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## Navigating the New Normal of Business With Enhanced Human Resource Management Strategies

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Perfecto Gatbonton Aquino Jr. and Revenio C. Jalagat Jr.



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# Navigating the New Normal of Business With Enhanced Human Resource Management Strategies

Perfecto Gatbonton Aquino Jr.  
*Duy Tan University, Vietnam*

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*Al-Zahra College for Women, Oman*

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*Perfecto Gatbonton Aquino Jr., Duy Tan University, Vietnam*

The lurid and shocking insurgence of COVID-19 has shaken the world in 2019, and it continues to cause uncertainties in all spheres of peoples’ lives, businesses, and society. This uncertainty has created employee anxiety, fear of job loss, health threats, and impedes the organization’s earning potentials and operational sustainability in the workplace. This chapter aims to investigate how recruitment practices effectively are utilized in selecting new hires amid COVID-19 disastrous situations. Document analysis was utilized to provide interpretations on the data gathered and proposed viable strategies and propositions on new normal-based employee selection patterns. Recommendations were proposed to integrate the findings and strategies into the human resource policies in addressing the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In today’s globalized world, with mandatory changes in the way businesses operate due to COVID-19, the criteria for organizations to be ahead of competitors within a globally competitive environment during pandemic has been—and continues to

be—associated with their qualified human resources management strategies and the usage of these resources. The concept of “employee-friendly” human resources management has become clear in our lives in the rapidly changing environmental conditions as a result of COVID-19. In the new normal, the changing dimensions of human resources deeply affect employee motivation while the way of satisfying the employee needs of organizations that have developed with continuous changes are differentiating. Employees, who have been motivated well by their organizations and treated as one of the most important dynamics of the organizations, are keen to seize organizational commitment and adopt the organization vision. Therefore, organizations need to increase responsibilities to ensure employee satisfaction in the remote and flexible working system.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work. The situation has exponentially increased the use of online platforms in every aspect. Work-from-home has become more prominent, more widespread, and a routine of life rather than the exception. Within this context, drawing support from the conservation of resources theory, a conceptual framework is proposed to list the various factors affecting the psychological capital (PsyCap) which in turn impacts overall life satisfaction. The model is empirically validated with data from the Indian working population using structural equation modeling. Specifically, it was observed that remote abusive supervision, family demands, and work demands negatively influence PsyCap. Simultaneously, social support from work and family (colleague, team, partner/spouse, and parent) positively influences PsyCap. PsyCap, in turn, influences their overall life satisfaction. Psychological detachment negatively moderates the relationship between remote abusive supervision and PsyCap. Implications and future scope of research are also highlighted.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the playing field and overall operations for organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the world at large. In this chapter, the authors explore the biggest human resource (HR)-related challenges that firms in the UAE have faced as a result of COVID-19. The chapter outlines the skills and competencies required by professionals to overcome the challenges

they have experienced. This groundbreaking chapter also undertakes an analysis of the extent to which COVID-19 and the lockdown have influenced the ability of human resource departments to achieve their key strategic objectives. It has been found that skills are among the most important competencies that professionals must possess today to keep pace with recent developments and in order to navigate the “new normal.” The chapter concludes with a review of the competitive survival strategies that UAE organizations are applying in order to remain sustainable during and post COVID-19.

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*Perfecto Gatbonton Aquino Jr., Duy Tan University, Vietnam*

*Revenio Cabanilla Jalagat Jr., Al Zahra College for Women, Oman*

Amid the increasing threats of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam arose the human resource management challenges in the tourism industry and the loss of jobs and the scarcity of workforce due to lockdown, business bankruptcy, and unstable business conditions in many businesses including the tourism sector. Previous studies have identified the shortage of skilled labor as well as the perceived lack of highly qualified talents with vast opportunities for success economically. This has exacerbated at the heights of the COVID-19 crisis as many employees live in fear of losing their means of living whenever companies declare work stoppage, closure, and other threatening measures to lessen unfavorable situations. Recently published articles and government regulations were examined and evaluated to determine the role of HRM in addressing employee fear within the organization. Interpretations and recommendations were proposed to effectively shed light on its resolution. However, further studies are needed to further validate these findings.

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Public sector organizations are faced with many challenges due to their continued reform, and new strategies are thus being implemented to ensure that these organizations adapt to the new normal business environment. However, no other issue is more important than developing effective leaders. Talent and knowledge are considered as critical resources to develop the most valuable assets of an organization and to support a sustainable competitive advantage and outstanding performance. But how can the principles of talent management be integrated with knowledge management practices to enhance leadership development within public sector

organizations? This chapter critically reviewed literature pertaining to leadership capability development through integrating talent and knowledge management strategies. The transformational leadership theory, leadership development model, and talent management model were used as underpinning theories to guide the study. The chapter established that the integration of talent and knowledge management strategies leads to effective leadership development.

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CRM refers to a set of business tactics, tools, and procedures that aid in developing long-term connections between businesses and their customers. The purpose of this study is to give the initial findings of customer relationship management. Little research exists in this sphere concerning the banking sector. The sample size is 30 customers of a local privatized bank in Karachi, as it is the hub of financial activities in Pakistan. The survey is adopted from Lu and Shang’s work with few changes. This study will analyze whether the instrument is reliable or not. Cronbach’s alpha value has been found to evaluate the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. In this study, the levels of agreements and disagreements have been used to conclude the respective instrument’s validity.

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The emerging spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted business organizations in various ways. Considering risk management, HRM should re-strategize in recognizing, assessing, and mitigating those risks. Further, the importance of HRM’s role and strategies in maintaining, increasing productivity, and improving the quality of work life by emphasizing risk management can no longer be disputed. As a key player in organizations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, HRM shall incorporate new technologies and ICT in redesigning work systems, scheduling, staffing, and training, as well as reskilling the employees. In order to ensure a company does not lag behind in business, business organizations should be sensitive and quick in taking steps in handling the current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the authors highlighted three types of risks that

have taken place in organizations, namely managing workplace diversity, staffing, and training; and toward the end of the chapter, the authors propose strategies for HRM to manage those identified risks.

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The COVID pandemic has a major impact on the business world and workplaces. The effect is visible across all the industries, businesses, and job positions. Bringing about drastic changes in our means of communication, the way we work, transportation, and other daily activities, COVID-19 has generated changes in the basic values and practices of recruitment of the personnel. It has placed us in the position of adapting and compromising with the situation in all aspects. Whatever the situation, the world and its business have to keep running. Today companies are busy finding ingenious ways of recruitment, keeping the social distancing rules in mind, to meet the recruitment goals of their organizations and run business as usual. In this chapter, the author is going to discuss the steps taken by organizations to continue their recruitment process across the pandemic and how they are different from recruitment in normal days.

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*Tansif Ur Rehman, University of Karachi, Pakistan  
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In various organizations, most HRM practices are ineffective because they are unimplemented in their genuine sense. The dilemma lies in the very fact that HRM practices in every organization are, to a great extent, responsible for its success or failure. Many scholars have focused on organizational performance since it is regarded as one of the most important variables in achieving efficiency and positive outcomes in businesses. The respective study aims to analyze the effects of HRM practices on organizational performance. This research is qualitative; therefore, content analysis (in general) and relational analysis (in specific) were used, and in this regard, 25 pieces of research encompassing the effect of HRM practices on organizational performance were analyzed. The findings revealed a highly positive relationship between an organization's training and development practices with its performance (financial and non-financial). Moreover, this research recommends that organizations focus more on their training and development practices to enhance performance in the short and long run.

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# Preface

*Navigating the New Normal of Business With Enhanced Human Resources Management Strategies* uniquely provides the readers, researchers, HR managers, business leaders and professors along the area of HR Management with the recent insights, interventions and the successful attempts of multifarious leaders and practitioners who are in the forefront of managing people in the midst of the pandemic crisis which specifically due to the widespread of Covid 19 and its variants that have shocked the world with its ill impact on the operation of the business organizations and institutions.

This book is designed primordially to serve as direct reference and as a new forum or platform for those managers and business leaders who have the difficulty in coping with the challenges brought about by the pandemic crisis. The prescription and the practices that were employed by the expert contributors can shed light and be a useful guide for others to adopt or perhaps could be a viable option for their companies to survive in the light of the foregoing pandemic crisis in their respective city or region. Strategies used by business leaders and HR managers include some of the key areas in Human Resources Management but not limited to recruitment, selection, training, compensation, labor market, among others.

The authors hope that this book would be of great help to the interested parties both from the industry and from the academia who are constantly seeking for new methods and new strategies that will help the needs of their respective organization for their sustainability in the current pandemic crisis.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

**Chapter 1:** The lurid and shocking insurgence of COVID-19 has shaken the world in 2019 and it continues to cause uncertainties in all spheres of peoples' lives, businesses, and society. This uncertainty has created employee anxiety, fear of job loss, health threats, and impedes the organization's earning potentials and operational sustainability in the workplace. This paper aims to investigate how recruitment

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outlines the skills and competencies required by professionals to overcome the challenges they have experienced. This groundbreaking chapter also undertakes an analysis of the extent to which Covid-19, and the lockdown, have influenced, the ability of human resource departments in achieving their key strategic objectives. It has been found that skills are among the most important competencies that professionals must possess today to keep pace with recent developments and in order to navigate the “new normal”. The chapter concludes with a review of the competitive survival strategies that UAE organizations are applying in order to remain sustainable during and post Covid-19

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**Chapter 7:** CRM refers to a set of business tactics, tools, and procedures that aid in developing long-term connections between businesses and their customers. The purpose of this study is to give initial findings of customer relationship management. Little research exists in this sphere concerning the banking sector. The sample size is 30 customers of a local privatized bank in Karachi, as it is the hub of financial activities in Pakistan. The survey is adopted from Lu and Shang's (2007) work with few changes. This study will analyze whether the instrument is reliable or not. Cronbach's alpha value has been found to evaluate the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. In this study, the level of agreements and disagreements have been tried to identify to conclude the respective instrument's validity.

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**Chapter 9:** COVID pandemic has a major impact on business world and work places. The effect is visible across all the industries, business and job position. Bringing about drastic changes in our means of communication, the way we work, transportation and other daily activities, COVID 19 has generated changes in the basic values and practices of recruitment of the personnel. It has placed us in the position of adapting and compromising with the situation in all aspects. Whatever be the situation the world and its business have to keep running. Today companies are busy finding out ingenious ways of recruitment, keeping the social distancing rules in mind, to meet the recruitment goals of their organizations and run business as usual. In this chapter, the author is going to discuss about the steps taken by organizations to continue their recruitment process across the pandemic and how they are different from the recruitment in normal days.

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*Perfecto Gatbonton Aquino Jr. and Revenio Cabanilla Jalagat Jr.*

# Introduction

The whole world was unprepared and astounded by the unprecedented and immediate widespread of the Covid 19 virus, which is believed to have originated in Wuhan, China, in 2019, which is almost three years ago. More than a million humans and global organizations were contaminated and shaken, whether this virus is a pathogenic phenomenon or a spill-over event. But things must be done to cushion its negative impact on business cum industrial sector organizations and entities in various nations worldwide. One of the significant adverse effects of Covid 19 is the loss of millions of jobs people not only in the poor and developing countries due to the closure of various firms in the international arena but even in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the European Union, among others. The book “Navigating the New Normal of Business with Enhanced Human Resources Management Strategies” is designed to primordially serve as a beneficial resource for HRM students, professors, practitioners, and businessmen, most especially those belonging to the private sector.

It is an attempt to highlight some of the most palatable and effective Human Resource Management strategies and approaches adopted by professionals from various organizations and countries worldwide during the pandemic crisis. It is pitched at the right time for the HR practitioners and people in business to cope with the changing and so-called new typical business environment. In this context, the businessmen and HR practitioners respond to Covid 19 on their organization and institution. They have no option but to resort to new approaches to combat the ill effects of the virus for their sustainability.

Chapter 1 ventured on “The Efficacy of HRM Practices During COVID-19: Basis for Proposed New Strategies in Aid of New Employee Selection”. It seeks to investigate how recruitment practices effectively select new hires amid COVID-19 disastrous situations. Document analysis was utilized to interpret the data gathered and proposed viable strategies and propositions on new normal-based employee selection patterns. Recommendations were presented to integrate the findings and strategies into the human resource policies in addressing the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 2 is entitled “Employee-Friendly Human Resources Management Strategies in the New Age COVID Era.” According to the author, the

## **Introduction**

concept of “employee-friendly” human resources management has become clear in our lives in the rapidly changing environmental conditions as a result of Covid19. In the new normal, the changing dimensions of human resources deeply affect employees’ motivation while satisfying the employee needs of organizations that have developed with continuous changes are differentiating. Chapter 3 of this book focused on the “Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees: Evidence From India.” Specifically, it was observed that remote abusive supervision, family demands, and work demands negatively influence PsyCap. Simultaneously, social support from work and family (colleague, team, partner/spouse, and parent) positively influences PsyCap. PsyCap, in turn, influences their overall life satisfaction. Psychological detachment negatively moderates the relationship between remote abusive supervision and PsyCap. Implications and future scope of research are also highlighted. Chapter 4 elucidated the “Strategies to Combat COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE: A Guide to Encounter Human Resource Challenges.” This chapter undertakes an analysis of the extent to which Covid-19 and the lockdown have influenced human resource departments’ ability to achieve their key strategic objectives. It has been found that skills are among the most important competencies that professionals must possess today to keep pace with recent developments and navigate the “new normal.” Chapter 5 explored “The Pivotal Role of Human Resource Management in Overcoming Employee Fear in Organizations of the Tourism Industry in Vietnam.” Recently published articles and government regulations were examined and evaluated to determine the role of HRM in addressing employee fear within the organization. Interpretations and recommendations were proposed to shed light on its resolution effectively. However, further studies are needed to validate these findings further. Chapter 6 analyzed the “Integrating Talent and Knowledge Management Practices in the New Normal Business Environment: Developing Future Leaders in Public Sector Organizations.” This chapter critically reviewed the literature on leadership capability development through integrating talent and knowledge management strategies. The transformational leadership theory, leadership development model, and talent management model underpin the study. The chapter established that combining talent and knowledge management strategies leads to effective leadership development.

Furthermore, Chapter 7 presented the “Customer Perceptions of the Banking System Through Customer Relationship Management in Pakistan.” This study aims to give initial findings of customer relationship management even though there is limited research data in this sphere concerning the banking sector. Chapter 8 evaluated the “Risk Management and Human Resource Management Strategies in the Facing COVID-19 Pandemic.” It purports that HRM incorporates new technologies and ICT in redesigning work systems, scheduling, staffing, training, and reskilling the employees. To avoid business delays, business organizations




should be sensitive and quick to take steps in handling the current challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the authors highlighted three types of risks that have taken place in organizations, namely managing workplace diversity, staffing, and training. Toward the end of the chapter, the authors had proposed strategies for HRM to manage those identified risks. Chapter 9 showed the “COVID 19: Impact on Recruitment Process.” The author tried to discuss the steps organizations take to continue their recruitment process across the pandemic and how they are different from the recruitment on normal days. Ultimately, Chapter 10 described the “Human Resource Management Practices and Organizational Performance in the New Normal: A Relational Analysis.” This closing chapter is aimed at analyzing the effects of HRM practices on organizational performance. This research is qualitative; therefore, content analysis (in general) and relational analysis (in specific) were used, and in this regard, 25 pieces of research encompassing the effect of HRM practices on organizational performance were analyzed.

# Chapter 1

## The Efficacy of HRM Practices During COVID–19: Basis for Proposed New Strategies in Aid of New Employee Selection

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### ABSTRACT

*The lurid and shocking insurgence of COVID-19 has shaken the world in 2019, and it continues to cause uncertainties in all spheres of peoples' lives, businesses, and society. This uncertainty has created employee anxiety, fear of job loss, health threats, and impedes the organization's earning potentials and operational sustainability in the workplace. This chapter aims to investigate how recruitment practices effectively are utilized in selecting new hires amid COVID-19 disastrous situations. Document analysis was utilized to provide interpretations on the data gathered and proposed viable strategies and propositions on new normal-based employee selection patterns. Recommendations were proposed to integrate the findings and strategies into the human resource policies in addressing the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The evolution of COVID-19 since December 2019 has shaken the world and in all spheres of lives. Businesses are shutting down, recurring lock-downs, fearful experiences, increasing increases of diseases, and the likes prevented people from living a normal life. Losing jobs by many has become a norm that people are fed up with countless pressures and stresses of how to continue the life facing threats of life survival. In the global setting, there were 400 million jobs lost in the second quarter of 2020 according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and highlighting the 400% job losses in Africa in just the first three months (April-June 2020) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pandey, 2020). Consequently, the Asia-Pacific region has accounted for almost 59% of job losses for full-time wage earners thus, revealing the figures of 110 million from the total job losses of 235 million across the entire region. In terms of the changes in working hours due to the COVID pandemic, the ILO has recorded that in Southeast Asia the working hours have declined beginning March 2020 that has resulted in full-time job losses. Similarly, Latin America has experienced the highest reduction in working hours with a reduced rate of 20% and slightly higher than Southeast Asia having 18% in the second half of 2020.

Struggles have circulated the business industry especially the economic aspects and the increasing unfavorable business conditions, unprecedented job losses, salary cuts, loss of key personnel and skilled staff, and difficulty to hire new staff especially foreigners. None other than the United Nations disseminated warnings on the quick decline in the working hours implemented worldwide because of the stringent rulings on lockdowns to curb COVID-19 (UN News, 2021). Prevalent job losses were also experienced in Africa and India wherein an estimate of 45 million full-time jobs were accounted for across Africa as well as an increasing unemployment rate in India from 8.74 percent in March of 2020 to 23.52% in April of the same year. The ILO has maintained that COVID-19 has brought catastrophic consequences to the estimated two billion informal sector workers in the world (UN News, 2021). In other words, ILO has projected an increase in job gaps of 75 million in 2021 and if the crisis will not subside will continue to increase in the years to come.

Its implication to the business is alarming and threatening to take into account the small and medium enterprises. The difficulty to provide salaries on time to employees, the shorter working hours and shortfall of employment, underutilization of the workforce, and the increasing poor working conditions have been attributed to increasing unemployment scenarios (ILO, 2021). In Oman for example, emerging issues have arisen dealing with travel bans, shutdowns of schools, cinemas, shops, workforce operation reduction, enforcement of work-from-home system, salary and

withholding of salaries, and other related precautionary measures (Al-Harthy and Wigley, 2020).

It can be remembered that the issuance of the VISA ban for expatriates workers had been first implemented in June 2018 into 87 jobs except for businesses classified as small and medium enterprises on its quest of Omanization. This includes the finance and accounting, human resources, some medical and airport professions, information technology, sales and marketing, insurance, information and media, technical and engineering jobs (Arab News, 2021). This has been aggravated with the travel ban and restrictions for people who will enter Oman for the first time regardless of their purpose. This has caused fewer options for businesses especially the large-scale businesses to hire new employees as well as a challenge for the Human Resource Department of these organizations on how to overcome the current situation with its existing recruitment practices considering that the challenges brought by COVID-19 are way beyond the normal operations when compared to the business conditions before the pandemic. The main objective of this chapter is to assess the state of recruitment processes of companies in general amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its efficacy. It also evaluates the challenges the businesses encountered especially the human resource department. Finally, it will also recommend new strategies to ensure that recruitment and selection processes for new hires are taken care of during and beyond the pandemic situation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Perceived Triangular Impact of COVID-19 in Oman**

The unfavorable impact of COVID-19 has been felt globally by all nations and this has become a global norm with people becoming used to face masks, hygiene, and the likes after battling for more than a year and still struggling at present. Owtram and Hayek (2020) in their article titled “Oman in the COVID-19 Pandemic: People, Policy, and Economic Impact” described the impact of such a health crisis on the people, policy implications, and its impact on the economic situation of the country. Although Oman has achieved relative success in fighting COVID-19, its economic situation has become a greater challenge with the low oil prices, loss of about 45% exports to China, and issues dealing with the Omani rentier state (Owtram and Hayek, 2020). This has inflicted a negative impact on the economic well-being of citizens in the country with the decline of household incomes and the growing threat of unemployment which was accounted for from 2.7 percent of the last year to 3.8 percent in 2021 which may lead to social instability.

## **Policy Implications of COVID-19**

Among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Oman has been ranked third in terms of population where 45% of it is expatriate workers. During the COVID-19 crisis, the country has revealed more confirmed cases compared to the other GCC member countries except for Saudi Arabia which has posed an alarming situation for the government. The government through the Oman Supreme Committee has issued many policies aimed at controlling the spread of the pandemic and one of those is to direct the Omani citizens who are employed in the public sector to stay at home to curtail the spread of the virus. National policies related to COVID-19 were implemented as an immediate response to the crisis through market incentives, restrictions, and prohibitions. A debated issue related to market incentives is the abolition of the “No Objection Certificate” (NOC) which allows expatriate workers to switch jobs from one sponsor to another effective January 1, 2021 (TAS News Service, 2020). Mixed reactions were solicited with the decision as many Omani entrepreneurs consider the policy as detrimental to their business while others threatened the policy as a roadway to competitiveness and more business opportunities as well as promote a healthy competitive economy. This policy is designed to encourage more citizens for employment opportunities in the private sector and to curb the population of expatriates working in almost all private companies throughout the country.

Besides, prohibitions and quotas had been implemented by the government of Oman to ensure the safety and welfare of the citizens and residents. Stringent measures employed by the Supreme Committee in Oman were almost the same globally which include travel bans; closure of non-essential shops, parks, and places of worship; curfews; lockdowns; reduction of workforce and working hours; etc. However; about employment especially in the private sector, prohibitions on VISA and Labor Card renewals were implemented in various sectors particularly the types of jobs that Omanis can handle except for the type of works that requires expatriates like the construction industry, brick factories, and others. This means that the private companies should adhere to the non-renewal of the expatriate workforce after the end of their contract and non-employment of expatriates based on that nature of jobs that are restricted by the concerned implementing Ministry. The Omanization policy has been given greater importance, especially amid the crisis.

## **Impact on People**

COVID-19 has stricken the country on February 24, 2020, identifying two passengers from Iran and followed by the first accounted death of a 72-year old Omani citizen in March of the same year. Cases have increased infecting both the citizens and expatriates as the outbreak continuous to strike in the different parts of Oman.

### ***The Efficacy of HRM Practices During COVID-19***

Deaths after six weeks on July 13, 2021, had gone to 259 and with 2,164 new cases comprising of 1,572 Omanis and 592 expatriates. As result, public gatherings were strongly prohibited, travel restrictions, heavier penalties, and sanctions for violators, closure of non-essential businesses, curfews, reductions of working hours, and other restrictions implemented through the government's Supreme Committee. However; despite the government's efforts to impose safety and security measures, still a quite number of people are not seriously following the rules and regulations and people gather in secret places without precautionary measures resulting to increase cases of virus infections.

### **Economic Impact on the Country**

Along with the GCC countries, Oman faced serious threats to economic stability as evidenced by the continued decline and instability of oil prices and the ballooning of the country's debts. The oil price war in Russia has added to the challenges of Oman to the economy's health and finances. Compared with the counterparts in GCC, Oman has lacked the hydrocarbon reserves and smaller rent-per-capita that worsens the economy. One of the economic impacts of COVID-19 is the downgrading of the government's bonds as assessed by the three rating agencies in March 2020 aside from the oil price drop and the increasing demands of government finances. According to the data provided by the Oxford Business Group (2021), the rising of public debt is about to reach 77.1% of the GDP and the country's oil reserves in 2017 to production ratio was 15.2 years which is lower in comparison to the other GCC countries. The plan to diversify Oman's economy has been intensified with the rulership of Sultan Haitham in consonance with the Oman Vision 2040.

Moreover, the pressures brought by monetary and fiscal policies have left less option for the country to solicit external aids from other GCC countries which recalled the same situation in 2011 and the possible changes in foreign policy as measures to revive the present economic condition. New policies were implemented as measures such as how to combat against oil dependence, unemployment, and force retirement offers for those government employees who have served more than 30 years in the service, abolition of migrant workers No Objection Certificate (NOC), sovereign wealth funds rationalization, etc. The call for diversification in the economy has become an urgent concern in Oman through reliance on market incentive changes contrary to the easier quotas.

### **HRM Practices during COVID-19**

The unprecedented consequences of the COVID-19 have made major challenges for individuals and organizations which include issues on employment and working

environment changes. Altering work schedules and sudden changes in working conditions require adjustment for companies to work outstanding policies to limit physical contact of employees and intensifying the concept of remote working. Follmer et al. (2018) expressed that the working environment that employees were used to adopting has been drastically changed into job uncertainties that have shaken company management and their workers. The increasing demand for virtual platforms replaced the usual physical gathering of employees especially in the recruitment and selection processes wherein face-to-face interactions are considered the most choice and approach. Barrick, Mount, & Li (2013) for instance stressed that physical gathering of employees in the workplace promotes camaraderie and positive work environment and building each other's up. Yu (2016) supported this idea and stated that in the recruitment and selection processes, aspirants are more convinced to apply to organizations that promote favorable working environments and work relationships.

However, with the unprecedented COVID pandemic, workers have shifted to the virtual platforms and organizations have limited the physical interactions, implemented a skeletal workforce that may pose potential destruction of productivity and employee well-being. Maurer (2020) expressed that the COVID-19 situation has urged companies and firms to adopt new HR practices amid recent crises and understand the unexpected changes that have left no option for the employees but to follow and to avoid losing jobs. Maurer (2020a) found that recruitment and selections during the pandemic utilized the virtual forms as a replacement to the usual face-to-face interactions. The essence of understanding and embracing the pandemic-related human resource practices will change the organization's future fabric.

Accordingly, transitioning from face-to-face encounters into virtual communication has changed the employees' and management views on the perceptions of person-environment fit and general employment conditions. Maurer (2020b) pointed out that socialization practices were also changed from physical gathering in the workplaces into virtual socialization such as virtual coffee breaks and virtual lunches. According to Fetters (2020), the sudden change in the work environment's social fabric has contributed to the employees' dissatisfaction when compared to the work-lives during the pre-pandemic situation. Furthermore, the research conducted by Chawla et al. (2020) examined the impact of virtual activities in place of the face-to-face gathering of employees on their daily recovery experienced from the sudden change in work conditions. In the study of Agarwal (2021), she explored the human resource management practices that hotels utilized to deal with employees in COVID-19. Her findings revealed that employee-centered HRM practices significantly impact employee well-being. While in many cases a surge in the retrenchment of employees happens during COVID-19, Agarwal (2021) recommends that the human resource

department should consider the well-being of employees thus keeping them and support for personal/family life.

A dilemma arose when it comes to the company's choice between tactical planning and the strategic role of human resource management. During the pandemic, managers and leaders are inclined to short-term solutions and strategies that focused on operational competencies like for instance implementing measures related to retrenchments rather than performing based on strategic long-term orientation (Roche and Teague, 2012). Roche and Teague (2012) also emphasized that the organization's focus on the impact of the pandemic on operational areas may not provide sustainable outcomes as managers and leaders will lose the state of balance between strategic and tactical planning considering that tactical plan should be in-lined with strategic HRM plan. Harney and Collings (2021) also stressed that the utilization of strategic human resource management has been criticized because of its inability to fit within the context of COVID-19 thus, the essence of a high-performance working system and the conventional approach to implementing the HRM practices need modifications.

## **Challenges of HRM Practices in Oman in the Midst of COVID-19**

While the country is also in the midst of a pandemic the Oman Supreme Committee a standing committee that oversees and decides all the matters related to COVID-19 issued numerous orders to counter the spread of this virus. Like other countries, all measures were implemented including but not limited to shutdowns of establishments both essential and non-essential business, and encourage employees regardless of their job nature to work from home. Skeletal workforces were implemented in many companies throughout the country and promote the technology to allow employees for remote working. In the article written by Al-Harthy & Wigley (2020) they ironed out the key employment challenges that reflect the changes in HRM practices in Oman primarily driven by the changes in legislation by the Oman government which are specific employment regulations to alleviate the negative impact of the pandemic crisis.

The first issue that challenges the salary administration policies of organizations is the question of whether employers can reduce or withhold the salaries of the workforce. What are the possible consequences of doing this activity on the part of employers? Based on the capacity and power rested to the Omani Supreme Committee to make decisions relative to COVID-19, regulation was disseminated to businesses that any closure, staff reductions, and salary cuts made any establishments in the light of the Supreme Committee was treated as employer's decision and are considered as normal legal action (Al-Harthy & Wigley, 2020). In line with this, the Ministry of Manpower in Oman maintained its rule and guidelines that during



this time of crisis employers should still pay the salaries and wages in full which applies to nationals and expatriate workers. However; while this regulation still stands, companies have devised mechanisms to reduce the days and hours of work to possibly implement salary cuts justifiably.

Another issue confronting human resource managers and HR practitioners dealt with the consumption of employee leaves. The question that arises focused on whether employers have the right to force employees to take leaves without pay. Provisions from the Oman Labor Law (RD 35/2003) dictate that all workers were given 30 days annual leave. This may mean that organizations provide annual paid leaves to employees as embodied in their manual of operations and the work requirements. On one hand, the Supreme Committee's focus in relation to the spread of the COVID-19 is to reduce the people interaction in public places which also applies to the companies and institutions thus introducing the work from home as an urgent response to the crisis. However; this policy may not apply to all nature of business as the construction industry for example cannot implement the work from home because of the job nature itself since the bulk of workers are under the blue-collar job classification. Reduction in employees at work means that those who are not reporting to their offices will stay at home and receive salaries in the normal course of operation.

The third issue under intense discussion deals with the employer's decision to allow work redundancy or instead terminate employees. This is usually hard for HR managers to make a decision considering that terminating national employees is strongly discouraged by the Ministry of Manpower in Oman through its memorandum issued to all the private sector by refraining from the mass termination of the Omani workforce regardless of any causes such as bankruptcy, closure, etc. Moreover, the Ministry also strengthens its regulation about the three advance notice to them for any business that has faced impending closure or bankruptcy because of COVID-19 so that measures can be taken to look for alternative employers and relocation for the Omanis to continuously work. The government along with the Ministry of Manpower also expressed a strong statement that the redundancy concept has no legal basis and therefore is not accepted and any staff reduction or job redundancies will be treated as the company's prerogative to implement and will be considered as individual terminations.

Terminations of employees amid COVID-19 do not fall on any grounds of the labor law, however; exceptions have been identified in some cases such as cancellation of construction or project related to COVID-19 issues. This has provided employers the justifiable reason to reduce or terminate employees if their cases fall under these exceptions. However; the Ministry of Manpower has ruled out those businesses that have experienced economic hardship not to consider financial difficulty as reasons for terminating or reducing staff unless it can be proven that their operation is on

the verge of shutting down. More so, mass terminations of any kind are strictly prohibited by law which means that even the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be a reason for unlawful terminations in the light of the Ministry of Manpower's decision unless certain flexibilities will be imposed as means to counter the negative effects of the crisis.

## **Effective Recruitment Practices in Selecting New Hires amid COVID-19 Crisis**

Conventional recruitment processes usually start with checking or scanning resumes, screening to sort out top candidates, series of interviews, select and extend offer letters, and congratulatory handshakes. However; on the verge of the pandemic, changes are inevitable as people prefer to work at home and be in isolation. Questions were lingering on these questions as a result of uncertainties as follows: What to do now? What happens tomorrow and onwards? Where to go from here? And, how to move forward? Before the pandemic, companies have received many employment applications and their focus dwelt on choosing the best possible employees from a variety of options. Now that pandemic strikes, millions of people are facing heavy unemployment conditions, the “new norm” dictates that companies must know what are those recruitment practices that reflect the changing structure of future recruitment in an effective manner. This means that adopting strategic recruitment procedures must be in place to sustain recruitment and selection practices, in the long run, emanating from the COVID-19 experience and even beyond.

Today demands to put pressure on businesses through their human resource department to remain competitive and secure best talents over their competitors. Among the available recruitment techniques nowadays include social media ad campaigns, video interviewing, automation for communicating, tracking, schedules for interview series (PeopleFluent, 2020). Technology has played a major role in ensuring the continuity of recruitment and selection processes and has contributed a significant impact on making the business operate normally as in the pre-pandemic era. Many organizations have experienced growth in their business operations and intensify the extent of hiring processes effectively by system engineers, net developers, and specialists in cybersecurity. Recent trends that human resource managers especially in the IT industry have developed are built on maximizing technological use in the recruitment and selection processes that include the following:

1. More opportunities for remote working for freelance and contingent staff.
2. Increasing use of teleconferencing in the hiring process such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc.

3. Existence of the so-called pre-boarding and on-boarding software system that help new recruits make their working lives easy while speeding up their remote working jobs.
4. Intensifying emphasis on succession planning and mobility of current employees.

Online recruitment is not new for companies especially those recruiting international workforce even before the pandemic, however; it was heightened due to restrictions on physical gathering and other regulations. Recruitment automation has become a rising platform for companies regardless of size as primary means to hire new recruits. COVID-19 has enabled many companies to pursue advancement in technology like endeavoring into recruiting software and video conferencing platforms which they believe will continue even after the pandemic crisis. It will become a lifestyle rather than a COVID-related strategy and solution.

Onboarding is one of the recruitment strategies that have gained attention by companies nowadays because of its use of online platforms which enable them to conduct learning and development programs online which were usually delivered physically before the pandemic crisis (PeopleFluent, 2020). According to Stein and Christiansen (2010), the use of onboarding programs is intended to increase productivity and guide new hires on what to do before finally starting with the work. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) define onboarding as the method of goal setting, strategizing, resource allocating, networking, learning with the aim of achieving optimum productivity for the new hires as quickly as possible. In other words, onboarding is not only contained with getting the papers completed and distribution of manual but rather it is a process that educates new hires into the company regulations, rules and procedures, expectations, benefits, and the organization's goals. To be a productive agent in the workforce as new hire describes the deepness of its understanding of what onboarding truly means. Bauer (2010) emphasized that providing clear roles and responsibilities of the newcomer and mentoring him/her starting in the first day of duty would make the new employee feel special to facilitate adjustment of the said employee to his/her new role. Day and Fedele (2012) on one hand, asserted that if the company implemented an effective onboarding strategy, it will result in a highly engaged and productive new employee who therefore decreases employee turnover and the associated reduction of company cost.

Furthermore, onboarding cannot be compared to a mere employee orientation as it encompasses higher elements such as but not limited to 360 feedback; coaching; organization's introduction and to manager, teams, and subordinates; and, mentoring (Gilmore and Turner, 2010). Also, onboarding promotes adaptation of the company's values and culture through the strategy called "organizational socialization". Organizational socialization is defined as the process of acquiring social knowledge and skills by an individual to start an organizational role (Maanen and Schein, 1977).

Bauer, Bodner, and Tucker (2007) also explain the term organizational socialization as the process wherein new hires adapt knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations needed for a new and changing organizational role. In the handbook written by Wanberg (2012), she ironed out that being a newcomer to an organization faced with job uncertainties especially in few weeks or months in his/her work and may have the feeling of proving the self and at the same wanting to pass the probationary period without hassle. Besides, new employees are practically new with the system, culture, and practices so difficulty might arise on how to feel at home. However; the use of socialization tactics coupled with the new employee's proactivity when associated with the organizational outcomes will lead to higher job performance and low employee turnover. Good experiences in earlier days in the office would enable the new employees to adapt to the culture of the organization as well as shape his/her behavior and attitude in line with the organization's goals and objectives (Bauer et al., 2007).

## **Technology-Driven Recruitment and Selection during COVID-19 and Beyond**

Changing the mindset whether, at the individual, organizational, national, and even international plays a big role at the heights of this pandemic. Most of the businesses amid the pandemic thought that the current situation will not be restored to normal but companies that are inclined with technological advances resume business operations regularly. Forecasting by experts also supported the concept that business will be restored to normal although it may take an effort for organizations, the country, and the world. Businesses' use of technology helps them focus on keeping the employees and venture on integrating technology in learning and development and not only on recruiting processes (PeopleFluent, 2020). In the UK, recruitments done physically had been subjected to logistical problems because of stringent rules on social distancing and this scenario urged the companies to operate remotely so they can design hiring systems in the absence of the physical gathering and instead perform such activities through video conferencing, virtual platforms. A survey from Gartner and analyst firm revealed that 86 percent of the companies that utilize virtual interviews during the crisis and another 85 percent are using the latest technology to onboard employees.

Furthermore, the hiring process has been initiated initially through telephone and followed by video interviews on Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Evidence of the growing need for recruitment at the heights of the pandemic in Sunrise Senior Living UK, a care home provider had hired more than a thousand employees. Manned by its HR director Ms. Benson, the company has adopted a daily virtual classroom for training and orientation before employees can work with one of the care homes

and with the aid of the onboarding online. Instead of physical lectures, online mechanisms are implemented using for instance videos that carry out work activities by accessing the employees through the e-learning modules. Another recent trend in COVID-19 is the increasing collaboration of employers across several industries. This is evidenced by platforms such as People + Work Connect as established by Accenture thereby connecting thousands of individuals outside the office of work to prevent the contamination of virus. For international companies, centralization of recruitment activity works for them in the areas of screening, virtual interviews, and offering contracts (Faragher, 2020).

Another strategy utilized by employers during the pandemic is through the creation of a recruitment portal to cater to hundreds of new applications in which happening across London, UK. Recruitment agencies volunteered to offer recruitment services for example in hotels by conducting screening interviews over the phone and perform Disclosure and Banking Service (DBS) checks to ensure that the applicant has no prior or current criminal records. Further, checking of documents and other pertinent information of the applicant will be done through video chats and those that do not have previous experience on the job applied for are able to take benefit of two-day online free skills training.

## **Strategies and Propositions on New Normal-Based Employee Selection Patterns**

While COVID-19 has increased contagion in many parts of the world, for some companies it resulted in an increase in recruitment demand because of experiencing recruitment shortage (Akkermans, Richardson, & Kraimer, 2020; Giupponi & Landais, 2020). The situation calls for the use of virtual recruitment and selection strategies which can be taxing on the HRM practitioners and the applicants as new users of this method (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Maurer, 2020). But with the limited option possible, the use of ICT has become an urgent demand that HR practitioners should adopt not only during this pandemic and even beyond thus moving into the new normal HRM practices.

The consensus from the different researches confirmed the suitability of remote working is one of the most workable strategies amid the COVID-19 crisis and is expected to be sustainable even beyond the pandemic (Aitken-Fox et al., 2020b; Lund et al., 2021; Prasad & Vaidya, 2020). In the recruiting and selection process, the orientation on remote working will be given to the new recruits so they will be conditioned on what to expect before finally starting with the work. The Human resource department should identify in advance the positions that would require most of the remote working and those that require only less remote working engagement. Inevitably, the need for updated information technology is the challenge for every

organization to foster creativity and innovativeness to stay with the business and in the hiring and retention of the workforce. Countries for example have adopted video conferencing to promote remote working in many organizations (Sagan & Schüller, 2020). Remote working has become a new normal HR practice that potentially maximized during the pandemic.

The report published by the McKinsey Global Institute supported the idea of remote working and virtual platforms to be a sustainable strategy in increasing the productivity and performance of employees although higher utilization of these strategies is expected during the crisis than in the normal pre-pandemic era. The Institute further assesses the long-term impact of the pandemic on the employee occupations, skills, and labor demands in eight countries namely Japan, China, India, France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Lund et al., 2021). Remote working promotes flexibility in work schedules, eliminates communicating hours, promotes control over the job, and the new ICT experience. Moreover, it is also a good cost and resource saver while at the same time maximizing the available resources.

The second strategy or proposition is the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) linking the human resource practices especially in industries that posted high human interactions, such as personal and medical care, salons, gyms, etc. (Lund et al., 2021). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a big role in overcoming the challenges brought by the COVID-19 that aims to automate processes and lessen physical contacts. Devyania et al. (2020) stressed the strong need for the utilization of AI for HRM during the pandemic as many believed in its effectiveness to stop distractions in management and operations as well as create employee protection and sustaining the physical distancing policy. Similarly, Liu, Lee, and Lee (2020) have introduced the so-called “predictive models” that take into consideration the risk factors and uncertainties in scheduling proactively and planning of supplies that encourage managers and leaders to adopt AI into the HRM functions and strategies. It also optimizes the use of new technology that supports the HRM elements such as recruitment, talent management, and employee planning.

Several authors have found the necessity to adopt the new trend of HRM practices and lay the foundation of developing a hybrid workplace model that enables organizations to quickly adapt to the requirements of the new work situation (Kaufman, Lovich, Bailey, Messenböck, Schuler, & Shroff, 2020; Przytuła, Strzelec, & Krysińska-Kościańska, 2020). In this model, workers need the full support of the firm in acquiring vital skills to counter the effects of COVID-19 and beyond to provide avenues for employees’ career development employability enhancement, and upward mobility offers (Ngoc et al., 2021). Accordingly, recruitment costs will be reduced while creating positive consequences to workers’ motivation and retention. Another viable strategy is the integration of entrepreneurial competency

development for the employees to attain a dynamic environment amid the crisis and other uncertainties (Carnevale & Hatak, [2020](#); Liu, Lee, & Lee, [2020](#)). The purpose of this integration is to help employees explore, evaluate, and discover opportunities to overcome uncertainties and unexpected situations in a sustainable manner.

Managers and practices should also revisit and calibrate the existing performance management system and realign it with the new objectives suitable to the current situation and crisis. The human resource department should increase experiences of sharing and learning of workers and instill to them the importance of organizational flexibility in this hard time and their motivation and retention (Ngoc Su et al., [2021](#)). Furthermore, Hamouche (2020) also emphasized the importance of wellbeing programs to ensure that will ensure the mental health of employees, considering their needs through social support and resources. Safety issues and preventions should be exercised by the human resources especially in ensuring that workers that have manifestations of COVID-19 are strongly advised to stay at home and perform the work from home.

Finally, the crisis has changed the way the organizations operate and this means that the organizational culture might change. Rebuilding the culture might pose a challenge especially with the sudden changes that occur. Cultural change is needed to enable the acceptance of flexible work schedules and to embrace the hybrid working model. Lund et al. (2021) reiterated the need to establish a culture that encourages interactions and connectivity among employees especially in remote working. This means that organizations and its executive should not forget to allow from time to time meetings physically to avoid being individually been isolated instead maintain the state of collaboration and social support among employees, the management, and the clients. Also, taking into consideration that purely remote working arrangements and virtual interactions affect the socialization process, hence; the hybrid model plays a major role in this new working mechanism implemented by organizations.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The status of the existing HRM practices implemented by the organizations amid the COVID-19 is confronted with real challenges and unprecedented changes that seem to be beyond the normal situation for HRM practitioners, managers, and employees in many organizations. Many studies have partially investigated the impacts of the COVID-19 on the sustainability of the organization to operate in the long run considering that no one knows when this crisis will end. Apparently, the intensity of the research conducted in this area is relatively new as the authors have found it difficult to search for researches that quantify the presumption of the significant impact of COVID-19. The pieces of evidence gathered in this study also

provide a narrative analysis and thus, require an in-depth analysis considering the findings as viable input for a wider investigation. In line with this, the researchers recommend that in-depth investigation can be done to provide a strong connection on how AI can practically be integrated into HRM practices. Also, remote working has been identified as one of the aids in the continuity of business, however; further investigation can also be conducted in order to weigh the long-term benefits of its use to the workforce not only in organization per se but the psychological impact to them as valuable assets of the organization. Finally, technology-driven recruitment and selection are believed to be a suitable alternative at the heights of this pandemic, however; there is still a need for further exploration on how this will be applied to businesses especially SMEs.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter primarily investigates the state of HRM recruitment and selection processes of companies amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its efficacy. Undeniably, all nations are affected by the pandemic outbreak including the organizations and their workforce. In this study, it was revealed that generally, there are three impacts that COVID-19 has brought in Oman and these are: impact on policy, people, and economy. The changing rules implemented by the Supreme Committee in charge to eradicate the COVID outbreak challenge the businesses, the people through restrictions, and deplete the economy and resources of the country focusing on spending on COVID-related activities. Specifically, the human resources of organizations have been diminishing with unprecedented terminations, staff reductions, and difficulty to recruit new staff, especially in other countries. Furthermore, employers through their human resource departments struggled with salary administration, employee leaves, work redundancy vis a vis termination, continuous Visa ban which restricts companies to hire employees on specific professions.

The main challenge facing this crisis is for companies to develop an HRM strategy that does not only address the present situation but a sustainable solution in the post-pandemic era. Based on the findings, it was found that the importance of ICT has become an urgent consideration and the need to have an in-depth study on how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be integrated with HRM practices. The idea of ICT utilization through technology-driven recruitment and selection and in the implementation of HRM practices in general. Further analysis has shown that to achieve effective recruitment during the COVID-19 period, companies should apply strategies such as social media ad campaigns, video interviewing, automation for communicating, tracking, schedules for interview series. Moreover, other strategies could be teleconferencing in the hiring process, use of pre-boarding and onboarding,



remote working for freelance and contingent staff; and emphasis on succession planning, and online recruitment and automation.

Further, results from examining different shreds of evidence gathered revealed that the use of predictive models will aid in forecasting uncertainties with the integration of AI into the HRM function wherein this new technology is expected to benefit recruitment, talent management, and employee planning. Also, the introduction of the hybrid workplace model enables organizations to quickly adapt to the requirements of the new work situation while not abandoning the old conventional system of operation. The purpose of this integration is to help employees explore, evaluate, and discover opportunities to overcome uncertainties and unexpected situations in a sustainable manner. Finally, higher emphasis on remote working may help the organization manageably adapt to the new normal recruitment and selection practices that potentially benefit in the post-pandemic era while trying to change the cultural paradigm in the workplace.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**High-Performance Work System:** A system that combines HR practices, processes, and work structures to enhance the knowledge, skills, the attitude of the employees along with their commitment, involvement, and adaptability.

**Hybrid Workplace Model:** This is a working method or arrangement wherein the job applies both the in-office and remote working agreement.

