

# Linking Workers' Supportive Voice and Task Performance through Workers' Perception of Decent Work and Distributive Justice Climate: A Multilevel Research on the RMG Industry in Bangladesh

Habiba Rahman<sup>1</sup>, Min Li<sup>1</sup>, Yen Nguyenthi<sup>1</sup> & Xiaoli Hu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, 510640, China

<sup>2</sup> Management College, Zhongkai University of Agriculture and Engineering, Guangzhou, 510640, China

Correspondence: Habiba Rahman, School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, 510640, China. E-mail: chowaib4848@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Prior scholarly works suggest that workers' promotive behavior and positive perception of decent work enhance performance, and employers prefer and are fair to workers with supportive voice behavior. Nonetheless, Bangladeshi workers tend to display destructive voice behavior, leaving the possibility of exploring the influence of their supportive voice. This study examined the influence of workers' supportive voice on their task performance through the mediation of their perception of decent work and the moderation of distributive justice climate. Data had been collected from 396 working adults in the RMG industry in Bangladesh and analyzed using multilevel path analysis. Based on the social exchange theory, the equity theory, and psychology of working theory, the findings showed a positive relationship between workers' supportive voice and task performance with positive mediation of workers' perception of decent work. Distributive justice climate positively moderates the relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' perception of decent work but does not significantly moderate the relationship between workers' perception of decent work and workers' task performance. The findings suggest that employers should confirm a fair and just workplace to amplify workers' supportive behavior, decent work perception, and performance.

**Keywords:** Workers' supportive voice, perception of decent work, task performance, psychology of working, distributive justice climate

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In today's global competitive market, decent work has become the central discussion among researchers, policymakers, and workers, which triggers employers to ensure decent work at their workplaces. The International Labor Organization (ILO) focuses on decent work to promote equality, fairness, human rights, and justice in the world, specifically in emerging countries (ILO, 1999). Nowadays, workers tend to work in decent environments, and their perceptions of workplace decent work influence their performance. They have become more passionate about decent work because the recent pandemic has made the difference between the working conditions of the privileged and the unprivileged more visible (Nourafkan & Tanova, 2023). Besides, because of the dependency of workers' individual-level job outcomes on their individual-level opinions, workers' way of observing and assessing the decent work ensured at the individual level is as significant as ensuring decent work at the macro level (Nourafkan & Tanova, 2023). The psychology of working theory (PWT) denotes that decent work can satisfy workers' needs and wellbeing (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016) that, makes workers perceive a sense of achievement and satisfaction (Wan & Duffy, 2022) and intend to stay in the organization and perform a better task (Ferraro, Santos, Moreira, & Pais, 2020; 2018; 2017; Wang et al., 2019; Buyukgoze-Kavas & Autin, 2019).

Consequently, workers are now aware of the value of decent work and keener to achieve their rights in the workplace, and their performance level depends on their perception of decent work. The situation is similar among the workers in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh which is one of the global leaders in world's apparel industry. Being the second largest RMG exporter in the world, Bangladesh's RMG industry

contributes over 80% of the country's export earnings<sup>1</sup> and employing more than 4.2 million workers (Jahan, 2024). The industry has been pivotal in creating jobs, especially for women, contributing to poverty reduction and women's empowerment. Since this industry relies heavily on manual labor, the RMG industry should provide fair and equitable workplaces for workers. To enforce productive and decent work for RMG workers, ILO has taken "The Bangladesh Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2022-2026" initiative (ILO, 2024). Despite having rules and regulations, Bangladesh RMG companies, specifically small and medium RMG companies, need to improve their practice of decent work. Lack of decent work impedes workers' psychological commitment to enrich their task performance and prompts their intentions to quit, resulting in a drop of 15.55% in total exports from the previous year along with almost 25% worker turnover (WTO, 2024; Rubel & Kee, 2015; Rubel & Kee, 2014; Bhuiyan, 2013; Shamsuzzoha & Shumon, 2007). Yet, less attention has been given to investigating the decent work perception of the RMG workers in Bangladesh.

Nonetheless, it is evident that in the dynamic environment, employers comprehend that their primary goal which is better organizational performance, can be achieved by combining both top-level leaders' expertise and bottom-level workers' opinions (Zhang, Akhtar, Zhang, & Rofcanin, 2019; Duan, Li, Xu, & Wu, 2017; Wei, Zhang, & Chen, 2015; Bryson, Charlwood, & Forth, 2006; Black & Lynch, 2004; Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Scholars have investigated that workers' task performance, which is the most vital area of industrial relations (López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez, & Quiñó-Piñero, 2022), is an appropriate Human Resource Management (HRM) practice to improve organizational performance (Ashiru, Erdil, & Oluwajana, 2021; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020; Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010). Studying task performance can highlight ways to enhance organizational performance, productivity, quality, as well as worker satisfaction, safety, and overall well-being, which are crucial for United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8)<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, researching on the task performance of the Bangladesh's RMG industry will ensure to meet SDG8, organizational performance, and quality. As a major player in the global apparel supply chain, Bangladesh must adhere to decent work conditions and expectations for quality and timely delivery. However, Bangladesh RMG industry's total global export was 38.4 billion US dollar (USD)<sup>3</sup>, which is significantly lower than the total global export of China (164 billion USD)<sup>4</sup> and slightly higher than the total global export of Vietnam (31 billion USD)<sup>5</sup>. The total export of Bangladesh in fiscal year FY2023-24 was 81.92% which is lower than that of FY2022-23 (82.15%)<sup>6</sup>. These numbers indicate that the current situation of this key global industry is not promising and the urge to improve the situation is crucial. Therefore, research on the influential factors of enhancing task performance within the RMG sector directly impacts productivity, quality, and global competitiveness, ensuring the industry's sustained contribution to national economic growth and global export in the context of Bangladesh.

