

Social Communication Satisfaction and Pandemic Effects: A Case Study of Office Employees at Berjaya Langkawi Resort

Muhammad Ilham Sariman, Nan Zakiah Megat Ibrahim, Azahari Jamaludin

Faculty of Business, Accounting and Art, Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA,
56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: zakiah@kuptm.edu.my.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on satisfaction with social communication among office employees at Berjaya Langkawi Beach and Spa Resort. Pandemics, like COVID-19, lead to measures such as movement control orders, significantly impacting social interaction and potentially causing loneliness and isolation. The research aimed to examine the relationship between the pandemic's impact and satisfaction with social communication, and to identify differences by age and gender. A quantitative research design was employed, using a questionnaire distributed to 108 of 150 targeted employees who had worked from home. The questionnaire collected data on respondents' backgrounds, the effects of the pandemic, and satisfaction with social communication. Instrument reliability was confirmed through a pre-test, with acceptable Cronbach's alpha values for all variables (Effects of Pandemic = .802; Social Communication Satisfaction = .761). Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the impact of the pandemic and social communication satisfaction ($r = .326^{**}$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that pandemic conditions indeed affect communication satisfaction. While no significant difference in social communication satisfaction was found by age ($F = .636$, $p > .05$), a significant difference was observed by gender ($\text{Sig.} = .000$), indicating that gender plays a role in social communication satisfaction during the pandemic. This research underscores the importance of social connection as a fundamental human need, consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and contributes valuable insights into pandemic-related communication challenges for future studies.

Keywords: *social, communication, satisfaction, pandemic, Berjaya Resort*

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INTRODUCTION

Social Communication Satisfaction is defined as an emotional feeling derived from the effectiveness of communication interactions among stakeholders. For this research, communication is defined as interaction between individuals, such as friends, colleagues, or neighbors, a vital component of life that enables peace of mind and desired interaction. This concept is crucial to society as individuals develop a helpful interpersonal communication system and build relationships through mutual interactions, activities, and impacts. A strong social support network, resulting from effective social communication, equips a person to deal with various life issues. However, a significant problem with satisfaction in social communication during the pandemic is the inability to achieve it in social interactions. The main issues include reduced face-to-face engagement, increased reliance on mediated platforms such as Zoom and Skype, and reduced overall interaction with people outside one's immediate household. What remains unresolved in this issue is the long-term impact of extended Movement Control Orders (MCOs), which can lead to social isolation and loneliness and are known to have negative effects on various ailments, including cardiovascular, inflammatory, neuroendocrine, and cognitive disorders.

The second significance of social communication satisfaction in today's environment, particularly during a pandemic, lies in its direct link to an individual's psychological well-being and the ability to achieve a high-quality existence through extensive, close social communication. It is viewed as a crucial aspect that, if lacking, can cause significant problems. For instance, families consisting of parents and children are severely affected by the pandemic and are likely to experience worsening problems due to reduced communication outside the home. Students, due to school closures, also experience dissatisfaction with social communication because they cannot meet peers, a vital part of their social development. The research aims to raise awareness about these seemingly small effects that can escalate into larger, long-term problems. A research gap this study addresses is the need for new findings on age- and gender-based satisfaction with social communication, potentially contrasting or aligning with previous research on related concepts such as depression or general communication satisfaction.

The concept of social communication satisfaction significantly influences the current situation, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has drastically altered communication patterns, leading to reduce in-person engagement and a greater shift to digital platforms. This shift, while making people more literate in communication technologies, poses challenges to achieving satisfaction in social interactions. Furthermore, the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia, as a government initiative to curb the spread of the virus, prohibited citizens from leaving their homes and limited social activities, directly impacting opportunities for social communication. The emotional and psychological toll of the pandemic, along with the rapid spread of unfiltered and potentially false information online, further complicates social communication, making it difficult for individuals to achieve satisfaction when engaging in discussions they are unsure about.

