

# Throwback to pre-pandemic days: A photo-elicitation study on organizational nostalgia

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## Abstract.

**BACKGROUND:** As an unprecedented outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted and dramatically changed several respects of life. In terms of working life, the transition to a remote working system has brought several changes and interrupted the continuity between past and present working life. In this case, this adversity has led people to past experiences and memories, and many people have used nostalgia as a crucial resource for alleviating the negative impact of the outbreak.

**OBJECTIVE:** In this context, as a form of nostalgia, the current study particularly investigated memories eliciting organizational nostalgia and antecedents and consequences of organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era.

**METHODS:** Photo-elicitation interview in general, and participant-driven photo-elicitation in particular, was used as a data collection method. A cross-sectional design was employed for this study. In total, 10 photo-elicitation interviews through 62 photos were carried out with participants in Turkey. The thematic analysis was used for coding and analyzing the interviews.

**RESULTS:** The current study demonstrated that (1) participants feel nostalgic for managers, colleagues, events, job, and working environment-related memories; (2) lack of social connectedness, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty triggers pandemic-induced nostalgia; and (3) pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia has an impact on the variety of emotions (regret, hope, pride, freedom, joy, peace, excitement, yearning, gratitude, sadness, and happiness) of employees in the pandemic era.

**CONCLUSIONS:** This study contributes to overcoming the lack of studies investigating the nostalgic emotion of employees in the pandemic era and how this emotion might contribute to overcoming the effects of COVID-19.

Keywords: Nostalgia, organizational nostalgia, photo-elicitation, qualitative research, COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

*‘Maybe when social distancing is a thing of the past, we’ll hug a little harder; hold on a little longer, and remember that nothing matters more*

*than the time we spend with the people we love.’*  
Lori Deschene (*The founder of Tiny Buddha*)

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of human life in almost all nations around the world. With the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic, a variety of restrictions (i.e. distance education, remote working, and

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social isolation) have been taken for reducing the spread of the disease and these restrictions have dramatically changed all aspects of life. In these pandemic days, people have a lack of social connections with family, friends, and society as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions [1]. In this respect, dramatic changes have diminished an individual's social connectedness in daily life with the pandemic. Deteriorations in social bonds caused by these changes increase the perception of loneliness and, in turn, loneliness increase nostalgia. Additionally, many people died due to COVID-19 all around the world. The high mortality rates create anxiety and fear of death in people.

In these pandemic days, when the future is full of uncertainty and today creates high stress and anxiety, individuals found the remedy to look back on memories with nostalgia [2], which refers to 'a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past' [3]. Specifically, previous literature reported that radical changes in normal life create negative psychological consequences including, loneliness, boredom, anxiety [4, 5], and self-discontinuity [6]. When the nostalgia literature is examined, interestingly enough, it is clear that most of these negative effects are caused by the changes in normal life including loneliness [7], lack of social connectedness [8], death anxiety [8], and self-discontinuity [9] elicit nostalgia. Considering these antecedents, the existence of one of these precursors is sufficient for triggering nostalgia.

In fact, the researchers stated that nostalgia is one of the psychological and social mechanisms for alleviating the undesirable impact of the pandemic. Concordantly, based on recent research, individuals' proneness to nostalgia has increased in the time of the pandemic. For example, according to Steele [2], music listeners preferred old music and sounds such as Bob Marley rather than popular music during the pandemic. In a similar vein, Klein [10] emphasized that nostalgia has also been reflected in social media and added the following: 'Hashtags #ThrowBack-Thursday have been used+43% more frequently over the last month, while Tweets containing "I Miss" are being posted+63% more frequently on a daily basis.'

Specifically, nostalgia is a restorative mechanism with adverse events, challenging times, and discontinuity in life [9]. In this vein, Wildschut and Sedikides [11] stressed that nostalgia has mainly four psychological functions as social (re-establishes the emotional bonds and connectedness with close others), self-oriented (enhancing self-positivity and

maintaining self-esteem through providing the access to memories [6]), existential (intensely feeling the meaning of life [12], positive affect, and self-continuity [13]), and future-oriented functions (elevating future-directed thoughts and behaviors (i.e. optimism, inspiration, and creativity) [14]). Batcho [15] also revealed that nostalgia reminds people to enjoyable times, how they overcome difficult times, and the temporality of these times. People with nostalgia proneness have an appreciation of how they cope with difficulties in the past and hence, remain strong in challenging times [15]. State alternatively, nostalgia has a therapeutic function, and the past creates hope that the future will be good by evocating to people that "what was possible once can be possible again" [15]. In a nutshell, nostalgia serves as an important psychological resource for people thanks to the psychological functions of nostalgia in the existence of adverse events and challenging times.

Although it is likely that the concept of nostalgia is an important emotion that individuals use to buffer the negative effects of the pandemic, the scope of memories evoking nostalgia and the role of nostalgia in the pandemic era have remained implicit and have not been directly addressed in the existing literature. Additionally, whereas many researchers have focused on the concept of nostalgia, few studies have investigated nostalgia as an organizational phenomenon, that is, organizational nostalgia [16].

From an organizational perspective, the concept of organizational nostalgia refers to 'sentimental longing or wistful affection for past events and aspects of one's organizational life' [16]. Specifically, past studies investigated a variety of factors affecting organizational nostalgia. Gabriel [17] suggested that employees' past interpersonal interaction and their experiences with buildings of the organization induce organizational nostalgia [17]. In a sense, old and retired leaders, departed colleagues, and the social environment also attracts nostalgic feelings [17]. Besides, organizational events such as Christmas parties have been seen as memorable for employees [16]. Gabriel [17] stressed that discontinuity and disconnection between past and present organizational life of employees elicit a sense of nostalgia. These organizational changes divide the work-life of the employees as before and after periods and generally induce a sense of organizational nostalgia in the employees. In this respect, past studies have noted that employees of a coffee shop remember and feel nostalgia to the strong bond of friendship before moving to the larger coffee shop [18]. In

another study, with the transition to a larger hospital, corporate culture changed as a result of the fire of employees who are very good at their jobs and employees feel nostalgic to the past days when there was a family atmosphere [17]. Furthermore, nurses yearned for the days when the sense of friendship was strong [17]. Besides, academics felt nostalgia towards organizational values as freedom, autonomy, personal development, and academic merit and belonging which exist before the changes in academic work [19].

In this vein, the COVID-19 pandemic has also changed and transformed the 'normal' work or the workplace [20]. In the time of the pandemic, most people have started working from home and experienced a significant discontinuity in their working life. Besides, with working from home, most of the corporate activities have been moved to the virtual environment. Online meetings and working from home have also undermined collegial relationships and mitigated feelings of disconnectedness. Most of the employees are filled with anxiety and stress due to economic situations, high unemployment, increased workloads, and overtime working hours in the pandemic era [21, 22]. Employees also suffer from uncertainty about COVID-19 spread, work processes, and uncertainty in economic conditions [23]. Furthermore, the lack of social connectedness and interaction in the remote working processes has triggered a high feeling of loneliness [22, 24, 25]. Hence, these changes are likely to trigger a sense of organizational nostalgia. Besides, the literature has not considered how the nostalgic emotions of employees might contribute to overcoming the effects of the unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19.

