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## Motivation Factors towards Organizational Effectiveness during COVID-19 Pandemic among Academic Staff in Private Colleges in Malaysia

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### **Abstract:**

*Purpose – The COVID-19 pandemic has raised significant global challenges for the higher education community. A particular challenge has been the urgent and unexpected request for previously face-to-face university courses to be taught online. Correspondingly, motivation is required for the various reasons, preferences, and behaviours in this innovative trend of teaching and learning. Hence, this study aims to understand academicians demographic profile, exposure to techniques of online learning, facilities at home, and infrastructure, which are crucial tools to discover issues to guarantee remote learning can be executed and accomplished effectively and efficiently.*

*Design/methodology/approach – Descriptive quantitative method is employed in the study because it provides a systematic accuracy that describes the phenomenon of the current study. The study also systematically explores the different transitions of the Covi-19 pandemic in the implementation and readiness of online learning for academicians, especially the baby boomers. Findings – The outcomes show that flexible work schedules, challenging work, open communication, commitment, teamwork, and mentoring may be key to positively affecting organizational effectiveness. The findings clarify how the educator's motivation level could affect the performance of the higher educational institution in Malaysia.*

*Research limitations/implications – Research are encouraged to test the proposed model to provide better support for educators.*

*Practical implications – The study indicates a conceptual configuration for policymakers as well as managers to build the educator's motivation and increase the organization's effectiveness. The study outcomes also provide the college management with the necessary and appropriate actions to achieve organizational performance through the framework governed by underlying theories.*

*Social implications – The conceptual model may be able to generate more social values, considering a holistic education and aligning with sustainable development goals (SDGs).*

**Keywords:** Online learning, COVID-19, higher education, motivation, baby boomers

### **1. Introduction**

Beginning on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the central legislature of Malaysia implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) (Majlis Keselamatan Negara, 2020) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the many upheld ways to control the spread of the COVID-19 infection are the stay-at-home decision and the restriction on mass social occasions (Majlis Keselamatan Negara, 2020). The Covid illness has influenced the advanced education sector in Malaysia altogether. Accordingly, the public authority had made conclusive moves in instructing and learning wherein the advanced education area in Malaysia embraces blended learning. Blended learning replacement alludes to the utilization of online teaching and learning (T&L) to supplant the regular face-to-face (f2f) T&L meetings. This proposition is in accordance with the Malaysian Qualification Agency's (MQA) circular (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020) on permitting 30% - 80% of the Student Learning Time (SLT) to be conveyed utilizing blended learning in replacement mode.

Keeping focused and motivated are the two fundamental difficulties educators are encountering because they got to shift from face-to-face learning to virtual and remote strategy because of COVID-19 (Sani, 2020). While some have adjusted well to this new norm, many are wrestling with technical issues, especially the baby boomers. This age of educators requires reliable communication with management and peers. A 2021 report by the New Straits Times expresses that many academics wear out due to having a lot of work on their plates, such as teaching, marking, researching, writing, publishing, and many more (Hasan. M, 2021). Online infrastructure and suitable facilities are key in forcing educators to enable organizational effectiveness.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF's objective is to maximize the online learning environment and offers motivational support to educators (UNICEF, 2020). The unexpected change to blended learning has prompted insignificant outcomes, especially for educators to unusually fine-tune to a novel situation. Correspondingly, motivation is required for the various reasons, preferences, and behaviors in this innovative trend of teaching and learning. Therefore, understanding academician demographic profile, exposure to techniques of online learning, facilities at home, and infrastructure are crucial tools to discover issues to guarantee remote learning can be executed and accomplished effectively and efficiently.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Organizational Effectiveness

Employee motivation impacts the effectiveness of an organization (Paul, 2017). Organizational effectiveness is a wide term, yet this study follows the concept that motivated educators are more creative as they continually search for better approaches to completing a task. (Boundless, 2017). A viable organization will ensure that there is an assurance of collaboration and a feeling of responsibility and fulfillment inside the circle of its impact (Abbah, 2014). There are no fixed parameters to figure the viability of an organization as it changes from firm to firm and from one case to another. However, it very well may be utilized to gauge anything inside an organization, from leadership, communication, accountability, metrics, and human performance, to the delivery systems (Anderson & Adams, 2015). In this research, the emphasis is mainly on human performance, particularly on the part of educators' motivation. The purpose is to demonstrate the relationship and make a concrete idea of educator motivation resulting in organizational effectiveness.

