



## Research Article

# Employment Generation in the Organized Retail Sector: An Assessment of its Impact in West Bengal

**Biswajit Bhattacharyya**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Sunrise University, Alwar, Rajasthan, India

**Corresponding Author:** \* Biswajit Bhattacharyya

Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>This study examines the impact of the organized retail sector on employment generation in West Bengal, India. The retail industry has undergone significant transformation in recent years, with the emergence of organized retail chains complementing traditional unorganized retail. This research investigates how this shift has affected employment patterns, job quality, and economic growth in West Bengal. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and analysis of government data, we found that the organized retail sector has created substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities. However, challenges such as skill gaps and the displacement of traditional retail workers persist. The study concludes with policy recommendations to maximize the positive impact of organized retail on employment while mitigating potential negative consequences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>ISSN No:</b> 2583-7397</li> <li>▪ <b>Received:</b> 13-07-2024</li> <li>▪ <b>Accepted:</b> 10-08-2024</li> <li>▪ <b>Published:</b> 19-09-2024</li> <li>▪ <b>IJCRM:3(S4); 2024:</b> 68-75</li> <li>▪ <b>©2024, All Rights Reserved</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Plagiarism Checked:</b> Yes</li> <li>▪ <b>Peer Review Process:</b> Yes</li> </ul> <p><b>How to Cite this Manuscript</b></p> <p>Biswajit Bhattacharyya. Employment Generation in the Organized Retail Sector: An Assessment of its Impact in West Bengal. International Journal of Contemporary Research in Multidisciplinary.2024; 3(S4):68-75.</p>

**KEYWORDS:** organized retail; employment generation; West Bengal; economic development; labor market

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The retail sector plays a crucial role in India's economy, contributing significantly to the country's GDP and employment. Traditionally dominated by small, unorganized retailers, the sector has witnessed a gradual shift towards organized retail in recent decades. This transformation has been particularly notable in urban and semi-urban areas, where large retail chains and modern formats have gained a foothold.

West Bengal, with its rich cultural heritage and strategic location, presents an interesting case study for examining the impact of organized retail on employment. As one of India's most populous states, with a mix of urban and rural areas, West Bengal offers

insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the growth of organized retail in a diverse economic landscape.

The objective of this research is to assess the employment generation potential of the organized retail sector in West Bengal and to understand its broader economic implications. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Quantify the direct and indirect employment created by the organized retail sector in West Bengal.
2. Analyze the quality of jobs created in terms of wages, working conditions, and career progression opportunities.
3. Examine the impact on traditional retail employment and potential displacement effects.

4. Investigate the skill requirements and training needs in the organized retail sector.
5. Assess the spillover effects on related industries and the overall economy of West Bengal.

Understanding these aspects is crucial for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers to develop strategies that maximize the benefits of organized retail while addressing potential challenges. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on retail sector transformation in developing economies and provides specific insights into the context of West Bengal. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, examining existing research on retail sector transformation and its impact on employment. Section 3 outlines the materials and methods used in this study, detailing our data collection and analysis approaches. Section 4 presents the results of our research, followed by a discussion of these findings in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper with policy implications and suggestions for future research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 The Evolution of the Retail Sector in India

The retail sector in India has undergone significant changes over the past few decades. Traditionally, the sector was dominated by small, family-owned businesses, often referred to as "kirana" stores. These unorganized retailers have long been the backbone of India's retail landscape, providing employment to millions and serving as a crucial link in the distribution chain (Guruswamy et al., 2005). However, economic liberalization in the 1990s paved the way for the entry of organized retail. Goswami and Mishra (2009) note that the organized retail sector in India began to grow rapidly in the early 2000s, driven by factors such as rising disposable incomes, changing consumer preferences, and urbanization. This growth has been characterized by the emergence of large retail chains, shopping malls, and e-commerce platforms.

Despite this growth, Mukherjee and Patel (2005) point out that organized retail still accounts for a relatively small share of the overall retail market in India compared to many other developing countries. This presents both challenges and opportunities for the sector's future development.

### 2.2 Organized Retail and Employment Generation

The relationship between organized retail and employment generation has been a subject of considerable debate. Proponents argue that the growth of organized retail creates significant employment opportunities, both directly and indirectly. A study by Joseph et al. (2008) for the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) found that the expansion of organized retail in India led to a net increase in employment, with job losses in traditional retail more than offset by new jobs created in organized retail and related sectors.

Basker (2005) examined the impact of Walmart store openings on local employment in the United States, finding a small but positive net effect on retail employment. While some small retailers were displaced, the overall impact on employment was

positive due to the larger number of jobs created by the new stores.

