



Impact of Covid-19 HRM Challenges on HRM Practices for Routing the Post Pandemic: A Study with Special Reference to Oil & Gas Companies in Oman

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ABSTRACT

Human Resources Management is an important element to the success and progress of any organization, the uniqueness of HRM practices is considered as a possible competitive tool and the central value of the company. In this research, an attempt was made to study the impact of HRM challenges on post-COVID-19 HRM practices. The practices include health and safety, work schedule, cooperation communication, training, and recruitment and selection. The respondents of the study were different levels of managers working in oil and gas companies in Oman. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 130 respondents. This research concludes that the level of HRM challenges has highly significant with the age group of the respondents. In addition, multiple linear regression was applied and the study revealed that three variables are highly significant with the post-COVID HRM practices. Those variables represent health issues in the Pandemic situation, difficulty in balancing between work and life, and difficulty in strategic focus during this pandemic. These variables underwent most of the post-COVID HRM practices in the Oil and gas companies in Oman.

Key words: HRM challenges, HRM practices post-COVID-19, HRM practices pre COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Companies apply various HRM practices that is consistent with the firm's vision and mission, however due to the extraordinary current situation which is created by the COVID-19, human resource practices have been significantly affected in many organizations worldwide. According to a study conducted by Anseel, et. al. (2020), most of the organizations faced challenges due to the outbreak of COVID-19 these challenges include: difficulty in remote working, difficulty in maintaining employees wellbeing, difficulty to downsize the employees, difficulty in measuring the resilience of institution. In order for organizations to overcome the challenges enforced by the pandemic they need to make alteration on the HRM practices applied. Based on a study by Gigauri (2020), these practices include; cooperation, communication, online training, health and safety, and designing work schedules and E-recruitment and selection.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Oil and gas is the largest industry in Oman, which accounts to 72% of the Government revenue (Al-Reiami, 2020), this industry has the highest contribution to the Omani economy (Minter 2020). However, it's one of the most affected industries in Oman due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Due to this pandemic, the industry faced many challenges. Since most of their work is done on the petroleum fields some of the challenges are unique to this sector. These HRM challenges include; remote working, employees' wellbeing, downsizing employees, and resilience of the institution. Hence, this study tried to investigate the impact of COVID- 19 HRM challenges on post-COVID-19 HRM practices. The HRM practices in the case of oil and gas companies in Muscat comprises; training, recruitment and selection, cooperation, communication, health and safety, and work schedules. This study will provide an insight to the managers and HRM practitioners working in oil and gas industry in Oman, to response effectively the challenges to support their subordinates to cope with the recent changes.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the level of HRM challenges faced by the managers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To examine the impact of COVID-19 HRM challenges on post-COVID-19 HRM practices in oil and gas companies in Oman.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between demographic factors and the level of HRM challenges due to COVID-19.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 HRM challenges and post-COVID-19 HRM practices.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the research focuses on the level of challenges faced by managers in different managerial levels in oil and gas Companies located in Muscat due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The challenges discussed in this study include; remote working, employee wellbeing, virtual management, employee dismissal and resilience of the institution. In addition, the study will address the HRM practices such as cooperation, communication, online training, health and safety management, designing work schedules and E-recruitment and selection which are

implemented by the companies in the industry to overcome these challenges and the impact of the challenges of COVID-19 on these practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Around the same time as COVID-19 has suddenly revised usual job practices, there has also been an escalation in emerging developments concerning the transfer of working to digital settings Anseel, et. al. (2020). Gartner (2020) reported that nearly one-half of the corporations may have over 80% of their workers operating remotely during the beginning phases of the COVID-19 outbreak and predicted significant long-term growth in mobile working following the disease outbreak. However, when a massive percentage of employees are required to work from home, some encounter problems related to such basic concerns as not enough room to work in one's residence. Workers also face difficulties to establish distinctions between professional and personal life Ramarajan & Reid (2013). Based on a study by Russo (2020), in consideration of the risks of the disease outbreak, organisations need to vigorously foster the wellbeing of workers. There is significant variance around and within sectors as to how COVID-19 has influenced the needs and capabilities of various workers. In addition, data proves that working conditions have worsened for many workers. In the presence of these challenges, COVID-19 has led to a higher risk of workers developing persistent stress syndrome, including a prolonged sense of fatigue and a distant attitude towards work, Bakker & Demerouti (2020). In addition, being exposed continuously to COVID-19 news promotes a repeated and negative intensity on employee thinking, employees will need support to cope appropriately with disease outbreak and unpredictable work demands.

According to ILO (2020), 195 million full-time workers are predicted to be unemployed this year. In addition to losing wages, unemployed individuals can suffer a variety of anxiety outcomes, including depression and physical illnesses. In contrast to the repercussions of unemployment for those who lost their jobs, there is a harmful impact for those who are still working, prior literature indicates that as companies decrease total workforce numbers, there continues to be consequently lower levels of corporate loyalty, employment participation and elevated tension among people who survived Trevor & Nyberg (2018).

