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THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING AN AGILE ORGANIZATION IN THE PANDEMIC CRISIS

PANDEMİ KRİZİNDE ÇEVİK ORGANİZASYON OLMANIN ÜSTÜNLÜĞÜ

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ÖZET

Bireyler ve kuruluşlar 2019'un son çeyreğinden buyana koronavirüs salgınının sebep olduğu pandemi döneminin olağandışı koşullarına uyum sağlamaya çalışmaktadır. Pandeminin dünyayı değiştirdiği bu süreçte sosyal ve ekonomik çevrelerde hızlı ve köklü değişimler yaşandı. Endüstri 4.0'ın da etkisiyle ivme kazanan birçok trendin hızlarını koruduğu bu dönemde çeviklik de popülerliğini arttıran trendler arasında yer aldı. Özellikle örgütsel çeviklik, adından en çok bahsedilen yönetim kavramlarından biri oldu. Örgütsel çeviklik, istikrarsızlık ve belirsizlik koşullarında daha iyi performans göstererek üstünlük avantajı elde etmek için çağdaş kuruluşlar tarafından benimsenen yenilikçi ve dinamik bir yönetim modeli olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu makale örgütsel çeviklik kavramını tanıtmak ve pandemi koşullarında sürdürülebilirliği sağlamak için şirketler tarafından benimsenmesinin önemine dikkat çekmek niyetindedir. Bu bağlamda şirketler için çeviklik kavramının, çevik çalışmanın ve çevik organizasyon yapısının stratejik önemi anlatılmaya çalışılmıştır. Genel olarak, COVID-19 salgını sürecinde çevik organizasyon yapısı ve çevik çalışma modeli şirketlere ne gibi faydalar sağlamaktadır? sorusuna cevap arayan bu çalışma, örgütsel çeviklik ve firma performansı arasındaki etkileşimi işaret ederek değişken ve belirsiz çevre koşullarında başarılı çevik organizasyona sahip olmanın ayrıcalığını da vurgulamaktadır.

ABSTRACT

Individuals and organizations have been trying to adapt to the extraordinary conditions of the pandemic period caused by the Coronavirus epidemic since the last quarter of 2019. During this period in which the pandemic changed the world, rapid and radical changes occurred in social and economic environments. Agility was among the trends that increased its popularity in this period in which many other trends that gained momentum with the effect of Industry 4.0 maintained their speed. In particular, organizational agility has become one of the most frequently mentioned management concepts. Organizational agility is regarded as an innovative and dynamic management model adopted by contemporary organizations to achieve superiority by performing better under conditions of instability and uncertainty. This article intends to introduce the concept of organizational agility and highlight the importance of its adoption by companies to ensure sustainability in pandemic conditions. In this context, the strategic importance of agility concept, agile working and agile organizational structure for companies was tried to be explained. This study, which seeks to answer the question "what benefits do the agile organizational structure and agile working model provide to companies during the COVID-19 pandemic?" in general, highlights the interaction between organizational agility and firm performance, and also emphasizes the privilege of having a successful agile organization in unstable and indistinct environmental conditions.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevik, Örgütsel Çeviklik, Salgın Krizi, COVID-19.

Keywords: Agile, Organizational Agility, Pandemic Crisis, COVID-19.



1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic has caused and continues to be much more social and economic depressions than the economic disruptions caused by the global financial crisis in the years of 2008 and 2009. By challenging the values, traditions, living and management systems of societies, COVID-19 has clearly become a serious threat to the business processes and models of both public and private organizations. In order to achieve victory against this global catastrophe that shocks all humanity and organizations, all organizations must first achieve transformation and change with radical strategic moves and adapt to the changing conditions of the pandemic. In these extraordinary conditions created by the global pandemic, the organizational agility capacities and levels of companies are much more valuable and important than before. Because agile organizations have the ability to quickly respond to changes in the external environment. For this reason, businesses can survive in the market for a long time when they bring new technologies and services in the external environment to their organizations.

There is currently a wide debate among academics and practitioners about best practices that business organizations can follow to survive and thrive in the face of rapid, nonlinear changes caused by environmental discontinuities characterized by uncertainty and instability (Rigby et al., 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2015). Agility is the capacity of an organization to comply to recent circumstances and variation path. Replacing the production-based economy of the previous century, the new service-based economy makes firms' ability to change much more important than before. The flexible and volatile economic system and flexible market conditions have caused many transformations and are likely to continue to cause more. For example, we are living in a period where it is more important to be customer oriented rather than investment oriented (Acmagile, 2020).

Agility is observed to add significant value and benefit to companies. Digitalization and new players in the market cause customer expectations to change faster than ever before. This requires companies to quickly create new products and launch them to the market as soon as possible to meet expectations and changes. Because even a year is now a long time to meet expectations. After a year, either that customer need has completely disappeared from the market, or your competitors may have already developed these products and made serious gains. It is observed that large-scale companies tend to be agile in order to accelerate against expectations and change. In today's world where customer needs change faster than ever, satisfying customers is now the top priority of organizations. At this point, organizational agility offers companies the advantage of evaluating their customers as a member of the team and gives push to customer focus. Agility also provides an advantage to companies in bringing employee loyalty and new generation competencies and abilities to the organization. Companies that adopt agility can offer their employees less hierarchy, more development opportunities in different areas, end-to-end responsible and competent business goals. Using these advantages, new agile companies aim to attract new generation competencies and more importantly, to bring in organizations employees with digital competencies that are much more limited in the current market. In addition, agile organizations also significantly increase employee engagement and employee happiness (McKinsey & Company, 2021).



