

# **The effects of the Pandemic on Nayatel Pvt Ltd**



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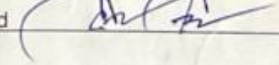
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ISP (Internet Service Provider) sector of Pakistan is growing rapidly. With the rising population of our country, the demand for Internet is also growing. This sector was doing reasonable well until the pandemic hit & some issues arose. It would also not be wrong to say that while all other sectors faced a decline in growth, this particular segment has seen some growth. This unexpected demand was seen mainly due to work from home. Since majority of the companies adopted this policy, consumers demanded better Internet connections.

Despite this increase in demand the pandemic did effect the company's supply chain negatively. There were seen many delays in shipments. Alongside this, delays in installations were also a major problem as contactless installations were not an option. Most importantly as work from home was not possible for everyone, we saw many people being laid off as well. Side by side employees concerns increased regarding job security as well. The HR personals faced greater issues in dealing with them.

In this study we will have a detail look on all the problems which were faced by the organization during pandemic, the strategies they adopted to cope up with these issues & some of the loopholes which still exist. Lastly we have also given some recommendations at the end which we think could bring improvement towards the organization & if adopted could bring efficiency & effectiveness.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The effective management of employees is of great importance in the Telecom sector. The major reason behind this is because of the widely available options the employees have today. The workforce is considered as the backbone of each company in the telecom sector. This is because they belong to the service sector & the organizations are greatly dependent on their employees in order to be the most effective & efficient. Over the years we can see that this sector has been on a boom. For the very reason, employee retention has been of great concern for organizations. Especially during this pandemic, when many people have been laid off by their organizations, finding the best fit for your company has been a difficult task for the HR personals.

It would not be wrong to state here that among the very few sectors, telecom sector has been the one which did not take the hit from this pandemic. Rather this sector globally performed well during COVID-19 & is still performing well. One of the major reason behind this has been an increase in the data & voice traffic. Where work from home has helped organizations in cutting down their costs, it has caused a huge increase in demand for data/internet. As per reports, the Internet Service Provider's (ISP) sector has seen the usage surged by around 77% (Khurshid Ahmed, 2021).

The telecom sector in Pakistan is largely controlled by a few major giants. Some of the latest stats as per the *Pakistan Telecommunication Authority* for the telecom operators can be seen in Fig 3 regarding the market share:

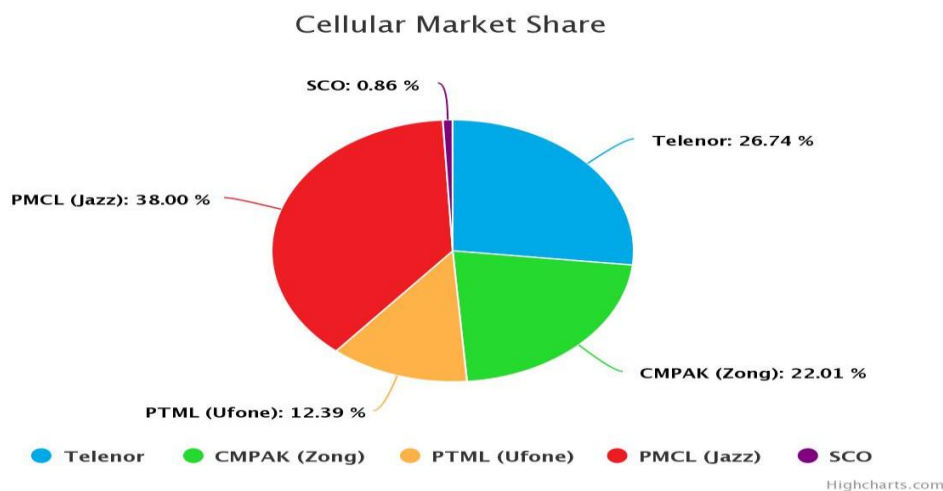


Fig 3 ~ As per July'21 PTA

### 1.1 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to identify the major issues faced by the organization and then suggest improvements to address these challenges. The study is focusing on Nayatel Pvt Ltd.

The main goal behind this study is to see the challenges that Nayatel faced during Covid-19. We will have a look at how operations were carried out by different departments of the company before the pandemic hit, how things changed during Covid & what measures the company took by the challenges they faced.

### 1.2 Structure of study

This project has five basic components. The **introductory** part deals with preliminary information about the project. The second part is regarding the **literature** review to see what the literature suggests regarding the pandemic & how organizations around the globe have dealt with this situation. Moving ahead, the **findings** part describes the issues faced during the pandemic by this company. Since Interviews were conducted to gather the data & a mixed approach was used for data analysis, a detail look would be taken in the findings section. We then proceed for the **analysis** part keeping in mind what the previous research has also suggested. The last part, **conclusion & recommendation** as the name suggests, deals with the outcome of the project & recommendations put forth from the results. As a result of this, we will be able to understand & develop outcomes which could benefit firm's post-covid.

### 1.3 Background of the company

Nayatel Pvt Ltd is a private company owned by three friends from Islamabad namely; Wahaj Siraj (CEO), Aqeel Khurshid (CTO) & Saad Saleem (COO). The company started its operations back in the year 2002. Initially at that time the Sister company of Nayatel, Micronet Broad Band provided services to the customers in Rawalpindi & Islamabad only. The company used PTCL's infrastructure & lines to provide internet services to the users of the twin cities.

In 2006, however things started to change. For the first time in Pakistan Nayatel Pvt Ltd started its operations in Rawalpindi & Islamabad. It was the first company in Pakistan providing Fiber to the home/Fiber to the user (FTTH/FTTU) services. Currently the company has started to expand

nationwide by expanding its services in Faisalabad & Peshawar. The core services of Nayatel are as follows:

- Internet
- Cable TV
- Telephone

Other than this, the company is also providing around 30 Value Added services. With the state of the art network, highly motivated workforce, ethical & fair business practices being adopted along with innovative services, the company is the most trusted & reliable telecom service provider in the four major cities of Pakistan. Currently the company employees around 1000+ employees.

