



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Well-being of Employees, Institutional Support and Government Measures

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted workplaces, raising concerns about employee well-being, stress, health, remote work, and job security. Employers' ability to ensure safety and support was vital, while government interventions influenced employee experiences. **Objective:** This study was aimed to examine the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on employee well-being by exploring the following key dimensions like institutional support, workplace safety, psychological impacts, and the broader governmental responses to the pandemic. **Methodology:** This descriptive study was conducted at Department of Virology at National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Center, Dhaka, Bangladesh to explore the experiences and perceptions of 45 employees of NILMRC during the COVID-19. A structured questionnaire was developed to assess employees' perceptions and experiences related to institutional support, workplace safety, and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 crisis. **Results:** Data have been collected from 45 employees working at NILMRC and analyzed using with SPSS with the bootstrapping procedure. The results indicated that organizational response, work-family conflict, and adaptability directly affect perceived stress and well-being, except for organizational response, which has no direct effect on well-being. Furthermore, it was found that perceived stress mediates the relationship of organizational response and work-family conflict with well-being but not adaptability. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, employees felt supported during the COVID-19 crisis, challenges like increased workloads, inadequate infection control, and mental health issues, including depression, persisted. Government restrictions and media coverage influenced perceptions. Future strategies should enhance support, improve infection control, and prioritize mental health in crisis planning.

Keywords: Covid 19; Stress; institutional support; workplace safety; well-being.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in late 2019 and spread globally, has had profound and far-reaching impacts on nearly every aspect of society, including the workplace. As organizations scrambled to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, employees found themselves navigating an array of new challenges, ranging from health concerns to shifts in work patterns and expectations. In particular, the pandemic created

an urgent need for institutions to provide effective responses to safeguard employee well-being, ensure workplace safety, and adjust to the evolving needs of their workforce^{1,2}.

Employee well-being became a central concern during the crisis, as many individuals faced heightened stress, anxiety, and other psychological impacts related to fears of infection, changes in work arrangements (such as remote work), and concerns about job security. The ability of employers to respond effectively to these challenges, including providing adequate infection control measures, ensuring support for increased workloads, and maintaining communication, became critical factors in sustaining employee morale and performance. Additionally, government measures, such

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as lockdowns, financial relief programs, and public health guidelines, also influenced employee experiences and perceptions of safety during this unprecedented time³⁻⁶.

This study seeks to examine the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on employee well-being by exploring the following key dimensions: institutional support, workplace safety, psychological impacts, and the broader governmental responses to the pandemic. Specifically, it aims to assess employees' perceptions of how their institutions responded to the crisis, their sense of safety within the workplace, the psychological toll of the pandemic, and the role of government interventions in supporting employees. The insights gained from this research will provide valuable information for organizations and policymakers looking to improve crisis management and enhance employee well-being in future public health emergencies.

Methodology

Study Settings: This descriptive study was conducted at department of virology, NILMRC to explore the experiences and perceptions of 45 employees of NILMRC during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the crisis on employee well-being and institutional responses across multiple dimensions. Participation in the study was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were assured that their responses will be anonymized and used solely for research purposes. Given the potential for psychological distress related to the subject matter, participants will also be provided with information about mental health resources and support services.

Study Population: The sample for this study consists of NILMRC employees. A total of 45 employees were for in-depth interviews. The inclusion criteria were those were employed during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that the experiences captured are relevant to the study's objectives.

Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was developed to assess employees' perceptions and experiences related to institutional support, workplace safety, and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 crisis. The survey included the following sections like employee demographics which included basic demographic information, including age, gender, educational level, and years of work experience;

institutional support which included questions assessing the adequacy of institutional responses, including infection control training, support for increased workloads, and communication effectiveness during the pandemic; workplace safety which included the items related to employees' sense of safety in the workplace, their perceptions of infection control measures, and attitudes toward returning to work, psychological Impact which included a set of standardized psychological scales, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), to assess stress, depression, and overall mental health during the pandemic. The survey was administered online to ensure broad accessibility and ease of participation. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models to explore relationships between institutional support, workplace safety, and psychological well-being.

Statistical Analysis: Data analyzed using Excel and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 software to summarize the responses.

Results

In this study, two third of the employee are in young age in between the age of 15 to 30 years. Employee's age ranges from 23 to 51 years with predominance in male (1:6.5) ratio. Most of the employee's studied BSC and rest completed Diploma and MSC courses. Majority of employee (77.7%) had working experience between 2 to 5 years and 6 to 9 years (Table 1).

