

The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Human Resource Management and the Role Changes of HR Manager in an Organization

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Abstract: *This research examines the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Human Resource Management and the role changes of HR manager in an organization. The covid-19 pandemic reviews the weakness as well as the strength of the HR manager in an organization. Showing the competency of the HR manager to be able to think outside the box and creating measures of achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. This study also examines the dimensions of Covid-19 pandemic which are remote working and unemployment and layoff as well as the measures of Human Resource Management which are performance appraisal and recruitment.*

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, HRM, Remote Working, Unemployment and Layoff, Performance Appraisal and Recruitment.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a particularly challenging environment for human resource management (HRM) with managers having to quickly venture into the unknown as they strive to help their workforce adapt to and cope with radical changes occurring in the work and social environment. For example, employees who formerly spent all or most of their time working inside their organization's physical boundaries now have to quickly adjust to remote work environments. Due to shelter in place orders and the closure of non-essential businesses, even those who might be well adjusted to remote working conditions are now faced with their own unique challenges due to an inability to seek alternative workspaces (e.g., cafés, libraries and co-working spaces) outside of the home itself. This has likely further limited the segmentation between work and private spheres leading to greater difficulties in unplugging from work demands (Chawla, MacGowan, Gabriel, & Podsakoff, 2020). Aside from the increased inability to separate work and private life, the closure of schools and child-care services has increased parental demands for employees, further blurring the lines between work and family spheres. While these work-family interconnections seem particularly demanding for employees with children, single and childless workers are not immune to the negative consequences of such altered working conditions, as they may be at greatest risk of loneliness, a felt lack of purpose, and associated negative effects on well-being (Achor, Kellerman, Reece, & Robichaux, 2018).

Perhaps one of the most salient HRM challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic involves adjusting new and current employees to drastically altered work conditions, such as shifting to remote work environments or implementing new workplace policies and procedures to limit human contact. Such dramatic alterations in how and where employees do their work is likely to have important implications for employees' experiences of person-environment fit or the level of congruence between the attributes they possess and those of the environment (Kristof, 1996).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The essence of every research is to produce additional knowledge or to discover new facts. The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the influence of Covid-19 Pandemic on Human Resource Management. More specifically this study will seek to:

- Ascertain the influence of remote working on performance appraisal
- Ascertain the influence of unemployment and layoff on recruitment

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The covid-19 pandemic took the world and organizations by storm which led to shutdown of many sectors across the globe. Covid-19 has made HR managers to think outside the box creating ways on making sure that the organization meets its requirement in terms of performance and productivity of the organization. Many organizations suffered a blow due to neglect of the current pandemic as a result of their HR manager not being able to devise a means of making sure that the employees are catered for and in most cases get infected by the virus leading to total shutdown of the company. The manifestation of the pandemic as led to the shutdown of many industries due to the covid-19 pandemic that has ravage the world, Manufacturing companies in U.S like the automakers in Detroit announced a complete factory shutdown following news that workers at several auto plants had tested positive for covid-19.

HR managers have tried to provide a solution to adapt to the global pandemic but there are still some challenges in the process. This research seeks to solve the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on human resource management and the role changes of HR manager in an organization.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the study is the time frame given for this research work and it should be noted that the covid-19 pandemic is a new ground in research as there are not enough literature on the subject matter. The Covid-19 pandemic and Human Resource Management focuses on organizations as it cut across all sectors.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

COVID-19's impacts on workers and workplaces across the globe have been dramatic. We present a broad review of prior research rooted in work and organizational psychology, and related fields, for making sense of the implications for employees, teams, and work organizations. Our review and preview of relevant literatures focuses on:

- Remote working (working from home, virtual teams)
- Recruitment.
- Performance appraisal
- Unemployment and layoff

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Accordingly, as organizations continue to adapt their HR practices in the face of COVID-19, understanding how these unprecedented changes are influencing employees' experience of person- environment (P-E) fit, and how to resolve potential misfit, will be critical. For instance, as organizations have to transition to virtual forms of recruitment, selection, and training in lieu of face-to-face interactions (Maurer, 2020), it will become increasingly important to understand how these practices will impact the future fabric of an organization's values and culture, as these new practices could certainly attract and retain individuals differently than traditional face-to-face approaches. Toward this end, research is needed to understand the impact that COVID-19 has on employees' ability to navigate the job search process, how the transition to virtual recruitment affects their ability to develop and assess perceptions of fit regarding potential employment situations, and the efficacy of virtual assessment centers and training programs.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Organizations are faced with increasing uncertainty as they navigate today's grand challenges or highly significant problems not typically confined to national, economic, or societal borders (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015). The grand challenges of today are diverse, involving a range of complex issues such as climate change, severe economic downturns, and political instability (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016). In our interconnected world, these significant problems can pose an immediate threat to organizations' vitality and survival, encouraging organizations to remain responsive and adaptive as they organize and manage their workforce. But with the recent outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus, 2020), organizations face a grand challenge of unparalleled proportions, one that forces them to dive into and directly manage unprecedented territory as they alter their workforce in technical, physical and socio-psychological ways not seen before. According to Mead and Andrews, (2009) has opined that the lockdown occasioned by the Corona Virus Pandemic showed that international cooperation and interdependence of nations could suddenly be disrupted. Consequently, HR in developing countries like Nigeria must advise its organization on the need for their employees to work with expatriates, to have skills transferred to them, so that such nations could be reasonably independent. This will enable them survive in case of future lockdowns, which could be occasioned by pandemics, natural disaster or war.

