

Study on the Role of HR Managers in Risk Revolving Around COVID-19

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 3

Issue: Special issue 2

Month: December

Year: 2024

ISSN: 2583-7117

Citation:

Sharmila Singh, Naureen Parveen, Rajendra Tiwari, Vinay Kumar Tiwari, "Study on the Role of HR Managers in Risk Revolving Around COVID-19" International Journal of Innovations In Science Engineering And Management, vol. 3, no. Special issue 2, 2024, pp.301-305.

DOI:

10.69968/ijisem.2024v3si2301-305



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

Dr. Sharmila Singh¹, Naureen Parveen², Dr. Rajendra Tiwari³, Mr. Vinay Kumar Tiwari⁴

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Business Administration, Ashoka Institute of Technology and Management, Varanasi, drsharmila.vns@yahoo.com

²Student of MBA Dept. in AITM, Varanasi, naureen.parveen01@gmail.com

³Head & Assistant Professor of MBA Dept. in AITM, Varanasi, tiwarirajendra5@gmail.com

⁴Assistant Professor of MBA Dept. in AITM, Varanasi, rkvinaytiwari@gmail.com

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the global business landscape, compelling organizations to adapt to unprecedented challenges. Human Resource (HR) managers, in particular, have faced multifaceted risks and responsibilities in navigating this crisis. This paper examines the diverse risks HR managers encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these risks reshaped their roles and strategies. It explores the implications of these risks on employee well-being, organizational operations, and the future of work. By analyzing these dimensions, this study provides insights into the evolving role of HR managers and the critical lessons learned in mitigating risks during a global health crisis. An organization's HR manager's strengths and weaknesses are reviewed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this study looks at the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on remote work, unemployment, and layoffs, as well as HRM practices including hiring and performance reviews. A qualitative case study approach based on systematic analysis was used to conduct research among 15 HR managers employed in the IT industry. The results of the study were identified through a focus on Maslow hierarchy of needs theory. The study disclosed the approaches practised by human resource managers during the pandemic eruption in upholding the working atmosphere. Both employees and human resource professionals face a growing legacy of stress and anxiety, which negatively affect their mental health, the findings show. With remote work erasing the boundaries between personal and work lives, achieving a work-life balance has become a huge challenge. This study emphasises how crucial human resource management specialists are to overcoming the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the information technology industry.

Keyword: COVID-19 pandemic, Human Resource Management (HRM), Global Challenges Remote Work, work-life balance, health & safety, IT Sector.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic that began at the close of 2019 made deep imprints in world organizations, especially in the IT Sector. It led HR managers to front-run in coping with this crisis: responsible for workers' safety and general welfare in a bid to keep on working, therefore ensuring business continuity. Gradual transition into remote work situations, imposing health and safety measures, and seeking support on psychological needs opened new risks and HR management issues. It aims to research the specific risks that were faced, their responses, and the outcomes or long-term implications for the HR profession.

Particularly in the IT sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has made human resource management (HRM) extremely difficult. Managers must swiftly take risks in order to assist their employees in adjusting to and navigating the drastic changes taking place in the workplace and social environment. Employees who used to work exclusively or mostly from within the physical borders of their company, for instance, now have to swiftly adapt to working remotely.

Even individuals who may have adapted well to remote working conditions now face particular difficulties because they are unable to find alternative working organizations (such as coffee shops, libraries, and co-working spaces) outside of their homes due to shelter-in-place orders and the closure of unnecessary businesses. As the globe prepared to go into lockdown in 2020, businesses started adjusting to remote arrangements. Software licensing management technologies became even more crucial as a result, even though this meant more business for IT firms. With few software trials, the HR manager found it challenging to oversee the staff remotely and fully utilize the application's features.

