

Original Article

An empirical study to analyze the effects of work culture, work ethics, and work satisfaction on employees' performance post-pandemic

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Abstract

The work culture, work ethics, and work satisfaction factors (WC-WE-WS, hereafter) are the key elements for any organization, and are significantly associated with employee performance. However, these factors were strongly affected during the pandemic. The reason for this is that changes were made to the WC-WE-WS factors during the pandemic. This can influence the employees' performance negatively or positively post-pandemic. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the effects of WC-WE-WS on employees' performance post-pandemic, in India. The method of data collection was through a survey of 198 employees and the structured questionnaire was distributed among the employees working in the private sector in India. The data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Smart PLS software. The results suggest a significant relationship between empowerment, recognition, support, and trust in employees' performance and an insignificant relationship between innovation and organizational commitment to the employees' performance. The changes done during the pandemic in all the factors had, in the present study, a positive influence on employees' performance post-pandemic. The study informs about the impact of WC-WE-WS factors on employees' performance post-pandemic.

Keywords: pandemic, post-pandemic, work culture, work ethics, work satisfaction, employees' performance

1. Introduction

The sudden advent of a pandemic always results in drastic changes to the work environment and generates pressure on companies and employees to adopt technologies excessively within a short time (Priyono, Moin, & Putri, 2020). During disruptive changes, various organizations try to adopt a similar planning process and implement yearly scheduling, which can be used but is of no relevance (Li, 2020) as developing a style with a flexible work culture is more relevant (Doern, Williams, & Vorley, 2019).

The pandemic is inclined to cause drastic changes worldwide. As a result, the organizations have to make major variations to their operations and work culture that drives them toward challenges and opportunities. However, this major work culture shift correlates with employee stress, satisfaction, and alleged productivity (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). According to Sapta, Muafi, & Setini (2021), "work

satisfaction has motivated employees during the pandemic and positively influenced employees' performance." However, Jones *et al.* (2008) stated that "pandemic creates a relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance, but with little weak concentration."

Kotalik (2005), stated that various countries make contingency plans to mitigate the effect of such events, but investigation of pandemic plans elevates some thoughtful concerns from ethical perspectives. Moreover, the sudden need for innovation and adaptation during pandemic brings ethical problems to organizations (Ives & Huxtable, 2020). Because the workforce considers some different ethical contemplations in emergence of its agenda, which includes: ensuring accountability, equal treatment, the balance of action, and accuracy of decision (McGorty *et al.*, 2007). According to Bennett and Carney (2010), the WHO has recommended that organizations give dispersed consideration to ethical challenges arising during a pandemic.

Despite this, according to WHO, even after giving many early warnings the organizations were found to be unprepared to deal with the recent pandemic of covid-19 (Frutos, Gavotte, Serra-Cobo, Chen, & Devaux, 2021).

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According to Patanjali and Bhatta (2022) of employees working in India, 50% said their productivity had increased, while 27% said it had decreased due to a shift of work culture during the pandemic. Additionally, 10% of workers claimed gains in their employment and 13% in their personal lives, while 30% of employees said both had gotten worse (Tušl, Brauchli, Kerksieck, & Bauer, 2021), which led to dissatisfaction among these employees. In a report by Economic Times (2022) just 7% of employees reported having the option to work fewer hours for less money, while about 77% of employees claimed their businesses did not offer flexibility. Therefore, due to a lack of preparedness and of knowledge about changes in which factors would help the organization's betterment and about changes in which factors are harmful. The organization must predict and choose those factors carefully (Biswas, Huq, Afiaz, & Khan, 2020).

The choice of factors based on predictability negatively affects many organizations during the pandemic and even after it. Therefore, the problem demands a study to know whether the changes made to these factors during the pandemic have affected the employee's performance post-pandemic negatively or positively. Therefore, this paper reports a study on the changes done in WC-WE-WS factors during the pandemic that have impacted employee's performance post-pandemic negatively or positively. Moreover, the study will help to create an understanding among the readers about how the changes made to these factors during the pandemic have impacted the employees' performance post-pandemic.

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

2.1 Work culture

Watkin (2020) and Singh (2020) defined "work culture as a reflection of leadership ability of their top managers and day-to-day behavior of their staff." There can be various dimensions of work culture such as leadership styles, organization climate, work processes, and organization's values. However, the present study focuses on the study of the two dimensions empowerment and innovation.

