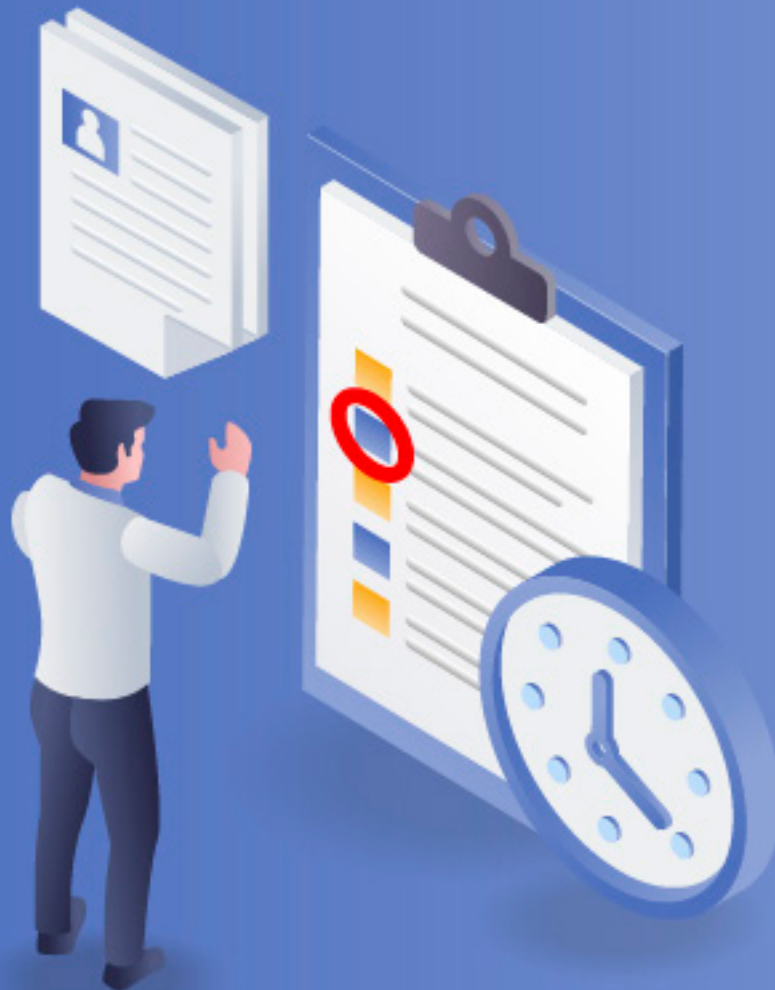




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The Effect of Organizational Justice on Ethical Behavior of Employees: Insights from the RMG Sector in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Although the relationship between organizational justice and employees' ethical behavior has been investigated in various sectors and countries, this association remains largely unexplored in the context of Bangladesh's labor-intensive ready-made garment (RMG) industry. To address this gap, this study finds out how distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational dimensions of organizational justice affect workers' moral conduct in Bangladesh's RMG sector. This study collects data from 134 RMG machine operator employees through a survey method. This research paper employed regression analysis to examine the relationships. The results show that employees' ethical behavior in Bangladesh's RMG sector is significantly improved by all four organizational justice categories ($R^2 = .807$), with distributive justice having the most influence ($\beta = .577$, $p < .001$). These findings show how important fairness beliefs are in shaping workers' moral conduct. The study contributes by investigating the ways in which different aspects of organizational justice impact the moral conduct of employees in Bangladesh's RMG sector.

