

Blessing and Curse: Reviewing the Implications of Generative AI on Employee Relations in the Ready-Made Garment Sector

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is transforming Human Resource Management, particularly Employee Relations, by automating decision-making, enhancing personalization, and optimizing operational efficiency. This paper explores the implications of GAI adoption in the ready-made garments (RMG) sector, a labor-intensive industry in South and Southeast Asia. While GAI offers opportunities for productivity gains, safety improvements, and enhanced communication, its integration raises concerns about job displacement, skill gaps, and ethical dilemmas. Drawing on theoretical frameworks, such as the Technology Acceptance Model, the Task-Technology Fit model, and Self-Determination Theory, this study examines how GAI reshapes labor dynamics, organizational policies, and employee engagement. The findings suggest that successful GAI adoption requires a balanced approach, incorporating training initiatives, regulatory safeguards, and inclusive decision-making processes to mitigate risks and maximize benefits. The study highlights the need for a nuanced, context-specific analysis of GAI's role in reshaping employee relations within the RMG sector.

Categories: Computational Intelligence and Information Management, Employee Relations & Labour Legislation, Sustainable Human Resource

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, employee relations, ready-made garments, south asia, human resource management

Introduction And Background

Generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is rapidly transforming Human Resource Management (HRM), particularly Employee Relations (ER). This technology, which involves AI systems capable of generating contents, solutions, and insights, is emerging as a powerful tool in reshaping how organizations manage their workforce. GAI refers to AI systems capable of automatically generating new content by identifying and leveraging patterns in extensive datasets (Andrieux et al., 2024). While traditional AI relied on human supervision learning mechanism and relies on labeled data, GAI operates unsupervised, automatically discovering patterns, fostering creativity, and generating human-like contents (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023) (Kronblad et al., 2024) (Agrawal, 2023). Due to high level of automation, GAI can create rapid reports, customize feedback, expediting decision-making processes (Kar et al., 2023), which is demonstrated in a handful of prior literature and also practical reports (Feuerriegel et al., 2024) (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023) (Gupta et al., 2024). This superior capability allows GAI to penetrate and change the way several sectors operate, including hospitality, healthcare, marketing, and education by advancing customer services, enabling personalization, and optimizing technical problem-solving (Brown et al., 2024) (Budhwar et al., 2023) (Kasneci et al., 2023). According to a 2023 McKinsey survey of more than 1,600 business leaders, 55% reported that AI tools were invested in their work environment (McKinsey Company, 2023).

Despite its remarkable features and potential for organizational uses, GAI has been criticized for ethical concerns, including unfairness, data privacy violations, cybersecurity risks, misinformation, accountability gaps, and intellectual property issues (Walkowiak and Potts, 2024). To ensure ethical and fair adoption, GAI must adhere to key principles such as accountability, transparency, accuracy, and autonomy (Andrieux et al., 2024) (Rana et al., 2024). Given its diverse applications and requirements, from individual support to enhancing organizational productivity, as well as its distinct industrial characteristics, research on GAI adoption should focus on specific contexts and workplace settings to address these complexities effectively. This paper aims to explore the implications of GAI adoption in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector, a labor-intensive industry prevalent in South and Southeast Asia. The study seeks to provide analysis of both the potential benefits and the challenges associated with integrating GAI into this sector.

