

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION ON REMUNERATION AND FIRE SAFETY: EVIDENCE FROM THE GARMENT SECTOR OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Workers have difficulties in evaluating their working circumstances due to the constraints of limited knowledge and restricted access to information. This paper aims to assess workers' satisfaction with remuneration and their satisfaction with fire safety in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, collecting data from primary sources through questionnaire distribution to 252 root-level workers in Narayanganj, Savar (Dhaka), and Gazipur. The findings suggest that although workers are satisfied with the punctuality of their payments and the environment of their workplace, they are worried about the adequacy of their salaries. Despite the availability of fire and health safety equipment, there are gaps in training and knowledge about fire safety. Recommended measures needed to be taken for alleviating the existing dissatisfaction include salary increments, improved working conditions, and periodic fire safety training. The study provides unique insights on current trends in the business, making it a great resource for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners who want a better knowledge of the changing landscape of the RMG sector in Bangladesh. Limitations of this study include a limited sample size and the need for further investigations to determine the impact of the attitude of upper-level workers and the processes for promotion on employee satisfaction.

Key Words: Satisfaction, Remuneration, Fire safety, Garments sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Readymade Garment (RMG) sector has made a significant impact on defining Bangladesh's economic environment, playing a crucial part in its impressive economic expansion during the last 25 years with more than 4.56 thousand garment factories presently conducting its operation in Bangladesh (Roy, 2020). Bangladesh has experienced a rapid growth, and the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry serves as evidence of its capacity to withstand and adjust to global economic shifts. This sector has not only emerged as an indispensable component of the nation's economy but also as its most essential commodity for export.

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The statistics reveal the significant influence of the RMG industry on Bangladesh's export sector, as it accounts for an astonishing more than 75% of the country's overall export revenues (Basher, 2022). The RMG market has a prominent position in the country's economic operations, highlighting its importance in earning foreign currency and contributing to the overall economic progress of Bangladesh. The continuous increase in income generated by RMG exports highlights the sector's strong economic power. Bangladesh, in the fiscal year 2021-2022, achieved a significant milestone by exporting garments valued at US \$42.613 billion, positioning itself as the second-largest global exporter of clothing (Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau, 2021). In 2022, Bangladesh was the second-highest exporter of garments among individual countries, with clothing exports amounting to \$45 billion (WTO, 2023).

In addition to its economic achievements, the RMG business plays a crucial role in tackling socio-economic concerns. An outstanding characteristic of this is its ability to provide resources for the impoverished and generate work prospects for the unemployed. The RMG industry now employs over 4.4 million workers, with a substantial proportion of this employment consisting of women, approximately 85% (Roy, 2020), from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Haque & Bari, 2021). The sector plays a crucial role in generating money for disadvantaged communities, hence helping to reduce poverty and empower women (Khatun & Shamshuzzaman, 2017). The employment developments in the RMG industry are remarkable. The significant increase of women entering the sector has played a crucial role in transforming conventional gender norms and offering women the chance to achieve economic autonomy. The demographic makeup of the workforce, specifically targeting the recruitment of women from underprivileged backgrounds, showcases the industry's capacity for fostering social inclusiveness and empowerment (Paul-Majumder & Begum, 2005).

However, labour unrest, which means measuring how the workers are dissatisfied with job and working environments, has become a prevalent occurrence in the textile industry in Bangladesh. Roy (2020) determined that the primary cause of labour unrest is the owners' disregard for the lawful demands of workers. Employers fail to meet the requirements for safe working conditions, inflation-adjusted wages, and equitable working hours (Roy, 2020). The labour unrest has resulted in significant production losses (Roy, 2020). Conversely, the safety of the workers in the garment industry is not given enough attention. The Rana Plaza collapse, which took place on 24 April 2013 in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, resulted in the death of at least 1135 textile workers and an estimated 2500 injuries. This event has heightened concerns among garment workers about

their safety in the workplace (Wiersma, 2018). Furthermore, from 1990 to 2020, the garment industry saw a minimum of 40 significant fire events, leading to a total of more than 500 fatalities (NurAmin, 2021). In 2012, Tazreen Fashions Ltd. Experienced the most severe industrial fire ever recorded in the country, resulting in the tragic loss of over 100 lives (Siraj et al., 2023).

