



**THE RELATIONSHIP OF WOKPLACE SAFETY AS A  
MODERATOR BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
PERFORMANCE**

**by**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>DECLARATION OF THESIS</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	10
1.3 Research Questions	20
1.4 Research Objectives	21
1.5 Scope of the Study	22
1.6 Significance of the Study	23
1.6.1 Academic Significances	24
1.6.2 Practical Significance	26
1.7 Definition of Terms	28
1.7.1 Organizational Performance	28
1.7.2 Garment Industry	28
1.7.3 Managers	29
1.7.4 Human Resources Management (HRM)	29
1.7.5 Recruitment and Selection	29
1.7.6 Training and Development	29
1.7.7 Performance Appraisal	30
1.7.8 Compensation, Reward, and Benefit	30
1.7.9 Workplace Safety	30
1.8 Organization of the Thesis	30
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>32</b>
2.1 Introduction	32
2.2 Organizational Performance	32

2.2.1	Performance Planning	36
2.2.2	Performance Management	36
2.2.3	Performance Measurement	37
2.3	HRM Factors	38
2.3.1	Recruitment and Selection	49
2.3.2	Training and Development	53
2.3.3	Performance Appraisal	59
2.3.4	Compensation, Reward, and Benefit	63
2.4	Workplace Safety	67
2.5	Underpinning and Supporting Theory	81
2.5.1	Underpinning Theory (HCT)	83
2.5.2	Supporting Theories (Affective Event Theory and the Contingency Theory)	88
2.5.3	Contingency Theory	90
2.6	The Proposed Research Framework	92
2.7	Hypothesis Formulation	95
2.7.1	Relationship between HRM Factors and Organizational Performance	95
2.7.2	Relationship between Recruitment and Selection and Organizational Performance	95
2.7.3	Relationship between Training and Development and Organizational Performance	96
2.7.4	Relationship between Performance Appraisal and Organizational Performance	97
2.7.5	Relationship between Compensation, Reward and Benefits, and Organizational Performance	98
2.7.6	Moderating Effects of Workplace Safety on the Relationships between IVs and DV	99
2.8	Summary of the Chapter	103
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>		<b>104</b>
3.1	Introduction	104
3.2	Research Design	104
3.3	Population and Sample of the Study	106
3.4	Sample Size Determination	108
3.5	Unit of Analysis and Respondents	111
3.6	Sampling Techniques	111

3.7	Measurements and Operationalization of Constructs	113
3.8	Design Questionnaire	114
3.9	Pilot Study	118
3.10	Data Analysis Procedures	119
3.11	The Partial Least Squares (PLS)	120
3.12	Assessment of Measurements and Structural Model	120
3.13	Measurement Model Assessment	121
3.14	Reliability of Construct	122
3.15	Convergent Validity	123
3.16	Discriminate Validity	124
3.17	Assessment of Structural Model	124
3.18	Assessment of Predictive Relevance	125
3.19	Proposed Structural Model of the Study	126
3.20	Summary	126
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS</b>		<b>128</b>
4.1	Introduction	128
4.2	Preliminary Data Examination	128
4.2.1	Non-response Rate	129
4.2.2	Dealing with Missing Responses	130
4.2.3	Data Cleaning and Screening	131
4.2.4	Data Outliers	131
4.3	Assessment of Data Normality	135
4.4	Demographic Analysis	140
4.5	Descriptive Analysis	143
4.6	Partial Least Square Modelling	144
4.7	Measurement Model Assessment	144
4.7.1	Construct Validity and Reliability	145
4.7.2	Convergent Validity	146
4.7.3	Discriminant Validity	150
4.7.4	Fornell and Larcker	151
4.7.5	Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations	152
4.7.6	Cross Loading	153
4.8	Structural Model Assessment	156

