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Research Article

THE USE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITHIN 5-STAR HOTELS IN TURKEY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS AND ITS EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement (EE) has become a popular term in organisational management recently. In the relevant literature, the use of internal communication (IC) channels is claimed to be a significant factor in increasing employees' engagement levels. However, the number of research conducted on this issue within the hotel context in the tourism sector is very limited. Therefore, this research aimed to examine the use of IC channels and their effects on employees' satisfaction levels from their jobs, the meaningfulness of their work and their commitment levels to their organisations during the COVID-19 crisis. Questionnaire technique was used in the study for data collection and 389 employees from five-star hotels in different geographical regions of Turkey participated in the research. The results obtained with relevant statistical analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship between the use of IC channels and satisfaction levels of employees at Turkish hotel organisations.

Keyword: Crisis, internal communication, employee engagement, hotel organisations, COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "internal communication" emerged first in the 1990s in the USA and developed very quickly and become widespread in the world (Vercic et al., 2012). If organisations do not use IC channels, employees tend to lose their trust in their organisation, and as a consequence of that, they start to care about their self-interests and they become sceptical towards their organizations. They also tend to take less initiatives and stop engaging in their organisation's goals (Ely, 2015). That is why IC is considered to be an important tool for organisations to improve or restore their employees' trust (Quirke, 2008). On the other hand, employee engagement (EE) is claimed to reduce employee turnover, increase shareholders' value and functions as a catalyst in employees' outperformance within their organisations (Watson Wyatt, 2004; Woodruffe, 2006). With this regards, much research in the relevant field has claimed that IC is an important issue in employees' engagement in their organisation (Baumruk et. al., 2006), and the organisations effectively communicating with their employees could have higher EE (Baumruk et al., 2006; Yates, 2006). Whereas much research has claimed that communication is an important means for increasing EE, the number of research conducted in the

tourism sector to find out the relationship between the use of IC channels and its effects on employees' engagement is very limited.

1.1 Significance and Purpose of the Study

This paper aims to find out any significant relationship between the use of IC channels and employees' engagement in the hotel organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and then to find out in what way the use of IC channels influences employees' level of engagement in the examined sector. It is commonly believed by field scholars that organisations effectively communicating with their employees can establish an environment encouraging employees to believe in organisational goals and to spend more effort voluntarily to achieve the set organisational goals. There has been much research in the relevant field examining the use of IC channels and their relationship with employees' job satisfaction levels. However, the number of research in the field of tourism empirically examining the effect of IC on EE is very limited. Therefore, this study is considered to be significant as it was designed to provide empirical support regarding the relationship between the use of IC channels and EE within hotel context during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a health crisis causing damage in the tourism sector as in all other sectors.

1.2 COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started in Wuhan in China in 2019, is a health crisis with global effects in world tourism. When 2020 August is taken as the cutting edge, it is seen that 21.294.845 cases and 761.779 deaths were confirmed globally (UNWHO, 2020). Almost all countries (except 1 or 2) worldwide have been in a struggle against the pandemic to stop its spread and to relieve its social and economic effects. To achieve this, they started "shelter-in-place" "wear your mask" and "keep your social distance" initiatives to fight with the spread of the virus. Some businesses were closed for some period to prevent dense human interaction, and only some businesses considered to be essential for the provision of basic human needs were allowed to continue their operations (VOX, 2020).