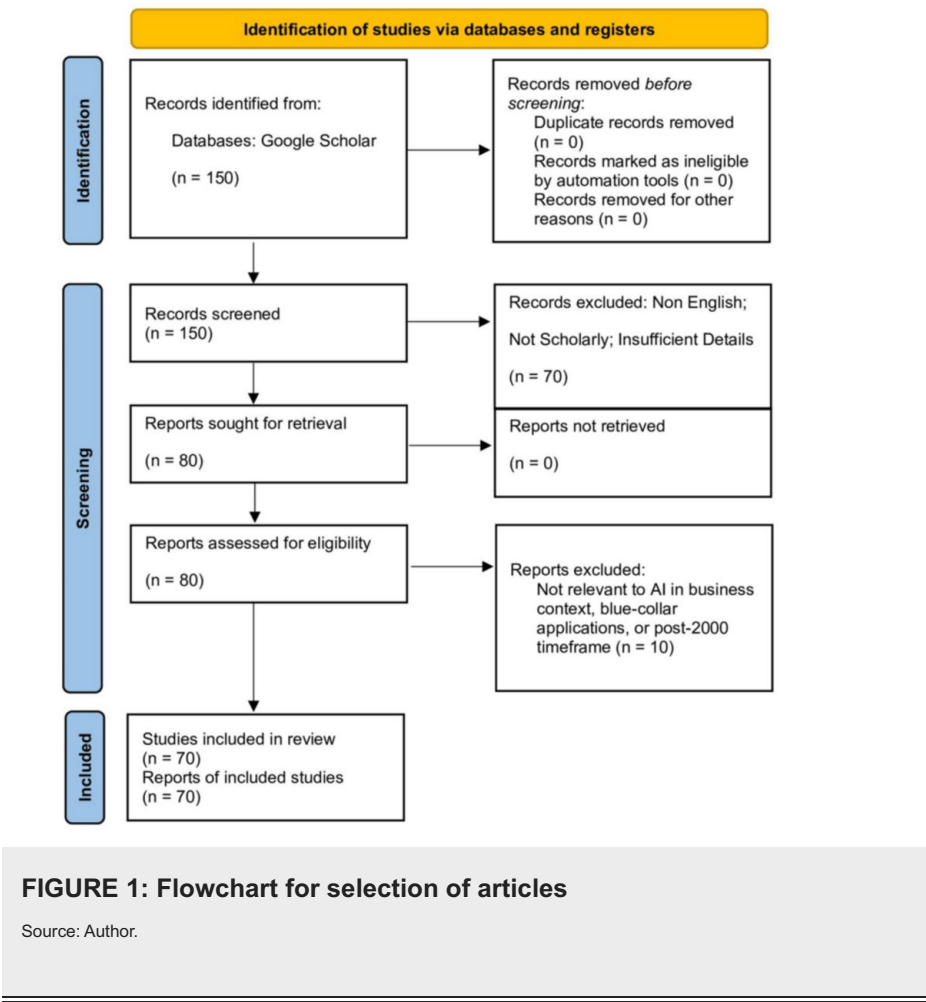
Review

GAI adoption: theoretical perspectives

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The application of AI, and GAI specifically, in business has been widely examined through both micro and macro lenses from the perspective of relatively popular theoretical frameworks (Chatterjee et al., 2021) (Manresa et al., 2024) (Agrawal, 2023). The paper drew on two main groups of articles: (1) scholarly articles covering the rationale and theoretical perspectives on the use of AI and (2) scholarly articles, though limited, covering the emerging use of AI in the blue-collar sector. Along the two main criteria mentioned above, we focused on date, considering articles on technology adoption in the post 2000 era since this where greater debate about AI issues emerged. Our main search was based on Google Scholar, which captures both scholarly and practice-based articles. The search revealed 150 articles that closely matched our criteria. Proceeding by elimination based on area relevance, the researchers included only 70 more recent articles for the discussion (Figure 1).



At the societal and organizational levels, previous authors investigated the succession of GAI adoption and acceptance by considering the uncertainty of external factors, such as legal environment, organizational regulations and procedures, infrastructures, and technological capabilities (Agrawal, 2023). Concerning external pressure, the Technology-Organizations-Environment (TOE) framework and institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) are theoretically driven for search in technology adoption and adaptation within the organizational context. The TOE framework examines the adoption of new technologies by considering three key factors: technology itself, organizational characteristics, and the external environment. But institutional theory emphasizes the role of government policies and environmental pressures in shaping organizational behavior and actions in adopting technology (Bag et al., 2021). More specifically, the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 1995) is often used to demonstrate the process of how novel ideas and technology spread through different communication channels within the organizations. This theory is frequently applied for actual and common GAI use such as ChatGPT, or real application of new technology like mobile phone ubiquitous system (Ahad and Busch, 2023) (Gupta et al., 2024).

