

The Impact of COVID-19 on HRM Practices and Working Conditions: Moderating Role of Ethical Orientation

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Abstract

As a result of the lack of rules and sometimes conflict of values owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges impacting the HRM practices and working conditions of the companies were generated. This paper examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HRM practices and working conditions and analyze the moderating role of ethical orientation that affects this relationship. A survey of 172 managers and HRM practitioners from Saudi Arabian companies was conducted as the data collection method. To investigate the direct effect of COVID-19 pandemic on HRM practices and working conditions, and its moderating effect through development of ethical orientation we used linear regression analysis. The findings indicate that ethical orientation plays a moderating role and impact positively and strongly the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the enhancement of the organizational structure, the organizational leadership, the HRM practices, the corporate culture and the responsibility for health.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic; Organizational Structure; Organizational Leadership; HRM Practices; Corporate Culture; Responsibility for Health; Ethical Orientation

I. Introduction

The COVID19 pandemic as a crisis situation has forced organizations to make quick decisions in order to manage catastrophic social and financial disasters. Coronavirus risks and requirements have impacted HRM practices and working conditions, and the managers have to play a major role in this crisis situation to sound employees' performance. Therefore, managers and HRM practitioners are required to take appropriate measures to protect all stakeholder interests (employees, customers, suppliers...). Several emerging HRM practices and working conditions can be adopted by an organization under COVID-19 pandemic situation as remote working,

autonomous work culture, flexible organization of working time, balance between work and personal life, anticipation and management of absenteeism and commitment to the job, appropriate leadership style, pay cuts instead of layoffs, etc. The implementation of these emerging HRM practices and working conditions has provided new challenges that employers need to meet to achieve organizational objectives. Considering the possibility of incorrect operation during the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes essential to reinforce into the organizational structure a set of ethical values and principles to guide the behavior of stakeholders in crisis situations (Lichtenstein et al., 1995).

In the absence of valid norms and standards that can guide the managers' decisions, the development of ethical orientation becomes required (Kohlberg, 1981). COVID-19 should be considered as opportunity to maintain and further develop ethical norms and values in this regard.

This paper investigates the moderating role of the ethical orientation in the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic effects and emerging HRM practices and working conditions. This is theoretically through literature review, and empirically through a survey conducted with a number of managers and HRM practitioners from Saudi Arabia companies.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypothesis Development

COVID-19 pandemic has strongly impacted economies, societies, organizations and employees. This pandemic has indeed slowed global economic activity (Gourinchas, 2020), resulting in temporary layoffs and partial unemployment across many countries (OECD & International Labor Organization, 2020). This pandemic requires companies to meet a variety of challenges, and the manager and the HRM practitioners have to find solutions to maintain their companies' stable position. To overcome this crisis situation, it is essential to enhance the social responsibility to the human resource practices and develop ethical practices and appropriate working conditions (Gama et al., 2012). In addition, improving the organizational structure, the leadership, and the corporate culture through the development of the managers' and HR practitioners' ethical orientation. Another domain has been added and related to the responsibility for Health vis-à-vis the employees, this will positively affect the quality of the work environment when companies assume their social responsibilities.

2.1. Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on HRM practices

To protect the health and safety of populations, all countries are moved through the institution of restrictions "Covid risk" protocols. The companies

are forced to respect rigorously these protocols, and where possible, to relocate certain activities and use home teleworking (Tokarchuk, et al. 2021). The managers particularly the HRM practitioners make efforts to cope with the complex and challenging environment, so as to ensure company's survival and provide assistance to employees facing issues related to COVID-19 pandemic. They need go through this crisis effectively and efficiency.

2.2. Effect of ethical orientation on HRM practices

The HRM practices and their related sub-activities (recruitment, training and development, wage and rewards, appraisal of the employees' performance, and task autonomy) embody employees' ethical behaviors (Al-Tarawneh, 2020). Consequently, HRM during COVID-19 period requires practices allowing the promotion of positive attitude among employees and encouraging of their commitment, involvement, and engagement for the change (Manuti et al., 2020). The development and promotion of ethical behaviors becomes necessity to develop new practices and appropriate workplace conditions contributing to reassure employee welfare and safety, and support them in meeting challenges related to the COVID-19 period.

