



**T.C.
HALIÇ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT MASTER'S THESIS
PROGRAMME**

MOTIVATING AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES IN THE POST-COVID ERA

MASTER'S THESIS

**By
Niama ADEL**

**Thesis Advisor:
Assist Prof. Dr. Melih ATALAY**

**İSTANBUL
October 2024**



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THESIS ETHICS STATEMENT

I hereby declare that, under the guidance of my advisor Dr. Melih Atalay, I finished my master's thesis, which was titled "Motivating and Retaining Employees in the Post-COVID Era." I attest that I personally gathered all of the information and examples used in this study, carried out the analyses using the proper techniques, and correctly referenced and cited all data that I acquired from other sources. I also affirm that I have followed ethical and scientific research guidelines at every stage of the investigation, and I take full responsibility for any repercussions that may arise from any transgression of these guidelines.

Niama ADEL

PREFACE

With immense pleasure, I, NIAMA ADEL, present to you this thesis project. My heartfelt thanks to my supervisor Dr. Melih ATALAY for his invaluable guidance throughout the course of the thesis and whose encouragement, insights, and assistance played a pivotal role in motivating me to work harder and shaping the content of this report.

I want to express my deep appreciation to my mom, Maria Ksiks, who always believed in me and motivated me through the tough times, to my dad Fouad Adel, for his unwavering support and to my sister Oumaima Adel for always giving me valuable advice based on her respectable experience and finally to my deceased grandmother Naima Ouarzazi, the greatest woman and mother of our family.

October 2024

.. Niama ADEL

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ÖZET

COVID SONRASI ÇALIŞANLARI MOTİVE ETMEK VE ELDE TUTUMAK

Bu araştırma, modern insan kaynakları yönetiminde çalışan bağlılığının kritik rolünü analiz etmektedir. Özellikle COVID-19 sonrası dönemde. Çalışan motivasyonunun ihmal edilmesinin olumsuz etkilerine dair kişisel gözlemlerden yola çıkarak bu konu detaylı inceleme için seçildi. Çalışma aşağıdaki gibi temel kavramları kapsamaktadır: tutma ve devir. Çalışanların kurumdan ayrılma veya kurumda kalma kararlarını etkileyen faktörlerin derinlemesine araştırılması. Aynı zamanda etkili elde tutma stratejilerinin uygulanmasında yönetimin rolünü de araştırır.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, çalışan bağlılığının örgütlerdeki önemli etkisini vurgulamaktır. Çeşitli kaynaklardan elde edilen niceliksel verilerden yararlanılması. OECD'nin "COVID-19 Sırasında ve Sonrası Üretkenlik İçin Tele Çalışmanın Rolü" raporunun yanı sıra kapsamlı anket ve çalışmaları da içeren araştırma, çalışan bağlılığı, sadakati ve elde tutma stratejilerini inceliyor.

Temel bulgular, pandemi sırasında artan iş yükü stresi, uzaktan çalışma yorgunluğu ve tanınma eksikliği nedeniyle katılımcıların önemli bir kısmının motivasyonunun azaldığını gösteriyor. Bunun tersine, bazı katılımcılar motivasyonun arttığını bildirdi. Bu, artan sorumluluk duygusundan kaynaklanıyordu. Çalışma, dirençli işgücünün geliştirilmesinde stratejik İK müdahalelerinin önemini altını çiziyor. Uygulanabilir öneriler sunar. Bu öneriler çalışanların motivasyonunu korur ve benzeri görülmemiş zorluklara karşı kurumsal dayanıklılığı güçlendirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çalışan Katılımı, İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Çalışan Tutma Stratejileri, Esnek Çalışma Düzenlemeleri.*

ABSTRACT

MOTIVATING AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES IN THE POST-COVID ERA

This research analyzes the critical role of employee engagement within modern human resources management. Particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. Motivated by personal observations of negative effects of neglecting employee motivation, this topic was chosen for detailed examination. The study encompasses key concepts such as retention and turnover. Alongside an in-depth exploration of factors influencing employees' decisions to either leave or remain with organization. It also investigates the role of management in implementing effective retention strategies.

The aim of this research is to emphasize the considerable influence of employee commitment within organizations. Utilizing quantitative data from various sources. Including the OECD report "The Role of Telework for Productivity during and post-COVID-19" as well as comprehensive surveys and studies, the research examines employee engagement loyalty and retention strategies.

Key findings indicate significant portion of respondent's experienced decreased motivation due to increased workload stress, remote work fatigue and lack of recognition during the pandemic. Conversely some respondents reported increased motivation. This was driven by a heightened sense of responsibility. The study underscores the importance of strategic HR interventions in fostering resilient workforce. It offers actionable recommendations. These recommendations sustain employee motivation and strengthen organizational resilience amidst unprecedented challenges.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Human Resources Management, Employee Commitment, Retention Strategies, Flexible Work Arrangements.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Quotes:

“The two most important things don’t appear on the company’s balance sheet: its reputation and its people.”

Henry Ford

"If you take care of your employees, they will take care of your business."

Richard Branson

1.1. Background

In a challenging economic context marked by a loss of motivation and productivity, it is crucial to optimize human resources management by implementing various innovative means and solutions to retain employees. Indeed, the true wealth of an organization lies in its human resources, as an old Tunisian saying goes, **"the difference between a desert and a garden is not water, but Man."** It is the people, their enthusiasm, motivation, skills, and creativity that distinguish a successful company from one failing. While recruiting qualified individuals is an important step in human resources management, it is merely the visible part of the iceberg. Retaining and motivating them represent a major challenge for companies today.

In the past, business leaders believed offering financial rewards was key to motivating employees. However, the worldwide pandemic has caused a significant shift. Companies now reevaluate old approaches to employee motivation and retention. The rise of remote work has introduced a new work setting. Keeping a motivated and loyal workforce has become more difficult. As we transition into the post-COVID world understanding how to inspire employees is essential for the vitality and prosperity of any organization

Today, companies are experiencing a significant turnover rate, especially post-COVID crisis, constituting a major problem that can lead to significant financial losses. Additionally, employees engage in behaviours that hinder the company's growth. For instance, absenteeism is an important concern, impacting both the overall workplace vibe and the company's public image.

Demotivated employees reflect organizational and communication issues that should be identified and resolved to prevent the negative consequences that comes along. Employee motivation is, therefore, an economic factor that should not be neglected, as employees not only impact the profitability and sustainability of the company but also influence customer satisfaction which directly correlates to the profit.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, companies are facing difficulties in keeping employees motivated and retaining them. Changes in work patterns, shifts in employee preferences, and variations across different generations add complexity to the task of fostering a motivated and committed workforce. Overcoming these challenges is crucial for organizations aiming to adjust to the changing workplace environment and hold on to their most valuable employees.

1.3. The Study's Objectives

- **Gain insights into how COVID-19** changed employee motivation: We will delve into the effects of remote work, cultural changes, and leadership on the motivation of employees both during and after the pandemic.
- **Propose successful approaches for motivation and retention:** We will offer practical recommendations for establishing a nurturing work atmosphere, enhancing remote work guidelines, and ensuring continued employee engagement in the aftermath of COVID-19.

1.4. Research Questions

This study had 3 research questions:

- What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee motivation?
- What challenges do employees face in adapting to the post-COVID work environment?
- What are the contemporary strategies HR can use to motivate and retain employee's post-COVID-19 pandemic?

1.5. Importance of the Study

The study's profound significance becomes apparent as organizations struggle to adjust to the dynamic post-COVID work environment. The results aim to provide more than just insights but also to provide actionable recommendations for sustaining a motivated and loyal workforce in the face of unprecedented challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of Motivation and Employee Retention

Motivation

The word motivation comes from the Latin word *movere*, which translates to move (**Kretiner, 1998**).

Motivation involves the cognitive processes that encourage, lead, and maintain purposeful actions aimed at achieving goals (**Mitchell, 1982**, p.81).

Robbins (1993) suggests that motivation entails dedicating significant effort to reach organizational objectives, fueled by the hope that this effort will fulfill individual needs. In this situation, a need is an inner condition that causes specific results to appear attractive. An unresolved need leads to tension that triggers inner motivations in the person. These urges eventually result in the striving for specific goals that, when achieved, will alleviate stress and pressure (**Robbins, 1993**).

The suggestion is that driven workers feel tension and, to relieve it, they work hard. The more tension there is, the more effort is required. Although motivational theorists may have varying opinions on where energy comes from and the specific desires being sought, the majority agree that motivation requires a readiness to take action, the capability to act, and a definite goal. Multiple motivation theories are present, with the author focusing on the pertinent ones and exploring their potential effects on employee dedication in a company.

What are the Theories of Motivation?

Maslow's Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs suggests that individuals strive for self-actualization by fulfilling basic needs such as physical, security, affection,

recognition, and self-fulfillment. According to Stephen (2000), managers can motivate their employees by addressing unmet needs, as proposed by **Kreitner (1998)**.

Abraham Maslow posits that individuals are motivated when all their needs are satisfied. Beyond security and money, people are primarily driven by the desire to contribute and utilize their skills. Maslow's pyramid illustrates that individuals must address lower-level needs before focusing on higher-level needs. Until basic needs are met, individuals are not motivated to pursue higher-level goals.

The hierarchy of needs consists of several levels:

- **Basic physiological needs** like air, sleep, food, water, clothing, sex, and shelter that are crucial for survival.
- **Safety needs** involve protection from danger, deprivation, and various risks like health, job stability, and property.
- **Social needs** encompass a sense of belonging, love, friendship, and connection with others.
- Self-esteem needs involve the desire for respect and recognition.
- **Self-actualization needs** provide opportunities for personal growth, learning, and engaging in meaningful, creative, or challenging work. Self-actualization represents the highest level of human aspirations.

A leader should recognize the current level of needs of team members and support them in fulfilling those needs to improve performance and progress in the project. Getting a PMP certification can help in understanding this concept better. When team members' needs are met, their performance will enhance until they start aiming to fulfill the next higher level of need in the hierarchy.

The PMP certification is an internationally recognized credential in project management that evaluates a candidate's capability in handling the people, processes, and business objectives of a professional project.

In 1970, Maslow updated his theory to include two additional higher needs. Aesthetic needs involve the desire for beauty and balance in life, while cognitive needs are focused on acquiring knowledge and understanding its origins. These cognitive needs are important in relation to motivating and training employees.

Frederick Herzberg, who had a close connection with Maslow, proposed a two-factor theory of motivation. He suggested that businesses should introduce motivators to encourage employees to work harder, while also addressing certain hygiene factors that can demotivate employees. These hygiene factors are associated with the job itself, regardless of how engaging or rewarding the work may be.

Herzberg's two-factor theory includes motivators and hygiene factors, which impact employee motivation and satisfaction. Additionally, McGregor introduced Theory X and Theory Y in his book, "The Human Side of Enterprise," to describe contrasting management styles - authoritarian (Theory X) and participative (Theory Y).

Theory X describes an authoritarian management approach where employees are motivated by fear of punishment. Managers following Theory X believe that their team members dislike their work, lack motivation, need constant supervision, avoid responsibility, and try to avoid work whenever possible. As a result, managers using Theory X closely monitor and control their employees' tasks to ensure they are completed properly.

On the other hand, Theory Y suggests that employees who work independently, take pride in their tasks, see challenges positively, and strive for personal growth can effectively manage themselves. Managers who embrace Theory Y use a participative management style, allowing employees to take ownership of their work and direct their efforts independently. This approach promotes self-direction among employees to achieve organizational goals.

McClelland's theory of needs identifies three main motivators: affiliation, authority, and achievement. Individuals driven by the need for achievement aim for personal excellence, while those motivated by authority seek influence over others. The need for affiliation reflects a desire for social connections. Successful people often exhibit traits related to these needs, according to **Kreitner (1998)**.

The three motivators identified by McClelland are as follows:

1. Achievement: This relates to the desire to complete tasks and showcase one's abilities. Those with a strong need for attainment are drawn to activities where they can take on personal responsibility and see results from their own endeavors. They also appreciate receiving timely recognition for their achievements.

2. Affiliation: This relates to the need for love, belonging, and social approval. Those with a high need for connection are motivated by a desire to be well-liked and accepted by others. They often participate in social events and may feel uncomfortable in situations involving conflict.

3. Power: This involves the need for control over one's own work or the work of others. Individuals with a strong need for authority seek opportunities where they can exert power and influence over others. They aim for positions that come with status and leadership, prioritizing their level of influence over simply getting the job done effectively.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory highlights that an individual's motivation is determined by their expectations for the future. This theory consists of three key components:

- **Expectancy:** This involves the belief that an increase in effort will lead to improved performance, indicating that hard work will result in better outcomes. Factors influencing this include adequate resources, managerial support, and necessary skills.

- **Instrumentality:** This aspect centers on the belief that good performance will result in favorable outcomes. Factors affecting this include understanding the connection between performance and rewards, trust in decision-makers, and transparency in the reward system.

- **Valence:** This refers to the importance an individual places on expected outcomes. For example, someone driven by financial rewards may not value offers of additional time off.

Motivation is calculated by multiplying V (Expectancy), I (Instrumentality), and E (Valence). These elements play a crucial role in decision-making and are clearly defined through two main components:

- **E>P expectancy:** The likelihood that efforts will lead to the desired level of performance.

- **P>O expectancy:** The probability that successful performance will result in specific outcomes.

Outcomes are influenced by the concept of fairness in **Equity theory**, which was developed by **J.S. Adams**. This theory recognizes that individuals are concerned about the balance between what they put into a situation and what they get out of it. When there is inequity, it can lead to tension and drive actions to restore fairness, as explained by hope theory (**Robbins, 1993**).

Expectancy theory suggests that motivation is driven by the belief that effort will result in timely performance and outcomes. Vroom's model adds to this by highlighting the importance of values, instrumentality, and expectations in determining motivation. Porter and Lawler's extension of this theory incorporates factors like effort-performance links, ability, role perceptions, and rewards to predict job satisfaction.

The Job Characteristics Model, proposed by Hackman, Oldham, and their colleagues, identifies job characteristics that contribute to intrinsic motivation. These characteristics include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, which create psychological states that are important for motivating individuals.

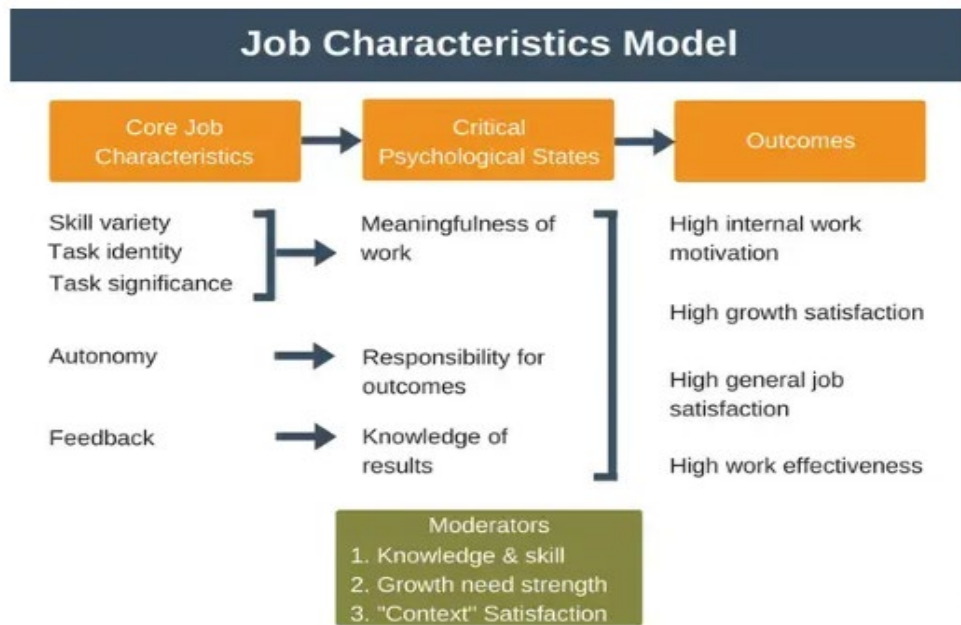


Figure 2.1. Hackman and Oldham Define The Five Job Characteristics As

1. Skill Variety

Skill variety indicates how much a job requires different tasks and utilizes various skills of the employee. A repetitive job with the same tasks does not allow for the utilization of different talents. Conversely, a job with diverse tasks can lead to higher job satisfaction and motivation.

2. Task Identity

Task identity refers to how much a job involves a complete process or product. This means that the job allows the employee to work on a task from start to finish, rather than focusing on small parts. Employees appreciate the chance to work on a whole process as it enhances their sense of involvement and responsibility in their work.

3. Task Significance

Task significance is a measurement of how a job impacts the lives of others within the organization and society as a whole. Recognizing the value of one's work is essential for motivating employees. When employees can see how their work positively impacts others in various aspects like physical, financial, psychological, it boosts their motivation and job satisfaction.

4. Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the level of independence an employee has in their job. It allows them to plan their workday and create new procedures that need to be followed. Having autonomy in their job increases the sense of responsibility and ownership, leading to enhanced motivation. Autonomy is not just for managerial or high-level positions; employees at all levels can benefit from a sense of autonomy and responsibility by being given the freedom to make decisions and take ownership of their work.

5. Feedback

Assessing the performance of employees is essential to ensure they understand the impact of their work. Giving feedback can greatly increase their motivation. When managers recognize employees' successes, it inspires them to continue excelling. On the other hand, if they receive feedback about areas needing improvement, they are more likely to make changes to improve their performance.

The Effects of both Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The effects of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation vary greatly depending on the particular work environment and can be achieved through rewards from outside sources or internal fulfillment. Employee intrinsic motivation tends to decline in companies that rely primarily on financial incentives. Conversely, businesses that prioritize providing verbal acknowledgement and constructive criticism tend to increase their employees' intrinsic motivation (**Mak and Sockel, 2001**). Job security, task importance, constructive criticism, job variety, autonomy, and the ability to keep employees within an organization are all crucial internal task motivators. On the other hand, external motivators such as opportunities for advancement and positive working relationships significantly increase employee cooperation (**Lin, 2007**).

The Concept of Intrinsic Motivation

In today's competitive labor market, intrinsic motivation is very essential. Over time, there has been a need for society to be provided with intrinsic rewards in order to keep individuals motivated and performing effectively (**Thomas, 2000**). Traditionally, management has focused on offering external rewards such as pay,

benefits, and status. However, this is no longer enough. Now, intrinsic rewards—those that come directly from the work itself, such as technical excellence producing customer satisfaction or making a positive impact on customers—can make employees feel satisfied with what they do at work, thus increasing their productivity and efficiency.

