

Revisiting the Rana Plaza Collapse Tragedy in Bangladesh: A Study of Aftermath Cases from the Victims' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The Rana Plaza (RP) collapse is considered one of the deadliest industrial disasters in history, and it exposed critical ethical failures within the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry. This paper explores the tragedy through the theoretical lens of unethical business practices that contributed to the occurrence of such a disaster and increased the magnitude of the disaster. The present research, adopting a qualitative case study approach on the basis of secondary data, explores eight illustrative cases in order to look at the human, social, and economic impacts of the collapse. The findings detail how unethical practices, including violations of building codes, unsafe working conditions, and employee exploitation, resulted in immense human suffering among vulnerable victims hailing from the poorest sections of Bangladesh. The study highlights specific gaps in organizational accountability and systemic failure within the rehabilitation process among survivors. This study identifies that unethical business practices lead to the RP tragedy and contributes to the literature on the RMG industry, industrial hazards, and business ethics. Additionally, it offers actionable recommendations to promote ethical adherence and strengthen regulatory enforcement within the RMG industry. The urgency of taking proactive measures to prevent future disasters and ensure sustainable development through ethics-oriented business practices has been clearly underscored.

KEYWORDS: Rana Plaza Collapse, Readymade Garment, Unethical Business Practices, Case Study

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1. Introduction

The Readymade Garment (RMG) is a pre-manufactured textile product made for the apparel industry (Alam et al., 2019b). The Bangladeshi RMG industry is an unregulated industry where incidents and accidents are frequent, posing a challenge to the viability of this export-oriented clothing industry (Macfarlane-Horn, 2022; Rahman, 2023), yet it is regarded as the country's highest contributor to the economy (Alam et al., 2019b). Rana Plaza (RP) collapse is considered the devastating disaster in the RMG industry's history (Kalbaska et al., 2019).

The RP is a garment factory in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, which was constructed in 2006. It was an eight-story commercial building with the ninth floor under construction, accommodating numerous garment factories, various shops, and a bank (Anson, 2018; Rambe & Ndofirepi, 2017), employing over 5,000 people. Renowned companies such as El Corte Inglés and Mango (Spain), Benetton (Italy), Cato Fashions and The Children's Place (the USA), Bon Marche, Matalan, and Primark (the UK), Joe Fresh (Loblaws, Canada), Kik (Germany), and Texman (Denmark) were the clients of these garment factories (Kabir, 2013). Additionally, international retailers such as Walmart, Sears, H&M, Tommy Hilfiger, Adler Modemärkte, Ascena Retail, Auchan, Bonmarché, Camaeu, Carrefour, Inditex, J. C. Penney, LPP SA, and Man manufactured their products in this plaza (Anson, 2018; Fitch & Ferdous, 2014; Karim, 2014).

It has been an epoch since the tragic destruction of the Savar-based RP collapsed. The collapse transpired on Wednesday, the 24th of April 2013, at 8:30 am (Berik, 2017; Bossavie et al., 2023; Camarena, 2023; Grier et al., 2023; Islam, 2023; Kabir et al., 2021; Koenig & Poncet, 2022; Kusmawan & Rasyidah, 2023; Martin et al., 2021; Motlagh & Saha, 2014; Murshed et al., 2016; Murshed & Sultana, 2015; Rahman, 2021; Sultan et al., 2023), just five months after the Tazreen fashion fire hazard, which disrupted the Global Supply Chain (GSC) and labor regulations (Vanpeperstraete, 2021). The Tazreen fashion incident occurred on the 24th of November 2012 in Ashulia, Savar, resulted in 112 worker fatalities. Delwar Hossain, the property owner, faced criticism for exceeding the permitted height of three stories by five feet, and the building's occupancy with yarn, coupled with the absence of an emergency exit, made it susceptible to fires. Similar incidents have claimed over 700 lives since the early 1990s (Gopinath & Choudhury, 2015).

The RP tragedy unfolded during a flourishing period for the Bangladeshi RMG industry, claiming the lives of 1,134 garment workers, injuring 2,515, with 158 reported missing, and approximately 200 unexcavated bodies, marking it as the highest death toll in the clothing industry's history and the worst industrial disaster in construction history (Barua et al., 2021; Begum & Solaiman, 2016; Bergermann & Wolter, 2023; Berik, 2017; Bujaki & Durocher, 2019; Camarena, 2023; Clark, 2015; Comyns & Franklin-Johnson, 2016; Da Costa Branco, 2021; Doorey, 2017; Fitch et al., 2015; Islam, 2023; Jacobs & Singhal, 2017; Kabir et al., 2021; Karim, 2014; Macfarlane-Horn, 2022; Mamun & Griffiths, 2020; Murshed & Sultana, 2015; Rahman, 2021; Schübler et al., 2019; Sultan et al., 2023). In the aftermath of this unprecedented tragedy - marked by structural negligence and profound ethical violations against human dignity - this article moves beyond mere descriptive analysis to offer a critical examination of its underlying causes and impacts.

It scrutinizes the unethical business practices that led to the disaster. Looking at the lived experiences of those who lost their lives, as well as at the broader systemic failures of the Bangladeshi RMG industry, it seeks to reveal the human cost of such malpractice. The authors contend that the RP collapse is resulted from RP authorities' unethical business practices. This study is driven by the need to explore the consequences of unethical business practices within an industry that has a significant global impact. Thus, this study aims to explore the effects of unethical business practices on RP collapse from the victims' perspectives, specifically in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Other key focuses include (i) providing a comprehensive scenario regarding losses, especially for victims through individual cases, incurred due to the incident, (ii) scrutinizing post-tragedy actions, and (iii) proposing protection measures for future occurrences.

Concerning occurrence, the authors argue that the impact of occurrence and its aftermath is the effect of unethical business practices from the victims' perspectives. Thus, this study raises three primary research questions concerning RP collapse:

RQ1: Do unethical business practices cause RP incident, and how do victims suffer?

RQ2: What actions are taken after the RP collapse?

RQ3: What precautionary measures are required to prevent recurrence?

The subsequent sections of this writing are as follows: first, the methodology is outlined, followed by a discussion of the ethical issues that arose in the businesses involved in the RP tragedy. Then, a discussion of the study's cases is presented in the next section. Subsequently, the steps taken in response are outlined. Afterwards, recommendations are given for future protective measures in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The final section covers discussions and ends with a concluding remark.

