 2003).

Further, Anker (2001) has criticized the process of globalization as it is considered gender-neutral. He demonstrates the globalization process as hyper-masculine and violent, brutal, competitive, and adversarial (Anker 2001). Anker (2001) argues that women have tended to engage in low paid and prestigious jobs, although they always have a chance to gain a higher paid job at the professional level. It is also argued that globalization has forced the patriarchal tendency in trading as women are forced to do low-paid jobs (Meyer 2003). However, this idea is related to the neoliberal ideology, and then it is argued that the gendered division of labor and economic inequality are not the results of market-based economics but the social system's consequences (Black & Brainerd 2004).

Next, there is a dispute that Foreign Direct Investment is interrelated with income inequality, although it is assisted for economic development and job creation (Gauchat et al. 2012, p. 723). It demonstrates that foreign investment in the local market has a significant impact on labor condition labor demand after the investment process (Anker 2001). Further, the demanding labor force always motivates women to move into a competitive labor market for better income (Black & Brainerd 2004, p. 545). Then, the labor market conditions have improved with the global demands of goods and services, and it might facilitate diminishing occupational segregation in the local economy (Gauchat et al., 2012). Therefore, the globalization process would not be a reason for occupational segregation or income inequality.

The relationship between income inequality and economic development is interconnected to each other. The theory of Simon Kuznets curve demonstrates that income inequality has increased in the primary stage of development, and will decline after gaining a certain average income (Anker 2001). It argues that the trend follows only the migration of human resources from agriculture to industry and rural to metropolitan areas (Meyer 2003). Further, it argues that workers from urban industries always receive more than agricultural and rural areas workers. The migration of workers to urban areas from rural areas has decreased the income inequality (Anker 2001). The theory of the Kuznets curve has challenged by other economic ideas because it does not have any clarification for the rise of inequality in developed countries (Anker 2001). Therefore, the relationship between globalization and gender income inequality is still an ambiguous topic in the globalized world.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample:

A total of 50 workers from different age groups was randomly selected for the interview, and there were twenty-five (25) women and girls, and twenty-five (25) were male. The selected sample area is one of the readymade garment factories in Mirpur, Dhaka. The interview mainly captured the gender gap and income inequality among workers in Dhaka city factories. Based on fieldwork from mid-December 2020 to the end of December 2020, the research for the paper derived from semi-structured interview and observation of interviewee. The open structure of qualitative interviewing allows for unexpected issues to emerge. Local 'Bangla dialect' used for the interviews with workers.

Table 01: Profile of the Male and Female Respondents

Age Group	Female	Male
18-22	8	5
23-27	5	2
28-32	4	7
33-37	5	7
38-42	3	4
Total	25	25

(Source: Field Data 2020)

V. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON BANGLADESHI WOMEN IN LABOR MARKET

It is argued that the main signs of the globalization process are urbanization and workers migration to urban areas (Anker 2001). In Bangladesh, it is one of the primary recipients of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) quota system. The result of trade liberalization in Bangladesh is the export-centred ready-made garment industry, where most of the workers are women (The Commonwealth Secretariat 2012). It is reported that there are more than 4000 factories for ready-made garments, and this is the source of 80% of export profits (The Commonwealth Secretariat 2012). This industry has created a huge employment opportunity for 1.5 million women migrating from rural areas to urban for a better job (Annie Kelly 2012). These garments workers have become the primary driving source of a robust economy in this country. As the industry is growing rapidly with the globalization process, the women workers are migrating to the urban area compared to the last few decades, and the urban population is estimated to reach 50 million by 2015 (Annie Kelly 2012). 90% of female respondents are from the village area and the main reason behind the migration to Dhaka is to find a suitable job and better living. One of the respondents Ruma, 20 years old, says that she has joy and this job guarantees her freedom in society. Most of the female come to Dhaka city with their husbands and brothers. All the male respondents also state that it is difficult to find a job outside Dhaka city and are not interested in going to rural life. From this perspective, it is clear that urbanization is the main effects of globalization and women migration is the main consequence of this condition.

