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Extensive Pivoting in Start-ups – The Effect on Employee Motivation and Commitment: a review of the literature

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KEYWORDS

Pivoting, Lean Start-up, Motivation, Intrinsic,

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In today's complex environment, pivoting becomes common amongst start-ups as many a times their idea may not work and make them to try entirely new idea by changing their product strategy, market strategy, business plan etc., to survive and achieve their desired goal. Employees working in such organisations are often expected to adapt quickly, learn continuously and contribute beyond a narrow job description. Through the selection and analysis of relevant literature, this paper aims to provide our understanding on how extensive pivoting in start-ups affect employee motivation & commitment and providing directions for future research.

Design/methodology/approach : By using an explicit method for the review (Pittaway, et al, 2004), the authors selected a set of papers, which covers the knowledge domain object of the study. In total 54 articles about start-ups, pivots in start-ups, and employees motivation theory in starts-ups have been selected and the full papers have been analysed

Findings: The comprehensive literature review & analysis revealed that pivoting is good up to a certain point, but pivoting extensively can be the reason that employees get demotivated that results in inferior start-up performance which ultimately lead to start-up failure.

Originality/Value: Despite the substantial scientific & practical discussion on factors affecting the start-up failure, pivot is relatively a new world and its literature is still under researched. The research area of pivoting literature is relatively young area that too in Indian context. Considering the huge number of start-ups being set-up in the country, research on pivoting and its effect on employees' motivation for start-up success is most relevant, as start-up is basically team of highly motivated employees with new/innovative knowledge. To fill this knowledge gap, the review of literature represents the first attempt to organise the scientific knowledge on pivoting that might affect the motivation & commitments.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Times in its publication dt. 15th November 2022 has predicted by experts that India is likely to surpass China as the most populous country in 2023. It is stated that increasing population in the country can turn out be an opportunity for India to become resource creators for the world. However, through to 2027, India will add 10 crore young people into the working age population, which is about five times the population of Australia and has to create jobs equivalent to five Australia's [1]. The United Nations 2017 report indicates by mid-century India's potential workforce will grow from 885 million people to 1.12 billion and Confederation of Indian Industry's "Focus on the Future" reflects without focus on education and skilling growing population will become liability. Hence India is at cross stage to utilize

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its growing young manpower to become resources creators for the world or becomes liability for the nation putting stress on the government and policy makers. The focus should be now on creating more and more entrepreneurs which can establish create jobs and wealth for the socio-economic development for the country.

As per NASSCOM & Grant Thornton report "Fuelling Entrepreneurship" October 2022 [2] India has emerged as the third largest ecosystem for start-ups globally with 107 unicorns in the country with 44 added in 2021 and 21added in 2022 with a total valuation of USD 340.79 billion [3]. The total number of unicorns in India is next to the United States of America (USA) and China [4]. As per the PIB report dt. 17th April 2026 released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India. The Government has recognized more than 55,200 start-ups during Financial Year 2025-26, marking the highest number of start-ups recognized in a single year since the launch of the Start-up India initiative. The Start-up India initiative was launched on 16th January 2016 with an Action Plan comprising schemes and incentives aimed at creating a robust ecosystem for nurturing innovation, encouraging private investments, and supporting start-ups across the country. Various programmes are being implemented to recognize, develop and empower start-ups. Since inception, the number of recognized start-ups has crossed 2.23 lakh as on 31st March 2026, generating more than 23.36 lakh direct jobs. More than 1.07 lakh recognized start-ups have at least one woman director or partner, accounting for approximately 48% of total recognized start-ups.

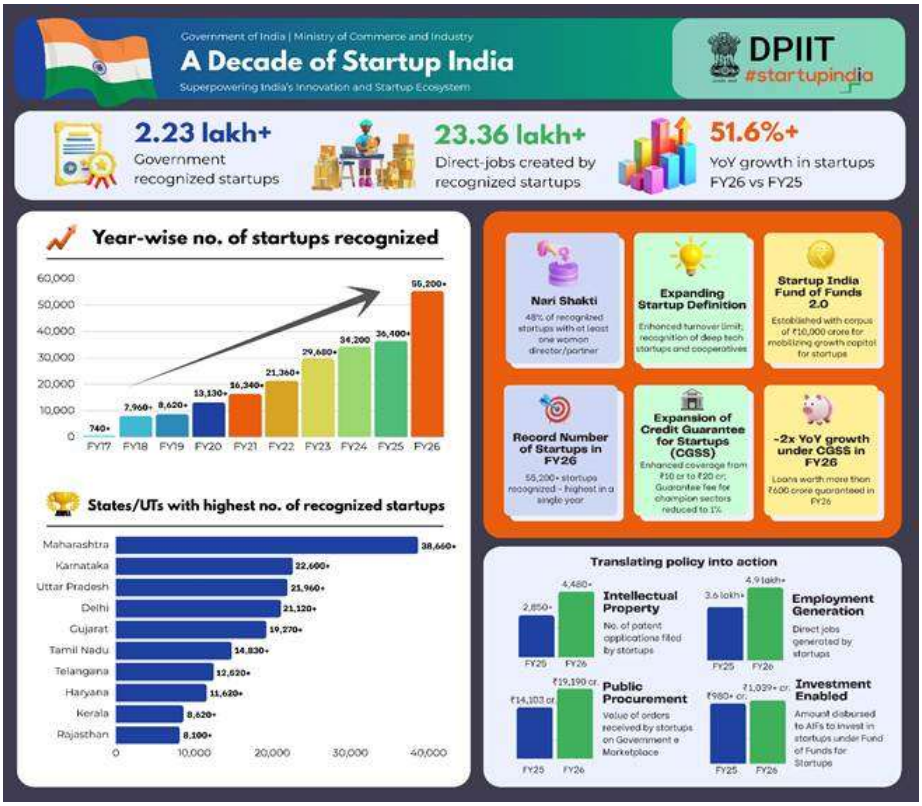

Fig. 1 Source: PIB Press Release by Ministry of Commerce & Industry, 17th April 2026

In view of these facts and key-role being played by start-ups in the Indian socio- economic development it is necessary for the country to keep the sustainability of the start-up ecosystem.

