Remote Working During Covid-19 Crisis: Impact of Organizational Support Mechanisms on Employee Engagement and other Work-Related Attitudes

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Abstract

Purpose: As the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated increased remote working, organizations need to use support mechanisms to facilitate new ways of working. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the organizational support mechanisms impact employee work-related attitudes in the context of remote working. As people are anxious about both lives and livelihood during this crisis, the paper also aims to analyze how anxiety impacts the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Methodology: For this purpose, responses were collected between March 25 and April 30, 2020 from a heterogeneous sample of employees (N=181) working remotely during the pandemic. Employees' perspectives on work-related attitudes and organizational support mechanisms throughout lockdown in India were captured. Structural Equation Modeling was used to analyze the data.

Findings: This study reported findings in two areas: how organizational support mechanisms (effective structure, supportive leadership, caring culture and technology) impact employees' work-related attitudes in the context of remote working during the pandemic; and how anxiety due to the crisis impacts the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Practical Implications: An immediate managerial implication of the findings suggest that it is not just technological infrastructure that facilitates remote working during a pandemic like Covid-19 but other organizational support mechanisms also have a significant impact on employee engagement. Also, there is a need for managers to create a caring, supportive, and open culture to reduce employee anxiety.

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Originality The article makes two main contributions. First, this study suggests and tests a model for boosting employee engagement leading to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for remote working in times of a pandemic. Second, the study provides suggestions for managers to apply the theoretical model.

Key words: *Remote Working, Covid-19 crisis, Employee Engagement, Job satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Organizational support mechanisms.*

1. Introduction

On 24 March 2020, a complete lockdown was announced by the Government of India in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. To contain the spread of virus and also have business continuity, most organizations were compelled to ask their employees, other than involved in essential services, to work from home (WFH) with immediate effect. This compulsory remote working at such a large scale was unprecedented and organizations as well as employees were caught off-guard as they were not familiar or did not have technological infrastructure for enabling WFH. Apart from a desktop/laptop and a Wi-Fi network, organizations needed to provide employees with malware protection software, collaboration tools, instant communication tools, project management platforms and many others depending on the type of industry/ role. They not only had to deal with the challenge of enabling remote working but also ensuring that employee accountability and therefore the productivity did not taper. It was not just the organizations, employees had to prepare and familiar themselves with the new ways of working.

Like many forms of flexible working, remote working (also termed as working from home or telecommuting) wasn't a new idea and had been the subject of much research (Greer, Payne, 2014; Hickman, 2019). However, much of this research focused on remote working which was an active choice by employees for work-life balance reasons, and not on enforced full-time working from home. Studies found that flexible work arrangements had a positive impact on job satisfaction (Hyman & Summers, 2004), and job satisfaction was highest among individuals who work remotely a moderate amount compared to those who work remotely either a small amount or extensively (Golden, 2006; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Virick et al., 2010;). While remote working had a few benefits, such as saving commute time, providing work-life balance (Liao, 2017; Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017), greater productivity, less absenteeism, lower turnover rates, greater organizational commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Martin &MacDonnell), enforced full-time working from home during the pandemic was challenging for both organizations and employees. Some

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employees felt the stress of social isolation and an 'always-on' mentality contributed to burn out, others found coordinating with remote colleagues and distractions at home such as home-schooling for children, providing care to elderly, etc. a challenge (Bick et al., 2020). In order to have stability and business continuity during this crisis, there was a need to support and provide care to the employees.

Remote working may be defined as working anywhere outside the conventional workplace (Bailey & Kurland, 1999). The concept of virtual teams wherein teams work in virtual settings with geographically and temporally dispersed members is considerably different from remote working during the pandemic, except that both work arrangements rely on information and communication technologies to communicate and coordinate work (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Studies on virtual teams have found many challenges associated with leadership, coordination and control due to low level of face-to face relationships as compared to conventional teams (Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001; Carlson et al., 2017). Apart from the psychological and emotional concerns due to the pandemic, the challenges associated with leadership, coordination and control would also be a concern for organizations, not familiar with remote working at this scale. It is not unlikely that employee and organization performance will be impacted if not managed properly.

Therefore, the current paper examined the impact of organizational support mechanisms on work-related attitudes while remote working during Covid-19 crisis. The paper specifically focused on examining how the following impacted employee engagement: designing an effective structure for new way of working; supportive leadership, a caring culture; and use of technology to facilitate remote working during crisis. Any crisis brings with it uncertainty and insecurity generating anxiety in the people. This paper also analyzed how anxiety due to crisis impacted the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

2. Crisis Due to Covid-19 and Work-Related Attitudes

The threatening circumstances created by the pandemic made a significant shift in people's behavior. It also influenced their approach in life and how they evaluated their work situations. Evidence from studies during the economic recession of 2008 suggested that job satisfaction and job security levels drastically reduced when compared in pre- and post- crisis (Mehri et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011). Unlike the economic crisis of 2008, the Covid-19 crisis impacted both lives and livelihoods, thus, immensely impacting job satisfaction and job security levels. With no face-to-face communication with the organizational leaders, colleagues and subordinates, it resulted in feeling of isolation, loneliness and disconnection in their day-to-day work. Even for those who were not new to remote work, found it difficult to focus as there were newly added distractions, for example: managing children at home, other

family members working from home, the fear of the virus spread and economic fall-out. The uncertainty of what would happen in the next week, let alone next year was stressful and anxiety triggering for everyone. From the supervisors' point of view, there were challenges due to lack of face-to-face communication, co-ordination and collaboration needed due to interdependency of work and managing and monitoring remote workers' performance (Greer & Payne, 2014). There was a need for organizations and the managers to be well-equipped to respond to these changes for the benefit of the employees and the organizations.

