

Motivation, Hygiene Factors, and Cross-Cultural Dynamics: A Study of Employee Perceptions in Chinese Owned Ready-Made Garments (RMG) Industries in Bangladesh

Ping Liu¹, Aman Hossain^{2*}

¹ College of International Communications, School of Foreign Studies, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, China

² Department of International & Regional Studies, School of Foreign Studies, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, China

Email Address

libby@ctgu.edu.cn (Ping Liu), hossainaman445@gmail.com (Aman Hossain)

*Correspondence: hossainaman445@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study explores the interplay of motivation factors, hygiene factors and cultural dimensions towards job satisfaction level among employees of Chinese-owned ready-made garment (RMG) industries in Bangladesh; Based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, the present research uses a quantitative survey design comprising 150 respondents from different factory departments. To analyze the data, DP descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, ANOVA and techniques of regression were used. Findings indicate that hygiene factors (salary, job security and working conditions) are very important in preventing dissatisfaction but not effective in increasing satisfaction in general. With weak to moderate positive relationships with satisfaction, such intrinsic motivators as recognition and achievement show that these factors' influence depends on a conducive work environment. The cultural dimensions fixed and the collective values were noted to have moderate effect on employee perceptions. However these factors were not significant predictors of job satisfaction in regression models with the model accounting for only 1.9% of the variation. The study demonstrates the weak predictive validity of traditional job satisfaction models in cross-cultural industrial settings, demonstrating the impact of unmeasured psychological and organizational factors, such as, autonomy, style of leadership, and communication climate. Practical implications include the requirement for participative management style, the culturally sensitive leadership and the integrated HR policy to improve satisfaction in the foreign owned enterprises. The research makes a contribution to the cross-cultural management literature and provides practical findings to multinational firms that operate in the Bangladeshi RMG sector.

Keywords:

Bangladesh RMG Sector, Chinese-owned Enterprises, Job Satisfaction, Cross-cultural Management

1. Introduction

This research examines the factors that determine job satisfaction among workers of the Chinese-owned Ready-made garment (RMG) industries in Bangladesh in specific terms of the combination effects of motivational factors, hygiene factors and cross-cultural dynamics. The theoretical background is based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory [1], prioritizing job-related values as intrinsic motivators and extrinsic hygiene factors in terms of power distance and collectivism, two cultural aspects important for Chinese managerial styles and the Bangladeshi work culture.

Bangladesh's RMG sector has long been a very significant part of the country's economy accounting for more than 84 % of its export earnings and more than four million hands in the industry [2,3]. Such dissatisfaction among workers, which continues to grow due to low salaries, poor working conditions, poor upward mobility, as well as poor management practices which are culturally mismatched, has caused high turnover and recurrent troubles from labor unions [4,5,6]. Although such issues are extensively documented, very few studies have made an attempt to systematically analyze how the motivational and cultural aspects interact with each other to determine the level of satisfaction of employees in foreign owned industrial environments.

F. Herzberg [1] presents the fact that such hygiene factors as remuneration and work security were necessary to remove dissatisfaction but true satisfaction was found in motivators, such as recognition and achievement. At the same time, G. Hofstede [7] states that cultural traits, including acceptance of hierarchies (high power distance), and focus on group harmony (collectivism), shape the behavior of the workplace powerfully. In the case of Chinese-owned RMG firms, where a top-down approach could differ from collectivist labor demands, these cultural deficiencies can become yet another form of partial dissatisfiers to the employees [8,9].

But surprisingly, preliminary results of this research indicate surprisingly weak statistical relationships between job satisfaction and the studied independent variables. The regression model explains 1.9% of the variance in job satisfaction and therefore indicates the current lack of theory may not suit complex cross-cultural contexts [9] [10]. This highlights the need to take on other constructs (organizational justice, psychological contract, leadership style, and employee voice) that might mediate or moderate the witnessed relationships [11].

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

(1) How do employees in Chinese-owned RMG industries perceive various motivation factors such as recognition, achievement, and career development opportunities?

(2) To what extent do hygiene factors like salary, job security, and working conditions influence job satisfaction?

(3) How do cultural dimensions—especially power distance and collectivism—affect employees' perceptions of their work environment and overall satisfaction?