Reasons for Start-up Failure & Pivoting

Asper IBM study, many start-ups believe that they are creating the new ventures which is going to be the next big thing, but in reality, 90% of them fail in their first 5 years. According to DataLabs study 75% of the start-up's shutdown in India at the seed stage itself. In one the study [5] 10% of the start-up fail in the first year, 20% in the second year, 50% in five years and 70% in 10 years by time in business. According to "Lost & Forgotten: The Number Behind Failed India Start-ups" between 2014-2020 by Data Labs, 385 recorded funded start-ups shutdown with a total venture capital loss of $ 760 million and Bengaluru start-ups cost approximately $ 284 million to venture capital industry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 21.7% of start-up businesses fail their first year of operation. Less than 50% survive through year 5 and only a third of businesses make it 10 years. The research shows that [6 &7] the "Top 20 Reasons Start-up Failure" include (1) no market need, (2) ran out of cash, (3) not the right team, (4) get outcompeted, (5) pricing/cost issues, (6) poor

product, (7) need/lack business model, (8) poor marketing, (9) ignore customers, (10) product mis-timed, (11) lose focus, (12) disharmony on team/investors, (13) pivot gone bad, (14) lack passion, (15) bad location, (16) no financing and investor interest, (17) legal challenges, (18) don't use network or advisors, (19) burn out, and (20) failure to pivot. It is quite interesting from these research reports to note that "Pivot Gone Bad" and "Failure to Pivot" are amongst the top 20 reasons for start-up failure constitutes about 17% of the start-up failure, strongly indicating pivot as one of the major reasons why a start-up fails? Hence proper understanding of importance and effect of pivoting may lead to start-up failure is very crucial to reduce such percentage of failure, especially for entrepreneurs as they will be pivoting their business plan/model due to external and internal factors at various stages of start-up life cycle.

There are many reasons why start-ups need to pivot [8] In today's complex environment, pivoting becomes common amongst start-ups as many a times their idea may not work and make them to try entirely new idea by changing their product strategy, market strategy, business plan etc., to survive and achieve their desired goal. The founding entrepreneurs after too many iterations in the business plan will come to conclusion that their product or market or business strategy is not working and decide to introduce pivot. However, implementing the pivoting plan in action requires consistent team buy-in and collaboration, and communication is key to maintaining that. Entrepreneurs as leaders are also key to stake holders in keeping the motivation amongst the start-up employees too.

1.2 Pivoting & its Effect on Start-up Employee Motivation & Commitment

In a research study conducted by Pavan Kumar Sala & others [9] on 80 technology start-up companies have pursued pivot 187 times! with a customer segment pivot was the highest pursued pivot and customer need pivot is the second most pursued pivot followed by value capture pivot and market segment pivot was least pursued. In another study by Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar [10] finds that 7 different types of pivots were made in the initial years of start-up life cycle. These findings give raise to a question

"Start-up employees have been hired to work on a particular idea and worked tirelessly has been asked to work on different idea by effecting too many pivoting – what happens to their morale, enthusiasm, motivation and commitment?" This boiled down to a question "Why? This idea is not what I was sold for, not why I joined You guys [11] (Harsh Snehanshu, 2016).

Various researchers have attempted through light on the effect of too many pivoting on start-up employee motivation and commitment. The pivoting may be one of the possible reasons in start-up are said to often miss a high level of commitment of employee [12] (Baum & Silverman, 2004). Pivots can indicate a lack of passion about the original idea, which started the business, is another possible reason that pivots can be demoralising [13] (McGinn, 2012). Further, the article "Is Pivot the New Fail? for instance, criticises pivoting for promoting failure too much or "Too many pivots, Too little passion" (McGinn, September 2012, Harvard Business Review) talk about problems that arise from extensive pivoting as part of the lean approach.

This review paper analyses the various literature available in extensive pivoting effect on start-up employee motivation and commitments, their findings and research gaps.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will be divided into four parts. The first section provides an overview of "The Key Principles of Lean Start-up", the second section will provide brief on "Pivots in Start-ups as a Phenomenon", the third on overview of "Employees Motivation Theory in Start-ups", the fourth on existing literature on "Extensive pivoting in start-ups and its effect on employee motivation & commitment". Lastly the authors will provide the reader with concluding remarks with summary of analysis on how the existing research can help the authors bridge the gap of existing knowledge, future scope and direction of research.

2.1 The Key Principles of Lean Start-up

Entrepreneurship be in technology or product or service is a very important field that can enhance economic growth and create new market opportunities for the nation. Therefore, a question arises how can a start-up company survive in the long run? in the dynamic complex business environment facing extreme uncertainty with internal and external challenges. One way to address this is by implementing Lean Start-up Approach (LSA) which encourages start-ups to interact with customers and promotes to test new fundamental hypothesis to improve product or service or any other factor based on the feedback. The key resources for start-ups is its employees be it product development team, marketing team, even founder or non-founder. According to [14] (Katz et al., 2000) the start-up team is a major determinant for success or failure of start-ups.

The Lean Start-up Approach [15] has first introduced by Ries (2011) which is basic framework for lean start-up. This approach enables entrepreneurs to reduce their failure rates of start-ups by taking a strategic decision that leads a start-up to significantly change one or more of its basic components like product, entrepreneurial team, business model or growth strategy called pivots. Changing all components at the same time is considered starting completely new business, rather

than a pivot. Understanding pivot can help entrepreneurs to keep trying the unsuccessful business idea which results in unnecessary wasting resources like time, money, effort of teams and keep investors on board. The lean start-up has been introduced for the start-up entrepreneurs to reduce high failure rates based on the premise according to Ries (2011) "start-up success can be engineered by following the process, which can be learned, which means it can be taught" by following systematic method of entrepreneurship. Fig.1 provides the formwork of lean start-up process steps for the benefits of lean methodology.

