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# Exploring the Changing Landscape of the HR Role in Managing and Addressing the Unique Challenges Faced by Frontline Workers during Covid-19 Pandemic

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper delves into the emerging scenario of the role of HR in addressing and mitigating the specific challenges faced by frontline workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic drastically reshaped working environments and requirement, Human resource professionals and experts have been forced to opt their strategies and protocols to support frontline workers effectively and efficiently. Through a commodious powwow of literature review and empirical evidence, this research study elucidates the multifaceted responsibilities and role undertaken by Human Resource managers in addressing and managing the diverse needs and requirement of frontline workers and all the workforces of the organization, encompassing issues such as safety protocols, mental health support, remote work accommodations, and workforce resilience. Furthermore, it examines the pivotal role of technology in facilitating HRM initiatives and fostering employee engagement amidst unprecedented circumstances. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks with practical insights, this research study aims to offer and admit the valuable perspectives and suggestion for HR practitioners, organizational leadership, decision taker and policymakers in optimizing or admit the support mechanisms for frontline workers during times of COVID-19 pandemic crises.

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership, Genesis of HRM, Workforces, Frontline workers, Corona virus, Pandemic, Work-life balance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As we all agree on the statement that “Accepted that we all are Human Resources, but we are Human first & Resources later” but at the same time we believe that as per the theoretical knowledge Human Resource are the one who can manage to recruitment somebody on a very short notice as per the requirement to fulfill organizational need. Human resource have tendency to formulate policy and protocols to sustain their organization and company for longer time in the era of the competitive market, their main task to recruiting as well as formulation policy and if the person can do both the thing at same time in a short duration of time know to be a perfect Human resources.

### Genesis of HRM:

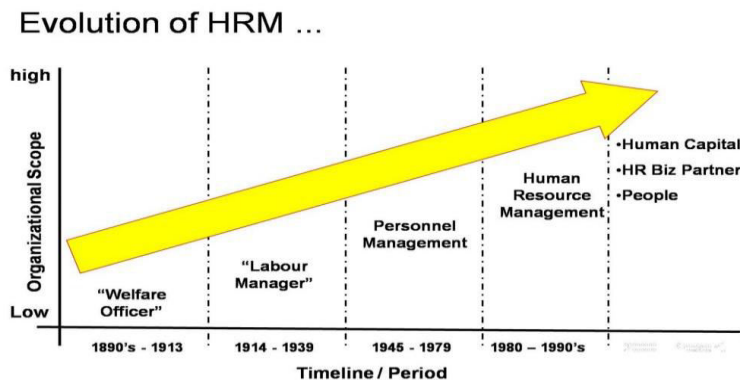


Figure no: 01



Source: <https://hrdictionary.wordpress.com/2012/10/28/evolution-of-human-resource-management/evolution-of-hrm-4/#main>

The genesis of HRM reflects the changing landscape of the workforces. From its roots in personnel management to its current strategic and data-driven approach, HRM strategy has continuously evolved to meet the evolving needs, goals, requirement of the modern workplace. By embracing innovation, harnessing technology, and prioritizing the well-being of employees, HRM will continue to play a vital role in driving organizational success in the years to come.

### **The changing Evolution of Human resource management:**

Human resource management (HRM) has changing significant evolution over the last many years, opting to the changing requirement and dilemma of the frontline workers and workforce of the organizations. Historically, HRM did emerge as a personnel management function, where the major focus was on administrative tasks like payroll, benefits, and compliance. It was frequently noticed as a approachable, more about to compel rules and regulation while maintaining control than promoting employee engagement or development. But things have definitely changed over a particular time period. In today's era, HRM has evolved into a more strategic role within organizations. It's all about attracting and retaining top talent and skill, creating a positive working culture, and aligning HRM strategies with primary business goals. So, while the focus used to be more on administration, now it's about empowering employees, more focus on profit maximization and driving organizational success.

