

University of Bahrain
College of Business Administration
Department of Management and Marketing



Human Resource Management in the Era of Covid-19: The Perceived Effectiveness of Remote Service Sector Employee Performance Management Systems in Bahrain

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of M.Sc. in Human Resource Management

Prepared By:

Aysha Hesham Althawadi

20156581

Supervised By:

Dr. Makarand Upadhyaya

Associate Professor

December, 2022

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which the HRM practices of managing employee performances affects the perceived effectiveness of their PMS meant for remote service sector employees during Covid-19 in Bahrain. The factors studied in this research are leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness.

Design / Methodology / Approach: This research was designed using quantitative research methodology in order to gather and analyze the primary data. The quantitative data was collected by distributing a self-administered online questionnaire to the targeted population that consists of remote service sector employees in Bahrain. The questionnaire mainly depends on the use of the Likert scale method with a five-point rating scale for the list of five statements to study each independent variable in the research. A survey was conducted using the random sampling technique where excel was used to generate the data and analyzed using SPSS.

Findings: The research results show that leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness have a positive and significant relationship with the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

Research limitations / implications: The results of the research are limited to Kingdom of Bahrain with a limited sample size and response rate. There was limited access to information as well as time constraints. The study helps to contribute to theoretical frameworks and helps HR managers gain more understanding related to the factors that influence the effectiveness of their organization's PMS.

Originality / value: The thesis reviews existing literatures and provides suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Performance Management System (PMS), Human Resource Management (HRM), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Leadership style, Organizational support, Employee involvement, PMS fairness.

ملخص الرسالة

الغرض: الغرض من هذا البحث هو استكشاف مدى تأثير ممارسات إدارة الموارد البشرية لإدارة أداء الموظفين على الفعالية المتصورة لنظام إدارة الأداء الخاص بهم المخصص لموظفي قطاع الخدمات عن بُعد أثناء Covid-19 في البحرين. العوامل التي تمت دراستها في هذا البحث هي أسلوب القيادة والدعم التنظيمي ومشاركة الموظفين وعدالة نظام إدارة الأداء.

التصميم / المنهجية / المنهج: تم تصميم هذا البحث باستخدام منهجية البحث الكمي من أجل جمع وتحليل البيانات الأولية. تم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال توزيع استبيان إلكتروني عبر الإنترنت على السكان المستهدفين و هم موظفي قطاع الخدمات عن بعد في البحرين. يعتمد الاستبيان بشكل أساسي على استخدام طريقة مقياس ليكرت بمقياس تصنيف مكون من خمس نقاط لقائمة العبارات الخمس لدراسة كل متغير مستقل في البحث. تم إجراء مسح باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات العشوائية حيث تم استخدام برنامج Excel لتوليد البيانات وتحليلها باستخدام SPSS.

النتائج: تظهر نتائج البحث أن أسلوب القيادة والدعم التنظيمي ومشاركة الموظفين وعدالة نظام إدارة الأداء لها علاقة إيجابية وهامة مع الفعالية المتصورة لنظام إدارة الأداء لموظفي قطاع الخدمة عن بعد.

قيود / دلالات البحث: تقتصر نتائج البحث على مملكة البحرين مع حجم عينة ومعدل استجابة محدودان. كان هناك وصول محدود الى المعلومات فضلاً عن قيود الوقت. تساعد الدراسة على المساهمة في الأطر النظرية وتساعد مديري الموارد البشرية على اكتساب المزيد من الفهم فيما يتعلق بالعوامل التي تؤثر على فعالية نظام إدارة الأداء في مؤسساتهم.

الأصالة / القيمة: تستعرض الأطروحة الآداب الحالية وتقدم اقتراحات للبحث في المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظام إدارة الأداء (PMS)، إدارة الموارد البشرية (HRM)، مؤشرات الأداء الرئيسية (KPIs)، أسلوب القيادة، الدعم التنظيمي، مشاركة الموظفين، عدالة نظام إدارة الأداء.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their continuous support and encouragement throughout this journey. They have always been a source of inspiration to undertake my higher studies and to face its challenges with hard work, enthusiasm and faith in God. To my siblings, I hope this inspires you to achieve your goals in life no matter what they could be. Last but certainly not least, to my supervisor, Dr. Makarand, I would have not been able to complete this study without your constant support and guidance.

Acknowledgements

“It always seems impossible until it is done” ~ Nelson Mandela

I have learned a lot while working on this thesis from developing the idea until its submission. It has been a challenging yet inspiring task to take on. With the end of my MSc journey, I look back with gratitude at the people who made this possible. First, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and patience to achieve my goals and for blessing me with a strong support system.

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Makarand, for his continuous assistance and support throughout the entire process. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with a supervisor that motivates his students with words of encouragement and inspiration. Thank you for patiently guiding me to complete this research effectively in a timely manner and for your immense knowledge.

My friends and work colleagues, thank you for your participation and for instilling words of motivation when I needed it most.

Finally, I would like to thank you all.

Aysha Hesham Althawadi

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List of Abbreviations	
Abbreviations	Full Form
HRM	Human Resources Management
HR	Human Resources
PMS	Performance Management System
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SD	Standard Deviation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

In late 2019, China reported the emergence of an unexpected and infectious respiratory virus that is now widely known as the coronavirus disease leading to a world-wide pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic negatively affected many people's health both physically and mentally along with letting the world face a global economic crisis that distressed many organizations and their employees (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang, Wang & Bernardini, 2020). To add up, it led to the need for many organizations to alter their approaches to work in order to continue their operations and minimize the risk of spreading the virus. This included implementing the concept of digital transformation and remote work for most employees. The HR department is the key element that connects the organization to its human resources. As a result, the HR managers' role became more challenging during the pandemic as they were required to adjust their practices and strategies in order to manage a newly remote workforce (Adonu, Opuni & Dorkenoo, 2020).

According to Aguinis & Burgi-Tian (2021), the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light the fact that a lot of organizations do not apply an effective PMS. Instead, they show little effort in the area of communication by providing their employees with minimum feedback and guidance. Their performance evaluations are usually conducted on a yearly basis which does not allow for the quick detection of weak performances. To add up, it is found that the employees' performances are not in sync with the organizational goals and strategies which is detrimental to performance outcomes.

The broad range of research or studies on remote working may lead to an assumption that there is sufficient evidence on the challenges that came along with remote working during the pandemic. However, most of those studies were conducted at a time where remote working was infrequent, unforced and does not apply to the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Majority of the existing research on remote work has been generated from conditions where remote work was not vital for the survival or continuation of business operations and was only practiced every so often. Moreover, most employees of an organization did not experience remote work up until the Covid-19 pandemic. This will lead to differences in the individual performance outcomes for the employees who were extensively used to remote work in comparison with employees who never practiced remote work prior to the pandemic.

The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which the HRM practices of managing employee performances affects the perceived effectiveness of their PMS meant for remote service sector employees during Covid-19 in Bahrain. Literature shows a number of factors that affect the effectiveness of a PMS. However, those factors are not widely studied with the concept of remote working conditions, especially ones that are unplanned for prior to its requirement. The factors studied in this research are gathered by the author to fulfill the purpose of this research. These factors are leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness.

1.2 Research Problem

The problem of this research lies in the lack of knowledge regarding performance management and its effectiveness with involuntary and unintended remote work schemes during crisis similar to what was faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The HR departments and management can gain more knowledge and understanding regarding this topic and can implement in their strategies when dealing with similar future conditions.

PMS played a big role in managing the remote employees' performance during the pandemic, however, its effectiveness remains unclear. There is insufficient information on what factors influence the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS during the pandemic. In order to comply with government policies related to Covid-19 health and safety measures, almost every organization in Bahrain digitally transformed its operations and implemented a forced work-from-home strategy for most of its workforce. The concept of remote work is not new to the world and a substantial amount of studies related to it are available prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, those studies focus on self-imposed and pre-planned remote work schemes that fit with the nature of certain jobs. A research gap exists where there is a lack of knowledge related to performance management with the involuntary and unintended remote work schemes that needed to occur during a time of crisis as it was a new experience for most organizations and their employees.

1.3 Research Questions

A number of questions are to be answered in this research that will focus on achieving its aims and objectives. The following are the research questions, and the major research question is:

What are the main factors that influence perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS during Covid-19 in Bahrain?

Whereas the minor research questions are as follows:

1. Is there a significant relationship between leadership style and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS?
2. Is there a significant relationship between organizational support and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS?
3. Is there a significant relationship between employee involvement and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS?
4. Is there a significant relationship between PMS fairness and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS?

1.4 Research Objectives

In a world that is constantly changing, there becomes a need for PMS to be more strategic and dynamic in nature in order to adjust to uncertain conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic led to the need for HR to alter their PMS to manage a newly remote workforce. The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the perceived effectiveness of PMS meant for remote service sector employees during Covid-19 in Bahrain.
2. To identify the factors relating to remote service sector employee PMS effectiveness during Covid-19 in Bahrain.
3. To test the significance of each variable in the study with the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS (Leadership style, Organizational support, Employee involvement, PMS fairness).
4. To provide insight and recommendations for HR departments when facing similar situations in the future.

1.5 Significance of the Research

An effective PMS is necessary for any organization especially when they are going through new changes in the working environment as it has a major impact on the employees' productivity and organizational success. The outcomes of this research are significant as HR departments will gain more knowledge on the concept of PMS in remote working conditions, especially in such new and unplanned for remote working conditions that were introduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will encourage them to invest more of their resources in this area which will help them be more prepared in the future with similar situations. To add up, they will be able to analyze the factors that affect their organizations' PMS and their importance towards the perceived effectiveness of their PMS. Lastly, this research is important as it provides more focus on the factors that are not widely studied in relation to PMS for remote working environments.

1.6 Research Steps

The following steps are taken to achieve the research objectives:

1. Reviewing existing published literature reviews about remote service sector employee PMS and theoretical concepts related to the research objectives.
2. Identifying the applicable factors that influence perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS during Covid-19 in Bahrain.
3. Gathering data to determine the level of extent that leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness influences perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS during Covid-19 in Bahrain.
4. Analyzing and interpreting the results obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative data.
5. Concluding the research with a summary.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter	Description
One	<i>Introduction</i> - This chapter gives a brief overview about the topic of the thesis along with covering the research problem, research questions, research objectives, research significance, research steps and research limitations.
Two	<i>Literature Review</i> - This chapter provides a theoretical background. It also includes information on the proposed

	research factors that affect remote service sector employee PMS effectiveness during Covid-19 in Bahrain.
Three	<i>Research Methodology</i> - This chapter demonstrates the methodology used to conduct the research and collect data including the research design, research framework, research variables and research hypotheses.
Four	<i>Data Analysis and Discussion</i> - This chapter displays and analyzes the collected qualitative and quantitative data in order to answer the research questions and objectives.
Five	<i>Conclusion, recommendations and future research</i> - This chapter summarizes the research by demonstrating its results along with providing some recommendations and areas for possible future research.

1.8 Research Terminology

Performance Management System (PMS) is a system or mechanism that is used to track, monitor and control the employees' performance and is supported by a list of key performance measures or indicators known as KPIs. It allows the organization to ensure that their employees across all departments are working effectively towards achieving the organizational goals (Akhtar & Sushil, 2018).

