

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the  
sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa**

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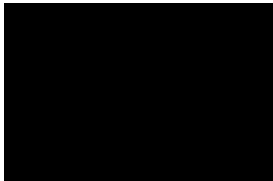
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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my late mother, Ms Kanmoney Naidoo.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to the Higher Power who had given me the strength to complete this piece of work. There were many times that I wanted to quit. Without Him, I would not have reached my goal.

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Mikka Nanri (*Thank you very much*).

Gods' richest blessings to all of you...

## **ABSTRACT**

The unanticipated spreading of the Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19) has had a devastating impact on the world, including South Africa. South Africa was susceptible to this impact as government enforced strict regulatory lockdowns, which required new ways of working in a workforce that was used to face-to-face business interaction. This study focused on retail sales employees within a petroleum company and the adaptation of their characteristics to drive work performance during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The main characteristic that this study focused on, was the motivational factors that influenced the employee's lives for better or worse. The retail sales employees (Territory Managers) are responsible for the business development of service stations. Their roles include monitoring of fuel sales, convenience store sales, safety and regulatory compliance of the service station, environmental and disaster management of the site, routine corporate contractual monitoring of the equipment and infrastructure, and housekeeping of the site. Qualitative research was conducted via semi-structured interviews to 12 Territory Managers, from the perspective of the employees, to gain a better understanding of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The non-probability purposive sampling method was used. The research methods consisted of secondary research from existing academic and corporate literature, as well as primary research from the interviews that were conducted with the retail sales employees. The research found that the impact of the pandemic touched every person's life in some way or the other. Whilst some people found ways to cope with the pandemic, others gave in to the stress which impacted on their physical and mental wellbeing. The research also pointed out the gaps in the company's support system for employees and the company's readiness to deal with the impact of the crisis. This study's main goal was to offer suggestions to the business, to help decision-makers support employees' productive ability, so that the employees remain inspired and performance-oriented during times of crisis.

Key Words: Motivation, Coronavirus, Performance, Petroleum Company, crisis, Pandemic.

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# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The Coronavirus was discovered in Wuhan, China, and was followed by several deaths due to the lack of a prevention method or cure for the symptoms it produced. The virus then spread around the world (including South Africa), killing millions of people, and the World Health Organization called it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, (World Health Organisation, 2020). Coronavirus, commonly known as Covid 19, is thought to be caused by the 'severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)'. Any individual infected by this virus can experience symptoms within two days of contact, which also include high fever, a cough, as well as headaches. The virus may be spread between people by droplets released when coughing, talking, or sneezing, as well as by touching surfaces that have been handled by someone infected with the virus (World Health Organisation, 2020). The virus's breakout prompted South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, to declare a total lockdown of the country on March 15, 2020, to halt the virus's spread (Nxumalo, 2020). The nation's lockdown resulted in minimal social or economic activity; schools, businesses, and corporations were closed, except for institutions judged to be delivering critical services, which were allowed to function under tight safety restrictions. The closure of companies had disastrous effects for the country and the economy, culminating in the closure of firms and companies and the retrenching of personnel (Bregman, et al., 2020).

An unprecedented economic and social crisis brought on by the Coronavirus Pandemic had affected every sector of business. The behaviour of people had changed due to the impact of the pandemic. Employees were impacted where they once were mobile and worked together in an office environment, but due to the pandemic have now evolved to working at home with the effect on each employee being different (Bhorat, et al., 2020).

The company's performance can be significantly influenced by employee motivation therefore the importance of employee motivation must be prioritised in the organisation because it is crucial to the well-being of the individual as their input directly impacts the company's business (Tovmasyan & Minasyan, 2020)

The aim of this study is to identify how employee motivation levels changed during the Coronavirus Pandemic and how this has impacted on the performance of the retail sales employees of a petroleum company in Southern Africa. The researcher wants to explore the factors that impacted the motivational levels and to define insights on how to keep motivating employees to continue working amidst the constraints of the of the Coronavirus outbreak virus. The researcher shall review various existing literature and using qualitative methodologies to support this research.

This chapter introduces the study with background to the topic, followed by the motivation of the study. Problem statement and research objectives then set the core focus of the study followed by an overview of the research design and methodologies. It also presents the key definitions for this research.

## 1.2 Background of study

### 1.2.1 The impact of Coronavirus on the Oil and Gas Industry

The oil and gas sector were in a state of turmoil due to the impact of the Coronavirus. The reduced demand for energy and the low oil prices has disrupted the energy sector overall. The decline in demand for petrochemical products placed the industry in oversupply as the restrictions on movement of people continued (Mckenzie, 2020).

Many companies who were inefficient faced liquidity and were on the brink of closing completely. Successful companies found new strategies to diversify into other energy sectors prompting a new business model. Companies that did turn to restructuring and redundancy tactics faced a shortage of skills when the market turned around (Norouzi, 2021).



Figure 1.1: Oil price developments, 2000-2020

Source: (BBC, 2020)

Figure 1.1 shows how the oil price decreased significantly during the Coronavirus Pandemic. (BBC, 2020). The global transport movement restrictions that had a substantial impact on the demand for fuel was seen at the petrol pump.

The Saudi-Russian price conflict led to an R2 per litre decrease in petrol prices in South Africa in April 2020. However, factors such as storage capacity, cost, levies, taxes, and the currency exchange rate will continue to be crucial in influencing the price of petroleum in South Africa. The government may impose additional tax charges to make up for the losses incurred because of the pandemic (Nortonrosefulbright.com, 2020).

### **1.2.2 Coronavirus impact on the Oil Company - Globally**

Coronavirus has made us reconsider what the most critical components in the workplace are and how we operate in conducting business. Since the requirement of social distance was imposed, companies in every industry; retail, manufacturing, entertainment, professional services, and food, (Guzman & Monzon, 2020), have had to evaluate their physical workspaces (Lal & Dwivedi, 2021).

The widespread effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the mandatory lockdowns throughout many high-priced petroleum-consuming nations placed enormous strain on both the domestic and international economies (Kar & Bansal, 2020).

These challenges that were experienced made companies and employees re-evaluate their working methods, what was valued at work, and their ambitions. The office remains important to both employees and businesses as working in an office environment offers benefits such as training, mentoring, and teamwork which are important. Unfortunately, some of the negative aspects of remote working, had come to light, including reports of long working hours, fatigue, and considerable long-term productivity loss (Beauchamp, et al., 2021).

The Oil Company that was studied is a large global organisation specialising in petrochemicals. The business is a service provider of energy for heat and light products, as well as fuel for motor vehicles. At global and local market levels, the Coronavirus Pandemic had a significant impact on the company's sales and profitability. The pandemic reduced demand for transportation fuels and led to the oil prices on the world market to plummet. The Oil Company recorded an underlying loss of \$5.7 billion (£4.2 billion) in 2020 compared to a profit of nearly \$10 billion in 2019. The Oil Company wrote off assets to the value of \$6.5bn and cut its global workforce by 10 000 employees due to the low demand during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The share price plummeted, and the shareholder dividends were reduced (Ambrose, 2021).

### **1.2.3 Coronavirus impact on the Oil Company – South Africa**

With approximately 500 petrol stations and 200 branded convenience stores, the oil company currently has one of the largest presences in South Africa. In South Africa, the oil company's overall business strategy focuses primarily on service station outlets and retail convenience stores which are branded as Express (BPSA, 2021).

The lockdown levels restricted the movement of most people hence decreasing the demand for fuel and convenience purchases. Only the sales of essentials goods were permitted. Whilst a customer fills fuel into his vehicle at a service station, he would be inclined to buy additional items from the convenience store. Therefore, with the restricted movement and the decline in fuel purchases, convenience stores sales fell sharply too. Convenience stores were also negatively impacted by the curfew imposed as fixed overhead costs increased because the store had to stay lit at night when there was no activity or sales (Fuel retailers Association, 2022). Due to the decline in demand for fuel and convenience items, the service stations had to reduce their operating hours (Majola, 2021). Some retail service stations that did

not enjoy the benefits of walk-in traffic had to close their doors during the lockdown period (Fotheringham, 2021).

According to the Fuel Retailers Association (FRA), fuel volumes decreased by 80% in 2020 compared to 2019 (Fuel retailers Association, 2022). Additionally, the FRA noted that 24-hour convenience stores were disadvantaged by the non-sale of cigarettes and non-essential goods.

#### **1.2.4 Impact of Coronavirus on Motivation of Employees**

The impact of the Coronavirus left most people stressed, anxious and unsure of their lives and jobs. Their level of demotivation ultimately impacted on the performance of the company they work for which they worked (Afaha, et al., 2021).

Motivation is a stimulating factor which is the primary cause of action in any life form. In work and business environments motivation keeps employees dedicated to their responsibilities and encourages them to fulfil their tasks sincerely and enjoyably. Organisations with high levels of motivational factors are seen to be successful and are therefore able to attract and retain high performing individuals (Cannon, 2020).

The concept of motivation is used to differentiate employees that may have specific skill sets and talents. Working remotely due to the Coronavirus impacted employee's performance. However, motivation provided a different level of performance from others in similar situations (Davidescu, et al., 2020). These employees perform their work in such a way that the jobs necessitates more effort, allowing them to deliver higher results. Thus, enhanced performance is driven by the organisation's positively motivated employees. (Davidescu, et al., 2020).

It is important for the organisation to understand the factors that lead to increased job satisfaction amongst their employees so that continuous motivational strategies can be implemented (Dewi & Adiarsi, 2020). Research has highlighted that where employees are unhappy, they tend to withdraw, be absent more often and their poor attitude impacts on overall performance. Employees who are motivated utilise both their skills effectively and the organisation benefits in exceeding expected performance benchmarks. An employee that is intrinsically motivated feels a sense of accomplishment when tasks are completed. An employee that is extrinsically motivated may perform his job tasks just to get a reward or to get paid (Cannon, 2020).

Therefore, this study sought to understand to what extent extrinsic and intrinsic effects affect the employee performance levels.

#### **1.3 Justification of the study**

The operators of a service station face multiple demands to fulfil the customer's promise, which necessitates immediate corporate support from the Oil Company employees. The sales team faced challenges whilst remotely working from home which had its own distractions such as family, children, home schooling, pets, domestic chores, clutter, and noise. This made things difficult for employees and affected their work productivity (Caligiuri, et al., 2020). In addition, the risk of becoming infected with

the Coronavirus virus or worse the fear of losing loved ones had caused immense stress. Due to the economic crisis caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic employees were uncertain about their wages and salaries, job security and their employers' viability for the future. The isolation from colleagues whilst working remotely caused productivity to be inhibited and challenging to collaborate and communicate using online methods whilst staying focused on their job tasks (Lal & Dwivedi, 2021).

This research was a justifiable study relating to the impact of Coronavirus on employee motivation and performance in the Oil Company based on the following:

- a) The research is timely as most employees have been impacted by Coronavirus and motivational levels could have changed so it is important for the organisation to better understand the factors of motivation that do impact on performance.
- b) The information gathered from this research can be used by the management of the Oil Company to improve employee motivation, to perform tasks well and contribute positively to the performance of the company.
- c) This study can stimulate the creation of policies that will help staff members prepare for the unforeseen and reduce the likelihood of poor performance. It will also make it possible to plan the way staff may work more productively and effectively under difficult circumstances.
- d) Lastly the findings of this study will be added to the existing studies already completed about the impact of Coronavirus and on the motivation and performance in similar companies.

Employee motivation is essential in the retail industry because employees who are motivated offer excellent customer service, promote growth and productivity (Caligiuri, et al., 2020). Employee motivation and performance have been the subject of many empirical research and theoretical theories. This study aims to add to the body of knowledge on employee motivation and performance by examining how the pandemic has affected employee motivation and performance (Kreinter & Kinicki, 2001).

#### **1.4 Problem statement**

The Coronavirus Pandemic brought a forced change to traditional working methods; hence this study focuses on those circumstances and how employees coped, adjusted, and changed so they still could be productive and meet their performance indicators as per the company's requirements. Studies have also shown that the mediating role between performance and attitude is motivation (Barrick & Mount, 2005). Since keeping high-performing employees motivated is so crucial in today's competitive business environment, the researcher believes that the findings of this study will be of interest to managers and organisational leaders of the company being studied.

The Oil Company had experienced substantial losses because of the Coronavirus Pandemic, therefore the company started to cut back on labour and production. Consequently, fewer people were required, to generate the same volume of work at the same level of quality which meant employees were required to perform tasks beyond those in their job descriptions. This and the adaptation of working outside the traditional office environment brought its own set of challenges to employees. Therefore, this study

investigates the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on motivation and the performance of the sales team in the oil company.

### **1.5 Aim and objective of the research study.**

The aim of the research study is to assess the impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa by interviewing the sales team, with an overall view to ensure effectiveness of the sales team in times of a crisis. The research shall define the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the level of employee motivation by using a qualitative study.

### **1.6 Research Objectives**

The following objectives were developed to address the study aim:

- a) To identify the employee motivation levels during the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- b) To identify what factors effected employee motivation and performance.
- c) To establish what motivational techniques or tools that were implemented by the organisations to ensure motivation of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- d) To establish the motivational support required by employees during the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

The following questions were developed to address the study objectives.

- a) What are the motivational levels of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- b) What are the factors that impacted the motivational level of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- c) What employee motivation techniques or tools have the oil company implemented in the workplace to maintain employee motivation during the Coronavirus pandemic?
- d) What motivational support is required by employees with the new method of working to remain productive with increased performance?

The overall outcome of the study is to ascertain how motivational factors can impact on the performance of a specific business that has changed its working methods.

### **1.8 Overview of the Research design and methodology**

A research design is described as a strategy or blueprint as to how a researcher intends to conduct a research study and the methods employed to address the research questions (Aaker, et al., 2000). A research design is a summary of the general framework for the research process that a researcher follows, the data gathered, and the data analysis that is carried out (William, 1988). The sample from a specific population, the research location where the sample is located and the conditions in which the respondents were examined are also described in the research design (Selltitz, et al., 1965). Since the aim of this qualitative study was to understand the participants motivational levels through their



experience of the Coronavirus Pandemic, it fit the constructivist research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

For this study, the sample was chosen using the purposive sampling method as this is the most appropriate method when the researcher is using their own judgement in choosing the sample (Manohar, et al., 2018). The data collection process comprised of a semi structured interview with probing questions for clarity. Each interview lasted for approximately 35 minutes (Turner, 2010). The interviews were conducted online using Microsoft teams and were recorded for the purpose of analysis. Due to the constructivist nature of the study, the rich data collected during the interviews was used to interpret the findings. Participants were given the opportunity to express themselves by the researcher through open-ended questions which allowed the researcher to gain more insight into the analysis.

The researcher tried to comprehend the social phenomenon from the respondent's viewpoint considering their personal and professional encounters with the pandemic. After categorising the answers to the open-ended interview questions, data analysis allowed for the identification of themes through coding. After organising the themes, the study gained context through their interpretation.

### **1.9 Definition of Key Terms**

Coronavirus – Pandemic caused by a family of viruses that impacts on the human respiratory system causing various illnesses that could range from a common cold to more severe diseases.

Motivation – The reasons why humans act or behave in a certain way.

Sales Team – this is the frontline team within the oil company that manages the relations between the service station operators and the oil company.

Performance – is the ability of the individual to attain the goals and objectives and expectations of the company that he or she works for and in so doing ensure that the strategy of the company is being met.

### **1.10 Structure of the Dissertation**

The Coronavirus Pandemic impacted negatively on the entire world. Every person was impacted in some way by the pandemic. Moreover, the impact on companies has been devastating leading to restructuring of companies and employee retrenchments. This placed a huge strain on many employees to keep motivated and productive as they were stressed about the impact of the pandemic on their lives in both a personal and professional manner. This lack of motivation further impacted on the performance of the company and vice versa. This research presented the research findings in a logical structured manner from the investigation of the impact of the pandemic on the motivational levels of the sales team within an oil company,

#### **1.10.1 Chapter 1: Introduction of the study**

Chapter 1 serves as the study's introductory chapter. It commences with the context of the study, preceded by the justification of the study, statement of problem, study aims, research objectives and research questions. It also discussed the methodology used in the study and key definitions.

### **1.10.2 Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter is primarily concerned with the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study that was developed from the comprehensive literature review that examined the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on a global and local level. The literature also sought to explore the impact of the pandemic on the company and its employee's motivational levels. The theoretical framework that informed this study was the self-determination theory.

### **1.10.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology**

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology used for the study. It also outlines how the data was collected and analysed. The constructivist research paradigm was adopted for this study using an open-ended semi structured interview as the main research tool. There were 12 participants chosen for this study using the purposive sampling method. Ethical Clearance was obtained from the ethics committee at UKZN. A gatekeeper's letter was also obtained from the oil company to allow the researcher to interview the participants. Measures were put into place to ensure trustworthiness was maintained and the data was credible and dependable. The transcripts from the interviews contributed to the validity of the research. The study limitations were also highlighted.

### **1.10.4 Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter examines and explains the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews. In a logical and coherent manner, it gives the interpretation of the research findings based on the data gathered for this qualitative investigation. Respondents' verbatim transcriptions are presented in this chapter. To support the conclusions, the researcher thoroughly reviewed the literature after analysing the respondents' comments. The information was grouped into themes under the different objectives.

### **1.10.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

Chapter 5 focuses on the findings collected from the interviews with the participants and provides businesses with useful recommendations for how employees should be kept engaged and productive during a crisis. Recommendations were based on interpretations derived from the research study. The major findings of this research study focused on how to keep employees motivated during a crisis to increase productivity and maintain a positive outlook for the performance of the organisation.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the study's background, a description of the research problem, together with objectives to steer the research. Chapter 1 also discussed the study's aims and research methodology, as well as definitions of terms. The study's primary objectives were made clear in this chapter, along with the methodology used to help achieve them. Finally, the research study's outline was provided. The following chapter provides a detailed review of relevant literature in respect of the research problem.

## **CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Coronavirus ravaged South Africa; therefore, this chapter provides the review of literature that explores the impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the sales team. The chapter presents the summary of the Coronavirus Pandemic and how it impacted the world on a global scale. This chapter further describes the impact on South Africa in different sectors of its economy, impact on the work environment and the psychological impact on various employees.

In this chapter the motivation of employees was explored using the different motivational theories to ascertain the factors that impact their motivational levels. These factors are used to understand which motivational tools could be applied to motivate and support employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The research has also reviewed some completed studies that were conducted on employee motivation and performance.

### **2.2 The Coronavirus Pandemic**

The Coronavirus is a large family of viruses that causes a respiratory infection in human beings. The virus is transmitted mainly through respiratory droplets from a person infected with the virus that may cough or sneeze without covering their mouth (World Health Organisation, 2020). The virus spreads rapidly, hence governments regulated and controlled citizens and their actions by isolating and preventing contact with others if they were experiencing symptoms of the virus. Governments across the world declared a state of disaster and countries were placed under lockdown to contain the spread of the virus (World Health Organisation, 2020).

#### **2.2.1 The Coronavirus Impact on the world**

Globally the pandemic has claimed over 1.5 million people's lives. Economic activities slowed as there were impositions on the movement to stop the spread of disease (Sharif, et al., 2020). Governments around the world were caught off guard by the speed and severity of the outbreak. They struggled to contain the virus and prevent it from spreading. Many countries implemented lockdowns and travel restrictions to slow the spread of the virus, but it had already spread far and wide. The impact of the coronavirus on the world was immense. It affected almost every aspect of daily life. Schools and businesses closed, and people were forced to stay at home. The global economy was severely impacted, with many businesses closing down and people losing their jobs.






Name	Cases - cumulative total	Cases - newly reported in last 24 hours	Deaths - cumulative total	Deaths - newly reported in last 24 hours
<b>Global</b>	<b>72,851,747</b>	<b>642,738</b>	<b>1,643,339</b>	<b>12,407</b>
 United States	16,446,844	201,468	301,536	2,942
 India	9,956,557	24,010	144,451	355
 Brazil	6,970,034	42,889	182,799	964
 Russian Federation	2,762,668	28,214	49,151	587
 France	2,367,648	17,441	58,989	289

Figure 2.1: Coronavirus death toll in 2020

Source: (World Health Organisation, 2020)

The pandemic caused uncertainty levels amongst people which is shown in Figure 2.2.

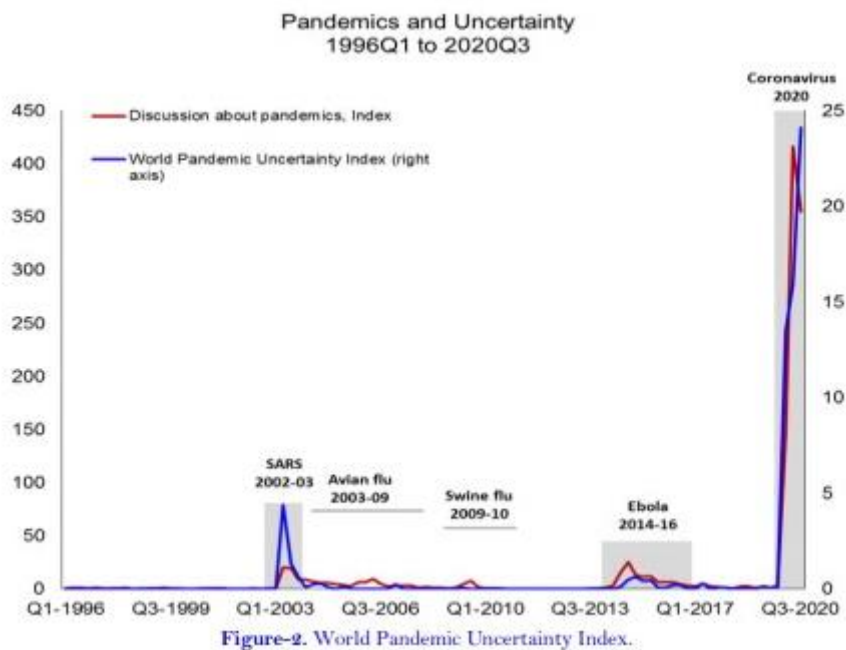


Figure 2.2: Levels of Uncertainty across the world during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Source: (Sackey & Barfi, 2021)

The impact of the pandemic had a severe unpredictability about the duration, direction, and magnitude, which might develop a vicious spiral of compressing economic position and lowering business and consumer trust; this could result in decreased investment and loss of jobs (Chudik, et al., 2020).

### 2.2.2 The Coronavirus Impact - South Africa

When a country's economy experiences two successive quarters of negative economic growth, that country enters a technical recession. Many factors contribute to lower growth and a weaker economy,

such as energy supply restrictions, a decrease in fixed investment expenditure and consumer spending (Bregman, et al., 2020). Coronavirus further impacted South Africa following years of economic hardship. In the final two quarters of 2019 the country faced a technical recession whereby GDP growth declined by 0.8 percent in quarter 3 and 1.4 percent in quarter 4. The unemployment rate also grew by 0.1 percent reaching 29.1 percent, the highest level since 2008 (Bhorat, et al., 2020).

As a result of the lockdown, there was almost no economic activity, which contributed to further deterioration. President Cyril Ramaphosa initiated a countrywide lockdown, which began on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, and lasted until the 16<sup>th</sup> of April of the same year. Initially the duration of the lockdown was supposed to be 21 days however it was extended to months by the Disaster Management Act.

The only way to resolve the demographic effects of Coronavirus is in the form of a national shutdown to reduce the spread of the disease by breaking existing economic and social forms of contact. Such policies triggered a massive negative shock to the economy, resulting in the instantaneous decrease in economic activity followed by moderate and long-term financial impact.

The Coronavirus Pandemic was declared a national state of disaster on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. Regulations under the disaster management act was brought in to reduce the transmission of the disease. The regulations included the limitation of the number of people allowed at public and private gatherings, restrictions on travel, schools were suspended, and learners were asked to move to online teaching. All national ports of entry were closed which impacted the import and export of goods in the country. Government gatherings were all cancelled, and all main religious activities were suspended. The health facilities were also revised where outpatients were discouraged (October, et al., 2021).

#### **2.2.2.1 Coronavirus Risk Adjusted Strategy**

To control the subtle scaling back of the lockdown, an alert level-five Coronavirus system was implemented. Many criteria were considered such as the infection level, transmission rate, health facility capacity to handle the sick and the social and economic impact of the continuous restrictions, to guide this approach. The country gradually adjusted the levels across the country based on the Coronavirus infections. The different levels of the risk adjusted strategy are explained below.

#### **2.2.2.1.1 Lockdown Alert level 5 from midnight 26 March to 30 April 2020**

The health system was not ready to handle the spread of the infection as the virus was spreading rapidly. The country was placed under a lockdown level 5 that limited mobility of people and only permitted individuals performing critical services in the health, fuel, retail and banking industries, permission to move. The rest of the population was told to stay at home.

The sectors permitted to operate were essential services with stringent hygiene requirements. Retail stores could sell essential items only which was restricted to food, hygiene, cosmetic products, and medication. Private vehicles were only permitted to travel during restricted times and bus and taxi services were halted. There was no interprovincial travel allowed. Alcohol and cigarettes were not allowed for sale. Restaurants and fast-food outlets were not allowed to operate. There were also strict curfews restricting the movement of people for unnecessary errands which was monitored by security officials (SACoronavirus, 2021).

#### **2.2.2.1.2 Lockdown alert level 4 from 1 to 31 May 2020.**

During level 4 lockdown approximately 1.5 million people started working again. Food and retail stores were allowed to sell all line of products that were available. Transport restrictions were lifted on both public transport and private motor vehicles. They were allowed to operate within the curfew times and abide with the stringent hygiene and capacity requirements. People were confined to their homes between 8pm and 5am. No interprovincial movement of people was allowed except those that were performing an essential service, and this required a special permit (SACoronavirus, 2021).

#### **2.2.2.1.3 Lockdown alert level 3 from 1 June to 17 August 2020.**

At this level there was a decrease in the rate of the virus infection and health facilities were coping with assisting patients. Certain business sectors were permitted to operate, finance, electronics, furniture, and retail sectors included. Approximately 8 million people went back to their jobs under level 3. The curfew times remained.

There was still no interprovincial movement allowed. The country was on alert level 2 from 00h01 on 18 August 2020 (SACoronavirus, 2021).

#### **2.2.2.1.4 Lockdown Alert level 2**

The health services were moderately ready and there was a decreasing of the infection rate of the virus. Movement of people between provinces was allowed. National schools were opened including the tourism, trade and industry and real estate sectors. Domestic air travel was allowed (SACoronavirus, 2021).

#### **2.2.2.1.5 Lockdown alert level 1 from 21 September to 28 December 2020**

There was a high readiness to handle the spread of the virus. The entire economy opened for trade. The country continued to move between levels as the different variants of the Coronavirus were discovered with the country staying at Alert Level 1 from October 2021 (SACoronavirus, 2021).

