



Labor Law Implementation in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment Sector: A Comparative Study of EPZ and Non-EPZ Industries

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ABSTRACT

The ready-made garment (RMG) sector is the largest export industry of Bangladesh with more than 4.2 million workers, where majority of the workers are women. Happily, the sector remains important, but it is also a sector where there has been chronic labor unrest, exacerbated by the tragic events at the Rana Plaza and the Tazeen Fashions fire, which highlighted the significant deficiencies in compliance of labor law and workplace safety. The research is comparative in nature which compares the practices of labor law in Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and non-EPZ (RMG) and compares the worker satisfaction of both sectors. A mixed methods approach was used, drawing both primary data from 60 worker surveys, four key informant interviews and two case studies and secondary data from books, journal articles and official sources. The results suggest that, in general, the EPZ workers have a slightly higher degree of satisfaction because, on average, they say they are more compliant with the labor standards; however, there are differences with respect to specific employment situations. The study suggests that there is a need to toughen the enforcement of labor law and improve working conditions in order to promote sustainable industrial development.

Keywords: Labor Law, Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Industry, Labor Law Compliance, Export Processing Zones (EPZ), Working Conditions

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of export-oriented RMG sector, it has been established as the pillar of the economy of Bangladesh. It has changed the industrial face of the nation and has created jobs, boosted export revenues and encouraged the development of ancillary industries like transportation, finance and communication. The industry has also worked towards the empowerment of the women in the economy by employing millions of women workers (Mazharul Islam Kiron, 2015). The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA, 2023) reported that the RMG industry exported over US\$24.49 billion last financial year and accounted for about 81% of the nation's overall export earnings. RMG industry currently has around 4.2 million employees with over 85% of them being women (Mazharul Islam Kiron, 2015).

While the figures of number of garment factories differ from one source to another, both government and BGMEA, it is undeniable that the industry contribution to employment, industrialization and economic growth has substantial. (BGMEA, 2023). After gaining

independence in 1971, Bangladesh was seriously affected by the lack of industrial capacity. The phenomenal growth of the RMG sector has since significantly contributed to maintain year-on-year GDP growth, reduce poverty and enhance the socio-economic development of the country (Mazharul Islam Kiron, 2015).

Good HRM is a key factor in maintaining industry competitiveness, along with adherence to labor standards. Strategic HRM practices foster employee commitment, productivity and organizational performance, especially in industries that are labor intensive like garments (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Guest, 2007). In addition to boosting productivity, effective HR practices also help to enhance the rights of workers, safety in the workplace, and employee well-being. The RMG industry is still plagued by issues regarding the rights of workers, working conditions, and employee welfare, despite its economic importance. Despite the extensive works done in the field of organizational performance and employee attitudes in Bangladesh, empirical studies to explore the issue are still very low in number particularly as far as the labor-intensive garment sector is concerned (Mukul, Rahman & Ansari, 2019). They also emphasize that the problem of employment contracts, salaries, maternity benefits, identity cards, overtime, and protection of the working environment must be dealt with to facilitate sustainable industrial development.

Acknowledging the above challenges, the Ministry of Labor and Employment aims at improving labor welfare, effective implementation of labor policies and enhance the relationship between employees and employers in productive employment (Ministry of Labor and Employment, n.d.). The contribution of the RMG industry to national economic development and its workforce's vulnerability make the initiatives very significant to the industry.

2. Literature Review

The Ready-made garment (RMG) sector is one of the key pillars of the development of Bangladesh economy contributing a lot to employment generation, export earnings and transforming the economy. The RMG industry has grown at a tremendous pace since it was born as an export based industry in the early 1980s, offering work opportunities to millions of people, mainly women. The industry has boosted Bangladesh's contribution to socio-economic development and also to poverty alleviation in the apparel sector, while strengthening the position of Bangladesh in the global apparel market (Mazharul Islam Kiron, 2015; Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association [BGMEA], 2023). The industry, however, has its own share of labor rights, workplace safety, wage conditions issues, job security, and implementation of labor laws as concerns (Sumi & Hossain, 2026).

HRM and labor standards are becoming more and more acknowledged as factors affecting the competitiveness of industries and worker performance. Becker and Huselid (1998) stated that good human resource practices affect the organization's performance by enhancing the commitment and productivity of employees. Likewise, Guest (2007) reported that strategic human resource management plays an important role in enhancing employees' satisfaction and improves the effectiveness of the organization. In labor intensive sectors like garments, suitable labor practices are essential as the motivation, safety and welfare of workers is directly linked to the productivity and sustainability (Abdullah, 2009).

