



Original Article

Work Related Quality of Life of Female Garment Workers

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Abstract

Background: Readymade Garment (RMG) was the key source of earning foreign currencies and had been playing a vital role in creating employment opportunity for the rural marginal people since long. This study explored the work related quality of life of female garment workers.

Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted during July 2016 to June 2017 and data were collected from 400 female garment workers through face to face interview by using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Results: The average age of the garment workers was 23.09 years. Most (86%) of the workers had some level of education and only 14% had no formal education. The workers' minimum and maximum monthly income was BDT 8500 and BDT 33500 respectively. Most of them agreed that they had good infrastructure, sanitation and safety facilities in the work place. All the workers (100%) were satisfied with job facilities and majority (72%) had a clear understanding about goals and aims to do their job at workplace. The workers also had positive impression about the issues related to job satisfaction and working condition. The study also discussed about the sexual issues. 6%, 7% and 9% of the female workers agreed respectively that they were sexually abused in the job, by the co-workers and by the supervisors. Most of the workers agreed to the statement that this job helped them to maintain a good quality of life and they were more respected in the family and society. Educational status, monthly income, infrastructure, sanitation and health safety facilities were statistically significant with the work related quality of life ($p = <0.05$).

Conclusion: The study recommended improving workplace health facilities, needling based health care services, effective safety measures, providing periodic training programs, long term work provision and incentives for good work and opportunity for promotion.

Keywords: RMG (Readymade Garment), WRQoL (Work Related Quality of Life), BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association)

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Introduction

Readymade Garment (RMG) is the leading sector in Bangladesh in terms of employment and earning foreign currencies.¹ The industry represents 75 percent of Bangladesh's exports and employs up to 4 million people and it is the greatest contributor to GDP growth.² At present

Bangladesh exports RMG to about 30 countries around the world.³ RMG plays an important role in generating employment opportunities for the rural illiterate women; otherwise they had to work as maid servant.⁴ RMG opened a new door for rural people, especially women to engage themselves into the economic activities of Bangladesh. It involves job security, good working conditions,

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adequate and fair compensation and equal employment opportunity all together.⁵

WRQoL ensures better quality of life of workers through fulfillment of higher needs and usages of knowledge, skills, and abilities.⁶ Only 12% of employee turnover happens due to salary and 38% staff turnover is related to working environment and quality life at work place.⁷

Work related quality of life is the essential concept of favorable situations in a working environment. A good work related quality of life reduces absenteeism, accidents & attrition. Work related quality of life is useful to improve production, organizational effectiveness, morale of an employee and economic development of the country.⁸

Materials and Methods

This cross sectional study was conducted to assess the work-related quality of life of female garment workers in a selected garment industry during July 2016 to June 2017 by using a semi-structured questionnaire to gather quantitative information from the female garment workers.

400 female garment workers were systematic randomly selected for this study from GMS Composite Knitting Industries, Gazipur. The workers were enrolled who voluntarily participated in this study through written informed consent and whose age was 18+. Data was collected through face-to-face interview. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of User Manual for the Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale. Developed questionnaire was pretested in the field and finalized before conducting the study.

Study Result:

Demographic Information: Demographic variables like age, marital and educational status, monthly income, sanitary condition, job duration has significant role on healthy economical and productive life. In this study these variables were positively and significantly associated with work related quality of life.

Table 1: Demographic information (n400):

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Age in years	18-23	240	60
	24-29	114	28.5
	30-35	30	7.5
	36-41	16	4
Marital status	Married	241	60.25
	Unmarried	86	21.5
	Divorced	65	16.25
Educational status	No education	57	14.25
	Primary education	103	25.75
	Secondary education	217	54.25
	Higher education	23	5.75
Monthly income (BDT)	8,000-13,000	244	61
	13,001-18,000	103	25.75
	18,001-25,000	41	10.25
	25,000+	12	3
Sanitation condition	Excellent	42	10.5
	Good	244	61
	Average	86	21.5
	Poor	28	7
Job duration (in years)	1—5	157	39.25
	6—10	143	35.75
	11—15	64	16
	16+	36	9

