



Job Satisfaction in Fashion Retailing in Bangladesh with a Focus on Gender Differences

ATM Jahiruddin*, Md. Enamul Haque, Imran Mridha

Business Administration Discipline of Khulna University, Khulna, Bangladesh

Business Administration Discipline of Khulna, University Khulna, Bangladesh

Mercantile Bank PLC, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines job satisfaction among employees in the fashion retail sector in Bangladesh, focusing on gender differences in overall and facet-level satisfaction. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 197 employees from 18 fashion brand outlets using a structured questionnaire capturing a global index of job satisfaction and seven facets. Overall job satisfaction and seven job-satisfaction facets were measured with multi-item scales. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential methods, including regression analysis and the Mann-Whitney U test. Descriptive results show moderate overall satisfaction. Multiple regression with standardized estimates highlights that salary, workload, and job security are the strongest predictors of the global index, while management behavior and promotion/growth have smaller positive effects. Physical environment and co-worker support, although rated highly, do not add explanatory power once other facets are accounted for. Mann-Whitney tests reveal no statistically significant gender differences in overall satisfaction or any specific facet. This study adds employee-centered evidence from South Asian fashion retail, suggests boundary conditions on gender-satisfaction asymmetries, and highlights practical levers for raising satisfaction in emerging-market retailing.

Keywords: Job satisfaction; Fashion retail; Gender differences; Bangladesh; Human resource management

INTRODUCTION

The fashion product retail sector in Bangladesh has experienced significant growth since the turn of the millennium. The country has witnessed impressive economic advancement, marked by steady GDP growth, a reduction in poverty rates, and a near tripling of per capita income from 2000 to 2020 (The World Bank, 2024). This economic progress has fostered a dynamic consumer market driven by a large, affluent middle class, which comprises nearly 15 percent of the population and is predominantly concentrated in major cities (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). As a result of these developments, brand fashion retailing has thrived remarkably in Bangladesh over the past three decades.

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Historically, the distribution of fashion products was managed through independent retail outlets that offered a mix of goods from both Bangladeshi and international producers to meet local demand. The conception of brand fashion retailing emerged in the early 1980s, coinciding with the nascent stages of the garment industry, which currently accounts for over 70 percent of Bangladesh's export revenue. This trend started in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital and largest city. However, the expansion of the consumer base, fueled by the emergence of a more affluent

middle class and increasing brand consciousness, has spurred the establishment of exclusive fashion outlets in large cities across the country. These outlets not only present a diverse array of trendy and distinctive designs but also provide an enjoyable shopping experience in conveniently located, less crowded environments. Their retail outlets usually feature premium physical facilities, such as safe working conditions, ample space, elegant decor, air conditioning, and adequate lighting. Furthermore, to improve customer support, these outlets employ well-trained, courteous staff, with about 25 percent of them women.

Job satisfaction is widely recognized as a key factor influencing employees' performance, retention, and the overall success of the organization (Spector, 1997; Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). Both classic and modern theories, such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the Job Characteristics Model, highlight various elements that influence employees' attitudes and well-being, including working conditions, pay, managerial support, and peer relationships (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959; Maslow, 1943). While employees' job satisfaction is a vital issue for both individual performance and organizational success, research shows that its magnitude and determining factors can vary significantly by gender (Clark, 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000; Bender et al., 2005; Lewis et al., 2021).

A wide array of studies exists concerning Bangladesh, encompassing both the fashion industry and job satisfaction. However, research within the fashion sector predominantly emphasizes customer perspectives, such as brand preference, shopping behavior and experience, customer satisfaction, and so on (e.g. Islam, et al., 2012; Nayeema and Nadia, 2013; Hasan, et al., 2014; Hossain et al., 2018; Haque and Barat, 2024). Conversely, while many studies on job satisfaction in the context of Bangladesh have been conducted with employees in the ready-made garment sector, other research primarily examines employees in the manufacturing sector and large service industries like financial and telecommunication companies (Islam, et al., 2016; Alauddin, et al., 2019; Rahman, et al., 2018; Amin, 2016; Tanjeen, 2013). Consequently, although safety hazards and poor physical environments significantly contribute to low job satisfaction across various sectors in Bangladesh (Akhtar and Shimul, 2012; Hossain, 2024), job satisfaction among employees at fashion brand outlets—recognized for their safe, comfortable, and upscale physical environments—remains a somewhat underexplored area of research.

