

# Employee Engagement and Creative Performance During COVID-19 Pandemic Basis for Sustainable Productivity in Selected Telecommunication Companies

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined employee engagement, creative performance, and sustainable productivity among employees of four selected telecommunication companies in Metro Manila during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed among 233 purposively selected active employees who had worked in the participating companies before and during the pandemic. Data were gathered through an online survey questionnaire reviewed by subject-matter experts and pilot-tested among 20 non-sample telecommunication employees. The instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .915. Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, chi-square test, and Cramer's V were used. Employee engagement was high overall ( $M = 4.05$ ), with vigor and dedication obtaining the highest means ( $M = 4.24$  each), followed by

absorption ( $M = 3.68$ ). Creative-performance-related dimensions were also high: adaptive performance obtained  $M = 4.24$ , task performance  $M = 4.16$ , and contextual performance  $M = 4.10$ . Counterproductive work behavior obtained  $M = 3.02$ , indicating a continuing need for workplace support and behavior-management interventions. Productivity was high ( $M = 4.41$ ). Civil status, company affiliation, and employee classification were significantly associated with employee engagement, while civil status, company affiliation, and employment status were significantly associated with creative performance. The reported effect sizes were negligible to low, suggesting that organizational practices and support systems remain important areas for intervention. The study proposes the ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program to integrate engagement, learning, innovation, employee well-being, recognition, communication, and monitoring initiatives.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19 pandemic, creative performance, employee engagement, employee well-being, sustainable productivity, telecommunication companies*

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations rely on employees to sustain productivity, service quality, and innovation. During periods of disruption, the ability of workers to remain energetic, dedicated, adaptable, and creative becomes particularly important. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged organizations to protect employees, maintain operations, and redesign work arrangements while responding to uncertainty, changing demand, and psychological pressure.

Telecommunication companies played a vital role during the pandemic because connectivity supported remote work, online education, digital services, and communication. The industry faced increased operational pressure while employees adjusted to alternative work arrangements, health protocols, technology demands, and changing organizational expectations. These conditions made employee engagement and creative performance important factors in sustaining productivity.

Employee engagement reflects the energy, commitment, and concentration that employees bring to their work. Schaufeli et al. (2002) described engagement through vigor, dedication, and absorption. Creative performance, meanwhile, involves effective task completion, contextual contribution, adaptive behavior, and the management of counterproductive behaviors. Productive organizations require employees who can complete assignments efficiently while adjusting to uncertain conditions and contributing constructive ideas.

Although employee engagement and creativity have been examined in different settings, evidence remains limited on how these variables were manifested among Philippine telecommunication employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. The source thesis also identified the need to examine organizational practices such as training, development, employee support, rewards, recognition, and communication.

This study described employee demographics and company-support practices, assessed employee engagement and creative performance, examined employee productivity, tested selected demographic and organizational associations, and proposed a sustainable productivity program for telecommunication companies.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Employee Engagement During Organizational Disruption***

Employee engagement is an important driver of commitment and performance. Schaufeli et al. (2002) identified vigor, dedication, and absorption as major engagement dimensions. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) reviewed the development of employee-engagement research, while Satata (2021) discussed engagement as an approach to improving work performance. During the COVID-19 period, engagement practices became increasingly important as organizations sought to sustain morale and continuity under changing work arrangements (Ahmed et al., 2020; Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020).

### ***Creative Performance and Adaptability***

Creative performance allows employees to generate useful ideas, solve problems, and adjust to change. Gong et al. (2018) identified creative performance as a source of innovation and competitiveness. Cai et al. (2020) explained that abilities, motivation, and opportunities influence employee creativity in the digital era. Tonnessen et al. (2021) likewise examined digital knowledge sharing and creative performance during work-from-home arrangements.

### ***Individual Work Performance and Counterproductive Behavior***

Individual work performance includes behaviors that support or hinder organizational outcomes. Koopmans et al. (2011) developed a conceptual framework covering task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Task performance relates to efficient completion of core responsibilities. Contextual performance involves constructive contributions beyond assigned duties. Adaptive performance refers to the ability to adjust to new demands. Counterproductive behavior concerns actions that may weaken individual or organizational performance.

### ***Organizational Support, Well-Being, and Sustainable Productivity***

Sustainable productivity requires organizational practices that support both performance and employee well-being. Di Fabio (2017) emphasized sustainability and well-being in organizations, while Khusanova et al. (2021) examined antecedents and consequences of work engagement. During the pandemic, training, health and wellness initiatives, flexible work arrangements, recognition, communication, and mental-health support became essential mechanisms for maintaining an engaged and resilient workforce.

