

Impact of Covid-19 on Employees Retention in Hotels and Travel Agencies in Egypt

Ghada M. El-Emam

Tourism Department

Cairo Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotels

Nancy J. Kamel

Hospitality Department

Abstract

Covid19 has generated significant consequences affecting almost all aspects of life around the globe as a result of its rapid spread. One of the most negatively affected industries is the tourism industry. Some studies have explored COVID-19 impacts on employees in tourism and hospitality sector. This research aims to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on employees retention in hotels and travel agencies in Egypt. For this purpose, a self-administered questionnaire was used with a random sample of employees in hotels and travel agencies in Greater Cairo. A number of 220 forms were distributed in five star hotels in Greater Cairo, among them 171 forms (77.7%) were completed and valid for analysis. Also, a number of 100 forms were distributed in travel agencies category (A) in Greater Cairo among them 63 forms (63%) were completed and valid for analysis. The research hypotheses were tested through multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 25). The initial results show that Covid-19 negatively affected employee retention.

Key words: Covid-19, employee retention, hospitality industry, travel agencies.

Introduction

The tourism industry is considered one of the most important economic activities in the world. (Sawant *et al.*, 2020). It is considered a labor –intensive sector (ECES, 2020), as it provides job opportunities and prosperity around the world. It is one of the largest service industries that attract international trade. (Sawant *et al.*, 2020). According to the report of the World Travel and Tourism Council in 2019, the tourism industry provided about 319 million jobs, equivalent to 10% of the total jobs globally in 2018, it also accounted for 10.4% of the global GDP. (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020).

Travel and tourism industry includes many subsectors such as: hotels, airlines, tour-operators, restaurants, travel agencies, cruise companies, car rentals. It provides employment to a great number of persons. The travel and tourism industry is highly dependent on human resources, because tourism is no longer only visiting tourist places, but rather the service that the tourist receives at the tourist destination (Sawant *et al.*, 2020)

The most recent pandemic that has changed people's lives is Covid-19. The pandemic has had a strong negative effect on travel and hospitality businesses (Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Ramkissoon, 2020). With enforced restricted mobility and social distancing measures imposed around the world, the pandemic has had a significant detrimental impact on travel and hotel sectors (ILO, 2020).

Many countries have begun to take measures targeting tourism directly, especially in countries where this sector

plays an important role in the national economy, as it is not only contributing to the gross domestic product, but also create millions of jobs. Most of the measures currently in place aim to:

- Providing financial relief and support to small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed workers (preventing bankruptcy, ensuring continuity in the market, and addressing the shortage of liquidity).
- Enhancing job retention and securing job opportunities, given the nature of intensive employment in the tourism sector. (UNWTO, 2020)

This research paper sheds the light on the impact of COVID-19 on employment in the Egyptian tourism sector, as it provides more information about the effect of Covid - 19 on employee retention in travel agencies and hospitality industry.

Literature Review

1- Impact of Covid-19 in hospitality and tourism Industry

COVID-19 continues to have an impact on tourism and hospitality, according to the media and academic publications (Deb & Nafi, 2020), Job losses have been reported in several of the major hotel chains, such as Marriott and Hilton (USAToday, 2020), as well as airlines (e.g., British Airways, Qantas). The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global hotel business (Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Majeed and Ramkissoon, 2020). Covid-19 has caused economic and labour issues in hospitality industry.

Travel and transportation are essential elements of hospitality, particularly in areas that rely heavily on international tourists. As a result, flight cancellations were common (Tams, 2020). COVID-19 has a significant impact on foreign airline flights and the travel business, as evidenced by a variety of international destinations. Egypt's Government has planned to suspend all air flights to and from Egypt for two weeks beginning March 19, 2020. This period has been extended until April 23rd of the same year. In a similar vein, all Nile cruises were halted as a preventative measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

One of the industries that has been harmed by Covid-19 is the hospitality industry. It has been struck the most because of fears of spreading to huge groups of people travelling together. The news has been filled with postponements and cancellations of events, conferences, conventions, and sports leagues, all of which are driving down business and leisure travel and tourism (Combs, 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 issue completely impacted the tourism business by cancelling mass trips, postponing national and international flights, and delaying events, according to (Gopalakrishnan *et al.*, 2020; Nishiura, *et al.*, 2020). The Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the hospitality industry and its employees around the world. It has resulted in a volatile and fast changing work environment for hotel employees. It has had a greater impact on the hospitality business than 9/11, SARS, and the 2008 financial crisis. Government mandates to "remain at home" and "social separation" have resulted in the partial or even permanent closure of hotels and travel firms in several nations. As a

result, the majority of employees were unable to keep their positions (Eliot, 2020).