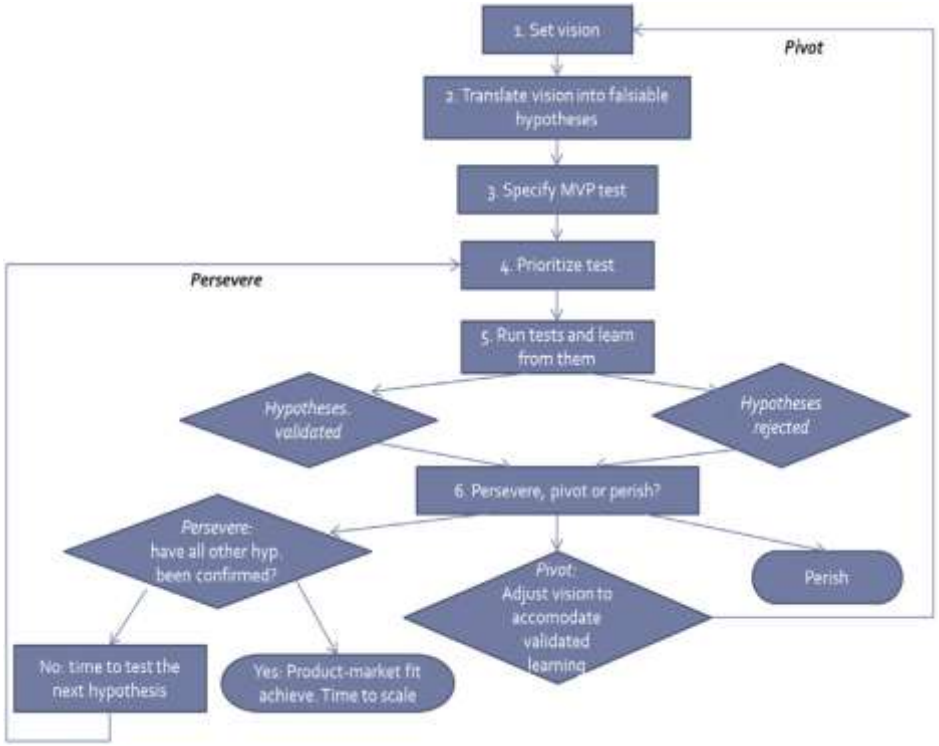

Fig. 2. Lean start-up process steps (Eisenmann et al., 2012) [16].

The LSA methodology follows the six steps starting from setting vision to successful pivot to product market fit to achieve scaling the business. According to Ries (2011) there are four main principles of LSA [17] which include validate learning, iterate rapidly, pivot as necessary and avoid premature scaling.

2.1.1 Validate learning

According to Eric Ries (2011), validated learning is an initial stage of progress that can be quickly verified to determine whether a set vision is correct. Validated learning treats product development as a series of experiments that use scientific method to answer questions about market demand. Validated learning is especially good at helping start-ups avoid building features that customers don't want or need. The thinking is that by continually validating what matters most to customers [18]. As start-up face great uncertainty, a mindset learning, experimentation and adoption is required in order to increase the odds of success [19] (Mullins & Komisar 2009). Lean start-up strives for continuous market feedback in order to reduce the degree of uncertainty [17]. By following experiments and thoroughly confirm or disapprove uncertain parts of business model, this process finally returns validated learning which is the effective measurement of advancement in lean start-up [17].

2.1.2 Iterate rapidly

Once the entrepreneur has created a hypothesis about what customers want, the next step is to test the hypothesis by building a prototype -- which in lean-speak is referred to as a minimum viable product (MVP). Potential customers are then asked for feedback about the prototype and the information is used to validate reality and fine-tune the product. The process is purposely iterative and is continually repeated throughout the product's lifecycle [18]. According to (Ries, Eisenmann and Furr, 2011) MVP is "The minimum set of features required to secure the next round of validated learning". Cooper and Vlaskovitd (2010) [20] define MVP as more customer centric "A product with the least number of features needed to achieve a specific objective, and that users are willing to pay for in some form of a scarce resource" it means customers need to pay something to get specific features of the product. The resources may be time, money or attention. Reduce the

cost of wasting resources including time in developing features which no customers want. By adding or removing one "vital" features separately and testing it by offering it to customers for a trade of resources, that entrepreneur will know the true value of adding an extra feature (Ries et al., 2011).

2.1.3 Pivot as necessary

With the testing hypothesis and iterating rapidly, the lean start-up either approves or disapprove its current business model by pivoting towards success and "fail forward". A failed business model which leads to new pivot and as a result affected elements of business model are altered depending on the requirement typically one at a time in order to reduce of wastage of resources and time (Cooper & Vlaskovitd , 2010, Ries, Eisenmann & Furr, 2011). The type and magnitude of pivots varies and it is reasonable that larger pivots will happen more occasionally in the early stage of start-up. The start-up achieves, a product/market fit when the product or service can be validated by a strong demand by prospective users who represents a sizeable market. Before the product/market fit is reached, the focus should be to validate learning by means of pivoting. After the fit is found, the focus should change to growth via optimization (Cooper & Vlaskovitd , 2010).

2.1.4 Avoid premature scaling

Premature scaling is perhaps the No.1definable cause of start-ups death. According to some reports premature scaling occurs in 70 percent of companies and is responsible for the failure of 74 percent of tech start-ups [21, Neil Patel, 2015]. One reason why premature scaling is so dangerous is because it is so deceptive. As Nathan Furr explains "most start-ups are dying and they are dying because they are doing good things but doing them out -of-order" [21, Neil Patel, 2015]. The most common factors of too much, too soon are too much money, too many employees, too many early adopters, early adopters are not market they leave quickly as they arrive.

If premature scaling is focusing on one dimension of the business and advancing it out of the sync with the rest of the operations, then to avoid this pitfall, entrepreneurs should focus on something that's un-scalable. Learning about customers, spending time with individual customers, listening to customer complaints are all un-scalable. Focusing on scaling is not the right thing. Focusing on your customer is, by contrast, is healthy and essential [21, Neil Patel, 2015].

Frederick Meiners [22] (2018) mentions other methodologies offer alternative ways to build start-ups – Customer Development (Blank 2003), Design Thinking (Brown 2009), Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur 2010), Entrepreneurial Operating System The results can add value to entrepreneurship by understanding how pivoting is affecting important determinants (Wickman 2011), The $100 Start-up (Guillebeau, 2012), Lean Canvas (Maurya 2012), Value proposition Design Osterwalder et.al 2014), Agile Development (Shore and Warden 2008). The lean methodology is the most popular and the fast adoption and quickly achieved reputation of the lean start-up by leading business schools e.g Stanford University, Harvard Business School, Berkely, Columbia University and accelerators e.g Techstars, 500 start-ups, Y-Combinator etc. (Blank 2013).