As reported by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2020), international tourist arrivals are predicted to decrease by 20% to 30% in 2020. Considering this prediction, the loss in the figures regarding the international tourist arrivals will mean between 300 and 450 US$ billion. The countries which have a higher reliance on the income from tourism are expected to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis more seriously. The top ten countries in terms of international tourist arrivals are predicted to suffer the hardest from the COVID-19 pandemic. As reported in the forecasts regarding tourism, Asian counties are expected to suffer from the pandemic the hardest when their revenue earned from travel and tourism is considered (STATISTICA, 2020). European countries where around 13 million people are employed in the tourism sector are predicted to lose about €1 billion per month because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Italy, which is one of the most popular touristic destinations in Europe, is predicted to experience a 60% loss in international tourist arrivals when compared to the figures of 2019. This figure is almost the same as the figures of 1960s (ASSOTURISMO, 2020).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE
2.1 Internal Communication (IC)

IC is defined as an interaction between an organisation and its employees, which are the key elements of such organisations (Dolphin, 2005). IC is also defined as social interaction with the use of appropriate messages (Kalla, 2005) and it is claimed that IC is a signal for management's ability to communicate with their employees at varying levels in their organisations (Welch and Jackson, 2007). Quirke (2008) points out that IC provides employees with the information that they may need to effectively do their jobs or tasks. It could also be defined as the exchange of formal or informal information between the managing team of an organisation and the employees of that organisation. Communication within organisations may be achieved through circulation materials, newsletters, surveys, interactions conducted face-to-face meetings, suggestion boxes, email, Intranet, video conferences, Internet, notice boards, memos, letters, formal presentations, telephone calls, open forums reports, wikis and blogs (Baumruk et al., 2006; Yates, 2006). Communication is also defined as meaningful interaction happening among people (Clutterbuck and Hirst, 2003). Barrett (2006) added that communication is the bases for any relationship at organisations and so no one can claim a good relationship without communication.

IC is claimed to be a very powerful instrument in effective organisational management. Gates (2000) highlights that, similar to the human being, organisations have to establish an IC system, just like the nervous system of the human being to coordinate the actions of the organisation. Therefore, the scientific interest in IC is gaining popularity. The objectives of IC within an organisation could be summarized as follows Spitzer and Swidler (2003):

- The shared information could be understood and accepted in terms of its content, intent, relevance and merit.
- Motivating, directing, informing and including the communicated employees.
- Achieving improvement in one or more of the following areas such as product quality, profitability, sales, workforce performance and satisfaction, and, as a consequence of that customer satisfaction.

The characteristics of a good IC could be summed up as follows (Farrant, 2003):
- Measurable
- Two way
- Accuracy – grapevine
- Honesty
- Inclusive
- Comprehensible
- Timely
- Prepared and delivered competently

2.2 Employee Engagement (EE)

EE is a term often used in business management literature, and it is gaining more popularity. Quirke (2008) pointed out that the engaged employees are considered to have a higher and stronger emotional tie to their organisations, and they also tend to recommend their organisations to others committing more time and effort to help their organisations reach their goals. In line with this definition, it could be claimed that engaged employees tend to contribute to their organisations with higher performance. In other words, they are more likely to remain as a part of the organisation.

The research conducted in the relevant field in recent years claims that EE is an important component of organisational success (Gallup, 2012; Aon Hewitt, 2012). Therefore, EE has become a key issue for organisations in the last century (Leadership Insights, 2011). Engaged employees could be claimed to be more motivated, be better at improving themselves, and be productive (Clampitt and Downs, 1993; Harley et al. (2005). They could also understand and align themselves with the culture of their companies and the business strategies of organisations as suggested by Coleman (2005). Engaged employees are also more innovative (Linke and Zerfass, 2011) and have a better psychological state (Robertson and Cooper, 2010). EE is also closely related to employees' retention, employees' performances, and the profitability of organisations (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Hughes and Rog, 2008).

Engaged employees are the ones who are intellectually and emotionally committed to their jobs, and thus they want to give their best effort to their jobs (Sias, 2005). The employees who exhibit such effort are claimed to have positive attitudes towards their jobs; better belief in and better identification with their organizations, and they also work hard to make things at the organisation better; treat others respectfully and encourage their colleagues for better performance; meet the requirements of their jobs; remain up to date about their field; and look for opportunities to improve their organizational performances (Harley et al., 2005). Besides, Baumruk et al. (2006) suggested the following behaviours for the engaged employees: they defend their organizations; they are motivated to be a key element of their organizations despite some other external opportunities; they spare extra effort, and they start a new initiative to help their organizations to grow.