Behaviors are affected by ethical orientations that provide leaders and HRM managers with sufficiently legitimate points of reference that direct their engagement in HRM practices. The ethical orientation is characterized by four dimensions: (1) justice encouraging ethical values as honesty, equity and rightness (Aupperle, 2008), (2) deontology focusing on the fit of the behavior with the unwritten rules, law, universal principles, duties and responsibilities, and obligations (Tamunomiebi & Elechi, 2020), (3) relativism taking into account the preferences of societies, cultures, families, and individuals (Gupta, 2010), and (4) teleology emphasizing on the individual and/social benefits for behaviors or decisions (Beu & Buckley, 2001).

Development of ethical orientation may be argued as a moderator between COVID-19 effects and HRM practices. Indeed, the direct relationship

between COVID-19 effects and HRM practices could be enhanced if positive ethical climate is developed and promoted.

2.3. Moderating roles of ethical orientation in the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic and HRM practices and working conditions

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the HRM practices and working conditions (Hamouche, 2021). HRM processes and practices are discussed and grouped by five interrelated dimensions: organizational structure, leadership, HRM practices, responsibility for health, and corporate culture.

2.3.1. COVID-19, Ethical orientation and organizational structure

The achievement of organizational goals under the COVID-19 pandemic requires more agility. For organizations to succeed in addressing this grand societal challenge, they should be capable of allocating resources, harmonizing work processes to be in place, and mobilizing and leveraging all resources (financial, human, and technological) (Liu et al., 2020). In fact, despite crisis situation generated by the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations have to updated practices and processes that help managers and precisionists to face challenges provided by drastic organizational changes.

The COVID-19 has influenced the companies' organizational design because of physical distance becoming an important contingency (Foss, 2020). With the COVID-19 pandemic, home teleworking has been used more frequently than ever before, allowing more autonomy in terms of attributions and methods used for work and tasks execution, and greater level of work time flexibility in terms of ways of performing the tasks (Lodovici et al., 2021). Having greater degrees of autonomy and flexibility generates positive effects, such as increased employees' job satisfaction and ensure equilibrium between their professional and personal life, or negative effects, such as increased workload and work-life imbalance (Messenger et al., 2017). Thus, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: The companies' organizational structure is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The use of home telework allows employees more autonomy to organize and perform their work. This margin of freedom can be treated differently, particularly in the absence of mechanisms of traditional direct control. Indeed, the employees will be more responsible for their actions. Decisions taken by them should be based on moral principles and directed towards achieving the intended outcomes. So, they are engaged in a dynamic process to generate ethical values guiding their decisions. This study postulated that:

H1b: The ethical orientation moderates the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the companies' organizational structure.

2.3.2. COVID-19, Ethical orientation and Organizational Leadership

Many leaders need to meet new challenges in COVID-19 time, including quick decisions on work organization, policies related to the exceptional circumstances characterized by high level of uncertainty. Leading an organization during COVID-19 pandemic is stressful, and three leadership practices become more required; developing a trusting relationship with employees, communicating clearly and frequently with stakeholders, and engaging staff and distributing leadership throughout the organization (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). Consequently, leaders encourage employee behavior in organization through trust, develop employees' positive organizational relationships. Those this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H2a: The companies' organizational leadership is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 period requires a radical shift in attitude and values of leader. Leaders who exhibit authentic leadership demonstrate ethical behaviors that affects the quality of employee relationships (Chen & Sriphon, 2021). Leadership can therefore be enhanced by promoting ethical values and norms (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Based on this argument, hypothesis H2b is formulated:

H2b: The ethical orientation moderates the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the leadership.

2.3.3. COVID-19, Ethical orientation and HRM practices

Strategic HRM and HRM functions have been impacted by COVID-19 pandemic (Hamouche, 2021). During COVID-19 period, uncertainty has been increased and the achievement of organizational goals have been compromised. This makes performing strategic planning risky, especially since the organizations can't provide enough and clear information about the employees' management plans and their intended reactions to the pandemic. In addition, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis working conditions have dramatically changed (Gourinchas, 2020), has reshaped staffing dynamics (Campello et al., 2020), has altered performance management within organizations (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021), has increased the need to reskill and upskill the workforce in order to respond to the new context of the new distance economy, and has altered the compensation management to prevent employees from losing the will to act ethically after the pandemic (Przytuła et al., 2020).