Crisis management is the implementation of strategies in an organization that helps it deal with the emergence of a crisis or serious negative events. Some organizations may also form a crisis management team for such reasons. A crisis includes an unforeseen or unpredictable event that acts as a consequence or a risk to an

organization as a whole (Thielsch, Röseler, Kirsch, Lamers & Hertel, 2021).

Remote leadership, which is also known as virtual leadership, involves managing and leading the employees who work in remote work environments and are out of the leader's sight. It requires the remote leader to be more innovative and strategic in their approaches in order to be effective especially in the area of communication (Saltman, 2020).

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that encourages or motivates the employees to show more efforts and achieve higher performance levels and outcomes by transforming their attitudes and mindsets positively. It is one of the most influential styles of leadership as it creates valuable and positive changes in the employees' behaviors (Ribeiro, Yücel & Gomes, 2018).

Maslow hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation organized in the form of a five level pyramid that show the categories of basic human needs dictating an individual's behavior. The five needs are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs (Ghatak & Singh, 2019).

Leadership style is defined as the characteristics or attributes of a leader's behavior when leading, managing and motivating their employees or followers. There are many different types or styles of leadership where the most influential style is found to be transformational leadership. The chosen style of leadership can have a major influence on the employees' behavior and performance outcome

which is why it is an important element to consider (Purvanova & Bono, 2009).

Organizational support involves the employees' perception that their organization values their work contribution and cares about their health and overall well-being. It is a vital element to keep in mind as it can greatly impact the employees' dedication to the organization thus influencing their performance levels and organizational outcomes (Caligiuri, De Cieri, Minbaeva, Verbeke & Zimmermann, 2020).

1.9 Summary of the Chapter

To summarize, this chapter provides a brief overview on the base structure of the research that focuses on the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain. It details the purpose of the research which is to explore the extent to which the HRM practices of managing employee performances affects the perceived effectiveness of their PMS meant for remote service sector employees during Covid-19 in Bahrain. A research gap exists where there is a lack of knowledge related to forced or involuntary remote work schemes which is which leads to the research problem. To add up, this chapter presents and describes the research problem, major and minor research questions, research objectives, significance of the research, research steps, thesis structure and research terminology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Due to the rapid advancements in technologies and continuous digital innovations, the implementation of remote working was introduced as a new means of work over the past several decades (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015). However, prior to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has not been widely practiced in many organizations. The pandemic caused a worldwide economic crisis that had a negative impact on many businesses. A large number of employees lost their jobs as a result of their organizations suffering immense losses. Employees who remain working at their jobs had to go through sudden changes in the working environment like implementing social distancing or working from home through the use of technology and digitalization of business practices (Cooke, Dickmann, & Parry, 2020).

The pandemic brought up many challenges for the HR and management which required them to quickly adapt to the change along with helping their employees do the same both in their work environments and socially with their peers. Remote working means that an employee can work from any location they want outside of their organization such as in a café, coffee shop or library etc. However, the pandemic limited the availability of those spaces forcing the employee to only work from their homes which mentally affects some employees. To add up, remote employees with children who follow e-learning face additional challenges in managing a work-life balance and adjusting to this new scenario. This is where the importance of crisis management rises and its effectiveness is required to facilitate change in the organization (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

The disruptions that occurred from the Covid-19 crisis is not only viewed in a financial loss matter. It is also looked at from the aspect of the HRM and the human capital of the organization as they faced the challenges it brought. A crisis is defined as an uncontrollable negative event that is destructive to the operations of an organization negatively affecting its finances and employees. It can negatively influence the employees' behavior and attitudes, thus affecting their performance levels along with the organizational performance outcomes. It is the role of the HR professionals to set strategic practices in place when such crises take place and effectively manage it for organizational continuation and success (Manuti et al., 2020).

As most employees continued their work remotely from their homes, an effective PMS is crucial especially in such working conditions as it will aid in a smooth change process in the organization. The employees will feel more encouraged and committed to their organization when they feel that they are satisfied with their organization's PMS. Organizations will not be able to make fair decisions regarding their employees, gain employee motivation and engagement, retain the talented personnel or tackle HR issues when they occur if their PMS is not designed and implemented effectively (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021). Moreover, the success of a crisis management and change process is strongly influenced by the implemented leadership approaches and strategies which is why it is important to support a collaborative culture in the context of remote working conditions and empower the employees to be optimistic throughout the process (Manuti et al., 2020).

According to Aguinis & Burgi-Tian (2021), the HR function of managing employee performances is a vital tool for responsible and

efficient leadership. Performance management is the ongoing process of managing, tracking and developing employee performances. It helps management identify when their employees are stressed and burned out in order to adjust their strategies to provide them with a better work-life balance even when they are working remotely. To add up, it helps in the detection of factors that could contribute to the disruption of employee performance outcomes. This is because the performance management process focuses on both previous performances from performance evaluations along with the future performances through the implementation of performance development plans and guidance. Moreover, employee engagement levels will be positively influenced by an effective PMS as the employees will have more understanding on their organization's expected performance outcomes.

2.2 Performance Management System

A Performance Management System (PMS) is a system that is used to track, monitor and control the performance of the employees supported by a list of key performance indicators (KPIs) or performance measures. These measures or indicators weigh the performance, productivity and effectiveness of the employees work and organizational operations. Nowadays, most organizations implement a PMS with a main focus on having a strategic point of view. Due to the rapid changes in the working conditions, it creates an environment of ambiguity and organizations face some risks where they need to be flexible and strategic in the way they operate (Akhtar & Sushil, 2018).

There are six main elements of a PMS which are tasks, inputs, individuals, formal processes, informal processes and outputs. To start, tasks include the activities that are involved in managing the performance of the employees. This involves setting performance standards or key performance measures, monitoring employee performances, conducting performance appraisals with meetings and feedbacks along with providing guidance to improve performance levels. The second element is inputs which includes the performance management strategies or approaches that are used in the PMS. The third factor, individuals, is related to the attributes of the parties of concern in the performance management tasks with a main emphasis on leadership and the employees. The fourth factor is the formal processes or methodological approaches used in the PMS. This involves how the performance management tasks are to be implemented in the organization. Informal processes is the fifth element of a PMS which includes the verbal or non-documented elements that come along with time such as casual feedbacks. The sixth and last element is the outputs of a PMS which are the performance evaluation results, feedback, conducting a development plan and providing career planning along with recommendations (Schleicher, Baumann, Sullivan & Yim, 2019).

The performance management practices used by leadership has a big influence on the effectiveness of the organizational outcomes. There are a number of elements that management needs to review and focus on with their organization's PMS. The first is related to the design of the PMS which mainly centers the main purpose of the system. The organization's goal should be clear and leadership should design a strategic PMS that's purpose is to achieve that goal. The system should also include appropriate KPIs and performance measures to appraise the employees' performance. Competencies such as knowledge, skills and abilities help to differentiate

performers who exceed the expected outcomes from average performers. It is found that the PMS effectiveness is reduced when it does not focus on these competencies during assessments. The second element includes the way that the PMS is implemented in the organization. This involves the leadership approaches in implementing the system, the PMS fairness and employee involvement (Gorman, Meriac, Roch, Ray & Gamble, 2017).

Performance management is mostly useful for bigger corporations that operate in a dynamic working environment. The implementation of performance management can be ineffective if employees are unwilling to accept change and there is an absence of good leadership skills. An effective PMS that is innovative and involves the organization's employees will lead to effective decision-making and organizational outcomes. The process of planning and controlling both in the short-run and in the long-run is what makes a PMS innovative. To add up, having an effective PMS in the organization is beneficial for an effective communication between management and the employees which is vital for operational continuation and success (Akhtar & Sushil, 2018).

The impact of the performance management approaches used by management also relies on the employee's perceptions. For the PMS system to be effective, management should ensure its fairness amongst the employees. If the employees perceive the PMS to be unfair and biased, they will not accept the change or the feedback given to them from their leaders which will have a negative effect on performance levels and organizational outcomes. Management should involve employees when developing and implementing their PMS as it will extend the employees' perception of its fairness making them feel more secure knowing the organization's expectations in a clearer manner (Gorman et al., 2017).

2.3 The role of HR with remote employee performance management

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, organizations need their HR departments more than ever to manage and lead employees through this difficult situation. They have a big role in helping employees adjust to new working environments and overcoming the feeling of ambiguity and fear by developing and implementing new strategies throughout the organization. The pandemic resulted in organizations making difficult decisions to make sure that they continue to function and survive which included laying off some employees to reduce costs. Social distancing was introduced in organizations and most employees started working from their homes to avoid the spreading of the Covid-19 virus. It placed a threat on the human capital by affecting their behavior and motivation to work which impacted the organizational performance outcomes (Pandey, 2020).

HR practices need to be managed strategically in order to make them fit for the changed scenario. The shift in the traditional mode of communication and the regime of remote working has been quite challenging to maintain the performance of the employees. The transformation requires a major change in the system of the process in architecture and operations. Thus, it is a proven fact that the pandemic forced organizations to plan and implement new business strategies. The HR department plays a significant role in this implementation since their job is to plan, manage and support employees. Innovative leadership is required to properly plan and ploy the tactics that will contribute to the wellness of the employees and the organizations as a whole (Shil, Barman, Zayed, Shahi, & Neloy, 2020).

The use of technology is becoming crucial and this includes the need for the digital transformation of HR practices in organizations. Many organizations started to rely on technology to perform their operations and the HR department has a significant role in the implementation of this change. In order to maintain an organization's competitive advantage, the HR departments face a challenge in the digital transformation process of their HR practices and have to strategically utilize HR technology (Banu, 2019). A study by Parry (2011) states that E-HRM is more efficient to perform HRM duties because technology will make the job faster and more accurate. It will also help the HR department to enhance its practices in the organization through conducting online meetings and managing employees who work from home.

2.4 Change and crisis management during Covid-19

The process of managing change in an organization is known to be challenging for managers' which is why their adopted style of leadership is one of the most crucial elements in leading the employees towards a successful change process. This is because it influences the employees' level of motivation and acceptance towards the change strategies along with affecting the organizational culture. However, there are four other important elements in change management that companies may overlook and not notice that it may have an affect on the success of their change process. These elements include duration, integrity, commitment and effort (Sirkin, Keenan & Jackson, 2005).

The first element is related to the time it takes to implement the change or achieve a breakthrough moment in the change process. It is

suggested that organizations should not put their main focus on the duration of the change process. Instead, they should focus on reviewing the process on a frequent basis as it will help in identifying gaps and unforeseen risks that may occur. The second element, integrity, is concerned with choosing the best team of executives to carry out the change process successfully in the organization. These executives should be supportive towards the change and clearly communicate it to the employees. This is where the third element, commitment, also comes to place. The fourth and last element is effort and is related to the level of employee workload. It is suggested that employees' workload should not increase by 10% and it is more effective to eliminate unnecessary tasks while mainly focusing on the important tasks in order to not lead to employees resisting the change (Sirkin et al., 2005).

