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**The impact of the COVID-19 policies on the employee's motivation within the electronic retail market segment.**

João Pedro da Silva Tavares

Master of Science in Human Resources and Organizational Consulting

Supervisor:

PhD Maria Gabriela Matias da Silva, Assistant Professor, Iscte-IUL

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## **Resumo**

Várias foram as medidas adotadas pelas empresas para controlar o agravamento da pandemia COVID-19. Desde medidas de Higienização a medidas de gestão de horários, os colaboradores destes espaços de atendimento ao público, viram-se confrontados com novas rotinas e conseqüentemente novas realidades.

Este estudo procura explorar que tipo de impacto emocional e motivacional foi sentido, por parte dos colaboradores, perante as medidas adotadas por uma empresa de retalho electrónico. A recolha de dados foi efetuada através de um entrevistas, com uma amostra de 9 pessoas entrevistadas.

Todos os inquiridos atendiam às condições de estar em idade ativa e estar atualmente empregados. Com vista à análise dos objetivos traçados, foram criadas as seguintes três perguntas de investigação

- O que motiva os colaboradores durante a pandemia do COVID-19?
- A valorização do trabalho por parte supervisor tem impacto positivo no engajamento do funcionário com a empresa?
- Podia a empresa ter gerido de forma diferente a gestão da a pandemia?

Os resultados foram obtidos através da jução de informação recolhida pelos candidatos e literatura revista.

*Palavras-Chave:* Motivação; Pandemia COVID-19; Retalho; Bem-estar; Espaço de trabalho; Colaborador

*JEL Classification System:* I31 (General Welfare, Well-Being); M54 (Labour Management)



## **Abstract**

Several were the measures adopted by companies to control the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic. From hygiene measures to time management measures, the employees of these public service spaces were faced with new routines and, consequently, new realities.

This study seeks to explore what kind of emotional and motivational impact was felt, by the employees, in view of the measures adopted by an electronic retail company.

Data collection was carried out through interviews, with a sample of 9 people interviewed.

All respondents met the conditions of being of working age and currently employed. In order to analyze the outlined objectives, the following three research questions were created

- What does motivates employees to work at a retail store during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Does the appreciation of the work from the supervisor have a positive impact on the employee's engagement with the company?
- Could the company do differently in the COVID-19 pandemic?

The results obtained were judged from the information collected by the candidates and the reviewed literature.

*Key Words:* Motivation; COVID-19 Pandemic; Retail; Well-Being; Workplace; Employee

*JEL Classification System:* I31 (General Welfare, Well-Being); M54 (Labour Management)





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## **1. Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a mix of new questions, feelings, and routines. It is a reality that this pandemic situation has affected human life around the globe and one of the challenges that this pandemic brought was the emergency on adopting new work policies to stop the virus from being transmitted. New work policies had to be implemented in a record time and in a specific way in all the workplaces. One sector that had to implement these policies was the electronic retail market sector. The constant human physical contact and the human's affluence on these particular spaces areas was one of the main reasons to implement this type of action. But, on the other hand, the employees needed to adapt towards this new routine, to achieve their personal and organizational goals and more important their well-being. However, there is a small understanding on what is the impact of these COVID-19 work policies on the emotional spectrum of the employees, specifically on the employee's motivation. According to Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000), motivation influences certain behavior to achieve a specific goal. Wich is crucial to an organization and the employee, to, achieve their goals. In addition previous research has demonstrated that motivation tends to have a positive correlation with performance (Chaudhary et al, 2012; Afful-broni, 2012). This new reality brought a lot of a lack of understanding and questions that need to be fulfilled.

Hence the purpose of this qualitative research is to study the new work realities, imposed by the COVID-19 policies and explore the lived experiences at the workplace in the electronic retail market sector. Based on the state of the art and the findings, the author's goal is to help companies to understand how the newly implemented policies and procedures to restrict the COVID-19 pandemic affected employees motivation and engagement, as well as to identify events/circumstances that could be could be improved in the future. Accordingly, three research questions were identified in this study, as follows:

*RQ1: What do motivate employees to work at a retail store during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

*RQ2: Does the appreciation of the work from the supervisor have a positive impact on the employee's engagement with the company?*

*RQ3: Could the company do differently in the COVID-19 pandemic?*

In order to, empirically investigate, all the Research Questions above identified, a qualitative research approach of primary and secondary data is used. The study is composed of the theoretical framework (Literatura Review), Methodology, Findings, and Conclusion.

The Theoretical framework is composed of important definitions for the study like: Employee's motivation; Employee's Well-Being; Crisis; Retailing. Is presented to strategies adopted by companies in the economic management during the crisis and its impact on employees to better understand this phenomenon. In addition and importance guidance on how to manage employees during a crisis, which is related to the pandemic management. The relation between important concepts like employee's motivation and employee's well-Being and a brief theoretical framework, on some description and characteristics of the COVID-19 policies adopted by the companies.

Following, the methodology, where was explained the data collection and its characteristics. Afterward, the findings, where are represented the data collection that will be discussed in the discussion chapter linked to the theoretical framework. In the end, a brief conclusion where will be a statement of three limitations of the study and respective recommendations for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the author approaches several constructs that are connected with the research goal. It starts with several important concepts of employee motivations, employee's well-being, retailing, and crisis. Their understanding by definition, theories, and contextualization. The concept and strategies of crisis management in the organization world remits to the research of literature that can provide information about the management in workplaces in similar cases, related to the actual pandemic crisis. The relation between the concept of employee wellbeing and employee's motivation since is related to mental health, and, the employees personal and organizational goals which can provide information about the possible consequences of the implementation of new processes in the workplace routines. In addition, some guidance about organizational management during a crisis and its implications to the employees. Lastly, an important description about the COVID-19 policies, known and studied, in order to, have theoretical information about its application.

### 2.1. Employee's Motivation

In the beginning, employees were considered not a true value for a company but instead just a number in the production of goods and services but the Hawthorne Studies came to change that belief. According to Dickson (1973), Elton Mayo from 1924 to 1932 the conductor of this study, employees have several motivations, not just money. These studies found too that their behavior has a direct connection with their attitude. So, from that time and with The Hawthorne Studies the needs and motivation of employees become a very important focus for managers (Bedeian, 1993).

Motivation has several definitions:

The definition of Motivation can be defined as the psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction	(Kreitner, 1995)
A behavior predisposition for a purposive manner to achieve certain needs	(Buford et al., 1995)
An incomplete need that needs to be fulfilled by an internal drive	(Higgins, 1994)

The concept of motivation has been studied for several years, and many theories came up to explain this concept. The Hawthorne Study results in publication was one of the reasons from the focus of many researchers involving the understanding on how the employees were motivated and what motivate them (Terpstra, 1979). Another important contribution is Maslow's need hierarchy theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Adams' equity theory, and Skinner's reinforcement theory, which have been the five major approaches that have been conducted to our understanding of motivation. According to (Maslow, 1943), employees have five levels of need: safety, social, self-actualizing, ego, and physiological. He structured the needs by level and declared that the motivation of employees comes from the satisfaction of all these levels mentioned already, and to full-field all the needs is necessary to full-field, firstly, the lower level needs, in order to, satisfy the higher-level needs. In the other hand, Herzberg's work categorized motivation into two factors: motivators and hygienes (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators factors, for example, as recognition and achievement. Hygiene factors, such as pay. According to Vroom (1964), the employee effort is the performance boost. The performance will lead to rewards, and rewards will lead to motivation if the rewards are more positive the motivation is higher, but if the rewards are less positive the motivation is negatively affected. According to Adams (1965), employees seek equity, among all the workers, including themselves. To Skinner (1953), employees behaviors with positive outcomes will be repeated, and employees behaviors with negative outcomes will not. That information and assets are crucial to the understanding of employees' motivation in workplaces. Particularly during a crisis, when the employee's motivation has even higher importance. For this reason, it's important that managers positively reinforce employees' behavior with positive outcomes, and, in other hand, managers should negatively reinforce the behavior with negative outcomes. According to Bowen (1991), there are several reasons why motivated employees are needed in organizations: They help the organization's survival and because motivated employees are more productive. To achieve that, managers need to be effective to understand what motivates employees, according to the roles that they perform. It's arguably the most complex manager's function, motivate their employees because motivating them is very speculative. A curiosity is that as employee income increases, the financial income becomes less motivator, and also, as the age became longer, the type of work becomes more of a motivator (Kovach, 1987).