In order to encourage talent transfers and skill acquisitions, organizations must use their labor more efficiently. HR in companies must therefore insist on recruiting rare talents, even if they are foreign and then use them in the training of their local employees. (Mead and Andrews, 2009). They must also move out from their traditional functions of personnel management and assume the function of enforcing employee compliance with company policies, minimizing the cost associated with staff and playing a role in the achievement of short term goals of the organization especially in this pandemic period. This will ensure speedier resuscitative leap by the companies that suffered assault occasioned by the lockdown. (Brower, 2020).

DIMENSIONS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The following are used as the dimensions of covid-19 pandemic which are remote working and unemployment and layoff.

Remote working

Remote working is working away from work place or company/organizations office. An employee can work at his/her home, company's partner office, or a designated place. However, because of Covid-19 pandemic the remote working is reduced to working from an employee's home. There are several merits, challenges, demerits both for employee and for organization. The benefits for organization are reduced operation cost, transport cost, allowing an employee to work though he is not the office during the Covid-19 pandemic and other similar situations. The challenges for employer are lack of supervision, irregular work schedules, communication, delayed decision making, an additional investment on communication technologies. As employee per se, workspace isolation, additional investment on communication channels, working too much or too little, absence of visibility from the management side to quantify the outputs, delayed decisions, lack of trust with the organization management, career development issues, job insecurity, no work-life balance, social isolation and family disturbances and increased occupational stress (Prasad et al. 2020). Remote work improved performance and business outcomes. The telecommuting and more job control by employee resulted in more efficient work and with less interruptions. The greater control of resources by the staff, better work-life balance and child care arrangements are contributors for enhanced employee performance. The elimination of commuting and flexibility of working enhanced employee performance (Dean Scaduto, 2020). The success of remote working depends on the trust between employee and employer and remote working is nothing but working from home meet the goals, vision and mission of an organization.

A remote worker operates beyond the conventional procedures and place anywhere which suits his needs from home or nearby net centre or co-working room with the supervisor's acceptance (Remote work, 2020). Melanie (2020) presented the required tools for remote working like Microsoft remote desktop, own, and other essential communication tools. It is being evident of from a study that 99% of information technology workforce has the capacity to perform remote working (SCIKEY Mind Match, 2020). Trust between the employee and employer is the major concern for remote working as the employee and superior has similar ambitions and perceptions of performance and job satisfactions (Standee Staples, 2001). Hickman (2019) reported from the Gallup Research data business outcomes improvement, attraction of talent, and better engaged workforce has the best financial outcomes through remote work. The author suggested lack of supervision of a remote work employee is major concern and further suggested to develop policies and procedure on remote work. Prasad et al. 2020 reported the factors such as role ambiguity, climate of an organization, job satisfaction, supervisor has significantly influencing the psychological well-being and work life balance of the employee of informational technology sector. The researchers further suggested if possible to continue the present form of remote working wherever possible.

Unemployment and Layoffs.

As entire industries such as travel, hospitality, sports, and entertainment were shut down by COVID-19, tens of millions of people in the U.S. alone filed new unemployment claims in early 2020. In addition to losing income, we know that individuals who are unemployed may experience a range of stress-related consequences including depression, anxiety, and physical ailments (Wanberg, 2012). Jahoda's (1982) latent deprivation model helps explain the negative effects of unemployment on psychological well-being by acknowledging that employment provides both manifest (income) and latent (time structure, social contact, sharing of common goals, status, and activity) benefits. Financial deprivation can be particularly devastating, triggering a spiral of adversity that can affect the entire family (McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, 2018).