The tourism sector, which is a major source of revenue for many African countries, are severely harmed as a result of most countries' border closures and travel restrictions. It should be noticed that air transport provides around \$ 55.8 billion to Africa's economy, supports 6.2 million employments, and accounts for 2.6 percent of GDP. Ethiopian Airlines, Egyptian Airlines, Kenya Airways, and South African Airways are among the African airlines that have been affected. The majority of aviation employees have been unable to keep their jobs (AU, 2020). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the COVID-19 pandemic might result in the loss of 50 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry worldwide. In 2020, approximately 5 million domestic journeys are cancelled all around the world (Tourism Economics, 2020). Furthermore, companies cut employee compensation, lay off workers, and established work-from-home policies (Jasmine, 2019).

2- Impact of Covid -19 on Egyptian Tourism

Since the outbreak of the virus in Egypt in March 2020, the Egyptian Government has taken several measures to reduce the spread of the virus, as airports and all travel outlets have been closed, followed by the closure of all shops, commercial centers, cinemas, tourist areas and some hotels in which certain cases have been discovered. Reservations with travel agencies were also canceled, and therefore those

companies refunded the reservation deposits to the customers, all of which led to the interruption of tourism activity, the loss of many tourism jobs and the spread of unemployment in this vital sector of the state (ECES, 2020).

Some small companies affected by Covid-19 have resorted to layoffs, reducing working hours, and working from home through modern technological devices connected to the Internet (Salem *et al.*, 2021).

According to United Nation World Tourism organization UNWTO (2020) the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities triggered a hotline to get complaints and queries of tourism sector's employees. The Egyptian Cabinet has accepted a draft law "Dealing with the Coronavirus Consequences". The draft law commits the obligation of all tourist establishments and hotels to retain employees; otherwise, no government support or facilities will be provided. The Ministry, in cooperation with the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Tourism and the Chamber of Tourism concerned, will design a capacity building program.

- According to the Official Statistics by CAPMAS, there is about 200 thousand workers in the tourism sector have lost their jobs, as a result of the precautionary measures announced by the State since the beginning of the crisis, by closing various hotels, tourist companies, restaurants, bazaars and cafes. In addition to the thousands who work in tourist

services on daily wages, those are the most affected by the crisis. Moreover, there are about 10,000 tourist guides were affected by the crisis. Now, most of them become without work. Most of the tourist companies' owners are unable to pay the employees' salaries. Most of them have already taken immediate measures since tourism stopped, such as: Reducing the number of workers and resorting to the complete liquidation of large numbers of workers, Unpaid open holidays, Leaves granted to employees are extended and counted from their leave balance (CAPMAS, 2020).

The Egyptian Government has taken several measures to keep the staff of the tourism sector by:

- Offering fiscal incentives to establishments that retain their employees
- Giving training courses to employees affected by leaving their jobs due to the pandemic.
- Working to expedite the procedures for reducing taxes and deductions and others affecting the owners of tourism projects (ECES, 2020).

3-Employee retention

The concept of employee retention first appeared in business in the 1970s. The term "retention" refers to a situation in which employees choose to work and stay with their companies on their own initiative. Retention is a voluntary action taken by an organization to create an environment that keeps employees engaged for a long time (Kibui *et al.*, 2014) Employee retention, according to

Melhem, 2019, refers to strategies and practices that firms utilize to keep valuable people from leaving their jobs. It entails taking steps to persuade staff to stay with the company for as long as possible (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019).

According to Sawant et al. (2020) Employee retention is the organizational goal of keeping talented employees and reducing turnover by fostering a positive work atmosphere to promote engagement, showing appreciation to employees, and providing competitive pay and benefits and healthy work-life balance.

Song et al. (2021) asserted that the fear of the spread of covid infection caused a decrease in the demand for travel as a result of the closure policy and the imposition of mobility ban taken by most countries, which led to a decrease in tourism revenues. Therefore, most travel organizations could no longer continue their work, and consequently, the tourism employment was reduced or laid off. An organization's heart and backbone are its employees. As a result, it is critical to hold the key to employee retention because it keeps the company on course. Nowadays, employee retention has become one of the major concerns because of the impact on the organization. Employee retention is one of the company's cost-cutting strategies. Retaining current staff saves money for the company. It is one of the company's most essential assets (El-Khishin, 2020).

Staff retention is highly important for organizations to avoid the bad effects of losing employees on quality, productivity, and profitability (Noor *et al.*, 2020; Rombaut

& Guerry, 2020). Hedberg and Helnius (2007) indicated that organizations can keep their employees by implementing such retention strategies as fair rewards and benefits, effective communication, and proper work environment.

Furthermore, Choy and Kamoche (2021) indicated that retaining employees is one of the most important priorities of companies, especially those that use labor-intensive to provide services to the public, such as travel agencies. It is necessary to prioritize employees to reduce the turnover rate by specifying the factors that lead to their intention to stay or leave the job.