### 2.2.2.2 Essential and Non-Essential services during the Lockdown

South Africa was placed under a three-week lockdown, announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March but put into effect on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. This was a national stay at home order to all people. Essential activities were allowed to operate. During the lockdown, essential services continued to provide everyone with the necessities that people required to live their everyday life. This included healthcare facilities, medicine, food, fuel, internet, municipal and banking services.

During the quarantine, individuals who were not operating in essential public services were obliged to remain at home and refrain from all physical encounters with individuals outside of their houses (SACoronavirus, 2021).

### 2.2.3 The Coronavirus Impact on the South African Economy

During the Coronavirus Pandemic the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South Africa dropped by 34% as shown in Figure 2.3.



Figure 2.3: Coronavirus Impact on Wage Earnings and income GDP components

Source: (Statistics, 2021))

Gross Operating Surplus was down by 40% whilst total wage earning was down by 30%. It can be seen by the results that earnings for people with less education were reduced by 40% and for those with tertiary education, were reduced by 25%. Lower earnings in lower educated workers could imply that lesser hours were worked, and certain resources could be idle due to the pandemic shocks (Arndt, et al., 2020).

The four channels through which a lockdown influenced economic activity were as follows:

1. Due to the national lockdown and other restrictions a forced reduction in production on non-essential business operation materialised.
2. The travel and movement restrictions led to a huge decline in household demand for goods and services. The tourism industry also came to a complete standstill.
3. There was an impact on the global production and supply chain on South African Exports.

4. Due to the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, it made investors draw back and delay investment into the country.
5. Informal trading and services were also affected and the people dependent on this sector could not earn a living due to the restrictions.

Figure 2.4 displays the different industries and the level of shock that each industry experienced during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

	Mild decline (0 to -10%)	Moderate decline (-10% to -30%)	Large decline (-30% to -60%)	Severe decline (Larger than -60%)
	Agriculture, forestry, fishing			
			Mining and quarrying	
MANUFACTURING		Food and non-alcoholic beverages		Alcoholic beverages and tobacco
			Textiles, clothing, leather and footwear	
			Paper, paper products	Wood, wood products
	Pharmaceuticals, hygiene and cleaning	Petroleum	Basic chemicals, fertilizer, paint, other	
		Plastic, glass		Tyres, rubber products
				Non-metallic minerals and products (cement, concrete, etc.)
				Iron, steel, metal products
				Machinery and equipment
	Electricity, gas, water			
				Construction
			Wholesale, retail trade	Accommodation, catering
	Communication		Transport and storage	
	Finance and insurance, computing services	Real estate, legal and accounting, other support services	Rentals, research, manufacturing services, other business services	
	Health services		Education services	Recreation, other community services

Figure 2.4: Implications of the Lockdown by sector

Source: (Arndt, et al., 2020)

- **Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry**

The lockdown regulations during the Coronavirus Pandemic allowed for the agriculture sector to continue, so that wastage of crops that were already planted, was prevented, and to take care of the livestock. This was done to ensure that South Africa had a secure supply of food (Arndt, et al., 2020). These sectors have been affected by changes in supply and demand, disruptions in transportation and logistics, and the closure of markets and processing plants.

- **Mining**

During the Coronavirus Pandemic there was a lower global demand for natural resources therefore some of the mines remained closed to comply with lockdown measures, resulting in decreased production and revenue loss. Coal was deemed essential hence these mines continued to operate. The care of the mines continued to prevent safety delays when the mines resumed operations (Arndt, et al., 2020). Many



mining companies implemented measures such as social distancing, remote working, and enhanced sanitation protocols to protect their employees' health and safety.

- **Manufacturing**

In the manufacturing sector only certain sectors such as food, packaging, medical, hygiene and non-alcoholic beverage were allowed to operate. Other sectors in manufacturing were affected. Most manufacturers moved towards pre-packaged goods to prevent the spread of the virus. The sale and transportation of alcohol and tobacco was prohibited.

Since textiles, leather and clothing was non-essential, this sector was seen to decline negatively.

Due to the restrictions on movement, people were not travelling and using their vehicles hence the demand for fuel declined whilst petrochemicals continued to trade during the lockdown.

Machines, car manufacturers, metal and furniture manufacturers showed a sharp decline during this period as these sectors produce capital goods or goods mainly for export (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Electricity Gas and Water**

This sector was exempted from the lockdown as more people worked from home that resulted in the increase in household consumption although industrial supply declined as some companies were not operating resulting in lower revenues for utility companies. With more people staying at home, there has been an increase in water consumption, particularly in areas with strict hygiene measures. Additionally, the pandemic has led to financial hardships for many individuals and businesses, leading to difficulties in paying utility bills. As a result, many utility companies have implemented payment plans and other measures to support their customers during these challenging times (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Construction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the construction industry. The initial wave of lockdowns and restrictions resulted in project delays and shutdowns, as job sites were forced to close or limit their workforce. Many construction companies experienced a shortage of workers due to travel restrictions, quarantine requirements, and illness, which led to further delays and increased costs. Additionally, supply chain disruptions caused by global shutdowns and restrictions on international trade have led to material shortages and price increases. As a result, construction projects have become more expensive and time-consuming, causing many projects to be postponed or cancelled (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Trade, Accommodation and Catering**

Essential trade in health and hygiene products continued as businesses had to invest in personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies, while also implementing measures to keep customers and staff safe. Furnisher, appliance, and hardware stores were closed. Hotel and catering including restaurants and fast-food outlets shut down for the period of the pandemic. Travel restrictions and quarantine measures led to a sharp decline in tourism, resulting in significant revenue losses for hotels, resorts, and other accommodation providers (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Transport Communication and storage**

Transport of goods were restricted to essential goods and transport of people were restricted to those that provided essential services, or those that required medical attention. All other transportation that handled freight or warehouse was limited. With lockdowns and travel restrictions, there was a significant decline in passenger transport, particularly in the aviation and public transportation sectors. This has resulted in significant revenue losses for airlines and other transport companies, as well as job losses for workers in the industry (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Finance and Real Estate**

The banking and financial institutions continued to provide services to all people including pension and medical aid services. Rental of industrial equipment and vehicles declined as productivity slowed down during the pandemic. The real estate industry was affected, with a decline in property values and construction activity. The financial industry has also been affected, with increased volatility and uncertainty in the stock market. (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Social and Community Services**

Social distancing affected many social activities such as religious gatherings. Schooling moved to online services. Medical services concentrated mainly on attending to Coronavirus patients and discouraged people from using the outpatients' services at medical facilities. Medical practitioners also offered online consultation.

All recreation facilities such as cinemas, parks, beaches and similar recreational activities, places and events were closed. Public gatherings were restricted.

Essential services such as waste removal, sewerage and sanitation continued (Arndt, et al., 2020).

- **Tourism**

The tourism industry came to a complete standstill as the restriction on movement continued.

In summary the essential industry (electricity, gas, and water) was mildly affected by the pandemic however the reduction in economic activity, indirectly impacted utilities. Construction was the worst hit as this industry came to a standstill during the pandemic. This was supported with Figure 2.3.

The Coronavirus outbreak and subsequent lockdown caused workplace closures, disrupted company supply chains, and lowered productivity across many industries (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020).

In the second quarter of 2020 all industries reported a decline in employment verses the first quarter. This was as per a Stats SA survey. The survey found that the loss of jobs were mostly the result of decreasing employment in commerce and industry. Furthermore, job losses were observed in the transportation, manufacturing, and construction industries. Moderate employment losses occurred in the electrical and mining industries. South Africa witnessed a steep decline in the demand for services and products. The country's closure of the economic sector had an influence on foreign trade, with imports and exports significantly curtailed (Statistics, 2021).

These negative influencers resulted in decreased confidence of foreign investors into South Africa and decreased interest from potential stakeholders to invest further in the country. The weakening economy and limited corporate operations spurred forecasts of a major recession in South Africa, one that would be worse than the global financial crisis of 2009, when the country had a 1.5 percent GDP decline (Statistics, 2021).

#### **2.2.4 Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the work environment**

Coronavirus has been characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) due to the increasing high numbers of confirmed cases and deaths. In South Africa, from 3 January 2020 to 11 February 2022, there have been 3,634,811 confirmed cases of Coronavirus with 96,705 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 4 February 2022, a total of 30,185,123 vaccine doses have been administered (World Health Organisation, 2020). The pandemic has posed an unprecedented health crisis to human beings (Stier, et al., 2020). The worldwide lockdown of businesses and industries that were implemented and mandated to curb the spread of the virus generated a wide array of unique and fundamental challenges for both employees and employers across the globe (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Nations all over the globe had implemented measures like lockdowns, bans on social gatherings and public events, closures of businesses and schools. There was restrictions on public transport. Many public education campaigns about the coronavirus were launched. It was impossible to prevent the effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the schedule and rhythm of work (Honey-Roses, et al., 2020).

As a result, families were affected in a positive and negative way. Many people's family lives were disrupted, which caused alterations to their otherwise typical daily routines. Due to the lockdown rules, many families worked from home and children had to be home schooled. There was a change in duties and roles, mostly for parents, because of the closure of schooling facilities (including day care centres and tertiary universities, as well as offices. Parental responsibilities for instance, included childcare and academic teaching whilst working from home (October, et al., 2021).

In the literature review the author focuses on Coronavirus related risks and the impact it has on employee's motivation, remote work environment, work practices and employee performance.

##### **2.2.4.1 Emergent changes in work practices**

###### **2.2.4.1.1 Remote Working**

Coronavirus disrupted normal work routines and increased trends for employees to work online or in virtual environments. Research previously covered practices that included work from home (WFH) although that was in response to employee's preference but now Coronavirus forced many into mandatory work from home. By June 2021 almost 50% of people were working from home. The pandemic had changed peoples view on how and where they worked best (Business Tech, 2021).

Remote working was not common practise in South Africa. A survey completed by Statistics South Africa revealed that about 1.4% of people worked from home before the lockdown and this increased to 77.9% during the lockdown (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

Due to the demand for a large workforce to respond to the Coronavirus, the increase in technology availability pushed tendencies toward remote employment. People turned to technology to ease the loneliness (Powers, 2020). It is known that some people who need to perform challenging tasks with minimal interaction with co-workers 'are much more productive if they work from home. "Remote work" is a broad word that incorporates work from anywhere (that is, not necessarily simply at home) (Aropah, et al., 2020). However, as more people are obliged to work remotely, many people confront difficulties due to a lack of facilities in their homes to work efficiently. Employees that reside with other family members confront more hurdles than someone who lives alone because they must also negotiate other people's space and requirements (Guzman, et al., 2022).

Employees generally find it difficult to draw a line between business and non-work activities (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). This situation has been worsened further by the compulsory isolation of employees during the pandemic. While working from home may appear tempting and could provide a haven during this difficult period, the lack of distinction between office and personal as well as the absence of commuting to and from work can create hardship as well (Konya, 2020).

Noting the difficulties that people confront whilst working remotely, employers are slower to accept this new method of working because they believe they would lose control over staff who are out of sight and reach (Agarwal, et al., 2020). Employers can use a variety of surveillance methods to keep track on their employees' whereabouts. Virtual calls have become possible thanks to the fast-growing use of videoconferencing. However, these virtual video calls come with a risk: they can raise feelings of stress by causing continual monitoring and a sense of violation of privacy.

Some research has noted working remotely may have been seen as being unproductive and lazy.

#### **2.2.4.1.2 Advantage of remote working for employees**

- Being agile and flexible as employee's are better placed to work hours outside of their normal stipulated working hours. Employees can either start earlier or work later in the day (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).
- Companies that allow employees to work from home can succeed in retaining these employees as the flexible hours could assist employees manage their personal lives in respect of childcare as the level of commute decreases. The level of trust and loyalty from employees increases (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).
- Financial savings for the company as the company can save office rent, office utilities and supplies since companies do not need to incur these costs if employees work from home.

- Employees are more productive as they are not interrupted whilst working from home as they would if they were at the office. Working from home does offer a quieter work environment with less interruption and more focused work.
- Working from home can offer a better work life balance for employees as they may have more time to fit in household chores and could free up some of their personal time to rest.
- Save on travel expenses and fuel as employees spent less time travelling to the office (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

#### **2.2.4.1.3 Disadvantage of remote working**

- Employees may feel isolated and disconnected from their colleagues and the organisation when working from home. There are also employees that live alone and require the office interaction during the day. Employees want to feel as part of a team.
- Companies that allow their employees to work from home may find it difficult to monitor employee performance when they are working from home. Employee personalities play a role in the way they react to companies monitoring them (Deloitte, 2020).
- Employees working from home can also become distracted by household noises and other family members that may be at home, so working from home may not suit everyone. Some employees prefer routine and structure that the office environment offers (Ford, et al., 2021).
- Employees can also experience burnout when working from home. An office environment provides a clear distinction between an office and home environment whilst just working from home can lead to employees struggling to switch off from work. This could lead to longer working hours and increased stress.
- The cost of setting up an employee to work from home is high and this is an added cost to the company. Companies ensured that employees that worked from home were safe and healthy.

#### **2.2.4.2 Virtual Meeting**

Coronavirus took face to face meetings to virtual media equipment systems. Although this way of meeting was present before the pandemic, it became more popular during the pandemic as more people needed to isolate due to becoming infected (Mak & Kozlowski, 2019).

Past research has suggested that virtual teamwork lacks the communication depth and complexity of face-to-face teams and that traditional teamwork issues such as dispute and co-ordination can quickly escalate in remote teams. The formation of structural scaffolds to alleviate conflict, harmonize team members, and ensure the safe and comprehensive processing of information are critical suggestions for virtual teams. Prior research, for example, has demonstrated the need – particularly in virtual teams – to regularise teamwork, clarify team goals, incorporate steps to improve and to nurture safe and supportive discussions (Abarca, et al., 2021)

The acceleration of Coronavirus has led to an increase in the use of virtual teams and research of innovation could allow such teams to function optimally. Due to an increased level of stress and anxiety

in the workplace it raises questions as to whether sensitive conversations can be done in a virtual connected network where emotional and social cues are limited.

#### **2.2.4.2.1 Advantages of using virtual meetings**

- Virtual team meetings allow the company employees to meet and communicate with other team members on a platform that works in real time.
- Virtual teams allow for employees to communicate with one another, and this reduces travel time, costs, and daily allowances.
- Virtual meetings also help companies such that companies can recruit talented employees from anywhere in the world and the costs of relocation is reduced as employees can still accept the role even if they are unwilling to relocate. This new method of holding meetings allows the companies to access a greater pool of talented employees without the stress of having to relocate them.
- Virtual teams also allow all employees to participate even those that may be physically challenged and may not be able to access the office space. Here again it creates employment for all people despite their challenges (Abarca, et al., 2021).

#### **2.2.4.2.2 Disadvantages of using virtual meetings**

- It is rather difficult for the line manager to provide feedback to their subordinates, and this could lead to lower learning opportunities, decreased commitment to the organisation and a higher risk of turnover (Chung, et al., 2020).
- There are instances where the employee may lack technological knowledge and may struggle to connect and interact on the virtual meeting.
- Certain companies due to the nature of their work cannot operate their companies whilst using the virtual teams for their online meetings.

### **2.2.5 Economic Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Employee**

#### **2.2.5.1 Loss of Jobs and Retrenchment**

Due to Coronavirus and the restriction of movement, many industries, including travel, sports and entertainment were shut down. The unemployment rate in South Africa hit a record high of 34.4% in June 2020.

Expanding on the unemployment it was noted that 44.4% of the labour force was unemployed in quarter two, this being an increase from quarter one of 43.2%. This then equates to 11.9 million people being unemployed. The impact per industry is as follows: Finance lost 278,000 jobs in the second quarter, while community and social services lost 166,000 and manufacturing lost 83,000 (Statistics, 2021).

The Coronavirus pandemic has certainly exacerbated South Africa's labour market woes.

South Africa's employment levels was already declining when the pandemic hit the country with low and sluggish job growth, considerably below the criteria of other upper middle-income nations, despite the government's effective reaction to the pandemic, it concludes that employment losses have been significant, and the recovery is taking a long time (THE WORLD BANK, 2021).

By the end of 2020, there were almost 1.5 million less people employed, and the salaries of those who were still working had declined by 10 to 15%, despite two quarters of employment growth. By the time this study's findings were published, just 40% of lost employment had been regained (THE WORLD BANK, 2021).

Even though the government's response was quick and efficient in the low-income sector, which included transfer programs that slightly lessened the pandemic's negative consequences, the loss of jobs during the pandemic was significantly centred amongst low-income employees, aggravating the existing inequalities. Low-wage workers experience job loss at a rate that is four times higher than that of high-wage earners (THE WORLD BANK, 2021).

### **2.2.6 Psychological Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Company Employees**

The coronavirus pandemic can influence the psychological well-being of the workers in addition to the immediate effects it has on various workplace practices and arrangements.

#### **2.2.6.1 Mental/Physical Health and Safety**

According to Maslow's theory, meeting the fundamental needs involves giving out safety gear like masks, cleaning supplies, and food, as well as encouraging healthy lifestyle choices. Peoples' needs at a higher level will develop if the demands at a lower level have been met (Zoellner & Sulikova, 2022). Every employee of the company should be granted access to crisis response equipment.

The two challenges that are noticed with an employee working from home are psychosocial risks and ergonomics. Working from home during the pandemic can provoke higher levels of anxiety than usual. These can be linked to ill health, economic and social implications of the crisis. This can then lead to mental health issues (Banerjee & & Nair, 2020).

The pandemic has created uncertainty. People are fearful of contacting the virus and dying from it. They are also worried about their family members becoming ill or dying. They are also uncertain as to how long the pandemic could last. This creates a sense of helplessness in individuals that increases anxiety, stress levels, sadness, and loneliness (Gao, et al., 2020). The literature shows that people who were quarantined during the pandemic reported low moods, insomnia, stress, anger, exhaustion, depression with irritability and low moods having a high prevalence.

The increase in unemployment or even the threat of losing one's job also has led to a range of stress related consequences such as depression, physical ailments, and anxiety.

#### **2.2.6.2 Loneliness stemming from Social Distancing**

Human interaction is required among co-workers. This is essential for physical and mental health. Handshakes were also not practiced due to the social distancing required. This places some degree of harm to an individual's physical and mental health (Brooks, et al., 2020).

Solitude is a mentally and emotionally painful feeling which usually results from people's subjective experience that their social and intimate needs are not fully met. It is much more severe than that of the disruption of human connections.

Loneliness in the workplace is shown to have a significant negative influence on workers' continuance commitment, behaviour patterns and performance (Ozcelik, 2018). Online communication also can bring a risk of misunderstandings due to the absence of non-verbal cues and this could result in an employee feeling rejected (Qiu, et al., 2020).

Since interpersonal contact was restricted due to the lockdown and social isolation laws, there were less possibilities to see close relatives, friends, and neighbours. Therefore, many people experienced psychological effects from the social isolation brought on by lockdown limitations. Being connected to others can be a coping method, especially in trying times, thus being cut off from family and friends sometimes results in feelings of sadness and loneliness (Mental Health Foundation, 2021) (Luchetti, et al., 2020).

#### **2.2.6.3 Stress and Burnout**

The negative impact of Coronavirus has placed a strain on many jobs as working conditions have deteriorated. Companies have restructured their organisations leading to fewer staff members whilst the load of work remains the same. This deterioration has increased the risk of employees experiencing burnout, stress, exhaustion, and a distant attitude towards work. To preserve employee well-being and performance, companies need to support employees with resources to be able to work from home, such as, counselling or therapy sessions and training to prevent transmission of the disease (Garro-Abarca, et al., 2021).

#### **2.2.6.4 Addiction**

The Coronavirus Pandemic is especially disturbing because lack of the jobs and government mandated work from home orders may increase employee vulnerabilities and therefore prompt or aggravate alcohol dependence. Working from home and being away from peers and supervisor could instigate addictive behaviour such as alcohol abuse (Gao, et al., 2020). Substance addiction during the pandemic is a major health threat (Dubey, et al., 2020).

Fig 2.5 talks to the lockdown and people being isolated. The impact of the economic stress, loss of jobs, domestic violence and the reduced availability of health care can lead to many alcohol dependant people, finding their happiness in homemade spirits or even the hand sanitizers (Dubey, et al., 2020).



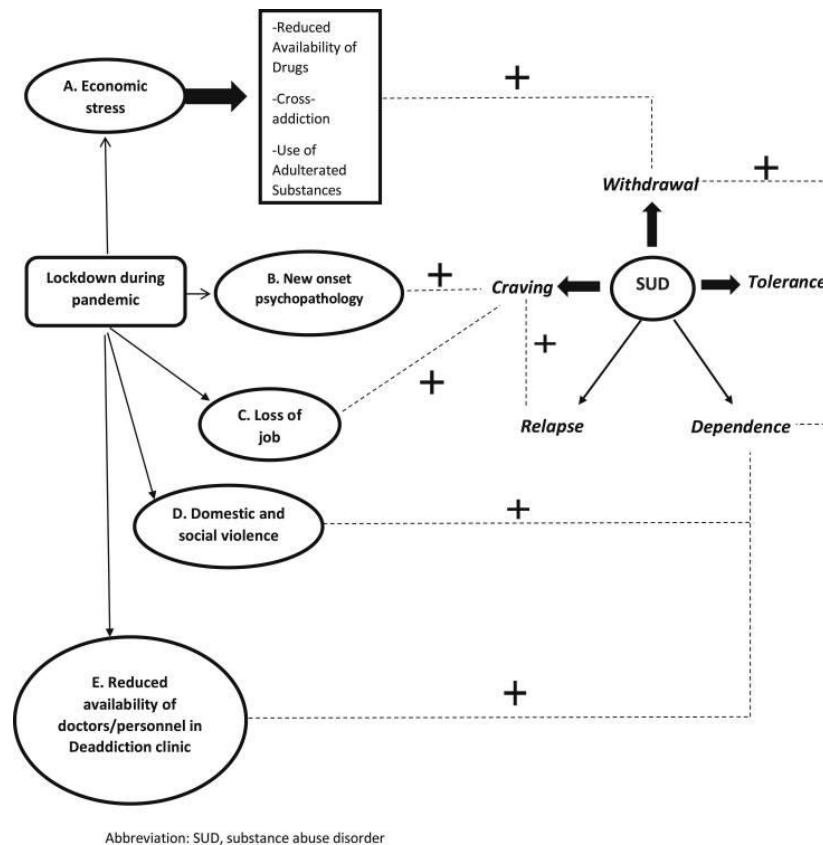


Figure 2.5: Relationship between Coronavirus Pandemic and addiction

Source: (Dubey, et al., 2020)

### 2.3 Motivation in the workplace

It can be noted from the above literature that the impact of the pandemic has not only been felt by the health sector but also the entire economy of the country. The pandemic led to a decline in the level of public purchasing power. The decrease in sales volumes was felt both by the company and its employees (Devany & Arquisola, 2020). This has impacted on the motivation of the sales team.

Employee motivation has an impact on productivity and performance therefore it is vital for the business to ensure that the motivation of employees and the factors that are impacting on this motivation are addressed such that performance within an organisation is met or improved (Devany & Arquisola, 2020).

Due to the great likelihood that the sales staff performance being diminished as they were at danger during the pandemic social isolation, they may not be able to function successfully, especially for the sort of sales team that persuades buyers and develops a relationship with customers through in-person encounters.

There have been various motivational theories that have explored the psychology of motivation. Most of these theories have concluded that motivation is not something that can be handed out to employees but is within the employee themselves and their internal state (intrinsic) of mind. This could drive their external behaviours which is driven by their needs.

This section explored the different theories of motivation and the factors that impact on the motivational levels of employees.

### **2.3.1 The meaning of Motivation**

The reasons for one's actions are what is meant by the phrase motivation (Amabile, 1993). Motivation is defined as "the characteristic that influences our decision to act or not to act (Ganta, 2014).

Three elements make up motivation, which has been described as the influence or drive that prompts us to act in a particular way: direction, energy, and sustainability (Kroth, 2007).

Motivation is described as a cause or goal that drives a person to behave in a specific way in a specific scenario (Lamb, 2016). Furthermore, Ganta (2014) defined motivation as the ability to dedicate a considerable effort and time to the attainment of organisational objectives depending on the potential of the undertaking (Azar & Shafighi, 2013).

A person may be motivated by an action or a process that describe their recurrent behaviours, wants, and desires or to provide them a purpose for doing something (Vroom, 1964). The various factors that influence direction and behaviour at work collectively make up motivation. Given that motivation encourages workers to participate in activities connected to their jobs, motivation is seen as a crucial workplace factor. An employee that is motivated exhibits excitement, eagerness, and a strong desire to carry out and finish their responsibilities (Nguyen, 2017).

The definitions of motivation that is set out above deal with elements or occurrences that drive specific human action at the time throughout a certain period due to the circumstances that existed. The definitions further imply that an "invisible force" is required to push people to make a positive contribution. It is also possible to derive from the concept that maintaining a motivated team or establishing an atmosphere wherein higher performance levels are expected, is still a challenge. Motivation is not a constant attribute and is more of a dynamic phenomenon since it may alter because of personal changes.

### **2.3.2 Importance of Motivation in crisis situations**

Employee motivation is a fundamental element of the business that affects the productivity and performance of the company.

As a result, Oluwasanya (2016) argued that because motivation is seen as an integral aspect of one's mental state, it is closely correlated with the degree of productivity. However, it is seen as more than just the person's thoughts; rather, it refers to the physical activity the person does because of their thoughts.

Motivation and output are closely related. To increase productivity and a company's overall success, employees must be motivated (Kanfer, et al., 2017). According to published research, an organization's total productivity and success are correlated with its employees' levels of motivation (Hussein & Simba, 2017).

Therefore, the ability of the company to keep employees motivated especially during a crisis should be a high priority.

When the employee morale is high, employees feel motivated and enjoy their roles that they hold in a company. Motivated employees are a key to a profitable business. They thrive on achievement and getting tasks done.

During a crisis such as the Coronavirus employees feel unsettled and could become demotivated. It is human nature to prefer familiarity and to feel settled in their work environment and may not prefer changes hence it is important for the company to help in this transition for their employees (Wolor, et al., 2020).

Motivated employees create an effective workplace in the times of crisis. A survey completed by Censuswide in the UK show that over 73% of employees want their employers to motivate them more. (Censuswide, 2020).

Employee engagement is realised when employees feel like they belong and are part of the team. This can be done when the company shares relevant information with the employees and ensures that employees understand their roles. Employees also feel engaged when their work is acknowledged and when the company makes plans for their career development and planning (Mefi & Asoba, 2021).

