Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE)

An Impact Evaluation

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Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE): An Impact Evaluation

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Acronyms

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDI	In-depth Interview
IGA	Income-generating Activity
ITT	intention-to-treat
2SLS	2-Stage Least Squares
LATE	Local Average Treatment Effect
MIS	Management Information System
PRIDE	Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment
PWD	Person With Disabilities
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
SDP	Skills Development Programme
SD	Standard Deviation
SSC	Secondary School Certificate

Executive Summary

The BRAC Skills Development Programme (SDP) launched a pilot project, titled "Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE)," in December 2019. The overall objective of the project is to provide training to equip disadvantaged youth with the skills necessary to secure sustainable employment in the retail sector. The pilot was implemented in the metropolitan areas of four districts: Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet, and Chattogram.

The program targeted unemployed youth aged 18–35 from low-income households (earning less than BDT 6,000 per capita per month) with at least a secondary school education. The program aimed for a diverse trainee pool, with 60% female, 40% male, and an overall representation of 6% persons with disabilities (PWDs). Program participants received apprenticeship- and classroom-based training. The training was provided in four phases. The first and third batches received classroom-based training (44 days of classroom training and 15 days of hands-on training), whereas the second and fourth batches received apprenticeship-based training (8 days of classroom training and 40 days of hands-on training in the retail stores).

The BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of the training program on the trained youth's economic empowerment. The survey period ran from June to November 2023. Potential learners were randomly assigned to treatment (960) and control (260) groups, distributed across the four program phases. Due to various reasons, including employment status and personal matters, not all individuals we approached wished to participate in the survey, and some had relocated. We successfully surveyed 675 treatment youths and 213 control youths at baseline. At the endline conducted in 2023, 71% of the full sample (those surveyed at baseline) were successfully resurveyed. In addition, to evaluate the retail sector environment, we surveyed 77 retailers at baseline and 66 of them at endline. We also collected data from employees at both baseline and endline (with different respondents due to staffing and career changes). Finally, we conducted 15 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with young people to understand employment status, non-compliance, and dropout dynamics.

A key part of the RCT methodology is to ensure the treatment and control groups are comparable, both in observed and unobserved characteristics. Since the treatment and control groups are balanced in terms of baseline characteristics, any effect on the outcomes caused by smaller control groups is minimized.

The study's findings revealed a significant positive impact of the training on participants' soft skills. Compared to the control group, treatment group members demonstrated an 80% increase in perceived decision-making ability, a 70% improvement in communication skills, and a 73% boost in self-confidence. Notably, the effect on soft skills was higher for female participants compared to male participants.

The study found a significant positive impact of the training on the earnings of female trainees. While male trainees also experienced an income increase, it was not statistically significant. Female trainees saw an average monthly income increase of BDT 1,829—111% higher than that of the female control group. There was, however, no statistically significant impact of the training on female employment or labour supply, suggesting that the increase in females' income was generated through an increase in their productivity. Furthermore, from a comparison of

income levels between the treatment and control groups, we did not find any significant wage gap between males and females in the retail sector.

Results also show the PRIDE program's positive effect on the career mobility of participants. Those who completed the training applied, on average, for one more job than the control group in the past year, and the proportion of trainees who changed their job at least once in the past year was 555% higher than the control group. We also found that males experienced a significant increase in both the number of jobs applied for and job change in the last one year relative to their control group, implying greater success in job applications. Whereas, female participants experienced a significant increase in their job change status only, not the total number of jobs applied for. We found that both apprenticeship- and classroom-based training have a significant impact on job changes among participants.

Satisfaction levels among the participants were generally high. Most participants (90–99%) in classroom training were satisfied with almost all skills training. However, they expressed a comparatively lower level of satisfaction with the long duration of the classes and class schedule. For apprenticeship-based training, participants (both male and female) reported satisfaction with most workplace practices, with the exception of overtime work. PWDs were more satisfied than other respondents in both classroom-based and apprenticeship-based training.

The program yielded higher benefits for female participants, suggesting it can be scaled up for female participants. Though there are methodological limitations (since the two interventions are not randomized), both classroom-based and apprenticeship-based training appear to be similar in terms of effect on employment and earnings. The apprenticeship-based training is, thus, more cost-effective. Therefore, BRAC can scale up the apprenticeship-based training model.

The study identified a low program completion rate, with only 53% of treatment participants completing the training, as a key challenge. Effective targeting strategies would be essential for addressing this issue. Moreover, further research should be conducted to better understand the reasons behind the high non-completion rate. Additionally, there is scope for customizing the program (such as training duration and time) to better suit the needs of students and housewives, who were found to be more likely to drop out. Distance to training centres also emerged as a significant factor influencing completion rates. Finally, considering the concerns raised by participants regarding overtime work, the program should work closely with retailers to address this issue.

1. Introduction

The proportion of young population in Bangladesh is one of the largest in Asia, with over a third of the country's people falling within the 18–35 age range (Ahammed, 2012). However, a significant portion of this youth population faces barriers to entering the labour market due to insufficient skills and knowledge (Das, 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2013). This predicament is evident in the unemployment rate: while youth comprise 36.7% of Bangladesh's labour force, their unemployment rate is 8%, compared to the national average of 3.53% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2023). High dropout rates and gender disparities in skill development further exacerbate this issue (Cho et al., 2013; Millenky, 2016; Ramsdal et al., 2013).

Suitable training can equip young individuals with the specialized skills necessary for job market entry (Apunyo et al., 2021). Conversely, a lack of skills among disadvantaged youth leads to higher unemployment rates (Yeung & Yang, 2020). Vocational training can create more equal access to employment opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups like persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Marope et al., 2015). For instance, in one study in Bangladesh, Nuri et al. (2012) found that 60% of PWDs gained employment after receiving vocational training. Das (2021) estimated that on-the-job training of disadvantaged youth population increased labour market participation by 16 percentage points and earnings by 23% in Bangladesh. Alzua et al. (2014) observed a 32% increase in employment and a 52% increase in earnings for youth trainees in Argentina, compared to the control group, with a gender gap in impact. In the Dominican Republic, Ibarraran et al. (2014) found that aside from the direct labour market outcomes, such training significantly boosts the confidence and expectation among the youth. Apprenticeships and internships have also been found to promote decent work outcomes for youth, in addition to improving their employability (Comyn & Brewer, 2018). Perry (2003) further emphasizes the role of vocational training in increasing employment and promoting decent work practices, which includes a safe and fair work environment for all, especially for PWDs. It is argued that education, training, and core skills acquisition are key to improving the labour market prospects for PWDs, guided by the principles of decent work (O'Reilly, 2003).

In December 2019, BRAC initiated a pilot project titled "Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE)," funded by the IKEA Foundation and UBS Optimus Foundation. The project, in partnership with the retail sector, aims to create a scalable model for providing sustainable, decent livelihood opportunities for low-income urban youth in Bangladesh, with a special emphasis on the participation of women and PWDs. The pilot was implemented in the metropolitan areas of Dhaka, Khulna, Chattogram, and Sylhet. If proven effective, the project will explore the possibilities for achieving full financial sustainability during the scale-up phase.

Retail is a fast-growing sector in Bangladesh, already employing over six million people and making a substantial contribution to the economy (Kabir, 2022). Combined, the retail and wholesale sectors contribute 12.9% to employment (BBS, 2023) and 15.29% to the national gross domestic product (GDP), with an annual growth rate of 6.65% (Ministry of Finance, 2023). Over the past 13–14 years, Bangladesh has experienced a noticeable retail revolution, leading to a rapidly evolving retail landscape. Given its emerging economic significance, the retail sector holds substantial potential to offer employment opportunities for career advancement, particularly for young individuals, including women and PWDs. However, the sector has a demand for a skilled workforce, while a significant number

of unemployed youth lack the required skills to serve in this sector. Thus, the youth employment potential of the retail sector in Bangladesh remains largely unrealized.

BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) conducted an impact assessment of the PRIDE intervention. This study primarily aims to understand the immediate impacts of the project. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. evaluate existing decent work practices followed by employers in the retail sector;
2. explore the number of retail sector employers willing to recruit trained youth, especially females and PWDs;
3. measure the current labour force participation in the retail sector, segregated by gender, and gather separate data on the labour force participation rate in the partner organizations;
4. measure the gender-based pay gap in the retail sector generally;
5. evaluate the impact of the project on beneficiaries in terms of economic empowerment, labour market participation rate, and decent employment;
6. measure workplace accommodation of PWDs in the retail sector; and
7. compare and evaluate the effectiveness of the training models used by the project.

2. Program Description

BRAC's Skills Development Programme (SDP) launched a pilot project titled "Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE)" in December 2019. The project aimed to facilitate sustainable, decent livelihoods among the marginalized urban youth through providing them training to find employment in the retail sector. The project was piloted in the metropolitan areas of four districts: Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet, and Chattogram.

In collaboration with the retail sector and the Government of Bangladesh, the project aimed to develop a training model to foster sustainable livelihoods for low-income urban youth and other disadvantaged groups, including women and PWDs, in the retail sector. To identify the eligible learners, the program followed three criteria:

i) The learners must be from low-income households (earning per capita income of less than BDT 6,000 per month).

ii) They must be between 18 and 35 years old.

iii) They must have completed at least a secondary level of education.

Moreover, the program aimed to train 60% female and 40% male learners, with a target of 6% of participants being PWDs.