Travel agencies act as intermediaries between the providers of these services and the consumers. The tour guide and tour escort are considered as a travel advisor in travel agencies. These jobs depend on providing high-quality services, which is a key determinant to purchase all-inclusive package tours (Choy & Kamoche, 2021). According to Lovelock et al. (1998), the cost of hiring and training new employees is much higher than retaining existing employees in terms of experience and knowledge. There are many disadvantages in companies where employee turnover is high such as: Financial losses, loss of customers, poor service ... etc. (Deery & Iverson, 1996; Lam *et al.*, 2001; Sims, 2007, Kim, 2014).

According to Garcia et al. (2015) there is a relationship between employees' job satisfaction and their intention to retain in their jobs. Several surveys were conducted to find out the factors that motivate employees to stay in the job,

and this was a factor in conveying programs to retain employees and retain the workforce with experience and efficiency in the performance of work within the organization.

According to Radwan (2017), the tourism and hospitality industry in Egypt saw a demand decline as a result of the Arab Spring and political upheaval in 2011, lowering staff wages. In addition, hotels engaged in labor practices such as lowering employee wages and pay rates, requiring employees to take mandatory vacations, reducing staffing, requiring permanent employees to perform additional duties, replacing permanent employees with part-time employees, communicating regularly with all personnel, and training and developing employees during a crisis. Vardarler (2016), on the other hand, suggested changing compensation, reorganizing hours of work, and foregoing bonus and reward payments to prevent firing staff during a crisis. Several small firms affected by COVID-19 have chosen to lay off employees, (Bartik *et al.*, 2020).

Egypt has been taking steady steps towards many reforms as a result of the economic reform program that it has adopted since 2016. Egypt achieved an economic growth of 5% between 2018/2019, as the tourism sector recorded its highest revenues in those years. However, the spread of the epidemic worldwide has halted this progress, in addition to the restrictions taken by the countries of the world, which negatively affected the reduction of tourism to Egypt (Breisinger *et al.*, 2020).

According to Abbas (2021), before the Corona epidemic crisis, the tourism sector in Egypt achieved remarkable growth, as a result of the security and political stability, the stability of the exchange rate, infrastructure development projects - in addition to the tourism promotion of Egypt's potential. That is why the number of incoming tourists reached 13 million, and the number of tourist nights reached 136.2 thousand night tours in 2019.

4-Factors Affecting Employee Retention

A- Organizational Support

Employee engagement and loyalty are influenced by organizational support. (Bhatnagar, 2007). An employee's commitment to his job and company is based on his perception of the organization's support (Mitchell *et al.*, 2011). According to a study, there is a negative association between organizational support and turnover, which ultimately leads to job retention. (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002).

B- Supervisor Support

Khan *et al.* (2011) mentioned that if a manager or direct supervisor wishes to keep his or her employees, he or she must be more than a dictator; he must be a mentor, guide, communicator, and grievance handler. The less knowledgeable the boss is, the more pushy he is, the less likely he is to be retained. Managers and supervisors must strive to establish a cooperative relationship with employees

that is amicable and free of pressure. All of these factors play a role in employee retention.

C- External Causes

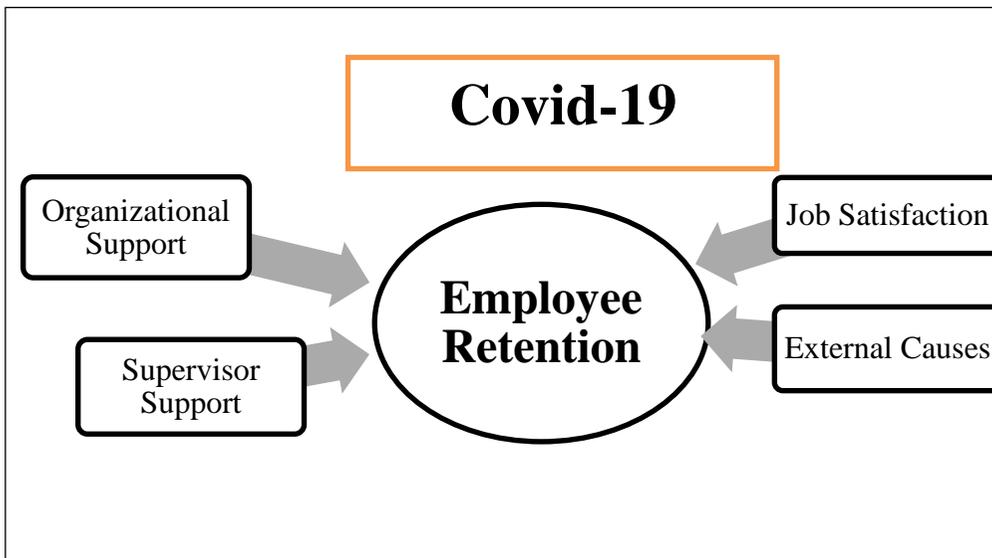
External causes are one of the most important factors affecting business turnover or employee retention. It can be defined as a better work environment to which the company's employees are exposed to from other companies compared to the work environment in their companies. The offers provided by other companies with better conditions may push the employee to leave his current company to join this company, such as the highest wage - the insurance system - bonuses...etc. Therefore, the more the company provides a good working environment compared to its counterparts, the more the company retains its employees (Kim, 2014).