Preceding studies found that workers' task performance gets better if they work in decent working conditions (Ferraro et al., 2020; 2018; 2017). Workers with positive perception of decent work tend to more committed psychologically, more satisfied, and show better task performance than workers with negative or no perception of decent work (WTO, 2024; Duffy et al., 2016). Similarly, in the RMG industry in Bangladesh, decent work such as occupational health and safety (Hoque & Shahinuzzaman, 2021) and compensation (Islam, 2014) is connected with workers' task performance. However, the RMG workers' working conditions are not up to the mark and the poor and hazardous working conditions in the garment industry have not been improved. Wage inequality, employment inequality, gender discrimination, lack of social protection, and lack of scope to improve personal value and social dialogue portray indecent working environment of the RMG industry in Bangladesh

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bgmea.com.bd/page/Export\\_Performance](https://www.bgmea.com.bd/page/Export_Performance)

<sup>2</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals 8 (SDG8), established at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, represents promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The central elements of SDG8 are decent work and the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda which are employment creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.textiletoday.com.bd/bangladeshs-rmg-exports-grow-by-7-23-in-2024-amid-challenges>

<sup>4</sup> <https://shenglufashion.com/2024/08/17/chinas-textile-and-clothing-export-latest-patterns-and-trends-updated-august-2024/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/apparel-news/china-2023-s-top-global-rmg-exporter-bangladesh-2nd-vietnam-3rd-wto-297174-newsdetails.htm#:~:text=Vietnam%20ranked%20third%2C%20with%20a,7.9%20per%20cent%20in%202022.>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.bgmea.com.bd/page/Export\\_Performance](https://www.bgmea.com.bd/page/Export_Performance)

(Akterujjaman and Ahmed, 2016; Azad, 2014; Hossain, Sarker, and Afroze, 2012). Scholar Sharma (2015) further proved that the working conditions of the RMG industry of Bangladesh is poor and workers negatively view their workplace decent work which leads to poor task performance. Yet to date, less attention had been given to study the connection between workers' perception of decent work and task performance, raising a question: how do workers' perception of decent work influence workers' task performance in the RMG industry in Bangladesh?

In addition, workers' task performance improves when they have influential voice (Mayer, Ong, Sonenshein, & Ashford, 2019; Lebel & Patil, 2018; Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). Workers' voice is a key way for workers to emphasize promotion, wage adjustments, working conditions, and justice practices (Babalola, Garcia, Ren, Ogunfowora, & Gok, 2022; Bowles, Thomason, & Bear, 2019; Lin, Lam, & Zhang, 2020; Klaas & Ward, 2015; Klaas, Olson-Buchanan, & Ward, 2012). And so, the RMG workers in Bangladesh are joining trade unions and raising their voices to confirm decent work. Workers' trade union participation is a way of raising their voices, which helps them to be aware of their rights, working conditions, and just treatment at their workplaces. This awareness drives workers to get their rights, decent work, and justice by any means, such as poor task performance, turnover, and labor unrest. For instance, the recent ongoing labor strike in Bangladesh predominantly centers around the demands for management practices change, equitable workplace, and the modification of employment practices (Apparel Resources, 2024). Many small and medium garments shut down because workers' task performances are not up to the mark, which leads to significant delays in completing order requirements. As a result, buyers stopped placing orders, and the order shortages put owners of small and medium garments into an economic crisis, causing the shutdown (Rahman, 2024). Some of the root causes of workers' poor task performance are the failure to provide equal treatment, unfair wages, and lack of decent work. However, the employers of the RMG industry in Bangladesh do not favor trade unions (Khan, Bartram, Cavanagh, Hossain, & Akter, 2019) because trade union influences workers' perception of decent work, and this perception triggers workers to cause labor strikes by demanding more from employers which the small and medium garments employers cannot provide often. The voice behavior of the RMG workers in Bangladesh is primarily destructive, and its impact is negative, which hinders achieving the key goal while damaging the employer-worker relationship. This situation raises the question: If the voice behavior of RMG workers was supportive, would it positively influence their perception of decent work and task performance?

Additionally, the growing concerns among workers regarding raising their voices, perception of decent work, and employment practices can push employers to practice equity and justice at the workplace. How fairly employers implement the procedure can highlight the perception of justice (Moorman, 1991) because when workers get justice in the outcome or reward in exchange of their input or contributions, they intend to perform better (Carter, Mossholder, & Harris, 2018; Mahajan & Benson, 2013; Moon, 2007). To ensure distributive justice at both the collective and individual levels, employers have to be fair in the reward distribution among workers who perform similar task and have same duties and responsibilities (Siswanti, Tjahjono, Heru, Hartono, & Prajogo, 2020; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Since group working guarantees both performance improvement and competitive advantage (Naumann & Bennett, 2000; Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002; Liao & Rupp, 2005; Mayer, Nishii, Schneider, & Goldstein, 2007), it has become a common practice in the RMG industry. According to the Bangladesh RMG employers, the reward or outcome distribution among workers at the individual level is fair and just due to the labor law and employment rules but in practice, significant gender discrimination in terms of employment, wage, compensation, health and safety has been identified (Haque, Sarker, Rahman, & Rakibuddin, 2020; Hossain, 2012). Yet, to date, the role of distributive justice climate (i.e., aggregate level) in the RMG industry in Bangladesh remains under-researched.

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions and to address all research gaps, this study seeks to explore the influence of workers' supportive voices on workers' task performance. Moreover, this study examines the relationship by adding workers' perception of decent work as mediator and distributive justice climate as moderator. Figure 1 illustrates the multilevel research model. The primary contribution of this research is to amplify our knowledge regarding psychological process to influence workplace dynamics by examining the affiliation between supportive voice, decent work perception, and task performance of workers. Besides, by adding distributive justice climate this research boosts the understanding of the interaction between perceived equity, exchange procedure, and individual's working psychology. To acknowledge the substantial function of distributive justice climate in the workplace and how it affects workers' reactions is a rational and pivotal aspect for employers. This understanding can assist employers in preserving a justice climate, which can make workers' voice behavior and perception of decent work positive and finally enhance their task performance. Besides, despite its global importance, the RMG industry in Bangladesh remains under-researched, particularly regarding the behavioral and organizational dynamics affecting performance. Conducting research in this context enriches

academic literature by providing a more refined understanding of voice, perception, performance, and justice climate in a unique socio-economic and cultural setting.