INTRODUCTION

Recent academic studies disclose a growing interest in comprehending the impact of organizational justice as well as the ethical conduct of employees on employee outcomes (Rahman & Karim, 2022; Alhaidani *et al.*, 2024; Shahidul *et al.*, 2022; Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Akter *et al.*, 2024; Mahan & Nelms, 2025; Rubel *et al.*, 2025). This interest arises because employees' ethical behavior in their jobs has a significant impact on an organization's reputation, sustainability, and success (Ezenwakwelu *et al.*, 2020). The term ethical behavior describes an employee's acts that are consistent with moral standards, organizational norms, and justice; these behaviors are frequently demonstrated by honesty, accountability, fairness, and compliance (Rubel *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, leaders' ethical behavior helps workers control their emotions and maintain their wellbeing, which develops their capacity to make ethical decisions under pressure (Saleem *et al.*, 2024). Also ethical behavior builds relationships, increases employee engagement, promotes trust, lowers conflict, and guarantees long-term organizational success, it should serve as the foundation for all businesses (Mahan & Nelms, 2025). Such ethical practices are especially crucial in labor-intensive industries in developing nations like Bangladesh, where competitiveness is directly impacted by business reputation and adherence to international norms (Crane *et al.*, 2019).

Unethical and counterproductive behaviors are frequent in organizations in Bangladesh (Haque *et al.*, 2026), including the RMG sector. Thus, ethical behavior is especially important within Bangladesh's RMG sector, which is the lifeblood of Bangladesh's economy (Akbar, 2025). With over 80% of all export revenue and millions

of people employed, Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry has grown to be the foundation of the country's economy (Ahmed & Nathan, 2016). In this context, the RMG industry is especially significant since it employs over 4 million people (Women make up nearly 55%), accounts for more than 80% of Bangladesh's export revenue, and is constantly inspected by international stakeholders and buyers (Rahman *et al.*, 2025; Hasan *et al.*, 2025; Akbar, 2025). However, alongside Bangladesh's economic contributions, the RMG industry has been repeatedly criticized for labor rights abuses, workplace safety concerns, and compliance deficiencies, the significance of ethical behavior is particularly clear in this sector (Rahman, 2023). Given ongoing concerns related to employee health, safety, and labor rights concerns, ethical behavior and just management practices are especially important in Bangladesh's RMG industry (Kabir *et al.*, 2022).

According to several previous studies (e.g., Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2024; Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2010), organizational justice significantly influences employees' ethical behavior. In countries like the USA, Malaysia, and Iraq, these studies have primarily been conducted in the context of the public, manufacturing, and service sectors. However, this empirical study has mostly ignored the relationship between moral behavior and organizational justice in the RMG industry. In order to bridge this significant research lack, the study will look into how organizational justice affects workers' ethical behavior in Bangladesh's RMG sector. Managers, lawmakers, and international stakeholders will likely find this to be helpful information. Research within the Bangladeshi RMG sector shows that social compliance method, such audits

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and codes of conduct, enhance organizational outcomes and provide useful levers to boost ethical behavior (Alam *et al.*, 2023). According to empirical research, managers' and supervisors' ethical practices in Bangladesh's textile and apparel industries are improved by an ethical culture and organizational rules of conduct (Mashiuth *et al.*, 2024). According to Ahmed *et al.* (2014), promoting ethics in the RMG industry also reduces workplace accidents, improves worker satisfaction, and increases productivity. Because they typically deal with long workdays, pressure to be productive, and wage-related concerns, maintaining views of organizational fairness can motivate employees in this sector to act more morally (Rahman & Karim, 2022). Moreover, workers believe that processes and interactions are more equal when managers consistently respect moral norms, which reinforce organizational justice and promotes cooperative and positive conduct on the production floor (Alhaidani *et al.*, 2024). Thus, the study use equity theory to examine how four forms of organizational justice influence machine operators' ethical conduct in Bangladesh's RMG industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical Behavior

Based on Angonga *et al.* (2019), acts that adhere to and are consistent with these established norms are considered ethical behavior. Ethics is a system of norms, guidelines, precepts, or rules that specify what behavior is morally acceptable. According to Serang *et al.* (2024), leaders who place a high priority on moral behavior foster an atmosphere where workers are more inclined to act in ways that uphold the norms and ethics of the company. Even though recent research (Ayaz *et al.*, 2025; Bai & Vahedian, 2023) consistently demonstrates that ethical behavior fosters legitimacy and trust, there is a critical knowledge gap regarding how ethical behavior changes in labor-intensive industries where organizational norms may conflict with survival-driven economic pressures. Previous studies exhibited that customer confidence (Aldulaimi *et al.*, 2025) and organizational success (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023) are significantly impacted by ethical behavior. However, since most of this research comes from the corporate and service sectors, there is a theoretical gap that raises questions about whether these outcomes are also applicable in highly regulated industrial enterprises like the RMG sector.

