

# Journal of Economics and Business

**Rashid, Farhana, Taib, Che Azlan, Yusoff, Rushami Zien, and Ahmad, Mohd Akhir Hj. (2020), Human Resources Management Practices and Total Quality Management (TQM) is the Precondition to Gain the Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments Sector. In: *Journal of Economics and Business*, Vol.3, No.1, 131-141.**

ISSN 2615-3726

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1992.03.01.183

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Journal of Economics and Business* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied, and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research *Journal of Economics and Business* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of Economics and Business, which includes, but not limited to, Business Economics (Micro and Macro), Finance, Management, Marketing, Business Law, Entrepreneurship, Behavioral and Health Economics, Government Taxation and Regulations, Financial Markets, International Economics, Investment, and Economic Development. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Journal of Economics and Business* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Economics and Business.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH  
Connecting Scholars Worldwide



# Human Resources Management Practices and Total Quality Management (TQM) is the Precondition to Gain the Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments Sector

Farhana Rashid<sup>1</sup>, Che Azlan Taib<sup>2</sup>, Rushami Zien Yusoff<sup>3</sup>, Mohd Akhir Hj. Ahmad<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Technology Management and Logistics, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia United International University, Bangladesh. Email: farhana\_rashid@oya.uum.edu.my

<sup>2</sup> School of Technology Management and Logistics, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. Email: c.azlan@uum.edu.my

<sup>3</sup> College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. Email: rzy278@uum.edu.my

<sup>4</sup> School of Technology Management and Logistics, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. Email: makhir@uum.edu.my

## Abstract

Bangladesh Garments manufacturing industry is expanding at a rate of 20% per year and around 76% of the export earnings are came from RMG sector (BEPB, 2018). Currently 4.2 million workers are working in this sector where 4490 manufacturing units are in operation (BGMEA, 2018). Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments (RMG) shows remarkable growth and significant contribution in the country's economic development though product and service qualities are yet a considerable problem to worry about. RMG companies in Bangladesh are not fully aware about the impacts and value of Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation. At the same time, Bangladesh garments industry fully labor intensive rather than technology oriented as Bangladesh is the cheapest labor country, the average labor cost per hour is only \$0.3. Researchers argue that effective implementation of HRM and TQM practices is a main criteria and predictor of gaining sustainability in business. As, it is notable to mention that in case of Bangladesh RMG sector most of the existing literature give more emphasis and discuss about the infrastructural and strategic matters whereas TQM and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in an attempt to improve sustainable competitive advantage is still a debate both theoretically as well as empirically. In this research tried to point out that HRM practices and TQM are positively related to organizational sustainable competitive advantage. In this aspect, literatures proved that, HR practices didn't get much attention which need to be measured and analysis in the aspect of Bangladesh RMG sectors quality performance improvement as in RMG sector human resources is the main advantage for industrial growth and sustainable competitive advantage in business. So this study is required to lift up this expectation to fulfill this research gap So there is a huge gap for further research. Proposed research direction and conclusion are discussed in conclusion of this research.

**Keywords:** Total Quality Management, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Human Resource Management practices, RM

## INTRODUCTION

Cost of poor quality of Bangladesh ready-made garments amounted to 18 percent of the operating costs (BGMEA, 2018). The RMG industry has been Bangladesh's key export industry and a main source of foreign exchange for the last 25 years though poor quality of products and services are considerable factor for the development of this sector.

Meanwhile the apparel sector, all the Bangladeshi garment companies are producing at the low end of the market (Rahman and Masud, 2011). Basically they are performing cutting, making and trimming (CMT) activities (Abdullah and Yusuf, 2008; Johir, Saha, and Hassan, 2014). Therefore, this industry takes maximum lead time to process an order (Yunus and Yamagata, 2012). According to Rahman and Anwar (2011) in Bangladesh the lead time for apparel export varies between 90-120 days, whereas the time for Sri-Lanka is about 19-45 days, China 40-50 days and for India 50-70 days for similar products.

Cost of poor quality of Bangladesh ready-made garments amounted to 18 percent of the operating costs (BGMEA, 2015). In this regard, Sharmin Akhter (2014) stated that the theory of quality management is new in Bangladesh RMG sector and the state is in a limited understanding condition. In contrast of few organizations that have adopted quality management practices have experienced an overall improvement in corporate performance (Rahman, 2010). However, according to Mamun and Islam (2012) in nearly all cases, TQM organizations achieved better employee relations, higher productivity, better customer satisfaction, increased market share and improved profitability. According to Sharmin Akhter (2014) little research has been conducted in TQM practices area in Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments sector. According to Jha and Joshi (2010) in today's global competition and economic liberalization, quality has been considered as an important factor for achieving competitive advantage. In case of Bangladesh Ready-made Garments companies, rather than take the whole process, most local authorities narrowed down their quality approach to few operations in order to cut cost (Sawhel, 2012). TQM practices is always the most neglected field of research in case of Bangladesh RMG sector as very few research have been conducted in this area (Rahman and Masud, 2011; Ferdousi and Shabnam, 2013). So there is an unsolved and emerging research argument in the field of TQM practices in Bangladesh RMG sector is yet need to be answered. However, many garments companies in Bangladesh don't have full knowledge and awareness about the effective implementation of TQM practices whereas they only use and stressed on ISO 9000 which sometimes cause problems (Shareef, Vinod and Kumar 2008; Ariful, Nasima and Rashed, 2012). In this regard, according to Sohail and Teo (2003) the certification of ISO 9000 is the initial step of TQM implementation though survey shows that few researchers stressed only on total quality management practices exclusively. Heras et al. (2012) also verified the result of these studies. So their study concluded with the view that the application of ISO 9000 concept is primary initiative and TQM is contribute further towards the development and ensure organizational quality performance. As Bangladesh RMG sector is now only used ISO 9000 which need to transformed and transit to TQM implementation. So this research will help to explore this research gap.

