

Original Research Article

Employees perception about HRM practices in the selected retail shops in Bangladesh

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.

Key words: HRM practices, Retail Shops, Bangladesh

1) Introduction:

Retailing business is forced to be competitive in this era of high market competition (Saaty and Qureshi, 2012; Reddy and Chandra, 2011). 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 (Munni, 2010). 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 (Munni, 2010). 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 (Bhardwaj, 2011; McGuire and Cross, 2003; Saaty and Qureshi, 2012; Sarker, 2014a). HRM is a relatively new concept

in Bangladesh (Ahamed, 2014; Hossan et.al. 2012a; Sarker, 2014a). 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 (Absar, et.al. 2010; Sarker, 2014b). 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 that consists of all activities that result in the offering for sale of merchandise to consumers for their own use (Kashem, 2012). It is the final step in bringing goods to consumer. Reddy and Chandra (2011) 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 (Shamsher and Hossain, 2012). 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 (Baldingen and Rubinson, 1996; Jeevananda, 2011). 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 (Sureshchandar. et al, 2003). According to Imrie. et al. (2002) 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 (Gronroos, 1984 cited in Akbar, 2013). Service quality influences customer loyalty (Clotey. et al, 2008). Product quality is the second most important factor for increasing customer loyalty (Clotey. et al, 2008 and Ahmed, 2012). Product quality is also defined as total features and characteristics of product and service that can satisfy the customer’s needs (Kotler, 2010). Product quality is essential because good quality products and strong brand influence the

customer purchasing decision (Low and Lumb, 2000). Product quality is also known as a pre-requisite for customer satisfaction, repeat purchase and customer loyalty (Ruyter and Wetzels, 1998). Moreover Shoppers' perception of product quality typically influences their value appraisal which can influence their level of satisfaction and loyalty (Munger and Grewal, 2001). 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 (Pearson, 1996). 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 (Ahamed, 2012; Kashem, 2012; Reddy and Chandra, 2011). 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 (Ahamed, 2012; Kashem, 2012). 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 (Kashem, 2012). 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 (Shamsher and Hossain, 2012). 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 (Munni, 2010). 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 (Munni 2010). 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 (Munger and Grewal, 2001). In addition to this, it can be said that the satisfied employees will perform well and happy employees will make happy customers (Hossan, et. al., 2012b; Sarker, 2014b). 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 (Nalla and Varalaxmi, 2010). The study of Reddy and Chandra (2011) 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 (Kashem, 2012; Reddy and Chandra, 2011). It was found that the HRM practices in the selected retail outlets are still in the initial stages of development in Bangladesh (Ahamed, 2012; Akbar, 2013; Kashem, 2012). The present retail organizations which are performing as organized retailing in Bangladesh are facing huge challenges in procuring, retaining and maintaining good employees (Akbar, 2013; Shamsheer and Hossain, 2012). 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. 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 (Hossan,et.al., 20012a; Powell and Single, 1996; Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Rabiee, 2004). All the FGDs were 2 hour long where respondents shared their opinion on the subject matters,

126 and the discussions have been tape recorded with the full consent of the respondents. Only the
127 important issues raised by the respondents are used in analysis part, and these were taken from the
128 discussion note and the tape recorded dat. The secondary data is collected from the annual reports of
129 selected organizations, news papers, magazines and articles pertaining to the HRM activities in the
130 retail shop industry. During this study, several retail shops have been visited in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet
131 (three metropolitan cities in Bangladesh). Experiences through the observations are also included in analysis
132 part to support the findings of the FGDs.

133 **6) Current HRM Practices in Retail Shops of Bangladesh (Findings from FGDs):**

134 Major issues related with HRM practices have been discussed with the participants in the FGDs, and
135 the findings are stated below.

136 **6.1 Relationship among employees:**

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

147 **6.2 Work load and time:**

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

156 **6.3 Knowledge and education level of employees:**

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

167 **6.4 Work stress:**

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

176 A heavy workload causes stress, which leads a series of other health problems. The stress of dealing
 177 with a nonstop flow of work can lead to heart problems, high blood pressure, loss of sleep and loss of
 178 appetite (F2:3, F3:3, F4:3). The company may see its health insurance costs go up while watching
 179 employee production go down. The health issues caused by a heavy workload can often outweigh any
 180 benefits that may come from maintaining a high level of output. Most of the workers of superstores
 181 face the problem of headache because of heavy workload (F2:1). According to the participants,
 182 employees feel exhausted when work load is high and their service quality goes down (F1:4, F2:3,
 183 F4:3). Anger is another expression of their high work load (F3:5)
 184 Employees exposed to a heavy workload can sometimes become disgruntled with their work. This is
 185 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).

