

Problems Faced by Garments Workers: A Study on Matrix Sweaters Limited

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Abstract

This paper examines the problems confronted by Matrix Sweaters Limited workers. The study also attempts to identify the possible reasons for dispute among the workers. Results from the study have revealed that wage discrimination is the main problem for Garments workers and low salary for garments worker is the vital reason for industrial dispute. The analysis have also exposed that workload is not justifiable to labor act. The hypothesis test has proved that female garments workers faced more problems in compare to male workers.

Keywords: Garment Industry, Wage Discrimination, Industrial Dispute, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

The emergence of the export-oriented ready-made garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh resulted from a combination of factors including a conducive global environment, policy reforms within the country and the entrepreneurship of the positive private sector in 1980s. Since the mid-1980s, under the patronage of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund Structural Adjustment Policy and other policy initiatives have taken place in the policy regime in Bangladesh stimulating industrial investment in the country's private sector.

Bangladesh also participated in market-opening trade agreements at the regional and bilateral levels. In fact, trade liberalization policies related to tariff reduction and duty and various export and fiscal incentives together with increased global demand for textiles and clothing smooth the way for a flourishing export-oriented RMG sector. The growth of the sector owes much to the quota facilities provided by the importing countries under the Multi-Fibre Arrangements (MFA) and zero tariff access to several developed country markets most notably the European Union (EU) under the EC Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). The development of domestic supply capacities such as bonded warehouse facilities, duty drawback incentives, cash compensation schemes and the ease of procuring raw materials especially fabrics under back-to-back letters of credit (LC) also encourages the sector's growth. Moreover, the availability of less expensive female labor than in many other developing countries gave Bangladesh a comparative advantage in the global market. In 2003, the minimum wage in the RMG sector in Bangladesh was \$10 per month for the non-export-processing zone area workers and \$30 for export-processing zone workers. While, the minimum wage was \$45 for regular workers in Cambodia, \$43.25 for unskilled workers in Pakistan, and \$ 22 for workers of Xianzi area in China, in November 2013, the minimum wage for RMG workers in Bangladesh was fixed at 5,300 taka which is still lower than in other competing countries.

The expansion of this sector has not been without challenges, and the sector is currently weighed down with several problems. Trade liberalization has helped Bangladesh to integrate into and reap benefits from the global economic system. The country has assumed costs associated with this liberalization. Bangladesh has been facing the challenges of quota phase out since January 2005, which is another phase of liberalizing the global trade regime. The phase has exposed the country to competition in the global market and emerging challenges such as the removal of safeguards on imports of Chinese apparel. The extent of global trade liberalization in apparels manifested through quota phase-out is likely to have an impact on the sector's profitability. China's entry in the global apparel market following its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 is another challenge. Competition from other cheap suppliers from Vietnam and Cambodia is also putting pressure on price levels and profitability. As a result of falling profits, suppliers may attempt to adjust costs through improved production processes, technological upgrades, and changes in employment.

The impact of such adjustments on women and men requires careful examination. The Bangladesh export-oriented RMG has depended on female labor traditionally. In the woven-RMG sector, women constitute approximately 80 percent of the workforce (Rahman 2004), although in the knitwear sector the proportion favors male workers. While the RMG sector has created an unprecedented opportunity for a large number of young women in Bangladesh, it has also led to workplace environments in which women workers may face discrimination and other disadvantages in comparison with men. Employers believe that men are more efficient workers and this belief hampers women's job mobility—relegating most women to lower-level jobs rather than supervisory positions. Some gender-specific constraints such as early marriage, household responsibility, child-bearing and rearing, and uncertainty about returning to work after marriage might result in discrimination confining women to lower-ranking jobs, lower income, and less or no training. This paper analyses the problems faced by workers of Matrix Sweaters Limited.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The following objectives are formulated while conducting the research:

- To identify probable solution for problems confronted by garment workers of Matrix Sweaters Limited based on their concern.
- To identify the reasons for dispute in Matrix Sweaters Limited.