In order to transform the challenges created by globalization, the fourth industrial revolution and the Covid-19 epidemic into corporate opportunities, many businessmen, managers, consultants, academics and politicians envision the need to develop and adopt organizational models with ideal proactive dynamics that can make quick decisions and provide flexibility (Kosack et al., 2021). While many trends that were already on the rise before the pandemic accelerated, on the other hand, new ones were added to them. Especially, the concept and methodology of agility used in information technologies, development programs and projects has become more important during the pandemic period. Agile organizational structure in companies was also among the trends that accelerated in this period. The application and benefits of the agile mindset that has been the subject of discussion in different industries and sectors can reveal the great potential of the agile organization concept. From this point of view, this study intends to explain the advantages of agile organizational structure to companies in pandemic conditions. In this direction, the importance of agility concept, agile working and agile organizational structure for companies has been tried to be explained. Also, tried to answer the questions such as “is there an added value increase where an agile structure is provided to companies?” and “what are the benefits of agile organizational structure and agile work for companies during the COVID-19 pandemic?”. For this reason, the concept of organizational agility, its components and the characteristics of an agile organization have been tried to be explained first. Afterwards, some examples of agile applications during and before the pandemic were mentioned. Finally, the advantages of the agile organizational structure for companies and the importance of agile work for companies during the pandemic process was discussed and the study was concluded.

2. Understanding Organizational Agility

The concept of agility, defined as the ability to think quickly and take easy action, was first put forward in the early 1990s and was considered as a solution for the company to survive in changing environmental conditions (Nafei, 2016, p. 297). Agility is the capacity of to vary direction and adaption to changes. Replacing the production-based economy of the previous century, the new service-based economy has made companies' ability to change much more important than before. The term of agility was first used in studies on many subjects such as change, production, environmental uncertainty, leadership, information technologies, and then it was determined that many new concepts such as agile organization, agile business processes, and agile system were derived from this concept.

In the 2000s, the concept of agility was developed to predict and resolve complex, as well as rapidly changing developments. Agility, which can respond quickly to the differing customer demands and needs of production organizations, is of vital importance in terms of innovation and creating a competitive structure in modern organization environments. Agility, necessary for businesses to be successful, can be expressed as the ability of organizations to evaluate market opportunities that appear quickly and unexpectedly (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Christensen, 1997; Goldman et al., 1995). Agility, previously focused on manufacturing, later turned into an approach that focused on product and service production. Also, agility requires organizations to avoid sticking to a single idea and to be adopted by making use of the necessary data. In this way, it can provide organizations with



the ability to be ready in advance for any possible setback, responsiveness, strategic flexibility, speed, internal and external stakeholder orientation (Araza & Aslan, 2016).

Businesses try to stay behind the race by developing strategies to live longer and develop competitiveness against other businesses. Among these strategies, organizational agility is the most important one (Bakan et al., 2017). Organizational agility consisting with the use of agility in organizations, refers to the organizational structure that is based on constantly feeling the markets that will create competitive advantage, accessing the information required for these markets, and at the same time trying to gain competitive advantage in new products, services, distribution channels, market segmentation (Sambamurthy et al., 2003). Ravichandran (2018, p. 25) defines organizational agility as the firm's capacity to satisfy rapidly to changes. Olbert et al. (2017, p. 7) explains organizational agility as the ability of an organization to adapt quickly, effectively and for a long time to continuous changes that occur as a result of efficiency superiority. In another definition, Akkaya and Tabak (2018, p.187) explains organizational agility as the ability of the firm to satisfy rapidly to these changes by using the opportunities that will arise in the changes in its environment in order to meet customer demands. In a more general definition, organizational agility is the ability of the business to satisfy rapidly and on the spot to these unpredictable changes in the environment that changes and develops suddenly in the interior and exterior environment of the business. In other words, it can be explained as the ability of enterprises to act quickly and effectively in order to turn the market opportunities in favor of meeting the demand and requirements of the customers to unexpected environmental and technological changes.

Aoron De Smet, one of the organizational design leader and managers of McKinsey, explains agility as an organization's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing and uncertain environment, to change quickly, and to succeed. While the dynamic ability of agility - the ability to move quickly, to resistance on and react - and other characteristics are constantly changing, as an unchanging anchor point, the company requires the stability that the company has likened to a springboard (McKinsey & Company, 2015). Organizational agility enables the company to perceive the changes in the environment and respond to these changes quickly, thus provides adapting to the changing environment and surviving. Environmental changes here include all changes that concern the company, such as changes in the activities of competitors, changes in consumer behavior and preferences, legal and economic changes (Overby et al., 2006).

2.1. Determinants of Organizational Agility

Organizational agility, consisting of dimensions such as readiness in advance for any possible setback, responsiveness, strategic flexibility, speed, internal and external stakeholder guidance, is effective in revealing new dimensions of competition. Organizations with awareness of organizational agility gain the habit of being agile and reach the level of developing their strategies through agility (Araza & Aslan, 2016).

An organizational agility model, consisting of three elements, was proposed by Sharifi and Zhang in 1999: agility drivers, agility capabilities, agility providers. "Agility Drivers" defines the way the business does business, changing and organizing the business according to the environment in order to implement agile production in businesses. "Agility Skills" is the component that proposes the basic headings of abilities that will provide the necessary strength to respond to changes. "Agility Providers" is the use of the agility abilities of the



business by the managers (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 11). In addition to this model proposed by Sharifi and Zhang (1999), the components of organizational agility are stated as *responsiveness, flexibility, speed and competence* as a result of the studies. (Sharifi & Zhang 1999; Zhang & Sharifi 2000; Sharifi et al., 2001; Crocitto & Youssef, 2003; Shahaei, 2008; Zhang, 2011; Nejatian & Zarei, 2013).