The current study focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic as a health-related adverse event inducing organizational nostalgia. Specifically, past studies investigated organization-related adverse events as organizational change [26], high burnout [16], low interactional justice [27], low procedural justice [28], and low social connectedness [27]. Nevertheless, the role of organizational nostalgia in the presence of societal crises [20] has been neglected in the literature. Particularly, the pandemic has a destructive impact on the way people work and threatened the employees' psychological health. Hence, many people have also begun searching ways for coping with these detrimental psychological effects of the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, the current study concentrated on organizational nostalgia as an important resource and functional escapist strategy

to ameliorate the negative psychological impact of the pandemic era. Specifically, nostalgia facilitates the employees' access to the organizational heritage of beliefs and values during organizational adversity, provides a source of meaning in tougher times, and allows employees to overcome present malaise [17].

Besides, according to the Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions [29], positive emotions broaden people's thinking, mindsets, adaptability, quick and decisive action. In turn, people build personal, social, and psychological resources as resilience, the ability to cope with life-threatening situations, and psychological and physical well-being [29]. As one of the pleasant emotions [8, 9, 30], nostalgia also broadens the mindset of people and builds a variety of resources for coping with the undesirable impact of the pandemic era. In this context, nostalgia has preservative functions for people in the pandemic era [31–33].

Furthermore, nostalgia studies in organizational settings have been mainly investigated in individualistic cultures such as Germany [28], Finland [19], U.K. [34], and U.S.A. [16, 27, 35, 36]. Nevertheless, organizational nostalgia has not been explored within the context of collectivistic culture. Besides, in terms of culture, Wasti et al. [37] stressed that individuals from different cultures (i.e. individualistic cultures and collectivist cultures) recall work-related memories with different motives (self-continuity, social bonding, and directing behavior). However, studies specifically examining the recall of work-related memories and underlying motives within the context of culture are rare [37]. In this vein, we investigated work-related memories more specifically and motives for recalling past experiences for Turkish participants, within collectivist cultures.

Finally, the photo-elicitation methodology was used in the current study. Whereas past studies mainly used qualitative methods [17, 19, 36] or a combination of survey and experimental design methods [16, 27, 28], visual methodology in general and photo-elicitation, in particular, have not been considered in organizational nostalgia literature. Indeed, the photo-elicitation methodology captures more comprehensive, deeper, and richer insights about the nostalgic emotions in organizations. Despite calls of scholars [38, 39], visual methodologies have been neglected in organizational and business research.

Therefore, to address these gaps in knowledge, this study investigated (a) memories evoking organiza-

tional nostalgia in the pandemic period and (b) the impact of organizational nostalgia on the employees' emotions and behaviors in a work setting via photo-elicitation interview. This study also contributes to overcoming the lack of studies investigating the nostalgic emotion of employees in the pandemic era and how this emotion might contribute to overcoming the effects of COVID-19.

## 2. Method

To investigate what induces organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era, we conducted a semi-structured, photo-elicitation interview in which photographs taken by either the researchers or participants are used as stimuli in the research interviews [40]. In this regard, from the photo-elicitation interview approaches, the participant-driven photo-elicitation method was used for the current study. Using photos taken by participants allow researchers directly to understand the experiences, emotions, and feelings rather than imposing the framework of research and the researchers' perspective [41]. This approach also reduces the power distance between participants and researchers through eliciting the 'closer rapport and more openness during the interview' and enhances the interest, willingness, and engagement of participants to research [38].

In the photo-elicitation interview, photos evoke 'deeper elements of human consciousness that do words' [40]. In this regard, Collier [42] revealed that photo-elicitation interviews are more comprehensive and effective methods due to providing precise, deeper, and submerged information compared to verbal interviews. Besides, people need more than words for expressing their emotions and visual stimuli may capture hidden emotions and feelings, even for disappeared things (past events and people gone) [40]. In this vein, another advantage of this method is that photographs, as visual stimuli, allow for attaining deeper memories through facilitating the remembrance [43] and expression of memories in the interviews [40].

In other respects, from the methodological perspective, photo-elicitation interviews decrease recall bias contrary to interviews based on free recall of memories [40]. The photo-elicitation method also enables the trustworthiness of qualitative research through triangulating interview data with the photos [40].

### 2.1. Data collection

The interview guide was developed collaboratively by the research team to address the memories triggering organizational nostalgia during the pandemic era. Further, the interview protocol contributed to recognizing the antecedents and affective outcomes of organizational nostalgia based on the existing literature of photo-elicitation studies, nostalgia, and organizational nostalgia. Five experts in the field of organizational behavior and organizational psychology reviewed the interview guide and we finalized the guide in line with the experts' recommendations. The protocol contained a core set of questions as (1) demographic information of participants; (2) their feeling of organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era; (3) pandemic-related antecedents of organizational nostalgia; and (4) affective outcomes of organizational nostalgia. Considering the context of the present study is mainly emotions, we tried to distinguish the main concept (organizational nostalgia), antecedents, and consequences by asking questions within a certain logic and order in the interviews.

In this vein, following the demographic questions, interviews were continued with photos selected by participants. In terms of photo-elicitation, for each of the photos related to participants' organizational experiences that evoke nostalgia in the pandemic era, we asked the main questions as follows: (1) Can you tell me a little bit about this photo?; (2) When you evaluate this photo in terms of nostalgia, what did this photo revive in you?; (3) Who was in the photo?; (4) Where it was taken?. Follow-up questions were also determined for each photo ("What were the good things for you in this photo? What was your favorite thing to do?" for pleasant memories and "What were the bad things for you in this photo? What was your unfavorable thing to do?" for unpleasant memories). These questions were repeated until we discussed all the images of informants. Then, participants were asked emotional consequences of organizational nostalgia for each photo (What emotions do trigger when you look at this nostalgic photo?). After completing this stage, participants were asked about the antecedents of nostalgia during the pandemic period (What do you think might have triggered this sense of nostalgia about your working life during the current pandemic?).

In line with the photos, participants were asked whether there was a discontinuity in the constituents of organizational nostalgia within the framework of the restrictions, precautions, and changes during the

pandemic period. For some specific organizational memories (i.e. memories related to the PhD qualifying exam, launch meeting of Turkey's domestic car) that cannot be compared with the pandemic era, the participants were asked what they would feel if they experienced these memories during the pandemic.

## 2.2. Ethics

The participants were informed about the aim of the study at the beginning of each interview. We also assured them that their information would be used for academic purposes and would not be disclosed to anyone else. Moreover, we highlighted privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, and pseudonyms were used for each participant to preserve anonymity. All the participants gave verbal and written consent. No participants withdrew from the study. Additionally, we didn't offer any gifts to participants of this study.

## 2.3. Sample

Purposeful sampling was used for sample selection [44] based on the logic that purposeful sampling allows researchers to select information-rich participants for yielding rich, detailed, and in-depth information [45]. Inclusion criteria were selected based on the maximum variation via demographic characteristics of the participants of the current study [46]. With this regard, participants from different sectors, different demographic and occupational backgrounds were selected as inclusion criteria to ensure heterogeneity and gather more diverse, rich, and comprehensive experiences evoking organizational nostalgia. Additionally, another criterion was working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this vein, Covid-19 was considered as an adverse situation/event and the current study examined whether the changes in business life through this event affect the nostalgia feelings of employees working partially or completely from home. In the current study, to investigate pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia, data were gathered from employees working in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Turkey, the first case was reported on 11 March 2020 and Turkey was among the 10 countries with the greatest number of cases globally within 30 days of the pandemic [47]. Restrictions have started during this period and, in terms of work-life, employees working in public institutions and private organizations were allowed rotation, flexi-

ble, and remote work on 22 March 2020 [48]. These work arrangements were implemented according to the spread of the pandemic. In this regard, interviews were conducted between 19 June 2020 and 4 September 2020 when remote and rotational working practices continue. Additionally, all informants were still working from home.

