

WORK AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract

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“What contributes to the differences in women’s economic empowerment?” To investigate this problem, a large N statistical analysis set up this comparative case study of Bangladesh and India that evaluates the relationship between women’s access to employment in the formal labor market and women’s access to ownership of accounts in banks and other financial institutions. The large N statistical analysis results illustrate a global pattern that the percentage of women working in the formal labor market is associated with a greater percentage of women having accounts in banks or other financial institutions. Neither Bangladesh nor India fit this pattern, and statistics from these two countries are very different, so the purpose of this comparison is to show why this is the case. Institutional and socio-cultural factors, including differences in each country’s banking systems and how each country has developed over the years, explain the variances between Bangladesh and India.

Key Words: women’s empowerment, women’s work, formal labor market, informal labor market, accounts in banks or other financial institutions, South Asia, Bangladesh, India, ready-made garment industry

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List of Acronyms

ASA: Association for Social Advancement

ATMs: Automated teller machines

BB: Bangladesh Bank

BCs: Banking Correspondents

BLA: Bangladesh Labor Act

BMB: Bharatiya Mahila Bank

BRAC: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

BSBDAs: Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

FCBs: Foreign commercial banks

FIPs: Financial Inclusion Plans

FLCs: Financial Literacy Centres

GDP: Gross domestic product

HBFC: House of Building Finance Corporation

ILO: International Labour Organization

MFI: Microfinance institutions

MFS: Mobile financial services

MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

MoLE: Ministry of Labour and Employment

MPI: Microfinance Penetration Index

MRA: Microcredit Regulatory Authority

NBFCs: Non-banking financial companies

NBFIs: Nonbank financial institutions

NGOs: Non-governmental organizations

NLP: National Labor Policy

OLS: Ordinary least squares

PCBs: Private commercial banks

PKSF: Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation

PMJDY: Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana

RBI: Reserve Bank of India

RMG: Ready-made garment

SBs: Specialized banks

SFTEs: Southern Fair Trade Enterprises

SHGs: Self-help groups

SMEs: Small and medium enterprises

SOCBs: State-owned commercial banks

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UPA: United Progressive Alliance

VAW: Violence against women

WVS: World Values Survey

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Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem/Significance of the Research Question

Does having an opportunity to work in the formal economy allow women to achieve a greater sense of empowerment than when they work in the informal economy?¹ This is the fundamental question behind this study. Scholars have defined empowerment in various ways, but many agree that it is the overall increase in a person's material resources that contribute to gaining greater power and agency (Ahmed, 2004; Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Le Mare, 2012; Pereznieto & Taylor, 2014). Empowerment means having a greater decision-making ability and it also can mean having greater control over one's income (Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Kibria, 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Pereznieto & Taylor, 2014). This is true of both men and women.

The specific research question of this study is, "What contributes to the differences in whether women are able to attain economic empowerment?" Economic empowerment is operationalized as having access to ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution because it may indicate that women have greater control over their money as opposed to having to turn the money they earn over to the household or their male relatives (Ahmed, 2004; Kibria, 1995). Demirgüç-Kunt, Klapper, Singer, and Van Oudheusden (2015) even argue that financial inclusion starts with having access to ownership of a bank account.² Overall, women having ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution may also signify empowerment because this may make them less financially dependent on men. The ownership of an account in a bank or financial institution may also afford women the opportunity to have access to credit and/or contribute to a savings account (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015).

To assess what contributes to the differences in women experiencing economic empowerment, this study compares women's access to ownership of an account in a bank or

¹ The informal economy describes "activities and income that are partially or fully outside government regulation, taxation, and observation" (The World Bank, 2016c).

² Financial inclusion will be discussed further in "Chapter 3: Institutional Factors."

other financial institution, first globally, and secondly, in Bangladesh and India.³ This study hypothesizes that work in the formal labor market as opposed to the informal labor market is associated with women having greater economic empowerment, measured as the percentage of women having accounts in banks and other financial institutions. That said, more will be discussed below concerning both the pros and cons of women working in the formal labor market.

Bangladesh and India were chosen for this study because they are ostensibly similar, but the percentages of women working in the formal labor market and the percentages of women with accounts in banks or other financial institution are very different. Hoping to understand why these differences exist between Bangladesh and India is what initiated this study. With that said, this study hypothesizes that institutional and socio-cultural factors account for the differences in the percentages of women working in the formal and informal labor markets and who experience economic empowerment in Bangladesh and India.

Comparison of Development Factors in Bangladesh and India

This study of female empowerment focuses on South Asia, in particular, the countries of Bangladesh and India because they both have large garment and handicraft industries where the majority of the workers are women (Ahmed, 2004; Bose, 2007; Feldman, 1992; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Le Mare, 2012; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004).⁴ Studying the garment and handicraft industries in South Asia shows the positive and negative impacts of both of these industries

³ Nonbank financial institutions (NBFIs) do not have full banking licenses, and these institutions cannot accept deposits from people. NBFIs provide different financial services such as “investment (both collective and individual), risk pooling, financial consulting, brokering, money transmission, and check cashing” (The World Bank, 2016b). Some examples of NBFIs are “insurance firms, venture capitalists, currency exchanges, some microloan organizations, and pawn shops” (The World Bank, 2016b).

⁴ Based on prior studies, handicraft items can include items produced from jute and terracotta, homemade paper, metal work, hand printing, embossed leather, and embroidery production (Das, 2011; Le Mare, 2012; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). The Oxford English Dictionary defines handicraft as “a manual art, trade, or occupation; craft involving making things (now typically domestic or decorative objects) by hand (“Handicraft,” 2013).

(Dedeoglu, 2014; Kabeer, 2004; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Ross, 2014; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Some researchers and many of the women workers see these industries as a necessity because it provides them with an avenue to make money (Dedeoglu, 2014; Kabeer, 2004; Lim, 1983; Ross, 2014). On the other hand, other scholars and women workers believe these industries are exploiting women (Dedeoglu, 2014; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Lim, 1983; Ross, 2014). That said, development factors may help explain why more women work in the formal labor market in Bangladesh than in India. See development factors for each state displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Development Statistics for Bangladesh and India

	Bangladesh	India
Population, total (millions)	159.1 (2014)	1,295.3 (2014)
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) ⁵	\$3,134.2 (2014)	\$5,672.2 (2014)
Share of Population Below the National Poverty Line (%)	31.5% (2015)	21.9% (2015)
Employed Population below \$1.90 PPP a day (%) ⁶	73.5% (2012)	17.9% (2012)

⁵ GDP per capita, PPP indicates that this measure utilizes GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP). This means the GDP of each country is converted to international dollars using the PPP rate. GDP with the PPP rate “is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products” (The World Bank, 2016d).

⁶ The percent of the employed population that lives on less than \$1.90 per day. PPP indicates that the amount each citizen makes has been converted to international dollars in order to compare different countries (The World Bank, 2017c).

Gender Inequality Index (GII) ⁷	0.527 (2014)	0.544 (2014)
Human Development Index (HDI) ⁸	0.575 (2014)	0.615 (2014)

(Asian Development Bank, 2017a; Asian Development Bank, 2017b; The World Bank, 2016d; The World Bank, 2017a; The World Bank, 2017b; United Nations Development Program, 2016b; United Nations Development Program, 2016c)

Based on these statistics, it is evident that India has a much larger population than Bangladesh, and less of the total population is living below the poverty line in India than Bangladesh. In particular, almost three-fourths of the entire population in Bangladesh lives on less than \$1.90 a day, while only about one-fifth of the population in India lives on less than \$1.90 a day. India also fares somewhat better when looking at overall human development with its HDI value, but both countries fall into the same category of medium human development with values between 0.550 and 0.699 (United Nations Development Program, 2016e). This is remarkable to see that Bangladesh's and India's HDI values are so close when the poverty rates of each country are considered; India's HDI should be much higher. Additionally, Bangladesh does have slightly less gender inequality according to the GII. This is surprising considering so much of the population is living in poverty. Nevertheless, this may be indicative of Bangladesh having a higher percentage of women laboring in the formal labor market than India.

All in all, the purpose of highlighting these differences is because development factors such as having a high poverty level may override cultural norms and expectations for women and

⁷ The GII measures gender inequalities in three segments of human development that include reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. The GII value ranges from zero to one, and the higher the GII value, the greater the inequality there is between men and women (United Nations Development Program, 2016a; United Nations Development Program, 2016e).

⁸ The HDI was created to show that economic growth should not be the only measure when evaluating development. The HDI measures three important features of human development including having "a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable," and having a decent standard of living (United Nations Development Program, 2016d). HDI measures are broken down into four categories: 0.800 and above (very high human development); 0.700-0.799 (high human development); 0.550-0.699 (medium human development); and below 0.550 (low human development) (United Nations Development Program, 2016e).

make it more appropriate for them to take up work at garment factories (Kibria, 1995; Shehabuddin, 2008). Keep this information in mind because these differences in development impact institutional and socio-cultural factors and may help illuminate why the female labor market participation rate is so much higher in Bangladesh compared to India's female labor market participation rate.

The State of Women's Empowerment Globally and in South Asia

Kabeer (2003) explains that South Asia is one of the regions in the world that is associated with "extreme forms of patriarchy" (p. 52). This characteristic makes South Asia an interesting region to study in terms of women's empowerment. Women are working in South Asia, but there is a question of whether women are more empowered there and whether their overall status is improving. Bangladesh and India showcase a contemporary example of the changing roles of women in patriarchal societies and what may affect whether women attain economic empowerment.⁹

Statistics Concerning Women's Empowerment. In terms of women's empowerment worldwide, the World Economic Forum's The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 found that the gap between men and women pertaining to education has decreased since 2006 (World Economic Forum, 2015). Concerning education in Bangladesh and India, data from the year 2014 shows that females in Bangladesh averaged 4.5 years of schooling, and males averaged 5.5 years of schooling (United Nations Development Program, 2015b; United Nations Development Program, 2015c). In India, females averaged 3.6 years of schooling, and males averaged 7.2 years of schooling (United Nations Development Program, 2015b; United Nations Development

⁹ Finlayson (2016) describes patriarchy as "a system in which men rule or have power over or oppress women, deriving benefit from doing so, at women's expense" (p. 6).

Program, 2015c).¹⁰ Consequently, in both countries males have more education than females. In India, boys receive twice the education of girls, while the gap in Bangladesh is much narrower.

The World Economic Forum's The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 also found that across the globe, the health of men and women is close to parity at 96 percent (World Economic Forum, 2015). Specifically in Bangladesh, the life expectancy for females in 2015 was 73.3 years, and the life expectancy for males was 70.7 years (United Nations Development Program, 2015d; United Nations Development Program, 2015e).¹¹ In contrast, females in India had a life expectancy of 69.9 years compared with 66.9 years for males in 2015 (United Nations Development Program, 2015d; United Nations Development Program, 2015e). In general, women's life expectancy in both countries exceeds men's life expectancy. Furthermore, both men and women in Bangladesh have higher life expectancies than men and women in India. Yet, the gap between men and women is similar in both countries at around three years (United Nations Development Program, 2015d; United Nations Development Program, 2015e).

The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 also revealed that there are still wide gaps in political empowerment and economic participation between men and women worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2015). Nevertheless, it is important to note that women constitute 30 percent of seats "in at least one chamber of national parliament" in 42 countries (United Nations Development Program, 2015a, p. 74). Moreover, the number of seats in parliament in 2015 held by women is 20 percent and 12 percent respectively in Bangladesh and India (United Nations

¹⁰ "Average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level" (United Nations Development Program, 2015b).

¹¹ "Number of years a newborn infant could expect to live if prevailing patterns of age-specific mortality rates at the time of birth stay the same throughout the infant's life" (United Nations Development Program, 2015d).

Development Program, 2015f).¹² Based on this data, the percentage of women in parliament in both countries is lower than the 30 percent found in 42 countries across the globe, but the percentage of women in parliament in Bangladesh is closer to 30 percent, and it is much higher than the percentage of women in parliament in India. This could indicate it is more culturally appropriate for women in Bangladesh to participate in the government than it is in India.

Regarding economic participation, Wilkins (2016) reports women make up 40 percent of the global workforce, but only possess one percent of the global wealth and make much less than men who work in the same positions. In general, women earn 24 percent less than men and almost 50 percent of women participate in what is termed as “vulnerable employment” (United Nations Development Program, 2015a).¹³ As it stands in South Asia, 62 percent of women are employed in agriculture, mostly in the informal economy, compared with less than 42 percent of men employed in this sector (United Nations Development Program, 2015a).¹⁴ Kabeer (2003) also explains that women in South Asia are concentrated in unpaid family labor, accounting for 60 percent of the female labor force.¹⁵ Overall, the majority of women in South Asia participate in the informal labor market laboring in some type of agriculture.

Based on the fact that 62 percent of women in South Asia are employed informally in agriculture, it is evident that the informal labor market is prevalent in South Asia (United Nations Development Program, 2015a). Even though the majority of women in South Asia are employed

¹² “Proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament expressed as percentage of total seats. For countries with bicameral legislative systems, the share of seats is calculated based on both houses” (United Nations Development Program, 2015f).

¹³ Vulnerable employment signifies people who are unpaid family workers or those who are self-employed and do not have any employees working for them routinely. These people generally work in the informal economy and lack stable pay and protections. Social security is limited or not present at all for them (United Nations Development Program, 2015a).

¹⁴ The Human Development Report 2015 defines work in agriculture as work in farming, fisheries, or forestry (United Nations Development Program, 2015a).

¹⁵ Benería (2003) describes the different categories of unpaid work as encompassing subsistence production, work in the informal sector, domestic work, and volunteer work. Motives and norms such as “love, compassion, altruism, empathy, individual and collective responsibility, and solidarity” are often associated with unpaid work (p. 160).

in agriculture in the informal economy, South Asia is also the region with the highest percentage of people laboring in nonagricultural work in the informal economy at 82 percent (United Nations Development Program, 2015a). Since this is the case, it is important to analyze research about the garment and handicraft industries because it highlights that there are differences between both the informal and formal labor markets. Some of these differences are significant because they affect to what extent women experience empowerment. There are variances between women who work inside and outside of the home and women who work by themselves or are surrounded by other women (Agarwal, 1997; Bose, 2007; Kabeer, 2004; Kabeer, Milward, & Sudarshan, 2013; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rock, 2003; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Overall, it is necessary to take into account these separate labor markets as this study does.

Many types of official data evaluating women's participation rates across different countries measure women who are typically working in the formal labor market (Rustagi, 2004). Because of the data that is available, this study also assesses the percentage of women employed in the formal labor market for the large N statistical analysis, but it considers both the informal and formal labor markets concerning the comparative case studies of Bangladesh and India. The case studies examine the institutional and socio-cultural factors of each country, which include analyzing the different segments of each country's economy such as the manufacturing, agricultural, and service sectors.¹⁶ This analysis aims to determine to what extent there are opportunities for women to work in the formal labor market in Bangladesh and India.

Different Forms of Empowerment. Specifically, this study focuses on how women achieve economic empowerment, but other forms of empowerment are associated with gender equality globally and in South Asia. One form of empowerment is political empowerment, which

¹⁶ The breakdown of what sectors make up each country's economy is in "Chapter 3: Institutional Factors."

can be operationalized as the number of women who are politically active, involved in politics in some capacity, and in positions of power in governments. Being politically active may encompass the percentage of women running for and holding political office, voting, or being leaders in their communities (Kabeer, 2003; Stromquist, 2015; Wilkins, 2016). Wilkins (2016) points out that the political status of women in South Asia varies. For example, some women have been able to hold positions at the top of national governments, but this has not translated to the general population of women who still may experience violence or lack access to rights when compared to men.

More than 35 percent of women across the globe have been the victim of physical or sexual violence from either partners or non-partners (Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; United Nations Development Program, 2015a). Specifically in South Asia, between the years 2001 to 2011, 53.3 percent of women in Bangladesh and 35.4 percent of women in India reported experiencing violence from an intimate partner or non-intimate partner (United Nations Development Program, 2015g).¹⁷ These statistics indicate that a higher percentage of women in Bangladesh report being a victim of violence even though more women are in positions of power in the government in Bangladesh than in India (United Nations Development Program, 2015f).

Education is another significant measure of women's empowerment because it is associated with positive outcomes for women such as marrying older, having more sexual autonomy, greater decision-making ability (including economic decision-making), and a lower incidence of gender violence (Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; Kabeer, 2003). Yet, some scholars question if education really empowers women. For example, education that does not always incorporate gender-sensitive curricula may reinforce traditional gender roles (Kabeer, 2003; Shehabuddin, 2008; Stromquist, 2015). Stromquist (2015) argues that education is very

¹⁷ "Intimate or non-intimate partner violence ever experienced by a woman: Percentage of the female population, ages 15 and older, that has ever experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate or non-intimate partner" (United Nations Development Program, 2015g).

important, but it needs to be connected to other forms of empowerment including economic, political, and psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment is another measurement of empowerment for women, and it is related to a woman's perceived self-confidence. When women feel confident and competent, this is what enables them to push for changes in social relations (Stromquist, 2015; Wilkins, 2016). Wilkins (2016) explains that this form of empowerment is difficult to assess because self-confidence can only be measured from self-reports from women who are willing to share how they feel. Overall, determining what forms of empowerment have the most positive outcomes for women is difficult to unravel because they may well be interconnected. With this said, because "access to material goods is fundamental to enjoy economic and social rights" and because many human rights violations perpetrated against women are a result and contributor to women's lack of power and economic independence, this study is centered on economic empowerment (Stromquist, 2015, p. 310; Green, 1999).

Literature Review

Before describing the trends that come to light from the literature concerning women's economic empowerment, it is necessary to explain some of the theoretical frameworks scholars use to approach the issue of women's labor. The explanation below includes comparing the theoretical framework of Marxist and socialist feminisms versus the theoretical framework of liberal feminism. Furthermore, the effects and principles behind the theoretical framework of neoliberalism are also outlined in this sub-section.

Theoretical Frameworks

One approach is Marxist and socialist feminisms, which incorporate the inclusion of gender in the analysis of class conflict (Bothamley, 2002; Finlayson, 2016; Guerin, Morgan, Reesman, & Willingham, 1992). Marxist and socialist feminisms have been a response to the traditional Marxist framework (Finlayson, 2016; Holmstrom, 2002; Vogel, 1981). Marxism

views the relationship between wage laborers and capitalists in the capitalist economic system as inherently oppressive and exploitative (Eisenstein, 1979; Guerin et al., 1992; Holmstrom, 2002; Lim, 1983; Mies, 1998). Marxist and socialist feminists are not content with a purely Marxist approach because it does not incorporate gender. They believe that the capitalist system is not only oppressive based on class, but is also oppressive based on gender (Bothamley, 2002; Guerin et al., 1992; Holmstrom, 2002). This oppression based on class and gender is also similar to the oppression some individuals experience based on race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (Holmstrom, 2002; Vogel, 1981).

Since this is the case, Marxist and socialist feminists believe it necessary to look at the division of labor that is in the home and how that has been perpetuated into the market with the assumptions of “men’s” and “women’s” work (Bothamley, 2002; Mackintosh, 1984; Lim, 1983). The system that has enabled the continuation of the sexual division of labor and women’s subordination is capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1979; Finlayson, 2016; Guerin et al., 1992; Mackintosh, 1984; Mies, 1998). Mies (1998) explains that “patriarchy” signifies the systematic and historical male dominance women have experienced in almost all aspects of their lives including in the home, at work, in societal institutions, and in politics and economics. For Mies (1998), “capitalist” indicates the current system that allows for the continuation of this male dominance. Finlayson (2016) makes clear the inter-connectedness of this system when she states, “For socialist feminists, capitalism is so deeply implicated in the current system of patriarchy that it isn’t really possible to criticize one without criticizing the other” (p. 78). The sexual division of labor within the capitalist system allows for greater capital accumulation to be extracted from the workers (Clelland, 2014; Mackintosh, 1984; Mies, 1998, Nash, 1983).

