

## Educational and Organizational Handling during COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Changes

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### ABSTRACT

In light of the current circumstance, this study aimed to look into the difficulties and adjustments educational institutions and organizations underwent during the COVID-19 epidemic. The methodology used in this study was qualitative. Data was collected using Key Informant Interviews (KII) and two focus group discussions. Five participants in the group talks and six in the KII provided the evaluated and analyzed data. Theme-based triangulation and visualization techniques were used to classify and present the collected data. According to the findings, respondents were concerned about how COVID-19's consequences on enterprises, educational institutions, organizations, and individual employee income will affect their ability to operate. Organizations, especially those in educational sectors, have altered work schedules and restrictions, imposed social distancing during the supply of goods and services, and changed workflows. They have also moved away from physical environments and toward virtual supervision and instruction.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on educational institutions and organizations' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus has been categorized by the World Health Organization as a worldwide emergency with a very high probability of transmission and impact [1]. Therefore, schools and organizations must change their working methods [2]. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic affects agriculture, politics, education, society, and the environment. Significant dangers to business, industry, politics, agriculture, and especially the sphere of education have been posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Online platforms have replaced physical learning and teaching. This method of instruction was designed primarily to benefit individuals pursuing higher education [3]. There have been several cancellations and reschedules of exams, tests, and assessments [4].

Interestingly, many nations experienced severe corporate and firm bankruptcies, increasing unemployment [5]. Cambodia's ability to retain its socioeconomic standing is limited. Undoubtedly, those most impacted by the significant socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 are the most vulnerable groups, such as women and young people [6]. Moreover, change management is crucial for organizations to thrive during pandemics, stay highly competitive, and develop into better organizations [7]. The methods needed to manage organizational transformation primarily depend on human resources [8]. Human resources rely heavily on the techniques required to manage organizational transformation [8]. COVID-19 introduced new organizational working methods, separating office- and home-based staff and encouraging social estrangement. The first concern with organizational change is how people or individuals adapt to the changes [2].

Furthermore, a study by David Morgan & Rachid Zeffane [9] in 2003 examined management trust and employee involvement in organizational change. The findings showed that any change has a detrimental impact on people's trust in management. This demonstrates how workers respond to any change. They are averse to change since it will probably have a detrimental effect on their professional and personal well-being, which includes their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance and feel satisfied in their jobs. The readiness of employees for organizational change was also examined by Samaranayake and Takemura [10], who discovered that when staff members have confidence in their superiors and peers, they are more eager to embrace organizational change.

Donthu and Gustafsson [11] claim that while some businesses struggle during the epidemic, others are doing well. This is true for many Internet-based businesses, such as those that provide services for remote work, food delivery, online shopping, online education, and online entertainment. Furthermore, the survey entitled *Looking for Opportunities during the Crisis* [12] draws on the observation that larger companies will better cope with the storm than smaller privately owned companies. However, to meet the issues posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Caligiuri et al. [13] examined the applicability of current research in international business and education, particularly the work on international human resources management. Researchers discovered that decision-makers in multinational corporations used a variety of steps to lessen the pandemic's effects.

The primary objective of this study is to determine, from the employees' viewpoints, how schools and organizations handled change due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The following research objectives will facilitate the achievement of this aim such as 1) to identify educational and organizational challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by its employees, and 2) to find out changes undertaken by schools and organizations to cope with the challenges as perceived by its employees. Moreover, this research will answer the following research questions such as 1) What are educational and organizational challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by its employees? Furthermore, 2) how did schools and organizations cope with the challenges perceived by their employees?

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**2. METHOD**

The methodologies employed in this investigation were qualitative. In qualitative research, a broad question is posed, data is gathered in words, photographs, videos, etc., and then examined in search of themes. This research tries to investigate a question without attempting to quantify variables or look at potential links between variables quantitatively.

For two sets of focused group discussions, there were 12 participants, while in Key Informant Interviews, there were only 6 participants. There were 5 participants in one FGD group and five in the other FGD group. Purposeful sampling is used to select FGD and interview participants for the study based on their capacity to share and produce the information-rich output [14]. In this instance, participants were specifically chosen because they had noticed changes at their places of employment due to the pandemic.

Secondary data on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations were gathered from older and more recent studies. Focused group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) were employed to gather primary data. The research questions were used to frame the questions for the FGD and KII. The KII and FGD sessions were held at the same time. Significant statistics were taken from the interview transcript and briefly presented to offer a foundational discussion. The information was collected after being triangulated, categorized by topic, and visualized. According to Fussell et al. [15], a visual context is any effort to use visualization to help people understand the meaning of data. Patterns, trends, and correlations are more evident and straightforward to spot in data visualization than they could be in text-based data.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Demographic Data**

**a. Key Informant Interviewee Profile**

A thorough profile of each of the six participants in the critical informant interview is provided in Table 1 below. There are two females and four males, respectively. One participant is 35 years old, two are 26 years old, three are 28 years old, and three are 26 years old. Five interviewees are finishing their master's degrees, while one is finishing a Ph.D. One person holds a position as a Logistics Assistant, another holds a Junior Management role, a third holds a position as a Government Official, and the final member holds a position as a Full-Time Student. The suggested number of years of work experience is six, five, three, two, one year and three months, and zero.

