

Examining the Relationship Between Work Engagement and Employee Performance During Covid-19 Era: The Role of Social Distancing Rules

Covid-19 Döneminde İşe Angaje Olma ve Çalışan Performansı Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi: Sosyal Mesafe Kurallarının Rolü

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most dangerous diseases of our day. Measures such as production restrictions taken by international and national institutions and governments to prevent the pandemic and reduce its effects have negatively affected working life. Social distancing rules were typically applied in the workplace. In this study, the moderating effect of social distancing on the relationship between employees' work engagement and their performance was examined. To do so, a quantitative method was utilized, where the participants' perceptions were assessed via survey. 392 employees working in nine textile companies in Adıyaman, Gaziantep, and Adana provinces constitute the research sample. The necessary statistical analyses were performed using Amos 24 and SPSS 25 programs. The study findings supported that the employees' vigor, dedication, and absorption during COVID-19 positively affected their job performance. While social distancing negatively moderates the relationship between vigor and job performance, it has no effect on the other work engagement dimensions.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Social Distance, Job Performance, Employees

JEL Classification: M00, L00, I30

Özet: Covid-19 salgını günümüzün en tehlikeli hastalıklarından biridir. Salgını önlemek ve etkilerini azaltmak için uluslararası ve ulusal kurum ve hükümetlerin aldığı üretim kısıtlamaları gibi önlemler çalışma hayatını olumsuz etkilemiştir. Sosyal mesafe kuralları işyerlerinde yaygın şekilde uygulanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, sosyal mesafenin çalışanların işe bağlılıkları ile iş performansları arasındaki ilişki üzerindeki düzenleyici etkisi incelenmiştir. Bunu yapmak için katılımcıların algılarının anket yoluyla değerlendirildiği nicel bir yöntem kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Adıyaman, Gaziantep ve Adana illerinde bulunan dokuz tekstil firmasında çalışan 392 çalışan oluşturmaktadır. Gerekli istatistiksel analizler Amos 24 ve SPSS 25 programları kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, çalışanların COVID-19 sürecindeki dinçlik, adanmışlık ve odaklanmalarının işe iş performanslarını olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir. Sosyal mesafe, dinçlik ve iş performansı arasındaki ilişki üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahipken, diğer işe bağlılık boyutları için bu etki mevcut değildir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İşe Angaje Olma, Sosyal Mesafe, İş Performansı, Çalışanlar

JEL Sınıflandırması: M00, L00, I30

1. 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. The epidemic quickly affected services and production deemed nonessential, including reduced working hours and job losses (Korkmaz, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has forced almost all employees around the world to work in completely different conditions or environments than before. COVID-19, social isolation, travel restrictions, and virtual or remote work have

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triggered interventions that restrict the continuation of previous processes and change how employees work. 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). 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 (Nemteanu et al., 2022; Wijayati et al., 2022). 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).

The concept of social distance was first brought to the agenda by Bogardus in 1925. A person carrying the epidemic disease is at risk of spreading this disease to an average of 2 people. The easiest way to prevent this is to keep a distance of at least 2 meters between people. Experts express their opinion that the best choice to prevent the spread of the epidemic is to maintain social distancing. Academic studies show that social distancing has been revealed to be the most deterrent measure in the spread of the epidemic (Oral and Günlü, 2021).

There are many studies in the literature investigating the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on business life (Balci and Çetin, 2020; Karakaş, 2020; Aytaç and Murat, 2020; Şen and Bütün, 2021). However, none of these studies have explained the moderating effects of social distance on the relationship between work engagement and job performance. This study investigates whether social distance has a moderating effect on the relationship between work engagement and performance. The main proposal of this study is that the social distance rules applied in the workplaces adversely affect the engagement of the employees and their performance at work. A quantitative approach was followed, where the participants' perceptions were assessed via a questionnaire form. 392 employees working in nine textile companies in Adıyaman, Gaziantep, and Adana provinces constitute the research sample. The study findings supported that the employees' work engagement during COVID-19 positively affected their job performance. Significant relationships were found between vigor, dedication absorption, and job performance. While social distancing moderates the relationship between vigor and job performance, it does not have this effect for the other work engagement dimensions. The study results suggest that applying social distance rules will reduce the positive impact of employees' efforts, energy, and enthusiasm at work on their job performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Work Engagement

