

Article

The Employees' State of Mind during COVID-19: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective

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Abstract: The unprecedented outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a devastating effect on the global economy. Many businesses experienced a significant decline in their business activities. As a result, their employees were concerned on their job security and long-term employment prospects. This research explores the service employees' motivations in their workplace environment and sheds light on their perceptions about their employers' corporate social responsibility (CSR). The methodology integrated key measures from the self-determination theory (SDT), CSR, job security and organizational performance. A structural equations modelling (SEM-PLS3) approach was used to analyze the proposed research model. The findings confirmed that the employees' intrinsic motivations were significantly predicting their organizational performance. Their identified motivations, job security as well as their employers' social responsibility were significant antecedents of their intrinsic motivations. Moreover, there were significant indirect effects that predicted the employees' productivity in their workplace during COVID-19.

Keywords: external motivation; intrinsic motivation; identified motivation; introjected motivation; job security; corporate social responsibility



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1. Introduction

COVID-19 had a detrimental effect on society and the economy at large. Many governments have introduced preventative measures including social distancing and hygienic practices to curb the spread of the virus. In all countries and regions, there was, at least initially, a push toward working from home, as far as possible [1]. Some sectors, including hospitality, tourism and retail enterprises, among others, have significantly decreased their business activities. Consequently, they registered a considerable decline in their incomes [2]. COVID-19 has affected mobilities and reduced the demand for their companies' products and services. Hence, several employees have lost their jobs or experienced substantial reductions in their take-home pay [3]. Others were concerned about their job security and employment prospects.

Various governments have pledged their support to ailing businesses to remain viable during this crisis, to preserve their jobs, in their endeavors to alleviate financial burdens on their employees [1]. Some companies were capable of differentiating themselves, as they have taken a proactive stance to support their workers [4]. Many firms relied on remote technologies to engage with their employees through the digital media and organized virtual meetings and team building activities [5]. A few businesses have also launched programs that addressed their employees' mental, physical and emotional health [6,7]. Others devoted resources for well-being programs, including counselling and psychological assistance.

Eventually, the governments and their policy makers have realized that the preventative measures, including lockdown conditions, that were mandated during the first wave of COVID-19, could not be sustained in the long term. Many countries have eventually eased their restrictions to revitalize their economies. As a result, many organizations, including

businesses, imposed new health and safety regulations in their premises. They introduced hygienic practices, temperature checks and expected their visitors to wear masks, to reduce the spread of the virus. Several businesses including small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as startups, have availed themselves of their governments' support [1]. Governments assisted those enterprises that were the most affected by COVID-19. They helped them improve their liquidity to safeguard their employees' jobs, to adopt new working processes, speed up their digitalization and find new markets. In many cases, they have dedicated specific funds to (re)train employees to strengthen their post-crisis competitiveness [8]. These ambitious programs were intended to restore the faith and trust in the businesses and their employees, by reassuring their job security, in the short term. Hence, many governments and other employers from the private sector became responsive to their employees' needs. Their intention was to boost their morale and to provide them with sense of belonging in order to enhance their productivity levels.

The individuals' intrinsic motivations are usually driven by their psychological needs including their sense of relatedness with others, competence and autonomy [9–12]. Relevant literature reported that those employers that recognize, praise and reward their employees in a commensurate manner will enhance their motivations and job satisfaction [13–15]. The recognition of the employees' efforts in their day-to-day operations increases their intrinsic motivations and decreases the need for extrinsic motivations [16,17]. The employers' constructive feedback would satisfy their employees' personal needs for competence, stimulate their well-being and foster productive behaviors [18,19]. On the other hand, destructive feedback would have a negative effect on their intrinsic motivations [20,21]. Moreover, the reduced conditions of employment as well as job insecurity can also have a negative effect on the employees' attitudes and behaviors in their workplace environments [22–24]. The employees' perceptions on their job security (or insecurity) and on their long-term prospects may result from their employer's internal practices and/or can be triggered by external issues, such as COVID-19. Therefore, the employers' responsibility is to engage with their members of staff. They are expected to communicate about their policies and procedures with their employees, including those relating to COVID-19.

This research investigates the employers' socially responsible behaviors from their employees' perspective. It also examines the employees' job security, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations as well as their organizational performance in their workplace environment during COVID-19. The methodology incorporates key measures from SDT with other constructs, including those relating to CSR, job security and employee performance. This contribution addresses a knowledge gap in academia, as it investigates the effects of CSR behaviors, external motivations and perceived job security on the employees' intrinsic motivations and productivity. Currently, there is no other study that has integrated the same measures that were utilized in this study, to understand the employees' motivations and performance during the challenging times of the pandemic. The underlying purpose of this research is to raise awareness of the employees' state of mind, in terms of their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in their workplace environments, following the second wave of COVID-19. This timely contribution adds value to academia, as it clearly identifies important theoretical and managerial implications.

The following section provides a critical review of relevant theoretical underpinnings. It introduces the readers to the measures that were used in this study and to the formulation of the hypotheses of this research. The methodology section describes the method that was used to collect and analyze the data from the respondents. Afterwards, the results section presents the findings from a structural equation modelling partial least squares (SEM-PLS) confirmatory composite analysis approach. In conclusion, this contribution outlines its theoretical as well as its practical implications. It identifies its research limitations and outlines plausible research avenues to academia.

