

Teen perception of employment: a study of the hospitality industry in Bangladesh

Dr. M. Javed Hossain*, M. Noman Siddiquee** & Rashed Ahmed***

Abstract: This study investigates perceptions of teens pertaining to some key employment issues that are important in job selection. A total of 152 teens working in the hospitality industry at Cox's Bazar identified a number of key issues that they considered important for selecting and retaining jobs. The findings reveal that teens prefer to work for firms that offered flexible working hours with friendly coworkers and good salary. At the end, some recommendations are made for the employers in the hospitality industry in order to facilitate a better understanding of the perception of their teenage employees regarding employment.

Keywords: Teenage employees; Coworkers; Employment; Hospitality; Human resources.

Introduction

The hospitality industry historically has depended on teens for unskilled labor in the areas of lodging, restaurant, food services management, and recreations. The entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry face challenges while recruiting, selecting, training, and motivating the teen employees. Research on teenage employment is extensive and diverse. A number of studies investigated the impact of employment on high school-going teens. These studies found that long working hours had a negative impact on teens' academic performance.¹

A study by Steinberg and Dornbusch shows that school-going teens who worked longer hours have less interest in school activities.² The study also unveils that these school-going working teens suffer from psychological distress, drug abuse, and less reliance on parental guidance. O'Regan and Quigley establish relationships between teen employment prospects on one hand, and the demographic variables and social class on the other.³ Their empirical study reveals that teens with white complexion received more and better employment than those with black complexion; and teens from poor social background receive less jobs than those coming from the upscale class of society.

Divine and Bartlett investigate the perceptions of college students working in hospitality and non-hospitality businesses while attending high school.⁴ Contrary to the studies

* Associate Professor in Marketing Studies and International Marketing, Chittagong University

** Lecturer in Finance, International Islamic University Chittagong, Email: siddikeenoman@gamil.com

*** Associate Professor in Marketing and Deputy Director (Research), Policy Research Center Bangladesh

conducted by Greenberger, Steinberg, and Vaux,⁵ Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero,⁶ and Greenberger and Steinberg,⁷ their findings conclude that high school employment is perceived to be positive in terms of generating potential for financial success and job satisfaction. However, the data used in the study undertaken by Divine and Bartlett is more than two decades old and the data was collected from college students only.⁸

Many teenage employment studies conducted during the last thirty years (1981 to 2009) have traced the effect of employment on educational performance. Yet, no major research has been conducted pertaining to the perception of teens as employees and the reasons for teens' leaving or continuing jobs. This picture is particularly true in Bangladesh. Though the tourism and hospitality industry in the country employs a good number of teens on permanent and temporary bases, the rate of teen-employee turnover in this industry is very high. With this relatively high turnover rate, companies in the hospitality industry are faced with the challenges of hiring employees and retaining them for long. The entrepreneurs in this industry should better know why a teen-employee leaves job so fast and how these teen-employees can be kept in better. In other words, they should develop the understanding of the needs and perceptions of teens regarding employment. This may be helpful not only to the hospitality entrepreneurs in their strategy development regarding teen employment, but also to career guidance counselors who deal with teens. This study aims at filling the gap in the literature through attempting:

- To identify the teen perception of key employment issues in the hospitality industry; and
- To examine the relationship between teen job perception and teen job satisfaction.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a teen is defined as a person between 13 to 19 years of age registered in an educational institution. The sampling frame consists of school-going teenagers who were at jobs for more than 6 months. Data from the respondents (school-going teen workers) were collected from 32 residential hotels and 21 road-side restaurants at Cox's Bazar. A total of 437 school-going teen-employees were found in the randomly selected hotels and restaurants. However, 106 teen-workers were found to have started their jobs in less than 6 months time and as such they were not included, which makes the sample size 331. Of the total sample, only 152 teens agreed to participate in the survey resulting in only 45.9% response rate. Among the 152 teens, 80 came from selected hotels and 72 from restaurants.

A self-administered 3-section questionnaire was given to the respondents for data collection. The first section comprised of demographic and employment profiles of the respondent teens. The second section contained eight 5-point Likert-type attitudinal statements with a view to capturing the teen perception of key employment variables, and the third section with 1-item question rated the level of teen satisfaction with their current jobs. For analysis of data, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations were used. For the inferential analysis independent sample *t*-test and bivariate correlation were used. Analyses were done using SPSS, version 13.0.

Findings

As stated above, the questionnaire contained 3 sections. The first section contained questions designed to elicit demographic and employment profiles of respondents.