Work engagement is one of the most popular outcomes in occupational health psychology. It is defined as a positive state of the total investment of employees into a role that comprises vigor, dedication and absorption (George et al., 2022). Work engagement, described as a positive, affective-motivational work-related state of high energy combined with high levels of dedication and a strong focus on work, can be influenced by the working arrangement that offers employees autonomy and personal discretion, including telework (i.e., location-autonomy) and flexible work (time-autonomy). On the other hand, work engagement gives greater calibration for desired favorable work outcomes (Naqshbandi et al., 2024). Examination of the literature revealed three sub-dimensions of work engagement. These are vigor, dedication, and absorption (Borst et al., 2019). In a scientific study, the concept of work engagement was explained as "employees feeling energetic and vigorous at work and internalizing the work they do" (Gürlek and Tuna, 2019: 38). Similar studies have proven that the concept of work engagement has three sub-dimensions (Bilginoğlu and Yozgat, 2019: 2866; Schaufeli et al., 2022). Vigor is when employees feel energetic and interact with their colleagues while working; dedication is when employees see themselves as a whole with their job; On the other hand, absorption is the situation in which employees dedicate themselves to their job and see themselves as a part of the job (Atcıoğlu, 2018).

2.2. Job Performance

Performance is the results that the organization's employees achieve by completing their tasks and responsibilities within the allotted time, within the frame job of a plan and program, to bring the organization to its goal (Tingo and Mseti: 2022). If the results are positive, they are interpreted as good or high performance, and if they are negative, they are interpreted as bad or low performance. This is because performance is defined as "success" in the Turkish Language School Dictionary (Anaç, 2021: 42). In his study, Doğru (2019: 2701) examined general job performance, task performance, contextual performance, creative performance, and individual adaptive performance. In the related study, the concept of task performance is "performance that measures the extent to which the basic actions and duties in the job description of the employees meet the expectations of the enterprises". Literature reviews revealed that the concept of performance has two sub-dimensions: organizational and individual. Individual performance is divided into employees' task and situational performance sub-dimensions (Katı and Toptaş, 2021). Task performance, employees in the

workplace; It includes basic knowledge and skills related to the job they do. It is a concept that emphasizes situational performance and more psychological aspects (Akçin, 2021). For example, employees helping their colleagues, making extra efforts on work-related issues, and trying to improve the workplace can be given as examples (Yeşiltaş et al., 2019).

2.3. Social Distancing

In a study investigating the relationship between social distancing, isolation, and quarantine measures and psychological symptoms in Germany at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that higher levels of restriction were associated with more loneliness, psychosocial distress, and lower life satisfaction, as well as higher anxiety and depressive symptoms (Okutan et al., 2021). Although social distancing, isolation, and quarantine are used as similar terms, they cover different definitions. Social distancing includes practices such as staying away from crowded environments, not participating in non-essential meetings, maintaining physical distance when in the same environment with others, and staying at home when feeling any symptoms of illness to prevent the transmission of the infectious agent (Aslan and Türkili, 2021). An impermeable barrier should be installed between employees, especially those who cannot maintain a distance of two meters from each other. To ensure social distancing between employees, barriers should be placed in the workplace, and high-level measures should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission of the epidemic by using plastic coatings and partitions (Korkmaz, 2020: 118). In this era, social media groups, where information, emotions, and experiences created by non-governmental organizations and private individuals are shared, independent of space and time, open to interaction and surrounding large masses, are seen as saviors in accessing information and reducing uncertainty (Şahin and Ayaz, 2021).