2.1.1. Responsiveness: The ability to respond emerges as one of the main factors that keep businesses alive and provide competitive advantage. Nowadays, especially due to the developments in the technological field, customer demands and needs are constantly changing and companies must respond to these changes on time and on the spot. Responsiveness is defined as the ability to perceive the change in the environment and to include it in the system in a controlled way (Nejatian & Zarei, 2013). It is the ability of organizations to identify, perceive, anticipate changes in the external environment, react reactively or proactively to these changes, and survive change without damage. In this context, Zaheer and Zaheer (1997) stated the ability to respond as the speed of reacting to environmental signals. Similarly, Zhang and Sharifi (2000) describe environmental changes as the ability to respond quickly and proactively. According to Shahaei (2008), responsiveness refers to the ability of the business to anticipate the changes in its field and to perceive the advantages of change with the insight ability of the enterprise.

2.1.2. Flexibility: According to Shahaei (2008) flexibility is the ability of managers to use different processes and alternatives to achieve the goal while providing organizational agility in enterprises. Organizational flexibility is also expressed as the flexibility in the production capacity of an enterprise, flexibility in organizational change and the flexibility of personnel to adapt to new technology (Sharifi et al., 2001). Agility and flexibility should not be confused. Agility is a dynamic, outward-focused ability however flexibility, is an inward-focused competence that forms the basis for agility (Uğurlu et al., 2019). As a result, the flexibility of an enterprise can be expressed as an interaction phenomenon that requires dynamism in management, as well as the capacity of the firm to reply to the changing environment and customer demands and needs. These two situations also should be in balance and their interaction (Volberda, 1996, p. 361). That is, the business must be flexible and interact with each other to meet the demands and needs of customers.

2.1.3. Speed: It is important for businesses to have the ability to act quickly in order to survive in today's competitive environment, especially to develop new knowledge against change, in terms of their innovation capabilities. The speed dimension reveals the completion acceleration of the organizations. This capacity is an indicator that the organization is fast while continuing its activities, solving problems, evaluating opportunities, developing new knowledge and making decisions (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018). Researchers emphasize that responsiveness includes the decision making process about how businesses will react to changes, while acting quickly includes the process of putting the decision into practice (Sharp et al., 1999; Lin et al., 2006; Jain et al., 2008). This ability of organizational agility, expressed as the fast time to market new products, the speed and timing of the delivery of products and services, fast processing time (Sharifi & Zhang, 2001, p.790), as well as fast learning, performing tasks and operations, also defined as making changes in time, setting working hours, changing production time, product and service delivery time, learning time and adaptation time to change (Sherehiy et al., 2007, p. 457).



2.1.4. Competency: It is the ability of an organization to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and competence as well as achieve its goals and objectives. In other words, it is the competencies of organizations in determining their strategic visions, having appropriate and sufficient technological capacity, product and service quality actions, affordable price policy, management policy open to change, knowledgeable, talented, strengthened personnel capacity, internal and external cooperation and strategic integration (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). Competency, the last of the organizational agility skills, is actually a concept related to the ability to use the three skills stated as speed-flexibility-responsiveness, in other words, with the dynamism of the organizational agility capabilities of the enterprise. The dynamism here is defined as the capability to recondition potential talents to match to the changing business environment (Teece et al., 1997). In other words, if the organization improves its competence, they will be able to respond quickly and flexibly to changes and uncertainties.

3. Agile Organizations

An agile organization is a company that has the ability to satisfy fast to variations in market and workplace trends and respond to the demands of its customers, stakeholders and employees. Agile companies are the organizations that are aware of change by accepting that organizational change is inevitable. For this reason, these organizations regularly review the practices and business processes to keep employees' motivation, morale, and performance levels at optimum levels. An agile organization is innovative and responds quickly and successfully to new competitors.

3.1. Features of Agile Organizations

Firms with high organizational agility can easily perceive and anticipate environmental changes, reduce costs by reducing unnecessary activities and increase investment opportunities, are aware of the importance of innovation and focus on innovation, can quickly integrate resources and capabilities to maintain and increase their competencies (Darvishmotevali & Tajeddini, 2020). Belz and Barbasz (2014) specified that it is feasible to specify the characteristics of an agile organization, inspired by the agility definitions put forward. They determined these features as listed below (Rzepka & Bojar, 2020, p. 384).

- the ability to quickly identify opportunities offered by the market,
- interpreting the threats that the business environment may create in the best way,
- ability to classify cases into favorable or unfavorable ones,
- skillful performing of duties and to check the applications and output,
- combining “visionary with operational management,” that refers spreading ideas and integrating them in the activities of an organization,
- efficient assessment of resource adequacy,
- ability to gain resources from the environment.

More specifically, it is possible to predict or express an agile organization from the following features stated by Stuart Hearn (Clearreview, 2019):

- Agile organisations have a shared purpose and vision. They are flexible regarding resource allocation and in terms of strategy, they can sense and seize opportunities, which gives them an edge competitively.



- Agile organisations generally have a flat company structure. They have hands-on managers, all roles are clearly defined and employees are empowered to fulfil their purpose.
- Agile organisations are dedicated to transparency and continuous learning. They have a “fail fast” attitude, meaning they are open to experimentation. Even if these experiments fail, they still represent valuable learning opportunities.
- Agile organisations encourage role mobility and entrepreneurial drive. Engaged employees want to delve into the company and help where they can. Agile businesses encourage this thinking and drive.
- Importantly, agile organisations prioritise effective, user-friendly technology that facilitates decision making, communication and feedback.

3.2. Being an Agile Organization

The terms "agility" and "agile organization" are primarily defined as the ability to react quickly and fit to recent circumstances in response to unexpected and unpredictable alterations in the market. Speedy reaction provides resilient and rapid adaptation to unexpected changes by an agile organization that includes company goals, technology and employees (Kidd, 1994). Today's new service-based economy, which has replaced the production-oriented economy model of the 20th century, makes the rapid change capabilities of companies much more important than before. The new market conditions that changed with the effect of the 4th industrial revolution have caused many transformations and will keep going to cause even more with the 5th transformation. In the new economic and social model, customers prefer to purchase simplistic, smart and need-focused products and services instead of multi-functional products. Are companies prepared for today's socio-economic conditions where consumption habits and lifestyles are changing?