Though there are several studies on employee satisfaction, fewer studies are found that incorporate both remuneration and fire safety to assess the level of satisfaction of garment workers in Bangladesh. To fill this gap, the primary objective of the research is set as to determine employee satisfaction with fire safety and to determine the workers' satisfaction with remuneration. This paper aims to explore the many aspects of the RMG industry, providing an extensive analysis that surpasses current literature. Based on collected information and personal observations, the study seeks to make a significant contribution to the discussion on the RMG business in Bangladesh. The importance of this study is not only in its thorough examination but also in its timeliness and pertinence to the present condition of the RMG sector. The paper's distinctive view point, obtained via firsthand observation and analysis, establishes it as an essential addition to the expanding knowledge base on the RMG industry's impact on economic and social progress. For this research, we gathered the required information from primary sources.

This paper has been organized into sections where 1st section contains the introduction part. Literature review has been provided in section 2. Section 3 and section 4 contain Research methodology and Demographic statistics of respondents respectively. Findings and conclusion have been summarized in section 5 and section 6 respectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, proposed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959, proposes that employee contentment and discontentment are affected by separate categories of variables—motivators and hygienic issues. Factors that stimulate or encourage individuals, such as the desire to accomplish goals and get acknowledgment, have a direct impact on the level of satisfaction and engagement in one's profession. Conversely, hygienic elements like as pay and working environment serve as necessary conditions to avoid dissatisfaction but they do not necessarily increase job satisfaction.

Therefore, Herzberg's theory offers a structured approach to examine the elements that influence employee satisfaction. The payment component is categorized as a hygiene issue, which pertains to fulfilling fundamental necessities

and reducing dissatisfaction. However, given the importance of fire safety in the garment industry, it is crucial to provide a secure working environment as a fundamental need to minimize dissatisfaction among workers.

The stakeholder theory of business, as delineated by Phillips (2003), emphasizes the responsibility of managers to prioritize the concerns of stakeholders, such as employee well-being, rather than exclusively concentrating on increasing shareholder earnings. It is crucial to acknowledge that employee well-being, in accordance with social welfare principles (Khanom et al., 2022), is vital for the overall well-being of a business. The research may enhance satisfaction with work by addressing factors such as compensation and fire safety in the garments industry of Bangladesh. The emphasis on employee well-being plays a crucial role in promoting motivation and devotion among workers, eventually impacting their commitment and contributions to corporate achievements.

2.1 Employee Satisfaction with Remuneration

According to Judge et al. (2020), job satisfaction is the evaluation made by an employee, where people measure their level of satisfaction by comparing it to their diverse goals. Khanom et al. (2022) highlights the relationship between workers' expectations of their employment and their actual experiences, which influences the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction they experience.

Compensation has a crucial role in influencing work satisfaction, especially in economically challenging circumstances. According to Malik et al. (2012), in developing countries with high unemployment rates and economic uncertainty, job satisfaction is often dependent on receiving a significant wage and having chances for advancement in one's position. Effective compensation schemes, as emphasized by Khanom et al. (2022) and Alauddin et al. (2019), have a significant impact on improving the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations, while also decreasing turnover rates (Fang et al., 2010). Salary is a primary determinant that stimulates employees and fosters job contentment (Alauddin et al., 2019). Consequently, employees have a strong sense of dedication to their company when they get an equitable wage. In addition, it contributes to the improvement of staff retention and attractiveness (Khanom et al., 2022). Akterujjaman & Ahmad (2016) determined that garment workers in Bangladesh express dissatisfaction with their earnings and other forms of compensation.

