

The impact of the sense of security in young employees on job satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic



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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to contribute to positive organizational behavior by investigating the sense of security among academic staff and faculty in Egyptian universities in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting their overall attitude towards the organization and job satisfaction. According to the literature, this study hypothesized that there is a relationship between security importance, attitude, and job satisfaction. Thus, a quantitative approach was used to test this assumption. 384 questionnaires were collected and analyzed for this study. The SPSS program version 22 was used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. According to the results, academic staff and faculty were satisfied in their jobs because they believed the university was prepared for any crisis that can take place, including the COVID-19 outbreak. They indicated that if they do not feel secure in their jobs, they would not appreciate their work environment, leading to negative attitudes. When asked what to do in a crisis, they were unaware of procedures. This study offers practical and academic contributions. The empirical evidence adds to the body of literature supporting the relationship between crisis and a sense of security influencing job satisfaction. In addition, this study contributes practically by pointing out the obligation of having crisis management practice in higher education in light of pandemic outbreaks.

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1. Introduction

Perceptions of insecurity have an influence on the labor market because insecurity demonstrates individuals' lack of control or autonomy to manage their environment (Wills-Herrera et al., 2011). Security is, therefore, mandatory in the labor market, and life is unsettled in the absence thereof (Wills, 2014). Various analysts (Cummins et al., 2003a; 2003b) have proposed that security is a principal dimension of subjective wellbeing. However, individuals are usually unprepared and take fewer risk-reducing measures (Botzen et al., 2019).

Maslow (1943) identified security as one of the lower-order needs that have to be fulfilled so that people can satisfy their higher-order needs of self-actualization. It is currently imperative to understand the effects of crisis management on

young employees' feelings of security in the market. At present, competitiveness is the greatest challenge of both the manufacturing and service sectors. Organizations need enhanced methods to communicate their strategies because of the increasing number of firms (Ortiz and Ford, 2009). In their efforts to communicate and implement their strategies, organizations consider human behavior to be their most important source of competitive advantage. While research outcomes may vary in relation to context, most studies have concluded that engaged employees may be an important source of organizational competitiveness (Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

What all countries have in common today are panic and fear. Today, the world is frightened of the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a new virus recently developed in humans, the world's population is totally immune-naïve and, therefore, vulnerable to the virus (Fisher and Heymann, 2020).

The known COVID-19 symptoms are general fatigue, sore throat, fever, dry cough, nasal congestion, sore throat, and diarrhea (Zhou et al., 2020). On February 14th, 2020, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) distributed the initial details of 44,672 confirmed

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cases. Lately, there have been outbreaks all over the world and considerably affected countries like Italy and Iran (Fisher and Heymann, 2020).

As of Feb. 19, 2020, the disease has infected more than 75,000 worldwide, killed 2,014, and provoked more than 50 countries to close their borders to arrivals from China (Gregory, 2020).

With the current event and consequences of this pandemic, it is important to consider the implications of Education: Students and Staff. Many countries, most importantly, China is taking measures to ensure students' well-being in the light of the COVID-19. With their annual college entrance exam taking place in June, the country is unsure whether it will happen or not. The minister of Education in China stated that the ministry would do everything it can to ensure the security and health of the exam takers as well as workers related to the exam (Zhihao, 2020).

In this research, we chose to examine the effects of a sense of security for young employees on Job satisfaction in the light of COVID-19 in Universities in Egypt. Governments are taking different actions to prevent the pandemic, but the situation in Egypt is still unclear at the date of the research. Universities are a highly overcrowded place, and with the population number in Egypt, an pandemic outbreak should be avoided at all costs. Workers and Students fear for their health. As the COVID-19 transmission could occur due to failure infection prevention (Fisher and Heymann, 2020), it is crucial that universities implement infection prevention and control measures in all facilities. Organizations and Universities are taking important measures to ensure the security of their employees. Our objective is to measure the sense of security perceived by employees of Egyptian universities on their job satisfaction. The purpose of the study is to understand how feeling secure is important to university employees and the unknown effects in the recent developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to measure the effects of security feeling on job satisfaction in the educational field in Egypt.

