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Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Employees' Reaction to Changes on Employee Performance of Bangladesh

Mahmud Hamid

Ph.D. Student, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Dr. Sazali Abdul Wahab

Professor, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Asma Ul Hosna

Ph.D. Student, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Mohammad Waliul Hasanat

Ph.D. Student, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Mohammed Kamruzzaman

Assistant Professor, College of Business Administration (CBA),
International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Bangladesh

Abstract

The economic condition of Bangladesh damaged badly due to coronavirus. From May 2020 Bangladesh has started opens its business sectors to save the economy. The government imposes 'new normal' rules for organizations to reduce the impact of coronavirus. This research has been conducted to assess the impact of COVID-19 and its impact on employee's performance in Bangladesh. To accomplish this study 'Employee's Reaction to Changes (ERC)' in employee performance has been measured. Employees from different industries have been studied. For this study online questioned was asked to 199 employees from different industries randomly. SPSS and Microsoft Excel used as a tool to find the result and visual presentation. The research findings explained that COVID-19 and Employee's Reactions to Changes have a significant negative impact on Employee's Performance. These 'new normal' changes negatively affected employee's work concentration, way of communication, and concentration on work significantly. Based on these findings, discussion and future direction on reaction to changes has been provided.

Keywords: Coronavirus (COVID-19), new normal, reaction to changes, employee performance

1. Introduction

COVID-19 spread out to the entire world very quickly. Because of the rapid spread of coronavirus, all the organizations and businesses had to lockdown overnight. According to Worldmeters.info total number of coronavirus cases was 14,010,687 on 17 July 2020. And daily new cases were more than 200 thousand all over the world. Although total closed cases were 8,919,225, but still it is a great crisis for the world to recover. Because now everything started to become normal with 'new normal' rules and this is good for organizations to survive but still bad for health safety. During the COVID-19 outbreak, all the organizations were forced to lockdown its regular working process and start the official work through the digitalization process with the help of technologies. As per new political and social rules, emergency action plans were implemented like; work from home (Ince, F., 2020). It was a great challenge for the organization to handle the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak as well as employees. Now the challenge is employee's safety and their performance (Carnevale et al., 2020).

From Bangladesh's perspective, COVID-19 hit Bangladesh a bit lately but very badly. Bangladesh is a small country with a total number of population 164,689,383 approximately (Worldmeters.info, 2020). According to Wikipedia on 3rd March 2020, Bangladesh found its first three cases. From 23rd March 2020, Bangladesh declared lockdown for safety purposes like other countries. After that Bangladesh experienced a rapid increase in coronavirus cases till now. Bangladesh has total confirmed cases of 199,357+, recovery number 108,725, and death 2,547 by 17 July 2020. According to Nazila Fathi written on International Finance Corporation (IFC), Bangladesh is known for its garments industry. Bangladesh is the 2nd largest garment exporter in the world. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic around 1 million garments workers losing their jobs according to Lauren Frayer reporter at npr.org. Also, other job sectors facing similar issues like; lower the salary, pending salary, and temporary job termination because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh organizations have to suffer like other countries and implement work from home to continue the official task (Ince, F., 2020). But still, employees whose work is manufacturing or customer service or employees of banks have to work physically (Wang C. et al., 2020). Like other countries, Bangladesh also implements the same 'new normal' to open the job sector to save organizations as well as employee's interests. All changes (social distance, washing hands, sanitizer, mask) according to 'new normal' has been implemented for developing hand hygiene and safety (Eliza Wong

et.al.,2020). This study has been developed based on Bangladesh's perspective to measure the impact of 'new normal' changes on employee performance caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

