

# COVID 19: Effect of Job Insecurity on Employee Performance: Mediating Role of Depression

Mohammad Ali\*, Sabrina Sharmin Nishat\*\*, Farzana Tazin\*\*\* and  
Mohammad Rabiul Basher Rubel\*\*\*\*

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## ABSTRACT

*The focus of the current study is to see the influence of job insecurity (JI) on employee performance in the form of in-role (IR) and extra-role (ER) performance with the mediating effect of depression. Data were collected from front line employees of 4-star and 5-star hotels of Bangladesh. Findings of the study showed significant effect of employee JI on both IR and ER performance. Again, JI exhibited positive relationship with employee depression in the workplace. For depression, both employee IR and ER performance also showed significant relationship. Finally, both the mediating relations were also found significant. Thus, it can be revealed that management of the organization needs to be more concerned on employee performance which may help them to attain sustainable competitive advantage in the industry. Therefore, it is essential for the organization to ensure employee continuity in the workplace which may minimize their depression to contribute more.*

**Keywords:** Job insecurity, Employee performance, Depression, Hotel industry, Bangladesh.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic revealed a global bump with approximately 25.1 million verified incidents and over 8,44,000 deaths in 216 countries up to 31st August 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). This condition generated an adverse impact on the economies, (Gössling et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020) societal connection, association, bonding (Balanza–Martínez et al., 2020) and health. COVID-19 has brought about an exceptional catastrophe to all industries across the globe. Business sectors like tourism, accommodation, and travel agencies are facing a steep plunge in demand because of being subtle to severe tremors like the occurrence of pandemics (Chang et al., 2020). In specific, the hotel industry has faced massive sales decreases as service availing rates have massively fallen owing to the social distancing rule imposed by the world health organization as well as the local government. Thus, worldwide the hotel organizations faced a radical drop in the count of visitors (Sobieralski, 2020). In consequence, the hotel business across the world is facing an employment shockwave in comparison to other industries, with a sharp drop in the employment ratios and a theatrical increase in the frequency of short-term leaves.

In response to the upsurge of the pandemic in Bangladesh, the appearance of visitors into the country was controlled, and the percentage of internal travel also declined remarkably, initiating an undeniable managerial crisis in hotels. Employment uncertainty is generated by the spread of the virus in these industries, thus, causes an unavoidable threat to organizational operations and viability-an unusual situation that demands the hospitality industry to search for a variety of alternative approaches (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

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\*Corresponding author; Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration in Management Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Email: rana.ali0191@gmail.com)

\*\*Lecturer, Department of Business Administration in Management Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Email: sabrina.nishat@bup.edu.bd)

\*\*\*Lecturer, Department of Business Administration in Management Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Email: farzana.tazin@bup.edu.bd)

\*\*\*\*Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration in Management Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Email: rabiul.basher@bup.edu.bd)

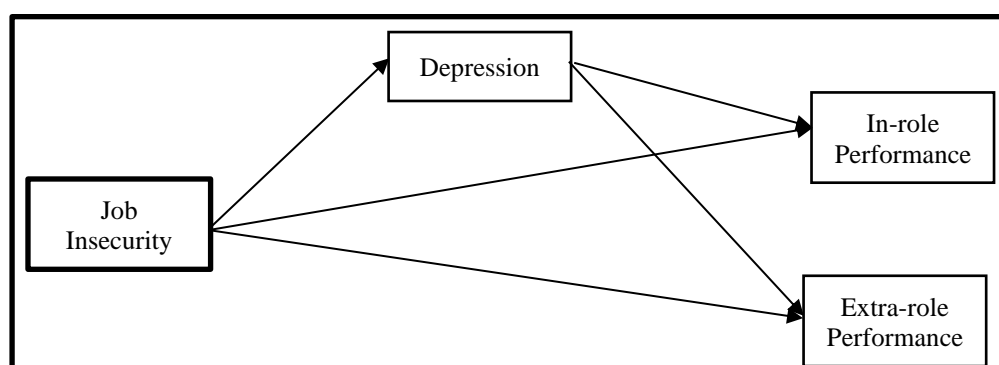
In this situation, examining job insecurity (JI), as seemed by hotel employees, and its negative implications might prove to be noteworthy in defining how industries can replenish and how fast-changing industries can experience a persistent future.

