

Factors contributing to labour unrest at the garment factories in Bangladesh: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Persistent labour unrest among garment workers could influence Bangladesh's economic growth. This study explored the factors contributing to labour unrest among Bangladesh garment factory workers. The items inquiring on the causes of labour unrest subdivided into Worker induced cause (WIC), owner induced cause (OIC), Middleman induced cause (MMIC) and external influence (EI) factors. We examined factors contributing to labour unrest among garment factory workers using hierarchical linear regression analyses. The study found that the mean percentage scores for WIC, OIC, MMIC and EI were 82%, 64%, 59% and 57%, respectively, with an overall mean percentage score of 67% for the causes of labour unrest. Multivariate analyses revealed that, older workers of the garment factories, those working in Nabinagar region (coefficient (β) = -1.71, 95% confidence interval [CI] -3.38, -0.04, $p=0.045$), workers who disagreed with the labor unions (β = -1.72, 95%CI -3.33, -0.10; $p=0.037$), and those who paid high accommodation fees (β = -1.92, 95%CI -2.98, -0.86; $p<0.0005$), were less involved in activities leading to labor unrest in Bangladesh. Respondents who disagreed that all Owner-Induced Cause (OIC) (non-payment, low payment of wages, the imposition of excessive hours, lack of security) and External Influence (EI) variables (site accident, price hike/inflation) contribute to labour unrest in their region were less likely to be involved in activities leading to labour unrest. In conclusion, the approach to prevent factory workers' involvement in activities that lead to labour unrest in Bangladesh should reduce inflation, discourage workers from participating in labour unions, and allow garment worker autonomy, especially the young workers.

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1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the global progress in Asia's less developed and developing markets has concentrated on export-driven economic growth (Oatley 2015). This growth has led to the preference for trade liberalisation strategies for supporting the national export market in developing economies (Dornbusch 1992). Bangladesh has become the textile city of many newly industrialised countries (NICs) in Asia, primarily due to the quest for cheap wages (Smith, 1996). The Bangladesh textile industry, which started in the 1970s, has evolved dramatically due to the assistance of foreign direct investment in the 1990s (Mohibullah Takebira & Jannat 2018). Also, the government adopted various strategies to lure international investors, including enforcement of minimum salaries, regulation of working hours, restriction on child workers and forced labour, and freedom of expression for the garment workers (Moran 2004; Rodrik 2004; Dey & Basak 2017; Rahman 2002; Nuruzzaman 2004; Wells 2005). These initiatives made Bangladesh famous for labour-friendly textile manufacturers, boosting employment opportunities and revenues. The country has also been developing offshore sites for cheaper labour. There are reports that a substantial number of the uncoordinated employees are living in squalors and desperate for help (Smith 1996).

Currently, Bangladesh's garment industry contributes mainly to the country's exports, and employment (Mottaleb & Sonobe 2011; Alam & Natsuda 2016) and exports of garments from Bangladesh increased from \$7.9 billion to \$34.2 billion between 2005 and 2019 (BGMEA 2020). The garment industry has had a significant impact on Bangladesh's economy by generating job opportunities, particularly for its young, uneducated women, and contributing to its poverty alleviation programme (Ahmed 2009; Carr 2004; Yunus & Yamagata 2012; Sikdar & Sadeka 2014). The workforce in this industry is comprised of primarily women employees (Carr 2004; Yunus & Yamagata 2012), and about 90% of the employees are people who moved from rural to urban regions, where the manufacturing sites are situated (Sikdar & Sadeka 2014). The Bangladesh garment industries flourished very rapidly, taking advantage of the large and inexpensive labour force, the government's current economic liberalisation strategies, and the encouraging environment of foreign trade agreements (Dey & Basak 2017; Rahman 2002; Nuruzzaman 2004). However, the supply of low-cost, fast-fashion apparel for global distributors and companies by the country's garment factories has been compromised by systemic constraints on

employees, job instability, long working hours, coerced and severe overtime as well as low wages (Ashraf & Prentice 2019; Ahmed Raihan and Islam 2013; Tamanna 2010). Employers' deprivation of Bangladesh workers' rights has led to numerous labour unrest activities in the garment industry sector.