COVID-19 pandemic creates a great crisis for the whole world. This pandemic develops a conflict between earnings and safety. All the organization has to stop its regular schedule and introduce a new system to communicate as well as to conduct its daily work. Managers have to take a critical decision in this crisis to save the organizations and their employee's interests (Van der Meer et al., 2017; Van Zoonen & Van der Meer, 2015). The situation from June or July started to become normal but still, we have to live with COVID-19. This is a great challenge for the management to conduct daily work as per the 'new normal' schedule with various new rules for everyone's safety purpose. Organizations taking the help of technologies to communicate but only white-collar and professional employees are effective to do so (Karin et. al., 2020). For the employees working in manufacturing or Banks, customer services, or any position where direct communication is required were hampered heavily because of COVID-19. These employees around the world are the most dangerous situation. Even education sectors are also affected by COVID-19 (Wang C. et al., 2020). Work from home even doesn't go well often. Conducting work at the same time take care of family and children, creates role conflict. These issues hampered the overall performance of employees. There are several changes imposed by the government to maintain safety, people at workplaces must be equipped with masks, physical distance, washing hands, and use hand sanitizer all along (Wolor et.al., 2020).

Employees' performance also depends on employees' mental condition. During COVID-19 pandemic employees were most concerned about safety. Hamouche (2020), mentions in her article that employee's mental health specifically stresses and depression. Employees are most concerned about safety, risk of virus, social exclusion, financial loss, and job insecurity. These are the main reason for employees' stress and loss of performance at the workplace. The organization needs to assure the safety of employees' health, social distance, financial security, job security to reduce stress and enhance employee's performance (Sasaki et.al, 2020).

Hasanat et.al., (2020) has research on the impact of COVID-19 on E-business. This article explains that pandemic heavily affected small and medium-sized retailers due to the low footprint on consumers, and also consumers' buying behavior also affected heavily by the novel coronavirus. Not only small and medium-sized businesses but also manufacturing, education, and others also affected by a coronavirus. COVID-19 impacted all types of businesses, all around the world. The economy goes down for that reason. But the world cannot run like this. Everything started to open and organizations are prepared for physical works under 'new normal' rules. Work from home and digitalization of the workplace during COVID-19 was a good initiative but not for a long time because of digital inequalities. Beaunoyer Elisabeth et.al. (2020), works on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and digital inequalities where it was explained that technological differences, ethnicity, and differences of other staff create these inequalities. Employees from rural or remote places won't have the fastest internet to conduct work from home tasks, family members interference will disturb works during work from the home period. According to İnce, F. (2020), employee's performance during COVID-19 has been decreased compared to the condition before COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, employees have to work from home and it has negatively impacted employee's productivity. Hence employee performance reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1. COVID-19

COVID-19 was first identified in November 2019. After that within a month, it spread widely and become a major issue for the world. The business affected badly by COVID-19. Coronavirus force the world to sit inside the house (Ahmad,2020). According to Hasanat et.al., (2020), COVID-19 impact the maximum industries, because of that reason import-export of product reduced significantly. No import-export means no business which means it's difficult for manufacturing or work which needs direct contact is at great risk. It has been already stopped manufacturing works and employees related to these works affected most. From June to July maximum countries open its organization and start its production with 'new normal' rules. But performance is crucial factors as we still living with COVID-19 (Wang C. et al.,2020, Karin et.al.,2020).

COVID-19 has been chosen as an independent variable for this study because it impacts the performance of employees at all levels within an organization. Because of COVID-19 organization force their employees to work from home, which was not that effective due to digital inequalities, family-work conflict, stress, sleeping problems. Now everything started with 'new normal' rules but still living with and with the fear of COVID-19(Bernard,2020,Beaunoyer Elisabeth et.al,2020).

2.2. Reaction to Changes

There are several ways to adjust employees with new changes in organizations. Why does the organization need to adjust employee's reactions to changes? Because Employees will feel stress and their well-being is important for their work performance. During this COVID-19 pandemic, employees are scared, worried about coronavirus, work-family issues with work from the home system (Van Dick et.al.,2018). For a good leader, it is important to know, how to manage employee's reactions to any organizational changes? Through individual readiness for change and commitment to change, and employee engagement to the organizational change. A leader has to act as a change agent to maintain employees in commitment to change. A leader needs to develop employee satisfaction to build a positive reaction to the changes. A leader can make its follower agrees on the new changes through motivation. It has to analyze employees' stress and well-being at work in terms of changes (Mangundjaya et.al.,2015, Tyler et.al., 2005).

