

Initiatives to Implement Legal Safeguards for Workers' Rights in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

In particular, the ready-made garment (RMG) sector- a key industry that heavily employs human labour- remains highly susceptible to labour discrimination in Bangladesh. This article questions the statutes intended to protect workers from discrimination on the job. It analyses how well the existing legislation operates and has been implemented regarding gender, age, and disability discrimination.

Results indicated that policies addressing ageism and disability discrimination are inadequate and that they are often forgotten. Further, the weak enforcement of gender equality provisions has resulted in the continuation of discriminatory practices, particularly against women in the RMG sector. The report calls for extensive legislative measures for enforcement and enhanced international cooperation to eradicate these systemic problems. The report advises that the amended Bangladesh Labour Act include age discrimination, disability discrimination, and intersectionality.

It also suggests the promotion of better corporate social responsibility and the strengthening of labor inspectors' capacity. The comparison of labor laws in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal suggests that the laws of Bangladesh need to be better in numerous respects. These comparisons can assist in pinpointing particular legislative lacunae and opportunities for policy improvement.

Keywords:

Employment Discrimination, Gender Inequality, Workers' Rights, Bangladesh Labour Act, Ready-Made Garments (RMG) Industry, Legal Framework, International Labour Organization (ILO), Workplace Harassment.

Introduction

Human dignity and economic prosperity, on a global and national scale, depend on people's ability to exercise their rights in the workplace.ⁱ Due to discriminatory policies, certain marginalized persons in Bangladesh have been forced to work in the labour-intensive economy, namely in the export-oriented Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry.ⁱⁱ Given the country's economic foundation, the importance of investigating workplace discrimination in Bangladesh cannot be stressed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Section 332 notably prohibits gender discrimination regarding remuneration and other job-related considerations.^{iv} However, its enforcement mechanisms are weak, and its applicability is severely limited. Age, disability, and racial bias are not included. The fact that international treaties deal with employment discrimination is another factor supporting the advancement of human rights. Bangladesh is a signatory to two International Labour Organisation conventions: one dealing with equal pay for equal work and another with employment and occupational discrimination.^v Nevertheless, problems arise during implementation and use. There is a noticeable shortage of personnel and funding at the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, the principal agency responsible for enforcing labour rules.^{vi}

The workplace in Bangladesh is a hostile environment for women. Women make up more than 80% of the RMG workforce, yet they often have to settle for lower-paying jobs with limited opportunities for promotion.^{vii} Despite being prohibited, sexual harassment in the workplace remains a significant concern.^{viii} When older adults face age discrimination, it can make it even more difficult for them to find work or maintain their current positions.^{ix} Due to the lack of an outright prohibition against age discrimination in the workplace in the Bangladesh Labour Act, this demographic has no recourse to legal action.^x People with disabilities still encounter prejudice even after the act protecting their rights was passed in 2013.^{xi} People who face multiple forms of discrimination in the workplace are more likely to act discriminatorily.^{xii} In certain companies or positions of power, the idea that women value family more than work could be problematic.^{xiii} Cultural conventions like these perpetuate bias against women and prevent them from fully participating in society.^{xiv}

Adding further anti-discrimination protections and prioritizing them in the Bangladesh Labour Act's upcoming amendments necessitates an all-encompassing strategy.^{xv} The revised

Bangladesh Labour Act will include prohibitions against ageism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.^{xvi} The labour inspection authority's capacity and resources will be significantly enhanced by increasing the number of inspectors, providing them with the proper training, and setting up better monitoring systems to enforce current legislation.^{xvii} Employers and employees can increase their awareness and comprehension by working with labour unions, civil society, and international organizations to organize and execute such programs.^{xviii} Closing the gender wage gap, empowering women, and reducing sexual harassment are all legislative objectives that must be pursued to achieve workplace gender equality.^{xix} Reducing and eventually eliminating gender-based discrimination can be achieved through the effective implementation of rules regarding work-life balance and maternity leave.^{xx}

People with disabilities may be able to participate in the labour market more if quota systems were in place and businesses were incentivized to make reasonable accommodations for their employees.^{xxi} Extending social security coverage and progressively formalising informal job ties are two creative methods that can help reduce discrimination in the informal sector.^{xxii} Still, reducing discrimination and improving working conditions require concerted international action and pressure.^{xxiii} The global supply chain relies heavily on Bangladesh, especially in the RMG industry. As a result, overseas buyers and entities have a lot of ways to push for stricter labour standards in Bangladesh.^{xxiv} The law has come a long way, but there are still significant issues with enforcing and implementing it.^{xxv} This is vital to foster long-term economic growth and social development while protecting workers' rights.^{xxvi}

Literature Review

In Bangladesh, discrimination in the workplace is a significant problem. Social, cultural, economic, and legal actions all impact it. This matter is informed by three theoretical frameworks: human capital theory,^{xxvii} labour market segmentation,^{xxviii} and institutional perspectives.^{xxix} According to human capital theory, skills, education, and experience are the root causes of employment market gaps.^{xxx} Nonetheless, it has been criticized for failing to identify institutional constraints that significantly harm a given community.^{xxxi} According to research, women, religious minorities, and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

face widespread prejudice in Bangladesh.^{xxxii} This prejudice occurs in educational and training opportunities and jobs, ultimately harming economic possibilities.^{xxxiii}

The concept also explains why some individuals have little choice but to settle for low-paying, unstable professions with no chance for promotion.^{xxxiv} A key area of research in institutional theory is the persistence of prejudice and how institutionalized behaviors, cultural ideas, and social norms influence it.^{xxxv} Traditional patriarchal gender norms in Bangladesh hold that women should spend most of their time at home taking care of the home and children.^{xxxvi} We must urgently address this deeply rooted practice that affects employment, wage determination, and professional career prospects.^{xxxvii} There have been significant shifts in Bangladesh's legislative framework meant to prevent discrimination in the workplace.^{xxxviii} Section 345 of the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006, which forbids discrimination based on gender, religion, and ethnicity and consolidates prior laws, is mainly responsible for this improvement.^{xxxix} The framework's inefficient implementation mechanism and limited scope have also drawn criticism.^{xl} To give more precise directions for execution, the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 were later passed.^{xli} However, significant obstacles remained, especially when tackling intersectional prejudice and guaranteeing a smooth rollout.^{xlii} There are still difficulties in implementing the laws, even though they are in line with international norms. This is especially true in the ready-made garment sector, where violations of labour rights and gender discrimination are prevalent.^{xliii}

According to numerous studies, the efficacy of legal mandates within suitable legislative frameworks is diminished by pay discrimination, occupational segregation, and other socio-cultural obstacles.^{xliv} The poverty rate among families headed by women is exacerbated by the fact that women, particularly in rural regions, experience wage inequalities due to their gender and are often restricted to low-paying employment.^{xlv} Equal employment opportunity is also being considered in Bangladesh's public sector.^{xlvi} Cultural norms and institutional failures cause the systematic disregard of legal obligations, notwithstanding their intended promotion of equality.^{xlvii} The 2024 student quota protests sparked public debate about institutional discrimination in the distribution of public-sector jobs. This issue exemplifies the ongoing challenges in the employment sector, emphasizing the urgent need for reform.^{xlviii} Protests began with the proposal for quota reform.^{xlix} They discovered that educational options, regional identification, and socioeconomic status contribute to the persistent employment disparity.¹