In any organization, especially the telecom industry where each company fights to the neck for skill and competence worthy people, HR plays a pivotal role in workforce development and retention. Nayatel's HR has always had a moto of letting people work their way in an environment that is conducive to growth and learning. Ever since Nayatel's operations begin, the company has had a 90% retention rate and the employee turnover has been bare minimal. The HR policies have been impactful due to the fringe benefits and policies that are employee centric. The bonuses and piece rate structure has proved to be beneficial for the company and its growth overall. Nayatel has always believed in all its stakeholders growing and advantaging together. The hierarchy of department is such that a total of 15 people at various levels are split to manage the operations let by the Vice president HR.

The second most important department in the company is of supply chain. Since it is a telecom company, the purchasing of equipment and hardware is the most important element of managing day to day tasks. During the unprecedented times of COVID, the most critical part was played by the supply chain department. The department employees a total of 20 people managing supply chain nationwide.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we will have an in-depth look at the Pandemic, the Telecom sector of Pakistan & how Covid-19 has affected this sector locally & globally.

### 2.1 The Pandemic – COVID 19

In the early 2009 (Morens, 2009), the H1N1 influenza virus caused a sudden emergence & rapid global spread resulting in confusion regarding the word “pandemic” & how to evaluate if a pandemic has occurred or not. Any assumption that the term pandemic had an agreed-upon meaning was quickly undermined by debates and discussions about the term in the popular media and in scientific publications (Cohen, 2009; Enserink, 2009; Altman, 2009). Uses of the term by official health agencies, scientists, and the media often seemed to be at odds. For instance, some claimed that the level of explosive transmissibility was enough to be declared as a pandemic whereas others argue that the severity of the infection needs to be considered as well (Cohen, 2009; Enserink, 2009; Altman, 2009).

It would not be wrong to state that COVID-19 has been the latest threat to the global health. The disease had its roots from Wuhan, China where the first case popped up in December 2019 (WHO, 2020). In Pakistan however, the first case was reported on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020. Since then it has been expanding rapidly. However the government did take important measures to control the widespread. Sindh & Punjab were the ones which took the major blow.

As per the stats of national centre for disease control it is reported that Sindh was hit the most due to Covid. The confirmed tested cases were around 4 lac and the recoveries made above 3 and a half lac. Reported deaths were around 5 thousand. Sindh had maximum surges of covid due to lack of medical facilities and underdeveloped rural areas.

The second province hit hard was Punjab. Punjab had almost the same numbers as Sindh but slightly better. The total reported cases was around 4 lac and recovered around 3 lac. KPK, Islamabad, AJK and Baluchistan had the covid positivity as per the said order while Gilgit Baltistan reported the least number of cases. This was because Gilgit Baltistan is a low population area.

The major reason considered behind this spread is the increased influx of travelers coming into Pakistan, mainly from China & Iran. However due to the rising cases in the country, the

government took drastic measures & halted trade & transportation with Iran. International flights were also cancelled & lockdown was also imposed several times. However lockdown cannot be considered as a permanent solution to stop the virus. This is because it would in turn cause death due to hunger as the majority of population in Pakistan is dependent on daily wages. Thus to cope up with this, it was decided to impose smart lockdown rather than complete lockdown & people were also asked to avoid mass gatherings (Abid, K., Bari, Y. A., Younas, M., Tahir Javaid, S., & Imran, A. 2020).

Being a welfare state, COVID-19 Relief Fund was also established by the government in order to receive donations during this time of crisis. Side by side, social network help lines were also launched in different local languages in order to facilitate the nation. The provinces on the other hand established drive through testing services, in which Sindh was the first one to come up with this particular solution. Besides this, Isolation & Quarantine facilities were also widely distributed amongst the different provinces. Isolation wards are basically the ones where the ill/infected persons are separated from others whereas Quarantine facilities are the ones where those people are separated who were exposed to COVID-19 & thus are kept so that they can be monitored (Waris, A., Atta, U. K., Ali, M., Asmat, A., & Baset, A. J. N. M. 2020).

From the data available & when comparisons are made with the rest of the world, the rate of transmission of COVID-19 has been very less for Pakistan. Some of the identified reasons for this low transmission are listed as below:

- Humid conditions
- Hot weather
- Tropical conditions
- Effective & efficient pre-cautionary measures taken by the government
- Vaccinations

However uncertainty still exists about the near future regarding COVID. This is because majority of Pakistan belongs to the rural areas as compared to the urban cities. Hence the damage it could bring to those areas is far beyond imagination. Thus it would not be wrong to conclude with the fact that further studies & government efforts would be required to avoid the widespread of this deadly virus (Ilyas, 2020).

## 2.2 The Telecom & ISP sector of Pakistan

During the last decade, there has been a massive growth in the telecom sector globally. This has primarily been due to an increase in the usage of smart phones alongside the rapid technological advancements. Similarly the telecom sector of Pakistan has also grown a lot. The major reasons for this are the favorable policies by the government, healthy competition & also tax reliefs. Besides this, when PTCL was de-regulated & privatized a rapid growth was seen in the form of expansion which was related to the network coverage & subscriber base. The sector further flourished when it got investments from telecom giants like Orascom, Etisalat, Telenor & even China mobile (Imtiaz, 2015).

According to *Khurshid Ahmed* (2021), during this pandemic the telecom sector of Pakistan has contributed around 128% to the economy. The broadband subscriptions also showed a growth of 17% whereas the 4g subscriptions showed an exponential increase of 60%. “By & large, the sector withstood the impact of COVID-19 & showed sustainable revenues of Rs.537.2 billion in FY2020 as compared to Rs.550.4 billion in FY2019” *the PTA report stated*.

