

## Perceived Risks of COVID-19 Pandemic among Employees of International Airports in Tanzania: A Study on their Nature and Effect on Job Satisfaction Levels at Julius Nyerere International Airport

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines whether employees' perceived safety, health, and security risks affected job satisfaction levels during the COVID-19 pandemic at Tanzanian airports. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory was used to analyze and understand the dynamics of perceived risks and job satisfaction. The research adopted a case study approach with Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) as a case study because this airport is Tanzania's busiest gateway and prominently exposed to international flights. Using a 10% rule of thumb, a target population of 130 employees and 25 employers was set as an adequate sample size from a total population of 1300 JNIA employees and all employers. The study utilized a non-probability sampling approach whereby a convenience sample was created in which the attending respondent identified the next respondent in a snowball sampling technique, although initial respondents were deliberately picked by the researcher. Questionnaires for employees and employers were developed and administered during the surveys and interviews, supplemented by a few focus group discussions. As interviews and discussions were being held, written documents and records were simultaneously collected. In the study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed using basic statistical and narrative approaches, respectively. Research findings indicate that employees were affected by perceived risks and fears of highly contagious disease, which created anxiety among them, disrupted their social interactions, and generally decreased their work performance without significantly affecting their levels of job satisfaction. The main recommendation demands increased efforts by employers to mitigate perceived risks of pandemics on job satisfaction by introducing health programs, timely containment of pandemics, treating affected employees, improving employment salaries, benefits, and financial incentives, enhancing the security and safety of the work environment, and improving employees' social cohesion. Study limitations included delayed research permissions, difficulties accessing busy and suspicious employees and employers, a lack of finances, and inadequate research time, which fortunately did not affect the quality of the work. The main delimitation of the study was the "security-sensitive" nature of the airport itself. This study has research and practical significance, with far-reaching implications for pandemic or public health and disaster management policies and labor and employment-related policies, and it is quite a resourceful tool among researchers and academicians in human resources management.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Job Satisfaction Levels, Perceived Risks

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### I. INTRODUCTION

If there is anything a human being would like to experience to the fullest during one's life, it is "life satisfaction," a concept that psychologists consider critical, particularly to one's mental health and wellbeing. Mental conditions occasioned by and related to fear, anxiety, depression, lack of sleep, and mental stresses are some of the conditions that hinder enjoyment of one's good health and wellbeing at home and at work (Mans et al., 2021). Risks of contracting a deadly disease or acquiring mental conditions associated with or from a disease at a place of work start with mental perceptions and become real with time, with serious consequences on work performance and production, job satisfaction, and occasionally turnovers. This study wanted to establish whether the health, safety, and security risks of the COVID-19 pandemic, as perceived by employees, impacted levels of job satisfaction among employees at Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA). It was postulated that during a deadly, contagious, and ferocious pandemic like COVID-19, employees' levels of job satisfaction would have been greatly reduced as a result of the perceived risks, triggering job turnovers.

COVID-19 erupted in 2019 in Wuhan City, China, unexpectedly turning into a pandemic that spread rapidly to most countries in the world by 2020 (Shangguan et al., 2020). By January 30, 2020, WHO had declared it a "public health emergency of international concern" and, by March 11, 2020, a "pandemic." By 2021, the disease had spread to all countries in the world (Kumar et al., 2021), causing serious consequences and challenges in various aspects of science and technology in an international attempt to contain it.

The pandemic had become a universal economic catastrophe, exposing the world population to risks involving health, jobs, and incomes (OECD, 2020), significantly impacting employment opportunities. To curb its spread, many

countries suspended many economic activities, negatively impacting various economic sectors through air travel bans, reduced industrial production, shrunk service delivery, etc. To that effect, the economic development of many developed world countries like Germany, Italy, the UK, Sweden, and Canada was greatly affected by the impacts of COVID-19. Strict pandemic containment measures adopted by many of these countries in the early months of 2020, aimed at levelling the rise in contagion, substantially affected most of the otherwise flourishing economic and social activities.

Luka (2022) asserted that COVID-19 had negatively affected the level of job satisfaction in many developed countries, especially in those companies whose labour turnover was relatively higher, ranging between 40% and 50% during the 2020–21–2022–23 period. A slowdown and development stagnation in economic sectors, including transport and agricultural ones, were also experienced during this time. Baker and Zuech (2022) of Gartner, Inc. had earlier observed that during the pandemic peak time, i.e., 2020 and 2022 in the USA alone, voluntary turnover among employees was expected to rise by 20% from previous annual averages of 31.9 million employees in 2020 to 37.4 million in 2022.

Around April 2020, newly confirmed daily reported cases peaked in many G20 countries and kept on rising fast in India, South Africa, and some Latin American economies, while around July 2020, there were new resurgence cases in several countries, including the United States. By the end of August 2020, there were almost 25 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and reported 840,000 deaths globally, of which 77% and 82% emanated from the USA and G20 economies, respectively (OECD, 2020). These countries experienced high numbers of workers' turnovers and higher rates of inevitable redundancies among employees, with losses amounting to 50% in big sales companies, 50% in recreational services, 26% in investment companies, and 40% in construction companies (Richard & Romesh, 2020). Such employees' turnovers were mostly due to a fall in overall production of goods and services as demand and sales fell, salaries were cut off, and employers opted for fewer workers. In response to the rapid spread of the disease, countries like India had to suspend many of their economic activities, and employees, particularly professionals, had to work from home (Kumar et al., 2021). In other countries like Egypt, for example, fear of contracting the coronavirus and the COVID-19 pandemic consequently impacted job satisfaction levels and turnover among physicians (Eman et al., 2021), where between 2020 and 2021, around 40%–50% of physicians dissatisfied with their working environment as a result of the corona quit their jobs. This problem had, likewise, severely affected many sectors of the economy in many African countries like South Africa, Libya, Congo, Cameroon, Uganda, etc., which had a lot of COVID-19 infection cases as a result of international movements of people.