2.1.1 Change in empowerment impacting employee performance during the pandemic

Pedersen (2020) highlighted that pandemic forces organizations to decentralize the work, which positively impacts employees' empowerment during the pandemic. Moreover, Alrige, Alshahrani, Alharbi, Aljuhani, and Aldini (2022) indicated that during pandemic the employees' performance can be increased through two empowerment practices: a) presenting performance-based rewards to employees, and b) allowing employees to change their work process. Based on this outline to know the effect of change in empowerment on employees' performance post-pandemic the hypothesis framed is:

H1: There is a significant effect of empowerment on employees' performance post-pandemic.

2.1.2 Change in innovation impacting employee performance during the pandemic

In a survey conducted by Am, Furstenthal, Jorge, and Roth (2020), executives in organizations strongly alleged that they would return to innovation-associated initiatives once things related to the covid-19 pandemic would get normal, to enhance employee performance. Moreover, "innovation and willingness to learn directly affect an organization's sustainable financial performance" (Faulks, Song, Waiganjo, Obrenovic, & Godinic, 2021). Based on this outline to know the effect of change in innovation on employees' performance post-pandemic, the hypothesis framed is:

H2: There is a significant effect of innovation on employees' performance post-pandemic.

2.2 Work ethics

Valentine *et al.* (2011) have defined work ethics as an operative way of enhancing the firm's performance, especially when the firm wants to create an ethical work culture among staff. There can be various dimensions of work ethics such as teamwork, quality, sense of responsibility, integrity, and discipline. However, the present study focuses on the study of the two major variables organizational commitment and trust.

2.2.1 Change in organizational commitment impacting employee performance during the pandemic

Chanana (2021) in his study concluded that organizational commitment was low among both female and male employees during the pandemic. Further, O. Mihalache (2021) also revealed that employees feel less motivated and unhappy during pandemic, which hampers their organizational commitment negatively. Based on this outline to know the effect of change in organizational commitment on employees' performance post-pandemic the hypothesis framed is:

H3: There is a significant effect of organizational commitment on employees' performance post-pandemic.

2.2.2 Change in trust impacting employee performance during the pandemic

"The sudden hit of covid-19 always resulting into the shift of on-site work culture to work from home culture tends to create trust issues between the employer and employees" (Ladika, 2021). Further, P (2021) study results suggested that "in areas like decision making and integrity the leaders have displayed a high level of trust but in other areas like maintaining employees motivation and communication there were gaps that should be filled by the leaders to maintain the trust of their employees during pandemic." Based on this outline to know the effect of change in trust on employees' performance post-pandemic the hypothesis framed is:

H4: There is a significant effect of trust on employees' performance post-pandemic.

2.3 Work satisfaction

Evans (1997) in his definition has linked job satisfaction with the requirements related to the office and employee’s insight to the level of satisfaction. There can be various dimensions of work satisfaction such as pay, promotion potential, job security, and appreciation. However, the present study focuses on the study of the two major variables recognition and support.

2.3.1 Change in recognition impacting employee performance during the pandemic

Hunter (2020) stated that the pandemic causing to work from home has disturbed the usual ways of giving recognition to the employees. Further, the author revealed that during pandemic recognition becomes harder, but turns out to be more valuable than ever. Based on this outline to know the effect of change in recognition on employees’ performance post-pandemic the hypothesis framed is:

H5: There is a significant effect of recognition on employees’ performance post-pandemic.

2.3.2 Change in support impacting employee performance during the pandemic

According to O. Mihalache (2021) for reducing the effects of pandemic the organizations should implement support activities. Nguyen & Tran (2021) stated that during a pandemic organizational support has a positive influence on employees’ engagement and performance. Further, Mihalache and Mihalache (2022) study also concluded that support given to employees during a pandemic results in positive changes in the employees. Based on this outline to know the effect of change in support on employees’ performance post-pandemic the hypothesis framed is:

H6: There is a significant effect of support on employees’ performance post-pandemic.

3. Conceptual Framework

Each factor of WC-WE-WS is studied by two variables through a qualitative study of the existing literature. In the present study, the independent factors are Empowerment (Hanaysha, 2016), Innovation (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) (Work culture factors), Organizational Commitment (Hanaysha, 2016), Trust (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) (Work ethics factors), Recognition (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) and Support (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) (Work satisfaction factors). The impacts of these variables are measured on employees performance (Mardiyah & Purba, 2019), which is the dependent factor

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Ethical consideration

In the current paper, a guarantee was made on their anonymity to the respondents. After reading the entire document, respondents were requested to take the survey, with the first question relating to their readiness to do so (are you willing to take the survey?).

