
EMPLOYER RESISTANCE TO THE FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK IN BANGLADESH: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The idea of working four days a week instead of five sounds exciting less stress, more balance, and maybe even better productivity. Around the world, trials in places like Iceland and New Zealand have shown exactly that. But in Bangladesh, things aren't so straightforward. We wanted to find out why many employers are still hesitant, so we talked to 18 organizations from industries such as garments, banking, IT, healthcare, and education. What we found was a mix of curiosity and concern. Employers worry about how clients would react if services were unavailable for an extra day, whether deadlines could still be met, and if productivity might drop. Cultural habits also play a role here, long hours are often seen as proof of commitment and the law doesn't clearly support flexible work models yet. Still, most leaders agreed the idea has promise, especially for keeping employees happy and reducing stress. The challenge is that there's no local evidence yet. Our study suggests Bangladesh doesn't need a big leap all at once small, well-planned pilot programs in sectors like IT and education could show what's possible and help build confidence. With the right support, a four-

day work week could gradually become a reality that works for both businesses and people.

Keywords: *Four-day work week, Employer resistance, Flexible work arrangements, Work culture.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The four-day work week model, which either condenses regular hours into four days or lowers overall working time while preserving productivity, is posing a growing threat to the traditional five-day work week model globally. As businesses place a higher priority on employee wellbeing and work-life balance, this creative strategy has gained traction. Shorter work weeks result in lower employee stress, higher job satisfaction, and maintained or increased productivity levels, as evidenced by international success stories from Iceland, New Zealand, and Belgium. These successes have established the four-day workweek as a competitive option to traditional employment arrangements in a number of industries. However, there are particular difficulties with implementation in Bangladesh. This study carried out a thorough survey across 18 organizations representing a range of industries and company sizes in order to comprehend employer perceptions and barriers in this context. In industries ranging from clothing and banking to IT and shipping, the survey gathered opinions from important decision-makers such as founders, HR specialists, department heads, and operational managers. The purpose of this study is to determine the fundamental causes of employers' resistance

to implementing a four-day workweek and to pinpoint possible avenues for progressive work arrangements in Bangladesh's changing business environment.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The four-day work week has gained global attention, with countries like Iceland, New Zealand, and Japan reporting positive results such as higher job satisfaction, reduced stress, and maintained productivity (Thorstensson, 2021; Microsoft Japan, 2019). These examples imply that reduced workweeks can enhance work-life balance without compromising productivity. However, developed countries with robust infrastructure and adaptable industries are responsible for the majority of these results. The outcomes are less clear in Asia and other developing nations. According to Pang, Wang, and Liu (2022), industries that require continuous client access may experience operational issues as a result of compressed schedules. Pencavel (2015) also made the case that workplace culture, job design, and industry type all affect how well reduced hours work. In Bangladesh, where the manufacturing and apparel industries depend on rigorous supply chain schedules and continuous production, these concerns are extremely pertinent. Other difficulties are highlighted by local researchers. According to Rahman and Ahmed (2023), Bangladeshi companies are resistant to flexible arrangements because they frequently adhere to strict hierarchies and cost-driven models. In Bangladeshi workplaces, physical presence and long hours are still regarded as indicators of commitment, according to Hofstede's (2011) cultural study. Feasibility is further shaped by industry differences. While IT and software

companies, which use output-based models, seem more receptive to flexible work arrangements, client-focused industries like banking and clothing require daily availability. Traditional schedules for frontline services are still necessary in the healthcare and education sectors, despite possible minor adjustments to administrative roles. Overall, the research shows that although there is evidence from around the world that a four-day workweek has advantages, Bangladesh faces barriers that are unique to its culture, system, and sector. It is essential to take a slow, sector-based strategy backed by updated policies and a shift in culture. Above all, local pilot projects are required to demonstrate viability prior to widespread adoption.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We got a lot of information from 18 organizations in Bangladesh that work in different fields for our study. The point was to find out how employers feel about making the work week four days instead of five. We looked at 16 important areas, such as how many people know about the idea, whether businesses are ready for it, what problems might come up, how employees might react, and what benefits they might have. This survey of 18 companies gave us a good mix of views from different industries and company sizes. However, we know that in the future, a bigger survey would give us even better results. Also, doing research over a longer time would let us see how things change as businesses try out new ways of doing things. For this study, we used both numbers and opinions. We got quantitative information like percentages and charts to see patterns clearly. We also got qualitative information from open-

ended questions where people could share their own ideas and thoughts. The companies we talked to were all different sizes and types, with more than 500 employees. They worked in a wide range of fields, from clothing and banking to IT and education. Our results are stronger because they show that different types of businesses face different challenges and opportunities.