Research studies in virtual teams have revealed the predictors of team effectiveness: organizational factors (e.g. team design, tasks, and objectives); leadership behaviors (transformational leadership, empowerment); and team processes (communication, decision making, learning and adaptation) (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Schaubroeck & Yu, 2017). In the same vein, Bick et al. (2020) suggested various organizational mechanisms to manage remote working without breeding inefficiency, damaging work relationships, and demotivating employees leading to tapering off productivity. They were: designing an effective structure, supportive leadership, instilling a caring culture and usage of technology. In this study, firstly, the authors used the factors suggested by Bick et al. (2020) and empirically validated how they impacted employee engagement during crisis. Secondly, as anxiety is an aspect which is heightened during crisis and results in demotivation and frustration, the current study explored the impact of anxiety generated by the pandemic on the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

2.1 Employee Engagement

According to Kahn (1990), when employees are engaged, they bring their cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects at work towards performance. Employee engagement has generated considerable academic interest (Macey and Schneider, 2008) and it has been found to significantly influence job satisfaction (Judge et al. 2001; Whitman et al. 2010), turnover intentions, customer satisfaction, organizational success and source of competitive advantage (Rich et al., 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Markos & Sridevi, 2020). Bakker and Demerouti (2009) in a study found that highly engaged employees are enthusiastic, positively perceive their role and organizations, invest in continually improving work-related competencies, persevere to constantly improve performance and are more respectful of their co-workers. Given these benefits, most organizations invest substantial resources toward establishing policies and practices that foster employees' engagement (Robinson et al., 2004). A study conducted by Saks (2019) empirically tested the antecedents of employee engagement and found that job characteristics, perceived organizational support and procedural justice were significant predictors.

Employee Engagement during crisis

Studies found mixed results on the levels of engagement during the economic crisis of 2008. While most organizations experienced a decline in engagement during the down turn, around 40 percent of the organizations managed to increase engagement during the period (Van Rooy et al., 2011). This suggested that positive organizational interventions could lead to an increase in engagement even during a crisis. The study by Van Rooy et al. (2011) found that effective leadership communication and providing upskilling opportunities were key drivers of improving engagement during crisis. Bick et al. (2020) suggested several organization mechanisms for boosting productivity and morale while remote working during the Covid-19 crisis – designing an effective structure; leading from afar; instilling a caring culture; finding a new routine; communicating; harnessing the power of technology, taking security seriously and adapting a 'test and learn' mindset. The current study attempts to empirically test four factors by adapting and combining the factors suggested by the Bick et al. (2020) and examine its impact on employee engagement. The organizational support mechanisms that are proposed to impact employee engagement during the pandemic are:

Effective Structure: The key components of an effective structure include: defining objectives and priorities; aligning individual goals to organizational objectives; providing clarity of roles and accountabilities for decisions; setting expectations; establishing effective and efficient support processes, systems and feedback mechanisms. Macey et al. (2011) stated that the feeling of engagement cannot occur without a specific purpose or objective and there also needs to be an alignment between individual goals and organizational goals. Having a clarity of the vision of success empowers employees to determine the appropriate course of action enhancing engagement (Fernandez, 2021). Saks (2006) found job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) a significant predictor of employee engagement. During covid-19 crisis, as remote working became the new norm, Bick et al. (2020) suggested that setting up small, cross-functional teams; providing clarity of roles, expectations; and establishing feedback mechanisms is likely to enhance employee engagement during a crisis. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Designing an effective structure for remote working is positively related to employee engagement during a crisis.

Supportive Leadership: A review of literature suggested that inspiring leaders enhance employee engagement (Wallace and Trinka, 2009). While immediate supervisors are critical for building engagement, they are also the root cause of employee disengagement (Frank et al., 2004). Authentic and supportive leadership positively

influence employees' sense of involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work (Schneider et al., 2009). During Covid-19 crisis, immediate supervisors played a critical role in team satisfaction and performance (Mysirlaki and Paraskeva (2020) and they must genuinely communicate with their team regularly and also inspire and support them in their daily course of work in dealing with the crisis (Pitts et al., 2012; Bick et al., 2020). Other ways in which leaders can enhance team outcomes is by promoting active learning, problem solving and empowering people at all levels (Fernandez, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: A supportive leadership is positively related to employee engagement for remote working during a crisis.

Caring culture: A caring working environment that encourages employees to freely express their concerns, empathizes with the employees' needs and feelings, provides positive feedback and facilitates them to develop new skills is a significant predictor of employee engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Saks (2006) stated that when employees believe that their concerns and well-being are looked after by the organization, they become more engaged and respond by committing to their responsibilities instead of just complying. Bick et al. (2020) opined that while working remotely during crisis, it is important for organizations to instill a culture of empathy, connect with the employees at a personal level and display genuine consideration for employees' needs and concerns.