Employee Retention

Retaining employees is the practice of implementing strategies to prevent employees from leaving a company. It is essential to maintain a high retention rate to avoid the costs and negative impact on team morale associated with high employee turnover. Effective methods for retaining employees include offering competitive benefits, promoting a positive work environment, and providing opportunities for professional development (**Fitz-enz, 1990**).

According to Fitz-enz (1990), employee commitment and retention are influenced by a variety of factors rather than a single issue. These factors may include growth opportunities, supportive supervision, job stress, relationships with coworkers, compensation, recognition, challenging assignments, promotion prospects, organizational culture, work environment, work-life balance, effective communication, and supervision

. Ghapanchi and Aurum (2011) highlight the importance of factors like pay, training opportunities, fair treatment, and organizational culture in retaining employees.

Allen and Shanock (2013) stress the significance of social connections with colleagues, while **Andrews and Wan (2009)** emphasize the role of management style and leadership in improving an organization's ability to retain employees. Additionally, **Loan-Clarke et al. (2010)** found that autonomy, flexible work schedules, and social support contribute to longer employee retention.

Christeen (2014) outlined eight key factors that impact employee retention: leadership, work environment, social support, opportunities for growth, autonomy, compensation, workload distribution, and work-life balance.

The Relationship between Good Leadership and Employee Retention

The relationship between good leadership and employee retention is essential. Effective communication between supervisors and staff is crucial for motivating employees. Positive communication styles between managers and employees lead to increased motivation, while poor communication results in decreased motivation levels. Research conducted by **Dwiyedula and Bredillet (2010)** demonstrated that open lines of communication have a positive impact on employee motivation.

A study from 2014 revealed that Australian employees view having a supportive manager as vital for workplace motivation. Employees tend to feel valued and content when recognized by their superiors (Verner et al., 2014).

Employee Performance

When it comes to employee performance, **Pang and Lu (2018)** stress the significance of setting goals to enhance overall organizational performance. Companies should focus on maintaining personal effectiveness and increasing extrinsic motivation to improve employee performance. In the current business environment, organizations need to consider different types of extrinsic motivation as part of their strategy to boost employee performance.

2.2. COVID-19's Impact on the Workforce

The COVID-19 virus has altered the global economic landscape and presented an unparalleled organizational challenge. Organizations require assistance in maintaining and managing their day-to-day operations, financial outcomes, and linked devices in order to do business as usual.

Macroeconomically speaking, the **World Economic Forum (2020)** noted that the pandemic will affect international commerce and sustainable development in the near and long terms. The severe consequences of the pandemic have caused minor disruptions to employees' life at work and at home. Stress, melancholy, and discontent with one's employment have grown as a result (**Jenny, 2020; Shan and Tang 2020**).

Therefore, COVID-19 has significantly disrupted enterprises and personal life globally. Businesses have had difficulties. They have made an effort to ascertain how SHRM, or strategic human resource management, may successfully address the problems posed by the epidemic. Their goals are to keep the company strong and revive employee motivation. The need for innovative approaches stems from the global crisis. Work must be done to safeguard employment and increase productivity.

According to **Selkowski (2020)**, the shock brought on by the pandemic has had a significant impact on the dynamics of supply and demand as well as the productivity and expansion of the manufacturing sector.

The pandemic's financial problems will affect future competitiveness and jeopardize workers' job security. To sustain organizational resilience and performance, SHRM plays a critical role in protecting employment and enhancing the lives of employees (**Selkowski, 2020; Hamouche, 2020; Rajhans et al., 2020**).

The COVID-19 epidemic has changed expectations at work and had novel effects on employee motivation and behavior. Stress and anxiety among workers have escalated, which has led to shortages of basic supplies like masks and hand sanitizer (**Wells and Miklencicova, 2021; Shigemura et al., 2020**), as well as toilet paper (**Corkery and Maheshwari, 2020**). Even after the crisis, the dynamics of the epidemic might negatively impact workers' motivation and mental health. According to **Hamouche (2020)**, workers who are subjected to social and organizational obligations may experience severe stress as a result of the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, workers have faced a range of stressors, including as health hazards (**Brooks et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2020; Gibson et al., 2020; Janikova, 2021**), an abundance of information (**Lewis and Zauskova, 2021**), social isolation (**Brooks et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2020**), and financial insecurity (**Brooks et al., 2020**).

Productivity is lowered by these circumstances. They also lessen motivation and job satisfaction. Work contentment is a complex idea. It includes aspects that are emotional and psychological. **Greenberg and Baron (1997)** gave job satisfaction a definition as how people think and how do their jobs maket hem feel. Job qualities and

personality traits are connected (**Brown and Peterson 1993**). The opinions that workers have about their jobs also matter (**Organ and Near, 1985**). According to **Locke (1976)**, occupational satisfaction arises when needs and results align. The SHRM can improve contentment at work. By producing priceless resources that are challenging for rivals to imitate, it adds to a sustained competitive advantage (**Wernerfelt 1984; Hu et al., 2018; Nemteanu et al. 2021**).

A major obstacle to increasing productivity and efficiency in corporate operations is employee turnover (**Deery and Shaw 1997**).

Employees' behavioral desire to depart an organization is referred to as turnover intention (**Martin, 1979**). **Mobley (1982); Blau and others (2003). 2020 Stevens.**

According to **Hellman (1997)**, it's a normal and occasionally preferable result. When it comes to an employee's decision to stay or go, work-related variables, personal health, organizational culture, and performance are all important considerations (**Mobley, 1982; Blau et al., 2003**). Furthermore, occupational preferences are influenced by demographic factors such as region and age (**Cohen, 1993**). Employee turnover has been found to be a legitimate organizational effect and a sign of voluntary outcomes by researchers (**Mobley, 1982; Blau et al., 2003**).

Workers have experienced movement limitations and workplace disruptions as a result of COVID-19, which has been brought on by travel bans and lockdowns. When **Oswald et al. (2015)** looked at job happiness, they discovered that happy workers are more dedicated and effective. But the pandemic has brought up new limitations, tardiness in employment, and problems with policies.

Impact of COVID-19 on the workforce

Organizational Factors

Lack of Safe Working Conditions

The lack of awareness among top management teams has created difficulties for workers in maintaining a safe workplace. As the level of exposure to the coronavirus increases at work, site personnel are likely to experience fear and

apprehension, particularly if they perceive that vendors or other staff members are not adhering to safety measures such as social distancing. Additionally, the number of people working in a shared workspace can contribute to elevated stress levels among employees. Common areas, including restrooms, are often shared, and subcontractors may be involved in multiple projects at different locations, increasing the risk of virus transmission and exposing employees to potential infection (Stiles et al., 2020).

Challenges Arising from Remote Work (WFH)

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted traditional work habits and accelerated adoption of teleworking arrangements. Prior to the pandemic the decision to work remotely was typically left to the employee. COVID-19 has compelled many construction office personnel to work remotely: This change was mandatory and had its set of challenges. One is that the employees do not have a suitable workspace at home. They also have to define clear boundaries between office work and home life. The issue is even more problematic because of isolation from friends and others, the daily social contact through which one can maintain a good mental health is not present. Therefore, such employees are socially isolated (Omran & Zaid, 2014).

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Work Patterns

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards remote work, significantly disrupting traditional work patterns. Before, employees had the option to work remotely or from an office. However, the pandemic forced many into working from, even those who typically worked in physical office settings.

Handling a Different Workload

Throughout the pandemic, some companies maintained their project timelines, pushing employees to meet deadlines despite the circumstances (Omran & Zaid, 2014). Social distancing measures slowed down design and planning processes, causing stress and anxiety among workers. Increased workloads became common due to staff shortages from illness and self-isolation, disrupting inspections and maintenance tasks. These disruptions led to overtime work, heightened personal risk, and elevated anxiety levels (Nawi et al., 2017).

Lack of Leadership Knowledge and Skills within the Management Team

Effective leadership during crises like COVID-19 goes beyond problem-solving; it requires skills, competencies, and understanding to navigate such challenges (Stiles et al., 2012). The ambiguity surrounding effective onsite management, compliance reporting, and regulation leaves construction workers unsure about the support they need (Dirani et al., 2020). Ineffective leadership and misinformation about worksite policies increase worker risk (Stiles et al., 2020).

Economic Factors

Limited Access to Tools and Equipment

Remote workers faced significant obstacles due to the lack of necessary digital infrastructure (Zaid Alkilani et al., 2013). Acquiring essential software and tools proved difficult, leading to inefficiencies and struggles to meet project deadlines (Alsharef et al., 2021).

Ambiguity Regarding the Future of the Workplace

Unemployed individuals face no immediate health risks from COVID-19 but suffer from job insecurity and financial instability, impacting mental health. Many companies enforced furloughs and layoffs due to decreased workloads. An online survey by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) revealed over 40% of U.S. construction companies recently furloughed employees due to contract cancellations and equipment shortages (Survey: 28% of Member, 2020). Delayed cash flows forced businesses to lay off workers, adding to employee stress (Rowlin, 2020).

Disruptions in the Supply Chain

The pandemic has disrupted subcontractor schedules and material supplies, causing significant project delays. Social distancing and quarantine measures led to a reduced workforce in supply chain organizations, especially noticeable when relying on international materials (Fernandes, 2020).

Delays in Cash Flow

Delayed cash flows have hindered contractors from paying employees, subcontractors, and suppliers on time, affecting productivity (**Pamidimukkala et al., 2021**). Increased material costs and late payments from owners exacerbated delays, impacting project progress and sometimes leading to suspensions (**Choudhari, 2020**).

Psychological Factors

Impact of Social Isolation from Teleworking

Teleworking has led to social isolation, adversely affecting mental health, causing anxiety, depression, and even suicide (**Henke et al., 2016**). The new work environment and changes in habits contribute to mental well-being deterioration (**Rowlin, 2020**). Pre-existing mental health issues are exacerbated, and quarantined individuals face higher psychiatric illness risks (**Brooks et al., 2018**). Isolation impacts workers' engagement and efficiency (**Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018**).

Stress and Burnout

Uncertainty and complexities during the pandemic have led to increased job burnout, characterized by fatigue and decreased motivation. Constant exposure to COVID-19 news instills fear, with lingering mental health effects similar to those observed post-Hurricane Katrina (**Pfefferbaum & North, 2020**).

Individual Factors

Responsibility for Personal and Family Needs

Employees balancing challenging work environments with family responsibilities worry about their loved ones' safety and their ability to care for dependents. These concerns, coupled with childcare and school closures, lead to increased pressure and mental health issues (**CDCgov, 2020**).

Learning Different Communication Tools

The unfamiliarity with digital tools heightens employee stress levels (**CDCgov, 2020**). Lack of proficiency in using VPNs, virtual meetings, and other platforms leaves them overwhelmed, impacting productivity and mental well-being (**Alsharef et al., 2021**).

Feeling Inadequate in Contributing to Work

Construction office workers in virtual environments face limitations in accessing necessary equipment, stressing over acquiring resources and adapting to new technologies. These challenges contribute to feelings of inadequacy in their work contributions (CDCgov, 2020).

Adapting to New Work Schedules

Adjustments to rotating shifts, night shifts, and flextime during the pandemic affect absenteeism, turnover, and efficiency differently (Alsharef et al., 2021). These varying schedules impact productivity, attitudes, and overall job satisfaction (del Rio-Chanona et al., 2020).

Moderating Factors

Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Age Groups

Older workers, since they have weaker immune systems, are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. They face challenges with telework, balancing responsibilities, and maintaining communication, which leads to increasing anxiety (Brown et al., 2020).

Gender Disparities

Women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, since they had increased family responsibilities and health issues. Balancing unpaid housechores tasks and coping with income loss reinforces gender inequalities (Wenham et al., 2020).

Effects on Migrant Workers

Migrant workers, already facing mental health challenges, have had their issues multiplied by the pandemic. Limited resources and social distancing increasing anxiety and post-traumatic stress (Mucci et al., 2020).

2.3. The effect of COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye

COVID-19 has deeply affected many sectors in Türkiye, especially the education, hospitality, and healthcare sectors. These sectors play a vital role in the economy and faced different challenges during the pandemic.

Education Sector The shift to online classes exposed significant digital disparities and disrupted traditional educational methods. This transition significantly impacted both students and educators, affecting their mental health (UNICEF, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

Hospitality Sector The hospitality sector suffered from severe revenue losses and many workers lost their job due to travel restrictions and lockdown measures. To adapt to this situation some strategies were implemented encouraging more health protocols and promoting domestic tourism (OECD, 2021; Turkish Tourism Investors Association, 2021).

Healthcare Sector The healthcare sector faced immense pressure, resulting in an increased stress among healthcare workers. Telemedicine emerged as a crucial adaptation strategy or innovation during this period (World Health Organization, 2021; Turkish Medical Association, 2021).

2.3.1. The Impact on Healthcare

On December 26, 2020, the Turkish Ministry of Health reported that over 130,000 health workers had contracted COVID-19, leading to the deaths of 326 workers during treatment (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey, 2020). The virus causes both physical and mental problems. This stress is linked to viral load, angiotensin, and cytokines, increasing the risk of infection (Hanscom et al., 2020). Frontline healthcare providers were identified as the most vulnerable throughout the epidemic (Tuncay et al., 2020).

Families of healthcare workers often worried about the heightened risk of infection, changes in work hours, and evolving issues like isolation, social stigma, and neglect of family responsibilities. The fear of spreading the virus to their loved ones caused significant anxiety. Evidence shows that healthcare workers who dealt with

SARS experienced considerable anxiety due to these fears (Kackin et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Maunder et al., 2003; Sun et al., 2020). Common emotions among healthcare workers during epidemics include loneliness, fear, anger, uncertainty, and hopelessness, all contributing to increased anxiety levels.

Transformations in Health Management during the Pandemic in Türkiye

Medical staff and citizens can access vital information about COVID-19 through the Ministry of Health's dedicated webpage (covid19.saglik.gov.tr). Key changes in health management during the pandemic include:

- **Strengthening Public Relations:** The Ministry of Health has improved public relations by providing a free-access website with daily updates and information on COVID-19.
- **Access to Medical Information:** Ensuring public access to health information has been crucial. The website provides definitions, treatment guidelines, case query pages, and lists of authorized diagnostic laboratories.
- **Support for Health Professionals:** The Ministry coordinates efforts with healthcare professionals and other public sector experts to manage the pandemic effectively.
- **New Health Protocols:** New health protocols have been introduced and made available to the public, healthcare professionals, and industries.
- **Public Instructions:** Detailed brochures and documents have been provided to guide the public on COVID-19 safety measures.
- **Digitalization:** Many healthcare services have moved to digital platforms, such as the HES Code (Hayat Eve Sığar) mobile app, highlighting the importance of digital solutions and coordination between health authorities and policymakers during the pandemic.

2.3.2. Impact of Covid 19 on Education in Türkiye:

The pandemic has affected healthcare systems worldwide which led the governments to take measures to minimize the damages of the economic and social fallout. Education systems were significantly affected.

On **March 11th, 2020**, after the WHO's pandemic declaration, many countries, including Türkiye, transitioned to online education. In Türkiye, this transition started from kindergarten to high school and began on **March 23rd, 2020**, after just one week of preparation (**Ministry of National Education, 2020**). Despite efforts by the Turkish government to create a stable and reliable distance learning environment for millions of students, disputes arose regarding the gap between theoretical plans and practical implementation. These disputes primarily center on citizenship education and its integral components, such as equality and fairness.

To What Extent Is Equality of Opportunity Achieved?

Equality of opportunity in education means avoiding discrimination and ensuring that everyone has equal access to education based on their abilities and needs (**İnan & Demir, 2018**). This principle is fundamental to the Turkish Education System (**Ministry of National Education, 1973**). Although this right is constitutionally guaranteed, not all students can fully benefit from it. Reflections from the distance learning process particularly highlight this issue. The most significant aspects of this inequality are problems with access to education and the failure to consider individual differences.

The Frustration of Teachers and Students in Distance Learning

Teachers' frustration over inadequate support for their students due to poor access to online resources is evident in online forums like Ekşi Sözlük. One teacher shared their struggle, saying, "I have approximately 500 students and try to keep up with the process, but it's so inadequate. First, there is no equality of opportunity. Out of 500 students, only 200-250 are reachable because not everyone has internet access or a computer. This isn't their fault. While I find the lessons on EBA TV good, 20 minutes per week is insufficient for reinforcing the subject. The lack of feedback also creates uncertainty. Despite this, I try to check and give feedback on students' homework, but some students can't benefit, which makes me sad. Although we can't create a real classroom atmosphere, this is the best we can do for now." (metaletapankiz).

From this teacher's perspective, the lack of internet access leads to unfairness for some students, and those who only have a TV also struggle due to limited course time. Students feel left behind, as ten-year-old Emirhan, who only has access to a TV, expressed, "My friends at school can participate in online lessons and continue their education, but I cannot. I have been left behind in my education. I ask for help to continue my education."

Adding Fuel to the Fire: Technical Issues

Technical problems are significantly affecting distance learning, both in terms of academic performance and mental health. Teachers report that live course applications often malfunction, preventing many students from participating effectively. One teacher noted that if three out of twenty students could fully participate, it was considered a success (fairwhitewater).

To address these issues, some private schools and institutions have created their own digital platforms, which unfortunately exacerbates inequalities. This approach not only highlights disparities in access to education but also emphasizes the shortcomings of distance learning compared to traditional classrooms.

In summary, one teacher expressed that true education can only take place within a school environment. Despite various efforts to adapt, the classroom remains essential for effective learning, and the current distance learning methods fall short of providing a comprehensive educational experience (Nemrutdağı).

2.3.3. Impact of COVID-19 on Hotel Employees in Türkiye

The COVID-19 significantly impacted hotel employees in **Türkiye**. With tourist numbers dropping by 72,5% in the first ten months of 2020 compared to the previous year. The number of tourists visiting **Türkiye** declined from 40,7 million in 2019 to 11,2 million in 2020. The primary nationalities of these tourists were Russia, Germany, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and England (ATTA, 2020b).

Economic and Job Security Concerns

Many hotel workers faced considerable job insecurity as numerous hotels either temporarily closed or drastically reduced their workforce. This instability heightened anxiety and stress among employees, adversely affecting their job performance and satisfaction. Worries about financial stability and personal health became prominent during the pandemic (**Karatepe et al., 2021; Safavi & Karatepe, 2019**).