Hopes related to COVID-19 unemployment have centered on an economic recovery unfolding fast enough that jobs lost to COVID-19 unemployment will largely be regained but that is far from certain. The broad-based closures associated with COVID-19 have further complicated typical advice for individuals who are unemployed to develop a regular routine of job search (Wanberg, Ali, & Csillag, 2020). Researchers studying unique features of COVID-19 will want to compare how people cope and adapt to the shocks entailed by COVID-19 in both the near-term with respect to the employer that let them go and, in the longer term, where career adaptability (Klehe et al., 2012). The willingness and interest to explore new options and future work scenarios might prove to be increasingly valuable. In addition to the consequences of unemployment for individuals, there are negative spillover effects for those who remain employed. Prior research shows that when firms reduce overall staffing levels, there tends to be correspondingly lower levels of organizational commitment, job involvement, and greater stress among survivors (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). Meta-analytic evidence finds that overall reduction in staffing has roughly the same adverse organizational performance as comparable voluntary turnover (Park & Shaw, 2013). We also know from recent research that broader economic downturns tend to be associated with a shift towards more "zero-sum" mindsets with a downstream consequence that people become increasingly prone to misconstrue others as competitors even when they are not (Sirola & Pitesa 2017). Future research that examines the mass layoffs entailed by COVID-19 should test the extent to which prior research holds up in the face of the wide, broad, and abrupt layoffs.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

HRM has become a key player in improving the organization's performance, enhancing its competitive position, and gaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Dessler (2015) defined Human Resource Management as the process of recruiting, training, appraising, and compensating employees, attending to their health and safety, justice concerns, and labor relations. Shawish (2005), defined HRM as the activity of identifying the needs of the organization with the appropriate numbers and competencies of the workforce and coordinates the utilization of this human resource as efficiently as possible. HRM is a set of activities that concern employees; starting from human resources planning, job analysis, preparation of selection and recruitment systems, performance evaluation and motivating employees to achieve organizational objectives (Loraibi, 2018). If companies want to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, they should focus on intellectual capital and implicit knowledge of the human resources, because it is hard to be imitated by competitors. The HR Department, like other business functions, designs and implements special strategies, which in turn, support the company's strategies to improve the organization's performance and competitive position (Dessler, 2015). According to Atakpa (2011), human resource management involves the integration of personnel and other HRM considerations into the firm's overall corporate planning and strategy, formulation procedures. It is proactive seeking consistently to discover new ways of utilizing the labour force to more productive manner thereby giving the business a competitive edge. Maduagwu and Nwogu (2006) defines human resource management as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued asset (the people working in the organization) who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives. According to Lado and Wilson (2004), a human resource management system is considered to be a set of distinct set of activities, functions, and processes which are interrelated and directed at attracting, developing, maintaining, utilizing and finally disposing of a firm's human resources.

Bratton and Gold (2007) said that HRM is a technical means which deals with employment relations management whereby employee's capabilities and competency is essential in the achievement of competitive advantage, in order to achieve this to set up distinctive integrated employee programmes, policies and practices.

Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002), said HRM practices can aid commitment of firm's workers, knowledge, motivation, synergy and providing the firm a sustained chance of having a competitive advantage. They must confidently roll out modalities that will mitigate the negative impact on work pattern and procedures. In all of these, the HR must remember that the employees are their closest ally. They must therefore carry them along, trust, motivate, and assure them, as they weather through the coming days of this corona virus and beyond. (Collington, 2020). Armstrong (2009), opined that the HR Manager is the driver of human resource policies in organizations. Human resource policies connotes what the HR must do in an organization in order to maintain their philosophies and values, particularly in respect of how employees should be treated. Such policies usually are structured and serve as beacons for the activities of an organization. Peters and Waterman (1982) cited by Armstrong, (2009), noted that an excellent organization is known by its value system and what people know it to be. Ulrich (1996), has opined that the functions of HR included ensuring that the human resources of an organization understands and aligns with the business strategy of that organization, resuscitating and repositioning organizations process when it is down, managing the human resource in the organization in terms of taking their grievances and adopting their input when necessary. HR must see themselves as business people who specialize in human resource. Their role is to incubate and nurture the human resource of organizations; and this will enable them to contribute positively to the growth of companies. (Nwoka, 2019)

According to Nwoka (2019), HR managers must ensure that only qualified and competent employees are recruited. Their performance appraisal must be thorough. There could be reason for a layoff of some members of staff due to the economic difficulties. The HR must be able to manage the process so as to maintain the confidence of those that will remain in the organization.

MEASURES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The measures of human resource management consist of performance appraisal and recruitment.

Performance appraisal

Lecky (1999) defined performance appraisal system as a benchmark which is set against a specific task or performance. It requires the input and output such as remuneration, pay rise, level of expectation, promotion and managerial planning. In addition, it is a merit rating which should be beneficial to both parties and must be constantly reviewed to suit the requirement. Dave and Wayne (2005) argued that performance appraisal is an instrument whereby an individual was retaliated by the assessment due to certain personal dissatisfaction, and it has adversely affected future performance. Nonetheless, study by Hassan (2007) has discovered that in Malaysia, the focus on employee development has yet to be the centre stage in organizations.

