



Challenges and Countermeasures of Human Resource Management in the Post-Epidemic Period

Yueting Gao

Jose Rizal University, Philippines

Received: 20/08/2021

Accepted: 26/09/2021

Published: 31/10/2021

Representative e-mail: Carla_Ting@163.com

ABSTRACT

As the COVID-19 pandemic becomes more normalized and global, enterprises are faced with extremely serious human resource management issues, including employee safety, employee turnover, working routines, remote work conditions, etc. The main aim of this paper is to research the current situation and challenges for enterprise human resource management in the post-epidemic era and put forward corresponding countermeasures based on theoretical analysis, so as to improve the efficiency of human resource management, alleviate the pressure of enterprise operation and reduce the impact of epidemic on enterprise management.

Keywords: Post-Pandemic Era, Human Resource Management, Remote Work

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, it has had a great negative impact on the global economy, resulting in many enterprises facing layoffs, production reduction and even bankruptcy liquidation (Caligiuri, Paula, et al., 2020). Even though the epidemic has achieved a stage victory in the united forces, and some enterprises can start to resume production and operation, there are abundant difficulties such as low employee morale, inefficiency and disordered management (Rajagopal, et al., 2021), which cannot form the cohesion of enterprises themselves and affect development and sustainability.

According to Adler and Ghadar (2012), human resource management plays an important role in enterprise production and management, modern enterprise competition is essentially a kind of talent competition. The Covid-19 outbreak has caused not only greater pressure on production and operation, but also the decrease in employees income, the possible threat of life safety and health, the increased unemployment risk and the increase of psychological pressure on employees (De Leon, 2020). Only by correctly recognizing the current difficulties and implementing effective human resource management can enterprise managers improve their capacity to adapt to crisis, so as to ensure the normal operation and stable development of enterprises (Kumar, et al., 2020). However, the existing literature studies mostly focus on the impact of major emergencies on enterprise development and social or economic development, and there are few specific studies on the field of human resource management for enterprises. This paper will analyze the challenges of the epidemic on human resources and the countermeasures of enterprises, so as to provide reference for enterprise management and academic research.

II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this paper can be divided into two aspects. On the one hand, it is dedicated to analyzing the challenges faced by enterprises in human resource management under the normal epidemic prevention and control. As the outbreak tends to be normalized, enterprises have gradually developed new human resource management policies in response to this public crisis, but these measures are unstable and relatively imperfect institutional system. This paper will analyze specifically from the working mode, performance management, labor relation management, digital management, and other aspects. On the other hand, after fully understanding the difficulties and challenges faced by enterprises with regard to human resource management, feasible countermeasures were proposed and summarized to support leaders to adapt to the new normal of the epidemic.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology of this paper is qualitative research. On basis of previous literature, it mainly focuses on the change of Human resources management in the post-epidemic era to explore and examine relative Challenges and Countermeasures of Human Resource Management in the Post-Epidemic Period

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Challenges for HRM in the new normal era after the outbreak

Enterprises are exposed to a business environment of Volatility, uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, which is also known as the "VUCA" world (Mohanta, Nanda and Patnaik, 2020). The new normal era after the outbreak has reinforced the breadth and depth of these characteristics in a relatively short period of time, The influence extends to all aspects of enterprise human resource management and is analyzed as follows.

4.2 Change of Working Mode

The combination of online and offline work is a new working mode in the normalization stage of the epidemic (Aitken-Fox et al., 2020; Gourinchas, 2020; Koirala & Acharya, 2020). With the arise of new working mode, there are two sides to online working. The complex and diverse working environment for employees cannot be monitored by enterprise leaders, which leads to demotivation, low work efficiency and poor connection of work processes (Contreras, Baykal, and Abid, 2020). When working from home, employees can flexibly combine and allocate their time freely (Peters and Blomme, 2019), thus it is difficult for employees to ensure the completion and timeliness of work (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020). When dealing with transactions, it is easy to appear that the internal process is not transparent and the work is not smooth. Although telecommuting has great flexibility (Collings, 2021) and inclusiveness, its work quality and efficiency are far inferior to the traditional one, the utilization rate of human resources is relatively low, which presents a difficult problem to be solved for the reform of enterprise human resource management and control in the post-epidemic era (Marek et al., 2020).

