Employee Engagement on Employee Relations with Supervisor and Employee Performance Relationship in Developing Economy: Critical Analysis with PLS-SEM

Shaheen Ahmed, Dr. Fais Bin Ahmad, Dr. Abdul Rahman Jaaffar
School of Business Management, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author:
Shaheen Ahmed
Email: shaheenmahmed@yahoo.com

Abstract: Performance of employee brings organization's achievements in the business world where rivalry among the organizations is very common. In this connection, the academicians and practitioners do struggle to reach a conclusion about the determinants of employee performance. As a result, the study endeavors to develop a structural equation model with the help of PLS technique in determining the relationship among employee relations with supervisor, employee engagement, and employee performance in the context of developing country. The opinions of 392 employees have been collected through survey method who works in the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh. The findings of the study revealed that employee relations with supervisor have influence on employee performance and employee engagement; and employee engagement mediates employee relations and employee performance relationship. Therefore, the model is expected to be used in the developing context as a method for increasing employee performance.
Keywords: Developing economy, Employee relations, Employee engagement, Employee performance, Mediating

INTRODUCTION

Today's business operations all over the world are advancing through hyper competition where employee performance is inevitable for its survival. Business organizations may have enough physical resources but without proper utilization of those resources no organization can reached at its desired targets. Organization's human resources, in this connection, make all other resources to be properly utilized for the organization to have best outcomes. As a result, practitioners emphasize on the human aspect of the organization so that employees devote their full efforts in performing their job duties. As human being employees expect to fulfill social needs from the organization they are involved [1]. Consequently, in recent time organization's management started to think seriously about the employee relations issue for their concern [2]. Cooperative and harmonious relations among the members of the organization create positive work environment that results synergy in employees' performance.

Several researchers accentuate on different aspects of HRM practices at the aim of achieving employees' contributions to the organization. For example, few studies reveal that payment, training, job security, work-family balance, and performance measurement method are essential for better employee performance [3, 4]. Moreover, some other studies emphasize on training and development, employee relations, and career opportunity for desired employee performance [5, 6]. In essence, contextual differences need to be considered while determining the aspects causes for employee performance [7]. The study also pointed out that majority of the studies has been conducted in developed countries where socioeconomic condition, people's perception, culture etc are different than that of developing economy. As a result, more studies are expected to be conducted in the developing economy like Bangladesh for generalization of the conception.

From the perspective of RMG industry in Bangladesh it is evident that employee relations between supervisors and their fellow employees noticed unpleasant [8] though it is essential for the flourishing of employee performance especially in the labor intensive organization [9]. The study of Rahman, Bhattacharya and Moazzem (2008) suggests that top management should maintain good employee relations with the employees for achieving employees' superior performance. Now (financial year 2014-2015) about 4.00 million employees are working at 4,296 garment factories [10] which is about 40 percent of total industrial employment in Bangladesh (Labor Force Survey, 2010) and RMG industry earns 80.86 percent of country's total exports (Export Promotion Bureau, 2016). The government of Bangladesh is trying to flourish its economy from agriculture to industrial based. Therefore, performance enhancement program

through the implementation of positive employee relations for the RMG industry deemed indispensable in Bangladesh.

Additionally, employee engagement is one of the aspects which have influence on the performance of employees in the organization [11]. Thus, academicians and practitioners keep their concentration to find out appropriate antecedent of employee engagement. The employee engagement concept is comparatively new in the area of organizational behavior [12] although various researchers identified various factors for the enhancement of the employees' engagement level at their workplace. Empowerment, training program, and payment system have been discovered by the study of

Karatepe [13] as a means of increasing employee engagement level. But Saks [14] identified that reward and recognition are important for ensuring employee engagement level. Besides, Arrowsmith and Parker [15] draw a conclusion that the impact of HRM practices on employee engagement is still unclear to the practitioners. Thus, the contradictions need to be solved which determine the employee engagement level at the workplace. Therefore, the study aim to develop a structural equation model with the combination of the variables such as employee relations with supervisor, employee engagement, and employee performance to bridge up the gap in the context of RMG industry in Bangladesh. The theoretical framework of the study is presented below:
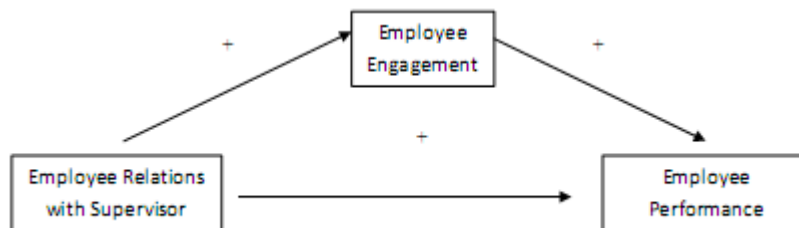

