

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT
DURING PANDEMIC PERIOD

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EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT
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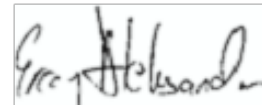
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to examining the complex challenges faced by organizations in India in retaining, engaging, and sustaining the participation of employees during the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this work, I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how employees and employers navigated this crisis together.

The research examines how organizations adapted their engagement strategies to retain talent and sustain productivity throughout the pandemic. Key factors such as leadership communication, workplace flexibility, the use of digital tools, and employee well-being initiatives emerged as significant contributors to employee retention and engagement during this period.

It highlights how the sudden shift to remote and hybrid work environments tested organizational resilience, leadership effectiveness, and employee commitment. The study emphasizes that during such challenging periods, employee engagement and retention became not only business imperatives but also indicators of organizational empathy, adaptability, and strength.

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This doctoral degree is dedicated to my beloved mother, whose enduring principles of hard work and perseverance have consistently inspired and guided me. I further extend my sincere appreciation to my friends and colleagues for their steadfast encouragement and moral support. Their presence has been integral to the completion of this journey.

Thank you all, and may God bless you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

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DECEMBER, 2025**

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Background

This research holds significance as it examines the critical challenge of maintaining employee engagement and retention within remote work environments during crisis situations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sudden transition to remote work disrupted traditional workplace structures and created unprecedented challenges for organizations in sustaining employee motivation, commitment, and performance.

Understanding how engagement strategies influence employee satisfaction and loyalty is essential for reducing turnover, maintaining productivity, and supporting long-term organizational stability. As organizations continue to adapt to evolving work models, this research provides valuable insights for leaders and HR professionals to design and implement policies that promote employee well-being, foster collaboration, and cultivate a strong sense of belonging, thereby enhancing both individual and organizational resilience in the post-pandemic era.

The primary objectives of this study are to investigate the strategies employed by organizations to sustain employee engagement and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic; to analyze the effectiveness of online engagement initiatives in maintaining employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment in remote work environments; to identify the key challenges encountered by employees and managers in preserving engagement and alignment with organizational goals during remote work; to examine the

influence of recognition, support, and professional development on enhancing employee engagement and retention; and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for developing sustainable engagement strategies that strengthen organizational resilience and retention in future crises and remote work contexts.

The research questions guiding this study seek to explore the strategies organizations adopted to sustain employee engagement and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic; assess the effectiveness of online engagement activities in maintaining employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment in remote work settings; examine the challenges encountered by junior and middle-level managers in keeping employees engaged and aligned with organizational goals while working remotely; evaluate the extent to which recognition, professional development opportunities, and resource allocation influence employee engagement and retention; and identify sustainable practices that organizations can implement to strengthen engagement and retention in future crises or remote work environments.

Methodology

This research adopts a **mixed-method approach**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to develop a comprehensive understanding of employee engagement and retention strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative data were collected through a survey **questionnaire** administered to employees in the IT sector capturing key variables such as engagement levels, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment in remote work settings. Along with this, **semi-structured interviews** with managers and HR professionals were conducted to obtain qualitative insights into organizational practices, challenges, and the effectiveness of various engagement strategies. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. This combined approach allowed the study to identify measurable trends alongside deeper contextual perspectives, thereby ensuring a holistic and robust examination of the research objectives.

It investigates key factors influencing engagement, including the resources and digital tools required for effective remote work, approaches to maintaining organizational culture and core values, managerial strategies for driving team performance and providing feedback, and methods for employees to stay aligned with organizational goals while celebrating achievements. By exploring how tailored engagement initiatives create a supportive and connected environment, this research highlights strategies that enable employees to remain committed despite physical separation from the traditional workplace, particularly in a technology-driven sector characterized by dynamic and fast-paced work environments.

Results

The findings reveal that while organizations introduced several online engagement initiatives such as virtual meetings, interactive sessions, online recognition programs, and remote team-building activities. These efforts had **limited impact on replicating the engagement levels of physical workplaces**. Employees appreciated flexibility, regular communication, and recognition of their progress, but challenges such as lack of face-to-face interaction, inadequate resources, and blurred work-life boundaries continued to hinder full engagement. The study further indicates that **employees who received adequate support, clear communication of expectations, and opportunities for skill development exhibited higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment**, which in turn strengthened their intentions to remain within the organization. However, engagement remained inconsistent across junior and middle-level managers, largely influenced by access to resources, recognition from leaders, and collaborative practices within teams.

This research is important as it explores strategies to sustain employee engagement during remote work, particularly in crisis situations like COVID-19. By examining online engagement activities, managerial practices, and organizational support, the study provides insights into maintaining motivation, satisfaction, and commitment. The findings offer practical guidance for IT organizations and contribute to the academic understanding of engagement, remote work, and crisis management.

Conclusion

This study investigates how organizations addressed employee engagement and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the strategies adopted to sustain motivation, satisfaction, and commitment among employees working remotely. The study demonstrates that organizations employed a combination of online engagement activities, flexible work practices, and supportive leadership behaviors to enhance employee well-being, encourage collaboration, and ensure continued alignment with organizational goals. Through this analysis, the research provides substantive insights into the effectiveness of engagement and retention strategies during periods of crisis, thereby providing valuable guidance for strengthening workforce management in the future organizational challenges.

The study concludes that sustaining employee engagement and retention during crises like COVID-19 requires more than surface-level virtual activities. Organizations must adopt **holistic strategies** that integrate clear communication, recognition, resource

support, and opportunities for professional growth. By fostering trust, flexibility, and a culture of care, organizations can cultivate a resilient, motivated, and committed workforce that is better equipped to adapt to disruptions and contribute to long-term organizational success.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT
DURING PANDEMIC PERIOD

1.1. Introduction

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the business landscape experience significant transformation, leading to substantial shifts in organizational structures, work practices, and employee expectations across industries. During this challenging period, human resource managers have played a pivotal role in developing innovative, creative, and effective strategies to keep employees engaged, connected, and supported in a healthier and more sustainable manner. Employee engagement, a fundamental organizational construct, motivates individuals to consistently contribute their best efforts while maintaining alignment with the organization's goals, core values, and overall mission. Employees who demonstrate high levels of engagement typically achieve greater productivity, which contribute to enhanced performance outcomes and improved customer satisfaction. This positive cycle ultimately drives increased sales, greater profitability, and long-term organizational success.

A major challenge highlighted in the theoretical literature on employee engagement is the absence of a universally accepted definition, resulting in varied interpretations and the development of multiple conceptual frameworks across various studies. Different researchers and practitioners interpret the term in various ways, leading to inconsistencies in how engagement is understood and measured. Employee engagement has been described as both emotional and psychological investment that individuals make in their work, as well as a behavioral construct reflected through commitment, enthusiasm, and discretionary effort.

Kahn's (1990) work presents employee engagement as a condition in which individuals direct their physical, emotional, and cognitive energies towards fulfilling their work roles. He explains that engagement is shaped by three psychological conditions which are **meaningfulness**, **safety**, and **availability**. When employees experience a sense of purpose in their task, feel secure in their work environment and have the personal resources necessary to perform effectively, they are more inclined to invest deeply in their roles, maintain concentration, develop emotional attachment to their work, and participate actively in organizational activities.

The cognitive aspect of employee engagement includes how employees perceive their role, understand organizational goals, and believe in the company's values. Employees' attitudes about their jobs, the strategies of the company, and their confidence in leadership all contribute to their cognitive engagement.

May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) extended Kahn's (1990) framework by showing that employees are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement when they

perceive their work as meaningful, feel secure within their work environment and believe they have sufficient personal resources to carry out their responsibilities.

Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) advanced the concept of employee engagement by defining it as a positive and energized mental state related to one's work. They emphasized three key dimensions which includes vigor, which reflects high levels of energy and persistence; dedication, which involves a strong sense of purpose, enthusiasm, and pride; and absorption, which refers to being fully immersed and deeply focused on work activities.

May et al. (2004) suggested that employee engagement represents the extent to which individuals are actively involved in their work, experience a sense of well-being, and develop an emotional connection to their job.

Saks (2006) proposed that employee engagement can be understood in two dimensions, namely engagement with one specific work tasks reflecting active involvement and effort and engagement with the organization indicating the employee's commitment and sense of connection to the organization.

Employees who are highly engaged tend to demonstrate strong dedication of their roles and consistently put forth sustained effort to achieve superior levels of performance. Their focus extends beyond merely completing assigned tasks; they take genuine interest in the quality of their contributions and the positive impact these efforts have on organizational success. Such employees maintain a strong emotional connection to their roles and are motivated by the desire to produce meaningful and measurable outcomes.

Human resource managers play a crucial role in developing and executing innovative strategies to maintain employee engagement, especially during periods of disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Employee engagement is fundamental to building a motivated and high-performing workforce that directly contributes to enhanced organizational outcomes. When employees believe they are valued and that their efforts are aligned with the organization's mission, values, and objectives, they are more likely to demonstrate discretionary effort, collaborate effectively, and contribute innovative ideas. This increased motivation enhances workplace morale and creates a positive effect that enhances customer interactions, strengthens business performance, and boosts overall organizational productivity.

Engaged employees are more inclined to exceed their formal job responsibilities, build strong customer relationships, and consistently deliver high-quality service, ultimately contributing to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. This level of engagement also serves as a driving force for organizational improvement, as engaged individuals are more likely to take initiative, demonstrate sense of ownership, and actively support a culture of continuous learning and development.

Employee engagement serves as an important mediating factor that shapes employees' behaviors and attitudes, while also playing a significant role in enhancing overall organizational performance. Engaged employees are more inclined to assume ownership of their responsibilities, direct their efforts towards achieving organizational

objectives and contribute to a positive and collaborative work environment. This level of commitment often results in meaningful financial and operational improvements, underscoring the strategic value of the employee engagement within organizations.

Various human resource practices including job design, recruitment, selection, compensation, training, and performance management, play a crucial role in cultivating employee engagement. When these practices are effectively implemented, employees are more likely to remain focused on their work and committed to the organization's success, driven by the perception that their contributions hold meaningful value and impact.

A strong and positive relationship between an organization and its employees is a key determinant of employee engagement. When the organizational culture encourages open communication, values employee contributions, and supports both personal and professional growth, it strengthens employees' sense of connection and commitment to the organization. By nurturing this relationship, organizations can build motivated, empowered, and dedicated workforce that contributes meaningfully to long-term success.

Higher levels of employee engagement contribute to a range of numerous positive outcomes for both individuals and the organization, including enhanced performance, increased retention and higher overall job satisfaction.

Human resource practices including job design, recruitment and selection, remuneration, training, and performance management play an essential role in enhancing employee engagement and cultivating a committed and high performing workforce.

Organizations that actively promote employee engagement, manage their workforce effectively and ensure honest, accurate and timely communication with employees are more likely to sustain long-term success.

Furthermore, employee involvement should not be regarded as a one-time initiative, but rather as an ongoing process embedded within the organization culture. Key factors that influence employee engagement include opportunities for career development, consistent motivation and encouragement, transparent communication, recognition of contributions, flexible working arrangements and equitable pay structure.

The six C's which is clarity, confidence, convey, connect, credibility, and career represent essential elements that organizations must cultivate to achieve effective and sustainable employee engagement.

An engaged employee exhibits a high level of commitment to their role and to the organization's overall success, consistently making efforts that contribute to meaningful and impactful outcomes.

Employee engagement not only enhances individual productivity but also drives customer satisfaction, improved sales, and greater profitability for the organization. Moreover, mutual trust, confidence, and effective communication between employees and the organization are crucial elements of engagement. This synergy fosters alignment between individual and organizational goals, enabling both to perform at their highest potential.

Employee engagement is rooted in organizations and its members' beliefs, reliability, commitment, and communication. Organizations can strengthen engagement by encouraging greater employee participation in decision-making, fostering commitment, and ensuring transparency from top management. In essence, employee engagement reflects an individual's enthusiasm, dedication, and sense of purpose in performing their work. The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for maintaining employee engagement. The COVID-19 outbreak was initially identified in Wuhan, a city in China's Hubei Province, following reports of several cases of unexplained pneumonia on December 31, 2019. As the virus rapidly spread across countries and continents, it attracted worldwide attention. Due to its fast transmission and escalating case numbers, the World Health Organization first declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and subsequently classified it as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The disease manifests in a range of symptoms, from mild conditions such as fever and headache to severe respiratory issues and, in critical instances, multi-organ complications.

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, there were no globally approved antiviral medications or targeted treatments specifically designed for SARS-CoV-2. As a result, healthcare providers relied on a range of management strategies to reduce the severity of the infection. These approaches involved the use of antiviral drug combinations such as oseltamivir, lopinavir, ganciclovir, and ritonavir, along with supportive therapies including antibiotics, immunoglobulins, corticosteroids, and both non-invasive and invasive mechanical ventilation. In critical cases, continuous renal replacement therapy was administered. As scientific understanding of the virus advanced, vaccines became a central component in preventing infection and reducing disease severity. In addition to medical treatments, public health measures such as regular hand hygiene, mask usage, physical distancing, and quarantine, were widely implemented to limit the spread of the virus.

Many nations enforced lockdowns to limit movement and protect their borders from external transmission sources. While these measures effectively reduced viral spread, they also produced significant social and economic consequences, altering everyday life through restrictions on mobility, remote work practices, and prohibitions on large gatherings.

The global lockdown represented an unparalleled intervention aimed at protecting lives from the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This response operated at both domestic and international levels. Within countries the governments enforced strict movement restrictions and mandated home confinement which substantially reduced, and in many instances entirely halted routine human interactions. Internationally, border closures restricted the movement of people and goods, resulting in significant disruptions to economic activities and creating considerable strain on cross-border relations.

The nature and intensity of lockdowns varied across nations. Indeed, the influence of the virus has profoundly shaped global realities, disrupting food chain security, the economies, education, healthcare and contributing to rising mental health issues including depression and domestic abuse. On a more positive note, lockdown led to reduced pollution levels and significant growth in the telecommunication industries. The global lockdown has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of human life, creating new realities that continue to evolve. Several countries are now transitioning from containment and lockdown policies towards economic recovery, driven by the realization that the pandemic may have caused a permanent disruption of established societal norms.

During global health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) plays a critical role in gathering and analyzing data from countries worldwide to deliver evidence-based guidance and support to governments. WHO collaborates with international experts to review research findings, country reports, and emerging trends, ultimately developing strategic recommendations for effective response. This guidance is primarily intended for health policymakers, who then adapt it to their specific national contexts. As new scientific evidence becomes available, these documents are continuously reviewed and updated. Since January 2020, WHO has issued over a hundred publications related to COVID-19, more than half of which comprise detailed technical guidelines addressing areas such as case detection and testing, clinical care based on illness severity, contact tracing and quarantine procedures, transmission prevention, healthcare worker protection, and community-level response measures.

Most nations adopted a range of COVID-19 prevention measures, including national quarantines, school closures, and restrictions on public gatherings. Governments enforced lockdowns, social distancing protocols, and mandatory face mask usage in public spaces. As a result, many organizations transitioned to remote operations and implemented work-from-home policies. However, this sudden shift presented several challenges for employees. The absence of a structured organizational environment, combined with frequent household interruptions, often led to reduced concentration, and increased work-life conflict. Additionally, limited access to essential resources including computers, printers, scanners, headphones, cameras, stable internet connections, and dedicated workspaces further intensified the challenges associated with remote working.

The COVID-19 pandemic substantially transformed perspectives on both life and work, altering how individuals, organizations, and societies understand and navigate daily routines and professional responsibilities. Although individuals had faced personal challenges before, the shared experience of prolonged uncertainty, chronic stress, financial instability, and collective grief proved uniquely difficult. The world of work was particularly disrupted, as employees often had to exert greater effort and work longer hours merely to maintain pre-pandemic levels of performance. This sustained pressure led to exhaustion, reduced self-efficacy, and increasing cynicism. Ultimately, these factors converged to produce widespread burnout, with nearly half of the global workforce reporting disengagement during the same period.

A key factor driving employee resignations during the pandemic was unsustainable workloads. Despite declining capacity among the employees, many organizations continued to pursue stretch goals, often pushing workers beyond their limits. As a result, widespread burnout became inevitable. In response, employees have begun to reassess workplace expectations, with employees increasingly renegotiating their psychological contracts with work. This shift has given rise to initiatives focused on mental health awareness, fairness, hybrid work models, flexible hours, active listening, real-time feedback and personalized communication. Such measures reflect a growing recognition among leaders that supportive workplace policies are no longer optional, but a necessity for sustaining employee wellbeing and organizational performance.

Over the past two years, our priorities, identities, and worldview have been profoundly reshaped, drawing a sharp distinction between what truly matters, namely health, family, time, purpose and what does not. The power dynamics within the organizations is undergoing change, rendering traditional incentives like complimentary meals or private offices less significant. The emphasis has instead shifted to organizational culture, which is largely shaped by managerial effectiveness. However, managers, frequently occupy a challenging position between executive directives and increasing employee expectations, leaving them with limited agency to drive substantive change for their teams.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant stress among employees, giving rise to widespread concerns about job security, income stability, and long-term career prospects. These anxieties made it difficult for many employees to remain focused and maintain productivity, underscoring the urgent need for effective employee engagement strategies during times of crisis. Organizations must place significant emphasis on employee well-being and engagement, as individuals who are fully engaged are more inclined to perform at their highest potential and contribute effectively to organizational success. Leaders play a critical role in cultivating an open and supportive work environment that encourages employees to express their concerns and challenges. Some key actions leaders can take during these stressful times is by utilizing multimedia communication through various multimedia tools like video apps, messaging apps and internet platforms, ensuring that they feel connected and supported. Organizations should have clear and transparent policies regarding job security, compensation, and work expectations. This can help to reduce anxiety, uncertainty, and stress, allowing employees to focus on their work without unnecessary worry.

The global COVID-19 outbreak significantly reshaped the business landscape, requiring human resource managers to devise innovative and adaptive strategies to maintain employee engagement amid heightened uncertainty. Employee engagement refers to the creation of a work environment that motivates individuals to consistently contribute their best efforts in alignment with the organization's goals and core values. Engaged employees not only strengthen workplace morale but also improve customer satisfaction, which in turn supports higher sales and profitability. Furthermore, employee

engagement serves as a catalyst for fostering positive attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, ultimately enhancing productivity and contributing to long-term organizational success.

Employee engagement has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment, making it a critical factor in fostering long-term workforce loyalty and sustained performance. Moreover, existing research demonstrates a clear positive relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement, indicating that employees who experience high levels of satisfaction are more likely to be deeply involved and motivated in their roles. Managers should receive support from senior leadership in offering development opportunities, career advancement, and recognition, as these factors are essential for effectively enhancing employee engagement.

Organizations should enable employees to derive a sense of meaning from their work by creating an environment that supports autonomy, promotes engagement, nurtures feelings of fulfillment, and purpose.

The integrated model of employee engagement presented by Bedarkar and Pandita (2014), suggest that strong leadership, transparent communication, and a healthy balance between work and personal life are essential components that contribute to higher levels of employee engagement within organizations.

Employee job satisfaction is a critical determinant of engagement, which subsequently has a substantial impact on an organization's overall performance. Organizations that maintain a highly engaged workforce generally outperform those with lower engagement levels, achieving stronger financial results such as increased revenue, higher profitability, enhanced shareholder value, and improved operating performance. Moreover, higher levels of employee engagement are linked to decreased absenteeism, reduced work-related stress, and improved overall well-being. Collectively, these outcomes highlight the crucial role of employee engagement in enhancing organizational performance and supporting long-term business success sustainability.

Employee engagement drives organizational profitability by increasing efficiency in both time and resources specially in organizations that foster a supportive corporate culture where employees feel appreciated and empowered. Engagement is further reinforced when management demonstrates trust in employees, adopts flatter organizational structures, and exhibits consistent leadership behaviors that serve as positive role models. Furthermore, there is a strong relationship between satisfaction with internal communication and employee engagement, with studies highlighting that effective internal communication plays a vital role in fostering and maintaining high levels of engagement among employees.

Employees who are emotionally committed to their work and organization typically demonstrate greater productivity, motivation, and dedication. This type of engagement is often supported by a high level of trust in leadership, which reinforces employees' connection and commitment to their roles. As a result, organizations benefit from enhanced performance, elevated employee morale, and improved overall business outcomes. Engaged employees tend to remain optimistic, build strong interpersonal

relationships and demonstrate high levels of workplace performance. Elements like effective internal communication, perceived satisfaction with organizational communication, active knowledge sharing, opportunities for continuous learning, and an entrepreneurial work environment have all been shown to positively influence employee engagement levels. Organizations that invest strategically in their human resources and implement well-structured human resource management systems are more likely to cultivate a highly engaged workforce, which in turn enhances overall organizational performance. Additionally, employees who experience higher levels of personal well-being tend to demonstrate greater engagement in their work.

During COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, employee engagement emerged as a central focus for human resource managers and organizational leaders. The pandemic not only disrupted lives worldwide, but also had severe repercussions on the economic stability of many nations. Many countries faced extensive job losses and wage reductions, which strained the financial security of the individuals and families. However, the extent of the pandemic's economic impact varied across countries. Certain economies experienced profound disruptions, while others were relatively less affected. Nevertheless, despite these variations, majority of the countries continue to face substantial economic difficulties in the post-pandemic period. The swift worldwide transmission of COVID-19 caused widespread business shutdowns, interruptions in supply chains and transportation, disturbances in educational systems, increased social isolation, and a rise in poverty levels. As a result, many employees around the world have faced sudden job losses and mounting financial pressures. The Human Resources departments worldwide are increasingly focusing on employee retention through various strategies, such as flexible working arrangements, employee wellbeing initiatives and comprehensive recognition and reward programs.

This research investigates how Human Resource Management has addressed the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic for employees. It focuses on the strategic measures implemented by Human Resource departments to support and retain employees during this unprecedented global crisis.

During pandemics, employees are regarded as strategic assets to the organization, necessitating careful management, preservation, and retention, particularly those with valuable experience and specialized skills. Consequently, organizations face several critical challenges, including the retention of valuable employees, the potential loss of time and resources invested in their training and development, disruption of organizational relationships due to employee turnover, and a notable decline in overall morale following employee departures. Organizations are increasingly acknowledging that engaged employees are fundamental to sustaining productivity and maintaining business continuity. As a result, prioritizing employee satisfaction and well-being has become crucial for ensuring sustainable organizational success in the long run.

In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have implemented virtual employee engagement strategies, including

online team meetings, virtual training programs, stress and anxiety management webinars, digital team-building activities, family involvement initiatives, employee recognition schemes, online counseling, and structured feedback systems. These initiatives play a crucial role in boosting employee morale and cultivating a sense of belonging and commitment during remote work. By facilitating social interaction, supporting well-being, and promoting continuous learning, organizations can maintain high levels of employee satisfaction and productivity, even in virtual work environments.

Organizations must implement innovative and well-designed employee engagement initiatives to keep their workforce motivated, committed, and emotionally supported during this challenging period. In this new context, cultivating strong virtual relationships has become essential for sustaining and enhancing employee engagement. When employees feel genuinely engaged, they demonstrate greater commitment to their individual and organizational goals. Furthermore, when management takes an active role in understanding and supporting its workforce, it fosters deeper organizational loyalty and contributes to building a more resilient and motivated team capable of navigating adversity with greater effectiveness.

1.2 Research Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated one of the most severe employment crises in modern times, leading to widespread economic consequences worldwide. This crisis has contributed to rising poverty and widening social and economic inequalities, with its impact expected to persist for years to come. Without timely and effective intervention, the employment crisis risks evolving into a broader social crisis. Therefore, rebuilding a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient labour market is essential to safeguard the well-being of future generations.

The main research problem involves identifying effective strategies to manage and **control the COVID-19 epidemic** while developing robust measures to **effectively prevent and respond** to future epidemics.

Workers who lose their jobs and incomes, particularly those in non-standard forms such as freelancers, part-timers urgently require income support to prevent them from falling into poverty. These workers often lack access to necessary support and benefits like paid sick leave, health and insurance. Consequently, they are particularly vulnerable during economic downturns, as they often lack the financial stability, social safety nets, and employment benefits typically afforded to formal, full-time employees. This leads to financial hardships and economic insecurity during such crisis. Therefore, it is essential in every organization, the policymakers should extend social protection mechanisms to the employees in non-standard employment, so that these employees have access to necessary financial support during emergencies.

1.3 Purpose of Research

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of employee engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that has significantly impacted both employees' daily lives and the overall functioning of organizations. It also aims to highlight how employee engagement can help organizations to navigate such crises by addressing emerging challenges and contributing to sustained productivity during periods of disruption.

The aim of this study is to examine the various online engagement initiatives implemented in the IT and Finance sectors and to evaluate their effects on **employee engagement levels** during the pandemic. This study seeks to offer valuable insights into how organizations in these sectors effectively sustained employment engagement and

how these efforts influenced both employee well-being and organizational performance during the crisis.

Specific Aims:

The objectives of this study are to analyze the impact of communication, training and development, and transformational leadership on employee engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic; to conduct an independent evaluation of employee retention programs and assess their effects across different groups of employees; and to design and develop both broad-based and targeted strategies, or a combination of the two, aimed at enhancing employee engagement and retention.