Table 1. Key Informant Interviewees Profile

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	35	26	26	28	28	28
Education	Ph.D. Student	M.A. Student	M.A. Student	M.A. Student	M.A. Student	M.A. Student
Designation	Senior Mgmt.	Logistics Assistant	Junior Mgmt.	Marketing Officer	Government Official	Full-Time Student
Years of Work Experience	5	2	1.3	6	3	0

### b. Focus Group Discussion 1 Participants' Profile

A thorough profile of the group members in the focus group discussion is shown in Table 2 below. There are two females and five males, respectively. Three participants are 28 years old, while the remaining individuals range in age from 24 to 37. Six participants have previously earned a bachelor's degree, while one is working toward a master's. The participants' occupations range from shop assistants to government officials, passenger ground handlers, manager's assistants, agricultural intervention managers, bankers, and teachers. Two people have stated that they have two years of professional experience. Two more claimed to have three years of professional experience. Others claimed to have 4, 10, and 16 years of employment history.

Table 2. Focus Group Discussion A Participants' Profile

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	28	28	24	26	37	25	36
Education	BA	BA	BA	BA	BA	BA	MA
Designation	Shop assistant	Gov't. Official	Passenger ground handling	Manager's assistant	Agricultural Intervention Manager	Banker	Teacher
Years of Work Experience	2	3	4	3	16	2	10

### c. Focus Group Discussion 2 Participants' Profile

A thorough profile of each group member for the Focus Group Discussion 2 is included in Table 3 below. They are all males aged 25, 26, 28, 29, and 30. Three participants are finishing their master's degrees, while one is finishing a Ph.D. The group includes a graphic designer. A vice school president is another. Manager, Executive, Resourcing & Talent Acquisition, and Government Official comprise the other three participants.

Table 3. Focus Group Discussion B Participants' Profile

Participants	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	30	28	25	26	29
Education	M.A.	Ph.D	M.A.	M.A.	M.A.
Designation	Student Graphic Designer	Student V. School President	Student Business Dev't Mngr.	Student Executive, Resourcing & Talent Acquisition	Student Government Official
Years of Work Experience	5	9	2	3	6

## 3.2. Research Findings According to the Questions

- a. What are educational and organizational challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by its employees?

### Key Informant Interview Results

Critical Informant Interview responses are shown in the results when questioned about the organizational obstacles brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic they had personally encountered. They all mentioned the difficulties, the transition from in-

person to online support, guidance, and instruction, the change in work schedules, and new workplace restrictions in their responses.

The first respondent claimed that *although initially challenging for her, there were many opportunities to grow and discover new things. Our managers or supervisors offer guidance, recommendations, and instructions on social media platforms like Telegram or WhatsApp. We communicate by chit-chatting.*

The second respondent stated that *the management team planned the schedule and the new regulation to shield the business from the pandemic's effects. When suppliers deliver goods and services, we keep our distance working environment.*

The third respondent mentioned that *all work had been changed to be delivered online during the immediate COVID-19. We enhance business resilience, long-term digital literacy capabilities, and resource availability.*

The fourth interviewee pointed out that *in my workplace, they changed some structures; for example, we stopped working physically; namely, we used Microsoft Team to communicate the workflow. However, we need to change some workflows and then rotate the daily working timetables.*

The fifth interviewee noted that *we have a virtual meeting where we interact through Zoom, Skype, and other social media. In reality, I have learned to research and prepare for technology.*

Finally, the sixth interviewee said *almost everything is processed online. The respondent also added that shifting education to online platforms can teach students and teachers to learn new things in the 21 century.*

### **Group Discussion 1**

The majority of participants, according to the results, expressed concern about how the pandemic might impact businesses, particularly those that depended on the income of individual employees. The first participant talked about how the changes impacted them personally, particularly the lower staff salaries. *He claimed that my company was in danger of going bankrupt. The business has been without revenue for five months. The business is undergoing adjustments. It would eventually file for bankruptcy or start a new business. The staff's living conditions were impacted by the staff's five-month home absence and 50% pay.*

The second member, employed by the private sector, voiced worry about declining business revenue. *She revealed that my business's revenue had significantly fallen due to a drop in sales. Because other industries are suffering, there is less demand for our company's products.*