Originally interpreted in the field of production, the term agility was later discovered to be feasible to concern to various functions of an organization. Such a perspective concluded in the emergence of the term "agile organization" (Goldman et al., 1995). An agile company can be defined as a fluid, open to change, renewable customer-oriented organization with a resilient structure that satisfy customer wishes and end-to-end journeys, is a dynamic, fast, flexible company where a great deal of varied proficiencies and specialties (such as sales, finance, software, marketing, human resources) work for a common goal in the same team by minimizing hierarchy and bureaucracy.

Complex bureaucracy and heavy hierarchy pose a threat to the transition to agile organizational structure in strong companies with a conventional traditional structure. In these kinds of structures, where power is concentrated at the top, speed and creativity can be prevented by redundant procedures. In traditional organizational structures that are not customer-oriented, where value creation is compelled and freedoms are restricted, the decision processes are expanded by preserving the chain of command, priorities conflict and an atmosphere of stress is raised. For this reason, companies need to transform their cumbersome structures into customer-focused team organizations that create end-to-end value.

The digital new world formed by the impact of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 revolutions will be the world of companies that can adapt to change and transformation and of which basic principle is rapid change. Therefore, the coming years will be a new era when agile



companies will dominate. In order to be agile, the current company structure, culture and way of doing business need to be completely changed. Traditional organizations are formed in a fixed and orderly hierarchical framework, however agile organizations are built as a network of performance teams in rapid learning and decision making systematic. Also, the governance elements of traditional organizations are at the top of the organization, and the hierarchy to the decision flows from top to bottom. But, agile organizations instill a common purpose and, using new data, give decision making rights to teams closest to knowledge (Aghina et al., 2015).

Table 1 summarizes the changes required for agility by comparing traditional and agile organizations (Acmagile, 2020).

Table 1

Traditional Organization and Agile Companies Comparison

<i>Traditional Organizations</i>	<i>Agile Companies</i>
Function-based organization.	Team-based structuring where different competencies are joined together with a focus on value.
Chain of command and order type management approach.	Collaborative, teamplay-based governance structure.
Commanding management and managers.	Servant leaders.
Focus on efficiency and operation.	Focus on productivity and value.
Long-term plans and control of following the plan.	Focus on continuous planning, catching the winds of change and adaptation.
Detailed plans, production of perfect product/service at the very end (at once).	Continuous production of highly prioritized value with small steps.
Bottom-up reporting, assumption and feeling-based decision making mechanisms.	Complete transparency, data-based decision making mechanism.
Longer approval processes, proceeding only with approving authority.	Strong end-to-end teams with the power of decision.
Limited tolerance for errors	Learning based on experiments and errors.
Mechanical, cumbersome organizational structure.	Living organizational structure, which changes form in parallel to company strategies.
Individual performance-oriented.	Team-based performance-oriented within the framework of business objectives.
Investor-oriented	Employee and customer oriented.

Source: www.acmagile.com, (2020)

The dynamic structures of agile organizations make it easy to make decisions and act quickly against changes. It can be stated that the agile organizational structure develops to create a stable future for companies in rapidly changing and unpredictable market conditions. Based on the literature, the new agile organization is designed to (Ebrahim et al. 2018; Laloux & Wilber, 2014; Kristensen 2019; Moreira, 2017):

- create value for all stakeholders by noticing the wealth of opportunities and resources available.



- ensure that employees engage with each other, create professional solutions and achieve exceptional results through specific responsibilities.
- be quick and productive to manage uncertainty and try new things to minimize risk.
- encourage employees to adopt flawlessly by motivating them to achieve the organization's objective and vision.
- focus on customers, adapt fluently to environmental changes and minimizing hierarchy and bureaucracy.

3.3. Prominent Examples of Agile Organisations

ZMac is mentioned as an example of a company that has reduced bureaucracy by taking advantage of technology and this managed to create a more agile approach to business processes. ZMac, a customer of Impact Software Company, is a Wisconsin-centered logistics company. ZMac has renewed software platforms with Impact, making it easier for their customers to order, and started building such a better business agility. ZMac's new order application offered a functional, fast and easily accessible order and communication opportunity for potential customers and customers, thus gaining significant advantages over its competitors (Impactmybiz, 2021).

Genel Electric's (GE) successful and reliable performance management revision in 2015 created a model for other global companies to make the same revision. GE decided to renew the performance management system that they have been using for years, which ranks employees and ignores the 10% with the lowest performance each time. The new system operates a model where employees work in a less rigid framework, with managers providing guidance and coaching. GE also decided to use an app they developed as PD@GE to facilitate normal employee feedback and effective performance negotiations. Thanks to this application, each employee determines a set of priorities and has the opportunity to ask these priorities for foresight, advice and feedback. Also, have the opportunity to provide real-time feedback to others. Employees can request an in-person interview that focuses on transparency, honesty and continuous improvement at any time. With these new applications, GE is now known as an agile organization that has seen significant improvements (Clearreview, 2019).