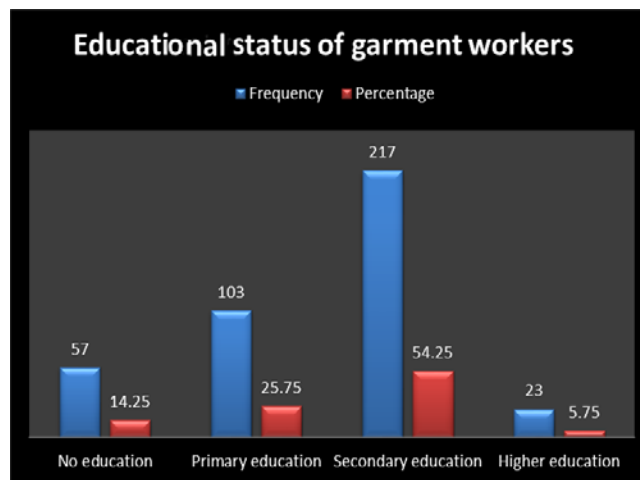
Mean age 23.09 years.
Age limit 18-41 years

Mean income; BDT
11,931.
Minimum BDT 8,500.
Maximum BDT 33,500.

Educational status of the garment workers:

A nation's improvement and quality of life depends mostly on their educational background particularly in their workplace. It has got tremendous role to increase their working capability by applying their academic and practical knowledge towards their work to recent improvised machineries. This study identified that 54% had secondary, 26% primary and only 6% of the workers had higher level of educational background. 14% (54/400) had no formal education. It was found that education had significant association with the work related quality of life.

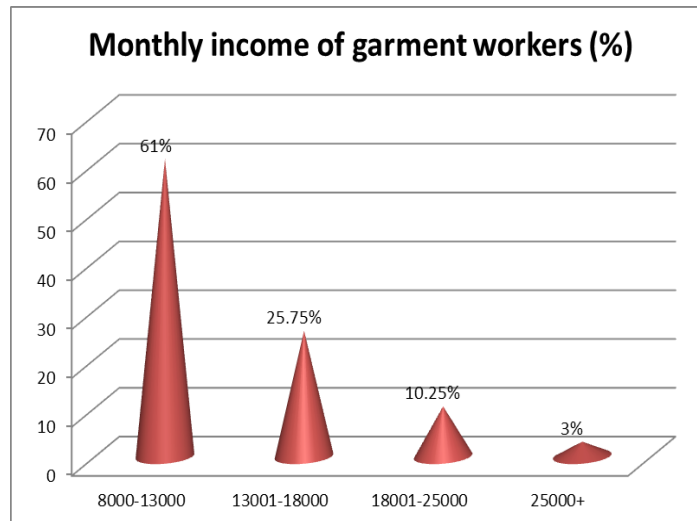
Figure 1: Educational status of the female garment workers



Monthly income of the female garment workers:

Wage is a large contributing factor for maintaining a clean and satisfactory peaceful life. It not only gives them mental satisfaction but also helps them to lead a healthy and economically productive quality of life. In this study average monthly income of the female garment workers was BDT 11,931; with a minimum income of BDT-8,000 and maximum was BDT 33,500 and it had significant association with their work related quality of life.