Leaders shape culture during the first stages of business creation (Schein, 1992; Torpman, 2004), but later, when the business matures, it is the culture that defines leadership (Taormina, 2008). There is, thus, a reciprocal relationship between leaders and organizational culture. In order to distinguish supportive leadership behaviors and caring culture, in this study the authors have defined supportive leadership behaviors as: setting a clear direction and communicating it effectively; empowering people and making them accountable; inspiring people and having open and honest communication and providing regular feedback. The characteristics of caring culture include: respecting and addressing specific needs of people due to lockdown or in case of contracting the virus; creating a sense of community; giving space to employees to pursue personal endeavors and being flexible in addressing with work-life balance. Therefore, though being interdependent constructs, both are likely to impact employee engagement independently and, thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: A caring culture is positively related to employee engagement for remote working during a crisis.

Usage of technology: The foundation of remote working is reliant on technology. Technology enables connecting team members across locations for sharing information, collaborating and monitoring work progress. The selection of technology depends on

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the task complexity. Higher task complexity requires greater team interactions and coordination necessitating reciprocal communication and feedback (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). The impact of technology on employee performance is generally dependent on the technical capabilities of the medium, the group's understanding of the medium and their usage according to the purpose (DeSanctis et al., 1993). Inappropriate selection of technology may lead to misinterpretation of the message, interpersonal issues among team members which can result in conflicts (Knight & Burn, 2011). Bick et al. (2020) stated that remote working not only required organizations to create technological infrastructure but also define new ways of working with digital tools. While the new technology driven work methods facilitate teams to contribute towards team goals in a variety of ways (Sarker et al., 2009), these also tend to modify and redesign power dynamics (Miele & Tirabeni, 2020). The organizations must provide training for effective use of technology to sustain remote working. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Usage of technology for enabling remote working is positively related to employee engagement during a crisis.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values". Job Satisfaction involves how individuals feel about their work environment, remuneration, co-workers, etc. (Judge et al. 2001). There is ample research indicating that highly engaged employees have higher job satisfaction when compared to disengaged employee (Radosevich et al., 2008). Saks (2006) found that employee engagement accounted for significant variance in job satisfaction. Research in the context of remote working found mixed impact on job satisfaction. The relationship between the extent of remote working and job satisfaction is found to be curvilinear such that satisfaction and amount of remote working are positively related at lower levels of remote working, but satisfaction plateaus at higher levels of remote working (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). The justification for this curvilinear effect may lie in the inability to develop meaningful relationships with colleagues leading to feelings of social and professional isolation. Other factors specific to remote working that positively impact job satisfaction are technical and human resources support, trustworthy relationship with supervisor, training to support remote working and family support (Baker & Dutton, 2017; Allen et.al., 2015). Thus, organizational mechanisms for making remote working effective are likely to enhance employee engagement which will impact job satisfaction. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Employee engagement is positively related to job satisfaction during remote working.

2.3 Organizational Commitment

There is ample research on employee engagement and its positive work outcomes (Sonnentag, 2003). A review of literature suggests that engagement is positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Some studies focused on understanding predictors of commitment – high-quality relationships with coworkers and supervisors, amount of social support received, communication satisfaction and competence (Golden & Veiga, 2008). Studies in the context of remote working found a small positive relationship between remote working and organizational commitment as people had choice and flexibility of work location (Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). Therefore, the authors proposed the following hypothesis:

H6: Employee engagement is positively related to organizational commitment during remote working.

2.4 Anxiety During Crisis and its Impact on Work-Related Attitudes

The covid-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis but is also having a growing impact on the global economy. At an individual level, isolation from society, the inflow of negative coronavirus-related information, the fear of contracting Covid-19, the looming economic recession and a sense of helplessness are all adversely impacting people's mental well-being and causing a lot of stress and anxiety. Though remote working has been common in IT/ITES and consulting sectors, there have been cases wherein employees had nervous breakdown due to anxiety (The Economic Times, 2021). Anxiety is a persistent psychological state causing fear or a negative feeling that something bad is about to happen (Gudykunst 2005). Apart from the anxiety due to the pandemic, the new ways of working due to the lockdown have pushed people out of their comfort zones. Under the stress of job demands, employees fear about failure to achieve work goals, therefore leading to job anxiety (Skinner and Brewer, 2002) which reduces job satisfaction (Ferguson, et al., 2012). The global economic fallout has made people insecure about their jobs resulting in anxiety which is likely to impact organizational commitment. Studies in the area have found remote working to be a source of stress and anxiety due to role conflict; as employees deal with both professional and personal commitments (Kraut, 1989; Moore, 2006). The anxiety due to the remote working during Covid-19 crisis is likely to impact the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Thus, following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Anxiety moderates the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction during remote working under crisis.

H8: Anxiety moderates the relationship between employee engagement and

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organizational commitment during remote working under crisis.

Figure 1 shows the research model.

Please refer to Figure 1 at the end of the paper

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

During the covid-19 crisis most of the people were remotely working except those in essential duites. The sample was collected from the service industry which included IT and ITES industry, educational institutes and consulting organizations. The rationale was limiting to these sectors was, unlike the manufacturing and infrastructure development sectors, these sectors moved into near 100 percent remote working. The organizations were selected using convenience sampling method. Only those samples were selected who were remotely working. The survey was administered using google forms. The survey was conducted between 25 March 2020 and 30 April 2020 and a total of 1020 on-line questionnaires were send. A total of 186 responses were received. Of them, 124 were employees in the IT/ITES companies, 41 in the consulting companies and 21 in the educational institutes. The responses were scrutinized and 181 responses were considered complete and valid for further analysis. The response rate was 17.7 percent. The minimum sample is calculated by multiplying 10 with the dependent variable with the largest number of independent variables impacting it (Chin, 1998). In this study, supportive leadership has the largest number of indicators (9), the minimum sample size required is 90 (9*10). Therefore, our sample size of 181 fulfils the suggested minimum sample size for sample adequacy. Table 1 provides the respondent's demographic summary.

