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NAVIGATING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT QUALITY AMIDST FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT DURING GLOBAL DISRUPTION

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on information management (IM) quality within organizations, focusing on factors such as organizational roles, seniority, gender, technological maturity, and employees' perceptions. The research seeks to understand how these variables interact to shape the dynamics of IM in information-intensive organizations during a global disruption.
Background	The rapid shift to remote work during the pandemic has raised questions regarding its effects on organizational processes, particularly in IM. Previous studies have largely focused on technological and operational adjustments, with limited attention to how demographic and organizational factors related to human capital influence IM quality.
Methodology	The study conducted a comprehensive analysis of 716 questionnaire responses gathered from both employees and managers within four distinct Israeli government ministries during the "new normal" that emerged with the onset of the pandemic.
Contribution	The study contributes to the literature by offering empirical insights into the complex dynamics of IM during a global crisis. It challenges conventional assumptions about the detrimental effects of remote work on IM quality and provides new perspectives on the role of technological maturity and individual perceptions in shaping IM outcomes.
Findings	The study reveals a striking divergence in IM quality perceptions between employees and managers in the wake of COVID-19. While employees without managerial responsibilities reported a decline in IM quality, managers

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	experienced significant improvements, highlighting a gap in how different organizational roles adapted to the crisis. High organizational technological maturity was associated with higher IM quality, while seniority and gender had no discernible impact. Overall, 41.48% of respondents reported a positive change in IM quality post-COVID-19, 44.97% observed no significant change, and 13.55% believed the pandemic adversely affected IM quality. Key IM dimensions – documentation, accessibility, and information sharing – emerged as pivotal during the crisis, underscoring their importance in organizational resilience. In addition, employees' perceptions of the pandemic's impact revealed a complex relationship between subjective experiences and objective IM results.
Recommendations for Practitioners	This study underscores the importance of investing in technological infrastructure to maintain IM quality in remote or hybrid work environments. Additionally, providing tailored support for employees, particularly non-managerial staff, through targeted training programs and digital literacy initiatives is crucial for sustaining IM quality during disruptions.
Future Research	Future research should explore IM dynamics during crises, focusing on comprehensive strategies. Longitudinal studies should assess the impacts of technological maturity and AI adoption on IM quality. Additionally, examining organizational culture, leadership styles, and cross-industry comparisons will help identify factors enhancing IM resilience in crisis scenarios.
Keywords	information management, information systems, information technology, COVID-19, human capital, crisis management, remote work

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to information management (IM), intensifying stresses and demands. The World Health Organization's declaration of a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, significantly disrupted business operations and work environments. Organizations were compelled to rethink their processes, provide training, and equip employees with the necessary tools to transition to efficient remote work environments (Adekoya et al., 2022; Bolisani et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Fink, 2020; Loignon et al., 2022; Massoudi & Sobolevskaia, 2021; Tomé et al., 2022; Williamson et al., 2020).

Remote work quickly became the "new normal," reshaping work, education, and healthcare systems on a global scale (Banjo et al., 2020; Barnes, 2020; Ipsen et al., 2023). This shift required significant adaptation from employees and information technologies (IT) teams alike as they navigated the technical and procedural complexities of this transformation (Herath & Herath, 2020; H. J. Lee et al., 2023). As digital tools became indispensable, employees faced mounting challenges accessing, retrieving, and managing information effectively through these platforms (APQC, 2021).

The pandemic's disruption of traditional workflows has created numerous research opportunities to investigate the evolving dynamics of organizational IM (Barnes, 2020; Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Fink, 2020). While a growing body of literature explores IM in specific contexts, such as healthcare systems during the pandemic (Massoudi & Sobolevskaia, 2021) and the broader experiences of remote work (Kirchner et al., 2021; Loignon et al., 2022), there remains a notable gap in understanding how COVID-19 has impacted the IM assets within organizations (Jacks, 2021; Nakash & Bouhnik, 2023a, 2023b; Spanaki et al., 2024).

Prior research has also examined the use of digital tools in government information dissemination before the pandemic (Bouhnik et al., 2013; Yavetz & Aharony, 2021) and the role of social media in

emergency communication and e-government services during COVID-19 in countries such as India and China (Amosun et al., 2022; Paul & Das, 2023). However, the implications of the pandemic for IM quality within governmental organizations, particularly in the public sector, have received limited attention.