2. Related Literature

Researchers quoted on ethics in business. They provided the philosophical underpinnings of corporate ethics to provide business managers with a moral compass to help drive through complex ethical issues. Among them, Hill et al. (2014) stated that ethics are the accepted principles of right and wrong that govern the behavior of business people, emphasizing that business ethics are inherently connected to personal ethics, which guide individual conduct. On the contrary, according to Garrett et al. (1989), unethical business practices are actions that deviate from moral and socially accepted norms, often leading to public accusation and reputational damage. Although ethical clothing loosely affects consumers' attitudes (Magnuson et al., 2017), it has an impact (Islam et al., 2023).

Recently, there has been growing attention on ethical decision-making in business, particularly in response to increasing corporate scandals, stakeholder expectations, and sustainability concerns (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017; Ferrell et al., 2021; Kaptein, 2011; Pembi & Ali, 2024; Treviño et al., 2013). Brady (1985) observed an ethical link between business and society, asserting its complementarity. Although large companies have a history of adopting ethical business practices (Rambe & Ndofirepi, 2017), many Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) tend to neglect them, despite the

critical role that ethical perceptions play in shaping strategic business orientations. In competition with rivals, employees are at the forefront, and maintaining ethical standards becomes imperative for achieving profitability, market share, business growth, survival, and meeting stakeholder expectations, simultaneously. As Alam et al. (2024) noted, the absence of strategic direction in many family-run RMG businesses in Bangladesh contributes to poor governance and negligence of ethical and safety standards, issues that became tragically evident in the RP collapse. Furthermore, emphasizing ethics and integrity among personnel and operations enhances profitability, stakeholder connections, and prospects for all parties involved (Islam & Tahasin, 2023). Business ethics, however, faces challenges such as a lack of direction (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994) and ethical dilemmas (Fritzsche & Becker, 1984).

According to Khan et al. (2019), rather than being self-initiated, ethical and moral practices are upheld in reaction to increasing legal and political constraints and external stakeholders. Unethical or questionable leadership is often linked to business misconduct, which in turn contributes to declining industry performance (Davis et al., 2019; Rees et al., 2021). It's an allegory that successful businesses operate unethically or unlawfully. Jannat et al. (2021) reported that punishment and monitoring are significantly negatively associated with unethical behavior. Companies may gain human rights by paying attention to the insights gained on broader needs (Buhmann et al., 2019). *"At the government level, the politics-business nexus remains dominant, which has fostered irresponsible/nasty business and Indecent Garment Industries (GIS), worsening the vulnerabilities of already disadvantaged workers (Begum & Solaiman, 2016, p. 27)."*

The RP discourse comprises three stages: reporting, reprocessing, and commemoration (Bergermann & Wolter, 2023). Nevertheless, the literature reveals numerous studies on RP collapse, focusing on areas such as the RMG supply chain (Backer, 2016; Jacobs & Singhal, 2017; Koenig & Poncet, 2022; Schübler et al., 2019), health and safety (Barua & Ansary, 2016; Clark, 2015; Frosecchi, 2022; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015), working conditions (Frenkel et al., 2022), social upgrades (Lohmeyer et al., 2022), labor regulations, labor and social standards (Berik, 2017), reasons for collapse (Motlagh & Saha, 2014; Taplin, 2014), human rights (Tag-Eldeen, 2017), compensation (Prentice, 2019), casualty management (Murshed et al., 2016; Murshed & Sultana, 2015), sociocultural change (Monteil et al., 2020), posttraumatic stress disorder (Fitch et al., 2015; Mamun & Griffiths, 2020), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Begum & Solaiman, 2016; Comyns & Franklin-Johnson, 2016; Doorey, 2017), managing legitimacy (Bujaki & Durocher, 2019). Despite the extensive literature on industrial disasters, there is a lack of exploration into the unethical business practices surrounding the RP. Notably, various analysis of the RP collapse from different perspectives does not offer a detailed exploration of how unethical business practices lead to the tragedy and its consequences. Recognizing this gap, the authors undertake the present study to underscore the importance of integrating ethical practices into business operations.

3. Methodology

To answer the research questions, this study utilizes a qualitative case study approach. Case studies are essential components of scholarly work, offering valuable insights and providing a broader perspective on a given issue. A case study research approach is an empirical investigation that examines a recent incident

in its actual setting. This approach uses a variety of sources of evidence and blurs the boundaries between the incident and context. The case studies are categorized as descriptive, illustrative, intrinsic, exploratory, explanatory, causal, or critical (Epler, 2019; Yin, 2017). This paper specifically uses an illustrative case study for the relevance of the current study. This type of case study is descriptive and focuses on specific aspects of an incident to clarify the problem (Epler, 2019). It is employed to describe a real-world situation or phenomenon, analyzing what is occurring and why it is happening (Yin, 2017).

To connect the illustrative cases to the research questions, each case is presented using a structured approach. Each case was selected to highlight a distinct aspect of the RP disaster: building code violations, poor working conditions, and inappropriate post-disaster responses. These cases were subsequently mapped to the research questions for a structured analysis. First, RQ1 explores how unethical practices at both the organizational and institutional levels contributed to the RP disaster and how the disaster brought about the suffering of the victims, supported by detailed narratives from the affected individuals and families. Second, RQ2 discusses post-collapse actions through the analysis of captured institutional and organizational responses in the cases. Lastly, RQ3 examines the preventive measures and lessons learned from these cases, with the aim of providing actionable recommendations. This structured methodology ensures that each case not only contextualizes the tragedy but also strengthens the alignment with the research objectives, enhances analytical depth, and increases the overall relevance of the investigation.

RP collapse itself serves as a tragic case study. This study incorporates multiple case studies to comprehensively investigate RP collapse and its consequences resulting from unethical business practices by Sohel Rana (SR). The chosen cases provide sufficient data from validated sources, eliminating the need for primary data collection. Thus, the researcher uses a literature review based on secondary data, drawing from journal articles, books, book chapters, conference papers, theses, organizational reports, and YouTube videos related to the RP collapse. The cases selected are evaluated based on relevance, source credibility, target audience, time, and place to avoid bias, utilizing content analysis. Content analysis is employed to evaluate the quality and relevance of sources, ensuring data reliability.

To critically examine the ethical dimensions of the RP tragedy, this study adopts the unethical business practice framework rooted in business ethics theory, which focuses on identifying behaviors that violate accepted moral norms and professional conduct standards (Ferrell et al., 2021). Unethical business practices refer to actions that may be legally permissible but are morally questionable, such as compromising worker safety for profit, withholding due compensation, or exploiting power asymmetries in labor relations. This theoretical lens allows the study to explore the decisions and conduct of key actors - particularly the RP owner and associated stakeholders - who prioritized cost-efficiency and production speed at the expense of human lives. By applying this framework, the study systematically investigates the lived experiences of victims and connects individual case narratives to broader patterns of unethical decision-making endemic to RMG industry in Bangladesh.