On the other hand, according to Seddiqe and Basak (2014) Human Resource is the most important asset for Ready-made Garments industry in Bangladesh. Bangladesh RMG sector should focus on proper implementation of HR policies to emphasis quality performance (Absar and Mahmood, 2014). As each organizations success and quality goal accomplishment is largely depends upon the capabilities of human resources (Budhwar and Debrah, 2011). In this regard according to Rahman (2012) against technological scenery, a thorough analysis of human resource management practices on manufacturing industries especially on Bangladesh RMG sector is very much needed. HRM practices are immensely necessary for the achievement and ensuring quality performance in the organization. It is not secondary rather an crucial and major elements for the implementation of TQM practices (Abbas, 2012). TQM studies related to HR practices can be found in the operations management literature but paid little attention to human resources issues towards gaining sustainable competitive advantage (Shahi, Faisal and Aftab, 2014; Issac et al., 2014). According to Alsuhaيمي (2012) indirect effects (mediation) of HRM have been neglected in most empirical research specifically in quality management area. These issues are more significant in Bangladesh RMG sector as never tested the mediating role of HRM practices in the aspect of TQM and sustainable competitive advantage (Ferdousi and Shabnam, 2013). So there is a huge research gap in this area which needs to justify further.

However, Bangladesh has reached and gains a remarkable development especially in inexpensive workforce context of RMG sector still its development and continuity of growth is not assured (Adhikari and Weeratunge, 2007). In this respect, according to Fasil and Osada (2011) TQM practices are the precondition for the continuous development of business to cope up with the current competitive market and globalization. For identifying the need of TQM practices in Bangladesh RMG sector, it already focused and start working on using quality control issues but unfortunately due to structural difficulties and inflexible hierarchical difficulties quality goals not achieved (Sharmin Akhter, 2014). So, the defining role of TQM implementation in predicting to gain sustainable competitive advantage in Bangladesh RMG context is required (Lee, 2012). Hence, the purpose of this study is to generate research idea for investigation the potential link and association of TQM practices in Bangladesh RMG sector to gain sustainable competitive advantage mediated by Human Resource Management practices.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

To promote and facilitate TQM adaptation in RMG sector in Bangladesh, this research result will contribute significantly. The levels of service offered by ready-made garments companies in Bangladesh were not always acceptable to customers. However, this study is immensely significant for Bangladesh Ready-Made garments companies as for the growing competition, imposition of various new rules and regulations in global business context. The necessity of this research can be justified. One, almost every organization need to develop a quality environment to ensure the quality performance. Two, the purpose of the organizations are mainly to variegate the competitive market as well as boost up the export and revenue through quality performance. Three, to cope up with the changing market condition and ensuring quality performance, organizations need to involve every employee as well as gain commitment. Four, ensuring customer satisfaction is the precondition of business success and sustainability. Five, the importance of group work and an interdisciplinary research was firmly recommended. As well as the findings of this study will be useful to government and other organizations in Bangladesh that are currently implementing TQM practices, as well as those seeking to establish TQM practices within their systems with the aim of improving performance as well as gaining sustainable competitive advantage of their businesses (Chowdhury, Ahmed, & Yasmin, 2014). The current study offers significant values for practitioners since it has considerable managerial significance. At the same time, this research will be significant in Bangladesh garments sector by offering new insights into the various TQM as well as HRM functions. The results of the study will enable buyers as well as customers to buy products from Bangladesh without worrying about the quality standard of products and services. Clearly, theoretical contribution of this study is significant because the research model will form theoretical and practical variables to relate TQM, HRM practices and sustainable competitive advantage. These initiatives will cover the latest research gap on the implementation of TQM, HRM as well as gaining sustainability in the literature. Additionally, it is believed that this study can be replicated in other context such as other product and service industries in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study will assist and explore for future research prosperities and opportunities in TQM area of research. Another relevance of this study is to serve as a guide for researchers who focus on quality management to strategize and help maintain competitive advantage of a given government through implementation of TQM practices (Fahmida Khatun, 2015). Overall, this research can help to build up remarkable understanding of practicing TQM in Bangladesh RMG sector as well as contribute significantly in building the scientific knowledge in the subject of the research area.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Human Resource Management**