By pursuing these objectives, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can assist organizations in enhancing their employee engagement practices, refining retention strategies, and fostering a resilient workplace culture in the face of ongoing uncertainties.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, employee engagement has become a critical factor for organizations seeking to maintain productivity, uphold morale, and ensure operational continuity amid widespread disruption. In the current environment of lockdown, achieving organizational goals without the active support and involvement of the employees is highly unrealistic. Recognizing this, organizations have begun prioritizing strategies that maintain employee satisfaction and motivation through effective engagement initiatives. The use of digital tools and technology has become essential, allowing organizations to implement virtual engagement initiatives such as online training and development programs and digital team-building activities, thereby

maintaining employee growth, collaboration, and connection even during periods of crisis.

During the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations must adopt innovative and creative employee engagement strategies. Key initiatives include virtual team-building activities, flexible work arrangements, regular check-ins and feedback sessions, recognition and rewards programs, and ongoing learning and development opportunities. These practices help sustain employee motivation, commitment, and satisfaction, ultimately fostering a resilient and engaged workforce during times of uncertainty.

Therefore, during this crisis, companies must adopt refined and innovative approaches to employee engagement by implementing a variety of practices that nurture connection, motivation, and commitment among employees. Such strategies play a vital role in preserving employee morale and keeping employees focused on and committed to organizational objectives, even amid the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

1.5 Research Purpose and Questions/Hypothesis

The main aim of this study is to analyze the significance of employee engagement during the pandemic. It highlights how strong engagement practices can help organizations address crisis-related challenges while maintaining and potentially improving the overall productivity and performance.

This study seeks to formulate a comprehensive employee retention strategy that focuses on both attracting talented professionals and sustaining their long-term engagement. By examining the underlying causes of employee turnover, the research

aims to reduce workforce attrition and the associated financial and operational burdens.

In this context, job satisfaction and employee engagement are identified as essential elements in designing effective retention initiatives.

Research Questions:

What essential materials, equipment, collaboration and productive digital tools do workers need while working remotely during crisis like COVID-19?

How are you maintaining and nurturing the company culture and core values in a remote work environment?

How managers can drive team performance and hold effective performance conversations?

How can employees stay aligned with team and organizational goals while celebrating success milestones?

Hypothesis:

Integration of advanced technology and greater efficiency for humanity, across different sections.

Expansion of advanced diagnostic procedures and digitalization in healthcare.

Development in health care system as a critical part of the country's infrastructure.

Addressing and overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic requires global teamwork and collaboration, as isolated national efforts are insufficient to manage such a widespread crisis effectively.

In the current phase of the pandemic, relying on a "one size fits all" approach may seem like the only viable alternative, especially in the absence of adequate testing and digital tracking apps. Science and technology form the basis of medicine.

Chapter II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak, which originated in Wuhan, China, rapidly evolved into a global emergency and had far-reaching economic consequences worldwide, including in India. All major sectors, the primary, the secondary, and the tertiary sector experienced significant disruptions due to nationwide lockdowns, supply chain breakdowns, and a sharp decline in consumer demand. The resulting economic slowdown triggered substantial job losses, reduced household incomes, and a marked decline in overall economic activity. Numerous businesses were compelled to shut down or scale back operations, leading to extensive layoffs and temporary workforce reductions. The situation was especially severe for individuals employed in informal or non-standard work arrangements, who were left with minimal social protection and faced heightened financial vulnerability.

In India, the first COVID-19 case was confirmed on January 29, 2020, and by early March the infection began spreading more rapidly across the country. In response, the government introduced several preventive measures to limit transmission. Since close physical contact was identified as a key factor in the spread of the virus, citizens were advised to maintain social distancing. On March 22, the country observed a voluntary “Janata Curfew” as an initial step toward reducing public movement. This was soon followed by a nationwide 21-day lockdown announced on March 24 under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, intended to slow the progression of the outbreak and

safeguard public health. The lockdown also provided time to sanitize public areas and enhance hospital readiness to handle the increasing number of cases. Authorities imposed stringent penalties on individuals who failed to comply with these regulations. The sudden declaration of a nationwide lockdown had a profound effect on the psychological well-being of citizens. With only a few hours' notice before the restrictions were enforced, widespread anxiety and uncertainty emerged across the population. Fears about the availability of essential items triggered panic buying and excessive stockpiling, reflecting the heightened sense of insecurity regarding the immediate future. To address the risks faced by doctors, nurses, and other frontline healthcare workers, the Government introduced a dedicated insurance scheme to provide them with financial protection and support. In order to strengthen the healthcare system's capacity, private hospitals were brought into the national response effort, and additional testing centers were established to improve early detection and management of COVID-19 cases. The Government also encouraged manufacturers to increase the production of essential medical supplies, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ventilators, and other critical healthcare tools. Alongside this, specialized training programs were organized to enhance the preparedness and skills of healthcare professionals in handling the crisis effectively. To alleviate financial pressure on the middle class, salaried individuals, and those employed in the organized sector, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the repo rate, resulting in lower interest rates on loans. Borrowers were also allowed to defer their loan EMIs for a period of three months. ATM withdrawal charges were temporarily waived to facilitate easier access to cash. The Government further introduced several welfare measures, such

as providing free LPG cylinders, food grains (rice or wheat), and pulses to eligible households. The deadline for filing income tax returns was extended to mitigate financial strain during the lockdown. Additionally, collateral-free loans were made available to support small and medium enterprises, and the deadlines for GST filing were extended to ease compliance burdens during this period (Varalakshmi and Swetha, 2020).

During the lockdown period, migrant workers experienced severe difficulties, largely because they were unable to return to their native places. To alleviate their hardship, the Government instructed employers to ensure that workers were provided with food, shelter, and uninterrupted wage payments throughout the lockdown. Farmers also faced considerable psychological stress due to labor shortages that disrupted essential agricultural activities, particularly the harvesting of crops. In addition, restrictions on the export of agricultural products such as vegetables, fruits, flowers, and spices led to substantial income losses, further affecting the agricultural sector and intensifying the economic strain on farming communities.

Alsamhi et al. (2022) reported that India experienced its first and second COVID-19 waves within an interval of roughly five months. The initial wave peaked in September 2020, with daily infections approaching 100,000 cases. Following this peak, case numbers gradually decreased until mid-February, when a rapid escalation in infections signaled the beginning of the second wave.

The Indian economy was already facing significant vulnerabilities before the onset of COVID-19, and the suspension of economic activity combined with prolonged state-wide lockdowns further intensified the slowdown. In this context, it is crucial to

evaluate how the pandemic has influenced the financial performance of key sectors in the country. Owing to data availability constraints, this study examines four major sectors, which are construction, tourism and hospitality, food, and consumer goods. The objective is to develop a clear understanding of the immediate economic consequences of the pandemic while also identifying effective short- and long-term response strategies. The insights derived from this analysis aim to support organizations across both manufacturing and service industries in preparing for and effectively managing future disruptions.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced countries across the globe to confront extraordinary challenges, resulting in major disruptions across economic, social, and institutional domains. Its effects were felt across all industries, with businesses worldwide experiencing significant interruptions to their operations. While lockdowns and social distancing measures were essential to slowing the transmission of the virus, they also created wide-ranging economic, social, and psychological consequences.

From an investment perspective, stakeholders assess a company's value by examining how effectively its management responds to evolving economic conditions. Investors increasingly expect transparent reporting on the effects of COVID-19 and the steps taken to address risks and meet stakeholder needs.

The pandemic has also influenced several key business characteristics, including operational performance, corporate governance practices, liquidity, and leverage. Nonetheless, in many cases, the differences observed between the pre- and post-pandemic periods have been relatively modest.

Overall, COVID-19 triggered a global economic crisis of unparalleled scale, severely disrupting business activities and reshaping consumer behavior across markets, including within India.

The effects of the pandemic were clearly reflected in the energy sector as well. Evidence shows that COVID-19 significantly undermined both the operational and financial performance of energy firms, with the impact being especially pronounced among companies that reported goodwill impairments. These organizations exhibited increased susceptibility to economic pressures, highlighting the importance for industry leaders to develop and implement strategic interventions aimed at mitigating the pandemic's negative consequences on the energy sector.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were similarly impacted by the pandemic, facing substantial operational and financial challenges. Research indicates that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, financial performance, and resilience were closely linked during this period, with innovative work behavior strengthening the connection between financial outcomes and entrepreneurial confidence. Further studies also show that SMEs in highly affected regions and industries experienced particularly significant declines in performance. These insights underscore the need for coordinated support from banks, regulatory authorities, and government institutions to reduce the economic strain on SMEs and support their recovery.

In China, firm-level studies showed that the pandemic significantly weakened business performance, with the effects being particularly severe for companies with smaller investment capacities and limited sales revenues. Evidence from enterprises in

Guangdong Province further indicated substantial disruptions to manufacturing activities and operational processes, resulting in increased business risks. The authors suggested policy measures which aimed at reducing production costs to help firms recover and restore stability. Additional findings revealed that the intensity of the outbreak had a significant adverse effect on trade flows, with import volumes declining more sharply than exports.

In the Indian context, the aviation industry suffered significant setbacks during the pandemic, largely due to rising fatalities from communicable diseases and the resulting travel restrictions. Several interconnected sectors such as telecommunications, tourism, automobile manufacturing, and transportation also experienced major declines. Although prior research has investigated the broader relationship between COVID-19 and economic performance, limited attention has been given to understanding how the pandemic specifically affected the performance of publicly listed companies across different sectors in India.

The COVID-19 pandemic, after claiming countless lives across the globe, also had a profound impact on economic stability and workforce dynamics. It led to widespread job losses, salary reductions, shifts in job responsibilities, and large-scale layoffs, among other challenges. The severity of these effects varied among countries, influenced by factors such as economic resilience, healthcare infrastructure, and reliance on global supply chains. Consequently, while some economies experienced limited or even temporary positive effects in certain sectors, the vast majority endured significant economic strain. Businesses across industries struggled to remain operational, resulting in financial insecurity and uncertainty for employees worldwide. Abrupt job losses left many employees dissatisfied and under immense pressure, as many also faced mounting personal debts. In response, the Human Resources (HR) departments worldwide,

including those within our economy shifted their focus on retention of their employees and their well-being. In response to the crisis, organizations implemented a variety of measures aimed at sustaining employees' professional involvement and emotional well-being, acknowledging that a committed workforce is essential for maintaining operational stability and business continuity. The goal for HR was not just to manage the workforce during the pandemic, but to create conditions that would help employees stay resilient, engaged, and connected to the organization, ensuring business continuity through this unprecedented global crisis.

Despite of the devastating negative effects of COVID-19, one thing to which we all can agree is that immense amount of learning has occurred. When local businesses were forced to shut down and quickly adapt to managing employees remotely, managers faced a steep learning curve. The shift to virtual workspaces was abrupt, and initially, many leaders struggled to navigate this new reality. However, this challenge led to valuable lessons about enhancing employee engagement that should not be overlooked as we move forward.

Employee engagement is defined as the emotional and psychological commitment that individuals cultivate toward their organization, its vision, and its objectives. This attachment promotes dedication and a sense of belonging, motivating employees to exceed their formal job responsibilities and actively contribute to organizational success.

Engagement goes beyond mere job satisfaction, competitive compensation, or occasional recognition. It taps into an intrinsic **motivation of individual** to contribute meaningfully to the organization's success beyond personal gain.

Management holds the responsibility of developing and implementing work practices and policies that enhance employees' emotional attachment to the organization and foster long-term commitment. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated ongoing workplace transformations and underscored the urgent need for innovative strategies that safeguard job security while sustaining organizational competitiveness. It has highlighted the need for robust Government policies to ensure safe working conditions, stable income, and fair treatment, especially for those in informal employment sectors.

Persistent uncertainty surrounded the duration and long-term implications of the pandemic, along with concerns about potential subsequent waves in the following months and years. As a result, numerous organizations were compelled to shut down or reduce their operations, severely hindering their prospects for sustainable growth and development. The resulting debt accumulation, market contractions, and significant loss of income created widespread ripple effects, influencing employees, suppliers, business partners, and local communities alike. However, for some organizations, the crisis served as a catalyst for reinvention and strategic adaptation. By leveraging new opportunities arising from changes in supply chains, consumer behavior, and market dynamics, these organizations were able to transform challenges into avenues for growth and resilience.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating across all sectors, particularly for individuals who have borne the burden of the crisis. One of the most striking and unforgettable from this period, particularly in India, was the **mass migration of laborers** from cities back to their **villages and small towns**, often on foot, highlighting the severe economic hardships faced by these workers. Sectors including

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), hospitality, real estate, and infrastructure which are the key pillars of modern economies were among the most severely affected by the uncertainty and instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As key contributors to employment generation and economic growth, these industries faced immense challenges in maintaining operations and ensuring business continuity amid prolonged disruptions and market volatility.

This study seeks to explore how organizations manage employee retention during times of crisis, particularly during a pandemic. It focuses on understanding the strategies and practices adopted to sustain employee commitment and reduce turnover.

Employees represent a critical strategic asset, particularly in times of crisis such as pandemics. Effective management, preservation, and retention of experienced and skilled employees are therefore vital. When employees experience dissatisfaction due to insufficient support, unclear expectations, or low engagement, they are more likely to pursue alternative employment opportunities, often with competitors. Such turnover results in the loss of essential organizational resources, including investments in training, accumulated expertise, and valuable time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected employee retention across all sectors, making it increasingly difficult for organizations to retain talent amid heightened job insecurity, shifting work environments, and growing economic pressures. This study aims to offer insights into the complexities of retaining employees during crises and to examine how these challenges impact overall organizational performance, employee morale, and productivity. Organizations have implemented effective strategies to manage

turbulent times, focusing on maintaining employee engagement and concentration during periods of change. Key strategies for enhancing employee engagement and retention include clearly communicating organizational expectations, providing adequate resources, enabling employees to utilize their strengths effectively, recognizing their contributions, demonstrating genuine concern for their well-being, and consistently supporting their professional growth. Employee engagement acts as a bridge to influence employees' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, ultimately enhancing overall work performance.

Enhancing employee satisfaction and organizational commitment largely depends on key factors such as improving the work environment, establishing clear employee development plans, and providing meaningful opportunities for career advancement.

Engaged employees contribute to organizational profitability through savings in cost and time, particularly when the corporate culture emphasizes employee value and support. Management's trust in employees, reduced hierarchical barriers, and leadership by example further enhance engagement levels.

Internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement are closely linked with communication satisfaction acting as a key precursor to higher employment engagement. Moreover, higher levels of internal communication satisfaction play a significant role in promoting employee engagement.

Engaged employees cultivate a deep emotional bond with their work and organization. This connection fosters trust in leadership and translates into higher levels of dedication and commitment. Such employees tend to be optimistic, maintain positive

interpersonal relationships, and consistently deliver high levels of performance within the organization. Functional, economic, and psychological factors play a key role in enhancing employee engagement. Aspects such as effective internal communication, satisfaction with communication processes, active knowledge sharing, ongoing learning opportunities, and support for entrepreneurial initiatives are all positively linked to higher levels of engagement.

The findings suggest that organizations that invest strategically in human resources and establish comprehensive human resource management systems are more likely to foster elevated levels of employee engagement. In turn, engaged employees play a crucial role in enhancing overall organizational performance. This relationship between effective human resource management and employee engagement is essential for achieving sustainable growth and long-term organizational success, particularly during times of crisis.

Employee engagement is crucial for organizations seeking to retain their most valuable talent. Effective management of human resources is essential, as low engagement levels can threaten long-term organizational sustainability. Employees are among an organization's most important assets, and when motivated, they exhibit greater effort, dedication, and commitment. As a result, employee retention becomes a key organizational priority, enhancing efficiency, productivity, and overall profitability. Furthermore, well-designed retention initiatives help cultivate a positive work

environment that encourages and motivates employees to perform at their highest potential. A supportive work environment is a critical factor in promoting employee retention, as it fosters a strong sense of belonging and organizational connection. When employees view their workplace as one that maintains a healthy work culture, provides job security, and encourages positive interpersonal relationships, they are more likely to feel valued and committed. Furthermore, engaging employees in decision-making processes enhances their sense of ownership and strengthens alignment with the organization's vision and objectives.

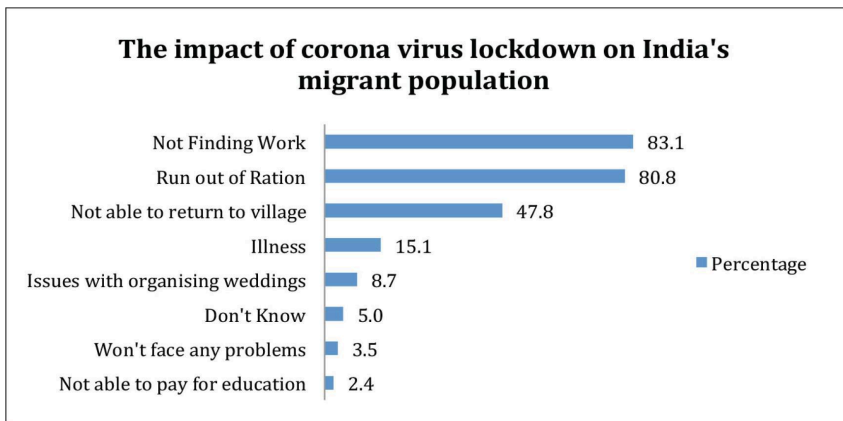


Figure 2.1: The impact of corona virus lockdown on India's migrant population. (Source: NSOU-OPEN Journal, 2022)

The Janata Curfew on 22nd March 2020 was soon succeeded by a 21-day nationwide lockdown in India. Surveys conducted by NGOs such as Jan Sahas highlighted the severe hardships faced by migrant laborers, many of whom were forced to return to their native places, often travelling long distances on foot with their families and children. This large-scale movement, which was not anticipated by the government, resulted in severe hardship and several fatalities, drawing global attention to the

humanitarian crisis. The surveys further indicated that while approximately 85–90% of migrant workers possessed government-issued identification such as Aadhaar and Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards, only about 4% received wages close to the statutory minimum as stipulated under labour laws. Although the central and state governments, along with NGOs and private individuals, extended immediate relief during the early phase of the lockdown, widespread uncertainty regarding the continuity of such support and the lack of a comprehensive social security framework compelled many migrant workers to return to their hometowns. India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) experienced an unprecedented slowdown during the 2020 fiscal year as a result of the pandemic-induced lockdown and the consequent decline in economic activities. The first quarter (April–June 2020) witnessed a record contraction of –23.9%, marking the steepest decline among major economies. However, the second quarter showed signs of recovery with a reduced contraction of –7.5%, while the third quarter was projected to return to positive growth territory (Sinha, 2022).

Sector(s)	Quarter1 Growth	Quarter 2 Growth
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Trade and Hotel	-47%	-15.6%
Construction	-50.30%	-8.60%
Finance and Retail Estate	-5.30%	-8.10%
Manufacturing	-39.30%	0.60%
Agriculture	3.40%	3.40%

Table 2.1: Estimated Quarterly Impact of Covid-19 on Major Economic Sectors in India (Source: NSOU-OPEN Journal, 2022).

While many organizations initially found it difficult to adjust their management practices during the COVID-19 crisis, the experience ultimately provided important insights into improving employee engagement. As workplaces move forward, stronger emotional bonds between employees and their organizations are likely to contribute to lower turnover, higher motivation, and better productivity. Achieving these outcomes, however, depends on senior leaders' willingness to adopt more adaptable leadership approaches and reassess the organizational culture to better support their workforce (Kewalramani, 2021).

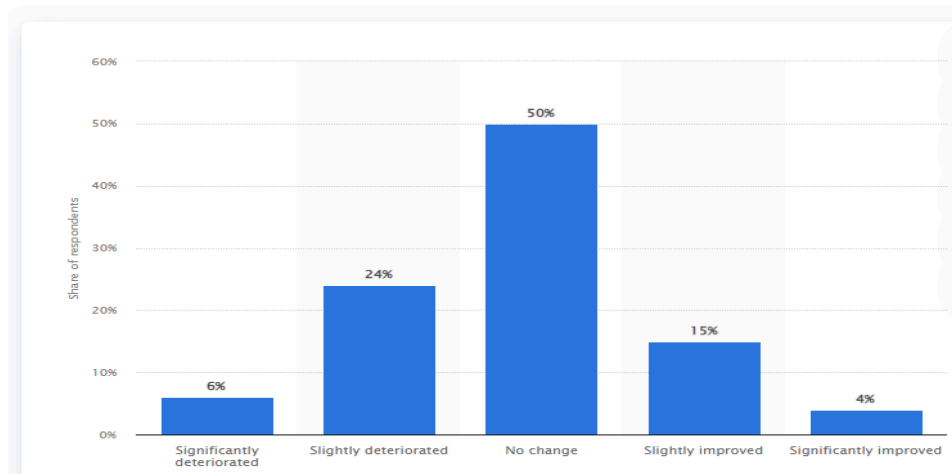


Figure 2.2: Impact of Work-from-Home on Employee Productivity and Work Performance in India During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Source: Statista Journal, August 24, 2023).

A survey conducted in India on remote work practices showed that, by August 2020, many employees in the IT/ITeS sector felt a sense of loss for their usual office environment during the pandemic. Nevertheless, about half of the participants stated that their productivity and work performance stayed the same even while working from home (Rathore, 2023).

The COVID-19 outbreak originated in China toward the end of 2019 and was first identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global health emergency because of its potential to strain healthcare systems worldwide. As the virus rapidly spread across nations and continents, the WHO later designated it as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Firmansyah, 2021).

Human resource managers are increasingly implementing creative and effective strategies to maintain positive employee engagement, especially during challenging periods. Employee engagement represents a workplace philosophy that motivates individuals to perform at their highest potential while remaining aligned with organizational goals and values. With the global economy slowing down and engagement levels declining particularly among the expanding millennial workforce, corporate leaders are becoming increasingly concerned. These shifting trends have introduced new and significant challenges for organizations across the world.

Corporate leaders are increasingly expressing concern over the global economic slowdown and the noticeable decline in employee engagement, particularly as millennials constitute a growing proportion of the workforce. These converging factors have produced a highly complex environment, compelling organizations to address unprecedented organizational and economic challenges.

Therefore, examining employee engagement has become crucial for organizations striving to navigate the current economic environment. As an emotional bond between

employees and their organization's mission, employee engagement serves as a vital asset, one that offers strategic benefits and competitive advantages that are difficult for rivals to replicate.

Employee engagement has become a central topic in management research and organizational practice because of its strong association with job performance, service quality, employment outcomes, and individual development. Earlier perspectives viewed engagement as the degree of personal involvement and self-driven effort that employees invested in organizational success, particularly to improve profitability and strengthen competitive advantage. In contemporary understanding, employee engagement is seen as the creation of a supportive organizational climate that motivates individuals, cultivates a strong sense of commitment, and encourages them to consistently perform at their highest potential.

In the current environment, organizations are consistently adopting innovative and effective strategies to keep employees engaged, motivated, and connected despite the challenges they face. Surviving in the corporate sector depends on maximizing profits through efficient utilization of existing capabilities.

A robust positive association has been observed between employee engagement and important organizational outcomes such as higher productivity, improved profitability, better employee retention, safer workplaces, and greater customer satisfaction. However, the fast-changing work environment during the pandemic created significant psychological stress and uncertainty, which in turn weakened employees' engagement and overall well-being (De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

Employees play a central role in an organization's profitability, making it essential for leaders to prioritize strategies that strengthen engagement to ensure long-term, sustainable success. High levels of engagement not only improve overall organizational performance and outcomes but also promote individual growth, consistent achievement, and ongoing performance improvement throughout the year.

Employers across India have increasingly turned to digital tools to manage the challenges of remote work. Many organizations have enhanced communication through regular video meetings to keep employees engaged and have shifted to virtual recruitment methods. Despite the transition, most companies have reported stable productivity levels, with only a small percentage experiencing significant declines, while others even observed improved output. These trends suggest that flexible work arrangements are capable of supporting consistent performance levels. They also highlight employees' increasing inclination toward adaptable schedules and remote work opportunities, which they view as important for achieving a healthier work-life balance.

Although work-life balance remains an important consideration for job seekers, it ranks only fourth in overall importance. Career advancement has become the most influential factor, particularly among Gen Z and Gen Y employees, who prioritize opportunities for skill enhancement and professional growth more than older generations.

This marks a clear shift from 2019, when salary was the dominant motivator for most individuals. Financial incentives, however, continue to play a substantial role in job mobility. Nearly half of employees still consider competitive compensation among their top reasons for changing employers, and the average expected salary increase in India has risen significantly from 21% in 2019 to 38% in 2020. Among the large proportion of employees considering job changes in the coming year, employers place the highest value on industry-specific experience, followed by essential soft skills such as accountability and responsibility. Yet only a minority of employees view these as their strongest attributes. As the pandemic continues to reshape workplace expectations, skills related to adaptability, teamwork, creativity, and innovation are gaining prominence. The persistent shortage of candidates with the required competencies remains a major challenge for many Indian employers, contributing to ongoing talent gaps across sectors. (RGF International Recruitment, PRNewswire Report, Sept 2020).