D- Job Satisfaction

To manage employee satisfaction, the company must meet their needs and desires. (Ghiselli *et al.*, 2011). In order to improve employee retention, a satisfaction survey (which includes variables such as compensation, supervision, coworkers, advancement opportunities, and the work itself) is commonly employed. Employees get unhappy when the organization's production falls short of their expectations. Furthermore, personal pleasure, individual sense of accomplishment, and achieving long-term personal goals are all variables that

contribute to employee retention. (Gunl *et al.*, 2010). Supervisory, benefits, job design, and work circumstances are associated to employee happiness and retention, according to a research of focus groups and personal interviews with CNAs (Yih & Htaik, 2011). Another research of hotel employees found a high correlation between satisfaction and retention (Das & Baruah, 2013).

To explore the impact of Covid-19 on employees' retention in hotels and travel agencies in Egypt this paper proposed five hypotheses (see figure1); these hypotheses show the impact of Covid-19 on employees' retention and the relationship between the factors that affecting employee retention (e.g., organizational support, supervisor support,



external causes and job satisfaction) on employee retention.

Figure (1): A conceptual framework of factors affecting
employee retention

Source: The Researchers

- H1: There is a negative and significant relationship between Covid-19 and employee retention
- H2: There is a significant positive relationship between organizational support and employee retention.
- H3: There is a significant positive relationship between supervisor support and employee retention.
- H4: There is a significant positive relationship between external causes and employee retention.
- H5: There is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention.

Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was directed to a selected sample of employees from August 2021 to October 2021. To choose hotels and travel agencies that took part in the field study, a convenience sampling technique was used. Only the five-star hotels and travel agencies category (A) in Greater Cairo were considered. The questionnaire used comprised of two parts. The first part focused on the demographic data, namely gender, age,

educational level, and employment years with the current position. The second part is intended to assess the factors that affecting employee's retention during crisis with his or her current employment (organizational support, supervisor support, external causes and job satisfaction). A five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree" was used to measure employee's retention. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of each part. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for study variables was 0.80, indicating that the study instrument is reliable.

Three academic specialists in the tourism and hospitality area reviewed the questionnaire form's face validity in order to improve its clarity, format, and content. Some statements were reworded, and others were removed, based on the experts' recommendations. A number of 220 forms were distributed in five star hotels in Greater Cairo, among them 171 forms (77.7%) were completed and valid for analysis. Also, a number of 100 forms were distributed in travel agencies in Greater Cairo among them 63 forms (63%) were completed and valid for analysis (See Table 1,2). The descriptive analysis was carried out with the help of A Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25). To illustrate the relationship between the investigated factors that affecting employee's retention during crisis with his or her current employment a Pearson correlation coefficient was adopted.

Table 1: Employees' Response Rate in Hotels

Hotel Code	Distribute	Valid Forms
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	d No.	No.	%
1. H001	22	18	90
2. H002	22	16	73
3. H003	22	17	77
4. H004	22	16	73
5. H005	22	17	77
6. H006	22	15	68
7. H007	22	17	77
8. H008	22	16	73
9. H009	22	19	86
10.H010	22	20	91
Total	220	171	77.7

Table 2: Employees' Response Rate in Travel Agencies

Travel Agency Code	Distribut ed No.	Valid Forms	
		No.	%
1. T001	10	7	70
2. T002	8	6	75
3. T003	10	6	60
4. T004	5	5	100
5. T005	10	5	50
6. T006	10	6	60
7. T007	6	4	66
8. T008	10	6	60
9. T009	10	5	50
10.T010	10	5	50
11.T011	6	6	100

12.T012	5	2	40
Total	100	63	63

The relatively small numbers of respondents in the travel agencies could be attributed to those who were laid off an unpaid open leave or quit were due to low income during the crisis.

Results and discussion

In regards to the demographic data of the investigated respondents, it could be noticed that 67.3% of the investigated employees in hotels were males, while 32.7% were females. In travel agencies, most of the investigated respondents were females with 73 %, while 27 % were males. In terms of age the majority of employees in hotels 55.6% aged from 21 to 30 years. Followed by 23.4% of them 20 years or less. While 21% of the investigated respondents were over 30 years old. In travel agents, the majority of employees were aged from 21 to 30 years 52.4 %, followed by 28.6 % of them 20 years or less. While 19 % of the respondents aged over 30 years.