The pilot program provided two types of training: apprenticeship- and classroom-based. The training was provided in four different batches. The first and third batches received classroom-based training, while the second and fourth batches received apprenticeship-based training. The classroom-based training offered extensive classroom instruction (44 days) with a shorter hands-on training component (15 days) in BRAC-placed retail stores. On the other hand, the apprenticeship-based training provided less classroom training (8 days) but offered a longer hands-on experience (40 days) in retail stores. Following training, participants were placed in retail stores across various business sectors, including clothing and footwear, supermarkets, hypermarkets (a combination of supermarket and departmental store), groceries and convenience stores, electrical and electronics, food products (e.g., confectionery, bakery, etc.), mobile phone and mobile accessories, and furniture and furnishing.

The program began with a comprehensive analysis of the retail sector landscape and a location survey. Collaborating with retail partners, the project developed a training curriculum aligned with core business needs. Before selecting learners, the program established partnerships with employers and prepared training centres. Door-to-door visits were conducted to identify potential learners. Motivational boot camps and orientation sessions were also organized to inform potential learners and their parents about the training benefits and career pathways in the retail sector. Subsequently, selected learners received retail sales training through either the apprenticeship- or classroom-based modality.

The training aimed to provide career counselling and increase required skills for the retail sales sector. It also focused on promoting decent work practices, career progression, and the inclusion of women and PWDs in the retail sector by conducting workplace assessments, awareness sessions, and workshops. Following training, the program placed the training graduates with various retail businesses. BRAC made partnership[1] agreements with selected retail

[1] Some of these retailers have become partners of SDP for the PRIDE project.

businesses for the job placement. The project targeted to successfully place 80% of graduates in the job market.

The program also provided allowances to learners upon completion of the training. Male participants received BDT 6,000, while female participants received BDT 8,000. For PWDs, male learners received BDT 9,000 and female learners received BDT 11,000, all contingent on training completion.

3. Research Design and Descriptive Statistics

3.1. Quantitative Research Design

BIGD employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to assess the impact of the PRIDE project. The RCT[2] was conducted at the individual level, stratified by the four training batches.

The study encompassed all program locations across four geographical regions in Bangladesh: Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet, and Chattogram districts. SDP used home visits to generate a list of potential learners for training in these locations. The research team then randomly assigned these potential learners to treatment and control groups, batch by batch. The training was offered to the treatment group. In total, 960 learners were assigned to the treatment group and 260 to the control group. During the baseline survey, we were able to reach approximately 73% of the total sample (Table 3.1).

3.2. In-Depth Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of employment status, non-compliance factors, and dropout dynamics, we conducted 15 in-depth interviews (IDIs). Participants were purposefully selected from Dhaka (4) and Sylhet (11) to capture the perspectives of both urban and peri-urban participants. Thematic analysis was applied to the collected data to extract coherent interpretations and generate findings. These qualitative insights complement the results derived from the quantitative analysis.

3.3. Data Collection and Sample Distribution

The baseline survey was conducted on a rolling basis, starting with the first batch. On average, it took a week to complete the survey for each batch. Following the survey, the program started the training for the treatment group. Table 3.1 shows the sample distribution and survey success rate for the baseline survey by batch.

The endline survey was conducted from June 2023 to November 2023. It is important to note that at the point when the survey ended, the final cohort of learners had not yet finished the training, as they graduated at the end of November. The survey began simultaneously in all four districts, and enumerators visited the respondents' houses or workplaces and conducted face-to-face interviews. However, 71 respondents were not located at their baseline addresses during the endline survey due to migration for studies, work, or family purposes. Enumerators filled out the questionnaires for these respondents via phone surveys.

Approximately 67% of baseline respondents from the first batch were surveyed at the endline. This success rate was approximately 64%, 77%, and 76% for batches 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Overall, the survey success rate was similar between the treatment and control groups, with 71% of the full baseline sample successfully surveyed.

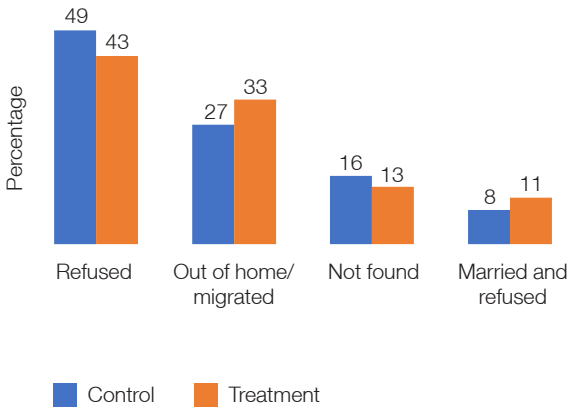
[2] An RCT is applied when an intervention is randomly assigned to the subjects of a study. An RCT assumes that the mean differences between the treatment and control groups are negligent at baseline, making the two groups comparable. This lack of difference is an indicator of a successful RCT: since treated/control groups are chosen randomly, they should be similar at baseline, and any significant differences between the treatment and control group at the endline can subsequently be attributable to the intervention.

Table 3.1. Sample Distribution and Baseline Success Rate

Batch	Total sample	Treatment	Control	Baseline			Endline		
				Control	Treatment	Success rate at baseline (%)	Control	Treatment	Success rate at endine (%)
1 (Class-room-based)	300	240	60	51	170	74	34	114	67
2 (Apprentice-ship-based)	320	240	80	66	161	71	44	101	64
3 (Class-room-based)	300	240	60	49	195	81	34	154	77
4 (Apprentice-ship-based)	300	240	60	47	149	65	34	115	76
Total	1,220	960	260	213	675	73	146	484	71

Among the attrited samples, almost 50% did not participate due to factors like employment in different sectors/companies or illness. The next largest attrited group consisted of those who were out-of-home or had migrated. Notably, female respondents who got married were mostly reluctant to participate in the survey. Nevertheless, the reasons for non-response appear to be quite similar between the treatment and control groups. Annexe Table 1 also confirms that there is no statistically significant difference in observable characteristics between the attrited and non-attrited households.

Figure 3.1. Reasons for Attrition (%)



3.4. Demographic and Outcome Characteristics at Baseline

Before assessing the program's impact, it is important to establish that the treatment and control groups were initially similar in key characteristics. This ensures that any observed differences at the end of the program can be confidently attributed to the program itself, rather than pre-existing group disparities.

Table 3.2 presents the baseline socioeconomic characteristics of the sample, along with corresponding t-test results. It also details the basic characteristics of participants with disabilities (collected at the endline survey).

The average household size of the selected sample was five, with a monthly per capita income of around BDT 4,000. The participants were 21 years old on average, with an average of 10 years of schooling. Males comprised approximately 40% of the sample. Notably, a little over a third of the youth were employed, earning less than BDT 2,000 per month. These primary characteristics of the youth align with the selection criteria of the PRIDE project of SDP, BRAC.

The t-test results in Table 3.2 confirm that the treatment and control groups were statistically similar in terms of socioeconomic variables at baseline, establishing their comparability. Additionally, there were no statistically significant differences in primary outcome variables between the treatment and control groups at baseline. These findings demonstrate a lack of significant differences in observable characteristics between treatment and control respondents at baseline.

It is important to note that 6% of the final survey group (endline sample) have disabilities. However, only PWDs were chosen for Batch 5 of the program. Since this selection occurred after the initial baseline survey, there is no baseline data available for this group.

The most common disabilities among PWDs are related to mobility and walking. Other types of disabilities include difficulties with seeing, speaking, and hearing. On average, the youth with disabilities were 23 years old and had completed 11 years of education at the time of baseline survey. Among this group, 15% were married. According to employment records from the last month, over half (51.52%) of the youth with disabilities were employed. In the past year, individuals with disabilities earned an average of BDT 2,464 per month, working approximately 13 hours per week. The average per capita household income for the youth with disabilities was BDT 4,496.

Table 3.2. Primary Outcome Variables at Baseline

	Control (1)	Treatment (2)	Difference (1-2)	PWD Endline
	Baseline	Baseline		
Demographic characteristics				
Total members of the household	5.15	5.00	-0.15	4.48
Youths' age	21.44	21.49	0.06	23.28
Youths' gender (% of male)	42	38	0.04	47
Youths' marital status (% married)	11	15	4	15
Household owns this dwelling (%)	34	36	3	27
Household has concrete roof (%)	45	42	-2	54
Household has own toilet (%)	80	84	4	68
Education				
Household heads' education years	5.26	5.68	0.42	7.62
Youths' education years	10.66	10.75	0.09	11.12
Math score (% above average)	49	45	-4	---
English score (% above average)	45	49	4	---
Labour market and economic outcomes				---
Percentage of people who were active in income-generating activity last month	36	38	2	51.52
Average working hours per week	5.26	4.83	0.44	12.98
Monthly income of the respondents (BDT)	1,882	1,459	423	2,464
Per capita income of the household	4,062.67	3,762.61	-300.05	4,496
Total savings of the household	22,121	31,407	9,286	55,671
Last month's household food expenditure	8,586	8,066	-520	9,790
Last month's household non-food expenditure	16,572	16,613	39	18,222

Note: The values displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups.

