

DYNAMICS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES: A SILVER LINING FOR ORGANIZATIONS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract. *The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a number of challenges that influenced economic*

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conditions and social behaviors of individuals, and also organizational operations in an adverse manner. This study is a critical literature review that aims to highlight the pivotal role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in devising strategies and practices that can be used to alleviate the hindrances that resulted from the current global health crisis. For this purpose, relevant articles published between December 2019 and April 2022 were retrieved from different databases, some of which include: Scopus, Science Direct, and Web of Science. Only 27 articles were chosen for this study due to a higher degree of relevance. The study concluded that HRM was competent enough to devise varied strategies and practices that enabled organizations to continue its routine operations while ensuring health, safety, psychological well-being, motivation and productivity of personnel at the workplace in prevalence of the global pandemic. Furthermore, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also included.

Keywords: Human resource management; HR practices; HR strategies; COVID-19; pandemic; challenges; solutions

Introduction

The health crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic has shattered every walk of life, leaving the whole world into an unprecedented state of fear and uncertainty. Initially the virus, commonly known as Corona virus or COVID-19 and scientifically named as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), appeared in the city of Wuhan, located in China, back in December 2019. The virus is responsible for causing severe respiratory infection which proved lethal since its emergence. The microbe is highly contagious and statistics shows that within a short time-frame of three months its presence was detected in most of the countries on the global map. Due to soaring casualties resulting from the infection, the World Health Organization declared it a global pandemic in March 2020. As a result, most of the countries introduced non-

pharmaceutical measures to curb the spread of the virus. Social distancing is one of the vital measures to control the infection, which was implemented through different strategies like imposing lockdowns, quarantining individuals who had the infection, closure of educational institutions, non-governmental firms and non-essential business entities on a temporary basis, mobility and travel restrictions being introduced, and the prohibition of public gatherings exceeding a specified number (Brodeur, Gray, Islam, & Bhuiyan, 2021; Gourinchas, 2020). The impacts of COVID-19 pandemic are so significant that it has compelled individuals, societies, firms and economies to rethink and re-engineer their policies and strategies that can enable them to live and work in such uncertain and fearful environments. It is true that crisis management is not novel for firms, but the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic are so ruthless that even most of the proactive, responsive and adaptive organizations were shaken. Regardless of the size and nature, organizations now are more concerned about their vitality and existence. Firms are reshaping their strategies and policies, ultimately giving a new horizon to business directions with the purpose of effectively tackling adversities of the pandemic.

In such a distressed environment, Human Resource Management (HRM) is always on the front-line to guarantee the health and safety of all employees by providing novel work settings. These new work arrangements and practices can be effective to deal with consequences of the pandemic appropriately as these are based on the results of concrete and strategic decisions made by professionals in the area. This updated and responsive philosophy of work can serve multi-dimensional benefits concerning: employee morale, stress management, work engagement, hiring and retention along with well-being of the personnel (Adikaram, Priyankara, & Naotunna, 2021; Hamouche, 2021; Zhong, Li, Ding, & Liao, 2021).

Emergence of new variants of the microbe has guaranteed continuity of the pandemic for quite some time. Until now, majority of the firms have seen unfortunate economic conditions during these hard times. To ensure survival and economic recovery, firms have decided to reopen in the midst of this ongoing outbreak by adopting new rules and regulations such as working from home and physical distancing in the work premises (Gómez, Mendoza, Ramírez, & Olivás-Luján, 2020; Shaw et al., 2020). In such situations, it is inevitable for the HRM professionals to come up with innovative ideas and introduce policies and practices that can be productive to cope with the complex challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, a limited number of studies in varied contexts have highlighted different obstacles that HRM has faced and devised possible solutions. The present study is intended to comprehensively present various challenges that got ground and intensive during the COVID-19 pandemic and what could be the possible solutions from the HRM perspective. The investigation is basically a literature survey, thus assisting to broaden the scope of management research and provide recommendations for future researches in the area.

The study makes a significant contribution to theory and practice in the field of HRM by adopting an integrated approach where previous investigations are analyzed in a thorough manner with an objective to assist HR professionals to focus on altered HRM areas, while also devising effective policies. Unlike previous approaches that normally addressed one or few aspects, the present study discovers and examines the maximum possible areas and practices to ensure optimal flexibility in the realm of managing personnel. Furthermore, it is also shown that various practices can be modified and reengineered by using innovative methods and technologies to continue business and routine operations in the prevalence of a health crisis like COVID-19.