In Tanzania, around 25% of all employees in the infrastructural, agricultural, and commercial sectors were impacted by the pandemic (Saguti & Kileo, 2021), causing job turnover and the collapse of many businesses, especially those involved in food processing, fashion design, hospitality, bakery and restaurant, etc. Like in Tanzania, Chen et al. (2023) noted that elsewhere in the world, like China, hotels and airlines, including airports, were similarly severely hit. By 2023, the COVID-19 pandemic still remained a risk in Tanzania (Smartraveller, 2023), and based on most recent 2023 WHO information and data, between January 3, 2020, and May 10, 2023, there were 43,078 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 846 deaths in Tanzania, despite 39,392,419 vaccine doses that were said to have been administered by March 11, 2023.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

This research focuses on the problem of job dissatisfaction among employees at international airports as a result of perceived risks of the deadly, contagious, and ferocious COVID-19 pandemic. With the rapid spread of the pandemic due to the nature of the pandemic itself and social interactions through commerce, tourism, travel, etc., airports have become very vulnerable places for spreading such pandemics.

COVID-19, with its associated risks as perceived by employees, is an independent variable in this work, containing risk-enhancing job characteristics. As part of the pandemic's perceived health and safety hazards, these risks are exasperated by maintaining close physical proximity to ill persons, which exposes individuals to illness and deaths while experiencing mental states of emotions, personal fear, anxieties, depression, etc. as a consequence. Similarly, security risks, as part of an independent variable, comprise job insecurity and compensation and pay uncertainty, all of which are related to unemployment, i.e., financial concern. It is these variables under the influence of socio-demographics that cause anxiety, stress, depression, etc., with serious consequences on the level of job satisfaction, as a recipient-independent variable. The pandemic and its associated risks and fears usually change working environments and disrupt social and economic interactions and relationships.

The effects of such pandemics on employees and employers, employment and economic production, and social life at home and at the place of work provide an enormous challenge. It is this scenario that has raised employers' interest in understanding the dynamics of COVID-19, perceived risks, job satisfaction, and employees' retention during pandemics. This subject has become vital because it affects productivity and employers' ability to retain critical talents within organizations, which become apprehensive when their good talents are lost (Hee et al.,

2018). So, understanding factors that influence job satisfaction, falling productivity, and quitting employees is important because employees’ motivation, efficiency, and performance get enhanced when improvements increasing job satisfaction are made. For many companies, managing employees during turbulent times of pandemics is problematic (Samah and Miriam, 2020), and it would be perilous not to be prepared for such eventualities. Although such pandemics are rare, historically, they are likely to reoccur. Unfortunately, few studies exist on how job satisfaction has been affected by health risks, while those examining its impactful relationship to the pandemic's perceived safety, health, and security risks are even fewer and lack in-depth analysis.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore the effect of perceived risks of Covid-19 pandemic on job satisfaction at JNIA. Specifically, the study intends to determine the effect of employees’ perceived safety, health risk and security on job satisfaction at JNIA during COVID-19 pandemic

### 1.3 Research Questions

The main research question in this study is “What factors affected employees’ job satisfaction levels at JNIA during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic? Specific question is “What effect did perceived safety, health risk and security have on employees’ job satisfaction intention at JNIA during COVID-19 pandemic?”

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theories Framework

#### 2.1.1 Theories on Job Satisfaction and Social Exchange

This study uses one of the job satisfaction theories to explore the causes and effects of employees’ job satisfaction amidst the perceived risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need Theory, represented in Figure 1, explains how human needs are prioritized from physiological needs up to self-actualization. Job satisfaction theories say that the more the employees receive as outcomes they value, the more they feel satisfied; the less they receive as outcomes they do not value, the less they feel satisfied (Khan et al., 2010).

*Social Exchange Theory (SET)* suggests that social exchanges in organizations foster trust in employees, and the provision of a safety culture by management encourages employees to reciprocate by demonstrating their genuine efforts toward realizing organizational goals. In the context of human resources management, SET suggests that when employees receive benefits from their organization, they are likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes (Blau, 1964, as quoted by Chen et al., 2023), such as job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. In this study, STE is used to explore how employees reacted when their psychological conditions changed as a result of work pressures and anxieties emanating from perceived fear and stress of COVID-19 in their working environment. It is assumed that, if employers offer benefits, employees will return the organization’s favor by being satisfied and staying with the organization longer than otherwise.



**Figure 1**

*Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need Theory*

Source: Maslow (1954)

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Politis et al. (2022) explored the effects of risk-enhancing job characteristics on emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic. They argued that physical proximity and exposure to disease or illness are job characteristics that seriously present threats to employee physical health. They concluded that pandemic-heightened threats to workers' well-being negatively affect employees' emotional well-being depending on job characteristics, which pose different levels of risk to them.

Wilson et al. (2020) investigated the consequences of stressful perceptions of job insecurity caused by COVID-19 and its associated risks. They concluded that high unemployment rates, concerns about losing one's job, and the difficulty of attaining new employment increased worries about personal financial stability, resulting in poorer mental health. Heightened job insecurity and financial concern impacted employees' mental health, with greater depressive and anxiety symptoms. Similarly, they explained why employees with greater financial concern due to COVID-19-induced job insecurity had greater anxieties, full of negative feelings.