This is July 2020, and the vaccine of COVID-19 is still on the way. But the world needs to move on to save economic conditions. All the world following 'new normal' rules to continue regular schedule. What is 'new normal'? According to The Star 'use of mask all the time at outside, use of sanitizer, washing hands frequently, work from home, keeps social distance at least 2 meters, temperature checks for fever'. Employees have to go through these changes everyday. And as these are new for everyone and it is kind of mandatory to obey due to health safety purposes, employees have to accept these whether they like it or not. Men et.al., (2020) explain that a study about employee's behavior does impact during any change in the organization. Also, suggest that organization needs to build trust in terms impose any changes to the employees. Because employees' trust has a positive impact on employees' openness to any changes in the organization.

Another study reveals that organizations impose new policies and guidelines to reduce infection and develop an awareness of personal hygiene. This study also explains that employees are less likely to wash hands, while hand hygiene is more important than using a mask. Employees have to wash their hands from time to time and use sanitizer to prevent viruses (Eliza Wong et.al.,2020). Thus, reaction to changes has been selected as an independent variable in this study. Employees have their own opinion on changes that happens in the organization. This can impose a positive or negative impact on their performance.

2.3. Employee Performance

Fear of contracting the coronavirus is undoubtedly impacting employee's performance whether it is work from or working at the workplace. Fear of contracting coronavirus from corona positive people stopping us to do many things even going to the hospital. It is normal to be scared of coronavirus as it spread without touching. But with 'new normal' rules it is possible to minimize the risk. All the organizations are implementing these rules to minimize the risk as well as the fear of employees. Thus, employees can perform better without any fear at workplaces (Solis et.al.,2020).

Employee's performance depends on many factors, and safety is one of them. Ms. J. Suja Kannu et.al., (2020) studied knowledge, attitude, and practice on the Indian food industry. Employee's awareness of COVID-19 is very important in terms of performing works. Employees must know safety measurements, their attitude needs to be positive about the changes, at last employees need to practice safety measurements to minimize the threat of coronavirus. The organization needs to apply training on employee safety measurements. Time to time employees will go through this training to apply social distancing, using masks, maintaining hand hygiene during and after work. Thus, employee awareness can be increased and employee's fear of coronavirus will decrease. Thus, employees will feel comfortable working fear free at the workplace (Das,2020).

COVID-19 is considered as deadliest virus and because of that organizations had to lockdown and impose new ideas to maintain their daily works from home. But it has found that work has reduced the performance level of employees. Work from home is a good initiative to reduce fear and continue official works from home. But it has limitations too. Frustration, work-family conflict, digital inequalities, stress, not all work can be done from home, and many more issues affecting employee's performance (Karin et.al.,2020, Wang C. et al.,2020). Not only these issues but also cybercrime, hacking into a home network, identity theft is a major concern (Ahmad,2020). Thus, employee's performance is difficult to maintain from home as well as workplaces due to fear of coronavirus. From May 2020, many workplaces around the globe including Bangladesh has started its regular schedule based on the 'new normal' system. Now employees around the globe have started to work physically. Now the challenge is to assure employees safety as well as get the work done from the employees (Wolor et.al.,2020, Sasaki et.al.,2020). Due to new guidelines employee performance reduced. In that article, it has described that the post COVID situation will be also very low. Now the concern is, how the organization improves employee's performance during this pandemic?

According to Sasaki et.al., (2020), to maintain employees performance organization needs to maintain mental health by reducing fear and worry about COVID-19. In that study also suggested that an employee's mental health also can be the reason for their performance. Organizations need to fight against coronavirus and maintain sound health and safety to develop the sound performance of employees. Employee training on safety can be more effective to measure health safety and increase employee's performance (Opatha,2020). This period is one of the most challenging situations for the organization to handle. Because the employee's performance is the cornerstone for the organization. If any organization wants to maintain good performance, the organization needs to assure that employees' performance is good as well (Craig,2018, Carnevale et.al.,2020).