The study is supposed to summarize the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, which differs from previous studies that focused on an individual problem or challenge that resulted from the pandemic; present a detailed HRM viewpoint to develop such strategies and practices that can be used to manage human resources effectively and in a suitable manner while also handling the various consequences resulting from COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

This article is a critical review of recent and relevant literature, initiated with the purpose to elaborate the challenges that yielded due to emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and also to highlight the role of human resource management in alleviating those obstacles. Relevant articles were searched in Google Scholar by using different combinations of keywords including; Human Resource management; HRM; HR practices; coronavirus, pandemic 19 and COVID-19. Selection of articles for review was manual as it was the only way to choose the most related articles. The current paper skimmed relevant information from 27 articles that were published between December 2019 and April 2022. All the articles cited in this paper are available in different databases like Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science and JSTOR. The cited paper can be accessed using the 'References' section of this paper.

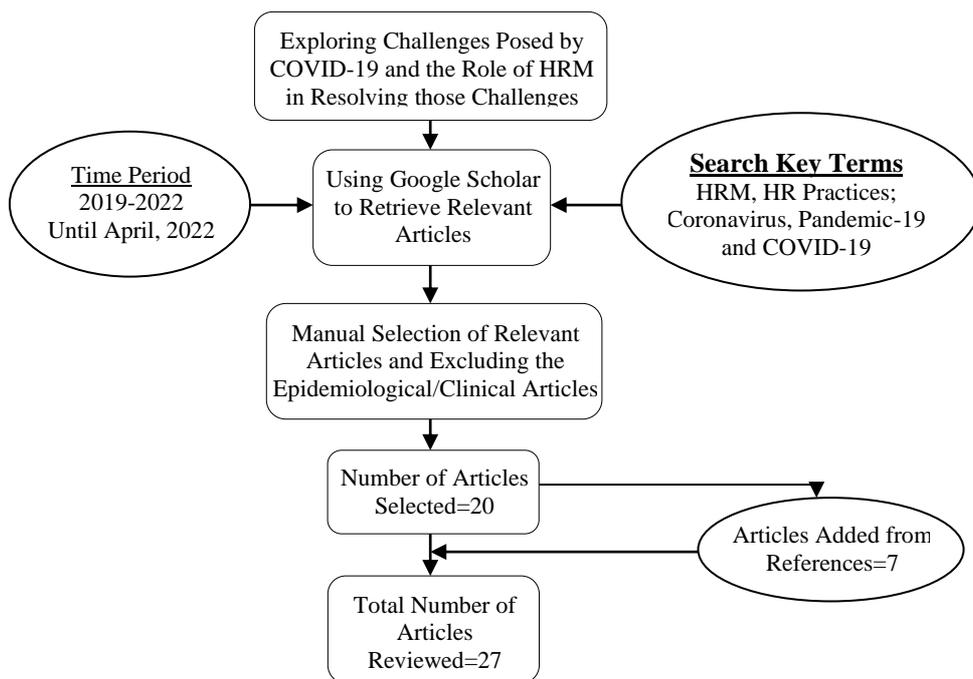


Figure 1 Systematic-Process Model for the Study

Literature Review

Proactive organizations remain competent when it comes to facing new challenges that arise, but the COVID-19 pandemic has confronted these firms to revisit their plans for crisis management. Due to widespread and constant mutation of the microbe (Corona virus), COVID-19 pandemic has become a major global health concern. As a result, these firms are dragged into a zone with higher degree of volatility and ambiguity. This unparalleled condition has resulted in a variety of new obstacles for the corporations, which may include; low motivation and morale of employees, problems associated with virtual work space, higher figures of unemployment and concerns about business existence (Kloutsiniotis, Mihail, Mylonas, & Pateli, 2022; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). Human resources play a pivotal role in the operations and development of any firm. Effective communication, contribution and dedication of personnel not only lowers the employees' turnover, but it can also put organizations on the track of success, backed by higher level of productivity and profitability (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020; Yoosefi Lebni, Ziapour, Mehedi, & Irandoost, 2021). Due to prevailing adversities of the pandemic, organizations are more cautious about health, safety and wellbeing of their workforce (Dennerlein et al., 2020). Professionals in the field of human resource management are coming up with innovative and effective ways to ensure protection of the employees and at the

same time, to carry out routine human resource practices like recruitment, selection, retention, compensation management and performance management with an ease (Chanana, 2021). Developing a feasible, reliable and flexible management strategy is crucial to manage human resources effectively in such uncertain situations and abruptly changing economic conditions (Hamouche, 2021; Zhong et al., 2021).