2. The Conceptual Developments and the Formulation of Hypotheses

Previous studies that investigated the employees' motivations in their workplace environments have often relied on the SDT to explore the relationship between the employees' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations [12,13,15,19,25–31]. These contributions suggested that whilst intrinsic motivations would lead individuals to engage in activities because they are interesting and satisfying, extrinsic motivations would necessitate external goals to entice them to pursue certain behaviors. Many employers strive in their endeavors to motivate their employees to improve their performance and productivity [32,33]. They may use different approaches including extrinsic motivations to internalize organizational behaviors in their members of staff [34]. Some academic commentators argued that the individuals' intrinsic motivations may decrease if they perceive that external contingencies such as incentives and rewards are being used to entice them to engage in certain activities or to do them well [35–37]. Employees are usually coerced to follow their employers' desired behaviors in workplace organizations [26]. However, their actions can also be triggered by personal interests and desires. In this case, it is likely that they will enjoy doing them [38].

2.1. Intrinsic Motivations

SDT presumes that individuals are determined to find purpose in their personal life and to fulfill themselves by achieving goals. The persons' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are a means to influence their behaviors. SDT theorists contend that human beings are inclined to engage in persistent behaviors to enhance their self-efficacy and to satisfy their self-actualization needs [39]. Three intrinsic needs, including competence, autonomy and relatedness can motivate persons to initiate self-determined behaviors [12]. These psychological, innate needs are required for their emotional health and well-being [9,16–18]. Therefore, individuals rely on each other, as they can develop in a social context. Of course, individuals have different traits, characteristics, values and beliefs. Some persons may develop stronger intrinsic needs than others.

In a similar vein, the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) seeks to explain how social and environmental factors could facilitate or hinder intrinsic motivations [40]. Similar to SDT, CET can be used to investigate the individuals' needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness [15]. In fact, it is considered as a sub theory of SDT, as it explains the effects of external consequences on internal motivations [41]. Both theories were often used to explore the employees' motivations and performance in their workplace environment [28,29,33,35,38].

Employees are usually frustrated if they believe that they have a lower locus of control to perform the task [34,42]. Their autonomy may be undermined if they perceive that they are controlled by tangible, motivational factors [11]. Therefore, employees are self-determined when they feel autonomous and competent [39,43,44]. For this to happen, they require the support of their colleagues. CET suggests that the relatedness construct provides a sense of security, thereby contributing to increase the individuals' intrinsic motivations [15]. Moreover, according to SDT, positive reinforcement, praise and rewards would motivate employees to engage in desired behaviors, whilst fulfilling their needs for competence. Collaborative working climates that promote supportive behaviors and relatedness [15,45] would facilitate the internalization of the organizations' shared values, beliefs and norms of behavior. The interdependence of employees can influence collective behaviors and can affect how they interact with each other, with customers and with other stakeholders [46]. An organizational culture that fosters relatedness among workgroups, flexibility and innovation will increase their employees' motivations [15].

The employees' basic needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy are linked with their intrinsic motivations, including morale and job satisfaction [15,47,48]. Their intrinsic motivations are driven by the emotions that emerge while they are engaging in specific activities on their job. These inherent motivations can have a positive effect on their work outcomes [49]. They will lead them to engage in productive behaviors, if they enjoy doing their job [14,50,51]. Hence, their organizational performance is an outcome of the employees' subjective feeling of well-being. This leads to the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Intrinsic motivation is a positive and significant antecedent of organizational performance in workplace environments.*

2.2. Extrinsic Motivations

There are different types of intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations comprise externally regulated behaviors, introjected regulations of behavior, regulations through identification as well as integrated regulations. These external motivations can usually have a negative effect on the individuals' intrinsic motivations [35–37]. Many researchers contended that if employees are incentivized to perform organizational tasks, they will create the perception among them that their motivation is primarily triggered by extrinsic rewards. The employees' motivations may shift to extrinsic factors and undermine their pre-existing, intrinsic motivations [37].

Arguably, this may not always be the case. It may appear that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations represent opposite poles of the same dimension or, rather, distinct, independent dimensions of motivation [52]. The external rewards or incentives may not necessarily reduce their intrinsic motivations. Although there may be situations where extrinsic motivations are perceived as controlling and coercive, people can differ in their propensity to perceive situations as controlling [36,53]. Individuals may internalize extrinsic regulations when they feel secure and cared for. The internalization of extrinsic motivation is also linked to their feelings of competence in carrying out their jobs. The employees' autonomy is particularly important when trying to integrate external motivations and regulations into their sense of self [10]. However, to integrate employers' regulations they should be knowledgeable about their extrinsic goals [54].

