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An analysis of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on employee productivity: A case of Oshakati Town Council, Namibia

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of the study was to analyse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee productivity. The study adopted a quantitative approach and a causal-comparative design. A census sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents in which all the 110 employees of Oshakati Town Council took part in completing structured questionnaires. The study utilized the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) to analyze and explain the findings. The main finding was that COVID-19 negatively affected the productivity of employees, thereby impacting on the overall performance of Oshakati Town Council. The COVID-19 pandemic created anxiety, depression and other health challenges on employees. Although it was proven that low anxiety was significantly helpful in arousing employee motivation, persistent exposure to the infectious environment negatively affected the mental health of employees and that negatively affected productivity. Findings of this study further revealed that Oshakati Town Council lacked manpower to help enhance employee productivity during the pandemic. Moreover, the study established that the working from home (WFH) strategyfailed because of multi-tasking between official duties and household chores, and the absence of suitable office space and equipment at home. This study recommended management to ensure that employees are well supported during a pandemic like COVID-19 in order to keep them safe and productive. Employers should always be ready with strategies of how to respond if a pandemic strikes the workplace.*

Key Words: Covid-19, employee productivity, employee performance, working from home,

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The novel COVID-19 virus also known as corona virus was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, in the Hubei province, China in December 2019 and it was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (Wolor et al., 2020). COVID-19 is highly contagious and it spread rapidly to all part of the world, including the African continent and eventually to Namibia.

Life threatening pandemics in history of mankind have had serious negative effects on people's psychological wellbeing and mental health. Psychological and mental health problems are associated with chronic conditions like stress, depression, mental confusion, and social anxiety(Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic brought the largest shock to world economies that had never been recorded in recent times. Eventually, itcaused the contraction in GDPs of every country including largest economies like the USA and Asian nations(Islam et al., 2020; Thorbecke, 2020).

The low production of firms during COVID-19 pandemic may be attributed to decreased productivity by employees due to psychological disturbances and well-being associated with the pandemic.Usually, organizationsthrive and sustain themselves by expecting their employees to perform well and above board(Bishwas & Sushil, 2016). In essence, employee well-being was greatly affected by the pandemic and it further created a hazardous work environment. Moreover, the sudden change in workplace environment and setting like working from home (WFH) may as well have

caused stress and anxiety among employees that led to confusion, and loss of organizational productivity. Isham et al. (2021) posit that employee productivity and well-being are correlated. Furthermore, the human relations theory argues that a healthier employee makes a positive significant contribution to improve organizational performance. Hence there was need to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on employees' productivity in order to fully understand whether or not poor performance in organizations was occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study first analyzed employee productivity, quantifying the effects of COVID-19 using a casual-comparative design. Secondly, the study investigated the challenges affecting local authority employees in performing their duties during COVID-19 pandemic before identifying strategies that could be adopted by local authorities in enhancing productivity of employees during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about the new normal in which most employees were unable to report for work due to lockdowns and other WHO restrictions(Li et al., 2020). This situation became difficult for some organizations to maintain operations in such an unpredictable situation where the external environment was threatening the well-being of employees(Saleem et al., 2021). Organizationsinstructed their employees to WFH(Afrianty et al., 2021). The new phenomena of WFH was not without challenges. Companies didnot know how to supervise and fairly remunerate such work as it was not clear if employees where really concentrating on their official work or they were more concentrating on household chores. Separating hard workers and lazy workers became a problem yet the purpose for every firm is to be able to measure productivity. Thus therewasneed for a study which would measure the effects of COVID-19 on employee productivity. Earlier studies indicated that influenza pandemics like the 1918 outbreak and 2009 H1N1 influenza had a wide range of disruption on productivity of industries and emerging economies due to reduced workload, closure and absence of workers (Verikios et al., 2011). Little was known about the effects of COVID-19 on employee productivity in local contexts. Most studies concentrated on the effects of COVID-19 pandemics on the economy, mostly at macro level. Earlier studies analyzed the effects of COVID-19 on oil prices(Gil-Alana & Monge, 2020)and this is the knowledge gap which this study sought to fill.

1.3 Research objectives

The main research objectiveof the study was to analyze the effects the COVID-19 pandemic on employee productivity. The specific objectives were:

1.3.1 To examine the level of employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic at Oshakati Town Council.
1.3.2 To determine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on employee productivity at Oshakati Town Council.
1.3.3 To assess the challenges affecting the local authority's employee productivity during COVID-19 pandemic.
1.3.4 To evaluate the strategies employed by Oshakati Town Council to enhance the productivity of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypotheses to be tested were:

H_1 – COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected employee productivity.
H_0 – COVID-19 pandemic had no negative effect on employee productivity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Abend (2014) defines a theory as a well-substantiated explanation of a particular social phenomenon that can integrate laws, hypotheses and facts. The study was guided by the protection motivation theory (PMT) which dwells on employee safety in relation to productivity.

2.1.1Protection MotivationTheory (PMT)

The PMT theory (2013) better explains how employees are likely to react when their mental states are challenged due to threats coming from the environment in which they work. PMT is animportant health psychology theory developed by Rogers in 1975 and it was aimed at explaining the cognitive mediation process of behavioral change in terms of threat and coping strategies. The model was further aimed at understanding the effectsof fear in times of danger. It was for this reason that PMT was found suitable to explain the phenomenon of employee safety in relation to productivity.

The foundation of PMT is based on earlier studies on the persuasive impact of fear appeal that concentrated on whether fear appeal may influence attitudes and behaviors of individuals. PMT elaborates how individuals are able to respond to dangerous environments. Individuals may then adopt a cognitive process to respond to danger with the aim of protecting themselves. Dwomoh et al (2013) postulate that employee safety is of utmost importance to productivity and organizations should protect employees from the threat in order to gain maximum productivity from employees.

Another necessary component of PMT is coping appraisal. Within this component various factors in terms of how likely the individual engages in preventative initiatives are evaluated. PMT coping appraisal is coined around response efficacy, self-efficacy and perceived cost deals. PMT described the response efficacy as those set of beliefs that guide and inform an individual thatengaging in a certain behavior will result in health threat getting reduced. For example, in terms of COVID-19, social distancing, mask wearing and disinfecting of hands and premises reduced chances of contracting the virus (Plohl & Musil, 2021). On self-efficacy, PMT describes it as a set of beliefs that an individual is expected to engage in terms of health behaviors. For example,Singh- et al., (2020)indicate that taking up COVID-19 vaccination jabs almost eliminates the chances of contracting the virus. The last factor within PMT coping appraisal is the perceived response-cost deals in terms of monetary, used to mitigate the illness, e.g. cost of procuring COVID-19 protective equipment and vaccines to boost the immune and safety of individuals to remain productive.