Undoubtedly, contemporary working conditions have been incapable to ascertain employment security for all employees owing to unpredictability arising from technological upgradations, economic shifts, political instability, even from time-period before the upsurge of the pandemic (Etehad & Karatepe, 2019). Employee conceptions about JI- the prejudiced and insensate conception of losing jobs have boomed on account of organizational re-engineering and cut-downs in addition to it, the pandemic has severed the condition. Employees might fall prey to JI for two particular causes (Mauno et al., 2014); mostly, moves in an organization brought by measurable JI, like employee cut-offs, dismissals, and mergers that affect specific workgroups of an organization, incorporating their conceptions of JI, and furthermore, separate work groups might perceive commonly or jointly about notions like particular threats or stressors. Henceforth, it cannot be avoided that employees face tremendous stress in the form of JI (Gaunt & Benjamin, 2007) signifying a negative correlation between factors of job attitude and employee mental health conditions (De Witte et al., 2015). A study by Chirumbolo (2015) explored the consequences of JI throughout the pandemic referring to the fact that JI influences worker involvement in damaging actions directing through damaging psychosomatic behaviors.

A contemporary study identified that psychological condition is a moderate to potential correspond of work performance (Ford et al., 2011). The current research also considered depression as a mediator between JI and employee performance (in-role and extra-role). The discrete expenses of depression are fairly recognized (Lacko & Knapp, 2018), and contemporary predictions propose that approximately \$925 billion annual cost is being incurred by the global economy in consequence of the productivity lost due to depression and anxiety conditions. Depression is a fairly prevalent mental health condition, declared by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), as the existence of continual dejected spirit infused with cognitive and somatic changes that considerably intervene with typical routine activities. The segregated costs of depression are well recorded, and updated statistics signify that reduced output arousing from depression and anxiety disorders cause an annual charge of approximately \$925 billion to the global economy (Chisholm et al., 2016).

The contributions of this study are two-tiered. Primarily, we addressed the impact of JI on employee performance in the shape of IR and ER in the hotel service industry in Bangladesh with mediating effect of depression in COVID 19 situation. There has been little research on assessing the effect of JI on employee work outcome in hotel organization as service industry (Jung et al., 2021). Another, here is a lack of research considering depression as mediator between JI and both employee IR and ER performance. Therefore, this contextual study adds to this track of study as well. Henceforth, Figure 1 presents the projected outline of the current study that portrays the relationship between JI and employee IR and ER performance with the mediating role of depression:

**Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework**



## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Job insecurity

JI was initially defined in the eighties as the powerlessness to maintain the steadiness of work of an individual in an endangered working condition (Greenhalgh, 1984). There is huge uncertainty facing the employees around the world due to globalization, technological innovation, economic and political changes. Thus, resulting in the replacement of stability and predictability with JI (Dewitte, 2015). Employees expecting a possible layoff results in stress which are traumatic and life-disrupting (Alaina C Keim, 2014). JI appears from workers' perception about events, signal link with work, people and social atmosphere. Employees have a negative perception of JI when new managers arrive. It can threaten an individual's personal resources and identity (Shoss, 2017).

JI as a significant work stressor resulting in drastic consequences does not only impact both employees and their employers. Alongside the advent of continuous changes in the working environment inducing feelings of JI, employers are now forced to deal with new demands or master skills not relating to their jobs. (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018). Employees feel threatened by the prevalence of JI owing to the concept that they may lose their employments. JI means to behold idiosyncratic conceptions about employment settings, overtly, about losing job constancy and continuance of employment relationship with the organization (Laura Bernardi, 2008). So far, JI has been linked with adverse job-related outcomes. For example, upon confrontation with perceived JI, employees may reveal lower level of motivation and they become depressed.

### 2.2 Employee performance

Performance is expressed as the acquired result of competent workers in some situations (Prasetya & Kato, 2011). As stated by Hawthorne studies, and scores of other research work on productivity of worker showed up the reality that employees who are pleased with their job will have maximum job performance, in consequence, foremost job retention, than those who are not satisfied with their jobs (Landy, 1985).