Fig-1: The theoretical framework of the study

According to Baron and Kenny [16], mediating variable can be used on the relationship where both independent variable and mediating variable have positive influence on dependent variable and similarly independent variable has influence on mediating variable. Therefore, the study is expected to conduct by developing a structural equation model for the developing economy where mediating role of employee engagement have been measured on the relationship between employee relations with supervisor and employee performance to enrich the existing literatures [2].

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to develop a structural equation model with three constructs such as employee relations with supervisor, employee performance and employee engagement. Moreover, the study also endeavors to find out the influence of employees' relations with supervisor on their performance and engagement level. Finally, the study uncovers how employee engagement plays role between employee relations and performance relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Relations with Supervisor and Employee Performance

Harmonious employee relations have significant role in increasing the performance of employees in the organization. Employee relations make subordinates to be more responsible and enthusiastic in their works which eventually increase their job performance in the workstation [17].

Moreover, the employees having positive work relations and psychological work environment are more productive and have contribution in fulfilling the expected goal of the organization [18-20]. Furthermore, the study conducted by Muhammad and Hamdy [21] claim that in the organizational setting direct relationship exists between supervisor's supportive relations and employees' work performance.

Again, employees are encouraged to exert their best efforts in doing their work when superior maintain strong relations with their fellow employees in the workstation [22]. The study also added that effective communication of managerial people with the fellow employees have effective role in gaining outputs from the employees. Correspondingly, Ivancevich [23] argued that better understanding between employee and employer should be the integral part of a corporate culture for ensuring higher employee productivity. In addition, Brown and Leigh [19] showed that supportive management relations have contribution in attaining organization's objectives through better employee performance as employee relations encourage them to perform challenging work in the organization.

Relations with Supervisor and Employee Engagement

The relationship between employee and employer is inevitable to enrich the employee engagement level. Employee relations focus on what level employees are engaged with their work in the organization [24]. The positive views and attitudes of superior towards subordinates convey excellent

employee relations that results high employee engagement at the workplace [26]. Moreover, the proposed model of Fleck and Inceoglu [25] suggested that job support and relations works as a key driver in making employees engaged with the job. Additionally, pleasant employee relations come from job autonomy which found critical in maintaining the employee engagement elements [27, 28].

The views exchange and higher management support is related to high employee engagement level [29]. Similarly, some other studies [30, 31] argued that supervisors' supports and relations between them have positive influence on engagement level of the employees in the organization. Although May *et al.* [30] additionally added that both supportive colleagues and relations with supervisor have positive link with employees' engagement level and psychological safety. In the study of Kahn [20], interpersonal relationship with the supervisor enhances through employees' psychological safety results employees' level of engagement.

Studies conducted by several researchers [12, 32-34] evident that employees' pleasant relations with the reporting boss encourages employees to be engaged with their job in the organizational setting. When employees feel at home in doing their job create a positive psychological attitude to the organization which is inevitable in fostering employee engagement level at work. In the same vein, few empirical studies [35-37] provide significant relationship between employee relations and employee engagement level. Furthermore, some other early studies [30-31] conveyed that supervisors' supportive relations with the employees make them more engaged with their job in the organization.

Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

Engaged employees are expected to be more productive in performing their job duties due to their physical, mental and emotional devotion to the organization. Recently, a couple of studies [38] in two different contexts revealed that employee engagement plays a significant role for the enhancement of employees' job performance. Additionally, another empirical study conducted by Kim *et al.* [39] conform that both direct and indirect positive link exist between employees level of work engagement and their job performance. The enhancement of employee performance is the result of which level employees are engaged in the organization. Similarly, the organization having high level engaged employees gain more organizational outcomes through high employee performance [33, 40-42].