This study addresses two key research gaps resulting from the dearth of research initiatives on employees' job satisfaction in the brand fashion retailing sector: (1) limited scholarly focus on employee job satisfaction within Bangladesh's growing fashion retail sector, and (2) lack of empirical evidence on gender-based variations in job satisfaction levels.

This research was conducted to address these gaps with three objectives: (i) assess overall and dimensional job satisfaction levels among employees working in brand fashion retail outlets; (ii) identify how various dimensions of job satisfaction impact overall job satisfaction; and (iii) analyze gender-based differences in job satisfaction among employees in the brand fashion retail sector in Bangladesh. The study took place in Khulna, the third-largest city in Bangladesh, covering an area of 45.65 km² and with an approximate population of 718,000. The per capita GDP of Khulna city is estimated at \$7,374, nearly three times higher than the country's per capita GDP of \$2,593.

The subsequent sections of this paper are organized as follows: first, a literature review that lays a robust theoretical foundation for the research questions, outlines the variables used to measure job satisfaction, informed by existing studies, and explains the hypotheses. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the methodology, outlining sampling methods, data collection techniques, and analysis procedures. The paper then presents the research findings and interprets the data analysis, culminating in a reflective conclusion that encapsulates the key insights of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction is a central construct in organizational behavior, reflecting employees' cognitive and affective evaluation of their work. In labor-intensive industries such as fashion retailing, where employee turnover is high

and customer service pressures are intense, understanding the determinants of job satisfaction is critical for improving performance and retention (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). This review synthesizes theoretical and empirical insights with specific reference to Bangladeshi fashion retail outlets.

The Concept of Job Satisfaction and Its Evolution as an academic and management discourse:

Job satisfaction is the psychological state of employees that reflects their positive feelings about their job and measures how much they prefer the work and the employer (Spector, 1997). The recognition of the importance of human factors in labor productivity and overall organizational performance has led to a significant shift in how job satisfaction is viewed in modern management. Early management thought treated labor primarily as an economic input with little consideration of human factors. Adam Smith's classical economic perspective in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) described labor as a factor of production vital to wealth creation but offered limited consideration of the human and psychological aspects of work (Brue and Grant, 2013; Robbins and Judge, 2022). This productivity-centered view continued into the early twentieth century with F.W. Taylor's *Scientific Management* (1911), which revolutionized industrial productivity, largely neglecting intrinsic motivators, employee satisfaction, and socio-psychological dynamics (Wrege and Greenwood, 1991; Kanigel, 1997). A significant shift from this early industrial era perspective can be noticed in the subsequent behavioral theories, marked by studies such as Elton Mayo's Hawthorne experiments (1933) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), which recognize job satisfaction and individual differences, including gender, as critical to organizational performance (Wrege and Greenwood, 1991; Kanigel, 1997). Contemporary research continues to support and reinforce this perspective, with current human resource management practices considering job satisfaction a key factor influencing employee retention, customer service quality, organizational resilience, and overall organizational performance (Inuwa, 2022; Nguyen and Tran, 2023).

Constructs and Measures of Job Satisfaction

Classic behavioral theories from the 1950s to the 1970s not only highlighted the pivotal role of motivation and satisfaction in shaping workplace dynamics but also fundamentally reshaped the understanding of job satisfaction by identifying both intrinsic and extrinsic determinants of employee motivation and satisfaction that influence these constructs and determine their intensity. Among these, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) remain seminal frameworks. Despite employing different terminologies, both theories converge in distinguishing between lower-order factors (e.g., salary, safety, health) and higher-order factors (e.g., interpersonal relationships, recognition, dignity, and opportunities for growth). While their interpretations of how these factors influence motivation and satisfaction differ—Maslow advocating a hierarchical progression and Herzberg emphasizing the distinction between motivators and hygiene factors—both highlight the need to address these factors collectively to achieve sustained employee job satisfaction. Other influential behavioral theories, i.e., McGregor's Theory X and Y (1960), and Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976), also recognized that job satisfaction stems from more than monetary rewards or task efficiency and acknowledged intrinsic motivators such as autonomy, recognition, and meaningfulness of work as important factors of job satisfaction. Adams (1963), in the equity theory, identifies employees' perceptions of the fairness of management's decisions regarding employee rewards as an important factor in employee satisfaction.