Firms responded in different manners to cope with the global pandemic by adopting several types of strategies. Teams were conspicuously challenged to come up with solutions that can ensure wellness of the individuals while keeping the business activities in progress (Gonçalves et al., 2021; Hamza Shuja, Aqeel, Jaffar, & Ahmed, 2020). A study suggested that organizations demonstrating higher level of flexibility by providing opportunities like totally working from home, a partial home office, flexible working hours and co-working, can improve performance and satisfaction of the employees and reduce employee turnover at the same time. Findings of the study further supported that a combination of these strategies like working from home and workplace flexibility can yield favorable results (Davidescu et al., 2020). Organizations lacking an appropriate management strategy during the health crisis had to deal with different psychological problems, majority of which included depression, anxiety and stress among their employees. As a result, the personnel showed lower organizational commitment, which is a noteworthy concern for the firm (Radic, Lück, Ariza-Montes, & Han, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is an unexpected threat but it can be treated as a unique opportunity, where organizations can revisit its culture and ultimately improve its human resource strategies for future prospect. This approach is readily adopted by most of the fortune companies to cash the abrupt change and retrieve maximum benefits out of it (Gómez et al., 2020; Porkodi et al., 2021).

Challenges Arising from COVID-19

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic is followed by a set of diverse challenges that left the world bewildered. From an economic perspective, the global supply-demand equilibrium has been dismantled and the markets have been the most vulnerable to this economic shock. Restrictions on mobility has resulted in shortage of raw materials and as a result production has lowered worldwide. This has led to tremendous pressure on the global market where some firms are having minimal profitability while others are forced to close their businesses (Fonseca & Azevedo, 2020; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020; Ngoc Su, Luc Tra, Thi Huynh, Nguyen, & O'Mahony, 2021). Establishments are heavily relying on layoffs to minimize the cost during these hard times. Due to increasing unemployment, individuals are having a decreased income, which significantly reduced purchasing power and consumer consumption (Butterick & Charlwood, 2021; Fonseca & Azevedo, 2020; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020).

Influence of the pandemic does not remain confined solely to the economic sphere. Its impacts have brought vivid changes in social behaviors of individuals as well. To curb the spread of infection, large gatherings were prohibited and social distancing was introduced. New travel and mobility rules were implemented to safeguard regions against spread of the corona virus. These unfamiliar and unprecedented measures resulted in a decreased demand for products and services from different industries like tourism, aviation, education, entertainment and food (Azizi, Atlasi, Ziapour, Abbas, & Naemi, 2021). The pandemic itself, and the resulting novel measures and regulations, has given rise to varied mental health problems like anxiety, stress, anger, fear, depression and despair (Gigauri, 2020; Opatha, 2020; Porkodi et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic presented alarming challenges at the organizational level. Regardless of the nature, size, type and geographical origin, majority of the corporations are negatively influenced by the introduction of new rules and regulations in correlation to controlling the infection (Kraus et al., 2020; Stuart, Spencer, McLachlan, & Forde, 2021). Firms have to be prudent in choosing strategies while tackling this novel crisis as these strategies can serve as a double-edged sword. The prime focus is to keep personnel safe and to ensure their retention. For this purpose, different approaches like work from home and flexible working hours have been used by numerous employers but in some cases these approaches are not sustainable due to unavailability of the required resources (Gigauri, 2020; Günther, Hauff, & Gubernator, 2022). Despite countless efforts, majority of the establishments are facing a sharp decline in business and have to go for undesirable initiatives, such as reducing the number of working hours and making some of the workers redundant (Ichsan, Santosa, Shara, & Liriwati, 2020; Tomčíková, Svetozarovová, Cocolová, & Danková, 2021). These steps rocketed unemployment on one hand and yielded dilemmas of lower motivation and job insecurity among the existing employees on the other (Khudhair, Alsaud, Alsharm, Alkaabi, & AlAdeedi, 2020; Nutsubidze & Schmidt, 2021). Individuals are facing increased workload as they have to work for additional hours after their colleagues are being dismissed, giving rise to job burnout (Hamouche, 2021; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022).