Social communication plays a fundamental role in human life. It enables individuals to develop a helpful interpersonal communication system and build relationships through mutual interactions, activities, and impacts. It is not solely verbal; it also includes nonverbal cues such as body language, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions. This skill is often learned without direct instruction and through experience interacting with others. In a broader sense, social communication, encompassing social interaction, social cognition, pragmatics, and language, is essential for a high-quality existence and psychological well-being. In professional settings, communication satisfaction, a close relative of social communication satisfaction, is crucial for employee engagement and coping with organizational changes, with studies showing a positive relationship between organizational communication and job satisfaction.

Several factors influence satisfaction with social communication, often with a significant impact. The most noticeable differences affecting it during the pandemic include reduced face-to-face engagement, the need to wear masks during interactions, increased time spent on mediated platforms like Zoom and Skype, and reduced overall interaction with individuals outside one's immediate living arrangement. The long duration of the Movement Control Order (MCO) is also identified as a factor that could cause dissatisfaction with social communication, leading to broader problems such as social isolation and loneliness. These conditions can have severe negative impacts on an individual's health, contributing to cardiovascular, inflammatory, neuroendocrine, and cognitive disorders. The proliferation of unfiltered and

False information online during the pandemic also affects satisfaction with communication, as people may feel criticized when discussing unverified issues.

Previous studies have extensively explored aspects related to social communication and satisfaction. Researchers such as Bhatti and Haq (2017) and Xia and Li (2018) have highlighted the adverse effects of social isolation and loneliness on health. Definitions of social communication have been provided by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Adams (2005), Olswang, Coggins, and Timler (2001), and Riggio (2003), emphasizing its role in using language appropriately, interpreting situations, and connecting it to traits such as sociability and extraversion. Its importance in childhood development and challenges faced by students with learning disabilities have also been noted by Adams (2005), Skuse (2010), Levin (2015), and Nordin (2020). Regarding communication satisfaction, Thayer (1969) defined it as personal satisfaction from communicating, while Hecht (2004) and Gray & Laidlaw (2004) described it as a socio-emotional outcome. Morele (2005) viewed it as an emotive sensation from effective interactions. Studies by Hargie & Tourish (2000), Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois (2004), Akkirman (2005), Nakra (2006), Kandlousi (2010), Wagner (2015), Abdi (2017), Mehra (2019), and Kakkar (2021) have explored its role in organizational settings, employee well-being, and remote working. This study's findings, which show a relationship between the pandemic's impact and satisfaction with social communication, align with previous research by Rutherford (2017), Kemp (2020), Bozkurt (2020), Miller (2020), and Depoux (2020). However, it offers a new finding by concluding no significant difference in social communication satisfaction based on age, contrasting some past research on age and depression. Conversely, it supports prior research by finding a gender difference in satisfaction with social communication.

The study's objectives are to examine the relationship between the pandemic's impact and social communication satisfaction, and to identify differences in social communication satisfaction by age and gender. The purpose and implications of this research are multifaceted. Firstly, it aims to observe, study, and raise awareness of how seemingly minor effects of the pandemic can lead to larger, long-term problems, particularly regarding satisfaction with social communication. It also serves as a valuable reference for future studies on the effects of pandemics and social communication satisfaction. Furthermore, the study aims to raise public awareness of the dissatisfaction caused by the pandemic, noting that families and students are particularly vulnerable to these problems. For the researcher, conducting this study provided significant knowledge and guidance for future research, fostering awareness of the pandemic's widespread impact beyond Malaysia, and deepening understanding of social communication factors. It also allowed the researcher to learn from previous studies and gain practical experience in the chosen field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pandemic: A Literature Review

A pandemic is broadly defined as an epidemic that spreads globally or over a vast area, crosses international borders, and affects a large number of people. This definition is echoed by the International Epidemiology Association's Dictionary of Epidemiology (2009). Robinson (2020) further clarifies that a pandemic has a larger impact and causes more deaths than a typical epidemic. Synthesizing these perspectives, a pandemic can be understood as a worldwide contagious disease that affects multiple parties and can spread across countries and continents. A key nuance from the World Health Organization (2011) is that the definition of a pandemic does not necessarily include criteria related to population immunity, virology, or illness severity. The primary differences in these definitions lie in their emphasis: the International Epidemiology Association focuses on geographic spread and the scale of the affected population; Robinson highlights severity in terms of impact and mortality; while the WHO clarifies what *is not* a defining characteristic. For this research, the synthesized definition emphasizing its global, contagious, and widespread impact on a large population is most appropriate, as it directly relates to the broad societal changes and individual experiences being studied.