Participants attended online meeting interviews with photos related to their organizational memories for assessing nostalgic emotions. Accordingly, participants were asked to bring at least five photos reflecting their organizational memories that evoke nostalgia at the periods of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this sampling strategy and specified criteria a general call for nominations was distributed through word of mouth personal and professional networks.

Besides, data saturation was used as a criterion for the sample size of the present study. In this regard, interviews were terminated when no new information and additional insights were gathered from participants [44]. As a strategy for assessing saturation, a stopping criterion was used in the current study. Based on the study of Francis et al. [49], a point of data saturation was determined as "when three further interviews have been conducted with no new themes emerging". In this vein, the stopping criterion was assessed after each consecutive interview. Accordingly, each new interview was compared with the codes obtained in the two further interviews and it was checked whether new information was gathered.

In this context, photo-elicitation interviews were conducted with 10 participants, which are adequate for sampling in qualitative research [46]. This sample size is also consistent with previous studies [50–52]. Besides, Pullman and Robson [53] also revealed that the photo-elicitation study results in a small sample size. In this vein, considering that a total of 62 photos were discussed in the interviews, it is thought that the sample size is sufficient (See Table 1 for the demographic profile of informants).

## 2.4. Participants

The sample was composed of 6 females and 4 males, ranging in age from 25 to 50. As for education, 30% had completed a bachelor's degree, 60% had completed a master's degree, and 10% had completed a doctoral degree. Participants were employed in a variety of industries (education, banking, information technologies, and service) and positions (academicians, credit specialist, business develop-

Table 1  
Demographic characteristics of participants

	Gender	Age	Education status	Sector	Position	Affiliation in current organization (year)	Remote working time (month)
1	Female	29	MBA	Education	Academician	4	3
2	Female	36	MBA	Banking	Credit specialist	13	3.5
3	Male	29	MBA	Information technologies	Business development specialist	4	3.5
4	Female	25	Bachelor	Service	HR specialist	2	3
5	Male	47	MBA	Automotive	Vice president	1.5	2
6	Female	27	Bachelor	Law	Lawyer	2	3
7	Female	50	MBA	Private sector	Entrepreneur of technology	25	4
8	Female	30	PhD	Education	Academician	3	4
9	Male	39	MBA	Manufacturing	R&D manager	11	3
10	Male	30	Bachelor	Banking	Business development specialist	3	5

ment specialists, and HR specialists). Participants' length of affiliation in the current organization ranged from 1.5 years to 25 years. On average, participants were working partially or wholly from home for about 3.4 months. Additionally, each participant contributed to interviews with 5–7 photos. A total of 62 photos were obtained containing various memories of the participants that they felt nostalgic in the pandemic era.

### 2.5. Data analysis

The data of the research was collected in a time when intense restrictions and precautions (i.e. physical distance, social isolation, restriction of freedom of movement, and obligatory self-isolation) were applied by the state due to the pandemic. For this reason, instead of meeting face to face, interviews were conducted online. In this regard, all interviews were conducted by Skype and were both audio and video recorded. Field notes were kept during the interviews. The interviews lasted between 31 and 83 minutes in length.

Data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to extract patterns of meaning, as suggested by Braun and Clarke [54], using MaxQDA software. Firstly, interviews were transcribed by the first author and randomly selected three interviews were reviewed by an independent researcher for confirming the accuracy of the data. Transcripts were reread for familiarizing with the data.

Codes were generated in the next phase of analysis. Particularly, transcriptions of interviews were read line-by-line, and codes were extracted [55]. In the coding process, iterative process-oriented and analytic procedures were used between transcriptions and coding until we had a clear grasp of the emerg-

ing theoretical relationships [44]. In this regard, the research team developed a codebook and then, met multiple times to discuss the statements, meanings, and codes to gain more deep and interpretive insights. Researchers iteratively and collaboratively examined the existing literature to comprehend organizational nostalgia and determine the codes related to organizational nostalgia. This process continued until a consensus was reached on the codes determined among the researchers.

When all data have been coded, these codes were then categorized as the main overarching themes and sub-themes that had similar ideas, subjects, or relationships [56]. The themes were reviewed whether the themes create a coherent pattern. Thereafter, we generated a thematic map of the analysis and visualized the themes via the Gioia method [56]. Specifically, the Gioia method allows for the holistic perspective for comprehension of dynamic relationships and interactions through examining 1st-order concepts, 2nd-order themes, and aggregate dimensions [56]. As a result, we identified five second-order themes (managers-related memories, colleagues-related memories, event-related memories, job-related memories, and working environment-related memories) and 20 first-order concepts (i.e. departed colleagues, job-related events, departed managers, the start date of employment, and office environment) related to central phenomena of the study, pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia. Besides, the current study also demonstrated the antecedents (lack of social connectedness, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty) and affective consequences (regret, hope, pride, freedom, joy, peace, excitement, yearning, gratitude, sadness, and happiness) of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia.

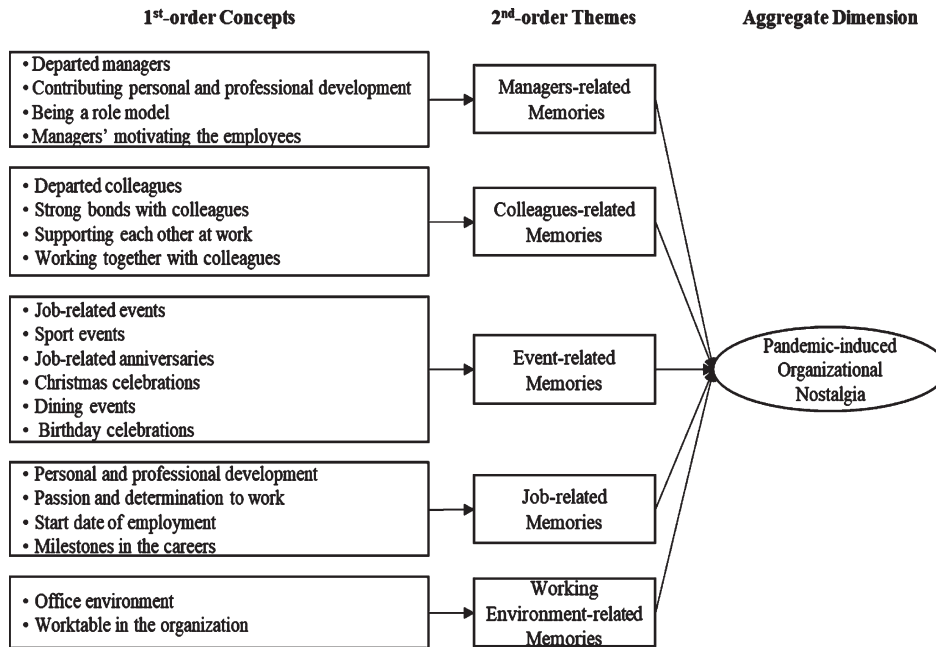


Fig. 1. Overview of data structure.

Finally, the most illustrative quotes were translated from Turkish to English by the first author and re-translated into Turkish by the second author by using the parallel translation method to test conformity. The two translators then jointly reconciled all differences. Academics in the field of organizational behavior also evaluated and verified that the meanings of the quotes were correctly transformed from Turkish to English.

### 3. Results

As a result of the analysis, five themes emerged from the data as managers-related memories, colleagues-related memories, event-related memories, job-related memories, and finally working environment-related memories (See Fig. 1).

#### 3.1. Managers-related memories

As shown in the managers-related memories themes, participants recalled the memories about their departed managers, contributing employees' personal and professional development, being a role model, and motivating employees.