With the increasing recognition of human resources as a strategic asset in competitive industries, job satisfaction has become a key focus of contemporary management research (Judge et al., 2017). Recent scholarly works on job satisfaction, although built on earlier behavioral models, now integrate intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as equity-based perspectives. These studies increasingly examine not only the overall level of satisfaction but also specific components—such as pay, supervisory support, promotion opportunities, and co-worker relations—that collectively influence employees' attitudes and satisfaction toward their work (Spector, 1997; Duong et al., 2021). In these studies, measuring job satisfaction is broadly conceptualized as either a unidimensional global affective state or a multifaceted construct comprising distinct work elements such as pay, promotion, supervision,

co-workers, and the nature of work (Locke, 1976; Smith et al., 1969). A seminal instrument reflecting the facet-based approach is the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), originally developed by Smith et al., (1969). The JDI measures five distinct dimensions—work itself, pay, promotion, supervision, and co-workers—and has been extensively validated across diverse cultural and occupational contexts. Some notable examples of application of JDI in measuring job satisfaction are, Duong et al., (2021) among IT professionals in Vietnam, Lopes et al., (2015) among military professionals in Portugal, and Tasios and Giannouli (2017) in Greece. Lepold et al., (2018) improved JDI by introducing a facet-scale methodology (measuring each broad construct or facet with the help of multiple indicators), and in their study of Austrian bank employees, they found that this scale offered superior internal consistency and diagnostic richness, particularly when examining nuanced relationships such as the role of gender in moderating satisfaction dimensions. A large number of recent studies (e.g., Butoi, 2021; Garba and Saidu, 2021; Akhter et al., (2020); Rahman and Chowdhury (2019); Kumari and Rani (2018) Avci, 2017; Kaya, 2015) measuring job satisfaction have used some version of facet-scale, where they used the same or slightly customized constructs outlined in the JDI, each of which was measured by several indicators.

Aligned with this approach, this study also employs facet-scales to measure employees' job satisfaction in brand fashion retail outlets. Job satisfaction in this study has been assessed using all five constructs—pay, promotion, supervision, co-workers, and the nature of work—as outlined in the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) framework. Considering the socio-economic context of Bangladesh and the dynamics of the fashion retail industry, two additional constructs—physical environment and workplace safety, and job security—have also been included to evaluate job satisfaction. Each of these broad constructs was measured using multiple indicators. The seven broad constructs or dimensions and the 27 indicators or variables used to measure them are listed in the table below in Table 1.

TABLE 1 DIMENSIONS AND INDICATORS OF JOB SATISFACTION

Dimensions/ Facets	Indicators	Supporting literature
Physical environment and workplace safety at the workplace	5 indicators (<i>Adequate lighting; Ventilation and temperature; Rest and wash facilities; Noise level, Workplace safety and hazards</i>)	Pandey, (2018); Opperman (2002); Syed & Mahmud (2022); Hoque, (2024)
Work load	4 indicators (<i>Physical hardship; Volume of work; Mental stress due to work pressure; Customer's inappropriate behavior</i>)	Newsham et al. (2009); Kocman & Weber (2018); Kumari and Rani (2018); Menguc et al. (2013)
Management behavior and support	5 indicators (<i>Cordiality and courtesy; Communication and guidance; Recognition; Appreciation; Attention to problem</i>)	Akhter et al. (2020); Gleim et al., 2019); (Shwe, 2024)
Relationship with co-workers	7 indicators (<i>Praise for good performance; Sense of gratitude; Help each other; Work as a team; Treat with respect; Helping overcome others' weaknesses; Sympathetic and kind.</i>	(Polwaththage, 2024); Larojan et al. (2020); Kato et al. (2023), Rahman and Chowdhury (2019)
Salary and	6 indicators (<i>Timely salary; Amount of salary; Fair overtime; Annual</i>	Akhter et al. (2020); Matsuki & Nakamura, (2019); (Khan



wages	<i>increment; Festival allowance; Performance incentive)</i>	et al., 2019); Kumari and Rani (2018)
Promotion and career growth	4 indicators (<i>Regularity of promotion; Fairness in promotion decision; Growth opportunity within the organization; Training and development programs</i>)	Rahman and Chowdhury (2019); Harris & Ogbonna, (2013); Hur et al., (2015); Hanna Lieberman et al., (2017)
Job Security	4 indicators (<i>Risk of termination; Retirement benefits; Termination benefits; Grievance communication opportunity</i>)	Kaya, (2015); Blanchflower and Oswald, (1999); Poza, (2000); Campbell et al., (2007).