3.5. Training Participation

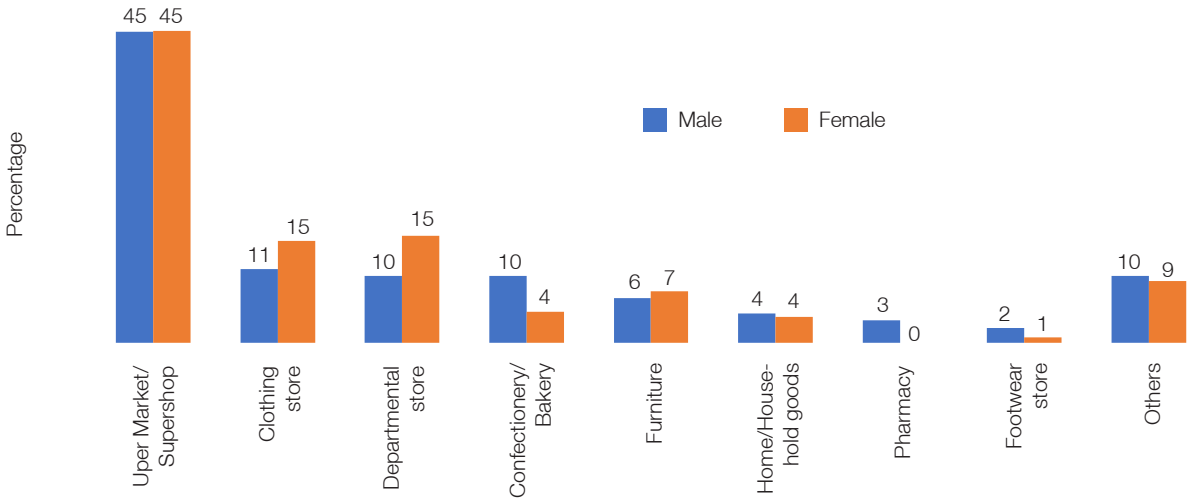
As mentioned earlier, the learners were provided with both classroom-based and apprenticeship-based training, though two batches received more classroom-based and the other two received more apprenticeship-based training. This blended approach aimed to equip participants with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, providing a well-rounded preparation for the retail sector.

The endline survey found that amongst the 675 respondents in the treatment group, 53% completed the training, with an attendance rate exceeding 85% for both training modalities.

Notably, it was found that many students dropped out of the training once schools reopened after extended closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the hands-on training, learners were placed in different retail stores. According to the endline data presented in Figure 3.2, supermarkets accepted the largest share (45%) of the learners, including both males and females. Clothing stores were the second most common placement destination, with 11% of male trainees and 15% of female trainees placed there. Departmental stores followed, taking 10% of male trainees and 15% of female trainees.

Figure 3.2. Apprenticeship Placement by Gender (%)



3.5.1. Reasons for Non-Attendance and Dropout

According to the qualitative investigation, the principal motivation for enrolling in the training program stemmed from the aspiration to acquire new skills and engage in income-generating activities (IGAs). With many participants still grappling with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, this training presented a valuable chance to gain skills that could facilitate their entry into the job market. The provision of incentives within the training program further bolstered their motivation. At the time of enrollment, about two-thirds of participants were not engaged in any IGAs. A male participant who completed the training explained his motivation:

> "After finishing my intermediate examination in 2022, I was looking for a source of income to support my family. The training program seemed like a good opportunity for me to learn a skill, get a job, and contribute to my family's income.

Similarly, a female participant shared her motivation:

> “I wanted to start my own business, but I lacked the capital. The training program offered an incentive of BDT 8,000 upon completion, which somewhat motivated me to join the training program.

Despite the appeal of the training program, the study found significant non-compliance and dropout rates among the treatment group. Only 53% of the treatment group participants completed the training. Figure 3.3 illustrates a completion rate of 57.46% for the classroom-based training group and 47.57% for the apprenticeship-based training group. Conversely, 32% did not attend the training at all, and 16% dropped out after enrollment (16% for classroom-based and 14.6% for apprenticeship-based).

One potential factor contributing to the high dropout rate was the randomized selection process used in the RCT. Since selection was not based on community, some individuals were chosen while others living in the same area were not. This created confusion amongst potential learners, leading many to drop out because their peers from the same community were not selected. The PRIDE program team made efforts to address this by following up with these learners in person and via telephone to provide additional information about the training and understand the reasons for non-completion.

Management information system (MIS) data from the program indicated a slightly lower dropout rate: 12% for apprenticeship-based training and 8% for classroom-based training. This discrepancy is likely due to the smaller sample size of four batches used in this study compared to the program’s MIS data.

Figure 3.3. Training Status (%)

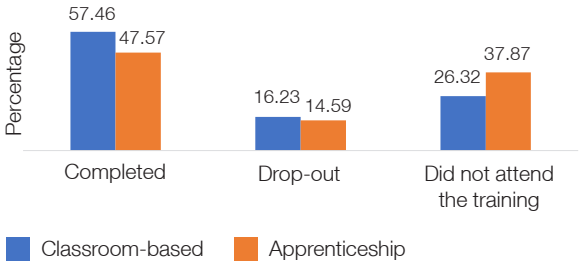


Table 3.3 details the reasons for non-attendance. Among those who did not attend, the most frequent reason for both males (50%) and females (24%) was their commitment to studies. Another prominent reason for females was restrictions imposed by their families regarding attending the training.

Table 3.3 also shows the primary reasons for dropping out. Similar to non-attendance, study commitment was the most frequent reason, reported by 44% of male dropouts and 30% of female dropouts. Illness was another significant factor, as were family restrictions for female participants (14%). A notable portion of both male and female dropouts also mentioned involvement in other jobs. Annexe Table 2 provides further details on reasons for non-participation and dropout. Additionally, Annexe Figure 3.1 presents baseline characteristics of dropout participants, which can offer valuable insights for future learner targeting.

Qualitative data revealed that some trainees found the classes to be too long and the training centres too far from their homes. These lengthy training hours, which interrupted their other engagements, and commutes discouraged them from continuing the program. A participant from Dhaka who could not complete the training described this experience:

> “I could not continue the training because my degree examination started in the middle of the training. My family did not allow me to continue the training at that time.

Table 3.3. Reasons for Non-Participation and Dropout

	Did not attend the training		Dropped out	
Reasons	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Busy with school and study	50	24	44	30
Illness	10	10	16	21
Take care of parents and kids	4	10	4	0
Restriction from home	2	27	8	14
Shifted house/distance	2	4	4	5
Engaged in other jobs	2	2	20	14
Unqualified due to age and other reasons	4	4		
Not interested	8	4		
Others	17	16	4	16

3.6. Sector-Wise Employment in the Last Month

Respondents reported their involvement in IGAs for the one month preceding the interview. Given the provision for job placement in the PRIDE project, the employment rate among participants immediately after training completion was high, at 83%. However, this rate did not translate into sustained employment throughout the year. IDIs with participants shed light on the reasons behind this trend.

Respondents who secured employment after completing their training were primarily engaged in sales assistant positions, with an average tenure ranging from four to six months. However, some individuals within this group reported employment periods as short as one month. On the other hand, respondents who remained employed for a significant duration were dissatisfied with the salary increments and limited prospects of career advancement in their current roles. This perceived stagnation in terms of both compensation and skill development motivated their pursuit of better employment opportunities. Table 3.4 shows the sectoral distribution of employment at the endline survey. Among working male respondents, the most frequently reported sectors were sales, public and private jobs, and teaching. Working females primarily mentioned public and private jobs and teaching. Notably, a small number of females transitioned into sales positions after training.

However, the endline survey revealed a decrease in the proportion of respondents seeking jobs across treatment and control groups, for both males and females. Among males, the percentage of those unemployed and not seeking jobs dropped significantly, leaving only 11% and 21% of treatment and control males in this category, respectively. On the other hand, around 40% of female respondents reported not looking for jobs at the endline, reflecting a minor decrease from baseline figures for both treatment and control groups.

IDIs revealed that most females who did not seek employment were married and looking after household chores, while a few were full-time students. This underscores the importance of effective program targeting to maximize positive outcomes.

Among participants with disabilities, 33% were inactive in the labour market at the endline, meaning they were not actively seeking work. Conversely, 15% were unemployed but actively searching for jobs. Only 3% and 24% of participants with disabilities found employment in the sales and teaching sectors, respectively.

Table 3.4. Working Sectors of Youths (%)

Sectors	Male				Female				Overall				Persons with disabilities (at endline)
	Control		Treatment		Control		Treatment		Control		Treatment		
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	
Sales sector	3	16	3	21	2	2	0	5	3	8	1	11	3
Skilled job	2	7	3	3	0	0	1	1	1	3	2	2	1.5
Business	5	8	4	6	0	0	3	2	2	3	3	4	6
Public/private job	5	28	6	17	2	5	3	10	3	14	4	13	14
Teacher	7	11	13	16	28	34	30	26	19	25	24	22	24
Day labourer	5	5	4	3	0	1	0	1	2	3	2	1	0
Garments-related	5	0	1	2	8	5	5	3	7	3	3	3	0
Others	3	7	7	8	5	1	3	4	4	3	5	5	8
Unemployed (looking for job)	31	15	27	10	15	12	20	16	42	28	39	31	15
Unemployed (not looking for job)	38	11	40	21	46	40	39	37	22	13	23	14	33

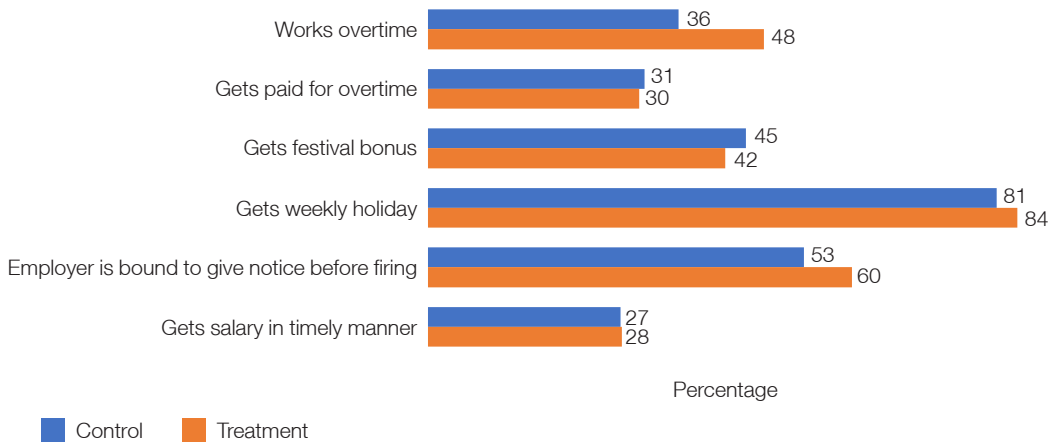
3.7. Decent Work Practice

It was expected that treatment group participants would be better equipped to negotiate decent work practices, such as overtime payment, festival bonuses, weekly holidays, notice before termination, and timely salary payment. Respondents engaged in IGAs were asked if they received these benefits in their current jobs (Figure 3.4).