2.2Empirical Review

This section provides a review of related literature from journals, books and previous research papers related tothe research topic.

2.2.1COVID-19 pandemic

Scientistsindicated that Coronaviruses belong to the family Coronaviridaeand are positive single-stranded RNA viruses encircled by a cover and are segmented into four genus: Alpha-, Beta-, Gamma-, and Deltacoronavirus(Ciotti, Angeletti, et al., 2020). The COVID-19 virus does spread faster and it is considered to be the biggest pandemic of humans ever reported (Du Toit, 2020). The virus spreads mainly from one human to another in close contact through respiratory droplets which are formed when a COVID-19 positive person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, breathes or talks(To & Editor, 2020).Therefore, there are a number of efforts that were taken with regards to inoculations, the robust and most effective defense that society has against this virus. Strictly adhering to hand hygiene, surface disinfecting, social distancing, quarantining and using personal protecting equipment (PPE) are some of the proven preventative measures(Pradhan & Biswasroy, 2020).

As deadly as it is, COVID-19 pandemic outbreak seriously affected key sectors of the economy that include manufacturing industry, transportation, aviation, tourism, catering, retail, entertainment and health sectors amongst others (Shen et al., 2020). The movement of people around the worldabruptly dropped due to movement restriction policies, which culminated into weak spending power and recession at macro level (Shen et al., 2020).

2.2.2Employee productivity

Employee productivity is fundamentally cardinal to an organization's profitability and it is one of the most conversed topic in business spheres(Yi & Chan, 2014).Iqbal et al (2019) define employee productivity as the volume of work done by an individual per hour as compared to resources consumed or used in the process. Productivity has a direct correlation with business inputs in both near and long-term, such that an activity will not be viewed as productive without this correlation (Barsulai et al., 2019).Agarwal et al (2020) acknowledge that labor productivity may be measured in physical numbers and monetary terms.

Knowing different factors that influence productivity is essential to improving productivity (Haenisch, 2012).There are many factors that can affect productivity rates in organizations like technical skills, tactical norms, physical energy, mental strength, emotional support and the work environment(Alaghbari, 2019). Enshassi et al (2010)conducted research by surveying 45 factors affecting employee productivity in construction projects in the Gaza Strip, and discovered ten main factors thatare responsible forinfluencing employee productivity as follows: inputs, supervision, leadership, quality, time, manpower, project, motivation, health and safety. Also Talhouni (1990)highlighted four factors influencing productivity, which are: management, environment, work-place design, and weather. Equally, Zakeri et al (1996) concluded that the main factors negatively affecting employee productivity are shortage of inputs, weather, work environment, lack of specialized equipment,absenteeism, labor turnover, health and safety.

2.2.3Working from Home (WFH)

WFH isa human resource exercise wherein certain personnel do not work from workplace offices but from their homes according toBao et al.(2020). Social distancing and commuting restrictions were associated with the COVID-19 pandemic

(Arntz et al., 2020). To ensure business operations flow during COVID-19, a system of performing activities from home was initiated as a strategy to ensure business continuity(Arruda, 6 C.E.). Employees acquired flexibility in their jobs and their schedules when they changed from working from the office to WFH (Zhang, 2016). According to the research study done by Konradt et al.(2000), organizations gained significantlyin terms of increased productivity from the WFH arrangements. Zhang (2016) affirms that communication technology platforms like Microsoft teams, zoom and skype afforded employees an opportunity to perform their work activitiesfrom any location on the globe,recordingoutstanding results with dexterity and on time.

On employee perspective, WFH has been a dream for many employees, especially the current techno savvy generation which does not want to wake up early in the morning, take shower, dress and join the hassles of commuting to workamid transport congestions in many towns and cities(Harapan et al., 2020). According to Russo et al. (2021) some employees struggled to pay attention throughout their official working hours staring only on a computer monitor without physically engaging with colleaguesalthough initially, they were enthusiastic about the idea of working alone, without the disturbance of the workplace.Raišiene et al., (2020) indicate that when employees are working from home, there are no supervisors to act as motivators as the case when working from their station of duty and as a result they found themselves without cheerleaders. Shaban et al.(2017) further posit that organizational sustainability and success is attained through having employees who are frequently motivated to reach greater heights. Moreover, positioning employees in wrong working environments may drivethem to lose motivation resulting in diminished productivity (Haenisch, 2012).

According toChadee et al. (2020), it is very difficult for employees to track their own work performance when working alone from home. Equally, it is also difficult for employees to supervise and monitor themselves as it all depends on their honesty and self-discipline in regulating themselves(Grant et al., 2013). When employees are not monitored when working from home, they often take longer and frequent breaks, as well as using official working hours for napping, leisure, and gaming activities(Bloom et al., 2015). This is true since McGregor's Theory X clearly states that an ordinary employee does not want to work. Wang et al. (2021) observed that in most cases when employees WFH, their productivity is affected by domestic work activities as well as unexpected catnaps that make it difficult for them to concentrate and perform their work for long periods, thereby decreasing productivity levels.

The partaking of women in domestic activities when WFH affected the productivity of women during COVID-19 pandemic as compared to men compatriot (Shockley et al., 2017). However, earlier study by Bönte & Krabel, (2014)suggest that there was no disparity in productivity between men and women in times of pandemic outbreaks.

2.2.4 Health and safety of employees

Health challenges were experienced by employees during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms anxiety, depression and stress(Tyrrell & Williams, 2020).Pappa et al (2020)study on prevalence of depression, anxiety and insomnia among health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic found that there was decreased productivity among health care workers caused by nervousness as they were in direct contact with those that contracted COVID-19.Pappa et al (2020) further indicated that health care workers were traumatized during COVID-19 because they werehelplessly witnessing people dying every day, observing patients enduring pain, fear of contracting the virus themselves and infecting their family members. While it has been proven that low anxiety is significantly helpful in arousing employee motivation, especially among frontline workers, persistent exposure to dangerous environments may have negative mental health effects on employees and that negatively affects work productivity (Labrague & De los Santos, 2020).