According to Chen and Yan (2021), the concept of social distancing is divided into two categories. The first of these is the adoption of social distancing by individuals with their awareness, and the other is the concept of a compulsory distance encouraged by the state through public means. In both cases, maintaining social distancing prevents the spread of infectious diseases. Restrictions such as closing some workplaces and narrowing their areas of activity, interrupting education, closing entertainment centers, travel restrictions, quarantine measures, and not leaving the house are given as examples of restrictions imposed through public means. In this context, social distancing enables people to stay away from public environments to prevent the transmission of infections, not to come together unless necessary, to maintain physical distance if in the same environment with others, and to isolate

themselves by staying at home when they feel any symptoms of illness (Güzel and Demirhan, 2021).

3. Conceptual Framework

It is possible for employees' performance to be affected positively or negatively by a psychological stimulus. It has been revealed in many academic studies that the COVID-19 epidemic negatively affects the performance of employees (Özcan and Erkasap, 2021; Özel et al., 2021). The contagious and dangerous nature of the COVID-19 epidemic negatively affects the performance of employees (Özcan and Erkasap, 2021). Symptoms at work include memory and concentration problems, difficulty performing tasks satisfactorily, and poorer problem-solving skills. During the Covid-19 period, there were decreases in the pre-epidemic performance of employees (Korkmaz, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic period, when production activities are limited in workplaces, employees prioritizing social distancing rules in the workplace and acting with the perception of the risk of transmission of the epidemic causes serious losses in their ability to concentrate on jobs and exhibit positive performance.

This study claims that social distancing rules have a moderating effect on the relationship between employees' work engagement and work performance. It is proposed that the social distancing rules implemented in workplaces during a pandemic reduce the impact of employees' work engagement on their work performance by making them both physiologically and psychologically alienated from their work and work relationships. When the literature is examined, it is seen that work engagement and work performance remain at low levels during the pandemic periods (Ersan and Süslü, 2022; Öngel, 2022). Despite this adverse impact, sustaining employees' health should be prioritized via social distancing procedures due to the devastating health risks of the epidemic. Therefore, it is important to understand whether social distancing has a moderating role during the pandemic. We developed the following hypotheses, considering everything mentioned above:

H₁: During the Covid-19 period, employees' vigor affects job performance.

H₂: During the Covid-19 period, employees' dedication affects job performance.

H₃: During the Covid-19 period, employees' absorption affects job performance.

H₄: Social distancing has a moderating role in the effect of employees' vigor on job performance during the Covid-19 period.

H₅: Social distancing has a moderating role in the effect of employees' dedication on job performance during the Covid-19 period.

H₆: Social distancing has a moderating role in the effect of employees' absorption on job performance during the Covid-19 period.

Hypotheses developed based on literature; work engagement and its sub-dimensions, vigor, dedication and absorption, were used as independent variables, social distancing as a moderator variable and finally work performance as a dependent variable. The research model is shown in Figure 1.