Organization Justice

Adamovic (2023, p. 762) defines organizational justice as "the study of employees' perceptions of justice in the workplace." It reflects how employees perceive justice, equality, and good behavior in both personal and professional settings (Zhang *et al.*, 2024). Although Colquitt (2001) and Greenberg (1990) proposed a four-dimensional model (distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational), subsequent research reveals variation in the relative impact of each component. According to Galáz-Vela *et al.* (2022) and Ho (2025), distributive justice reflects fairness in the distribution

of rewards such as pay, promotions, and recognition; procedural justice refers to the fairness and transparency of decision-making processes; interactional justice indicates fairness in interpersonal treatment, including respect, dignity, and open communication from supervisors and managers; and informational justice emphasizes the need of receiving timely and correct explanations of organizational procedures. For instance, in labor-intensive industries such as the Bangladeshi RMG sector, organizational justice plays an important role in forming employees' ethical behavior, as workers frequently face inequities in wages, working conditions, and supervisory practices. In order to determine which particular factor serves as the main motivator of ethical behavior in Bangladesh's RMG sector—a setting where salary disparities and a lack of transparency are enduring problems—this study integrates these perspectives by addressing the theoretical gap between descriptive fairness and practical application (Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2022).

Relationship between Organization Justice and Ethical Behavior

According to Adams (1963), the impact of organizational justice on the moral conduct of employees has also been extensively described by equity theory. In the context of equity theory (Adams, 1963; Adamovic, 2023), people compare their input-output ratio results with relevant others to determine how fair it is, and any perceived unfairness may lead to corrective behavioral reactions. On the other side, whereas recent empirical research (Latifi *et al.*, 2025; Kılıç *et al.*, 2024) demonstrates a positive correlation between justice and ethical behavior, that research frequently overlooks the ways in which external variables, like strong production pressure, may modify this relationship. The conclusion of recent findings also highlights a theoretical question: Does justice lead directly to ethical behavior, or are moral actions mediated by the ethical climate?

For example, Tufan *et al.* (2023) describe that justice serves as a moderator for ethical leadership, while Al Halbusi & Alshallaqi (2024) recommend mediation. For the purpose of reconciling these disparities, this study uses equity theory to anticipate that machine operators in the RMG sector will adopt moral compliance as a means of restoring cognitive equity in exchange for fair treatment. The study aims to end the gap between justice theory and real-world ethical application in Bangladeshi manufacturing by concentrating on this particular labor scenario. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are consistent with the existing literature.

H1: Distributive justice positively affects employees' ethical behavior.

H2: Procedural justice positively affects employees' ethical behavior.

H3: Interactional justice positively affects employees' ethical behavior.

H4: Informational justice positively affects employees' ethical behavior.

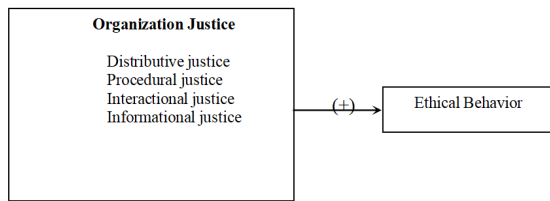


Figure1: The Research Model

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The study's target population is Bangladeshi working employees in the RMG sector in the Dhaka division (Savar, Gazipur, and Narsingdi). A structured questionnaire was distributed to the machine operators. Here, a combination of face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires was used to increase the answers' accuracy and participation. Each questionnaire had included a cover message that explained the overall objective of the study, provided necessary instructions, and also requested workers' voluntary participation, with a two-week deadline for submission. The study was limited to applying probability sampling because there was no access to plant premises, limited management permission, and the strong work schedules of machine operators in the RMG sector.

