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Research Article / *Araştırma Makalesi*

AGILITY AND AGILE ORGANIZATIONS FROM EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SAAS BUSINESS MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to learn the thoughts of individuals working in an agile organization about agility and contribute to the agility literature from the employee perspective. Through this aim, we conducted face-to-face interviews with 10 participants working in a SaaS (Software as a Service) company that provides software services to its customers. We analyzed the data through the MAXQDA 2022 Qualitative Data Analysis Program. When we examined the most preferred expressions to describe agility, 70 percent of the participants used the word "dynamic" 8 times and "innovation" 7 times. Half of the participants emphasized "stress" and "speed" 5 times each. More than 70 percent of the participants stated that the positive aspects of agility are "having a horizontal organizational structure" (19 times), "flexibility" (12 times), and "the existence of a dynamic and innovative environment" (11 times). On the other hand, we saw that "stress and job training pressure," repeated 17 times by 70 percent of the participants, was the most frequently emphasized negative aspect of agility. According to the participants, "adaptability to teamwork" and "being open-minded/ flexible" are the leading competencies that individuals working in an agile organization should possess. Studies examining employees' feelings and thoughts about agility are rare in the literature. This situation constitutes the original aspect of the present study.

Keywords: *Agile Organizations, SaaS Business Model, Employees, Qualitative Research.*

ÇALIŞANLARIN PERSPEKTİFİNDEN ÇEVİKLİK VE ÇEVİK ORGANİZASYONLAR: SAAS İŞ MODELİ BAĞLAMINDA NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, çevik bir organizasyonda çalışan bireylerin çeviklik hakkındaki düşüncelerini öğrenmek ve çeviklik literatürüne, çalışan perspektifinden katkıda bulunmaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, müşterilerine yazılım hizmeti sağlayan bir SaaS firmasında çalışan 10 katılımcı ile yüz

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yüze mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, MAXQDA 2022 Nitel Veri Analizi Programı aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. Çevikliği tanımlamak için en fazla tercih edilen ifadeler incelendiğinde, katılımcıların yüzde 70'inin 8 kez "dinamiklik" ve 7 kez "yenilikçilik" sözcüğünü kullandığı saptanmıştır. Katılımcıların yarısı ise 5'er kez "stres" ve "hız" kelimelerini vurgulamıştır. Katılımcıların yüzde 70'inden fazlası çevikliğin olumlu yönlerinin "yatay bir örgüt yapısına sahip olma" (19 kez), "esneklik" (12 kez) ve "dinamik ve inovatif bir ortamın varlığı" (11 kez) olduğunu belirtmiştir. Katılımcıların yüzde 70'i tarafından 17 kez tekrarlanan "stres ve iş yetiştirme baskısının", çevikliğin en sık vurgulanan olumsuz yönü olduğu görülmüştür. Katılımcılara göre çevik bir organizasyonda çalışan bireylerin sahip olması gereken yetkinliklerin başında "takım çalışmasına uyum sağlayabilme" ve "açık fikirli/ esnek olma" gelmektedir. Literatürde çalışanların çeviklik uygulamaları hakkındaki duygu ve düşüncelerini nitel araştırma yöntemleri ile derinlemesine inceleyen araştırmalar nadirdir. Bu durum, mevcut çalışmanın özgün yanını oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çevik Organizasyonlar, SaaS İş Modeli, Çalışanlar, Nitel Araştırma.*

1. Introduction

The problem of how organizations can successfully deal with the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity environments (VUCA world) has been a dominant topic in both industry and academia for decades. Although agility is perceived as a buzzword and a new management trend, it is not a recent phenomenon. Although its history dates back to the 1920s, it came to the fore, especially in the 1960s, when some researchers developed concepts about how organizations would cope with the increasingly volatile environment. The term "agility" was proposed in the 1990s by Lehigh University in Pennsylvania researchers. Initially focused on agile production, later adopted in supply chain management, software development, production economics, and information technology. Zerfab & Colleagues (2018:7) emphasized that agility has gained real momentum as it was used by the software industry, where the concept is most widely applied today. The software world had difficulties meeting customer demands, fast production, and on-time delivery due to the inadequacy of traditional approaches in the 1990s, and they had to change and adapt to survive. A group of software developers, aware of the need for change, published the Agile Manifesto in 2001, which led to the emergence of the "Agile" approach designed to keep up with all conditions.

The agile approach has been the subject of essential studies since 2001, with the manifesto's publication. The literature generally focused on defining the concepts related to agility and determining its characteristics (e.g., Croccitto & Youssef, 2003; Sherehiy et al., 2007; Trzcielinski, 2007; Wendler, 2016; Zerfaß et al., 2018; İnanır, 2020; İmamoğlu vd., 2021), agile methodologies (15th Annual State of Agile Report, 2021; The State of Agile HR 2020; Venkatesh et al., 2020; Rietze & Zacher, 2022), case studies of successful agile organizations (Sommer, 2019; Peterson, 2020; Çetinkaya & Akkoca, 2021; Al, 2022), managing the transition process to agile (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000) and agile HR practices (Gieles & Van der Meer, 2017; Saha et al., 2017; Blonde & Ekman, 2020; Ranaginghe & Sangaradeniya, 2021). There are also various studies conducted on individuals working in agile organizations. These studies measure organizational behavior variables such as job satisfaction, motivation, corporate culture, job performance, and workplace happiness (Melnik & Maurer, 2006; Sommer, 2019; Noronha, 2018; Dorp, 2019; Junker et al., 2021). On the other hand, no study has been encoun-

tered in the literature investigating the thoughts of employees working in an agile organization about agility.