However, critics argue that the growth of organized retail can lead to significant job losses in the unorganized sector. Kalhan (2007) suggests that the entry of large retail chains in India could potentially displace millions of small shopkeepers and their employees, leading to significant social and economic challenges.

### 2.3 Quality of Employment in Organized Retail

Beyond the quantitative aspects of employment generation, researchers have also examined the quality of jobs created by the organized retail sector. Sengupta (2008) notes that organized retail often provides more structured employment with better working conditions, regular salaries, and opportunities for career progression compared to traditional retail.

However, Robles (2018) highlights that many jobs in organized retail, particularly at the entry level, are characterized by low wages, long working hours, and limited job security. This raises questions about the overall impact on worker welfare and the quality of employment generated by the sector.

### 2.4 Skill Development and Training

The growth of organized retail has also highlighted the importance of skill development in the sector. Amin (2010) argues that the organized retail sector requires a different skill set compared to traditional retail, including customer service skills, inventory management, and technology proficiency.

A report by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC, 2015) identified significant skill gaps in the Indian retail sector and emphasized the need for targeted training programs to meet the industry's evolving needs. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for employment generation and workforce development.

### 2.5 Regional Variations and the Case of West Bengal

While much of the existing literature focuses on national-level trends or studies in major metropolitan areas, there is a need for more region-specific research. West Bengal, with its unique economic and cultural context, has received limited attention in the literature on organized retail and employment generation.

Sarkar and Roy (2016) examined the growth of organized retail in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, noting its potential for employment generation but also highlighting challenges related to infrastructure and regulatory environment. However, comprehensive studies on the impact of organized retail on employment across West Bengal, including both urban and rural areas, remain scarce.

### 2.6 Research Gap

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the relationship between organized retail and employment, there are several gaps that this study aims to address:

1. Limited focus on West Bengal: Most studies have focused on national trends or major metropolitan areas, with limited research specific to West Bengal.

2. **Comprehensive assessment:** There is a need for a holistic assessment that considers both quantitative and qualitative aspects of employment generation in the organized retail sector.
3. **Up-to-date analysis:** Given the rapid changes in the retail sector, particularly with the growth of e-commerce, there is a need for current data and analysis.
4. **Policy implications:** There is scope for more research on the policy measures needed to maximize the positive impact of organized retail on employment while addressing potential challenges.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive, up-to-date analysis of employment generation in the organized retail sector in West Bengal, with a focus on both quantitative and qualitative aspects, and clear policy implications.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To address the research objectives and fill the identified gaps in the literature, this study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of organized retail on employment generation in West Bengal.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

##### 3.1.1 Primary Data

1. **Surveys:**
  - A structured questionnaire was administered to 500 employees working in organized retail outlets across West Bengal.
  - The survey covered aspects such as job roles, wages, working conditions, career progression, and job satisfaction.
  - Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation from different retail formats (e.g., supermarkets, department stores, specialty stores) and geographical locations within the state.
2. **In-depth Interviews:**
  - Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 key informants, including:
    - 20 managers from organized retail chains
    - 10 representatives from industry associations
    - 10 government officials from relevant departments
    - 10 experts in retail and labor economics
  - These interviews provided insights into employment trends, challenges, and future prospects in the sector.
3. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):**
  - 5 FGDs were conducted with:
    - Traditional retailers
    - Employees in organized retail
    - Job seekers in the retail sector
  - Each FGD comprised 8-10 participants and explored perceptions of employment in organized retail and its impact on traditional retail.

#### 3.1.2 Secondary Data

1. **Government Reports and Statistics:**
  - Data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)
  - Annual reports from the Ministry of Labour and Employment
  - Economic Review reports of West Bengal
2. **Industry Reports:**
  - Reports from retail industry associations
  - Market research reports on the retail sector in India and West Bengal
3. **Academic Literature:**
  - Peer-reviewed journal articles
  - Conference proceedings
  - Theses and dissertations related to retail employment in India

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

##### 3.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

1. **Descriptive Statistics:**
  - Used to summarize key characteristics of the sample and provide an overview of employment patterns in organized retail.
2. **Regression Analysis:**
  - Multiple regression models were developed to examine factors influencing employment generation and job quality in the organized retail sector.
3. **Time Series Analysis:**
  - Employed to analyze trends in retail employment over the past decade, comparing organized and unorganized sectors.
4. **Input-Output Analysis:**
  - Used to estimate indirect employment generation in related sectors due to the growth of organized retail.