A survey conducted by Team Lease in May 2022 indicated that close to 58% of organizations across sectors such as FMCG, BFSI, healthcare, retail, and IT anticipated a full return to on-site work during 2022. In contrast, only a small share around 5% showed interest in continuing remote work once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted (India Business and Trade, 2022).

Business leaders from various Indian companies indicated that they plan to retain the flexible work arrangements introduced during the pandemic. Organizations such as Tata Steel and Mondelez have even begun recruiting employees for fully remote positions. In contrast, firms like ITC, Maruti Suzuki, and Mphasis are shifting toward hybrid models, requiring employees to be physically present at the workplace only on selected days each week (India Business and Trade, 2022).

Working from home brings both advantages and disadvantages for employees. On the positive side, it offers flexibility in terms of timing and location, helping individuals save commuting time and work during hours that suit them best. With less direct supervision, employees often experience greater autonomy, giving them more control over how they organize their tasks and schedules. This flexibility also allows them to manage personal responsibilities alongside work, making it easier to maintain a balance between professional and personal life. Conversely, research on remote work points to several challenges related to social interaction. Employees may feel isolated, receive less feedback from supervisors and colleagues, face fewer opportunities for social engagement, and experience a reduced sense of belonging within the organization.

The extent of mutual trust and respect between supervisors and employees plays a crucial role in shaping the leader–employee relationship, especially in a work-from-home context. Employees who perceived high levels of trust from their managers typically enjoyed more autonomy and experienced fewer conflicts between work tasks and personal responsibilities. However, this trust also created a heightened sense of duty, leading many employees to feel ongoing pressure to live up to managerial expectations.

Isolation is understood as a psychological state in which employees feel they have restricted access to social and emotional connections within their organization. Regular workplace interactions typically enable employees to engage with organizational culture, values, norms, and routines. However, in remote or virtual work settings, such interactions are limited, often leading employees to experience a sense of disconnection rather than full integration into the organization.

Employees may experience isolation in both professional and social dimensions. Professional isolation occurs when individuals worry that their absence from the physical workplace may limit visibility and reduce opportunities for career progression. Social isolation, on the other hand, stems from the loss of informal interactions that naturally occur in a shared work environment. Activities such as networking, casual conversations, and in-person communication help employees exchange information and build trust. When these interactions are disrupted, as often happens in remote settings, employees may experience reduced confidence, lower self-efficacy, and a weakened sense of belonging. Consequently, prolonged isolation can negatively affect employees' belief in their own capabilities and their overall confidence in carrying out job responsibilities effectively. The lack of social interaction during lockdowns amplifies employees' feelings of isolation, preventing them from satisfying their need for connection in both professional and personal spheres. Additionally, remote work often leads to a blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life. When work and home occupy the same space, employees may struggle to mentally disengage from job-related responsibilities. This lack of separation can create emotional fatigue and internal conflict as individuals continuously shift between work and personal roles within the same environment.

Accordingly, the effects of working from home became even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on movement, disruption of daily routines, and reduced interpersonal interaction heightened employees' sense of work-related isolation. These difficulties were further compounded by the blurring of work-life boundaries, making it harder for individuals to create clear separation between professional and personal roles. When combined with concerns about career progression, job insecurity, risk of infection, and the possibility of personal loss, employees faced substantial psychological strain. This accumulation of stress adversely affected their occupational health and overall well-being, challenging their ability to remain balanced and resilient in their work lives.

Pros of a Work-From-Home Model

a. Flexibility for employers and employees

In addition to lowering administrative and real estate expenses, the work-from-home (WFH) model provides greater flexibility for both employers and employees. It enables individuals to organize their work schedules with more ease and efficiency, allowing tasks to be completed in a manner that aligns with their personal

routines and preferences. This flexibility supports a healthier integration of professional and personal life.

For dual-income households, WFH makes it easier for partners to share domestic responsibilities, promoting a more balanced division of household tasks. This shared involvement not only strengthens family relationships but also contributes to a more harmonious home environment, ultimately improving personal well-being and enhancing productivity at work. With the growing adoption of the work-from-home model, employees have increasingly recognized and valued the convenience and flexibility of performing their professional responsibilities from home. This arrangement allows them to stay connected with their families while eliminating the stress of daily commuting and the challenges that often accompany relocation. Consequently, it has enhanced job satisfaction and improved work–life balance, positioning WFH as an increasingly attractive option for many employees.

b. Impact of digitalization

The rapid advancement of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality, alongside widespread internet penetration, has significantly reshaped traditional work practices. Tasks that previously required physical presence including sales activities, operational functions, and client interactions can now be effectively performed from remote locations, thereby improving flexibility and productivity. Client communications and product demonstrations are increasingly facilitated through digital platforms, while routine processes are being streamlined or fully automated through sophisticated technological tools.

c. Connectivity and Flexibility

Digital platforms allow employees to stay connected and collaborate consistently with colleagues and supervisors while also giving them more time to invest in family and personal relationships. The work-from-home arrangement strengthens personal bonds and promotes a more sustainable work–life balance, something that is often harder to achieve in traditional office environments. With reduced commuting demands and increased flexibility in scheduling, remote work enhances employees’ overall well-being and job satisfaction. This flexibility helps individuals manage their personal and professional roles more effectively, ultimately leading to greater productivity and better performance.

Cons of a Work From Home Model

a. Employee Burnout

In a remote work setting, where supervision is minimal or absent, employees may face challenges in maintaining a structured daily schedule. The flexibility to work late at night or start the day later can result in irregular sleep patterns, which negatively impact both mental and physical well-being. Additionally, family-related distractions are common, and the simultaneous management of professional and domestic responsibilities can lead to a backlog of tasks, increased stress, and eventual burnout. In some instances, working from home can be more demanding than a traditional office setting, as employees often face difficulties in separating professional responsibilities from personal

space. These challenges underscore the need for effective time management, well-defined boundaries between work and personal life, and sufficient organizational support to mitigate the potential negative effects of remote work.

b. Increased Employee Isolation

In traditional office settings, employees regularly engage in social interactions such as casual chats, shared moments of humour, and informal gatherings like lunches or after work meetups. Such experiences are essential for supporting mental well-being, as they cultivate a sense of community, belonging, and mutual support. In remote work settings, however, the lack of these everyday interactions can result in feelings of isolation and disconnection from colleagues.

Such detachment may decrease employee engagement, lower morale, and hinder productivity. Therefore, maintaining social connections through virtual communication platforms is essential to counteract these effects and sustain both employee well-being and team cohesion.

c. Cyber Risks

Working from home, where security protocols are often less stringent than in traditional office environments, exposes employees to increased cyber risks, including hacking, phishing, and data breaches. Ensuring the security of employees' devices in a remote setting can be a significant investment for organizations, requiring ongoing training on best security practices, regular software updates, and the enforcement of strong password policies. Furthermore, it is essential for organizations to establish strong backup systems to protect critical data and ensure its recovery in case of cyberattacks or technical failures. Implementing such measures not only enhances data security but also helps maintain operational continuity and organizational resilience in remote work environments.

If the work-from-home model offers numerous benefits, why do a significant proportion of employees still prefer working from the office? The following graph provides insight into this preference.

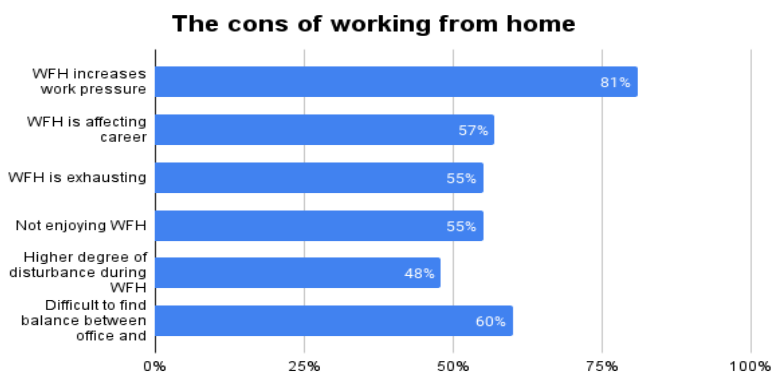


Figure 2.3: The cons of working from home (Source : India Business and Trade Bureau, September 12, 2022).

Survey evidence from the India Business and Trade Bureau (2022) shows that a large proportion of employees experienced heightened work pressure while working from home, and more than half were dissatisfied with this work arrangement. Likewise, reports from the World Economic Forum suggest that although remote workers have generally shown improved productivity, their output still does not consistently match the performance levels seen in traditional office settings. These patterns indicate that, despite certain advantages, the work-from-home model brings significant difficulties, especially related to technological constraints and inadequate infrastructural support.

In the Indian context, these challenges are further compounded by typical household structures. Many employees reside in small two-bedroom homes, often shared with large joint families, making it difficult to establish a dedicated and interruption-free workspace. Limited physical space and frequent disruptions reported by nearly half of remote workers create a sense of intrusion and make it harder for individuals to maintain concentration and productivity during working hours. This environment poses considerable obstacles to effectively managing professional responsibilities within the home setting.

Traditional office settings provide employees with clearly defined working hours, enabling them to disengage from their professional roles and devote time to personal activities once the workday concludes. In contrast, the work-from-home (WFH) arrangement frequently obscures the separation between work and personal life, contributing to increased mental and physical strain. The situation is further complicated by disparities in home environments where many employees lack stable internet connectivity or a quiet, dedicated workspace, making it difficult to sustain focus amid household interruptions. Evidence from the India Business and Trade Bureau (2022) indicates that around 60% of respondents found it more difficult to manage professional tasks alongside domestic responsibilities while working remotely.

Hybrid model: The best of both worlds.

Managers act as an essential bridge between employees' changing needs and the organization's broader strategic goals. When equipped with appropriate tools, training, and organizational support, they are well positioned to navigate the complexities of hybrid work arrangements and guide their teams toward optimal performance. By translating broad organizational policies into practical, day-to-day actions that reflect the specific requirements of their team members, managers significantly contribute to strengthening employee engagement, improving productivity, and promoting overall well-being. While executive leaders define overarching policies, it is equally important to empower managers with the autonomy to adapt these strategies to their teams' specific situations. This decentralized approach fosters a more agile, empathetic, and employee-focused work culture that aligns organizational success with individual fulfillment.

Creating an effective and inclusive hybrid meeting experience requires strategic investment in three interrelated areas: hardware, software, and organizational culture. First, augment existing hardware with AI-powered cameras that prioritize visibility for participants who are not physically present, and consider larger screens to ensure that every attendee feels represented and can actively engage in the discussion. Second, adopt a unified software platform, such as Teams, and ensure that all participants, including those present in the room, join via the platform to foster a shared, seamless experience. Third, cultivate cultural norms that promote inclusivity, encourage active participation, and support equal opportunity for input from all attendees, regardless of location. By combining advanced technology with thoughtful cultural practices, organizations can enhance collaboration, increase engagement, and ensure that hybrid meetings are productive and equitable for all participant.

The trend of working beyond regular office hours continues to grow, with employees experiencing longer workdays, more frequent meetings, and a higher volume of digital communication each week. In response to these pressures, it is essential for teams to establish clear norms for flexible work. Such norms should focus on reducing non-essential meetings and enabling employees to disengage from work-related communication, when necessary, thereby supporting healthier boundaries and preventing overload. Importantly, this initiative should be team-driven rather than an individual responsibility, promoting a culture of shared accountability. By fostering collaborative, team-led approaches, organizations can establish sustainable hybrid work practices that optimize productivity while safeguarding employee well-being, engagement, and long-term job satisfaction.

Leaders should not assume that bringing employees back to the office is the sole solution for rebuilding the social capital that has weakened over the past two years. Instead, they must intentionally create opportunities for meaningful relationship-building, particularly for remote employees and newly onboarded staff who may require additional support to integrate effectively. Managers play a pivotal role in this process by strengthening team cohesion, facilitating communication across groups, and encouraging interactions that help employees expand their professional networks. Through sustained investment of time and resources in cultivating these connections, organizations can enhance collaboration, improve engagement, and foster a stronger sense of belonging e which are the factors that ultimately contribute to higher retention, increased productivity, and long-term organizational resilience.

The past two years have fundamentally reshaped the world of work, leaving an enduring impact that will influence organizational practices and employee expectations well into the future. The emerging ‘worth it’ equation is no longer a zero-sum game; employees increasingly place high value on flexibility, autonomy, and overall well-being. These heightened expectations present organizations with a strategic opportunity to rethink traditional work models and reimagine work-life integration as a mutually beneficial arrangement. By embracing flexible work policies, supporting employee

well-being, and fostering a culture that balances productivity with personal needs, organizations can enhance engagement, retention, and performance, while employees achieve greater satisfaction and work-life harmony. Ultimately, this shift allows organizations to align business objectives with the evolving priorities of their workforce, creating a sustainable and resilient approach to the future of work.

Empowering employees to achieve their optimal performance benefits not only the individuals themselves but also contributes significantly to overall organizational effectiveness and success. To make hybrid work effective, leaders must enable managers to act as culture custodians, rethink the traditional role of the office, rebuild social capital for a digitally connected workforce, and implement practices that support sustainable flexibility. While technology is a critical enabler, this moment requires a shift in mindset, emphasizing adaptability, learning, and collaboration. Organizations that cultivate a robust workplace culture and encourage ongoing learning are more capable of navigating change and sustaining their competitiveness in an ever-evolving work landscape. By prioritizing learning, growth, and innovation, such organizations can remain resilient and position themselves as leaders in an ever-changing business environment.

A survey by CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd. revealed that 73% of companies in India are planning to adopt hybrid work models after the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting a growing trend toward flexible working arrangements. The survey identified four main patterns of hybrid work: occasional remote work for specific situations, working in the office three or more days a week, an equal split between office and remote work, and primarily remote work with three or more days from home.

Rajesh Uppal, Head of Human Resources at Maruti Suzuki, noted that the organization has formally integrated hybrid work arrangements wherever practical, prioritizing employee well-being and operational effectiveness. Likewise, several other companies acknowledge that providing flexible work options can improve productivity and efficiency, irrespective of where employees are based (India Business and Trade, 2022).

The work-from-home (WFH) model, as reflected in various studies, brings a mix of advantages and challenges. Initially introduced as a temporary solution during the pandemic, it has since transformed into a long-term global work trend. While many employees value the flexibility, comfort, and time savings it provides, others struggle with feelings of isolation, difficulty separating personal and professional life, and increased stress levels. The hybrid work model has gained prominence as an effective compromise, blending the flexibility of remote work with the collaborative advantages of on-site interactions. This balanced approach has contributed to its widespread acceptance among organizations in India. Looking ahead, remote work is expected to remain an integral component of the contemporary workplace, as it can support higher levels of efficiency, productivity, and employee satisfaction when applied thoughtfully and strategically.

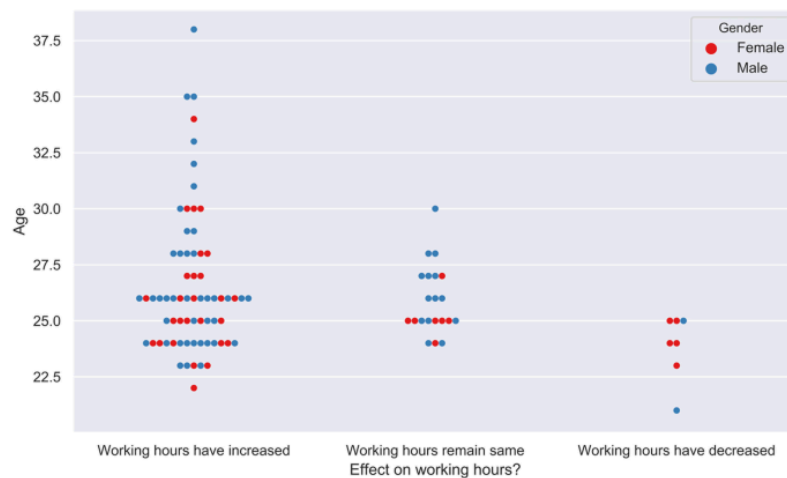


Figure 2.4 : Distribution of respondents by gender, age and effect on working hours (Source: Springer Link Journal of the Knowledge Economy, Feb 2022, Vol.14, p924-945).

An examination of respondents across gender, age groups, and changes in working hours showed notable differences in how the work-from-home (WFH) model affected men and women. Approximately 42% of male employees and 29% of female employees reported working longer hours, whereas 2% of men and 5% of women indicated a decrease in working time. These findings suggest that men experienced a more substantial increase in working hours compared to women. While many women also faced extended workdays, a comparatively larger share reported reduced hours relative to their male counterparts. The study also found a statistically significant negative correlation between gender and working hours, indicating that gender, as a social variable, is inversely associated with the number of hours worked in remote settings (Springer Link, *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, February 2022).

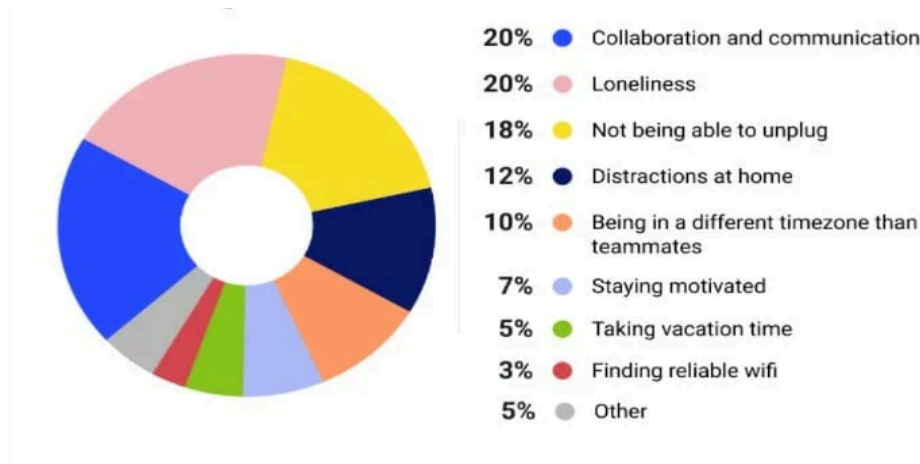


Figure 2.5: What's your biggest struggle with working remotely? (Source: Belyh, A. Founder Jar, Feb 14, 2023).

Communication and collaboration continue to pose significant difficulties for over 20% of remote workers. Despite considerable growth in the use of digital tools such as a 78% rise in team collaboration platforms, a 63% increase in business management software, and a 43% increase in project productivity applications since the onset of the pandemic only 36% of organizations have enhanced their video communication systems to support hybrid work more effectively. Alongside these challenges, another 20% of employees reported loneliness as their most pressing concern while working remotely during COVID-19. This issue is further reinforced by a survey conducted by Vikings among 1,500 freelancers, where 63% identified loneliness as their main struggle. Similarly, Global Workplace Analytics reported that 68% of remote employees missed the social interactions typically associated with workplace events. Additional difficulties experienced by remote workers include an inability to disconnect from work (18%), increased household distractions (12%), time-zone differences (10%), and reduced motivation (7%). A smaller proportion around 3% identified unreliable internet access as their major obstacle to effective remote work (Belyh, 2023).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework: Employee Engagement and Wellbeing in Times of COVID-19

Organizational crises often exert a profound impact on multiple facets of human resource management, affecting both strategic and operational practices. The complex, multi-level effects of such crises can influence employees' psychological resources, overall well-being, and job performance, often creating heightened stress, uncertainty, and decreased motivation. These challenges can, in turn, affect engagement, productivity, and retention, highlighting the critical role of effective HR strategies in mitigating adverse outcomes. During periods of crisis, organizations must balance operational demands with the needs of their workforce, providing support mechanisms such as clear communication, flexible work arrangements, and mental health resources. By proactively managing these human-centered challenges, organizations can maintain workforce stability, sustain performance levels, and enhance resilience in the face of uncertainty.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on economic, political, and social spheres worldwide, presenting challenges of a magnitude not witnessed in recent decades. What initially emerged as a public health concern quickly evolved into a major global humanitarian crisis, disrupting economic systems, transforming social structures, and reshaping daily life for individuals, communities, and organizations across the globe. COVID-19 can be classified as an intractable crisis. Intractable crises are those that, while somewhat predictable, are extremely difficult to influence due to the complexity and interdependent nature of their underlying mechanisms. The multifaceted and dynamic characteristics of such crises make it challenging to fully analyze or anticipate their progression. As a result, responding effectively becomes difficult, preparedness measures are hard to implement, and countermeasures are often impeded by conflicting interests among the various stakeholders affected by the crisis. This classification highlights the extraordinary challenges organizations and governments face in managing COVID-19 and its widespread consequences.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments worldwide introduced interventions such as physical distancing and nationwide lockdowns to reduce the spread of the virus. A lockdown functions as an emergency measure that restricts the movement of people, permitting them to leave their homes only for essential purposes such as buying food, medicines, or other necessary supplies. Its primary objective is to separate infected individuals from the healthy population to limit transmission and contain the spread of the disease. In times of such widespread and unexpected crises impacting individuals, organizations, and societies alike, resilience becomes essential. The capacity to adapt, recover, and emerge stronger plays a critical role in helping people and institutions navigate and overcome these challenging circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic exemplified this reality, highlighting the indispensable role of resilience at multiple levels. For organizations, it necessitated systemic changes in strategy, structure, and operations to withstand disruption. For individuals, it required psychological readiness, adaptability, and emotional strength to cope with uncertainty, stress, and rapid change. Together, these dimensions of resilience determined the ability of both organizations and people to navigate the crisis and position themselves for long-term sustainability.

Most businesses were not equipped to handle an unexpected black swan event like the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the abrupt and extensive shutdown of workplaces worldwide. This unexpected disruption not only brought normal operations to a standstill but also compelled organizations to swiftly transition to remote work, adopt digital tools, and develop new approaches to managing both employees and customers. To withstand the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19, most organizations, wherever feasible, mandated employees to work from home (WFH). While, under normal circumstances, WFH had been offered selectively by some employers to a portion of the workforce, the lockdown restrictions transformed it from an optional arrangement into the only viable means for organizations to sustain operations and ensure survival.

Healthy organizations are those that intentionally adopt policies and practices designed to promote and sustain employee well-being, ultimately enabling stronger performance and long-term organizational success. Conversely, unhealthy or toxic organizations exhibit poor work structures, inadequate support systems, and disregard for employee welfare. These conditions often result in low morale, high absenteeism, and greater staff turnover, ultimately leading to financial losses and reduced overall productivity.

In contrast, healthy organizations are characterized by a workforce that demonstrates high performance coupled with strong overall well-being, contributing to greater financial stability and sustained long-term success. A positive organizational climate shaped by supportive leadership, transparent communication, equitable policies, and consistent recognition of employee contributions cultivates an environment in which employees feel valued, motivated, and engaged. Such conditions foster trust, collaboration, and innovation, while also reducing workplace stress and burnout. The psychological impact of the work environment is deeply significant, as it directly influences employees' attitudes, behaviors, and overall productivity. When employees perceive the organizational climate as supportive and empowering, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, commitment, and alignment with organizational goals. This, in turn, promotes improved performance and contributes to long-term sustainable growth.

There is a strong positive relationship between organizational health and employee engagement. Organizations that cultivate a healthy work environment create conditions that naturally promote higher engagement levels, resulting in enhanced performance and productivity. Engagement drives employees to align with organizational goals and perform at their best, while a supportive environment enhances both well-being and motivation.

The relationship between employee engagement and well-being is reciprocal, meaning that engaged employees tend to experience greater well-being, while well-being, in turn, helps maintain engagement. Although definitions differ across literature, employee engagement is commonly described as the energy, commitment, and concentration individuals invest in their work, all of which have a direct impact on performance and overall organizational effectiveness.

Employee engagement is now widely acknowledged as a key factor in driving productivity, innovation, and overall organizational success. However, many organizations implement engagement initiatives without a cohesive strategy, which often reduces their overall impact and sustainability. In such cases, efforts may result in fragmented or short-lived outcomes, as isolated initiatives tend to lose impact when not aligned with a broader strategic framework. To address this, organizations can benefit from adopting well-established employee engagement models and theories, which provide both structure and direction. By leveraging frameworks that have been empirically validated and widely tested, organizations can ensure that their initiatives are

not only consistent but also capable of producing significant and sustainable change. This strategic approach enables businesses to maximize the return on their engagement investments, while also fostering a workplace culture that supports long-term employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

Employee retention not only ensures workforce stability in the organization, but also enhances productivity, ultimately contributing to the profitability of the organization. The organizations apply various employee retention theories in order to understand the cause of employee turnover.

These retention theories recognize that employee turnover stems from a range of interrelated factors. Common causes include job dissatisfaction resulting from ineffective management, insufficient compensation, an unhealthy work environment, limited opportunities for career growth or skill development, and misalignment between an employee's role and their skills or career goals.