At the individual level, previous research seems to be over-reliant on (Davis, 1989) technology acceptance model (TAM). TAM has been favored since it was developed in the information technology field with two constructs, which are perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. This theoretical model deeply investigates how individual readiness and decision-making play a hindering or driving role in technology

adoption. Likewise, studies also approach the Technology Readiness Index (TRI) (Parasuraman, 2000), concerning user technology acceptance (Flavián et al., 2021) (Manresa et al., 2024) to investigate how employees are prepared for technological change. The concept of self-determination (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 1985)), which is also commonly used in studies on GAI adoption, emphasizes the integration of employees' needs and aspirations as well as intrinsic motivations into the value creation process (Ren and Jackson, 2020) (Shen et al., 2024). As de Graaf (de Graaf, 2016) argues, how people perceive, respond, and interact with technology can shape the concept of human-robot relationships.

These theoretical frameworks are often integrated (e.g., TAM-TOE, TAM-SDT, DoI-TOE) to examine both macro- and micro-driven technology adoption (Ahad and Busch, 2023) (Chatterjee et al., 2021) (Shen et al., 2024). However, scholars argue that current theoretical frameworks on the application of new technology in organizations may pose challenges, considering the unique potential and capabilities of GAI (Brown et al., 2024) (Budhwar et al., 2023) (de Graaf, 2016). For example, both TAM and TOE studies often predict behavior rather than directly the outcomes of actual uses, which may not be valid assumptions in real-world situations, as well as in various business contexts (Goodhue, 2007) (Kelly et al., 2023). (Sohn and Kwon, 2020) and (Gursoy et al., 2019) argue that theoretical frameworks cannot provide timely optimal predictions in the face of the rapid development of GAI devices.

Theoretical frameworks are also limited in that they do not delve into the supporting factors that promote and complete a useful system with organizational settings, such as its design and suitability to the user's purpose, although these factors are important for both technology adoption and technology use to achieve high performance (Goodhue, 2007). These factors require much effort, and resources and depend on the type of technology suitable for each type of field and business.

GAI adoption and employee relations

Taking a deeper look at human labor, the literature also demonstrates that GAI has significant impacts on ER. The resource-based view (RBV) argues that organizations can leverage GAI as a valuable asset to enhance HRM by streamlining recruitment processes and improving training and development programs (Chowdhury et al., 2024) (Mohiuddin et al., 2022). GAI's ability to automatically generate content can support personalization, and frequently asked question processing for human services (e.g., monthly salary, benefits, ongoing feedback, and suggestions, etc.), thereby promoting internal communications, employee development and supporting organizations in making HR-related decisions (Feuerriegel et al., 2024) (Korzynski et al., 2024). Going beyond the conventional type of support resources, with a knowledge-based view (KBV), Malik et al. (Malik et al., 2023) emphasize the role of GAI in facilitating knowledge sharing and learning within the organization, especially by automating information dissemination and supporting collaborative knowledge building.

Some researchers have focused on reassessing job roles as GAI integrates into HRM practices (Boulus-Rødje et al., 2024) (Agrawal, 2023). Several studies have explored the Task-Technology Fit (TTF) model (Goodhue and Thompson, 1995), highlighting the importance of aligning technology capabilities with task requirements. This alignment supports technology adoption and usage and enhances AI performance by ensuring compatibility with workers' tasks (Ales et al., 2024) (Mikalef et al., 2019) (Agrawal, 2023). The theory suggests that the more effectively a technology aligns with the tasks it supports, the greater its adoption and utility (Goodhue and Thompson, 1995) (Mikalef et al., 2019). Similarly, Howard and Rose (Howard and Rose, 2019) emphasize that a strong alignment between tasks and technology can significantly improve individual performance.

By aligning technology capabilities with task requirements, organizations can mitigate the risks associated with automation and foster greater worker engagement. Additionally, from the perspective of SDT (Deci and Ryan, 1985), workers' positive interactions with GAI are shaped not only by task fit but also by intrinsic factors such as curiosity and the desire to learn. This suggests that both technical compatibility and intrinsic motivation play critical roles in successful GAI adoption.