Establishing an appropriate sample frame was particularly challenging due to the substantial personnel turnover and the lack of a centralized workers database. Convenience sampling was therefore used as a practical method of data collection from respondents who could be reached.

While this approach facilitates data collection, it may also raise sample bias and limit how broadly the findings may be applied. This investigation respondent was selected from a variety of factories and demographic backgrounds to ensure response diversity and eliminate any potential sample bias. As a result, it was critical to consider the outcomes carefully. Using a convenience sampling method, a total of 134 valid responses, representing a response rate of 89.33%, were obtained from the 150 questionnaires distributed. All responses were considered acceptable for the study, with no missing values, as all items and demographic information had to be completed to submit a questionnaire. Consequently, the study's final sample size is 134.

Profiles of the respondents

The study sample consists of 134 machine operators serving in the RMG sector, as illustrated in Table 1. Among them, 37.3% are male and 62.7% are female. Given the data, 50.0% of employees are between the ages of 18 and 25, making the workforce extremely young. 11.9% of Bangladeshi workers are under the age of 18. The presence of responders under the age of 18 reflects the reality of labor abuses in some parts of Bangladesh's RMG industry. In terms of marital status, 82.1% are married and 17.9% are unmarried. The majority of them are enrolled in primary school (56.0%), with secondary school coming in second (39.6%). When it comes to work experience, most people (53.0%) have been employed by their present employer for 1 to 5 years. Moreover, there are variations in the distribution of total work experience among different groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Demographics	Description	Frequency (N = 134)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 18	16	11.9
	18-25	67	50.0
	26-35	31	23.1
	36-45	20	14.9
	46 and above	0	0
Gender	Male	50	37.3
	Female	84	62.7
Marital Status	Married	110	82.1
	Unmarried	24	17.9
Education	Primary	75	56.0
	Secondary	53	39.6
	Higher Secondary	5	3.7
	Graduate	1	.7
	Postgraduate	0	0
	Others	0	0
Length of service in current organization	1-5 Years	71	53.0
	6- 10 Years	20	14.9
	11-15 Years	6	4.5

	16-20 Years	27	20.1
	21-25 Years	9	6.7
	Above 25 Years	1	.7
Length of total service life	1-5 Years	48	35.8
	6- 10 Years	21	15.7
	11-15 Years	11	8.2
	16-20 Years	27	20.1
	21-25 Years	14	10.4
	Above 25 Years	13	9.7

Measures

The respondents' perceptions were used to evaluate both organizational justice and ethical behavior. Organizational justice was measured using 20 items that were adapted from Colquitt (2001) and covered the four components of interactional justice (INTJ), procedural justice (PJ), distributive justice (DJ), and informational justice (INFJ). Following the developer's recommendations, the first four items measured the first dimension interactional justice (INTJ), with an alpha value of ($\alpha=.92$); the next seven items measured the second dimension procedural justice (PJ), and an alpha value of ($\alpha=.93$); the next four items measured the third dimension distributive justice (DJ), of an alpha value of ($\alpha=.93$); and the final five items measured the fourth dimension informational justice (INFJ), using an alpha value of ($\alpha=.90$). Nine items chosen from the study of Nascimento *et al.* (2023) were used to measure ethical behavior, and the measurement's alpha value was $\alpha=.81$, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

One example item is "I follow organizational rules, even when no one is watching." A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree was used to score each item. To make sure that there was content validity, the scale items were taken from earlier studies that had been verified. The items were also translated into Bengali, the local language, based on Bengali different geographical contexts and cultures to ensure that the materials were appropriate for RMG workforce members for their better understanding. Scales that had already been evaluated and satisfactory reliability statistics provided evidence for construct validity. Meanwhile, 20 participants from the RMG sector participated in a test study to evaluate the questionnaire items' clarity, reliability, and wording. A few minor adjustments were made in response to feedback from the pilot test to improve understanding and clarity.