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## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design with explanatory or predictive orientation. The descriptive component summarized demographic characteristics, company-support programs, employee engagement, creative-performance-related dimensions, and productivity. The correlational component examined selected relationships among demographic and organizational profile variables, employee engagement, and creative performance.

### **Research Locale and Participants**

The study was conducted among employees of four selected telecommunication companies in Metro Manila. For confidentiality, the participating companies were identified as Telco A, Telco B, Telco C, and Telco D. A total of 233 active employees participated: 73 from Telco A, 51 from Telco B, 45 from Telco C, and 64 from Telco D.

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposive sampling was employed. Eligible respondents were 20 to 60 years old, employed in Metro Manila, and working in one of the selected telecommunication companies before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation was open to all genders and employment-status categories.

### **Research Instrument**

The survey questionnaire contained four parts: demographic profile; training, development, and recognition factors; employee engagement; and creative performance. Employee engagement was assessed through vigor, dedication, and absorption indicators. Creative-performance-related indicators covered task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behavior. A five-point Likert scale was used: 4.21-5.00, Very High; 3.41-4.20, High; 2.61-3.40, Average; 1.81-2.60, Low; and 1.00-1.80, Very Low.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The instrument was reviewed by the thesis adviser and two telecommunication experts. Revisions were incorporated before pilot testing among 20 telecommunication employees who were not included in the final sample. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .915, indicating excellent internal consistency.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Ethics approval was sought from the Institutional Ethics Review Committee of Centro Escolar University. Permission was also secured from the human-resources coordinators of the participating companies. Respondents received an informed-consent form and completed the survey through an online platform or an on-site option when required. The researcher treated the responses confidentially and used the information solely for research purposes.

### **Data Analysis**

Frequency and percentage were used to describe respondent characteristics and company-support programs. Weighted mean and standard deviation summarized employee engagement, creative-performance-related dimensions, and productivity. Chi-square tests and Cramer's V were used to determine the significance and strength of selected associations. Statistical decisions were evaluated at the .05 level.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The study observed informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, organizational anonymity, and the responsible handling of data. The participating companies were coded to prevent disclosure of their identities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. *Selected Profile Characteristics of Respondents (N = 233)*

Profile Variable	Largest Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-25 years old	92	39.48%
Gender	Male	132	56.65%
Civil status	Single	165	70.82%
Educational requirement	High school graduate	109	46.78%
Employment status	Permanent employment	117	50.21%
Employee classification	Rank-and-file position	221	94.85%
Telecommunication company	Telco A	73	31.33%

The respondents were predominantly young, male, single, and employed in rank-and-file positions. Telco A contributed the largest share of respondents. The profile indicates that the study largely reflects the experiences of a youthful operational workforce during the pandemic.

### Training, Development, Support, and Recognition

Table 2. *Selected Organizational Support Findings During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Organizational Support Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Companies implemented training and other programs	228	97.85%
Respondents were aware of company-support programs	230	98.71%
Most reported policy category: health and wellness programs	86	36.91%
Most common financial incentive: extra allowances	88	37.77%
Most common non-financial incentive: employee empowerment or learning opportunity	68	29.18%

The majority of respondents reported that their companies implemented training, development, and support programs during the pandemic. Health and wellness initiatives received the highest frequency among the reported policy categories. Extra allowances were the most common financial incentive, while learning opportunities and employee empowerment were the most common non-financial incentives.

### Level of Employee Engagement

Table 3. *Summary of Employee Engagement Dimensions*

Employee Engagement Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Vigor	4.24	0.522	High	1.5
Dedication	4.24	0.526	High	1.5
Absorption	3.68	0.584	High	3
Overall employee engagement	4.05	0.441	High	

Employee engagement was high overall ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.441$ ). Vigor and dedication obtained the highest means ( $M = 4.24$  each), showing that respondents generally maintained energy, perseverance, responsibility, and commitment. Absorption received a lower but still high rating ( $M = 3.68$ ), suggesting that sustained focus remained an area for continuous improvement.

### Creative-Performance-Related Dimensions and Productivity

Table 4. *Summary of Creative-Performance-Related Dimensions*

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Adaptive performance	4.24	0.529	High	1
Task performance	4.16	0.579	High	2
Contextual performance	4.10	0.587	High	3
Counterproductive work behavior	3.02	0.879	Average	4
Overall score reported in the source manuscript	3.88	0.423	High	
Employee productivity	4.41	0.525	Very High	

Adaptive performance obtained the highest rating ( $M = 4.24$ ), followed by task performance ( $M = 4.16$ ) and contextual performance ( $M = 4.10$ ). These findings indicate that employees generally adjusted to changing work demands, completed tasks efficiently, and contributed constructively to the organization. Productivity was very high ( $M = 4.41$ ).