This study addresses this gap by adopting a managerial perspective and focusing on the human capital (HC) of the Israeli public sector. Specifically, the study investigates how demographic and organizational variables influenced IM quality in governmental organizations following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining these factors, the study seeks to contribute new insights into the intersection of IM practices and organizational adaptation during a period of profound global change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF IM IN MODERN ORGANIZATIONS

IM is defined as "the management of organizational processes, technologies, and people that collectively create, acquire, integrate, organize, process, store, disseminate, access, and dispose of information" (Sharma et al., 2021, p. 1). As a cornerstone of effective organizational operations, IM is particularly critical in the context of managing complex projects, where timely and accurate information is essential for success (Santos et al., 2012). To address the challenges of information overload and ensure the timely delivery of relevant and accurate data, many organizations have implemented advanced computing technologies and established robust information banks (Karim & Hussein, 2008). Information managers play a pivotal role in these efforts, tasked with identifying repetitive processes, gathering employee feedback on IM practices, and aligning IM priorities with evolving organizational strategies (Nakash, 2024; Wilson, 2002).

Modern information systems are expected to meet an expanding array of organizational demands, reflecting the increasing complexity of contemporary business environments. According to Dwivedi et al. (2020), one of the greatest challenges facing leaders and managers is the prevalence of "imperfect information," which can be incomplete, imprecise, uncertain, or unreliable. Addressing these deficiencies requires innovative IM solutions that enhance the quality and accessibility of information within organizations. Employees frequently request advanced internal search tools and intuitive IM systems to streamline their workflows and improve productivity. Meanwhile, managers emphasize the importance of leveraging IM to support evidence-based decision-making across all levels of the organization (APQC, 2021). These dual expectations highlight the critical need for IM systems to balance usability with the strategic objectives of fostering informed leadership and organizational agility (Nakash & Bouhnik, 2022).

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HC IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

HC is a fundamental component of intellectual capital, encompassing the value of intangible assets that collectively drive organizational success (Kudyba, 2020; Martín-de Castro et al., 2019). HC development involves enhancing skills, expanding knowledge, cultivating expertise, and accumulating experience – assets not directly reflected on a company's balance sheet but crucial for sustained organizational growth. In today's knowledge-driven economy, organizations with robust HC assets are better positioned to operate efficiently, foster innovation, and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Pasban & Nojedeh, 2016).

Equally important in the modern economy is the effective management of organizational information. The ability to organize, distribute, and utilize information effectively is critical to thriving. Knowledge workers, who handle vast amounts of data daily, depend on high-quality, relevant, and valuable organizational information to make informed decisions, achieve goals, and enhance productivity (APQC, 2017; Arshad et al., 2022). Despite the acknowledged importance of IM, many organizations continue to face challenges in implementing efficient IM systems. Persistent issues, such as

information overload and inadequate dissemination processes, hinder organizations' ability to maximize the potential of their HC and leverage their information assets strategically (Karim & Hussein, 2008).

THE IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK ON THE ISRAELI PUBLIC SECTOR

The transformative changes brought about by what has been termed "the world's largest work-from-home experiment" (Banjo et al., 2020) also significantly influenced the Israeli economy. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid digitization of workplaces to ensure employees remained connected and informed, fostering the "new normal" of remote work (Barnes, 2020; Cleverley et al., 2023; Gkeredakis et al., 2021; Herath & Herath, 2020; Kodama, 2020; Soto-Acosta et al., 2020; Zeuge et al., 2023; Zieba & Bongiovanni, 2022). In Israel, this shift was particularly pronounced within the public sector, which employed 19.7% of the national workforce in 2017, including 1.5% directly employed by government ministries (Asif & Har-Tov, 2020).

Before the pandemic, remote work was virtually nonexistent in Israel's public sector. Flexible work arrangements were not standard practice, reflecting the traditional office-centric culture of governmental organizations (Benita, 2020). However, the outbreak of COVID-19 dramatically changed this landscape, making remote work not only feasible but necessary. By mid-2020, 33% of public sector employees in Israel were working fully or partially remotely, a figure that rose to 38% by December of the same year (Aviram-Nitzan & Zaken, 2021). The adoption of remote work in the Israeli public sector revealed significant economic potential. A government report estimated that widespread implementation of remote work could contribute as much as 850 million NIS annually to Israel's gross domestic product (Benita, 2020).