4.8.1	Result of Multicollinearity (Inner VIF)	156
4.8.2	Coefficient of Determination (R <sup>2</sup> )	157
4.8.3	Effect Size (f <sup>2</sup> )	158
4.8.4	Predictive Relevant Q <sup>2</sup>	159
4.9	Path Coefficient	159
4.10	Chapter Summary	164
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>		<b>166</b>
5.1	Introduction	166
5.2	Recapitulations of the Study	166
5.3	Discussions	170
5.3.1	Evaluation of the Organizational Performance of the Garment Industries in Bangladesh	171
5.3.2	The Effects of HRM Practices on Organizational Performance	172
5.3.3	The Moderating Effects of Workplace Safety on the Relationship between HRM Practices and Organizational Performances	176
5.4	Implications of This Study	181
5.4.1	Academic Implications	181
5.4.2	Practical Implications	185
5.5	Limitations of the Study	189
5.6	Recommendations for Future Study	190
5.7	Conclusion	193
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>195</b>
<b>APPENDIXES</b>		<b>236</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>PAGE</b>	
Table 1. 1	Contribution of RMG to GDP in Bangladeshi export	2
Table 3. 1	Garment Industries in Dhaka Division	108
Table 3. 2	Sample Size of State in Each Area	113
Table 3. 3	Questionnaire Items	115
Table 3. 4	Pilot Study	119
Table 4. 1	Result of univariate outliers based on standardized values	132
Table 4. 2	Assessment of data normality	137
Table 4. 3	Demographic Analysis Results of the Respondents	141
Table 4. 4	Level of Organizational performance, Performance appraisal, Recruitment selection, Training development, Compensation benefit reward and workplace safety	143
Table 4. 5	Construct reliability and validity	147
Table 4. 6	Fornell and larcker	151
Table 4. 7	Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)	152
Table 4. 8	Discriminant Validity- Cross Loadings	153
Table 4. 9	Result of multicollinearity – Inner VIF values	157
Table 4.10	R-square result	158
Table 4. 11	f-square result	158
Table 4. 12	Cross validated redunda	159
Table 4. 13	Path coefficient result	160
Table 4. 14	Moderating effect	161
Table 4. 15	Summary of hypothesis	163

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>PAGE</b>
Figure 1. 1 Causes of Deadly Incidents	6
Figure 2. 1 Fatality in the incidents	70
Figure 2. 2 Research Framework	94
Figure 4. 1 Measurement Model	150
Figure 4. 2 Structural Model	162

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UniMAP	Universiti Malaysia Perlis
AET	Affective Event Theory
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
CT	Contingency Theory
CPD	Center for Policy Dialogue
DALYs	Disability-Adjusted Life-Years
EU	European Union
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRF	International Labor Rights Forum
PMS	Performance Measurement System
RMG	Readymade Garment

# **Hubungan Keselamatan Tempat Kerja sebagai Penyederhana Antara Pengurusan Sumber Manusia dan Prestasi Organisasi**

## **ABSTRAK**

Prestasi organisasi amalan pengurusan sumber manusia industri (HRM) pakaian di Bangladesh telah mendapat perhatian yang besar dalam beberapa dekad kebelakangan ini daripada ahli pendidikan popular, pengamal pengurusan sumber manusia dan firma perunding serta dalam kalangan pemilik dan pengurus pakaian industri pakaian di Bangladesh. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan amalan HRM terhadap prestasi organisasi industri pakaian di Bangladesh dan untuk menentukan bagaimana keselamatan tempat kerja dalam industri pakaian di Bangladesh memainkan peranan penyederhana dalam hal mencapai prestasi organisasi. Walaupun terdapat banyak amalan sumber manusia untuk mencapai atau pencapaian prestasi organisasi yang lebih baik, namun faktor pilihan (pengambilan dan pemilihan, latihan dan pembangunan, penilaian prestasi, dan ganjaran dan faedah) telah dipilih dalam konteks Bangladesh dan lebih khusus dalam industri pakaian Bangladesh. Walaupun sumbangan maksimum mengenai pendapatan mata wang asing, pekerjaan, pemerkasaan wanita, dan pencapaian KDNK maksimum kepada ekonomi Bangladesh melalui sektor ini, masih kebimbangan keselamatan industri pakaian siap Bangladesh sangat membimbangkan. Sejumlah 400 pengurus sumber manusia dari industri pakaian yang berbeza di Bangladesh telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik. Pendekatan Partial Least Squares kepada Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) adalah teknik statistik utama yang digunakan dalam kajian. Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa pengambilan dan pemilihan, latihan dan pembangunan, penilaian prestasi, serta ganjaran dan faedah didapati mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap prestasi organisasi dalam industri pakaian Bangladesh. Pembolehubah moderator keselamatan tempat kerja didapati mempunyai kesan yang signifikan antara amalan HRM dan prestasi organisasi. Berdasarkan penemuan, implikasi teori dan praktikal, serta batasan dan hala tuju untuk penyelidikan lanjut, turut dibincangkan.