Therefore, the individuals' competence, sense of relatedness and autonomy can help them internalize extrinsic regulations into intrinsic motivations and personal behaviors. Their identified motivations are often felt to be caused by themselves [35,55]. Hence, they are considered as autonomous forms of external motivations that are driven by their own values, goals and experiences [56]. Individuals may be intrigued to perform certain activities not because they find them interesting and enjoyable, but because they perceive their utilitarian value or meaning [35,57]. However, the extrinsic goals, rewards, regulations and associated cues (that are external) can influence their self-evaluations [54,55]. As a result, they may be willing to engage in activities that would enable them to achieve goals that are self-defining and that can help them express their identity. Hence, their identified regulations would sustain their intrinsic motivations and their needs for psychological well-being [16]. The identified motivations can also have a positive effect on their organizational performance [50,55]. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Identified motivation is a positive and significant antecedent of intrinsic motivation in workplace environments.*

Hypothesis 2a (H2a). *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between identified motivation and organizational performance.*

The SDT theorists suggest that other external motivations are manifested when individuals replicate behaviors or follow controlled regulations to comply in expected behaviors. However, they may not necessarily accept them. Their introjection occurs when persons do not internalize the regulations as their own [15]. The introjected motivations would entice individuals to engage in certain behaviors or to commit themselves to performing activities, because there are compelled to do so, to satisfy their self-esteem and ego enhancement. The individuals' introjected motivations trigger behaviors that are intended to avoid guilty feelings or to demonstrate their ability of self-worthiness. Thus, the perceived locus of control and the causality of their behaviors are external to them [34,42].

In a similar vein, it is very likely that employees would experience certain pressures from their organizations' introjected regulations to behave in a certain manner. As a result, their actions are not self-determined. Therefore, employees are not fully accepting the said regulations as their own. Relevant studies that were focused on individuals' introjected

motivations and their effect on their performance have yielded different findings [35]. Yet, many authors pointed out that introjected motivations and other external motivations are unstable forms of regulation, that will or will not always have an effect on intrinsic motivations [36,37]. Hence, there is a possibility that introjected motivations may be internalized and accepted by employees. If it is the case, they could trigger a positive effect on their organizational performance. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Introjected motivation is a significant and positive antecedent of intrinsic motivation in workplace environments.*

Hypothesis 3a (H3a). *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between introjected motivation and organizational performance.*

The individuals' externally regulated behaviors will usually involve incentives or rewards. External motivations are the least autonomous type of extrinsic motivations, as the individuals' actions are completely influenced by an external locus of control [34,42]. The introjected as well as the identified motivations have higher degrees of autonomy or self-determination than external motivations [15]. Thus, external motivations are clearly manifested when the persons' behavioral regulations have been internalized by them. Their internalization occurs when people perform tasks to obtain rewards or avoid punishments. Hence, they recognize their organizations' regulatory structures and their values [57].

Again, there were mixed findings in the academic literature that shed light on the relationship between the employees' external regulations and their work performance [35,36,58]. Whilst some studies suggested that external motivations such as rewards and incentives were a significant antecedent of performance, other research reported that such external regulations may not always undermine intrinsic motivations [26]. Some researchers contended that external motivations are necessary to enhance the employees' motivations, organizational performance and productivity levels [59]. Very often, they held that external regulations foster dedicative performance in workplace environments. Their commitment to their job may result in an increased organizational performance. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *External motivation is a positive and significant antecedent of intrinsic motivation in workplace environments.*

Hypothesis 4a (H4a). *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between external motivation and organizational performance.*

2.3. Job Security

The employees could be motivated to increase their job productivity in exchange for higher salaries and for further recognition from their employer [60]. Conversely, deteriorating working conditions and job insecurity can lead to worsened employees' attitudes and behaviors [21,22]. Those employees who are experiencing job insecurity ought to safeguard their employment while they are carrying out their usual duties and responsibilities.

The job security can be defined as the employees' psychological state relating to their expectations about job continuity in their foreseeable future [61]. Most researchers treat job security as a subjective, perceptual variable that is based on environmental cues [62,63]. The employees who are working for the same organization, who have the same job, will usually experience different levels of job security [62]. They may perceive that their job is insecure due to internal pressures such as organizational restructuring, reduced conditions of employment and/or since they are engaged on a temporary basis or on a short-term contract. Alternatively, external factors such as political, economic and/or social forces can also present possible risks to the employees' jobs. No matter the source, job insecurity represents a substantial threat to the individuals' intrinsic motivations [22].

The employees' psychological contract is based on their working conditions and on their ongoing relationships with their employer. Hence, their job security relies on their continuous engagement, mutual trust and agreement from the part of both sides of the

employer and the employee [64]. When employees perceive that their job is in peril, they may not engage in altruistic behaviors [62]. If they perceive low levels of job security, they tend to be less productive in their workplace environment [23,63]. Their low levels of job security (or job insecurity) can have a negative impact on their psychological well-being and work behaviors [65]. Several researchers reported that job insecurity can lead to negative attitudes and adverse behavioral effects in workplace environments [66].