Data Analysis Method

Data entry and statistical analysis were conducted using SPSS version 27.0. Initially, we presented the descriptive statistics of the study's constructs as means, standard deviations, and correlations. We performed inferential analysis using regression analysis in order to validate the hypotheses. Age, gender, education, and work experience were included as control factors in order to isolate the influence of justice views from specific demographic traits. This is due to the possibility that workers who are older or have more experience may naturally have different ethical standards. Since data was collected from a single source, the study undertook both procedural and statistical measures to make the data free from common method variance (CMV). For the procedural remedies of CMV, the study (i) ensured protection of the anonymity of the respondents, (ii) created psychological separation of predictor and criterion variables through an explanation that they are unrelated. For statistical remedies, SPSS was used to calculate a single component which may account for a maximum of 40.116% (below the cut-off value of 50%) of variation, in accordance with Harman's single factor test, suggesting that common method variance (CMV) is not a serious concern in this study. In addition, the study calculated VIF values (2.108 to 3.066), which are within the threshold of 3.3 (Kock, 2015), thereby confirming the absence of multicollinearity problem among the explanatory variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2, which indicate a strong positive association between ethical behavior and all dimensions of organizational justice. The dependability of the scales is excellent because all of Cronbach's alpha values, which range from .738 to .863 (shown in brackets), are greater than the suggested threshold of 0.70.

Table 2: Presents the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and inter-correlations among the study variables.

Latent Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlations					
			α	INTJ	PJ	DJ	INF	EB
interactional Justice	4.61194	0.685339	.863	1				
Procedural Justice	4.615139	0.536864	.785	.411**	1			

Distributive Justice	4.669776	0.530474	.741	.725**	.695**	1		
Informational Justice	4.165672	1.239974	.738	.285**	.525**	.480**	1	
Ethical Behavior	4.666667	0.574709	.803	.660**	.724**	.871**	.565**	1

The R^2 value of .807 in Table 3 indicates that 80.7% of the variance in ethical behavior can be explained by organizational justice. This implies that ethical behavior can be well explained by the independent variables.

Table 3: R Square and Adjusted R Square

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.898a	.807	.801	.15709

a. Predictors: (Constant), INFJ, INTJ, PJ, DJ.

The relevance of the regression model is supported by the ANOVA findings displayed in Table 4, which reveal that (F (4, 129) = 135.091, $p < .001$) indicates that the entire model is statistically significant (Sig. = .000 is interpreted as $p < .001$)

Table 4: Results of the ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.335	4	3.334	135.091	$p < .001$
	Residual	3.183	129	.025		
	Total	16.519	133			

a. Dependent Variable: EB

b. Predictors: (Constant), INFJ, INTJ, PJ, DJ.

Each component of organizational justice has a significant positive impact on ethical behavior, according to the regression analysis results, which are shown in Table 5. The highest influence on ethical behavior was seen in distributive justice (DJ: $\beta = .577$, $p < .001$), followed by procedural justice (PJ: $\beta = .194$, $p < .01$), informational justice (INFJ: $\beta = .152$, $p < .01$), and interactional justice (INTJ: $\beta = .119$, $p < .05$). All of the hypotheses

are supported by these findings, which demonstrate that employees' ethical behavior is greatly improved by increased evaluations of fairness across all dimensions. Analyzing all things, the results offer solid empirical proof of the beneficial influence of organizational justice for developing the moral behavior of Bangladeshi RMG workers.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
1	(Constant)	.943	.170		5.546	$p < .001$
	INTJ	.074	.035	.119	2.086	.039
	PJ	.160	.047	.194	3.402	$p < .01$
	DJ	.511	.065	.577	7.856	$p < .001$
	INFJ	.063	.019	.152	3.272	$p < .01$

a. Dependent Variable: EB

Discussion

The study shows that all four characteristics of organizational justice have a major positive impact on encouraging ethical behavior among employees in Bangladesh's RMG industry. The findings of the study are fixed with the core principles of equity theory (Adams, 1963), which gave information that people are motivated by justice. When employees feel the equity

behavior of their management in their organization, they exhibit positive attitudes and actions, such as compliance, honesty, and integrity. Basically, people typically compare the fairness of organizational procedures and output in relation to their own and other people's contributions. This sense in the workers' minds serves justice as a psychological contract between employees and management in the RMG industry. This result also

correlated with previous studies which carried out in a number of labor-intensive and service-related businesses in various nations (Alhaidani *et al.*, 2024; Mashiuth *et al.*, 2024).