For the difficulties businesses and organizations face due to the social exclusion placed on education. Regarding the effects of COVID-19, three respondents provided their

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opinions. One participant whom a public institution employed claimed that *the COVID-19 epidemic altered the workplace and required businesses to make adjustments in response to the current circumstances. According to his speech, the pandemic impacted Cambodians, organizations, and companies. It affected our company. Our company began to alter the working settings through the use of physical distance in our workspace, the avoidance of face-to-face meetings, and the development of strategies by the organization to contain and stop COVID-19 from spreading.*

*Another participant brought up the impact of COVID-19 on workers in the education sector because the government is taking steps to guarantee that social distance standards are adhered to. As they are compelled to stay home for their safety, he claimed that the pandemic affects public and private sector employees. In particular, high schools were impacted by the crisis in the public sector. They are not being able to attend class. The Ministry's efforts to promote online and distance learning only have a 20–30% positive impact. Even students living in rural areas without access to digital connections are unaffected by it.*

*Interestingly, one participant mentioned that COVID-19 can spread by contact or proximity. Countries enact laws to restrict travel, close borders, and even develop novel ideas for laws governing cross-border travel, such as COVID-19 negative certificates and money deposits. Due to concerns about the virus and the criteria put forward by the government, people do not want to go.*

### **Group Discussion 2**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused problems for businesses. Since face-to-face meetings are impossible due to social distance, organizations struggle with direct communication. Organizations have decided to lower salaries and delay hiring some staff. Additionally, they encountered job rotation issues while some other employees were placed on temporary leave. Additionally, some employees left their jobs and looked for alternative employment. The coronavirus outbreak is predicted to cause a decline in sales volume. Surprisingly, businesses continue to operate normally but are cautious when hiring new employees. Due to the travel restrictions, both domestic and international flights were canceled.

Moreover, some workers quit and tried to look for another job. Surprisingly, businesses are generally progressing in operations, although they are cautious when hiring new employees. Flights, domestically and internationally, were canceled due to the travel ban.

- b. How did schools and organizations cope with the challenges perceived by their employees?

### **Key Informant Interview Results**

The first interviewee claimed that *my school is very clever, adaptable, and had been ahead because, a week before the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) ordered all educational institutions to switch to online classes, my school had already*

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*made the switch to ensure that our students' education would continue online. It was extremely challenging at first. However, things significantly improved later.*

*The second interviewee mentioned that my organization must overcome difficulties. The management team had previously taken many precautions to protect their finances. Most management teams prepared a schedule and new regulations to ensure employees practiced proper hygiene. During working hours, employees were asked to wear masks. We establish the working from home habit and ensure social distance rules are followed. In my situation, I have to collaborate closely with the supplier and buy some equipment. Because of the requirement to maintain social distancing, I cannot see the supplier in person when they deliver some goods or services during this time. After that, we converse by phone and email. They must wait downstairs to await deliveries and receive the items.*

*The third interviewee explained that we are watching how our partners recover economically from the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with our partners, we are closely collaborating with female microbusiness owners. Our initiatives in Cambodia contain external resource training and sports designs that are created explicitly for partners in order to help them survive the epidemic.*

*According to the fourth interviewee, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced most of our coworkers to work from home. The business looked for resources or programs that were simple to access online and could be used for virtual meetings. Microsoft Team is used in my office to help run meetings and webinars.*

*The fifth respondent indicated that to stop the COVID-19 infection from spreading, my company provided all staff with hygiene kits that included alcohol to clean their hands. Previously, we had our first in-person meeting, but we can now connect via Zoom, Skype, and other social media. In addition, the last sixth interviewee responded that it was a significant failure to address the issue, and poor management handled the crisis poorly. The power of staff was used both directly and indirectly. However, the issue was eventually resolved, the company was stabilized, and its interests were upheld. The company can successfully manage COVID-19 despite not experiencing any financial losses from lost profits or interest. Despite a significant change in the working system, business operations continue as usual.*

### **Group Discussion 1**

Most participants indicated that the organization's adoption of social distance norms and hygiene procedures was the improvement it made in response to the problems it had discovered. Few participants mentioned lowering employee salaries and increasing business activities to maintain operations during the pandemic. It was noted that 50% of the participants' workplaces had switched to online working platforms (Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Team) and engaged in digital processes on complicated documents concerning social distance regulations.

