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Employees Perception about HRM Practices in the Selected Retail Shops in Bangladesh

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between authors MARS and RA. Author MARS designed the study and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MARS managed the literature searches and reviews, analyses of the study performed. Author RA managed the experimental process, participated in data collection and assisted in revision and proof reading. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Retail business in metropolitan cities of Bangladesh is playing a significant role in community life. It is offering good number of employment at present, and this sector is booming due to huge business demand. Therefore, competition also rises in this sector. In order to retain good business position, practice of Human Resource Management (HRM) is getting more importance at present time. This study identifies existing HRM practices in retail shops in Bangladesh, and recommends its importance. Data for this study has been collected through four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) where total 125 retail workers and managers have been participated. This study identifies some employment related disputes and problems in retail sector. Some recommendations are made at the end to make the work practices more efficient.

Keywords: HRM practices; retail shops; business; Bangladesh; FGD.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Retailing business is forced to be competitive in this era of high market competition [1,2]. Retail business in metropolitan cities of Bangladesh is playing a significant role in community life. It is offering good number of employment at present, and this sector is booming due to huge business demand. Retail business is now getting more formalized in Bangladesh and it is playing significant role in the national economy [3]. According to BSOA (Bangladesh Supermarket Owner Association), retail chain stores in Bangladesh get 15%-20% annual growth in sales, and they claim that the annual turnover of the superstores now stand at the 15.0 billion approximately [3]. Therefore, competition also rises in retail sector of Bangladesh. In order to retain good business position, practice of Human Resource Management (HRM) is getting more important. HRM generates sustainable competitive advantages for business [1,4,5,6]. HRM is a relatively new concept in Bangladesh [6-8]. It was considered as a part of the administrative functions of an organization few years before. However, HRM is a recent concern in Bangladeshi corporate culture due to the entry into global market [9,10]. The present study identifies existing HRM practices in retail shops in Bangladesh, and recommends its importance. It also ascertains the problems and prospects in the implementation of HRM activities by selected retail business. This study brings an overview of HRM practices in retail shops which has huge growth prospect.

2. RETAIL SHOP BUSINESS AND ITS IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTORS

Retailing is an important element of business which consists of all activities that result in the offering for sale of merchandise to consumers for their own use [11]. It is the final step in bringing goods to consumer. Reddy and Chandra [2] state retail business as "Retailing may include services, such as product delivery. Buyers may be individuals or businesses; a retailer buys goods or products in large quantities from manufacturers or importers, either directly or through a wholesaler, and then sells in smaller quantities or lots to the end –users or consumers. Retailers are the end links of the supply chain as an important part of manufacturing/marketer overall distribution strategy". There are some important factors in retailing such as Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Product Quality and Customer Loyalty

[12]. Product quality, service quality and Customer loyalty all are related with the most important factor like customer satisfaction. Customer Satisfaction is very important factor in retail business because satisfied customers are likely to be loyal and repetitive buyers [13,14]. Moreover, consumer satisfaction and sales performance in retail store are interrelated. Therefore, appropriate policy should be developed to increase customer satisfaction as well as sales revenue.

Service quality and product quality are also equally important in retail business. There is a strong relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction that will influence the customer whether they will be loyal or not [15]. According to Imrie et al. [16], service quality is an important factor for customer. Appraisal of value, service quality refers two components such as technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality refers what is delivered and functional quality refers how it is delivered [17]. Service quality influences customer loyalty [18]. Product quality is the second most important factor for increasing customer loyalty [18,19]. Product quality is also defined as total features and characteristics of product and service that can satisfy the customer's needs [20]. Product quality is essential because good quality products and strong brand influence the customer purchasing decision [21]. Product quality is also known as a pre-requisite for customer satisfaction, repeat purchase and customer loyalty [22]. Moreover Shoppers' perception of product quality typically influences their value appraisal which can influence their level of satisfaction and loyalty [23]. Loyal customers are less likely to move to other competitors. Customer loyalty means a favorable attitude toward a company; commits repurchase the company's product and recommend the product to other [24]. Calculative commitment is based on rational motives. These important success factors in retailing (Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Product Quality and Customer Loyalty) can be managed efficiently only if employees are well managed [2,11,19]. Therefore, practices of HRM are essential in retail business.