According to (Ngoc et al., 2021), despite the challenges and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, companies develop new practices allowing them to meet these challenges and navigate threats that menace their survival. Based on this argument, hypothesis H3b is stated as follows:

H3a: The COVID-19 pandemic affects the HRM practices.

In crisis times, particularly in the COVID-19 period, businesses are highly committed to business ethics and social responsibility (Attiany, 2016). To improve employees' performance, the organizations need to adopt ethical considerations in development of HRM practices as fairness, justice, and rights (Mathenge, 2011). The practice of ethical aspects based on justice, rights, fairness, transparency, integrity, and impartiality on HRM practices has a profound impact on raising organization's ethical culture, which in turn

reflects on employees' satisfaction and therefore performance. Thus, this study postulated that:

H3b: The ethical orientation moderates the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the HRM practices.

2.3.4. COVID-19, Ethical orientation and corporate culture

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unexpected changes requiring a hybrid workplace model (AM & Affandi, 2020; Yang et al. 2022), an enhancement of organizational resilience (Heredia et al., 2022), a development of the autonomy of employees (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020), an implementation of remote working (Tanpipa et al., 2021), a positioning new information technology (Sagan & Schüller, 2020), a maintaining communication with employees, and an adapting performance management system (AM & Affandi, 2020). These changes need the development of an emerging culture helping organizations to meet challenges and as possible avoid threats related to COVID-19. Therefore, we proposed that:

H4a: The COVID-19 pandemic affects the corporate culture.

In the COVID-19 period, develop and promote ethical values become crucial to affect the socialization process and therefore assist employees to develop the favorable culture contributing to the promoting and the maintain of ethical values and norms (Asatiani et al. 2021). Indeed, ethical behaviors facilitate the transition to a hybrid working model and a flexible work arrangement. Then, employees become more encouraged to use updated information technologies and home teleworking and increase autonomy at work. Thus, hypothesis H4b is set as follows:

H4b: The ethical orientation moderates the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the corporate culture.

2.3.5. COVID-19, Ethical orientation and responsibility for Health

COVID-19 pandemic has caused employees to be stressed at work (Shaw et al., 2020). HR

departments, in particular, are responsible for protecting employees and ensuring safe and secure working environment. To respond to COVID-19 and related welfare issues, they need safety units to keep the employees safe and ease stress on employees and enhance their general well-being in the pandemic (Ochalski, 2016). Thus, we postulated that:

H5a: The COVID-19 pandemic affects the safety and health management.

During COVID-19 period, corporate social responsibility was observed to intersect with human resource management (Omidi & Dal Zotto, 2022) requiring HRM activities rooted in ethical imperative. These activities are not just about ensure appropriate working conditions for employees based on legal requirements. Furthermore, HRM departments need to develop healthcare and prosocial work practices which

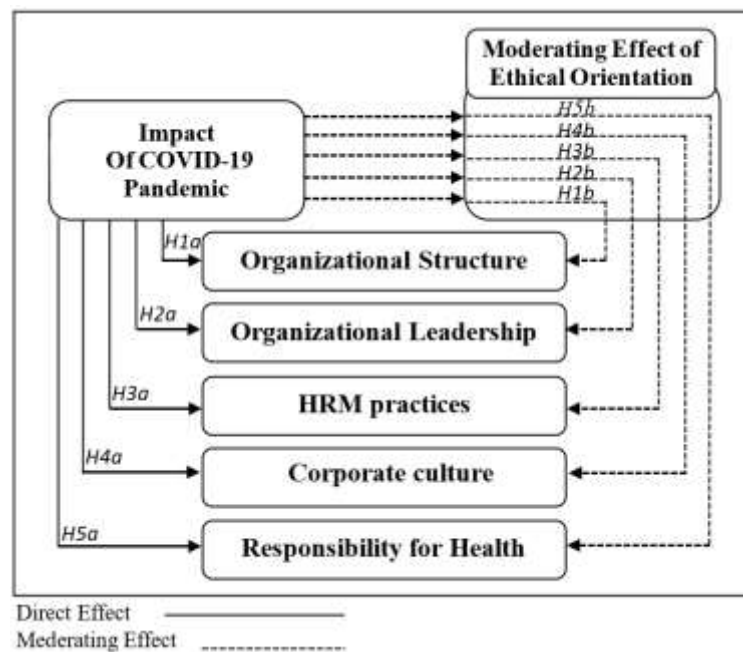
promote employee welfare and safety well-being to lessen the effects of burnout and stress (Florea et al., 2013). Thus, the hypothesis H5b is proposed:

H5b: The ethical orientation moderates the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the responsibility for Health.

3. Research model

According to the reviewed literature, the study's research model is illustrated in Figure 1. Through this study, the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on the HR practices and working conditions [H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a, H5a], on the one hand, and the moderator role of ethical orientation in the relation between COVID-19 effects, and HRM practices and working conditions [H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b, H5b], on the other hand were analyzed.

Figure 1. Exhibits the hypothesized relationships of the study.



4. Material and Methods

4.1. Methodology and Sampling

Correlating Coronavirus effects with HR practices and working conditions is the methodology used, as well as using ethical orientation variable as a

moderator for this relationship. A sample of 172 managers and HRM practitioners were surveyed in Saudi Arabian companies to examine the research problem and hypotheses.

Through a pilot test among 22 managers and HRM practitioners, the questionnaire content was

validated and the reliability of the statements used in the survey was confirmed (Cronbach’s alpha value above 0.7).

Using a Google platform, 217 questionnaires were sent out and 179 of them were returned, resulting in an 82% return rate. The usable response rate was 79% after seven questionnaires were partially completed.

Of the 172 respondents, male respondents represent 54.7% and female respondents represent 45.3%, with a mean age of 35.56. Most of respondents were Middle managers (50.6%), 25% were high managers, 13.4% were basic managers and 11% were HRM practitioners. The mean experience of respondents was 7.2 years. The respondents’ companies belong to different sectors: 38.4% wholesale Business; 30.2% Retail Business; 19.2% Service Business; 12.2% Manufacturing/Factory. The respondents represented companies of different sizes: less than 10 employees (10.5%), 10-49 (19.2%), 50-99 (30.1%), 100-199 (26.2%), or 200 employees or more than people (14%).

4.2. Measurement model analysis

Employing a five-point scale ranking (strongly disagree, neutral, disagree, strongly agree),

questionnaire multi-measurement items were used for each variable to avoid the limitation of the focus on a single item (See Table 2.). Specifically, five measurement items were used for measuring the effect of COVID-19 pandemic. The ethical orientation was measured through a total of four statements. Each of organizational structure, organizational leadership, HRM practices, corporate culture, and responsibility for health is measured through three items.

To evaluate the measurement model by the calculation of convergent validity and discriminant validity, on the one hand and to test the study hypotheses by the using of multiple linear regression, on the other hand, we used the statistics software SPSS 26 (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

To explore the interrelation between the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP), on one side and Organizational Structure (OS), Organizational Leadership (OL), HRM Practices (HRMP), Corporate Culture (CC), and Responsibility for Health (RH) on other side, we used the Pearson correlation. In this study the Ethical Orientation (EO) was moderating variables. The means and standard deviations of variables are showed in Table 1. The variables’ standard deviations are close to zero indicating that the data are clustered closely around the mean (more reliable).

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of variables.

	ICP	EO	OS	OL	HRMP	CC	RH
Mean	3.712	3.743	3.729	3.700	3.715	3.705	3.793
Std. Deviation	0.569	0.561	0.592	0.571	0.604	0.604	0.535

The validity of the measurement model was assessed from two perspectives: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Indeed, the calculation of Cronbach’s alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) allow the assessment of the convergent

validity. In addition, all item factor loadings were measured. The assessment of the discriminant validity was done through the using of the square root of the AVE for each variable. This is essential to ensure the distinguish of each variable latent from all other variables in the model.