2.4. Based on the Above Information, the Objectives Stand as

- To identify the impact of COVID-19 on employee's performance of Bangladesh.
- To identify the impact of reaction to changes on employee's performance of Bangladesh.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

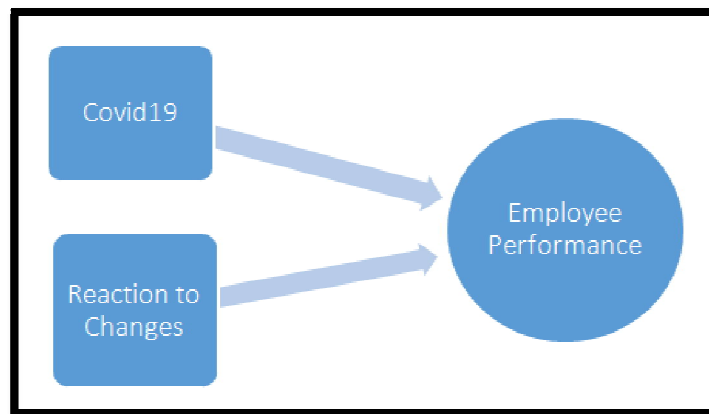


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional study was conducted through an online survey amongst the employees of Bangladesh from the manufacturing industry, financial industry, automobile industry, telecommunication industry, SME's and also employees from other industries like; tourism sector, and education. These employees have to work from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic through work from the home system as well as physically from the office. As of now, organizations started with the 'new normal' policies. This survey assesses the impact of COVID-19 and Employees Reaction to Changes in employee's performance of Bangladesh. Employees of all backgrounds have randomly chosen and questionnaires asked online. For this research, the 7-points Likert scale from 1= Strongly Agree to 7= Strongly Disagree is being applied. From this survey, 199 responses and 82 suggestions were received from both male and female employees.

3.1. Research Procedure

The data gathering process is completed through the help of survey questionnaires. These questionnaires are developed to gather appropriate information about the employee performance of Bangladesh. All the data has been analyzed and represented with the help of IBM SPSS version 25 and MS Excel. This research has been framed through these research questions which are provided below:

- Does the COVID-19 pandemic impact the employee's performance in Bangladesh?
- Does the employee's reaction to changes have an impact on performance?

The hypothesis is prepared by the researcher which is enabling the researcher to meet the research objective.

- H1. Covid19 has a significant impact on employee's performance.
- H2. Employee's reaction to changes has a significant impact on employee's performance.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis process is seen to be executed by the help of analyzing the quantitative data. The quantitative research method is used in this research to gather the data appropriately. The statistical analysis software (SPSS) software is used. It is enabling the researcher to gather the responses sequentially. The survey questionnaires framed by the researcher are helping the researcher in representing the data appropriately.

4.1. Demographic Variables

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	146	73.4
Female	52	26.1
Age Group		
15-25	87	43.7
26-35	94	47.2
36-45	10	5.0
Above 46	8	4
Industry or work		
Manufacturing	80	40.2
Financial	33	16.6
Automobile	26	13.1
Telecommunication	12	6
SME	24	12.1
Others	24	12.1

Table 1: Demographic Variables The

The demographic variables describe the basic information about respondents. The above table shows the total number of genders, age group, and industry of their work.

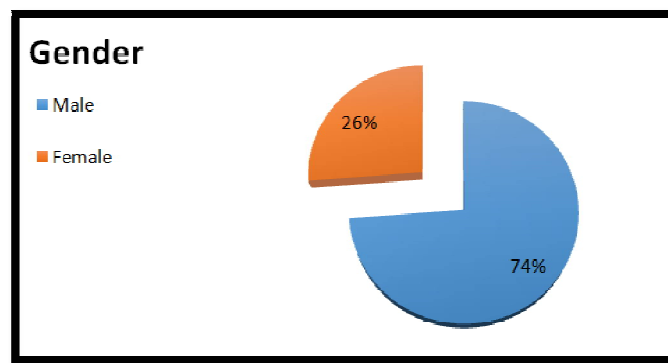


Figure 2: Gender

Form the total respondents about 74% are male and 26% are female from different backgrounds and ages.