While a higher proportion of treatment group respondents reported working overtime (approximately half) compared to the control group (36%), the percentage of respondents who received overtime pay was similar across both groups. This suggests that compliance with overtime pay regulations might be higher in the control group compared to the treatment group.

Less than half of the respondents reported receiving festival bonuses, and even fewer (under 30%) said they received their salaries on time. However, treatment group respondents were three percentage points more likely to receive weekly holidays and seven percentage points more likely to mention that they are bound to get a prior notice before termination compared to control group respondents.

Figure 3.4. Decent Work Practice (%)



4. Impact Estimation on Skills and Labour Market Outcomes

To estimate the program's impact on skills and labour market outcomes, a two-stage least squares model was employed. The detailed regression model can be found in Annexe A.1. The key findings are summarized below.

4.1. Impact on Soft Skills

Soft skills, such as friendliness, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and communication, are crucial for entering the labour market (Bunt et al., 2005; Lafer, 2004). This study assesses the impact of the PRIDE program on participants' soft skills, focusing on decision-making ability, communication skills, and self-confidence in running a business. These three soft skills are essential for effectively meeting customer demands in a timely manner.

Participants rated their perceived skill level on a four-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating the highest level and 0 indicating no skill. An average score for all three skills was then calculated for each participant. This variable was converted to a dummy variable where 1 denoted highly skilled and 0 otherwise.

Table 4.1 presents the local average treatment effect (LATE), which captures the impact on individuals who completed the training. It shows that the training program has a significant positive impact on participants' perceived decision-making ability, communication skills, and self-confidence.

Treatment group participants scored 80% higher in perceived decision-making ability compared to the control group. This effect was more pronounced for females (95% increase) than males (53% increase). In terms of communication skills, the overall score for treatment youth was 70% higher compared to the control group. This positive impact was larger for females (79% increase) than males (51% increase). The overall increase in perceived self-confidence was approximately 73% higher for the treatment group compared to the control group. Again, females perceived a larger increase in self-confidence compared to males. These results suggest that females may have benefited more significantly from the program in terms of soft skills development.

Table 4.1. Impact on Perceived Skills of Program Participants

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control mean	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Decision-making	0.235*** (0.05)	0.295	79.66	0.18** (0.08)	0.341	53.06	0.26*** (0.08)	0.271	94.60
Communication skills	0.297*** (0.0647)	0.426	69.72	0.24** (0.09)	0.461	50.97	0.32*** (0.09)	0.407	78.68
Self-confidence	0.352*** (0.0526)	0.485	72.58	0.30*** (0.07)	0.535	55.49	0.39*** (0.08)	0.450	86.16

Note: *** and ** indicate significance at the 1% and 5% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group (()*100).

Table 4.2 further explores the impact on perceived soft skills based on the mode of training. Results show that both apprenticeship-based and classroom-based training have a positive impact on decision-making skills and self-confidence. However, only apprenticeship-based training has a statistically significant impact on communication skills. Overall, these findings suggest that apprenticeship-based training might have a more substantial effect on soft skills development.

Table 4.2. Impact on Perceived Skills of Program Participants Based on the Mode of Training

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Decision-making	0.29*** (-0.08)	0.296	97.97	0.19** (0.073)	0.299	62.54
Communication skills	0.51*** (0.09)	0.3940	129.19	0.12 (0.085)	0.471	24.63
Self-confidence	0.44*** (0.08)	0.475	93.26	0.27*** (0.066)	0.501	54.69

Note: *** and ** indicate significance at the 1% and 5% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

4.2. Impact on Employment, Weekly Work Hours, and Monthly Income

Participants were asked to provide their employment history for the previous year. Those who worked for at least one full month during that period were considered employed. Respondents' total income over the past 12 months was converted into a monthly average, and total work hours were converted into a weekly average.

Table 4.3 summarizes the impact of the program on employment, weekly work hours, and monthly income for participants who completed the training. The findings indicate no statistically significant impact of the program on these three outcome variables. While the treatment group exhibits higher percentages of employed individuals, total work hours, and monthly income compared to the control group, these differences are not statistically significant. However, separate analyses for males and females revealed a significant increase in monthly income for female participants. They experienced an average increase in income by BDT 111 compared to the control group. Given the absence of a statistically significant effect on employment and labour supply, this income increase can likely be attributed to improved productivity.

It is worth noting that the intention-to-treat (ITT) results also show a positive impact on the income of females (Annexe Table 5).

Table 4.3. Impact on Employment, Weekly Work Hours, and Monthly Income of Participants

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control (mean)	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Employment (%)	0.063 (0.078)	0.734	8.59	0.133 (0.09)	0.82	8.77	2.25 (0.12)	0.68	1.52
Hours worked per week	5.797 (3.861)	17.17	33.76	8.481 (6,110)	24.2	35.05	5.83 (4.58)	11.86	49.16
Monthly income (BDT)	1,128 (725.8)	2,787	40.47	906.2 (1,227)	4,198	21.59	1,829** (819.7)	1,650.00	110.85

Note: ** indicates significance at the 5% critical level. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group (*100).

Table 4.4. Impact on Employment, Weekly Work Hours, and Monthly Income of Participants Based on Mode of Treatment

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Employment	0.0781 (0.12)	0.757	10.31	0.051 (0.105)	0.721	7.02
Hours worked per week	2.28 (6.01)	17.97	12.71	8.81* (5.011)	16.16	54.54
Monthly income (BDT)	658.1 (1,051)	2,934	22.43	1,531 (995.7)	2,618	58.48

Note: * indicates significance at the 10% critical level. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group (*100).

Table 4.4 shows that the program had no significant impact on employment, weekly work hours, or monthly income for participants who received apprenticeship-based training. Conversely, classroom-based training appears to have increased participants' weekly work hours by nine hours, a 55% increase compared to the control group. However, while the point estimates for income suggest a substantial increase for both training types, the results lack statistical significance due to the smaller sample size. Nevertheless, these findings hint at the potential effectiveness of classroom-based training.

4.3. Career Mobility

Skilled and confident people are more likely to seek out better job opportunities. They tend to apply for more jobs and are more likely to change jobs. Given that PRIDE program participants displayed increased skill levels and confidence compared to their control group counterparts, they were expected to apply for more jobs and change jobs more often.

Career mobility theory posits that as individuals acquire or refine their skills, they strive for upward mobility within their organizations or across different ones if opportunities for internal promotion are limited (Miller, 1984). Consequently, shifts in occupational mobility reflect adjustments to variations in information availability, market

dynamics, or individual worker attributes. In this study, respondents were asked how many jobs they applied for in the last one year. Those who completed the training applied for, on average, one more job than the control group, which is 45% higher than the average number of jobs applied for by the control group (Table 4.5). This suggests that the program encouraged participants to be more proactive in their job search.

Furthermore, the proportion of participants who changed jobs at least once in the last 12 months increased by 555% among program participants compared to the control group. Notably, this positive impact on job was statistically significant for males in terms of both the number of jobs applied for and job changes in the last 12 months. For females, the program's impact was only statistically significant for job changes in the last year. ITT results also show positive program effects on career mobility (Annexe Table 7).

Table 4.6 shows the impact of the program on participants' career mobility based on the type of training received. The results show that both apprenticeship- and classroom-based training significantly increased job changes among participants. However, the increase was more substantial for those who received apprenticeship-based training, with a three-fold increase in job changes compared to the control group. Conversely, the increase in job change for participants who received classroom-based training was only 13% higher. These findings suggest that apprenticeship-based training might be more effective in promoting job mobility.

Table 4.5. Impact on Job Mobility of the Program Participants

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Number of jobs applied	0.946* (0.569)	2.114	44.75	1.92** (0.90)	2.31	83.22	0.014 (0.75)	2.10	0.67
Changed job in last one year (%)	55.97*** (13.99)	10.09	554.71	0.0824*** (0.25)	16.00	51.50	0.420*** (0.160)	4.71	891.72

Note: ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group (*100).

Table 4.6. Impact on Job Mobility of the Program Participants Based on Mode of Training

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean	Impact	Control	Impact size as a percentage of control mean
Number of jobs applied	1.152 (0.884)	2.151	53.56	0.769 (0.737)	2.10	36.62
Changed job in last one year	0.418** (0.20)	0.142	294.37	0.681*** (0.194)	5.32	12.80

Note: *** and ** indicate significance at the 1% and 5% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group (*100).