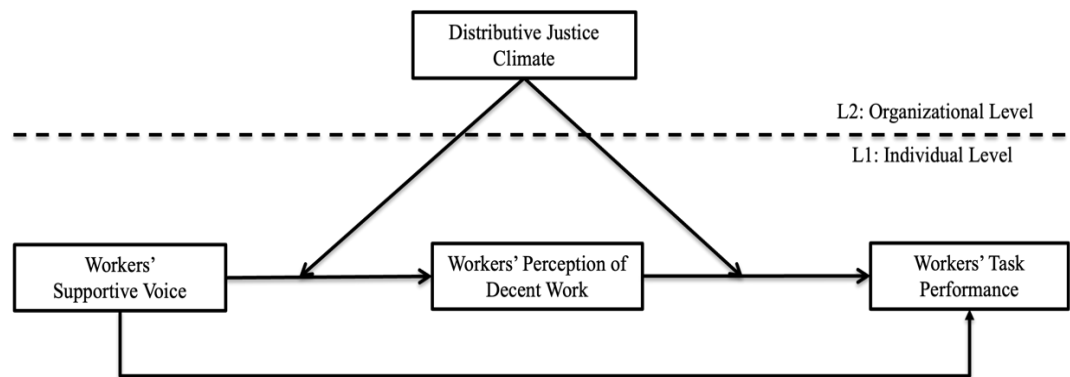


Figure 1. Multilevel Research Model

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### 2.1 Workers' Supportive Voice and Workers' Task Performance

Workers' voices are a way of communicating with employers to help them collectively in the decision-making process (Budd, 2004; Freeman & Medoff, 1984). Some scholars have elaborated on workers' voices as promotive behavior to prompt productive challenges for improvement rather than criticism (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Workers' supportive voice is a form of promotive behavior. Maynes and Podsakoff (2014) defined workers' supportive voice as "the voluntary expression of support for worthwhile work-related policies, programs, objectives, procedures, etc., or speaking out in defense of these same things when they are being unfairly criticized" (p. 91). A supportive voice is the behavior of both supporting and defending organizational procedures (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). On the other hand, the term 'performance' means goal-related behavior controlled by an individual (Murphy, 1989; Campbell, 1990), and a task is basically a work that an individual has to accomplish. Task performance refers to the fixed role activities and behaviors of workers that contribute to the technical core of the organization in exchange for payment (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997).

Prior scholarly works indicated that, within the organization, workers who have persuasive voices often find ways to boost task performance, reduce mistakes, accomplish goals, improve innovation, and limit self-serving behaviors (Li & Tangirala, 2022; Duan et al., 2017; Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Oc, Bashshur, & Moore, 2015; Bienefeld & Grote, 2014; Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Van Dyne et al., 2003; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Workers can identify issues and discuss with employers how to solve them by raising their voices through workers' participation committees (Khan et al., 2019) and trade unions (Okolie, 2010) to increase task performance (Chawla, Singh, Singh, & Agarwal, 2018; Peetz, 2012). Existing research showed that performances improve in those organizations where workers have a voice (Detert et al., 2013). Besides, employers prefer the opinions of workers who have a supportive voice rather than those who have a destructive voice (Burris, 2012). Employers' tendency to rely on the promotive behavior of workers to enrich the function of organizations (Chamberlin, Newton, & Lepine, 2017; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995) is proof of employers' preference for workers' supportive voice. Because, supportive voice involves workers offering constructive feedback, suggestions, or concerns aimed at improving organizational functioning (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). The social exchange theory refers to individual's action in exchange of other party's reaction (Blau, 1964). Social exchange theory offers a framework for understanding how organizations and managers influence workers' sense of obligation and positive workplace attitudes (Blau, 1964). According to social exchange theory, such proactive behaviors contribute to building trust and reciprocity within the workplace. Employers who perceive these contributions positively are more likely to provide support, resources, or feedback that directly or indirectly enhances employees' task performance. Besides, Maynes & Podsakoff (2014) declared that workers' supportive voice is similar to organizational loyalty, and, according to the studies of Murali, Poddar, & Seema (2017) and Alrawabdeh (2014), loyalty improves performance. Hence, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): Workers' supportive voice is positively related to workers' task performance.*

## 2.2 Mediating Role of Workers' Perception of Decent Work

ILO stated that decent work is "to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity" (ILO, 1999, p. 3). Duffy et al. (2016, 2017) demonstrated five components of decent work such as safe working conditions, adequate compensation, access to healthcare, organizational values, and free time and adequate rest based on the ILO's concept and PWT, which according to Huang, Shen, Yuan, & Li, (2020) endorse the essential ethical principles of human rights equality and justice. Workers' perception of decent work is an overall evaluation and judgment of employees on whether the management practices of the organization help to protect their basic rights and enhance their sense of dignity and value during the process of exchanging their labor for returns from the organization (Yuelan & Li, 2013).