The RMG sector in Bangladesh has been found to have grown at a fast pace in the past but it has not been able to create decent jobs. Mukul et al. (2019) found the following areas for improvement: employment contracts, wages, maternity rights, identity cards, overtime and

protection in the workplace. The above issues show that there is a mismatch between the legal labor framework and its application. Training of industrial relations, conditions of employment, and worker welfare have been the emphasis of the Ministry of Labor and Employment of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, but this is an ongoing challenge (Ministry of Labor and Employment, n.d.). The Bangladesh Labor Act (BLA), 2006 is a significant legislation on the workers' rights. The Act deals with wages, working hours, leave benefits, occupational health and safety, trade union activities, dispute settlement and employment termination (Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006). Sumi and Hossain (2026) noted that the Act offers significant safeguards such as timely payment of wages, job security, workplace safety, and compensation provisions. Section 123 of the Act is concerned with the payment of wages and Section 51-78A provides for occupational safety and health requirements. In addition, workers have the right to form workers' unions under Section 176 of the Constitution, and the registration of unions remains a factor limiting workers' collective bargaining opportunity (Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006; International Labor Organization [ILO], 2021).

Bangladesh has a serious concern on occupational safety in the garment industry particularly after several big industrial accidents like the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 and the fire of Tazeen Fashions. The events revealed the gaps in factory safety management and enforcement of factory labor laws (Sumi & Hossain, 2026). Haider (2007) claimed that international buyers are demanding more and more compliance with workplace standards and codes of conduct from Bangladesh suppliers. This pressure has led to the development of better and better safety equipment, but this is not necessarily the case in every factory.

Labor practice research also identifies issues of wages and job security. Rahman et. al. (2008) discovered that very many of the garment workers did not have formal appointment letters, thus leaving them with uncertainty about their employment rights. In the same way, Sarker (1997) found that garment industry had high labor turnover which was related to poor working conditions, lack of career opportunities, and worker's discontent. Siddiqi (2005) also noted that in Bangladesh the wages of the garment workers have been relatively low in comparison to their counterparts in other competing countries producing garments.

Other themes in the literature are worker skills and productivity. A significant number of the garment workers were reported to be unskilled by Chowdhury et al. (2005) which resulted in low productivity. It was observed that skill composition varies between the large and small factories, a larger number of skilled workers in large factories than in small factories (Rahman, Bhattacharya and Moazzem, 2008). Spinagager (2001) recommended that there is a great potential to enhance the skill of garment workers by providing training and skill development. Hence, the investment in workers' development is intertwined with the competitiveness and the condition of employment.

Relationships between working environment, job satisfaction and productivity are also discussed in the literature. Abdullah (2009) revealed that job satisfaction can affect the workers productivity as a satisfied worker is more motivated and committed. A positive work environment can have a positive impact on psychological health and morale. But, unhealthy work environments, insufficient compensation, and poor communication structures can cause discontent and a potential for labor disputes.

One of the primary problems of the RMG industry in Bangladesh is the workers' unrest. Islam and Ahmad (2010) reported on some wage protests, leave benefits protests, and workplace

conditions protests among workers. The unrest is indicative of larger issues around industrial relations and workers' negotiating power. Bangladesh has ratified various ILO conventions, such as the forced labor, freedom of association, equal remuneration, discrimination and child labor conventions but there are enforcement issues (ILO, 2021). There are only a few studies that have made a comparative analysis between export processing zone (EPZ) and Non-EPZ industries. To fill this void, Sumi and Hossain (2026) has undertaken a comparative analysis of the differences in labor law compliance, worker satisfaction and workplace conditions. Mixed methods were employed in the study, comparing EPZ and Non EPZ factories, which included worker survey, key informant interviews and case studies. Results showed that overall; EPZ workers were marginally more satisfied with their jobs because the compliance mechanisms were comparatively good, while there were variations across the various employment conditions (Sumi & Hossain, 2026).

EPZ industries are more likely to be subject to more monitoring due to their export-oriented nature and requirement for foreign investments. But the literature indicates that compliance does not always lead to full protection for workers. For instance, the infrastructure and labor law compliance perceptions were found to be higher among EPZ workers, but limited medical facilities, weak worker participation, and job insecurity were still issues to be concerned with, as identified by Sumi and Hossain (2026). Likewise, in non-EPZ factories, the issues of wage, employment documentation and workplace facilities are more difficult.