Employees find it difficult to remain motivated if they perceive the risk of losing their job and their economic well-being. Their job insecurity would affect their attitudes and intrinsic motivations because they feel their loss of autonomy whilst they are grappling to preserve their jobs [10,31]. The employers should not undermine their employees' sense of autonomy [22]. They went on to suggest that employees ought to be assured of their job security. Their perceived job security can have a positive impact on their intrinsic motivations and organizational performance. This argumentation leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Job security is a positive and significant antecedent of intrinsic motivation in workplace environments.*

Hypothesis 5a (H5a). *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between job security and organizational performance.*

2.4. The Employers' Social Responsibilities

The employees may perceive that their job is secure if their employer is responsive to their needs [67]. There are different views on the social responsibility of the businesses. Whilst the supporters of the shareholder theory contend that the responsibility of the business is to increase profits [68], other commentators argue that profitability and responsibility are compatible [69]. Businesses are capable of implementing responsible behaviors, as they pursue profit-making activities. Their economic responsibility is to provide a decent return on investment to owners and shareholders; to create jobs and fair pay for their employees; to discover new resources; to promote technological advancement and innovation, and to create new products and services, along with its other objectives [70]. Therefore, a firm's first responsibility is to earn a profit and to ensure its survival, its sustainable growth and competitive advantage [71,72].

Successful businesses are in a position to allocate discretionary resources to CSR, provide training and development opportunities to their workforce, to enhance their skills and competences [73,74]. Organizations can encourage certain behaviors if their members are emotionally attached to them [75]. Employees are motivated to work for firms if their values and ethics reflect their self-concept. This argumentation is also consistent with the social identity theory [76,77]. The employees' perceptions of their companies and of their behaviors can have a major impact on their commitment on the job [58,67]. Many commentators maintained that laudable CSR behaviors may result in positive outcomes, including increased employee motivations [78,79], job satisfaction [80,81], trust [82,83], employee retention [84,85], employee loyalty [86,87], and improved organizational performance in workplace environments [32,88].

The employees will satisfy their psychological needs of belongingness with fair and trustworthy businesses who engage in CSR activities [79,89]. Their employers' CSR behaviors would have an effect on their intrinsic motivations, as they feel satisfied in their workplace environment [90,91]. They may perceive that their employers challenge them and encourage their self-expression. Hence, CSR may also enhance the employees' productivity and creativity [78]. This reasoning leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *The employees' perceptions about their firms' social responsibility is a positive and significant antecedent of their intrinsic motivation in workplace environments.*

Hypothesis 6a (H6a). *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between the employees' perceptions of their firms' social responsibility and organizational performance.*

Figure 1 illustrates the research model of this empirical study.

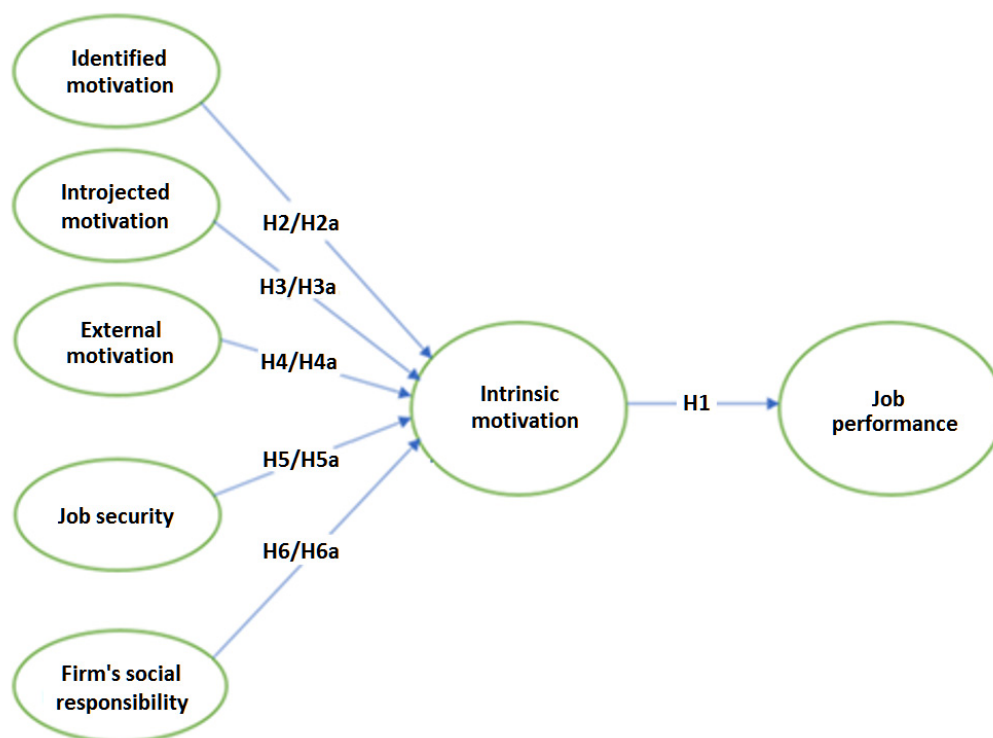


Figure 1. A research model that explores the employees' motivations during COVID-19.

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey Administration

The data were collected through an electronic survey questionnaire that was disseminated amongst trade unions and industry associations in a Southern European Union (EU) country. There were more than 27,000 affiliated members who could have taken part in this quantitative research. The targeted research participants had voluntarily given their consent to receive requests to take part in academic studies. The respondents received an email from the researchers that comprised a hyperlink to an online questionnaire. After two weeks, there were 824 respondents who have completed their survey.