**Kata kunci:** Amalan HRM, Prestasi Organisasi, Amalan HRM dalam Industri Pakaian di Bangladesh, Keselamatan di tempat kerja.

# **The Relationship of Workplace Safety as a Moderator Between Human Resource Management and Organizational Performance**

## **ABSTRACT**

The organizational performance of the garment industry in Bangladesh through human resource management (HRM) practices has received a great deal of attention in recent decades from popular educationalists, human resource management practitioners, and consulting firms and among the garment owners and managers of the garments industries in Bangladesh. The purpose of the present study is to examine the effects of HRM practices on organizational performances of the garment industries in Bangladesh and to determine how workplace safety in the garment industries in Bangladesh plays a moderating role in regards achieve organizational performance. Though there are numerous human resources practices to achieve or attain better organizational performance, yet handpick factors (recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward and benefits) were selected in the context of Bangladesh and more specifically in the garment industries of Bangladesh. Despite maximum contributions regarding foreign currency earning, employment, women empowerment, and attaining maximum GDP to the economy of Bangladesh through this sector, still the safety concerns of the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh are very alarming. A total of 400-human resource managers from different garment industries of Bangladesh participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires. The Partial Least Squares approach to Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was the main statistical technique employed in the study. The findings of the study revealed that recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward and benefit were found to have significant effects on organizational performance in the garment industries of Bangladesh. The moderator variable of workplace safety was found to have a significant effect between HRM practices and organizational performance. Based on the findings, the theoretical and practical implications, as well as limitations and direction for further research, were also discussed.

**Keywords:** HRM practices, Organizational Performance, Practices of HRM in Garment Industry in Bangladesh, Workplace safety.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Bangladesh is an emerging world economy, a small country with a high population density in Southeast Asia. Bangladesh's readymade garment industry, commonly known as the RMG (Readymade Garment), is Bangladesh's top ambassador on the global market as a nation (Adnan et al., 2015).

The RMG industry's path began in the late 1970s and has played a key role in the economy since then (Hossain, 2019). It has become the country's largest export earner in the early 90s in a very short period through a major positive forward thrust (Mahdevari et al., 2014). This industry has benefited not only through the earnings of the dollar, but also in socio-economic prospects, creating a huge number of job opportunities primarily for the country's poor and less-educated workers.

The RMG sector, the economy's lifeline, and according to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the RMG sector's contribution to GDP was 11.17% in the FY of 2017-18 (Hossain, 2018). Factory growth in the RMG industry is a key indicator of how this industry has developed so significantly starting with a few 134 factories in FY1983-84 to 5526 in FY 2018-19 (BGMEA, 2019).

According to World Trade Organization (WTO) data, Bangladesh is the world's second-largest garment exporter, after only China. According to the report, Bangladesh maintained its global stature in FY 2017-18, accounting for a 6.5 percent share of the market. Bangladesh has a 6.4 percent share of the world apparel market in 2016. Bangladesh exported garments worth \$29 billion in 2017. RMG exports obtained

undeniably hold an important position in total exports after the 1990s in the countries (Faruque, 2014) and one of Bangladesh's major contributors to GDP.