Generally, it can be concluded from the available literature that the RMG sector has made significant contributions to the economic development of Bangladesh and it has still some challenges in implementing the labor law in the sector. Previous studies have focused on labor rights, workplace safety, wages, productivity, and industrial relations; but there is still a lack of comparative analysis between EPZ and Non-EPZ industries. Literature indicates that more robust enforcement of the labor law, better workers' participation, better safety measures and better human resource practices would be required to achieve sustainable development of the garment industry in Bangladesh.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 Primary Objective: To comparatively assess the implementation of labor laws and their implications for worker welfare in EPZ and Non-EPZ ready-made garment (RMG) factories in Bangladesh.

3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To compare labor law compliance between EPZ and Non-EPZ RMG industries.
2. To assess workers' socio-economic conditions and labor rights in both sectors.
3. To examine workers' satisfaction regarding wages, benefits, working environment, and job security.
4. To analyze industrial relations and workplace governance in EPZ and Non-EPZ industries.
5. To recommend policy measures to strengthen labor law implementation and improve workers' welfare.

4. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

4.1 Methodology

It is a mixed methods research approach (both qualitative and quantitative) to gain a holistic picture of the context of the research. Primary and Secondary sources will be used to gather

data. Secondary data will be collected from a wide range of project documents, reports, academic literature and existing studies conducted via an extensive desk review.

The main data collection will include the design of research instruments such as structured, semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires, as well as detailed data collection schedules, which will be organized according to the goals of the research. Case studies will also be used to capture in-depth workers' histories, to learn more about experiences and workplaces.

The research methodology adopted will involve four stages: (1) secondary research and preparation, (2) survey design and preparation, (3) field data collection and (4) data analysis and reporting. Preparatory activities will include the recruitment and training of enumerators, development of survey monitoring procedures, as well as development of data management and quality assurance plans.

The field survey will include questionnaires, case studies and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to gather detailed and context-specific information. The last step will be the integration and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to fully answer the research questions. The research design enables the changes to take place in the field without affecting the reliability, validity and relevance of the study results.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

The study covered the topics of labor law 2006 and practice of readymade garment industry of Bangladesh.

The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh started to attract a considerable amount of investment in the early 1980s and by the late 1980s had become a major player in the country's economy. There was a significant impact of the Daewoo Company of South Korea on the foundation of the industry, since the company offered training for Bangladeshi workers. Many of them became self-employed thereafter and helped the swift growth and development of the garment industry.

RMG industry is one of the major foreign exchange earning industries in Bangladesh and it is playing significant role in promoting economic growth by supporting other industries like finance, transport, communication etc. in the country today. It has also generated significant employment opportunities, especially for women, leading to economic independence for millions and social and economic change in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Labor Act 2006 is the legal instrument that regulates employment conditions, workers' rights, workplace safety, wages, working hours and industrial relations in the garment industry. This study is focused on the extent of implementation and compliance of the labor laws and workplace practices within RMG industries with particular emphasis on workers' rights, compliance mechanisms and working environment.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1 The present overview of the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh

The RMG industry has been developing gradually. The RMG industry is a slowly developing sector. The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh began to grow in early 1980s. Investment and training programs, particularly Daewoo, a South Korean firm that trained Bangladeshi workers helped this sector grow. Later, many of the trained workers set up their own businesses, promoting the growth of the garment industry.

4.1.2 Contribution of RMG Sector to the Economy

The RMG industry has emerged as one of the leading industries in Bangladesh.

It is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings for the country.

The sector has provided job opportunities to millions of people, particularly women, and has helped to promote economic and social development.

The RMG sector has faced the following challenges. The following are the challenges of the RMG sector.

Despite the growth of the RMG sector, there are a number of challenges in the sector:

- Lack of internal efficiency.
- Problems in transportation and port management.
- Weak backward and forward linkages.
- Need for product diversification.
- Need to seek new markets in other countries in the wake of the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) in 2005.

4.2 Practices in the Labor Law in the RMG Sector

4.2.1 Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006

In order to safeguard the rights of the workers and to control the employment situation, the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA), 2006 was enacted. The Act covers:

- Working conditions.
- Wage payment.
- Injury and accident compensation.
- Worker welfare.
- Health and safety.
- Trade union formation.
- Arbitration of labor disputes.

4.2.2 Payment of Wages

Under Section 123 of Bangladesh Labor Law, the working persons are entitled to pay wages in the prescribed time. Employers must pay wages not later than the 7th working day after the end of the wage period.