Many scholars investigated that workers' voice is a significant way to ensure their requirements, wellbeing, and decent work at workplace (Claro et al., 2022; Babalola et al., 2022; Wilkinson, Barry, & Morrison, 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Bowles et al., 2019; Horecký, 2018; Alfayad & Arif, 2017; Oka, 2016; Klaas & Ward, 2015; Harley, 2014; Klaas et al., 2012; Pedersini, 2010; Webb & Webb, 1897; Gorden, 1988). Especially employers are more favorable toward workers who have supportive voices as they consider those workers as loyal and intend to listen to them more (Chamberlin et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2012; Burris, 2012; Van Dyne et al., 1995). According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), workers' supportive voice encourages employers to provide decent work. Furthermore, PWT affirms that work fulfillment, need satisfaction, and wellbeing are the results of decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). PWT further implies that the presence of decent work helps workers develop a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction (Wan & Duffy, 2022), resulting in a positive perception of their workplace's decent work. Therefore, this study assumes that workers' supportive voice can signal a positive organizational culture, which according to social exchange theory contributes to fostering decent work conditions and according to PWT, the presence of decent work helps workers develop positive perception of their workplace's decent work. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): Workers' supportive voice is positively related to workers' perceptions of decent work.*

Furthermore, decent work significantly enhances workers' task performance through career success, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction (Koekemoer & Masenge, 2023; Aybas, Özçelik, & Uyargil, 2022; Atitsogbe, Kossi, Pari, & Rossier, 2021; McIlveen et al., 2021; Blustein et al., 2020; Ferraro et al., 2020; 2018; 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). For instance, scholars Huang and Yuan (2022) empirically investigated the impact of decent work on performance and found that decent work significantly enhances task performance via career satisfaction. Another study exploring the link between decent work and performance showed that ensuring decent work is a vital resource to enhance workers' performance (Aybas et al., 2022). Decent work has been characterized by fairness, meaningful work, and respect by fulfilling workers' psychological needs. According to PWT (Duffy et al., 2016), this fulfillment makes workers psychologically committed to perform better. Therefore, we believe that workers may be motivated to enhance their task performance when their perception of decent work is positive. Hence, this study formulates the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Workers' perception of decent work is positively associated with workers' task performance.*

*Hypothesis 4 (H4): The relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' task performance is mediated by workers' perception of decent work.*

## 2.3 Moderating Role of Distributive Justice Climate

Scholars Li, Cropanzano, & James (2007) described distributive justice by stating that, an workers' might perceive low distributive justice when their coworkers unfairly take credit for accomplishments they did not earn and enjoy the resulting benefits. Regarding justice climate, Li and colleagues (2007) defined it as the manner in which they are collectively treated within the organization. Based on Li et al.'s (2007) concept, Siswanti et al. (2020) further defined distributive justice climate as an evaluation by a group regarding the fairness of outcomes workers's receive in relation to their contributions..

The concept of distributive justice is rooted in equity theory (Adams, 1965), which highlights the importance of social exchange in shaping workers' organization relationships. Workers's invest their time and effort into the organization, while organizations provide rewards and recognition in return. Workers' perceptions of fairness or unfairness are shaped by social comparisons with reference individuals or groups. At both the individual and group levels, the perceived balance between workers' inputs (effort) and the outcomes (rewards) they receive, relative to others, determines whether they view the situation as fair or unfair (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Building on social exchange theory, scholars Griffith, Harvey, & Lusch (2006) found that individual perceptions of distributive justice can promote positive behaviors, leading to greater satisfaction and improved performance.

Social exchange theory emphasizes the reciprocal exchange of activities to maximize mutual benefits between individuals and groups (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). According to this theory, one party's behavior is influenced by the expectation of rewarding responses from the other party (Blau, 1964). Homans (1958) further explained that when groups of workers have differing task responsibilities but receive equal benefits, those with heavier workloads may perceive inequity, which can lead to changes in their behavior, contributions, and performance.

Research highlights that individual perceptions of distributive justice climate significantly influence workplace behaviors (Naumann & Bennett, 2000) and performance outcomes (Carter et al., 2018; Mahajan & Benson, 2013; Moon, 2007). Colquitt (2012) showed that distributive justice climate influence workers' behavior and attitude. Besides, distributive justice acts as moderator to predict workers' supportive behavior (Biçkes, Yilmaz, Samur & Demirtas, 2020). Drawing on the notion that group-level perceptions of justice are analogous to individual perceptions (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), this study proposes that workers' supportive voice positively influences their task performance, and this effect is amplified in the presence of a distributive justice climate. Hence, this study formulates the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 5 (H5): Distributive justice climate moderates the relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' task performance, such that when the distributive justice climate is high rather than low, the positive relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' task performance is stronger.*

Furthermore, distributive justice is achieved when rewards and penalties are applied impartially, focusing on perceptions of fairness. These input-output ratio comparisons can lead individuals to adjust their levels of effort and participation within the organization (Biswas, Varma, & Ramaswami, 2013). Individual perceptions of distributive justice significantly influence satisfaction with compensation and benefits, as well as overall job satisfaction (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). According to psychology of working theory, work fulfillment, need satisfaction, and well-being are outcomes of decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). According to the psychology of working theory, when workers's experience decent work, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Duffy et al., 2016; 2017), which in turn boosts their performance (Jalagat, 2016; Pushpakumari, 2008; Katzell, Barrett, & Parker, 1961). Additionally, distributive justice act as a moderator to predict task performance (Janssen, Lam, & Huang, 2009). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that when workers perceive their work as decent, they are more motivated to perform at a higher level and this level magnifies in the presense of strong distributive justice climate. Similarly, the distributive justice climate impacts work capacity (Kiss, De Meester, Kristensen, & Braeckman, 2014), performance (Carter et al., 2018; Mahajan & Benson, 2013; Moon, 2007), perceptions of contingent reward leadership and leadership effectiveness (Carter et al., 2018), and workers's' emotions (Spell & Arnold, 2007). Distributive justice climate can influence the link between overall fairness perception (e.g., decent work perception) and behavior (e.g., supportive voice) (Colquitt, 2012). Accordingly, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

*Hypothesis 6 (H6): Distributive justice climate moderates the relationship between workers' perception of decent work and workers' task performance, such that when the distributive justice climate is high rather than low, the positive relationship workers' perception of decent work and workers' task performance is stronger.*