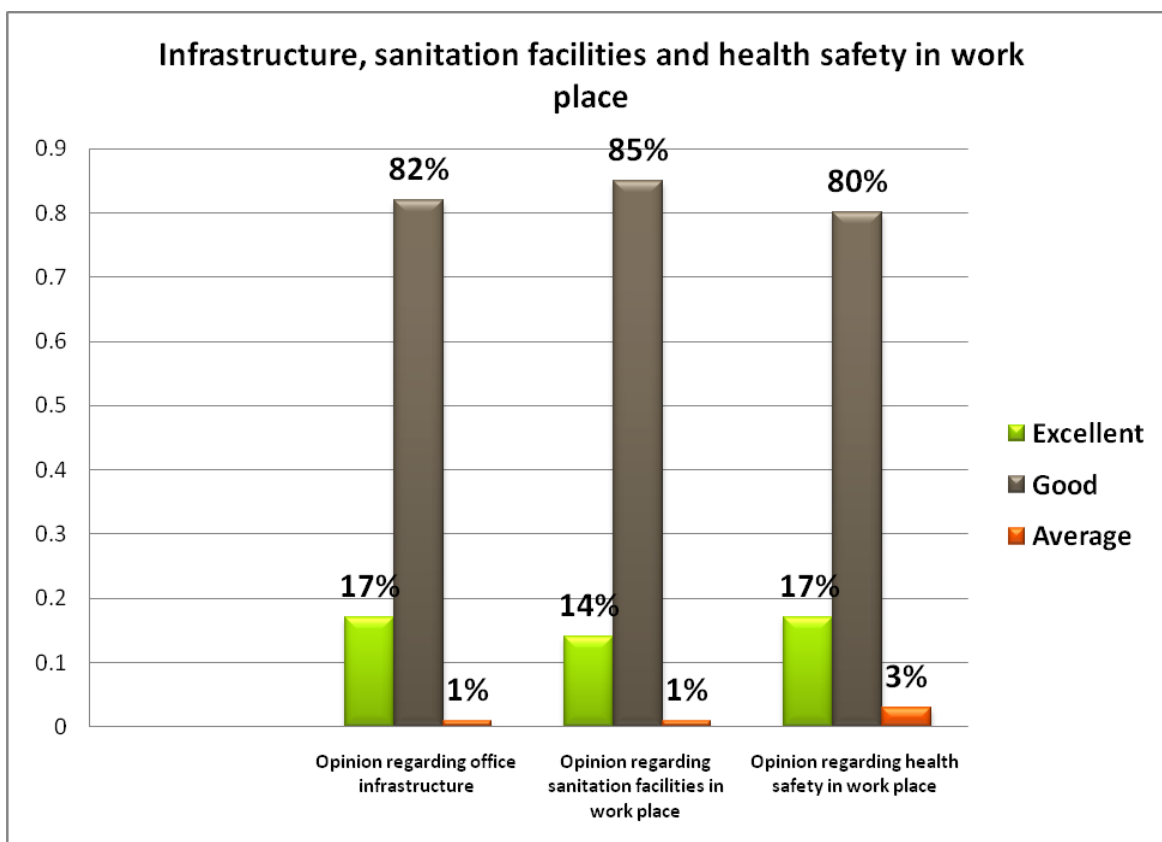
Figure 2: Monthly income of the female garment workers



Infrastructure, sanitation facilities and health safety in workplace:

A good working environment and quality of life mostly depends on firm infrastructure, surrounding hygienic sanitation facilities and proper health safety in their workplace. In this study female garment workers were asked the opinion regarding infrastructure, sanitation and health safety facilities in the work place and data showed that most of them gave positive opinion regarding these facilities and it was significantly associated with work related quality of life.

Figure 3: Opinion regarding infrastructure, sanitation facilities and health safety in work place



Job facilities at work place:

Regarding job facilities in the workplace, most had a positive opinion about these issues. All the (100%) female garment workers told that they had job facilities in the work place. Almost all agreed that they had positive supervision system, opportunity for promotion and opportunity for sick and maternity leave.

Table 2: Job facilities at work place

Variable	Yes	No	total
Positive supervision by supervisor	399 (100%)	1 (.25%)	400 (100%)
Opportunity for promotion	391 (98%)	9 (2%)	400 (100%)
Opportunity for leave (sick/casual)	376 (96%)	24 (6%)	400 (100%)
Opportunity for maternity leave	340 (85%)	60 (15%)	400 (100%)

Working environment in work place:

To demonstrate the work-related quality of life, it was asked questions related to their skills, motivation and understanding about the job. Majority 72% (289) of them had a clear understanding about the goals and aims to do their job. Others also gave positive opinion in respect to various issues given below.

Table 3: Working environment in workplace

Variable	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I have a clear set of goals and aims to do my job	289 (72)	38 (10)	73 (18)
I able to voice opinions & influence in my area of work	253 (63)	67 (16)	80 (20)
I have the opportunity to use my abilities at work	262 (65)	95 (24)	43 (11)
I am encouraged to develop new skills	291 (73)	43 (11)	66 (16)
Generally things work out well for me	245 (61)	107 (27)	48 (12)
I am satisfied with the training I received to perform my job	291 (73)	65 (16)	44 (11)
I feel well at the moment	270 (67)	79 (20)	51 (13)
I appreciated by the supervisor when I do excellent work	263 (66)	59 (15)	78 (19)
I have been feeling reasonable happy all things considered	310 (77)	54 (14)	36 (9)
I often feel under pressure at work	252 (63)	60 (15)	88 (22)
Recently, I have been feeling unhappy and depressed	71 (18)	61 (15)	268 (67)
Often feel excessive levels of stress of work	64 (16)	85 (21)	251 (62)

- Merged: Strongly agreed and disagreed as the number was too small

Job satisfaction regarding work related quality of life:

The work related quality of life also depends upon the facilities and opportunity that one gets from the job. Following data shows that majority of the female garment workers had positive impression about the issues related to job satisfaction, working condition and job facilities which they get from the employers.