2.3 Relationship between IC and EE

Effective communication is considered to be the primary goal of organizations. When organizations remain silent, they are expected to experience unwanted outcomes just because employees may tend to care speculations on the media to learn about their organisation (Hoover, 2005). When a crisis hits, communication could play a significant role in sustaining the business and its well-being. As suggested by Hoover (2005), when a crisis hits, the use of communication channels keeps employees engaged and thus help the organization

move forward. However, when there is not communication, a mismatch between what managers tell their employees about their organisations and what employees read or hear on the media may occur and this may demotivate employees and cause them to feel a lack of trust.

When employees feel the support of their supervisors, they become more engaged in their jobs or tasks assigned by their supervisors (Saks, 2006). Saks (2006) also pointed out that organisations need to communicate with their employees clearly and they also need to be consistent in their communications. Thus, employees tend to be more engaged and to be involved in a more positive relationship with their employers. Welch and Jackson (2007); MacLeod and Clarke (2009) and Ruck (2012) agree with that suggesting that IC is an important factor in helping employees remain engaged and keep employees from different generations and cultures connected with their organisations. In the context of business, IC is defined as formal or informal communication at varying levels of business organisations (Kalla, 2005). Ruck (2012) claimed a definition for IC suggesting that IC is all about the delivery of organisational information to all employees within the organisation for every employee to encourage their participation in important matters.

Bleeker and Hill (2013) highlight that the use of appropriate IC channels within an organisation motivates and engage employees just because employees can understand the changes happening and can respond to the newly emerging changes appropriately (As Cited in O'Neill et. al., 2015). Similarly, Powis (2012) mentions many financial and non-financial factors positively affecting EE and also suggests that IC is one of these factors. Similarly, Gallup (2012) claims that the following activities are important drivers of EE:

- Encouragement
- Praise and recognition
- Well-defined expectations

Few researches are available in the relevant literature mentioning about a relationship between the use of IC and employees' engagement. However, organizations with effective communication skills with their employees are accepted to be less likely to experience turnover and resistance and to have increased returns from the shareholder, commitment and EE (Goodman and Truss, 2006; Yates, 2006). Watson Wyatt (2002) found that organizations equipped with effective communication skills were found to be more likely to have more engaged employees, and it helps organisations to experience less financial problems (Yates, 2006).

Engagement is closely related to many psychological factors, and as suggested before, it is very important for organisations' success. Hunt and Ebeling (1983) claimed a significant relationship between using communication channels and the level of employees' job satisfaction. King et al. (1988) claimed a significant relationship between the use of communication channels and employees' satisfaction level with their supervisors and their jobs.

2.4 Research on Internal Communication (IC)

Research conducted on IC started to catch the interest of practitioners beginning from the 1990s and the 2000s (Welch and Jackson, 2007). The first research emerged from the field experts in organizational communication and organizational psychology (Vercic et al., 2012). In today's world, modern organisations have become more interdependent on other organisations. This has made it compulsory for all organisations and employees to coordinate more through communication. Conference Board, which is a business and research organisation, researched to examine how to deal with such changes and asked 200 participant managers about the effective employee communication channels used in their organisations. It was found that effective communication is supposed to improve morale, encourage positive relationship among employees and management, allow employees to remain informed about the latest changes, let employees learn about their benefits and increase their consciousness about organisational goals and culture (Troy, 1988).

Asif and Sargeant (2000) developed an IC model. They adopted a qualitative approach in their research and conducted interviews with 31 employees. They found that effective IC is closely related to job satisfaction; shared vision; empowerment; service focus; loyalty and commitment. There is also some other research in the relevant literature who claimed that communication within organisation improved employees' satisfaction levels as well as their organisational identification (Smidts et. al., 2002), trust and support in the goals of their organization (DeRidder, 2004), reputation, shareholder value and retention (Holtz, 2004). Smidts et al. (2002) conducted research examining the effect of the use of IC channels and perceptions regarding the organisation and its effect on employee's identification with their organization. They developed 18 hypotheses and focused

on the impact of communication with employees on the prestige of the organisation and employees' identification with their organisation. It was found in their study that there is a significant relationship between the use of positive IC and organisational identifications in the examined organisation. It was also found in the same study that the employees with positive attitudes towards the used IC had more organisational identity.