With the emergence of a crisis, organizations usually create and organize a structured team to manage the change process effectively in the organization who are known as the 'crisis management team'. From the standpoint of these crisis management teams, it is found that there are differences between the Covid-19 crisis and other crises. This is because big disasters and particularly pandemics rarely occur leaving the crisis management teams with little to no experience in such conditions making it more of a challenge. In the matter of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult and almost impossible to predict its time span as it doesn't have a specific pattern. The virus comes in waves which creates a high level of uncertainty on when it will come to an end leading to difficulties in decision-making as the results are unpredictable. Another difference between the Covid-19 pandemic and other crises is that it affects the team and other individuals on a more personal level where they have to follow critical rules such as social distancing and intensive hygiene procedures to reduce the risk of

spreading the virus. This also includes changing the organization's working conditions by adopting remote work among the employees without having prior experience in it. The rapidly changing government rules and conditions such as the need for lockdowns and forced restrictions is another distinguishable feature (Thielsch et al., 2021).

2.5 Remote transformational leadership

Leading employees who work from home is known as 'remote' leadership and requires following a transformational leadership style where both the employees and the leaders share a common vision for the organization's future and support a collaborative working environment (Kelloway, Barling, Kelley, Comtois & Gatien, 2003). There are four standards of remote or virtual leadership. The first is that the leader should be innovative and agile in order to connect the employees together in a remote working environment. The second is to have appropriate problem solving and decision-making skills in order to find solutions to any problem that may occur out of sight. The third is related to the leaders' ability to instill trust between the employees of the organization. The fourth and most important standard is to have an effective two-way communication with the remote employees (Hutajulu, Susita & Eliyana, 2021).

Transformational leadership is described as the list of actions projected by a leader that drives employees to accomplish better performance levels and outcomes through transforming their attitudes, beliefs and values. It is viewed as the most influential leadership style and plays an important role in the success of an organization. It includes four

features or elements related to a leader's behavior known by the authors as 'the four Is'. The first feature is Idealized influence or charisma which is related to a leader's attitude towards the employees and the approaches used in order to gain their trust and respect. The second element is Inspirational motivation which includes the leader acting as a role model and encouraging the employees to achieve better individual and organizational outcomes. Moreover, having an effective communication with the employees regarding expectations and desired results is important when it comes to transformational leadership. The third element is Intellectual stimulation where the leader promotes a culture of creativity, innovation and intelligence that aids in effective decision-making to be able to solve any problems that may occur throughout the transformation process. The fourth and last element of transformational leadership is Individualized consideration which includes the leader being able to analyze each employee individually by providing them with feedback and recognizing their individual efforts (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

A new set of challenges rises for leaders who lead a remote workforce as the leaders' chosen approaches influence the remote employees' performance and outcome. Remote employee leadership requires different approaches when compared to leading employees physically in a traditional workspace. It requires an extra amount of cohesiveness between employees for it to go smoothly due to the lack of physical interaction, different time zones, remote environments and technology (Chamakiotis, Panteli & Davison, 2021).

According to Saltman (2020), leading employees in a remote work environment requires the leader to alter their strategies in order to fit that type of working conditions that features a lack of in-person interaction with

the employees. A remote leader should be able to develop effective ways to stay in contact with the remote employees along with placing appropriate monitoring measures in place to view remote employee work output while still giving them enough autonomy in their job. Some remote employees may feel left out and that their efforts are unnoticed as the leader is out of sight. So, it is also important to recognize the remote employee's work and efforts while they are working from home as it can have a big impact on their performance and productivity. To add up, this type of working condition requires the remote leader to be prepared in dealing with stressful situations and solving problems that may occur with the remote employees in an effective manner.

In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, the nature of the virus is unpredictable and brought up the feeling of ambiguity amongst people. There was a sudden need for lockdowns and restrictions which required a shift to remote working conditions for most organizations in order to continue their operations in a safe environment. Even though the employees worked together locally prior to the pandemic, this shift affected their level of engagement which is where the leaders' role is crucial to keep employees engaged and productive even when they are out of sight. A remote leader should stress the importance of having an effective two-way communication with their remote employees and focus on encouraging and motivating them to be optimistic. Moreover, it is found that remote employees are more productive in their work when there is a high level of trust between them and their leader. So, remote leaders should persistently encourage a culture filled with trust and collaboration to keep the employees engaged and achieve high levels of performance (Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

2.6 Maslow's hierarchy of needs and remote work

In 1943, a psychologist named Abraham Maslow introduced a theory that is based on human behavior which categorizes the five basic human needs known as the 'hierarchy of needs'. This theory is portrayed in the form of a pyramid starting with the most basic need at the bottom and its main purpose is to gain a better understanding on what helps to motivate human beings. Maslow also states that the lower needs must be fulfilled in order to move up the pyramid to the next level of needs. The first or bottom level of the pyramid starts with the most basic needs that is psychological needs. It includes a human's basic needs to survive such as food, water, shelter, clothing and overall health. The second lower-level need is safety needs which includes feeling safe, secure and having a sense of stability whether it was emotional or financial. The third level is love and belonging needs which is related to a human's social life and having human interactions with family, friends and colleagues. The next level is esteem needs which includes being self-confident and independent along with feeling respected and recognized amongst others. The last and topmost level of the pyramid is self-actualization needs which can be achieved by recognizing our own potentials and fulfilling them (Ghatak & Singh, 2019). Figure 1.1 displays Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

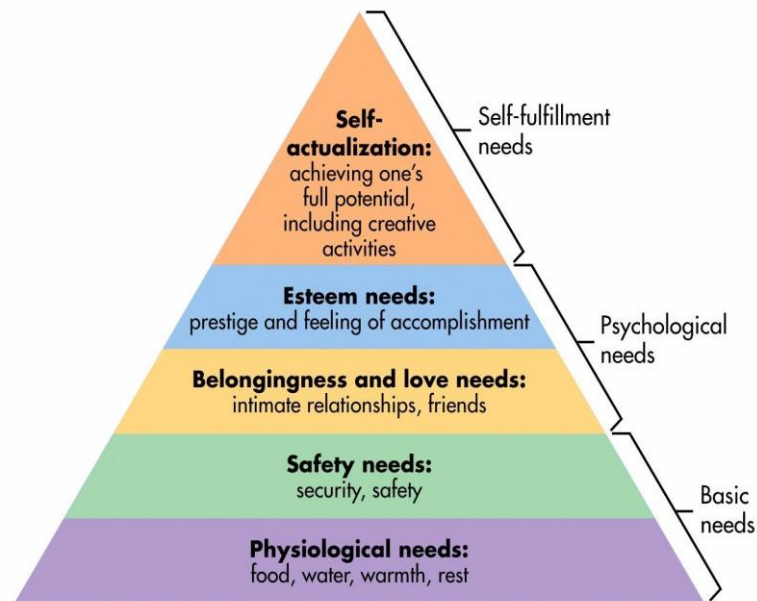


Figure 1.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

An effective human resource management is vital especially with the employees being introduced to forced remote working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because the employees' level of motivation and satisfaction with their job determines their performance and productivity outcomes hence influencing the organizational performance. Managers and HR professionals need to take into consideration the needs of their employees as shown in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Each need category in the hierarchy ties in with different aspects of remote work that aid in fulfilling the respective needs (Petcu, Sobolevschi-David, Anica-Popa, Curea, Motofei & Popescu, 2021). Figure 1.2 illustrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs applied to remote work. It will help gain a better understanding on the importance of motivation and job satisfaction in remote working conditions, especially in situations like the Covid-19 pandemic where remote work was suddenly implemented leading to drastic changes for most organizations and their employees.

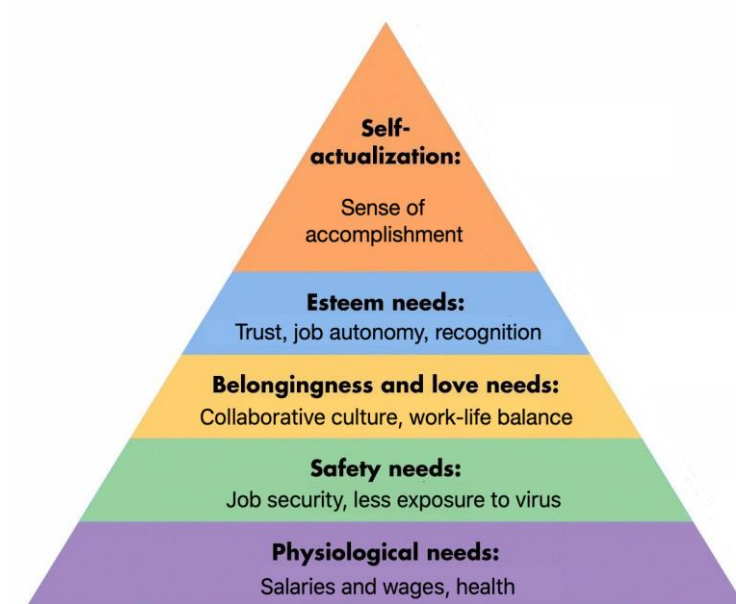


Figure 1.2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs applied to remote work

The first or bottom layer of the pyramid is related to physiological needs which are met with the remote employees receiving their salaries and wages for food, water, paying rent and supporting their family especially since the Covid-19 pandemic affected the economy in a negative way. This need category also includes saving time and money on transportation along with feeling responsible for taking care of their health by being at home. The second lower-level need is safety needs which are met when the employees have job security by remote working rather than being laid-off. Also, feeling safe about working from home and not being exposed to the virus. The third level is love and belonging needs which is related to socializing and human interactions. This includes remote employees feeling involved and connected with colleagues through communication supported by a collaborative culture. Due to flexible work dynamics, remote employees feel more connected to their families allowing them to spend more time together and have a work-life balance. The next level up the pyramid is esteem needs that are met when employees feel that their

managers trust them to complete their work remotely and recognizes their efforts. This need is also met when remote employees are given job autonomy to manage their work schedule independently. The last need level is self-actualization where remote employees feel accomplished for completing their tasks and duties without constant management supervision and with their own flexible work schedule (Petcu et al., 2021).

2.7 Proposed research factors affecting remote service sector employee PMS effectiveness during Covid-19 in Bahrain

Following a thorough review of relevant journals and articles from a vast pool of studies, this section is based on the surveys and findings of previous research in connection to the key elements of the study. To address the study gap, these factors were not detected as a group in any previous studies.

2.7.1 Leadership style

The first factor of the study is concerned with the adopted style of leadership towards newly remote employees during the pandemic and its significance in influencing the effectiveness of an organization's PMS. Due to the covid-19 crisis, new challenges were introduced to managers which required them to adjust the way they lead their employees and organization in order to achieve their goals.

Studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between leadership and employee performance, satisfaction and organizational

culture. Specifically, transformational leadership style positively affects the outcomes of the the employees as it enhances their level of motivation, commitment, engagement and performance thus positively influencing organizational outcomes (Poturak, Mekić, Hadžiahmetović & Budur, 2020). According to Sirkin et al. (2005), leadership style is an important factor that influences employees' level of motivation and acceptance towards organizational change initiatives thus influencing their performance. Similarly, Purvanova and Bono (2009) found that the most appropriate leadership style for virtual or remote working environments is transformational leadership style as it has a much stronger influence on the remote employees' performances.

Most of the former studies related to transformational leadership style mainly focus on leadership in the form of in-person working environments whereas recent studies also cover its application within remote working conditions. It is found that the adoption of a transformational leadership style on remote employees is feasible more than ever due to the continuous advancements of technology that allow for easier and faster communication between leaders and their followers. However, some of the researchers also express their concerns related to the effectiveness of remote employees' performance management where they believe that 'remote' leadership is detrimental to employee performances (Kelloway et al., 2003). The importance of this factor is looked at through the concept of change and crisis management along with transformational leadership in remote working conditions.