4.3 Recruitment and Training

From the perspective of the staff recruitment and selection, in the context of the new normal, enterprise's normal production and business operation has been curbed, the original human resource planning may not apply to the current situation, recruitment demand will also change, the enterprise should work to reduce costs to increase efficiency in the recruitment process (Stuart et al., 2021), so the scale of the enterprise recruitment and selection talents should be moderately lower, some companies are even facing layoffs (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018). Of course, as companies resume normal operations after the outbreak, their recruitment scale may increase accordingly (Akkermans, et al, 2020; Giupponi and Landais, 2020). In addition, under the epidemic prevention and control, the mobility of personnel is greatly restricted, and the traditional labor market and interviews are also limited. enterprises should innovate their recruitment and selection methods to rise to this challenge (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020; Maurer, 2020).

Meanwhile, in terms of training and development, an excellent training can not only solve the problems in employees' work, but also improve their work quality and team cohesion in a short period of time (Devyania, 2020). After the impact of the epidemic, enterprises have deeply realized the importance of training to cope with the crisis. Employees lack theoretical knowledge and practical experience in dealing with major emergencies, and late response measures may cause enterprises to miss the development opportunity, thus affecting the long-term development of the enterprise in the future (Przytula et al., 2020). The epidemic may exist for a long time and affect enterprises. Online training may be required for new employees, but there is no face-to-face communication and real interaction online, the training content is limited, and it is difficult to evaluate the training effectiveness after training. In view of the normal development of the epidemic, how to develop the training mechanism and training content to deal with the emergency situation requires the human resources department of the enterprise to pay full attention to the actual situation and predict the future development.

4.4 Performance Management

From the perspective of performance management, in the context of epidemic prevention and control, the working mode, work content and working hours of employees are changing (Prasad and Vaidya, 2020). The contribution value of employees to enterprises cannot be evaluated by the original performance evaluation system, and the standards of enterprise performance evaluation should also be adjusted accordingly (Prasad and Vaidya, 2020). If the enterprise does not formulate scientific and reasonable performance evaluation standards, then the employees are likely to have dissatisfaction, work enthusiasm is low, slow down, the work efficiency of employees will be greatly reduced, so that the production and operation of the enterprise cannot operate normally.

4.5 Labor Relation Management

From the perspective of employee relationship management, under the normalization of the epidemic, the personal safety and health of employees are threatened, and employees may also be under a stressful situation, because the sense of security and belonging of employees will be greatly undermined (Adams, Prassl et al., 2020), and they are worried about the impact of the epidemic on enterprise operation. In addition, in order to cope with the new normal market environment, enterprises will introduce some measures to ease operational pressure, such as salary reduction, layoffs, etc. (Stuart et al., 2021), and employment relations may be in a state of tension. it is urgent for the enterprise to take measures to adjust the relationship between the enterprise and employees, so as to make the employment relationship in a harmonious and positive state, so as to facilitate the effective work of employees, improve their work efficiency, and promote the long-term operation and development of the enterprise.

4.6 Digital Management

The problem of digital management has been fully exposed in this epidemic (Gigauri, 2020): the data collection of human resources informatization has not been really implemented. For example, statistics on the health and rework of employees after the epidemic, as well as off-site attendance of employees still need to be collected by

hand, which not only costs manpower and time, but also fails to provide timely and accurate data, statistics cannot be efficiently transformed to support managers to make decisions. The digital capability has become the underlying competitiveness for modern enterprises to resist risks, and it is also a big challenge to human resource practitioners (Parry & Battista, 2019). Limited by the epidemic prevention and control, the importance of human resource information digital management and adaptive business adjustment has become increasingly prominent. Since the establishment of the enterprise human resource information management system and the adjustment of the enterprise business require investment and a long period, there are still many deficiencies in the utilization and control of human resources in the early stage. The work quality and efficiency of telecommuting are not as good as before, and the utilization rate of human resources is relatively low, which presents a difficult problem to be solved for the reform of enterprise human resource management in the post-epidemic era. Those enterprises that can adapt to telecommuting effectively and efficiently in organizational management and digital management, which can not only cope with the epidemic more easily, but also breakthrough in the life-and-death competition more efficiently (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