The study's geographic focus is on Dhaka city and its surroundings, explicitly to determine the aftermath impact of the RP collapse on victims. From this perspective, detailed descriptive data, which are helpful for emphasizing key points, are collected through document analysis. Most of the research articles were sourced from reputable academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Springer, Emerald, SAGE, and Wiley. Other sources are Google Scholar and Research Gate. The inclusion criteria followed the keyword search strategy and included "ethics", "Rana Plaza collapse", "readymade garment", "RMG industry", "Sohel Rana", and "unethical business practice". On the basis of the search results, relevant papers, which are topic-relevant and insightful, are considered for inclusion. After the RP's demise, there was a surge in activism and media attention directed against companies sourced from disaster-affected factories (Koenig & Poncet, 2022) and disaster victims. Therefore, in addition to scholarly works, various contemporary local and international newspaper reports were considered, as they provide firsthand coverage from the incident site and field investigations, enhancing the reliability. In this study, only reports that are highly relevant to the research topic and sourced from reputable outlets were included, while those offering only incident descriptions were excluded. The selected sources were evaluated based on topical relevance, quality, and timeliness of publication.

4. Aftermath Cases

The RMG industry, a global US\$2.4 trillion business employing approximately 4 million individuals (Da Costa Branco, 2021), has faced a myriad of ethical challenges resulting in catastrophic consequences. According to Brown and Peterson (2022), there are no victimless disasters, and the repercussions of unethical practices extend far beyond the confines of the affected companies. In 1911, a tragic fire at a shirtwaist garment factory in the New York City claimed the lives of 146 workers, marking a pivotal moment in the city's history (Huq, 2017). This incident laid the groundwork for public education through initiatives such as the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition (RTFC) since 2008. RP tragedy, with its tenfold increase in casualties, was the second most devastating industrial incident after the Bhopal disaster in 1984. The Bhopal tragedy that occurred at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in India resulted in 25,000 deaths and left another 550,000 individuals injured due to gas leakage (Editorials, 2013; Khan & Rodrigues, 2015; Kusmawan & Rasyidah, 2023; Mamun & Griffiths, 2020).

The aftermath of the RP collapse is marked by heartbreaking stories that highlight the profound sufferings inflicted on stakeholders due to unethical business practices. The victims, while relieved from immediate pain, leave behind shattered families grappling with essential needs. Survivors, combating with immeasurable and unrecoverable injuries, face many challenges. Some families, left without their primary breadwinners, endure intolerable hardships. The aftermath also witnessed halted education for many students. Children, in the absence of parents, turned to work to contribute to their families, whereas elderly parents resorted to begging, and many faced starvation.

Reports by Fitch and Ferdous (2014) underscore the extensive financial support needed for victims and their families, indicating requirement of US\$25 million for medical expenses and income loss, beyond the funds from the RP collapsing donors' trust. Actionaid International's (2019) four-year survey of 1,403 survivors revealed alarming statistics: 13% experienced deterioration in physical health, 30% faced

mental health challenges, 42% were unemployed, 48% exhibited physical weakness, and 33% presented with mental illnesses. Although these statistics represent only a small portion of the overall impact, they highlight the multifaceted and lasting consequences of unethical business practices, offering deepest insights into the human tragedies that arise from such disasters.

4.1 Case 1

As per a report from the Daily Star, Kabir et al. (2021) documented the tragic incident where a 27-year old man named Himu immolated himself on the 24th of April 2019, leading to his death. Notably, Himu voluntarily participated in the 17-day rescue operation following the collapse of the RP building. During this period, he tirelessly aided numerous victims and engaged in the recovery of bodies. He subsequently played a significant role in supporting the rehabilitation of those injured during the incident. While the timing of Himu's suicide on the sixth anniversary of the RP collapse could be coincidental, his decision to take his own life draws attention to the intense psychological trauma inflicted by the RP disaster. Himu's case is a grave ethical debacle in mental healthcare, disaster response, and institutional responsibility, and it illustrates how the consequences of unethical business practices transcend material loss to long-term emotional and psychological damage.

4.2 Case 2

Islam (2019) and Mahbub (2019) conducted interviews with Shila Begum, a resident of the Barishal 23rd ward, to reveal the hardships she faced during the RP collapse. She commemorated her nice upbringing though experienced her family with hardships. Shila later married Khalilur Rahman, a brick mason from the same village, and initially experienced a contented life. Their joy expanded with the arrival of a daughter. However, their happiness was short-lived as Khalil passed away, leaving Shila and their daughter bereft. Struggling with empty hands and lacking Khalil's assets, Shila sought refuge in her father-in-law's home.

In an effort to sustain her family, Shila sought employment in an RMG company. Several years ago, reporters documented a moment of happiness as Shila used to return home from a day's labor at a factory located at RP, sharing a joyful time with her daughter Nipa. Tragically, this bliss was abruptly disrupted by the collapse of the RP, resulting in severe injuries to the Shila. Her spinal bones were fractured, rendering her unable to sit comfortably. Furthermore, her right hand became paralyzed, drastically impeding her ability to lead a normal life with her daughter.

The consequences of the RP collapse have manifested in the formidable challenge of arranging even basic necessities such as food three times a day for Shila and Nipa. The financial crisis exacerbated by Shila's physical limitations led to the halt of her only daughter's education. Inundated by this struggle, Shila, despite her efforts to seek assistance door-to-door, resigned herself to the abandonment of hope for her daughter's continued education, envisioning the possibility of admission to a college. Her days are thus marked by tears and despair, underscoring the enduring impact of the RP disaster on the lives of its survivors.

4.3 Case 3

Shahina Begum, a resident of Barishal, found her plight brought to light by Nabi (2016), who reported on her dire circumstances after interviewing her son, Rabin and sister, Jesmin Akter. Shahina resonated earnestly with millions who witnessed the agonizing days she endured beneath the debris of the RP collapse through televised broadcasts. Tragically, after enduring extensive efforts to rescue her, Shahina succumbed to a fiery fate and was unable to witness the world beyond the ruins or reunite with her son. Her unfulfilled dream of returning to her child stood as a poignant testament to the strenuous endeavors invested in her rescue.

As of 2016, Rabin, the lone offspring of the unfortunate mother, attended kindergarten following his completion of nursery school. Afterwards, Shahina's elder sister, Jesmin Akter, took on the maternal role for Rabin. Rabin continued his education at a school in Imandipur, Savar, availing himself of a free stipend. Despite the extreme loss he experienced, the young boy remained engrossed in his studies and the imaginative realm. Described by his teacher as academically proficient and self-motivated, Rabin was known for his friendly, sociable, and playful demeanor, often engaging in recreational activities after returning from school. Like many other child, he aspired to become a journalist, weaving dreams of his future.