215 Team building session to make all known to each other is sometime more effective for better work
 216 coordination (F1:4). Almost all the retail stores in Bangladesh now maintain a particular dress code for
 217 the employees to make them uniformed and work as a team (F2:3). Recognition for a job well done
 218 does not necessarily come in the form of pay raise or bonus. A verbal thank you often is good enough
 219 to recognize one for a good effort (F3:4, F4:5). The employees also think that good work should be
 220 recognized quickly and emphatically, but it is not always done properly (F1:5, F2:4, F4:5). To work in
 221 a retail store, it is very important to get support from the supervisor. The supervisor gives them
 222 suggestion to improve performance (F3:2). Their support seems like an inspiration to the workers
 223 (F1:2). An employee needs to feel good about the job he is doing. He will find more success at his job
 224 if he is well-trained in his position. Training should be on-going and updated whenever a change
 225 occurs. However, employees hardly go through a training program after recruitment and before joining
 226 (F2:3, F1:4). Employees spend a good portion of the day in their work place. So a well organized and
 227 spacious work place is a motivation to them. But, most of the retail stores have less or even no space
 228 for worker's dining and rest areas (F3:2; F4:5; F4:1).

229

230 **6.8 Staff hiring and Promotion:**

231 Employees can be recruited both internally and externally in retail shops. For the entry level job or for
 232 the lower position, the organizations go for both external and internal recruitment. But the recruitment
 233 of trainee officer requires external hiring and this is because of the availability of larger pool of
 234 workers from which it is easy to find the best candidate. Also the outside people bring in new ideas for
 235 the organization. Internal recruitment takes place mostly for moderate and top level of jobs. This is
 236 basically for the jobs of manager and supervisor. Internal recruitment is preferred because it is cheaper
 237 and quicker to recruit. Also the existing people are already familiar with the organization and its
 238 environment and the organization already knows the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates (F2:3,
 239 F3:3). Most of the time, supervisors are promoted to the next level for further growth and prosperity
 240 (F3:1). Internal recruitment is done through promoting the potential workers (F1:1). Promotion is
 241 given to the workers based on educational qualification and experiences (F4:4). Workers also get
 242 promotion based on their performance (F3:2). However, some retail shop managers prefer to hire the
 243 cashier and salesman from his own choice (F1:1, F3:2, F4:4). Biasness also works in promotional
 244 decision (F1:2, F4:1).

245 **6.9 Performance Appraisal:**

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

255 **6.10 Compensation and Other Benefits:**

256 Employees are encouraged to work better if they are well paid at the end of the month (F3:2). Almost
 257 all the employees have dissatisfaction with the payment they get (F1:1, F1:2, F1:4, F2:2, F2:4, F2:5,
 258 F3:1 ,F3:2 , F3:4, F4:1, F4:3, F4:5). Workers do not get enough leave and sometimes they have to
 259 work in the weekend without premier pay which is against the labor right (F1:3, F4:5). If they are
 260 absent for even a day, they need to lose something from their salary amount (F1:2). In case of reward,
 261 only the best performer is rewarded after performance appraisal in every three months, but it is not
 262 often done fairly (F2:3). Pay for performance is not practiced well in retail though sales revenue
 263 increases if workers get bonus or commission (F4:2). There is no retirement benefits provided to the
 264 employees which often encourage people not to work in retail for long run (F1:4, F1:5, F3:3, F4:5)

265 **7) Discussion and Conclusion:**

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

275 After the careful consideration of the findings, following suggestions are made for further
276 improvement of HRM practices in retail sector of Bangladesh:

- 277 ✓ Compensation package of the employees in retail should be revised so that, pay can be good
278 enough for a standard of living. In order to attract good employees, there should have a
279 competitive pay package in retail sector.
- 280 ✓ Performance evaluation of the employees should be done on a regular basis, and employees
281 should be rewarded for their good performance.
- 282 ✓ Retail companies should introduce relevant job training for their employees, so that workers
283 become skilled for achieving the goal of the business. Employee training will also ensure good
284 services to the retail customers, and it will bring more business through customer satisfaction
285 and improved service quality.
- 286 ✓ Interpersonal relationship between employees and employers should be improved for better
287 work motivation.
- 288 ✓ There should have standard working hour for retail workers, and flexibility should be given to
289 them for balancing work and family life.
- 290 ✓ Finally, work motivation needs to be improved through the reduction of work stress, adoption
291 of competitive salary package, ensuring career growth and promotion.

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367 **Appendix:**

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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Table: list of participants in FGDs