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A STUDY ON UPCOMING GLOBAL HUMAN RESOURCE CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 outbreak gave birth to various problems in human life and to world economy. Each and every individual is getting affected by this phenomena. This outbreak has slowed down the economy by shutting down the businesses in order to contain the spread of novel coronavirus. Companies started searching new ways of working, they identified different online platforms and work from home opportunities for their employees. This study focuses upcoming global human resource challenges during COVID-19 outbreak. The researcher has also tried to assess the effect of various factors on human resource in this pandemic situation. A structured questionnaire was framed to collect the data and analysis was done through SPSS by applying t-test and correlation. Researcher has come to the conclusion that employees should not get worried about their jobs as every organization wants to retain their employees. Hierarchy level of any employee has no relation with job security. Hence, one has to perform well to survive in the organization for a long term.

INTRODUCTION

There are various human resource management challenges (HR Challenges) that needs attention as it is an important function of any organization. Today, HR challenges can be environmental challenges and always remember that these challenges are not related to one single dimension; rather they are directed towards multi-dimensional issues that need to be tackled with immediate care and effects.

Keywords: Human resource challenges, Human resource policy, Work from home, COVID-19 outbreak, Pandemic situation.

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This research paper deals with the biggest global healthcare challenge of 21st century i.e. COVID-19, that originates from China and eventually spread across the globe and had a huge impact on the working style of every organization, its resources, processes and people thereby compelled individual to modify and evolve new ways and means of working.

COVID -19 outbreak

This disease affected economy of all the countries and changed complete scenario of the world. Lakhs of people died due to this coronavirus and cases have been increasing rapidly. The outbreak has been declared an epidemic throughout forcing the educational institutions and other commercial establishments to shut down. The organizations started pondering on the newer ways of working. In order to ensure safety of the employees, compliance towards government rules and continuity of the businesses, organizations initiated work from home policy. Organizations enabled their employees with updated technologies to complete their tasks. At the same time, companies are imparting training and development programs through various online sources. After all the new amendments, employees are still facing many challenges while working from home. A lot of companies experience decreased productivity and morale during periods of change. Below are the mentioned recent challenges that employees are facing:

- Adapting to new work methodology
- Work load and work pressure
- Working on pending projects
- Planning/forecasting future projects
- Compliance with laws and regulation (like working hour, leave policy, weekly off to name a few)
- Change in reporting structure
- Strong monitoring system

Adapting to new work methodology

Technology is constantly changing employee must be quick to adapt this rapid changing technology. The challenge for employee is to embrace innovation and learn new technology.

Work load and work pressure

Work load and work pressure is increased as there no fix time of working i.e. fix office hours. Employees are working more than their defined office timing to complete their daily tasks.

Working on pending and future/forecasting projects

As employees are working from home and having no limitation and restrictions so companies are asking them complete pending projects and also planning to work on upcoming projects.

Compliance with laws and regulation (like working hours, leave policy and weekly off to name a few)

It is being difficult to compliance with Laws and Regulation of the company. Before this outbreak organizations used to provide weekly off and leaves as per the HR policy but these daysemployees are working on Saturday and Sundays without taking any leave. It is not easy to manage home and work together especially for female employees.

Change in reporting structure

The reporting structure has been changed as employees are working from home so reporting is being done through conference calls and video calls. It is not supported by all the employees of the organization as they are not used to it.

Strong monitoring system

The monitoring system has become very strong as organization has to ensure the proper working of every employee and division of work as per the responsibility and capability of the employees.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since December 2019 this COVID-19 outbreak has badly have an effect on economic cost, mental cost and human cost. The spread of this contagion is deadly worldwide without any proven official medical treatment (Solanki, S., 2020).

(Paula Caligiuri et al., 2020) Authors have led to an investigation specifically on international human resource management to concentrate on COVID-19 pandemic challenges. In their research they have highlighted the problems occurred due to physical distance like training of employees, employee selection, their health and safety and most difficulties were faced in virtual collaboration. This research focuses on three major areas including facilitating international and global work, managing under uncertainty and redefining organizational performance. Their research is based on various articles, current issue and concerns of COVID-19. They have recommended how to manage under global uncertainty, How to facilitate global work and How to redefine performance during pandemic and in new normal situation.