Despite the plethora of existing policies and the professed role of the government and labour unions to uphold labour rights and thus ensure the much-needed harmony and stability in the relationship between stakeholders of the garments industry, the requests of garment factory workers and their grievances have not been addressed. The state repression on hardline labour protests, punitive measures against workers on charges of violating discipline, and all other attempts by the state to silence down the voices of the garment workers appear to restore short-term stability in the garments sector. These measures do not guarantee the sustainable harmony required for the greater welfare of all stakeholders in this industry. Therefore, this study aims to explore the key factors contributing to labour unrest in the garment factories in Bangladesh. Information from this study will provide recent evidence for policymakers in Bangladesh to formulate adequate policies to address the issue of colossal national interest.

2. Literature Review

Past studies have shown that issues related to payment, including low wage, deferred compensation, and irregular amount of salary, were associated with labour unrest in Bangladesh's garment sector (Uddin and Jahed 2007; Rahman Bhattacharya and Moazzem 2008; Islam and Ahmad 2014; Ahmed Raihan and Islam 2013). There are also reports that workers' desire for weekly vacation (Paul-Majumder 2007) and their inability to obtain more casual leave days (Islam and Ahmad 2010) were associated with labour unrest. Abrar (2007) reported that between 2006 and 2017, there has been at least 72 incidents of labour unrest involving Bangladesh garment factory workers (Abrar2007). Some of these clashes were violent, stimulated by rumours (Choudhury and Rahman 2017), such as fellow workers' death (Hasan Islam and Arifuzzaman 2015). However, few studies look at the causes of labour unrest from different angles. For example, the country's local politics and international business giant conspiracy have contributed to some incidents of labour unrest (Choudhury and Rahman2017; Mirdha, 2012; Absar, 2001). The central part of this literature outlined the lack of recognised Trade Unions (TU) as the reason (Islam and Ahmed, 2014). Some literature argued that there was TU, but this institution's failure to ensure the labour rights of citizens was the root cause of labour unrest (Islam and Ahmed 2014; Ferdous 2012). Finally, few studies outlined the mismanagement of trade in textile waste or jhoot (Kamal Billah and Hossain 2010).

Soft, non-confrontational approaches have been ineffective in Bangladesh, and militant labour protests by garment factory workers have been used to advance their interests, even though they are increasingly subjected to repression and violent crackdowns by the state (Rahman & Langford 2012). Selden found that labour activity faced harsh repression among Chinese workers during strikes, boycotts, and mass meetings throughout every significant industrial area (Selden 1995). Korzeniewicz argued that workers' wages in Argentina were 'a mockery, a delusion, and a snare' (Korzeniewicz 1989). Similarly, negotiations for a new minimum wage in Bangladesh led to massive labour unrest in Ashulia, Dhaka, in 2016; this, in turn, led to the temporary closure of sixty factories, dismissal of 1600 garment workers, and the arrest and

detention of at least 35 workers and labour organisers. Stimulated by labour groups working in the area, hundreds of workers walked out of local factories calling for a tripling of the minimum wage following the death of a garment worker in Ashulia, seemingly from overwork (Ashraf & Prentice 2019). But none of this literature provides a comprehensive scenario on the causes of labour unrest in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. Therefore, there is a need for further exploration into the issue of labour unrest in the country's garment sector.

3. Methodology

From July 2018 to October 2018, we collected primary data (questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews) from the garment factory workers. We observed that most of the labour unrest in the garment factories are in these six regions of Bangladesh, namely, Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Savar, Ashulia and Nabinagar, which were then selected purposively for data collection in this study. To collect data, we used a structured questionnaire (Supplementary Table S1) with 21 items obtained from previous literature (see table 1 for details). The questionnaire included socioeconomic variables such as age, gender, income status, and working area. The questions inquiring on the causes of labour unrest in Bangladesh included seventeen variables collected in five-point Likert-type items.