Positivity of employees comes about when they are comfortable in their work environment even if it's remote working. Employees perform better when they have all the necessary tools required to perform their jobs (Zoellner & Sulikova, 2022).

Motivated staff are loyal, and they stay in the company. This helps the company as replacing staff is costly and time consuming. Motivated staff tend to be flexible and would want to work longer hours to finish an urgent presentation or work over a weekend to finish their work (Nilasari, et al., 2021).

## **2.4 Factors that impact on Motivation and Productivity of employees**

Employee motivation is one of the most important components in a company's success because it allows workers to participate using the organization's various resources (material, financial and information) to achieve its goals. Employees become the most significant aspect of an enterprise's management and the factor that determines its success and competitiveness (Hitka, et al., 2021).

Organizations under crisis typically struggle to strike a balance between company goals and employee goals for safety and protection. As a result, motivational strategies and methods become difficult (Kitagawa, et al., 2021). The maintenance of employee health and welfare and the organisational need to maintain minimal performance levels were put in conflict by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Employers must find ways to inspire their staff to perform both physically and online. Given the novelty of the situation, the adoption of remote and teleworking brought additional hurdles for how to inspire staff working from home (Mefi & Asoba, 2021).

### **2.4.1 Work from home (WFH)**

One of the major changes that occurred during the pandemic was the implementation of the remote work, also called “work(ing) from home” (WFM), an employment arrangement that allowed employees to work from home (Chung, et al., 2020).

The percentage of the workforce that were WFH for each country may differ, however two common features can be observed:

- 1) Many people reported that it was their first time working from home.
- 2) Many people who worked from home wished to continue working from home even after the pandemic was over (Alan & Darja, 2020).

This suggests that WFH may increase the welfare of workers and may lead to growth in remote work after the end of the pandemic. However, some studies show that WFH results in worsened physiological well-being (Alan & Darja, 2020), while other studies show that people who work from home have an enhanced well-being (Xiao, et al., 2021). WFM also gives the employee the extra time to engage in leisure activities which could provide benefits for overall well being (Torales, et al., 2020).

Work from Home meant that families within a household spent more time together. An advantage of this being improved communications amongst family members as families got the opportunity to share and talk about their feelings and this could result in stronger relationships. However other families did not experience the same as spending more time together ended in frustration and arguments (October, et al., 2021).

There are also studies that have reported both positive and negative effects of WFH on productivity based on skills, education, tasks, or industry (Etheridge, et al., 2020). The demands of the work environment coupled with family demands have been a challenge questioning the work life balance of the workforce (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). It should come as no surprise that one of the hardest aspects of working remotely is controlling distractions at home. The second and third largest obstacles are isolation and collaborating with co-workers or clients (Gitlab, 2021).

Another factor that can impact on the work from home productivity is teams working from home can experience a lack of clarity around priorities and the tasks they need to perform. Working in isolation can lead to uncertainty as to whom to talk to about specific issues and from where to get support. With employees being online at different times, employees found it difficult to approach colleagues and this led to delays (Eurofound, 2020a).

Another aspect of working from home that needs to be focused on is the performance of the employee. This requires support for all levels of management, as they must have the ability to determine performance, track employee performance and drive an employee to perform (Aropah, et al., 2020).

### **2.4.2 Increased workloads and work commitments**

The lockdown and other related restrictions stemming from the pandemic had dire consequences for employees as they were placed on uncertain duration of leave, retrenched, reduced working hours and

wages, job losses as many businesses shut down. For a significant segment of the working population, this led to a sudden increase in workload, changes in working conditions and work arrangements.

The line separating personal and professional life vanished during the lockdown when every employee was required to work from home (WFH), and that too without any assistance from household staff, educational institutions, or childcare centres. The employee discovered that, in addition to experiencing distress, more demands and pressure at work caused workers to become irate, frustrated, and stressed (Verma, et al., 2021).

When the participants' degrees of discomfort were measured, it was discovered that several of them sometimes had anxiety and often throughout the lockdown. This may be the result of the discomfort they had been experiencing because of the strain from the WFH and juggling home duties. (Verma, et al., 2021) (Singh, 2020b).

Thus, it has been shown that when job responsibilities grow, people get more stressed, and family-related distractions lower the standard of work. While stress greatly reduced life happiness, performing well at work significantly increased it. This opens the door for more research on work-life balance under WFH settings for as long as there remains a crisis (Verma, et al., 2021) (Kumar, et al., 2021).

The reviewed research that was consulted regarding working from home has repeatedly shown that employees who work from home put in longer hours than those who work at the office. This is partly because the time spent commuting to work is now spent working, but it's also because work routines have changed and the lines between work and personal time have become blurred. In general, working from might result in longer workdays and more weekend and evening hours spent in the office (McCulley, 2020).

Those employees who must balance childcare or have dependants need to find additional time to get their work done by either working late at night or starting earlier in the day.

It is key to balance family care responsibilities with employee priorities to ensure business continuity and productivity.

### **2.4.3 Work-Life Balance**

Working from home during the pandemic was mandatory so that people isolated and distanced themselves from each other to limit the spread of the virus. This placed a challenge on many employees whilst many also enjoyed the benefits of working from home. Employers needed to support their employees during these times by managing outcomes and not the number of hours the employee worked.

When the workload is balanced and manageable, employees find themselves better placed to manage their own time and duties, personal life, and their family responsibilities, such that the expectations of the goals can be reached.

Due to the pandemic, one of the biggest problems that employees face is the conflict between work and home life. The blurring of the boundaries between paid employment and private life is an issue when it comes to remote working, but the pandemic's unique circumstances seem to have made it more

challenging than normal. The pandemic has undermined the notion that work and personal life are two separate realms, as well as the notion of the ideal employee, who can and should always be available to carry out work-related activities. According to studies, remote workers have higher levels of stress and work-life conflict, as well as an increase in work intensity (Singh, 2020a).

People who are working remotely and must tend to their school going kids or toddlers, as the schools and childcare facilities are closed, are even more challenged than parents with no school going kids (Eurofound, 2020b). Employees with young children reported difficulties in concentrating on their jobs. Some respondents commented that they appreciated the flexible working as it allowed them more time with their children and spouses (Eurofound, 2020b).

#### **2.4.4 Trust and organisation culture**

The organisation culture and values indicates how well the company had reacted to the pandemic. It would depend on the culture and values as to how employees were treated as they were moved to remote working. This depended on the leadership's skills, trust, transparency within the organisation. The employers that communicated with their employees and supported their employees through this transition benefited from a highly motivated workforce, increased trust between employee and employer and a positive impact on the organisation culture in the long term (Banerjee & Nair, 2020).

#### **2.5 Motivational Techniques employed by the business during the crisis.**

Employees are put in difficult situations that call for special consideration from typical case scenarios when a crisis occurs (Gigauri, 2020). Major crises induce an element of stress and fear and uncertainty amongst many employees in an organisation (Caligiuri, et al., 2020). The pandemic's environment, which included stress, fatigue, emotional strain, fear, and other negative feelings, required employees in enterprises to adapt (Gigauri, 2020). Therefore, the techniques that companies employed were key to ensure that employees were taken care of and were motivated to do their jobs.

##### **2.5.1 Social Support provided to employees whilst working from home.**

A pleasant workplace can foster positivity. The latest technology, a modern desk, natural light, and a comfortable break room are all advantages for office workers. As a result, output increases and becomes more productive. Remote workers must follow the same rules. When they have everything, they need to execute the task and people perform better. Employees could feel more motivated if an organisation offered them a laptop, mobile phone, quick internet connectivity, an up-to-date intranet, or whatever else they require. Employee productivity is higher when everything runs smoothly and efficiently (Pourron, 2020).

When executing their jobs from home, employees shouldn't be charged extra fees.

Additionally, they are entitled to tools and equipment from their company that let them accomplish their jobs as though they were at their normal place of employment without compromising their efficacy, performance, or general well-being. Working continuously with inferior tools and equipment causes productivity loss, employee annoyance and eventually worker disengagement. Thus, the employer must

make sure that employees have access to the technology and tools they would ordinarily use if they were at the place of business to attain a comparable level of productivity to that in the office. To identify any issues with the employee, the employer and the employees must maintain a constant lines of connection and frequently contact their staff to help (Mefi & Asoba, 2021).

### **2.5.2 Shared Involvement of employees**

By removing old hierarchies and outdated procedures, every employee should be involved in the issues impacting organisation and timely treatment of affairs. Employees need to be engaged so they feel part of a team, especially during times of working remotely such that it makes them feel that they matter. Companies can maintain this engagement by sharing information through the intranet, emails or in a newsletter. It is of paramount importance that the employee understands their role, particularly if it has changed during the crisis. The employee can be assisted with training and development to assist them with the transition into the role if it has changed during the crisis (Singh, 2020a). Whilst the employee is juggling the remote working and changes during the crisis, employers should acknowledge their good work such that it boosts their self-esteem (Talukar, 2020).

Employers should be transparent and forthcoming about their strategies during times of uncertainty. People can then plan when they are informed of circumstances. Employee motivation could increase since informed workers would respect their employer much more when they know what to expect (Pourron, 2020).

### **2.5.3 Management using goals set by employee – Performance Management**

Objectives and goals have an influence on productivity by changing the course of activity, the level of effort put forth and the endurance of that action through time. Goals are used as a gauge of one's level of happiness with oneself, with difficult goals requiring greater success than simple ones (Cannon, 2020). Therefore, employees were required to create their own goals because the Coronavirus crisis demanded the personal determination of the individual to attain them.

Setting goals is now done by the individual alone rather than by the supervisor and employee together.

### **2.5.4 Empowerment of Employees**

Employees are allowed to make decisions. The work that was done by an individual is allocated to a team of people led by a group leader. The group leader then feeds up to the leadership.

Employees should also be allowed to submit ideas to help develop the company. This motivates the employee whilst saving the company the cost of employing an external company. Employees feel valued when their employer listens to their ideas and acknowledges their capability. It allows the employee to express their ideas and contribute to the bottom line (Goswami, 2020).

An employee feels encouraged if they know their employer listens to them and this could motivate them to always find new ways of working (Mefi & Asoba, 2021).

### **2.5.5 Employee Rewards**

The achievements of employees must be recognized and rewarded accordingly. Extrinsic motivation, which heavily influenced employee performance during the pandemic, must receive more attention. To encourage extrinsic motivation, managers might use enticing incentives, bonuses, and commission programmes. They can also praise staff and recognise their hard work. (Nilasari, et al., 2021).

### **2.6 Motivational Support provided by the company during the Pandemic.**

Most employees experienced one of the many problems during the pandemic, be it juggling work whilst monitoring children's schoolwork, worrying about loved ones who may have contacted the virus or just isolation, each of them still required the support from their leadership more than ever.

#### **2.6.1 Demonstrate recognition and appreciation.**

Employers should thank their employees for the positive contributions that they make to the company. Employees should know how much they are appreciated for quickly adapting to the new health and safety guidelines during the pandemic. It should never be taken for granted that employees are adults and that they know they are appreciated (Talukar, 2020).

Companies should invest in technology to keep teams engaged. Platforms for phone and video calling and instant messaging are just a few examples. Investing in a platform that enables employees to send and receive acknowledgment is crucial (Chanana & Sangeetha, 2020)

#### **2.6.2 Leadership visibility and approachability**

Leadership should open the lines of communication and be accessible to all their employees.

Leadership should promote teamwork and promote active participation in meetings to discuss project statuses or obstacles. Leadership should provide a location where they may have regular informal check-ins through chat or phone.

Leadership can implement strategies that increase employee engagements. Team catch ups, Weekly alignment sessions, lunch routines, online games, virtual challenges competitions, brainstorming, appreciation sessions, emphasis on results, are just a few examples of the innovative approaches that need to be used to keep relationships and team building strong (Goyal, et al., 2020).

In difficult times more than at any other, leadership must be more evident. Leaders need to assume responsibility for inspiring their people to fulfil the future promise if organisations want their workforce to be engaged. A successful communication strategy encourages people to participate in their job and achieve goals even during challenging circumstances. In challenging times, employee engagement is essential, and only excellent leadership, supported by a communication strategy, can achieve great things (Chanana & Sangeetha, 2020).

#### **2.6.3 Communication**

Employees should be communicated with on a regular basis on mutually agreed platforms (Agarwal, et al., 2020). The pandemic has forced many companies to allow their employees to work from home. Employees relied predominantly on electronic contact. There has been known research that also proved



that remote teams experience more serious communication problems than teams that work face to face (Aropah, et al., 2020).

As team members work away for longer periods of time, the degree of separation and professional isolation grows. As a result, these difficulties amplify over time due to workers' tendency to share less information with their colleagues while talking electronically and, in certain situations, their inability to analyse and comprehend the information they receive causing the collaboration of teams to gradually erode.

When teams are working together in one place, the method for providing feedback is generally less involved. Managers and employees ought to increase their efforts to make sure that their communications are efficient, ensuring their messages are understood, and that they are giving a steady stream of information. Employers now spend a lot more time talking to their employees because of the pandemic.

Given the amount of time that employees work apart from their teams, effort should be made to assist them in maintaining connections with their managers, co-workers, and the company to avoid the risk of social isolation (Reisenwitz, 2020).

Because of this, firms must develop and expand informal opportunities for employees to connect. These situations generally reflect and build upon their prior behaviours, whether it be engaging in online social contacts, amusing co-workers' children using internet resources, or simply checking in to see how co-workers are doing. It is crucial to strike a balance and keep social connections primarily inside regular working hours to avoid further muddying the lines between work time and personal time. These touch points can significantly improve the situation for employees who are feeling anxious or alone.

#### **2.6.4 Employee Welfare**

The promotion of employee health and safety by encouraging happiness and engagement among employees. The health of employees should be a top priority for businesses; this includes their physical, mental, emotional, relational, and financial well-being in addition to their performance at work. A caring culture is fostered in an organisation by demonstrating to your staff that you care about them on a par with your concern for productivity (Singh, 2020b).

Employers must remind their staff that the company provides employees with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that is a free, private benefit that covers counselling for a variety of issues.

To lessen stress, the company should monitor staff capabilities before giving them new tasks. The employer should determine how the pandemic has affected people's motivation in respect to social, health, and emotional circumstances. This is crucial to continuing their success in both their personal and professional lives (Singh, 2020b).

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

The use of theories in qualitative research stems from the need to broadly describe behaviour and offer a theoretical framework through which behaviour may be understood (Cresswell, 2015). It is feasible to utilise theory to foresee potential themes that might arise from the study.

In this instance, it provides a theoretical framework that the research study adopts to conduct the study, particularly when it comes to the collecting and analysing of data (Cresswell, 2015).

### **2.7.1 Theories of Motivation**

In the case of reaching sustained high levels of performance, motivation theories are particularly useful for predicting and determining behaviour in relation to the internal and external influences that affect people's choice of action. Understanding and being aware of the many theories of motivation can help to foster a motivating atmosphere when managing motivation and putting these theories into practise can improve performance and productivity. Many researchers adopted the most well-known theories and models of motivation as a starting point for their work in the subject of motivation, which are classified into broad categories: Theories of content and process.

#### **2.7.1.1 Content Theories**

Content theories concentrate on the elements that motivates an individual. The elements can be the person's needs, incentives or drive that causes them to behave in a certain manner. These could include the person's working conditions or what stimulates their behaviours to perform (Hitka, et al., 2021). Human behaviour is motivated by the desire to meet personal wants such as survival, safety, social, esteem, development, accomplishment, and power, according to Maslow's Need Hierarchy, Alderfer's ERG theory, Herzberg's Two factor theory, and McClelland's Learned Needs theory. The shortcoming of content theories is that it deals with an individual's motivation system and not a group hence the motivational technique cannot be a "one size fits all." The content theory also does not consider external factors such the nature of the job or the culture. For this study only, the Maslow and Herzberg theory were discussed.

##### **2.7.1.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

In 1967 a psychologist named Abraham Maslow created a hierarchy of human needs which proposes that individual needs are organised into a hierarchy of physiological requirements, safety needs, sense of belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs (McLeod, 2020). Maslow suggested that for one to give attention to the needs of the next level, the needs of the current level would have to be mostly satisfied. Thus, one would only achieve one's full potential once their psychological and basic needs are met, as seen in figure 2.6 below.

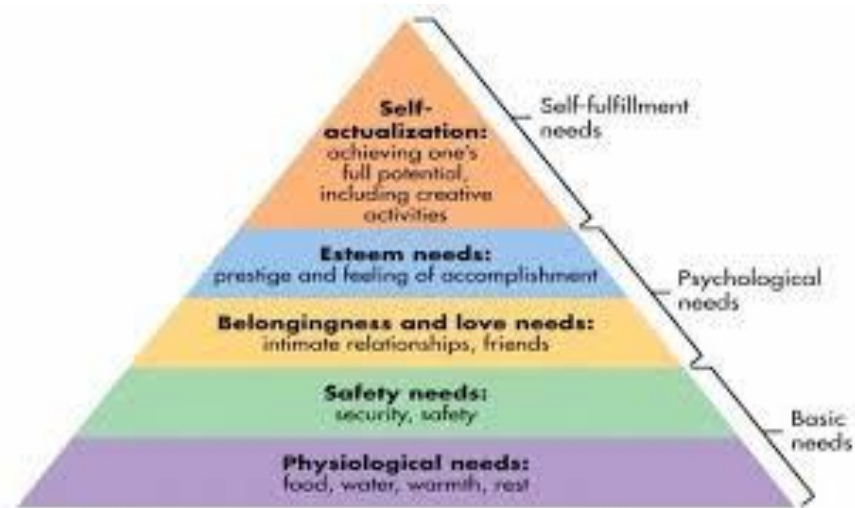


Figure 2.6: Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2020)

### a) Physiological Needs

Physiological needs, also known as biological requirements, are fundamental needs required for a person's survival, according to (Sharma, et al., 2020). These include needs such as, clean air and water, food, shelter, clothes, and sleep. During the pandemic people's needs were driven by necessities. Some employees had lost their jobs, and many struggled to satisfy basic requirements (Shoib, et al., 2022).

#### **b) Safety Needs**

During the pandemic, most people's primary aim was to stay safe and healthy and not become infected and keep their families safe from the pandemic.

#### **c) Social needs**

Social needs refer to the requirement of interaction between family, friends, or co-workers. These needs are important since they can help reduce emotional concerns such as stress, anxiety or depression (Matthews, et al., 2020)

#### **d) Esteem Needs**

Esteem needs refer to the need to feel recognized and respected by others, thus it is sometimes referred to as egotistic wants. These requirements are met when one is recognized for their contribution or achievements in professional activities. Thus, it is important for managers of an organization to congratulate the achievements of an employee. This will inspire the employee to continue to work hard so that they can fulfil their esteem requirements (Shoib, et al., 2022).

#### **e) Self-actualization need**

At this level, one would have satisfied most of their basic and psychological needs. Thus, one would now focus on achieving their full potential since all their resources would now be dedicated to achieving their own goals rather than their basic needs. Self-actualizing people tend to be more productive, truthful, and self-sufficient making them more valuable to an organization (Shoib, et al., 2022).

Situations have substantially altered since the lockdown began. Everything that had been taken for granted, such as going to the movies and meeting friends, as well as seeing relatives, was halted and individuals were encouraged to remain at home and isolate themselves. These changes have put the Maslow Hierarchy pyramid to the test (Matthews, et al., 2020). The physiological needs were put to the test when the fundamental demand for food was not supplied since stores couldn't keep up with demand at first. Toilet paper, wheat, eggs, rice, and pasta were all in short supply, making shopping difficult. Sleep proved difficult for many individuals, which is common in times of stress because our regular habits were disrupted (Shoib, et al., 2022).

While it was difficult to supply people's physiological demands, living became a little more challenging. Individuals were worried about their ability to make a living and the stability of their jobs; thus, the safety need was intensified. Numerous companies were shut down, people were given indefinite furloughs and many jobs were lost. The lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline personnel became a point of contention since people needed to feel safe and secure at work. However, research found that there was just insufficient PPE to protect the employees (Mahmood, 2022).

While it was tough to meet people's physiological and safety demands, they battled with feelings of love and belonging after being denied access to family and friends (Sippl, 2022).

People's self-esteem was tested. Getting out to shops to get what was required brought with it a sense of shame and worry about being out. Everyone was being judged socially for what they were doing.

Self-actualization has really become difficult for many people. Whatever the individual's goal may have been, motivation just did not exist (Sippl, 2022).

#### **2.7.1.1.2 Herzberg's Two Factor theory**

Herzberg's two-factor theory states that there are factors that cause job satisfaction and another set of factors that cause job dissatisfaction and that these factors are independent of each other. These factors can be grouped into two categories known as motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators give positive satisfaction and arise from one's drive for recognition and personal growth. Hygiene elements can result in job satisfaction, while their absence results in job dissatisfaction. The term hygiene is used since these are maintenance factors which mean they need to be continually enforced. These factors include, company policies, supervision, employee's relationship with their boss, work conditions, salary, and relationships with peers (Sinkowski, 2021). Most of the literature reviewed on the application of this theory was in the hospital and hospitality industry.

Herzberg's theory establishes a significant relationship between employee motivation and performance. He argues that achievement might manifest as an outflow of feeling associated with motivation, such as success, progress, and development. He stressed the significance of job enrichment, distinguishing it from taking on extra, which involves more responsibilities and participation, prospects for progress and a sense of accomplishment. The section provides an overview of each of Herzberg's motivation factors (iEduNote, 2021).

*Achievement:* An example of positive accomplishment is when a worker wraps up a job or project ahead of schedule and obtains favourable feedback on the outcome. This increases the individual's satisfaction levels. The level of satisfaction, however, could decrease if the same person is unable to finish the task before the deadline or feels rushed and is unable to perform the work accurately.

*Recognition:* When employees receive the praise, they deserve for a job well done, their level of satisfaction could increase. The outcome would be the opposite if a worker feels that their efforts are being ignored or mocked.

*Work Itself:* This involves how an individual views their role. Individuals are more inclined to work harder if they are allowed more responsibility in their roles and can make their own decisions.

*Advancement:* This refers to the likelihood of advancement, whether anticipated or unforeseen. In a case where a planned promotion is not achieved, it would impact on the individual negatively.

*Possibility of Growth:* This incentive element relates to the organisation creating opportunities for individuals to learn, grow and progress in an organisation. This could entail the individual taking on new tasks that could challenge and grow the individual.

The hygiene factors only affect the dissatisfaction one feels.

*Personal or Working Relationships:* These are the relationships that one has with their bosses, peers, and subordinates. How someone thinks about the interactions and debates that occur in the workplace can also contribute to discontent with working conditions.

*Compensation:* Employee dissatisfaction inside a company is significantly impacted by changes in pay or remuneration.

*Personal Life:* In most cases, individuals do try to keep work and home life separate however one does have an impact on the other. This was seen with the impacts of the pandemic and remote working.

*Job Security:* This is an important consideration. Dissatisfaction is related to a lack of job security within a position or an organisation.

Scholars have recently highlighted the significant transformation that moving the entire company from traditional offices to home offices represents. This meant a shift in the workplace, both in terms of how employees interact with their co-workers physically and in terms of their working conditions (Kniffin, et al., 2021). With the use of two-way theory, one can see how this shift might affect employee motivation. "Motivators" and "hygiene factors" are the two dynamics on which Herzberg bases his theory. Employee satisfaction is influenced by motivators such as achievement, self-recognition, and the work itself (Aprilia, et al., 2021).

Herzberg stressed that leadership should maintain a dissatisfied-free workplace environment through well-developed policies, competent management, enough compensation, and job security, with employee satisfaction addressed through improvements to the aspects of the work. He went on to say that "job enrichment continues to be the key to developing work that inspires workers." (Al-Awar, et al., 2022).

This theory presents that if some motivators are taken away, people don't become dissatisfied but rather lack satisfaction. With this theory it has been noted that the hygiene factors are the drivers of motivation and if these were not present during the pandemic it could have led to a decrease in motivation (Sinkowski, 2021).

### **2.7.1.2 Process Theories**

The "how's" of motivation are the focus of process theories of motivation. Instead of concentrating on what individuals require, these models concentrate on individual behavioural and psychological processes. It is feasible to comprehend the acts, interactions, and settings that inspire individuals' behaviour by studying these processes. The shortcoming of the process theory is that these theories also concentrate the individual's motivation and not on a group. The theories do not offer suggestions on how a group can attain a goal. The theory also assumes that all individuals have similar needs and follow the same process for each. The theory also fails to explain how goals are chosen or prioritised to achieve an outcome.

The Expectancy Theory appears to be the most important process theory. Vroom (1968) was the first to offer this paradigm, although many other scholars have attempted to modify and develop it since then.

### **2.7.1.2.1 Expectancy theory in times of uncertainty**

The expectancy theory helps one understand motivation. People are said to be inspired if they believe they can complete a task and would be recognized for it and that the payoff shall be worthy of their time and effort (Vroom, 1964) (Lateef, 2020).

Therefore, the formula for this theory is.

$$\text{Motivation} = \text{Expectancy} \times \text{Instrumentality} \times \text{Valence}$$

Expectancy is an employee's expectation that their job-related efforts can result in a certain level of performance.

Instrumentality is the perception of employees as to whether they can receive their desired reward.

Valence would be the view that the staff hold to rewards that they receive.

In times of uncertainty employees could struggle to determine what performance levels are desired. For example, working from home could have created many questions in the employee's mind as to what the new work routines are; would the company survive financially? These questions could become difficult to answer and this could impact on the efforts that they put into their tasks and therefore inhibit motivation. The sales team could be concentrating on achieving the targets set however due to the pandemic, they may not achieve these targets, and this could lead to a decline in performance (Devany & Arquisola, 2020). Employees may also feel the disconnect from the office environment and may think that they would not be recognized for the efforts put into their jobs even if he does work harder and longer hours from home. Employees may also think that even if they do get a good appraisal, the company may not be able to reward the extra effort. If there is a reward, it may not be necessarily attractive to the employee. The uncertainty associated with the pandemic could had a negative impact on Motivation (Raišienė, et al., 2020).

Therefore, it can be said that people are extrinsically motivated if they believe that they are sufficiently awarded for their effort.

### **2.7.1.3 Self Determination Theory (SDT)**

The Self-Determination Theory is the most comprehensive framework for understanding motivational demands (SDT). As proposed by this theory for a human to be fully functional, his basic psychological needs need to be fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These needs are a need for autonomy, a need for competence and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Humans have an inbuilt need for independence that stems from their capacity for self-determination, decision making, and logical reasoning. This need for competence comprises continuous self-development. As an outcome, the individual may develop as a person and find purpose in his or her life. Relatedness looks at the individual connecting with his surroundings. Individuals can realise their growth when they actively interact with the environment interact directly with their environments and participate in events that promote their growth and social connections (Camilleri, 2021). This could lead to individuals participating in shaping the environments.

## Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

External and internal motivations that influence human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000) are the two "forces" that can be understood from a Self-determination theory perspective. On the one hand, it acknowledges the importance of intrinsic motivation, while on the other, it recognises the circumstances wherein extrinsic incentives may be beneficial to human motivation (Waterschoot, et al., 2021).

**Extrinsic Motivators:** These motivating factors could be unrelated to the task that is being performed, it could be totally dependent on the individual and what external factors are seen as motivating to him. These factors could also include incentives such as money, fringe benefits or job stability. Employee working relationships could also be another factor that could influence a person's motivation extrinsically. The company will not know what these motivators are as people control them therefore it will be out of the line managers control (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**Intrinsic Motivators:** The need to act arises from within the individual instead, of being driven by a desire for a reward or certain results; behaviour is motivated internally by the inherent satisfaction it provides. They involve job features that a person's reward requires to achieve his or her goals and are generated from the person to suit the work itself. Some examples of intrinsic motivators are advancement in the role, good remarks, and significant accomplishment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Research completed by (Heyns & Kerr, 2018) argue that if people are extrinsically motivated for completing a task, they become less interested in taking part in that task again therefore this study concludes that intrinsic motivation is the most effective force in an individual's motivation.

The concept of SDT is based on the conflict between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which states that "people are ideally happy and motivated when three essential psychological needs are met: the need for individuality, the need to be competent and the need for connectedness." The first need is described as an individual's intrinsic urge to act with a sense of choice and our ability to make our own decisions. It should not, however, be confused with independence, despite its individualistic viewpoint. The need for autonomy does not imply that we must be self-sufficient, but rather that we must be able to make our own decisions in the presence of others (Camilleri, 2021).

The second need, referred to as the 'need for competence,' refers to people's desire to believe that they can control an outcome using their own skills, knowledge, and expertise. When people "explore and actively seek out challenges in which they might extend their physical and psychological skills," they satisfy their need for competence. People are more likely to stay motivated to continue if they have confidence and the perception of being able to produce pleasing results (Šakan, et al., 2020).

The urge for relatedness relates to our sense of belonging and security in our relationships with others. The desire for relatedness is the third requirement. "Experiencing a sense of communion and maintaining close and intimate relationships" satisfies people's demands for relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).



The SDT theory assumes that these needs do not just develop as suggested by other theories, they are already present in a person whether they are aware of them or not (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, it can be said people become driven when the needs for autonomy, growth and relatedness are satisfied. Studies show that when humans satisfy their basic psychological needs, it impacts positively on their wellbeing during the pandemic. Satisfaction with life is the main component of well-being and can be enhanced by satisfying the need for autonomy and relatedness (Šakan, et al., 2020).

### **2.7.2 Limitations of the motivational theories**

In summary the research shows that most scholars turn to Maslow's Theory when it comes to motivation, however much criticism has been afforded to this theory as each level must be met before an individual can climb to the next level of the hierarchy. These hierarchical needs contribute to an individual well-being but does not explain the drivers of motivation. Achieving a sense of well-being is not enough to motivate people. Studies also show that these needs are not universal or sequential.

Maslow's Theory - although well-known, forms the basis of many other theories that authors have built on, and it follows a strict hierarchy. An individual must fulfil the current level need first, then only will the individual pursue a higher-level need. There is also little evidence that supports this hierarchy. There are cultures that find social needs that are more important than any other need. Therefore, they may work on fulfilling more than one need at a time and not just one exclusive motivating. Maslow Theory also believes that all individuals are motivated by the same things such as money whilst specific individuals may have a different need.

During the pandemic it was found that people wanted their safety needs met first, as they did not want to contract the virus. They worked towards keeping themselves and their families safe whilst also wanting job security so that they could fulfil their physiological needs. It was also noted that working remotely and being isolated from their colleagues meant that their social needs were not met, and this impacted on their mental wellbeing.

Managers must note that employees may have more than one need to satisfy simultaneously and focusing just on one need at a time may not motivate an employee.

As a result, alternative theories have been proposed, such as David McClelland's (1965) need for achievement, in which most "achievers" are driven by the ability to control items, plans, and other people independently. These individuals are perhaps only one element of Maslow's higher tiers of motivational drivers, especially self-fulfilment wants, because they are ultimately focused on enhancing their own self-esteem by exercising their abilities.

Vrooms (1964) expectancy theory implies that people are motivated because they believe that their efforts will lead to the rewards they desire. Vroom suggests that people are driven by external factors whilst self-actualisation is more intrinsically driven (Vroom, 1964). Vroom also believes that human behaviours are rational. Therefore, the study seeks answers as to how motivation is retained. This leads to Herzberg two factor theory which is also another widely discussed concept. The criticism lodged against this theory is that people tend to base positive comments on themselves whilst anything that is

impacting them negatively is based on external conditions. If hygiene factors are maintained, then people are motivated however this is short term.

Motivational theories are aimed at individuals and not at groups, therefore these theories do not offer suggestions on how to motivate a group and achieve team goals. These motivational theories also assume that everyone has the same needs which may not be the case during the pandemic, as the pandemic affected people in different ways. These theories also do not consider the personality traits of people which could certainly impact when implementing new programmes since programmes may be based on what managers perceive to be the individual's needs. The content and process theories are built to work on the internal aspect of the individual only and does not consider external factors such as the impact of the pandemic.

Motivational needs that are extensively examined are within the Self Determination Theory (SDT) which assumes that individuals will constantly seek growth, internalisation, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theory covers intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and the need for satisfaction. Therefore, self-determination theory was chosen as a framework for analysing the potential effects of Coronavirus on employee motivation because it has received substantial support from the motivation literature and is regarded as a crucial mechanism for comprehending human motivation.

## **2.8 Conceptual Framework**

Chapter 2.8 encompasses the underlying connotations that shall shape the conceptual framework and interview themes for the current study. The research in Chapter 2 helped identify commonalities such that the main probing themes could be identified for investigation. The researcher formed this framework by reviewing the literature and the motivational theories relevant to the study which could provide answers to the research objectives set in Chapter 1.

This led to the conceptual framework in figure 2.7 that forms the basis of the study.

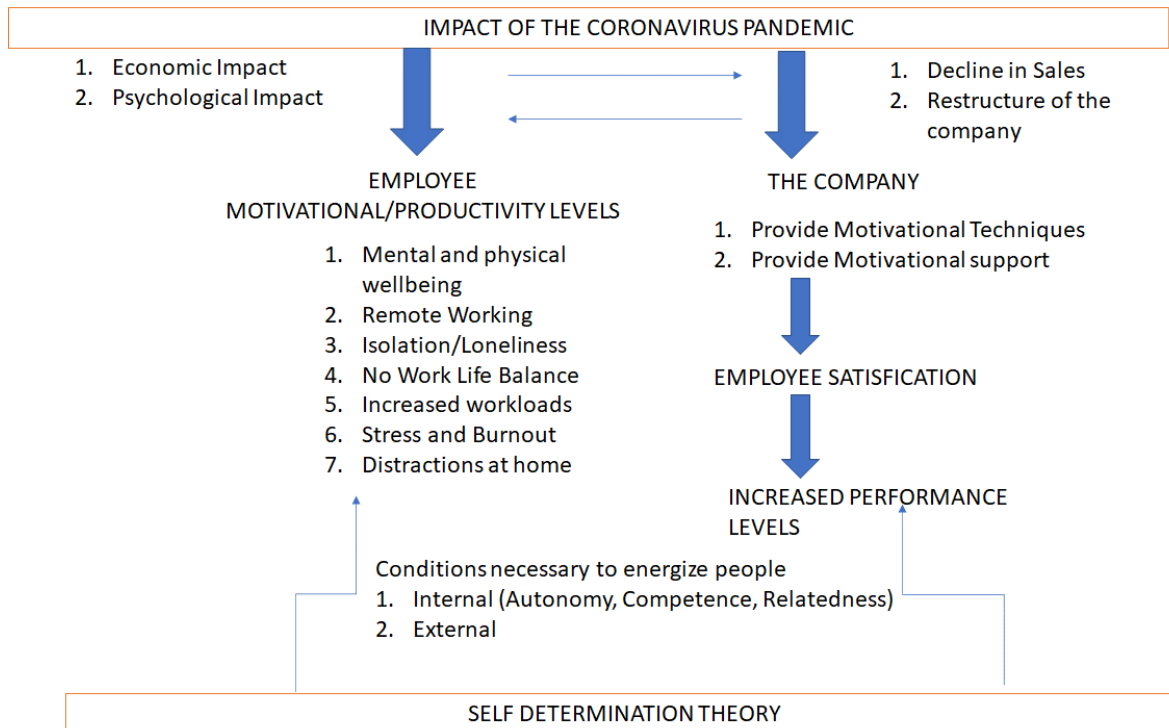


Figure 2.7: Conceptual Framework

The Coronavirus Pandemic had brought about uncertainty and change that was quickly encroaching on every aspect of organisational life, including governance, employee interaction, and perceived job security. Employees responded in ways that were detrimental to an organization's ability to achieve its goals. Management saw that employee motivations and skills changed because of the external stressors that existed. Previously top employees were prepared to take chances, work long hours, and initiate new projects however those same positive and proactive employees suffered with their well-being and lost enthusiasm at work, which led to lower productivity levels and performance. Although the pandemic had caused corporate leaders to adapt employee work designs, communication tactics and financial plans, it's vital to note that employees had also changed during this time.

To maintain employee engagement, performance and ideally, corporate success, it is vital to comprehend how companies may respond to fluctuations in motivation.

The researcher used the lens of the self-determination theory to review the potential impact of the pandemic on motivation of the employee as this theory was validated by many authors within the motivation literature and was considered as the key mechanism through which motivation can be studied (Gagné, et al., 2022).

The conceptual framework talks to the impact of the pandemic on the oil company, negatively impacting the sales and the performance of the company. The restructure was completed leading to many people being laid off work whilst the workload within the company stayed the same.

The impact of the pandemic on the employee made them question their job security, family health and the uncertain future thereby impacting on their internal motivational levels. Employees were torn

between caring for their family whilst adapting to the new ways of working. Work tasks were not met as they struggled to juggle work and home life. Employees experienced high levels of negative emotions that impacted on their mental health as they understood that their work was important to ensure long term financial survival, whilst realising that their family was equally important.

The restructure led to job changes and many employees taking on added responsibilities that were once completed by their colleagues. The increased workloads coupled with a lack of experience left employees overwhelmed and afraid to speak up for the fear of losing their jobs. Therefore, in a sales environment, many employees felt incompetent. This was further impacted by remote working and reduced employee contact leaving many employees feeling isolated, decreasing the communication and trust between employees in support functions and the sales team.

The Self-determination theory is best to motivate in this situation as it works on an individual personal drive to succeed. Motivation can be understood as condition within us with a desire to change in oneself or the environment around us. Coupled with the support from the company can then lead to employee satisfaction and being motivated which could lead to increased productivity levels and ultimately increased performance which would be good for the company as this could lead to an increase in sales.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the impact of the Coronavirus at a global level, thereafter, focusing on the impact it had on South Africa and the South African economy. It reviewed the changes and adaptations in the work environment, explaining the impact on the employee and how these changes impacted the motivational levels of the employees.

The different motivational theories were explored to understand motivation within context of a theoretical framework. The distinction between the two categories (content and process) of motivational theories were made. Theories from both categories were discussed in relation to the phenomenon studied to frame its understanding.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) best supported the study and was crucial to understand the employee motivational levels and was therefore used to further explore the motivating factors specific to the Coronavirus. It is evident that different theorists have tried to explain the topic of motivation from various points of view as shown in Chapter 2. Everyone is driven by one factor or another, which is a recurring theme. This factor is strongly linked to their own drives to accomplish a variety of objectives. Thus, motivation is the process by which people attain performance, and it all stems from their understanding of what is desired, appreciated, and accepted.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, including the research instruments used in gathering and analysis of the data. The sampling technique is explained, as well as the reasoning behind this choice.

## **CHAPTER 3 - - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The study aims to determine the impact of Coronavirus on the motivation of employees and its impact on the performance of the organization. A qualitative approach was adopted, targeting employees who, by nature of their job, had to still operate during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The literature review and interviews represent a methodological way to discover unknown characteristics and fundamental factors that have not yet been identified (Han et al., 2011; Maxwell, 2005).

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the methodology that was used in this study, literature on qualitative research, strengths and weaknesses of qualitative interviewing, research philosophy, ethical considerations which are critical to the success of the research and delve into the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. This chapter concludes with a selected sample size and the sample itself.

### **3.2 Research paradigms**

A research paradigm is a philosophical assumption forming the foundation of the research, and this guides how the research study will be undertaken. The background and knowledge that the researcher brings to the inquiry are referred to as philosophical assumptions (Cresswell, 2015).

According to Lather (1986), a research paradigm is an expression of how a researcher views the world based on their own opinions, ideas, and conceptions. Thus, it can be said that it is an expression of the researcher's worldview (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, paradigms are significant as they represent views and determine how and what should be studied and how the results are analysed and made sense of. As a result, a paradigm describes how meaning can be generated from data obtained from individual experiences (Busetto & Wick, 2020).

The figure below shows the difference between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.

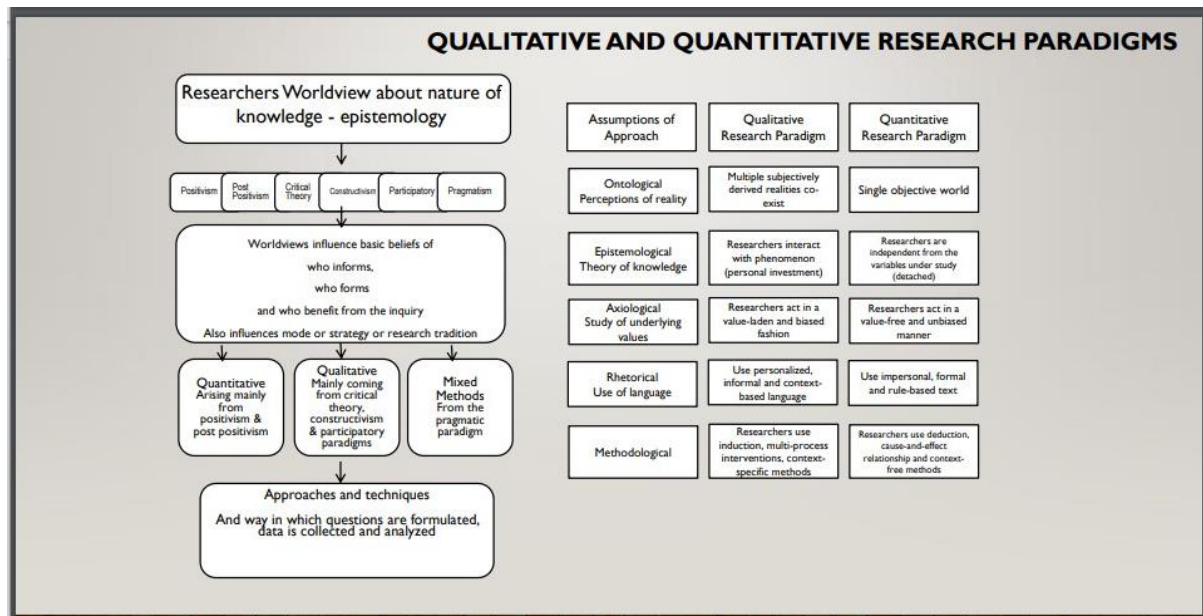


Figure 3.1: Qualitative and Quantitative Research paradigms

The main paradigms are discussed below.

### 3.2.1 Postpositivist

Postpositivist contend that a researcher's views, and even their own identification, affects what they see and, as a result, what they deduce. Post positivism seeks factual answers by striving to recognize and deal with such biases in the ideas and knowledge developed by thinkers (Antwi & Hamza, 2015).

The postpositivist paradigm is dominated by quantitative research rather than qualitative.

Creswell (2014) advocates for a move away from 'real knowledge,' claiming that people behave in a manner, whereby no conclusions can be reached, and that the outcomes of such experiments and observations cannot be considered to constitute genuine data. According to Creswell (2014), some elements must be considered to determine knowledge. Then, to determine impacts and outcomes; empirical observations, experiments, and/or measurements must be used.

### 3.2.2 Constructivist Paradigm

The constructivist paradigm is a philosophical approach that holds that people gain a better understanding of the world from experience and reflecting on those experiences. People are both subjective and objective in nature and may imagine completely different realities from each other (Ghauri, et al., 1995).

Therefore, the researcher must engage the research participants to encourage interaction and sharing of views. The participants are believed to be more valuable to the study than the phenomenon being researched. Researchers may get a lot of relevant data from the study participants by asking wide and open-ended questions and providing an atmosphere that may be favourable to research participants' such that they can express themselves and be properly interpreted (Cresswell, 2015).

### **3.2.3 Transformative Paradigm**

According to Creswell (2015), the transformative paradigm is built on transformational issues that promote social justice, including gender-based abuse and homosexual rights. According to Creswell (2014), the transformative paradigm is often largely qualitative, and study areas that utilise this paradigm may encompass human rights, politics, and environmental issues. This paradigm is based on a collection of material that is not addressed by the other paradigms (Cresswell, 2015).

### **3.2.4 Pragmatism**

This paradigm is problem based and can generally be both qualitative and quantitative. The focus of this research is on the research problem entirely (Easwaran & Singh, 2006). This paradigm generally applies to a mixed method study as different research methodologies may be used to respond to the research question. The research philosophical assumptions are also of both qualitative and quantitative form (Selltitz, et al., 1965).

### **3.2.5 Paradigm adopted in this study.**

Due to the nature of the research study the researcher employed a constructivist paradigm. The goal of the study was to better understand and analyse the elements that affect workers' motivation during times of crisis. Constructivist researchers must comprehend how individuals interpret the phenomenon under investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Constructivism allows for the research question to be responded to from multiple sources and is a collation of many views. The interaction between the interview participants and the researcher revealed information and insights from multiple sources (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Therefore, in this study, the researcher asked open ended questions as unlike the post positivist approach, the research questions do not have definite answers. The open-ended questions do not limit the participants' responses and allow them to elaborate on their answers. This gives the researchers the opportunity to form speculations rather than definite conclusions. This rationale supports the use of the constructivism research paradigm (Manheim, 1977).

## **3.3 Research Design**

The purpose of the research design is to provide a data collection and analysis method for the study. It is the structure of the research (Aaker, et al., 2000). This is a plan that a researcher needs to adopt before data collection is done so that the objectives of the study can be met. Social scientists define research design in different ways. A qualitative research design is the established procedure for data gathering in a way that it aims to balance significance to the study intent with economy and procedure (Selltitz, et al., 1965). The research design not only predicts and stipulates the apparently innumerable decisions related to data collection, sorting, and analyzation, but it also provides a rational justification for such decisions (Manheim, 1977). It is the master plan outlining the processes and techniques for collecting and analysing the required data (William, 1988).

The choice of research approach is a critical decision in the research design process because it helps determine how relevant information for a study was obtained and ensured that the research procedures flow smoothly. Each research requires a plan for conducting the intended research, data collection and analysis.

The four types of research design include explanatory, exploratory, causal, and descriptive designs. The type of design chosen impacts the choice of data sources (Cresswell, 2002).

Figure 3.2 displays the types of research design, its definition, its focus area, and the situation in which it is used.

No	Type of research design	Definition	Where it focuses	Situations it is used
1.	<b>Exploratory research design</b>	Conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to.	Focus is on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation or undertaken when problems are in a preliminary stage of investigation	Useful approach for gaining background information on a particular topic. Flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how).
2.	<b>Causal research design</b>	understanding a phenomenon in terms of conditional statements in the form	Causal effect (nomothetic perspective)	Used to measure what impact a specific change will have on existing norms and assumptions.
3.	<b>Descriptive Research design</b>	help provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem	used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena	Used to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation.
4.	<b>Case-study design</b>	in-depth study of a particular research problem rather than a sweeping statistical survey.	used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one or a few easily researchable examples	Useful for testing whether a specific theory and model actually applies to phenomena in the real world & when not much is known about a phenomenon.
5.	<b>Cross-sectional design</b>	have three distinctive features: no time dimension, a reliance on existing differences rather than change following intervention	can only measure differences between or from among a variety of people, subjects, or phenomena rather than change.	provide a 'snapshot' of the outcome and the characteristics associated with it, at a specific point in time.

Figure 3.2: Types of research design

(Easwaran & Singh, 2006)

### 3.3.1 Quantitative Design

The quantitative research approach is concerned with quantifying and analysing variables to obtain results. It entails the use and analysis of numerical data using certain statistical approaches to answer questions such as: how much, who, how many, what, where, when, and how. Quantitative research approach explains a problem by collecting numerical data and evaluating it using mathematical tools,



specifically statistics. The first element a study confronts or deals with is describing a problem (Cresswell, 2002).

According to Creswell (2015), quantitative research uses a hypothesis that investigates two or more variables (independent and dependant variables) to determine the relationship between the two. In quantitative research participants behave as if the researcher is not present, acting independently from the researcher (Yilmaz, 2013). Large sampling groups is used in quantitative research (Apuke, 2017).

### **3.3.2 Qualitative Design**

The process of gathering, examining, and understanding non-numerical data, such as language, experiences and attitudes is known as qualitative research. Qualitative research may be utilised to help explain how a person experiences and interprets their social environment.

Non-numerical data can comprise videos, pictures, texts, narratives, or audio recordings. This sort of information can be gathered through diary entries or in-depth interviews and examined using existing theory or themed analysis.

“An emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world.” (Yilmaz, 2013).

In qualitative research the researcher cannot separate him/herself from the research phenomenon. Their own life experiences inevitably influences how they interact with their research participants. Qualitative research involves feelings and is more expressive and seeks to explore a deeper meaning into the phenomenon being researched (Cresswell, 2015).

According to Yilmaz (2013), the researcher must also be able to notice how the participants in the study attach diverse interpretations to their experiences. Yilmaz (2013) emphasizes the importance of using an open-ended questionnaire in qualitative research studies. Posing open-ended questions to the participants allows them the freedom to discuss their personal experience without constraining or limiting their thoughts and feelings into specific themes. As a result, the sample must be restricted to a certain group (Yilmaz, 2013).

The figure below shows the difference between Quantitative and Qualitative research.

Criteria	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
<b>Purpose</b>	To understand & interpret social interactions.	To test hypotheses, look at cause & effect, & make predictions.
<b>Group Studied</b>	Smaller & not randomly selected.	Larger & randomly selected.
<b>Variables</b>	Study of the whole, not variables.	Specific variables studied
<b>Type of Data Collected</b>	Words, images, or objects.	Numbers and statistics.
<b>Form of Data Collected</b>	Qualitative data such as open- ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes, & reflections.	Quantitative data based on precise measurements using structured & validated data-collection instruments.
<b>Type of Data Analysis</b>	Identify patterns, features, themes.	Identify statistical relationships.
<b>Objectivity and Subjectivity</b>	Subjectivity is expected.	Objectivity is critical.
<b>Role of Researcher</b>	Researcher & their biases may be known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics may be known to the researcher.	Researcher & their biases are not known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics are deliberately hidden from the researcher (double blind studies).
<b>Results</b>	Particular or specialized findings that is less generalizable.	Generalizable findings that can be applied to other populations.
<b>Scientific Method</b>	Exploratory or bottom-up: the researcher generates a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected.	Confirmatory or top-down: the researcher tests the hypothesis and theory with the data.
<b>View of Human Behavior</b>	Dynamic, situational, social, & personal.	Regular & predictable.
<b>Most Common Research Objectives</b>	Explore, discover, & construct.	Describe, explain, & predict.
<b>Focus</b>	Wide-angle lens; examines the breadth & depth of phenomena.	Narrow-angle lens; tests a specific hypotheses.
<b>Nature of Observation</b>	Study behavior in a natural environment.	Study behavior under controlled conditions; isolate causal effects.
<b>Nature of Reality</b>	Multiple realities; subjective.	Single reality; objective.
<b>Final Report</b>	Narrative report with contextual description & direct quotations from research participants.	Statistical report with correlations, comparisons of means, & statistical significance of findings.

Figure 3.3: *Qualitative versus Quantitative Research*

Source: (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008, p. 34; Lichtman, 2006, p 7-8; Xavier University Library, 10/12/12)

### 3.3.3 Rationale for to using qualitative research method.

The unfolding of the Coronavirus pandemic, the spread of the virus, the rapid infection rate, and the efforts to develop a vaccine showed that this pandemic was a social event that disrupted social order amongst people. The pandemic brought about new social and cultural relations. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was the best method to capture these responses as it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into how people understand the impact of the pandemic on their health (Leach, et al., 2020).

The importance of studying the occurrence and causes of health and illness in particular groups, known as epidemiology, is highlighted by outbreaks like the Coronavirus (Last, 1988). Epidemiology is a quantitative discipline in which academics attempt to explain an outbreak, whereas quantitative epidemiological models invariably overlook the social aspects of illness. They are not adapted to capturing the reason for people's conduct, social relationships, or human understandings of what's going on around them (Leach, et al., 2020).

Qualitative approaches are open-ended and focus on "how" rather than "what.". Interviews, group conversations, and observations are used to investigate and welcome many points of view, meanings, and motives. These can help make a distinction between epidemiological model assumptions and social reality, as well as why certain outbreak responses succeed and others do not (Leach, et al., 2020).

Qualitative approaches are well positioned to investigate the range of skills and views required to fully comprehend the Coronavirus Pandemic as it progresses (Leach, et al., 2020). Qualitative approaches may provide lessons to apply to future crises and how to handle them efficiently.

### **3.3.4 Advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative research method.**

The qualitative interviewing approach has the advantage and benefit of being more adaptable and flexible. The selection of open-ended semi-structured interviews is a smart strategy in that it enables the researcher and participants to change the direction of the conversation or ask clarifying questions when needed. This type of explanation allows the researcher to determine what would be more significant to the respondents based on incentives and motivational approaches. Since participants are allowed to explain and are therefore not limited to responses supplied by the interviewer, it permits more agility and provides a more in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under consideration.

Face to face interviews allow the interviewer to pick up nonverbal cues.

Disadvantages of this method can be displayed in the analysis of data where people's perceptions are dealt with which is difficult to measure and quantify.

The pandemic also has made it difficult to conduct face to face interviews due to social distancing.

In this method it can also be difficult to maintain confidentiality of the respondent as the interviewer knows the participant and could pose a threat particularly when information is incriminating or embarrassing.

### **3.4 Target population**

According to Saunders et al. (2016), the target population is the total sum of specific individuals or subjects, under observation. The target population was 25 which includes all the Territory Managers across all the different locations within the oil company in Southern Africa. The study was performed at a major oil company in South Africa. During the Coronavirus Pandemic, the oil company provided a service to frontline workers and therefore remained trading during the different levels of the lockdown. This meant that the sales team within the oil company had to continue to perform their roles so that the

company could trade during this period. Therefore, the target population for this study was the sales team within the oil company.