To optimize human-machine collaboration, Boulus-Rødje et al. (Boulus-Rødje et al., 2024) identify three essential work requirements: articulation work (understanding AI functionalities), relationship work (fostering positive interactions with AI), and identity work (redefining professional roles). Their findings suggest that GAI is evolving from being merely a tool to becoming a workplace partner, reshaping roles, workflows, and professional identities. Workers navigate this transformation through phases of experimentation, frustration, adaptation, and integration, ultimately enhancing performance while preserving professional integrity. Similarly, Kronblad et al. (Kronblad et al., 2024) highlight the acceptance of GAI as a partner, particularly among tech-savvy employees in professional service firms. These individuals perceive GAI not as a threat but as a supportive tool that complements their work.

These approaches place employees at the core of business success, particularly in the context of the growing integration of GAI. As a result, GAI is increasingly regarded not merely as a tool but as a transformative factor that redefines the employment relationship, fostering greater employee engagement with these technologies (Ryan and Deci, 2017) (Shen et al., 2024).

While viewing GAI as a tool to harmonize human labor and technology in the workplace, by automating routine tasks, streamlining operations, and reducing conflict (Budhwar et al., 2023) (Dong et al., 2024) (Malik et al., 2023), may offer practical benefits, this perspective risks adopting a unitarist bias. Unitarism, which promotes the rationalization of human-machine cooperation to achieve common organizational goals, is often considered an ideal framework for fostering harmonious labor relations (Kaufman et al., 2020). Within HRM and organizational behavior research, the unitarist view dominates, presenting human-machine collaboration as a means to align workforce efforts with organizational objectives (Barry and Wilkinson, 2021) (Wilkinson et al., 2020). Studies on AI's impact on human labor frequently echo this idealized perspective. For instance, a review of 103 studies by Intahchomphoo et al. (Intahchomphoo et al., 2024) revealed a predominant focus on AI's positive effects, with only 37 studies addressing its potential negative implications for workers.

However, such unitarist frameworks often overlook the contextual nuances of different sectors, potentially leading to overly optimistic projections for GAI adoption (Chowdhury et al., 2024). They may also fail to account for conflicts arising in decision-making influenced by GAI or exacerbate existing inequalities in pluralistic (diverse interest groups) or extreme (conflicting interests) labor relations (Kaufman et al., 2020). While GAI is often celebrated for its efficiency and innovation, we have made a point to highlight the less visible tensions that come with its adoption. Instead of merely assuming it's a one-size-fits-all solution, we have pointed to risks like exclusion and uneven accesses, especially in sectors like RMG. By bringing in alternative viewpoints, we aim to offer a more grounded and realistic take on what GAI means for workers and organizations alike. To address these gaps, Brown et al. (Brown et al., 2024) emphasize the necessity of investigating GAI adoption through a cultural and contextual lens, with particular attention to workforce characteristics. Similarly, Wamba et al. (Wamba et al., 2023) argue that organizations cannot achieve optimal performance without adequately addressing external and environmental pressures. Moreover, TTF model underscores that effective GAI application requires alignment not only between task requirements and technological features but also with individual abilities and traits. While the previously mentioned papers primarily focus on GAI adoption among white-collar workers or managerial-level employees (Manresa et al., 2024), this highlights the increasing need for a careful analysis of sector-specific contexts, organizational dynamics, and the influence of individual characteristics on GAI implementation.

GAI and ER relation in RMG settings

The RMG sector is a cornerstone of the export-driven economies of developing South and Southeast Asian countries, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Despite significant growth in recent years, the fast fashion phenomenon and the demand for mass production have placed increasing pressure on RMG manufacturers. These pressures include the need to accelerate production cycles, respond swiftly to consumer demands, and maintain competitive production costs (Berg et al., 2021) (Gangoda et al., 2023). As a result, environmental and labor challenges have become critical issues within the sector.

Both academic researchers and industry practitioners emphasize the potential of technological advancements to mitigate these challenges. Innovations in production prediction, management, and operational control could enable textile organizations to manage large order requirements more efficiently (Gangoda et al., 2023). Similarly, GAI has gained recognition as a valuable tool for addressing operational inefficiencies in the RMG and broader textile sectors (Ghobakhloo et al., 2024) (Sikka et al., 2022). The integration of AI and automation into the RMG sector not only enhances machine efficiency but also optimizes overall production operations while controlling costs (Intahchomphoo et al., 2024) (Sikka et al., 2022).