Table 1. 1: Contribution of RMG in Bangladeshi export

YEAR	TOTAL EXPORT OF BANGLADESH (IN MILLION US\$)	EXPORT OF RMG (IN MILLION US\$)	% OF RMG'S TO TOTAL EXPORT
2010-11	22924.38	17914.46	78.15
2011-12	24301.90	19089.73	78.55
2012-13	27027.36	21515.73	79.61
2013-14	30186.62	24491.88	81.13
2014-15	31208.94	25491.40	81.68
2015-16	34257.18	28094.16	82.01
2016-17	34655.90	28149.84	81.23
2017-18	36668.17	30614.76	83.49
2018-19	40535.04	34133.27	84.21

*Source: Data Source Export Promotion Bureau, Compiled by BGMEA*

Bangladeshi RMG producers' current competitive advantage arises mostly from the availability and efficiency of extremely cheap labour. In terms of labour expenses, Bangladesh is well-positioned and compares favourably to other Asian countries. Bangladesh has a \$0.25 labour cost per hour, vs \$0.34 in Indonesia, \$0.34 in Pakistan, \$0.46 in Sri Lanka, \$0.48 in China, and \$0.57 in India (Arif, 2015). Because of the low

labour costs, ready-made clothes shoppers are more likely to purchase things from Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., N. 2013).

It is identified by a focus on crucial aspects such as low material prices, low labour costs, rapid production with a large pool of inexpensive labour, and competitive demand from competitors (Hasan et al., 2017).

The introduction of women workers into the Bangladeshi industrial employment system is one of the country's most notable features. Approximately 4 million workers work in Bangladesh's RMG sector, with 85 percent of them being female and primarily from rural areas of the country. As a result, the RMG industry provided a new avenue for rural unemployed and uneducated women to participate in the financial activities of Bangladesh's economy. According to a labour force survey, while male employment in the manufacturing sector has remained relatively stable, female employment has increased dramatically, which can be linked to Bangladesh's social progress (Hasan et al., 2015).

RMG exports obtained undeniably hold an important position in total exports after the 1990s (Faruque, 2014). Through exporting Apparel's goods, Bangladesh is now becoming a flagship brand in the world's developed countries where products have been exported such as countries of the European Union (59% of total exports), the USA (29%), and other parts of the world (15%) (Afsana et al., 2016). In the FY 2018-2019, RMG's share in overall export earnings exceeded more than 84 percent.

The growth of Bangladesh's RMG industry much depends on the labor force's hard work. Yet they are sadly deprived of the minimum facilities. For years together, they are to live a sub-standard life in urban slums. The working conditions at Bangladeshi garment factories are regularly found to be overcrowded and difficult to

move in, with a poor ventilation system. More than a thousand employees have perished as a result of numerous problematic jobs being ignored (Stanwick & Stanwick, 2015).

Unfortunately, much of this sector's labor force is uneducated, unqualified, and has come from rural areas merely in pursuit of a livelihood. In return, they have to work hard for a very low salary. In addition, their employers use them because of their inherent limitations. Their recruitment system is hiring and firing, as they do not obtain the factory's letter of appointment and identification card and can be fired by owners for any reason at any time. They know nothing about their job contracts (Khan, 2011).

Another study found that the working conditions in Bangladesh's RMG industries are below the minimum standard. Both government and administration habitually disregard well-being and safety strategies, as outlined by Factory Operations Rules in 1979. Garments employees are concerned about extended durations or double chronological shifts, risky occupations, poor working conditions, income, and sexual isolation, according to (Absar & Mahmood, 2011).