##### 3.2.2 Qualitative Analysis

1. **Thematic Analysis:**
  - Interview transcripts and FGD notes were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to employment in organized retail.
2. **Content Analysis:**
  - Applied to government and industry reports to extract relevant information on policies, regulations, and industry trends.

#### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for social science research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

#### 3.4 Limitations

- The study was limited to West Bengal and may not be fully generalizable to other states or regions.

- The rapid changes in the retail sector, particularly due to technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic, may affect the long-term applicability of some findings.
- Despite efforts to ensure representativeness, there may be some sampling bias, particularly in reaching informal workers in the unorganized retail sector.

**4. RESULTS**

This section presents the key findings of our research on employment generation in the organized retail sector in West

Bengal. The results are organized thematically, addressing each of the research objectives outlined in the introduction.

**4.1 Quantitative Assessment of Employment Generation**

**4.1.1 Direct Employment**

Our analysis of primary and secondary data revealed significant direct employment generation by the organized retail sector in West Bengal over the past decade.

**Table 1:** Direct Employment in Organized Retail in West Bengal (2014-2023)

Year	Number of Employees	Year-on-Year Growth (%)
2014	78,500	-
2015	85,200	8.5%
2016	93,700	10.0%
2017	102,500	9.4%
2018	112,800	10.0%
2019	124,600	10.5%
2020	129,800	4.2%
2021	135,200	4.2%
2022	147,400	9.0%
2023	162,100	10.0%

As shown in Table 1, direct employment in the organized retail sector in West Bengal has grown consistently over the past decade, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.4% from 2014 to 2023. The sector employed approximately 162,100 people directly in 2023, more than doubling from 78,500 in 2014. It's noteworthy that while growth slowed during 2020 and 2021, likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector

showed resilience and returned to higher growth rates in subsequent years.

**4.1.2 Indirect Employment**

Our input-output analysis estimated that for every direct job created in the organized retail sector, approximately 1.5 indirect jobs were generated in related industries such as logistics, security, facilities management, and IT services.

**Table 2:** Estimated Direct and Indirect Employment Generation (2023)

Employment Type	Number of Jobs	Percentage
Direct	162,100	40%
Indirect	243,150	60%
Total	405,250	100%

Based on these estimates, the organized retail sector in West Bengal was responsible for creating or supporting approximately 405,250 jobs in 2023, including both direct and indirect employment.

**4.2 Quality of Employment**

Our survey of 500 employees in the organized retail sector provided insights into the quality of employment generated.

4.2.1 Wages

Table 3: Monthly Wage Distribution in Organized Retail (2023)

Wage Range (INR)	Percentage of Employees
Below 10,000	15%
10,000 - 15,000	35%
15,001 - 25,000	30%
25,001 - 50,000	15%
Above 50,000	5%

The survey revealed that 65% of employees in the organized retail sector earned between INR 10,000 and INR 25,000 per month. While this is generally higher than wages in the unorganized retail sector, it's important to note that 15% of employees still earn below INR 10,000 per month.

4.2.2 Working Conditions

- 78% of surveyed employees reported having formal employment contracts.
- 85% had access to some form of health insurance or medical benefits.
- 72% reported working more than 48 hours per week, with overtime being common during peak seasons.

4.2.3 Career Progression

- 65% of employees believed there were opportunities for career advancement within their organization.
- 42% reported receiving some form of on-the-job training or skill development programs in the past year.

4.3 Impact on Traditional Retail Employment

Our research indicated a complex relationship between the growth of organized retail and employment in traditional retail.

Table 4: Estimated Changes in Retail Employment (2014-2023)

Year	Organized Retail	Traditional Retail	Net Change
2014	78,500	1,250,000	-
2018	112,800	1,180,000	-35,700
2023	162,100	1,105,000	-61,400

While organized retail showed significant growth, there was a decline in employment in traditional retail. However, the net impact on overall retail employment was still positive, with the growth in organized retail and related sectors more than offsetting the decline in traditional retail employment.

4.4 Skill Requirements and Training Needs

Our interviews with industry stakeholders and analysis of job postings revealed several key skill requirements in the organized retail sector:

1. Customer service skills
2. Digital literacy and familiarity with Point of Sale (POS) systems
3. Inventory management
4. Visual Merchandising
5. Sales techniques
6. Basic financial literacy

Table 5: Perceived Importance of Skills in Organized Retail

Skill	Percentage of Employers Rating as "Very Important"
Customer service	95%
Digital literacy	85%
Inventory management	80%
Visual Merchandising	75%
Sales techniques	90%
Basic financial literacy	70%

Our survey of employees revealed a significant skills gap:

- 65% of employees felt they needed additional training to perform their jobs effectively.
- Only 42% reported receiving formal training in the past year.
- 78% expressed interest in further skill development opportunities.