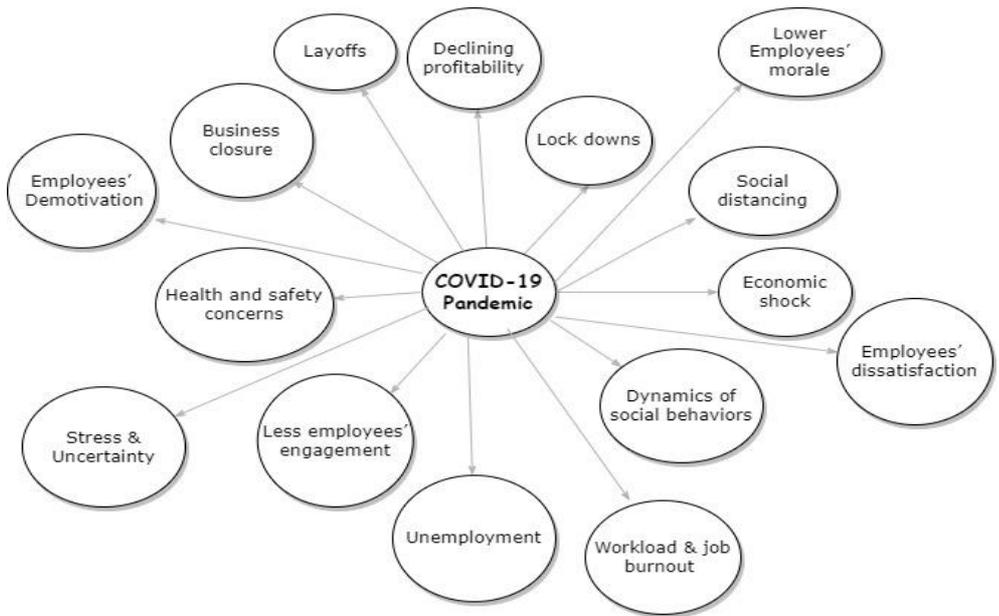


Figure 2 Challenges Posed by COVID-19 Pandemic

The role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in such a health crisis can be relieving by working in coordination with political authorities (Koirala & Acharya, 2020). Previously, sufficient work in the area enabled organizations to deal with different economic, social and political crisis's (Bailey & Breslin, 2021) but since the consequences arising from the pandemic are novel, it has brought new challenges in the framework of HRM. Adjustment of compensation, managing remote working, reorganizing work schedules, providing stability to the workforce; enhancing involvement of personnel while working remotely by adopting intensive communication policies are the noteworthy challenges in the current crisis scenario (Gonçalves et al., 2021). The uncertain environment also highlighted bad practices which were not aligned with professional ethics and could be a cause of workplace inequalities and injustice. Consequently, it can lead to opportunities for firms to rectify those unethical practices (Butterick & Charlwood, 2021). The COVID-19 outbreak has confronted corporations with a variety of negative consequences and in such distressed times; human resource managers have to address needs of individuals in such a way that can guarantee wellbeing of the labor force (Caligiuri, De Cieri, Minbaeva, Verbeke, & Zimmermann, 2020). Stress and anxiety remain common in such atmospheres, and the HRM professionals must be dedicated to build morale and motivation of employees and increase individuals' involvement while focusing on their mental health and physical wellbeing (Caligiuri et al., 2020; Wenham, Smith, & Morgan, 2020). Literature in the field of HRM is rich which can be utilized to develop such models that can create win-win

situations, ensuring the protection, wellbeing and benefits of all stakeholders (Butterick & Charlwood, 2021).

Possible Solutions to Tackle COVID-19 Pandemic

Literature in the field of HRM is becoming bountiful by accumulating information from studies carried out in different context during the course of COVID-19 pandemic. These studies have come up with different solutions while focusing on specific obstacles. Many of the studies presented that organizations should be flexible enough to provide remote working opportunities in order to avoid drastic impacts of the prevailing health crisis (Adikaram et al., 2021; Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). HR managers can practice the strategy of working-from-home or home-office and should motivate employees to work remotely and deliver the required results in order to play their part in dealing with the difficult situation (Chanana, 2021; Günther et al., 2022; Khudhair et al., 2020). This virtual work environment can be effective if the employees are provided with adequate resources including IT assets, logistical support and an effective communication platform (De Leon, 2020; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020).

It is true that a significant number of firms are lacking business during the prevailing emergency, many of which are forced to implement cost-cutting measures such as freezing new recruitments, layoffs and pay cuts (Campello, Kankanhalli, & Muthukrishnan, 2020) but there are also organizations having their business at a climax point and are going for new recruitments (Gonçalves et al., 2021). To fulfill the workforce, need in these crises, organizations have switched from conventional approaches to new approaches for talent acquisition, which consists of virtual recruitment and selection. Delaying recruitment of much needed personnel can have negative business impacts in such cases. It is essential for the firms to strengthen internal teams which can help in acquiring talent and to play a role in restricting unemployment (Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022; Opatha, 2020).