During the last decade several studies [12, 29, 43-45] conducted on engagement and performance relationship where it was evident that high employee engagement level foster employees' job performance as

well as their productivity at the workstation. Moreover, employee engagement remarked as a major determinant for increasing employee performance level [46]. Furthermore, numerous number of studies found that engaged employees are tend to perform more than that of disengaged employees in the organization [25, 30, 40].

Some other studies in several time argued that in the challenging environment of business workplace performance and employees' productivity can be achieved through high engagement level of the employees in the organization [12]. In the study of May *et al.* [30] claimed that psychological meaningfulness is the major precursor of employee engagement as presented by Kahn [20] which have positive influence on employees' behavioral consequence like performance. Moreover, Saks (2006) recommended that engaged employees perform more and their productivity are also high. In a nutshell, engaged employees constantly be viewed more productive almost every section in the workplace [29, 44, 47].

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Employee relations with supervisor have positive influence on the performance of the employees.

H2: Employees' relations with supervisor have influence on the engagement level of the employees.

H3: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employee relations with supervisor and employee performance.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted on the employees of RMG industry working at mid-level and lower-level at the Dhaka division in Bangladesh. The data were collected through survey method form 150 respondents who have at least three years job experience in the respective factory. According to '10 times rule' the analysis of PLS-SEM is good to be conducted with only 20 samples in this case [48] but more representation of samples have been considered for getting more acceptable results [49].

The items of the questionnaire have been adapted from previously developed and used by the different research scholars in their studies. The study used 5-point Likert scale for getting the respondents perceptions regarding the statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree because it is easy construct, appealing design, adaptable and relatively reliable (Babbie, 1990; Nunnaly, 1978). The total number of items is 33 where 24 items are related to employee relations with supervisor, employee engagement and employee performance, and remaining 6 items have been developed with demographic information of the respondents.

From the collected data demographic items have been analyzed through descriptive statistical tools and the items of other variables were analyzed through Structural Equation Models (SEM) with the help of Partial Least Squares (PLS) which is known as PLS-SEM. The variables have been analyzed with four stages such as development of theoretical structural equation model, assessment of measurement model, assessment of structural model, and measurement of mediating effects of the study.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study is carried on by using PLS-SEM technique for development of theoretical model and consequently the findings and the interpretation among the variables have been conducted accordingly.

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The measurement model or outer model deals with the measurement of latent variables of the PLS-SEM path modeling. Each latent constructs of the model comprises of with reflective multiple observations. The figure 2 depicted that employee relations have more effect on the employee engagement level in the organization. On the other hand, the relationship between employee relations and performance predicted stronger. But employee engagement has less influence on employees' performance level. Additionally, employee relations and employee engagement together explain 51.6 percent of the variances for the employee performance construct while 25.4 percent of the variances explained by the employee relations for the employee engagement construct. Factor loadings below 0.4 were not observed in this model whereas, item deletion process have been done to maintain the AVE ≥0.5 as a rule of thumb.
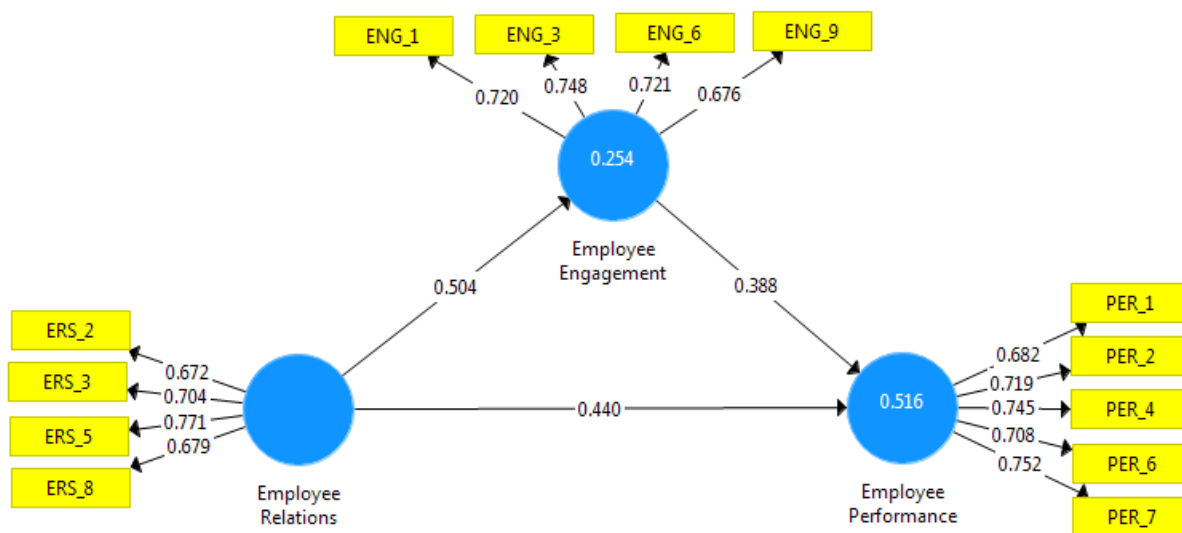