## 2.2. Employees Wellbeing

Wellness, as previous researchers noticed, is a concept usually examined and discussed from a multiple dimensions point of view. According to Roscoe (2009); Harari et al. (2005); Hettler (1984), and Adams et al. (1997), there are five-six dimensions. One of the most well-known methods to measure this concept is the perceived wellness survey. This included six dimensions: social, spiritual intellectual, psychological, emotional, and physical (Adams et al., 1997). Although is a very complete model there is some criticism. One of the critics of this method englobes the excessive fragmentation of the psychological dimension into the rest of the dimensions. Nevertheless, all these concepts are easily confounded. On the other hand, Hettler's Wellness Hexagonis composed of six different dimensions: emotional, social, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and occupational. It's important to refer that wellbeing is a multidimensional and conceptually alike concept to wellness. According to Linton et al. (2016), the concept of wellbeing englobes assorted dimensions related to mental wellbeing (happiness and emotional quality of life); Physical wellbeing (functioning and quality of physical performance); social wellbeing (communities and social relationships); spiritual (activities and functioning); and personal circumstances (Environmental and socioeconomic pressures and concerns). Concluding the implicit relations from the literature sources can be defined as Mental health down the mental confusion and cognitive abilities (Affected by biological, environmental, and socioeconomic factors); Physical health to the present psychical status of the person; Emotional and social health through wellbeing and happiness emerging from recognition, activities and social relationships (WHO, 2018; Soo You et al., 2006). The defined well-being can be contextualized in a workplace too. According to Guest and Conway (2004), wellbeing can be defined in six constructs: personal control over the job; positive relationships at work; a manageable workload; support from colleagues and supervisors; positive relationships at work; a reasonably clear role and a sense of control of involvement in changes in the organization. However, to describe this concept of well-being is important to know its formation process and the definition of strain can help to understand that. Strain is a response to the stressor, in a behavioral, psychological, and physical form (Le Fevre et al., 2003). In addition and according to (Jex, 1998), stressors, in this specific case, can be defined as the job or organizational conditions that require adaptive responses from employees. In these workplaces, several stressors can influence the wellbeing level of the employees. The neutral or even positive response from an employee to a stressor is not considered a strain (Cooper et al., 1999). According to Jex (1998); Cooper et al. (2001), strain can have several consequences: job dissatisfaction, anxiety, headache, depressed mood, coronary heart disease, poor performance, turn over and absenteeism.

### 2.3 Crisis Definition

As the objective of the study is the research of topics related to the actual pandemic crisis, it's important to investigate crises established in the past, and their management in the workplaces, by policies established and employees' feelings evidence.

First of all, a Crisis by definition is: “ a state of affairs marked by instability and the possibility of impending change for the worse, for example, in a political or social situation” (APA, 2020). Creeping Crisis

In addition, there are three types of crises and their definitions:

Creeping Crisis	“foreshadowed by a series of events that decision-makers don't view as part of a pattern.”	(Free Management Library, 2018)
Slow-Burn Crisis	“some advance warning, before the situation has caused any actual damage.”	(Free Management Library, 2018)
Sudden Threat Crisis	“damage has already occurred and will get worse the longer it takes to respond.”	(Free Management Library, 2018)

In the past were several cases of crises from different types, for example, the financial crisis in 2008 or the 9/11 of 2001. These crises were by far the most important crises of the century, and are examples of which different types of crises can have an impact on global society. With these crises, some actions and lessons were learned, for example, noticed in the 9/11 case. What happened on 9/11 was a watershed in the experience of and approach to risks. The underlying paradigm has shifted from local to global. This shift is clearly illustrated by actions in 492 Patrick Lagadec the United States on Homeland Security, in particular in the many discussions concerning the protection of critical infrastructures.



### **2.3.1 Organizational Crisis Management**

All organizations or companies need to establish a strategy to orientate them on the construction of activities in a situation of crisis. The organizations or companies present in an actual crisis, to reduce the exposure risk to the harmful effects of an economic crisis, are “obligated” to approach the cost structure, business risk profile, and revenue structure. These policies are related to human resources, which require HR policies response (Mudd et al., 2002).

One important mention is that in an economic recession or economic crisis, several organizations or companies may have to decrease production and reduce costs, which directly lead to salary cuts, layoffs, reducing fringe benefits, and even in worst cases close down their business (Beaverstock et al., 2001). The company or an organization needs to act as a whole, no matter the type or the origin of the crisis: from the bottom to the top (Reilly, 2008). So, a crisis impact can lead to significant damage to organizations or companies, individuals, and the environment. (Hutchins, 2008).

According to Kessel and Masella (2016, p. 2), In nowadays the events that can affect a company's operation are growing.

“As regulatory processes and the global economy become more complex and companies rely increasingly on cloud storage for sensitive information, the quick dissemination of negative information in crisis situations has become more widespread, and there is more scrutiny of board members than ever.”

The next figure represents the numerous events that can originate a crisis, according to Kessel and Masella (2016, p. 2).

### Box 1 Preparing for the worst

A key step in crisis management is preparing action plans for crises that your company is likely to face during its lifetime. The most common problems fall into four categories.

**Disaster recovery.** This includes earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and any other natural disaster. It also includes power outages and computer data loss. Management should have a natural disaster recovery plan that the board has reviewed and approved to mitigate an adverse impact on the company's operations.

**Information technology (IT) infrastructure.** IT problems and outages can cripple efficiency, especially for small companies without established infrastructure. In addition, plans addressing data privacy and IT security, including issues raised by increased use of cloud computing and mobile platforms and usage of personal devices by employees in the workplace need to be considered.

**Regulatory landscape.** Biotech companies are subject to significant regulation from foreign, federal, state and local bodies. With enforcement of these regulations ever increasing, there is a need to address whether the company has an effective compliance program. The burden of creating and implementing one is not insignificant for smaller biotech companies.

**Intellectual property and confidential information.** Intellectual property and confidential information are major ingredients of a biotech company's value. An inadequate program for protection of these assets can give rise to major adverse consequences if a breach occurs.

Figure 1. Source: Preparing for the Worst (Kessel and Masella, 2016, p. 2)

It's important to emphasize this information, to be prepared for any type of crisis. The COVID-19 crisis brought new challenges and the application of new policies to, control the spread of the virus. Not just due to sanitation health towards the society but for the employees, that are the most important asset of the company. According to Ramlall (2004), if organizations lose their employees lose the knowledge, although keeping the employees, helps to retain knowledge and experience in the organization. In addition, and according to Naudé (2012), ponder goal planning, during unstable times, must be managed about retaining high performers and using their skills to maintain a high level of productivity. However, on other hand, several organizations, during a crisis, seek to reduce the number of employees and have the exaptation from the remaining employees to have greater resilience.

### 2.3.2 Crisis impact on the employee

Since this study is related to the employees, of an organization, it's important to analyze by theoretical information the crisis impact on them. As noticed, already, one crisis can sabotage the organization and its employees (Boin, 2005).

Layoffs, in this type of context, grow in a significant way (Adkins et al., 2001). At the same time, since human resources value is not measurable like financial capital, HRD Scholars' perspective is that employees are one of the principal strengths that can orientate an organization to success (Jacobs et al., 1990). In a time of crisis, the response of the employees tends to be

different among them. The employee behavior to change differ in several reactions, varying from fear, minor discomfort, anger, acceptance to change, frustration and full resistance (Smolian et al., 2010). In the investigation of Wang et al. (2016) sixty-six employees were interviewed, from India, to find an understanding of how employees react to a crisis. Their Findings remet that employees responses to crises were different, so, in this case, employees could be categorized into three principal groups. The first group includes employees who have proactive behavior (Try to stay active and fight throughout the crisis). The second group includes the employees that accept the situation and compromise. The final group, faith was the source of their strangeness during the crisis. Besides, employees, during a crisis, and about labor violations, tend to complain less, because of their fear to lose their job (Naudé, 2012).

### **2.3.3 How to manage employees during a crisis.**

Leaders, during crisis time, and in order to recover the company or the business, need to establish a new goal planning or a new type of management to deal with the crisis. With this fact, several actions or implications to the employees are demonstrated, like the Obligation of learning to deal with complexity

At this time an important thing to consider is what the employees needs, which tools, which type of needs they have, and in consequence what management is the most appropriate?

With the COVID-19 pandemic, was clear to see that, a lot of unknown topics and questions were shown, and considered in order to deal with this pandemic crisis. A new type of routine was created, a new reality emerged, new experiences were felt, and for that, an important emotional and interpersonal support is crucial to deal with this adaption from all the intervenients.

So, the discussion of the ways to manage employees that are passing through these complex times is crucial, and to understand what is the most efficient way to get employees happier and more productive. For that reason, topics as Supervisory support; positive reinforcement; appreciation of work; psychological empowerment, and communication from the leaders, need to be discussed.

### **HRD Support**

The support of the organization in order to achieve efficient employee management is important, and to develop these policies, the Human Resources department is the main character.

In times like these the Human Resources Department, and its role, are critical and just show how important is the human capital's well-being in complex times. Human capital is the most important asset, so promoting their health and needs, is crucial for HRD. The Storytelling of Kopp et al. (2011), for example, helps Practitioners of this department to manage efficiently, employees during a crisis, reducing their stress. Another role from the Human Resources Department is the support on the connection between employees and their leaders. They must listen and work on employees' concerns about work, provide solutions to leaders, making sure that leaders provide psychological empowerment and supervisory support for their employees during crisis management. Providing to employees the updated Business state is important too (Dirani et al., 2020).