*Hypothesis 7 (H7): The indirect relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' task performance through workers' perception of decent work is moderated by the distributive justice climate, and the indirect relationship becomes stronger with higher distributive justice climates.*

### **3. Research Method**

#### *3.1 Participants and Procedure*

To collect data, we considered the employers and workers of the RMG industry in Bangladesh as a sample of this study. In order to evaluate workers' supportive voice and task performance, we mailed survey questionnaires to a total of 70 employers of 35 garment companies (two employers per garment company) using Google Forms through their email. We asked each employer to assess five workers regarding their supportive voice and task performance. Additionally, we arranged semi-structured interviews with the employers to validate the data collection process. To evaluate workers' perception of decent work and distributive justice climate, we conducted on-site surveys to gather data from a total of 350 workers. This study applied a convenience sampling technique (Golzar, Noor, & Tajik, 2022) to select workers from the population. This approach was chosen due to practical constraints, such as employers' selected workers and access to participants. This sampling technique aligns with the study's objectives of capturing a representative and diverse view of employees in the RMG sector. It also accounts for practical considerations, such as aligning both employers' and workers' data. This approach allowed us to gather strong data reflecting the context-specific dynamics of the RMG industry. First, a list of participating factories was obtained from industry directories. Employees were then selected based on their availability and

willingness to participate. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. According to the common method bias reduction recommendation of scholars such as Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, (2012); Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, (2003), we executed two-wave surveys at an average interval of four weeks. During the survey process, all participants remain anonymous because of ethical concerns. In the data collection, one garment company employer did not respond, and another garment company worker handed incomplete survey questionnaires. After matching the two-wave survey data and removing all invalid data, a total of 396 matching data from 33 garment companies, including 66 employers and 330 workers (five workers per employer), was found. Table 1 illustrates the detail of the survey sample. In terms of ethnicity, all participants identified themselves as by-born Bangladeshis.

Table 1. Survey sample distribution (N=396)

Measurement items	Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Respondents	Employers	66	16.67	16.67
	Workers	330	83.33	100.00
Gender	Male	206	52.02	52.02
	Female	190	47.98	100.00
Age	20 years old and under	11	2.78	2.78
	21 to 30 years old	94	23.74	26.52
	31 to 40 years old	114	28.79	55.31
	41 to 50 years old	96	24.24	79.55
Education Level	51 years and above	81	20.45	100.00
	High school and below	287	72.47	72.47
	College	43	10.86	83.33
	Undergraduate and above	66	16.67	100.00
Organizational Tenure	Less than 1 year	26	6.57	6.57
	1 year to 5 years	117	29.54	36.11
	6 years to 10 years	138	34.85	70.96
	10 years to 15 years	74	18.69	89.65
Size of Company	16 years and above	41	10.35	100.00
	Small	19	57.58	57.58
	Medium	14	42.42	100.00

Note(s). Number of companies = 33. Data source: Analyzed and compiled by the authors of this study.

### 3.2 Measures

To collect data for the variables, this study implemented a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

#### 3.2.1 Workers' Supportive Voice

This study used the five-item workers' supportive voice tool from the more refined 20-item workers' voice scale developed by Maynes and Podsakoff (2014). Several scholars including Botha and Steyn, (2020) and Chamberlin et al., (2017) often use it to measure the voice construct. Example items include "this employee Expresses support for productive work procedures when others express uncalled for criticisms of the procedures" and "this employee speaks up in support of organizational policies that have merit when others raise unjustified concerns about the policies."

#### 3.2.2 Workers' Perception of Decent Work

To measure workers' perception of decent work, this study measured the 15-item decent work scale including five subscales of Duffy et al., (2017). Many researchers found the validity of this instrument in cross-cultural context (McIlveen et al., 2020; Vignoli et al., 2019; Fabio & Kenny, 2019). Sample items include "at work, I feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind" and "I do not feel I am paid enough based on my qualifications and experience."

#### 3.2.3 Distributive Justice Climate

This study adopted the three distributive justice climate instruments from the organizational justice climate instrument of Siswanti et al. (2020). A sample item is "Some of the workers in my work group did not do their share of the work, although we have all received the same earning for special projects."

#### 3.2.4 Workers' Task Performance

This study measured the 9-item task performance scale developed by Goodman and Svyantek (1999). Example items include "Is competent in all areas of the job, handles tasks with proficiency" and "plans and organizes to achieve objectives of the job and meet deadlines."

### 3.2.5 Control Variable

This study used age, education, tenure, and gender as control variables. Age and tenure were measured in years and education was coded as 1 = high school and below, 2 = college level, 3 = undergraduate and above level, while gender was coded as 1 = men and 0 = women.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

To conduct descriptive analysis and correlation analysis, we administered SPSS version 27.0 and for the measurement model we used AMOS version 27.0. More specifically, to access validity and reliability of the measurement model, we implemented confirmatory factor analysis. To evaluate the model-data fit, the chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ),  $\chi^2/df$ , the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root-mean-residual (SRMR) had been carried out (Weston & Gore, 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Quintana & Maxwell, 1999; Steiger, 1990). Regarding the multilevel model test, we administered several ways to evaluate the hypotheses. First, we followed the proposed recommendations of Liu, Zhang, & Wang (2018). We carried out path analysis combined with Mplus version 8.3 to examine the direct effects because of its ability to identify the direct effect of all independent variables (Verma & Verma, 2024). Second, the mediating effects were analyzed by calculating the confidence interval (CI) of the indirect effect based on bootstrapping. Moreover, this study conducted a Monte Carlo simulation using Mplus version 8.3 to examine the moderating mediation effect. Besides, we followed the recommendations of Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, (2005). We took the average value of the five factors as indicators of decent work scale to measure workers' perception of decent work.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Measurement Model Testing