GAI, in particular, is revolutionizing operational practices with its self-learning and creative capabilities. It enables algorithmic fashion design, facilitating rapid prototyping, customization, and increase (Hasan et al., 2020) productivity, all while reducing time-to-market (Salman et al., 2023). Additionally, GAI supports sustainability initiatives by improving supply chain processes and reducing waste, a pressing concern amid the growth of fast fashion and increased consumption (Ghobakhloo et al., 2024) (Hossain et al., 2024) (Mohiuddin et al., 2022) (Sikka et al., 2022).

However, as discussed earlier, focusing solely on the technological benefits of GAI may overlook the nuances of sector-specific and labor force characteristics (Brown et al., 2024) (Chowdhury et al., 2024). The RMG sector, traditionally labor-intensive, has relied heavily on low-cost labor as a competitive advantage (De Mattos et al., 2021) (Hasan et al., 2020). Yet, a critical question arises: Is cheap labor still a sustainable competitive advantage for these countries in an AI-driven world? It can be seen that the transition to GAI requires a rethinking of labor strategies and an adaptation of organizational structures.

Scholars have argued that adopting new technologies in the RMG sector requires more than just financial investment in advanced infrastructure (Calabrese et al., 2020) (Saha et al., 2024) (Salman et al., 2023). It necessitates strengthening regulatory frameworks (Calabrese et al., 2020), ensuring compliance with ethical standards, and addressing organizational resistance to change. While research on employee

relations in the RMG sector has traditionally focused on organizational compliance with ethical standards (Azim et al., 2020) (Uddin et al., 2021), these steps are now crucial in managing the shift from labor-intensive practices to more technology-driven models. Without adequate support policies, however, employees may experience dissatisfaction and disengagement, which can lower morale and undermine productivity. Therefore, insufficient policy support not only affects individual satisfaction but also hampers the broader transformation needed to redefine labor dynamics in the age of automation.

These dynamics highlight the need for a pluralist approach that carefully considers the diverse interests of stakeholders, including workers, employers, and policymakers. As Wamba et al. (Wamba et al., 2023) note, optimal organizational performance cannot be achieved without addressing external pressures and contextual challenges. Therefore, any examination of GAI's role in the RMG sector must move beyond unitarist narratives to not only investigate socioeconomic context but also its workforce dynamics.

The positive impact of GAI on ER in RMG

Increasing Safety and Reducing Health Hazards

GAI and robotics have the potential to address labor safety issues in the manufacturing sector by automating operational tasks, such as pruning, handling heavy objects, and performing hazardous jobs (Intahchomphoo et al., 2024). This automation can mitigate the longstanding challenges of poor occupational safety and health, which are inherent in the garment manufacturing industry (Rubel et al., 2016). As a result, the adoption of GAI technologies may enhance workplace safety and improve workers' job satisfaction and overall sense of security.

Furthermore, the emergence of GAI in the RMG sector potentially introduces the concept of "blue collar with a tie" (Meisinger, 2022). The authors (ibid.) emphasize the surprising insight that, despite a potential decline in demand for traditional blue-collar workers, this labor segment is progressively transitioning into more prestigious and non-routine roles redefining itself under this new paradigm (Reijnders and De Vries, 2018).

Employee Wellbeing

While traditional AI systems face considerable limitations in managing complex, nuanced interactions that require human expertise (Andrieux et al., 2024), GAI offers innovative solutions to address such challenges. For instance, GAI-powered chatbots have demonstrated their utility as cognitive behavioral support tools, providing emotional assistance and personalized interactions (Budhwar et al., 2023) (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). These applications not only support mental health but also contribute to creating a more fulfilling and individualized working environment. Consequently, GAI can play a significant role in improving workplace conditions and employee satisfaction (Hasan et al., 2020) (Syed and Mahmud, 2022).

Unexpected Advantages from Workers' Characteristics

Surprisingly, the characteristics of the RMG workforce, especially female workers, can serve as an advantage in promoting employee satisfaction in digital context. According to Asadullah and Talukder (Asadullah and Talukder, 2019), the satisfaction of female workers in the RMG sector depends not only on the working environment but also on external social and cultural factors. Their research indicates that women working in environments where most of their colleagues are female tend to be more satisfied, even if the working conditions are less than ideal. Additionally, monetary factors are often significant drivers of job satisfaction for RMG workers (Dey and Basak, 2017) (Syed and Mahmud, 2022). In this context, their perceived satisfaction and well-being play a significant role in their overall job satisfaction.