**Oman Labor Law (RD 35/2003):** A specific provision that gives all workers a 30-day annual leave with pay.

**Onboarding:** Is a term used in human resource management that encompasses the process of introducing the newly employed individual in the company. It is also known as organizational socialization.

**Online Recruitment:** Also termed E-recruitment is the utilization of technology like web-based resources to implement the process of finding, attracting, interviewing, and selecting new employees.

**Recruitment Portal:** This is a job portal or a career portal that aids the job aspirants to look for a job and helps employers search for suitable and ideal candidates.

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**Remote Working:** A method of working that is done at home or in a location that is not the company's location or place of business.

**Supreme Committee Oman:** A special committee formed by the government of Oman that is primarily responsible to make decisions in all activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Virtual Communication:** A mode of communication wherein technology has been used in lieu of face-to-face conversation through audio or video electronic devices.


**Virtual Platforms:** A software-based system that is utilized for the formation and improvement of training modules through the web and is also used for teaching and learning.

**Work Redundancy:** Reduction of the employee because the position is no longer needed.

## Chapter 2

# Employee–Friendly Human Resources Management Strategies in the New Age “Covid” Era

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### ABSTRACT

*In today’s globalized world, with mandatory changes in the way businesses operate due to COVID-19, the criteria for organizations to be ahead of competitors within a globally competitive environment during pandemic has been—and continues to be—associated with their qualified human resources management strategies and the usage of these resources. The concept of “employee-friendly” human resources management has become clear in our lives in the rapidly changing environmental conditions as a result of COVID-19. In the new normal, the changing dimensions of human resources deeply affect employee motivation while the way of satisfying the employee needs of organizations that have developed with continuous changes are differentiating. Employees, who have been motivated well by their organizations and treated as one of the most important dynamics of the organizations, are keen to seize organizational commitment and adopt the organization vision. Therefore, organizations need to increase responsibilities to ensure employee satisfaction in the remote and flexible working system.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*It's not only a moral imperative to offer good benefits and economic security to employees – it's smart business. When companies have talented and diverse employees who feel secure at work and at home, both people and businesses perform at their best. – Business Roundtable, 2020*

The New Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), which affects the whole world, is a virus that was first identified as a result of research conducted in patients with respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.) in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020). Today's world is experiencing a fully-fledged volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) environment, where the speed and scope of change cannot be determined, and planning and foresight becomes difficult with Covid-19. VUCA is an acronym which means volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity first used in 1987 and especially based on the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (Inal et al., 2021). In complex environments, decision makers make informed predictions about which forces will ultimately change the outcome of critical events, weighing the impact of competitors (Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011). Volatility refers to constant change and the turbulence caused by the speed of change (Michel, 2016). Ambiguity refers to the risk that situations and events may be misinterpreted. This often results in missed opportunities, as it increases suspicion and delays decision making. It requires leaders to consider events from multiple perspectives (Cooke, 2013). Uncertainty is the lack of predictability, the possibility of surprises, and the lack of specific information (Guterman & King, 2014). Ambiguous environments are places where major “dramatic” changes occur frequently. However, in these environments, it is extremely difficult to find the answer to the question of “what will happen in the future” and to prepare for the future, as the past is not always an accurate predictor of the future (Sullivan, 2012). Due to the restrictions and measures, all the countries of the world experienced a sudden change their normal life and entered an aberrant process. Although predictions are made about when the virus will lose its effect (invention of treatment such as vaccines, drugs, etc.), uncertainty continues in this regard. With the Covid-19 process, the world is passing through a period in which the speed and scope of change cannot be determined, planning and forecasting for the coming periods become difficult, economic turmoil is experienced and some businesses are shrinking. Along with the economic fluctuations brought about by uncertainties, there are also changes in living standards. In this process, digital transformation accelerates, changes are experienced in production processes, employee demands, and customer expectations change. All this rapid and uncertain process of change also increases the level of



anxiety in people due to both health and changing economic and living conditions. Employees may react negatively if they perceive the threat of job loss (Pelenk, 2020).

With the shocking declaration of the Covid19 pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, global maritime business was one of the nonstop sectors in the world as well as logistics, health & food sector. Therefore, professionals of the maritime sector considering both on board crew and management department employees on shore had to continue without ceasing their operations in these hard times. Although they have fought to adapt to the new normal business world whilst being preoccupied with rushing to the transport needs of the world; 87% of the world international trade in goods is carried by sea transportation. Moreover, in December 2020, forty-five IMO Member States and one Associate Member have assigned seafarers as key workers, which is an important step in untwining the existing crew change crisis. The importance of the sea transportation, through which approximately 90 percent of the world trade is transported, was once again understood with the COVID-19 epidemic that affected the whole world. In difficult times such as Covid19, the efforts of seafarers and professionals serving the maritime industry, who perform the maritime profession, which provides the most important needs for people living on the world, are undoubtedly altruistic. One of the most important developments during the pandemic is the increase in the rate of those working from home. While only a minority of the workforce worked from home before the pandemic, after the crisis, working from home is encouraged or required. Productivity is extremely important, but when living and working in the same area, things can get difficult. Bloom and Reenen (2006) investigated whether “Anglo-Saxon” management practices and high product market competition produce higher productivity at the expense of employees’ work-life balance. The results of the surveys they conducted with the employees of 732 medium-sized manufacturing companies in the USA, France, Germany and the UK show that improved work-life balance results are associated with better management, and according to the results of the research, employee-friendly institutions that establish a work-life balance are also “well-managed and efficient institutions” (Blazovich et al., 2014). It is aimed that organizations can use their workforce efficiently as well as remain health conditions; nowadays workforce management is based on minimum contact and maximum efficiency, and every detail is planned in advance and arranged in an efficient workflow. However, it is not possible to work remotely in every job. One of these professions has been veteran seafarers who bear the burden of the world. This time, both professionals working in different industries and land-based professionals working in maritime business have witnessed the life of seafarers, whose private life and business life are ships, where they fit in both their homes and their business lives. In these hard times seafarers are not only worried about their own health but also about the health of their families and friends back home. While

seafarers are struggling burnout syndromes due to unbalanced work-life balance in the middle of the oceans without stepping on a piece of land due to Covid19 restrictions of countries and port authorities; land-based maritime professionals are fighting to keep up with daily assignments that are assigned to them within their daily work responsibilities. New Human Resources applications to support seafarers such as Tele-health or Psych-health supports justify late importance of seafarers' workforce for the maritime organizations. Caring and helping the family members of seafarers while seafarers work on board has become one of the priorities of the organizations. This global crisis has increased the anxiety and stress in business environments, and in some cases even caused a decrease in employee's productivity and problems in time management. In this process, organizations have had to revise their expectations from the personnel in line with this reality and take actions to increase the motivation of the workforce and reduce their business and professional concerns. Many of these new human resource approaches show that employee motivation plays an important role in the future of organizations. Work-life balance today; It has become a “win-win” situation where the preferences of the employees and the flexible working policy understanding of the employers, especially reducing the working time, overlap. In the work-life relationship, which is discussed in terms of three issues: time management, distribution between roles and care arrangements for family members in need (Gregory & Milner, 2009)

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought about radical changes in the recruitment processes as well as in the way companies do business. When the pandemic spreads around the world, companies have taken off the remote working policies overnight, which they have postponed for years, while managers have realized that working remotely provides many benefits as opposed to slowing, reducing or stopping business processes. Thus, the flexible working trend, which developed with small steps before the epidemic, has settled at the center of the normal work culture at the point reached today. Therefore, Human Resources (HR) Management has become more valuable than ever in deciding on new workforce structures, planning, increasing the success of employees and informing employees regularly. In this context, this book chapter aims to reveal talent management, new expansions of human resources management and its strategic dimension and employee motivation in strategic human resources management. Moreover, this book chapter will shed light on demonstrate current paradigms in human resources management in the global maritime organizations by revealing how do the key maritime organizations have succeeded to sustain their operations in a new normal operation of the business as they enhance their human resource management strategies and HR Management in organizations amid the Covid19 crisis. When organizations implement policies that respond to the family problems of employees and their individual needs, employees can maintain an

equilibrium between work and family liabilities rather than neglecting one area for the other, and this balance can reduce the perception of tension and disagreement as well as absenteeism (Goff et al., 1990; Chang et al., 2014).

## **HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

*We just have to try to be a lot more caring and compassionate towards these employees, and all of the staff to make sure that we are all an integral part of the family. – HR Leader*

The management of human resources which is one of the most crucial resources in productivity. From the beginning of industrialization, the process of human resources management is troublesome. Human resource management is largely based on theories of commitment and motivation and other ideas derived from the field of organizational behavior (Guest, 1987). Soft human resources model focusing on human nature with the transition from X theory to Y theory in management; It has become an alternative to the solid human resources model that focuses on economic fundamentals and managerial control. In the solid human resources model, there is a managerial approach based on the X theory, which adopts that human nature need to be controlled in martial law and takes these assumptions into account in performance management. Research in the field of Organizational Behavior has led to the strengthening of the soft human resource management trend. This approach has been equated with the concept of a “highly committed work system”, which aims to elicit a commitment such that behavior is primarily self-regulated rather than controlled by external sanctions and pressures and is based on a high level of trust in the organization (Truss et al., 1997). According to the Human Resource Management approach based on Y theory, assuming that people pursue self-actualization through work, the aim of management will be to encourage individual growth and development in order to reveal the potential of their human resources. The soft model of Human Resource Management is based on the concepts of commitment, flexibility and quality (Truss et al., 1997). The soft model of human resource management is based on the concepts of commitment flexibility and quality (Truss et al., 1997). Ensuring employee loyalty, which is one of the main objectives of human resources management, is based on the assumption that committed employees will be more satisfied, more productive and more adaptable. For an organization, organizational commitment means greater loyalty and better performance, as well as results such as an individual’s self-worth, dignity, psychological involvement and identification (Guest, 1987).

In the meta-analysis conducted by Subramony (2009), human resources management bundles created according to the approach of talent, skill and opportunity were examined in the context of empowering, motivation-increasing and skill-enhancing. It has been found that these practices have a higher positive effect on the performance of businesses than individual human resources practices. In the context of empowering applications, employee participation in influencing the business process, formal complaint procedure and complaint resolution systems, job enrichment (skill flexibility, job diversity, responsibility), self-directed or autonomous work groups, employee participation in decision-making processes, systems that encourage employee feedback. In the context of motivation-enhancing practices, formal performance evaluation process, incentive plans, bonuses, profit sharing, performance-based payment, in-house career mobility and advancement opportunities, health and nursery services and other benefits provided to employees are listed. Finally, in the context of skill-enhancing practices, job analysis-based definitions and job requirements, vocational-based skills training, structured and necessary tools and procedures for personnel selection are listed (Subramony, 2009). In the researches, the apparent reasons behind the employees leaving the job are among the hidden reasons, there are many behaviorally manageable causes workplace failing to meet expectations, mismatches between business people, insufficient advising and feedback, inadequate growth and improvement opportunities, self-depreciation, feeling worthless and unrecognized, overwork and tension from work-life imbalance, loss of reliance and confidence in senior leaders (Torrington et al., 2014; Senbursa, 2021).

## **INDUSTRY 4.0 AND HRM**

*We must develop a comprehensive and globally shared view of how technology is affecting our lives and reshaping our economic, social, cultural, and human environments. There has never been a time of greater promise, or greater peril.*  
– Mariette DiChristina, Editor-in-Chief of Scientific American, and chair of the Emerging Technologies Steering Committee

In the Industry 4.0 era, attracting and retaining core employees, who are indispensable for organizations, will be much more important in terms of sustainable innovation and competition. Research shows that one of the most important reasons for leaving voluntary work is the inability to match the demands of the job with the demands of the family. In the coming period, the creation of more family-friendly workplaces where employees, who are considered to be one of the most important determinants of work dedication, can take care of their work and family

responsibilities, constitute one of the important human resources strategies in this respect (Torrington et al., 2014). The way technology is applied or used affects the internal culture of the company and its behavior towards stakeholders within a company. The application of new technology, which is used with Industry 4.0 and frequently used with Covid 19, makes a gradual change in the composition of the workforce. The space and time flexibility brought by new technologies deeply affects not only individual work but also interconnected work. Information flow and simultaneous communication in interconnected tasks require teamwork. In this period when knowledge and creativity gain more importance, teamwork, communication and cooperation of teams come to the fore for idea development and implementation. In this sense, it will be important to build the organizational culture in a way that includes learning agility, innovation, cooperation and communication, and creating a culture that employees constantly develop (Schwarz Müller et al., 2018).

## **CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

*Your children get only one childhood. Make it memorable. – Regina Brett, author*

Work-life balance is one of the areas that has attracted attention recently with effect of Covid19. Work-life balance has become a prominent policy discourse in developed countries in recent years (Senbursa, 2022) with globalization and rapid technological change, an aging population, the increase in the number of dual-career families, and the rise in workforce attendance rates, particularly because of the drop in women’s fertility rates (Tosun & Keskin, 2017). While employees ask for facilities to balance work and private life responsibilities, organizations strengthen their competitive benefits by proposing work-life balance opportunities to their employees. The way of doing work adjustments such as remote working, job sharing, flexible working hours and reduced working hours are becoming more significant for employees who are more aware of this issue. Work-life balance implementations also tone down the relationship between work necessities and tension. On the other hand, organizational work-life arrangements are considered as possible mediators for a supportive work-family culture and employee well-being relationship (Tosun & Keskin, 2017). The current strategies implemented by organizations regarding work-life balance in a changing order based on knowledge, innovation, cultural differentiation and flexibility are as follows (Robbins & Judge, 2012):

- Time-based strategies: Flex time, job sharing, leave for new parents, transportation, work at home, paid leave for volunteer work

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- Knowledge-based strategies: work and life support, relocation assistance, aged care resources, counseling service
- Money-based strategies: Insurance subsidy, flexible benefits, adoption allowance, nursery fee reduction, direct financial aid, local partner aid, scholarship fee reimbursement
- Direct services: Childcare, sports center, summer school childcare, special maid service (such as car wash, dental care, hairdresser, etc.), side activities, free or discounted products
- Cultural change strategies: Establishing a work-life balance culture, training of managers to assist employees in their work-life work, paying based on the manager for employee satisfaction, concentrating on the actual performance of the employees rather than the time they appear

Work-life balance involves the impacts of conflicts between work and family, gender apartheid, work-life on psychological health, output growth, productivity increase, experiences of dual-career families, change policies in institutions' work-life initiatives, work-life balance and gender differences. The issue of work-life balance has emerged in the XXth century with the increase in the number of women with children and the number of employees who have to take care of their elderly relatives in the workforce. It has been gaining popularity since the end of the century. The demographic change experienced in the job market is in order in institutions; increased the adoption and implementation of work-life balance programs such as workplace care centers (such as nurseries), aged care programs, employee support programs and flexible working hours (Wang & Verma, 2012). For most employees, the issue of work-life balance is increasingly related to the care responsibilities of not only children but also the elderly members of the families, and at this point, the expectation is that women should ensure work harmony with these responsibilities (Watts, 2009). In business life, where the role of managing work and family responsibilities is interpreted as the main responsibility of women, this becomes a special issue especially for mothers from past to present (Weigt & Richards, 2008). Kossek (2016) says that he developed and elaborated five design and implementation considerations to increase the possible impact of work-life initiatives: “(1) Integration of organizational cultural and structural systems; (2) protection and inclusion (applications do not create any grievances for employees); (3) institutional support against individual power; (4) multi-layered inclusiveness (prevention of negative dynamics between groups) and (5) undesirable consequences (work-life initiatives can often lead to both positive and negative consequences that cannot be predicted during the design and implementation phases). However, proactive employees preparing these applications should be aware that work-life initiatives can vary in social relations between employees and managers, between

employees and customers, and among employees with various work-life identities and work styles). According to Kossek, each of these elements can change during a process (Kossek, 2016). Research shows that work-family conflict; They argued that it has two dimensions: “conflict from work to family”, where work interferes with the family (conflicts with the family) and “conflict from family to work”, where the family interferes with work. It is seen that “work-to-family conflict” is more common than the other (Allard et al., 2011). According to another study, work-life balance practices that reduce work-life (family) conflicts increase employee well-being and happiness. Employees whose work and living spaces are in balance are more satisfied with their jobs, experience less work-load and depression, and fulfill their roles more easily (Greenhaus, 2003; Fisher, 2010) While providing work-life balance has positive effects on both individuals and institutions, such as job and life satisfaction, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism, work-life imbalance is associated with stress-related problems such as increased job turnover, life dissatisfaction and depression (Lauzun, et al., 2010)

## **Covid19 and Changes in the Nature of Work**

*To get everyone through this crisis, employees who are under less strain need to invest in understanding the experiences of their colleagues who are struggling more. This is especially true for senior leaders, who can set a powerful example by practicing empathy and reaching out to offer support. – Women in the Workforce 2020*

With Covid19 period, work-life balance; together with rapid technological change and remote work, has become a prominent policy discourse in all over the world since 2020. One of the problems that arises in this new period is the problem of employee commitment and dedication to the organization. It is inevitable that individuals who constantly work remotely or in a digital environment will experience alienation and depersonalization problems after a while. In particular, the distance management and the relationship between the manager and the subordinate is carried to a different dimension with electronic performance evaluation and monitoring tools. For this reason, it is aimed to manage the behaviors of individuals at work and outside the business world through programs such as Artificial Intelligence supported programs, second life or virtual environment supports, gamification activities (Stone et al., 2015). With the digital transformation, the relationship between work life order, work and private life continues to undergo a radical change in terms of spatial and temporal flexibility. Even though there are offices in the workplaces of the future, a company building is not always necessary for these offices, and it has been seen during industry 4.0 that it can become accepted as a home-office arrangement with personal households, houses, and the most modern technologies. Therefore, it is

guaranteed for many employees that they are not physically present in the workplace. Completing important projects in the evenings and on weekends is becoming normal and working hours are losing their importance. Work is no longer defined by regular working hours such as 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, but takes place around the clock with breaks during traditional core times (Schwarz Müller et al., 2018). On the one hand, this situation takes into account the special needs of employees, such as childcare; they can benefit from increased life-work balance, such as being able to work whenever and wherever convenient (Aybas, 2020). However, on the other hand, the fact that employees can access work-related materials anywhere, be accessible at any time and stay in touch can create the norm. It can cause a never-ending problem of overtime. According to this newly formed working norm in the minds of the employees, they should arrange their break times, take care of their health by taking their minds away from work from time to time; It will be important for company managers to create an environment of freedom that we can have without exploiting digital unlimited accessibility without turning it into an excessive workload. Work stress caused by time flexibility can be reduced by behaviors such as not making work-related demands on weekends or outside of working hours, for example, not waiting for an e-mail or phone to be answered except in really exceptional circumstances (Schwarz Müller et al., 2018). The COVID-19 epidemic has caused heavy damage all over the world and has caused the old ways of doing business to change. The epidemic has caused destruction in many areas, including economic and socio psychological. Responsibility and cooperation are needed in every field from the micro level to the macro level in order to combat the epidemic. Therefore, to rebuild trust, a culture of collaborative production and value creation for all is needed, rather than a culture of competition (Aydın & Doğan, 2021).

## **Flexible Benefits of Employees**

*Employees cannot leave their home life at the door. They bring their worries to work, and it impacts their productivity. – HR leader, 2021*

Employees' satisfaction in their private and business lives also influences institutions in a positive way. Work-life balance implementations bring along profitability and value creation in employee-friendly organizations and higher productivity. Employers look forward to increasing corporate productivity and profitability as well as maximizing employee productivity with an employee-friendly approach (Tosun & Keskin, 2017). As the workforce in many sectors grows, decentralized, flexibility – where people work, what hours they work, and the family-friendly benefits offered – is becoming gradually widespread (The Future of Benefits Report, 2021). From December 16, 2020 – January 6, 2021, a survey of



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500 Human Resource managers and C-suite decision-makers, conducted by Care.com of which 36% of respondents are women and 64% are male. All participants work for companies with 500 or more employees. Also, the respondents work in a wide range of industries such as Technology, Manufacturing/construction, Finance/insurance/consulting. The survey unveils that majority of the organizations are leaving the “nice to have” profits critical to a centralized workforce (such as free transportation and lunches) in the interest of advantages that effect hugely on the way people work nowadays and will continue to work in the future.

*Figure 1. Plans to combat the attrition during COVID-19 (The Future of Benefits, 2021)*



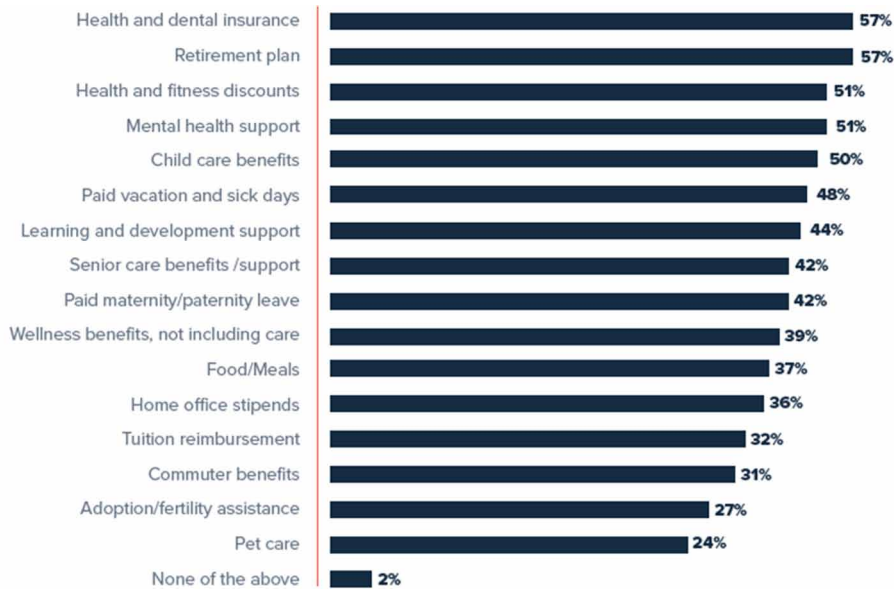
In Figure 1, respondents were asked what benefits they specifically plan to expand to increase employee retention. 66% of organizations plan to offer more work flexibility (an employee-friendly benefit with no direct costs to employers), while 63% plan to expand childcare benefits and 41% plan to expand aged care services.

In Figure 2, when asked, “*How would you describe your company/organization’s strategy to manage the challenges faced by employees who are caring for their children or elderly parents during the COVID-19 pandemic?*” respondents accepted accelerating support and flexibility. Fifty percent of employees said their organization plans to newly offer or expand childcare benefits in the near future whereas 42% plan to newly offer or expand senior care benefits. 43% of the respondents’ organizations presently offer childcare and senior care benefits.

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Figure 2. Benefits your company/organization plans to newly offer or expand in the near future (%)

(The Future of Benefits, 2021)



## Maritime Industry and Fluctuant Employee Expectations

*Employers are recognizing they must expand beyond traditional benefits, especially as many employees are experiencing burnout and the boundaries between work and home have blurred. – Marc Brown, chief people officer at Zovio*

As in the whole world, the COVID-19 pandemic has had many negative economic, social and individual effects in Turkey. The measures taken by both the government and individuals to control the spread of the disease have led to the start of a period called the “New Normal”. The uncertainty, risk and fear created by COVID-19 and the New Normal Period measures have led to changes in the entire tourism sector. Closing borders and canceling flights at a global level; travel bans, closure of some hotels, etc. at national and local levels. These conditions have caused great damage to tourism in all countries (Aydın & Doğan, 2021). In the maritime industry, like other industries, traveling in the new business normal has led to a narrowing of travel options due to the insecurity created by many companies (the new normal travel measures are not fully taken and implemented), even though it is for the purpose of providing a great hygiene and precautionary measure for the passengers. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated seafarers in dangerous

situations around the world. As of July 2021, it is forecasted that 250,000 seafarers are presently stranded on ships beyond the expiration of their original contract and cannot be repatriated due to COVID-related travel restrictions. A similar number of seafarers are known to be trapped in their homes, unable to join ships and unable to provide for their families (IMO, 2020) The pandemic has caused major health and safety concerns (McKinsey & Company, 2020). Since the organizations serving the maritime sector are global enterprises, both the personnel they employ in the office and the personnel employed as seafarers often need to travel domestically and abroad, and they have to work with limited organizations due to the concern of lack of precaution. This results in loss of time and money in the maritime sector. Due to the sanctions that change suddenly between countries and cities that do not meet on a common denominator, the workload increases along with the material and moral burden. Due to travel restrictions, maritime organizations have had hard times on positioning and planning seafarers to vessels. Both in Turkey and in many countries of the world, the suspension of all national and international flights, intercity bus and train services, and the restrictions on intercity travel by private vehicle have created an obstacle to the travel and tourism expenditures of individuals, regardless of socio-economic status. It is obvious that the travel restrictions, new normal rules, physical distance, and hygiene obligations that have stepped in our lives due to both the measures taken by the governments and the individual measures against the epidemic will continue in the New Normal Period (Tavakoli et al, 2020). In addition, it is important that the measures and procedures taken by the authorities in transit between countries and cities are placed in a common system. It is observed that the workload and confusion created by researching the pre-travel requirements for each travel region should be avoided. Apart from travel restrictions and repatriation of seafarers, with the coronavirus epidemic, there has been no change in the way seafarers work remotely at sea.

In many maritime business organizations, it is aimed to use the workforce efficiently as well as to stay healthy; workforce management is based on minimum contact and maximum efficiency, and every detail is planned in advance and organized in an efficient workflow. In all situations deemed risky, personnel are provided with conveniences and measures such as working from home and holding meetings on online systems. In addition to business management in human resources management, the need for motivation management has also increased. This global Covid19 crisis has increased the anxiety and stress in business environments, and in some cases, has led to a decrease in employees' productivity and problems in time management. In this process, organizations have had to revise their expectations from the work force in line with this reality and take actions to increase the motivation of the employees and reduce their work and professional concerns. These are intended to be provided to the employee with administrative permits, work from home permits

and a healthy working environment created. The work planning and responsibilities of the employees have been prepared on the basis of agenda factors.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

*Mental health will continue to be a central topic for HR. We will be dealing with a lot of stress and anxiety from COVID-19, racial injustices, fatigue, you name it... HR's primary role has always been keeping employees safe, and enabling mental well-being is crucial to supporting employees and helps workers stay engaged and motivated. – Rachel Ernst, Chief Human Resources Officer at Reflektive*

Since the change and transformation faced by organizations during the Covid-19 period is revolutionary, this situation needs to be managed much more carefully than usual. The change and transformation experienced during the Covid-19 period has caused employees to suddenly find a completely different job and working conditions. This process may have been psychologically damaging for both the employee and the employer. Employees under these conditions such as uncertainty, overtime, stress, loss of work-life balance may show more cynicism, frustration, anger, distrust, information hiding, sabotage and other counterproductive behaviors (Torrington et al., 2014). All these may cause employees to lose their sense of organizational justice and organizational commitment. Therefore, managing the behavior of employees and preventing their psychological well-being are under the basic responsibility of human resources management. It is essential to know that the impact of technological developments on the organizational structure and culture, and to manage this situation proactively Sustainable competitive advantage and prolonging the life of organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

*HR's primary role has always been keeping employees safe, and enabling mental well-being is crucial to supporting employees and helps workers stay engaged and motivated. – Human Resources Leader*

The primary step to be taken by employers is to put employees first in order to create an employee-friendly workplace. Today, human resources management necessitates to consider employees happiness and satisfaction, which is to be remembered in the approach of managing employees. Doing this will have a positive impact on the success of the work and the happiness of people working for organizations. It is

important that employees are praised by managers. As well as focusing on what their employees need to fix and improve on, managers need to tell them what employees are doing well. Praise can be motivational for example a simple recognition of a good job being done, since it shows the recognition of employee’s good performance and success. Albeit, open-door policies in their employee handbooks is another leader’s alternative to attach employee to the organization. Being available for an employee and welcome her when s/he needs to share an idea, problem, vision, is always motivating. Either listening to the employee’s problems or, scheduling the meeting to the earliest possible gives the message to the employee that they are the organization’s top priority. In this study, the concept of employee-friendly business, which continues during the fight against Covid19, which is extremely important for businesses in the global world, has been tried to be examined and the importance of this concept has been tried to be explained with examples in different sizes. Remote working, online meeting programs, and technological developments, which have become a necessity during the pandemic, have entered the global business world and changed business activities considerably. With this wind of change, different ways of working and doing business will remain as hybrid or remote work. It is observed that the business world, top management managers, human resources managers and leaders urges to adopt the “we care about you” approach to their employees by renewing their organizations’ strategic human resources policies with this reality, on the basis of sustainable human resources. Strategic human resources management, along with the pandemic, has experienced that the focus of the organization management, apart from economic concerns, profit and loss balance, employees who do not have an office environment can only work from home or remotely with a strong sense of belonging, only by making the employees valuable and offering them more flexible working conditions.

*Human welfare depends on healthy ecosystems. – Lailah Gifty Akita*

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Employee-Friendly Organizations:** In today’s world, talented, multi-tasking, assiduous, teamwork, committed, motivated and productive employees are essential for a business. In this context, all businesses start to see their employees as the most valuable element and accordingly develop an employee-friendly climate and practices. Employees are the most valuable assets of businesses. According to scientific studies supporting this thesis, it has been observed that “high level of



employee satisfaction is achieved, success in financial performance is achieved and these organizations carry less risk” in workplaces that create an “employee-friendly climate” or “work-life balance”. On the other hand, the Quality Management System implemented by successful organizations shows that the way to provide customer satisfaction (external customer) is to make the internal customer (employee), that is, to keep the employees happy.

**New Normal:** After the COVID-19 pandemic, companies are trying to adapt to the new normal process, which includes the stages of life returning to normal, by producing innovations or taking precautions. With well-structured measures and usual procedures, daily life and work life define the new normal. Companies now continue by adapting their processes to the ‘New Normal’ or working from home and continuing without contact. The new normal, which is heard a lot thanks to the coronavirus, is adapting to the conditions and accepting the reality in our lives from now on. After the crisis created by the epidemic, the ‘new normal’ is to be faced and there will be differences as well.

**Organizational Strategies:** Organizations adapt to their environment by implementing strategies formulated by top management. For this, the top management constantly monitors the changes in the environmental conditions affecting the business; It tries to determine what opportunities these changes create or what dangers they bring. Organizations develop and implement various strategies to provide competitive advantage or to maintain the current advantage.

**Strategic Human Resources Management:** Strategic human resource management; It refers to the link between companies’ human resources departments and strategies, goals and objectives. Strategic human resources management refers to the methods applied for businesses to make a difference and stay strong in the competitive environment. To have a say in the competition, not to fall behind the times and most importantly, organizations that have to change in order to survive have to look at their human resources from a strategic perspective. As a matter of fact, in this conceptual study, the concept of strategic human resources management and the perspectives developed regarding the concept are discussed.

**Work-Life Balance:** Work-life balance refers to the harmony of work and private life. This harmony improves the quality of life for both us and our family. Intense competition in the business world often does not allow such a balance to be established in personal/private life. There is a point that is ignored that people who work hard and do not pay attention to their health and do not establish a work-life balance are at risk of exhaustion. Burnout is not a sign of helplessness or dislike for one’s job, but the scientific result of one’s choices.

## Chapter 3

# Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work–From–Home Employees: Evidence From India

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work. The situation has exponentially increased the use of online platforms in every aspect. Work-from-home has become more prominent, more widespread, and a routine of life rather than the exception. Within this context, drawing support from the conservation of resources theory, a conceptual framework is proposed to list the various factors affecting the psychological capital (PsyCap) which in turn impacts overall life satisfaction. The model is empirically validated with data from the Indian working population using structural equation modeling. Specifically, it was observed that remote abusive supervision, family demands, and work demands negatively influence PsyCap. Simultaneously, social support from work and family (colleague, team, partner/spouse, and parent) positively influences PsyCap. PsyCap, in turn, influences their overall life satisfaction. Psychological detachment negatively moderates the relationship between remote abusive supervision and PsyCap. Implications and future scope of research are also highlighted.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background – Covid19

Humanity has been grappling with the pandemic since early January 2020, created by a coronavirus (Covid19). With neither a known cure nor prevention, the only way to restrict the virus' spread was through social distancing, i.e., isolating the sick (Sintema, 2020). Thus, most countries were placed under lockdown (Kaplan *et al.*, 2020). The pandemic had changed the way of functioning for all, some drastically, most permanently. Though countries have started the vaccination process in early 2021, multiple strains created virus' rapid mutation have forced governments across nations to follow social distancing measures, with lockdown restrictions extended (temporarily and intermittently) (Richardson, 2021). Public schools, colleges, public utility spaces like gyms, theatres, malls, etc.) are shut or re-shut after opening for a few weeks. In this scenario, online platforms came to the rescue for socially isolated human beings. Forced to stay at home and unable to venture out, people turned to online avenues for business, education, entertainment, and social interactions. Schools, colleges, and offices, whoever can, shifted to work-from-home arrangements (WFH). Multiple organizations have mandated their workforce to work from home. As per a McKinsey 2021 survey on executives from over 100 geographic locations, most of them are likely to follow a hybrid model of functioning post-pandemic (Alexander *et al.*, 2021).

Since the onset of the pandemic, many organizations have shifted to remote working (work-from-home), in whichever role is possible. New-age stalwarts like Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon had mandated one-year or even lifetime work-from-home options. In India, too, companies like Citibank, BCG, HUL, KPMG, RPG Group, Cognizant, Infosys, Philips, Pfizer, Pidilite, and TCS (Basu, 2020), to name a few, have mandated that only essential workers are required to be physically present in the office premises. Tata Group has implemented work-from-anywhere for its employees in specific functions (sales, digital marketing, HR, IT support, etc.) (Bhalerao, 2020). While most preferred to work-from-home during the early lockdown period (as per a survey conducted by Lenovo in July 2020 (Caramela, 2020), the increase in productivity also led to more stress and difficulty in maintaining work-life balance. In addition, people also faced toxic workplace behaviour, albeit online, including incivility, aggressive behaviour, and poor interpersonal treatment (Liu, 2020).

In this context, work-from-home has obtained unprecedented importance, especially being the 'new normal' way of functioning, especially for the workforce. Earlier, work-from-home was considered an employer-provided benefit, given as a way of showing support, to enable employees with family life constraints (young

child/ children, aged/ sick parents, dependant family members, self-illness, etc.), and were not utilized much by the workforce. In a country like India, this was more so, especially with the negative connotations associated with working from home (the fear of not being treated at par with other employees, considered 'not sincere/ dedicated enough' towards career, projecting the image that career was not 'as important') made this a paper policy in most organizations. However, the work environment has changed with the pandemic, and work-from-home has become the norm rather than the exception. Organizations, as well as individuals, have awakened to the various advantages of working from home. While many have resumed working from the physical office, others continue to work from home and are comfortable doing so. Hence, the area of work-from-home is more relevant now than ever.

## **Scope**

The changes heralded by the pandemic brought unto humankind are permanent and here to stay. The way of employment has changed, suggesting a permanent shift towards working from home. This shift demands organizational policy and strategy changes, more so for the human resources domain (Hern, 2020). Based on ongoing research, the beneficial impact of working from home during the pandemic is heavily tilted for the organizations with increased work effort and employee productivity (Allen *et al.*, 2015). Employees also benefit as the increased autonomy directly influences their well-being (Bathini and Kandathil, 2019; Choudhury *et al.*, 2019; Rupiotta and Beckmann, 2018). However, there is also a parallel body of research exploring the negative implications of working from home (or anywhere). The pressure of being 'on' always (Mellner *et al.*, 2016) increases stress (Román *et al.*, 2018) due to inadvertently increased working hours (Adisa *et al.*, 2017). In fact, some authors opine that the enforced work-from-home acts as a deterrent, as the feelings of greater autonomy and gratitude are lacking when it becomes a requirement to work from home (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). This holds especially true for those individuals who did not prefer to work from home (Kramer and Kramer, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the current study aims to identify the various situational and environmental factors contributing to an employee's overall experiences of life satisfaction through the mediating role of psychological capital while working remotely. Specifically, the influence of leadership experiences (abusive supervision), demands (work, family), and supports (colleague, team, spouse, parent) on life satisfaction is explored through their influence on the individual's psychological capital. Additionally, the moderating role of psychological demands is also explored. It is imperative to mention here that this framework was created keeping in mind the Indian culture, as Indians have less demarcation between their work-family lives culturally (Raina *et al.*, 2020). Staying in a joint family, with parents, etc., is

common as staying alone or in a nuclear family. This framework has been empirically validated with data from the Indian working adult population. It is envisaged that the study will aid researchers and practitioners alike by contributing to the work-life interface literature and life satisfaction domains.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The framework developed for this study is based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), which states how individuals react to stressors in their environment. Individuals are motivated to maintain their resources and also create new resources. As per the COR theory, people try to accumulate or generate resources, which help them function in their multiple roles. On the other hand, parental interference depletes resources, as the teacher feels more negative emotions to deal with such a situation, generating negative affect. Adult individuals play multiple roles in their life, and all require resources to be conducted efficiently. These resources – time, energy, attention, are limited by nature, and examining how they are utilized is of interest to researchers of the work-life domain. While one group argues that handling multiple roles create conflict due to inherent stress (based on the Scarcity Theory (Goode, 1960)), others argue that they also generate resources due to positive spillover from one role to the other (based on the Expansionist Approach of Marks (1977) and the Role Accumulation Theory of Sieber (1974)). Researchers aligned with this positive thought process argue that combining multiple roles enables positive energy flow from one role to another, thereby adding resources. Specifically, in line with the COR theory, it is posited that work environment (WFH) stressors (created due to abusive supervisor, time and space constraints, family demands, etc.) create a strain on the global resource of PsyCap (psychological capital), which in turn affects the overall life satisfaction of the employee.

Also, the author took support from the concepts from Boundary Theory (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000). The boundary theory stated how work and family roles are managed using personal strategies of the segmentation-integration continuum. Integration of roles is inevitable, and segmentation cannot be followed to the hilt. Thus, the consequences of integration between roles occur, depending on how an individual integrates their work and home domains. It is observed that an individual who can psychologically detach from the stressors is affected less adversely than one who cannot do so (Junker *et al.*, 2020). Thus, the moderating role of psychological detachment is also explored.

## **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT (WITH PRIOR LITERATURE SUPPORT)**

### **Role of Remote Abusive Supervision on Psychological Capital**

Abusive supervision reduces PsyCap, leading to reduced employee well-being (Avey *et al.*, 2021). An abusive boss directly increases stress and intention to quit (Tepper, 2007; Chi and Liang, 2013; Whitman *et al.*, 2014), as also negatively affect job satisfaction (Aryee *et al.*, 2007) however the impact is not linear and varies across individuals (Rigotti, 2009). Personal resources impact how individuals perceive abuse (Martinko *et al.*, 2013). Abusive supervision is considered an occupational stressor (Hoel *et al.*, 1999), leading to resource loss (Wheeler *et al.*, 2013). In the context of work-from-home, abusive supervision takes a different meaning as it is done remotely. However, the impact is felt, and it does occur (Liu, 2020). Drawing from the COR theory, which states that individuals try to protect resources when stress occurs, facing abusive supervision at work, even remotely, drains personal resources (PsyCap), decreasing hope (Avey *et al.*, 2011), optimism (Avey *et al.*, 2011), resilience (Luthans *et al.*, 2007), and efficacy (Luthans *et al.*, 2007). Remote abusive supervision is likely to increase self-doubt (Brown *et al.*, 2005), thus reducing feelings of self-efficacy and optimism. Thus, based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Remote Abusive Supervision negatively influences employees' PsyCap

### **Role of Perceived Demands on Psychological Capital**

Having too much workload in a role, be it a work role or family role, creates stress on resources, thus draining them and impacting their balance. Excessive work demands like extended working hours, high-intensity work, strict deadlines, etc., all add to the strain, leaving fewer resources to deal with family demands. Similarly, excessive family demands, like household chores, managing children, taking care of aged/sick parents, catering to spousal needs, all create stress. It becomes more prominent when working from home, as there is a continuous blurring of boundaries between work role and family role. Managing a child's online class while simultaneously preparing for one's meeting both create stress and drains resources, including personal resources like PsyCap. In a recent study on the impact of remote working, the authors observed that women and mothers had little choice as to when and how work was done (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). Further, gender roles are observed to be more demarcated and reinforced during the pandemic (Chung, 2020). Studies across the world have observed that workload increased for women, be it Italy (Boca *et al.*,

2020), the UK (Sevilla and Smith, 2020), Spain (Farré and Gonzalez, 2020), even in gender-egalitarian countries like Iceland (Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir, 2021). It may seem too overwhelming a situation, making one lose resilience, hope, and optimism. Thus, it is expected that:

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceived Work Demands negatively influences employees' PsyCap

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived Family Demands negatively influences employees' PsyCap

## **Role of Perceived Support on Psychological Capital**

The positive impact of support received from others on PsyCap, be it social support at work or family, is well-established in the literature. Especially, PsyCap's mediating role between support and performance outcomes are explored by prior researchers, be it organizational support (Luthans *et al.*, 2008; Nigah *et al.*, 2012), instructor support (Luthans *et al.*, 2012; Nielsen *et al.*, 2016), and family support (Nielsen *et al.*, 2016). Even for subjective well-being outcomes (of which life satisfaction is a key aspect), empirical evidence from prior studies exists (Nielsen *et al.*, 2016). In addition, in line with the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), external factors like support received from others aid in generating resources. Team support, like colleague support, aids PsyCap (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). In a collectivistic society (India being an amalgamation), the family includes not only spouse/ partner and kids but also parents, extended family, etc. Support received from family, including spouse/ partner and parents, becomes essential in maintaining a positive balance in life and influences satisfaction levels in life. It is imperative to mention here that the perception of support received is often more important than the actual support received. This is because it is associated with enhancing a positive image of self and has direct as well as indirect effects on health and well-being through self-esteem (Lakey and Cohen, 2000; Lakey and Rhodes, 2015). Thus, it is expected that:

**Hypothesis 4:** Perceived Colleague Support positively influences employees' PsyCap

**Hypothesis 5:** Perceived Team Support positively influences employees' PsyCap

**Hypothesis 6:** Perceived Partner/ Spousal Support positively influences employees' PsyCap

**Hypothesis 7:** Perceived Parental Support positively influences employees' PsyCap

## **Role of Psychological Capital on Overall Life Satisfaction**

Family demands, e.g., household chores, infant care, children schooling from home, aged parents, etc. all create demands on resources, which affect the personal resource

of PsyCap {consisting of individual components – *hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism* (Luthans *et al.*, 2007)}, which in turn affects the overall subjective well-being of the individual. Support from team members, partner/spouse, and other family members (parents), in turn, add on to the resources and thus positively influence PsyCap. In prior studies, the influence of PsyCap on subjective well-being (Baron *et al.*, 2013; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2012), even longitudinally (Luthans *et al.*, 2013; Avey *et al.*, 2010, Culbertson *et al.*, 2010) is well-established. As life satisfaction is the most widely utilized measure of subjective well-being (Kong *et al.*, 2012), deriving from the same, it is expected that:

**Hypothesis 8:** PsyCap positively impacts employees' overall life satisfaction

### **Mediating Role of Psychological Capital**

An individual's experiences of life satisfaction are heavily influenced by various situational and environmental factors. In addition, PsyCap acts as a buffer between these factors and experiences by attenuating the negative influences of demands (work, family) while at the same time enhancing the positive influences of support from various sources. This is also in line with the concepts of Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). In the work-from-home context, hence, it is expected that PsyCap negatively mediates between the relationship of workplace demands (remote abusive supervision) and family demands with overall life satisfaction, while positively mediating the relationship between social support received, be it at work (colleagues, team members) and personal (partner/spouse, parent) and overall life satisfaction. In addition, psychological detachment is expected to moderate the relationship between various demands (work, family) and PsyCap. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 9:** While working from home, psychological capital mediates the relationships between the various factors and employees' overall life satisfaction, such that

- a) It reduces the negative impact of abusive supervision and perceived demands, and
- b) It enhances the positive impact of perceived supports

### **Moderating Role of Psychological Detachment**

Psychological detachment can also be considered as a key resource, that is to say, those personality traits that enable a more active and efficient coping style (Hobfoll, 2002)}. The ability to successfully detach from a specific role allows one to get



recharged and rejuvenated, thus generating resources. For such an individual, the negative impacts of stressors get lessened. Accordingly, the moderating effect of detachment on the relationship between demands (of work and family domain) and PsyCap also cannot be denied, as this creates a restriction on resource depletion (energy, affect) and thus makes it possible to achieve higher PsyCap, and thus impacting employee's overall life satisfaction levels. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 10:** Psychological Detachment moderates the relationships with Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in such a way that

- a) It reduces the impact of remote abusive supervision on PsyCap
- b) It reduces the impact of family demands on PsyCap
- c) It reduces the impact of family demands on PsyCap

## **Integrating It All**

### **Control Variables**

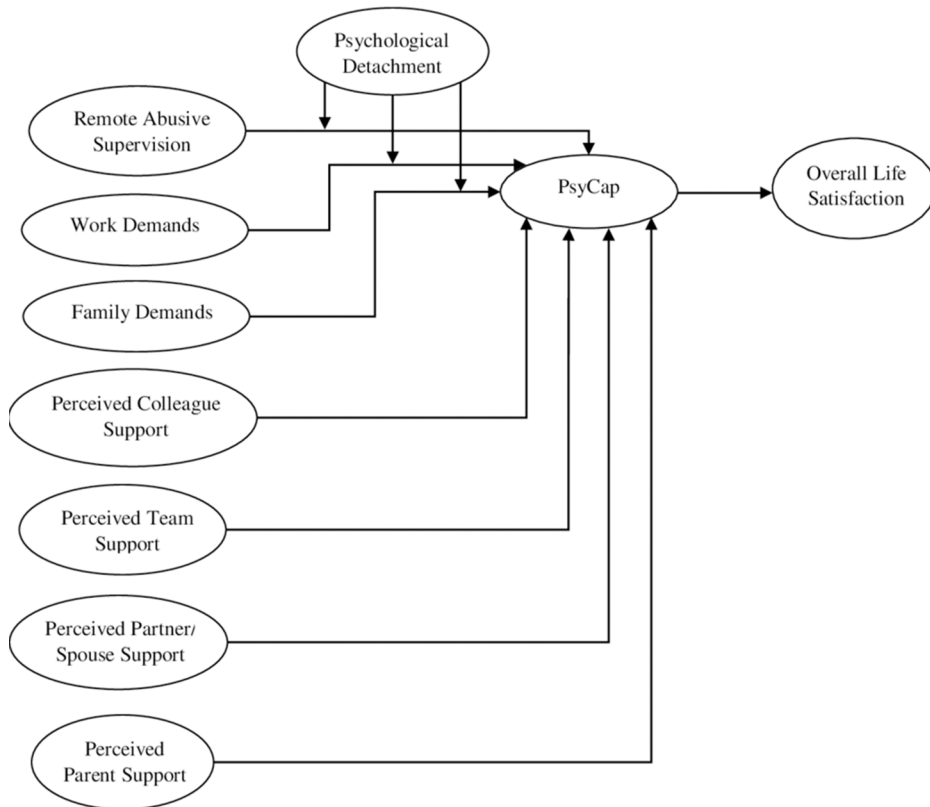
Gender (male or female), age, family type (staying in a nuclear or joint family), spouse's work from home status, and presence of children at home were taken as control variables. These demographics were considered as they bear a significant impact on life satisfaction experiences (Byron, 2005). Though PsyCap is found to have a weak relationship with demographics such as age, gender, tenure (Avey, 2014), in the context of this framework, those are considered as control variables because of two reasons. Firstly, the intensity and dimensions of resource constraints faced by a 20-something individual staying alone are quite different from those faced by a 40-something with children at home and a 30-something with aged-sick parents at home. Hence, in line with the family development theory (Rodgers, 1964), which states that as a person transition across various life stages, their priorities, wants, needs, expectations change, and this creates a strain on their resources, adding or depleting them, it is expected that variations would occur. Secondly, in the Indian context, which is an amalgamation of a collectivistic and individualistic culture, the demands (and the stressors) are quite unique. A 30-something staying with aged parents might have fewer stressors than a similarly placed 30-something whose parents stay in a different city, owing to the distance and responsibilities (self/ society imposed). Thus, the demands created on their resources would be different. Hence, the demographic ones are considered as control variables.