However, as businesses began with the upcoming era to recognize the importance of their human capital and monetary term in driving organizational success, HRM underwent a transformation, moving towards a more strategic role. Every unpredictable situation of organization is only handle by applying the basic rule of strategic method. This shift marked the transition to what is commonly known as "Strategic Human Resource Management(SHRM). During this phase, HRM became increasingly aligned with business objectives, with HR experts playing a more strategic role in talent acquisition, retention, and training & development. Organizations started viewing employees as valuable assets-"Their People" rather than the resources to get profit.

Technology has totally changed the game for HRM with the rise of "Digital HRM" automation and digitization have made things way more efficient. HR departments can now use things like applicant tracking systems and employee self-service portals to streamline processes and make life easier for everyone. This means HR professionals can focus more on important strategic stuff instead of getting bogged down by routine tasks.

Furthermore, the enforcement of data analytics has revolutionized HRM role very differently, giving rise to "People Analytics". By leveraging data-driven insights, HRM departments make major informed decisions taking regarding talent management, workforce planning, and employee engagement. Predictive analytics, sentiment analysis, and machine learning algorithms are empowering HR experts to proactively identify requirement, trends, mitigate risks, and optimize organizational performance.

## **II. FRONTLINE WORKERS**

They are the individuals who interact directly with customers, clients, or patient. They are often to begin of contact and play a vital role in serving product, service, or care.

## **III. ARRIVAL OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Various challenges and issues faced by frontline workers :-

- High risk of infection and exposure to traumatic situation and grief which is very dangerous for the health.
- Lack of food, mask, sanitizer, safety resources that includes the PPE kit, mask, vaccination and many more things.
- Heavy workload which may resultant in stress, mental/physical strain, burnout,.
- Facing social stigma and isolation and discrimination stigma.
- Multilingual or diverse communities create communication and coordination barrier between different HRM department.
- Uncertainty and constantly changing of rules, regulation, guidelines, protocols and orders from the higher authority.



- Lack of vaccine education and assistance, limited access to mental health support and the main thing is shortage of testing and screening of virus at organization.
- Supple collaboration of working agreement which ultimately help the frontline workers to accommodate the primary concern of their need and requirement.
- Lack of proving financial incentives and hardships.
- The various responsibilities performed by HR during the COVID-19 world in favour of frontline workers that includes:
  - Provide hygiene and welfare coordinators
  - Benefits and compensation Administrator
  - Manage Remote Work Manager
  - Physical and mental Health Advocate
  - Crisis Management Team Member

#### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

**(Marwitz, 2020)**– The author in their research study has suggested 7 HRM practices to aimed during COVID-19. Proper Communication, stay on top service . Know the details of wage and hour considerations. Be ready if frontline workers family members are diagnosed with COVID-19. Be prepared if workforces are impacted by school closures and public health emergencies. Monitor changing laws and be ready to adjust HR policies at any time.

**(Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2020)**- According to the statement on the emergence of COVID-19 has also altered performance management in organizations. According to many authors, organizations were overwhelmed by challenges resulting from COVID-19 pandemic, such as measuring workforces ' performance and the interruption in performance-based pay, that they have reduced or even abandoned performance management, due to the complexity and the novelty of this corona pandemic crisis.

**(Divya Bajpai, 2020)** - **the author** have clarify that ingenious HR practices and management will increase the workforces morale and will prove to be a boon to the laborers for the profit of firms The crises during Covid-19 have big impact on organization and then bringing them back was equally critical to bring back the manufacturing units back to operations. One more concern for HR manager was to create trust and safety and provide training at workstation so that laborers would be ready to resume work.

#### V. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the long term implication of the pandemic on the HR role in supporting and managing Frontline workers including potential changes in policies, practices and organizational culture.
2. To investigate the impact of HR strategy in promoting teamwork, collaboration and peer support among Frontline workers in a physical distanced work environment
3. To assess the impact of HR policies and practices on the work life interrogation of Frontline workers, considering the blurring boundaries between professionals and personal life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study is purely based on descriptive research.