3. RETAIL SHOP BUSINESS IN BANGLADESH

The concept of super shops in Bangladesh has been a revolutionary one since its inception in the late 1990s [11,9]. Earlier, there were no such shops available. 'Kaacha Bazars' (street shops)

were the only means of household shopping for people. Shopping there meant a lot of hassle with bargaining, untidy and unhealthy environment. After the super shops were introduced, things became so much easy for the consumers. They could get varieties of things all under the same roof at a price that is not too much more than the usual 'Kacha Bazar' price. Superstores and retail chain store are getting more popular among the urban people in Bangladesh [11]. Retail stores in Bangladesh are rising rapidly in the urban areas, especially in metro cities. These shops are trying to attract consumers to buy in large volume of products on weekly or monthly basis in a hassle-free comfortable shopping environment. Retailers are now offering newer services to create unique shopping experiences for the customers [12]. According to BSOA (Bangladesh Super Market Owner Association), retail chain stores in Bangladesh get about 20% annual growth in sales. BSOA also claims that the annual turnover of the superstores is about 15 billion taka [3]. There are some major retail chains in Bangladesh. These are Agora, Meena Bazar, Prince Bazar, Nandan, Swapno who have their own blends of offerings to attract segments of consumers. There are some attractive features of these stores. These are hassle free shopping, hygiene and clean shopping environment, quality product, fair price right and wider product assortment and superior store service [3]. Online shopping facility from retail shops is another revolutionary in retail business in Bangladesh.

4. IMPORTANCE OF HRM PRACTICES IN RETAIL SHOPS OF BANGLADESH

Human Resources are very important for any business, as without employees no business organization can fully run its operation. Employees are key part of the retail business and they are directly dealing with customers where employee's effort will mostly determine business success [23]. In addition to this, it can be said that the satisfied employees will perform well and happy employees will make happy customers [10,25]. HRM activities are important in retail business for proving its ability to satisfy its consumers, to create profitability, to provide better services, to help the economy to grow instantly, to improve the workforce and finally to ensure the success of the organizations [26]. The study of Reddy and Chandra [2] found that there are many differences in the implementation of Human Resource (HR) practices in the selected organized retailers. These are unhappy

employees with incentive plans, lack of employee facilities and benefits, poor work environment and poor relation between employee and employer. Moreover, retail business faces the challenges which include high attrition rate and absenteeism everywhere [2,11]. It was found that the HRM practices in the selected retail outlets are still in the initial stages of development in Bangladesh [11,17,19]. The present retail organizations which are performing as organized retailing in Bangladesh are facing huge challenges in procuring, retaining and maintaining good employees [12,17]. Therefore, effective manpower planning, recruitment, motivation and retention are essential for maintaining operational smoothness and for consistent service to the customers. The growing needs of retail industry in Bangladesh can be coordinated with the aggressive HR practices.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The primary data for this study has been collected through four Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) from the sample respondents of total 125 (both managerial and non managerial employees) from four different retail companies in Bangladesh between August, 2014 and January, 2015. All the retail shops for this study are selected from Dhaka city (capital of Bangladesh) where more formalized retail shops are established. The sample respondents in the FGDs include the Guest Service Attendant, Floor Supervisor, Cashier, Grocery & Household Service Assistant, Store Manager, Service Assistant, Porter, Bakery and Fast food Service Assistant and Sales Personnel (See Table 1 in the Appendix). While selecting sample size of the respondents, convenient sampling method is applied. Data Collected through FGDs is a qualitative approach where synergy of the discussion was noted down and coded on each single issue for systematic analysis [8,27,28], [29,30]). All the FGDs were 2 hour long where respondents shared their opinion on the subject matters, and the discussions have been tape recorded with the full consent of the respondents. Only the important issues raised by the respondents are used in analysis part, and these were taken from the discussion note and the tape recorded data. The secondary data is collected from the annual reports of selected organizations, news papers, magazines and articles pertaining to the HRM activities in the retail shop industry. During this study, several retail shops have been visited in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet (three metropolitan cities

in Bangladesh). Experiences through the observations are also included in analysis part to support the findings of the FGDs.