Jesmin's family, responsible for Rabin's upbringing, rented a flat at the cost of US\$70 per month to provide a stable environment for the young boy. Despite receiving approximately US\$35-45 per month from various post-incident sources, including social assistance, Jesmin faced financial constraints in managing the needs of her own three children along with Rabin. While unable to accumulate savings, she harbored optimistic sentiments regarding Rabin's educational aspirations and aimed to enroll him in a reputable school, recognizing the necessity of additional support. The narrative of this orphaned boy highlights the irreplaceable losses he endured and emphasized the ongoing challenges survivors face in rebuilding their lives.

4.4 Case 4

Hasnat's (2019) investigation focused on Sajeda Begum and her daughter, Mithila, revealing a poignant narrative. Mithila, who lost her father within a year of her birth, found herself under the sole care of her mother, Sajeda Begum. Prioritizing her daughter's future, Sajeda abstained from remarriage and, along with Mithila, led a decent life by working in the garment industry located at RP. However, the RP collapse drastically altered their circumstances.

Six years after the incident, Sajeda Begum found herself incapacitated, sitting idly with a wounded leg, whereas her daughter took the responsibility of earning a livelihood. Mithila embarked on her earning journey at the tender age of 14 who established a tea stall operating from 6 am to 1 pm. Following her morning business, Mithila attended school, resuming her shop operations at 4 pm after classes. Her day concluded at 10 pm, as she returned home to take care of her mother, who could not feed herself.

The mother-daughter duo navigated their lives through a strenuous routine marked by Mithila's relentless efforts to balance work, education, and caregiving. This narrative illuminates the arduous struggles faced by families impacted by the RP's disaster, shedding light on the resilience and determination required to rebuild lives in the aftermath of such catastrophic events.

4.5 Case 5

Rahman (2021) presented a detailed case study based on documentation, highlighting the circumstances of Mossamot Aktara Begum. At 35, she relocated from Rampur to Savar, where she resided with her spouse, two children, and two pets. Additionally, she undertook the responsibility of providing for her in-laws, who reside in the countryside. Before the catastrophic RP collapse, Mossamot worked as a sewing operator at Phantom Apparels Limited, located on the third floor of the RP building, where she had been employed for two years. Collaborating with one of her in-law brothers, she was engaged in manufacturing activities.

Mossamot endured a distressing experience during the RP collapse, spending three days trapped in the wreckage before being rescued. Following her rescue, she underwent extensive and costly medical treatment, resulting in partial recovery of strength in her left leg. However, her face and left hand remain paralyzed, impeding her ability to move, eat, and perform daily tasks. Notably, her left eye lacked mobility. Urgent surgical interventions for her hand and eye were essential, yet financial constraints hindered these procedures.

The aftermath of her injuries rendered Mossamot incapable of undertaking various job responsibilities, prompting her question to employability within the clothing manufacturing industry. She expressed concern about employers' expectations, questioning how she can meet the demands of performing tasks properly and efficiently given her physical limitations. Mossamot grappled with the challenges of providing for her in-laws and two growing children while being unable to afford her own medical care and her children's education. Expressing a massive sense of loss, she reflected on her initial move to the city to enhance her children's education, an aspiration now thwarted by her inability to work and provide for them. The intersection of physical impairment, financial hardship, and familial obligations illustrates the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals affected by the RP disaster.

4.6 Case 6

In the research conducted by Rahman (2021), Nazma Akter, an 18-year-old female, emerged as a significant case study participant. Formerly employed as a folding operator at New Wave Style Limited on the seventh floor of RP, Nazma hailed from a family of five sisters, with her parents and three sisters residing together. One of her older sisters got married and resided elsewhere. Nazma had completed her education up to the eighth grade and was earning up to US\$90 per month, a financial contribution that afforded her some influence in family decisions. However, this source of income became inaccessible following the RP collapse, prompting a shift in her aspirations.

Expressing a reluctance to continue working in the RMG industry, Nazma now harbors an intense desire to return to school and pursue further studies to secure a better future. Despite her aspirations, she divulges that parental pressure to marry has intensified in the face of her unemployment. Nazma expresses a common sentiment among survivors, stating, *'my parents believe it would be better for me to get married, now that I simply sit at home and no longer contribute to the family income.'* This assertion reflects the complex dynamics and societal expectations that individuals such as Nazma navigates in the aftermath of the RP disaster, underscoring the multidimensional impact on their lives, aspirations, and familial roles.

4.7 Case 7

In a case documented by Rahman (2021), the narrative of Sopna unfolds, revealing a 27-year-old woman who experienced acute hardships in the aftermath of the RP collapse. Sopna's association with the RP extended over nine months on the third floor and three years on the sixth floor before the tragic collapse. She and her family settled in Savar around 12 years ago, where she grew up as one of six siblings. Tragically, one of her sisters lost her life in the collision, and Sopna herself endured a harrowing ordeal, spending four days trapped within the debris. During her attempt to escape, her leg became seized, resulting in severe damage and ongoing difficulties in its proper use.

Married for six years with a five-year-old daughter, Sopna faced additional challenges in her personal life. Due to her husband's perceived shortcomings, she was compelled to join the garment industry five months after the disaster, only to face additional hardships. The demanding nature of the job forced her to resign, exacerbating the strain on her marital relationship. Her husband subsequently abandoned her, choosing to remarry elsewhere, citing her inability to fulfill her matrimonial responsibilities effectively.

Sopna grappled with uncertainty about her future, further compounded by the difficulty of seeking support from her family. Her father's lack of stable employment and responsibility for caring of three younger siblings left her with limited support. Sopna's narrative underscores the complex intersections of familial, economic, and personal challenges faced by individuals affected by the RP disaster, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of their post-collapse lives.

4.8 Case 8

Sultan et al. (2023) recounted the story of Latifa Lipi, who, along with her four sisters, worked in the RP building - tragically lost her one sister in the collapse. Latifa, trapped under rubble for nearly 12 hours, suffered injuries to her head, legs, and abdomen, and her compensation for around US\$1,200 mainly was medical treatment. Since the disaster, she struggled to keep a job due to persistent health issues and increasing work demands, despite wage increases. Financially strained, Latifa and her husband recently withdrew their daughter from a Madrasah due to unaffordable fees, compounded by the lack of a nearby government school. She also faced unfair dismissal from two factories, where employers refused to pay her earned benefits. Latifa's demand is straightforward: she seeks only the money she rightfully earned, stating, *"all I am asking for is the money I have earned, what I am owed. I am not asking for anything else."* Briefly, the case represents unethical business practices by way of failure to provide a safe working

environment, exploitative pay schemes, denial of rights, and socio-economic exclusion of victims in the longer term.