Mental Health Challenges

The pandemic-induced stress, fear of infection, and economic instability took a toll on the mental health of hotel employees. A notable increase in workplace stress, emotional exhaustion. The adoption of new digital tools who later on gained a name as "technostress," due to increasing the stress levels and worsening these mental health issues (**Ali, Nisar, & Nasir, 2023; Wong et al., 2021**).

Increased Workload and Adaptation

With reduced staffing, remaining employees often shouldered heavier workloads and were responsible for implementing stringent health and safety protocols. Additional training to manage these new standards enhanced the stress and anxiety (**Maslakçı et al., 2022; Nisar et al., 2021**).

2.4. HR Professionals in the Post-COVID-19 Era

2.4.1. Overview of Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (**HRM**) is the practice of recruiting, managing, and developing employees inside a corporation.

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) emphasised that **HRM** plays a big role on managing people effectively, it affects employee behavior, attitudes, and performance. Key roles of HRM are:

- **Recruitment and Selection:** Attracting and selecting qualified individuals for jobs. It helps in selecting the best talent and thus how we know that a recruitment was effective, which should contribute to company success (Dessler, 2017).
- **Performance Management:** Through goal setting, feedback, HRM can evaluate and improve performance. It helps that the employee objectives align with the company strategic goals (Aguinis, 2009).
- **Training and Development:** Preparing employees for future roles. It is crucial to develop employees' skills and promote their career growth (Noe, 2017).
- **Compensation and Benefits:** Managing the pay and the rewards, ensuring to stay competitive in the market, and offering benefits like health insurance and retirement plans to boost job satisfaction and retention (Martocchio, 2017).
- **Health and Safety Management:** Providing a safe working environment, following the health regulations and preventing workplace accidents and illnesses (Shaw et al., 2020).
- **Employee Relations:** Maintaining positive employer-employee relationships, managing conflict, respecting work laws, and promoting engagement and satisfaction (Boxall & Purcell, 2016).

In the post-pandemic time, HR's role took a bigger importance and responsibility, especially that the crisis left employees uncertain about their future and also shifting their mindset, which makes it challenging for HR to protect organizational morale and continue the company's normal activities. HR and their innovative approaches are vital for adapting to the new reality (Giurge & Bohns, 2020; Roy, 2021).

The pandemic has led to a big transformation in the work trends, requiring HR leaders to re-plan performance management. HR professionals should by nature help employees navigate changes in the workplace and society more smoothly. Organizations worked on redesigning workspaces while adapting to the new rules of social distancing and prioritizing employee safety and mental well-being (Morse, 2020; Sheppard, 2020).

To maintain a competitive position, organizations must provide and equip **HR** with the latest and updated technologies. This is essential to be able to overcome the new obstacles in the new world of work. **HR** professionals must address challenges such as the shift to remote work and the need for policies to manage a distributed workforce. This includes managing traditional **HR** tasks like payroll, attendance, and leave, as well as maintaining effective communication and performance evaluation (**Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Rice, 2021**).

As remote work becomes more permanent, **HR** must ensure employees develop digital collaboration skills and adapt performance goals for remote conditions. This reimagining of the employee journey is necessary to address post-pandemic challenges and ensure sustained productivity and engagement (**Baker, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2020**).

2.4.2. HRM Challenges Post-COVID-19

Strategic HRM and Unpredictability

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced an unpredictable nature into strategic HRM. Companies worldwide struggled with strategic planning due to sudden shifts in market conditions and operational disruptions. The pandemic accentuated the difficulty of making accurate predictions and preparing the necessary resources, which led to an important amount of stress and confusion among employees and managers (**Elsafy & Ragheb, 2020; Wong et al., 2020**).

Training and Career Development

Career development faced severe disruptions as organizations shifted priorities to immediate survival over long-term growth. The pandemic caused major professional shocks, with employees fearing job loss and missed promotional opportunities. Training programs were halted or moved online, often reducing their effectiveness and engagement (**Akkermans, Richardson, & Kraimer, 2020; Baert et al., 2020**).

Compensation Management

Managing compensation during the pandemic has been particularly challenging. Organizations had to balance financial constraints with the need to retain and motivate employees. Government policies, like temporary paid sick leave, were implemented to support workers, but these measures also introduced complexities in managing absenteeism and maintaining employee morale (**Andersen et al., 2020; Giupponi & Landais, 2020**). High-risk industries, such as healthcare, faced unique challenges in ensuring that compensation adequately reflected the increased risks faced by employees (**Hecker, 2020**).

Health and Safety Management

One of the main HRM concerns due to the pandemic was health and safety. Ensuring workplace safety while maintaining operational continuity needed significant efforts and adjustments. Organizations had to implement strict safety measures to control the virus spread and protect employees, a task complicated by if the staff adheres to the measures or no (**Hamouche, 2020**). The launch of vaccines added complexity, requiring HR to manage vaccination campaigns and address vaccine hesitancy (**Rothstein, Parmet, & Reiss, 2021**).

Mental Health Challenges

The mental health challenges were one of the biggest impacts of the pandemic. Remote work, social isolation, and the fear of contracting or transmitting the virus significantly increased stress and anxiety issues among employees. HR professionals had to manage these issues while also try to maintain a control on the physical health risks of employees who were working on-site (**Brooks et al., 2020; Prasad & Vaidya, 2020**).

2.4.3. HR challenges Post-Covid in Türkiye:

Economic and Social Conditions

In Turkey, the economic crisis and high unemployment rates exacerbated the challenges faced by HR professionals. The pandemic's impact on the recruitment of employees was severe, with many companies who were obliged to freeze the hiring processes. Moreover, the switch towards remote work also led to additional challenges

due to the varying levels of digital infrastructure across different sectors (Leblebici, 2012).

In the Workplace

Ensuring workplace safety was a major concern in Turkey, especially in industries who couldn't easily transition to remote work. The manufacturing and service sectors faced struggles in implementing social distancing and other preventive measures. Additionally, vaccine launch and managing government regulations and compliance.

Turkish HR professionals had to navigate a complex landscape of government regulations and compliance measures introduced in response to the pandemic. These included health and safety directives, remote work policies, and financial support schemes. Ensuring compliance while maintaining operational efficiency was a significant challenge (OECD, 2021).

Health and Safety employee health during the pandemic added further complexity (Özdemir, 2021).

Employee Morale and Mental Health

The psychological impact of the pandemic was significant among Turkish employees HR professionals had to cope with heightened stress and anxiety situations among workers due to profitable query and health pitfalls during the epidemic. Prioritizing internal health support and icing overall well-being came pivotal rudiments of HR operation at this time (Yılmaz, 2021).

Adaptation to Remote Work

Although remote work allowed operations to continue, it brought its own set of challenges, including maintaining productivity, managing performance, and icing effective communication. HR brigades had to draft new programs and fabrics to support remote work, a conception that was fairly new to numerous Turkish companies (Çetin & Güleç, 2020).

2.5. Contemporary Strategies to Motivate and Retain Workers Post-COVID

The COVID-19 epidemic led to major shifts in work practices, emphasizing the need for innovative and adaptable HR strategies to maintain motivation and retention. The transition to remote work, an increased focus on well-being, and a strong emphasis on diversity and addition have come critical factors of modern HR operation (Gartner, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). This section explores contemporary strategies employed by companies globally and in Turkey to effectively motivate and retain workers in the post-pandemic period.

Flexible and Responsive HR Practices

HR leaders need to be flexible and responsive, conforming to fast new informations and changing circumstances (Zavyalova et al., 2020). This includes developing contingency plans, embracing digital metamorphosis, and fostering a growth mindset. For case, Amazon enhanced its digital structure to support remote work, increased hiring to meet demand, and enforced expansive health and safety measures (McKinsey, 2021).

Emphasizing Collaboration and Communication

During meetings, effective communication is consummate. HR leaders should promote open and transparent communication to keep workers informed and engaged (Quirke, 2008). Salesforce demonstrated this by launching "Leading Through Change," a series of webinars and resources to support well-being and communication during the epidemic (Salesforce, 2021).

Developing a Culture of Learning and Adaptation

Cultivating a learning culture that encourages continious improvement and adaption is vital (Marsick and Watkins, 2003). This involves providing resources for skill development and promoting knowledge sharing and experimentation. Microsoft invested significantly in digital literacy platforms, enabling workers to upskill and acclimatize to new work surroundings (McKinsey, 2021).

Supporting Employee Mental Health and Well-being

Prioritizing mental health and well-being is essential during both crisis and recovery periods. This includes promoting work-life balance, remote-work, stress management, and access to internal health resources (**Wright & Cropanzano, 2000**). Unilever introduced a global well-being frame, offering internal health coffers and flexible working arrangements to support their workers (**Unilever, 2021**).

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Addition

HR leaders should support diversity and inclusion enterprise to insure all workers feel valued and included. This involves reviewing hiring practices, promoting different representation in management, and offering development openings for underrepresented groups (**Kochan et al., 2003**). Google expanded its diversity hiring enterprise and created programs to support underrepresented groups, fostering a more inclusive workplace (**Google, 2021**).

2.5.1. Case Studies of Successful HR Strategies

1. Arçelik (Turkey)

Company Overview: created in 1955, Arçelik is a prominent Turkish home appliances manufacturer with operations in over 145 countries. Known for its innovative approach and commitment to quality, Arçelik has established itself as a leader in its industry (**OECD, 2021**).

Strategy: During the COVID-19 epidemic, Arçelik quickly addapted to the new normal by implementing a comprehensive remote work policy. The company heavily invested in digital tools to enable flawless remote collaboration. To insure workers were equipped to handle these tools, Arçelik provided extensive training programs concentrated on remote work and digital collaboration (**OECD, 2021**).

Outcome: The transition to remote work programs resulted in significantly higher levels of employee engagement and productivity. Arçelik's proactive approach to digital metamorphosis and hand training enabled it to maintain business durability and adapt efficiently to the operational challenges posed by the epidemic (**OECD, 2021**).

Key Lessons:

- **Digital Infrastructure** Investing in robust digital tools and comprehensive training programs is pivotal for maintaining productivity and engagement in remote work settings (OECD, 2021).
- **Agility** Quick adaption to remote work can help sustain productivity and hand morale (OECD, 2021).

3.Garanti BBVA (Turkey)

Company Overview: Established in 1946, Garanti BBVA is one of Turkey's largest private banks, known for its strong client service and invention in fiscal services (OECD, 2021).

Strategy: In response to the epidemic, Garanti BBVA placed a strong emphasis on hand well-being. The bank introduced comprehensive mental health support programs, flexible working hours, and expansive digital upskilling enterprises. These measures were aimed at ensuring that workers could addapt to the new work terrain while maintaining their well-being (OECD, 2021).

Outcome: Garanti BBVA's enterprise led to bettered hand satisfaction and retention. The focus on internal health and flexible work arrangements helped the bank navigate the challenges posed by the epidemic effectively, performing in a more flexible pool (OECD, 2021).

Key Lessons:

- **Employee Well-being** Prioritizing internal health and flexible work arrangements is essential for enhancing hand satisfaction and retention (OECD, 2021).
- **Digital Upskilling** Investing in digital chops training ensures that workers remain adaptable and able in a fleetly changing work terrain (OECD, 2021).

2.6. Salesforce (Global)

Company Overview: innovated in 1999, Salesforce is a global leader in client relationship operation (CRM) software. The company is famed for its innovative results and strong commercial culture, constantly ranking among the top companies to work for (Salesforce, 2021).

Strategy: Salesforce responded to the epidemic by launching the "Leading Through Change" program. This action included a series of webinars, resources, and tools designed to support workers' internal health and productivity during remote work. The program aimed to maintain high situations of communication and support for workers across the globe (Salesforce, 2021).

Outcome: The "Leading Through Change" program was successful in sustaining hand engagement and morale. Salesforce's emphasis on continuous support and transparent communication helped maintain productivity and a positive work terrain during the epidemic (Salesforce, 2021).

Key Lessons:

- Continious Support furnishing ongoing coffers and support can significantly boost hand morale and engagement (Salesforce, 2021).
- Transparent Communication Regular and clear communication is vital for maintaining trust and productivity during heads (Salesforce, 2021).

4. Microsoft (Global)

Company Overview: Established in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, Microsoft is a global technology mammoth known for its software products, including the Windows operating system and Office suite. The company has a long history of invention and leadership in the tech assiduity (McKinsey, 2021).

Strategy: Microsoft concentrated on fostering a culture of continious learning and adaption during the epidemic. The company invested heavily in digital literacy platforms, handed expansive coffers for remote work, and promoted a culture of invention and adaptability (McKinsey, 2021).

Outcome: These sweats redounded in high situations of hand rigidity and skill development. Microsoft's commitment to continuous learning assured that its pool remained competitive and productive throughout the epidemic and beyond (McKinsey, 2021).

Key Lessons:

- **Continuous learning** Investing in learning platforms and promoting skill development is pivotal for maintaining a competitive and adaptable pool (McKinsey, 2021).
- **Culture of Innovation** Encouraging invention and adaptability helps workers navigate new challenges and maintain productivity (McKinsey, 2021).

What We Can Learn from Successful HR Strategies

These case studies punctuate several crucial strategies that have proven effective in motivating and retaining workers post-COVID

1. Digital Transformation

o Investing in robust digital tools and comprehensive training programs is essential for maintaining productivity and engagement in remote work settings (OECD, 2021; McKinsey, 2021).

2. Employee Well-being

o Prioritizing internal health and flexible work arrangements can enhance hand satisfaction and retention. This approach is instanced by Garanti BBVA's focus on well-being enterprises (OECD, 2021).

3. Continuous learning

o Investing in nonstop learning and skill development is critical to make sure that workers remain adaptable in a fleetly changing work environment. Microsoft's sweats in this area demonstrate the significance of fostering a literacy culture (McKinsey, 2021).

4. Effective Communication

o Regular and transparent communication is vital for maintaining trust and productivity. Salesforce's "Leading Through Change" program underscores the significance of nonstop support and communication (Salesforce, 2021).

5. Flexibility and Agility

o Companies must be suitable to easily adapt to changing situations and develop strategies that support both business durability and well-being. Arçelik's quick adaption to remote work is a high illustration of this approach (OECD, 2021).



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this section, we will describe the research methodology used in the study. It will include the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used to explore the research questions :

- How did the pandemic affected the motivation of employees and their retention ?
- What challenges do employees face in adapting to the post-COVID work environment ?
- What are employees' contemporary strategies for engagement and retention in the aftermath of the pandemic ?

3.2. Research Approach

This study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to collect comprehensive data. It used a mix-method approach. The quantitative section consists of survey responses, while the qualitative section is in a form of open-ended questions to be able to provide general perspectives. Combining quantitative and qualitative questions allows research at both levels.

3.3. Sampling

3.3.1. Target Population

The population targeted in this research includes employees and HR professionals from different industries who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Precisely, participants from healthcare, hospitality, education.

Prior to their participation in the study and to ensure ethical norms, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Additionally they were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntariness of their participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The maintenance of the confidentiality was through anonymizing their responses to protect the participants.

3.3.2. Sampling Frame and Elements

The sampling frame consists of mainly professionals in the health, hospitality, and education sectors, those sectors were selected as they were among those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and constitute a big role in the economy. Each participant in this study gives a unique perspective on the challenges and strategies associated with employee motivation and retention during and after the pandemic.

3.3.3. Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling methods, especially convenience sampling, were used due to the accessibility of respondents willing to participate in the study.

3.3.4. Sample Size

The sample size of this study was **83 respondents**. This number is considered sufficient to provide meaningful insight into answering the research questions. A mix of qualitative and quantitative questions helps capture a wide range of perspectives. Furthermore, the consistency of responses allows for a thorough examination of trends without overcomplicating the analysis.

3.4. Data Collection

3.4.1. Data Collection Method

Data were collected through an online survey, which was distributed via email and social media platforms (LinkedIn). In addition, physical copies with QR codes were distributed in hospitals in Istanbul universities and hotels, which could be scanned to access the survey directly. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions to include a variety of quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4.2. Data Checking, Editing, and Coding

Data coding was the third step in the data process. Large volumes of data were sorted into more manageable categories by using a systematic approach to group related responses once the data had been collected and edited. Numerous survey questions in this study used a Likert scale, and answers were coded as follows:

1= Very satisfied

2= Satisfied

3= Neutral

4= Dissatisfied

3 = Very dissatisfied

Nominal scales were used to code demographic variables. For example:

Gender: 1= Female , 2 = Male

Industry Sector: 1 = Healthcare, 2 = Hospitality , 3 = Education

3.4.3. Data Transcription

Following coding, the data was entered into **SPSS (version 24)** for transcription and additional analysis. To ensure the data was prepared for statistical interpretation, this required entering each coded response into the SPSS program.

3.5. Data Analysis

To investigate the connections between the variables in the study, the data was analyzed using a variety of statistical techniques in **SPSS (version 24)**.

3.5.1. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated for demographic data and key research questions. Pie charts and bar charts were used to present the data visually.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The results of a survey I conducted for the research thesis "Motivating and retaining employees in the post-COVID era." are presented in this chapter.

The results of the questionnaire are presented and examined in this chapter. Descriptive and inferential statistics are included in the analysis, which is based on responses from 83 participants in three important industries: hospitality, healthcare, and education. We ensured the validity of the device in reflecting the study's objectives by using version 24 of the Statistical Package for the **Social Sciences (SPSS)** for data analysis. The results will be presented in detail in multiple sections, covering frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and reliability testing in addition to demographic data.