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Everyone in the discussion agreed that social isolation and good cleanliness habits would help stop the COVID-19 outbreak. Two expressed the following:

*Unlike earlier, we now conduct meetings via video conferencing, especially with overseas visitors. Documents are now carefully carried with tools and are preferred to be scanned, in contrast to the past when we were not scared to grasp and carry the documents. Although initially challenging, he anticipates that his organization will eventually be able to adopt this practice.*

*My coworkers, particularly the foreigners, returned home. Some local employees worked remotely. My company has physical separation policies, with one department's workers working in the office for one week and the other staff rotating between working from home. Other practices include using Microsoft Teams, changing to virtual communication, changing hand-washing hygiene, and taking temperature measurements. I believe that my company adopted sound policies and practices. Two participants in the FGD who discussed lowering employee salaries and establishing extra business activities to maintain operations for their organization during this pandemic gave the following insights:*

*The corporation tried to cut costs by sending expatriate employees, who were paid higher salaries, back to their native nations. The corporation initially employed one regional manager to oversee activities in five to six nations. The business generated some revenue while implementing hygienic methods to safeguard employees from the virus, such as requiring them to wear protective clothing, masks, and other restrictions. In order to address sustainability issues, there is no other option than to cease operations because there will not be any clients outside those who have a great desire for travel.*

### **Group Discussion 2**

According to the FGD with five participants, the participant's organization has made modifications to deal with the situation. First, 4 participants concurred that their companies have adapted to the new work schedule by implementing staff rotation shifts and work-from-home policies. Employees must use social media platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp to interact with their coworkers and management team while working from home. Second, the participants noticed that to survive, their businesses or organizations had to modify their budget plans due to an overwhelming decline in sales and income. During the conversation, it was also brought up that their organizations had reduced the size of the organizational chart by letting go of some people. One of the participants who worked in school mentioned that their organization has adapted to an e-learning platform. The company employs the Internet platform for communication with staff, students, teachers, managers, principals, and parents. Another participant, who works for a real estate firm, observed that his business had implemented a new strategy for extending its clients' due dates. In order to protect their staff members and clients from the virus, all participants agreed that their businesses or

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organizations should adhere to the Covid-19 preventive instructions from the Ministry of Health.

### 3.3. Discussion

The above findings are also supported by McEntee's [16] observation that the world is responding and adjusting in their supervision and work; namely, managers and employees are both becoming aware of the task ahead to sustain company continuity and ensure a successful continuation of work and business as a result of employers requesting that employees work from home in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. Working from home may help organizations and people in the short term, but if they are not ready, it may not work for them in the long run. The results also suggested that these social distance rules provide organizational problems beyond cultural issues. Organizations may function in culturally distinct environments, but this does not exclude them from social distancing-related difficulties. This implies that firms must adjust and implement steps to help individuals and the entire organization overcome this difficulty.

Ironically, this outcome demonstrates how the epidemic challenges societal and economic norms. It suggests that organizations need to reinvent themselves to achieve both individual and group well-being [17] as well as develop coping mechanisms to deal with delicate situations [18]–[20].

Additionally, teaching and learning were conducted on different virtual platforms, as found by Sey et al. [21]. Sey [22] also added that Cambodian students were moderately ready for their online classes since it is new to Cambodians. Sey [22] continued that although students were online during the COVID-19 pandemic, they seemed concerned about the qualifications obtained from online platforms such as Zoom. According to Schmid et al. [23], organizations must change the workplace to implement social distancing. They must also adjust to changes in employee schedules, provide support for continued teleworking, make physical adjustments, lessen physical touch and in-person encounters, account for changes in travel restrictions, and give managers and staff training on social distancing.

Besides, Zhao [24] also found similar findings with this study; in other words, Zhao pointed out that schools must change to online supervision and instructions. Without flexibility, schools will be stopped. However, Zhao et al. [25] emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic gave educational institutions a golden opportunity to develop and change schools. Hoofman and Secord [26] additionally addressed the effects on education during this challenging time. However, schools still had to adapt to new situations.

Interestingly, McQuirte [27] also explored the challenges and some changes that schools had to equip the classroom with technology during the pandemic. The study conducted by Ng [28] also supported the above findings. Singapore had moved education to online platforms, which was a good change. As part of this study, Azorín [29] found that schools would never be closed during the pandemic. This is a good lesson learned from the world. We have to adapt and adapt to the changes. Tabatadze and Chachkhiani [30] explored the schools in Georgia that had to implement emergency remote teaching practices because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tabatadze and Chachkhiani [30] added that it was pretty challenging, yet it was a good chance for schools toward the changes.

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In short, challenges and changes were everywhere during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions and other companies would be bankrupt without changes and adjustments. This is a good lesson learned by the world. Hence, educational institutions should update and change based on contextual situations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It is appropriate for various organizations to adapt. Leaders and staff have learned to update and modify their working and leading ways due to a shift for the better, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Organizations, educational institutions, and other businesses will go bankrupt if nothing is changed. Changes are, therefore, essential to the development of organizations. The COVID-19 epidemic is a good experience from which all organizations can gain. The subject of further research should be the attitude of employees toward organizational changes.

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