### **Supervisory support**

Strategies need to be developed and implemented, in order to, deal with crises. This can help organizations or companies to prepare and respond in an efficient way to these times of crisis. During uncertain times, morale is low, and jobs get threatened as the economy suffers, Mani et al. (2020). Motivation and engagement with employees should be supported by leaders to supervisors Employees, during this pandemic, facing many obstacles, with the new work routines. With new routines and obstacles, it's crucial that employees have more flexible supervision from the leaders and supervisors, it's not just important for their adaptation, but important for the business itself. According to Eisenberger et al. (2002) study, retention can be increased by the supervisory support from the leaders, and have a positive impact on the organization's performance, especially during and after a crisis, (Dirani et al., 2020).

### **Positive reinforcement and appreciation of work**

In any organization, positive reinforcement and appreciation of work are very important, especially in times of crisis like this pandemic situation. According, to McGuinness (2020) there are four needed skills from the leaders: In the first place, they need to have positive accountability and have the capacity to recognize that a way of an employee to deal with the crisis and new routines are a new reality in their lives. In second place, the importance of leaders has the capacity of dissecting misinformation, have discipline, objectivity, and have environmental

and situational awareness, (McGuinness, 2020). In the third place, people are the main focus, so they need to be a priority. It's important as a leader, to build loyalty and commitment to the organization, in order to do that, leaders should be grateful and show that towards employees' obstacles, (McGuinness , 2020). The last skill is related to decisive adaptation, which needs to be a very powerful skill from the leaders (McGuinness, 2020). So in conclusion we can notice that the real challenge to a leader is the way that they can control and handle this situation, that's is their major skill.

With COVID 19, one important factor to be mentioned is that companies are adopting a number of new policies and providing new resources to prevent mental health issues on their employees. One of these examples is the wellness centers and mediation sessions, that nowadays are being offered or implemented by the organizations (Brower, 2020). It is emerging the awareness that organizations have about these topics. Brower (2020) suggests too, that home-office will be a new common norm; a greater disparity of work-life balance; a more often team engagement; more flexibility; more frequent use of technology, and company culture will be more significant. Optimization of processes and standardized practices will increase which brings an increase in employee empowerment. In addition, organizations will compete less and collaborate more as a result of the pandemic situation.

## **Communication**

The COVID-19 brought many challenges in terms of communication due to all the changing environments experienced. According to the survey oriented by Orangefiery (2020), that the main focus was the need for communication from the employees, the results were:

1. Transparency, about what are the relevant and irrelevant information
2. Information, about provided resources for emotional and mental health, to deal with stress and anxiety
3. Stronger acknowledgment, about the level of difficulty in specific situations

According to, Orangefiery (2020b), to increase the positive level of communications during the COVID-19, some steps need to be taken: behavioral emphasis on empathy to the subordinates; Caring about the employee, and demonstrating leadership by example.

Another survey about the same topic was the Bogusky-Halper (2020) survey. In this survey, there were top-six responses by employees about the communication from the leaders:

1. Transparency
2. Staying calm and leadership by example
3. Helping employees stay safe and healthy
4. Being Factual
5. Caring
6. Direct and objective

In conclusion, these 4 factors ( psychological empowerment, positive reinforcement and appreciation for work, and communication ) are crucial in the management of employees during a crisis of any kind.

## 2.4. Retailing

The definition of retailing can be defined as :

“Consists of the final activity and steps needed to place merchandise made elsewhere in the hands of the consumer or to provide services to the consumer.”	(Dunne and Lusch, 1999, p. 5)
“Consists of the selling of goods and services to their ultimate consumers, that is, individuals who buy something for personal or households.”	(Morgenstein and Strongin, 1983, p. 6)
Retailing: “Consists of all activities involved in the sale of goods and services to the ultimate consumer.”	(Mason, et al., 1991, p. 5)
“All activities involved in the marketing of goods and services directly to consumers.”	(Lucas, et al., 1994, p. 612)

Paraphrasing, Lucas et al. (1994) “All activities involved in the marketing of goods and services directly to consumers.” This is made by offering to consumers a small extent of what is produced in a massive extent. (Amit and Kameshvari, 2012). Hence, consumers associate retailing as the ultimate gate for the delivery of the products to be consumed by them. So any company that markets goods to the ultimate buyer is retailing, including all the activities in the

selling of products or services process. The final stage of the economic activity is retail. The focus of any retailing activity is the fulfillment of desires and needs from the customer (MEGEP, 2008). The agents who have participated in the retail activity in the marketing channel, or who have to retail as a professional occupation are called retailers (Aydın et al., 2013). However, many other entities do retail too like producers or wholesalers, but the majority of businesses whose sales are come principally from retailing are retailers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). But the main orientation of this study is one of the activities of the retailing process, is the retail store. In retailing exists a space where is practiced one of the processes of retailing called store or sell point. The store is the place where the retailer and the client meet, and where the client shows the buying behavior (PARENTE, 2000). The process of selling final consumer goods to the ultimate consumer is provided by the retail store, which is its main focus (Altunışık et al., 2012; MEGEP, 2008).

### **2.5. The COVID-19 protection Measures**

COVID-19 belongs to the Coronaviridae (CoV) subfamily of the Coronavirinae family, which is a member of the order Nidovirales. This subfamily is composed of 40 varieties of single-stranded RNA-viruses residing in some animals like bats and birds. This single-stranded RNA virus can involve infecting non-human mammals, humans, or birds. This virus keeps emerging among, for example, humans, since it can mutate, recombine, and infect multiple species and cell types, causing outbreaks among humans. (Lai and Cavanagh, 1997; Brian, and Baric, 2005; Ziebuhr, 2005).

All aspects of people's lives have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic. Changes in work behaviors, personal well-being, and experiences can be examples (Achenbach, 2020; Brenner, 2020; Thompson, 2020). One of the focuses of this type of interferon was on the workplaces. With the virus spreading all the necessary caution was needed. It was time to idealize and implement multiple strategies and policies at the workplace. The COVID-19 was declared, by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as the first occupational disease in this decade. So, this Organization recommended all governments in several countries and regions prepare for an intervention in order to control this disease (Kosk-Bienko, 2009 ; Joob, 2020; Mosaffaei, et al., 2020). According to OSHA (2020) all the prevention and protection measures implemented to use against the virus spreading and its exposure depends on the typology of the work, its exposure risk, workplace pollution, and the potential to come in contact with infected people. These measures are classified into three levels: administrative controls, engineering controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Above all those measures, it's important to implement

social distancing, in other words, customers and worker physics separations, specifically in workplaces with close interaction between client and employees, using too many glass and plastic barriers (Rafeemanesh et al., 2020). Also, limiting the number of staff, reduced and flexible work hours, transmitting information and educating the employees about the COVID-19, social distance, using specif tools and instruments, washing and cleaning the hands, disinfection of objects and surfaces, dropping the share of objects, avoiding physical meetings, quarantine of sick workers and shutdown of specif occupations, are very important measures, classified as administrative controls (Mahmood et al., 2020).

“Although personal protective equipment (PPE) is considered as the last way of protection at workplaces, the use of PPE is an essential component of protecting staff against COVID-19 due to high contagiousness. PPEs have been recommended for all individuals to avoid the spreading of new coronavirus. Providing the proper PPEs based on the kind of duty is critical. This equipment may be included a mask and respirator, eye protection, gloves, and special clothing, and gown. Various organizations such as CDC and the world health organization (WHO) have recommended guidelines regarding the prevention and control of the COVID-19 outbreak including the use of PPE” (Golbabaei et al., 2020, p. 62).

The combination of measures classified administrative controls, engineering controls, in addition to PPE, is important to the virus spreading, especially in this type of workplace (Ontario, 2020). Above all of that, continuous education about occupational hygiene is necessary for employers and employees.