6. CURRENT HRM PRACTICES IN RETAIL SHOPS OF BANGLADESH (FINDINGS FROM FGDs)

Major issues related with HRM practices have been discussed with the participants in the FGDs, and the findings are stated below. Participant and the FGDs details are mentioned in Table 1 in the Appendix part.

6.1 Relationship among Employees

Maintaining interpersonal relationship among employees is important for the employers, as it is the basis for workplace to grow and sustain (F2:1). It is quite essential to have a healthy and friendly work environment. Work place with conflict among employees will affect the quality of job performance and reduce morale (F4:4). However, some employees (both managerial and non-managerial) in retail shop have got the attitude to behave like superior, and they often do not cooperate (F3:3; F3:1). Shop managers often discriminate the subordinates in case of giving overtime (which gives workers extra pay and it is demanded by many employees), flexibility and extra time off (F2:5), and this leads to conflict among employees. Therefore, it is important to improve the interpersonal relationship among the employees, and the initiative should be taken by the management authority to reduce the disputes and discriminations (F3:3, F3:1).

6.2 Work Load and Time

According to Bangladesh Labor Code (2006), minimum work hour per week is decided for the employees and it is mentioned that the working hour should not exceed 42 hours (F3:4). But, the employee's weekly working hour exceeds 55 to 60 hours in retail shops in Bangladesh (F1:2). Employees are ready to do overtime if they are paid, but in practice they are not paid anything extra (F2:3). Sometimes employees are paid for their overtime but that is not sufficient and inequitable in comparison to their work efforts (F4:3). Again they cannot choose any extra hour when they need some extra income in a particular month. If the shop manager asks only

then retail workers can go for extra hour work (F3:2).

6.3 Knowledge and Education Level of Employees

Education is essential both in personal and professional life in a number of significant ways. The level of education is the paramount to future success and prosperity. Advanced levels of education help one to have a drive and commitment to learn and apply information, ideas, theories, and formulas to achieve a variety of tasks and goals. That is why every job has separate specification. The jobs of a cashier and a sales person are not the same in retail shop. A cashier in retail shop must have good skills in operating computer and retail software, billing and customer service, but very few of them are efficient in these activities (F2:2, F4:2). On the other hand, a sales person in retail shop should have good knowledge on products and customer services, high level of tolerance, convincing the buying decision (F1:5, F4:5). However, the sales persons often do not hold good knowledge on product's brand, attributes and uses which often affect on sales revenue (F3:3, F4:5).

6.4 Work Stress

Employees experience a heavy workload for many reasons in retail industry, including tight deadlines, layoffs that have caused staff shortages and unplanned company growth that has created more work for the same staff (F1:5, F3:4). A heavy workload requires a manager to be more of a taskmaster and less of a supportive coach (F4:3). The manager spends a great deal of his time scheduling work hours, reporting to upper management and doing the minimal tasks to keep production moving smoothly. This may break down the relationship between managers and employees, and can lead to other issues such as low morale and high turnover. For example: Overload of work creates problem among employees and supervisor (F4:1).

A heavy workload causes stress, which leads a series of other health problems. The stress of dealing with a nonstop flow of work can lead to heart problems, high blood pressure, loss of sleep and loss of appetite (F2:3, F3:3, F4:3). The company may see its health insurance costs go up while watching employee production go down. The health issues caused by a heavy workload can often outweigh any benefits that may come

from maintaining a high level of output. Most of the workers of superstores face the problem of headache because of heavy workload (F2:1). According to the participants, employees feel exhausted when work load is high and their service quality goes down (F1:4, F2:3, F4:3). Anger is another expression of their high work load (F3:5) Employees exposed to a heavy workload can sometimes become disgruntled with their work. This is especially true if the job is repetitive without offering any kind of variety (F2:3, F4:3). This phenomenon is often referred to as being burned out by a job and it can lead to some significant effects such as low morale, high turnover and violence in the workplace (F2:5, F3:5, F4:1). Frustrated employees may find themselves lashing out at each other, which can create an uncomfortable and unproductive workplace (F4:2). Employees working under the stress of a heavy workload can make mistakes, however, and the quality control personnel who are also feeling the workload stress can make those mistakes (F1:3, F3:4). Because of the work load they sometimes dissatisfy the customers with services (F2:5).