The study intends to answer these questions and, in the process, would reveal the likely factors that fuel employee satisfaction in foreign firms' RMG industries in Bangladesh while shedding greater light on creating workplace outcomes through cross cultural dynamics in global business settings.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Literature Review

The Ready-Made garments (RMG) is the nerve center of Bangladesh's economy accounting for 84% of export earnings and employing 4 million workers – mostly women [2,3]. In spite of its importance in the economy, the industry is marred by a chronic labor discontent, structural exploitation and managerial inadequacies. There is a huge body of literature that has dealt with these issues, noting low wages, extended working hours and poor working factory conditions as the key sources of grievances [4,12,13].

From the studies, hygiene factors such as lack of safety measures, [14] the lack of job security [15], lack of job security [15] and gender-based violence [16] further increases the vulnerability of workers especially women. Factors-centric of motivation such as recognition, career growth, and communication are under-developed in foreign-managed firms [9,17]. For instance, D. Hossan, et al. [18] report that leadership style and lack of employee engagement erode the intrinsic motivation of RMG employees; in particular Chinese-managed factories.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory has been greatly used in RMG-oriented studies and confirming that if hygiene factors diminish dissatisfactory behaviors, the actual satisfaction will come from the intrinsic motivators [19,20,1]. However, research like that by M. M. Mowla, K. Hasan, et al. [5,21] indicate that perhaps both sets of factors are often missing or overlooked in the context of the RMG, which explains chronic dissatisfaction and high levels of turnover.

Cultural dimensions also play a very critical role. The power asymmetries and collectivist inclinations have been studied in workplace settings in applying Hofstede's theory [7]. In Bangladesh and China, where there is high power distance culture, hierarchical management styles have been known to deter worker feedback which impacts job morale and satisfaction; [8,9,22] further show how social stressors – restricted voice and limited group support – are detrimental in collectivist work contexts where they are accompanied by top-down leadership.

Aspects of ownership nationality and management style are receiving more attention with the emerging literature. Research indicates that Chinese owned RMG factories in Bangladesh tend to import centralized managerial structures that are not suitable for labor character in the region leading to increased cultural incongruity [23,15]. Findings of research conducted by D. Hossan, K. Khanom, M. T. Islam, et al. [24,25] highlight the importance for culturally-adjusted HR policies that would settle motivational and hygiene expectations of the workers.

Moreover, policy analysis reveals the deficit in institutional enforcement of the rights of the labor. Post-Rana Plaza reforms have made safety audits better, but implementation is still inconsistent [26,27]. Researchers show that participatory committees and integrated safety should be implemented to improve accountability in the workplace [28,16].

This review identifies a great lack in the research that has been conducted per se on Chinese ownership structures in Bangladesh's RMG industry. The vast majority of previous work has presumed a homogeneous RMG sector and the factors that shape job satisfaction by firm nationality and embedded cultural practices have been ignored.

This research intends to bridge that gap by conducting a systematic review of how motivational, hygiene and cultural factors work together in Chinese owned factories.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Two seminal models form the basis of this study. Motivation and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. These frameworks collectively guide the analysis of job satisfaction of employees in Chinese-owned RMG factories operating within the face of socio-cultural Bangladesh.

2.2.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory was first developed back in 1959 and was later improved in 1966; two groups of work-related factors are distinguished here; motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators such as achievement, recognition, responsibility and personal advancement are inherent in the job and are satisfied as genuine and not as "false hopes". Hygiene factors such as salary, job security, working conditions and company policies are on the other hand extrinsic and only act an inducement to avoid dissatisfaction [1].

This bifurcation indicates, that absence of dissatisfaction is not equivalent to satisfaction and the importance of addressing both sets of factors in the process of managing the workforce. Regional wage, insufficient acknowledgement, and career development opportunities are still an impediment to motivation and retention in the context of Bangladesh's RMG sector [4,29]. Herzberg theory is particularly applicable in the context of the split personalities of industrial labor behavior in developing economies where health effects of labor dominate policy discourse while intrinsic motivators remain largely unexplored.

Other studies in similar fields have shown that enhanced hygiene conditions do help curb complaints but rarely translate to productivity or commitment unless supported by motivational boosters [30,5]. This theoretical lens thus allows for a refined examination of whether organizational arrangements in Chinese owned factories can provide for these two paths to satisfaction.

2.2.2. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory [7] warrants a systematic method of how the national culture affects in the workplace behavior. This study is largely concerned with two dimensions; Power Distance and Collectivism versus Individualism.