The following are some of the points that will be developed in this study related to leadership style:

- The effectiveness of communication between leader and remote employees for an effective PMS during the pandemic.
- The amount of timely and useful feedback given by the leader to the remote employees.
- The level of trust between leadership and the remote employees as they are working out-of-sight.
- Leadership approaches in giving the remote employee a certain level of job autonomy.
- Leadership style in motivating the remote employees during times of uncertainty that came from the pandemic.

2.7.2 Organizational Support

The second factor of the study is related to the employees' perception that their organization values them and their efforts along with caring about their health and safety. This factor will be studied in terms of remote working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic and its significance in influencing the effectiveness of an organization's PMS. A study by Ribeiro et al. (2018) shows that employees are more devoted to their organization when they feel that they are getting the support they need and that their organization cares about their health and safety. As a result, employees are more committed to their organization and put more effort to improve their performance levels in order to achieve the organization's goals.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought up challenges for the HR in managing the employees who work remotely and have children going through e-learning at the same time. It is found that providing the remote

employees with a flexible work schedule allows for a better work-life balance, thus improving their performance outcomes as employees will be less stressed and more productive when they plan their own schedule (Perrigino & Raveendhran, 2020). The context of remote work usually consists of a certain level of job autonomy which does lead to a better work-life balance. However, too much job autonomy can have a negative effect on the remote employees' performance as the employee may get occupied with their family thus disrupting their focus on work (Wang, Liu, Qian & Parker, 2020).

Research shows that organizational support is vital especially during times of uncertainty that came with the pandemic as it can have a positive influence on the employees' adjustment to a remote work environment. Management should care for their employees' health and safety especially during the pandemic. They can encourage the employees to take regular breaks from work and provide flexibility in work schedule to relief their stress. The main aim should be to care for the employees along with improving their performance and engagement levels (Caligiuri et al., 2020).

The concept of remote working means that an organization will need to make sure that its employees possess the right technology to be able to perform their jobs online from their homes as there may be people who do not own it. Some organizations provide devices, software systems and even an allowance to its employees for the purpose of covering their working requirements. However, not all organizations can afford it, especially during a pandemic. To add up, employees may need assistance or training on how to use the technology and systems in order to perform well digitally (Pandey, 2020).

The following are some of the points that will be developed in this study related to organizational support:

- The organization's care towards its employees' health and safety during the pandemic.
- The supply of materials and technological equipment to remote employees for effective performance.
- The provision of training and guidance on how to use the given materials and technological equipment effectively.
- The support given to the remote employees that aid towards a better work-life balance.
- The availability of IT support when needed by the remote employee.

2.7.3 Employee involvement

The third factor of the study is related to employee participation or involvement in decision-making and its significance in influencing the effectiveness of an organization's PMS. A research by Gorman et al. (2017) suggests that organizations should let their employees participate in the designing and execution of the PMS in order to make them feel more involved and satisfied with the process. This is because the employees will feel a sense of belonging in the organization and that the leadership cares about their point of view. Moreover, employees will feel more secure as they will have a clear idea of the expected performance outcomes which will be beneficial to the organizational goals. To add up, increased levels of employee involvement is linked to the employees' perceptions of the PMS fairness.

Caligiuri et al. (2020) stresses the importance of employee

recognition especially with remote working conditions. Remote employees should be given attention for their skills and efforts particularly during a pandemic. This can be done by mentioning and recognizing the employee during virtual meetings along with including the virtual communication and teamwork efforts as a criterion in the performance evaluations.

The following are some of the points that will be developed in this study related to employee involvement:

- The organizational approaches in aiding a collaborative culture.
- The employees' level of ease or reassurance with communicating their suggestions and concerns to management.
- The level of employee involvement in decision-making with a flexible working schedule.
- The level of trust given towards the employee as they are working alone in a remote environment.
- The amount of recognition received by the remote employee from their management.

2.7.4 PMS Fairness

The fourth and last factor of the study is concerned with the employees' perception of the PMS fairness and its significance in influencing the effectiveness of an organization's PMS. According to Gorman et al. (2017), a PMS is considered more effective when it is perceived as fair by the employees of the organization. This is because the employees will not listen to the feedback if they feel like the system is unfair or their rater is biased with their results. It is recommended that the organization involves its employees when developing and implementing

their PMS in order to raise the employees' perceptions of the PMS fairness along with improving the PMS effectiveness.

The following are some of the points that will be developed in this study related to PMS fairness:

- Senior leadership provides a clear explanation of the organizational goals and expected outcomes.
- The fair distribution of workload between all the remote employees.
- The feeling of favoritism from management towards specific employees.
- The frequency and appropriateness of monitoring the remote employees' work.
- The performance appraisal fairness being free from rater bias.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter

An organizational culture that supports innovation and teamwork is more likely to survive the changes emerging from the external environment. These innovative organizations will more likely be able to develop their performance and adjust to collaborative approaches of work. Performance is also affected by an employee's level of engagement which reflects their views towards their organization's goals and objectives. When implementing a PMS, it is important to consider the human aspect in order to be effective. This includes making sure that the employees understand the system as its implementation will be affected by their behavior. Receiving organizational support and training can highly influence an employees level of satisfaction, commitment, motivation and performance (Jugmohun, 2018).

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approaches used in this research to achieve the research objectives in identifying and studying the factors relating to remote service sector employee PMS effectiveness during Covid-19 in Bahrain. These factors include leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness. The methodology used to conduct the qualitative and quantitative research for gathering the data will also be discussed in this chapter along with the targeted population that consists of service sector employees from various departments who have experienced remote work during Covid-19 in Bahrain for both private and public organizations. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire in order to gain the required resources to test the research hypothesis and come to a result whereas secondary data was collected from quality online journal articles. Moreover, this chapter shows the population and sample size along with the data collection and analysis tools used.

3.2 Research Design

A research design acts as a framework when collecting and analyzing data for a study. This research looks at human resource management in the era of Covid-19: the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee performance management systems in Bahrain. The research design is an important element in this research as it will help ensure that the methodological approaches used match the research aims and objectives in order to reach clear and valid conclusions.

This research was designed using quantitative research methodologies in order to gather and analyze the primary data. The quantitative data was collected by distributing an online questionnaire to the targeted population that consists of remote employees. Other than the demographic questions, the questionnaire include a list of 5 statements for each independent variable in the research in the form of a Likert scale. Other general questions were asked relating to the employees' experience with remote work prior to the pandemic. Also, their perception towards remote working after experiencing it during the pandemic and whether they prefer primarily remote working, traditional working in the workplace or a hybrid work model. Secondary data was carefully gathered from quality online journal articles to construct the literature review and conceptual model of the research.

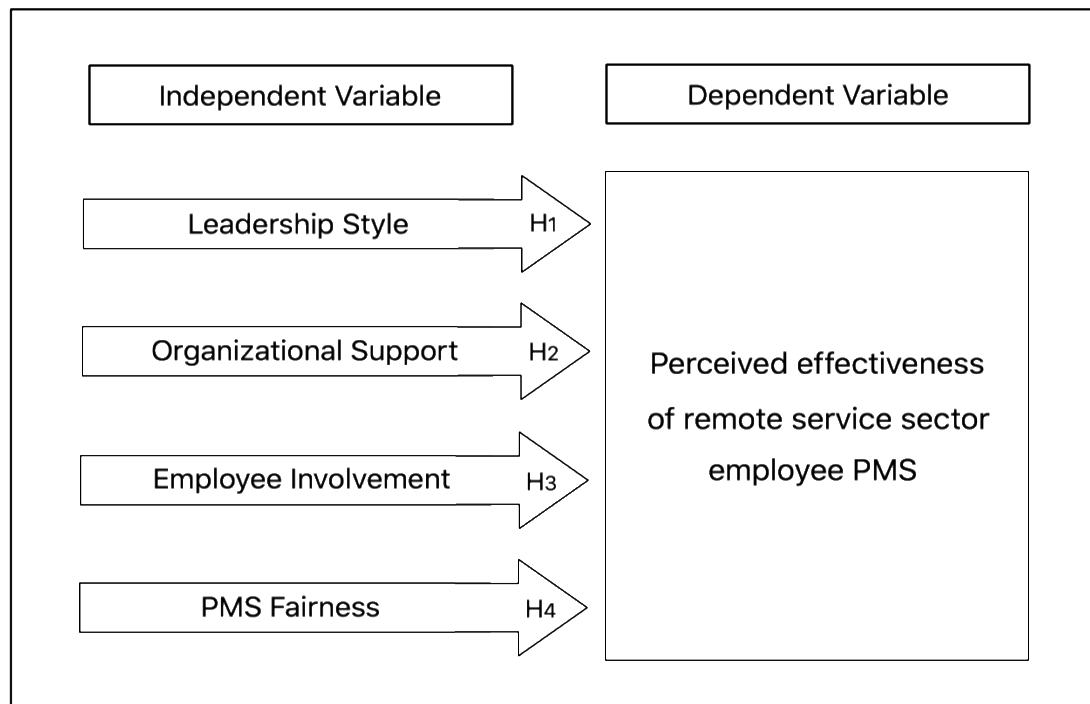
Descriptive research design was applied in this research in order to achieve the researcher's set research goals. There are various ways to design or structure a survey for the purpose of achieving results. For the purpose of this research, the researcher chose a simple and less expensive method through the use of reliable online survey service providers and digital devices. To add up, the use of online devices allows the researcher to reach a larger population of respondents which is beneficial for the end results. The chosen method is flexible and easy to work with which makes it more beneficial by digitally distributing the conducted survey to the targeted population. Moreover, the chosen method allows for a better data analysis process as it provides adequate survey results that can be conducted both online and offline.