A conflicting approach when evaluating capitalism and women’s labor is liberal feminism. Liberalism is a theoretical framework that has had many layers and meanings throughout history (Freeden, 2015). The layer of liberalism that is most relevant when

discussing the ability for women to gain empowerment through work is the one that values individuals and their freedom “to own and produce wealth” (Bothamley, 2002, pp 310-311; Freedden, 2015). In this strand of liberalism, liberals believe that promoting more free trade and economic exchange across the globe helps populations have greater wealth, have more knowledge, and have experience with the idea of self-help (Freedden, 2015). Self-help means that when someone has the ability to work, they can help themselves attain a comfortable life (Freedden, 2015).

Liberal feminists differ from Marxist and socialist feminists because they believe that capitalism can coexist with “gender justice and gender equality” (Finlayson, 2016, p. 83). Gender justice and gender equality denote liberal feminists’ focus on suggesting solutions for a fairer distributive scheme under capitalism in order to achieve a more just social system (Finlayson, 2016). Finlayson (2016) argues that there are five tenets of liberal feminism—individualism, distribution, abstraction, positivity, and capitalism. She asserts that the last two characteristics are not mentioned as often when describing liberal feminists because many researchers see these characteristics as “so obviously unobjectionable and positively good” (p. 86). Liberal feminists may emphasize positive solutions or “what should be done” to achieve gender justice, but also may neglect to criticize or examine the patriarchal system that currently exists (Finlayson, 2016, p. 87).

Another important element to consider when explaining the theoretical framework of liberal feminism is ‘neoliberalism.’ Freedden (2015) describes neoliberalism and many of the characteristics associated with it as a distortion of liberalism. Those who prescribe to neoliberal thinking see an “unencumbered global market” that produces greater economic advantages as the most important aspect in the relationships between countries (Freedden, 2015, p. 109). For neoliberals, a “self-regulating economic market” overrides social, political, and cultural aspects (Freedden, 2015, p. 109). Overall, the neoliberal approach lacks the “ethical mission towards a

fair society” that enables individuals (rather than corporations) to succeed which liberalism promotes (Freedon, 2015, p. 110). Some scholars specifically blame neoliberal policies for reinforcing the sexual division of labor and the exploitation of women in global production (Das, 2011; Dunaway, 2014; Feldman, 2009; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015; Stromquist, 2015; Wilkins, 2016). It is necessary to mention that there are other paradigms that could be discussed concerning women attaining economic empowerment, but the paradigms explained above are the most relevant.

Bargaining Power

When examining the literature related to the topic of what affects women’s economic empowerment in South Asia, some trends begin to emerge. The first trend that scholars have demonstrated in their studies is the idea that what happens inside the household affects what happens outside of the household (Agarwal, 1992; Agarwal, 1997; Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Le Mare, 2012; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rustagi, 2004). This stems from the idea of bargaining power that comes from the field of economics (Kantor, 2003).

The way women view their bargaining power, or their household decision-making power, inside the home affects how they view their bargaining power outside of the home. This affects the types of opportunities that women seek outside of the home and what decisions they voice their opinion on and advance inside the home (Agarwal, 1997). When a person has a greater chance of physically surviving outside of the home or has access to greater resources, that person has greater bargaining power within the family household (Agarwal, 1992; Kantor, 2003; Rustagi, 2004). Gender can cause women to be in a weaker bargaining position. If women are in a weaker bargaining position, they are disadvantaged when trying to claim economic and social rights (Agarwal, 1992; Agarwal, 1997; Gideon, 2002).

Kantor (2003) explains that there are additional factors that can affect the ability of women to bargain in India including women getting married at a young age, the stigma of

divorce, and women being socially dependent on men to do activities outside of the home. All of these factors may contribute to women being unable or unwilling to press for their personal interests over their husband's interests within the household (Kantor, 2003). Similarly, Agarwal (1997) establishes that social norms such as marital status and age can affect a woman's ability to bargain for what she wants. Overall, when discussing bargaining power, it is important to acknowledge that a woman's ability to bargain is context-specific (Agarwal, 1997; Kantor, 2003).

With that said, some scholars have found that women who do paid work feel that they gain greater decision-making power in their home. This is a result of women contributing more monetarily to the household and gaining knowledge and skills through work and educational programs provided by their employers (Bose, 2007; Le Mare, 2012; Rustagi, 2004). In contrast, other scholars utilizing a Marxist or socialist feminist lens have found that wage work does not eliminate the subordination women experience, and in fact, it is reinforced because in many working environments within the capitalist system, males are in charge of females who do what they are told (Elson & Pearson, 1984; Green, 1999; Mies, 1998).

This is why Prügl and Tinker (1997) explain, "Educating them about their rights not only as workers, but as women is essential to enhancing their bargaining power within the family and community" (p. 1479). Women having the ability to participate in waged labor does not always change the sexual division of labor, so women need to have access to programs, organizations, or activities where they can learn to cultivate their own identities (Elson & Pearson, 1984).

Additionally, some women may gain more respect within their household, but that does not necessarily lead to increased agency outside of the home in the public sphere (Le Mare, 2012). Nevertheless, Le Mare (2012) and Rustagi (2004) show that the recognition of women contributing to their household has resulted in daughters being valued and surviving more often than before in a society that favors boys. Le Mare (2012) also found that women now wish for

their daughters to be more educated so that they can acquire better jobs. Bearing this in mind, it seems that women's greater participation in the workforce has had a lag effect that has benefitted future generations.

Social Norms and Culture

Another trend that is manifested through this literature is that social norms and culture affect what types of activities and work are appropriate for women to do (Agarwal, 1997; Bose, 2007; Dhamija, 1975; Feldman, 1992; Kantor, 2003; Kibria, 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Pereznieta & Taylor, 2014; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rustagi, 2004; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). This is important because social norms not only affect what is allowed to be bargained about in the first place, but social norms also put constraints on bargaining power; social norms determine how bargaining can take place; and a social norm could actually be the issue that is being bargained over that one party is wishing to change (Agarwal, 1997; Kantor, 2003).

The strongest social norm that has affected many women throughout Muslim and Hindu communities in South Asia is what is called *purdah*, or female seclusion (Agarwal, 1997; Feldman, 1992; Jeffery, 1979; Kantor, 2003). This is the idea that men and women are supposed to be separated based on the norms of honor and shame (Jeffery, 1979; Kabeer, 2003; Shehabuddin, 2008). *Purdah* is what enables women in traditional Muslim and Hindu societies to be viewed as maintaining their chastity in order to be respected in their communities, and it has been most easily practiced by women of a higher economic status because they can afford not to work outside of the home (Jeffery, 1979; Shehabuddin, 2008). The majority of people in these societies aspire to keep their women secluded, but some expenses such as the cost of coverings like burkas and curtains or solid structures to separate men's and women's areas in the household can be too costly for the poor (Jeffery, 1979; Shehabuddin, 2008).

It is important to recognize that the institution of *purdah* takes place in both Hindu and Muslim communities throughout India and Bangladesh (Jeffery, 1979; Beech, 1982). Muslim

women may experience more restrictions than Hindu women, but it is also necessary to recognize that there are differences in how this institution is practiced even among Muslims as well because of differences of economic standing (Jeffery, 1979). Furthermore, because *purdah* is associated with women being restricted in their mobility, many women who needed to work in this region have traditionally worked in the informal labor market close to the home (Bose, 2007; Kabeer, 2003; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rustagi, 2004; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004).

The concept of women making handicrafts in the home in order to earn money to help support their families has been around for many years because scholars have inferred that this is the most culturally-acceptable type of employment for women to do since it does not inhibit their ability to also take care of their families and homes (Dhamija, 1975). Dhamija (1975) argues, “Instead of trying to change these values, we should build on them” (p. 463). More recent scholars have also had similar findings. Some explain that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use handicraft production to help women make money because it is viewed as a female occupation that is not threatening to men’s employment opportunities (Le Mare, 2012). This fits nicely with the liberal framework that champions positive ways to increase the individual wealth of women.

In contrast, many feminists have a problem with this line of thinking because it does not fundamentally challenge traditional gender norms, and the necessity of women needing to be close to the home has resulted in women being unable to “proletarianize themselves” (Prügl & Tinker, 1997, p. 1476; Gideon, 2002; Le Mare, 2012; Mies, 1998; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Gideon (2002) explains the following:

Gender norms force women to look for income generating activities that allow them to combine both their productive and reproductive roles, but this tends to confine women to activities which provides for survival, but not for improvements in growth and living standards. (p. 190)

Furthermore, many feminists question how much handicrafts can really empower women since luxury craft items are not in high demand (Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). These criticisms are from a Marxist or socialist feminist framework because they identify that handicraft labor does not do anything to transform the subordination of women and the sexual division of labor found in the capitalist patriarchal system in South Asia.

Home-Centered Work Less Empowering

In a similar vein, the next trend that comes through in the literature is that working in the home is less empowering than working outside of the home (Bose, 2007; Das, 2011; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Le Mare, 2012; Prügl & Tinker, 2007; Rustagi, 2004; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). There are other forms of labor within the informal sector besides strictly home-centered work, but much of the literature concerning women's work in the informal sector in South Asia centers on labor conducted inside the home (Bose, 2007; Das, 2011; International Labour Organization, 2013; Prügl & Tinker, 2007; Rustagi, 2004; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Bose (2007) describes home-centered work as encompassing "piece-rated work, petty commodity production, vendors, hawkers, rag pickers and domestic service" done at or near the domestic service worker's home (p. 274). Some of the main issues many scholars bring up relating to home-centered work are that the women participating in this type of work are very isolated resulting in them being unaware of other opportunities, having insufficient legal protection, and not having very much leisure time (Bose, 2007; Prügl & Tinker, 2007).

Researchers have found that when women work from home in the informal sector, their jobs are not as valued, and they are viewed as men's helpers (Das, 2011; Dedeoglu, 2014; Le Mare, 2012; Rustagi, 2004; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Women in South Asian societies are seen as wives and homemakers first, and the crafts that they are involved in are just a way for them to express themselves and are not considered an important job (Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). In addition, Kabeer (2004) shows that women who work in the formal labor market (garment

industry) do not want to work in the informal labor market because women view conditions in the informal labor market as worse than the formal labor market.

Shifts in Social Norms and Culture

Bearing in mind the established importance of social norms and culture on how women utilize work to achieve a sense of empowerment, the subsequent trend that has become apparent in the findings of the literature is that there have been shifts in social norms concerning women and work in South Asia (Feldman, 1992; Feldman, 2009; Kibria, 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Rock, 2003; Rustagi, 2004; Shehabuddin, 2008). In particular, scholars have asserted that the advent of the garment industry in the late 1970s through the 1980s drastically changed social norms because it was correlated with young women moving out of their parents' homes (Feldman, 1992; Kaber, 2003; Rock, 2003). This provided "friendship and information-sharing opportunities" that these women had never experienced before because they now lived and worked with other people that were not their families (Feldman, 1992, p. 119; Rock, 2003). Rock (2003) found that garment workers did gain a sense of independence that encouraged many women to want to organize to press for better working conditions.

Along the same lines, Rustagi (2004) also found that any type of employment in patriarchal societies "provides the desirable opportunity to interact with others and operate in 'public' domains, traits which can be substantially empowering in certain contexts" (p. 75). With this said, Le Mare (2012) has shown that the handicraft industry, especially within Southern Fair Trade Enterprises (SFTEs), can have similar effects as to the women working in the garment industry. The women who work for these SFTEs are able to benefit from the experience of being a part of a group that allows them to attain social skills and discuss issues they dislike with other women such as having to pay a dowry (Le Mare, 2012). Le Mare (2012) discovered that many of the women in the SFTEs have decided they do not want to give dowries for their daughters when they get married.

Scholars have shown that the concept of *purdah* has shifted as well. Many women now perceive it to be “individual responsibility and personal morality” so as not to punish those choosing because of financial need to work outside of the home (Feldman, 2009, p. 283; Shehabuddin, 2008). Extreme poverty has shifted how families operate in countries like Bangladesh. Women cannot count on the support of their male family members to take care of them, so this is what is leading them to take jobs outside of the home (Kibria, 1995; Shebuiddin, 2008). Even though this is the case, Shehabuddin (2008) argues that *purdah* is still associated with the status of women because wealthier women are more able to buy expensive coverings like burkas in order to maintain separation from men.

Work Can Be Positive and Negative

The literature also includes conflicting views of whether laboring in the garment and handicraft industries is a positive experience (Ahmed, 2004; Das, 2011; Dedeoglu, 2014; Feldman, 1992; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Kibria 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Lim, 1983; Ross, 2014; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Feldman (1992) shows that women gain access to employment opportunities that they have never had before, but these opportunities lead to “new forms of subordination and domination” (p. 123). Elson and Pearson (1984) and Mackintosh (1984) explain that a woman participating in wage work does not change the capitalist production system that subordinates women by demarcating men’s and women’s work. Women laborers are now just being given orders by men who are not their family (Elson & Pearson, 1984). In addition, Shehabuddin (2008) shows that women workers are often disrespected by their supervisors; they do not have access to good childcare while they are working; and many people in Bangladesh consider women who work in the factories as immoral and not good role models.

On the other hand, some scholars have found that although this work may be exploitative, women mostly had positive responses when asked about their work and found it better than other options such as domestic service or prostitution (Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Kibria, 1995).

Fair-trade organizations have been touted as the answer to some of the problems of neoliberal globalization that has produced the garment industry, but Das (2011) found that over time fair-trade organizations become more like businesses that are more concerned with efficiency and getting their products to market instead of empowering workers.¹⁸ Taking all of this into account, Le Mare (2012) did find that SFTEs do have the potential to utilize handicraft production to empower women. Generally, Ahmed (2004) concludes that work in the garment industry is good for the individual woman because she may gain money to take care of her family or achieve economic independence, but has negative effects on the rights of women as a collective group because sweatshop labor cannot be the way to improve the standing of women. This type of labor ultimately reinforces women's subordinate status (Ahmed, 2004; Elson & Pearson, 1984, Kabeer, 2003; Lim, 1983).

Researchers have also concluded that it is who has the control of income within the house that explains whether women gain a sense of empowerment, not just if women experience an increase in the amount of income they make (Kantor, 2003; Rustagi, 2004). In Bangladesh even if women make their own money, they may still feel like they need to follow social norms and give that money over to their male family members (Ahmed, 2004; Kibria, 1995). With that said, Hanmer and Klugman (2016) using data from the Demographic and Health Survey for 58 countries found that women living within a nuclear family (not a large, extended family) and within female-headed households are one-third more likely to make the decisions concerning household purchases. Hanmer and Klugman (2016) also found that women who participate in paid work are 60 percent more likely to be a part of the decision-making process pertaining to household spending. Control over the money or having the ability to decide about household purchases is different based on an individual woman's circumstances.

¹⁸ An alternative network for trade between consumers in the Global North and suppliers and producers in the Global South that champions "fairness to all" (Das, 2011, p. 104).

Violence as a Consequence of Increasing Female Labor Participation. Liberals may view the expansion of women into the labor market as assisting women to attain empowerment because it enables them to gain wealth, but this might not be the whole story (Green, 1999; Lim, 1983; Mies, 1998; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015). The entry of more women into the workforce may produce a backlash because men may develop anxieties about not being able to attain employment (Ahmad, 2011; Chin, 2012; Green, 1999; Lim, 1983; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015). They may feel that more opportunities are available to women, so they are no longer able to be the breadwinner, which is the cultural norm in many regions including South Asia (Ahmad, 2011; Green, 1999; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015). Women having access to jobs may enable them to make more money than their male family members. This could lead women to challenge the male authority in their lives (Green, 1999; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015).

Shehabuddin (2008) found violence has been an element of the backlash women have experienced in Bangladesh since becoming more visible as more women are working outside of the home. Conservative, Islamist groups in mostly rural and poor areas of Bangladesh have issued *fatwas* on women that have resulted in women being whipped, stoned, and burned at the stake. One leader of the Islamist party, Jamaat, blames violence such as rape, acid attacks, and murder being perpetrated against women on there being more sexual messages in the media and “women not observing *purdah*” (Shehabuddin, 2008, p. 105).

Similarly, Ahmad (2011) also makes the case that the backlash against women based on women entering the labor force because of increased globalization has resulted in acid attacks on women in both India and Bangladesh. According to Ahmad (2011), 80 percent of acid attacks in the Indian subcontinent are perpetrated against women. Because both of these countries are strong patriarchal societies where men have high unemployment rates, this is a way frustrated men show their dominance over women (Ahmad, 2011). In contrast, Chin (2012) found that women’s participation in the labor force in India is associated with decreasing the probability

that women will experience physical spousal violence. With that said, Chin (2012) found that this only occurred when working reduced the amount of time women spend with their husbands. Nevertheless, Chin (2012) also found there is evidence for backlash in terms of men committing more violence against their wives once they enter the labor force if work does not limit the time the women spend with their spouses.

Organizing

The final trend elucidated in the literature is that women are stronger and gain a greater sense of empowerment when they organize into groups, unions, or cooperatives (Agarwal, 1997; Bose, 2007; Kabeer, 2004; Kabeer et al., 2013; Lindio-McGovern 2007; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rock, 2003). Researchers have found organizing into groups allows women to challenge some of the established social norms without having to face the negative consequences of acting alone. In general, women's bargaining power would be increased when they act together instead of just individually (Agarwal, 1997; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rock, 2003).

Organizing can be essential for female workers who work at home because it provides a necessary framework to reduce the isolation these women experience and provides them with a support system to highlight any exploitation taking place in order to push for their employers to follow rules and regulations (Bose, 2007; Kabeer et al., 2013; Prügl & Tinker, 1997). However, some scholars have found that women's NGOs and cooperatives have been more successful in securing rights for women than trade unions or state institutions because trade unions or state institutions are often male-biased and not in tune with the needs of women (Kabeer, 2004; Kabeer et al., 2013; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Rock, 2003). Conversely, Prügl and Tinker (2007) argue that NGOs organize women workers from a patronizing standpoint that does not take into account the connections to global economic trends that unions understand. They argue that those looking to organize women should include some of the practices of unions because unions recognize power relationships and stress political action to secure rights for workers.

Summation of the Literature

Overall, there are two main theoretical frameworks that scholars use to examine women's labor—Marxist and socialist feminisms and liberalism or neoliberalism. Most of the literature that views women's work as empowering comes from a liberal framework, while those researchers who question whether work is the complete answer for empowering women and reducing their subordination comes from a Marxist or socialist feminist perspective (Bothamley, 2002; Elson & Pearson, 1984; Finlayson, 2016; Freedden, 2015; Gideon, 2002; Green, 1999; Mackintosh; 1984; Mies, 1998; Ross, 2014). Many scholars (Das, 2011; Dunaway, 2014; Feldman, 2009; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015; Stromquist, 2015; Wilkins, 2016) also attribute the exploitation of women in the garment and handicraft industries to neoliberal policies that lack the ethical nature of promoting the economic success of individuals that is associated with liberalism (Freedden, 2015).¹⁹

The literature pertaining to what affects women achieving economic empowerment in South Asia is also focused on cultural aspects. The patriarchal norms within society and the necessity of female seclusion are just some of the characteristics that contribute to women attaining a sense of empowerment or not (Agarwal, 1997; Feldman, 1992; Kantor, 2003; Rustagi, 2004). Furthermore, the trend in the literature concerning shifts in social norms enables us to understand that changes have occurred in South Asia because of factors such as the development of the garment industry and the fact that this region has a high poverty level (Feldman, 1992; Feldman, 2009; Kibria, 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Rock, 2003; Rustagi, 2004).