Research has tended to emphasize the lack of employee engagement or the lack of job satisfaction and has neglected to explore the potential positive effects of the sense of security on job satisfaction. In contrast to developing teams that are positively working together to form enhanced strategies in times of crisis, understanding a sense of security may assist in the identification of the positive effects of behavior and attitudes that may improve performance at work. Inspired by the crisis currently facing the Egyptian market, this research examines the impact of a sense of security on job satisfaction in Egyptian universities. Thus, this study contributes to positive organizational behavior by exploring the various mechanisms by which different levels of job satisfaction can be attained. When people feel insecure, they may feel overwhelmed, and experience reduced wellbeing in a way that is similar to what an unemployed person would. Furthermore, research has empirically demonstrated this

relationship. Møller (2005) revealed that in South Africa, worries about personal security had a negative impact on satisfaction with life.

Prior research has shown that preferences for high-risk activities tend to be correlated across multiple domains, including decisions about financial investments, health, job choice, and leisure activities (Nicolaou and Shane, 2019). Accordingly, in this study, we explored the effects of security on job satisfaction in an Egyptian context. This study was aimed at exploring young academic staff and its impact on job satisfaction in Egyptian universities.

1.1. Research objectives

Previous research has focused primarily on the effects of employee engagement and job satisfaction and, in particular, on the negative effects in the workplace such as stress and turnover. Although many scholars have discussed the concept of job satisfaction, inadequate attention has been paid to employees' feeling of security and the extent to which it can be rewarding for job satisfaction and building positive organizational behavior (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Consequently, the aim of this study is to analyze the present sense of security for young academic faculty and staff in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the following research objectives were formulated:

- to identify the reality of the sense of security in Egyptian universities;
- to identify the reality of the sense of security among young employees; to understand the role of the sense of security in enhancing job satisfaction for young employees; and
- to provide suggestions to enhance the sense of security for Egyptian universities under crisis management.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the reality of crisis management in universities in Egypt?

RQ2: What is the reality of young employees' sense of security?

RQ3: What is the role of the sense of security in job satisfaction?

2. Literature review

Currently, the science of crisis management is considered to be important, particularly during evolutions and changes witnessed by institutions. The term crisis management was established in public administration to refer to the role of the state in confronting any unforeseen disasters. Furthermore, it was developed in the science of administration as a characteristic of critical situations known as crisis management (Hamidovic, 2012). Campbell (1999) distinguished between

crisis, catastrophe, and emergency. He defined the crisis as a serious, negative event that has detrimental effects on an organization.

An administrative method is employed to deal with crises using the correct scientific methods of planning, organization, guidance, follow-up, the formation of crisis team members, leadership, communication and information systems, and evaluation (Jacobsen, 2010). Mitroff et al. (1992) identified five phases of crisis management: Signal detection, preparation/prevention, containment/damage limitation, recovery, and learning. Many organizations, after having successfully managed a crisis, have slipped into a state of euphoria in the belief that they have the expertise to overcome any future crises. However, other organizations, after having barely survived a crisis, may find themselves too exhausted to devote their depleted energies to revisiting the crisis and sorting out the lessons to be learned (Jacobsen, 2010).

Mazzei and Ravazzani (2011) revealed that the most important requirement for crisis management is an effective internal communication system in the organization during the crisis. However, misunderstandings between the entire staff and the department that wants to communicate a message often result. Consequently, the objective of this study was to investigate the terms of employee satisfaction during times of unstable market conditions and crisis management.

It is imperative to understand employees' states of mind and their attitudes so as to understand ways in which to influence human behavior to improve overall competitive strategy (Okpu and Kpakol, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic is, by all means, a crisis situation that needs to be handled carefully by organizations and institutions. In all public health situations, rapid data sharing is crucial. The international Health regulation published a report on the 30 January 2020 stating that the Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic emphasized on the importance of constant sharing of full data regarding the virus with the World Health Organization (WHO) (Moorthy et al., 2020). Besides a clear human-to-human transmission in family clusters in China and beyond, there is also transmission from close face-to-face social contact, especially in small enclosed spaces, and transmission from failed infection prevention and control measures in health facilities (Fisher and Heymann, 2020).