Employees can be provided with additional skills through online trainings and distance-learning courses by introducing user friendly virtual platforms. These new skills can be used to carry out the assigned projects successfully (Ichsan et al., 2020; Ngoc Su et al., 2021). Such training approaches can be used not only to build employees' morale and prevent boredom but can also be useful to educate individuals about health care methods in the current health crisis (Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). Similarly, innovative and interactive methods can be used to have efficient and frequent communication with individuals who are working remotely. This will assist in promoting employees' involvement and engagement which can also be fruitful in building their motivation to yield the desired level of productivity (Chanana, 2021; Ichsan et al., 2020; Nutsbidze & Schmidt, 2021). The switch to a virtual work space has led to organizations having new dimensions of training. It is not necessary that all individuals are familiar with the technology and applications used in a virtual setting. In this case, it is crucial for the

companies to train the individuals who are naïve to such tools so that they can carry out their work efficiently (Hamouche, 2021; Zhong et al., 2021).

During COVID-19 pandemic, organizations supported employees by using compensation practices effectively (Hamouche, 2021). Some studies present that giving financial benefits, such as rewards and bonuses to workers during the pandemic, have greater impact on employees' retention and controlling unemployment (Elsafty & Ragheb, 2020; Nutsbidze & Schmidt, 2021; Stuart et al., 2021). Providing additional benefits during these harsh times will increase employees' loyalty and organizational commitment as they will remember their respective organization provided support to them when it was much needed (Chanana, 2021; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). Furthermore, in the current situations, such compensation policies should be used that treat the individuals working from home and those working in office in an equal and same manner in order to avoid unwanted psychological problems among the employees (Khudhair et al., 2020; Opatha, 2020).

HRM strategies during COVID-19 varied from organization to organization. For some establishments, specifically those in the IT sector, the virtual setting might be a best solution, but entities in other sectors like in manufacturing might not find the virtual workspace to be a viable solution (Adikaram et al., 2021). Companies adopting digital economy models provide the required resources to employees and carry out routine operations efficiently, thus playing a vital role in reducing unemployment and enhancing job opportunities and employees' involvement (Zhong et al., 2021). Organizations which rely on physical involvement of employees should develop teams which can work alternatively. This hybrid strategy, where one team works remotely while other works on site at a point of time, can ensure social distancing and can be fruitful in prevention of the infection. Improving working conditions by providing dedicated working space, masks, sanitizers and temperature checking facilities can further assist in restricting spread of the infection (Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022; Porkodi et al., 2021). The aim of these diverse strategies is to ensure physical and psychological well-being of employees and also to deal with the stress, anxiety, fear and demotivation that they can have during these hard times (Dennerlein et al., 2020; Hamouche, 2021; Zhong et al., 2021).