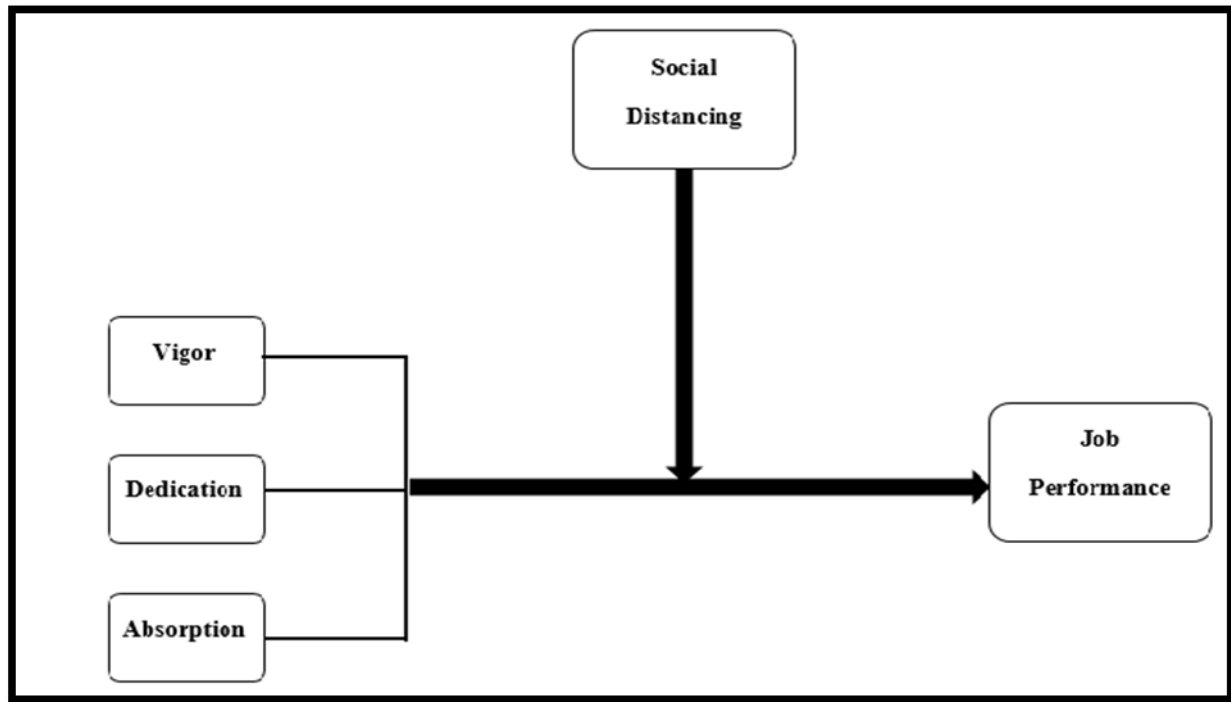


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: The research model was produced by the author

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

This study is based on a quantitative research design. While collecting the data, the convenience sampling method was used (Çoban and Çiçek, 2023). The necessary permissions were obtained from the Ethics Committee of Hasan Kalyoncu University on April 28, 2021, to collect data with the help of a questionnaire. The universe of this study consists of employees of textile companies operating in Adıyaman, Gaziantep, and Adana provinces. Textile companies are engaged in activities aimed at yarn and carpet production. The companies where the data were collected provided service in the dining hall by the 1.5-meter social distancing rule during the pandemic. On the other hand, a security corridor was created at the company entrance, and employees were allowed to enter the workplace in a controlled manner. During the pandemic period, workplaces applied COVID testing to their employees.

Employees whose results were positive in the tests were considered to be allowed to receive treatment. The owners and managers of the establishments provided material and moral support to the employees whose results were positive. The sample consists of 392 textile sector employees who agreed to participate in the study. August May 2nd and August 17th, 2021 between the dates data were collected. In the data analysis stage, exploratory analyses and reliability tests were performed with the SPSS 25 statistics program. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed by Amos 24 software. Finally, simple mediation and moderation regression analyses were performed with the Process Macro v3.3 program.

4.2. Measures

The measures used in the study were obtained in two stages. The first stage constituted finding the appropriate scales. The second stage included scale validation to determine whether scales previously developed in a different culture adapt to one's own culture. The scales used within the scope of the study were preferred as those that could best reflect the purpose of the study. The scale items used within the scope of the study were translated by the Turkish cultural structure and using expert opinion. The following steps were followed in translating the scales used in this study into Turkish (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2017):

1. Step: First of all, it was decided to use scales developed by the foreign culture.
2. Step: The scale was translated into Turkish by two translators who are also knowledgeable in the field of management and organization.
3. Step: The experts translated it back from Turkish into English.
4. Step: During the adaptation phase of the study, the opinions of 3 academicians who were experts in their fields were consulted.
5. Step: Testing reliability and validity (Cronbach Alpha and EFA).

After going through these steps, the finalized measures were inserted in the questionnaire form. The questionnaire included a total of 25 items: 6 items for vigor, 5 items for dedication, 6 items for absorption, 4 items for job performance, and 4 items for social distancing. The work engagement dimensions were adopted from Musenze and Mayende's (2020) scale, which consists of 3 sub-dimensions and a total of 17 statements. The job performance scale was adopted from Aguiar-Quintana et al. (2021). In this study, the social distancing scale included in the last study of Oral and Günlü (2021) was used. Three statements in this original scale were reverse coded. Due to the risk of COVID-19 transmission, data were collected using an online survey instead of a face-to-face survey option. The 5-point Likert scale was

used in the study. The responses to the statements were rated Decently between “1-strongly disagree” and “5-strongly agree”.