4.2 Sample description

In the present study, the survey research method was used to gather data from the employees working in private manufacturing industries in India. The manufacturing industries were chosen, as these industries is highly labour intensive, due to which they got highly impacted during the pandemic. Moreover, the majority of the data were collected from the Delhi NCR region. This method was selected as it is the most suitable technique of data collection when the sample size is large, and it has many benefits of good quality research (Shuhaiber, 2018). Moreover, the data were examined with the help of Smart PLS software. The employees for the collection of data were selected through the convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling was used to collect the data as it helps the author collect the data easily and receive ideas about the respondents’ opinions and attitudes. Moreover, this method was adopted as the data for the paper were collected during the pandemic.

For data collection, the questionnaires were mailed to the employees working in different states of India. The questionnaire was distributed among 200 employees out of which 198 questionnaires were returned complete and the remaining 2 incomplete questionnaires were omitted from the final data evaluation. Therefore, as shown in Table 1, the data analysis process was completed by considering 198 questionnaires.

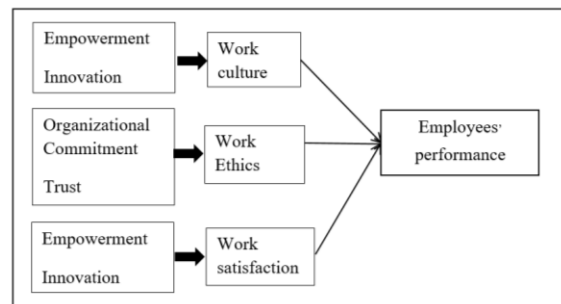


Figure 1. Conceptual framework model

Table 1. Description of the sample presented in the paper.

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 104 | 52.5 |
| | Female | 94 | 47.5 |
| | Total | 198 | 100.0 |
| Age | 18-25 | 54 | 27.3 |
| | 26-30 | 68 | 34.3 |
| | 31-40 | 52 | 26.3 |
| | 41-50 | 19 | 9.6 |
| | 51 above | 5 | 2.5 |
| | Total | 198 | 100.0 |
| Educational qualification | Elementary school | 37 | 18.7 |
| | Junior school | 19 | 9.6 |
| | High school | 12 | 6.1 |
| | Intermediate | 21 | 10.6 |
| | Graduate | 18 | 9.1 |
| | Postgraduate | 28 | 14.1 |
| | Diploma | 26 | 13.1 |
| | Others | 37 | 18.7 |
| Total | 198 | 100.0 | |

4.2 Questionnaire construction

The questionnaire used in the present study was adapted and developed in the English language. The questionnaire was adapted from the studies of previous authors as mentioned in Table 2. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The very first section was on the demographic features of the employees, which include their age (coded as: 18-25, 26-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 and above), state, gender (coded as: male and female), and educational qualification (coded as: elementary school, junior school, high school, intermediate, graduate, post graduate, diploma and others). The second section includes the questions related to the variables representing work culture, that is, empowerment and innovation. The third section consists of questions representing work ethics via organizational commitment and trust. The fourth section includes the questions related to work satisfaction via recognition and support. The last and fifth section of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the employees' performance. Every item was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1-highly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-highly agree).

5. Data analysis and results

5.1 Reliability of scale

In Smart PLS the Cronbach's alpha value and the composite reliability are used to verify the reliability of the scale. The preferred Cronbach's alpha value of the constructs should be more than 0.70, and Table 3 specifies that Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs exceeded 0.70. Further, according to Fornell & Larcker (1981) "the composite reliability value range from 0.7 to 0.92 is acceptable." Moreover, Hair *et al.* (2021) indicated that "composite reliability value range from 0.7 to 0.9 is very satisfactory, and value range from 0.7 to 0.95 is acceptable, but values more than 0.95 are problematic as this shows redundancy of the items." In the present study, the composite reliability also ranged from 0.876 to 0.938, which exceeds the threshold value of 0.70, indicating that the scale is reliable and consistent enough to carry out the study (Ali, Danni, Latif, Kouser, & Baqader, 2021).