Source: The authors based on the literature review

Gender Based Differences in Job Satisfaction

Due to potential differences between male and female employees in their expectations and priorities in the workplace, stemming from their various physiological, psychological, and social differences, the effect of gender on job satisfaction has been widely examined in the social science and business literature. One of the earliest works addressing gender-based differences in job satisfaction - the “paradox of the contented female worker” (Clark, 1997) reports that despite being discriminated against in terms of salary, promotion, and autonomy, women usually report higher job satisfaction than men due to lower expectations about career growth and salary. Although this paradox is claimed to be less relevant in the contemporary context (Lewis et al., 2021) due to a change in gender role perception, increasing participation of women in the workforce, and growing concern for gender equity in society and workplace, the contemporary studies continue to suggest gender-based differences in job satisfaction in the South Asian context (Lewis et al., 2021). According to Nguyen and Tran (2023), differences between male and female employees exist not only in overall job satisfaction but also in its various dimensions, due to differences in household roles, mobility, socio-cultural constraints, and workplace aspirations and priorities. Polwaththage (2024) also complements this proposition by showing that different satisfaction profiles across job dimensions exist between male and female employees because the value placed on various job-related factors differs between the two groups.

While the above research suggests various differences between males and females in the workplace, a large body of research indicates a gradual shift in this pattern. Nguyen and Tran (2023) suggest that younger female employees are increasingly prioritizing career development and financial independence, narrowing the expectation gap historically posited by the contented female worker hypothesis. According to a Boston Consulting Group report (2023), urbanization, rising female education, and expanding middle-class consumer markets are reshaping women’s career aspirations in Bangladesh’s retail sector.

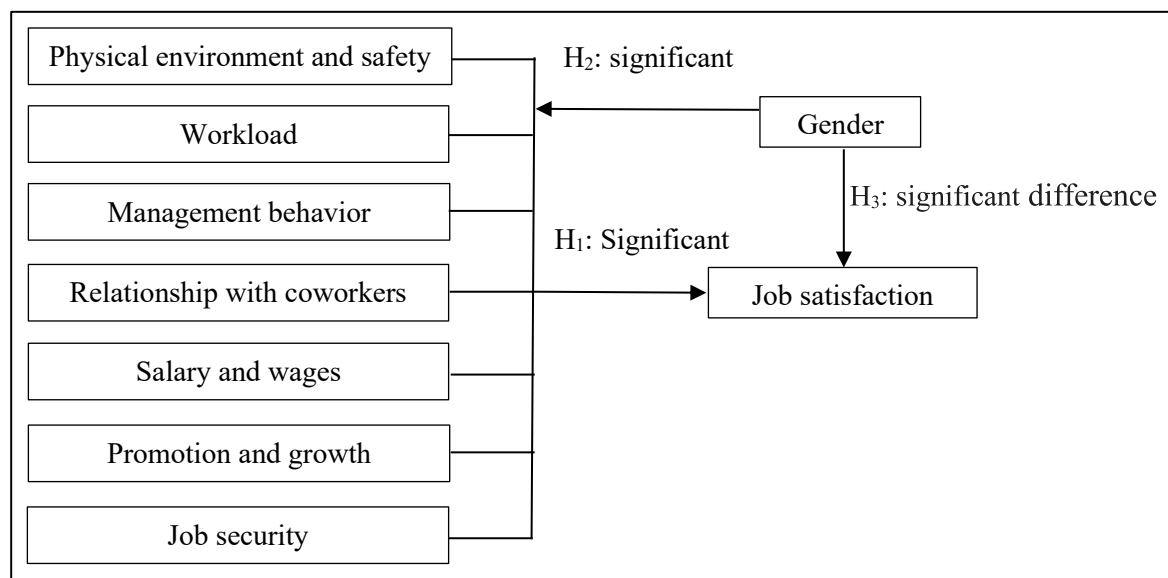
Given the conflicting research evidence on gender-based differences in job satisfaction and the limited research in this area within Bangladesh's emerging fashion retailing industry, this study aims to examine overall job satisfaction and its various dimensions. It also seeks to compare male and female employees concerning overall job satisfaction and satisfaction in different aspects of their job.