The research examination depends on the secondary data. Secondary data was collected and obtained through related literature review on HR role play in favour of frontline workers during COVID-19. The examination utilizes broad secondary data gathered site, different national and worldwide diaries, article, distributions, meeting papers, reports, journals, and articles. The system utilized was that of a basic audit.

Collecting data is exclusive, authentic and complicated by the speed at which events occurs and the time bound nature of observation.

#### VII. FINDINGS

According to this research study, it is quiet surprising that many of people still do not aware about the frontline workers. They are the only workforces persons who play a crucial role in our society, especially during challenging times like the pandemic. Frontline workers are the ones who are on the front lines, providing essential services and care



to keep us safe and healthy. On the other hand, if we cast light on business organizations, firms, companies then their higher authorities such as Hr expert/ professional, SHRM, Strategic management department have done many commendable such things for the frontline workers and workforce which were proved very essential and important during Covid-19, they proved beneficial in providing their security and safety very successfully.

During exploring the changing landscape for managing and addressing the unique challenges faced by frontline workers during COVID-19 pandemic is crucial.

Hr can play a vital role by:

- To begin with, The most important thing is how to take care of the health and mental/ physical well-being of the frontline workers and how to keep it good so that they can reduce the chances of uninterrupted work for serving to fulfill the requirement of the customers and consumers and for this the HR manager and higher authority of the companies used to provide all the benefits related to safety measure like free vaccination, mask, sanitizer and PPE kit.
- The most essential thing during the corona pandemic to conduct the proper vaccine education and assistance, limited access to mental health support and the main thing is shortage of testing and screening of virus at organization to the frontline workers which ultimately reduces the chances of spread of virus among others.
- Providing clear communication and better coordination among the workforces keeps frontline workers informed about safety protocols, policy changes, and available resources. which helps to erase the blurring boundaries between professionals and personal life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## VIII. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

During covid-19 delivering of proper message is very crucial job in it. So, for this magnify Communication Channels with less language barriers which ultimately encourage the frontline workers to ask questions, provide feedback, or share concerns. This can be done through dedicated email addresses, suggestion boxes, or virtual feedback sessions. Its also help to build harmonious relationship between higher authority and operational level workforces of any organization. As we experienced in our houses that maintain mental/physical health during COVID-19 is quiet a difficult task whereas the frontline workers had to work at ground level to meet the organizational need so for keeping in mind the HR mangers has to advocate options like remote work, flexible scheduling, or rotating shifts to ensure a healthy work-life balance and reduce burnout and mental health strain. HR experts has to collaborate with relevant departments to develop training programs tailored to the specific challenges faced by frontline workers which help them to do their works continuously. As we know that everyone is working to earn money which help us to meet the goal of our life so the organization has also provide Well-being Initiatives, financial support, reward and recognition for their overall development of personal as well as professional life.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Accoring to in-depth observation and finding this research study conclude that many challenges and issues faced by the frontline workers during COVID-19 pandemic. T his study also focus on the different role of HR experts play in managing and addressing the unique challenges and issues faced by the frontline workers during COVID-19 pandemic. This research study concluded all the factors and keys that helps us to examine the performance of HR managers led organizational system during Covid-19 pandemic. This reports shows that some of the major factors about Human Resource Management (HRM) hysteria among the frontline workers of the organization also developing wrong feeling and perception toward the leadership of the organizational management. From this survey study it can be concluded that the major works done by HR managers, Which makes them good in the eyes of entire workforces during COVID-19 pandemic. the lessons delivered from the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to reshape the future of Human Resource Management. As organizations navigate the recovery and transition to a post-pandemic world, HRM will play a central role in driving innovation, fostering resilience, and supporting the needs of frontline workers. By embracing flexibility, empathy, and agility, HR can help build a more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable workforce, capable of thriving in the face of future challenge and issues.

In conclusion, this research study has provided the major and valuable insights into the changing landscape of HR's role in managing and addressing the unique challenges faced by frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the strategies, practices, and lessons learned from this unprecedented crisis, organizations can better prepare for future to tackle the disruptions and ensure the well-being and resilience of their most valuable asset- "Their People".



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