Generally, Human resource management (HRM) is the governance of an organization's employees. Absar (2014) denoted that due to lack of proper HR policies and procedures, labour-intensive manufacturing firms are facing shortage of workers, and high job turnover in developing countries such as Bangladesh. Shahin and Basak (2014) stated that Human Resource is the most important asset for Ready-made Garments industry in Bangladesh for implementing TQM properly. In Bangladesh context very few researchers have been conducted though the importance of HRM practices are immensely important for organizational development, growth and sustainability (Ahamed, 2013). In this regard according to Hossan, Rahman and Rumana (2012) there is a rapid growth of industrialization in Bangladesh, yet, the realities for Bangladesh RMG sector is that their people remain

undervalued, under trained and underutilized. So the potential growth and prospect in Bangladesh RMG sector is huge. And for using this opportunities it should focused on proper implementation of HR policies to emphasis quality performance (Weeratunga, 2003; Absar & Mahmood, 2014).

Pfeffer (1994) introduced 16 HR practices which denote best practice. In context of Bangladesh ready- made garments industry and TQM implementation, in this research we consider the following four practices: recruitment and selection, job analysis, manpower planning, equal employment opportunity act (EEOA).

The main focus of recruitment and selection process is the choosing the right person for the right position. According to Mládková (2005), "workers must be able and willing to cooperate and communicate and accept the way of sharing their knowledge (skills, abilities and experience) based on reciprocity, reputation and altruism." Schuler (1987) give emphasised in his study on more general, implicit and less formalised selection criteria are proposed by some authors. In Bangladesh ready-made garments, they don't follow any defined recruitment and selection policies which largely affect employees' turnover and competitiveness (Ahamed, 2013). On the other hand, Geisler stated that, "manpower planning is the process – including forecasting, developing and controlling by which a firm ensures that it has- the right number of people, the right kind of people, at the right places, at the right time, doing work for which they are economically most useful." Manpower planning is associated with organizational optimum size of workforce, appropriate training design, compensation system design as well as the future vision of the workforce management which are highly recommended in case of TQM practices in Bangladesh RMG sector (Ahamed, 2013). According to Bansari (2010), "most garments factories in Bangladesh pay little attention to labour standards and labour rights, disallow trade union activities, unsafe working environment, and ineffective laws and discard fair labour practices, and compliance enforcement is limited and limited role of stakeholders." According to Ahamed, F. (2011), "there is a rising fear in Bangladesh that the readymade garments sector may face a decline in demand and social compliance in the RMG industry is a key requirement for most of the world's garments buyers which ensures labour rights, labour standards, fair labour practices and a Code of Conduct."

So for ensuring quality practices and gaining sustainability in RMG sector of Bangladesh much attention should be given to EEO approach to avoid labor unrest and lack of quality performance. Job analysis is required huge impact for starting to implement any HR practices in organization (Sharmin, 2014). According to Cascio (1991) for evaluating the organizational performance effectively job analysis also associated with performance management and compensation, recognition and reward. Therefore, according to Dobbins et al. (1991), individual skills and competencies are focused in job analysis which is needed for empowering employees which is essentially significant in case of TQM implementation. Lastly, According to Shahin and Basak (2014) measuring job fitness is also a part of job analysis process which includes change management, job classification, creativity, and job design and job rotation. In this research, job analysis requires more significant attention in context of Bangladesh ready-made garments industry to gain sustainable competitive advantage for implementing TQM.

Therefore, according to Absar (2014) HRM practices were not given proper acknowledgements and preferences in aspect of Bangladesh RMG sector. So based on literature it is easily understandable that HR practices didn't get much attention which need to be measured and analysis in the aspect of Bangladesh RMG sectors quality performance improvement as in RMG sector human resources is the main advantage for industrial growth and sustainability in business. So this study is required to lift up this expectation to fulfil this research gap.

### **Total Quality Management**

For defining quality there is no unison. Various researchers define the concept of quality in various ways. Quality Gurus defined quality and total quality management in numerous ways, such as, Deming, Crosby, Juran, Garvin, Feigenbaum and Ishikawa etc. every one gave various types of definition. Garvins definition was very remarkable; he defined quality in respect of industry based, usage based, service and product based, theoretical based, customer based approaches. Eight attributes of measuring service and product quality is also mentioned by him (Garvin, 1987). According Juran quality is "fitness for use." Planning of quality, control of quality as well as quality

improvement is the quality trilogy which was also mentioned by Juran. According to Crosby, "quality is the conformance to requirements or specifications and requirements are based on customer needs."