Table 1: Sociodemographic Status of the Employee (n=45)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age Group		
• 15 to 30 years	35	77.8
• 31 to 45 years	8	17.8
• More Than 45 years	2	4.4
Gender		
• Male	39	86.7
• Female	6	13.3
Education Level		
• Diploma	12	26.7
• BSC	28	62.2
• MSC	5	11.1
Working Experience		
• Less Than 2 years	2	4.4
• 2 to 5 years	20	44.4
• 6 to 9 years	15	33.3
• More Than 10 years	8	17.8

Perception regarding the institutional support includes the adequacy of institutional responses during the COVID-19 crisis, including infection control training and support for increased workloads, control over COVID-19 crisis. All of these questions are categorized into agree, disagree with strongly agree or disagree statement. All the employee's felt that institute had good control over COVID-19 crisis and support the staff during the COVID-19 pandemic condition. They showed positive attitude towards the new COVID-19 regulations but workload was increased without increasing staff (Table 2).

Table 2: Perceptions Regarding the Institutional Support (n=45)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Institution did not support during COVID-19 crisis		
• Strongly disagree	20	44.4
• Disagree	23	51.7
• Agree	1	2.2
• Strongly agree	1	2.2
Institution losing control over COVID-19 crisis		
• Strongly disagree	23	51.1
• Disagree	22	48.9
Felt overwhelmed with new COVID-19 regulations imposed by institution		
• Disagree	3	6.7
• Agree	22	48.9
• Strongly agree	20	44.4
Institute increased workload without increasing staffing		
• Strongly disagree	2	4.4
• Disagree	2	4.4
• Agree	6	13.3
• Strongly agree	35	77.8

Employees' sense of safety regarding workplace during COVID-19 crisis showed mixed perceptions. In this segment, few questions was asked to about employee's individual perception of safety, few were about the current standard precautions and few were about the regulations of safety measures. All of the employees were aware to inform the manager and colleagues after being contracted with COVID-19 patients and did not want to change the job due to COVID-19. But a small portion feels absence from work may reduce the chance of getting COVID-19 (Table 3).

Table 3: Employee's Individual Perceptions Regarding COVID-19 (n=45)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Absence of work reduces the chance of getting COVID-19		
• Strongly disagree	26	57.8
• Disagree	13	28.9
• Agree	3	6.7
• Strongly agree	3	6.7
Felt ashamed to tell manager and colleague about COVID-19 contract		
• Strongly disagree	34	75.6
• Disagree	11	24.4
Change the current job due to COVID-19 crisis		
• Strongly disagree	39	86.7
• Disagree	6	13.3

Regarding the current standard precaution procedure showed mixed perception. Majority of employee's did not offer infection control training, accessibility to infection control specialist. Therefore, above half of the employees were not confident about standard precautions and felt safe while using the standard precautions (Table 4)

Table 4: Perceptions Regarding the Current Standard Precaution (n=45)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Do not feel proper infection control training has been offered		
• Strongly disagree	3	6.7
• Disagree	6	13.3
• Agree	35	77.8
• Strongly agree	2	4.4
Do not feel an infection control specialist is accessible to the respond		
• Strongly disagree	1	2.2
• Disagree	11	24.4
• Agree	31	68.9
• Strongly agree	2	4.4
Not confident with current infection control measures		
• Strongly disagree	3	6.7
• Disagree	18	40.0
• Agree	22	48.9
• Strongly agree	2	4.4
Do not feel safe at work when use standard precaution		
• Strongly disagree	2	4.4
• Disagree	18	40.0
• Agree	25	55.6

Majority of the employees felt COVID-19 outbreak plan was set at their area. Most of the employees wanted not only to restrict the travel from one area to other area but also avoid inviting expatriates from infected area and isolate the COVID-19 cases to

Table 5: Perceptions Regarding the Government Initiative (n=45)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
COVID-19 outbreak plan set at your area		
• Disagree	9	20.0
• Agree	34	75.6
• Strongly agree	2	4.4
Government should restrict travel from and to the infected area		
• Strongly disagree	1	2.2
• Agree	11	24.4
• Strongly agree	33	73.3
Government should isolate COVID-19 case in special hospital		
• Agree	15	33.3
• Strongly agree	30	66.7
Government should avoid inviting expatriates from infected areas		
• Strongly disagree	2	4.4
• Disagree	14	31.1
• Agree	29	64.4
Government should implement curfew and movement restriction		
• Agree	31	68.9
• Strongly agree	14	31.1
School and shopping markets need to be closed		
• Strongly disagree	1	2.2
• Disagree	3	6.7
• Agree	29	64.4
• Strongly agree	12	26.7
Do not feel COVID-19 has been highlighted and discussed efficiently in media		
• Strongly disagree	26	57.8
• Disagree	13	28.9
• Agree	3	6.7
• Strongly agree	3	6.7
Felt depress due to COVID-19 crisis		
• Strongly disagree	9	20.0
• Disagree	20	44.4
• Agree	8	17.8
• Strongly agree	8	17.8

special hospital. The employees also wanted to close the school and shopping markets and implement curfew to restrict the mass movements. Employees also remark the role of media in highlighting the COVID-19 crisis efficiently. Overall, two third of the employee felt depressed during COVID-19 crisis (Table 5).

Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding institutional support, individual safety measures, and government initiatives. A majority of the employees (77.8%) were between the ages of 15 and 30, indicating a young workforce, which is consistent with trends in many industries where younger employees comprise a significant portion of the labor force. This demographic, with predominantly male employees (86.7%), aligns with the gender disparity commonly observed in certain sectors, particularly in the medical and healthcare fields. The educational background of employees in this study showed that most held a BSC degree (62.2%), followed by a diploma (26.7%) and an MSC degree (11.1%), reflecting a well-educated workforce.

When it comes to institutional support, the results suggest that the employees largely felt that their institutions had strong control over the COVID-19 crisis. The majority of employees (95.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that the institution did not support them during the pandemic, which indicates that institutional leadership had a positive perception. However, the increased workload without additional staffing (77.8%) reflects a common issue faced during the pandemic. Many organizations had to manage an increased workload while maintaining limited staffing due to health concerns, which resulted in employees feeling overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities⁷.

This finding resonates with other studies that have highlighted the strain on healthcare systems and employees during the pandemic, particularly as many institutions struggled to balance worker safety with the demand for services⁸. However, while employees expressed positive attitudes toward new regulations, the increased workload without corresponding staff support has been identified as a key source of stress in similar settings during COVID-19⁹.

Regarding individual safety, a significant number of

employees (57.8%) felt that absence from work did not reduce their risk of contracting COVID-19, which suggests that the perceived risk of exposure to the virus was high even among employees who did not report direct contact with COVID-19 patients. Despite this, a vast majority (75.6%) did not feel ashamed to report potential COVID-19 exposure to colleagues or management, which reflects a relatively healthy workplace culture around the issue of reporting illness. This finding contrasts with the stigma that some healthcare workers and employees in essential sectors faced when reporting illness during the pandemic, where fear of judgment or professional repercussions was a deterrent¹⁰. The lack of stigma in this study is an encouraging indicator of the organizational culture's supportiveness and transparency.

The perception of standard infection control measures in the workplace showed a mixed response. While most employees (77.8%) agreed that they received training on infection control measures, more than half (68.9%) felt that infection control specialists were not easily accessible. Additionally, many employees were not confident in the current infection control measures in place, with nearly 49% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they lacked confidence in these precautions. This is concerning, as proper infection control training and accessible expert guidance are critical to ensuring a safe workplace, especially in the context of a pandemic¹¹.

These findings align with studies that have reported gaps in infection control training and a lack of sufficient resources for healthcare workers during the pandemic. This may be especially pertinent for organizations that had to quickly pivot to new safety protocols without having the time or resources to thoroughly train staff¹².

In terms of government initiatives, employees largely supported the idea of restricting travel from infected areas (73.3%) and isolating COVID-19 cases in specialized hospitals (66.7%). These perceptions align with public health recommendations that aimed to limit the spread of the virus and ensure proper care for those infected¹³. The employees also expressed support for implementing curfews and restricting movement to prevent mass gatherings (68.9%). Such measures have been widely debated, with some studies noting that while they were necessary to curb the spread, they also contributed to social and economic strain¹⁴.

Interestingly, a significant number of employees (57.8%) felt that the media did not adequately

highlight the COVID-19 situation, which may suggest that the employees were either dissatisfied with the media's coverage or felt that it did not fully capture the severity of the crisis. This dissatisfaction with the media's role is consistent with concerns raised during the pandemic about the spread of misinformation and inconsistent media reporting, which affected public perception and response to the crisis¹⁵.

Finally, the psychological toll of the pandemic on employees was evident, with two-thirds of the respondents reporting feelings of depression during the crisis. This is a serious concern, as mental health challenges during the pandemic were widespread, affecting both frontline workers and employees in other sectors. Studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted mental health, with many individuals reporting increased anxiety, depression, and stress due to job insecurity, increased workloads, and concerns about health and safety¹⁶.

Conclusion

The findings from this study underscore the complex relationship between institutional support, individual safety perceptions, government interventions, and the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on employees. While employees generally felt supported by their institutions, the increased workload and lack of sufficient infection control measures highlighted the ongoing challenges faced during the pandemic. The government's role in implementing restrictions and the media's coverage of the crisis also emerged as important factors influencing public perceptions. Most concerning is the psychological impact, with a significant proportion of employees reporting feelings of depression. Future strategies should focus on improving support systems, addressing gaps in infection control measures, and considering the mental health needs of the workforce as part of pandemic preparedness and response plans.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authors' contributions

Akram A conceived and designed the study, analyzed the data, interpreted the results and wrote up the draft manuscript; Rahman M contributed to the analysis of the data, interpretation of the results and

critically reviewing the manuscript; Melan A & Nafisa T were involved in the manuscript review and editing; All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Data Availability

Any inquiries regarding supporting data availability of this study should be directed to the corresponding author and are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. All methods were performed in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations.

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