Chen et al. (2023) studied perceived health risks and turnover intentions among flight attendants in China. They observed that between perceived risks and turnover intentions, job insecurity played a mediating role and concluded that dissipating job insecurity and increasing job crafting behavior were critical to employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

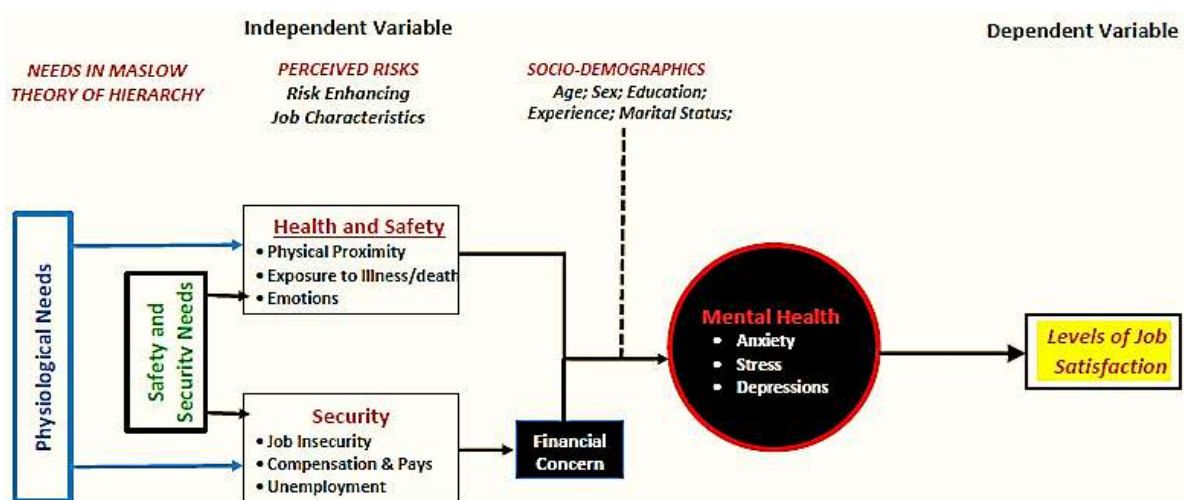
Landari and Wahyuni (2022) evaluated the impact of fear of the risk of contracting COVID-19 on work stress and anxiety, job turnover intentions, and job satisfaction as moderated by supervisor's support among nurses. The results indicated that fear of COVID-19 affected work stress and job turnovers positively but negatively on job satisfaction. Supervisory support moderated the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 variable and job stress and job satisfaction but not with job turnovers.

Kumar et al. (2021), researching in India, showed a relationship between COVID-19-induced work stressors, job performance, distress, and life satisfaction during lockdowns, which were critical. Life satisfaction during the pandemic was reduced due to a significant increase in distress levels, lowering job performance and satisfaction levels.

Zanabazar et al. (2022) surveyed the effects of work stress on job satisfaction and organizational trust during the COVID-19 pandemic among the Czech's local travel agencies. The study concluded that work stress caused by the pandemic had a negative impact on job satisfaction and organizational trust among employees.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

An overall guide for causal relationships and connections between main issues of investigation and factors causing them is done by the conceptual framework.



**Figure 2**  
*Conceptual Framework*

Source: Adapted and modified from Hong et al. (2013) and Maslow (1954)

The adopted framework highlights how independent variables are linked to the impacted dependent variables, and this, as seen in Figure 2, was adapted from Hong et al. (2013) and Maslow (1954) and modified to guide this



analysis. Independent variables that determine the level of job satisfaction fit the physiological, safety, and security needs of Maslow theory and are influenced by personal demographics and perceived risks.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this work is the *Case Study Approach* picking JNIA as a case study, being the main gateway onto Tanzania and the busiest airport, handling ever increasing numbers of international and local flights and of travellers, even at the peak of pandemic period. Secondly, JNIA had the geographical advantages in terms of proximity and accessibility.

#### 3.2 Study Population and the Sample Size

The study population is an average of the group of items, the entirety of items, issues, or persons or organizations under inquiry (Kothari, 2004). The determination of sample size and the actual selection process from the study population are crucial because they must be truly representative. In sample determination, the “Ten Percent Rule of Thumb[1] was used, as applied by many researchers, including Kothari (2004), who supports and uses this rule while insisting that it produces truly representative samples. By using this rule, out of a population of 1300 employees and 25 employers, the sample size was set at 130 for employee respondents and 25 employers. Out of four employer-based employers’ categories, potential respondents were subjectively and conveniently picked. A total of 130 respondents were earmarked from four employer categories: airline employers (55 employees), government departments’ employers (50 employees), ground handlers (10 employees), and service providers (15 employees).

#### 3.3 Sampling Design and Procedure

Sampling design refers to a specific approach that researchers use for selecting samples from larger populations (Kothari, 2004). This study adopted a non-probability sampling approach by creating a convenience sample in which the attended respondent identified the next respondent using the snowball sampling technique. The initial respondents from among the employees were deliberately picked by the researcher.

#### 3.4 Types of Data and Collection Approaches

Logical and efficient procedures for data gathering are desirable because they ensure that data is measurable, necessitating the use of statistical approaches for analyzing quantitative data and narrative analysis for analyzing qualitative data, as proposed by Kothari (2004). The nature and measurability of the data to be collected determined the data collection instruments and analytical tools applicable. Most research data was collected using questionnaires during surveys and interviews, but we also held a few focus group discussions, while records and written documents were mostly collected from employers. Modes of analysis identified in a typical process included descriptive, analytical, prognostic, and prescriptive in nature.

### IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Response Rates

The researcher planned to involve 130 respondents, representing 10% of the entire study population, and a total of 25 employers. The response rate was 76.2% for employees and 40% for employers, respectively, which was considered reasonably adequate. Out of 130 respondents, 99 responded with 89 questionnaires (89.9%) and 10 interviewees (10.1%). Of 20 operational airlines, 15 were contacted, and 46.6% ( $n = 7$ ) responded, whereas of all 3 existing cargo handlers contacted, only 1 responded (33.3%), while of 11 government departments, 28.5% ( $n = 7$ ) responded.

#### 4.2 Respondents’ Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics were considered useful, capable of influencing employees’ reactions, decisions or perceptions. Uhlř et al. (2020), Martin et al (2021), Oshagbemi (1998) and Hasan (2021) had all shown the linkages between socio-demographic characteristics and job satisfaction. Respondents’ characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

*Gender of Respondents*, indicate that of the 99 JNIA respondents 66% ( $n=66$ ) were males and 33% ( $n=33$ ) females. Regarding *marital status*, the bulk of these employees i.e.73% ( $n=72$ ) were married while 26% ( $n=26$ ) were still single, 1% ( $n=1$ ) were divorced. Uhlř et al. (2020) noted significant assessment differences in job satisfaction between people in a relationship and people who were single, making this variable important. Social interaction and the fear of disease and death was bigger with married people than otherwise.

*Age of respondents* classified employees into six groups ranging from *Below 18 years* to those *Over 60 year* of age. Majority of respondents ranged between 41 and 50 years representing 36%, those aged between 31 and 40 years were 31%, while within 18 to 29 years represented 25%. Most employees are above 18 but below 50 years representing 92% of all JNIA workers who are youths, young adults and grownups. Only one employee (1%) was over 60 years and none below 18 years. Martin et al. (2021) noted that motivation enhancing initiatives produced larger retention effect for younger and middle-aged employees than older ones, reflecting changing relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction as workers age.

**Table 1***Basic Characteristics of the Respondents (n= 99)*

Variable/Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	
<b>Sex/Gender</b>	Male	66	67
	Female	33	33
<b>Age (Years)</b>	< 18years	0	0
	18-29years	25	25
	30-40years	31	31
	41-50years	36	36
	51-59years	6	6
	>60years	1	1
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	26	26
	Married	72	72
	Divorced	1	1
	Widowed	0	0
<b>Level of Education</b>	Certificate	20	20
	Advance Diploma	12	12
	Degree	46	47
	Masters	20	20
	Other	1	1
<b>Work Experience/Length of Service with Employer</b>	< 5years	54	55
	6-10years	22	22
	11-20years	21	21
	21-30years	2	2
	>31years	0	0

*The level of education* for most employees was a university degree, representing 66.7% (n = 66), of whom 20% (n = 20) held master's degrees as well. Certificate holders were 20% (n = 20), while 12% (n = 12) held advanced diplomas, totaling 32% of all respondents, but one employee (1%) had primary school education. However, Ilies, Yao, Curseu, and Liang (2018) argue that levels of education and financial mastery trigger destructive effects on job and life satisfactions because educated employees tend to be less satisfied with their jobs than someone else might be with the same job but a different level of education. As Uhlir et al. (2020) observed, degree holders tend to rate their satisfaction with jobs they do better than those with none by linking perceived satisfaction with their levels of education.

Regarding *the length of service with the current employer*, 55% (n = 54) had worked for less than 5 years, 22% (n = 22) for 6–10 years, 21% (n = 21) for 11–20 years, and 2% (n = 2) for over 30 years. Generally, most employees have worked for less than 10 years, accounting for 77% (n = 76), while 23% (n = 23) have served for 10 years and above. Oshagbemi (1998) and Hasan (2021) argue that employees' age has a bearing on the level of satisfaction because, as employees grow older, they tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than younger employees. Old employees' decisions to leave an organization take much longer and consider many items before making such a decision.

#### 4.3 Employees' Job Satisfaction amidst Perceived Fear and Risks of COVID-19?

COVID-19-induced risks that could affect job satisfaction include those pertaining to perceived safety, health, and security risks. These risks are examined in Table 2, where respondents' perceptions found "job characteristics," (mean score = 2.38; standard deviation = 1.12) as the strongest of the risks influencing job satisfaction as perceived by employees. These risks vary significantly because different jobs pose different levels of risk to employees. Physical proximity and exposure to disease or illness, as stressors that predict emotional strain, are risk-enhancing job characteristics that present threats to employee physical health and emotional well-being (Politis et al., 2022). On the

other hand, any anticipated workload reduction minimizes risk, leading employees to not perceive this job characteristic as threatening. The effect of these risk-enhancing job characteristics varies as a function of anticipated workload changes.

Perceived Job security issues were rated second (mean score 2.31 and standard deviation = 1.16). COVID-19-induced job insecurity due to financial concern, fear of losing one's job, and difficulty attaining new employment is often associated with greater depressive and anxiety symptoms and increased worry about financial stability, resulting in poorer mental health (Wilson et al., 2020). This is a key stress-inducing cause, leading to a diminution in job satisfaction while contributing to mental health concerns (Nyanga & Chindanya, 2020). These two items were highly perceived as having an impact on job satisfaction.