DEVELOPING HYPOTHESES

The COVID-19 pandemic instigated rapid and unprecedented changes in employment models, disrupting traditional workplace practices and compelling organizations to adapt swiftly to new norms (Bolisani et al., 2020; Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2021; Tomé et al., 2022; Zieba & Bongiovanni, 2022). These adjustments included a widespread shift to remote and hybrid work arrangements, often implemented without sufficient infrastructure or protocols to ensure seamless IM. Given the integral role of IM in maintaining organizational efficiency, these abrupt changes raised critical concerns about the ability to sustain IM quality – defined by processes such as documentation, storage, retrieval, searchability, accessibility, and the sharing of information assets (Austin & Kachalia, 2020; Fisher et al., 2012; Y. W. Lee et al., 2002).

Organizational IM systems were often ill-equipped to manage the rapid digitalization required for remote work environments. Employees and managers alike encountered challenges in adapting to new tools and methods, which were further exacerbated by the psychological strain of the pandemic (Asatiani & Norström, 2023; Bartulis, 2024). The convergence of these stressors with rapidly evolving technological demands likely undermines IM effectiveness. Consequently, a hypothesis was formulated suggesting that the pandemic would result in a decline in IM quality, impacting both managerial and non-managerial employees due to organizational unpreparedness and the increased pressures on existing systems:

> **H1:** IM quality deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic among both managers and employees in non-managerial roles.

Seniority within an organization is commonly associated with higher levels of experience, institutional knowledge, and a deeper understanding of organizational objectives. These attributes often translate into greater adaptability during periods of crisis, as senior employees are more familiar with organizational workflows, systems, and crisis-response strategies (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Sott & Bender, 2025). Furthermore, seniority is frequently linked to leadership responsibilities that necessitate proactive engagement with IM practices to support organizational continuity. These factors suggest that

senior employees would be better positioned to mitigate disruptions to IM quality during the pandemic. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: The higher the employee's seniority within the organization, the more likely they are to report an improvement in IM quality during COVID-19.

Existing literature on gender differences in technology adoption and usage has produced mixed findings, often perpetuating stereotypes without robust empirical support (Heisig & Kannan, 2020; Trauth, 2013). While some studies suggest that gender may influence digital literacy and access to technology, such discussions often fail to account for organizational roles, workplace culture, or contextual factors such as crisis conditions. In light of the multifaceted nature of these variables, the hypothesis was advanced that gender would not significantly influence perceptions of IM quality during the pandemic. Rather, professional attributes such as seniority and job position were expected to play a more decisive role:

H3: Gender did not influence IM quality during COVID-19.

The pandemic underscored the critical role of technological maturity in sustaining IM systems, particularly in the context of remote work. Organizations equipped with robust technological infrastructures were better positioned to maintain IM quality through digital platforms such as cloud-based storage, collaborative tools, and advanced data management systems. These technologies facilitated the continuity of IM processes despite the shift to remote work. In contrast, organizations with limited technological maturity struggled to adapt, encountering significant challenges in ensuring seamless IM (Adekoya et al., 2022; Barnes, 2020; Bolisani et al., 2020; Cleverley et al., 2023; Zieba & Bongiovanni, 2022). It was hypothesized that organizations with higher perceived technological maturity would report superior IM quality during the pandemic:

H4: A correlation exists between the organization's technological maturity for remote work and IM quality during COVID-19.

Beyond structural and technological factors, the pandemic also influenced employees' perceptions of IM quality due to widespread uncertainty and significant cultural shifts within organizations (Nakash & Bouhnik, 2023a, 2023b). Psychological distress, coupled with difficulties in accessing reliable information, may have led employees to perceive IM quality as declining even in cases where objective indicators remained stable. Conversely, organizations that successfully adapted their IM infrastructure may have failed to mitigate broader stressors affecting employee perceptions. In light of this complexity, the prevailing hypothesis suggested that most respondents would perceive the pandemic's impact on IM quality negatively, regardless of measurable changes:

H5a: Respondents widely perceived that the global pandemic had a negative effect on IM quality.