Watson Wyatt (2004) conducted a study and found that the organizations which are rated as effective ones in the use of communication channels tended to use technology in delivering their messages to their employees. They also found that such organisations used Web services to communicate, collaborate, and share their resources with their employees. Such organisations use technological tools to deliver their employees important organisational information about the business and issues about employees' interests.

2.5 Research Conducted on Employee Engagement (EE)

EE is a relatively new issue in the literature. Kahn (1990) researched EE and his research was based on the research conducted by Hackman and Oldham (1980), which claimed that there is a significant relationship between internal motivation at the workplace and some psychological conditions. At this point, Kahn (1990) suggested some psychological factors which could be used to decide whether an employee is engaged or not at their workplace. Kahn (1990) claimed that employees unconsciously tend to ask some basic questions to themselves when they experienced a new situation. The answers that could be given to these unconsciously asked questions could be used to decide if an employee is engaged or disengaged. The questions that Kahn suggested are:

- How meaningful is it for me to do this?
- How safe is it to do so?
- How available am I to do so?

Taking into account the received responses, three psychological states of employees could be claimed:
- Psychological meaningfulness,
- Psychological safety,
- Psychological availability.

Psychological meaningfulness is closely related to the fact that engaged employees feel they gain something. Psychological safety is defined as the employees' feeling that they would be given no harm. Psychological availability is defined as the employees' feeling that they have "physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage in the situation". Kahn (1990) identified that employees could better engage in their work environments when they have benefits, guarantees, and necessary resources. In brief, employees are better engaged in situations offering more psychological meaningfulness.

3. METHOD
3.1 Rationale and Hypotheses

This paper intends to examine the relationship between the use of IC channels and employees' engagement levels. Although much research in the relevant field (e.g. Asif and Sargeant, 2000; Hunt and Ebeling, 1983 and King et al., 1998) has revealed that communication affected employees' job satisfaction levels and their attitudes towards their organisation in a positive way in some sectors, there has been almost no research examining the variables of EE at hospitality organisations. The variables of EE are commitment to the organisation, the meaningfulness of the work and employee dissatisfaction. Communicating with employees within the organisation may affect employees' engagement, and therefore those organisations with better and more frequent use of IC channels are expected to have increased levels of EE. Considering this and the variables of EE, the following research hypotheses have been developed in this study to test:

H1: The frequent use of internal communication channels with employees has positive effects on employees' commitment to their organisations.

H2: The frequent use of internal communication channels with employees has positive effects on the meaningfulness of employees' organisation.

H3: The frequent use of internal communication channels with employees has positive effects on employees' dissatisfaction levels from their organisations.

3.2 Procedure

The data in the research was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. As Baxter and Babbie (2004) suggested, self-administered surveys allow researchers to collect data from large samples. The survey method also makes the analysis flexible for the researcher and many questions can be asked about a particular topic. In this study, each participant was given an online questionnaire along with a consent form. This study used a questionnaire of Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) on organisational commitment (OCQ) to examine the participants' engagement levels to their organisation and the Empowerment Scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) to measure the meaningful work of the participants. As the original scales were in the English language, they were first translated into Turkish by two English language experts and then they were peer-reviewed by a third English language expert to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

The final questionnaire consisted of three sections. In the first section of the questionnaire, participants were asked 4 questions regarding demographic details such as gender, age, experience in the sector, and their income. The aim of the demographic section in the questionnaire is to allow the researcher for detailed data collection. For example, using the data regarding the gender of the participant, participants' individual expectations about the use of IC channels could be measured and compared. Respondents' income may affect their perceptions regarding organisational IC channels and their effect on their engagement to their organisation during a crisis period such as the COVID-19. In the second section of the questionnaire, participants were asked 11 questions measuring the frequency of the use of the IC channels that their organisations might have used during the COVID-19 crisis and they were asked to state the level of their agreement with each item.