4.2. Data Analysis

4.2.1. Descriptive data analysis :

Table 4.1. Demographics and Age Distribution

Age of respondent		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 25	16	19.3	19.3	19.3
	25-34	37	44.6	44.6	63.9
	35-44	23	27.7	27.7	91.6
	45-54	1	1.2	1.2	92.8
	55-64	6	7.2	7.2	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

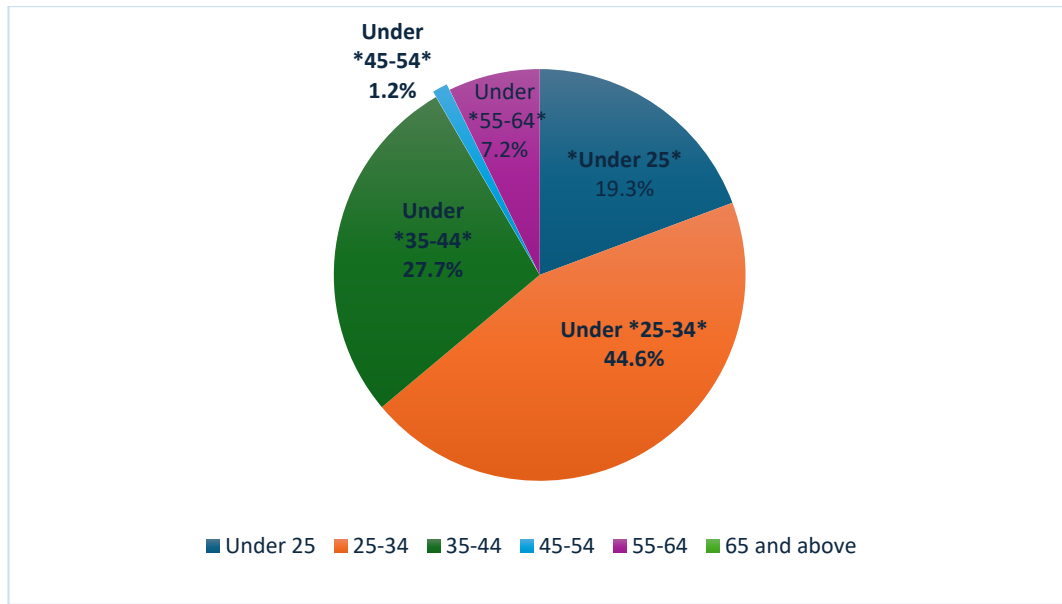


Figure 4.1. Demographics and Age Distribution Pie chart

- **Under 25:** 19.3%
- **25-34:** 44.6%
- **35-44:** 27.7%
- **45-54:** 1.2%
- **55-64:** 7.2%
- **65 or over:** 0%

The data presented in the table and pie chart demonstrate the distribution of respondents according to their age groups.

Out of the 83 participants:

The age group of 25-34 years makes up the largest portion at 44.6%, with 37 respondents.

In the age group of 35 to 44 years, there is a proportion of 27.7% (23 individuals).

16 respondents make up 19.3% of **those under 25 years old**.

Between the ages of 55 and 64, the occurrence is lower at 7.2% with 6 participants.

The age group of 45-54 years has the lowest percentage with only 1.2% of respondents.

- None of the respondents are 65 years old or older.

This distribution indicates that the sample is mostly made up of younger and middle-aged individuals.

Gender Distribution

Table 4.2. Demographics and Age Distribution

Gender of respondent		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	41	49.4	49.4	49.4
	Male	42	50.6	50.6	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

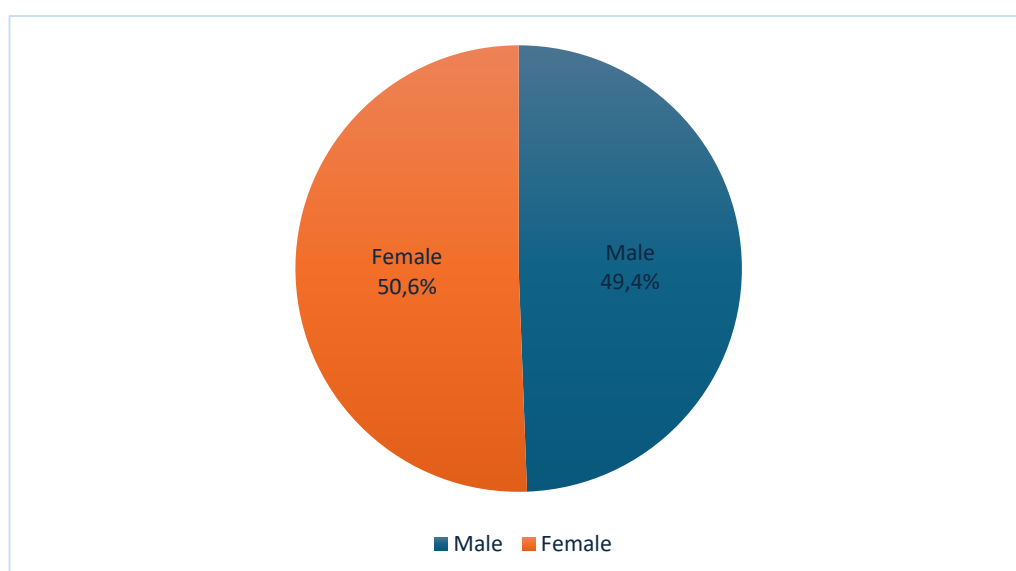


Figure 4.2. Demographics and Age Distribution Pie chart

- **Female:** 50.6%
- **Male:** 49.4%

The table and pie chart above show the breakdown of male and female survey participants by distribution and frequency. In total, there are 83 individuals, **with 41 women (50.6%) and 42 men (49.4%)**, making it nearly equal.

Industry Sector

Table 4.3. Industry Sector of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Healthcare	27	32.5	32.5	32.5
	Hospitality	21	25.3	25.3	57.8
	Education	29	34.9	34.9	92.8
	Other	6	7.2	7.2	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

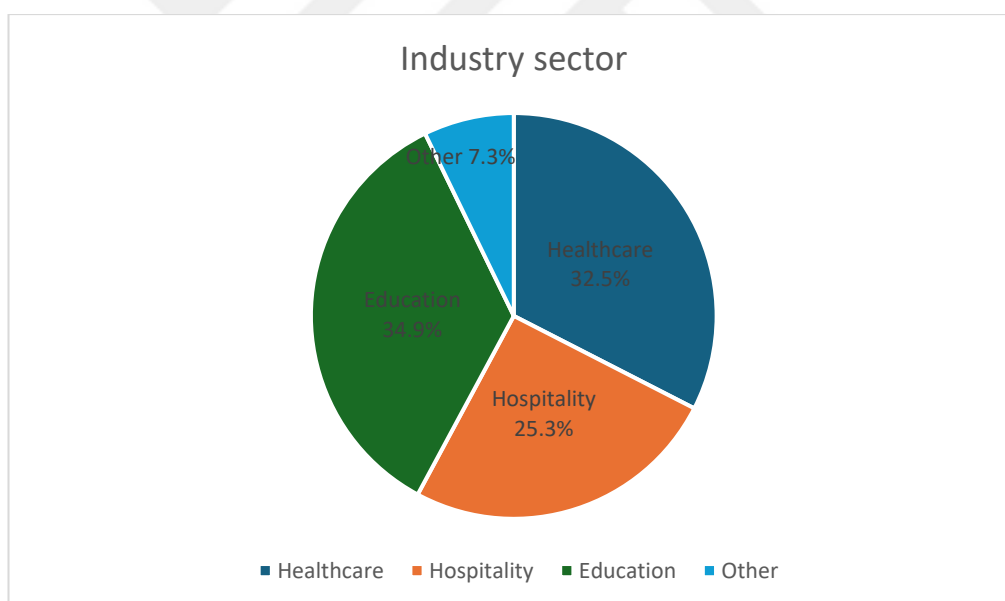


Figure 4.3. Industry Sector of Respondents Pie chart

- **Education:** 34.9%
- **Healthcare:** 32.5%
- **Hospitality:** 25.3%
- **Other:** 7.3%

The data presented in the table and pie chart display the distribution of sectors. **Education is the most prevalent sector**, with 29 out of 83 respondents (34.9%), **followed by healthcare** with 27 participants (32.5%). **Hospitality represents 25.3%** with 21 respondents, while **other sectors** make up 7.3% with 6 respondents.

Position Held

Table 4.4. Job Position of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HR professional	7	8.4	8.4	8.4
	Employee	76	91.6	91.6	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

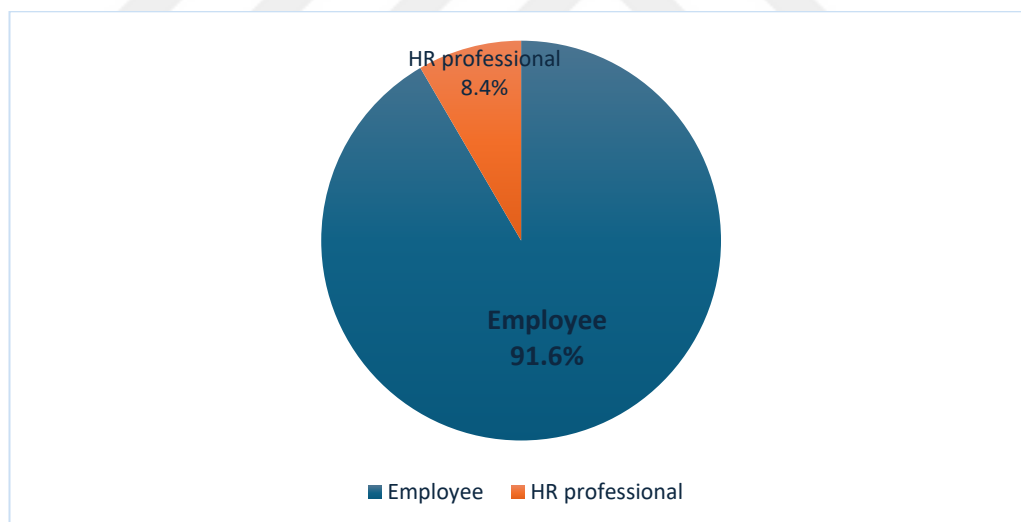


Figure 4.4. Job Position of Respondents Pie chart

- **Employee : 91.6%**
- **HR Professionals : 8.4%**

The table and pie chart above show the frequency and percentage of the job positions of respondents who filled in the questionnaires. **73 out of 83 respondents were general employees**, making up 91.6% of the total, **while only 7 participants**

were **HR professionals**, representing 8.4%. This classification indicates that the survey is centered on examining the difficulties and driving factors of employees after COVID-19, instead of focusing on specific HR positions.

Impact of COVID-19 on Workplace Motivation

Respondents were asked how COVID-19 affected their work motivation :

Table 4.5. Motivation Change Due to COVID-19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Increased	10	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Decreased	45	54.2	54.2	66.3
	No change	28	33.7	33.7	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

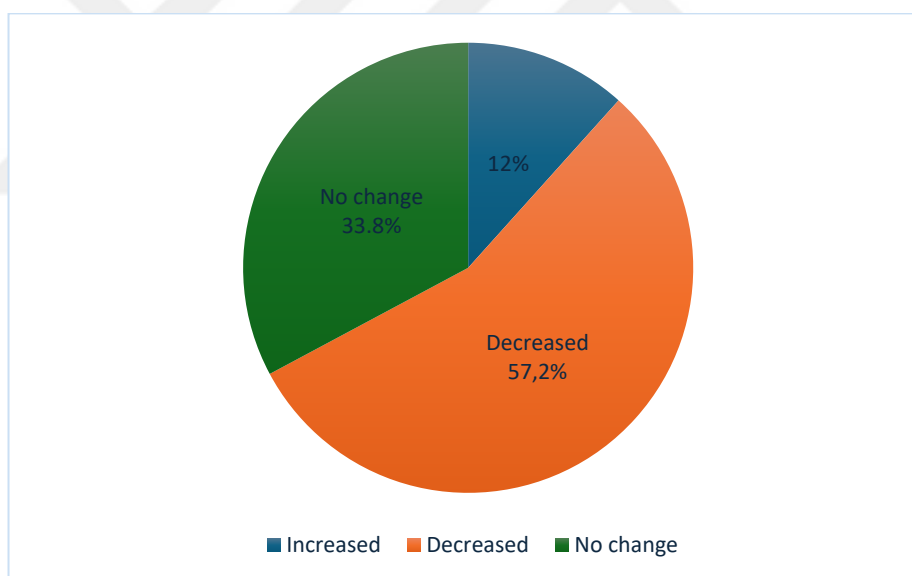


Figure 4.5. Motivation Change Due to COVID-19 Pie chart

The table and pie chart above illustrate changes in motivation due to COVID-19.

Out of 83 respondents:

- 54.2% (45 respondents) reported a **decrease** in motivation.
- 33.7% (28 respondents) experienced **no change**.
- 12.0%(10 respondents) felt their motivation **increased**.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents felt their motivation decreased during the pandemic.

Table 4.6. Satisfaction with Current Work Environment Post-COVID-19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfied	3	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Satisfied	25	30.1	30.1	33.7
	Neutral	36	43.4	43.4	77.1
	Dissatisfied	15	18.1	18.1	95.2
	Very dissatisfied	4	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

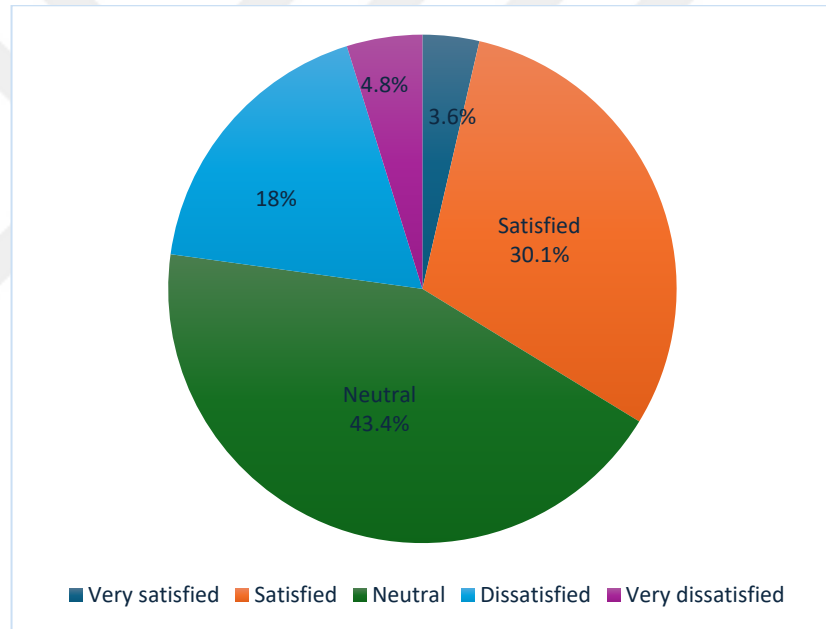


Figure 4.6. The Table and Pie Chart Above Reveal Satisfaction Levels With The Work Environment Post-COVID-19, From A Total Of 83 Respondents:

- 43.4% (36 respondents) reported being **neutral**.
- 30.1% (25 respondents) were **satisfied**.
- 18.1% (15 respondents) were **dissatisfied**.
- 4.8% (4 respondents) were **very dissatisfied**.
- 3.6%(3 respondents) were **very satisfied**

Workplace Adaptation to Pandemic Changes

Table 4.7. Adaptation to Pandemic Changes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	58	69.9	69.9	69.9
	No	25	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

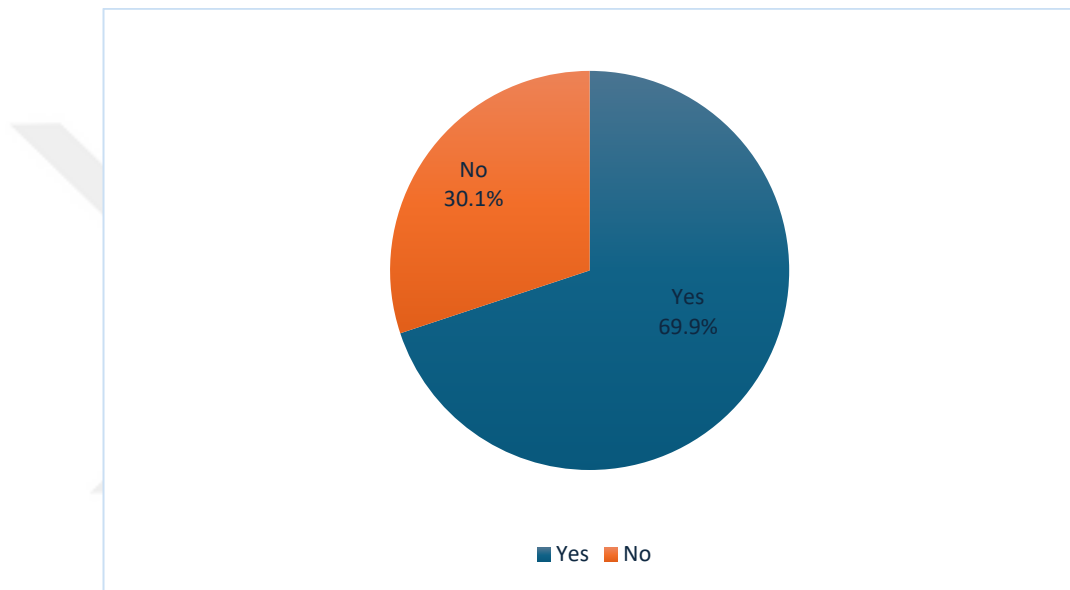


Figure 4.7. Adaptation to Pandemic Changes Pie chart

- **Yes:** 69.9%
- **No:** 30.1%

The frequency and percentage of respondents who answered the questionnaire and were asked if their workplace had adjusted well to changes brought about by the pandemic is **displayed in the table and pie chart above.**

58 out of 83 participants, constituting 69.9% of the total, reported **their workplace had adjusted to the pandemic-induced changes**. Some people even commended their companies for swiftly putting in place security measures and remote work choices. One health care worker mentioned that their hospital gave out PPE and set up an isolation area, which had a positive effect. **Yet, 25 participants (30.1%) believed their workplaces did not handle the situation well**, citing delays and

resource shortages. A teacher reported that the switch to online education was disorderly, with minimal assistance for both educators and students.