3.3 Research Framework

Based on literature related to PMS effectiveness and remote work, the identified factors were not intended for the involuntary remote work schemes that needed to take place during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research framework of this research is based on four important factors that will fill the gap in the literatures. The perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS conceptual framework consists of the following four factors illustrated in Figure 3.1:

- Leadership Style
- Organizational Support
- Employee Involvement
- PMS Fairness

Figure 3.1. Conceptual framework



3.4 Research Variables

The variables of this research are categorized into independent and independent variables and are shown in Figure 3.1.

a) Independent variables:

- Leadership style: is related to the adopted style of leadership towards newly remote employees during the pandemic.
- Organizational support: involves the employees' perception that their organization values them and their efforts along with caring about their health and safety.
- Employee involvement: is related to employee participation or involvement in decision-making.
- PMS fairness: is concerned with the employees' perception of their organization's PMS fairness.

b) Dependent variable:

- Perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

3.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were formulated based on the research questions and objectives:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between leadership style and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between

organizational support and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

H3: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee involvement and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

H4: There is a positive and significant relationship between PMS fairness and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

3.6 Research Instruments

A five interval scale was used in order to interpret the respondent's degree of agreement with the statements. The following formula was used to calculate the score intervals:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score interval} &= (\text{Maximum score} - \text{Minimum score}) / \text{Number of levels} \\ &= 5 - 1 / 5 = 0.8 \end{aligned}$$

Table 3.1 shows the rating scale used for the assessment of the degree of agreement:

Table 3.1: Likert Scale of Agreement

1-1.8	1.81-2.6	2.61-3.4	3.41-4.2	4.21-5
Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Neutral (N)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)

The correlation between the factors was calculated using the formula and the results rated between -1 and +1. The positive values indicate a positive relationship while the negative values indicate a negative relationship. According to Wilson (2014), the scale that measures the strength of correlation and the rule of thumb for interpretation correlation size is displayed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: The Rule of Thumb for Interpretation Correlation Coefficient Size

Size of Correlation	Strength of Relationship
± 0.91 and ± 1.00	Very Strong
± 0.71 and ± 0.90	Strong
± 0.41 and ± 0.70	Moderate
± 0.21 and ± 0.40	Weak
± 0.00 and ± 0.20	No Significant Relationship

Table 3.3: The Rule of Thumb on Cronbach's Alpha

Alpha Coefficient Range	Strength of Association
< 0.6	Poor
0.6 to < 0.7	Moderate
0.7 to < 0.8	Good
0.8 to < 0.9	Very good
0.9	Excellent

Source: Hair et al. (2003); Essentials of Business Research Method

3.7 Data Collection

For the qualitative research, primary data was collected through the distribution of a standardized questionnaire to the targeted population consisting of remote employees in order to gain the required resources to test the research hypothesis and come to a result. The secondary data was collected from quality online journal articles to construct the literature review and conceptual model of the research. The main tool to collect the data was:

- a) Questionnaire: The questionnaire was designed after a thorough research on multiple literatures reviews. The questionnaire (refer to Appendix B) was distributed and resulted in a total of 148 respondents in both public and private organizations located in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The online survey is based mainly on the use of the Likert Scale method with a rating scale of 5 points. The chosen survey design method makes the analysis more reliable and easier to monitor with a clear presentation of the data. To add up, it was distributed to a random sample of people to obtain the required data. The survey is divided into six main sections where the first section is based on the general or demographic data of the respondents. The second section includes general questions relating to the employees' experience with remote work prior to the pandemic. Also, their perception towards remote working after experiencing it during the pandemic and whether they prefer primarily remote working, traditional working in the workplace or a hybrid work model. The third to sixth sections include a list of 5 statements for each independent variable in the research in the form of a Likert scale.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires

3.8.1 Validity

The validity of a research refers to the extent to which the research concept is accurately measured by the researcher. The obtained data from the respondents was organized and measured statistically. Multiple sources of questionnaires, data and previous studies were used in order to ensure the validity of the research. The design of the questions is based on a clear understanding of the factors that impact the perceived effectiveness of remote employee PMS. A sample of the initial questionnaire was presented to four faculty members prior to its distribution in order to gain their opinions on the appropriateness of the questionnaire in achieving the research objectives. Also, to get their feedback on whether the wording of the questionnaire was clear to the respondents and understandable.

3.8.2 Reliability

The reliability of the research relates to the degree to which the research methodologies produce consistent results when it is repeated. All the participants received the questionnaire in a similar manner in order to ensure research uniformity. The reliability of the questionnaire statements was assessed for the purpose of ensuring the reliability of the questionnaire in their measurement. The most common and reliable tool applied to estimate the proportion of variance in a range of test scores is Cronbach's alpha that spans between the values 0 and 1. The value 0 indicates that there is an inconsistency with the variances while the value 1 shows a consistency between all variances. According to Bonett and Wright

(2014), the minimum acceptable value is 0.6 which will consider the statement as reliable. Hair et al. (2003) provides a rule of thumb for Cronbach's Alpha values that are displayed in table 3.3.

Table 3.4 shows the reliability statistics using Cronbach's alpha for all statements in this research. All the factors have Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.6 which indicates that they are all internally consistent, acceptable and reliable for analysis. Leadership style has the highest value with alpha of 0.857 while the lowest value of alpha is 0.761 for Organizational support.

Table 3.4: Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics			
Factors	No. of statements	Cronbach's Alpha	Comment
Leadership Style	5	.857	Accepted
Organizational Support	5	.761	Accepted
Employee Involvement	5	.849	Accepted
PMS Fairness	5	.844	Accepted

3.9 Data Analysis

The data and drawing charts were presented and processed using Microsoft Excel. The collected quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following analysis methods were used:

- 1) Frequencies and percentages to analyze the demographic data.
- 2) Standard deviations and mean averages for each statement in the questionnaire.

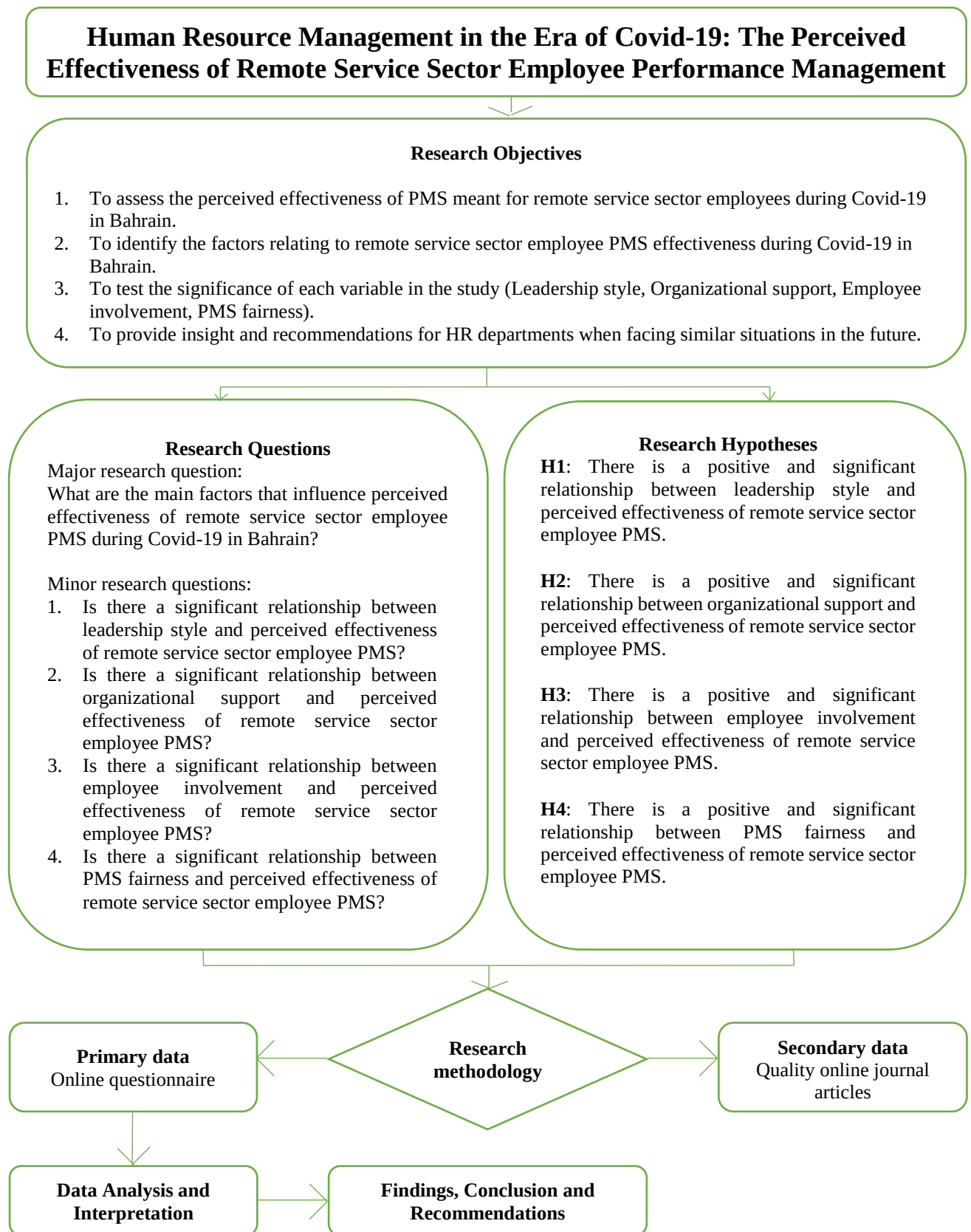
- 3) Cronbach's alpha method to measure reliability of the statements.
- 4) Pearson's correlation to measure the relationship between the variables.

3.10 Population and Sampling

The targeted population consists of service sector employees from various departments who have experienced remote work during Covid-19 in Bahrain for both private and public organizations. A simple random sampling method was applied with participants from both genders. This method was chosen and implemented as it ensures that the obtained results from the sample would be approximately similar to what would have been obtained if the whole population had been measured. The sample size formula was used and the results for the required number of respondents was 323. The self-administered online questionnaire was designed using Question Pro website and was distributed digitally through Whatsapp and email. Participants were assured that their responses would remain strictly confidential and utilized only for the purpose of this research in order to make them feel more comfortable. A pilot study was conducted with a total of 14 respondents in order to find out if there were any alterations that needed to be made before the distribution of the final version of the questionnaire. Taking this step is useful in detecting errors such as unclear questions that may lead to invalid results. It was found that the display or format of the questionnaire on the website made respondents think that the questionnaire ended leading to incomplete questionnaires. Moreover, the survey questions were reviewed by the supervisor for approval.

3.12 Research Flowchart

Figure 3.2: Research Flowchart



3.13 Summary of the Chapter

To summarize, this chapter includes the methodological approaches used for the purpose of achieving the research objectives and obtaining end results. In order to study the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain during Covid-19, the research was designed using quantitative research methodologies through the distribution of an online questionnaire. This chapter displays the conceptual framework, research variables and hypotheses on the four factors leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness. Moreover, the research instruments and the chosen data collection methods are explained in detail which include a questionnaire for the primary data and quality online journal articles for the secondary data. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was also assessed. Microsoft Excel and SPSS software were used in order to process and analyze the data. The targeted population included remote service sector employees in Bahrain's for both public and private organizations during the pandemic and random sampling technique was used. The research flowchart is also displayed to give a better understanding of the steps taken throughout the research.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

The data was collected through the use of a self-administered online questionnaire and was analyzed using Microsoft Excel along with SPSS software. To start, a correlation analysis was conducted in order to interpret the respondent's degree of agreement with the statements. The gathered data was processed and tabulated using SPSS for a simpler interpretation. A total of 148 responses were received from both male and female participants. To gather data related to the research variables, Likert scales with a 5 points rating scale were used. To add up, this chapter will show whether the research hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the responses of the participants.

4.2 Response Rate

Table 4.1 displays the total number of questionnaires distributed which was 293 where 148 responses were received and completed.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire responses

Questionnaire responses	
Total questionnaires distributed	293
Completed questionnaires	148
Completion rate	50.51%

4.3 Questionnaire Design and Analysis

The analysis of the quantitative data is divided into four sections. The first and second section include a descriptive analysis of the

demographic data along with a summary of the respondents' profile. The third section deals with general questions related to remote work. The fourth section includes the multivariate analysis related to testing the hypotheses results.

4.3.1 Demographic Analysis

This section covers the respondent's demographics such as their gender, age, educational background, position level (seniority), level of work experience along with the number of children following E-learning due to Covid-19. The figures and tables below show the frequency and percentage levels for each category.

Figure 4.1 and Table 4.2 display the gender of the questionnaire's respondents. It is found that out of 148 respondents, most of them were female (80) making up 54% of the responses while about 46% were male respondents (68).