Power Distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept (or tolerate) hierarchical order where unequal power distribution is their normal expectation. Decentralized decision-making and employee voice and participation may be inhibited in high power distance cultures with centralized decision-making and obedience to authority as in cases of China and Bangladesh [8,7]. This dimension is highly relevant in Chinese-managed factories, where top-down styles of management may run counter to local mental models regarding informal, relational ways of working.

On the other hand, collectivism demonstrates the prevalence over individual initiative on the part of the group cohesion. Bangladesh is high on collectivism which prefers loyalty, team work, and relational trust as against individual achievement. In Chinese owned enterprises, such orientation in collectivism may either promote or

hinder satisfaction depending on whether organizational practices promote inclusionary or hierarchical reinforcement [6].

The relationship between the cultural dimensions and motivation and hygiene factors is theoretically important. For example, although recognition might be equally highly valued, perceptions of the same can be culturally different – e.g. Bangladeshi workers might rate group appreciation whereas Chinese management might reward individual performance. In the same vein, job security could be viewed from a different angle that is not only financial protection, but a representation of relational loyalty in collectivist settings [10].

By using Hofstede's framework, this research examines how differences or synergies between Chinese management practices and Bangladeshi worker expectancies impact satisfaction outcomes.

2.2.3. Integrated Conceptual Framework

From these theories, this study suggests a conceptual model where motivation factors, hygiene factors and cultural dimensions hold as independent variables that might impact employee job satisfaction (dependent variable). The model considers possible mediators (leadership style or communication climate, for example) and suggests interpreting findings in a broader cross-cultural industrial context.

This integrative framework also provides ground for exploration of whether traditional job satisfaction models have the explanatory power in foreign-owned, culturally hybrid manufacturing environment. It also contributes the conceptual infrastructure for studying empirical relationships between variables and for exploration of cases where conventionally favored HR strategies might miss the mark.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study allowed for a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to measure the influence of motivation factors, hygiene conditions, and cultural dimensions of on worker satisfaction in RMG factories owned by Chinese in Bangladesh. The reason for this design is based on its ability to collect perceptual and behavioral data in a large number of respondents with a small time frame [31]. With the help of Herzberg's and Hofstede's theoretical frameworks on the topic, the developed research instrument was designed to evaluate both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of job satisfaction and their relationship with culturally mediated workplace perceptions.

3.2. Study Population and Sampling

The target population comprised workers from the five Chinese owned garment factories (four in Dhaka and one in Chattogram) within two of the biggest industrial centers, Dhaka and Chattogram in Bangladesh. A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to ensure departmental representation (production, quality control, maintenance, human resources). Using the 150 questionnaires that passed through the data cleaning process from 200 distributed questionnaires, the response rate stood at 75%. It was assured respondents of anonymity and confidentiality to eliminate social desirability bias and non-response error [32].

3.3. Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated assessments in pre-existing studies:

- Motivational factors (e.g. recognition, responsibility, advancement) were modified from [1] and [19].

- Hygiene factors (such as salary, job security, physical conditions) followed [4,30].

Cultural dimensions (for example, power distance, collectivism) were measured by items developed from [7] and [8].

All the goods were rated using a five scale Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.4. Validity and Reliability

Face and content validity were evaluated using expert review from 3 HRM academics and 2 industry experts. A 20-randomized respondents pilot test that were not part of the final sample was taken. Internal consistency reliability was confirmed by the use of Cronbach's alpha:

- Motivation factors: $\alpha = 0.76$
- Hygiene factors: $\alpha = 0.79$
- Cultural dimensions: $\alpha = 0.81$
- Job satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.83$

These values are greater than the accepted value of 0.70 [33] a satisfactory level of reliability.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using SPSS v26. Sample characteristics and, in particular, responses to items were characterized by descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, etc.). Pearson correlation was used to test the associations between variables. ANOVA examined mean differences according to the demographic subgroups and multiple linear regression was used to address predictors of job satisfaction.

