QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND EMPLOYEE WORK OUTCOMES: A HIERARCHICAL MODEL WITH MEDIATION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates how the quality of work life (QWL), presented in a hierarchical model, influences employee work outcomes (job performance and retention intention). The paper also examines if job satisfaction mediates the above relationship. Drawing on the social exchange theory, the paper examines these two research questions using 365 employees from Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry. The findings show that QWL is positively associated with job satisfaction, retention intention, and in-role performance. Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on the outcome variables as well. Furthermore, job satisfaction mediates QWL and employee work outcomes relationship. The hierarchical model of QWL and its impact on employee outcomes through the mediating role of job satisfaction continues to lag. As such, the paper provides practical insights for organizations looking to improve employee satisfaction, performance, and retention through QWL. These findings have implications for research on positive relationships at work. The study has a few limitations that may provide opportunities for future research.

Keywords: Quality of work life, retention, job satisfaction, job performance, ready-made garment (RMG) industry, Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

As business organizations are operating in a highly competitive and rapidly changing environment, the issue of improved performance and retention of valued employees for the survival of the organizations has become a central area of research around the world (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Equal importance is also given to addressing employees' quality of work life (QWL) at work, given that ensuring QWL has a significant bearing on overall employee outcomes such as

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performance and retention (Kim et al., 2017). Employee outcomes of improved performance and increased retention are essential to an organization's economic stability and progression, for which an organization can and even wants to spend more (Aruldoss et al., 2021). To a greater extent, the distinctive performance of the workforce determines the organization's competitive capability (Rubel et al., 2018). Likewise, employee retention helps an organization to continue its performance and strengthen its image and reputation (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). All such employee-related issues are crucial as organizations cannot sustain themselves at the expense of their valued employees. Such realization is equally important for all types of organizations where the Ready-made garment (RMG) industry is one focal for the Bangladesh economy based on their contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP).

The RMG sector is Bangladesh's largest source of earning foreign exchange (Rubel et al., 2017). This industry enormously contributed 13% to GDP in 2018-2019 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The remarkable increase in the RMG industry also stimulates the employment prospect for the country. More than 4.5 million people work in this industry (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Local researchers claim that the growth of this industry largely depends on the significant contribution of its operating labor force (Russel et al., 2021). However, recently this sector has been going through severe disturbances resulting from employee problems due to their dissatisfaction with employee management practices (Khan, 2021). RMG employees are disappointed due to a lack of caring and focus on their overall well-being (Rubel et al., 2017). Organizations think only about making a profit rather than thinking about the well-being of the individuals working for them (Russel et al., 2021).

Consequently, frustration, absenteeism, production disruption, and turnover are the regular phenomenon observed among employees in this industry (Akter & Banik, 2018). Given the utmost priority to the employees' satisfaction for their improved performance with stability in the organization, local researchers recommend improving the QWL of RMG employees (Akter & Banik, 2018; Helen et al., 2014). Azim et al. (2021) also recommend focusing on QWL to enhance employee well-being. Researchers consider QWL one of the foundation blocks of ethical and virtuous organizations that help ensure employee well-being (Rubel et al., 2017) and organizational performance (Rubel & Kee, 2014). In recent years, QWL is increasingly being identified as a progressive employee management indicator influencing attitudinal outcomes such as employee satisfaction, commitment, and engagement (Dhamija et al., 2019; Jabeen et al., 2018). Furthermore, QWL is considered the predictor of employee behavioral intention and actual behavior, such as employee performance, citizenship behavior, turnover intention, and turnover (Hermawati & Mas, 2017; Surienty et al., 2014).

This study advances our knowledge of QWL in four ways. First, we investigate QWL at a high level of analysis in a hierarchical reflective model using PLS-SEM. Prior researchers have used a hierarchical reflective model in different study domains, for instance, online experiential value (Wetzels et al., 2009), trustworthiness (Akter et al., 2011), high involvement HRM (Rubel et al., 2017), high commitment HRM (Rubel et al., 2018), and high performance work practices (Rubel et al., 2020). However, research on the hierarchical reflective model in PLS-SEM is still limited (Akter et al., 2011; Rubel et al., 2020). Second, we outline the logic underlying how QWL is conceptualized at this higher level of analysis. In particular, we consider five dimensions, namely (i) compensation and benefits, (ii) job characteristics, (iii) supervisor behavior, (iv) work-life balance, and (v) working conditions, to capture a broader understanding of QWL.

Third, we include job satisfaction as a mediator in our model to understand how QWL influences employee retention and job performance. We propose job satisfaction as a mediator between QWL, employee retention, and job performance. We expect that QWL affects job satisfaction, influencing employee retention and job performance. Job satisfaction is a leading predictor of job performance (Loan, 2020), work engagement (Orgambídez-Ramos & de Almeida, 2017), and organizational commitment (Sari & Seniati, 2020). In other words, when employees are satisfied, employees are more likely to perform, engage, and commit to their organizations. Job satisfaction is also studied as a mediator between HRM and turnover intention (Haque, 2018; Ashraf, 2020). This study is one of the early investigations of using mediating effect under a hierarchical model.

Fourth, we answer the call for better incorporating the Asian context into the study. We consider QWL as the predictor of employee attitudinal, behavioral intention, and actual behavioral outcomes within a novel paradigm of the rising Bangladeshi RMG industry. The mainstream research on QWL and its outcomes are authenticated more based on the perspectives of either more developed and Western countries and less on Asian countries (Akter et al., 2018; Aruldoss et al., 2021; Jabeen et al., 2018). In developing countries like Bangladesh, particularly in the labor-intensive RMG industry, few studies link QWL and employee outcomes with more research calls (Ashraf, 2020; Jabeen et al., 2018). In line with the recent research call, the present study examines the impact of QWL on RMG operators' job satisfaction, performance, and retention intention. Our study linking the hierarchical QWL model, job satisfaction, employee performance, and retention intention is valuable to the existing knowledge. Figure 1 presents our research framework.

Figure 1: Research Framework
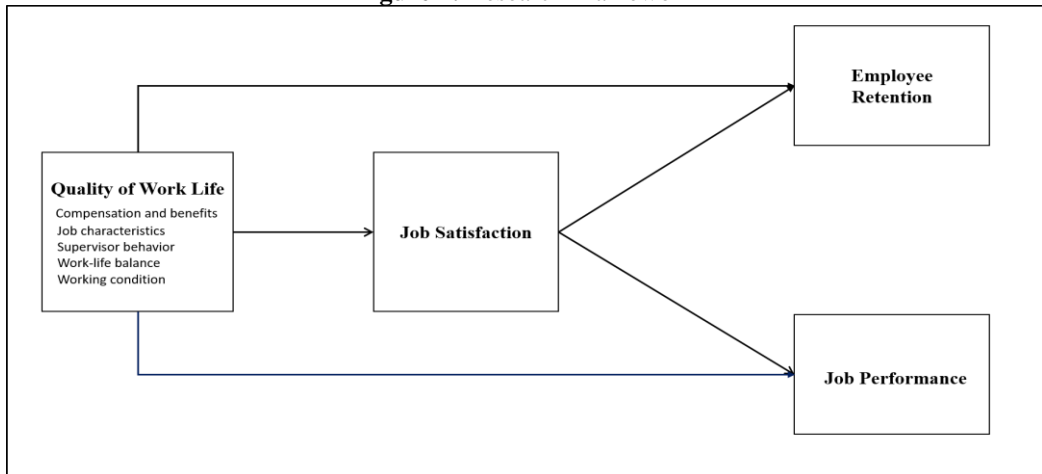

1.1. Social Exchange Theory

We propose that how employees perceive they are treated (QWL) in the workplace is influenced by social exchange process, which would influence their work-related attitudes and behaviors. We draw on the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) to predict how QWL will influence job satisfaction, affecting employee retention and job performance. SET posits that interpersonal interaction unfolds through reciprocity whereby deeds are repaid in kind (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rubel et al., 2020). Through the lens of SET, we expect the employees to reciprocate

depending on how much they get returned from their organization for their contribution. We assume the possibility of reciprocal causation of employee satisfaction performance and retention intention that can be explained by SET. Thus, we are suggesting the existence of a two-way relationship of behavioral reinforcement. We summarize this because a good QWL (compensation and benefits, supervisor behavior, job characteristics, work-life balance, and working condition) is made available to employees to encourage positive work-related attitudes and behaviors. Employees would exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors to access a better QWL in the workplace.

1.2. *Quality of Work-life as a Hierarchical Reflective Model*

A hierarchical construct (second-order construct) is comprised of several dimensions (first-order constructs) where each dimension with respective indicators extracts some portion of that hierarchical construct (Wetzels et al., 2009). The hierarchical model demonstrates a concept higher than its representative constructs in first-order, usually in second-order, using a multidimensional reflective or formative basis (Wetzels et al., 2009). The reflective approach indicates that first-order dimensions represent the second-order construct, and these representative dimensions might change, whereas the formative approach has first-order dimensions, which might not change, to form a second-order construct (Hair et al., 2017). In the hierarchical reflective model, all first-order dimensions share a general concept in a second-order, and dropping a dimension would not change the second-order construct's conceptual realm. Also, first-order measures are expected to be highly and positively correlated (Wetzels et al., 2009), and such reflective constructs have high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). The first-order constructs (compensation and benefits, job characteristics, supervisor behavior, work-life balance, and working condition) are used as manifest variables that reflect the higher-order construct (QWL). Subsequently, the linkage is developed to comprehend the role of a hierarchical reflective QWL model in enhancing employee job satisfaction, performance, and retention. Figure 2 portrays the linkage among QWL, job satisfaction, and employee outcomes (job performance and retention) in the organization.

Figure 2: QWL a Second-Order, Hierarchical, Reflective Model
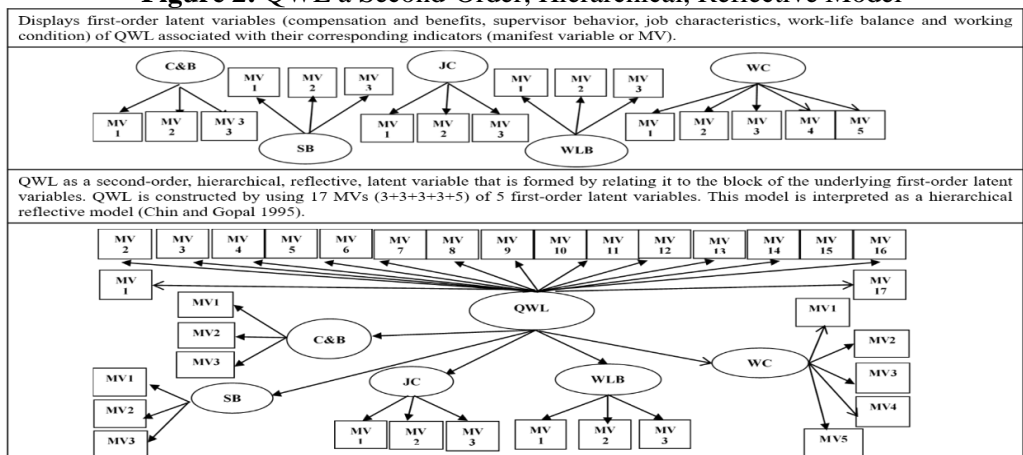
Note: MV = Manifest variable, QWL = Quality of life, C&B = Compensation and benefits, IRP = In-role performance, JC = Job characteristics, JS = Job satisfaction, RI = Retention intention, SB = Supervisor behavior, WC = Working conditions, WLB = Work-life balance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Quality of Work Life (QWL)*

QWL refers to the extent of an employee's perceived life experiences about his or her work environment. QWL is a favorable situation that enhances employee satisfaction by conforming to proper rewards, job security, and growth opportunity (May et al., 1999). In this sense, QWL designates an individual's broader job-related understanding of his or her work. It involves positive feelings of employees such as job satisfaction, work involvement, possibilities for development, use of one's skills, a meaningful future at work, work-family balance, and negative responses such as anxiety and job strain as an exchange for their efforts in the organization. Aryeetey and Sanda (2012) stated that QWL represents employees' freedom in ensuring that their job functions match their personal needs and interests. Yeo and Li (2013) defined QWL as employee perception of how they are involved in work, respond to the environment, and behave in specific work activities. According to Kara et al. (2018), QWL is a platform to enhance employees' happiness with their work setting and efficiency. They found that different organizational attributes, such as policies and procedures, management style, and other general contextual components, influence how employees perceive QWL.

Despite this clear conceptual linkage and a burgeoning interest in QWL within the organizational literature, QWL impacts on job performance and retention via mediating effect remain relatively unexplored in the Asian context. Past studies have largely neglected questions concerning how QWL affects employee outcomes. Local studies generally focus on whether QWL promotes employee performance (Rubel et al., 2014), organizational commitment (Akter et al., 2018), and competitive advantage (Hossain & Shirazi, 2018). And there has not yet been a resolution regarding the components of QWL. Different dimensions linked with QWL seek meticulous consideration to be conceptualized and measured (Surienty et al., 2014). So far, QWL is viewed as a reflection of employee experiences of several work-life factors. This study, therefore, responds to the calls to consider five dimensions, (i) compensation and benefits, (ii) supervisor behavior, (iii) job characteristics, (iv) work-life balance, and (v) working condition as reflective dimensions of QWL. Table 1 summarizes the past literature on the dimensions of QWL.

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Table 1: Research on QWL

QWL Research in Global Perspective	
Sources	**Attributes/Dimensions of QWL**
Van Laar et al. (2007)	Job and career satisfaction, working conditions, General well-being, homework interference and work stress, control at work, and working Conditions.
Almalki et al. (2012)	Work-life/home life, work design, work context and work world.
Mosadeghrad (2013)	Pay, benefits, job promotion, management support, disturbance handler, communication, job stress, wage and salary, job security, participation, and job pride.
Taher (2013)	Work creativity, payment, and work environment.
Huang et al. (2007); Surienty et al. (2014); Rubel and Kee (2014)	Supervisory behavior, compensation and benefits, job characteristics, and work-life balance.
Hermawati & Mas (2017)	Participation, growth and development, compensation rewards and working environment.
Jabeen et al. (2018)	Capacity, opportunity, remuneration, respect for the law, social integration, social relevance, work conditions, and influence.
Subbarayalu et al. (2019)	Working environment, psychosocial factors at work, compensation and rewards, training and development opportunity and job security
Sari et al. (2019)	Adequate and fair compensation, a safe and healthy working place, growth opportunity, social integration in work organization, and constitutionalism.
Alrawadieh et al. (2020)	Physical safety, appropriate benefits, organizational involvement, appreciation, pay and benefits, and development opportunity.
QWL Research in Bangladesh	
Tabassum et al. (2012)	Fair compensation, healthy working place, growth opportunity, social integration in the workplace, work organization constitutionalism.
Hossain & Shirazi (2018)	Health and safety, workload, working hours, grievance handling procedures, relationships with coworkers, and training program availability.

2.2. *Job Satisfaction*

The concept of job satisfaction has been defined in many ways. However, the most-used definition of job satisfaction in organizational research is that of Locke (1976), who describes job satisfaction as " a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience" (p.1304). Job satisfaction is also considered an emotional reaction to the various aspects of job experiences (Weiss, 2002). Skalli et al. (2008) argue that job satisfaction is the combined weighted outcome of different aspects of a job. Lorber and Skela (2012) consider job satisfaction as the outcome of different organizational and personal variables. In other words, job satisfaction is a work-related attitude that reflects the extent to which employees evaluate different aspects of their jobs.

2.3. *Employee Retention*

Considering the magnitude of employee turnover costs, organizations are trying to improve employee job-life experiences to boost their retention intention (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020). Retention intention is an employee's willingness to continue long-term employment relationships with the present organization. It is the opposite of leaving intention (Johari et al., 2012). It is globally accepted that leaving employees creates a huge loss for the leaving organization (Milliman et al.,

2018). Employees need to experience that their work-life is smoother through proper training, compensation, fair appraisal, and a clear career path to remain with the present organization (Johari et al., 2012). Considering job characteristics, organization goodwill, career development potential, job security, and organizational culture, employees would decide whether to work with or leave the organization (Stokes et al., 2013). Therefore, the key to retaining employees is to assess their intention to stay and implement adequate retention measures.

2.4. *Job Performance*

Job performance is referred to as employees' behavioral consequence, indicating that employees portray positive attitudes toward their organization. Performance is the aggregated value of employee contribution directly and indirectly to organizational objectives (Rubel et al., 2014). Employee performance is conceptualized into in-role performance and extra-role performance. In-role performance is regarded as the contribution of individuals toward the organization, as mentioned in the job description. According to Williams and Anderson (1991), in-role performance is the behavior of individual employees intended to achieve an organizational goal, as stated in their job description and specification. The extra-role performance focuses on the involvement of individual employees in the organization as well as a group to enhance group behavior toward achieving both group and organizational goals.

Moorman et al. (1993) consider that extra-role performance is discretionary, like acting courteously in helping others, a good relationship with colleagues and supervisors, which are required for overall organizational effectiveness. As in-role performance indicates individual performance behavior, this study focused on employee in-role performance.

2.5. *Hypotheses Development*
2.5.1. *QWL and Employee Outcomes*

Past studies have reported that QWL relates to employees' satisfaction and other work-related behaviors (Kim et al., 2017). Chan and Wyatt (2007) reveal a negative association between QWL and employee turnover intention in China and explain that a better work-life helps reduce turnover intention. Almalki et al. (2012) discover a negative relationship between QWL and nurse turnover intention. In Bangladesh, research on QWL has found a negative influence on turnover intention (Newaz et al., 2007) and a positive effect on employee retention (Rahman et al., 2017). An individual's QWL directly influences the quality of life value (Sari et al., 2019) and the organization's productivity (Pio & Tampi, 2018). We, therefore, hypothesize that QWL will promote job performance and employee retention.

H1: QWL has a positive relationship with employee retention.
H2: QWL has a positive relationship with employee in-role performance.

2.5.2. *QWL and Job Satisfaction*

Existing attempts to establish the association between QWL and job satisfaction have focused on various QWL and job satisfaction measures. For example, Kim et al. (2017) suggest that QWL predicts employee attitudinal outcomes (job satisfaction, commitment, and team spirit). Sirgy et al. (2001) note that QWL may affect work-life (job satisfaction) and non-work-life satisfaction.

Moreover, Huang et al. (2007) find a significant relationship between QWL and employee satisfaction in Taiwan. In Bangladesh, Rubel and Kee (2014) also found a positive influence of QWL on job satisfaction. In a recent study, Pio and Tampi (2018) and Sari et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between QWL and employee satisfaction. In other words, QWL should have a significant impact on job satisfaction, which leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: QWL has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

2.5.3. Job Satisfaction and Employee Outcomes

Why do satisfied employees matter? In theory, it is assumed that satisfied employees feel obliged to pursue and achieve challenging goals and continue with the organization. Satisfaction in the workplace pushes the employees to exert extra effort, as the reciprocity norm suggests (Leiter & Bakker, 2010). Satisfaction promotes engaged employees with the organization because they might 'create their own resources' and 'perform better' (Bakker et al., 2011). Job satisfaction is an important determinant of employee performance (Dinc et al., 2018). Rubel and Kee (2014) reported that job satisfaction positively relates to employees' in-role performance. On the other hand, job satisfaction is also related to employee retention intention. Terera and Ngirande (2014) found a significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention intention in the organization. The authors have asserted that retaining employees by satisfying them contributes to achieving the organization's success. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with employee retention.
H5: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with employee in-role performance.

2.5.4. Hypotheses Development

Research evidence supports the mediating role of job satisfaction between different dimensions of the workplace and employee outcomes. For instance, Wang (2011) examined the mediating influence of job satisfaction between internal service quality and organizational performance. In analyzing turnover intention, researchers also revealed the role of job satisfaction as a mediator (Kumara & Fasana, 2018). A study conducted by Dinc et al. (2018) on nurses in hospital organizations considered job satisfaction a mediating variable between organizational commitment and job performance. The authors found a positive mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between nurses' organizational commitment and job performance. We expect job satisfaction mediates the relationship between QWL and employee outcomes. Our study is the first study that explores the potential role of job satisfaction in the context of QWL and employee outcomes. We argue that there is an indirect effect of QWL on employees' outcomes. In other words, our model represents a causal sequence: QWL affects job satisfaction, influencing employees' in-role performance and employee retention. This leads us to propose the following hypotheses:

H6: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between QWL and employee retention.
H7: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between QWL and employee in-role performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Population and Sample*

RMG organizations were located, engaging over 3 million people (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2019). According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association [BGMEA] (2019), operating employees comprise approximately 80% of the total labor force in the RMG industry. Hence, the study focuses on the operators in the RMG organizations. Most of the research on the RMG industry focuses on operators (Rubel et al., 2017). The unit of analysis for this research is at the individual level: the employees working as an operator in the RMG organizations in Bangladesh.

The back translation method was employed in this research. Professional translators conducted translations in both the English and Bangla languages. The bilingual version (both English and Bangla languages) was used in the questionnaire. We identified 80 RMG organizations to conduct the survey. The selection was based on the following two criteria: (1) organizations are operating for at least ten years, and (2) the employment size of the organization must be at least 1,000 employees. 800 questionnaires were distributed to the HR personnel of the 40 RMG organizations who had consented to participate in the survey. Of the 800 questionnaires, 432 were returned, equivalent to a 54% response rate. However, after the data screening had been carried out, only 365 surveys were found usable, with a 45.6% response rate, which is relatively higher than other researchers' response rates from the RMG industry in Bangladesh. For instance, Rubel and Kee (2020) obtained a response rate of 29.0 % and 29.3% from the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Table 2 summarizes the respondents' profiles.

Table 2: Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Information	Respondents (N = 365)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	166	45.5
Female	199	55.6
Age:		
20 – 24 years	168	46.0
25 – 29 years	124	34.0
30 – 34 years	46	12.6
35 – 39 years	27	7.4
Religion		
Muslim	238	65.2
Hindu	88	24.1
Christian	23	6.3
Buddhists	16	4.4
Marital Status		
Single	155	42.5
Married	179	49.0
Divorced	31	8.5
Industry Experience		
1 – 4 years	126	34.5
5 – 9 years	175	48.0
10 – 14 years	51	14.0
14 years above	13	3.5

3.2. Measurement Items

QWL was assessed on 17 items developed by Huang et al. (2007) and Tsigilis et al. (2006). Job satisfaction was measured by five items developed by Rubel and Kee (2014). Three items were adapted from Kyndt et al. (2009) to measure employee retention. Last, to assess employee performance, this study only considered in-role performance. In-role performance was assessed via three items adapted from Yavas et al. (2012). A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" was applied to take responses for independent and mediating variables. The dependent variables, in-role performance, and retention were assessed by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 7= "strongly agree."

4. RESULTS

4.1. Common Method Variance

Podsakoff et al. (2003) stated that CMV is problematic if a single latent factor accounts for the most explained variance. To counter CMV, we employed the proximal and methodological separation technique and the Harman single-factor test suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). In the current study, the un-rotated factor analysis exhibited that the first factor accounts for only 28.67% of the variance, and six factors explain 62% of the variance. Thus, CMV was not an issue in the study.

4.2. Measurement Model

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure reliability, convergent validity, and discriminate validity. Convergent validity is assessed if an item measures a latent variable that is thought to be measured (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 3, all item loadings were above Hair and colleagues' proposed minimum value of 0.60 (2017). All average variance extracted (AVEs) and composite reliability (CRs) were above the cut-off values of 0.5 and 0.7, respectively. In this study, the lowest CR was 0.759, and AVE was 0.515, reported for the supervisor's behavior. Therefore, these measurements assured convergent validity.

Table 3: Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE[a]	CR[b]
Compensation and Benefits	CB1	0.734	**0.609**	**0.823**
	CB2	0.819		
	CB3	0.786		
Job Character	JC1	0.778	**0.668**	**0.858**
	JC2	0.859		
	JC3	0.812		
Supervisors Behavior	SB1	0.810	**0.515**	**0.759**
	SB2	0.727		
	SB3	0.601		
Work Life Balance	WLB1	0.861	**0.732**	**0.891**
	WLB2	0.857		
	WLB3	0.848		
Working Condition	WC1	0.794	**0.579**	**0.873**
	WC2	0.785		

	WC3	0.800		
	WC4	0.758		
	WC5	0.661		
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.846	**0.587**	**0.876**
	JS2	0.786		
	JS3	0.762		
	JS4	0.728		
	JS5	0.702		
Retention Intention	RI1	0.810	**0.686**	**0.867**
	RI2	0.831		
	RI3	0.843		
In-role Performance	IRP1	0.862	**0.665**	**0.856**
	IRP2	0.732		
	IRP3	0.846		

4.3. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the variables was calculated based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Table 4). It was found that the values of all the diagonal numbers (square root of the AVEs) were greater than the corresponding off-diagonal ones (squared correlations of the constructs). Based on Hair et al. (2017), the study found adequate discriminant validity. To calculate the predictive relevance, the Stone-Geisser Q^2 was measured. Hair et al. (2017) recommended that the value of redundancy (Red) in Q^2 must be greater than zero. This study fulfilled the criteria for all the latent variables, for instance, job satisfaction (Red: 0.161), in-role performance (Red: 0.125), and retention intention (Red: 0.118).

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	C&B	IRP	JC	JS	RI	SB	WC	WLB
C&B	**0.780**							
IRP	0.352	**0.816**						
JC	0.475	0.329	**0.817**					
JS	0.341	0.441	0.436	**0.766**				
RI	0.273	0.654	0.303	0.419	**0.828**			
SB	0.416	0.339	0.688	0.403	0.231	**0.718**		
WC	0.207	0.215	0.231	0.210	0.183	0.229	**0.761**	
WLB	0.457	0.438	0.621	0.568	0.422	0.585	0.297	**0.855**
Mean	3.50	4.36	3.54	3.68	4.75	3.62	3.69	3.51
SD	0.722	1.15	0.795	0.892	1.07	0.670	0.707	0.873

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the average variance extracted, while the other entries represent the squared correlations. C&B=Compensation and Benefits; IRP=In-role performance; JC=Job Characteristics; JS=Job Satisfaction; RI=Retention Intention; SB=Supervisors Behavior; WC=Working Condition; and WLB=Work-life Balance.

4.4. The Hierarchical QWL Model

This study stipulated QWL as a second-order hierarchical reflective construct, which consisted of 5 first-order reflective constructs signifying 17 items. The second-order factor (QWL) was directly measured by indicators of all the first-order factors supporting the concept of the repeated indicators method (Hair et al., 2017). This study found that all the items and the dimensions were correlated and statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. In this model, the entire path coefficients from

QWL to its components were significant at $p < 0.01$(See Table 5 and Figure 3). Table 5 shows the R^2 value of all first-order dimensions, the path coefficient (β value), and the path's confidence level (*p*-value). The AVE and CR of QWL were 0.547 and 0.855, respectively.

Table 5: Hierarchical QWL Practices

(AVE = 0.547, CR = 0.855)				
Compensation and Benefit	**Supervisors Behavior**	**Job Character**	**Work Life Balance**	**Working Condition**
$R^2 = 0.452$	$R^2 = 0.604$	$R^2 = 0.686$	$R^2 = 0.706$	$R^2 = 0.286$
$\beta = 0.672$	$\beta = 0.777$	$\beta = 0.828$	$\beta = 0.840$	$\beta = 0.535$
$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$

4.5. Structural Model

The structural model exemplified the goodness of the theoretical model based on the variance explained (R^2) of the endogenous construct and the significance of all the path estimates (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, the R^2 value of job satisfaction, retention intention, and in-role performance showed 0.301 (30.1%), 0.218 (21.8%), and 0.269 (26.9%). Cohen (1988) has asserted that R^2 of 0.02-0.12 is weak, 0.13-0.25 is moderate, and 0.26 and above is substantial. Following Cohen (1988), the R^2 value was found to be substantial for job satisfaction and employee performance, whereas R^2 was moderate for retention intention. As shown in Table 6 and Figure 3, the direct paths model of this study exhibited a positive relationship between QWL to job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), employee retention ($\beta = 0.246$, $p < 0.01$) and in-role performance ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, the path from job satisfaction to both employee retention ($\beta = 0.285$, p < 0.01) and in-role performance ($\beta = 0.266$, $p < 0.01$) also showed significance and was accepted. Therefore, all direct paths found supported and accepted according to the hypotheses. This study also assessed the mediating effect of job satisfaction between QWL and employee outcomes based on the concept suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and found a significant mediating effect of job satisfaction between QWL and retention intention ($\beta = 0.156$, $p < 0.01$) and between QWL and in-role performance ($\beta = 0.146$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, both H6 and H7 were supported.

**Table 6**: Summary of the Structural Model for Direct and Indirect Path

Direct Path	**Std. beta**	**std. error**	*t*-**value**	**Decision**	
H1: QWL → Retention	0.246	0.055	4.459**	Supported	
H2: QWL → In-role Performance	0.322	0.053	6.139**	Supported	
H3: QWL → Job Satisfaction	0.549	0.033	16.883**	Supported	
H4: Job Satisfaction → Retention	0.285	0.055	5.189**	Supported	
H5: Job Satisfaction → In-role Performance	0.266	0.049	5.440**	Supported	
Indirect Path	**Std. beta**	**std. error**	*t*-**value**	**Decision**	**95% LL**	**95% UL**
H6: QWL → Job Satisfaction → Retention	0.156	0.032	4.93**	Supported	0.094	0.218
H7: QWL → Job Satisfaction → In-role Performance	0.146	0.029	4.96**	Supported	0.088	0.204

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$(based on one-tailed), ** $p < 0.01$ (based on two-tailed).

5.   DISCUSSION

This paper offers one of the first attempts to examine the indirect effect of QWL on employee retention and performance via job satisfaction. Specifically, we integrated SET theory to examine whether QWL promotes job satisfaction, improving employee retention and performance. As expected, our study demonstrated that QWL positively influenced employee retention and job performance. Past studies supported the findings, which revealed that QWL is a predominant factor for employee performance (Hermawati & Mas, 2017) and turnover intention (Surienty et al., 2014; Jabeen et al., 2018). In addition, we found that QWL leads to greater job satisfaction, leading to improved employee retention and job performance. The positive influence we observed was consistent with the argument we initially proposed that QWL leads to improved job performance and employee retention via job satisfaction. The findings may spark the thinking of the RMG management to create a better workplace for the operators. Therefore, the present study expects to facilitate RMG organizations to realize the significant outcomes of operator perceived QWL dimensions and the mechanism of how they influence employee performance and continuity through job satisfaction in a labor-intensive industry base of a developing economy like Bangladesh.

Figure 1: Output of the Structural Model
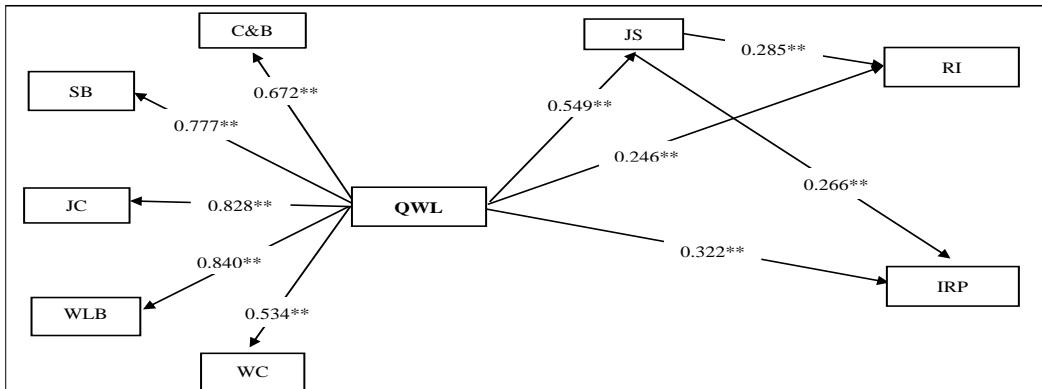
We provided the necessary literature and methodological justifications in developing QWL, a hierarchical reflective model. Our study has expanded the QWL literature by introducing it as a higher-order reflective construct, demonstrating that all five dimensions significantly reflect QWL. In addition, using the method of repeated indicators (Rubel et al., 2020) in assessing the higher-order latent variable, our study has verified satisfactory measurement and structural results for the research model.

5.1.   *Theoretical Implication*

Our study is the first to study the relationship between QWL and employee outcomes using data collected from RMG employees. Our findings contribute to the QWL literature by exploring the higher-order reflective model of QWL in explaining employee outcomes through the intervening effect of job satisfaction. Our study also contributes to the organizational behavior and HRM literature by systematically examining the influence of QWL on employees' job satisfaction,

performance and retention intention in the RMG context. Overall, our findings support the notion that the QWL should be recognized as a significant antecedent for employees' job satisfaction, job performance, and retention intention in the RMG context and contribute in two ways: (a) proof of the importance of the QWL in labor-intensive organizations of the developing economy of Bangladesh, and (b) the use of standard measures of the QWL in a higher-order reflective model, job satisfaction, performance and retention intention for evaluating RMG employees' perceptions. In addition, these findings have implications for research on positive relationships at work. This study also successfully attempts to apply SET in the RMG context.

5.2. *Practical Implication*

This paper has explored the different dimensions of QWL of the RMG employees of Bangladesh in relation to their positive responses. Our model supports the said relations enlightening the requirements of quality work life of RMG employees. Furthermore, it ensures the universal role of QWL in organizations ignoring the contextual differences between developed and developing economies. The model explains that the availability of employees in a highly populated country like Bangladesh does not guarantee that employees would compromise their QWL. Rather, they perceive a significant impact of work-life quality on their work outcomes.

Given the growing importance of the RMG industry in Bangladesh, these findings provide fruitful implications for decision-makers and practitioners. RMG management can proactively improve working conditions, which would promote employees' positive perceptions of work life. Perhaps, improving the working relations between the RMG supervisors and the employees and encouraging supportive supervisory behavior might help. As such, our foremost piece of practical advice is that RMG organizations should consider QWL, and it will result in long-term employee retention and improved job performance. Eventually, this could create a win-win situation whereby the employees might be motivated to be more productive, and the RMGs' profitability would be kept increasing in the process. The findings might assist organizations willing to be virtuous by assuring employee well-being. Furthermore, other organizations that largely depend on employee performance can better understand how QWL can affect employees' job satisfaction, influencing their job performance and retention. Therefore, the model might provide a solid substance in QWL practices in RMG organizations.

6. DISCUSSION

We demonstrated that QWL promotes job satisfaction, influencing employee performance and retention. The study has a few limitations that may provide opportunities for future research. This study focuses on the RMG industry. As such, conclusions derived from this study should be interpreted with caution and might not be readily generalized to other sectors. Further study could replicate the present model focusing on other sectors to authenticate the commonality of the present findings. The current research only employed the operators as a sample from the RMG industry, which cannot be generalized for all employees in the RMG industry. Therefore, it can be suggested in future research to incorporate different hierarchical employees from managerial positions and test the reliability of the model.

Future studies could replicate the present model focusing on other sectors to authenticate the commonality of the present findings. Since QWL could be measured using different dimensions and this study uses few, future research might consider other dimensions that are not captured in the present study. Moreover, QWL impacts many outcomes besides job satisfaction, performance, and retention. Future researchers can examine such outcomes as employee well-being, work-life balance, and loyalty to the organization. Nonetheless, this study has opened up new research avenues for future study on the RMG industry in a particular and labor-intensive industry in developing countries neglected in academic research.

The present findings provide evidence that QWL could promote employees' performances and retention intention directly or indirectly through the mediating effect of job satisfaction. In doing so, attempts to promote positive employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors that include enhancing job satisfaction, performance, and staying intention, such as programs that foster a shared sense of enjoyment among employees at the workplace, appear promising. We believe the results provide a convincing indication that management of organizations with distinctly different cultural and economic characteristics than those typically found in Western countries like the U.S. might promote QWL for enhancing employees' satisfaction, performance and retention intention, which are also common responses of employees of developed countries. Such findings might facilitate organizational policymaking in developing and adopting formalized compensation and benefits, clear supervisory instructions, balanced work life, exciting job, and supportive work environment that promote good QWL.

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