

Human Resource Management and Organizational Resilience in The Era of COVID-19: Theoretical Insights, Challenges and Implications

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic is currently considered as a critical global health crisis that endangers the health and safety of individuals. This new disease not only assesses organization's resilience but also their ability to follow an altered strategy that enables them to adapt to these trigger events. This situation creates an environment of uncertainty for their workforce and generates instant threats to their performance and sustainability. Therefore, organizations' leaders are taking strategic actions to face effectively these critical circumstances by renewing their human resource strategies. This paper conducted a thorough literature review to elaborate a critical analysis of insights, challenges, and implications for human resource management (HRM) in the era of COVID-19. The results of this research paper revealed that resilient organizations can better support their workforce to cope with this newly altered work environment. Decision makers must adopt the organizational resilience approach in order to achieve outstanding performance in a dynamic environment.

Keywords— *Human Resource Management, Organizational Resilience, COVID-19, Challenges, Implications.*

INTRODUCTION

In a constantly fluctuating environment, organizations are challenged with growing uncertainty in the economic, political, and societal contexts. These current assorted challenges involve a wide range of complex issues (George et al., 2016).

These issues represent direct threat to organizations' survival; nevertheless, they encourage organizations to be more adaptive to risks and opportunities while they are organizing and managing their workforce.

Furthermore, these broadly unexpected turbulences have augmented awareness about the importance of organizational resilience.

According to Galvin (2014), it is critical how organizations response to highly dynamic environments. Limnios et al., (2014) defines organizational resilience as the organization's ability to adjust to unpredicted events and to swiftly develop anticipated actions. Therefore, the Human

Resources departments of organizations are focusing on resilience planning by developing knowledge, skills and capacities which alternatively indorse resilience within the organization (Cooper et al., 2014) and avoid risk threatening the organization's survival.

The recent epidemic of COVID-19 is challenging organizations and particularly the human resource management (HRM) to adapt and alter their workforce strategy (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

The main objective of this paper is to present a critical analysis of the existing literature for insights, challenges and implications COVID-19 pandemic presents to HRM and organizational resilience. It also provides recommendations in order to assist organizations to overcome one of the highest challenges in the modern society.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Organizational resilience:

The transboundary events present a significant challenge for organizations as their business sustainability can be severely affected (Bryce et al., 2020). Accordingly, the rise of COVID-19 in 2020 carries a novel challenge for organizational resilience.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) contended that unanticipated events are often considered as an assessment to organization's resilience. "Resilience" is recognized as the capability of maintaining performance whilst facing severe risks, recovering and coping with change (Carmeli & Markman, 2011; Williams & Shepherd, 2016).

Likewise, resilience refers to the system's ability to adjust to transformation while remaining to operate effectively (McManus et al. 2008). In addition, resilience is a process not an outcome (Weick et al., 1999), considered as a system of optimistic organizational behavior (Youssef and Luthans, 2007), and it involves the capability to continue functioning and to recover in case of deficiency (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007).

The importance of resilience in the present day has increased rapidly for individuals, organizations and the society (George et al., 2015).

For McManus et al. (2008), organizational resilience includes three main characteristics which are: realization of the current circumstances, dealing with the weaknesses of the organization, and compliance.

In the same light, Denyer (2017) indicated that organizational resilience has two core values: “defensive” which is the capability to prevent issues and “progressive” which is creating opportunities. (See in specific: Denyer, 2017; Balu, 2001; Dutton et al., 2002; Gittell et al., 2006; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Coutu, 2002; Freeman et al., 2004; Jamrog et al., 2006).

B. HRM's role in developing capacity for organizational resilience during COVID-10 crisis:

Employees are the most important asset of organizations and their potentials create the competitive advantage (Agarwala, 2008, Qehaja & Kutllovci, 2015).

According to Gunnigle et al., (2013), there is a direct connection between HRM and organizational resilience.

Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) stated that it is central to adopt constant HR practices in order to develop cognitive, behavioral, and contextual resilience. Such practices provided by HRM play an important role in the organizations' survival and adaptability in the dynamic environment (Galvin et al., 2014; Haimes, 2012; Chadwick & Dabu, 2009; Nijssen & Pauwe, 2012).

However, organizational resilience is improved when organizations adopt a strategic human resource management (SHRM) approach (Agarwala, 2008; Fottler, 2002).

Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) revealed that organizational resilience can be reached through SHRM by fostering individual skills at high organizational level which enables organizations to face uncertainty, generate appropriate responses, and eventually involve in change processes to sustain.

C. HRM's role in managing workforce during COVID-19 Crisis:

According to Caralli et al., (2010), a skilled workforce is indispensable to achieve the organizational resilience program. They also stated that resilience responsibilities should be specified in the job descriptions of employees.

In addition, Xing & Gamble (2016) concluded that HR practices can promote organizational resilience by improving their employee capacity to adapt with change. HR activities are vital for endorsing a culture of engagement and, thus, attaining employees' resilience (Truss et al., 2013; Wang, Cooke & Huan, 2014).

Haggerty and Wright (2010) and Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) noted that the power of HR system is vital for shaping employees' performance and outcomes leading to organizational resilience.

II. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to elaborate a critical analysis of insights, challenges, and implications for human resource management (HRM) during COVID-19 crisis and how they manage their altered work environment to achieve organizational resilience.

This study went through gathering secondary data by conducting the analysis and synthesis of existing literature. Secondary data analysis is the analysis of data gathered by other researchers and it offers a pragmatic opportunity for researchers who are facing restricted time and resources (Johnston, 2017). The secondary data of this paper were collected from journals, reports and online sources.

Then, the data were analyzed in a table (see table 1) based on the insight, challenges and implications related to the subject of this research.

III. RESULTS

The majority of reviewed papers were published in 2020 following the spread of COVID-19 and, thus, tackling the challenges and opportunities of this new situation. The reviews varied in terms of purpose, research context, and reporting details, however, some similarities were found.

First, the literature disclosed that there is an implication of the emergence of infectious disease outbreaks and various psychological and behavioral consequences such as depression, psychological stress, anxiety, and overall degradation in life quality.

Second, COVID-19 is disturbing significantly the labor market conditions as the intensification of downsizing, layoffs, and involuntary unemployment issues, which is threatening the job security of employees around the world and, hence, causing an ambiguous work environment.

Third, the social distancing requirements of COVID-19 to control the virus spread have forced organizations to formulate virtual workplace policies which is increasingly distorting the balance between work and family duties causing an immense burden and stress.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The long-term consequences of the current situation caused by COVID-19 still unidentified. It is threatening the health of individuals, business, economy, social life and brings unprecedented challenges for people's workplace. Hence, this paper discusses the challenges caused by COVID-19 and what solutions for organizations, especially human resources management managers, in order to develop their resilience and manage the change.

- HRM managers are required to address employees' physiological and safety needs. Hence, provide them with access to crucial services to fulfill their needs and increase their sense of belonging and self-esteem. It can be through virtual counseling services to help mitigate stress, webinars and tutorials on resilience.

- HRM managers are required to provide a wide-ranging of resilience training to increase the workforce skills in technological, time management, communication, safety and stress management skills.

- HRM managers are required to collaborate with IT department in order to build a smooth virtual workplace, improve the overall remote work environment experience, provide several communication channels, and to identify technology, information, and data issues which might occur during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- HRM managers are required to design flexible workplace arrangements that outline when employees start their work,

how to run their work, and what resources they have to use in order to encourage daily healthy performance.

- HRM managers are required to build an interactive organizational culture with strong, consistent, open communication to spread the teamwork spirit.

- HRM managers are required to apply efficacy in self-affirmation interventions in order to enable employee's alignment of values and needs with altered environments.

- HRM managers are required to provide support to employees, especially, childless and single employees whose isolation might have greater effect on their life-force by sponsoring social events where employees can build resilience.

- HRM managers are required to focus further on HRM functional activities such as workforce deployment and workforce performance through enhanced supervision, incentives, job design, training and performance appraisal.

V. FUTURE RESEARCH:

This main objective of this study is to analyze the literature related to HRM resilience during COVID-19 pandemic and to contribute significantly to the area of HRM studies. In addition, due to time restrictions, the study was limited to gathering secondary data which results in methodological limitations in terms of lack of numerical data. Hence, for future research, this paper recommends the following:

- Using this paper as a form of foundation to develop propositions that guide future research as there are several theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research opportunities to understand the current situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic within the business domain.

- The emergence of a body of knowledge concerning COVID-19 pandemic in this study has created further empirical research prospects, hence, it is possible to gather primary data through utilizing surveys or case studies as a methodology for collecting and analyzing the data.