2.2 Pivots in Start-ups as a Phenomenon

Pivot is relatively a new world and its literature is still under researched. Pivot in start-up follows from Eric Ries (2011) work on LSA following three steps first "turn idea into a product", second "measure its effect" and third "learn form results". With this approach, start-ups test their business model and make early decision to evaluate whether the business should pivot or persevere, which eventually makes start-up to carryout pivots and how the pivot changes the business hypothesis. Ries (2011) definition for start-up pivot follows *"structured course correction designed to test a new fundamental hypothesis about the product, strategy and engine of growth"*. Hence, a start-up pivot or business pivot occurs when a company shifts its business strategy to accommodate changes in its industry, customer preferences, or any other factors that impact its bottom line. Another definition of pivot could be "it is an essential process of a start-up translating direct or indirect feedback into a change in its business plan or model or strategy".

Pivoting is paramount to start-ups – NASSCOM. According to recent survey by NASSCOM, 70 percent of start-ups in India have less than three months of cash liquidity in the banks, and 22 percent may find it challenging to survive until the end of the year. In light of such disruptive statistics, it is critical for start-ups to adapt their offering rapidly to meet the evolving demands of the altered marketplace. The time has to come to pivot to change the business strategy without tinkering with its foundation.

The data collected from various published articles [23, 24] provides an insight on start-up founders and pivot strategies. In Wilburlabs survey of 150 founders, 55% reported pivoting to avoid failure. Less than half felt confident in their likelihood of success when the pivot took place. Even so, nearly 75% of the founders who pivoted said it was successful. During a pivot, founders should build the plane as they fly it. The team must learn from mistakes, iterate, and adapt quickly before the money runs out. Presumably, founders who invest in identifying and mitigating future risks have better odds of not only pivoting but surviving the process. A majority of founders pivoted by updating or improving their business plan. As noted earlier, a bad business plan is the third most common cause of failure and is linked to running out of money, the most frequently reported reason for failure. Few startups launch with a bulletproof, immutable plan. Rather, successful founders

create a plan and improve it continuously as market conditions and customer feedback demand. Changing the business plan can lead to the second and third most popular strategies: improving the existing product or launching a new one.

Twitter, Pinterest and Flickr are well-known, successful software start-ups. However, not many people know how they started. For example, Twitter was initially a podcast service, Pinterest was born from the Tote application that allowed people to browse and shop their favourite retailers and Flickr used to offer an online multiplayer role-playing game. There are many such examples like Starbucks, Nokia, PayPal, HP, Instagram, Netflix etc., This shows that even most successful start-ups don't necessarily end up the way they started, and some change direction drastically.

2.2.1 Know when should start-up considering pivoting?

According to lean start-up approach knowing when to pivot is also outcome of continuous learning. When things get tough, start-ups should look at solving the problem with more research, customer development, funding etc., depending on the problem they are facing, if they can't think of a solution regardless of how improbable it may be, they should consider pivoting. Instead of changing the whole, only one aspect either product or business gets the most traction. Consider pivoting when there is no response for your offering in the market, company is always trying and failing to overrule competition, the financial viability of the business isn't certain and company's business objective and expectation has changed from its inception. Every entrepreneur knows that customer satisfaction must always come first. Customers expressing dissatisfaction with company's product or service can indicate that your business needs to pivot. Even in instances when customers aren't being direct, a lack of positive feedback can indicate a need for change, it is through pivoting and implementing the necessary changes that will ensure business gets back on the right path.

2.2.2 Triggering factors for start-up pivoting

There are many external and internal factors that trigger to a pivot [25]. In the external environment, it can be factors such as competition, technology change, timing, legal issues etc., and in internal environment it can be triggered due to flawed business model, not the right team, unsustainable business etc., where it might not solve the right need [26] (Bajwa, wang, Duc, Chanin and Abrahamson, 2016). In research made by Bajwa et al. [8] (2017), the authors surveyed factors that rigger pivots by using a review of 55 unknown pivots in 49 different start-ups. The authors found 14 triggering factors that can cause pivots as provided in table 1 below.

Table 1: Source: Pivot Triggering Factors (Bajwa et al. 2017)

Pivot Triggering Factors		
Factor	**Process**	**Description**
Negative customer reaction	External	Customer adoption and retention are slow, and customer provide negative or no response
Inability to survive the competition	External	Competition outplays the start-up by working on the same idea more effectively
Technology Challenge	External	Existing technologies have limitations or technologies or technologies have emerged that are better than the start-ups
Influence of investor, mentor or partner	External	An investor, mentor or partner suggest or experts' pressure to change direction
User appreciation of one product feature	External	Users like one feature rather than the entire product
Unanticipated use of product	External	Users utilize the product in an unexpected way
Bad timing	External	The market isn't ready to accept the product
A positive response from an unforeseen customer segment	External	Among the customer segments, one shows unexpected interest

Legal issue	External	Legal issues occur as copyrights occur with another company
A side project that's more successful than the main project	External	Customers lack interest in the main product, but like a side product
Narrowing of the target market	External	The initial target market becomes too small for the business to grow and become profitable
Flawed business model	Internal	Customer acquisition costs are high, or the revenue model is ineffective
Identification of a more significant customer need by solving and internal problem	Internal	While solving an internal problem to support the core product, the start-up realizes that customers are more concerned about the internal problem and should change its product accordingly
Un-scalable business	Internal	The product solves the problem that does not concern many people

Throughout the 4 identified triggering factors, 11 are focused on external factors and only three are focused on internal factors. The findings indicate that almost all the triggering factors were related to customers. This view suggests that entrepreneurs should focus on customers rather than developing a product and then looking for customers [25].

2.2.3 Types of pivoting

Ries (2011) and Bajwa et al (2017) have identified various types of pivots that a start-up implements at various stages of its life cycle. There are nine types of pivots grouped into four categories, the major category amongst them is product/technology side of business and marketing side of the business. Table 2 gives the picture of types of pivots and related definition. To understand the type of pivot few corresponding examples are also provided in Table 3.

Table 2: Different types of pivots

Category	**Pivot Type**	**Definition**
Product	Zoom-in	A single product feature becomes the entire product.
	Zoom-out	An entire product becomes a feature of a larger product.
	Technology	The product offers the same solution with different technology.
Market	Customer need	The new product solves a different customer problem than the original.
	Customer segment	The new product targets a different customer segment
	Channel	The start-up finds a better way to reach customers.
Platform	Platform	A product becomes a platform or vice versa.
Business Architecture	Business Architecture	The start-up switches from B2B sales to B2C (or vice-versa).
Engine of Growth	Engine of Growth	The start-up changes its growth strategy to viral, sticky, and paid growth.

Sources: The lean startup, 2011, Eric Ries; and Start-ups must be ready to pivot, 2017, Bajwa et al.