Another challenge faced by the companies is their resilience which is identified as a company's capacity to transfer, create condition reactions to, and eventually engage in strategic practices to maximize on transformative events that could possibly harm the sustainability of the firm, Lengnick et al (2018).

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design implemented to describe the impact of HRM Challenges due to COVID-19 on routing post-COVID-19 HRM practices in Oil and gas companies in Oman. Quantitative methodology is used in this study. In order to meet the goals of this report, a Likert's scale 1 to 5 survey is being used to allow the researcher to discuss the factors pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 HRM challenges on HRM operations in Oman's oil and gas companies. 130 participants from different levels of management working in various companies in the gas and oil industry in Muscat were participated in this study. An online survey method was implemented to gather data from the targeted participants. Various analysis such as Quartile method, Chi square, percentage analysis, and multiple linear regression method were applied to analyze the data to test the strength and importance of the relationship of the data.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

The association between the demographic factors such as gender, age-group, educational qualification, experience and the managerial level of the research respondents and the level of post-COVID-19 HRM challenges were represented through the two- way or cross tab.

TABLE 1 : CROSS TAB-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND LEVEL OF HRM CHALLENGES POST-COVID-19				
S. No	GENDER	LEVEL OF POST-COVID-19 HRM CHALLENGES		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	Male	5 (3.8%)	71 (54.6%)	2(1.5%)
2	Female	5 (3.8%)	40(30.8%)	7(5.4%)
Total		10 (7.7%)	111 (85.4%)	9(6.9%)
S. No	AGE GROUP	LEVEL OF POST-COVID-19 HRM CHALLENGES		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	20 – 30	3 (2.3%)	37 (28.5%)	1(0.7%)
2	31 – 40	6 (4.6%)	24 (18.5%)	4(3.1%)
3	41 – 50	1 (0.7%)	50 (38.4%)	4(3.1%)
Total		10 (7.7%)	111 (85.4%)	9(6.9%)
S. No	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	LEVEL OF POST-COVID-19 HRM CHALLENGES		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	Diploma Level	4 (3.1%)	10 (7.7%)	7(5.4%)
2	Advance Diploma & Bachelor Level	5 (3.8%)	68(52.3%)	2(1.5%)
3	Master & PhD	1 (0.7%)	33 (25.4%)	0(0%)
Total		10 (7.7%)	111 (85.4%)	9(6.9%)
S. No	EXPERIENCE WITH THE PRESENT ORGANIZATION	LEVEL OF POST-COVID-19 HRM CHALLENGES		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	Less than 2 years.	2 (1.5%)	14(10.8%)	3(2.3%)
2	2-4 years.	2 (1.5%)	22(16.9%)	1(0.7%)
3	5-7 years.	3 (2.3%)	44 (33.8%)	0(0%)
4	8-10 years.	1 (0.7%)	23 (17.7%)	2(1.5%)
5	More than 10 years.	2 (1.5%)	8 (6.2%)	3(2.3%)
Total		10 (7.7%)	111 (85.4%)	9(6.9%)
S. No	MANAGERIAL LEVEL	LEVEL OF POST-COVID-19 HRM CHALLENGES		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	Managing director	1 (0.7%)	9(6.9%)	1 (0.7%)
2	Technical director	1 (0.7%)	22 (16.9%)	1 (0.7%)
3	Directors	0(0%)	7 (5.4%)	1 (0.7%)
4	Managers	3 (2.3%)	14 (10.8%)	2(1.5%)
5	Team leaders	3 (2.3%)	28 (21.5%)	1 (0.7%)
6	Coordinators	1 (0.7%)	9 (6.9%)	1 (0.7%)
7	Supervisors	1 (0.7%)	22 (16.9%)	2(1.5%)
Total		10 (7.7%)	111 (85.4%)	9(6.9%)

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents with the level of HRM challenges they faced due to COVID-19. It is observed from the table, most of the respondents faced medium level of challenges in spite of their demographic differences. In particular, the highest percentage that is 54.6 percentage of the male respondents, 38.4 percentage who belongs to 41 to 50 Age group category, 52.3 percentage of respondents who have completed Advanced diploma or Bachelor level studies, 33.8 percentage of respondents who had 5 to 7 years of experience in that company and 21.5 percentage of team leaders were faced medium level challenges at highest percentage.