## **2.6. Employees Motivation and Employees Wellbeing**

Employee motivation and employee wellbeing have a relationship in theory very well established, especially employee wellbeing related to general health or mental health. Employee motivation, in an individual way, is one key mechanism on the continuous wellbeing at the workplace and in the development of burnout (Salmela-Aro and Nurmi, 2004). The relation between burnout and employee motivation has been more common even than the relation between employee motivation and depression. Some theoretical models have been applied to this relationship between employees motivation and employees well-being. One of them is the job demands-resources model (JD-R) (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004). In this model, is noticed



that the concept of motivation has been associated with burnout, related to resources invested in work (Demerouti, et al., 2001) and where burnout is related to lower resources (Alarcon, 2011). This model, has a process, is the motivational process. This process proposes that employees that work in workplaces reinforced with appropriate resources, have the plan to achieve their work-related goals, and for instance, the motivation and engagement to work are higher. In addition, and according to Demerouti et al. (2001); Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), empirical evidence, suggests there are negative relations between the energetic component of motivation and psychosomatic health complaints. Is noticed too, from a recent study that autonomous motivation, in which employees act with choice, had a negative influence on exhaustion, but the controlled motivation (employees action under internal or external pressure), has a positive influence on exhaustion (Fernet et al., 2012). Besides that, and according to Blais et al. (1993), previous studies found that autonomous motivation has a positive relation with well-being. Studies that try to relate these two concepts, motivation, and wellbeing, have been cross-sectional. To conclude is very weak the evidence of the long time influence on employee's well-being from changes in motivation. However, is important to refer that previous studies have yet established a relation between them (motivation and mental well-being).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Qualitative research focuses on elucidating and understanding real-world issues (Korstjens and Moser, 2017). Rather than gathering numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments, as in quantitative research, qualitative research aids in the development of hypotheses as well as the investigation and understanding of quantitative data. Since this study collected data from perceptions and opinions from people using open questions qualitative approach is more adjustable since one of the qualitative research's advantages is its capacity to describe difficult-to-quantify processes and patterns of human behavior (Cleland, 2017).

#### **3.2. Sample**

As noticed this study has the objective to study the impact of the COVID-19 measures on the employee's motivation in an electronic retail store. For that, I made nine interviews in a retail store in the electronic retail segment with an average duration of fifty-one minutes. In this case, all interviewees are Sales assistants.

The sales Assistant definition can be described:

Sales assistant is an asset of human resources who has a major role in supporting the success and progress of the company. A company as a pure producer of goods or services requires a sales assistant who is in charge as a liaison between the company and consumers in offering goods and provides information about the needs of consumers on the company (Yudhawati et al., 2016).

In terms of sociographic characteristics, this sample is composed of two female (22%) employees and seven (78%) male employees. Each one of the employees is in the commercial segment, with the position of Sales Assistant.

<i>Name</i>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Seniority</b>	<b>Type of Contact</b>
<i>André</i>	M	22 years	1 year and 7 months	Part-Time
<i>Ana</i>	F	22 Years	2 years	Part-Time
<i>Carlos</i>	M	21 Years	3 Years	Part-Time
<i>Daniel</i>	M	22 Years	3 years and 6 months	Part-Time
<i>Fábio</i>	M	27 years	5 Years	Full-Time
<i>Filipa</i>	F	23 years	9 years	Part-Time
<i>Guilherme</i>	M	27 years	2 years and 6 month	Full-Time
<i>Hugo</i>	M	40 years	20 years	Full-Time
<i>Nuno</i>	M	26 years	1 year and 6 months	Full-Time

### **3.3. Data Collection**

The interaction between the researcher and his object of study is common in all research methods. Considering the type or the nature of this study is more appropriate to embark on a qualitative study. The qualitative methodology, for Bardin (2009), differs from the quantitative approach in that it presents a greater degree of subjectivity, having a more intuitive and flexible character.

Two Dimensions are provided by an interviewee: Facts and perceptions. Minayo and Costa (2018), emphasize that respondents can provide data that can be confirmed in documents, generating facts. In the interview subjective information, perceptions can be collected, which means that a more representative reality can be achieved in a form of ideas, opinions, beliefs, skills, behavior, and actions. For qualitative research, perception as a dimension of information is the dimension that can contribute to the construction of meanings from experiences that can determine behavior patterns of social actors in a broader way.

In the first place, I approached employees of a retail store in the technology retail segment, that belongs to a group of companies in the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) market. The Fast Moving Consumer Good (FMCG) industry primarily deals with the production, distribution, and marketing of consumer-packaged goods. As the definition suggests, FMCG goods are also popularly called CPG (Consumer-packaged goods). The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) are those products that are consumed by the consumers at regular intervals, (Gupta, 2018). This particular company has 25 years of existence and has several stores around the country. The employees of this study belong to a store located in the Metropolitan zone of Lisbon.

I invited employees to an interview with the purpose of collecting data for the study. I approached 17 employees but not all the approached employees accepted the invitation, since just nine of them accepted. At the beginning of each interview, I emphasized the confidentiality of the data. Each interview was made with my guidance, from the orientation of the interview guideline.

The interviews were conducted in Portuguese. The author transcribed each interview to Portuguese and translated each one to English. The employees' names represented in this study are not real, in order to protect their confidentiality.

### **3.4 Interview Format**

The Guideline is composed of 37 questions subdivided into three parts. The first part was composed with a majority of 10 open questions. The second part was divided into two parts each one with a variable of the investigation like noticed, and the third part was composed of one final question of reflection. In the first part with 8 open questions, the importance was to collect data about the general feelings of the employees about the COVID-19 measures and new policies adopted by the company. The purpose was to collect the maximum amount of information about it, in order to, proceed to the more specific questions about the topics the employee wellbeing and motivation. The second part subdivided into two parts where was approached both COVID-19 measures, the Schedule policies, and the Hygiene and protection policies, in order to ensure the maximum understanding of the differences felt about each one of the measures. The third part was a reflection question, which means that was, invited to give a more open answer about his or her preferences about the stage of the pandemic situation. It's important to say that in all the interviews the behavior of the interview was very good with the disponibility to give all the information needed.

### **3.4 Content Analysis**

In this study, content analysis was chosen for text analysis. One of the definition of content analysis can be seen as a group of approaches for analyzing the informative contents of textual material that are systematic and rule-based (Mayring, 2000). Its porpose is to characterize the qualities of a document's content by looking at who says what, to whom, and with what effect (Bloor and Wood, 2006). The basic goal of content analysis is to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual manner (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Data must be evaluated with such applications in mind because the content analyst sees data as representations of words, images, and expressions produced to be viewed, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings, rather than physical events (Krippendorff, 2004). It is important to notice that when there have been no previous studies on the topic, inductive content analysis, and thematic analysis are utilized, and the coded categories are derived directly from the text data, so the approach is inductive and not deductive. (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

**According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), the process of data analysis in content analysis is shown in Table 1.** In content analysis, the preparation phase is quite specific and involves a number of steps. First, the interview is transcribed, and the transcripts are read numerous times to get a feel of the entire. Before moving on to the next step of data analysis, the content analyst might pick between manifest (developing categories) and latent contents (developing themes).

The second stage of data analysis, known as the organizing phase in content analysis, involves open coding, which involves gathering codes under prospective subcategories/subthemes or categories/themes and comparing the emerged coding's clusters together and in connection to the complete data set. Generating initial codes, identifying and labeling themes, reviewing themes, and searching for themes are some of the analytical interventions used in content analysis. In the end, is reported the results and analyzed.

The text sections with code labels are crucial, not just to order the«e related groupings or categories but for the comparison process (Saunder et al., 2016).

Table 1 shows themes categories and codes identified in this study. The Themes are individual characteristics and organizational aspects. The theme of individual characteristics includes three categories: motivation to work with COVID-19 policies, work-life balance, and mental health. The organizational aspects also involve three categories: company support, company actions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and communication and contact.

Individual Characteristics	Motivation to Work with COVID 19 Policies	Sanitation Policies	<p>“I felt, nobody wanted to go to work, but the fact of knowing that a client would never cough directly at me, made me go to work a little better, a little safer. We have a complicated job which is to be in contact with the public and if we can somehow protect ourselves it's fantastic. So yes, those were measures that made me feel better going to work.”</p> <p>(Filipa)</p>
	Work-life Balance	Obstacles due to the Schedule Policies	<p>“It depends. For example really when we closed at one we still worked until the end. Of course, when we closed at 1 pm they would always pull the employees' schedules as early as possible, at 8 am., so we would always leave</p>

			<p>around 5/6 pm. Which was good for us, in a way, we were leaving early, but on the other hand, it was not good, because they were waking up very early and were not used to it.”</p> <p>(Guilherme)</p>
	Mental Health	Psychological fatigue	<p>“Yes, very much so. When you have to stand in a doorway and ask all the people, especially there, what they come to see, what they don't come to see, with the mask, it's wear and tear, especially there, you know?”</p> <p>(Hugo)</p>
Organizational Aspects	Company Support	Company's strategy of Reward	<p>“Yes, there was a recognition, that is, at Christmas we usually have a Christmas dinner with all the employees and in this case, it was not possible due to the pandemic, so what they did was give us a monetary recognition so that in a certain way, since we didn't have the dinner at least we had this gift, so to speak.”</p> <p>(Ana)</p>

	<p>Company actions due to the COVID19 pandemic</p>	<p>The impact on personal interest</p>	<p>“some differences between the company's lockdowns... the 1st one was that in the first one they really had to reduce and even send some people away, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> one even with the store closed they've already started to implement drive-thru's, they've already started to implement, even us working there even with the store closed, they've already managed to distribute the work better and create new ways to work even with the store closed, which made it a lot easier.”</p> <p>(Nuno)</p>
	<p>Communication and Contact</p>	<p>Impact of COVID-19 Sanitation Policies on Work Dynamics (Client and Employee)</p>	<p>“So, social distancing was what affected us the most, keeping that distance from the client meant that our service was probably not so well heard or not so well accepted by our clients, isn't it? There is always that social distance, as the name says. So we created a barrier there that it is more difficult for us to reach the customer, so that was the implication.”</p> <p>(André)</p>





## 4. Findings

This chapter focuses on the presentation of both outcomes from the primary research and the research questions of the study. To a more clear understanding, of the topic of this study, the findings of the interviews are organized into 6 subsections. Each subsection is aligned with one identified Category.