Table 3: Different types of pivots applied by various firms at start-up stage

Category	Pivot Type	Examples
Product	Zoom-in	**Benefit System:** Tried to create full cafeteria system (different employee's benefit). The B2B customer was interested mainly in fitness clubs so they decided to concentrate on that.
	Zoom-out	**MOZ:** Start by creating website for their customers (consulting service). Customers were not happy so they decide to add SEO service where they would help them position their website to make more money
	Technology	**Netflix:** started sending via mails DVD. In 2007 they switched to delivering the entertainment via streaming (internet)
Market	Customer need	**InPost:** Originally delivery of letters. They discovered that (as online sales were growing) reqmt. are for parcels. People did not have place to where they could pick up parcel. Created locker for parcels.
	Customer segment	**Snapchat**: Was originally an app targeted at students. They discovered that mainly teenagers were using the app no to leave any clue for their parents, so they switch the effort this target groups
	Channel	**Avon:** Start the switch from direct sales (MLM) to online/offline sales Apple: Moved from third part retail chains and platform to their own retail chain & direct sales
Platform	Platform	**Facebook:** Started as a desktop application. As mobile grew they become mobile first and have adjusted the desktop version to look and feel like the mobile version.
Business Architecture	Business Architecture	**Google Glass:** Stared as a mass product that would replace the phone. Due to adoption problem they moved to specialist (niche market) like doctors using the google glass to access information without use of hands.
Engine of Growth	Engine of Growth	**WhatsApp:** From paid App (1 USD/ year) to free app that earns money from Ads **Gmail:** From a paid solution to free solution (makes money from Ads) to freemium service (you get money from ads and selling cloud space)

Sources: The lean startup, 2011, Eric Ries; and Start-ups must be ready to pivot, 2017, Bajwa et al.

For start-ups in their early stage, it is common to undergo multiple pivot types at the same time [25]. For instance, Instagram is an example of a company that performed both zoom-in and technology pivot. Originally Instagram was a service called Burbn, which combined phot sharing and a game. However, Instagram found their users to use the photo-sharing features mainly, and therefore, they decided to zoom in on their single feature product [27] (MacManus, 2012)

2.2.4 Frequency & types of pivots pursued by start-ups

This section focuses on available literature on various types of pivots carried out by start-ups and the factors that triggered pivots. The research study conducted by Pavan Kumar Sala et. al (2021) [28] while studying and analysing the secondary data of 80 technology start-up companies it was observed that these start-ups have pursued different types of pivots 187 time and the most frequently pursued pivots are customer-oriented types of pivots (15%) and customer need pivot (12%) followed by the value capture pivot (11%). The frequency factors that triggered pivots are flawed business model (16%)

customer feedback (14%), technology challenges (13%), influence of investor/partner/founder (12%) and un-scalable business (11%). The results tabulated by the authors are provided below.

Table 4 : Frequency of pivots pursued by the tech start-ups

Type of Pivots	**No. of Times Pursued**	**Percentage**
Social pivot	0	0%
Market segment pivot	2	1%
Complete pivot	8	4%
Technology pivot	9	5%
Zoom-out pivot	10	5%
Platform pivot	11	6%
Zoom-in pivot	13	7%
Channel pivot	14	7%
Business architecture pivot	14	7%
Engine of growth pivot	17	9%
Side project pivot	17	9%
Value capture pivot	21	11%
Customer need pivot	23	12%
Customer segment pivot	28	15%
Grand Total	**187**	**100%**

Source: Exploring entrepreneurial pivoting & the factors that trigger pivots by tech start-ups Pavan Kumar Sala et. al (2021)

Table 5: Frequency of factors that triggered pivots

Factors	**No. of Times Occurred**	**Percentage**
Legal issues	1	1%
Wrong timing	3	2%
Competition	4	2%
Side project success	5	3%
Business financials	15	8%
Market conditions	17	9%
MC-Pandemic	19	10%
Unscalable business	20	11%

Influence of investor, partner or founder	22	12%
Technology challenges	24	13%
Customer feedback	27	14%
Flawed business model	30	16%
Grand Total	**187**	**100%**

Source: Exploring entrepreneurial pivoting & the factors that trigger pivots by tech start-ups Pavan Kumar Sala et. al (2021)

An analysis on pivots made by start-ups [29] conducted by Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016) reflects on various types of pivots made during which stage of the life cycle and which pivot is made more frequently etc., The fig. 2 shows the type of pivots pursued in different stages of a start-up life cycle.

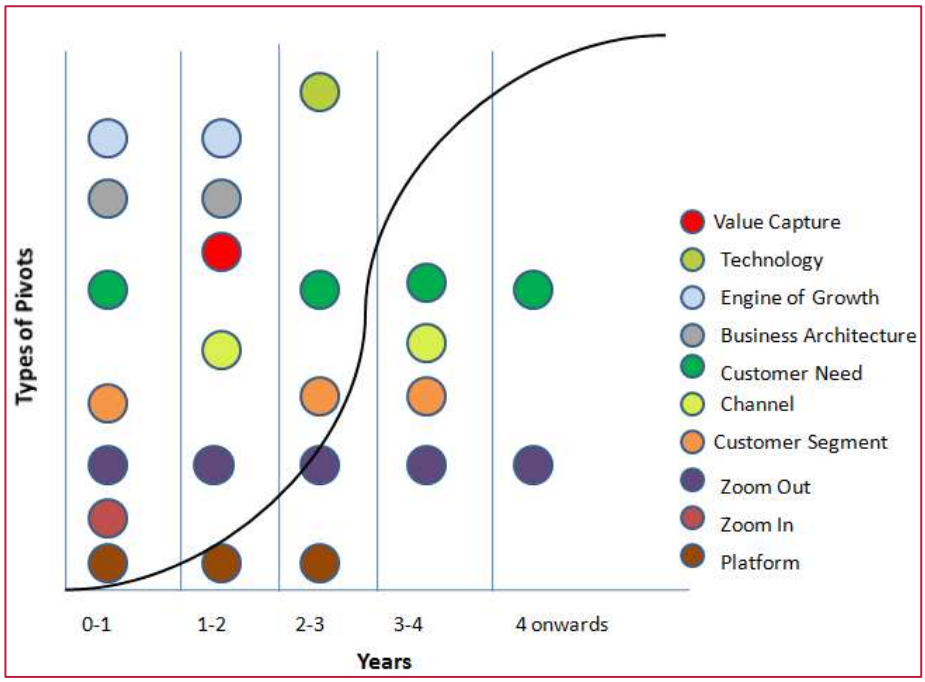

Fig 3: type of pivots pursued in different stages of a start-up life cycle

Source: An analysis on pivots made by start-ups [29] conducted by Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016). www.metisindia.com

From the figure following can be inferred [29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016):

The major concentration of various types of pivots is in the initial 3 years of the start-up life cycle, as it can be seen that 7 different types of pivots were made in the year 0-1, 6 in the year 1-2 and 5 in the year 2-3 [29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016).