In this context, this article examines employees' views on agility and agile organizations. In line with this goal, we conducted qualitative research in an international SaaS company. SaaS (Software as a Service) is a new software distribution model in which a provider licenses a requested application for customer service. Organizations are moving to the SaaS delivery model as it has proven to be one of the most promising service delivery models in the last few years. SaaS models are adopted and developed globally by small and medium-sized enterprises. In this model, companies establish a SaaS-based model in various functional areas such as customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, and supply chain management; thus, companies do not need to invest in expensive hardware and software. It also relieves them of most IT (information technology) responsibilities of troubleshooting and maintaining software. Services are installed, assembled, and carried on by the systems of the SaaS provider. Users pay on a pay-per-use pricing model and get a flexible experience in terms of time and location of access. In addition, SaaS provides on-demand scalability and a short implementation time (Aleem et al., 2019:83).

This study approaches agile organizations from an "employee-oriented" and "micro" perspective and aims to contribute to business life and academic literature. In addition, we think it will be helpful to convey the views of individuals working in agile organizations, company managers who adopt an agile approach or plan to become agile, and individuals who are considering working in agile companies.

2. Conceptual Framework

The problem of how organizations can successfully deal with dynamic, unpredictable, and constantly changing environments has been a prevailing topic in the industry and academia for several decades. Many solutions such as networking, reengineering, modular organizations, virtual companies, high-performing organizations, empowerment, flexible manufacturing, and just-in-time manufacturing have been proposed to overcome this problem. One of the prominent among these suggestions for dealing with an unpredictable and uncertain environment is agile organizations (Sherehiy et al., 2007:445). An agile paradigm is an approach that considers it necessary to carry out software development activities in a project in an iterative (repetitive) and incremental life cycle, to produce value at the end of each cycle, and to have stakeholders and end users have a say in this cycle. Furthermore, the agile approach aims to accelerate the processes by using them effectively and documenting them when necessary (Keskinkılıç & Kahveci, 2019:1073-1074).

The basis of the agile working methodology is to meet the customers' needs quickly and flexibly. As a result, organizations move away from hierarchy in an agile organizational structure and turn into a more horizontal organization. This system is a business model with rituals, where there are no unnecessarily long meetings, and all employees feel valued. Furthermore, according to varying agile parameters, human resources departments change their annual strategies (Cönbez, 2020). In summary, agility helps a company succeed and increase its profits in competitive markets (Ragin-Skorecka, 2016:5). Below, we will explain the definition of the agile approach and its development process, and the characteristics of agile organizations.

2.1. Definition and Development of Agility

The word agility, which is of Persian origin, was used for the first time in the organizational sense in the report titled "21st Century Manufacturing Company Strategy," published by the Iacocca Institute in 1991 (Candan et al., 2017:4-5). Kidd (1994) defined agility as a "proactive and rapid adaptation of enterprise elements to unpredicted and unexpected changes" (Sherehiy et al., 2007:445). According to a more comprehensive definition made by Yusuf et al. (1997:37), "agility is the successful exploration of competitive bases (speed, flexibility, innovation proactivity, quality, and profitability) through the integration of reconfigurable resources and best practices in a knowledge-rich environment to provide customer-driven products and services in a fast-changing market environment." In another definition, "agility is the ability to create and respond to change to profit in a turbulent business environment" (Highsmith, 2002:xxiii). Rzepka & Bojar (2020:383) defined the concept as the "strategic ability of the organization to adapt to turbulent market changes." According to Harraf et al. (2015:676-677), "agility enables adaptation and response and is increasingly linked to organizational success in today's competitive environment."

There is no consensus on the definition of agility. However, Ganguly et al. (2009:412) examined the essential elements of 12 descriptions of agility developed by different authors between 1991 and 2005 and found that the most emphasized standard features of agility were "speed," "responsiveness," and "focusing on customer needs." Responsiveness and speed are critical for competition. In this context, quick response allows rapid and flexible adaptation by an agile organization of all components, including company goals, employees, and technology, to unexpected changes (Rzepka & Bojar, 2020:383). Due to the changing nature of competition, the inherent variability of the competitive environment, and the need for an organization to respond to the environment faster and more accurately, it has become necessary for an organization to be agile today.

Agility emerged nearly 30 years ago due to volatile economic environments and global competition. In the early 1990s, when the IT sector began to rise, a problem described as "application delivery delay" or "application development crisis" was encountered in software development. This problem is based on the slow progress of the processes despite the development of technology, the delivery times exceeding expectations, and the inadequacy of traditional project management methods such as the Waterfall Approach to solve these problems. This model is designed to not move on to the next development phase until the previous one has been completed. Progress flows downward, similar to how rushing water flows downwards from a height; hence, the name "waterfall" was conferred on this programming model. In this approach, it is essential to stick to the plan set at the beginning of the project. It means that any changes that may be necessary during the process cannot be made. In addition, the planned product is offered to the market in the waterfall approach, even if it takes years to complete. However, when this happens, sometimes the product appears to be outdated. Therefore, this approach may lead to delays in product delivery or delivery of a product that is not suitable for the market (McCormick, 2012:3-6).