### 4.1 Motivation to Work with COVID 19 Policies

As a result of all data collected from the interviews, we can assume that from the 9 interviews, in this particular topic, 6 demonstrate a negative impact on motivation due to the use of COVID-19 sanitation's policies, which corresponds to 67% of the sample, and 3 demonstrate a positive impact on motivation due to COVID-19 sanitation's policies, which correspond to 33% of the sample.

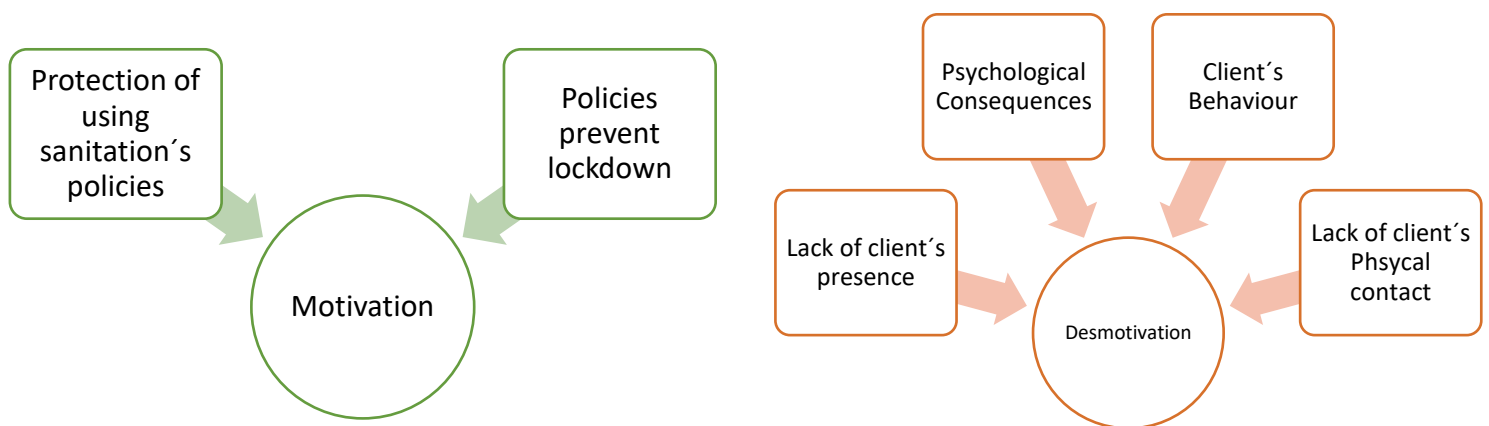
The interviewee André, who has been in the company for 1 year and 6 months, approximately, felt a lack of motivation due to the lack of contact with the clients. He said, “ *It could have been simply the fact of not being able to be there so close to the client, being closer, feeling the client closer to me, getting closer to the client, having those touches, and that maybe made it sadder for work or less motivated in some way*” (André, 2021). In addition, the interviewee Daniel claimed too, that, the major cause of his demotivation was too, the lack of client's contact, “*I like to see people's expressions when I'm... my profession is as a salesman and when I'm selling something, I like to see the person's expression when I see this type of thing that I'm selling and then I can also play with what I can do next and in this respect, the mask has made my work a little more difficult, because, although I can see some, I can't see some expressions that the client might be making*”, (Daniel, 2021). On the other hand, the interviewee Guilherme felt that the fact of having been fewer clients in the store contributed to a little demotivation, at the beginning: “*It wasn't just this, but of course, that helped too. Of course, it always helps, it always gives a little bit of demotivation, not having so much client, the client is also already more grumpy normally*”, (Guilherme, 2021). Ana, who has been for 2 years on the company “blamed” her demotivation to the particular bad behavior or lack of worry towards the COVID-19 pandemic from some clients, who didn't accept some routine tasks, from her, in order, to maintain the sanitation's policies in force: “*In terms of motivation I don't think so, only when in terms of clients when we have to disinfect everything and there are clients who still complain about this, this ends up in a way... I end up finding it unfair and I get a little demotivated in the sense that I am worried and the client is not and this is a bit annoying* (Ana, 2021).

The previous interviewees “blamed” the demotivation on the lack of abusive interaction with the clients because of COVID-19 Sanitation policies but the next two interviewees had different reasons for feeling the demotivation. Both Nuno and Hugo “blamed” their demotivation on the psychological consequences of its inclusion, for example, using masks. In the first place, Nuno said: *The motivation goes right down by excessive tiredness, for example in a day when maybe I was very well, very motivated to do everything, probably more at the end of the day, while in normal times I was still well, at ease, always happy and content there, with the mask I end up sometimes, maybe getting a little tired, because I'm always there sometimes fogging up the glasses, as I had said, always having to go drink water to remove the mask a little. As I end up getting a little more tired, I end up having a little more performance, maybe less patience for certain clients, less insistence on some things, because psychologically I end up getting a little more tired than I would without the mask* (Nuno, 2021). In Addition, Hugo, that have the higher seniority of all the interviews, with more or less 20 years of contribution to the company had the following affirmation: *“From the quality of the air you breathe at least, you get more oxygen in your lungs, from shaking people's hands it creates more trust and it creates more stimulation and if humanity is becoming dehumanized then now with Covid it's a turbo”* (Hugo, 2021).

The previous statements were collected and analyzed as being labeled as having a negative impact on the motivation of the employees, but not all the employees felt demotivated with the implementation of these specific policies.

Carlos, who has been in the company for 3 years, had a more comprehensive and different perspective. For him, the simple fact of these policies allows his professional activity, just increased his motivation about using or respecting them. The major fear to Carlos was the possible lockdown or even the possible scenario of unemployment, and, since these policies, brought the possibility of that not happening, it makes him happy. As he said: *“No, I don't think it changed my motivation at work because in my case, being able to work and having that job during the pandemic was a good thing for me. Because I know that many people were left without work or were paid less. So I think that the shop has been in operation and thanks to those measures, then I never looked at those measures as something demotivating, but rather as something motivating* (Carlos, 2021). Another employee motivated due to the new sanitation routine was, Filipa. Filipa, who has 9 years of seniority in the company, put on these sanitation policies the major contributor to the feeling of protection due to difficult the easy spread of this virus. For her, the simple fact of these policies reducing the physical contact with clients makes her feel more protected. She said: *“I felt, nobody wanted to go to work, but the fact of knowing*

*that a client would never cough directly at me, made me go to work a little better, a little safer. We have a complicated job which is to be in contact with the public and if we can somehow protect ourselves it's fantastic. So yes, those were measures that made me feel better going to work”, (Filipa, 2021). With the same perspective the interviewee Fábio, claimed: “That is, a little more comfort and security that they guarantee you” (Fábio, 2021).*



Source: Own Illustration

#### **4.2 Work-life Balance**

From the findings of the interviewees is clear that the major part of the interviewees had negative implications on the work-life balance due to the COVID-19 time policies, and the reasons are mainly two: Difficulty to conciliate with Academic Life and The effect of the constant changes in the employees routine.