Figure 4.1. Gender

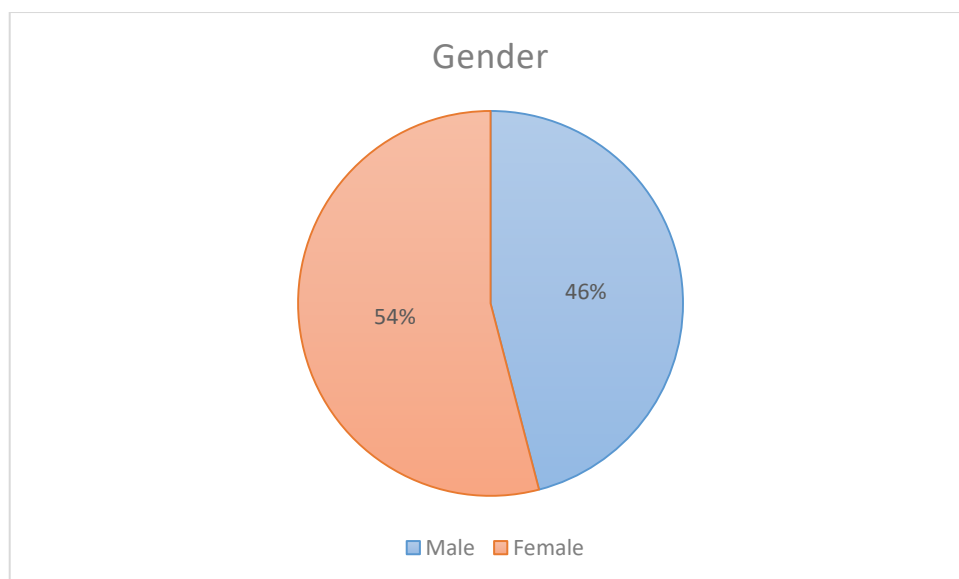


Table 4.2. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	68	45.95%
Female	80	54.05%
Total	148	100%

Figure 4.2 and Table 4.3 show the age range of the respondents. There were five different age distributions presented in the questionnaire. Most of the respondents (55) were between 25 to 35 years old making up 37% of the responses. The second highest response rate was about 23% (from respondents younger than 25 years old. The least amount of responses (8) were from individuals older than 55 years old making up only 5% of the responses.

Figure 4.2. Age

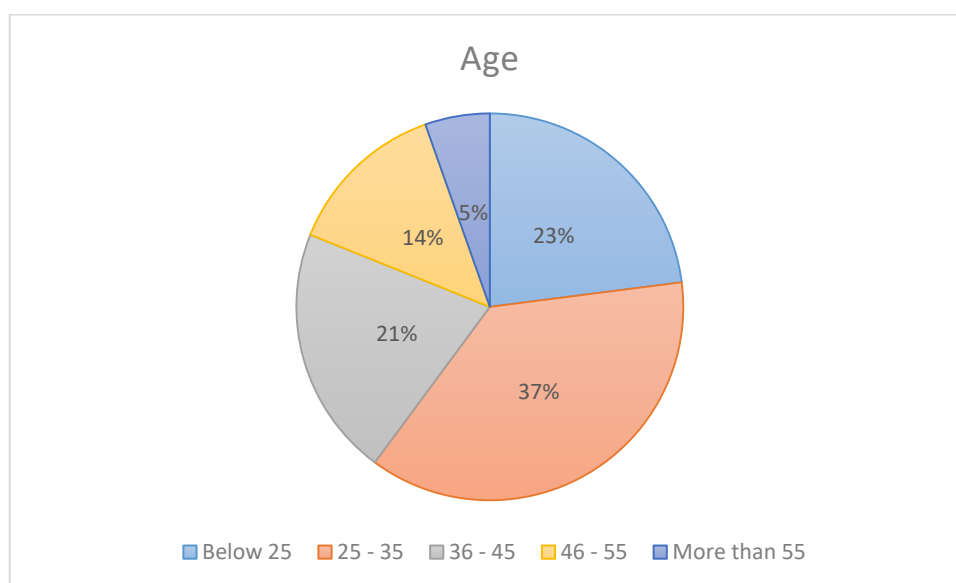


Table 4.3. Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 25	34	22.97%
25 - 35	55	37.16%
36 - 45	31	20.95%
46 - 55	20	13.51%
More than 55	8	5.41%
Total	148	100%

Figure 4.3 and Table 4.4 display the respondents' educational background. Most of the respondents (92) have a bachelor's degree making up 62% of the received responses. The second highest number of responses (42) are from individuals holding a master's degree with a percentage of 28%. The lowest level of responses are even results between individuals with high school certificates and doctoral degrees (4) making up about 3% of the responses each.

Figure 4.3. Educational background

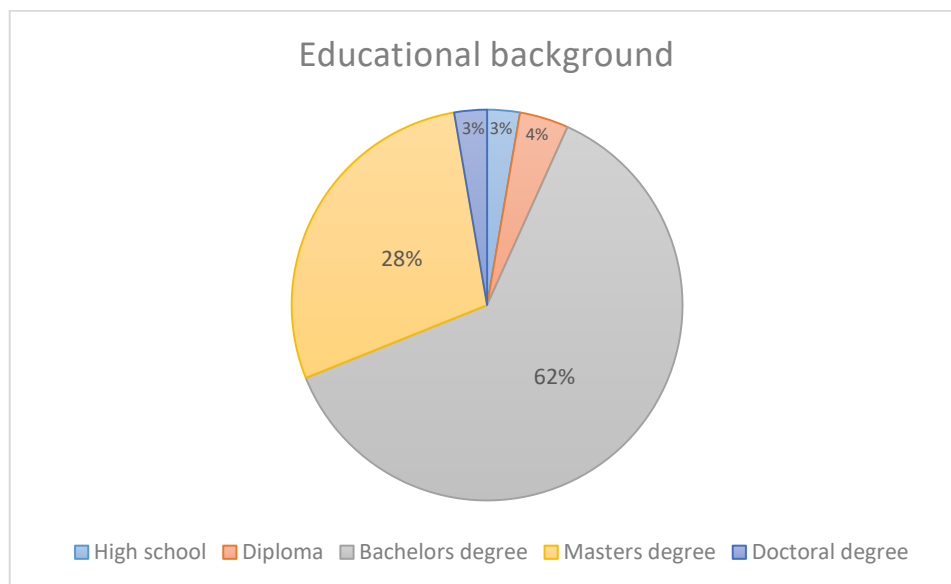


Table 4.4. Educational background

Educational background	Frequency	Percent
High school	4	2.70%
Diploma	6	4.05%
Bachelors degree	92	62.16%
Masters degree	42	28.38%
Doctoral degree	4	2.70%
Total	148	100%

As shown in Figure 4.4 and Table 4.5, most of the respondents (115) position or seniority level are in the middle range making up almost 78% of the responses while the lowest number of responses (14) were from

individuals with low seniority levels making up 9% of the responses. Only 13% of the respondents (19) come from high seniority levels.

Figure 4.4. Position level (seniority)

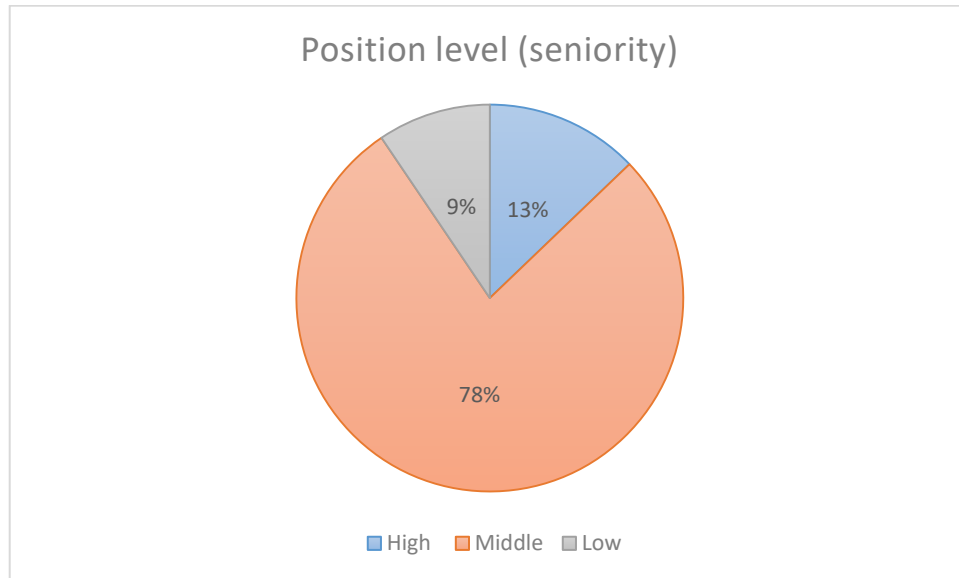


Table 4.5. Position level (seniority)

Position level (seniority)	Frequency	Percent
High	19	12.84%
Middle	115	77.70%
Low	14	9.46%
Total	148	100%

The respondents level of work experience is shown in Figure 4.5 and Table 4.6. It is found that almost 30% of the respondents which is most of them (44) worked for more than 10 years. About 24% of the respondents (35) worked between 1 to 3 years. While the three other options of individuals who worked for less than 1 year (24), 4 to 6 years (22) and 7 to 9 years (23) had approximately the same percentage result of 16%, 15% and 15% relatively.

Figure 4.5. Level of work experience

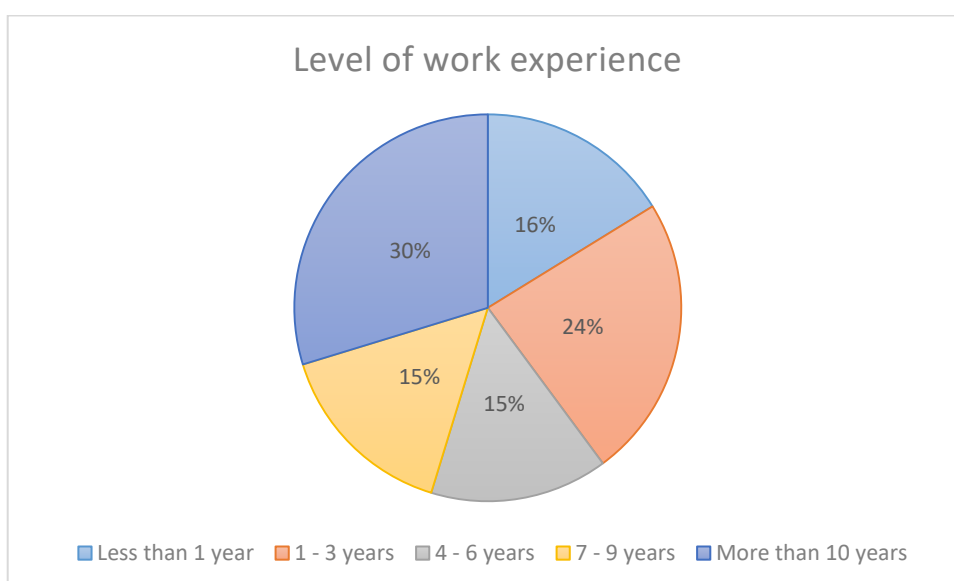


Table 4.6. Level of work experience

Level of work experience	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	24	16.22%
1 - 3 years	35	23.65%
4 - 6 years	22	14.86%
7 - 9 years	23	15.54%
More than 10 years	44	29.73%
Total	148	100%

Regarding the respondents number of children following E-learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the results are displayed in Figure 4.6 and Table 4.7. Most of the respondents (85) answered that they have no children following E-learning during Covid-19 making up more than half (almost 58%) of the responses. Approximately 17% of the respondents (25) have one child, 24% (36) have two to four children and only 1% (2) respondents have more than 4 children following E-learning due to Covid-19.