Table 2: Convergent validity.

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	α	CR	AVE
<i>Impact of COVID-19 pandemic (ICP)</i>				
		0.856	0.938	0.754
My job performance is negatively affected during the COVID-19 time. (ICP1)	0.883			
Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am apprehensive. (ICP2)	0.896			
I feel stress from my work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (ICP3)	0.817			
Current corona crisis will affect my future career once I have returned to normal work. (ICP4)	0.925			
I perceive a negative impact of the crisis on my private life due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (ICP5)	0.817			
<i>Ethical Orientation (EO)</i>				
		0.773	0.931	0.772
The COVID-19 pandemic made ethical values as justice, fairness and rightness more applied frequently at work. (EO1)	0.925			
In the COVID-19 period, I insist in my work that all decisions being for my family, culturally, and traditionally acceptable. (EO2)	0.885			
In the COVID-19 period, I insist in my work that all decisions taken maximize benefits and minimize damages. (EO3)	0.807			
In the COVID-19 period, I insist in my work that all decisions are not a violation of unwritten rules or an abusive practice. (EO4)	0.895			
<i>HRM Practices and Working Conditions</i>				
<i>Organizational Structure</i>				
		0.734	0.930	0.818
In the COVID-19 period, I have been forced to break with traditional models as well as working methods, as well as interpersonal relationships. (OS1)	0.896			
In the COVID-19 period, the decision-making processes have been shortened, requiring the flat organizational structure emphasizing exchange, sharing of new forms of interpersonal solidarity. (OS2)	0.929			
The COVID-19 pandemic was a trigger for companies to realize the advantages of a culture of worker autonomy faced with the uncertainty of demand, disruptions in supply chains, pressures on costs and on cash flow. (OS3)	0.888			
<i>Organizational Leadership</i>				
		0.755	0.852	0.658

Because of COVID-19, leaders are face a serious and urgent adaptive challenge. (OL1) 0.817

During COVID-19 pandemic, the leadership is focused on the employees' health, safety and well-being. (OL2) 0.784

In the COVID-19 period, I prefer communal relationship and social exchange relationship. (OL3) 0.833

HRM practices 0.794 0.877 0.706

In the COVID-19 period, our priority is to preserve our workforce. (HRMP1) 0.772

It is difficult to maintain the previous employee performance evaluation criteria adopted before the crisis situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. (HRMP2) 0.854

In the COVID-19 time, employees are not subject to the same working conditions and availability. (HRMP3) 0.891

Corporate culture 0.776 0.869 0.695

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is preferable to implement a hybrid workplace model in order to provide flexibility and support to employees. (CC1) 0.896

In the COVID-19 period, I prefer more autonomy to choose work hours and location. (CC2) 0.935

I prefer more flexibility and autonomy during the COVID-19 period because it will increase job satisfaction and happiness, which will improve performance. (CC3) 0.639

Responsibility for Health 0.708 0.811 0.591

The COVID-19 variants are an ongoing threat, so the design of office space must take safety and health into consideration. (RH1) 0.676

In the COVID-19 period, I prefer working in shifts / alternate days. (RH2) 0.834

In the COVID-19 period, employees are regularly trained and sensitized COVID-19 risk factors and protective measures. (RH3) 0.788

To measure convergent validity, the factor loadings should be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011). As shown in Table above the majority of factor loading are greater than 0.7 except CC3 and RH1 who are near 0.7 and we keep them because their factor loadings aren't lower than 0.4 (Chin, 2010).

The convergent validity of the measurement model is acceptable because, as shown in table 3, the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the cutoff point 0.7 (Joseph et al., 2016) and the results of AVE of all latent variables exceeded the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2011)

Table 3: *Discriminant validity.*

	ICP	EO	OS	OL	HRMP	CC
ICP	0.869					
EO	0.846	0.879				
OS	0.809	0.934	0.905			
OL	0.636	0.605	0.568	0.812		
HRMP	0.427	0.603	0.568	0.793	0.840	
CC	0.528	0.763	0.795	0.655	0.648	0.834
RH	0.719	0.719	0.694	0.804	0.593	0.525

According to Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each latent variable is higher than all other values in the same column, indicating that the model is discriminately valid.