Please refer to Table 1 at the end of the paper

3.2 Measures

Data for each of the variables was collected using measures based on the literature review and existing survey instrument. A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used for all variables.

Effective Structure (S), Supportive leadership (L), Caring Culture (C) and Usage of Technology (T): The four independent variables are reflective constructs and they were measured using reflective indicators based on Bick et al. (2020) study – Effective Structure (6-items), Supportive Leadership (9-items), Caring Culture (8-items) and Usage of Technology (6-items)

Employee Engagement (EE), Job satisfaction (JS) and Organizational commitment

(OC): The three dependent variables are reflective constructs and they were measured using reflective indicators based on Saks (2006) study – Employee Engagement (5-items), Job Satisfaction (3-items) and Organizational Commitment (6-items). The negative items in employee engagement and job satisfaction were reverse scored and higher values indicated higher employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Anxiety (A): The independent variable 'Anxiety' is a reflective construct and is measured using a 5-items scale adapted from Cheung and Tse (2008) study. There are 3 negative items: "I am feeling relaxed during this crisis", "I feel no pressure regarding any professional aspect" and "I am generally calm working from home", which were reverse scored and higher values indicated higher anxiety due to crisis.

Age was measured using a five-point scale, organizational tenure was measured using four-point scale and gender was coded as a binary variable.

3.3 Data Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling – Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) method was used for data analysis using SmartPLS3 software. PLS was used as it is considered a robust method for estimating path coefficients in structural models. This method is especially useful when sample size is small to medium and data is not normalized (Hair et al., 2013).

PLS path modeling is an iterative process involving two steps: evaluation of (1) measurement model and (2) structural model. Evaluation of measurement model includes assessing internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Evaluation of structural model involves assessing collinearity among constructs and testing hypothesized relationships.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Model

Internal consistency of the measurement model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The convergent validity was tested using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the latent variables (Refer Table 2). To have internal consistency and convergent validity, Cronbach's alpha should be higher than 0.7, CR higher than 0.6, factor loadings higher than 0.7 and AVE higher than 0.5. Indicators with item loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 were removed. Values in Table 2 indicate that the data are valid and reliable at item and construct level except for the factor loading of S1 (0.46), L8 (0.42), L9 (0.63), C1 (0.60) and C2 (0.50). Being reflective constructs, the indicators are interchangeable and dropping an indicator should not alter the conceptual meaning of the construct (Jarvis et al.,

2003). These items were deleted, and the AVE of S increased from 0.5 to 0.56; AVE of L increased from 0.51 to 0.59; and AVE of C increased from 0.5 to 0.58. Finally, number of items considered for each of the construct were: S = 5, L = 7, C = 6, T = 6, EE = 5, JS = 3, OC = 6 and A = 5.

Please refer to Table 2 at the end of the paper

Discriminant Validity (DV) is assessed to ensure that there is no correlation between measures of various constructs (Ringle et al., 2010). DV is evaluated using Fornell and Larker's (1981) criterion. DV exists if square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the values of its bivariate correlations. For example, square root of AVE value for Caring Culture (C) is 0.76 which is shown in Table 3. This value is greater that C's bivariate correlations with all opposing constructs and shows that discriminant validity has been established for C. While DV between C and L is 0.54 which is less than 0.76, it is higher than all other constructs. This is basically due to the fact that L and C are interdependent constructs. Discriminant validity existed for A, EE, JS, L, OC, S and T.

Please refer to Table 3 at the end of the paper

To further establish discriminant validity, a more robust criterion based on the multitrait-multimethod matrix called Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015) was used. Two constructs' indicators having HTMT value smaller than 1 indicates that the constructs are different from each other. Table 4 shows that all HTMT values between constructs are below 1. Therefore, discriminant validity was established.

Please refer to Table 4 at the end of the paper

4.2 Evaluation of the Structural Model

As a first step in evaluating the structural model, Hair et al. (2016) suggest testing the collinearity between the predictor variables. Collinearity can be identified by assessing variance inflation factor (VIF). The value of VIF must be 5 or lower. A collinearity test is required for each hypotheses involving more than one independent variable predicting a dependent variable. Table 5 shows that all VIF values are below 5, indicating the absence of collinearity among independent variables.

Please refer to Table 5 at the end of the paper

4.3 Testing of Hypotheses

The next step in assessing the structural model involves testing the hypotheses by measuring path coefficient (β) values, T-values and R-square using bootstrapping

method with a resample size of 5000. Figure 2 shows the structural model and Table 6 shows the summarized results of the estimated structural model.

Please refer to Figure 2 at the end of the paper

Please refer to Table 6 at the end of the paper

Hypothesis 1: Designing an effective structure is positively related to employee engagement and the relationship is significant (β=0.35, T-value=6.55, p <0.05). Hypothesis 1 is accepted. Also, designing an effective structure explains 12.4 percent variance in employee engagement (R square value= 0.124).

Hypothesis 2: Supportive leadership is positively related to employee engagement and the relationship is significant (β=0.30, T-value=2.55, p <0.05). Hypothesis 2 is accepted. Also, supportive leadership explains 9.0 percent variance in employee engagement (R square value= 0.09).