### 2.2. Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements remain a major concern at this present time. Studies advocating the advantages of flexible work schedules recognize these practices' positive and indirect contributions to organizational profit (Morgan, 2009). Flexible work schedules relate to ways that let people choose and handle their work schedules (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell & MacVicar, 2006). In contrast, Gardiner & Tomlinson (2009) observe that in view of hours of work, in light of these schedules, the worker is permitted to have some authority over their work and can settle on the circumstance just as where the work ought to be finished (Lambert, Marler, & Gueutal, 2008).

Furthermore, employee demographic characteristics that must be connected to flexible work schedules include gender, age, education, and marital and family status. By offering flexible work schedules, particularly to the baby boomers, organizations indicate that they favor educators' well-being. Intrinsically, past research revealed that flexible work schedule accessibility negatively correlates to organizational effectiveness (McNall et al., 2010). According to Allen (2001), employees using flexible work schedules may be recognized as less committed to their organization and work.

In addition, perceived work flexibility predicts better sleep behaviors, physical activity, and participation in stress management practices (Grzywacz, Carlson & Shulkin, 2008). In a previous study outlined by Tee (2014), it was stated that there is a significant relationship between flexible work arrangements towards organizational effectiveness since the increase in job satisfaction of employees will encourage employees to hold their current position. Concerning COVID-19 lockdowns, in Malaysia, the academic staff have the freedom to work from home (WFH), convey teaching, and become allied with their students anywhere they want (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

### 2.3. Online Infrastructure

Online learning gives benefits to both lecturers and students. The HEIs likewise acquire gains during the execution of new learning techniques, which is further profitable with a large audience and no necessities of physical infrastructure. (Misko et al., 2004). Moreover, Iqbal and Ahmad (2010) reiterated that online learning has an insignificant relationship with organizational effectiveness. This is because of the fact that numerous education institutions encounter an insufficient supply of e-learning facilities, for instance, very effective tools and Internet connections. This is supported by Randy (2011); some baby boomer educators have weak computer literacy and self-motivation, which influenced them to gain access to online learning.

However, according to Azhari and Ming (2015), the online learning demand has been expanding because of exclusive functionality by providing the best other option while simultaneously accomplishing organization effectiveness. This research is essential to examine the challenges Malaysian HEIs educators face during the pandemic and provides insight to the Malaysian government in assisting online learning. For the instruction section, the outcome displayed that the lecturers showed high satisfaction with their performances during the period of COVID-19. A study in Malaysia stated that lecturers' computer and internet efficacy and personal characteristics, such as age status, affect organizational effectiveness (Lau & Shaikh, 2012). Past empirical studies support that online infrastructure is connected to organization effectiveness. The study of Kinman (2014) and Nikunen (2012) indicated that online infrastructure positively affects organizations' effectiveness by providing training in education sectors.

### 2.4. Consistent Communication

Various organizations concede that consistent communication is the foundation of any business's success and determination. This view is supported by Brun and summers (2010), stating that the communication skills of everyone affect every individual along with organizational effectiveness. It appears reasonable to infer that absence of powerful correspondence is quite possibly the most hindering power for organizational effectiveness (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Workplace communications positively increase organization effectiveness and enhance employee satisfaction and morale.

Certainty and communication among both employees and organizations are additionally fundamental. This unification between the enterprise and the employee happens as both can best perform (Sarangi & Nayak, 2016). Employee motivation is based on belief, dependability, responsibility, and communication between an organization and its adherents. Corporations preserve build commitment by improving employee decision-making, responsibility, and openness from senior leadership. Employee engagement is the degree of excitement and dedication an employee feels toward his/her job (Chandani, Mehta, Mall, & Khokhar, 2016). Communication is a methodology that multiplies the odds of business accomplishment, sponsoring hierarchical and singular execution, efficiency, and well-being of workers.

Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) mentioned that communication has a positive effect and is vital to organizational effectiveness. Correspondingly, Tiwari and Lenka (2019) indicate that internal corporate communication, perceived communication satisfaction, knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and intrapreneurship among peers were positively associated with organizational effectiveness. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the work-from-home system is challenging for employees and organizations during this difficult situation. Therefore, the organization needs to engage their employees in refined ways with the help of various employee motivation practices, for example, lead week by week arrangement meetings, group meet-ups, whole group accumulation over video gathering for lunch, short internet game meetings, virtual difficulties, and contests (Goyal, Trivedi, Nandwani, Changulani, and Lokhandwala, 2020).