Firstly, the departed managers elicited nostalgia based on the photos and memories shared by the participants about their managers. Some of the participants shared photos from the farewell dinners for departed managers. One participant stated his feelings about the departure aroused in him with the following words:

*"After our manager left, we were all sad. We tearfully sent off our manager. He was sad too. You can see in the photo, now he may be at the age of the seventies or eighties. He also wanted to be retired. It was a nice separation. He was also happy and we were happy too, but of course, we were sad because he was leaving."*

The interviewees also mentioned how their managers contributed to their personal and professional development. In this context, participants stated that they gained many professional skills from departed and current managers transferring their knowledge and experience. One participant stated:

*"Thanks to her, I learned and gained professional skills such as disciplined and systematic working, work-life balance, step-by-step learning, and business planning. Luckily, I was at the beginning of my profession and she was a correct example for me."*

Participants also reported their memories with their managers in terms of being role models in their careers. One participant said:

*“People and your managers are really important in our profession. I even smiled as soon as I opened this photo. This is one of the points where I feel very lucky professionally. No matter what I do in the future, I will feel very lucky because she is my manager. If I’m going to be a manager one day in the future, I want to be a manager like her. I take my manager as a role model not only as a career but also about what I should do to be a good person and how I should establish balance in business life.”*

Consequently, several participants emphasized managers’ motivating the employees through bonuses and rewards even in case of adverse situations. The following comment reflects the nostalgia feeling of one participant related to this concept:

*“I remember working for long hours without even anger, and now when I look at this photo, I can see how hard I have worked. It is still normal for me and I would do it again, but you can work that hard when you see a certain tolerance, respect, and love... Not just as a career. ‘What should I do to be a good person? How should I find the balance in business life?’ For example, I try to learn these points thanks to my managers. When I fall, they always motivated me and I know they are always with me.”*

### 3.2. Colleagues-related memories

The participants also provided many photos that captured the memories with colleagues, including strong bonds with their colleagues, supporting each other at work, working together with current and departed colleagues.

Departed colleagues trigger a feeling of nostalgia in the participants, similar as it was with the departed managers. One of the participants expressed how departed colleagues contributed to her professional development and feeling of nostalgia for the days she worked with departed colleagues in the following quote:

*“Nobody in the photo is in the organization right now. They all departed from the organization. It’s actually a nostalgic photo. When I first came to the organization, they all supported me a lot. Because I was inexperienced. I had just gradu-*

*ated from university and they all really supported me and made me learn and understand the job in a short time. They trained me and then went on their own. I miss them all very much. We can still talk and see each other. This photo is really important for me. I loved my friends very much.”*

Participants signposted having strong bonds with their colleagues during the interview by expressing how they have close emotional bonds, deep understanding, make deep conversations, and contribute to their mutual well-being, as indicated below:

*“For example, in this photo, I wish that this photo would be alive, I wish one of my friends would come to me and say let’s go down to drink coffee, for example. Or I wish he could say ‘Let’s go out or play basketball tomorrow’. Things I miss to spend our time, relieve stress, and make effort together.”*

Other memories and experiences inducing the nostalgia were about supporting each other at work. In this regard, they support each other both in terms of career development and managing difficult times which creates a sense of nostalgia in the participants. One participant described these experiences that elicit nostalgia as follows:

*“When this photo was taken, we were planning the year 2020. So, we were all looking at 2020 with the same glasses. We all agreed. We were of one mind. I thought in my mind as ‘We will approach all our goals in a single voice’. There was an idea as ‘Yes, we achieve these goals by supporting each other’.”*

It has been observed that the participants also feel nostalgic to working together with their colleagues because all of the employees cannot be together due to the pandemic era. He states:

*“We are currently six people on the team. Only one of us goes to the office each day of the week. Therefore, we cannot be in the office at the same time. In this way, we cannot see each other because two people cannot be in the office at the same time. We cannot work with our teammates at the same time. I have its bitterness. We used to be very stressed when we were there, but someone would explode a joke and the atmosphere would suddenly cheer up. If you look nostalgically, I miss those times. There is no trace of the old work environment in the pandemic.”*



### 3.3. Event-related memories

Due to isolation and social distance, restrictions have also been placed on events during the pandemic. In this context, the interviewees mentioned their memories about the events in organizations such as job-related events, sports events, Christmas celebrations, dining events, birthday celebrations, job-related anniversaries, and other events.

Participants generally mentioned annual evaluation meetings, project presentations, and vision and strategy meetings for the job-related events. Participants attributed value to these events due to allowing fun activities as well as providing the opportunity to establish networks and information sharing. This was vividly described by the event where experts share their knowledge and interactive presentations take place in the following quote:

*“This photo was taken at our annual meeting. Every year, there is a meeting in a big hotel hosted by the organization in Bodrum and attended by all the white-collar employees. In this two-day meeting, there were both business meetings and briefings and free time for the employees to have a comfortable time. We formed a music team to make use of this free time. We had a lot of fun. Of course, we couldn’t do that during the pandemic process.”*

Sports events include various activities such as cycling, volleyball, basketball, and table tennis tournaments. These activities include indoor and outdoor arrangements and were exemplified in the following quotes:

*“In our organization, there were astroturf activities, volleyball and basketball tournaments, and table tennis tournaments for both men and women. Besides, painting contests were organized for the children of employees. Apart from that, there were many different events such as spring festivals and rodeo games. Almost 10–12 activities were organized monthly every year.”*

Participants also mentioned dining events such as having breakfast or lunch together with colleagues and managers. The most remarkable thing among the dining activities was the participants’ sharing about the iftar during Ramadan. This year, Ramadan coincided with the pandemic era. In Turkey, many people lived Ramadan in the shadow of the pandemic due to the restrictions in both work and social life. One participant stated:

*“This photo shows an iftar from last Ramadan. This year’s Ramadan month was very different from the previous ones. It was much more in terms of longing. In previous years, even knowing that there was a chance to do iftar with friends in Ramadan was enough for me, but it was very sad that I could not go out and could not eat iftar meal with my colleagues and my family during this Ramadan.”*

One participant presented a photograph of Christmas celebrations in her organizations and stated: *‘This photo was taken on December 30, 2019. Before New Year’s Eve, we were having dinner together on a day when everyone was dressed diligently. There were food and drink or something. There was a celebration at the bank until 8–9 pm.’*

Another interviewee mentioned birthday celebrations as event-related experiences eliciting organizational nostalgia and stated: *‘This is the birthday photo of my manager. We prepared a birthday celebration for him that he never predicted. We all greeted her in her room with a cake very early in the morning. It was a surprise that our manager never predicted.’* Also, a variety of events such as 10th-anniversary celebrations, music, and theatre events has been among the activities that create a feeling of nostalgia for the participants.

### 3.4. Job-related memories

Participants mentioned their personal and professional development, passion and determination to work, the start date of employment, and career milestones within the job-related memories as primary sources of organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era.