According to Zhou et al. (2020), the virus is a descendant from a bat coronavirus. There are many forms of bat coronavirus, but the closest one to the COVID-19 is a virus that originated from the Rhinolophus bat, which is >96% homologous with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus. As for The economic repercussions of the COVID-19, they already are severe. According to research firm Capital Economics, COVID-19 will cost the world economy more than \$280 billion in the first quarter of this

year. China's growth is expected to slow to 4.5% over the same period (Gregory, 2020).

A plethora of research has focused on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Sila and Širok, 2018). Scholars have previously found human behavior, attitudes, and mindsets at work as affecting organizations in various different ways (Loku et al., 2018). The need for security is linked to natural and physiological defenses by virtue of human nature, which is both psychological and physical. Human security is one of the most important necessities of life (Maslow, 1970).

The sense of security can be influenced by situations in individuals' daily lives. These situations may result from the community, individual factors, or general societal insecurities. Feelings of insecurity can also be generated because of political reasons, natural disasters, or basic needs that are not fulfilled (Wills, 2014). Feelings of security may also be viewed as part of a human security concept (Jolly and Ray, 2007). The Commission on Human Security proposes human security as protecting the vital core of all humans' lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment (Ogata and Sen, 2003).

In previous research, the concept of community and social capital has been viewed as part of the sense of security in order to address the lack of control that individuals have over the environment (Wills, 2014). Studies have also revealed that people with larger networks of social contacts have more affective support that could compensate for their feelings of insecurity (Wills-Herrera et al., 2011).

3. Research methodology

The descriptive-analytical method, which studies a phenomenon, explains it and analyzes it, was employed in this study. The study sought to present appropriate proposals, solutions, and recommendations.

A questionnaire was administered to collect data and was distributed among young academic faculty and staff in several universities in Egypt to shed light on the reality of all the variables, namely, crisis management, the sense of security, and job satisfaction. Convenience sampling was employed. The questionnaires were distributed between February and March 2020. It was the development or introduction phase of the pandemic in Egypt. The universities started closing down from the 22nd of March.

Several research limitations related to spatial boundaries were encountered in that the study was only conducted in Egyptian Universities.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between the importance of security and job satisfaction directly and indirectly through attitude toward the university.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the perceived sense of security and job satisfaction directly and indirectly through attitude toward the university.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between attitude toward the university and job satisfaction.

3.1. Research theoretical framework

In this research, we concluded that the requirements of crisis management in Egyptian Universities include being equipped with effective leadership to support the effective implementation of crisis management. A crisis management team should be well-trained to assist employees. In order for staff members to know in advance how they will face a crisis in a timely manner, the type of confrontation required in each situation should be continuously developed and distributed within the team in the university, thereby providing channels of communication in, and outside of, the company to raise awareness and provide assistance if necessary. Employees and Students in universities should feel secure and well protected. Special measures should be taken to protect staff and students from the virus outbreak.

This paper is a quantitative study. It distributed administrated questionnaires to those that work in universities in Egypt's Metropolitan cities. The questionnaire contained five main sections: A section that assessed (1) the employees' perception of safety/security importance, (2) the security in their jobs, (3) their attitude towards the university and, (4) their overall satisfaction level with their workplace. The questionnaire's final section (5) asked about their personal sociodemographic status (gender, income, marital status, children, education level reached, and city of residence).

4. Research analysis

This research is a quantitative study. Questionnaires were distributed to employees of universities in Egypt's metropolitan cities in the time of the beginning of the crisis during the time when the workflow was still regular, and executive

positions were still in the decision making phase. The questionnaire composed of five main sections: assessments of employees' perception of security importance; job security; attitude toward the university; overall satisfaction level with the university; and personal sociodemographic status, including gender, income, marital status, children, education level reached, and city of residence.