This survey questionnaire complied with the EU's general data protection regulations (GDPR). The research participants remained anonymous. There was no way that they can be identified, as only aggregate data were analyzed. The respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with the survey's measuring items that were presented in a five-point Likert scale. The responses ranged from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree", whilst 3 signaled an indecision. In the latter part of the questionnaire, the participants were expected to disclose their age by choosing one of five age groups. They indicated their gender and the industry sector they worked for. The questionnaire was pilot tested among a small group of post graduate students (who were not included in the survey results) in order to reduce the common method bias, as per MacKenzie and Podsakoff's (2012) recommendations [92].

3.2. The Measures

The survey instrument has used valid constructs from the self-determination theory and from other valid measures that were drawn from the business ethics and tourism literature. This research explored the individuals' perceptions about their external motivation [35,57], introjected motivation [57,93], identified motivation [35,57], job security [61], corporate (or SMEs') social responsibilities [94,95], intrinsic motivation [35,57], as well as or-

ganizational performance [58]. Table 1 features the list of measures and their corresponding items that were utilized in this study.

Table 1. The measures that were used in the survey instrument.

Identified Motivation (Zhang et al., 2016; Gagné et al., 2010).	Ident1 Ident2	My job allows me to reach my life goals. My job fulfils my career plans.
Introjected Motivation (Deal et al., 2013; Gagné et al., 2010).	Intro1 Intro2	My job is my life. My reputation depends on my job.
External Motivation (Zhang et al., 2016; Gagné et al., 2010).	Ext1 Ext2	This job affords me a certain standard of living. I have a good paying job.
Job Security (Kraimer et al., 2005).	Js1 Js2	I will be able to keep my present job as long as I wish. I am secure in my job.
Corporate (or SMEs') Social Responsibility (Camilleri, 2018; Singh and Del Bosque, 2008).	Sr1 Sr2 Sr3 Sr4	My employer provides training and development opportunities to its employees. My employer promotes equal opportunities when hiring and promoting its employees. My employer has made suitable arrangements for the health and safety of its employees. My employer is concerned about improving the general well-being of society.
Intrinsic Motivation (Zhang et al., 2016; Gagné et al., 2010).	Intrins1 Intrins2	I enjoy my job very much. I am pleased with my job.
Job/Organizational Performance (Giri and Kumar, 2010).	Perf1 Perf2	I am one of the best at the work I do. I set very high standards for my work.

3.3. The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The sample consisted of 623 females (75.6%) and 201 males (24.4%). Most of the respondents ($n = 348$, 42.2%) were between 29 and 39 years of age. The second largest group ($n = 220$, 26.7%) was between 40 and 50 years old. The sample included respondents from service industry sectors. The majority of respondents were employed in the retail industry. The second largest group of research participants worked in marketing, advertising and/or public relations.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The respondents agreed with the survey items in the model, as the mean scores (M) were mostly above the mid-point of 3 (except for the introjected motivation items, Intro1 and Intro2) as reported in Table 2. The highest mean scores were reported for external motivation—Ext1 ($M = 3.762$), job performance—Perf2 ($M = 3.718$) and social responsibility—Sr3 ($M = 3.65$). The standard deviations (SD) indicated that there was a narrow spread around the mean. The values of SD ranged from 0.714 for job performance—Perf2, to 1.145 for perceived social responsibility—Sr2. .

4.2. Confirmatory Composite Analysis

This study relied on a structural equation modelling approach to explore the measurement quality of this research model [96]. SEM-PLS 3's confirmatory composite analysis' algorithm revealed the results of the reflective measurement model.

The values of the standardized loadings were higher than the usual recommended threshold of 0.7 and had an associated t-statistic above ± 1.96 . The composite reliability values were above 0.8. The constructs that were used in this study had reported acceptable convergent validities, as their average variance extracted (AVE) values were higher than 0.5 [97]. There was evidence of discriminant validity, as the square root value of AVE was higher than the correlation values among the latent variables [98]. This study also

examined the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) as indicated in the shaded area of Table 2. The correlations re-confirmed the presence of discriminant validity, as the HTMT values were higher than the recommended threshold of 0.9.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics and an assessment of the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

		Std.		Outer										
	Construct	Items	Mean	Deviation	Loadings	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	External Motivation	Ext1	3.762	1.008	0.897	0.898	0.815	0.903	0.578	0.407	0.483	0.13	0.137	0.328
		Ext2	3.35	1.072	0.908									
2	Identified Motivation	Ident1	3.427	0.966	0.911	0.921	0.854	0.463	0.924	0.709	0.616	0.33	0.206	0.261
		Ident2	3.393	0.993	0.937									
3	Intrinsic Motivation	Intrins1	3.578	0.888	0.96	0.96	0.923	0.343	0.622	0.961	0.465	0.436	0.289	0.229
		Intrins2	3.597	0.886	0.961									
4	Introjected Motivation	Intro1	2.733	1.048	0.932	0.835	0.719	0.331	0.456	0.378	0.848	0.519	0.103	0.1
		Intro2	2.981	1.115	0.755									
5	Job Performance	Perf1	3.597	0.769	0.851	0.814	0.687	0.084	0.23	0.309	0.299	0.829	0.293	0.11
		Perf2	3.718	0.714	0.806									
6	Job Security	Js1	3.636	0.994	0.97	0.941	0.889	0.115	0.182	0.275	0.084	0.196	0.943	0.222
		Js2	3.612	1.063	0.915									
7	Social Responsibility of the Employer	Sr1	3.534	1.1	0.778	0.884	0.657	0.301	0.433	0.478	0.23	0.221	0.358	0.81
		Sr2	3.34	1.145	0.795									
		Sr3	3.65	1.121	0.796									
		Sr4	3.422	1.057	0.869									

Note: The discriminant validity was calculated by using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The values of the square root of AVE were presented in bold font. The AVEs for each construct were greater than the correlations among the constructs. The shaded area features the results from the HTMT procedure.