Zero defect quality improvement plans to achieve performance improvement which consist 14 steps also mentioned by Crosby (Kruger, 2001). Deming defined, "quality is a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability, at low cost and suited to the market". To enhance and ensure the performance as well as productivity, Deming also mentioned 14 quality management principles. To improve organizational performance Ishikawa insist on the importance of total quality control. Ishikawa diagram (the fish bone diagram), the cause and effect diagram is also Ishikawa's contribution to identify quality issues and problems (Kruger, 2001). Feigenbaum denoted the ideas and views of organization wise total quality control. And most interestingly he was the initial user of the concept of total quality control in the literatures of quality aspect. According to Feigenbaum, "quality is the total composite product and service characteristics of marketing, engineering, manufacturing and maintenance through which the product and service in use will meet the expectations by the customer" (Kruger, 2001). The significant elements of these quality development concepts consists commitment of management, strategic quality system approach, measurement of quality, improvement of process, training and development and reducing the various symptoms and reasons of problematic incidents. TQM always give emphasis on customer satisfaction to ensure quality culture by using continuous improvement concept. According to Kanji and Wallace (2000), "this culture varies both from one country to another and between different industries, but has certain essential principles which can be implemented to secure greater market share, increased profits, and reduced costs."

Rao et. al (1996) illogically, TQM should be the set of practices that enable an organization to deliver quality products or services.

TQM defined as ...

- The way of managing organization to achieve excellence
- Total – everything
- Quality - degree of excellence
- Management – art, act of way of organizing, controlling, planning, directing to achieve certain goals

**According to BS4778:1991, TQM is a management philosophy embracing all activities through which the needs and expectations of the CUSTOMER and COMMUNITY, and the objectives of the organization are satisfied in the most efficient and cost effective manner by maximising the potential of ALL employees in a continuing drive for improvement."**

However, According to Zairi and Youssef (1995), "management awareness of the importance of total quality management, alongside business process reengineering and other continuous improvement techniques was stimulated by the benchmarking movement to seek study, implement and improve on best practices." Originally management commitment and continuous improvement was developed in aspect of using in manufacturing industries though later service sector also included in the usage categories, such as use teller transactions in case of bank's service, processing order in various catalog organizations, etc.). Therefore, to identify various critical factors for TQM, many researches were conducted as well as lots of identified by many researchers as well as academicians and organizations such as "Malcolm Baldrige Award, EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management), and the Deming Prize Criteria". On the basis of these researches, a vast majority of managerial concepts, tools, methods, process and strategic system have been developed. For measuring the organizational performance Saraph et al. (1989) identified and mentioned 78 items that were categorized in to eight critical factors of TQM. These are: "Role of divisional top management and quality policy, role of the quality department, training, product and service design, supplier quality management, process management, quality data and reporting, and employee relations." Other researchers Flynn et al. (1994), suggested other tools to identify major critical factors of TQM. They mentioned seven factors of quality. These are "top management support, quality information, process management, product design, workforce management, supplier involvement, and customer involvement." It's mentionable that Saraph et al. and Flynn et al., their recommended elements are quite identical. Flynn et al.

identified the influence of TQM practices in aspect of performance of quality and gaining competitive advantages of the organizations. In this regard, other significant study, Anderson et al. (1994) mentioned the basic concepts of TQM practices on the basis of Deming's 14 principles. By using the Delph technique they could able to reduce the number of elements from 37 to only 7. The elements are: "visionary leadership, internal and external cooperation, learning, process management, continuous improvement, employee fulfillment, and customer satisfaction." On the basis of the Malcolm Balridge Award measurement tools, Black and Porter (1996) suggested critical factors for TQM. Actually they formulated 32 elements which were categorized into 10 different categories of critical factors which are: "corporate quality culture, strategic quality management, quality improvement measurement systems, people and customer management, operational quality planning, external interface management, supplier partnerships, teamwork structures, customer satisfaction orientation, and communication of improvement information."

On the basis of thorough investigation of literatures Ahire et al. (1996) also recommended 12 elements to measure critical factors of TQM of firms. The 12 factors are: "supplier quality management, supplier performance, customer focus, statistical process control usage, benchmarking, internal quality information usage, employee involvement, employee training, design quality management, employee empowerment, product quality, and top management commitment." Motwani (2001) denoted, "TQM as constructing a house." Firstly, he considers top management commitment as the base line concept. For a better house construction of base line or foundation is essential. After that "employee training and empowerment, quality measurement and benchmarking, process management, and customer involvement and satisfaction" should be assured and placed. All these elements are considered as the basic four concepts of constructing a house. When the four concepts or pillars are developed properly then time to give emphasis on product manufacturing and design as well as service quality which are the end step of ensuring TQM practices of organization. In this regard, generally many researchers have been mentioned that the center of effective implementation and execution of TQM practices is top management commitment and capability to work as a visionary leader to cope up with the continuous changing and competitive market (Absar & Mahmood, 2011). Literatures also showed the necessity of training for the effective implementation of TQM practices (Palo & Padhi, 2003; Quazi, Hong, & Meng, 2002). In this respect, Wali, Deshmukh and Gupta (2003) also work on selecting TQM elements for organizational success. Though, their research work focused on quality gurus works only. In Bangladesh few researchers (Rahman and Masud, 2011; Alsuhaيمي, 2012; Parul Akhter, 2015) work haven been found which was concentrated only on the TQM elements which were proposed by Ahire, Golhar and Waller (1996) as well as they tried to relate it with Bangladeshi context.