All these are a perfect match for the theoretical framework of unethical business practices in demonstrating how corporate negligence and disregard for labor rights can continue to inflict human suffering long after the initial disaster.

5. Unethical Business Practices Leading to the Tragedy

Alam et al. (2019a) argued that an ethical leader might possess attributes like charisma, idealized influence behavior, superior effectiveness, willingness to exert extra effort, considerate or fair treatment, satisfaction with supervisor, willingness to power sharing, honesty and integrity, willingness to report problem, concern for consequences, role clarification, and self-judgment. Many of these ethical attributes were notably absent in the leadership of RP authorities, particularly in the case of SR. Gavin (2015) stated that the event of RP collapse reveals many missteps in its design and ethical practice. Sabuj (2013) reported that the multi-millionaire SR, owner of RP, became richer from a poor hijacker. Under the umbrella of the political leader, he could earn by hijacking and seizing the land. Local government and politics were all under his control. According to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), SR has substantial illegal wealth (The Prothom Alo, 2014). According to Begum and Solaiman (2016), “*gross violation of laws, corrupt practices, and serious disregard for human rights and lives has engulfed RP disaster, from its inception to destruction*” (p. 27).

The immediate response to the catastrophe involved critical medical treatments (Khan et al., 2020), which was not readily available except some exceptions. The family members of the victims grieved for their loss and wanted restitution and punishment for the offenders (The Daily Star, 2016a). Many eyewitnesses claimed that the workers were sent back to the factory during the incident day as they were under pressure from higher authorities to complete orders for buyers on time. This kind of aggressive behavior with the employee is not ethical. According to Immanuel Kant, human beings possess inherent dignity as rational beings and should not be treated merely as means to another’s end - a principle that, as Sirotkin (2014) points out, was violated by the RP authorities.

Survivors of RP disasters face both short-term and long-term disabilities (Quadir et al., 2019), with 20.5% reporting worsening physical health, 51% being unable to work due to physical injuries, and 10.5% experiencing psychological trauma (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020). Following the RP tragedy, the survivors have been experiencing a significant decline in income, with 36.6% facing poor levels of economic reintegration - women being twice as likely as men to be at risk (Quadir et al., 2019). The RP tragedy not only exposed unethical labor practices but also led to severe medical crises, as many victims suffered from crush syndrome leading to Acute Kidney Injury (AKI), posing significant challenges for emergency medical response and renal care (Gupta et al., 2021). Furthermore, Bangladesh’s economy slowed down by 2013, though not so radically (Ahmad, 2014) due to this tragedy. The RP collapse has become a symbol of global inequality. The consequences of the RP collapse highlighted the intersection of national and

international laws, standards, and private governance mechanisms - constituting what Backer (2016) describes as an international legal order that influences business behavior.

Doorey (2017) specified that *“Loblaws argued that it had no obligation to take steps to protect the workers, let alone to check if the buildings where its products are made are likely to fall. While it was entitled to monitor supplier factories, Loblaws argued that it had no obligation. Even when violations of Bangladeshi law and Loblaws’ supplier code of conduct were identified before the collapse of RP, Loblaws took no steps to ensure compliance. Serious violations of health and safety laws were ignored”* (p. 18). Taplin stated after reviewing the full circumstances of the occurrence, *“it becomes apparent that there were systemic issues that effectively encouraged many parties to engage in workplace policies that almost inevitably can lead to accidents or at least labor abuses”* (2014, p. 72).

Motlagh and Saha (2014) mentioned that it was seen as a fragile recovery process, elusive justice, and little reform activity after a year. *“Almost a year after the world-shaking collapse, the victims, their families, and the garments workers population, in general, continue to fight for their rights, better standards of living, safer working environments, that seem to be falling on deaf ears”* (Khan & Rodrigues, 2015, p. 22). Macfarlane-Horn (2022) determined that victims had not received justice. Approximately two dozen suspects in murder failed to appear before the trial (France, 2015). Among all the accused, only SR remains incarcerated (Corraya, 2024), indicating a significant failure on the part of the legal and law enforcement institutions to ensure that all liable individuals are brought to justice.

Based on this discussion from the existing literature and illustrative cases, the authors conclude that the activity of RP authorities, particularly owner SR was unethical, resulting in a significant loss of individual and public interests.

6. Actions Taken after the Tragedy

The RP catastrophe has led to numerous diverse national and international measures to increase workplace safety (Barua et al., 2021). Enam Medical College and Hospital played a vital role in providing immediate medical treatment to the victims (Khan et al., 2020). Alamgir, the organizer of the protest in front of the Dhaka national press club, urged that the day be observed as ‘National Garment Workers Mourning Day’ (The Daily Star, 2017). Since its collapse, the Bangladeshi RMG industry has undertaken significant compliance measures to ensure workers’ factory safety (Da Costa Branco, 2021; The Daily Star, 2017), conjointly with public and private regimes (Frenkel et al., 2022). Financial donations from different national and international parties helped the victims (Khan et al., 2020). Global clothing brands supported the Rana Plaza Arrangement (RPA), a voluntary compensation initiative established in 2015, which provided US\$30 million in work-injury compensation funds to injured survivors and the families of those who lost their lives (Macfarlane-Horn, 2022; Prentice, 2019; Prentice & Sumon, 2023).

According to two YouTube video reports by Jacobs and Singhal (2017), the catastrophe led to the creation of two factory inspection programs for checking for fire, electrical, and structural hazards in clothing manufacturers. One consists of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (ABWS) and the Accord on Fire

and Building Safety in Bangladesh (AFBSB). These programs were initiated to promote improved labor standards and to ensure responsible business conduct within Bangladesh's RMG and knitwear industry (Schüßler et al., 2019; Vanpeperstraete, 2021). Koenig and Poncet (2022) discovered that the Accord and the Alliance were more successful than individual company-led private monitoring because they both approached intervention with a focus on specific safety issues, time-bound deliverables, resources, and the effective application of sanctions for noncompliance. Most participants criticized the national effort's limited budget, lack of transparency in reporting results, and "softness" in punishing noncompliance, which they felt made it much less successful.