To test the measurement model, this study used the values of Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR) to evaluate the reliability of the data. The data indicate good reliability if both Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and CR values are greater than 0.7 (Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2010). According to the values of factor loading and average variance extracted (AVE) we then assessed the convergent validity. As suggested by several scholars (Hair et al., 2010; Nunnally, 1994; Fornell & Larcker, 1981), data show good convergent validity when both factor loading and AVE values are higher than 0.5. The current study finds satisfactory critical values for further analysis. Table 2 demonstrates the reliability and convergent validity of this study's data.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE	Factor Loading
Workers' Supportive Voice	0.937	0.892	0.785	0.718–0.829
Workers' Perception of Decent Work	0.950	0.895	0.509	0.779-0.906
Distributive Justice Climate	0.942	0.893	0.670	0.689-0.844
Workers' Task Performance	0.945	0.889	0.574	0.696-0.901

Note(s). CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Furthermore, this study followed the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981) to test the discriminant validity. Table 3 illustrates that all the square roots of AVE are greater than the correlations between constructs used in the study, fulfilling the criterion of discriminant validity and further suggesting that the data of this study have good discriminant validity. Table 3 also portrays means, standard deviations, and correlations for the four variables of this study. Workers' supportive voice was positively related to both workers' perception of decent work ( $r = 0.381$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and workers' task performance ( $r = 0.427$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Workers' perception of decent work also indicated a positive correlation with workers' task performance ( $r = 0.462$ ,  $p < .05$ ), therefore, showing initial support of the hypotheses.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Coefficient Matrix, and Discriminant Validity (N = 396)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	0.276	0.467	-							
Gender	1.854	1.885	0.020*	-						
Education	2.673	1.743	0.019*	0.015	-					
Tenure	3.629	0.662	0.024*	0.018**	0.041	-				
WSV	4.358	1.198	0.053*	0.044*	0.037*	0.021*	<b>0.886</b>			
DWP	1.896	0.140	0.031*	0.015*	0.021*	0.018*	0.381**	<b>0.713</b>		
DJC	0.277	0.703	0.011*	0.023*	0.025*	0.017**	0.233**	0.276**	<b>0.819</b>	
WTP	3.670	0.928	0.009**	0.014*	0.016**	0.012*	0.427*	0.462*	0.315*	<b>0.758</b>

Note(s). \* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .01$ . M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. Figures in bold on diagonals are the square root of AVE



of each construct. WSV = Workers' supportive voice, DWP = Workers' perception of decent work, DJC = Distributive justice climate, WTP = Workers' task performance.

#### 4.2 Model-Data Fit

To investigate whether our proposed model, which is the four-factor model, demonstrates a better fit to the data than the alternative models, we compared four different models. Table 4 summarizes the result showing that the values of four-factor model ( $\chi^2/df = 1.992$ , RMSEA = 0.041, SRMR = 0.038, TLI = 0.944, CFI = 0.947) are better than that of other models. We first ran the single-factor model but did not find good model fit. We then gradually test the other models and finally found that our proposed model has better model-data fit.

Table 4. Measurement Model Comparison

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI	CFI
Four Factor	615.528	309	1.992	0.041	0.038	0.944	0.947
Three Factor	934.855	311	3.006	0.062	0.057	0.880	0.893
Two Factor	1602.720	318	5.040	0.071	0.069	0.859	0.847
Single Factor	1730.240	320	5.407	0.076	0.072	0.806	0.811

Note(s). Four-factor model: WSV, DWP, DJC, WTP; Three-factor model: WSV + DWP, DJC, WTP; Two-factor model: WSV + DWP + DJC, WTP; Single-factor model: WSV + DWP + DJC + WTP. WSV = Workers' supportive voice, DWP = Workers' perception of decent work, DJC = Distributive justice climate, WTP = Workers' task performance.

#### 4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses test results using path analysis are showed in Table 5 and Figure 2, respectively. Workers' supportive voice had significant positive effect on workers' task performance ( $\beta = 0.298$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and on workers' perception of decent work ( $\beta = 0.375$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); while workers' perception of decent work had a significant positive effect on workers' task performance ( $\beta = 0.483$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) supporting hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. The results also denoted that the interaction between workers' supportive voice and distributive justice climate was significantly related to workers' perception of decent work ( $\beta = 0.362$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, a simple slope test (Figure 3) to further reflect the moderating effect of distributive justice climate visualized that the positive link between workers' supportive voice and workers' perception of decent work was much stronger when the level of distributive justice climate was high. Therefore, our H5 was supported. However, the interaction between workers' perception of decent work and distributive justice climate was not significantly related to workers' task performance ( $\beta = 0.155$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, H6 was not supported.

Table 5. Results of Path Analysis

Hypotheses	Direct Effect	$\beta$	SE
H1	WSV $\rightarrow$ WTP	0.298*	0.104
H2	WSV $\rightarrow$ DWP	0.375*	0.057
H3	DWP $\rightarrow$ WTP	0.483**	0.106
H5	WSV $\times$ DJC	0.362*	0.060
H6	DWP $\times$ DJC	0.155	0.127

Note(s): \*  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$ . WSV = Workers' Supportive Voice, DWP = Workers' Perception of Decent Work, DJC = Distributive justice climate, WTP = Workers' Task Performance.