Interviewees André, Carlos, Daniel, Filipa, Hugo, and Nuno noticed negative impacts on their work-life balance, but for diverse reasons. First of all, we can notice that some of the interviewees had problems conciliating the academic activity with the restrictions from the

COVID-19 Time policies. André felt that the new restriction made by these new policies interfered with his academic life, in the way that some of his classes were at the same time as his work new schedule, forced by the reducing amount of hours available to work. He said *“In my example, for example, that I work and study, I easily came to an implication which was, for example, to force my life to happen, my working life to happen at those times when the store would be open for less time. So maybe there were days when it was closing, so I left later, had classes in the morning, maybe it didn't happen because the store didn't close that late. So work and classes were at the same time, for example”*, (André, 2021). Carlos, by academic reasons too, claimed that before with the pre-pandemic schedule he was able to close the store which allowed him to have better management of his academic routine, but now he has sometimes difficulty managing it with the work which not just affect his academic life, but have a negative effect on his work-life balance: *“Okay. In my case, as... there were some implications even for me personally, because I had so many classes at the university, I would leave classes and as I usually did the closing of the shop, then as the shop started to close earlier for example, my time in started to coincide with my time out of classes, so it was difficult to get to work on time for that reason. That was the main... the main impact of this change of schedule”*, (Carlos, 2021). In addition Daniel is a Student-worker too so he noticed the same reasons as André and Carlos: *“They did for me, because as I'm a student-worker the fact that sometimes we had to close the shop earlier meant that I had to change aspects at the college level and I had to change, for example, my days off, etc, because of that. Because they were impositions, but I still had tests to do and things to do and so reconciling my student life in that... roughly months ago, it was more complicated”*, (Daniel, 2021). For different reasons, Filipa felt that the constant change in the schedule to work affected her life at home. She said: *“It affected my personal life a little bit, yes. With all this, they started constantly with the store's timetable opening and closing at a certain hour. One week it closes at 9 pm, the next week it closes at 10 pm., the day after it closes at 11 pm. We ended up... We ourselves couldn't agree on anything, we couldn't have schedules at home, because we never knew if the day after we had to go to work at 7 am, at 8 am or at 10 a.m. So, it ended up affecting the personal situation, didn't it? Life at home”* (Filipa, 2021). In addition, Hugo felt that those changes don't even allow him to create new routines in his life: *“All if you had a routine of going out at a certain time and coming in at a certain time, you have scheduled are made much more by counting, you don't know, imagine that you have to plan the schedule of a team, if you after 15 days you don't know if it's going to close at "x" hour or "y" hour, you can't even, in a certain way, create routines. Do you understand?”* (Hugo, 2021). In a light way, Nuno noticed that these policies didn't have much impact

on his personal life, but at times that exist more changes same specific events need to be planned in a different way because the changes were very sudden, so at that times the implications were more visible. He said: *“In those transition weeks I was more at a loss as to what to do, not knowing if you could schedule anything, but when I was in that transition phase, closing at 7 pm didn't make that much difference to my personal life. Yes, it's more like that, it was only on the weekend that it was more boring”* (Nuno, 2021).

The major part of the interviewees noticed negative impacts from these policies, but 2 interviewees noticed positive implications.

Ana claimed: *“In the dynamics of personal life or work I think that these policies had in my case even a positive implication because the fact of always working earlier and having the end of the day freer ended up helping me for example in terms of college, because I'm in college and always had more time, In terms of work it was a little confusing because everything changed, I was left owing hours and I think that was a little confusing with the company because they didn't give us an answer but they also didn't know the answer and I think that nobody knew very well what was really happening”*(Ana, 2021)”. So is notary that in this particular case, the fact of the interviewee had the implication to leave the work earlier allow her to conciliate better his personal life and academic one. On the other hand, Fábio noticed that these new policies allowed him to have more free time for himself, which brings him more satisfaction. He claimed: *“No, on the one hand, I even had a little more time for my personal life, since the store had been closing earlier for so long, they were even better times for my personal life, I had time to be with my girlfriend, family,* (Fábio, 2021).

One of the interviewees felt there were negative and positive implications on his work-life balance. Guilherme said: *“It depends. For example really when we closed at one we still worked until the end. Of course, when we closed at 1 pm they would always pull the employees' schedules as early as possible, at 8 am., so we would always leave around 5/6 pm. Which was good for us, in a way, we were leaving early, but on the other hand, it was not good, because they were waking up very early and were not used to it. For people who normally were always leaving later and who liked to leave earlier, there was an opportunity, even as we are now on a schedule the maximum we leave is at 9 pm, so it's a perfectly normal time and people are normally always happy in a way because they are leaving early”*

(Guilherme, 2021).

### 4.3 Mental Health

In terms of mental health topics, one of the approaches in the interviews was the psychological fatigue felt during the implementation of the COVID-10 Sanitation policies. Most of the interviewee's answers were affirmative on the impact of these policies on their psychological fatigue. Most of the interviews made a correlation about their fatigue with the policy of using a mask, which is considered a COVID-19 sanitation policy. The major stress caused by that policy was the fact of being an obligation to use it, which turnouts being annoying and stressful. For example, André said: *“The fact that wearing a mask in establishments for so many hours is already a great example, it is something that tires not only physically but psychologically. We are tired of wearing masks there and that affects us psychologically”*(André, 2021). It's to refer that not all the interviews that felt a negative impact with these policies felt from the obligation to use a mask, Guilherme, for example, felt more psychological fatigue from the constant approach that he had to do, to the client, which began to reveal more stressful. Guilherme, said: *“As I had repeated the fact that we were controlling the entrances and approaching the customer when the customer doesn't want to be approached often looked sideways at us or responded poorly, which made us leave there more stressed”* (Guilherme, 2021). On Other hand, Ana didn't feel any psychological impact with these sanitation policies. She was very concrete in her answer: *“- I think that in psychological terms I didn't feel any impact at all”* (Ana, 2021).

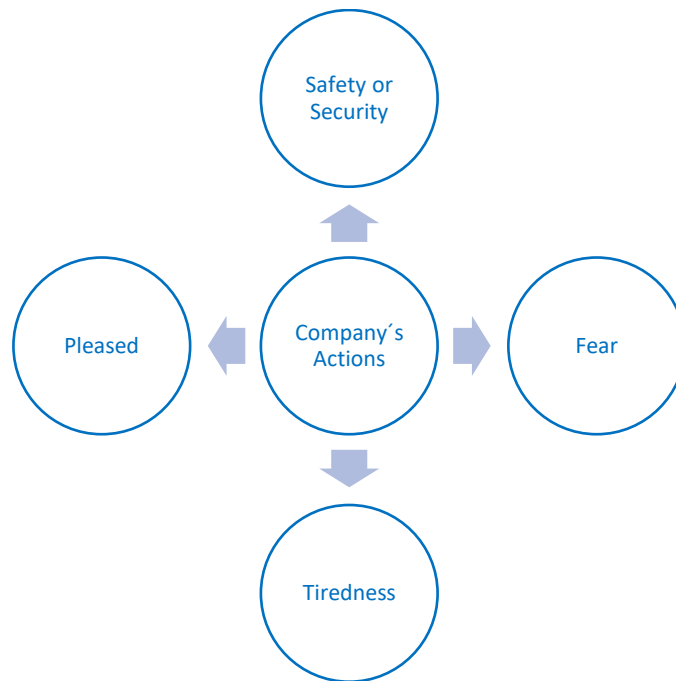
### 4.4 Company Support

As mentioned in previous statements, company support is very important during times of crisis to provide a good labor environment and a positive engagement from the employees to the company. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that, in this particular company, the company support was present in various ways, but all the interviewees mentioned a particular one, the monetary bonus provided by the company due to the effort made by the employees, during these particular times. It was clear that, from the information provided by the interviewees, the reception of the monetary bonus happened, and it was a very pleasant gesture by the company. For example, André said: *“There was and there is. We also received an award at the time for all this, for having fought together with them in the company, so there was a certain reward. It was a productivity bonus during that time and that was good. It was nice to receive, obviously”* (André, 2021). In addition to, the feeling of satisfaction by André and by the majority of the interviewees, it was interesting to notice that this reward did not just bring a feeling of satisfaction but brought to a motivation added, as noticed by Nuno: *“ There was always this concern on their part to keep employees and even former employees, in case they were let go, as happy*

*as possible, and even after the first lockdown phase, prizes were also distributed to motivate people who went through complicated phases, because the full-time employees had to work part-time with a lot less money”, (Nuno, 2021).*

#### **4.5 Company actions due to the COVID19 pandemic**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were two lockdowns, obligating the majority of the citizens to stay permanently at their homes, in order to not spread the virus. However, certain services, like essentials market retail needed to be operational to provide certain products to society. The company of the study was one of them. During the lockdowns, certain actions were made. With the actions of the company due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several employees felt a mix of feelings by the action from the company. The next graphic reflects on the type of feeling felt.



