

METHODS

Challenges of HR managers in remote working after post-COVID pandemic

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This study helps in exploring the changes in the working of the employees from new normal work to remote working due to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic, which has made changes in the role of human resource (HR) managers. The qualitative methodology was applied along with an interview technique. This study revealed the impact of COVID pandemic on impacts within the organization, remote working strategies, and technological adaptation. HR managers faced the challenge of employee satisfaction and organization productivity at the same time. The paper discusses about the challenges of HR on remote working and the strategies to overcome these challenges. The study revealed that the employees had to face problems such as communication problems, lack of motivation to employees, family problems, and health issues.

Keywords: remote working, COVID 19, work from home

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) period has shifted the work from offices to work from homes for a long period of time. For some employees, it is comfortable to work from home, whereas for others, it is a balancing between work and a family life. It has heavily impacted on economies, societies, employees, and organizations (1). COVID 19 has created the situation causing 50% or more of the workforce unable to work (2). Not everyone will be able to achieve the targets given by the team leaders if they work from home due to the lack of quick contact with team members, low Internet connections, and inevitable distraction events at home. Still, many employers are worried about the performance appraisal of employees who work from home. The unprecedented situation even resulted in a reduction in the market of some products and services which made the employers to opt for employee layoffs (Baldwin and Weder, 2020). Some employers get good response from their employees, so they have shut

their offices and encouraged the employees to work from home.

Challenges of remote working faced by HR managers

Lack of communication

The personnel are required to work remotely for an indeterminate period of time under COVID 19. Some of them are really uneasy about their job security. As the employees work from home, there is no proper co-ordination with other co-workers in the organization, which will affect the performance of the company. Communication plays an important role in any team work (3).

- **Health issues of family members**

Any health problems of either an employer or his family members result in a decrease in the focus of the work, thus affecting the productivity. The

employee has to act as an employee of the company and the caretaker of the sick. He needs to invest more time for caring, which increases the stress and anxiety of an employee.

- **No social contact**

Because of standard operating procedures of COVID 19, the employees are restricted the social contact with the people; it affects the performance of the employees who work from office and who tend to enjoy the social life.

- **Lack of work facility at home**

The employee cannot expect the facilities or the work tools he gets in the office in the case of work from home, which will affect the work performance of the employees.

Strategies of HR managers to overcome the problem

Channels of communication should be opened

The channels of communication should be open. The work place should provide them an opportunity to ensure that the communication is open, transparent, frequent, and consistent. This makes every team member to share the opinions freely.

The companies need to arrange meetings online and should give an opportunity to speak to everyone and share the objectives of the organization in the meetings so that each and every one will be reminded about the purpose why the company is formed.

Provide opportunities to increase employees' well-being

The responsibility of the HR manager is to see the challenges faced by the employees. The parent of young children and employees having old or sick people in home need extra support from the company. Workshops or conferences on how to maintain the mental health should be arranged, and counseling can be arranged with the help of experts.

- **Keep the teams engaged and productive**

When it is discovered that this element is lacking in the remote working model, it is the HR staff's responsibility to build a sense of connection and empathy among the team members. Focus, attention, and energy can be maintained by frequent but brief meetings that are timed to the agenda. To

maintain engagement and productivity, it should be ensured that the team has access to online tools and resources. Teams with higher levels of interaction and engagement produce more productive workers.

- **Maintaining work-life balance will increase productivity**

Because there is no clear separation between work and personal obligations, people risk losing track of time, working 18 to 20 h a day, and overworking. HR may offer advice to staff members on how to care for their loved ones' needs and spend time with their families without materially affecting their productivity. In order to encourage work-life balance, employees should be assisted in setting up and adhering to a timetable.

- **Making use of technology to improve communication**

Technology plays a critical role in enhancing the remote working environment for both the individual and the business. Tools for virtual communication and cooperation are crucial for a productive remote working approach. Slack, Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and Dropbox are examples of collaboration software. The company can use Google Drive to help team members communicate effectively with one another. Project management softwares like Basecamp, Asana, and Monday.com aid in facilitating effective team member communication about tasks and deliverables.

- **Strategies that the HR department can use to manage remote work**

Infrastructure enabling human capital management should be developed. HR must adapt and transform to align with the company, and an HCM (human capital management) cloud solution is a better alternative for this. HCM is a set of software that companies employ to handle their internal HR functions. HR must choose the best cloud-based HRMS to manage the complete employee lifecycle in order to be representational of change. HR must choose the best cloud-based HRMS to manage the complete employee lifecycle in order to be representational of change.

- **Providing the right tools**

Even if people work remotely, providing them with the necessary tools to accomplish the task is crucial. Things that would be offered if they worked in the office instead of home should be considered. How remote staff comparable tools might be offered should be considered.