6.5 Job Turnover and Absenteeism

Employers who experience a high level of turnover not only incur financial ramifications, but may also cultivate a poor work environment (F3:3). Employee turnover can occur for a variety of reasons, many of which can be controlled by the employer. Job stress is one of the most significant reasons of job turnover in retail shops (F2:2). The stress may become even more pronounced if the employee feels the compensation received is not satisfactory (F4:4). Lack of job security is another reason of job turnover in retail sectors of Bangladesh (F1:3; F3:3; F4:4). Most of the times, employees leave their jobs as the payment is not good enough, their opinions are not considered, and work feedback is not given to the employees on time (F2:2, F3:1).

6.6 Job Security

Job security is the most important factor for an employee to work in an organization. If the position of an employee is secured in an organization, he or she feels relief to work. However, most of the retail workers work on contingency basis where they do not have permanent job offer (F4:5, F2:2). Workers performance is always influenced by job security (F2:2). Most of the employees participated in the

FGDs have been working in the retail stores for less than 2 year, and they leave their retail job whenever they get permanent job offer outside (F2:3).

6.7 Motivational Activities

A motivated employee is key to success, so employees continually look for those activities and behaviors from employers that will encourage them (F1:2). Although monetary reward is often thought to be the best employee motivator, it rarely stands on its own. Humans crave other forms of recognition to stay upbeat, motivated and focused (F4:3). Working in a team is very important to work in a super store, as coordination is highly required in serving the customer (F2:3, F1:3, F3:1, F3:4). Team building session to make all known to each other is sometime more effective for better work coordination (F1:4). Almost all the retail stores in Bangladesh now maintain a particular dress code for the employees to make them uniformed and work as a team (F2:3). Recognition for a job well done does not necessarily come in the form of pay raise or bonus. A verbal thank you often is good enough to recognize one for a good effort (F3:4), F4:5). The employees also think that good work should be recognized quickly and emphatically, but it is not always done properly (F1:5, F2:4, F4:5). To work in a retail store, it is very important to get support from the supervisor. The supervisor gives them suggestion to improve performance (F3:2). Their support seems like an inspiration to the workers (F1:2). An employee needs to feel good about the job he is doing. He will find more success at his job if he is well-trained in his position. Training should be ongoing and updated whenever a change occurs. However, employees hardly go through a training program after recruitment and before joining (F2:3, F1:4). Employees spend a good portion of the day in their work place. So a well organized and spacious work place is a motivation to them. But, most of the retail stores have less or even no space for worker's dining and rest areas (F3:2; F4:5; F4:1).

6.8 Staff Hiring and Promotion

Employees can be recruited both internally and externally in retail shops. For the entry level job or for the lower position, the organizations go for both external and internal recruitment. But the recruitment of trainee officer requires external hiring and this is because of the availability of

larger pool of workers from which it is easy to find the best candidate. Also the outside people bring in new ideas for the organization. Internal recruitment takes place mostly for moderate and top level of jobs. This is basically for the jobs of manager and supervisor. Internal recruitment is preferred because it is cheaper and quicker to recruit. Also the existing people are already familiar with the organization and its environment and the organization already knows the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates (F2:3, F3:3). Most of the time, supervisors are promoted to the next level for further growth and prosperity (F3:1). Internal recruitment is done through promoting the potential workers (F1:1). Promotion is given to the workers based on educational qualification and experiences (F4:4). Workers also get promotion based on their performance (F3:2). However, some retail shop managers prefer to hire the cashier and salesman from his own choice (F1:1, F3:2, F4:4). Biasness also works in promotional decision (F1:2, F4:1).