5. Results

The relationships between model variables are presented in table 4. Organizational Structure (OS) and Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) are positively and strongly correlated ($\beta = 0.676$) with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. Thus, as the impact of COVID-19 increased, so did interest in the enhancement of organizational structure. Hypothesis H1a was accepted. Furthermore, the other direct relationships have a positive and strong associations with a significance level of $p < 0.001$: relationship between Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) and Organizational Leadership (OL) ($\beta = 0.620$), relationship between Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) and HRM Practices (HRMP) ($\beta = 0.587$), relationship between Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) and Corporate Culture (CC) ($\beta = 0.426$), and relationship

between Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) and Responsibility for Health (RH) ($\beta = 0.539$). The results show that when the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic increased, managers and HRM practitioners bring more concerns to organizational leadership, HRM Practices, Corporate Culture, and Responsibility for Health. Hypothesis H2a, H3a, H4a, and H5a are fully supported.

Moreover, all hypotheses with moderating effects (H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b, H5b) were supported by the study results. As a consequence of the findings, it seems that the role of Ethical Orientation (EO) in strengthening the relationship between each two original variables is positively significant. The direct relationship between Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic (ICP) and Organizational Structure (OS) with (β) = 0.676 is enhanced to become (β) = 0.752 through the moderating effect of Ethical Orientation (EO). The other testing models H2b, H3b, H4b, and H5b also have same outcomes. The details are presented in Figure 2.

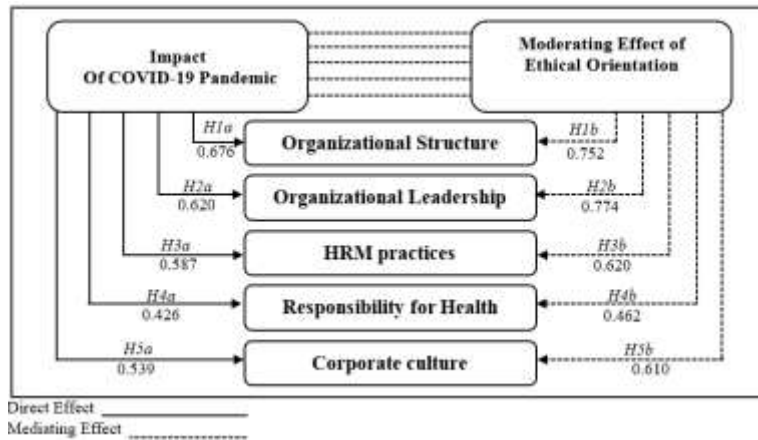
Table 4: *Multiple correlation Results.*

Variables Relationship	Beta Value	Hypothesis Test
ICP ↔ OS	0.676	H1a is accepted
EO_ICP ↔ OS	0.752	H1b is accepted

ICP ↔ OL	0.620	H2a is accepted
EO_ICP ↔ OL	0.774	H2b is accepted
ICP ↔ HRMP	0.587	H3a is accepted
EO_ICP ↔ HRMP	0.620	H3b is accepted
ICP ↔ CC	0.426	H4a is accepted
EO_ICP ↔ CC	0.462	H4b is accepted
ICP ↔ RH	0.539	H5a is accepted
EO_ICP ↔ RH	0.610	H5b is accepted

Notice: For all variable relationships $p < 0.001$: Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level and $N = 172$.

Figure 2: The direct effect and moderating effect of test model.



Notice: Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level and $N = 172$.

6. Discussion

According to the results of the study and in order to achieve objectives under COVID-19 pandemic, the companies surveyed emphasized the need to become more agile, flexible, and collaborative. But succeeding individually and collectively is a challenge, and the Covid-19 pandemic has disclosed the maturity of companies to operate in agile mode on five dimensions:

- Organizational Structure (hypotheses H1a & H1b): The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed organizational changes requiring the acceleration of management by objectives, the strengthening of the technological infrastructure of organizations,

the acceleration of the digitization, and the need for empowerment and confidence. First, the managers and employees have been forced to break with traditional models as well as working methods, as well as interpersonal relationships. Second, the decision-making processes have been shortened, requiring the flat organizational structure emphasizing exchange, sharing of new forms of interpersonal solidarity. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic was a trigger for companies to realize the advantages of a culture of worker autonomy faced with the uncertainty of demand, disruptions in supply chains, pressures on costs and on cash flow. The study found, that it is as if the pandemic has encouraged an ethical behavior oriented to the self-sacrifice and collective-

interest. Therefore, the companies are invited to take a standpoint and adopt a strategy for dealing with ethical issues.