4.5 Countermeasures Challenges for HRM in the new normal era after the outbreak

4.5.1 Innovate Working Mode and Strengthen Institutional Improvement

Flexible online office is a new office channel adopted by human resource management departments of enterprises. When a face-to-face office is not available, human resource management of enterprises has to be transformed, online operation can be regarded as a necessary channel (Aitken-Fox et al., 2020). Remote working also has its unique benefits, in the same working day it can allow employees to flexibly arrange work deployment with greater freedom (Prasad and Vaidya, 2020), it requires employees to reasonably arrange their working hours in effective time, which is more able to reflect the personal value of employees.

At the same time, the online office is hard to manage and monitor, the human resources department should set a clear and definite target as well as workload, in order to alert the staff to work efficiently, enterprises can establish strict office system and attendance system to ensure the efficiency and punctuality of work (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2020). In view of the poor communication of the work process, the human resource department can make use of Internet technology and new office software, so that multiple people can make tasks and cooperate at the same time, reduce the time cost of work transmission, and make the work results clearly presented. According to the current situation of the epidemic, the enterprise can combine both online and offline office. Even the one who works on telecommuting will burden more stress, and this kind of pressure will provide a strong impetus for the appreciation of their personal value, enabling employees to grow rapidly in a short time and quickly adapt to the new requirements of the new era.

4.5.2 Use Online Recruitment wisely and integrate training Resource

With the development of Internet technology, it covers various fields and all aspects of management. Human resource management of enterprises, in the recruitment process, should combine with the "Internet +" thinking to give full play to advantages of flexibility, which can greatly reverse the recruitment disadvantages. Enterprises should build more multidimensional recruitment channels (Maurer, 2020), compared with the traditional recruitment channels such as telephone invitation, recruitment conference, etc., the enterprise website, recruitment website and App, public account on social platform, etc., greatly expand the information dissemination, which is more suitable for the use of the new generation of employees. Nowadays, there is still a risk of accidental outbreak epidemic, blind expansion of workforce may bring more operating burden to enterprises. To streamline and build a strategic reserve talent pool can make an enterprise more quickly optimize human resource cost, as well as have more rapid development and expansion of reserve resources (Lund et al., 2021).

Training is the driving force of enterprise development and the converter of new knowledge, new skills and new policies (Devyania et al., 2020). Enterprises convey corporate culture and product standards to employees through training. Face-to-face courses are suspended, and the human resource management department should actively and effectively use the internal resources of the enterprise to build an internal training lecturer system. With the normalization of the epidemic, online training is more commonly used by enterprises, but a series of problems will arise in the initial operation. Due to the large number of trainees, Training department should enlarge the carrying capacity in terms of software system, and trainers should be grouped according to the course requirements, so as to avoid poor training results. Taking the way of combination of online and offline training has many advantages, but it cannot fully replace traditional lesson don, students can gain theoretical knowledge by the internet, and practice the actual operation in face-to-face communication to consolidate, such as role play (Przaytula, 2020).

4.5.3 Adjust the performance assessment method

Under the normalization of the epidemic, the performance assessment indicators of employees should also be adjusted accordingly, and the performance assessment indicators should be refined to achieve humanized assessment (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2020). For example, under the epidemic prevention and control, for the sake of employees' own safety, they should minimize going out and gathering. Therefore, if employees have working conditions and working environment, they can try to work at home. For employees who need to return to the workplace, there can also be distributed multiple shifts and flexible work arrangements. In the process of performance appraisal, the assessment of employee attendance should be adjusted accordingly. For example, employees should be allowed to clock in at home, or the performance appraisal of employees should be linked to their work results instead of taking attendance time into account (AM et al., 2020). In short, with a major crisis, the enterprise's performance management must analyze the specific situation, and formulate a flexible, available and adaptable performance system to improve

the employees' work enthusiasm and work efficiency, so as to ensure the realization of the organization's business objectives.