Main Challenges in Maintaining Motivation at Work during the Pandemic

Table 4.8. Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No challenges	14	16.9	16.9	16.9
	Health and safety concerns	12	14.5	14.5	31.3
	Mental health challenges and social isolation	17	20.5	20.5	51.8
	Remote work and work-life challenges	29	34.9	34.9	86.7
	Job insecurity and workplace challenges	11	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

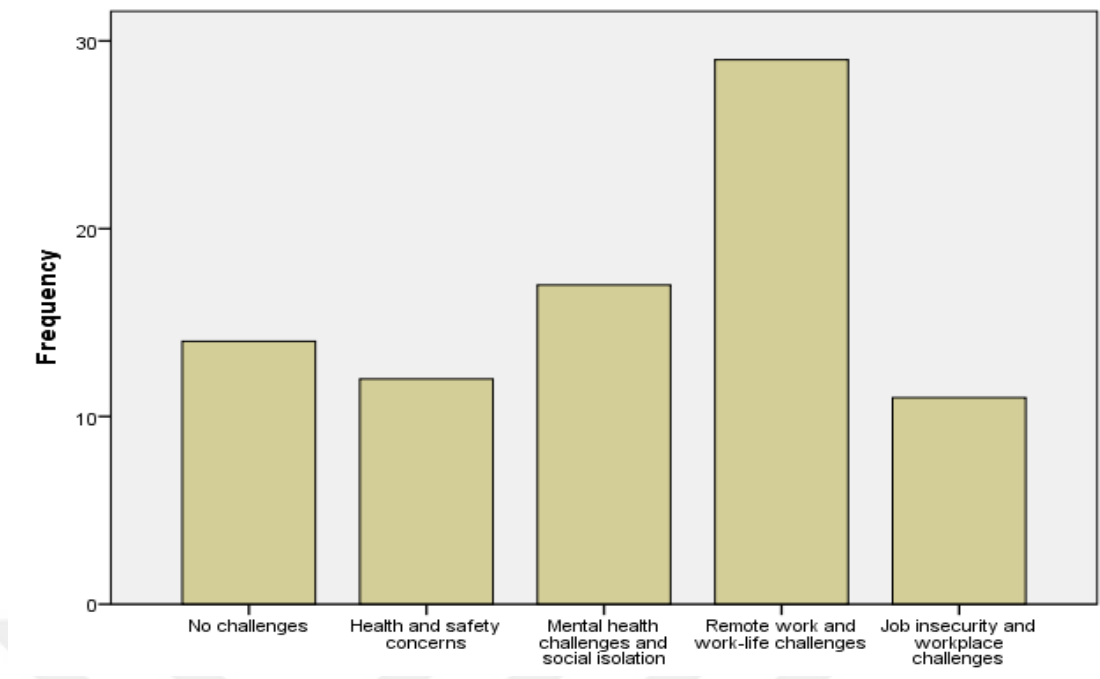


Figure 4.8. Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work

The following questions classifies the various obstacles that workers encounter in order to stay motivated both during and after the pandemic:

Based on the bar chart and the table above, the frequency shows responses as follow :

- No challenges: 16.9%
- Health and safety concerns : 14.5%
- Mental health challenges and social isolation : 20.5%
- Remote work and work-life challenges: 34.9% (This is the most significant challenge reported)
- Job insecurity and workplace challenges: 13.3%

The majority of respondents (34.9%) or **29 participants** stated that **remote work** and work-life balance challenges were the main issues impacting their motivation, according to the frequency data. This is expected due to the transition to remote work during the pandemic, which has blurred the lines between personal and professional life. **Furthermore, 17 participants (20.5%) cited mental health and social isolation** as significant hurdles, underscoring the psychological effects of the pandemic on workers. **Twelve participants (14.5%) were also influenced by health and safety considerations. 14 participants (16.9%) experienced no difficulties in staying motivated.**

Introduction of New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention

The table and pie chart above show the frequency of respondents who filled out the questionnaire and were asked whether their organizations introduced new measures to improve motivation and retention during the pandemic.

Table 4.9. Did Your Organization Introduce New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention During the Pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	29	34.9	34.9	34.9
	No	54	65.1	65.1	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

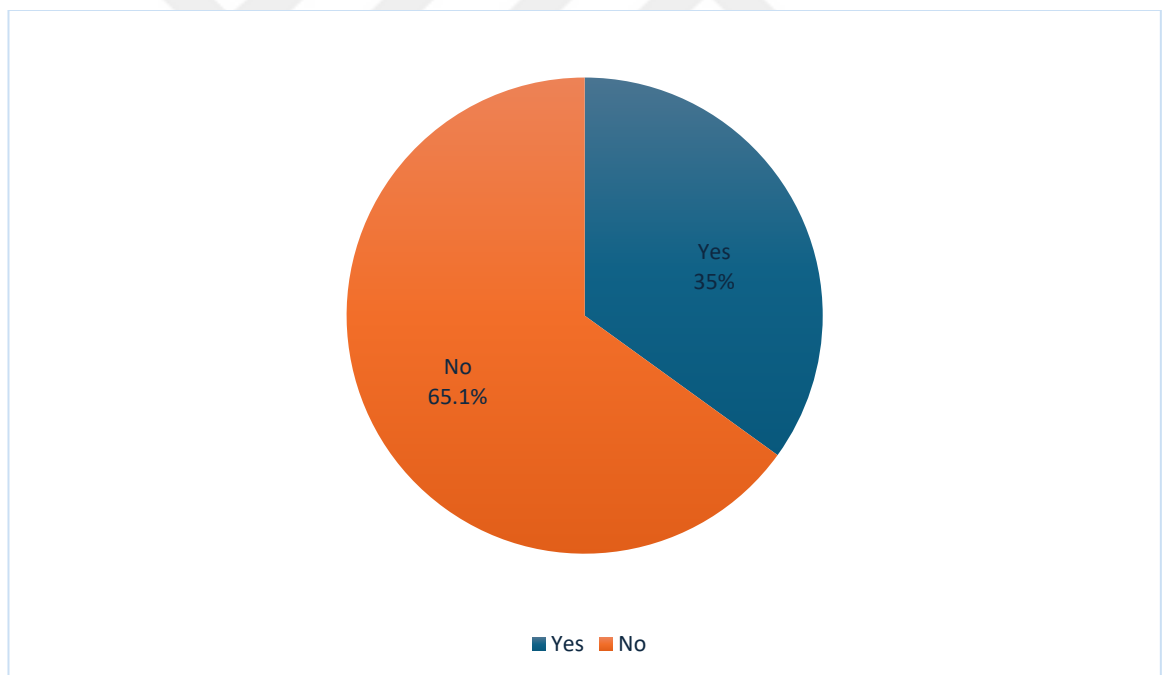


Figure 4.9. Introduction of New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention Pie chart

- **No** : 65.1%
- **Yes** : 35%

Out of the total 83 respondents, 29 (34.9%) reported that their organization introduced new measures, while 54 (65.1%) indicated that no new measures were introduced.

Table 4.10. New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention During the Pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Flexible work arrangements and wellness programs	10	12.0	34.5	34.5
	Health and safety measures	10	12.0	34.5	69.0
	Support and communication	9	10.8	31.0	100.0
	Total	29	34.9	100.0	
Missing	No measures	54	65.1		
Total		83	100.0		

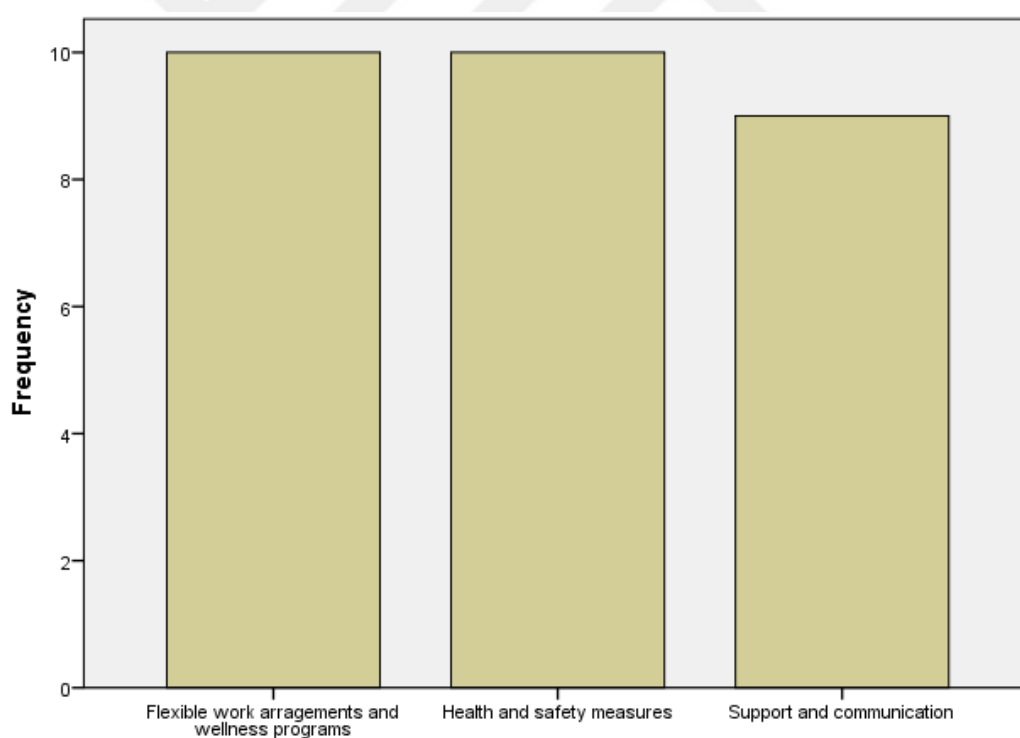


Figure 4.10. New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention During Pandemic

The table and bar chart above show the frequency and percentage of respondents who filled out the questionnaire and were asked whether their organizations introduced new measures to improve motivation and retention during the pandemic.

Out of the participants who provided answers, 10 individuals (12.0%) talked about implementing flexible work schedules and well-being initiatives. 10 more participants (12.0%) mentioned the introduction of health and safety protocols. Moreover, 9 participants (10.8%) pointed out enhanced assistance and communication as fresh initiatives.

Effectiveness of Measures

Respondents were asked about the effectiveness of the introduced measures :

Table 4.11. Effectiveness of Measures

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very effective	8	9.6	9.6	9.6
	Somewhat effective	16	19.3	19.3	28.9
	Not effective	5	6.0	6.0	34.9
	No measures	54	65.1	65.1	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

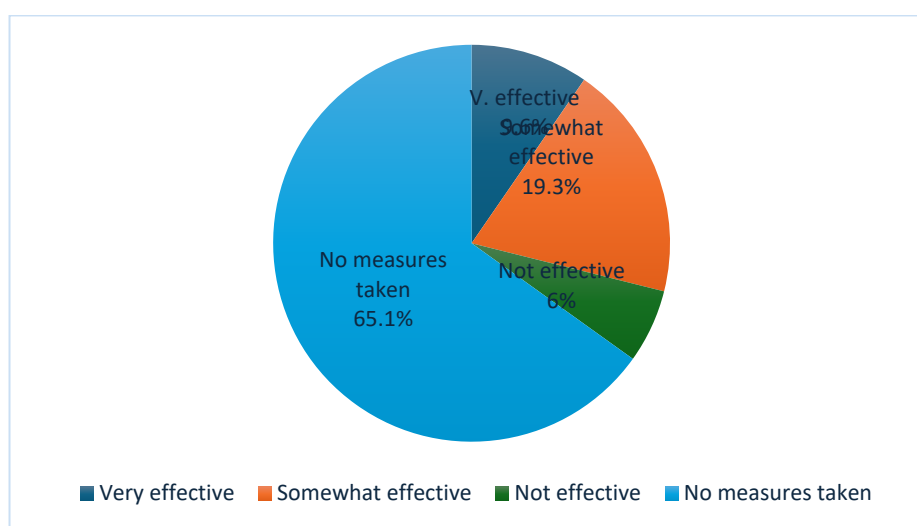


Figure 4.11. Effectiveness of Measures Pie chart

Among 83 participants, **54 (65.1%) stated that no measures** were taken to enhance motivation and retention amid the pandemic. Out of the evaluators, only 8 (9.6%) believed the measures were "highly effective," with 16 (19.3%) thinking they

were "moderately effective." 5 respondents (6.0% of the total) considered the measures as ineffective.

Satisfaction with Current Work Environment Post-COVID-19

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the current work environment post-COVID-19 :

Table 4.12. Satisfaction with Work Environment Post-COVID-19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfied	3	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Satisfied	25	30.1	30.1	33.7
	Neutral	36	43.4	43.4	77.1
	Dissatisfied	15	18.1	18.1	95.2
	Very dissatisfied	4	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

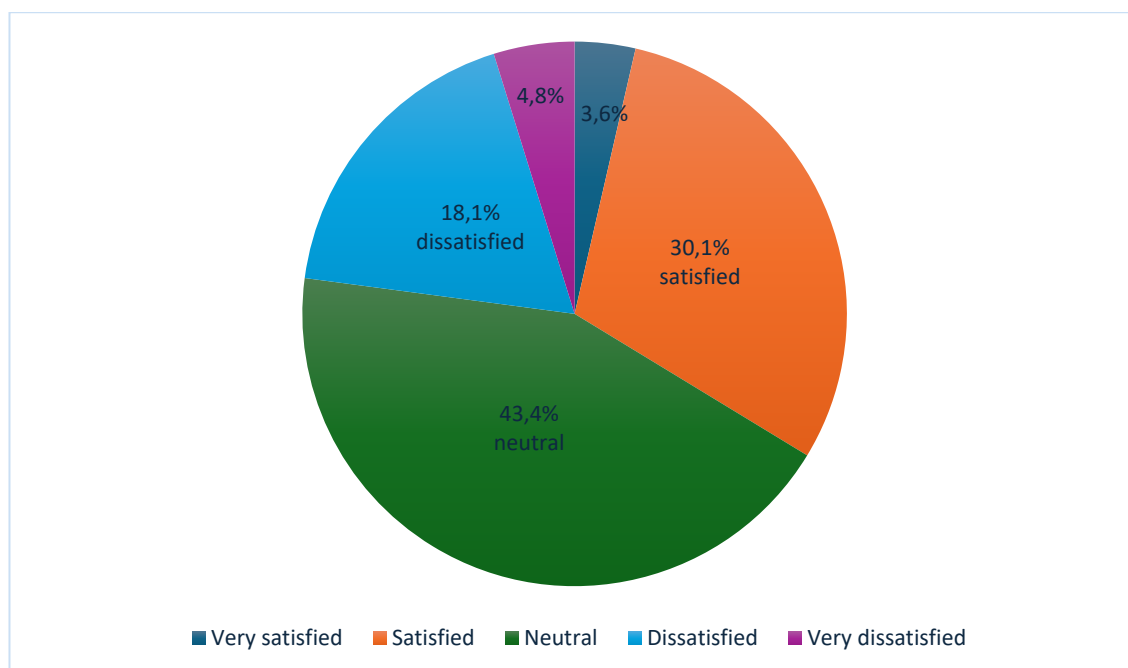


Figure 4.12. Satisfaction with Current Work Environment Post-COVID-19 Pie chart

The Table and Pie Chart Above Reveal Satisfaction Levels With The Work Environment Post-COVID-19, From A Total Of 83 Respondents:

- 43.4% (36 respondents) reported being **neutral**.
- 30.1% (25 respondents) were **satisfied**.
- 18.1% (15 respondents) were **dissatisfied**.
- 4.8% (4 respondents) were **very dissatisfied**.
- 3.6% (3 respondents) were **very satisfied**.

The majority of respondents are neutral or satisfied with their work environment, though a notable portion remains dissatisfied.

HR Priorities for the Near Future

Table 4.13. HR Priorities for Motivation and Retention

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Salary and compensation	14	16.9	19.4	19.4
	Flexibility and work environment	20	24.1	27.8	47.2
	Employee engagement and recognition	25	30.1	34.7	81.9
	Health and safety	6	7.2	8.3	90.3
	Career development and training	7	8.4	9.7	100.0
	Total	72	86.7	100.0	
Missing	No response	11	13.3		
Total		83	100.0		

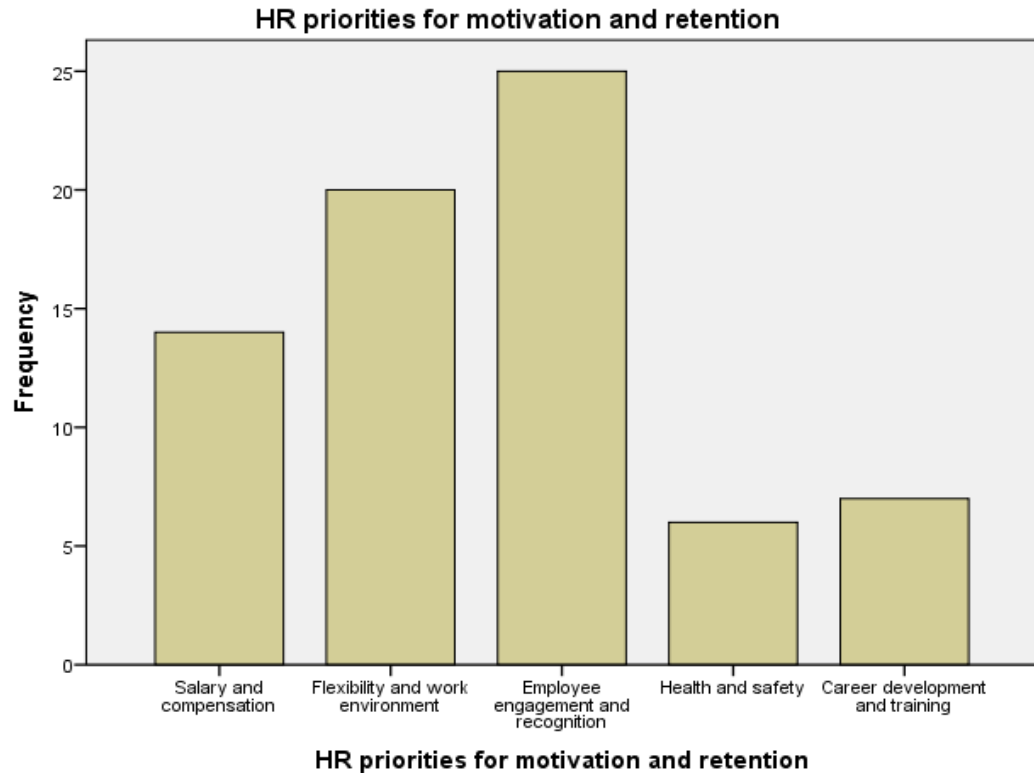


Figure 4.13. HR Priorities for Motivation and Retention

The table and bar chart above show the frequency of respondents who filled out the questionnaire and were asked about HR priorities for the near future.

- **Employee Engagement and Recognition** emerged as the most significant priority, with 25 (30.1%) respondents highlighting its importance. Many emphasized the need for regular feedback and formal recognition programs to boost morale.
- **Flexibility and Work Environment** followed, with 20 respondents (24.1% of respondents) indicating that flexible work arrangements and a supportive work environment are crucial for motivation.
- **Salary and Compensation** was noted by 14 respondents (16.9%), who suggested that fair compensation is essential for retaining employees.
- **Career Development and Training and Health and Safety** were also mentioned by 7 (8.4%) and 6 respondents (7.2%) respectively, reflecting a need for professional growth opportunities and improved health and safety measures.