4. RESULTS, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Main Body

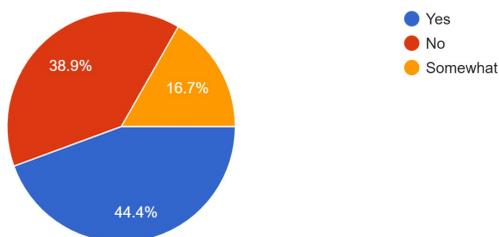


Figure 1. Awareness Level of 4-Day Work Week Concept

A big knowledge gap is shown by the fact that almost half of the respondents (44.4%) have no idea what a four-day work week is, while only 16.7% are fully aware. With 38.9% saying they were only somewhat aware, there may be room for education and information-sharing programs that help people understand better and maybe even change how things are implemented.

These results show that raising awareness should come first, before expecting a lot of people to start using it. Because business leaders don't know much about it, it seems like large-

scale education campaigns highlighting global success stories and practical benefits would be needed for implementation to go well. This lack of knowledge, along with complicated organizational and cultural factors, makes it hard for employers to want to work in Bangladesh.

4.2 Company Size Distribution Analysis

Responses to the survey came from businesses of all sizes, giving us information about businesses of all sizes. The distribution of company sizes shows some interesting patterns in how employers see things:

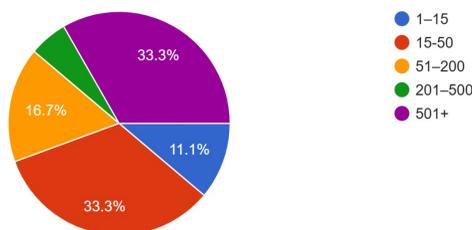


Figure 2. Company Size Distribution of Survey Respondents

We saw that the survey responses came from a good mix of small businesses (44.4% with less than 50 employees) and large businesses (38.9% with more than 200 employees). This means that we learned from both big, structured organizations and small, flexible ones. A study found that opinions are really affected by the size of the company. Large companies with well-established systems may find it harder to change the way they do things, while smaller companies can adapt more quickly.

Since both ends of the spectrum are well represented, we can't take a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Our takeaway is that any

plan to introduce a 4-day work week in Bangladesh needs to be tailored: smaller businesses might move quicker, but large companies will need more phased strategies, policy tweaks, and change management to make it work.

4.3 Designation and Leadership Perspectives

Our survey included leaders from different levels, with over a quarter (27.8%) being Founders or CEOs, giving us strong strategic viewpoints. Alongside them, we had department heads, operations managers, HR professionals, and technical experts, which means we captured insights from both top-level decision-makers and those managing day-to-day operations. This mix helps us see the 4-day work week debate from all angles – strategy, operations, and people management. Based on this, we can say our findings are balanced and reliable, and any recommendations we make will consider both high-level vision and ground-level realities.

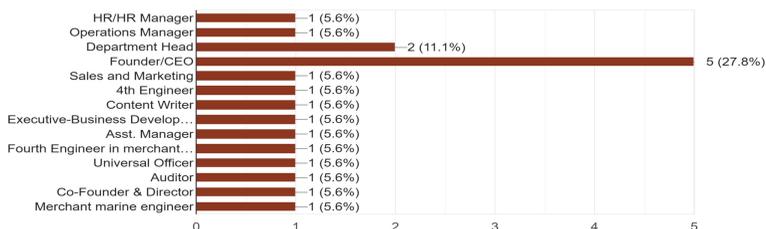


Figure 3. Current Designation Distribution of Survey Respondents

Our survey covered a wide range of industries in Bangladesh – from garments (22.2%) to IT, banking, education, healthcare, and NGOs – giving us a clear picture of how different sectors view the 4-day work week. Global studies, like Iceland’s trials

and Microsoft Japan's example, show that shorter weeks can boost productivity and reduce stress, while research also suggests people can often do more in less time. But in countries like Bangladesh, challenges are different — limited infrastructure, strict client demands, and a culture that prefers sticking to traditional routines make change harder. From this, we can conclude that while the benefits are clear on paper, local realities mean we need sector-specific strategies and gradual adoption, rather than trying to apply the same model everywhere at once.