Cockburn & Highsmith (2001:120-121) stated that technology and software are changing daily, traditional methods are outdated, and these methods do not always yield the desired results in every situation. Practitioners recognized that new practices are necessary to better

cope with changing requirements and concluded that these new practices should offer "productive rules," be people-oriented and flexible, rather than "overarching rules" that deteriorate rapidly in a dynamic environment. Different methods were constantly sought to solve these problems in production; thus, Scrum, one of the most widely used agile methodologies today, has emerged. The concept of Scrum was first used by Japanese scientists Takeuchi & Nonaka in the article "The New New Product Development Game," published in the Harvard Business Review in 1986. This article explains the characteristics of teams that develop products in complex environments. The structure of these teams is likened to rugby players' movements, and the rugby term Scrum is derived from this. According to the authors, "a holistic or 'rugby' approach - where a team tries to go the distance as a unit, passing the ball back and forth-may better serve today's competitive requirements. Under the rugby approach, the product development process emerges from the constant interaction of a hand-picked, multidisciplinary team whose members work together from start to finish. Rather than proceeding in defined, highly structured stages, the process proceeds through the interaction of team members. For example, a group of engineers may begin designing the product before all the results of the feasibility tests are available. Alternatively, the team may be forced to reconsider a decision due to later information. However, the team does not stop then but engages in iterative experimentation. This situation continues in even the latest phases of the development process" (Takeuchi & Nonaka, 1986:138).

Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber, known as the creators of Scrum, contributed to creating the Agile Manifesto in 2001. They named the approach they developed, inspired by the article "Scrum," and presented the "Scrum Development Process" paper together at a conference held in Austin, Texas, in 1995. However, despite these developments, the problems experienced in the software field have not been fully resolved. For this reason, at the beginning of the 2000s, a group of software developers started meeting to find ways to provide faster service and solve problems. After the Oregon meeting, 17 software developers (Kent Beck, Ward Cunningham, Arie van Bennekum, Alistair Cockburn, Jeff Sutherland, Ken Schwaber, et al.) came together in Utah in 2001 and, within a few days, created the "Agile Software Development Manifesto" (Highsmith, 2002:xxviii). The manifesto sets out four core values (agilemanifesto.org/iso/en/manifesto.html, 2001):

- *"Individuals and interactions* over processes and tools,
- *working software* over comprehensive documentation,
- *customer collaboration* over contract negotiation,
- *responding to change* by following a plan."

While the developers accepted the value of the items on the right, they stated that they found the items on the left more valuable. An additional 12 principles have been published to clarify the values outlined in the manifesto (https://agilemanifesto.org, 2001). Set off by this manifesto, much research regarding agility has explicitly focused on agile software development and showed that agile methods might benefit project teams, reduce costs, and enhance quality (Wendler, 2016:442). For example, Highsmith (2002) identified the most important principles of agile development from his point of view in his work "Agile Software Development Ecosystems," such as providing value to the customer and focusing on individual devel-

opers and their skills. The author also presented all the critical agile methods, such as Scrum and Extreme Programming, in his work. Pathak & Saha (2013:270-276) examined different agile practices in their "Review of Agile Software Development Methodologies" study and compared them with traditional process methods. They also compared the positive and negative aspects of applying these agile processes to research projects and pointed out the difficulties in adapting agile methods. Theocharis et al. (2015:149-166) conducted a literature study that resulted in various development approaches. The approaches described are generally a combination of traditional approaches and agile methods. They called these combinations "hybrid approaches" and introduced the Water-Scrum-Fall way, a variety of the Scrum and Waterfall model, as the most common method.

2.2. Definition and Characteristics of Agile Organizations

The concept of agility was used in the area of production. Then its assumptions were related to other functions of an organization. Such an opinion resulted in the emergence of an "agile organization" (Rzepka & Bojar, 2020). An agile enterprise is a meta-concept introduced by Goldman, Preiss, Nagel & Dove (1991). The essence of an agile enterprise is to find and use opportunities in its market environment by using its primary asset – knowledge. Organizational agility depends on members' knowledge, experience, inventiveness, and information. According to Ragin-Skorecka (2016:5-6), "an agile enterprise activates social capital and involves customers in creating value. An organization must be agile to grab the opportunities emerging in its surroundings and reconfigure itself to respond quickly to customers' needs.". Rzepka & Bojar (2020:384) emphasized "the ability of an agile organization to react correctly and rapidly to turbulent changes in the market environment, monitor competitive markets with unique resources, and build successful relationships with customers, suppliers, and competitors."

Based on these explanations regarding the agile organization, it is possible to define the phenomenon of "organizational agility," which is closely related to the concept. For example, Putnik (2001:79) described organizational agility as "the capability for fast adaptability or fast reconfigurability to respond rapidly to the market or customer demand changes." In this context, we can define "enterprises that learn quickly by combining their agility ability with the organization's functions, adapt quickly to the environment, are ready for change, create an organizational culture in this direction, and adopt agile methodologies" as *agile organizations*.