Employee performance can be stipulated based on IR and ER performance. IR performance alludes to the behavior directed toward formal tasks, duties and responsibilities designated to the sole employee previously referred in their job description (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Contrarily, ER performance indicates to those activities that are vitally important for organizational success but are discretionary in nature, for example, acting respectfully, assist others, quality relationship with fellow workers and superiors (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Scholars also termed ER performance as organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al., 2009).

### 2.3 Employee depression

Depression is not just a form of acute unhappiness. It is a jumble that influences both brain and body as well as behavior, immune system and nervous system. Depression is observed as a disorder because it is imbalanced in a person's work activities or relationships (PDM Task Force, 2006). Depression also varies from ordinary sorrowing in that the person feels the world as empty or cruel, in contrast to, clinically depressed persons who hold their sense of emptiness or badness in themselves. In most cases depression ranges from light to extremely severe (PDM Task Force, 2006).

Depression has also been viewed as a veto subject in the organization. A lot of employees face organizational depression. Maximum employees conceal their sadness due to the fear of job loss or discrimination among their colleagues (Lacko & Knapp, 2018). Due to depression and anxiety, employees face negative reactions from employers and colleagues. Actually organizational depression is a mental sickness related to drawbacks due to a poisonous workplace atmosphere (Rasool et al., 2016). According to the grouping of DSM-5, Depression is a familiar mental health condition that

confirms continuous dejected temper collective with perceptive and sensual deviations which pointedly intervenes with everyday routine working. Beyond all health conditions, depression has far-reaching consequences on individual work performance (Kessler et al., 2008). Depression is a psychological discomfort that encompasses a tireless feeling of sorrow and loss of attraction (American Psychological Association, 2020; Sandoiu, 2020). Owing to the upsurge of COVID-19, tension arises among the employees regarding their careers. This COVID-19 triggers job loss of employees and unstable future job market which grows depression among the employees (Sandoiu, 2020; Morath & Guilford, 2020; UN News, 2020). Normally, employees with depression shows low concentration, lethargy and decreasing decision-making capacity (Kessler et al., 2008). Several areas of job performance are deteriorated by depression such as interpersonal relationships, innovation, time management, workplace safety etc.

### 3.0 Hypotheses Development

#### 3.1 Job Insecurity and employee performance

JI is adversely related with employee job related outcomes (Darvishmotevali et al., 2017) as it is perceived as a job stressor. Employees who are mostly worried about JI cannot perform with full spirit (Darvishmotevali et al., 2017). Shin and Hur (2020) found that JI negatively controls employee job performance and acts as a mediator between the association of supervisor rudeness and employee job performance. JI acts as a negative determinant of in role performance (Schreurs et al., 2012). Piccoli et al. (2019) believed that JI leads to negative behavioral consequences like poor performance, absenteeism, job switching intention, etc. Rubel et al. (2018) suggested that employee feelings towards the insecurity of jobs can play as an important hindrance IR service and extra role service behavior. Based on the previous empirical evidence on the relationship between JI on employee performance, the following hypotheses may be developed.

**Hypothesis 1a:** Job insecurity is negatively related to IR performance.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Job insecurity is negatively related to ER performance.

#### 3.2 Job insecurity and employee depression

JI as a psychological stressor (Kim & Kim, 2018) leads to high stress on employees' mentality. It acts as a determinant of job anxiety that causes depression (Kim et al., 2017). Kim & Kim (2018) claimed that JI significantly contributes to increase employee depression which may even lead suicidal attempt. Amid Covid-19, employees feel insecurity about their job and as a result of which anxiety and depression exist among young adults (Ganson et al., 2021). JI creates mental burden for employees that becomes the reason of poor mental health (Ganson et al., 2021). Therefore, it could be hypothesized that JI may act to enhance employee depression.

**Hypothesis 2:** Job insecurity is positively related to employee depression.

#### 3.3 Employee depression and employee performance

Depressed employees are less productive employees because depression prevents dedication and engagement towards performance (Anwar et al., 2021). Depressed employees tend to be frequently absent and less involved in the assigned tasks which lead poor job performance (Parent-Lamarche et al., 2020). Lerner et al. (2015) concluded that job stressors like depression, anger and fear have a detrimental impact on employee performance. Alam (2020) concluded that work stress causes depression, which, in turn, is negatively correlated with employee performance. Lack of coworker and supervisor support may lead to high employee depression which may significantly deteriorate the IR and ER performance of employees (Talebzadeh & Karatepe, 2020). These arguments might be induced into the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Employee depression is negatively related to IR performance.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Employee depression is negatively related to ER performance.