**Table 2**

*COVID-19 induced Risk-Determinants of levels of Job Satisfaction (N=99)*

Risk Determinant of Job Satisfaction Level	Respondents' Level of Agreement or Disagreement (nos. and %)					Mean	$\delta$	Decision & Perception	RK
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
Risk-enhancing Job Characteristics	20 (20%)	44 (44%)	19 (19%)	9 (9%)	7 (7%)	2.38	1.12	High	1
Job Security Issues	25 (25%)	42 (42%)	14 (14%)	12 (12%)	6 (6%)	2.31	1.16	High	2
High work anxiety and Stress	29 (30%)	45 (46%)	12 (12%)	8 (8%)	4 (4%)	2.11	1.05	Low	3
Pay, Compensation and Salary issues	39 (39%)	36 (36%)	14 (14%)	6 (6%)	4 (4%)	1.99	1.07	Low	4

Note: (a) SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree;

(b) Mean Score=MS;  $\delta$ =Standard Deviation, RK=Rank

(c) Decision: Weighted Average Value=2.23

Although enhanced work anxiety and stress were proven to have a negative impact on job satisfaction, as evidenced by researchers like Nahar et al. (2013), Dilruba (2016), and Ramzan (2013), as quoted by Riaz (2016), this issue was lowly perceived (mean score = 2.11; standard deviation = 1.05). Similarly, pay, compensation, and salary issues are proven to have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, as confirmed by many researchers. Although improved compensation increases levels of employees' dedication and job satisfaction, the results in Table 2 show lowly perceived ratings (mean score = 1.99, standard deviation = 1.07).

#### 4.4 Effects of Employees' Perceived Safety, Health Risk and Security on Job Satisfaction

##### 4.4.1 Perceived Risks versus Job Satisfaction

As explained above, the main objective of this study was to explore the effect of perceived risks of the COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction at JNIA and specifically determine whether these perceptions regarding safety, health, and security risks during the COVID-19 pandemic had affected employees' job satisfaction. It is agreed that if safety, health, and security are guaranteed by employers, employees would normally remain committed to their work and perform better. Such performance would not only be related to employees' tasks but also to maintaining good relationships and adopting ways to protect themselves against hazards (Saleem et al., 2021). Contextually, safety, which includes security, order, law, stability, and freedom from fear, keeps employees motivated to properly perform in an organization. Similarly, security, which includes aspects concerned with environment, pension and benefits, promotions, fairness, and equality and encompasses management, operational, and physical security, can cause changes in the level of job satisfaction. However, it is worth noting that safety and security are very crucial in human life, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory always guarantees satisfaction for many employees (McLeod, 2018).

Findings shown in Table 3 confirm that during the pandemic, employees' perceptions regarding safety, health, and security risks could have had some effect on job satisfaction levels. These findings are consistent with the results of the study undertaken by Zanabazar et al. (2022) and significantly support research outcomes of many other previous studies in this area by other researchers (Zanabazar et al. 2022). In addition, the above-cited table shows the perceived severity of these impacts, based on interviews conducted using the Likert scale. It is evident from the findings that employees agreed to a larger extent that perceived risks could cause dissatisfaction as a result of job-insecurity and hence facilitate and speed up employees' intentions to quit their jobs. It is for this reason that these two impact items were perception-wise, highly ranked. These observations are in line with what Chen et al. (2023) noted among Chinese flight attendants where in the context of unexpected environmental changes caused by COVID-19, dissatisfactions and intentions to quit were significantly noted. Also, these risks are likely to influence job satisfaction

levels by brewing dissatisfaction among employees as a result of changed work environments and conditions. Evaluations made by Landari and Wahyuni (2022) regarding the impact of risks and fear of contracting COVID-19, indicated that these fears affect work stress and job turnovers positively, but negatively on job satisfaction.

However, in this study the risks noted during the pandemic were not perceived as serious enough to create severe anxiety among employees or high degree of physical stress and emotional fear as initially expected, mostly because of the employers' commitment to reducing the pandemic's negative impacts, simply referred to as the moderating effect. Such observations are consistent with the findings made by Bhatti et al (2011) as quoted by Zanabazar et al. (2022) who, having noted this moderating effect, argued that organizations or employers need to tackle problems of perceived risks through identifying employee stress levels, their causes and find appropriate solutions while working hard to resolve such challenges. Evaluations made by Landari and Wahyuni (2022) regarding the impact of risks and fear of contracting COVID-19, indicated that these fears affect work stress and job turnovers positively, but negatively on job satisfaction.

**Table 3**

*Perceived Severity of Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic Risks on Job Satisfaction Levels among JNIA employees (n=99)*

Impact Risk Item	Respondents' Level of Agreement or Disagreement (nos. and %)					Mean	Δ	Decision & Perception	RK
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
Facilitating and speeding up the intention to quit jobs at JNIA	22 (22%)	36 (36%)	15 (15%)	13 (13%)	13 (13%)	2.59	1.32	High	1
Causing dissatisfaction due to changed working environment and conditions	27 (27%)	34 (34%)	14 (14%)	15 (15%)	9 (9%)	2.44	1.29	High	2
Changing employees' personal relationships at JNIA	28 (29%)	50 (51%)	12 (12%)	5 (5%)	3 (3%)	2.03	0.94	Low	3
Reducing social interactions among JNIA workers	38 (38%)	44 (44%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)	1.89	0.96	Low	4
Negatively affecting the way travellers were being handled and treated	45 (45%)	34 (34%)	14 (14%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	1.82	0.96	Low	5
Creating high degree of physical and emotional fear	36 (36%)	54 (55%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	1.77	0.74	Low	6
Creating anxiety among workers	42 (42%)	45 (45%)	9 (9%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	1.76	0.86	Low	7

Note: (a) SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree;

(b) Mean Score=MS;  $\delta$ =Standard Deviation, RK=Rank

(c) Decision: Weighted Average Value=2.04

#### 4.4.2 Severity of Effects of Perceived Risks of COVID-19 on job satisfaction

Effect and the severity of each of the perceived pandemic risks on job satisfaction is likely to differ depending on its nature and on the individuals being affected. Based on this view, Chen et al (2023) noted that when employees are faced with high risk of COVID-19, using their cognitive faculties they initiate an assessment process to evaluate the severity of the risk and determine the necessary actions. The greater the risk of infection, the harder it is for employee to complete their tasks, the greater the job insecurity and the higher the level of job dissatisfaction and the greater the likelihood of job change.