4.3. Analysis Procedure

In this study, two basic analysis techniques, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), were used with the help of statistical software programs. In addition to the analyses aimed at ensuring the validity of the scale, a reliability analysis was also performed.

4.4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The scale used in the study consists of the dimensions of work engagement, social distancing, and job performance. In addition, the work engagement dimension consists of three sub-dimensions, namely the drive, engagement, and absorption sub-dimensions. The results of exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha reliability analysis are presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. In Table 1, exploratory factor analysis was performed with a 3-factor structure related to work engagement.

Table 1. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis on Work Engagement

Items	Factor Label	Cronbach's Alpha	Cross-loadings	Factor Loading	Significant P
Vig1	Vigor	0.863	0.685	0.845	0.005
Vig2			0.728	0.876	
Vig3			0.579	0.791	
Vig4			0.548	0.715	
Vig5			0.416	0.612	
Vig6			0.425	0.485	
Ded1	Dedication	0.853	0.514	0.567	0.004
Ded2			0.718	0.724	
Ded3			0.762	0.812	
Ded4			0.527	0.854	
Ded5			0.561	0.711	
Abs1	Absorption	0.896	0.485	0.487	0.000
Abs2			0.419	0.564	
Abs3			0.492	0.802	
Abs4			0.703	0.759	
Abs5			0.721	0.774	
Abs6			0.526	0.633	
KMO= 0,900; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx, Chi Square= 70748,678, df= 298, p<0,01 Cumulative percentage of explained variance: 62.169 %					

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test the validity of the translated scales' structure consisting of three sub-dimensions. Bartlett's test of sphericity provides information about the adequacy of the relationships between the expressions in the correlation matrix. The probability value of this test statistic being less than 0.05 indicates that the correlation matrix formed by the relationships between the variables is suitable for factor analysis (Akkaya and Özkan, 2021). When the Bartlett sphericity values in the exploratory factor analysis were examined, it was concluded that the three-factor (dimensional) structure of the scale was confirmed (Table 1). When the literature studies on acceptable threshold values for KMO values were examined, it was stated that the KMO threshold should be above the 0.60 threshold to continue the factor analysis in a study (Durak and Şenkal, 2020: 411). Since the KMO value for all scale sub-dimensions used in the study was above 0.8, it was decided to continue the analysis because this value was satisfactory. No items were removed since the common values of all items related to the five factors were above the 0.30 value. All factor loadings were above 0.40 and were significant at the 0.001 level. The variance values for the three constructs used in the study were found to be 47.814% for vigor, 58.621% for dedication, and 61.124% for absorption. The reliability values of the 3-factor structure forming the work engagement scale were found to be 0.863, 0.853, and 0.896, respectively. It can be claimed that these values are a very reliable scale regarding the reliability of the scale. The work engagement scale was found to be a valid and reliable scale. The results of the EFA regarding the social distancing factor used in the scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis on Social Distancing

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor Label</i>	<i>Cronbach'S Alpha</i>	<i>Commonalities</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>
<i>Sd1</i>	Social Distancing	0.852	0.619	0.694
<i>Sd2</i>			0.404	0.424
<i>Sd3</i>			0.809	0.923
<i>Sd4</i>			0.518	0.785
<i>KMO= 0,900; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx, Chi Square= 8121,904, df= 305, p<0,01</i> <i>Cumulative percentage of explained variance: 64.287 %</i>				

As shown in Table 2, $\alpha=0.852$ was found. It is above the accepted threshold value of 0.7 for reliability analysis. In this case, it has been concluded that the factor structure is reliable. When the values related to exploratory factor analysis are examined, it is seen that the threshold value of 0.30 is above for all the expressions included in Table 2. On the other hand, it has been determined that the variance value described for the factor is above the threshold

value of “0.50”. It was found that the explained variance described in Table 2 was 64.287%. It was concluded that the social distancing factor is a valid and reliable dimension. The statistical findings related to EFA regarding the work performance factor used in the scale are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis on Work Performance