2. Methodology of the study

The nature of the study is a descriptive one. It aimed to find out the present workers conditions of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. that exercised by the owner. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in this study to explore and analyze necessary data needed to make the research fruitful.

Research Approaches

Two types of research approaches are involved in this study. They are described below:

Questionnaire Survey: Questionnaires have been designed for different types of respondents and they have been interviewed to find out data and information in light of respective questionnaire. This questionnaire is quite same for lower class of respondents of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. These respondents are different in nature and working behavior. They are worker which problems faced in different areas.

Observation: In some cases, conducting questionnaire survey was quite difficult especially for hitting right information from workers. In those cases the observation method is used to find out necessary information about the objective of the study.

Data collection method: Pertinent data for this report has been collected primarily by direct investigations of different worker, records, papers, documents, operation process and different personnel. The discussion held mostly in informal sessions due to the confidential in nature of the key personals. They often feel uneasy due to the secrecy policies of the organization in case of answering some questions which harmful for own work.

Data sources: The information and data for this report have been collected from the primary and secondary sources.

Data Collection Procedure: Data was collected from the primary and secondary sources. The data was supplied by many publications forms etc. Data collection is a term used to describe a process of preparing and collecting data. The purpose of data collection is to obtain information to keep on record, to make decisions about important issues, to pass information on to others. Primarily, data is collected to provide information regarding a specific topic. Data collection usually takes place early on in an improvement project and is often formalized through a data collection plan. Prior to any data collection, pre-collection activity is one of the most crucial steps in the process. It is often discovered too late that the value of their interview information is discounted as a consequence of poor sampling of both questions and informants and poor elicitation techniques. After pre-collection activity is fully completed, data collection in the field by interviewing or other methods can be carried out in a structured, systematic and scientific way. A formal data collection process is necessary as it ensures that data gathered is both defined and accurate and that subsequent decisions based on arguments embodied in the findings are valid. The process provides both a baseline from which to measure from and in certain cases a target on what to improve. There are two types of data sources that are used for this research paper-

- **Primary or Direct data source:** This study is mainly based on primary data which are collected from different sources and applying different techniques (Questionnaire). These sources are Matrix Sweaters Ltd. worker who involve directly in different sections.
- **Secondary (Prior) or Indirect data source:** To find out problems which faced by garments worker in Matrix Sweaters Ltd. and some other answers of the research data has been collected from secondary sources. Secondary sources include different web survey and different research reports. Data has also been collected from internet and website.

Sample Size: The study has observed 50 respondents from Matrix Sweaters Limited.

Data analysis Procedure: Qualitative approach has been adopted for data analysis and interpretation taking the processed data as the base. Analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making. Data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, encompassing diverse techniques under a variety of names in different business, science, and social science domains. Data mining is a particular data analysis technique that focuses on modeling and knowledge discovery for predictive rather than purely descriptive purposes. Business intelligence covers data analysis that relies heavily on aggregation, focusing on business information. In statistical applications, some people divide data analysis into descriptive statistics, exploratory data analysis, and confirmatory data analysis.

EDA focuses on discovering new features in the data and CDA on confirming or falsifying existing hypotheses. Predictive analytics focuses on application of statistical or structural models for predictive forecasting or classification, while text analytics applies statistical, linguistic, and structural techniques to extract and classify information from textual sources, a species of unstructured data. All are varieties of data analysis. Data integration is a precursor to data analysis, and data analysis is closely linked to data visualization and data dissemination. The

term data analysis is sometimes used as a synonym for data modeling. Here, the study has applied some analysis procedures that are-

- Mean of worker salary
- Frequency of Demographic Data
- Age
- Educational status
- Gender
- Designation
- Hypothesis Analysis(T-test of independent sample and one sample)

3. Analysis

The analysis of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. mostly depends on statistical approach which is very much popular for designing experimental and survey research. The number of common analyses was based on the number of dependent variables (sometimes referred to as outcome variables), the nature of your independent variables (sometimes referred to as predictors). The Matrix Sweaters Ltd. statistical and graphical analysis has presented according to the analytical model of SPSS.