Many obstacles, such as a lack of necessary infrastructure, social and cultural pushback, and financial constraints, hinder the effective enforcement of anti-discrimination laws in Bangladesh.^{li} Institutional barriers include a shortage of resources dedicated to labour inspections, an insufficient demand for new resources, and legal procedures that impede the timely delivery of justice.^{lii} According to research, insufficient labour standard enforcement by government organizations is typically connected with limited capacity, notably in the personal and non-clinical healthcare sectors.^{liii} Socio-cultural factors contribute to discriminatory practices by influencing recruiting, compensation determination, and promotion procedures.^{liv} Despite the legal enforcement of caste discrimination rules, numerous communities continue to demonstrate considerable socio-cultural biases through their actions.^{lv} Persistent bigotry may have economic roots, especially in export-oriented industries that prioritize cheap labour over worker rights.^{lvi} Implementation is impeded because employees are not informed about their rights and options under anti-discrimination laws.^{lvii} These reasons discourage employees from reporting discriminatory incidents, especially in the informal sector, and there is widespread fear of retaliation.^{lviii}

More in-depth intersectional techniques are required to examine how many determinants of disadvantage, such as gender, religion, and socioeconomic status, influence labour market outcomes.^{lix} Addressing socioeconomic inequities in public sector employment and recognizing that implementing anti-discrimination legislation simultaneously fosters fairness and equal access to work prospects for marginalized groups were essential themes of the 2024 student quota demonstrations.^{lx} The anti-discrimination laws of Bangladesh are based on the 2006 Bangladesh Labour Act, which is ineffective mainly for several reasons. For example, in industries that are not subject to strict regulations, the Act above prohibits discrimination in hiring, wage payment, and working conditions, but, in reality, this is seldom enforced.^{lxi} The main issue is a lack of implementation of legislation and regulations governing the informal sector, which employs a significant portion of Bangladeshi labour.^{lxii} The main issue is a lack of implementation of legislation and rules governing the informal sector, which employs a substantial portion of Bangladeshi labour.^{lxiii} Inadequate labour inspector training and limited resources for work inspections lead to inefficient anti-discrimination enforcement.^{lxiv} Discriminatory practices remain in the RMG industries, most notably pay discrimination, employment segregation, and hazardous and unstable working conditions. These concerns mainly affect the female and minority workforces.^{lxv}

Given this, it is reasonable to assume Bangladesh's ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 100 and 111 demonstrate their intention to implement global labour standards.^{lxvi} However, domestic legislation has been inconsistent and sporadic in performing the duties imposed by these Conventions.^{lxvii} Both the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and its predecessor contain measures for compliance with the applicable conventions, which have been implemented.^{lxviii} Even though these provisions forbid gender-based income discrimination, they have been little enforced.^{lxix} Legal safeguards in Bangladesh are often overridden by deeply embedded patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes in the workplace.^{lxx} Fewer women participate in the traditional labour market in rural areas because of the pervasive assumption that women should put family obligations before professional goals.^{lxxi} It is difficult to effectively execute anti-discrimination efforts due to this socio-cultural impediment to equality.^{lxxii}

The 2024 student quota rallies highlighted the intersectionality of discrimination within Bangladesh's labor market as participants called for reforms to the government's quota system.^{lxxiii} This approach allocates public sector jobs according to geographical affiliation, socioeconomic status, and educational credentials.^{lxxiv} Opponents argue that the approach promotes bias by giving an unfair advantage to particular groups while maintaining current inequalities.^{lxxv} Protests have brought attention to the need for a stronger public sector hiring system that accounts for the many types of discrimination that marginalized people encounter.^{lxxvi} Many changes were made to fix the quota system's most prominent and troublesome aspects due to the government's varied responses to these difficulties.^{lxxvii} Problems with socioeconomic inequality and the underrepresented groups' lack of opportunity in the workplace persist despite these advances.^{lxxviii}

Economic worries sometimes constrain Bangladesh's legislative system, making it harder to achieve the desired results.^{lxxix} It is essential to keep production costs low for industries that support the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry to remain competitive worldwide.^{lxxx} Regardless of workers' rights cost, profit maximization is the top priority for businesses in this industry.^{lxxxi} Workers of color and women, already over-represented in low-wage, hazardous occupations, are even more exploited as a result of the economic crisis.^{lxxxii} The export-oriented business is notorious for its disrespect for labour rights and its flagrant violations of anti-discrimination laws, driven by its intense focus on competition.^{lxxxiii} Employers may hesitate to implement such measures if improving working conditions or ensuring fair compensation

increases operational expenses.^{lxxxiv} Consequently, even though there are specific legal limits in place, the labour in these businesses is nevertheless exploited and lives in poverty.^{lxxxv}

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) concepts linked to firm actions can help eliminate employment discrimination.^{lxxxvi} However, the present situation has not been changed by the initiatives of a few multinational firms to establish programs to enhance labour practices in particular supermarkets or retail outlets.^{lxxxvii} CSR is sometimes criticized for boosting a company's brand image rather than affecting behavioral changes.^{lxxxviii} Many RMG brands have developed codes of conduct that include assurances of non-discrimination. Nonetheless, the criteria are consistently not applied in the manufacturing sector.^{lxxxix} This covert CSR challenges determining if CSR programs truly advance workers' rights.^{xc} However, we need a system that works hand in hand with strict legal enforcement and heavy-handed corporate responsibility.^{xc}

The main thing that might be done better in this study is to have more data to show how common discriminatory behaviors are in many different venues and businesses in Bangladesh. Due to its economic significance and significant worker rights breaches, the RMG industry has been the primary focus of most of the present research.^{xcii} The informal sector employs many of Bangladesh's workforce, who often endure low pay, uncertain employment prospects, and the absence of official contracts. The implementation of labour rules is made more difficult by these scenarios.^{xciii} Regmi and Naidoo considered several aspects in their comprehensive assessment of studies examining the correlation between workplace discrimination and job satisfaction.^{xciv} Discrimination against workers exists based on gender, religion, and economic standing.^{xcv} This knowledge vacuum should be filled in the future by studies focusing on specific industries to understand employees' difficulties in these fields better.^{xcvi} The crucial aspect of intersectionality is often overlooked in talks about employment discrimination in Bangladesh. Several factors, including gender, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background, usually come together to form workplace discrimination.^{xcvii} The interaction between gender and religious prejudice may make religious minority women more susceptible.^{xcviii} Research and policy development on job discrimination could benefit from an intersectional lens, which would help shed light on the issue and direct targeted responses to meet the specific needs of different groups.^{xcix}

A comprehensive study of neighboring countries, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal, is necessary to find and remove the legislative hurdles Bangladesh faces while trying to combat workplace discrimination.^c . Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan and other seminal court rulings, anti-discrimination statutes, and the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 are all essential standards.^{ci} Similarly, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Prejudice Against the Castes and the Constitution of Nepal 2015 aim to end caste prejudice in Nepal.^{cii} Legislation prohibiting discrimination exists in Sri Lanka and Pakistan; nevertheless, there are significant obstacles to its practical implementation in the informal economy and among minority groups.^{ciii}