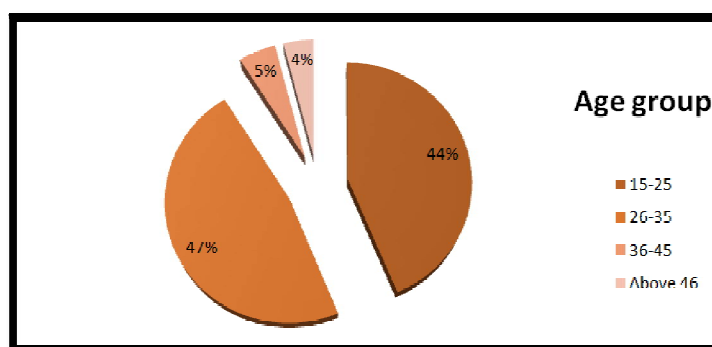


Figure 3: Age Group

Respondents of 26-35 ages are more, then 15-25 age group. After that 36-45 age group and at last above 46 age group. From this chart, it can be said that young employees are more responsive than old employees.

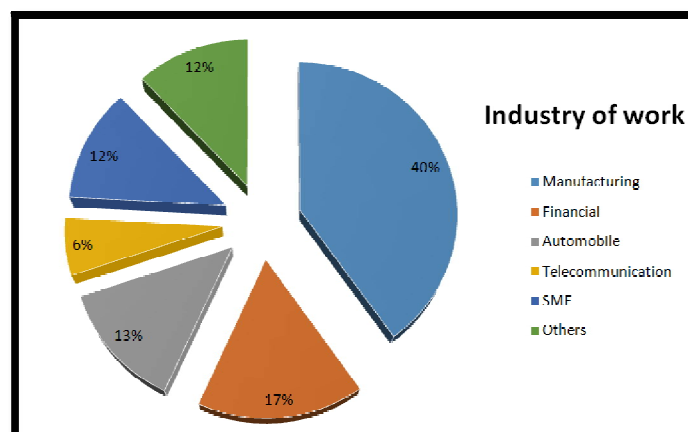


Figure 4: Industry of Work

From this chart, it can be said that the manufacturing industry (40%) has a more response rate than any other industry. After that financial industry (17%) on 2nd, following that automobile industry (13%), SME and other industry (12%), at last telecommunication with 6%.

4.2. Reliability Test

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
COVID-19	3	.7
Reaction to changes	3	.8
Employee Performance	3	.8

Table 2: Reliability Test

The reliability test is the most used test in research to measure the internal consistency of variables. According to the role of thumb Cronbach's Alpha rating is as follows;

- Excellent.
- Good
- Acceptable
- Questionable
- Poor Less Than
- Unacceptable

Based on this rating, the consistency of these variables is acceptable and good. Variable COVID-19 has an acceptable rating, Reaction to Change has good rating and Employee performance has a good rating as well.

4.3. Regression Analysis

Variables	R	R ²	β	T	Sig.	F-value	Tolerance
Covid-19	.638	.406	.638	11.614	.000	134.89	1.00
ERC	.850	.722	.850	22.611	.000	511.258	1.00

Table 3: Regression Analysis

The simple linear regression analysis reported in Table 3 with the t value from COVID-19 11.614 at $p < 0.001$, and Employee Reaction to Change 22.611 at $p < 0.001$, indicating that both COVID-19 and ERC have a significant negative effect on employee's performance of Bangladesh. Therefore, based on these results, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are supported. The strength of the impact is measured by the r-value of .638 for COVID-19 and .722 for ERC at a p-value of 0.001, within the $r = 0.5$ to 1.0 ranges which are considered large according to Cohen's guideline. The coefficient of determination measured by the r^2 is at 0.406 for COVID-19 and .722 for ERC. This value indicates that COVID-19 by 40.6 percent and ERC by 72.2 percent has negatively impacted employee's performance.

5. Results and Discussion

Based on the analyzed data it can be said that the employee performance of Bangladesh has significantly affected by the changes of COVID-19 pandemic. Employee's performance due to coronavirus is decreasing significantly. Impact of COVID-19 on employee's performance has been measured by behavior in the workplace, the way of communication, and also their daily activities.