Specifically, the participants talked about the point they have reached in their careers in terms of personal and professional development. A respondent narrated this as:

*“I made a great effort for my job. I worked hard, and in the end, I found myself in the position of being one of the people who managed the project among the very well-known people here. So obviously everything is in here. There is a reward for the hard work I have put into the automotive industry over the years. I just coincided with the lucky period of this . . . Both in terms of age and position. It coincided with a lucky period. It coincided with a period when I felt successful both in terms of career and personal development.”*

Passion and determination to work were emphasized as a source of organizational nostalgia by the participants. A participant shared a photo of a flower and described her passion and determination to work against all the odds. She quoted this experience as:

*“I worked for 5 years to be able to work in this job. At the end of this process, I took the exam of the university where I am currently working. The flower in the photo was in our house at that time and did not bloom for 10 years. This flower bloomed right on the day I passed the exam. I named this flower as hope. I have realized what I want in terms of a career, and in this direction, I have made an effort for it for 5 years without giving up, as this flower. In fact, I am a person who is integrated with his work in every aspect of my life. Regardless of where it is done or under what conditions, my profession is very important to me.”*

The start date of employment is an important source of nostalgia for the participants within the framework of job-related memories. Participants especially emphasized the excitement and happiness of that day. For example, one participant said:

*“It was the first week I officially started work. It was officially my starting photo and this room and table will always be special for me. Although I will not be here in the future, I think I will remember this place and this day first.”*

In addition, the participants also mentioned the career stages, moving to important jobs, and phases that they defined as milestones in their careers. In this vein, one participant shared a photo from a period in which she took important roles in a corporate transformation project in the organization. The following comment of the participant reflects how important this process was in her career in light of Mevlana’s saying, who is the great Anatolian mystic, poet, and thinker [57]:

*“This is a photo that depicts my master’s period in my professional life. During this period, I conducted international projects. It was a period where I worked in multicultural, different environments. Mevlana has a saying, ‘I was raw, I became cooked, I was burnt’. This photo really shows a period in which I was cooked and mastering.”*

One of the participants works in one of the organizations in the production of Turkey’s first domestic car. The participant shared a photo taken by him

from the launching meeting of the domestic car and expressed the excitement and importance of this job for his career with the following words:

*“This photo was taken in Turkey’s first domestic automobile meeting of promotion and launch, having participated president and all stakeholders in the project. We will do the cockpit of this car. I felt tremendously lucky. Because automotive was my all childhood dream and I’ve been a part of this project.”*

### 3.5. Working environment-related memories

As employees started working from home during the pandemic period, one of the themes that they feel most nostalgic about has been the working environment. Especially the office environment and work desk has been frequently mentioned by the participants and included in their photos.

Regarding the office environment, some of the participants stated that they could not be in the office with all their friends due to the rotational work program in their organizations. It has been observed that there is a nostalgia for the old crowd environment and for remaining together since few people work in the office environment. In addition, one participant emphasized his feeling of nostalgia for their office environments as follows:

*“I would like to be where my friends are now. But as long as we stay in the organization. It would be okay if I didn’t go up to my colleagues. Even if I hear them talking or humming in the office, it is enough for me.”*

Besides, different precautions have been taken due to the pandemic, such as placing separators between working desks in offices that are close to each other. Participants stated that this situation created a sense of nostalgia and longing for the old work environment. One of the participants shared the photo she took about this situation and expressed her longing for the office environment as indicated below:

*“It’s a sad photo for me. Because separators were installed in the office for maintaining the social distance due to the pandemic, you see. They installed these separators everywhere in the organization.’ Why did this happen? When will this disease end?’ I ask myself. Also, working under a mask makes me sad. When I look around, it makes me sad to see masked people. I miss the old state of the office. There will always be a longing for*

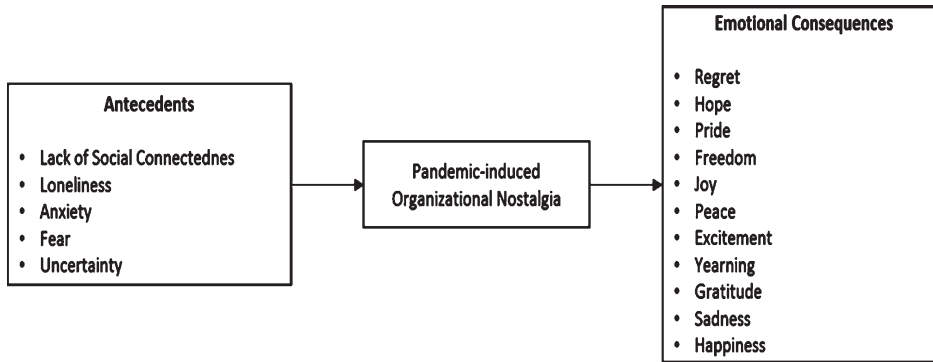


Fig. 2. Antecedents and emotional consequences of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia.

*the old times, maybe something like that. Maybe we'll get used to it, but this state of the office felt more stifling to me."*

Regarding the worktable in the organizations, participants stated that they felt nostalgic for their worktables during this process, even though the participants were aware of the fact that the worktable is a fixture of the organization. Some of the participants stated that they felt nostalgic due to the connection they established with the items on their worktables in the office, while others felt nostalgic as they do not have a worktable as comfortable as in the office. The following words of one participant about the photo related to the worktable are quite remarkable:

*"During the pandemic process, I missed the office a lot. Especially my worktable. Because my notepads and pens are on my worktable. That's why there is an order in my opinion. I missed that order very much. I only had a computer at home. I obviously missed my worktable during the pandemic era. There is also a desk at home, but my desk in my office is different for me. Both the scenery and things that belong to me on my worktable as a whole were a huge factor in my productive work. I understood it during the pandemic process."*

Further, one participant emphasized the importance of worktable in the organization for her motivation as follows:

*"I even lost my willingness to work at home. I could not work as efficiently as I was in the organization. For me, the desk is a motivation for job and work... It is a place where I should feel responsibility... I have never felt this responsibility in the office while working at home. I could*

*not catch it. For this reason, my motivation has dropped a lot in the pandemic. For example, I laid down on the job. Also, I was working on my computer on the lap. It felt like a burden to get to the table while at home. That's why I was putting the computer aside again. You sit at the desk in the office and get up when you finish the job, but I didn't get that efficiency at home."*

### 3.6. Antecedents of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia

After gaining an understanding of memories and experiences that elicit organizational nostalgia during the pandemic, the participants were asked the triggers of the organizational nostalgia. As a result, we grouped findings thematically into categories as a lack of social connectedness, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty (See Fig. 2).

Most people have difficulties in maintaining closeness and connectedness due to the social isolation and distance restriction in the pandemic. In this vein, most of the participants' narratives denoted the lack of social connectedness theme. Generally speaking, the lack of social connectedness' theme is related to the feeling of being distant and disconnected from the people at work and unable to be in a close relationship with the members of the organization. Participants indicate that, especially in this process due to remote working, there is a decrease in the quality of connection with their colleagues and managers. Similarly, the participants shared that many work-related meetings have been held online that mechanizes and weakens the connectedness. This was mentioned as indicated below:

*"It may be more advantageous to work this way, but I can say that we are in a worse situation emo-*

*tionally. Socialization is more important besides anxiety and loneliness. I think the desire to be with colleagues is more triggering nostalgia. I think this is effective in my wanting the pandemic to end."*

Working remotely has increased the isolation of many people in the pandemic era. The loneliness, which is highly felt in this process, is another factor that triggers organizational nostalgia. Most of the participants stated that they did not feel lonely in the process of working remotely because they were married and did not have to be completely alone at home. However, they also stated that they would feel lonely if they were not married and lived alone. Even if they did not experience loneliness, they also stated the expression of their colleagues who felt very lonely during this period. The narrative exemplifies the feeling of loneliness in the following quote:

*"Obviously, I can say that I was very impressed by the pandemic era because I was alone at home. I'm mostly at home as there are so many similar cases where I live. This situation triggered my feeling of nostalgia too much."*