Fig-2: Measurement Model

The assessment of measurement model conducted to ensure the quality criteria before proceeds to the structural model assessment. For this reason thorough evaluations have been done which is presented below.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Engagement	0.685	0.808	0.514
Employee Performance	0.770	0.845	0.521
Employee Relations	0.667	0.800	0.501

Cronbach's alpha is the traditional measure to identify the reliability of the variables or constructs. The Cronbach's alpha value ≥0.7 is consiered excellent but the value more than 0.6 is acceptable for ensuring the reliability of the construct. In PLS-SEM, composite reliability is measured for the constructs for ensuring reliability. In this model each construct have composite reliability >0.8 which is good enough for high level research although 0.6 is acceptable. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) value measure the convergent validity of the constructs. The AVE value ≥0.5 is accepted for the validation of the constructs. Thus, the model satisfies all the above conditions for further measurements.

Discriminant validity ensures that every construct in the model is different from each other and no construct is represented by other construct in the model. Three different methods for the assessment of discriminant validity are considered in this study for assessing discriminant validity.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Critarion

Variables	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Employee Relations
Employee Engagement	0.717		
Employee Performance	0.609	0.722	
Employee Relations	0.504	0.635	0.708

As this study considered the reflective measurement items thus, Fornell-Larcker method is more acceptable for the assessment of discriminant validity. The diagonal values are more than the correlation of other constructs ensures discriminant validity.

Table 3: Cross Loadings

Variables	Employee Engagement	Employee Relations	Employee Performance
ENG_1	0.720	0.386	0.486
ENG_3	0.748	0.420	0.442
ENG_6	0.721	0.310	0.402
ENG_9	0.676	0.314	0.408
ERS_2	0.354	0.672	0.432
ERS_3	0.405	0.704	0.474
ERS_5	0.359	0.771	0.475
ERS_8	0.297	0.679	0.410
PER_1	0.459	0.470	0.682
PER_2	0.438	0.408	0.719
PER_4	0.418	0.468	0.745
PER_6	0.424	0.440	0.708
PER_7	0.456	0.499	0.752

The cross loading measures the indicator's outer loading of the respective construct which is higher than the loadings of other constructs. The lower cross loadings than that of indicator's outer loading symbolizes no crisis with discriminant validity, thus, conform discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variables	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Employee Relations
Employee Engagement	1		
Employee Performance	0.833	1	
Employee Relations	0.732	0.881	1

Recently, Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) is used for measuring the validity of the constructs. The value of HTMT ranges between 0.7 and 0.9 is better but the value 0.95 is considered acceptable for the study. Thus, the computed values fulfill the condition of constructs validation under HTMT method.

Table 5: Latent Variable Correlations

Variables	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Employee Relations
Employee Engagement	1.000		
Employee Performance	0.609	1.000	
Employee Relations	0.504	0.635	1.000

The latent variable correlations measure the relationship among the constructs of the PLS-SEM path model. The study depicted that employee relations have high influence on the employees' performance level, whereas comparatively less influence observed on employee engagement level.

STRUCTURAL MODEL

The structural model describes the relationship among the latent variables in the PLS-SEM path model.