According to Highsmith (2002), "companies must determine what level of agility they require to remain competitive. Agility is only an advantage relative to competitors – a copper mining company does not need to be as agile as a biotechnology firm." Today, it is known that large world-renowned companies such as Google, Adobe, Amazon, Netflix, and General Electric are agile organizations. When these agile companies are examined, it is understood that they have some standard features. Customer focus, collaboration, fast learning, open communication, flexibility, and fast decision-making are just a few of these features. Zerfaß et al. (2018:9) stated that agile enterprises must adapt quickly to changes within their business environment. They require four capabilities: performance, flexibility/adaptability, responsiveness, and speed. Based on some research in the literature, the authors also suggested that aside from speed and flexibility, stability is also a significant catalyst for organizational performance. According to these authors, "agile organizations master the paradox – they are both stable and dynamic simultaneously."

Alton (2017) listed the main features of agile culture in his article titled "Why Agile Work Cultures are so Important to Millennials":

- *Flexibility:* Agile work cultures are flexible in almost every respect. When a problem arises, there is not just one way to solve it or one person responsible for solving it. Instead, the team works together to find the best solution.
- *Responsibility distribution:* Agile environments are also more fluid when assigning responsibilities. Rather than having a strict division of labor, there may be overlap and redundancies.
- *Fast response times:* Agile work environments prioritize speed in adopting new standards and policies or literal speed when addressing a new problem.
- *Autonomy:* Most agile work cultures also have a heightened sense of autonomy; employees have more leeway and freedom to do work how they see fit.
- *Little formalities:* Agile work environments have minimal formal structures dictating how work is supposed to be accomplished. They have leaders rather than managers and best practices rather than strict rules. As a result, documentation and procedural requirements are sparser, and there are fewer hierarchies and bureaucracies.

Goldman, Nagel &Preiss (1995) state that there are four aspects of agility in an organization: (1) providing value to the customer, (2) readiness for change, (3) valuing human knowledge and skills, and (4) establishing virtual partnerships. The first three elements refer to the lean concept. However, the fourth one is specific to agile organizations (Ragin-Skorecka, 2016:5-7).

2.3. Research Studies on Employees in Agile Organizations

Since the publication of the "Agile Manifesto," the number of articles on agility has been overgrowing. However, these studies generally describe the characteristics that agile organizations should have, the role of leaders in such organizations, or case studies about how successful agile companies in the business world have achieved this. It is noteworthy that the studies reflect how it feels to work in such organizations; in other words, the perspectives and attitudes of the employees of agile companies are limited. However, as seen from the research examples presented below, studies examining the effects of agile transformation or agile practices on employees or agile teams are more common.

One of the studies on this subject is in Melnik & Maurer's (2006:32) article "Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction in Agile and Non-Agile Software Development Teams." The study examined whether job satisfaction was related to the development processes used among various teams, regions, and employees. They found a moderately positive relationship between experience level with agile methods and job satisfaction. In addition, studies show that the satisfaction level of employees in agile teams is twice as high as those of employees in non-agile teams. Similarly, Noronha (2018:3) conducted qualitative research by exploring the perceptions of IT employees about agile practices and their effects on organizational culture. As a result of the study, indications were obtained that agile methods can produce changes in 10 organizational culture factors: communication, flexibility, control, collaboration, innova-

tion, feedback, the pressure of work, visibility of tasks, focus on the customer, and continuous improvement. Another research conducted in this area is Dorp's (2019:4) study titled "Agile Teams: Experienced Work Characteristics and Their Effects on Employees' Perceived Job Performance and Happiness at Work." As a result of the research, three significant relationships were determined regarding the characteristics of the job: (i) Decision-making autonomy related positively to work engagement, (ii) autonomy in working methods related positively to organizational citizenship behavior, and (iii) feedback from others were also positively related to work engagement.

The article "Agile Transformation at LEGO Group" covers the first results of the agile transformation implemented in LEGO's two central digital departments. According to these results, it is understood that the responsiveness of digital deliveries has increased, and significant improvements have been made in response time to change in many areas, from market participation to digitalization in production. In addition, project delivery time has been reduced from months to weeks compared to the traditional development approach. According to Sommer (2019:20), one of the most important findings is that "the new way of working has improved the motivation and satisfaction among employees in the two departments that kicked off the Agile transformation and contributed to a significant positive increase in the yearly employee motivation and satisfaction survey score."

Peterson's (2020) master's thesis, "Agile Practices in Commercial SaaS Teams: A Case Study on the Adoption of Agile Practices in Non-Software Teams," concluded that introducing agile methods to commercial teams benefits the organization and helps teams solve more complex problems. However, Venkatesh et al. (2020:733-734) emphasized that despite their popularity and benefits, it is unclear how agile methods affect work exhaustion in software developers and how developer skills play into this effect. In this context, the authors tested their research model in a field study among 1894 software developers in 217 project teams that used agile methods. The results showed that the agile approach facilitates the achievement of unambiguous role perceptions and reduces work exhaustion in developers, particularly if developers possess the organizational skills to interact with others in their organization effectively.

Research that approaches agile implementation from employees' perspective is Roosendaal's (2021) master's thesis named "Employees' Perspective on the Impact of Agile Implementation on Knowledge Sharing: A Qualitative Study in a Large Multi-National Company." This study presents findings on how a change towards agile project management can impact knowledge sharing in an IT department of a large multinational company. One of the critical findings of the research is that even teams that work with agility are highly self-organized and have responsibility. Due to its strategic nature, employees cannot independently solve the difficulties of knowledge sharing. Junker et al., (2021:1) developed a new multilevel agile working model. They tested this model in a sample of 114 teams (476 individuals) undergoing an agile transformation at a large German transport and logistics organization. Teams at the end of the agile transformation scored significantly higher on agile work practices, proactivity norms, and team performance than at the beginning.