Moreover, the Bangladeshi garment industry continues to face on going difficulties, as highlighted by Akterujjaman & Ahmad (2016), with workers expressing dissatisfaction with their wages and other forms of compensation. Roy (2020) asserts that the poor labor pay in the Bangladeshi textile industry, as shown

by a monthly compensation of BDT 8000, plays a role in fostering dissatisfaction among the workers. The dissatisfaction as emphasized by Roy (2020), has the potential to result in labor strikes, resulting in significant financial losses for company owners, economic instability, and a damaged reputation on the global stage, which may impact future orders from foreign clients. While previous research by Khatun & Shamshuzzaman (2017) and Chowdhury & Ullah (2010) has provided some understanding of the satisfaction levels among garment workers, there is a need for more contemporary assessments. According to Alauddin et al. (2019), income, promotion, and housing facilities have a substantial impact on work satisfaction in the RMG industry. It is crucial to tackle these problems within the garments sector of Bangladesh in order to promote a more satisfied and involved workforce, eventually benefiting both workers and the industry as a whole.

2.2 Employee Satisfaction with Fire Safety

The research has analyzed relevant parameters outlined in the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006, to assess employee satisfaction with fire safety in the garments industry of Bangladesh. The Act's Sections 61-72 define safety protocols for buildings, machinery, fire prevention, tasks in proximity to machinery, and other pivotal elements (Khanom et al., 2022).

The Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), 2020 has been revised to specifically tackle fire-related occurrences. The amendments now mandate the use of fire-resistant materials in construction, installation of fire detection and alarm systems, implementation of exit systems, provision of firefighting equipment, adoption of smoke management systems, and conducting regular fire drills and training (Afrose, 2023). The Fire Prevention and Extinguishing Act of 2003, together with the Fire Prevention and Extinction Rules of 2014, also include safety regulations. Nevertheless, the absence of an implementing authority and the vulnerability to some modifications contribute to a deficiency of accountability. The lack of adherence by owners poses a substantial hindrance to the enforcement of these standards. The BNBC advises conducting fire drills on a quarterly basis, or alternatively, or twice a year, depending on the specific characteristics of the structure.

Employee satisfaction, an essential factor influencing employee attitudes, is closely linked to the preservation of a secure working environment (Khanom et al., 2022). Unfortunately, several organizations in Bangladesh are deficient in sufficient fire prevention methods and expansive emergency pathways for their workers (Rakib & Adnan, 2015). Furthermore, a concerning 68% of employees indicate the non-existence of first aid facilities, while 98% acknowledge the absence of insurance coverage in their workplaces (Farhana et al., 2015).

Many studies on job satisfaction among workers in Bangladesh's RMG industry highlight difficulties associated with inadequate working conditions and non-compliance with social standards. Ahmed et al. (2013) pin point the insufficient implementation of labor norms and rights, while Roy (2020) establishes a connection between labor dissatisfaction and several factors such as health and hygiene, safety concerns, working hours, leave policies, and wage-related matters. It is essential to tackle these difficulties in order to improve worker satisfaction, foster a feeling of ownership, and create a safer and more secure working environment in the garments industry of Bangladesh. However, few studies have been done specifically on worker satisfaction of the RMG industry of Bangladesh in health, hygiene and safety measures.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The primary data has been used in this study. To collect raw data, a set of questionnaires has been developed to collect the required information from the garment workers. To collect preliminary data from workers, a structured questionnaire is designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to answer the main research question. For this research data has been collected by using a simple random sampling method. The set of questionnaires was distributed among 300 randomly selected readymade garment workers working in Narayanganj, Savar (Dhaka), and Gazipur. Finally, 252 workers have provided their responses on the questions asked them.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

This demographic summary serves as a strong basis for analyzing employee satisfaction. It allows for a detailed examination of the relationship between compensation, fire safety, and various demographic factors in the ever-changing garments industry in Bangladesh.

The gender breakdown shows that the majority of the workforce is composed of women, who make up 70% of the total responses, while males make up the remaining 30%. Upon analyzing the age distribution, a significant majority of participants belong to the 20-30 years age group, accounting for 63% of the whole sample. Subsequently, there is a 13% representation of persons under the age of 20 and a 23% representation of those over the age of 30. The sample is further diversified by marital status, with 44% of respondents being married and 56% being single. Understanding this difference is crucial when examining the potential impact of marital status on employee satisfaction with regard to compensation and

fire safety. Married people may assign varying degrees of importance to factors like as financial stability and employment security in comparison to their unmarried counterparts.