The path model equation (Figure 3) measure the T-value between the constructs and associated indicators of the particular latent variable. Therefore, structural model signifies the level of the constructs as well as the manifest variables.
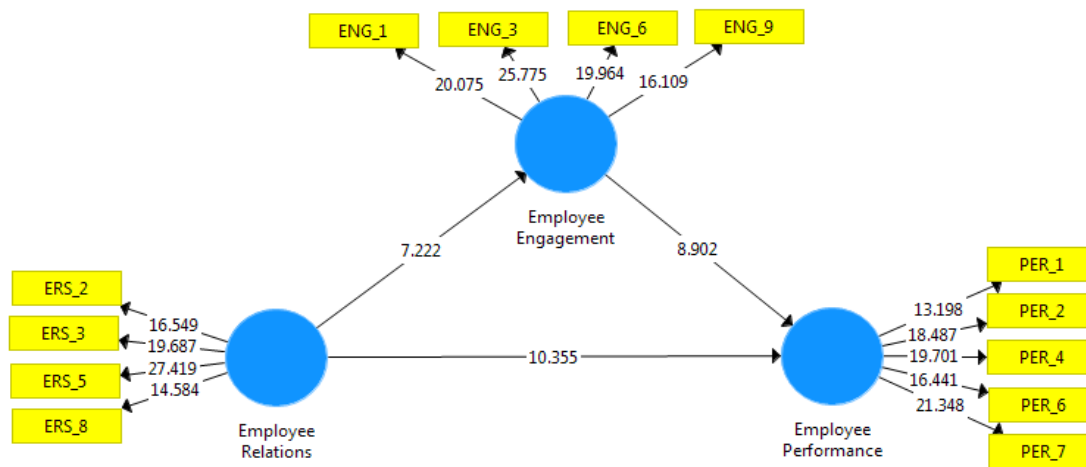

Fig-3: Structural Model

Collinearity problem arises when two or more predictor constructs are highly correlated, meaning that one construct can be linearly predicted by other predictor variable with high level accuracy. Collinearity is judged by the value of VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) where, VIF<5 considered free from collinearity problem.

Table 6: Inner VIF Values

Variables	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance
Employee Engagement		1.340
Employee Relations	1.000	1.340

The constructs of the path modeling having VIF less than 5.0 considered acceptable meaning that no collinearity problem with the constructs existed in this study.

Table 7: Path Coefficient of Structural Model: Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Path coefficient	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Employee Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.388	0.044	8.902	0.000***
Employee Relations -> Employee Engagement	0.504	0.070	7.222	0.000***
Employee Relations -> Employee Performance	0.440	0.042	10.355	0.000***

Note: p≤0.01***; p≤0.05**; p≤0.10*

The standardized path coefficient value higher than 0.0 signifies positive relationship between the constructs, whereas, the t-value or p-value signifies the significance level of relationships. The path coefficient between employee engagement and employee performance is 0.388 meaning that positive relationship exists between them. Similarly, employee relations have positive relationship with employee engagement and employee performance with the values 0.504 and 0.440 respectively. The t-value of each of the relationships are above cutoff value signifies that all the relationships are statistically significant.

Table 8: Coefficient of Determination (R^2): Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Employee Engagement	0.254	0.255	0.068	3.748	0.000***
Employee Performance	0.516	0.509	0.079	6.560	0.000***

Note: p≤0.01***; p≤0.05**; p≤0.10*

Coefficient of determination (R^2) identifies the variance of endogenous construct explained by the exogenous latent variable in the model. In this study, employee engagement construct explain 25.4 percent variance derived from employee relations with supervisor construct. Again, employee performance explains 51.6 percent variance with the combination of both employee relations and engagement constructs. The t-value of both the endogenous constructs is 3.748 and 6.560 for the employee engagement and employee performance respectively, thus signifies statistically significant.

Table 9: Effect Size (f^2)

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Employee Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.231	0.065	3.568	0.000***
Employee Relations -> Employee Engagement	0.340	0.125	2.714	0.003***
Employee Relations -> Employee Performance	0.298	0.076	3.946	0.000***

Note: p≤0.01***; p≤0.05**; p≤0.10*

Effect size (f^2) measures the changes in R^2 values when a specific exogenous variable is excluded from the model and evaluate whether substantial changes occur in the endogenous latent variable. In this study, employee engagement has medium effect on the performance of employee. Similarly, employee relations also have medium effect on the employee engagement and performance. Nonetheless, all of the relationships are statistically significant.

MEASUREMENT OF MEDIATING EFFECT

Mediating effects is measured by the ratio of indirect effect of the construct and direct effect of the construct. Mediating effect strengthen the relationship between exogenous construct and endogenous construct. For this purpose, both indirect and direct effects have been computed between employee relations and employee performance.