In the third section of the questionnaire, participants were asked 15 questions measuring their commitment level to their organisations and their dissatisfaction levels from their jobs, and they were asked to state the level of their agreement (ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) (see Table 2 for the items). The Cronbach alpha value of the OCQ was reported to range from .82 to .93, with a median of .90 by Mowday et.al. (1979). The OCQ was also designed in a way to include several negatively phrased questions which require reverse scoring. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the Empowerment Scale developed by Spreitzer (1995), which was included in the second section of the questionnaire to measure the meaningfulness of employees' work, was reported to be .72. What is important with this scale is that only three questions of the Empowerment scale regarding meaning were used in this study (see Table 2 for the items). The used items were designed in a five-point scale again ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. The number of questions asked in the second section of the questionnaire was 18 in total.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of the research consists of all employees working at 5-star hotels in Turkey. It was calculated that the number of the certified 5-star hotel was 720 when August 2020 was considered (TURİZMAKTÜEL, 2020). This research aimed to gather data only from five-star hotels and to generate its findings to such hotels. Therefore, each of them was predicted to employ about 100 employees on average and then the research population was calculated to be maximum 72.000. Therefore, the sample size of the research was determined to be a minimum of 383 participants from the target hotels in Turkey (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Due to time and cost-related reasons, the convenience sampling method was used. The managers and human resource (HR) departments of the accessed hotels, as many as the researcher could reach, was contacted by the researcher through corporate communication channels e.g. e-mail and phone numbers. Then the accessed managers and HR responsible were given detailed information about the research, the procedure and possible outcomes of the research. They were made sure that upon no account the name of the participants and their hotels where the data collected would not be mentioned in the research and the collected data would be kept safe and private. They were asked for their help to either obtain the contact information of some of their employees or to share the online questionnaire with their employees through their IC channels. They were sent the link of the online questionnaire and requested to examine the content and told that they would be provided for further explanation about the content of the survey upon request. A relevant explanation was provided by the researcher when requested. Then the employees whose contact details were obtained from the managers were sent the link of the online survey receiving their consent for voluntary participation in the research. A detailed explanation about the research was also provided for each respondent, and they were also told that relevant permission for data collection was received from their superiors. Then they were told that the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary. The completion of the survey was planned to take about ten to fifteen minutes. The survey was administered between June and July 2020. Before starting the general survey administration, a pilot test on 10 participants was conducted to find out whether any revisions

and corrections were needed on the questionnaire. Relevant revisions and correction were made based on the collected feedback from the participants and the survey tool was finalised based on the received feedback.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Following the completion of the data collection process, the data were transferred to SPSS 22.00 package program for statistical analysis. The negative items in the factors were reverse coded in the SPSS program before the analysis. As the items were designed as 5 point Likert scales, the collected data was submitted for the normality test before continuing with the further parametric tests. As a result of the normality test, Skewness value was found to be -.258 and Kurtosis value was found to be -.835. These values indicate that the data had normal distribution as Skewness and Kurtosis values ranged between -1 to +1 (Hair et. al., 2013). Then the data were submitted for descriptive analysis. Of the 389 respondents who filled in the online questionnaire appropriately, 101 were female and 288 were male. As the questionnaire administered as an online survey, no respondent left any of the items blank. Following the normality test, the data were submitted for item analysis to determine the internal consistency of the scale. As recommended by Spector (1992), .40 coefficient criterion was set to include items in the final data analysis. For internal consistency of the scale, .70 coefficients alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was set as the cutting edge. Following the analysis of all items of the questionnaire were found to meet the set criteria for internal consistency.