### 3.4 Employee depression as a mediator

We encompass the present study by assessing depression as a mediator in the relationship between JI and employee performance. Literature has emphasized the significance of negative relationship between JI and employee performance which decreases IR and ER performance (Piccoli et al., 2019; Rubel et al., 2018; Shin & Hur, 2020). Similarly, researchers have claimed employee depression plays a prominent role to reduce the level of employee performance (Alam, 2020; Anwar et al., 2021; Parent-Lamarche et al., 2020; Talebzadeh & Karatepe, 2020). Common beliefs of the scholars support that JI is a psychological threat for employees which creates high depression (Ganson et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2017; Kim & Kim, 2018). However, researchers are still investigating the impact of JI on employee performance. It can be argued that JI is a determinant of depression which decreases employee performance.

Accordingly, employee depression has been experimented as a mediator by the researchers. Morasco et al. (2013) identified that employee depression influenced by JI is a potential mediator between JI and chronic pain. Furthermore, it was supported that depression mediates the relationship between workplace culture and employee productivity (Laing & Jones, 2016). Parent-Lamarche et al. (2020) found that depression mediates the influence of working condition on job performance. Recent research also provides the evidence of mediating role of depression (Bianchi et al., 2015; Fazeli et al., 2020). Therefore, the present study argues that depression plays a mediating role in the relationship between JI and employee performance and the hypothesis is as follows.

**Hypothesis 4a:** Employee depression mediates the relationship between job insecurity and IR performance.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Employee depression mediates the relationship between job insecurity and ER performance.

## 4.0 Methodology

### 4.1 Sample

The current research is a cross-sectional in nature where data were collected in 2020 (October 2020-November 2020) from numerous categories of employees working in both four (4) and five (5) star hotel in Bangladesh. A structured questionnaire is employee to collect data for the current research. Front line employees were included of the 4-star and 5-star hotels in Bangladesh. Approximately there are 105 (4-star and 5-star) hotels in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Report, 2017). Among these 105 hotels, almost 76% (80) hotels are in Dhaka the capital city and chottogram division where rest 24% (25) are situated in other locations of the country (Bangladesh Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Report, 2017). Thus, these two locations are considered the sampling frame of the current research.

With the help of the human resource department the researchers distributed 800 questionnaires equally to all participated organizations. Of 800 questionnaires distributed, 478 were reverted. 60 questionnaires were discarded due to inconsistent information. In total 418 questionnaires were found suitable for further analysis. The current research employed purposive judgmental sampling a category of non-probability sampling design. Judgmental sampling is suitable when there is no complete list of the respondents and very difficult to identify the actual number of population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

## 4.2 Measures and data analysis technique

The current study adapted all items from the previous validated literature. Such as JI and depression were measured by 8 and 5 items adapted from Jung et al., (2021) and Ganson et al., (2021). Finally, both IR and ER performance were measured by 3 items for each adapted from Rubel et al., (2018). In this study independent and mediator variable were assessed by 5 point Likert scale whereas, 7 point Likert scale were employed to measure both dimensions of dependent variable. Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed to insert data, analyze the descriptive statistics and measure the demographic profile of the respondents. Whereas, Partial Least Square (PLS 3.2.7) was used to assess both measurement and structural model of the research framework based on the hypotheses.

## 5.0 Results

The respondents of the current research were from line employees; therefore, their perceptions were examined. The average age of the respondents who participated in this survey is 34 years. Approximately half (50%) of the participants are between 25-34 years. Two-thirds portion of the respondents is male (67.80%). On average, the span of work experience of the respondents is around eight years.

