



PKSF
Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation



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INSTITUTE OF HEALTH ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA

Internship Report

Addressing Challenges to Establish a Decent Working Environment in the Informal Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project

Name of Intern

Jarin Farhana

Exam Roll: 15717

Registration no: 2019015958

Session: 2019-20

Intern, PKSF

Name of the Supervisors

Dilip Kumar Chakravorty

General Manager (Programme) & Project Coordinator

Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF).

Golam Gilane

Manager (Programme)& Deputy Project Coordinator

Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF).

Internship duration: 10 December, 2024- 10 March, 2025

Declaration

Students Declaration

I, Jarin Farhana, solemnly declare that the research paper titled “Addressing Challenges to Establish a Decent Working Environment in the Informal Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project” is an original work undertaken by me with utmost dedication and sincerity. This study is the outcome of my independent research, guided by ethical standards and academic integrity.

All information, data, and literature from other sources have been duly acknowledged with proper citations. This work has not been submitted to any institution or organization for any academic or professional degree, diploma, or certification. Any assistance received during the research process has been sincerely acknowledged.

I take full responsibility for any errors, omissions, or misinterpretations in this work, and I remain open to constructive feedback for its further enhancement.

With profound gratitude and respect,

Student's signature

Supervisor declaration:

In order to fulfill the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Sciences degree, Jarin Farhana completed her internship report under my supervision on “Addressing Challenges to Establish a Decent Working Environment in the Informal Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project.” To the best of my knowledge this is an original report and she has not submitted this report elsewhere for any degree.

.....

(Dilip Kumar Chakravorty)

General Manager (Programme)

Project Coordinator

RAISE Project, PKSF

.....

(Golam Gilane)

Manager (Programme)

Deputy Project Coordinator

RAISE Project, PKSF

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Acronyms:

PKSF- Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation

RAISE- Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment

PO- Partner Organization

NGO- Non-Government Organization

SUS- Social Upliftment Society

ILO- International Labor Organization

SDG- Sustainable Development Goal

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With deep appreciation,

Jarin Farhana

Intern

Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (December 10,2024 to March 10, 2025)

BSS (Hons), Institute of Health Economics

University of Dhaka

Preface

The journey of conducting this research, titled "Addressing Challenges to Establishing a Decent Working Environment in the Informal Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project," has been both intellectually enriching and personally transformative. The informal sector, despite being a significant contributor to the economy, often remains overlooked in discussions on labor rights and decent work environments. This study seeks to highlight the pressing challenges faced by informal workers and explore sustainable solutions to improve their working conditions.

This research would not have been possible without the invaluable guidance and support of Dilip Kumar Chakravorty, project coordinator(RAISE project) and Md.Golam Gilane, Deputy Project coordinator(RAISE Project), whose insight and expertise helped shape the direction of this study. I am also deeply grateful to my project coordinator, Dilip Sir, whose encouragement and mentorship have been instrumental in my academic and professional growth.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all the individuals and organizations involved in the RAISE Project for providing crucial data, resources, and field insights. Their contributions have been fundamental in ensuring the credibility and depth of this research.

Conducting this study has not been without its challenges. From navigating complex fieldwork dynamics to analyzing multidimensional labor issues, every step of the process has deepened my understanding of the informal labor sector and its struggles. However, these challenges have only reinforced the importance of advocating for sustainable policies and interventions that can uplift workers in this sector.

I hope this research contributes meaningfully to ongoing discussions on labor rights and policy reforms and serves as a stepping stone for future studies in this domain.



**“Addressing Challenges to Establish a Decent
Working Environment in the Informal
Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project”**

1. Institution Description: Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation

Introduction:

The Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is a non-profit organization in Bangladesh that aims to eradicate poverty through development programs. It is a national public sector, direct access entity working as a sustainable platform for government to non-government organisation collaboration based in Bangladesh, with a mission of sustainable poverty eradication in Bangladesh by undertaking multidimensional human-centered development programmes. PKSF offers financial and non-financial services to rural people in Bangladesh, including microcredit, micro-savings, micro-insurance, training, education, health, nutrition, and marketing support. There are more than 20 million members in this institution. There are more than 200 hundred Partner organizations(POs) for implementing the projects (Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)).

History: In the 1980s, the Government of Bangladesh felt the need to establish a specialized institution for poverty alleviation through employment generation. After years-long discussions with development partners, different ministries and top development experts, the GoB finally decided to found the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF). This apex development organization formally came into being on 13 November 1989, after the President of Bangladesh approved the proposal. Ever since, PKSF has been working relentlessly to fight poverty and improve lives across the country.

Mission: To implement policies and action programs involving multiple dimensions of human living and human poverty; pursue a life-cycle approach to human progress, catering to the appropriate needs at all stages of life. The policy planning and action programming centre on human beings and focus on socio-economic development and environmental protection.

The support and services provided relate to education, workforce development, health and nutrition, infrastructure, inclusive and appropriate financing for planned economic activities, social issues and social capital, response to climate change impacts, gender issues, cultural dimensions, sports

and social advocacy etc.

Vision: A Bangladesh where poverty has been eradicated; the ruling development and governance paradigm is inclusive, people-centred, equitable and sustainable; and all citizens live healthy, appropriately educated and empowered and humanly dignified life.

Programs: PKSf provides loanable funds to its Partner Organizations (POs). Currently funds are being provided under its four mainstream credit programs- Buniad, Jagoron, Agrosor and Sufolon. The other programs are- ENRICH, Environment and Climate Change unit, Program for Adolescent etc. Along with financial services, PKSf provides different technical assistance to its POs. Besides the mainstream programs, PKSf has been implementing different projects in order to address the diversified needs of the people of the community.

PKSf offers financial and non-financial services to rural people in Bangladesh, including microcredit, micro-savings, micro-insurance, training, education, health, nutrition, and marketing support.

Ongoing project- Bangladesh Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Human Capital Development Project, Climate-resilient Haor Project, Extended Community Climate Change Project-Drought (ECCCP-Drought), PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY FOR EXTREMELY POOR PEOPLE-EUROPEAN UNION (PPEPP-EU) PROJECT, Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE).

Completed project- Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), Developing Inclusive Insurance Sector Project (DIISP), Microenterprise Development Project (MDP),

OBA Sanitation Microfinance Project, Promoting Financial Services for Poverty Reduction (PROSPER), Strengthening Resilience of Livestock Farmers Through Risk Reducing Services, Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP), Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People (PPEPP) Project.

2.Overview of the RAISE project

2.1 Description and Content of RAISE Project:

The RAISE project is a five-year program implemented by the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and the World Bank. The project began in February 2022 and is being implemented through 70 partner organizations(POs). This project facilitates employability and workers to increase productivity of the informal sector, and provide financial assistance to 175,000 low-income youths, micro-entrepreneur and COVID-19 affected micro-entrepreneurs in urban and peri-urban areas across the country. The project's services include: Skill-acquisition through informal apprenticeship, Business management training, Access to credit, Risk Management and Business Continuity (RMBC) Training, and Mastercraft Person & Apprentices Training(Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), 2025a).

2.2 Key objectives of RAISE project:

The Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE) project's objectives are:

- Help small entrepreneurs: Assist small entrepreneurs, especially those affected by COVID-19, in starting their businesses again

- Improve economic inclusion: Increase the economic inclusion of low-income youth and micro-entrepreneurs in urban and peri-urban areas
- Provide financial assistance: Provide financial assistance to 175,000 low-income youths, micro-entrepreneurs, and COVID-19 affected micro-entrepreneurs.
- Enhance productivity: Enhance the productivity of youth and young micro-entrepreneurs
Engage youth: Engage youth from low-income households in sustainable employment.

2.3 Activities of the project:

1. Credit and Financial Support :The project provides credit to rural farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs to help them invest in agriculture and small businesses.
2. Training Programs: Various training programs are organized for farmers to learn about advanced farming techniques, pest management, irrigation methods, and organic farming practices.
3. Support for Small Enterprises: Assistance is given to rural small businesses through financial resources and market linkages to enhance local economies.
4. Health and Education: Some components of the project also focus on improving health outcomes by promoting better hygiene, sanitation, and access to healthcare.
5. Partnerships with NGOs: The RAISE project works in collaboration with local NGOs and community-based organizations to effectively deliver its services and reach the target population.
6. Monitoring and Evaluation: Ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place to ensure the success and sustainability of the project's initiative.

Target Groups:

- COVID-affected micro-entrepreneurs receiving microfinance support-50,000
- Low-income youth and micro-entrepreneurs accessing business management track-90,000
- Low-income youth accessing apprenticeship track-35,000

35% of participants under this category will be female.