In July 2013, the National Tripartite Plan of Action (NTPA) for fire safety and structural integrity was established through the collaborative efforts of the Bangladeshi government, RMG employers, and RMG workers. To ensure the implementation and monitoring of NTPA commitments, the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) was established, chaired by the secretaries of government organizations and representatives from employers - specifically the Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF), the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) - along with trade union representatives. The NTPA, the European Union (EU), the government of Bangladesh, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) jointly agreed on time-bound actions to promote improved labor standards and ethical business practices within Bangladesh's RMG industry. Kusmawan and Rasyidah (2023) highlighted the role of the ILO in promoting garment workers' rights through the Better Work Bangladesh Phase II Program. This initiative collaborates with both local and global stakeholders to improve labor standards and working conditions. According to Ahmed (2019), a National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM) 2016 – 2020 was developed with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). According to Barua and Ansary (2016), to lessen the challenges faced by RMG enterprises, the Bangladeshi government decreased the advance income tax from 0.8% to 0.3%, and arranged for low-cost credits. The use of international frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), simplifies the process. Bujaki and Durocher argued that *"Loblaw worked on many fronts to secure stakeholders' support in the aftermath of the fatal incident. Through their social disclosures, Loblaw simultaneously managed exchange, dispositional, consequential, procedural, structural, personal and cognitive legitimacy, striving to demonstrate that, notwithstanding the incident, the company was still conforming to its social contract"* (2019, p. 1023).

The accident brought attention to worker safety issues from a global perspective (Barua et al., 2021; Westervelt, 2015). While improvements have been observed since the RP factory collapse, particularly in areas such as working hours and building safety, there remain several areas that still require further development (Lohmeyer et al., 2022). The incident prompted an outcry for improved safety standards (Barua & Ansary, 2016; Frosecchi, 2022; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Since RP collapsed, numerous avenues for social advancement have been opened, although to what extent varies (Lohmeyer et al., 2022). As a result, international discussions have been held on the importance of maintaining CSR across GSCs. Since the tragedy, the Bangladeshi government, the apparel industry, trade unions, and the international community have strengthened workplace safety regulations and ensured that employees are

aware of their rights, according to the broadcasts of Vanpeperstraete (2021) and the United Nations TV (2014). Teams of structural engineers and safety specialists visited and examined enterprises around the nation where owners supported this project with the assistance of the ILO. Ansary and Barua (2015) stated that this industry had made significantly progressed after the RP collapsed. Bossavie et al. (2019) reported that increased international scrutiny led to improved working conditions of 0.80 standard deviations, as intended by the reforms. Rahman's (2024) study revealed that post-RP measures successfully enhanced the enforceability of national labor laws and private codes, particularly regarding safety compliance. The shared emphasis on safety compliance, including inspection, remediation, transparency, and training, led to significant technical changes. However, policy changes were less substantial.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) imposed 16 points of action plans for regaining the Global System of Preferences (GSP) in this industry. The promises made by the government of Bangladesh and companies have not been adequately fulfilled to improve working conditions, workers' rights, and health (Clark, 2015). Kurpad (2014) argued that the solution to this problem is more practical unionism and collective bargaining. Representatives of 190 RMG companies from 20 countries created a five-year independent and legally enforceable agreement to develop a secure and robust Bangladeshi RMG industry. Again, 26 North American retailers and brands prepared a five-year contract to enhance Bangladesh's labor safety initiatives. In September 2015, Bangladesh government amended the labor law to protect labor rights, resulting in several trade unions. The national Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) policy was signed on 15th May 2013, with a five-year validity period, and the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) law was introduced to enforce safety standards and ensure structural integrity. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) lauded the workers' safety measure improvement and termed it revolutionary. Under the rules of the accord, the RMG sustainability council is in charge of factory inspections, including fire, electrical, and structural inspections; safety training; monitoring remediation; and resolving safety complaints, where employees have the right to refuse to work in hazardous conditions (Da Costa Branco, 2021; Frosecchi, 2022).

The Policeman arrested SR on the 28th of April 2013. The suspects, including SR, his parents, and seven others, were indicted for violating building codes (The Prothom Alo, 2017). Adding an additional four levels to the main 5-floor building of the RP, the owner and the other 17 were charged with breaking the building code (The Daily Star, 2016b). Three co-defendants of the prime suspect, SR, were also charged with aiding his attempted escape (The Guardian, 2016). Rana's mother, Morzina Begum, surrendered before the court on the 30th of August 2015 for the case filed by the ACC in 2014 (The Daily Star, 2015). SR is sentenced to 3 years for his corrupt wealth, whereas 31 others among 41 charged individuals, including Rana's parents, are on bail, whereas three died and six are on the run. The commencement of the murder trial was delayed due to a court-issued stay order (BBC News, 2017). Approximately 21.4% of the survivors secured employment either in the RMG industry or other industries (Barua & Ansary, 2016), while over 42% remained unemployed (Khatun, 2017).

7. Recommendations for Future Protection

Where there is change, a challenge must be taken (Gangalay, 2019). Both developed and developing countries carry out disaster management planning in various ways, but implementing this planning is impeded by different challenges (Ahmed, 2019). Moreover, without adequate safety precautions, new hazards - such as the RP collapse - can emerge, leading to catastrophic consequences. A study by Rahman et al. (2015) revealed that old Dhaka is more vulnerable to fire hazards than to earthquake risks, with significant challenges in implementing mitigation efforts. Therefore, raising awareness, educating individuals, and establishing risk management training programs are prerequisite to reduce such hazards effectively.

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill introduced the theory of utilitarianism, which centers on moral judgments derived from evaluating the outcomes resulting from choosing one action over another. The theory discerns the ethical correctness of an action by assessing its impact on the overall well-being of the population. A key tenet of utilitarianism involves the acknowledgment of sacrificing less harm in pursuit of the greater benefit (Buhmann et al., 2019). In Western territories, business practices often align with this theory, prioritizing greater ethical considerations over economic interests. Conversely, in Eastern regions, greater emphasis is often placed on economic gains, with comparatively less attention given to ethical considerations (Syed, 2020). The core principle of utilitarianism is the maximization of good and the minimization of harm (Hill et al., 2014). Thus, the utilitarian principles are suggested to the RMG industry key authorities.

When a company is scrutinized or involved in unscrupulous behavior (Zahra, 1994), empirical evidence suggests a statistically significant negative unusual return, indicating that companies face repercussions for engaging in unethical business practices. This highlights the broader societal condemnation of corporate ethical failings (Gunthorpe, 1997). However, Bangladesh is not a reminder of its history. Instead, it is the name of the future vision (Maher, 2015). This section enumerates and discusses ten distinct recommendations aimed at restoring and sustaining the industry's reputation, with the potential to mitigate future hazardous conditions in the RMG industry by fostering a heightened sense of ethical obligation.