Another significant element that scholars incorporated in the literature is the concept of bargaining power (Agarwal, 1992; Agarwal, 1997; Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Le Mare, 2012; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Rustagi, 2004). The importance that women's bargaining power within

¹⁹ See pages 11 to 13 for a greater explanation of the differences between liberalism and neoliberalism.

the home has on women's bargaining power outside of the home is crucial to understand.

Bargaining power was a helpful complement to all of the research relating to social and cultural norms because it is clear that these social and cultural norms affect a woman's bargaining power and the overall empowerment a woman can achieve (Agarwal, 1997; Kantor, 2003). In a similar vein, the context-specific nature of bargaining power coincides with whether women can achieve economic empowerment from working. Whether women have control over the money they make is also dependent on the individual circumstances of women and the social and cultural norms that constrain them (Ahmed, 2004; Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; Kibria, 1995).

Finally, there was a lot of back and forth as to whether work in the garment and handicraft industries is harmful to women or if it actually empowers women (Ahmed, 2004; Das, 2011; Dedeoglu, 2014; Feldman, 1992; Kabeer, 2004; Kibria 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Lim, 1983; Ross, 2014; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). Many times the differences of opinion are based on how a particular scholar views capitalism. Moreover, the differences that scholars point out in the literature relating to how women experience collective empowerment or individual empowerment illuminates that work in the garment and handicraft industries may not be able to overcome social norms and elevate women from their subordinated position in a capitalist, patriarchal system (Ahmed, 2004; Elson & Pearson, 1984; Gideon, 2002; Green, 1999; Lim, 1983; Mackintosh, 1984; Mies, 1998). In general, this back and forth enables us to understand that the garment and handicraft industries within patriarchal systems are very complex.

Methodology and Hypotheses

This study aims to determine what contributes to the differences in women's ability to attain economic empowerment. Economic empowerment may be associated with many things, but in this study it is signified by ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution (Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Kibria, 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Pereznieto & Taylor, 2014). Overall, this study hypothesizes that work in the formal labor market as opposed to work in the informal

labor market is correlated with women having greater economic empowerment in a large number of countries around the world. This first hypothesis sets up the comparison between Bangladesh and India.

This study centers on Bangladesh and India and the percentage of women working in the formal labor market as connected to the percentage of women who have accounts in banks or other financial institutions in each country. Based on World Bank statistics from 2014, the percentage of women in the formal labor force in Bangladesh is 40.4%, and the percentage of women in the formal labor force in India is just over half that, 24.2%.²⁰ The inverse is true on banking: the percentage of women with accounts in financial institutions in Bangladesh is 25.2%, and the percentage of women with accounts in financial institutions in India is 42.6% (The World Bank, 2016a).²¹ Neither reflects the pattern expected, which is greater female formal labor market participations is associated with greater female access to ownership of bank accounts. Given Bangladesh has higher female formal labor market participation and fewer bank accounts versus India's lower female labor market participation and higher female access to ownership of bank accounts, this study hypothesizes that the differences between Bangladesh and India can be explained by institutional and socio-cultural factors that vary between each state.

These statistics indicate that it is relevant to evaluate why there are differences between India and Bangladesh. Consequently, this study is trying to illuminate why these two ostensibly similar states vary so much when it comes to women's access to formal labor market employment and women's access to ownership of bank accounts. Specifically, this study

²⁰ "Female labor force as a percentage of the total shows the extent to which women are active in the labor force. Labor force comprises people ages 15 and older who meet the International Labour Organization's definition of the economically active population" (The World Bank, 2016a).

²¹ "Denotes the percentage of respondents who report having an account (by themselves or together with someone else) at a bank or another type of financial institution" (The World Bank, 2016a).

hypothesizes that factors such as the differences in the banking systems and differences in the availability of work in the formal (particularly garment factories) and informal labor markets for women affect the extent to which women are able to experience economic empowerment in each country.

Research Design

First, this study utilizes a large N statistical analysis of 132 countries to determine if there is a relationship between the percentage of women participating in the labor force and the percentage of women who hold accounts in banks and other financial institutions. This study operationalizes women's economic empowerment as women's ownership of an account in a financial institution because this signifies having at least some control and access to the money they make as opposed to just handing it over to the men in their lives. The data this study uses is provided by the World Bank, and it was obtained from surveys. The independent variable for this analysis is the percentage of women working in the formal labor market.²² The dependent variable is the percentage of women who own accounts in financial institutions.²³ To determine the correlation between these two variables, this study ran an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.²⁴

The World Bank data concerning the percentage of women working in the formal labor market unfortunately only measures women who are deemed "economically active" according to

²² The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the percentage of women in the labor force as the percentage of women 15 and older who are considered economically active (The World Bank, 2016a).

²³ Having an account in a financial institution is defined as women 15 and older who report that they own an account either by themselves or with someone else in a bank or other financial institution (The World Bank, 2016a). While owning a joint account may not be as empowering as owning a single account, joint ownership does provide transparency to a woman about what is happening with the money put into that account. In general, the money in an account at a financial institution may be more secure because a woman can monitor what is happening with the account.

²⁴ The hypothesis of this study is that there will be a global pattern with a positive correlation between the percentage of women working in the formal labor market and the percentage of women who own accounts in financial institutions.

the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition, so this data may not be measured the same for every country (“Economically active population,” 2010).²⁵ When a country has a lower percentage of women participating in the formal labor market, it could mean they may have a higher percentage of women participating in the informal labor market. This may, in turn, mean that if a country has a higher percentage of women working in the informal economy, the country could also have a lower percentage of women with bank accounts. Consequently, this study seeks to fill in those blanks and investigate whether this is what is occurring. Furthermore, this study aims to ascertain whether women working in the informal market are at a disadvantage when it comes to having access to ownership of an account at a bank or other financial institution.

Based on the literature, many scholars (Das, 2011; Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; Kabeer, 2004; Le Mare, 2012; Prügl & Tinker, 2007; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004) have found that women who work in the informal labor market do not achieve as great of a sense of empowerment as women who work in the formal labor market. Yet, Bose (2007) did find that women participating in home-centered work in the informal labor market gained self-esteem and liked having more economic independence as a result of the money they made. This indicates that the women in this study increased their sense of empowerment since empowerment is defined as an overall increase in a person’s material resources that contributes to him or her gaining greater power and agency (Ahmed, 2004; Bose, 2007; Kantor, 2003; Le Mare, 2012; Pereznieta & Taylor, 2014). Consequently, this study explores whether women in countries with a higher percentage of women participating in the formal labor market, as opposed to those laboring in the informal

²⁵ Data from many of the countries only include people above a certain age that are unemployed and employed, which may not take into account many women who are family workers. This means the majority of people working in the informal sector are not included in this data. People who are seasonal workers or work part-time may not be counted either (“Economically active population,” 2010).

labor market, have greater economic empowerment in terms of having greater access to ownership of an account at a bank or other financial institution.

Pereznieto and Taylor (2014) assert that when examining economic empowerment for women, studies with the best outcomes that measure change and provide information to improve future studies use a mixed method approach. Since this is the case, the large N statistical analysis sets up a “structured, focused comparison” of Bangladesh and India, thus incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methods (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 67). In particular, this study utilizes a “most similar case design” because Bangladesh and India are in the same region of South Asia, have similar social and cultural norms that affect women such as *pardah*, and the garment and handicraft industries are prevalent (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 50; Ahmed, 2004; Bose, 2007; Feldman, 1992; Jeffery, 1979; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Le Mare, 2012; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004; Malici & Smith, 2013). This structured, focused comparison examines why there are differences in the labor market participation rates and the percentage of women who own accounts in financial institutions in each country.

Because India is so much larger than Bangladesh there are bound to be many variances throughout India as a whole, so it would be difficult to compare the whole state of India with Bangladesh. Therefore, this structured, focused comparison focuses on two states within India to compare to Bangladesh whenever possible.²⁶ The first state to be utilized in the structured, focused comparison is West Bengal. This state falls in line with the most similar case design because it was originally part of the British Indian Bengal before it was partitioned into Eastern Bengal and West Bengal in 1905. Eastern Bengal then became East Pakistan in 1947, and it eventually became Bangladesh in 1971. Bengali is also spoken in both West Bengal and Bangladesh (Wolpert, 2009). Additionally, the garment and handicraft industries have

²⁶ This study may use country-level data concerning sectors of the economy or development factors if this data is not available at the state-level.

historically been a part of the economy of West Bengal (Bose, 2007; Sen, 2013). In recent years, informal and home-based work has become more prevalent than factory-based work (Ganguly-Scrase, 2008; Sen, 2013). This could be an indication that West Bengal has a larger informal sector than Bangladesh, which this study aims to evaluate.

The second Indian state that is compared to Bangladesh is Karnataka. This is a state in the South of India where the garment industry is still very vital to the economy (Barry, 2016; RoyChowdhury, 2005; Sen, 2013). In the Karnataka state, especially the city of Bangalore, the garment industry is organized and based within factories as opposed to home-centered work. In addition, the majority of those working in the factories are women (RoyChowdhury, 2005; Sen, 2013). Therefore, this study will compare Karnataka with Bangladesh because factory-based production utilizing mostly female labor seems to be the practice in Bangladesh as well (Ahmed, 2004; Feldman, 2009; Kabeer, 2003). It is useful to examine these two states because each seems to represent a different sector of the economy. West Bengal looks to be more associated with the informal sector and Karnataka appears to be more associated with the formal sector. This allows for both sectors to be accounted for when comparing India to Bangladesh. Figures 1 and 2 on the next pages are maps of India and Bangladesh. Note the states and cities referenced to be utilized for the case study of India.

Figure 1: [Political Map of India]



(Ezilon Maps, 2009b)

Figure 2: [Political Map of Bangladesh]



(Ezilon Maps, 2009a)

In addition, this study will assess institutional and socio-cultural factors which may explain the differences in the percentage of women working in the formal labor market and the percentage of women who own accounts in banks or other financial institutions in each country.

This study analyzes institutional and socio-cultural factors that have developed from the late 1970s to 2016 in each country. The late 1970s are the starting point because this is when garment

production in South Asia really began to be utilized by corporations in the Global North and when greater amounts of young women began to enter the formal labor market (Ahmed, 2004; Feldman, 1992; Feldman, 2009). The year 2016 is the ending point because it is the year with the most recent results for some of the data concerning each country.

To examine the institutional factors, this study utilizes government/historical sources and reports from the World Bank and the ILO to discuss each country's banking system. It seeks to evaluate the underlying accessibility of financial institutions throughout each country for women. In addition to assessing the banking system in each country, this study also examines the prevalence of microcredit institutions in each country, such as the Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), that provide loans to women (Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015; Shehabuddin, 2008; Wilkins, 2016). This alternative to traditional banking systems may bring to light why there are differences between the percentages of women with accounts in financial institutions in Bangladesh and India.

Another institutional issue that may affect female labor force participation is the environment determining women's opportunities for work in the formal labor market compared with opportunities to work in the informal labor market. To assess this, this study looks at governmental reports, country profiles for India and Bangladesh from Euromonitor International, and reports from the ILO and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to see what sectors are most prevalent in Bangladesh's and India's economies. One aspect this study explores is whether Bangladesh offers more opportunities for women to work in garment factories (opposed to other sectors) than India, allowing women there to have greater access to the formal labor market and why that is the case.

Socio-cultural elements are closely related to the institutional elements this study investigates because the development of banking structures in each country may affect the cultural norms associated with having access to an account in a bank or other financial institution

for women in each country. For example, India's banking structure may be more developed, so it may make it more of a cultural norm to own bank accounts.²⁷ On the other hand, the banking structure may be less developed in Bangladesh, so it may be less likely that ownership of bank accounts is a cultural norm. Along the same lines, if there are more opportunities to secure employment in the formal labor market in Bangladesh as a greater percentage of its economy is devoted to the garment industry, it may indicate it is more of a cultural norm for women to work in the formal labor market there in comparison to India. In a similar vein, if a smaller percentage of the economy in India is devoted to the garment industry, it may remain a cultural norm for women to work in the informal labor market or not work at all.

To test these assumptions, this study uses laws, newspapers, World Values Survey (WVS) results, and reports from the IMF, ILO, governments, and other NGOs to assess the cultural changes that have taken place in each country. This study will evaluate policies and attitudes related to women, women and labor, and women's access to work in the formal labor market. Overall, this study aims to establish whether working in the formal labor market contributes to women obtaining economic independence in Bangladesh and India.

Similar Studies

It appears that no one has conducted a mixed method approach utilizing a large N statistical analysis of many countries to set up a comparative case study of Bangladesh and India that evaluates the relationship between women's access to employment in the formal labor market and women's access to ownership of accounts in banks and other financial institutions. Although this seems to be the case, the themes of this study do coincide with some previous studies (Aterido, Beck, & Iacovone, 2013; Klawitter & Fletschner, 2011; Pandey, 2003; Singh &

²⁷ "Cultural norm" and "social-cultural norm" are used synonymously and signify that there are belief and value systems present in societies that dictate the types of behavior that is deemed appropriate for men and women. These belief and value systems may constrain the choices people are able to make in societies (Hirsh, Hollingdale, & Stecy-Hildebrandt, 2013).

Morley, 2010). Pandey (2003) assessed what effects private property ownership had on women in Nepal. One of the factors Pandey (2003) used to measure economic empowerment was whether a woman had been exposed to financial institutions. Ultimately, Pandey (2003) found that private property ownership is associated with many positive outcomes for women including having a bank account. Singh and Morley (2010) studied the effects of marriage on women having separate bank accounts and what that signifies for women in Australia. They found that an individual's employment status is significant, but one's income does not affect the types of accounts one has.

In a similar vein, Klawitter and Fletschner (2011) examined what affects whether low-income couples have bank accounts in the United States. Their study found that there is a difference in the access women have to formal bank accounts as compared with men. In addition, they also found women's bargaining power (defined as how much of their income women contributed to the family's household earnings) is associated with women having their own bank account as opposed to joint bank accounts. Aterido et al. (2013) also evaluated the gender gap concerning access to financial services for women business-owners in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on the responses of women, they found that one of the reasons women may not utilize financial services is because they do not have a formal income or a job. Therefore, assessing whether work in the formal labor market provides greater economic empowerment for women across the globe than informal labor market work and what factors augment or limit women's economic empowerment in South Asia could prove to help produce more sustainable solutions that may assist in empowering women in other regions and add to the literature concerning women's relationships with accounts in financial institutions.

The next chapter displays the results of the large N statistical regression, and examines whether there is a global pattern that women's formal market labor force participation is

correlated with women's access to ownership of bank accounts in banks or other financial institutions.

Chapter 2

Large N Statistical Regression

In order to evaluate the relationship between the percentage of women participating in the formal labor market (independent variable) and the percentage of women owning accounts in banks or other financial institutions (dependent variable), World Bank data for 132 countries was input into an Excel workbook (The World Bank, 2016a). Along with the independent variable and the dependent variable, the GDP per capita for each country was also put into Excel (The World Bank, 2016d). The final number of 132 countries was established because these were all the countries that reported data for each variable and control for the year 2014. Only using those countries that had values for each variable and control for the same year establishes continuity.

The GDP per capita of each country is a necessary control for assessing the relationship between the independent and dependent variables because having higher GDP per capita values may indicate that countries are more economically developed. Although this is the case, there are issues with using GDP per capita. GDP per capita is a measure that divides the GDP of a country by its population. This assumes that every person's income is equal, so it neglects to take into account the reality that there is income inequality in each country. With that said, Stiglitz and Squire (1998) explain that even though GDP does not account for all aspects of development, "higher output and hence higher incomes are important because they expand the choices available to individuals, families, and societies" (p. 139). Consequently, GDP per capita is still a relevant measure that captures the overall picture of whether a country is more economically developed or not. Because higher GDP is an indication of more choices for a country's citizens, this may mean higher GDP per capita is associated with having more developed banking institutions and structures. This may, in turn, increase the likelihood that citizens will have access to ownership of an account at a bank or other financial institution.

After putting these variables into Excel, the data from the workbook was imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Utilizing this program, this researcher ran an OLS regression. As you will recall, the percentage of women in the formal labor force with the control of GDP per capita was the independent variable, and the dependent variable was the percentage of women with accounts in banks or other financial institutions. The hypothesis of this part of the study is that women's labor force participation correlates with women's economic empowerment in a large number of countries around the world. This means that a country with a higher percentage of women working in the formal labor market is associated with a higher percentage of women owning accounts in a bank or other financial institution.

After running this regression in SPSS, the results show that the relationship between the percentage of women in the labor force and the percentage of women with accounts in banks or other financial institutions is statistically significant. The control of GDP per capita is also highly correlated with the percentage of women having accounts in banks or other financial institutions. Additionally, the *t*-values are above the threshold for what is considered significant. The overall R^2 values indicate that the relationship between the percentage of women in the formal labor market with the control of GDP per capita and the percentage of women holding accounts in banks or other financial institutions is also very systematic.²⁸ The results are shown in Table 2.

²⁸ In other words, the results are not random (Systematic, 2008).

Table 2: Regression Results

	Women owning Accts, %
Female Labor Force Participation, %	.001*** (3.7)
GDP per capita, PPP	.001*** (14.1)
Intercept	.56 (-.6)
N	132
R ²	.6

t-statistics are in parentheses

* indicates significance at $p < .05$ ** indicates

significance at $p < .01$ *** indicates significance at $p < .001$

The results from this large N statistical regression showcase a pattern that makes it clear that the percentage of women working in the formal labor market is positively associated with a greater percentage of women having accounts in banks or other financial institutions.

Furthermore, the results from this study show that GDP per capita levels are also associated with women having access to ownership of accounts in banks and other financial institutions. Overall, the results from this regression are important because they show that Bangladesh and India do not fit the global pattern which is a higher percentage of women's formal labor market participation is correlated with women's economic empowerment in terms of having access to accounts in banks and other financial institutions.

In Bangladesh, the percentage of women working is just below the average for all 132 countries, but the percentage of women owning accounts is much lower than the mean. The data concerning India is quite a bit different from Bangladesh. The percentage of females

participating in the labor force there is much lower than the average and the percentage of women owning accounts is also less than the average for the 132 countries used in the study. Yet, the percentage of women owning accounts in banks or other financial institutions is much higher in India than in Bangladesh. The GDP per capita of both Bangladesh and India is significantly lower than the mean for all 132 countries. Additionally, it is important to note that Bangladesh's GDP per capita is lower than India's GDP per capita. The data in Table 3 displays the differences between Bangladesh, India, and the mean of all 132 countries.

Table 3: Country Level Statistics

	Female Labor Force Participation, %	Women Owning Accts, %	GDP per capita, PPP
Mean (132 countries)	41.6	50.7	\$19,043.8
Bangladesh	40.4	25.2	\$3,134.2
India	24.2	42.6	\$5,672.2

(The World Bank, 2016a; The World Bank, 2016d)

Bangladesh and India do not follow the expected pattern from this large N regression because neither country shows a positive correlation between the percentage of women laboring in the formal labor market and the percentage of women having access to ownership of accounts in banks or other financial institutions. Additionally, it is interesting to see that the female labor force participation rates, the percentage of women owning accounts in banks or other financial institutions, and GDP per capita levels are so different in Bangladesh and India considering they are similar to each other in many ways. Some of the similarities include being in the same geographical region, having similar social and cultural norms, and having prevalent garment and handicraft industries (Ahmed, 2004; Bose, 2007; Feldman, 1992; Jeffery, 1979; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Le Mare, 2012; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004).