To meet their shipment deadlines, the women labourers typically work until 3 a.m. The average working hour in most RMG factories is 8.28 hours. Women usually come to work at RMG factories because of their low financial situation and lack of control over their earnings. Women, on the other hand, confront sexism at work when it comes to remuneration and gender discrepancies. In most cases, we labour in unfavourable conditions and feel vulnerable (Choudhury & Rahman, 2017).

Their regular fate is to be mistreated by owners and mid-level policemen, to work long hours in congested surroundings without ample rest, lack of nutritious food, medication, right to fair protest brutal exploitation, etc. The collapse of the factory house, explosion of fire, stampede leave many dead and wounded. However, if any worker protests owners or managers, he/she is targeted with different forms of abuse,

such as being fired, detained, or even physically attacked by the employed owners' criminals (Khan, 2011).

The unrest at work is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh's RMG industry. Staff is often embroiled in confrontations; they also call for strikes to make their claim safe. It causes the owners massive losses, cripples the economy, and tarnishes the country's reputation abroad. It also makes international buyers wary of making potential orders (Ahmed et al., 2013).

Confrontation between owners and workers, labour unrest, gas and electricity shortages, poor infrastructure, poor port facilities, time-consuming complexities, domestic and international plot, and advancing rivals in the quota-free international market are among the issues identified by Islam et al. (2016). The challenges are casting a negative light on the sector's future growth.

The events have direct and indirect effects on the ready-made garment sector's efficiency, competitiveness, and growth. The complete live-taking occurrence occurred in several clothing businesses due to the carelessness of many problematic functions (Stanwick & Stanwick, 2015). It shows in a report that there were about 57 different types of accidents in 2010-2016 (such as an explosion, building collapse, boiler burst) in several garment industries where about 1288 were killed and 10,848 were injured (Hasan et al., 2017). The following figure 1.1 shows the causes of various types of fatal accidents. Due to dangerous workplaces and numerous sorts of instability in the textile sector, Bangladeshi RMG goods are losing demand in industrialised countries (Textile Bulletin, May 2014).