## **Hypothesized Model**

Figure 1 below represents the nomological model of this study.

## Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees

Figure 1. Overall life satisfaction while WFH



## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection Procedures and Samples

To test the hypothesized model, the author collected data (online) from married Indian dual-working population to test the hypotheses. At the time of conducting the study, all the participants were working from home. The respondents also have at least one child staying with them at home. Data was collected over three months (from February 2021 till April 2021). An online survey questionnaire created through google form was floated, based on convenience sampling. No personal information (which can identify the respondents) was collected to maintain anonymity and prevent bias. Out of the total responses obtained, 262 were fully completed and relevant to this study, following the minimum required sample size of 200 (Kline, 2011).

Since self-reported scales measured all the collected data, the author conducted Harman's single factor test to check for common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Results for the one-factor model (principal component, no rotation) showed that the variance for extraction sum of squared loadings was less than 15.46%. Additionally, conducting principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed multiple factors (6) constituting cumulative variance of 64.86%, both within desirable limits (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Hence common method bias was ruled out.

The majority of the respondents were men (57.3%), with an average age of 42.1 years (SD= 6.47), ranging from 29 – 52 years. The average age of female participants was 37.31 years (SD= 6.68), ranging from 27 – 54 years. Almost three-fourths of the participants (74.8%) stayed in a nuclear family. Over two-thirds of the respondents have one child (67.6%), and the rest participants have two children. Interestingly, 78.6% of the respondents reported that their spouses were also working from home; however, female respondents had a lesser number of spouses working from home (68.8%) than their male counterparts (86%).

## **Measures**

All the items were measured in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” (i.e., except the demographic variables). The questionnaires were presented in English using items from pre-existing scales. The reliability measures are above the desired levels (Cronbach  $\alpha > 0.7$ ). These are listed below:

- i. *Remote Abusive Supervision (RAS)* – 15 items of the Abusive Supervision Scale, modified to suit remote working (Tepper, 2000), with  $\alpha = 0.943$ .
- ii. *Perceived Work Demands (PWD)* – 3 items corresponding to work demands' perceptions (Choi and Chen, 2006), with  $\alpha = 0.834$ .
- iii. *Perceived Family Demands (PFD)* – 4 items corresponding to family demands' perceptions (Choi and Chen, 2006), with  $\alpha = 0.892$ .
- iv. *Perceived Colleague Support (PCS)* – 4 items from the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek *et al.*, 1998), with  $\alpha = 0.802$ .

### **Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees**

- v. *Perceived Team Support (PTS)* – 4 items adapted from the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek *et al.*, 1998), with  $\alpha = 0.881$ .
- vi. *Perceived Partner/Spousal Support (PSS)* – 4 items adapted from the Perceived Social Support Scale (Zimmet *et al.*, 1988), with  $\alpha = 0.865$ .
- vii. *Perceived Parental Support (PPS)* – 4 items adapted from the Perceived Social Support Scale (Zimmet *et al.*, 1988), with  $\alpha = 0.863$ .
- viii. *Psychological Capital (CPC)* – 12 items of the Compound PsyCap Scale CPC-12 (Lorenz *et al.*, 2016), with  $\alpha = 0.908$ .
- ix. *Overall Life Satisfaction (RLS)* – 6 items of the Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale (Margolis *et al.*, 2019), with  $\alpha = 0.90$ .
- x. *Psychological Detachment (PD)* – 4 items of the Recovery Experience Questionnaire (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2007), with  $\alpha = 0.895$ .

### **Control Variables**

As mentioned earlier, gender, age, family type, spouse's work-from-home status, and presence of children at home were taken as control variables.

### **Data Analysis**

Structural equation modelling (SEM) using SPSS AMOS (v.23) was used to validate the proposed model. It was done in two steps; first, the measurement model was tested and then hypothesized structural models were tested (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the construct validity. Secondly, the structural model was tested using Path Analysis in AMOS.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations and reliability estimates for the variables are depicted in Table 1.

**Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees**

*Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients between variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	RAS	2.42 (0.943)													
2	PWD	3.17 (0.834)	0.011 (0.834)												
3	PFD	3.42 (0.892)	0.056 (0.892)	0.008 (0.892)											
4	PCS	3.66 (0.802)	0.071 (0.802)	0.051 (0.802)	0.039 (0.802)										
5	PTS	3.60 (0.881)	0.037 (0.881)	0.037 (0.881)	0.040 (0.881)	0.109 (0.881)									
6	PSS	4.07 (0.865)	0.002 (0.865)	0.025 (0.865)	0.025 (0.865)	0.018 (0.865)	0.089 (0.865)								
7	PPS	3.86 (0.863)	-0.012 (0.863)	0.089 (0.863)	0.089 (0.863)	0.044 (0.863)	0.044 (0.863)	0.044 (0.863)							
8	PC	3.52 (0.908)	-0.042 (0.908)	0.086 (0.908)	0.086 (0.908)	0.016 (0.908)	0.016 (0.908)	0.016 (0.908)	0.133* (0.908)						
9	RLS	3.09 (0.900)	-0.113 (0.900)	0.060 (0.900)	-0.148* (0.900)	-0.096 (0.900)	0.002 (0.900)	0.036 (0.900)	0.036 (0.900)	0.036 (0.900)					
10	PD	3.74 (0.895)	0.014 (0.895)	-0.016 (0.895)	-0.015 (0.895)	-0.034 (0.895)	0.001 (0.895)	0.000 (0.895)	0.367** (0.895)	0.367** (0.895)					
11	GENDER	1.43 (0.942)	-0.060 (0.942)	-0.023 (0.942)	-0.094 (0.942)	0.014 (0.942)	-0.106 (0.942)	-0.089 (0.942)	-0.126* (0.942)	-0.042 (0.942)					
12	AGE	2.03 (0.942)	0.041 (0.942)	-0.075 (0.942)	-0.001 (0.942)	-0.143* (0.942)	-0.005 (0.942)	0.127* (0.942)	0.101 (0.942)	-0.092 (0.942)	-0.276** (0.942)				
13	FAMTYPE	1.25 (0.942)	0.019 (0.942)	0.028 (0.942)	0.007 (0.942)	0.068 (0.942)	-0.043 (0.942)	-0.039 (0.942)	-0.050 (0.942)	0.009 (0.942)	-0.110 (0.942)	-0.117 (0.942)			
14	CHLD	1.32 (0.942)	0.047 (0.942)	0.012 (0.942)	0.054 (0.942)	0.019 (0.942)	-0.050 (0.942)	-0.020 (0.942)	-0.017 (0.942)	0.051 (0.942)	-0.170** (0.942)	0.153* (0.942)	0.161** (0.942)		
15	SPWFH	1.21 (0.942)	-0.149* (0.942)	-0.009 (0.942)	0.057 (0.942)	0.052 (0.942)	0.029 (0.942)	0.035 (0.942)	0.075 (0.942)	-0.042 (0.942)	0.208** (0.942)	-0.106 (0.942)	-0.067 (0.942)	-0.043 (0.942)	

Note.

n= 262

\*\*p<0.01 (2-tailed), \*p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

Bracketed values on the diagonal shows Cronbach alphas (α) of each scale

## **Testing the Measurement Model**

The measurement model was evaluated containing all the ten latent variables – remote abusive supervision (RAS), perceived work demands (PWD), perceived family demands (PFD), perceived colleague support (PCS), perceived team support (PTS), perceived spousal support (PSS), perceived parental support (PPS), psychological capital (PC), life satisfaction (RLS), and psychological detachment (PD). While conducting factor loading, one item from the variable measuring psychological capital (PC12) was dropped due to poor loading value. The results established reliability and construct validity for the model. Reliability was checked through Cronbach  $\alpha$  and CR (composite reliability), both  $>0.7$ . Convergent validity was established as for all latent variables with AVE  $>0.5$ . Discriminant validity was established through two steps: MSV  $<$  AVE, ASV  $<$  AVE, and square root AVE was greater than the correlations between all the latent variables. The author looked at the  $\chi^2$ , df, RMSEA, NFI, CFI, TLI values to check the model fit. All of them were significant within the acceptable limits (Awang, 2012). Table 2 depicts the reliability and construct validities.

## **Hypotheses Testing**

SEM path analysis was conducted using SPSS AMOS (v.23) to test the hypotheses. Results displayed that both the measurement and structural models were within the acceptable fit indices (Awang, 2012). The role of control variables shall be explained in greater detail in the next sub-section. Table 3 below depicts the model fit indices values for the measurement model and the structural model.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that remote abusive supervision negatively influenced PsyCap; the relationship was strongly significant ( $\beta = -.82$ ,  $se = 0.174$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 2 proposed that work demands negatively influenced PsyCap; this was also observed as strongly significant ( $\beta = -.769$ ,  $se = 0.505$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 3 proposed that family demands negatively influenced PsyCap; this was observed as moderately significant ( $\beta = -.639$ ,  $se = 0.212$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Hypothesis 4 to hypothesis 7 proposed that perceived support positively influenced PsyCap; all were again observed to be strongly significant ( $p < .001$ ). Specifically, hypothesis 4 proposed that perceived colleague support positively influenced PsyCap ( $\beta = .187$ ,  $se = 0.203$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hypothesis 5 proposed that perceived team support positively influenced PsyCap ( $\beta = .068$ ,  $se = 0.318$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hypothesis 6 proposed that perceived spousal support positively influenced PsyCap ( $\beta = .231$ ,  $se = 0.907$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and hypothesis 7 proposed that perceived parental support positively influenced PsyCap ( $\beta = .163$ ,  $se = 0.252$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 8 proposed that PsyCap positively influenced overall life satisfaction; this was found to be weakly significant ( $\beta = .020$ ,  $se = 0.069$ ,  $p = .033$ ).

**Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees**

*Table 2. Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity (measurement model)*

	L Var	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MSV	ASV	AVE	CR
1	RAS	<b>0.725</b>										0.015	0.003	0.525	0.943
2	PWD	0.019	<b>0.798</b>									0.272	0.054	0.637	0.839
3	PFD	0.069	-0.003	<b>0.824</b>								0.014	0.005	0.679	0.894
4	PCS	0.075	0.045	0.031	<b>0.724</b>							0.105	0.016	0.524	0.812
5	PTS	0.043	0.404	0.054	0.096	<b>0.807</b>						0.163	0.023	0.650	0.881
6	PSS	0.002	0.026	0.083	0.003	0.102	<b>0.787</b>					0.010	0.014	0.619	0.866
7	PPS	-0.012	-0.02	0.118	0.025	0.03	0.299	<b>0.785</b>				0.009	0.014	0.615	0.864
8	PC	-0.043	0.093	0.08	0.018	0.049	-0.074	0.136	<b>0.706</b>			0.003	0.005	0.499	0.905
9	RLS	-0.124	-0.522	0.062	0.155	-0.145	-0.098	-0.011	0.049	<b>0.779</b>		0.002	0.056	0.606	0.902
10	PD	0.016	-0.188	-0.032	0.324	0.000	-0.037	0.011	0.006	0.393	<b>0.828</b>	0.002	0.033	0.686	0.897

Note.

Bold values depict the square root of AVE values for each of the latent variables.

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Table 3. Model Fit Indices for measurement model and structural models

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2 / df$	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	TLI
Measurement Model	2302.96	1607	1.433	0.051	0.041	0.774	0.918	0.913
Structural Model	2914.14	2010	1.450	0.066	0.042	0.781	0.919	0.910

Hypothesis 9 explored the mediating role of psychological capital between the various factors and life satisfaction. To check for mediation effect, bootstrapping method (bootstrapping sample = 5000, bias confidence interval = 95) was done. Hypothesis 9 was supported by empirical data, i.e., PsyCap mediated between life satisfaction and remote abusive supervision ( $p = 0.023$ ), perceived work demands ( $p = .011$ ), perceived family demands ( $p = .002$ ), perceived colleague support ( $p = 0.02$ ), perceived team support ( $p = 0.03$ ), perceived spousal support ( $p = 0.015$ ), and perceived parental support ( $p = 0.04$ ).

Hypothesis 10 looked at the moderating role of psychological detachment on the relationship between PsyCap and overall life satisfaction. It was observed that psychological detachment moderated between remote supervision and PsyCap [PD-> PC ( $\beta = -.857$ ,  $se = 0.909$ ,  $p < .001$ ); RAS->PC ( $\beta = -.82$ ,  $se = 0.174$ ,  $p < .001$ ); RASPD->PC ( $\beta = .029$ ,  $se = 0.184$ ,  $p = .033$ )]. However, its moderating role on work demands [PD-> PC ( $\beta = -.857$ ,  $se = 0.909$ ,  $p < .001$ ); PWD->PC ( $\beta = -.769$ ,  $se = 0.505$ ,  $p < .001$ ); PWDPD->PC ( $\beta = -.016$ ,  $se = 0.123$ ,  $p = .96$ )] and family demands [PD-> PC ( $\beta = -.857$ ,  $se = 0.909$ ,  $p < .001$ ); PFD->PC ( $\beta = -.639$ ,  $se = 0.212$ ,  $p = .005$ ); PFDPD->PC ( $\beta = -.047$ ,  $se = 0.290$ ,  $p = .72$ )] remained unsupported.

With respect to the control variables, women participants reported greater PsyCap than men. With increase in age, PsyCap also increased. Those with spouse also working from home reported greater PsyCap. Interestingly, the increase in number of children at home, as well as staying in a joint family decreased PsyCap. With respect to life satisfaction, men reported greater satisfaction with their life than women. It also increases with age and for those whose spouses were also working from home. However, with increase in number of children at home, as well as staying in a joint family decreased life satisfaction. These results are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, barring the moderating role of psychological detachment, the framework received empirical support from the data. Remote abusive supervision showed a positive relationship with PsyCap, which strengthens the conviction that abusive



supervision occurs remotely. Demands (workplace and family) showed a negative relationship with PsyCap, while at the same time supports (colleague, team, partner or spousal, parental) showed a positive relationship with PsyCap, as hypothesized. Concerning the moderating role of psychological detachment between demands and PsyCap, data did not support the hypotheses. It is an interesting deviation from existing researches. There may be a multitude of reasons for this. As per the author's understanding, the same space is shared for office and home roles while working from home. It inevitably leads to blurred boundaries, thus making it more difficult to mentally and physically be detached (Kossek *et al.*, 2006). For those who are forced to work from home, the situation creates additional stress and burden (Kramer and Kramer, 2020). Studies on psychological detachment and its beneficial role in alleviating workplace demands almost always looked at a physical distance from the workspace. It may be an interesting avenue to explore for future researchers.

In the Indian society, women are expected to do more household chores, irrespective of working or non-working status. In the covid19 situation, inequality has increased (Galasso *et al.*, 2020). Workload has increased for women all across the world (Boca *et al.*, 2020; Sevilla and Smith, 2020; Farré and Gonzalez, 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir, 2020), with men contributing more towards childcare and online schooling rather than housework. As women end up doing more household work, women reported lesser PsyCap and lesser life satisfaction than men, owing to additional stress and the burden of family demands. Staying in a joint family also means increased household responsibilities and other family demands (looking after aged parents, more chores to do), thus decreasing PsyCap, which was also reflected in the empirical data. The presence of a spouse at home, even when both are working, leads to greater sharing of household chores and parental responsibilities. It was reflected in the increased PsyCap and overall life satisfaction experiences reported by such respondents.

While working from home, raising children in a nuclear family is difficult due to increased household and parental responsibilities. In a collectivistic society like India, support from the extended family acts as a huge support system. However, when extended families reside in different cities, this support diminishes. In this pandemic situation, the severity is felt by dual-earning parents the most, who have to struggle between the pressures of working-from-home while managing household chores and parental responsibilities in addition to monitoring children's online schooling, often with external help (housekeepers, caregivers, daycare, etc.). Thus, the presence of more children at home is bound to harm life satisfaction, which is also aligned with the respondents' experiences.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Theoretical Implications**

In an adverse situation like the one created by the covid19 pandemic currently faced by humankind, positive traits like hope, optimism, efficacy, and resilience play a major role in hanging on and bouncing back and enabling life satisfaction experiences. Together, they constitute PsyCap, which in turn influence overall life satisfaction. With this study, an attempt is made to explore the various factors contributing towards overall satisfaction with life for an individual through influencing PsyCap. The moderating role of psychological detachment is also considered, as this trait enables one to restrict between work and nonwork-life and thus influences satisfaction. Research is sparse on such an integrated facet, especially more so in the context of work-from-home. The current study contributed to the research on work and life domains, and also that of the fast-changing field of remote working.

The covid19 context in this study provides a unique opportunity to explore the enforced work-from-home workforce. It is hoped that this unique context contributes to understating the remote e-working (work-from-home) literature, with empirical support, broadening the scope of work-from-home literature. Additionally, to the best of the author's knowledge, no studies have looked at the affective pathway of remote abusive supervision, along with support and demands, which influence PsyCap, moderated by detachment. Thus, it is hoped to add to the work-life integration research arena.

### **Practical Implications**

With regards to practical implications, having a healthy, safe, and satisfied workforce is imperative to the organization's well-being for its growth and productivity. This model sheds light on one important aspect of subjective well-being, that of overall life satisfaction, and the work and nonwork factors influencing the same. An understanding of these relationships will enable practitioners to design and implement better policy interventions to cater to the workforce's needs. Organizations would benefit from an evidence-based approach to policy-making (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). At the same time, HR practitioners need to be sensitive to the individual employees' preference of boundary control, ultimately deciding the success or failure of such policies (Perrigino *et al.*, 2018). Being adaptable and responsive to the changing environment (Harsch and Festing, 2019) is the only way to achieve agility and sustainability in the fast-changing, uncertain environment. The result is ultimately better alignment of the workforce with the organizational goals and values, positively impacting the performance, growth and sustainability desired outcomes.

## **Limitations and Future Scope**

This study helps understand the various factors affecting an employee's overall life satisfaction levels while working from home, specifically in the Indian context. While empirical data overall supported this conceptual framework, further studies are required before it can be generalized. Firstly, replicative studies with a larger and more diverse database would help ascertain whether the model holds. Secondly, limited control variables are explored in this current study. Other demographics like location, education qualification, children's age, parent's age, etc., can quite possibly shed more light on the model. Thirdly, having cross-cultural studies with diverse cultural aspects can throw in some interesting results. For example, in gender-egalitarian cultures, the effect of family demands (house chores, child care, etc.) is expected to be much lesser. Additionally, it is expected that results from individualistic vis-à-vis collectivistic culture would be different, as the support and demands created therein vary widely. Thus, it would be interesting to explore the cultural angle and see how the fit of the model then. Fourthly, this study was conducted during the ongoing covid19 pandemic, where stress is created due to environmental and situational factors. Replicating the study in post-covid19 normalcy may also help better understand the model and its nuances. Finally, the context of the Indian population is also of importance here. Factors like parental support (even after marriage) are essential in the individual's life due to the received support. Other support systems, like support received from friends and caregivers may also be explored further.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the changed scenario due to the covid19 pandemic situation, the workplace, as is known, has changed considerably and in all probabilities permanently. While some surveys are conducted to look at the stressful effects of work-from-home, especially in this pandemic situation, where people are confined to their homes, an integrated approach, to the best of the author's knowledge, remained lacking. It is hoped this framework would act as a stepping stone for future researchers in this domain towards a deeper and enriching understanding of the subject matter. It would be interesting how empirical data pans out across various geographies, whether the hypothesized model is supported or refuted, and will definitely help fine-tune this framework, even more so when considering the cultural aspects.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Abusive Supervision (AS):** It is defined as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact” (Tepper 2000, p. 178).

**Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA):** Flexible work arrangements are defined as “employer provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside of the standard workday” (Lambert et al., 2008, p. 107). It is broadly demarcated as ‘flextime’ and ‘flexplace’ (or ‘flexspace’) the

### ***Factors Affecting Overall Life Satisfaction for Work-From-Home Employees***

former meaning having flexibility in the time of work. In contrast, the latter meant flexibility in the location where one does the work.

**Overall Life Satisfaction (LS):** It is one of the key desired outcomes in HR & OB literature, used extensively as a measure of hedonic well-being (Ryff & Keye, 1995). Hedonic well-being as a concept was ideated by Greek philosopher Epicurus, who opined that the ultimate aim of life was to achieve as much happiness as possible, and little or no pain.

**Psychological Capital (PsyCap):** It is based on the concepts of positive psychology in general, and, specifically, positive organizational behaviour (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). The four constructs, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, defines positive organizational behaviour the best, and PsyCap is an integration of these four combined resources (collectively termed as the HERO within).

**Psychological Detachment (PD):** It is defined as an “individual’s sense of being away from work situations” (Etzion et al., 1998, p. 579).

**Work-From-Home (WFH):** It comes under the ‘flexplace’ (or ‘flexspace’) kind of flexible work arrangements, where the individual is allowed to work from their home premises, not requiring to be physically present in the office premises.

# Chapter 4

## Strategies to Combat the COVID–19 Pandemic in the UAE: A Guide to Encounter Human Resource Challenges

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the playing field and overall operations for organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the world at large. In this chapter, the authors explore the biggest human resource (HR)-related challenges that firms in the UAE have faced as a result of COVID-19. The chapter outlines the skills and competencies required by professionals to overcome the challenges they have experienced. This groundbreaking chapter also undertakes an analysis of the extent to which COVID-19 and the lockdown have influenced the ability of human resource departments to achieve their key strategic objectives. It has been found that skills are among the most important competencies that professionals must possess today to keep pace with recent developments and in order to navigate the “new normal.” The chapter concludes with a review of the competitive survival strategies that UAE organizations are applying in order to remain sustainable during and post COVID-19.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When the Coronavirus hit the world especially in March 2020, it quickly became something of a roller coaster ride for organizations and employees across the world. The global spread is considered as the black swan event of the decade that has affected the world by storm. Millions of people across most countries have lived through lockdowns and have made the abrupt shift to working from home, some have suffered from a lack of safety and labor protections, and yet millions of others have lost jobs. As the future has looked increasingly uncertain, the human resource sector remains a crucial element of employee well-being within businesses, regardless of their scope and size. To meet a new set of organizational needs, it is critical that human resources (HR) grow and evolves in every aspect. Since the virus affected the entire globe, its effects have been felt across all industries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The governments around the world have taken several steps as a primary measure collectively to combat the spread of the disease. Measures included, essentially putting economies on hold, suspending flights, and enabling working from home. Businesses across the world recognize how important the HR function is, and how many leaders have lost out by failing to include Human resource professionals in discussions to achieve their business goals. This is so because in their mind heretofore or in the past some have thought that business was about manufacturing and customer delivery of sales, and they didn't really appreciate how much of that was dependent upon people. Pandemics are a severe wake-up call for HR professionals and global firms to prepare multiple alternate strategies in different parts of the world to avoid the danger of such catastrophic conditions. As traditional resilience planning doesn't do enough to prepare for a pandemic this chapter will provide the input in supporting the targeted audience to incorporate pandemic planning considerations into existing resilience management activities to provide a comprehensive response.

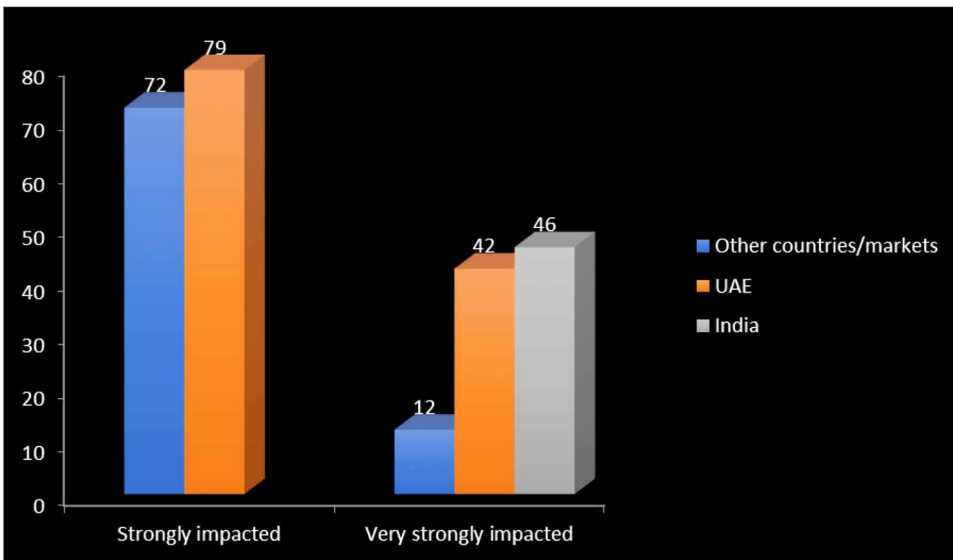
## **BACKGROUND: COVID-19's DISRUPTIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates with one of the most diversified and non-oil-dependent economies in the Gulf. Its economy is heavily reliant on areas such as hospitality, tourism, entertainment, real estate, and retail. The UAE boasts a well-developed infrastructure, a stable political system, and one of the Gulf region's most free trade regimes. The UAE market benefits from a strategic geographic location (Dubai is considered a regional center and commercial capital

for the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond), a big expatriate community, and a liberal trading environment that attracts capital from all over the region.

The coronavirus infection, commonly known as COVID-19, is caused by a severe and acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) which is part of a large family of coronaviruses. The Covid-19 pandemic has flung the world’s playing field into disarray. Even the wealthy nations of the Arabian Gulf have been hard hit and the UAE is no exception. The major industries overall operations in the United Arab Emirates were severely affected resulting in several adverse implications on the business. In a survey of 2,600 organizations in 14 countries, Mita (2020) found that many companies in the UAE (79 percent) were “highly impacted” by COVID-19 in comparison to other affected markets. The UAE was the second- highest market after India to experience the impact “quite significantly” (42 percent). Beside the slowdown of the global economy, several organizations in the UAE, regardless of size and sector such as Aviation, Real estate, F&B, Travel & Hospitality, and Health care, were negatively affected, with some forced to close. According to Donthu and Gustafsson (2020), many businesses, specifically those in the tourism and hospitality sectors, are gravely affected by the restrictions imposed by national governments such as physical distancing, travel bans, and lockdowns. In the words of Carnevale & Hatak (2020), COVID-19 has created “a particularly challenging environment for human resource management (HRM) – with managers having to quickly venture into the ‘unknown unknowns,’ as they strive to help their workforce adapt to and cope with radical changes occurring in the world.”

*Figure 1. Impact of covid in UAE*



## ***Strategies to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE***

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UAE have not fallen equally on all shoulders; it has exposed deep-rooted labor market fragilities, and many employees in various industries—such as pilots, cabin crews, technicians, repairmen, chefs, event planners, nutritionists, and executive teams—have been affected by the managerial decisions that were being taken, and are being taken, and that will continue to be taken in the future. HR professionals are playing a critical role in leading their organizations through some of the toughest workplace challenges being faced by companies across the board. The main strategies that were followed and implemented by businesses and HR professionals before Covid were growth strategies that increased profitability but however, COVID 19 has caused many businesses within different industries to shift focus to realignments and retrenchment strategies in all aspects of business including, but not limited to, recruitment and employment levels, compensation of employees, as well as health and safety regarding employees and consumers.

In the foregoing context, the authors explore the biggest Human-Resource (HR) related challenges that firms in the UAE have faced as a result of the corona virus pandemic, and competitive survival strategies that they have applied and are applying to remain sustainable during and post Covid-19 era. The chapter makes a useful contribution to knowledge around pandemic-induced HR challenges and strategies, an occurrence the likes of which have never been witnessed in a generation.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to Lepak et al., (2006), HR management's performance in the development and growth of a highly productive workforce in companies is dependent on the firm's competitive advantage. The key responsibility of the HR department is managing a company's human capital, which includes hiring, ensuring that the organization is up to date with the local, state and federal tax laws, as well as payroll and employee benefits. Kane & Palmer (1995), on the other hand, argue that human resource management is subsequently revised with the objective of employment management that aims to gain competitive advantage by using strategies to develop a highly dedicated and competent workforce, using a variety of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. The functions, roles, and responsibilities of the HR managers worldwide have changed dramatically and they are in a position to respond and develop their workforce to meet those challenges. Gigauri (2020a) believes that businesses must brace for further shifts and instability, and they should embrace the current and most important technology and build new business models to overcome the situation that has arisen due to covid-19. To overcome the current negative impacts of the pandemic, many organizations have shifted



to remote working, where practical, in order to adapt to the change, as well as to manage the workforce more effectively and efficiently. HR should look for digital skills for the organization to continue and for employees to perform better in their jobs remotely. The real challenge for HR (Gigauri, 2020b) in remote working is, it makes it difficult to keep track of and control the activities of employees. Managers overcome this by using online dashboards and digital data to measure workload and results is a viable solution (AlMala, 2020). Organizations not only in the UAE but all over the world tend to be unaware of how remote working affects efficiency and productivity, which is unsurprising considering that most are implementing it for the first time. The findings of AlMala (2020) suggest that the effect of Covid is one of the most important issues confronting both HR practitioners and workers. From the analysis of Gigauri (2020b), human resource management should assist workers in using advanced technology in the workplace, as it is not easy for the workforce to cope with all of the problems posed by the recent pandemic on their own. It is the responsibility of the HR professionals to assist them in improving their digital skills by providing online training and thus planning for their well-being.

The most pressing problem for today's HR practitioners is sustaining high levels of employee engagement. According to a Gallup report, businesses with disengaged workers have 19 percent higher turnover rates than companies with engaged employees and while workers are disengaged, their efficiency suffers significantly due to this. The solution for this type of problem is to consider the organization's culture when recruiting or hiring employees. HR practitioners believe that managing change in the workplace is not only critical, but also difficult. Change management, according to SHRM, entails identifying and implementing organizational strategies, processes, and innovations in order to respond to external circumstances and the market climate. If HR professionals want to keep workers and help their businesses expand, they need to put in place a strategy that works. In order to boost and cultivate a team environment, for instance, they have to recruit applicants who are versatile and creative (The Key to Conquering Today's Top HR Challenges, n.d.). In order to address the evolving needs of the company, HR practitioners must be vigilant with all policies and action plans. They must be well-versed in HR's fundamental tasks, such as planning, coordinating, guiding, and managing human resources which will enhance corporate performance.

## **OVERVIEW OF UAE TRENDS**

The UAE, commonly called the Emirates, is a true mirror of a diverse workforce driving prosperity and a tourism magnet with the 10th largest expatriate population in the world. According to a report published by Townsend Sarah(2018), the UAE is

## ***Strategies to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE***

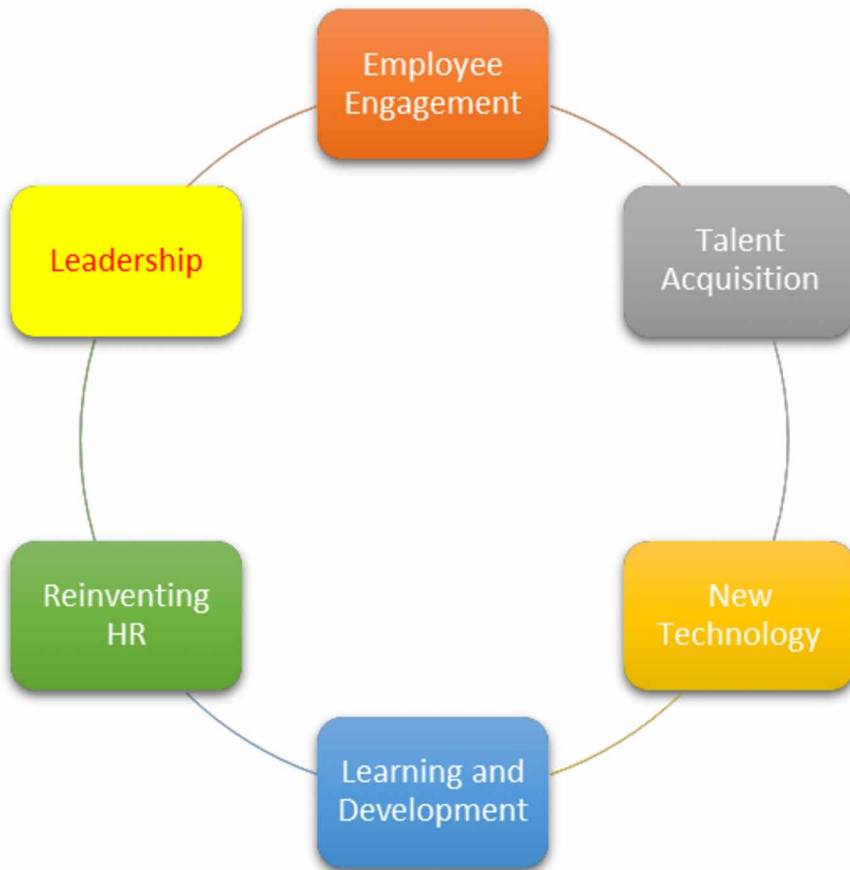
ranked the 11th best nation in the world for doing business out of 190 countries, up from 26th position in the year 2017, and it has always been a trendsetter. The UAE government encourages espousal HR technologies supported with mobile applications which is a positive sign. According to Patrick (2019), the UAE is ranked 19th among Arab countries in terms of adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, with Singapore topping the list, followed by the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and Finland. The UAE aims to boost its GDP by around 35% (\$96 billion) using AI technologies which are expected to help the country cut down government expenditure by up to 50%, saving approximately \$3 billion. Artificial intelligence figures to apply in a variety of sectors such as transport, health, space, water, education, and especially in the HR departments of government sectors which is expected to play a pivotal role in driving this change. In the process, it is expected that there will be significant cost reductions and efficiency increases and this trend is very supportive for the HR professionals to overcome the covid damages in the sector. The gig economy, a trend which refers to temporary short-term jobs performed by freelancers, is more visible in the UAE. It enables professionals to decide on the number of projects they wish to take up and their lengths, giving them utmost freedom and flexibility. This trend helps in the success of the ventures, for both professionals and companies in the UAE. The very latest and most potential trend in the UAE is data analytics which enables HR professionals to make data-driven decisions. In the years to come, we can expect HR Transformation in all organizations by developing analytics and metrics to measure, manage and maximize the value of their workforce. This trend ensures that HR professionals bring high-value input to people-related decisions and shape the future of their organizations using a scientific and unbiased approach. The digital trends and the country's Expo 2020 which has a solid spotlight on sustainability, frames the foundation for the nation's future. Despite these trends, the pandemic has turned the world upside down with setbacks especially for the UAE where the Emirate of Dubai, for instance, relies heavily on tourism, itself beset by covid-induced air travel and aviation problems. Dubai-based Emirates Airlines, the largest international travel airline, has remained active and afloat, but has seen significant operational problems as global travel has been decimated by the pandemic. Emirates has had to lay off thousands of ground and air crew, including pilots and air hostesses. On the positive side, the UAE has managed to contain the pandemic better than most countries, with daily infection cases never exceeding 5,000. In recent months, the country has embarked on one of the most aggressive vaccination campaigns in the world, with upwards of 50 percent of its 10 million residents already vaccinated as of March 2021. This encouraging sign can only help the economy on many fronts, including a gradual return to on-site work assignments for most employees as they get fully vaccinated against the corona virus. With the consequent and progressive decrease of the lockdown, and the

forthcoming Expo 2021 in November 2021, many financial analysts are of the view that the UAE economy will witness a significant rebound in the latter half of 2021.

## **HUMAN ASSEST CHALLENGES PRECEDING TO COVID PANDEMIC**

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, organizations in the UAE faced numerous challenges, especially in the area of human resources. When each new challenge was overcome, a new one arose. Talent acquisition, catching up to emerging technology, Learning & Development, Reinventing Human Resources (HR),

*Figure 2. Human assest challenges preceding to covid pandemic*



Leadership, and Culture & Engagement were some of the challenges prior to the outbreak. Many organizations in the UAE, as well as around the globe, were not prepared for these challenges. They were repeatedly criticized for failing to plan effectively in order to meet the most urgent human resource needs. We expand on some of these issues in the ensuing sections of this chapter.

## **Talent Acquisition**

One of the most significant challenges facing UAE organizations centers around talent acquisition. Attracting the right talented employees in organizations requires certain skill sets such as candidate assessment, compliance and hiring standards, and corporate hiring initiatives. Inadequate development of a robust candidate pipeline is an obstacle in attracting the right men to the right job, and especially at the right time. A related challenge is finding candidates who are competent. Resolving this overall challenge is key to overall organizational effectiveness in achieving corporate goals, and efficiencies in resource utilization across the organization.

## **New Technology**

Adoption and integration of new and state-of-the-art technologies needs to be a priority in order to effectively address many new challenges, not just those triggered by the pandemic. When done in all key industries and national priority areas, new technology adoption is the impetus that will drive economic growth in the United Arab Emirates and reposition the country of some 10 million people as a true regional and global hub for global business and competitiveness. The greatest challenge therefore lies in organizations having to proactively update their technologies in the workplace in order to keep pace with the rest of the business world. Towards this end, it is worth mentioning that a key challenge in the Arab world is the relatively high cost of internet access and bandwidth, as well as exposure to cybersecurity risks. A partial solution to this dilemma centers around strategic alliances and joint ventures with foreign firms that have requisite expertise and a willingness for knowledge as well as services sharing to mutual benefit with UAE counterparts.

## **Learning and Development**

The most critical talent-related issue facing organizations in the Middle East, including the UAE, is “learning and growth.” Some organizations are not equipped with the needed resources to address the human capital gaps. Gaps exist between critical investments in physical infrastructure and the interest of organizations in boosting the human capital endowments in order to effectively face the pressing

challenges. A deliberate future strategy on learning and development is essential towards ensuring enhanced organizational performance, consistent with the mission of individual organizations.

## **Reinventing HR**

Business and HR leaders in the Middle East see an urgent need to reinvent the HR function and make it a true partner to the business. Only when the HR function has a complete view of the situation will it be able to adapt and integrate the latest management trends. The main objective of HR should always be to develop an innovative culture. Only then will the culture in the UAE turnaround in the direction of better mission-linked outcomes. Naturally, the HR function has a strategic role to play in this needed reinvention and transformation.

## **Leadership**

A survey by Deloitte (2015) found that leadership is an important and pressing challenge that has been compelling business and employers for many years. Moreover, the demand for leadership is gaining momentum across the globe, particularly among middle management in the UAE. Despite its importance, there are sometimes inadequate leadership development programs that are suitable for particular organizations. In the survey alluded to, a rather low number, some 28% of the respondents, believed their organizations were ready with the tools or techniques to develop leaders and equip them to interact with workers. Organizations in the Middle East face challenges in the identification and development of leaders at varying levels. For human resource management in this region, leadership development must be a vital strategic initiative.

## **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is common around the world and is considered an important and challenging task in the Middle East in the field of human resources. According to Deloitte (2015) organizations must have a clear understanding of the prevailing organizational culture and should consider encouraging and developing the workforce based on the culture for the success of the organization. One of the key issues for organizations in the UAE to enhance their performances has been the setting of ambitious goals, thereby leading to the economy's growing regional and global positioning. Without this thrust on employee engagement, global competitive pressures would prevent most companies from reaching their mission-linked outcomes. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, these were some of the most pressing issues for human

resources. Since then, the situation has been worsened by the pandemic, leading one to conclude that more emphasis should be duly placed on employee engagement by organizations.

## **CHALLENGES OF COVID19 OUTBREAK IN KEY INDUSTRIES**

Businesses have been dealing with a labor shortage for many years. This subject is regularly discussed in the media, to the point that it becomes boring at times. Here, we present additional challenges that have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. They are worth discussing because of their critical nexus to the future of the human resource sector in the UAE and, in many respects, other organizations in other countries.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, the human resource sector has suffered in many ways. With some existing businesses seeing their bottom line dwindle dramatically due to a severe slowdown in national and international demand due to the ravages of the pandemic on operations, human resource professionals have been forced to rethink their existing techniques and ways of management. Old management styles, or “we have always done it this way” mindsets have become obsolete in the face of the pandemic. It is time for the human resource field to evolve. By using existing technologies many organizations started rapidly to adopt new models of the first adopters on working from home practices. There is an increasing use of VoIP service for conferences and creating a network of human resources through which they could securely transfer data between each other. Many corporate meetings are now done digitally, via Zoom for instance, instead of occurring face to face in order to reduce the real risk of transmission of the corona virus. Many public organizations, educational institutions have also adopted the same strategies of working from home due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Even though many human resource professionals were hypothesizing on a challenge of catching up to other organizations in technological advancements, they were not equipped for the urgent transition that was needed in upgrading to new strategies of working from home. It makes sense, therefore, to suggest that human resource managers need to consider the capacity of their business to transition quickly to new modes of work arrangements in order to keep pace with global trends during and post-Covid 19.

### **Airline Industry**

The operational and managerial implications of the pandemic in the aviation industry are incredibly vast and endless. Airlines have been especially impacted by

the pandemic, which has either slowed down or completely eliminated national and international travel in some segments.

Many airlines have suffered huge losses in terms of lost passengers and foregone revenue. More importantly, this has in turn led to unprecedented redundancies and unemployment levels in the airline industry. The unemployment rate all over the world has increased very drastically. Reuters (2020), for instance, reports that Emirates airlines has dismissed around 600 pilots and around 7,500 cabin crew members. Most of these layoffs have been due to the pandemic. In addition, Indigo airlines have terminated a total of 2,000 employees overall. Another added major challenge faced by HR professionals has to do with maintaining the right mindset of the employees now, across all levels of the workforce. Workers in this industry are especially prone to getting profoundly affected by the virus, as come into contact with thousands of individuals daily, unaware of who is infected.

There are various challenges that the HR professionals would have to tackle in order to boost the airline industry once again to what it was before. The demands and desire for travel have reduced drastically due to border limitations, although recent signs of an uptick in demand are encouraging. International airports have included certain rules and regulations to be followed by citizens and visiting individuals. As a result, the industry is still facing huge losses, especially when traveling is to be done internationally and in a more limited manner. Individuals and families are still afraid to fly, frightened to contract the virus and end up spending more than 14 days in quarantine and maybe even longer depending on their results.

Additionally, airline workers have been dismissed, furloughed, or have lost their jobs due to airlines trying to downsize their operations in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic. This has led to an increase in the unemployment rate and a shortage of skilled workers around the world. It can only be hoped that new variants of the virus will not negatively impact recent signs of a slow but discernible turnaround in air travel, on which the two UAE national carriers—Dubai based Emirates and Abu Dhabi based Etihad—largely and exclusively depend.

## **The Tourism Industry**

Tourism has always played a huge role in the growth and economic fortunes of many developed and developing countries. It is considered the largest and most successful industry in the UAE. In 2019, the total tourism contributed some 11.5% to the GDP of the United Arab Emirates (Aburumman, 2020). Unlike the oil-rich Emirate of Abu Dhabi, home to ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Corporation), tourism accounts for a significant share of the Emirate of Dubai, which is home to roughly a third of the population of the UAE.

## ***Strategies to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE***

The UAE government works hard to improve and develop tourism by spending energy, time, and money towards its development and sustainability. The overall strategy is to get tourists to spend their money in hotels, food, entertainment, shopping at the country's many malls, as well as elsewhere. This has a huge impact on the source of income for the people of the country. Before the covid-19 pandemic, people were able to visit the world by just booking a ticket and going on their adventure. Going from one place to another was not hard and with time, traveling became easier. All that changed when the pandemic happened, and the tourism industry was the first to be affected by this. Due to international travel bans and the rigorous quarantine clauses in most countries, tourism largely came to a standstill, causing the loss of millions of jobs in the global tourism sector. The loss of jobs in this industry has a disproportionate effect not only on women but on youth and among indigenous populations in respective countries who may depend disproportionately on tourism income.