4.3. Structural Model Assessment

The results indicated that there were no collinearity issues, as the variance inflation factors (VIFs) have exceeded the recommended threshold of 3.3. The PLS algorithm revealed the model's predictive power, in terms of the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the endogenous latent variables. The findings from this research model revealed that the constructs that were used in this study predicted 46.2% of the participants' intrinsic motivations and 9.6% of their job performance. SEM-PLS' bootstrapping procedure was used to explore the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. The significance of the hypothesized path coefficients in the inner model were evaluated by using a two-tailed t -test at the 5% level (Hair et al., 2012). Table 3 presents the results of the hypotheses of this study. It tabulates the findings of the standardized beta coefficients (original sample and sample mean), the confidence intervals, t -values and the significance values (p). Table 4 features the findings from the mediation analyses.

H1: This study reported that there was a positive and highly significant effect between the individuals' intrinsic motivations and their job performance, where $\beta = 0.309$, $t = 4.473$ and $p < 0.001$. H2 indicated that the individuals' identified motivations were a very significant antecedent of their intrinsic motivations (where $\beta = 0.45$, $t = 6.735$ and $p < 0.001$). H2a: They also had indirect effects on their job performance, where $p < 0.001$. H3: The respondents' introjected motivations were not significantly affecting their intrinsic motivations as $p < 0.05$. Similarly, H4 revealed that the participants' external motivations were not a significant antecedent of their intrinsic motivations.

Table 3. Testing of the hypotheses.

	Path Coefficient	Original	Sample	Confidence	t-Value	p	Decision
				Intervals			
		Sample	Mean	Bias Corrected [2.5%, 97.5%]			
H1	Intrinsic motivation -> Job performance	0.309	0.311	[0.164, 0.434]	4.473	0.000	Supported
H2	Identified motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.45	0.449	[0.323, 0.577]	6.735	0.000	Supported
H3	Introjected motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.102	0.102	[−0.018, 0.216]	1.756	0.080 *	Not Supported
H4	External motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.029	0.025	[−0.098, 0.148]	0.469	0.639 **	Not Supported
H5	Job security -> Intrinsic motivation	0.106	0.106	[0.008, 0.211]	2.087	0.037	Supported
H6	Firms' social responsibility -> Intrinsic motivation	0.238	0.237	[0.095, 0.378]	3.182	0.002	Supported

Note: * Introjected motivation was found to be a very weak antecedent of intrinsic motivation as $\beta = 0.102$ and $0.05 < p < 0.1$. ** External motivation did not have a significant effect on intrinsic motivation as $p > 0.05$.

Table 4. The mediation analyses.

		Direct	Indirect	Total	Confidence	t-Value	p	Interpretation
		Effect	Effect 1	Effect	Intervals			
					Bias Corrected			
H2a	Identified motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.45		0.589	[0.062, 0.214]	3.644	0.000	Partial Mediation
	Identified motivation -> Job performance		0.139					
H3a	Introjected motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.102		0.134	[−0.004, 0.076]	1.439	0.151	No Mediation
	Introjected motivation -> Job performance		0.032					
H4a	External motivation -> Intrinsic motivation	0.029		0.038	[−0.029, 0.046]	0.470	0.639	No Mediation
	External motivation -> Job performance		0.009					
H5a	Job security -> Intrinsic motivation	0.106		0.139	[0.004, 0.077]	1.800	0.073	No Mediation
	Job security -> Job performance		0.033					
H6a	Firms' social responsibility -> Intrinsic motivation	0.238		0.311	[0.024, 0.130]	2.661	0.008	Partial Mediation
	Firms' social responsibility -> Job performance		0.073					

Note: there was no mediated effect in H3a, H4a and H5a, as $p > 0.05$.

H5: The respondents' job security was positively related with their intrinsic motivations. There was a small effect on the endogenous construct as $\beta = 0.106$, $t = 2.087$ and $p < 0.05$. H6: The results suggest that their perceptions about their employer's social responsibility were a positive and significant precursor of their intrinsic motivations in their workplace environment, where $\beta = 0.238$, $t = 3.182$ and $p < 0.05$. Moreover, they were having an indirect effect on the employees' organizational performance, where $p < 0.05$.

Figure 2 depicts the explanatory power of this research model. It illustrates the total effects, outer loadings and the coefficient of determination (i.e., R squared) values.