Table 1. Independent variables

Causes of Labour Unrest	Related Literature
Worker Induced Cause (WIC)	
Accommodations and higher house rent	Islam and Ahmad 2010
Fear of losing a job	Mirdha, 2012; Islam and Ahmed 2010; Absar, 2001
Rumours	Choudhury and Rahman 2017; Hasan Islam and Arifuzzaman 2015; Kamal, Billah and Hossain, 2010
Labor union	Islam and Ahmed, 2014
Lack of motivation	Chowdhury, Ahmed and Yasmin, 2014
Owner Induced Cause (OIC)	
Non-payment	Uddin and Jahed 2007; Rahman Bhattacharya and Moazzem 2008; Islam and Ahmad 2014; Ahmed Raihan and Islam 2013
Low payment	Uddin and Jahed 2007; Rahman Bhattacharya and Moazzem 2008; Islam and Ahmad 2014; Ahmed Raihan and Islam 2013
The imposition of excessive work	Paul-Majumder 2007; Islam and Ahmad 2010; Abrar 2007
Unhealthy workplace	Jakir, Mostafiz and Afroza, 2010;
Lack of human security	Islam and Ahmed 2014; Ferdous 2012
Police arrest or police case	Mirdha, 2012; Islam and Ahmed 2010; Absar, 2001
Middleman Induced Cause (MMIC)	
Political interest	Mirdha, 2012; Islam and Ahmed 2010; Absar, 2001
International propaganda	Choudhury and Rahman 2017; Mirdha 2012; Absar 2001
Jhut businessman provocation	Kamal Billah and Hossain 2010
External Influence	
Accident	Mottaleb and Sonobe, 2011
Inflation	Bhuiyan, 2013
Order cancel	Hasan, Islam and Arifuzzaman, 2015

3.1. Sample estimation of the study

We calculated the sample size using the statistical formula: $n_0 = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$, where n_0 is the sample size, z^2 is the standard value for normal distribution at 95% confidence level (1.96), proportion (p) was set at 0.50 in line with the previous study (Tamanna, 2010)), and e^2 is a maximum acceptable error (5%). The minimum sample size was determined to be 384 and to draw accurate and reliable data, we added a 15% non-response rate, yielding a total sample size of about 444 workers.

3.2. Dependent variables

Seventeen items on the questionnaire assessed the Worker's responses to labour unrest in the garment factories (Table 1). Each positive statement was given a score of 5 for "Agree", 4 for "Little Agree", 3 for "Neutral", 2 for "Little Disagree", and 1 for "Disagree". The labour unrest scores ranged from 0–85 points. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the 17 items was 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

3.3. Independent variables

The independent variables were based on previous studies (Table 1) (1-3) and included gender, age category, work location, and wages in taka as per minimum wage. As presented in table 1, the seventeen items were subdivided into Worker Induced Cause (WIC), Owner Induced Cause (OIC), Middle Man Induced Cause (MMIC) and causes related to External Influence (EI). The responses were classified as '1' for agree/little agree and '2' for neutral/ little disagree and disagree, as presented in table 4.

3.4. Data Analysis

We performed all statistical analysis using STATA/MP version 14 (Stata Corp, College Station, TX, USA). This study used frequency tables to describe the characteristics of the sample. This study conducted Multivariate linear regression analyses using five-stage modelling as described in Table 2. The first stage (Model 1) included demographic factors. The second stage (Model 2) had the Worker Induced factors. The third stage (Model 3) had the Owner Induced factors. And this was followed by the addition of Middleman Induced causes and External Influence factors in the fourth (Model 4) and fifth stages (Model 5), respectively. The main reason for this modelling strategy was to compare the impact of the different sets of factors in examining the contributing factors influencing labour unrest in the garment factories. Coefficients (β) and their 95% confidence intervals (CIs) obtained from the adjusted regression model were used to measure the factors associated with labour unrest in the garment factories.

Table 2. Potential covariates used in the hierarchical linear regression model.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Demographic	Demographic	Demographic	Demographic	Demographic
Age	Worker Induced Cause (WIC)	Worker Induced Cause (WIC)	Worker Induced Cause (WIC)	Worker Induced Cause (WIC)
Sex	Accommodations and higher house rent	Owner Induced Cause (OIC)	Owner Induced Cause (OIC)	Owner Induced Cause (OIC)
Work location	Fear of losing a job	Non-payment	Middle Man Induced Cause (MMIC)	Middle Man Induced Cause (MMIC)
Wages	Rumours	Low payment	Political interest	External Influence (EI)
	Labour union	The imposition of excessive work	International propaganda	Accident
	Lack of motivation	Unhealthy workplace	Jhut businessman provocation	Inflation
		Lack of human security		Order cancel
		Police arrest or police case		