Youths from disadvantaged groups, e. g. Dalit; ethnic minorities; inhabitants of char, haor, hill tracts, tea estate and coastal areas; and persons with disabilities will get priority to be enrolled in this project.

3. Research problem

This study revolves around the persistent issues that hinder the realization of decent work in the informal sector. Despite its significant contribution to employment and economic activities, the informal sector is characterized by poor working conditions, low wages, lack of social protection, and weak regulatory frameworks.

The study aims to identify the key challenges that prevent the implementation of decent work standards in this sector, such as:

- **Lack of Legal Recognition & Protection:** Informal workers often operate outside labor laws, making it difficult to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and job security.

- **Absence of Social Security & Benefits:** Many informal workers lack access to healthcare, pensions, or unemployment benefits, leaving them vulnerable to economic shocks.
- **Job Insecurity & Exploitative Practices:** Without formal contracts, informal workers face job instability, exploitation, and unfair treatment.
- **Health & Safety Concerns:** Many informal jobs involve hazardous working conditions with minimal occupational health and safety measures.
- **Limited Bargaining Power & Representation:** Informal workers have little to no access to labor unions or worker associations, making it difficult to negotiate better conditions.
- **Gender & Social Inequalities:** Women and marginalized groups in the informal sector often experience additional challenges such as wage discrimination and harassment.

By analyzing these challenges through the lens of the RAISE Project, the study seeks to provide insights into potential policy measures, interventions, and strategies to promote a decent working environment in the informal sector.

4. Research objectives:

Overall Objective:

To assess the achievement of the RAISE project according to the targets of SDG goal-8 and investigate the challenges faced in achieving decent work for individuals participating in the RAISE Project within the informal sector, and to provide insights for enhancing project effectiveness.

Specific Objectives:

- a) To identify the primary barriers and challenges that hinder the attainment of decent work conditions for participants of all genders in the informal sector through the RAISE Project.
- b) To evaluate the effectiveness of the RAISE Project in addressing these identified challenges and improving working conditions and opportunities for all participants.
- c) To formulate practical recommendations for overcoming the obstacles to decent work based on the experiences and outcomes observed from the RAISE Project participants of all genders.

4.1 Research Questions:

1. What are the primary barriers and challenges that participants of all genders face in achieving decent work conditions within the context of the RAISE Project in the informal sector?
2. To what extent has the RAISE Project been effective in addressing these identified challenges and improving working conditions and opportunities for participants?
3. What practical recommendations can be developed to help overcome the obstacles of achieving decent work based on the experiences and outcomes observed from participants in the RAISE Project?

4.2 Significance of the study:

The significance of the study "Addressing the Challenges to Establish Decent Work in the Informal Sector: Insights from the RAISE Project" lies in its potential to contribute to policy development, social justice, and economic sustainability. The study holds importance in the following ways:

1. Addressing Informal Sector Challenges

The informal sector comprises a significant portion of the workforce, particularly in developing economies. However, workers in this sector often face:

- Lack of job security
- Low wages and income instability
- Absence of social protection
- Poor working conditions
- Limited access to legal rights and representation

This study highlights these challenges and explores practical solutions to improve working conditions in the informal sector.

2. Socio-economic Impact

By addressing decent work challenges, the study contributes to poverty reduction, social justice, and economic growth. It helps ensure that informal workers—who play a crucial role in economies—receive fair treatment and opportunities for advancement.

3. Policy Implications

The study's findings can guide policy reforms to bridge gaps in labor rights and protections for informal workers. Governments, NGOs, and international bodies can use the research to:

- Develop inclusive labor policies
- Strengthen social protection programs
- Improve occupational health and safety measures
- Foster economic stability for informal workers

4. Practical Insights from the RAISE Project

- The study leverages findings from the RAISE Project, offering real-world examples of interventions that can be scaled up.
- Provides a framework for future projects aimed at improving the informal labor market.

5. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups

The informal sector often includes vulnerable groups such as women, migrants, and youth, who are disproportionately affected by poor working conditions. The study can shed light on how to empower these groups through decent work opportunities, thereby contributing to employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and equal pay for work (SDG-8.5)

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The study can provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress toward SDG 8 in the context of the informal sector. This is essential for tracking achievements, identifying persistent challenges, and ensuring accountability in the implementation of SDG-related initiatives.

7. Sustainable Development

Ultimately, the study contributes to the broader agenda of sustainable development by highlighting the interconnectedness of decent work, economic growth, and social well-being. It underscores the importance of addressing the informal sector as a critical component of achieving the SDGs.

In summary, the significance of this study lies in its potential to advance the global agenda on decent work and economic growth by providing actionable insights, informing policy, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development, particularly for those in the informal sector.

4.3 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on analyzing the barriers to achieving decent work in the informal sector and exploring potential solutions based on the experiences of the RAISE Project. The study covers:

1. **Geographical Scope** – The research is limited to the areas where the RAISE Project has been implemented, which may include specific regions or countries.
2. **Target Population** – Focuses on informal workers, including those in small-scale businesses, street vending, domestic work, and other unregulated employment.
3. **Key Issues Examined** – Includes lack of legal protection, poor wages, job insecurity, absence of social security, and workplace safety concerns in the informal sector.
4. **Policy and Intervention Analysis** – Evaluates the RAISE Project's strategies and their effectiveness in promoting decent work.
5. **Timeframe** – Covers data and interventions from a specific period (e.g., recent years when the RAISE Project was active).

4.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite its significance, the study has certain constraints:

1. **Limited Generalizability** – The findings are based on the RAISE Project's scope and may not fully represent all informal workers globally.

2. **Data Availability** – Some aspects of informal work are undocumented, leading to gaps in data and analysis.
3. **Worker Participation Challenges**: Informal workers may be hesitant to share information due to fear of legal repercussions, job loss, or distrust in researchers.
4. **Short-Term vs. Long-Term Impact** – The study may focus on immediate challenges and interventions, but assessing long-term effects on informal workers may require extended research.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study ensures a realistic interpretation of its findings, paving the way for future research to build upon its insights.

5. Literature review

Decent work is a broad concept that includes multiple aspects. According to ILO (the International Labor Organization), decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men(*Decent Work*, 2024).

The informal economy refers to all economic activities by workers that are not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements (*Informal Economy*, 2024). The informal sector is characterized by unregulated employment and limited access to formal labor markets. The informal sector includes various types of work and businesses that operate

independently and are often characterized by low wages, limited job security and lack of legal protection.

The RAISE project initiative is designed to bridge the gap between the informal sector and formal labor markets by providing hands-on apprenticeship training in various trades among youth labor. The informal sector is not organized in a way that enables it to focus on the aspirations of employees in their working lives. That's why, ensuring decent work in this sector is challenging. By Ensuring the rights of workers, the decent work concept can be implemented.

According to ILO, The targets of SDG goal 8 that are aligned with RAISE project are:

Target 8.3- promote policies to support job creation and growing enterprises-

Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

Target 8.5- Full employment and decent work with equal pay-

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Target 8.6- promote youth employment, education and training-

By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

Target 8.8- protect labor rights and promote safe working environments

Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

The term "decent work" was formally introduced by ILO at the 86th conference declaring Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work for its 187 member states. This declaration covered groups with unemployed and migrant workers. The fundamental rights were: freedom of association and bargain, elimination of forced labor and Child labor and elimination of discrimination in employment(Rantanen et al., 2020). This led to the creation of the Decent Work Agenda, structured around four pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue (ILO, 2022). .In the 21st century, decent work became a global development priority, explicitly included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8) to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment, and decent work for all. The concept continues to evolve in response to challenges like globalization, technological change, climate transitions, and the impact of global crises, emphasizing the need for fair, secure, and dignified work worldwide(Rantanen et al.,2020). Decent work is not only pivotal for individual well-being but also serves as a cornerstone for sustainable economic growth, social cohesion, and poverty reduction. In the context of rapidly evolving global labor markets, fostering decent work remains a critical challenge, particularly within sectors where regulatory oversight is minimal, such as the informal sector.

The Bangladesh labor force Survey 2022 shows that close to 6 crore (60 million) people, 84.9% of total working population in Bangladesh, are in informal employment (ILO,*Bangladesh's Informal Sector*, 2024). Informal sector is a very significant area of the economy and employment in Bangladesh particularly for the less skilled people, living both in urban and rural areas. Thus, improvement of the informal sector is compulsory. With formal sector job-availability that has not kept pace with the growth of the labor force, the formalization of employment being procedurally difficult, and the allure of benefits of informal sector such as being free of taxation, a staggering 85% of total employment is estimated to be informal (Wing, 2022).Since Bangladesh faces a shortage of the required

skilled manpower, industry growth and investments are likely to be severely affected. The relatively low skill level of the workers results in low labor productivity; and it is lower than in several other countries such as Vietnam, India, China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka (Barkat-E-Khuda, 2024).