The study's findings confirm the basic idea of equity theory, where this theory holds that equitable incentive distribution, transparent processes, respectful interpersonal interactions, and appropriate information sharing can encourage employees to act morally and productively. In this analysis particularly found distributive justice, which was the most important predictor, that determined the primary factor ethical behavior among RMG machine operators is equitable income distribution. The study contributes by showing organizational justice to be a significant antecedent of ethical behavior; moreover, it gives us the body of knowledge on organizational behavior in the setting of a developing country's RMG sector. Prior research mostly ignored the effect of perceived equity on employees' ethical behavior, without some exception studies (Lee & Rhee, 2023). Furthermore, this examination found that workers respond positively when they believe that an organization's practices are fair and equitable. From a practical viewpoint, for making an ethically conscious workforce, managers should provide sufficient information sharing with workers, establish fair compensation schemes, ensure transparent decision-making, and maintain respectful supervision.

The current results can also be contrasted with the findings from other developing-economy settings. Tufan *et al.* (2023) discovered that the association between ethical leadership and deviant behavior at work was significantly influenced by beliefs of organizational fairness. Both studies show that perceived fairness may promote positive workplace behavior and lessen unpleasant conduct, despite the fact that their investigation looked at a different outcome. In a similar vein, Rahman and Karim (2022) discovered a connection between organizational citizenship behavior through work engagement and organizational justice.

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed in further studies, as is common in social science research. The analysis's main weakness is the small sample size and non-probability sampling technique that could restrict how extensively the findings can be applied. Future research should employ probability-based sampling techniques, longitudinal designs, and multi-source data and incorporate larger, more diverse samples from Bangladesh's different geographical regions. Also, future studies should investigate the possible mediating roles of psychological well-being, intrinsic motivation, and ethical leadership in the relationship between organizational justice and employees' ethical behavior.

Practical Implications

The results of this study imply that leadership in RMG companies should place greater emphasis on fairness at all levels of organizational behavior. In practice, management should prioritize establishing fair and consistent salary

structures, ensuring transparency in decision-making, and demonstrating polite and supportive supervisory behavior. Also, workplace misconduct can be greatly decreased by creating an atmosphere where workers feel their dignity is valued. Good communication between management and employees can help build trust and encourage morally responsible action. Together, these forms of bonding between management and employees can help increase organizational performance and create a more morally committed workforce in the long run.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between organizational justice and employees' ethical behavior in Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector. The findings show, based on workers' perceptions, that fairness in the workplace is not limited to formal procedures alone, but also plays a direct role in shaping employees' day-to-day ethical behavior and sense of accountability. These results highlight the practical importance of organizational fairness in building a motivated and ethically responsible workforce. The findings showed that distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice, as well as informational justice, significantly influenced ethical behavior. These quantitative findings suggest that employees' ethical behavior is shaped not only by the fairness of outcomes but also by fair procedures, respectful interactional treatment, and adequate information sharing in labor-intensive developing-economy settings. They also offer strong empirical evidence for Equity Theory. From the standpoint of behavioral ethics, the results suggest that perceived fairness serves as a moral heuristic that directs employees' everyday conduct at work. To promote organizational performance and competitiveness, RMG organizations need to develop a fair and ethically conscious workforce, which can improve job satisfaction, increase productivity, and reduce workplace conflicts. Fair compensation and incentive systems, transparent resource allocation, consistent decision-making processes, respectful supervisory behavior, and adequate information sharing are particularly important for promoting ethical compliance and long-term competitiveness in the global garment sector. Policymakers and management should take note of these findings. Overall, the investigation highlights the importance of fairness-oriented organizational strategies in encouraging ethical behavior in Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector. By strengthening organizational justice, RMG firms may support a more ethically aligned and compliant workforce, which may contribute to the industry's reputation, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

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