Of the 384 questionnaires that were distributed, 248 were returned complete, yielding a response rate of 65%. Bryman (2012) noted that this rate is acceptable in social sciences. The participants displayed a wide variety of sociodemographic traits. The effects of gender and other sociodemographic traits, such as age and income, in risk-taking behavior, are a much-debated topic. The interest in differential risk-taking by different groups can be ascribed to its role as a potential explanation for differences in behavior (Bouchouicha et al., 2019).

SPSS version 20 was employed to conduct the analyses. Reliability analysis was first conducted to check the dependability of the scales that measured the variables. Frequency analysis was employed to count the responses of questions related to the respondents' personal sociodemographic status. The hypotheses were tested by means of correlation analysis. The hypotheses were also assessed by means of multiple regression analysis. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was also conducted to explain the relationships between the variables (Tables 1-6).

Cronbach's alpha was first conducted to check the dependability of the scales that were employed to measure the variables. The scales were taken from prior studies. Thus, the question of whether they were accurate and applicable to this study remained. Consequently, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The results indicated that the scales were reliable. The results of Cronbach's alpha are displayed in Table 6.

Correlation analysis revealed that all the hypotheses were supported. First, there was a relationship between security importance and job satisfaction directly through attitude toward the university.

Table 1: Job

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Academic position	164	66.1	66.1	66.1
	Administrative position	84	33.9	33.9	100.0
	Total	248	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Salary

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BELOW 5,000	30	12.1	12.1	12.1
	5,000-10,000	67	27.0	27.0	39.1
	10,000-20,000	91	36.7	36.7	75.8
	ABOVE 20,000	60	24.2	24.2	100.0
	Total	248	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	156	62.9	62.9	62.9
	Female	92	37.1	37.1	100.0
	Total	248	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Maritals status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	137	55.2	55.2	55.2
	Married	91	36.7	36.7	91.9
	Divorced/ Separated	18	7.3	7.3	99.2
	Widow	2	0.8	0.8	100.0
	Total	248	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: City

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CAIRO	161	64.9	64.9	64.9
	ALEX	75	30.2	30.2	95.2
	OTHER	12	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	248	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Reliability analysis

Variable: Job Satisfaction Reliability Statistics		Variable Security Importance Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.957	3	0.971	7
Variable Attitude Reliability Statistics		Variable: Security Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.961	4	0.962	4

Second, there was a relationship between the perceived sense of security and job satisfaction directly through attitude toward the university. Third, there was a relationship between attitude

toward the university and job satisfaction. The results revealed that the relationships were positive, strong, and significant. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in [Table 7](#)

Table 7: Correlation analysis

		Satisfaction	Security Importance	Security	Attitude
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	0.611**	0.860**	0.881**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	248	248	248	248
Security importance	Pearson Correlation	0.611**	1	0.667**	0.728**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	248	248	248	248
Security	Pearson Correlation	0.860**	0.667**	1	0.888**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	248	248	248	248
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	0.881**	0.728**	0.888**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	248	248	248	248

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to describe the relationships in more detail. An ANOVA test was conducted on the basis of this analysis. The results showed that the overall model of this study was significant. The results of the ANOVA analysis are displayed in [Table 8](#).

Table 8: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	336.743	3	112.248	341.156	0.000 ^b
Residual	80.281	244	0.329		
Total	417.025	247			

a. Dependent variable: satisfaction; b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, security, importance, Security

Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to assess the adjusted R square so as to determine the extent to which the independent variables affected the dependent variable. The results revealed that attitude, security importance, and security have an 80% impact on job satisfaction. The remaining variation is a result of the other variables. The

results of the model summary analysis are displayed in [Table 9](#).

Table 9: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.899 ^a	0.807	0.805	0.57360

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, security importance, Security

Multiple regression analysis was also used to consider the Beta analysis and sig value. On the basis of sig value, all the variables together were found to have an impact on the dependent variable, the perceived job satisfaction of participants. Each hypothesis indicated a sig value of less than 0.05. Finally, when the variables were all exploited and exposed to the dependent variable, each contributed to the dependent variable with different strengths. On the basis of the Beta outcome, the variables with the strongest impact on contribution were found to be attitude, security, and security importance, respectively. The results of the Beta analysis and sig values are presented in [Table 10](#).