Figure 4.6. No. of children following E-learning due to Covid-19

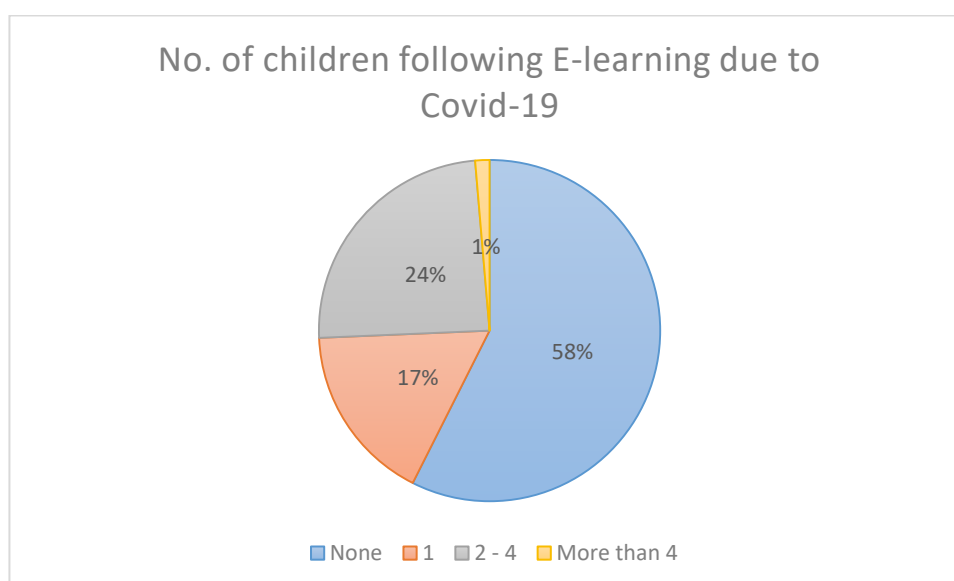


Table 4.7. No. of children following E-learning due to Covid-19

No. of children following E-learning due to Covid-19	Frequency	Percent
None	85	57.43%
1	25	16.89%
2 - 4	36	24.32%
More than 4	2	1.35%
Total	148	100%

4.3.2 Respondents Profile Summary

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	68	45.95%
Female	80	54.05%
Total	148	100%

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 25	34	22.97%
25 - 35	55	37.16%
36 - 45	31	20.95%
46 - 55	20	13.51%
More than 55	8	5.41%
Total	148	100%

Educational background	Frequency	Percent
High school	4	2.70%
Diploma	6	4.05%
Bachelors degree	92	62.16%
Masters degree	42	28.38%
Doctoral degree	4	2.70%
Total	148	100%

Position level (seniority)	Frequency	Percent
High	19	12.84%
Middle	115	77.70%
Low	14	9.46%
Total	148	100%

Level of work experience	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	24	16.22%
1 - 3 years	35	23.65%
4 - 6 years	22	14.86%
7 - 9 years	23	15.54%
More than 10 years	44	29.73%
Total	148	100%

No. of children following E-learning due to Covid-19	Frequency	Percent
None	85	57.43%
1	25	16.89%
2 - 4	36	24.32%
More than 4	2	1.35%
Total	148	100%

4.3.3 Remote Work

This section will provide the questionnaire results of the two general questions asked to the participants related to remote work. Figure 4.7 and Table 4.8 display the respondents answers when asked whether they experienced remote work prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is found that most of the respondents (102) did not experience remote work before the

pandemic making up about 69% of the received responses. Only 31% of the respondents (46) have experience remote work before the pandemic.

Figure 4.7. Experienced remote work prior to Covid-19

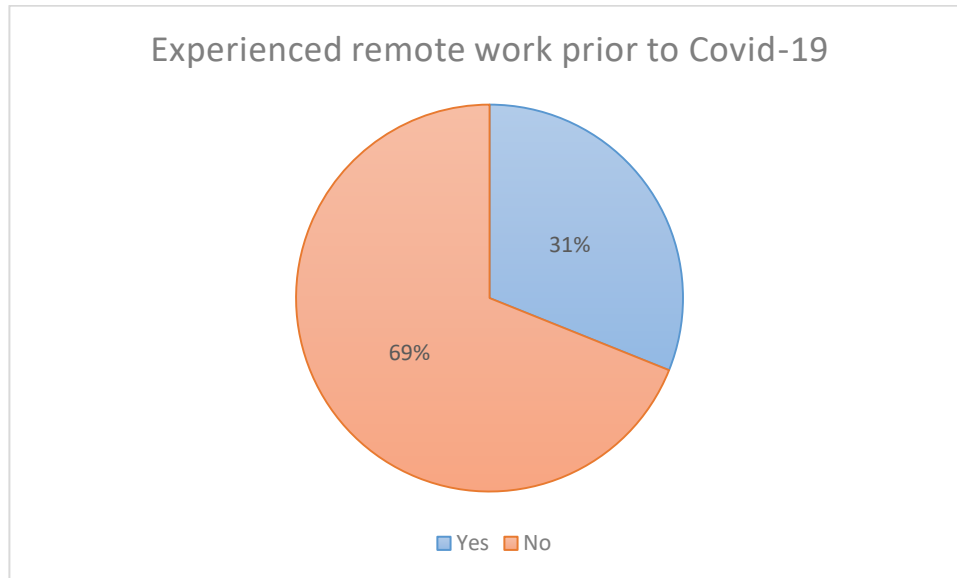


Table 4.8. Experienced remote work prior to Covid-19

Experienced remote work prior to Covid-19	Frequency	Percent
Yes	46	31.08%
No	102	68.92%
Total	148	100%

Figure 4.8 and Table 4.9 shows the respondents answers when asked about their most preferred work arrangement. Most of the respondents (81) prefer a hybrid work model which is a mix between both remote work and working in the office. They make up 55% which is more than half of the responses. The respondents who prefer to work fully at their offices (46) make up 31% of the received responses while the least amount of respondents is 14% (21) with a preference of fully remote work.

Figure 4.8. Work arrangement preference

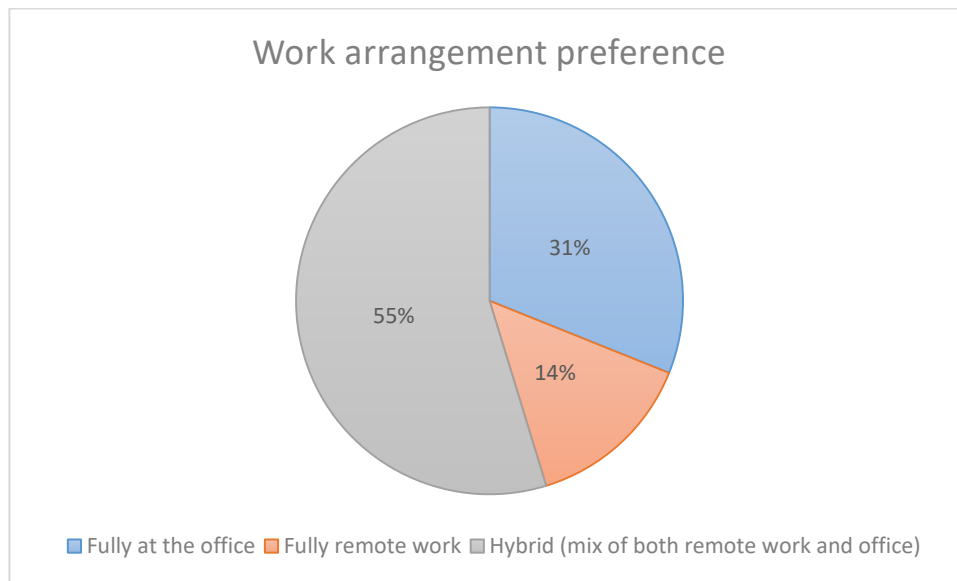


Table 4.9. Work arrangement preference

Work arrangement preference	Frequency	Percent
Fully at the office	46	31.08%
Fully remote work	21	14.19%
Hybrid (mix of both remote work and office)	81	54.73%
Total	148	100%

4.3.4 Inferential Analysis

The third section of the questionnaire is related to the four research factors: Leadership Style, Organizational Support, Employee Involvement and PMS Fairness. It included a five-point Likert scale, starting from “Strongly disagree” at a score of 1 to “Strongly Agree” at a score of 5. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the five statements for each factor in the research. A simple mean-based ranking is used to analyze each statement for the factors. Table 4.10 displays a summary of the factors ranked by the mean. The highest mean is for the factor “Leadership Style” with a value of 3.87 while the lowest mean value

is 3.75 for the factor “Organizational Support”. The difference between the highest and the lowest value is 0.12

Table 4.10 shows the current state of practice for each factor in Bahrain. The first rank is for leadership style with a mean of 3.87, the second rank is for employee involvement with a mean of 3.804, the third rank is for PMS fairness with a mean of 3.786 and the last rank is for organizational support with a mean of 3.75.

Table 4.10. Summary of the factors ranked by the mean

Summary of the factors ranked by the mean		
Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
1- Leadership Style	3.87	.896
2- Employee Involvement	3.804	.888
3- PMS Fairness	3.786	.899
4- Organizational Support	3.75	1.017

- **Leadership Style**

This factor measures the importance of leadership style for the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain during Covid-19. This factor has 5 statements displayed in Table 4.11 with a ranking of the mean results.

Result analysis: The leadership style factor mean average (3.87) and standard deviation (0.896) indicate that respondents agree that leadership style is necessary for perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

Table 4.11. Leadership style

Leadership Style		
Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1- There is a level of trust between me and my leader	4.24	.854
2- There is an effective communication between leaders and employees	3.99	.857
3- Leader motivates me to be optimistic in facing the future	3.84	.948
4- I receive useful and timely feedback from my leader	3.83	.820
5- I have the freedom to make some decisions about my work	3.47	1.000
Leadership style total average	3.87	0.896

- **Organizational Support**

This factor measures the importance of organizational support for the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain during Covid-19. This factor has 5 statements displayed in Table 4.12 with a ranking of the mean results.

Result analysis: The organizational support factor mean average (3.75) and standard deviation (1.017) indicate that respondents agree that organizational support is necessary for perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

Table 4.12. Organizational Support

Organizational Support		
Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1- My organization cares about my health and safety	4.27	.770
2- IT support was constantly available when needed	4.16	.911

3- My organization supported me in managing a work-life balance	3.53	.899
4- I was given access to the materials and technological equipment I need to perform effectively when working remotely	3.51	1.322
5- I was provided guidance or training on how to use new tools to perform effectively when working remotely	3.30	1.182
Organizational Support total average	3.75	1.017

- **Employee Involvement**

This factor measures the importance of employee involvement for the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain during Covid-19. This factor has 5 statements displayed in Table 4.13 with a ranking of the mean results.