5. Satisfaction With Training and Future Expectations

5.1. Satisfaction With Classroom Training

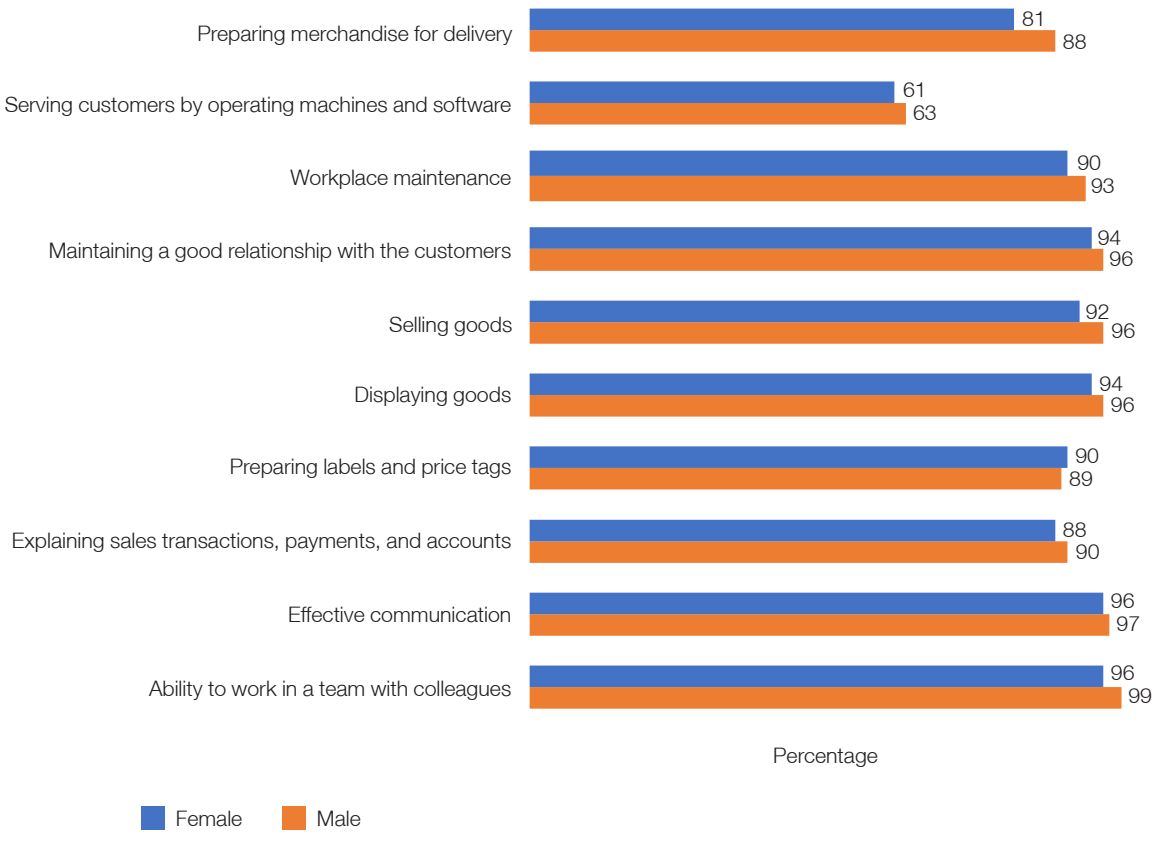
To gauge the appropriateness of the training and identify areas for improvement, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of and their level of satisfaction with the program. Participants ranked indicators of classroom and hands-on training on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all satisfied, 4 = very satisfied). These responses were converted into a binary variable, with 1 indicating "satisfied" or "very satisfied" and 0 indicating otherwise.

Figure 5.1 depicts the percentage of participants satisfied with the classroom training materials for various workplace skills, such as teamwork, communication, product display and sales, customer relations, and so on.

Most participants (90–99%) were satisfied with almost all skill training materials—they believe that they had properly learned these skills in the classroom training. However, satisfaction levels were lower for two specific topics: operating machines and software for customer service and preparing merchandise for delivery. Both males (37% and 12%, respectively) and females (39% and 19%, respectively) expressed a lower level of satisfaction with these two types of skills. This indicates that there is a scope to prioritize improvement in these two training areas.

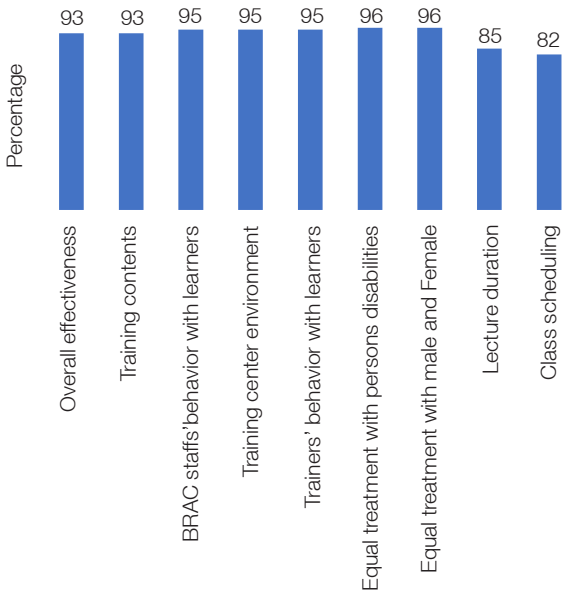
Similarly, Figure 5.2 provides evidence of participant satisfaction with various aspects of the training delivery, including the behaviour of BRAC staff and trainers towards learners, and the provision of equal treatment for males,

Figure 5.1. Satisfaction With Workplace Training Materials in Classroom Training (%)



females, and PWDs. We measured the indicators on a 10-point scale, with 1 signifying complete dissatisfaction and 10 signifying complete satisfaction. Participants who selected at least 8 out of 10 were categorized as satisfied. According to this classification, 93% of training participants expressed satisfaction with the overall effectiveness of the classroom training.

Figure 5.2. Satisfaction With Classroom Training (%)



IDIs revealed specific reasons for this high satisfaction rating. Participants commended the curriculum's relevance to the targeted job market and expressed appreciation for the trainers' quality and the conduct of the training centre staff.

Many respondents were particularly impressed by the inclusion of shop demonstrations within the training classroom. This feature allowed them to participate in daily role-playing exercises, providing an opportunity to practically apply the knowledge they gained in the classroom.One participant commented:

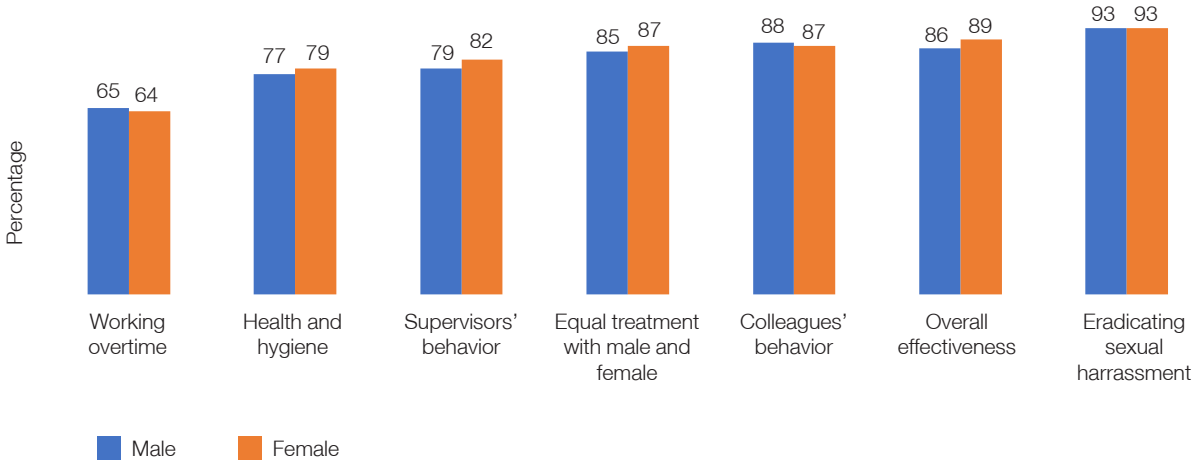
> "Our trainers instructed us to set up a demo shop in the classroom. We set the shop up with various crafts as products that we made in the classroom and at home. Then each of us practiced as the salesperson while some of us pretended to be customers. Every time we practiced in that shop, we learned something new.

However, satisfaction levels were somewhat lower for lecture duration and class scheduling. Fifteen per cent of participants expressed dissatisfaction with long lectures, and 18% were dissatisfied with class scheduling. Despite this, overall satisfaction with lecture duration remained high at 85%. This finding has been triangulated with qualitative insights, which revealed that a few respondents dropped out due to long class durations and inconvenient scheduling.

5.2. Satisfaction With Apprenticeship Training Materials

Figure 5.3 shows the satisfaction levels of participants with the apprenticeship (workplace) component of the training. While both males and females expressed general satisfaction with workplace practices, their satisfaction level (percentage of learners) was lower for working overtime and health and hygiene protocols. Several factors might contribute to lower satisfaction with overtime. These could include the need to stay late at the workplace (e.g., after evenings) and the possibility of not receiving compensation for overtime hours. The data reveals a correlation between overtime satisfaction and workload. Participants who reported dissatisfaction with overtime worked an average of more than eight hours during their apprenticeship, while those who were satisfied worked 1.07 hours less.

Figure 5.3. Workplace Assessment by Apprentice (%)



PWDs showed a high level of satisfaction with both classroom and apprenticeship components. Comparisons of satisfaction levels between PWDs and other groups are depicted in Annexe Tables 10 and 11.