As the mostly informal sector consists of low productivity and low wage jobs, many skill development programs are being implemented. The RAISE project initiative is designed to bridge the gap between the informal sector and formal labor markets by providing hands-on apprenticeship training in various trades among youth labor. The informal sector is not organized in a way that enables it to focus on the aspirations of employees in their working lives. That's why, ensuring decent work in this sector is challenging. By Ensuring the rights of workers, the decent work concept can be implemented.

The **rationale** for this study stems from the persistent challenges associated with ensuring decent work conditions in the informal sector, despite its critical role in economic development. Informal employment is often characterized by precariousness, lack of legal safeguards, and poor occupational health standards. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these vulnerabilities, exposing systemic gaps in social protection and labor rights. Given the informal sector's significant contribution to both urban and rural economies, it is imperative to explore effective strategies for improving working conditions. This study, leveraging insights from the RAISE Project, aims to critically analyze these challenges and provide a comprehensive framework for fostering decent work within the informal economy.

The primary **purpose** of this study is to investigate the structural and systemic obstacles that hinder the establishment of decent working environments within the informal sector. By drawing on empirical insights from the RAISE Project, the research seeks to identify best

practices, policy interventions, and innovative approaches that can enhance the quality of work in informal settings.

The **importance** of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, development practitioners, and labor advocates about the complexities of informal employment. It contributes to the global discourse on labor rights, social justice, and economic development by offering actionable recommendations aimed at improving the livelihoods of informal workers. Additionally, this research underscores the need for inclusive labor policies that recognize the diverse realities of informal sector employment.

6. Theoretical framework:

1. Decent Work Agenda (DWA)

The Decent Work Agenda, introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) part of SDG goal-8, serves as a fundamental framework for understanding the core dimensions of a quality working environment. It emphasizes four strategic objectives:

- **Employment Creation:** Ensuring opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income.
- **Rights at Work:** Protecting fundamental rights, including freedom of association, non-discrimination, and elimination of forced and child labor.
- **Social Protection:** Providing security through safe working conditions, health benefits, and measures to support workers during economic fluctuations.
- **Social Dialogue:** Encouraging strong communication channels between workers, employers, and policymakers to foster inclusive decision-making.

In the context of the informal sector, the DWA highlights the challenges related to the absence of formal contracts, lack of legal protections, and insufficient access to social security. The RAISE Project's efforts can be critically examined through this framework to assess how interventions are aligned with or deviate from these decent work dimensions.

2. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach shifts the focus from traditional economic measures (such as income) to individuals' real freedoms and opportunities to achieve well-being. According to Sen, development should be evaluated based on people's capabilities—their ability to lead lives they value. Applied to the informal sector, this approach helps to analyze:

- **Workers' Capabilities:** Many informal workers lack the ability to achieve decent work conditions due to structural barriers.
- **Conversion Factors:** Personal, social, and environmental barriers limit workers' ability to transform labor opportunities into decent employment.
- **Agency and Empowerment:** Workers often face constrained choices due to economic necessity and lack of legal protection.

Sen's framework complements the DWA by focusing not just on the presence of decent work but also on whether individuals have the genuine capability to access and benefit from such opportunities.

3. Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory provides insights into how formal and informal rules, norms, and structures influence organizational behavior and societal outcomes. It posits that institutions—both regulatory (laws, policies) and normative (cultural values, social norms)—shape the practices within any sector, including the informal economy.

In examining the challenges of establishing a decent working environment, Institutional Theory helps to explore:

- **Regulatory Frameworks:** Weak labor laws, poor enforcement, and bureaucratic barriers prevent informal workers from accessing legal protections.
- **Cultural Norms:** societal beliefs or practices exploited working conditions or discourage compliance with decent work standards.
- **Organizational Practices:** Social norms and cultural expectations normalize job insecurity and low wages.

The RAISE Project can be analyzed through this lens to assess how it navigates institutional barriers, leverages enabling norms, and fosters sustainable changes in informal work environments.

Equity theory:

Rooted in the work of Adams (1965), Equity Theory underscores the significance of perceived fairness in workplace exchanges. Workers compare their input-outcome ratio to that of their peers, influencing job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. In the informal sector, systemic inequities—manifested in wage disparities, exploitative working conditions, and lack of social protection—engender dissatisfaction and high turnover rates. The absence of enforceable labor standards exacerbates these inequities, reinforcing workers' perceptions of unfair treatment. By integrating fair compensation structures, ensuring occupational safety, and fostering collective bargaining mechanisms, stakeholders can bridge the equity gap, thereby enhancing worker morale and retention.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a multidimensional framework:

The Decent Work Agenda defines the key elements of a decent working environment.

The Capability Approach explains the importance of enhancing individuals' freedoms and opportunities.

- The Institutional Theory addresses the mechanisms through which social, cultural, and regulatory institutions facilitate or impede progress.

The Equity Theory highlights the importance of fairness in labor relations.

By combining these approaches, the research aims to generate holistic insights into the systemic, individual, and institutional factors affecting the informal sector and evaluate how initiatives like the RAISE Project can effectively address these challenges.

7. Conceptual framework

1. Economic Factors → Decent Working Environment

Income Level: Higher wages contribute to improved living standards and job satisfaction, whereas unstable or low income leads to financial insecurity.

Job Security: Workers with permanent or stable jobs experience better working conditions, while temporary or seasonal workers face higher vulnerability.

Social Protection: Access to health insurance, pensions, and other benefits enhances worker well-being and long-term job stability.

Economic stability positively correlates with a decent working environment by ensuring financial security and reducing worker exploitation.

2. Workplace Conditions → Decent Working Environment

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Standards: The availability of protective gear, proper ventilation, and safety measures reduces workplace hazards.

Working Hours and Rest Periods: Excessive working hours without breaks can lead to burnout, while regulated work hours promote productivity and health.

Physical Work Environment: Poor sanitation, inadequate lighting, and lack of basic facilities create an unsafe and unhealthy workspace.

A better physical work environment and compliance with safety regulations significantly improve workers' health and morale.

3. Legal and Policy Factors → Decent Working Environment

Awareness and Implementation of Labor Laws: Workers who are aware of their rights can demand fair treatment, while weak enforcement leads to exploitation.

Unionization and Worker Representation: The presence of unions or worker associations strengthens collective bargaining power and ensures better working conditions

Employer-Employee Relations: A structured contract and fair dispute resolution mechanisms contribute to job security and workplace harmony.

Impact: Strong legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms play a crucial role in establishing a just and secure work environment.

4. Social and Psychological Factors → Decent Working Environment

Workplace Discrimination and Harassment: Gender, caste, or migrant-based discrimination leads to inequality and psychological stress.

Worker Satisfaction and Motivation: A motivated workforce, supported by fair treatment and career growth opportunities, leads to higher productivity.

Access to Skill Development and Training: Continuous skill enhancement provides workers with better job opportunities and higher earning potential.

Addressing social inequalities and improving motivation fosters an inclusive and productive workplace.

5. Technological and Structural Challenges → Decent Working Environment

Access to Digital Tools and Financial Services: Digital payment systems and online job platforms increase financial transparency and employment opportunities.

Nature of Employment Arrangement: Self-employed workers may have more autonomy but less security, whereas wage employment offers stability but often lacks benefits.

Bridging the technological and structural gaps ensures better access to financial security, fair work arrangements, and safer job environments.

8. Research Gap:

In Bangladesh, a large portion of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector, where young workers often struggle with low wages, job insecurity, and unsafe working conditions. The RAISE project seeks to tackle these issues by providing apprenticeship training and promoting a better work environment alignment with SDG goal-8. This study will derive the achievement of the RAISE project according to SDG goal-8 and challenges of establishing decent work conditions in the informal sector.

9. Methodology of the study

9.1 Research Design:

This study will be conducted using a **mixed method approach** combining both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis. A survey questionnaire will be developed and we will go on a field visit to collect data.