The anxiety theme involved both health-related and job-related anxiety. In terms of job-related anxiety, participants expressed that they feel anxiety due to the inability to plan their job for the future, the possibility of being fired due to the bottleneck of the companies in this period of uncertainty, and the economic condition of the country. One of the participants also stated that in a project they will carry out jointly with Romania, they are experiencing enormous difficulties due to the government-mandated and monitored quarantine for incoming travelers in Romania. Stating that they have not yet been able to share this with their customers, the participant expressed the anxiety he felt in this process as follows:

*"When I look at it now, a lot of questions arise: 'If this is the place where we will suffer a great defeat? Will we not be able to complete the project? How will we account for the customer?' We are looking at this place with great concern right now. We also set up this factory here, but 'How are we going to enlarge this factory that we established now? It is unclear how the automotive industry will be affected after six months and one year. When will Romania restore? Will the European Union be able to restore?' There are huge questions and anxiety."*

In a similar vein, many of the participants stated that this process excessively triggered health-related anxiety. The following comment reflects this concern:

*"I had serious anxiety about the pandemic since I have asthma. Experts and doctors could not say anything exactly. There are deaths. 'What if it somehow infected me? If my child or his wife is infected? What do we do if we come across with those bad scenarios?' That's why I rarely left the house. In such a situation, I am sure that these worries and anxiety triggered my feeling of nostalgia."*

Fear is another theme that participants feel intensely during the pandemic as a trigger of organizational nostalgia. In this respect, the participants stated that they generally think about their memories to relax in this fearful period. One of the participants stated that they felt an intense fear of death from coronavirus as follows:

*"I felt the fear of death. This virus is claimed to cause the loss of a lot of lives when it first appeared. That was both the winter period and we were against a powerful virus, and we obviously did not know exactly how we would treat it, what drugs to use, and so on... Currently, Turkey has been successful in the treatment of the virus. We were very afraid in those early times. Because we were afraid of ourselves. We also have elderly parents. We were very afraid that we would pass the disease on them."*

Most of the narratives exemplified the feeling of uncertainty as a trigger of organizational nostalgia. Similar to anxiety, participants accentuated the feeling of pandemic-related and job-related uncertainty. Firstly, the job-related uncertainty theme included uncertainty related to operations of the organizational procedures, economic conditions, and future. Participant reflecting this view and nostalgia feeling commented that:

*"The uncertainty triggered my sense of nostalgia. How nice it was to go to dinner with friends, go to and return from abroad. How beautiful the world really was. How beautiful life was. 'How will life go on like this now? How are we going to enjoy this life in this way? Will it get worse? Will humanity be destroyed suddenly?' things like that come to my mind. Therefore 'Was our old life really behind now? Will we never be able to live those*

*happy days again? I have these uncertainties in my mind.”*

One participant also stated the feeling of uncertainty related to the pandemic:

*“Of course, currently, there is huge uncertainty. Because everything is very new. It seems like we are just coming out of the pandemic, but it is not clear whether we are coming out or not. ‘Is it still the 1st wave or the 2nd wave?’ this is discussed. The number of cases in the country is still very serious . . . America is leaving the WHO membership. In a sense, the environment is extremely complicated right now. There is huge uncertainty.”*

Furthermore, the participant also stated that this uncertainty led him to think about the past and remember the meals he went with his colleagues and his business trips abroad. Besides, one of the participants stated that because of always spending time at home in this highly uncertain period, his tendency towards nostalgia increased and he extremely remembered the past experiences and organizational memories.

### 3.7. Emotional consequences of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia

After identifying triggers of organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era, during the interviews, the participants were asked what emotions were triggered by the nostalgic photos they shared about their routine organizational life. As a result, the interviewees mentioned regret, hope, pride, freedom, joy, peace, excitement, yearning, gratitude, sadness, and happiness as emotions elicited by the organizational nostalgia in the pandemic period.

Firstly, the participants stated that remembering mainly the job-related memories, managers-related and colleagues-related memories with a sense of nostalgia created the feeling of regret in the pandemic era. Participants stated that they feel regret especially for the things they postponed even though they wanted to do in the pre-pandemic days. In addition, one of the participants stated that she missed out on many things within the period she exactly focused on skipping important career steps while talking about the memories in the photos she shared related to career milestones and said the following:

*“When I look at the photos, I wish I could spend more effort and time on human relations, commu-*

*nication, and interaction in my work life before the pandemic . . . I wish I could have been more sharing in time.”*

Interestingly, nostalgic memories in general and job-related memories (start date of employment) in particular generated hope in the pandemic era. The participant talked about the feeling of hope while describing how she overcame the difficulties she faced when she first started to work. Additionally, one of the participants shared that they remember the past very often during the pandemic and they frequently look at photo albums with her family. At the same time, she stated that remembering difficult times that were experienced in the past similar to the pandemic period and talking about those times created a sense of hope that these days will also pass, as indicated below:

*“When we went back to the past with nostalgia, we remembered this; we remembered the 1998 crisis, the oil crisis, and the 2001 crisis. There are these kinds of crises in life. The pandemic is one of these crises and this will pass. Knowing that these have passed through in the past made me feel more hopeful that the pandemic process will pass too.”*

Besides, participants stated hope as another emotion arising from the job-related memories (milestones in the careers) in the pandemic. For instance, one of the participants shared the photos related to memory that attended the launch meeting of Turkey’s domestic automobile, he expressed the feeling of pride for being one of the stakeholders in the production process as follows:

*“When I looked at the photos, I remembered that I had been talking about my work, attending events, working as a project manager, and this made me feel proud.”*

Another emotion is freedom described in the event-related memories, managers-related and colleagues-related memories in the pandemic. Especially because the pandemic process restricts our lives in many areas, narratives have mentioned freedom as a feeling triggered by organizational nostalgia as follows:

*“When I look at this photo, I see how easy and comfortable those times were, how free we were, now, unfortunately, it is very difficult. We could not go to our suppliers for a while. Now, we have started visits gradually under precautions. While*

*walking around the field, we make our visits with a mask, without eating, drinking, and by paying attention to social distance.”*

As an emotion triggered by organizational nostalgia in the pandemic, narrative exemplifies the feeling of peace in the photos about managers-related memories (managers’ motivating the employees) and job-related memories (milestones in the careers and start date of employment) as in the extracts below:

*“I feel at peace when I look at the photos. I see that I have reached the level of self-actualization between the period when I started the profession and the last point I came. This makes me feel at peace.”*

Yearning is one of the emotions that are encountered in many narratives and most triggered emotion by photos shared in the context of organizational nostalgia. Specifically, job-related memories (milestones in the careers and start date of employment), managers-related memories (departed managers and managers’ motivating the employees), event-related memories (job-related events, sport events, dining events, and birthday celebrations), working environment-related memories (office environment and worktable in the organization), and colleagues-related memories (departed colleagues, strong bonds with colleagues, supporting each other at work, and working together with colleagues) triggered the yearning in the pandemic. It was observed that the participants yearned mainly for their organizational life before the pandemic. Narrative exemplifies the feeling of yearning as indicated below:

*“We are in a working environment where we will be thankful again, but there was something else that was given by being crowded here. And that room was a place where I felt the helpfulness. I don’t know, and the opposite room seemed very close to each other. That’s why it’s a photo that belongs to an environment I miss and is the beginning of my happy memories.”*

Additionally, with the nostalgic photos about working environment-related memories (office environment and worktable in the organization), job-related memories (start date of employment), and colleagues-related memories (departed colleagues and strong bonds with colleagues), the participants stated that they appreciate the value of everything they had and felt a sense of gratitude intensely. The following narrative reflects this feeling of gratitude:

*“In this process, the feeling of gratitude happened every day. This feeling of nostalgia felt during the pandemic process increased the feeling of gratitude and made us feel more positive. When I look at this photo, I feel a strongly feeling of gratitude for the organization I work for.”*