Koç Group that focuses its activities in many different sectors including energy, finance, durable consumption and automotive, is an important example of agile organization in Turkey. With the cultural exchange program initiated in 2016, Koç Holding aimed to have a more agile and flexible organizational culture in the cultural transformation process that will lead the change. With the paradigm change and cultural transformation initiative initiated in 2016 in order to manage the uncertainties and the process of change, Koç Group succeeded in differentiating itself during the pandemic process that they switched to the agile working model. The company planned to realize a cultural transformation program with digital transformation, zero-based budgeting, agile management, innovation and entrepreneurship. The agile working model, one of the most important elements in the cultural transformation program, operates an understanding in which internal and external customers are included in the design process, regular feedback is received, teams governing each other instead of hierarchical structures, and frequent feedback is made. Thanks to its digital infrastructure, Koç Group was able to change its working model rapidly during the pandemic process and switched to working from home very quickly with its agile working



model. With the zero-based budgeting methodology, Koç Group has provided a significant amount of resource savings and gained the advantage of using the resources quickly in different areas (Ekonomist, 2020)

Having an important act in providing access to the materials and needs necessary for casual life, Amazon has made a name for itself as the best performing company to the pandemic by developing online strategies. Like many other retail organizations, Amazon focused on its efforts to discover reliefs to the way COVID-19 is reshaping economies, social structures, consumption and shopping habits around the world. Although “Prime day” and “Cyber week” were prepared for this unexpected process in terms of infrastructure and agility, like other retailers, Amazon was still faced with a large volume of demand. The Amazon platforms had to react very rapidly and agile to tackle the emerging issues to be very focused demand for specific categories, sustainable customer confidence. Anticipating that staying in stock leads to higher-rated prices, Amazon was one of the primary retailers to apply "price swing" defense measures. Low priced products were sold in critical categories such as hand sanitizer and face mask. In addition, Amazon has been quick to flag and take corrective action quickly enough to put more than 4,000 people on hold when non-compliant sellers have improperly changed product ingredients. Going so far as to offer incentives for customers to delay their deliveries, Amazon also takes extra steps to prioritize key high-demand categories. For this, Amazon stopped delivering redundant materials to its storages and (even on Prime) extending delivery dates to 1+ month. Finally, Amazon has delayed its locomotive retail fact, Prime Day, to focus on sending specific promotions or deals to consumers from its platform during top quarantine demand. Recently, they notify their plan to hire 100,000 additional workers and offered two weeks of salaried sick leave for workers who test positive for COVID-19, while boosting their salaries as well as supporting the safety of the workforce (Ascentialedge, 2020).

The fast service restaurant brand KFC is another important example of an organization that can respond quickly to the Covid-19 epidemic. KFC has fast initiated a new contactless delivery service to meet emerging social distance obligations and to make consumers feel comfortable when ordering. KFC sent a sincere message to stay healthy and safe at home. Company used the advanced targeting capabilities of Facebook's Dynamic Advertising instruments to keep KFC in consumers' consciousness until they reopen their doors and re-invite everyone to their restaurants. As soon as the Coronavirus disaster began to arise in the Middle East, KFC rapidly strengthened its worldwide KFC system, learned about top app, one of which was a new contactless delivery service. Even before social distancing became a standard, KFC decided to implement contactless delivery to ensure consumers feel 100% confident and comfortable. To reduce the impact of store closures, KFC has taken a data-driven approach to reach consumers and encourage them to order online. Working with the media agency Hearts & Science, KFC used Facebook's Dynamic Ads solution to personalize the creative based on each customer's interests and profile. The messaging was handed over based on signals about the behavior of users on KFC's website. This app facilitated people get what they requested and promoted the proficiency of KFC's e-commerce investment by dropping the brand's cost per order by 88%. Hereby, considerable saving was provided for the brand. The campaign even used automatic installations on Facebook and Instagram to achieve the best outcomes at the minimum average cost (Campaignme, 2020.)



While looking at the different sectors that are most affected by the current epidemic, Emirates Airlines, a key industry player that has shown more agility than others and how to deal with this crisis proactively, draws attention. Unfortunately, the company laid off many of its employees with an estimated 15% workforce reduction rate. However, many planes were towed to hangars and the number of flights was reduced, salaries were cut and other austerity measures were implemented to reduce costs. In fact, Emirates tried to be flexible enough by retracting the essentials to handle turbulent times. Emirates is the first airline to implement rapid on-site 10-minute COVID-19 tests for all passengers. The company first demonstrated the safety principle by ensuring that food and beverage kits and toilets are disinfected by assigning additional crew members on the aircraft. Each passenger was provided with a personal hygiene kit and the crew was made to wear PPE (personal protect in equipment). Supplemental COVID-19 insurance has been developed to cover funerals and risk for passengers. Also, Emirates has pledged to pay the additional costs should passengers become ill or quarantined. While passenger travel decreased in the pandemic, the demand for B2B freight transportation increased. Because, many regions needed additional medical supplies. Emirates Sky Cargo implemented a smart strategy to address the new requirements by transforming 10 Boeing 777-300ER aircraft from passenger aircraft to freight aircraft. All economy seats have been removed to be able to ship up to 17 tons of additional cargo on these aircraft. In addition, Emirates, flexible to increasing and decreasing demand, has added several smaller aircraft to its fleet to be more efficient. The most remarkable thing about Emirates Airlines is their speed from initial idea to execution and execution. Inwardly, Emirates seems to have created a culture that allows the company to make decisions early and move on with that while there is still a lot of uncertainty (Boardofinnovation, 2021).

4. Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the way of life for countries, organizations, communities, families and all other drivers of the global economy. The vast majority around the world have switched to remote work and a different lifestyle with school and basic workers at the forefront. Industries are grappling with the challenges of slow growth by trying to conserve liquidity and stop prominent projects or investments while trying to minimize discretionary spending by optimizing or automating variable spending. As the video conferencing, distance learning, and telehealth industries, the other industries are also appearing to be dealing with high demand spikes that they must be able to scale to support in a little while.

As the 4th Industrial Revolution transformation processes progressed with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses had to renew their existing strategies and business models. Businesses operating in the pharmaceutical and medical fields had the opportunity to increase their profits successfully in this process. Industry leaders such as Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Hoffmann-La Roche and Sanofi carried out their laser-focused work to find a Corona vaccine. Similarly, technology giants such as Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook and Alibaba achieved record growth with online B2C and B2B applications in an environment where white-collar personnel work remotely, especially during shutdowns (Elali, 2021: 6). Agility, can adapt private and public organizations in order to maintain their growth and excellence in adverse environmental conditions, is the promising one of the many strategies that has the ability to overcome shocks in the market. Because it transforms



industry conditions depending on changes in customer demands into opportunities that provide competitive advantage in times of congestion. Especially during the pandemic period, it is observed that companies with agile organizations take faster action and react more quickly to changes in the market compared to companies with traditional organizations. In short, in this period when both the market and customer needs change very rapidly, agile companies were perceived as faster than their peers.