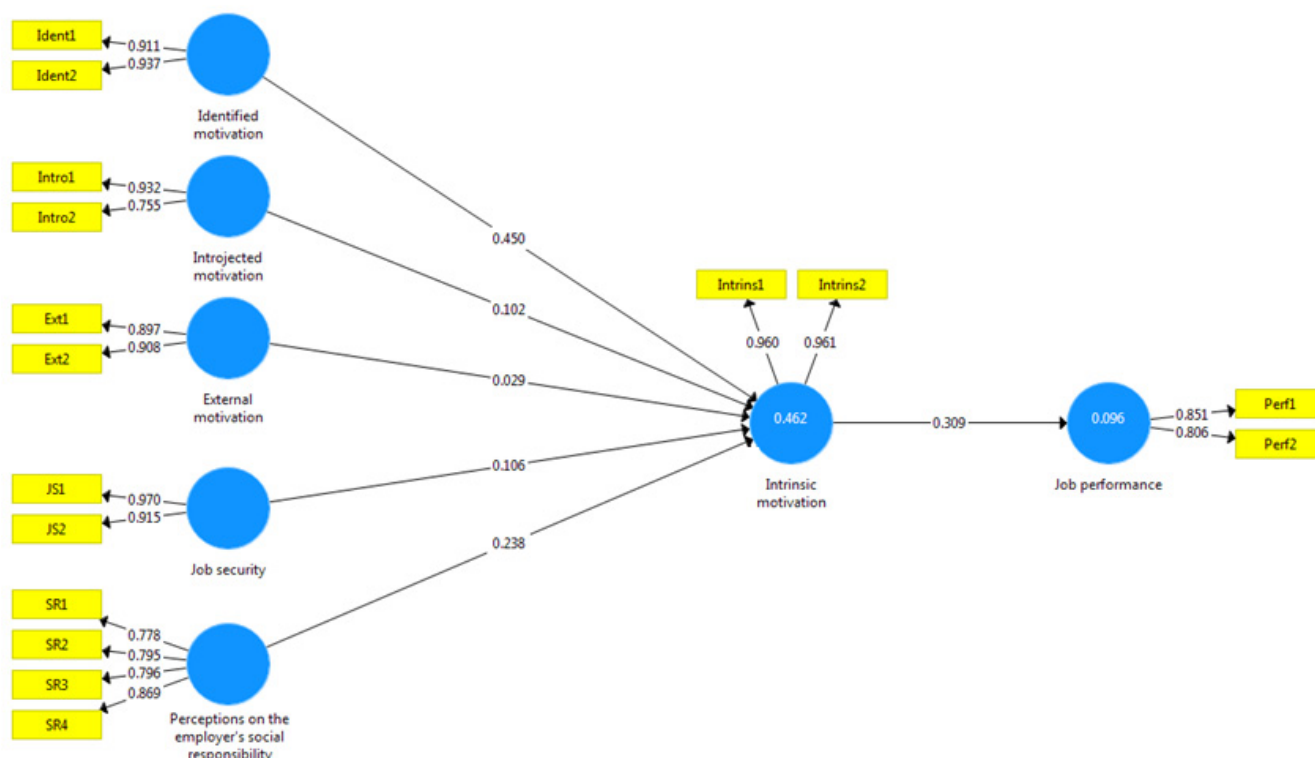


Figure 2. A graphical illustration of the results.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Implications to Academia

This research has presented a critical review of the self-determination theory and its key constructs, as well as on other theoretical underpinnings that were drawn from business ethics and tourism literature. It shed light on the employees' job security as well as on their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in their workplace environment. Moreover, it explored their perceptions on their employers' CSR practices during COVID-19. The study hypothesized that the employees' identified motivations, introjected motivations, external motivations, job security and their firms' socially responsible behaviors would have a positive and significant effect on their intrinsic motivations and organizational performance. The findings confirmed that the employees' intrinsic motivations were predicting their productivity. This relationship was highly significant. Evidently, the employees were satisfied in their job, as they fulfilled their self-determination and intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness [15,48,56]. Their high morale in their workplace environment has led to positive behavioral outcomes, including increased organizational performance.

The results reported that there were highly significant effects between the employees' identified motivations and intrinsic motivations, and between their perceptions on their firms' socially responsible practices and their intrinsic motivations. The mediation analysis indicated that these two constructs were indirectly affecting the employees' job performance. These results suggest that although previous studies reported that extrinsic factors could undermine the intrinsic motivations of individuals [35–37], this study found that the research participants have internalized and identified themselves with their employers' extrinsically motivated regulations, as they enabled them to achieve their self-defining goals. In this case, the respondents indicated that they were willing to perform certain

tasks, as they perceived that their utilitarian values were also sustaining their psychological well-being and self-evaluations.

The employees also identified motivations that led as an incentive to increase their organizational performance. The empirical results have proved that the employees were motivated to work for firms that reflected their own values [60,77]. This research is consistent with other contributions on CSR behaviors [32,78,88,90,91]. The respondents suggested that their employers had high CSR credentials. The findings revealed that the businesses' CSR practices enhanced their employees' intrinsic motivations and satisfied their psychological needs of belongingness and relatedness. Evidently, the firms' socially responsible behaviors were enhancing their employees' productivity and performance in their workplace environment.