Table 3: Employees' Demographic Data		Hotels		Travel Agencies	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender	Male	115	67.3	17	27
	Female	56	32.7	46	73
Age	20 years or less	40	23.4	18	28.6

	From 21 to 30 years	95	55.6	33	52.4
	Over than 30 years	36	21	12	19
Educational Level	Secondary School Education	8	4.7	-	-
	Post-secondary	11	6.5	-	-
	University	122	71.3	57	90.5
	Post-graduate	30	17.5	6	9.5
Employment Years with the Current Position	Less than a year	20	11.7	15	23.8
	From 1 to less than 3 years	107	62.5	28	44.4
	From 3 to less than 5 years	35	20.5	9	14.3
	More than 5 years	9	5.3	11	17.5

Concerning the educational level of the investigated respondents, 71.3% of the employees had a university degree. Followed by 17.5% Post-graduate. Only (6.5%-4.7%) of employees were post-secondary and secondary school education. In travel agents, noticed that 90.5% of the employees had a university degree. Followed by 9.5% Post-graduate. With regards to employment in the current position in hotels, the majority of employees ranged from 1 to less than 3 years 62.5%. Followed by 20.5% from 3 to less than 5 years. Only (11.7%-5.3%) of employees were less than a year and more than 5 years. In travel agents, 44.4 % ranged from 1 to less than 3 years, followed by 23.8% less than a year, 17.5 % of employees were more than 5 years while 14.3 from 3 to less than 5 years. (See Table 3)

The descriptive analysis of the factors that affect employee retention during Covid19 crisis shown in Table (4).

The data in Table (4) are discussed as follows:

1. Organizational support in Hotels and Travel Agencies

In terms of organizational support, the mean score for the statement (The company is willing to help its employees) and (The company has the proper environment for me to perform my job to the best of my ability) was the highest on a total scale with a mean score of (3.55) and SD (.738 and .620). Moreover, the other statements were below (3.13). The average mean score of the overall organizational support is (2.77) and SD (0.734). The finding shows that most of the items have a low mean score which mean that the employees were not have organizational support from the investigated hotels during pandemic. This finding disagreed with (Loi et al., 2014) who found that, there is a substantial link between perceived organisational support and employees' willingness to stay with a given company. This result indicates that if employees receiving organizational support from their companies, the employee retention would decrease.

In Travel Agents, the results of the respondents show that they neither agree nor disagree that the company tries to

make their job secure ($M= 2.86$, $SD= .596$). This finding agrees with Pang et al. (2015) who stated that the income of employees in the tourism sector is erratic as a result of the fluctuation of tourist seasons between high and low. As most of the tourism companies' employees rely heavily on commission with low salaries, especially those who have direct dealings with tourists such as tour guides and Tourist group escorts, so the administration must take measures to raise the salaries of employees and reduce the commission, especially in times of crisis. This may be made those employees feel more secure in their jobs. Also, Mao et al. (2020) stressed that employees in tourism companies faced many problems - as a result of the spread of the virus- such as low salaries, layoffs... etc. which caused the spread of anxiety and a feeling of insecurity at work.

The results also show that not all travel agencies have a good system to protect the employees with ($M=2.21$, $SD= .736$). Sawant et al. (2020) affirmed that companies must have employee retention programs and plans to be able to keep and retain their experienced employees such as training - health insurance - internal promotions and performance bonuses, especially during crisis.

Furthermore, the results show the lack of interest to provide opportunities to improve the employees' experience ($M= 3.18$, $SD = .746$). This finding disagrees with Pang et al. (2015), who asserted that providing the employees a training could improve their skills and experience, this may be reduced the turnover intention.

Moreover, Emam et al. (2020) pointed out that the Corona virus affected the fiscal returns of companies, therefore the moral motivation and training had decreased during the crisis period, which affected the retention of employees.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Employee Retention during Crisis

Construct	Measure	Hotels			Travel Agencies		
		Me an	SD	α	Me an	SD	α
Organizational Support	The company tries to make my job as more secure as possible.	2.34	.695	0.78 1	2.86	.596	0.69 3
	The company is willing to help its employees	3.55	.738		3.46	.627	
	The company has a good system to protect its employees.	2.42	.827		2.21	.736	
	The company has the proper environment for me to perform my job to the best of my ability.	3.55	.620		2.88	.731	
	The company is equipped with employee benefit services and facilities	2.65	.736		3.79	.849	
	The company is interested in the health and well-being of its employees.	2.34	.894		2.52	.993	
	The company provides adequate opportunities for me to improve my experience.	2.22	.635		3.18	.746	
	The company is committed to taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety of its employees	3.13	.731		2.12	.843	
Supervisor	My supervisor has the ability to suggest alternative	2.13	.537		3.33	.746	

