

Impact of Covid-19 on HRM Functions

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ABSTRACT: Any organisation depends on their Human Resource Management (HRM) team to get the right talented man power and retain the right skilled team for the growth of the organisation and yield the profit in the business. The importance for the HRM team is increasing day by day during this pandemic. The role of the HRM team before and after pandemic is discussed in this paper.

KEY WORDS: Covid-19, pandemic, HRM functions, work from home

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I. INTRODUCTION

Any organisation irrespective of its size, will rely on the HR team to attract and retain the right talented resources to contribute towards achieving the organization's goals. This team always gives the priority to the wellbeing of the employees and ensures the right working environment to make them comfortable at working place in turn to achieve the maximum output from them.

At present, many of the major cities are in lockdown due to Covid-19 where the end of the pandemic is not predictable. This is affecting all the employees as they cannot travel to the offices. Thus it is the responsibility of HR team to provide the possibilities to the employees to work from home and deliver the maximum. The impact of Covid-19 on the world's economy had become massive from the month of January 2020. This resulted in the loss of jobs, downfall in the income of the employees as well as in the businesses.

Objectives

- To discuss the role of Human Resources team in an organisation
- To discuss the changing functions of HRM during Covid-19

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Armstrong (1987) sees HRM as 'old wine in new bottles' and argues that HRM has been a replacement of the term personnel management in organizations. Storey (1995) states that HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management to achieve the advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques.

Murthi (2006) explained the role of HR manager in the changing scenario as crucial to face the challenges of globalization, liberalization, cost effectiveness and profit maximization. The present day aim is survival of the fittest. To face the challenges in the world today we need constant changes in skills, attitudes and knowledge. This can be achieved only by the training department of an organisation. This can pave the way for industrial prosperity in the business world. The development of Human Resource is the key to the business survival and business success. All companies must look towards developing a more highly skilled workforce to cultivate specialist skills in new areas and to attain a higher level of basic education and training. Training is a route to quality performance.

Purang (2006) compared the human resource management perceptions of middle level managers of five Indian organisations operating in different sectors. Two of them are public sector organisations, the two are private sector and fifth one is a multinational organisation. The study hypothesized that the human resource development climate perceptions of the managers in the private and multinational organisations would be more positive than in the public sector. Bharathi (2009) explained the value of HR functions in business and its impact on higher productivity, enhanced quality, better customer service, good industrial relations and lower cost which influence the profitability of an organisation. Effective HR practices could play important role in achieving all the above said factors.

III. THE FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human Resource Management(HRM) in any organisation will have to play multiple roles which will be in line with the organisation goals. Different functions of HRM are shown in the fig.1

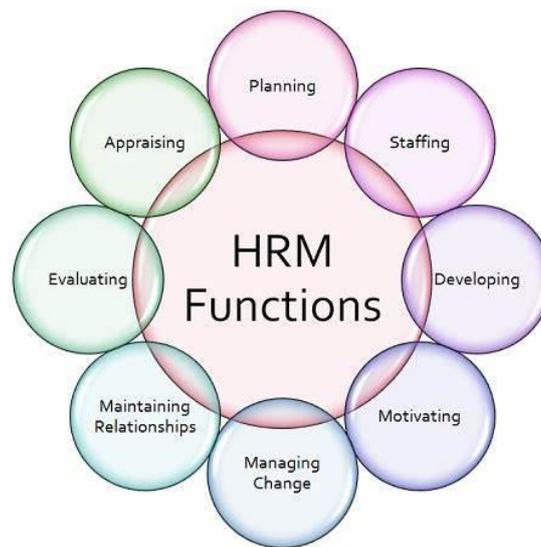


Fig.1. HRM Functions

- **Planning**

Planning is an important task of HRM to analyse the job requirements and skills and talents needed to meet the requirements. As a part of the planning, the HRM should estimate the number of resources needed, should be able to assess the skills and knowledge of the job seekers and should be able to evaluate the employees' performance.

- **Staffing**

Selection of Human resources by using different recruitment methods is called staffing. It is a primary function of HR department. The recruitment should be done without discriminating based on the race, sex or religion. Recruitment should be purely based on the talent and skills.

- **Developing**

The employees are to be trained to develop professionally. HR department should arrange for trainings, seminars and conferences and insist the employees to attend and get benefitted.

- **Motivating**

It is the role of the HR management to identify the factors that are demotivating the employees and take action convert those factors to motivate the employees. The motivated employees will deliver the maximum. Few of the factors that motivates the employees are good working environment, pay without discrimination and providing the brand value to the employees.