I. Learning from the past: Early detection, prevention, and recovery management of catastrophic scenarios must aim at minimizing losses and providing comprehensive solutions (Khan et al., 2020). The current political landscape in Bangladesh weakens the politicization of worker rights in the RMG industry by marginalizing transnational actors, particularly global unions, and, by extension, local ones. As a result, local unions have adopted a "technocratic approach," which prioritizes inspection and remediation over active participation in political movements, diverging from the traditional role of trade unions (Rahman, 2024). Thus, there is a dire need to reform the nature of politics so that they can take action to learn from history and do so in favor of the RMG industry's conducive environment. Neglecting the lessons from the previous RP calamity is not only imprudent but also morally, legally, politically, socially, and ethically indefensible.

II. Initiating a global system for change to improve factory standards: The RP incident underscores the necessity of establishing a global system for change within the RMG value chain (Mahtab & Sajen, 2017). Prioritizing human responsibility as the foundation for international jurisdiction is crucial (Sizoo, 2015). To achieve swift and efficient recovery after a disaster, the reconstruction of businesses and housing is needed (Messaoudi & Nawari, 2020). Schoen (2019) noted a shift in the regulatory environment, with increased brand oversight and corporate-driven efforts to enhance factory conditions. This includes relocating factories to rural industrial estates, aligning with a national shift toward rural industrialization.

III. Exercising a globally plausible RMG protocol: In today's globalized economy, corporate activities can generate significant risks, which must be mitigated through effective regulatory frameworks, including those grounded in private law (Begum & Solaiman, 2016). As Jennifer Bair noted, resolving all the safety and compliance issues identified by the Accord and Alliance within the initial deadlines was unlikely (Sultan et al., 2023; White, 2017). Consequently, a new International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry was introduced as a more robust and long-term solution. For sustainable and ethical industrial practices to be achieved, strict compliance with this revised Accord is essential (Da Costa Branco, 2021; Frosecchi, 2022; Sultan et al., 2023).

IV. Setting up a crisis management team and/or mobilizing their activities: Vanpeperstraete (2021) proposed the establishment of an RMG coordinating cell with sufficient authority and responsibility to ensure the continuity of initiatives, especially after the end of agreements and alliances. Effective communication is a critical component of crisis management, particularly in the fashion industry where intangible assets - such as brand image and consumer trust - are highly susceptible to crisis-related disruptions.

V. Ensuring labor safety and support measures to escape from disaster: Mansoor (2016) revealed that approximately 13% of garment suppliers failed to address safety concerns, such as removing locked doors hindering workers' escape during a fire. Despite some progress, working conditions for employees have largely remained suboptimal since the incident, highlighting the ongoing need for substantial improvements (Bergermann & Wolter, 2023; Kasperkevic, 2016). Providing appropriate and timely treatment for injured and disabled individuals remains a significant challenge because of the limited resources available in Bangladesh. Therefore, securing working conditions with supportive measures is the prerequisite to prevent likely hazards.

VI. Developing, disseminating, and exercising an effective corporate ethical culture: A corporate ethics program can mitigate unethical behavior (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2016; Jannat et al., 2021; Treviño et al., 2013). Gavin (2015) emphasized the importance of identifying situations where engineers might be influenced by unethical behavior and the need for them to consistently maintain high ethical standards in their work and personal lives. In this context, forming a national ethics board to enhance ethical responsibilities would be a pragmatic action. A robust ethical decision-making leading to ethical culture must be introduced (Kaptein, 2011; Pembi & Ali, 2024).

VII. Taking prudent measures to protect the RMG industry: Implementing precautionary measures to ensure labor safety, protect labor rights, and address CSR violations by entities is essential to regain and maintain the industry's lost glory (Vanpeperstraete, 2021). These measures include establishing a national labor research institute, enforcing structural standards for garment factory buildings, strictly adhering to national and international labor rights, and creating fire safety cells in all RMG factories. Additionally, allowing the free expression of trade unions to advocate for labor rights is crucial.

VIII. Ensuring CSR inevitably: Zhang and Shah (2024) reported that Chinese consumers' perceptions of the jewelry industry's CSR positively influence their intentions to purchase ethical jewelry, their attitudes toward green pricing, and their Environmental Protection Consumption Psychology (EPCP). Some studies have concluded that socially irresponsible actions lead to significant, unrecovered losses in shareholder wealth (Jacobs & Singhal, 2017). This emphasizes the strong urgency of ensuring CSR to combat further accidents.

IX. Fostering mutual cooperative relationships among stakeholders: Public-private co-governance initiatives in Bangladesh often avoid addressing politically sensitive areas, particularly those involving influential RMG factory owners and political elites. As a result, the RP tragedy did not lead to the kind of political or institutional reforms typically expected after such a major disaster (Rahman, 2024). However, international collaboration has shown positive impact. Therefore, strengthening existing partnerships - across public and private sectors, and between national and international actors - and developing new collaborative frameworks are essential for building long-term, effective stakeholder relationships in the RMG industry.

X. Focusing on product and process innovation and development training: There is a dire need in today's fourth industrial revolution to keep pace with technology and innovation. To meet the needs of the age, the RMG industry in Bangladesh must comply with the up-to-date modern technology in its product and process mechanism and at the same time initiate appropriate training arrangements for employees' skills enhancement. This will keep the industry competitive and thus attract a newer loyal customer base.

8. Conclusion

This study comprehensively investigates the unethical practices attributed to the owner of RP, denoted as SR. It systematically analyzes the root causes and extensive repercussions of these unethical business practices while delving into the ethical dimensions of business conduct and dissecting the contributing factors to ethical lapses in the examined incidents.

An examination of individual cases reveals that the victims of the RP collapse suffered direct consequences due to SR's unethical practices. The effects encompass succumbing, falling into the injuries of family mainstay members, resulting in social and economic challenges. This ensures that RQ1 is validated. Various motivations underscore the unethical behavior exhibited by business leaders or managers, encompassing a deficiency in personal ethical codes, an inability to discern unethical conduct,

a deleterious company culture, unrealistic performance goals, and lack of ethical leadership. SR's misconduct in the RP collapse led to an extreme loss of human life and property.

However, amid this tragedy, positive outcomes emerged, prompting the RMG industry to prioritize establishing secure working conditions and reinforce adhering to ethical codes of conduct, although this was insufficient. Therefore, RQ2 is answered. In the aftermath of the collapse, key stakeholders in the RMG industry, such as the BGMEA, BKMEA, and business owners, have modified their working behaviors and actions, catalyzing changes in workplace safety standards. Concurrently, the government and regulatory bodies have taken measures to enhance the industry, albeit a more concerted effort is imperative.