However, it was further posited that these subjective perceptions might not align with actual IM quality metrics, as individuals who reported minimal pandemic-related disruptions could still exhibit concerns about IM performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5b: IM quality deteriorated during COVID-19, both among those who felt the pandemic had some influence on IM and among those who believed it did not have any significant impact.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted between May 2020 and March 2021, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the public sector in Israel. It adopted a quantitative-positivist paradigm to achieve objective, accurate, and reliable measurements suitable for statistical analysis. Data were

collected using a structured questionnaire, selected for its cost-effectiveness and ability to represent large populations (Queirós et al., 2017).

Data Collection Instrument and Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate participants' perceptions of IM quality within their organizations, comparing the pre-pandemic period to the situation during the pandemic. It included both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items. The Likert scale utilized a 6-point format ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), with 6 indicating "unknown/irrelevant." Additional questions were included in single- or multiple-choice formats to gather demographic and professional information, such as gender, organizational role, and seniority, thereby enabling analysis of potential relationships between these factors and participants' perceptions of IM quality. Dependent variables measured various aspects of organizational IM related to the creation and consumption of information. IM was categorized as high quality if participants reported that information was fully documented, accessible, quickly and easily retrievable, up-to-date, complete, relevant, and effectively shared among co-workers.

A pilot test was conducted with a control group to validate the questionnaire and ensure its reliability. The instrument underwent a credibility test, yielding Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78, which indicates acceptable internal consistency. This step ensured that the instrument was suitable for capturing accurate and meaningful data. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, and data confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Approval was obtained from the Israeli Civil Service Commission, and participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

Responses were processed and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Standard statistical models were applied to identify patterns and relationships, with specific attention to variations in perceptions of IM quality across HC demographic and professional variables. This rigorous methodological approach provided a robust and comprehensive understanding of IM quality perceptions during a period of significant organizational transformation.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 716 participants completed the questionnaires. Of these, 58.24% (n=417) were professional/administrative employees without managerial responsibilities, while the remaining 41.76% (n=299) were managers at the middle or senior management levels. The majority of respondents (61.73%, n=442) had over 10 years of seniority within the organization, whereas a small minority (2.66%, n=19) had been employed for less than one year. The gender distribution included 338 males (47.21%) and 378 females (52.79%). For a detailed segmentation of the sample, refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study participants

Description		Number of respondents	Percent %	Description		Number of respondents	Percent %
Role	Professional administrative employees	417	58.24%	**Organization Size**	Large	407	56.84%
	Middle management	234	32.68%		Medium	146	20.39%
	Senior management	65	9.08%		Small	163	22.77%
Seniority in the Organization	Up to a year	19	2.66%	**Work Location**	Work from the office	335	46.78%
	Over a year to 3 years	82	11.45%		Fully remote work	64	8.93%
	Over 3 years and up to 5 years	61	8.52%		Hybrid work	317	44.27%

Description		Number of respondents	Percent %	Description		Number of respondents	Percent %
	Over 5 years and up to 10 years	112	15.64%	Age	Until 30	38	5.31%
	Over 10 years	442	61.73%		31-40	167	23.32%
Gender	Male	338	47.21%		41-50	226	31.56%
	Female	378	52.79%		51-60	190	26.54%
					Over 60	95	13.27%
Sample: 716 participants							

RESULTS

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of respondents' organizational roles on IM quality. The results indicated a significant interaction effect, $F(2, 705) = 3.74$, $p = .02$. Follow-up analyses revealed that IM quality improved for intermediate managers [$t(231) = 1.92$, $p = .03$] and senior executives [$t(63) = 1.98$, $p = .03$]. In contrast, a deterioration in IM quality was observed among professional and administrative employees who held non-managerial roles [$t(411) = 2.33$, $p = .02$]. These findings provide partial support for hypothesis *H1* (see Figure 1).