Besides the telecom sector, Digicom was amongst the pioneers of the Internet Service Providers (ISP). They launched the first on-line Internet service in Karachi in the year 1995. It was soon after this that PakNet data operating under PTCL the very next year started their operations as well. Back then, PakNet was connected to the global internet with only 512Kbps. 2 years after PakNet, 9 ISP’s further entered the market & started their operations in the 5 cities of Pakistan (Wolcott, 2000). According to *Fahad Saleem* (2021) Internet has become a necessity all around the globe & so even in Pakistan. He further mentions that the poor performance of these ISP’s are due to the following reasons:

- Regulatory issues
- Undersea fiber optic technology lapses
- Lack of government support

As per the *Pakistan Regulatory Authority*, the total number of internet users in the country have crossed 30 million. Out of this 30million, the number of broadband users have increased to 3million. Despite the fact that 3G/4G has brought in wonders of the internet to Pakistan, Broadband Internet is still given preference. Some of the major reasons for this is the stable speed along with unlimited volumes the users get (Aadil Shadman, 2017).

However, *Tayyab Ali* (2019) was of the view that all the high speed Internet services are for the urban areas. If you are in a rural area this is not the case. In these areas the only option available is either of VSAT Satellite Broadband or Viasat. *Amir Manzoor* (2013) was also of the same view & so claimed that Pakistan needs to work on the digital divide that exists in the country. According to *Mansell* (1998) any country that aims to fully exploit the potential of IT needs to have the available infrastructure along with the capacity to create & administer an enabling environment. Hence in the case of Pakistan, they have to work on both & so this would be a challenge for the policy makers in the short as well as long run.

According to *Melanie Mingas* (2021), Facebook & Nayatel Pvt Ltd have formed up a partnership to deploy fibre networks which in turn would serve as the backbone for 4G/5G mobile as well as fixed broadband Internet services. As a result of this partnership, rural areas too would benefit with this expansion. The CEO of Nayatel, *Wahaj Siraj* stated “This collaboration will accelerate the government’s vision of digital Pakistan by increasing productivity for small and medium businesses, creating new job opportunities and online learning for the youth. The partnership demonstrates confidence from a leading global brand like Facebook in Pakistan’s tech and entrepreneurial potential and we sincerely hope that the government will implement fast track reforms with predictable regulations and policies to attract more foreign investors in the tech sector”.

### 2.3 The effects of the Pandemic on the Telecom Sector

The behavioral patterns of billions of people have been affected due to COVID-19. Due to these changes the use of the Internet has also changed as compared to the past. An increase in demand has been seen in terms of the usage of the Internet since work from home, online education & other similar activities have become the need of the hour. Due to this the ISP’s have also seen changes in the network traffic demand (*Shinan Liu*, 2021). As per the *Telecom Industry Roundup 2020* 5G network connections were also adversely affected due to COVID-19. This is because many countries restricted trade & so closed their borders due to which Mobile operators had to delay the planned 5G launches. The entire 5G ecosystem was affected by supply chain & logistics disruptions. As per *KMPG UK* (2020) Europe saw a massive spike in the Internet traffic when isolation was at its peak. They claim that it went as high as 70% in those initial 2-3 weeks. As a

result of this, companies including Facebook, YouTube had to lower the qualities of their videos so that less strain could be there on the network (Beech, 2020).

According to *Hennessy, Lapple & Moran (2016)*, rural areas suffered the most during this pandemic due to lack of Internet infrastructure in these areas. Besides this, cybersecurity has been another major concern for organizations as employees have started to work from home globally (*Tom Leighton, 2020*). The core infrastructure of the Internet has also raised alarms across the globe due to the heavy Internet traffic (*Martin McKeay, 2020*).

The Telecom sector of Pakistan has stepped up to give relief to the people during this pandemic. Not only has Easypaisa agreed to disburse funds of Rs.1.5billion but Jazz has also pledged Rs.1.2billion. Jazz employees also agreed to voluntarily contribute their salaries for up to 3 days for the COVID-19 relief (*Dawn News, 2020*). The Minister for Zakat & Ushr Punjab, *Shoukat Ali Laleka* added “*Digital banking technology will allow us to disburse these funds in a hassle-free and safe manner*”. The revenue of the Telecom sector of Pakistan took a turn during this pandemic as the companies saw a dip in revenue of Voice traffic but side by side saw an increase in the Data usage (*Khurram Hussain, 2020*). This was further supported by the statement given by *CEO Jazz Aamir Ibrahim* “We are seeing a 10 per cent reduction in voice traffic but at the same time there is a 15% increase in Internet traffic”.

Besides this, the overall activities of organizations have been greatly affected by the pandemic. As a result of this, the operations of Human resource department have become a great challenge as well (Lewis, 2020). They now have to deal with huge amounts of paperwork for their colleagues who are being laid off & side by side motivate the existing ones who are working remotely so as to sustain the emotional connection (Hassan, 2021). As per *Dirani (2020)*, the relationship between the employees & organizational leaders need to be tight during this time. He feels that the employees should be kept updated & informed about the current state of the business so that uncertainty does not rise. According to *Eisenberger (2002)*, the support from supervisors allow leaders to increase the level of employee retention. As a result of this they can positively affect the performance of the organization both pre & post crisis situation.

*Mohan Singh (2020)* was of the view that the HR demonstrated new attributes during this pandemic. These were agility, creativity & flexibility. He was also of the view that this pandemic has resulted in more emphasis towards the human connect aspect of the HR function. Many of the

traditional HR practices are also getting affected. For instance recruitment now would focus more towards tech-savvy talent, onboarding new hires have started to be done more digitally & trainings have also started to be on online-only mode.