It is essential for organizations to apply employee retention theories to maximize the advantages of keeping skilled talent. By implementing strategies such as career development opportunities, work-life balance initiatives, a supportive organizational climate, and competitive compensation, organizations can reduce employee turnover while simultaneously enhancing morale, engagement, and overall performance. In the long run, these practices strengthen organizational stability and drive sustained profitability.

2.2.1. Employment Engagement Models and Motivational Theories

The business leaders in every organization aim for their employees to excel, because the organization's financial success and reputation is based on the employee's performance. However, employee engagement is a multifaceted concept, and most employers now understand that motivating employees goes beyond offering competitive salaries. While fair compensation plays a significant role, factors such as meaningful work, opportunities for professional growth, recognition, work-life balance, and a positive organizational culture are far more influential in fostering strong employee engagement. When individuals feel valued, supported, and aligned with organizational objectives, they are more likely to remain committed and perform at their fullest potential, thereby contributing to both personal development and overall organizational success.

Employee engagement theories and models provide essential frameworks for cultivating a motivated, productive, and committed workforce. They offer organizations insights into how employees can be made to feel valued, empowered, and meaningfully connected to their roles. Although these models serve as practical guides, they are intended to be adaptable rather than prescriptive. Among the most widely recognized models are those proposed by Maslow, Kahn, and AON-Hewitt (Megan Thompson, 2021).

i. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, introduced in 1943, outlines a five-tier structure of human requirements, ranging from physiological and safety needs to social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The theory posits that individuals are driven to satisfy these needs sequentially, with fulfillment at each level contributing to enhanced motivation and overall well-being. In the organizational context, this suggests that employees require fundamental conditions such as financial security, job stability, and a safe work environment before they can fully engage with their roles. Once these basic needs are met, employees further look for meaningful relationships, acknowledgment of their efforts, and opportunities for growth and self-expression. The framework emphasizes that these needs are interconnected, and sustained motivation and strong performance are achieved when employees experience a sense of fulfillment across all levels.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains highly relevant in understanding human motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory, which organizes human needs in a pyramid from basic physiological requirements to higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment needs, helps explain how individuals respond to crisis situations. Maslow's theory suggests that individuals are primarily motivated to fulfill their basic needs such as physiological requirements, safety, and security before progressing toward higher-order needs related to belonging or self-actualization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened fear, uncertainty, and social isolation significantly interfered with people's capacity to satisfy these essential lower-level needs, thereby affecting their overall well-being and motivation. Factors such as health risks, job insecurity, and social distancing directly affected both physical and psychological well-being. Consequently, many people's motivation shifted toward fulfilling basic survival and safety needs, illustrating how external crises can reshape priorities within Maslow's framework (Shoib et al., 2022).

The effects of COVID-19 have varied across different segments of the population, with some groups experiencing significantly greater challenges than others. In particular, vulnerable populations, including children, older adults, and individuals with underlying health conditions have been disproportionately impacted by the crisis. For children, extended school closures and lockdown restrictions disrupted routines, reduced social interaction, and contributed to feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and anxiety. Meanwhile, older adults particularly those living alone or managing chronic illnesses experienced increased physical and emotional strain due to isolation, limited mobility, and restricted access to medical care. These disparities highlight the uneven social and psychological toll of the pandemic across different demographic groups.

Healthcare professionals, among the groups most affected by the pandemic, experienced substantial psychological and emotional pressure while serving on the frontlines. Prolonged exposure to high-risk environments, long working hours, and the emotional demands of caring for critically ill patients led to increased stress, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and burnout. These challenges highlight the urgent need

for robust support systems and targeted mental health interventions to protect the well-being of vulnerable and high-risk groups, particularly those serving on the front lines during public health emergencies like COVID-19.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a valuable lens for examining human motivation, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The widespread disruptions caused by the pandemic compelled individuals to reevaluate their priorities and concentrate on fulfilling their most basic and essential needs first. As uncertainty and fear prevailed, the relevance of Maslow's model became increasingly apparent. The following discussion explores how each level of the hierarchy, from physiological needs to self-actualization manifested during the pandemic.

Physiological Needs (Basic Survival):

At the onset of the pandemic, individuals' primary focus was on meeting basic survival needs such as food, shelter, clean water, and access to healthcare. Lockdowns, economic disruptions, and job losses made fulfilling these necessities especially challenging. Organizations also had to step in by ensuring employees had the essential resources including a stable income, reliable internet access, and proper equipment to continue working effectively and safely from home.

Safety Needs (Security and Stability):

The COVID-19 pandemic generated significant anxiety surrounding physical health, job security, and financial stability. Uncertainty about infection risks and future employment prospects amplified feelings of fear and vulnerability among workers. Organizations that emphasized health and safety measures, provided extensive medical benefits, and maintained clear and transparent communication were better able to foster employee trust and create a heightened sense of stability and security.

Social Needs (Belonging and Connection):

Lockdowns and social distancing measures disrupted interpersonal interactions, deeply affecting emotional well-being. Since the need for belonging and connection is fundamental, the lack of in-person contact posed significant challenges. To address the challenges of physical isolation, organizations implemented virtual team-building exercises, frequent check-ins, and online engagement initiatives to maintain connections, strengthen team cohesion, and support employees.

Esteem Needs (Recognition and Achievement):

With limited face-to-face interaction, recognition became even more important. Employees sought validation for their efforts, adaptability, and resilience. Organizations that acknowledged contributions, through digital recognition programs, performance feedback, or appreciation message which helped to maintain motivation and self-worth.

Self-Actualization (Growth and Fulfillment):

The pandemic encouraged many individuals to reflect on their purpose, values, and career aspirations. Opportunities for skill development, online learning, and innovation helped employees pursue personal growth even during uncertain times. Organizations

that invested in professional development fostered a sense of fulfillment and long-term engagement.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a valuable lens for developing strategies to address mental health concerns such as physician burnout. The model emphasizes that psychological well-being and the pursuit of higher-level goals depend on first meeting basic physiological and safety needs. Research shows that when these foundational needs are satisfied, individuals report lower levels of neuroticism and a greater sense of control over their lives. In the context of healthcare, physicians who lack adequate rest, fair compensation, job security, or safe working environments are more vulnerable to stress and deteriorating mental health. In contrast, when these essential needs are fulfilled, physicians are more likely to exhibit resilience, adopt effective coping mechanisms, and remain engaged and committed to their professional responsibilities.

All five levels of Maslow's hierarchy are interconnected, meaning that fulfilling or neglecting one level affects the satisfaction of others. This interdependence reflects the dynamic and fluid nature of human motivation, where individuals continuously adjust their priorities in response to changing internal states and external conditions. As a result, movement within the hierarchy is not strictly linear; people may progress upward, regress downward, or experience multiple levels simultaneously. This flexibility enhances the model's practical relevance, as it reflects the complex and evolving patterns of human needs and behaviors in real-world contexts.

For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of nationwide lockdowns in several countries resulted in the temporary closure of routine outpatient services in many major hospitals. To ensure continuity of care, individuals with mild or moderate health concerns were advised to access tele-consultation platforms as an alternative means of receiving medical guidance and support. However, the effective use of these digital health services depended on the prior fulfillment of fundamental needs. Patients were able to utilize tele-consultation services only if they had consistent access to essential resources including food, medication, electricity, and a stable internet connection throughout the lockdown period. This illustrates how higher-order needs, such as access to healthcare, become meaningful only when fundamental physiological and safety needs are met.

When developing psychosocial intervention models informed by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is essential to incorporate flexibility and recognize the interdependence of all levels within the framework. This holistic approach views individuals as integrated beings, where each need influences and is influenced by others, rather than existing independently or progressing in a fixed sequence. Adopting a cause-and-effect perspective helps explain how changes in one level of need can trigger corresponding shifts across other levels, capturing the dynamic and adaptive nature of human motivation and overall psychological well-being.

For instance, a decline in physical health can limit an individual's ability to sustain social connections and access other essential support systems, which subsequently affects

their mental well-being. This deterioration may also hinder the fulfillment of higher-level needs such as self-esteem and belonging, creating a reinforcing cycle of psychological distress. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has suggested that mental health may play a more foundational role within Maslow's hierarchy than traditionally assumed, indicating that psychological well-being may underpin the satisfaction of other needs. Nevertheless, this perspective remains theoretical and requires empirical research for confirmation.

It is essential to prioritize the fulfillment of basic needs, especially for individuals in quarantine or isolation, as this forms the foundation for maintaining mental health and overall well-being. From an intervention standpoint, Maslow's hierarchy of needs serves as a useful framework for understanding and addressing these requirements at both individual and community levels. When combined with the broader social determinants of health, it provides valuable guidance for designing targeted and adaptive support strategies. This integrated approach holds substantial public health significance, particularly as nations strive to recover from the wide-ranging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce its long-term psychological effects.

ii. The Kahn Model

Organizational psychologist William Kahn is widely recognized as one of the earliest scholars to conceptualize employee engagement in a structured manner. In his seminal 1990 work, he identified three core components of engagement which are physical, cognitive, and emotional. Physical engagement refers to the effort and energy employees invest in carrying out their tasks, cognitive engagement reflects the degree of focus, attention, and absorption they bring to their work, and emotional engagement relates to the sense of attachment and meaningful connection they experience toward their role and organization. Kahn's study, *Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work*, drew on observations of two groups, summer camp counselors and employees in an architecture firm to investigate the workplace conditions that shape employees' decisions to either engage fully or withdraw from their work (Megan Thompson, 2021).

Kahn outlined three fundamental psychological conditions required to cultivate employee engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Criterion HCM, 2024). Meaningfulness relates to the sense of purpose employees draw from their work and the belief that their contributions have value. When employees perceive their roles as purposeful, their motivation and commitment increase, whereas the absence of meaning can contribute to disengagement and burnout.

Safety refers to the extent to which employees feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of negative consequences for their professional reputation or career progression. A psychologically safe environment encourages open communication,

idea-sharing, and innovation; in contrast, a lack of safety often leads to withdrawal and reduced participation.

Availability involves having sufficient physical, emotional, and psychological capacity to engage fully in one's role. When employees have access to the necessary resources, support systems, and energy, they are better able to perform effectively and feel appreciated. Insufficient resources, however, can result in fatigue, frustration, and diminished engagement.

Kahn concluded that employees achieve true engagement when these three conditions are met they feel their contributions are meaningful, experience a stable and supportive environment, and possess the necessary resources to perform effectively. Together, these factors create a workplace where individuals are intrinsically motivated to invest their full selves in their work.

Several workplace factors play a crucial role in shaping employees' engagement levels and their willingness to contribute meaningfully to the organization. The quality of interpersonal relationships is particularly important, as positive interactions build trust and support collaboration. Task variety also influences engagement by sustaining interest and motivation through diverse and stimulating responsibilities. In addition, the degree of alignment between an employee's job role and their self-concept affects how personally meaningful the work feels. Leadership behaviors further contribute to engagement outcomes supportive and empowering leaders tend to enhance engagement, whereas authoritarian or inconsistent leadership can diminish it. Finally, employees' self-efficacy, or their confidence in successfully navigating both the social and operational aspects of the organization, plays a key role in determining the depth of their engagement.

For instance, employees require meaningful assignments, well-defined objectives, and avenues for creativity to develop a sense of ownership and purpose in their work. Equally essential is the presence of psychological safety; when individuals believe they can express ideas and participate fully without fear of negative repercussions, they are more likely to feel secure, motivated, and committed to performing at their best. In contrast, workplaces marked by low trust, punitive norms, or unclear expectations create uncertainty around engagement, making employees less willing to invest themselves fully in their roles.

Kahn challenged the prevailing belief in management theory that employee engagement was primarily driven by cognitive evaluations of one's work. Instead, he argued that engagement is rooted in emotional experiences rather than thoughts alone. His model is based on the idea that individuals make conscious decisions about how much of their authentic selves they choose to invest in their roles. Kahn also emphasized the consequences of disengagement, noting that employees may perform only at a minimal level sufficient to retain their jobs, while withholding their cognitive and emotional energy. According to his theory, employees are willing to exert greater effort only when they feel psychologically safe to express their true selves in the workplace (Megan Thompson, 2021).

The first step in addressing any organizational challenge is developing a clear understanding of the current state. When it comes to employee engagement, this begins with measuring existing levels of engagement within the workforce. However, the factors identified in Kahn's theory, namely physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement are not easily measured directly. This difficulty is further amplified in disengaged workplaces, where employees may perceive honesty as either futile or potentially threatening to their job security. The question that follows is how organizations can effectively identify areas requiring improvement and determine the underlying factors that influence employee engagement.

One commonly used approach is to ask employees to assess their levels of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability in the workplace. However, obtaining honest and transparent responses remains a considerable challenge. Although anonymous surveys are designed to protect confidentiality and encourage employees to provide candid feedback, concerns about digital monitoring and potential data breaches may still undermine employees' trust in the anonymity of their responses. Consequently, the validity and accuracy of such feedback may be diminished.

Measuring employee engagement requires more than relying on perceptions or isolated survey. It calls for a systematic evaluation of both workforce behavior and organizational outcomes. A multi-dimensional approach provides a clearer picture of how engaged employees truly are.

One of the most important metrics is the **turnover rate**, which highlights how many employees leave the organization over a given period. High turnover typically reflects dissatisfaction with the job, culture, or workload, suggesting disengagement. The reverse, the **retention rate**, signals how well the organization is able to keep employees who are motivated to stay and grow.

Absenteeism is another valuable metric. Frequent unplanned absences or last-minute no-shows can reveal low motivation, burnout, or poor workplace morale. Beyond being a sign of disengagement, absenteeism also places strain on colleagues, creating a ripple effect that may reduce overall team engagement. Direct measures of employee performance, including productivity, quality of work, and achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) offer concrete evidence of engagement. Highly engaged employees typically exhibit initiative, creativity, and reliability in their work, reflecting strong personal motivation and a clear alignment with organizational objectives. Although an indirect measure, customer satisfaction frequently reflects the level of employee engagement, especially in service-driven roles. When employees are engaged, they tend to provide attentive, high-quality service that enhances the customer experience. In contrast, declining customer satisfaction may indicate underlying disengagement or organizational issues affecting the workforce.

Finally, additional indicators such as participation in training and development programs, internal promotion rates, contributions in feedback sessions, and collaboration

within teams can further enrich the assessment. Together, these metrics help organizations move beyond assumptions to an evidence-based understanding of engagement levels.

In summary, no single measure can fully capture engagement. Organizations should adopt a balanced approach that combines quantitative data (turnover, retention, absenteeism, performance, customer feedback) with qualitative insights (surveys, focus groups, team dynamics). This comprehensive perspective not only identifies areas of concern but also guides leaders in designing targeted strategies to build a motivated, committed, and resilient workforce.

When interpreting engagement metrics, it is important to consider the broader organizational context. A low score in a specific area does not automatically signal employee disengagement; rather, it may reflect localized or situational challenges that do not represent wider organizational concerns. For example, a **low retention rate** might not stem from employees being disengaged, but rather from compensation that is not competitive with industry standards. Similarly, a **high turnover rate** could be the result of hiring mismatches, where individuals are not the right fit for the role or organizational culture, rather than a reflection of poor engagement practices. In other cases, challenges such as a single **disruptive employee** or localized leadership issues may create negative dynamics that affect attendance or morale within specific teams.

For this reason, engagement metrics should not be interpreted in isolation. Rather, they should be incorporated into a broader diagnostic process that integrates quantitative data with qualitative insights, such as employee feedback, interviews, and focus group discussions. This holistic approach enables leaders to more accurately identify underlying issues and develop targeted interventions that genuinely enhance engagement, rather than risking misdiagnosis based on limited data.

iii. The AON-Hewitt model

The AON-Hewitt model frames employee engagement as the combined influence of employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses, emphasizing how these interconnected factors drive higher performance and overall productivity. The model highlights six core engagement drivers that organizations can actively influence, along with three key outcomes that result when these drivers are effectively addressed.

Key drivers of engagement, according to the model, encompass foundational elements like fair compensation, benefits, job security, and work-life balance; the intrinsic qualities of work, including meaningful tasks, autonomy, empowerment, and teamwork; and organizational practices such as inclusivity, transparent communication, adequate staffing, and supportive infrastructure. Strong and accessible **leadership** providing direction is another essential driver, as are opportunities for **performance and growth** through career development, learning, recognition, and effective people management. Finally, the organization's **brand and reputation** including its credibility, social responsibility, and employee value proposition play a significant role in shaping engagement. When these drivers are successfully implemented, they result in three

outcomes: employees who **say** positive things about the organization, **stay** with a sense of loyalty and belonging, and **strive** by going above and beyond in their roles.

Bottom of Form

Hewitt's research indicated that during periods of economic uncertainty, two elements are particularly effective in maintaining employee engagement: regular, transparent communication from leaders and opportunities for cross-training. Interestingly, challenging times can also create meaningful avenues for professional growth, which remains a significant driver of engagement. Organizations that prioritize transparent communication and actively invest in employee development can strengthen resilience, foster loyalty, and maintain high levels of engagement, even during challenging or uncertain times.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as the crisis escalated globally, organizational leaders faced significant challenges in navigating the sudden transition to remote work, addressing employee concerns and anxieties, and maintaining operational continuity amid widespread uncertainty. To navigate this uncertainty, most organizations adopted key strategies such as ensuring **transparent and frequent communication**, investing in **employee learning and development**, and implementing **recognition programs** to acknowledge contributions. These initiatives not only helped sustain employee morale but also reinforced trust, adaptability, and engagement during an unprecedented period of disruption.

iv. Zinger Model

Developed by management consultant David Zinger, the Zinger Model of Employee Engagement focuses on the importance of building strong connections to enhance engagement. The model suggests that engagement is strengthened when employees form meaningful relationships with their organization, their teammates, their customers, and even the broader community. These connections help employees feel that they belong, that their work has purpose, and that they share responsibility for the organization's success. In essence, the model views engagement as a network of relationships that motivate people to contribute fully and collaboratively.

Similar to Maslow's hierarchy, the Zinger Model of Employee Engagement is structured as a pyramid comprising ten interconnected building blocks, each representing a key factor that contributes to overall engagement. The foundational levels support the upper tiers, fostering motivation, connection, and enhanced performance, ultimately guiding employees toward meaningful results.

At its core is achieving results, supported by enabling employees to see progress in their career paths, maximize performance, and receive recognition for their contributions. Strong relationships with peers, leaders, customers, and the wider community are complemented by efforts to enliven energy and sustain motivation. The model further highlights the importance of leveraging individual strengths, helping employees find meaning in their work, and mastering everyday moments that shape the employee experience. Finally, by enhancing well-being across physical, emotional, and

psychological dimensions, the model integrates purpose, performance, and health to foster sustained engagement.

The **Zinger Model** is structured as a pyramid with four foundational blocks: the need for **meaning, enhanced well-being, leveraged strengths**, and **energy**, which together create the base for engagement. The next level emphasizes social and experiential factors, comprising **fostering recognition, mastering moments**, and **building relationships**. At the top of the pyramid are two capstone elements namely **maximizing performance** and **creating a path to improvement** which represent the ultimate outcomes of sustained employee engagement.

The Zinger Model presents employee engagement as a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework, where all components function together to convert individual effort into meaningful outcomes for both employees and the organization. It integrates foundational aspects such as purpose, well-being, strengths, and energy with relational elements like recognition, collaboration, and achievement. The model underscores the importance of cultivating a supportive and motivating work environment. Its focus on sustained performance and ongoing growth emphasizes that employee engagement goes beyond immediate motivation, encompassing long-term fulfillment, professional development, and the overall success of the organization.

v. Deloitte Model

Engaging employees requires building a culture where individuals feel genuinely involved, respected, and continually challenged. The Deloitte Employee Engagement Model is built on the premise of creating a workplace that is “irresistible” to employees. It means creating a place where they are motivated to contribute, feel valued for their efforts, and are excited to show up every day. By fostering such an environment, organizations can cultivate deeper commitment, stronger performance, and long-term loyalty among their workforce.

Deloitte, a leading member of the Big Four accounting firms, created its own model of employee engagement based on extensive interviews with its workforce. From these insights, the firm identified five essential pillars that shape engagement. These include meaningful work that provides employees with a clear sense of purpose; supportive management that offers direction, feedback, and encouragement; a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, inclusiveness, and well-being; opportunities for growth through ongoing learning and career progression; and trust in leadership, which strengthens employees’ belief in the organization’s vision and strategic goals. Together, these components form what Deloitte refers to as a “simply irresistible organization” a workplace where individuals feel appreciated, motivated, and empowered to achieve strong performance.

According to the Deloitte framework, enhancing employee engagement involves cultivating an organizational culture that truly energizes and motivates employees a work environment where individuals feel proud to show up and make meaningful contributions each day. This means aligning the efforts of top **leadership, middle management**, and

organizational policies to create an environment that supports people at all levels. Leaders must set the tone by providing vision and trust, managers must enable employees through hands-on guidance and recognition, and company policies must ensure fairness, inclusivity, and opportunities for growth.

vi. Gallup Model

Gallup's Q12 model is one of the most recognized frameworks connecting employee engagement with productivity and overall organizational success. The model centers on 12 carefully crafted survey questions that assess critical elements of engagement. These questions are grouped into four hierarchical categories: basic needs, individual needs, teamwork, and growth, each representing a progressive stage in an employee's journey toward deeper engagement and higher performance.

Gallup identifies **12 specific employee needs** that managers can address to improve engagement and, in turn, productivity. This approach is straightforward, actionable, and proven to be effective. These 12 needs form the core items of Gallup's **Q12 employee engagement survey**, providing a practical framework for leaders to understand and enhance their employees' workplace experience. By systematically meeting these needs, managers can foster higher motivation, satisfaction, and performance across their teams.

Gallup's Q12 model outlines twelve essential employee needs that leaders can focus on to strengthen engagement and enhance productivity. These needs include having well-defined job expectations, access to the tools and resources required for effective performance, and opportunities to use one's strengths on a daily basis. They also involve receiving regular recognition, feeling genuinely cared for by one's supervisor, and being encouraged to grow and develop. Additional factors include feeling that one's voice matters, having a meaningful sense of purpose at work, being committed to delivering quality, forming close workplace relationships, receiving acknowledgment of progress within the last six months, and having opportunities for continuous learning and advancement. When these needs are met, employees feel valued, motivated, and connected to their work, resulting in higher performance and overall job satisfaction.

The goal of the Q12 engagement survey is not simply to have employees complete a questionnaire and move on, but rather to spark meaningful conversations between managers and their employees. The survey serves as a structured tool to surface employees' needs and experiences, providing managers with valuable insight into what drives engagement within their teams. By highlighting specific areas that require attention such as recognition, development opportunities, teamwork, or access to resources, the Q12 survey equips managers with clear insights into what their employees need most. This enables leaders to prioritize and tailor their actions in ways that directly impact engagement and productivity. Importantly, the Q12 is not designed to be a one-time activity or a box-ticking exercise; rather, it serves as the foundation for ongoing, two-way dialogue between managers and employees. When used effectively, it builds trust, enhances relationships, and creates a culture where employees feel truly heard, appreciated and supported. Over time, such meaningful conversations create a more

motivated, connected, and committed workforce driving both individual and organizational success.

vii. JD-R Model

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, proposed by Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti, suggests that all workplaces are characterized by two key elements: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, or emotional efforts required to carry out one’s work such as heavy workloads, tight deadlines, complex tasks, or highly emotional interactions. While these demands are not necessarily negative on their own, when they become excessive or chronic, they can contribute to stress, exhaustion, and diminished well-being.

Job resources, on the other hand, are the factors that enable employees to accomplish their work effectively, cope with demands, and pursue personal and professional growth. These resources may include social support, opportunities for skill development, autonomy, and a sense of purpose or significance in one’s tasks. The balance between demands and resources plays a crucial role in shaping the overall work experience, influencing motivation, engagement, and job performance. When job demands surpass available resources, employees are more vulnerable to burnout; however, when resources are adequate, they can transform challenges into opportunities, fostering resilience and sustained productivity.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory has become an essential framework for understanding how employees and organizations navigate crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other large-scale disruptions. The pandemic demonstrated that job characteristics alone cannot account for variations in employee well-being and motivation two central outcomes highlighted in the JD–R model. Instead, it emphasized the importance of the dynamic interaction between demands and resources operating across multiple levels, including the individual, family, job, and organizational domains. These combined influences shape employees’ resilience, overall well-being, and performance in uncertain conditions. Additionally, the behaviors and responses of families, leaders, and work teams function as regulatory mechanisms that can either mitigate or intensify the impact of demands and resources, ultimately determining how employees adjust and maintain engagement during periods of crisis.

Organizations worldwide have sought to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected employees and to identify effective approaches for safeguarding well-being and maintaining performance during and after the crisis. While predicting employee health and work outcomes is inherently complex, large-scale disruptions make this assessment even more difficult. The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory provides a valuable lens for examining these dynamics, as it distinguishes between two key pathways influencing employee outcomes: the health-impairment process and the motivational process. Job demands—such as heightened workloads, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, and emotionally taxing interactions—consume energy

and can undermine well-being. Conversely, job resources—including autonomy, supportive leadership, and strong interpersonal relationships—serve as protective factors that enable employees to manage demands, remain engaged, and continue developing at both personal and professional levels.