4.2.3 Working Hours and Leave Benefits

The working hours and employee leave are governed by the rules of the Labor Act.

Working Hours:

Adult workers are allowed to work no more than 8 hours per day.

Working time may be extended up to 10 hours (including overtime).

Types of Leave:

Casual leave includes 10 days of paid leave every year.

Sick leave: 14 days per year with payment.

Annual leave according to the number of working days.

4.2.4 Employment of Children and Adolescents

The Labor Act makes the following definitions:

Child: A person between 14 and 16 years.

Adolescent: Someone who is 16 to 18 years old.

Rules include:

Children are not allowed to work in a hazardous job.

Adolescents must obtain a fitness certificate prior to being employed.

Their health, education and development should not suffer due to their employment.

4.2.5 Occupational Safety and Health

The Labor Act is centered on providing a safe workplace. Major provisions include:

- Maintaining workplace cleanliness.
- Preventing workplace hazards.
- Taking care to provide safe operation for buildings and machines.
- Taking action against unsafe working conditions.

4.2.6 Workers' Right to Join Trade Unions

The workers may establish and join a trade union.

Important points:

Section 176 provides workers the right to organize unions.

Relations between workers and employers are improved by the help of trade unions.

But the rules for registration make forming a union difficult.

4.2.7 Job Security

The Labor Act protects workers in the following ways:

- Appointment letters and ID cards.
- Notice before termination.
- Compensation in connection with an unfair dismissal.
- Appropriate grounds for dismissal.

4.2.8 Other Worker Benefits

The payment of Unused Leave: An employee must be paid for any unused annual leave they are owed upon termination of employment.

Death Benefits: Those who are on the continuous service are entitled to receive death benefits to their nominees or dependents.

Provident Fund: The provident fund benefits can also be availed even after a worker is dismissed or terminated.

5. The safety of Buildings, Machinery, Development and Productivity Challenges**5.1 The safety of buildings and machinery**

- Factories need to have safe buildings and machinery.
- Authorities may be able to prevent unsafe operations by stopping them.
- Labor Law Practices in the RMG Sector
- The students will examine employment and working conditions.
- Bangladesh's textile sector (RMG) is one of the most job creation industries in the country.
- It has created employment for millions of workers and has contributed significantly in the field of employment of women and their economic empowerment.
- The product export of the industry is primarily to international markets like USA and Europe.

5.2 Skill Development and Productivity Challenges

- Many of the employees are unskilled or semi-skilled.
- Poor skills are correlated with reduced productivity and output costs.
- The competitiveness in the global market is dependent on skilled workers.
- Implementation of the Labor Law—Problems

While this has improved, there are still some issues to be addressed:

- Poor working environments.
- High labor turnover.
- Absent of formal work documentation.
- Inadequate appointment letters for many workers.
- Wage-related problems.
- Labor Unrest in the RMG Sector
- The major reasons for labor unrest.

Labor conflicts mainly occur due to:

- Low wages.
- Poor working conditions.
- Discontent with overtime compensation.
- Labor-management relations issues.
- Labor Unrest—Consequences of. How Labor Unrest Affects.
- The factory is shut down.
- Labor and management have conflicts.
- Production and/or business activities are limited or impacted.

In Bangladesh, several conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) have been adopted to safeguard worker's rights.

These include:

- Freedom of association.
- Collective bargaining rights.
- Equal remuneration.
- Ending the use of forced labor.
- The elimination of child labor.

However, problems still exist in achieving full implementation due to wage inequality, working hour problems, and continuing labor disputes.

6. A comprehensive summary of EPZ and Non-EPZ Garment Workers situation

This section gives a detailed account of the survey results on EPZ and Non-EPZ garment workers. The summary is based on the data in all available tables, such as demographic profiles of workers, socio-economic conditions, working conditions and factory facilities, as well as comparisons between working conditions in EPZ factories and in non-EPZ factories. The numeric information obtained from the original tables has not been changed.

The survey results of EPZ garment factories give a general picture about the workers' demographic and socio-economic features. The study was carried out in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) area of Savar among the workers in seven garment industries of the

area. The age distribution shows that the largest number of EPZ workers fall in the age bracket of 25-39 with 56.7% of the respondents coming from this age group. Workers aged 20–24 years represent 16.7%, while 13.3% belong to the 40–44 years group. The age group of 45-49 years and 50-54 years account for 6.7% of workers.