Communication, particularly in the education sector, should be concentrated on communication between educators and peers and between educators and management to develop the learning experience further and create a positive arrangement. Communication is basically the exchange of information from one person to another or group to another. As indicated by Cheney (2011), effective communication is a process of trading thoughts, considerations, information, and data to satisfy the reason or expectation in an ideal manner. In different terms, it is just the sender's demeanor or perspectives that the beneficiary sees best. Singh (2020) revealed that there is a significant relationship between consistent communication and organization effectiveness because appropriate communication channels enable employees to reduce their stress levels during this difficult time.

### 2.5. Challenging Work

Employee motivation is a workplace attitude that ensuing all adherents of an organization to give of their greatness consistently, dedicated toward their organization's objectives and values. Due to lockdown, most private colleges provide the facility for academic staff to work from home. However, working from home is more challenging for academic staff due to the remote teaching platform (Segura, 2000). According to Crawford, Barker, & Seyam (2014), a lot of effort has been made to coordinate classes in virtual classrooms such as time, management, media, and engage the material with full online classes.

Correspondingly, to deal with online learning challenges, Huang et al., (2020) recommends that governments and education providers need to conduct online training and support academic staff focusing on online education, especially with strategies to assist educators with online learning challenges. Previous findings (Abraham, 2012; Anitha, 2014; Echols, 2005; Haid & Sims, 2009) discovered that challenging work commitment had a significant positive effect on organization effectiveness. In addition, they are highly committed to mirroring the organization's core values, which resultantly builds brand value (Ramanujam, 2014).

### 2.6. Commitment

According to studies, teachers or instructors who are devoted, responsible, or accountable for their classroom and pupils are more effective in the classroom and with their students. According to numerous studies, commitment and duties ensure quality or effective classroom management and instructional efficacy. According to the findings of a survey by Sturman (2020), school instructors' lecturers in Higher Education Institutions are more accountable and involved than primary teachers. Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that teachers' tasks and responsibilities have an impact on their quality of life as well as their working hours.

In Himachal Pradesh, Sood and Anand (2010) investigated the factor of professional commitment among Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Teacher Educators. The results revealed that B. Ed. teacher educators in Himachal Pradesh have moderate professional dedication. Significant differences were found in the professional commitment of B. Ed. However, qualified and non-qualified educators were found to have a similar level of commitment to their profession. Exemplary instructors have been reported to favor student achievement and pre-service educators' decisions to pursue a career in education (Niemi, H 2020).

### 2.7. Age

Previous research by Weeks et al. (2017) suggested a general discernment among groups that baby boomers are superior at technology, performing multiple tasks, and utilizing technology. Results likewise demonstrated that baby boomers have a more grounded, hard-working attitude, conceivably showing that baby boomers have more of a long-term view of motivation, leading to higher organizational effectiveness. Baby boomers are giving an astounding chance to younger ages to assume a more critical part in the work environment upon the boomers' retirement at a record rate and speed (Flippin, 2017). Results showed that the overall impact has much more positivity on online teaching and learning, digital marking, consultation hours, and assessments where baby boomers are ready for a change and generate organizational effectiveness. Gibson et al. (2009) also indicate that educators and baby boomers are equally comfortable with distance learning and traditional classroom delivery methods. This study fills in the gap by investigating the impact of age on educators' positive attitudes, focusing on the moderation effect that age plays in the relationship between HR development practices and organizational effectiveness.

### 3. Theoretical Perspectives of the Study

#### 3.1. Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

According to Mukururi (2014), this theory has endeavoured to clarify satisfaction and organizational effectiveness in the workplace driven by various issues, which are motivation and hygiene factors. According to Herzberg, job satisfaction is achieved by building motivation elements such as accountability, accomplishment, acknowledgment, and work (Nelson & Quick, 2010). These elements can challenge people to grow and contribute to the organization. Meanwhile, hygiene factors usually include several attributes of the working environment: pay, compensation and benefits, company policies, supervisory practice, and other working conditions. Generally, individual differences, such as age, sex, societal position, education, or occupational level, may impact the characterization of factors.