- Organizational Leadership (hypotheses H2a & H2b): The Covid-19 pandemic acts as an incentive for the strong leadership. In fact, the strong leadership allowed to manage and transmit positive energy as best the leaders can despite the uncertain context created by the coronavirus. During the COVID-19 pandemic, exercising a leadership is focused not only on the reinvention of technical and technological capacities but also on the employees' health, safety and well-being. It's time to reimagine or reinvent a social contract that instills confidence and creates a workforce that's resilient and dynamic. For this purpose, the need of ethical leader is accentuating. Four qualities are considered essential to ethical leadership: motivate remote teams, communicate with scattered teams, strengthen technological tools, and flexibility. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged employees to consider more efforts to realize actions, develop compromises, and take initiatives. It has encouraged employees to consider actions, compromises and sacrifices that they otherwise would not have considered. In this way, the study Shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected various dimensions of leadership causing a review of processes, a questioning of employee support choices, an establishment of leadership using company's digital resources and technology, and increase employee empowerment through privileging collaborative social networks, and developing a social dialogue promoting ethical behavior of employees.

- HRM practices (hypotheses H3a & H3b): Concretely, the expected consequences of COVID-19 pandemic result in a tendency towards precarious employment with also more restrictive and less well-paid jobs. The quality of conditions of employees is the responsibility of companies. Regarding the human resources planning, the respondents are more interesting to preserve their workforce sometimes by means of temporary cost optimization measures than to make social plans and then to lost employees with core competencies. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has led search for new models of needs

and expectation of workers, better consideration of the health and working conditions, and the rise of connectivity and communication technologies. These new orientations are influenced by the development of the manager's ethical conduct. In this regard, minor organizational changes such as adopting measures of internal mobility or adjustment of working time because they are less costly and easier to manage compared to radical changes with heavy social impacts such as going to the dismissal of workers all over the place. Under COVID-19 pandemic, training plays an important role generating the need diversity in order to ensure, in these particular circumstances, temporary replacement or to meet the requirements of new job profiles.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, performance evaluation has become a challenging as a result of for several reasons: first, it is difficult to maintain the previous evaluation criteria adopted before the Covid-19 pandemic with objectives not updated to reflect the realities experienced by the companies. Second, working conditions and availability are not the same. Third, Individual evaluations well as collective evaluations are inadequate in this context and may be damage team motivation and confidence. It seems necessary to establish a clear and transparent evaluation modality which take into account the commitment and the efforts undertaken in crisis time. Fourth, the organizational changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the use of use home teleworking, the acceleration of digitization and the increasing of employee empowerment, require revisiting of the performance evaluation methods. The implementation of teleworking has significantly modified collaborations and working methods; team management, delegation, motivation, the definition of objectives must be redesigned. Consequently, the performance evaluation needs to be adapted. Many surveyed companies have seen their objectives unachieved by the COVID-19 pandemic, some on the contrary, see new opportunities to be explored.

Therefore, as founded by the study, with the redefinition of the strategic objectives in which many surveyed companies are engaged, the development of ethical values and the adoption of

ethical behavior have to be considered in HRM practices.

- Corporate culture (hypotheses H4a & H4b): Due to the COVID-19 pandemic consequences, effective teleworking arrangements were developed. Before the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of teleworking was made possible by a company culture prepared for digital technology and depend on the characteristics and the requirements of the tasks. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, many companies were quick to act. Their employees are clearly and openly communicated with about the processes and the potential risks of the pandemic, and they are encouraged to promote and adopt teleworking. In the long run, they have benefited from a highly motivated workforce, an increased level of trust, and a positive impact on the organizational culture. Their objective is to ensure continuity and flexibility in implementation of activities.