In order to address the pandemic, the first sector to reduce workforce to control cost was the hotel industry. Hotels in the UAE put various protections in place including requesting their workforce, supporting staff to take periods of unpaid leave, utilize remaining annual leave, and freezing recruitment programs to control costs and to ensure sustainability. The Resolution (number 279 of 2020) issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization mainly intended to stabilize employment during Covid supports employer measures in reducing employment-related costs due to the pandemic. As the industry is affected by the crisis and due to the financial impact, it is forced to reduce the headcount.

## **The Real Estate Industry**

According to one of the consultants Matthew Palmer (Nagraj Aarti, 2020), transactions associated with sales volume within the emirates of Dubai fell about 25% compared to an increased volume of the transaction by 41% over the previous year indicating a "significant but reasonable contraction in the market as potential domestic and overseas buyers remain at home,". Due to lockdown and social distancing norms, disinfection programs and travel limits, one of the key obstacles for investors was the inability to visit properties. And because the perception of the consumers is changing about their living environments, there has been greater pressure for real-estate brokers to create those sales (Stevens Louisa Inga, 2020). The workforce employed in real estate can find properties that fulfill new requirements and have a deeper understanding of the profits, uniqueness, and value propositions that the properties they should have to offer. The results of the outbreak have impacted the minds of consumers and despite the low-interest rate and bargaining capacity the



buying decisions of investors have in many instances been postponed, negatively affecting the overall industry in the process (Altios, 2020).

The spread of COVID-19 has exacerbated the oversupply problem within the UAE, especially in Dubai, and led to slow home purchases by expatriates and lower rental rates for the investors who already invested within the property market (Sbai Alaae, 2020). Factors like job reductions, pay cuts, the risk associated with job prospects, and credit tightening by the financial institutions have all negatively impacted property demand in the Emirates. This has affected both the rental and sales markets. To minimize the risk due to the pandemic, banks extended their financial support only to few industries and based on consumer profiles. In most cases, however, banks tightened the lending capacity which led to present clients deferring existing monthly requirements (Varghese Justin, 2021).

## **THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE**

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a major impact not only on the primary sectors of the economy but also on other businesses across the UAE. The abrupt change in work culture has had a major effect on the mental health and well-being of its workers. Increased stress, anxiety and mental health problems in the workforce are typical scenarios. Some organizations responded by introducing several wellness services and initiatives.

Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has made it difficult for management to analyze the problems and complaints related to the workforce and to provide solutions quickly as the workers operate remotely instead of from offices. Since successful communication has been undermined, HR practitioners are having difficulty determining the mental health of their employees. In many multinational corporations (MNCs), however, employees had prior experience working remotely but this practice was not found in all other organizations. The abrupt transition from physical to virtual working has presented significant challenges throughout organizational levels, including global HR professionals who are worried about this challenge. To control remote workers, HR practitioners are currently designing new job practices, procedures, and systems. The challenge is to come up with simple solutions and tactics to deal with the crisis and still maintain a level of both effectiveness and efficiency towards attaining both short-term and long-term goals.

In the words of Giorgi et al., (2020) anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and sleep disorders are more likely to affect healthcare workers, especially those on the front lines, migrant workers, and those in contact with the public. Job instability, long periods of loneliness, and uncertainty about the future

wreak havoc on people's mental health, particularly young people. According to Pahos & Galanaki (2019), supplying their staff with suitable resources for remote-working and gathering real-time updates to address arising issues is also a challenge. Employees, in general, are worried about infecting themselves and their loved ones with COVID-19, and they are still worried about their financial status, resulting in them not being able to pay their bills. This makes it increasingly difficult for them to focus on work. Many workers have lost their jobs due to a lack of job security in the current situation. Also, in addition, many businesses adopted a policy related to a rise in wage cuts across the region in order to avoid losing their employees and to avoid the organization preventing the loss. As a result, workers are constantly on edge during their working hours, and they become emotionally drained as a result. To elaborate, the current situation has caused many workers to feel a lack of interest, which has resulted in multiple employees exhibiting unmotivated behavioral actions, embedding lack of discipline into their jobs, or too stressed and apprehensive to concentrate on the job at hand as many of them are not used to working anywhere out of their comfort zone. Their performance has naturally dropped due to a lack of job recognition and promotions resulting in a decline in motivation. Furthermore, a lack of team spirit would cause employees to lose interest, as working with coworkers has a significant positive impact on an employee and offers the energy that they might be missing. Similarly, disruptions from family members or other events will most likely cause workers working from home to perform their work at a less than ideal level of interest, effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

As a result of the enduring pandemic crisis, our insight into mental wellbeing and its effect on the workplace continues as a puzzle. The mental health of the human resource is also a critical component compared to physical health, and businesses need a stable and resilient workforce to thrive in times like these in order to provide their full potential.

## **ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL—REQUIRED STRATEGIES**

Uncertainty affects workers all over the world, and not knowing what the future holds can be an unnerving experience for HR practitioners who aim to develop proactive plans and remain prepared to respond. Concerns arising from the global COVID-19 outbreak are real, rather than imaginary. Organizations in the Emirates must assess and resolve important concerns as it is clear the outbreak's effects will persist. Businesses must take decisive steps to handle and minimize the effects on their workforces and begin preparing for what comes next.

## **Possible Measures Adopted by HR Managers in the Airline Industry**

Despite the various obstacles that the industry faces, it is possible to create a business strategy that can be implemented to keep the industry going forward. HR managers will have to find a way to reconcile many workers in the business with the limited amount of income produced, as it does not add up, by introducing cost-cutting measures. The alternatives include freezing non-essential recruiting and consulting work as the organization's generated income is currently reduced. It is advantageous for employers to provide paid or unpaid leave because it is preferable to firing many qualified employees if the flying capacity is reduced.

The second measure that can be executed is to establish a passenger management plan to assist during the social distancing norms, since it is very crucial to secure the safety and protection of both passengers and staff. To facilitate an adequate and smooth implementation, this can be achieved through educating staff on the current protection and wellness screening protocols. These procedures involve performing temperature screenings of passengers using infrared detectors at key points or as suggested by health authorities. Additionally, congestion can be avoided by reducing interactions at meeting points with the use of biometric technology.

Another approach to ensure successful workforce management is to create a staff management strategy that focuses exclusively on the safety and well-being of workers, by effectively allocating and leveraging resources. Personnel care services may be introduced to ensure the physical and mental well-being of workers. As a result, HR managers can set up access portals for workers to come forward and request personal assistance if necessary for the employees and also make sure that the workers are up to date with the current health regulations in both their personal and professional lives, at home and abroad.

By introducing social distancing steps, airlines can reduce physical contact and sanitize all the equipment. For example, at Dubai Airport, retractable belt barriers are used at checkpoints and ticket counters to keep people apart in long lines. In addition, the Dubai Airport uses mark stickers that are mounted on the floor to signify the distance that must be covered, and passengers must also wear a protective barrier around their faces to keep irritants out of their nasal cavities. The management should agree to employ remote working for non-critical tasks and conduct meetings remotely as much as possible and develop meeting protocols for remote team collaboration.

There should also be a focus on building a workforce that is versatile and adaptable and capable of performing multiple tasks. For instance, low operating employees such as laborers would have to multitask by relocating every once in a while. One week they would be sanitizing the plane and the facility, and the next week they

## ***Strategies to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE***

would help customers with their packaging, and that is a result of management's attempt to maximize the use of its current workforce with the current low income being generated. In order to maintain enough workers for all shifts, they should be advised to maintain gaps between shifts to avoid physical interaction as much as possible. And, the organization should ensure the availability of backup human resources in case of emergencies, such as the quarantine of core teams.

Further, there should be a business strategy or contact plan to connect with internal employees on the job. Management can and should hold staff meetings on a regular basis to review the latest COVID19 related material, staff deployment, training plans, employee well-being initiatives, and other relevant updates.

To conclude, the aviation industry will have to navigate and rebalance the redemption period, which will necessitate more strategic, data-driven risk management. A good risk management strategy creates incentives, which means that strategic risk management will help a company become more resilient. The pandemic has shown that the industry must always be prepared to respond to unforeseen events. Regardless of where airlines are currently on the path to redemption and resuscitation, they must fundamentally reinvent their market strategies in order to survive post-COVID, rather than merely retooling what they have now. Organizations must prepare a business continuity plan, which is a comprehensive plan that describes all of the risks that the company, its staff, and its customers will face as a result of Covid-19, as well as how to reduce those risks as much as possible. As the business workforce, as well as customers, found themselves in the middle of a global crisis, the idea of responsible leadership has risen in popularity like never before. Practicing responsible leadership would support the employees in these organizations to develop human resilience, which refers to the capability to adapt as well as engage during difficult times.

## **Possible Measures Adopted by HR Managers in the Tourism Industry**

Reduced demand due to the outbreak would almost certainly cause the sector to contract and prices to rise. The industry has faced difficulties since 2020 when the pandemic gained steam as the health measures put in place by the Ministry of Health in the UAE inevitably increased the sanitation costs along with other limitations of limited occupancy due to social distancing. Industry profitability has been negatively impacted as a result. A recovery strategy adopted by hotels in the UAE has been one where they offer rooms for purposes other than tourism accommodation. Additionally, guests can be entrained only to participate in activities that take place in open-air environments. The buffets or breakfast bars at hotels can be made self-service and can be replaced instead of room service (Assaf & Scuderi, 2020).

The latest automation technologies such as robots and artificial intelligence can, in the long run, assist facilities in lowering fixed costs, improving liquidity and flexibility, and maintaining social distance. Diversification of markets and outsourcing certain services can also help to minimize risk. To a large extent, the recovery of the industry purely depends on the higher value of cleanliness and trust that travelers have in the industry. It is highly likely that, in the long run, the industry will bounce back to pre-crisis levels. The UAE government, following in the footsteps of several countries, must intend to offer interest-free loans, secured loans, flexible mortgages, innovative funding solutions, and non-refundable subsidies which will not only benefit tourism but other related businesses like hotels, restaurants, and cruise lines. The government can loosen visa regulations to attract international tourism to recover from the outbreak. This is something that the UAE government announced in March 2021 that it would indeed embark on, that is providing multiple entry tourist visas so that relatives of UAE residents and tourists can come into the country without having to apply for a new visa each time they wish to visit the UAE for any number of reasons.

The tourist industry must draft strategies to attract millennials. According to the New York Post (Romashko Bogdan, 2020) the consumers of this age group are the most willing group interested in discovering the globe after the coronavirus has passed. Sure, they are nervous about the COVID-19 pandemic's outcome but at the same time they are more fearless and desirous of one-of-a-kind encounters right now than other age groups.

Developing effective health and Safety policies, strategies, protocols, and procedures in place is critical for the hotel industry due to the infectious nature of the virus as these industries rely on in-person interactions. The hotel industry should draft innovative strategies to pursue, induce and re-establish tourist confidence, through various campaigns (Miguel Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2020).

When we look through the crystal ball for 2021 travel predictions, the timing of the vaccine's release will be critical as travelers are cautious. The Allianz Travel poll (Kiesnoski Kenneth, 2020) suggests that 49% of Americans are willing to travel again once a proven vaccine is available. Right now, there are two vaccines developed out of the U.S that are in full implementation, that is Pfizer and Moderna. Reports in the public domain show that as of March 20, 2021, some 100 million Americans have already been vaccinated. That is an encouraging sign, indeed. In several ways, the tourism industry will reap the benefits if it keeps in touch with consumers and reassure them of their protection when they decide to fly. To conclude, the strategic plan of a business serves to outline the underlying aspects of running the entire business. Hence the employers in these industries, when developing the plan must include an analysis of the market and competition, a breakdown of the operating

budget, and the long-term and short-term goals of the organization as strategic plans outline the daily operations of the business.

## **Possible Measures Adopted by HR Managers in the Real Estate Industry**

Developers of the real estate market in the United Arab Emirates must continue to offer a variety of promotions and offers, such as fee exemptions, discounts, rent-to-own, and alliances with banks, to draw new buyers and end-users looking to take advantage of the lower rates, according to real estate and investment management company JLL (Sbai Alaae, 2020). Experts advise the new investors who look to enter the market for the first time to have a longer-term view. A bank loan and funding available for the customers is not as easy due to the pandemic backdrop and expected delays in the job market recovery are all in play (Varghese Justin, 2021).

Organizations in the UAE are witnessing the direct effects of the pandemic, which has resulted in reconsidering their plans for an extension, and this is expected to result in lower demand for leases in the short term, and correspondingly affecting leasing activity and a corresponding decline in the industry. When tenants renew their leases, some landlords are noticing that they are demanding less leasable areas as a result of the economic downturn (Assests.kpmg, 2020). Additional policies have been adopted by the UAE Federal Government to directly reduce business costs. Tenants who are unable to pay their rent due to the pandemic are not subject to eviction. Between the months of March and April 2020, all eviction decisions relating to residential and commercial properties were suspended, and all “incarceration verdicts” related to rental disputes have been suspended. The Dubai Free Zones Council, for its part, has announced an economic stimulus plan that involves five main elements for organizations: (a) a six-month delay in rent payments, (b) the right to pay in installments, (c) the refunding of security deposits and guarantees, and (d) the cancellation of penalties for both businesses and individuals (White & Case, 2020).

The UAE government shall drive to soften the blow to the real-estate sector and retain its central position in the region’s aggressive growth policy by following this two-pronged strategy of stabilization and then stimulus. However, we expect industries to rebound to pre-Covid-19 levels of operation by the end of 2022.

## **ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL— REQUIRED COMPETENCIES**

Employees always look up to their leaders to receive reassurance, especially during unstable times. Those who are in leadership roles must communicate with clarity with managers as well as employees to demonstrate commitment towards workforce health as well as business sustainability. One of the most crucial challenges that every HR manager is facing during the pandemic is the extent of disruption. It is important to provide employees with the flexibility that they need to recreate a work-life balance. Companies should support employees who are self-isolated or home-quarantined by widening paid-time-off HR policies as well as facilitating the remote-working concept. With the ongoing crisis, working-from-home has become the new standard model of working which was not so common earlier. However, remote-working demands HR professionals present effective guidelines and implementing flexible procedures that define clear expectations such as their availability, communication channels and scope of responsibilities (Pahos & Galanaki, 2019). To allow uninterrupted performance, HR professionals should also ensure the availability of appropriate technology tools for workers to perform expected tasks effectively and efficiently.

The global HR challenges that are being faced by professionals can be eased out if they focus on the opportunity aspect to express the company's empathy and compassion for its employees. Even though there is hardship everywhere, human resource professionals need to be optimistic about the situation and focus on effective crisis management which is an integral part of HRM. Adequate emphasis on the opportunity would enable driving and supporting effective business decisions even in such a crisis. Besides, these professionals should focus on developing competencies such as being proactive, risk-assessment, achievement-orientation, and personal effectiveness. HR managers should also create and promote a learning ecosystem to keep employees upskilled.

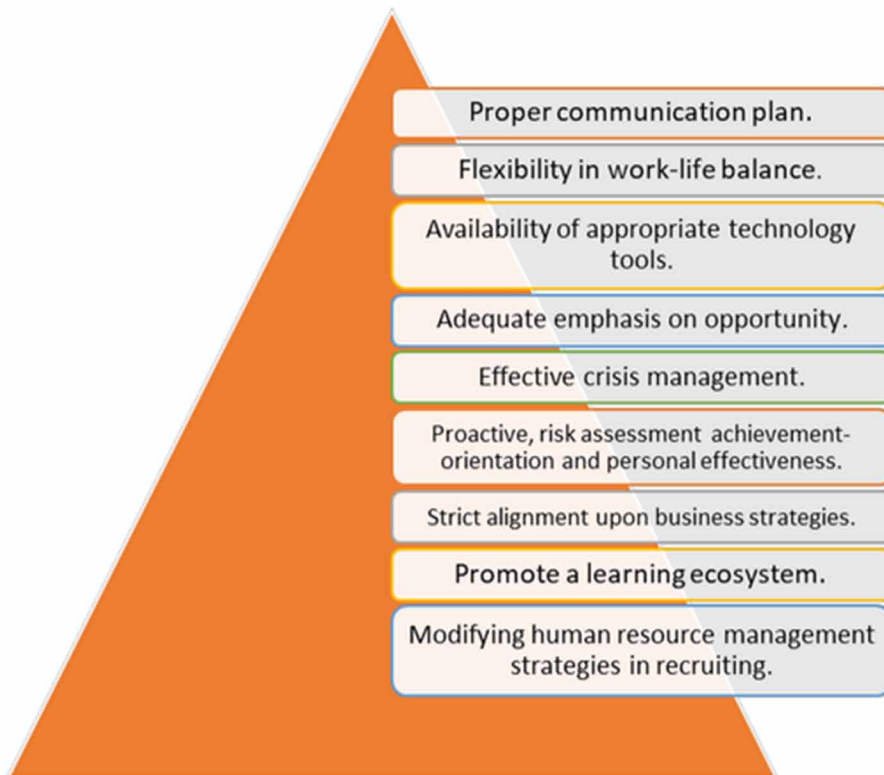
Human resource professionals must align designed principles with external realities to address specific crises. They should focus on strict alignment upon business strategies including the effects of work type, sector, locations, technology, and diversity. HR managers must incorporate a toolset of workforce analytics as well as modeling capabilities, and assembling all data related to the workforce for developing potential scenarios for effective planning and proactive execution. The virus has undermined communication between individuals and within organizations, which has served to undermine the ability of these departments to accomplish their goals and objectives. Therefore, organizations must ensure that they have implemented proper communication plans in order to empower their departments towards business continuity. It is challenging to determine the extent to which Covid-19 will affect

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businesses in the future, but proper strategic planning can also help HR departments across organizations to deal with potential future challenges more effectively.

The managerial implications of these challenges include modifying human resource management strategies in recruiting and hiring employees or candidates. It is important to ensure the selection of the candidates is based on the skills (technical and soft skills) they must possess in addition to other skills as this is important to the HR Department than to check only the certificates and qualifications that the candidates hold. If applicants with these skills are chosen, human resource management will become simpler and more versatile, as the workforce will be able to follow the basic requirements of the new post-Covid-19 human resource management process, which requires high-skill and intelligence to adapt to.

*Figure 3. Adapting to the new normal – required competencies*





## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The overarching national and global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic presents many strands of unexplored research areas not just around HR issues, but rather more holistically. The need to understand just how much the pandemic has impacted and continues to impact life and global business in all sectors is made ever more urgent as new strands and strains of the virus continue to be identified across the world. Most of the new strains of the virus have far more devastating impacts on human life and therefore overall business than the original virus. Among the key questions and rationalizations for future research and a book covering HR issues and the pandemic are the following:

1. To what extent are the experiences of organizations and sectors in the UAE during the Covid-19 pandemic similar to, or different from, experiences in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar?
2. Israel normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates in 2020. Along with the UAE, Israel is one of the most aggressive countries in vaccinating their nationals against the Covid-19 virus, including the new strains of the virus that have since arisen. Organizations in these two countries could provide an excellent comparative case study in how a robustly vaccinated country is able to experience an economic upturn, including some of the opportunities such early adaptation to the virus may bring about.
3. The argument was made in several places in the chapter regarding the thousands of employees, including pilots and cabin crew in the airline industry, who have lost their jobs as a direct result of the pandemic. Some of the expatriate employees may have stayed in the UAE, while a preponderance of this group went back to their home countries. As both Emirates and Etihad Airlines begin to experience a positive turnaround, a logical research question centers around how many of these former employees can be called back and have been called back for re-engagement? Would these recalls involve similar or altered conditions of service including salary levels for these recalled former employees?

## **CONCLUSION**

In an ever-changing world, human resource management has changed dramatically since March 2020 due to the corona virus outbreak. The pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions and significant changes in the global economy and way

of life. The United Arab Emirates has not been spared from these history making disruptions. New technologies and openness to new ideas represent the main challenges that a business must face in order to be a leader in its field, and HR managers in the UAE are pushed to a position to do everything they can to stay on top and unlock the full potential of every employee. Even though COVID-19 has created a lot of new challenges to human resource management and to the field in general, it has also provided opportunities for change and improvement for the HR managers and organizations such as jumpstarting a quick process of adopting new technologies and technological advancements. All the key industries in the UAE must enunciate pro-growth strategies that strengthen their brand, even in the face of obvious adversity, in order to adapt to the so-called “new normal”. Now that the world has experienced this unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, history will judge us harshly, as individuals and countries, if we do not learn the hard lessons that strategically position us to address more effectively similar, far-reaching, crises in the future.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Competencies:** Competencies are particular qualities that a company's recruiters have decided are desirable for employees to possess.

**COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

**Employee Engagement:** Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work.

**HR Practitioners:** HR professionals integrate their activities closely with management and ensure that they serve a long-term strategic purpose.

**Human Asset:** Human Assets are the accumulated knowledge and skills that make a workforce productive and are part of the Intangible Assets the company.


**Mental Health of Employees:** Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being of employees.

**Talent Acquisition:** Talent acquisition refers to the process of identifying and acquiring skilled workers to meet your organizational needs.

# Chapter 5

## The Pivotal Role of Human Resource Management in Overcoming Employee Fear in Organizations of the Tourism Industry in Vietnam

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### ABSTRACT

*Amid the increasing threats of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam arose the human resource management challenges in the tourism industry and the loss of jobs and the scarcity of workforce due to lockdown, business bankruptcy, and unstable business conditions in many businesses including the tourism sector. Previous studies have identified the shortage of skilled labor as well as the perceived lack of highly qualified talents with vast opportunities for success economically. This has exacerbated at the heights of the COVID-19 crisis as many employees live in fear of losing their means of living whenever companies declare work stoppage, closure, and other threatening measures to lessen unfavorable situations. Recently published articles and government regulations were examined and evaluated to determine the role of HRM in addressing employee fear within the organization. Interpretations and recommendations were proposed to effectively shed light on its resolution. However, further studies are needed to further validate these findings.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the birth of the COVID-19 crisis, the people in the world are continuously struggling on how to restore their normal way of living and conduct. The countless of people contaminated with the virus daily and the rising deaths from different parts of the world have induced fear and chaos especially in those countries that are severely affected until the date in counting. The World Health Organization (2020) has confirmed the spread of COVID-19 in October 2020 to have swept 215 countries. Many studies have investigated the status of COVID-19 and the measures that have been taken by the government such as quarantine, restriction on travels, lockdowns, banned on movements of people, travel modes, and others, and how it severely affect the worldwide tourism sector (Gössling et al., 2020; Jarratt, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Accordingly, the World Tourism Organization estimated that 120 million jobs related to tourism will be at risk in 2020 that could cause a decrease in the international arrival of tourism of 58% to 78% (UNWTO, 2020). Vietnam is one of the emerging markets in South Asia maintaining a huge number of international tourists prior to the pandemic, however; a decrease in the number was experienced since the pandemic crisis during the first half of 2020 with a 57% decline in international tourist arrivals (GSO, 2020a; Nhandan, 2020).

Undeniably, the tourism industry has become a key economic sector in Vietnam and the focus of economic development. Anent to this, the surging demand for human resources is evidently high. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism reported that the increase in the yearly growth rate of demand would require 40,000 new employees and 25,000 that need retaining (Hien et al., 2020). However; they have also found in their study that the quality of the workforce in the tourism industry is low, labor productivity in tourism and hotels compared to Thailand, Singapore, Japan, and Malaysia (Nhat Nam, 2019). Accordingly, the demand for foreign workers particularly in the tourism industry is relatively high since the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) wherein Thai, Indonesian, Filipino, and Singaporean workers came to Vietnam in almost every 4-5 star hotel. Hence, the need to pay more attention to building local tourism employees as feedback from stakeholders dictates the lack of local workers in foreign languages hinders them to become effective tourism workers (Hien et al., 2020).

One of those heavily affected by the COVID-19 is the tourism industry particularly the management of human resources in consonance with the low sales and profitability. Dissanayake (2020) has pointed out that human resources are vulnerable to drastic changes amid the pandemic crisis globally and are compelled to establish and apply new policies and regulations, new work structures to ensure that employees' health and welfare are preserved and safeguarded while sustaining the effective functioning of the company. New studies related to COVID-19 have dealt with the

new normal work structure, new norms of working, moving from the conventional work into the work-from-home and remote working, and the challenges brought by work-from-home structure, new training, online modules, employee wellbeing, and moral issues, and the handling of employee redundancies, terminations, and lay-offs (Meister, 2020). Moreover; Caligiuri et al. (2020) have shared their opinion on how the challenges in the global setting for human resource management be addressed especially in the aspects of recruitment and selection, training and employee support, and the employees' health and safety.

In Vietnam, the status of human resource and human capital deployment has become a major concern as the proliferating pandemic crisis continues. The sudden change in work structure from the face-to-face working environment to a new working from home (Dezan Shira & Associates, 2020). Also, unprecedented changes in workplace policies, shortages of labor, flexible working arrangements, travel restrictions, and other stringent measures create a real challenge for organizations and their workforce. This means that the human resource department of organizations is faced with and threaten with daily changes as the pandemic crisis continues to evolve. Lately, the government of Vietnam has banned issuances of new work permits which were started on March 22, 2021, to all the expatriates except for the diplomats, experts, officials, and high-skilled employees (Dezan Shira & Associates, 2020). The perceived immediate impact of this action is that companies who have relied on the expatriate workforce will be the ones heavily affected. Human resource departments have to handle these related issues with short notices, apply unprecedented guidelines and do their best to adapt the new normal means of managing the workforce attuned to the pandemic-related scenarios.

This paper evaluates the challenges faced by the tourism industry in Vietnam and particularly the tourism organizations through their human resources. It will also investigate the documents and shreds of evidence taken from the recently published articles and government regulations to appraise the role of the HRM to address the employees' fear within the organization. Then, recommendations will be offered based on the analysis and findings of the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **HRM-Related Challenges in Vietnam**

In the recent article published by Dezan Shira & Associates (2020), the prevalence of the challenges related to HRM is accounted for. One of the challenges is related to a *work stoppage* that is allowable per the labor code of Vietnam that companies and organizations can suspend their business conducts for a maximum period of two



years for justifiable reasons, for instance, pandemic crisis provided the employer and employee must reach a bargaining agreement of how the salary arrangements can be done. According to the law in Vietnam, there were no expressed stipulations about the companies or businesses that will be subjected to temporary closure and these have to threaten the establishments as employees have fears that anytime they will be informed that they will lose their jobs or be subjected to temporary lay-offs. The Ministry of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) has expressly informed the public that salaries provided to employees during the work stoppage shall be decided depending on the reasons for the stoppage.

The second challenge facing companies and their human resources is the *changing and unprecedented laws and regulations* which are pandemic-related and are contingent on how the spread of COVID-19 will possibly be controlled. As provided by the social insurance law 58/2014/QH13, businesses that have been suspended for more than a month due to natural disaster, fire, epidemic, and other related calamities will also be suspended from compulsory social insurance collection provided that at least 50% of the workers being deducted with the insurance are not working and that 50% of the damages are experienced by the company from its total assets excluding the value of the land. Furthermore, workers who have taken 14-day unpaid leaves will not also be deducted with social insurance hence; will not enjoy insurance benefits for that period. However; this rule will not be applicable for those leaves less than 14 days and those workers that are mandated to be on compulsory quarantine and medical isolation.

The third challenge is on *unilateral termination* as permitted by the government labor code specifying that the employer can singly dismiss labor contracts of the workers by handing out an advanced 3-day notice when an employee is sick sic consecutive months, twelve consecutive months, and more than half of the contract term, and for those employees that are still cannot work in spite of the medical treatment received. Also, specific provisions were implemented by the MOLISA earlier in 2021 that cater to the labor laws during COVID-19. Companies have been given the flexibility to transfer temporarily workers to other jobs during the crisis or transfer to another department provided such transfer will only last in 60 days or less and as agreed by the worker. Businesses that are not opened for a long period are endangered of bankruptcy that will lead to suspension of the contract between the employer and the employee. In worst cases, termination of labor contracts can be the last recourse if companies continue to incur losses and the management should notify in 45 days the termination for indefinite contract terms while 30 days for definite contract terms along with the payment of allowances and settlements.

And, *takeaways* wherein tourism and other business operators must comply with all the laws, policies, and regulations. Cities like Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi strongly implemented rules through their authorities to limit the operations of non-essential

businesses as well as limit the people gathering of not more than 10 individuals. Stringent regulations and sudden changes are evident for implementation that may include the following:

- Implementation of the work-from-home work structure and flexible working.
- Checking of temperatures for people who are entering the workplace.
- Preventive maintenance and educating the employees about COVID-19 measures.
- Management of employees' panic and fear through internal communication.
- Contact tracing measures to locate those people who have contacted infected workers.
- Implementation of rotational shifts, split teams, and backup sites.
- Utilization of online meetings with both the clients and the workers such as teleconferencing, video calls, etc.
- Introduce safeguards and crisis management procedures.
- Establish recovery strategies and critical identification of business functions (Dezan Shira & Associates, 2020).

These challenges have increased the difficulty of the individuals, businesses, and government agencies to restore the economy, social, political situation not only in Vietnam but worldwide. Emerging trends revealed such as salary cuts, flexible working, reduction and or employee terminations, ever-changing pandemic-related laws and regulations as the outright outcome because of the intensity of the pandemic crisis. Individual and company fears have developed paralysis for businesses to whether continue or close them, especially to the small-scale businesses. Workers in the tourism industry in Vietnam have experienced uncertainties in consonance with the decreasing tourists and the border situation of the country depriving tourists of different parts of the world to come. Its impact economically can be disastrous for all types of businesses including the tourism sector. Salaries are delayed because of the losing business “No customer, no profit, no salary”.

### **HRM and Psychological Consequences of COVID-19 to the Employees' Mental Health**

Several laws and regulations and actions were implemented by the government authorities worldwide, however; the authorities have missed the importance of people's mental health and the psychological consequences of this COVID-19. Gallie et al. (2017) stressed that sickness produces a negative influence on mental health and if not taken due consideration will lead to anxiety and depression. The immediate impact of the government's stringent rules for example the lockdowns

brought fear on employees like job loss and insecurities towards their jobs (Zang, et al., 2020). They further found that the fear of losing the job is higher compared to the fear of infection. Research revealed that the people's anxiety and stress for losing jobs and income are threatening more than the virus as people claimed that the virus can stay for short days only while unemployment takes years to recover for people who lose their jobs especially during this pandemic (Mazza, et al., 2020). Related studies of the past on pandemic revealed that sickness significantly impacts mental health and workers' performance and it also contributes to job uncertainties leading to poor employee performance levels (De Witte, et al., 2016). When an employee's mental health is not taken into consideration by the management and the human resource department, they will find it difficult to control the employees' behavior when such employees develop depression, fear and anxiety, job burnout, and others. The study showed that employees' impaired mental health develops in them negative attitudes that significantly reduce the quality of their service to the company and the clientele (He and Harris, 2020).

Moreover, the fear of economic crisis and the non-employability on the employees' mental health in the tourism industry was emphasized in the study of Khan et al. (2021) wherein their results found out that hotels and restaurants were deprived of accepting guests, no dine-ins, terminations and lay-offs and the active employees living in fear for possible non-employability anytime. It is a win-win situation between the employers and the employees considering the uncertainty of the pandemic crisis. The human resource department of organizations is also bombarded with the ever-changing rules and regulations that impact human resources. Their findings from the survey of 372 employees in the hospitality sector amid COVID-19 showed that job insecurity mediates the relationship of fear in non-employability, economic crisis, and mental health. This means that people in stress and depression will lose the courage to work with confidence but rather are faced with job insecurities and fear that anytime they can be terminated and lose their earnings.

## **Employees' Fear of Economic Crisis**

One of the fears that have had developed in the employee's mind is the fear of economic crisis which particularly affects the job. The most common notion of the people when talking about fear is the fear of the unknown. The impact of the COVID-19 has long-term negative connotations, especially in mental health. Giorgi et al. (2015) opined that economic crisis encompasses job insecurity, unemployment, and financial sufferings which are job-related situations. Giorgi et al. (2020) also added that economic crisis is related to the streamlining of the organization that may result in employee terminations. The study revealed that there are cases of suicides caused by job loss and unemployment during the pandemic crisis as people find much

difficulty looking for jobs (Shoss et al., 2021). Voydanoff (1984) earlier found that depression negatively affects mental health and this happens because of the three common causes that include unemployment, income loss, and financial difficulty. The pandemic limits the people to meet because of the fear of contamination and ICT has become a perfect substitute that makes it difficult for managers and business owners to interact physically with applicants and employees.

## **Non-Employability of Employees, A Precursor of Mental Health**

The most vulnerable outcome during the pandemic is non-employability as a precursor to mental health. Workers become sensitive if they hear that other companies have implemented mass lay-offs due to unfavorable cases or situations just like the pandemic outbreak. Anchored on the uncertainty management theory, the vulnerability and sensitivity of the workers are evident during uncertain times which mean that stresses are experienced as time becomes unpredictable. As reiterated by Giorgi et al. (2020) the fear of job loss cause the employees to believe that their companies are not considerate and are not cooperating with them that increases economic crisis fears. They added that the difficulty of finding jobs is related to the mismatch between the requirement of the job against their knowledge and skills. Stresses and psychological unfavorable conditions because of non-employability related to finding a new job negatively affects the mental health hence; the adverse effect of non-employability is not only experienced by the individual but also his family. Research showed that the fear of non-employability is prevalent in families of low-income earning those results in adverse health and mental issues (Devries & Wilkersor, 2003). Moreover; an earlier study also claimed that non-employability is linked with challenges with mental health such as self-harm, depression, and anxiety, and other psychiatric cases (Montane et al., 2019).

## **The Role of HRM in Addressing Employee Fear Within the Organization**

Opatha (2020) mentioned that one of the essential functions of the human resource department is in the aspect of health and safety management which encompasses all the undertakings that enhance the mental and physical condition and health of the workers to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively. The central importance of health and safety is to ensure that the work environment should be an avenue for higher productivity, increased commitment of the workforce along with quality and efficiency in the work, insurance, and medical reduction, encourage the sense of ownership with higher adaptability and flexibility of employees, and heightened reputation (Jackson and Schuler, 2003). The urgency on the need to exercise effective

human resource management has been tested with the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic being considered as the lasted challenge. HR practitioners and HR departments in organizations express their difficulty to counter the unprecedented impact of this pandemic on the workforce which they thought unusual and rare situations that happen worldwide (Opatha, 2020).

At the employee level, COVID-19 also poses a severe threat and people are not used to practicing the wearing of masks in public places which usually only the medical doctors are wearing during surgical operations. Every employee in an organization is facing the danger of being infected and the uncertainty of the sickness to become either be healed or worsen are possible scenarios as some cases reports were disseminated that people are dying leaving their jobs, families, and other personal activities. To the company, this uncertainty greatly impacts the general working environment considering, for example, possible physical loss of employees may occur, loss in the number of days for infected employees for quarantine, difficulty to hire new ones, and employee termination.

Notably, fear is also one of the undesirable attitudes that many employees have experienced since the pandemic crisis in 2019. People who don't have COVID-19 feel that at any time they will be infected or being in danger of contamination as the mental health of the people are covered by an unknown fear. In some cases, people commit suicide for fear of infection and when their bodies were examined, no contamination was seen while some reasons for committing the crime are fear of survival because of job loss and extreme poverty. In the study of Opatha (2020) titled, "The Coronavirus and the Employees: A Study from the point of Human Resource Management", findings showed the different kinds of fear encountered by employees at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as identified in the succeeding paragraphs.

The prevailing fear that manifested among employees is the *fear of infection*. While in the office and public places, people might experience paranoia because of uncertainty that they will be infected anywhere unaware. Second, the *fear of getting quarantined* as they will be portrayed as prisoners and don't have any freedom to go outside and do their usual activities as well as the feeling of being alone. The third is the *fear of stigmatization* whereby co-employees, friends, and the general public might consider a person a subject of humiliation. Fourth, fear that *COVID-19 can cause an infection to the relative, directly, and love ones once infected*. Fear of *being a carrier* of the disease to anyone. The sixth fear is the *fear of going to work* when infected by the virus even after recovery. Fear of *getting sanctioned by employers* for non-attendance during quarantine. Fear of losing a job; fear that the organization will downsize, dissolve, or temporarily closed, peer pressure; and *fear of negative responses from customers* due to contamination with the virus. These kinds of fears if left unattended may lead to depression, desperation, and other related consequences (Giorgi et al., 2020). The real challenge to the HR department

and HR practitioners is on building strategies that provide not only short-term or pandemic related initiatives but extends to post-pandemic scenario or situations.

In the article of Brower (2020) titled, “HR’s compelling new role in response to the Coronavirus” she has identified areas in Human Resource Management that can be examined and its role towards overcoming the pandemic with success efforts and work experience. She also stressed that the companies must reconsider and re-visualize their ways of delivering its present services and how it can be improved, better talent management, and a long-term forward thinking methodology of HR in a most compelling experience. Issues identified that needs appropriate responses lie on leadership development, strategic partnerships, employee support, and the pays and benefits. The following are essential means on how the human resources in organizations can drive and lead to strive for business success.

## **Re-Visualization of the Firm**

The human resource department of organizations plays an integral role in implementing *systematic thinking* where the organizations should consider the future of work and must possess an ability to perform with quickness and agility. The human resource department carries the charisma of communicating the entire organization and in the right position to perform the functions which include communicating and coordinating with the various units of the organization, collaborating across functions, teams, organize and spearhead employee and organizational dialogues, goal setting, and prioritization, and adapt to the changing demands of the work environment, the customers, the market with the view of countering the ill effects of COVID-19. Secondly, the *culture of the organization* is another aspect that should also be given closer consideration as it is a vital contribution to HR and organizational success. In uncertainties, organizations needed to be reinvented such that the workforce under close supervision of the human resource department will be re-energized to perform their jobs and responsibilities with a sense of connectedness and uphold the cultural mandate of the organization. The changing working environment relating to the COVID pandemic affects the culture in the organization for instance shifting from a physical working culture to the new normal system of remote working or work-from-home. The culture of fellowship and camaraderie will be replaced by working in isolation.

Discussions about the contradicting effect of conventional working against the work-from-home or remote working are also rising. While benefits of remote working include flexibility, lesser cost, freedom to work anywhere, foster health protection, its disadvantages are prevalent and this may comprise alienation and absence of socialization, self-discipline issues, dependency on technology, and in some cases fewer chances for promotion. Analyzing from the authors’ standpoint, remote working

will serve as an immediate response to the pandemic crisis but critical assessment should have been done to ensure that the remote working concept can sustain future work environments or even in the post-pandemic situation.

Attaining outstanding *leadership* is an urgent concern amid the pandemic crisis. Brower (2020) ironed out that mediocrity in leadership is not needed during these hard times. The vice president of performance acceleration at the Marcus Buckingham Company in the name of Leschke-Kahle once said that the role of HR is paramount consideration as overseers of the company talents and the department that can establish connectivity and continuity between leaders and followers in the work. Leaders may enforce new systems and programs that are immediate concerns during crisis or COVID pandemic but this may not be made possible without motivating the workforce, enhance skills of employees even with distance management, aligning employees to company vision with greater focus, aligning the work among all members of the work team, provide clearer direction, and reassuring employees with the ways and means to overcome uncertainties or ambiguities.

Furthermore, it is critical and crucial for the human resource department of organizations to manage the talents during the pandemic crisis which requires major shifts. A study conducted on 20 industries totaling 600 managers revealed that when business talents and business policies are interconnected, retaining best performers and achievement of higher performance (Business Wire, 2020). Overcoming fear is a very important concern for employees that the human resources should give higher attention. If employees were driven with fear, all the plans and initiatives that they have in mind will turn into nothing, hence; if the fear is appropriately addressed, their dynamism and charisma towards work will be restored. The human resource department should possess dynamism to lead the employees in redeployment, skills appraisal, drive efficiency and effectiveness towards their work, reskilling, boost their morale, and support for their situation and well-being. Valuing the essence of “*Social Capital*” is another important consideration for HR practitioners and HR managers. In this time of health crisis when most companies impose policies that may lead to employee isolation, workers and the people need to have a commune with people whether physically or through online platforms wherein fellowship, connectivity and shared understanding of how to work together efficiently and effectively.

The human resource department should also look into the level of *engagement* of the employees amid COVID-crisis to ensure that the work continuous like in normal working conditions. The work-from-home strategy has been utilized by many companies recently basically to prevent the spread of the virus and this is one of the toughest actions that the management and HR professionals can do, however; the spirit of unity and cooperation in working together physically and instead promote social alienation. Human resource managers can think of creative and productive ways on how actively engage with the employees even in a remote working environment

through surveys, employee feedback, motivations, and the likes to remove in the minds of employees the sense of job insecurities, fear, loneliness, and unengaged with the company activities. On the other hand, HR managers and the management should also consider in these times the employees' *wellbeing and work-life* as many of them are in confusion with the hard-life situations and on what will happen to them in the days to come. The essence of the so-called "*Holistic Wellbeing*" requires that apart from physical wellness, consideration should extend to the employees' mental and emotional health (Brower, 2020). Reading from different sources from either articles, newspapers, books, and others reached a consensus that mental and physical health were greatly affected by the pandemic crisis and people experienced more stress especially those that are fearful of contamination by the virus than those who were already infected.

*Work-life* balance has become a more interesting discussion amid pandemic crisis with the advent of work-from-home work strategy as one of the prime strategies of companies and organizations in ensuring continuity of the work and as responsibilities of employees. Proponents of the work-from-home strategy asserted that the crisis has helped organizations to promote work-life-balance by giving the employees options to perform their tasks in a flexible working environment, promotes child care, and more avenues for work-life options (Carmela, 2017; Jalagat & Jalagat, 2019; Nield, 2016). They further stressed that the human resources department of organizations should support work-from-home not only during the pandemic but even beyond the crisis however; emphasized that this strategy should be communicated to the employees and ensure that they fully understood the goal and objective of implementing such action for future implications.

Revitalizing the *compensation, employment, and benefits* gearing towards approaches to counter the pandemic crisis and beyond can also be considered as a viable strategy for organizations wherein the human resource departments play an essential role in making sure that equitable processes are observed and empathize to employees especially in times of lay-offs and employee reductions. Human resource departments need to be flexible in working structure or arrangements for example changing the work status from full-time to part-time which makes the decrease in salary justifiable rather than temporary lay-offs, and shifts of retirement plans from possibly from a defined-benefit pension plan into a defined-contribution retirement plan.

And, flexible pandemic-related policies from the standpoint of the human resource department can help fight the spread of the virus provided it is also anchored on the government policies and regulations. The pandemic situation has brought new realities from the individual, companies, national, and even global levels. With this unprecedented event, it is necessary for organizations to quickly adapt new policies and strategies that are tailored fit to the present condition of the business.



The organizations should establish policies that are based on recent government regulations and formalize the process into a company policy. Although change has been tough in the beginning stages approaching the pandemic, because of the severity caused by this outbreak governments, companies, and individuals are bound to do enormous changes to counter the spread of COVID-19 and these changes increase the fear, uncertainties, and pressures of employees considering that changes may bring positive or negative effects to them. Reflection from these changes shows that policies and regulations have become unstable as many of them are contingent on the impact of COVID on the country and the people. For instance, many businesses have to be dependent on lockdowns, temporary closures, and other stringent measures that deprive these businesses of earnings and profitability.

In the study of Khan et al. (2019), they emphasized the importance of *positive psychology* during the pandemic as an addition to mental and physical health. This focuses on the worker's wellbeing as primary support to organizational resilience. Cooper et al. (2013) earlier remarked that the essence of attaining resilience-oriented discussions enables the executives to comprehend the workers' psychological condition comprising of fear, anxiety, and depression while proving that the management maintains due care concerning the employee wellbeing. Constant communication is an essential strategy for human resource managers to strengthen the relationship between the workers and the management. An established relationship between employees and the management may prevent the decision-makers from terminating employees but instead taking into consideration how the employees can be retained through workforce adjustment such as reduced work hours, duration shifts changes, and enabling workers to take accrual of leaves. The International Labor Organization (2020a) recognized the practices as mentioned that these can contribute to lowering costs, lessen experiences of fear, and job losses arising from these uncertainties.

## **Will There “Be a Return to Work”?**

Questions that circulate too many individuals nowadays dealt with restoring normal work structure. The fear and anxieties have increased its stool as the days pass by and queries have spread whether the normal working situation is reinstated so soon or in the following years. The fear of contamination remains to be a great struggle for employees even amid mass vaccination. Many of those vaccinated were still victims of the COVID-19 outbreak that made people doubt whether vaccination is effective or not. Related to this reality, the Canadian Mental Health Association has devised strategies and means on how individuals can handle the trauma and worries amid pandemic uncertainties. The association has outlined different tips to consider by the management and their employees in the workplace: (1) Acceptance of fear and anxiety as normal consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. The intensity

of pandemic can become part of daily struggles and the tolerance of uncertainty of people increased considerably; (2) Avoidance of information overload related to the pandemic crisis and instead pursue reliable data or information which means that news and reports about the status of COVID-19 that are not released from trusted sources should be avoided and only those released by the government, the Whole Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Health, and the likes should be considered. In other words, exposing oneself to countless information that is not officially declared will just add anxiety, fear, and unwanted stresses.

Further, (3) distance the self from social media and news that can ruin the positive mindset but rather focus on doing things that encourage joy and happiness without being connected with mobile phones and other gadgets. Almost daily, reports worldwide are focused on the COVID-19 status and its information is more on negativities rather than on the ways how to lessen if not eradicate the spread of the virus, (4) Ask for support from loved ones, colleagues, friends when feeling lonely to be comforted and be stronger to fight with the ill-effects of the virus. And, (5) maintain a healthy lifestyle to minimize anxiety and stress. Apprehensions toward safety and security become a serious concern from students if they will be asked to return to normal duty. According to the CBC News, current survey related to the preferences of employees on what working mode they wanted and results found that only 25% of those surveyed would want to return to the regular work while 75% said that they are inclined to work-from-home and if it is really necessary to go and physically meet in the office otherwise in most cases they prefer the remote working arrangements. This finding is not new to people because at the onset of the pandemic crisis the researchers found many articles and studies that promote remote working in place of the physical working arrangement and many questions have arisen about how safe it is to return to the workplace. Employees are also anxious whether their companies are doing the right protocol and safeguards in ensuring that the office is free of viruses as they thought that at any time they can be contaminated from the workplace where they spent much of their time throughout the day.