Another feeling triggered by organizational nostalgia is sadness, according to the narratives and photographs of organizational memories related to the working environment (office environment), events (birthday celebrations), managers (departed managers), and colleagues (departed colleagues) in the pandemic era. One participant who was an academician and shared a photo from past graduation ceremonies expressed the feeling of sadness as below:

*“Normally our students would have graduated this June, but it could not happen due to the pandemic. I felt sadness when I saw this photo. I would like to see my beloved students throw their caps. I wish we had photos taken at their graduation. Not being able to take that photo makes me sad.”*

Finally, much of the narratives about working environment-related memories (office environment and worktable in the organization), event-related memories, managers-related memories (departed managers and managers’ motivating the employees), colleagues-related memories (departed colleagues and supporting each other at work), and job-related memories (milestones in the careers) provided by the participants stressed happiness as an emotion arising from organizational nostalgia as exemplified in the following quotes: *“The oldies... We are happier with the oldies. It seems like I’ve always been happy. Even now, when I looked at the photo, it made me happy.”* and *“I feel happy when I look at this photo of smiling faces. I dream of going back to those days again. We hope the pandemic will end soon.”*

#### 4. Discussion

The changes, restrictions, and difficulties in our lives with the pandemic have led most people to think about the past through nostalgia in the pandemic period. In this context, nostalgia has been used as a restorative resource for impairing the undesirable impact of the pandemic era. As such, this study broadens our understanding of the role of organizational nostalgia in times of adversity experienced with

the COVID-19 pandemic by stressing the nostalgic experiences and memories in the pandemic era, and antecedents and affective consequences of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia.

Firstly, the results of this study reveal that the pandemic era induces organizational nostalgia, which extended prior studies. Specifically, previous studies have found that nostalgia has restorative power in the existence of organization-related adverse events as organizational change [26], high burnout [16], low interactional justice [27], low procedural justice [28], and low social connectedness [27]. Here, we demonstrated the Covid-19 outbreak which is an adverse event within the context of societal crises, thereby responding to the call of Vaziri et al. [58] or future research. Vaziri et al. [58] stated that the impact of the novel, disruptive, and critical societal crises on employees' attitudes and behaviors has been neglected in organizational research. In this vein, we leverage organizational nostalgia literature and organizational research by concentrating on the COVID-19 outbreak as a societal crisis. The COVID-19 outbreak as health-related adverse events induced organizational nostalgia by creating discontinuity and dramatic changes in working life. This finding enhances our comprehension of the potential role of organizational nostalgia as a valuable resource in the existence of other adverse organizational events such as distress, anxiety, boredom, disengagement, organizational distrust, life and job dissatisfaction.

Indeed, memories and experiences that we remember with nostalgia make us realize the transience of difficulties today [15]. Knowing that all the difficult times and adverse situations in the past have passed away also facilitates overcoming the difficult times with the pandemic in today. In this vein, our findings suggest that most participants also use their feeling of organizational nostalgia as a source for the unexperienced and difficult times in the pandemic era. This finding leverages the study of Milligan [18] that changes (i.e. relocating to a new building) within the organization create an extreme sense of nostalgia in employees. Here, parallel to this view, with the transition to the teleworking or rotational working system due to the pandemic, the routine work life of the employees has changed and this new way of working has increased the feeling of nostalgia.

This study also highlights the specific memories about organizational life that are nostalgically remembered in the pandemic era. In this respect, memories related to managers, colleagues, organiza-

tional events, jobs, and working environments induce organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era. This result provides further support to the research of Gabriel [17] demonstrating that physical buildings, previous leaders who left from the organization for retirement or similar reasons, departed colleagues and social interaction among members elicit organizational nostalgia. Specifically, this study shows that event-related memories and job-related memories are also nostalgically remembered in the pandemic era, leveraging organizational nostalgia literature. Additionally, Gabriel [17] demonstrated memories related to colleagues (departed colleagues), managers (departed managers), work environment (physical buildings) elicit organizational nostalgia. Particularly, we observe that participants share more specific, detailed, and deep memories (i.e. strong bonds with colleagues, managers' sharing their knowledge and experience). One reason for this finding may be using the photo-elicitation interview due to allowing precise and deeper emotions and experiences of participants through visual stimuli compared to verbal interviews [42]. Besides, participants mainly talk about memories about social interactions, social activities and events, working environment, working together, and strong bonds with members of the organization. It seems that a possible reason for this finding is the changes in working life during the pandemic period.

Secondly, this study demonstrates that lack of social connectedness, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty evoke organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era, which extends the literature on nostalgia and organizational nostalgia. For example, previous studies found that aversive states evoke nostalgia as loneliness [7], fear of death [8], lack of social connectedness [8], and anxiety [51]. Concordantly, Davis [30] also stated that nostalgia 'occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties'. Here, we specifically revealed that with the transition to the remote working system during the pandemic, there is a lack of social connectedness due to the inability to work together with all of colleagues and managers, decrease in social interactions with the members of the organizations, and organizing online corporate meetings and events. In a similar vein, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to prevent the disease causes many people to fear of death and being infected by COVID-19. The uncertainty and anxiety created by the direction of COVID-19 spread and worsening the economic conditions of the countries have also complicated this

period. In this sense, nostalgia may be a safe place to escape for many people in the pandemic era.

Additionally, this study further expanded organizational nostalgia literature within the context of national culture. Specifically, Turkey has a collectivistic culture and collectivistic culture is associated with a strong bond and relations with other people, emotional dependence, and interdependence within the groups [59]. Also, Wasti et al. [37] also revealed that Turkish employees remember work-related autobiographical memories for enhancing social bonding greater extent. In this context, in line with these arguments, we found that the participants mainly mentioned about social interaction and group-based triggers (event-related memories, managers and colleagues-related memories) and antecedents (loneliness, lack of social connectedness) of nostalgia.

Third, this study reveals that organizational nostalgia elicits a wide variety of emotions such as regret, hope, pride, freedom, joy, peace, excitement, yearning, gratitude, sadness, and happiness in the pandemic period. Although, past studies have shown that nostalgia elicits positive affect [12, 13]. Here, remembering the memories and past experiences with nostalgia has triggered pleasant emotions by appreciating the value of everything and strengthening the belief regarding the transience of difficulties today. Additionally, the feeling of nostalgia triggered unpleasant emotions, which is in line with prior studies [8, 12], such as sadness and regret. However, from the viewpoint of unpleasant emotions, it was seen that these emotions were actually caused by the discontinuity in organizational life due to the pandemic. For instance, when the participants looked at the photos, due to the decrease in human relations, the less time spent together, and the decrease in interaction during the pandemic period, they regretted that they did not attach sufficient importance to these values in the pre-pandemic days. In other respects, the participants stated that they have not felt strong regret and that they were not affected negatively because these memories bring a sense of awareness along with regret. Likewise, the inability to hold the graduation ceremony and the separators installed between the work desks during the pandemic period create a sense of sadness due to the change brought to the activities and working environments that the participants attach to nostalgic importance. In sum, it has been revealed with nostalgia that unpleasant emotions arise due to discontinuity and changes in organizational life during the pandemic period.

Also, we used a photo-elicitation interview, which leverages past studies in organizational nostalgia literature. Previous studies investigated organizational nostalgia via qualitative methods [17, 19, 36] or a combination of survey and experimental design methods [16, 27, 28]. Here, we specifically conducted the photo-elicitation interview, and this allowed for precise, deeper, and submerged information about the emotions and experiences of participants compared to verbal interviews [42]. Additionally, organizational nostalgia is a concept mainly based on remembering and recalling memories. In this vein, the photo-elicitation method has facilitated remembering [43] and communicating memories for participants by capturing hidden emotions and feelings with visual stimuli [40].