4.5 Regional Variations within West Bengal

Our research revealed significant variations in the impact of organized retail on employment across different regions of West Bengal.

Table 6: Distribution of Organized Retail Employment by Region (2023)

Region	Percentage of Organized Retail Employment
Kolkata Metropolitan Area	55%
Other Urban Areas	30%
Semi-urban Areas	12%
Rural Areas	3%

Key findings:

- The Kolkata Metropolitan Area accounted for the majority of organized retail employment, reflecting the concentration of large retail chains and shopping malls in the state capital.



- Other urban areas, such as Siliguri, Asansol, and Durgapur, have seen significant growth in organized retail employment in recent years.
- The penetration of organized retail in rural areas remains limited, with correspondingly low employment generation in these regions.

**4.6 Economic Spillover Effects**

Our input-output analysis and interviews with stakeholders revealed several positive spillover effects of organized retail growth on the broader economy of West Bengal:

1. **Supply Chain Development:** The growth of organized retail has led to the modernization of supply chains, creating employment in logistics, warehousing, and transportation sectors.
2. **Real Estate Development:** The establishment of shopping malls and large retail outlets has stimulated commercial real estate development, creating jobs in construction and property management.
3. **Local Manufacturing:** Some organized retailers have partnered with local manufacturers, particularly in textiles and food processing, stimulating employment in these sectors.
4. **Tourism:** The development of modern retail infrastructure, particularly in Kolkata, has contributed to the city's appeal as a shopping destination, indirectly supporting employment in the tourism sector.

**Table 7:** Estimated Indirect Employment Generation by Sector (2023)

Sector	Estimated Indirect Jobs Created
Logistics and Supply Chain	75,000
Real Estate and Construction	45,000
Local Manufacturing	60,000
Tourism and Hospitality	30,000
Others (IT, Security, etc.)	33,150
Total	243,150

**4.7 Challenges and Concerns**

Despite the positive impacts, our research also identified several challenges and concerns related to employment in the organized retail sector:

1. **Job Displacement:** While net employment has increased, some traditional retailers and their employees have been displaced by the growth of organized retail.
2. **Working Conditions:** Concerns were raised about long working hours, particularly during peak shopping seasons.
3. **Job Security:** Many employees, especially those in entry-level positions, reported concerns about job security and the prevalence of temporary or contract-based employment.

4. **Skills Gap:** Both employers and employees highlighted the need for more comprehensive training programs to address the skills gap in the sector.
5. **Geographic Disparity:** The concentration of organized retail in urban areas has led to uneven employment generation across the state.

**5. DISCUSSION**

The results of our study provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of organized retail on employment generation in West Bengal. This section discusses the implications of these findings in the context of existing literature and the broader economic landscape of the state.

**5.1 Employment Generation: Quantity and Quality**

The significant growth in direct employment in the organized retail sector, from 78,500 in 2014 to 162,100 in 2023, aligns with national trends observed by Joseph et al. (2008) and reflects the rapid expansion of organized retail in urban areas of West Bengal. The CAGR of 8.4% over this period indicates a robust growth trajectory, even accounting for the slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the multiplier effect observed in indirect employment generation (1.5 indirect jobs for every direct job) highlights the sector's broader economic impact. This finding supports the argument that organized retail can be a significant driver of employment not just within the sector, but across related industries (Basker, 2005).

However, the quality of employment presents a more nuanced picture. While the majority of employees (65%) earn between INR 10,000 and INR 25,000 per month, which is generally higher than wages in the unorganized sector, the presence of 15% of employees earning below INR 10,000 per month raises concerns about low-wage employment in the sector. This aligns with Robles' (2018) observations about the prevalence of low-wage jobs in organized retail, particularly at entry-level positions.

The high percentage of employees with formal contracts (78%) and access to health benefits (85%) indicates improvements in job formalization and social security compared to traditional retail. However, the reported long working hours (72% working more than 48 hours per week) suggest that concerns about work-life balance and labor standards in the sector persist.

**5.2 Impact on Traditional Retail**

The decline in traditional retail employment, from an estimated 1,250,000 in 2014 to 1,105,000 in 2023, confirms some of the concerns raised by critics of organized retail expansion (Kalhan, 2007). However, it's important to note that the net impact on overall retail employment remains positive, with growth in organized retail and related sectors more than offsetting the decline in traditional retail.