Table 2. Scale item and description of items adapted from the literature

| Variable | Factor | Question | Author | Scale reliability | | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------|--|---|--------------------------|-------|
| Work culture | Employee Empowerment Post-pandemic.... | EM1 I believe I am capable of carrying out the duties of my job. | (Hanaysha, 2016) | 0.771 | | | | |
| | | EM2 I am confident in my ability to perform my duties. | | | | | | |
| | | EM3 I have the authority to make the decisions. | | | | | | |
| | | EM4 My boss has faith in my ability to make sound business decisions. | | | | | | |
| | | EM5 In terms of how I execute my job, I have a lot of room for reliance and independence. | | | | | | |
| | Innovation My manager post-pandemic..... | IN1 Inspires creative thinking. | (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) | 0.80 | | | | |
| | | IN2 Enjoys working in a technologically based environment. | | | | | | |
| | | IN3 Cultivating innovative working practices. | | | | | | |
| | | IN4 Regularly discusses innovative working methods. | | | | | | |
| | | OC1 I am eager to put in a lot of effort to ensure that this institution succeeds. | | | | | | |
| Work ethics | Organizational Commitment Post-pandemic.... | OC2 I am pleased to announce that I am a member of this organization. | (Hanaysha, 2016) | 0.860 | | | | |
| | | OC3 This organization's status is very important to me. | | | | | | |
| | | OC4 This is, in my opinion, one of the nicest places to work. | | | | | | |
| | | OC5 I tell others how great this institution is. | | | | | | |
| | | TR1 My manager keeps things hidden from the rest of the staff. | | | | | | |
| | Trust \ Post-pandemic..... | TR2 My manager is trustworthy. | (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) | 0.80 | | | | |
| | | TR3 My manager followed through on his promise. | | | | | | |
| | | TR4 I'm able to level up with my manager. | | | | | | |
| | | TR5 My manager never offers me bad advice. | | | | | | |
| | | RE1 When I do well at work, my manager pats me on the back. | | | | | | |
| Work satisfaction | Recognition Post-pandemic.... | RE2 My manager appreciates hard work in the office. | (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) | 0.83 | | | | |
| | | RE3 I'm used as an example by my manager. | | | | | | |
| | | RE4 If I perform well at work, my employer informs me directly. | | | | | | |
| | | SU1 At work, my manager assists me. | | | | | | |
| | Support Post pandemic.... | SU2 My manager has expressed an interest in me. | (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) | 0.89 | | | | |
| | | SU3 My manager is always there to help me out at work. | | | | | | |
| | | SU4 Communicating with my manager is simple. | | | | | | |
| | | SU5 My manager believes in me. | | | | | | |
| | | Employees' performance | | | Post-pandemic employees of my organization are.... | EP1 Having a thorough comprehension of the duties. | (Mardiyah & Purba, 2019) | 0.758 |
| | | | | | | EP2 Getting the job done and getting good outcomes. | | |
| EP3 Able to finish duties to reach the deadline. | | | | | | | | |
| EP4 Making the most of free time for other pursuits. | | | | | | | | |
| EP5 Able to get the most out of organizational resources. | | | | | | | | |

Table 3. Validity and reliability of the scale

| | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability | Average variance extracted (AVE) | VIF value |
|----|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| EM | 0.883 | 0.928 | 0.811 | 3.022 |
| IN | 0.867 | 0.902 | 0.700 | 2.030 |
| RE | 0.845 | 0.906 | 0.762 | 2.014 |
| SU | 0.821 | 0.891 | 0.731 | 2.353 |
| TR | 0.901 | 0.938 | 0.835 | 2.330 |
| OC | 0.810 | 0.876 | 0.702 | 2.899 |
| EP | 0.819 | 0.892 | 0.735 | - |

5.2 Validity of scale

5.2.1 Convergent validity

The factor loading of the items helps to estimate the convergent validity of all the constructs. According to Ghozali (2014) “if the factor loading of all the constructs is more than 0.5 then the constructs have a strong validity to describe the latent constructs.” In the present research, the items having factor loading less than 0.5 were excluded from the study, along with the condition of having an AVE value of more than 0.5 (Ghozali, 2014). Additionally, other than the items excluded from the model, all the remaining items had a factor loading of more than 0.5 and had met out the condition of having an AVE of more than 0.5, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, the model is reliable and valid to conduct the research.