#### 3.2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is critical for comprehension of human inspiration, management training, and personal development. Maslow reiterated that people are motivated by unmet wants in a hierarchical order that prevents us from being motivated by a need area unless all lower-level needs have been met (Smith, 2010). However, the hierarchy is generally shown as reaching five main levels: physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization, which is placed at the highest level. This theory explains an employee who only concentrates on working.

#### 3.3. Elton Mayo

Corresponding theories done by Elton Mayo (1880 - 1949) held that separated from bringing in cash, laborers could be propelled better by having their social requirements met while at work. This is something that Taylor disregarded. By presenting the Human Relations School of thought, the center moved to taking a greater interest in specialists and regarding them as individuals with beneficial sentiments. A need was additionally given to laborers' communication with each other. Mayo did a progression of examinations at the Hawthorne Factory of the Western Electric Company in Chicago, where he secluded two ladies' gatherings and considered the impact of changing elements, for example, lighting and working conditions, on their usefulness levels.

While his clarification was to observe a decrease in efficiency levels as lighting and different conditions deteriorated, the outcome was that the usage levels of laborers continued as before or improved. This drove Mayo to distinguish some non-monetary helpers as: Enhanced correspondence – among chiefs and laborers (Hawthorne laborers were counseled about the analyses and had the chance to give input) and Greater director contribution to representative working lives (Hawthorne laborers reacted to the expanded degree of consideration they were getting).

#### 3.4. McClelland's Motivational Needs Theory

This theory has greatly impacted the success of healthy, challenging needs (Hassan et al., 2011). This theory explains the need for employee responsibilities to work on the job. This theory has emphasized the need for achievement, power, and affiliation to measure their degree of motivation to satisfy individual or societal goals. Fundamentally, there are three features to consider for individual high-need achievement. First and foremost, setting tough yet achievable goals. Second, getting feedback on their improvement, and third, not allowing other people's interference with their goals. Therefore, they require a high motivation to create organizational effectiveness in the workplace by encouraging commitment and responsibilities to the employees.

### 4. Proposed Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework for this study is developed to explain the causal relationship among the dependent, independent, and moderating variables. The following conceptual framework (Figure 1) has been developed from past studies. Flexible work arrangements, online infrastructure, consistent communication, and challenging work were posited as independent variables that may affect dependent variables on organizational effectiveness. However, this study would like to propose age (baby boomers) as a mediator in the conceptual framework. This framework has put the direction of this study to determine the relationship between these variables. Meanwhile, it also leads to the development of the hypothesized framework for this study.

Based on Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, practices that can improve organizational effectiveness through alternative forms of work schedules are known as flexible work arrangements. FWAs can directly or indirectly affect both organizational and individual (behavioral and work-related) beneficial outcomes (Kattenbach et al., 2010; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Outcomes of FWAs on organization effectiveness can be classified into non-financial performance and financial performance. Absenteeism, turnover, and retention have been the most frequently studied non-financial performance variables in the context of flexible arrangements. The idea is that without options for flexibility at the workplace, employees will try to improve their work-life balance by reducing the amount of work and reporting they are sick even when they are not (Battisti & Vallanti, 2013). Next, the factors that constitute quality service in HEIs, namely, teaching quality, facilities, support staff quality, and communication, closely correspond with the hierarchy of needs presented by Abraham Harold Maslow in his theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943, 1965).

Moreover, De Jager and Gbadamosi (2010) found a significant relationship between online infrastructure and organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the communication factor directly affects the organization's well-being because it is a central means by which organizations organize and structure themselves and simultaneously adapt themselves to unstable environments, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is demonstrated in the real motivation

behind Mayo's theory. Along Jain (2015) studied that there is a significant effect of consistent communication on organizational effectiveness. In the 21st century, consistent communication is important to organizational effectiveness (Kay & Rusette, 2000; Liu & Mattila, 2016; Moncarz, 2007; Rudd & Mills, 2015). In addition, a workforce with high achievement motivation tends to be interested in doing challenging work. In other words, studies have shown that challenging work is positively related to organizational effectiveness. The effect of challenging work toward organizational effectiveness is supported by Patil, Philip, et al. (2017), Twenge et al. (2010), Weber (2017), and Ng et al. (2010).