According to *Chris Bornstein (2020)*, telecom sector needs to evolve their processes post COVID-19. He feels that the higher demands of the consumers need to be met effectively & efficiently by the telco's. This in turn has to be done by making adjustments to their supply chain as well. The supply chain of the telecom sector has been heavily disrupted due to COVID. This is because majority of the procurement was being done from China. These disruptions in the supply chain have resulted in extended deadlines to the customers thus impacting the serviceability as well as the overall revenues (Chris, 2020). According to the *International Labour Organization (2020)* what was initially considered to be the supply side constraints have turned into demand side issues due to the global lockdown. Due to this all tiers of the supply chain have been adversely affected; both socially & economically.

*Mattias Hedwall (2020)* believes that in the long run companies would be required to carry out a more holistic approach due to which they would require to make drastic changes like moving the supply chains to other countries. According to *Zhitao (2020)* COVID-19 has had a bull whip effect on the supply chain. This is because as all businesses are interconnected via the global supply chain, the actions of the downstream actors adversely affect the actions of the upstream actors. One of the possible strategies to revamp the supply chain for the future would be to shorten the supply chains & thus staying close to the consumers. Though it would not be wrong to say that the supply chains need to be more resilient than ever now (Olga Solleder, 2020).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Type of study

The study was conducted on Nayatel Pvt Ltd which is an Internet Service Provider. The findings would help us identify the potential solutions to the issues faced during the pandemic & how these things could be avoided in the future. The study I have conducted has a *mixed approach*. It is a mixture of both *quantitative & qualitative* analysis. A detail study was carried out on Nayatel Pvt Ltd & so the information gathered was via *Interviews*. Moreover to validate the data, the using of existing literature was also utilized.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The data was collected via interviews from the employees who were currently working at Nayatel.

#### 3.2.1 Interviews

Amongst the many techniques for gathering data, Interviews are one of them. Interviews are considered as a main source when it comes to exploratory & descriptive studies. Interviews further can be either unstructured or structured. Unstructured interviews are the ones where the participant can talk about whatever they want & so there is no particular pattern. On the other hand, structured interviews are the ones where the participant is limited to answer the questions which are asked from them (Nick, 2009).

In the study conducted, structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The questions asked however were open ended so that more information could be gathered & also because the participant this way could share their point of view as well. As we know that the majority of companies have adopted remote working due to the pandemic therefore not all Interviews could be conducted on premises. The interviews of the senior officials however were conducted on premises whereas the interviews of middle management & junior staff were conducted remotely via internet. In qualitative research, usually researches study fewer people so that they can dig in more deeply into those individuals & thus generate a subjective understanding (Sarah, 2012). Our interviews were conducted around 30 individuals.

The questions covered in the questionnaire were based on themes set for analysis. **Moreover the questionnaire was divided in 2 sections.** One covered the *HR Department* whereas the other part covered the *Supply Chain & Operations Department*. The first theme covered paradigm shift which included elements regarding the work from home policies and changing working styles. Because covid was quite unprecedented, the HR policies drafted may have had an adverse impact on employee morale too, to counter the extent the questions also revolved around the unhealthy HR practices such as no increments, lack of trainings and too much load on existing workforce. Employee productivity was also covered which included demotivation, layoffs and salary issues. Another theme discussed was supply chain constraints. It included delay in shipments, hardware shortages, increase in installation lead time etc.

CODES	THEMES
Increase in Work from home & remote working	Paradigm Shift
New working styles introduced	
New policies & procedures	
No pay raise	Unhealthy HR Practices
No Trainings	
Recruitment problems	
Demotivation among workforce	Decrease in Employee Productivity
Layoffs	
Salary issues	
Delay in shipments	Supply Chain Constraints
Hardware shortages	
Increase in installation lead time	

COVID-19 has had a drastic impact on organizations around the globe. Similarly Nayatel had to face the music as well. Though the demand for the products being sold by the company was sky-high, the company had to simultaneously deal with the problems. Not only did they face issues internally, but also the issues at suppliers end had consequences on Nayatel’s operations.



The interviews conducted were of people from several age groups ranging in between 35-60 & different levels of experience i.e. from junior to top management. The questions asked in the interview were mainly related to the way the company operated before the pandemic, the challenges that they faced during the pandemic, what measures the organization took to cope up with the issues & so on. An important thing to note here is that the questions asked in the interview were open ended. This was done so that the individuals could share their own experiences & are not limited to choices only.

Before the interviews were conducted, each individual had to sign the consent form after which the interviews began. Each interview lasted for approximately thirty minutes.

### 3.2.2 Interviewee Selection

Before conducting the interviews, it is very much important for us to have the right people in front of us. This is because if we do not have the right people, then the research conducted would be of little benefit to us. Besides this, the experience of the people being interviewed also matters a lot. This is because freshly recruited people would have little or no knowledge regarding the issues & challenges being faced. Another important factor to be considered before interviewing people is that they should be willing to share the information regarding the company. Many people are reluctant to do so & so if we have those people on-board, we would be in trouble.

## 3.3 Interviewee Stats

### 3.3.1 Population

The total people interviewed for this project were 30. 70% were from the middle management that included managers and senior managers, 20% were junior executives, and 10% were top management. One of the major reason behind the selection of people from different managerial experience was to see how they had to respond differently & the issues & challenges each of them faced & in turn dealt with it at their own level. Another reason for selecting people from top to bottom was to see the difference in the opinions as well.