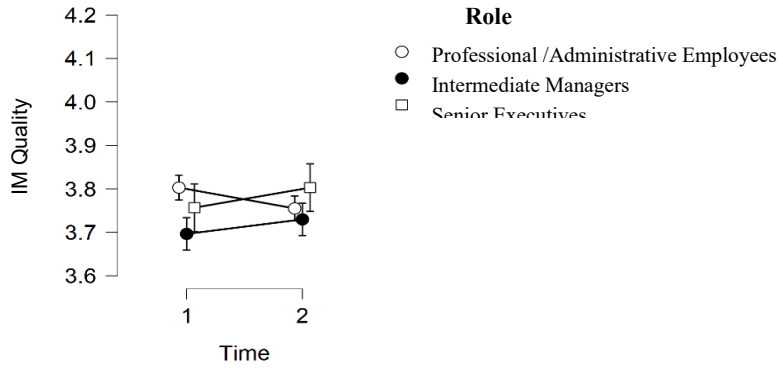

Figure 1. Interaction effects of time (before and during the COVID-19 pandemic) on IM quality relative to employees' roles

Note. Time 1=before COVID-19; Time 2=during COVID-19. Error bars 95% CI.

To further investigate organizational factors influencing IM quality, the role of employee seniority was examined. A repeated measures ANOVA yielded a non-significant interaction effect, $F(1, 706) = 1.23$, p = n.s., indicating that employees' seniority within the organization did not significantly impact IM quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. These results do not support hypothesis *H2*. Similarly, the potential influence of gender on IM quality was assessed. A repeated measures ANOVA revealed a non-significant interaction effect, $F(1, 706) = 1.00$, p = n.s., demonstrating that gender had no discernible impact on IM quality during the pandemic. This finding fully supports hypothesis *H3*.

Beyond individual demographic factors, the role of organizational technological maturity in shaping perceptions of IM quality was assessed. A Spearman rho test indicated a significant positive correlation between these variables, $r = .24$, $p < .001$. Specifically, respondents who perceived their organization's technological infrastructure as mature enough to support continuous and effective remote work were more likely to report improvements in IM quality. These findings provide full support for hypothesis *H4*.

In addition to organizational and technological factors, we examined how respondents perceived the pandemic's overall effect on IM quality. Among the 716 respondents, 44.97% (n = 322) believed that

the COVID-19 pandemic had no significant effect, 41.48% (n = 297) perceived a positive effect, and 13.55% (n = 97) reported a negative effect. These findings refute hypothesis *H5a*. Further analysis highlighted three key components of IM that were central to respondents' perceptions: documentation, accessibility, and the sharing of organizational information assets (Table 2).

Table 2. Perception of the COVID-19 Pandemic's Effect on IM

		Respondents' perceptions of the pandemic's effect on IM		
		No significant effect **(44.97%, n=322)**	***Positive effect*** **(41.48%, n=297)**	***Negative effect*** **(13.55%, n=97)**
IM components	***Documentation***	The information documentation stayed the same; **n=267**	The information is more documented; **n=181**	The information is less documented; **n=45**
	Accessibility	The information accessibility stayed the same; **n=240**	The information is more accessible; **n=149**	The information is less accessible; **n=45**
	Sharing	The information sharing among the organization's employees stayed the same; **n=213**	The information is shared more among the organization's employees; **n=167**	The information is shared less among the organization's employees; **n=71**
	Retrieval Ease	The information retrieval ease stayed the same; **n=145**	It is easier to retrieve the information; **n=65**	It is more difficult to retrieve the information; **n=25**
	Retrieval Speed	The information retrieval speed stayed the same; **n=144**	It is faster to retrieve the information; **n=50**	The information retrieval became slower; **n=29**
	Information Quality	The information quality stayed the same; **n=202**	The information is of better quality; **n=66**	The information is of lower quality; **n=33**

Note. The question permitted multiple selections of IM components regarding the perception of influence or lack thereof. Consequently, the responses do not sum to 100%.

To deepen the analysis, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of respondents' perceptions on IM quality. The results indicated a significant interaction effect, $F(2, 705) = 21.23$, $p < .01$. Follow-up analysis revealed that IM quality improved among respondents who believed that the pandemic had a positive impact [$t(292) = -3.86$, $p < .01$]. Conversely, those who perceived a negative impact reported a deterioration in IM quality [$t(96) = 3.41$, $p < .01$], as did those who believed the pandemic had no significant effect [$t(317) = 3.34$, $p < .01$]. These findings provide partial support for hypothesis H5b (Figure 2).