Quantitative data (Numerical and Statistical data)

- Socio-demographics status (gender, age, education level)
- financial support
- women employment rate
- Average earnings per month of female and male employees
- working hour
- weekly off day, sick leave
- caregiving service for female employee
- safe work environment (Pure drinking water, Hygienic toilet, machine safety, adequate light and air in workplace, fire extinguisher, First aid box, PPE)

Qualitative data (perception):

- basic knowledge about decent work concept
- Challenges faced by employees to achieve decent working environment

9.2 Data collection methods:

1. survey- a survey will be conducted on the youth apprentices
2. In depth interview of apprentice
3. Key Informant Interview- discussion with NGOs, training providers and MCPs

9.3 Sampling:

Sample size determination:

Data will be collected from the apprentices who are working in the same institute where they received training under MCP (Master CraftsPerson) in the RAISE project in Dhaka district. The approximate population size is around 264. To calculate the sample size for a survey with a population of 264 and a 90% confidence interval, we can use the following formula for sample size calculation:

$$n = \frac{N.Z^2.P.(1-P)}{(E^2(N-1) + Z^2.P.(1-P))}$$

- n = required sample size
- N = population size (which is 264)
- Z = Z-value for 90% confidence (which is 1.645)
- p = estimated proportion (0.5 unknown, maximum variability)
- E = margin of error (usually 0.10or 10%)

Now plugging values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{264.(1.645)^2.0.5(1-0.5)}{((0.10)^2.(264-1) + (1.645)^2.0.5(1-0.5))}$$

$$n = \frac{264.2.706.0.25}{0.01.263 + 2.705.0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{178.596}{3.30625}$$

$$n \approx 54$$

So, the sample size **54** to achieve a 90% confidence level with a 10% margin of error for a population of 230.

But the sample size may be shorter due to time, financial and logistic constraints.

9.4 Data Analysis:

1. Quantitative Analysis:

Descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, frequency).

2. Qualitative Analysis:

Thematic analysis of interviews to capture deeper insights into challenges and success factors.

10. Key Findings of the study

Demographic information:

A total of 48 respondents were surveyed for this study. To align with the RAISE project's age eligibility criteria (15 to 35 years), respondents were grouped into four age categories: 15–20, 21–25, 26–30, and 31–35 years.

- The highest proportion of respondents (35.43%) fell within the 15–20 age group.
- Both the 21–25 and 26–30 age groups each accounted for 29.17% of the respondents.

These findings indicate that the majority of participants are young adults, with a strong representation from the early youth demographic.

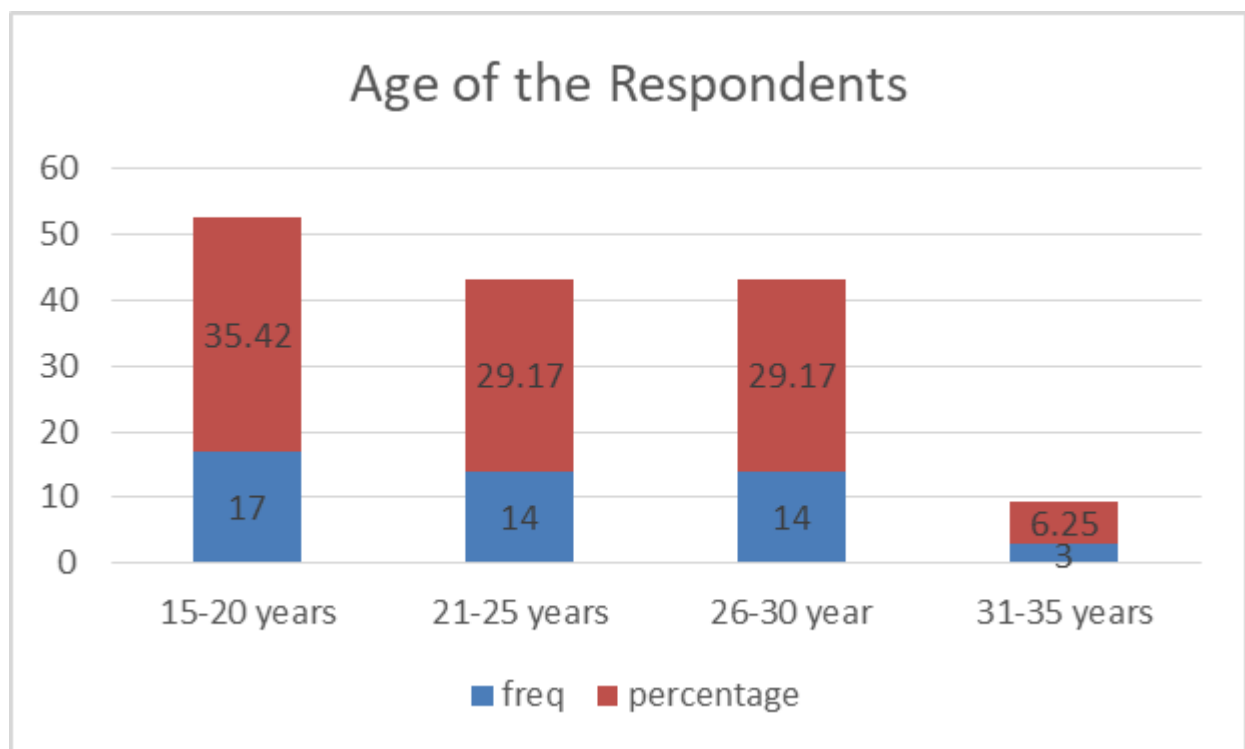


Fig 1: Age of respondents

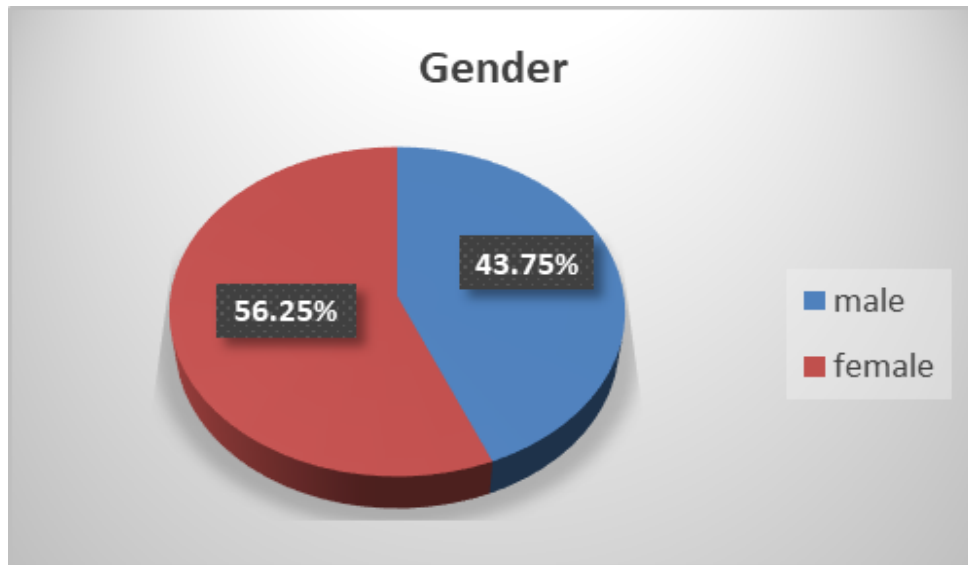


Fig 2: Gender status of respondents

Among the respondents 56.25% were female and 43.75% were male. the participation of females under the RAISE apprentice program which is commendable.

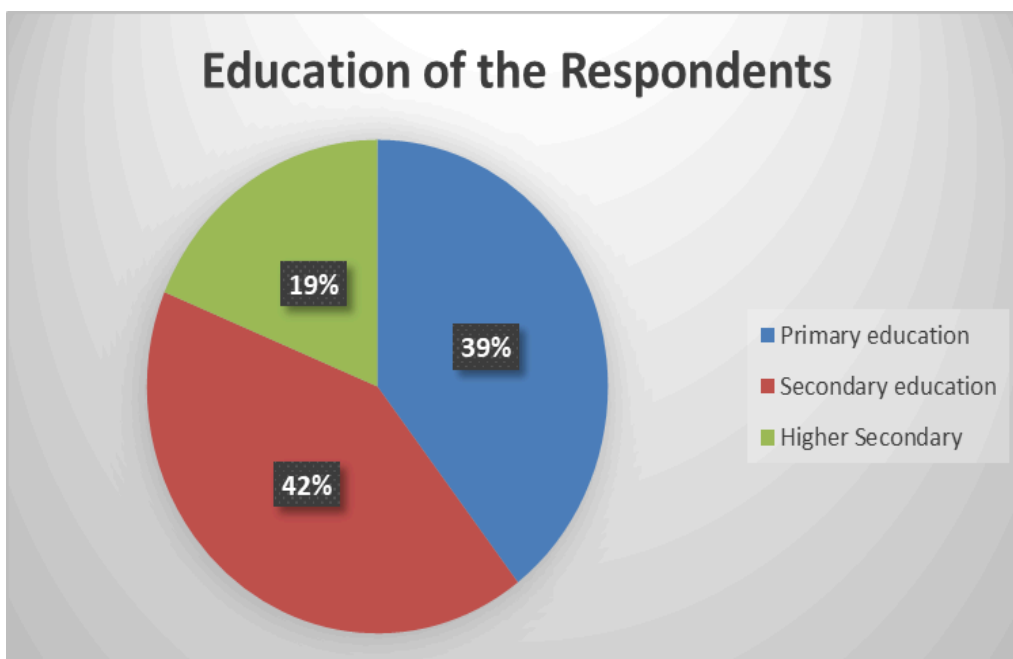


Fig 3: Education level of the respondents

Most of the respondents completed secondary education which comprises 41.67%. 39.58% of respondents completed primary education. Only 19% completed higher secondary education.