### 5.1 Measurement model

The measurement model has been evaluated using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model. The data presented in Table 1 reflects that the value of all item loadings is higher than 0.5 while both AVE's and CR outcomes are predominantly higher than 0.5 and 0.7 respectively. Recommended by Hair et al. (2014). Among the values presented in this table, the lowest value of CR is 0.843, and that AVE is 0.519, as stated for CDO. Henceforth, it can be concluded that the study confirms convergent validity by achieving the parameter for acceptability.

**Table 1: Measurement Model**

Constructs	Items	Item Loading	AVE	CR
Depression	Depre 1	0.768	0.519	0.843
	Depre 2	0.647		
	Depre 3	0.737		
	Depre 4	0.728		
	Depre 5	0.714		
Extra-role Performance	ERP 1	0.876	0.735	0.892
	ERP 2	0.913		
	ERP 3	0.825		
In-role Performance	IRP 1	0.825	0.733	0.845
	IRP 2	0.886		
Job Insecurity	Job Ins 1	0.763	0.692	0.931
	Job Ins 2	0.893		
	Job Ins 3	0.799		
	Job Ins 4	0.866		
	Job Ins 5	0.848		
	Job Ins 6	0.813		



Furthermore, this study tested discriminant validity by an empirical standard to show how each construct was different from others following Hair et al. (2014). This study used Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) for discriminant validity analysis. Henseler et al. (2015) proposed value  $\geq 0.85$  as the stricter criterion or value  $\geq 0.90$  as the lenient criterion. The present value was found supporting the limit of the stricter criterion of  $\geq 0.85$ . Therefore, the discriminant validity standard was justified (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity**

	Depre	ERP	IRP	Job Ins
Depre				
ERP	0.265			
IRP	0.242	0.637		
Job Ins	0.223	0.337	0.346	
Mean	3.61	4.67	4.81	3.72
S.D	0.66	0.87	0.92	0.69

## 5.2 Structural model

A structural model is developed by studying the hypothetical relationships among the variables. Following Table 4 and Figure 2, the path from depression to employee ER performance ( $\beta = -0.164$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and IR performance ( $\beta = -0.126$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) also illustrate significant relationships. Moreover, the path from JI to depression shows significant relation ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, the paths from JI to both outcome variables (extra-role and in-role performance) indicate their substantial relationships having values of ( $\beta = -0.274$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and ( $\beta = -0.249$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), correspondingly. Table 3 shows the results of the hypothesized relationship.

**Table 3: Result of Direct Effect**

Direct Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-Value	P-value	Decision
Job Insecurity > In-role Performance	-0.249	0.045	5.58**	0	Supported
Job Insecurity > Ex.-role Performance	-0.274	0.042	6.51**	0	Supported
Depression > In-role Performance	-0.126	0.048	2.65**	0.008	Supported
Depression > Ex.-role Performance	-0.164	0.046	3.58**	0	Supported
Job Insecurity > Depression	0.196	0.049	4.02**	0	Supported

This research also measures the mediating effect of depression on both JI and employee IR and ER performance following Preacher and Hayes (2008). The current results indicate considerable mediating effect of depression on JI and employee IR performance ( $\beta = -0.025$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and ER performance ( $\beta = -0.032$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommend that the upper and lower limit values of confidential interval should not include zero to get mediation effect. The present study supports this requirement to get the mediating effect of depression between JI and employee IR performance (LL 5 0.095, UL 5 0.268), and ER performance (LL 5 0.271, UL 5 0.130).

**Table 4: Result of Indirect Effect**

Indirect Path	Std. Bet.	Std. Erro	t-Value	95% LL	95% UL	P-value	Decision
Job Ins > Depre. > ERP	-0.032	0.011	2.87**	0.013	0.123	0.004	Supported
Job Ins > Depre. > IRP	-0.025	0.011	2.26**	0.056	0.142	0.024	Supported

## 6.0 Discussion

The aim of this research is to examine how JI influences employee performance through the mediating effects of employee depression in the setting of a developing country. Specifically, the influence of JI on employee performance through depression among the front-line employees of the organizations in Bangladeshi hotel industry. The outcome of the study is congruence with the past studies. The results of the current study accepted the first hypothesis on the relationship between JI and employee IR and ER performance. Earlier Shin and Hur (2020) supported that JI directly and indirectly makes negative link with employee performance.