The number of pivots made by start-ups after first 3 years then decreases and very less pivots are made 4th year onwards. Hence it can be concluded that start-ups mainly focus on carrying pivots in the initial stages of their life cycle as compared to the later stages. [29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016).

Also, it can be seen that Zoom Out Pivot is the one that has been made throughout and has its presence in all years. Hence it can be inferred that there is a trend to add more features in the product/services provided by start-ups in order to gain competitive advantage [29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016).

After Zoom Out Pivot, it is the Customer need Pivot that is given major focus as it is also made mostly in all stages of start-up life cycle. Hence, it can be said that Zoom Out and Customer Need Pivots are the most prevalent pivots for start-ups

[29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016).

Further study [29] Charu Mishra & Shashank Kumar (2016) shows that, in terms of frequency of types of pivots (Fig. 3) also, the Customer Need, Zoom Out and Customer Segment Pivot have occurred maximum number of times as can be reflected from the Fig.3. Thus finding is also consistent with the fact that Zoom Out and Customer Need Pivot are the more prevalent pivots.

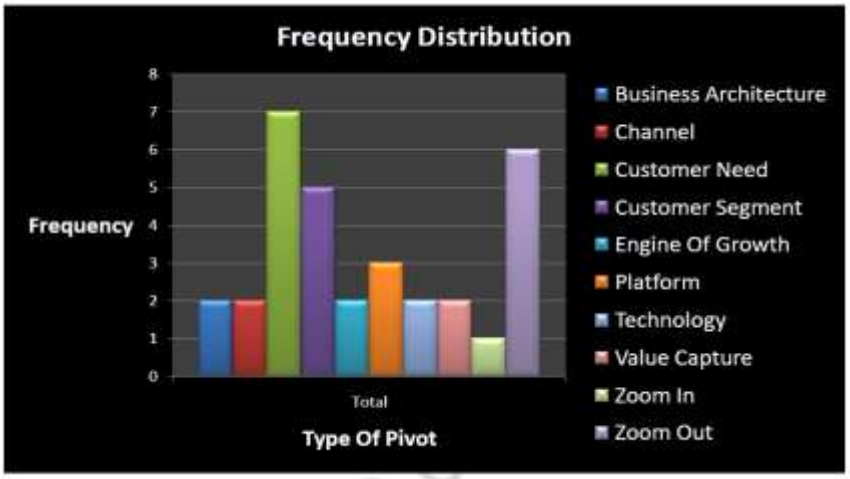

Fig 4: Frequency distribution of various types of pivots in different stages of start-up life cycle

Source: An analysis on pivots made by start-ups [29] conducted by Charu Mishra &

Shashank Kumar (2016). www.metisindia.com

In a study conducted by Sisce Eka Fitria et. al (2022) [30] in Indonesia which is ranked 5th in the world with a total of 2297 start-ups, on the pivot strategy used by start-ups at the Business Incubator in Bandung Techno Park when making business strategy decisions, the results indicated that the most widely used type of pivot strategy is the Customer Segment Pivot. The common pivot strategy types are Zoom-in Pivot, Zoom-out Pivot and Customer Need Pivot. The factors that influence when deciding to use the pivot strategy are customer request, selection of inappropriate target segments, inadequate business vision, incompatible features and finding new opportunities that match customer needs [30] (Sisce Eka Fitria et. al 2022).

2.2.5 Pivot outcomes on customers & employees

Start-ups who pivot triggering external or internal factors will reduce their chances of failure and more likely to create product or services that create value for their customers [31] (McDonald & Bremmer 2020). However, there will be problem with the stakeholders when a company decides to change its direction and facing the risk of losing trust and confidence in the founders, team and idea. McDonald and Bermmer (2020) further add that the key to retaining stakeholders' confidence is to revisit and broaden the perspective and not change the original pitch the stake holders were sold on. Although some start-ups result success after a pivot, research shows that most start-ups fail their pivots [32] (Duchesneau & Gartner, 1990). Hence, the outcome of pivot performance [33] (Brush, Egelman & Manolova, 2015). Pivots who turn out to be successful often address the needs of their customers better, and therefore, the pivot will have a positive impact on their customers' interest [34, 35] (Amit & Zott, 2001; Eisenhardt & Tabrizi, 1995). Opposite, ventures that cannot engage their customers will often fail in their attempt to pivot and not be able to acquire new customers, causing the venture to fail their pivot [36, 37] (Hampel, Tracey and Weber, 2020, Mc Donald & Gao, 2019)

Nevertheless, pivoting is not the solution to everything and can also have a dark side [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). Pivoting if done extensively can also become a problem in particular if important stakeholder lose faith in the original idea and in the entrepreneurial team [13] (McGinn, 2012). Following criticism about the extensive use of pivoting from (McGinn, 2012), justification about the importance and motives to pivot for employees and investors can be as important as pivoting itself [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). This also important as the employees are not demoralise or upset and clear about the new business strategies and direction. This indicates that understanding how the process of pivoting is structured is critical to judge if employees who are already introduced to be major determinant for success of start-ups are prepared for a pivot or on the contrary are surprised by it [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). Both learning theory and pivot

literature suggests that pivots are structured process, each pivot is the result of rigorous planning as the methodology of the lean start-up advises entrepreneurs to follow the very structured process including possible pivots (Frederick Meiners, 2018). Hence, we can assume that employees under normal and theoretical condition should not be surprised by pivots and can prepare to work on a new direction since its definition suggests a very structured and foreseeable path, which leads to a pivot [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

Entrepreneur look at whether pivots affect employee motivation and commitment and if so in what direction? Negative effects might eventually result in start-up failure. Employees in start-up are said to often miss a high level of commitment. The role of pivoting can be a possible reason - (Baum & Silverman, 2004)