Legislation improvements are essential to improve workers' rights in Bangladesh. Legislation has been strengthened by the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015. However, their execution has been uneven.^{civ} There is a noticeable lack of studies in the existing literature regarding the effectiveness of different legislative remedies in eliminating discrimination. Empirical studies are needed to fill this vacuum.^{cv} To identify its advantages and disadvantages, the present legal system might be better understood through longitudinal studies that follow its impact over time.^{cvi} Mediation, workplace ombudspersons, and similar processes for addressing allegations of prejudice in the workplace require further investigation.^{cvi} Particularly for those in informal occupations, these processes may offer more accessible and efficient ways of handling accusations of discrimination.^{cvi} These methods are essential so that these employees can seek redress outside the traditional court system.^{cix}

At last, it is essential to assess how international labour standards influenced the evolution of Bangladesh's legal system.^{cx} Bangladesh's ratification of the ILO's core agreements necessitates investigating the effects on labour practices and the degree to which international principles have been incorporated into national laws.^{cx} An example would be how global supply chain dynamics and international trade agreements inadvertently affect Bangladesh's worker rights development or stagnation.^{cxii} The report also looks at anti-discrimination statutes and judicial interventions in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal to determine where Bangladesh's legal framework is lacking. Implementing this trade agreement can enhance workers' rights if labour standards are maintained. How well the system enforces domestic and foreign laws will indicate its effectiveness.^{cxiii} There is a widespread belief that the government's substantial changes in reaction to the large protests do not go far enough in tackling the systemic issues contributing to inequality.^{cxiv} Bangladesh's regulatory and

legislative structure is flawed, focusing on reactive rather than proactive reforms, highlighting a more significant problem.^{cxv} A well-planned strategy is necessary, which involves looking forward to potential problems and adapting to the ever-changing demands of the labour market.^{cxvi}

Legal framework in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's principal law governing labour relations is the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006. This legislation established a thorough regulatory framework by consolidating and revising other prior labour laws. Important topics covered by the Act include compensation, working conditions, occupational safety and health, union activity, and dispute resolution. Protecting employees' rights is critical because it ensures a level playing field for all employees.^{cxvii} It is believed that workers in Bangladesh would get their wages on schedule.^{cxviii} Employees in Bangladesh will supposedly get their paychecks on time.^{cxix} When deciding how much to pay workers to keep up with basic living expenses, pay boards look at inflation, the cost of living, and the company's finances.^{cxx} The number of working hours and several forms of paid leave, including annual, sick, and maternity leave, are outlined in the Act. To implement essential parts of the BLA 2006, the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 lay forth the necessary steps to take.^{cxxi} Payroll procedures, acceptable conduct in the workplace, and ways to resolve conflicts are all expected to be spelled out in the rules that are now before us. They provide the groundwork for the rights guaranteed by the Labour Act to be implemented appropriately. Even while this framework is well-founded, there are still worries about how it will be implemented, especially in sectors like Ready-Made Garments (RMG), where it doesn't seem to tackle the serious problems that workers, whom the legislation should cover entirely, confront.^{cxxii}

The Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006 imposed stringent regulations to stamp out prejudice. Discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender, or birth country is forbidden under Section 345. This section is designed to make sure that all workers are treated fairly and not discriminated against in any way, including when it comes to hiring, promotions, and pay.^{cxxiii} Section 337 ensures that equal pay for equal work is implemented, irrespective of gender. It also discusses gender-based discrimination and how it leads to pay gaps and fewer

advancement opportunities. Given that gender inequality is still a problem in Bangladesh, this is a significant matter.^{cxxiv} Even though the Act mandates equal pay, many companies pay men and women significantly differently. This is especially true in industries like the RMG, where women dominate. The law safeguards the rights of underrepresented groups, including workers with disabilities, and guarantees equal rights for everyone. Legally, businesses cannot discriminate against their workers based on their disability and must provide reasonable accommodations for such employees.^{cxxv} There is more protection against discrimination in the workplace, according to the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015.^{cxxvi} To comply with these rules, businesses must set up internal procedures to handle discrimination and harassment claims. To evaluate allegations of bias and take appropriate action, employers are required to establish internal committees. Sexual harassment is a prevalent issue in many companies, and dealing with it requires an organizational framework.^{cxxvii} Reports of inadequate investigations and noncompliance have cast doubt on the effectiveness of these processes.^{cxxviii} Many workers, especially women, are afraid to come out about harassment because of the negative repercussions and cultural stigma that accompany reporting such instances.^{cxxix} Although they are commendable, the current legislative measures do nothing to prevent prejudice, hold offenders accountable, and ensure that victims of harassment and discrimination get justice.^{cxx}

Further clarification and definitions are required under Bangladesh's Labour Law, Section 345.^{cxxxi} It outlaws any discrimination in hiring, promotion, or training that a company may provide.^{cxxxi} Nevertheless, this fails to confront the structural biases present in the workplace, including biased decision-making and the discriminatory impacts of ostensibly neutral laws.^{cxxxi} Extended work-hour regulations disproportionately affect female workers who are also caretakers, although this is not acknowledged as discrimination by the law.^{cxxxi} Business owners who violate anti-discrimination laws face steeper penalties because of changes made to the BLA 2006 in 2013.^{cxxxi} In addition, these measures enhanced workers' rights by bolstering unions and collective bargaining. In light of worldwide condemnation in the wake of tragedies like the Rana Plaza building collapse, the government of Bangladesh has taken steps to bring its labour laws in line with those of other developed countries.^{cxxxi} This incident highlighted the terrible working conditions endured by RMG workers in Bangladesh.^{cxxxi} Enforcement concerns have mitigated the measures' practical effect, even though they represent progress in this area. Several employers undercut anti-discrimination laws by

taking advantage of legislative loopholes or using their political clout to avoid fines. Improved maternity benefits for women and stronger rules to protect workers from hazards on the job were the primary goals of the 2018 updates.^{cxviii} Unfortunately, religious minorities and persons with disabilities, among other marginalized groups, still face discrimination on the job, and even adjustments won't be enough to help them.^{cxvix}

Workers' rights in Bangladesh are well protected under the country's constitution. Every physically competent individual has the right and the duty to work, as stated in Article 20(1) of the Constitution.^{cxl} Following the principle of "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work," it stresses the significance of fair compensation for labour.^{cxli} Fair wages are defined and discussed in this paragraph, which also deals with workplace equality. Everyone has the inherent right to be treated fairly by the law, as stated in Article 27 of the Constitution.^{cxlii} Furthermore, it is forbidden to discriminate against someone because of their religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, according to Article 28.^{cxliii} The BLA 2006 labour laws are based on constitutional provisions that establish the core foundations of workplace anti-discrimination legislation.^{cxliv} Article 29 fortifies these protections to guarantee equal opportunity in public employment by clarifying that government posts are filled based on merit, not discrimination.^{cxlv} However, the fact that Bangladesh has kept its grade of 5 from the ITUC for the last nine years shows that it has to take more action to protect workers' rights.^{cxlvi} Bangladesh is included among the top ten nations that would hurt workers in 2022, according to earlier results from the ITUC Global Rights Index (2020 and 2021).^{cxlvii}