3.5. Ethical Clearance and Quality Control

This study follows the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki as revised in Fortaleza. We obtained ethical clearance from the

Institutional Review Board of Dr Wazed Research and Training Institute, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (#BRUR/DWRTI/2018/a.n.014). We provided an informed consent paper to the factory workers for the signature before taking part in the survey, including assurance of anonymity and a description of the data use policy. For illiterate factory workers, informed consent information was read aloud and signed. We entered the data daily after the questionnaire was collected and was checked daily for any inconsistencies and errors. The data used in this article was presented as aggregate to ensure all respondents' identification information was obscured.

4. Results

4.1. *Demographic Characteristics of the sample*

Table 3 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study. About 72.3% of the respondents were aged 30 years and below, whereas 27.7% were aged 31–58 years. Most of the respondents were females (61.7%), with 39.6% and 10.8% living in the Gazipur zone and Dhaka, respectively. More than two-thirds of the garment workers earned less than the minimum wage in Bangladesh.

Table 3. Demographic information of the respondents (N=444)

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group		
≤20 years	73	16.44
21-30 years	248	55.86
31-40 year	80	18.02
41-58	43	9.68
Sex		
Female	274	61.71
Male	170	38.29
Work location		
Savar	24	5.41
Ashulia	38	8.56
Narayanganj	90	20.27
Nabinagar	68	15.32
Gazipur	176	39.64
Dhaka	48	10.81
Wages in Taka		
Minimum wage (≤8000)	363	81.76
Above minimum wage	81	18.24

Table 4 presents the proportion of participants who agree or disagree with the variables identified as the causes of labour unrest in Bangladesh. The table shows the majority of the respondents agreed they were responsible for the labour unrest in the industry. An overwhelming majority (94.6%) of the respondents reported that the labour unions were responsible for the unrest. In comparison, 87.4% of them believed that rumours were the reason for labour unrest among garment factory workers. Conversely, a smaller proportion of the respondents cited the Middleman induced factors as causes for labour unrest among the garment factory workers. A little over one-third cited provocation by *Jhut* business people as a contributory factor to labour unrest.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of Variables Used in the Hierarchical modelling. Values are expressed as numbers (%).

Outcomes	Agree	Disagree
Worker Induced Cause (WIC)		
Accommodations and higher house rent	274 (61.7)	170 (38.3)
Fear of losing a job	362 (81.5)	82 (18.5)
Rumors	388 (87.4)	56 (12.6)
Labor union	420 (94.6)	24 (5.4)
Lack of motivation	360 (81.1)	84 (18.9)
Owner Induced Cause (OIC)		
Non-payment	243 (54.7)	201 (45.3)
Low payment	225 (50.7)	219 (49.3)
The imposition of excessive work	240 (54.1)	204 (45.9)
Unhealthy workplace	117 (26.4)	327 (73.7)
Lack of human security	220 (49.6)	224 (50.4)
Police arrest or police case	90 (20.3)	354 (79.7)
Middleman Induced Cause (MMIC)		
Political interest	88 (19.8)	356 (80.2)
International propaganda	107 (24.1)	337 (75.9)
<i>Jhut</i> businessman provocation	163 (36.7)	281 (63.3)
External Influence		
Accident	193 (43.5)	251 (56.5)
Inflation	92 (20.7)	352 (79.3)
Order cancel	81 (18.2)	363 (81.8)

The average mean score, 95% CIs for each of the outcome variables and, the overall score of labour unrest were presented in figure 1. The mean scores expressed as percentages in their decreasing order were Worker Induce Cause (81.6%), Owner Induce Cause (63.7%), Middle Man Induce Cause (59.3%) and External Influence (57.3%). In comparison, the overall labour mean percentage score was 67.1%.