2.2.5 Multi-tasking between official work and domestic work during official working hours when WFH

The challenges of missing targets and deadlines is mostly associated with employees engaging in personal activities, especially when WFH according to (Kumar et al., 2021). COVID-19 was spreading at an alarming rate and that forced countries to shut down schools and daycare centers to curtail further spread(Feng & Savani, 2020). The arrangement of WFH was not a solution to many organizations as employees were found to be partaking in domestic activities during official working hours (Feng & Savani, 2020). Moreover, homes were becoming noisy, filthy and untidy because of children who were at home fulltime, and that gave rise to increased household chores burden to parents WFH (Rožman et al., 2021).Feng & Savani, (2020) postulates that multi-tasking between work tasks and domestic activities resulted in un-reached targets and lower productivity among employees when WFH.

2.2.6 Digital technology transformation

Digital transformation is defined as radical change in utilizing technology with the main purpose of improving organizational output (Winarsih et al., 2021). In general, digital transformation facilitates innovation, creativity and

encourages significant positive change in organizations (Lankshear & Knobel, n.d.). Digital transformation is an effort to accelerate business output by using technology tools and looking at the opportunities that can assist businesses when they are forced to shift due to changing times and unforeseen circumstances (Winarsih et al., 2021).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

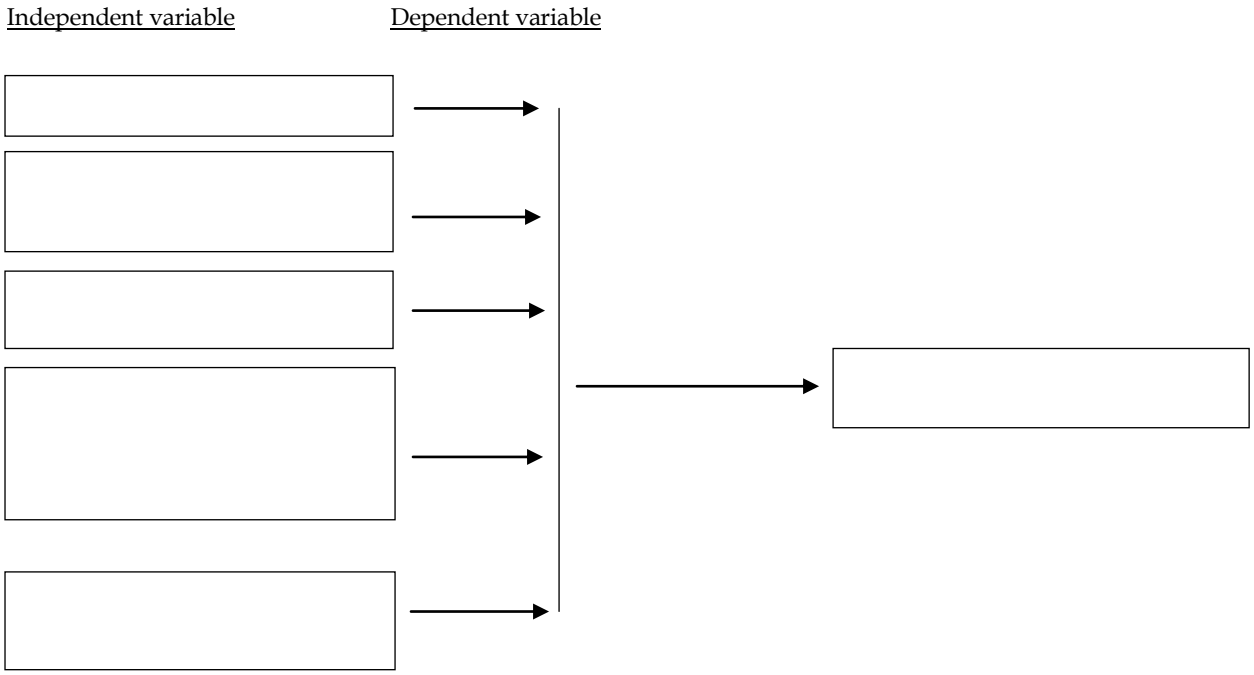

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researchers' own work

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was anchored on Positivism. In this study, it was felt that the best way to understand the effects of COVID-19 on productivity was to subject the respondents to objective questions requiring objective data which could be quantified and verified with exactness. This study chose positivism, whose cradle is natural sciences or scientific research, and is underpinned by the belief that reality is singular, objective, and external to the researcher (Collis and Hussey, 2009). In addition, the study chose positivism because positivists are of the opinion that the only phenomena that are observable and measurable can be validly regarded as knowledge and truth, all others could be speculations or mere perceptions that cannot withstand the test of time. The qualities of positivism which include precision, objectivity and rigour instead of subjectivity and intuitive interpretation made it unavoidable to adopt this approach. The use of large samples, hypothesis testing and production of precise, objective, quantitative data are the trademarks of positivism. This justifies why Positivism was chosen for the study ahead of Interpretivism and Pragmatism. In other words, the study believed that knowledge can be viewed, collected, analysed and interpreted quantifiably using exactness.

The target population for this study was all the 110 employees of Oshakati Town Council. Oshakati Town Council was preferred for this study because it is one of the organizations that was delivering essential service (portable water, refuse collection, rates collection, health provision etc.) to residents during the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was critical to measure employees' productivity as some health institutions like hospitals depended on council to provide them with above services for them to remain functional.

A sample refers to a smaller, manageable set of a larger group containing the uniform characteristics or features of a larger population(Bhalerao & Kadam, 2010). Samples are used in statistical analysis when population sizes are too large for the study to include all possible members or units. A sample should be a representative of the whole population as a whole and not lean toward a specific attribute.

According to the Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size calculator, a population of 110 should have a sample size of 86. However, since the population of this study was small and manageable, the study opted to survey the entire population. Israel (1992) asserts that a census sampling is suitable for small populations of 200 units or less and it eliminates sampling error since it provides data on all units of the population.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Socio Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents comprised all 110 employees of Oshakati Town Council. Out of the 110 issued questionnaires, 94 questionnaires representing 85.45% of the questionnaires distributed were returned fully completed.

Table 1:Gender of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	53	56.4	56.4	56.4
	Female	41	43.6	43.6	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that 53 participants in the study were males, while 41 were females. While the National Planning Commission(2016) advocates for a 50-50 gender representation in all organizations in Namibia, this study noted that there is no gender parity at Oshakati Town Council. Notwithstanding, the gender imbalance of respondents, this was a true reflection of the gender ratios on the ground, a thing which helps the results of this study to be reliable and valid.