In a study conducted in partnership with McKinsey and Harvard Business School, 25 agile companies from 7 different sectors were examined in detail. Operational measures, customer satisfaction, financial measures and employee motivation were the main criteria examined in this research. It has been observed that the 25 companies that are the subject of research outperform their competitors in their own sectors in all these metrics. To put it more clearly, it is also supported by the data that in Europe and America, especially during the pandemic period, enterprises that switched to agile organization, especially banks, performed twice as fast in the market compared to their competitors. This speed is achieved especially during product development or launching a new service. Studies conducted both in Turkey and overseas indicate that the agile organizational model has benefits for employees as well. It is accepted as an important advantage that both the responsibilities and authorities of the employees within the teams are defined very clearly and have increased compared to previous organizational models. Another benefit is that employees develop themselves more than previous organizational models. Obviously, agile organization employees can find opportunities to gain competence not only in their own expertise or competencies, but also in other areas that the team needs and close to them. In addition, it is observed that in the agile model, employees have higher job satisfaction compared to previous periods, as they can find the opportunity to better connect the top corporate goals with their team or individual goals (McKinsey, 2021).

Uncertainty and the need for change are two important issues that mark the environment we live in. It has become more important than ever for individuals and institutions to analyze threats and opportunities well and be ready for changing conditions. Managing change and uncertainty is vital for companies in all circumstances, it is known that other dynamics that we do not know today will force change and trigger change in the coming years. For this reason, more agile, more flexible organizational structures that are not afraid of change and will lead change will be more important from now on. Greater agility in organizations is an important glimmer of hope, as well as evidence of the determination and resilience of peoples around the world to contain the Corona pandemic. It should not be surprising that only smart and strategically agile organizations can survive in today's social and economic conditions in current "age of agility". During the pandemic, the different and superior positions of agile companies that develop and transform rapidly by gaining a digital competitive advantage in a technologically advanced but variable and uncertain working environment do not go unnoticed. Even though 2020 was a dismal year for most companies, governments, communities and people as supply chains, consumption patterns and habits were disrupted, corporate agile organizations continued to thrive. Agile companies with the ability to transform and reorganize priorities can use the unprecedented turmoil created by the Corona crisis as an opportunity to learn. Agile structures, intensify and develop their own operations and create a new natural state, can create rapid recovery and growth advantages in times of crisis.



There are many companies that implement agility at different levels in Turkey. Some agile teams are included especially in IT departments. There are also some agile team trials including the functions such as marketing, sales, analytics, and software. In addition, it is observed that some companies are trying to achieve the level of corporate agility by transforming the organization into agile. Especially banking, insurance and telecom sectors lead the agile transformation. It is also possible to say that these sectors are followed by retail, automotive, white goods, chemical and steel sector companies.

This paper is limited in terms of examining the agility capabilities and strategies of companies only in the pandemic crisis. Also, only large-scale or global-sized companies were mentioned in the study. This study may inspire future studies in terms of examining the agile organizational structures or capabilities of companies during the global economic recession caused by the global financial crises. Furthermore, the agility strategies of companies in pandemic and economic crises can be examined by mentioning examples of medium-sized or family companies in future studies.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Koronavirüs (COVID-19) salgını, 2008 ve 2009 yıllarında küresel finansal krizin neden olduğu ekonomik aksaklıklardan çok daha fazla sosyal ve ekonomik bunalımlara neden oldu ve olmaya devam ediyor. COVID-19 toplumların değerlerine, geleneklerine, yaşam ve yönetim sistemlerine meydan okuyarak hem kamu hem de özel kuruluşların iş süreçleri ve modelleri için açıkça ciddi bir tehdit haline geldi. Tüm insanlığı ve örgütleri şoke eden bu küresel felakete karşı zafere ulaşmak için öncelikle tüm örgütlerin radikal stratejik hamlelerle dönüşüm ve değişimi gerçekleştirmesi ve pandeminin değişen koşullarına uyum sağlaması gerekmektedir. Küresel pandeminin yarattığı bu olağanüstü koşullarda, şirketlerin organizasyonel çeviklik kapasiteleri ve seviyeleri eskisinden çok daha değerli ve önemlidir. Çünkü çevik organizasyonlar, dış ortamdaki değişikliklere hızlı bir şekilde cevap verme yeteneğine sahiptir. Bu nedenle, işletmeler dış ortamdaki yeni teknoloji ve hizmetleri kuruluşlarına taşıdıklarında piyasada uzun süre ayakta kalabilmektedirler.

Dördüncü sanayi devrimi dönüşüm süreçleri COVID-19 pandemisinin patlak vermesiyle ilerlerken, birçok işletme mevcut stratejilerini ve iş modellerini yenilemek zorunda kaldı. Özellikle, ilaç ve tıp alanında faaliyet gösteren işletmeler bu süreçte kârlarını başarılı bir şekilde artırma fırsatı bulmuştur. Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Hoffmann-La Roche ve Sanofi gibi sektör liderleri, korona aşısını bulmak için lazer odaklı çalışmalarını gerçekleştirmişlerdir. Benzer şekilde Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook ve Alibaba gibi teknoloji devleri de beyaz yakalı personelin uzaktan çalıştığı bir ortamda, özellikle de kapanmalar sırasında çevrimiçi B2C ve B2B uygulamalarıyla rekor büyüme elde etmişlerdir (Elali, 2021: 6). Örgütsel çevikliğin, özel ve kamu kuruluşlarını olumsuz çevre koşullarında büyümelerini ve mükemmelliklerini sürdürmek için adapte edebilen, piyasadaki şokları aşma kabiliyetine sahip birçok stratejiden daha fazla umut verici olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Çünkü çeviklik, müşteri taleplerindeki değişimlere bağlı sektör koşullarını, kriz dönemlerinde rekabet avantajı sağlayan fırsatlara dönüştürebilmektedir. Özellikle pandemi döneminde, çevik organizasyonlara sahip şirketlerin geleneksel organizasyonlara sahip şirketlere göre daha hızlı aksiyon aldıkları ve piyasadaki değişikliklere daha hızlı tepki verdiği gözlemlenmektedir. Kısacası, hem pazarın hem de müşteri ihtiyaçlarının çok hızlı değiştiği bu dönemde çevik şirketler emsallerinden daha hızlı algılanmışlardır.