4.5.4 Build a people-oriented management philosophy

Practice has proved that people-oriented attention to the development of staff's physical and mental health (Hamouche, 2020), possess more cohesion to the enterprise. Due to the particularity of COVID-19 transmission, the human resources department must pay attention to the safety of employees in the process of work. Therefore, enterprises must change the traditional concept of human resource management and establish the concept of people-oriented management. For example, the human resources department of the enterprise establishes a sound health monitoring system to ensure the health of employees, or create a virtual team building, like virtual lunch, coffee break or other online activities (Hamouche, 2020), make them feel the care of the enterprise, and thus mobilize the enthusiasm of employees. In addition, we should create a friendly and inclusive corporate culture. A good corporate culture is an important factor to motivate employees. In the face of the impact of the outbreak, enterprises should build a cultural atmosphere of unity, cooperation and respect for the wishes of employees, so that employees can work in a relatively free working environment (Hamouche, 2020). For example, some employees are unable to go to work in regular, enterprises can allow employees with special circumstances to work at home according to the real situation.

4.5.5 Build an intelligent human resource management platform

Big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and other technologies have entered the human resources industry in a comprehensive way, not only meeting the rigid needs of enterprises for human resources management during the epidemic period, but also opening a new era of human resources reform led by science and technology (Lund et al., 2021).

Human resources managers can utilize a digital tool to make decisions from depending on former management experience to the data-driven one, so as to enable data of each module to carry the process engine through the business scenario dynamically, and help the enterprise HR build a data closed loop from collection, summary, reporting to analysis, and build a smooth channel from process informational to data to decision-making (Liu and Lee, 2020). For example, the prediction of turnover tendency can be modeling by artificial intelligence to analyze the status of employees in the enterprise, including development status, working years, salary forecast and daily commute, thus predict their turnover tendency, and actively communicate with employees with high turnover tendency. With the help of automation and intelligent technology, human resources can complete a large number of complicated basic work through digital platform, build a shared service center for employees, create digital work experience, and make human resources work truly focus on strategy and embrace reformation.

V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, unexpected crisis will greatly impact on the enterprise human resources management, enterprises should know what kind of specific influence on various aspects, and then aiming at the problems, to carry on the scientific, reasonable and effective human resources management, safeguard the interests of the enterprise and employees, to ensure the long-term development of the enterprise.

In view of the new normal era after outbreak, this paper proposes targeted countermeasures for enterprises from the perspectives of working methods, recruitment and training, performance management, humanized management, digital management, etc., so as to provide suggestions for the sustainable development of enterprises, aiming at triggering related theoretical thinking and practical exploration. In the future, enterprises can pay attention to the response and management of major emergencies, to ensure that enterprises smoothly through the crisis.

REFERENCES

- Adams-Prassl, A., Boneva, T., Golin, M., & Rauh, C. (2020). Inequality in the impact of the coronavirus shock: Evidence from real time surveys. *Journal of Public Economics*, 189, 104245.
- Adler, N. J., & Ghadar, F. (2012). *Strategie Human Resource Management: A Global Perspective*. In *Human resource management* (pp. 235-260). de Gruyter.
- Aguinis, H. (2019). *Performance management for dummies*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Aguinis, H., & Burgi-Tian, J. (2020). Measuring performance during crises and beyond: The performance promoter score.
- Aitken-Fox, E., Coffey, J., Dayaram, K., Fitzgerald, S., Gupta, C., McKenna, S., & Wei Tian, A. (2020a). COVID-19 and the changing employee experience. *LSE Business Review*
- AM, E. N., Affandi, A., Udobong, A., & Sarwani, S. (2020). Implementation of human resource management in the adaptation period for new habits. *International Journal of Educational Administration, Management, and Leadership*, 1, 19–26.
- Bailey, K., & Breslin, D. (2021). The COVID-19 Pandemic: What can we learn from past research in organizations and management? *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1), 3-6.
- Bus Horiz, 64(1), 149–160.
- Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A., & Zimmermann, A. (2020). International HRM insights for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for future research and practice.
- Carnevale, J. B., & Hatak, I. (2020). Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 183-187.