Items	Factor Label	Cronbach's Alpha	Commonalities	Factor Loading
Jp1	Work	0.894	0.551	0.686
Jp2	Performance		0.774	0.892
Jp3			0.748	0.887
Jp4			0.612	0.765
KMO= 0,900; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx, Chi Square= 7247,741, df= 302, p<0,01 Cumulative percentage of explained variance: 66.143 %				

As shown in Table 2, $\alpha=0.894$ was found. It is above the accepted threshold value of 0.7 for reliability analysis. In this case, it has been concluded that the factor structure is reliable. When the values related to exploratory factor analysis are examined, it is seen that the threshold value of 0.30 is above for all the expressions included in Table 3. On the other hand, it has been determined that the variance value described for the factor is above the threshold value of 0.50. It was found that the explained variance described in Table 3 was 66.143%. In this case, it was assumed that the work performance factor is a valid and reliable dimension and that it is above the acceptable value for testing hypotheses.

5. Findings

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

As a result of descriptive statistical analyses, it was determined that 49% of the participants were female and 51% were male. When the age groups of the participants were examined, it was found that the 18-26 age group accounted for 30% of the participants, the 27-35 age group accounted for 27% of the total participants, the 34-44 age group accounted for 24% of the participants, and the age group over 45 accounted for 19% of the total number of participants. When looking at the education levels of the participants, it was found that 47% had primary education or less, 42% had completed high school, and 11% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

The findings related to variable means, standard deviations, and pairwise correlations are given in Table 4. As seen in the table, positive and significant relationships were found between the five variables used in the study.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5
Vigor	3.85	1.3	1				
Dedication	4.11	1.4	0.47	0.52			
Absorption	4.04	1.2	0.48	0.53	0.65		
Social Distancing	3.15	1.5	0.51	0.58	0.62	0.67	
Job Performance	4.24	1.1	0.53	0.64	0.66	0.69	0.71

*All correlations above are significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ for a two tailed t test

5.2. Hypothesis Testing

The Process Macro program developed by Hayes (2013) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings related to the testing of hypotheses are given in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Findings Related to Direct Impact Analysis

Hypothesis No	Relationships	B	R ²	%95 Bias-Corrected Bootstrap CI	P Value	T Value
H ₁	V  JP	.2207***	0,1072	[.1601, .2812]	.0000	7.1603
H ₂	Ded  JP	.3452***	0,2389	[.2880, .4023]	.0000	11.87
H ₃	Abs  JP	.2806***	0,1660	[.2211, .3401]	.0000	9.26

Notes. WE: Work Engagement; JP: Job Performance; V: Vigor; Ded: Dedication; Abs: Absorption

According to them, H₁, H₂, and H₃ hypotheses aimed to investigate the relationship between the sub-dimensions of the variable of work engagement and job performance. Accordingly, H₁, vitality, has a positive and statistically significant effect on work engagement (b= .2207, 95% CI [.1601, .2812], t= 7.1603, p <.001). The change in the effect of vigor to job on their job performance was R²= 11% (Table 5). In this case, H₁ was supported.

In the H₂ hypothesis, in this study, it was claimed that dedication will have a positive effect on job performance. The result of the analysis showed that the effect of work engagement on dedication was positive and statistically significant (b= .3452, 95% CI [.2880, .4023], t= 11.87, p <.001). It was found that dedication explained R²=24% of the change in job performance (Table 5). In this case, hypothesis H₂ was supported. For hypothesis H₃, where we examined the effect of absorption on job performance, it found that absorption focus had a positive and statistically significant effect on job performance (b= .2806, 95% CI

[.2211, .3401], $t = 9.26$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, it found that absorption explains approximately $R^2 = 17\%$ of the change in job performance (Table 5). In this case, hypothesis H_3 was supported. In Table 6, it has included the findings of the moderating impact analyses regarding the H_4 , H_5 , H_6 .