This finding suggests that while the transition to organized retail does involve some displacement of traditional retailers, it also creates new employment opportunities, both directly and indirectly. The challenge for policymakers lies in managing this

transition to minimize negative impacts on traditional retailers while maximizing the potential for new job creation.

### 5.3 Skills and Training

The identified skill requirements in organized retail, particularly the emphasis on customer service, digital literacy, and sales techniques, reflect the changing nature of retail work in the organized sector. The high percentage of employees (65%) feeling the need for additional training, coupled with the relatively low percentage (42%) receiving formal training in the past year, highlights a significant skills gap in the sector.

This finding aligns with the NSDC (2015) report on skill gaps in the Indian retail sector and underscores the need for more comprehensive and accessible training programs. The strong interest in skill development opportunities (78% of employees) suggests that there is potential for collaborative efforts between industry, government, and educational institutions to address this gap.

### 5.4 Regional Disparities

The concentration of organized retail employment in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area (55%) and other urban areas (30%) reflects the urban-centric nature of organized retail development. This pattern is consistent with broader trends of urban-rural disparities in economic development in West Bengal and India as a whole. The limited penetration of organized retail in rural areas (3% of employment) suggests that the benefits of employment generation in this sector are not evenly distributed across the state. This disparity could potentially exacerbate existing economic inequalities and rural-urban migration trends.

### 5.5 Economic Spillovers

The identified spillover effects, particularly in supply chain development, real estate, and local manufacturing, demonstrate the potential of organized retail to stimulate economic activity beyond the sector itself. This aligns with research by Mukherjee and Patel (2005) on the broader economic impacts of retail modernization in India.

The estimated indirect employment generation in sectors such as logistics (75,000 jobs) and local manufacturing (60,000 jobs) highlights the importance of considering these spillover effects when assessing the overall impact of organized retail on employment.

### 5.6 Policy Implications

Based on these findings, several policy implications emerge:

1. **Balanced Growth:** Policies should aim to promote balanced growth of organized retail, ensuring that its expansion does not come at the excessive expense of traditional retail. This could involve zoning regulations, support for traditional retail modernization, and measures to facilitate the integration of small retailers into organized retail supply chains.
2. **Skill Development:** There is a clear need for more comprehensive and accessible skill development programs tailored to the needs of the organized retail sector. This

could involve public-private partnerships for training delivery and the integration of retail-specific skills into vocational education curricula.

3. **Labor Standards:** While organized retail has brought improvements in job formalization, there is a need for stronger enforcement of labor standards, particularly concerning working hours and minimum wages.
4. **Regional Development:** Policies to incentivize the expansion of organized retail into semi-urban and rural areas could help in distributing the employment benefits more evenly across the state.
5. **Support for Transition:** Programs to support the transition of workers from traditional to organized retail, as well as support for traditional retailers looking to modernize or integrate with organized retail systems, could help in mitigating the negative impacts of sector transformation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of employment generation in the organized retail sector in West Bengal, offering insights into both the opportunities and challenges presented by the sector's growth. The findings indicate that organized retail has indeed become a significant source of employment in the state, both directly and indirectly, contributing to job creation and economic development.

Key conclusions include:

1. The organized retail sector in West Bengal has shown robust growth in employment generation, with direct employment more than doubling from 2014 to 2023.
2. The sector has a significant multiplier effect, creating an estimated 1.5 indirect jobs for every direct job.
3. While job quality in organized retail shows improvements in terms of formalization and benefits, concerns persist regarding wage levels and working hours.
4. There is a notable skills gap in the sector, with a high demand for training and skill development among employees.
5. The growth of organized retail has had some negative impact on traditional retail employment, but the net effect on overall retail employment remains positive.
6. The benefits of employment generation in organized retail are unevenly distributed, with a strong concentration in urban areas, particularly the Kolkata Metropolitan Area.
7. The sector has significant positive spillover effects on related industries, particularly in logistics, real estate, and local manufacturing.

These findings have important implications for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers. They highlight the need for balanced policies that can maximize the employment generation potential of organized retail while addressing challenges related to job quality, skills development, and the transition of workers from traditional retail.

Future research could focus on longitudinal studies to track the long-term career trajectories of workers in organized retail, more detailed analysis of the impact on specific demographic groups

(e.g., women, youth), and comparative studies with other states to identify best practices in managing retail sector transformation.

In conclusion, while the growth of organized retail in West Bengal presents significant opportunities for employment generation and economic development, realizing these benefits fully will require careful policy interventions and collaboration between government, industry, and educational institutions.

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