A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC TIMES

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Abstract: *Companies of all sizes throughout the globe are already feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes steep declines in revenue, bankruptcy, and the loss of employees. As a corollary, the challenges experienced by businesses are exacerbated by the enforcement of travel restrictions, the adoption of quarantine processes, and the shutting of international borders. In order for their organizations to continue operating regularly and address the new difficulties that have developed as a consequence of the outbreak, human resource managers will need to be flexible and open to new methods of doing business. Consequently, strong multidimensional leadership skills and prompt, calibrated policy responses are required to manage the effects of Covid-19 on HR processes for both employees and the organization as a whole. The research report summarizes the difficulties encountered by HR specialists, especially managers, and their functions in addressing the void left by the covid-19 epidemic. In addition to addressing the problems that have already arisen as a result of the corona virus pandemic, the research makes suggestions on how to foster a productive telework and sustainable working environment among employees and the organization both during and after the outbreak.*

Keyword: *Human Resource Management; Employee well-being, Teleworking, Covid-19*

1. INTRODUCTION

HR managers during the COVID-19 period prioritized health and safety considerations in the workplace (for both workers and employers), and they encouraged a swift shift to telework to mitigate the impact of the epidemic on efficiency and output. To counteract the epidemic, teleworking was used extensively. Human resources professionals, in particular, have prepared the workforce for the oncoming pandemic by encouraging its members to strengthen their resilience and increase their output. Because of this, businesses and their employees are better equipped to deal with the epidemic. With the corona virus being the newest pandemic, it has provided HR professionals with a broad range of challenges. Human resources is facing a wide variety of difficulties, many of which have gotten more complex with the spread of the covid-19 virus. Despite mobility restrictions, the inability to hold physical meetings, the appraisal of employees despite remote working, effective ways to sensitize employees on the corona virus and its effects, the maintenance of personal hygiene, the psychological state of employees to function effectively, etc., HR professionals now have to worry about the efficient and effective functionality of the organization towards the achievement of organizational goals.

It is essential to keep in mind that many companies, such as the food and pharmaceutical sectors, simply could not afford to completely shut down their operations (Ahmad, 2020). As a consequence of this, many businesses who do not have the financial resources to completely close their doors have instead adopted a policy that allows employees to work from home. This practice has subsequently become the industry norm. However, once the lockdown is removed and companies reopen, both the private and public sectors are confronted with extraordinary problems. This is especially true in light of the vast amount of work that has accumulated ever since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of managers of human resources to institute additional safeguards to protect the health of workers who are willing to accept risks on the organization's behalf (Ahmad, 2020). In addition, there is a greater need to be inventive as a reaction to the issues that are now being faced. A medical screening to identify employees who may have been exposed to the virus and measures to ensure successful overall business operations despite the challenges may be examples of such measures. Educating employees on the significance of maintaining social distance may also fall under this category ofmeasures.

The purpose of this study is to investigate a number of difficulties that were experienced by HR managers during the COVID-19 epidemic and to provide a variety of solutions to the difficulties that were encountered by organizations during the period of COVID-19.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

A systematic literature review summarizes existing evidence and identifies gaps and directions for future research. The procedures that are performed to choose, scan, and evaluate the literature are what set it apart from a narrative review. These stages make it possible to examine both similarities and differences across the studies, which in turn expand one's understanding of the subject matter. This review approach is nevertheless important despite the difficulty of doing a data synthesis that spans several disciplines since it allows for the identification of the breadth of existing propositions on COVID-19 and sustainable HRM as well as the exploration of future research prospects. In this literature review, the qualitative methods of pattern matching and theme analysis have been used to classify the journal articles in a descriptive manner according to theoretical lens, geographical emphasis, methodology, and other thematic categories.

This study uses predefined selection criteria to capture the underlying relationship between COVID-19 and sustainable HRM. These criteria were inspired by the principles and guidelines outlined in a leading systematic literature review method called PRISMA (preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses) [19]. PRISMA is an acronym that stands for preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses. This systematic literature review, which was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA procedure, provides a revealing stand-alone assessment of the literature that was carefully reviewed in relation to COVID-19 and sustainable HRM. In a manner similar to that of De Cieri and Lazarova [20] and Cooke et al. [21], we used the PRISMA methodology, but we modified it to include the phases that are listed below: (1) search and selection, (2) data extraction and (3) data analysis.