Table 2:Age of the participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25 Years	16	17.0	17.0	17.0
	26-40 Years	48	51.1	51.1	68.1
	41-60 Years	30	31.9	31.9	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 16 participants in the studyaged were between 18 and 25, 48 were aged between 26 and 40, and 30 participants were between 41 and 60 years. The ages of the participants in the study were normally distributed.

Table 3: Education level of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Grade 12	18	19.1	19.1	19.1
	Grade 12	12	12.8	12.8	31.9
	Diploma	28	29.8	29.8	61.7
	1st Degree	28	29.8	29.8	91.5
	Post Graduate	8	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 above shows that 18 participants had not attained grade 12, 12 had grade 12, 28 had diplomas, 28 had first degrees, eight had post graduate degrees. These findings show that the majority of the participants in the study had a minimum educational attainment of grade 12, as such they could understand the modalities of what was being studied.

Table 4:Job category of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Labourer/Cleaner	17	18.1	18.1	18.1
	Administrative	29	30.9	30.9	48.9
	Specialist	15	16.0	16.0	64.9
	Supervisor	22	23.4	23.4	88.3
	Manager	8	8.5	8.5	96.8
	Executive member	3	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 4shows that 17 participants in the study were labourer grade, 29 were administrative level, 15 were specialists, 22 were supervisors, eight were managers, and three were members of the executive. This shows that the participants in the study were a true representative of the various organizational roles at Oshakati Town Council.

4.2 Level of employee performance during the COVID 19 pandemic at Oshakati Town Council

The responses below were grouped according to Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). During analysis of the responses, Agree and Strongly Agree were grouped into one category called AGREE, and Strongly Disagree and Disagree were grouped into another category called DISAGREE.

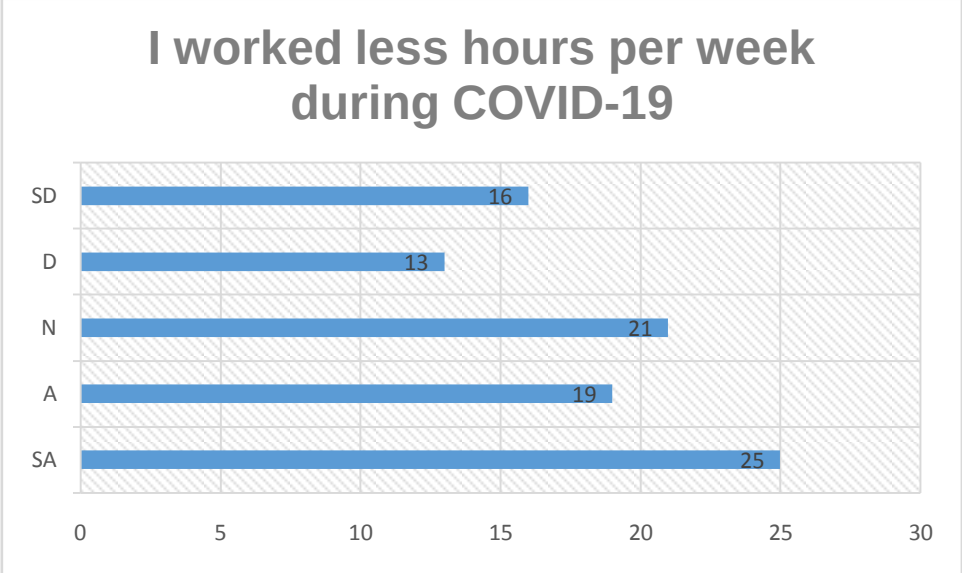

Figure 1:I worked less hours per week during COVID-19

Figure 1shows that 44 participants in the study agreed that they worked less hours per week during COVID-19 pandemic. 21 were neutral, 29 disagreed. It can be concluded from the data collected that employees at Oshakati agree that they worked less hours during the COVID -19 pandemic.

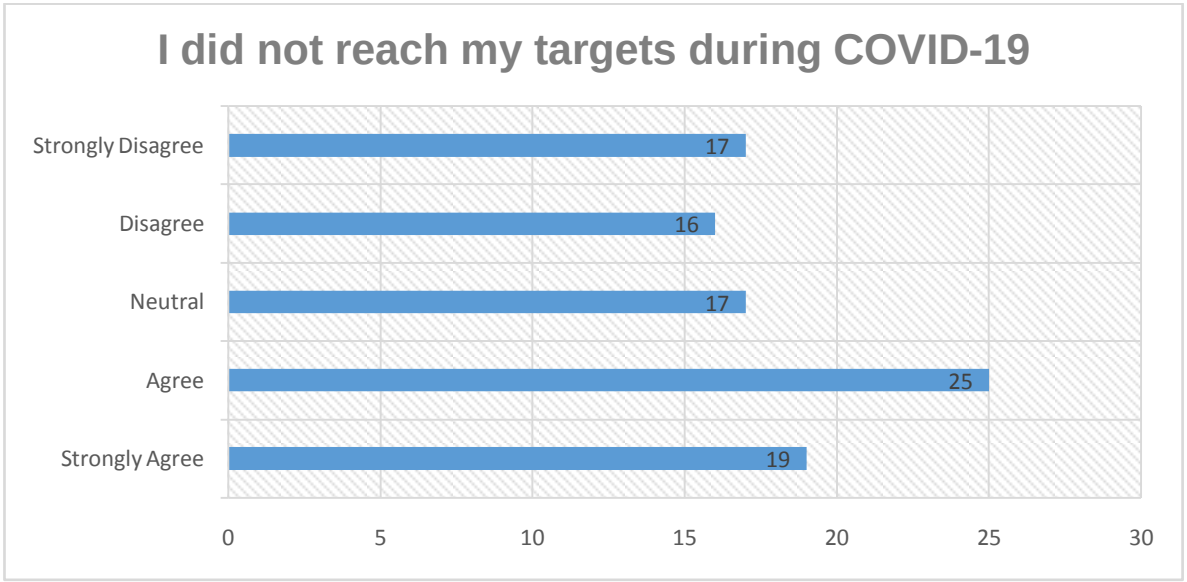

Figure 2:I did not reach my targets during COVID-19

Figure 2shows that 44 respondents agreed that they did not reach their targets during COVID-19, while 33 disagreed with the statement. Thus more employees agreed that they did not reach their work targets during the COVID-19 pandemic.