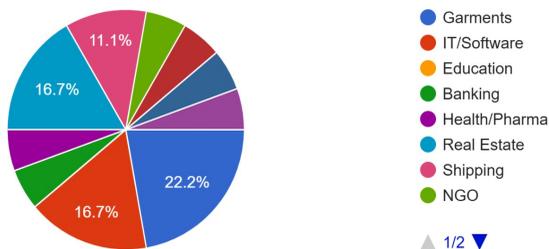


Figure 4. Industry Distribution of Survey Respondent

Our survey shows that the four-day work week would affect industries differently. Garments and banking face the biggest hurdles due to strict international deadlines, regulatory demands, and the need for daily client service, though administrative areas might allow small trials. IT and software have the highest potential thanks to flexible, output-based work styles and global trends, making them ideal for pilots. Education, healthcare, real estate, and shipping could also try flexible schedules in non-frontline roles. Employee opinions are mixed,

but many seem open to the idea. Based on this, our decision is to start with pilot programs in sectors and roles that are already flexible—like IT, education admin, and certain support functions—so we can gather proof of success before expanding to more rigid industries.

4.4 Employer Concerns and Challenges

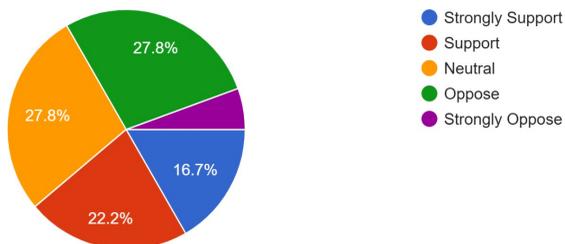


Figure 5. Opinion on Implementing 4-Day Work Week in Bangladesh

According to our research, employers in Bangladesh have mixed opinions about the 4-day workweek: 44.4% are in favor of it, 27.8% are neutral, and another 27.8% are opposed. With only one-third certain it would work, half unsure, and some openly doubtful, productivity concerns appear to be the largest uncertainty. This indicates that hesitancy stems more from a lack of sufficient evidence that it can succeed in this situation than from outright rejection. Therefore, before anticipating broader acceptance, we should concentrate on raising awareness and conducting small-scale trials to provide employers with concrete, local evidence.

4.5 Productivity and Operational Concerns

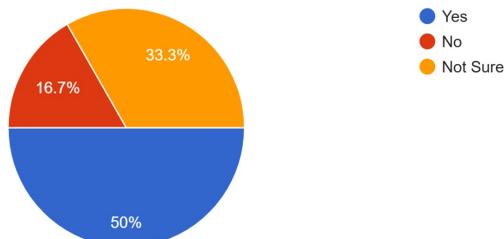


Figure 6. Belief in Productivity Maintenance with 4-Day Work Week

Two-thirds (66.7%) of employers cite the possibility of disgruntled customers as the largest obstacle to implementing a 4-day workweek, which is a significant concern. Many worry that cutting working days will result in delayed responses, missed deadlines, or service gaps. These problems are particularly serious in client-driven industries like banking and clothing where speedy turnaround is essential for competitiveness. Being accessible nearly every day is regarded as a sign of dependability in Bangladeshi business culture, which is closely related to this worry. This makes it evident that any shift to a 4-day model needs to incorporate effective client management techniques, like rotating off-days or staggered schedules, in order to maintain service levels while still providing employees with additional sleep.

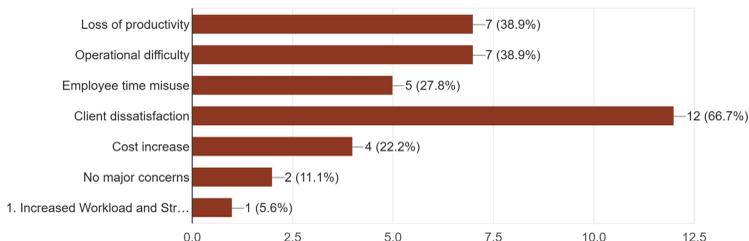


Figure 7. Primary Concerns Regarding 4-Day Work Week (Multiple Selection)

Fewer working days are a difficult adjustment for many Bangladeshi industries, particularly banking and clothing, which depend on continuous customer access and prompt responses. In addition, a significant majority (83.3%) believe their current structures are just not prepared for such a change, and 38.9% are concerned about losing productivity. This indicates that most businesses would struggle without adjustments to workflows, systems, and scheduling, even though the idea might sound good. Our conclusion is that before a 4-day work week can actually function here, structural readiness must be achieved, which entails process improvements, improved resource planning, and incremental adjustments.