The following table consists of the demographic characteristics of the respondents who have expressed their opinion.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	76	30%
Women	176	70%
Total	252	100%
<i>Age</i>		
Below 20 years	34	13%
20-30 years	160	63%
Above 30 years	58	23%
Total	252	100%
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	110	44%
Single	142	56%
Total	252	100%
<i>Educational level</i>		
Below S.S.C	98	39%
S.S.C	78	31%
H.S.C	51	20%
Undergraduate	25	10%
Total	252	100%
<i>Monthly Income</i>		
Below 7000	54	21%
7000-9000	83	33%
9000-12000	42	17%
12000-15000	51	20%
Above 15000	22	9%
Total	252	100%

The respondents possessed diverse educational backgrounds, with 39% having education below the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C), 31% holding a S.S.C, 20% obtaining a Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C), and 10% being undergraduates. The presence of various educational backgrounds within the sample enables an examination of how varying levels of education may influence employees' views on compensation and measures taken to ensure fire safety. The monthly salary has a substantial impact on employee happiness, and the distribution across income levels indicates 21% of individuals make less than 7000, 33% earn between 7000 and 9000, 17% earn between 9000 and 12000, 20% earn between 12000 and 15000, and 9% earn more than 15000.

5. FINDINGS

Employee satisfaction with salary and wages

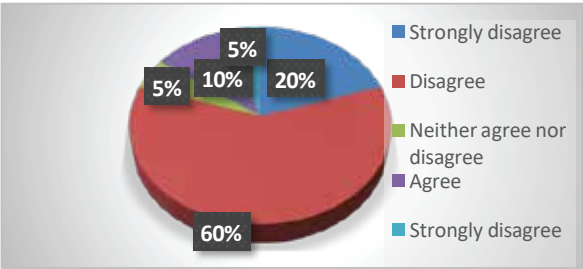
Question asked: You are happy with your wages and benefits.

Disagreement indicates: Wages and salaries aren’t well received by workers.

Salary and wages are the most important determinants of employee satisfaction in developing countries like Bangladesh. Because their main source of income is salary which helps to maintain their standard of living. It has been discovered that forty percent of respondents did not agree with the statement that employees are content with their wages, and forty percent of those respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

It can be concluded that, 80% or more of individuals who participated in the survey expressed dissatisfaction with both their wages and their perks.

Figure- 1: Employee satisfaction with the timing of payment



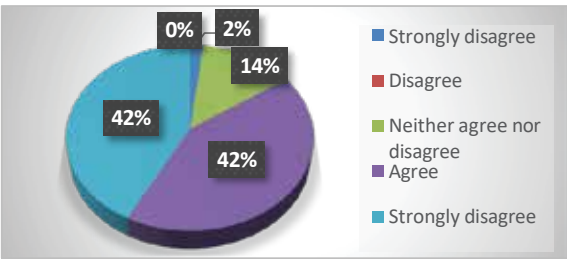
Question asked: The company is paying your wages and salaries within your expected date.

Disagreement indicates: Salary and other compensation aren’t timely paid by the company.

The findings suggest that 44 percent of respondents agree and 40 percent of respondents strongly believe that the organisation pays wages and salaries on time.

According to responses of the workers, around 84% of respondents concluded that the organisation has never been late with a payment.

Figure- 2: Employee satisfaction with inflation-adjusted wages.



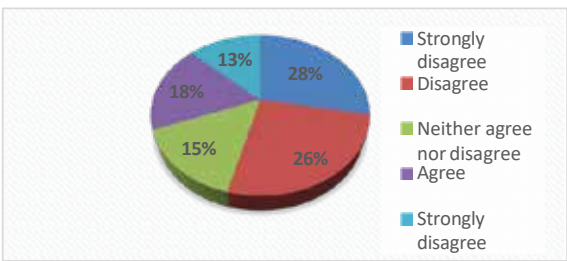
Question asked: you are getting inflation adjusted wages to maintain the standard of living.

Disagreement indicates: Workers are getting lower increments which is below the inflation rate of the economy.