The strategies that governments across the globe have adopted to stop the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus have put the existence of enterprises all over the world in jeopardy,

resulting in a global economic crisis that has never been seen before (Wenzel et al., 2020). As a consequence of this, businesses need to quickly adjust their management procedures in order to maintain their level of competitiveness both during and after the aforementioned financial crisis (Hong, 2020). Even though there is a large body of research on how crises affect companies (Mitroff, 2005; Sayegh et al. 2004), the majority of businesses are not typically ready to react swiftly and successfully manage crises. This is despite the fact that the literature on this topic is numerous (Wang, 2008).

When analyzing the actions taken by a company in response to a crisis, it is essential to take human resource management (HRM) into account because of the cross-cutting nature of these issues and the impact they have on important and strategic organizational factors (Aburumman et al., 2020). This may be explained by the fact that human resource management (HRM) makes it possible for firms to refresh their knowledge and strategic competencies (Wright et al., 2001), which is particularly important during times of economic uncertainty (Smith & Abdullah, 2007). In practice, the relevance of human resource management (HRM) in times of crisis is based on the fact that it improves competitiveness (Boxall & Steeneveld, 1999), influences organizational performance (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995), and increases human capital in organizations (Jiang et al., 2012; Wright & Boswell, 2002).

Previous research has looked at how HRM departments react when faced with an emergency situation. To be more specific, this topic has been discussed in the academic literature from a variety of perspectives, including the following: the role of human resource management (HRM) in crisis circumstances; the restructuring of human resource strategy to address these; the definition of activity packages as a response to recession situations; modifications to both philosophy and HRM practices; and the implementation of knowledge management initiatives to renew companies' strategic capabilities in times of crisis (Arzenek & Lenik, 2016; Bilginolu, 2019; Gunni).

Human resource management (HRM) is a relatively recent concept that originated in the 1980s as a consequence of research by the famous economist Michael Porter. When it comes to a company's performance, employees are the single most crucial aspect, according to Porter (Porter, 1980). O'Riordan (2017) claims that the growing economic downturn, rapid industrialization, and technology improvements all had an effect on businesses, necessitating the necessity for this rebranding. As a result, the shift from people management to human resource management shows that workers are increasingly seen as an asset crucial to the company's success. The transition from HRM (human resource management) to PM (personnel management) prompted this modification. Kok et al. (2001) state that HR formerly served as the company's "backbone," responsible for everything from hiring to benefits. Although this idea was not commonly acknowledged until the last several decades, companies now recognize that their staff are their most significant asset. The scope of human resource management extends beyond personnel management, which is concerned only with tasks like hiring, firing, and ensuring legal compliance, to include strategic planning. It's hardly surprising that companies' competitiveness and productivity have improved since they switched from people management to human resource management (Flynn, 1997).

Olasoji (2019) notes that it is the HR department's primary duty to increase productivity inside the company by fostering an environment in which all workers may thrive. As a result,

businesses, both public and private, are now understood to be made up of people working together toward a common purpose. Human resource management is becoming an increasingly popular area of study as the 20th century winds down (Michaels et al., 2001). According to the research of Igalen and Roussel (1998), the field of human resource management encompasses all efforts made to increase the efficiency of an organization as a whole by strengthening its individual members. This is due to the fact that efficacy is the yardstick by which the success of an organization's aims can be judged. Managers of human resources may play a key role in this regard by serving as a role model for HR growth in service of organizational goals. Human resource management, according to Byars & Rue (2006), is "a system of activities and strategies that focuses on the effective management of personnel at all levels of an organization in order to accomplish organizational objectives.

3. CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

The World Health Organization (2020) defines the coronavirus pandemic as a communicable illness brought on by the recently found covid-19 virus. Droplets of saliva and nasal discharge are the primary vectors of viral transmission. The rapid spread of Covid-19, if it is not contained, has led to its classification as a pandemic. At December of 2019, the corona virus was first thought to have arisen in a food market in the Hubei province region of Wuhan, China. It is still unknown where exactly the virus first appeared. The Covid-19 epidemic has caused significant disruption to organizational operations. This presents a significant barrier to the HR department's day-to-day functions. Remote work, email, and video conferencing have replaced on-site operations with all its ramifications as businesses scramble to contain this epidemic (Lewis, 2020). The slow resumption of business operations has presented human resources experts with the task of recruiting new medical staff to supplement the current one in an effort to contain covid-19 and maintain a rigorous isolation centre policy.

In addition, HR professionals have difficulties in preserving the health and safety of employees throughout the course of the pandemic. The increased amount of paperwork that layoffs bring about, in addition to the pressure that they inflict on the personnel that is still there, presents a unique challenge for departments that deal with human resources. As a result of the fact that millions of people are losing their jobs, HR professionals will need to provide consolation to individuals whose lives have been disrupted as a result of the layoffs. HR professionals have a responsibility to encourage employees who are required to work from home to maintain personal relationships with their co-workers even though they are not physically present.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Employees' motivation and well-being

In the past, many employees believe that remote working or working from home was an impossible task, but the pandemic and its subsequent effect necessitated the sudden shift to the "new normal" approach. Regrettably, the remote working approach was taken into consideration as a result of covid-19. More especially, the week preceding and during the covid-19 confinement posed a number of stress and anxiety for all business stakeholders including employers and employees as remote working and exceptional working conditions

had to be introduced to ensure continuity of industries (Sigma, 2020). While some employees experienced the fear of losing their jobs, others were faced with the fear of increasing workload and reduced wages. At the same time, majority of the workforce suffered perplexity as a result of poor communication from supervisors, demotivation and constant stress. Some were inadequately supported as a result of limited or no contact with other colleagues, with the agitation to be efficient and productive, supervisors and senior managers frequently demanded for deadlines to complete a specific work with online supervision (Ahmad, 2020). According to the 2020 American state of mind report on covid-19, employees are significantly affected mentally by the effect of the virus. The report showed that there was 21% increase in mental health since 16th of February, 2020 and the corresponding increase in the prescription of anti-anxiety medication in order to relief the effect of the virus. In this situation, Human resource managers can adopt some measures in order to ease off these challenges such as self-scheduling, a situation where employees set their own to help them balance work and family responsibilities using certain criteria and limits.

In addition, senior managers can promote flexible working hours such as shift work for employees in order to improve morale, increase job satisfaction and motivate workers. More can also be achieved by encouraging stressed employees to proceed on advanced annual leave (Sigma, 2020).

Managing Teleworking and maintaining a balance between work and family
Prior to Teleworking is a term that describes a situation where an employee works from home using modern technology and telecommunications to remain in touch with their employer. Prior to covid-19 pandemic, organisations where not conversant with managing the workforce without on-site supervision, but with the onset of the pandemic, organisation had to go digital even though a number of jobs still requires physical attention. Besides, a number of staff was not equipped with modern technologies to cope with the sudden change. Organisations had to distribute technical equipment such as laptops and internet facilities to support them (Baska, 2020).
Series of difficulties which resulted to anxiety and stress, especially for staff with children and those working from home. The ability to ensure adequate performance of employees who are remote-working as well as ensuring proper integration with on-site workers with work processes becomes a hard nut to crack for the HR managers. This is because managers would have to manage remote employees and teams which they have never managed in the pas (Gartner, 2020).The dramatic modification of work environment will inevitably have drastic effect on employees' ability to fit in work environment (Kristof, 1996). (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), in analysing the theory of person-environment fit opined that employees tend to flourish and experience high level of satisfaction and general well-being when they are selected by organisations whose work environments reflects similar culture, values, and work features as their own important beliefs. On the contrary, when the job setting present a different environment that does not fulfil these needs, employees' desires are significantly altered and they may not properly fit-in the work environment as in the case of the current pandemic – covid-19 (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Gartner survey on remote working during covid-19 pandemic posits that managers have well adapted to the new technological

development especially in helping employees adapt socially and economically (Gartner, 2020). In this survey, new models of managing remote employees were introduced (the NEAR Model) as follows:

Normalize Self-Direction: Majority of the remote worker demand for self-directed work. Therefore managers should reduce supervision of remote workers but rather concentrate on their output.