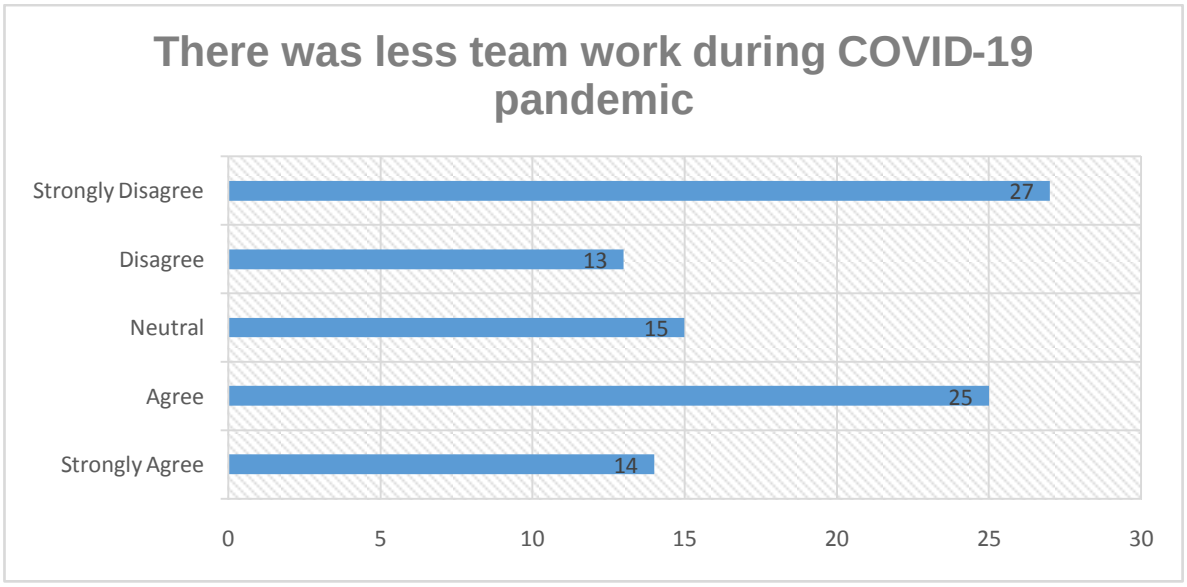

Figure 3:There was less team work during COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 3shows that 39 respondents affirm that there was less team work during the COVID-19 pandemic while 40 disagreed.There was a close tally among those who agreed and those who disagreed that there was less team work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

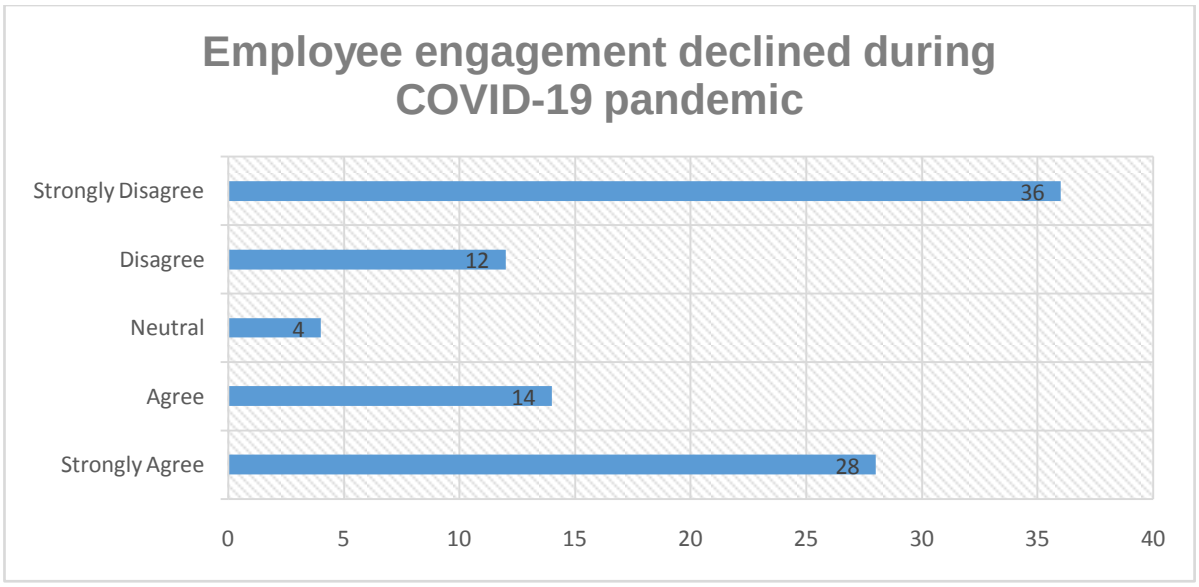

Figure 4:Employee engagement declined during COVID-19 pandemic

Figure4 shows that 42 participants in the study agreed that employee engagement (organisational commitment) declined during COVID-19 pandemic while 48disagreed with the statement. It can therefore be concluded that employees' organisational commitment was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

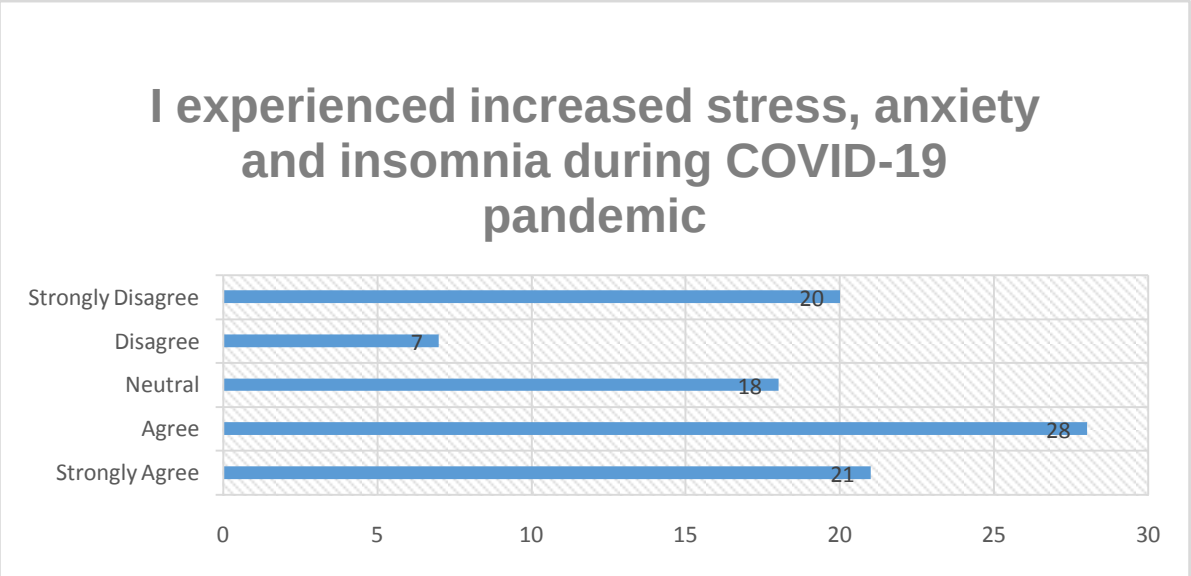

Figure 5:I experienced increased stress, anxiety and insomnia during COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 5shows that 49 respondents agreed that they experienced stress, anxiety and insomnia during the COVID-19 pandemic. 27 respondents disagreed with the statement. It is clear therefore that COVID-19 caused stress, anxiety and insomnia among employees at Oshakati Town Council.