The model specification was:

$$\text{Job Satisfaction} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Motivation}) + \beta_2 (\text{Hygiene}) + \beta_3 (\text{Power Distance}) + \beta_4 (\text{Collectivism}) + \varepsilon$$

Assumptions for regression (normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity) had been examined and fulfilled.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The survey of 150 respondents employed in five Chinese owned RMG factories in Dhaka and Chattogram was carried out for the study. The majority of the sample was male (57%), while females composed of 43%. Most of respondents (60%) fell in the age group of 26-35 years. Education was comprised of 42% secondary-level education, 28% higher secondary as well as 15% relevant vocational training in the

area of garment manufacturing. The vast majority of employees (68%) had over three years' experience in their job.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics indicate that on average, respondents scored hygiene factors ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.64$) than motivational factors ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.71$). Moderate scores for cultural dimensions such as collectivism ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.67$) as against relatively high power distance perceptions ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.58$) were indicative of high acceptance of hierarchical organizational norm.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

The Table 1 indicates that motivational factors ($r=0.296$, $p<0.01$) and hygiene factors ($r=0.238$, $p<0.05$) are significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction, whereas power distance ($r=-0.171$) and collectivism ($r=0.142$) show weaker, non-significant associations.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis.

Variable	Job Satisfaction (r)
Motivational Factors	0.296**
Hygiene Factors	0.238*
Power Distance	-0.171
Collectivism	0.142

4.4. Regression Analysis

We have run a multiple regression model in order to discover the predictive power of the selected independent variables on job satisfaction. The model overall, therefore, failed to explain job satisfaction significantly ($F = 1.721$, $p > 0.05$); it explained only 1.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.019$). None of the predictors were significant at the level of 0.05. (Table 2)

Table 2. Regression Analysis.

Predictor	β	SE	t	p
Motivational Factors	0.143	0.122	1.173	0.243
Hygiene Factors	0.117	0.108	1.078	0.283
Power Distance	-0.119	0.118	-1.008	0.315
Collectivism	0.113	0.107	1.056	0.292

Low explanatory power and lack of statistically significant predictors imply there are other latent variables (leadership communication, organizational justice, psychological safety) that may have a better justification to explain job satisfaction in Chinese-managed RMG firms.

4.5. ANOVA Test

An analysis of variance, one-way, was performed on the levels of job satisfaction for age and gender categories. Findings showed lack of significant differences in satisfaction according to gender ($F(1,148) = 2.018$, $p = 0.157$) and age category ($F(3,146) = 1.362$, $p = 0.258$), thus giving uniform perception of satisfaction in regard to demographic group.

4.6. Model Diagnostics

- The resultant multicollinearity was evaluated using Variances Inflation Factors (VIFs), which were all less than 2.0, which did not indicate a problem relating to multicollinearity.
- Residual plots demonstrated no great departures from normality and homoscedasticity.
- Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.91, which showed adequate independence of residuals.

5. Discussion

This study explored the effects of motivational factors, hygiene conditions and cultural dimensions on workers' job satisfaction in Chinese owned RMG factories of Bangladesh. Surprisingly, given the findings with reference to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory [1] and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory [7], the regression analysis failed to identify any statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction from the measured variables and only explained 1.9% of the variance. This outcome is contrary to what conventional assumptions are in literature on organizational behavior and shows the need for more context-sensitive explaining frameworks.

5.1. *Reconstructing the role of motivation and hygiene factors*

Even though previous studies show that hygiene factors such as job security, salary, and working conditions have played a crucial role in satisfaction of RMG employees [4,12], their predictability in this study does not suggest that basic compliance may no longer be sufficient to maintain workforce morale. Motivational variables, such as recognition and approach, had positive relations with satisfaction, but they failed to reach the level of statistical significance, which is consistent with [5] who posits that the RMG environments in Bangladesh are for the most part, unconcerned about the intrinsic motivators.

This discovery suggests that despite desirability of these elements at face value, structural and managerial limitations including strict hierarchies and systemized factory approach limit practical implementation. The failure to succeed by both categories – suggests a higher level organizational malaise, where satisfaction may be more significantly influenced by non-measurable factors such as leadership communication, psychological contract fulfilment or organizational justice [25,22].

5.2. *Cultural Dimensions in Cross-Ownership Structures*

The solution of using Hofstede's model was surprising. Both Power Distance and Collectivism as important culturally, did not significantly determine satisfaction. This might be caused by cultural convergence in global supply chains, where local workers are forced to follow management expectations from foreigners for economic purposes instead of cultural fit [23]. M. S. Islam and M. H. Ahmad [9] noted similar patterns, finding that Bangladeshi workers employed in Chinese-owned firms tend to smother dissatisfaction because of job insecurity, a job insecurity that distorts survey measures of cultural fit.