Additional Support Needed to Feel More Motivated

Table 4.14. Additional Support Needed for Motivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Professional development training and career growth	9	10.8	12.2	12.2
	Salary and compensation	13	15.7	17.6	29.7
	Work environment and conditions	25	30.1	33.8	63.5
	Flexibility and work-life balance	8	9.6	10.8	74.3
	Recognition, communication and support	19	22.9	25.7	100.0
	Total	74	89.2	100.0	
Missing	No response	9	10.8		
Total		83	100.0		

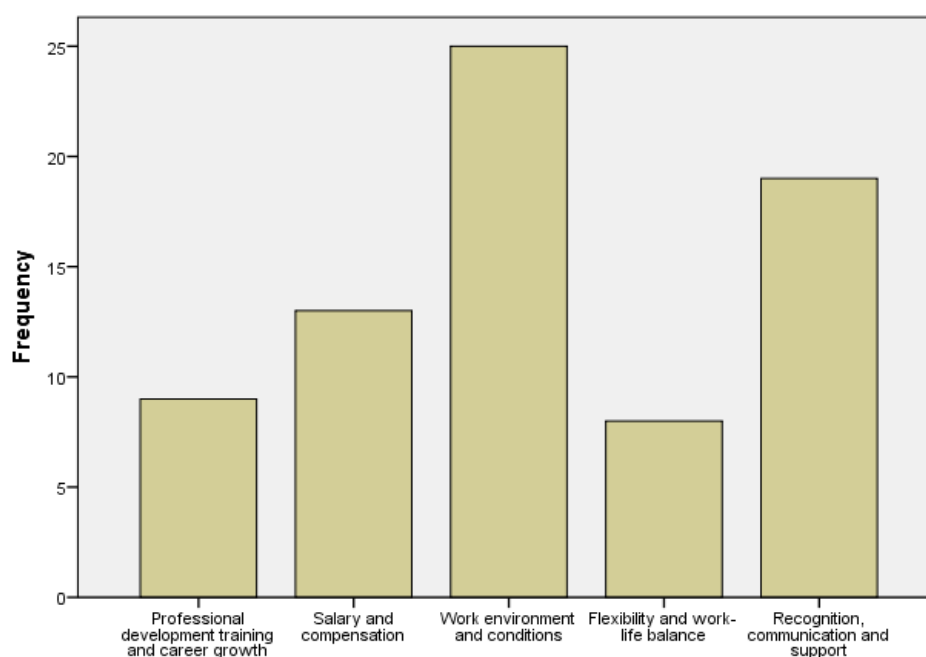


Figure 4.14. Additional Support Needed for Motivation

The table and bar chart above show the frequency of respondents who filled out the questionnaire and were asked about additional support needed to feel more motivated.

Most respondents identified **“Work Environment and Conditions”** as the **most critical support needed, with 30.1% highlighting its importance**. This suggests that improving workplace conditions is essential for enhancing employee motivation.

“Recognition, Communication, and Support” was noted by 19 respondents out of 83 (22.9%) as another significant factor. This indicates the need for effective acknowledgment and communication within the workplace.

“Salary and Compensation” was mentioned by 13 respondents (15.7%), reflecting its importance but suggesting that it may be secondary to improvements in work environment and recognition.

Less frequently cited were **“Professional Development”** by 9 participants (10.8%) **“Flexibility and Work-Life Balance”** by 8 participants (9.6%).

4.3. Cross tabulations :

➤ Impact of Covid-19 on Motivation :

Table 4.15. Age of Respondent Motivation Change Due to COVID-19
Crosstabulation

Count		Motivation change due to COVID-19			Total
		Increased	Decreased	No change	
Age of respondent	Under 25	3	8	5	16
	25-34	5	19	13	37
	35-44	2	12	9	23
	45-54	0	1	0	1
	55-64	0	5	1	6
Total		10	45	28	83

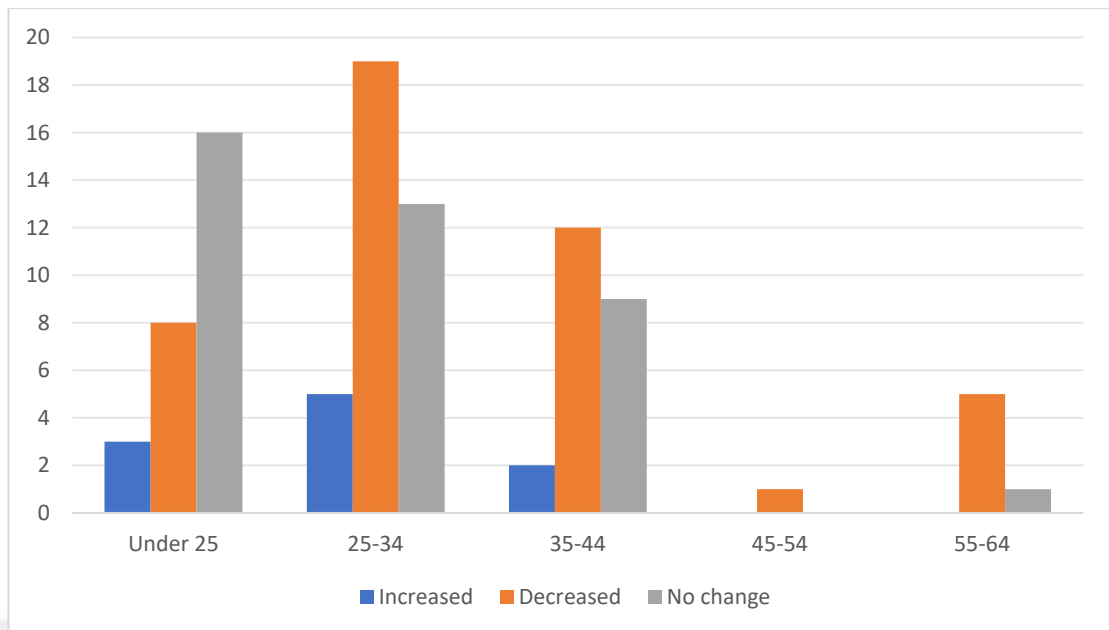


Figure 4.15. Impact of Covid-19 on Motivation by Age Group

- **The 25-34 age group reported the most significant decrease in motivation,** with 19 out of 37 respondents experiencing a decline. This suggests that younger employees in this group, likely in key developmental stages of their careers, might have faced more disruptions or challenges adapting to remote or hybrid work models introduced during the pandemic.
- In contrast, respondents aged 45-54 had the least variation, with only one reporting a decrease in motivation. This could imply that older employees may have had more established roles and were less impacted by the structural changes or uncertainties during COVID-19.

Table 4.16. Gender of respondent * Motivation change due to COVID-19
Crosstabulation

Count		Motivation change due to COVID-19			Total
		Increased	Decreased	No change	
Gender of respondent	Female	3	23	15	41
	Male	7	22	13	42
Total		10	45	28	83

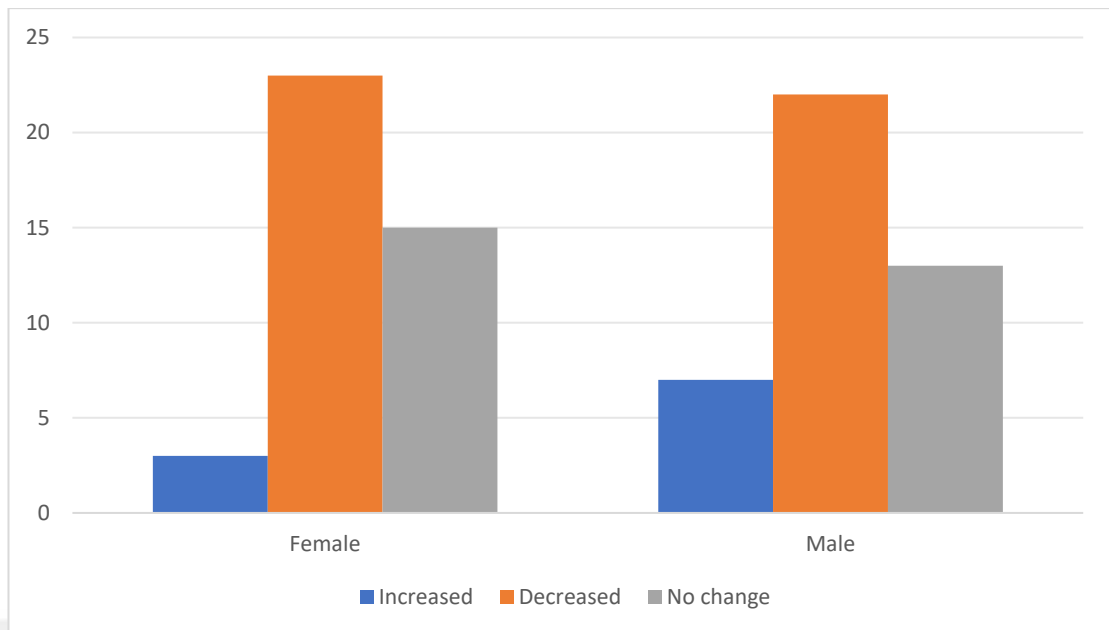


Figure 4.16. Impact of Covid-19 on Motivation by Gender

Females and males experienced a relatively similar decrease in motivation due to COVID-19 (23 for females, 22 for males).

More males (7) reported an increase in motivation compared to females (3). Indicating a slightly more positive response to changes caused by the pandemic among male respondents.

Table 4.17. Industry sector of respondent * Motivation change due to COVID-19 Crosstabulation

Count		Motivation change due to COVID-19			Total
		Increased	Decreased	No change	
		Increased	Decreased	No change	
Industry sector of respondent	Healthcare	2	17	8	27
	Hospitality	4	9	8	21
	Education	4	17	8	29
	Other	0	2	4	6
Total		10	45	28	83

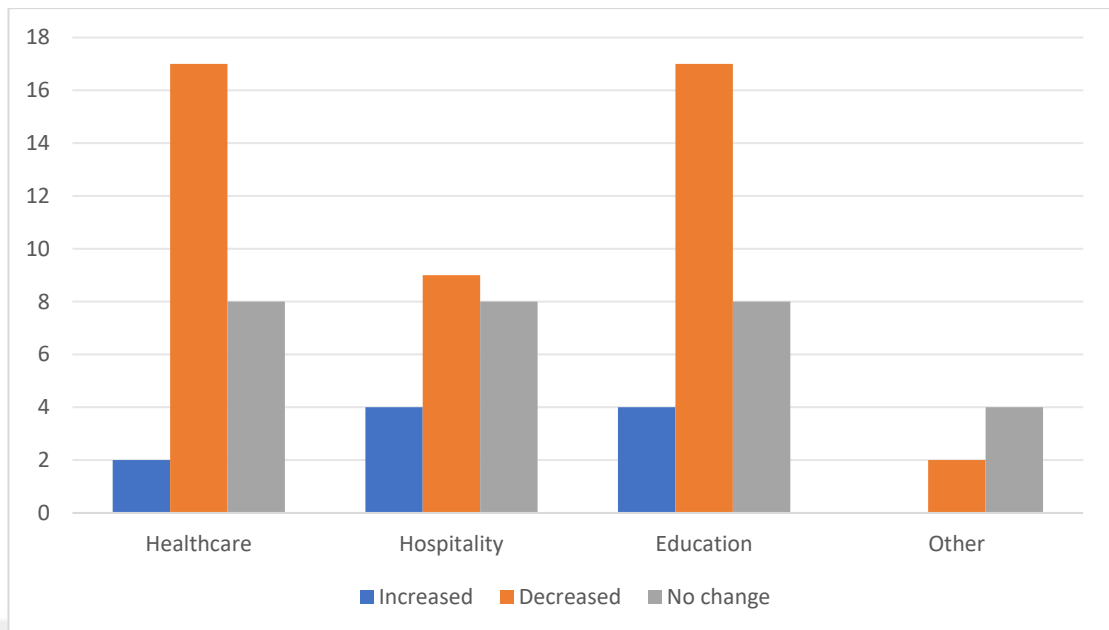


Figure 4.17. Impact of Covid 19 on Motivation by Industry

- The healthcare sector reported the most significant decrease, with 17 out of 27 respondents experiencing a decline.
- Both education and hospitality sectors also saw high decreases in motivation, with 17 and 9 respondents respectively.

➤ Satisfaction with work Post-Covid 19

Table 4.18. Age of Respondent Satisfaction with Work Environment Post-COVID-19 Crosstabulation

Count		Satisfaction with work environment post-COVID-19					Total
		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Age of respondent	Under 25	1	4	8	3	0	16
	25-34	0	16	17	4	0	37
	35-44	2	2	8	7	4	23
	45-54	0	1	0	0	0	1
	55-64	0	2	3	1	0	6
Total		3	25	36	15	4	83

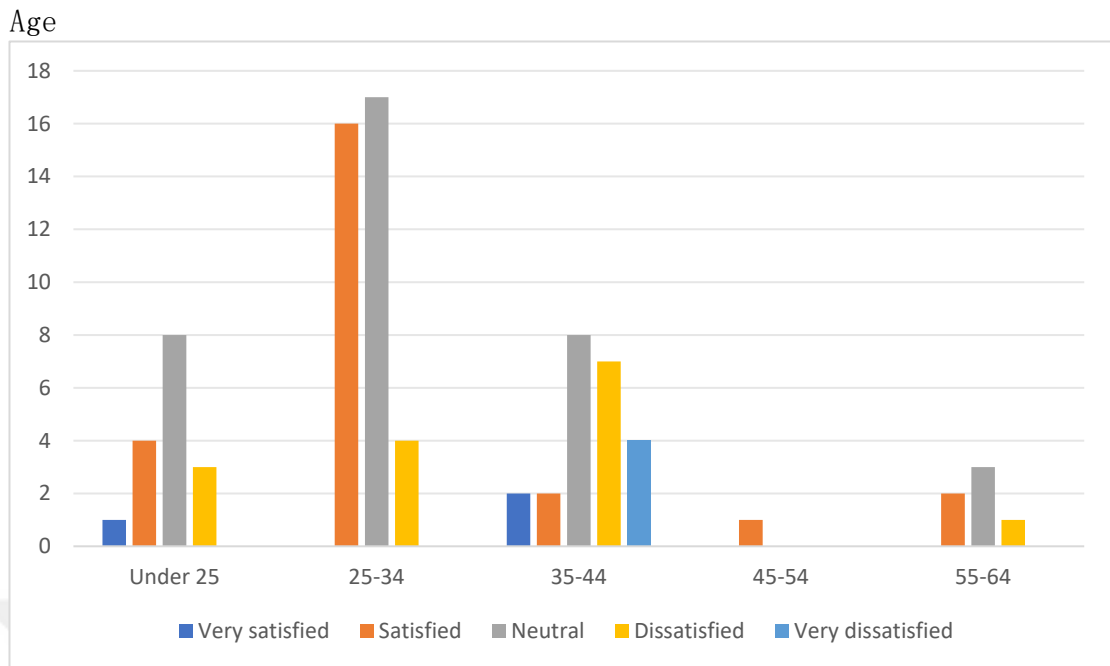


Figure 4.18. Satisfaction With Work Environment Post-Covid 19 by Age Group

- Respondents aged 25-34 were mostly satisfied (16 out of 37), but 17 reported being neutral, indicating mixed feelings about their work environment post-pandemic.
- The 35-44 group reported higher dissatisfaction, with 11 respondents dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- The under 25 group leaned toward neutral or dissatisfaction, possibly reflecting challenges in early-career roles.

Table 4.19. Gender of Respondent Satisfaction with Work Environment Post-COVID-19 Crosstabulation

Count		Satisfaction with work environment post-COVID-19					Total
		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Gender of respondent	Female	1	8	22	7	3	41
	Male	2	17	14	8	1	42
Total		3	25	36	15	4	83

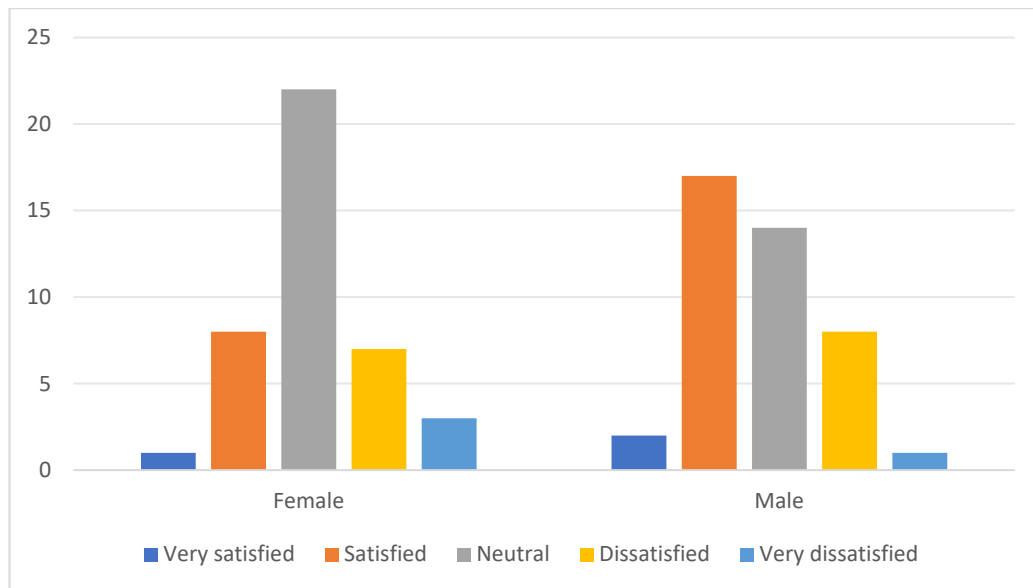


Figure 4.19. Satisfaction with Work Environment Post-Covid by Gender

- Males were more likely to report satisfaction (19 satisfied or very satisfied) compared to females (9 satisfied or very satisfied).
- A higher number of females (22) remained neutral about their post-COVID work environment, suggesting more uncertainty or ambivalence compared to males.