5.2.2 Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity helps to determine statistically that each of our unobserved latent variables is distinct from the other latent variables. Table 4 (a) and (b) highlight the discriminant validity of all the constructs used in the scale. To assess the discriminant validity of the scale the Heterotrait–Monotrait Method (HTMT) and Fornell and Larcker were used, indicating that the factor-loading was greater than cross-loadings that deliver the proof of discriminant validity. Fornell and Larcker specify that the square root of AVE should be higher than its correlation with all the other constructs. However, to establish HTMT validity the values should be less than 0.9 (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, to check the multicollinearity within the constructs the VIF (Variance Inflation factor) was assessed. The VIF of all the constructs of the scale was below 5, indicating that there was no multicollinearity within the constructs.

5.3 Results of structural equation model analysis

The study has analyzed the effects of changes made to the WC-WE-WS factors during the pandemic on the employees’ performance, whether negatively or positively post-pandemic, and the results have highlighted a significant relationship between empowerment and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.207$, $t=2.917$, $p=0.004$), recognition and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.156$, $t=2.603$, $p=0.010$), support and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.529$, $t=8.796$, $p=0.000$), and trust and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.157$, $t=2.085$, $p=0.038$), whereas there was no significant relationship

Table 4. (a) Fornell and Larcker

| | EM | EP | IN | OC | RE | SU | TR |
|----|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| EM | 0.900 | | | | | | |
| EP | 0.734 | 0.857 | | | | | |
| IN | 0.046 | 0.095 | 0.837 | | | | |
| OC | -0.037 | 0.032 | 0.703 | 0.838 | | | |
| RE | 0.574 | 0.747 | 0.077 | 0.059 | 0.873 | | |
| SU | 0.576 | 0.845 | 0.093 | 0.029 | 0.726 | 0.855 | |
| TR | 0.795 | 0.705 | -0.024 | -0.057 | 0.561 | 0.547 | 0.914 |

Table 4. (b) Heterotrait–Monotrait method (HTMT)

| | EM | EP | IN | OC | RE | SU | TR |
|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| EM | | | | | | | |
| EP | 0.861 | | | | | | |
| IN | 0.062 | 0.122 | | | | | |
| OC | 0.071 | 0.065 | 0.849 | | | | |
| RE | 0.650 | 0.881 | 0.088 | 0.068 | | | |
| SU | 0.660 | 0.899 | 0.112 | 0.047 | 0.837 | | |
| TR | 0.889 | 0.822 | 0.056 | 0.067 | 0.622 | 0.624 | |

between Innovation and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.022$, $t=0.408$, $p=0.684$) or Organizational commitment and employees’ performance ($\beta=0.011$, $t=0.236$, $p=0.814$). Therefore, the results suggest a significant relationship of empowerment, recognition, support, and trust with the employees’ performance, and an insignificant relationship of innovation and organizational commitment to the employees’ performance. Moreover, the β -values of all the factors are positive, which confirms that changes done in all these factors during pandemic had a positive influence on the employees’ performance post-pandemic.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The pandemic had crucial implications for organizations worldwide (Biswas, Huq, Afiaz, & Khan, 2020). The WC-WE-WS factors are the key elements for any organization, playing a critical role in success or failure, and are significantly associated with employee performance (Bijaang, Modding, Gani, & Nujum, 2018). But these factors were highly affected during the pandemic as organizations made drastic changes to these factors taking a reactive approach to deal with the pandemic problems, which henceforth impacts their employees’ performance. Moreover, the changes done to the factors during the pandemic also have a continued effect on the employees’ performance post-pandemic (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). Therefore, this study examined the effects of changes made to the WC-WE-WS factors during the pandemic that influenced the employees’ performance negatively or positively post-pandemic.

The results suggest a significant relationship and effect of empowerment, recognition, support, and trust on the employees’ performance and an insignificant relationship of innovation and organizational commitment with the employees’ performance. Moreover, the β -values of all the factors were positive, which confirms that changes done to all these factors during pandemic had a positive influence on employees’ performance post-pandemic. But, there are many