### 3.3.2 Age & Job title

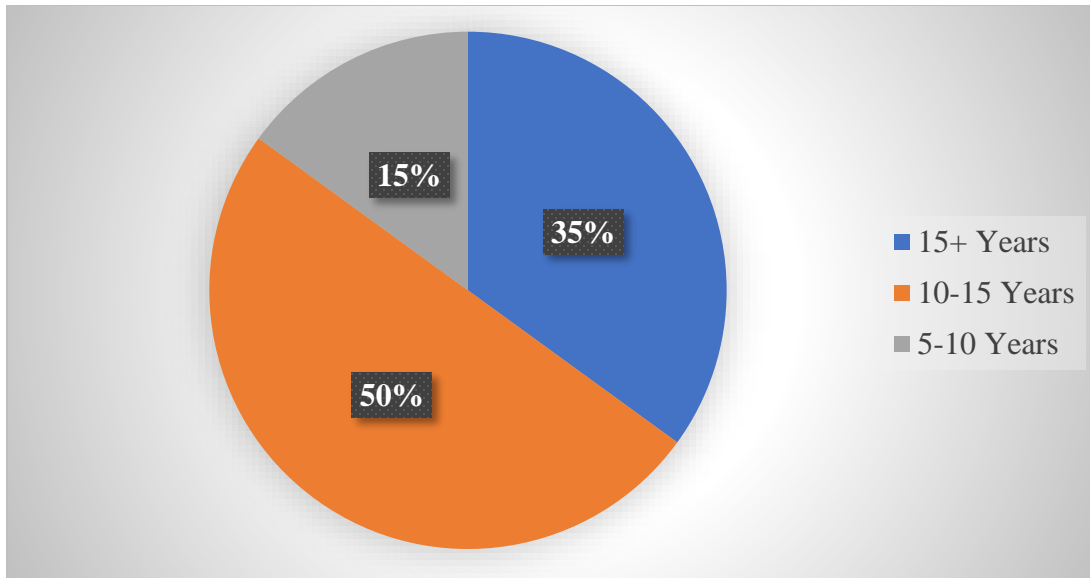
As mentioned above, the people interviewed were from different hierarchical levels from within the company. As a result of this, they were also from different age groups. The details of the age & job title of the individuals interviewed can be seen in the below given table:

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Designation</i>
1	55	Vice President Human Resource
1	52	Vice President SCM
1	43	Senior Manager Recruitment
1	38	Manager Organizational Development
1	39	Senior Manager Procurement
5	35-40	Manager Sales & Marketing
2	38-40	Deputy Manager Business Development
4	28-31	HR Executive
4	25-27	Assistant Support Executive HR
10	30-45	Corporate Support Executive SCM

*Table 1~Age & Designation*

### 3.3.3 Experience Level

The average experience of the people interviewed was around 15 years. The levels of experience held by people in different experience categories can be seen in the below figure:



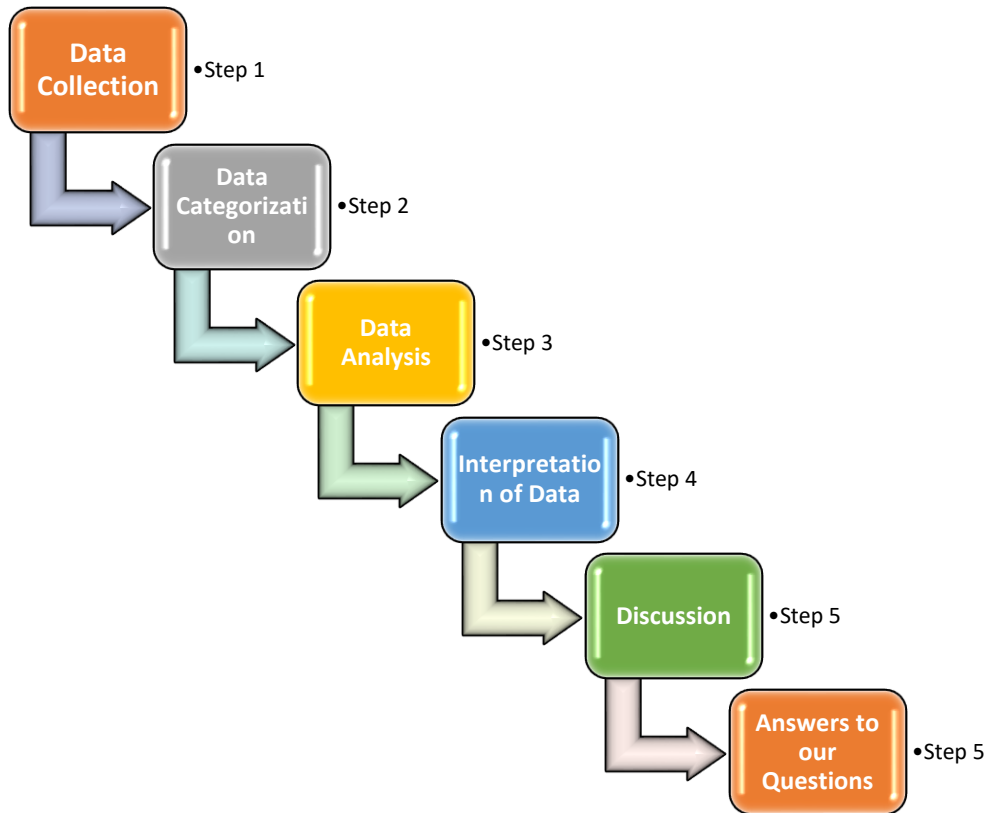
*Fig 6 ~ Experience of participants interviewed*

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis & interpretation of the data has been done by carrying out the steps shown in Figure 7 on the following page.

After the data was collected through interviews, the next step was to proceed for its analysis. Some preliminary steps were also taken before we could proceed further. This was done to see if the data gathered was sufficient for our analysis or not. To proceed further, data edition & categorization was done to give it a shape. Once this was done, the use of thematic analysis & ABC analysis was used to categorize the data.

According to *Boyatzis, 1998* – thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. This technique is used to analyze classifications & so in turn present themes (patterns) which then relate to the data. Through interpretations, the data is illustrated in great detail & so also deals with diverse subjects. On the other hand when we talk about ABC analysis, it basically is based on the fact that managerial items & efforts are scarce & limited & some of the items in inventory are more important while others are less important. It would not be wrong to say that the inventory in any organization consists of many different items which vary not only in price but also in the usage rate, size as well as in lead time. Hence its not possible to have all these items in stock 24/7 or pay equal attention to all.