68.75% of respondents are working in the same enterprise where they took training and the remaining 31.25% are working in a different enterprise.

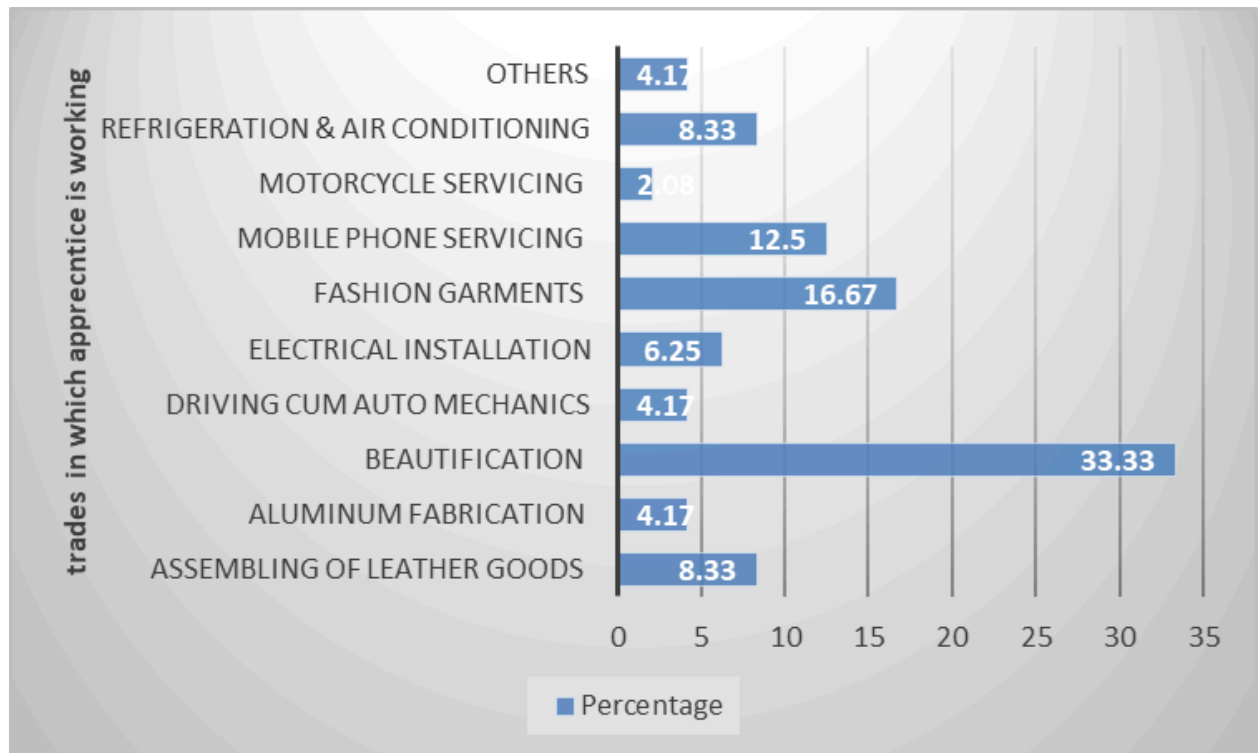


Fig 4: Trades where apprentices are employed after training

Most of the respondents are from beautification trade which comprise 33.33%. And the remaining trade comprises respectively- fashion garments(16.67%), mobile phone servicing(12.5%), assembling of leather goods(8.33%), Refrigeration and air conditioning(8.33%), electrical installation(6.25%), driving cum auto mechanics(4.17%), aluminium fabrication(4.17%) and others(6.17%).

Employment Conditions:

The highest monthly average income is around 25000 tk and the lowest monthly income is around 4000 tk.

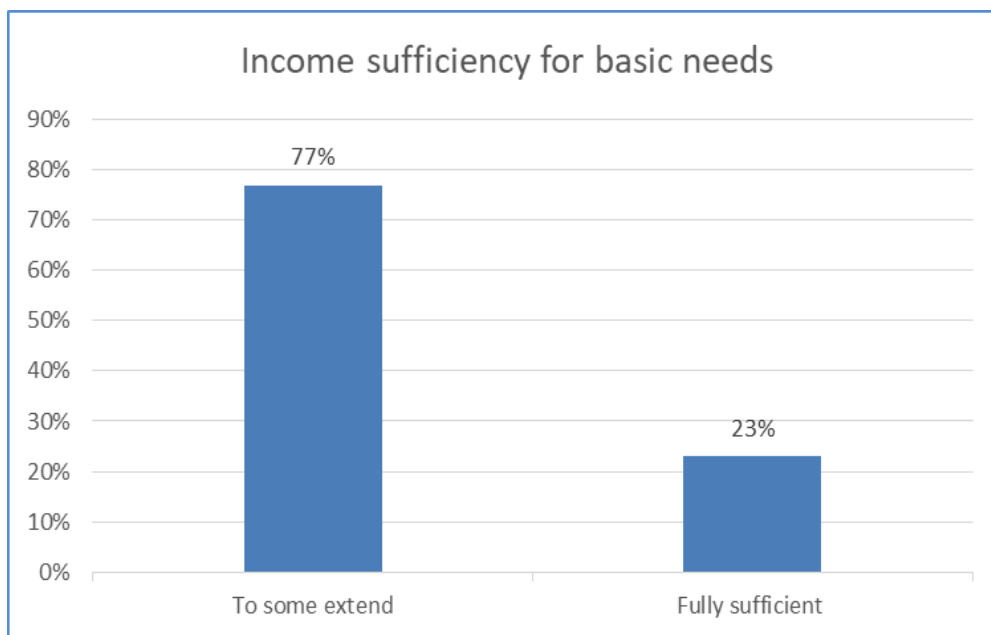


Fig 5: income sufficiency level to fulfill basic needs of respondents

77.08% responded that their income is sufficient to some extent for their livelihood and only 23% think that their income is fully sufficient for their livelihood.