COVID-19

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people work. While most firms were accustomed to working in an office setting, COVID forced 88% of businesses globally to work remotely. There is no doubt that this unanticipated rise in remote labour has raised the business need for better technology. The IT sector has therefore had to respond swiftly to the expectations. The news of the U.S. lockdown in March earlier this year caused a spike in demand for tools for remote working. Thus, to meet the expectations of remote working teams worldwide, global IT leaders have reported a median 5% increase in IT budgets, and IT experts have been trying to ease the shift to remote working. The IT business has continued to hire regularly during the pandemic to satisfy demand, although the sector also saw a substantial decline in vacancies, as was the case across most industries. At the start of the epidemic, businesses were mostly employing temporary IT and related engineering specialists to fulfil the increased technological needs. But as more permanent IT jobs started to appear in Q3, this has started to change. This may be because businesses have realized how serious the pandemic is and that they will need new IT advances for a long time. While the rise in remote work has created new opportunities for the IT industry, it has also led to a rise in the percentage of IT jobs available to remote workers. Because it increases the number of qualified candidates, this has the effect of making the employment market more competitive for IT experts. Additionally, there have been fewer openings in the IT sector overall each year, albeit the number of job searchers has stayed stable in some regions. For enterprises to promote skill acquisitions and talent transfers, they need to make better use of their workforce. To develop their local staff, HR departments in businesses must insist on hiring exceptional talent, even if it means hiring foreigners.

Risks Encountered by HR Managers

HR managers faced several risks while the pandemic was taking place. These include:

1. **Risks to Health and Safety:** Employees' physical well-being and safety became crucial as their health and safety were in jeopardy. HR managers have to implement work-from-home regulations, social distancing measures, and stringent hygiene practices to slow the virus's spread (World Health Organization, 2020).
2. **Operational Risks:** The abrupt change to remote work presented operational difficulties. For employees to work effectively from home, HR managers have to make sure they have the appropriate tools and resources. This required assuring efficiency, providing technical assistance, and upholding cybersecurity (KPMG, 2020).
3. **Regulatory and Legal Risks:** Managing the pandemic's complicated legal environment was a difficult undertaking. HR managers must stay up to date on the ever-evolving health and labour rules as well as government directives about risk reduction and compliance (Society for Human Resource Management, 2020).
4. **Risks to Mental Health:** The epidemic made workers more susceptible to mental health problems. (American Psychological Association, 2020) To address these issues, HR managers had to create and execute programs for mental health assistance, make counselling services accessible, and encourage a work-life balance.

Remote working

Remote working is working away from the workplace or company/organization office. An employee can work at his/her home, the company's partner office, or a designated place. There are several merits, challenges, and demerits both for employees and for the organization. The benefits for the organization are reduced operation costs, transport costs, allowing an employee to work though he is not in the office during the COVID-19 pandemic and other similar situations. Employers face difficulties with communication, delayed decision-making, inconsistent work schedules, a lack of oversight, and increased investment in communication technologies. According to Prasad et al. (2020), workplace isolation, increased communication channel investment, working excessively or insufficiently, lack of management visibility to quantify

outputs, delayed decisions, lack of trust in the organization's management, job insecurity, career development issues, lack of work-life balance, social isolation and family disruptions, and increased occupational stress are all factors that affect employees. Performance and business results were enhanced by working remotely.

REVIEW OF 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 misfits, will be critical. Research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic tremendously changed HR functions.

According to Deloitte (2020), To keep workers informed and involved, HR managers had to quickly adjust to remote work settings, put health and safety protocols in place, and create new communication tactics. The epidemic also highlighted the significance of flexible work schedules and mental health support.

In her research on HRM and the COVID-19 pandemic, **Hamouche (Citation2023)** notes that while the pandemic has caused managers and HRM practitioners to face many challenges, it has also created opportunities that are worth understanding and learning about, which could help organizations plan their future operations.

Another study by Vahdat (Citation2022) looks at how technology supports and empowers human resource management as well as some important impacts of COVID-19 on various HRM jobs. The study, which was split into three categories—communication technologies, cloud computing, and remote working—was carried out during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on HR Functions

