

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has captured the entire world and has also affected the organizations. Various changes are made in organization with innovative technologies like IOT, data science, AI, etc to boost up economy. With the outbreak of COVID-19, employees are adopting technologies very fast and various organizations are making changes in their work practices to cope up with the challenge. It has been observed that post COVID-19, HR departments have restructured their HR policies to restart the work functioning. The purpose of this study is to understand the employee's perception towards the amendments in HR policies. The study makes an attempt to identify the factors that affect the employee's perception towards the amendments in HR policies post COVID-19. The factors are identified through statistical procedures of SPSS version 20 software. The findings of the study will help organizations in identifying the factor that can assist in improving the HR policies and strengthen their work environment to conquer this pandemic situation and contribute in transforming the economy.

Key Words: Human Resource Policy, Employee Perspective, COVID-19 pandemic, Working Environment, Job Security.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has captured the entire world which is inevitable. The World health organization (WHO) declared the outbreak as pandemic in March 2020. For safety measures many public areas like schools, colleges, mass social gathering, theaters, transportations, international travel etc. got completely shut down by the government. However this pandemic affected humanity, lifestyle of individuals, functioning of many organizations as well as economy also got slow down. In this time of crisis to ensure the working of business, employees adapted technologies very fast and various organizations have transitioned to digital

operations for maintaining the social distancing. In this Covid-19 pandemic era, advance technologies has changed the way organizations used to function but also have found a way to help in continuing their business, which in turn help in pushing up the economy.

Historically, the role of HR professionals was only confined to administration, managing life cycle of employees and maintaining personal & other records for business. With changes in scenario, HR professionals also plays important role in framing strategies for business. Now, it is responsibility of human resource management to get maximum return on investment from organization's human capital and minimize the financial risk **Dr Ashfaque & Ujjal (2014)**. The Human resource policies are the foundation for the day to day operations in organization **Dr Praveen & Jayanti (2013)** which serves as guidelines for management in taking decision to achieve organization's goals and objectives. The human resource policy is defined as the roadmap for achieving organizational goals and objectives in an effective manner by effective people management & development. The key functional areas for designing the company's HR policies are – Recruitment & selections, Training & development, Performance appraisal, Promotions, Industrial & employee relations, Compensation management, Career growth & development, Grievance handling, Handling personal records and Code of ethics. This HR policy gives organization fair and coherent approach in managing the human capital.

Covid-19 pandemic was also an unprecedented situation for HR professionals and new working trends brought many challenges for them. **Braja (2020)**. Being the lifeline of organization, HR professional has performed strong leadership in this crisis in order to keep employee engagement and built strong communication and trust. HR professionals have redesigned and restructured their HR policies for the post covid-19 working environment with proper guidelines as per government. The pandemic forced organizations to give more focus on 'human connect' **Mohan (2020)** and HR professionals made amendments in organization's policies with concern on employee safety.

Prasad & Mruthyanjaya (2020) suggested framework for back to workplace policies and the foundation of policies are health & safety of workforce, maintaining social distancing or remote working, following ICMR & state government guidelines, flexible in unforeseeable situations and phase approach. HR professionals made amendments in company's policies with the inclusion of ICMR and governmental guidelines for resuming work after lockdown. The

updated HR policies are flexible for all employees and are more concern on telecommuting & remote working and virtual leadership & management. Sick leave policies are also modified in order to give relaxation to employees. For any organization, their first priority should be the safety and well-being of your employees and up next would be communicating with your employees **Joy (2020)**.

Initially, HR policies are developed by the HR professionals in consultation with the top management of the organization. But however it is important that the policies are reviewed by the HR professionals periodically and gain insights into the areas of improvement through employee's perspective. As HR policies are established for supporting and building the desired organizational culture for employees, it is prominent to know employee's perspective regarding HR policies because their positive or negative perception can be reflected in their working pattern and behavior which can directly or indirectly influence the individual as well as organization's performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section magnifies the understanding of how the amendments in HR policies post COVID-19 has affected employee's job-related attitude The Covid-19 pandemic has not only affected worldwide with economic slowdown but also affected the employees at individual level. The estimation of researches accessible on the prediction of human resource policy related to the current study is cited. One of the researcher analyzed that covid-19 has changed the working schedule of the employees i.e. switching work from office to work from home as well as employees have adopted virtual leadership & management and virtual team interactions. The study also focuses that pandemic has affected the socio-psychological factors through unemployment & layoff, stress & burnout, economic inequality, social distancing & loneliness etc, **(Kevin M. et.al., 2020)**. Another study gives the impression that the worldwide pandemic Covid-19 brought changes in working pattern of the organization which forced employees to adopt digitalization and even human resource management played an important role in supporting their employees. Since work-life balance became essential due to digitalization, human resource management has to frame such policies that are beneficial for employees in keeping balance between personal and professional life. **(Iza Gigauri,2020)**

On the same track, **Meenakshi & Neha (2020)** also exposed that the new Covid-19 trends, work from home concept. It also proposed the merits and demerits of

working from home. While working from home employee need to focus more on time management skills and work schedule. HR also plays crucial role in motivating and engaging employees. **Aashish & Ajit (2020)** recognized that after post-Covid environment, HR professional have to focus more on human-centered approach to maintain the healthy environment for employees. The study also pointed out that they are the backbone of the organization and have to perform new role to support employees and continue proper functioning of organization.