4.3 There was increased absenteeism of employees

52 respondents agreed that there was increased absenteeism during the COVID-19 pandemic while 26 disagreed. Indeed it was affirmed that the COVID-19 caused an increase in absenteeism.

4.4 Our customers/clients decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic

62 respondents agreed that the pandemic caused a reduction to customers/ clients. This was the majority figure.

Table 5: Employee performance rating

Score total		Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	7-14	Good	33	35.1	35.1	35.1
	15-20	Average	15	16.0	16.0	51.1
	21-35	Poor	46	48.9	48.9	100.0
	Total		94	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 above shows the participants ratings on performance levels. 35 rated their performance as good, 15 as average while 46 rated their performance during the pandemic as poor.These findings concur with the findings by Saleem et al. (2021)and UNICEF (2021) who studied performance in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic because anecdotal evidence from Namibia suggests that some learners may have missed more than 7 cumulative months of teaching and learning (Chirimbana, et al., 2021).

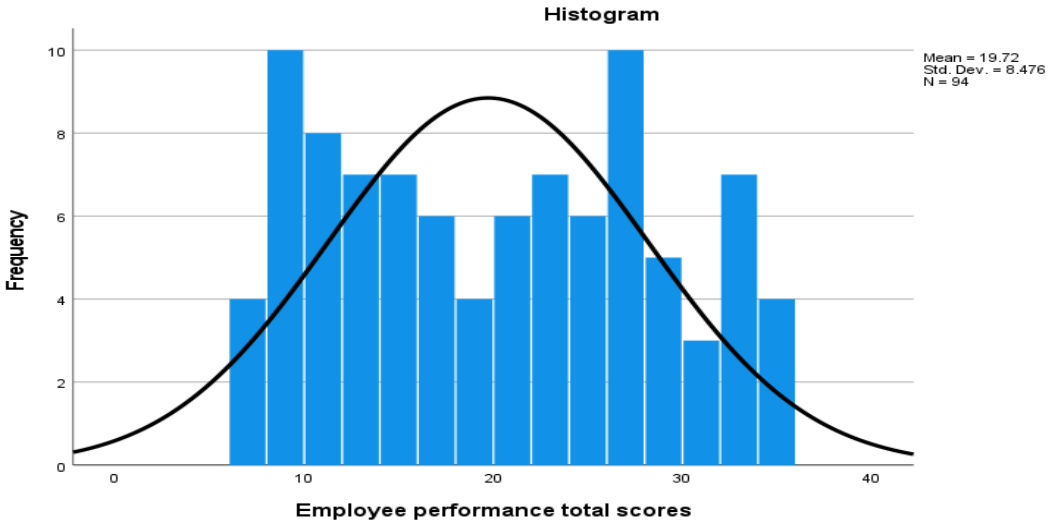

Figure 6: Distribution of employee performance total scores

The graph above shows the distribution of the employees' total performance scores. The figure shows that the total score almost follows a normal distribution curve with a slight skewness to the right.

Table 6: Employee performance score descriptive by gender

Group Statistics

	Gender of Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Employee performance total scores	Male	53	19.58	8.125	1.116
	Female	41	19.90	9.008	1.407

Table 6 above shows that male mean score was 19.58 with a standard deviation of 8.125 while female mean score was 19.90 with a standard deviation of 9.008. These scores show that the male score was slightly higher than that of females.

The table above also shows that the P-value of the T-test is 0.380 between males and females. The p-value(0.380) >0.05 which is not significant. This finding shows that the performance score for males and females were the same during the COVID -19 pandemic at Oshakati Town Council.

Table 7: Employee performance score descriptive by age

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
18-25 Years	16	19.44	8.205	2.051	15.07	23.81	7	35
26-40 Years	48	19.58	8.412	1.214	17.14	22.03	7	34
41-60 Years	30	20.10	8.980	1.640	16.75	23.45	8	35
Total	94	19.72	8.476	.874	17.99	21.46	7	35

Table 7 shows employees' performance score by age. The table reveals that a performance mean score of 19.44 was attained by the participants whose ages were 18-25 years, while those whose ages were 26-40 had a performance mean score or 19.58 average. Those whose ages were 41-60 had a mean score of 20.10. The table below shows the ANOVA table to test if there were differences in these performance score levels.

Table 8:ANOVA on the employee performance levels by years of experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.504	2	3.252	.044	.957
Within Groups	6674.304	91	73.344		
Total	6680.809	93			

Table 8 above shows that the P-value of 0.044 was obtained and this was less than 0.05 which shows that there was a significant difference in the performance mean scores by age among the Oshakati Town Council employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. These differences could be attributed to the fact that the way COVID- 19 affected employees depended on their ages according to Saleem et al. (2021).The study undertook a Post Hoc test to see whether the difference is on the performance of the employees by years of experience. The table below shows the outcome of the Post Hoc Test.