The participants' beliefs about their job security were also found to be a significant antecedent of their intrinsic motivations. Their perceptions on their job security were affecting their morale at work, in a positive manner [22,61]. During COVID-19, many employees could have experienced reduced business activities. As a result, many businesses could have pressurized their employees in their organizational restructuring and/or by implementing revised conditions of employment, including reduced working times, changes in sick leave policies, et cetera, particularly during the first wave of the pandemic. However, despite these contingent issues, the research participants indicated that they perceived that there will be job continuity for them in the foreseeable future. This study indicated that many employees were optimistic about their job prospects during the second wave.

The findings suggest that employees are attracted by and motivated to work for trustworthy, socially responsible employers [43,62,66,75]. On the other hand, they reported that the participants' introjected and external motivations were not having a significant effect on their intrinsic motivations and did not entice them to engage in productive behaviors during the COVID-19 crisis. A plausible justification for this result is that the participants were well aware that their employers did not have adequate and sufficient resources during COVID-19. Their employers were not in a position to reward or incentivize their employees due to financial constraints that resulted from their reduced business activities or were never prepared to deal with such an unprecedented contingent situation. Hence, external motivations were not considered as stable forms of regulation [36]. Many researchers noted that extrinsic motivations will not necessarily influence the individuals' behaviors, as their perceived locus of control is external to them. Therefore, their actions will not be autonomous and self-determined [35,52].

5.2. Managerial Implications

Businesses are continuously affected by ongoing challenges arising from their macro environment. The pandemic has exacerbated their transformation on behavioral, cultural and organizational levels. The first wave of COVID-19 was devastating for many businesses, in different contexts. The social-distancing procedures have led to changes in their working conditions and diminished communications. Many of the non-essential businesses were expected to follow their government's preventative measures to slow the spread of the pandemic and to close the doors to their customers. Moreover, several employees have experienced their employers' cost cutting exercises, as they reduced salaries and wages. These uncertainties have affected their employees' psychological capital and caused them anxiety and frustration [99]. Notwithstanding, many employees were concerned about their job security and long-term prospects. During the work-from-home scenario, employers had to find new ways to manage their employees' performance. The change in their working environment allowed them to do their work, whilst also attending to personal needs. Very often, employees found themselves taking other responsibilities including parenting/schooling their children.

Remote working has served as a reminder to managers that there are a number of non-work-related factors that can affect their employees' mindsets and engagement levels. Hence, many employers set virtual meetings with their human resources to inject a sense of

purpose in them. During the first wave of the pandemic, the employees' intrinsic motivations have declined with the decreasing visibility of their management or colleagues. The lack of motivation could have led to a decrease in their productivity levels [3]. Therefore, employers were expected to look after their employees and to foster a culture of trust and recognition to improve their motivations and performance at work [64].

This study was carried out during the second wave, when many governments had eased their preventative restrictions to restart their economy. As a result, many employees were returning to work. They were encouraged to work in a new normal, where they were instructed to follow their employers' health and safety policies as well as hygienic and sanitizing practices in their premises. They introduced hygienic practices, temperature checks and expected visitors to wear masks to reduce the spread of the virus. Many businesses, including SMEs and startups, were benefiting of their governments' financial assistance. Resources were allocated to support them in their cashflow requirements, to minimize layoffs and to secure the employment of many employees. These measures instilled confidence in employers, as they provided their employees with a sense of relatedness, competence and autonomy in their workplace environments. Evidently, employers were successful in fostering a cohesive culture where they identified their employees' values and their self-determined goals [45].

In sum, this contribution revealed that employees felt a sense of belonging in their workplace environment. The results confirmed that their intrinsic motivations were enhancing their productivity levels and organizational performance.

5.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research explored the employees' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations during COVID-19's second wave, when they were expected to return to their workplace environment. It examined their perceptions about job security on their employers' corporate social responsibility practices and investigated their effect on organizational performance. Of course, all research has its inherent limitations in its research design and/or in the methodology. This study relied on the measures relating to SDT and on valid constructs that were adapted from other contributions. The measuring scales that were utilized in this research were used to investigate the employees' motivations and performance in the context of COVID-19. This study has integrated the constructs of job security and corporate social responsibility with SDT's key constructs.

The findings reported that the participants' identified motivations, job security and their employers' social responsibility were significant antecedents of their intrinsic motivations and organization performance. Hence, the employees' identified motivations (i.e., one of the external motivations) were found to be a significant precursor of their intrinsic motivations in their workplace environment. This is in stark contrast with other theoretical underpinnings where commentators noted that external motivations will usually have a negative effect on the individuals' intrinsic motivations [35–37]. The mediation analysis also revealed that identified motivations together with the employers' socially responsible practices were also having an indirect effect on the employees' productivity. Therefore, this contribution puts forward plausible research avenues to academia. In future, researchers can utilize the measures that were used in this study and replicate this study in different contexts in order to explore the employees' motivations and performance in a post-COVID-19 era.

Alternatively, researchers may validate other theoretical frameworks to examine the employees' commitment, job satisfaction and loyalty, among other constructs. Other methodologies and sampling frames can be used to capture and analyze their data. Perhaps, inductive studies may shed more light on the employees' in-depth opinions and beliefs on their organizational culture and working conditions. Interpretative studies can reveal important insights on the employees' intrinsic motivations and on their sense of relatedness, competence and autonomy in their working environments.

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