Coordinating with remote workers can be challenging; communication tools can help in improving the coordination. Offering a stipend to allow employees to purchase what they want is also a preferable option. There should be a limit on spending to save employees from extravagance.

- **Performance matters**

Companies are frequently hesitant to allow employees to work remotely because they are concerned about performance. The HR department must set up metrics to evaluate the performance of remote workers. They should also plan corrective action, which needs to be taken with regard to the performance of remote workers.

- **Boosting employee engagement and happiness**

The highly engaged and happy employees will work harder and better than unhappy employees. But it is difficult to make all the employees happy as there is personal variation between individual workers.

- **Ensuring consistent communication**

Communication in any organization will be the top issue for remote working teams. The HR has to arrange collaborative meetings so that every employee is given a chance to express himself/herself; otherwise, they feel bored and do not concentrate on the meeting.

- **Focusing on training and development**

A structured and relevant training and development plan is important because it contributes to full employee engagement, increasing their efficiency.

Research objective

The research objective is

- To find out the problems faced by the HR managers after remote working by the employees.
- To suggest the solutions to overcome the problems faced by the HR.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative one. The data have been collected from the newspapers and articles in the website. The primary data have been collected through an open-ended questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire has been sent to the HR before the visit to help them to have an idea about the interview. The total number of samples is 18. It includes manufacturing, readymade garments, IT firms, and so on. The interview session was conducted through phone calls and WhatsApp calls. The research is mainly concerned with the problems of the HR managers during and after remote working considering the COVID 19 crisis (4).

Research findings and discussion

The study revealed that there are many problems which were faced by the HR managers due to COVID 19 pandemic because of the changes in the employee health condition; there was no effective face-to-face communication between the employees, with family problems which are unavoidable. The interview with the HR revealed that the employees were not satisfied with the assistance given to them during remote working. Various types of training were conducted in order to provide the employees with the changed business perspective due to COVID 19.

The interview with the HR revealed that the work was suspended due to financial crisis; the stress, fear, and anxiety of employees were increased; the employees were forced to upgrade their digital skills in online tools; and the employees have to face unemployment or reduction in salary due to recession. The HR management of each company played an important role in companies' success and employees' well-being. The important problem faced by the HR managers was the lack of knowledge to use new technology and know how to manage the crisis. Besides this, there was online management of employees' performance. There were even dismissals, turnover, and management of panic situations. The imposing of safety measures in the company was also the challenge faced by the HR managers (5).

The HR managers were even ready to listen to the problems faced by the employees during pandemic and also in remote working. The HR management has taken leadership and more responsibility to solve many problems. They conducted online team meetings and retained the relationship with the present and new workers. Most of the positions were removed, and there were some positions where they had difficulty and where they were unable to perform better from home (6).

The respondents of this study were HR professionals. The snowball sample method was used in order to contact HR professionals. Out of 36 respondents 20 (55.6%) were female and 16 (44.4%) were male. The average experience of these respondents were 4–5 years. More than 40% of the respondents work in the service sectors and others in manufacturing and other sectors (7).

The questions asked were about 14 which were divided into two parts. First part is general demographic information and the second part consists of how the HR deals with challenges due to remote work policy. The questions asked were regarding the how to retain highest performance even during remote working, maintaining high level of employee engagement, managing change in the strategies, managing the loss of key workers during lock down period, adoption to the new technology due to remote working.

After the interview it was found out that the main problems faced by the HR professionals were found out they are maintaining mental health and wellbeing, lack of agility, employee communication, uncertainty. For these above

aspects HR professionals on an average responded positively regarding the problems faced. The HR professionals also agreed that this policy of remote working has become permanent, challenging task, employees are stressed, the working hours has been stretched and it is one of the cost saving models for the business.

The HR managers were of the opinion that when there is remote working, the employees can enjoy a flexible work schedule, enhance productivity, save time and money of traveling from one place to another, and customize work space; the employees can even enjoy better work–life balance and maintain eco-friendly lifestyle.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken with the basic objective to identify the HR challenges that would have raised due to remote working scenario post pandemic. All the businessmen agree that success of any organization depends on attracting, retaining, engaging and recovering the fullest talent of the human resources. The sudden outbreak due to COVID pandemic changed the very wellbeing and health of the humans. Post Pandemic many sectors have opted for remote working, which has led to unexplored problems in front of HR professionals.

From the above study, it can be said that remote working is an essential strategy at the time of COVID 19 pandemic and even after COVID 19, which has made the employees to work from home and made the employees inefficient without a proper direction and good communication, which

plays an important role in increasing the efficiency. The HR manager's responsibility was increased, and they were able to reach the targets with the suggested measures, with efforts to overcome the drawbacks.

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