A total of 25 employees were targeted which is consistent with other comparable relevant research, implying that, to acquire a full understanding of the phenomenon addressed in such studies, data should be based on 1–30 individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Sandelowski, 1995). In every qualitative research, the lowest reasonable sample size of participants established elsewhere is about fifteen, but not more than fifty respondents (Lovrić, et al., 2020).

As stated by Burns & Grove (2004), it is impossible to gather data for all population members as the cost for data collection would be too high and the data collection process would be time consuming. In a qualitative study, one would extract only a few members (sample size) of a target population to gather data and draw conclusions. Thus, the sample size for a qualitative study smaller than sample size for a quantitative study (Sandelowski, 1995).

### **3.5 Data Collection**

#### **3.5.1 Sampling Method**

McMillan & Schumacher (2010) state that sampling is a process of selecting a representative of a population, such that, information gathered from the representative can be assumed to reflect information of everyone within a population. Curtis & Morris (2015) argue that there are two types of sampling methods namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

##### **3.5.1.1 Probability sampling method**

According to Marchand-Martella (2013), probability sampling is a process of randomly selecting a sample of a population. Thus, every member has an equal chance of being chosen for the sample, eliminating any biases (De Vos et al., 2011).

##### **3.5.1.2 Non-Probability sampling method**

De Vos et al (2011) states that the non-probability sampling method, also known as purposive/judgemental sampling, is a process of selecting members of a population that provide the needed answers/responses to a research question. This method of sample selection is usually done when the number of people in the field being researched is limited.

Since this study was qualitative in nature and thus needs certain preferred individuals as study participants, this study used the non-probability sampling method. The researcher applied reason when choosing the respondents to participate in the study. Curtis & Morris (2015) argue that purposive sampling technique is the most appropriate technique when the researcher wants to use his/her own judgement in selecting the research participants. Since this study shall employed the non-probability sampling technique, the techniques falling under non-probability will be explained while those that fall under the probability technique will only be listed.

**Purposive sampling or Judgmental sampling** – The sample is chosen by the researcher based on the people that the researcher deems suitable for the research. When only a handful of experts in the subject

being studied or when a narrow topic or small group is of interest to the research, this method is typically adopted. Despite being irrelevant to this study, the probability sampling techniques are listed for comparison's sake. Thus, according to Saunders et al. (2016), the sampling techniques which align with quantitative studies include systematic sampling technique, simple random technique, clusters sampling technique, stratified sampling technique, and quota sampling technique.

### **3.5.2 Sample size**

According to Saunders et al. (2016), a sample size refers to the number of members that have been selected from a target population. The sample size for this study was 12 and they were purposively selected based on the years of experience as a Territory Manager. The study used the qualitative method, using interviews to gather data from participants.

### **3.5.3 Recruitment of participants**

Recruitment is a process whereby a researcher actively searches for a potential participant for a research study. The process involves identifying, targeting, and contacting potential participants required for the research study (Manohar, et al., 2018). The participants were each contacted and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. Once they confirmed that they would participate, an interview date and time was agreed with each of them. The purpose of the study and intended aims and outcomes was shared with each participant.

### **3.5.4 Inclusion and exclusion selection criteria**

Inclusion criteria are characteristics that the prospective research participants must have if they are to be included in the study. The participants in this study comprised the territory managers with more than five years of experience in the role. These individuals managed the relationship between the oil company and the site operators. They were all at the same grade level.

All other sales staff that interacted with the service stations were excluded. These included the staff that were below the grade level and other support teams from the other departments.

### **3.5.5 Qualitative Interviews as the data collection method**

This is a qualitative research study since it set out to generate a detailed account of the subjective experiences and meaning connected with a phenomenon, being the participants experience of the Coronavirus. (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were used as the qualitative data gathering approach in this study. Interviews allowed the researcher to pose questions to the participants, to understand more about their ideas, attitudes, and points of view on the impact of Coronavirus on their motivational levels (Maree, 2020). This gave the researcher the opportunity to learn about the individuals' in-depth experiences.

Qualitative interviewing is a purposeful conversation between two people (Kim, 2006). The participant or the interaction between the two people provide the data source therefore knowledge and data is generated via this interaction.

This interview process used a semi structured in-depth interview to collect qualitative data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). A researcher will ask participants questions using oral-verbal stimuli, and they will respond orally or in writing. This technique is known as an interview (Cresswell, 2015). Semi structured interviews allow the flexibility for the researcher to probe for further explanations.

Using a semi-structured interview method guaranteed that each interview explored the same main areas of information while also allowing for some individuation and customization in data collection. For example, the researcher asked each participant a comparable series of questions (see Annexure D for interview schedule), but also gave them leeway for flexibility and asked questions pertaining especially to their unique, subjective responses. Using a semi-structured technique allowed the researcher to ask follow-up question that broadened the participants' specific motivating variables. This enabled the researcher to create an accurate story based on information supplied by the participants. Furthermore, letting the interviews last roughly 35 minutes allowed the researcher to delve into each participant's personal narrative and the reasons behind their responses.

In conducting these interviews, the researcher aimed to understand more about the participants' experiences during Coronavirus. The interviews allowed the researcher to probe further about the links between personal circumstances and motivation to understand whether other challenges or other personal stressors had contributed to their experience.

Interviews also allowed the researcher to observe the participant's tone and nonverbal cues.

The interview questions were open-ended because they allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and to offer follow-up questions depending on the participants' replies (Turner, 2010). Open-ended interview questions were created to provide participants the freedom to respond in their own words and on their own terms. The use of open-ended questions was suitable for this study because it assisted the researcher in gaining an empathetic, a thorough understanding of the participants actual experiences (Apuke, 2017) from the questions posed, particularly those relating to the motivational factors that influenced them during the pandemic.

Finally in conducting an interview the researcher could also cover other topic that may have been key in work or non-work experiences that could have impacted on the motivation of the employee during the Coronavirus.

### **3.5.6 Data Collection Method**

The following measures were performed to acquire data for this study:

The researcher created an interview schedule (see Annexure D) based on the aims of this study and constructed questions based on the topics and themes identified in the literature review. The researcher devised three introduction questions pertaining to factual matters (such as the participants' demographic information), and these questions enabled the researcher to establish rapport at the start of the interview. The questions covered the participant role in the organisation, whether their role required them to travel to see their customers and how they felt about this. The questions also included their personal stressors, work, and motivation for work during the Coronavirus pandemic. Sub-questions were also developed

to assist the researcher in assisting the participant in responding to the primary question, as well as to make the interview process efficient.

The researcher requested authorisation from the oil company's gatekeeper (see Annexure B) to approach their members (while still preserving the possible participants' identities). These were sent to the ethics committee for approval (see Annexure A). Once permission was approved, the researcher emailed potential participants to see if they would be willing to engage in an interview for this study. After agreeing to be interviewed, all participants received and signed the agreement to participate (see Annexure C) and consent to audio record (see Annexure C).

Finally, the researcher assigned a time for each participant to do their interview at their leisure. To maintain safe social distancing during the Coronavirus Pandemic, each interview was conducted through digital communication using Microsoft Teams. Before commencing the discussion, the researcher explained what this research was about and how the interviews are utilised to help this study research. During each interview, the researcher asked the opening questions first, followed by the main questions and sub-questions.

Each interview concluded with the researcher asking the participants if they had any more remarks or questions. Each interview lasted around 40 minutes and was recorded by the researcher using Microsoft Teams.

### **3.5.7 Data Analysis**

As this was a qualitative study, it depended on the participants' words and focused on how individuals made meaning of their individual experiences (Maree, 2020). The researcher analysed the data using a technique called thematic analysis. Using a systematic process of coding and theme or pattern identification, thematic analysis is described as a research technique for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Shava, et al., 2021; Clark et al., 2017; Braun & Clark, 2006).

The research study used thematic analysis, a method frequently used to analyse qualitative data, to understand the unstructured text data that resulted from the data collection approach described in chapter 3, section 3.5.5. The data was analysed using both an inductive and deductive method (Nowell, et al., 2017). Saunders & Lewis (2012) advocate the use of a multidisciplinary research strategy.

This technique also enables the researchers to uncover patterns throughout and across the data in terms of the participants' life experiences, attitudes, and behaviours (Clarke, et al., 2017) such as those factors that kept them motivated during the pandemic such that they could still perform in their respective roles. This technique of coding was useful for this study since it allowed the researcher to connect all generated themes to a single core topic (Maree, 2020).

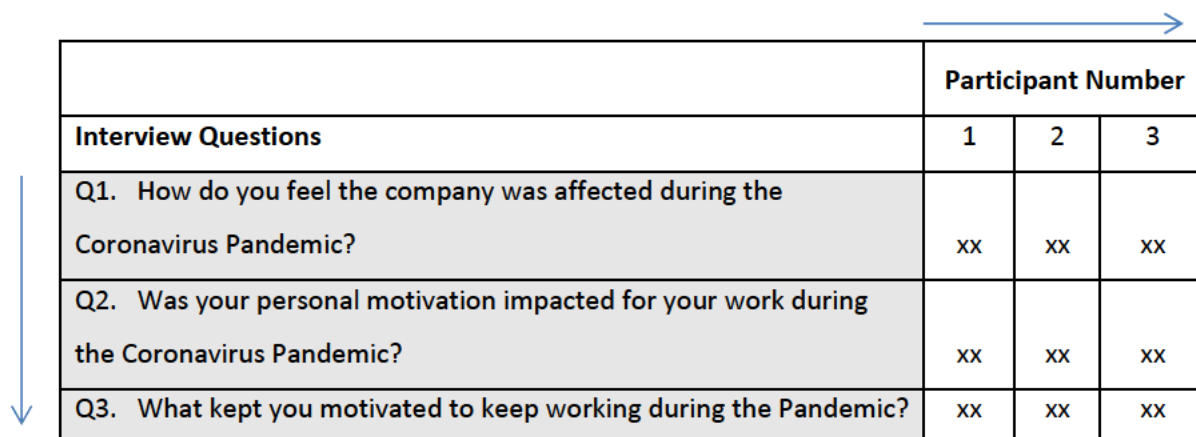
### **3.5.8 Application of the data analysis method**

The raw data was the result of 12 interviews that lasted approximately 40 minutes each. The interviews were held on a Microsoft Teams meeting. These were held after working hours and this method was

appropriate as it accommodated the participants personal circumstances. This method was effective as both the call was recorded, and it also generated a transcript for the call

Step 1 of the data analysis began with a review of the transcripts of the responses provided to the interview questions. This was converted to an easy format using Microsoft Excel that allowed the researcher to see all the participant replies at once.

### 3.5.8.1 Illustration of the format used for interview data transcription.

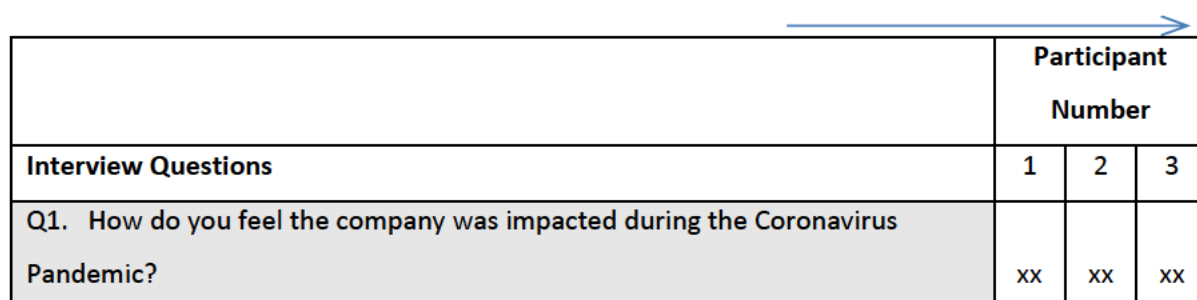


	Participant Number		
Interview Questions	1	2	3
Q1. How do you feel the company was affected during the Coronavirus Pandemic?	xx	xx	xx
Q2. Was your personal motivation impacted for your work during the Coronavirus Pandemic?	xx	xx	xx
Q3. What kept you motivated to keep working during the Pandemic?	xx	xx	xx

Table 3.1: Illustration of the format used for interview data transcription

The researcher moved on to step 2, which involved separating each question from the framework shown in Table 3.1 to show how each participant perceived it specifically. Table 3.2 below provides an example of this:

### 3.5.8.2 View of the transcribed data by specific interview questions



	Participant Number		
Interview Questions	1	2	3
Q1. How do you feel the company was impacted during the Coronavirus Pandemic?	xx	xx	xx

Table 3.2: View of the transcribed data by specific interview questions

The final phase involved selecting important subthemes from the collected data for each interview question and participant. As seen in Table 3.3, the major subthemes were then bolded to aid in the count facilitation, pattern recognition, and identification. Based on the researcher's analysis in connection with the question addressed, subthemes were found. The initial sub themes were found and, where appropriate, coded into themes. To interpret the initial, unstructured data, these themes were then ranked according to the number of participants who mentioned them and the frequency with which the participants made those mentions.



Because participants frequently had various opinions or responses to a single question, the totals and percentages did not always equal the sample size. In cases where the number of interviewers was the same, the themes were sorted by the frequency with which they were discussed.

### 3.5.8.3 Illustration of themes identification

	Interviewee Number		
	1	2	3
<b>Q1. How do you feel the company was affected during the Coronavirus pandemic?</b>	in the <b>beginning it was quiet</b> . so everybody had to <b>move working remote</b> and especially for the teams in, in the locations where you are not home based, <b>that was quite a change because you were used to work in presence in an office with your colleagues</b> . 80-90% working remotely and the rest coming back to the office. So I had the feeling that many people enjoyed working from home. They don't have to commute,	<b>sales dropped. Company was restructured. Staff numbers were reduced. Profit margins dropped. Business was slow.</b> company was negatively impacted. <b>Rising cost of fuel impacted customers and the dealers.</b> <b>People worked from home pushin longer hours.</b> Perhaps company may have benefited from people working longer hours or could it have been more work with lesser people. <b>Expenses increased whilst profits remained low so whatever sales was achieved was wiped out by the expenses.</b>	<b>severely impact. obviously a drop in sales - drop in productivity</b> because we were <b>not being able to go in to see customers</b> . impact due to the pandemic from people, not. Being able to go into the office and being not a be able to drive their cars, we obviously <b>was sitting at home for three months</b> and if not, some of us more than that, especially from a point of view of those of us that were head office or where you didn't need to be customer facing and you could work from home.

*Table 3.3: Illustration of themes identification*

## 3.6 Trustworthiness of the study

In a qualitative study smaller, non-random samples are frequently used (Cresswell, 2015). As a result, these evaluation criteria cannot be fully correlated to the qualitative paradigm, particularly when the researcher is motivated by addressing and comprehending the significance and interpretation of phenomena. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, a few techniques and criteria can be used to enhance the trustworthiness.

It is appropriate to discuss how qualitative researchers show that the research study's findings are credible, transferrable, confirmable, and dependable because they do not employ methods with defined metrics for validity and reliability. It all comes down to determining how credible, transferrable, reputable, and trustworthy the study is. In qualitative research, the concept of reliability is used to assess the nature of the investigation. This refers to how dependable and acceptable the data and data analysis is. According to Creswell (2015), four techniques—credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), trustworthiness(verification), and conformability—can be used to increase the reliability of qualitative research. These strategies are established in a manner similar to how the quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and neutrality are constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)

### 3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is the degree to which the qualitative researcher has faith in the veracity of the study's findings, or in the degree to which the results of the study can be taken to be true. It also provides a means of verifying the truth and accuracy of the researcher's results. If the hypothetical information

derived from the participants' original data is a valid interpretation of the participants' original opinions, it is said to be credible (Shenton, 2004).

To determine whether a study is credible, a researcher can employ triangulation. When gathering data through triangulation, the researcher may employ two or more methodologies. The use of triangulation enables researchers to combine information from interviews with information from documents or other sources. For instance, they might combine qualitative case study information with quantitative information from a survey. When conducting a study, qualitative researchers combine data from many sources (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

As privacy issues may become a concern, it would be crucial to make the participants feel at ease with the researcher (Cresswell, 2015). The participants were therefore asked open-ended and non-leading questions to ensure they felt comfortable and to establish their willingness to participate in the study. This helped build up the confidence of the participants.

Debriefing meetings were also held between the researcher and supervisor to suggest better alternative techniques and to raise attention to apparent weaknesses in this research (Shenton, 2004). For example, the supervisor made certain that the researcher planned to ask acceptable questions during the interview session and encouraged the researcher to ask appropriate questions. Furthermore, the researcher gave an adequate description of the phenomenon (that is, impact of Coronavirus on the sales team) using previous study findings to guarantee that this study was consistent with earlier studies (Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility of the data, interviews were recorded, the transcripts were used as direct quotes of participants and both the transcripts, and the recordings were saved for reference purposes. If required, the information can be stored for five years. the researcher used well-established methods of research such as interviews to collect data and thematic analysis to analyse the data.

### **3.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability is when the research findings in a study can be applied to other contexts, and transferable or applicable to settings outside the study environment. Transferability and external validity, or how broadly conclusions may be applied, are not distinct concepts. Generalisability refers to the extent to which one can add information about a particular group, scenario, or time frame to that which was originally intended (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Transferability in qualitative research can be challenging since the research participants are the key instruments in the research and it might be difficult to draw reliable conclusions. Transferability is achieved by giving a rich, in-depth explanation of the settings under study so that the reader has enough information to judge whether the discoveries apply to other contexts they are familiar with (Cresswell, 2015).

### **3.6.3 Dependability**

Consistency is a crucial concept of research dependability (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The procedures used to gather and analyse data must be consistent, such that if a research is duplicated by some other researcher who uses the same data collecting and analysis methods, the findings should be the same or

comparable (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To guarantee dependability, the interview guide and subsequent design for the research project intended to ensure a level of consistency and uniformity in terms of topic questions throughout all interviews conducted with the sales team.

According to Creswell & Miller (2000), creating an "audit trail" (Creswell & Miller, 2000) is one technique to ensure the validity of a research project. A research audit trail guarantees that a researcher offers clear record of all study choices and actions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In qualitative research, data can easily be manipulated or contaminated due to the biases of the researcher or selective sampling. Thus, it is important that all investigations are repeatable and conducted in an ethical manner (Arifin, 2018). The researcher can compare their own findings to existing literature of the researched phenomena to promote uniformity and limit bias.

### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

The degree to which the research findings can be confirmed by other sources is known as confirmability. It is comparable to objectivity, which refers to how much a researcher is aware of or considers personal subjectivity or prejudice. Respondent validation is the process of seeking confirmation from respondents that one's interpretation of the findings is correct (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The accuracy of the interpretation can be confirmed by cross-referencing the results with information from various sources and methodologies. To establish confirmability, auditing may also be used. In this case, the researcher provides a methodologically honest description of how the research was conducted. It's a smart idea for the researcher to store all the data they've gathered in a well-organized, accessible manner to enable auditing by other researchers (Cresswell, 2015)

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

A research study conducted using quantitative or qualitative methods must adhere to sound ethical principles. For this study, the researcher obtained permission from the University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN) Research Office to conduct research.

**Informed and written consent:** All participants signed a letter of consent confirming that they would participate in the study of their own free will and they were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were also informed of the researcher's aims and objectives. A gatekeeper's letter was also obtained, which authorized the researcher to perform this research study at the oil company (Sunday, 2019).

**Right to confidentiality:** All participants and organizations involved in the study were assured that all information obtained from them would be processed anonymously and stored securely. The identities and locations of the participants were also kept anonymous, and each participant was assigned an identity number, such as "Participant 1", which was used throughout their transcript, folders, analysis, and final report to ensure confidentiality (Cresswell, 2002).

### **3.8 Limitations to the Study**

Whilst the sample size was restricted to evaluating solely the sales team, the researcher understands that when a crisis occurs it impacts on all departments. The sample only included the sales team, and this could have limited the study as the support functions to the sales team also play a key role in ensuring that the performance of the company is maintained. Due to the nature of qualitative research, data collected is in bias towards a sales team. Therefore, the researcher used a database of national employees and not just a particular region. This was to get the view of how all employees were affected as some regions operate differently with their support departments compared to others.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methodology that was used in the study, being qualitative research. The chapter further explained the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods. The researcher used a semi structured interview to collect data from the participants. The data analysis method was discussed, together with the trustworthiness of the study whilst considering the ethical issues of the participants. Limitation of the study was included at the end of the chapter. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 4 - - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

The research findings, presented in Chapter 4, are in line with the research methods outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 consists of an overview and discussion of collected data, regarding the participants. The research questions from Chapter 1 are answered in Chapter 4, and in accordance with the study questions, the participants' answers are also collated and presented.

### 4.2 Overview of Sample

The following section gives an overview of the sociodemographic makeup of the respondents.

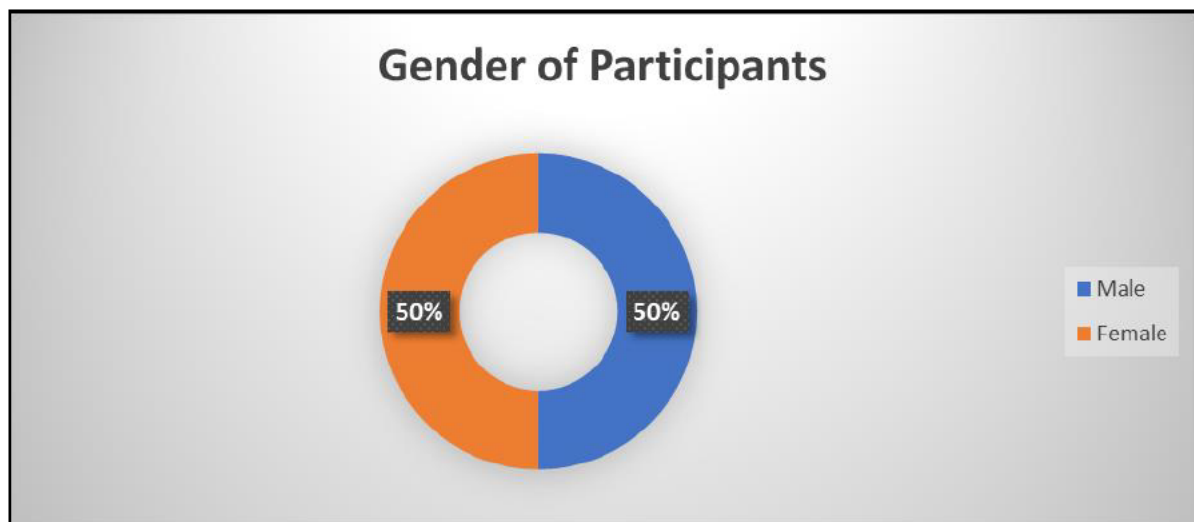


Figure 4.1: Gender of Participants

Figure 4.1 shows that the participants gender is equally distributed: with 50% each identifying as male and female, respectively.

The pandemic affected all genders equally in the sales role as all genders were in a customer facing.

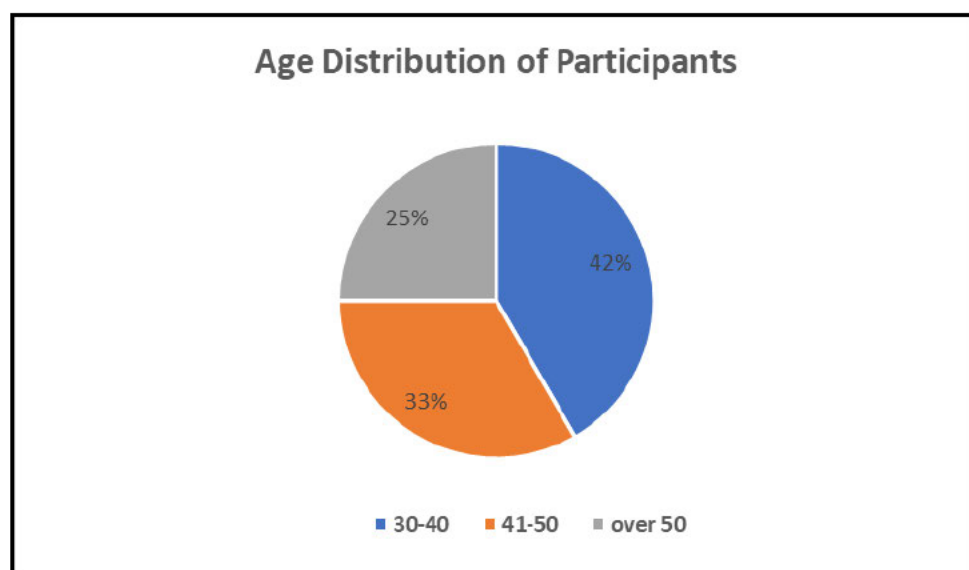


Figure 4.2: Age Distribution of Participants

Figure 4.2 shows that most of the participants (42%) are between 30 – 40 years old, 33% are between 41-50 years old and over 50 represent 25%.

	No. of years in Company	No. of years in sales role
Participant 1	10	5
Participant 2	7	5
Participant 3	15	8
Participant 4	15	6
Participant 5	15	6
Participant 6	20	6
Participant 7	8	6
Participant 8	7	5
Participant 9	15	10
Participant 10	7	7
Participant 11	15	10
Participant 12	6	5

*Table 4.1: Age and Experience of Participants*

In Table 4.1 the data shows the number of years that the participants were employed at the oil company, 50% of participants were with the company for 6-10 years whilst the other 50 % had been in the same company for over 10 years. The length of time employees have been with the organization demonstrates how loyal they are to it. The years spent in the organisation ranged from 6 years to 20 years. This data can also reflect the participant's support or need for job security. The number of years the participants spent in a customer facing sales role, ranged from 5 years to 10 years. It can be deduced that the participants had ample years of experience in the role of territory manager, so they were competent in their roles.

#### **4.3 Results discussed under research Objectives.**

##### **4.3.1 Research Objective 1: To identify the employee motivation levels during the Coronavirus pandemic.**

The aim of this objective was to investigate the views of the sales team on how the company was impacted during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on the individual's motivational levels were explored by identifying the personal stressors each employee experienced and how they managed to keep motivated during the crisis.

The questions posed to the participants that allowed the researcher to gain insight into research.

Objective 1 were as follows:

1. How do you feel the company was affected during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
2. Was your personal motivation impacted for your work during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
3. What kept you motivated to work during the Pandemic?

The Results for each of the questions are discussed below.

#### 4.3.1.1 Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on the oil company

The themes identified through the data analysis for this question are illustrated in table 4.2.