Another author considering the relatedness of job insecurity to organizational performance and employee turnover i.e. job insecurity affects the performance & productivity of the organization as well as employee turnover, the researcher studied the factors that influence the job insecurity and employee turnover such as technological changes, lack of experience & training, poor management policies, lack of skills & education, poor attitude towards work, racism etc. (**Abolade, 2018**). Another study concentrating on the effects of job insecurity on job satisfaction and work behavior & emotions, analyzed that job insecurity is individual perception of employee which have negative impact on job satisfaction, work behavior (like Organizational citizenship behavior & deviant behavior) and negative emotions (like anxiety, anger and burnout). (**Willian et.al., 2010**)

As the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employee directly and/or indirectly affects the functioning and productivity of the organization, **Gnaneshwar & R. Perumal(2019)** evaluated that satisfaction level of employee in any organization can vary due to working hours, training, motivation, team work, performance feedback and welfare benefits. In connection with job satisfaction, **Bhavya sree & Satyavathi(2017)** analyzed the relationship between that job satisfaction & working environment. . As from their research it is concluded that if the working environment of the organization is healthy, then the employees are more satisfied with their job which ultimately result in improvement in the job performance.

The relationship between compensation management & employee motivation was also evaluated (**Poonam & Jasleen, 2015**). It was concluded by them that compensation management have positive impact on motivating employees to be productive. So, management should concentrate on the compensation policy of organization which will be directly and/or indirectly helpful for organization in achieving its goals and objectives. In connection to this, another study also

focused on connectivity between Compensation management and employee commitment towards organization and analyzed that good compensation is not only the factor that make employees committed in an organization. So management need to keep balance between other factors also which will make employees committed towards their organization. **(Dr Osibanjo et.al,2014)**

The research also conducted on the relationship between occupational health & safety (OHS) and organization productivity & performance, **(Felicity et.al, 2007)** It is evaluated that a good healthy and safe working environment directly proportional to the employee productivity i.e. if the working environment of the organization is healthy & safe for employees with all precautions then the employees will be more productive which in turn profitable for organization in achieving goals and objectives. Also **Mihiravi & Perera(2016)** studied that there is a positive connectivity between occupational health & safety and the employee's job satisfaction. So management needs to focus on occupational health & safety policies to increase the business profit.

Objectives

1. To study the impact of Covid-19 on human resource policy.
2. To identify the factors of HR policy that influence employee perception.
3. To develop a proposed model to strengthen the employee perception.

Methodology and Data Analysis

To accomplish the objective of the current research, the study is based on primary data. The data is collected through a self structured questionnaire with close-ended questions from the employees A 5 point Likert scale was developed, comprising of 35 items that were generated from the literature. Non-Probabilistic convenience sampling technique was used to establish the elements of the sample. Around 101 valid responses were collected from the employees of the organizations who made amendments in their HR policies post Covid-19. To determine different dimensions of employee perception, inferential statistics have been carried out to analyze the data. Appropriate statistical tools are used to achieve the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

To understand the perception of employees towards the human resource policy (post covid-19), socio-economic characteristics of the employees were studied and mentioned in the table below.

Table 1:
Demographic Profile

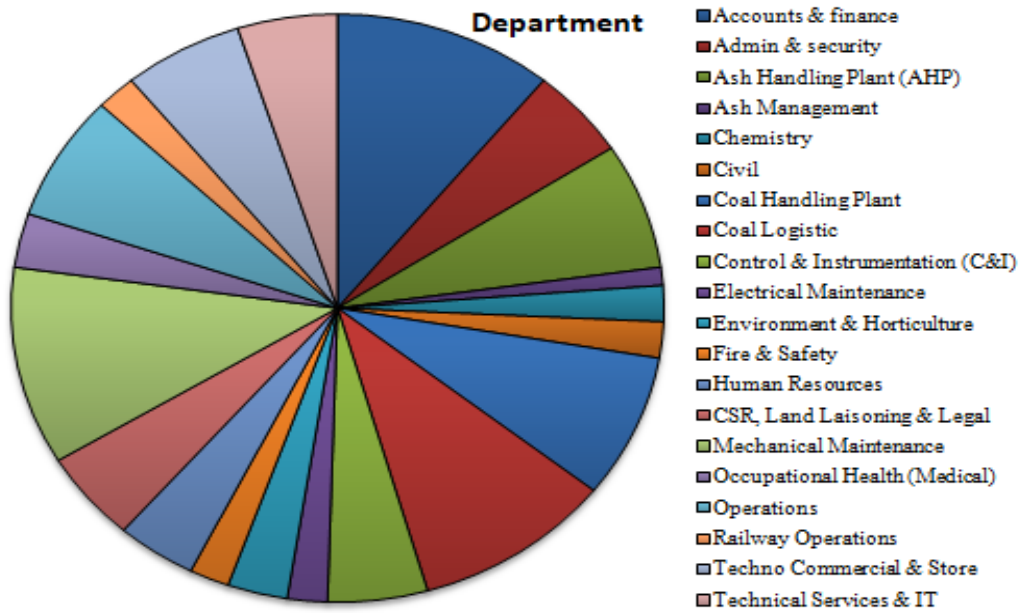
Category		Number	Percentage
Gender			
	Male	99	98%
	Female	2	2%
	TOTAL	101	100%
Age			
	Below 30yrs	3	3.0%
	31-34yrs	36	35.6%
	35-39yrs	33	32.7%
	40-44yrs	8	7.9%
	45-49yrs	8	7.9%
	50-54yrs	8	7.9%
	55-60yrs	5	5.0%
	TOTAL	101	100%
Association with the Organization			
	0-2yrs	18	17.8%
	3-5yrs	29	28.7%
	6-8yrs	29	28.7%
	9-19yrs	25	24.8%
	TOTAL	101	100%