6.9 Performance Appraisal

People differ in their abilities and their aptitudes. There is always some difference between the quality and quantity of the same work on the same job being done by two different people. Performance appraisal helps the employees to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and it gives the direction to individual performance (F3:3). Performance appraisal takes into account the past performance of the employees and focuses on the improvement of the future performance of the employees (F2:3). Giving feedback to employee's work and assistance for future improvement are common issues in superstore management (F3:3). Performance appraisal is done quarterly or half yearly in retail to keep the employees up to date about their performance (F1:4, F1:2, F2:1). However, this is not equally practices in all retail shops (F2:2; F 2: 3; F 4:3).

6.10 Compensation and Other Benefits

Employees are encouraged to work better if they are well paid at the end of the month (F3:2). Almost all the employees have dissatisfaction with the payment they get (F1:1, F1:2, F1:4, F2:2, F2:4, F2:5, F3:1, F3:2, F3:4, F4:1, F4:3, F4:5). Workers do not get enough leave and sometimes they have to work in the weekend without premier pay which is against the labor

right (F1:3, F4:5). If they are absent for even a day, they need to lose something from their salary amount (F1:2). In case of reward, only the best performer is rewarded after performance appraisal in every three months, but it is not often done fairly (F2:3). Pay for performance is not practiced well in retail though sales revenue increases if workers get bonus or commission (F4:2). There is no retirement benefits provided to the employees which often encourage people not to work in retail for long run (F1:4, F1:5, F3:3, F4:5).

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although the retail sector in Bangladesh is growing in recent time, it requires improving its HRM activities significantly. The current study reveals that the employees in retail sector feel stress in their job because of heavy workload and long working hours. Most of the retailers are not offering flexible work schedule. Paid leaves and work benefits of the employees (including financial pay) are not sufficient enough for their livelihood. There is a lack of job security that increases absenteeism and job turnover relatively high. Retail workers get few formal training at work, and their work interests are also less. Moreover, employees get limited opportunities to develop their career in retail sector and they are dissatisfied with their job. Therefore, it is essential for the retailers to focus immediately on their HRM activities in order to retain good employees for further growth and success of this business. After the careful consideration of the findings, following suggestions are made for further improvement of HRM practices in retail sector of Bangladesh:

- ✓ Compensation package of the employees in retail should be revised so that, pay can be good enough for a standard of living. In order to attract good employees, there should have a competitive pay package in retail sector.
- ✓ Performance evaluation of the employees should be done on a regular basis, and employees should be rewarded for their good performance.
- ✓ Retail companies should introduce relevant job training for their employees, so that workers become skilled for achieving the goal of the business. Employee training will also ensure good services to the retail customers, and it will bring more business through customer satisfaction and improved service quality.

- ✓ Interpersonal relationship between employees and employers should be improved for better work motivation.
- ✓ There should have standard working hour for retail workers, and flexibility should be given to them for balancing work and family life.
- ✓ Finally, work motivation needs to be improved through the reduction of work stress, adoption of competitive salary package, ensuring career growth and promotion.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. List of participants in FGDs

Retail-1		Retail-2		Retail-3		Retail-4	
SL/Code	Designation	SL/Code	Designation	SL/Code	Designation	SL/Code	Designation
F.1.1	GSA (Guest Service Assistant)	F.2.1	Floor Supervisor	F.3.1	Floor Supervisor	F.4.1	Floor Supervisor
F.1.2	Cashier	F.2.2	Cashier	F.3.2	Cashier	F.4.2	Cashier
F.1.3	Grocery & Household Service Assistant	F.2.3	Store Manager or Service Assistant	F.3.3	Store Manager or Service Assistant	F.4.3	Store Manager or Service Assistant
F.1.4	Porter	F.2.4	Monitor	F.3.4	Monitor	F.4.4	Monitor
F.1.5	Bakery and Fast food Service Assistant	F.2.5	Sales(cosmetics, fast food)	F.3.5	Sales(fish and meat)	F.4.5	Sales (cosmetics, fish and meat, fast food)

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