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Themes	Themes	Total frequency
9	Company sales declined overall	Decrease in Sales volumes of the oil company	Negative impact of the pandemic on both petrol stations and the oil company	23
1	Transport Delivery Costs increased	Cost to deliver fuel increased		
1	Site operators experiencing cash flow issues	Site operators became cash constrained		
1	Site operators cannot afford to buy product			
2	Decrease in customers visiting the site	Decline in fuel volume		
9	Company is constrained financially	Financial Impact on company		
8	Changes in ways of working	Working From Home	Working From Home	8
5	Company went through a restructure	Company was restructured	Restructure of the company	14
1	Employees asked to work at late hours	Increase in Work hours/duties		
4	Staff numbers were reduced	Reduction in staff /impact on people		
1	Staff felt alone with no collaboration	Led to staff isolation		
3	Decline in Productivity	Drop in employee Productivity levels		

Table 4.2: Results for the Impact of Coronavirus on the oil company themes.

##### 4.3.1.1.1 Negative impact of the pandemic on the petrol stations and the oil company

The results displayed in Table 4.2 were obtained from responses that the participants had with respect to the questions posed to them. The participants were asked for their opinion on how they thought that the oil company, that they worked for, was impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic. All responses received indicated that the company was impacted negatively in some way. Nine participants spoke about a decline in sales at multiple service stations and another three also mentioned cash constraints that the site operators were faced with because of decreased sales. This was due to the lockdown that was in effect at the time, so customers had no need to fill their vehicles with fuel. Six of the participants spoke of the financial impact on the company and the lack of bonuses and salary increases. This showed that the participants were aware of the impact of the pandemic on the overall company performance including the service stations.

Some of the direct quotes from the participants are listed below for illustration purposes.

Participant 12: "Our sales decreased a lot, so there was less sales for our partners on the retail side."

Participant 7: "Company was in a difficult place financially."

Participant 10: "customers were directly affected as the lockdown prevented movement."

Participant 6: "Company could not afford bonuses and increases."

A business impact survey of the Coronavirus Pandemic, completed by “Statistics South Africa” showed that majority of businesses reported lower than normal turnovers. Some businesses closed temporarily or did not trade at all. Almost half of the South Africa’s workforce worked from home whilst other businesses reported a decrease in workforce because of layoffs. Whilst a portion of the workforce were able to meet business demands the balance of employees were not able to meet the demands of the company and this dropped the productivity levels (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The travel restrictions and the increase in employees working from home led to a reduction in traffic volumes on the road resulting in a decrease in fuel volume and shop turnover. The sites situated in urban areas did not have the same benefit of walk on trade as the rural sites enjoyed (Fotheringham, 2021).

According to the fuel retailer’s association (2022), there was about 80% drop in fuel sales, as many customers worked from home and did not need to spend money on fuel. Across the fuel industry all companies, irrespective of the brand, were impacted (Fuel retailers Association, 2022).

#### **4.3.1.1.2 Working from home**

The pandemic brought about a major change in the manner of working whereby employees were forced to work from home. This disrupted many employees who always came into the office to work or whose work relied on on-site visits. The participants who were interviewed indicated that working from home forced them to hold meetings virtually. The participants, who were part of sales teams, could not visit the service stations to meet their customers due to lockdown and the need for social distancing.

*Participant 12: “before the coronavirus came, everybody nearly worked very often in the office, and we did not work on the digital way.”*

*Participant 10: “people were forced to work from home.”*

According to Statistics South Africa (2020), the pandemic caused an increase in employees working from home. The respondents in the business impact survey indicated that none of their colleagues worked from home before the pandemic, therefore, these results indicated that there was a huge shift towards working from home. Although this shift is not mirrored across all sectors of the industry, as can be seen with the essential services industry, which still require their employees to work on site (Chung, et al., 2020).

Recent studies completed by Chakraborty & Maity (2020), have also demonstrated how this pandemic affects both individual and economic productivity. Among others, the transportation and tourist sectors have seen a decline in production as everyone is forced to work from home (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020).

According to Vyas & Butakhieo (2021), many people across the world were forced to stay home to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus. Likewise, the employees of oil companies experienced the same working habits, trends and disruptions experienced by other industries on a worldwide scale.



#### **4.3.1.1.3 Restructure of the company**

All participants in the study were impacted by the restructuring within the oil company. The feedback from the participants indicated that many people were retrenched in the process, leaving fewer people behind, with an increased workload. This led to many having to participate in meetings at irregular hours and work longer to meet the company's demands. Some participants indicated that they felt alone and did not have the same level of the collaboration, amongst their colleagues, as they had before. The reduction in staff and increased workloads led to a decrease in productivity levels. Feedback from the interviews indicated that there was support departments that had refused to work due to the restructure.

*Participant 7: "restructure pressures that either caused people to work or give up completely."*

*"Parts of bp, that was supposed to support downed tools."*

*Participant 6: "restructure/retrenchment of people."*

*Lost good people, trim the fat."*

*Participant 5: "meetings at irregular hours."*

*Participant 2: "More work, Less people."*

The results from the survey completed by Statistics South Africa (2020) indicated an increase in working hours amongst respondents while others reported being on "short time" or the fear of being completely laid off from work. All businesses mentioned in this study reported that a percentage of their workforce was made redundant (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

According to Camilleri (2021), the pandemic had impacted mobility and decreased demand for the goods and services provided by respective companies. Consequently, several people had lost their employment or suffered a significant decrease in their salaries/wages because of budget cuts. This left other participants worried about their future work opportunities and job security.

Job security in the oil company was negatively impacted. This can be seen from reports of; retrenchments, the loss of bonuses and lack of increase in pay, which negatively affected employees. Companies locally and abroad experienced the same setbacks as shown by the supported literature (Camilleri, 2021).

### 4.3.1.2 Was your personal motivation impacted for your work during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

The themes deduced from the participants are illustrated in table 4.3.

Code frequency	Codes	Sub Themes	Themes	Total Frequency	Personal motivation impacted
1	fatigue crept in	feeling demotivated	Impact on physical health and mental wellbeing	46	Yes
1	Was demotivated				
1	Feeling negative				
1	support from colleagues to regain focus	Feelings			
1	Feeling negative, frustrated				
1	Looking after safety and health of you and your family	Family and self care			
1	motivate to set targets and tasks	Self Motivation			
1	personal motivation based on personal pride				
1	Grateful to have a job				
1	lots of uncertainty	Anxiety			
1	losing time				
1	cannot take leave				
1	worried about parents				
1	will I get paid				
1	will I lose my job				
1	no people interaction	Isolation and Lonliness			
1	being caged				
1	quarantine alone				
1	cannot meet friends or collaborate				
1	Felt alone				
1	Missed colleagues				
1	missing face to face communion	Increased Stress levels			
1	no people interaction				
1	meeting KPIs				
1	lost time of day				
1	lost grips on reality				
1	mental issues				
1	staff were reduced				
1	got divorced				
1	how long will cold last				
1	tasks overdue				
1	could not cope with managing time	Health Issues			
3	Pandemic took a toll on me				
1	body hurt and needed glasses				
1	food and weight gain				
	got covid				
2		Increase in working hours	Adaptation to new ways of working	14	Yes
4	family became sick				
1	lost family to covid	Ways of working has changed			
2	I became sick				
1	Limit working hours	Adjust to working from home			
1	Longer working hours				
1	Work in the field changed to work from home				
1	Ways of working became challenging	Communication with Co-workers/Dealers/Customers			
1	Embracing the new ways of working				
1	Field work had changed to work from home				
1	To adjust to work from home	Productivity declined			
1	Working from home as a RTM was challenging				
2	no collaboration between teams				
1	not have face to face communication	Productivity declined			
2	Decline in productivity				
1	could not meet deadlines				

Table 4.3: Results for the impact of Coronavirus on employees' themes

#### 4.3.1.2.1 Impact on physical Health and mental wellbeing

All the participants agreed that their personal motivation was impacted in some way. They described feeling stressed, afraid, depressed, and nervous about the Coronavirus and the lockdown. The participants explained how these feelings have affected both their everyday activities and their overall psychological being because of the lockdown restrictions.

Quotes of some of the participants listed below are in support of the findings.

*Participant 1: "initially I coped but as time increased, loneliness did creep in"*

*Participant 2: "However as time went it took its toll"*

*Participant 3: "There were obviously times where we got to like Day 10 and I was still at home, and it was nowhere to go that it was a little bit of a struggle"*

Some found that communication with colleagues and customers became difficult as most were not available at the time when you needed their support. This made employees despondent and lose interest

in what they were doing, and this led to a decline in productivity. Some individuals found that their family commitments increased such that they could not meet deadlines.

*Participant 5: “not have that face-to-face communication and at times when I needed to have a specific appointment, either the individual that I needed to contact was not available.”*

Some participants felt grateful for having a job and the fear of losing one’s job or being retrenched gave some individuals the motivation to keep doing their best.

*Participant 10: “I have a job. People are losing their jobs. I have a job and I'm actually very lucky. It's a privileged position to be in. So, you kind of self-motivate from there.”*

Family perceptions were positively impacted with more family time. One participant said that spending time together assisted families to support one another throughout the pandemic.

Participants also mentioned that due to the restructure and many people leaving the company, due to retrenchment, led to more work being placed on individuals that remained employed. This led to longer working hours.

According to research by Vanderhout, et al (2020), the pandemic was responsible for the changes that occurred in people's lives. The current pandemic affected people significantly, disrupting daily routines, altered roles and relationships within families and affecting the typical childcare, educational, and recreational activities (Vanderhout, et al., 2020).

Further probing on this question as to what the actual stressors were that impacted on the motivation of the participants elicited the following responses.

Many of the participants indicated that they were experiencing anxiety as they were worried for their own or loved one’s health, financial security, and safety. They were worried about the impact that this virus may have on them. The pandemic was new and unfamiliar to everyone. Also, the need to practice safe behaviours heightened the anxiety as even though people were vaccinated, they were trying to avoid anything unsafe that may lead them to contact the virus. The impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the company that led to the restructure caused further anxiety as people were uncertain if they will be paid or have jobs.

Isolation and Loneliness was one of the stressors experienced that was unique to this pandemic. Many people became lonely and felt isolated due to the uncertainty as they were unable to reach out to their families, friends, and colleagues, some even afraid of dying from the virus. What further added to the stress was that participants were faced with family members that had contacted the virus whilst other employees were infected themselves and were recovering, this being further exacerbated by other illnesses that came about as people worked long hours and spent many hours in front of their screens. One participant found that his personal life fell apart and he went through a divorce.

Direct quotes of some of the participants listed below for illustration purposes.

*Participant 1: "It's a lot of uncertainty. You don't know how to react."*

*Participant 10: "the company is not going to continue paying us if we are not delivering in terms of our performance"*

*Participant 2: "took a mental toll. I was losing grip with all sorts of things and reality and not go outside reality in the sense"*

*Participant 8: "I had a lot of personal struggles. I got divorced - I had to find a new place and change my life completely in the middle of the lockdown"*

Also, some participants found that they could not manage their time and were not meeting deadlines. This further led to them being stressed.

Caughey (1996), states that, "A stressor is a demand, event, or scenario that upsets a person's balance and causes heightened autonomic arousal, which triggers the stress reaction."

The main stressors during a pandemic are: 1) Perceptions of safety, danger, and infection risk (Brooks, et al., 2020). 2) Misinformation and the unpredictability (Gao, et al., 2020). 3) Isolation and confinement (Qiu, et al., 2020). 4) shame and exclusion from society; 5) loss of money and unstable employment (Brooks, et al., 2020). Studies show that some pressures that have arisen during pandemics have long-term effects (Brooks, et al., 2020). According to several academics, these stress-related effects last long after the pandemic has ended, therefore management must give workers strong assistance to help them cope.

Research by Zoellner & Sulikova (2022), indicates that many companies had to get their employees to work from home during the pandemic. Balancing the daily stresses of work and family responsibilities, led to many employees lacking commitment to their work. Many experienced technical challenges whilst missing the face-to-face interaction with their colleagues, spending hours in front of a screen eventually led to many mental and physical challenges. The fusion of work and private life led to many not being able to disengage from their work. This called for companies to support their employees with mental and physical well-being programs (Zoellner & Sulikova, 2022).

The results from the interviews and the research reviewed indicated that during the pandemic, employees experienced many factors that impacted on their mental and physical wellbeing.

#### **4.3.1.2.2 Adapting to the new ways of working**

Some participants mentioned that adapting to the new ways of working took some time getting used to. The sales role where an in-person interaction is common, made it difficult dealing with disgruntled dealers from home and over the phone.

*Participant 12: "We had to work from home and that for the whole time and that that was a big change in the way the people were working as a retail territory manager."*

Research by Brooks, et al (2020) has also shown that working from home has its side effects on the employee in terms of their mental and physical health (Brooks, et al., 2020).

The literature that is currently available acknowledges that social interactions, which are normally undertaken in the traditional workplace, are a vital aspect of social life and that their absence can result in feelings of social isolation and other detrimental effects. Lal & Dwivedi (2021) acknowledged in their research that social contact suffers, and people that work from home frequently experience a sense of social isolation (Lal & Dwivedi, 2021).

Previous studies indicate that employees often were challenged to maintain the boundaries between work and non-work-related activities (Raišienė, et al., 2020). The pandemic forced this confinement on to employees which led to further complications. Research indicates that while working from home, it first seemed enticing but the lack of separation between work and family life, and the lack of commutes to serve as a transition between the two domains, made it very difficult for employees to cope (Kniffin, et al., 2021).

Prior to the pandemic, the oil company's sales team conducted in-person meetings with dealer partners at the service station and spent part of their time working in an office setting. The employees' ability to work from home, using digital tools, had an impact on how they had to change how they interacted, with each other and their customers. The adaptation was strenuous on the employees as they also had to do this whilst working from their personal home environment.

#### 4.3.1.3 Employee keeping motivated during the Pandemic.

The themes determined from the participants interviews on the topic of personal motivation are shown in Table 4.4.

Code frequency	Codes	Sub Themes	Themes	Total Frequency
1	to focus on stuff I can do	focus on areas that I can influence	Self determination - driving intrinsic motivation	18
1	consume entertainment	reduce entertainment		
1	prepared mentally	mental preparation to work from home		
1	motivate yourself			
1	not let it emotionally break me down	remained emotionally strong		
1	natural drive to improve	personal drive to succeed		
1	personal drive			
1	personal pride			
1	Hope			
1	spiritual	Spirituality		
1	positive feelings	Remaining positive		
1	work from home	Recreational activities whilst at home		
2	reading			
1	music			
1	exercising			
1	fun quizzes	Depression		
1	lost interest in doing what I previously enjoyed			
1	relied on people	Support from colleagues	Support from/to family and colleagues	12
1	interaction with team			
1	talking with management			
1	help offered from teams			
1	collaboration			
1	share wins and ways of working			
3				
	talking with colleagues /family	family support		
1	moved home			
1	being there	providing support to customers		
1	support to customers			

Table 4.4: How the Employee kept motivated during the pandemic themes

##### 4.3.1.3.1 Self Determination – driving intrinsic motivation.

The results provide a view of the different themes that emerged from the responses of the participants. The theme of self-determination and drive was derived from the comments made by the participants regarding how they handled their mind-set and focus such that they were not derailed from their daily tasks. Many of the participants spoke about controlling their thoughts and the way they viewed the

situation. They concentrated more on what was within their control. Two of the participants spoke about their personal drive and the pride that they took in the way they did their work. This drive motivated them to do their tasks and not lose momentum whilst working from home. One participant spoke about finding their spirituality and how this gave them the strength to deal with sick family members whilst working from home.

Direct quotes of some of the participants listed below for illustration purposes.

*Participant 1: "I tried not to focus too much on what I can't influence, to focus on the stuff I can do"*

*"I tried not to consume too much entertainment"*

*Participant 3: "I prepared myself mentally - psyche myself to work from home"*

*Participant 4: "I didn't let it emotionally break me down"*

*Participant 6: "I don't like to perform badly. So that's where my personal drive kicks in"*

Recreational Activities - Some participants tried to engage in recreational activities such as reading, listening to music, and attempting online quizzes.

*Participant 4: "I did a lot of reading."*

*Participant 5: "just taking a break, listening to music."*

*Participant 7: "create quizzes and things, so fun additions to it to get the team closer together."*

Depression: Even though all participants did try to keep themselves motivated there was a certain point where the situation did become lonely and overwhelming, and depression set in.

*Participant 2: "A bigger toll than I expected. Whatever motivated me initially did not motivate me anymore and it took a toll on me. My home was no longer my happy space and I wanted to get back to the office"*

Research studies by Sakan, et al ((2020) indicated that people who started the pandemic feeling more upbeat and optimistic had had lower levels of overall distress, but when fundamental psychological needs were frustrated because of the pandemic backdrop, even those who felt happier were more susceptible to despair, anxiety and stress. Those who felt inept and controlled experienced greater suffering throughout the crisis due to competence and autonomy dissatisfaction than those who entered the pandemic with more negative feelings. These findings, which are in line with the Self Determination Theory postulates, add to our understanding of how people function in unusual conditions, like as a pandemic, by indicating that meeting and failing to meet basic psychological requirements may be crucial to achieving optimal well-being (Šakan, et al., 2020).

A rise in mental health issues like depression and anxiety has been noted in studies on the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic and taking part in recreational activities may have preventive implications for

psychological well-being (Torales, et al., 2020). As part of their Coronavirus mental health support programmes, the World Health Organization and other top health organisations have underlined the value of scheduling time for hobbies and recreation (World Health Organisation, 2020b). However, majority of the research has been based on the advantages of physical leisure activities like walking or running, as well as gardening and other outdoor activities, during the pandemic. Since the global pandemic's breakout, news and popular media outlets have covered the rise in interest in running and at-home workouts detail (World Health Organisation, 2020a).

The research shows that if employees remained positive and focused on what was within their control, it gave them more strength to deal with the issues that came their way. It was all about controlling their minds and finding it in themselves not to let the situation control them. The literature supports the findings in Table 4.4.

#### **4.3.1.3.2 Support from family and colleagues**

The results of the study show that six of the participants relied on support from their colleagues either telephonically or through Microsoft teams calls engaging in fun activities online.

This could be gauged from some of the direct quotes.

*Participant 12: “contact with my colleagues. So, I tried to still have a lot of contact with them via teams”*

*Participant 9: “I moved back home”*

Some participants found that helping and supporting their customers and feeling the sense of being needed, helped them keep motivated.

*Participant 8: “provide an outlet for people that are struggling out there in their businesses, in their petrol stations.”*

Some participants found solace in spirituality while one participant found comfort in working from home.

Research by Powers (2020) indicated that companies were concerned about the loss of face-to-face interactions that could lead to loneliness and disengagement of employees. However, research proved that daily planning, one on one meetings with team members, customer and partner calls and making sure to spend time with family helped people stay connected and supported. During the working hours employees were engaged and collaborated during this time. After work employees found time to spend with their families and then went online, to work, for a few hours before bed. This proved that people worked longer hours (Powers, 2020).

The results were in line with the literature reviewed and it was clear that humans required the social interaction and when this was taken away, the negative effects on people became obvious. However, some employees used their intrinsic self to find ways to cope with the pandemic. This cannot apply to everyone. As we see from the results that some became severely depressed during the pandemic and whilst working from home.



The Results for Research Objective 2 now follows:

#### **4.3.2 Research Objective 2: To identify what factors effected employee motivation and productivity.**

The study's second objective was to determine the factors that influenced employee motivation and productivity. This study goal intended to define the impact of the employee workplace on work-life balance and how people managed working from home while juggling their personal and professional lives and remaining productive.

The questions posed to the participants that would allow the researcher to gain insight into Research Objective 2 was as follows:

1. Do you think working from home affected work productivity in a negative or positive manner?
2. Has the divide between work and home changed for you during the pandemic?
3. Was your work different due to the Coronavirus Pandemic?
4. How have you organized your daily routine to achieve your daily goals/complete daily tasks

The Results for each of the questions are discussed below.

##### **4.3.2.1 Do you think working from home affected work productivity in a negative or positive manner?**

The responses to the unstructured text data were compiled into two themes, "It positively impacted" and "It negatively impacted," with the results shown in Table 4.5.

Theme	Count of Participants	Number of Participants	Times mentioned directly/indirectly
Negatively affected productivity	11	12	24
Positively affected productivity	10	12	21

*Table 4.5: Themes relating to impact of Work from home on productivity and motivation of employees.*

The interpretation of data showed that working from home affected the motivational levels and productivity both positively and negatively, with a count of 45 comments, of which 24 comments mentioned were negative and 21 comments mentioned were positive.

The count of participants cannot add up to the total sample of 12 due to participants supporting both opinions. Even though participants alluded to both responses in their answers to the interview question, the researcher used the logic of adding up all responses in favour of "it positively impacted" and all responses in favour of "it negatively impacted" to arrive at the interpretation described above.

Further probing to the same question as to how working from home impacted on the participants elicited further responses. The data was then analysed, and the following themes emerged.

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Theme	Theme	Total Frequency
1	working from home - flexibility	working from home benefits	Convenience of working from home	12
1	working remote			
1	excited about working from home			
1	online meetings could talk to all customers			
1	comfort of home			
1	more hours at home			
1	fetch kids from school			
1	can do more from home			
1	easy to work from home			
3	save petrol costs			
	save costs on travel			
	less time spent in traffic			
2	less contact with colleagues	Difficult to communicate with Colleague		
1	no human interaction			
1	negative feelings			
3	communication was difficult			
	no interaction with team			
	no relationship with customers and team			
1	Demands from the company became more	Increased demands from the company	Productivity Levels/Potential Burnout	13
3	working longer hours			
5	more productivity	Increased focus led to increased productivity and good relationship with team		
	less distractions			
	forged better relationship with team			
	concentrate and focus			
2	connectivity issues	people challenged with technology to connect online		
1	struggle to work online			
1	virtual applications			

Table 4.6: Themes relating to working from home.

These themes are depicted in Table 4.6.

#### 4.3.2.1.1 Convenience of working from home

Further interpretation of the data from participants, nine of which confirmed that working from home was convenient. The participants indicated that they had more time since they did not have to commute to work or sit in traffic. Some participants indicated the benefits as having more time to complete more tasks, hence increasing productivity. Whilst others indicated a decrease in productivity levels. Financial benefits were highlighted as a positive by three participants as they were saving on the fuel purchases due to no travel to the office.

Of the respondents interviewed only two indicated having school going children at home. The rest of the participants interviewed did not have child related challenges such as overseeing school- work whilst trying to focus on work.

Research completed by Gitlab (2021) show that the benefits of work from home may include being able to care for sick family members, care for pets and lesser office politics. However, this may also depend on individual preference as some individuals may associate comfortable clothing with leisure time and may not be able to work. Flexible work time may also be a challenge for others as they may not be able to concentrate to finish their workload. Although being closer to family members may be a benefit for some employees, this could also pose as a challenge as people struggle to concentrate with the distractions (Gitlab, 2021).

Research by Ford, et al (2021), highlighted both the benefits and challenges of working from home which could impact on productivity. Among the advantages they cited were increased physical activity, improved work-life balance, fewer interruptions, or distractions, longer breaks, a nicer working atmosphere, and more time to finish tasks.

Ford et al. (2020) assert that all benefits have a positive impact on productivity and that if a respondent mentions a benefit, that benefit raises their output. Better focus time, a better working environment and fewer interruptions or distractions, per Ford et al. (2020), are the advantages that have the biggest impact on productivity.

On the other hand, they reported the following as some of their challenges for the same study: less physical exercise, a bad work-life balance, more interruptions and distractions, fewer breaks, an unpleasant work atmosphere and less time to do the work (Ford, et al., 2021).

#### **4.3.2.1.2 Relationship with colleagues**

Six Participants indicated that they felt isolated as they missed the chats over coffee or the spontaneous get togethers. They also said communication became difficult to maintain. Important requests to support team members were ignored, and it became harder to do your work. The human element was missing and sometimes translations were lost over a team's call. They indicated that collaboration and creative work became much harder in a remote environment.

Work from home has some limitations, such as the fact that workers must cover their own internet and electrical bills. When working from home, employees felt isolated from their peers and managers worried that productivity would suffer (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

#### **4.3.2.1.3 Productivity levels/potential burnout**

Potential Burnout was highlighted by five participants as key factor that impacted negatively on productivity as people worked longer hours. Employees indicated that the more output they produced, the company demanded more of them and there was no end to this.

Three participants highlighted technology as a challenge in the start of the pandemic as people were still learning how to connect online and this could have negatively impacted on the productivity levels as employees did not get the support from the IT department and eventually switched off their laptops and did not work.

The University of Kent and the University of Birmingham conducted a survey amongst employees to understand how the pandemic, lockdown, and the work from home influenced many work-life issues. In this survey study, it was noted that employees identified blurred boundaries between work/home. Some did not have the space to work from home. The research showed that many missed the interactions with colleagues. Some other negative aspects that were observed in this research were the distractions at home, increased stress levels, increased workload and being less productive (Chung, et al., 2020). The literature reviewed above supports the themes found in this research study for Question 4.3.2.1. Many studies show that employees experienced both positive and negative outcomes from working from home and many experienced challenges that were specific to their environment. This impacted either positively or negatively on their productivity levels.

#### 4.3.2.2 Has the divide between work and home changed for you during the pandemic?

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Themes	Theme	Total Frequency
1	worked weekends	worked long hours	No work/life balance	16
1	computer constantly on. Took calls at night			
1	restructure reduced staff, worked all the time, no cut off			
1	working all odd hours			
1	no cut off time			
1	no work/life balance			
1	divide between work and home was a blur	Blurred Boundaries between work and home		
1	working hours got blurred			
1	work and home merged into one			
1	restructure took away people meant more work	Increased workloads		
1	customer expectations	Increased Expectations from customers /company		
1	working from home distracted. Dress code changes	distraction at home		
1	went through a divorce			
2	challenging with people at home			

Table 4.7: Themes in response to if the divide between work and home has changed.

##### 4.3.2.2.1 Absence of work/life Balance

According to results in table 4.7, six of the participants agreed that the line separating work and home had shifted because there was no longer a work/life balance as the laptop was always on and there was no set time for closing off from work. There was no commute to work so people started working earlier and this led to longer hours spent in front of the laptop. The volume of work increased since many people were laid off work during the restructure and this meant others had to take on the extra tasks.

Three of respondents said that having family/children around, using the same space as them at home created a lot of distractions. One of the participants mentioned the change in dress code, now being more casual which made you feel like you were at home at leisure and not being in the professional work environment made it difficult to focus. If you were travelling to the office, you were forced to be working from a certain time. However, when working from home, the participant changed her work alignment to suit her home environment meaning if there was no meeting at 8am, she got ready for work later or did household chores till the next meeting was due.