The pandemic demonstrated that employee outcomes are shaped not only by workplace conditions but also by the interaction of demands and resources across multiple contexts, including individual, family, organizational, and broader societal domains. Additionally, regulatory responses at each of these levels whether enacted by individuals, family members, leaders, or teams can either mitigate or intensify the impact of demands and resources. By adopting this multi-level perspective, the JD–R framework underscores how organizations can design more resilient job structures, strengthen support mechanisms, and cultivate adaptability to safeguard employee well-being and sustain performance during periods of crisis.

For many professions especially in sectors like education, healthcare, and services, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a substantial shift in job demands. Employees were required to quickly adapt to remote or hybrid work setups, often without prior preparation or adequate resources. Conversely, in other occupations, the workload decreased sharply due to local lockdowns. For example, cleaning personnel, receptionists, and employees in catering or cultural industries faced reduced or suspended duties. To support employees through these disruptions, many organizations provided **job resources**, with timely and transparent information about pandemic-related measures emerging as one of the most critical resources, both for practical guidance and for sense-making.

The shift to remote work further elevated the importance of critical job resources such as autonomy, effective digital communication, and reliable technological support. When leaders recognized these requirements and proactively offered the appropriate tools, flexibility, and direction, employees were better equipped to manage heightened job pressures. This support not only sustained motivation and productivity but also helped employees remain focused and accomplish their objectives despite the significant disruptions brought about by the pandemic.

Across occupations, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified job demands universally, as employees in every sector were required to adapt their work processes to meet emerging challenges. Beyond the immediate health threats, workers had to demonstrate increased effort, adaptability, and emotional resilience to maintain performance in an environment marked by rapid and unpredictable change. Importantly, these spikes in job demands are not unique to the pandemic; similar patterns consistently emerge during times of widespread disruption and organizational transformation.

Research shows that crises consistently heighten job demands while reducing clarity and stability in the work environment. For instance, Centra and Gualtieri (2014) found that the global economic downturn led to increased job complexity and deteriorating working conditions. Likewise, Büssing (1999) reported that periods of crisis amplify feelings of ambiguity, uncertainty, and insecurity among employees. In the same

way, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role of job resources especially those that help counterbalance the intensified pressures of remote work and heavy workloads. Supportive work environments, marked by strong assistance from supervisors and colleagues, were particularly important during the pandemic (Britt et al., 2021) and have long been recognized as protective factors in earlier crises as well (Belfroid et al., 2018). Social support operates as a “negativity buffer,” easing the psychological strain that arises in difficult circumstances (Bavik et al., 2020). Additionally, clear and transparent organizational communication serves as an essential resource that reduces uncertainty, strengthens trust, and helps employees navigate disruptions more effectively.

To mitigate the short- and long-term consequences of the pandemic on employees and organizations, it is essential that all stakeholders, including governments, employers, leaders, families, and employees share responsibility for creating and sustaining supportive working conditions. This involves maintaining job demands, whether pandemic-related or general, at sustainable levels while simultaneously ensuring the availability of robust resources that enable individuals to effectively cope, adapt, and thrive in evolving work environments. Such balance can be achieved through interventions aimed at redesigning work, organizational structures, and family processes in ways that minimize risks, foster resilience, and facilitate effective functioning with fewer negative outcomes. At the same time, supporting employees in navigating rapid and often threatening changes calls for targeted prevention strategies. Secondary prevention focuses on helping employees develop the skills needed to manage stress, adapt to remote work, and balance work–family demands. In contrast, tertiary prevention aims to address and reduce the effects of strain, illness, or financial difficulties after they have already emerged. Taken together, these strategies emphasize not only proactive job and organizational design but also the importance of holistic, multi-level interventions that safeguard employee well-being and sustain organizational performance during and after crises.

We Thrive’s 4C employee engagement model

We Thrive’s 4C psychological models were developed by WeThrive Co-Founder Piers Bishop, a psychotherapist specialized in Human Needs psychology and member of the Association for Business Psychology.

The **4C Employee Engagement Model**, developed by psychologist and We Thrive founder Piers Bishop, offers a simple yet effective way to understand the root causes of low motivation, disengagement, and underperformance. By focusing on four key areas, the model helps diagnose the underlying issues that may be holding employees back. This structured approach makes it easier for organizations to pinpoint exactly what their people need in order to thrive, and to implement targeted improvements that enhance both individual performance and overall workplace engagement.

We Thrive’s employee engagement survey, rooted in the **4C model**, is designed around the principle that real engagement comes from meeting employees’ underlying

needs. The model identifies four areas of working life that shape people's experience at work.

Cognitive refers to the mental process employees use to understand their roles, goals, and the broader organization. Capability relates to employees' perceptions of the resources, support, tools, and training available to help them perform effectively. Connection captures the relational dimension of work, including trust, meaningful relationships, and the sense of belonging within a team or organization. Finally, Confidence encompasses employees' emotional perceptions of their work, such as their sense of security, recognition, and belief that their contributions are valued. Together, these four areas provide leaders with a clear diagnostic framework to understand not just what employees do, but how they think, feel, and connect, making it easier to identify the root causes of disengagement and drive meaningful improvements.

We Thrive's **intelligent employee engagement surveys** are designed to go beyond surface-level feedback by exploring both the conscious and subconscious drivers of engagement. By leveraging the **4C model**, the platform digs deeper into the areas that most directly influence how employees think, feel, and perform at work. Through its **smart dashboards**, managers and their teams receive instant, actionable recommendations, enabling them to address issues quickly and effectively. The 4C model itself was developed with input from GPs, practical psychology, and psychotherapy, ensuring that it not only measures engagement but also pinpoints the factors that may be hindering employees' **mental health and overall happiness**. In this way, the framework bridges the gap between workplace performance and personal wellbeing, providing organizations with a holistic tool to enhance both.

The **4C model** focuses primarily on the **psychological needs** that influence how people think, feel, and perform at work, while also considering key **physical needs** such as sleep and movement. By acknowledging and effectively addressing these elements, organizations can reduce the psychological and physiological impacts of stress and the body's natural fight-or-flight response. Doing so strengthens resilience, supports better mental well-being, and creates conditions that enable employees to engage more fully and sustainably in their work.

2.2.2. Employee Retention Theories

Employee retention is a key strategy for maintaining a dedicated and high-performing workforce, which directly contributes to long-term organizational productivity. Reducing turnover not only minimizes the substantial expenses linked to hiring and training new staff but also helps maintain employee morale and overall organizational stability.

While employee retention strategies can fulfill several goals, their primary focus lies in reducing the difficulties and financial burdens of turnover while cultivating a supportive and positive organizational culture. To accomplish this, many organizations draw on established employee retention theories to gain insights into why employees

choose to leave and to develop proactive approaches that enhance commitment and minimize attrition.

Retention theories are based on the recognition that employee turnover results from a combination of complex and often subjective factors. Among the most common causes are job dissatisfaction, a lack of career growth opportunities, and a misalignment between employees' skills, values, or expectations and the roles they occupy within the organization. These drivers may arise internally such as from team dynamics or organizational culture or externally, such as from labor market competition. To maximize the advantages of retaining employees, organizations need to explore and tailor various theoretical frameworks, applying the ones that best fit their specific organizational context. When effectively applied, integrating multiple retention theories can enhance job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and ultimately boost overall organizational performance.

While a certain level of turnover can be healthy for an organization, unexpected or undesired attrition can be highly detrimental. Retaining talented and skilled employees remains one of the biggest challenges for businesses today. To address this, scholars have advanced various retention programs and theories aimed at guiding organizations in developing effective human resource practices. These practices are designed to evolve into best-fit strategies for retaining employees. Among the classic approaches are behavioral theories and other frameworks that continue to inform modern retention practices.

i. The Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE)

The Barnard-Simon Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE) provides a foundational framework for understanding employee retention and turnover, emphasizing the conditions that sustain workforce stability. The theory posits that employees are more likely to remain with an organization when there is a balance between their contributions and the rewards or benefits they receive, encompassing both professional and personal aspects of their lives.

Within this framework, job satisfaction is shaped by three critical factors. The first is the alignment between an employee's skills, abilities, and role expectations, which ensures they can perform effectively and feel competent in their work. The second is the level of trust and predictability in workplace relationships, which provides a sense of security and stability. The third is the congruence between an individual's personal values and self-image with their job responsibilities, ensuring harmony between personal identity and professional role. When these conditions are met, employees experience harmony between organizational expectations and personal fulfillment, leading to higher job satisfaction and stronger retention.

A critical contribution of this theory lies in its **systems perspective**, which views the organization as a cooperative social system that must continually adapt to internal and external pressures. Changes in market conditions, leadership styles, or organizational policies can shift the equilibrium, prompting employees to reassess their satisfaction and

commitment. In modern workplaces, this concept is particularly relevant given the evolving nature of work, where psychological contracts often hold as much weight as formal employment contracts. Ultimately, the Barnard-Simon framework underscores that **retention is not achieved solely through incentives**, but through sustaining a sense of **mutual trust, fairness, and shared purpose**, which keeps the organizational system in equilibrium over time.

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	01	2.3
Sometimes	20	45.5
Most of the times	19	43.2
All the times	04	9.1
Total	44	100

Table 2.2: Impact of employee retention to the development of IT companies in this COVID-19 pandemic situation (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

The table above indicates that 45.5% of respondents believe employee retention only occasionally contributes to organizational development during the pandemic. This suggests that the strategies implemented to retain employees may be inadequate, or that the facilities provided such as health and safety measures, support systems, and relationships with supervisors are not meeting satisfactory standards, ultimately impacting overall organizational growth (Sawant, 2022).

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	33	75
No	11	25
Total	44	100%

Table 2.3: Provision of flexible working hours (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

The table above shows that 75% of employees, approximately 33 respondents, were provided with flexible working hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, 25% of employees did not receive flexible hours at times due to urgent project-related work demands (Sawant, 2022).

ii) Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory serves as a psychological and economic framework that outlines how individuals initiate, develop, and sustain relationships across various settings, including personal, professional, and social environments. At its core, the theory functions as a **cost–benefit analysis of human interaction**, where individuals assess the potential risks and rewards associated with engaging in or maintaining a relationship. By weighing perceived benefits against possible costs, individuals determine whether a relationship is worthwhile. Owing to this framework, Social Exchange Theory has been widely applied to explain human actions across diverse settings and within a variety of personal and professional relationship.

Business leaders have extensively applied Social Exchange Theory (SET) within organizational contexts, using it to guide both academic research and practical management approaches. Positive social exchanges between employees and their colleagues, supervisors, and the organization are widely recognized as critical indicators of job success. Strong interpersonal relationships in the workplace contribute to higher job satisfaction, greater engagement, and a deeper sense of commitment. When employees experience supportive and positive interactions, they are more inclined to reciprocate through increased effort, loyalty, and productivity. Conversely, the absence of supportive or meaningful relationships often leads to disengagement and, ultimately, the search for alternative employment where such connections can be established. By applying the principles of Social Exchange Theory, organizations can design work environments and foster cultures that promote collegiality, trust, and relationship-building. This dynamic further deepens employees' emotional connection to the organization, strengthens their commitment, and lowers the probability of turnover.

Applying Social Exchange Theory within organizational settings offers substantial benefits. When employees feel that their well-being is genuinely supported and can build positive interpersonal relationships with the help of effective leadership, they are more inclined to sustain high levels of productivity and remain loyal to the organization. Strategies that encourage these reciprocal exchanges contribute to stronger engagement, improved retention, and enhanced overall organizational performance (Recognizing Social Exchange Theory in the Workplace, 2024).

Employee engagement and retention can be significantly strengthened through the application of Social Exchange Theory, particularly by nurturing positive workplace relationships. One essential strategy is employee recognition; consistently acknowledging individual contributions, whether through formal recognition programs or informal

expressions of appreciation demonstrates that employees' efforts are valued and reinforces their sense of connection with organizational leaders. Equally important is cultivating a positive organizational culture that promotes friendly interactions and strong peer relationships, which can be supported through team-building initiatives, off-site activities, and structured in-office programs. Effective conflict resolution also plays a vital role. Addressing disputes promptly and ensuring that employees feel heard fosters trust and psychological comfort, preventing minor issues from escalating. Additionally, maintaining transparency in communication and decision-making processes strengthens trust between employees and management, encouraging openness and collaboration. Collectively, these practices create a supportive environment that enhances engagement, promotes loyalty, and contributes to long-term organizational success (Recognizing Social Exchange Theory in the Workplace, 2024).

Applying Social Exchange Theory in the workplace involves fostering an environment in which employees feel valued, supported, and meaningfully connected. Organizations can achieve this by consistently rewarding employees for exceptional performance, thereby reinforcing positive associations with the organization. Demonstrating friendliness and respect in everyday interactions also helps establish a standard of collegiality across all levels of the workplace. Facilitating relationship-building through team activities and workplace gatherings further strengthens interpersonal bonds, while providing support to employees facing personal or professional challenges contributes to resilience through strong social networks. Additionally, training customer service employees to apply social exchange principles in their interactions can extend these benefits to external stakeholders, resulting in improved client relationships. Regular check-ins with employees ensure that they feel heard, recognized, and cared for, demonstrating proactive engagement that helps address concerns before they escalate. By implementing these strategies, organizations cultivate a culture of trust and mutual reciprocity, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction, strengthening organizational commitment, and reducing turnover.

According to Social Exchange Theory, employees are more likely to exit an organization when there are violations or imbalances in the exchange relationship, whether these are explicit factors like salary and benefits or implicit factors such as trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment between the employer and employee. Failure to uphold these negotiated obligations often leads to reduced job performance and diminished engagement. The theory further highlights the importance of strong social ties within the workplace, which encourage employees to remain longer and contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction. To minimize unwanted turnover, organizations must therefore ensure that both formal and informal agreements are honored while simultaneously fostering positive and productive team dynamics that extend beyond routine interactions.

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
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Highly dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	1	2.3
Neutral	13	29.5
Satisfied	17	38.6
Highly satisfied	13	29.5
Total	44	100

Table 2.4: Interpersonal relationships are encouraging in IT organization (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

From the above table, 38.6% of respondents reported being satisfied with interpersonal relationships in the workplace, characterized by friendly interactions, a healthy work environment, trust, transparency, and cooperative behavior from superiors, while an additional 29.5% strongly agreed with these positive perceptions. Such interpersonal dynamics support the development and maintenance of social bonds and enhance employees' ability to empathize with others. However, 2.3% of employees expressed dissatisfaction, indicating challenges such as difficulty adjusting to colleagues or issues related to trust (Sawant, 2022).

iii) The Job Embeddedness Theory

The positive outcomes of employee retention are most evident when motivated employees feel deeply embedded within the social and professional structures of their organization, resulting in a lower inclination to leave. According to Job Embeddedness Theory, individuals are more likely to remain with an organization when they maintain strong connections to the communities and networks they belong to, as these relationships enhance their sense of stability, belonging, and overall commitment. This embeddedness is influenced by several interrelated factors: social linkages with colleagues, relatives, and friends that provide interpersonal support; individual attributes such as values, aspirations, knowledge, and skills that align with organizational expectations; organizational elements including job requirements, career development opportunities, and company culture; and external influences, such as recreational opportunities, quality of life, and even local climate conditions.

The key strength of Job Embeddedness Theory is its acknowledgment that employee retention is shaped not only by job satisfaction or financial rewards but also by the wider network of social, personal, and organizational connections that employees develop both inside and outside the workplace. These diverse ties foster a sense of stability and belonging, reducing employees' likelihood of leaving the organization, even when other factors such as workload or stress change over time. For example, an employee with strong workplace friendships and a supportive community is less likely to leave, even when presented with a higher-paying job elsewhere, because the cost of disrupting established networks outweighs the benefits of change.

Consequently, effective retention strategies should not only address organizational factors such as pay, recognition, and career advancement but also focus on reinforcing employees' sense of embeddedness in wider contexts. This may include promoting workplace friendships through team-building initiatives, supporting employees' work-life balance, providing professional development opportunities that align with individual aspirations, and fostering a positive organizational culture. Additionally, organizations that engage with the external environment, such as sponsoring community events or supporting local activities can strengthen employees' attachment to both the workplace and the community in which it operates.

By strategically enhancing these dimensions of embeddedness, organizations can cultivate deeper loyalty, reduce voluntary turnover, and foster long-term organizational commitment. In this manner, Job Embeddedness Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding employee retention by underscoring the intricate interaction of professional, personal, and social factors that shape an individual's decision to remain with an organization. By considering these interconnected elements, the theory demonstrates that retention is influenced not only by job satisfaction or financial rewards but also by the wider network of workplace relationships, community attachments, and organizational ties that cultivate stability and a strong sense of belonging.

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	01	2.3
Disagree	01	2.3
Neutral	12	27.3
Agree	19	43.2
Strongly Agree	11	25
Total	44	100%

Table 2.5: Management provides necessary support when employees encounter critical situations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Source: *South India Journal of Social Sciences*, 2022).

From the above table, 43.2% of employees agreed that management provided support when they encountered critical situations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another 27.3% remained neutral. When such supportive practices are implemented consistently, employees are more likely to feel secure in their work environment, demonstrate greater enthusiasm, and develop stronger relationships with their superiors (Sawant, 2022).

iv. Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Introduced by Frederick Herzberg in 1959, the Two-Factor Theory of Motivation distinguishes between two categories of factors that influence employee attitudes: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are elements that enhance employees' intrinsic satisfaction and encourage higher levels of performance, such as opportunities for advancement, professional development, recognition for accomplishments, and a strong sense of achievement. Conversely, hygiene factors do not directly boost motivation, but their absence can result in dissatisfaction and reduced engagement. These include aspects such as the quality of supervision, adequacy of salary and benefits, fairness of organizational policies, and the overall working conditions.

From the perspective of employee retention, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory underscores the necessity of addressing both motivators and hygiene factors to sustain an engaged and stable workforce. Properly managing hygiene factors helps prevent dissatisfaction, while emphasizing motivators ensures that employees feel valued, recognized, and encouraged to contribute effectively. Additionally, promoting positive relationships with management and fostering a leadership approach that earns employees' respect can further enhance retention. In practice, applying Herzberg's framework involves simultaneously reducing sources of dissatisfaction and actively cultivating factors that increase satisfaction, creating an environment where skilled employees are more likely to remain committed and motivated within the organization.

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	02	4.5
Disagree	12	27.3
Neutral	10	22.7
Agree	05	11.4
Strongly Agree	15	34.1
Total	44	100%

Table 2.6: You are rewarded periodically for your performance from COVID-19 situations (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

To maintain employee retention and ensure high levels of job satisfaction, organizations must focus on the “three Rs” of retention: respect, recognition, and rewards. Data indicate that 27.3% of employees disagreed that they received extra benefits for their hard work, which negatively affects motivation. Meanwhile, 11.4% reported receiving rewards during the COVID-19 period, and 22.7% remained neutral. Implementing strategies that address these aspects can help organizations retain employees even during challenging situations (Sawant, 2022).

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
ESIC	21	47.7
Medicclaim	02	4.5
Both	18	40.9
Other	03	6.8
Total	44	100%

Table 2.7: Provision of Health facility (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

The data reveals that 47.7% of employees feel that their contributions are recognized as meaningful and valued. Research suggests that when employees perceive their skills and efforts as significant, they are less likely to leave the organization, emphasizing the importance of fostering a sense of value in retention strategies. One practical method is the provision of ESIC schemes, which deliver medical benefits and serve as a simple yet effective mechanism for rewarding and retaining talent. These health benefits not only improve productivity and morale but also support a positive organizational culture. Furthermore, 40.9% of employees reported access to both ESIC and medi-claim facilities, while newer employees may receive alternative benefit packages (Sawant, 2022).

v. The Resource-Based Theory

A company achieves a competitive advantage when it possesses resources that are rare, valuable, and difficult for competitors to imitate. For employees, being part of such organizations enables them to contribute greater value to customers while simultaneously supporting higher organizational profitability and long-term success. The Resource-Based Theory of Retention highlights that empowering employees to create meaningful value for clients fosters a strong sense of pride and satisfaction in their roles, which in turn strengthens organizational commitment and reduces turnover intentions. Additionally, by investing in distinctive employee capabilities through targeted training, career

development programs, and innovation-focused initiatives, organizations enhance their human capital as a unique resource. This approach increases employee engagement, reinforces their sense of value, and aligns their goals with organizational objectives, ultimately improving retention and sustaining long-term performance.

vi. The Equity Theory

Introduced in 1963 by workplace behavioral psychologist John Stacey Adams, the Equity Theory of Motivation states that perceptions of fairness and equity are central to shaping employee motivation and overall job satisfaction. According to the theory, employees continuously assess the balance between their inputs such as effort, skills, experience, and education and their outputs, which include salary, recognition, benefits, and career advancement opportunities. Crucially, this evaluation is comparative: employees measure their input-output ratio against those of colleagues within the organization or peers in similar roles outside the workplace, influencing their perceptions of fairness and subsequent motivation.

When employees perceive that exchanges within the workplace are fair, they tend to exhibit stronger motivation, greater engagement, and higher overall job satisfaction. Conversely, perceptions of inequity whether through under-reward, such as receiving lower pay for comparable work, or over-reward, such as gaining disproportionate recognition relative to peers can generate negative emotions including frustration, resentment, or guilt. Over time, these feelings may erode morale, diminish performance, and increase the likelihood of turnover. For instance, an employee who discovers that a colleague performing the same tasks earns a higher salary may feel undervalued and reduce their effort as a way of restoring balance. Similarly, a single parent may willingly accept lower pay in exchange for flexible work hours, as they perceive the overall exchange to be equitable in their circumstances.

Adams also identified four referent groups employees use for comparison: **self-inside** (their experiences within their current organization), **self-outside** (their past experiences in other organizations), **others-inside** (comparisons with peers in the same organization), and **others-outside** (comparisons with individuals outside the organization). These comparisons shape perceptions of fairness and, ultimately, motivation.

From a management perspective, applying Equity Theory requires fostering a workplace environment where fairness is both transparent and consistently upheld, as employees are highly sensitive to perceived inequities. To reduce perceptions of inequity, leaders can adopt multiple strategies. They may modify employees' inputs or outcomes by providing additional rewards, recognition, or adjusting job responsibilities; ensure fairness by recalibrating the inputs or outcomes of others within the team; or help employees reinterpret the exchange by highlighting the value of non-monetary benefits such as flexibility, trust, career growth opportunities, and a supportive organizational culture. By actively managing these dynamics, organizations not only reduce

dissatisfaction but also strengthen employee motivation, engagement, and long-term retention.

Equity also extends beyond pay to include respect, dignity, opportunities for growth, and recognition. Managers must therefore remain attentive to employees' expectations, balance rewards appropriately across different levels of seniority, and ensure that fairness is embedded in workplace practices. By doing so, organizations can foster higher motivation, strengthen retention, and maintain a culture of trust and engagement.

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	37	84.14
No	2	4.5
May be	5	11.4
Total	44	100%

Table 2.8: Impact of career path and promotion opportunities for career development (Source: South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022).

From the above Table, 83% of respondents says that company is good enough for their career development; while 5% of respondents said no; while 12% seems to be somewhere in between. If practiced properly by organization this will also create self-assessment, Career Exploration, and most importantly Career Identification of the employee (*South India Journal of Social Sciences 2022*).

vii. The Human Capital Theory

Human capital encompasses the combined skills, knowledge, competencies, experience, and overall well-being that individuals bring to their work, enabling them to contribute effectively to an organization or a nation's economic development. It includes technical capabilities such as education, training, and cognitive ability as well as soft skills like punctuality, interpersonal effectiveness, and communication. For example, an employee with strong communication skills may have honed these abilities over years of interacting with diverse customers, steadily learning more effective ways to manage different situations. The Human Capital Theory, originally introduced by Adam Smith, highlights that every individual carries a unique set of abilities and skills that can be developed through education, training, and practical experience. Investing in these areas enhances both individual and organizational productivity, thereby contributing to sustained competitiveness, improved performance, and stronger employee retention over time.

According to Human Capital Theory, economic growth is largely driven by a well-invested workforce. The theory underscores that when individuals are provided with education, training, and skills development, they not only enhance their personal earning potential but also contribute to greater organizational and national productivity. For instance, a more educated population is more likely to access higher-paying jobs and, through increased spending, stimulate broader economic growth. Similarly, the adaptability of humans highlights their unique value: even in highly automated industries, employees can perform complex tasks that machines cannot replicate. This capacity for continuous learning and reprogramming reinforces the idea that human capital is a critical asset, making sustained investment in employees central to both organizational success and long-term economic development.

The Human Capital Theory emphasizes that when organizations invest in employee education, training, and developmental opportunities, they enhance workers' skills and competencies. This improvement not only boosts overall organizational performance but also supports long-term employee retention. It postulates that advancements in these areas directly increase the productivity and efficiency of individuals, which in turn contributes to greater overall productivity within the company. By focusing on education and skill-building, employees become more capable, adaptable, and valuable to their organizations. Core components of human capital include not only formal education and workplace training but also attributes such as effective communication skills, people management abilities, problem-solving capacity, and even personal health and well-being. Together, these factors form the foundation of human capital, underscoring the importance of continuous investment in employee growth as a driver of organizational success.