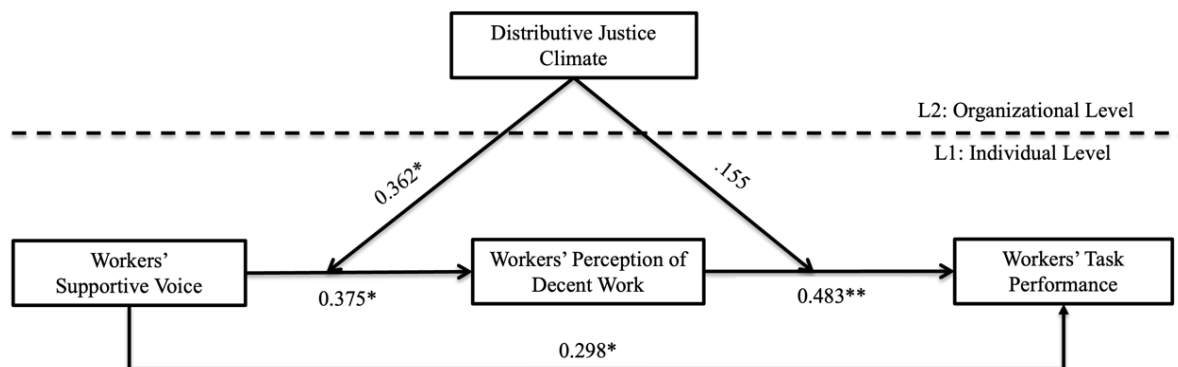


Figure 2. Multilevel path diagram

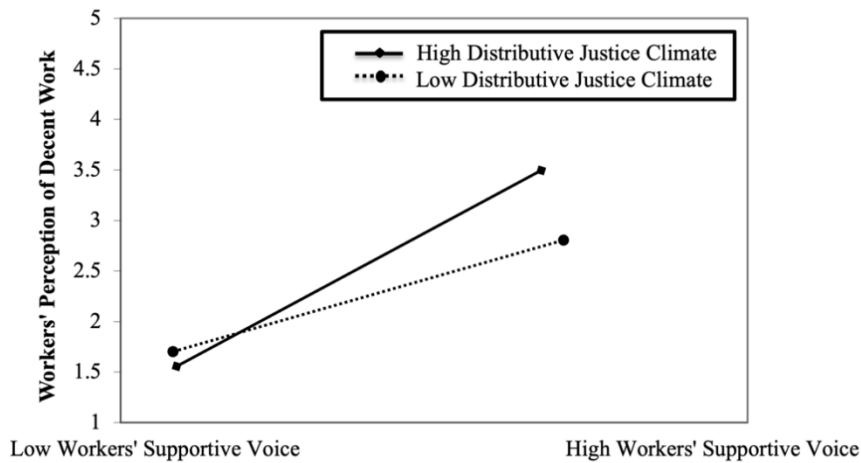


Figure 3. The moderating role of distributive justice climate in predicting the relation between workers’ supportive voice and workers’ perception of decent work

According to the mediation impact analysis process proposed by researchers Zhonglin, Jie, Jinyan, & Jingying (2022), the current study combined Mplus version 8.3 software with the Bootstrap method to test the mediating effects to report the CI. The result demonstrated in Table 6 signifies that workers’ perception of decent work plays a mediating role in the link between workers’ supportive voice and workers’ task performance. The effect size is 0.363, and the 95% CI is [0.394, 0.068]. Accordingly, H4 is supported, confirming that workers’ perception of decent work act as a mediator in the association between workers’ supportive voice and workers’ task performance.

Table 6. Indirect Effect of Workers’ Supportive Voice on Workers’ Task Performance via Workers’ Perception of Decent Work

Indirect Effect	$\beta$	SE	LLCL	ULCL
WSV $\rightarrow$ DWP $\rightarrow$ WTP	0.363	0.019	0.394	0.068

Note(s): WSV = Workers’ Supportive Voice, DWP = Workers’ Perception of Decent Work, WTP = Workers’ Task Performance, LLCL=bias corrected lower limit of 95% confidence interval, ULCL=Bias corrected upper limit of 95% confidence interval.

Furthermore, to assess the moderating mediation effects this study conducted a Monte Carlo simulation. After 10,000 Monte Carlo replications, the 95% CI for the mediating effect of workers’ perception of decent work under conditions of strong (+1SD) and weak (- 1SD) distributive justice climate was generated. Table 7 depicts the result of the analysis. The analysis result denotes that when distributive justice climate is weak, the mediating effect of workers’ perception of decent work on the association of workers’ supportive voice and workers’ task performance is significant ( $\beta = 1.067$ , 95% CI [0.307, 1.534] excluding 0); when distributive justice climate is strong, the mediating effect of workers’ perception of decent work on association of workers’ supportive voice and workers’ task performance is significant ( $\beta = 1.174$ , 95% CI [0.418, 2.156] excluding 0), and the difference between the high and low groups is also significant ( $\beta = 0.107$ , 95% CI [-0.269, 0.483] excluding 0). Thus, H7 has been supported.

Table 7. Results of Moderated Mediation Analysis (N=396)

Indirect Effect	Condition	$\beta$	SE	LLCL	ULCL
WSV $\rightarrow$ DWP $\rightarrow$ WTP	-1SD	1.067	0.053	0.307	1.534
	+1SD	1.174	0.184	0.418	2.156
	Difference value	0.107	0.192	-0.269	0.483

Note(s): WSV = Workers’ Supportive Voice, DWP = Workers’ Perception of Decent Work, WTP = Workers’ Task Performance, LLCL=bias corrected lower limit of 95% confidence interval, ULCL=Bias corrected upper limit of 95% confidence interval.

### 5. Discussion

Existing literature found evidence that workers' promotive behavior, that is, workers' supportive voice, is

preferable to employers, makes them listen more, and boosts workers' task performance (Burris, 2012; Chamberlin et al., 2017; Murali et al., 2017; Alrawabdeh, 2014; Liang et al., 2012; Van Dyne et al., 1995). Nevertheless, the RMG workers in Bangladesh have destructive voice behavior, which causes their poor performance, order shortage, and company shutdown. Therefore, the current study investigates the effect of workers' supportive voice on workers' task performance in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. We examine this relationship through the mediating effect of workers' perception of decent work to illustrate if workers who have supportive voices have positive perceptions of their workplace's decent work and if their positive perceptions lead them to perform better. Besides, we also explored the influence of distributive justice climate to identify the influence of equity treatment at the collective level due to the increased group working practices in the RMG industry in Bangladesh.