Restoring to the normal working structure is a big challenge for organizations especially those who are large-scale businesses with estimated workers of more than one thousand, however; going back to basics by developing a clear-cut plan and contingencies should be undertaken to ensure that the workplace is a better place not only to work but to rest. Keeping the workplace safe and secured can be the primary concern for the management and the human resource department at the height of this pandemic crisis. So, it is necessary for the companies to perform a risk assessment while following government policies and protocols to make sure that the workplace is ready to accommodate the employees safely. On the basis of the risk assessment result, a plan can be established and implemented before finally bringing the employees back to work. Also, the plan should be communicated or

disseminated timely to the employees to understand the objective of implementing the plan. Employees' contribution to the plan is necessary to ensure that all information in the plan is clearly understood before its full implementation.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This chapter focused on investigating the role of human resource management in overcoming employee fear in organizations in Vietnam's tourism industry. A growing number of researches examine the role of human resources amid the COVID-19 crisis, however; as the content of this paper, most of the emphasis is on gathering sources for analysis. So, the need for more quantitative studies should be conducted to arrive at validated hypothetical assumptions and not merely based on conceptual and theoretical analysis. More qualitative researches can be undertaken to support quantitative findings and to account for actual experiences of the respondents during this pandemic which usually is not happening before the crisis. The study should also be expanded to determine the root causes of the pandemic crisis; the extent of its impact economically, socially, environmentally, and politically; the working condition of the business in the post-pandemic era. Further, many studies focus on resolving pandemic issues; however; very few studies conceptualize how the businesses and organizations operate after this COVID-19 outbreak. Studies can also be endeavored to conceptualize possible business scenarios after the pandemic crisis. Finally, fewer studies have explored how employee fear and anxiety can be minimized amid the crisis and those studies that have already been undertaken are most narrative, so a qualitative study can be undertaken to solicit ideas and opinions on how it can be reduced to an acceptable level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Amassed attention of researches has already been undertaken to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on people, businesses, countries, and in the global setting. Related to this, this chapter was endeavored to provide an analysis on the role of human resource management in overcoming employee fears in organizations especially in the tourism industry in Vietnam. Like any other country, COVID-19 had caused uncertainties worldwide that resulted in emerging trends for the human resource department of organizations to act related to salary cuts, flexible working, reduction and or employee terminations, ever-changing pandemic-related laws and regulations including the tourism industry in Vietnam. Evidence showed that individuals and company fear have developed paralysis for businesses to whether

continue or close them, especially to the small-scale businesses. Workers in the tourism industry in Vietnam have experienced uncertainties in consonance with the decreasing tourists and the border situation of the country depriving tourists of different parts of the world to come. Fear and anxiety prevailed to be one of the major causes of the employee's poor performance and productivity. Fear has been categorized into different kinds including fear of economic loss, non-employability, infection, getting quarantined, stigmatization, cause of infection to others, going back to work, stationed by employers, negative responses from customers.

However; the main objective addressed in this study is on how the human resource management department can address the employee fear and based on the analysis, a need to revisualization of the present condition of the organization. Re-assessing its present situation amid the COVID-19 crisis and the unprecedented changes necessitates new approaches that aimed to survive and sustainable even beyond the pandemic. Recommendations were presented to undertake the following actions including but not limited to: systematic thinking, reinventing organizational culture, possess outstanding leadership, promote social capital, increase employee engagement, attain holistic wellbeing, promote work-life balance, pursue positive psychology, achieve flexible pandemic-related policies, and re-vitalize compensation and benefits. These strategies and actions necessitate the commitment of the human resource management in its implementation and evaluation as the HR department plays a crucial role in leading the employees into a well-responsive response to this pandemic crisis. However; further studies can be undertaken to quantitatively assess these variables as possible indicators of the organizational performance of organizations.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Fear of Stigmatization:** Feeling of humiliation, worthy of disgrace or great disapproval from friends, co-employees, acquaintances, etc.

**Holistic Wellbeing:** It means a combination of physical, mental, and emotional health.



**Ministry of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA):** Is one of the Ministries in Vietnam that executes and governmental functions such as wage, salary, employment, social insurances, occupational hygiene and safety, social protection, etc.

**Positive Psychology:** A scholarly research of living a worthy life emphasizing both the individual and societal wellbeing.

**Social Capital:** Is a system of affiliations amongst individuals who resides and work in a specific community and empowering them to effectively function.

**Social Insurance Law 58/2014/QH13:** Contains recent policies in matters of social insurance considering social insurance participants, rights and responsibilities, social insurance and agencies, and other employers.

**Takeaways:** One emerging from a discussion wherein tourism and other business operators must comply with all the laws, policies, and regulations.

**Unilateral Termination:** A government labor code stating that the employer can singly dismiss labor contracts of the workers by handing out an advanced 3-day notice. when an employee is sick sic consecutive months, twelve consecutive months, and more than half of the contract term, and for those employees that are still cannot work in spite of the medical treatment received.

**Unprecedented Laws and Regulations:** Unexpected changes in policies and regulations contingent on the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Vietnam National Administration of Tourism:** This is the government agency of Vietnam that manages tourist operations and activities throughout the country.

# Chapter 6

## Integrating Talent and Knowledge Management Practices in the New Normal Business Environment: Developing Future Leaders in Public Sector Organizations

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Public sector organizations are faced with many challenges due to their continued reform, and new strategies are thus being implemented to ensure that these organizations adapt to the new normal business environment. However, no other issue is more important than developing effective leaders. Talent and knowledge are considered as critical resources to develop the most valuable assets of an organization and to support a sustainable competitive advantage and outstanding performance. But how can the principles of talent management be integrated with knowledge management practices to enhance leadership development within public sector organizations? This chapter critically reviewed literature pertaining to leadership capability development through integrating talent and knowledge management strategies. The transformational leadership theory, leadership development model, and talent management model were used as underpinning theories to guide the study. The chapter established that the integration of talent and knowledge management strategies leads to effective leadership development.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The retirement of executive leaders and baby boomers poses business disruption, knowledge erosion and business continuity risks (Pandiyani & Jayalashmi, 2016), and therefore millennials or young generation is poised to take over leadership roles once they retire. Weber (2017) further stated that millennials enter the workforce with a typically strong desire to prove themselves by taking initiatives and having high self-esteem. Human resource managers need to develop agile strategies to handle baby boomers' exiting the workforce. Emerging trends also demand human resources managers to develop new strategies to support talent management and succession planning initiatives. White (2018) described succession planning as a process of building next generation or future leaders considering current and future business challenges, critical skills, future skills, all core technical competencies and career development plan. Therefore, bridging the skills gaps that have also occurred during the pandemic era is one of the factors to consider although the "war for talent" continues unabated. Business organizations are now competing against each other to acquire and retain talents in order to maintain their operations and continue to grow (Arora, 2018). The transition to new normal business environment is also forcing public sector organizations and its employers to reimagine their talent and knowledge management strategies. However, human resource and knowledge managers in public sector organizations are faced with a challenge of ensuring business continuity and retaining talent and knowledge in a knowledge-based economy and new normal business environment. There is therefore a need for best practices and implementation of innovative strategies for managing talent and knowledge during this COVID 19 pandemic era.

Kehinde (2012) further observed that, in order to increase the effectiveness, organizations' resources such as money, men and machines can be used to achieve this, and of these resources the most important of them all is the people. Human capital is considered as a key resource to adapt the business organizations to the knowledge-based economy and global competition. Employees' knowledge, skills and competencies need to be maximized and recognized as a distinctive source of competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Public sector organizations thus need to develop and strategically manage talent and knowledge flows to ensure that employees with the needed skills and competencies are available and are aligned with the right jobs based on the organization's objectives. Public sector organizations are organizations set up by law to run services on behalf of the government, and they are owned or controlled by the government (the state) which makes all decisions. Nowadays, human resources managers in the public sector organizations requires hiring employees with good moral character, work ethic and talent above those with a specific skill set. Talent and knowledge are considered as fundamental resources

to help public sector organizations to reach its goal and success. The notion of talent management has become increasingly popular, and the global war for talent is becoming a critical driving force in corporate competitiveness and performance (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones & Michaels, 2002). Talent management thus has the enormous potential of retaining and developing the most valuable assets of an organization to gain competitive advantage in a new normal business environment, whereby organizations are striving hard to survive and gain competitive edge over rivals. It is concerned with developing strategy, identifying talent gaps, succession planning, recruiting, selecting, educating, motivating and retaining talented employees through a variety of initiatives (Guthridge & Komm, 2008).

The earlier you start the talent management process the better as the proverb says “All the flowers of all of the tomorrows are in the seeds of today” and with top specialists in your organization, you can reach any goal. Talent management is also considered to be a primary driver for knowledge creation and knowledge sharing, and therefore, talent management of knowledge workers and high potentials is of increasing strategic importance, as noted by Tymon et al. (2010). Knowledge is critical to the long-term sustainability and success of any organisation. It is regarded as the most strategically significant organizational asset with companies emphasizing capabilities and intangible resources as competitive tools (Kiessling & Harvey, 2006). Rhambasi (2010) described knowledge as the mainstay of the 21st century organization that has a knack for innovative breakthroughs in all functional areas of organization. Managing organization’s knowledge is thus imperative for organizations that need to attract, retain and grow their talent from the ground up. Organizational knowledge includes all the tacit and explicit knowledge that individuals possess about products, systems and processes and the explicit knowledge codified in manuals, databases and information systems (Hayat, Hasanvand, Nikakhlag & Dehghani, 2015). The tacit knowledge is shared collectively in the firm in the form of routines, culture and know-how embedded in social processes (Bryant, 2003).

Integration of talent and knowledge management has so far been considered by various scholars who have tended to examine how learning from the field of knowledge management can achieve talent management goals (Vaiman, 2010; Orlova, Afonin, Voronin, 2015; Ahmed, 2016). Harris (2020) described knowledge management as the explicit and systematic management of intellectual capital and organizational knowledge, as well as the associated processes of creating, gathering, validating, categorizing, archiving, disseminating, leveraging, and using intellectual capital for improving the organization and the individuals in it. Knowledge management should thus be seen as one of the most concrete and important set of practices that any public sector organization can adopt in order to survive in the knowledge-based economy. Rowley (1999) also noted that effective management of knowledge, change and innovation are core competencies that must be mastered

for organizations to succeed, and those business organizations that can succeed in the knowledge-based society are those that can identify, value, create and manage their knowledge assets. The organization thus gain sustainable returns on both talent and knowledge management investments by attracting new talent through good employee satisfaction, capturing organizations' knowledge and using knowledge management best practices to empower employees to grow (Demers, 2018). The aim of this chapter was to determine how talent management strategies can be integrated with knowledge management practices to enhance leadership development within public sector organizations in the new normal business environment.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopted transformational leadership theory by Bass and Avolio (1994), leadership development model by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) and Talent management model by McKinsey (2000). Conceptual framework was adopted in this study to inform the development of talent management, knowledge management and leadership programmes and their capabilities within the organizations. The models and frameworks outline a set of principles and guidelines to which all strategic human resource activities should adhere and be implemented in line with the organisation's mission and overall operations.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory was developed by Bass and Avolio (1994) and one of its attributes underlines motivating followers and employing change management skills to deliver the organizational vision. Bass and Avolio (1994) defined transformational leadership as the process that transforms people in pursuit of the greater good of the organization while the leader is attentive to followers' needs and motives. According to Breevaart et al. (2016) transformational leadership satisfy subordinates' needs, cater for their self-development and contribute to their long-term goals. An attribute of transformational leadership underlines motivating followers and employing change management skills to deliver the organizational vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformation leaders act as role models for employees, motivate them, and stimulate their intelligence and have the ability to assess the skills gap and recognize required development areas that would help the organization to achieve its vision (Damer, 2020). Transformational leaders are thus role models who inspire and motivate their followers to achieve personal and organizational growth objectives and to discover and develop leadership skills (Breevaart, et al., 2016). Liao et al. (2017) noted that followers' high respect and

confidence in their leaders motivate them to stretch beyond average performance, and also advance employees' engagement and stretch their personal growth by providing continuous support to their team members so talents can step up in their careers. These leaders thus stimulate their followers to challenge the status quo, take up leadership responsibility and seek career progression and growth through self-worth, self-belief and self-development (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016).

Transformational leaders create an environment that challenged norms and introduce creative ideas to innovate and progress, and they set high expectations from their subordinates in terms of development and performance (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Organizations should thus assign the right transformational leaders who can drive a proper change management program that includes talent development, succession planning and leadership development initiatives (Wang, Van Wart & Lebrede, 2014). Transformational leadership theory also provides a foundation for understanding how leaders impact imparting of knowledge (Bryant, 2003). As stated by Gowen et al. (2009) transformational leaders make improvements in overall knowledge management processes in health care institutions. Transformational leadership styles thus play a significant role on individual employees, performance and organizational performance through knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge exploitation (Politis, 2001). It enhances the organizations' environment and helping to apply knowledge in an efficient way by managing the knowledge in a way required for improvement of organizational learning (Gelard, Zahra, Ali, 2014). The study by Crawford (2005) found that transformational leadership contributed to 19.5% variance in knowledge management. The study by Politis (2001) on the role of leadership styles in knowledge management further reveals that leaders having behavioural and interpersonal skills were more effective in knowledge management process, and these skills are an integral part of transformational leadership.

## **Leadership Development Model**

Leadership development model was developed by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) and it is comprised of the following elements: assessment, challenge and support mechanisms. Assessment refers to a diagnosis of the current state of the individual or organization in terms of leadership capacity and this will help to clarify what needs to be learned, improved or changed. Challenge occurs when current capabilities are tested and it involves some willingness for risk-taking and feeling a little bit uncomfortable. It is also through taking on a developmental challenge that the limits of how things are normally done become apparent. Challenges are motivating in terms of the desire to master a new skill or way of thinking support-from co-workers, bosses and the broader environment helps to build self-confidence and master the challenge at hand as developmental challenges are often difficult

physically, psychologically and emotionally. It is hard to bring about lasting changes at an individual or organizational level, without substantial support and sending an employee into an unsupportive interpersonal environment is a waste of organizations' resources. The leadership development model is presented in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Leadership development model  
(Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004)*

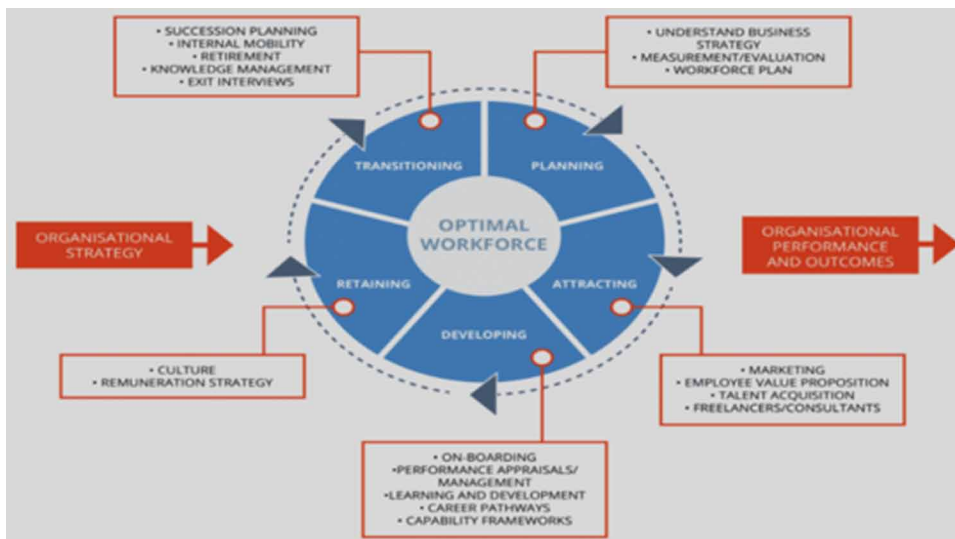


The leadership developmental process is also shaped by the ability and motivation to learn. Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) argued that someone with little ability or motivation to learn will get comparatively less from a developmental experience than someone who is able and motivated. The relationships between developmental experiences, the ability and motivation to learn, and leadership development take place in an organizational context (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Leadership development process is thus influenced by the aspects of the organization's context, such as its size, mission, strategy and culture. This influence extends to the overarching focus, the degree of integration with other processes, how systematic it is and ultimately who is responsible for the system. For best practices, human resource professionals need to carefully consider their own particular organizational context with regard to the fit and feasibility of a particular practice.

## Talent Management Model

Talent management model provides managers with a structured approach to developing staff potential and retaining talent within the organization. This model is comprised of five key elements, namely: planning, attracting, developing, retaining and transitioning by McKinsey (2000) as shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Talent management model (McKinsey, 2000)*



Planning is comprised of three key areas including, understanding the organisational or business strategy, developing the job description and key roles and developing a workforce plan for recruitment. Attracting involves employee value proposition, marketing, talent acquisition and consultants or freelancers and the decision on whether the source of recruitment should be internal or external and seeking for the suitable individuals to fill in the vacant positions through job portals and social networks. Developing involves onboarding, orientation programme, performance appraisals, learning and development, coaching and mentoring employees, capability frameworks and career pathways. Retaining involves culture, remuneration strategy, promotions and increments, providing opportunities for growth by handing over special projects, participative decision making, teaching new job skills and identifying the individual's contribution and efforts. Transitioning involves succession planning,



internal mobility and knowledge management. It can also be done through retirement benefits to employees, conducting exit interviews and internal promotions.

## **TALENT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Organizations are in need for leaders to fill vacant positions in line with business growth strategies and to contrive evolving workforce demographics (Grayson, 2016). Human resource managers can work tirelessly recruiting and hiring the right people and also spend more time redesigning performance and rewards programs, but the whole process will be a wasted effort if they are unable to identify, assess and develop the key talent among their employees. Talent refers to those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or in the long-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential (Tansley et al., 2007). It is regarded as a competitive advantage, and any organization needs to have a plan for developing and managing its key talent. Talent development is the process of changing an organization, its employees, its stakeholders, and groups of people within it, using planned and unplanned learning, in order to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage for the organization (Davis & Davies, 2010). Public sector organizations thus need to develop programs that describes all processes to assess and manage talent.

Al Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe (2014) described talent management as the conventional management of talents, including talent identification, management, and development to support business processes and links to organizational strategy. It is a constant process that involves attracting and retaining high-quality employees, developing their skills and continuously motivating them to improve their performance (CIPD, 2012). Talent management integrates organisational objectives with the employees' knowledge and skills that facilitates employees in serving clients or customers and producing good quality products and services for organisational and stakeholder satisfaction (Collings et al., 2018). Oladapo (2014) noted that if the organization is able to manage its talent effectively by having the best talent management practices, it will definitely be beneficial in the long term for the company. Talent management program is thus important to any organization as it creates a framework that accommodates and motivates high-potential employees to develop their careers and fill leadership positions faster than average employees. The primary purpose of talent management is to create a motivated workforce and nurturing them into life-long employees. Janson (2015) further identified the drivers for effective talent management program including: human resources need to appreciate the value and benefits of talent management; ensure that their employees are assigned to the right jobs, the right positions and have the right skills to perform their jobs;

develop proper job segregation, duties and rewards for every position and ensure that enough time is provided for job development and succession planning. Talent management programs can include a range of activities such as talent acquisition and recruitment, learning and development, leadership, coaching and mentoring, organizational values and vision, performance management, networking events, career pathways and succession planning.

Recruitment and selection require that organizations use various methods or techniques of selecting the right talent that reflects the culture and value of that particular organization (Armstrong, 2006). Oladapo (2014) stated that when an organization is successful in retaining its top or key talent, it definitely has an impact on the profitability of that organization. As stated by Rana and Abbasi (2013) organizations that gain a competitive advantage and become successful in their businesses, are those who effectively manage their talented employees. Business leaders in both private and public sector organizations thus need to develop future leadership competencies and recognize talented employees to support growth strategies and to compete globally. Public sector organizations can benefit from the principles of identifying crucial job skills, knowledge, social relationships and passing them on to preparing future leaders, thereby ensuring the seamless movement of talent within the organization.

Human resource managers need to also understand their employees as that will make it easier to develop talent and prepare leaders in the new normal business environment and modern workplace. However, human resource managers in various public sector organizations have embarked on developing talent management programs as one of their strategies to identify, retain, and nurture high potential employees, to develop the essential skills and competencies to fill leadership positions. Maamari and Alameh (2016) emphasized that organizations must retain talents through accommodating and matching their talent development expectations. Galpin, Whittington, and Bell (2015) stated that human resource policies influence talent development programs, and therefore, human resource managers need to develop policies that support these initiatives. Some reasons why business organizations should invest in talent management include: attract top talent, employee motivation, continuous coverage of critical roles, increase employee performance, engaged employee's talent, retain top talent, improve business performance and higher client satisfaction. Leadership bench strength, leadership pipeline and leadership capacity are popular metaphors for the underlying issue of ensuring that an organization's leadership is adequately developed to face current and future challenges (Day, 2019). Weiss and Molinaro (2005) describe leadership development as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. One way of expanding a person's leadership capacity includes help to develop knowledge, skills

and abilities that the organization values with regard to leadership (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004).

Weiss and Molinaro (2005) further pointed out that investments in leadership development pay off in terms of creating a sustained competitive advantage that will propel organizations forward in the 21st century economy or digital economy. As stated by (Day, 2019), the design of a leadership development initiative should also be grounded in succession planning or management and anchored in the organization's size, strategy and resources. White (2018) described succession planning as a talent management process that builds a pool of trained employees who are ready to fill key roles when leaders and other key employees step down. Most business organizations regard talent development programs as one of the tools that develop future leaders' skills and expand succession planning in multiple roles. Bali and Dixit (2016) stated that organizations need to identify talented employees (unrecognized talent), maintain and attract talented employees to survive in today's competitive business environment.

## **BENEFITS OF TALENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The growing interest in talent and knowledge management is due to the result of increasing recognition of the impact these practices have on business growth and profitability. Talented and knowledgeable employees contribute to the achievement of competitive advantage in their organizations because they are able to innovate and to make right decisions for achieving organizational goals. Public sector organizations are faced with difficult challenges and an ever-demanding customer expectations in the new normal business environment. Talent and knowledge management comes to the rescue of organizations by developing an ever-flexible business work force that can address any kind of challenge. Talent and knowledge management have become quite indispensable to ensure survival of any organization across the globe and it is therefore essential to make the best possible utilisation of the employee's talent, knowledge and skills. Talent management allows organizations to stay competitive, it drives innovation, helps form productive teams, decreases turnover, leads to strong employer branding, increases employees' motivation and performance, attract top talent, continuously cover critical roles, enhance employee engagement and retain top talent (CIPD, 2012). It initiates a positive environment in the organisation whereby employees get a chance to learn and improve themselves while motivating them to perform better and experience job satisfaction.

Talent management also supports growth strategies and offers high performers with career advancement prospects and provides organizations with talents that support succession planning, improve competencies for future growth and develop sustainable performance (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). It focuses on an individual's growth and betterment, and as a result, employees develop a feeling of being cared for and belongingness for the organisation and remain associated with the organisation for a long-term period. Human resource managers are thus able to recognize high performing employees in the process of talent management and offer them rewards that lift up their confidence level and increases their performance and motivation. CIPD (2008)'s report on "the war on talent" found that organizations are now placing greater scrutiny on their talent management processes. As a result, talent management and recruitment has gone through a massive transformation, with organizations requiring the identification and hiring of talent using new methods for new normal business environment and post-pandemic era.

Public sector organizations are moving quickly towards the digitization of the workplace during this pandemic era while also tended towards downsizing their headcount. This shift to digital transformation requires employees who can adapt to a shift towards working remotely and maintain their productivity. Virtual hiring solutions such as Instant Teams and OData are providing critical support for talent acquisition during this digital transformation era and have also become a necessity during this pandemic era. The purpose of Instant Teams is easing the process of building and assembling virtual teams for companies and business organizations. On the other hand, OData aimed at helping business organizations to figure out easier ways to tap into underutilized talent pools of people stretched across the globe in order to perform repetitive tasks efficiently and faster than Artificial Intelligence or any machine learning can do. Virtual solutions are easily scalable, cost-effective, and perfect for boosting organizational agility despite public sector vulnerabilities and uncertainties in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic. Most of business organizations are now leveraging these high-tech and high-touch solutions to find talents internally and externally and have therefore adapted their talent acquisition strategies by using these technological solutions in their new normal business environment. Effective knowledge management depends on effective management of the organizational talent who possess key knowledge, in terms of talent recruitment, training, performance management, succession planning, and knowledge sharing (Whelan & Carcary, 2011).

Knowledge is also regarded as the most significant organizational asset with companies emphasizing capabilities and intangible resources as competitive tools (Kießling & Harvey, 2006). Organizations are now focusing on individuals with critical and analytical skills, who can share knowledge through their social networks (Lengnick-Hall & Andrade, 2008). Some business organizations primarily focus on maximizing their productivity, others focus on the importance of collaboration

and team work for knowledge sharing while others heavily invest in their training and development (Lepak & Snell, 2002). Organizations thus need to adopt a more strategic approach to managing knowledge workers as superior performance is linked to tacit knowledge, the retention of employees who possess this knowledge and the ability to continuously harvest their knowledge and expertise (Kiessling & Harvey, 2006). Knowledge activities thus encompasses the following key dimensions or processes which can benefit leadership development through integration of talent management principles, namely: knowledge creation and acquisition, knowledge sharing, developing knowledge competencies and skills and knowledge retention.

## **Knowledge Creation and Acquisition**

The acquisition, integration and availability of specialized knowledge, influence the outcome of organizational success. Knowledge acquisition is also a priority for the World Health Organization. As noted by Birkinshaw and Sheehan (2002) one of the key challenges to managing organizational knowledge is understanding how to amplify and crystallize the activities of creative knowledge workers. Organizational learning is an important dimension of knowledge acquisition, and if an organization is to continue to create new knowledge, or put existing knowledge to work, its employees must understand the key issues and be able to relate them to the organization 's mandate. The organization thus needs to support and provide a context for key knowledge workers to create new knowledge. Strategies for enhancing knowledge creation include practicing relevant leadership behaviors such as providing vision and support for innovation, creativity and cultivating an organizational learning culture (Pei, 2008). Key knowledge creators could also be fast-tracked to training programs on technologies that facilitate knowledge creation.

## **Knowledge Sharing**

Talent managers can support knowledge sharing practices by determining the appropriate timing for employee transfers that enable them to capitalize on group cohesion, social ties and diverse experiences. Today, business organizations face a number of challenges relating to the effective sourcing, storage and dissemination of knowledge, as noted by Shermon (2002), and these include loss of knowledge as job requirements change rapidly and personnel move across department. The retiring workers or employees leaving the organization are taking with them knowledge essential to the organization that cannot easily be replaced on the open market. Many public sector organizations are not prepared for the loss of this crucial knowledge when their employees leave the organization. There is lack of organizational culture for sharing of knowledge and employees are often reluctant to share information within

the organization. To mitigate the threat of lost knowledge, a proper succession plan needs to be put in place to transfer both the technical and organizational knowledge to ensure vital and critical knowledge is captured before retirement. This question thus arises from employees: why should I part with my knowledge?

Another challenge is the absence of adequate knowledge management systems to capture and store tacit knowledge residing in the minds of personnel. For example, when technical service personnel do not file reports after field visits, the next team that performed the same work has to start afresh and reinvent the wheel. Absence of an effective learning organizational culture is another issue. Many organizations have inadequate filing, database management system and knowledge management system. This also includes establishing effective content management and knowledge sharing systems. Business organization need to establish mechanisms for searching for knowledge resources, tapping internal and external resources (including personal search), developing communities of practice, setting up technology bulletin boards and identification of experts.

## **Developing Knowledge Skills and Competencies**

Any business organization's success increasingly depends on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees, particularly as they help establish a set of core competencies that distinguish an organization from its competitors. Therefore, in the business work environment employees need a broad range of technical, problem solving and interpersonal skills to work either individually or in teams on cutting-edge projects. People have always been central to organizations' performance and their strategic importance is growing in today 's knowledge-based organizations. Organizational performance is thus correlated with its employees' competencies i.e. the underlying knowledge, skills and abilities needed to carry out an organizational role (Abel, 2008). However, in today 's knowledge-based organizations and economy, number of jobs requiring little knowledge and skill is declining while the number of jobs requiring greater knowledge and skill is growing rapidly. In addition, the delay between identifying and filling competency gaps through learning remains too large (Capuano et al., 2008).

Public sector organizations that attempts to compete through employees, must invest in leadership development, and this includes selecting the best and talented candidates available in the labour market and providing all employees opportunities to continually showcase their talents. Public sector organizations should thus make the effort to effectively manage the employees to help them develop their skills and capabilities in order to retain them. Business organizations such as Southwest Airlines, Sony and Wal-Mart revolutionized their industries by developing skills and core competencies that helped them gain advantage over their competitors. Business

organizations thus tend to make long-term commitments to core knowledge workers, investing in their continuous training and development and perhaps giving them an equity stake in the organization. Core knowledge workers are group of employees who have firm-specific skills that are directly linked to the organization strategy i.e. computer scientists in a software development company. These knowledge workers thus need to learn in an informal and self-directed manner and this learning process need to be aligned with organizational requirements. However, in order to tap into the knowledge capital of an organization, human resource managers and business leaders first need to know where and with whom it resides. Talent management initiatives such as competency-based training thus need to be in place to help assess employee skills, identify required competencies, develop skills, knowledge and attitudes and improve performance (Abel, 2008).

## **Knowledge Retention**

Talent development and succession planning are part of organizational sustainability and knowledge management strategies. Appelbaum et al. (2012) noted that there is an increasing interest in knowledge management due to its ability to diffuse and share baby boomers' experience and tacit knowledge with new joiners, yielding a competitive business advantage. As the Baby Boom generation of corporate leaders and experts approaches retirement, organizations face the loss of experience and knowledge on an unprecedented scale. Employees may leave organizations with a limited notice period, taking with them implicit and explicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge being the hard to obtain from other employees, means that there is information about the organization, which is unable to be sourced from anywhere. Human resource managers need to understand where there will be gaps in critical roles and when is necessary for best practice knowledge management.

Transformation of the knowledge is thus imperative requirement because the looming retirement issue for the bigger proportion of skilled employees with tacit knowledge creates challenges for the organizations, for successful talent management program (Mogwere & Schutte, 2014). For example, young generation may not be counted to fill the void, as they lack the experience that builds deep expertise and they also tend to change jobs frequently, taking their technological savvy and any knowledge they have gained with them. Muñoz, Mosey and Binks (2015) stated that organizations that recognize and utilize their employees' knowledge wealth have a significant competitive advantage since deployed knowledge promoted sustainability and business continuity. Human resource managers need to support baby boomers' retirement and develop tacit knowledge transfer models to other employees through succession planning.

## **CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE TALENT MANAGEMENT**

Critical roles arise continuously resulting in the public sector organizations having to attract talented employees or improve the skills of their existing employees. Talent management ensures that top talented individuals within the organisations remain with the organisation longer because it impacts them as well with greater benefits (Sheehan et al., 2018). It concentrates on how the employees can be engaged and motivated, increasing their skills and abilities so that they can work towards organisational goals (Wilder et al., 2014). However, as noted by Foster (2015) talent development is creating unprecedented pressure on human resource management to develop new skills and competencies to manage additional human resources activities. Most of the organizations underutilize talent management due to a lack of some specific human resource skills. Human resource managers lack knowledge and skills that enables them to develop proper talent development programs and these programs fail to meet their objectives due to limited expertise in managing them. Although executive coaching is becoming a popular talent management activity, however, many organizations struggle to integrate this activity as part of their succession planning (Grover & Furnham, 2016).

As pointed out by Jacobson et al. (2014) many organizations are limiting possible benefits from business coaching and mentoring programs due to lack of intrinsic strategic human resources skills and competencies. Human resource managers need to develop new skills and design mentoring programs that will provide mentors with clear mentoring objectives that can be measured and rewarded (Donohue, 2016). Human resource managers also struggle to distinguish between high performing and high potential employees. Karadas and Karatepe (2019) described high potential employees as those who can develop new expertise all the time, perform in complex environments, and lead the organization. High potential employees are clear on required performance criteria and are able to align to organizations' desired talent development deliverables (Damer, 2020). Some organizations tend to focus on high performing employees due to their knowledge depth in their areas of expertise, whereas other organizations focus their talent development programs around high potential employees due to the possible future skills they can develop (Damer, 2020).

However, organisations have been facing various challenges in implementing effective talent management programs. One example is the way in which organizations' working procedures have been changing due to technological integration, while new offers, products and services of competitors also compel organisations to bring about changes in the working processes (Collings et al, 2018). Training arrangement in the organisations and sending employees to the external training institutions also requires substantial expenditure (Vaiman et al.,2018). The redesigning of training processes according to changes in the market and internal work environments is



also expensive and lengthy, which also creates challenges in facilitating training practices on a regular basis (Tafti et al., 2017). The attitude and acceptance of the employees also has an impact on the establishment of talent management within the organisation and many employees and managers are not aware of the benefits that talent management can create (Starbuck, 2017). Failure to recognise talented employees for proper succession planning and effective talent management poses another challenge to organizations and human resource managers (Collings et al., 2018). An awareness regarding talented employees and their significance should thus be improved (Guthridge Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011). The dispute between internal promotion and external recruitment can impact organizations' succession planning strategies. Janson (2015) highlighted that succession planning is underutilized because some talent development programs are fragmented and do not link to business strategy while some human resource managers lack business knowledge that enables them to develop proper talent development programs.

Human resource managers also need to update their selection and recruitment strategies regularly and align them with business strategies (Damer, 2020). Lack of frameworks is also complicating the development of succession plan and talent management programs and increases human resource managers' reluctance to develop these initiatives. Lack of a knowledge management plan can also decrease innovation, lowers growth capacity and reduces efficiency in the organization. Talent development and succession planning programs should thus include knowledge transfer plan, financial assessment framework and return on investment criteria to enable a comparison between internal and external recruitments' costs (Damer, 2020). All these challenges underscore a need to implement effective talent management program to respond to situational demands. Organisations thus need to apply the talent management strategies so that they can attract and retain talented employees and fill in the critical roles (Brewster, Cerdin & Sharma, 2017).

## **STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE TALENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Human resource functions including recruitments, training, performance management and succession planning play a major role in the incorporation of effective talent management practices. Determinants of talent management includes talent attraction, talent acquisition, talent retention, learning and development, coaching and mentoring, succession planning and performance management, and all these processes must be well designed to fit the strategic requirements of the business as well as integrating with each other. Some of the strategies or approaches to develop effective talent management for an organization include: leadership pipeline,

performance assessment and appraisals, coaching and mentoring and employees' empowerment and engagement

## **Implementing Effective Succession Planning and Leadership Pipeline**

One aspect of a successful talent management is to combine succession planning with leadership development well before a replacement is needed. Succession planning and leadership development are key processes in assessing and developing an organization's leadership talent (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). These processes are important in any organization as they share a vital and fundamental goal which is getting the right skills in the right place, and therefore these initiatives must be linked in explicit and coherent ways to best manage the leadership talent of an organization (Day, 2019). The *who* and *what* of leadership development are ultimately based in the foundation set by succession management (Day, 2019). Organizational survival in a globally competitive environment depends on having identified and developed replacements (i.e. successors) for key positions, which is the essence of succession planning (Rothwell, 2005). As noted by Berke (2005), effective succession planning involves more than just a replacement planning process, and it also includes a comprehensive employee development system.

Succession planning can thus be of great value to smaller organizations that have fewer resources available for knowledge management programs and the formal, structured development of employees. However, many business leaders struggle to integrate talent management in their succession planning due to lack of effective talent development strategies to improve future leaders (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). These leaders believe that succession planning is a complex process and a practice restricted to the largest organizations with the most sophisticated organizational development departments. As a result, some human resource managers in various organizations fail to fill vacant leadership positions due to the lack of appropriate succession planning (Damer, 2020). Hirsh (2000) describe succession planning as the process of identifying one or more successors for key positions and preparing them for expanded organizational responsibilities through job assignments and other developmental activities. The part of this definition, preparing individuals for expanded responsibilities overlaps with what is considered as leadership development, broadening the capacity of an individual to be effective in leadership roles and processes (Day, 2019). A change in leadership can be sparked by a resignation, an employee might retire, get fired, get sick, take leave or quit without notice (Day, 2019). Succession planning thus ensures that there is a strategy in place for someone to step in or get promoted and take over that person's duties without a loss in productivity and morale. As stated by Damer (2020) succession planning

may positively influence talent management activities such as talent retention, knowledge transfer, enrich leadership skills and increase the probability of new leaders succeeding in senior roles. Therefore, if the organization has an integrated succession management initiative in place, any well-trained employee can step in and continue with job responsibilities until a successor can be appointed either from internally or externally hire.

The successors should have the right skills, energy and leadership qualities that will benefit the organization across a spectrum of roles, departments and seniority levels. For example, Steve Jobs, founder of Apple support succession planning by educating Apple employees and leaders to understand how he built the business and how to think like him. Steve Jobs demonstrated a commitment to succession planning when Tim Cook took over as Chief executive Officer (CEO) after he stepped down. International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) also demonstrated its succession planning strategy in 2011 when Samuel J. Palmisano stepped down as CEO and succeeded by Virginia Rometty, the company's first female. Therefore, during the succession planning process, if an ageing workforce is identified, appropriate measures may be put in place to plan ahead for the retirement of such talent and for the gaps in critical roles. Organization with effective succession planning programs thus foster a talent-oriented culture by recruiting skilled workers and top talent. Therefore, by integrating succession planning and leadership development, organizations get the skills required for senior management positions along with an educational system that can help managers develop those skills (Damer, 2020).

Human resource managers thus need to invest in succession planning and leadership development programs to ensure organizational survival in an increasingly competitive environment (Van Dongen, 2014). As a result, most of the organizations are increasingly integrating talent development initiatives in their human resources planning to improve their succession planning. However, human resource managers require the right capacities and skills to identify, nurture, develop and retain talents. Ineffective talent management programs directly and clearly affect business outcomes. One of the first tasks when planning for talent development activities is to outline its business case, and ensure the program is aligned with corporate strategy, policies and programs. Human resource managers should integrate the proper definitions, scope, objectives, timeline, required skills, review protocols and assessment procedures within talent development programs.

## **Performance Assessment and Appraisals**

Lopes, Sarragaça, Lopes, and Duarte (2015) noted that performance appraisal is one of the practical tools to identify talents based on their merits and behaviors. Performance management helps in identifying those knowledge workers who are

performing best, and provides feedback on employees' roles and expected performance standards (Debowski, 2006). Groen, Wouters, and Wilderom (2017) added that human resource managers should use performance metrics to define objectives, actions, deliverables, and performance criteria. Soucat, Dale, Mathauer, and Kutzin (2017) added that human resource managers need to have the proper operational knowledge to define objectives and development areas otherwise, talent development programs will become obsolete. However, as pointed out by Lopes et al. (2015) the increased subjectivity or bias in performance appraisal would affect organizations' capacity to identify and develop talents, and will ultimately affect succession planning.

Human resource managers should develop transparent talent assessment and performance appraisal tools to ensure that talent development programs are fair, reliable and trustworthy. As stated by Jacksch and Klehe (2016) these managers should use consistent assessment tools and selection criteria to benchmark talents' response against targeted behaviors. Diaz-Carrion, López-Fernández, and Romero-Fernandez (2019) further indicated that clarity of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and actionable objectives drives high employee engagement and promotes their development motives. For example, General Electric (GE) has developed a structured leadership review cycle called Session C for assessing its leadership talent and determining its performance level, job accomplishments, strengths, development needs etc. Leaders are thus rated on their performance and promotion potential using a nine-block matrix, and this helps in identifying the organization's high performers and in implementing initiatives for addressing developmental needs. Such talent identification metrics need to be tailored when applied to knowledge-intensive environments characterized by collaborative efforts (Whelan et al., 2010).

## **Coaching and Mentoring**

Organizations are increasingly using coaching and mentoring as talent development strategy or approach to prepare future leaders' skills. Grover and Furnham (2016) mentioned that organizations are increasingly integrating business coaching to improve the sustainability of their resources through enhanced productivity and succession planning. According to Jyoti and Sharma (2015) mentoring impacts organizations positively through coaching and counselling which in turn improves organizational commitment, business continuity, increases job performance, grows job satisfaction and lowers turnover. The interaction between mentors and mentees strengthens the relationship between junior and senior staff, which eventually improves organizations' culture, resources sustainability, knowledge management, and business continuity (Damer,2020). Successful coaching thus has a positive impact on employer brand, reputation and employees' career growth plans and robust employment prospects (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). As stated by Filsinger (2014) coaching relationship

develops trust, improves managers' skills and provides adjustable interaction with virtual subordinates based on their culture and background.

## **Employees Empowerment and Engagement**

When there is a fair talent development process, employees feel more engaged and this also increases retention rates and ensure that the organization can meet its operational requirements. As stated by Gözükarar and Hatipoğlu (2016) employees who fail to meet their committed objectives are usually less engaged and become less interested in organizational development programs. Organizations need to empower and engage their employees in additional assignments to support talent management programs and help develop a succession planning pipeline. As noted by Damer (2020) engaging employees in new assignments help identify their potential and sharpen their skills beyond standard activities, and they therefore need to be given a chance to open up and to participate. New assignments can enrich a learning culture among employees, which exposes talented employees to demonstrate new skills that qualify them to take part in succession planning and talent management. Organizations need to develop programs that trigger employee's engagement by providing a platform that enable them to embark on different functions, activities, and responsibilities in an attempt to discover their career passion and where they would eventually excel (Damer, 2020). Therefore, when employees are engaged, skilled and motivated, they will work towards organizations' goals, which in turn increases client satisfaction and business performance.

## **Recruiting and Staffing**

Recruiting and selecting people are also central to building knowledge capital and the selected individuals affect organization's supply of knowledge capital, and the competencies on which it can draw to meet business objectives. Most of public sector business organizations are now incorporating virtual hiring solutions and talent recruiting technology while rethinking their entire talent management strategies in preparing their future leaders. Human resource practitioners must thus find ways to recruit and select the right talent to meet pressing organizational needs, retain the right talent once it is available, leverage the talent through appropriate uses of rotations, temporary and permanent team assignments, transfers and promotions so that the organization 's knowledge capital is brought to bear in the most pressing challenges. These goals may require focusing on specific universities, competitors, or other talent pools to attract people with the specific competencies needed to help address business trends.

Online screening and analysis tools, such as resume analysis programs and online pre-employment assessments also facilitate the identification of key talent sources from the resultant increased applicant pool (Frank & Taylor, 2004). Organizations favor individuals who have flexibility to cope with new external challenges, competition, and changed processes. Guarino (2007) describes a Quick Screen approach as talent recruiting that helps evaluate the match between a candidate's competencies and key aspects of the position. This approach helps organizations source high performers, whose knowledge competencies may then be further developed through in-house initiatives. Organizations are now riding the wave to transform talent acquisition, from simply shifting workplace priorities to people and leveraging virtual hiring solutions, among other talent recruiting technologies. For example, Grayline Group company alongside reputable organizations like Deloitte and McKinsey, is constantly monitoring and pursuing these trends to help businesses and organizations get better insights into the powerful forces shaping the future of work. These efforts will go a long way to help predict employee success and help leaders make smarter hiring decisions.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter contributes to leadership development capabilities within business organization through integrating talent and knowledge management practices and principles. Talent and knowledge are considered as critical resources to develop the most valuable assets of an organization, to supports a sustainable competitive advantage and outstanding performance. It is well established that organizational knowledge assets, skills and competencies are critical to competitive success, outstanding performance and leadership development. However, niche skills or technical expertise and the roles requiring a higher degree of training or certification are areas worth exploring external hires to address critical needs to enhance innovation, productivity, and required leadership capabilities. The absence of these skills and expertise can significantly impact an organization's market edge and share. Therefore, managing the top performing knowledge workers is necessary for enhancing organizational performance and competitiveness. Suggestions were made based on the findings of the study. Public sector organizations need to:

- Develop a talent nurturing environment that encourages employees to pursue and embrace development programs and talent management framework that will provide a well-articulated roadmap.

### ***Integrating Talent and Knowledge Management Practices in the New Normal Environment***

- Develop a corporate culture that fosters knowledge sharing and integrates human resource strategies to support retirees' replenishment without significant loss in knowledge wealth.
- Develop and introduce knowledge sharing incentives, mentoring and coaching programs.
- Ensure that all the actions for effective implementation of succession planning and talent management reflects the government regulations, union expectations, corporate values and cultural norms.
- Assess the international initiatives and best practices in implementing succession planning and talent management as that will aid in developing sustainable programs.
- Identify key knowledge holders whose departure would detrimentally impact knowledge flows, implement plans to retain their knowledge and manoeuvre them in network positions where they can enhance knowledge sharing;
- Set-up effective training programs and internal team capabilities to identify potential candidates and build a robust and skilled talent pipeline.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Knowledge Management:** Harris (2020) described knowledge management as the explicit and systematic management of intellectual capital and organizational knowledge, as well as the associated processes of creating, gathering, validating, categorizing, archiving, disseminating, leveraging, and using intellectual capital for improving the organization and the individuals in it.

**Leadership Development:** Weiss and Molinaro (2005) describe leadership development as the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes.

**New Normal Business Environment:** The new normal business environment alludes to new ways of doing business and how we work due to circumstances such as economic crises and health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Public Sector Organization:** The public sector is usually comprised of organizations that are owned and operated by the government and exist to provide services to citizens. The public sector organization thus provide governmental services or any public services which benefit all of society rather than just the individual who uses the services including health care, the military, law enforcement, infrastructure, public education, water management, etc.