The sense of dissatisfaction with apprenticeship was stronger among apprenticeship-based trainees. This dissatisfaction primarily stemmed from the perception of inadequate compensation relative to the time they dedicated to their assigned tasks within the affiliated shops. A participant who underwent the apprenticeship-based training program recounted:

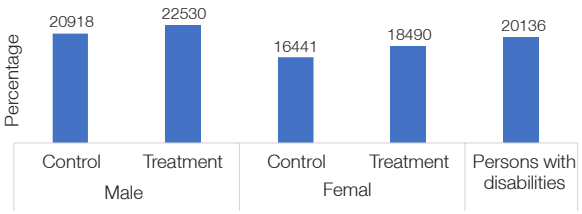
> "I only received a small amount for food and transportation every day during my apprenticeship period. They gave me BDT 50 for transportation and BDT 120 for food every day. I did not receive any payment for extra hours working too.

5.3. Expectations About Earnings and Job Locations

At the endline survey, respondents were asked about their expected monthly earnings one year after the interview date. This data can serve as an indicator of how the training program influenced their confidence levels. The expected income value represents the participants' desired annual income based on their current role and experience, projected one year into the future.

Figure 5.4 shows that the expected incomes of male and female participants in the treatment group are much higher than those in the control group. Specifically, the predicted monthly income of treatment group males is BDT 22,530, which is BDT 1,612 higher than that of control group males. Similarly, the expected income of treatment group females is BDT 2,049 higher than that of control group females. Evidently, a gender gap persists, with treatment group males expecting BDT 4,040 more than treatment group females. Similarly, the expected income difference between control group males and females is BDT 4,477. It shows that even after participating in the program, female participants generally expect lower earnings than their male counterparts.

Figure 5.4. Expected Earnings per month (BDT) After One Year



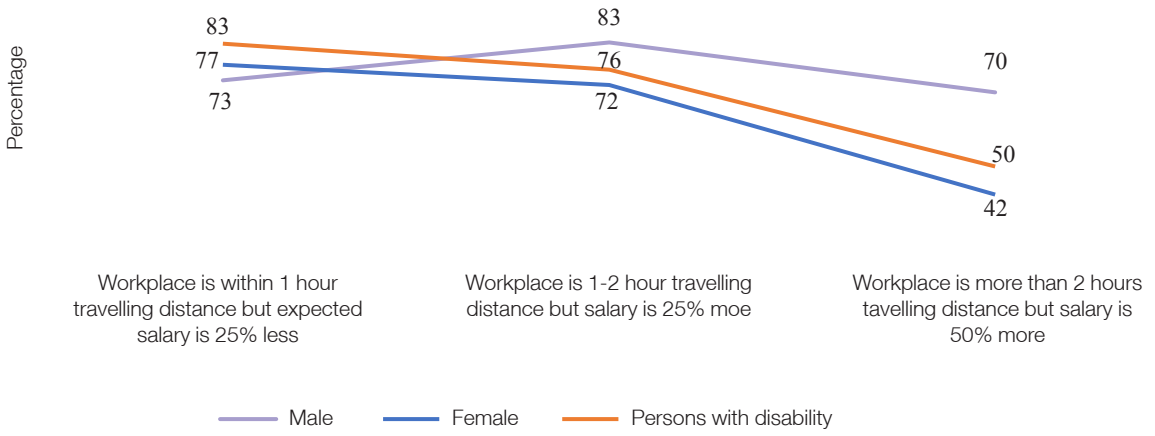
Notably, PWDs expressed an average expected income of BDT 20,136 for the following year, exceeding the expected earnings of both control and treatment group females.

The distance between the workplace and home plays a crucial role in job preferences. As illustrated in Figure 9, a significant majority of both male (73%) and female (77%) respondents prefer working within a one-hour commute from home, even if it means accepting a 25% lower rate than their expected salary. However, if the commute extends to one to two hours with the possibility of earning 25% more than their expected salary, 6% fewer females (72%) are willing to accept this option, while 13% more males (83%) are receptive. When the commute exceeds two hours, even with a 50% increase in expected salary, only 42% of female respondents show interest in the job compared to 70% of males.

These results show a clear preference for shorter commutes to the workplace among females, while for males, commute time is still important, but increased earning potential is a much stronger motivator.

Figure 5.5 also shows that 83% of PWDs are likely to engage in a job with a commute time of less than one hour, even if the pay is 25% lower than their expected salary. If the commute increases from one to two hours with a corresponding 25% increase in expected salary, the percentage willing to accept the job shows a marginal decrease to 76%. This proportion dips further to 50% when the commuting distance surpasses two hours, even if the pay is 50% higher than the expected salary. These findings suggest a strong preference for workplace proximity among PWDs.

Figure 5.5. Relation Between Workplace Distance and Job Interest by Gender (%)



6. Wage Gap, Employment, and Work Environment in the Retail Sector

6.1. Retailer Profile

To explore the wage gap, employment, and work environment within the retail sector, we surveyed 77 retailers at baseline and resurveyed them during endline, one year after the intervention. At the endline, we were able to reach 66 (86%) of the retailers. Geographically, these retailers were distributed across Khulna (39.39%), Chattogram (24.24%), Dhaka (19.70%), and Sylhet (16.67%). The businesses surveyed encompass a variety of retail sectors, including department stores, supermarkets/super shops, pharmacies, confectioneries/bakeries, clothing stores, footwear stores, furniture stores, household goods stores, hardware stores, and others. Among these, clothing stores were the most common type (39.39%), followed by furniture stores (13%). Super shops accounted for 12% of the total sample. A more detailed profile of the super shops is provided in the Annexe (see Annexe Table 9).

6.2. Wage Gap in the Retail Sector

One of the study's objectives was to identify whether there is a gender wage gap in the retail sector. To analyze the employment outcome of the employees in the retail sectors, the two rounds of data were pooled. It is important to note that the employees selected in the baseline and endline retailer surveys were not the same individuals. Respondents were asked about their last month's earnings, gender, job position, experience, etc. Baseline income figures were adjusted for inflation.

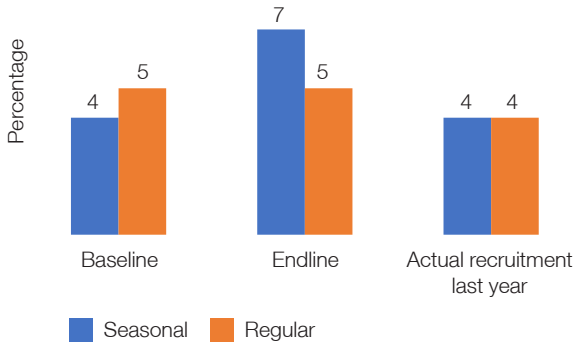
We conducted a simple regression analysis to examine the relationship between wages and various employee characteristics to identify whether there is a significant wage gap between males and females in the retail sector (see Annexe Table 12). The results show that there is no significant wage gap between male and female employees in the retail sector. It is important to note that this finding is not related to the program's treatment and control groups. This result is derived from the two-round retailer survey where we surveyed the employees of the particular retail stores, who are not necessarily the program's treatment or control group participants.

6.3. Recruitment by Retailers

The program placed the trainees in specific retailers at baseline for apprenticeship-based training. The study surveyed these retailers to track their decent work practices and recruitment of trained workers at baseline and endline.

According to the endline retailer survey, only 18% of the firms expressed a desire to recruit at least one PWD. Figure 6.1 shows the number of trained workers recruited by retailers in the past year vis-à-vis the expected recruitment of trained workers at baseline and endline. At baseline, retailers desired to hire an average of four and five trained seasonal and regular workers, respectively. At endline, they intended to maintain the same number of seasonal trained workers but expressed a desire to recruit more regular trained workers (seven on average). However, the actual average number of seasonal and regular employees recruited by retailers last year was four, indicating an unmet demand for skilled workers. Training programs like PRIDE can play an important role in meeting this unmet demand.

Figure 6.1. Number of Trained Youth Retailers Want to Employ



6.4. Gender-Disaggregated Labour Force Participation in the Retail Sector

Figure 6.2 presents data on labour force participation in the retail sector, disaggregated by gender, at both baseline and endline. We successfully surveyed 66 retailers at both baseline and endline to understand this phenomenon. Among entry-level/salespersons, males comprised 68% of the workforce at baseline and 69% at endline. Considering total employees in the retail sector, the male representation is even higher, at 71% at baseline and 73% at endline.

6.5. Retailer Workplace Practice

The study documented the self-reported workplace environment within retail shops both at baseline and endline (Figure 6.3). The results suggest an overall improvement in workplace conditions between the two survey periods, with increased availability of first-aid kits, fire drills, emergency exits, and work opportunities for PWDs. It is important to note that since we do not have any control group, we cannot definitively attribute these improvements to the program intervention. Annexe Table 13 provides details on decent work practices within retail shops according to the MIS data. Over 80% of the retail shops reported implementing some decent work practices, such as providing overtime compensation (including food, cash, and additional benefits during festivals), offering proper leave allowances to workers, issuing appointment letters, promoting positive employee conduct, ensuring equal opportunities for male and female employees in the same positions, and creating a safe working environment with minimal risk of accidents.