These results indicate it is necessary to examine the institutional and socio-cultural factors that may explain why there are variances between Bangladesh and India. Neither of these countries fit the pattern illustrated in the large N statistical regression which shows that globally a higher percentage of women in the formal labor market is associated with a higher percentage of women owning accounts in banks or other financial institutions. The next chapter will discuss some of the institutional factors that may be causing the percentages of women workers in the formal labor market and the percentages of women who own bank accounts to be different in Bangladesh and India.

Chapter 3

Institutional Factors

This chapter begins with a breakdown of the banking systems in India and Bangladesh, and it also describes the evolution that has occurred to form the present banking systems found in both countries. Following these sections, there is an explanation of financial inclusion and how India and Bangladesh emphasize implementing measures to increase financial inclusion for their citizens. This chapter also discusses the dormancy rates for accounts in financial institutions across South Asia. After this discussion, this section shows how microfinance institutions fit into the banking systems in India and Bangladesh.

This chapter also examines how technological access and financial literacy affect people having ownership of accounts in banks or other financial institutions. The last institutional factors that are outlined in this chapter deal with each country's economy. This includes India's and Bangladesh's paths to economic growth, the different sectors that make up each country's economy, and the prevalence of the informal economy found in each country. In general, the discussion of these institutional factors allows for the assessment of what may be causing the variation in the percentages of women workers in the formal labor market and the percentages of women who own bank accounts in Bangladesh and India.

Banking Systems

Banks (both commercial and co-operative) and financial institutions make up the financial system in India (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009).²⁹ The institutions in which the majority of people make deposits and keep their savings are commercial banks, but over the years there have been fewer distinctions between commercial banks and other financial institutions (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established in 1935, and ever since it began

²⁹ Financial institutions include development banks and non-bank financial institutions (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009).

one of its stated purposes has been to assist with the development of India. In the beginning the focus was on assisting with agriculture, but since liberalization policies have become the norm, the RBI is now concerned with “core central banking functions like Monetary Policy, Bank Supervision and Regulation, and Overseeing the Payments System and onto developing the financial markets” (Reserve Bank of India, n.d.).

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) was established in 1971 in Dhaka, and it characterizes the financial system in Bangladesh into three distinct categories that include formal, semi-formal, and informal (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.a; Bangladesh Bank, n.d.d; Muqtada, 2015). BB has the following functions:

Formulating monetary and credit policies; managing currency issue and regulating payment system; managing foreign exchange reserves and regulating the foreign exchange market; regulating and supervising banks and financial institutions, and advising the government on interactions and impacts of fiscal, monetary and other economic policies (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.b).

The formal institutions are defined as commercial banks, non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), insurance companies, merchant banks, and microfinance institutions (MFIs). The formal financial institutions in Bangladesh mainly consist of the state-owned commercial banks (SOCBs), the private commercial banks (PCBs), specialized banks (SBs), and foreign commercial banks (FCBs). It is important to mention that Islamic Banks fall under the category of PCBs (Muqtada, 2015). Semi-formal institutions indicate that they are regulated, but the BB does not control them (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.d; Muqtada, 2015). Muqtada (2015) explains that these are “specialized financial institutions, such as the House of Building Finance Corporation (HBFC), Grameen Bank, Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF) and NGOs” (p. 19). On the other hand, the informal institutions are not regulated at all (Bangladesh Bank, Central Bank of Bangladesh, n.d.d; Muqtada, 2015).

The RBI has obviously been around for much longer than the BB because Bangladesh did not become its own independent state until 1971. Because India's banking system began many years before Bangladesh's, it appears that this would enable the banking system of India to be more established. Having a more mature banking system most likely enables more citizens, including women, to have access to banks and other financial institutions. With that said, both the RBI and the BB have similar purposes now, and are mostly concerned with forming and regulating monetary policies.

Evolution of Banking Systems

The first phase of Indian banking was dominated by private ownership of banks. There were 566 banks in India in 1951, but many of the rural and semi-urban areas did not have sufficient access to financial institutions, and large corporates, not agricultural and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), were given the majority of the credit (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). Then in 1969, a new phase began as the government nationalized most banks. During the post-nationalization period, two reforms took place including "priority sector lending" and "branch licensing policy" (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009, p. 59). Priority sector lending meant that the State Bank of India and other nationalized banks were supposed to lend a fixed percentage of credit to those in agriculture and small-scale industry. For every single branch a bank opened, the branch licensing policy required banks to open four branches in unbanked areas.³⁰ This policy contributed to 60,000 bank branches being opened in every district across India by 2000 (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). Opening all of these new banks appears to have increased the likelihood that citizens (including women) throughout India have access to the banking system.

Additionally, the government mandated quantitative targets and strict administrative constraints on banks starting in 1980. The next phase was the era of financial liberalization

³⁰ "Unbanked" signifies those do not have ownership of accounts in financial institutions (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015).

which began in 1992, in which reforms have taken place to increase stability and competitiveness for India (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). Typically with liberalization in emerging banking structures consolidation and privatization occur. India is representative of emerging banking structures, but this has not been the case. Even within the last ten years, government control of the banks has still been very prevalent in India (Bongini, Chiarlone, & Ferri, 2009).

Bangladesh became independent in 1971, and the years immediately after this were very difficult for Bangladesh in terms of recovering from a war and striving to ensure there was even enough food to feed their population (Muqtada, 2015).³¹ In the 1980s, Bangladesh experienced large fiscal deficits because the public expenditures were very high, but any profits being made were very low. Bangladesh suffered from high inflation rates in the 1980s as well. This is why Bangladesh took measures to make macroeconomic reforms in both the 1980s and 1990s. They aimed to stabilize their economy with liberalization reforms and structural adjustment programs (Muqtada, 2015).

Consequently, starting in the 1990s the formal financial sector in Bangladesh has gone through a series of changes. These reforms included the recommendation that Bangladesh transition to a market-based financial system, and that the BB institute measures to create greater financial discipline. This led to the banks having greater autonomy, but it also led to the BB having more oversight over PCBs (Muqtada, 2015). Overall, in the last two decades the financial sector in Bangladesh has added to the growing economy there by increasing “the mobilization of savings and growth of credit to the private sector” (Muqtada, 2015, p.19). Nothing in particular was mentioned on how this has affected women, but growth in the economy and credit available

³¹ Bangladesh’s background is emphasized here because it affected the different phases Bangladesh has gone through concerning its banking system. The severe poverty Bangladesh experienced when it became independent in 1971 affected the liberalization policies and structural adjustment programs put in place. These programs are correlated with low paying jobs in manufacturing like jobs in the garment industry (Dedeoglu, 2014). The phases of the banking system in India were different because the RBI started many years before in 1935 (Reserve Bank of India, n.d.).

in the private sector may increase women's access to more jobs in the formal sector or allow more women to become entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

Even though India's banking system has been around for a longer period of time than Bangladesh's banking system, over the last 20 to 30 years, a similar process has been going on in each country. Both have experienced financial liberalization policies to stabilize each country's economy and increase each country's market competitiveness. Additionally, these liberalization policies have come with continued government oversight of the financial sector for each country.

Financial Inclusion

It is widely accepted that a strong financial system that promotes financial inclusion (ownership of bank accounts) is essential for growth and for gender equity.³² Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2015) assert that "access to accounts and to savings and payment mechanisms increases savings, empowers women, and boosts productive investment and consumption" (p. 2). Between 2011 and 2014, all of South Asia has seen account ownership increase by 10 percentage points, but the gender gap between men and women having account ownership has persisted. In fact, South Asia has the largest gender gap compared to the rest of the world with a difference of 18 percentage points in absolute terms (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). This means that men are more likely in South Asia to have access to financial institutions than women. To counter this fact, both India and Bangladesh have implemented measures to increase financial inclusion. Yet, it is evident that achieving complete financial inclusion in these countries is still a work in progress. The measures each country has taken are discussed in the next sections.

Financial Inclusion in India

The government of India and the RBI are incredibly focused on financial inclusion as a policy objective because they see it as necessary to target those living in poverty and other

³² The Indian Department of Financial Services (2014) and Muqtada (2015) define financial inclusion as aiming to increase the number of vulnerable people who have access to credit or other financial services at an affordable price.

excluded segments of the population (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Mundra, 2016). Nair and Tankha (2015) explain that “the core of India’s financial sector policy has come to be constituted by restructuring and reforms that promote financial inclusion” (p. xvii). The government of India and RBI believe that only when financial inclusion is the goal will there be sustainable growth (Mundra, 2016). Along the same lines, the government of India views providing access to financial services as a form of empowering vulnerable groups (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014). For this reason, India is focused on improving financial inclusion for three main groups including 1) small and marginal farmers and sharecroppers, 2) micro and small businesses, and 3) those earning low salaries who work in the unorganized sectors (Mundra, 2016). These groups are relevant for women having access to financial institutions because many women in India are going to fall into at least one of these three categories. More information on this will be discussed in further detail below.

The RBI started focusing on financial inclusion in the 1960s when they aimed to give credit to those with fewer resources in the population. Between 1975 and 1990, the RBI also established different programs to ensure greater access to banks for the total population (Mundra, 2016). To improve financial inclusion, RBI has also utilized a “planned and structured approach” since 2006 (Mundra, 2016). One of the main aspects of the “planned and structured approach” has been for banks to prepare Financial Inclusion Plans (FIPs). So far, two phases of these plans have been put in place.

In 2011, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government introduced the ‘Swabhimaan’ campaign to strive to increase those classified as unbanked into the formal financial system. This initiative was put forth in order to open branches of banks in every village with more than 2,000 people, designate banking correspondents, and increase the amount of people who have ownership of a bank account (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Nair & Tankha, 2015). Ultimately, 74,351 banking facilities were opened as a result of this

campaign. Of which 3,395 were opened in Karnataka and 7,452 were opened in West Bengal (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014). This was a serious effort by India to be financially inclusive, and it did result in more accounts being opened. With that said, there is not much information on how many women have opened accounts, and most of the accounts opened were dormant (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Nair & Tankha, 2015).

Additionally, RBI has mandated that banks must open at least 25 percent of their new branches in unbanked rural areas (Mundra, 2016). As a result of these measures, the numbers of Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDAs) have increased from 73 million in March 2010 to 469 million in March 2016 (Mundra, 2016). Additionally, a majority of Indian households have acquired access to banking services. Census data from 2011 showed that urban areas had greater access with 67.68 percent than rural areas with 54.46 percent. With that said, 58.7 percent of all households in India had access to banking services (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014).

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). The PMJDY aims for “comprehensive financial inclusion” by opening bank accounts for every household (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015, p. 26; Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.a; Nair & Tankha, 2015). Shri Arun Jaitly, the Minister of Finance, Corporate Affairs, and Defence stated the following:

I am glad that we have undertaken the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana as a National Mission on Financial Inclusion to provide all households in the country with financial services, with particular focus to empower the weaker sections of society, including women, small and marginal farmers and laborers, both rural and urban (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014, p. 3).

Specifically, two accounts are supposed to be opened for every household, and one of those accounts should be opened in the name of a female family member within the household (Nair &

Tankha, 2015). To ensure access to banking services, one of the main pillars of the PMJDY is “universal access to banking facilities” (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014, p. 11; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.a). This is why in 2014 to 2015 public sector banks aimed to open 7,332 branches and 20,130 new automated teller machines (ATMs) (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014).

To get people to open bank accounts, this initiative offers many incentives such as “zero balances, overdraft facilities, and free life insurance” (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015, p. 26; Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.a; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.c). Many people are critical of this new program because they claim that it has made the public banking sector more powerful since 97 percent of the new accounts under this program have been opened at public banks (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). Since the inception of the PMJDY, an estimated 220 million to 242 million new accounts have been opened (as of June 2016) (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Mundra, 2016). As of May 2017, 10,614,517 million accounts have been opened in Karnataka, and 27,281,320 million accounts have been opened in West Bengal (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2017, May 3a; Indian Department of Financial Services, 2017, May 3b). Unfortunately, a demographic breakdown has not been given to determine how many women have been able to open new accounts.

Financial Inclusion in Bangladesh

The government in Bangladesh has also been aiming for inclusive growth with targeted measures that aim to increase financial inclusion (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.b; Bangladesh Bank, n.d.c; Cubero, De, Gupta, & Kaendera, 2016; Monetary Policy Department: Bangladesh Bank, 2017; Muqtada, 2015). These measures are directed to certain sectors (agriculture), businesses (SME), and groups within the population “(marginal farmers, landless laborers, urban slum dwellers, senior citizens, and women)” (Cubero et al., 2016, p. 19). In particular, the BB stresses

the importance of giving loans to small businesses and women entrepreneurs. In order to increase loans given to SMEs, the BB has established a target for the amount of loans commercial and non-financial institutions must give to SMEs (Muqtada, 2015). The BB has also established the SME and Special Programs Department, which has mandated that at least 15 percent of all credit has to be given to women entrepreneurs (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.c; Muqtada, 2015).

Furthermore, the government of Bangladesh has instituted Sustainable Development Goals, and the BB has been “promoting inclusive, green financing (targeting SME, agriculture and green initiatives), fostering financial sector wide a socially responsible financing ethos” (Monetary Policy Department: Bangladesh Bank, 2017). To encourage more lending in the agricultural sector, the BB also promotes all commercial banks to use their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-induced financing. The BB supports this financing with their refinancing schemes (Bangladesh Bank, n.d.c; Muqtada, 2015). To assist landless sharecroppers, the BB created a special refinance facility with BRAC in 2010 (Muqtada, 2015).

Additionally, the government of Bangladesh requires that banks open 50 percent of their new branches in rural areas (Cubero et al., 2016). In a similar vein, the Perspective Plan produced by the Bangladeshi government in 2012 not only outlines ways to reach their “Vision 2021” through measures to increase economic growth within Bangladesh, but the principles that are stressed within this plan are aimed at eliminating poverty and ensuring inclusiveness (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

As a result of these measures to produce greater financial inclusion within the banking system, Bangladesh has obtained many positive results. In particular, changes within the financial sector are responsible for a greater number of people putting money into savings (Muqtada, 2015). Bangladesh also does very well concerning the amount of accounts held and the access to credit available at financial institutions for the marginalized populations of those in rural areas, young people, women, and the poor compared to other low-income countries. In

addition, more people have opened accounts, there has been an increase in women entrepreneurs, women-owned SMEs have been given credit, there are more people with active mobile accounts, and the amount of ATMs and bank branches have increased (Cubero et al., 2016).

With that said, Bangladesh does not perform as well when the usage of debit and credit cards and the amount of people that put their money in savings at financial institutions is evaluated compared to other low-income countries. Along the same lines, the amount of people in Bangladesh who turn to using informal finance to borrow money is still high compared to other emerging market countries (Cubero et al., 2016).

10 Taka. Similar to the PMJDY in India, Bangladesh has also instituted the 10 Taka initiative (Cubero et al., 2016; Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012; Muqtada, 2015). This program in particular focuses on assisting “poor farmers, wage laborers, and other vulnerable groups” with opening a bank account (Muqtada, 2015, p. 25). These people are able to open an account with as little as 10 Taka, which equates to just 12 United States cents, and there were no fees to open an account (Cubero et al., 2016; Muqtada, 2015). As a result of this campaign, 13 million people have opened new accounts. They are using these accounts for their savings, to make payments, and to receive social safety net payments from the government (Muqtada, 2015). Exact figures of the number of women who have opened accounts through this program were not stated. What is important about these accounts is that they may allow the people who opened them to have access to other financial services such as receiving remittances, to have access to credit from a formal financial institution, and these new accounts may increase their owners’ overall financial literacy (Cubero et al., 2016).

Dormancy Rates in India and South Asia as a Whole

Across all of South Asia the dormancy rate is very high at 42 percent, especially compared to other developing regions that typically have a dormancy rate of less than 20 percent. India has a dormancy rate of 43 percent, which signifies that 195 million of the 460 million

accounts that are dormant worldwide are in India (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015).³³ Since the new PMJDY initiative, 72 percent of the new accounts that have been opened have a zero balance (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015; Nair & Tankha, 2015). Throughout all of South Asia women are a third more likely than men to have dormant accounts, and men are also more likely to have what are termed as “high-use” accounts (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015, p. 63).

Therefore, India may have a greater percentage of women that have ownership of an account in a financial institution compared to Bangladesh, but the lack of transactions taking place within all these accounts is concerning (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009; Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015; Nair & Tankha, 2015). This might indicate that yes, more accounts are being opened in India, but people really are not using them (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015; Nair & Tankha, 2015).³⁴

Microfinance Institutions in India

Both India and Bangladesh understand the value of connecting their mainstream financial institutions with alternative financial institutions like MFIs. When discussing India, Mundra (2016) explains, “All of them have to play a complementary role in championing the cause of financial inclusion. Time is ripe to weave a financial inclusion tapestry where all these institutions can fit in a manner which brings about their contribution in the efficient manner.” Microfinance is incredibly important for financial inclusion because many times this is the only formal institution that provides finance to the poor, especially the poor living in rural areas (Crisil Ratings, 2014).

In 2006, the RBI decided that banks could utilize the services of NGOs, SHGs, and MFIs to act as “intermediaries” when it comes to providing access to financial and banking services (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014, p. 7). In a similar vein, the performance of microfinance loans has been increasing since 2010 in India because there have been more

³³ Demirgüç-Kunt, et al. (2015) defines an account as dormant when no deposit or withdrawal is made in the past 12 months.

³⁴ No dormancy rate was given specifically for Bangladesh.

regulations put in place, there has been a concerted effort to have technology that monitors the collections centers, and borrowers have been more diligent about making their repayments (Crisil Ratings, 2014).

Within CRISIL's Inclusix tool in India there is also the Microfinance Penetration Index (MPI), which "provides estimates of the relative share of the states in microfinance clients as compared to their share in the population" (Nair & Tankha, 2015, p. 12). The penetration of microfinance institutions in Karnataka and West Bengal was 2.27 and 1.54 respectively in 2014 (Nair & Tankha, 2015).³⁵ Additionally, 9.86 million people were microfinance clients in Karnataka, and 10.01 million people in West Bengal utilized microfinance institutions in 2014 (Nair & Tankha, 2015). Furthermore, five of India's top 25 MFIs are concentrated in or linked to Karnataka, while only two are concentrated in or linked to West Bengal. Alternatively, West Bengal has five of the new emerging MFIs in India, and Karnataka only has three (Crisil Ratings, 2014). Again, the information concerning the number of women who use microfinance institutions has not been provided, but these figures indicate that a large proportion of the population in these states utilize microfinance institutions.

In 2012, the RBI created a new category of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) that are run as MFIs and are called NBFC-MFIs. There is a comprehensive set of guidelines for how the NBFC-MFIs should operate, and the Malegam sub-committee was set up to monitor the MFIs (Crisil Ratings, 2014). This indicates that there is a greater regulatory framework, and these increased regulations in the NBFC-MFIs sector have resulted in greater confidence in the sector for those actors involved including banks (Crisil Ratings, 2014). This indicates that India has been incorporating microfinance with mainstream financial institutions more, and an

³⁵ Nair and Tankha (2015) explain that an MPI that is greater than one signifies that the number of "microfinance clients was more than proportional to its population, indicating better than par performance" (p. 12).

example of this is NABFINS found within the organization of NABARD in Karnataka.³⁶

NABFINS uses the mainstream banking system to channel funds over to some SHGs with fair rates of interest (Nair & Tankha, 2015).³⁷ This is a recent phenomenon, but these relationships between NBFCs/NGOs and MFIs have allowed more people to increase their savings (Nair & Tankha, 2015).