- H1a: COVID-19 has affected the behavior of employees during performing works.

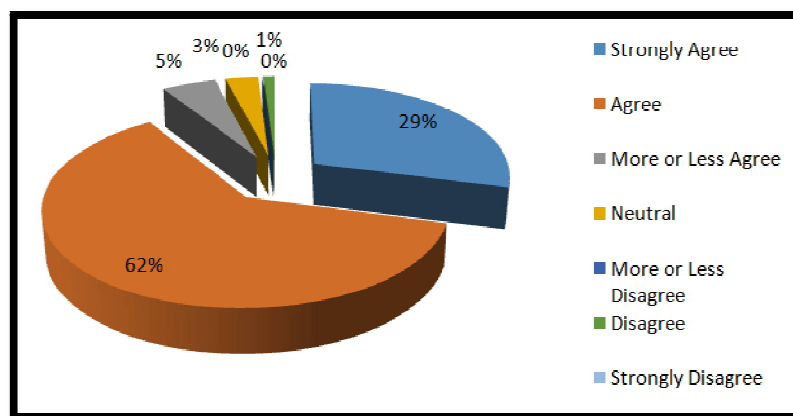


Figure 5: The Behavior of Employees

A significant number of employees agreed that COVID-19 has affected the behavior of employees during performing works. Employee behavior has been changed compared with before coronavirus with after coronavirus. Their movement has been controlled, employees don't involve with daily occurrences like before, no more greetings with shaking hands or express happiness with hugging each other. According to the 'new normal' rules, employees had to change these types of behavior to minimize the spread of coronavirus in the workplace.

- H1b: Fear of COVID-19 has a significant impact on the way of communication.

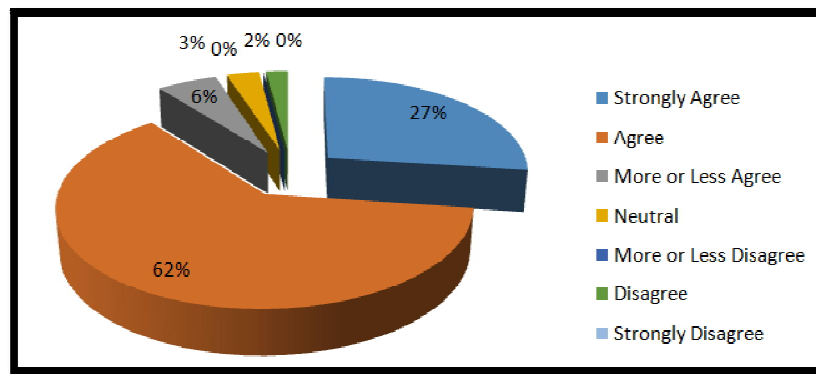


Figure 6: Way of Communication

Coronavirus can be spread through an unsafe conversation with each other. The majority of employees agreed that COVID-19 impacted their way of communication. Organization limit direct conversion to avoid risk. Blue-collar employees allowed to work from home through digital equipment to communicate with other employees and subordinates. Employees work in the production department, customer services, have to have a direct conversation but in a safe way like; from behind glass, use of a mask or have to measure safety.

- H1c: Covid19 has a significant impact on daily activities.

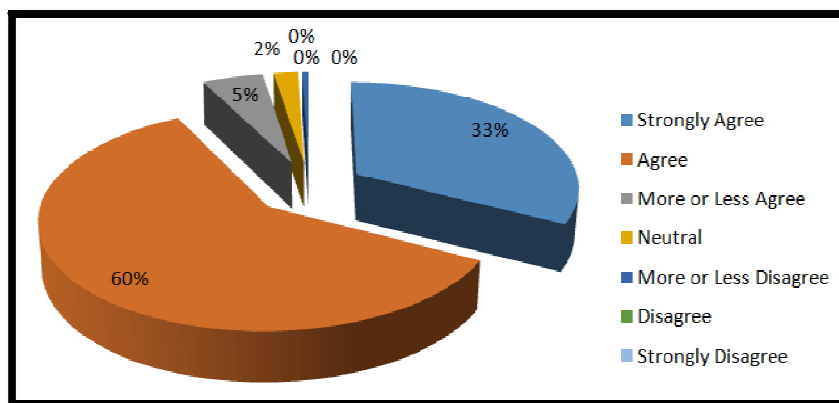


Figure 7: Daily Activities

The majority of employees agree that COVID-19 significantly impacted on their daily activities. COVID-19 has changed our daily activities by adding washing hands, grabbing sanitizer before leaving home, using the mask, limit touching things on the workplace.