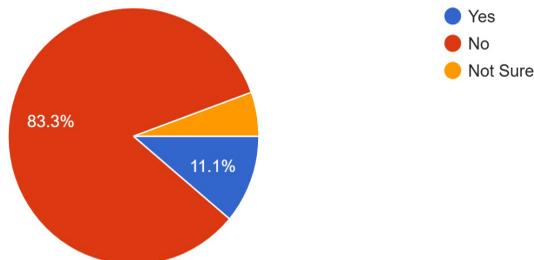


Figure 8. Organizational Structure Readiness for 4-Day Work Week

According to the data, a large number of businesses in Bangladesh have inflexible systems that make it difficult to modify schedules without creating problems. Just 22.2% of respondents are certain that a 4-day work week would reduce revenue, and more than half (55.6%) are unsure of the potential effects. Because of this uncertainty, financial risk is more about "not knowing" than actual loss. Our conclusion from this is clear: businesses should obtain local trial data to see the true financial effects before making the shift. This could help transform uncertainty into well-informed decision-making.

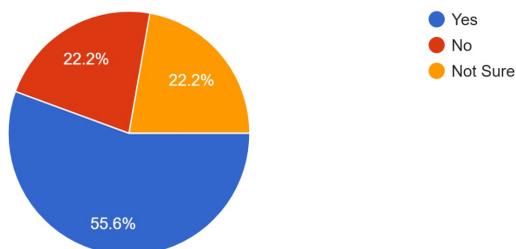


Figure 9. Expected Revenue Impact from 4-Day Work Week

The lack of local evidence surrounding a 4-day work week creates uncertainty, forcing employers to make educated guesses rather than fact-based decisions. 22.2% of respondents are concerned that costs may increase, primarily if additional employees are required to maintain services, which is significant for Bangladeshi businesses that compete on price. Operations would have the biggest departmental difficulties (38.9%), followed by customer service and production (22.2% each). This leads us to the conclusion that any trial should begin in less

important areas first while figuring out how to manage workloads without incurring significant additional costs.

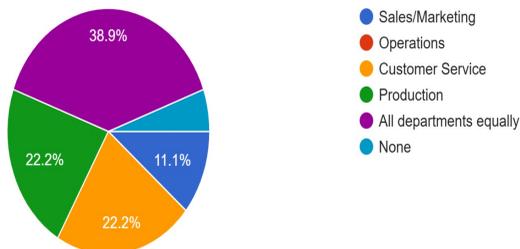


Figure 9. Departments Facing Most Difficulty with 4-Day Implementation

Flexible workweeks are challenging to manage in Bangladesh because the country's garment and manufacturing industries rely on continuous production, optimal use of machinery, and synchronization with global supply chains that adhere to conventional schedules. Based on this, we have decided that in order to test a 4-day work week without interfering with core operations, these sectors would require highly focused, department-specific approaches, beginning with non-production roles.

4.6 Socio-Economic Factors

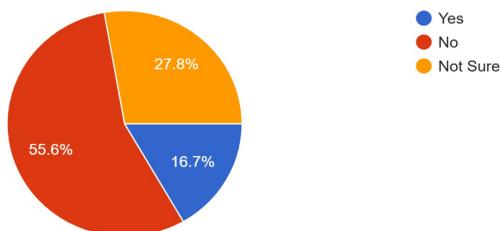


Figure 11. Current Labor Law Suitability for 4-Day Work Week

More than half of respondents (55.6%) to our survey are unclear if Bangladesh's Labor Act 2006 permits a four-day work week. This is primarily because the law was drafted with traditional schedules in mind and doesn't explicitly address compressed or alternative work patterns. Employers are hesitant to try it in large part because of the legal uncertainty, which makes them concerned about potential compliance risks. On the basis of this, we have decided that we must work with industry associations and legislators to update or clarify the law to support contemporary work models before advocating for its implementation. Employers will feel more comfortable testing pilot programs without worrying about legal issues once the legal aspect is clear.