It is assumed that the introduction of agile work practices positively affects work characteristics and, in turn, the well-being of employees. However, because there is only very little and methodologically limited empirical research on this topic, Rietze & Zacher (2022:1) devel-

oped and tested a model on the direct and indirect relationships between agile work practices, resources, job demands, and occupational well-being. Data from 260 employees working in agile development teams who participated in two surveys approximately six weeks apart. As a result of the research, agile work practices negatively affect emotional fatigue through lower job demands. At the same time, agile work practices also positively and indirectly affect emotional engagement through higher job resources.

Schloegel et al., (2018) emphasized that "driven by demographic change, employees of different age groups would need to work closely together in agile software development in the future. However, age stereotypes can hinder many aspects of communication, cooperation, and coordination in these self-managed teams." In this context, they conducted a quantitative survey at the individual level with 464 employees in two software development companies to identify and differentiate age stereotypes in agile software development. They revealed that employees in agile software development showed a bias in general performance expectations, favoring middle-aged employees over younger and older employees. They also found that younger developers hold the strongest negative age stereotypes, and older developers suffer the most from stereotypes. Based on these findings, the authors emphasized that when an older or younger employee joins a team, managers should take formal or informal precautions against stereotypes.

As summarized above, studies investigating the opinions of individuals working in agile organizations about agility and agile organizations are extremely limited in the literature. However, more detailed research and analysis of the perspectives and attitudes of employees can provide important information to both potential candidates considering working in such organizations and the founders and senior managers of these companies. In addition, it is thought that determining the essential competencies of agile organizations and the personnel working in these organizations from the employee's perspective will contribute to the literature. Therefore, the research carried out in a SaaS company, a business model with special qualifications designed in this direction, is presented below.

3. Research Design

The primary purpose of this research is to learn the thoughts of individuals working in an agile organization about agility, thus contributing to the agility literature from the employee perspective. In this study, we designed *qualitative research* to determine how employees working in an agile company define the concept of agility and what kind of attitudes they have about working in an agile organization. The general approach of the research is the *inductive approach*, which provides a general idea by looking at a limited number of examples.

The design of the research is a "*case study*." Case studies are beneficial when one needs to have a deep understanding of a particular problem or situation and can identify cases rich in information that can be learned from a few examples. A case can be a person, an event, a program, a critical incident, or a community. Regardless of the unit of analysis, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth, in detail, in context, and holistically. The more a program aims at individualized outcomes, the greater the appropriateness of qualitative case methods (Patton, 1987:19). The case study pattern in the research is the "holistic single-case design." (Yin, 2006). Single-case designs have a single unit of analysis (an individual, an insti-

tution, a program, a school, etc.). The holistic single-case method studies extreme, contradictory, or idiosyncratic situations that do not meet general standards. Accordingly, the holistic single-case design is suitable for this research, which was conducted in a SaaS company with a unique structure and working methods. It is natural for a company showing these characteristics to be the subject of a study alone because there are not many companies that have similar features (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013:326).

3.1. Sample

In this research, we used Patton's (1987) "*typical case sampling method,*" one of the *purposeful sampling methods*, as we aimed to provide information about the typical features of SaaS companies and their agile working methods. The purpose of typical case sampling is to describe and illustrate what is familiar to those unfamiliar with the setting (Suri, 2011:68). In this method, if the researcher wants to introduce a new application, they can identify one or more of the most typical situations in which this application is made and study them. The aim is to have an idea about a specific field or to inform those who do not know this field, subject, application, or innovation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013:138).

The current research focused on a single SaaS technology company that provides cloud-based software services to its customers. The company offers the next generation of virtual try-on technology to industry-leading retail companies worldwide. Adopting a customer-oriented and fast production approach, the company is an agile organization and uses Scrum and Kanban methodologies. The team consists of individuals dedicated to changing the way of people shop and utilizing augmented reality in various industries. That team has engineers, user experience designers, technology experts, and business strategy consultants.

Excluding the employees of outsourcing companies, there are 41 employees in the firm. So, the population of our case study is 41 employees, 10 of whom agreed to interview us. Although others stated that they wanted to participate in the research, they could not due to their busy work schedules. Therefore, we think that our interview with a quarter of the employees of this company, which has different characteristics from other types of organizations, is a sufficient sample size for qualitative research. In addition, since agile organizations have very sharp and distinctive features, the answers were similar, and repetitions started from the first few interviews. Accordingly, it is possible to say that we have reached the saturation point in the responses we received from 10 people.

3.2. Data Collection

Within the framework of the research approach, we applied to the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the university we are affiliated with and obtained the ethics committee permission (dated 12.04.2022, decision numbered E-87347630-659-240964 / 14). The data collection process started on April 20, 2022, and ended on May 20, 2022. After informing the participants about the content and purpose of the research, we asked six open-ended questions about agility and agile organizations:

- Which words do you use to describe agility?
- What are the positive aspects of agility for you?

- What do you think are the negative aspects of agility?
- What do you think are the competencies that individuals working in an agile organization should have?
- Were your expectations before working in an agile company met?
- Would you like to continue working in an agile organization in the future based on your experience?

We conducted the interviews in an environment where the participants could express themselves comfortably and where we could record audio. Then, we transferred the interview recordings, which took about 20-30 minutes, to the Office program.