Support	solutions.			0.86 4			0.73 1
	My supervisor and I have a good relationship.	2.88	.903		2.46	.856	
	My supervisor treats the employees equally.	3.11	.645		3.45	.772	
	My supervisor seems willing to listen to my problems.	3.44	.779		3.41	.762	
	My supervisor has trust in the work that I do.	3.57	.819		3.57	.922	
External Causes	I hear that other Hotels/travel agencies have a better working environment.	4.86	.782	0.79 2	4.96	.988	0.74 1
	I get job offers from other Hotels/travel agencies with a better condition.	4.72	.665		4.27	.716	
	I hear that other Hotels/travel agencies have a better team spirit	4.77	.706		4.82	.691	
Job Satisfaction	Within this company my work gives me satisfaction.	2.15	.827	0.76 6	2.71	.938	0.72 8
	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company.	2.68	.820		2.52	.762	
	I see a future for myself within this company.	2.21	.936		3.11	.947	
	If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next five years.	3.26	.794		3.04	.893	
	The work I'm doing is very important to me.	3.33	.735		3.28	.876	
	I love working for this company.	2.09	.827		2.26	.974	

Moreover, the results point out that a small percentage of the travel agencies only is interested in employees' health ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .993$), in this case, Vardarlier (2016) recommended that tourist establishments, in general, must take precautionary measures, hygiene practices, and medical examination of all employees during periods of crisis related to infectious diseases. This contributes to retaining employees in their jobs for a long time.

In addition to the failure to take precautionary measures to ensure the safety of the employees ($M = 2.12$, $SD = .843$). Emam et al. (2020) affirmed that employees need to learn and apply health awareness procedures and take precautionary measures during epidemic outbreaks. Kim et al. (2005) also stressed that the management of companies need to take preventive plans and to pay attention to educating employees to take preventive and health measures to limit the spread of the epidemic, as the outbreak of epidemics may lead to cases of anxiety and panic among employees, which leads them to leave their jobs.

The above results show that if the tourism companies provide their employee organizational support, the employee retention will increase.

1- Supervisor support during the pandemic in Hotels and Travel Agencies:

Regarding to supervisor support during pandemic the mean score for the statement (My supervisor has trust in the work that I do) was the highest on a total scale with a mean score of (3.57) and SD (.819) followed by (My supervisor seems willing to listen to my problems) with a mean score of (3.44) and SD (.779). The other statements were below (3.44). The average mean score of the overall supervisor support during pandemic is (3.02) and SD (0.736). These findings show that most of the items have a moderate mean score which mean that the support from the supervisors in investigated hotels during pandemic was moderate. These findings disagreed with Khan et al. (2011) as mentioned in the literature review who stated that if a manager or direct supervisor wishes to keep his or her employees, he or she must be more than a dictator; he must be a mentor, guide, communicator, and grievance handler. The more uninformed the boss is, the more pushy he is, the less likely he is to be

retained. Managers and supervisors must strive to establish a cooperative relationship with employees that is amicable and free of pressure. All of these factors play a role in employee retention.

Regarding the supervisor support in travel agencies, the results show that a medium percentage of the respondents believe that the supervisors help their employees in the work problems and suggest alternative solutions ($M= 3.33$, $SD = .746$). This finding agrees with Mao et al. (2020) who declare that upon the spread of the epidemic, some company managers showed responsibility through their dealings with their employees. By providing some support and assistance according to the company's strong capabilities. Especially encouraging employees to face the challenges brought by the epidemic, this led to a positive evaluation of work organizations, in addition to improve recognition of employees and enhance their enjoyment and satisfaction in their workplaces.

Also, not all the employees have a good relationship with the supervisor ($M= 2.46$, $SD= .856$). This finding agrees with Choy and Kamoche (2021), who state that some studies have shown that employee satisfaction with supervisors and co-workers is related to their retaining or quitting work, as good relationships with managers and peers reduce the intention to quit work.

Besides that, the respondents believe that they are not treated equally by their supervisors ($M= 3.45$, $SD = .772$). According to Choy and Kamoche (2021) the uneven distribution of workloads and inequality in dealing with all employees are among the most important reasons for leaving work. In addition, Kovačević et al. (2012) stressed that employee satisfaction with the reward system and their awareness that the company distributes rewards fairly is one of the factors that retain them at work even in difficult circumstances and crises.

The previous results indicate that the supervisor support has impact on the employee retention.