2.4 Theoretical Underpinning, Analytical Model, and Hypothesis

The study has embarked on four seminal works on behavioral theories, which are Maslow’s need hierarchy theory (1943), Herzberg’s two-factor theory (1959), Adam’s equity theory (1963), and Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristic Model (1976), to address the research gaps by investigating three specific issues as described at the end of the introduction section.

By synthesizing these frameworks with the seminal research works of contemporary time, this study uses the following conceptual framework (Figure 1), conceptualizing job satisfaction as a function of seven broad constructs: physical environment and workplace safety, workload, managerial support, co-worker support, salary, promotion and growth, and job security. At the same time, this framework also considers gender as a potential determinant of overall satisfaction and satisfaction across the broad dimensions of employees.

FIGURE 1: ANALYTICAL MODEL OF THE RESEARCH



Source: The authors based on the literature review

This framework addresses the research gaps and research objectives identified in the introduction. As shown in the framework, the seven broad constructs or dimensions collectively determine overall job satisfaction. The first objective of the study is to assess overall satisfaction and satisfaction within each of the seven constructs or broad dimensions. The second objective is to investigate the degree of collective influence and individual influence of the broad constructs on overall job satisfaction. This investigation is made by testing the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant collective and individual impact of the seven broad constructs on overall job satisfaction

The framework suggests gender as a determinant of both overall satisfaction and satisfaction within each broad construct, and the third objective of the study is to investigate whether there is a difference between male and female employees in their overall satisfaction and satisfaction within the broad dimensions. This investigation is made by testing the following two hypotheses:

H2: There is a significant difference between male and female employees in their overall job satisfaction.

H3: There is a significant difference between male and female employees in their satisfaction level on each broad construct of satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional research design, collecting data from 197 employees, including 58 females and 139 males, out of a total workforce of approximately 400 at 18 branded fashion outlets in key

commercial areas of Khulna city. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representative coverage; employees were stratified by outlet and gender, and male and female participants were selected

proportionally from each outlet based on their share of the total workforce. The sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula (1977), which is widely used to determine sample sizes in known populations.

Primary data were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire with 34 questions: 4 on demographic features, 27 on broad aspects of job satisfaction, and 1 on overall job satisfaction. Except for the demographic questions, responses to all other items were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Highly Dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Indifferent, 4 = Satisfied, and 5 = Highly Satisfied).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and interprets the study's findings in line with its three objectives. First, it reports overall satisfaction and satisfaction across seven broad constructs (objective 1). Then, it describes the collective and individual influence of these dimensions on overall satisfaction using regression analysis (objective 2). Finally, it highlights gender-based differences in overall and dimension-specific satisfaction with the Mann–Whitney U test (objective 3).

Overall Job Satisfaction and Satisfaction across the Broad Constructs

In line with the dual conceptualization of job satisfaction outlined in the literature review, this study applied the Global Affective State approach to evaluate overall job satisfaction and a Facet scale (a multifaceted construct) to evaluate satisfaction across seven broad constructs. Respondents reported their satisfaction in both cases on a five-point Likert scale as described in the methodology section. Table 2 below illustrates overall satisfaction and satisfaction across seven broad constructs:

TABLE 2: OVERALL SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTION WITH BROAD DIMENSIONS

Broad construct/ Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Physical environment and safety	4.26	0.48
Workload	3.49	0.73
Management Behavior & support	2.89	1.26
Relationship with co-workers	4.26	0.48
Salary	3.49	0.73
Promotion and growth	2.89	1.26
Job Security	3.38	0.78
Overall satisfaction	3.28	0.98

Source: Field data

As shown in Table 2, employees working at the fashion brand outlets demonstrate a moderate overall level of job satisfaction – higher than “indifferent” but lower than “satisfied.” However, satisfaction levels across different areas vary significantly. High satisfaction is seen in two areas: Physical environment safety and Relationship with

co-workers. Moderate satisfaction is reported in three areas: Workload, Salary, and Job security. Low satisfaction is noted in two areas: Management behavior and support, and Promotion and growth.