3.3. Data Analysis

We used *content analysis*. Thus, we transferred the data to the MAXQDA 2022 and read and coded the answers given by each participant. In the next stage, we determined the categories by combining the codes that formed a meaningful whole. Then, we completed the process of editing the codes by applying appropriate strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative research. In the literature, it is stated that various methods or techniques can be used to increase the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Altunay et al., 2014; Erlandson et al.,1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Merriam, 1995; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Therefore, the methods we used in the present research can be explained as follows:

- We used the "*peer examination method*" to ensure the research's **credibility** (internal validity). We asked a peer who has knowledge about agility and is an expert in qualitative research methods to examine the data and comment on the plausibility of the emerging findings. The peer provided feedback by critically looking at the processes, from the research design to the data collected, their analysis, and the writing of the results. Then, in line with the suggestions from the peer, we reviewed the codes and made the necessary corrections. We also used the "*member checks method"* in our research. For this, we summarized, asked participants for their opinions on these accuracies, and got their approval after the interviews.
- We used the "*thick description method*" to ensure the research's **transferability** (external validity). For this, we tried to provide enough information about the phenomenon under study so that readers can determine how closely their situations match the research situation and whether findings can be transferred. In addition, we gave "*direct quotations*" from the participants' statements about the determined categories in reporting the results. We conducted the research in a SaaS organization that adopts agile working methods and has different characteristics and dynamics. We also selected the participants from among the employees of this company. In this context, we can say that we used the *"purposive sampling method"* as a strategy to increase the transferability of this research.
- To perform an "*audit trail"* strategy, we described how collected data and categories were derived and made decisions for the inquiry. In addition, based on the literature, we can say that the *peer examination* method we use to increase validity will also improve **consistency** (internal reliability).

- To increase the **confirmability** (external reliability) of the research, we gave detailed explanations about the participants, the environment in which conducted the investigation, the conceptual framework used in the data analysis, and the analysis methods. We also tried to increase external reliability by keeping the raw data of the research in case other researchers request it or to make comparisons with further research in the future (*confirmability audit*).

4. Findings

Information on the profiles of the ten employees participating in the research is shown in Table 1. Accordingly, three of the participants are female, and 7 are male. Ages range from 24-to 26, and all participants are undergraduates. The occupational/job information of the participants is in the last column of the table. Accordingly, four participants are software engineers, and two are Augmented Reality (AR) Creators. In addition, there is also a finance professional, a customer success manager, a product owner, and a growth specialist.

Table 1: Participants

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Job/Task
Participant 1	Male	25	Computer Engineering	Software Engineer
Participant 2	Male	26	Business Administration	Finance Expert
Participant 3	Male	26	Geological Engineering	Customer Success Manager
Participant 4	Female	26	Computer Engineering	Software Engineer
Participant 5	Female	26	Industrial and Product Design	AR Creator
Participant 6	Male	26	Architecture	AR Creator
Participant 7	Male	26	Architecture	Product Owner
Participant 8	Male	25	Computer Engineering	Software Engineer
Participant 9	Male	24	Computer Engineering	Software Engineer
Participant 10	Female	25	Business Administration	Growth Specialist

4.1. Findings Related to the Words Used by Participants to Define Agility

The most preferred expression of the participants to describe agility was the word "dynamic," and 70 percent of the participants (7 people) emphasized this word eight times (Table 2). In addition, 70 percent of the participants used the word "innovative," and 50 percent used the words "stressful" and "fast." In the analysis, it is noteworthy that some of the participants used the expression "*orderly*," some of them used "*chaotic*," and some of them used both "*orderly and chaotic*" when describing agility. For example, P2 expressed his thoughts on agility as "*Order in chaos…*" while P7 said, "*Ordinary but chaotic!*".

Table 2: Findings related to the words used by participants to define agility*

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
Dynamic	8	15.0	7
Innovative	7	13.2	7
Stressful	5	9.4	5
Speed	5	9.4	5
Orderly	5	9.4	4
Equality - Horizontal Structure	5	9.4	3
Customer-oriented	4	7.5	3
Chaotic	4	7.5	3
Flexible	3	5.6	3
Result oriented	2	3.7	2
Teamwork	2	3.7	2
Open to learning	2	3.7	2
Fun	1	1.8	1

* The "code frequency" in the tables is the number of times a participant refers to a particular concept/code in his/her speech; "Participant frequency" shows how many participants refer to a concept.

4.2. Findings on the Positive Aspects of Agility

Eighty percent of the participants emphasized the "horizontal organizational structure" as a positive agility feature. For this category, we can give the following statements of three participants as examples:

P2: "We determine the path and put everything on the table."

P3: "I like that it is not hierarchical and does not involve many authorities or people to make a decision."

P10: "I always did my internships in corporate companies. Therefore, I can easily compare it to where I am now. Institutional and hierarchical places made me nervous, and I feared making mistakes. I thought they would get angry with me if I stopped working, and I was always nervous. I do not feel such pressure in the agile organization where I work."

Another category, "flexibility," was mentioned 12 times by 70 percent of the participants. In this category, some participants emphasized the flexibility of working hours. For example, P10 said, "*One of my favorite features of agility is the flexibility of working hours*." Finally, some participants mentioned the flexibility of the process. For example, P9 stated that he finds it positive that "*the plans are flexible and can be changed during the process when necessary*."

