

# A Conceptual Study on the Impact of Covid 19 pandemic on Human Resource Management

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## **Abstract:**

*“Necessity is the mother of invention”. This saying says the essence of the dilemma faced by today’s industrial sector and made the corporate leaders to review their work policies. In times where social distancing and employee’s health are outpacing the basics of traditional Human Resource concern like productivity & human relationships, now it’s becoming difficult to have office with hundreds and thousands of employees. HRM technology, which have witnessed a global digital disruption owing to the growing needs of millennial and digital technology, is now in a state of accelerated disruption. Industries are now searching for innovative ideas to have a balance between changing workplace and expected work result. Organisations feel that the employees have showcased commendable agility and resilience to adapt to the new ways of working. The new way of work may create a want for some new roles or require improvements of skills of existing resources. This paper made an attempt to present the impact of pandemic on Human Resource Management and its practices, base on secondary data available in books and websites.*

## **Key Words:**

*Human Resource Management, Pandemic, COVID 19, Revolutionary changes, Training and Development, Learning and Development*

## **Introduction:**

World Health Organization (WHO) on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 presented the report regarding new corona virus (SARS- COV-2) which presents the information came from WHO office in China informing about a typical pneumonia of unknown cause has been found in the city of Wuhan. Now there was a great challenge in front of workforce by COVID 19 due to its pressure on the survival of people and organization as well.

Employees are expected to take more responsibility for improving their skills as well to add new one. This is only because to meet the current job demands, prepare for leadership opportunities and to ensure their own employability to move and adapt between organizations as needed. (Molloy and Noe, 2010). Workforce engagement is one of the important roles of HR. Many studies have focused that a highly engaged workforce is necessary for the survival and development of the organization. Changes can be rapidly done which can affect not only business but also economy and social attitudes of throughout world.

The biggest change or trigger for change that the world is facing now in the pandemic crisis. It has definitely affected to how we live and work both and therefore no organization is left to be unaffected. And how could we forget the different sectors? This is only because in an organization everything is interconnected and interdependent. Not only this, the pandemic has also redefined the area of learning and development in organization. (Training Magazine, 2019; Kshirsagar 2020; Jingfang and Yates, 2020; CIPID 2020; Gartner Report, 2020; Raheja 2021). Today development becomes more important. According to Thomas Friedman, an American journalist and publicist express his views that curiosity and passion are the most important ingredients for development process. And employers those who support workplace education and training programs enjoy more reliable, resourceful, loyal and dependable workforce. (Goldglantz, 2013)

So, in such circumstances it becomes more important for the HR to take care of his employee's wellbeing. Human Resource Management (HRM) now have to perform the role of implementing the plans in order to maintain social distancing (Koirala and Acharya 2020) which ultimately helps to reduce the spread of this virus. Now he has to design new policies which take care of both mental and physical health of the employees.

The same situation took place in the year 2008 i.e. financial crisis in Europe where we can see greater flexibility, change in structure and design of jobs, downsizing etc. That time also common HR practice where been designed like adjustment of wages and workforce, reorganization of work schedules, stabilizing the workforce, etc (Roche 2011)

Now there is a great deal of discussion regarding the impact of this pandemic on HRM which defines how "The New Normal" will be. This paper helps us to know number of challenges which has been faced by HR managers during the pandemic and the various measures taken to face the challenges which is been experienced by organization during this era.

### **Concept of The Study:**

Now there is a drastic need of a change in work policies and in different processes. The most important challenge is now that how to manage the company's employees. This becomes more difficult when employees work, efficiency measurement etc. becomes unpredictable with that of health priorities, economic uncertainties and changing social norms. And now when this growing combination when carefully analyzed provides a bigger picture of organization's future curve. With this, most important objective of every organization now is to strike a balance between

productivity and work force morale and the HR team is now putting much effort by various means and strategies to achieve this. On the other hand, now the more focus of HR management, is on employee's health and wellness. And this is only because of the increasing interest of employees owing to awareness about hygiene, health management, personal well-being as well as productivity and growth of the organization. To smoothen the back to work situation, employers are depending more on digital HR features which can help them to maintain social distancing as well as contactless employee management.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