**Talent Management:** Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2012) describes talent management as a systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organization either in view of their ‘high potential’ for the future or because they are fulfilling business or operation-critical roles.

## Chapter 7

# Customer Perceptions of the Banking System Through Customer Relationship Management in Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

*CRM refers to a set of business tactics, tools, and procedures that aid in developing long-term connections between businesses and their customers. The purpose of this study is to give the initial findings of customer relationship management. Little research exists in this sphere concerning the banking sector. The sample size is 30 customers of a local privatized bank in Karachi, as it is the hub of financial activities in Pakistan. The survey is adopted from Lu and Shang's work with few changes. This study will analyze whether the instrument is reliable or not. Cronbach's alpha value has been found to evaluate the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. In this study, the levels of agreements and disagreements have been used to conclude the respective instrument's validity.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Because of unique reasons, internet banking technology in Asia, particularly in Pakistan, is less developed than in the Western world. Therefore, a thorough examination of future e-banking in Pakistan will need research in several areas. The Electronic Transactions Ordinance was passed in 2002 to help encourage e-commerce in Pakistan, and it gave electronic transactions legal protection (e-Transactions). It also emphasized Public-Key Infrastructure (PKI), a collection of software encryption technologies and services. As a result, it enables many businesses to safeguard their communications and commercial activities to the greatest extent possible.

The Government of Pakistan launched an information-technology (I.T.) and e-commerce program in early 2000. The banks were anticipated to take the lead in e-commerce at the time. On the other hand, the banking industry has been one of the top spenders on information and communication technology (ICT). E-government has made the most development in the e-commerce industry. Although some business-to-business (B2B) portals exist, they are primarily geared to provide information rather than facilitate transactions. Pakistan has made significant strides in the development of e-commerce. Optical fiber networks were previously exclusively available in big cities, growing exponentially.

Almost all well-known banks have invested in cutting-edge technology that will significantly improve their services and have made e-banking available to their clients. Customers may now access their accounts without having to visit their banks. Banks are increasingly providing services to make e-banking easier and more convenient for their clients. In Pakistan, however, this is not the case. People in Pakistan are still hesitant to utilize e-banking for various reasons. The e-banking industry has developed at a breakneck pace over the last decade. It has much more room to expand as banks continue to push consumers to conduct e-transactions such as utility bill payments, account information access, and money transfers.

CRM systems collect information from various sources (Bardicchia, 2020), such as a company's website, phone, email, live chat, marketing materials, and, more recently, social media (Shaw, 1991). They enable organizations to understand better their target audiences and how to best respond to their requirements, resulting in client retention and sales growth (Bain & Company, 2018). CRM can be utilized with existing, future, or former customers. Customer relationship management refers to the principles, methods, and regulations that a company uses while engaging with its customers. From the company's standpoint, this entire connection includes direct interaction with consumers, such as sales and service-related activities, forecasting, and the study of consumer patterns and behaviors (Investopedia, 2021).

This research analyzes customers' perceptions of the banking system through customer relationship management in Pakistan. This research aims to assist

academicians, banking, and other professionals. The study will be necessary to the banking sector as it will help enhance customer relationship management by adopting various strategies to remain competitive while providing services. It will also strengthen the existing subject matter and changes encompassing the banking sector regarding customer relationship management in a much broader context.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Earliest Banks**

According to historical data, the first banks in the ancient world were most likely religious temples. They were most likely founded in the third millennium B.C. Scholars have also claimed that these banks foresaw the development of money (Gilbart, 1919; Millet, 2002). Grain was first placed, but other products such as animals and agricultural machinery were added later. Valuable metals such as gold on compressed plates (i.e., simple to transport) and precious stones were eventually placed (Liverani, 2013). Temples and palaces were the safest places to keep money and other valuables since they were well-maintained and well-constructed as holy sites (Schmandt-Besserat, 1992). Additional records of loans were given by temple priests to merchants in Babylon in the 18th century B.C. Financial had progressed that rules controlling banking operations and processes could be justified by Hammurabi's Code, written around 1754 BC (Prince, 1904).

### **Banking in the Western World**

The London Royal Exchange was founded in 1565 (Walvin, 2011). Money-changers were already known as 'bankers' at the time. The term 'bank' was typically used to refer to their offices. Because its usage and connotations no longer have the same meaning it once did (Cameron, 2015; Davies & Bank, 2002). In the late 17th century, Amsterdam, London, and Hamburg were the most important commercial centers. Banking offices were often placed near trade hubs during the time. Individuals may also profit from a prosperous business—East India trade by acquiring these banks' bills of credit (Davisson & Harper, 1972). The price paid for the commodities was determined by the time it took for the ships to return (which was typically delayed) and the sort of cargo they carried (which often was not according to the plan formulated). The commodities market became very volatile as a result. Wars and conflicts often resulted in cargo seizures and shipwrecks (Parker, 1984).

## **E-BANKING AND ITS GLOBAL CONTEXT**

The rise of the internet and personal computers provided the banking sector with both an opportunity and a difficulty. Financial institutions have been using strong computer networks to automate millions of daily transactions for many years (Baker, 1999). Customers are now connected to the internet via personal computers (Hamel, 2000), as banks see comparable economic benefits from extending those same internal computerized procedures to home use. Customers can use internet banking to conduct financial transactions on a secure website run by their retail or virtual bank.

Modern, highly industrialized, technology-driven economies are today exposed to more significant dangers than they have ever been. Individuals must safeguard themselves against the vastly increasing personal risk. From the banks' perspective, online banking is projected to result in cost savings and increased competitiveness. The industrial sector is, without a doubt, one of the country's most important service sectors (The Financial Brand, 2018). This kind of service delivery is regarded as a vital instrument. It can keep current web-based consumers who want to use banking services wherever they want. Internet banking also allows banks to expand their client base by recruiting new customers from existing internet users.

Financial researchers have rated financial services websites as lagging behind other businesses regarding overall innovation over the previous five years. Internet banking sites now rank low in design and technological utilization compared to other retail websites. According to current financial data, bank clients are the most satisfied when they are free to choose when, where, and how they do their banking (Pedro et al., 2018). As a result, banks must devote more time and resources to strengthening client relationships and differentiating consumer experiences. It is a topic attracting the attention of numerous banks across the world.

According to financial analysts, banks may learn a few things from various non-bank businesses, demonstrating creativity in dealing with self-service alternatives for their consumers (Pedro et al., 2018). Internet technology can help banks improve their online services by adding features to enhance customer service interactions. It will provide them with more control over their e-banking experience as a whole. Because financial transactions entail transferring sensitive and personal data, customer trust is crucial in online banking platforms. Customers' faith in banks, particularly online banking, is eroding due to repeated incidents of internet banking security violations and complaints. As a result, any efforts to improve customer happiness and strengthen essential security control measures must consider concerns related to internet banking.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF RETAIL AND CORPORATE BANKING**

Retail banking refers to a bank branch that interacts directly with retail clients, whereas corporate banking refers to the banking industry segment that deals with corporate customers. With bank branches plentiful in most major cities, retail banking is the public's initial introduction to banking. On the other hand, corporate banking works directly with companies to provide deposits, credit, deposit plans, and checking accounts customized to corporations' needs rather than people (Majaski, 2019).

### **Retail Banking**

Retail banking is a type of financial institution that is open to the public. Market banking often referred to as personal banking, assists clients in managing their money by offering essential banking services, loans, and financial counseling. The phrase "retail banking" refers to a wide variety of goods and services, such as:

1. Credit and Debit cards
2. Automobile finance
3. Accounts for checking and savings
4. Mortgages
5. Deposit certificates
6. Services for foreign currency and remittances
7. Credit lines, including home equity lines of credit (HELOCs) and other personal credit products

Retail banking customers can additionally receive the following services, which are often offered by another branch or subsidiary of the bank:

1. Stock brokerage (discount and full-service)
2. Private banking
3. Insurance
4. Wealth management

The degree of personalized retail banking services provided to clients is influenced by their income level and duration of affiliation with the bank. For example, a teller or customer service representative would generally assist someone with little financial resources. Still, an account manager or private banker would handle the financial requirements of a high-net-worth entity (HNWI) with a lengthy history with the bank. In comparison, physical branches are still necessary to express the sense of solidity and continuity in banking. Retail banking is now the field of banking most

impacted by technology, thanks to the proliferation of automated teller machines (ATMs) and the prevalence of online and mobile banking (Majaski, 2019).

## **Corporate Banking**

Corporate banking serves a diverse spectrum of clients, from minor to medium-sized local businesses with a few million dollars in sales to global corporations with billions of dollars in earnings and offices across the world. Since the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 separated the two disciplines, the term was first used in the United States to distinguish commercial banking from investment banking. Although that regulation was repealed in the 1990s, most banks in the United States and abroad have been providing corporate and investment banking services under the same umbrella for many years (Majaski, 2019). Corporate banking is a crucial source of revenue for the majority of banks. However, being the largest provider of consumer loans, it is also the source of daily loan write-downs. Corporations and other financial organizations can benefit from the following commercial bank products and services:

1. Loans and other credit products
2. Treasury and cash management services
3. Equipment lending
4. Commercial real estate
5. Trade finance
6. Employer services

Commercial banks' investment banking sections provide complementary services to their corporate customers, such as wealth management and bond underwriting.

## **Special Considerations**

The banking industry is critical to the economy at home and internationally. First and foremost, individuals and businesses deposit funds into savings accounts, which banks can then lend to others. Banks also help in the production of wealth, the creation of finance, and the facilitation of commerce. The financial market, which includes retail and commercial banking, is essential for any economy. When banks have problems, it harms the economy. Take the financial crisis, for example. The U.S. housing bubble caused the situation, and banks and financial institutions worldwide have excessive exposure to derivatives and shares based on U.S. home values. As a result, banks found it more difficult to lend money to one another or businesses. It brought the global banking and credit system to a near-standstill, culminating in the worst global recession since the Great Depression (Majaski, 2019). Because of

the worldwide economy's near-death experience, authorities have renewed their focus on the largest banks deemed "too big to fail" because of their importance to the global financial system.

## **OVERVIEW OF PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY**

Pakistan's population is estimated to be 212 million. According to the IMF (2021), Pakistan ranks at 139 concerning the gross domestic product (at purchasing power parity) per capita, and it has the 44<sup>th</sup> largest nominal gross domestic output. Unfortunately, Pakistan's GDP per capita is lower than that of the South Asian area, at just US\$1260. Agriculture, textiles, chemicals, food processing, and other essential sectors make up Pakistan's semi-industrialized economy. The inflation rate is 8.7%, while GDP growth is just 1.5%.

The central bank of Pakistan, the State Bank, highlighted in the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2019-20 that food inflation has driven up total inflation. Borrowings from the State Bank by the government have reached dangerous levels, causing inflationary pressures. Pakistan has suffered from decades of internal conflicts of a social and political character, limited foreign investment, and a costly continuous struggle with its surrounding nations as an impoverished country. Pakistan's financial recovery has been fueled by IMF-approved government policies, considerable foreign aid, and reopened access to global markets during the past several years.

Rising energy prices, rising inflation, dwindling water resources, infrastructural shortfalls, and a lack of flaws in social services such as education and health are just a few of Pakistan's numerous difficulties. Economic and political instability, trade competitiveness, and human resource development are unquestionably crucial in the face of all of the issues above. Despite its terms and restrictions, the World Bank is willing to assist Pakistan in achieving its poverty reduction plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. The World Bank has also collaborated with Pakistan on many projects. This aid is also being provided in investment loans, technical assistance, and programmatic activities in Pakistan and South Asia, where rising global petroleum and food prices negatively impact many lives.

## **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

It is the relationship between a firm and its customers (Bardicchia, 2020; Samudro et al., 2020). A firm can only prosper when it has adequate knowledge of customers' needs (Gil-Gomez, 2020). Therefore, CRM aims to improve and deliver the best possible customer service (Allwood, 2019; Solomon, 2020). In 1983, Berry laid



the foundation of CRM by introducing relationship marketing (Ryals & Payne, 2001). Further researches have been conducted on this concept so that multiservice organizations are attracted and maintain a better relationship between customers and organizations (Andrew, 2019; DiJulius, 2019). Companies employ various techniques, strategies, and technology to manage and analyze customer interactions and data over the customer lifecycle. The objective is to strengthen customer service relationships, encourage client retention, and increase sales (Chai, 2020). CRM systems collect data from customers across many channels, or points of contact, with the firm, such as the company's website, phone, live chat, direct mail, marketing materials, and social media. CRM systems may also provide extensive information on consumers' personal information, purchasing history, buying preferences, and concerns to customer-facing employees.

## **BENEFITS OF CRM FOR A BUSINESS**

Customer relationship management systems may be readily modified to fit the demands of any type and size of an organization. Start-ups, significant companies, and verticals use customer relationship management software to improve sales, marketing, and customer service operations (Zoho, 2021).

1. **B2B:** B2B firms benefit from having a sales CRM in place for everything from keeping an account's contact information to staying on top of business agreements, payments, and reports. It enables them to build a single platform for their partners, vendors, and other business stakeholders to communicate.
2. **B2C:** Customer life cycles are shorter in B2C businesses; therefore, they need a more direct and less time-consuming solution. B2Cs may reach out to their consumers more simply with a multichannel CRM solution that includes capabilities like lead management, sending out quick surveys, marketing automation, and more.
3. **SMBs:** SMBs are not just small or medium businesses; they are also clever and contemporary enterprises. The popular belief that cloud CRM is too expensive and challenging for small businesses is untrue. They may always start with a free CRM solution to get their CRM feet wet. Small company CRM solutions give SMBs a level playing field and the opportunity to compete against larger companies in their sector by acting as a technical leveler.
4. **Enterprises:** Enterprise CRM systems with advanced CRM features such as workflow management, advanced analytics, territory management, sales, and marketing automation can help salespeople spend less time on mundane

tasks, focus more on their customers, and unify their operations across multiple geographic locations.

## **HOW CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT WORKS**

According to Bain and Company (2018), CRM works as follows:

1. Managers must first identify key “pain spots” in the customer relationship cycle. These issues significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty, and resolving them would result in greater financial rewards and competitive advantage.
2. Examine whether—and what type of—CRM data might alleviate such issues. Determine how much value such information would bring to the firm.
3. Choose the right technological platform and estimate the costs of deploying it and educating staff on utilizing it.
4. Examine if the advantages of CRM data exceed the costs associated.
5. Create incentive schemes to encourage employees to engage in the CRM initiative. For example, many firms have learned that CRM success may be improved by realigning the company away from product divisions and a customer-centered structure.
6. Keep track of CRM’s progress and effect. Maintain a close eye on critical personnel’s engagement in the CRM program. In addition, implement measurement tools to track the increase in customer profitability due to CRM implementation. Once the data has been gathered, disseminate it widely among employees to urge them to participate in the program.

## **USAGE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT BY COMPANIES**

According to Bain and Company (2018), companies use CRM to:

1. Conduct market research on customers, if necessary, in real-time.
2. Increase the accuracy of sales projections.
3. Increase the efficacy of salespeople and customer service agents by rapidly coordinating information.
4. Allow sales reps to examine the economic effect of various product configurations before deciding on pricing.

5. Determine the impact of integrated marketing initiatives and the return on separate promotional programs, and redirect expenditure accordingly.
6. Provide product designers with information about consumer preferences and challenges.
7. Increase revenue by discovering and handling sales leads methodically.
8. Enhance consumer loyalty.
9. Create successful customer service programs.

## **CUSTOMER ACQUISITION**

Customer acquisition defines the process of attracting new customers to a specific brand, product, or service (Buttle & Maklan, 2019; Peppers & Rogers, 2016; Samudro et al., 2020). In marketing and advertising, there is a cost in this process, termed as ROI (return on investment) (Chapman & Feit, 2019; Solomon, 2020; Susanti et al., 2020). The purpose of customer acquisition is to gain as many customers as possible while spending less money and less effort (Andrew, 2019; Helgeson, 2017).

## **CONSUMER RESPONSE**

A company's positive or negative response or feedback relating to its services, product, and business ethics is called consumer response (Samudro et al., 2020). A company inquires about their service or product, or a customer himself gives the company feedback (Bardicchia, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). The input could be any letter regarding an issue or survey about the product or company (Peppers & Rogers, 2016). Customer response is an essential factor that can help maintain and improve a product and service (Chapman & Feit, 2019; Susanti et al., 2020). For instance, a company can send letters to its customers to acquire information on the ease of use of their product. If any automaker needs to know about his customer satisfaction, he could survey his vehicles.

A customer response could greatly benefit a company because a customer response could rectify the product's mistakes or enhance the existing quality (Solomon, 2020). For example, if it is not easy for customers to assemble a bookshelf, a company can gather the necessary data and improve the product. The company can then notify its assigned staff, i.e., engineers, sales managers, and other working departments, about customers' feedback, to take proper action (Morgan, 2019). Organizations can also value consumer responses because they can let their feedback about the product compel a company to modify it.

## **CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE**

Customer knowledge can be described as the discernment of customers and understanding their specific requirements (Bardicchia, 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Samudro et al., 2020). It is assumed that companies are aware of the needs of their customers. However, this could be problematic to critically analyze these needs (Chapman & Feit, 2019; Lizotte, 2017). Customer knowledge needs to be conspicuous everywhere throughout the organization to ensure that the customers' demands are satisfied (Allwood, 2019; Kotler & Kelle, 2011). Customer knowledge includes implicit and analytic knowledge about sales, customers' behavior, and other pertinent analytical data (Helgeson, 2017; Susanti et al., 2020).

## **CUSTOMER INFORMATION SYSTEM**

Customer Information System (CIS) is an in-depth customer relationship management application that allows the user to store unlimited data and codes (Susanti et al., 2020), including much-predefined information (Gardner, 2016; Liu et al., 2020). A CIS can increase responsiveness, productivity, information access, which can automate the business processes (Morgan, 2019; Samudro et al., 2020). From service requests to billing and collections, CIS can easily manage many characteristics of business operations. However, the requirements must be identified and prioritized based on business needs (Bardicchia, 2020; Hegelson, 2017).

## **CUSTOMER VALUE EVALUATION**

It is observed that multiple perspectives, criteria, and responsibilities have been elaborated in the definition and also elaborates the vastness and complexity of the conception of customer value evaluation (Buttle & Maklan, 2019; Gardner, 2016). Still, there is another area for the business, but the definition is more closely related to the customers (Liu et al., 2020; Lizotte, 2017). Customer value evaluation is a contemplative assumption of customer preferences and analysis of those product characteristics, attribute performance, and consequences (Susanti et al., 2020), resulting in achieving goals of different situations (Helgeson, 2017; Samudro et al., 2020). It leads to customer satisfaction and provides the best solution, further leading to customer loyalty, which could ultimately contribute to its profits (DiJulius, 2019).

## **CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

Consumer loyalty is a favorable relationship between a customer and a firm that continues over time. It motivates repeat purchases and convinces existing clients to prefer your business over a competition offering comparable advantages. Loyalty develops throughout time due to several pleasant contacts that foster a sense of trust. Not all interactions must be flawless. Customer loyalty can endure a few negatives, but too many will erode the connection's strength. One lens through which to see loyalty is via the lens of a brand. People become brand loyal when they identify with pleasant experiences, such as superior customer service, a sense of connection to the brand's values and ideals, or consistently excellent product quality (Qualtrics, 2021).

According to Sophia Bernazzani (2021), customer loyalty is something that any business should strive for. Given that acquiring a new client is more expensive than retaining an existing one, the notion of mobilizing and motivating your present customers to attract new ones – merely by promoting a brand — should thrill marketers, salespeople, and customer success managers equally. The following are the primary advantages:

1. **Increased Confidence:** Customer loyalty also builds a strong sense of trust between your brand and your consumers - when customers choose to return to your business regularly, the value they receive surpasses the possible benefits they might receive from one of your rivals.
2. **Increased Word-of-Mouth Recommendations:** Customers loyal to a brand convert and spend more time and money with that brand. These clients also spread the word about those businesses to their friends and colleagues, resulting in referral traffic and word-of-mouth marketing.
3. **Increased Wallet Share:** The term “share-of-wallet” refers to the amount of money spent by a consumer on a particular brand compared to the amount paid by the company's rivals. Customers loyal to a brand convert and spend more time and money with that brand. It results in a higher share of your wallet for you.

According to SendPulse (2021), it is critical to maintaining client loyalty because of the enlisted reasons:

1. It increases profitability.
2. Loyal customers generate more excellent conversion rates.
3. Customer loyalty contributes to the effectiveness of planning.
4. It is less expensive to retain an existing client than acquire a new one.
5. During the holidays, repeat clients spend more.

6. Customers that are loyal shop frequently.
7. Returning consumers spend more than new customers.

## **HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

- **H<sup>0</sup>**: There is no relationship between effective customer relationship management and perception of customer loyalty in Pakistan's banking sector.
- **H<sup>1</sup>**: There is a relationship between effective customer relationship management and perception of customer loyalty in Pakistan's banking sector.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The prospective study has adopted the survey method, and the questions were taken from Lu and Shang's (2007) work. This study is characterized in the following segments. The first segment is related to customer acquisition. Customer response has been analyzed; the third segment deals with customer knowledge. While in the fourth segment, customer information system has been studied. Finally, customer value evaluation has been interpreted.

### **Sampling Method and Size**

The convenience sampling method gathered data from 30 customers of a local privatized bank in Karachi, Pakistan, i.e., Bank AL Habib Limited (Gulistan-e-Jauhar Branch).

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The data was collected through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument also supported the reliability test, and SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

## **TABLE ANALYSIS**

The above-cited table shows respondents' background, i.e., sex, age, online banking usage, employment status, and education level. 70% of the respondents are male,

while 30% are female. 20% of the respondents are less than 25 years, while 50% are between 26-35 years, 10% are between 36-45 years, while the remaining respondents are 46 years and above, i.e., 20%. 80% of the customers avail online banking facility, while 20% do not. 47% of the respondents work for private organizations, 10% work in government organizations, 13% are self-employed, and 30% are either students or seasonally employed. Finally, only 20% of the respondents are intermediate. 50% are graduates, while the remaining 30% of the respondents have attained either a Master's or higher degree.

## **AGREEMENT LEVELS IN CRM PRACTICES**

### **Customer Acquisition**

The respondents believe their bank uses all possible strategies to attract new customers. However, customers are not sure about whether their bank is using this information for planning purposes or not.

### **Customer Response**

The majority of the customers are aware that their bank is rapidly responding to their problems and trying to meet their expectations, but few customers are unsure whether their bank does the same.

### **Customer Knowledge**

Respondents are sure that their bank encourages and convinces them to purchase its products and services. However, the customers do not know about the objectives and prospects of the bank.

### **Customer Information System**

The respondents agree that their bank protects their transactions and provides internet banking. However, they are unsure whether their bank uses new technology to improve communication.

### **Customer Value Evaluation**

The result shows that the respondents are confident with bank security and enjoy bank services.

## **CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

The data shows the correlation matrix that examines the correlations among the five dimensions of customer relationship management. The correlation was challenged on all dependent and independent variables, which shows the strength of their relationship. A correlation among the variables is positive, but it is not significant except for the strong positive relationship between customer value evaluation and customer acquisition (Here  $r = 0.794$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation is indicated by “r,” which means the correlation between independent and dependent variables is strong or weak. The data proves a weak relationship between the dimensions of customer relationship management. Hence every aspect must be considered and given extra attention to individual issues separately.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Because of time and financial constraints, the sample size is small and limited to a single bank limiting the overall scope of results. A mixed-method approach and a greater sample size can further explore the respective phenomenon in great detail.

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

With the internet’s growth, the e-banking system is now restructured. A growing number of innovations are moving to the digital realm every day, signaling a shift in attitude, industry prototypes, and cyber-security measures. Businesses that have been affected by the change expect that their banks’ services would positively help them. This expectation may be expressed in four ways: originality, simplicity, ease, and multichannel. It may also enable companies to request additional financial services without going through lengthy and complex procedures that rely on clients’ physical presence in banks. It might be interactive apps for smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, and other mobile devices. Finally, it may be a seamless multichannel approach that keeps clients engaged and in touch with institutions more frequently.

Users might think about numerous procedures that are altering due to discussions about the future of commercial organizations. Although modern banking technologies such as internet banking, mobile banking, and BitCoin are widely used, the growth of digital signatures, encryption, Blockchain, data security, and other security-related elements might also be linked to them. Technology developments have resulted in an all-digital world, and commercial interactions are increasingly being integrated into daily lives as they have become more convenient and easy. It may



be observed in the case of payments made with cell phones. The business area has evolved regarding information technology investment and commercial transactions involving products and services.

Customers should be informed about all of the advantages of mobile and e-banking. Foreign banks' service fees should be decreased to use their services and keep their accounts. Mobile banking services that are more personalized and feature-rich should be provided. Because mobile usage is on the rise, these services are insufficient, and this sector needs attention. Accessing the internet becomes difficult during power outages and repeated power outages; consequently, mobile banking might be helpful during this time.

Despite all the advances in CRM technology, a CRM system can quickly devolve into a glorified database for storing customer data without effective management. Data sets must be linked, disseminated, and structured so that users may find the information they want quickly. If data sets are not integrated and arranged in a single dashboard or interface, companies may struggle to obtain a single picture of the customer. When systems include duplicate customer data or obsolete information, problems emerge. Long wait times during phone calls, inappropriate technical support situations, and other issues can negatively affect customer experience. Before supplementing CRM data with other sources of information, firms should invest time cleaning up their existing customer data to minimize duplicate and incomplete entries.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Individuals' perceptions of banking vary depending on whether they conduct transactions for themselves or their employers, which is fascinating. Comparing one's opinions on private banking vs. banking for business reasons as a corporate customer might show some intriguing facts. As a result, a more detailed examination of the demographics and user's history would aid in determining how these factors impact corporate customers' decision-making and banking usage in Pakistan. Gender adaptability of technology, incident response planning in Pakistan, issues encompassing economic growth and stability in Pakistan, issues in the e-commerce sector of Pakistan, perceived and actual risk in e-commerce are all essential areas for conducting future research encompassing prospects of e-banking through the lens of customer relationship management in Pakistan using a qualitative, quantitative, or eclectic approach.

## **CONCLUSION**

The primary purpose of this study was to give initial findings on customer relationship management. Little research has been conducted in this sphere, particularly concerning the banking sector (in general) and Pakistan's banking sector (specifically). This research proposed a framework: customer acquisition, customer response, customer knowledge, customer information system, and customer value evaluation. The Cronbach's alpha values for the instrument show that the instrument has passed the reliability test, and hence it is valid. In addition, it offers better internal consistency of the scale items. The results also show that most respondents agreed with the respective statements. This study is crucial for the banks as it will provide them with essential information about maintaining better relations with their customers and increasing their valued customers via strengthening the relationship.

Pakistan has suffered from decades of internal conflicts of a social and political character, limited foreign investment, and a costly continuous struggle with its surrounding nations as an impoverished country. Pakistan's financial recovery has been fueled by IMF-approved government policies, significant foreign aid, and reopened access to global markets for several years. As a result, advancements in detecting technology and safety must be assured. The most advanced anti-fraud solutions employ big data technologies to execute new predictive models online, giving banks the ability to spot and prevent suspicious activity as it occurs. As a result, banks should use an e-banking system protected from clients. Security measures should be required at all levels to keep the fraud situation under control. Improved technology and powerful machine-learning algorithms would provide banks access to more advanced, dependable, and competitive systems, decreasing fraud.

Furthermore, providing financial services through the internet should be considered part of more extensive customer service and distribution plan. As a result, the relationship established might be a portal for product information distribution. In addition, these methods may also aid in the migration of consumers to the electronic banking environment. Finally, this has resulted in significant cost reductions for the different banks across Pakistan.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**B2B:** It is a transaction between two businesses, a wholesaler, and a retailer.

**B2C:** It refers to the process of a firm selling products and services directly to end-users or customers.

**Banking:** These are the services offered by a bank.

**Customer Relationship Management:** It is a method for businesses to understand their customers better and respond quickly—and in some cases, instantly—to changing customer preferences.


**E-Banking:** It is online banking, i.e., via the internet.

**E-Commerce:** Transactions conducted on the internet.

# Chapter 8

## Risk Management and Human Resources Management Strategies in Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

*The emerging spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted business organizations in various ways. Considering risk management, HRM should re-strategize in recognizing, assessing, and mitigating those risks. Further, the importance of HRM's role and strategies in maintaining, increasing productivity, and improving the quality of work life by emphasizing risk management can no longer be disputed. As a key player in organizations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, HRM shall incorporate new technologies and ICT in redesigning work systems, scheduling, staffing, and training, as well as reskilling the employees. In order to ensure a company does not lag behind in business, business organizations should be sensitive and quick in taking steps in handling the current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the authors highlighted three types of risks that have taken place in organizations, namely managing workplace diversity, staffing, and training; and toward the end of the chapter, the authors propose strategies for HRM to manage those identified risks.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The human lockdowns imposed to curb the current Covid-19 disease had affected businesses around the world. Organizations whose financial achievement relies highly on the production sector are facing challenges in maintaining business stability. The authors had suggested HR as a key role player in organizations that intend to manage risks during the Covid-19 pandemic by integrating new technologies, designing work systems, redesigning work systems, scheduling, staffing, and training the employees. This view of the author strengthens the importance of HR's role in an organization in increasing productivity and improving the quality of work life by emphasizing on risk management.

Human resources management (HRM) in an organization is crucial in managing a positive climate by ensuring employee satisfaction, morale, and high efficiency. Human resources management, in the modern context, encompasses the presence of employees, recruitment and selection of employees, training, advancement, assessment, and the granting of rights. HRM is a strategic, comprehensive and internally consistent approach to human management, which is the most valuable asset of the organization. HRM aims to ensure the superiority of enterprise by balancing the individual desires and corporate expectations of the employee's for the organization's growth and development (Ozkeser, 2019). HRM has two key goals which are to confirm that human resources are implemented in the most effective way possible in order to meet the company's goals, and to ensure that workers' desires and professional growth are fulfilled.

Furthermore, HRM is one of the most critical sources-that organizations would use to accomplish their objectives. At this viewpoint, employees are both an integral part of the operational process and the ultimate object of production. Today, no matter how good an organization's other material or physical resources are, its chances of success are low if its human resources are inefficient. With low labor motivation, it's difficult to meet productivity and quality goals. A motivated human resources in an organization contributes to a high-performance work system which is linked in achieving successful organizational goals. As businesses grow in organization, risks become inevitable. Due to the complexities of market circumstances and modern globalization, business players are trying to decide the best way to manage and track risks, as well as thinking beyond profit (Mohammed & Knapkova, 2016). There are many factors contributing to risks, especially rapid technological advancements (Luo, 1999), strong competition (White & Frame, 2004), dynamics in social, political and economic environment (Baldwin & Li, 2002), and methodological change has forced the organizations to establish a strong risk management system. Therefore, risk management plays the main role in facing the challenges in today's world.

The process of recognizing, evaluating, and managing risks for an organization's resources and earnings are known as risk management. Financial vulnerability, legal liability, strategic management errors, accidents, and natural disasters are only a few of the risks that could occur. Information technology security threats and data related risks, and for digitalized businesses, risk management techniques to mitigate them must become a top priority. As an effect, a risk management plan includes processes to elaborate and control threats for its digital assets which include proprietary corporate data, a customer's personally identifiable information (PII) and intellectual property. Any business or organization is vulnerable to unforeseeable, destructive events that may impact financially or bankruptcy. Risk management allows companies to prepare for the unexpected by lowering risks and costs before they arise. Risk management is a proactive method to understand and manage specific risky events and overall risk, improve performance and minimize risks by enhancing opportunities and quality. Risk management is concerned with the prediction of what could possibly go wrong, and steps to reduce disruption to a realistic level.

In this chapter, the objective of this writing is to identify the issues in HR management and the risk management that should be used to address those issues. as risk management is very important to face the challenges for every organization. In order to ensure that a company does not lag behind in business, organizations should also be sensitive to environmental problems and to be quick in taking steps to overcome current problems such as Covid-19 pandemic.

## **BRIEF BACKGROUND OF COVID-19**

As businesses are driven mostly on human connection and connectivity, the abrupt disruption caused by Covid-19 has significantly dropped the financial graph of most businesses. This has caused a stress on organizations especially whose financial goals are highly dependent on people or service related businesses. Retail businesses are now to immediately sought for online platforms as having customers in their stores would risk the exposure to Covid-19 infections despite precautionary measures and mass inoculations are in place.

The first recorded occurrence of collective pneumonia, started at the South China market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019 (Huang et al. 2020). The emergence of pneumonia cases with an unclear origin appeared in Wuhan at the end of 2019. The Director-General of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus denominated the disease as "Covid-19". On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 as the number of the involved countries rose to 114, inducing more than 118,000 cases and over 4000 deaths, the WHO made the call to declare the unknown disease as a pandemic. The period of Covid-19 symptoms felt by the patients to death, ranges from six to

forty-one days with a median of fourteen days. The length of time depends on the patient's age and the state of his or her immune system. By comparing patients over the age of 70 to those under the age of 70, it was found to be shorter. Fever, cough, and fatigue with fever, hemoptysis, diarrhea, and dyspnea are among the most common symptoms of Covid-19 disease (Wu *et al.*, 2019). The WHO suggested an incubation period for Covid-19 between two and ten days. According to some reports, the incubation period could be more than two weeks as a long incubation period could possibly indicate double exposure.

Various studies indicate that people who have been exposed to the pathogen should be monitored for 14 days. Age over seventy years, comorbidities such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, obesity, hypertension and male gender tend to be linked to high risks. Despite the seriousness of the clinical image, no scientifically validated theories have been found (Wu *et al.*, 2019). Some patients with Covid-19, whether suspected or confirmed, necessitate a hospital treatment. The treatment of such patients entails maintaining proper infection control as well as compassionate care. The researchers used noninvasive positive pressure ventilation and high-flow oxygen. People or patients with advanced disease often need oxygen therapy and it may occur for certain patients, necessitating intubation and mechanical ventilation.

The word prevention, since there is no successful cure for Covid-19, is the best practice so far. The following are the key steps to achieve this goal: first step is to wear face masks, second is to cover and use tissues if one is to cough and sneeze, third is to properly wash hands with soap or clean one's hands with at least 60% alcohol contained hand sanitizer, fourth is to avoid contact with sick people, fifth is to keep a safe distance from people and last but not least to prevent touching nose, eyes, and mouth with your own hands (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Surprisingly, the WHO released comprehensive instructions, which include the following step which is always clean your hands and thoroughly with when coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue, and stop rubbing your eyes, nose, or mouth and use alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. If you have a fever, cough, or difficulty in breathing, see a doctor as soon as possible. Stay informed and follow your healthcare provider's advice. Keep at least one meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and another person. For face masks it is recommended to use certified N95 or Filtering FacePiece 2 (FFP2) when conducting aerosol-generating operations, and when providing treatment in confirmed or suspected cases, to use surgical masks (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

## **RISK MANAGEMENT AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In the face of this crisis, play a very important role in ensuring that their business operations always run smoothly. Therefore, the various risks during the effects of this Covid-19 should be emphasized in the organization. Risks are present in almost every part of human life and vary for different people, but it is the knowledge and knowledge management that help people to eliminate risks (Gharehbiglo *et al.*, 2012). Risk is described as the probability of losing money or having a negative outcome as a result of taking a certain action. Uncertainty is the inability to predict what will occur in the future or coming days. The higher the level of uncertainty, the higher the risk. There is a risk-reward trade-off for each decision. When there's a chance of losing money (risk), there should also be a chance of making profit. Growers must choose between a variety of choices, each with varying levels of risk. Those options with the lowest risk can yield little benefit. High in to adapt with risk alternatives may generate the highest possible return, but they may also bring more risk than the producer is willing to take. The preferred and optimal choice must balance potential to gain profit and the risk of loss. It all leads back to leadership, and there are no simple solutions (Laurence *et al.*, 2013).

However, risks are not just hazards, they are uncertainties but can also create opportunities. And of course, these terms give different meanings. Briefly, the risk can be understood as the exposure or probability of occurrence of loss or gain. Risks are the possibility of danger, loss, injury or other adverse consequences and possible uncertainties that must be faced by people or organizations which arise from their ordinary jobs. In addition, Wang and William (2010) supported the definition and added that those uncertainties would give positive and negative effects to organizational goal. Risks are described as events that have a negative impact on results, whereas opportunities are defined as events that have a positive impact on success (Perminova *et al.*, 2008). The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) later issued an international standard for risk management, ISO 31000:2009, and defined risk as the effect of uncertainty on objectives.

Risk and uncertainty are often used interchangeably, and one can often be found in the other's definition. Risk and uncertainty will be described and used as separate issues of the same complex phenomenon and hazard management. Depending on the essence of the risk and the sense in which it is applied, risk is likely to be subjective. A hazard is a condition that has the potential to cause damage. The recognition of risk in relation to the hazard is sparked by the awareness that a situation may cause 'harm'. Risk can be described as a concerned with the perception of the nature of the harm caused by a threat.

Risk is a more complicated term than the combination of probability and impact. It contains some concerns relevant to the organization that are considered by the cognitive study, such as risk profile, which is a collection of risks that can affect all or parts of an organization. Second, refers to the overall amount and nature of risks that a company chooses to take, keep, or adopt. The third factor is risk assessment, which explains how people assess risks in the light of their beliefs and goals. Fourth, if a company is especially good at handling those forms of risks, it may be able to take on more risks in that category, or it may not have any appetite for risk in that category. Fifth, risk acceptance refers to an organization's ability to handle the full possible effect of a risk case. Sometimes, appetite falls well short of what is appropriate. The sixth aspect is risk capacity, which is the maximum amount of risk a company can take without breaching regulatory requirements. The seventh factor is risk retention, which takes into account stakeholders' conservative return expectations and low risk appetite, as well as risk tolerance, which is the amount of variation the entity is able to accept. (Prochazkova, 2017). All of these issues should be considered to assess the overall risk level of the organization.

To deal with this risk, the organization should know to control this risk by making the best risk management. The risk management taken should be appropriate to the problems faced by the organization today which is Covid-19. A meaningful target is one that is relevant, measurable, attainable, difficult yet doable, time-bound, written, and based on results. When all requirements of a particular measurable target are met, trust grows and satisfaction follows. An individual's capacity or willingness to bear or take risk has an effect on risk management strategies. If a measurable target is not met, critical review may be conducted and improvements made to increase the chances of success (Laurence *et al.*, 2013).

Setting goals has a number of benefits, including representing the company's principles, interests, resources, and expertise, creating a basis for all business and family decisions, establishing priorities for the allocation of scarce resources, and monitoring progress. Risk management is an organizational model that focuses on enhancing the efficiency of management processes by analyzing incidents that have yet to occur within the organization. Risk management, unlike most administrative systems, since it represents a unique perspective that cuts through planning and monitoring, performance management, and a variety of other areas, it overlaps with other internal controls (Ale *et al.*, 2010). As a result, risk management aids companies in achieving higher levels of service and product quality by supporting decision-making processes and anticipating challenges that can obstruct the achievement of strategic objectives.

In a strategy setting and around the company, risk management is a tool used by an organization's board of directors, management in organization, and other personnel to recognize potential events that can affect the entity, minimize risk to stay within

the entity's risk appetite, and provide equal trust that entity objectives will be met. In a nutshell, risk management's key aim is to preserve and reinforce the entity's principles, ethics, and sense of belonging, as well as the entity's tangible and intangible assets, corporate culture, leadership, and relationships, process effectiveness and performance, and resources for strategic goals, as well as stakeholder satisfaction. That is to say, risk management is a technique that can be used to accomplish a particular purpose (Ale *et al.*, 2010).

The infrastructure for providing, managing, and governing risk management in the enterprise is provided by a risk management process (system). As part of this framework, a company should develop a risk management mandate, which is the board's statement setting the risk management's course and goals, as well as establishing "who does what" and providing the appropriate authorization and resources. This is the primary mechanism by which the organization's board of directors involve the stakeholders in risk governance.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT AND HRM STRATEGIES**

Organizations intending to grow or sustain their businesses amid this Covid-19 pandemic should manage and track their current and possible risks by implementing effective Risk Management. HRM on the other hand aims to ensure in achieving organizational goals by balancing employee's needs with the organization's expectations on employees. The objective of this article is to identify the organizational risks and integrate the strategic approach of HRM to effectively manage the risks to continuously achieve the organizational goal.

Risk management must also consider risk policy, which outlines how risk management relates to the organization's overall strategy and associated goals. Risk policy concisely and clearly defines the organization's risk management requirements in the context of the organization's overall governance strategy. It takes into account both external and internal contexts, with a particular emphasis on the needs of critical stakeholders. It includes a risk appetite statement, a human resources training curriculum to help the risk management process and a risk evaluation criteria specification.

According to Harrington *et. al.*, (2017), risks management is an ongoing and flowing mechanism affected by people at all levels of a company, implemented in a strategic environment, applied throughout the enterprise, at every level and unit, and involved taking a portfolio view of risk at the entity level, structured to recognize possible incidents that may occur. If they occur, they will affect the entity's ability to manage the risk within its risk appetite, provide fair confidence to the entity's management and board of directors, and achieve objectives in one or more



separate yet overlapping categories. It captures vital principles and practices on how companies and other organizations manage risk and provides a foundation for use across industries and sectors. It concentrates on achieving a single entity's goals. It acts as a foundation for assessing the efficacy of enterprise risk management.

Risk management refers to the process of recognizing, analyzing, and eliminating the uncertainties that can obstruct change and growth; on the other hand, it refers to the process of identifying, analyzing, and removing the tensions that can block change and development (Ale *et al.*, 2010). The effectiveness of risk management is fundamental to modernization in National Statistical Organisations (NSOs); it is unique in that it is concerned with both organizational and manufacturing processes.

## **REVISITING HRM STRATEGIES IN FACING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Considering the above discussion, the following paragraphs elaborate the risk factors during Covid-19 pandemic especially in the context of:

1. Managing Workplace Diversity
2. Staffing
3. Training
4. Mental Health / Wellness

Strategic HRM is the essential element of the company's organizational performance, and goal achievement in the organizations' structure. Because of the rapid changes and challenges that organizations face, HR strategic risk management planning is becoming more important to assist organizations in meeting these challenges. It also entails evaluating and defining the organization's requirements, which should be enforced.

### **Managing Workplace Diversity**

At the exact times as Covid-19 threw regular work habits into disarray, it accelerated previously established patterns concerning the work is moved to an online or simulated world. However, one significant difference is that, in the past, Work-From-Home (WFH) was also attentive to employee needs, while Covid-19 pressured many employees to conform to the mandatory WFH. Acceptance and appreciation are critical elements of workplace diversity. It means acknowledging that we are all unique and appreciating our differences. These differences may be based on racial, ethnic,

gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical capacity, religious, political, or other ideologies (Harold, 2012). Gartner (2020) reported that based on a survey of 229 human resources (HR) departments indicated more than 80% of their employees are working from home during the early stage of the pandemic and a substantial long-term increase is expected after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile at the workplace, diversity refers to the broad range of differences between employees in a company. Gender, race, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational structure, education, context, and more are all factors in diversification. Not only do people's views of themselves and others vary, but so do their perceptions of others. Their experiences influence their interactions. Diversity management is a mechanism for creating and maintaining a supportive work atmosphere. Individuals' similarities and differences are respected to achieve their full potential and contribute to its strategic goals and objectives. Human resource professionals must or should be dealt efficiently with problems such as communication, adaptability, and transition in order for a diverse community of workers to work effectively as an organization. As a result of the growing number of employees who are forced to work from home, many face difficulties such as a lack of room in their homes to attend to work. Employees who live with others, for example, face a greater range of challenges than those who live alone because they should manage other people's space as well. Employees also encounter trouble in drawing a line between work and non-work activities (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Even though WFH seems appealing, still there is lacking in the separation between work and home and thus such a vague may lead to a dispute.

Managing workplace diversity seeks to build and sustain a supportive work atmosphere in which individuals' similarities and differences are respected, helping everyone achieve their full potential and contributing to its organization's strategic goals and objectives. Successfully managing diversity would assist companies in nurturing creativity and innovation and thereby tapping hidden capacity for growth and enhanced competitiveness. Diversity management ensures that all employees can achieve their full potential, develop as individuals, and contribute to the company. It recognizes that people with a wide range of experiences and perspectives can bring new ideas and perspectives to improve job efficiency and the quality of products and services.

Due to the high level of the problem faced in managing workplace diversity in the organization, HR should take some risk management to adapt to this risk. Organizations recommend that employers raise the legal overtime limits, allowing all employees to work more hours by considering raising the limits across positions and categories. As a result, organizations raise overtime pay, raising the hourly wage and/or extending the overall number of hours that workers can be charged.

The organization also needs to send everyday routine tasks and other simple jobs to other units that are not as affected by the increased workload to help minimize backlogs. Employees should be given instruction, encouragement, and appreciation. The support workers stay in their unit, on their property, and under the same hierarchy, so this is not mobility. Extend the business's opening or operating hours and days to accommodate shift work and enable workers to work during off-peak hours. For example, employees who work very early in the morning, after five o'clock or during the weekend and also use shift work, which divides workers into two or more on-site shifts to spread out their presence over time and ensure sufficient physical separation, such as on-site hours, which may be paired with telework.

## **Managing Staffing**

The operation involving recruiting, choosing, and retaining qualified people to gain organizational goals or objectives is referred to as staffing. One of the most obvious ways for businesses to increase their human capital stock is through the people they employ. Staffing is described as the human resource management process of finding, hiring, recruiting and retaining people who have the requisite expertise, talents, and abilities to perform the duties of now and future jobs in an organization. Staffing is the process by which businesses find and hire employees who are of higher quality and more generic human resources. In this way, the two stages of the staffing process may be called recruiting and selection.