Son zamanlarda akademisyenler ve uygulayıcılar arasında, belirsizlik ve istikrarsızlık ile karakterize edilen çevresel süreksizliklerin neden olduğu hızlı, doğrusal olmayan değişiklikler karşısında kuruluşların hayatta kalmak ve gelişmek için izleyebileceği en iyi uygulamalar hakkında geniş bir tartışma söz konusudur (Rigby ve diğerleri, 2020; McKinsey & Company). Geçen yüzyılın üretime dayalı ekonomisinin yerini alan yeni hizmete dayalı ekonomi, firmaların değişim kabiliyetini eskisinden çok daha önemli hale getirmiştir. Esnek ve değişken ekonomik sistem ve esnek piyasa koşulları birçok dönüşüme neden olmuştur ve muhtemelen daha fazlasına neden olmaya devam edecektir. Örneğin, yatırım odaklı olmaktan çok müşteri odaklı olmanın daha önemli olduğu bir dönemde yaşadığımız yadsınamaz bir gerçeklik olarak kabul edilmektedir (Acmagile, 2020).

Çeviklik, bir organizasyonun son koşullara ve değişim yoluna uyum sağlama kapasitesidir. Çevikliğin şirketlere önemli değer kattığı ve fayda sağladığı gözlemlenmektedir. Dijitalleşme süreçleri ve pazardaki yeni oyuncular, müşteri beklentilerinin hiç olmadığı kadar hızlı değişmesine neden olmaktadır. Bu durum da,



şirketlerin beklentileri ve değişiklikleri karşılamak için hızlı bir şekilde yeni ürünler yaratmalarını ve bunları mümkün olan en kısa sürede piyasaya sürmelerini gerektirmektedir. Çünkü beklentileri karşılamak için artık 1 yıl bile uzun bir süredir. 1 yıl sonra ya o müşteri ihtiyacı piyasadan tamamen kalkmış ya da rakipleriniz bu ürünleri geliştirmiş ve ciddi kazançlar elde etmiş olabilir. Büyük ölçekli şirketlerin beklentilere ve değişime karşı hızlanmak için çevik olma eğiliminde oldukları gözlemlenmektedir. Müşteri ihtiyaçlarının hiç olmadığı kadar hızlı değiştiği günümüz dünyasında, müşterilerin memnuniyetini sağlamak artık kurumların birinci önceliği haline gelmiştir. Bu noktada organizasyonel çeviklik, şirketlere müşterilerini ekibin bir üyesi olarak değerlendirme avantajı sunmakta ve müşteri odaklılığı teşvik etmektedir. Çeviklik aynı zamanda şirketlere çalışan bağlılığı ve yeni nesil yetkinlik ve yeteneklerin organizasyona kazandırılmasında avantaj sağlar. Çevikliği benimseyen şirketler, çalışanlarına daha az hiyerarşi, farklı alanlarda daha fazla gelişim fırsatı, uçtan uca sorumlu ve yetkin iş hedefleri sunabilir. Yeni çevik şirketler, bu avantajları kullanarak yeni nesil yetkinlikleri kendine çekmeyi ve daha da önemlisi mevcut pazarda çok daha sınırlı dijital yetkinliğe sahip kuruluşlara çalışanları kazandırmayı hedeflemektedirler. Ayrıca, çevik organizasyonların çalışan bağlılığını ve çalışan mutluluğunu da önemli ölçüde artırdığı gözlemlenmektedir (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Belirsizlik ve değişim ihtiyacı, içinde yaşadığımız çevreye damgasını vuran iki önemli konudur. Tehdit ve fırsatları iyi analiz etmek ve değişen koşullara hazır olmak birey ve kurumlar için her zamankinden daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Değişimi ve belirsizliği yönetmek her koşulda şirketler için hayati önem taşırken, bugün bilmediğimiz diğer dinamiklerin de önümüzdeki yıllarda değişimi zorlayacağı ve değişimi tetikleyeceği öngörülmektedir. Bu nedenle daha çevik, daha esnek, değişimden korkmayan ve değişime öncülük edecek organizasyon yapıları bundan sonra daha da önemli olacaktır. Kuruluşların daha fazla çeviklik kazanmak adına geliştirdikleri ve uyguladıkları stratejiler, önemli bir umut ışığının yanı sıra, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki insanların korona pandemisini kontrol altına alma kararlılığının ve direncinin kanıtıdır. Günümüzün sosyal ve ekonomik koşullarının oluşturduğu mevcut "çeviklik çağına" yalnızca akıllı ve stratejik olarak çevik kuruluşların ayakta kalabilmesi şarttır olmamalıdır. Pandemi sürecinde teknolojik olarak gelişmiş ancak değişken ve belirsiz bir çalışma ortamında dijital rekabet avantajı elde ederek hızla gelişen ve dönüşen çevik şirketlerin farklı ve üstün konumları gözden kaçmamaktadır. 2020, tedarik zincirleri olarak çoğu şirket, hükümet, topluluk ve insan için kasvetli bir yıl olsa da, tüketim kalıpları ve alışkanlıkların bozulduğu fakat, kurumsal çevik organizasyonların gelişmeye devam ettiği tarihi bir yıl olmuştur. Öncelikleri dönüştürme ve yeniden düzenleme becerisine sahip çevik şirketler korona krizinin yarattığı benzeri görülmemiş kargaşayı bir öğrenme fırsatı olarak kullanabilirler. Çünkü, kendi operasyonlarını yoğunlaştıran ve geliştiren, yeni bir doğal hal oluşturan çevik yapılar, kriz zamanlarında hızlı toparlanma ve büyüme avantajları yaratabilmektedir.