Enable New Relationships: Since employees are not physically connected to colleagues, HR manage identify distressed staff and connect them to other colleagues. Bailey, K., & Breslin, D. (2020)

Emphasize the Positive: remote working personnel are almost twice as liable to get correction criticism – which centres on conduct that was not fruitful –To maintain a two-way communication, management need to put more effort in addressing the remote working employees openly and in a straight forward way. Management need to affirm noticeable advancement with explicit illustrations.

Refurbish Team Expectations: At times, managers expect that teleworking staff depend solely on personal ideas. However, Gartner investigation reveals that completely remote workers relate with at least 3-5 other teams while working. For leaders, it is necessary to set targets for each member and the whole group to guarantee effective individual commitment and team work. Leaders should lay emphasis on individual and group targets in their discussions.

Limited Number of Staff Working On-Site

Because of the presence of the corona virus in the workplace, there has been a practical rise in the amount of teleworking as the amount of work has progressively grown. The majority of workers now do their jobs from home, while some are so incapacitated by illness that they are essentially unavailable. This has led to an increase in the amount of work performed by employees who are stationed at the physical location. In addition, the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 had led to a significant decrease in employee attendance, particularly among those working in sensitive positions. These concerns provide some unpredictability challenges for the managers of human resources, whose job it is to make sure that people resources are used most effectively. To address this issue, management may decide to increase the number of workers present at the workplace by implementing new policies that encourage workers already there to put in longer shifts in order to complete a greater number of responsibilities and make up for employees who are not physically present (EP, 2003). There is also the possibility of increasing the restriction on overtime work in order to free up additional hours and so alleviate backlogs (sigma, 2020). In a similar vein, in order to preserve the on-site working hours, it may be necessary to institute overtime pay, although this benefit would be limited to teleworking hours.

Covid-19 Health Hazards within the Workplace:

It has been determined that the atmosphere of the workplace is a significant risk factor that may hasten the propagation of the Covid-19 illness. Organizations are comprised of both skilled and unskilled laborers, the vast majority of whom hail from outlying villages and work in various capacities within the organization. These labor forces almost always provide a significant contribution to the propagation of the illness (George& George, 2020). For example, the Corona virus is more likely to be transmitted in high-traffic places including

restrooms, changing rooms, canteens, hallways, departure points, elevators, and other common facilities (HSC, 2020). Because of this, it is very necessary for companies to provide a healthy working environment that protects employees' mental and physical health in order to ensure the continuation of their businesses and maximize employee productivity. The strategy for containing the virus should also include the acquisition of essential human, financial, and material resources. These resources should include things like conducting risk assessment and determining how to prioritize the requirements, developing a project plan with specific actions, and consulting health and labour experts where necessary.

5. CONCLUSION

The experts who work in human resources should prioritize the introduction of new rules and processes that will provide simple access to the new problems. Not only should there be the establishment of policies, but there should also be careful partnerships with workers at all levels, with the primary emphasis being placed on interpersonal relationships as opposed to control, standard, and hierarchy (Bingham, 2020). This may be accomplished by developing confidence in the workers who have a lot of expertise while at the same time providing them with consistent assistance. Leadership styles that are successful and efficient, but also adaptable enough to accept rapid changes in the workforce, operation, corporate structure, and environment should be encouraged by professionals working in human resources. In this sense, human resource management (HRM) flexibility refers to the degree to which they are adaptable to a variety of different conditions as well as the speed at which the procedures are readjusted and redeployed to meet the new scenario (Agarwal, 2020). It is imperative that the necessity of acquiring the skills necessary for information management to filter information with the intention of distinguishing genuine information from false news and misinformation be emphasized. Finding material that can be checked for its veracity and accuracy will be of great assistance in developing plans and policies that will allow an organization to persevere in the face of obstacles.

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