Microfinance Institutions in Bangladesh

Two-thirds of the population lived below the poverty line when Bangladesh became independent in 1971, so this is when the microcredit and microfinance institutions such as the Grameen Bank, BRAC and Proshika began to become prevalent (Muqtada, 2015).³⁸ Government agencies and NGOs utilized these in order to support rural populations and provide access to financial services to those groups within society that did not have access to formal/mainstream financial services (Cubero et al., 2016; Muqtada, 2015). MFIs have spread all throughout Bangladesh, and they are still very important there today (Cubero et al., 2016; Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

Microcredit programs in Bangladesh are put in place and carried out through a variety of institutions including NGOs, the Grameen Bank, state-owned commercial banks, and specialized programs in some of the ministries of the government of Bangladesh (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.). Muqtada (2015) explains that microfinance and microcredit programs like the

³⁶ The Karnataka Agriculture Finance Company Limited was restructured into a NBFC-MFI combination called NABFINS in 2008. The goal of NABFINS is to help the poor and marginalized populations have greater access to sustainable livelihood strategies. Specifically, they aim to help the poor and marginalized populations have access to credit. They work with “SHGs, producer collectives, and first generation microenterprises” (Nair & Tankha, 2015, p. 34).

³⁷ SHGs stand for self-help groups. They are typically alliances run by women that promote access, disperse funds and provide technical assistance to improve the lives of local villagers and to help them start businesses (The World Bank, 2015).

³⁸ Cubero et al. (2016) explain that the type of credit provided by MFIs can be separated into six categories—1) small-scale self-employment based activities, 2) microenterprise loans, 3) credit for the very poor, 4) agricultural loans, 5) seasonal loans, and 6) loans to management disasters.

Grameen Bank in Bangladesh are preeminent examples of organizations that promote financial inclusion. These organizations give resources to the poorest of people to increase their abilities with the goal of improving their overall livelihoods (Muqtada, 2015).³⁹

Much of the population utilizes MFIs for their financial services. As of June 2014, the total number of clients who participate in the microcredit sector is 33.73 million. Of that total number, 8.62 million utilize services from the Grameen Bank (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.). In addition, Cubero et al. (2016) states, “As of June 2014, there were 676 NGO-MFIs catering to over 25 million clients of which around 20 million were borrowers” in Bangladesh (p. 20). Furthermore, BRAC and the Association for Social Advancement (ASA) each serve four million borrowers (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.).

As of June 2014, the microfinance sector was also estimated to be responsible for creating 114,644 job opportunities for people (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.) Of that total, 81 percent of those jobs went to males, and 19 percent of those jobs went to females. This sector has also assisted clients with increasing the amount of savings they have in financial institutions. In 2009, clients only saved 2,097 Takas per person, but in 2014 clients were able to save 4,489 Takas per person (meaning over those five years, there was a 46.7 percent increase in the amount of savings people were able to accrue). As of June 2014, 25.17 million clients have been able to save a total of 112 billion Bangladeshi Takas. Over 93 percent of these clients were women (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.). Based on these statistics, it is evident that the microfinance sector in Bangladesh is strong and has contributed to “microeconomic growth” even with the global recession (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d., p. 1).

³⁹ Although Grameen Bank has been a significant microfinance institution in Bangladesh, there have also been many criticisms of this organization including that it takes advantage of the poor because it provides them with loans that are easy to get, but difficult to pay back (Hall, 2013; Mustafa, 2013). These loans often have extremely high interest rates (Chowdhury, Rezwana, & Alam, 2015; Hall, 2013; Mustafa, 2013).

With that said, Muqtada (2015) explains there has been a question of how much MFIs really help the poor in Bangladesh. To ensure that MFIs do promote more financial inclusion, the Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) was set up under the direction of the BB in 2006 (Microcredit Regulatory Authority, n.d.; Muqtada, 2015). The MRA and the BB have put forth an initiative focused on financial inclusion. This campaign is not just about increasing the reach of MFIs, but is centered on the BB becoming a central bank that is concentrated on development (Muqtada, 2015).

Technological Access

One of the main challenges that India and Bangladesh have faced when it comes to increasing the access to financial institutions is the lack of technological access available to their populations. The total share of those in South Asia who have access to a mobile money account is only three percent (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). For India, Mundra (2016) states that the “absence of technology was a major impediment as it restricted expansion of banking services to far-flung areas of the country comprising of 600 thousand plus villages” (para. 5). In a similar vein, the percentage of people who own accounts in India that have a debit or ATM card is very low at 39 percent. This may indicate that going to the bank is not an easy process because it is more time-consuming (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). Because this process is difficult and time-consuming, the high dormancy rates found in India may also be connected to the lack of access people have to debit or ATM cards.

Increasing technological access is something that both governments are aiming to improve. India now has what are termed Banking Correspondents (BCs) which utilize a mix of “brick and mortar” and “mouse and click technology” in order to provide greater geographical access to financial institutions (Mundra, 2016).⁴⁰ The government of India is also striving to

⁴⁰ BCs are typically found in rural areas, and they provide those communities with representatives from public sector and regional rural banks. These representatives assist people

enable and promote citizens to directly transfer their pension benefits into their accounts (Nair & Tankha, 2015). India has also made efforts to increase mobile banking with the introduction of the Mobile Wallet in 2012 and RuPay debit cards that enable “all Indian banks and financial institutions in India to participate in electronic payment” (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014, p. 32; Nair & Tankha, 2015). The success of the PMJDY and ultimately the ability for India to provide financial inclusion for its citizens is dependent on a greater expansion of technology (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.a; Nair and Tankha, 2015).

The BB made technological access a priority with their financial inclusion initiatives in 2012 when it issued guidelines for mobile financial services (MFS) (Cubero et al., 2016; Muqtada, 2015). Additionally, the BB recognized the increased demand for mobile banking, so it has granted many mobile banking licenses to several banks including BRAC’s bank called bKash. Granting these licenses has helped to increase the access of financial services across Bangladesh (Muqtada, 2015). Overall, Cubero et al. (2016) assert that mobile banking usage in Bangladesh is very high with the number of active accounts increasing from half a million in 2012 to over four million in 2015. The number of agents providing this service also increased from 51,000 in 2012 to about 540,000 in 2015 (Cubero et al., 2016). It is important to note that the mobile banking services do not usually require a formal account at a financial institution, so many times mobile banking services are being used informally (Cubero et al., 2016).

with basic banking services like opening basic accounts, making deposits, withdrawing cash, transferring funds, getting balances, and getting “mini statements” (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014).

Financial Literacy

An effort that appears to set India apart from Bangladesh is India's focus on creating measures to increase financial literacy.⁴¹ Specifically, banks within India have been directed to open Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs) that strive to help those who are new to using financial institutions (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Mundra, 2016; Nair & Tankha, 2015).⁴² Teaching people about financial literacy is very important to the Indian government because they view it as a “prerequisite for effective financial inclusion” (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014, p. 23).

As of September 2016, 1,380 FLCs are up and running. The FLCs are for “farmers, small entrepreneurs, SHGs, school students, and senior citizens” or anyone new to using financial institutions (Mundra, 2016). The FLCs, along with the Scheduled Commercial Banks in rural areas, have financial literacy awareness camps at least once a month. It is estimated that between 2013 and 2014, 3.8 million participated in these types of activities (Nair & Tankha, 2015). The Indian government also utilizes Skilling Centres located across different states in India to teach their citizens financial literacy (Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.b). In particular, there are 1,696 Skilling Centres in Karnataka, and 144 Skilling Centres in West Bengal. The majority of the centers in Karnataka are located in Bangalore, and the majority of the centers in West Bengal are located in Barddhaman and Kolkata (Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.d; Indian Department of Financial Services, n.d.e).⁴³

⁴¹ In all of my research concerning Bangladesh, the only mention of financial literacy came from Cubero et al. (2016). They assert that just having access to new accounts through the 10 Taka program would help those who open the new accounts learn about financial literacy.

⁴² In addition to providing education, FLCs also provide credit counselling (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014).

⁴³ The majority of Skilling Centres located in West Bengal are in Barddhaman and Kolkata because Bangalore is still where many garment factories are located, and Kolkata is traditionally where a lot of handicrafts and garments have been produced (Barry, 2016; Bose, 2007; RoyChowdhury, 2005; Sen, 2013). Because these industries are prevalent in these cities, the

Furthermore, the RBI has created informational booklets to pass on knowledge concerning financial literacy. An example of this is the “Raju and The Skyladder” booklet published in 2008. This booklet also supports India’s efforts to be more inclusive when it comes to the ownership of bank accounts. Specifically, this story highlights a young woman getting a savings account as part of the story (Reserve Bank of India, 2008). Another aspect this booklet makes clear is how joint operation of accounts works in India. When any money is withdrawn, all account holders must sign that they wish to withdraw this money (Reserve Bank of India, 2008). This suggests that women could experience some aspects of empowerment even when they have ownership of only a joint bank account in India.

Paths to Economic Growth

Historically, India has focused on their domestic market rather than centering their growth on exporting low-priced, manufactured goods that utilize intensive labor to produce to promote economic growth (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). This has resulted in India having a very large domestic market, which means that India is less dependent on trade than other Asian countries. In 2015, exports only represented 12.7 percent of India’s GDP. The total amount of exports India produced in 2014 was worth 322,480.5 million dollars, and the total amount of exports India produced in 2015 was worth 267,791.0 million dollars. Consequently, exports actually declined in 2015 by 17 percent in terms of U.S. dollars (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5).

Nevertheless, the government of India would like to increase exports, so seven new ports are currently being constructed and export subsidies for textiles and engineering goods have been reintroduced. These export subsidies are aiming to counter the lack of demand for these products in Europe (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5). In addition, to encourage more

number of Skilling Centres in each could be connected to the prevalence of formal labor market positions available.

growth within the manufacturing sector, the Indian government is planning to advance a “made in India” program (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5). Ultimately, the Indian government would like to raise the percent of GDP resulting from manufacturing to 25 percent from the 17 percent it was in 2015 (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5).

On the other hand, what has powered Bangladesh’s economy in the last 30 years has been relying on an export economy and remittances (International Labour Organization & International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013; Monetary Policy Department: Bangladesh Bank, 2017; Muqtada, 2015). Growth in GDP began in the 1990s, and trade liberalization has created greater efficiency and competitiveness in the manufacturing sector (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012; Muqtada, 2015). In 2014, Bangladesh produced 25,127.9 million dollars’ worth of exports, and the total amount of exports produced in Bangladesh in 2015 was 26,901.6 million dollars’ worth (Euromonitor International, 2016, September 26). More than 90 percent of Bangladesh’s export basket is composed of manufacturing exports (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

Exports have driven Bangladesh’s economy because there is an abundance of low-cost labor, and the government has even created incentives to encourage manufactured exports (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). Consequentially, the manufacturing sector has contributed to producing growth and employment opportunities for Bangladesh because when this sector is strong it helps to produce higher income jobs (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). Additionally, the increase in earnings that came from the ready-made garment (RMG) exports has enabled Bangladesh’s economy to stabilize (Muqtada, 2015).

Sectors That Make up India’s and Bangladesh’s Respective Economies

Within India, agriculture is a very important sector of the economy because it accounts for 46.9 percent of the workforce. Most farming in India takes place at a subsistence level, and

the government subsidizes some necessary crops to ensure that a billion people can afford to eat (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5). Furthermore, the service sector in India makes up 53.4 percent of the country's GDP (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5). The manufacturing sector is responsible for 15.8 percent of the country's GDP, and 10.4 percent of those present in the labor force work in this sector (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5).

Specifically, the textile industry makes up 10 percent of India's manufacturing production, and it is responsible for 13 percent of India's earnings from exports. Additionally, the textile sector in India accounts for five percent of the country's GDP (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). Overall, work in the textile and apparel industries provides 51 million jobs for people directly laboring in these industries, and more than 68 million people indirectly benefit from these industries (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). Regrettably, the government reports that provide this information do not give a breakdown of the percentage of women who labor in the textile industry, which may indicate the government's lack of interest in who actually works in this industry.

Between 2013 and 2016, the percentage constituting the textile and apparel industries of the total amount of exports out of India increased from 13 percent to 15 percent (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). A report from the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion and the Ministry of Textiles published in 2016 states that "the categories that had the most growth were the readymade garments, wool and woolen textiles, silk, carpets, coir and coir products and handicraft" (p. 4). To promote this sector over the past few years India has introduced an array of tax reforms and other benefits (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016).

The government of India has also initiated a program called the Integrated Skill Development Scheme in 2014 that has mainly aimed to train youth to work in the garment sector. Women make up the vast majority of those being trained. Between 2014 to 2015, women accounted for 71.7 percent of those trained, and between 2015 to 2016, they accounted for 78.2 percent of those trained. The success rate of this program is also high, with 81 percent of people that have been trained being placed in a position. This includes 79 percent of women who have been trained being placed in a job as well (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). One sub-sector of the textile industry that has done very well is the handloom sector, which employs 4.3 million people. With that said, most of those who work in the handloom sector are part of the unorganized sector of the economy (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). This indicates that those working in the handloom sector are laboring in the informal labor market, so they are not under government regulations. The prevalence of the informal sector will be discussed further below. In general, the textile industry still remains very fragmented and inefficient (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5).

The most significant segment of the economy in Bangladesh is still the agricultural sector, which employs 66.7 percent of the labor force. It is also necessary to state that this sector accounts for 33.3 percent of Bangladesh's GDP. Alternatively, the service sector accounts for 56.4 percent of GDP within Bangladesh. Lastly, the manufacturing sector makes up 17.8 percent of GDP, of which the garment industry is the foundation (Euromonitor International, 2016, September 26). As of 2012, the textile and RMG industry in Bangladesh employed 6.5 million people, and these industries together made up half of all manufacturing production (Bangladeshi

General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).⁴⁴ Interestingly, these reports that provide the sector-level information on what industries make up the economy of Bangladesh omit details on how many women are employed in each industry.

In particular, the RMG industry is responsible for the double-digit export growth Bangladesh has experienced over the past 20 years. This industry accounts for two million jobs and 77 percent of the earnings from exports (Euromonitor International, 2016, September 26; Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). The majority of garment workers are women, and the RMG industry also indirectly supports another 15 million jobs (Euromonitor International, 2016, September 26). Furthermore, the RMG industry experienced over 20 percent growth per year over the last 20 years (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

The Multi-Fiber Arrangement of 1974 contributed to the growth of the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Jute and jute goods were the most significant exports until 1981, but all traditional exports were overtaken by RMGs during the 1990s (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). The RMG sector has also experienced preferential treatment from the Bangladeshi government with such benefits as receiving “exclusive facilities” (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012, p. 45). That said, it is important to note that manufacturing does not just include the ready-made garment industry and other exports, but other industrial manufacturing activities like generating power, mining, quarrying, and ensuring proper wastewater management (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

Even with this growth and stabilization, Bangladesh still may find it difficult to achieve middle-income status and accomplish “inclusive growth” by the year 2021 (the 50th anniversary

⁴⁴ It is important to recall that work in this sector can be viewed as either positive or negative (Ahmed, 2004; Das, 2011; Dedeoglu, 2014; Feldman, 1992; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2004; Kibria 1995; Le Mare, 2012; Lim, 1983; Ross, 2014; Wilkinson-Weber, 2004).

of the independence of Bangladesh) (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012; Muqtada, 2015, p. 7).⁴⁵ A specific area that may keep Bangladesh from progressing is that there have not been significant changes in the composition of those employed in different sectors of the economy (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012; Muqtada, 2015). Bangladesh's dependence on the RMG industry to power the economy makes Bangladesh susceptible to shocks in the global economy that affect the demand for RMG (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012; International Labour Organization and International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013). In order to increase the chances of attaining the goal of reaching middle-income status, the government is trying to increase public investments that will increase investment GDP and increase the development of physical and social infrastructures (Muqtada, 2015).

Prevalence of Informal Economy in India and Bangladesh

The vast majority of workers in both India and Bangladesh labor in the informal labor market. Specifically, 85 percent of the working population in India is comprised of those who work in the unorganized or informal sectors (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Nair & Tankha, 2015). Even though Bangladesh has experienced a large increase in economic growth over the last 20 to 30 years, the percent of those employed in the informal sector as of 2010 still remained very high at 87.7 percent. This percentage has actually increased from 75 percent in 1999 (International Labour Organization & International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013).

In India, the 85 percent of those working in the informal labor market equates to about 400 million people, of which 120 million are women (30 percent of those working in the

⁴⁵ Middle-income status indicates that by 2021 Bangladesh will have annual GDP growth of 10 percent for that year, and will average 8 percent for the period between 2011 and 2021 as outlined in the "Vision 2021" (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012).

informal labor market) (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Nair & Tankha, 2015). Based on these statistics, women are not the majority who work in the informal sector in India, but this is a higher percentage than those women who work in the formal sector. If you recall, only 24.2 percent of workers in the formal labor market are women (The World Bank, 2016a). With that said, it is difficult to assess the true significance of this figure of 30 percent. This figure could be even higher because all the women who work in their homes or for their families might not be fully counted. Further research utilizing survey data could provide us with a truer picture of the number of women working informally.

Some scholars assert that the informal sector is so prevalent in India because of the rigidness of the labor market there as a result of strict regulations (Cashin, Tulin, Khera, Iorgova, Bi, and Svirydzenka, 2016; Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar, Kumar, 2015). This rigidness results in higher costs associated with hiring and firing workers in the formal labor market (Cashin et al., 2016). Cashin et al. (2016) also found that the women's labor force participation rates have fallen in India because jobs within the formal labor market are lacking for women. In India, women just do not have the same access to work in the formal labor market as men. While women's labor force participation rates have declined from 34.1 percent in 1999 to 27.2 percent in 2012, men's labor force participation rates have stayed constant at around 80 percent (Cashin et al., 2016).⁴⁶

In order to address the "old age income protection" for those working in the informal sector, the government of India started the Swavalamban scheme in 2010. This is a pension scheme for those working in the unorganized or informal sectors of the economy (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014; Nair & Tankha, 2015, p. 46). This scheme has 2.7 million subscribers, of which 70 percent are women (Indian Department of Financial Services,

⁴⁶ The declining women's labor force participation rate in India will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

2014).⁴⁷ The creation of this program signals that the government of India is aware of how prevalent the informal labor market is there. In addition, because 70 percent of the subscribers are women, this shows that women are the majority taking advantage of this program, and is indicative of the large number of women who work in the informal sector.

In Bangladesh on the other hand, women make up 60 percent of unpaid, family workers, and 19 percent of women labor as self-employed, informal workers in either the agricultural or non-agricultural sectors. With that said, only about 7 percent of women are “regular, formal employees” (International Labour Organization & International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013, p. 83). The prevalence of the informal sector in Bangladesh is associated with an unfavorable business environment (including lack of access to financing and credit), a high percentage of jobs being in agriculture, the absence of a minimum wage, and poverty overall. Yet, the women who are able to secure employment in the formal labor market are still susceptible to extremely poor working conditions and low pay (International Labour Organization and International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013).

Because of the prevalence of the informal labor market, the Bangladeshi government is concerned that those in the most disadvantaged groups are still being excluded. This is why in the Sixth Five Year Plan, the Bangladeshi government outlined measures to assist those at the greatest disadvantage within society such as poor women, ethnic minorities, and socially-excluded groups (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). Specifically, the government is going to try to create a social protection program that stresses the importance of creating assets and job opportunities, and provides priority distribution of benefits for these disadvantaged groups (Bangladeshi General Economics Division Planning Commission, 2012). Nevertheless, the Bangladeshi government has not yet established a specific

⁴⁷ It is also important to note that the state government of Karnataka has also adopted this scheme (Indian Department of Financial Services, 2014).

program to address the needs of those who work in the informal sector (International Labour Organization & International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013).