During the Covid-19 the managers were placed in a situation of uncertainty and complexity. In the face of complicated problems and to seek optimal solutions, the data on which they base their management reasoning is multidimensional, unstable and often elusive. In particular, it is essential to establish a high quality of interaction with all company stakeholders, as well as to develop innovative solutions with a view that transform the environment instead of simply adapting to it. This requires reviewing decision-making habits, by privileging collective intelligence, and no longer just individual autonomy and expertise, while developing the individual responsibility and ethical orientation.

These achievements in terms of organizational infrastructure, technological investments, and openness to e-learning collaborative tools make rolling back impossible. In the postcrisis period, companies will have to take into account these new skills, experiences and expectations of staff but also those of external stakeholders in terms of sustainable development, social and societal responsibility, business ethics and strategy.

- Responsibility for Health (hypotheses H5a & H5b): As managers today, they should strike a balance between the need for compliance with

health and safety regulations for their employees, on the one hand, and a return to economic efficiency and effectiveness that can ensure their survival by preserving jobs and ensuring their future development, on the other. In additional, an important challenge is to implement hygiene measures in every workplace, aiming to protect the workers' health and safety more than previously. Concretely, the companies conduct awareness-raising and information actions and adopt a protocol for employees contaminated or suspected of being infected. The employees' duties are to safeguard their safety and that of other people in the workplace. Therefore, they have an obligation to follow the instructions to use the sanitary equipment properly.

Social dialogue is maintained between companies and employees in order to negotiate not only safety and health conditions, but also support plans to ensure the social equity. According to the survey, companies publish fact sheets, guides and videos explaining the preventive measures to ensure employees' safety in order to reorganize the work of employees. A "Covid risk" protocol is posted in the workplaces of companies to better adapt their hygiene systems. It is also used, after deconfinement, for all those who will be authorized to resume their activities. Concretely, the companies have favor telework when it is possible. Otherwise, other companies have opted for other alternatives, such as group work to reduce the number of employees.

7. Managerial implication

It was founded that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed managers and HRM partitionists in crisis characterized by challenges. It imposed changes in HRM practices and working conditions to become more agile, flexible, and collaborative. Furthermore, this study provided managers with valuable information regarding the role that ethical orientation played during the COVID-19 period. This study confirms the hypothesis that ethical orientation can be used as a moderating factor to improve the relationship between impact of COVID-19 pandemic and HRM practices and working conditions. In this paper we argue that managers should be aware and understand the

importance of developing an ethical orientation during COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic affected HRM practices and working conditions requiring the development of innovative solutions to meet new challenges. As a result of the crisis, organizations committed themselves to a greater level of humanization in management, impacting the organizational structure, the organizational leadership, the HRM practices, the corporate culture, and the health responsibilities. To control these changes and support employees in accepting and positively committing to challenges associated with COVID-19 period, the development of ethical values and orientation is required. Managers taking the ethics of care approach avert situations of confusion and dilemmas caused by the lack of rules and the conflict of values by building and improving relationships with others and the corporations.

The results of the study of 172 managers and HRM practitioners from Saudi Arabian companies found that the COVID-19 pandemic imposes new challenges to managing the crisis effectively and efficiently. Indeed, this crisis has imposed organizational changes that have strengthened the digitization, encouraged solidarity and enabled exchange. Leaders stress the importance of adopting a strong leadership style that fosters a sense of responsibility for each other's welfare and encourage employees to support one another. The implemented new HRM practices aimed at preserving their workforce and implementing effective teleworking arrangements. In order to improve the level of trust and promote open and transparent communication, an emerging culture was developed. Hygiene measures were also implemented at all workplaces to provide and maintain a health and safe working environment. An analysis of the moderating role of the development of the ethical orientation between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the HRM practices and working conditions found that the stronger the ethical orientation was enhanced, the more the managers are engaged in improving HRM practices and related sub-activities.

In this study managers and HRM practitioners are helped to understand importance of developing ethical values and orientation to face consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the crisis situations and it will soon be over, but we have learned something else that may be useful in other crisis situations. However, this result analysis of this study was limited on 172 respondents, which doesn't allow to generalize the results.

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