Research indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered HR functions. According to a study by Deloitte (2020), HR managers had to quickly adapt to remote work environments, implement health and safety measures, and develop new communication strategies to keep employees informed and engaged. Additionally, the pandemic highlighted the importance of mental health support and flexible work arrangements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the difficulties that human resource specialists encountered throughout the COVID-19.
- To identify how the pandemic has impacted the information technology industries' HRM operations.
- To offer recommendations to human resource experts to enhance their standard of living and lessen their workload.
- To know the lack of expertise in some engineering and IT skill sets, such as cybersecurity
- Determine how remote work affects performance reviews.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought unexpected disturbance to organizations across the world, transforming traditional work structures and operational structures. Human Resource (HR) managers face complex challenges: maintaining the well-being of the employees along with the business operations. This dual responsibility exhibits HR managers to multifaceted risks, including health and safety issues, operational inefficiencies, and legal compliance challenges. The key role of HR manager in managing crises is a very clear understanding of the jeopardized risks they face and how those risks influence their decision and organizational action. The ultimate shift to work in remote locations, the urgency to implement health measures, and the challenges of maintaining employee engagement in a virtual workspace were all new and unforeseen risks. In addition, employee laws and regulations governed by the government were complex and often appeared during the pandemic, so the risk of non-compliance became higher. There were mental health issues related to the employees, making it complicated for HR managers to manage things in innovative ways to handle support mechanisms. This research aims to identify and analyze risks and address them while offering insights into how Human resource (HR) managers address the issues and what was learned. These dimensions examined in this study hope to reflect a framework for risk mitigation going forward, ensuring that such disturbance of this magnitude would be more effectively handled by the HR manager in IT sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research in this paper is based on the qualitative method, which has extensively reviewed the available literature, case studies, and interviews conducted with several HR managers representing various sectors. It aims to derive information related to risks faced by HR

managers, the way they manage them, and the lessons derived.

Data Collection

1. Literature Review: This section will consist of a comprehensive review of all the academic articles, industry reports, and organizational case studies regarding the impact of COVID-19 on HR functions and the risks involved.

2. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with HR managers across different sectors to get direct experience of their experiences and strategies in this pandemic.

3. Case Studies: Analysis of particular organizational responses to the pandemic with the best practices and challenges identified.

FINDINGS

Health and Safety Risks

The human resources managers have taken numerous initiatives to ensure the security of employees, including -

- Developing comprehensive health and safety procedures.
- Remote work arrangements
- Accessibility of hygienic necessities and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Regular health screenings and taking temperatures

Operational Risks

The critical operational risk control measures included -

- Technology and digital tools to support the new remote work
- Increasing IT support and strengthening cyber protection Training and Development.
- Ensuring that the workforce acquires the necessary skills for working remotely.
- Establish open lines of communication to bring out productivity and involvement

Legal and Compliance Risks

- Risk management for compliance and legal issues Management was done by HR managers.
- Monitoring changes to Labour laws and government directives
- Institute policies for compliance with health directives
- Solicit the input of lawyers, for the avoidance of risks

- Informing employees and workers on changes in the policies and what is expected to happen.

Mental Health Risks

Management of mental health risks For HR managers, management-

- Organized campaigns to create awareness.
- Counsel and offer mental health services.
- Promotes flexible work schedules and frequent breaks.
- Promotion of an open and supporting culture.

RECOMMENDATION

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

- Organizations should invest in training employees to work remotely.
- HR managers should give more consideration to remote employee's well-being.
- Share with staff all the necessary steps the company has made.
- HR should have a backup plan in place in case of emergencies.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic introduces endangered risks faced in the It sector by Human Resource (HR) managers, reshaping their roles and responsibilities. By addressing health and safety concerns, operational challenges, legal compliances and mental health issues, the HR manager played a very important role in navigating the crisis. The key insight learned by the HR professionals during this period will have a lasting impact on the HR professionals, driving confrontation that will enhance organizational resilience and employee well-being in the future. The importance of HR managers in crisis management was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The difficulty they faced required a multifaceted approach, combining health and safety measures, technological investments, legal compliances and mental health support. The gradual adaptation to these challenges impacts the resilience and strategic importance of HR professionals in ensuring organizational stability as well as sustainability.

REFERENCES

- [1] American Psychological Association. (2020). Stress in America 2020: A National Mental Health Crisis.
- [2] Deloitte. (2020). The future of work: The impact of COVID-19 on work, workers, and the workplace.

- [3] KPMG. (2020). Responding to COVID-19: A practical guide for business leaders.
- [4] Society for Human Resource Management. (2020). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for HR.
- [5] World Health Organization. (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public.
- [6] <https://openit.com/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-it-industry/>
- [7] <https://imspeople.com/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-it-industry-skills-shortages-and-challenges/>
- [8] <https://www.ijraset.com/research-paper/impact-of-covid-19-on-it-company>
- [9] Angelo S. DeNisi and Robert D. Pritchard, (2006) Management and Organization Review 2(2) 253–277, 1740-8776 Armstrong. M (2019) Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice 11th ed. Kogan page, London Atakpa R.A (2002) Evaluating Resources for Business Education programme. Book of reading in business education vol.1(1) pp 133-139