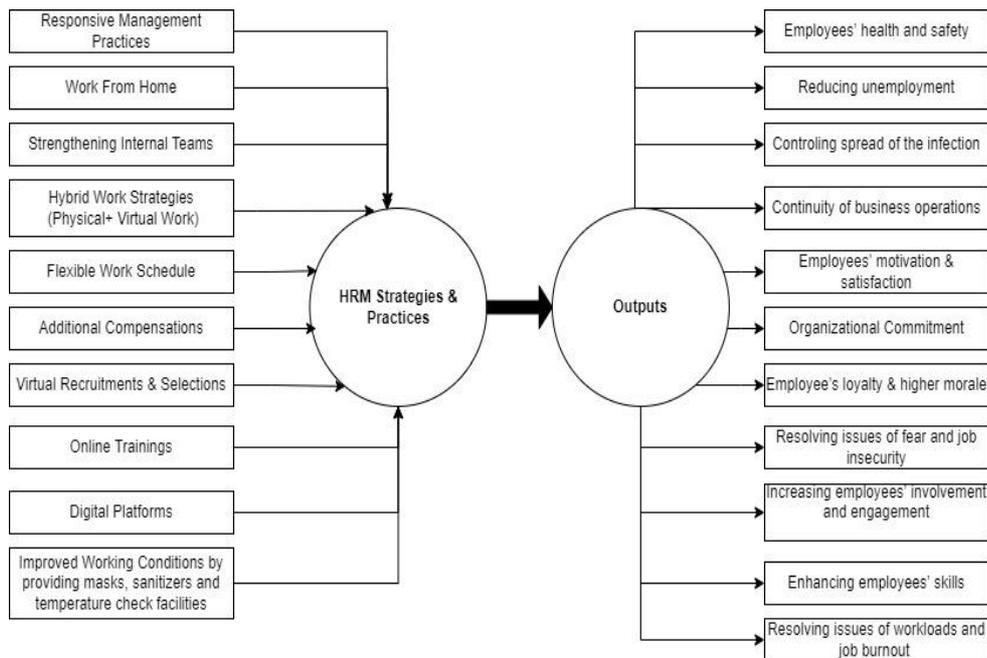


Figure 3. Dynamics of HRM and its Outcomes During COVID-19 Pandemic

Discussion

The study was intended to give a comprehensive overview about how human resource management responded to COVID-19 crisis. For this purpose, 27 relevant articles were retrieved by using a combination of different search keywords like COVID-19, Corona Virus 19, and Pandemic 19, Human resource Management, HR practices and HRM. Table 1 shows sufficient information about the nature of each article being reviewed. In the table it is also highlighted what are the similarities and differences among these studies by giving details about the areas investigated and what are limitations for each individual study.

Table 1 *Information about the Nature of Articles Reviewed*

#	Author(s)	Methodology	Scope of the study	Areas invsgtd	Limitations
1	Campello et al. (2020)	Quantitative research	US companies by using data obtained from Link-Up, a leading provider of job market data and analytics.	Hiring decisions of US companies.	US companies only. Other functions of HRM are not investigated
2	Carnevale and Hatak (2020)	Literature review	A general view of HRM challenges and opportunities during Covid-19.	Employee adjustment and well-being.	General overview and discussion from entrepreneurial perspective. Limited HRM practices are highlighted.

3	Davidescu et al. (2020)	Quantitative research	Romanian organizations. The data was collected by using a structured questionnaire.	Work flexibility, job satisfaction and job performance.	Findings limited to Romanian organizations. Small sample size. Results can change with fluctuations in geographical contexts.
4	Dennerlein et al. (2020)	Literature review	Investigating conceptual model(s) to analyse working conditions.	Worker safety, health and well-being	No empirical work. Very few HR areas investigated.
5	Elsafty and Ragheb (2020)	Quantitative research	Egyptian health care industry.	Employee retention during Covid-19.	Study in Egyptian context only. Smaller sample size. Only one HRM dimension investigated
6	Gómez et al. (2020)	Quantitative research	Employees in Mexican organizations.	Employee stress and remote work.	Investigates employees in Mexican organizations only and also a couple of HR areas are investigated.
7	Koirala and Acharya (2020)	Qualitative research based on observational evidence and experimental evidence.	Evolution in dimensions of HRM and business.	Impacts on business and employees.	Data sources not identified. Very general overview without addressing specific HRM functions.
8	Radic et al. (2020)	Qualitative research	Online focus group interviews with employees of nine cruise ships.	Psychological effects of Covid-19 on employees.	Qualitative data can be biased. Mainframe functions and practices of HRM are not investigated.
9	Gigauri (2020)	Quantitative research	48 organizations in Georgia.	Organizational support, employee wellbeing, work settings, emotional experiences.	Small sample size, country limitation, a few HR areas investigated.
10	Opatha (2020)	General literature review	HRM related recommendations in the context of Sri Lankan organizations	Employee wellbeing, selection and compensation practices.	Study is focusing on Sri Lankan organizations only. Findings are based on subjective measures and therefore, can be biased.

11	Khudhair et al. (2020)	Quantitative research	The findings are based on data collected online from 50 HR and 50 marketing professionals.	General challenges faced by HR and marketing practitioners.	Smaller sample size. Lesser attention to individual areas of HRM and marketing.
12	Ichsan et al. (2020)	Review article	General review of a few articles showing the response of HRM to Covid-19	Strategic HRM practices, employee empowerment	Very general in nature without paying attention to specialized HR functions. The conclusion is based on data of a few articles which is not adequate to devise a working strategy.
13	Adikaram et al. (2021)	Qualitative research approach is used by collecting data via in-depth interviews with top level human resource professional	24 companies from diverse industries including: services, information technology and manufacturing in the geographical context of Sri Lanka	Stages of crisis management from HRM perspective in a general way without investigating individual functions of HRM	Restricted to organizations in Sri Lanka. Individual functions of HRM such as recruitment, training and compensation are not investigated.
14	Agarwal (2021)	Qualitative research	Nine hotels where the data is collected from 50 respondents working in different areas such as: management, operations, house-keeping, business development and sales.	Compensation and incentives (where most of the hotels cut off the incentives), T&D, HRM flexibility Life & family support, mental health support.	Qualitative approach is biased and the results can be different in varied industry contexts.
15	Azizi et al. (2021)	A systematic review	15 relevant articles critically reviewed	12 HRM strategies to cope with effects of COVID-19	Review based on a limited number of 15 articles. Certain issues like layoffs, job insecurity, professional ethics & job burnout are not addressed.
16	Chanana (2021)	A literature review	Investigating secondary data of articles, blogs and online newspapers	Employee engagement	Very few articles are reviewed. In the wider realm of HR Practices only employee engagement is investigated.