Demographic analysis

The Matrix Sweaters Ltd. demographic data are essential part for analysis. The organizational conditions can easily understand by evaluating this information. The study has selected both male and female for this clarifying the report problems. The clarifications of demographic data are as follows-

Age

The age limits of workers of the Matrix Sweaters Ltd. are lower 18 to above 35. There is under-age male or female worker in other section of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. apart from the study working area. The age limits that the study found 18- 25=42%, 25-35=48% and above 35=10 percent.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	21	42.0	42.0	42.0
	25-35	24	48.0	48.0	90.0
	Above 35	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The maximum educational qualifications of worker in Matrix Sweaters Ltd. are primary 76 percent, secondary 22 percent and higher secondary 2 percent. The maximum report showed this type of circumstances in past. The workers ratio both male and female is almost equal to 0.5 to 0.5. There is little fluctuation between male and female workers rate. The Matrix Sweaters Ltd. workers perform the job average 347.98 hours monthly and get per hour rate 20.10 tk. That is much lower than their efforts, the minimum rate of labor act other and country. The average salary is 6,995.00 (Monthly).

The Matrix Sweaters Ltd. all workers assure the information about the problems which is related to their lives.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The major problems that are faced by workers –work load =0.78 percent, wage discrimination 20 percent and working hour 2 percent. Sometimes, they work 15 hours in 24 hours when shipments continue to importers in due time.

The worker mainly makes disorders in the organization for low salary 46 percent, lack of fringe benefits 44 percent, delay promotion 2 percent and small payment for overtime 8 percent. The country properties (buses, tracks, cars and owner assets) also damage for uncertain clash of workers in organization and road-side.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Salary	23	46.0	46.0	46.0
	Lack of Fringe Benefits	22	44.0	44.0	90.0
	Delay promotion	1	2.0	2.0	92.0
	Small Payment for Overtime	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Statistical hypothesis testing

The possible correlation or similar relation between phenomena can be investigated. A proposed remedy is effective in treating a disease that is at least to some extent and for some patients. The hypothesis that a relation exists cannot be examined the same way one might examine a proposed new law of nature: in such an investigation a few cases in which the tested remedy shows no effect do not falsify the hypothesis. Instead, statistical tests are

used to determine how likely it is that the overall effect would be observed if no real relation as hypothesized exists. If that likelihood is sufficiently small (e.g., less than 1%), the existence of a relation may be assumed. Otherwise, any observed effect may as well be due to pure chance. Conventional significance levels for testing the hypotheses are 0.01-0.05. Whether the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, all must be determined in advance before the observations are collected or inspected. If these criteria are determined later, when the data to be tested is already known, the test is invalid. It is important to mention that the above procedure is actually dependent on the number of the participants (units or sample size) that is included in the study. For instance, the sample size may be too small to reject a null hypothesis and, therefore, is recommended to specify the sample size from the beginning.

One-Sample Test

The hypothesis of one sample T-test (2-tailed) indicates the positive or above 0.05 or 0.00 percent that is accepted that is null hypothesis will be accepted for these problems. For one sample, the significance will measure on individual comment on value 4.

The accepted significance value of wage discrimination 0.000 indicates the workers agree to the statement Wage discrimination is the main problem for Garments worker. There is wage discrimination between male and female workers.

The significance value of low salary for industrial disputes of null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted because 2-tailed value to the range of 0.05.

	Test Value = 4					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Workload is not justifiable to labor act.	1.830	49	.073	.16000	-.0157	.3357

The organization is not maintained the labor act.. The workload is not justifiable to labor act 0.073.

The female worker faced more problems than male worker. Both the male and female workers ensure the positive comments against the hypothesis.

Independent Samples Test

In the independent sample T-test, the two variances (equal variances and not equal variances) that the study has found. The independent sample test will be depend on gender (male and female). The significance level for both one sample T-test and independent sample T-test acceptance range is same

The hypothesis of wage discrimination main problems in garments is rejected for the value 0.038 (null hypothesis) that is lower than the 0.05 or not equal to 0.000. That means wage discrimination is not only one issue for main problems of garments workers.