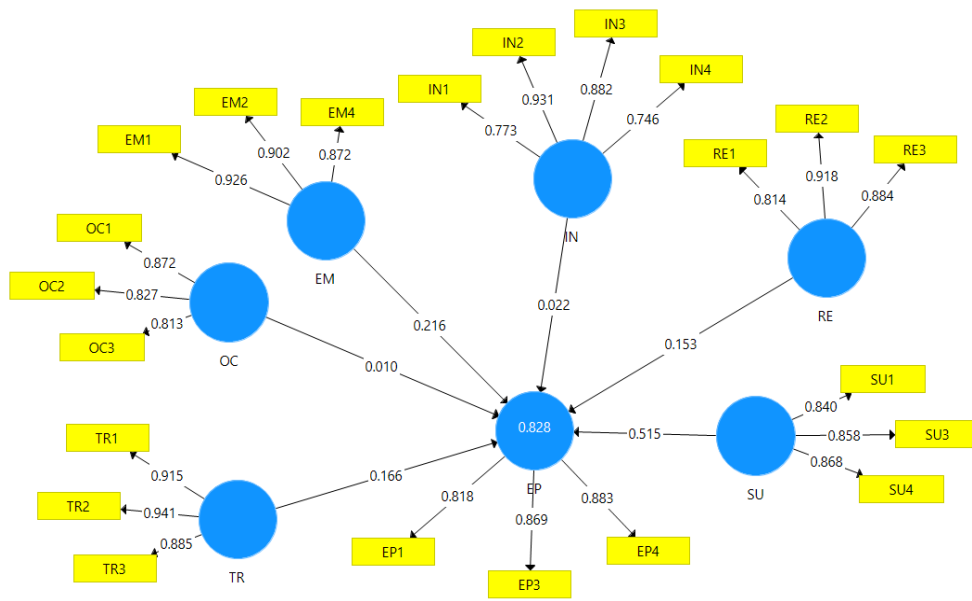


Figure 2. Structural equation model and measurement results

Table 5. Results of structural equation model analysis

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|----------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| EM-> EP | 0.207 | 0.211 | 0.071 | 2.917 | 0.004 |
| IN -> EP | 0.022 | 0.020 | 0.053 | 0.408 | 0.684 |
| OC -> EP | 0.011 | 0.017 | 0.047 | 0.236 | 0.814 |
| RE -> EP | 0.156 | 0.164 | 0.060 | 2.603 | 0.010 |
| SU -> EP | 0.529 | 0.520 | 0.060 | 8.796 | 0.000 |
| TR -> EP | 0.157 | 0.153 | 0.075 | 2.085 | 0.038 |

other factors too that are associated with WC-WE-WS, which can influence employees’ performance negatively post-pandemic, if the organizations take a reactive approach during a pandemic this will instead of solving the pandemic problems create a worse situation for the organizations (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020). Therefore, the organizations are required to make pandemic preparedness plans well in advance to deal with such catastrophes. For example, the salary was the major variable that drastically changed in the organizations worldwide. However, the financial crisis faced by the employees during the pandemic dissatisfied them with reduced salaries as they were unable to meet their expenses, which thus highly influenced the employees’ performance. This reduction of salary also resulted in a huge turnover of talented employees from the organizations and had a post-pandemic influence on employees’ performance (Lord, 2020). Therefore, experts have suggested that instead of high salary reduction, the organizations should try to reduce the unnecessary expenses of the organization, give employees work from home post-pandemic, and continue communicating with employees about the organization’s situation along with the assurance of giving a salary hike after normality returns (Miller, 2020). Similarly, for other WC-WE-WS factors, the organizations should keep their planning intact for the suitable changes that should be made in such crucial situation like a pandemic in the future.

7. Research Implications

The academic contributions of the research have significant implications for the research constructs in defining the relationship of all the variables with employees’ performance in private manufacturing industries in developing nations. These variables have not been studied before in such a context of a post-pandemic situation. Therefore, the present research helps create an understanding of the scenario of factors influencing employees’ performance post-pandemic. Moreover, the research is limited to the study of a few variables, and leaves a wide scope for future researchers to explore in this area and to generate recommendations and suggestions to deal with such pandemic problems.

The study also has managerial implications as it has highlighted a very important issue that the organizations face after the pandemic. The study will be helpful for the managers to critically analyze the situation and have taught on preparing the organizations for such pandemic problems in advance.

8. Research Limitations and Future Suggestions

The research has a few limitations including that a) the study is based on data collected from private manufacturing industries in India. Hence, the study is limited to the private sector and manufacturing industries only, and

does not generalize to public sector companies and other industries such as education, hospitality, IT, etc. Therefore, in the future, research can be conducted by taking other industries potentially along with the public sector. b) there are various other WC-WE-WS factors included in the literature review, which were not taken into the present study as studying all the variables together in one paper is not possible and only two-factors from each variable were extracted and studied in the present study. Therefore, future research can incorporate other variables having a relationship between WC-WE-WS factors and employees' performance.

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