To conduct the current research, we collected data from 396 employers and workers and analyzed it with multilevel path analysis. The results showed that both workers' supportive voice and workers' perception of decent work positively influence workers' task performance, and workers' perception of decent work positively mediates the relationship between workers' supportive voice and workers' task performance. All these relationships indicate that workers who support organizational policies have positive views towards their workplaces, they are optimistic about their workplace decent work, and their task performance is magnified. When they positively acknowledge their workplace's decent work, their task performance gets even better than when they do not have any perception regarding decent work at the workplace. Regarding the moderating effect, in the presence of a high distributive justice climate, workers' supportive voice is strongly associated with workers' perception of decent work. Likewise, a high distributive justice climate moderates the mediating effect of workers' perception of decent work on the relationship between workers' supportive voice and worker's task performance. However, the distributive justice climate had no moderating impact on the association between workers' perception of decent work and task performance. These effects imply that if the workers' group who support their workplace policies find justice in procedures, their perceptions of decent work become more vigorous. Although a strong distributive justice climate amplifies the mediating effect of workers' perception of decent work, the effect could be higher. Because workers who have a positive perception of their workplace's decent work inevitably perform better tasks regardless of the presence of a distributive justice climate. A supportive distributive justice climate is significant in maximizing the benefits of workers' supportive voice on their task performance via their decent work perceptions. Thus, the findings imply that the combination of both employers' equitable treatment and workers' supportive perception creates an ideal working environment and intensifies performance.

This study is effective across three theories, organizational behavior (OB), and HRM. First, this study integrated the social exchange theory, the psychology of working theory, and the equity theory to guide the affiliation between workers' supportive voice, decent work perceptions, distributive justice climate, and task performance. This combination suggests a vigorous framework to understand how to create supportive and fair work environments that amplify performance. The social exchange theory indicates the mutual exchange of resources and behaviors between employers and groups of workers (Cook & Emerson, 1987; Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), equity theory which indicates how workers compare each other's rewards with each other's contributions (Adams, 1965), and the research on the psychology of working theory showed how workers' needs and wellbeing have been satisfied through decent work and how workers positively acknowledge their workplace decent work at a fair workplace (Wan & Duffy, 2022; Duffy et al., 2016). In light of these three theories, we proposed that, in the process of social exchange theory, workers' supportive voice amplifies their perception of decent work that magnifies in the presence of a distributive justice climate based on equity theory, which, according to the psychology of working theory, satisfies workers resulting improvement in their task performance.

Second, our study contributes the theoretical implication for OB research by analyzing the influence of both employers' and workers' behavior on organization's effectiveness. The findings confirm that when employers' behavior is fair regarding decision-making procedures, workers' supportive voice behavior magnifies their decent work perception and boosts task performance. Employers' focus on fulfilling workers' basic psychological needs through a fair decision-making process leads to higher task performance. Organizations that promote a supportive climate through distributive justice, social exchange, and workers' psychological wellbeing confirmation are likely to see improved organizational performance. Finally, this study provides the theoretical implication for HRM research by incorporating the social exchange theory, equity theory, and the psychology of working theory to underline the importance of a fair and inclusive workplace in promoting workers' support, decent work perception, and performance.

Several key implications for organizations can be derived from the study. First, the empirical analysis postulates the understanding that workers' supportive voice enhances their perception of decent work. Consequently, employers should create good working conditions and ideal policies for workers so that workers can support organizational policies and have a positive perception of decent working conditions in the organization. Second, the results of workers' perception of decent work magnifying their task performance indicates that employers should create decent working environment for workers to progress workers' perception and performance. Finally, the findings explain that a high distributive justice climate strongly magnifies workers' decent work perception, indicating that by implementing fair and just rewards among the group workers with similar task, employers can gain workers' support and positive perception towards the organization, which inspires workers to perform better. Exercising these insights practically, employers can establish a supportive and fair workplace environment where workers feel appreciated, inspired, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study investigates the relationships among workers' supportive voice, task performance, workers' perception of decent work, and distributive justice climate in the context of Bangladesh's RMG industry. The findings reveal that workers' supportive voice positively influences their perception of decent work and task performance. Moreover, the mediating role of workers' perception of decent work underscores its critical influence on the link between supportive voice and task performance. The study further identifies distributive justice climate as a significant moderator, amplifying the mediating effect of decent work perception in certain contexts. By focusing on the unique sociocultural and economic context of the Bangladeshi RMG industry, this research suggests some concluding remarks: first, it is significant to create a decent environment to improve performance where workers feel empowered to express their ideas and concerns; second, the fair outcome distribution is significant in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing performance; lastly, the precision of these moderating effects may vary, reflecting the complexity of justice perceptions in shaping workplace dynamics.

Some limitations can be derived from the present study. First, this study considered distributive justice climate to identify the moderating roles, neglecting other dimensions of justice climate. Therefore, research on the moderating impact of other dimensions of justice climate still needs to be explored. Future studies can highlight this issue by identifying the moderating effect of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice climate on the proposed research model. Similarly, another key limitation is that we only explored workers' supportive voice as the independent variable and overlooked other forms of voice. Future research, including the effects of constructive voice, defensive voice, and destructive voice, will provide more insights into the current research model. A final limitation is that this research considered the RMG industry in Bangladesh as a sample. So, the findings of this study are not promised to be instigated in other organizations and cultures. The general use of the findings of the study may be questioned due to the nature of the research sample precisely. To test the generalizability and identify any changes that may arise, we propose further studies that inspect the current research model in a cross-cultural context. Following this study's implications and possibilities for further study, researchers can find more effective ways to enhance workers' welfare and organizational success.

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## **Authors' contributions**

Habiba Rahman was responsible for study design, data collection, analysis, and discussion. Prof. Dr. Li Min was responsible for designing the research methodology. Yen Nguyenthi and Dr. Xiaoli Hu were responsible for the literature review and development of the questionnaire. Habiba Rahman drafted the manuscript and Prof. Dr. Li Min revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### **Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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