In addition, the worldwide spread of COVID-19 has resulted in the loss of employment for many individuals, especially in Bangladesh.^{cxlviii} Employee layoffs in Bangladesh were triggered mainly by budget cutbacks, which led to falling earnings.^{cxlix} Developing nations are more vulnerable to the effects of gender discrimination. Workplace verbal harassment affected 84.7% of female workers, and mental harassment affected 71.3%, according to Karmojibi Nari and CARE Bangladesh. Even more concerning is the fact that 12.7% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment, with 52% blaming their superiors for physical assaults.^{cl} The Constitution has strong protections, but implementing them may be difficult.^{cli} Due to the slowness of the court system and the high expense of legal proceedings, it was not feasible for the average worker to pursue legal action to enforce their rights.^{clii} In addition, many instances of discrimination go unreported because workers are unaware of their rights under the law.^{cliii} One crucial department that helps interpret these basic demands

is the court.^{cliv} Still, there are inconsistencies since the court has decided cases individually. Also, some people use a narrow interpretation of the law to limit how far anti-discrimination protections go.^{clv} When deciding allegations of job discrimination, courts may focus only on overt acts of prejudice rather than addressing systemic issues like pay disparities and barriers to promotion.^{clvi} Legislation, protocols, and conventions provide a thorough framework that protects workers' rights. Nevertheless, in practice, things aren't always as they seem.^{clvii}

A significant influence on Bangladesh's anti-discrimination and labour rights legislation has been the country's rigid adherence to international legal norms.^{clviii} The essential international treaties the government approves are the Convention to Eliminate All Discrimination Against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.^{clix} Non-discrimination regulations and fair remuneration are two areas of Bangladeshi labour law that have significantly influenced these factors. The BLA 2006 is in line with the provisions of the International Labour Organization's Conventions No. 100 and No. 111, which guarantee equal pay for equal labour and seek to eradicate discrimination in the workplace.^{clx} The Bangladesh Labour Law of 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules of 2015 recognize non-discrimination and fair compensation as fundamental rights that the treaties guarantee.^{clxi} Although the government has approved these accords, how they will be fully implemented is unclear.^{clxii} Corruption, a lack of funds, and ineffective enforcement tactics are the primary challenges they face.^{clxiii} Wage disparity is substantial across most sectors, even though the BLA 2006 included measures to guarantee equal pay for equal work.^{clxiv} Despite doing the same work as men and being subjected to the same working circumstances, women are nevertheless paid less and treated less highly. According to studies conducted on labour rights in Bangladesh, there is a persistent discrepancy between international promises and local implementation.^{clxv} These studies often emphasize strict enforcement and enhanced political will as crucial in this setting.^{clxvi} Workers' and employers' misunderstanding of their rights and responsibilities under these international labour agreements and these organizations' inefficiency and resource constraints (including technology) worsen the issue.^{clxvii}

Legal precedents have significantly influenced how anti-discrimination laws in Bangladesh are understood and implemented.^{clxviii} In the 2009 case of *BNWLA v. Bangladesh and Others*, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court formulated rules for addressing sexual harassment in diverse public venues, including workplaces and educational institutions.^{clxix}

The groundbreaking nature of this case lay in the fact that it laid out precise criteria for the future protection of women's and girls' rights, with an emphasis on specific strategies and criteria.^{clxxx} To comply with current judicial mandates, organizations and enterprises must have a system in place to handle accusations of harassment internally.^{clxxi}

A complaint committee with equal representation of the sexes must be formed as part of the process.^{clxxii} In addition, it has stipulated that disagreements must be resolved in an individual setting without fear of retaliation.^{clxxiii} Organizations still need to construct the required mechanisms; certain governments have chosen to disregard these demands, and others have conducted superficial investigations that have failed to establish wrongdoing.^{clxxiv} The court has greatly supported the effort to enact anti-discrimination legislation.^{clxxv} However, its conservative stance has hampered the potential strength and effectiveness of statutory protections against work discrimination.^{clxxvi} Despite the need for legal education, many workers are deterred from seeking it out due to the high costs, lengthy court hearings, and fear of employer retribution associated with legal procedures.^{clxxvii}

Disconnects exist between the passing of anti-discrimination legislation in Bangladesh and its execution.^{clxxviii} While several supplementary laws are included in the Constitution, the most important ones for dealing with employment discrimination are BLR 2015 and BLA 2006.^{clxxix} As a result of systemic flaws, including weak enforcement and a lack of political will, international legal norms cannot effectively impact domestic labour laws.^{clxxx} The breadth of anti-discrimination safeguards has been defined in part by case law. However, a lack of precedents and judicial unwillingness hinders a strong legislative framework to address prejudice.^{clxxxi}

The effectiveness and implementation of legal measures

The ready-to-wear apparel business and the financial sector are two areas that have had a significant impact.^{clxxxii} The RMG industry, a critical component of the national economy, is notorious for gender wage disparities, poor working conditions, and weak employee statutory protections.^{clxxxiii} These difficulties primarily affect female labourers, who comprise the bulk of this industry and remain unaddressed.^{clxxxiv} Bangladesh occupies the 48th position

among 149 nations in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Disparity Report, indicating moderate progress while underscoring the pressing need to tackle persistent gender inequality.^{clxxxv}

In their investigation of discrimination, harassment, and bullying in the private banking industry, Milon et al. gathered extensive evidence.^{clxxxvi} These problems seem prevalent in many other businesses, not just the RMG one.^{clxxxvii} According to this research, women working for private banks have particular difficulties, such as harassment and bullying, which act as roadblocks to their career progress.^{clxxxviii} Women constitute 63% of the private banking workforce but a pitiful 4.44% of senior management roles, according to the latest statistics from the Bangladesh Bank.^{clxxxix} This research shows the importance of trade policies that take gender into account.^{cxc} One major problem in the RMG industry is the gender pay gap, meaning that women may get less money than men for doing the same work.^{cxc i} The extensive legal framework instituted by the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 has been inadequate in protecting these workers, attributable to a deficient enforcement mechanism and pervasive corruption among governmental bodies.^{cxc ii} Additionally, they are more likely to be victims of prejudice and exploitation due to their financial fragility, since many of them are the leading providers for their families.^{cxc iii} This highlights the discrepancy between legal frameworks and their execution, showing that institutional hurdles hinder efforts to tackle discrimination in the workplace in Bangladesh.^{cxc iv} The private banking industry has a long history of recorded instances of discrimination in the workplace.^{cxc v} Bullying and harassment are everyday workplace experiences for many women working in banking, according to many studies. These negative experiences hurt their mental health and their ability to advance in their careers.^{cxc vi} Victims are typically discouraged from reporting events due to a lack of efficient enforcement procedures and fear of retaliation, creating an environment that promotes the spread of discrimination.^{cxc vii} The ingrained cultural norms inside these institutions, which frequently favor the advancement and assignment of significant roles to male employees, worsen the existing gender discrepancies in this domain.^{cxc viii}