The component of 'new normal' rules, like; Social distancing, use of mask, use sanitizer and washing hands often, temperature measurement, personal information writing. To measure employee's reactions to changes, this research chooses social distance, the use of masks, and frequent wash of hands.

H2a: Social Distancing has a significant impact on work performance.

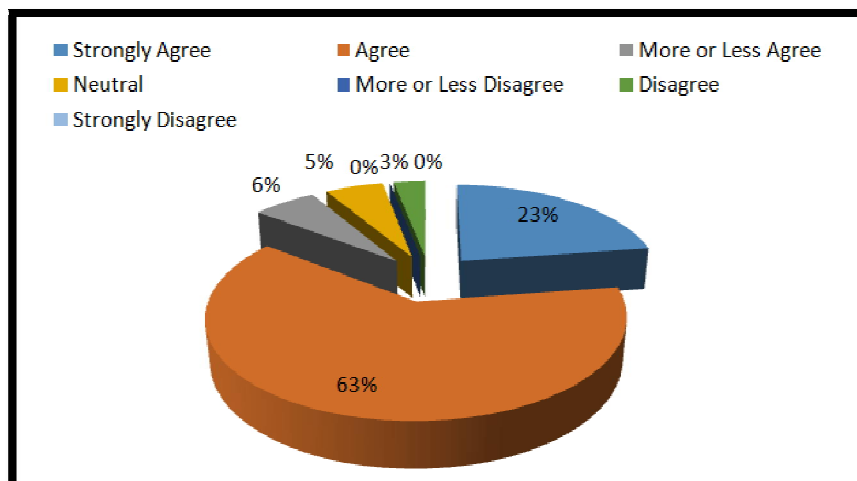


Figure 8: Social Distance

Social distancing is one of the major changes that have employees in the workplace. The majority of employees agree that social distancing has a significant impact on their work performance. Employees have to stay at least 1 meter far from each other in the workplace. Production oriented jobs, marketing jobs, customer services where direct interaction plays a major part, social distancing create some conflict between task and safety measurement.

- H2b: Use of mask during communication affecting daily work outcome.

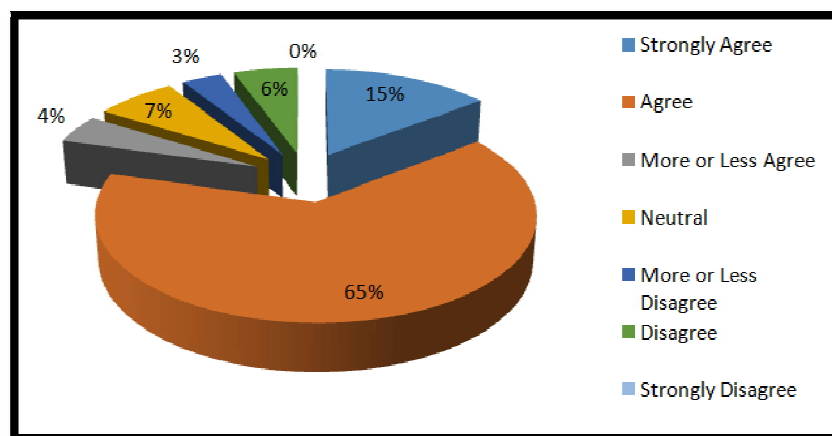


Figure 9: Use of a Mask

The majority of employees agree that using masks affecting their communication during performing work at the organization. Employees found that these changes are interrupting their daily work performance. Employees working in manufacturing, customer service, marketing and sales, the call center has seen difficulties to maintain social distancing and perform well in their work. Using a mask is very interrupting in communication during instruction, meeting, handling customers, and many more.