In order to determine the severity of factors influencing job satisfaction as perceived by employees, this study had requested employees to rate their individual job satisfaction. Using a Likert scale, employees were also asked to determine extent of their agreement with probable influencers of job satisfaction levels identified in Table 3, within the context of perceived safety, health, and security risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the seven impact items listed, two were perceived very highly, while the rest were not. Perceived risks that ranked first and second were likely to have a greater influence on job satisfaction by facilitating and speeding up employees' intentions to quit jobs (mean score = 2.59; standard deviation = 1.32) and causing dissatisfaction due to changed working environments and conditions (mean score = 2.44; standard deviation = 1.29) during the pandemic. Effects of the two highly ranked impact items suggest that these risks once perceived tend to facilitate and speed up job quitting decisions consistent with the results observed in the study undertaken by Zanabazar et al. (2022).

As per Table 3, the view that perceived risks were "facilitating and speeding up the intention to quit jobs" as a result of increased job dissatisfaction seems to support the outcome that this impact item is the most influential one



among impact items of perceived risks. About 58% (n = 58) of respondents were "agreeing," 26% (n = 26) were generally "disagreeing," and 15% (n = 15) were neutral. Similarly, another impact item that causes dissatisfaction due to a changed working environment and conditions (mean score = 2.44, standard deviation = 1.29), was equally highly perceived and ranked second, with 61% (n = 61) of the respondents "agreeing," 24% (n = 24) "disagreeing," and 14% (n = 14) remaining neutral.

The other five impacts, ranking from third to seventh, were all lowly perceived. These included changing employees' personal relationships (mean score = 2.03, standard deviation = 0.94), reducing social interactions among workers (mean score = 1.89, standard deviation = 0.96), negatively affecting the way travelers were being handled and treated (mean score = 1.82, standard deviation = 0.96), creating a high degree of physical and emotional fear (mean score = 1.77, standard deviation = 0.74), and creating anxiety among workers (mean score = 1.76, standard deviation = 0.86).

Although distress-linked impact item "creating high degree of physical and emotional fear" was lowly perceived and ranked as sixth among seven impact items, according to Kumar et al (2021) their Indian experience depicted a different picture. COVID-19-induced work stressors, job performance and distress, portrayed a different relationship against life and job satisfaction. According to Kumar et al. (2021), their research indicated that job and life satisfactions were reduced due to significant increase in distress levels which instead lowered job performance and satisfaction levels.

#### 4.4.3 Employees' Perception of the Factors Influencing Levels of Job Satisfaction

Besides requiring employees to assess the severity of identified impacts, additional questions wanted them to identify and rank factors affecting job satisfaction, as seen in Table 4. Most of these factors are employer-induced, and they are part of employers' organizational commitment to fighting COVID-19 by improving working conditions, the environment, and employment terms. Evidently, these issues related to safety, health, and security risks, when properly addressed by employers, improve job satisfaction levels significantly or prevent employers from tumbling.

**Table 4**

*Employees' Perception of Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction Levels*

Category of Perceived Risk/ Consequences	Main Influencing Factors	No.	%
<b>SAFETY AND HEALTH RISKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High degree of fear for physical proximity and exposure to illness/death</li> <li>• High degree of anxiety and emotional fear</li> </ul>	Physiological tiredness, depression, desperation, fatigue, anger, anxiety and fear	22	19%
	Increased vulnerability to Covid-19 due to underlying health problems	17	14%
	Increased work stress and pressure due to workload	14	12%
<b>SECURITY RISKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Safety and Insecurity</li> <li>• Changed Working Environment</li> <li>• Changed Working Conditions</li> </ul>	Forced lay-offs: reduced salary payments, allowances	14	12%
	Poor employment conditions in predatory contracts	10	8%
	Presence of Poor Work Environment	3	3%
	Lack of Job safety and insecurity	8	7%
	Lack of motivational fringe benefits	4	3%
	Termination of employees sick of Covid-19	2	2%
<b>SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced Social Interactions</li> <li>• Social Disconnection and Fear</li> </ul>	Self-inflicting segregation and quarantines to stop the corona virus spread	5	4%
	Physical and social contacts with people develops fear of contracting / transmitting Covid-19 to others etc.	4	3%
<b>MANAGEMENT RISKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of organizational commitment in fighting Pandemic</li> <li>• Human Resources Management challenges during pandemic</li> </ul>	Poor organizational commitment by employers, weak strategies to combat Covid-19	8	7%
	Human resources management challenges, problems and difficulties during Covid-19	4	3%
	Lack of appreciation and recognition by employers	3	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100%</b>

Moreover, employees were also asked to list other factors they perceived as affecting job satisfaction levels. These factors are summarized in Table 4. From the said table, it is apparent that the Safety and Health Risk category shows a high degree of fear for physical proximity and exposure to illness or death, and a high degree of anxiety accounted for 45% with 3 influencing factors. Security Risks, which cover job safety and insecurity, a changed working environment and changing working conditions, with six influencing factors accounting for 35% of the total the total (n = 41), Social Risks and Consequences, including social disconnections and fear, loss of social interactions, with two reasons accounting for 7% (n = 9), and lastly, Management Risks and Consequences, which include a lack of

organizational commitment in fighting pandemics and human resources challenges during pandemics, accounting for 13% (n = 15). Results from Table 4 show that employees perceived health and safety risks and security risks as being more influential reasons listed therein than social and management consequences and risks.