The items asked in the second section of the questionnaire to measure the frequency of the use of IC channels are given in Table 1 below, together with the mean scores for each item. As seen in Table 1, e-mail was found to be the most frequently used internal communication channel with 4.141 mean score out of 5. It is also attention-grabbing that audio recordings and phone messages were found to be the least frequently used internal communication channel with the mean score 1.781 out of 5 (The scale ranged from 1=never to 5= always).

Table 1: IC Channels on the Research Questionnaire

1. Printed Newsletters	2.891
2. Blog	2.125
3. Posters, flyers, brochures, banners	3.859
4. E-mails	4.141
5. Employee recognition & rewards ceremonies or presentations (Virtual or Real)	2.062
6. Training classes (Online or physical presence)	3.766
7. Meetings with senior management (Online or physical presence)	3.781
8. Pre-shift information or meetings (Online or physical presence)	3.453
9. Videos released on corporate social media organs	2.922
10. Audio recordings or phone messages	1.781
11. E-newsletters	3.813

After the item analysis, the principal component factor analysis was conducted on the data. As a result of the principal component analysis, three factors were identified, which are dissatisfaction from work, the meaningfulness of employees' work and employees' commitment to their work. The factor loadings are seen in Table 2 below for each factor and item.

Table 2: Findings regarding the Principal Component Analysis for Scales

	OC	MW	DO
1. I find my values and the organization's values are very similar	.83		
2. I talk up this organization to my friends	.78		
3. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	.77		
4. For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work	.78		
5. I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I considered	.70		
6. I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working for this organization	.70		
7. This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	.70	.38	
8. I really care about the fate of this organization	.69		
9. I often find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies relating to employees	.59		.41
10. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this organization be successful	.55	.44	
11. Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part	.42		
12. The work I do is meaningful to me		.88	

	DO	MW	OC
13. The work I do is very important to me	.38	.78	
14. My job activities are personally meaningful to me	.41	.78	
15. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave			.77
16. I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the work was similar			.62
17. There's not much to be gained by staying with this organization	-.50		.54
18. I feel very little loyalty to this organization		-.44	.56

DO: Dissatisfaction from the Organisation; MW: Meaningfulness of the Work; OC: Organisational Commitment

4.1 Hypotheses

The first hypothesis predicted that the frequent use of IC channels with employees during the COVID-19 pandemic has positive effects on employees' commitment to their organisations. Pearson Correlation statistics were conducted to find out the relationship between the frequent use of IC channels and employees' commitment to their organisation. The independent variable was set as the frequent use of the IC channels and the dependent variable was set as employees' commitment level to their organisation. As seen in Table 3 below, no significant relationship was found between the frequent use of the IC channels and employees' commitment levels (r=-.062, p <.313).

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Between Frequency of the Use of Internal Communication Channels and Employees' Commitment.

		FUICC	CF
FUICC	Pearson Correlation	1	-,062
	Sig.		,313
CF	Pearson Correlation	-,062	1
	Sig.	,313	

FUICC: Frequent Use of Internal Communication Channels, CF: Commitment Factor

The second hypothesis tested in the study is that the frequent use of IC channels with employees has positive effects on employees' meaningfulness of their work. Pearson Correlation statistics were conducted to find out the relationship between the frequent use of IC channels and meaningfulness of employees' work. The independent variable was set as the frequent use of the IC channels and the dependent variable was set as the meaningfulness of employees' work. As seen in Table 4 below, no significant relationship was found between the frequent use of the IC channels and employees' meaningfulness of their work (r=-.084, p <.256).