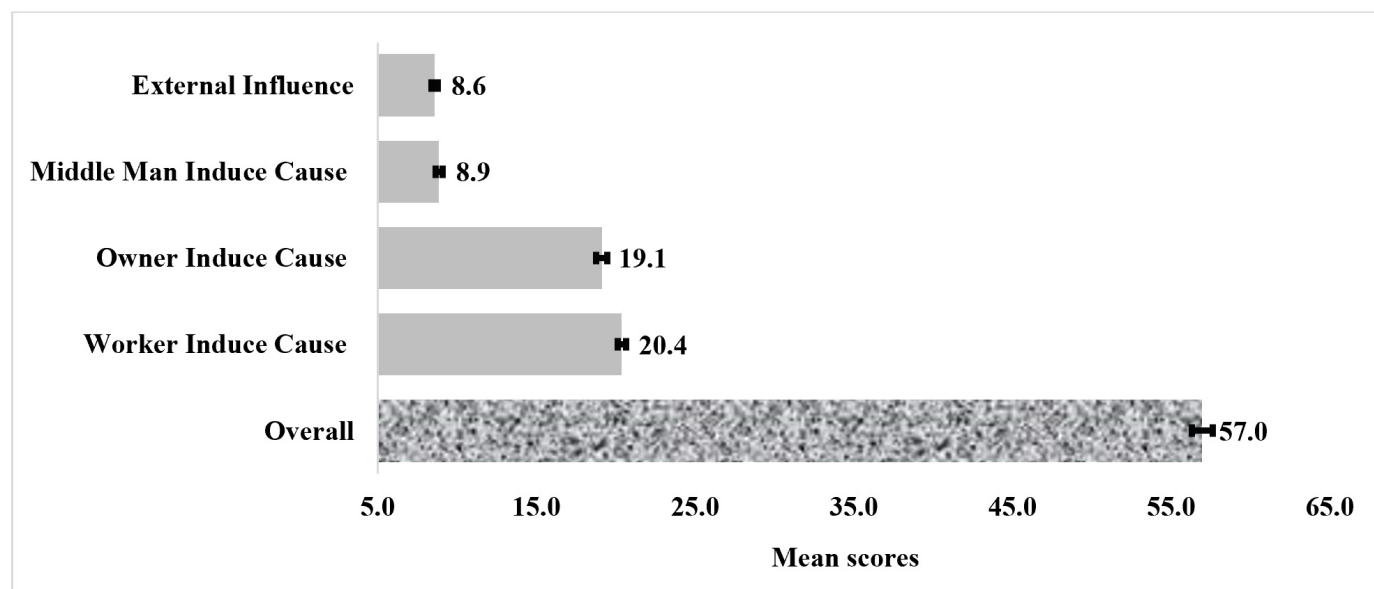


Fig. 1. Mean scores of causes of labor unrest in Bangladeshi garment factory workers. Error bars are 95% Confidence Intervals.

4.2. Hierarchical linear multiple regression analysis

Table 5 shows the hierarchical multiple regression analyses performed for different stage modelling strategies. In Models 1 and 2, older age was significantly associated with a lower likelihood of involvement in activities leading to labour unrest. After adjusting for age in the analysis, the likelihood of involvement in activities leading to labour unrest was associated with sex, work location and wages. Respondents who were aged 41-58 years were 5.35 times (95% confidence interval [CI] of β -8.00, -2.71) less likely to participate in activities leading to labour unrest compared to those aged ≤ 20 years. Garment factory workers in the Nabinagar region were significantly less likely to be involved in activities creating labour unrest compared to workers in other regions. This association was consistent across all the regression models. Those who worked in Dhaka were more likely to involve in labour unrest activities than those in the Savar district. Still, this association was significant only after adjusting for the demographic variables and the OIC factors (β 4.41, 95%CI 1.34, 7.48). Workers who disagreed with the labor unions (β = -1.72, 95%CI -3.33, -0.10; $P=0.037$), those who paid high accommodation fees (β = -1.92, 95%CI -2.98, -0.86; $p<0.0005$) and lacked motivation to work (β = -2.34, 95%CI -3.10, -1.58; $p<0.0005$), were less likely to be involved in activities that lead to labor unrest.

Table 5 Regression analyses of socioeconomic and other induced variables for workers-induced causes of labour unrest among garment factory workers in Bangladesh (standardised coefficients β , and 95% confidence interval, CI).