Inflation has become a great concern in Bangladesh. So, workers always expect that their salary increment should be at least enough to cover the prevailing inflation in their country. Otherwise, their standard of living will be hampered. It is observed that 28% of workers strongly disagree and 26% of workers disagree with the proposition of getting inflation-adjusted wages.

Finally, it can be concluded that a total of 54% of workers are dissatisfied as their wages are not inflation-adjusted and only 31% of workers are satisfied due to getting inflation-adjusted wages.

Figure- 3: Employee satisfaction with the safe working environment.



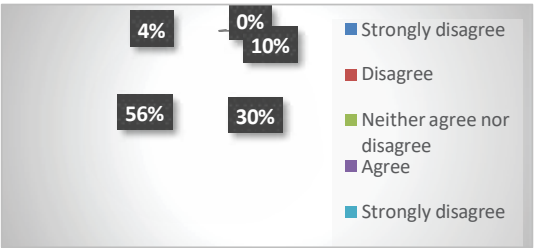
Question asked: The working environment is beneficial to the health of employees.

Disagreement indicates: The working environment is hazardous to the employees' health.

Workers' motivation to work increases when they feel that they are safe in their workplace. The result of this study suggests that 30% of people who responded to the survey agreed with the question and 56 percent agreed strongly with their safe working environment.

On average, 86% of those polled said they believe their employment environment is beneficial to their health.

Figure- 4: Employee satisfaction with proper emergency medical treatment for workers



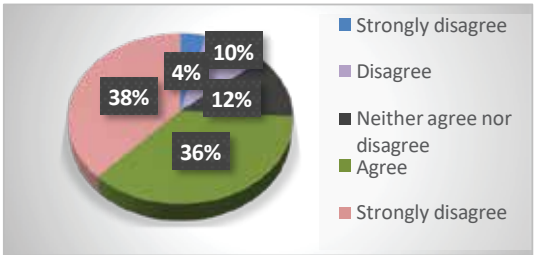
Question asked: Enough emergency medical care for employees is provided by the company.

Disagreement indicates: The Company is unable to pay for adequate medical care for its workers.

According to the findings of the poll, 36% of respondents agree, and 38% are extremely agree, that the firm provides sufficient medical care for its workers as part of emergency medical treatment.

Thus, 74% or more of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the organization takes care to provide its workers with good health treatment.

Figure- 5: Employee satisfaction with fire and health safety.



Question asked: The company supplies the necessary fire and health safety equipment (such as fire extinguishers)

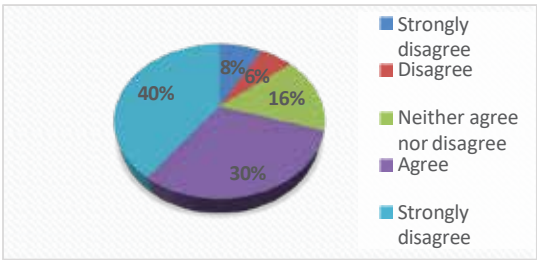
Disagreement indicates: Fire and health safety equipment is inadequate.

Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) requires that every building should make necessary firefighting equipment available in the building premises

to tackle emergency fire issues. According to the findings, 36 percent of respondents feel that the firm offers enough fire and health safety equipment, and 40 percent of those respondents strongly agree with this statement.

Approximately, 76% of those who were surveyed felt that organisation makes sure its workers have access to good medical care.

Figure- 6: Employee satisfaction with enough fire training to employees on regular basis.



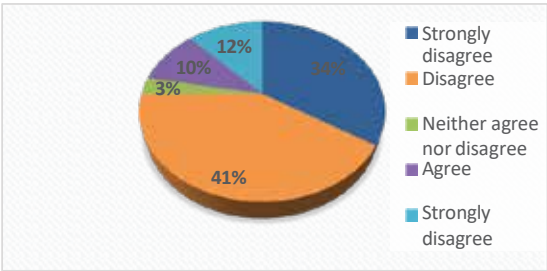
Question asked: The company provides fire training to handle fire emergencies.

Disagreement indicates: Company has enough fire equipment but workers aren't trained to use that equipment and handle fire emergencies.