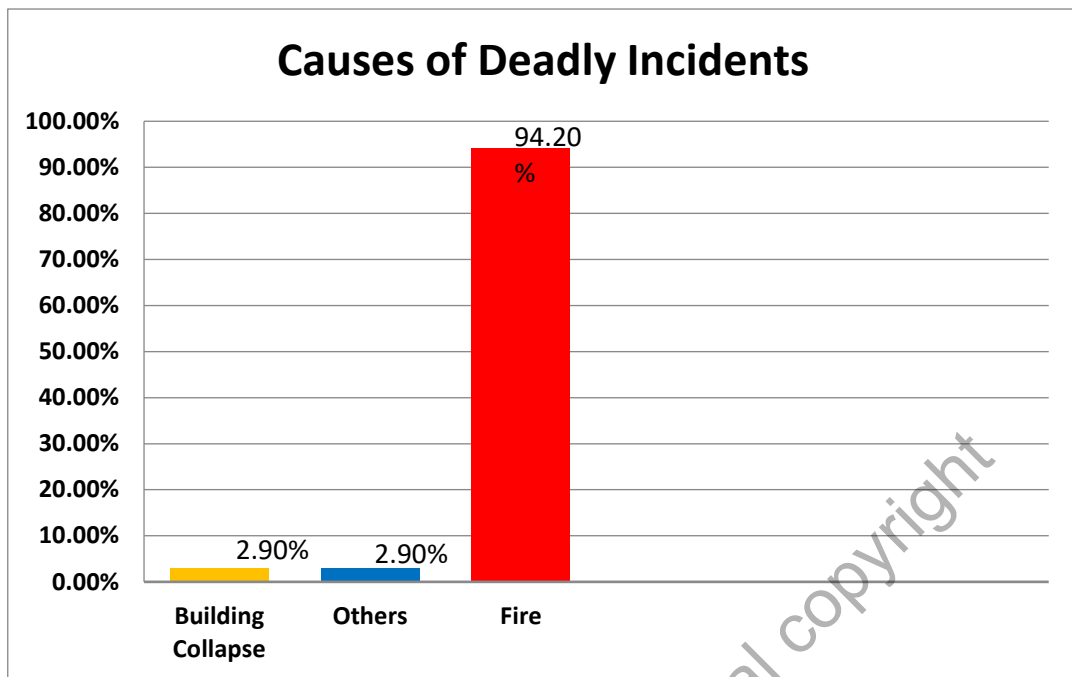


Figure 1. 1 Causes of Deadly Incidents

Given the RMG industry's phenomenal success in Bangladesh over the past two decades, workplace accidents in the past few years have resulted in a downturn in this sector's development. Building collapses, repeated fires, and other avoidable industrial accidents have affected the industry (Chowdhury, & Tanim, 2016). In preventable workplace accidents (Mahmood, 2013), almost 4,500 garment workers have been injured, crushed, burnt, trampled, or killed in the last four years.

Unfortunately, the safety concerns of the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh are very low. Factory found to be approximately 100 percent below the fire safety level (Wadud et al., 2014). There have been no factory audits of the responsible parties on security issues (owners, inspection authority, and state, etc.) over the decade. In the Bangladeshi apparel industry, safety issues are comparatively low (Ahmed & Hossain, 2009).

The ready-made garment industry's economic and surrounding environment has become a human rights problem as a result of certain fatal accidents. Several accidents appear to be a normal occurrence in this industry on a regular basis (Hasan et al., 2017).

The collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013, which killed 1,129 people and injured 2,515 more (CPD — Center for Policy Dialogue, 2013; ILRF — International Labor Rights Forum, 2013), and the fire at Tazreen Fashions in 2012, which killed 117 people and seriously injured another 200 (CPD — Center for Policy Dialogue, 2013; ILRF — International Labor Rights Forum, 2012). (Mahmood, 2013). Such occurrences startled not just the country, but also the rest of the globe, inciting outrage at the government's failure to provide a safe and healthy working environment (Motlagh & Saha, 2014).

There is a risk of the country losing its preferential market access to the EU as workers' health standards remain poor despite several reminders. The impact of the removal of trade benefits on Bangladeshi exporters was seen in the case of the US, which Germany overtook as the largest export destination in 2017. Roughly half of the exports from Bangladesh go to the EU countries every year (The Economist, March 25, 2019).

Retailers such as Wal-Mart Stores and Levi Strauss & Co. were moving away from factories managed by several tenants in multi-story buildings before the Rana Plaza building collapsed. According to safety experts, these structures offer a greater risk in developing countries than low-rise enterprises with single tenants. Following a series of industrial mishaps and political turbulence, the country is already losing garment orders, a pattern that might stifle its economy and let other Asian exporters to increase their sales in the United States and Europe. The Walt Disney Co., the world's largest licensor, told licensees in March that their licensed products in Bangladesh could no longer be produced. The move is part of a greater initiative to transfer the production

of Disney-branded goods from what it sees as countries with high-risk security problems, like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Venezuela.

Different dangers arise not only because of life-threatening incidents, but also because of the major issue of injury and development loss. Such incidents jeopardise public safety and competition. It is critical to keep the Bangladeshi apparel sector healthy for the workers. A safe working environment will help to reduce the dangers of a variety of hazards. Hasan et al. (Hasan et al., 2017).

Employees are dissatisfied with their pay and working conditions in the factory. Labor discontent is linked not just to a worker's salary but also to non-wage issues such as excessive overtime work, a lack of leisure and holidays, the overall working atmosphere, and so on. Workers are reported to be working for most of the days. (Ahmed and colleagues, 2013).

The national political climate has a notable effect on the labor unrest in the RMG industries investigated from Uddin and Jahed's (2007) report. It has been reported that Bangladesh's RMG industry has faced around 72 labor unrest incidents due to delayed salary payments. 41 of the cases occurred because of the demand for payment of their dues, according to the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies. In 13 cases the workers went to the streets for the protest because their fellow workers were murdered or tortured (Choudhury & Rahman, 2017).