17	Gonçalves et al. (2021)	Quantitative research	136 Portuguese organizations provided data through online surveys.	Recruitment and selection, labor relations	The findings can be different in firms operating in different countries. Additional HR practices need to be investigated.
18	Hamouche (2021)	A literature review	Analysis of HRM functions in the light of published articles	Working conditions, performance and safety management	A general overview without addressing technicalities of the field.
19	Zhong et al. (2021)	Systematic review	Articles focusing on various industries across different countries including; USA, UK and other European countries.	Employee wellbeing, work settings, HRD and leadership	Lack of comprehensive analytical methods due to information breach or unavailability
20	Stuart et al. (2021)	Review article	Investigating uncertain future of HRM in geographical context of the United Kingdom by using data from a number of public agencies	Job retention and HRM reforms	Country specific analysis. Does not cover a range of HRM practices and policies
21	Nutsubidze and Schmidt (2021)	Qualitative research using semi structured interviews	Results of the study are based on data received from 28 HR professionals working at different level in various sized organizations of Kuwait.	Performance management, Employee motivation and engagement, employee retention.	Limited geographical scope of the study. Smaller sample size. Scarcity of comprehensive approach in realm of HRM.
22	Porkodi et al. (2021)	Quantitative research	Different level managers in oil & gas companies in Oman. Analysis of data received from 130 participants	HRM Challenges	Industry specific research. Systematic Strategies to cope with challenges are not included.
23	Ngoc Su et al. (2021)	Qualitative research	Tourism and Hospitality industry of Vietnam. Data collected from 20 managers through semi-structured interviews	Firm's resilience, HRM practices	Country and industry limitations. General overview of HRM practices. Lack of HR strategies to cope with the pandemic situation.

24	Tomčíková et al. (2021)	Quantitative research	Tourism sector of Slovakia. Data from 274 managers in the industry was collected and analyzed.	Impact of Covid-19 on HRM practices	Industry and country specific investigation. Challenges are highlighted only, without devising solutions for those obstacles.
25	Günther et al. (2022)	Quantitative research	Data collected from 262 German employees is analysed.	Tele-working, employee wellbeing, leadership.	Generalization of findings can be difficult. Additional HR practices can be included.
26	Kloutsiniotis et al. (2022)	Quantitative research	Study is carried out in 13 Greek hotels where 459 front-line employees participated in the survey.	Transformational leadership, HRM practices, job burnout	Individual HR practices not investigated. No involvement of HR professionals in the study
27	Kutieshat and Farmanesh (2022)	Quantitative research	Education sector in Jordan. Data from a sample size of 450 was analysed.	New HRM practices, Innovation performance, innovative work behavior	Focus on education sector only. The role of individual HRM practices not investigated.

After critically reviewing these chosen articles from different databases, it was found that human resource professionals played a pivotal role in coping with the pandemic while continuing the business operations in the corporate world. These experts primarily focused on protecting individuals which is crucial to control spread of the infection and also to make significant contribution and maintain performance of a company (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022; Tomčíková et al., 2021). A diverse set of approaches were presented to help organizations continue their routine businesses during the current global health crisis (Agarwal, 2021; Azizi et al., 2021; Bailey & Breslin, 2021). The strategies and approaches highlighted in this study can be used by organizations to address adverse impacts of the crisis in a responsive manner, and continue its operations. The investigation also shed light on how the global economic conditions have worsened; social behaviours have changed and the problems different organizations are facing in midst of the pandemic have evolved.

The investigation elaborated a series of challenges that are naïve for organizations. These obstacles include: developing strategies to provide health protection to labor force, resources management to effectively implement a virtual work setting (Davidescu et al., 2020; Dennerlein et al., 2020), dealing with business recession, controlling unemployment, and managing employees motivation and perception about job insecurity (Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022; Stuart et al., 2021). Readjustment of remuneration policies, developing new work schedules, and acquiring adequate IT assets to develop a working digital platform, are other hurdles which organizational leaders and human resource professionals have to

resolve (Adikaram et al., 2021; Butterick & Charlwood, 2021; Gonçalves et al., 2021). It was also noted that employees' fear, stress and anxiety are the threats which lead to lower employees' morale, demotivation and decreased involvement in the workplace (Caligiuri et al., 2020; Nutsubidze & Schmidt, 2021; Wenham et al., 2020).