Overall, many of the institutional factors in India and Bangladesh are similar. The banking systems of both countries have evolved to have more government oversight even though financial liberalization policies have shaped each country's banking system over the last 30 years. Both India and Bangladesh have also instituted many policies to increase overall financial inclusion for their populations. Additionally, MFIs are utilized heavily in both countries. Along the same lines, both countries still have significant agricultural and service sectors, and the number of people laboring in the informal labor market is still extremely high in both India and Bangladesh. With that said, there are some differences that may affect the percentage of women who have access to an account in a bank or other financial institution.

One aspect to take into consideration is that the banking system has been around much longer in India than in Bangladesh, which means the Indian banking system has had more time to evolve and develop more initiatives and programs. This chapter finds one example of a program is the PMJDY initiative in India that aims to provide every household with bank accounts. Specifically, one account is supposed to be opened in the name of a female family member. Conversely, when it comes to assisting women in the financial sector in Bangladesh, this chapter finds that the BB focuses on giving loans to small businesses and women entrepreneurs.

Another aspect to note is more women in India have access to bank accounts than in Bangladesh, but dormancy rates in India are very high. A difference that should also be emphasized is India seems to have made a more concerted effort to increase financial literacy than Bangladesh. An additional variance between the two countries to take into account is that Bangladesh has relied more on an export economy than India over the last 30 years. In a similar vein, Bangladesh's manufacturing sector is also larger than India's, and Bangladesh's economic growth has been powered more by the RMG sector than has India's economic growth. Therefore,

it appears that what each country has focused on has contributed to the differences in the percentages of women participating in the formal labor market and the percentages of women having access to bank accounts in India and Bangladesh.

In this section I examined the history of the banking systems, policies and initiatives aiming to increase financial inclusion, and the different sectors that make up India's and Bangladesh's respective economies to assess the overall accessibility of bank accounts and formal sector work for women in India and Bangladesh. Many of the policies or initiatives I mention do not specifically say they are targeted for women, but are aimed at vulnerable groups like the poor or people who live in rural areas. These policies are still important to include because women are most likely part of these groups. With that said, the fact that women are not mentioned specifically shows us that both India and Bangladesh may not be prioritizing that women get access to financial services.

In a similar vein, it is necessary to state that even though India and Bangladesh have both seemed to make great efforts to increase financial inclusion, government policies have not always translated into what occurs within each country. This dichotomy of laws on the book versus what is actually occurring will be discussed further in the next section. The next chapter will outline some of the socio-cultural factors that may affect women's access to formal labor market jobs and in turn, accounts in financial institutions.

Chapter 4

Socio-Cultural Factors

This chapter begins with an examination of cultural differences, which may explain the persistent variances in the percentages of women who work in Bangladesh and India.⁴⁸ After highlighting these differences, this chapter evaluates some of the measures each country has taken to improve the situation for women's access to employment and workers' rights. Additionally, this chapter outlines the rights granted in Bangladesh's and India's constitutions to all citizens. Laws that affect women and work in both India and Bangladesh, including issues that may affect women's labor force participation like maternity leave, child care, and restrictions on when women can work and what women can do, are also evaluated. Furthermore, an assessment of laws regarding sexual harassment in each country is included in this chapter.⁴⁹

It is necessary to assess both social customs and legal rights in this chapter because formal and informal laws (culture and/or customs) can be perceived as perpetuating discrimination against women if "they undervalue women's status in the household or labour force or limit their decision-making powers" (International Labour Organization, 2016, p. 57). Consequently, examining social customs and legal rights allows for the investigation of what cultural elements may be contributing to women's access (or lack of access) to formal labor market employment and whether that is affecting women's access to accounts in financial institutions in each country. Generally, this investigation aims to aid in the understanding of why there are differences in the percentages of women working in the formal labor market and the

⁴⁸ In Bangladesh, the female labor force participation rate is 40.4 percent and the percentage of women who own accounts is 25.2. In contrast, the female labor force participation rate is 24.2 percent and the percentage of women who own accounts is 42.6 in India. See Table 3 in "Chapter 2: Large N Statistical Regression."

⁴⁹ It is important to note that some of the laws examined in this section fall out of the timeframe of the 1970s to 2016 established previously for this study. The reason for this is that many of these laws are still active in India and Bangladesh.

percentages of women with access to ownership of accounts in banks or financial institutions in Bangladesh and India.

Reasons for Women's Labor Force Participation Rates in Each Country

Customs found within Indian and Bangladeshi cultures influence the terms of employment for women, and society may also directly affect whether women can experience economic independence. For example, in both India and Bangladesh, women have been traditionally expected to give their earnings to their husbands or male family members (Ahmed, 2004; Kibria, 1995; Soutik, 2013). In a similar vein, pursuing a specific field of study that ultimately affects what type of work women are able to participate in is very much influenced by culture and society (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Customs and Trends across India and Bangladesh. Traditional gender norms seem to persist in India that say women should be separated from men in order to preserve their purity (*purdah*), which contributes to the low labor market participation rates in India (Pande & Moore, 2015). Specifically, the percentage of women working in India is very low, and it has actually decreased within the last 10 years (Bhalla & Kaur, 2011; Cashin et al., 2016; Catalyst, 2015; Nigram, 2013; Pande & Moore, 2015; Stevens, 2016; Verick, 2014). Many researchers have been trying to evaluate why this is the case.

Different researchers have found that the rising household incomes with the emerging middle class in India may lead to more women dropping out of the labor force (Bhalla & Kaur, 2011; Das et al., 2015; Nigram, 2013; Verick, 2014). Another factor researchers have found that may be leading women to withdraw from the labor force in India is that there is a stigma associated with more educated or higher socio-economic status women working in menial jobs (Das et al., 2015; Klasen & Pieters, 2012). Overall, there appears to be a lack of appropriate jobs for women in the formal sector (Cashin et al., 2016; Das et al., 2015; Klasen & Pieters, 2012; Nigram, 2013; Verick, 2014). Along the same lines, the increase of women furthering their

education and the increase of women leaving jobs in agricultural activities could be to blame for the decrease in female formal labor market participation rates (Nigam, 2013; Stevens, 2016). It is also important to note that labor force participation rates could be so low in India because the types of jobs many women still participate in like agricultural work or work based from home are difficult to measure (Nigam, 2013; Verick, 2014).

With that said, it should be noted that the gender gap between women and men workers in India is one of the largest of the G-20 economies, at 50 to 60 percent (Catalyst, 2015; Das et al., 2015). Some researchers have also found that there are legal restrictions based on gender that are associated with a larger gender gap in labor force participation rates. These legal restrictions include the right for women to their inheritance or property (Das et al., 2015; Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar, & Newiak, 2015). In particular, Hindu traditions may prohibit women from fully inheriting property even though the *The Hindu Succession Act* from 1956 guarantees that widows and daughters have equal access to inheritances (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). In addition, these researchers also found that legal restrictions on women's economic activities (like not being able to open a bank account or being able to pursue a profession that they want) is also associated with a larger gender gap (Das et al., 2015; Gonzales et al., 2015).⁵⁰

Not only is there a small percentage of women participating in the female labor market, but there is also a lot of variance in the rates of female labor market participation in the different states throughout India. The gender gaps regarding labor force participation rates are much higher in the urban areas (average 60 percent) than in the rural areas (average 45 percent). Based on India's National Sample Survey's Unemployment and Employment Surveys for 2011/2012, Karnataka has a much higher percentage of women participating in the labor force (at around 35 percent) compared to West Bengal (where about only 15 percent of women are participating in

⁵⁰ It is necessary to note that many women in India have access to ownership of accounts in banks or other financial institutions, so this issue is not a factor affecting the large gender gap between women and men workers there.

the labor market) (Das et al., 2015). The fact that Karnataka is one of the hubs of the garment industry in India may explain why there is a higher percentage of women working there compared with West Bengal (Barry, 2016; RoyChowdhury, 2005; Sen, 2013). With that said, the labor force participation rates are much higher for women living in rural areas than women living in urban areas overall (Bhalla & Kaur 2011; Catalyst, 2015; Das et al., 2015).

In addition, poor infrastructure in states negatively affects female labor force participation rates (Das et al., 2015). Having poor infrastructure such as “inadequate access to water supply, sanitation, electricity, roads, safe transportation, health care and other social care services” may also affect the amount of unpaid work women have to do each day (International Labour Organization, 2016, p. 20; Ghosh, 2016). The need for women to do unpaid work in their homes may keep women from being able to fully participate in the labor market as paid employees (Ghosh, 2016; International Labour Organization, 2016; Stevens, 2016; Verick, 2014). It should be noted that women in India do three times as much care work as men (International Labour Organization, 2016). This indicates that women are still expected to take on traditional gender roles in the household in India.

Like India, Bangladesh is also a patriarchal society with strong social and religious norms (*purdah*) that have traditionally said it is inappropriate for women to work outside of the home (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016; Byron & Rahman, 2015; Chowdhury et al., 2015). However, the fast progression of the garment industry expanding across Bangladesh over the last 30 years has caused some flexibility with this deeply held belief (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016; Chowdhury et al., 2015; Pande & Moore, 2015). In particular, Chowdhury et al. (2015) found that the increase of women working in the garment industry in Bangladesh has happened because the garment industry allows women to enter the labor force in a very segregated sector. All in all, there is a very short list of acceptable work for women in Bangladesh outside of traditional agricultural activities.

Work in the RMG sector falls in this category, and women now dominate RMG factory jobs (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016).

As a result, Bangladesh in recent years (1999 to 2010) has experienced increasing female labor force participation rates (Chowdhury et al., 2015; Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016; Verick, 2014). However, it is important to note that between 2010 and 2013 there was a slight decrease in female formal labor market participation rates from 36 percent to 33.5 percent, but it appears this was a result of less women working in agricultural jobs overall. Yet, during this time, there was also a jump in the percentage of women working in manufacturing jobs (most likely in the RMG sector) (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016).

Even with more and more women entering the workforce, there is still a negative attitude when it comes to women working in the public sphere, and many experience extremely poor working conditions and poor wages in Bangladesh (Chowdhury et al., 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Ridout & Tisdall, 2015). Consequentially, Chowdhury et al. (2015) found that most of the women they interviewed chose the work they do because they are living in poverty. This is necessary to point out because these results are in line with what other scholars have found—it may be more acceptable in Bangladesh for women to work outside of the home if their family is impoverished and needs the income (Kibria, 1995; Shehabuddin, 2008).

As noted above, the majority of workers in the RMG sector in Bangladesh are women, but it is necessary to highlight that men make up the majority of managers or supervisors in the factories (Human Rights Watch, 2015; USAID, 2014). This fact clearly agrees with Marxist and socialist feminists' opinions that wage work in the capitalist system just reinforces women's subordination because they are still being told what to do by males, who are now just strangers, instead of their male family members (Elson & Pearson, 1984; Green, 1999; Mies, 1998).

Furthermore, there is some evidence that even when new supervisor positions open up, women are hesitant to apply for them because the women “do not see themselves as ready for supervisory roles” and “they may be more reluctant to accept more workplace responsibility while needing to juggle home and family responsibilities” (USAID, 2014, p. 31). This coincides with the fact that women in Bangladesh typically spend as much as three times the amount of time men spend on doing unpaid household work (Byron & Rahman, 2015; Chowdhury et al., 2015; Ovi, 2017). This shows that ultimately these women may not be experiencing an increase in bargaining power or empowerment in their household as a result of gaining employment in the formal labor market (Agarwal, 1997; Kantor, 2003).⁵¹ In a similar vein, results from the WVS between the years 1995 and 2004 show that many women in both Bangladesh and India agreed that “men make better political leaders” than women (World Values Survey, 2017h; World Values Survey, 2017p).⁵² This indicates that patriarchy is so engrained within these societies that many women themselves do not feel ready for positions of power in these countries.

It should also be noted that many women are intimidated by national and commercial banks in Bangladesh because they find the procedures dealing with the paperwork that is necessary for bank loans too complicated. This inhibits these women from getting bank loans for their businesses when emergencies happen (Chowdhury et al., 2015). Because this is the case, women in Bangladesh get loans from MFIs and money lenders that have very high interest rates

⁵¹ See pages 13 to 14 for a greater explanation of bargaining power and how it affects women’s empowerment.

⁵² The WVS is a survey that was started in 1981 to examine how beliefs, values, and motivations change across time and how this affects society and politics. The research design for the survey strives to be thorough and accurate, and the survey is conducted by social science scholars across the world (World Values Survey, 2017a). This survey is utilized in this study because it enables us to have an idea of how the people in both Bangladesh and India have felt about certain issues that relate to women, women and labor, and politics. See Tables 4 and 5 at the end of this chapter with eight pertinent questions given to both men and women in Bangladesh and India. Only Waves 3 and 4 are used because these are the only two waves where data is available from both Bangladesh and India.

(Chowdhury et al., 2015; Hall, 2013).⁵³ Additionally, if there are layoffs, women are much more likely to be fired than men (Chowdhury et al., 2015). This corresponds to the results of the WVS from 2000 to 2004, which shows that the majority of men and women in both Bangladesh and India agreed that “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women” (World Values Survey, 2017k). The percentage of women who agreed with this statement actually increased between 1995 and 2004 (World Values Survey, 2017c; World Values Survey, 2017k). This also indicates that both countries still have very patriarchal societies where it is expected that men should work over women.

Increasing Women’s Access to Employment and Workers’ Rights in India and Bangladesh. Even though customs and social norms may have negatively affected women’s labor force participation in India, the government has made some efforts to increase women’s access to employment. In the 1980s, the Indian government placed gender quotas in the educational sector. This has resulted in women being employed in large numbers in this sector. Consequently, some argue this gender quota system should be incorporated in other sectors to encourage greater overall female labor force participation rates (Pande & Moore, 2015).

Furthermore, India enacted the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005 to promote greater employment throughout India. This program had specific provisions to improve women’s employment rates, including that at least 33 percent of the participants of the program had to be women. Additionally, this program stipulates that jobs take place within five kilometers of a worker’s home in order to allow more females the opportunity to work. This program appears to be successful because those women and men who have MGNREGA cards are more likely to be employed. Even though this program has helped both men and women, women who are a part of this program are even more likely than men to be participating in the labor market (Das et al., 2015).

⁵³ See pages 53 to 55 for more information regarding the prevalence of MFIs in Bangladesh.

In 2013, the Government of India also set up a bank designed especially for women called the Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) (Soutik, 2013; Venkatesh, 2016). This bank was created to encourage women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion (Soutik, 2013). The BMB had the effect of other banks opening branches with only women staffs that also specifically catered to women (Venkatesh, 2016). However, there has been talk as of 2016 that the BMB may be merged with the State Bank of India (Venkatesh, 2016).

The Government of India also set up The Women Vocational Training Program with National and Regional Vocational Training Institutes across India. These institutes are designed to train women to develop professional skills in order to find jobs or become self-employed (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18).⁵⁴ Even though these vocational training programs have been set up, there has been some evidence that in rural India some men will not allow their wives or daughters to participate in these training programs that take place outside of their home villages. Some men will also not allow the women in their lives to take job offers that take them away from their villages. These issues make trainers less willing to want to train women because their jobs are dependent on their trainees receiving and taking job offers (Pande & Moore, 2015).

As noted above, increasing numbers of women in Bangladesh have been entering the labor force out of necessity and as a result of the garment industry. With that said, many of these women experience poor working conditions. Since this is the case, there are many different worker organizations including unions and NGOs that aim to help workers achieve their rights in Bangladesh. Some NGOs may provide services to workers outside of work situations. An example of this would be NGOs setting women workers up with legal representation for non-

⁵⁴ There are Regional Vocational Training Institutes in Bangalore and Kolkata (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18). This is significant because this means both of my case studies for India (Karnataka and West Bengal) have vocational training centers. This means women in these states are more likely to have access to vocational training, which may indicate women there may have more opportunities to work.

work related activities. In a similar vein, legal aid organizations can also help women with things like getting their husbands to allow them to handle the pay they make from the work they do instead of it going directly to their husbands (USAID, 2014).

To further increase women's employment opportunities, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) in Bangladesh has also created many training programs. The National Strategy for promotion of Gender Equality in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was established in 2012 (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2016; Bangladeshi Ministry of Finance, 2017). In order to guarantee more women to participate in TVET institutions, the Technical Education Board increased the quota reservation from 10 to 20 percent for women. In addition, there are other industry-related educational institutions that train laborers and owners on labor laws and other issues related to labor. These educational institutions have also increased women's knowledge about their rights as workers, which increases the likelihood for them to get jobs (Bangladeshi Ministry of Finance, 2017).

Overall, it is evident that there are many cultural and societal similarities when it comes to examining Bangladesh and India. For example, women in both societies are still affected by *purdah* (being separated from men to preserve their honor). Along the same lines, women in both countries are expected to perform the majority of care work and unpaid work in the home. In a similar vein, results from the WVS show that between 1995 to 2004 there was an increase in the percentage of men and women in both countries who agreed that a "woman needs children" (World Values Survey, 2017d; World Values Survey, 2017l). This shows that the expectation of traditional roles continues for the most part in both India and Bangladesh.

To counter some of these negative aspects of culture that affect women's terms of employment, both India and Bangladesh have also made provisions for women to increase the likelihood of them getting jobs. For example, each country has implemented measures to

increase women's access to technical training programs. WVS results indicate that programs like these may be making a difference in changing attitudes. Men and women in both Bangladesh and India strongly agreed or agreed that "both the husband and wife should contribute to household income" (World Values Survey, 2017g; World Values Survey, 2017o).

The main difference between the two countries that has affected women's labor force participation rates is how each country has developed. In Bangladesh, women's labor force participation rates appear to have increased as a result of more women entering the garment industry, which segregates women to work on production lines. Conversely in India, women's labor force participation rates appear to have decreased because household incomes have risen, and there is a lack of appropriate jobs for more educated women.⁵⁵ WVS results also support that this difference has been taking place.

The majority of men and women in India agreed with the statement that "being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay," while the majority of men and women in Bangladesh actually disagreed with this statement (World Values Survey, 2017f; World Values Survey, 2017n). It is also important to note that the percentage of men and women who said work was "very important" actually decreased in India between 1995 and 2004, while the percentage of men and women who said work was "very important" increased in Bangladesh (World Values Survey, 2017b; World Values Survey, 2017j). This may be indicative of more

⁵⁵ India and Bangladesh appear to be on two different trajectories when it comes to how they have been developing, which has affected women's labor force participation rates. India has traditionally been less focused on exports and has had a larger domestic market (Chiarlone & Ghosh, 2009). In contrast, exports and remittances have been the engine of Bangladesh's economy over the last 30 years (International Labour Organization & International Institute for Labour Studies, 2013; Monetary Policy Department: Bangladesh Bank, 2017; Muqtada, 2015). With that said, India is trying to increase their manufacturing exports, which involves trying to get more young women to work in the garment sector (Euromonitor International, 2016, December 5; Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ministry of Textiles, 2016). See sections "Paths to Economic Growth" and "Sectors That Make up India's and Bangladesh's Respective Economies" in "Chapter 3: Institutional Factors" for a greater explanation of this phenomenon.

women in Bangladesh working in the formal labor market than women working in the formal labor market in India.