Table 9:Multiple Comparisons on employee performance total scores by years of experiencePost Hoc

	(I) Employment Length	(J) Employment Length	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	6.112*	2.121	.025	.56	11.66
		11-15 Years	1.286	2.524	.957	-5.32	7.89
		Above 15 Years	-.781	2.460	.989	-7.22	5.66
	6-10 Years	1-5 Years	-6.112*	2.121	.025	-11.66	-.56
		11-15 Years	-4.826	2.772	.309	-12.08	2.43
		Above 15 Years	-6.893	2.714	.061	-14.00	.21
	11-15 Years	1-5 Years	-1.286	2.524	.957	-7.89	5.32
		6-10 Years	4.826	2.772	.309	-2.43	12.08
		Above 15 Years	-2.067	3.039	.904	-10.02	5.89
	Above 15 Years	1-5 Years	.781	2.460	.989	-5.66	7.22
		6-10 Years	6.893	2.714	.061	-.21	14.00
		11-15 Years	2.067	3.039	.904	-5.89	10.02
Bonferroni	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	6.112*	2.121	.030	.39	11.83
		11-15 Years	1.286	2.524	1.000	-5.52	8.09
		Above 15 Years	-.781	2.460	1.000	-7.42	5.86
	6-10 Years	1-5 Years	-6.112*	2.121	.030	-11.83	-.39
		11-15 Years	-4.826	2.772	.511	-12.30	2.65
		Above 15 Years	-6.893	2.714	.077	-14.21	.43
	11-15 Years	1-5 Years	-1.286	2.524	1.000	-8.09	5.52
		6-10 Years	4.826	2.772	.511	-2.65	12.30
		Above 15 Years	-2.067	3.039	1.000	-10.27	6.13
	Above 15 Years	1-5 Years	.781	2.460	1.000	-5.86	7.42
		6-10 Years	6.893	2.714	.077	-.43	14.21
		11-15 Years	2.067	3.039	1.000	-6.13	10.27

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9 above shows that the differences in employee performance by years of experience was found at those with 6-10 years of experience and 1-5 years of experience where a p-value of 0.03 <0.05 was obtained.

Table 50:Descriptive for Employee performance total scores by educational level

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Below Grade 12	18	20.39	8.651	2.039	16.09	24.69	7	35
Grade 12	12	19.33	9.326	2.692	13.41	25.26	8	34
Diploma	28	18.82	8.525	1.611	15.52	22.13	7	33
1st Degree	28	19.18	8.201	1.550	16.00	22.36	7	35
Post Graduate	8	23.88	8.408	2.973	16.85	30.90	10	34
Total	94	19.72	8.476	.874	17.99	21.46	7	35

Table 10 above shows the descriptive statistics for the performance levels of the participants by qualification. The mean score reveal that those with qualifications less than grade 12 had 20.39, while those at grade 12 had 19.33, those with diplomas had 18.82, those with first degree had 19.18, and finally those with post graduate qualifications had a score of 23.88. The table below shows the ANOVA table on these results

Table 11:ANOVA on employee performance total scores by educational level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	178.775	4	44.694	.612	.655
Within Groups	6502.034	89	73.057		
Total	6680.809	93			

Table 11 above shows that the P-value of 0.655 was obtained and this value is above 0.05 which shows that the performance scores by qualification were not significant.

Table 12: Descriptive for Employee performance total scores by specialization

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Laborer/Cleaner	17	19.94	9.263	2.247	15.18	24.70	7	35
Administrative	29	18.76	8.047	1.494	15.70	21.82	8	35
Specialist	15	22.13	6.717	1.734	18.41	25.85	9	34
Supervisor	22	18.45	9.112	1.943	14.41	22.49	7	32
Manager	8	21.88	9.568	3.383	13.88	29.87	7	34
Executive member	3	19.33	12.055	6.960	-10.61	49.28	8	32
Total	94	19.72	8.476	.874	17.99	21.46	7	35

Table 12 above shows employees' performance score by areas of specialization. The table shows that the performance mean score level for the laborers was 19.94 with a standard deviation of 9.263, the one for the administrators was 18.76 with a standard deviation of 8.047, specialists 22.13 with a standard deviation of 6.717, supervisors 18.45 with a standard deviation of 9.112, Managers 21.88 with a standard deviation of 9.568, Executive members 19.33 with a standard deviation of 12.055. After the presentation of the above descriptive statistics, the study undertook an ANOVA test to see

if there were a significant differences among employees' performance scores by employment role. The table below shows the ANOVA results.

Table 13: ANOVA for Employee performance total scores by educational level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	187.827	5	37.565	.509	.769
Within Groups	6492.981	88	73.784		
Total	6680.809	93			

Table 13 shows a P-value of 0.767 which is not significant at 0.05. These findings reveal that there was no difference in the performance scores by employment roles. This means the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employees uniformly without regard of employment roles.

4.5How the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on employee productivity at Oshakati Town Council

Table 14: Hearing that some of my workmates were infected or succumbed to COVID-19 made me work with fear

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	12	12.8	12.8	12.8
	A	64	68.1	68.1	80.9
	N	18	19.1	19.1	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 above shows that 76 respondents (80.9%) indeed worked with fear after hearing of workmates who had been infected or succumbed to COVID-19. Anxiety affects people's memory and ability to concentrate(Pappa et al., 2020). Stressful, fear-inducing situations can impact the workplace through absenteeism, reduced performance and possible safety concerns (Labrague & De los Santos, 2020).

Table 15: The change in my working norms affected my work performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	11	11.7	11.7	11.7
	A	6	6.4	6.4	18.1
	N	22	23.4	23.4	41.5
	D	42	44.7	44.7	86.2
	SD	13	13.8	13.8	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Table 15shows that employees' performance was not affected by the change in the working norms. These findings contradict with a study by the American Psychological Association (2021) which stressed the importance of five types of behavior that influence productivity: interpersonal skills, drive, dependability, cooperation, and change of working environment. These behaviors may affect the quantity and quality of work from an employee.

4.6 Less supervision from my supervisors affected my work performance

72 respondents (76.6%) agreed that less supervision from supervisors negatively affected work performance.

4.7 Working in an isolated environment affected my work performance

53.2% of the respondents affirmed that working in isolated environments affected their performance. These findings corroborate with the findings byWang et al. (2021) who stated that chronic social isolation increases the risk of mental health issues like depression, anxiety and substance abuse, and gave rise to chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. It also raises the risk of dementia in older adults. On this issue, Tyrrell & Williams,

(2020)also argue that people who experience solitary confinement are more likely to develop anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and psychosis.

Table 16: Performing other household chores while working from home affected my work performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	12	12.8	12.8	12.8
	A	58	61.7	61.7	74.5
	N	8	8.5	8.5	83.0
	D	7	7.4	7.4	90.4
	SD	9	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	100.0	

70 respondents (74.5%) agreed that performing other household chores while working from home affected their work performance. These findings are in harmony with the findings byVyas & Butakhieo, (2021)who indicated that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in changes to the working arrangements of millions of employees who are now based at home and may continue to work from home, in some capacity for the foreseeable future.

4.8The Oshakati Town Council's profit and revenue decreased during COVID-19 pandemic

78 respondents (83%) acknowledged that Oshakati Town Council's profit and revenue decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings confirm earlier findings byShen et al (2020)who stated that the pandemic negatively impacted revenues of many organizations especially the ones operating in the tourism sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an economic crisis with far-reaching effects throughout the entire world.