2.3 Employees Motivation Theory in Start-ups

Contrary to established firms, start-ups offer challenging work environments for individuals and the motivational backgrounds also differ variedly, i.e highly dynamic and risky environments. The present literature review is focused on job motivation on an individual level in start-ups it is important to analyse specific motivational characteristics of this group [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). The literature on motivation differentiates extrinsic and intrinsic factors, where intrinsic motivation refers to the internal feelings of a person liking and enjoying the job, whereas extrinsic motivation is linked to doing something because either positive or negative outcomes may cause them to take action [38] (Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. 2000). In another example [39] (Fishman C 1998) points out that one reason, why people prefer to work in start-ups despite extrinsic factors like lower salary and lower job security is to have a chance to be very connected to the top of the company, which refers to higher job responsibilities, which is also extrinsic. In start-ups employees are placed to a play key role at a young age with higher responsibilities. However, in start-ups intrinsic factors or motives likely to play an increasingly important role like challenging job assignments [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). According to Amabile (1997) [40] the motivation to work on something that is interesting and intellectually challenging can be a crucial factor to attract talent. Also intrinsically motivated people tend to display higher levels of creativity, which in turn crucial for star-up's success (Amabile, 1997).

Sauremann's Framework (2017) [41], which focuses on employee motivation in start-ups, analysis five important motivational factors which differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic. The framework is illustrated in fig. 4 which can provide measurable indicators of motivational factors and given an insight on the origin of overall changes in the motivation. These five factors to measure motivation are job security, salary, responsibility, independence and challenge at work. The first three refers to extrinsic factors and the latter two referring to the intrinsic factors.

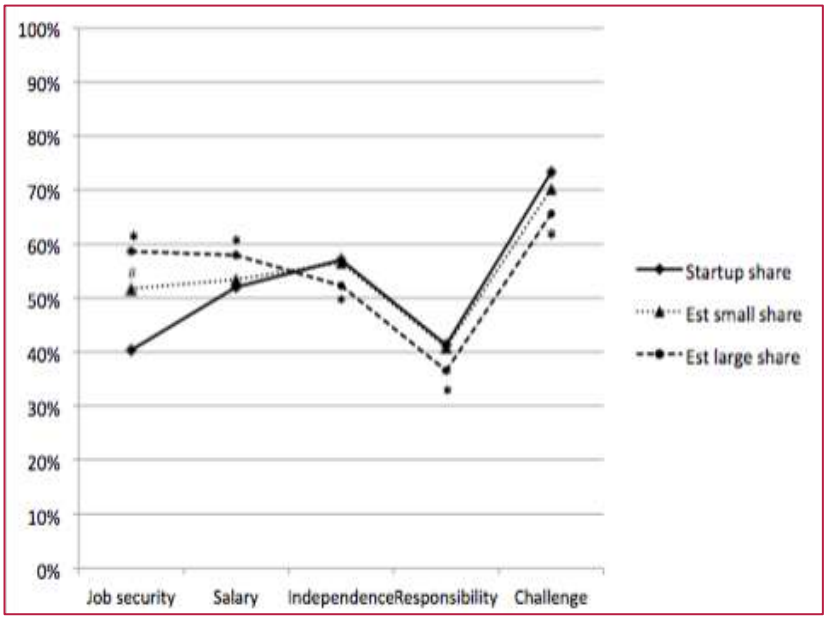

Fig. 5: Source: Motivational factors across firm types, taken from Sauermann (2017) Fire in the Belly? Employee Motives and Innovative Performance in Start-ups versus Established Firms

From the fig.5 one can observe that employee motivation is majorly intrinsic i.e independence and challenge at work in start-ups, so if extensive pivoting demotivates employees the start-up would face a serious problem because they rely on the intrinsic factors, as extrinsic incentives such as high salaries and higher job security may not be available as offered by established firms. Pivoting by definition by various authors involves substantial changes in the business model and thus is also always affecting the employees (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

Various literature reviewed and mentioned at sections of this review article by authors like Baum & Silverman (2004), McGinn (2009, 2012) and Kim (2016) leads to the hypothesis *that "too many pivoting leads to the negative motivational and commitments of the start-up employees".*

2.4 Extensive Pivoting in Start-ups and its Effect on Employee Motivation & Commitment

We have not found many research articles on the above thesis related topic from various sources like Google Scholar, Emarald Insight, EBSCO, SCOPUS, Web of Science, SAGE, Wiley Online Library etc., No research has been done on the selected topic in India. The one research article found on the research topic is the thesis work on "A dark side of pivoting? – The effect on employee motivation & commitment" carried out by Frederick Meiners, University of Catolica, Portugese, 15.03.2018.

http://hdl.handle.net/10400.14/25390.

The researchers followed the descriptive approach, collecting primary data through an online small sample of 50 and 3-minute survey. 50% of the responses were obtained in the Websummit, the biggest technology conference in the world. The approach was chosen to get the results, which can describe the effect of pivoting on motivation. Quantitative data is used to get results instead of qualitative data and the goal was to establish evidence with results in a given & fixed environment of LSA of structured pivoting [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018). The research questions & hypothesis are summarised below in table 6.

Table 5: Research questions & hypothesis [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

Research questions	**Hypothesis**
R.Q.1 is there a dark side of pivoting, through negative effects of pivoting on motivation?	H.1 Pivoting has a negative relationship with on-the-job motivation in start-up employees
R.Q.2 What motivational framework describes the relationships between pivots and job motivation?	H.2 (a) Technology pivots have a higher effect on motivation on technology employees than market pivots
R.Q.3 Is there a type of pivot that might affect motivation more than other?	H.2. (b) Market pivots have a higher effect on motivation on sales and marketing employees than technology pivots.

Table 6 summarises all variables conducted through the survey distinguished by dependent variables, motivational factors and the remaining control variables. The sample characteristics consists of 17 software, 18 service oriented and 15 technology-oriented companies to have proper mix of representation. The respondent job position includes 22 founders, 28 non-founders, 28 technologies oriented and 33 marketing & sales. The number of employees in start-up were more than 20 are 14, 15 to 20 are 7, 10 to 15 are 9, 5 to 01 are 14 and less than 5 are 6 start-ups.