In addition, it is clear that the prevalence of poverty in Bangladesh has been one of the factors that have led more women to work in the formal labor market outside of the home.⁵⁶ Ultimately, it is difficult to say whether more women working in the garment industry in Bangladesh has led to women being more empowered, though, because women are still hesitant to take positions of power. Women in both Bangladesh and India still deal with cultural norms, like the men in their lives not allowing them to handle their own pay or to go to training to get jobs, which keeps them from experiencing economic independence.

In fact, the majority of “chief wage earners” between 1995 and 2004 were still men in both Bangladesh and India. The percentage of women who answered yes to being the chief wage earner in Bangladesh actually decreased between the years 1995 and 2004 from 11.5 percent to 5.8 (World Values Survey, 2017i; World Values Survey, 2017q). On the other hand, it is important to note that between 1995 and 2004, the amount of women and men who strongly agreed that “a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” increased in both Bangladesh and India (World Values Survey, 2017e; World Values Survey, 2017m). This may indicate that more men and women are becoming comfortable with the idea of women working even if it is not leading to more women becoming economically independent.

Rights and Laws Dealing with Equality and Work

Now the discussion turns to the rights granted in each country’s constitution and the laws regarding women and work. It is important that this section come after the explanation of the

⁵⁶ It should be noted that there is poverty in both India and Bangladesh, but India has succeeded at having better outcomes across a scope of development factors. See Table 1 on page eight to examine these statistics. Specifically, India also has a higher GDP per capita, PPP at \$5,672.2 compared with Bangladesh’s at \$3,134.2. Both are significantly lower than the average for 132 countries at \$19,043.8 though. See Table 3 on page 39 for further comparison.

customs and trends found within Indian and Bangladeshi cultures because society is intricately connected to whether laws are carried out and how women experience employment opportunities in each country.

Rights for Citizens Guaranteed in Bangladesh's and India's Constitution. The Constitution of India explains that all citizens should work to promote harmony across all different types of people. This specifically includes rejecting any customs that are derogatory toward women. Women are also guaranteed one-third of the seats in the *Panchayats* outlined in the 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution (Catalyst Information Center, 2012; Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015).⁵⁷ The Constitution also stipulates that Co-operative Societies must ensure that at least two women are on their boards (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015). Furthermore, the Indian Constitution grants that the state cannot “discriminate against any citizen on grounds of only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them” (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015, p. 7; Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010).

The Indian Constitution also “guarantees equality for women before the law” and guarantees that equality is a “fundamental right” (Catalyst Information Center, 2012, pp. 1-2). Along the same lines, the Constitution makes it clear that the state of India should make efforts to ensure that women and men both have equal access to “adequate means of livelihood” and that both men and women receive equal pay for equal work (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015, pp. 21-22). Specifically, in Article 16, there is a provision for “equality of opportunity” when it comes to employment (Catalyst Information Center, 2012, p. 3).

This right has been translated into the Equal Remuneration Act, introduced in 1976, that implicitly states that it is the “duty of employer to pay equal remuneration to men and women workers for same work or work of a similar nature” (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment,

⁵⁷ Panchayat is an institution of self-government in rural areas (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015).

1976, p 3). Furthermore, this Act makes provisions that there should not be any discrimination between men and women when employers are recruiting for positions and that there should be a Central Advisory Committee (where half of the 10 committee members are women) in order to promote more job opportunities for women (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1976; Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1991; Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2017). If companies do not comply with this Act, they are vulnerable to being fined or even imprisoned (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1976).

Provisions in the Bangladeshi Constitution are very similar to the Indian Constitution. The preamble to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh explains that it is the state's fundamental aim "to realise through the democratic process to socialist society, free from exploitation-a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens" (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, n.d., p. 1). Like the Indian Constitution, the Bangladeshi Constitution also ensures that the state of Bangladesh cannot discriminate against any citizen because of their "religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth" (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, n.d., p. 7; Islam, 2013).

The Bangladeshi Constitution also states that there should be steps taken to ensure that women are able to participate fully in every part of the national life (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, n.d.). Furthermore, the Constitution states that "women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and of public life" (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, n.d., p. 7; Islam, 2013). The Bangladeshi Constitution also establishes similar means as the Indian Constitution to ensure equality in access to employment opportunities. The Constitution explains, "No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic" (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, n.d., p. 7; Islam,

2013). However, it should be noted that there are 350 seats in the National Parliament, of which 50 are reserved for women (Bangladesh Parliament, 2013). It is an important step for Bangladesh to reserve seats for women, but this means only about 14 percent of Parliament is required to be made up of women. Overall, this is not a very high quota to maintain.

Nevertheless, the rights granted in the Bangladeshi Constitution have also been converted into law with the Bangladesh Labor Act (BLA). With this law, Bangladesh consolidated its 50 labor-related Acts and Ordinances into one main Act in 2006. One of the highlights of this Act is that it aims to ensure gender equality. Some examples from this Act are if a trade union is created within a company, 20 percent of the members should be women and 10 percent of the union executive board should be women (Bangladesh Government Press, 2006). In contrast, India does not have one law that condensed all of its labor laws like the BLA.

Another law that fulfills the rights granted in the Bangladeshi Constitution is the National Labor Policy (NLP), implemented by the Government of Bangladesh in 2012. This policy outlines ways to “safeguard workers’ rights, establish a decent work environment with healthy labor relations, and increase productivity and efficiency” (USAID, 2014, p. 9). Within the NLP, there are also specific goals to stop women from experiencing discrimination in order to have safe and healthy work environments (USAID, 2014). Furthermore, the NLP has provisions to ensure that women receive equal wages and rights that men receive when they work (Bangladeshi Ministry of Finance, 2017).

Consequently, an assessment of both of these rights and laws shows that the governments of India and Bangladesh view the rights of their citizens similarly. There are passages in both constitutions that specifically prohibit discrimination based on sex within each state, which indicates (at least in terms of the law) women are supposed to be viewed equally and should have equal opportunities when it comes to having access to jobs. Additionally, the constitutional rights granted by each country have been incorporated into laws that strive to ensure gender equality.

Yet, even though many laws are in place, these laws may not always be enforced. Employers are able to do this because the language in the laws is not clearly written or there is no outline for how the laws are supposed to be enforced. India's labor legislation is also inconsistent because the laws can be specific to certain regions, states, or industries. Concerning laws relating specifically to gender, many times these laws are not implemented because there is not enough staff or funding to ensure they are enforced. Furthermore, many laws that have to do with gender are written with a bias that further propagates gender stereotypes (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). This will be discussed further below concerning both India and Bangladesh.

Maternity Leave. Having access to maternity leave is incredibly important for women because it enables women to go back to work after having a baby. Going back to work after having a child allows them to not have prolonged career interruptions that could deter them from having greater opportunities to advance in their careers. Without maternity leave, women may also lose out on income (International Labour Organization, 2016; Sharma, 2017).

There is legislation within India that grants up to three months of paid maternity leave for new mothers in every sector regardless of if they are permanent or contract staff. There are also laws to make sure women are not fired for becoming pregnant or for using their maternity leave. Even though it is rare for men to take paternity leave, the Central Government does offer fathers (with less than two children) the option of taking 15 days of paid paternity leave. Many states are beginning to give this option to their public employees as well (Catalyst Information Center, 2012).

In particular, the Maternity Benefit Act from 1961 provides that all women are entitled to receive maternity benefits for up to six weeks before the delivery of their babies and six weeks after the baby is born. In order to receive this benefit from their employers, women must have worked for their employer for at least 160 days in the last year. This Act also states that women

who return to work are allowed two breaks to nurse their babies until the babies are 15 months old. If employers do not follow this law, they will face fines and imprisonment (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1961).

In Bangladesh, the BLA of 2006 established that women workers are entitled to maternity leave for eight weeks before the baby is born, and it also prohibits companies from having women work eight weeks after their delivery. Additionally, this Act also states that companies are not allowed to have women do “arduous” labor within 10 weeks before having a baby or 10 weeks after having a baby. This Act also states that the women are entitled to this maternity leave with a full salary (Bangladesh Government Press, 2006; Chowdhury et al., 2015).

The Government of Bangladesh increased the amount of maternity leave from four to six months in January 2011 (Bangladesh Awami League, 2014; Chowdhury et al., 2015). There are also provisions in this Act that protect women from being denied maternity leave if they are terminated for being pregnant. Yet, women are only eligible to receive this benefit if they have worked for their employer for at least six months (Ahmed, 2015; Bangladesh Awami League; Bangladesh Government Press, 2006).

Both Bangladesh and India seem to have relatively good maternity leave programs, but mothers in Bangladesh are entitled to more maternity leave than mothers in India. Nevertheless, some scholars have found that in Bangladesh many companies do not always follow the BLA (Chowdhury et al., 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015). In fact, some women who work in the RMG sector said that they typically only get maternity leave and a paid salary for three months, which would actually be less maternity leave than women are entitled to in India (Chowdhury et al., 2015).

Childcare for Women Workers. Lack of childcare (or crèches) is one thing that still keeps many mothers in India from being able to work (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). Some laws for particular sectors guarantee rooms in order to care for children (Indian Ministry of

Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18). The Factories Act implemented in 1948 says that in every factory that employs at least 50 women, there must be rooms for children under the age of six (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1948). The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act put forth in 1966 makes similar provisions for children (Bihar Labour Resources Department, 2017). Along the same lines, The Contract Labour Law from 1970 says that in every business where 20 or more female employees are working, there needs to be two rooms for children under six years old (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1971).

There are also similar laws within Bangladesh that establish that there must be rooms for children in businesses that employ women workers. Outlined in The Factories Act of 1965 is the stipulation that every factory where more than 50 women workers are employed, there must be a room for children under the age of six (International Labour Organization NATLEX database, n.d.). The BLA enacted in 2006 also has provisions that say for every business that employs 40 or more women workers, there must be a room available for children under six years old (Bangladesh Government Press, 2006).

Both India and Bangladesh have similar policies when it comes to rooms being required for the care of children at different working facilities. With that said, crèches are becoming more popular in Indian cities, but many women still depend on their extended families for childcare (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). Even with the increase of crèches, it is important to note that the Central Government and state governments of India do not have any government licensing guidelines or regulations regarding childcare centers (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). Along the same lines, none of the laws for either Bangladesh or India that stipulate rooms must be available for children say how these rooms should be regulated at the working facilities.

Restrictions on When Women Can Work. There are laws within India that prohibit women from working during certain times (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18). In India, The Factories Act put forth in 1948 has this stipulation. It states that

some factories may be able to make some exceptions, but a woman will by no means be allowed to work between 10:00 P.M. and 5:00 A.M. (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1948). The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act from 1966 also says that women and young people are only allowed to work during the times of 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. (Bihar Labour Resources Department, 2017). Similarly, The Contract Labour Law enacted in 1970 prohibits female contract workers from being able to work before 6:00 A.M. and after 7:00 P.M. (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1971).

Bangladesh also has similar restrictions for women. The Factories Act from 1965 states that women are allowed to work between the hours of 7:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. The only exemption to this rule can be women who work in industries such as fish-curing or fish-canning because the product could go bad if they are forced to stop working because they are unable to work past a curfew (International Labour Organization NATLEX database, n.d.). Another example of a law that restricts when women can work is the BLA, implemented in 2006, which establishes that women should not be allowed to work between 10:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. (Ahmed, 2015; Bangladesh Government Press, 2006).

Restrictions on the Type of Work Women Can Do. Throughout India's history, there have also been laws that outlaw "dangerous behavior" for women. One law that does this is The Factories Act, put in place in 1948. This law explains that the Government has the right to say whether any group of people (such as women or adolescents) is prohibited from doing something within a factory because it is unsafe or could be a health hazard. A specific stipulation that this law makes is that women and children are not supposed to be around cotton-openers. Another task that women and young people are barred from doing is cleaning any part of the prime mover or transmission machinery while either one of them are moving (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1948; Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18).

Bangladesh also has laws that restrict women from doing tasks that are too “dangerous.” For example, the Factories Act, implemented in 1965, also prohibits women and children from being by cotton-openers or doing any of the work associated with pressing cotton in Bangladesh. Additionally, this law restricts women from working on or near any type of machinery that is moving (International Labour Organization NATLEX database, n.d.). In a similar vein, the BLA implemented in 2006 outlines that the government can determine what is considered too dangerous of work for certain groups to perform including “women, adolescents, and children” (Bangladesh Government Press, 2006, p. 51).

Both Bangladesh and India have laws restricting what hours women are allowed to work or the type of work they can do. These types of laws may be considered discriminatory even if they are enacted in order to “protect” women. These laws may be put forth with the best intentions, but they are the opposite of providing women with equal opportunities. Additionally, they may also contribute to women experiencing additional discrimination at work because women could be missing out on chances to make more money at jobs that men may not be restricted from doing (International Labour Organization, 2016). In general, these restrictions continue to perpetuate patriarchal societies with traditional gender roles.

Laws Requiring Separate Washrooms. There are also laws relating to work in India that specify there must be separate washrooms for women and men employees (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, November 18). One example of a law in India that outlines this is The Factories Act established in 1948. This Act says that there must be separate washing facilities and restrooms for both men and women workers (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1948). In a similar vein, The Contract Labour Law from 1970 states that in the canteen area there should be separate places to eat for women and separate washing areas for women (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1971).

In contrast, women who work in the public sector in Bangladesh many times still do not have the basic rights they are entitled to like separate restrooms or safe drinking water. Female garment and construction workers also complain about having to use the same toilets as men because they view this as unhygienic. In companies where men and women must share bathrooms, male workers often “draw indecent pictures, cartoons, [and] slogans on the walls of the toilet” (Chowdhury et al., 2015, p. 29). This indicates that women may feel uncomfortable or are unable to go to the bathroom while working. Because women may not have adequate access to bathrooms, women workers may experience health problems such as urinary tract infections or kidney stones (Chowdhury et al., 2015).

The stipulations India has in place for men and women having distinct facilities and the fact that many Bangladeshi women workers suffer because of the lack of separate facilities is indicative of the cultural factor of *purdah*, where women are supposed to be physically separated from men. Again, this just reinforces that patriarchal socio-cultural norms persist in each country.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment in India. India passed legislation defining sexual harassment in 1977 with the *Vishaka Judgement* (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). In this judgement, the Supreme Court of India defined sexual harassment in the workplace as “unwanted physical contact, advances, or requests, as well as the display of pornographic material and verbal or non-verbal sexual contact” (Catalyst Information Center, 2012, pp. 3-4). In addition, this judgement was important because it made it clear that sexual harassment is a violation of “fundamental rights to equality” (Catalyst Information Center, 2012, p. 4; Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010).

The *Vishaka Judgement* also helped to establish guidelines concerning sexual harassment (Catalyst Information Center, 2012; Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, September

29). These include that the company is responsible for putting a stop to sexual harassment; companies need to ensure that they have sexual harassment oversight committees that are run by women; companies need to punish offenders and protect victims; and women workers need to be aware of their rights (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). Specifically, these guidelines have “the force of law under Article 141 of the Constitution of India” (Indian Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015, September 29, para. 1).

Later, India also enacted the Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act of 2013 (Catalyst Information Center, 2012; Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013). This Act outlines in detail what is considered sexual harassment (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013; Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010).⁵⁸ This Act sets out to make sure all women are protected from sexual harassment, and it addresses how sexual harassment complaints should be handled. One example of this is that every company needs to create an “Internal Complaints Committee,” in which one half of the total number of members should be women. This Committee is responsible for determining if a sexual harassment event took place and what the consequence will be for the perpetrator or for the aggrieved woman (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013; Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010).

Some of the wording of this Act is concerning because it seems to really be open to allow the Committee to rule that sexual harassment did not take place. With that said, this Act does say that every employer should “provide assistance to the woman if she so chooses to file a complaint in relation to the offence under the Indian Penal Code or any law for the time being in force” (Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010, p. 9; Indian Ministry of Law

⁵⁸ In this Act, sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome acts or behavior” that includes physical contact and advances; a demand or request for sexual favors; making sexually colored remarks; showing pornography; or any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct related to sex (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013, p. 3).

and Justice, 2013). Along the same lines, this Act highlights that sexual harassment violates women's fundamental human rights granted in the Indian Constitution and in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was ratified by the Government of India in 1993 (Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013; Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2010).

Sexual Harassment in Bangladesh. The first law that focused on addressing sexual harassment in Bangladesh was the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance in 1976. It identifies sexual harassment as "teasing women" (Bangladeshi Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010; Hussain, 2016). This Ordinance makes clear that if a man exposes himself, physically touches or gets in a woman's way, or uses inappropriate language or makes vulgar noises or gestures, he will be imprisoned or fined (Bangladeshi Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010).

Many years later, Bangladesh implemented the Prevention of Cruelty against Women and Children Act 2000, which was created in order to protect women and children from crimes including rape, dowry, and serious injuries. In addition to protecting women and children from these crimes, this Act establishes punishments for sexual abuse and sexual harassment (UN Women, 2016). Some important aspects of this Act are there is to be a quick investigation and trial for the cases, and crimes that fall under this law are not eligible for bail (Khan, 2014; UN Women, 2016). Within this Act there are also provisions to protect victims from the media (UN Women, 2016).

In addition, the BLA from 2006 establishes what is appropriate behavior toward women in the workplace when it states, "Where any woman is employed in any work of any establishment, whatever her rank or status may be, no person of that establishment shall behave with her which may seem to be indecent or unmannerly or which is repugnant to the modesty or honour of that woman" (Bangladesh Government Press, 2006, p. 161). There is also a judgement

from the Bangladeshi Supreme Court in 2009 as a result of *Writ Petition No. 5916 of 2008* that clearly defines what is considered sexual harassment and what measures should be taken to address sexual harassment claims in Bangladesh. These recommendations have not been included in a specific sexual harassment law though (Bangladeshi Supreme Court, 2009; Chowdhury et al., 2015).⁵⁹

To promote gender equality and prevent violence against women (VAW) in the workplace, the ILO worked with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Bangladesh Employers' Federation, the National Committee for Workers' Education, NGOs, and civil society organizations on a project from 2010 to 2013. This project implemented sensitization training programs about gender equality and VAW at work, which has paved the way for some large companies to create complaints or suggestion boxes. As a result of this project, some companies now have committees headed by women to tackle sexual harassment. In addition, some companies have also changed their Human Resource policies in order to promote gender equality and to prevent VAW (International Labour Organization, 2017; Bangladeshi Ministry of Finance, 2017).

As outlined above, it is evident that both India and Bangladesh have laws in order to protect women from sexual harassment to enable women to have the opportunity to work. The question is if these laws are really enforced. It appears that they may not be because women in

⁵⁹The high court describes sexual harassment as encompassing the following: Unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as physical contact and advances; sexually coloured verbal representation; demand or request for sexual favours; sexually coloured remark or gesture; indecent gesture, teasing through abusive language, stalking, joking having sexual implication; insult through letters, telephone calls, call phone calls, SMS, notice, cartoon, writing on bench, chair, table, notice boards, wall of office, factory, classroom, washroom having sexual implication; taking still or video photographs for the purpose of blackmailing and character assassinations; making love proposal and exerting pressure or posing threats in case of refusal to love proposal etc. (Bangladeshi Supreme Court, 2009; Chowdhury et al., 2015, p. 29).

both India and Bangladesh still experience sexual harassment regularly. Studies in 2012 revealed that between 40 and 80 percent of women in India deal with sexual harassment at work, and most of the time this sexual harassment comes from their supervisor (Catalyst Information Center, 2012). Consequently, companies not enforcing sexual harassment policies can demotivate women because it inhibits their professional development. This ultimately may lead to many women leaving their jobs unless they need it for financial reasons (Sharma, 2017; Stevens, 2016). This may be contributing to the low percentage of women laboring in the formal labor market in India, and it may have negative effects on women's economic independence and empowerment overall.