4.9 I was worried the virus may infect me and my family members

During the COVID-19 pandemic all the 94 respondents (100%) were worried that the virus would infect them.

4.10: The challenges affecting local authorities' employee productivity during COVID-19 pandemic at Oshakati Town Council

4.10.1: had a furnished, comfortable home office

Only 10% of employees affirmed that they had a furnished and comfortable home office during the pandemic.
This means that a majority did not have a good working environment. This affects production.
These findings validate the findings of Thorbecke (2020) who indicated that a good sitting posture allows employees to perform daily tasks without strain.

4.10.2: I had necessary equipment/tolls needed to WFH

Only 22% of the employees had necessary equipment. This also affected performance because the majority did not have the necessary equipment. COVID-19 struck the world when employers were least prepared and that is why employees were required to work without adequate equipment.

Table 17: The home office had good lighting, temperature, ventilation and air circulation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
	A	6	6.4	6.4	9.6
	N	13	13.8	13.8	23.4
	D	40	42.6	42.6	66.0
	SD	32	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	**94**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 17above shows that only 9.6% of the respondents had home offices with good lighting, temperature, ventilation and air circulation, while the majority had poor home offices. These findings support the findings bySoriano et al. (n.d.) who stated that good temperaturesin an industrial or office setting and proper lighting makes all work tasks easier.

Table 29: When WFH, there was multi-tasking between work tasks and household chores like childcare, cooking, cleaning, during working hours

83% of respondents confirmed that they were required to multi-task while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected production. This indicates that employees were more involved in household chores such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, during working hours. Feng & Savani, (2020) postulate that combining household and official tasks decreases official work productivity of employees when WFH.

Table 18: There were frequent long breaks, midday naps and surfing social medias when WFH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	28	29.8	29.8	29.8
	A	45	47.9	47.9	77.7
	N	13	13.8	13.8	91.5
	D	6	6.4	6.4	97.9
	SD	2	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	**94**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 18 above shows that after combining SA and A, 73 respondents (77.7%) agreed that they had frequent long breaks, midday naps and times for surfing social media during working hours when WFH. Obviously this affected production.The statistics proved that more official working time was being lost, resulting in reduced productivity of employees.

Table 19: The closure of schools and daycare centres resulted in my workload burden when WFH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	34	36.2	36.2	36.2
	A	38	40.4	40.4	76.6
	N	12	12.8	12.8	89.4
	D	9	9.6	9.6	98.9
	SD	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	**94**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 19 above shows that 72 respondents (76.6%) agreed that the closure of schools and daycare centres shifted the burden to them thereby detracting them from concentrating on work/ production. An excessive workload with long hours tops the list of leading stressors(Thorbecke, 2020). Workload and job stress lead to burnout which the World Health Organization describes as a form of chronic work stress that depletes energy and diminishes efficacy. Excessive workload can also increase the risk of other workplace problems, such as increased absenteeism, higher employee turnover, employee burnout and disillusionment.

V. SUMMARY FINDINGS

5.1 Summary of findings from literature Review

Literature review revealed that COVID-19 disrupted economies world-wide(Gil-Alana & Monge, 2020; Shen et al., 2020; Thorbecke, 2020). Studies revealed also that COVID-19 created anxiety, depression and stress among employee (Assor et al., 2005; Labrague & De los Santos, 2020; Pappa et al., 2020). COVID-19 made WFH system more popular and that enabled employees to WFH effectively and efficiently but it affected production(Awada et al., 2021; Fassoulis & Alexopoulos, 2015; Moretti et al., 2020). Finally literature review revealed that employee engagement significantly decreased during COVID-19 pandemic (Graves & Karabayeva, 2020; Russo et al., 2021).

5.2 Summary of findings from quantitative data

5.2.1 The study established that employees worked less hours during the COVID -19 pandemic andthey did not reach their expected daily work targets.

5.2.2 There was less teamwork among the employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.3 The findings also revealed that employees who were working in isolation experienced stress, anxiety and insomnia, and these employees also had a decreased performance rating score as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

5.2.4 The study also revealed that the performance of males and females were just the same during the COVID 19 pandemic at Oshakati Town Council as shown by the P-value and the T- tests. The P-valueof (0.380) >0.05 was not significant.

5.2.5 An ANOVA test on the employee performance by age shows that the P-value of 0.044 was obtained and this was less than 0.05 which shows that there was a significant difference in the performance scores by age among the Oshakati Town Council employees during the COVID 19 pandemic. These differences could be attributed to the fact that the way COVID 19 affects employees depends on their ages according to Saleem et al. (2021) who stated that COVID 19 pandemic had greater effects onolder employees whocould have had other underlying conditions.

5.2.6 The study revealed that there was poor revenue collection as a result of cashiers' lack of physical contact with customers.

5.2.7 The study also revealed that employees did not have psychological support from the organizationat Oshakati Town Council during the pandemic.

5.2.8 The study also revealed that financial support was not given to employees such as increased medical aid to help the infected.

5.2.9 The study revealed that employees did not have furnished, comfortable home offices during the time they were WFH and this affected their productivity.

5.2.9.2 The findings also revealed that the home environment for the employees did not have good lighting, ventilation and air circulation.

5.2.10 While working WFH, the participants in the study revealed that there was multi-tasking involving work tasks and household chores like childcare, cooking, cleaning, during working hours and that there were also frequent long breaks, midday naps and surfing social media. This affected production.

5.2.11 Furthermore, the study also revealed that the closure of schools and daycare centers resulted in workload burden being shifted to employees who WFH and such employees experienced burnout, stress, insomnia and headaches as a result of combining household chores and work tasks.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic had significant negative effects on the productivity of employees. The study also concluded that there was poor revenue collection as a result of social distancing regulations. Employees were not given psychological and financial support by the organization and this further affected production. Finally, the study concluded that employeesendured working from home where the environment was not suitable, with no quiet working space, inadequate equipment and no suitably furnished offices. This caused strain on the workers.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 The study recommended that Oshakati Town Council should be ready for eventualities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.4.2 Management should ensure that employees are well supported during the emergence of a pandemic like COVID-19 in order to keep the employees safe at the same time making them as productive as ever

5.4.3 There was need for the Government of Namibia to develop an institute that trains and equips company directors with knowledge onorganizational health and safety measures and procedures to be followed when pandemics arise.

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