Generally, individual differences, such as age, sex, societal position, education, or occupational level, may impact the characterization of factors. The Motivation-hygiene theory supports the moderating variable of age. The motivation-hygiene theory assumes that if organizations provide environments whereby academic staff can be more intrinsically motivated, the motivation factor will be positively impacted, leading to increased organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, the factor of age at work and the aging workforce have significantly affected organizational effectiveness (Rudolph, Marcus, & Zacher, 2018).

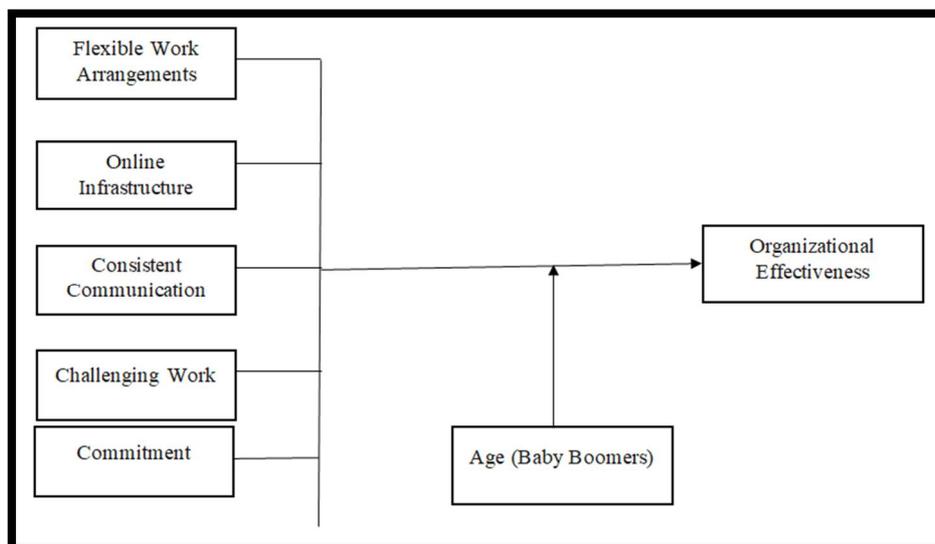


Figure 1

Source(s): Formulated by Author

## 5. Theoretical Implications

Notwithstanding, there were indeed no clear distinctions concerning how baby boomers between the ages of 57 and 75 could have impacted the findings or if there were any age differences in the use of technology or performing various tasks capacity. There was a more extensive gap in the literature and an opportunity for future study on baby boomers in higher institutions relating to organizational accomplishment (Weeks et al., 2017). There is a requirement for organizations to likely comprehend if and how they need to change procedures, structures, and ways to deal with the short-term and long-term consequences of organizational effectiveness. This study is justified to assist higher institutions well comprehending generational shifts in intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affecting academic staff and organizational effectiveness.

## 6. Practical Implications

This study indicates a conceptual configuration for policymakers and managers to build the educator's motivation and increase the organization's effectiveness. The study outcomes also provide the college management with the necessary and appropriate actions to achieve organizational performance through the framework governed by underlying theories. On the other hand, this study concedes HEPs to develop a curriculum allowing lecturers to creatively use digital technology to shape new business models in furtherance of national and global agenda (Altbach & De Wit, 2020). Online teaching is an essential part of professional preparedness but not the only one. Now more than ever, universities should invest and respond to Sustainable Development Goal 4 in providing quality education.

## 7. Conclusion

This study may contribute additional data and findings to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. In this study, organizational effectiveness among academic staff in private colleges in Malaysia was examined, along with their motivation factors. Based on theoretical propositions drawn from appropriate literature, it is likely appropriate to explain the findings.

## 8. Limitation and Direction for Future Research

While this study illuminated some of the challenges educators face in the early days of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional research is needed to provide better support, preparation, and motivation for educators. For instance, what is the relationship between educators' online and blended teaching competencies (Pulham & Graham, 2020) and the quality of their teaching with technology during a Pandemic?

Finally, additional studies are needed regarding the difference in motivation and blended or online teaching, especially the baby boomers. In emergency settings, lecturers may experience trauma (Burde et al., 2019), lack typical university services, access to technology, or reliable Internet (Rush et al., 2020). These factors can significantly impact an educator's ability to support learners with technology. Exploring the difference between motivation and online teaching may help scholars and educators identify professional learning topics that can improve lecturers' feelings of preparedness for teaching in any situation moving forward.

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