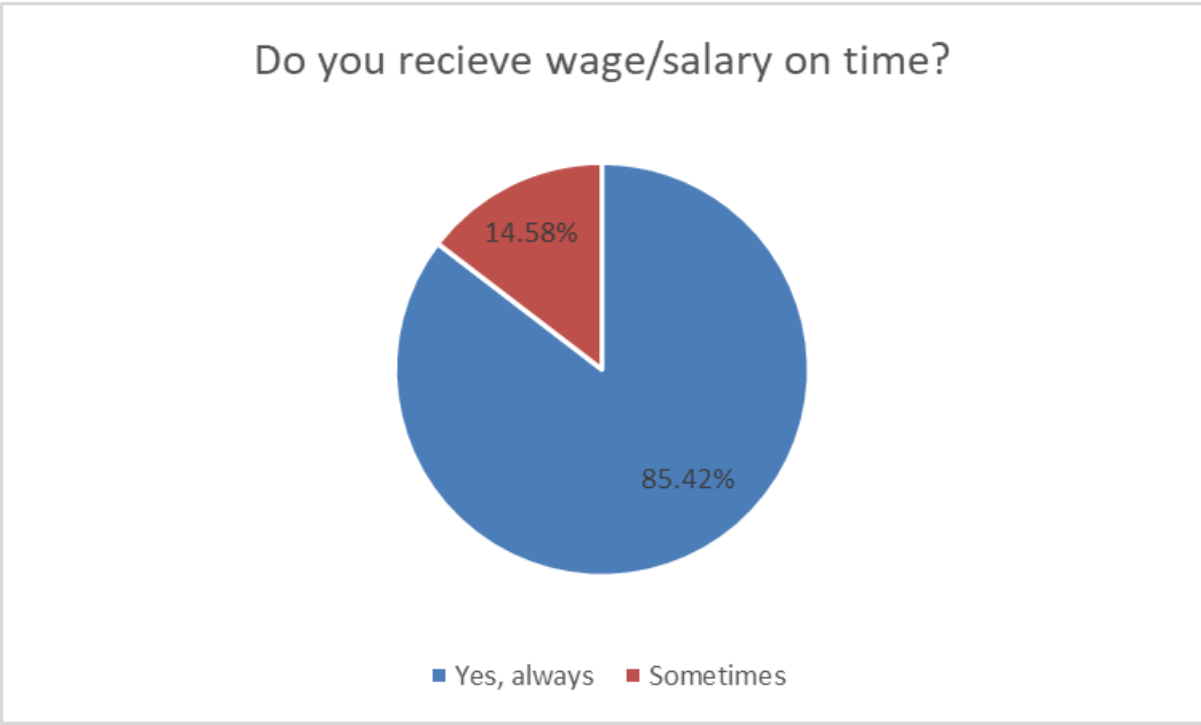


Fig 6: Status of receiving timely wage/salary

Almost 85% of workers get a wage/salary on time. Only 15% of workers responded that they sometimes receive wage/ salary on time.

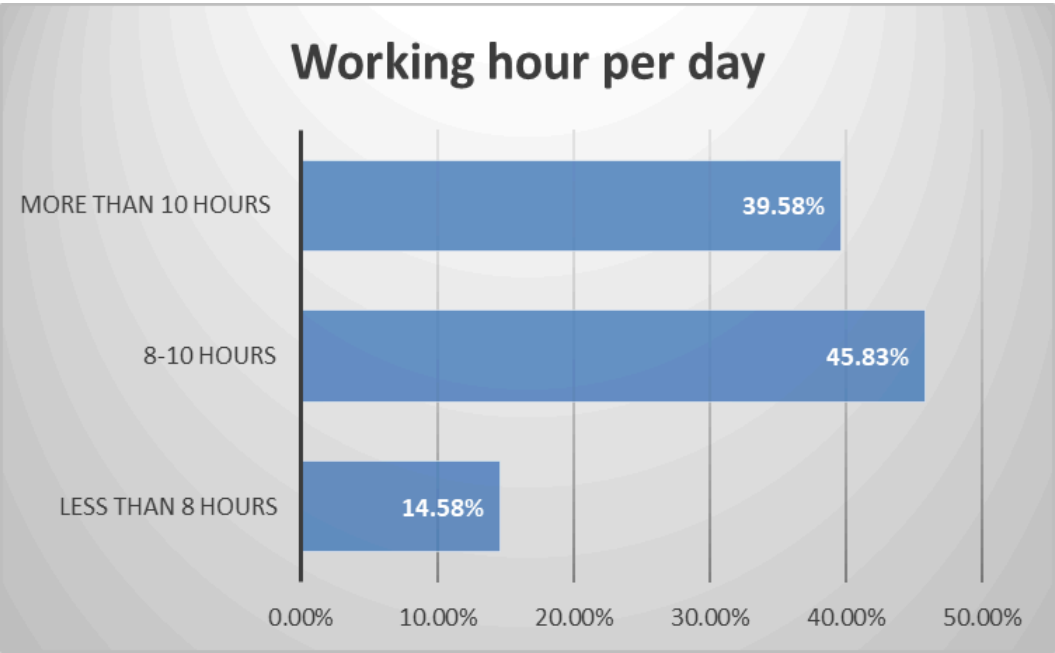


Fig 7: Working hour status per day

Around 45.83% of respondents work 8-10 hours per day. 39.58% of respondents work more than 10 hours, only 15% work less than 8 and 8 hours.

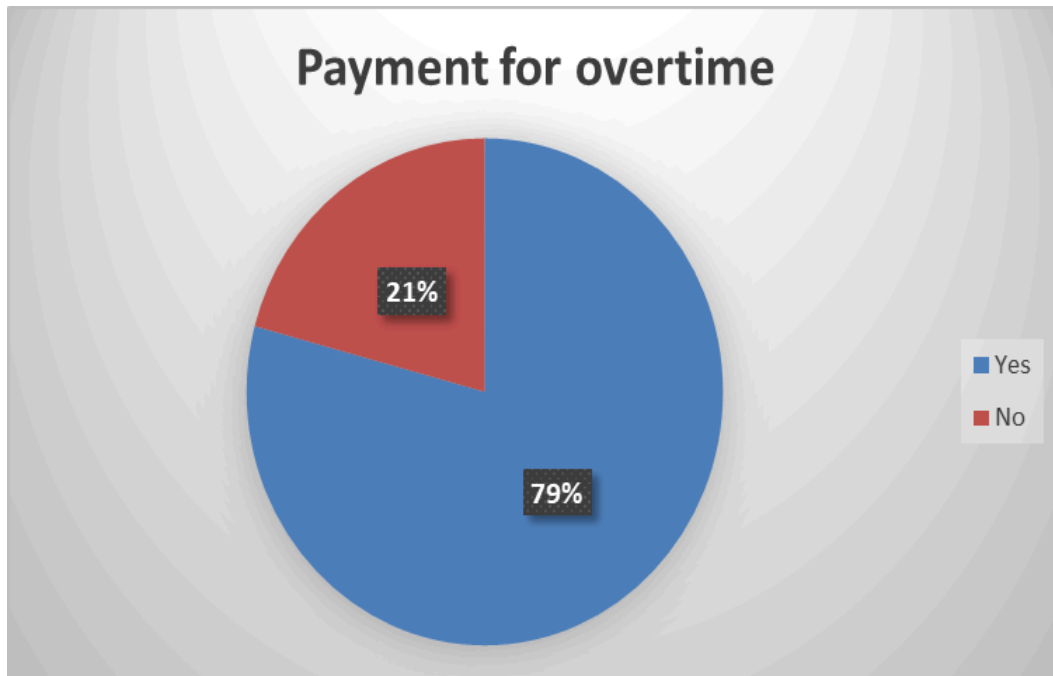


Fig 8: Payment for overtime

It is noteworthy that almost 79.17% get payment for overtime. But 21% of workers do not get payment for overtime.

And 81.15% get a weekly off day. 93% of respondents get sick leave when needed. 79.17% claimed that their skills that they acquired during the apprentice training match fully the demand at their workplace.

Workplace safety and environment

89.78% of respondents have a fixed workplace. Among them 81.25% of respondents have safe drinking water at their workplace.

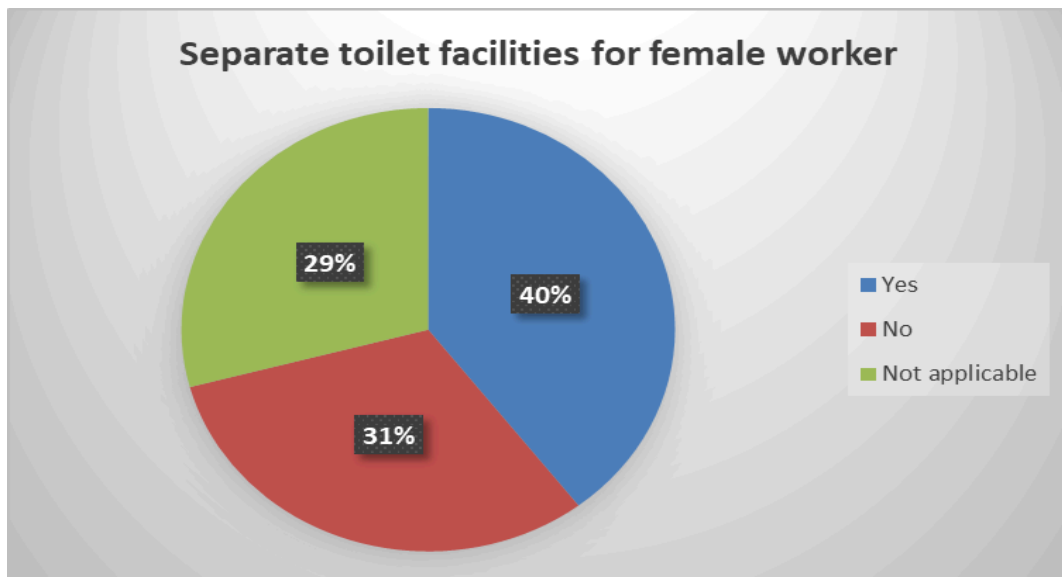


Fig 9: percentage of separate toilet facilities for female workers

79.17% of respondents claim that they have hygienic and well maintained toilets at their workplace. Only 39.58% of workplaces have separate female toilets at their workplace.