Table 6. Findings on Moderating Impact Analysis

Hypothesis No	Relationships	B	%95 Bias-Corrected Bootstrap CI	P Value	t Value
H_4	V $\xrightarrow{\text{SD}}$ JP	-.1359***	[-.1947, -.0771]	.0000	-4.5397
H_5	DED $\xrightarrow{\text{SD}}$ JP	-.0459	[-.1011, .0093]	.1013	-1.6318
H_6	ABS $\xrightarrow{\text{SD}}$ JP	-.0198	[-.0808, .0411]	.5213	-.6390

Notes.: WE: Work Engagement; JP: Job Performance; V: Vigor; DED: Dedication; ABS: Absorption; SD: Social Distancing.

For hypothesis H_4 , it found that social distancing had a moderator role in the effect of vigor on job performance ($b = -.1359$, 95% CI [-.1947, -.0771], $t = -4.5397$, $p < .001$). In this case, hypothesis H_4 was supported (Table 6). For hypothesis H_5 , social distancing has no moderator role in the effect of dedication on job performance ($b = -.0459$, 95% CI [-.1011, .0093], $t = -1.6318$, $p > .005$). H_5 was not supported in this case (Table 6). As seen in Table 6, the H_6 was not supported ($b = -.0198$, 95% CI [-.0808, .0411], $t = -1.6390$, $p > .005$).

6. Conclusion and Discussion

6.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The key factors affecting the performance of employees regarding their duties have been closely monitored and investigated by researchers. Especially in the information age, studies on employee performance have gained even more importance. At this point, more responsibility falls on employees in terms of displaying high performance and efficiency in enterprises. Considering that the human element is an important production factor for every business, their efficiency and effectiveness have become very valuable. The pandemic process has negatively affected business life, as well as all areas of human life. In this regard, health problems have become the priority of employees. In business life, interruptions in production due to the pandemic have negatively affected the performance of employees.

All humanity is going through a tough test caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The epidemic's negative effects on workplaces and employees are evident in areas like work engagement and job performance. In a scientific study, it was emphasized that the measures taken in businesses due to Covid-19 brought production to a standstill. In the related study (Noyan-Yalman *et al.*, 2021). During the Covid-19 era, measures regarding isolation, that is, social distancing rules, have negatively affected the psychological mood of employees. Thus,

decreases in employees' work engagement and related performance were detected (Baker *et al.*, 2020). Production activities were stopped in many workplaces operating in Turkey where physical distance could not be maintained. Rozman *et al.* (2021) found that the level of work engagement of employees during the Covid-19 pandemic decreased compared to the period before the pandemic. In another study, it was stated that employees who concentrate on their jobs will be more devoted to their jobs in the working environment and will be more satisfied with their jobs; that is, they will be more attached to their jobs (Altunok, 2019). However, there have also been some contrasting findings. For example, it has been reported that pandemic-related stressors of Hong Kong police officers did not affect their work engagement and their performance (Li *et al.*, 2012).

Interestingly, the current study findings from a sample of 392 textile workers provide support for both. The study tested whether social distancing diminishes the positive influence of the three dimensions of work engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption, on employee job performance. The hypothesis testing results showed that among these three sub-dimensions of work engagement, the moderating effect of social distancing was found significant only for vigor. On the other hand, dedication and absorption processes, which also play a significant role in increased performance, were not negatively affected by social distancing. These results imply that during the pandemic, social distancing caused a complex situation for employees where some work processes were damaged and the others remained intact. That is, while it weakened some aspects of work engagement (e.g., vigor), it could not eradicate it altogether as employees' dedication and absorption capacity were unaffected.

6.2. Study Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The most important limitation of this study was the economic dimension. Due to the inability of the study to receive support from any organization, data were collected from organizations and their members located in a single region. Another limitation of the study is that many textile company owners and managers did not allow data collection at their workplaces. It is strongly recommended that future studies be conducted on different and more diverse samples. It is also recommended that the same relationships be tested in different cultures and in different professional groups.

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