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	β [95%CI]	β [95%CI]	β [95%CI]	β [95%CI]	β [95%CI]
Age in category (in years)					
≤ 20 years	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
21-30 years	-2.42[-4.26, -0.58]	-2.19[-3.83, -0.55]	-0.43[-1.62, 0.76]	0.03[-0.91, 0.97]	0.03[-0.91, 0.97]
31-40 years	-3.34[-5.54, -1.14]	-2.66[-4.64, -0.69]	-1.05[-2.48, 0.38]	-0.54[-1.67, 0.59]	-0.54[-1.67, 0.59]
41-50 years	-5.35[-8.00, -2.71]	-4.41[-7.48, -1.34]	-0.43[-1.62, 0.76]	0.03[-0.91, 0.97]	0.03[-0.91, 0.97]

41-58 years	-5.35[-8.00, -2.71]	-3.44[-5.83, -1.05]	-0.69[-2.41, 1.04]	0.21[-1.16, 1.59]	0.21[-1.16, 1.59]
Sex					
Female	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Male	-0.36[-1.77, 1.05]	-0.48[-1.74, 0.79]	-0.12[-1.02, 0.79]	0.26[-0.45, 0.97]	0.26[-0.45, 0.97]
Work location					
Savar	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Ashulia	-0.22[-3.89, 3.46]	-1.53[-4.82, 1.77]	0.98[-1.38, 3.35]	1.10[-0.77, 2.96]	1.10[-0.77, 2.96]
Narayanganj	-1.19[-4.28, 1.90]	-1.32[-4.07, 1.44]	-0.78[-2.77, 1.21]	0.71[-0.88, 2.29]	0.71[-0.88, 2.29]
Nabinagar	-6.37[-9.58, -3.17]	-5.25[-8.14, -2.35]	-2.95[-5.05, -0.84]	-1.71[-3.38, -0.04]	-1.71[-3.38, -0.04]
Gazipur	-2.73[-5.64, 0.18]	-2.35[-4.95, 0.26]	-1.13[-3.02, 0.76]	0.05[-1.44, 1.55]	0.05[-1.44, 1.55]
Dhaka	2.64[-0.77, 6.06]	4.41[1.34, 7.48]	1.25[-1.02, 3.53]	1.65[-0.14, 3.44]	1.65[-0.14, 3.44]
Wages					
Minimum wage	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Above minimum wage	1.46[-0.19, 3.12]	0.91[-0.58, 2.40]	0.65[-0.40, 1.71]	0.02[-0.82, 0.86]	0.02[-0.82, 0.86]
Worker-induced causes					
Labour union					
Agree	-	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree		-3.18[-6.02, -0.34]	-2.11[-4.16, -0.07]	-1.72[-3.33, -0.10]	-1.72[-3.33, -0.10]
Rumours					
Agree	-	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree		-0.34[-2.36, 1.69]	-1.10[-2.56, 0.36]	-0.63[-1.78, 0.52]	-0.63[-1.78, 0.52]
Fear of losing a job					
Agree	-	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree		-0.50[-2.50, 1.49]	-0.77[-2.21, 0.68]	-1.06[-2.19, 0.08]	-1.06[-2.19, 0.08]
Lack of motivation					
Agree	-	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree		-2.56[-4.41, -0.70]	-1.96[-3.30, -0.62]	-1.92[-2.98, -0.86]	-1.92[-2.98, -0.86]
Accommodations and higher house rent					
Agree	-	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-5.47[-6.66, -4.29]	-2.00[-2.95, -1.04]	-2.34[-3.10, -1.58]	-2.34[-3.10, -1.58]
Owner induced causes					
Non-payment					
Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-2.25[-3.33, -1.16]	-1.99[-2.85, -1.12]	-1.99[-2.85, -1.12]
Low payment					
Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-2.06[-3.03, -1.09]	-2.15[-2.91, -1.39]	-2.15[-2.91, -1.39]
The imposition of excessive work					
Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-3.30[-4.17, -2.42]	-2.63[-3.33, -1.94]	-2.63[-3.33, -1.94]
Lack of human security					

Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-3.12[-4.05, -2.19]	-3.22[-3.95, -2.49]	-3.22[-3.95, -2.49]
Unhealthy workplace					
Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-1.63[-2.58, -0.68]	-2.17[-2.92, -1.42]	-2.17[-2.92, -1.42]
Police arrest or police case					
Agree	-	-	Reference	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-	-5.43[-6.53, -4.32]	-3.78[-4.68, -2.88]	-3.78[-4.68, -2.88]
External Influence					
Accident					
Agree	-	-	-	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-		-3.02[-3.67, -2.37]	-3.02[-3.67, -2.37]
Inflation					
Agree	-	-	-	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-		-3.96[-4.81, -3.10]	-3.96[-4.82, -3.10]
Order cancel					
Agree	-	-	-	Reference	Reference
Not agree	-	-		-2.48[-3.37, -1.60]	-2.48[-3.37, -1.60]

Description of staged model: **Model 1** included age category, gender, district and wages. **Model 2**, Age in the category, gender, district and wages, labor union, rumour, Job Loss, Motivation, high cost of accommodation. **Model 3**: Age cat, Gender, District and Wages, Labor union, new Rumor, Job Loss, Motivation, high cost of accommodation, Non Payment, Low Payment, Excessive Workload, lack of human Security, Unhealthy workplace, Police arrest. **Model 4**: Age cat, Gender, District and Wages, Labor union, Rumor, Job Loss, Motivation, high cost of accommodation, Non Payment, Low Payment, Excessive Workload, lack of human Security, Unhealthy workplace, Police arrest, Accident, Inflation, Order cancel. Bolded CIs are significant variables.

5. Discussion

The garment sector is Bangladesh's largest foreign exchange earning source and provides a means of sustenance for many of its people and their families (Siddiqi 2005). The frequent reoccurrence of unrest among workers in this sector has been a matter of great concern for the government (Akerlof et al., 2020). This study investigated the factors associated with labour unrest among Bangladesh garment factory workers by controlling for various confounding factors in our staged model. We found that the worker-induced and owner-induced causes contributed the most to labour unrest in Bangladesh's garment sector. Factors such as provocation from the labour union, rumours, fear of losing the job, and lack of positive motivation towards work were the primary causes of labour unrest among Bangladesh garment factory workers.

Historically, labour unions are known to incite labour unrest, and this can be attested to by the numerous cases of labour

unrest across Europe in 1886 and 1901 (Mesa, 2011). In Ghana, it was reported that the politics of labour union agitations was responsible for the Graduate Teachers' movement against their government (Okyere, 2015). Similarly, Dixon et al.'s (2013) found that the connection of the labour unions with other external factors was responsible for two incidents of labour unrest in the south of the USA. Generally, there is a negative perception that labour unions are too rigid, rule-bound, and geographically fixed to accusations of corruption, illegitimacy, and indebtedness to political elites (Zajak 2017). Also, the unions are often seen as integral parts of the ruling party-state apparatus (Rutland 1990). They can be used as platforms for external links by offering protective shields for foreign money donors to the national labour union federations and their leaders (Siddiqi 2015).

This study found that rumour was significantly associated with labour unrest among garment factory workers in Bangladesh. Often stories of deaths and accidents in the industry cause commotion and provocation of workers to vandalise factories without thinking through the veracity of the rumours (L. Mahbub, personal communication, July 19 2018). Past studies in China have highlighted the adverse effects of stories in inciting labour unrest. In 2014 about 40,000 workers in the shoe factory in Guangdong, China, stopped work due to rumours that the local government officials were corrupt and demanded bribes from workers (Schmalz et al., 2017) to meet their demands. The fear of job loss encourages workers to engage in various acts of vandalism (K. Ahmed, personal communication, July 14, 2018).

In most cases, the factories were shot by the authorities without any prior notice to the workers. Such acts create fear of job loss with the agitated workers clashing with the owners of the business (A. Mahmud, personal communication, July 14, 2018). Previous studies in Bangladesh found that fear of losing jobs and factory shutdown was inevitable due to the pandemic or political instability. These aggravated the labour unrest. Many Western owners of significant clothing brands in Bangladesh have cancelled orders during the recent corona pandemic (Danciu, 2020). These decisions have sent more than a million workers unemployed, 80 per cent of whom are women. Fear of losing jobs made them engage in labour unrest in various areas near Dhaka, such as Narayanganj, Gazipur, Saver and, Nabinagar. Labour unrest happened for the same reasons during the pre-election period in 2014. Due to the hostile political conflicts and violence during utter turmoil, Bangladesh missed many global economic opportunities because the foreign buyers cancelled their orders from Bangladesh for pending shipment (Kamal & Kaiser, 2015).