Searching, finding, assessing, and assigning individuals to work is the method of employee staffing. Organizational success is good at the implementation of an efficient staffing mechanism. When dealing with an external candidate, a sophisticated screening process evaluates the candidate's suitability for the job and decreases the degree of ambiguity in the company. A strict recruitment and selection process instills a sense of elitism in those selected, encourages high-performance expectations, and sends a message about the value of people to the organization. HR faces problems in creating staffing in the organization. This is because the Covid-19 problem that occurs today has made it very difficult for organizations to initiate staffing activities—for example, hiring new employees, evaluating employee performance, assigning tasks in the organization to employees and more. This is because employees mostly have to work from home. It is difficult for HR to provide information on current tasks to preserve the organization's objectives. Individual and organizational incompatibility can obstruct the achievement of required performance standards. At the same time, an innovative staffing process can add workers to the company who complement the skills of current HRM and fit it into the established interpersonal method, all while saving time and costs in training.

The quality of an organization's recruitment and staffing process is highly dependent on the efficiency of its persons in-charged. Such recruitment and selection are viewed as critical factors in influencing organizational performance by achieving the organization's strategic objectives (Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011). However, in the face of the current pandemic, organizations have difficulty in hiring because most of the hiring has to be done online. This situation is quite difficult for the employer to recognize the perspective of an employee who is being hired because it is done online. The primary objective of the staffing process is to achieve the appropriate number and standard of workers at the lowest possible costing. Finding a suitable candidate can be complicated, but in the end, the company's credibility depends on the people it hires to do their jobs. Due to tight labor markets, job seekers in vocational, information/knowledge-based, technological, and service jobs have many options for employers. Creating a pool of high-quality, qualified candidates to choose the best among them is known as recruitment (Jovanovic, 2004; Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011).

Following recruitment comes from selection, which is only successful if an increasing number and quality applicants show interest in working for the company. This dilemma is compounded by the fact that many companies are having difficulty recruiting a diverse workforce. The mechanism by which an entity selects a person with the ability, expertise, abilities, and other characteristics that will assist it in achieving its objectives from a pool of applicants is referred to as selection (Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011). Due to the high level of the problem faced in staffing for an organization, in order to respond to this risk, HR takes specific risk management measures, such as hiring temporary or interim workers to help understaffed facilities and considering partial or -complete e-recruitment procedures. To avoid running out of personnel for priority missions, keep the non-priority workload to a minimum. At the same time, identify critical roles, such as front-desk workers, that are needed for on-site work and create a contingency plan to ensure that alternative skilled personnel can fill in if regular employees cannot work. Thus, the regular workload meeting in the early morning to redistribute workers based on the current situation. Reorganize tasks and duties following goals and the number of on-site employees. Non-essential or urgent programs and events should be stopped, deferred, or reduced. Ensure that direct communication resources, such as WhatsApp, Viber, or others, are accessible for all employees to notify supervisors/teams in advance if they cannot come to work. Early alerts enable managers to respond and reorganize or assign workload differently.

Ensure adequate leadership and supervision, which involves asking the manager to evaluate teleworking employees based on their performance and deliverables rather than their working hours or immediate availability; use a survey to determine how

employees or workers feel about teleworking. The challenges they face, so the company can find survey templates and the results can be shown right away. Encourage staff to develop self-care plans to avoid burnout by promoting healthier lifestyles such as diet, rest and sleep, physical activity, and social interaction with family and friends while taking adequate precautions. Assist workers in developing a work schedule to effectively distribute workload and reduce exhaustion, and enable managers, front line personnel, and those in related roles to “resolve” challenging circumstances involving users or subordinates, thus reducing employee tension during operations. Employees should be recognized, for example, by recognizing and highlighting outstanding efforts. Listen to the workers’ or staff’s wishes and concerns, and assist. Ensure visible leadership provides guidance and support-and consistent goals and outcomes by concentrating on objectives rather than time working.

## **Managing Training**

In the field of human resource capacity and competency development, training is considered fundamental. It is very much concerned with learning, developing and practicing all acquired knowledge and skills to the desired level. Training is also seen as a platform and a systematic process that develop employees’ competencies to execute their jobs correctly, effectively, and conscientiously. This also refers to the teaching and learning activities undertaken for the purpose of helping employees to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes needed by a particular job and organization. Considering the new normal, organization shall incorporate elements of mechanization, computerization, and automation as well as innovation and creativity to enhance numerous changes that necessitate qualified personnel. Organizations should be educated to ensure that they have access to the most up-to-date technologies and information. Due to modern inventions, technological advancements, and diversification, many businesses have become highly diverse. This improvement has increased the teamwork issues. Thus, preparation and analysis of training needs has become more critical, especially in dealing with the new normal complexities and uncertainties.

Increased virtual training as a result of Covid-19 may have a risk of helping pro-social behavior. While physical distance between co-workers may reduce helping behaviors in the short term, previous research has shown that people should be more confident in asking for assistance because people are more likely to help and provide better quality support when asked (Newark, Bohns, & Flynn, 2017). Increased virtual training as a result of Covid-19 may have a risk on helping pro-social behavior, as it serves to the greater benefit, doing good, charitable work, volunteering, or sharing one’s resources and time which benefits the greater crowd.

Moreover, the management team should to a level best maintain a good human relations, and ensure the rapport with all employees is always harmony. There is often a disconnection between an employee's current specifications and the demands of the company. Training is needed to close this distance. Regardless of previous experience or qualifications, an employee's profile can not necessarily match the position and organization's specifications. Regardless of previous experience or qualifications, an employee's profile can not necessarily match the position and the organization's specifications. There is often a disconnection between an employee's current specifications and the demands of the company. Training is needed to close this gap.

With months of experience working from home, both employers and workers have felt the effects in the short term, and will continue to feel the effects in the long term as a result of preparation and growth for the company. Previous research has shown that virtual or online training lacks the communication richness that face-to-face teams have. Global economies have realized that their supply chains and other market fundamentals are incredibly vulnerable and must be revisited. Many have even been forced to restructure their corporate models for months at a time, resulting in many of the changes being increasingly entrenched in day-to-day operations.

For various reasons, several businesses in the past have refused to use remote and on-demand training solutions. Organizations were forced to move training and other operations to a remote and on-demand format or not have them at all, as almost all private activities were closed for months. The fact that this format cannot achieve direct and indirect training interaction is a common concern. This situation has made it difficult for employees to conduct their training online, and as a result, it may be slow to provide adequate training to employees.

Due to such issue, the organization takes risk management by making a self-schedule that allows workers to create their custom work schedules, allowing them to manage work and family obligations better while adhering to specific requirements and limits. The company also offers workshops to improve job satisfaction, instructing managers and superiors to pay attention to motivation by providing input and ensuring proper recognition. Encourage stressed workers to take advanced annual leave and encourage them to work flexible hours to increase their activity, job satisfaction, morale, and motivation. Encourage workers to participate in training and career development and provide employees with well-being training to reduce the risk of stress or burnout during training and operations. Managers and supervisors should receive training in guiding remote employees and promoting collaboration among on-site and teleworkers.

Here are some strategies which already serve a purpose which is offering early reflection on incidents, injuries, and occurrences that could result in breakdowns, discontinuities, or even impossibilities in maximizing established capacity, putting

the entity's long-term viability in jeopardy. Beyond this objective, strategy entails devising ways to more or less continuously recreate a company's potential, anticipate and then direct the necessary investments to regenerate products and techniques, or open markets that enable the company's long-term viability, growth, and achievement of its vision and goals.

Although risk management is often based on finding and closing discrepancies between installed capacity and realized potential. Besides that, the foundation of managing the capacity of managers to diagnose a situation and ensure that the business plan is always modified with knowledge and qualification of what is in practice is guided by the control strategy.

For a variety of reasons, several businesses in the past have refused to use remote and on demand training solutions. The fact that this format cannot achieve direct and indirect training interaction is a common concern. Organizations were forced to move training and other operations to a remote and on-demand format, or not have them at all, as almost all private activities were closed for months. This situation has made it difficult for employees to conduct their training online and as a result it may be slow to provide effective training to employees.

## **Managing Mental Health/Wellness**

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the general public's mental health, and that impact is continuing. Travel restrictions and social restraints have exacerbated our sense of isolation and despondency. Working from home presents a unique set of challenges, and for critical employees, the fear of contracting the virus exacerbates their nervousness and stress. Long-term changes to business practices will be a critical challenge for businesses to overcome in the coming years, even more so given the high expectations their customers and clients have of them. Travel restrictions and social restraints have exacerbated our sense of isolation and despondency. Working from home presents a unique set of challenges, and for critical employees, the fear of contracting the virus exacerbates their nervousness and stress. Given that many employers anticipate a shift to remote working soon, addressing mental health issues will be one of the most significant challenges businesses face in the coming years.

Human beings are becoming isolated due to their inability to obtain the assistance and resources necessary to meet their basic needs. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), workers who are stressed or anxious at work and experience a sudden loss of physical connection with their co-workers may feel they have nowhere to turn if they have experienced a sudden loss of physical connection with their co-workers. Further, the association stated that workers who are stressed or anxious at work and experience a sudden loss of physical connection with their

co-workers may feel they have nowhere to turn if they have experienced a sudden loss of physical connection with their co-workers. It is critical to remember that establishing a solid support network becomes more difficult as one ages, which is critical for maintaining good mental health.

Distinguishing between working from home and being a homebody successfully is a difficult skill to master. Workers without access to a home office are tempted to work longer hours, while those with access to a home office are tempted to blur the lines between home and work. As a result, working from home can increase workload, which can be challenging to manage if they are constantly on the road. Employees are devoting an increasing amount of time to these meetings as the frequency of informal catch ups at work declines. Additionally, video meetings report feeling exhausted and disconnected following the meeting, which is ironic given the nature of video meetings.

The difficulty of seeing and hearing the faces of those in the audience during large meetings is exacerbated further by the large audience size, which makes it difficult for the speaker to see and hear the faces of those present. This increases workplace stress and anxiety, which has a detrimental effect on employees' overall health and productivity throughout their careers. When an employee is physically ill at work, it is usually immediately apparent because they take more time off or are less productive than healthy. Additionally, managers must be on the lookout for signs that something is wrong with their organization, which can be challenging given how many people are uncomfortable discussing their psychological well-being with co-workers. As a manager, they have the authority to take steps to reduce the likelihood of mental health issues occurring at work. They should possess the authority and responsibility to act in this manner.

Generally, the average time required to recover from mental illness is between three and four months; however, many employees cannot take sick leave or receive other benefits and assistance during this period. While such risks should be considered when providing relief to employees, the organization should also consider them when developing a strategy to reduce the likelihood of a future occurrence. It is critical for employees who work from home to have strong time management skills, as significant differences exist between the work environment and the home environment. To maintain the work-life balance, strict policies requiring employees to complete their tasks within the confines of the office will be implemented. Additionally, managers can conduct brief virtual meetings rather than lengthy ones, which benefits employee morale by lowering the risk of burnout.



Table 1. HRM strategies in dealing with identified risk area

Risk area	Risk description	HRM strategies
Managing workplace diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When returning to work on site, organizations should take steps to reduce health risks by ensuring safety and comforting of employees, and preventing overcrowding in the workplace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enlarge workplace space and ensure physical distances with isolation tables to make sure small distances, expand workspace by using other room availability (meeting rooms, canteens, warehouses). Make use of an open environment for lunch to avoid indoor risks. Borrow or rent more space to expand workspace, establish appropriate procedures for entry and exit points, halls, and other areas, use stairwells and elevators, and extend the hours of service of the canteen and cafeteria.</li> <li>To ensure that there aren't too many workers in the office at the same time, manage with combining work at premise and telework (days or hours) and considering by setting an occupancy rate per building or per floor. For instance, a maximum occupancy of 40%.</li> </ul>
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization has a problem in dealing with the process of hiring applicants and selecting prospective employees.</li> <li>Since some processes are often more extensive, expensive, and time-consuming than others, they have an effect on an organization's performance.</li> <li>It is to make sure that employees are fit with the culture of the organization but during the Covid-19, the organization had a problem ensuring the employees are really fit with the goal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to minimize trips to the workplace, an option for hiring employees is to replace personal interviews with phone or video interviews over Skype or Zoom.</li> <li>HR should prepare the suitable questionnaires to be used for an online pre-selection before a first interview for online recruitment.</li> <li>In order to improve the online recruiting process, businesses should understand the perspectives of various stakeholders.</li> <li>Professional certification questions can be included in an online questionnaire.</li> <li>An online questionnaire can be used to validate a candidate's knowledge level, and surveys can be used to learn more about their personality.</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees have difficulty in understanding the training they need to do. In the short term, physical distance between coworkers can reduce helping behaviors.</li> <li>Because of high levels of WFH and owing to coronavirus related absences and/or increased workload, there are currently insufficient employees working on-site to complete all activities.</li> <li>Employees' regular attendance is not entirely predictable due to coronavirus-related conditions, which can result in absences in sensitive positions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR should concentrate on creating a culture of lifelong learning, and training programs should be located in a single, digital location that workers can easily access. It's also a good idea to offer workers, whether they're remote or not, access to a variety of learning opportunities and training based on their time, preferences, level, and skills.</li> <li>Propose that the staff already on the job work more hours to cope with the additional workload. These extra hours allow available employees to finish tasks that would otherwise be completed by absent colleagues, reducing bottlenecks.</li> <li>Increase overtime pay with HR must be aware that increasing the hourly rate or extending the maximum amount of hours that can be charged is just a temporary measure, and they must also be aware of the costs.</li> <li>Enable workers with family commitments to have personally customized work schedules to make on-site work more convenient. For example, work at premise just in the afternoons or on certain days a week to accommodate childcare during school closures.</li> </ul>

## **SOLUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are some strategies which already serves a purpose which is offering early reflection on incidents, injuries, and occurrences that could result in breakdowns, discontinuities, or even impossibilities in maximizing established capacity, putting the entity's long-term viability in jeopardy. Beyond this objective, strategy entails devising ways to more or less continuously recreate a company's potential, anticipate and then direct the necessary investments to regenerate products and techniques, or open markets that enable the company's long-term viability, growth, and achievement of its vision and goals.

Although risk management is often based on finding and closing discrepancies between installed capacity and realized potential. Besides That, the foundation of managing the capacity of managers to diagnose a situation and ensure that the business plan is always modified with knowledge and qualification of what is in practice is guided by the control strategy.

Table 1 below highlights some risk areas, brief description and strategies that could be considered by HRM management team in dealing with such risk.

### **Strategies in Managing Workplace Diversity**

Risk management is a term that is thrown about a lot. To different people in different industries, it means different things. Likelihood management is essentially the process of identifying loss exposures within an operation and determining how to best eliminate, control, or otherwise lower the risk of a negative event having a negative impact on the firm. Risk reduction is accomplished through policies and procedures or contractual risk transfer to a third party, usually an insurance company. The best way to eliminate risk is to prevent it.

Workers are encouraged or required to work from home if the nature of their job allows it as part of most Member States' physical distancing policies. Many of these workers may be teleworkers for the first time, and their working environment is likely to be lacking in many ways compared to their regular workplace. The degree to which the home environment can be modified varies. The extent to which the worker's home environment can be modified depends on the worker's situation as well as the time and resources available to make changes.

Here's some advice on remaining safe and healthy while working from home, although it's really for individuals who telework on a regular or long-term basis. Here are some tips to help workers who haven't been able to adequately prepare their home office reduce their dangers. Conduct a risk assessment with the help of teleworkers and their representatives. Allow workers to temporarily move equipment

from their workplace to their house if they cannot fetch it themselves, consider arranging its deliver. Computer, monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer, chair, footrest, or light are examples of such items.

Keep track of who takes what and when normal work resumes to minimize confusion. Assist teleworkers in setting up a home workstation that incorporates appropriate ergonomics, such as good posture and frequent movement, to the extent practicable. Encourage employees to stand up, move about, and stretch on a regular basis every 30 minutes or so. Assist teleworkers in the usage of IT hardware and applications. Tele and video conferencing facilities may become indispensable in the workplace, but they can be difficult to use for employees who aren't used to them. Ensure effective communication at all levels, including those who work from home.

This includes everything from top-level management's strategic knowledge to line managers' responsibilities, not to mention the significance of regular social interaction among co-workers. The former can be addressed through scheduled online meetings, while the latter can be fostered through online chats or "virtual coffee" gatherings. Do not underestimate the dangers of workers feeling lonely and under pressure, which can lead to mental health issues if they are not supported. It's critical to have effective communication and support from your management and co-workers, as well as the ability to retain informal touch with them. If a gradual return to work has been commenced, consider holding regular staff or team meetings online or rotating which employees can be present at the workplace.

Be aware that your employee may have a teleworking partner or children who require care because they are not in school or who require remote access to complete their schoolwork. Others may be responsible for elderly or chronically ill people, as well as those who are confined. Managers will need to be flexible in terms of working hours and employee productivity in these conditions, and workers will need to be aware of their knowledge and adaptability. Assist employees in establishing healthy work-life balance by explaining explicitly when they are expected to be working and available.

## **Strategies in Managing Staffing**

There are a variety of recruitment methods available as well. In this context, approaches refers to strategies or procedures for carrying out the recruitment process. Because recruitment is a sophisticated and data-intensive process, the volume of applications and interest can be daunting, especially in light of the global economy and Internet job boards. The recruitment procedure could be handled by internal staff. Human resources personnel at larger companies may be in charge of the project. Recruitment may be delegated to line managers in the smallest companies.

For some firms, outsourcing recruitment to an external vendor may be the best option. Recruiting talent is also done through employment agencies. They keep a pool of possible employees and place them according to the employer's needs. For executive and professional positions, executive search agencies are used. To discover the ideal fit, these companies use advertising and networking.

Job listings are frequently communicated via internet job boards and job search engines. In this century, social media is now playing an important part in recruitment. Perhaps the most recent development in recruitment is social networking, in which websites such as LinkedIn allow companies and potential employees to communicate and share information. Knowledge, skills, and abilities which generally known as KSAs, are basic conditions in most employee selection system. Employee-selection system has to use evidence-based processes in identifying the most qualified candidate either among existing employees or new recruits.

Some of the common selection tools include the ability tests cognitive, physical, or psychomotor, knowledge exams, personality assessments, organized interviews, rigorous biographical data gathering, and work samples. The HRM department is normally in charge of developing and implementing such screening systems. Rather than establishing personnel-selection methods internally, some other organizations may outsource the activity by hiring a third-party or consultants that specialize in doing so. Because of the modern nature of work, individuals may need to reassess the process of making professional choices and decisions more frequently than in the past. Lastly, managing "boundless" careers refers to the skills required by employees whose work extends beyond the confines of a particular business, a work style typical among artists and designers, for example. Employees must take charge of their own development in order to preserve and improve their employability while employers take on less responsibility. A self-report measure was also used to evaluate employee staffing. This was an initial conclusion of how subjective employee experience affects hiring decisions. Future studies of perceptual assessments should be combined with more objective tests, such as results from HRM departments using an online survey during the implementation of the new norm.

## **CONCLUSION**

Risk is the common denominator of all human decision-making. The aim of these decisions is not to eliminate risk, but to consider it and ensure that sufficient compensation is provided for the risks taken. Quantify, analyze and handle such risks. The researchers have great responsibility that a risk management function should be developed through which risks would be identified and investigated. The managers have to encounter several challenges associated with knowledge

management including the risks of employee's resignation or retirement, knowledge drain, difficulties in knowledge recording, and mapping of knowledge. It is very much needed that decision makers must benefit from risk management.

The overall coverage of this chapter shall add value and provide valuable insight into the organization's current risk management activities. The majority of workers are confident in their ability to deal with risk management implemented by HR during the covid-19 pandemic, while a few workers have adjusted, and are able to work and exploit a supportive workplace, some have not. Managers or HR departments should use active risk management to monitor rather than only putting blame for failure. The analytical approach to identifying, evaluating, and quantifying risks is combined with the administrative approach to minimizing, monitoring, and managing the risk in active risk management.

Risk management is critical for any company, whether or not it is facing risks. Risks should be established early and actively in an effective risk management strategy by engaging and communicating with relevant parties. Risk management also assists in determining various methods and measures to control such risks, as well as assuring the company that it will be able to develop and execute an efficient management strategy to reduce or avoid losses. Risk management can be described as an organization's decision on how to deal with or react to various risks that may arise. An excellent risk management strategy should explicitly state the tactics that would be used to identify and confront the company's risks and weaknesses, as well as potential solutions to the problems.

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# Chapter 9

## COVID-19: Impact on Recruitment Processes

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The COVID pandemic has a major impact on the business world and workplaces. The effect is visible across all the industries, businesses, and job positions. Bringing about drastic changes in our means of communication, the way we work, transportation, and other daily activities, COVID-19 has generated changes in the basic values and practices of recruitment of the personnel. It has placed us in the position of adapting and compromising with the situation in all aspects. Whatever the situation, the world and its business have to keep running. Today companies are busy finding ingenious ways of recruitment, keeping the social distancing rules in mind, to meet the recruitment goals of their organizations and run business as usual. In this chapter, the author is going to discuss the steps taken by organizations to continue their recruitment process across the pandemic and how they are different from recruitment in normal days.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

At present, COVID-19 has imposed an unexpected shift to inaccessible and new approaches of work besides many have acquired the hard and challenging way that workplace skill is critical for the existence in the long run. In reaction to this, the hiring teams have accepted adaptable and cooperative means to reconstruct their recruitment plan, maintain the lights on and the affair moving onward.

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The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a turmoil all over which has made every task, be it easy or complex, very difficult. Every aspect of business process now has become either a challenge or a daunting risk. The corona virus catastrophe has caught all of us unaware, and its adverse impact has been observed by organizations of all statures and level globally. Owing to the adversities of the situation some unwanted and unusual decisions has been implemented at most of the places such as: hiring, layoffs, policy changes, and unfortunately some enterprises were shut down permanently leaving the employees in dilemma.

COVID -19 has a huge impact on the way the companies worked. Given the current situation, the solution lies in shifting to a new set up completely. But, as we all know any change needs sufficient time and labour and switching of instantly may cause slowdown of the recruitment process. Given the fact, we have to change our way of working, we have to reflect keenly as to what areas need change and also what skills and experience is essential to maintain the sanctity of the work process at a place.

Every business has their own way to respond to this catastrophic crisis and handle the situation according to their current need. Whatever be the mechanism of situational handling, it is evident that planning for the next step relevant to the situation is significant. It is necessary that recruitment team or the hiring managers should keep their strategies updated and pertinent to the situational demands, to maintain their brand value and attract probable candidates in future. During the pandemic, companies are struggling to adjust themselves with the situation, at this hour lay off and job change is really scary and a gruelling job since, the business world is still uncertain and unpredictable due to this unwanted crisis. Owing to the pandemic, new work patterns has emerged on the scene where lots of adjustments and compromises have to be made.

“While some industries are being decimated by the corona virus pandemic, like brick and mortar retailers, others are ramping up hiring to meet demand. Healthcare providers may be the largest sectors looking to increase staffing levels as systems prepare for worst-case scenarios already being seen or anticipated” (Donnell, 2020). Sailing through this rough weather, organizations have to shift to new tactics of recruitment and focus upon the stability of the business evolving through this challenging and disruptive crisis.

COVID -19 saw a dawn of a new era of lockdown which restricted most of the office work to personal rooms and corners of employees’ home. Organizations which could manage ‘work from home’ at least were able to survive the crisis, but not all businesses could be conducted implementing this system. Undoubtedly, some organizations needed direct and onsite communication with their clients had to struggle to keep their feet firm to carry on with their job. These organizations were

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likely to suffer the most, hence, they also gradually adapted the new methods of doing business and set up technological infrastructure to ensure their direct management/communication with their customers. The war has begun, and “the world is united in the fight against COVID-19, sharing knowledge, efforts, and initiatives across different and beyond borders” (Whitehead 2020).

## **JOB RECRUITMENT IN COVID-19**

Covid-19 has had significant impacts on the recruitment sector of corporate world round the globe. Huge losses were incurred upon established businesses, some enterprises met the fate of shut down and, layoffs and terminations became the routine, unemployment rate increased and so on. Hiring process all over the world is facing an unprecedented challenge due the COVID-19 outbreak. The organizations are concerned about the safety of their employees, and the employees are trying to adjust to the new job obligation, i.e. work from home amidst other obligations like school closures and cancelled /deferred events. Fresh job seekers and laid off employees are doubtful given to the current situation that whether they’ll be able to find a suitable job position.

Businesses all over the world are working on strategies across the departments that will help in cost-cutting and retrenchment of the company to survive amidst current situations to fight with this crisis. “The scope of the coronavirus crisis has caught us all by surprise, and the impact has been felt by companies of all sizes, across all industries. Some tough decisions have been (and continue to be) made regarding layoffs, policy changes, hiring, and unfortunately, in some cases, whether or not to shut the doors permanently” (Monster, 2020). Although businesses suffered huge losses due to pandemic and things have been quite slow since last year, it is not that everything is lost. Corporate world is gearing up itself to bounce back with a bang in the backdrop of pandemic to cover up for the losses. “Recruitment is evolving – and like all things in life and business, change is never isolated. It is driven by different elements such as technological advancement, sociological trends, behavior transformation of candidates and the shift in job market perspectives” (Tulsie, 2020). It is worth mentioning that this crisis is momentary and will pass away with time. In the term of long run, businesses are looking over to turnaround and create new jobs over the last few months, as they are trying to cope with the new normal of pandemic. “However, navigating this crisis will require a different mindset and reframing challenges into opportunities. It will also require flexibility and a lot of “out of the box” thinking” (Zojceska, 2020). Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has brought about crucial changes in the systems and approaches in which we have

usually tackled recruiting. The strategies of Job recruiting needs to be adaptable and self-motivated to ensure that with the current situation they tally. “The future of many businesses, and therefore the future of many in the job market, remains up in the air at the moment. This is why it’s so crucial for businesses to be flexible in order to adjust their stance to be able to adopt new recruitment process until we’re able to go back to hiring face-to-face” (Harper, 2020).

## **NOVEL WAY OF RECRUITMENT**

Over the past several months, HR managers around the world are struggling about how to prepare for this crisis in the best manner. Each organization is charting out its own route for this situation, some of them have restricted employee travel, some have cancelled sales meetings and congregation, and some have re-planned their goals and so on. Some organizations are watching keenly and waiting for the appropriate time to strike back. Whatever the strategy may be, organizations are now ready to face the situation with novel line of attack as discussed below.

### **Virtual Recruitment Platform**

Covid -19 has trapped the business world in a manner that the future of many organizations, employees and other stake holders has been jeopardized by uncertainty. This situation calls upon the organizations to adopt a flexible strategy so that they can adjust themselves to be able to adopt new recruitment practices atleast till the normal situation is restored back. So the time is high to shift to the digital platform of recruitment, and the best fit is Virtual Recruitment Platform. Virtual recruitment has an advantage over face to face recruitment method as it complies with all the terms and conditions of covid- 19, like social distancing, no gathering, no travelling etc and thus protects both the hiring team and the candidate against the risks involved. Besides the company can also benefit by virtual recruitment in terms of saving travel costs, avoid schedule delays, cutting interview allowances and, can speed up and simplify the complete process of hiring with near to nil chances of glitch. This also intensify the recruitment pool which otherwise be lacking in diversity and mobility. The most important step in digital hiring is virtual interview. Virtual interview can be conducted through various means, employing digital tools like Skype, zoom, Microsoft teams Google meet etc. which has flooded the virtual market. Commenting on the feature of video interview, Irene DeNigris, chief people officer at recruitment software company iCIMS, said, “You don’t lose the human connection with video. You can still assess facial expressions and level of engagement when speaking virtually to candidates” (Maurer 2020).

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For recruiters who are new to digital platform and have no experience of virtual interviews, need to prepare well for these interviews beforehand. First, they have to make up their mind and assume that they are conversing with the candidate in the same place, as it happens in normal interviews, to get a feeling of personal interview and be comfortable. Second, they should provide the candidate with ample time for their answers and queries, since the system may be new for them as well. Recruiters should also ensure quality video and audio during virtual interviews as this allows professional feel for a candidate and maintain consistency with the interview without any interruption.

### **Use of Technology for Recruitment**

As the Covid outbreak is strengthening its foothold all over the world, the HR managers are facing a tough task to adjust the recruitment strategies accordingly. Thankfully, technology is available for rescue from this type of unexpected crisis. Although use of technology for recruitment in organizations is not a new practice, currently it has become a necessity due to the pandemic situation. The greatest advantage of automation in recruitment is that it facilitates quick adaptation to the ever-changing situations which is the need of the hour. Apparently Covid -19 has put recruiters under pressure to demonstrate data-based performance indicators as it has become quite challenging now, and on the other hand, talent acquisition leaders are keen on evaluating their recruiting teams based on the quality of hiring in addition to the time taken for the recruitment process. Indeed the situation is grim. To overcome the crisis organizations are heavily relying upon the automated recruitment process which includes use of technology in recruitment. Automated recruitment helps the recruitment team in gathering all the necessary details of a candidate required for hiring like- resume, details of contact and communication, interview feedback and other important information, all in one go. Automation in recruitment also helps to calculate and forecast the requisites, time involved and, cost of the total recruitment process in an intelligent and fast manner. "For example, AI recruiting software can automatically post jobs to different platforms, screen resumes, discover the best matching candidates automatically from your database, can contact them using email or conversational chatbots." (Gawande, 2020).

### **Open Up with the Organisational Plans**

Companies were in the habit of safeguarding their organizational plans from each other in the normal times before the arrival of covid. Currently the organizations are bound to, and need to open up with their plans in response to the situation raised due to pandemic and to lessen the impact of the consequences. Opening up

the organizational plans means -providing with the detailed information about the transmission of Covid -19, how they are going to deal with it, answer the concerns of the employees, and give access to the links and other sources which provide detailed information on the subject. This information shall include all the FAQs related to the business procedures which has become mandatory now such as sanitization of workplace, travel restrictions, social distancing, avoid congregation etc. This system will help an organization to safeguard their employees as well as other companies also so that employees are well prepared and well informed to handle the situation as it continues to evolve.

Recently in response to the pandemic situation, a crypto currency company located in San Francisco named 'COINBASE' has made their organizational response on corona virus public. Philip Martin, chief information security officer at 'Coinbase' comments on this action of the company as: "By sharing our plans around COVID-2019, we hope to help other companies that are trying to navigate this situation and to encourage a calm, rational approach," (Schimdt, 2020).

## **PROACTIVE RECRUITMENT APPROACH DURING COVID-19**

### **Proactive Recruitment Approach**

Traditional recruitment methods based upon vacancy advertisements and personal interviews are used widely across the business world. Employing this method for hiring in recent times may prove difficult in attracting and retaining candidates due to safety concerns and travel restrictions. To overcome this issue, recruiters are shifting to proactive approach of hiring process. In this process everything is planned and fixed in advance. This process helps to identify the potential candidates and their skills and roles are predefined by the recruiter. This also save time and reduce cost of hiring as everything is done virtually and fast. Proactive mode of recruitment is more advantageous for them in current situation. "Proactive Recruitment helps to gain a better understanding of key applicants' motivation, their fit to the group, and their social skills and movability. It broadens the recruitment pool which might otherwise remain severely lacking and local (thus hindering diversity and mobility)" (Kekale, 2020). Proactive approach to hiring can be represented best as in the figure below:

Proactive recruitment helps the companies to count on the candidates who have applied considering themselves fit for the job after evaluating the needs of the organization on their website, rather search for them and then competes for their recruitment. This also facilitates a company's reach to a larger potential group simultaneously. Steps to proactive recruitment are:

Figure 1. Proactive recruitment model



### **Determine the Needs and Post Vacancy**

As a paradigm shift is observed in recruitment process these days, first of all the companies need to determine the needs of the organization and then post vacancies on their websites, marketing campaigns and other social media platform through which they can appeal to the candidates. Companies need to reach out to job seekers that they are still in the market, ready to hire and looking to move forward. Since distant/remote recruitment process is quite different from hiring candidates in person, it depends solely upon the organizational management and recruitment team to ensure that the strategy they have taken up is feasible for their business. To ascertain accuracy in determining the needs and roles of a vacancy and the number of candidates they need, hiring team can use previous years recruitment metrics and discuss capacity planning with line managers. They can use the external platforms to find the suitable candidates and also search in their own candidate database.

## Attract Potential Candidates

Once the organization is aware of the platform from where they can seek potential candidates, they need to attract the job seekers towards their job vacancy. To attract the prospective candidates, it's necessary that organizations provide detailed information related to the companies policies, their previous achievements, and their status in business world and do brand marketing. In addition to these tactics, management should also highlight the possibility of the long-term growth opportunities at their company and illustrate with live examples of their employees, how they have climbed the ladder up in their careers. Employers can also engage their existing staff to attract potential candidates. Employee referral method has always played an important role in sourcing quality recruits. The present employees can share /inform about a new job to their friends and other contacts who possess the needed qualification and experience, through their personal messages like SMS, Whatsapp, Facebook etc.

## Retain and Maintain the Audience

After the process of attracting the potential candidates is done, next step to follow by organizations is to retain and maintain their audience following. The process is also called 'nurturing'. This strategy of proactive recruitment helps to retain active candidates and connect to the passive candidates as well. In this process the HR managers or the hiring teams send the personalized messages to the candidates through emails, text messages, career pages, company blogs, webinars, brand marketing etc. This procedure is continued from the very beginning of the recruitment process till the passive candidates are convinced and converts into active one which facilitates successful hiring.

This method of hooking up the potential audience to company's website is very necessary because –“70 percent of the global workforce is made up of passive talent who aren't actively job searching and the remaining 30 percent are active job seekers” (Biswas 2019). According to Biswas (2019) candidate nurturing is one of the most powerful strategies in the recruiter's toolkit. He proposed few steps to get started with the process as:

1. Create talent communities that prospective candidates can join and initiate conversations.
2. Create content showcases your company culture
3. Be proactive in responding to candidate queries.
4. Invest in a talent CRM or recruitment marketing solution. Automation helps you scale drive personalization at scale.

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5. Evaluate data regularly to optimize the performance of your candidate nurturing strategy

Retaining a talent pool with diversified knowledge and skills and catering to the candidates need positively, saves both time and money for the companies.

### **Shortlist Potential Candidates**

The next step that follows is short listing potential candidates from the talent pool gathered. This accounts for making tough decisions by hiring managers. Organizations need to make sure that both the employee and the employer meet their expectations. Moreover it is also necessary that the short listing process should be fair and honest without any bias on any grounds. After short listing, the final list should have the genuine candidates who according to the job description are the best fit for the job. These candidates should have the required qualifications, right impetus to join the company and a good fit with the culture of the organization. “Having access to more talent is of huge benefit right now, given the pressure piling on companies to balance both profitability and the safety of employees, whilst seamlessly servicing clients, partners and extensive supply chains” (Robinson, 2021).

Most of the people are now working from home remotely and have adapted well to this system. Some organizations may find this system favourable and would prefer to continue with remote working even after the pandemic is over and normalcy returns. Hence, conserving the potential talent pool with experience in remote working is important for future employment as they can easily continue with their work outside the boundaries of an office. To hook up the shortlisted candidates, organizations need to keep them updated with the status of their application through digital platforms like SMS, phone calls, emails and social media.

### **Hire the Most Suitable Person**

The last step of recruitment is hiring the desirable/suitable person. The final selection criteria for the best fit may be the education, experience, skills and knowledge, personality and competencies of the candidate relevant to the job. After hiring, it is also necessary that organizations give a positive experience to the employee like providing an amicable work environment and easy communication to facilitate their career boost and growth. Now the demand of the hour is flexibility and adaptability to the working manners, hence both the employer and employee have to follow this mantra for successful professional compatibility. It is crucial to hire the most suitable candidate with right values and skills. If this important element is missed



out of the recruitment plan, it would expose the vulnerability of the organization and might push the existing staff under more pressure.

## **HOW TO MANAGE RECRUITMENT PROCESS DURING CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

The Pandemic crisis has completely altered our system of work and changed the way we live. Organizations have been forced to shift from the contemporary practices to the digital platform. They need to expand their technological infrastructure as the as the world is experiencing a digital shift at a rapid pace .Technical skills have become the buzz word and also a necessity to adapt to the changing scenario. This shift may come easy for some who are well versed with digital /online processes, but may be taxing for those with little or no experience in this field. The global health crisis has prompted the foremost concern of organizations to be the health and safety of their employees and the job seekers. “All sectors have been affected by COVID-19 and due to the measures and regulations to safeguard our health, and to help stop the spread of the virus, restrictions have now impacted both private and public institutions across the globe, as well as the daily lives of individuals”. (Whitehead 2020). We need to include ways and means in our work plan to cope up this unprecedented crisis. Some strategies to lessen the effect of pandemic and ensure overall safety are recommended as:

### **Maintain Healthy Relationships**

An important aspect of recruitment process during covid -19 is to maintain good relationships with the potential candidates, hiring team, and the employer. Earlier it was easy as the candidate and recruiter would meet each other in person and get a clear understanding of the type of role and business they were going to collaborate for. Today the situation is completely different as there are several restrictions and everything needs to be settled online. Given to the situation, there is tremendous pressure upon each stake holder of a recruitment process, so to ease out the pressure and to ensure smooth hiring, it is important to build and maintain a good relationship among the team. An amicable relationship can be developed with the candidates by attracting and nurturing them through various digital and social platforms. Building good rapport with potential candidates will definitely boost organizations potentiality and productivity with a diverse pool of talent. Similarly to promote a healthy relationship among them, employers and the hiring team need to work together to get a better hold of their available resources and plan.

## **Analyze Needs Beforehand**

During the pandemic, the most important thing for a company is the continuity of their business and, flexibility in their plan and schedule. Hiring the right fit for the right job has become more crucial as the recruitment is to be done now for potentiality and adaptability, rather just filling up the space. Organizations need to clearly identify the kind of skills they need and make sure they have access to candidates with the right skills and experience. Organizations should take up external hiring only when there is an urgent need. Before going aboard they need to identify their requirements of human capitals and also assess their financial status to ensure right decision in response to the changing demands status. “For example, many positions that is usually face-to-face or requires an on-site presence, such as teaching and front desk customer services, have now moved to the virtual environment to be managed and delivered via online tools, to full the same role or to support different departments within the same organisation.”(Whitehead 2020) Similarly job seekers should also reflect over their qualifications, experiences and skills and use them to apply for jobs in different fields in accordance to their suitability.

## **Internal Up Skilling and Training**

Pandemic crisis has prompted organizations to restrict themselves to hire potential and adaptable candidates. As things are changing quickly, organizations should consider the development of their existing staff before going for external hiring to fill up the new gaps in business as the companies are continuing to adapt .Economies all over the world are consistently on back foot since emergence of covid -19 and there has been an increasing demand for candidates acquainted with use of technology at work, it will be favorable for companies to up skill and train their existing employees. Training the existing employees and utilizing the available internal resources will help the organizations to identify both their present and future needs which may lead them to a perfect hire.

## **Provide Employee Support**

The unprecedented health crisis and economic slump cropped up due to pandemic has prompted organizations to review their conduct of business. Coping through this new and uncertain situation is full of unpredicted, unheard and unseen challenges ahead. The time is now to chart out a new plan for employee support. Governments round the globe are busy developing new plans related to issues like sick leave, insurance cover, hourly wage plans etc. to safeguard the workforce and other stake holders along with ensuring their financial stability. Organizations also need to support their

employees by reviewing existing policies and drafting new ones such as providing mental and emotional health support, revising benefits, revising absenteeism and sick leave plan etc. This strategy will help organizations to ascertain that their employees remain fit and healthy, both physically and mentally. Furthermore healthy employees will help the organization to function normally and be productive during crisis also. When employees feel valued at workplace, it ultimately reduces their anxieties, stress and other negative elements and they become more productive and resilient to the situational changes. The best way to support the employees is through open and personalized communication .This helps to know and understand about the exact need of the employees during this hard times. “Give people the opportunity to understand what’s happening and ask questions by communicating frequently and quickly. Send consistent messages and host town-hall meetings updating employees regarding travel, office closures and confirmed employee cases while maintaining confidentiality” (Diane Adams, 2020). During crisis, employees will be looking up to employers for guidance and direction to proceed further as confusion is prevailing everywhere. Organizations should open up with their plans and try to address employee concern in their best possible way and guide them through uncertainties’ throughout the unfolding of events. Some best examples of organizations offering employee support during Covid -19 are (Alicia, 2020):

- Facebook have stepped up to the plate and recently announced that they are giving \$1000 to all 45000 of their employees, to help them pay for things like a home office or childcare while their staff work remotely
- Amazon is doubling hourly wages for associates working overtime and also committed to donating \$25 million to help its network of independent drivers, flex workers and seasonal employees
- Contract, temp and freelance workers are at a significant risk of losing their jobs, which is why Google has created a fund to enable all its contract and temporary workers globally to take paid sick leave if they have potential symptoms or are in quarantine

## Remote Working

Covid -19 has changed the way of how business was conducted. The future of several organizations is in lurking without any definite direction which makes it mandatory for them to change their course. The best possible means at the moment for businesses is to adopt flexibility in their practices and procedures. Recruitment is an essential element of organizational processes, and they need to continue this to cope up with new demands of the market. The shift from traditional hiring to digital and online hiring has become the new norms. Organizations are now opting

for work from home strategies to fill the gap in the availability of potential candidates as the recent commuting restrictions, safety measures, travel bans and lockdowns have limited the access to the talent pool required to fill the job positions. Remote working has diluted the geographical boundaries as companies can now interview the candidates online and can hire them from anywhere in the world. It's been more than a year that business world have adopted ways and means to continue their process and, remote working is one of them.

Initially people were apprehensive of remote working concept as it needed lots of adjustments on both professional and family front and, also lots of changes in daily routine of a person. Gradually everyone adopted and adjusted to this practice and it gained prominence with passing time. Now many beneficial aspects of remote working and flexibility are being noted. People now value their freedom and quality family time they are able to enjoy. They are relieved of daily commuting hassles and still enjoy the office life by being hooked up to their regular office schedule through various digital platforms. "What is clear is that now that employees have seen that remote work is possible in so many workplaces, taking what many see as a perk off the table will only hamper an organization's recruitment efforts. The wider acceptance of flexible working will lead to shifting expectations" (Lloyd, 2020). To promote this new work culture, Organizations should review their remote work policies and make changes accordingly. "They can also creating support groups with experienced remote-work employees and sharing practices that will help them assimilate to the new work structure" (Schimdt, 2020). Remote working obviously hampers the socialization process of employees as they are not with their colleagues at same place .This element of missing the workplace environment can push employees towards a feeling of isolation. Since every one working at different place and maybe different time also since remote working has provided with the liberty of flexibility, though on the same project, they can miss the communication that is often passed on from one person to another in the workplace. To ensure coordination among the management, employees and colleagues companies can organize regular virtual meetings and group chats. This is necessary for new recruits as they need to be familiar with other employees, their supervisors and also their work environment.

## **RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

We all know that Coronavirus started at Wuhan, a city in China as a mere regional outbreak but it rapidly transformed into a global pandemic threatening humanity and the economies simultaneously. The pandemic forced people to confine themselves within the walls of their homes be it adult, children or senior citizens. Terms like

confinement, social distancing, sanitation, hygiene, immunity took the centre-stage and rules applied were same for everyone irrespective of age, race, gender or demography. This situation however, propounded immense pressure and challenges for the enterprises and organizations across all sectors.

Employment rates in the last few months of the year 2019 touched a record high but suddenly it took a nosedive in 2020 as the business world was marred by the pandemic. Some companies even decided to halt their recruitment process until the things return to normal, while most of them continued their hiring process with changed strategies and plans. Adjusting to this new, uncertain and grim situation was quite challenging for everyone including governments, economies, educational fraternity, medical fraternity and many more. The only silver lining in this pandemic is that amidst the fear and uncertainty, economies around the world and our society is still able to continue their work.

Covid -19 has had a colossal impact on hiring process with a whole new set of recruiting challenges onboard for employers and candidates as well. This outbreak has caused many firms to defer their recruitment schedules while some employers have been forced to shut down their enterprises and layoff their employees. Almost all the businesses have had to bear the brunt of covid -19, but some of them have been hit harder. Business sectors like sports and entertainment, tourism and travel, hotels and restaurants, hypermarkets and shopping malls, real estate etc. have been badly affected due to pandemic. Various local and small businesses also became vulnerable to pandemic. On the other hand businesses like health care, logistics, biotech sectors, IT/ICT sectors, online E-commerce etc. experienced an increased surge for new employee hiring. Given the situation, companies who continue to recruit during pandemic need to apply alternative methods and measures to ensure the safety of the candidate and the recruitment team to remain compliant with pandemic restrictions.

Recruiting during Covid -19 is associated with challenges and some of the key challenges faced by employers are:

## **Layoffs and Hiring Halt**

One of the biggest challenges ever posed by recruitment personnel's is to handle the layoffs and dismissal of employees from their job. As already mentioned depending upon the availability of the resources and their situation, some organizations have halted their hiring, some have fired their employees, some have shutdown their businesses and some are still continuing with hiring process. The impact on the job market due to pandemic seems to be quite profound and long lasting. Employees at managerial levels are under stress as they dismiss or lay off their workers which

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were an important part of the company. They feel helpless in the situation as they don't have any option. They themselves are in dilemma about their own position whether they will be retained or laid off next. "Laying off employees is difficult in normal times; but amidst the Covid-19 global health crisis, the task is "emotionally and cognitively overwhelming," (Knight, 2020).

Willis Watson from global risk management and advisory firm conducted research on some organizations and found that about 42 percent of the organizations that have been surveyed have either put on hold or reduced their hiring process. According to other statistics, in commerce and finance industries, 44 percent of the companies have halted their hiring or laid off/ dismissed their employees. In the Travel and tourism industry, 83 percent of the companies have done the same. The figure is quite alarming and intriguing. In a report published by Arthur Little, from an international management consulting firm, gathered data suggested that Indian working class could lose up to 135 million jobs in near future and about 120 million people possibly will be forced into poverty in, all due to the pandemic. Unemployment at this large scale is a matter of concern as it will have a huge impact on the income, expenses, and savings approach of people.