The Human Capital Theory presents both advantages and criticisms. Among its key benefits is its strong link to improved economic and organizational performance.

Studies demonstrate that improvements in human capital particularly through education and training are closely linked to increases in GDP. This is because employees with stronger skills and competencies typically exhibit higher levels of efficiency, productivity, and innovation in the workplace (Watts, 2023).

However, one of the main criticisms of the theory is that it tends to adopt a narrow focus on formal education and training while overlooking non-cognitive aspects of development. Beyond formal education and job-specific skills, qualities like emotional intelligence, adaptability, creativity, and resilience have become key determinants of employee success and loyalty factors that traditional human capital theory often fails to fully acknowledge.

A 5Cs Model to Reinforce Employee Engagement and Wellbeing in Times of COVID-1

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2.2.3: 5 Cs Model to Reinforce Employee Engagement and Wellbeing in Times of Covid-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of employment-related measures centered on temporary work schemes and short-term unemployment programs aimed at safeguarding jobs and reducing the rate of layoffs. Alongside these measures, organizations adopted various strategies to sustain both employment and economic continuity, prioritizing occupational health and safety as a central concern. Acknowledging the significant toll of the pandemic on employees' physical and psychological well-being, many employers expanded their workplace wellness efforts.

These measures encompassed initiatives such as mental health support, stress-management resources, and flexible work arrangements, all designed to enhance employee well-being while sustaining productivity and organizational resilience. Following the COVID-19 crisis, however, many organizations continued to face considerable difficulties in preserving employee engagement and motivation. The introduction of lockdowns, social distancing rules, and strict safety protocols, though essential for public health had far-reaching effects on employees' emotional and psychological well-being. Many employees experienced feelings of isolation, difficulty separating work from personal life, elevated stress levels, and uncertainty about their job stability. Together, these conditions made it increasingly difficult for organizations to sustain engagement, foster morale, and nurture a sense of belonging in an environment marked by disruption and change.

The onset of COVID-19 required organizations to swiftly introduce extraordinary interventions to sustain operations, while simultaneously prioritizing employee safety in response to the virus's highly contagious nature. Although it is still premature to comprehensively assess the long-term effectiveness of these interventions, several key considerations have emerged for sustaining operations. These include adhering to government guidelines and regulatory requirements, ensuring compliance with evolving legislation, and learning from effective practices adopted by other organizations. By integrating these strategies, firms can navigate ongoing uncertainty more effectively while safeguarding both employee well-being and overall business performance.

The analysis was structured around five categories identified as key determinants for strengthening employee engagement. This framework facilitated the identification of specific factors within each category, along with measurable indicators that can be employed to evaluate workforce well-being across organizations. While these indicators are relevant in both stable and crisis conditions, they were applied in this study to specifically evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee well-being. Drawing from the literature, the study identified five key factors that play a critical role in shaping and strengthening employee engagement.

The five factors identified as key determinants of employee engagement are as follows. Conciliation refers to maintaining a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal life, a need that became especially important with the increasing reliance on flexible and remote work arrangements. Cultivation involves the implementation of development initiatives that enhance employees' skills and support their career progression. Confidence is built by ensuring employee health and safety and by promoting strong, visible, and hands-on leadership. Compensation pertains to the fair and timely recognition of employee contributions, including adjustments to address the additional costs and challenges experienced during periods of disruption. Lastly, Communication underscores the importance of maintaining transparent dialogue, encouraging active participation, and ensuring that employees are well-informed, valued, and included in organizational decision-making processes.

The development of the 5C Model for strengthening employee engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic should be viewed as a complementary framework that enhances organizational health and well-being, rather than as an additional or optional component. The model emphasizes that its five engagement dimensions which are Conciliation, Cultivation, Confidence, Compensation, and Communication. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, working together to generate a stronger and more sustained impact. Within this framework, strong performance in one dimension cannot compensate for deficiencies in another, emphasizing the importance of a **balanced and holistic strategy**. By addressing all five dimensions in an integrated manner, organizations can more effectively support employee engagement, strengthen well-being, and enhance resilience during periods of crisis.

To demonstrate the effects of the health crisis, the table outlines the principal factors that strengthen employee engagement, accompanied by the specific indicators used to evaluate each one (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

Table: The 5C Model for Enhancing Employee Engagement During COVID-19 and Corresponding Assessment Indicators (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021)

Category	Factors	Indicators
1. Conciliation	Work–life balance and flexibility (e.g., remote working, family support).	Employee satisfaction and overall work–life balance Reduction in work–family conflict
2. Cultivation	Employee development and career growth opportunities.	Participation in training or reskilling programs. Employee perceptions of career growth opportunities. Internal mobility or promotion rates. Investment in digital learning platforms.
3. Confidence	Health and safety assurance, plus trust in leadership.	Employee perception of workplace safety. Implementation of occupational health and safety measures. Trust in leadership communication and decision-making. Reported stress or anxiety levels among employees.

4. Compensation	Fair pay, benefits, recognition, and support.	Perceived fairness of compensation. Adjustments or allowances for remote working expenses. Recognition and reward programs. Employee satisfaction with benefits.
5. Communication	Transparent, frequent, and participatory communication.	Frequency and clarity of internal communication. Employee participation in decision-making processes. Feedback mechanisms and their effectiveness. Employee engagement survey results.

Conciliation

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, research conducted by Ramstad on workplace flexibility indicated that 58% of Spanish employees felt equipped with the resources needed to perform their duties from home, while 68.6% expressed support for remote working, even though most organizations had not yet implemented such practices. Despite this interest, telework remained relatively rare, with less than 5% of EU employees regularly working remotely in 2018. The onset of the pandemic triggered a widespread shift to remote work, representing a major labor market adjustment and helping to limit job losses. By July 2020, approximately 40% of employees were working from home due to COVID-19 (Eurofound, COVID-19: Implications for Employment and Working Life, COVID-19 Series).

Despite the expansion of remote work during the pandemic, the proportion of employees able to work from home remained below the number of households with children or dependents estimated to be 10–20% higher who required constant supervision during lockdowns. Consequently, many employees were compelled to balance their professional responsibilities with caregiving duties, highlighting the added pressures on work–life integration during this period (Carmen M. De-la-Calle-Durán & Jose-Luis Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

Additionally, Redondo, Sparrow, and Hernández-Lechuga proposed a preliminary classification framework outlining seven critical dimensions that characterize remote work: location, timeframe, technical requirements, position within the value chain, contractual relationship, and remuneration. The location dimension highlights the physical setting of the work, noting that remote work is not synonymous with working from home. The timeframe aspect addresses the frequency and scheduling of remote

work, such as specific days of the week or month, while the working day dimension differentiates between full-time and part-time arrangements (Carmen M. De-la-Calle-Durán & Jose-Luis Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

During the pandemic, employees engaged in remote work were less likely to experience reductions in working hours and more likely to feel confident about retaining their jobs in the post-pandemic period. This outcome is closely associated with the concept of **organizational justice**, which refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in the treatment they receive from their employer, particularly regarding decisions related to remote working arrangements. When employees perceive that organizational processes and outcomes are fair, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed to their work, resulting in lower turnover intentions and higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being. Moreover, organizational justice directly influences health and quality of work life by addressing psychological and social risk factors within the workplace and shaping the broader organizational climate. Consequently, higher levels of perceived organizational justice are strongly linked to reduced absenteeism, improved employee health, and enhanced overall workplace engagement.

Cultivation

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant workforce retention challenges, with many organizations forced to adopt temporary measures such as Spain's ERTE system, which allowed reductions in working hours or temporary contract suspensions while guaranteeing job reinstatement. Despite such protections, uncertainty regarding potential future redundancies negatively impacted employee engagement and morale, while permanent layoffs further eroded trust and organizational reputation, underscoring the importance of transparent and supportive communication (Carmen M. De-la-Calle-Duran & Jose-Luis Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2021). Employee retention is also influenced by personal characteristics, work experience, skills, and family responsibilities, as well as accumulated stress, which, according to cusp catastrophe theory, can trigger dissatisfaction and increase turnover intentions (Thatcher, Stepina, & Boyle, 2002; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010; Ovadje, 2010). Aligning job roles with employees' sense of purpose, designing meaningful work, and fostering upward feedback and open communication are therefore critical strategies for maintaining engagement and commitment. Additionally, healthy organizations promote safe and secure work environments while involving employees in decision-making processes. Empowerment-oriented practices, which distribute power and control between the organization and its workforce, have been linked to reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, and stronger organizational commitment, thereby enhancing overall performance, resilience, and employee well-being (Grawitch, Ledford, Ballard, & Barber, 2009; Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Carmen M. De-la-Calle-Duran & Jose-Luis Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2021).

Organizations should consider employees' perspectives on how they can actively contribute to well-being initiatives, as such involvement enhances engagement and commitment. Studies indicate that increased access to professional development opportunities is associated with lower turnover intentions, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning for employee retention. Structured internal training programs can improve attitudes, boost motivation, and raise expectations regarding job roles. Under typical circumstances, however, organizations often face difficulties releasing employees for training due to high opportunity costs. These challenges were intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, as training opportunities were further limited by short-time work arrangements, temporary unemployment, and constrained organizational resources. Uncertainty regarding the duration of the crisis and insufficient planning for employee development needs also contributed to reduced access to learning initiatives.

Within today's dynamic business environment, human resources must be equipped with emerging technologies and tools that organizations rely on to remain competitive. Mastering these new approaches to work not only strengthens employees' technical capabilities but also enhances their motivation, while creating greater opportunities for professional growth and the achievement of organizational objectives. At the same time, sustaining employee involvement and fostering engagement has become increasingly critical for ensuring long-term organizational success. In this context, coaching has become a strategic approach that promotes employee development while simultaneously enhancing organizational effectiveness, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. By promoting adaptability, resilience, and continuous learning, coaching equips firms to navigate the complexities of the "new normal." As many of the structural changes triggered by the pandemic are likely to endure, agility and flexibility will remain essential for organizational sustainability. Coaching encourages individuals to reflect critically, take initiative, and remain focused, thereby mitigating risks of disengagement, apathy, or demotivation. Additionally, coaching encourages the development and application of innovative ideas, thereby enhancing individual performance and contributing to overall organizational effectiveness in both the medium and long term.

Confidence

The organizational environment plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' overall health and well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a comprehensive state encompassing physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than merely the absence of illness. Within this framework, perceived organizational injustice can elicit negative emotional and physiological responses, such as heightened stress and cardiovascular strain. Extended exposure to such unfair practices may also result in chronic health problems, including sleep disturbances, persistent fatigue, and systemic inflammation, ultimately diminishing employees' quality of life.

A primary concern for employees throughout the pandemic has been ensuring that their work environment remains safe. Employee engagement tends to increase significantly when individuals feel confident that their health and well-being are being

prioritized through strict adherence to official safety guidelines and the implementation of supplementary preventive measures. While organizations are responsible for evaluating the specific risks their employees may encounter, certain universal safety practices are essential to fostering trust and safeguarding well-being. These include reinforcing personal hygiene through adequate hand-washing facilities, provision of face coverings, and maintenance of physical distancing; ensuring environmental safety through regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and equipment; and reorganizing workplace layouts including furniture arrangements and corridors to sustain the recommended distancing between employees.

At the organizational level, adopting flexible approaches such as task reassignment and remote working, where feasible, is essential to maintaining both safety and productivity. For workplaces that remain open to the public, strict adherence to health and safety protocols becomes even more critical. This includes limiting the number of customers within premises, ensuring consistent physical distancing, implementing effective access-control mechanisms, and organizing queues outside to prevent crowding. Such measures not only protect employee health but also reinforce trust and confidence in organizational management, contributing to sustained engagement and morale during times of uncertainty.

Finally, organizations need to prioritize employees' mental health, as many have become increasingly susceptible to stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly within remote and hybrid work contexts. Effective mental health management involves proactive measures, including counseling services, wellness initiatives, and stress management programs, alongside a strong commitment to maintaining employee privacy and confidentiality. When organizations genuinely respect these needs, they foster deeper trust based on mutual concern and shared interests. Under such conditions, the employer–employee relationship can develop into a unified sense of purpose, with both parties confidently supporting and advocating for each other's well-being.

Compensation

Employee compensation or remuneration, typically provided in the form of monetary payment, represents a primary means of rewarding both the work performed and the individual or team delivering it. In times of crisis, eliminating productivity bonuses or variable pay would be a significant error, as such measures risk demotivating employees. Importantly, the notion of wage fairness is not tied to a fixed amount; rather, it reflects employees' subjective assessment of what constitutes fair compensation based on their skills, experience, and level of risk. When employees sense a disparity between what they expect and the compensation or rewards provided by the organization, perceptions of inequity can arise. Such imbalances often lead to reduced job satisfaction, lower engagement levels, and a decline in overall workplace well-being.

It is essential to develop and implement a target-based incentive policy that genuinely reflects the changing dynamics of the work environment, ensuring that performance criteria are fair, transparent, and closely aligned with organizational

objectives. For instance, providing employees with a risk bonus for potential exposure to infection, particularly relevant in food companies or retail sectors serves as a tangible recognition of their commitment. At the same time, remote working carries its own set of costs, including the need for appropriate hardware, communication tools, and reliable internet access to ensure effective performance. In the post-COVID-19 context, where financial resources may be constrained, organizations also have an opportunity to optimize their compensation strategies by incorporating cost-effective yet meaningful benefits, such as healthcare insurance. Such measures not only support employee wellbeing but also strengthen engagement and loyalty in a sustainable manner.

Non-monetary benefits especially those that promote social well-being function as incentives aimed at meeting particular employee needs and are generally offered in forms other than direct financial compensation. While they tend to be less common due to the significant costs they may entail, their design must be carefully aligned with employees' priorities and personal circumstances. In the current context, remote workers may experience feelings of detachment, creating an invisible barrier between themselves and the organization. To counter this, recognition of employees' goals, achievements, and contributions becomes a powerful tool for fostering connection and engagement. Recognition can take many forms from public acknowledgment through corporate communication channels, to private appreciation by supervisors, or even the introduction of creative "digital prizes" to motivate teams. These practices not only reinforce the connection between employees and the organization but also help cultivate a sense of belonging, particularly in remote or fragmented work settings.

In the post-COVID-19 context, where many organizations face increased financial pressures, companies have the opportunity to develop compensation strategies that are both cost-effective and socially meaningful. Offering benefits such as comprehensive healthcare insurance demonstrates long-term commitment to employee well-being. Moreover, non-monetary benefits have emerged as crucial tools for addressing the unique challenges introduced by the pandemic. Among the most valuable HR initiatives are those that support working parents, including nursery vouchers, on-site childcare facilities, and parenthood charters, which collectively promote work-life balance and employee retention. These measures go beyond financial assistance, providing meaningful support for employees in managing their day-to-day responsibilities. Non-monetary benefits must also be carefully aligned with broader HR policies and intentionally crafted to reflect the organization's core culture and values. When these benefits are consistent with the company's identity and match employee expectations, they not only improve satisfaction but also reinforce the psychological contract between the employee and the organization. When designed thoughtfully, they create a lasting impact, as employees perceive that the company genuinely cares not only about performance outcomes but also about their personal well-being and family life. This holistic approach strengthens trust, loyalty, and engagement across the workforce.

Communication

Equally important is feedback. In the evolving world of work, where employees are increasingly detached from traditional organizational structures, consistent feedback becomes harder to access. Without regular performance reviews or career discussions, workers risk losing clarity about their progress and development. This gap can weaken motivation and hinder professional growth. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to implement systems that facilitate ongoing and meaningful feedback, ensuring that employees feel informed, appreciated, and connected to organizational goals. Establishing such two-way communication channels promotes transparency, builds mutual trust, and enhances employees' sense of inclusion and belonging within the wider organizational community.

A supportive organizational climate that promotes open dialogue enhances communication flow and nurtures trust. Such an environment not only reduces uncertainty but also helps employees feel psychologically secure and connected. By fostering interpersonal trust and maintaining transparent communication channels, organizations can reduce occupational stress, improve wellbeing, and ultimately reinforce employee engagement and loyalty in both traditional and remote work settings.

Networking is also indispensable for reinforcing employee engagement. Practical initiatives include sharing agendas, creating and maintaining a regularly updated website with news about the organization, its processes, and its sector, and developing digital spaces that foster interaction. Creating virtual meeting platforms and internal social networking spaces where employees can share ideas, collaborate, and access timely information strengthens organizational connectedness. These initiatives also contribute to a greater sense of community and belonging among employees, even in geographically dispersed or remote work settings.

A digital platform that enables employees to raise queries becomes especially critical when regular workplace routines are disrupted. In traditional on-site environments, both formal and informal information flows naturally; however, in remote work contexts, the absence of spontaneous interactions can lead to feelings of isolation unless organizations intentionally create opportunities for communication, collaboration, and social connection. To counter this, managers should dedicate more time to each employee, not only to detect potential demotivation or problem areas but also to provide support and guidance. These engagements provide a chance to evaluate performance, monitor productivity, and gather employee feedback. They also allow organizations to address cultural barriers and strengthen employees' technological skills through targeted training, thereby fostering greater engagement and resilience.

This situation further highlights the need to reduce the digital divide by implementing focused and accessible training programs. Webinars offer an effective format for addressing organizational or technical challenges, while brief, targeted “training pills” that deliver practical, task-oriented content help employees rapidly acquire the competencies required to carry out their work efficiently.

The relevance of these factors varies among employees, as their impact is influenced by individual goals, personality characteristics, prior experiences, and past performance. Likewise, organizations must tailor these parameters across various teams and job roles, adapting engagement strategies to meet the distinct needs and motivational drivers of each group. Despite these differences, strengthening employee engagement during the uncertainty of the pandemic remains essential. Employees who feel engaged are more likely to stay committed, perform effectively, and contribute to organizational resilience. This underscores the critical role of engagement initiatives in retaining key talent and sustaining organizational stability in an evolving work environment.

This analysis offers a structured set of guidelines that organizations can use to develop strategies aligned with legal requirements, government directives, and successful practices adopted by other firms. The purpose of these guidelines is to help organizations navigate the challenges of the pandemic while simultaneously promoting employee engagement and supporting overall well-being.

2.3. Human Society Theory

Humans are naturally social creatures who, throughout history, have organized themselves into societies which are groups of individuals connected by shared lifestyles, values, and social structures. These societies can be categorized in various ways, depending on criteria such as cultural practices, economic systems, and organizational structures. Similarly, in the context of organizations, employees form communities within the workplace, influenced by shared goals, values, and interactions. Understanding these social dynamics is essential for promoting collaboration, strengthening engagement, and cultivating a positive organizational culture.

Human society refers to a group of individuals who interact regularly and share certain common traits. In broader discussions, the concept of society generally denotes groups whose members uphold shared traditions, norms, or ways of life. Humans are inherently social creatures who live and interact in the presence of others. Over time, we have formed a variety of social structures from small nomadic bands and villages to sprawling cities and nations within which we work, trade, play, reproduce, and engage in

countless other activities. Unlike other species, humans not only socialize naturally but also deliberately modify their social behaviors and organizational structures. Consequently, human societies differ greatly across locations, historical periods, and cultures, creating a complex and ever-evolving social landscape.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary challenges for organizations, particularly within the domain of human resource management. The crisis has brought about significant shifts in both workplace and social dynamics, most notably the accelerated adoption of remote work and the introduction of new policies and protocols designed to minimize physical interaction. Although these measures were necessary, they have had notable impacts on employees, including difficulties in disconnecting from continuous work demands, struggles to maintain boundaries between professional and personal life, and increased psychosocial risks, such as heightened feelings of isolation.

Essential workers have been particularly exposed to stressful conditions during the pandemic, including heavier workloads, extended working hours, and fewer opportunities for rest. Another major source of employee stress during the pandemic has been the fear of becoming infected with COVID-19 in the workplace and potentially transmitting the virus to family members or others within their community. Compounding these challenges, many employees have faced layoffs, pay cuts, and furloughs, which have heightened job insecurity and contributed to economic hardship. Together, these pressures have created significant threats to employee wellbeing, amplifying both physical and psychological risks.

Current management research highlights effective strategies for navigating human resource challenges during crises. Key approaches include prioritizing employees' needs, promoting teamwork and open communication, practicing clear and empathetic leadership, offering skill-development opportunities, and implementing incentives that motivate staff, reduce uncertainty, and facilitate efficient remote work. Such measures not only safeguard employee wellbeing but also help organizations recover and enhance performance, primarily through strengthened staff engagement.

Studies consistently demonstrate that employee well-being and engagement directly enhance efficiency, productivity, and overall organizational performance. Healthy organizations proactively implement workplace measures and processes designed to promote and sustain wellbeing among their workforce, which in turn drives effective performance. The organizational climate and the broader work environment are psychologically significant, shaping both employee behavior and workplace success. Conversely, when the work environment is structured to nurture engagement characterized by energy, involvement, and effectiveness, it reinforces both wellbeing and productivity. Ultimately, employee well-being forms the essential foundation for sustaining long-term engagement within the organization.

i. Luhmann Theory of Interaction

Luhmann's interaction theory conceptualizes society not as a collection of individuals, but as a network of communications. According to this perspective, communication forms the fundamental unit of social life, and social systems sustain and reproduce themselves through continuous exchanges of information. People are not inside

these systems; rather, they form part of the environment to which systems must adapt. What defines a system is not the individuals who participate in it, but the way communications are connected and maintained over time.

To understand Luhmann's theory of society, it is essential to recognize that among the many possible social systems, he identifies three types at different levels of system formation: interaction, organization, *and* society. Interaction systems require only the physical presence of participants and the reciprocity of perception. They are inherently limited, as they can address only one subject matter at a time and dissolve once co-presence ends. Nevertheless, interaction systems are common, repetitive, and capable of crystallizing into recognizable social forms. For this reason, they account for a significant portion of our everyday social experience

Luhmann theory views organizations as self-contained, autopoietic systems, meaning they are operationally closed at the level of decision-making, where all actions within the organization stem from internal decisions. These organizations are defined by formalized membership rules that bind members to the system's operations, and everything that happens within the organization can be traced back to a decision. Extending this framework to society, Luhmann argues that society itself is the most extensive social system, defined by its communicative reach and interactions between individuals and organizations. He further introduces the concept of World Society, a global system of interconnected communication, where societal systems have become increasingly interdependent across national and cultural boundaries.

Within this framework, **organizations** occupy a special place. They are defined by rules of membership and by the decisions they continuously make. Entry and exit conditions determine who belongs, but the organization itself persists only by making and attributing decisions to itself. This makes organizations self-referential: everything they do is either the result of a decision or something that requires a new decision. In this way, they ensure continuity and adaptability within an uncertain environment.

Overall, Luhmann's theory shifts attention away from individuals and towards the **patterns of communication** that sustain social systems. It emphasizes that systems reduce the overwhelming complexity of the world by creating boundaries, rules, and internal logics. Change does not come from external pressure alone, but through the system's own operations and reinterpretations. This perspective provides a powerful way to understand how modern societies, organizations, and institutions function in highly complex and interconnected environments.

2.4 Summary

In response to the challenges of the global pandemic, organizations have recognized the importance of strengthening employee commitment and engagement through the implementation of innovative and flexible strategies. Many firms are therefore adopting models that emphasize critical factors to keep employees motivated, connected, and productive despite unprecedented disruptions. This underscores the importance for managers to design and execute well-defined action plans that keep teams supported, motivated, and engaged throughout periods of crisis. To make factors such as Conciliation, Cultivation, Confidence, Compensation, and Communication truly effective

in enhancing organizational health and well-being, managers must continuously assess the impact of their initiatives and refine them based on employee feedback. Regularly administering employee surveys, monitoring participation in organizational initiatives, and tracking key metrics such as retention, engagement, and absenteeism provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the model and help identify areas for further improvement. This article presents a theoretically grounded yet practically applicable framework that brings together key organizational health and well-being policies. In doing so, it provides valuable insights that can guide both academic research and managerial practice. The framework highlights the critical importance of aligning organizational strategies with employee needs, especially during periods of uncertainty and disruption, to strengthen commitment, enhance engagement, and build resilience across the workforce.

The pandemic has created profound uncertainty for employees, heightening concerns about job security, health, and overall well-being. This uncertainty can undermine both engagement and well-being factors that are essential for sustaining efficiency, productivity, and organizational performance. Focusing on employee engagement and well-being enables organizations to reduce the adverse impacts of crises while simultaneously enhancing performance and maintaining a strong competitive advantage in the market.

The study highlights critical areas where managers should concentrate their efforts to strengthen employee engagement both during and following the pandemic. A primary priority is enabling remote work arrangements that help employees effectively balance

professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments. Offering flexible working hours further supports this balance, accommodating diverse individual schedules and reducing stress.

Another important focus is fostering transparent communication regarding employees' career aspirations, professional objectives, and concerns about the changing work environment. Providing in-house training and development opportunities enhances skillsets, increases motivation, nurtures positive attitudes, and reinforces employees' confidence in their future prospects. Clear pathways for professional growth encourage employees to remain committed to the organization and actively contribute to its long-term success.