Hypothesis 3: Instilling a caring culture is positively related to employee engagement and the relationship is significant (β=0.32, T-value=6.22, p <0.05). Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Also, instilling a caring culture explains 10.2 percent variance in employee engagement (R square value= 0.102).

Hypothesis 4: Usage of technology is positively related to employee engagement and the relationship is significant (β=0.28, T-value=3.57, p <0.05). Hypothesis 4 is accepted. Also, usage of technology explains 7.8 percent variance in employee engagement (R square value= 0.078).

Hypothesis 5: Employee engagement is positively related to job satisfaction and the relationship is significant (β=0.59, T-value=12.5, p <0.05). Hypothesis 5 is accepted. Also, employee engagement explains 35 percent variance in job satisfaction (R square value= 0.35).

Hypothesis 6: Employee engagement is positively related to organizational commitment and the relationship is significant (β=0.36, T-value=5.13, p <0.05). The hypothesis 6 is accepted. Also, employee engagement explains 13 percent variance in organizational commitment (R square value= 0.13).

Moderation Test (Hypotheses 7 and 8)

The moderation effect was tested using the BOOTSTRAP test. It was tested by multiplying employee engagement (predictor) and anxiety (moderator) and an interaction construct (EE*A) was created to predict job satisfaction (JS). As shown in Table 6, anxiety has a negative relationship with job satisfaction (β = -0.34, T = 6.05, p<0.01). The interaction construct reduces the magnitude of the relationship between

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employee engagement and job satisfaction (β = 0.12, T=2.84, p<0.05). Therefore, the moderating effect of anxiety on the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction is significant. Thus, hypothesis 7 is accepted. Simple slope analysis further indicates that anxiety moderated the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction (Figure 3). It indicates that when anxiety is high the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction is weakened.

Please refer to Figure 3 at the end of the paper

Similarly, employee engagement (predictor) and anxiety (moderator) were multiplied to create an interaction construct (EE*A) to predict organizational commitment. As shown in Table 6, anxiety has a negative relationship with organizational commitment (β = -0.34, T = 6.05, p<0.01). The interaction construct makes the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment insignificant (β = 0.05, T= 0.97, p>0.05). Therefore, moderating effect of anxiety on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment is significant. Hence, hypothesis 8 is accepted. Simple slope analysis further indicates that anxiety moderated the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment (Figure 4). It indicates that when anxiety is high the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment is weakened to a great extent.

Please refer to Figure 4 at the end of the paper

5. Discussion

The global crisis due to the spread of Covid-19 is unprecedented. Apart from becoming a threat to human life, it has pushed nations to initiate lockdown which has triggered a huge economic slowdown. With limited economic activity, organizations across the globe are facing huge loses which has pushed most people to the wall – many have lost jobs, facing pay cuts or are living under the sword of a lay off. Under these crisis situations, organizations have been forced to initiate remote working for majority of their workforce, making it critical for leaders to recognize ways of enhancing employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The current study examined (1) how designing an effective structure facilitates remote working impacting employee engagement, (2) how supportive leadership in a crisis influences employee engagement, (3) how instilling a caring culture impacts employee engagement and (4) how usage of technology facilitates remote working which influences employee engagement. The current study is among the first efforts to test the interplay of variables: effective structure, supportive leadership, caring culture and usage of technology for remote working with employee engagement during a crisis situation. The study also examined to what extent anxiety due to crisis moderates the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. To tide over a crisis, it is imperative for organizations to

ensure that the people are engaged, satisfied and committed. Therefore, the findings of the study have several theoretical and managerial implications.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the findings of the current study extend the literature on employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment by studying the constructs during a global crisis that has forced organizations to undertake remote working at scale. The study examines how effective structure, supportive leadership, caring culture and usage of technology facilitate remote working and positively influence employee engagement. Though there is ample research to understand the impact of alignment of goals and job characteristics (Macey et al., 2009; Saks, 2016); leadership (Wallace and Trinka, 2009); and culture (Saks, 2006) on employee engagement. However, none of these studies have been undertaken in the context of remote working during crisis. Similarly, though there are several studies that bring out the importance of usage of technology in virtual teams, there is scant literature on its importance in remote working during a crisis and its impact on employee engagement. The current study suggests that a small team with clarity of goals, roles and responsibilities; open, trustworthy, and inspiring leadership; a caring, considerate, transparent and supportive culture; and technology that facilitates remote working positively influence employee engagement during crisis.

A second contribution of the current study is the moderating influence of anxiety on the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Several studies have investigated how stressors influence work related attitudes and behaviors (Brief &Weiss, 2002). Covid-19 pandemic is an anxiety-inducing stressor as it has unhinged the lives of people. Thus, we contribute to the anxiety literature by advancing scholarly understanding of the impact of anxiety on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, particularly in situations characterized by high levels of threat and lack of control.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The global crisis due to Covid-19 has pushed organizations to resort to mass remote working. Apart from building the technological infrastructure, it is important for organizations to support the employees to wade through the crisis who are facing their own uncertainties and insecurities. Looking after the concerns of the people will not only ensure that they are engaged, satisfied and committed but also safeguard employee productivity. Remote working is not a new concept and most organizations have been using it in a limited manner. However, with covid-19, organizations have been compelled to ask majority of their employees to work from home. With the looming health and economic crisis, and with no face to face interaction with colleagues and supervisors there is a tendency for employees to feel anxious, insecure and frustrated.