Bangladesh's Labour Act 2006 and Labour Rules 2015 prohibit workplace discrimination; however, law enforcement concerns show the gap between the law requirements and implementation.^{cxc ix} While the Labour Court system remains ineffective, understaffed, and overburdened with cases, the Department of Labour and DIFE face challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiency, resource constraints, and corruption, all while overseeing

compliance, inspections, and labour rule enforcement in Bangladesh.^{cc} The problem worsens because many workers don't know their rights or fear that their employers would retaliate if they sued.^{cci} Despite Bangladesh's ratification of Conventions Nos. 100 and 111, which ensure equitable remuneration and prohibit employment discrimination, and its acknowledgment of the ILO's international labour standards, implementation is constrained by cultural and financial limitations.^{ccii}

For the most part, the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Department of Labour are responsible for ensuring compliance with labour laws.^{cciii} This branch of government is notoriously slow to address labour rights abuses and has a history of inadequate proactive monitoring.^{cciv} Corruption is the main problem with these agencies. Claims show that officials and labour inspectors put political affiliation and financial gain ahead of legality when prioritizing cases.^{ccv} Because of the rise of selective enforcement, powerful wrongdoers may now evade punishment. Employees and civil society groups are demanding more access to information on government steps to rectify labour rights abuses. Still, the lack of transparency makes the lack of accountability even worse.^{ccvi} It is also necessary for the several institutions responsible for enforcing labour rules to work together more effectively. The Department of Labour and Inspection for Factories and Establishments ensures worker safety and regulates labour regulations. Workers often find it more challenging to seek remedies for discrimination, and overlapping responsibilities and insufficient cooperation across different authorities and organizations worsen inefficiencies in implementing labour rules.^{ccvii}

For these organizations, dealing with politicization is a considerable challenge. Due to fears that strict adherence to labour standards may impede production and cause economic disruption, the government is hesitant to thoroughly enforce them fully thoroughly thoroughly thoroughly, even if doing so would benefit the economy as a whole, especially in the RMG sector. Usually, the law has been selectively implemented due to economic concerns taking priority over worker welfare.^{ccviii} Furthermore, industry lobbyists may exercise influence, resulting in leniency toward companies that break labour laws, ultimately undercutting enforcement operations.^{ccix}

Economic pressures force the majority, particularly those in the RMG sector, to tolerate discriminatory behavior. Individuals hesitate to address discriminatory behavior or seek legal remedies because they fear losing their jobs and finding new employment.^{ccx} The

precariousness of their economic standing is accentuated by the fact that many people work in informal industries where labour standards are rarely enforced. As a result, their options for protection against discrimination are minimal.^{ccxi}

Disparities in salary, sexual harassment, and limited prospects for job progression arise from social perceptions of women as less qualified and unworthy of equitable treatment, aggravating the difficulties women have in asserting their rights.^{ccxii} Women contribute significantly to the financial sector; only 4.44 percent hold top leadership positions.^{ccxiii} The traditional expectation for women to prioritize family responsibilities frequently limits their opportunities for advancement, exacerbating the problem.^{ccxiv} A hostile environment is created when numerous layers of gender, caste, and class overlap, amplifying the discrepancies and making it far more difficult for low-income workers to get justice.^{ccxv} Because they do not have any legal protections, it is difficult to enforce regulations on working conditions or anti-discrimination laws in an informal setting.^{ccxvi} Workers' inability to comprehend and exercise their rights and lack of analytical and legal literacy worsen the situation.^{ccxvii}

Fear of social ostracism, personal retaliation, and a lack of awareness of legal rights have been recognized as hurdles to taking legal action or reporting discriminatory acts.^{ccxviii} Numerous examples show that cultural prejudices have a part in the limiting process.^{ccxix} This is especially important for women and underprivileged communities, who may face additional social consequences for expressing protest against discrimination.^{ccxx} The extensive employment of contract or temporary workers, who may be dismissed immediately if seen as instigators, adds to the fear of retaliation in the RMG business.^{ccxxi}

Workers in Bangladesh are theoretically protected from discrimination under the country's legal structure, but actual enforcement needs a significant overhaul.^{ccxxii} The requirement that workers be informed of their rights has been a substantial hurdle to the full implementation of such legislation. Many people avoid seeking legal redress for bias because they lack awareness and fear social repercussions.^{ccxxiii} Workplace harassment escalates due to insufficient enforcement, bureaucratic delays, and legal ambiguity. Politically active trade unions may prioritize political agendas over worker welfare; nonetheless, the Labour Court addresses delays and backlogs.^{ccxxiv} Furthermore, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies impede enforcement procedures.^{ccxxv}

While trade unions are essential for safeguarding workers' rights, many in Bangladesh are politically motivated and may put political agendas over worker welfare.^{ccxxvi} The labour movement in Bangladesh is deficient in statistical data about workplace discrimination, although competing unions have bolstered campaigning for worker rights.^{ccxxvii} Research on labour rights is comprehensive, yet studies on discrimination, especially within the informal sector, are scarce, hindering assessment and the development of targeted interventions.^{ccxxviii} The government's unwillingness to rigorously implement labour rules has been a persistent drag on output and the economy, which is highly dependent on the RMG industry's expansion.^{ccxxix} Economic interests frequently precede worker rights, resulting in the selective implementation of labour laws.^{ccxxx} Furthermore, the influence of big business interest organizations results in employers receiving lenient treatment for violations of labour laws, diminishing the effectiveness of enforcement operations.^{ccxxxi}

Numerous legal systems in South Asian countries

If Bangladesh wants to learn more about how to stop discrimination in the workplace, it could look at the legal systems of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal. Protecting employees' rights, especially those against discrimination, is something that each nation has done uniquely. Bangladesh can compare these frameworks to find where its system might improve. There is robust protection against workplace discrimination in India's statutory framework. Strong protection against racial, religious, gender, and place of birth discrimination is provided by the Indian Constitution in its lengthy Articles 14, 15, 16, and 17.^{ccxxxii} Pay equity for men and women is guaranteed under the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976.^{ccxxxiii} Protected under the Atrocities Prevention Act of 1989 are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.^{ccxxxiv} An example of the forceful interpretation of these principles by Indian courts is shown in the case of *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* [1997] 6 SCC 241, which resulted in workplace harassment prevention recommendations.^{ccxxxv} *Federal of India v. Navtej Singh Johar* [2018] Discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation is never acceptable, as 10 SCC 1 acknowledged.^{ccxxxvi}

The Rights of Persons with Impairments Act of 2016, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace and mandates reasonable accommodations for people with impairments, is a prime example of this tendency.^{ccxxxvii} By creating clear rights and remedies, this law expands constitutional protections and makes it possible for people with disabilities to participate in the workforce without facing discrimination. A positive indicator of progress in comprehending employment discrimination is the increasing recognition in Indian law that gender, disability, and caste discrimination may coexist.^{ccxxxviii} Protecting workers' rights and fighting discrimination are two areas in which Nepal has made great strides. The 2015 Constitution of Nepal guarantees equality for all citizens and makes it illegal to discriminate based on gender, caste, religion, or ethnicity.^{ccxxxix} Regulations against discrimination in hiring, advancement, and other work areas are strengthened under the 2017 Labour Act.^{ccxl} Caste discrimination is a significant problem in Nepal, and the 2011 Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act makes it illegal.^{ccxli} An alternative to litigation, the National Human Rights Panel was established in 2012 with the National Human Rights Commission Act, which grants the panel the authority to consider accusations of discrimination.^{ccxlii}