The demographic profile

The demographic profile of the sampled respondents (teen workers attending schools) comprised of their gender, age, and educational level. The majority of the teen workers in the different studied hotels and restaurants were male (98.7%). Most of the teens (77.6%) were within the age range of 15 to 19 years. The study also found that 15.8% of the sampled teen-workers obtained their Secondary School Certificate (SSC), whereas 56.6% completed up to class VIII and the rest 27.6% had no formal education. The demographic profile of the teens is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Teen Workers
(N=152)

Variables	Number and Percentage
Gender	
Male	150 (98.7%)
Female	2 (1.3%)
Age	
Below 15 years	34 (22.4%)
16 to 19 years	118 (77.6%)
Education	
No formal education	42 (27.6%)
Up to class VIII	86 (56.6%)
Up to SSC	24 (15.8%)

Employment profile

The employment profile of the respondents comprised of their number of jobs including the current job and the length of weekly working-hours in the current job. As shown in Table 2, about three-fourth of the samples (72.4%) reported that the current jobs were their first jobs; whereas the remaining 27.6% claimed that the present jobs were their second jobs. Regarding the length of weekly working-hours, majority of the teens (82.9%) reported to be working 20 to 29 hours a week; while the remaining (17.1%) were working for about 30 to 36 hours a week. Table 2 shows the employment profile of the sampled respondents.

Table 2: Employment Profiles of the Teen Workers

(N=152)

Variables	Number and Percentage
Number of jobs	
Current employment is 1st job	110 (72.4%)
Current employment is 2nd job	42 (27.6%)
Length of working hours per week	
20 to 29 hours	126 (82.9%)
30 to 36 hours	26 (17.1%)

Table 2 shows the number of jobs they held since they started working. The study found 42 respondents working for the second employer. It means that these 42 teens had left their 1st job for a number of reasons. In order to identify the reasons, these teens were asked to indicate the most important reason for leaving their previous jobs. The respondents were asked to select only one reason from the 5 reasons specified. The 5 reasons include: low pay, misbehavior of the supervisors/owners, long distance of workplaces from home, long working hours, and other reasons.

Table 3: Reasons for Leaving Job

(N=42)

Reasons	Number and Percentage
Poor pay	25 (59.5%)
Misbehavior of supervisor/owner	6 (14.2%)
Long working hours	7 (16.7%)
Long distance of workplaces from home	3 (7.14%)
Others	1 (2.46%)

As Table 3 shows, more than half of the 42 respondents left their previous job due to “poor pay” (59.5%). However, “long working hours” and “misbehavior of the supervisors” were identified by 16.7% and 14.2% respondents respectively as the most important reasons for leaving their previous job. “Long distance of workplaces from home” was considered important by 7.14% of the respondents as against only 2.46 percent who ticked “others” as the reason for leaving previous job.

Teen perception of key employment issues

The sample teens were asked to express their agreement or disagreement to 8 statements regarding their current jobs. The perceptions of the respondents were evaluated on a 5-point Likert Scale with scale 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to scale 5 indicating 'strongly agree'. The respondents were divided into two groups: teens employed in the hotel sector and those employed in the restaurant sector.

Table 4 : Teens' Perceptions of Current Employment Issues

Statement	Level of Agreement					
	All Respondents		Hotel Working Teens		Restaurant Working Teens	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
My employer pays me what I deserve	3.41	0.67	3.60	0.57	3.22	0.79
I do the job to support my personal causes	3.97	1.08	3.82	1.32	4.12	0.84
I do the job to help my family	3.81	1.06	3.83	1.02	3.80	1.12
Doing a job enhances my reputation in society	2.99	0.39	3.10	0.45	2.87	0.33
My co-workers help me a lot in my work	3.46	1.43	3.48	1.41	3.43	1.44
Working schedule is flexible in my current job	2.73	1.24	2.78	1.31	2.67	1.09
My supervisor/owner behaves well with me	2.34	1.34	2.29	1.30	2.38	1.38
My supervisor/owner fairly evaluates my job performance	3.45	0.72	3.73	0.34	3.17	1.08
Overall Total	3.27	0.99	3.32	0.97	3.21	1.01

N = 152

It was observed that the teens' overall perception of their current employment issues was not high ($M= 3.27$). Categorically, the perception of 'hotel sector' was slightly better ($M= 3.32$) than that of the 'restaurant sector' ($M= 3.21$). It was important to know whether or not the mean perceptions between the two groups of teens truly varied. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

$$H_0^1: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_1^1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

Since the sample sizes between the two groups were different (82 for the hotel sector and 70 for the restaurant sector), Levine's *F*-test was conducted to know the equality of the variances of the sample groups. Equal variances were assumed between the sample groups ($F = 15.23, p < .05$). Afterwards, an independent sample *t*-test was run to test the null hypothesis that 'there is no difference in the mean perception between the teens employed in hotels and the teens employed in restaurants'. Result of the *t*-test found no difference between the two groups as the null hypothesis was accepted ($t = 1.211, p > .10$). Thus, it can be confirmed that there was no difference in the means of the two sample groups regarding the overall perception of employment issues.