Then, the paper argues that occupational segregation still exists in the job sectors, although the participation of women workers is increasing day by day (Anker 2001). The industrialization has provided the occupational opportunity for women but in the lower rank of the occupation (Anker 2001). For instance, in Bangladesh, most of the managerial positions are hold by men (Annie Kelly 2012). Further, a few per cent of the female employee for administration and administrative position, although the female labor force is the preferred source of labor in the factories (Annie Kelly 2012). From the field visit report, it is seen that the female workers are happy with their position. Most of the female respondents are sewer or helper and there is only one female floor supervisor. The female respondents state that they are happy with their job position though it is a low-ranking job. 5 of the female respondents are getting training from the factory to be a machine operator. Others are not complaining about their condition. The reason behind this situation is the poor economic conditions of female workers as they are the primary bread earner in their family. Further, they always get jobs in lower positions because most do not have any prior experience working in the industrial condition (Annie Kelly 2012). Therefore, occupational sex segregation is not the result of globalization in Bangladesh but the social conditions have motivated to increase it.

The paper also argues that the gender wage gap is the consequence of the globalization. In the condition of Bangladeshi factories workers, they have always benefitted better conditions and better payment than outside EPZ factory workers (The Commonwealth Secretariat 2012). The field data finds that most of the factories are following structured salary rules. Here, female respondents say that they do not see any discrimination or wage gap between men and women. Further, men respondents state that the factory policies are supportive towards female workers and there are no wage discriminations. Researchers argue that women workers are consistently paid less compared to men workers (Annie Kelly 2012). However, the field data reports that the factories mainly concern about the production and the experienced workers. As a result, the skilled female workers are getting a better salary compared to men workers. In the domestic sector of Bangladesh, the main reason of income inequality is the business condition, governance and education of the women labor. The female respondents working as the sewer and helper are not educated enough to get any other better job. Further, the female manager is a university graduate, and she says that she will not stay in this industry if she gets a better job. On the other hand, the respondents' male managers are university graduate, and their experiences are more than 15 years. So, the disparity is not the direct result of globalization.

VI. IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE RMG SECTOR: CHALLENGES IN NEW NORMAL WORLD

COVID 19 has upended the global economy by the year 2020. Restrictions on trade, cut the supply-chain demand and other necessary steps to tackle the COVID 19 have created a threat to the normal flow of the global economy. As WTO assumes that it could bring collapse in global trade than the 2008-09 crisis. And the impact of the crisis (COVID 19) affects men and women differently, accelerating the gender gap widely. Such findings include 61% of the world's total employed population live their life through the informal economy. Also, researchers found that in South Asia 80% of women are employed informally in nonagricultural sector.

In Bangladesh, no exception number of a female worker in nonagricultural sector contributes a lot. Especially in the garment sector 85% of the workers are women, while this industry contributes 80% of the country's total export revenue.

To some extent, the country's the readymade garment (RMG) sector is the second-largest exporter globally. While the global economy was facing great economic shock because of COVID 19, its impact on Bangladesh was huge. It was reported in April 2020 that due to lockdown, the sector about to lose 6 billion US dollars is cancelling buyers' orders. In addition, due to the lockdown declared by the government of Bangladesh from March 2020, many garment workers working in the informal sector faced serious hurdles. For instance, there is such evidence found in newspapers that parents of a newborn baby had to sell their child as they could not pay the hospital bill. Though police reclaimed and hand over the child to the parents. But the child's father stated that both he and his wife worked in a garment factory, and as it was closed, they were not getting their salary for a long time.

Also, evidence shows that the country's garment sector, especially the RMG sector, started facing troubles earlier than others. It greatly depends on raw materials in China, and the government went for suspension of economic relation with the country from the very beginning of the lockdown. Although later opening up with China lesser the problem but cancellation of orders threatening the survival of the sector. Till now, in the newly shifted supply chain, demand has been influencing the global economy and the economy of Bangladesh.

VII. CONCLUSION

Although gender wage inequality is always interlinked with the global labor market, it is not yet proved that inequality is the consequence of globalization. The condition is varied country to country; such as, the wage gap is risen almost 8 percent in Asia but only 0.5 percent in developing country. The globalization is not accountable for inequality but domestic factors such as governance and education play a significant role to determine wage inequality growth. Further, different factors have worked to produce inequality in society, and these factors are migration, trade and foreign direct investment. Then, the developing countries are impacted by unequal income distribution and occupational sex segregation due to weak social system but not the effect of globalization. To reduce occupational segregation and income inequality in developing countries, the policy makers should protect the workers and the industrial administration should follow the designed code of conduct for workers' rights instead of blaming globalization.

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