While pandemics are generally associated with negative outcomes, the provided sources indicate some unforeseen positive adaptations or "benefits" arising from the situation. Notably, the pandemic has led many individuals to become more proficient in using communication technologies. This increased digital literacy can be seen as beneficial for moving forward, fostering a community more adept at adapting to changes and progress. Industry surveys during the COVID-19 epidemic revealed a significant increase in digital media consumption as people spent more time at home due to lockdowns,

indicating that communication continued, albeit with changes. This forced shift to digital platforms, while different from physical communication, has enabled continued interaction and learning.

The pandemic has played a multifaceted role in shaping global and individual experiences. It acts as a widespread disruptor, causing varied impacts across nations and severely affecting citizens through government initiatives such as Movement Control Orders (MCOs), school closures, and restrictions on workplace and social activities. These measures, implemented to curb the spread of viruses, prohibited citizens from leaving their homes and limited social gatherings. Beyond physical restrictions, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous global influence on social, economic, and political life and has significantly affected individuals emotionally and psychologically. Furthermore, the pandemic environment has inadvertently facilitated the rapid spread of unfiltered and potentially false information online, making it difficult for the public to achieve communication satisfaction when discussing unverified issues.

Social Communication Satisfaction

The impact of the pandemic on satisfaction with social communication is profound and largely negative. Social communication satisfaction, defined as the inability to derive satisfaction from social interactions, is directly affected by the pandemic's disruptions. Key changes include reduced face-to-face engagement, the need to wear masks during interactions, increased reliance on mediated platforms such as Zoom and Skype, and less overall interaction with individuals outside one's immediate living arrangement. The prolonged duration of Movement Control Orders (MCOs) can lead to social isolation and loneliness, which are known to have severe negative effects on health, contributing to cardiovascular, inflammatory, neuroendocrine, and cognitive disorders. The proliferation of online disinformation also hinders satisfaction with communication, as people may feel criticized when discussing unverified information. Findings confirm a direct relationship between the pandemic's impact and social communication satisfaction, with target workers showing differences in satisfaction between pre-pandemic and pandemic conditions.

Empirical Review on the Impact of the Pandemic and Limitations

Previous studies have explored various facets of the pandemic's impact. Rutherford (2017) highlighted that influenza pandemics are unpredictable and can have devastating consequences for societies worldwide, aligning with the general understanding of the pandemic's severe impacts. Kemp (2020) observed that digital media consumption skyrocketed during the initial months of the COVID-19 epidemic due to lockdowns, indicating a significant shift in communication methods. Bozkurt (2020) differentiated between "distance education" and "emergency remote education," emphasizing the rapid, survival-oriented adaptation to online tools during a disaster. Miller (2020) pointed out the enormous emotional and psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on individuals, which can be evidenced by increased stress and suicide rates in some regions. Depoux (2020) noted that disinformation during the pandemic is as contagious and harmful as the virus itself, spreading rapidly and affecting communication satisfaction when individuals are unsure about the issues they discuss.

While these studies extensively cover various impacts of pandemics, the provided source does not explicitly discuss their methodological limitations. However, it implies a research gap that this particular study aims to address. Previous research has established broad impacts; this study contributes new findings specifically on social communication satisfaction and investigates differences by age and gender. This indicates that while the reviewed studies cover the *impact* of pandemics, they may not have focused specifically on *social communication satisfaction* or examined demographic differences in this context, leaving room for further investigation.