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Table (1)

Theoretical Insights, Challenges and Opportunities from the literature review

Authors	Challenges and insights	Implications
Maben, Taylor and Bridges (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper delineated what managers, organizations and leaders might ensure in order to support nurses at critical time. - It described the new nature of highly stressful work and highlighted the concerns among nurses while they are in a direct contact with a potentially deadly virus. - It highlighted the need for resilience among nurses to survive this extraordinary situation, thus, the resilience must be through collective and organizational responsibility. - Employees resilience training is essential to be adequately resilient against stress, especially, with the lack of resources with ethical and emotional challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address the physiological and safety needs of workforce. - Provide workforce with adequate resilience training. - Establish an organizational culture to encourages team spirit during hard times. - Deliver strong, constant and open communication - Formulate a long-term recovery strategy.
Carnevale, & Hatak (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper discussed the challenges and opportunities of COVID-19 towards HRM, especially, during radical changes of work and social environment. - It highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has created a particularly challenging environment for the managers of human resource management department. - How to “fit” employees to be able to adjust to work environment changes, such as shifting to remote work environments and implementing new work policies. - How to deal with issues related to the balance of work-family. - How to deal with employees who are either single or childless due to lack of social relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving employees’ involvement with the remote work environment by providing opportunities for virtual socialization. - Provide workshops about self-affirmation interventions to help employees manage altered policies. - Provide special assistance to employees to reduce the risk of loneliness among childless and single employees through sponsoring professional and social events.
Verma & Gustafsson (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study stated that COVID-19 has several long- and short-term policy changes for organizations around the world. - It stated that the crisis of COVID-19 has affected employees working in different sectors such as manufacturing, food services, travel and tourism, retail. - Business of information technology services represent a flourishing sector for workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizations must give a special priority to capacity building. - Organizations must provide training to employees to gain the latest technological skills during critical situations.
Roome, Raven, & Martineau (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper presented three functional areas of HRM during post-conflict health systems: workforce supply, workforce distribution, and workforce performance. - HRM policies must effectively address the systemic effects of conflict on the supply, allocation and performance of the health workforce. HRM in solving health workforce supply issues, especially pre-service education and training, wages, staffing and selection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizations must dedicate further attention to all functional areas of HRM. - HRM policies must effectively address the systemic effects of conflict on the supply, distribution and performance of the health workforce.
Pan & Zhang (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper discussed the development of digital workplace as a direct result of COVID-19 pandemic. - Digitalizing workplace is crucial to sustain the business, and enable employees to get prepared for the recovery phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate policies related to technology, information, and data issues occurring during remote work experience.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is fundamental paying attention to social and moral issues related to the digital workplace especially work-life balance. - It is important to manage the risk of isolation and loneliness associated with remote working environments. 	
Donthu, & Gustafsson (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper addressed the pandemic-related issues affecting society by reviewing 13 papers covering different sectors (e.g., retail, tourism, higher education). - It addressed issues related to deviations in consumer behavior and businesses, ethical issues, and aspects associated to employees and leadership. - It stimulated organizations to practice virtual recruitment, training, and socialization instead of direct communication. - It emphasized the increasing challenges of family-related issues arising due to remote work environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource leaders must provide employees with the adequate resources to manage work-family issues. Likewise, implementing protection plans and surveillance measures to support employees. - Human resource leaders must adopt a relationship-oriented human resources system to decrease the risk of isolation among single, childless employees.
Caligiuri, Cieri, Minbaeva, Verbeke & Zimmermann (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper addressed the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic for international human resources management (IHRM) research. - It focused on IHRM's Selection, Training, and Employee Support Literature. - It focused on IHRM's Management of Health and Safety, especially, COVID-19 pandemic which has emphasized the role of HRM in managing the health and safety of the international workforce. - It focused on International Leadership, especially, leaders which must attain certain competencies such as adaptability, integration and direction of diverse perspectives. - It focused on Literature of Virtual International Collaboration, especially, skills of virtual collaboration which can be developed through training related to ICT, intercultural knowledge and experiential exercises. - It focused on Global Talent Management, especially, global talent management which can be reached through strategic positions and talent pools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select employees based on their tolerance to ambiguity, resilience, and curiosity. - Organizations must offer opportunities to help relieving stress such as resilience webinars, mindfulness tutorials, employee assistance programs, and virtual counseling services. - Open and consistent communication between managers and HR about health risks issues. - Offer flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to formalize where, when, and how employees do their work. and encourage healthy work practices.