Owners face risks, the country's economy is typically slowing down, and the country's popularity is also fading. Foreign buyers think twice because of these kinds of strikes and different types of unrest in the garment industry, and they add new conditions to the producer or the garment owners to purchase products from them. That causes the industry to lose the edge of core competencies. There is more than one reason behind that unrest (Choudhury & Rahman, 2017).

The garments industry has achieved a lot since its inception, but there is no omega point of achievement yet there are many things to do, plenty of peaks to climb (Rakib & Adnan, 2015). It is necessary to address new prospects and new challenges.

Technical advancement in the work cycle has contributed to a higher degree of product quality and production volume. Manufacturing systems are changed by introducing new machines and advanced technology, as the global market demands. This new technology has transformed the conventional textile and garment / RMG enterprise production processes by integrating capital-intensive technologies such as Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM) into foreign market textiles and clothing products. To satisfy the competitors, the international markets demand high-quality products with new technology. Technological change in production processes required to work harder with new skills (Islam & Montenegro, 2002). However, workers are not yet comfortable dealing with technology, due to the lack of needs-based training and the lack of on-the-job training (Islam & Siengthai, 2009).

Unfortunately, several programs and policies put in place by the government and non-government organizations to improve the growth, performance, and stability in the garment industries in Bangladesh did not yield the expected outcome. For instance, the BGMEA is responsible to promote and facilitate the apparel industry through policy advocacy to the government, services to members, ensuring workers' rights, and social compliance at factories. But in many cases, it has been found that they have miserably failed to ensure the workers' rights and privileges and safety of their respective working places and due to that, unrest deprivation and job turn in the garment industries of Bangladesh is very frequent.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite tremendous economic growth, Bangladesh still has high unemployment and underemployment rates, low real wage rates, and large wage inequalities across the RMG sectors (Haque et al., 2020; Ahmed & Peerlings, 2009; Mahmood & Akhter, 2011; Uddin & Choudhury, 2008).

Rakib and Adnan (2015), as well as Clark and Kanter (2011), assess the level of efficiency based on Bangladeshi workers' productivity, which is not up to date or comparable to that of other countries. Bangladeshi garment workers are one-fourth as efficient as Chinese employees, according to an empirical study. One of the key causes for this is the low literacy rate, which has an impact on the sector's efficiency.

Furthermore, according to Islam et al., 2016 's assessment on RMG employee productivity, large factories (46-53 percent) have a higher proportion of skilled personnel than small and medium enterprises. In small and medium-sized businesses, the proportion of unskilled workers is high (18-26 percent) compared to large companies (16-18 percent). Rakib and Adnan (2015) found that the level of output measured by the productivity of RMG workers in Bangladesh is not up-to-date or in line with international standards and it is having got an adverse impact on the organizational performance of the garment industries in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi RMG industry is also facing challenges in product diversification, new market entry and positioning, poor infrastructure, inadequate backward link, and very little forward integration or brand growth and promotion because of several integral shortcomings within this organization (Islam et al., 2016; Robbani, 2000).

Additionally, it is also found the growth of technical knowledge, education, and creativity, research, and development is much less of a concern, which essentially

reduces the long-term profitability of this sector. The monotony of repetitive work, rapid technological development, and the costly cost of restricting innovation can all be important difficulties that must be addressed quickly (Hossian et al., 2019; Abdullah, 2005).

According to a study by Hossan et al. (2012a), Bangladesh's RMG companies are experiencing high temporary labour crisis rates due to high and consistent unemployment and absenteeism. Increased workload, poor line manager conduct, inadequate skills, and low-income levels were also identified as key explanations for high job turnover in this study. Existing workers are frequently overworked because of manpower shortages, which decreases their job happiness and productivity. One of the biggest causes of labour discontent in the RMG business is the poor salary structure of employees. Unrest among RMG workers in Bangladesh is growing more widespread as a result of irregular pay.