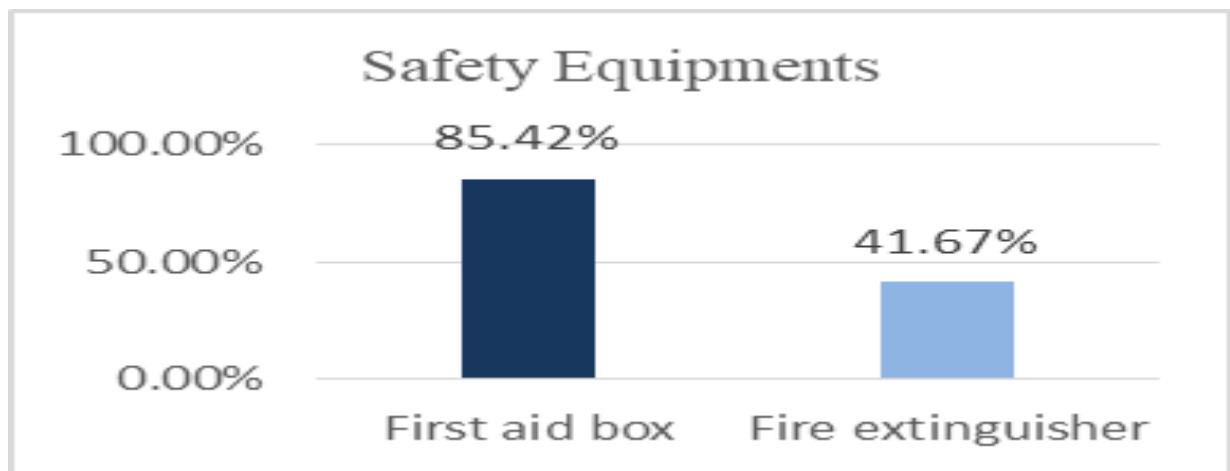


Fig 10: percentage of usage of first aid boxes and fire extinguishers at the workplace

85.42% of respondents have a first aid box at their workplace and the remaining 14.58% do not have a first aid box at their workplace. But only 41.67% of respondents have fire extinguishers at their workplace and the remaining 58.33% of respondents have no fire extinguishers at their workplace.

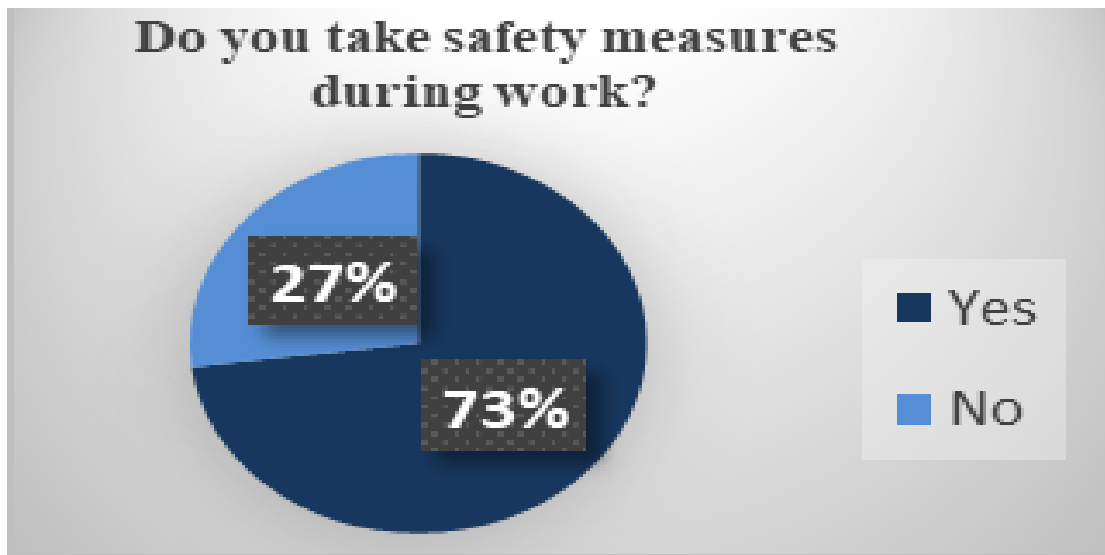


Fig 11: percentage of using safety measures during work

Almost 73% of respondents claimed that they take safety measures and the remaining 23% claimed they do not take safety measures during work.

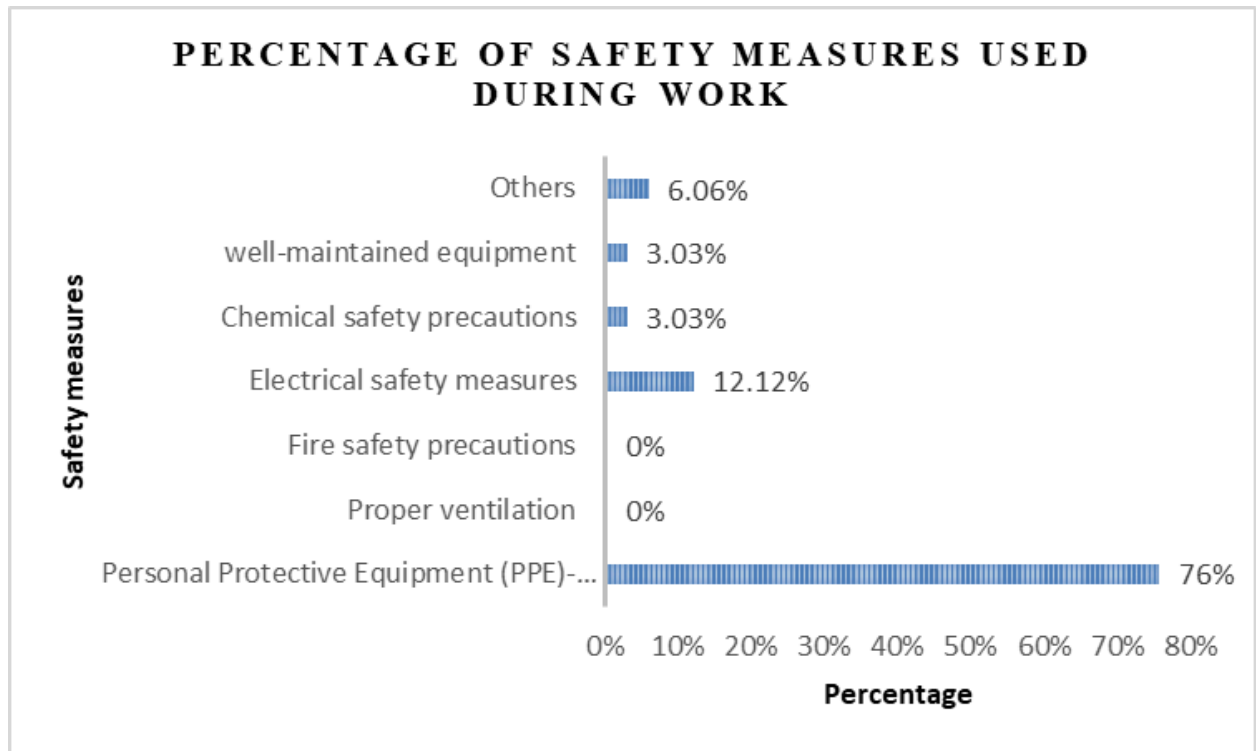


Fig 12: percentage of safety measures used during work

75.76% of respondents use Personal Protection Equipment(PPE) as their safety measures and only a few use other safety measures during their work such as- only 12.12% uses electrical safety measures, 6.06% uses seat belt(others), 3.03% well maintained equipment and 3.03% uses chemical safety measures.

27.08% of respondents those who do not take safety measures, among them 53.85% claimed that safety measures are not necessary for their work, 8% claimed that they are not aware of safety measures. 56.25% of respondents have a tendency to save for future emergencies and the remaining 43.75% can not save.

Social Protection:

56.25% of respondents said that they faced work related injury/ health issues in the last six months.



Fig 13: work related injury status

Among them 51.85% had cuts and lacerations, 29.63% had burns and the remaining respondents had other types of injury. Among them only 18.52% needed medication at hospital. Among those who needed medication at the hospital, 60% were provided medical assistance initially by their employers.