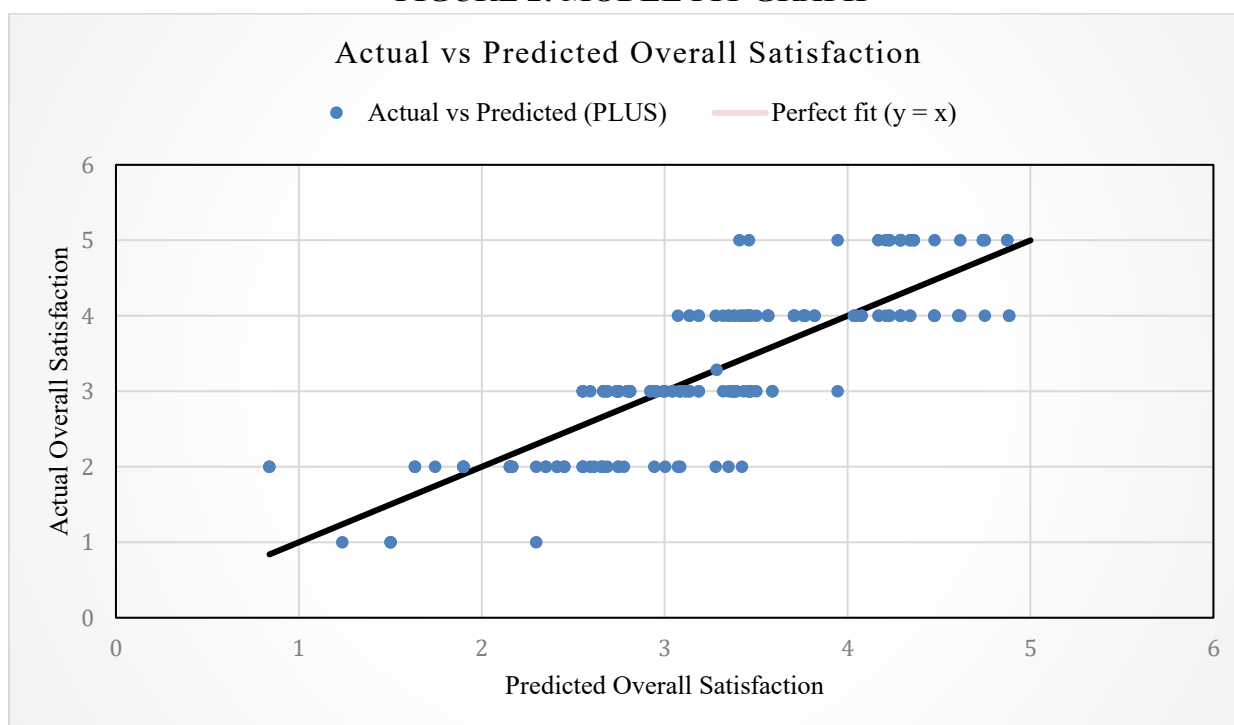
The Impact of the Constructs on Overall Satisfaction:

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of both collective and individual influences of seven broad constructs on employees' overall job satisfaction (global index). All variables were standardized before the analysis to facilitate the interpretation of standardized beta coefficients (β).

The model explains 69.4 percent of the variance in overall job satisfaction, suggesting that a significant portion of the variation in job satisfaction can be accounted for by the seven broad constructs used in this study. The F-statistic (145.8, $p < 0.001$) indicates that the model is statistically significant overall.

Figure 2 below shows the model fit graphically.

FIGURE 2: MODEL FIT GRAPH



Source: field data

Figure 2 shows the model fit by comparing predicted overall job satisfaction (dependent variable) with the actual observed values. The dotted 45-degree line serves as the reference line where predicted and actual values would match perfectly. The concentration of data points around this line indicates a strong fit, implying that the predictors—Workload, Salary, Promotion, Management behavior and support, and Job security—collectively explain a large portion of the variance in employees' overall satisfaction. Only workplace safety and co-workers' support deviate from this pattern, as indicated by their non-significant coefficients in the regression analysis.