From a HRM perspective, different action plans can be utilized by firms to cope with COVID-19 crisis. The establishments should show flexibility by introducing virtual work spaces (De Leon, 2020; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020) or implement a hybrid strategy i.e. combination of virtual and physical work settings (Adikaram et al., 2021), in order to provide immense protection to workers (Opatha, 2020). These new work settings can also contribute to manage stress, fear and anxiety the individuals are experiencing during these harsh times (Gómez et al., 2020; Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). Organizations which need new employees should not delay the recruitment process and instead, use innovative and online recruitment and selection methods to fulfill labor need and play a role in reducing unemployment (Campello et al., 2020; Maurer, 2020). Online training programmes can be used to enhance skills of individuals and at the same time, address different psychological problems found among the personnel such as lower employees' morale, demotivation and reduced work engagement (Gonçalves et al., 2021; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022). Virtual training techniques can also be used to bring awareness among employees, about the methods and procedures that can help in controlling spread of the infection (Azizi et al., 2021; Ichsan et al., 2020). Firms can lend a helping hand by providing additional financial benefits to employees during these setbacks. It will boost the loyalty and commitment of employees by yielding a perception among them that their employer helped them when they were in distress (Agarwal, 2021; Dennerlein et al., 2020). Since firms vary in size and nature, responses shown to the pandemic crisis can be different from different employers but the prime objectives of these initiatives are to ensure corporations' survival and continuity of business operations while taking employees' mental and physical health into consideration (Nangia & Mohsin, 2020; Zhong et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The study is a systematic literature review which enabled us to identify challenges arising from COVID-19 crisis by focusing on different spheres; economic, organizational and employees' behavior thus met the first objective of the study. Information collected from the articles indexed in different databases showed that human resource management plays an eminent role in continuing business operations during the prevailing uncertain and fearful situation by adopting a higher degree of flexibility. It was found that various approaches are used in different organizational and societal context. The conclusive purposes of these practices were to shield the health and well-being of employees, adapt to changing

environment, improve working conditions, manage personnel's psychological problems and ensure continuity of businesses during the existing pandemic. The collection of these information ultimately led to fulfilling the second objective of the study. An occurrence can have both positive and negative sides. Rather than treating the pandemic as a disaster or chaotic situation, the organizations can treat it as an opportunity to learn, grow and change (Kraus et al., 2020). In Figure 4, it is shown that the pandemic has provoked organizations to develop such HRM strategies and practices that can be used to enhance pro-activeness, preparedness and adjustment capabilities of organizations to respond to challenges arising from such crisis (Adikaram et al., 2021; Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022). It is impossible for any organization to prevent occurrence of crisis no matter how efficient the organization's planning and preparedness is. In prevalence of a crisis the only solution for firms is to show higher level of flexibility, and modify strategies and practices in accordance with demands of the situation. The introduction of these novel and modified approaches can enable organizations to reshape their HRM policy which can be helpful in improving planning and resource management to deal with such crisis in a proper manner.

The study presented a comprehensive set of HRM strategies and practices that can be useful in managing calamities like the COVID-19 pandemic, though the selection of any or all of these practices depends on size of the organization, industry type and also on the society or economy in which the firm is operating. Since organizations, societies and economies differ in resources, the selection of these modified strategies and practices is decided on the basis of resources availability. For instance, an IT firm can easily adopt remote working strategy but for a manufacturing corporation it might be difficult. Similarly, larger organizations may provide additional bonuses or financial benefits to employees but, for smaller firms, it might not be possible. Organizations will go for a set of approaches which are cost effective and can provide maximum benefits to all stakeholders. COVID-19 pandemic enabled organizations to identify different problems and gaps in the realm of human resource management and responses from companies can be observed in the form of modified and refined practices. Moreover, there are a lot of other dimensions which have to be addressed in order to make HRM functions more effective and responsive in the matters of crisis management. It can be realized if there is a strong collaboration and frequent communication between managers, employees and investigators.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

The investigation has provided a detailed overview about the obstacles posed by COVID-19 pandemic and also presented a set of possible solutions to tackle those challenges while still bearing certain limitations. Information in this article is focusing on diverse industries and societies; there is a dire need to carry out research of the same nature in a specific industry and societal context to know the exact findings about the role of HRM in the pandemic crisis. This is because

different industries and societies have a significant difference in resources and facilities. The current study is a literature survey, where analytical methods like interviews and questionnaires can be used to get an accurate insight about the role of HRM and its practices in dealing with the pandemic.

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