Another category most frequently mentioned, "Constant Change – Innovation – Dynamism - Speed," was emphasized 11 times by 70 percent of the participants. Although these concepts may have different meanings, they were gathered under a single category, assuming that the participants used them for related and close purposes. In this category, we can give examples of the following sentences of two participants:

P3: "I am happy to work in a place where the action is taken faster, and we can see the results faster."

P4: "I like to reciprocate, and Agile is a structure that enables me to reach this result quickly. Dynamic, easy to accelerate, and constantly to change."

We see that "openness to learning," repeated ten times by 7 participants, is vital for employees. For example, P3 expressed his opinion on this issue: "*My favorite aspect of working in an agile company is that I am constantly in different conditions and processes. It also helps me add more to myself and contribute to my personal development*."

Table 3: Findings on the positive aspects of agility

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
Being away from hierarchical structure – Horizontal organizational structure	19	21.1	8
Flexibility	12	13.3	7
Continuous Change-Innovation-Dynamism-Speed	11	12.2	7
Openness to Learning-Development	10	11.1	7
Teamwork	9	10.0	5
Result oriented	7	7.7	5
Measurability of Performance - Accountability	6	6.6	4
Autonomy-Initiative	6	6.6	3
Planned-Regular Work	6	6.6	3
Productivity	3	3.3	2
Customer-oriented	1	1.1	1

4.3. Findings on the Negative Aspects of Agility

"Stress and pressure to get the job done on time," repeated 17 times by 7 participants, is the most frequently emphasized negative aspect of agility. Notably, this code has a rate of nearly 40 percent (38.6) of all codes related to the negative features of agility (Table 4). Most participants emphasized that pressure to get the job done on time causes stress. For example, P2 expressed his thoughts on this subject: "*The stress level increases because we also determine the duration of doing a job. Therefore, the pressure of not being able to complete the work creates stress*."

Interestingly, the participants used "speed, dynamism, customer orientation, and flexibility" to express both positive and negative aspects of agility. For instance, P2 used the following expressions: "*The positive aspects of agility can cause negative aspects*." P7 also stated that customer focus can be positive and negative: "*Getting much feedback from customers, although beneficial, can prolong processes*." Finally, evaluating flexibility positively and negatively, P6 said: "*As much as I like flexibility, I think there is a possibility that some employers can exploit flexibility. For example, the lack of specific working hours may lead to the employer's perception that they can employ staff whenever they want*."

Four participants stated that due to the dynamism and speed, they sometimes cannot concentrate enough on the details and therefore get stressed. For example, P3 said, "*Although I find dynamic and fast-moving processes more effective and useful, sometimes I feel that I have a superficial knowledge of the subject I am working on when we move agile without knowing much about the event. So sometimes, I want to go deep and do long research*." P7 stated that "*Being fast can sometimes increase stress and pressure*." Accordingly, we conclude that some agility features are perceived by employees positively and negatively.

Table 4: Findings on the negative aspects of agility

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
Stress and pressure to get the job done on time	17	38.6	7
Speed and dynamism	9	20.4	4
Customer-oriented	5	11.3	3
Too many meetings	5	11.3	2
Flexibility	3	6.8	2
Performance-reward-effort relationship	2	4.5	1
Coordination problems between teams	2	4.5	1
The problem of adapting new members to the agile culture	1	2.2	1

4.4. Findings Regarding Competencies That Employees Should Have

Participants most frequently stated competence was "adapting to teamwork" (6 times). This competence is followed by "being open-minded and flexible" (5 times). Two competencies emphasized four times were "energetic" and "openness to learning and development." Quick and practical thinking competence was repeated three times. By coding the answers, we determined 20 employee competencies, and participants repeated these competencies 42 times (Table 5).

Table 5: Findings regarding competencies that employees should have

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
Ability to adapt to teamwork	6	14.2	6
Open-minded and flexible	5	11.9	4
Energetic	4	9.5	4
Open to learning and development	4	9.5	3
Quick and practical thinking	3	7.1	3
Solution-oriented	2	4.7	2
Ability to adapt to rapid change	2	4.7	2
Ability to manage a crisis	2	4.7	2
High communication skills	2	4.7	2
Ability to fulfill the requirements of more than one role / have multiple skills	2	4.7	1
Calmness	1	2.3	1
Self-disciplined	1	2.3	1
High motivation	1	2.3	1
Proactive	1	2.3	1
Inquisitive	1	2.3	1
Ability to focus on the goals of the organization	1	2.3	1
Ability to empathize	1	2.3	1
Ability to take responsibility	1	2.3	1
Self-confident	1	2.3	1
Be patient	1	2.3	1
Total	**42**	**100.0**	

4.5. Findings Related to Meeting the Expectations

Three categories emerged in the analysis to determine the level of meeting the employees' expectations. The first category includes the answers of 4 participants whose expectations were partially met. The statements of two participants, who stated that they were somewhat satisfied, are as follows:

P1: "I expected the Agile structure to be more agile. The fact that it includes too many meetings makes it a bit cumbersome, in my opinion. Half the week is spent with meetings. It did not meet my expectations, but other than that, it was what I expected."

P9: "I encountered things close to what I heard and learned from my environment, but I also encountered different situations. So, I can say both yes and no."

In addition, 30 percent of the participants stated that their expectations were met, and the other 30 percent indicated that they did not know about agile companies before. Therefore, they did not have any expectations when they started working in the company (Table 6).