In three of the responses, it was mentioned that the lines between work and family life were blurred. Since the sales team was perceived as being available around-the-clock, the strain of raised expectations from the company became apparent to the sales team. Three of the participants were still able to prioritise tasks to meet deadlines despite these challenges. However, with the company and customers' demands increasing, it was expected that the sales team be available 24 hours a day which eventually took its toll on everyone.

Direct Quotes from participants for illustration purposes.

*Participant 10: “common to a number of people is there is no cut off and it's almost a case of because you're working from home and your laptop is there”*

*Participant 3: “I was constantly attending to email and took calls in the middle of the night”*

*Participant 4: “you change your alignment to start suiting your home environment”*

*Participant 2: “longer hours - the divide between work and home became a blur. Stopped doing what previously enjoyed like cooking”*

Research by Vyas & Butakhieo (2021) showed that working from home impacted on family life. Workers tend to overwork because their inability to control the boundaries between work and personal time. Others found that the lines between work and family life were blurred, which could cause overwork and lower work life balance. (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

A research paper completed by Agarwal, et al (2020), on how to effectively lead teams during a pandemic, show that half of the workforce worked more hours when working remotely than in office. The team productivity level increased amongst some of the respondents while some say their productivity stayed the same. However, the stress levels increased for the respondents, and they attributed the increased stress levels to the pandemic and another smaller percentage to other stressors such as the political drama and current events (Agarwal, et al., 2020).

Further research confirmed that employees were putting in longer hours into their work, respondents claimed they were more likely to work longer hours (McCulley, 2020). Due to the pandemic, one in four workers who worked from home said they work during downtime to keep up with business needs (Eurofound, 2020b).

A recent study by Reisenwitz (2020) found that the physical separation of teams resulted in one-on-one meetings or team check-ins.

The literature reviewed certainly supports the themes collated for this question. The impact on people's daily lives from a work and personal life perspective took a knock and many could not find the balance between work and their family life.

### 4.3.2.3 Was your work different due to the Pandemic?

Code Frequency	Coding	Sub Themes	Theme	Total frequency
1	Role changed after restructure	Change in role	Increased Work loads to meet unreasonable demands	9
1	Workload increased due, scheduled incidents requiring immediate attention	increased work load		
1	offer change to customer increased workload			
1	support and communication environment , crazy amount of work.			
1	there was things that presented themselves on a daily basis that required immediate attention	all tasks was urgent and a priority		
1	everything that came up was a priority			
1	restructure and working virtually changed my work.	work changed due to covid and restructure		
1	more work due to the nature of the business.	nature of business changed		
1	support teams were not available to support. The company wasnot ready to handle the covid and restructure.	No support from extended support teams		
1	had a lot more online meetings	online meetings	Increase in online virtual meetings	6
1	more online meetings			
1	more online meetings on team - very impersonal			
1	demand from all directions was required. Being on the phone and laptop 24/7.	work demands increased		
1	way of working was different	ways of working changed		
1	more work on the computer	computer work		

Table 4.8: Themes that explain how the employees work had changed during the pandemic.

From a perspective of whether the Participant work had changed during the pandemic, the themes identified by the participants are illustrated in Table 4.8.

#### 4.3.2.3.1 Increased workloads to meet unreasonable demands.

Three participants indicated that there was an increase in workload due to people being laid off from work due to the restructure of the company. One participant said his role had changed and due to this he had taken on more duties. Further comments received were that every task was urgent and a priority and this meant that employees needed to juggle many tasks within a short period of time. The demands on the employees increased and some had to catch up on weekends.

One participant indicated that they struggled to get help from the support teams whilst another commented that the company was not prepared for this pandemic and reacted rather than being proactive. This further led to stress and uncertainty as employees struggled to get support from their support teams. This caused delays in responding to the customers and further delayed the completion of the task. The unhappy customer then would call the sales team and demand for responses which the sales team are then unable to respond to.

*Participant 2: “role changed a bit due to restructure”*

*Participant 5: “took a strain in the sense that there was just one of me to actions certain areas of activities required by the business. So, in sense of that, my workload did increase. I did have several scheduled Incidents that required action on a regular basis. Due to other staff being sick we had to step up and take on extra”*

*Participant 7:” where others other teams, visibly were downing tools and left us even with even more to pick up on our own. We were not geared up and we were never geared up to be able to deal with that level of change within an organization.”*

*Participant 8: “because there was a change in the way things presented themselves on a daily basis that that needed immediate attention.”*

Studies by Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi (2020), show that there have been several changes when comparing traditional working circumstances before and after the pandemic. While some factors appear to have been positively impacted, others appear to have been negatively impacted. Conventional work expectations, such as working hours and days worked, have reportedly been overstated and have little to no effect on productivity. Many respondents expressed satisfaction with their company's communication and motivation during the crisis. Most respondents are hoping that after the coronavirus outbreak, the traditional job expectations can alter (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

#### **4.3.2.3.2 Increase in online virtual meetings.**

Five participants said they spent their time on online meetings all day. This became very disruptive as there was still more work to be done. Spending the day on meetings meant that the participants had to find time outside of their working hours to attend to their tasks and deadlines. This also impacted on their productivity as some tasks could not be completed on time and deadlines could not be met.

*Participant 1: "you had a lot of meetings where you potentially spend much more time in meetings than before."*

*Participant 2: "meet teams online - group meetings, it was disruptive."*

*Participant 4: "trying to communicate with people was very difficult because you had to be on your mobile 24/7. You have to be on your laptop 24/7 and also you have to report to your seniors and your executives all the time. So, there was demand from all directions. Every demand had to be to meet the deadline, so that also was a major impact during that time."*

These results of the study by Abarca, et al (2021) show trust as the most important variable that was required to ensure teams worked and performed virtually. As most companies worked virtually and held meetings online, the research concluded that trust between team members strengthened communication, so everyone understood what was required of them. This increased group cohesion and collaboration amongst team members.

Similarly, in this study the participants had felt that were on team meetings all day long and did not feel that there was any positive outcomes or support from these meetings. Therefore, trust amongst themselves together with clear communication would have assisted them in achieving a positive outcome.



#### 4.3.2.4 How have you organized your daily routine to achieve you daily goals?

Code Frequency	Coding	Sub Themes	Themes	Total frequency
1	If I don't plan I wont do anything			
1	Established a plan integrating all the home life stuff	created a plan		
1	set boundaried and rules	boundaries and rules		
1	prepare as a normal as if I was going to work. Check whether all tasks completed	check all tasks to be completed		
1	start work at 7.30am and continue till 5.30pm	start earlier in the day		
1	write down the activities, tick them of the list as completed. Meet deadlines and carry over outstanding.	tick off the activities completed		
1	daily morning routine. Lock out 90 minutes in day for important tasks	create focus periods on the calendar		
1	understand my priorities, merge the priorities into my diary, set goals and targets	set goals and targets		
1	working beyond 4.30pm	working extra hours		
1	flexibility to plan		Prioritize tasks to meet deadlines	22
1	flexibility to plan			
1	being flexible	Being flexible to handle any tasks		
1	handle adhoc tasks	adhoc tasks		
1	constant firefighting to get stuff done	firefighting		
1	upped the working hours	increased working hours		
1	no face to face interaction created challenges.	challenges with no face to face		
1	set priorities, use team calendar to set reminders	set priorities		
1	created a structure in my day, talk to dealers and sort out operational issues	created a structure		
1	put tasks into calendar and block out time			
1	demarcate calendar for important tasks			
1	use outlook calendar to block out time			
1	block myself out from incoming messages	block out time in calendar		

Table 4.9: Themes for organising the daily routine to achieve daily goals.

From a perspective of how the Participant work had had organised their daily routine to achieve their daily goals, the themes identified by the Participant are illustrated in Table 4.9.

##### 4.3.2.4.1 Prioritise tasks to meet deadlines.

The results in Table 4.9 show that the participants planned their day to get through their tasks. However, this did not happen immediately. Quote from Participant to illustrate this.

*Participant 2: "So you know you coasting, you're doing your thing. Came to realize if I don't plan my day. I'm not going to get through a lot"*

The results show that four of participants created focus period where they blocked out their calendars to deal with urgent specific tasks. Three participants spoke about using the teams, calendar to book meetings and set reminders throughout the day.

*Participant 6: "I put them in my calendar as a reminder to go off."*

*Participant 5: "setting priorities plan and do things in advance. And like I say, the team's calendar works fantastic. It reminds you of your meeting, it prompts you as to times meetings are set so that you need to log in and a family support is very, very important."*

There was a mention of being flexible from two of the participants and one participant as indicated that with lack of visibility and communication limited to the cell phone or laptop created challenges.

*Participant 1: "more flexibility in planning the day."*

Research completed by Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi (2020), show that the pandemic had affected different work expectations in a sense that employees could not meet deadlines. This was attributed to the fact that employees decided their own hours when they felt productive, and this may have not necessarily

tied into the time of the deadlines. This research also showed that there was a delay in decision making due to the lack of social interaction and decision makers not being available as in an office setting (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

### 4.3.3 Research Objective 3: To establish what motivational techniques or tools that was implemented by the organisations to ensure motivation of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The oil and gas industry are rather conservative and rather slow to respond to new ways of working, hence the working from home model was new to them (Dewi & Adiarsi, 2020). The Pandemic forced companies to allow their employees to work from home.

The study third objective was set to understand what motivation tools that the oil used to motivate their employees to perform their tasks effectively from their WFH environment.

The two questions that was set to seek answers to the research objective 3 are as follows. The questions were broad and open ended that encouraged the participants to talk such that more insight could be gained into this area.

1. What tools did you require to work more efficiently during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
2. Has anything changed that you believe will remain so, even after the pandemic?

Results of the first question are discussed below.

#### 4.3.3.1 What tools did you require to work more efficiently during the pandemic?

From the perspective of what tools were required by the employee to work more efficiently during pandemic. The themes identified by the Participant are illustrated in Table 4.10.

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Theme	Theme	Total Frequency
1	laptop, second screen	Tools provided by company to do the work	Tools provided by the company to work from home	14
1	laptop			
1	microsoft teams			
1	had all requirements			
1	office space			
1	laptop, double monitors			
1	laptop, data, space to work			
1	sanitizers, masks			
1	laptop, chair, monitor			
1	laptop			
1	laptop, monitor			
1	tools available but not serving purpose.	tools not supporting the work function		
1	required more data	data not sufficient		
1	support required from other functions	support structures fell apart		

Table 4.10: Themes to the question on what tools did you require to work more efficient during the pandemic.

#### **4.3.3.1.1 Tools required to work from home.**

Table 4.10 illustrates that most of the participants have all the necessary tools and equipment that they required to work from home. The oil company provided the laptop, screen, headphones, and chair. There were instances where employees connected to their home WIFI and did not require the company data, however during times of load shedding company data was required. There were also cases where employees were challenged as they ran out of data and then could not remain connected online. There was feedback in areas where online tools were available however there were not serving the purpose, or the employees could not extract the data required to do their work. In this study the impact on the sales team was reviewed and given that the sales teams required other support structures to be available online, it was found that this was not the case as the support teams were not equipped to support the sales team daily. This potential lack of communication between employees could lead to lower productivity.

Similar studies completed by Nkate (2020) showed that to assist its business operations, the public service has begun using video-conferencing solutions including Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet due to the pandemic's limits on movement and travel. Using these IT tools, personnel from geographically separated places can now share information and work together effectively and efficiently on projects in real time. These tools have allowed organisations to successfully organise online conferences, webinars, meetings, and even job interviews. Despite the programmes' effectiveness and user-friendliness, some users have expressed concerns about "video call fatigue" because of participating in too many or lengthy online meetings (Nkate, 2020).

Other research showed that the company must supply and upgrade the required IT infrastructure, including high-speed internet, as well as the necessary managerial and staff training, for the work from home policy to be implemented successfully (Aropah, et al., 2020).

Research studies by Mefi & Asoba (2021) indicated that any crisis situations have a significant impact on the structure of the organisation and the human element and employee motivational techniques had to fit the changes that the crisis brings. In respect to the pandemic digital employee recognition, goal setting and empowerment of the employee was key in keeping the employees motivated (Mefi & Asoba, 2021).

Results for the second question is discussed below.

#### 4.3.3.2 Has anything changed that you believe will remain so even after the pandemic?

Code Frequency	Codes	Themes	Total Frequency
1	flexible work arrangement	Hybrid way of working	14
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1	Hybrid way of working		
1	remote work with right tools		
1	remote work with rules		
1	remote work, online shopping		
1	remote working		
1			
1			
1			
	work from home		

Table 4.11: What employees believe could remain after the pandemic ends.

##### 4.3.3.2.1 Hybrid way of working

Table 4.11 indicates that all participants believed that the hybrid way of working could remain long after the pandemic ends, therefore the company must improve and have the right tools in place to manage this way of working in the future. The participants also indicated that there should be rules and policies in place such that people and performance can be managed correctly. The downside that the respondents highlighted, about this way of working, were the long work hours and time spent in front of the laptop. The expectation from both the customer and the company was that employees should be available 24/7. This expectation needs to be managed by the company such that employees do not experience burnout.

Research by Diab-Bahman & Al Enzi (2020) state that over 70% of workers who did work remotely during the pandemic said they could complete at least 60–70% of the scheduled task. This suggests that working remotely may be effective and meaningful in most areas of the organisation. With revised expectations, procedures and policies, firms could further adjust to the pandemic and boost productivity (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

If a hybrid approach of onsite as well as at work is formed, more than half of the participants claimed they could do at least 80–90% of the workload. This suggests that employees may very well be able to

function completely efficiently when doing remote work with the proper assessment of traditional workload standards and suitable surroundings (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020). Further studies by Singh (2020a) to support this study showed that 52% of participants were more motivated when they were at the office versus working remotely (Singh, 2020a).

#### 4.3.4 Research Objective 4: To establish the motivational support required by employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Employees felt stressed and less driven during the time of the pandemic. Most employees were juggling remote employment with family responsibility whilst some felt isolated and lonely. The emotional wellbeing of the employees was affected which directly influenced their quality of work and efficiency. Research objective 4 was intended to understand the support provided by the oil company to support the employees during the times of crisis.

The questions set out below was posed to the participants to gain insight into how the employees felt they were supported during this pandemic.

- What support did your employer provide during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- Do you believe the company maintained adequate communication with all employees?
- Have you kept up your virtual collaboration with your team during this time?
- Do you believe the organization has your best interests in mind when making business decisions during the Coronavirus period?
- How do you think employees should be motivated to work more effectively and be dedicated to the organization during a crisis?

Results of the first question are discussed below.

##### 4.3.4.1 What support did your employer provide during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Theme	Themes		Total Frequency
1	headspace, meditation	programs to support mental well being	Mental	Wellbeing	17
1	employee Hotlines, open talks				
2	tools for mental health, staying fit				
2	employee assistance program				
1	encouraged to use headspace				
2	group sessions - social interaction	Team socials			
1	support for working moms with kids	support for family responsibility			
1	food packages provided to employees	provided food for employees			
1	interactive sessions with the employees	Line manager support /communication	Physical		
2	regular line manager check ins				
1	ongoing communication and support				
1	Covid tests, PPE, discounts on food	Personal protective equipment			
1	PPE and sanitiser				
1	work life balance				
1	support for work life balance was required	Assist employees in maintaining work life balance.	Support for work life balance		2

Table 4.12: Themes that illustrate support provided by the employer.

The themes revealed by the Participant's response to the question are shown in Table 4.12.

##### 4.3.4.1.1 Employee wellbeing

Table 4.12 shows that seven of the participants said that the oil company provided tools and support for the mental and physical wellbeing. The oil company provided an online tool called headspace that

provided meditation techniques to employees to help them relax and remain calm during the pandemic. Some participants mentioned an employee assistance line where employees could phone in and talk to a counsellor on-line. Three of the participants mentioned that there was also regular line manager check-ins.

Two of the participants mentioned the personal protective equipment that was provided by the company. Two participants in the interview indicated that the company should have had a support structure in place that helped employees keep a work life balance. They noted that people worked long hours and were reaching burnout. Some participants mentioned participating in group sessions or coffee breaks where teams participated in online quizzes or shared recipes, baking ideas just to bring in the social interaction. There was a mention by one participant that the employer supported family responsibility, and another mentioned the food packages that were provided to the employees that had taken ill.

Direct quotes of some of the participants listed below for illustration purposes.

*Participant 1: "There was a lot of around mental well-being and that's a general theme. Many programs, like for example"*

*Participant 5: "Employee Assistance programme"*

*Participant 11: "Company provided the necessary PPE and sanitiser to keep healthy"*

A few companies, noted by Kohll (2020) had also started initiatives that focused on the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of their employees. Others committed resources to wellbeing initiatives, such as counselling and psychological support (Kohll, 2020).

A paper written by Talukar (2020) suggested five recommendations for promoting employee participation during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Create a virtual community with your employees, do online team-building exercises, strengthen contact with your remote teams, don't forget to encourage them with instant praise, loosen up and ensure flexibility (Talukar, 2020).

Another research by Goswami (2020), indicated that employees should be engaged during the lockdown period. Businesses maintained employee engagement during the lockdown by focusing on learning and development. Some businesses offered their staff access to TED Talks, webinars with business gurus, books, e-learning and self-developed content. During the pandemic, several businesses encouraged their staff members to ease their anxieties and keep optimistic (Goswami, 2020).

According to Singh (2020a), when an individual is tasked with meaningful work and the company is consistently offering them growth possibilities, they become motivated and devoted to the company. Engaging remote workers creates an open atmosphere where workers can cultivate fresh ideas (Singh, 2020a).

Another research report covered the many problems that employees dealt with during the pandemic. According to this article, businesses needed to be aware of the stress that employees were under during the pandemic. There should also be an open environment and effective channels for communication, so

employees feel comfortable and can come forward and talk about the problems that they have faced. (Singh, 2020b).

To boost staff participation during the lockdown, Goyal, Trivedi, Nandwani, Changulani, and Lokhandwala (2020) proposed and described several strategies. These included team meetings, lunchtime video conferences with the full staff, short online game sessions, virtual challenges, and competitions (Goyal, et al., 2020).

When a crisis occurs, managerial support should often be implemented through corporate policies and laws to apply certain leadership tactics to help maintain staff motivation.



#### 4.3.4.2 Do you believe the company maintained adequate communication with all employees?



Figure 4.3: Communication maintained with Employees

##### 4.3.4.2.1 Communication with employees and external business partners

Figure 4.3 indicates that nine of the participants agreed that the company maintained adequate communication with all employees however three participants believed that it was not adequate. The response received from the participants that supported this view said that the communication was not consistent with all staff. They felt that it was more quantity than quality of information shared. The oil company lacked direct communication with the dealer network as information was shared on the dealer portal for the dealers to read however there was no engagement with them. Overall, three of the participants felt that the company was not adequately prepared to manage the human side of things.

Agarwal, et al (2020) research stated that the transparency from the management was gauged, and the results show that 33.3% of the respondents say that the transparency from management increased while 16.7% say the transparency decreased and half of them stated that the transparency levels stayed the same. We are unsure what the transparency levels were before hence the 50% could be referring to either an increase or decrease in transparency levels amongst management (Agarwal, et al., 2020).

#### 4.3.4.3 Have you kept up your virtual collaboration with your team during this time?

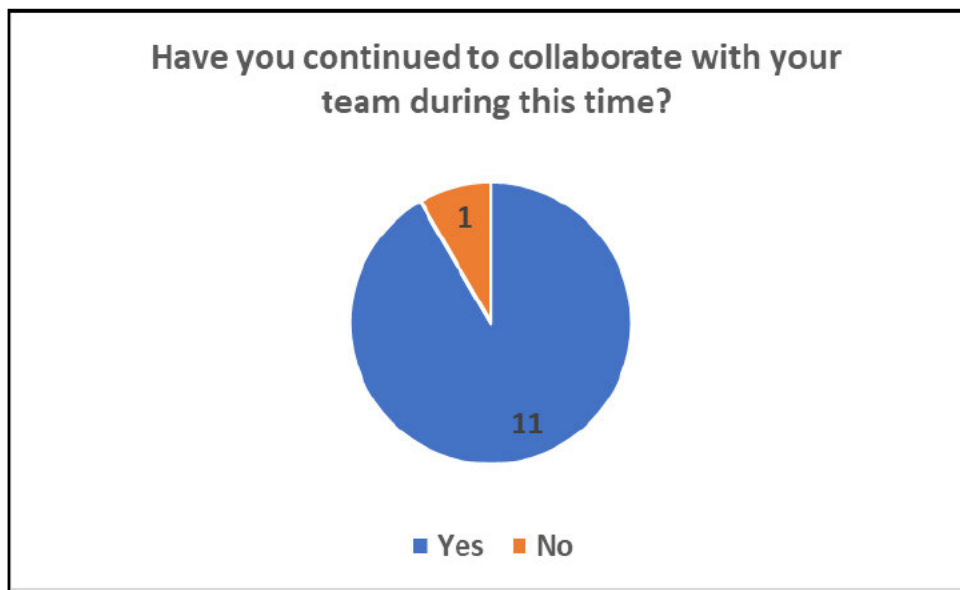


Figure 4.4: Collaboration between Teams

##### 4.3.4.3.1 Collaboration with teams

Figure 4.4 indicates that eleven of the participants collaborated with their teams in team meetings on Microsoft teams. They also socialised online and played virtual games. Just one participant said he struggled to stay connected with others and only did when needed.

There were comments made that indicated some of the participants struggling to get the support teams to assist them. This is important as the frontline sales team can only function optimally if all the support teams are there to assist. Quotes to illustrate this point.

*Participant 5: "not have that face-to-face communication and at times when I needed to have a specific appointment, either the individual that I needed to contact was not available"*

*Participant 7: I think the company, as a whole was, in a difficult place off the back of a restructure. A large portion of functions that went on to furlough and were effectively not having to work. Parts of BP that I would look to for support also downed tools somewhat off the back of that.*

The research explored on this topic also indicated similar results whereby communication is seen as an important factor and must be improved using collaborative tools amongst virtual team members such that everyone is on the same understanding of what is required (Garro-Abarca, et al., 2021). The other factor that was discussed in this research was trust as trust allows employees to perform their tasks at a distance. Too many controls make employees feel watched and uncomfortable (Garro-Abarca, et al., 2021). Trust also can improve performance. The level of empowerment of team members also impacted on the trust and ultimately on performance. (Abarca, et al., 2021).

The pandemic highlighted the need for social interaction. The spontaneous socialising helped create bonds and this was missing during the pandemic as employees worked remotely. It was highlighted in the study that employees started scheduling these social interactions online more often and this is in line with the literature reviewed.

#### 4.3.4.4 Do you believe the organization has your best interests in mind when making business decisions during the Coronavirus period?



Figure 4.5: Did the organisation have your best interests at heart.

##### 4.3.4.4.1 Decisions taken by the company – did it consider the employees.

Figure 4.5 indicates that nine of the participants believed that the company had their best interest at heart when certain decisions were made. Two of the participants believed that to a certain extent companies took their employees into consideration when making decisions agreed that whilst companies must find a balance being profit driven to keep shareholders happy, they could have done a bit more during the restructure in supporting the employees. One participant felt that the company did not consider their employees when they restructured and left employees worse off.

The research reviewed show that company employees reported that their company did not have the contingency plan in place to deal with this unprecedented pandemic (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020). However, 70% of the employees were happy with the support and communication and decisions were made in the best interest of the employee.

Literature reviewed displays comparable results where the company tried to keep the employee's best interests in mind when they decided to change certain ways the company operated. However, when a restructure takes place, employees still feel that they were unfairly subjected to retrenchment.

#### 4.3.4.5 How do you think employees should be motivated to work more effectively and be dedicated to the organization during a crisis?

Code Frequency	Codes	Sub Themes	Theme	Total Frequency
1	Organisation to listen and take criticism	Listen	Company to show genuine care and understanding	5
1	Line managers to have constant touch points with their team			
1	Company miss empathy to create employee loyalty			
1	allow people to talk	Talk		
1	when issues are raised employer should action	Action		
2	motivate each generation differently	Motivate	Company to motivate employees to become more conscientiousness	2
	get people to really want to make a difference	make a difference		
2	I like to know I am values and appreciated	valued and appreciated	Company to show recognition and appreciation	2
	reward and recognition and complement staff	reward and recognition		
2	upskill employees to improve skills	upskilling of people	Upskilling of Employees/talent management	2
	career development	career plans		
2	collaboration and simplify things	cohesive one team	More Collaboration amongst teams to work together	2
	improve connection between teams.			
2	communicate with people	visible management	Management transparency	2
	managers to be visible			
1	how do field workers contribute	contribution	Agree on the boundaries of WFH	1
1	to feel psychologically safe in the job	feel safe	Diversity and Inclusivity from the company	1

Table 4.13: Employees view on how employees should be motivated to be more effective and dedicated to the organisation.

The themes revealed by the Participant's response to the question are shown in Table 4.13.

This question was posed as a general question to the participants to understand what the company could have done better to assist the employees in remaining motivated and dedicated to the organisation.

Table 4.13 sets out the responses which were themed together.

Five of the participants felt that the organisation should have shown more care and understanding to the employees. It should have not been mechanical or a "tick box" exercise. The felt that the team leads should reach out and listen to their employees and not merely call to "check if they are working." Some of the quotes from participants that illustrate this are below.

*Interview 2: "The ability of the organisation to listen to employees, be able to take criticism. Incentives is not always about money. Keep people energised so they don't feel isolated during a crisis. Increase my well-being and mental state"*

*Interview 11: "I see from my side. Company in that moment, firstly they missed empathy".*

Two of the participants indicated that the company should motivate people, to want to work, and fix things, whilst another two participants indicated that recognition and being appreciated for a job well done is important for employees to be motivated.

Other comments were that the company should up skill their employees and there should be talent mapping for them such that employees believed that there was future for them at the company.

One feedback that came through was that the company should agree on boundaries and create some rules and that are fair to all so that employees are clear on how to react when faced with a challenge.

Open Communication was highlighted as an area where participants felt that the leadership should communicate more with the employees. This will help employees understand why some decisions in the company had to be taken. This tied in with the comment on management transparency. Leadership should present the state of where the company is; and the impact of the pandemic on the business, the measures to be taken, live Q&A session allowing employees to address employee questions and give immediate feedback.

Employees also want to be heard and they want the company to do something about the issues that they had raised. Employees also want to feel included, whilst another felt that the boundaries of work from home, should be agreed, and clearly shared with all.

A study by Aropah (2020), demonstrated similar results. The study highlights that the business should be aware of what the employees require to do be motivated during the crisis. The study further concludes that management should assess the organisational support that is currently in place, including the use of technology, support for that technology usage, and other factors besides technology. To implement the work from home policy effectively, management must engage in conversation with the employees to learn what the demands of the workforce are (Aropah, et al., 2020).

