

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

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This is an interesting paper and it approaches an interesting question – what makes Bangladeshi garment workers engage in labor unrest. The authors have taken the time to find and survey garment workers, which is laudable in and of itself, as not many researchers get as far as speaking to workers and the views of firm managers tend to be relatively better represented.

Unfortunately, there are a few aspects of this paper that were difficult to follow. The following summary assumes that I have filled in the blanks listed below correctly:

Summary: The authors surveyed 444 Bangladeshi garment workers, achieving an unspecified response rate. They (seem to have) asked about each worker's involvement in labor unrest, and about their views on the role of 17 different potential contributing factors to labor unrest. This allows them to identify the factors that most workers think contribute to labor unrest (Table 4). They then ask whether identifying a factor as a significant contributor to labor unrest predicts that a worker will "be involved in activities leading to labor unrest" (Table 5).

The authors need to fill in the following missing pieces of the paper so that its results can be properly understood and appreciated.

1. Explain what the dependent variable is in Table 5, and where it comes from. The authors describe that variable as some sort of an indicator that a worker was "involved in activities leading to labor unrest". But the survey instrument provided as a supplemental table does not include a question about this. How do the authors know which workers did and did not participate in such activities?
2. Explain why and how a hierarchical linear (i.e. multi-level) model is applied in Table 5. What are the "levels" in his model? Which coefficients and intercepts are allowed to vary across the levels? As these details are not provided, my best guess from the structure of the table and from the information provided is that it is not a multi-level model, and that the authors ran five specifications of a linear-probability model in which the dependent variable is an indicator that the worker participated in activities leading to labor unrest.
3. Describe how they found and sampled workers. Did they have lists of garment workers in the represented districts, and if so, were they obtained from employers, unions or the government? How many workers refused to answer? Were they interviewed at home or at their place of work? How many different employers are represented? Are the workers randomized within firms, within districts etc.? All of this has bearing on the choice of specification (e.g. should

employer fixed effects be included when analyzing the role of “worker-induced causes”?).

4. Explain why particular contributing factors are grouped as Worker-Induced Causes, Owner-Induced Causes, Middleman Induced Causes and External Influences. For example, “fear of losing a job” could be due to insecurity created by employers; and “international propaganda” feels more like an EI, rather than an MMIC. Similarly, “union provocation” might only be the proximate cause. If unions are provoked by employer actions, then it is OICs are the real causes of labor unrest, and union provocation, classed as a WIC, is simply an intervening variable.