The Concept of Pandemic Impact and Its Relationship with Societal Aspects

The concept of "Impact of Pandemic" fundamentally refers to the widespread and varied consequences a global disease outbreak has on society and individuals. A pandemic is a cynical term that describes a situation in which people live in fear and experience numerous negative effects. Historically, pandemics like the Spanish Flu and H1N1 have demonstrated their capacity to cause global fear and exert broad influence. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, necessitated stringent government measures such as the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia, which directly restricted citizens' movement and curtailed social, economic, and educational activities to prevent the spread of the virus. This governmental response, a direct outcome of the pandemic's threat, profoundly influenced daily routines and communication patterns. The pandemic's impact extends beyond physical health to encompass emotional and psychological well-being, as evidenced by increased stress and mental health challenges. It also plays a role in fostering an environment in which unfiltered information and disinformation can spread rapidly, complicating social interactions and hindering satisfaction in communication. Thus, the pandemic's impact is a pervasive force that compels societal adaptation, reshapes human interaction, and significantly influences psychological states

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative method to collect and analyze data, focusing on objective measurements and statistical analysis. Quantitative research is valuable for generating knowledge and insights into the social world, especially regarding phenomena that affect humans. It involves collecting numerical data to identify patterns, averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize findings to larger groups. The selection of respondents in quantitative methods is typically random to avoid bias, allowing for broader dissemination of findings. Furthermore, quantitative methods facilitate rapid data collection, as surveys can be distributed efficiently.

The study's target population comprised employees from Berjaya Langkawi Beach and Spa Resort's office. This specific group was chosen because, unlike operational employees, office workers at the resort experienced work-from-home arrangements that could have significantly affected their schedules and work environments. The entire office comprises various departments and a total of 150 employees. Based on Morgan (1960)'s table for small sample techniques, a sample size of 108 respondents was deemed sufficient for this research. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was used, as it allowed for the easy distribution of questionnaires to the selected employees.

A structured questionnaire prepared in Google Forms served as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Part A for respondent background (age, gender, education level, department), Part B with 17 questions on the effects of the pandemic (rated on a 1-5 scale), Part C with 18 questions assessing social communication satisfaction (using varying scales for different question types), and Part D (not detailed in the provided excerpt but implied by the questionnaire structure). Before distribution to the main sample, a pre-test was conducted with 50 working professionals from KidZania Kuala Lumpur and lecturers from Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur. The pre-test aimed to assess the instrument's reliability and validity, ensuring that the questionnaire was easy to understand, relevant, accurate, and appropriate for the study's objectives. The pre-test results indicated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of .802 for the "effects of pandemic" variable and .761 for the "social communication satisfaction" variable. After obtaining consent from superiors, the questionnaire was disseminated via the office's WhatsApp group to facilitate access for respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main study involved 109 respondents from Berjaya Langkawi Beach and Spa Resort. The demographic breakdown of the respondents showed that 67% (73) were male and 33% (36) were female. In terms of education, 46.8% held a Bachelor's degree, 26.6% a Diploma, 17.4% a Master's, and 9.2% SPM level, with no PhD holders. The majority of

Respondents were Malay (78%), followed by Chinese (11%), Indian (7%), and others (4%). Age distribution showed 33.9% aged 21-25, 22% aged 31-35, 17.4% aged 26-30, 16.5% aged 41-45, and 10.1% aged 36-40.

The reliability of the instruments for the main study remained acceptable, with Cronbach's alpha values of .776 for "effects of pandemic" and .762 for "social communication satisfaction". Inter-item correlations for both variables were also significant, indicating internal consistency.

Hypotheses

The study proceeded to test its hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a relation between the impact of the pandemic and social communication satisfaction. The results indicated a significant positive relationship ($r = .326^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This hypothesis was accepted, confirming that the pandemic affects satisfaction with social communication, as target workers reported differences between working during the pandemic and under normal conditions.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a difference in social communication satisfaction based on age. The analysis showed no significant difference in social communication satisfaction by age ($F = .636$, $p > .05$). This hypothesis was rejected, suggesting that all age groups experienced similar impacts on their social communication satisfaction during the pandemic.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a difference in social communication satisfaction based on gender. The findings revealed a significant difference in satisfaction with social communication by gender ($F = .000$, $p < .05$). This hypothesis was accepted, indicating that gender plays a role in how individuals experience satisfaction with social communication during the pandemic.