The influence of the individual dimensions on the overall job satisfaction is shown in Table 3 below:

TABLE 3: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION

Predictor Dimension	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Physical environment and safety	-0.016	-0.39	0.69	Not significant
Workload	0.378	3.904	0.00	Significant
Management Behavior & Support	0.089	7.429	0.00	Significant
Co-Workers' Support	-0.016	-0.39	0.69	Not significant
Salary	0.381	11.14	0.00	Significant
Promotion and career growth	0.082	4.45	0.00	Significant
Job Security	0.136	13.07	0.00	Significant

Source: field data

The regression analysis conducted on employees working in brand fashion houses in Bangladesh offers significant insights into the dynamics of job satisfaction in the country's rapidly evolving retail sector. The findings highlight that salary, workload, and job security are the strongest predictors of overall job satisfaction, while management behavior and support, and promotion opportunities exert moderate positive effects. Conversely, two factors with the highest satisfaction score- physical environment and workplace safety, and relationship with co-worker - were non-significant predictors. Interpreting these results in light of both classical and contemporary theories of job satisfaction offers valuable contributions to scholarly understanding and practical implications.

The findings of this study resonate strongly with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959)- the two foundational behavioral theories. The most influential predictors of overall job satisfaction—salary, workload, and job security—correspond closely to the lower-order needs in Maslow's model and the hygiene factors in Herzberg's framework. Although respondents reported relatively high satisfaction with two constructs, Physical environment and workplace safety, and Relationship with co-workers, these factors did not emerge as statistically significant predictors in the regression model. This suggests that while employees may appreciate these aspects, they do not substantially elevate their overall satisfaction unless more fundamental needs are addressed. This pattern reinforces the notion that unmet or moderately satisfied core needs can suppress overall job satisfaction, even in the presence of highly satisfactory interpersonal and environmental factors.

These findings align with research from developing economies where economic stability remains a primary driver of employee contentment (Rahman, 2022), unlike the Western context, where the social factors, such as relationship with management and co-workers, commonly play central roles in shaping employees' overall job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001). The significance of Promotion and career growth and Management behavior, albeit weaker than Salary, Workload, and Job security, reflects a growing aspiration among retail workers for professional growth and recognition, consistent with findings by Imna and Hassan (2015) and Wajeel-ul-Husnain et al. (2020) in South Asian retail industries.

Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction Dimensions (with Effect Sizes)

As discussed in the literature review, various physiological, psychological, and social differences between males and females, as well as gender differences in job satisfaction, have been widely researched issues in the social science and business literature. In line with this, this study examined differences between male and female employees in overall job satisfaction and satisfaction across various broad constructs.

The independent samples t-test is commonly used to compare the means of two groups when the continuous or scale data satisfy the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance (Field, 2013). However, preliminary

tests on the dataset for this study, specifically the Shapiro-Wilk test, indicate non-normal distributions in several satisfaction dimensions across at least one gender group. Furthermore, Levene's test for equality of variances suggests potential heterogeneity in some dimensions. Given these violations, there is a likelihood that using a parametric t-test could yield biased results (Pallant, 2020).

To address this issue, the Mann–Whitney U test—a non-parametric alternative—was utilized. This test does not rely on the assumption of normality and is robust to unequal variances (Jamieson, 2004). Moreover, it offers a dependable method for situations where parametric assumptions are not met, as it compares ranks rather than means between two independent groups (Nachar, 2008). Below, Table 4 presents the mean satisfaction score along with the standard deviation (in parentheses) and the results of the Mann–Whitney U test:

TABLE 4: GENDER DIFFERENCE IN JOB SATISFACTION

Variable	Gender based Mean and (SD)		Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Cohen's d
	Male	Female			
Overall satisfaction	3.27 (1.00)	3.33 (0.94)	3950.00	0.818	-0.06
Workplace Safety	4.28 (0.51)	4.22 (0.42)	4620.00	0.103	0.13
Workload	3.51 (0.77)	3.43 (0.65)	4465.00	0.233	0.12
Management behavior & support	2.98 (1.32)	2.68 (1.06)	4495.00	0.202	0.25
Co-Workers' support	4.28 (0.51)	4.22 (0.42)	4620.00	0.103	0.13
Salary	3.51 (0.77)	3.43 (0.65)	4465.00	0.233	0.12
Promotion	2.98 (1.32)	2.68 (1.06)	4495.00	0.202	0.25
Job Security	3.44 (0.82)	3.25 (0.66)	4466.00	0.233	0.25

Source: field data

While there are some minor differences in the mean satisfaction scores between male and female employees regarding overall job satisfaction and across all broad constructs, the Mann–Whitney U values and p-values presented in Table 4 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female employees in terms of overall job satisfaction or in any of the broader constructs. Although p-values indicate whether a difference is significant, they do not provide information about its magnitude. To address this, Cohen's d was calculated to complement the Mann–Whitney U test. Cohen's d measures the effect size by expressing the difference between two group means in standard deviation units, offering insights into practical significance (Cohen, 1988). The small values of Cohen's d support the conclusion that there is no meaningful difference in overall satisfaction or satisfaction levels across any dimension, with Cohen's d values for each case remaining at 0.25 or lower.