Thus, findings of the study provide valuable implications for management practitioners in dealing with the crisis. First, the findings suggest that building smaller teams and providing clarity of goals, roles, responsibilities, and norms of communication are useful ways to support remote working and enhance employee engagement. Second, leaders must have open and transparent communication with the employees and share information on the steps being taken by the organization in coping with the crisis. Open communication provides security to the employees and builds trust enhancing employee engagement. Third, creating a culture wherein the employees feel safe and cared also increases employee engagement. Last, technology is an enabler for remote working. Apart from building the technological infrastructure, organizations must ensure that employees are provided adequate training on the best ways of using technology for their work processes.

Furthermore, our research establishes that anxiety reduces the relationship of employee engagement with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to create a caring, supportive and open culture which reduces employee anxiety.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The present study uses a cross-sectional design which does not consider causality of the variables in the research model. For instance, there is likelihood that engaged employee have clarity of goals, roles and responsibilities or job satisfaction and organizational commitment could cause employee engagement. Longitudinal studies, maybe pre- and post- Covid-19 crisis or experiments are better suited for providing conclusive outcomes about the causal effects of employee engagement.

Finally, convenient sampling method was used rather than a random sampling method. The sample collected were also from the service sector. The phenomenon of remote working at such a large scale in a crisis is unprecedented. The work practices for making remote working effective and also its challenges and concerns will vary from industry to industry. A study in a particular industry would provide specific insights on practices regarding remote working which influence employee engagement. Similar studies in other industries would help in generalizing the results to the larger population.

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Table 1: Respondent's Demographic Summary

Demographic Characteristics		**Percentage**
Gender	Male	70.8
	Female	29.2
Age Group	<25	13.2
	25-34	42.8
	35-44	13.2
	45-54	29.2
	>55	1.6
Organizational Tenure	<1 year	15.1
	1-5 years	45.6
	6-10 years	29.1
	>10 years	10.2

Source: The Authors.

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Table 2: Evaluation of Measurement Model

Item	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Construct 1: Effective Structure (S)					
I am part of a small team with clear objectives.	S1	0.46	0.80	0.87	0.50
I have specific roles and responsibilities.	S2	0.73			
I have clarity of the various work processes.	S3	0.79			
I have clarity on the communication modes to use.	S4	0.72			
I have clarity of whom to talk to on issues.	S5	0.79			
I have clarity on what issues to escalate.	S6	0.70			
Construct 2: Supportive Leadership (L) **My Manager:**					
Communicates what the current situation is with regard to the crisis and the steps being taken.	L1	0.76	0.87	0.90	0.51
Sets a clear direction and communicates it.	L2	0.81			
Encourages open and honest communication.	L3	0.82			
Spends time with the team addressing how the team will work together.	L4	0.74			
Has one-on-one communication with all members.	L5	0.77			
Inspires the members in their daily activities.	L6	0.76			
Has empowered the team to take decisions.	L7	0.68			
Checks on the work progress regularly.	L8	0.42			
Encourages people to speak up and share their concerns with regard to the crisis.	L9	0.63			
Construct 3: Caring Culture (C)					
My organization has committed to providing monetary benefits to those who contract the virus.	C1	0.60	0.85	0.88	0.5
Most employees have been asked to WFH and for others in essential duties are provided safe working.	C2	0.50			
Employees are given space to pursue their personal/social endeavors in dealing with the crisis.	C3	0.76			
Top leaders reach out to all employees reaffirming that business might be slow and it's okay if an employee uses this time to invest in professional development.	C4	0.73			

There is transparency in communication and appropriate information is provided about what the organization is doing to support employees during this time.	C5	0.82			
Top leaders reach out to employees to understand their needs and pressures.	C6	0.83			
My organization is supporting employees by providing the required resources to help address any anxiety or stress.	C7	0.67			
My organization is flexible in their policies to help employees address work-life balance.	C8	0.71			
Construct 4: Usage of Technology (T)					
My organization accelerated roll-out of productivity solutions like Slack, Microsoft teams or Zoom, etc.	T1	0.67	0.86	0.89	0.59
My organization conducted training sessions for all personnel on effective use of tools.	T2	0.73			
My organization defined new ways of working with digital tools to make remote working effective.	T3	0.81			
To compensate for fact-to-face interactions, the organization established a format for digitally enabled meetings.	T4	0.83			
A digital performance dashboard was created to keep everybody aligned and accountable.	T5	0.75			
A digital platform has been created for employees to learn from each other.	T6	0.81			
Construct 5: Employee Engagement (EE)					
Even though I am WFH, I really "throw" myself into my job.	EE1	0.86	0.84	0.88	0.60
While working, I often lose track of time.	EE2	0.75			
This job is all consuming; I am totally into it.	EE3	0.72			
My mind often wanders due to distractions at home and I think of other things when doing my job. (R)	EE4	0.71			
I am highly engaged in this job even though WFH.	EE5	0.83			
Construct 6: Job Satisfaction (JS)					
Even though I am WFH, I am satisfied with my job.	JS1	0.84	0.71	0.83	0.63
Things have changed due to this pandemic and I do not like my job now. (R)	JS2	0.80			
In general, I like working for my organization even from home.	JS3	0.73			