62.50% of respondents feel that their employer addresses their personal and family needs during work. 41.67% of respondents felt that their employer always considers their feedback, suggestions at the workplace, 52.08% of respondents felt that sometimes and the remaining of the respondents felt that the employer never considers their feedback and suggestions at the workplace.

Rights at workplace

23% of respondents claimed that they somewhat witnessed or experienced discrimination at their workplace and 6.25% of respondents claimed they always witnessed or experienced discrimination at their workplace. Almost 90% of respondents have no idea about labor rights. After skill improvement and employment, 60% felt always respected and heard in the family and society and 31.25% felt sometimes and the remaining never felt respected and heard in the family and society.

11. Discussion

Large portion of employment in Bangladesh consists of the informal sector, where mostly the youth population. According to SDG goal 8 which focuses on decent work and economic growth, Bangladesh must prioritize working conditions and rights at work in the informal sector. Programs like RAISE have a huge impact on the informal sector. We got a closer view on informal sector workers' rights and working conditions through this study. We can see the participation rate of females in the workplace is praiseworthy. It's a matter of deep consideration of labor rights and working conditions. Some employees feel that their employer takes into account their opinions and suggestions at work and attends to their personal and family needs while they are there. even though few employees experienced or observed workplace discrimination. However, the respondent feels heard and respected in the family and community after starting work. The fact that over 90% of respondents are ignorant of labor rights is regrettable.

Most of the workers are not satisfied with their income level. It is praiseworthy that almost 85% of the respondents get their salary/wage on time and 79% get their payment for overtime. But most of them have to work more than 8-10 hours or more than 10 hours, which is vulnerable. Most of them get sick leave whenever needed.

Most of the workplace seems careful about safe drinking water. The observation reveals an alternate scenario, even though the majority of respondents stated that their toilet was clean and well-maintained. It should be noted that very few workplaces provide separate toilets for female employees. The majority of workplaces have first aid kits. However, very few people own a fire extinguisher. As a direct result of the RAISE project's training, the majority of respondents are aware of workplace safety procedures and mostly wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when working.

In the last six months, 56% experienced a work-related injury. Just 18% of them need hospital medicine. However, the majority of them first receive assistance from their employers.

Some employees feel that their employer takes into account their opinions and suggestions at work and attends to their personal and family needs while they are there. even though few employees experienced or observed workplace discrimination. However, the respondent feels heard and respected in the family and community after starting work. Some employees feel that their employer takes into account their opinions and suggestions at work and attends to their personal and family needs while they are there. even though few employees experienced or observed workplace discrimination. However, the respondent feels heard and respected in the family and community after starting work.

12. Recommendations

RAISE project's apprenticeship program plays a significant role in promoting economic growth and fostering decent working conditions in Bangladesh's informal sector. By closely aligning with the objectives of SDG Goal 8—promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all—this initiative provides a promising model for transformative change. To strengthen its impact, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Systematically educate apprentices about their legal and labor rights to empower them as informed workers.
2. Encourage Master Craft Persons (MCPs) to improve workplace infrastructure, including expanding workspaces and ensuring access to clean, gender-sensitive sanitation facilities.
3. Promote respectful and supportive employer-worker relationships to enhance productivity and job satisfaction.
4. Provide comprehensive training on occupational safety and health measures to mitigate workplace hazards.
5. Ensure the enforcement of structured and consistent working hours to uphold work-life balance and reduce exploitation.

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Appendix

The questionnaire of survey:

Section1: Participant Demographics

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
1.1	Age		1. 15-20 years 2. 21-25 years 3. 26-30 years 4. 30-35 years	
1.2	Gender		1. Male 2. Female	
1.3	What is your highest level of education?		1. No education 2. Primary School 3. Secondary School 4. Higher secondary school 5. Diploma degree 6. Tertiary education	
1.4	Current Employment Status		1. Working in the same enterprise where he/she took training 2. Working in the different enterprise	
1.5	In which trade are you employed?		1. Fashion garments 2. Beautification 3. Mobile phone servicing 4. Refrigeration and air conditioning 5. Driving cum Auto Mechanics 6. Assembling of Leather Goods 7. Aluminum fabrication 8. Electric installation 9. Motorcycle Servicing	

			10. Small Engineering 11. Others	
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Section 2: Employment conditions

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
2.1	What is your average monthly income?			
2.2	Do you receive your salary on time?		1. Always 2. Sometimes 3. Rarely 4. never	
2.3.	What is your typical working hour per day?		1. Less than 8 hours 2. 8-10 hours 3. More than 10 hours	
2.5	Do you get paid for overtime work?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not applicable	
2.6	Do you receive a weekly off day?		1. Yes 2. No	
2.7	Do you get sick leave when needed?		1. Yes 2. No	

	Do the female workers at your workplace get maternity leave ?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure 4. Not applicable	
2.8	Does your workplace provide caregiving services or facilities for female employees (e.g., childcare support)?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not applicable	
2.9	Had the Apprentice training under the RAISE project provided you with improved opportunities for employment or self-employment?		1. Yes, significantly improved 2. Yes, somewhat improved 3. No, there has been no improvement	
2.10	How secure did you feel about finding work after completing the Apprentice training?		1. Very secure 2. Somewhat secure 3. Not secure at all	
2.11	Do you feel that the skills you acquired during the Apprentice training match the demand for skilled craftspersons in your community or country?		1. Yes, completely 2. To some extent 3. No, they do not match	
2.12	In your opinion, is the training duration sufficient to equip you with the necessary skills for sustainable work?		1. Yes, the duration is sufficient 2. The duration is somewhat sufficient 3. No, more time is needed	

Section 3: workplace safety and environment

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
3.1	Does your workplace provide clean, safe drinking water?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Sometimes	

3.2	Are toilet facilities hygienic and well-maintained?		1. Yes 2. No 3. sometimes	
3.3	Are there separate toilet facilities for female workers?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure 4. Not applicable	
	Do you have a first aid box at your workplace?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure	
	Do you have a fire extinguisher at your workplace?		1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure	
3.4	Do you take any safety measures during your work?		1. Yes 2. No	3.5 3.6
3.5	Which safety measures do you use at work? (select all that apply)		1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- gloves, goggles, face shield, helmet, body protection 2. Proper ventilation 3. Fire safety precautions 4. Electrical safety measures 5. Chemical safety precautions 6. well-maintained equipment 7. Others	

3.6	If not, why don't you take safety measures at work?		1. Not necessary for my work 2. The employer does not provide them 3. Too expensive to afford 4. I am not aware of their importance	
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Section 4: Social Protection

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
4.1	Have you ever faced any work-related injury or health issue during the training/ in the last 6 months at your workplace ?		1. Yes 2. No	4.4 4.5
4.2	Types of injury		1. Cuts and Lacerations 2. Burns 3. Electric shock 4. Bone fracture 5. Injury from lifting heavy objects 6. Breathing difficulty 7. Eye injury 8. Others	
	Do you needed medication at the hospital for your injury?		1. Yes 2. No	
4.4	Does your employer provide medical assistance for these work-related injuries?		1. Yes 2. No	
4.5	Do you feel that the project addresses your personal or family needs during your		1. Yes, fully 2. Somewhat 3. Not at all	

	training (e.g., childcare, transportation, housing)?			
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Section 5: Rights at work

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
5.1	Have you ever experienced or witnessed discrimination (based on gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) in the training environment?		1. Yes, frequently 2. Yes, occasionally 3. No, never	
5.2	Do you feel safe and protected in the physical training environment (e.g., from accidents, hazards, or unsafe working conditions)?		1. Yes, completely safe 2. Somewhat safe 3. Not safe at all	
5.3	Do you feel that there is a clear understanding of your rights as a trainee under the RAISE project (e.g., right to safety, fair treatment, privacy)?		1. Yes, fully 2. Somewhat 3. No, not at all	

Section 6: Social Dialogue

Serial no	Question	Answer	Code	Skip
6.1	Do you feel that your feedback and suggestions are considered by the trainers/project management team/employer?		1. Yes, always 2. Sometimes 3. Rarely 4. Never	
6.2	After skill improvement and employment, do you feel respected and heard in your family and society?		1. Yes, always 2. Sometimes 3. Rarely 4. Never	

Section 7: challenges and suggestions

7.1 What are the biggest challenges you face in your work? (Check up to 3)

- Low wages
- Lack of job security
- Unsafe working conditions
- Long working hours
- No social protection benefits
- Workplace harassment/discrimination
- Limited opportunities for skill development
- others(please specify)

7.2 What do you think could be improved in the training/working environment to make it a more decent work setting?

Ans: