

Changing Job Demands: What do Job Advertisements in the Bangladeshi Apparel Industry Job Portals tell us?

Ishtehar Sharif Swazan, Debanjan Das Ph.D., West Virginia University, USA

Keywords: Bangladesh apparel, job qualification, content analysis

Bangladesh, a small country in South Asia squeezed between two economic and garment export giants India and China, is one of the largest garment manufacturers and exporters in the world. In 2019-20, Bangladesh exported apparel products worth 27.94 billion USD (BGMEA, 2021). The garment business has drastically changed Bangladesh both socially and economically. To sustain a competitive advantage in the global apparel market, hundreds of foreign apparel companies relocated their production units to Bangladesh to get the benefits of cheap and abundant labor (Ullah, 2015). The government of Bangladesh also facilitated the growth of apparel exports by implementing various export-friendly policies. A total of 4,381 factories now producing apparel items for export purposes in Bangladesh (BGMEA, 2021). The government also provided incentives for export activities and established the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) (Feldman, 2009).

The apparel industry of Bangladesh, is the largest employer in the country, employing 5 million people (Alam et al., 2017). Employee productivity has been an issue of concern for most employers in the global apparel industry (Ullah, 2015). The skills and qualification of the employees play a vital role in any apparel firm's success and directly contributes towards the competitive advantage of that firm. Apparel employers realize that any specific type of work such as spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing, and finishing done by the employees needs good skills and qualifications such as professional experience, educational degrees, computer knowledge, and other related skillsets to make any business more successful and profitable (Raju & Banerjee, 2017). Proficient skills are required in the apparel sector to improve productivity, use and maintain rapidly changing technology, improve quality systems and technical efficiency (Foster, Bateman, Delaney, & Dyson, 2007). So, there is a direct positive relationship between job skills and qualifications requirements in the apparel industries and success in the apparel business. Previous studies by Alam (2008), Hossan, Sarker, & Afroze (2012), and Moninoor (2014) were of great importance as they investigated the relationship between education, job skill requirement, and national development. However, there is a lack of study on the job categories and job qualifications/requirements needed for the garment sector professionals of Bangladesh. No study has identified employers' demand from today's garments professionals. So, this study aims to explore the job nature in the garment sector of Bangladesh and what qualities are the employers looking for from their garment professionals.

Kunz's (1995) behavioral theory of apparel firms has been used as the study's framework. The behavioral theory of the firms was first developed by Cyert & March (1963). According to Cyert

& March (1963), the business firm can be considered as an alliance of individuals having some common goals that relate to business activities like production, sales, inventory, market share, and profit. Kunz (1995) established the behavioral theory of the apparel firms that provided a foundation for apparel business-related research. According to Kunz (1995), apparel firms can be considered as a coalition of employees that share some common goals, and apparel firms were further categorized into five different internal constituencies or areas of specialization; (1) Executive management; (2) Merchandising; (3) Marketing; (4) Operation; and (5) Finance.

To provide context for our discussion on job qualifications, a content analysis of job requirements in the apparel industry of Bangladesh was conducted. Job posting advertisements published on the Bdjobs website from June 2020 to October 2020 were collected (Bdjobs, 2020). A total of 168 job advertisements were collected. However, 25 job postings were removed from the data set due to repeated posting or lack of sufficient information. Finally, 143 job postings were selected and served as the study's sample frame. The text data available under the "job title" section in the garment/textile division of the Bdjobs (2020) website were analyzed for this study and used for coding. The coding system was developed to analyze all terms used to describe job qualifications and job requirements in the garment industry and to classify them into separate categories according to the behavioral theory of apparel firms (Kunz, 1995).

The data analysis of the job postings revealed five major themes, subject knowledge, demographic requirements, communication skills, technical skills & education, and work experience. Subject knowledge requirements were mentioned 398 times across all job posting advertisements or 2.78 times per job posting. Demographic requirements were mentioned 397 times or 2.77 times per job posting. Communication skills were mentioned 252 times or 1.76 times per job posting. Technical skill and education were mentioned 233 times or 1.62 times per job posting. Work experiences were mentioned 138 times or 0.96 times per job posting.

The study results highlighted some major job requirements within the five job categories. In the executive management job category, production planning and providing technical assistance were found to be the most important job requirements. Production planning, inspection of products, and sample development were found to be the key job requirements for the merchandising job category. In the marketing job category, business planning was identified as the key job requirement. Also, communication power, team player, and making new clientele were found to be other major job requirements for the marketing job postings. In the operations job category, technical knowledge, team player, and inspection of products were found to be the key job requirements. Performing bank duties, being a team player, proficient communication power, managing bills, expenses, and preparing documents were found as the major job requirements for the finance job category.

The study result has some major implications and contributions. First, the study supports the behavioral theory of the apparel firms, as the job categories in the Bangladesh garment industry were easily designated in the existing behavioral job categories. Second, the study findings

provided a practical understanding of the apparel industry job market by identifying the job requirements, and qualifications and filled the gaps in the Bangladeshi apparel industry literature by exploring the job requirements and qualifications. Third, students and educators in the textile and apparel-related programs in Bangladesh will be benefited from the study findings as the study results will provide them with a clear understanding of the present job requirements in the Bangladeshi garment industry. Finally, employers and human resource professionals can evaluate the job market using the job qualification requirement findings to better advertise and recruit prospective employees for the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The study has some limitations. As the study sample was collected during the Covid-19 period, the job postings were lower than normal times due to the market downturn. Many garment industries had to pause their recruitment process due to financial crises.

References

- Alam, G. (2008). The role of technical and vocational education in the national development of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 9(1), 25.
- Alam, M., Selvanathan, E., & Selvanathan, S. (2017). Determinants of the Bangladesh garment exports in the post-MFA environment. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 22(2), 330-352. Retrieved September 28, 2019, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/13547860.2017.1292768>
- Bdjobs. (2020). Bdjobs. Retrieved September 2020, from <https://www.Bdjobs.com/>
- BGMEA. (2021). Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. Retrieved from BGMEA: <http://www.bgmea.com.bd/>
- Cyert, R., & March, J. (1963). A behavioral theory of the firm. *Englewood Cliffs, NJ*, 2(4), 169-187.
- Feldman, S. (2009). Historicizing Garment Manufacturing in Bangladesh: Gender Generation, and New Regulatory Regimes. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 268-288. Retrieved September 29, 2019, from <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol11/iss1/17/>
- Foster, S., Bateman, A., Delaney, B., & Dyson, C. (2007). Higher-Level Vocational Education and Training Qualifications: Their Importance in Today's Training Market. Support Document. National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Hossan, C., Sarker, M., & Afroze, R. (2012). An Assessment of Managerial Skills in the Labour Intensive Industry: A Case Study of a Garments Manufacturing Firm. *Journal of Accounting – Business & Management*, 19(2), 1-14.
- Kunz, G. (1995). Behavioral Theory of the Apparel Firm: A Beginning. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 13(4), 252-261.
- Moninoor, R. (2014). English communication skills in the ready-made garments industry in Bangladesh: A case study. Doctoral dissertation, Monash University.
- Raju, K., & Banerjee, S. (2017). A study on job description and its effect on employee performance: case of some selected manufacturing organizations in the city of Pune, India. *International Journal of Latest Technology in Engineering, Management, and Applied Science*, 6(2), 278-540.
- Ullah, A. (2015). Garment Industry in Bangladesh: An Era of Globalization and Neo-Liberalization. *Middle East Journal of Business*, 10(2), 14-24.