## 4.5 An Overview of Job Satisfaction: Employees versus Employers' Assessment

### 4.5.1 Airport as a Workplace

Most people would like to work in a good environment and earn a good salary with attractive employment benefits, career advancement, security, and safety. Airports are believed to provide just that. The 2022 Air Transport Action Group Report noted that the aviation and tourism industries provided 62.7 million jobs worldwide, with 9.9 million directly involved in the aviation industry (Rated Recruitment Ltd, 2023). Besides attractive company employment benefits, other reasons attracting people to the aviation sector include employer-offered travel opportunities, chances of meeting new interesting people, career development opportunities, the availability of lifestyle benefits ensuring happiness at work and home, etc. But when job insecurity and financial concern as a consequence of stressful perceptions caused by COVID-19 pandemic and its associated risks ensues, worries of personal financial stability crop up, resulting in poorer mental health as observed by Wilson et al. (2020) who concluded that greater depressive and anxiety symptoms would certainly follow.

However, continuous exposure to new contacts as friends, visitors or passengers at the airport, such transactions bring airport workers within physical proximity and exposure to disease or illness (Politis et al., 2022). These characteristics of airport jobs seriously present threats to employees' physical health and well-being negatively impacting their emotional well-being, which in turn affect their levels of job satisfaction. Findings from Zanabazar et al., (2022) are supported by observations from this study that work stress created by pandemic negatively affected organizational trust among employees and may precipitate job dissatisfaction unless deliberate efforts are made by the management as JNIA authorities did. Generally, employers are concerned with employees' job satisfaction because this has implications for their human resources investment plans and productivity.

Although some JNIA employees had died of COVID-19 and a few were dissatisfied with their jobs mainly due to relatively low or half salaries, WFH shifts, shrunk revenues, little health support extended, or poor relationships among employees and management, still many, as seen in Table 5, were "very satisfied" (58%, n = 57) with their jobs despite their perceived fears and anxieties. Employers' observations indicated that COVID-19 had somehow reduced employees' overall morale and satisfaction at the pandemic's peak and JNIA jobs became slightly less attractive as perceived fear and anxiety grew. However, as pandemic awareness campaigns and preventive measures got underway, employees' fears and anxieties slowly receded.

The biggest effect of these risk perceptions was an increase of fear and anxiety regarding the personal safety and the insecurity of employees' current jobs, rather than the pandemic itself because in many countries, employees lost their jobs due to the closure of company operations. JNIA employers concluded that COVID-19 fears, anxieties, and perceived risks did not have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction, and no voluntary turnovers were recorded as a result of the pandemic. Recorded turnovers at JNIA were mainly due to station transfers, statutory age retirements, disciplinary dismissals, retrenchments, poor health, or deaths, a phenomenon that pre-existed the pandemic.

### 4.5.2 Job Satisfaction at JNIA: Employers versus Employees Assessments

From the above discussion, it is clear that perceived *health, safety, and security risks* emanating from the pandemic did not negatively affect employees' job satisfaction levels. When answering "Are you satisfied with the current job you are doing?" as per Table 5, about 58% (n = 57) of JNIA employees said they were very satisfied, 34% (n = 34) were moderately satisfied, totaling 92% (n = 91) of "satisfied" employees, while 1% (n = 1) was dissatisfied and 7% (n = 7) were rather unsure.

**Table 5**

*Employees' Level of Satisfaction for the Current Job at JNIA (n=99)*

Issue	Levels of Job Satisfaction	Frequency (n=99)	Proportion (in %)
Satisfied with current job at JNIA	Very Satisfied	57	58%
	Satisfied	34	34%
	Neutral / Unsure	7	7%
	Dissatisfied	1	1%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>N=99</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 shows that of 10 employers who assessed factors affecting job satisfaction, good employment policies and contracts, financial remunerations, and fringe benefits were regarded as critical by 90.0% (n = 9) and 80% (n = 8), respectively. Work environment was regarded by 70% (n = 7) of employers as influential, and the ability to meet human needs by only 30% (n = 3), whereas the quality of a place of work was regarded as influential by only 10% (n = 1) of employers, as seen in the said table.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that despite health, safety, and security risks perceived by JNIA employees, employees' satisfaction with their jobs was unwavering due to the moderation effect undertaken by their employers, especially on the job safety and insecurity risk, which significantly helped to cool down the perceived risks as observed above. Zanabazar et al. (2022) quoting Poor et al. (2014) and Yang et al. (2016) maintain that when employees feel or perceive less support or cooperation from their co-workers and managers, this can lead to stress, which negatively contributes to the loss of self-confidence, decrease in job satisfaction and fall in overall job performance among the employees. Earlier studies on the influence of job satisfaction have also shown their support and consistency with observations they make that improved relations among employees and managerial structure, acceptable staffing of required personnel, a safe working environment, and appreciation by management are known to be effective strategies for improving job satisfaction (Afulani, et al. 2021). These findings seem to be in line with what Shan et al., (2022) concluded from their work that organizational commitment have often played a mediating role between perceived risks especially those concerned with health, and job satisfaction.