Additionally, any organisation's extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction are crucial for factories' smooth and efficient functioning. This study found that workers who lacked the motivation to work were less likely to engage in labour unrest activities. This finding is corroborated by the results of a survey of the South African public sector that showed statistically significant relationships between job satisfaction and extrinsic motivation factors such as remuneration, quality of work-life, teamwork, and life satisfaction (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014).

On the other hand, this study found that the Owner induces casus such as irregular payment payments (54.7%) and workload (54.1%) trigger labour unrest. Other studies in varying contexts corroborated the significant association between workers' low wage level with turmoil in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. Homlong (2016) found a significant association between the low wage level of workers and the number of strikes in Cambodia. In another study, factors such as forcing workers to achieve the target, i.e. workload in some garment factories, were associated with labour unrest (Haider 2007).

Instead of maintaining an 8-hourly shift system with different workers, it is common practice for factories to use the same employees to work long hours. Overtime is usually mandatory. As the shipment deadline nears, the workload becomes unbearable (S. Akter, personal communication, July 19, 2018). Previous studies in Bangladesh agreed on this finding and revealed that when the workers become sick, managers simply say, 'if you cannot work, then do not come'. With rent to pay and food to buy, workers are left with no choice other than to yield to the situation (Ashraf & Prentice 2019).

This study also found that provocation from the *jhut* businessmen (36.7%) often triggers violent protest. *Jhut* (a scrap of clothing items) business is very lucrative for traders as it brings them cash (K. Ahmed, personal communication, July 14, 2018). Previously *jhut* was a waste product of the garment factory, but now it has become a by-product for its commercial value (H. Rahman, personal communication, July 25, 2018). For this reason, some people, especially the locally influential ones, want to grab more *jhut* through influencing either workers or mid-level management personnel of the factories (K. H. Munna, personal communication, July 25 2018). Many factories have faced unrest for the politics involved in this process of *jhut* business.

Some past studies have reported dissimilar findings of labour unrest, including the study by Khan (2010), which said that workers high house rent was associated with labour unrest. However, the results of Clark and Kanter (2010/2011) differ in part from the present study. Regarding the significant influence of having semi-skilled workers, lack of awareness about labour rights and labour laws, and the impact of unfair practices of various NGOs and legal agencies on labour unrest, some of their results agree with our findings. In this study, work location and age were the only demographic variables significantly influencing labour unrest in Bangladesh garment factory workers. Still, work location remained an independent predictor of unrest after adjustments for all potential cofounders. Past study has implicated other demographic factors of housing, daycare, holidays, pensions and unfair dismissal as influencers of labour unrest (Rutland, 1990).

There are potential limitations to this study. Despite the good internal validity of this study, it has very poor external validity because of the random sampling of the respondents, which represents only a tiny proportion of the Bangladeshi population (RMG Labor). As with all surveys, responses are subjective, and their accuracy cannot be verified. The study design meant that there was limited ability to gain access to the participant's type or geographic location and limited access to those respondents. In addition, analyses of the outcomes may not directly reflect the participants' behaviour. Despite these limitations, the use of robust statistical modelling that adjusted for all potential cofounders is a significant strength of this study.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the factors of labour unrest in Bangladesh's RMG industry and revealed major factors that substantially contribute to the employees' growing discontent in this sector. In the garments sector in Bangladesh, we have observed that the workers' and owner-driven factors contributed the most to labour unrest. The primary causes of job-related strife among Bangladesh's garment workers were trade union provocation, rumours, fear of losing work and

lack of encouragement for duty. Future research on how to reduce the alarming trends of labour unrest in the RMG sector of Bangladesh should consider including the various stakeholders in this sector, namely workers, owners, government, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), international stakeholders and other relevant institutions. Any incidence of labour unrest needs to be investigated, and the reasons behind the stew should be revealed for sound policymaking and actions to avoid future unrest. There is a need for further investigation into the current Labor Law in Bangladesh with respect to the provisions of employment standards, health and safety, social welfare and social protection, and studies on the legal requirement regarding collective bargaining and trade unionism. Further policy research is required to decide and implement the right initiatives. A "Tripartite Committee" (government, owners and workers) should be formed to solve disputable issues and facilitate the existing situation.

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