4.7 Cultural and Market Readiness

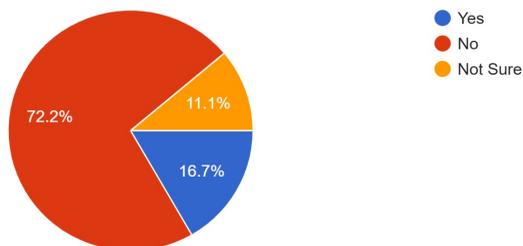


Figure 12. Readiness of Bangladeshi Work Culture for 4-Day Work Week

According to our research, 72.2% of participants are not sure whether Bangladeshi workplace culture is prepared for a four-day workweek. This is primarily because many workplaces have rigid hierarchies that oppose changes that could appear to be a lack of commitment, and local business culture still values physical presence as evidence of hard work. Because of this, we

have decided that before we expect widespread adoption, we should first concentrate on transforming mindsets through awareness campaigns, leadership development, and pilot projects in order to move away from a "time spent" mentality and toward a "results delivered" approach.

4.8 Client and Market Expectations

61.1% of respondents were unsure of how clients would respond to four-day service models, indicating serious concerns about customer acceptance. In service industries, where traditional five-day availability patterns have shaped client expectations, this uncertainty is especially noticeable.

Businesses must adjust to the time zone requirements and expectations of international clients due to Bangladesh's status as a global outsourcing destination, especially in the apparel and IT services industries. In international markets where customers anticipate traditional availability patterns, deviating from traditional schedules may have an effect on competitiveness.

4.9 Employee Perspectives

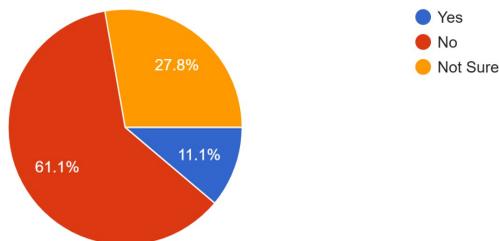


Figure 13. Expected Employee Reception of 4-Day Work Week

According to our findings, employers have differing opinions about how workers would respond. Of those surveyed, 38.9% believe that workers would embrace a four-day workweek, while roughly the same percentage anticipate opposition or conflicting emotions. Nonetheless, the majority of employers see obvious advantages, with 50% seeing the possibility of increased job satisfaction and retention and 61.1% acknowledging that it could lessen stress. This indicates that they recognize its importance in luring and retaining talent in a competitive labor market. In order to make management and employees view the change as an investment in people rather than merely a change in schedule, we have decided to emphasize these benefits to employee wellbeing when proposing pilots.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Strategic Implementation Approaches

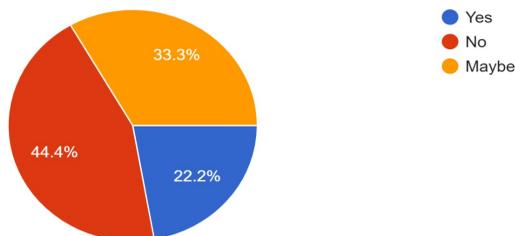


Figure 14. Willingness to Try 4-Day Work Week as Pilot Program

Although most respondents want to see concrete evidence that a four-day work week is effective before making a full commitment, 44.4% of respondents are open to trying it out on a trial basis. This demonstrates that there is potential to influence employers through carefully thought-out pilots in positions where performance is more important than

appearance. Clear performance objectives, frequent evaluations, and the ability to modify the strategy should all be features of these trials. In light of this, we have decided to advocate for small, closely watched pilot projects that can yield concrete proof of productivity and advantages, which will facilitate broader adoption in the future.