In their research they mentioned twelve TQM elements which are responsible for Bangladeshi organizational success (Rahman and Masud, 2011; Alsuhaيمي, 2012; Parul Akhter, 2015). The twelve factors are: Innovation and leadership, employer and employee relationship, rewards and recognition, culture of the organization, Information system, concentration on customer related factor, issues related with ethics, channel of organizational communication, work Team, mutual respect among employees, employee empowerment, continuous improvement.

However, the commonality of concepts of quality and TQM of various researchers are hard to find. Suppose many researchers give emphasis on the "technical and programmatic properties of TQM," whereas another group of researchers pointed out "the general management philosophy." Many other researchers mentioned, "the holistic picture when formulating constructs of TQM (Saraph et al., 1989; Anderson et al., 1994; Flynn et al., 1994; Ahire et al., 1996; Black and Porter 1996; Motwani, 2001; Sila and Ebrahimpour, 2005; Demirbag et al., 2006)". Therefore, on the basis of the above literatures, it is easily concluded that the ideas and opinions of various researchers are not identical rather complementary to each other. And in this research more focused will be given on leadership and top management commitment, focus of customer, process approach, training & development, system approach, continuous improvement, reward and recognition and supplier relationship.

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

Sustainable competitive advantages are company assets, attributes, or abilities that are difficult to duplicate or exceed and provide a superior or favorable long term position over competitors. According to Bohoris (1995)

many organizations have already realized that their only way of surviving in today's competitive global market is to become a successful total quality organization. At the same time, Corbett and Rastrick (2000) stated that there is significant association between TQM activities and organizational competitiveness. Several other researchers support the findings of this study (Shabbir et al, 2010). All these elements associated with sustainability which could achieve through successful quality implementation. According to Fasil and Osada (2011) Total Quality Management is a buzzword for the organizations to safeguard their growth and sustainability in today's strongly competitive and turbulent global scenario.

Currently garments sectors financial performance is satisfactory but to gain the long term sustainability and competitiveness need to focus on TQM practices (Rahman, 2011). According to Zineldin (2006) RMG sector needs to retain its customers by providing excellent quality services with minimum or no defects to gain sustainability. So, the defining role of TQM implementation in predicting to gain sustainable competitive advantage in Bangladesh RMG context is required (Akhter, 2015). According to Pinho (2008) in the global market, for gaining sustainability practices of TQM received proper attention and acknowledgement. Kanji (2001) stated that, "organizations need a framework that is comprehensive, flexible and easy to adopt and help to gain sustainability." According to Talib et al. (2010), "the reasons being only to help industries improved its efficiency and competitiveness through quality improvement." TQM practices enhance the whole organizational communication system which is highly required for quality performance in the current business world (Lee, 2012). Drew and Healy (2006) stated that, "TQM allows firms to obtain a high degree of differentiation, satisfying customer needs and strengthening the brand image, and also acts as a tool to reduce costs by preventing mistakes and time wastage, while it allows improvement in the corporation processes." Sila and Ebrahimpour (2003) also had given emphasis on conducting research on TQM elements in aspect of various countries as well as various industries. For sustainability cost reduction as well as product and service differentiation is required which can be achieved through TQM practices (Sharma & Kodali, 2008).

In this research organizational performance selected as the part of gaining sustainable competitive advantage in Bangladesh RMG sector. According to Li et al. (2006) organizational performance refers to how well an organization achieves its market-oriented goals as well as its financial goals. In this regard, Stock et al. (2010) mentioned that a number of prior studies have measured organizational performance using both financial and market criteria, including return on investment (ROI), market share, profit margin on sales, the growth of ROI, the growth of sales, and the growth of market share. In this research long term performance is focused which is related with organizational long-term sustainability. According to Terziovski (2006) TQM is the source of sustainable competitive advantage for business organizations. Teh et al. (2009) stated that TQM work as a source of enhancing organizational performance through continuous improvement in organization's activities. At the same time, much research had been conducted to define the relationship among TQM and innovation (Prajogo & Brown, 2004). The relation between TQM and innovation also need to be considered in aspect of gaining Bangladesh RMG sectors sustainable competitive advantage which is focused in this study.

The effect of TQM practices on gaining sustainable competitive advantage in context of Bangladesh ready-made garments industry should be select for further research which will done in this research as there is a huge research gap for it. In this Regard, according to Dean and Bowen (2014) the recognition of TQM as a competitive advantage is widespread around the world, especially in Western countries, and today very few companies especially manufacturing companies can afford to ignore the term TQM. Therefore, according to Issac et al. (2014) TQM has been widely considered as management tool for business stability, growth and prosperity as a tool to keep competitive advantage. In this regard, Dale and Plunkett (1995) stated that for last two decades, quality has been considered as one of important factor in manufacturing, service and purchasing to increase sales and profits. There is an inconsistency of research result of these studies and worthy to examine as research gap. According to Lewis et al. (2006) the relationship is not so clear when the TQM concept is divided into different dimensions and those dimensions are evaluated for their separate effect.



## PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

According to Li et al. (2012) TQM practices enhance the whole organizational communication system which is highly required for quality performance in the current business world. Recent research proves that Bangladesh RMG sector faces some serious quality issues that have largely influenced the growth rate of this sector (Haque et al., 2011; Ariful, Nasima and Rashed, 2012). Over the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in Total Quality Management (TQM) as a strategy that is capable of offering organizations a competitive advantage (Reinhardt & Gurtner, 2014). Currently RMG's are facing immense global competition (Heras et al. (2012)). TQM is one of the most widely used operation management practices which most of the developed countries already adopted (Jung & Wang, 2006; Johir, Saha & Hassan, 2014). Whereas, According to BGMEA (2014) the quality of products and services of Bangladesh ready-made garments are a vital issue to concern. RMG can charge high prices as well as increase their profit if they can ensure about their quality operation of product and service delivery (Ariful, Nasima, & Rashed, 2012; Yunus & Yamagata, 2012).

Many organizations have already realized that their only way of surviving in today's competitive global market is to become a successful "total quality organization" (Alsuhami, 2012). Empirically, In the aspect of Bangladesh garments manufacturing industry a TQM approach unique to the needs and culture of the organization must be developed (Rahman & Masud, 2011; Johir, Saha & Hassan, 2014). At the same time, Absar and Mahmood (2012) stated that in the context of TQM, the extent to which HR departments undertake and support organizational sustainability competitive advantage have been examined and seriously questioned. In the current Bangladesh RMG context, HRM researchers paid much attention on TQM practices and implementation in case of organizational profitability (Absar & Mahmood 2012; Parul Akhter 2015. Literatures suggest that, several TQM practices help organization to gain sustainable competitive advantage, specially, developing country like Bangladesh ready-made garments industry(Bansari, N., 2010; Ahamed, F., 2011).Hence, the following framework is put forward (Figure: 1)

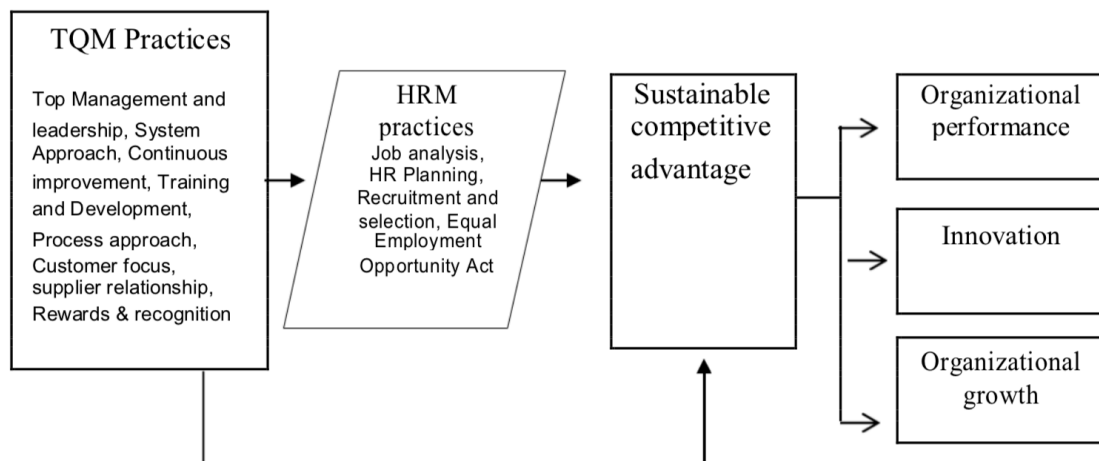


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

Based on the Figure 1, HRM practices will influence or alter the value of link among IV and DV. The IV (Independent Variable) is consists of eight TQM practices such as leadership and top management commitment, customer focus, process approach, system approach, training and development, continuous improvement, supplier relationship, reward and recognition. HRM practices work as mediator which consists four practices. The four functions are: Selection and recruitment, job analysis, manpower planning and equal employment opportunity (EEO) will help to build up the efficient workforce. And lastly, the DV (Dependent Variable) is the sustainable competitive advantage which consists of three criterions to measure, such as organizational performance, innovation and organizational growth in the context of Bangladesh Ready-made Garments industry. DV and IV relation or association will be influenced by the levels of mediator, either strong or weak. In few circumstances,

the relation will be either positive or negative depends on the level of mediator. So the impact of mediator will be considerable in aspect of defining the condition of IV and DV.