*Figure 7 ~ Procedure for Data Analysis*

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 THE HRM practices at Nayatel

Around 12 questions were asked to have an understanding of the HR practices at Nayatel & how the company acted during the pandemic. The concerns of the employees can hence be clearly seen. It seemed as everything that could be done to improve the conditions was being done but still nothing seemed to work.

#### 4.1.1 Workforce management during COVID-19

Due to the lockdown imposed things were not easy at all. All of a sudden the whole scenario had changed & the way the company operated was turned upside down. Work from home policy had to be adopted & there was no way to keep a check on the attendance of employees because biometric attendance was out of option. Similarly as attendance could not be ensured, the leave deductions/salary deductions could also not be done as well because there was no way to keep a track of the timings. As per our Participants from the Sales department, stated that Employee productivity at start was very low. All the employees opted for the work from home policy & most of them had their own working ours. Since the HR department had not seen anything like this ever before, they too were not ready for it. They had to ensure that the top management & leadership including all the employees get through this transition of work from home smoothly & avoid any sort of disruptions during the process.

Moreover, the HR policies regarding COVID-19 were also not employee friendly. This is because if any employee got COVID, they had to manage all the expenses themselves. They were not covered in the health benefits they already had. Both the senior management & the junior executives from the HR departments stated the same thing that employees were not at all happy on this & were highly stressed as well due to the layoffs which were happening simultaneously. The junior staff claimed that this might not be a big issue for the top management, but for the field workers, the lower staff, guards etc. this was a major concern because already salaries were not given on time & now they had to manage the COVID tests & medicines all by themselves. There was too much of mental stress to deal with for them. It was due to these health policies which the company was adopting during COVID-19 – the employees for the first time in companies history went on strike for 3 consecutive days.

#### 4.1.2 Layoffs & the Cost cutting

One of the major concerns during the pandemic which the HR department had to deal with was cost cutting. This is because like every other company, Nayatel too was taking a hit. The management had given instructions for layoffs & asked the HR department to go for cost cutting. This was not an easy task for the department as this would result in more uncertainty. The employees were already concerned regarding their job security & were demotivated. As per HR executives *“Laying off your employees is never an easy task. It always results in demotivation among other employees”*. This is exactly what happened when some of the employees were laid off. The demotivation level drastically increased, employees questioned more about their job security & many were seen applying for other jobs & even taking on new opportunities. As a result of all this, the productivity of the employees was also adversely affected. Since work from home was already applicable during the lockdown, the HR department faced more issues on how to address the concerns of the employees.

Simultaneously for the cost cutting, the HR department took temporary measures. One of the major & most drastic step they took was when they advised the Finance department to hold onto the salaries of the employees & give them only partial salaries. Besides this, they started to redistribute work internally in order to avoid new hiring against those laid off. As a result of this the productivity decreased & employees were burdened with more work. Hence more work with less workers resulted in overtime. However this time the employees were not paid for the access hours that they worked. Thus again causing problems.

#### 4.1.3 Low employee morale

The employee morale was at its lowest since COVID-19 hit. The employees were not only demotivated but also had major concerns regarding the job security. As per the HR executives *“Boosting the morale of the employees seemed impossible since there was little interaction with them as work from home was adopted. Besides this, with all else going – things weren’t as easy as they seemed with the online models”*.

The top management & the senior managers also had the idea that most of the employees were looking for other jobs since the job market of Islamabad is very small. Due to this the productivity of the employees was also very poor. Most of the time, the employees used to log in to the system & would then just disappear. This happened in many online meetings & trainings as well. However

not much could be done against this. This is because everyone knew that job security was a concern. Furthermore, customer support which was the backbone of the company was also being affected badly & the thing which hurt the company the most was that little could be done to improve this & HR department could do little about it.

Not only this but many of the senior employees aging between 45-55 were also seen in trouble while coping up with the online models. Since they weren't as tech savvy as the younger employees:

- a) They felt embarrassed of asking for technical support all the time
- b) Online models weren't their cup of tea
- c) Demotivation was there amongst them as well

The HR department was under constant pressure from the board of directors & the top management to keep up with the morale of the employees & improve it. However they could do very little to improve or even sustain it. The online models had already made things tougher for the HR department & as a result → for some of the training sessions they held didn't had any positive outcomes. As per the Manger Organizational Development, *"No matter what you did, nothing at the time seemed right"*. For the very reason it was seen that even the employees working in the HR department had low morale.

#### 4.1.4 Recruitment concerns

During this pandemic, recruitment was also amongst the top concerns of the HR department at Nayatel. Where people were being laid off, many were leaving voluntarily as well as they got opportunities elsewhere. As a result of this – the company was having a shortfall of employees, especially in the installation department. Due to this they had to onboard new employees. This was not an easy task. One of the major reason for this was because physical interviews could not be conducted as COVID-19 was already on its peak. In normal times, the hiring process at Nayatel was a lengthy one & consisted of around 3 different rounds of interviews alongside psychological & personality assessment tests. But during this phase they could not carry out all the stages nor could they conduct the other tests. Thus what the HR department did was that they only had 2 rounds of interviews after which they would hire the person.

The Manager Recruitment stated that Employees hired during the pandemic were neither given an orientation session nor did they get a chance to have any trainings. Thus they were directly sent on-field to carry out the given tasks. The management had serious concerns against these new hires but it was very little that they could do. Besides this, the HR department also did not have any other option available to them.

Another major concern that the HR had to deal with the new hires was that they hired each employee on different terms. For the first time in the company's history, employees were also hired on contractual basis. Upon research it was found that this was done as the company was adopting a cost cutting model. Though this lead to further uncertainty amongst new employee as well, but again it was very little that they could do during this time. According to Manager OD *“When things would get back to normal, the company would be required to revamp the contracts of those hired during the pandemic. This is because only then could they regain their loyalty & once again develop the level of trust between each other. This would also help in reducing the negative atmosphere which is currently surrounding the organization”*.