Having only fire equipment will have no use if the concerned workers aren't trained to use that equipment. Moreover, during a fire crisis, many people fail to deal the situation with a normal mindset unless they are trained about how to tackle the situation. In this study, it is observed that 41% strongly disagree that the company provides fire training to their employees and 34% disagree on the availability of fire training. So, it is a great concern that workers lack of knowledge to use fire equipment.

Overall, 75% of employees are dissatisfied with the availability of fire training and fire handling skills.

Figure- 7: Employee satisfaction with enough emergency exit points for fire safety.



Question asked: There are sufficient fire exits in the building

Disagreement indicates: There aren't enough fire escapes in the building.

Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) also mandates every garment industry to make emergency exit points available in the building to help workers leave the workplace safely. The findings suggest that 38 percent of respondents hold the view that the business has an adequate number of emergency exit points for fire safety and that 32 percent of those respondents have a strong attitude in this regard.

Approximately, 86% of respondents said that there were enough exits available in the case that there was a fire.

6. CONCLUSION

The satisfaction of employees is crucial in enhancing productivity across any industry. Issues with job satisfaction have been observed in the Bangladesh readymade garment industry. Many fundamental concerns directly impact the degree of satisfaction among workers. Due to their limited access to formal education and lack of information, Bangladeshi workers have difficulties in assessing and comparing their working environments with those in industrialized countries. Consequently, they are concerned about their access to basic income and benefits. The insufficiency of compensation and benefits, together with the irregularity of wage payments, provide challenges for rural migrants in meeting their financial obligations. So, workers in the Bangladeshi garment sector want to get remuneration and benefits that are on line with industry standards, emphasizing the need for improved working conditions and enhanced opportunities for those moving from rural areas.

The garment manufacturing sector in developing countries like Bangladesh needs to reduce fire risk to ensure its long-term viability and expansion. Fires can lead to fatalities, asset destruction, and financial setbacks. Prioritizing the safety and welfare of the workforce is crucial for enhancing the sector's resilience. Reducing fire risks is also essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as they can have significant environmental impacts.

Considering the above scenarios, this paper concentrates on fulfilling two objectives namely, to determine the workers' satisfaction with remuneration, and to assess their level of satisfaction regarding fire safety. All the required information has been collected from primary sources through distributing questionnaires to the root-level workers working in Narayanganj, Savar (Dhaka), and Gazipur. The

findings of the study indicate that 80% of garment workers are dissatisfied with their salary and wages but employees have no objection regarding the timing of their payments as 84% of workers expressed their satisfaction with the timing of payments made by the company. But it should be noted with great concern that 54% of workers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the fact that their wages are not revised yearly considering the inflation of the country so they are facing problems in maintaining their standard of living. Hopefully, workers are satisfied with their working environment and about 86% of respondents believe that their employment environment is beneficial to their health.

Additionally, 74% of workers are satisfied with the factors of availability of emergency medical treatment in their workplace. Though fire and health safety equipment are available (76% of workers are satisfied) in the workplace, workers aren't receiving enough training (as 75% of workers are dissatisfied) to use fire equipment and handle a fire emergency. Fortunately, many garment factories (about 86% of workers are satisfied with exit points) have taken enough steps for emergency exit points in times of danger.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation proposes increasing the wages of workers in response to their discontentment with their current salary. Enhancing working conditions is essential, despite the majority of workers expressing satisfaction with their current employment. Implementing supplementary safety measures is necessary to enhance the attractiveness of the business to international clients. It is essential to annually review workers' salaries, ensuring that they at least keep pace with the country's inflation. It is highly recommended to schedule training sessions or seminars on fire emergencies at least twice a year to educate the workers on using the fire equipment in times of fire emergency.

8. LIMITATION

This study has also some limitations for example sample size is limited, and the findings are judgmental as they depend on the mindset of the respondents. The findings cannot be used as concrete evidence to evaluate the compensation and fire safety of any company. Moreover, the attitude of upper-level employees and the process of promotion, which have been ignored in this study, also affect the satisfaction level of the workers. So, future research can be conducted considering those factors and increasing the sample size.

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