Employers need to deal layoffs with compassion as sudden removal from job can be shocking and disgusting at the same time for any one. Looking out for new job in crisis, worrying about their future and thinking about the maintenance of families can lead a person to depression and might make them repulsive. Organizations should offer financial and emotional help and support to the laid off employees even after they are removed from jobs. This will help them to sustain at least for some time during crisis and save them from initial struggle, depression and negativity.

## **Managing Loads of Applications**

With companies freezing or laying off their employees, unemployment rate has unprecedentedly increased. This is a very unfortunate situation as more people becoming unemployed. Moreover there are fresh job seekers also that just have arrived into the job market. Overall, however organizations making few jobs available or not hiring at all, and number of jobseekers being more, the situation leads to influx of applications against a job. This means there will be lots of candidates applying against a single job. It is also obvious that jobseekers start sending open applications in anticipation of being hired and they may lack the requisite knowledge and qualification for that job. "As a result of more people being out of work, it is highly likely that recruiting businesses are going to receive an influx of CVs, most of which will be from candidates who are not qualified for the roles being advertised" (Clegg, 2020).

To avoid and manage the unwanted influx of applications and, filter out under-qualified candidates, recruiters need to design the job roles strategically for which they are going to hire. Organizations should also develop a proactive and attractive recruitment strategy that can be applied when the economic and health conditions improve.

## **Ensure Safety for All While Maintaining Covid Decorum**

As economic and political pressure has built to relax “shelter in place” public health orders for control of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), industry, professional service firms, retail and service establishments, and educational institutions seek to establish norms that protect workers, customers, clients, students, and visitors (Barnes & Sax, 2020).

The scary situation of pandemic has made people nervous. Everyone is concerned about their and their family’s health, future and their finances. Governments are imposing restrictions which is changing every day as new problems crop. How to manage these problems is yet to be investigated, hence there are several questions left un answered. Travel bans, quarantine policies, work from home requisites, lockdown limitations and many more things have become suddenly important and changed the way people worked and lived, both temporarily and permanently. All these situations have elevated the confusion and chaos in peoples’ lives. The uncertainty around the crisis has made it difficult for both the recruiter and the candidate as to how to remain safe. In this time of uncertainty and social distancing, it is really a tough time for recruiters to continue with their jobs while ensuring their safety and the safety of candidates amidst uncertainty, confusion and social distancing.

Together with technology and communication strategies into their recruitment plan, employers can continue to recruit and hire keeping in accordance comply with legal and safety regulations promulgated by their governments .Strategies like online interviews, video conferencing, social media platforms, virtual career fairs etc can help the recruiters to ensure safe hiring even During Pandemic. “While standard video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts and Microsoft Teams are a great way to interview potential employees, new video interview technologies are emerging which make it easier to manage the hiring process and screen candidates” (Richard, 2020).

Various recruitment software depending upon the size of the business are available in market like iCIMS, Zoho Recruit, JobAdder, BambooHR etc. and, some of them are even free. These software can be used to manage job postings, conduct interviews, on-boarding, applicant screening and reference checks. Recruitment teams can access these software from any place with the help of these cloud based solutions.

## Manage Budget

The devastating blow of Covid- 19 worldwide in terms of cost related to managing people health, education, job, fiscal and economic adjustments etc. has stretched the impact of the crisis beyond the economical and political segments. Industries across the world are engaged in cost cutting of their budgets including recruitment plans to sustain their business and navigate through difficult times. Hiring process has been badly affected by the pandemic crisis, with most of the companies halting or reducing recruitment. ‘As companies everywhere become more cautious about resource allocation, almost half (47%) of the talent professionals surveyed said they expect their overall recruiting budget to decrease’ (McLaren, 2020).

Despite the crisis some business sectors continue with recruitment process and, to hire the potential candidates at the lowest cost is crucial and integral to the strategic plan of the organizations. The situational impact of pandemic is different for each organization hence they need different strategies to deal with the crisis. It is important for organizations to evaluate their budget and determine their investments where it will make the biggest difference. To manage and reduce hiring costs, companies can cut the cost in the not so important recruitment components and invest in most important areas where it matters the most. ‘Some employers have been taking steps to empower some of their mission-critical employees. For example, nearly one in six employers is providing subsidies to manage the cost of working remotely, including WiFi, childcare, office equipment borrowing, and heat and electricity’ (Otto, 2020).

To manage the recruitment efficiently in restrained budget, organizations should adopt novel strategies like-create a robust career website that represents the employer’s brand positively to attract the diverse talent pool, completely digitalize recruitment process to cut the travel and venue settings cost, hire through employee referrals as the formal referral schemes reduces cost and save time simultaneously, collaborate with an efficient recruitment agency which understands their business and are able to benchmark candidates according to the requirements of the company. These strategies may help organizations cut the hiring costs by enhancing both the quality and speed of the recruitment process and drive them towards growth and development during pandemic.

## Steering Through Crisis

No doubt we will win over the crisis together, but the changes brought in our lives due to pandemic on social, economic and political fronts may become governing policies of our lives in future. We can and will find ways out to revive our society, our people, our country and our world in best possible extent. We can find the solutions to help and sustain our future to achieve professional and personal goals. While



layoffs and employee reduction is an evitable for some organizations in this difficult times, Companies need to consistently evaluate their cost investment in managing their human resources and, try to support and protect their employees during this difficult times. Companies should focus upon their long term goals and objectives and collaborate with their existing employees. This is important as connecting with employees help them to evaluate and assess the business goals in better way and work according to the required plan. Recruitment is a time consuming process and given to the situation many organizations cannot afford the time liberty. They need to draft a well structured proactive recruitment plan which include technology and digitalization as a major component to mitigate Covid challenges. Technological assistance in recruiting process has proven the best tool for pivoting during pandemic to continue with hiring and on-boarding in a virtual and remotely working world.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**COVID-19:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by coronavirus 2 that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2).

**COVID-19 Decorum:** COVID 19 decorum entails taking the required steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as wearing a mask, sanitizing hands, maintaining hygiene, and social distancing, among other things.

**Hiring Halt:** A hiring halt occurs when an employer temporarily stops non-essential employee hiring to minimize costs, usually when the company is facing financial crisis.

**Layoffs:** A layoff is a temporary suspension or permanent termination of an employee's or, more typically, a group of employees' employment for business reasons such as personnel management or organization downsizing.

**Manage Budget:** A yearly expenditures approved by department/management heads based on the budget that was provided and sanctioned.

**Potential Candidates:** A potential candidate is a person who meets the required conditions for employment against a job by all means.

**Proactive Recruitment:** In proactive recruitment, preparation is essential to achieve success. It entails looking for individuals before staffing levels become a problem for a corporation.

**Recruitment:** The process of identifying, sourcing, screening, shortlisting, and interviewing individuals for jobs (permanent or temporary) within an organization is termed recruitment. Recruitment can also refer to the procedures for selecting people for unpaid positions.

**Remote Working:** Working from a location other than a central office provided by the employer is as known as remote working.

**Technology:** Technology refers to methods, processes, and equipment resulting from scientific knowledge applied to practical applications.

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**Upskilling and Training:** Upskilling is a workplace concept that promotes continuous learning by offering training and development opportunities that broaden an employee's talents and lessen skill gaps.

**Virtual Recruitment:** A recruiting procedure that takes place remotely, without recruiters and candidates in person.

# Chapter 10

## Human Resource Management Practices and Organizational Performance in the New Normal: A Relational Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*In various organizations, most HRM practices are ineffective because they are unimplemented in their genuine sense. The dilemma lies in the very fact that HRM practices in every organization are, to a great extent, responsible for its success or failure. Many scholars have focused on organizational performance since it is regarded as one of the most important variables in achieving efficiency and positive outcomes in businesses. The respective study aims to analyze the effects of HRM practices on organizational performance. This research is qualitative; therefore, content analysis (in general) and relational analysis (in specific) were used, and in this regard, 25 pieces of research encompassing the effect of HRM practices on organizational performance were analyzed. The findings revealed a highly positive relationship between an organization's training and development practices with its performance (financial and non-financial). Moreover, this research recommends that organizations focus more on their training and development practices to enhance performance in the short and long run.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Researchers and academics of management and organizational professionals have been interested in investigating, identifying, and implementing successful techniques for managing organizational performance in organizations since the end of the twentieth century. The development of measures (or indicators) that are acceptable for evaluating measurable organizational performance results has received much attention. After the emergence of numerous challenges (dubbed “organizational sector diseases” by some authors), there has been a renewed focus on institutional, organizational performance. Furthermore, because the individual performance of smaller units (e.g., a single employee may represent a smaller operative unit in a more extensive organizational system) has been identified as a relevant determinant of the larger unit’s general performance (e.g., a department or another subdivision within the organization as a whole), or the entire organization, it represents a relevant determinant of the larger unit’s overall performance (e.g., a department or another subdivision within).

A large number of elements have been identified as significant predictors of organizational performance outcomes. Organizational culture has been identified as a significant element determining performance results in an organizational context by Hunnes et al., (2008). Brewer and Selden (2000); Petty et al. (1995) found that defining variables of organizational culture were associated with objective measures of organizational performance. Organizations have also seen similar results from such studies, though they are scarce (Brewer & Selden, 2000). Nonetheless, researchers discovered more essential aspects affecting organizational performance, such as leadership/managerial practices, training and development, and working environment (Brewer & Selden, 2000).

“Best human resource is the main resource of every country to prosper. If we do not appoint eligible and efficient candidates in every sector, we cannot live & grow as a successful nation. Amazing changes are coming in technology and globalization, and to compete with them, every organization needs to select the best human resource. More rightsizing will decrease the downsizing. Time, cost, and effort can be saved by all organizations processing the ineligible & sluggish candidates if the HRM system of any country is weaker so the public administration of the country will be less effective, less efficient & less capable” (Boohene & Asuinura, 2011, p. 266).

Organizations do not critically analyze to what extent personnel is required for which job and the productivity of previously hired personnel (Beunza, 2019). It is the very reason that if an individual gets a job in any organization permanently, his efficacy decreases over time (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Only in a few cases, employees retain their efficacy level (Boudreau et al., 2019).

The recruitment & selection process of organizations in a general context is not effective (Kennedy, 2019). As one can see, the current state of problems in HRM practices is merely the result of wrong recruitment & selection policies (Lowisz, 2019). Selections on essential posts in organizations are usually carried out based on non-transparency (West, 2019). Significant posts are compromised based on biases, prejudice, and corruption rather than allocating them to highly educated and eligible candidates (Ulrich et al., 2012).

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will help public and private sector organizations to a great extent. It will explore multiple facets behind public and private sector organizations' deteriorating conditions in a broader context.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To highlight organizational performance with respect to its influencing factors.
2. To critically analyze the effects of recruitment & selection practices on organizational performance.
3. To critically analyze the effects of compensation & benefits practices on organizational performance.
4. To critically analyze the effects of training & development practices on organizational performance.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is qualitative; therefore, content analysis (in general) and relational analysis (in specific) were used. In this regard, four factors that effect organizational performance and 25 pieces of research encompassing the effects of HRM practices on organizational performance were analyzed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organizational Performance and Influencing Factors

The first point to consider is that the peculiarities of the local work environment and its constituent elements, such as organizational culture, focus on expertise, skills and knowledge flexibility, and so on, have a substantial impact on performance and career chances (Hunnes et al., 2008). Others have proposed that other elements influence organizational success, such as managerial techniques or the physical spaces and conditions of the work environment (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Guest, 1997). Second, performance evaluation is one of the most complex and contentious management and human resource management activities. Critics of such an approach say that the practice should be altered at the very least (Roberts, 2003). Some of the arguments made include: creating the false impression that individual performance evaluations are perfectly accurate, increasing workplace conflict due to the unhealthy competition it fosters among employees, and putting much of the blame for poor performance on employees' shoulders without first assessing contextual factors associated with the work environment (Roberts, 2003).

However, the same study that identifies the earlier issues says that performance appraisal must meet several criteria. The performance evaluation must be dynamic and inclusive (i.e., the subject whose performance is being evaluated must be able to participate in it) in order for the process to meet two essential criteria, namely transparency and efficacy. Inclusiveness and participation are critical components of such a strategy because they satisfy three fundamental needs: transmitting motivational value, expanding the pool of knowledge sources, and allowing employees to express themselves. The inclusive strategy, on the other hand, is not immune to anomalies. An inadequate inclusive performance evaluation system includes a lack of training, confusion, or lack of methodologies used to "evaluate" assessors and supervisor resistance to unbiased input.

Even in underdeveloped countries, the quest for discovering and implementing quality managerial techniques for managing organizational performance and creating relevant indicators has been more critical than ever in recent decades has attracted academic interest because it is designed to measure results. Employee performance as a whole impacts the overall performance of the organization. Moreover, given the increased focus on organizational performance in the second part of the twentieth century and the ongoing frustration with increasingly inflexible personnel. Thus, the implementation of the "New Management" paradigm, the perception of organizational entities as giant and slow elephants that are unnecessarily bureaucratic and inefficient; the importance of identifying factors that are of significant interest to organizational performance evaluation has gained more traction.



## Organizational Culture

Regardless of an organization's ownership position, organizational culture is one of the most important aspects to consider (i.e., publicly, privately, or co-owned). Organizational culture and its constituent dimensions are at the forefront of scholarly debate on the subject (Desson & Clouthier, 2010). Culture is a term that may be traced back to the discipline of anthropology (Tharp, 2009). There is no universally accepted exhaustive definition of "culture" among scholars in the numerous fields that study it as a concept. Culture is generally defined extremely generically, merely as a "social process" (Tharp, 2009).

"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, thus, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel concerning those problems," according to Tharp (2009). Organizational culture definitions, like cultural definitions, are numerous, broad, and diverse (Tharp, 2009). Organizational culture, according to Desson and Clouthier (2010), is "an organization's personality; capable of guiding the thought and activity of its members at work, and fundamental to the values, beliefs, attitudes, and interpersonal behavior of crucial players, which defines the way an organization runs."

According to some researchers, firms that have formed a culture with characteristics suited for their operational setting have better financial performance (Barney, 1986). Economists such as Martinez, Beaulieu, Gibbons, Pronovost, and Wang have examined the impact of organizational culture on economic activity in organizations extensively (Martinez et al., 2015). They also describe the mechanism by which organizational culture affects performance. They argue that organizational culture impacts large and small scale organizational, economic activities and the drivers of behavior inside political and legal institutions, whether broad and large or slow and gradual. They also looked at the impact that four aspects of corporate culture (adaptability, mission, consistency, and inclusivity) have on overall performance (Fisher, 1997; Martinez et al., 2015).

According to Ovidiu-Iliuta (2004), organizational culture indirectly impacts performance because it influences managerial techniques used to evaluate performance. Thus, if the business employs managerial practices that promote job security, fair remuneration, and appropriate incentives, it improves its performance through culture, allowing it to recruit people who are most aligned with current organizational values (Martinez et al., 2015; Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2004).

Furthermore, other research shows that organizational culture significantly impacts many organizational functions (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2004). The findings imply that if employees share beliefs and respond to standard norms inside the organization,

they will maximize their work efforts, resulting in higher organizational performance (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2004; Shahzad et al., 2012). On the other hand, organizational culture can improve organizational performance, employee happiness, and problem-solving capacity (Kotter, 2008). It achieves this by increasing employee organizational commitment to completing their assigned tasks (Nikpour, 2016).

There is scarce data on the link between organizational culture and performance at the individual and organizational levels inside organizations. Only a few empirical studies (Fisher, 1997) have attempted to link organizational culture and performance. However, research into such a relationship has demonstrated that culture-defining organizational performance variables are linked to objective measuring units of organizational performance (Petty et al., 1995).

If organizational effectiveness is related to performance, the data show that organizational culture impacts organizational effectiveness. Nikpour (2016), on the other hand, created a model of organizational culture in which organizational culture has a direct beneficial impact on organizational performance as well as an excellent indirect impact on employee commitment. The indirect effect is greater than the direct effect (Nikpour, 2016; Shahzad et al., 2012).

## **Training and Development**

On-the-job training can also be defined as a set of activities organized by an organization to improve on-the-job knowledge and abilities or to change members' attitudes and behavior in ways that are consistent with the organization's goals and job requirements. Other definitions of training and development as a single notion have been offered. According to one definition of training and development, people learn or absorb skills and knowledge that improve their effectiveness. They do it in various ways, including guidance and leadership, headship, organization, and persuasion (Khan et al., 2011).

The amount of training completed by an individual can also be used to measure the effectiveness of training. The benefits of training and the necessity of engaging in training are two more significant training factors to consider when evaluating the efficacy of this technique. Gathering knowledge that is important for workers to amass, which supports performing job activities correctly and effectively, are essential training and development objectives (Truitt, 2011). On the other hand, employers may not be paying enough attention to employee development needs since they prefer to provide training primarily for the services or work processes that are most useful to them (Truitt, 2001).

On the other hand, other scholars have identified training and development methods, on-the-job training, and training design and delivery as some of the most critical areas in organizational research (Truitt, 2011). Training is essential

in developing organizational goals because it combines the organization's interests with its employees. For various reasons, developing training objectives is a critical practice for the business and its leaders.

It is, first and foremost, a significant contributor to the growth of a society's human capital. It is accomplished by impacting the educational policies of the unit or organization where it is being implemented, providing employee training, and enhancing service and productivity. It also allows it (the organization) to persuade companies to invest more in staff training and development. Second, it will provide a critical service to employees by providing them with necessary and handy skills, particularly in the context of emerging countries.

The quality of training can directly influence the income and financial performance of the unit or organization. Another critical duty is to teach personnel to deliver expertise to future generations of employees better. Other essential training and development functions are mentioned, the most important of which are: improving relationships among administrative staff, the organization's overall image, and investing in a higher level of professionalism, which can lead to an increase in the institution's recruitment capacity and influence (Khan et al., 2011).

Managing companies necessitates a particular level of expertise and professionalism to achieve successful and efficient outcomes (Musmuliana & Mustaffa, 2012). Productivity, performance development, and competitive advantage have all become hot topics among academics studying work organization. Employee training aids in the correct and successful development of organizational resources, one of the most significant arguments favoring it. Other data show direct benefits of training, such as job security, increased productivity, and enhanced performance outcomes in particular (Shadare, 2011).

## Work Environment

Regarding how it has been addressed in the literature, the work environment is likewise a multidimensional issue. Foldspang et al. (2014); Jain and Kaur (2014) define it as the physical dimension of the organization in which personnel conducts relevant duties and the non-physical milieu and social dynamics in which individuals interact and exercise their fundamental functions. Another definition of the work environment is the organizational dimension that incorporates all variables that affect the minds and bodies of employees (Jain & Kaur, 2014). Other defining characteristics of what makes up an organization's work environment include patterns of delegation of competencies, authority, responsibilities, and control. Coordinating interactions between key stakeholders in the organizational context communication channels and dissemination of guidance between employees and their managers are also determining factors in the workplace (Robbins et al., 2008).

People work independently, but they also interact with others in a shared workspace, necessitating various workplace solutions (Chandrasekar, 2011). Employees and the dynamics of interactions produced in the shared work environment in which people shape professional and personal links are thus inextricably intertwined (Chandrasekar, 2011; Robbins et al., 2008). Some authors like Chandrasekar (2011) and Robbins et al. (2008) discuss the mechanism by which workplace connections influence employees' behavior and are influenced by the shared work environment in their empirical studies. According to them, the intensity and complexity of relationships developed between persons in the workplace are critical in determining employees' level of professional involvement and dedication in studying the psychological and psychosocial effects of the workplace on employee well-being and productivity. Robbins et al. (2008) argue that the workplace, through the so-called "psychological contract," becomes a determinant of emotional reactions at work, thus becoming responsible for positive and negative impacts on employees' professional and psychosocial well-being.

For a long time, the impact of organizational structure and environment on the conduct of its members has been a hot topic of debate and analysis in the literature. The dilemma of increasing production while making the work environment more pleasant has been addressed in the industrial context by introducing a work environment that encourages and promotes long-term and sustainable change. The physical and psychosocial components of the work organization environment are further classified into two groups. The physical dimension of the environment and the workplace was emphasized and thought to dominate employee productivity throughout the early decades of research and development in industrial psychology. Earlier research concentrated on determining essential work environment variables, including lighting, temperature, noise, and meteorological conditions on worker productivity (Srivastava, 2008). Workplaces also comprise tools, materials, equipment, working circumstances, employee performance, leader conduct, organization goals and objectives, information availability, and time availability, among other things (Srivastava, 2008). Regardless, the working environment in businesses has changed dramatically since then.

The phrase "workplace performance" refers to a work environment whose primary goal is to promote work performance and change it into one that maximizes employee productivity. Employee productivity is understood in a broad economic framework, but it risks being ambiguous and nonspecific regarding the set of desired behavioral outcomes in the workplace. It has been challenging to discover environmental factors that influence employee performance due to a lack of a clear definition of productivity and how it has been assessed. Multiple studies, however, have concluded that productivity levels vary depending on the suitability and efficacy of an organization's work environment (Robbins et al., 2008).

## Management/Leadership

Human resource management is a broad term that has received much attention in academic circles. In the literature, the phrase has been given a variety of definitions and connotations. The definitions of a few of these terms are listed below (Prasad & Gulshan, 2001). “The skill of knowing and identifying what one intends to do, and seeing how something can be done effectively and efficiently,” says Frederick Taylor, as demonstrated by the preceding definition, Taylor emphasized productivity, which he associated with management in general (Levin-Waldman, 2015; Witzel & Warner, 2015). Taylor also highlighted the need to maximize human capital, machines, money, and resources to achieve the desired results. He believes that having a thorough understanding of the task and selecting the most sensible option possible should be the top priorities. One of the most vehement objections leveled at Taylor’s concept was that it placed too little emphasis on people’s needs and the interactions and bonds built between them at work, whether formal or informal (Prasad & Gulshan, 2001).

Henri Fayol, Taylor’s successor, defined management as the ability to anticipate, plan, organize, command, coordinate, and assure that maximum control in all of the processes mentioned above (McDonald, 2010; Prasad & Gulshan, 2001). The originality of Fayol’s definition in management was that it was the first time someone mentioned and listed certain management functions required to achieve the desired goals (Prasad & Gulshan, 2001). Management, according to Fayol, is a series of interconnected processes that include planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling (Prasad & Gulshan, 2001; Wren et al., 2002). Even though there are numerous additional definitions of management, each created to extract the essence of the notion, not just theoretically but empirically, they all contain some similar components: the essential managerial functions outlined above (Prasad & Gulshan, 2001).

Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), Aucoin (1990), and Polidano and Hulme (1999) regard management to be one of the most important factors influencing performance. Furthermore, experts in the field claim that, besides implementing successful management techniques in generating high-performance levels, faith in management is just as crucial as a psychological component in enhancing effort and reaching higher performance levels. Performance management is a technical term that relates to the process of managing the output of performance. How a company meets, its budgetary objectives are performance management and financial management systems (Campos & Pradhan, 1996).

Given the importance of vital human resource practices to an organization’s overall performance, integrating performance management systems with financial management systems is critical in constructing sound human resource practices.

Campos and Pradhan (1996) have established various goals that can be used as guiding benchmarks for organizational performance standards. It is argued that (i) maintaining fiscal discipline, (ii) allocating resources per organizational priorities, and (iii) promoting efficiency in the use of budgetary resources for the efficient delivery of services will assist institutions in configuring their organizational management systems, financial, and performance management systems by directing them toward developing effectively (Campos & Pradhan, 1996).

## **Related Researches**

Razzaq et al.'s (2017) work is entitled 'The impact of human resources management practices on employee commitment: Evidence from Pakistan telecom sector.' Their research's primary variables were employee participation, compensation, career planning, performance appraisal, training, selection, and employee performance. They used correlation and concluded that all variables are positively correlated, but compensation & training are highly correlated with employee performance.

Chaudhry Akhtar Shoaib et al. (2013) conducted a research 'Impact of organizational culture on organizational commitment: A comparative study of public and private organizations. The primary variables of their research were the culture of an organization and the organizational commitment of employees. They used correlation analysis, validity, and reliability in their research. The data was gathered from employees who work in public sector organizations. They concluded that organizational culture is positively related to organizational commitment in the public sector.

Hassan et al. (2013) carried out research entitled 'Impact of HR practices on employee satisfaction and employee loyalty: An empirical study of Pakistan's government-owned public sector banks. Their research's primary variables were employee compensation, employee empowerment, appraisal system, employee satisfaction, and employee loyalty. They implied regression analysis, correlation analysis, and validity & reliability test. They conducted this research in different public banks in Pakistan and got questioners filled randomly by their employees. They proposed that employee compensation is the most crucial factor in satisfying the employees and that employee empowerment is the significant factor in making the employees loyal to an organization.

Meera Alagaraja (2013) researched 'HRD and HRM perspectives on organizational performance: A review of the literature.' The primary variables of her research were human resources management, human resource development, and organizational performance. She used only secondary data, and it was purely qualitative research. She concluded that there are differences as well as similarities in the organizational

performance concept. Thus, the perceived image can be very different from the natural (actual) situation. Positive perception can positively affect organizational performance and *vice versa*.

Mustapha et al.'s (2013) research was 'The impacts of well-planned recruitment and selection process on corporate performance in the Nigerian banking industry.' The primary variables of research were education, motivation, and psychological testing. They used multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance. They found that if recruitment and selections are made on merit, it will be positively related to organizational performance.

Fayza Z. (2012) research was entitled 'A case study of human resource practices in a public sector: Silk factory in Kashmir.' The primary variables of her research were human resource practices. Primary data was collected from 200 employees and mean as well as standard deviation. She concluded that though ten HR practices are listed in the Silk factory, only four are implemented. She further suggested that they should implement all practices to make the performance better.

Hong et al. (2012) work was 'An effectiveness of human resource management practices on employee retention in higher learning institutes: A regression analysis. Their research's primary variables were employee empowerment, training & development, compensation, appraisal system, and employee retention. They used multiple regression analysis and probability. They found that compensation, training & development, and appraisal system are significant to employee retention in the higher learning sector. In contrast, empowerment is less significant to employee retention.

Javed et al. (2012) conducted the respective research 'Impact of HR practices on employee job satisfaction in Pakistan's public sector organizations. Their research's primary variables were training and development, employee rewards, employee recognition, and job satisfaction. They used reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, and data was gathered from the employees who work at public sector organizations. They concluded that training & development and recognition are essential practices regarding the job satisfaction of employees. At the same time, employee rewards are less important factors to employee's job satisfaction.

Nermine Magdy Atteya (2012) worked on 'Testing the impact of human resource management practices on job performance: An empirical study in the Egyptian joint venture petroleum companies.' Her research's primary variables were human resources practices, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational behavior, and job performance. She used regression and ANOVA analysis and collected data from 549 supervisors of the petroleum industry in Egypt. She concluded that human resources management practices exert a significant positive impact on job performance and job satisfaction.

Pankaj Tiwari and Kurunesh Saxena's (2012) research was 'Human resource management practices: A comprehensive review.' It was purely qualitative research based on secondary data gathered from different websites and books. They reviewed the literature on HRM practices and concluded that they have to implement innovative HRM practices to manage human resources effectively.

Shedrack Mbithi Mutua and Kabare Karanja's (2012) work was 'Role of human resource management practices on financial cooperatives' performance-based in Nairobi county, Kenya.' The primary variables of their research were HRM practices and organizational performance. It was qualitative research, and thus secondary data was collected. They found that HRM practices play a vital role in making the organizations' performances better, but HRM practices are not appropriately applied (i.e., in its real sense) worldwide as they should be.

Bowra et al. (2011) carried out their work entitled 'Impact of human resource practices on employee perceived performance in Pakistan's banking sector. The primary variables of their research were compensation practices, performance evaluation, and promotion practices. They used regression and correlation analysis. The data was gathered through a questionnaire of 235 banking personnel. They concluded that employee perceived performance and HR practices have a positive and significant relationship. Further, promotion and performance evaluation is significant, but employees' compensation practices are not significant enough to make a positive change alone in an organization.

Iqbal et al. (2011) conducted research 'HRM practices in public and private universities of Pakistan: A comparative study.' The primary variables of their research were HRM practices and training & development. They used T-test and reliability, and the data was gathered through a questionnaire from 60 Directors of the departments of public and private universities in Pakistan. They revealed that HRM practices of public universities are relatively better as compared to private universities. They suggested that both sectors should improve their HRM practices more in favor of their employees.

Ismail Tokmak et al. (2011) conducted a research 'Exploring the effect of human resource management practices on organizational performance and perceived organization support's mediating role: An empirical research on Turkish SMEs.' The primary variables of their research were HRM practices, organizational performance, and perceived organizational support. They conducted a field survey in SMEs operating in four central Black Sea cities and used validity, consistency of scales, and casualty. The data was gathered through a questionnaire from the employees of 31 SMEs. They found that compensation, recruitment, and selection positively and significantly affect organizational performance and perceived organizational support, and HRM practices have an aggregate effect on organizational performance.



Muhammad Sial et al. (2011) conducted a research 'Effect of human resource practices on organizational commitment in Pakistani universities.' The primary variables of their research were performance evaluation, promotion, compensation, and organizational commitment. They used regression analysis & correlation analysis. They conducted this research in different Pakistani universities and selected 206 teachers randomly to get the questioners filled. They concluded that there is a strong positive correlation between compensation practices and organizational commitment. On the other hand, performance evaluation and promotion have no significant relationship to organizational commitment.

Rosemond Boohene and Ernesticia Lartey Asuinura (2011) conducted research 'The effect of human resource management practices on corporate performance: A study of Graphic Communications Group Limited.' His research's primary variables were human resources policies, recruitment & selection practices, performance appraisal practices, rewards & benefits, and training. He used T-test, standard deviation, mean, and probability, and the data was gathered through a questionnaire filled from 460 employees of Graphic Communications Group Limited. He concluded that remuneration and training & development have no significant relationship to corporate performance. However, recruitment and selection have a significant relation to corporate performance.

Werner Nienhueser's (2011) research is entitled 'Empirical research on human resource management as a production of ideology.' The primary variables of his research were ideology, images of work, and power. It was purely qualitative research. He observed that the human resources management practices framework is not adequately implemented. He suggested that the HRM practices framework is ideal for increasing productivity.

David M. Akinnusi's (2010) work is entitled 'Benchmarking of human resource management in the public sector: Prospects, problems, and challenges.' The primary variables of his research were the benchmarking process and human resource management practices. He conducted purely qualitative research based on secondary data. He suggested that to improve the benchmark of public universities HRM model followed by private universities should be implemented. It is a model of excellence, and there is a big difference between the ethics and culture of public and private universities.

Esra Nemli Caliskan (2010) researched 'The impact of strategic human resource management on organizational performance.' The primary variables of her research were strategic human resource management, competitive advantage, and corporate performance. It was purely qualitative based research, and the data was gathered from different books and websites. She emphasized that human resource is the primary source to create a competitive advantage for an organization. She concluded

a significant relationship between the ways upper management deals with their human resource and their performance.

Akbar Ali (2009) investigated the respective phenomenon in 'The role of leadership in human resources management: A comparative study of specific public and private sectors in Pakistan.' The primary variables of his research were feedback strategies, leadership roles, leadership types, and delegation. He used mean, mode, and median. He examined ten competencies of banks, hospitals, and airlines of Pakistan's public and private sectors and got a questionnaire filled by 520 respondents. He found that private banks' leadership role is comparatively better than public banks, the leadership role of private hospitals is better than public hospitals, and public airlines' leadership role is better than private airlines.

Ann P. Bartel (2004) researched 'Human resource management and organizational performance: Evidence from retail banking.' The data was collected by visits to a big bank's branch operations, and she used mean, standard deviation, correlation, regression, correlation coefficient, and T-test. Her research's primary variables were branch performance, employee satisfaction, recognition, feedback, and work quality. After analyzing the information obtained by employees, she concluded that it shows a positive relationship between branch performance and employee satisfaction with recognition, feedback, and work quality.

Kerry Brown (2004) researched 'Human resource management in the public sector.' The primary variables of her research were human resource management practices. The data was collected by previously available research works as it was purely qualitative research. She highlighted a vast difference between the new management approach of public sector operations and activity than traditional bureaucratic models.

Garry Gelade's (2003) research was entitled 'The impact of human resource management and work climate on organizational performance.' The primary variables of their research were HRM practices, operational performance, and work climate. They used correlation, reliability, and standard deviation. They concluded that HRM practices and work climate have a positive and significant relationship with organizational performance.

Kok et al. (2003) researched 'Professional HRM practices in family-owned-managed enterprises.' Their research's primary variables were recruitment, selection, compensation, training & development, and appraisal. They used correlation, reliability, and regression, and the data was gathered through questionnaires from the employees of 31 SMEs. They found that family-owned enterprises are less likely to imply professional human resources management practices in their organizations.

Ahmad and Schroeder (2002) researched under the title 'Impacts of human resource practices on organizational performance: Recognizing country and industry differences.' Their research's primary variables were human resource practices,

strategic human resource management, and organizational performance. The data was gathered from different countries, and they used mean, correlation, regression, and standard deviation. They concluded that HRM practices would be positively related to organizational performance after controlling the country and industry differences.

## **CONCLUSION**

Since the close of the twentieth century, management researchers and academics have been interested in exploring, finding, and implementing successful approaches for controlling organizational performance in organisations. Much attention has been paid to the development of measures (or indicators) that are suitable for evaluating measurable organizational performance results. There has been a renewed attention on institutional and organizational performance following the rise of several issues (called “Organizational sector illnesses” by some authors). Recruitment & selection practices of organizations harm their performance (financial & non-financial) because it involves more resources (time, money, and human resource). As far as compensation & benefits practices are concerned, it also harms organizational performance. Increment in this sphere has not shown its efficacy to a great extent. In contrast, the training & development practices of organizations have a positive effect on their performance. As training & development motivate existing employees, it is far more feasible to train senior personnel rather than hire new employees.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Leadership:** It is the act of directing a group of individuals or an organization.

**Management:** It is the act of interacting with or exerting control over objects or people.

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**Organizational Culture:** It refers to the underlying ideas, assumptions, values, and modes of interaction that contribute to an organization's distinctive social and psychological environment.

**Organizational Performance:** It is defined as an organization's actual output or outcomes in comparison to its expected outputs (or goals and objectives).

**Training and Development:** It is described as a system utilized by a business to enhance its employees' abilities and performance.

**Work Environment:** It is the geographical location, social characteristics, and conditions in which individuals execute their job.

## Conclusion

This new book entitled *Navigating the New Normal of Business With Enhanced Human Resource Management Strategies* presented several strategies employed by businesses and Human Resource practitioners in various organizations worldwide as they beset the challenges posed by the pandemic crisis for almost three years now. This book serves as a catalyst for leaders or managers who are looking for the best strategies which the organization adopted to provide satisfaction, increase their employees' level of productivity and adjust to the new normal way of conducting their business operation along with their usual procedures and standard operating procedures from recruitment, selection, training, motivation and all other facets of human resource management. The authors and contributors of this book vehemently discussed significantly their strategies of addressing possible risks and proposed solutions to mitigate such risks. The contributors of this book have scientifically formulated and proposed effective strategies to perpetuate the new normal business environment where most employees work in various digital platforms using zoom without disrupting the business operation.

The main objective of this book is to explore more of the unknown strategies insofar as human resource management system and other clinical entities during the Covid 19 pandemic. The firms mentioned and discussed in this book have adopted the new normal reality of the current period with their attempted measures, strategies, and practices to transcend their firms over and above the economic blow by slowly recuperating from the endemic impact of the Covid 19 crisis. Such measures have somehow made them stay in the business industry as they thrive on combating the adverse effects of the pandemic crisis.

## Glossary

**Abusive Supervision (AS):** It is defined as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact” ( Tepper 2000 , p. 178).

**B2B:** It is a transaction between two businesses, a wholesaler, and a retailer.

**B2C:** It refers to the process of a firm selling products and services directly to end-users or customers.

**Banking:** These are the services offered by a bank.

**Competencies:** Competencies are particular qualities that a company’s recruiters have decided are desirable for employees to possess.

**COVID-19:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by coronavirus 2 that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2).

**COVID-19 Decorum:** COVID 19 decorum entails taking the required steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as wearing a mask, sanitizing hands, maintaining hygiene, and social distancing, among other things.

**COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

**Customer Relationship Management:** It is a method for businesses to understand their customers better and respond quickly—and in some cases, instantly—to changing customer preferences.

**E-Banking:** It is online banking, i.e., via the internet.

**E-Commerce:** Transactions conducted on the internet.

**Employee Engagement:** Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work.

**Employee-Friendly Organizations:** In today's world, talented, multi-tasking, assiduous, teamwork, committed, motivated and productive employees are essential for a business. In this context, all businesses start to see their employees as the most valuable element and accordingly develop an employee-friendly climate and practices. Employees are the most valuable assets of businesses. According to scientific studies supporting this thesis, it has been observed that "high level of employee satisfaction is achieved, success in financial performance is achieved and these organizations carry less risk" in workplaces that create an "employee-friendly climate" or "work-life balance". On the other hand, the Quality Management System implemented by successful organizations shows that the way to provide customer satisfaction (external customer) is to make the internal customer (employee), that is, to keep the employees happy.

**Fear of Stigmatization:** Feeling of humiliation, worthy of disgrace or great disapproval from friends, co-employees, acquaintances, etc.

**Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA):** Flexible work arrangements are defined as "employer provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside of the standard workday" ( Lambert et al., 2008 , p. 107). It is broadly demarcated as 'flextime' and 'flexplace' (or 'flexspace') the former meaning having flexibility in the time of work. In contrast, the latter meant flexibility in the location where one does the work.

**High-Performance Work System:** A system that combines HR practices, processes, and work structures to enhance the knowledge, skills, the attitude of the employees along with their commitment, involvement, and adaptability.

**Hiring Halt:** A hiring halt occurs when an employer temporarily stops non-essential employee hiring to minimize costs, usually when the company is facing financial crisis.

**Holistic Wellbeing:** It means a combination of physical, mental, and emotional health.

## **Glossary**

**HR Practioners:** HR professionals integrate their activities closely with management and ensure that they serve a long-term strategic purpose.

**Human Asset:** Human Assets are the accumulated knowledge and skills that make a workforce productive and are part of the Intangible Assets the company.

**Hybrid Workplace Model:** This is a working method or arrangement wherein the job applies both the in-office and remote working agreement.

**Knowledge Management:** Harris (2020) described knowledge management as the explicit and systematic management of intellectual capital and organizational knowledge, as well as the associated processes of creating, gathering, validating, categorizing, archiving, disseminating, leveraging, and using intellectual capital for improving the organization and the individuals in it.

**Layoffs:** A layoff is a temporary suspension or permanent termination of an employee's or, more typically, a group of employees' employment for business reasons such as personnel management or organization downsizing.

**Leadership:** It is the act of directing a group of individuals or an organization.

**Leadership Development:** Weiss and Molinaro (2005) describe leadership development as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes.

**Manage Budget:** A yearly expenditures approved by department/management heads based on the budget that was provided and sanctioned.

**Management:** It is the act of interacting with or exerting control over objects or people.

**Mental Health of Employees:** Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being of employees.

**Ministry of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA):** Is one of the Ministries in Vietnam that executes and governmental functions such as wage, salary, employment, social insurances, occupational hygiene and safety, social protection, etc.

**New Normal:** After the COVID-19 pandemic, companies are trying to adapt to the new normal process, which includes the stages of life returning to normal, by producing innovations or taking precautions. With well-structured measures and usual procedures, daily life and work life define the new normal. Companies now continue by adapting their processes to the 'New Normal' or working from home and continuing without contact. The new normal, which is heard a lot thanks to the coronavirus, is adapting to the conditions and accepting the reality in our lives from now on. After the crisis created by the epidemic, the 'new normal' is to be faced and there will be differences as well.

**New Normal Business Environment:** The new normal business environment alludes to new ways of doing business and how we work due to circumstances such as economic crises and health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Oman Labor Law (RD 35/2003):** A specific provision that gives all workers a 30-day annual leave with pay.

**Onboarding:** Is a term used in human resource management that encompasses the process of introducing the newly employed individual in the company. It is also known as organizational socialization.

**Online Recruitment:** Also termed E-recruitment is the utilization of technology like web-based resources to implement the process of finding, attracting, interviewing, and selecting new employees.

**Organizational Culture:** It refers to the underlying ideas, assumptions, values, and modes of interaction that contribute to an organization's distinctive social and psychological environment.

**Organizational Performance:** It is defined as an organization's actual output or outcomes in comparison to its expected outputs (or goals and objectives).

**Organizational Strategies:** Organizations adapt to their environment by implementing strategies formulated by top management. For this, the top management constantly monitors the changes in the environmental conditions affecting the business; It tries to determine what opportunities these changes create or what dangers they bring. Organizations develop and implement various strategies to provide competitive advantage or to maintain the current advantage.

## **Glossary**

**Overall Life Satisfaction (LS):** It is one of the key desired outcomes in HR & OB literature, used extensively as a measure of hedonic well-being (Ryff & Keye, 1995 AU74: The in-text citation &quot;Ryff & Keye, 1995&quot; is not in the reference list. Please correct the citation, add the reference to the list, or delete the citation. ). Hedonic well-being as a concept was ideated by Greek philosopher Epicurus, who opined that the ultimate aim of life was to achieve as much happiness as possible, and little or no pain.

**Positive Psychology:** A scholarly research of living a worthy life emphasizing both the individual and societal wellbeing.

**Potential Candidates:** A potential candidate is a person who meets the required conditions for employment against a job by all means.

**Proactive Recruitment:** In proactive recruitment, preparation is essential to achieve success. It entails looking for individuals before staffing levels become a problem for a corporation.

**Psychological Capital (PsyCap):** It is based on the concepts of positive psychology in general, and, specifically, positive organizational behaviour ( Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017 ). The four constructs, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, defines positive organizational behaviour the best, and PsyCap is an integration of these four combined resources (collectively termed as the HERO within).

**Psychological Detachment (PD):** It is defined as an “individual’s sense of being away from work situations” ( Etzion et al., 1998 , p. 579).

**Public Sector Organization:** The public sector is usually comprised of organizations that are owned and operated by the government and exist to provide services to citizens. The public sector organization thus provide governmental services or any public services which benefit all of society rather than just the individual who uses the services including health care, the military, law enforcement, infrastructure, public education, water management, etc.

**Recruitment:** The process of identifying, sourcing, screening, shortlisting, and interviewing individuals for jobs (permanent or temporary) within an organization is termed recruitment. Recruitment can also refer to the procedures for selecting people for unpaid positions.



**Recruitment Portal:** This is a job portal or a career portal that aids the job aspirants to look for a job and helps employers search for suitable and ideal candidates.

**Remote Working:** A method of working that is done at home or in a location that is not the company's location or place of business.

**Remote Working:** Working from a location other than a central office provided by the employer is as known as remote working.

**Social Capital:** Is a system of affiliations amongst individuals who resides and work in a specific community and empowering them to effectively function.

**Social Insurance Law 58/2014/QH13:** Contains recent policies in matters of social insurance considering social insurance participants, rights and responsibilities, social insurance and agencies, and other employers.

**Strategic Human Resources Management:** Strategic human resource management; It refers to the link between companies' human resources departments and strategies, goals and objectives. Strategic human resources management refers to the methods applied for businesses to make a difference and stay strong in the competitive environment. To have a say in the competition, not to fall behind the times and most importantly, organizations that have to change in order to survive have to look at their human resources from a strategic perspective. As a matter of fact, in this conceptual study, the concept of strategic human resources management and the perspectives developed regarding the concept are discussed.

**Supreme Committee Oman:** A special committee formed by the government of Oman that is primarily responsible to make decisions in all activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Takeaways:** One emerging from a discussion wherein tourism and other business operators must comply with all the laws, policies, and regulations.

**Talent Acquisition:** Talent acquisition refers to the process of identifying and acquiring skilled workers to meet your organizational needs.

## **Glossary**

**Talent Management:** Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2012) describes talent management as a systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organization either in view of their 'high potential' for the future or because they are fulfilling business or operation-critical roles.

**Technology:** Technology refers to methods, processes, and equipment resulting from scientific knowledge applied to practical applications.

**Training and Development:** It is described as a system utilized by a business to enhance its employees' abilities and performance.

**Unilateral Termination:** A government labor code stating that the employer can singly dismiss labor contracts of the workers by handing out an advanced 3-day notice. when an employee is sick sic consecutive months, twelve consecutive months, and more than half of the contract term, and for those employees that are still cannot work in spite of the medical treatment received.

**Unprecedented Laws and Regulations:** Unexpected changes in policies and regulations contingent on the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Upskilling and Training:** Upskilling is a workplace concept that promotes continuous learning by offering training and development opportunities that broaden an employee's talents and lessen skill gaps.

**Vietnam National Administration of Tourism:** This is the government agency of Vietnam that manages tourist operations and activities throughout the country.

**Virtual Communication:** A mode of communication wherein technology has been used in lieu of face-to-face conversation through audio or video electronic devices.

**Virtual Platforms:** A software-based system that is utilized for the formation and improvement of training modules through the web and is also used for teaching and learning.

**Virtual Recruitment:** A recruiting procedure that takes place remotely, without recruiters and candidates in person.

**Work Environment:** It is the geographical location, social characteristics, and conditions in which individuals execute their job.

**Work Redundancy:** Reduction of the employee because the position is no longer needed.

**Work-From-Home (WFH):** It comes under the 'flexplace' (or 'flexspace') kind of flexible work arrangements, where the individual is allowed to work from their home premises, not requiring to be physically present in the office premises.

**Work-Life Balance:** Work-life balance refers to the harmony of work and private life. This harmony improves the quality of life for both us and our family. Intense competition in the business world often does not allow such a balance to be established in personal/private life. There is a point that is ignored that people who work hard and do not pay attention to their health and do not establish a work-life balance are at risk of exhaustion. Burnout is not a sign of helplessness or dislike for one's job, but the scientific result of one's choices.

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To continue our tradition of advancing information science and technology research, we have compiled a list of recommended IGI Global readings. These references will provide additional information and guidance to further enrich your knowledge and assist you with your own research and future publications.

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