**Table 6**

*Employers' Agreement with Opinion Regarding Reasons for their Employees' Job Satisfaction (N=10)*

Employment Issue/Factor	Reasons for Job Satisfaction	No. & %
Financial Remunerations and Fringe Benefits	1. Good salary with annual increments and adjustments, 2. Financial incentives (allowances and fringe benefits)	8 (80%)
Employment Policies and Contracts	1. Permanent employment contracts, 2. Good working conditions (motivating teamwork, encouraging high performance) 3. Recognition and appreciation of workers' contribution and career advancement	9 (90.0%)
Ability to meet human needs	1. Satisfying basic staff requirements e.g. good pension, health insurance, 2. Meeting basic physical and social staff requirement	3 (30%)
Work Environment and Working Conditions	1. Better Working Environment which is safe and secure, 2. Job security guarantee, 3. Good relationships with management and co-workers	7 (70%)
Quality of Place of Work	1. Good and Quality Offices and working tools	1 (10%)

#### 4.5.3 JNIA's Anti-Pandemic Moderation Measures: Employees' Assessment

The moderation measures undertaken by the JNIA authorities to mitigate the effects and perceived risks of COVID-19 were of great significance. When the pandemic erupted, several measures were instituted to combat the virus, which also played a crucial role in reducing employees' job dissatisfaction levels. Approximately 96% of employees found the measures taken by JNIA to be quite satisfactory in creating a conducive working environment. Some of the key measures included supplying and maintaining COVID-19 screening equipment in a timely manner, rescheduling certain jobs to allow for work-from-home arrangements, introducing compulsory entry requirements for passengers along with COVID-19 screening and certificate issuance, temporarily closing international flights, conducting public awareness and vaccination campaigns, enforcing health directives from the Ministry of Health, and introducing the "Msafiri Online Registration Information System" for tracking passengers. It is worth noting that anti-pandemic measures undertaken by airport authorities at JNIA, resembled and were consistent with what Chen et al. (2021) had suggested for flight attendants. The study suggested that adoption of more scientific and practical virus protection methods and strategies to reduce the risk of infection, such as upgrading virus protection equipment and reducing human interaction and contact with passengers without compromising service quality, were several of the useful measures that had to be undertaken in Chinese airports. It was argued that more informed decisions of crafting an environment of job stability for employees in organizational work environment had to be made for reducing employees' job insecurity which would prevent job dissatisfactions and eventual loss of valuable employees.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic had caused many job dissatisfactions, influenced many turnover intentions among many employees, and caused problems for many employers worldwide, and making employees' management during pandemics very problematic. Findings from this research indicate that the majority of the employees were surprisingly satisfied with their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the peak moments of the pandemic. JNIA experiences show that perceived fear of disease, stress, social isolation, deprivation, frustration, poor sleep quality, depression, and ultimate confusion did not significantly impact employees' mental health nor their job satisfaction levels as initially thought. Employers at JNIA had succeeded in ensuring job satisfaction, where the perceived risk of the COVID-19 pandemic had positively affected job security among the workers. It was this job security created that played a fully mediating role in the relationship between perceived risks and job satisfaction.

As noted, JNIA employers' commitment to moderating perceived risks of fear and anxiety seemed to have paid off through employees' reciprocal sacrifices of being satisfied with their current jobs and abandoning turnover intentions, in line with the STE. Obviously, when STE exchanges take place in organizations, they tend to nurture hope, confidence, and trust in employees, and by instituting a safety culture, management inspires employees to reciprocate. It is an established fact that when an organization offers privileges and benefits for its employees, they too are likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes such as job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings and conclusion made, several recommendations are proposed:

#### 5.2.1 Introduction of Preventive Health Educational Programs

To fight perceived fear, anxiety, depressions of pandemic/health risks which interfere with job satisfaction, it is important to introduce regular preventive health educational programs. Programs covering all critical aspects of pandemic preparedness, preventive strategies, techniques of overcoming fear, depression, and anxiety disorders, regular expert counselling and psychological clinics, and enforcement of health rules and regulations, be introduced.

#### 5.2.2 Timely Containment and Treatment of Disease Outbreaks and Pandemics

Measures to contain spread of disease outbreaks and pandemics must be instantly introduced when such occurrences happen, in order to contain their spreading while minimizing effects and unnecessary fear and anxiety. Employees ought to undertake health screening regularly at airport health stations to be established.

#### 5.2.3 Improved Employment Benefits, Salary Pay and Financial Incentives

With the economic hardships brought about by pandemics, it is crucial that terms of employment contracts and agreements ought to be revisited and fringe benefits be improved. "*Risky Environment Allowances*" be introduced by employers, as extra incentive for those working in harsh, unsafe and risky environment and provision of free or subsidized treatment through pay-cash or insurance schemes for diseases like Covid-19, be guaranteed. During pandemics, unnecessary retrenchment or half pays should be avoided because these create hardships for employees.

#### 5.2.4 Enhancing Security and Safety of Work Environment

In order to improve employees' working environment, frequent medical checks during the pandemic periods are crucial to identify and help affected employees. Employees with underlying health challenges vulnerable to pandemics, should be allowed to work from home not to be terminated or get half salary. Working environment for employees must be made attractive while good relationship and social interaction among employees and with employers, must be encouraged.

### 5.3 Policy Implications

Issues and challenges observed at JNIA reveal the importance of having disaster management policies which identify strategies applicable by sensitive institutions like JNIA. Since, non-salary payments and allowances linked with "risky working environment and conditions" help in reducing job dissatisfactions and turnovers amidst pandemic or dangerous situations, labour policies and employment laws must address these challenges. Employers in risky work places must review their internal operational working policies and mainstream them into national labour policies and laws in order to face such challenging and risky labour situations at workplaces. By revisiting laws which promote the employees' rights like the Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004 or those focusing on workplace security and safety, the issue of job satisfaction would have been covered. It is obvious from the study that employees are ready to



trade off their pandemic fear and anxiety, if the “price” is right for the benefit of a well committed employer, as per Social Exchange Theory.

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