Bender and Roche (Bender and Roche, 2016) found that female workers often have lower expectations for certain job attributes, such as job flexibility. This may explain why, despite the RMG industry not offering sufficient flexibility, female workers are still able to maintain satisfaction. For example, in Bangladesh, where women in the RMG sector have few alternative employment options, the gap between their expectations and job performance is often narrower than for men, leading to higher levels of satisfaction (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). Therefore, increasing awareness of these employee demographics, particularly in the context of digital work, may offer distinct advantages over their higher-expectation counterparts in enhancing satisfaction and fostering a more positive attitude toward GAI adoption.

Challenges for RMG Workforce

The integration of AI technologies into the RMG sector presents considerable challenges, particularly in relation to labor concerns. Given the unique nature of the RMG workforce, which is adapting to rapid technological advancements, it is vital to evaluate how businesses and workers can navigate the labor relation challenges and risks posed by the adoption of GAI (Hasan et al., 2020). These challenges are particularly evident in areas such as job displacement, gender inequities in the workplace, and skill

deficits.

Job Replacement

According to Makridakis (Makridakis, 2017), the rise of emerging AI technologies continues to drive a decline in manufacturing employment, resulting in profound changes to businesses and jobs. Akter et al. (Akter et al., 2024) emphasize that automation poses a significant threat to job security, with projections suggesting that up to 60% of jobs could be affected by 2041. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated tensions in labor relations within the RMG industry, leading to more severe layoffs and increased job insecurity (Hardy et al., 2024). This trend has heightened the vulnerability of informal and unprotected (Hardy et al., 2024), particularly among female workers, who face disproportionate caregiving burdens (Dey and Basak, 2017). As Ehsan (Ehsan, 2021) notes, women in RMG manufacturing are often excluded from decision-making roles, which results in their relegation to lower-paid and less secure positions, especially when it comes to the implementation of GAI.

While technology can offer peace of mind by automating certain processes and addressing traditionally physical, psychological, and emotional challenges, it also introduces new sources of stress, such as job uncertainty and the possibility of job loss (Budhwar et al., 2022) (Budhwar et al., 2023). Prior research has found that in developing economies, technological advancements significantly impact employment, heightening job insecurity and generating new technology-related well-being concerns, such as automation anxiety or fear of job loss (Bertulfo et al., 2019) (Dong et al., 2024) (Islam, 2018). This psychological strain significantly affects the female workforce, the most vulnerable group in the RMG industry.

Moreover, unlike other white-collar industries, the role of GAI, when combined with human labor, is likely to challenge the concept of "decent work" in the RMG sector due to the risk of unequal distribution of benefits and burdens as AI reshapes work roles (Budhwar et al., 2023) (De Mattos et al., 2021). The International Labor Organization defines "decent work" as including job creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue, advocating for fair wages, safe working conditions, workers' rights, and job security (Khan et al., 2019). In the RMG sector, job creation is crucial for poverty reduction, especially in developing countries. As AI, and later GAI, gradually reshape work roles, it is essential to ensure that these changes align with the principles of decent work and protect workers at risk of displacement. Therefore, identifying the types of technology-related tasks, according to the framework of Boulus-Rødje et al. (Boulus-Rødje et al., 2024) for RMG workers and implementing appropriate training initiatives will be key in helping them adapt to these new roles.

Skill Gaps and Resistance to Change

The predominantly low-skilled workforce in the RMG sector, which includes a significant underemployed and unemployed female demographic, may face significant barriers in adopting automation and advanced machinery (Ehsan, 2021) (Islam, 2018). According to Salman et al. (Salman et al., 2023), the most significant barriers to adopting Industry 4.0 in Bangladesh's RMG sector are "I4.0 training," "lack of motivation," and "resistance to change," based on their prominence scores. Likewise, in a literature review paper, Calabrese et al. (Calabrese et al., 2020) indicate that the lack of a skilled and specialized labor force, as well as insufficient knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness regarding emerging technologies, further exacerbates these challenges in developing countries' RMG sectors.