It is also very clear that many women workers in Bangladesh have experienced harassment from male colleagues and supervisors (Chowdhury et al., 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015). Chowdhury et al. (2015) found that women workers are bullied with abusive language, male colleagues tell them sexual jokes, and they are given unwelcome physical contact (Chowdhury et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that Bangladesh has not enacted a law that is specifically targeted with addressing sexual harassment like India's Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act of 2013. This may indicate that this type of legislation is not a top priority for the Bangladeshi Government. Ultimately, women experiencing sexual harassment may negatively affect women's overall empowerment in Bangladesh.

There are many similarities when it comes to socio-cultural factors in Bangladesh and India based on the examination of the many documents utilized in this study including laws, newspaper articles, and reports from the IMF, ILO, governments, and other NGOs. India and Bangladesh are still highly patriarchal societies where traditional cultural and social norms persist such as *purdah* (women needing to be separated from men to preserve their honor) that limit the likelihood of them achieving economic independence. Similarly, women in Bangladesh

and India also still do the majority of the care work or unpaid labor at home. This continuation of traditional social and cultural roles can also be seen in laws in both countries as well that restrict the type of work women can do and when women are allowed to work.

Yet, there are also elements found within each country that promote women having equal opportunities to work in the formal labor market. Both India and Bangladesh have created programs to assist women with increasing their access to employment or workers' rights. Along the same lines, each of these countries' constitutions show that each government views the rights of their citizens similarly and both prohibit discrimination based on sex within each state. Furthermore, India and Bangladesh have laws in order to protect women from sexual harassment to increase their ability to work. That said, these laws do not really seem to be enforced as women in both India and Bangladesh still experience sexual harassment regularly.

Overall, economic growth has been powered by manufacturing exports in Bangladesh. This has contributed to more women starting to work as a result of the expansion of the garment industry. Garment work is deemed appropriate for women, and it is a way for women to make money to lift their families out of poverty in Bangladesh. Conversely, India has traditionally been more focused on their domestic market than manufacturing exports to increase economic growth, meaning there are less manufacturing jobs in which women can work. In addition, rising household incomes and a lack of work deemed appropriate for educated women (not factory jobs) in India appear to be contributing to a decrease in women's overall formal labor force participation rates.

Ultimately, how each country has developed over the years contributes to the variation of formal labor employment opportunities for women in Bangladesh and India. This factor helps to not only illuminate why India and Bangladesh do not fit the global pattern of having a correlation between the percentage of women with access to formal labor market work and access to

ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution, but why these two countries are so different from each other concerning these issues.

World Values Survey (WVS) Results

Table 4: WVS Statistics for Bangladesh

Bangladesh	Wave 3: 1995-1999		Wave 4: 2000-2004	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Are you the chief wage earner in your house? (%)	-64.3 (Yes) -35.7 (No)	-11.5 (Yes) -88.5 (No)	-57.8 (Yes) -41.1 (No)	-5.8 (Yes) -93.3 (No)
Men make better political leaders (%)	-26.2 (Strongly agree) -31.3 (Agree) -30.5 (Disagree) -6.6 (Strongly Disagree)	-13.4 (Strongly agree) -29.6 (Agree) -32.2 (Disagree) -10.5 (Strongly disagree)	-26.1 (Strongly agree) -42.5 (Agree) -21.6 (Disagree) -8.4 (Strongly Disagree)	-22.4 (Strongly agree) -41.1 (Agree) -28.2 (Disagree) -6.6 (Strongly disagree)
When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women (%)	-65.9 (Agree) -15.9 (Neither) -16.5 (Disagree)	-41.7 (Agree) -24.9 (Neither) -30.1 (Disagree)	-75.8 (Agree) -12.4 (Neither) -11.0 (Disagree)	-56.3 (Agree) -18.3 (Neither) -22.8 (Disagree)
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (%)	-8.5 (Strongly agree) -31.9 (Agree) -46.2 (Disagree) -5.7 (Strongly Disagree)	-10.0 (Strongly agree) -38.1 (Agree) -40.3 (Disagree) -5.5 (Strongly Disagree)	-17.5 (Strongly agree) -41.7 (Agree) -36.1 (Disagree) -2.5 (Strongly Disagree)	-19.2 (Strongly agree) -37.7 (Agree) -36.2 (Disagree) -4.6 (Strongly Disagree)
Woman needs children (%)	-94.9 (needs children) -3.3 (not necessary)	-95.7 (needs children) -2.8 (not necessary)	-97.1 (needs children) -1.9 (not necessary)	-96.7 (needs children) -1.8 (not necessary)

Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay (%)	-3.5 (Strongly agree) -16.3 (Agree) -53.7 (Disagree) -17.9 (Strongly Disagree)	-3.4 (Strongly agree) -14.9 (Agree) -50.3 (Disagree) -22.4 (Strongly Disagree)	-7.6 (Strongly agree) -19.4 (Agree) -45.8 (Disagree) -19.9 (Strongly Disagree)	-6.4 (Strongly agree) -20.3 (Agree) -38.7 (Disagree) -26.2 (Strongly Disagree)
Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income (%)	-31.8 (Strongly agree) -49.1 (Agree) -14.4 (Disagree) -4.0 (Strongly Disagree)	-39.1 (Strongly agree) -50.4 (Agree) -8.0 (Disagree) -1.5 (Strongly Disagree)	-31.8 (Strongly agree) -49.6 (Agree) -15.8 (Disagree) -1.9 (Strongly Disagree)	-34.4 (Strongly agree) -57.5 (Agree) -6.4 (Disagree) -0.9 (Strongly Disagree)
Importance in life: Work (%)	-85.5 (Very important) -13.5 (Rather important) -0.5 (Not very important) -0.2 (Not at all important)	-80.1 (Very important) -19.0 (Rather important) -0.7 (Not very important) -0.0 (Not at all important)	-92.3 (Very important) -6.9 (Rather important) -0.5 (Not very important) -0.0 (Not at all important)	-90.0 (Very important) -8.5 (Rather important) -0.6 (Not very important) -0.1 (Not at all important)

(World Values Survey, 2017b; World Values Survey, 2017c; World Values Survey, 2017d; World Values Survey, 2017e; World Values Survey 2017f; World Values Survey, 2017g; World Values Survey, 2017h; World Values Survey, 2017i; World Values Survey, 2017j; World Values Survey, 2017k; World Values Survey, 2017l; World Values Survey, 2017m; World Values Survey, 2017n; World Values Survey, 2017o; World Values Survey, 2017p; World Values Survey, 2017q)

Table 5: WVS Statistics for India

India	Wave 3: 1995-1999		Wave 4: 2000-2004	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Are you the chief wage earner in your house? (%)	-60.4 (Yes) -39.6 (No)	-9.8 (Yes) -90.2 (No)	-70.5 (Yes) -29.4 (No)	-10.9 (Yes) -89.1 (No)

Men make better political leaders (%)	-16.5 (Strongly agree) -31.7 (Agree) -32.8 (Disagree) -8.5 (Strongly Disagree)	-8.8 (Strongly agree) -24.8 (Agree) -34.7 (Disagree) -11.5 (Strongly disagree)	-22.4 (Strongly agree) -33.8 (Agree) -23.9 (Disagree) -10.9 (Strongly Disagree)	-16.9 (Strongly agree) -26.0 (Agree) -25.3 (Disagree) -12.0 (Strongly disagree)
When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women (%)	-52.7 (Agree) -8.1 (Neither) -32.1 (Disagree)	-36.6 (Agree) -7.4 (Neither) -41.2 (Disagree)	-56.8 (Agree) -10.4 (Neither) -25.9 (Disagree)	-42.3 (Agree) -9.9 (Neither) -29.9 (Disagree)
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (%)	-14.5 (Strongly agree) -44.5 (Agree) -23.6 (Disagree) -3.7 (Strongly Disagree)	-13.2 (Strongly agree) -37.3 (Agree) -29.1 (Disagree) -3.5 (Strongly Disagree)	-16.5 (Strongly agree) -33.7 (Agree) -31.8 (Disagree) -3.3 (Strongly Disagree)	-18.0 (Strongly agree) -32.8 (Agree) -23.0 (Disagree) -2.4 (Strongly Disagree)
Woman needs children (%)	-79.1 (needs children) -16.6 (not necessary)	-83.5 (needs children) -12.9 (not necessary)	-80.2 (needs children) -16.0 (not necessary)	-83.8 (needs children) -11.3 (not necessary)
Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay (%)	-19.3 (Strongly agree) -36.5 (Agree) -23.6 (Disagree) -5.7 (Strongly Disagree)	-13.3 (Strongly agree) -37.6 (Agree) -24.0 (Disagree) -5.7 (Strongly Disagree)	-21.4 (Strongly agree) -32.7 (Agree) -23.1 (Disagree) -7.7 (Strongly Disagree)	-21.3 (Strongly agree) -29.0 (Agree) -20.7 (Disagree) -6.8 (Strongly Disagree)
Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income (%)	-20.6 (Strongly agree) -48.7 (Agree) -20.2 (Disagree) -2.0 (Strongly Disagree)	-19.6 (Strongly agree) -47.3 (Agree) -17.3 (Disagree) -1.2 (Strongly Disagree)	-35.5 (Strongly agree) -41.7 (Agree) -14.2 (Disagree) -2.6 (Strongly Disagree)	-35.8 (Strongly agree) -40.6 (Agree) -11.2 (Disagree) -1.5 (Strongly Disagree)

Importance in life: Work (%)	-84.0 (Very important) -13.5 (Rather important) -1.2 (Not very important) -0.7 (Not at all important)	-80.4 (Very important) -16.4 (Rather important) -2.0 (Not very important) - 0.4 (Not at all important)	-80.6 (Very important) -14.9 (Rather important) -3.2 (Not very important) -0.7 (Not at all important)	-71.1 (Very important) -21.0 (Rather important) -2.5 (Not very important) -2.7 (Not at all important)
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(World Values Survey, 2017b; World Values Survey, 2017c; World Values Survey, 2017d; World Values Survey, 2017e; World Values Survey 2017f; World Values Survey, 2017g; World Values Survey, 2017h; World Values Survey, 2017i; World Values Survey, 2017j; World Values Survey, 2017k; World Values Survey, 2017l; World Values Survey, 2017m; World Values Survey, 2017n; World Values Survey, 2017o; World Values Survey, 2017p; World Values Survey, 2017q)

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The specific research question of this study was, “What contributes to the differences in whether women are able to attain economic empowerment?” Economic empowerment was operationalized as having access to ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution because it may indicate that women have greater control over their money as opposed to having to turn the money they earn over to the household or their male relatives (Ahmed, 2004; Kibria, 1995). Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2015) even argue that financial inclusion starts with having access to ownership of a bank account. Overall, women having ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution may also signify empowerment because this may make them less financially dependent on men. The ownership of an account in a bank or financial institution may also afford women the opportunity to have access to credit and/or contribute to a savings account (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015).

To assess what contributed to the differences in women experiencing economic empowerment, this study compared women’s access to ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution not only globally, but also in Bangladesh and India. This study hypothesized that work in the formal labor market is associated with women having greater economic empowerment, measured as the percentage of women having accounts in banks and other financial institutions. This study recognized that other factors matter as well; this study also hypothesized that institutional and socio-cultural factors account for the differences in the percentages of women working in the formal labor markets and who experience economic empowerment in Bangladesh and India.

Results from the large N statistical regression did show that neither Bangladesh nor India fit the global pattern of when there are a higher percentage of women working in the formal labor market, there is a higher percentage of women owning accounts in banks or other financial

institutions. Bangladesh has a much higher percentage of women laboring in the formal labor market than India, and India had a much higher percentage of women with access to ownership of an account in a bank or other financial institution than Bangladesh.

Based on these results, assessing why Bangladesh and India are so different from each other was necessary. Consequently, Bangladesh and India were chosen for this study because they are ostensibly similar, but they have these variances. This was the problem that needed to be evaluated. Furthermore, these results indicated that the institutional and socio-cultural factors that may explain why there are variances between Bangladesh and India should be examined. Generally, this study aimed to identify which institutional and socio-cultural factors may be causing these differences between Bangladesh and India.

Many of the institutional factors in India and Bangladesh were similar. The banking systems of both countries have evolved to have more government oversight even though financial liberalization policies have shaped each country's banking system over the last 30 years. Both of the governments of India and Bangladesh have also instituted many policies to increase overall financial inclusion for their populations. Additionally, microfinance institutions are utilized heavily in both countries. Along the same lines, both countries still have significant agricultural and service sectors, and the number of people (including women) laboring in the informal labor market is still extremely high in both India and Bangladesh. With that said, there are some differences that appear to affect the percentage of women who have access to an account in a bank or other financial institution.

One difference this study found is that the banking system has been around much longer in India than in Bangladesh, which means the Indian banking system has had more time to evolve and develop more initiatives and programs. One example of a program that has resulted in many people (including women) opening accounts is the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana

initiative in India that aims to provide every household with bank accounts, including one account opened in the name of a female family member.

In contrast, this study found that the Bangladesh Bank focuses more on giving loans to small businesses and women entrepreneurs to assist women in the financial sector, rather than aiming for them to open bank accounts. More women in India may have access to bank accounts than in Bangladesh, but dormancy rates in India are very high. This indicates the women in India may not be using their accounts, so they may not have greater control of their money and be more economically independent. Another difference that should also be emphasized is that India seems to have made a more concerted effort to increase financial literacy than Bangladesh, which encourages more people (including women) to participate in the financial sector.

Furthermore, this study found that there are many similarities when it comes to socio-cultural factors in Bangladesh and India. Both countries are still highly patriarchal societies where traditional cultural and social norms persist such as *pardah* (the separation of women from men to preserve women's honor), which may discourage women from working outside of the home. Similarly, women in Bangladesh and India also still do the majority of the care work or unpaid labor at home, which may hinder them from being able to work in the formal labor market. This continuation of traditional social and cultural roles can also be seen in laws in both countries as well that restrict the type of work women can do and when women are allowed to work. All of these issues negatively affect women being able to achieve economic empowerment/independence.

This study found that most of the literature that views women's work as empowering comes from a liberal framework, while those researchers who question whether work is the complete answer for empowering women and reducing their subordination comes from a Marxist or socialist feminist perspective (Bothamley, 2002; Elson & Pearson, 1984; Finlayson, 2016; Freeden, 2015; Gideon, 2002; Green, 1999; Mackintosh, 1984; Mies, 1998; Ross, 2014). Some

scholars specifically blame neoliberal policies for reinforcing the sexual division of labor and the exploitation of women in global production (Das, 2011; Dunaway, 2014; Feldman, 2009; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015; Stromquist, 2015; Wilkins, 2016).

That being said, there are also elements found within each country that promote women having equal opportunities to work in the formal labor market. Both India and Bangladesh have created programs to assist women with increasing their access to employment and workers' rights. Along the same lines, each of these countries' constitutions prohibits discrimination based on sex. Furthermore, India and Bangladesh have laws to protect women from sexual harassment to increase their ability to work. That said, these laws do not really seem to be enforced as women in both India and Bangladesh still experience sexual harassment regularly.

A variance between the two countries to take into account is that Bangladesh has relied more on an export economy than India has over the last 30 years. Bangladesh's manufacturing sector is also a larger proportion of its economy than India's, and Bangladesh's economic growth has been powered more by the ready-made garment sector than has India's. As a result of the expansion of the garment industry, more Bangladeshi women work in the formal labor market. In Bangladesh, garment work has been deemed appropriate for many women because it is a way for women to make money to lift their families out of poverty. Conversely, India has traditionally been more focused on its domestic market than manufacturing exports to increase economic growth. In addition, rising household incomes and a lack of work deemed appropriate for educated women (not factory jobs) seems to be contributing to a decrease in women's overall formal labor force participation rates.

Therefore, it appears that what each country has focused on explains the differences in the percentages of women participating in the formal labor market and the percentages of women having access to bank accounts in India and Bangladesh. This not only illuminated why India

and Bangladesh do not fit the global pattern, but why these two countries are so different from each other concerning these issues.

Policy Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

With that said, there are some policy implications as a result of this study. In order to increase women's access to bank accounts, countries should strive to increase formal measures to provide financial literacy for all citizens. Additionally, countries could develop programs like the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, which specifically aims for females in every household to have an account. In order for these programs to be successful though, countries should implement ways to ensure their citizens are actually using the accounts, so they do not become dormant. Many accounts in India are dormant, so it is difficult to say that women there have experienced greater economic empowerment. Signing women up for these accounts may be a way for the Indian government to look like it is striving to empower women, but if women are not actually using their accounts, these women may not be economically independent and have control over their money.

To increase women's access to formal labor market employment, countries should aim to grow their manufacturing sectors, so that the numbers of manufacturing jobs are high like in Bangladesh. With that said, Bangladesh has a higher percentage of women working in the formal labor market, but this just appears to be a result of how it has developed in comparison to India. Manufacturing exports powered by the garment industry and poverty seem to be why Bangladesh's female formal labor force participation is so much higher than India's.

Yet, it is hard to say that the women in Bangladesh who labor in the formal labor market have really attained empowerment. For example, the majority of workers in the RMG sector in Bangladesh are women, but men make up the majority of managers or supervisors in the factories (Human Rights Watch, 2015; USAID, 2014). This fact clearly agrees with Marxist and socialist feminists' opinions that wage work in the capitalist system just reinforces women's

subordination because they are still being told what to do by males, who are now just strangers, instead of their male family members (Elson & Pearson, 1984; Green, 1999; Mies, 1998). In addition, women working in the formal labor market still experience extremely poor working conditions and poor wages. Many women are also still hesitant to take on positions of power and are still intimidated to utilize banking services due to the patriarchal system in which they live.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, India has been trying to increase the number of women working in manufacturing jobs. This has the potential to help increase the female formal labor force participation there. With that said, a lack of appropriate jobs for more educated women also appears to explain India's low female labor market participation rate in the formal labor market. Because this is the case, countries similar to India may benefit from making concerted efforts to increase employment opportunities for the degrees many women are pursuing in colleges. This could help with providing educated women with more appropriate jobs (Nigam, 2013; Verick, 2014).

One opportunity for future research is to conduct surveys or interviews from women in both Bangladesh and India (specifically, Karnataka and West Bengal). It would be important to ask women in Bangladesh and India questions concerning their socio-economic status, religion, and their place in the caste system to gain insight into what extent differences in these factors affect women's economic empowerment. Similarly, questions in these surveys or interviews could be used to evaluate if the many laws in Bangladesh and India that strive to promote equality are truly being enforced. Generalizations made from country-level statistical information and government documents do not always provide the full story. Ultimately, these

⁶⁰ See page 73, which discusses how women in Bangladesh are hesitant to take on managerial positions in their workplaces and how women still agreed in the WVS results that men are better political leaders. Page 73 also explains why many women in Bangladesh shy away from using banks.

surveys or interviews would help us to understand the context of the situation for individual women in both countries.

Another opportunity for future research could be examining other outliers from the large N statistical regression. This OLS regression was used to set up the comparison between Bangladesh and India because these two countries do not fit the global pattern, but they are also very unlike each other when it comes to women's access to formal labor market employment and women's access to accounts in banks and other financial institutions. Looking at why these two seemingly similar countries are so different was the main focus of this study, but it could be interesting to assess why other countries do not fit this global pattern as well. Doing this could provide us with a greater understanding of what may keep women from experiencing economic empowerment. In a similar vein, examining different countries that follow the global pattern could allow us to see trends across multiple countries that create greater opportunities for women to achieve economic empowerment. Taking all of this into account, this study opens up many possibilities for future research on the topic of women's economic empowerment.

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