Studies by Vyas & Butakhieo (2021) showed that employees did not understand the work from home policy and lacked resources to support them to work from home, such as working space, documents, and software. There was no training provided that helped with work life balance (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

Another study explored confirmed decreased productivity associated with work from home and this could be attributed to companies not being ready to handle the pandemic (Kitagawa, et al., 2021). Employees were not comfortable in their home setups whilst the company lacked the right communication to keep the employees engaged.

Companies understand, in these challenging times, having motivated employees is essential for success. Because of this, businesses must plan to keep their staff members happy and engaged by involving them in decisions making. For firms to grow in a difficult economic environment, implementing employee engagement measures with the aid of technology is crucial. Many businesses are creating a variety of employee engagement strategies, including virtual team meetings, online learning and development, weekly alignment sessions, webinars with industry experts, as well as webinars for anxiety and stress, online team building exercises, online family engagement strategies, online sessions for brainstorming,

apologies, and appreciation, shared content like TED Talks, online books, online courses, and live sessions for new skills training, online communication exercises, online sharing of best practises for maintaining health and hygiene, digital classroom training modules, e-learning modules, online guidance for exercise and meditation, short online game session, virtual challenges and competitions, 5 minutes of informal talk, entire team gathering via video conference for lunch, online counselling sessions, and social interaction (Chanana & Sangeetha, 2020).

#### 4.4 Summary of results for the Research Objectives

Research Objective	Results
a) To identify the employee motivation levels during the Coronavirus Pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of the pandemic led to a company restructure and people being retrenched leaving lesser people with more work to complete.</li> <li>• Working from home was the new norm and some found it hard to adapt to the new ways of working.</li> <li>• The loneliness and lack of interaction between people took a negative toll on all employees.</li> <li>• Although employees tried various techniques to self-motivate, these were short lived.</li> <li>• The motivational levels were low and negatively impacted physical and mental wellbeing</li> </ul>
b) To identify what factors effected employee motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The convenience of working from home had both positive and negative impacts.</li> <li>• Productivity levels declined and the increased workloads led to burnout.</li> <li>• Managing both work and personal life became difficult which led to no work/home life balance.</li> <li>• Increased virtual meetings led to employees disconnecting with their colleagues impacting on the collaboration that is required between team members to work together.</li> <li>• There was also a drive to prioritise tasks to meet deadlines such that productivity levels were maintained. However, this was not consistent trough the different teams.</li> </ul>
c) To establish what motivational techniques or tools that was implemented by the organisations to ensure motivation of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the results gauged on the motivational tools provided to employees was positive, further probing at the interviews allowed the researcher to identify gaps where the oil company did not provide the necessary tools for staff to work efficiently.</li> <li>• The results indicated that the oil company was not ready to handle this crisis.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support structures not equipped to support the sales team.</li> <li>• The hybrid way of working was supported if done with clear rules and procedures in place.</li> </ul>
d) To establish the motivational support required by employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company needs to understand and learn about its workforce such that it would know what strategies to put in place to motivate their employees.</li> <li>• Participants indicated that the company did communicate with them however it was more quantity over quality. The dealer network/service station operators were not communicated with, and they were left with no help.</li> <li>• Collaboration between teams in the same departments took place however the support departments were not included and there was a clear break between the sales team and the other support departments.</li> <li>• The company did take the employees into account when decisions were made however it was felt that some decisions were taken that benefited the company more than the employees.</li> </ul>

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the analysis of data and the findings. The objective was to explore how the Coronavirus Pandemic impacted on the motivational levels of the sales team. The themes extracted for each question was presented in the analysis above. To contextualise the study's findings, a quick literature review was done.

Chapter five discusses the conclusions drawn from the research findings and the development of recommendations. The oil corporations will benefit from these recommendations as it will assist the company to motivate their sales teams in times of crisis. This chapter offers suggestions for additional investigation.

## **CHAPTER 5 - RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main aim of this study was to establish the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the motivation and performance of the sales team within an oil company in Southern Africa. The purpose of the study was to derive answers to the research questions that were posed in Chapter one.

- What were the motivational levels of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- What were the factors that impacted the motivational level of employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- What employee motivation techniques or tools has the oil company implemented at the workplace to maintain employee productivity during the Coronavirus Pandemic?
- What motivational support is required by employees with the new method of working to remain productive and increase performance?

Chapter 1 introduced the study, outlining the background of the study, followed by the motivation of the study. The problem statement and research objectives were highlighted. The research questions were presented, and the research methodology used was discussed.

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature on the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on motivation levels. The factors that impacted on motivation and productivity, including the motivational techniques and support that was needed by the employee during the crisis to work efficiently. The theoretical and conceptual framework for the study was discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology for the study to include the research design, population, sources of data, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. Limitations of the study were also discussed.

Chapter four consisted of the presentation of data, analysis of the data and the discussion of the analysis in line with the literature reviewed on the impact of the Coronavirus on employee motivational levels.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to present the summary of the research process, conclusions to the research objectives and recommendations of the study. This chapter also included the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

## **5.2 Main conclusions of study**

### **5.2.1 Conclusion on research objective 1: To identify the employee motivation levels during the Coronavirus pandemic.**

The research findings concluded that the employee motivation levels were low during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Employees' motivation at work was impacted by the pandemic, as employees stressed about their health and job security. Due to the pandemic, the oil company had to restructure the organisation and had to lay off many staff just to survive the financial effects of the pandemic. The restructure led to the company losing many experienced employees and resulted in people being placed in new roles, or, they had to take on more duties, to compensate for the reduction in staff. This was difficult, for the employees to manage, as most were working remotely and had no training or support, to be able to do their new roles effectively.

The organization had to put specific safety measures in place and give their employees personal protective equipment to wear at work to safeguard their workers from potential infections. This led to an increase in costs for the company. Due to the financial pressures that the company was under, employees were not given a bonus, or a salary increase, and this further took a toll on individual employees who relied on these bonuses to pay school fees and other annual fees. Even though the schools were closed, children were schooled from home and the schools and universities still expected fees to be paid. Employees with children had to further compensate for internet facilities and data as the children needed to attend classes online.

Whilst the oil company was impacted negatively, the service stations were impacted more severely as the lockdown prevented the people from moving around which meant there were fewer customers filling up fuel. The service station owners were put under severe financial pressure. They turned to the sales team for support, requesting extended credit terms. The sales team was placed under even more pressure to be able to support their customers remotely whilst having to meet their daily fuel targets.

The results of the study also indicated that all staff had to work from home. Working from home became the new norm and whilst this was initially embraced, the loneliness and lack of social interaction eventually took a negative toll on everyone. The level of uncertainty and the fear of the unknown resulted in stress and concern for all employees. Employees started to feel demotivated. The pressure of looking after one's own health and the family's health also made employees anxious and stressed. This was exacerbated by employees contracting the virus themselves and having to isolate from their families. All of this impacted on their mental and physical health.

Adapting to the new ways of working also came with challenges of increased working hours, the sales team having to work remotely and not being able to visit the service stations and support their business partners. Communication and support from their support departments was lacking. This led to the sales team not being able to meet deadlines and a decline in productivity overall.

Certain participants in the study indicated that they tried to keep themselves motivated and were determined to remain positive through the pandemic. Some found the support from colleagues online and their family members. However, this also was short lived for some participants as the depression eventually set in.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the answers to research question 1 were displayed in the participants responses to say that the motivational levels were low and negatively impacted during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Employees' struggles in their new roles and in certain cases, support departments' failure, to perform their duties to guarantee business continuity, were strong indicators that there was a training and up skilling deficit in the workforce. Communication and collaboration between different departments and teams was also a challenge.

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### **5.2.2 Conclusion on research objective 2: To identify what factors effected employee motivation and productivity.**

The results indicated that working from home held both positive and negative impacts for the employees. Whilst many of the participants indicated that working from home allowed them more flexibility and comfort, it also allowed many to attend to family obligations, while still being able to service their customers via online calls. The financial benefits associated with working from home was a positive as there was no commute to work so many saved on fuel costs and spent less time in traffic. On the other hand, the negative impact of isolation and loneliness eventually took its toll on most participants as they worked remotely. There was less face to face interaction with colleagues and communication online became difficult. Many participants of the study indicated that there was a strong need for social interaction and many roles could not be completed remotely, namely the territory managers needed to visit their customers to understand what was happening at the service station so they could provide the necessary help to their service station owners.

It was also noted that productivity levels did decline, as not all employees are able to manage the change in the same effective manner, hence impacting on other employees who required their support. The demands from the oil company became harsher and as employees worked from home, the company expected them to be available 24/7. This led to employees working much longer hours. On the other hand, some participants indicated the positive of having more time to focus, less distractions, allowing them to concentrate and focus. Some teams in certain regions used this remote working as a tool to forge closer relationships amongst themselves. There was also the challenges that some participants faced with technology and connectivity. Some of the participants struggled with some of the virtual applications.

While the restructuring resulted in the layoff of many employees, some discovered that their roles and the services they offered to customers had significantly changed, which meant that the nature of the business had changed. The results indicated that there were unreasonable demands made by the company where every task was urgent and a priority and required immediate attention. There was also indication from the participants that the support departments were not providing the adequate support to the sales team to do their jobs. This led to some decisions taking longer and customers becoming frustrated as they waited for answers.

The increase in online meetings was astronomical and participants felt that they spent the entire working day in meetings and then had to catch up on their work after hours or on weekends. The participants also commented that some meetings added no value as it was just a top down “information” tick the box exercise. The changes in the work environment led to increased workloads and employees spending hours on the screen. The line between work and home became blurred and some found the distractions at home hard to cope with whilst managing both work and personal life. This led to little work/life balance.

While navigating this uncertainty and maintaining a healthy work-life balance, the employees were aware that completing their daily tasks and meeting deadlines was essential to remain productive. Many of the participants indicated how they used the online calendar to prioritise tasks and set reminders for important deadlines. Some started earlier in the day whilst others worked until the job was done. The study indicated that some participants created focus periods and set goals and targets. The participants also indicated that working remotely during a crisis required employees to be adaptable and able to adjust their everyday tasks in response to the circumstances. This was the case with the sales team where they had to be on call when the site required a load of fuel, especially if that service station was servicing an essential business sector.

Again, the lack of team support was seen, and this called for collaboration amongst the different teams so that they could support the sales teams effectively. The sales team was also confused as to how to do their jobs as they were required to work remotely whilst their roles required them to be on site and there were no clear guidelines. Therefore, there needs to be clear guidelines that will guide the sales team on how to work during a crisis. The sales team also put in longer hours and did not feel recognized or appreciated for their efforts. If anything, they were expected to do more and be available at odd times. Overall, with this objective the study indicated that there many factors that impacted on the motivational levels and productivity of the sales team.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion on research objective 3: To establish the motivational techniques or tools used by the organisation to motivate employees during Coronavirus Pandemic**

The study indicated that some participants were satisfied that all their requirements were met in respect of the hardware that they required to be able to work from home. They indicated that the company provided the laptop, data, chair, monitors, and even personal protective equipment.

However, there were participants that indicated that some of the tools provided did not serve the purpose. Some participants ran out of data or knew of colleagues that could not connect as they did not have enough data to last for all the online teams' meetings that were scheduled.

Although the company provided some of the hardware that the employees could use, they did not check if the employee had space at home to work from. Some employees shared the home with spouses and kids and extended family who were also working from home. This created distractions when they were dialled into team meetings.

Another outcome of this study were the other support departments not being available online to provide support to the sales team. This hindered the sales team from doing their jobs effectively. The sales team felt that the company did not align all departments, to share the same goals, or shared involvement of all employees to achieve one objective. The sales team also did not feel empowered to make the decisions that impacted on their role in meeting the customers' expectations. They had to wait on other functions or departments to sign off purchase orders or quotations. This frustrated both the sales team and the service station owners as the sales team was tasked to hold the relationship with the owners but could not do anything to help them.

The study indicated that employees clearly supported the hybrid way of working if done with clear rules and procedures in place to drive performance across the business equally.

The findings of the study specific to this objective pointed out the gaps on the oil company side in terms of ensuring that their employees have all the correct tools to work remotely. The oil company was not ready to handle this crisis as was highlighted through the study. The oil company provided the necessary tools to the sales employees so they could be productive whilst working from home. However, certain parts of the organisation were still not equipped sufficiently to support the sales team in an efficient manner. The clear outcome of this objective was that the oil company did not show empathy by listening to their employees to understand employee requirements.

#### **5.2.4 Conclusion on research objective 4: To establish the motivational support required by employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

During the pandemic, the participants noted that the company provided tools and programs to support their mental wellbeing. Teams were encouraged to use the headspace app to meditate and keep calm. Participants also acknowledged that there were employee hotlines, open talks and employee assistance programs provided to support the employee's welfare. Team socials were encouraged so that employees could interact with each other online. Some individuals mentioned receiving support from their line managers during the pandemic. There was also family support given to some participants that had children. One of the mandatory requirements was the use of sanitizers and masks which the company provided to the participants.

The study results indicate that the decline in work-life balance during the Coronavirus Pandemic did not significantly differ by gender, age group, or whether there were children living in the respondents' households. All employee groups encountered difficulty juggling work and personal obligations during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

It should be emphasised that work-life imbalance is one of the elements that has a negative impact on employees' physical and mental health and wellbeing, which in turn has a negative impact on the sustainability of work. Work-life balance benefits employees' health and boosts their levels of motivation and loyalty, increases work efficiency and production, amongst other things. Therefore, it is key for employers to arrange work schedules in a way that don't negatively affect workers' health and wellbeing. Employers should also include family-friendly programmes in the human resource policies to encourage a work-life balance for employees.

The results from the study indicated that the company did maintain communication with their employees, however further probing also highlighted that communication was more of quantity rather than quality. Conclusions drawn by the participants was that the company was not ready for this crisis. The major flaw in the company communication was around the service station operators. There was little communication, from the oil company to the operators. Many service stations operators struggled with human resource issues, staff getting sick, and they did not know how to respond.

The company supported team collaboration and made it easy for the sales team to collaborate with each other. However, the gap that was highlighted in the study was the lack of support from the other departments. This was an area that was mentioned several times in the interviews, and it is certainly an area that the company needs to improve on.

The results indicated that the oil company undertook a restructuring during this period and that certainly impacted on all employees negatively. The feedback from the participants were mostly positive on the question whether the oil company had the employees' best interest in mind when they made business decisions during the pandemic. The participants indicated that the company is profit driven and will



always need to keep the shareholders' value in mind, however if the company tried harder, there was much more the company could have done to reduce the impact of the restructuring.

The support that the oil company gave to their employees during the pandemic was well received, however the study has highlighted some gaps in the support provided. Communication is one area that requires development. To keep employees motivated throughout the pandemic, it is imperative that the company's leadership maintain effective communication and convey information with individuals working from home. Everyone feels very detached because staff members are not being brought together, especially during lockdowns when interpersonal relationships suffer.

In conclusion it must be noted that the company must spend time with its employees to learn and understand employee needs such that the company will be better placed to support their employees and keep them motivated during a crisis. Employees want the company to listen to them and then act accordingly.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Drawing from the study conclusions, the researcher enlisted the following recommendations.

#### **5.3.1 Company to show genuine care and understanding by:**

Listening to the employee

The company needs to develop a listening strategy. The listening strategy can be developed around main topics such as safety for the employee, building a community amongst the internal departments to promote communication and collaboration, key performances indicators, adapting to change, and including work life balance support to the employee. The employees would like the company to actively listen to their concerns and challenges. Employees also have innovative ideas on how the company can offer flexibility and support to their employees. Listening to the employees is essential for creating and preserving trust based working relationships.

To learn how employees are doing and feeling, organisations must develop employee listening techniques and pulse checks. Employees want the company to demonstrate awareness and empathy.

#### **5.3.2 Show recognition and appreciation for Employees.**

Staff are worried about the economic effects that the Coronavirus Pandemic has had on the company and their jobs. The study also indicated that employees worked longer hours when working from home. Employees felt that the more output they delivered, the more the company expected out of them without acknowledging their efforts. Recognition provides the much-needed assurance and highlights the major contributions that employees make to the business. Recognition is an essential tool for communicating to employees what is important to focus on and the contributions that the organization values. Acknowledging employee efforts are critical to employee engagement, well-being, and effectiveness.

#### **5.3.3 Up skilling employees through talent management**

Many employees are supporting the hybrid way of working and many have indicated in this study that they prefer to continue working in this way. The post pandemic era will call for employees to be reskilled and up skilled to deliver on the new business models. The restructuring of the company and the movement of employees to new roles with more responsibilities revealed a gap in the talent management area. Succession planning of key employees is required so that these employees are ready and skilled to take on the new roles should these roles become available. The pandemic challenged the sales forces who had to manage customer relationships effectively in remote settings. The company must know and understand its core strategy, communicate this purpose to its employees so employees know their purpose in the organisation and then put together a skills recovery plan to up skill its employees to close the critical skills gap. Companies should budget for this as it is a key area that will also motivate employees if they know that the company is investing in them.

#### **5.3.4 Encourage more collaboration amongst teams.**

Adapting to the new ways of working, employees having transitioned to new roles, processes, collaboration, and communication. The company should create a foundation of involvement, respect,

equality, and fairness that will help employees interact and work together. The results of the study showed that teams were not communicating, collaborating, or supporting each other.

The company should look at creating a network of teams, to promote cross functional collaboration and transparency. The team can also find solutions to the company's most urgent issues, whilst enhancing team connections and encouraging team building. Also creating inclusion and an environment for people to feel safe can encourage individuality and will allow members to experiment without fearing negative consequences.

### **5.3.5 Transparent Leadership**

During a crisis employees experience stress and fear of the unknown. Leadership can build trust by scheduling direct communication with the teams. Transparency and trust are the key elements in managing fear and uncertainty in future crisis.

Leadership transparency calls for honesty, openness, and accountability in the way the company discloses its current situation and its decision-making process. The information provided by leadership must be accurate, and transparency also involves participation on the part of the stakeholders in determining the information they require. During a pandemic, developing and putting into practise communication strategies that improve transparency can bring a department together and foster trust.

### **5.3.6 Agree on the boundaries of work from home and performance management.**

The territory manager role is customer facing and requires them to visit the service stations. The company needs to clearly define the boundaries of working from home. A policy must be created to set out the clear rules on how to work from home ensuring that work life balance is maintained, whilst the employees understand key performance indicators that are required by the company. The timelines by when the key performance indicators are due must be clearly communicated and tracked. It is also crucial for the company to have a central point where the territory managers can report into on a weekly basis to give feedback or an update on what they had achieved in the week.

## **5.4 Limitations**

The study was limited the use interviews, and to minimise the limitation, the interview statements were carefully constructed so that they answer the study objectives. In addition, the interviewer allowed follow-up questions to clarify sections that were deemed not answered during the interview process. The study was also limited by timing as the study was supposed to be completed within a short space of time. To minimise this, resources in the form of manpower to capture data and use of faster state of the art technology were employed to quicken and improve the quality of the data collection and analysis process. The study was also limited by the Coronavirus Pandemic measures which did not allow face to face interviews to be performed. The use of virtual interviews however proved to be a faster and efficient data collection method which still allowed recording by the researcher.

## **5.5 Suggestions for future research**

Future research should include testing the motivational levels/productivity of the support departments within the oil company and how these impacts on the sales team. To test whether the necessary support is available from the support departments to support the sales team during a crisis. Ultimately the support of both the sales team and the support teams is required to ensure the service stations and the end customer needs are met. The customer experience, at the service station, will determine if the customer is happy and whether he will continue to support the service station and the brand again. If there are more customers at the service stations, making repeat purchases, it will increase the sales on the forecourt and shop and will overall improve the performance of the oil company.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The research study analysed the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the motivational level of employees within an oil company in Southern Africa.

The research study concluded that the employees are the driving force of every organisation therefore the oil company needs to recognize how any type of crisis affects the individual employees. The company must also understand the fundamental shift in their employees' priorities away from work and toward caring about their families' well-being, also tolerating the anxiety that comes with a life-threatening situation or crisis. Therefore, focusing on securing the immediate health and safety of employees should be the initial focus of the oil company.

Motivational theories cover most of the subject matter on the psychology of motivation. The employee has varying levels of need that will drive their behaviour. For this study, the self-determination theory was used as the basis. The drive to succeed and survive during the pandemic was internally driven by the employee and it was noted that for an employee to reach higher level psychological needs, the lower needs would have to be fulfilled.

Therefore, it is crucial for employers to understand that employee needs vary per employee and change over time based on the individual circumstances of each employee.

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## CHAPTER 7 - APPENDICES

### Appendix A - Ethics Clearance Certificate



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL<sup>TM</sup>  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

03 June 2022

Thirumoney Govender (205507927)  
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership  
Westville Campus

Dear T Govender,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004169/2022  
Project title: Impact of Corona Virus on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa  
Degree: Masters

**Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 10 May 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/departments for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 03 June 2023.  
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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**Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

### Appendix B - Gate Keepers Letter

BP Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd  
199 Oxford Road  
Oxford Parks  
Dunkeld  
2196  
PO Box 1554  
Johannesburg 2000  
Tel: +27 11 488 5111  
[www.bp.co.za](http://www.bp.co.za)



For Attention:

Chair of Research Ethics Review Committee  
The University of Kwazulu Natal  
College of Law & Management Studies  
The Graduate School of Business & Leadership  
Westville Campus

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO USE bpSA AS A STUDY SITE FOR A MASTERS RESEARCH: A QUESTIONNAIRE WITH OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS POSED TO THE bpSA SALES TEAM IN RETAIL**

This letter serves to grant permission to Thirumoney Govender (Student Number 205507927), a registered student at UKZN to use bpSA as a research study site in fulfillment of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) research in bpSA. The study entitled "Impact of CoronaVirus on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa".

The student is reminded of the ethical considerations as well as the current COVID-19 related regulations as per the Disaster Management Act (2020) when conducting the research.

Wishing the student all the best in her studies.

Yours sincerely

*Thabo Matlhare*

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**Thabo Matlhare**

**Employee Relations Manager**

Directors: T Orleyn (Chairman)  
F Abrahams H McCabe  
T Mojapelo S Mokone-Matabane  
J Ndlovu I Skosana

Reg.No.1924/002602/07  
Vat Reg No. 4430105454

## Appendix C - Consent Form

### UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL  
For research with human participants

#### INFORMED CONSENT

##### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 28 May 2022

To whom it may concern

My name is Thirumoney Govender, and I am a student at University of KwaZulu Natal. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr Emmanuel Mutambara about the Impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa.

My Contact details are as Follows:

**Researcher:** Thirumoney Govender

Email: Thirumoney Govender 205507927@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Mobile: +27 834017234

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research of the impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the sales teams.

The aim and purpose of this research is to assess Impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa by conducting interviews with the sales team, with an overall view to ensure effectiveness of the sales team in times of a crisis. The research shall define the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the level of employee motivation by using a qualitative study.

- a) The research is timely as most employees have been impacted by Coronavirus and motivational levels could have changed so it is important for the organisation to better understand the factors of motivation that do impact on performance.
- b) The information gathered from this research can be used by the management of the Oil Company to improve employee motivation to perform tasks well and contribute positively to the performance of the company.
- c) Lastly the findings of this study will be added to the motivation studies already completed about the impact of Coronavirus on motivation and performance in similar oil companies.

The study is expected to enroll 12 participants in total across the various regions in Southern Africa. It will involve a semi structured interview. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be about an hour.

There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number: 00004169/2022).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**Supervisor:** Dr Emmanuel Mutambara  
Telephone: +27 31 260 8129  
Mobile: +2774 561 5083

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Master's in Business Administration. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the outcome of the study.

-----



## CONSENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed about the study entitled  
**Impact of Coronavirus on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa by Thirumoney Govender.**

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at +27834017234.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Record the interview	Yes	No
<b>Signature of Participant:</b>		
<b>Date:</b>		

## **Appendix D – Interview Schedule**

Greet the interviewee.

Discuss the aims of this research study and how the interview will help this research.

The aim of the study is to assess Impact of Coronavirus (Corona Virus) on the motivation and performance of the sale team within a petroleum company in Southern Africa by conducting interviews with the sales team, with an overall view to ensure effectiveness of the sales team in times of a crisis.

### **Section A: Biographical information**

1. Gender of participant
2. Age of Participant
3. How long have you worked for the company?
4. How many years have you been in the role of territory manager?

### **Section B: Motivational levels**

4. How do you feel the company was affected during the Coronavirus pandemic?
5. Was your personal motivation impacted for your work during the Coronavirus pandemic?
  - If so, how?
  - Did you experience any personal stressors during the Pandemic?
  - Prompt if required (this could include health, childcare, economic, family/friends' impact, general stress/anxiety, other)
6. What kept you motivated to work during the Pandemic?

### **Section C: Factors that impacted the motivational levels and productivity.**

7. Do you think working from home affected work productivity in a negative or positive manner?
  - If so, how?
  - Negative: (Distractions, procrastination, laziness)
  - Positive: (No home-work travel, can work for longer periods of time (Comfort of working at home), Less stressful when at home)
8. Has the divide between work and home changed for you during the Pandemic?
  - How do your experiences in the work and non-work environment influence each other?
  - Does your work priorities and home priorities interfere with each other more during the pandemic as opposed to before the pandemic?
9. Was your work different due to the Coronavirus Pandemic?
  - Prompt to ask if the dynamics of work were different?
  - Less or more work?
10. How have you organized your daily routine to achieve your daily goals/complete daily tasks
  - How has this routine changed due to Covid-19?
  - How do you balance your day to meet your daily deadlines?

- How do you deal with the daily work demands/challenges such that it does not impact on your performance?

**Section D: Motivational techniques or tools was used by the oil company to motivate employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic.**

11. What tools did you require to work more efficiently during the pandemic?
  - Equipment? (PC, webcam, microphone, headphones, Internet modems(data))
  - Monetary support/motivation?
  - Medical support?
12. Has anything changed that you believe will remain so even after COVID-19?
  - Do you think these changes will be beneficial?
  - If no, why?
  - If yes, why?

**Section E: Motivational support required by employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic.**

13. What support did your employer provide during Covid-19?
  - Was the support effective? (Did your productivity increase?)
  - If not effective: What do you think, they should have provided?
  - If effective: What else do you think, they should have provided?
14. Do you believe the company maintained adequate communication with all employees?
  - Forms of comms
  - How?
15. Have you kept up your virtual collaboration with your team during this time this time?
  - How?
16. Do you believe the organization has your best interests in mind when making business decisions during the Coronavirus period?
  - How so?
17. How do you think employees should be motivated to work more effectively and be dedicated to the organization during a crisis?

Ask if they have final comments and questions.