- H2c: Frequent use of sanitizer and washing hands interrupt the concentration of work.

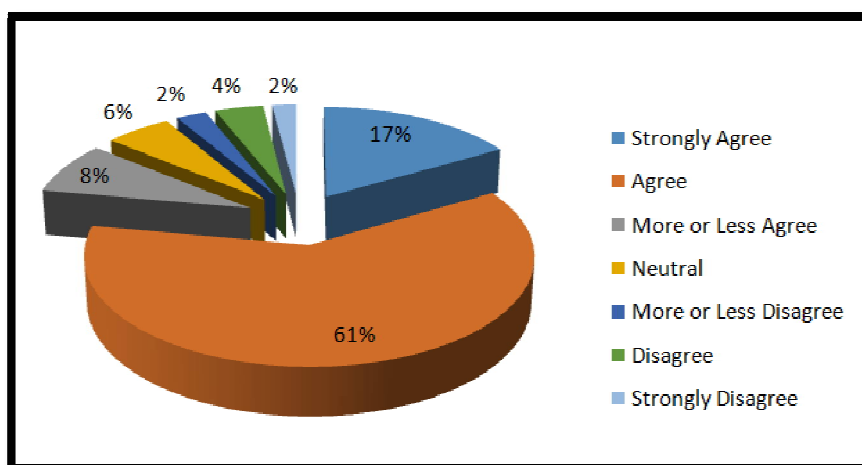


Figure 10: Use of Sanitizer and Washing Hands

More than 61% of employees agree that use sanitizer and frequent washing hands interrupt the concentration of work performance. Washing hands frequently, using sanitizer are very important to minimize the risk of coronavirus. But maintaining hand hygiene is quite difficult for the employees to follow and give full concentration on work. Because they had to wash their hands from time to time and use sanitizer to avoid the possible risk of coronavirus that could spread from materials.

These 'new normal' changes have been imposed for health and safety purposes. Bangladesh reopens almost every business sector to save economic conditions. Bangladesh is facing a rapid increase in coronavirus. The government has to impose these changes to minimize the impact of coronavirus. Usually, these steps are applied to minimize the risk of coronavirus. As these changes are new for employees at workplaces, it is quite difficult to maintain in a busy schedule. Employees have to accept these changes due to the pandemic but their reaction and their feelings about these changes are preventing them to fully concentrate on their works like before. Employees need more time to adjust themselves to the 'new normal' changes.

6. Limitation and Recommendation for Future Study

This research tries to describe employee's reactions to the 'new normal' changes and their impact on their work performance. By doing so this research has limitations.

- Low responses due to COVID-19 pandemic.

- Very few researches have been done on reaction to changes in organization and employee perspective to compare the findings.

This research has been done on employee's reactions to 'new normal' changes and their impact on performance. Future research can be done on employee's reactions to change on employee performance by measuring openness to change and support to change. This research doesn't choose any specific industry, future studies can be done on a specified industry for better result. Researchers must do their research regarding the COVID-19 with every possible outcome.

7. Conclusion

COVID-19 has impacted our lifestyle in many ways. Medicine yet to come out soon. But the world must go on. For a small developing country like Bangladesh, it is very hard to lock down the business sector for a longer period. The economy goes down for this pandemic rapidly. So, to save the economy, Bangladesh and also many other countries had to open its business sector. But coronavirus is still around us. We all have to live and work with coronavirus. So, to minimize the risk government imposes 'new normal' rules that all have to follow.

When there are any new rules or any changes imposed in the organization employees had to accept those changes. Sometimes employees agree on that and sometimes they don't. but their feelings and reactions are important to measure. Because if employee's reactions to changes are negative that might end up as a barrier to performance. According to this research employees, reaction to changes has a significant negative effect on their performance. But this research is based on a pandemic situation so we all had to accept these changes for our safety. For the pandemic changes, employees had to adjust them for safety purposes. But except pandemic change, other changes occurred in the organizations where leaders can take initiative to maintain and handle employees according to changes or involve employees in changes.

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