## 4.2 A rollercoaster of emotions at SCM

As per the respondents working at Nayatel, the following were the major issues which came up & badly affected the supply chain of the company:

### 4.2.1 Demand for an Increase in Internet Connections

During the pandemic, there was seen an immense increase in demand for the Internet connections. Where once the company was handling around 800-900 installations per month, they now had increased to 1300+ new installations per month. The major reason for this increase in unexpected demand was the adoption of work from home policy from almost all the organizations. As a result of this, the load of new installations increased because the company had reduced the number of team members to 3 from 7. Not only this, but the backlog also increased. As a result of this → the lead time increased which further resulted in more annoyed customers than before. This is because as per the Sales & Marketing heads when interviewed stated that no matter what happens, their department has to facilitate the customers & on board them no matter what the circumstances are. Thus we can see that instructions to them were clear. For the very reason we can see that the



company was making new sales record during the pandemic when other companies were on the verge for closure. This increase in new connections caused issues at the end of the supply chain department since they were not equipped to handle this. Hence we can see that work force management was another major concern the company had to deal with.

#### 4.2.2 The shortfall of ONT's

Due to delays in shipment, there was seen a shortage in the ONT devices, which is the main hardware required in installation. The major reason behind this again was COVID-19 which led to an unexpected high demand. This was due to the lockdown & increase in work from home policy which was adopted by almost every company. Also the imports from china have been stopped & so the company is yet again facing another shortfall. The supply chain executives claimed that *“No one had predicted this pandemic. If we do not find an alternate to the imported Huawei devices, the company would be in BIG trouble”*. This shortfall was also linked to the other concern already addressed above. Since all the things at SCM were inter-linked – an issue at one end raised alarms on the other end. Besides this, since no timelines were communicated to the workers as to when shipments would arrive, there was uncertainty as well. Everyone was clueless. Hence resulting in a trickle-down effect.

#### 4.2.3 Demands for HD Boxes went sky high

Besides this, there was seen an un-expected demand for the HD Boxes. As a result they went into shortage & so left many customers unattended. When research was conducted it was found out that such demand was never anticipated. It was an abnormal demand that the company saw for the first time. This is because what they usually were practicing since the very start was that they had fixed a percentage of sales for their HD boxes each month (for new customers) & a small percentage for existing customers. However since people were now working from home & started to watch more tv, Netflix, YouTube etc. the demand increased massively. The Vice President responded by saying *“If we do not respond to the requests initiated by our customers for the installations of these boxes, it is very much likely that they would shift to other alternatives available in the market”*.

#### 4.2.4 One solution leads to another problem

It was not the end of problems here for Nayatel as the pandemic delayed the shipment of their routers/access points as well. This is an optional hardware which they sell from a portfolio of other products. The company suddenly saw a shortfall in Routers because of high demand coming from clients. The reason for this was again the Corona Virus which was never in the wildest of imaginations anyone could have predicted. As a result, they now had to purchase the routers from local market to meet the unexpected demand. However it cost Nayatel more as compared to the usual price since these were not purchased from their vendors. The major reason being the total unexpected increase in demand for routers was because it had 1 major important role rather than just boosting the signals. In case a customer needs another internet connection in the same premises, he can get the router from them & get the new package configured on it rather than getting the ONT again which is comparatively an expensive solution. Thus due to the lockdown implemented by the govt, the lead time for new installations increased drastically. This was because of the shortage of staff. Hence employees in the call center started to pitch this new solution to clients which was not at all time consuming. Thus this led to an unexpected super high demand for these routers. Manager Procurement was seen concerned on this issue. He said that the CEO has said that we can take this blow of higher costs of procuring the routers locally for only six months. After that the shipment issues needs to be resolved or else we cannot procure at high costs as this blow is damaging the company a lot due to the higher costs”.

#### 4.2.5 Nayatel response time

70% of the interviewee’s claimed that there was little that the company could have done to deal with these issues. This is because orders for equipment were already booked. The shipments could not be moved & dispatched to our country due to trade restrictions. Besides this, as for new installations again the number of employees working together in one team could not be increased due to COVID. Social distancing also had to be obeyed & simultaneously new connections needed to be installed as well. From the installation department, many interviewees said that when one employee got symptoms of COVID the whole team had to be quarantined & initially when lockdown was imposed Wahaj Siraj did not force any employee to come, even from Installations department. As a result the number of employees & teams working in the Installation department dropped gradually.

Besides this, 30% of interviewee's claimed that they should have had good terms with local vendors as well & got the equipment from local vendors at better prices. Despite procuring them locally & getting the issue resolved temporarily, they could have signed a long term deed with them to avoid these issues.