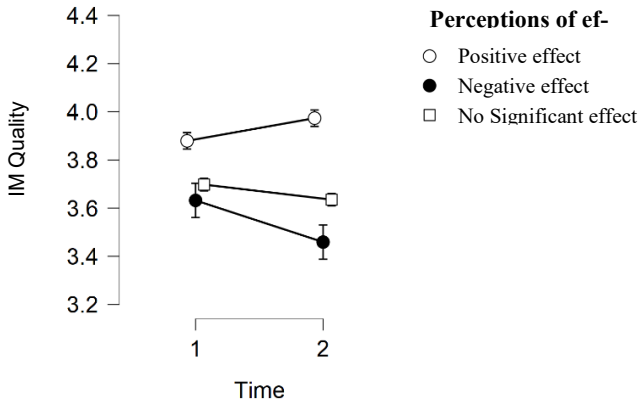

Figure 2. Interaction effects of Time (before and during the COVID-19 pandemic) on IM quality relative to perceptions of the pandemic's impact on IM

Note. Time 1=before COVID-19; Time 2=during COVID-19. Error bars 95% CI.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study illuminate the complex interplay of organizational and demographic factors influencing IM quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to the assumption that IM quality would universally decline in the "new normal," as suggested by Hypothesis ***H1***, the results demonstrate that managerial roles were pivotal in shaping IM outcomes. While non-managerial employees experienced a decline in IM quality, intermediate managers and senior executives reported improvements. This suggests a need for organizations to implement targeted support mechanisms to help non-managerial employees maintain IM efficacy during disruptive events.

The study also challenges Hypothesis ***H2***, which posited that seniority would positively influence perceptions of IM quality. The non-significant interaction effect suggests that seniority alone did not offer a substantial advantage in navigating IM challenges during the crisis. Given that the majority (61.73%) of respondents had over ten years of experience in their organizations, the homogeneity of this group may have influenced these results, highlighting the need to consider factors beyond seniority in managing IM during crises.

In contrast, Hypothesis ***H3*** was fully supported, confirming that gender did not significantly affect IM quality perceptions during the pandemic. This reinforces the importance of focusing on structural and role-related factors rather than demographic characteristics when assessing IM dynamics. Similarly, strong support for Hypothesis ***H4*** underscores the critical role of technological maturity in sustaining IM quality. Organizations with advanced digital infrastructures were better positioned to maintain effective IM processes, reinforcing the importance of investing in digital transformation to enhance organizational resilience.

The mixed results regarding Hypotheses ***H5a*** and ***H5b*** reveal the nuanced ways in which employees perceived the pandemic's impact on IM quality. While a considerable portion of respondents did not perceive a significant change, the variation in responses – from positive to negative perceptions – indicates that subjective experiences played a crucial role in shaping IM outcomes. Employees who viewed the pandemic's impact negatively or neutrally reported declines in IM quality, while those with a positive outlook reported improvements. This underscores the need for a holistic approach to assessing IM quality, one that integrates both objective metrics and employees' subjective experiences.

Overall, these findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of IM quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. While managerial roles and technological maturity were significant determinants, seniority and gender were less influential. The variability in employees' perceptions of the pandemic's impact highlights the need to incorporate both quantitative data and qualitative insights to develop comprehensive strategies for IM resilience. Future research should explore these dynamics further to enhance organizational adaptability in times of crisis.

From a practical standpoint, organizations should prioritize enhancing their technological infrastructure and providing tailored support to different employee groups, particularly non-managerial staff. Investments in artificial intelligence (AI)-powered workflow automation, training programs on digital literacy, and enhancing employees' familiarity with AI tools will foster adaptive IM practices and mitigate the adverse effects of disruptions. Additionally, integrating AI into decision-making and resource allocation can help managers provide more targeted and effective support to their teams.

This study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response biases, and the cross-sectional nature of the survey limits causal inferences. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine how IM quality evolves over time, particularly in hybrid work environments, and explore additional contextual factors, such as organizational culture and leadership styles, that may mediate the impact of crises on IM processes. Conducting qualitative interviews could also provide richer insights into employees' experiences and further illuminate the mechanisms shaping IM quality in disruptive contexts. Expanding the research to include diverse industries and

international settings would enhance the generalizability of these findings and offer a broader perspective on IM dynamics during crises.

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