


Chapter 5

Examining the Relationship Between Work Engagement and Employee Performance During the COVID–19 Era: The Role of Social Distance Rules Applied in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

It is known that employees' engagement at work positively affects their performance at work. In this study, it is thought that it is an important problem to reveal whether social distancing affects job performance by employees' work engagement. The collected data were tested with direct impact analysis and moderating regression analysis, and the hypotheses developed within the scope of the study were tested. Eight hypotheses were developed based on the literature and research model. The population of the study consists of employees in the provinces of Adiyaman, Gaziantep and Adana in Turkey. As a sampling method, easy sampling method was preferred from non-probability sampling methods. In this direction, data were collected from 456 employees who agreed to participate in the study. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 25, Amos 24 and Process Makro v3.5 package programs. When

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the findings of the study were examined; It has been proven that the engagement of employees during the Covid-19 period positively affects their performance at work.

INTRODUCTION

Protecting employees and their families from the risk of infection has become a top priority due to the direct health effects of Covid-19 on employees and their families. Services and production deemed non-essential were quickly affected by the epidemic, including reduced working hours and job losses (Korkmaz, 2020: 114). The COVID-19 pandemic has forced almost all employees around the world to job in completely different conditions or environments than before. Covid-19, social isolation, travel restrictions, virtual or remote working have triggered interventions that restrict the continuation of previous processes and change the way employees job. These interventions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected employee behavior, ranging from temporary to long-term, with multiple closures (Özcan and Erkasap, 2021: 143). It is possible to come across many supportive studies in the literature on the fact that work engagement has an increasing effect on job performance, positively affects job attendance, and also has a reducing effect on negative outcomes such as labor turnover and intention to leave the job. However, the COVID-19 epidemic, which has recently seriously affected people's lives, is one of the most important factors that is thought to affect the performance of employees (Ersan and Süslü, 2022: 232).

Attempts to slow down and control the epidemic and panic (staying at home, social distance, travel restrictions, etc.) cause a decrease in economic activity and general production, causing direct production losses and behavioral costs resulting from panic. In this context, plague is not only a medical and health problem but also an economic problem. Since the cost of riots and total production losses far exceed the direct (medical and non-medical) costs of circulation, it is necessary to study the cost of riots in detail and understand the scale and dynamics of riots. The total production volume in the economy is mainly realized in the service sector, industry, construction, and agriculture sectors. The economic downturn caused by Covid-19 does not affect all sectors equally. While some sectors slow down significantly and experience losses, some sectors may experience growth. For example, many sectors of tourism, such as air transportation, ground transportation, entertainment, and hotel management, have been hit hard, but areas such as cleaning products, masks, online shopping, and distance education systems will thrive. These changes will be reflected in both imports and exports. Overall, there will be a significant macroeconomic deficit due to a significant slowdown in economic activity. While Covid-19 affects sectors differently, not every sector has the same impact on the economy.

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