- To provide the impact on Human Resource Management practices
- To show the various changes that took place in Human Resource Management during pandemic
- To identify the various challenges experienced by HR managers to sustain in organization during the pandemic

#### **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:**

Human Resource Management has been derived from the concept of Personnel Management in 80's by a famous research economist, Michael Porter, who details the success of every organization to the employees (Porter, 1980). This implies that now the employees are looked as a major resource where the success of the organization ultimately depends upon. Employees are now the most important assets for the business (Kok, 2001). With this we can say that now the HRM also includes Strategic Planning.

Because of the shift from personnel management to HRM has developed organizational competitiveness and productivity (Flynn, 1997). And as per Olasoji (2019), the main responsibility of HRM is to use employees effectiveness organization productivity. And this is the main reason that many researchers are now interested in the area of HRM by the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Michaels, 2001). To support this, Byars & Rue, 2006 express his views that HRM organizes such plans & strategies that ultimately focus on how the employees get manage at all levels so that organizational objectives can be achieves.

#### **IMPACT OF PANDEMIC OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:**

The pandemic has increased the importance on the ‘human connect’ aspect of the HR function. Along with a rapidly unfolding health crisis, HR functions have taken the initiatives to provide better safety protocols, hygiene practices, guidelines for quarantining and isolating, and much more. Organizations are now helping employees to handle stress by setting up online classes for employee well being and motivation.

Because today employee safety has become more important, the HR teams with the help of other functions define ways to ensure safety and social distancing at factories and plants that continue to operate. Making surroundings disinfection has now become a primary goal to keep employees safe. Things like masks, hand washes and sanitizers are now part of daily hygienic products to be used by employees.

Today HR puts more efforts by putting employees engaged, motivated, and safe & productive. However, minimum staff situation around is still likely to continue for some time. Because of the virus transmissibility, social distancing is going to be continuing for at least a year or more and this could naturally affect the HR practices like recruitment, on-boarding and learning and development.

Now the Recruitments will depend upon the tech-savvy talent to work on digital workplace and so the process now has to be fully digital. Then how could we forget about Training & Development which will also be in online mode only.

In the coming future, HR will play a key role in redefining the nature of workplace. Like standard attendance and leave policies will no longer now given importance. This is only because now the organization has to keep trust in the commitment of employees who all are working remotely. Video meeting platforms will also have certain drawbacks and so this could impact the decision making structures when we are more depended on WFH. Smaller teams in this situation may be able to work better and take faster decision. More or less Work from Home may be even blessing in disguise. WFH may help people to balance professional & personal tasks in a better manner. It will provide encouragement to more of women & children with disabilities to enter the workforce. As organizations get more comfortable with remote workers, the requirement of office space & fixed workstation will be reduced considerably.

Organizations are now finding new ways to become more productive with fewer resources. As this pandemic changed the world practically overnight, the same have been done by the organization. Now the industries are watching a reinvention of the workplace in front of our eyes.

## **REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:**

Now the word “disturbance” has been worrying the HR people since COVID 19 started far reaching the country as a whole. HR leaders have started working to keep up the changes by making remote work or through the flexibility.

COVID 19 has about certain innovative changes by putting HR in centre as much emphasis is put on workers prosperity. Business leaders are now trying to connect the work team beyond the work place and support them through this tough situations. HR leaders are now searching for those individuals who can adjust as organization are still not organizing the full scale hiring activity. However, adaptability is the key for every organization for any future emergency.

And therefore, keeping safety & security of employees in mind, they are advised to work remotely. In order to bring everyone in one umbrella and to create positive work environment, every employee should be connected with team members and thus improve efficiency.

## **CHANGED WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT:**

Pandemic is one of the causes to reinvent the future work for managers who as such take the responsibility to make things better. New skills have to be encouraged as new technologies are going to be important for new role to perform. Employees are ultimately benefited from new mindsets, behavior and values in the new quickly workplace.