Performance appraisal deals with sanction, discrete and formal in an organization. This is not a daily routine in an organization but it is done once in a year in an organization which defines the performance needed for the evaluation process (Angelo and Robert, 2006). In this performance appraisal, scores are been assigned to employees base on the job been performed as defined by the organization for evaluation process. It is sometimes called merit rating when its sole objective is to discriminate between employees in granting increase in wages and salaries (Atakpa, 2011). This is also process by which a manager or consultant examines and evaluates an employees work behavior by comparing it with pre set standards. The performance communication process is essential

for promoting personal success and fostering a collaborative culture in an organization. A discussion about performance help a supervisor gain insights into their employee's strengths and abilities and allows them to recognize achievements and evaluate job progress. Feedbacks from this process aids to the development of effective training programs to further expand knowledge and skills. It is a systematic evaluation of an individual with respect to performance on the job and individuals potential for development. It is a formal, structured system of measuring, evaluating job related behaviours and outcomes to discover reasons of performance and how to perform effectively in future so that employee, organization and society all benefits through performance appraisal, the process, product and administrative innovation can actually be enhanced.

Armstrong (1979) described appraisal as the process of reviewing an individual's performance and progress in a job and assessing the potential for future promotion.

Recruitment

The process of attracting qualified individuals to fill available vacancies in the Organization (Dessler, 2015). If the process of recruitment is carried out properly, it reflects positively on the performance of the organization by attracting the qualified individuals' vacancies. Ethical behavior emerges through careful identification of needs, systematic planning, and avoid nepotism to provide equal opportunity and social justice to all members of society, and provides an obligation to appoint the best and most efficient person, that is, putting the right person in the right place(Mihailović, Cvijanović, and Simonović 2015). As well as fairness and integrity in the internal recruitment of holding positions according to competence, and allowing the organization to benefit from capabilities and expertise (Dessler, 2015).

Nwosu (2002) defined recruitment as the process of searching for prospective employee and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organization. It is the provision of a large enough group of candidates so that the organization will be able to select those persons with the required skills. Recruitment is the first part of filling vacancy which include the examination of the vacancy, the consideration of sources of suitable candidates, making contact with those candidates and attracting applications from them (Graham and Bennet, 1995). Recruitment practices underlie recruiting activities and functions such as sponsoring career fairs at colleges and universities with diverse student populations, advertising job vacancies across several venues to reach a broad audience. Mayhew (2018) states that, human resource recruitment and selection practices generally are based on the organization's mission and workplace culture aimed at recognizing the value of workplace diversity to embrace recruitment practices designed for the attraction of diverse applicants' pool.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

There are various stages of recruitment. However, there must be vacancy before any position is advertised. The advertisement for the vacant position will be placed in the media, employment agencies, notice board, labour office etc. it is advisable to do the following:

- Promoting current employees: this will reduce the cost of employing and training new staff.
- Employing staff from competitive firms/organization. This will encourage persons who are doing similar job somewhere to join the organization.
- Employing staff from other industries specializing in similar products due to experience.
- Recruiting young graduates into business where experience is not a priority but for which potentials are more important.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

The covid-19 pandemic affected all sectors of the economy and the world at large. The human resource management plays a major role in making sure that the organization recovers from this unprecedented situation facing the organization and calving out measures of achieving the organization goals. The HR Department, like other business functions, designs and implements special strategies, which in turn, support the company's strategies to improve the organization's performance and competitive position. The covid-19 pandemic dimensions consist of the remote working and unemployment and layoff while that of Human resources management consist of performance appraisal and recruitment.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic situation may force many organizations to innovate work methods to keep the organization on and lead to adapt to technology as better as possible. This method will not only be applied in the lockdown period but also be used in a normal period in the future. This adaptability will lead the organization to increase the technology utilization in near coming days. Human resource management ensure that the organization recover from the current pandemic ravaging the globe and also create strategies in achieving

organizational goals by making sure that the well-being of employees are put into consideration while working to make sure the organization's goals and objectives are achieved in this era of the covid-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation is made base on the conclusion of the research work.

- Organizations should invest in training employees for remote working.
- Organization should give more consideration for worker wellbeing.
- Encourage sick employees to stay at home.
- Conduct medical tests at the selection process.
- Communicate all necessary action taken by the organization to employees.
- Identify activities that need to be rescheduled and communicate to staff affected (recruitment activities, Objective setting meetings)
- They must also ensure improved welfare of the employees and safety of the work place particularly in respect of the transmission of the Covid-19 Virus as the death of any employees could throw panic within the organization with very disastrous consequences. The death of a major stakeholder could also lead to the closure of the organization.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Today managers recognize the value of human resource management practices as an intangible asset which stimulates innovation in organizations. However, few studies examine the role of human resource management in fostering knowledge capacity which leads more innovation in enterprises for this reason, this research work contribution to knowledge focuses on how covid-19 pandemic impacts human resource management practice as well as HR manager role in organization.

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