The second hypothesis was also supported; JI can reinforce the depression of employees as the two are positively related. Similar results were also supported by the empirical analysis of Ganson et al. (2021). The result shows that when employees are concerned about the security of their job during COVID-19, they have a tendency to be depressed. The results of the study confirmed the third hypothesis. The current findings showed a significant relationship between employee depression and IR and ER performance as advocated by (Talebzadeh & Karatepe, 2020). In the present context of hotel industry, due to COVID-19 depressed front-line employees cannot psychologically engage themselves in the job that ultimately deteriorate their performance.

In this study, hypothesis four presumed that depression mediates the association between JI and both IR and extra role performance. The result confirmed the mediating role of depression between JI and employee IR and ER performance, which is reliable with the previous study directed by Morasco et al. (2013). Since JI increases employee depression (Ganson et al., 2021) and depression decreases employee performance (Alam, 2020), the results established the mediating effect of depression between JI and employee performance.

In the present study, JI was found as a negative determining factor of employee performance that eventually impedes the performance of the organizations in hotel industry as well. Moreover, employee depression was found as intervening variable between JI and employee IR and ER performance. Therefore, hotel organizations should ensure the job security of employees which will contribute to reduce depression and ultimately improves their current level of performance.

### 6.1 Theoretical and practical implications

The findings of this research prioritize the importance of pragmatic style when managing employees' conceptions of job security in controlling their depression and refining their performance. At the instance of ensuring the job security by an organization, employees believe that their well-being is considered. They respond by enhancing their enactment beyond the specific task-related errands for which they are cared for and recognized by their organization. The current study imparts the empirical evidence to belief that organizations can reduce employee depression when job security is ensured and well communicated with employees. Such insight may enrich human resource management (HRM) theories imparting support of employee IR and ER outcomes as well as recognizing JI as a job stressor. Moreover, the findings accelerate the argument of mediating impact of employee attitude by presenting depression as a mediator between JI and employee IR and ER performance. On theoretical aspect, the present results differentiate the study from the existing literature of HRM. The findings of the study contribute to the literature on HRM and employee



outcomes by providing insights into JI, depression and employee performance in a developing country context. The current study provides the evidence of negative impact of JI on employee performance and the positive linkage of depression with JI amidst COVID-19.

Specifically, in practice, the results of the study provide Bangladeshi hotel organizations with a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of JI and their applicability in the service sector for an improved economy. Proper security of job may lead to better performance of the employees. The study assesses how JI has an impact on front-line employees' performance through depression. The study suggests that hotel managers must concentrate on job security to make employees more devoted towards their performance. Fear of COVID-19 creates psychological pressures which becomes acute due to depression that arises from insecurity of job. Hence, hotel managers should take care of the issues of employee depression.

The findings help in presuming that job security is an important factor of goodwill of an employer when employees are not depressed. As a result, employees become more enthusiastic to perform effectively for the organizations. Hence, the outcome of this research will help the managers of hotel organizations to gain better insight of preventions of employee performance due to depression and the extent to which job security is crucial in this regard. Moreover, the findings will be beneficial to the organizations of other service industry and other developing countries.

## 6.2 Limitations and future research direction

The study admits some limitations though it has been designed carefully. This study is cross sectional in nature; therefore, longitudinal approach can be used in the future study to examine the causal relations of the variables. Only three dimensions have been used in the present study whereas depression was incorporated as a mediator. Hence, researchers can analyze the impact of JI addressing the mediating effect of other altitudinal variables such as engagement, commitment, perceived support from leader, etc. The study focused on just hotel industry which is not enough to generalize the findings of service sector in a developing country context. Therefore, more service industry such as, insurance, banking, medical, etc. can be covered to achieve more generalizable results in the context of service sector of Bangladesh. Moreover, similar study can be performed in the developing country context to extend the literature in JI and employee outcomes.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This paper aims to examine how JI influences employee performance through depression during COVID-19. The study concludes that insecurity of job is significantly related with employee outcomes such as, IR and ER performance. Our findings prioritize the idea that when job security is not ensured, employee performance suffers. Hence, management of hotel industry can attain better performance when employees feel their job is secured. More specifically, hotel industry should pay more attention on job security and mental health such as, state of depression, to get maximum and sustainable employee performance.

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