For RQ3, the RP incident has become a pivotal reference point for guiding future actions to avert unforeseen unethical practices that could precipitate similar tragic events. Ten disparate protectionist measures might protect the RMG industry in Bangladesh from the likely occurrence in the future.

8.1 Implications

The RMG industry in Bangladesh has played a pivotal role in the nation's economic growth, positioning Bangladesh as a noteworthy global contributor under the 'Made in Bangladesh' label. Hossen (2016) and Karim (2014) aptly characterized the nation's transformation from a perceived 'bottomless basket' to a 'basket full of miracles.' However, despite significant strides, the industry faces challenges that demand urgent attention.

Issues such as unsatisfactory progress in remediation efforts, factory owners refusal to cooperate led to the exclusion of certain buildings from the national safety initiative, incomplete factory lists, constraints on human resources and technical capacity, database management concerns, activity-related errors, improper fund management for resilience, and the need for a transition in the rectification coordination cell for sustainability are among the critical challenges. Failure to address these issues promptly may lead to the recurrence of incidents akin to RP collapse in Bangladesh (Barua et al., 2021). In today's dynamic business environment, upholding robust ethical and moral standards cannot be overstated, as highlighted by Islam and Tahasin (2023).

This study emphasizes the significance of ethical codes of conduct and seeks to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the RMG industry, business ethics, and related fields. The theoretical contributions resonate in the arenas of research, teaching and learning, with specific implications for the Bangladeshi RMG industry and Asian business. In practical terms, the findings have the potential to influence industry authorities, fostering greater consciousness toward ethical adherence, thereby averting potential tragedies. Furthermore, the study creates societal impacts by improving working conditions, strengthening industry regulations, and supporting the victims' livelihoods. The outcomes of this study can serve as valuable insights for other developing countries, including India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, and, notably, China.

8.2 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the unethical practices surrounding the RP collapse, several limitations might be acknowledged. First, the focus of the investigation is confined to the RP collapse, and thus the analysis is limited to this single event. This narrow focus means that the study does not address other similar incidents within the RMG industry, which could have provided a broader understanding of the systemic issues in the industry. Additionally, the study does not consider collapses and accidents in other industries, which may have comparable ethical and operational challenges. As such, the conclusions drawn may not fully capture the wide range of ethical issues affecting various industries.

Another key limitation of this study is its reliance on secondary sources. While these sources provide valuable data and insights, the lack of primary data - such as interviews with survivors, factory workers, or industry experts - limits the depth of the analysis. Primary data could have offered a more nuanced understanding of the victims' personal experiences, the decision-making processes within the businesses involved, and the broader societal implications. Furthermore, secondary sources may be subject to biases or limitations in reporting, which can affect the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Additionally, the study does not incorporate a comparative analysis of pre-and-post-collapse industry practices. This means that while the research highlights the deficiencies in ethical conduct, it does not explore whether these practices have significantly changed or improved over time in response to the RP collapse.

Finally, the geographical scope of the study is limited to Bangladesh, and while this focus is crucial for understanding the local context, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries or regions with different regulatory environments or cultural contexts. The conclusions drawn from the Bangladesh-based data may not necessarily apply to other nations with differing levels of industrialization, governance, and ethical standards.

8.3 Future Study

In light of the limitations identified in this study, it is important for future research to address these gaps to build a more comprehensive understanding of ethical practices within the context of the RP collapse. One of the key areas for further exploration is a more holistic examination of the impact of CSR and ethics on the RMG industry, particularly in the cause and consequences of the RP disaster. Future studies could broaden the scope to include a detailed analysis of how CSR initiatives, both before and after the collapse, influence business practices, worker welfare, and long-term industry reforms.

Additionally, research could focus specifically on ethical considerations in the recruitment, employment, and supervision of garment workers within Bangladesh's RMG industry. This would involve studying how ethical practices affect working conditions, job security, wages, and overall worker satisfaction. Investigating the role of recruitment agencies, factory management, and union involvement in ensuring fair

treatment of workers could provide further insights into the systemic failures that contributed to the RP collapse.

Replication of this study in other manufacturing industries, particularly those that have experienced similar catastrophic events, could offer valuable comparative perspectives. By applying the same analytical framework to different industries or regions, researchers could identify common ethical pitfalls and propose more universally applicable recommendations for improving corporate governance and ethical standards. Such comparative studies would also allow for cross-industry learning and could inform the development of best practices for preventing disasters across various industries.

Another area for future investigation is the use of CSR funds by leading RMG companies. While many firms claim to allocate resources towards social and ethical causes, it is unclear whether these funds are effectively utilized in addressing the root causes of unethical practices within the industry. Future research could investigate how CSR initiatives are monitored and evaluated, and whether they lead to meaningful improvements in worker welfare, safety standards, and environmental sustainability.

Lastly, the effectiveness of existing precautionary measures, such as safety regulations, monitoring systems, and structural audits, should be critically examined. Despite post-collapse reforms and commitments, ongoing challenges remain in ensuring that safety standards are consistently upheld across factories. Future studies could focus on evaluating the impact of initiatives like the NTPA and the role of industry watchdogs in preventing further disasters. Research could explore whether these measures have led to significant improvements in workplace safety or whether they remain largely ineffective in practice.

By addressing these research areas, future studies will not only expand the current understanding of the RP collapse but also contribute to the broader conversation about ethical business practices in the industrial landscape. This would ultimately foster an environment where ethics and responsibility are central to business operations, reducing the likelihood of future disasters and improving the lives of those affected.

8.4 Concluding Remark

The findings of this study underscore that the unethical business practices prevalent in the Bangladeshi RMG industry directly contributed to the catastrophic RP collapse. The disaster revealed a significant disregard for maintaining ethical codes of conduct, which continues to persist within the industry. This ongoing neglect highlights the urgent need to implement and enforce the suggested precautionary measures for improving safety standards, workers' rights, and ethical business practices. Ensuring these measures are not only crucial for preventing future tragedies but also for fostering the long-term sustainability and growth of the RMG industry. It is evident that a commitment to ethical business practices is vital for the protection of workers and the broader welfare of society, making it an essential focus for industry stakeholders moving forward.

The concluding remark suggests that ‘*unethical business practices in Bangladeshi RMG industry lead to the historically devastating debris of RP collapse, and the resulting cases indicate that the ignorance of maintaining ethical codes of conduct still persist, which necessitates ensuring the suggested precautionary measures in this industry for the sustainability and growth*’.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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