The primary limitation of this work lies in its theoretical orientation, as it relies predominantly on existing literature and conceptual models rather than empirical evidence. Although the proposed framework offers meaningful insights and actionable strategies, its effectiveness has yet to be examined in real-world organizational settings. This limitation underscores the need for future research to validate the framework, evaluate its applicability across diverse organizational contexts, and refine its components based on empirical findings.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic created unparalleled psychological stress and uncertainty, profoundly affecting employees' work behaviors and attitudes. The conditions created by the crisis could either enable or impede employees' capacity to remain engaged, productive, and connected to their organizational roles. The disruptions and challenges brought on by the pandemic often undermined employees' concentration, sense of belonging, and overall integration within their teams and work environments.

Studies have shown that employee engagement dropped significantly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. By June 2021, engagement levels among U.S. workers were at 36%, compared with only 20% globally. The experiences of 2020 emphasized the vital importance of maintaining an engaged workforce, as organizations with higher engagement exhibited greater resilience and adaptability in navigating the pandemic, economic challenges, and social unrest (Harter, 2021).

During periods of significant change in the workplace and the broader economy, creating an engaging work environment supported by effective managers remains a critical priority for organizations. Regardless of whether organizations are navigating crises, economic downturns, or periods of recovery, employee engagement continues to be a critical factor for success. During times of adversity, engagement enhances resilience and cohesion within the workforce, while in recovery phases, it plays a pivotal role in retaining key talent and attracting new employees. Across all situations, an engaged

workforce reinforces the organization's reputation, solidifies its position as an employer of choice, and contributes to long-term stability and competitiveness in an evolving global environment.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

The Resource-Based View (RBV) and Agency Theory, both central to strategic management, serve as essential frameworks for understanding the ways in which organizations can secure and sustain a competitive edge.

Resource-Based Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) underscores the importance of a firm's internal resources and capabilities in achieving strong performance, positing that resources that are unique, valuable, scarce, and difficult to imitate enable long-term competitive advantage. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, while the impact varied across industries, organizations that effectively leveraged and deployed their critical resources were better positioned to withstand both the health crisis and the accompanying economic downturn. In the short term, financial resources proved to be particularly essential. Lockdowns, supply chain disruptions, and steep recessions caused drastic declines in revenue and severe cash-flow constraints for many firms. As a result, organizations were compelled to rely on internal reserves or seek alternative liquidity sources such as increasing debt, liquidating assets, or negotiating payment deferrals to maintain solvency and operational continuity.

For many organizations, the immediate priority has shifted toward ensuring short-term survival, with a focus on safeguarding existing competitive advantages and

maintaining value appropriation. Consequently, organizations have often shifted focus away from long-term strategic goals of building valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources, prioritizing instead measures that maintain operational continuity and organizational stability during the crisis. This reorientation of priorities is further supported by the threat-rigidity effect, which posits that when faced with external threats or crises, organizations tend to adopt conservative strategies reducing innovation, avoiding risk, and concentrating their attention on familiar routines and previously successful practices. Consequently, many firms have limited their strategic flexibility and postponed long-term initiatives, choosing instead to focus on short-term goals aimed at preserving liquidity, ensuring business continuity, and sustaining core operations amid heightened uncertainty.

Nonetheless, firms must also prepare for the transformed post-crisis business landscape. Although numerous organizations have demonstrated short-term resilience and adaptability, maintaining long-term competitiveness will require cultivating new capabilities and implementing innovative strategies to utilize resources efficiently. This underscores the importance of Strategic resource allocation, which refers to the strategic arrangement, coordination, and utilization of resources to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. In this evolving environment, firms will need more flexible resources and dynamic capabilities to navigate a rapidly shifting competitive landscape and ensure long-term sustainability.

Fixed assets, especially those tied to specific locations, have long been considered vital sources of competitive advantage. Nevertheless, their inherent rigidity often restricts

their redeployment or repurposing, reducing an organization's ability to respond effectively during disruptive events. In the aftermath of the pandemic, numerous firms have recognized the strategic importance of investing in more flexible and liquid resources, which allow for the reallocation and reconfiguration of existing assets as needed.

Among these, technology and human capital are paramount, as they underpin an organization's capacity for agility, innovation, and continuous learning. By effectively leveraging these dynamic resources, firms can cultivate new capabilities that allow them to adapt, compete, and sustain performance in an increasingly uncertain and volatile business environment.

Ironically, although innovation has become essential for firms seeking to remain competitive in this transformed business landscape, the concurrent economic downturn and reduced physical colocation of human capital driven by the widespread shift to remote work have made innovation more difficult to achieve. Consequently, while long-term strategic initiatives and shaping strategies are now more critical than ever for securing sustainable advantage, they have simultaneously become more complex, uncertain, and risk-laden to implement.

ii. Agency Theory

Agency Theory examines the relationship between principals (owners) and agents (managers), highlighting the potential for conflicts of interest that can emerge when there is asymmetry in information and differing goals between the two parties. The theory argues that these divergent interests can create inefficiencies, often referred to as agency

problems or agency costs. Accordingly, much of the discussion within agency theory focuses on the mechanisms such as incentive structures, monitoring systems, and governance practices designed to align interests and ensure that agents act in ways that maximize shareholder (principal) value. The pandemic has intensified the debate between short-term and long-term value creation, as many firms prioritized immediate survival while still facing pressures to develop strategies for long-term success. Under such uncertainty, ensuring that managers (agents) act in the best interests of owners (principals) has become both more critical and more challenging. Scarce resources, threats to firm survival, and risks to managerial job security further complicate this alignment. Compounding the challenge, most owners and managers lack prior experience with crises of this scale, making it difficult to identify strategic actions that optimize shareholder value. The typical cognitive processes and decision-making heuristics that guide managers may prove inadequate when confronted with such unprecedented disruptions.

Before the pandemic, organizations were gradually becoming more attentive to the needs and interests of stakeholders beyond just owners or shareholders, such as employees, customers, and the community. However, the COVID-19 crisis intensified this awareness, as companies faced new challenges that directly affected these groups, making it even more critical to consider their well-being and interests in decision-making. The economic disruption severely affected many of these groups, raising new questions about firms' responsibilities and drawing greater attention to stakeholder interests. Consequently, stakeholder theory is expected to gain greater prominence in the

post-pandemic era, serving as a valuable complement to agency theory. In this context, the traditional focus on immediate shareholder profits can shift toward wider organizational priorities, including maintaining the company's reputation, ensuring ethical conduct, and pursuing initiatives that enhance its long-term ability to generate value in a constantly evolving and complex business landscape.

Barney (2018) argued that considering shareholders as the only residual claimants of a firm conflicts with the principles of Resource-Based Theory, which focus on how value is created and appropriated. He highlighted that non-owner stakeholders such as employees, customers, and suppliers must receive value first, since their engagement and cooperation are essential for the firm to generate overall value. This view challenges the traditional emphasis of Agency Theory, which has largely prioritized the interests of executives and shareholders while overlooking the critical contributions of other stakeholders. In addition, Barney and Mackey (in press) argued that stakeholders should be considered complementary rather than competing, as collaborative efforts produce greater value than when stakeholders act separately. Aligning with this view, scholars recommend a deeper incorporation of stakeholder theory into current firm theories to better reflect the advantages of stakeholder collaboration (Hitt, Arregle, & Holmes, 2020).

3.3. Research Purpose and Questions

Research Purpose

Studying employee retention and engagement amid the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for understanding the extensive impact of the crisis on both organizations and

their employees. Such research examines how organizational responses affect employee engagement, evaluates the effectiveness of various retention strategies, and provides practical guidance to help organizations prepare for ongoing uncertainty and potential future crises. Gaining insight into these dynamics enables organizations to build resilient, adaptive, and engaged workforces that can perform effectively both during challenging periods and over the long term. Moreover, such insights can guide the formulation of future workforce strategies and policies, enabling organizations to better navigate uncertainty, enhance resilience, and sustain employee engagement in an ever-evolving environment. Here are some potential research purposes and objectives related to this topic:

1. Evaluating the Impact of Remote Work on Employee Engagement:

This explores how the sudden shift to remote work has affected employee engagement, focusing on factors such as work–life balance, communication patterns, and overall job satisfaction in virtual work settings.

2. Identifying and Adopting Flexible Retention Strategies:

Explore employee-centric retention approaches, including remote work options, enhanced health and well-being benefits, investment in professional development programs, and recognition initiatives.

3. Assessing Employee Well-being :

Examine the need for comprehensive support programs to address mental health issues and maintain engagement during periods of uncertainty.

4. Adapting Flexible Organization Culture:

Study how organizations adapted to more flexible and supportive cultures, emphasizing leadership, communication, and remote team-building strategies that sustain engagement and retention.

5. Assessing the Impact of Employee Layoffs:

Evaluate how workforce reductions affect the engagement and morale of remaining employees, highlighting the role of transparent leadership and effective communication during such processes.

6. Diversity and Inclusion in Remote Work Environments:

The transition to remote work has created both advantages and obstacles for organizations aiming to promote diversity and inclusion initiatives. While flexible work arrangements can enhance accessibility and participation for diverse groups, they may also reinforce existing inequalities if technological, communication, or cultural barriers are not adequately addressed. On one hand, remote and hybrid arrangements have expanded access to a broader talent pool by removing geographical barriers, creating opportunities for individuals who may have previously been excluded due to location, caregiving responsibilities, or physical limitations. At the same time, remote work has introduced new challenges related to equity and inclusion. Unequal access to technology, stable internet connections, and appropriate home office setups means that not all employees can participate, collaborate, or perform effectively in remote work environments. Additionally, maintaining a sense of belonging, visibility, and inclusion in

virtual environments requires intentional leadership and structured practices. Organizations must therefore reassess and adapt their diversity and inclusion strategies to ensure that remote work fosters equitable opportunities, fair treatment, and an inclusive culture for all employees.

7. Adoption of Technology and Tools for Engagement:

Research the rapid adoption of digital collaboration platforms and other technologies, examining their impact on employee engagement, team dynamics, and productivity.

8. Conducting Industry-Specific Studies:

Analyze how COVID-19 has differently affected employee engagement and retention across sectors such as healthcare, education, retail, and technology, providing insights into industry-specific challenges and strategies.

9. Assessing Long-term vs. Short-term Effects:

Pandemic-driven short-term measures such as enhanced well-being programs, flexible work policies, and open communication have significant implications for maintaining long-term employee engagement, commitment, and retention. While these measures were initially introduced as immediate responses to crisis-driven challenges, they have reshaped employee expectations of the workplace. Ongoing support for mental health and well-being has become a baseline requirement for fostering trust and loyalty, while flexible work policies have redefined how employees perceive work-life balance and organizational support. Similarly, effective communication marked by transparency, empathy, and accessibility has strengthened connections between employees and leadership. If sustained and integrated into organizational culture, these adaptations can

create lasting positive effects, enabling organizations to build resilient, committed, and engaged workforces well beyond the pandemic period.

10. Conducting Comparative Analysis:

Compare organizations that implemented proactive engagement and retention strategies with those that did not, assessing the impact of such measures on organizational performance, morale, and employee well-being.

11. Understanding Resilience and Adaptability:

Analyze how employee and organizational resilience and adaptability contributed to navigating the pandemic, identifying key drivers of retention such as leadership, flexibility, support systems, organizational culture, and employee empowerment.

12. Employee Feedback Mechanisms:

Explore the role of employee surveys, feedback loops, and pulse surveys in maintaining communication, responding to challenges, and refining engagement and retention strategies in a dynamic environment.

13. Addressing Legal and Ethical Considerations:

Examine how legal and ethical factors related to remote work, workplace health and safety, and employee privacy have shaped retention strategies. This involves analyzing how organizations navigate the balance between ensuring business continuity and operational effectiveness while safeguarding employee rights, autonomy, and well-being.

Research Questions:

- What kinds of materials and technological support do employees need to maintain productivity and teamwork?
- How does your organization ensure that its culture remains strong and visible in a remote or hybrid setting?
- What approaches are managers using to sustain high performance at both the individual and team levels while ensuring ongoing feedback?
- In what ways are employees aligning their goals with organizational objectives while also recognizing and celebrating achievements?

Hypothesis:

The integration of advanced technological innovations and efficiency-focused processes contributes positively to enhancing the quality of life for both individuals and society.

The growth of diagnostic capabilities and the digitalization of healthcare are reshaping medical services by increasing their accuracy, efficiency, and accessibility.

The recognition of healthcare systems as a vital component of country's critical infrastructure, essential for public safety and national resilience.

Shift from independent national initiatives to coordinated global teamwork to effectively combat pandemics.

In the absence of sufficient testing and technology, a "one size fits all" approach may seem like the only immediate option.

Science and technology serve as the foundation of modern medicine, driving advancements in diagnosis, treatment, and patient care.

3.4 Research Design

The literature review highlights the pivotal role of non-financial rewards such as recognition and acknowledgment in reinforcing employees' perceived value and sense of belonging within the organization. Diverse forms of recognition, including awards, verbal appreciation, and public commendation, foster enduring engagement by satisfying employees' intrinsic psychological needs. For organizations, implementing structured and personalized recognition programs can serve as a strategic approach to cultivating a committed, high-performing workforce and improving overall organizational performance.

Constructing a conceptual framework that combines multiple theoretical perspectives to analyze the effects of reward systems on employee engagement and motivation in local non-governmental organizations provides a thorough and systematic approach for investigation.

Adopting a subjective or constructivist approach, coupled with a qualitative research design, offers an effective means of gaining a deep understanding of how compensation packages shape employee engagement and motivation. Semi-structured interviews with managers allow for guided discussions while also giving participants the flexibility to share additional insights. This approach enables a detailed exploration of managers' perspectives on how compensation affects employee engagement and motivation.

The findings indicate that gratuity, as a form of financial reward, significantly enhances employee engagement and motivation, with all interviewees recommending it as an effective tool for improving performance.

3.5 Population and Sample

Analyzing COVID-19 mortality rates in India's diverse states requires careful consideration of each state's unique demographic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics, which significantly influence the disease's spread and impact. Gather up-to-date population data for each state, accounting for demographic variations like age distribution, density, urbanization, and health infrastructure, which can influence mortality. Some states may have a higher proportion of elderly or at-risk populations, which can elevate the mortality rate. States with high urban populations might face faster virus spread due to density, whereas rural areas may struggle with healthcare access, impacting mortality. States with robust healthcare systems may show lower mortality rates, while those with fewer resources may face higher mortality despite lower population densities.

3.6 Participant Selection

Extensive testing in a country as populous as India does pose logistical and financial challenges, particularly given constraints on healthcare budgets and infrastructure. Under-testing can impact the accuracy of forecasting models used to predict the disease's spread and healthcare needs, influencing policy responses and resource allocation.

3.7 Instrumentation

During India's second wave of COVID-19, around April, official testing protocols largely remained unchanged; however, the rapid surge in infections led to a substantial increase in the total number of tests performed. This wave prompted health authorities to scale up testing efforts, which included screening of the general population. As infections spread more widely, screening went beyond the typical approach of focusing solely on symptomatic or high-risk individuals. Testing began to include the general population to capture asymptomatic carriers who could inadvertently spread the virus. Testing within high-risk groups, such as healthcare workers, essential service providers, and those in densely populated areas, became even more critical. Containment zones, where cases were concentrated, also saw intensified testing to limit further transmission.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

During the early phase of India's COVID-19 lockdown, research offered valuable insights into how different industries managed sudden disruptions. Interviews with 24 senior executives from major private-sector companies highlighted varied responses across sectors. Manufacturing and FMCG leaders focused on sustaining production, resolving supply chain issues, and ensuring on-site employee safety, while executives in IT and banking emphasized strengthening digital operations, cybersecurity, and customer service continuity. The study also revealed distinct differences in remote work adoption. IT and banking employees transitioned smoothly due to strong digital infrastructure, whereas manufacturing and FMCG sectors could offer remote work only to administrative staff, with operational roles remaining on-site. Participants, each with over ten years of experience, provided informed perspectives on how remote work affected individual practices, team dynamics, and organizational processes. Their responses, collected from major industrial hubs such as Chennai, Bangalore, Gurugram, and Pune, contributed to a comprehensive understanding of work-from-home experiences across diverse regions and sectors during the nationwide lockdown (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022). Participant characteristics (Jaiswal and Arun, 2022)

Participant Characteristics (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022)

Participant	Sector	Gender	Experience (Years)	Job Function
1	Metals and Mining	Male	13	Operations
2	Renewable Energy	Male	11	Engineering Design
3	Information Technology	Female	10	Human Resources
4	Financial Services	Male	11	Business Development
5	Financial Technology	Female	12	Program Management
6	Information Technology	Female	10	Technology Advisory
7	Paint Manufacturing	Male	10	Human Resources
8	Automobile	Male	10	Sales

Participant	Sector	Gender	Experience (Years)	Job Function
9	Banking	Male	10	Marketing
10	Financial Services	Male	11	Market Research
11	Banking	Female	10	Finance
12	Banking	Male	10	Sales
13	Marine Logistics Technology	Female	25	Human Resources
14	Banking	Male	12	Sales
15	Auto Ancillary	Female	28	Human Resources
16	Technology Education	Male	12	Teaching & Research
17	Professional Services	Female	11	Project Management
18	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)	Male	14	Marketing
19	Automobile	Male	10	Human Resources
20	Auto Ancillary	Female	12	Human Resources
21	Mining and Power Generation	Male	15	Human Resources
22	Oil and Gas	Female	13	Safety
23	Industrial Chemical Manufacturing	Male	10	Marketing
24	Electronics	Male	15	Supply Chain

The table above provides a summary of the participants and the characteristics of their respective organizations. Interviews were arranged only after participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured that their identities and responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Due to the limitations on in-person interactions during the lockdown, all interviews were conducted by telephone, offering a safe and feasible method of data collection. A semi-structured interview format was employed to ensure consistency across discussions while allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022).

Appendix: Interview Schedule

(Adapted from Jaiswal & Arun, 2022)

The following questions were used to guide the semi-structured interviews:

- **What significant changes have occurred in your work as a result of the lockdown?**
- **Compared to your usual stress levels, have you experienced increased stress during the lockdown?**
- **How has your productivity been affected since the lockdown began?**
- **How connected do you feel with your colleagues during this period?**
- **Have you taken on any new tasks or responsibilities during the lockdown?**

- Each interview lasted approximately 25–30 minutes and was transcribed within twenty-four hours to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022).

The model was validated using historical data, and a 30-day forecast of the spread was generated for the ten most affected states in India. The findings indicate that the model effectively captures disease dynamics with a high degree of accuracy. Moreover, the projections reveal a sharp increase in cumulative cases and fatalities over the subsequent weeks (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022).

3.9 Data Analysis

Statewise Data

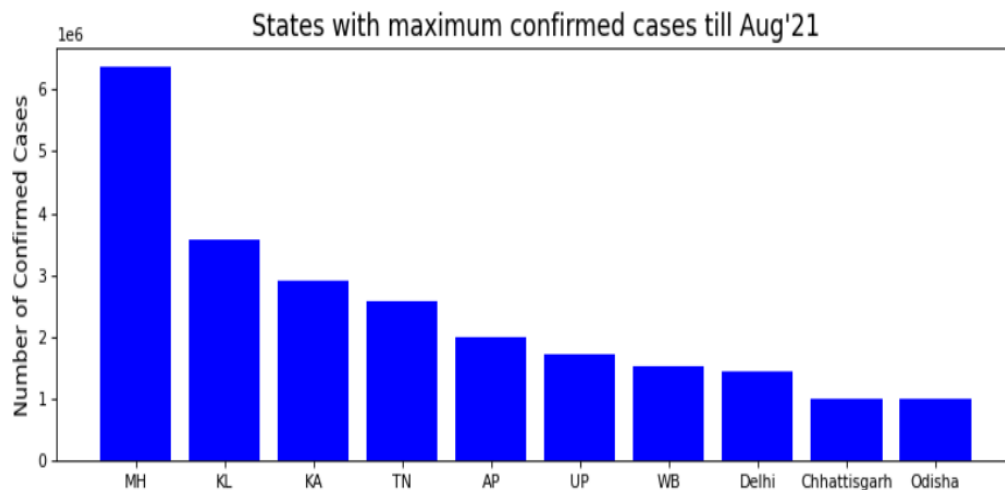


Figure 3.6: The data for the 10 most affected states with Covid-19 in India (Source: Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

The data indicates that Maharashtra recorded the highest number of cases up to August 2021. Further analysis reveals that Mumbai and Pune were the most severely impacted cities within the state. The high population density of Mumbai facilitated rapid transmission of the virus, while Pune's climatic conditions created an environment conducive to the spread of infectious diseases (Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

States	India	Gujarat	Uttar Pradesh	Maharashtra	Delhi	Tamil Nadu
Status	22,500	735	929	5,368	1,379	3,827
Conformed	7,20,346	36858	28636	2,11,987	1,00,823	1,14,978
Active	2,59,926	8574	8718	87682	25620	46836
Status	15,256	423	348	3,522	749	3,793
Recovery	4,40,150	26323	19109	1,15,262	72088	66571
Status	473	17	24	204	48	61
Death	473	17	24	204	48	61
Status	10 M	6.3K	25.9K	22.6K	13.9K	34.8K
Total	138019747	418.5K	890K	1.1 M	657.4K	1.4 M

Table 3.9: India state data statistics (Source: Informatics in Medicine Unlocked, 2021, Vol. 26.).

The table shows that by July 6, 2020, India had documented 720,346 total COVID-19 cases, including 22,510 new cases reported that day. COVID-related deaths totaled 1,704, making up roughly 4% of all active cases. On average, 613 deaths were

recorded daily among 8,944 patients out of 260,022 active cases. During this period, the country carried out 9,969,662 tests from an estimated population of 13 million (Informatics in Medicine Unlocked, 2021).

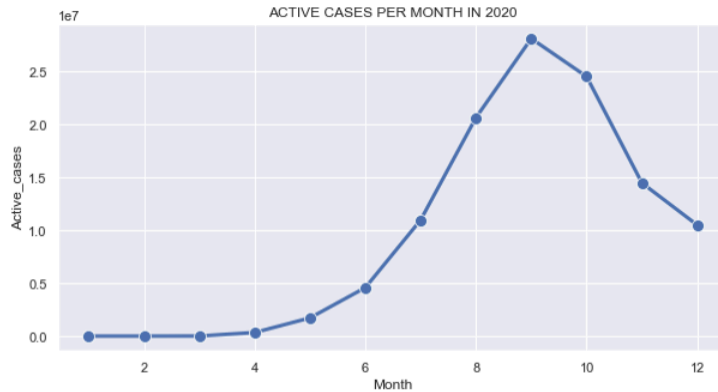


Figure 3.7 : Active cases per month in 2020 (Source : Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

The graph shows that COVID-19 cases in India stayed comparatively low with little increase up to March 2020. Beginning in April, however, cases rose sharply, reaching their highest point around August. The nationwide lockdown imposed during April to August helped reduce the spread, leading to a consistent decline in case numbers from September to December (Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

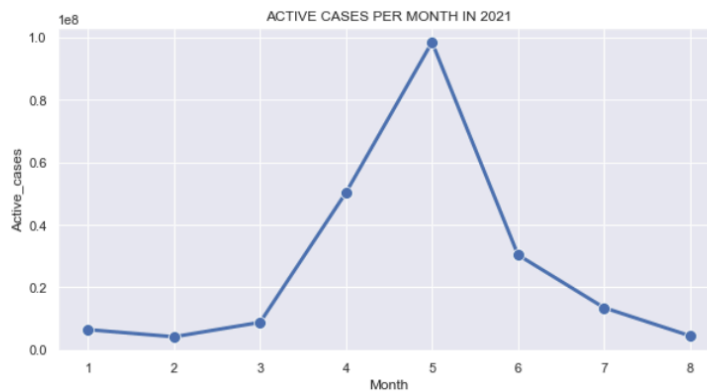


Figure 3.8: Active cases per month in 2021 (Source : Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

The figure shows that active COVID-19 cases remained very low during the first three months. However, in March, the emergence of a new variant triggered a steep rise in infections. From April to August, cases continued to climb steadily, with the second wave being considerably more severe than the first. During this period, the government

intensified its vaccination efforts, and by August, a large share of the population had received at least one dose. This increased vaccination coverage contributed to the marked decline in cases that followed (Analytics Vidhya, 31 March 2022).

3.10. Research Design Limitations

Acknowledging a study's limitations not only strengthens its credibility but also helps guide future inquiry. In this case, the data were collected from a small number of Indian states, which restricts the broader applicability of the findings. Employees' remote work experiences and the resulting effects on engagement, motivation, and productivity can differ widely across regions due to variations in culture, economic conditions, and access to technology. Future studies should include participants from a more diverse range of cities and states to better reflect these differences. For example, employees in major urban areas may encounter challenges that differ from those in rural regions, requiring distinct types of organizational support. Considering such contextual variations is essential for forming a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of how remote work influences employees.