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Construct 7: Organizational Commitment (OC)					
This crisis has not changed anything and I would be happy to work at my organization until I retire.	OC1	0.70	0.9	0.92	0.67
Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.	OC2	0.86			
This is a real crisis for my organization and I really feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems.	OC3	0.74			
I feel personally attached to my organization.	OC4	0.89			
I am proud to tell others I work at my organization.	OC5	0.83			
I feel a strong sense of belongingness to my organization.	OC6	0.87			
Construct 8: Anxiety (A)					
I am feeling relaxed during this crisis. (R)	A1	0.72	0.85	0.89	0.62
The uncertainty of the future is making me restless.	A2	0.86			
I am tensed about our jobs due to the economic fallout.	A3	0.88			
I feel no pressure regarding any professional aspect. (R)	A4	0.72			
I am generally calm working from home. (R)	A5	0.76			

Source: The Authors.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) Criterion

	A	C	EE	JS	L	OC	S	T
A	**0.793**							
C	-0.327	**0.764**						
EE	-0.331	0.313	**0.777**					
JS	-0.458	0.509	0.578	**0.794**				
L	-0.225	0.541	0.248	0.403	**0.772**			
OC	-0.411	0.464	0.353	0.598	0.462	**0.819**		
S	-0.181	0.474	0.336	0.251	0.508	0.239	**0.752**	
T	-0.144	0.454	0.282	0.265	0.41	0.295	0.288	**0.77**

Source: The Authors.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	A	C	EE	JS	L	OC	S	T
A								
C	0.372							
EE	0.376	0.328						
JS	0.566	0.657	0.647					
L	0.246	0.619	0.257	0.503				
OC	0.441	0.524	0.372	0.746	0.513			
S	0.224	0.556	0.351	0.326	0.577	0.279		
T	0.18	0.523	0.298	0.326	0.455	0.339	0.355	

Source: The Authors.

Table 5. Collinearity Assessment (Inner VIF Values)

Hypothesis 1,2,3,4 (EE is dependent variable)		Hypothesis 7 (JS is dependent variable)		Hypothesis 8 (OC is dependent variable)	
Predictor	VIF	Predictor	VIF	Predictor	VIF
S	1.46	EE	1.12	EE	1.12
L	1.66	A	1.19	A	1.19
C	1.66	EE*A	1.07	EE*A	1.07
T	1.32				

VIF = Variance inflation factor. Source: The Authors.

Table 6: SmartPLS Results for Testing Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficients (β)	T-value	P-value	R^2	Hypotheses
H1	S ->EE	0.35	6.55	0.00	0.12	Accepted
H2	L->EE	0.30	2.55	0.011	0.09	Accepted
H3	C -> EE	0.32	6.22	0.00	0.102	Accepted
H4	T ->EE	0.28	3.57	0.00	0.078	Accepted
H5	EE->JS	0.59	12.5	0.00	0.35	Accepted
H6	EE->OC	0.36	5.13	0.00	0.13	Accepted
H7	EE	0.47	8.74	0.00	0.43	Accepted
	A	-0.34	6.05	0.00		
	EE*A->JS	0.12	2.84	0.00		
H8	EE	0.24	2.91	0.00	0.23	Accepted
	A	-0.36	5.5	0.00		
	EE*A->OC	0.05	0.97	0.33		

Source: The Authors.

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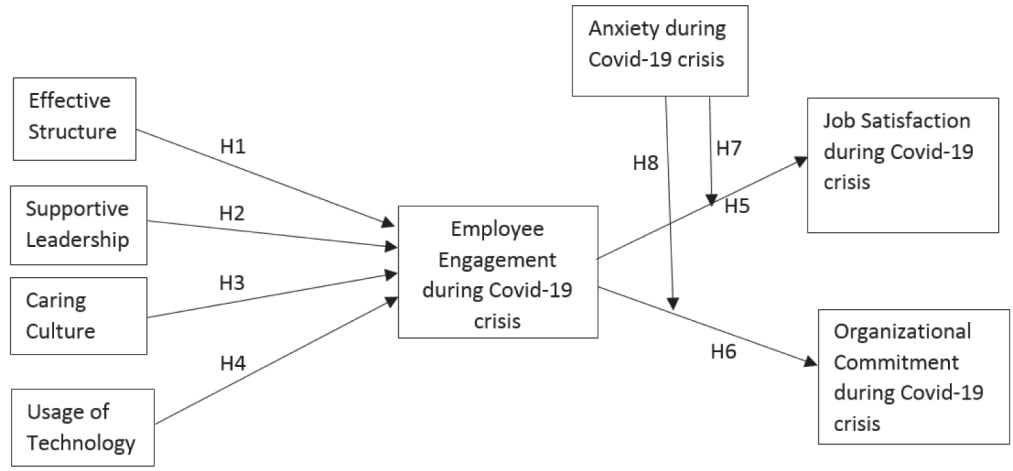
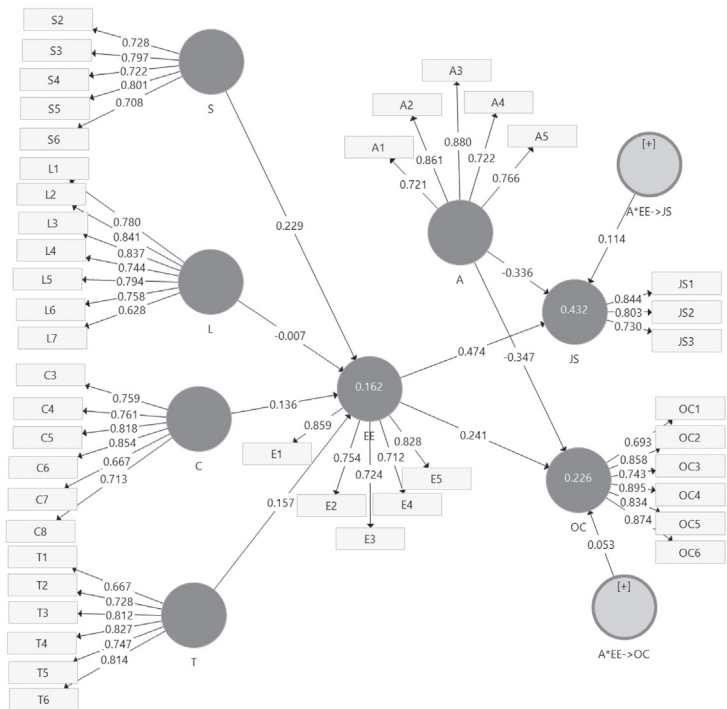
Figure 1. Research Model



Source: The authors.

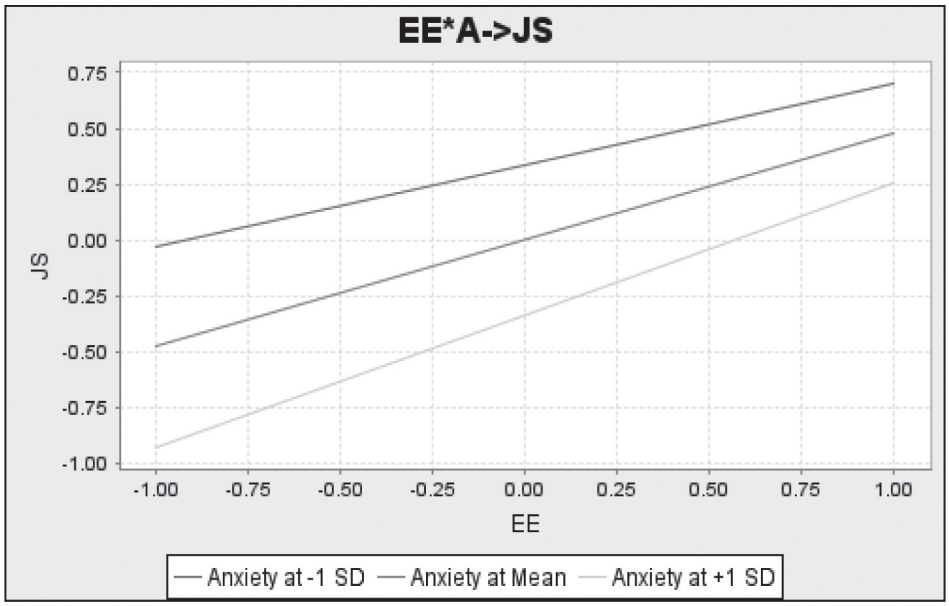
Figure 2. Structural Model for Hypotheses Testing



Source: The Authors.

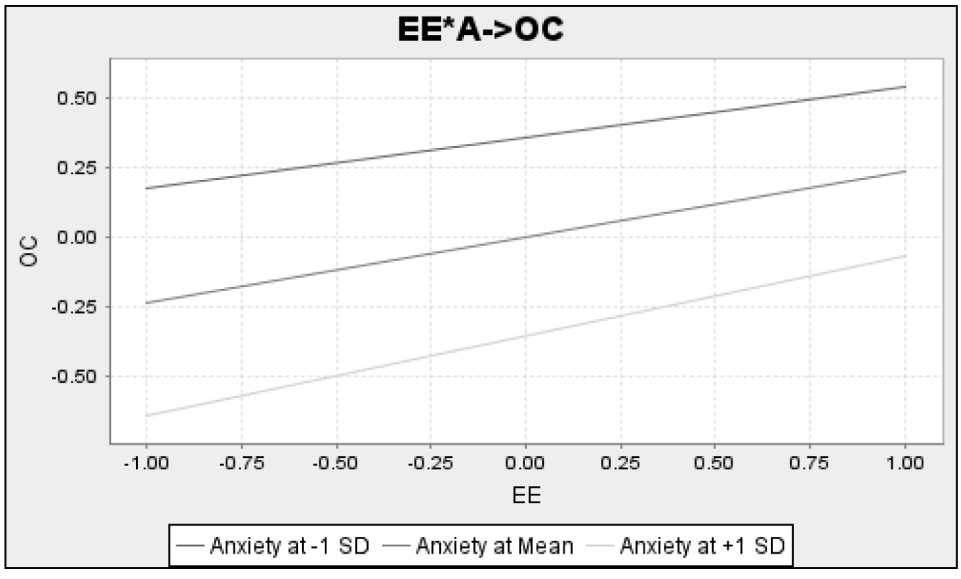
Note: S=Effective Structure, L=Supportive Leadership, C=Caring Culture, T=Technology, A=Anxiety, EE=Employee Engagement, JS=Job Satisfaction, OC=Organizational Commitment.

Figure 3. Moderating effect of Anxiety (A) on the relationship between Employee Engagement (EE) and Job Satisfaction (JS).



Source: The Authors.

Figure 4. Moderating effect of Anxiety (A) on the relationship between Employee Engagement (EE) and Organizational Commitment (OC)



Source: The Authors