Overall, the current study provides intriguing examples of nostalgic memories in the pandemic era and ensures a baseline understanding of the antecedents and consequences of organizational nostalgia within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic era.

#### *4.1. Practical implications*

From a practical perspective, the current study has shown that not only nostalgia but also organizational nostalgia has an important role in the existence of adverse events. Moreover, although it was not an organization-related adverse situation, organizational nostalgia has alleviated the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for many people. In this context, managers should pay more attention to the restorative and positive aspects of nostalgia in case of organizational adversity. In this vein, managers should maintain past experiences through stories, official documents, visuals, and video materials to elicit nostalgia during times of organizational hardships and adversity.

Besides, managers should pay attention to memories related to organizational experiences, events, or work environments that create a sense of nostalgia in case of possible organizational changes. In this regard, management can store and ensure the continuity of organizational nostalgic memories through organizational newsletters, websites, social media channels, and organizational museums. Management can also create key narratives and stories about nostalgic memories and past experiences as organizational success, founders, and milestones in the journey of the organization through promoting



storytelling. Storing memories and past experiences that will be important to the organization in these ways will increase the sense of continuity for employees. Especially the employees' disconnection with the memories and experiences that they attach importance with nostalgia can create an organizational discontinuity. Considering the studies in the nostalgia literature revealing that discontinuity has negative effects on behaviors, organizational changes should be made in the area that will not damage the ties with important memories and experiences in organizational life.

Contrarily, employees have negative as well as positive past experiences and memories in organizational life. The negative past experiences may lead to undesirable employee attitudes and behaviors. Hence, identifying these negative experiences/memories is crucial for managers. From the organizational continuity perspective, managers aim to enhance the continuity of positive aspects of organizational life whereas continuity is not beneficial in the presence of negative past experiences. In this context, managers should encourage nostalgia for identifying these negative past experiences. Especially, while ensuring the continuity of positive experiences in the organizational change within the organization, it is necessary to eliminate or transform negative past experiences from organizational life.

Based on this study, we also offer implications for occupational health practitioners. Particularly, from a positive psychology perspective, pleasant emotions leverage psychological health during a crisis [60]. Indeed, pleasant emotions broaden cognitive awareness, thinking, and mindsets, and thus people build personal, social, and psychological resources during the crisis [29]. In this vein, the current study provides insights about the use of nostalgia, as one of these pleasant emotions for enhancing the health and wellbeing of employees in the presence of adverse events. That said, practitioners should use organizational nostalgia for the prevention of adverse health-related impacts (i.e. loneliness, anxiety, fear) of the COVID-19 pandemic era. Besides, nostalgia increases positive mood, enhances positive self-regard, heightens the sense of social connectedness, and elevates the meaning in life [12]. Additionally, nostalgia is easy to implement, cost- and time-effective strategy for health promotion [8]. Hence, routine nostalgia intervention in the workplace could be applied for promoting psychological health and well-being. Furthermore, nostalgia therapy can be used for improving the comprehension of the tem-

porality of organizational hardship and enhancing optimism about the future.

#### 4.2. Limitations and directions for future research

The current research is limited by a few concerns. Specifically, this study used a cross-sectional design (all data have been collected at one point in time). In this regard, considering the context of the present study is mainly emotions, this study may not fully distinguish the main concept (organizational nostalgia), antecedents, and consequences due to the cross-sectional nature of the study. Therefore, we suggest that future research may further obtain longitudinal data to examine any changes in nostalgic memories that were remembered across the duration of the pandemic. Especially, whether the nostalgia is felt more intensely during the periods when the number of cases is at a peak and the second wave is experienced, should be examined in future research. Moreover, determining the memories that create a feeling of nostalgia for employees during and after the pandemic will enable us to see whether there is a difference in the memories we remember and attribute importance during the crisis periods and uneventful times.

Similar to all qualitative studies, a small sample size prevents the generalization of findings [44], although we considered sample diversity. Future research should conduct test quantitative-driven research. In particular, empirically investigating the antecedents and consequences of organizational nostalgia indicated through the current study may broaden our understanding of organizational nostalgia.

Using a photo-elicitation method was also a limitation of this study. Although a photo-elicitation interview provides rich data and valuable insights, this method is mainly based on the participants' self-report of nostalgic memories, the triggers, and the consequences of nostalgia. Future research can benefit from researcher-driven photo-elicitation interviews. In this way, photos related to working life in the pandemic provided by the researchers can be used as stimuli for the interviews. Besides, the follow-up research can use experimental design via participants in the organizational-nostalgia condition (bringing photos related to the nostalgic event experienced in organizational life within the pandemic period) and control condition (bringing photos

related to the ordinary event experienced in organizational life within the pandemic period) to deeply assess organizational nostalgia and investigate its antecedents and consequences.

Additionally, this study was performed using data gathered in Turkey. Based on the national culture perspective, Turkey has collectivistic culture [59]. It is possible that the participants mainly mentioned social interaction and group-based triggers as a result of collective culture. In this vein, future research should further indicate the possible national differences concerning organizational nostalgia, in the antecedents and triggers of organizational nostalgia. We encourage researchers to investigate different cultures especially based on future orientations, individualism, and low uncertainty avoidance as facets of cultures [61], to assess the organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era.

In this study, we assessed the COVID-19 pandemic as an adverse situation and event inducing organizational nostalgia. Future research should explore other adverse situations (i.e. economic and financial crisis, natural disasters) inducing organizational nostalgia to determine whether nostalgic memories are specific to particular adverse events and to determine the impact of organizational nostalgia on employees' health and wellbeing in the existence of other adverse events. Also, although we did not interfere with the organizational nostalgia-related photo choices of the participants in any way (such as memories/ experiences should be positive or negative), the participants voluntarily shared their positive memories within the scope of the current study. In this vein, future research should focus on gathering negative as well as positive organizational memories in the process of interviewing (i.e. general call for nominations for the research, interview questions) in a more neutral and non-intrusive manner to limit potential biases. Furthermore, the current study focused mainly on the affective consequences of pandemic-induced organizational nostalgia. The current study suggests that investigating behavioral (i.e. organizational commitment, task performance, job satisfaction) and motivational (i.e. perceived organizational support, intrinsic motivation) consequences of organizational nostalgia may also be a fruitful direction for future research.

## 5. Conclusion

This study addressed organizational nostalgia, which has received little empirical attention to date, as

a valuable resource against the undesirable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We examined the organizational nostalgia elicited by the pandemic era through a variety of organizational memories, antecedents, and affective consequences of organizational nostalgia. We conducted photo-elicitation interviews and used photos as stimuli, which has been unexplored in mainstream organization and management studies and allowed researchers to investigate the rich and emotional side of organizational life. The results showed that participants nostalgically remember memories related to managers, colleagues, organizational events, jobs, and the working environment inducing organizational nostalgia in the pandemic era. Besides, we demonstrated that lack of social connectedness, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty elicit organizational nostalgia. Besides, a wide variety of emotions such as regret, hope, pride, freedom, joy, peace, excitement, yearning, gratitude, sadness, and happiness have been triggered by organizational nostalgia in the pandemic period. Indeed, this research supports that the past is not left behind and is a guide and nostalgia may be a safe place to escape from adversity for most people today. We hope our work will attract the attention of more researchers and practitioners on this intriguing and under-researched phenomenon.

## Ethical approval

Not applicable.

## Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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