2- External Causes during pandemic in Hotels and Travel Agencies:

In regards to the, external causes during pandemic the mean score for the statement (I hear that other Hotels/travel agencies have a better working environment) was the highest on a total scale with a mean score of (4.86) and SD (.782) followed by (I hear that other Hotels/travel agencies have a better team spirit) with a mean score of (4.77) and SD (.706). Moreover, the mean score for the statement (I get job offers from other Hotels/travel agencies with a better condition) with a mean score of (4.72) and SD (.665). The average mean score of the overall external causes during pandemic is (4.78) and SD (0.717). The finding shows that most of the items have an average mean score which mean that on average, the respondents were felt that other hotels have a better working environment than the hotels they are working in during pandemic. This finding is in line with a prior study, which found a link between external factors and employee retention. The possibility of leaving the existing employer increases if another company offers better terms and employee retention will be favorably related to a favorable opinion of an alternative employment (Ahsana *et al.*,2013).

Concerning External Causes in Travel Agencies, the respondents agreed that the other travel agencies have a better condition (M= 4.96, SD=.988). Also, they confirmed that the other travel agencies have a better team spirit (M= 4.82, SD=.691). These findings agreed with Kim (2014) who stressed that the other companies that have a good work environment motivate their employees to stay and urge the other employees from the other companies to leave their jobs to another one. As for the employees of tourism companies, it is easy for them to know the work environment in other companies as a result of the functional characteristic of the networks. Therefore, managers of tourism companies must provide a good working environment and support the experienced and skilled employees monetarily and morally to retain them, especially in times of crisis. This indicates the strong link between the external causes and the employee retention.

3- Job satisfaction in Hotels and Travel Agencies

The last factor that affecting employee retention during crisis is job satisfaction. The mean score for the statement (The work I'm doing is very important to me) was the highest on a total scale with a mean score of (3.33) and SD (.735) followed by (If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next five years) with a mean score of (3.26) and SD (.794). Moreover, the other statements were below (3.26). The average mean score of the overall job satisfaction during pandemic is (2.62) and SD (0.823). This finding shows that most of the items have a low mean score which mean the respondents were not satisfied with their current job during pandemic and as a result they did not have employee retention as mentioned by Irshad and Afridi (2007) employee retention in the services sector is based on employee satisfaction, as previously stated. Furthermore, work dissatisfaction correlates to low employee retention. (Kossivi *et al.*, 2016).

Regarding job satisfaction in travel agents and employee retention, the results show that the respondents neither agree nor disagree that their work in this company gives them satisfaction (M= 2.71, SD= .938). Moreover, they did not give priority within their company if they have another function (M= 2.52, SD= .762). Furthermore, the results of the respondents show that they are neutral in their love to work for this company (M= 2.26, SD = .974). These findings agree with Ramman (2011) who emphasized that employees do not feel satisfied in their work as a result of several reasons such as the lack of link between promotion and efficiency, lack of linking rewards to productivity in addition to low salary, especially in times of crisis. Furthermore, Kovačević *et al.* (2012) confirmed that the employee's satisfaction affects his behavior at work. The more satisfied employees are in their work, the more loyal they are and the lower the rate of quitting the job.

To compare the strength of association between factors affecting employee retention during crisis a correlation analysis was conducted. The results are shown in Tables (5 and 6).

Table 5: Correlations Analysis (Hotels)

		Organizational Support	Supervisor Support	External Causes	Job Satisfaction
Organizational Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.655**	.739**	0.698**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	0.000	0.000
Supervisor Support	Pearson Correlation	.655**	1	0.698**	0.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		0.000	0.000
External Causes	Pearson Correlation	.739**	0.698**	1	0.812**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0.698**	0.856**	0.812**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

There was a slightly strong positive relation between organizational support and supervisor support $r, .65, n= 171, P. < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Dabke and Patole. (2014) who stated that because a supervisor is a representative of the company, employees who have more supervisor support are more likely to feel higher organizational support. Moreover, there was strong positive relation between organizational support and external causes $r, .73, n= 171, P. < 0.01$. Furthermore, there was a slightly strong positive relation between organizational support and job satisfaction $r, .69, n= 171, P. < 0.01$. These findings agreed with Allen et al. (2003) who has found that employees who believe their company supports them are more likely to be satisfied with their work. According to the findings, perceived organisational support has a significant and beneficial impact on job satisfaction (Maertz *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, there was a slightly strong positive relation between supervisor support and external causes $r, .69, n= 171, P. < 0.01$. In

addition, there was a strong positive relation between supervisor support and job satisfaction $r, .85, n= 171, P. < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Smith and Shields (2013) who discovered that employee job satisfaction is influenced by perceived supervisor support. Moreover, Guchait et al, (2014) found that Employee job satisfaction rises when they have a positive view of their boss's support. Vlachos et al. (2013) extended Smith and Shields finding that there are strong positive connections between perceived supervisor support and employee job satisfaction. Moreover, there was a strong positive relation between external causes and job satisfaction $r, .81, n= 171, P. < 0.01$.