### PROPOSITION TESTING

This part explains how the relationship among variables will be managed and how hypotheses developed and tested. Hypothesis tests, or tests for statistical significance, require a number of elements. Before going further, the proper terminologies such as null and alternative, distribution data, critical value, confidence level, two-tailed or one-tailed test and errors should need to be considered. From the purposed framework, null hypothesis can be generated. A null hypothesis is a claim made, a belief expressed, a statistic is held to be the norm. The proposed framework assigned Human Resources Practices as a mediator variable. Based on the literature reviewed in the previous section, therefore these hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Total Quality Management practices are positively associated with Human Resource Management practices.

H2: Total quality management practices are positively associated with sustainable competitive advantage.

H3: Total quality management practices are negatively associated with sustainable competitive advantage.

H4: Human Resources practices are positively associated with sustainable competitive advantage.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, according to Creswell (2009), there are mainly three approaches used as the process to collect data and information for the purpose of investigation certain issue; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method. There is no right or wrong what approach researcher may choose. The important is related with the research paradigm. The research approach selection is based on the research problem. Thus, the research approaches, designs, and the methods represent a perspective about research that presents information in a successive way from broad constructions of research to the narrow procedures of methods (Creswell, 2009).

### CONCLUSION

The performance and growth rate of Bangladesh RMG is diminishing. Current research shows various problems associated with the quality issues. However, the performances of Bangladesh RMG sectors are largely influenced by the international quality standard and regulations. By integrating the HRM practices literature into the TQM and organizational sustainable competitive advantage literature, this study do able to scientifically prove the practitioners of RMG sectors that the introduction of TQM is a compulsory step to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations worldwide have been exploring ways to improve business practices to gain competitive edge. The aim of this study was to test the impact of TQM practices on sustainable competitive advantage at ready-made garments companies in Bangladesh. TQM practices have positive and significant effect toward organizational sustainable competitive advantage. The question whether this proposed framework or model is valid and reliable to be answered if further investigation has been carried out. Henceforth, the examinations of each hypothesis and the subsequent empirical investigations of this study are crucial to validate the proposed research framework. It is expected that the study will be beneficial to local manufacturing players, policy makers, government and relevant practitioners.

### References

- Ahamed, F. (2012). Improving Social compliance in Bangladesh's Ready-made Garment Industry. *Journal of Labour and Management in Development*, Vol 13. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/lmd/article/viewFile/2269/3148>
- Akhter, Sharmin. (2014). Deming Management Method in the Readymade Garments Industry of Bangladesh. *Journal of Management*, Vol. 9(1), 178-189.
- Alsuhaimi, M. R. (2012). The Implementation of Total Quality Management in King Saud University. *International Journal of Independent Research and Studies-IJIRS*, Vol. 1(2), 84-88. Ahamed, F.
- (2013). Could monitoring and surveillance be useful to establish social compliance in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry of Bangladesh? *International Journal of Management and Business Studies*, Vol. 3 (3), 088-100.

- Ariful M. I., & Anwarul Haque, A.F.M. (2012). Key aspects of TQM implementation in manufacturing organization- an empirical investigation. *International Journal of Research in Management & Technology (IJRMT)*, ISSN: 2249-9563, Vol. 2 No. 3.
- Alireza Anvari, Yusof Ismail & Seyed Mohammad Hossein Hojjati (2011). A Study on Total Quality Management and Lean Manufacturing: Through Lean Thinking Approach. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 12 (9): 1585-1596.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2015). Statistical pocket book of Bangladesh. GOB. Dhaka. Government Printing Office.
- BKMEA. (2014). Export Performance of RMG of Bangladesh for 2011-12 and 2012-13. Annual Report of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Export Association. Retrieved from <http://www.bkmea.com/facts-figures.html>
- Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. (2015). Annual Report of BGMEA. Retrieved from [www.bgmea.com](http://www.bgmea.com)
- Calvo-Mora, Picón, A., Ruiz, C., & Cauzo, L. (2014). The Relationships between Soft-Hard TQM Factors and Key Business Results. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol.34 (1), 115–143.
- Feng, M., Terziovski, M. & Samson, D. (2007). Relationship of ISO 9001: 2000 Quality System Certification with Operational and Business Performance: A Survey in Australia and New Zealand-based Manufacturing and Service Companies. *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*, Vol. 19 (1), 22–37.
- Fasil, T. & Osada, H. (2011). Multiple dimensions of TQM success in developing countries: an empirical study on Deming prize winners from India and Thailand. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, Vol. 9(2), 184-203.
- Gopal K Kanji, & Mike Asher (1996). 100 methods for TQM. Response Books, New Delhi. Hietschold, N., Reinhardt, R., & Gurtner, S. (2014). Measuring Critical Success Factors of TQM Implementation Successfully-a Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Production Research*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2014.918288>
- Harun, N. A., Rashid, A. A., & Alrazi, B. (2013). Measuring the Quality of Sustainability Disclosure among the Malaysian Commercial Banks. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, Vol. 28, 195–201. Ishikawa, K. (1985). *What is TQC. The Japanese way*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: PrenticeHall.
- Islam, M.M., & Khan, A.M. (2013). Minimization of Reworks in Quality and Productivity Improvement in the Apparel Industry. *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, 1(4), 147-165.
- Israfil Shahin Seddiq, & Avizit Basak. (2014). Importance of Human Resource Management and the Competitive Advantage: A Case Analysis on Basis of the Textile Industry of Bangladesh. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: A Administration and Management*, Vol.14 (9), 93-115.
- Islam, Md. Ariful, & Haque, A.F.M. Anwarul. (2012). Pillars of TQM Implementation in Manufacturing Organization- An Empirical Study. *Journal of Research in International Business and Management*, Vol. 2(5), 128-141.
- Jahid, H. (2013). The Competitiveness of Ready Made Garments Industry of Bangladesh in Post MFA Era: How Does the Industry Behave to Face the Competitive Challenge. *British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade*, Vol. 3(3), 296-306.
- Juran, J.M. (1995). *A history of managing for quality: The evolution, trends and future direction of managing for quality*. Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press.
- Kim, D., Kumar, V., & Kumar, U. (2012). Relationship between quality management practices and innovation. *Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 30, 295-315.
- Md. Ariful Islam, & Anwarul Haque, A.F.M. (2012). Key aspects of TQM implementation in manufacturing organization-an empirical investigation. *International Journal of Research in Management & Technology (IJRMT)*, Vol. 2(3), 268.
- Munim Joarder, Nurul Hossain, & M M Hakim. (2010). Post-MFA Performance of Bangladesh Apparel Sector. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, Volume 6(4), 134 – 144.
- Nurul Absar, & Monowar Mahmood (2011). New HRM Practices in the Public and Private Sector Industrial Enterprises of Bangladesh: A Comparative Assessment. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, Vol. 7(2), 118-136.
- Ooi, K. B. (2014). TQM Practices and Knowledge Management: A Multi-group Analysis of Constructs and Structural Invariance between the Manufacturing and Service Sectors. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*. doi:10.1080/14783363.2014.914642.
- Parul Akhter (2015). Key Factors of TQM Implementation in the Textile and RMG Industry: A Study of Some Textile and RMG Companies of Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, Volume 17(2), 26-37.