Table 6: Findings related to meeting the expectations

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
My expectation was partially met	4	40	4
My expectation was met	3	30	3
I had no expectations/knowledge before	3	30	3

4.6. Findings on intention to continue working in an agile organization

We saw that most participants (60 percent) always prefer to continue working in an agile organization (Table 7). On the other hand, 40 percent of the participants stated that agile organizations could be tiring at later ages. Thus they may turn to a more stable organization and job in the future. The statements of three participants can be given as examples in this context:

P1: "It will depend on my energy. Constant change and speed are at the forefront in such companies. If I reach a certain age and feel tired, I may not be able to tolerate this stress and tempo. In that case, I can consider working in a more stable and corporate company."

P2: "For now, I would consider working in such a system. Because in corporate companies, everything is stable, and you can contribute less to yourself. Hours and things to do are always clear, but you always learn something in agile SaaS companies because something is always changing. Also, I can learn a lot from my friends because we work as a team. However, I would like to work in a corporate company after a certain level because it is very stressful. I want to work without forcing myself."

P7: "For now, yes, because I am learning a lot and like the flexible way of working. However, I may prefer to work more slowly and with less stress in the future."

When we examined the participants' statements, we understood that there was no negative result about the desire to work in agile organizations. However, we understood that after a while, especially at older ages, people may prefer not to work in these organizations on the assumption that the dynamic structure of agile organizations can be stressful and tiring.

Table 7: Findings on intention to continue working in an agile organization in the future

Codes	Code Frequency	Code Percentage	Participant Frequency
Always keep working in an agile organization	6	60	6
Do not consider working in a non-agile organization in the future	4	40	4

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This research, conducted to determine the participants' attitudes towards agility, was conducted through face-to-face interviews. Accordingly, we transferred the data to the MAXQDA 2022 program and coded and analyzed each participant's answers. As a result, we can summarize the findings of the research as follows:

- The most frequently used words to describe agility were dynamism, innovation, and stress. These concepts are consistent with the agility literature (Yusuf et al., 1999; Highsmith, 2002; Ganguly et al., 2009; Rzepka & Bojar, 2020).
- Employees evaluated some features of agility, such as speed, dynamism, flexibility, and customer focus, both positively and negatively. This situation is based on the fact that although these concepts have some advantages, they also have disadvantages for employees.
- The most critical competencies that employees in an agile organization should possess are adaptability to teamwork, being open-minded and flexible, high energy, and openness to development and learning. These findings are also consistent with the results of other studies in the literature (for example, Breu et al., 2002; Smith & Dickson, 2003; Sherehiy et al., 2007; Zerfaß et al., 2018; Sucu, 2020).
- We received three different responses to whether working in an agile organization met the expectations of employees: (i) those who had no expectations because they had no prior knowledge of agile organizations, (ii) those whose expectations were met, and (iii) those whose expectations were partially met.
- Sixty percent of the participants stated that they intend to continue working in an agile organization due to the non-hierarchical and flexible structure of agile organizations. However, participants considering working in a non-agile organization stated that agile organizations' fast, dynamic, and stressful systems would be tiring. Considering that the participants are between the ages of 24 and 26, we can conclude that the age variable has a predictive effect on the willingness to work in agile organizations. In addition, all participants emphasized that they prefer agile organizations to traditional organizations in their current age.

Study findings can support the decision-making of companies planning to adopt agile practices and look for more information about the values and behaviors that agile methods can drive. Based on these findings, we can suggest the followings for employees, managers, and owners of these companies:

- Stress and the anxiety of completing the work on time stand out among the negative features of agile organizations. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the owners and managers of such companies to focus on this issue. In such organizations, where an employee-oriented approach is dominant, managers should minimize the stress and pressure perceived by the employees. First, they should ensure that the job description is clear and job delivery times are determined realistically. Especially in the software industry, it is essential to decide on the duration (effort) of the work to be done by the software developers since the determination of these deadlines by the senior management may lead to incorrect delivery times and increase employee stress. In addition, harmonizing the departments/teams on delivery times and informing the customer about this will help reduce the pressure.

- Since agile organizations are always in conditions of change, all teams and departments should be aware of each other. Therefore, meetings are of great importance and are held frequently. While these meetings play a crucial role in agile organizations, they emerged as a negative feature in this research as they divide the workflow. Teams who complain about the frequency of meetings can be advised to arrange their meeting calendars in line with their working dynamics. In addition, anything that is wrong or believed to be unhelpful in the agile system can be changed. For example, the team does not have to hold a meeting if no one has a topic to convey in that day's daily session. Determining the dynamics should be at the initiative of the teams.

The most crucial limitation encountered in the study is that the number of people we could interview was limited to 10 because the employees were very busy during the interview process. We can advise researchers to conduct in-depth interviews with more individuals working in agile organizations. They can investigate the problems the employees experience regarding speed, dynamism, overly customer-focused, harmony between teams, and what kind of solutions they think are beneficial to solve these problems.

We thought that the findings of this research contribute to the Management and Organization (Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management) literature in terms of revealing the views of individuals working in agile organizations about the basic features, positive and negative aspects of these organizations, and the competencies that employees should have. In addition, we can say that it gives ideas to individuals, managers, and business owners who want to work or has worked in such organizations by presenting agile organizations from employees' perspectives.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Contribution Statement

The authors contributed to this study equally.

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