EPZ employees are predominantly employed in operational jobs. The largest share (60.0%) of workers are loaders. Labor account for 16.7% of all employment, cutting masters 6.7%, assistant operators 6.7% and other jobs including machine operators, clerks and distributors cover smaller shares. The shipping department is the department with the largest number of employees, accounting for 50.0% of the respondents. Other departments account for 10.0% each with print and sewing, 6.7% each with cutting and production and several smaller departments.

The gender split of workers in the EPZ indicates that workers are predominantly male. 80.0% of the respondents are male workers and 20.0% of them are female workers. As far as marital status, 73.3% of workers are married and 26.7% are single workers. The educational qualifications reveal that majority of those working in EPZs have primary education (56.7%). There are 23.3% workers who are educated at high-school level, 13.3% who are educated at HSC level and 6.7% who are educated at SSC level.

The income-expenditure situation of EPZ workers reveals moderate economic situation. 53.3% of the workers have income ranging between 10,000 – 10,999 BDT per month. The workers who earn income 12000 BDT or more constitute 36.7% and the workers with lower income ranges constitute smaller groups. The primary expense of workers is 10,000 - 10,999 BDT per month, accounting for 70% of the total. The majority of the workers are living alone (93.3%) and only 6.7% are living in joint families. When it comes to dependents, the highest number is for those with 2 dependents, accounting for 43.3%.

The working environment of EPZ workers portrays positive and challenging aspects. The recruitment is based primarily on skill, with 63.3% of workers being recruited based on skill. Experience-based recruitment makes up 20.0% and other qualifications make up 16.7%. In terms of discrimination, 50.0 per cent of workers experienced task-related discrimination, 20.0 per cent did not experience discrimination and 30.0 per cent cited gender as a reason for discrimination.

According to wage satisfaction among EPZ workers, most workers are neutral. Approximately 66.7% had a neutral opinion on wages, 26.7% were satisfied and 6.7% were dissatisfied. Labor union participation is very low, with 96.7% of the workers saying they were not involved in labor unions. The other worry is medical facility availability, 83.3% said that hospitals are not available, while 16.7% said they are available.

The majority of EPZ workers (83.3%) work for 8-10 hours a day. Workers working 6–8 hours represent 13.3%, while 3.3% work 10–12 hours. Decision making is restricted with 93.3% saying they cannot take part in decisions. As far as job security was concerned, 76.7% said their jobs were not secure, 13.3% said their jobs were secure, and 10.0% said their jobs were very secure.

Although some limitations, EPZ factories offer relatively good work conditions. About 70.0% of the workers rated the working conditions in the factories as good and 16.7% as very good. 73.3% of workers rated the infrastructure facilities as good. Leave facilities and

overtime facilities were also rated positively, with 66.7% saying there was good leave facilities and 66.7% saying there was good overtime facilities. The responses to compliance with the labor laws were positive with 66.7% agreeing that labour laws are complied with.

The non-EPZ workers profile has some different socio-economic traits. The majority of non-EPZ workers (66.7%) are in the age group of 25-39 years. The 45-49 age group of workers accounts for 16.7%, with other age groups making up smaller percentages. The occupational structure depicts that the greatest portion of people belongs to the loading group with 40.0%. Labor workers constitute 20.0% of the workforce followed by cleaners (13.3%) and machine operators (10.0%).

The distribution by departments shows that 36.7% of the workers are employed in the print department. The other main categories are sewing (13.3%) and administrative (13.3%) and accessories (10.0%). The work force is of male type comprising 83.3% males and 16.7% females. Like the EPZ factories, most of the non-EPZ workers are married (73.3%) and single (26.7%).

The result of the educational condition of non-EPZ workers reveals that the primary level of education is the most common level of education for non-EPZ workers, which is 73.3%. The proportion of high school education is 16.7%, SSC is 6.7%, and the proportion of degree holders is 3.3%. The income of EPZ workers is comparatively lower. The highest proportion of 30.0% each is for the earning brackets of 5000–5999 BDT and 6000–6999 BDT. The average monthly expenditure is largely in the 10,000 – 10999 BDT range, accounting for 33.3% of the total.

The situation in the Non EPZ factories can be seen as a representative of the problems faced in the workplaces. The dominant method of recruitment is mainly skill based (46.67%). Experience-based recruitment represents 16.67%. Labor union involvement is low with 90.00% of workers not being involved in labor unions. Fifty percent (50) of workers reported medical facilities were not available, and 43.33% reported they were available.