3.11. Conclusion

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, numerous countries, including India, saw a swift increase in infections. The enforcement of strict lockdowns and various public health strategies initially helped curb transmission in several areas. However, the appearance of a new variant during the second wave caused a significant and prolonged rise in cases, overwhelming healthcare systems globally and intensifying the crisis. As vaccination efforts expanded and more people received their doses, the number of active cases gradually began to fall.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

4.1 Research Question One

The first interview question was designed to assess employees' clarity regarding workplace expectations while working from home. This includes their understanding of roles, responsibilities, goals, communication norms, availability, and performance benchmarks. Participants were asked:

“Do you have a clear understanding of what is expected of you while working from home, particularly in terms of goals, communication, availability, and work output? What

expectations do you have from your organization to help you meet these requirements effectively?”

The responses from senior and middle-level managers highlighted their perceptions of expectation clarity, communication processes, and performance standards in remote work settings.

Several senior and middle-level managers reported having a strong sense of their job responsibilities and expected outcomes. They explained that a clear understanding of daily goals enabled them to complete assigned tasks effectively while also dedicating time to personal and professional development. Others emphasized that clarity in responsibilities, coupled with access to essential tools and resources, allowed them to work efficiently and sustain productivity while working remotely. Additionally, managers noted that departmental goals were generally defined by department heads, whereas team-level tasks and deliverables were communicated and monitored by team managers, ensuring a structured flow of expectations.

In contrast, junior and middle-level managers expressed mixed experiences regarding clarity of expectations. Many indicated that their work was heavily shaped by the guidance of their team managers. While this support helped them manage day-to-day tasks, some found that it reduced their autonomy and occasionally created uncertainty about broader expectations. A few participants stated that although they followed managerial instructions closely, overall performance expectations sometimes remained unclear or inconsistent under work-from-home conditions.

4.2 Research Question Two

The second interview question explored whether employees felt adequately equipped with the essential resources such as tools, materials, and technological support needed to perform their work effectively from home. Participants were asked:

“Do you believe you have access to all the necessary tools, resources, and organizational support to perform your job effectively while working from home? If not, what specific forms of additional support would enable you to perform better?”

Responses from senior and middle-level managers indicated that their organizations provided fundamental resources, including laptops, Wi-Fi devices, and SIM cards, which were essential for maintaining productivity in a remote work environment. However, they noted that not all employees received Wi-Fi devices, resulting in periodic connectivity issues. Some emphasized that access to higher-performance laptops would further strengthen efficiency and enable smoother task execution.

Junior middle-level managers highlighted more significant challenges related to technological support. They stressed that dependable IT equipment and stable internet connectivity were critical for effective remote performance. Several reported not receiving the Wi-Fi support they had requested, which hindered their ability to remain connected, communicate effectively, and complete tasks on time. In some cases, employees had to arrange their own internet solutions, expressing frustration that such essential support was delayed or inconsistently distributed. One participant noted that while their colleague received Wi-Fi equipment promptly, they had to escalate the issue repeatedly before ultimately purchasing the equipment independently.

4.3 Research Question Three

The third interview question sought to understand middle-level managers' perceptions of how their individual roles and contributions align with the organization's broader objectives, particularly within the context of remote work. Participants were asked:

“Do you feel that your role and contributions are clearly connected to the organization's overall goals, especially while working remotely?”

Middle-level managers expressed the following views:

One manager emphasized that their role is central to advancing both team development and organizational success in a work-from-home environment. They noted active involvement in decision-making processes and business planning, and recognized that achieving organizational goals depends heavily on the collective engagement and coordinated efforts of all team members.

Another manager highlighted the challenges of handling urgent tasks under tight deadlines set by project managers, explaining that this pressure can lead to errors, increased stress, and a decline in team morale. They underscored the importance of their position in facilitating effective communication and fostering mutual understanding across managerial levels. According to this participant, their role is essential for maintaining cohesion, coordination, and a positive working environment within the team.

4.4 Research Question Four

The fourth question sought to examine whether employees working remotely are given meaningful opportunities to express their views, share suggestions, and participate in organizational discussions. Participants were asked:

“Who in your organization considers your opinions while you work from home? Can you describe when and how your input is acknowledged or valued?”

Senior middle-level managers reported:

They indicated that both their team manager and project manager actively consider their opinions, particularly during policy formulation. For example, their input is especially valued in areas such as developing stock-taking policies.

Junior middle-level managers shared:

According to this group, project managers are generally receptive to team suggestions, and decisions related to business tasks, departmental targets, and organizational planning tend to be aligned with employee performance and productivity. However, they also highlighted challenges: autocratic leadership styles among some team leaders especially during departmental goal-setting often create communication barriers and discourage open dialogue.

Additionally, some participants expressed frustration over being excluded from the goal-setting process for major projects, such as establishing cumulative site targets for microwave and transmission device installations.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The results indicate that senior middle-level managers were provided with adequate organizational support during the work-from-home period, including access to essential IT tools and Wi-Fi devices. In contrast, junior middle-level managers reported insufficient access to such resources particularly Wi-Fi connectivity which negatively affected their engagement, productivity, and overall job performance. As noted by

Shokunbi (2016), the availability of appropriate resources is fundamental to fostering strong employee engagement, emphasizing the need for organizations to equip staff at all hierarchical levels with the tools required to perform effectively.

The findings also highlight a notable disparity in engagement opportunities between senior and junior managers while working remotely. Senior middle-level managers reported higher engagement, largely due to their involvement in decision-making processes and the value placed on their input. Conversely, junior managers expressed that their opinions were often overlooked, contributing to reduced engagement, lower motivation, and diminished morale, which may ultimately hinder their productivity and overall performance.

4.6. Conclusion

Junior and lower-level employees generally carry out tasks based on the directives and procedures established by senior personnel. In cultures characterized by high power distance, hierarchical structures often restrict open communication and limit employees' participation in decision-making. Consequently, junior staff may find it difficult to fully understand their roles and workplace expectations. While upper- and senior-level executives are actively involved in strategic planning and setting departmental goals, junior employees rarely have opportunities to share their perspectives. Their responsibilities are primarily execution-oriented, centered on implementing the instructions and tasks assigned by higher management.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Results

The findings indicate that senior and middle-level managers demonstrated relatively higher levels of engagement, primarily because they had a clearer understanding of organizational expectations, including goals, role responsibilities, and performance criteria. This underscores the importance of role clarity as a key driver of employee engagement; when individuals have a well-defined sense of their duties and the outcomes required at both team and departmental levels, they are more likely to show stronger commitment and active involvement in their work.

In contrast, junior and lower-level managers often experience lower levels of role clarity, as their responsibilities are primarily shaped by task assignments from higher-level supervisors. This dependence on directive leadership can restrict their autonomy and sense of ownership, which may, in turn, lead to reduced involvement in their work and lower overall engagement.

5.2 Discussion of Research Question One

Do you have a clear understanding of what is expected of you while working from home, particularly in terms of goals, communication, availability, and work output? What expectations do you have from your organization to help you meet these requirements effectively?

Understanding workplace expectations including target goals, assigned tasks, communication norms, and performance standards is a critical determinant of employee

engagement. The findings indicate that senior and middle-level employees generally possess a clear understanding of their responsibilities, both individually and at the team level. This role clarity enables them to stay focused on task completion, maintain deadlines, and contribute meaningfully to departmental and organizational objectives. As Interviewee 2 noted, consistent monitoring and reporting of completed tasks form a key part of their responsibilities. Clear and well-defined roles also strengthen collaboration, as employees understand how their contributions align with broader organizational goals. Such transparency not only improves teamwork but also promotes a sense of shared accountability and collective achievement.

Kalshoven et al. (2011) emphasize that insufficient clarity regarding job roles and task expectations can significantly diminish employee engagement.

This is evident among junior managers in the present study, who often view themselves as task executors rather than valued contributors especially when assignments lack clear goals or defined outcomes. Tasks are frequently delegated by team managers and carried out strictly according to instructions, limiting autonomy and contextual understanding. Consequently, junior managers may struggle to see how their efforts contribute to wider team or organizational objectives, leading to disengagement.

In contrast, senior managers benefit from a broader understanding of their roles and expected outcomes, which strengthens their sense of purpose and enhances engagement. The absence of such clarity among junior managers highlights the need for improved communication from team managers particularly the articulation of both immediate task

objectives and long-term departmental goals. Providing this clarity would enable junior managers to better understand the significance and impact of their work.

Overall, the findings reveal a gap in the literature concerning the importance of outcome-based role clarity for junior managers, especially within remote work environments.

5.3. Discussion of Research Question Two

Do you believe you have access to all the necessary tools, resources, and organizational support to perform your job effectively while working from home? If not, what specific forms of additional support would enable you to perform better?

Providing employees with adequate tools, equipment, and organizational support is a fundamental requirement for sustaining engagement, particularly in remote work environments. The findings indicate that the telecom organization supplied essential technological resources such as laptops, Wi-Fi devices, and SIM cards with unlimited data to enable employees to perform their tasks effectively while working from home. However, the distribution of these resources was inconsistent across departments, resulting in notable disparities in employee engagement and productivity.

For instance, employees in the IT and Technology Strategy departments received organizational Wi-Fi devices, whereas those in the Admin and Finance departments did not. Staff in these unsupported departments were required to rely on personal resources to secure stable internet access, which created a sense of inequity and operational strain. This disparity was especially evident among junior middle-level managers, whose engagement levels were negatively affected by the lack of reliable organizational support.

The absence of essential resources such as adequate internet connectivity or proper equipment, not only impedes employees' ability to carry out their responsibilities but also hinders collaboration with colleagues, often leading to disengagement. Reliable internet access is particularly critical for remote coordination, task completion, and meeting performance expectations. Junior managers, who frequently must procure and finance their own internet solutions, expressed higher levels of frustration and disengagement due to insufficient institutional support.

Conversely, senior managers who were adequately equipped with necessary technological resources reported higher engagement levels. This contrast underscores the significant role resource accessibility plays in shaping employee engagement. Ensuring that materials and equipment are provided consistently and equitably across all departments is therefore essential for enhancing productivity, fostering motivation, and supporting effective remote work performance.

5.4. Discussion of Research Question Three

Do you feel that your role and contributions are clearly connected to the organization's overall goals, especially while working remotely?

Engaged employees typically view their roles as meaningful and impactful, owing to a clear understanding of how their contributions support the organization's broader mission, vision, and strategic objectives. The findings indicate that both senior and middle-level managers demonstrate strong motivation to participate in departmental and team development initiatives, reflecting their commitment to continuous improvement and achieving organizational goals. Middle-level managers, in particular, play a crucial

role in guiding subordinates, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring alignment between team efforts and organizational priorities.

While junior middle-level managers are similarly motivated to contribute, they often face heightened stress due to the urgency of tasks and the tight deadlines imposed by project managers. This increased pressure raises the likelihood of errors, which can, in turn, undermine both their productivity and their overall engagement. These challenges highlight the need for supportive structures and clear communication to enable junior managers to perform effectively and remain meaningfully connected to organizational objectives.

5.5. Discussion of Research Question Four

Who in your organization takes your opinions into account while you work from home? Can you describe when and how your input is sought or valued?

Employees typically demonstrate higher levels of engagement when their opinions and suggestions are acknowledged and integrated into organizational decision-making processes. In the context of remote work, team and project managers actively involve senior and middle-level managers in discussions related to policy formulation and strategic planning. By leveraging their practical, experience-based insights, leaders ensure that decisions are both informed and operationally relevant.

Senior-level interviewees reported feeling valued and appreciated due to the consistent recognition and incorporation of their perspectives. This sense of appreciation enhances their psychological empowerment and reinforces their alignment with the organization's core values and strategic objectives. Contributing their ideas during

one-on-one discussions and team meetings enables them to foster a collaborative environment characterized by open communication and collective problem-solving. Such practices strengthen their engagement and long-term commitment to the organization.

Conversely, junior and some middle-level managers often face significant challenges in expressing their views, particularly during departmental goal-setting activities—for example, establishing cumulative site installation targets. Their participation is heavily influenced by the leadership style of their supervisors. When team managers adopt an autocratic leadership approach, directives outweigh dialogue, limiting opportunities for collaborative engagement and reducing employees' sense of inclusion. As a result, these managers may feel marginalized during critical discussions.

Junior managers in this study expressed frustration over the limited value placed on their expertise and experience. The exclusion from meaningful decision-making can diminish their motivation, weaken their commitment to team objectives, and hinder their contributions to innovative ideas or process improvements. Over time, such disengagement rooted in feeling unheard or undervalued may also contribute to increased turnover intentions among junior middle-level managers.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted business operations and accelerated major shifts in organizational structures and work practices. These shifts included the rise of innovative business models, rapid adoption of advanced technologies, and widespread use of agile work methods. While these developments had already begun before the pandemic, COVID-19 acted as a catalyst, heightening the need for organizations to design strategies centered on human experience. A human-focused approach enhances organizational resilience, supports sustainable change, and strengthens long-term competitiveness in an increasingly complex environment.

The insights gained from the pandemic about employee engagement and emotional connection hold the potential to reshape workplace dynamics. By cultivating a culture of trust, collaboration, and well-being, organizations can build a more resilient and engaged workforce. Such an environment not only boosts employee satisfaction and productivity but also enhances organizational flexibility and long-term success in the post-pandemic era. Prioritizing these elements contributes to a sustainable workplace culture where employees feel meaningfully connected to their roles, their colleagues, and the organization's overall mission and purpose.

6.2 Implications

Effective crisis management requires a unified approach in which all internal stakeholders contribute to the organization's stability and recovery. Leaders provide

strategic direction, managers act decisively to implement plans, and employees execute their responsibilities with commitment and adaptability.

Careful planning by leaders, timely decision-making by managers, and efficient task execution by employees are crucial organizational capabilities during crises. To reduce the stress and isolation associated with remote work, managers must focus on building genuine, empathetic relationships, offering flexible work options, and nurturing a culture of trust. These practices help create a healthier and more supportive remote work environment. Additionally, fostering a broader culture of care and connection strengthens employee well-being and enables organizations to harness the full potential of their workforce, even in uncertain times.

To support well-being and maintain engagement in changing work environments, organizations should invest in initiatives such as mental health support, training in digital collaboration tools, and flexible work policies. These investments are long-term strategies aimed at developing a resilient, engaged workforce not merely operational costs. Leaders must also demonstrate their commitment to employee welfare through consistent communication, transparent updates on organizational plans, and reminders about available support systems.

Strong leadership requires making informed decisions despite uncertainty, adapting quickly, and being ready to adjust strategies as conditions evolve. Likewise, employees need to manage their responsibilities independently scheduling their work, prioritizing tasks, and seeking necessary resources. A growth mindset is increasingly essential as

remote work practices evolve and new technologies emerge, requiring employees to continuously upskill and adapt.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for organizations to redesign engagement strategies to sustain motivation and performance during disruption. By implementing virtual engagement practices, leveraging technology for effective communication, and cultivating a positive remote work culture, organizations can preserve high levels of motivation and commitment. Ultimately, addressing the core drivers of engagement clear communication, trust, recognition, and well-being is vital for building a productive, resilient, and engaged workforce in the post-pandemic workplace.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation to Managers and Organizations

The organization should adopt engagement strategies that actively involve employees at all hierarchical levels especially junior and middle-level managers within remote work environments.

A central component of these strategies is the clear articulation of job roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes at both departmental and team levels. When employees have a clear understanding of their roles and how their contributions align with the organization's broader objectives, they are more likely to remain motivated and engaged. Such clarity not only mitigates ambiguity and work-related stress but also fosters accountability, collaboration, and a stronger sense of purpose among employees working from home.

Organizations that provide employees with adequate physical resources help enhance engagement and enable them to complete their tasks more effectively.

Ensuring employee engagement during work-from-home arrangements requires not only clear communication of expectations but also strong support through the provision of essential resources. To reduce the risk of disengagement among junior and middle-level managers, leaders should articulate desired outcomes clearly when assigning tasks, helping employees understand both their individual responsibilities and their contributions to broader organizational goals. Additionally, addressing gaps in resource allocation such as ensuring reliable internet connectivity and providing high-quality equipment can significantly enhance productivity, reduce frustration, and promote greater job satisfaction and commitment.

Recommendation to literature

Ensuring that employees have access to essential materials and equipment that support their basic work requirements not only motivates them to complete tasks efficiently but also enhances their satisfaction with the organization and fosters higher levels of engagement.

To foster engagement during work-from-home arrangements, organizations must ensure that employees' basic needs are met by providing adequate materials and equipment. When such resources are lacking, employees may experience dissatisfaction and face difficulties in completing their work, which in turn undermines their engagement.

Therefore, organizations must provide fundamental devices and resources during work-from-home arrangements to strengthen employee engagement. Additionally, learning and development programs should be aligned with employees' personal growth and career aspirations, ensuring that professional development supports both individual fulfillment and the organization's long-term success. Therefore, organizations should design training programs that address employees' professional development needs by aligning with their job roles and enhancing their skills. The provision of encouragement and developmental opportunities is positively correlated with elevated levels of employee engagement, as such practices enhance perceived competence and foster greater organizational commitment. Employee engagement increases when individuals are encouraged to pursue both personal and professional growth. The literature defines recognition as a form of positive feedback that acknowledges and values employees' achievements. Such recognition not only reflects appreciation for their contributions but also reinforces motivation and commitment by providing affirming feedback on their performance. Providing recognition for an employee's progress is essential for maintaining engagement and motivation. Acknowledging not only final achievements but also incremental improvements reinforce a sense of accomplishment and encourages continuous effort. Such recognition reinforces employees' sense of value and support, creating a positive work atmosphere that encourages proactive behavior, effective collaboration, and sustained commitment to organizational objectives. Consistent and meaningful recognition of employee progress not only strengthens morale and enhances

job satisfaction but also contributes to improved individual performance and overall organizational effectiveness.

The findings indicate that recognition from senior leaders especially project and team managers is generally provided in two situations: when employees deliver successful outcomes and when they meet targets within the specified timelines. Employees who consistently fulfill these conditions tend to exhibit stronger engagement, thereby contributing significantly to operational efficiency and the broader success of the organization.

Middle-level managers are pivotal in accomplishing departmental and team objectives by actively engaging with their subordinates. Promoting collaboration through information sharing and idea exchange helps cultivate engagement and supports the development of a productive work environment.

Middle-level managers and associates have adopted supportive practices to achieve better outcomes despite the challenges of remote work, including limited face-to-face interaction. These practices include maintaining regular virtual check-ins to ensure alignment, fostering open communication to address issues promptly, and providing both emotional and technical support to team members. By cultivating a collaborative online environment, they help reduce feelings of isolation and promote efficient task completion, thereby sustaining engagement and productivity.

During remote work, support and care from team members are critical for enhancing employee engagement. Collaborative practices, such as sharing ideas and solving problems together, foster a sense of community and teamwork, even in a virtual

setting. This exchange not only helps employees navigate work-related challenges but also reinforces a supportive environment, making them feel valued and connected to their teams. Such collaborative practices enhance employee motivation and contribute to creating a more cohesive, engaging, and productive remote work setting.

6.4 Conclusion

Keeping employees engaged in a virtual workplace is a significant challenge, as traditional opportunities for social interaction and team bonding are limited. The absence of in-person engagement, team gatherings, and developmental activities can make work feel repetitive and uninspiring, leading to decreased motivation and creativity. Consequently, remote work settings require creative approaches to maintain employee motivation and cultivate a strong sense of community. Creative initiatives such as virtual team-building activities, online celebrations, and interactive sessions have become increasingly important for maintaining a strong organizational culture and promoting collaboration in dispersed teams. Furthermore, emphasizing continuous skill development and offering opportunities for personal and professional growth contribute to sustained employee engagement and long-term organizational commitment.

The study seeks to evaluate how online employee engagement initiatives influence motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among IT sector employees working from home. Considering the challenges of remote work, it investigates how virtual engagement strategies are employed to create a supportive and interactive environment, helping employees sustain a sense of connection, belonging, and commitment despite being physically separated from the traditional workplace. The

research underscores the importance of tailored engagement strategies, particularly in a technology-driven sector where employees are accustomed to dynamic and fast-paced work environments.

The data indicate that, despite efforts to implement various online engagement activities during the pandemic, employee engagement levels in the IT sector remained relatively low. While virtual initiatives such as interactive sessions, online games, and video call celebrations provided some sense of connection, they were insufficient to fully replicate the engagement levels typically experienced in physical workplaces.

Employee engagement has become a critical element in navigating the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. With widespread lockdowns and a rapid shift to remote work, organizations have come to understand that fostering engagement is vital for maintaining performance and ensuring long-term organizational success. Engaged employees tend to remain motivated, satisfied, and committed even during periods of crisis, thereby enhancing organizational resilience, adaptability, and overall productivity. Consequently, businesses must prioritize strategies that foster engagement, address employee needs, and maintain a positive work culture, ensuring that their workforce continues to serve as a strong pillar of support throughout the pandemic and beyond.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY COVER LETTER

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Effect Of Knowledge Sharing On The Relationship Between Employee Engagement And Organizational Performance

❖ Gender Male ☐ Female ☐	❖ Marital status Single ☐ Married ☐
❖ Age 20 to 30 years ☐ 31 to 40 years ☐ 41 to 50 years ☐ 51 to 60 years ☐	❖ What is your qualification? Bachelors ☐ Masters ☐ PHD ☐ Others ☐
❖ Current position in your organization? Information Technology Specialist ☐ Technical Support ☐ Solutions Architect ☐ Entry Level Field Tech Rep ☐	❖ How long have you been working with this organization? Less than 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-6 years ☐ More than 6 years ☐

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using the 5-point scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Employee Engagement						
1.	My current role allows me to apply my strongest skills on a daily basis.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My supervisor and colleagues show genuine concern for my well-being at work.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My organization motivates me to exceed my expectation.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I take pride in being a part of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The organization's systems and processes enable me to perform my job efficiently and effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge Sharing						
6.	I can rely on my colleagues for support when I face challenges at work..	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4		5		
7.	My organization actively discourages inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour in the workplace.		1	2	3	4	5
8.	Knowledge sharing not only enhances the collective expertise of a team but also strengthens interpersonal relationships.		1	2	3	4	5
9.	Openness to sharing knowledge among employees enhances collaboration, productivity, and innovation within the organization.		1	2	3	4	5
10.	I am always willing to share my knowledge when requested by colleagues or other members of the organization.		1	2	3	4	5
Organizational Performance							
11.	My organization provides a positive environment that encourages creativity and innovation, making my work motivating and fulfilling.		1	2	3	4	5
12.	Employees are willing to go the extra mile to achieve the goals and objectives of the company.		1	2	3	4	5
13.	Compared to competitors, there is low absenteeism and turnover in my organization.		1	2	3	4	5
14	Company offers growth opportunities, training, and development to the employees in my organization.		1	2	3	4	5
15.	Customer service challenges have negatively affected my organization's reputation among clients.		1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID 19

I, Winifred Fernandes agree to be interviewed for the research which will be conducted _____ as doctorate students at the Swiss School of Business and Management, Geneva, Switzerland.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this research and the anonymity of my participation; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning research procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the research or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more electronically recorded interviews for this research. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous and that the results of this study may be published in any form that may serve its best.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

.....
Signature of Interviewee

.....
Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Candidate's Name:	Interview date:
Interviewer's Name:	Job title:

The Interview Process:

- (Before the interview) Provide all the information needed for the interview, include the location/software link and instructions, time and duration, attire, interviewer/s
- Welcome the Applicant
Introduce yourself and make them feel comfortable

- Provide an Overview of the Role and the Company. Outline any particulars about the role requirements.
- Ask the Interview Questions – See section below.
- Invite the Applicant to ask questions.
- If the candidate shows potential, promote the company and the position by highlighting its vision, mission, and long-term objectives, helping the candidate understand how they can contribute and develop within the organization.
- Thank the Applicant and outline next steps. Provide specific time frames for when the applicant can expect to hear back from the company.

Interview Questions:

Introduction:

Question	Notes
Provide a brief introduction, including relevant personal and professional details.	
How did you hear about our job opening?	
What interests you about this position?	
Do you have any friends or close relatives working with the company?	
What is your greatest professional achievement?	
What type of work environment do you prefer?	
What qualifications or expertise do you bring that make you a good fit for this position?	
Question	Notes
What have you learned about our company that makes you interested in working here?	
Why do you want to work for our company?	
Why are you leaving your current position?	
What positions have you held in the past?	
What are your goals for the future?	
Do you prefer working independently or as part of a team?	
What is your experience and proficiency in performing the tasks associated with this role?	

Motivation

Reflection and Scenarios

Question	Notes
What are your strengths and weaknesses?	
Why do you believe you are the best fit for this role compared to other candidates?	
What specific skills do you possess that align with the requirements of this position?	
When faced with tight deadlines or challenging situations, how do you maintain performance and manage stress?	
How would you approach a difficult situation? Can you provide an example of a time you successfully managed a challenging scenario?	
When managing multiple projects simultaneously, how do you stay organized and ensure deadlines are met?	
How do you handle conflicts that arise in your job role?	
Question	Notes
What is your earliest availability to join the organization if selected for this role?	
Do you have any constraints that would prevent you from working beyond standard hours occasionally?	
Considering the responsibilities of this position, what is your expected remuneration?	

Expectations

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