(Kristof, 1996) One of major challenge employees faced during this pandemic was to adjust with drastic change in working conditions like work from home concept and maintaining the physical distance from the human beings while implementing policies and procedures.

(Mrittika Shil et al., 2020) This research emphasized on transition in the human resource department due to global pandemic. The transformation in the prevailing industry for example cloud based and online managerial practices which will result in complete version of e-management. This pandemic has affected the various HR practices like people management, process, performance etc. this study was carried with the objective to discover evolution in HR practices and further plans to overcome the problem at minimum cost. The authors have considered relevant factors to justify the objective and concluded that this transition will create sustainable HR practices which will help the organizations in long run.

The current pandemic situation says that there are many human resource challenges that will continue to evolve for years to come. According to the (M Tom, 2020) the restrictions of COVID-19 are not over yet, organizations are realizing that they have to take necessary steps to overcome the challenges faced by their employees. They can do this by emphasizing on various training programs or by investing in areas such as integrated technology system in order to grow at national and international levels.

These days' organizations are ready to face the threats, challenges and uncertainty arisen due to crises and unforeseen events. During this COVID-19 pandemic organizations also found some solutions to counter the problems and coped up the employees to work under the situation (Joel B. Carnevale et al., 2020). The organizations have realized the worth of human resource. They have become the most valuable assets for the organizations as they are adopting policies like job rotation, competence building, empowerment, performance linked pay, etc. which help in developing their skills and make

them a strong personality (A Nikos, 2018). The organizations are also providing of employee welfare facility and social security measures with increased post-retirement benefits like provident fund, health insurance, pension, etc. The economic, social and technological conditions are changing every day. All the organizations are being affected by all these changes and will have an even greater impact in future as well. It cannot be expected from an individual a same reaction in same situation every time as human behavior is very complex. These changes pose major challenge to the human resource management(D Naorem, 2017).

Many organizations adopt human resource management (HRM) for its benefits. Human resource managers face various challenges and issues while performing their duties like recruiting new staff, retention, training, productivity, health and safety, workforce diversity, payroll, globalization, discipline, advancement in technology and management of information. HR professionals have to play a vital and pivotal role by acquiring, preparing and maintaining human resources for the meeting various challenges. The human resource function has to make a pro-active and creative response to these challenges and the consequence they hold for the human resource function (C Smriti, 2016).

When organizations take decisions related to the specific individual employees are considered as individual challenges for the human resource management. It is very important to treat employees well within the organization otherwise it becomes a big concern or challenge to deal with. The problems individual employee faces are:

- Productivity
- Empowerment
- Brain drain
- Ethics & social responsibility
- Job insecurity
- Matching people & organization

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study upcoming Human Resource challenges during COVID-19 outbreak.
- To assess the effect of various factors on human resource in this pandemic situation.

Hypothesis of the study

H₀: There is no significant difference in work load of men and women in this pandemic situation.

H_a: There is significant difference in work load of men and women in this pandemic situation.

H₀: There is no significant relation between job security and hierarchy level during COVID-19 outbreak.

H_a: There is significant relation between job security and hierarchy level during COVID-19 outbreak.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a framework and systematic approach that has been chosen by research to conduct the study.

- Target Population: Questionnaire was circulated among 200 human resources across the globe and 165 complete responses were considered for this study. Respondents who fall in 25-56 years of age

bracket participated in this survey in which 66% are male and 34% are female.

- Sampling Technique: Systematic sampling and Snow ball sampling technique was used.
- Area of Study: Across the globe.
- Data collection method: Data was collected through primary and secondary both the methods. In primary method a structured questionnaire including 30 questions was framed and circulated among the working professionals. In secondary method data was collected through various journals and websites to present in the paper.
- Statistical Technique: For the testing of hypothesis t-test and correlation were used through SPSS. Percentage analysis was also used to interpret the results.

Analysis of Data

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.915	30

The value of Cronbach's alpha α is .915 hence, there is high level of internal consistency for likert scale with this specific sample.

• Testing of Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in work load of men and women in this pandemic situation.