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Frequency of the Use of Internal Communication Channels and Meaningfulness of Employees' Work

		FUICC	MF
FUICC	Pearson Correlation	1	-,084
	Sig.		,256
MF	Pearson Correlation	-,084	1
	Sig.	,256	

FUICC: Frequent Use of Internal Communication Channels, MF: Meaningfulness Factor

The third hypothesis tested in the study is that the frequent use of IC channels with employees has positive effects on employees' dissatisfaction levels from their organisations. Pearson Correlation statistics were conducted to find out the relationship between the frequent use of IC channels and employees' dissatisfaction levels from their job. The independent variable was set as the frequent use of the IC channels and the dependent variable was set as dissatisfaction levels of employees from their job. As seen in Table 5 below, a significant relationship was found between the frequent use of the IC channels and employees' dissatisfaction levels at (r= .413, p <.000).

Table 5: Correlation Analysis Between Frequency of the Use of Internal Communication Channels and Employees' Dissatisfaction Levels

		FUICC	DF
FUICC	Pearson Correlation	1	,413**
	Sig.		,000
DF	Pearson Correlation	,413**	1
	Sig.	,000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

FUICC: Frequent Use of Internal Communication Channels, DF: Dissatisfaction Factor

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned before, the number of research examining the relationship between the frequent use of IC channels and employees' engagement at hotel organisations has been very limited. Therefore, this study is claimed to differ from relevant studies in the literature. With the Pearson correlation test, the frequent use of IC channels within hotel organisations was found to have a significant effect on employees' dissatisfaction levels from their work; however, no significant relationship was found between the frequent use of IC channels and meaningfulness of employees' work and their commitment to their organisations.

What this finding tells us is that using IC channels during crisis periods could positively influence employees' dissatisfaction levels, but their perceived meaningfulness of the job and their commitment is not significantly affected by the use of IC channels within hotels organisations. In other words, employees who are communicated by their seniors during crisis time have increased satisfaction levels. Hotel businesses which aim to reduce turnover rates in their organisations during crisis times could more often use IC channels and inform their employees about the latest changes in the organisation and thus decrease the turnover rates. Thus organisations could save money and increase client satisfaction with the help of fewer turnover rates.

The finding of this study regarding the employees' increased satisfaction levels due to the frequent and appropriate use of IC channels is in parallel with the findings of Hunt and Ebeling (1983); King et. al. (1998); Asif and Sargeant (2000) and Smidts et. al. (2002) who found that there was a positive relationship between the communication that employees are involved with their supervisors and their work-related satisfaction levels. The finding of this study is significant as it provides an insight into the importance of the use of IC channels between employee, supervisors and senior managers. It is obvious that there are many other factors affecting employees' satisfaction levels, but using IC channels effectively could be used by senior managers to increase their employees' satisfaction levels from their jobs and keep them in the organisation.

This study used an instrument for data collection from Mowday et. al (1979) and the Spreitzer (1995). This study has also revealed that the borrowed scales are reliable ones. The scale used in this study to measure the frequent use of IC channels was developed for this study including traditional and new media channels often used for ICs in business life. With this scale, this study has revealed how often hotel business uses traditional new media channels and how their use could increase employee satisfaction in hotel businesses.

This study developed three hypotheses to test the frequent use of IC channels and employees' satisfaction levels from their job, their commitment to their job and meaningfulness of their job. However, with this study, some demographic details were also collected through questionnaires such as age, income level, year of experience in the sector and ages. As this study did not aim to test any hypothesis on these variables and as some groups were below the cutting edge which is 30 for an appropriate ANOVA and Independent Samples T-test on SPSS package program, such analyses were conducted within the scope of the research. However, mean scores obtained from the groups will be used as part of the discussion here.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels for the male participants was 4.6313 for the factor meaningfulness of the work whereas it was 4.0313 for the female. The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels for male participants was 3.4375 for the factor dissatisfaction from the job where it was 3.4500 for female participants. The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels for male participants was 4.3931 for the factor commitment to their work where it was 3.8875. The difference between the scores regarding the factors, the meaningfulness of work and commitment to their work are noteworthy here. It could be concluded that IC channels are more often used to communicate with male employees and female employees are less communicated even in crisis times.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for the age group between 20 and 30 for the meaningfulness of the work was 4.3333, 4.5897 for the age group between 31 and 40, 4.4167 for the age group between 51 and 60. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels does not differ according to age groups. The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for the age group between 20 and 30 for dissatisfaction from the work was 3.4000, 3.4154 for the age group between 31 and 40, 3.4647 for the age group between 51 and 60. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels does not differ in satisfaction levels of participants according to their age groups. The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC

channels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for the age group between 20 and 30 for commitment to the work was 3.8500, 4.3821 for the age group between 31 and 40, 4.2275 for the age group between 51 and 60. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels with the age group between 20 and 30 is less than the other age groups.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on the years of experience in the sector was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with a sector experience between 1 and 5 years for the meaningfulness of the work was 3.8333, 4.4167 for those with sector experience between 6 and 10 years and 4.4347 for those with sector experience between 11 and 15 years, 4.5185 for those with sector experience between 16 and 20 years and 4.4513 for those with sector experience between 21 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels differs according to age groups for the meaningfulness of the work. In other words, those with long experience in the same sector are more communicated than those with less sector experience in hotel organisations.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on the years of experience in the sector was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with a sector experience between 1 and 5 years for dissatisfaction from the work was 3.4010, 3.3700 for those with sector experience between 6 and 10 years and 3.3846 for those with sector experience between 11 and 15 years, 3.3778 for those with sector experience between 16 and 20 years and 3.5077 for those with sector experience between 21 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels does not differ according to age groups for the dissatisfaction factor.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on the years of experience in the sector was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with a sector experience between 1 and 5 years for commitment to their work was 3.7333, 4.1917 for those with sector experience between 6 and 10 years and 4.9231 for those with sector experience between 11 and 15 years, 4.2296 for those with sector experience between 16 and 20 years and 4.2022 for those with sector experience between 21 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels differs according to the length of experience in the sector for the commitment factor. In other words, the length of experience in the sector increase, employees' commitment levels to their organisation also increases depending on the frequent use of IC channels.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on participants' income levels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with an income up to monthly 5000 TL for the meaningfulness of the work was 4.6190, 4.7826 for those with a monthly income between 5001 and 10000 and 4.4824 for those with an income between 10001 and 15000, 4.5120 for those with an income between 15001 and 20000 and 4.5556 for those with an income between 20001 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels does not differ according to the income level for the meaningfulness of the work factor.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on participants' income levels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with an income up to monthly 5000 TL for dissatisfaction from the work was 3.5714, 3.4696 for those with a monthly income between 5001 and 10000 and 3.5941 for those with an income between 10001 and 15000, 3.4801 for those with an income between 15001 and 20000 and 3.5330 for those with an income between 20001 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels does not differ according to the income level for dissatisfaction from the work factor.

The mean score regarding the frequency of the use of IC channels based on participants' income levels was also examined within the scope of the study. The mean score for those with an income up to monthly 5000 TL for commitment to the work was 4.4048, 4.6232 for those with a monthly income between 5001 and 10000 and 3.7569 for those with an income between 10001 and 15000, 4.5023 for those with an income between 15001 and 20000 and 4.3667 for those with an income between 20001 and above. It could be concluded from these mean scores that the frequency of the use of IC channels differs according to income level for the meaningfulness of the work factor on the employees with an income between 5001 and 10000 TL. This may be due to their belief that they could find similar jobs with similar salaries in the sector.

5.1 Conclusion

The main focus of this research was on examining the possible effects of frequent use of IC channels at 5-star hotels in Turkey on employees' engagement levels. This study found that there is a significant relationship between the frequency of the use of IC channels and employees' satisfaction levels from their jobs. This finding could be used for hotels and other hospitality organisations to increase their employees' satisfaction levels, and thus decrease turnover rates and increase work performance of their employees. This research also shed lights on future research in this area specifically focusing on the demographic factors, such as gender, income level, experience in the sector and age groups and their effects on employees' commitment levels working with a larger sample in the study.

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