McKinsey ve Harvard Business School ortaklığında yürütülen bir çalışmada 7 farklı sektörden 25 çevik şirket detaylı olarak incelenmiştir.. Operasyonel ölçüler, müşteri memnuniyeti, finansal ölçüler ve çalışan motivasyonu bu çalışmada incelenen ana kriterler olmuştur. Araştırmaya konu olan 25 şirketin tüm bu metriklerde kendi sektörlerinde rakiplerinden daha iyi performans gösterdikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Daha açık bir şekilde ifade etmek gerekirse Avrupa ve Amerika'da özellikle pandemi döneminde çevik organizasyona geçen işletmelerin, özellikle de bankaların, pazarda rakiplerine göre iki kat daha hızlı



performans sergiledikleri verilerle de desteklenmektedir. Bu hızın, özellikle ürün geliştirme veya yeni bir hizmet başlatma sırasında elde edildiği gözlemlenmektedir. Hem Türkiye'de hem de yurt dışında yapılan araştırmalar, çevik organizasyon modelinin çalışanlar için de faydaları olduğunu göstermektedir. Ekipler içerisinde çalışanların hem sorumluluklarının hem de yetkilerinin çok net bir şekilde tanımlanmış olması ve önceki organizasyon modellerine göre artmış olması önemli bir avantaj olarak kabul edilmektedir. Diğer bir fayda ise çalışanların kendilerini önceki organizasyon modellerine göre daha fazla geliştirmeleridir. Açıkçası, çevik organizasyon çalışanları sadece kendi uzmanlık veya yetkinliklerinde değil, aynı zamanda ekibin ihtiyaç duyduğu ve kendilerine yakın olan diğer alanlarda da yetkinlik kazanma fırsatları bulabilirler. Ayrıca çevik modelde çalışanların üst kurumsal hedefleri ekip veya bireysel hedeflerle daha iyi ilişkilendirme fırsatı bulabildikleri için önceki dönemlere göre daha yüksek iş doyumuna sahip oldukları görülmektedir (McKinsey, 2021).

Küreselleşmenin, dördüncü sanayi devriminin ve Covid-19 salgınının yarattığı zorlukların kurumsal fırsatlara dönüştürülmesi için birçok iş adamı, yönetici, danışman, akademisyen ve politikacı, ideal proaktif dinamiklere sahip hızlı kararlar verebilen ve esneklik sağlayan organizasyon modelleri geliştirme ve benimseme ihtiyacını öngörmektedir (Kosack vd., 2021). Pandemi öncesinde yükselişte olan birçok trend hızlanırken bir yandan da bunlara yenileri eklenmiştir. Özellikle bilgi teknolojileri, geliştirme programları ve projelerinde kullanılan çeviklik kavramı ve metodolojisi pandemi döneminde daha da önem kazanmıştır. Şirketlerde, çevik organizasyon yapısı da bu dönemde hızlanan trendler arasında yer aldığı görülmektedir. Farklı endüstri ve sektörlerde tartışma konusu olan çevik zihniyetin uygulaması ve faydaları, çevik organizasyon kavramının büyük potansiyelini ortaya çıkarabilir. Bu noktadan hareketle bu çalışma, pandemi koşullarında çevik organizasyon yapısının şirketlere sağladığı avantajları açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çeviklik kavramı, çevik çalışma ve çevik organizasyon yapısının şirketler için önemi anlatılmak istenmiştir. Ayrıca şirketlere çevik bir yapı sağlandığında katma değer artışı olur mu? ve “COVID-19 salgını sırasında çevik organizasyon yapısının ve çevik çalışmanın şirketlere faydaları nelerdir?” sorularına örneklerle cevap aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu nedenle, öncelikle örgütsel çeviklik kavramı, bileşenleri ve çevik bir organizasyonun özellikleri açıklanmıştır. Ardından pandemi sırasında ve öncesinde çevik uygulamalardan bazı örneklere değinildi. Son olarak pandemi sürecinde çevik organizasyon yapısının şirketler için avantajları ve çevik çalışmanın şirketler için önemi tartışılmış ve çalışma sonuçlandırılmıştır.

Bu çalışma, şirketlerin sadece pandemi krizinde çeviklik yeteneklerini ve stratejilerini incelemesi açısından sınırlıdır. Ayrıca çalışmada sadece büyük ölçekli veya küresel ölçekli şirketlerden bahsedilmiştir. Bu çalışma, küresel finansal krizlerin neden olduğu küresel ekonomik durgunluk sırasında şirketlerin çevik organizasyon yapılarını veya yeteneklerini incelemesi açısından gelecekteki çalışmalara ilham verebilir. Ayrıca gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalarda orta ölçekli veya aile şirketi örneklerinden bahsedilerek şirketlerin pandemi ve ekonomik krizlerdeki çeviklik stratejileri de incelenebilir.



Ek Bilgiler

Çıkar Çatışması Bilgisi: Sorumlu yazar, çalışmada çıkar çatışması olmadığını kabul etmektedir.

Destek Bilgisi: Çalışmada herhangi bir kuruluştan destek sağlanmamıştır.

Etik Onay Bilgisi: Çalışma, etik onay belgesi gerektirmemektedir. .

Katkı Oranı Bilgisi: Yazarın katkı oranı %100'dür.