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Workload	Male	99	1.9130	.79962	.09626
	Female	66	2.0000	.82808	.13801

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df (2-tailed)	Sig. Difference	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Work load	Equal variances assumed	.470	.495	-.523	163	.602	-.08696	.16641	-.41699	.24308
	Equal variances not assumed			-.517	68.940	.607	-.08696	.16827	-.42265	.24873

Interpretation

In above analysis, $\alpha = .05$, $p = .602$ which is greater than $.05$ i.e. $p > .05$ at 5% level of significance, the test is not significant. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted 'There is no significant difference in work load of men and women in this current situation'.

On the basis of above analysis alternate hypothesis is rejected i.e. There is significant difference in work load of men and women in this current situation is not accepted.

H₀: There is no significant relation between job security and hierarchy level during COVID-19 outbreak.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Hierarchy Level	1.2667	.44434	165
Job Security	1.8952	.96997	165

Correlations			
		Hierarchy Level	Job Security
Hierarchy Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.155
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.115
	N	165	165
Job Security	Pearson Correlation	.155	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.115	
	N	165	165

Interpretation

In above analysis, $\alpha = .05$, $p = .155$ which is greater than $.05$ i.e. $p > .05$ at 5% level of significance, the test is not significant. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted 'There is no significant relation between job security and hierarchy level during COVID-19 outbreak'.

Above analysis states that alternate hypothesis is rejected i.e. There is significant relation between job security and hierarchy level during COVID-19 outbreak is not accepted.

FINDINGS

After doing percentage analysis and applying t-test and correlation to test the null hypotheses it was found that:

- The workload of any employee in the organization depends on their responsibility and designation they hold. It might happen that women are having more responsibilities as compare to men in this pandemic situations as they are managing their personal and professional life but in terms of workload from the organization both are equally responsible.
- Job security of any employee is not associated with the hierarchy level in the organization. Probably, the performance of the employees is the key factor that helps them to grow in the organization.

- 46 percent human resources working with various organizations are satisfied with the HR policy in this pandemic situation.
- 48 percent of them are satisfied with present remuneration in terms of salary allowances and perks commensurate which make them enable to work from home.
- 43 percent of employees strongly agree that their organizations are helping them to achieve a match between their personal goals and organizational goals during COVID-19.
- 45 percent of organizations have assured the readiness of their employees before implementing changes.
- 35 percent of organizations are giving them an opportunity to take up other work responsibilities apart from their KRA's while working from home.
- 34 percent of employees said that supervisors of the organization are handling each and every threat raised due to Covid-19.
- 45 percent of the organization regards welfare of their employees as one of the priority.
- Still, 45 percent employees think that current global scenario will have a negative impact on the yearly promotion for FY 20-21.

CONCLUSION

The study tried to identify the upcoming global human resource challenges during COVID – 19 outbreak. In which two major factors were considered for conducting this study these factors are workload from the organization and job security concern in this pandemic situation. Employees are working from home during lockdown and they are trying to balance their personal and professional life especially female employees. This study depicted a clear picture that workload is not gender based factor it depends on the designation and responsibility one holds in any organization. This pandemic situation has increased the workload of women in their personal life as they are not getting any supporting hand to deal with it but organizations are delegating same kind of tasks to both male and female employees according to their responsibilities.

Researcher has come to the conclusion that employees should not get worried about their jobs as every organization wants to retain their employees. Hierarchy level of any employee has no relation with job security. Hence, one has to perform well to survive in the organization for a long term.

Organizations are taking corrective measures to ensure the safety and security of their employees. They are giving proper support to their employees during lockdown. The monitoring and reporting structure has been changed to motivate employees. Organizations have implemented hourly reporting structure to maintain the decorum and provide feedback or suggestions to their employees. Even organizations are helping their employees by providing them various E-training programs.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study has conducted on upcoming global human resource challenges and concerns during COVID -19 outbreak which is based on primary data and it was difficult to collect the data in this pandemic situation.
- This study was conducted from February'20 – May'20. Hence, there was limited time to conduct this study.

- Even respondents were not ready to give proper answers of questions as it related to their organization.

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