Figure 6.2. Gender-Disaggregated Labour Force Participation in the Retail Sector (%)

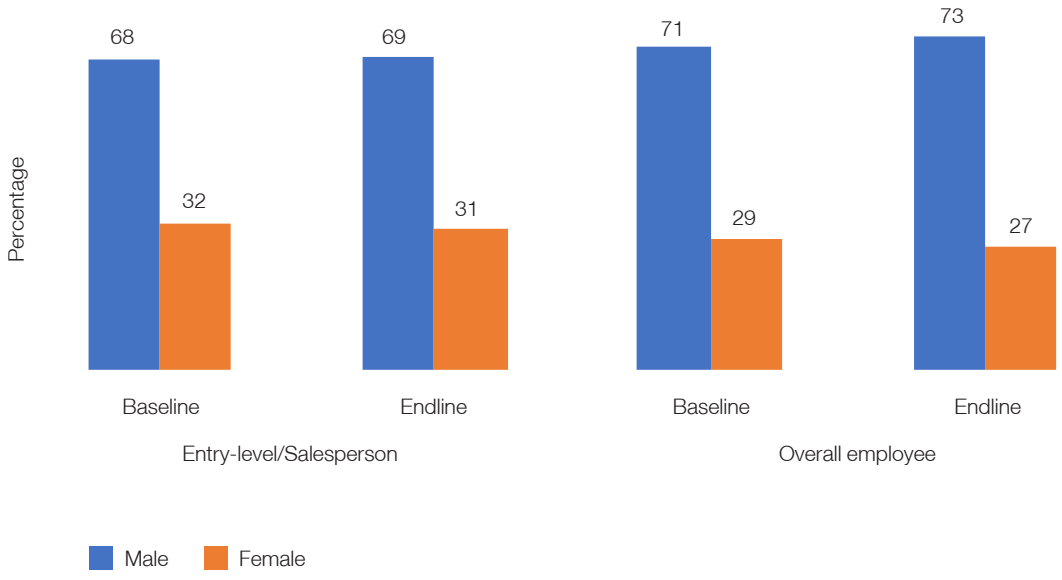
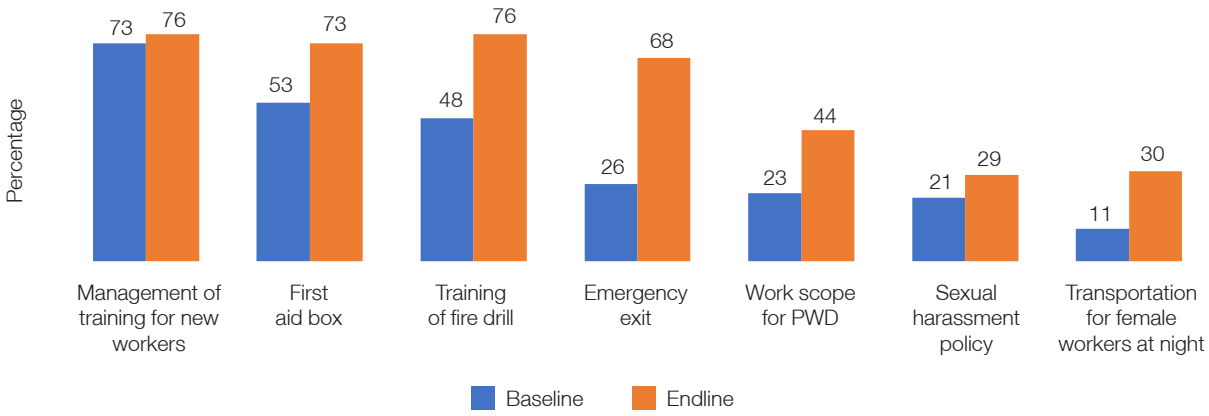
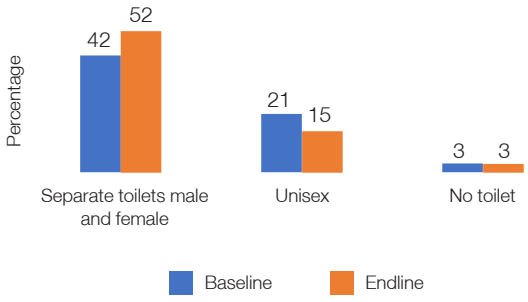


Figure 6.3. Workplace Environment of Retailers (%)



Another important indicator of the workplace environment is the condition of toilets. Since retailers in urban areas are often located in congested areas with limited access to hygienic public toilets, this aspect is particularly important. The data shows that the percentage of retailer shops with separate toilets increased from 42% at baseline to 52% at endline (Figure 6.4). At both survey points, 3% of retailers lacked toilet facilities altogether.

Figure 6.4. Toilet Condition (%)



IDIs yielded similar findings. The majority of employed respondents reported favourable experiences regarding the workplace environment. However, a few training participants expressed less satisfaction. Specifically, the shops where they were placed during the apprenticeship phase were characterized by their compact size and the lack of natural light and adequate airflow. Overall, the behaviour of workplace staff was generally positive, with only a few exceptions. Aligning with these findings, a few respondents narrated their experience as follows:

Sumon Ahmed from Sylhet shared a positive experience with the workplace environment:

> “Many trainees, including myself, work at *Mirror*, and the overall environment here is very good. My boss and colleagues are well-behaved and cooperative.

Shahidul Islam, also from Sylhet, described his positive experience:

> “During my employment in the last year, my superiors have been very supportive, economically and otherwise. Also, my co-workers have helped me in my work setting.

However, another participant, Anisur Rahman, expressed his discontent:

> “The shop I used to work in as an apprentice had no sunlight and airflow. It was situated in the underground section of a market. I could not differentiate the seasons while being in the shop. It always felt so hot and humid.

7. Conclusion

The retail sector contributes significantly to the economic growth of Bangladesh, currently employing around six million people, predominantly youths. This sector holds vast potential for creating even more youth employment opportunities. However, a study conducted by BRAC shows that there is a shortage of skilled workers in this sector. To address this issue, the BRAC SDP launched a pilot project titled "Progressing the Retail Sector by Improving Decent Employment (PRIDE)" in December 2019.

This impact evaluation study was conducted by BIGD. The primary objectives were to evaluate the program's impact on the economic empowerment of the learners, their labour market participation, and decent work practices within the retail sector. The research also explored the gender pay gap in the retail sector and workplace environment factors.

The findings reveal that the program has a positive impact on the perceived soft skills of the participants (those who completed the training). There were significant increases in perceived decision-making ability (23.5 percentage points), communication skills (29.7 percentage points), and self-confidence (35.2 percentage points) within the treatment group compared to the control group. Notably, female participants demonstrated a more substantial improvement in these skills compared to their male counterparts.

The study also found a significant positive impact of the training on female participants' earnings. It is worth noting that while the absolute endline statistics on employment and income for males are higher than those of females, these differences are not significantly larger than those of control males. One probable reason for no income impact for males might be their higher expected salary after the training, as found in this study, resulting in more males dedicating time to finding a better-paying job. This aligns with research by Acevedo et al. (2020), which suggests that after job training, females experience improved labour market outcomes and skills compared to males in the short run. In the PRIDE program, as the females experienced stronger skills improvement, as found in this study, their income increased thanks to improved productivity, as workers receive income related to their productivity or output.

Given the program's greater benefits for female participants, it can be scaled up for female participants. Though there are methodological limitations (since the two interventions are not randomized), both classroom-based and apprenticeship-based training appear to have similar effects on employment and earnings. This suggests that BRAC can scale up the more cost-effective apprenticeship-based training model.

This study also highlights a challenge related to high dropout rates and non-completion of the training. The completion rate among survey respondents in the treatment group was only 53%. However, it is important to note that this figure does not reflect the overall completion rate of the PRIDE program. The survey found some common reasons for non-completion of the training, including migration, academic commitments, long training hours, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, addressing the low completion rate (53%) requires effective targeting strategies. Further research should be conducted to better understand the reasons for the high non-completion rate. Additionally, there is scope for customizing the program (such as training duration and scheduling) to better accommodate the needs of students and housewives, who were found to be more likely to drop out. Distance to training centres is also an important issue affecting the completion rates. Finally, considering concerns raised by participants regarding overtime work, the program should work closely with retailers to address this issue.

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Annexe

A1. Empirical Analysis

As the baseline characteristics of the treatment and control samples are balanced, we use the endline data to estimate the impact. We first estimate the intention-to-treat (ITT) effects using the following:

$$Y_{ib} = \theta + \delta Tassigned_{ib} + \beta_b + e_{ib} \quad \text{.....(i)}$$

Where "$Tassigned_{ib}$" takes the value 1 if the individual *i* was assigned to the treatment and 0 otherwise; β_b are batch-fixed effects; Y_{ib} is the outcome variable; and δ is the ITT effect. However, all the participants assigned to the training did not complete the training, leading to imperfect compliance. To address the non-compliance issue, the study estimates the local average treatment effect (LATE). LATE shows the impact on those who completed the training. To estimate LATE, a two-stage least squares (2SLS) is used.

The first stage regression is as follows:

$$T_{ib} = \alpha + \beta Tassigned_{ib} + \beta_b + \varepsilon_{ib} \quad \text{.....(ii)}$$

Where T_{ib} is the dependent variable that takes the value 1 if the participants completed the training and 0 otherwise.

The second stage regression is as follows:

$$Y_{ib} = \theta + \delta \dot{T}_{ib} + \beta_b + e_{ib} \quad \text{.....(iii)}$$

Where $\dot{T}_{ib}$ is the predicted values of T_{ib} and δ is the LATE. The main analysis of the study focuses on the LATE estimation. The results of ITT estimates are reported in Table 3 to Table 8 in this section.