Result analysis: The employee involvement factor mean average (3.804) and standard deviation (0.888) indicate that respondents agree that employee involvement is necessary for perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

Table 4.13. Employee Involvement

Employee Involvement		
Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1- I felt trusted to perform my work in a remote environment	4.17	.868
2- My organization supports a collaborative culture	4.00	.710
3- I receive enough recognition from management	3.78	.989
4- I feel comfortable communicating my suggestions and concerns to management	3.73	.877
5- I was given decision-making autonomy with flexible working hours	3.34	.995
Employee Involvement total average	3.804	0.888

- **PMS Fairness**

This factor measures the importance of PMS fairness for the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain during Covid-19. This factor has 5 statements displayed in Table 4.14 with a ranking of the mean results.

Result analysis: The PMS fairness factor mean average (3.786) and standard deviation (0.899) indicate that respondents agree that PMS fairness is necessary for perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS.

Table 4.14. PMS Fairness

PMS Fairness		
Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1- Frequency of work monitoring was appropriate	4.04	.727
2- Senior leadership clearly communicated goals and expected outcome	3.82	.831
3- Management did not show favoritism to specific employees	3.72	1.062
4- I feel that my performance was evaluated fairly and free from bias	3.72	.849
5- Workload was distributed fairly amongst employees	3.63	1.025
PMS Fairness total average	3.786	0.899

4.3.5 Research Hypotheses Results

The research hypothesis was analyzed using the Pearson's correlation in order to measure the relationship between the four factors (Leadership style, Organizational support, Employee involvement, PMS fairness) and the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. The results of the correlation are displayed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15. Pearson's Correlations Matrix

Pearson's Correlations Matrix

		Leadership Style	Organizational Support	Employee Involvement	PMS Fairness	PMS Effectiveness
Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.599**	.664**	.613**	.844**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	148	148	148	148	148
Organizational Support	Pearson Correlation	.599**	1	.655**	.553**	.828**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	148	148	148	148	148
Employee Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.664**	.655**	1	.722**	.891**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	148	148	148	148	148
PMS Fairness	Pearson Correlation	.613**	.553**	.722**	1	.846**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	148	148	148	148	148
PMS effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.844**	.828**	.891**	.846**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	148	148	148	148	148

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

Result analysis for Table 4.15:

“**H1:** There is a positive and significant relationship between leadership style and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS”. The correlation factor $r = 0.844$ shows a strong correlation result. This means that there is a positive and significant

relationship between leadership style and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

“H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between organizational support and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS”. The correlation factor $r = 0.828$ shows a strong correlation result. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational support and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

“H3: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee involvement and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS”. The correlation factor $r = 0.891$ shows a strong correlation result. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee involvement and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

“H4: There is a positive and significant relationship between PMS fairness and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS”. The correlation factor $r = 0.846$ shows a strong correlation result. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between PMS fairness and perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

The overall results of the Pearson’s analysis indicate that employee involvement has the strongest relationship with perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS with $r = 0.891$. This factor is important for HR management and leadership to keep in mind as letting the employees participate in the designing and execution of the PMS makes

them feel more involved and satisfied with the process. The second strongest relationship with perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS is PMS fairness with $r = 0.846$. The PMS is considered more effective when it is perceived as fair by the employees of the organization. The third strongest relationship with perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS is leadership style with $r = 0.844$. Leadership style is an important factor that influences employees' level of motivation and acceptance towards organizational change initiatives thus influencing their performance. It is also found that the most appropriate leadership style for remote working environments is transformational leadership style as it has a much stronger influence on the remote employees' performances. Finally, the fourth and last strongest relationship with perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS is organizational support with $r = 0.828$. Employees are more devoted to their organization when they feel that they are getting the support they need and that their organization cares about their health and safety. Table 4.16 displays a ranking of the tested hypothetical factors.

Table 4.16. Ranking of tested hypothetical factors

Ranking of tested hypothetical factors

Hypothetical related factor	Correlation coefficients	Sig*	Comment
1- Employee Involvement	0.891	0.000*	Accepted
2- PMS Fairness	0.846	0.000*	Accepted
3- Leadership style	0.844	0.000*	Accepted
4- Organizational support	0.828	0.000*	Accepted

Sig*: Significant value

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

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

To summarize this chapter, a series of statistical analysis tools were used through Microsoft Excel and SPSS in order to test the research hypotheses related to the relationships between the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS and the four research factors: Leadership style, Organizational support, Employee involvement and PMS fairness. All the research hypotheses were accepted with a positive and significant relationship between the four factors and the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS where results showed the strongest relationship with employee involvement.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

This chapter concludes the research by providing the research results and recommendations along with proposing suggestions for future research in the area of discussion related to PMS effectiveness in remote work environments.

5.1 Conclusion

The main focus of the research lies in identifying the factors relating to remote service sector employee PMS effectiveness during Covid-19 in Bahrain. These factors are leadership style, organizational support, employee involvement and PMS fairness. Moreover, its aim is to assess the perceived effectiveness of PMS meant for remote service sector employees during Covid-19 in Bahrain and test the significance of each variable in the study. By reviewing the related literatures and through secondary data analysis, the researcher found a lack of relevant literature about the factors related to PMS effectiveness in remote service sector work environments where the research is an attempt to address the research gap of PMS effectiveness in remote service sector work environments in Bahrain.

Literature shows a number of factors that affect the effectiveness of a PMS. However, those factors are not widely studied with the concept of remote working conditions, especially ones that are unplanned for prior to its requirement. The factors studied in this research are gathered by the author to fulfill the purpose of this research and the survey was developed based on these factors. A total of 148 completed questionnaires were received from the respondents. After conducting data analysis, the results show that all the four factors have a positive and significant relationship

with the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS. To conclude, all of the research hypotheses were accepted.

5.2 The Theoretical and Managerial Implications

5.2.1 The Theoretical Implications

This study focuses on the perceived effectiveness of remote service sector employee PMS in Bahrain and studies the role of HRM in managing their performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, this study helps to contribute in the development of theoretical frameworks for the purpose of explaining and understanding the HR strategies or practices that affected the PMS effectiveness the most in Bahrain.

5.2.2 The Managerial Implications

This study helps HR management and leaders to gain more knowledge and understanding on the factors that influence the effectiveness of their organization's PMS. When taken into consideration, the results and findings of this research will bring more awareness to top management that will help them in their planning and decision-making process for a more effective PMS in their organizations. To add up, it will show the crucial role of an appropriate leadership style and its effect on the employees' performance especially in remote working conditions and times of uncertainties like the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.3 Research Limitations

This research focuses on the perceived effectiveness of remote employee PMS during Covid-19 with the following limitations:

1. Limited to the Kingdom of Bahrain: The topic of the research can be applicable and useful to many other geographical locations. The results of this research includes a limited population of targets in the Kingdom of Bahrain and reflects their experiences only.
2. Time constraints: Limited time in order to meet the deadlines of the thesis requirements.
3. Sample size and response rate: The sample size is limited and not all have responded. Some respondents did not complete the entire survey which required the author to discard those attempts.
4. Limited access to information: Due to E-learning and the pandemic, it was difficult to visit the university's library to access past research studies. Also, there is a lack of previous studies related to the research topic.

5.4 Suggestions for Future research

The Kingdom of Bahrain and its strong healthcare system was able to effectively handle the Covid-19 crisis which is the result of a good crisis management. The results of this study can be assigned to other comparable countries. However, future studies can investigate the

extent to which they apply under distinct conditions. To add up, this study focuses on studying the HR role in performance management practices for remote service sector employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is suggested to study the other HR practices in the context of remote working environments in Bahrain to add more useful insight to literature.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following is recommended:

- To improve the communication between leadership and the remote employees by giving them more feedback and making them feel more comfortable in communicating their concerns and suggestions.
- Leadership should consider providing some type of job autonomy to the remote employee as it will aid in a better work-life balance thus improving their level of engagement and performance.
- To involve the employees when developing and implementing the PMS in order to raise the employees' perceptions of the PMS fairness along with improving the PMS effectiveness.
- Provide the remote employees with more training and guidance on how to use new tools in order to improve their performance effectively.
- It is recommended to increase the sample size in order to include a larger amount of respondents for better accuracy of the research results.

- To take advantage of the research results in order to be more prepared and knowledgeable about remote working conditions during a time of crisis and the factors that influence the PMS effectiveness of an organization.

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Appendix – 1 Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire

Human Resource Management in the Era of Covid-19: The Perceived Effectiveness of Remote Service Sector Employee Performance Management Systems in Bahrain

Dear participants,

My name is Aysha Hesham Althawadi and I would like you to take few minutes of your time to complete the following survey which is required to get my master's degree in Human Resource Management from University of Bahrain. Thesis study title is "Human Resource Management in the Era of Covid-19: The Perceived Effectiveness of Remote Service Sector Employee Performance Management Systems in Bahrain."

The following questionnaire will take 5 to 7 minutes of your time. I hereby declare, that all the information provided will be held confidential and will only be used for the current research work under progress. There will be copies provided to Dr. Makarand Upadhyaya Associated Professor at University of Bahrain. Your active participation and genuine response will be highly appreciated. Please feel free to share this questionnaire with other employees.

Section 1: Demographic Data

Directions: Please select option that best describes you.

1. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

2. Age:
 - a. Below 25
 - b. 25 - 35
 - c. 36 - 45
 - d. 46 – 55
 - e. More than 55
3. Educational background:
 - a. High school
 - b. Diploma
 - c. Bachelors degree
 - d. Masters degree
 - e. Doctoral degree
4. What is your position level (seniority)?
 - a. High
 - b. Middle
 - c. Low
5. Level of work experience:
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1 - 3 years
 - c. 4 – 6 years
 - d. 7 – 9 years
 - e. More than 10 years
6. Number of children following E-learning due to Covid-19 (*if applicable*):
 - a. None
 - b. 1
 - c. 2 – 4
 - d. More than 4

Section 2: Remote work

7. Did you experience remote work prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Which of the following work arrangements do you prefer most?
 - a. Fully at the office
 - b. Fully remote work
 - c. Hybrid (mix of both remote work and office)

Section 3: Leadership style

Directions: Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
9.	There is an effective communication between leaders and employees	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I receive useful and timely feedback from my leader	1	2	3	4	5
11.	There is a level of trust between me and my leader	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I have the freedom to make some decisions about my work	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Leader motivates me to be optimistic in facing the future	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4: Organizational support

Directions: Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
14.	My organization cares about my health and safety	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I was given access to the materials and technological equipment I need to perform effectively when working remotely	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I was provided guidance or training on how to use new tools to perform effectively when working remotely	1	2	3	4	5

17.	My organization supported me in managing a work-life balance	1	2	3	4	5
18.	IT support was constantly available when needed	1	2	3	4	5

Section 5: Employee involvement

Directions: Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
19.	My organization supports a collaborative culture	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I feel comfortable communicating my suggestions and concerns to management	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I was given decision-making autonomy with flexible working hours	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I felt trusted to perform my work in a remote environment	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I receive enough recognition from management	1	2	3	4	5

Section 6: PMS fairness

Directions: Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
24.	Senior leadership clearly communicated goals and expected outcome	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Workload was distributed fairly amongst employees	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Management did not show favoritism to specific employees	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Frequency of work monitoring was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I feel that my performance was evaluated fairly and free from bias	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your time