Discussion of Findings

The research successfully achieved its primary objective by demonstrating a significant relationship between the pandemic's impact and satisfaction with social communication. This finding aligns with previous research and is attributed to the widespread changes in daily routines and communication methods brought about by the pandemic. The shift towards online communication, despite its benefits, could not fully replace physical interaction, leading to changes in satisfaction with social communication. The pandemic's influence on emotional and psychological well-being, as noted by Miller (2020) and Depoux (2020) regarding disinformation, further supports this relationship.

Regarding the second objective, the study found no significant age differences in satisfaction with social communication, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 2. This outcome suggests that individuals across all age groups experienced comparable challenges and adjustments during the pandemic, as movement controls and the novelty of the COVID-19 situation affected everyone universally. Both older and younger individuals were equally unfamiliar with the pandemic's impacts, necessitating similar coping mechanisms with new communication technologies. This finding, however, contrasts with some past research that identified age-related differences in issues such as depression.

For the third objective, the study identified a significant difference in satisfaction with social communication by gender, leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 3. This finding is consistent with previous research. The discussion suggests that women may be more susceptible to dissatisfaction in online interactions due to a tendency to personalize comments and react emotionally to perceived slights. Even minor emotional responses to online exchanges could lead to significant problems, such as withdrawing from social interactions.

The findings of this study contribute to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory by illustrating how pandemic-induced barriers to meeting social communication needs directly impede the fulfillment of the "love and belonging" tier. When individuals cannot maintain healthy relationships due to communication challenges, their motivation to pursue higher-level needs, such as esteem and self-actualization, is compromised. The study underscores that basic human needs, including social connection and motivation, remain essential even during a pandemic, and their unmet needs can prevent individuals from engaging in other aspects of life. Furthermore, the research posits that managing personal life, academic performance, and

Achieving life satisfaction contributes to an individual's overall quality of life, which is intricately linked to the fulfillment of these foundational needs.

CONCLUSION

This research yields several implications. Firstly, it has significantly enhanced the researcher's knowledge and awareness of the profound and potentially severe problems associated with the pandemic's impact on social communication satisfaction, not just in Malaysia but globally. The study highlighted that factors such as gender, contrary to initial assumptions, do play a role in satisfaction with social communication during a pandemic, alongside broader social communication challenges. This newfound understanding, gleaned from both the research process and the insights of previous scholars, is invaluable for future studies. The experience of conducting in-depth research in this specific field has also refined the researcher's understanding and methodological skills, making subsequent work more reliable and valid.

For future research endeavors into this complex subject, several recommendations are offered. Researchers should be prepared to navigate high-level terminology. To improve respondent engagement and data quality, it is crucial to simplify questionnaires and ensure they are easy to understand. When respondents fully comprehend the questions, this facilitates accurate responses and enhances the study's validity and reliability. Finally, for a more profound and nuanced understanding of satisfaction with social communication, especially regarding individual experiences during a pandemic, qualitative research methods are highly recommended. Face-to-face interviews, for instance, can provide richer, more detailed insights than quantitative surveys alone, allowing researchers to explore respondents' experiences in depth and in real-time. This approach can uncover complexities and individual narratives that numerical data might miss, offering a more holistic view of the pandemic's social communication impacts.

In conclusion, this study identified a significant relationship between the pandemic's impact and satisfaction with social communication, affirming that the unprecedented global health crisis profoundly altered how individuals connect and derive satisfaction from their social interactions. While the study found no age-related differences in satisfaction with social communication, it revealed that gender plays a role, with implications for how individuals cope with remote and mediated communication. Grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the research underscores the critical importance of fulfilling social needs for overall well-being and motivation. The findings provide valuable insights for future research and highlight the need for continued exploration into the evolving dynamics of human communication in a post-pandemic world.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of UPTM and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the **Review Board** under reference number JE212. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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