Additionally, RMG manufacturers lack investment in technology education (Saha et al., 2024); therefore, female workers face fewer opportunities for training and skill development due to job characteristics that do not support on-the-job training. Bertulfo et al. (Bertulfo et al., 2019) also highlight that limited access to training programs for female RMG workers not only hampers their ability to adapt to new technologies but also increases frustration and disengagement.

This situation poses significant challenges for the RMG industry to implement appropriate upskilling and reskilling program, which relies heavily on aligning its operations with the geographic, cultural, and low-education contexts of rural workers (Akter et al., 2024). Overcoming these barriers requires a strategic focus on enhancing knowledge, providing skill training, and raising awareness to foster readiness for technological transformation.

Opportunities for addressing ER challenges in RMG

Training Initiatives

Considering the increasing challenges of job displacement in the RMG sector, training is seen as an effective approach to upskill workers and ensure they possess the necessary skills to work with emerging technologies (Ooi et al., 2023). Training should not only enhance technical abilities but also foster a sense of control and self-efficacy, promoting long-term engagement and success in the workplace (Al Naqbi et

al., 2024). From the perspective of SDT, worker satisfaction and adaptation to GAI depend on fulfilling psychological needs such as autonomy and competence (Deci et al., 2017).

Although the implementation of GAI presents a skill gap challenge for RMG employees, there is clear evidence that it offers a significant opportunity to alleviate workforce training constraints and reduce inequality within the sector. While there is a gap in learning how to use GAI, its features can help employees bridge this gap by utilizing GAI as a tool to enhance their skills and knowledge. According to Korzynski et al. (Korzynski et al., 2024), personalized learning via GAI can be instrumental in bridging the skills gap, especially for female workers, who are often overlooked for higher-skilled positions in favor of their male counterparts (Akter et al., 2024). Wiles et al. (Wiles et al., 2024) argue that reskilling through GAI enables less-skilled workers to take on more complex tasks.

In this regard, GAI may become an "exoskeleton," offering temporary skill support, rather than a substitute for continuous training that keeps pace with technological advancements (Wiles et al., 2024). Akter et al. (Akter et al., 2024) address this concern by proposing training initiatives tailored to the specific needs of rural workers, with language, teaching methods, and content customized for better accessibility. Furthermore, (Gangoda et al., 2023) Gangoda et al. argue that training is essential for retaining valuable talent in the garment sector. Based on interviews with 21 participants across five countries: Sri Lanka, the United States, China, Hong Kong, and India, these authors suggest that bridging the skill gap requires developing specializations in emerging fields, such as AI and 3D technology, within the garment industry. This would help promote more effective and continuous internal training.

Training is argued as a crucial solution for facilitating the adoption of GAI in the RMG sector, helping to overcome resistance to change and boosting workers' confidence in using new technologies (Gangoda et al., 2023) (Guo et al., 2024)

To achieve sustainable effectiveness, flexible, continuous, and workforce-specific training strategies are essential. Managers in RMG may also need to strike a balance between the benefits of automation and the need to enhance the social-emotional competencies of workers (Smet et al., 2024), ultimately fostering a more equitable and productive work environment.

Increase Job Satisfaction Through Employee Trust

Many scholars emphasize that in the digital age, increasing employee satisfaction and engagement requires cultivating strong trust in technology (Glikson and Woolley, 2020) (Marimon et al., 2024) (Agrawal, 2023). Low trust in technology can lead to underuse and inefficiency, while excessive trust in ineffective technology can result in misuse and safety risks (Glikson and Woolley, 2020). Research shows that employees with an open attitude toward new technology not only work more efficiently but also feel more engaged in their work (Malik et al., 2023) (Shen et al., 2024). The TAM, later extended with a trust variable, indicates that trust is a key predictor of both behavioral intention and satisfaction with new technology (Park and Yoon, 2024) (Prasad and De, 2024). In corporate settings, when employees perceive GAI as trustworthy, fair, and transparent, they not only accept it but also appreciate the value it brings (Zerilli et al., 2022). These authors also found that when users trust the accuracy and safety of AI tools, they are more likely to use them again and feel more satisfied with the experience (Park and Yoon, 2024) (Prasad and De, 2024) (Zerilli et al., 2022).