Source: Own Illustration

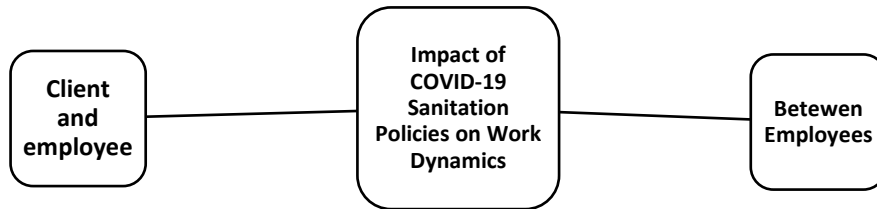
From the interviewee's answers is clear that not all had the same feeling due to the adoption of COVID-19 policies, by the company. As is the reflection on the Graphic, there were four main feelings felt by the interviews due to the Actions of the company: Safety or Security; Pleased; Fear; Tiredness. In general, most of the interviewees reacted positively to the action of the company. Filipa and André felt more security with the actions adopted by the company,

especially at the beginning, when the ignorance about the virus was higher. André said: *“I thought well. I think it was also necessary for us to survive this, this unknown, isn't it? That we were still at the very beginning, there was a lot of ignorance about the virus, so that way we were able to maintain some security, isn't it? Before the customer, before the unknown”*, (André, 2021). Ana actually, felt very pleased and for consequence impressed with all the organization and policies adopted by the company, she said: *“think it impressed me quite positively because everything was really very organized and it put me at ease in that regard”*, (Ana, 2021). On the other hand, some of the interviewees felt a negative impact with these actions from the company. Daniel, for example, felt scared, because the company didn't close, which puts him on the front-line, in a very complicated time, he actually mentioned it: *“Yes. I specifically reacted a little bit worse, but I think everybody reacted a little bit, right? In the beginning, I was a bit scared, especially because my company didn't close. I mean, I think that we were a little bit on the front line , because we were "a little bit obliged" to go to work and that scared me a little”*, (Daniel, 2021). In addition, Carlos felt Tiredness not just by the actions of the company, but by the fact that there were fewer customers in the shop. He said: *“I found that on a personal level, on an emotional level, for example, going to work became less exciting, because there were no more, there were no more customers in the shop, so it became more of a silent, calm workplace which I personally didn't like very much. I like to work in a busier environment, with more noise, I found it too calm, too quiet which is good, but in the long run, it starts to be a bit emotionally draining. I think that was my main reaction”*, (Carlos,2021).

#### **4.6 Communication and Contact**

The last topic from the findings is communication and contact. More specifically, it relates to, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work dynamics among employees and the work dynamics between employees and clients.





Source: Own Illustration

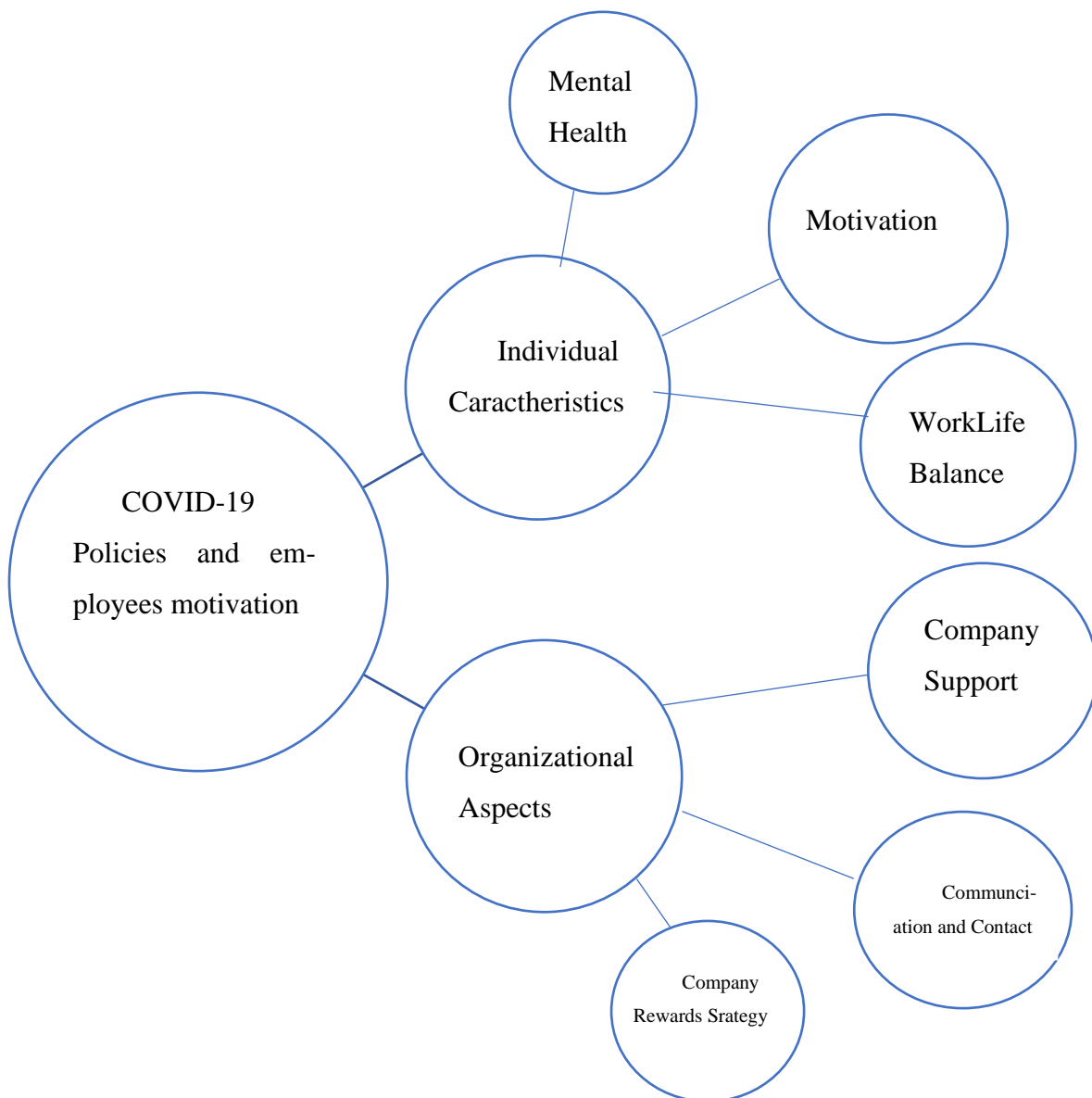
The major part of the interviewees did not approach the impact on the relationship between employees, but Hugo and Guilherme noticed the same particular impacts on these relations. According to Guilherme, although the major part of the colleagues knows each other very well the use of masks, for example, brought the same difficulties in understanding each other, and the social distance didn't allow them to hang out with each other. Due to this fact stress was felt and in satisfaction. He said: *“It's the following, especially the masks make it a little bit more complicated to communicate because sometimes people don't understand what we are saying. Of course, we've been colleagues for a long time, those of us who have been there at least the longest, we become quite close, right? Inside the store. And the obligation of social distance was also something that bothered me a little bit, right? Of course, we could still talk, all that, but always with a distance, always carefully. At meals we couldn't hang out together either, because it could also be a little stressful, so usually with the pandemic something good didn't come, so to speak. If something had come, it would have been bad, always”*, (Guilherme, 2021).

The impact Felt from the COVID-19 sanitation policies on the relations between client and employee had more collected information. It is important to say that all the impact felt by the interviewees from each work dynamics type was negative. The relation between client and employee was more significant. Seven of the nine employees noticed negative impacts. For example, André noticed that the social distancing was affecting the relation and communication with the client. According to André, the compassion with the client was more difficult to achieve

with, especially, the sanitation policy of social distancing. He said: “ *Yes, yes, yes. The distance from the customer, that closeness that we had before that helped us to be closer to the customer, to feel the customer, that compassion, that sociability we had with the customer, that affection ceased to exist with Clients*”, (André, 2021)

## 5. Discussion

In the present chapter, it will be analyzed the findings, regarding the theoretical framework, presented already, in previous chapter 2. So this chapter will be based on empirical data and theoretical data, presented in chapters 4 and 2, respectively, which can bring various conclusions to the study. This study was formalized by three research questions, in order, to be answered with the current investigation. The three questions approached on chapter 2, were answered by the collected data in chapter 4. The findings on chapter 4, were structured, from categorization and selection of data collected from 9 interviews made. The research findings have been divided into two main themes, which are subsequently divided into 3 categories each. Each category has its specific code. The next figure demonstrates that.



Source: Own Illustration

So, the following discussion will be related to all the findings collected from the categories approached, and their codes. Categories as Motivation to work with COVID-19 policies, work-life balance, mental health, company support, company's actions to the COVID-19 Pandemic and communication and contact, all belong to the themes, Individual characteristics and organizational aspects.

There are three research questions to be answered in this dissertation:

***RQ1: What does motivate employees to work at a retail store during the COVID-19 pandemic?***

According to findings, three main factors conduct to an increase of motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two of them are related to sanitation policies and the other one is related to schedule policies. The first two factors are protection and labor consequences.

This company adopted several sanitation policies. Using masks, a limited number of clients in the store, social distance, or even hygiene of all the space were examples of some of these policies. Not all the employee's interviewees felt motivated with these policies, but some felt more protected and safer with them, and by consequence, more motivated to work. One of these examples was Filipa. She claimed that the fact of clients is obligated to use masks, makes her feel better at work and by consequence more motivated to work. She said *“I felt, nobody wanted to go to work, but the fact of knowing that a client would never cough directly at me, made me go to work a little better, a little safer. We have a complicated job which is to be in contact with the public and if we can somehow protect ourselves it's fantastic. So yes, those were measures that made me feel better going to work”*, (Filipa, 2021).