Counterproductive work behavior received an average rating ( $M = 3.02$ ). Since the source instrument presents these items as negatively worded behaviors, the result should be addressed through supportive management, clear communication, employee well-being initiatives, and appropriate workplace controls. The composite creative-performance score should be interpreted cautiously unless the negative items were reverse-coded.

### Associations Between Profile Variables and Employee Engagement

Table 5. *Profile Variables Associated with Employee Engagement*

Profile Variable	Chi-square	p-value	Cramer's V	Interpretation
Gender	0.197	.906	.029	Not significant
Civil status	28.335	< .001	.349	Significant; low association
Educational requirement	6.489	.371	.122	Not significant
Telecommunication company	29.541	< .001	.252	Significant; low association
Employment status	4.970	.290	.103	Not significant
Employee classification	13.312	.010	.169	Significant; negligible association

Civil status, company affiliation, and employee classification were significantly associated with employee engagement. The effect sizes ranged from negligible to low, indicating that these profile variables were related to engagement but did not fully explain it. Organizational climate, support systems, leadership, and work design remain important considerations.

### Associations Between Profile Variables and Creative Performance

Table 6. *Profile Variables Associated with Creative Performance*

Profile Variable	Chi-square	p-value	Cramer's V	Interpretation
Gender	0.017	.991	.009	Not significant
Civil status	24.486	< .001	.229	Significant; low association
Educational requirement	5.494	.339	.109	Not significant
Telecommunication company	13.211	.042	.168	Significant; negligible association
Employment status	10.241	.037	.148	Significant; negligible association
Employee classification	1.701	.791	.050	Not significant

Civil status, company affiliation, and employment status were significantly associated with creative performance. However, the reported effect sizes were negligible to low. These results suggest that organizational

practices and workplace conditions may be more actionable intervention points than demographic characteristics alone.

### **Proposed ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program**

The findings support a structured intervention that integrates employee engagement, development, innovation, well-being, recognition, communication, and continuous monitoring. The proposed ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program is intended to strengthen existing organizational practices and address identified improvement areas.

*Table 7. ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program*

Program Area	Recommended Activities	Expected Outcome
Engagement enhancement	Monthly engagement sessions, team-building activities, and feedback surveys	Improved involvement and organizational connection
Learning and development	Quarterly training, e-learning platforms, mentoring, and coaching	Improved skills and adaptability
Creativity and innovation	Innovation challenges, idea-sharing platforms, and cross-functional collaboration	Improved problem-solving and efficiency
Employee well-being	Mental-health programs, stress-management sessions, and work-life-balance initiatives	Reduced stress and stronger resilience
Rewards and recognition	Incentives, recognition programs, and career-advancement opportunities	Improved motivation and commitment
Monitoring and evaluation	Quarterly surveys, performance reports, innovation feedback, and annual program review	Continuous program improvement

## **CONCLUSION**

Employees of the selected telecommunication companies demonstrated high employee engagement, strong task, contextual, and adaptive performance, and very high productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vigor and dedication emerged as engagement strengths, while absorption remained an area for improvement. Organizational support was widely reported, particularly training, health and wellness initiatives, extra allowances, and learning opportunities. Selected demographic and organizational variables were significantly associated with employee engagement and creative performance, but the reported effect sizes were generally negligible to low. These findings support an organizational response focused on actionable workplace practices rather than demographic characteristics alone. The ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program provides a practical framework for strengthening engagement, innovation, well-being, recognition, communication, and monitoring.

### **Recommendations**

1. Telecommunication companies may institutionalize regular employee-engagement activities, team-building sessions, and feedback mechanisms tailored to the needs of their workforce.
2. Training and development programs may be sustained through e-learning platforms, mentoring, coaching, and opportunities for employees to lead projects and develop new skills.
3. Organizations may improve internal communication so that employees can identify, access, and maximize available support programs.
4. Mental-health support, stress-management activities, work-life-balance initiatives, and employee-assistance mechanisms may be strengthened to promote well-being and reduce counterproductive behaviors.
5. Rewards and recognition systems may combine financial incentives with learning opportunities, empowerment, constructive feedback, and career-development pathways.
6. The proposed ENGAGE+ Sustainable Productivity Program may be reviewed by company leaders and human-resources units and adapted to the operational needs of each participating organization.
7. Future researchers may examine the long-term effects of remote and hybrid work, use longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and include broader samples across industries and locations.

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