		Organizational Support	Supervisor Support	External Causes	Job Satisfaction
Organizational Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.565**	.519*	0.816**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	0.046	0.000
Supervisor Support	Pearson Correlation	.565**	1	0.698**	0.833**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		0.023	0.000
External Causes	Pearson Correlation	.519*	0.698*	1	0.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.046	0.023		0.000
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0.816**	0.833**	0.826**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

There was a lightly strong positive relationship between organizational support and supervisor support $r, .56, n= 63, P. < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Khalidass and Bahron (2015) as she pointed out that supervisor support and organization support are the backbone of the tourism industry to retain employees and reduce turnover, especially during crises. Supervisors encourage employees to motivate them to commit to work and accordingly organization loyalty. This explains the relationship between the supervisor's support and the organization.

Moreover, there was a moderate positive linear relationship between organizational support and external causes $r, .51, n= 63, P. < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Thasika (2018) who confirmed that there is a relationship between organizational support and external causes that push employees to stay or leave work, such as (supervisor support - justice in treatment - rewards - work atmosphere...etc.) These factors have a significant impact on employee retention especially during crises

Furthermore, there was a strong positive relation between organizational support and job satisfaction $r, .81, n= 63, P. < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Ahmad and Yekta (2010) who explained that organizational support, especially during crises, has a significant impact on job satisfaction. The employees' response to work decisions stimulates their performance and achieves job satisfaction. On the other hand, the employee's dissatisfaction will lead to a decrease in the commitment to work and a large turnover of the organization.

Also, there was a slightly strong positive relation between supervisor support and external causes $r, .69, n= 63, P. < 0.01$. In addition, there was a strong positive relation between supervisor support and job satisfaction $r, .83, n= 63, P. < 0.01$. These findings agreed with Qureshi et al. (2018) who emphasized that a supervisor's support indicates his interest in getting to know employees. The support of the direct supervisor is of great importance in achieving the work objectives. The positive perception of employees regarding supervisor support enhances employee satisfaction.

Moreover, there was a strong positive relation between external causes and job satisfaction $r = .82$, $n = 63$, $P < 0.01$. This finding agreed with Coughlan et al. (2014) who stressed that there are external reasons that lead to job satisfaction, such as support from the supervisor, a good relationship with the supervisor, confidence in the supervisor's decisions, and his fairness in dealing with employees, in addition to some other items such as salaries and bonuses.

Table 7: Standardized parameter estimates of the structural model				
H	Path	Beta coefficients (β)	t-values	Results
H1	Covid-19 employee retention	-.348	-5.23***	Supported
H2	Organizational Support employee retention	.168	3.30**	Supported
H3	Supervisor Support employee retention	.148	3.39***	Supported
H4	External Causes employee retention	.765	18.6***	Supported
H5	Job Satisfaction employee retention	.811	22.5***	Supported

Absolute t-value > 1.96 , $p < 0.05$; **Absolute t-value > 2.58 , $p < 0.01$; ***Absolute t-value > 3.29 , $p < 0.001$.

The hypothesized relationships were tested using standardized path coefficients (β) as shown in Table 7. Overall, the structural model achieved acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 282.74$, $df = 10$, $p < 0.01$, $CFI = 0.827$, $RMSEA = 0.062$) These estimates can be described as positively strong since the 8 majority of Absolute t-value > 3.29 , $p < 0.001$. The findings revealed that Covid-19 had a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.348$; t-value = -5.23) on employee retention, (supported H1). Moreover, organizational Support had a significant positive effect on employee retention ($\beta = .168$; t-value = 3.30), (supported H2). As assumed, supervisor support had a significant positive relation with employee retention, supported H3 ($\beta = 0.148$; t-value = 3.39). On the other hand,

employee retention had a very strong positive relationship with external causes and job satisfaction ($\beta = .76$; t-value = 18.6) and ($\beta = .81$; t-value = 22.5), supported H4 and H5 respectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research aims to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on employees retention in hotels and travel agencies in Egypt. The data has been collected from ten five-star hotels in Greater Cairo and travel agencies in Greater Cairo. The findings report that Covid-19 negatively affects employee retention, Moreover, there was a strong positive relationship between the four factors affecting employee retention during crisis.

Moreover, most of travel agencies and hotels had taken immediate measures since tourism stopped, such as:

- Reducing the number of employees
- Reducing working hours
- Opening unpaid vacations
- Cutting employee compensation.
- Resorting to complete liquidation of large numbers of employees.

Recommendations

1. The management should support employees during the crisis period by creating a healthy work environment.
2. Participating employees in decision-making with the management, this method makes them feel important to the company and increases their sense of responsibility towards their work.
3. Organizing an effective practical training and development activities during crisis to enhance employees' skills and knowledge.
4. Supporting employees to create ideas about processes and procedures.
5. The employee exerts extra effort in his work during crisis, and for this reason it is preferable to obtain a reward, these rewards are a

reasonable percentage of the salary, as it may be a percentage of the company's shares, an in-kind award, or a trip free.

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