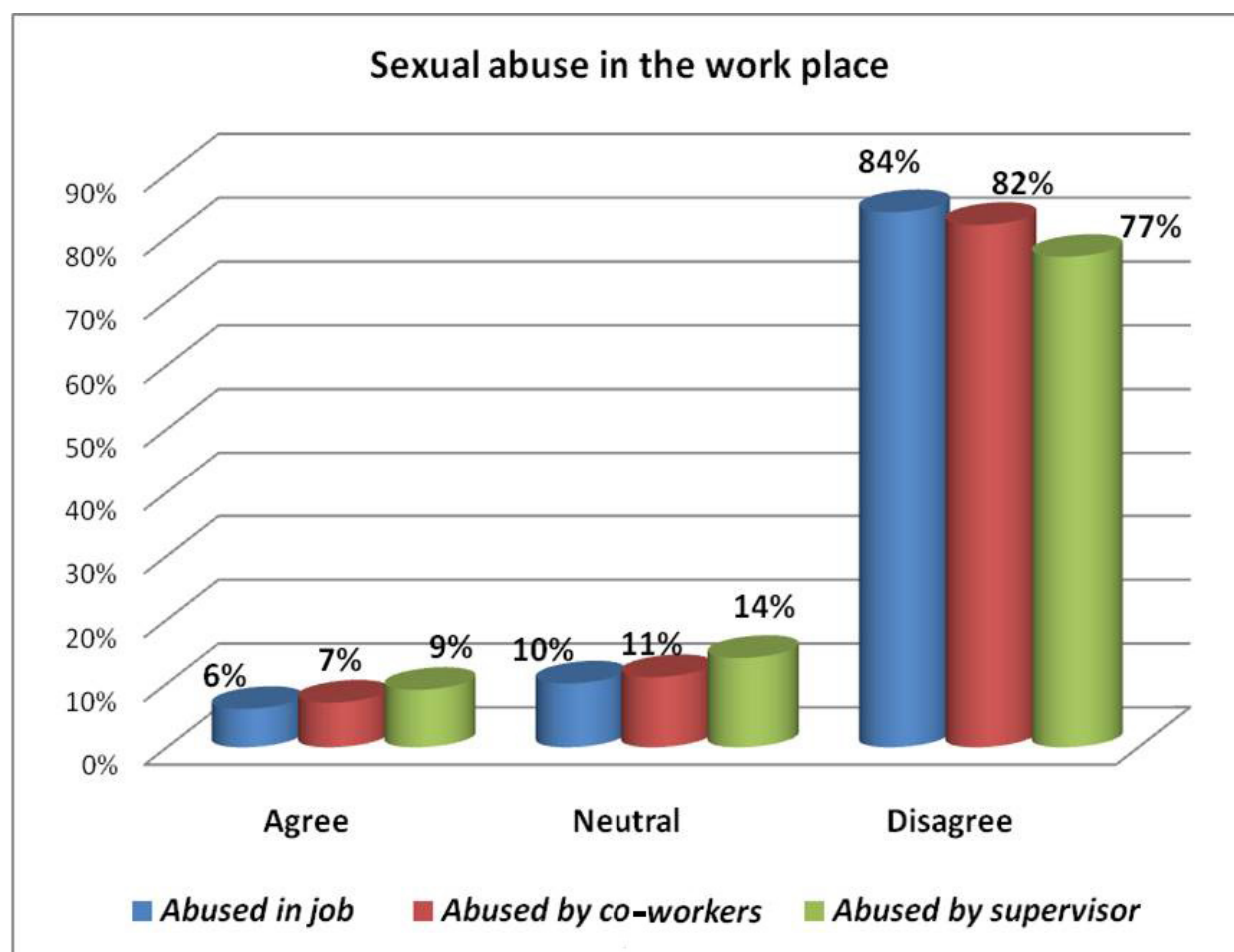
Table 4: Job satisfaction regarding work related quality of life