Encouraging employees is also essential for strengthening this trust and, in turn, enhancing satisfaction. According to a survey of 500 U.S. employees, Dong et al. (Dong et al., 2024) conclude that organizations that encourage employee participation in GAI-related decisions have successfully increased both employee satisfaction and adoption. When employees feel their voices are respected, they tend to perceive technology as a supportive tool rather than a threat. This reduces concerns about job loss and bias while fostering collaboration between humans and GAI. Furthermore, trust helps minimize the psychological distance between employees and technology. In the workplace, building trust in GAI through transparency and accountability can create a positive cycle of trust, acceptance, and satisfaction. According to Budhwar et al. (Budhwar et al., 2022) and Dong et al. (Dong et al., 2024), employee trust in AI systems depends largely on transparency and fairness in their operation. Intahchomphoo et al. (Intahchomphoo et al., 2024) argue that addressing concerns about ethics, privacy, and bias is crucial for trust in GAI to become a powerful driver of a harmonious, sustainable, and productive workplace.

To help guide future research, we have also included a summary table (Table 1) in the Appendices that outlines five key areas where further investigation is needed. These include job displacement, gendered impacts, training and upskilling, ethical considerations, and employee trust. Each theme is paired with a relevant research question and selected references to support deeper exploration of how GAI is reshaping employee relations in the RMG sector.

Conclusions

The research has implications for HR practice in blue-collar industries in developing economies. It shows the need for the field to rise up to the challenges and opportunities of the use of AI in a sector traditionally perceived to be a low-skilled area. The application of AI can help HR to understand details of the work environment and productivity issues, which if resolved, can enhance organizations' social responsibility. GAI has the potential to revolutionize various industries by enhancing efficiency, productivity, and innovation. However, implementing AI in sectors where it has not been adopted yet presents several challenges. These challenges range from data availability and quality to ethical and privacy concerns. Implementing generative AI in HRM presents several challenges that organizations must navigate to fully leverage its potential. In particular, the RMG industry faces workforce challenges, including labor-intensive processes, skill shortages, and evolving consumer demands. Generative AI, with its ability to automate tasks, enhance creativity, and optimize supply chains, can transform employment relations. However, it also raises concerns related to job displacement, discrimination, and employer liability. The paper's main limitation is to draw solely on literature without further empirical data. However, it contributes to the literature on the increasing use of technology in the RMG sector, an area of importance that is little explored. This analysis can inform emerging research since it has compiled and systematically examined the limited research on the topic, which can provide direction for future research.

This study is based solely on a review of existing literature, without the support of primary empirical data. As such, while it offers a comprehensive synthesis of current research and theoretical perspectives, it may not fully capture the lived experiences or nuanced realities of workers and organizations within the RMG sector. Additionally, the reliance on secondary sources may limit the generalizability of findings across different national contexts. Future research would benefit from incorporating fieldwork, cross-country comparisons, and direct engagement with stakeholders to validate and expand upon the insights presented.

Appendices

Research area	Promising research question	Exemplary references
GAI and job displacement	How can GAI adoption be balanced with job preservation in labor-intensive sectors?	(Makridakis, 2017); (Akter et al., 2024)
Gendered impact of GAI	What are the gender-specific implications of GAI in the RMG workforce?	(Ehsan, 2021); (Dey and Basak, 2017)
Training and upskilling	What models of GAI-supported training are most effective for low-skilled workers?	(Wiles et al., 2024); (Korzynski et al., 2024)
Ethical and regulatory frameworks	How can ethical standards be embedded in GAI deployment in developing economies?	(Andrieux et al., 2024); (Rana et al., 2024)
Employee trust and engagement	What factors foster trust in GAI among blue-collar workers?	(Glikson and Woolley, 2020); (Dong et al., 2024)

TABLE 1: Future research directions on GAI and employee relations in the RMG sector
GAI, generative artificial intelligence; RMG, ready-made garment.

Additional Information

Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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