TABLE 2: PEARSON CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS				
	Value	D.F	p value	Remark
Gender and Level of HRM Challenges (COVID-19)	4.51	1	0.502	Not significant at 5% level
Age Group and Level of HRM Challenges (COVID-19)	7.426	2	0.024	significant at 5% level
Educational Qualification and Level of HRM Challenges (COVID-19)	5.005	2	0.082	Not significant at 5% level
Experience and Level of HRM Challenges (COVID-19)	1.957	4	0.744	Not significant at 5% level
Managerial Level and Level of HRM Challenges (COVID-19)	3.509	6	0.743	Not significant at 5% level

Further, Pearson Chi-square test were applied to test the hypothesis in order to study the relationship between the demographic factors of the respondents and level of HRM challenges due to COVID-19. The hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between demographic factors and the level of HRM challenges due to COVID-19.

From the table 2 it is noted that, only age-group and HRM challenges the p value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), which indicate that there is a significant relationship between age group and the level of HRM challenges due to COVID-19, hence the null hypothesis is accepted. All the other demographic factors in relation with the HRM challenges, the p value is more than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

In order to examine the impact of COVID-19 HRM challenges on HRM practices for routing the post pandemic in oil and gas companies in Oman, the study adopts multiple linear regression analysis method. The hypothesis of this analysis is as follows:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between COVID-19 HRM challenges and post-COVID-19 HRM Practices

Dependent variable

Y_i = post-COVID-19 HRM practices

Independent variables

COVID-19 HRM challenges

X_1 = Difficulty in ensuring that employees have all the necessary equipment's to carry out their task remotely

X_2 = Lack of provision for providing adequate welfare facilities and amenities to employees and their families, both at Workplace and outside

X_3 = Lack of flexibility in work to meet all the responsibilities

X_4 = Health and safety issues in the Pandemic situation.

X_5 = Difficulty in balancing between work and life

X_6 = Difficulty in monitoring subordinates during the pandemic

X_7 = Managing the changes and organizing the workplace

X_8 = Increased rate of employee dismissal due to the pandemic

X_9 = Insufficiency of time to perform work tasks

X_{10} = Difficulty in strategic focus during this pandemic

X_{11} = Difficulty in adapting the pandemic situation

Multiple R value: 0.515

R square value: 0.266

F value: 3.875

P value : <0.001**

The multiple regression equation is

$Y_i = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, X_8, X_9, X_{10}, X_{11})$ where:

$Y_i = 3.775 + -.070X_1 + .017X_2 + .093X_3 + -.079X_4 + -.330X_5 + -.027X_6 + .134X_7 + .009X_8 + .083X_9 + .030X_{10} + .041X_{11}$

TABLE 3: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS					
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.775	.213		17.732	---
X_1	-.070	.084	-.122	-.830	p>0.001
X_2	.017	.097	.028	.174	p>0.001
X_3	.093	.084	.159	1.116	p>0.001
X_4	-.079	.078	-.137	-1.013	p<0.001**
X_5	-.330	.083	-.577	-3.973	p<0.001 **
X_6	-.027	.083	-.044	-.328	p>0.001
X_7	.134	.090	.222	1.498	p>0.001
X_8	.009	.085	.015	.107	p>0.001
X_9	-.083	.079	-.149	-1.049	p>0.001

X10	.030	.092	.052	.328	p<0.001 **
X11	.041	.070	.067	.588	p>0.001

Dependent Variable: POSTCOVID HRM PRACTICES

Note: **sig. at 1% level

From the table 3, it is observed that the variables X4, X5 and X10 represents Covid-19 HRM challenges, which have significant ($p<0.00$, significant at 1 percent level) impact on the post-COVID-19 HRM practices in the oil and gas companies. All the other variables p value is greater than 0.001 ($p>0.001$), which means those variables are not significantly impacting the HRM practices.

CONCLUSION

Crises are unavoidable in the corporate world. No one, however, could have predicted a crisis of the extent of COVID-19, which has hastened the disruption of traditional HRM methods and posed momentous challenges for managers and HRM practitioners. Most of the managers lacked the necessary information, resources, and skills to deal with the pandemic's difficulty and novelty. In this research, the researchers had tried to investigate the impact of the HRM challenges on post-COVID HRM practices. This study was done to discuss farther about the relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents with the level of HRM challenges. The survey was conducted from the perspective of different levels of managers. Overall the research results indicate that there is a strong relationship between age group of the respondents and the level of HRM challenges. The majority of research respondents in the oil and gas company viewed that the level of the HRM challenges due to COVID-19 was medium (85.4%). In addition to that in multiple regression analysis, it has been found that the variables X4, X5 and X10 are highly significant with the post-COVID HRM practices. Those variables represent health issues in the Pandemic situation, difficulty in balancing between work and life and difficulty in strategic focus during this pandemic. These variables underwent most of the post-COVID HRM practices in the Oil and gas companies in Oman. Considering that the pandemic rapidly brought to light the concerns that could jeopardize employees' health and safety, work life balance of the employees and for strategic focus the companies started providing lot of health facilities, safety measures, work flexibility and training programmes. These challenges ought to be addressed by all the level of managers and HRM specialist in all the organisation in an opportune way to guarantee the progression of the organisation during and after the pandemic.

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