Table 4.20. Industry Sector of Respondent Satisfaction with Work Environment Post-COVID-19 Crosstabulation

Count		Satisfaction with work environment post-COVID-19					Total
		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Industry sector of respondent	Healthcare	0	10	12	4	1	27
	Hospitality	2	7	8	3	1	21
	Education	1	7	13	6	2	29
	Other	0	1	3	2	0	6
Total		3	25	36	15	4	83

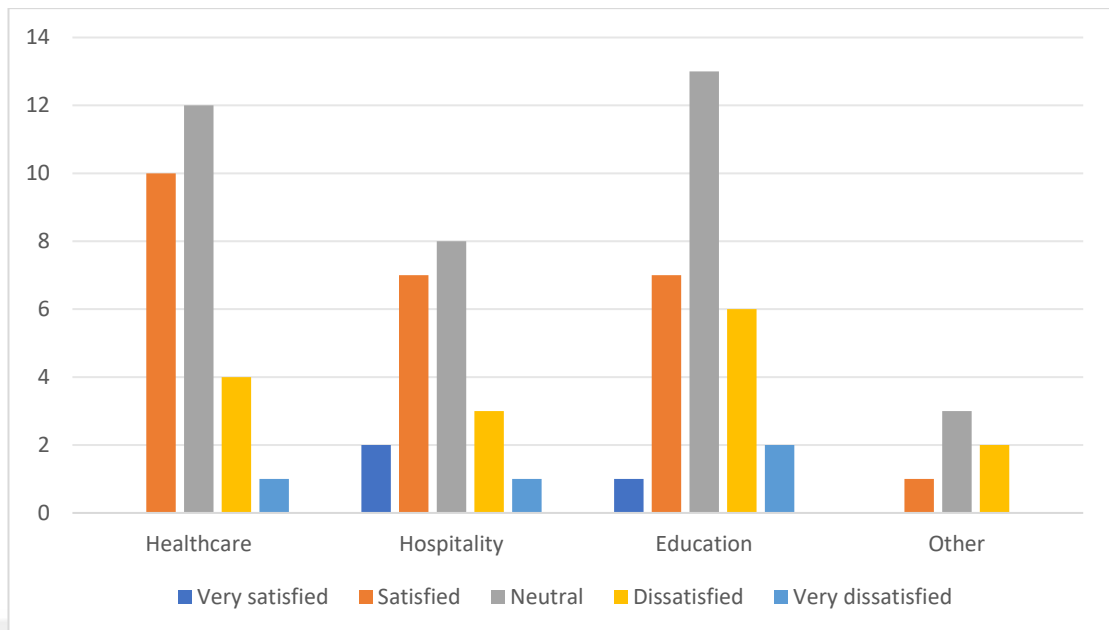


Figure 4.20. Satisfaction With Work Environment Post-Covid 19 by Industry Sector

- Healthcare and education sectors reported the highest levels of neutrality (12 and 13 respondents respectively), indicating that these sectors saw little improvement in work environments post-COVID.
- Hospitality showed some satisfaction (9 out of 21), though a significant portion remained neutral or dissatisfied.

➤ **Challenges faced**

Table 4.21. Age of Respondent Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work
Crosstabulation

Count		Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work					Total
		No challenges	Health and safety concerns	Mental health challenges and social isolation	Remote work and work-life challenges	Job insecurity and workplace challenges	
Age of respondent	Under 25	4	3	2	4	3	16
	25-34	6	7	10	9	5	37
	35-44	4	2	3	11	3	23
	45-54	0	0	0	1	0	1
	55-64	0	0	2	4	0	6
Total		14	12	17	29	11	83

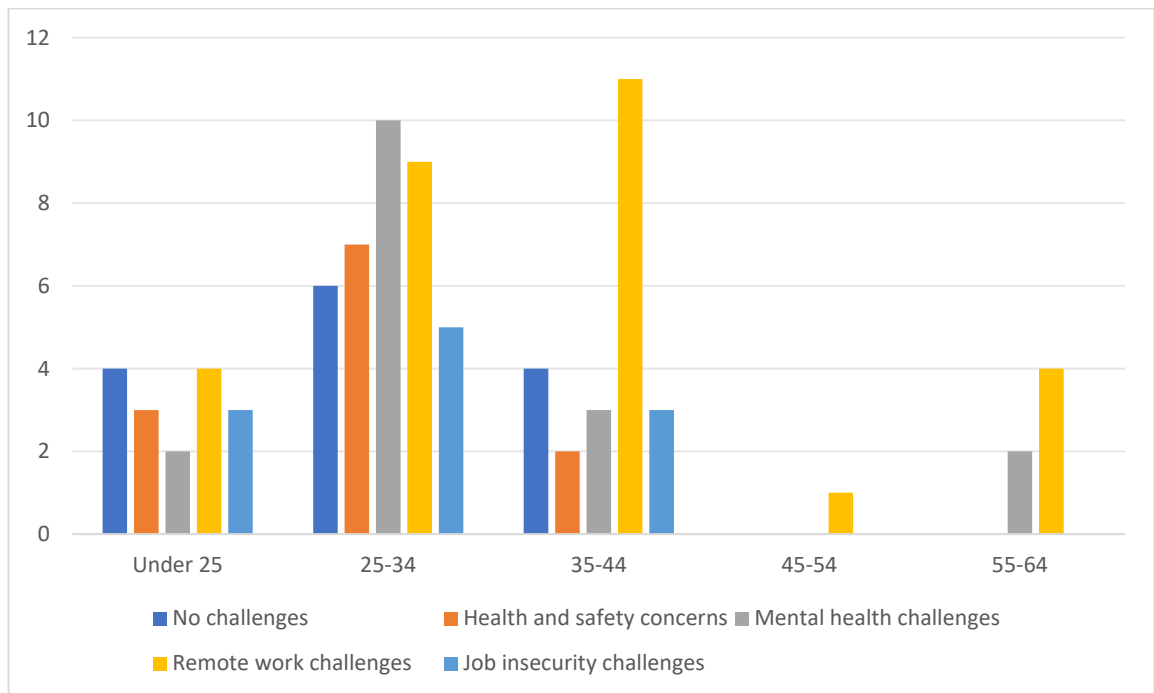


Figure 4.21. Challenges Faced to Maitain Motivation at Work By Age Group

- The 25-34 age group faced the most challenges, particularly with mental health (10 respondents) and remote work (9 respondents).
- The 35-44 age group also reported struggles with remote work (11 respondents), pointing to difficulties in balancing work-life demands.
- Younger respondents (under 25) reported a mix of health and safety concerns and job insecurity.

Table 4.22. Gender of Respondent Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work
Crosstabulation

Count		Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work					Total
		No challenges	Health and safety concerns	Mental health challenges and social isolation	Remote work and work-life challenges	Job insecurity and workplace challenges	
Gender of respondent	Female	6	8	13	9	5	41
	Male	8	4	4	20	6	42
Total		14	12	17	29	11	83

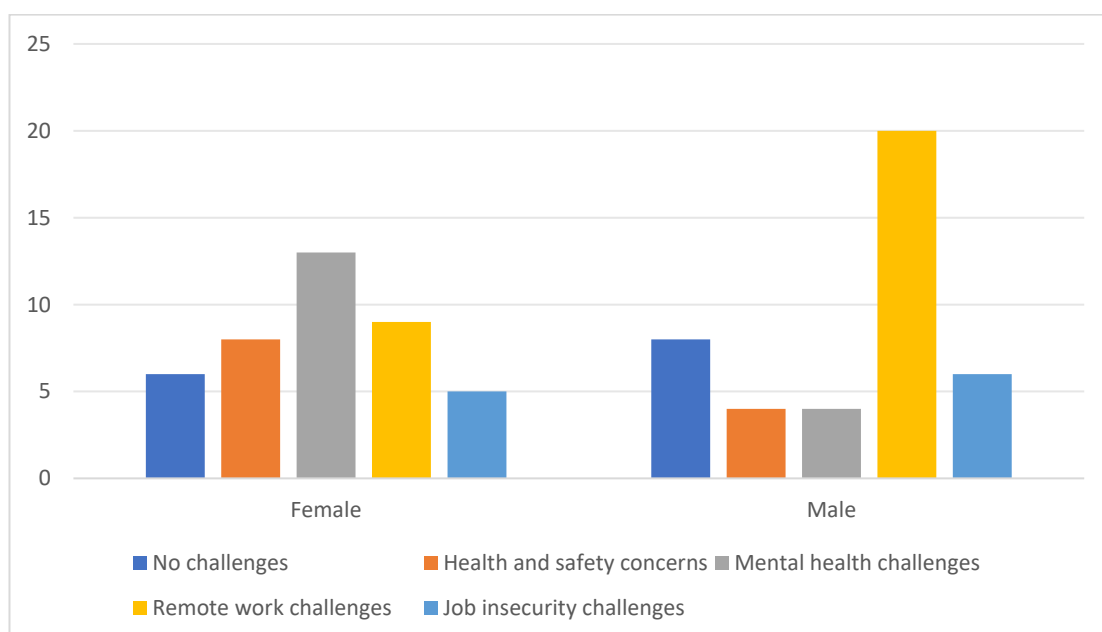


Figure 4.22. Challenges to Maitain Motivation at Work by Gender

- Females were more affected by mental health and social isolation (13 respondents), whereas males faced more remote work and work-life balance challenges (20 respondents).
- Job insecurity was slightly more prevalent among males.

Table 4.23. Industry Sector of Respondent Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work Crosstabulation

Count		Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work					Total
		No challenge s	Health and safety concerns	Mental health challenge s and social isolation	Remote work and work-life challenge s	Job insecurity and workplace challenge s	
Industry sector of respondent	Healthcare	2	7	10	4	4	27
	Hospitality	7	3	3	2	6	21
	Education	3	2	2	22	0	29
	Other	2	0	2	1	1	6
Total		14	12	17	29	11	83

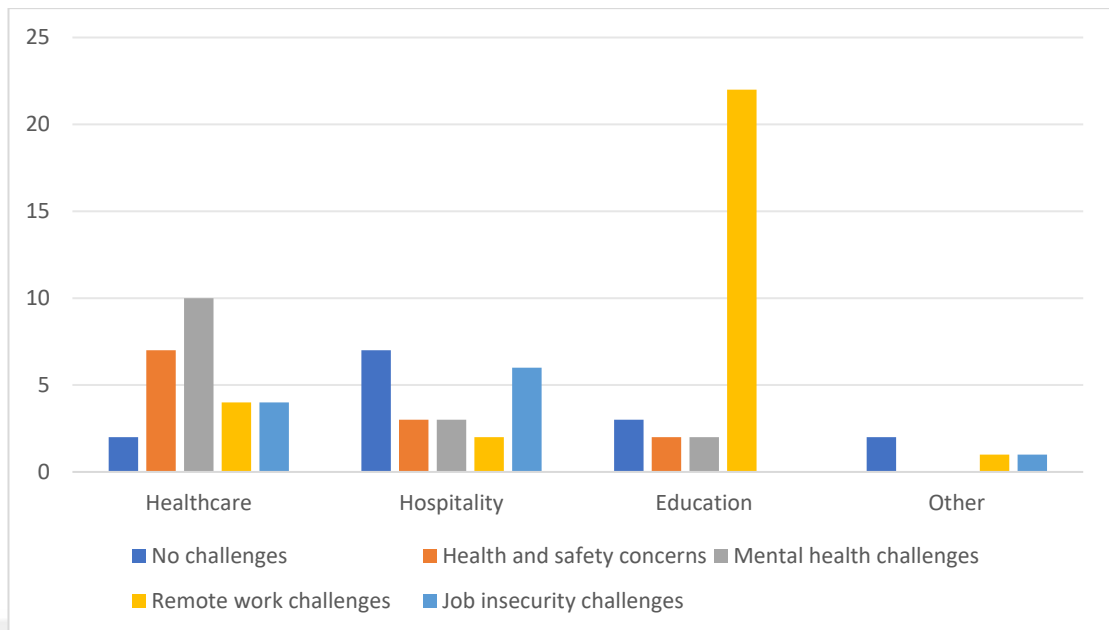


Figure 4.23. Challenges to Maintain Motivation at Work by Industry

- The healthcare sector reported significant mental health concerns (10 respondents) and health and safety issues (7 respondents).
- The education sector faced extensive challenges with remote work (22 respondents), reflecting the shift to online teaching and learning environments.
- Hospitality was affected by job insecurity, with 6 respondents indicating workplace challenges.

➤ **HR priorities:**

Table 4.24. Age of Respondent HR Priorities for Motivation and Retention Crosstabulation

Count		HR priorities for motivation and retention					Total
		Salary and compensation	Flexibility and work environment	Employee engagement and recognition	Health and safety	Career development and training	
Age of respondent	Under 25	2	5	4	0	2	13
	25-34	8	6	11	4	3	32
	35-44	3	8	7	2	0	20
	45-54	0	0	1	0	0	1
	55-64	1	1	2	0	2	6
Total		14	20	25	6	7	72

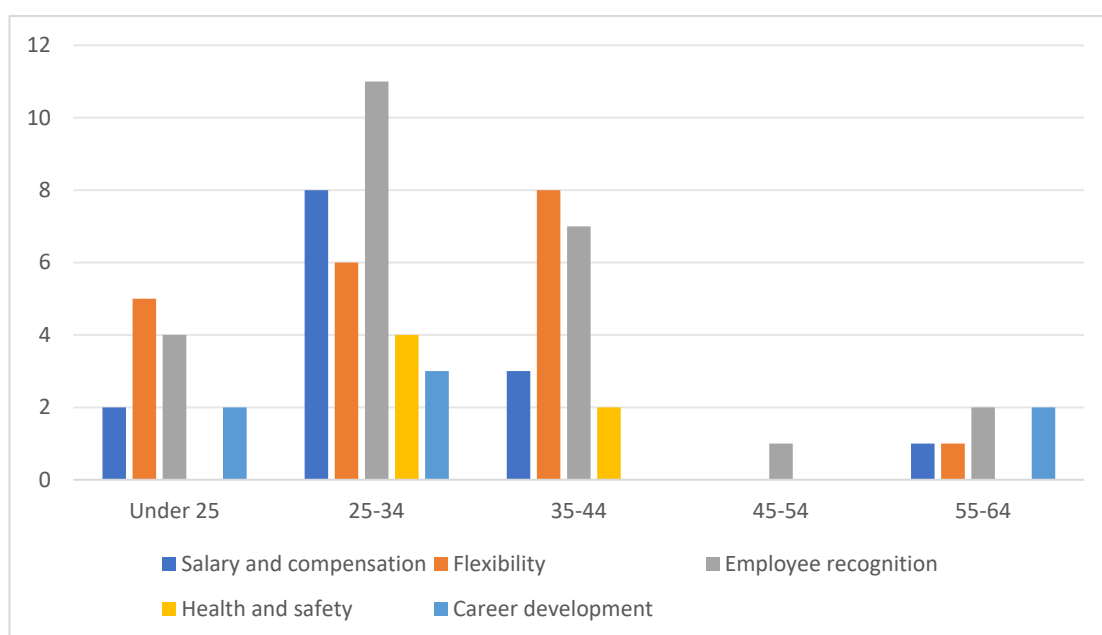


Figure 4.24. HR priorities for Motivating Employees by Age Group

- The 25-34 age group prioritized employee engagement and recognition (11 respondents), followed by salary and compensation (8 respondents).
- Flexibility and work environment were highly important to respondents aged 35-44 (8 respondents), while younger employees under 25 focused on flexibility (5 respondents).

Table 4.25. Gender of Respondent HR Priorities for Motivation and Retention Crosstabulation

Count		HR priorities for motivation and retention					Total
		Salary and compensation	Flexibility and work environment	Employee engagement and recognition	Health and safety	Career development and training	
Gender of respondent	Female	9	12	10	4	2	37
	Male	5	8	15	2	5	35
Total		14	20	25	6	7	72

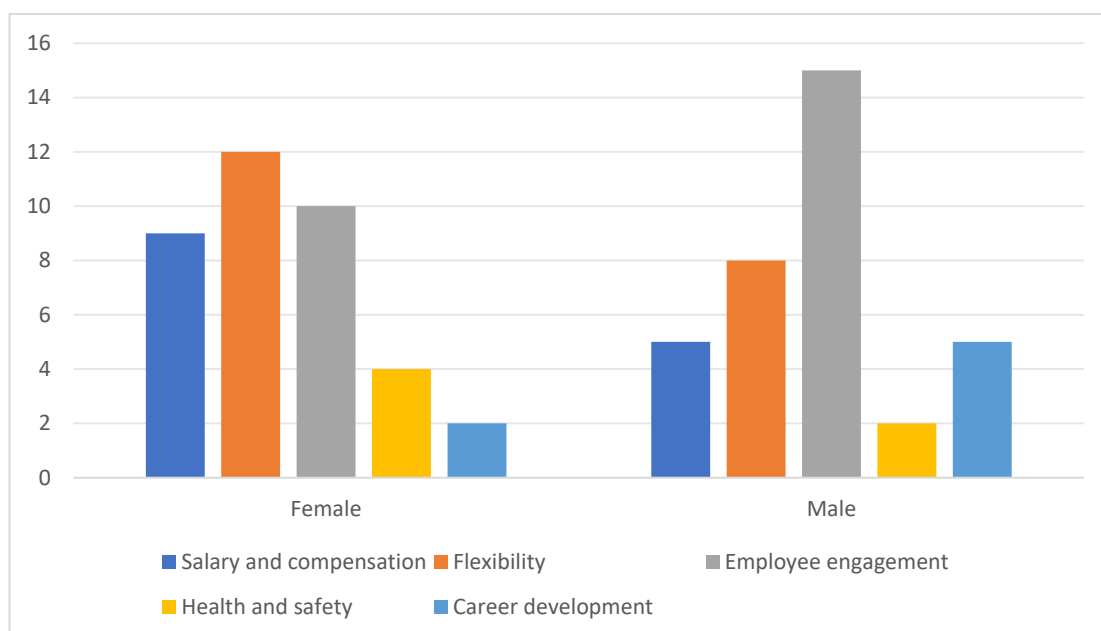


Figure 4.25. HR Priorities for Motivating Employees by Gender

- Males rated employee engagement and recognition (15 respondents) higher than females (10 respondents).
- Females placed a higher emphasis on flexibility (12 respondents) and health and safety (4 respondents).