The findings on gender-based differences in job satisfaction offer valuable insights into the levels and determinants of job satisfaction in Bangladesh's rapidly growing fashion retailing industry. At the same time, these results contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on the dynamics of gender and job satisfaction, particularly in the Global South. From one perspective, the observed pattern may align with recent studies claiming a decline in “paradox of the contented female workers” among young generations of employees (e.g., Lewis et al., 2021; Nguyen and Tran, 2023; Boston Consulting Group, 2023). However, a more critical view might see the generally lower satisfaction levels across both genders as a result of the lack or insufficiency of key

job satisfaction components in the workplace. In developing countries like Bangladesh, the labor market is characterized by an oversupply of labor, giving employers significant leverage. This structural imbalance often leads to exploitative practices in the private sector, where profit maximization is prioritized over investing in employee well-being (Haque et al., 2021; ILO, 2022). As a result, policies that support employees and improve workplace facilities are often overlooked. This systemic apathy towards developing meaningful and supportive work environments may explain the relatively low satisfaction levels found in this study, not just among women, but among employees of both genders. In such contexts, gender differences in satisfaction may appear muted, not because gender is irrelevant, but because both groups are similarly deprived of essential workplace benefits and support mechanisms (Chowdhury and Sarker, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study examined job satisfaction among employees of brand fashion retail outlets in Khulna city, Bangladesh, with a particular emphasis on gender-based differences across multiple satisfaction dimensions. The findings reveal that while employees reported high satisfaction with physical work conditions and co-worker relationships, their satisfaction with compensation, workload, career growth opportunities, managerial behavior, and job satisfaction remained moderate to low. The study also found that salary, workload, and job satisfaction are the factors that strongly influence overall job satisfaction. While managerial relations and career growth were identified as having a minor impact, physical facilities and co-worker support were found to have no significant effect on overall job satisfaction. No significant gender differences emerged in overall job satisfaction or its components.

This study makes a noteworthy contribution to both theory and practice. By situating empirical evidence within the frameworks of behavioral and contemporary theories of job satisfaction and motivation, this study underscores the importance of basic or extrinsic factors in influencing employees' job satisfaction, particularly in non-Western contexts. The findings reveal no statistically significant gender differences in overall satisfaction or in any individual satisfaction dimensions. This contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse regarding the role of gender in shaping workplace experiences in South Asia. While this aligns with emerging literature indicating a narrowing gender gap in workplace expectations, it also raises the possibility that systemic organizational deficiencies may affect all employees uniformly, thereby diminishing distinct gender-based differences in satisfaction. This underscores the necessity for further investigation to gain deeper insights into this issue. Additionally, by challenging assumptions derived from Western-centric studies that prioritize intrinsic factors, this research highlights the need for culturally sensitive, comparative studies of job satisfaction between the Global North and South, aiming to shed light on the cultural and economic moderators at play in job satisfaction dynamics.

This research offers important practical implications. The study's findings suggest that fashion retailers should prioritize competitive compensation packages, transparent promotion frameworks, and clear assurances of job security to enhance employees' job satisfaction. At the same time, management should balance workload to ensure fairness and sustainability, as employees perceive these factors as central to their overall satisfaction.

The study was conducted only in the major city of Khulna, which is a limitation for applying its findings to the entire fashion retailing industry in Bangladesh. However, similar management structures, physical settings, and salary structures in brand fashion stores, along with comparable socioeconomic features in major cities across Bangladesh, and a carefully selected representative sample, help mitigate this limitation significantly. Overall, by focusing on a less-explored sector in the South Asian context, this study provides new empirical evidence on job satisfaction and gender in developing countries and paves the way for future research on the changing aspirations of retail employees.

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