Working from home has become normal as we have gone digitizing the relationship from between firm and customer to employer and employee.

Adoption of new advanced technology has speed up in the creation of new roles but sometimes change in workload during pandemic is the due cause of unevenness in the creation of new roles. But re skilling & up skilling is most helpful to employees to move from one part of business to another.

The greatest impact of COVID 19 has been the human mainly their fear and uncertainty and a big example is work from home. So it becomes necessary that company culture and leadership style put attention on understanding the employees

Holding Virtual meetings was happening in the past but not in such extent. COVID 19 taught us to be supportive and trust is now put more attention than control. Many companies have balanced their prepossession so that flexibility becomes important to their strategic thinking.

It's very difficult to imagine group of people start working remotely all together. But still situations have thought us and we have adapted to such situation as well proved that we can move faster and work in more swift manner.

On one hand corporate leaders are thinking more of innovative ideas of what can be and cannot be done beyond their company's traditional process and on the other hand COVID 19 is forcing speedily on innovation.

The HR department of every organization is putting many efforts to facilitate their employees. And therefore because of these employees who were with WFH were able to face the situation without any negative impact on productivity. In order to keep their employees safe, motivated and productive the HR has to support them and give importance to their mental and emotional interest.

#### **MEASURES TAKEN BY HR DURING PANDEMIC:**

- **Compensation Restructuring:** Many companies are reducing this on a temporary basis; many are restructuring it to lower fixed & high variable package. And the variable pay is related to productivity and performance level. And so this reduces the fixed cost of organization which makes possibilities to earn earlier compensation by achieving desired productivity.
- **Redeployment/Re-skilling:** Due to pandemic some of the organization are transferring or reskilling their employees to other division or location where there is deficit. Deferment of Increment and Promotion: Due to this pandemic most of the companies are holding or deferring increment and promotions
- **Managing Temporary Employees:** Now the temporary/contract employees are given opportunities in this economic recession period which can be effective tool for cut across various segments of manpower.
- **Holding Performance Pay/Bonus:** Organizations are now also holding or even cancelling performance pay and bonuses except the statutory bonus which is mandated by the law.
- **Retrenchment and Termination:** After studying the impact of the pandemic certain businesses have closed down certain divisions/branches which are not performing in nature. Many large companies have also made temporary shutdown or suspension of operations for one or more plants to manage their variable & manpower cost.

- **Employee Communication:** This plays an important role in this kind of situation. Any kind of messages or information may lead to discourages morale of the employees and therefore they have to be taken into confidence otherwise situation can become worst.
- **HR Policies and Procedures Manual:** Organizations are always Re-looking for HR policies & procedures so that any changes if required can be undertaken in the future. This will make sure the employees safety and security as well as that of organizational health.

### **THE WAY FORWARD FOR HR:**

The practices which are made by HR for employees has to support with that of organization's vision and goals .Everything depends on the ultimate plans of the HR as the whole journey of the employees are depended on it. The plans includes all the activities related to recruitment, rewards & recognition, engagement motives and resignation process, everything gets included in it.

### **SCOPE OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

Working hours, locations and even work systems have to become more flexible Remote working now has become more important for every organization. The importance of temporary/contractual jobs will be more in demand. Workforce to constantly upgrade and work on capability enhancement to remain competitive. Employees are now more prepared for future and so they focus more on learning and development.

### **SUMMARY:**

HR evolution has took placed in 2020 and revolutionized the way they work. Employees are they assets of every organization. And therefore, to attract and retain the right talent becomes most important for every organization. It's not easy to build an employer brand easily. It also depends upon the HR Measures, and so it should be carefully analyzed and thought of. HR roles is been defined from Recruitment to appraisal to performance with cost optimization but without affecting employer brand. This ultimately plays a very important role for every organization in long term survival. And companies those are able to stabilize with this situation can only retain themselves in long run as well when the situation becomes balanced.

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