The non-EPZ factories have relatively high working hours. Approximately 63.33% of the workforce are engaged for 10-12 hours a day. Likewise, there is limited participation in decision making, with 83.33% saying they are unable to participate. The perceptions of job security indicate 40.00% feel they are secured, 36.67% feel they are not secured, and 23.33% feel that they are very secured.

The differences in employment benefits and facilities in the workplace between EPZ and Non-EPZ factories are clear. Apart from wages, EPZ factories generally offer more facilities for workers including food facilities, leave facilities, salary structure, security and worker support facilities. EPZ workers are paid more, and sometimes twice as much as non-EPZ workers for comparable jobs. The medical allowance and overtime facilities offered by EPZ factories are 10% and 52%, respectively, while the medical allowance and overtime facilities of the non-EPZ workers are 5% and 10-11 hours per week, respectively.

EPZ factories also offer more holiday facility: 10 days of holidays per Eid, whereas non-EPZ factories offer between 5- and 7-days holiday per Eid. The EPZ factories offer greater increment rates and workers in such factories are incremented by 1000-2000 taka per year while increment rate for non-EPZ workers is around 750 taka per year.

The overall results suggest relatively favorable working conditions, compliance systems, benefits and wages in EPZ factories when compared to non-EPZ factories. But worker participation, medical facilities, labor welfare, job security and other areas need to be improved in both the sectors. The survey shows that, while there is an improvement in facilities provided in EPZ factories, there are issues related to worker welfare and participation that need to be addressed.

Source: Survey, 2023-2025

7. Findings

1. The findings of the study revealed several important aspects of labor law implementation and worker welfare in Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry.
2. Labor law compliance was generally higher in EPZ factories than in non-EPZ factories.
3. EPZ factories provided comparatively better workplace infrastructure, occupational safety, and regulatory compliance.
4. Workers in both sectors identified job security as a major concern despite improvements in labor standards.
5. Access to medical facilities and welfare services remained inadequate, particularly in non-EPZ factories.
6. Worker participation in decision-making and formal grievance mechanisms was limited in both sectors.
7. Labor union participation was relatively low, indicating limited employee representation in workplace governance.
8. Most respondents acknowledged improvements in occupational health and safety following recent labor law reforms.
9. EPZ factories demonstrated stronger human resource management practices, including training, welfare programs, and compliance monitoring.
10. Effective implementation of labor laws was positively associated with improved working conditions, employee satisfaction, and industrial relations.
11. Continuous monitoring, institutional commitment, and effective enforcement are essential for ensuring sustainable labor law compliance across the RMG sector.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen labor law implementation and improve worker welfare in Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry.

1. Strengthen the enforcement of the Bangladesh Labor Act through regular inspections and effective regulatory monitoring.
2. Improve occupational health, workplace safety, and emergency preparedness in both EPZ and Non-EPZ factories.
3. Ensure fair wages, timely salary payments, and equitable employee benefits in accordance with national labor regulations.
4. Expand medical, welfare, and social protection facilities to enhance workers' physical and psychological well-being.
5. Promote greater worker participation in decision-making through effective grievance redress mechanisms and social dialogue.
6. Enhance training and awareness programmed on labor rights, occupational safety, and legal compliance for both workers and management.
7. Encourage factory management to adopt transparent and accountable human resource management practices.
8. Strengthen collaboration among government agencies, factory owners, workers' representatives, and international development partners to improve compliance.

9. Establish continuous monitoring and periodic compliance assessment systems to identify gaps and ensure sustainable implementation of labor laws.
10. Develop evidence-based policies that support decent work, protect workers' rights, and enhance the long-term sustainability and global competitiveness of Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry.

9. Conclusion

This study finds significant differences between EPZ and Non-EPZ workers regarding wage satisfaction, salary discrimination, workplace relationships, labor law compliance, welfare facilities, and communication processes. EPZ workers generally reported higher satisfaction with wages and workplace facilities, while non-EPZ workers showed greater involvement in workplace participation and decision-making. However, both sectors face challenges related to job security, medical facilities, and work stress.

Labor issues such as high turnover, absenteeism, and unrest in the RMG sector are mainly linked to weak HRM practices, low wages, and inadequate working conditions. To address these challenges, both EPZ and Non-EPZ factories should improve wage structures, employee benefits, labor law compliance, workplace safety, and worker participation.

The RMG sector should also focus on reducing gender inequality, improving communication between workers and management, providing better welfare facilities, and creating a supportive working environment. Strong monitoring systems, compliance with international labour standards, and greater attention to worker satisfaction are essential for developing a productive and harmonious workplace.

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