Table 10: BETA and the Sig Value outcomes

Model	Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	0.230	0.145		1.588	0.114
Security importance	0.097	0.049	0.081	-1.970	0.000
Security	0.406	0.067	0.373	6.110	0.000
Attitude	0.618	0.068	0.608	9.153	0.000

Dependent variable: Satisfaction

With the research analysis, we hereby answer the research questions exposed earlier in the research:

- What is the reality of crisis management in universities in Egypt? Egyptian universities have raised the state of precautions against the new Coronavirus, through the application of strict mechanisms and decisions of the Council of Ministers on the elimination of meetings and seminars that many students and citizens participate in, as procedures have varied Protection from one university to another. A crisis management committee has been set up to deal with any suspicion of any case over the 24 hours at the ministry of Higher Education. Necessary measures have been taken within colleges and university cities, and the state of maximum vigilance has been raised within the medical administration of the university and university hospitals, and the minister of Higher Education has issued a decision to postpone all activities that involve student crowds where seminars, conferences and major events were canceled. Most universities distributed online a number of reports and publications on the emerging coronavirus to the staff and students, employees were exempted from physical presence; the priority was their safety. All classes were conducted online using video conferences, and all exams were changed into projects or assignments.
- What is the reality of young employees' sense of security? The sense of security has become very important in young employees. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and more generally in times of crisis, a sense of security is highly important. In a field like higher education, in times of crisis, a sense of security is particularly significant due to the high exposure of staff.
- What is the role of the sense of security in job satisfaction? Job satisfaction is a common topic in organizational behavior research. Our research indicates that a sense of security directly influences job satisfaction in higher education employees. The results revealed that the relationships were positive, strong, and significant.

5. Conclusion

The model of job satisfaction that is proposed in this study builds on previous theories of employee engagement and job satisfaction. Scholars have previously noted that the roles of different organizational factors, the importance of attitude toward the company; the importance of feeling safe;

and the relationship between crisis management and employee behavior have a direct influence on job satisfaction.

Researchers have also investigated the structure and dimensions of crisis management and their effect on the company in general. Consequently, we consider that the most important contribution of this study is that it draws together these previously unrelated studies and demonstrates the manner in which they provide the foundation for a theoretical model of security importance, employee security, and job satisfaction that complete previous models.

The proposed theoretical model argues for changes in the manner in which management researchers should theorize security feeling and job satisfaction. Previous work has been criticized for positing associations among variables without presenting adequate causal mechanisms. In response, this study attempts to enhance theorization on the importance of security for young employees by conceptualizing the determinants of job satisfaction so as to render explicit and testable the underlying mechanisms by which various factors have an impact on job satisfaction. This study measures security feelings among young university employees at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This implies that in the future, scholars who wish to dive deep into the question of whether job satisfaction is influenced by objective or perceived situational characteristics would need to consider (or at least control for) the effects of security importance and security feeling, which has not been measured by most past studies.

One of the reasons for formalizing the proposed theory in the form of a causal model was to facilitate cumulative empirical research in this area. In part, this was in response to the observation that although a great deal has been learned within relatively narrow, specialized subareas of human resources and organizational behavior, there has been relatively scant integration of the concept of employee security.

As noted previously, all the hypotheses of this study were supported. The ideas proposed in this article are directed at providing preliminary evidence of the value of cross-specialty research. Furthermore, it is hoped that this framework would stimulate further research on this analysis. A sizable body of prior theoretical and empirical research appears to support the primary influence of security on job satisfaction. However, the reconceptualization presented in this study suggests that earlier works can be complemented by theories that consider security importance. By providing new variables as

determinants of job satisfaction, this study not only draws together and challenges the conclusions of a number of theories that have not previously been compared but also highlights opportunities for future theoretical and empirical work by highlighting new relationships.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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