Migrant workers are especially susceptible to mistreatment and abuse; Nepal acknowledges this and is committed to protecting their rights.^{ccxliii} In 2007, the Nepalese government passed the Foreign Employment Act to guarantee the rights of Nepalese migrant workers' rights in Nepal and their host country.^{ccxliv} The enormous number of Nepali migrant labourers in the Gulf nations makes this Act all the more noteworthy; these people endure terrible working conditions and are often victims of discrimination.^{ccxlv} Discrimination in the workplace is addressed under Articles 12 and 14 of the Sri Lankan Constitution. These articles prohibit discrimination based on several factors and encourage legal equality.^{ccxlvii} Revisions to the Employment of Women, Youth, and Children Act (EWA) of 1956 fortified safeguards for marginalized groups in the workplace.^{ccxlvii} However, there have been several challenges for Sri Lanka in implementing these restrictions, especially in the informal sector, where regulations are generally more relaxed.^{ccxlviii} First passed in 1957, the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act sought to eliminate discrimination based on a person's caste.^{ccxlix} The failure to entirely execute this act is attributed to enforcement challenges and socio-cultural restrictions, which render it ineffective. Sri Lankan workers are safeguarded from arbitrary

dismissal by the 1971 Employment Termination Workmen Special Provisions Act, which regulates the legal foundation for employment termination.^{ccl}

However, this method has taken a lot of heat for being too harsh on companies due to the many shortcomings that make it possible to sidestep its intended consequences.^{ccli} Government and business alike have actively worked to exclude minority groups, most notably Tamils, in Sri Lanka because of the country's long history of racial strife.^{cclii} Ultimately, the social environment inevitably erodes the rule of law, leading to a disastrous scenario.^{ccliii} When it comes to discrimination in the workplace, Pakistan has an uneven track record. There has been a lack of consistent enforcement of the values guaranteed by Articles 25 and 27 of Pakistan's 1973 Constitution, prohibiting discrimination and providing equal opportunity.^{ccliv} The passing of the Protection from Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act in 2010 marked a major milestone in workers' rights. Discrimination against religious minorities and gender pay inequalities are only two of the many serious concerns that our society continues to face.^{cclv} On the other hand, Pakistan passed the Industrial Relations Act of 2012, which guarantees industrial workers certain protections and permits unionization to defend workers' rights on the job and combat discrimination.^{cclvi}

Pakistan has not only put its protections into action, but it has also formally ratified several ILO accords, the most notable of which being Convention No. 111, which deals with the problem of occupational and employment discrimination.^{cclvii} A vast and pervasive informal sector is one of the main problems in implementing these international accords. Christians and Hindus are among the minority groups in Pakistan's workforce who face religious persecution.^{cclviii} The worst kind of job marginalization minority women experience is when religion and gender discrimination come together.^{cclix}

Bangladesh might learn a lot from India's anti-discrimination laws and constitutional protections.^{cclx} The Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan case shows that judicial activism is crucial in protecting workers' rights since it creates enforcement mechanisms via judicial interpretations. Bangladesh takes a page out of India's book when interpreting constitutional and statutory norms to implement and enforce anti-discrimination legislation within its jurisdiction successfully.^{cclxi} Moreover, including handicapped safeguards in India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 highlights the necessity to customize the law to address the unique needs of excluded communities.^{cclxii}

To combat prejudices stemming from ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status, Bangladesh should look to Nepal's anti-caste discrimination statutes for guidance.^{cclxiii} The rigorous legal protections introduced by Nepal under the Foreign Employment Act 2007 are particularly relevant to Bangladesh due to the rising demand for Bangladeshi labor abroad.^{cclxiv} So, it may be changed to ensure Bangladeshi workers are safe in their home country and the nation where they work. Bangladesh may learn much from Sri Lanka's mistakes regarding anti-discrimination policies in the informal economy. Most workers are engaged in the unregulated informal sector, often not adequately protected by law.^{cclxv} The government should learn from Sri Lanka's mistakes and do more to protect informal labourers' legal rights while strictly enforcing anti-discrimination laws. The fact that Sri Lanka hasn't done enough to prevent ethnic discrimination, especially against Tamils, shows that Bangladesh might benefit from passing laws that take an intersectional approach to fighting prejudice.^{cclxvi}

Bangladesh may improve its anti-discrimination and anti-harassment legislation by examining the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010.^{cclxvii} However, it is clear that there has to be a society-wide effort to fight prejudice and exclusion of all kinds, and the fact that religious discrimination against minority groups in Pakistan persists is evidence of that.^{cclxviii} Apart from these lessons that are applicable to any country, the larger South Asian context emphasizes the need for autonomous courts and robust efforts to safeguard workers' rights. Judicial precedent in India has had far-reaching effects on the country's legal framework. For the purpose of interpreting and enforcing anti-discrimination legislation in Bangladesh, this offers a convincing approach.^{cclxix} The fact that Pakistan has ratified the ILO accords demonstrates how international legal principles have entered Pakistani law. By using this method, the domestic legal system is brought into line with norms that are accepted on a global scale.^{cclxx} Examining Bangladesh's sociopolitical and economic perspectives is necessary to incorporate international best practices. While learning from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal might help, adapting and applying global best practices to Bangladesh's specific circumstances is essential. Among the many sociopolitical factors to be considered while putting international best practices into action in Bangladesh is the country's very varied population. Due to the prominent religious and ethnic minority in Bangladesh, anti-discrimination laws must be strictly enforced. The caste laws of Nepal might teach us a lot about how to fight religious and ethnic bigotry in Bangladesh.^{cclxxi}

As long as we provide thorough and efficient legal protection, Nepal can teach us a lot. There are a lot of leadership changes in Bangladesh, and the political climate is quite unstable. This calls for a solid legal framework that can easily weather political storms. The National Human Rights Commission in Nepal is an example of an autonomous body that has been given considerable power and jurisdiction.^{cclxxii}

When assessing the viability of this technique, economic considerations are also crucial. The ready-made clothing industry is vital to Bangladesh's economy. Women, in particular, face pervasive employment discrimination in this area. Just as India has laws mandating equal pay for equal labour, Bangladesh may pass laws demanding the same for men and women.^{cclxxiii} However, this law has to be well-crafted to account for the RMG industry's budgetary limitations. Equal remuneration for employees is essential, but so is recognition of the sector's competitive difficulties. Consequently, any change to the law has to be fine-tuned to safeguard workers' rights without impacting the economy.^{cclxxiv}

The Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules of 2015 are part of Bangladesh's present legal framework and should be considered while reforming the law.^{cclxxv} While these regulations are essential for safeguarding employees' rights, they are woefully inadequate in their current form to combat workplace discrimination. Individuals in Bangladesh who have been victims of gender-based harassment may find some solace in the provisions of Pakistan's Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010.^{cclxxvi} Similarly, handicapped employees in Bangladesh might be adequately protected and accommodated by implementing measures similar to those found in India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.^{cclxxvii}

How Bangladesh deals with workplace discrimination is greatly affected by ideas from international law. International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 111 against Discrimination in Employment and Occupation is one of several ILO treaties that Bangladesh must uphold as a signatory.^{cclxxviii} Bangladesh may significantly improve worker rights protection by studying other countries' laws and implementing international principles into their own. However, these international standards will only work if Bangladesh can guarantee that its domestic institutions can effectively implement them.^{cclxxix} It is critical to teach judges, enhance funding for worker legal assistance, and improve the competence of labour inspectors to handle employment discrimination cases appropriately. Careful consideration

of cultural factors is essential when bringing in successful strategies from other South Asian nations. Religious traditions and long-established social mores exacerbate inequality in Bangladesh. Therefore, a complete social change process should include legislative reform. Partnerships with civil society groups committed to advancing equality and eradicating prejudice, as well as public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives, may expedite this change.^{cclxxx} Because social and cultural factors may undermine legal safeguards, addressing them in tandem with legislative improvements in the Sri Lankan setting is crucial. Unions in Pakistan and India have been pushing for worker rights and getting laws passed to safeguard them.^{cclxxxi} Trade unions in Bangladesh should be given more power by the government so that they may be recognized legally and fight for workers' rights and protections against discrimination in the workplace. Possible changes to the law that would make it easier for employees to organize into unions and shield union officials and members from retaliation are on the table. Workers' rights in Bangladesh could be advanced via regional cooperation. Many South Asian nations face the serious problem of workplace discrimination. Still, opportunities for teamwork and collaboration arise from these difficulties. Bangladesh may join regional initiatives to promote workers' rights, exchange best practices, and harmonize legal requirements.^{cclxxxii} Some examples of participation include working with international organizations, attending conferences, or creating bilateral or multilateral processes. The discriminant validity of a variable is proven when it shows that it reflects and embodies separate phenomena not specified by the other variables in the model.

The social and legal ramifications of Bangladesh's quota movement in 2024

The judiciary's responsibility and the difficulties it faces

A turning point in the 2024 movement came when the High Court became involved in the legal disputes against the quota system. The matter gained public attention due to a writ lawsuit with the High Court, highlighting the intricate legal difficulties associated with system modification. Petitioners argued that the system hindered fair competition and equal opportunity in public sector employment, violating constitutional principles of equality and

non-discrimination.^{cclxxxiii} The difficulty of balancing justice and inclusive public policy was brought to light by the court dispute after the quota system was established. Affirmative action's role in promoting social justice was the subject of a passionate public discussion when the High Court became involved in this case, which garnered widespread media coverage and public interest.^{cclxxxiv} The public and media widely covered hearings on the writ petition, highlighting the challenges of changing laws with deep historical and social foundations.^{cclxxxv}

The top court in Bangladesh upheld the Quota System and mandated changes to fix its flaws in a historic decision. Critics saw the decision as a lost opportunity to reform an unjust system, while proponents of affirmative action hailed it as a victory.^{cclxxxvi} The ruling brought attention to the interconnectedness of meritocracy, fairness, and affirmative action, as well as the difficulty of modifying long-established cultural and historical standards.^{cclxxxvii} As the Court's decision highlighted, affirmative action, meritocracy, and fairness are complicated issues. The verdict acknowledged the need to adequately represent the minority group while emphasizing maintaining a careful equilibrium. Ultimately, the judges agreed with those who said quotas may let less qualified people go ahead at the expense of others with more experience and education.^{cclxxxviii}

An Examination of the Quota System's Evolution over Time

In order to rectify disparities in public sector employment, the Quota System was first put into place in Bangladesh with the goal of guaranteeing adequate representation for historically marginalized groups. However, this method has, over time, contributed to a widening income gap.^{cclxxxix} Those who are against the quota system say it has become a tool for favoritism and nepotism in the allocation of profitable public sector posts, especially among relatives of the liberation warriors of 1971. Many people are unhappy about this, but young people, in particular, are upset because they think the quota system should give more weight to their qualifications than those of less qualified people. The 2024 movement was born out of the massive and intense public outcry that began with the 2018 demonstrations.^{ccxc} According to an official from the interim health ministry, almost 1,000 people were killed in the rallies that turned into anti-government demonstrations after the quota movement. This occurred on August 29. Since achieving independence in 1971, this period has been the bloodiest in the

nation's history. The 2024 demonstrations built on the momentum of the last two waves, but they were far more widespread and violent. Most of the protesters, mostly students, believed that the present quota system undermined the principles of fairness and meritocracy, which are fundamental to hiring in the public sector. They aimed to establish a fair and meritocratic system that would reward individuals based on their abilities and ensure that underrepresented groups were represented.^{ccxcxi}

Student Activism's Resilience and the Role of Social Forces

The quota movement of 2024 shows that student activism and civil society still have a significant role in influencing changes to public policy. It is inspiring to see how student activists use their creativity and perseverance to rally support for revolutionary ideas and raise funds for them. Fights against discriminatory regulations and much-needed changes have received substantial support from community-based initiatives, grassroots organizations, and student activism.^{ccxcii} These movements bring about a fresh viewpoint and a strong will for real change, often arising from the communities they impact directly.^{ccxciii}

Advocacy networks and non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh have been instrumental to counteract workplace discrimination and raise public awareness. Legal aid for victims of discrimination, research, and legislative advocacy have all been undertaken by ASK BLAST and other notable groups to guarantee fair and unbiased employment procedures.^{ccxciv} These organizations have been essential to the 2024 quota movement by providing activists with logistical and legal support and promoting their demands on national and international platforms.^{ccxcv} They made sure lawmakers heard the protesters' views and changed the course of the campaign with their united lobbying.^{ccxcvi} The data about the quota movement's role in civil society shows the significance of public participation in formulating government policy. Popular support is essential for change and civil society activism to succeed in court. The quota campaign garnered support from a wide range of groups due to the participation of NGOs and advocacy networks. It was a certain way for their demands to reach lawmakers.^{ccxcvii}

The Effects of the Media on How the Public Views Law Reform

Conventional media outlets heavily influenced public sentiment toward the quota movement of 2024. The public's perspective impacted the quota movement's result, shaped by the substantial media coverage of particular bias cases and the ensuing protests. The media greatly influences reforms in the law.^{ccxcviii} Social media, like more conventional forms of media, encourages open dialogue and helps build support for anti-discrimination campaigns. Campaigns to end prejudice in the workplace are getting a lot of attention because of the meteoric rise of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Protest planning, victim stories sharing, and public support for legislative changes to increase workplace equality were all greatly aided by social media.^{ccxcix} The media gave extensive emphasis to the 2024 quota campaign, for instance. The public's support for quota system reform increased due to the attention. The article highlighted the problems of quotas in Bangladesh, including discrimination and inequality in the workplace. By reporting on the quota campaign and showing the demands of the demonstrators as well as the legal challenges they encountered, the media significantly boosted popular support for the movement.^{ccc}