- **Managing Change**

The effective HRM should manage the change effectively whether the change is internal or external. This includes in engaging the employees to put maximum efforts, implementing any required change in multiple phases and communicating the change to the employees and management in an effective manner.

- **Maintaining relationships**

The relationship between the management, HRM and employees should be smooth and avoid the conflicts. HR department is responsible to maintain such a good relationship. This will avoid the psychological pressure and demotivation among the employees and make them to stay motivated.

- **Evaluation**

The HRM should evaluate the quality and accuracy of the work done by the employees. Should check whether all the employees are meeting the deadlines. The skills in delivering the work, in communicating with co employees are to be evaluated in specific intervals

- **Appraisal**

The performance of the employees should be monitored to assess and implement the pay revisions according to their performance. Standards for the performance are to be defined by HRM and that are to be communicated to all the employees and also should motivate them to improve their performance.

IV. CHANGING ROLES OF HRM DURING COVID-19

The novel coronavirus pandemic, known as Covid-19 made us remain vulnerable and also taught us to face such challenges in future. Its impact is affecting the economy all over the world. Businesses are not running and hence not making money due to the lockdown. If they are not producing, there will not be any sales and thus no income either to management or to employees. The impact depends upon the type of business. Certain businesses are closed completely. Certain businesses like food processing, digital payments, e-learning and online media etc are surviving and creating more job opportunities.

Organisations took the step to define new strategies to get the work done instead of layoffs, furloughs and shutdowns. Protecting the health and safety of the employees has gained the priority for the organisations.

Covid-19 taught us to utilise the technological advances effectively and integrated into the work culture of the organisations. This helped a lot to face the crisis. At this situation the HRM played a major role by defining the work from home facility. HRM is implementing certain short term and long term measures whatever suits their work culture and current requirements. The traditional HRM functions are changed due to this current measures.

Few of the measures implemented by HRM are explained below.

- **Employee and employer relationship**

The employer should clearly communicate to the employees on the vision on the organisation during this tough situation and assure them that both employee and employers should work together to move forward and to get benefit for both of them. They should be informed that their health and safety is important to the management. HRM educated the employees on safety protocols, emergency numbers, hygiene practices and few organisations conducted online yoga and meditation classes to handle the mental stress and motivated them.

- **Flexibility and creativity**

The attributes demonstrated by HRM during the work from home are flexibility and creativity. The employees are made to login remotely from their homes. The brick and mortar offices transformed to virtual work places. HRM had taken relevant measures to make the work from home comfortable to the employees. They are supported with desktops, laptops, data cards etc to ensure that they can work without interruptions. The other measures taken to motivate the employees are hosting virtual coffee chats, conducting daily team video discussions and getting updates on progress of the work.

- **Recruitment**

The work from home concept and minimal staff at work place will continue for some more time as the social distancing is to be maintained. This will affect the recruitment process of HRM. The recruitment will be done based on digital platform and focusses on the technical skills. Opportunities will be given to the tech-savvies who will prove their skills in digital work places. On boarding of the new joiners and induction programs will happen online.

- **Reduced infrastructure costs**

The work from home concept enables many of the employees to balance both personal and official work. The costs on the fixed office places has come down drastically and employees are comfortable working remotely. HRM will move towards the technology adoption and digitalisation to perform their regular activities like attendance, leave policies. The best part of this pandemic is that the organisations are finding new ways to make the employees productive. More productivity with less workforce has become the mantra of the organisations.

- **Identifying key employees**

The positive impact of Coronavirus on the organisations is they are able to identify the key workers who are needed to keep the business running during the crisis. HRM should work without any bias and choose the key persons and make them understand their importance for the business and motivate them to deliver as per the requirement.

- **Maintaining the work place**

HRM should take measures to maintain the work place safe and hygienic for the sake of minimal staff who are working in the physical office. Fumigating the work place, maintaining the social distancing at work place, providing hand sanitizers, cleaning the floors etc are to be performed.

- **Redefining the compensation**

As the work culture and environment is totally changed, the previous policies of compensation may not suit now. HRM should restructure the policies that links the productivity and performance of the employees.

- **Furlough Leave & Compensatory Working:**

HRM may implement the furlough leave and inform the employees to go on mandatory leave without retrenching them. Salary will not be paid during the furlough leave but the employee will have job security. Once the business comes to normal state, those employees will be brought back to regular pay rolls. The compensation paid on re-joining will depend upon the importance of the employee to the business and his productivity.

V. CONCLUSION

The current Covid-19 pandemic made the organisation to learn new ways of working styles and accelerating into the digital world by utilising the advancement in technology. HRM in the organisation has to implement the measures to run the business without interruptions. These measures will keep the business running and improving the productivity of the employees. They will have to define a sustainable version of future.

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