- Prajogo, D.I. (2005). The comparative analysis of TQM practices and quality performance between manufacturing and service firms. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 16(3), 217–228.
- Rahman, M. M., & Masud, A.K.M. (2011). Quality Improvement in Garments Industry Through TQM Approach. *International Conference on Mechanical Engineering (ICME2011)* 18-20, Dhaka, Bangladesh, pp.1 -2.
- Rahman, M. M., & Masud, A.K.M. (2011). Quality Improvement in Garments Industry Through TQM Approach. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Mechanical Engineering, ICME 11-RT- 044*.
- Rahman, M. M., & Masud, A. K. M. (2011). Quality Improvement in Garments Industry Through TQM Approaches. *Journal of Management*, Vol. 12(1), 111-119.
- Shah Johir Rayhan, Sajeeb Saha, & Mohammad Masudul Hassan (2014). Factors Affecting the Customer Buying Behavior in Relation to Readymade Garments in Bangladesh. *International Research Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 2(2), 36-42.
- Sila, I., & Ebrahimpour, M. (2003). Examination and Comparison of the Critical Factors of Total Quality Management (TQM) across Countries. *International Journal of Production Research*, Vol. 41 (2), 235–268.
- Sharif Ahmed, Syduzzaman, Mahbubor Rahman, Mazedul Islam, & Ahashan Habib (2014). Effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Employee Satisfaction in the Apparel Industries of Dhaka Division. *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 22(7), 251-269.
- Shahid Mehmood, Faisal Qadeer, & Aftab Ahmad (2014). Relationship between TQM Dimensions and Organizational Performance. *Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, Vol. 8 (3), 662-679.
- Sila, I., & Ebrahimpour, M. (2005). Critical linkages among TQM factors and business results, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol. 25 (11), 1123- 1155.
- Sadrul Huda, Nargis Akhtar, & Afsana Akhtar (2011). Employee's View on Job Satisfaction: A Study on Garments Industry in Bangladesh. *Indus Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, Vol. 5(1),1-9
- Sukhwinder, Singh. (2013). TQM: An Emerging Necessity for Small Scale Industry Sector. *Global Research analysis*, Vol. 2 (1), 136–137.
- Talib, F., Rahman, Z., & Qureshi, M. N. (2010). The Relationship Between total Quality Management and Quality Performance sin the Service Industry: A Theoretical Model. *International Journal of Business Management and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1(1), 113-128.
- Uddin, Md Abbas. (2012). Readymade Garments Industry of Bangladesh: How the Industry is Affect in Post MFA Period. Unpublished master's thesis, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia.
- Yunus, M., & Yamagata, T. (2012). The Garment Industry in Bangladesh. Fukunishi (Ed.). *Dynamics of the Garment Industry in Low Income Countries: Experience of Asia and Africa (Interim Report)*. Chousaken Kyu, Huokokusho, IDE-JETRO