5.2 Flexible Model Selection

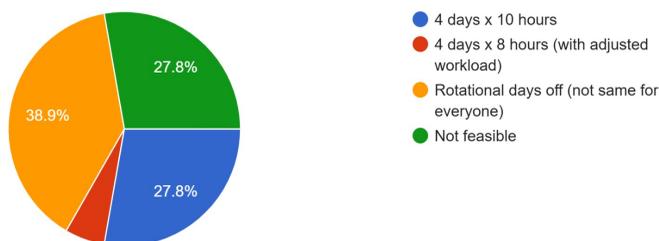


Figure 15. Preferred 4-Day Work Week Model

According to survey results, people prefer four days with eight-hour schedules and modified workloads (38.9% support) over ten-hour schedules that are compressed (27.8% support). The distribution that follows displays the favored implementation model:

According to our survey, rather than packing more hours into longer days, the majority of employers (38.9%) would rather have a four-day workweek with regular eight-hour shifts and modified workloads. Another 27.8% support rotating days off as a way to maintain services while still providing benefits to employees. Most people can imagine some form of this working, with only 5.6% stating it is not possible. In light of this, we have decided to investigate flexible models, particularly

rotational schedules, that preserve customer service while enhancing employee work-life balance.

Different industries require different strategies in order to implement a four-day workweek. For example, factories may begin in administrative and support areas, while service-based companies may employ longer hours but shorter shifts per employee. Strong client communication, cultural mindset changes, technological advancements for efficiency, and clear legal guidelines will all be crucial. Building system trust will be facilitated by measuring results in terms of output rather than hours. To ensure that businesses see tangible benefits without compromising service quality, we have decided to support a sector-specific, phased rollout that is backed by technology, policy updates, and transparent performance tracking.

5.3 Implementing recommendations

a) Pilot Programs

The four-day work week should be introduced gradually by organizations, especially in flexible industries like education and information technology. Before thinking about wider adoption, these pilots will assist in determining the true impact on output, worker satisfaction, and overall company performance.

b) Hybrid Models

Companies can implement a rotational system where teams take different off days rather than shutting down for three full days. While individual workers gain from a reduced workweek, this guarantees that services and client needs are still satisfied.

c) Policy Support

To promote adoption, the government must get involved. Companies can experiment with shorter work weeks without worrying about financial or legal repercussions if policies like tax incentives, subsidies, or regulatory guidance are in place.

d) Investment in Automation

Automation and process enhancements ought to be given top priority in manufacturing and production-based sectors. Despite fewer working days, businesses can maintain or even increase output by using technology to increase efficiency.

e) Cultural Shift Campaigns

To change the culture of the workplace from one that emphasizes "time spent" to one that emphasizes "results achieved," awareness and training initiatives should be implemented. The four-day work week model will be more widely accepted if the benefits to employee well-being and worldwide success stories are highlighted.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our survey reveals that the majority of Bangladeshi employers have legitimate reasons to exercise caution and are not opposed to the four-day workweek merely for the sake of it. Many companies, particularly those in the banking, clothing, and other service industries, are concerned with meeting deadlines, satisfying customers, and remaining competitive in the event of a working day disruption. Additionally, most businesses have very fixed systems, so

schedule changes could cause problems for them. Employers are also concerned about potential legal issues because the current labor law does not expressly support such changes. A shorter week could be interpreted as less commitment because many workplaces still hold the cultural belief that working long hours entails putting in a lot of effort. Still, a lot of employers see the positive aspects. They concur that it might lessen stress, retain qualified personnel, and increase employee satisfaction. Their lack of sufficient local evidence that it will function here is the issue. Therefore, we believe that taking things one step at a time is the best course of action. Small test programs in adaptable fields like IT, education administration, and certain support departments are where we advise beginning. To keep customers satisfied, these tests should be well-planned, monitor results, and employ strategies like rotating off-days. In order to give employers confidence to try it, the government and business leaders should simultaneously establish clear regulations. If these tests are successful, we can gradually expand the concept to other industries, revise regulations, and launch awareness campaigns to shift the focus from "time spent" to "results matter." In this manner, Bangladesh can transition to a four-day workweek without compromising productivity or service quality.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

We think there are a number of important areas that need more research in the future. Companies in Bangladesh should test the four-day work week in depth so that we can see what works and what doesn't. Another thing that would help is to look at the results from small, medium, and large businesses and see

how the size of the business affects implementation. It would be helpful to do long-term studies to see if the pros and cons stay the same or change as people get used to the new system. We also suggest that you pay attention to what employees think, make models that are specific to each industry, since a four-day work week might not work the same way in an IT office as it does in a factory. To make the four-day work week work in Bangladesh's unique business environment, these steps would help you make a plan that is both useful and attainable.

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