Table 4.26. Industry Sector of Respondent HR Priorities for Motivation and Retention Crosstabulation

Count		HR priorities for motivation and retention					Total
Industry sector of respondent	Healthcare	Salary and compensation	Flexibility and work environment	Employee engagement and recognition	Health and safety	Career development and training	
	Healthcare	7	3	8	3	0	21
	Hospitality	4	4	6	3	3	20
	Education	2	11	9	0	4	26
	Other	1	2	2	0	0	5
Total		14	20	25	6	7	72

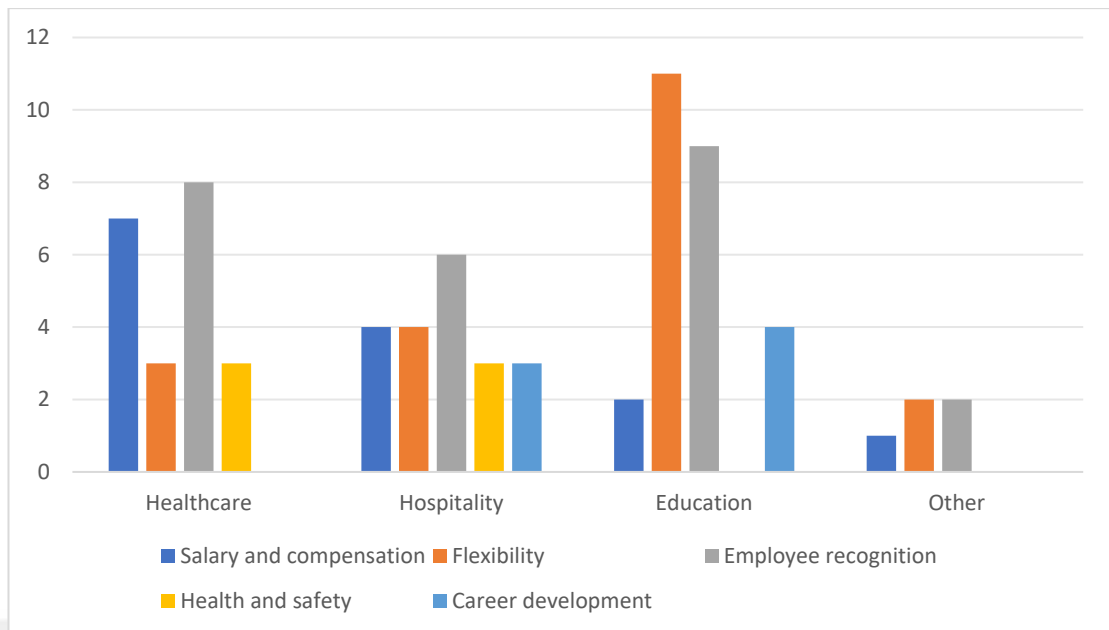


Figure 4.26. HR Priorities for Motivating Employees by Industry

- Healthcare prioritized salary and compensation (7 respondents) and employee engagement (8 respondents), reflecting a need for recognition and rewards in the sector.
- Education leaned heavily on flexibility and work environment (11 respondents) due to the shift to remote teaching.
- Hospitality focused on both salary and flexibility (4 respondents each), with employee engagement also a key priority.

Table 4.27. New Measures to Improve Motivation and Retention During the Pandemic Effectiveness of Measures Crosstabulation

Count		Effectiveness of measures			Total
		Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective	
New measures to improve motivation and retention during the pandemic	Flexible work arrangement and wellness programs	3	6	1	10
	Health and safety measures	3	5	2	10
	Support and communication	2	5	2	9
Total		8	16	5	29

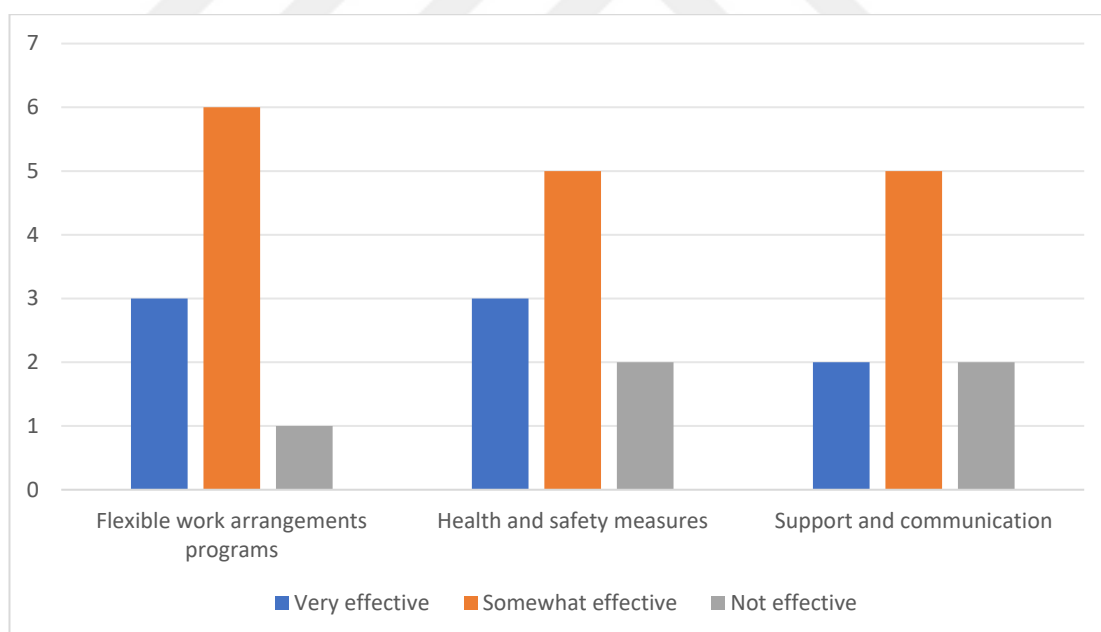


Figure 4.27. Effectiveness of Measures to Improve Motivation During the Pandemic

This cross-tabulation examines how well three measures implemented during the pandemic have worked.

- **Flexible Work Arrangements and Wellness Programs**

Most respondents (9 out of 10) stated that these actions were highly effective or moderately effective, showing that the flexibility and wellness programs greatly impacted employee motivation and retention employee motivation and retention.

- **Measures for Health and Safety**

8 out of 10 respondents found these measures effective, but 2 respondents rated them as not effective, suggesting that while health and safety were valued, some employees were dissatisfied with their implementation.

- **Support and Communication**

7 out of 9 respondents rated this positively, but 2 respondents found it not effective, indicating that communication and support, though generally helpful, may need improvement.

In summary, most employees viewed the new measures as effective, with flexible work arrangements and wellness programs being the most successful. Health and safety measures were also well-received but had more mixed reviews, and support and communication could benefit from better implementation to meet employee needs.

4.4. Central Tendencies Measurement

Central tendencies are utilized to display the average and variability of all the questions in the surveys. The average is obtained by summing all the values in the dataset and then dividing by the total number of participants, which makes it a reliable portrayal of the data. A higher standard deviation signifies greater variability in responses, measuring the distance from the mean. **SPSS software version 24** was used to calculate the average and variance for every question.

Table 4.28. Central Tendencies Measurement of Motivation Change

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation change due to COVID-19	83	2.22	0.645

According to Table 4.17, the mean score of motivation change caused by COVID-19 is 2.22, suggesting a moderate shift in motivation. The responses showed a degree of consistency with a standard deviation of 0.645.

Table 4.29. Central Tendencies Measurement of Satisfaction

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Satisfaction with work environment post-COVID	83	2.90	0.905

Table 4.18 displays a mean score of 2.90 for satisfaction with the work environment after COVID-19, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction. The standard deviation of 0.905 points to a variability in experiences among participants.

Table 4.30. Central Tendencies Measurement of Adaptation

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adaptation to pandemic changes	83	1.30	0.462

According to Table 4.19, the average score for adjusting to pandemic changes is 1.30, suggesting that the majority of participants believed their workplaces did not adapt well. A small standard deviation of 0.462 indicates that the responses were fairly uniform.

Table 4.31. Central Tendencies Measurement of Challenges Faced

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work	83	3.13	1.305

Table 4.20 shows that respondents have identified significant challenges in maintaining motivation, with a mean score of 3.13. A standard deviation of 1.305 indicates greater diversity in their encounters.

Table 4.32. Central Tendencies Measurement of New Measures

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
New measures to improve motivation and retention introduced during the pandemic	83	1.65	0.480

Table 4.21 shows that the average for newly introduced measures is 1.65, indicating that not many organizations adopted these measures, with a small standard deviation of 0.480, demonstrating consensus among participants.

Table 4.33. Central Tendencies Measurement of Effectiveness

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Effectiveness of measures	83	3.27	1.083

Table 4.22 shows that the average perceived effectiveness of measures is 3.27, suggesting that most respondents view the measures as effective, with a standard deviation of 1.083, signaling varying opinions among respondents.

Table 4.34. Central Tendencies Measurement of HR Priorities

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
HR priorities for motivation and retention	72	2.61	1.181

The data in Table 4.23 indicates that there is a moderate level of consensus on HR priorities, with a mean of 2.61 and a standard deviation of 1.181, showing a range of viewpoints.

Table 4.35. Central Tendencies Measurement of Additional Support

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Additional support needed for motivation	74	3.20	1.334

The data in Table 4.24 shows that the average amount of extra support required is 3.20, indicating a perceived need for additional support among respondents, with a standard deviation of 1.334, showcasing varying opinions.

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

After collecting responses from 83 employees in various sectors in Istanbul, Turkey, the following hypotheses were tested :

Hypothesis Testing for Motivation Change Due to COVID-19

Hypothesis Statement

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** COVID-19 has not significantly impacted employee motivation levels (i.e., there is no substantial change in motivation).
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** COVID-19 has significantly impacted employee motivation levels (i.e., motivation has either increased or decreased as a result of the pandemic).

Methodology

To assess the impact of COVID-19 on employee motivation, a one-sample t-test was conducted using survey data. The motivation levels were categorized as follows:

- 1 = Increased
- 2 = Decreased
- 3 = No Change

The one-sample t-test compares the mean motivation change score of the respondents against a known value (in this case, the neutral value of 3).

Table 4.36. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation change due to COVID-19	83	2.22	.645	.071

Table 4.37. One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Motivation change due to COVID-19	-11.064	82	.000	-.783	-.92	-.64

The analysis had the following results:

- **Sample Size (N):** 83
- **Mean Motivation Change:** 2.22
- **Standard Deviation:** 0.645
- **Standard Error Mean:** 0.071

T-Test Statistics:

- **t-value:** 31.321
- **Degrees of Freedom (df):** 82
- **p-value (2-tailed):** 0.000

Interpretation

The findings show that the neutral value of 3 is considerably higher than the mean motivation change score of 2.22. The p-value of 0.000 is below the significance level of 0.05, and the t-test resulted in a t-value of 31.321. Since the p-value is lower than the threshold for significance, **we reject the null hypothesis (H₀).**

This results in our support for the **alternative hypothesis (H₁)** that posits a notable disparity in the average motivation level between COVID-19 and 3. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reduction in motivation, evidenced by the average motivation score of 2.22. Since most survey participants reported a decrease in their drive, it can be inferred that the pandemic has adversely impacted employee motivation.

Testing hypotheses related to difficulties in keeping motivation in the workplace.

Hypothesis Testing for Challenges Faced to Maintain Motivation at Work

Hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): During the COVID-19 pandemic, employees do not experience major difficulties in staying motivated at work (mean = 1).

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): During the COVID-19 pandemic, employees have a difficult time staying motivated at work (mean $\neq$ 1).

Table 4.38. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work	83	3.13	1.305	.143

One-Sample Statistics results:

- N: 83
- Mean: 3.13
- Std. Deviation: 1.3

Table 4.39. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Challenges faced to maintain motivation at work	14.893	82	.000	2.133	1.85	2.42

- Std. Error Mean: 0.143

One-Sample Test results :

- Test Value = 1
- t: *14.893
- df: 82
- Sig. (2-tailed): 0.000
- Mean Difference: 2.133
- 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference: Lower = 1.85, Upper = 2.42

Interpretation:

The purpose of the one-sample t-test was to determine if the average difficulties employees faced in staying motivated at work deviated significantly from a value of 1 (which denotes "no challenges"). The test value of 1 ($t(82) = 14.893$, $p < 0.001$) is substantially lower than the mean of 3.13 ($SD = 1.305$) found in the results.

In light of this finding, we are forced to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1), indicating that workers will undoubtedly encounter considerable difficulties in staying motivated at work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges Faced:

The values in SPSS corresponding to specific challenges are as follows:

- 1 = No Challenges
- 2 = Health and Safety Issues

- 3 = Mental Health Concerns
- 4 = Remote Work Issues
- 5 = Job Insecurity

Given the mean response of 3.13, it indicates that the most common challenge faced by employees is related to mental health, followed closely by health and safety issues and remote work concerns.



5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The study's conclusions and recommendations are presented in this chapter. It starts with an overview of the findings and moves into a discussion of how the findings relate to the research questions.

5.2. Summary of Results

This study set out to look into how COVID-19 affected employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention issues in a variety of demographic contexts. A questionnaire served as the main tool for gathering data in this quantitative study design. The following research questions are addressed by the findings:

Question 1: How has COVID-19 affected employee motivation and satisfaction? According to the results, a considerable proportion of participants reported feeling less motivated during the pandemic, with 45 out of 83 respondents, or 54.2%, expressing a decrease in motivation. This demonstrates how widespread COVID-19's effects are on worker morale.

Variations in Demographics: Age Differences: Of the 37 respondents, 19 indicated a decrease in motivation, with the 25–34 age group reporting the largest decline. This indicates that adjusting to remote work environments was more difficult for younger employees, who were probably in critical career development stages. On the other hand, the 45–54 age group demonstrated resilience; perhaps as a result of their more established roles, only one respondent reported feeling less motivated.

Gender Responses: Twenty-three women and twenty-two men reported declining motivation, which was largely consistent across the board.

Industry-Specific Results:

The industry with the biggest decline in motivation was the healthcare sector, where difficulties were reported by 17 out of 27 respondents. This illustrates the extreme strain that healthcare professionals endured throughout the pandemic. Similarly, with 17 and 9 respondents, respectively, the education and hospitality sectors also reported significant drops in motivation.

Question 2: What challenges do employees face in maintaining motivation during the pandemic? The data reveals that challenges related to remote work and mental health were prevalent, particularly among the 25–34 age group, with 10 respondents citing mental health as a major concern. This emphasizes how critical it is to address psychological health in the workplace.

General Trends:

- The majority of respondents indicated **remote work and work-life balance challenges** as the primary issue impacting motivation, with **34.9%** (29 participants) identifying this as a significant challenge. This reflects the disruption of traditional work-life boundaries during the pandemic.
- Additionally, **mental health challenges and social isolation** were reported by **20.5%** (17 participants), underscoring the psychological impacts of the pandemic on employees.
- **Health and safety concerns** affected **14.5%** (12 participants), while **job insecurity** impacted **13.3%** (11 participants). A small percentage (**16.9%**, or 14 participants) reported experiencing no challenges.
- **Question 3: What are the HR priorities for enhancing employee motivation and retention?**

Employee Engagement and Recognition emerged as the most significant priority, with **25 respondents** (30.1%) emphasizing the importance of regular feedback and formal recognition programs to boost morale and enhance motivation.

Following closely, **Flexibility and Work Environment** was highlighted by **20 respondents** (24.1%), indicating that flexible work arrangements are crucial for maintaining motivation in today's workforce.

Salary and Compensation were noted by **14 respondents** (16.9%), underscoring the need for fair and competitive compensation to retain employees.

Career Development and Training and **Health and Safety** were also important, cited by **7 respondents** (8.4%) and **6 respondents** (7.2%) respectively, reflecting a desire for professional growth opportunities and improved health measures.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Tailored Support Programs:** Companies should put in place peer support groups and counseling services as well as other focused mental health support programs for younger staff members.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Promote adaptability by implementing hybrid work models that enable staff members to successfully manage personal and professional obligations.
- **Sector-Specific Initiatives:** To increase engagement, create wellness programs that address mental health issues in industries like healthcare and invest in training for remote work in education.
- **Employee Recognition Programs:** Formal recognition programs should be established in order to recognize employee contributions and promote a positive work environment.
- **Job Security Communication:** To address concerns, organizations should provide resources for skill development and maintain open lines of communication regarding job security.

6.1. Conclusion and Call for Further Studies

This study enhances our understanding of the dynamics affecting employee motivation and retention in the post-COVID landscape. To further refine strategies for effective employee engagement and capture a wider range of experiences, future research should be conducted in diverse sectors and geographic regions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are various restrictions that come with this research.

Size of the sample :

The 83 respondents in the sample might not fully reflect the workforce as a whole or capture the range of experiences that all workers have.

Focus on geography :

The study's focus on workers in Türkiye may limit how broadly the findings can be applied.

Self-reported data.

Self-reported responses are used to collect data, which means that bias or inaccuracies may have an impact.



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APPENDIX

APPX. A: Survey

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age group?

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or over

3. What is your industry sector?

- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Hospitality
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. What is your job position?

- ☐ HR professional
- ☐ Employee

5. How has COVID-19 affected your motivation at work?

- ☐ Significantly decreased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Significantly increased

6. What are the main challenges you've faced in maintaining motivation at work during the pandemic?

_____ (Open-ended)

7. How satisfied are you with your current work environment post-COVID-19?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

8. Has your workplace adapted well to changes brought about by the pandemic?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

9. Has your organization introduced any new measures to improve motivation and retention during the pandemic?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. If yes, what are the measures? (Please specify)

- _____ (Open-ended)

11. Do you believe these measures have been effective in improving motivation and retention?

- Yes, very effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective

12. What do you think should be the priority for HR in the near future to improve employee motivation and retention?

- _____ (Open-ended)

13. What additional support would help you feel more motivated at work?

- _____ (Open-ended)

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

Name Surname: Niama ADEL

EDUCATION STATUS

Bachelor's Degree: 2021 in International Management, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech

Master's Degree: 2024, in International Business management, Haliç University, Istanbul

OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE

English Teacher – Genç Academy, Istanbul

(January 2023 - March 2023)

- Designed tailored English lessons for Turkish students
- Fostered a positive and inclusive learning environment to enhance communication and interaction

Customer Service Representative – Venture Dış Ticaret, Istanbul

(July 2022 - September 2022)

- Engaged with French-speaking clients, promoted services, and handled customer inquiries

Sales Representative – Hotel Es Saadi, Marrakech

(June 2019 - August 2019)

- Engaged with customers, provided information on services
- Organized events and promotions to attract potential clients

Assistant to the Account Manager – BMCE Bank, Marrakech

(July 2018 - September 2018)

- Gained exposure to industry dynamics and service delivery with a focus on customer relations

VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Amal Association for Children with Leukemia – Marrakech, Morocco

(January 2019 – Present)

- Orchestrated events for children with leukemia, providing games and music to uplift them
- Contributed to creating a positive environment and lasting memories for families

Roca's Roja Hotel / Pastoral Vadi Ecological Yoga Farm – Fethiye, Turkey

(July 2023 - September 2023)

- Coordinated events at Roca's Roja Hotel
- Participated in agricultural work at Pastoral Vadi, enhancing environmental and mental health awareness

LANGUAGES

Arabic: Native

French: Native

English: C2

Turkish: B2

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Software: MS Word (Advanced), MS PowerPoint (Advanced), MS Excel (Proficient).

Interests: Travelling, Volunteering, Reading...