Annexe Table 1. Attrition Balanced Test

	Households in both survey	Attrited household	Difference [P-value]
Treatment (%)	0.77	0.74	-0.03 [.377]
Household head's age	48.31	46.22	-2.1 [.015]
Household head's education years	5.58	6.16	0.57 [.060]
Total members of the household	5.03	4.9	-0.14 [.302]
Youths' age	21.48	21.32	-0.16 [.456]
Youth is male (%)	1.61	1.64	0.03 [.404]
Youths' education years	10.73	10.6	-0.13 [.015]
Youths' marital status	1.21	1.28	0.07 [.109]
Youths' overall score	0.5	0.44	-0.06 [.102]
Youths' math score	0.47	0.45	-0.02 .542]
Youths' English score	0.49	0.51	0.02 [.610]
Youths' employment	0.37	0.39	0.01 [.717]
Household income (BDT)	18,831.55	18,411.98	-419.56 [.703]
Per capita income of the household (BDT)	3,832.15	3,858.69	26.54 [.896]
Household owns this dwelling	0.36	0.37	0.01 [.674]
Household has concrete roof	0.43	0.43	0 [.929]
Household has own toilet	0.83	0.83	0 [.864]
Average per day internet use (minute)	201.17	182.04	-19.12 [.085]
Total household loan (BDT)	80,362.52	60,680.08	-19,682.44 [.037]
Total savings of the household (BDT)	29,255.6	30,360.77	1105.16 [.893]
Last month's household food expenditure (BDT)	8,187.03	8,487.6	300.57 [.310]
Last month's household non-food expenditure (BDT)	16,603.89	18,753.75	2,149.86 [.030]

Annexe Table 2. Reasons for Not Taking the Training and Dropout

	Did not attend the training		Dropped out	
Reasons	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Busy with school and study	50	24	44	30
Illness	10	10	16	21
Take care of parents and kids	4	10	4	0
Restriction from home	2	27	8	14
Shifted house/distance	2	4	4	5
Engaged in other jobs	2	2	20	14
Unqualified due to age and other reasons	4	4	--	--
Did not get contacted by BRAC	13	11	--	--
Not interested	8	4	--	--
Others	4	5	4	16

Annexe Table 3. Impact on Skills of Total Treatment Sample

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change
Decision-making	0.0623** (0.0288)	0.296	21.05	0.0402 (0.0454)	0.343	11.72	0.0699* (0.0375)	0.270	25.89
Communication skills	0.0714** (0.0349)	0.426	16.76	0.0507 (0.0539)	0.464	10.93	0.0771* (0.0462)	0.408	18.90
Self-confidence	0.0873*** (0.0311)	0.486	17.96	0.0698 (0.0458)	0.536	13.02	0.0991** (0.0423)	0.452	21.92

Note: ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 4. Impact on Skills of Full Treatment Sample Based on Mode of Treatment

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change
Deci-sion-making	0.0768* (0.0396)	0.296	25.95	0.0471 (.18)	0.299	15.75
Communica-tion skills	0.152*** (0.0477)	0.394	38.58	-0.0129 (.05)	0.471	-2.74
Self-confi-dence	0.113*** (0.0433)	0.474	23.84	0.0599 (.46)	0.501	11.96

Note: *** and * indicate significance at the 1%, and 10% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 5. Impact on Employment Working Hours and Monthly Income of the Full Treatment Sample

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Per-centage change
Employ-ment (%)	0.02808 (0.04071)	0.7372	3.81	0.0719 (0.0489)	0.820	8.76	0.0103 (0.0585)	0.677	1.52
Working hour	1.956 (1.950)	17.16	11.40	3.060 (3.283)	24.19	12.65	2.416 (2.212)	11.77	20.53
Monthly income (BDT)	557.0 (375.3)	2,782	20.02	391.5 (673.9)	4,204	9.31	966.9** (403.2)	1,632	59.25

Note: ** indicates significance at the 5% critical level. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 6. Impact on Employment Working Hours and Monthly Income of the Full Treatment Sample Based on Mode of Treatment

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change
Employment	0.0283 (0.0552)	0.758	3.73	0.0279 (0.0598)	0.719	3.88
Working hour	0.427 (2.738)	17.99	2.37	3.565 (2.781)	16.15	22.07
Monthly income (BDT)	388.9 (512.5)	2,928	13.28	733.9 (548.5)	2,621	28.00

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 7. Impact on Career Mobility of the Full Treatment Sample

	Overall			Male			Female		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change
Number of job applied for in the last one year	0.470 (0.298)	2.111	22.26	1.019** (0.489)	2.302	44.27	0.0159 (0.368)	2.076	0.77
Changed job in the last one year	0.2596*** (0.06988)	0.1037	250.34	0.415*** (0.0128)	0.16	259.38	0.019** (0.077)	0.0489	384.46

Note: *** and ** indicate significance at the 1% and 5% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 8. Impact on Career Mobility of the Full Treatment Sample Based on Mode of Training

	Apprentice			Classroom		
	Impact	Control	Percentage change	Impact	Control	Percentage change
Number of jobs applied	0.547 (0.430)	2.143	25.52	0.389 (0.414)	2.098	18.54
Changed job in last one year	0.176* (0.0927)	0.142	123.94	0.035*** (10.4)	0.0534	649.81

Note: *** and * indicate significance at the 1% and 10% critical levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable "impact" defines the change in the treatment group due to the program. "Control (mean)" describes the mean value of the control group and "Impact size as a percentage of control mean" describes the proportionate change in the treatment group relative to the control group ()*100).

Annexe Table 9. Retailers' Profile (Baseline and Endline)

Characteristics	Baseline	Endline
Average number of employees [number]	16.14	17.80
Average number of male employees [number]	11.48	12.71
Average number of female employees [number]	4.65	4.79
Average number of male employees in entry-level positions [number]	8.20	8.98
Average number of female employees in entry-level positions [number]	3.89	4.02
Average size of institution [square feet]	3,892.83	4,579.06
Employee Identification (ID) cards [%]	64	77
Daycare [%]	0.00	2
Number of observations	66	66

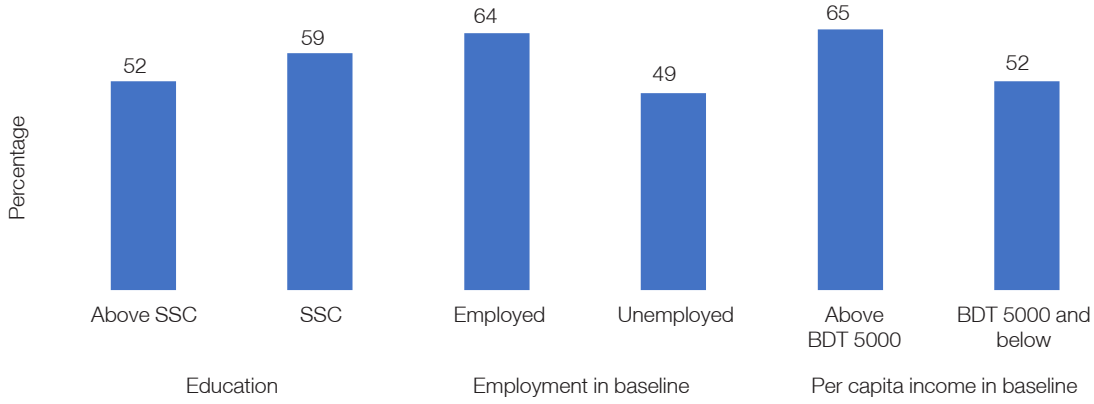
Annexe Table 10. Difference in Satisfaction With Classroom Training Between Persons With Disabilities and Others

Items	Other samples (%)	PWD (%)
Equal treatment of male and female	96	96
Equal treatment of persons with disabilities	96	100
Trainers' behaviour with learners	95	96
Training centre environment	95	93
BRAC staff's behaviour with learners	95	96
Training contents	93	93
Overall effectiveness	93	93
Lecture duration	85	93

Annexe Table 11. Difference in Satisfaction With Apprenticeship-Based Training Between Persons With Disabilities and Others

Items	Other samples (%)	PWD (%)
Daily working hours	71	83
Supervisor's behaviour	80	91
Overall effectiveness	87	96
Colleague's behaviour	87	86
Equal treatment of male and female	86	95
Supervisors' behaviour	80	93
Working environment	83	96
Health and hygiene	78	78
Working overtime	65	80

Annexe Figure 1. Baseline Characteristics of the Dropouts



Annexe Table 12. Wage of Employees in the Retail Sector

Variables	ln wage
Age (Years)	0.0692*** (0.0143)
Gender (1=Male; 0=Female)	0.0315 (0.269)
Position (1=Salesperson; 0=Otherwise)	-0.463 (0.303)
Job type (1=Permanent; 0=Otherwise)	-0.977*** (0.363)
Contact paper given (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.151 (0.254)
SSC (ref. education=below SSC)	-0.182 (0.227)
Above SSC (ref. education=below SSC)	-0.552** (0.219)
Year (1=Endline; 0=Baseline)	-0.344 (0.237)
Retailer type (1=Supershop/departmental store; 0=Others)	-0.759** (0.348)
Constant	8.985*** (0.607)
R-squared	0.088

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Annexe Table 13. Decent Work Practice by Retail Shops According to the MIS Data

Decent work items	Responses	%
Employees have to work overtime (more than 8 hours)	No response	1.05
	No	10.53
	Sometimes	53.68
	Yes	34.74
Payment for overtime	Food	2.11
	No	13.68
	Only during festival	33.68
	Yes	50.53
Proper leave for workers	No	2.11
	Yes	97.89
Scope of work for those aged less than 18	No	77.89
	Yes	22.11
Provision of appointment letter	No response	1.05
	No	11.58
	Yes	87.37
Good behaviour among employees	No response	2.11
	Yes	97.89
Equal chance (to all) for the employees in the same positions	No female worker	1.05
	No response	2.11
	Other	3.16
	Not equal for male and female	3.16
	Equal for male and female	90.53
Accident/risk-free environment for employees	No response	5.26
	No	10.53
	Yes	84.21
Support employees to engage in (labour) organizations	No response	11.58
	No	13.68
	Conditionally	41.05
	Yes	33.68

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