The theoretical framework in chapter two evidence the relation between safety and motivation. According to (Maslow, 1943), safety is one of the needs that need to be fulfilled in order to achieve motivation. Another factor is the labor consequences. According to the theoretical framework, this factor is related to the fact of in times of crisis, the fact of one company doesn't have to make layoffs or even down their business, brings a positive impact on individuals and by consequence motivation. (Beaverstock and Doel, 2001) and (Hutchins, 2008)

This corroborates the findings. According to Carlos, one of the interviewed employees, the fact of in the society, this pandemic brought unemployment and severe labor consequences to

many people, he felt more motivated to work, knowing that unemployment or even layoff, isn't his reality. As he said *"No, I don't think it changed my motivation at work because in my case, being able to work and having that job during the pandemic was a good thing for me. Because I know that many people were left without work or were paid less. So I think that the shop has been in operation and thanks to those measures, then I never looked at those measures as something demotivating, but rather as something motivating (Carlos, 2021).* The last factor is the work-life balance. This factor is related to the time schedule policies management done by the company. One of the employees felt an increase in his work-life balance, which provided him more time to spend with his family. He said *"No, on the one hand, I even had a little more time for my personal life, since the store had been closing earlier for so long, they were even better times for my personal life, I had time to be with my girlfriend, family, (Fábio, 2021).* In addition, one of the employee's most important assets for achieving well-being properly is to fulfill one of its constructs the social well-being (Linton et al. (2016).

***RQ2: Does the appreciation of the work from the supervisor has a positive impact on the employee's engagement with the company?***

There are shreds of evidence showing that in times of crisis, the appreciation of work from the superiors to the subordinates has a positive impact. Especially if the superior demonstrate constant gratefulness toward employees' obstacles in the management of their teams, the positive engagement from the employees to the company tends to increase, (McGuinness, 2020).

In this case and according to the findings collected on the company's support category, the strategy of monetary rewards adopted by the company, seems to prove that the demonstrations of gratefulness of any kind bring a positive engagement to the company from the employees, as said by André: *" There was and there is. We also received an award at the time for all this, for having fought together with them in the company, so there was a certain reward. It was a productivity bonus during that time and that was good. It was nice to receive, obviously", (André, 2021).*

In addition, of this appraisal award to the employees, the constant positive comments and encouragement had a positive impact on some employees, as noticed by André: *"Always that psychological help, the comments, talking to the bosses, obviously and with other colleagues as well. To cheer us up, not to fall apart. So we help psychologically", (André, 2021).*

The findings correlate with the theory that the importance of a demonstration of concern and appraisal from the superiors to the subordinates is an important key in the successful management of the employees, especially in times of crisis. It is crucial, to maintain, engagement in order to achieve the goal and the employee's well-being. The simple fact of certain terms used like "*having fought together with them in the company*" to describe all this situation can demonstrate that the feeling of union is higher and that this constant concern about their feelings and wellbeing just reinforces this feeling and increase consequently the engagement from them to the company.

So the answer to the main question is affirmative according to the findings and literature reinforcement. There is a positive link between the appreciation of the work from the superiors to the employees and the positive employee engagement to the company.

### ***RQ3: Could the company do differently in the COVID-19 pandemic?***

According to findings, there are several pieces of evidence that the company could do things in another way. Not all the employees agreed with the type of management by the company in specific aspects. The principal aspects noted were the incongruence of the schedule policies management and the control of a specific sanitation policy.

In relation to the incongruence management of time schedules, some employees noted that the fact of at the weekends the company had a more restricted schedule for the clients, brought more clients at the same time which made a necessary agglomeration of people. Carlos said "Very quickly. The main reason was the weekends, for example. The shop used to close early, and I don't think that was necessary at all. Because, the fact that the shop closed earlier meant that all the customers came to the shop at that time, so there was a greater flow, a greater concentration of customers, although for less time but it was a greater concentration. So I believe that, for example, at weekends, the change of schedule to close at the beginning of the afternoon was not necessary" (Carlos, 2021).

However it is important to notice that the time schedule management was not a policy made by the company, was an obligation imposed by the government to the pandemic. At the weekends the government imposed an obligation to all the markets close at 1 pm. But in this case, should not the company open early than 8 pm to not stimulate the agglomeration of people in the store? Or even ask an opinion from the employees?

Another proposal from the company that maybe should be made was to give the opportunity to the employees have an opinion about the management of their schedule.

According to chapter 2, especially during these times of crisis, human capital well-being is even more important to the success of the organization. In addition, is a crucial role for the Human resources department to promote their health and needs, but the demonstration of lack of promotion of this type of needs was not very clear, which brought emotional and confusion to the employees. This fact is due to the different personal needs among the employees that should be considered.

The control number of clients at the store was described as incongruence management by the company too. Is important to remember that one of the sanitation policies made by the company was the management of entrances from clients to the store, to avoid the agglomeration of people at the same time in the store. To control that they create a mechanism were was countable the number of entrances and it was number shown to everybody, but according to Daniel, the management of this number and the entrance of clients on the store was not the best. He said “What I would do differently... Currently, I think we're doing things well. Now, in the beginning, we really have to pay more attention to the issue of how many people enter the shop, because sometimes we have a lot more people than what is allowed, and sometimes there's a big pile of people around us and we can't escape from that situation. It's more from this perspective that I think I would do it differently, I would have even more security for the employees”, (Daniel, 2021).

These two factors showed an incongruence and by consequence a lack of transparency on the superior's communication with the employees. In addition, and according to Bogusky-Halper's (2020) survey, in chapter two, transparency is the number one employee's requirement from good communication from the leaders.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter it must be presented by the author three noticed limitations from several types of bias, during the study and a future investigation proposal, to approach this theme.

First of all, is notorious the personal opinion by the employees about all the actions made the company during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each one brought very important information about their personal feelings about the management of the pandemic by the company, but in some way, the difference of approach to the interview or even the difference of information given by each one of the employees was higher. Employees more introverted tend to not give all the necessary information, and on the opposite, the extrovert employees gave a lot of information, which brought a lot of tendencies to find the useful information.

The second limitation is related to the sample. Despite the fact of each employee has brought a lot of precious information about several topics related to the study, the number of interviewees should be higher than nine interviews. A sample with just nine employees could be a limitation in the representation of a market segment.

The third and last limitation is related to the fact that all the interviewees belong to the same company, which can bring a bias because cannot represent the entire retail segment. This restriction could bring bias to the goal of the investigation In future approaches is important to give a more global view of the retail market by, approaching more retailing segment of the market.



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## **Appendix A**

### Interview Guideline

#### Initial Phase (Open Questions)

1. Do you work in retail?
2. How long has it been?
3. Regarding COVID-19, what impact do you think it had on the adhesion of customers to the store?
4. How did the company react during the 1st Confinement? And on the 2nd?
5. How did you react when the company reacted to these confinements? And your colleagues?
6. What adjustments and what measurements were made during this period?
7. What differences exist in the company's actions in the 1st and 2nd confinement?
8. What advances and setbacks were made as the situation dragged on?



9. How do you characterize the general state of mind before the pandemic and during the pandemic? What differences did you notice there?
10. Was there or is there any recognition by subordinates?

#### Intermediate Phase (Concrete Questions)

- Sanitation and Protection Policies

11. Regarding the impact on work, what policies have been implemented regarding sanitation and protection in your workplace? Which?
12. What implications did these policies have on work dynamics?
13. What implications did these policies have on your performance at work?
14. What implications did these policies have on the personal/work life dynamic?
15. Were the imposed policies easily accepted or did you feel uncomfortable in accepting them?
16. With regard to the policies that have been implemented regarding sanitation and protection in your workplace, do you feel they were necessary? Why
17. What would you do differently?
18. Was it already possible to revert any of the implemented policies? Which/Which ones?
19. After this happened, was there any positive increase in your well-being?
20. Would you like some of these policies to be changed? Which/Which ones? Why?
21. When the situation is stabilized, would you prefer the current hygiene and protection policies to be maintained? Why?
22. Did you somehow feel the impact of these measures on your motivation? if so, in what way?
23. Did you feel any impact on your psychological fatigue due to these measures? If yes how?

- Schedule Policies

24. With regard to location-related policies, what changes have there been?
25. What had these policies in the work dynamics?
26. What did these policies have on the performance you had at work?

27. What have these policies had in the dynamic personal life / work?
28. Were the imposed policies easily accepted or did you feel uncomfortable in accepting them?
29. With regard to the policies that have been implemented regarding timetables by your place of work, do you feel they were necessary? Why
30. What would you do differently?
31. Was it already possible to revert any of the implemented policies? Which?
32. After this happened, was there any positive increase in your well-being?
33. Would you like some of these policies changed? Which / Which ones? Why?
34. When the situation has stabilized, would you prefer the current policies regarding hours to be maintained? Why?
35. Did you somehow feel the impact of these measures on your motivation? if so, in what way?
36. Did you feel any impact on your psychological fatigue due to these measures? If yes how?

#### Final Phase (Reflection Question)

37. Given the current state, would you prefer to go back to the pre-pandemic or post-pandemic state with regard to measures imposed by the company itself?