The low salary for industrial disputes 0.067 that is proved by the comments of workers. The other things are related to the facts.

The workload is not justifiable to labor act 0.257, the workers made positive answer to the problems. The owner of the organization does not maintain the labor act.

The female worker faced more problems than male worker 0.055 is accepted as null hypothesis. The male workers also attain to the troubles for making strong or weight platform.

The workers recommendations should be considered by the organization, govt. and law enforcement agencies as soon as possible before the domination to the sectors by other organizations and countries.

Findings

The research is based much on primary data. It has some variation when the evaluation was made. The most important statistical decisions that the study has performed of the present study are given bellow-

- The most garments are employing the lower age worker in factory. But, the Matrix Sweaters Ltd. employee the workers who are 18 to above 35 in work place. The education level of garments worker is primary which rates are 76 percent
- The worker percentages both male and female 56 and 44. The knitt operator is the 50 percent where male worker carry almost all the percentages.
- The average salary of worker is 6,995.00 tk. monthly and hourly rate 20.10 tk. This is quite lower than the International labor law. Whereas developed country is paid to worker \$ 9 per hour.
- The workers of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. are agreed to the problems of garments sectors. The worker has said that the most industrial disputes take place for low salary structure, overtime and large working hours. The work load is hampered to the production of garments worker.
- For one sample T-test, the significance level are-
- Wage discrimination is the main problem for Garments worker: 0.000
- Low salary for garments worker is the main reason for industrial dispute: 0.020

- Workload is not justifiable to labor act: 0.073
- There are more problems faced by female garments workers than that of male workers: 0.000
- For independent sample T-test, the significance levels are-
- Wage discrimination is the main problem for Garments worker: 0.038
- Low salary for garments worker is the main reason for industrial dispute: 0.067
- Workload is not justifiable to labor act: 0.257
- There are more problems faced by female garments workers than that of male workers: 0.055

The one sample and independent sample T-test shows the significance level of individual factors. The significance level > 0.05 or 0.00 is accepted for this research. Either the significance level < 0.05 is rejected.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Ready-Made-Garments industry of Bangladesh is growing at an exceptional pace these days. Matrix Sweaters Ltd is still a growing with moderate export. In spite of all the success it has achieved in previous economic years. The Matrix Sweaters Ltd creates opportunity in the job field of garments sector in every year. However, it cannot afford to get complacent. The workers problems of Matrix Sweaters Ltd are always concern able factors for production and exports. In order to maintain its maximum earnings in market place, it is imperative that the workers problems of Matrix Sweaters Ltd. should be solved mutual negotiation with entire workers for making better image, production and working environment. It is the impression that these problems of Matrix Sweater Ltd. that have influenced to worker's attitudes. It is thus highly important for Matrix Sweater Ltd. to work favorably towards the problems of workers in right way and give them as much support and assistance as possible which they are assumed in the organization perspective for future developments. The employer must make time to hear the feelings and views of these individuals' worker problems and solving the misunderstanding by applying reasonable device.

In order to be a successful investor and entrepreneur, the employer of Matrix Sweater Ltd. must take care of production system including workers. Employer must careful to workers that fresh leaves can efficiently & effectively coordinate in production area that the organization belongs to the existence with standard. To removal of problems faced by garments workers based on Matrix Sweater Ltd. the following steps can be suggested as recommendation:

- Moderate salary structure for the employees must set according to the laws govt. and ILO.
- Started to over time payment to worker for considering the double rate the general shift.
- The employment of both male and female percentages should be equal. The gender discrimination must remove from organization for creating better image.
- To introduce a public relation office to help the workers with various problems about the internal facts.
- The working hour of employees should be in standard format.
- The participative management should apply in organization for maintaining maximum export earnings.
- Introducing free and fair way to bargain the rate of production and internal activities.

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