HRM is widely recognised as a critical organisational tool that contributes to a firm's long-term viability and competitiveness (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2008; Schuler, 1990). It's one of the most critical factors influencing employee attitudes and behaviours including intent to leave, job satisfaction, and loyalty to the company (Lee & Heard, 2000; Sarker, 2014b). But still, the effective practices of HR are not adequately found in maximum garment industries in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2018; Dessler, 2007; Khan, 2010).

Despite this, employee loyalty and job satisfaction increase when workers perceive their employer to be reasonable and helpful in terms of the quality and duration of promotional incentives, appropriateness of compensation, active monitoring, and employer concern for the worker's well-being (Sarker, 2014b; Shabnam & Sarker, 2012; Nasurdin et al., 2001), but this is rarely the case in this sector (Sarker, 2014b; Shabnam

& Sarker, 2012; Nasurdin et al). HRM status remains mainly with outdated methods in operations of various organizations (Nadiv et al., 2017; Abdullah et al., 2011). It's because the vast majority of Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry are either family-owned or controlled by a small group of shareholders (Khan et al., 2015; Farooque et al., 2007; Mamun, 2008; Siddiqui, 2011).

Even though the clothes business fits under the prescribed category, the staffing strategy is far more casual than in Western countries. Many garment employees are powerless to stop job losses that occur without warning because there is no agreement or written letter in place. In addition, problems related to few issues like sexual harassment, workplace instability, and unequal payment of salaries, lower-wage shortfall, and endorsement policies also destabilize this sector. The job uncertainty in the RMG market is higher which in turn has got an adverse effect on the overall performance of this industry.

Hossain et al. (2019) study found that Bangladesh's RMG factories are facing high temporary labor crisis rates due to high and regular unemployment and absenteeism rates. According to this study, the key causes of high job turnover and poor organisational performance include heavy workload, poor line manager behaviour, inadequate skills, and low wage levels.

According to Rubel (2015), human resource development (HRD) is not present in RMG, even though it is crucial for organisational growth and success. Many garment factory employees do not receive performance evaluation, and wage rates do not match the cost of life. There is also wage and compensation disparity between male and female employees (Ahamed, 2014). Even though the government has set minimum wage rates for RMG workers, firms do not follow them, and law enforcement does not enforce

them (Absar, 2001; Ahamed, 2014; Rimi, 2014). The experience of deprivation has a favourable relationship with the decline in their work performance.

Private sector enterprises in Bangladesh hire employees without conducting standardised assessments or interviews (Khan, 2017; Chowdhury & Mahmood, 2012; Uddin & Choudhury, 2008) and pay little attention to employee training, negatively impacting the industry's overall performance (Belal & Owen, 2007; Mahmood & Akhter, 2011).

A survey of 4,000 Bangladesh industrial units showed that a minimum wage had been introduced by only 20 percent of employers (Hasan, 2019). As a matter of course, no compensation frameworks or performance appraisal (PA) programs are practiced by private sector organizations. It is handled inconsistently by companies that follow annual performance appraisal practices, creating employee frustration (Chowdhury & Mahmood, 2012).

Employees' career pathways in Bangladesh are not promising due to the limited reach of garment workers' multi-skilling (Hossan, et al., 2012b). According to Rubel (2015), the absence of Human Resource Development (HRD) tasks in RMG is critical for organisational development.

Often existing workers of the garment industries in Bangladesh face additional workload due to labor shortages, eventually reducing job satisfaction and work performance (Sarkar & Afroza, 2014). It is important to note that employee satisfaction is the primary factor for success in the company. RMG employees' unrest has been prevalent in Bangladesh because of inconsistent pay.

Although the Bangladesh government has set minimum wage rates for RMG workers, not all clothing factory owners and employers adhere to them, and the