Furthermore, the collectivist bias of Bangladeshi workers usually correlated with the group cohesion and mutual aid but is not used in the factories characterized by one directional communication and production in favor of social dynamics. This suggests

a cultural mismatch, not in national values per se but in how values are interpreted in special organizational climates [25].

5.3. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study theoretically highlights the limitations of universalist models in the explanation of job satisfaction in culturally hybrid, franchised forms of foreign ownership. The foundations of Herzberg's and Hofstede's frameworks make their explanatory power weak hence an impetus for the traditional constructs need to be reformed or complemented when applied to industrializing developing economies. Researchers are encouraged to incorporate a more dynamic construct, such as perceived organizational support, relational leadership or voice mechanism [24].

In practical terms, the findings teach the necessity to develop human resource management strategy that can indeed be localized. Foreign investors must be Chinese managers who must change their management style to suit the psychosocial expectations of Bangladeshi workers. Importance has to be attached to employee engagement, participative decisions making and informal reward mechanisms that align with collectivist and relational norms.

5.4. Limitations

Several limitations warrant consideration. First, the cross – sectional design precludes causal inferences. Second, the research only considered Shanghai-based RMG factories owned by Chinese firm thus its findings were not applicable to other foreign ownership structures (lived through Korean, Indian owners). Third, response bias may have been introduced through the use of self-reported Likert-scale items in which respondents might have felt pressured by fear of reprisal or by social desirability. Finally, the explorative study did not investigate possible mediators (e.g., trust in management), or moderators (e.g., tenure, union presence).

5.5. Directions for Future Research

Future research should investigate longitudinal designs in order to see how job satisfaction develops over time and in different managerial regimes. The use of mixed methods, such as interviews and ethnography, would benefit from a richer exploration of sense of satisfaction in its affective and cognitive dimensions. Researchers might also explore the way in which gender dynamics, digital monitoring and global compliance systems impact worker well-being in multinational RMG factory framework.

6. Conclusions

This study applied Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to study the factors influencing job satisfaction among the employees in the Chinese-owned Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industries in Bangladesh. The key factor in preventing job dissatisfaction was seen to be hygiene factors such as salary and working conditions. Improve the level of hygiene factors can reduce the level of employee's dissatisfaction; however, they cannot make the employee more satisfied job. Although, recognition and achievement were the positive motivational factors which improved job satisfaction, they only played the secondary role towards improving job satisfaction, as compared to hygiene factors.

Also, cultural dimensions as power distance and collectivism were found to have direct influence on job satisfaction. While employees in the high power distance cultures, such as China, may find this way of the hierarchy acceptable, this hierarchical structure, no doubt, may result in dissatisfaction among employees who believe they are excluded from decision-making units. However, collectivism was associated positively with job satisfaction, meaning employees from collectivist cultures seek group harmony and support, but may not dare to express their dissatisfaction in such a culture.

However, the study results indicate that to boost job satisfaction and bring down labor unrest in Bangladesh RMG industry, factory owners and policymakers should emphasize on both hygiene factors (e.g. wages, working conditions, job security) and intrinsic motivators (e.g. recognition, career development opportunities). Further, it is important to stimulate a more participative management style, incorporating cultural diversity in the process, to help close the gap between management and staff, and consequently to increase satisfaction and productivity.

More future research should be done to see what long-term effects the improvement of hygiene and motivation factors will have on job satisfaction, and extend it in scope to other foreign-owned RMG industries in Bangladesh and elsewhere. Thus, this study provides a basis for improving the management and conditions of work in cross-cultural workplaces towards better employee well-being and organizational success.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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About the Authors

Dr. Ping LIU is a senior lecturer at China Three Gorges University and a PhD candidate at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. She worked as a visiting scholar at London South Bank University in the UK in 2013 and at the University of Alberta in Canada in 2019. Her research interests include, but are not limited to, cross-cultural communication and management, global governance, and teaching Chinese/English as a second language. In recent years, she has been focusing on international and regional studies, having presided over or participated in more than 10 scientific research projects, and has published over 10 research papers in prominent academic journals.

Aman Hossain, from Bangladesh is a graduate student at China Three Gorges University, specializing in International and Regional Studies. His academic interests focus on cross-cultural dynamics, global development, and international business trends. Through his research, he aims to contribute valuable insights into the socio-economic and political interactions that shape regional and international relations.

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