Table 6: variables overview [22] (Frederick Meiners, 2018)

Variable	**Item asked**
Control Variable	Number of pivots experienced
Control Variable	Nature of pivot that had biggest impact
Control Variable	Pivot that would affect motivation most
Control Variable	Frustration
Dependent Variable	Effect of motivation
Dependent Variable	Effect on commitment
Motivational factors	Job security
Motivational factors	Challenging job tasks
Motivational factors	Independence at work

Motivational factors	Amount of responsibility
Motivational factors	Salary/bonuses
Control Variable	Start-up's age
Control Variable	Size of start-up
Control Variable	Tenure duration of employee
Control Variable	Industry
Control Variable	Founding team or not
Control Variable	Job posting description

The authors have carried out the data analysis which include; correlation analysis on effect of pivoting on motivation, Regression models to understand on overall positive effect of pivots on motivation, Analysis of linear regression models on significance checks with control variable, Welch Two sample t-test on nature of pivot on different employee types and significance check with sub-sample analysis.

2.4.1 Main findings from the literature (Frederick Meiners, 2018)

Research findings strengthen the methodology of the lean start-up from Eric Ries (2009), since positive effects of pivots on salaries originate from the lean methodology and indicate increasing expected performance of start-up through pivots, showing that in general there is a great belief in the outcomes of the pivot (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

The study does not support the claim that pivots have detrimental effects on employee motivation. On the opposite the results suggest a positive relationship of pivoting on individual's job motivations and commitments. Among 50 respondents from the survey 39 in total answered that pivots had positive effects on their motivation (Frederick Meiners, 2018)

The study could not find significant explanations from intrinsic factors namely challenging job task and autonomy or from extrinsic factors such as responsibility at the job and job security, that explain the positive effects of pivots on overall job motivation (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

Pivoting is good up to a certain point, but after too many pivots, the changes in direction can be detrimental to employee's job motivation. The study finds that employees who experienced several pivots (extensive pivots) were negatively employees motivation. The number of pivots experienced in the start-up was on average higher for employees who were negatively affected. It is suggested that pivoting extensively can be the reason that employees get demotivated which supports the findings of Mc Ginn (2012) that results in inferior start-up performance. This subgroup however needs to be further analysed and described with possible bigger samples.

3. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

3.1.1. Summary of Analysis & Interpretation

"Start-Ups are the backbone of New India" Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. India has emerged as the third largest ecosystem globally for start-ups with more than 2.23 lakhs start-ups employing roughly 23.36 lakhs direct employment and 131 unicorns (source : Tracxn, 6th August 2026) next to the United States of America (USA) and China. The key-role being played by start-ups in the Indian socio- economic development it is necessary for the country to keep the sustainability of the start-up ecosystem. However contrary to the fact that large number of start-ups being created, more than 90% fail in their first 5 years resulting in wealth and job loss as evident in the recent times.

While analysing the reasons for start-up failure, "Failure to Pivot" and "Pivot Gone Bad" is amongst the top 20 reasons for start-up failure. In today's complex environment, pivoting becomes common amongst start-ups as many a times their idea may not work and make them to try entirely new idea by changing their product strategy, market strategy, business plan etc., to survive and achieve their desired goal. Entrepreneurs introduce various types of pivots triggered by external & internal factors at different life -cycle of the start-ups to avoid failures. Pivot is relatively a new world and its literature is still under researched. Although some start-ups result success after a pivot, research shows that most start-ups fail their pivots.

The pivot outcome has both positive and negative effect on stake holders like investors, customers and employees. The

negative effects on the customer front will be ventures that cannot engage their customers will often fail in their attempt to pivot and not be able to acquire new customers, causing the venture to fail their pivot. On the start-up employee side, pivoting extensively can be the reason that employees get demotivated that results in inferior start-up performance which ultimately lead to start-up failure.

Unlike in larger establishment, the major asset of all start-ups is highly motivated and committed people than any physical asset. The motivation to work on something that is interesting and intellectually challenging can be a crucial factor to attract talent. Also intrinsically motivated people tend to display higher levels of creativity, which in turn crucial for star-up's success. Hence the utmost duty of entrepreneurs is to keep the motivation of their employees at high levels as extrinsic factors like higher salary, job security etc are not available.

While searching the published article for effect of extensive pivoting on motivation and commitment of start-up employees, hardly any research publications exists and the one found is from Frederick Meiners (2018). His research paper attempt to address the hypothesis of some of the authors like Baum & Silverman (2004), McGinn (2009, 2012) and Kim (2016) that Pivots can indicate a lack of passion about the original idea, which started the business, is another possible reason that pivots can be demoralising. However, the study does not support the claim that pivots have detrimental effects on employee motivation. On the opposite the results suggest a positive relationship of pivoting on individual's job motivations and commitments. Further, the study indicated that pivoting is good up to a certain point, but after too many pivots, the changes in direction can be detrimental to employee's job motivation. This needs to be further analysed and described with possible bigger samples.

3.1.2 Future Scope & Direction of Research

As it is stated above Pivot is relatively a new world and its literature is still under researched. The research area of pivoting literature is relatively young area that too in Indian context. Considering the huge number of start-ups being set-up in the country, research on pivoting and its effect on employees' motivation for start-up success is most relevant, as start-up is basically team of highly motivated employees with new/innovative knowledge.

There exists too little (even nil) research on the thesis related topic. The available literature on the topic is carried out in a given & fixed environment with an assumption that literature pivoting is described as a rather a well-structured process and communicated positively, but it is possible that pivots are very unstructured and surprise employees (Frederick Meiners, 2018). Even more, if pivots are badly communicated the effect might be entirely different from results of existing literature. Furthermore unstructured, badly communicated and performed pivots might have a more negative effect on motivation. To fill this knowledge gap future research is needed regarding process of structured pivoting, positive communication on pivoting might affect the motivation in different way than the pivot itself (Frederick Meiners, 2018).

Pivoting is good up to a certain point, but after too many pivots, the changes in direction can be detrimental to employee's job motivation. The bigger sample size for the study would create more significant and possibly other results. Besides, an increased sample could increase significance levels of the questionnaire results regarding the control variables.

Qualitative inquiry and analysis fit this purpose with stronger sensitivity than a quantitative methodology could offer. A qualitative research approach could be an interesting way to analyse if the results regarding effects on motivation have other determinants and explanations (Frederick Meiners, 2018). Since this study is exploratory in nature (not previously studied in depth), the process of allowing the data to speak for itself further supports a qualitative method of inquiry. Given that qualitative methodology uses context, individual experience, and subjective interpretation, generalizability is not possible, nor it is a goal. Applicability of the study to the reader's personal experience, however, is a goal.

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