Source:

Primary Data

The survey's demographic questions found a relatively uneven split by gender with more men at 98% and women at 2% only. The age distribution was fairly representative. The majority of respondents are employees aging between 31-34 yrs and 35-39 yrs who form the main workforce of the organizations. The years of association of employees with the organization shows almost uniform distribution. Respondents were also asked to indicate the department to which they belong and the results are indicated in the chart 1 below:

**Chart 1:
Departments**



Source:

Primary Data

For meeting the second objective, the data obtained from the questionnaires was coded, captured and edited. The results were analyzed with the use of the SPSS version 20. The factor analysis was done to identify the factors that influence the employee perception. Among the 35 items, there are 6 factors extracted, namely Remote working & Time Flexibility, Compensation Management, Working Environment, Job Satisfaction, Health & Safety and Job Security, which influences the perception of employees for HR policy. The value of KMO statistics shown below in table 2 deduces that the sampling is adequate, and the results are valid.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.864
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2878.213
	Df	595
	Sig.	.000

The factor loading extracted from factor analysis is mentioned below in table 3:

Table 3: Factor Loading

Factors	Factor Loading
Remote working & Time Flexibility	8
Compensation Management	5
Working Environment	3
Job Satisfaction	3
Health & Safety	2
Job Security	2

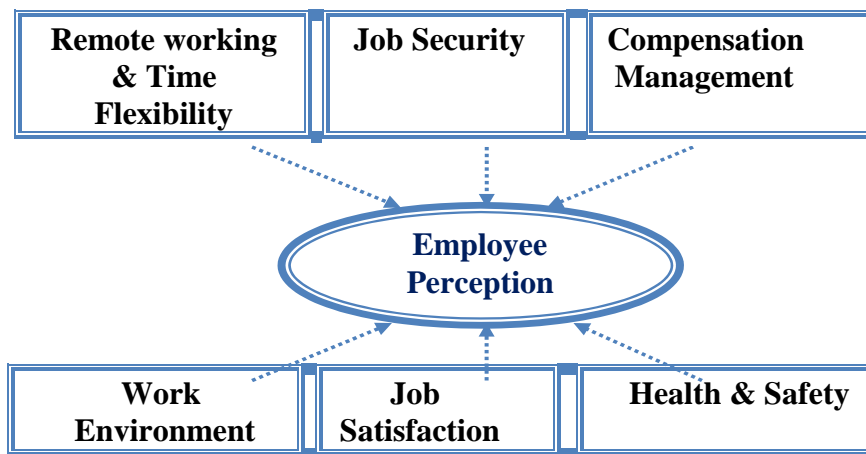
Source:

Primary Data

The highest factor loading 8 of the factor Remote working & Time Flexibility indicates that it can be the most prominent factor influencing employee perception.

The third objective is developing a proposed model to strengthen the employee perception and to meet this objective a model is developed with the help of the above identified six factors which is as given below:

Figure 1: Proposed Model



Source: Author's Compilation

FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

This study can incite more studies on employee perception of HR policy, with an understanding of the varied dimensions of this construct and a deeper understanding of the details involved in the formulation and development of employee perception of the amendments in HR policy. The identified factors can be further signified by applying statistical tools in future researches. The proposed model can be further tested and the most prominent factor influencing

the employee's perception can be identified, so that it can help organizations in future to frame their HR policy to be successful. Organizations need to invest in their remote working policy for their employees in terms of virtual training & other team building activities to make them develop positive attitude and healthy working environment for job satisfaction and productivity of employees.

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has been inevitable situation and amendments have been made in HR policies for continuing business. As HR policies are established for employees, so it is very important to know their perception regarding HR policies. Based on the analysis of the current study, various factors have been identified to understand the employee's perception. Because of such factors, the positive or negative perception of employees are formed that can affect their working pattern and behavior. Hence, it is concluded that in future while framing or making amendments in HR policies these factors could be helpful to HR professional which they can improve so that the employees are committed to work and increases organizational performance. This study would help managers to practically create HR policies and practices to benefit the employees and finally the organization. Employees are considerably willing to work for the company, if the company provides good policies and strategies. Also, the organizations can conquer inevitable situation in future like covid-19 pandemic with a positive employee perception.

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