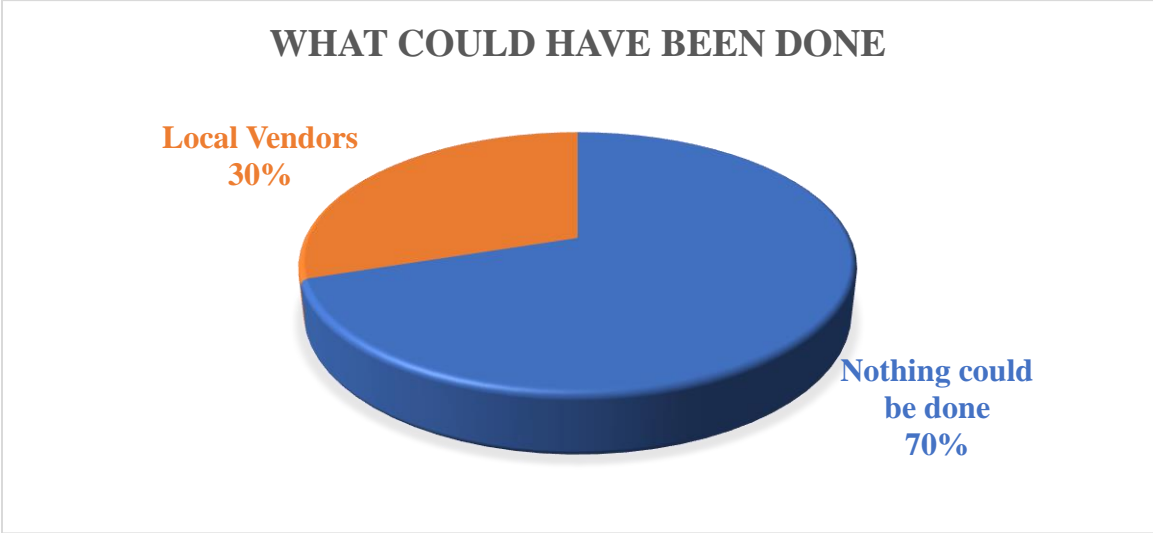


Fig 8 ~ What could be done

## 5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

During the unprecedented times of covid, most of the companies were unable to meet their basic cost because of which majority organizations in Pakistan were shut down. Very few companies were able to bare the pressures of covid. Because Nayatel is an internet service provider, its demand raised causing an increase in business which helped the company survive. Even though Nayatel had record sales over these times but because no one including Nayatel was not prepared of COVID and ways of dealing with the issues raised, they too faced glitches mentioned above. The following are the recommendations and way forward suggested.

In order to deal with attendance issues, the company could have integrated the attendance in the app. Also to ensure compliance, the company can time manage the tasks and an online sheet can be maintained with hourly reporting on tasks and deliverables allotted to the team manager. At the close of business, each manager can submit a report with evidence provided per team mate of the tasks conducted.

Covid tests were highly expensive. As the covid testing was not included in the medical, this had become very disappointing for the junior staff for whom a test worth 6 to 10k was unaffordable. To cater to this issue, the company along with insurance company can revamp their insurance policy and add covid tests in the insured amount. This would motivate and encourage the employees and they would feel heard and taken care off.

In order to avoid layoffs, the company could have opted for either of the two solutions. The first one is that the company could have deducted 25% of the salaries or have later paid them in installments. Another solution is that s few employees could have been sent on or asked to take an annual leave without pay. This would have provided job security as well and cut costs. One more option was to finish the fringe benefits such as fuel cards as the travelling was bare minimal and petrol is a major costly factor which could have reduced company cost if eliminated from the fringe benefits.

Low employee morale could have been catered by providing employee with appreciation letters & posting stories on social media sites through promoting how these employees have worked as front-line workers ensuring internet service needs of customers. This would have provided employees motivation & a sense of ownership by the company. Furthermore, as employees faced

issues with the online models & work from home, the HR department with the help of the IT department can launch tutorials/demo videos to better assist the not so tech savvy members.

Side by side if we have a look at the Supply side of Nayatel, it too was under constant bombardment during COVID. As we know that work from home was the new model being adopted by companies, it in turn led to a drastic increase in the demand for better internet connections. The company had not anticipated this demand & as a result of this they were facing issues in higher lead times & poor support. I personally feel that rather than giving a free will to their employees and leaving it onto them solely to opt for work from home, the CEO alongside his supply chain head should have made a forecast. Alongside this, rather than reducing the team member from 3-7 & giving them option to work voluntarily, they could have made small teams of 3 -4 members each so that work could have been managed well.

As far as the shortfall of ONT's & HD boxes was concerned, there is very little that the company could have done at the time. However for the future, they should align local vendors on this. Rather than solely relying on imports & china on this, the company should learn a lesson & onboard local vendors for this project as well. This would be of great benefit to them. This is because, they would now be having a backup & also chances are that costs would significantly reduce as well. Side by side at that time what the company could have done was that they could have re-issued the old HD boxes which the customer had returned (due to multiple reasons). They could have updated their software's from backend & re-issued them at a subsidized rate. As a result of this they could have met the demand to some extent.

Though to meet the unexpected demand the company did shift to the solution of Routers, but again as they were dependent on imports only, the costs rose. It would not be wrong to state here that the company must have learnt a lesson i.e. a backup is mandatory. For the routers too, local vendors are a great option. By locking a contract with them, they can secure a better price which in turn would lead to reduced costs & timely deliveries of hardware's.

Things at supply end were all interlinked. Due to all these delays in shipments, high costs from procuring equipment locally & smaller teams, the support was affected adversely. Being the market leader in FTTH, companies are trying to follow on the footsteps of Nayatel. However during COVID the company was badly exposed. Since their customer support was considered to be the backbone of the company & it was the same support that gave the company a competitive

edge over their competitors, it was very poor. Since there was very little check & balance during this time, employee's performance also declined. Here what the company could have done was that since support is something which is virtual & people working from home can also manage, they should have set some quality standards based on which their performance would be managed. As a result of this when employees would know that they are being monitored, they would automatically perform better. Furthermore when performance is linked with rewards, employees go out of the way & try to perform well. At the time where people were losing jobs & job security was a major concern, rather than laying off people the company could have ensured job security & the management should have been in constant touch with their employees. This would have resulted in a feeling of security & so in turn would have kept the employees motivated as well.

COVID was something which was unexpected. We saw many companies winding up their operations & getting closed. However during the same time we also saw many companies perform better as well. Nayatel was also among the very few companies which experienced growth during this time. New records were made during this time by the company. The main reason behind this was the product which they offered. Its demand drastically increased & so led the company to grow. However like any other company, Nayatel too was not prepared for this pandemic. Since such disasters are not planned – Nayatel too faced issues like every other company. Since time has passed & things are starting to get normal, Nayatel should now learn from the mistakes which they made during this time period. Also they should now be prepared for any such unforeseen event. When planning for the future, the company should keep in mind such events as well & hence have a backup plan as to how they would deal in such instances.

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