Table 10: Indirect Effects: Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Employee Engagement -> Employee Performance					
Employee Relations -> Employee Engagement					
Employee Relations -> Employee Performance	0.195	0.190	0.040	4.941	0.000

Table 11: Total Effects: Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Employee Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.388	0.382	0.044	8.902	0.000
Employee Relations -> Employee Engagement	0.504	0.496	0.070	7.222	0.000
Employee Relations -> Employee Performance	0.635	0.627	0.061	10.371	0.000

$$\text{Mediating Effects} = \frac{\text{Indirect Effects}}{\text{Total Effects}} = 0.307$$

Therefore, employee engagement has low mediating effect on the relationship between employee relations and employee performance in the organization. accordingly, it can be summarizes that employee relations have significant positive influence on the performance of employee, but if the management take initiative to engage employees' with the job the more performance of the employees' will be achieved. Thus, it is recommended that the practitioners in the ready-made garment industry should take necessary steps so that the employee performance can be increased to some extent.

Table 12: Results of the Hypotheses

Hypotheses		Decision
H1	Employee relations with supervisor positively influence on the employee performance.	Supported
H2	Employee relations with supervisor positively influence on the level of employee engagement.	Supported
H3	Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employee relations and employee performance.	Partial Mediation

DISCUSSION

In PLS-SEM, measurement model (Figure 2) describes the relationship between latent construct with the respective indicators. The constructs of the path model is represented by the items of that construct on the basis of the loading of each items of the construct. The measurement model exposes that the employee relations has positive influence on the employees' engagement and performance level. Conversely, employee engagement has comparatively less positive influence on the employee performance in the organization. The relationship between employee engagement and employee performance is low (r=0.388) compared to the relationship between employee relations and performance (r=0.440), and between relations and engagement (r=0.504).

The structural model describes (Figure 3) the relationship among the constructs of the PLS-SEM path model. The different paths of the path model having t-value more than 2.96 signify that all the relationships are significant at p≤0.01 level. The two predictor variables in the model is not highly correlated thus, free from collinearity problem (VIF<5.0), therefore, employee relations and employee engagement both ensure high level of predictive accuracy. The hypothesized relationships among the constructs are positive where higher path coefficient value represents higher relationship among them. Hence, employees' relations with their boss encourage them positively to perform more and become engaged with the organization. Similarly, engagement level has some positive influence on the performance.

Employee relations and engagement together explain 51.6 percent variances (R^2) for the construct employees' performance while employee relations along covers 25.4 percent variances for employees' engagment level level. Additionally, the explained variance for employee performance and employee engagement is significant at p≤0.001 level since the t-value of employee engagement (7.222) and employee performance (10.355) with employee relations are above 2.96. The different dataset are expected to produce very similar results as the adjusted R^2 values are very close to R^2 value. Moreover, when employee engagement construct is excluded from the model the R^2 value of the endogenous construct changes a little bit, but no changes occurred at significant level. Therefore, employee relations is a good predictor for employee performance and engagement level.

Mediating effect strengthen the relationship between exogenous and endogenous construct. The study identified partial mediating effect (0.307) of employee engagement on employee relations and employee performance relationship at the workplace. Accordingly, the conclusion is that employee relations have significant positive influence on the performance of employee, but this relationship can be made stronger by taking initiative of increasing the employees' engagement level with the job. Thus, it is recommended that the practitioners in the ready-made garment industry should take necessary steps to improve employee relations and engagement related matters so that the performance of employees can be enhanced.

CONCLUSION

Employee performance ensures the survival of the organization in the competitive environment of the business. Consequently, academicians and practitioners are passionate to find out the appropriate antecedents of employee performance. The study empirically proved that employee relations have significant positive influence on employees' performance level. Similarly, employee relations have influence on employee engagement level at the job place. When employees find harmonious relations with their boss in the organization they feel encouragement to do more work for the organization. Additionally, employee relations have significant positive influence on employee engagement. Moreover, employee engagement partially mediates the relationship of employee relations and performance. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to work as a guideline for the policy makers and practitioners to enhance the employee performance of the garment factories in Bangladesh.

The study has been conducted empirically on the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh; therefore, further research may be conducted on other industries or contexts to generalize the findings.

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