Variable	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I am involved in decisions that affect in my own area of work	92 (23)	53 (13)	255 (64)
My employer provides with what I need to do my job effectively	287 (72)	62 (15)	51 (13)
My line manager actively promotes flexible working hours/pattern	45 (11)	97 (24)	258 (65)
In most ways my is close to ideal	268 (67)	95 (24)	37 (9)
I work in a safe environment	265 (66)	104 (26)	31 (8)
I am satisfied with the career opportunities available for me here	260 (65)	81 (20)	59 (15)
The working conditions are satisfactory	325 (81)	49 (12)	26 (7)
I am involved in decisions that affect members of my own area of work	82 (21)	57 (14)	261 (65)
I am satisfied with the overall quality of my working life	292 (73)	75 (19)	33 (8)
My employer provides adequate facilities & flexibility to work in and family life	266 (66)	99 (25)	34 (9)
My current working hours suit my personal circumstances	238 (59)	102 (16)	60 (15)
I am satisfied with my life	276 (69)	75 (19)	49 (12)

Sexual abuse in the work place:

In large manufacturing industry like garment factory most of the workers are female and they are to work together with their male colleagues. Often they become embarrassed and at times verbally and physically abused by their male co-workers. According to this study, 6%, 7% and 9% of the garment workers were agreed that they were sexually abused in the job, by the co-workers and by the supervisors respectively.

Figure 4: Sexual abuse in the work place



Discussion

Bangladesh's garment industry was booming until the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse. This was a cross sectional study and conducted in a selected garment industry in Gazipur to determine work related quality of life of female garment workers. A total of 400 female garment workers were interviewed by using a semi-structured questionnaire constructed with Work Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale. These study

findings were discussed here comparing with other similar studies.

The study data showed that the workers were in between 18-41 years of age with a majority (60%) were in the age group of 18-23 years followed by 28.5% was in the age group 24-29 years. The rest 11.5% was from age group of 30-41 years. The garment workers in between of 18-30 years of age group were similar to another study.⁹

This study identified that most (85.75%) of the female garment workers had some level of education with 25.75% had primary, 54.25% had secondary and 5.75% workers had higher level of education. Only 14.25% female garment workers had no formal education. Another study identified similar female education and girls' enrollment rate in school.¹⁰

Income and work related quality of life had also close association. This study revealed that majority (61%) of the workers' monthly income was BDT 8,000-13,000 followed by 25.75% had BDT 13, 001-18,000, 10.25% had BDT 18001-25000 and rest 3% had monthly income BDT 25000+. The Mean monthly income of the female workers was BDT 11, 931. Recently BGMEA increased the salary of garment workers and this salary was quite similar with the new salary structure of Bangladesh sector workers.¹¹

The workers had great infrastructures (99%, excellent/good), sanitation (99%, excellent/good) and health safety (97%, excellent/good) facilities in their work place. No one reported that the office/ factory infrastructure, sanitation and safety facilities were poor or very poor. This study finding was a bit different from some other studies. Some study reported that factory infrastructure, sanitation facilities were not good.¹²

All (100%) the garment workers were satisfied with job facilities and majority (72%) had a clear understanding about their job at workplace. They agreed that they had positive supervision by the supervisor and opportunity for promotion. Almost all workers had positive impression related to job satisfaction, working condition and they could work in a good working environment.¹²

This study also focused on sexual abuses and reproductive health issues of garment workers and according to data 84% (337/400) of the study participants disagreed that they were sexually abused in the working place, 82% disagreed that they were abused sexually by the co-workers and 77% disagreed to the statement that they were sexually abused by the supervisor. So sexual abuse was not significant in this study but a study conducted by Dr. Dina Siddique revealed that

sexual abuse rate was higher among female garment worker.¹³

Conclusion

The garment industry contributes a very good support to the economy of our country. RMG is the leading sector of Bangladesh in terms of employment, production and foreign exchange earnings.

This cross sectional study was conducted among the female garment workers to assess their work related quality of life. Majority of the workers were from rural areas and married. In this study, it was found that infrastructure, sanitation and workplace health safety was positively and significantly associated to their work related quality of life. Demographic variables like education and monthly family income also had significant association. Total work related quality of life score showed positive relationship with age of the workers, monthly family income and job duration and it was statistically significant correlation. The study recommended improving the workplace health facilities, enhancing safety measures, providing periodic training programs and increasing opportunity for promotion, gratuity and provident fund policy. It also recommended nationwide further study to know the real situation of work related quality of life of different garment industries.

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