Teen job satisfaction

The respondent teens were also asked to evaluate their level of job satisfaction with the current places of employment. The 1-item question was scaled on a 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree) points. The following table shows the level of teen satisfaction with their current jobs:

Table 5 : Teen Satisfaction with Current Employment

Statement	Level of Satisfaction					
	All Respondents		Hotel Working Teens		Restaurant Working Teens	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Overall, I am satisfied with my current job	3.49	0.93	3.82	0.89	3.16	0.79

N = 152

Table 5 shows that the teens' overall satisfaction with their jobs was moderate ($M= 3.49$). In a comparative scenario, the level of satisfaction in the hotel sector was little better ($M= 3.82$) than that of the restaurant sector ($M= 3.16$). To see if the level of mean satisfaction truly varied between the groups compared, an independent sample *t*-test was run to test the following null hypothesis that 'there is no difference in the mean satisfaction between the teens employed in hotels and the teens employed in restaurants':

$$H_0^2: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_1^2: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

Due to the differences in the sample sizes between the two groups (82 for the hotel sector and 70 for the restaurant sector), Levine's *F*-test was conducted to know the homogeneity of the variances of the groups studied. Equal variances were not assumed between the sample groups ($F = 21.56, p < .01$). Afterwards, the result of the *t*-test found differences between the two groups as the null hypothesis was rejected ($t = 18.61, p < .01$). Thus, it can be confirmed that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the two sample groups regarding satisfaction with current job. In other words, the teens employed in the hotel sector were more satisfied ($M = 3.82$) than the teens employed in the restaurant sector ($M = 3.16$). However, the overall satisfaction was not high, rather moderate ($M = 3.49$). It was necessary to know whether the overall perception of employment of both the groups had any relationship with overall satisfaction with their job.

Relationship between overall job perception and overall job satisfaction

Pearson's correlation was run between the independent variable (overall mean perception of employment) and the dependent variable (overall mean satisfaction) to test any association between them. The study found a positive relationship between the two variables ($r = .347, p < .01$).

Conclusion and implications

Exploratory in nature, this study has attempted to study the perceptions of teens regarding key employment factors. Although no significant perceptual differences were found between the 'hotel-employed teens' and 'restaurant-employed teens', entrepreneurs in the hotel and restaurant sectors in the hospitality industry of Bangladesh might look at some key employment-related factors considered important by the teen workers and focus on these factors in the marketing campaigns of recruitment of workers.

The study results opt for a number of recommendations. The findings have revealed that teens left their previous jobs due to low pay, misbehavior of the supervisors, and long working hours. Considering this, pay can be increased, albeit with caution. Rather, the other extrinsic incentives such as flexible and small-shift-working hours could be used first by the hoteliers and restaurateurs since the teens are not completely ready to take full work-load like an adult employee.

Job perception of the respondents was not high. It was greatly due to the poor impression of the teens about their supervisors' misbehavior with them. In this respect, the entrepreneurs in both hotel and restaurant sectors need thoughtful revision. Moreover, the teens believed that their supervisors did not evaluate them properly. Teen employees should be treated equally with all other employees regarding benefits, pay increases, and promotions.

The provision for transport facility to and from workplace might be a good stimulator to motivate teens to work for large hotels and restaurants. Group transportation could be used in

this case to carry the employees to and from some common spots. It will also save some system losses derived from differential arrival time of employees at workplaces as their transportation is personally arranged. Moreover, parents of the teen workers would also welcome this initiative since combined company transport would ensure more safety and security of their children.

Now-a-days, a good number of teens are attracted to relatively new job opportunities in information technology, telecommunications, media and the like; and are gaining experiences while on the job.⁹ To attract these teens, hospitality employers; especially in the hotel and restaurant sectors, should develop partnerships with junior and high schools and offer internship programs. HR managers in the hospitality and tourism industry of Bangladesh should carefully consider the findings of this study and apply them for better recruitment planning, employee selection, training, and development of the teen workers – simply not for the sake of their businesses, but also as part of their responsibility and commitment to society.

Endnotes

- ¹ See E. Greenberger, L. D. Steinberg, & A. Vaux, “Adolescents who Work: Health and Behavioral Consequences of Job Stress”, *Developmental Psychology*, 17, (1981), 691-703; Greenberger, Steinberg, and M. Ruggiero, “A Job is a Job... or is it? Behavioral Observations in the Adolescent Workplace”, *Work and Occupations*, 9, (1982), 79-96; Greenberger and Steinberg, *When Teenagers Work: The Psychological and Social Cost of Adolescent Employment*, (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
- ² Stinberg & S. M. Dornbusch, “Negative Correlates of Part-time Employment during Adolescence: Replication and Elaboration”, *Developmental Psychology*, 27, (1991), 304-320.
- ³ K. M. O’Regan & J. M. Quigley, “Teenage Employment and Spatial Isolation of Minority and Poverty Households”, *Journal of Human Resources*, 31(3), (1996), 692.
- ⁴ H. A Divine & A. L. Bartlett, “Teenage Employment in Hospitality: Attitudes, Outcomes and Analysis”, *Hospitality Education and Research Journal*, 12(2), (1988), 431-441.
- ⁵ Greenberger, Steinberg, & Vaux, *Adolescents who work...*,
- ⁶ Greenberger, Steinberg, & Ruggiero, *A job is a job...*,
- ⁷ Greenberger & Steinberg, *When teenagers work...*,
- ⁸ Divine & Bartlett, *Teenage employment...*,
- ⁹ J. Dodge, “Teenagers save the Day”, *The Boston Globe*, p. C4.