A key tenet of the quota movement is the need for free and independent media to hold government officials accountable. In contrast to government efforts to minimize protestors' concerns, media coverage of the movement was crucial in maintaining its public profile.^{ccci} Protecting protestors' rights and ensuring their demands were taken seriously were greatly aided by the media's coverage of the demonstration and the government's reaction to it.^{cccii}

The relationship between ethical employment practices and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

In response to local and international pressures, CSR programs in Bangladesh are working to improve working conditions, pay workers a fair wage, and expand access to jobs for underrepresented groups, particularly in the ready-made garments sector.^{ccciii} Multinational corporations working on targeted CSR projects in Bangladesh have increased diversity and decreased prejudice in the workplace by providing anti-discrimination policies and diversity training to workers.^{ccciv}

Although CSR projects have advantages, others argue that they are more like PR stunts than genuine attempts to abolish workplace prejudice and fail to address the fundamental issues that keep bias alive.^{cccv} To ensure that businesses follow through on their promises of ethical labour practices, we need more excellent enforcement tools for CSR programs as they are voluntary.^{cccv} The role of CSR in the quota movement highlights the importance of the private sector's engagement in fighting prejudice and promoting social equality. Robust regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to ensure that companies are held responsible for their activities, while CSR initiatives may help enhance ethical employment practices.^{cccvii}

Institutions of higher learning and programs aimed at advancing human understanding

The country's educational institutions heavily influence how people in Bangladesh see efforts to reduce workplace discrimination.^{cccix} Lessons on anti-discrimination and equality should be read in schools nationwide.^{cccix} A more inclusive society may be achieved by educating young people on the importance of fair work practices and discrimination's negative consequences.^{cccix} Bangladesh's government has launched several awareness initiatives to educate employers and the general public. Employees' rights, the value of a diverse workforce, and the consequences of discrimination have been the primary foci of the awareness campaigns. However, the effectiveness of these endeavors varies; some programs are better than others in reaching their goals.^{cccxi}

Education and awareness efforts must be launched to promote workplace inclusion while the impacts, in the long run, are being studied. Success usually requires constant work and dedication from everyone involved, including teachers, bosses, and lawmakers. To defeat prejudice, raising public awareness and providing continuing education is essential.^{cccxi} Educational institutions can better combat prejudice and promote social justice due to the quota movement's emphasis on raising awareness. The general population will understand equal employment opportunities and the dangers of discrimination due to these campaigns. Consequently, they will be pivotal in establishing an inclusive society that respects and safeguards the rights of all individuals.^{cccxi}

Conclusion

The paper has highlighted significant obstacles Bangladesh has when combating workplace discrimination, such as unclear legal definitions and political meddling with implementing regulations. The Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules of 2015 are the governing documents in Bangladesh that guarantee employees' rights on the job. International Labour Organization treaties on non-discrimination (Convention No. 111) and fair compensation (Convention No. 100) are among the relevant international labour standards that these rules adhere to. However, other shortcomings were also revealed by the investigation, most notably insufficient enforcement and execution of the measures. Legally vague notions of discrimination leave employees unprotected when it comes to age, disability, and other intersecting characteristics. Bureaucratic inefficiency dramatically limits their ability to execute regulations, and limited resources and political influence often cause them to enforce rules selectively.^{cccxiv} The enforcement of compliance with labour laws is the responsibility of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, which requires more resources to carry out its tasks effectively. The problem is made worse by long-standing cultural norms and economic barriers; despite the existence of legislative safeguards, gender-based pay disparities, and dangerous working conditions continue in the RMG industry.^{cccxv} There are a lot of legislative changes and policy suggestions that might make Bangladesh's anti-discrimination laws operate better. There has to be an explicit prohibition against age and disability discrimination in the workplace in Bangladesh's updated Labour Act. In addition, we need to take better action to combat intersectional discrimination, which occurs when people are excluded because of their gender, race, and socioeconomic background, among other criteria.^{cccxvi} In addition, the systems that guarantee compliance must be improved. Increasing the number of labour inspectors and providing them with better training to combat discrimination effectively is a good technique.^{cccxvii} Improving DIFE's growth is an urgent need. Thus, we must immediately address infractions and provide more resources for thorough inspections.^{cccxviii} Another way to reduce political meddling and increase responsibility is to set up separate committees to monitor compliance.^{cccxix} Incentivizing private sector corporate social responsibility initiatives is critical for reducing prejudice in the workplace. Although some companies, particularly those in the RMG industry, have launched

CSR programs, the focus is on improving their public image rather than making meaningful changes. Therefore, any progress should be made easier by laws that require corporations to comply with CSR. Organizations should be encouraged to go above and beyond by actively participating in diversity and inclusion activities. This might be done via tax incentives or other public recognition programs.^{cccxx} Several problems exist in this work, even if it has been thoroughly reviewed. A significant limitation was the lack of comprehensive data on the frequency of discrimination in the workplace across different industries in Bangladesh. The RMG business is the primary focus of most recent studies because of its economic importance and the large number of documented labour violations.^{cccxxi} On the other side, several areas, notably the informal sector, have received very little academic attention. Bangladesh and its neighboring countries—India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan—could be the subjects of a comparative study, although there has been little investigation into this area. This will provide insight into how these nations deal with job discrimination in various industries and how Bangladeshi legislation may be improved.^{cccxxii}

Some areas where study is required are listed below: Examining workers' rights in the digital sphere in light of the growing "gig economy" and other forms of internet-facilitated employment is critical. Workers in Bangladesh are increasingly opting for freelance and contract employment. To combat the widespread bigotry in these sectors, it is essential to revise the existing labour rules.^{cccxxiii} The development of rules to regulate online platforms and ensure fair treatment of employees depends on the findings of this study.^{cccxxiv}

"Intersectional discrimination" is a promising area for future studies. More studies are needed on how employees' labour-market experiences are impacted by their overlapping and interrelated identities, including gender, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Policymakers can craft more targeted anti-discrimination measures if they thoroughly grasp these intersections.^{cccxxv} Research on the ever-changing landscape of international labour rules is very appealing. The best way for Bangladesh to improve worker protection is to study how it may amend its laws to include international sustainability principles and ethical labour practices.^{cccxxvi} This promotes economic expansion while aligning with moral and social fairness concepts.^{cccxxvii} Women and other oppressed people live in even more poverty as a result of discrimination in the workplace, which, therefore, reduces productivity for

everyone.^{cccxviii} Bangladesh must provide a fair and inclusive labour market for all employees to compete in the global economy.^{cccxix}

Despite pointing out several problems, this study maintains its hopeful tone and concludes that hope does exist. It is essential to fix existing gaps in the legal framework and pass further changes if Bangladesh is to build a fair labour system.^{cccxix} In addition to the government's steadfast dedication, this objective can only be realized with the help of business sector organizations, partnerships within civil society, and financial backing from international allies. Achieving long-term sustainable development that benefits the whole country requires compliance, a legal obligation. Making ensuring they comply is a top priority for each of these stakeholders.^{cccxixi}

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