- Collings, D. G., McMackin, J., Nyberg, A. J., & Wright, P. M. (2021). Strategic Human Resource Management and COVID-19: Emerging Challenges and Research Opportunities. *Journal of Management Studies*, 10.1111/joms.12695. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12695>
- Contreras, F., Baykal, E., & Abid, G. (2020). E-leadership and teleworking in times of COVID-19 and beyond: what we know and where do we go. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 3484.
- De Leon, V. (2020). Human resource management during the Covid-19 pandemic (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Northridge).
- Demirkaya, H., & Aydın, A. (2006). The strategic management and reorganization of human resource management in crisis process. Paper presented at the International Strategic Management Conference, Dedeman Oteli, İstanbul.
- Devyania, R. D., Jewanc, S. Y., Bansal, U., & Denge, X. (2020). Strategic impact of artificial intelligence on the human resource management of the Chinese healthcare industry induced due to COVID-19. *IETI Transactions on Economics and Management*, 1(1), 19–33. doi: 10.6897/IETITEM.202007_1(1).0002
- Devyania, R. D., Jewanc, S. Y., Bansal, U., & Denge, X. (2020). Strategic impact of artificial intelligence on the human resource management of the Chinese healthcare industry induced due to COVID-19. *IETI Transactions on Economics and Management*, 1(1), 19–33. doi: 10.6897/IETITEM.202007_1(1).0002
- Gigauri, I. (2020). Effects of Covid-19 on Human Resource Management from the Perspective of Digitalization and Work-life-balance. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*, (4 (31)).
- Gigauri, I. (2020). Organizational Support to HRM in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis. *European Journal of Marketing and Economics*, 3(3), 36-48.
- Hamouche, S. (2021). Human resource management and the COVID-19 crisis: implications, challenges, opportunities, and future organizational directions. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 1-16.
- ILO. (2020). Working conditions. Retrieved from <http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/working-conditions/lang-en/index.htm>
- Kumar, M. S., Raut, R. D., Narwane, V. S., & Narkhede, B. E. (2020). Applications of industry 4.0 to overcome the COVID-19 operational challenges. *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews*, 14(5), 1283-1289.
- Liu, Y., Lee, J. M., & Lee, C. (2020). The challenges and opportunities of a global health crisis: The management and business implications of COVID-19 from an Asian perspective. *Asian Business & Management*, 19, 277–297.
- Lund, S., Madgavkar, A., Manyika, J., Smit, S., Ellingrud, K., Meaney, M., & Robinson, O. (2021). The future of work after COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19>
- Marek, D., Patrik, R., Veronika, G., & Marina, F. (2020). Economic impacts of Covid-19 on the labor market and human capital. *Terra Economicus*, 18(4), 78-96.
- Mohanta, B., Nanda, P., & Patnaik, S. (2020). Management of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) Using machine learning techniques in industry 4.0 paradigm. In *New Paradigm of Industry 4.0* (pp. 1-24). Springer, Cham.
- Rajagopal, K., Mahajan, V., & Ayyagari, K. C. (2021). Human Resource Management Strategies of the Indian Information Technology Sector Post-Pandemic. In *Handbook of Research on Sustaining SMEs and Entrepreneurial Innovation in the Post-COVID-19 Era* (pp. 191-210). IGI Global.
- Stuart, M., Spencer, D. A., McLachlan, C. J., & Forde, C. (2021). COVID-19 and the uncertain future of HRM: Furlough, job retention and reform. *Human Resource Management Journal*.
- Terziev, V. (2020). COVID-19 and the National employment plan in Bulgaria—analysis and opportunities for change. *Economic Archive*, 3.
- Wunderlich, M. F., & Løkke, A. K. (2020). Human Resource Management Practices in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Denmark: AARHUS University.