

Investigating hr management strategies during covid-19 in hotels

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the hospitality industry, forcing hotels to adopt various human resource (HR) strategies to sustain their operations while managing workforce challenges. “This study explores the HR management strategies implemented by hoteliers during the pandemic, with a particular focus on employee layoffs, government support, and alternative cost-saving measures. The findings indicate that layoffs were the most common strategy adopted by hotels to reduce financial burdens, despite the severe implications for employee job security and well-being. Government assistance programs, including tax relief and subsidies, provided some relief; however, many hotel operators believed these measures were insufficient in sustaining long-term business viability. Notably, strategies such as encouraging early retirement and establishing pandemic funds were largely neglected, indicating a lack of preparedness within the industry for handling large-scale crises. The study also examines the role of socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) in mitigating employee fears and fostering a supportive work environment during times of uncertainty. Hotels that implemented SRHRM practices—such as mental health support, flexible work arrangements, and enhanced workplace safety measures—demonstrated greater resilience in maintaining employee engagement and operational stability. Furthermore, the research applies a contingency approach to talent management, suggesting that adaptive HR strategies tailored to the unique challenges of the pandemic were more effective in sustaining business operations. As the hospitality sector transitions into the post-pandemic era, the study emphasizes the need for long-term HR resilience, including investments in digital transformation, workforce flexibility, and strategic government interventions. The research highlights the critical importance of developing comprehensive crisis management frameworks that integrate financial, operational, and employee-centered strategies to ensure sustainability in future disruptions. Additionally, the study calls for stronger collaboration between industry stakeholders, including government agencies, business associations, and HR professionals, to establish policies that promote business continuity and employee retention during crises. By learning from the challenges posed by COVID-19, hotel operators can build more sustainable business models that prioritize both financial stability and workforce well-being. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on HR crisis management in the hospitality sector, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of different strategies employed during the pandemic. Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity for proactive HR planning, resilience-building measures, and policy-driven interventions to equip the hospitality industry with the tools needed to navigate future crises effectively. The research serves as a foundation for future studies on HRM in crisis situations, offering guidance for businesses seeking to enhance their preparedness for unexpected disruptions.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Hospitality Industry, COVID-19 Pandemic, Employee Layoffs, Government Support, Crisis Management, Socially Responsible HRM (SRHRM), Talent Management, Workforce Resilience, Business Sustainability, Digital Transformation, Employee Well-being, Organizational Adaptability, Crisis Preparedness, Hotel Industry.

introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the global hospitality industry, presenting unprecedented challenges for businesses, particularly in human resource management. The hotel sector, heavily reliant on customer interactions and service delivery, faced significant disruptions due to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and reduced consumer confidence. This study aims to investigate the human resource strategies adopted by hotels during the pandemic to sustain business operations and workforce management. Many hoteliers employed a variety of strategies to navigate the crisis, including employee layoffs, government assistance programs, and mandatory leave policies. The study reveals that layoffs emerged as the most commonly adopted measure, highlighting the financial strain on businesses attempting to balance operational sustainability with employee welfare. Interestingly, strategies such as encouraging early retirement and establishing pandemic funds were largely ignored by hotel operators, pointing to a lack of long-term crisis preparedness in the industry. While layoffs helped businesses reduce financial burdens, they also had severe implications for employees, leading to job insecurity, reduced morale, and economic hardship. Government support played a crucial role in mitigating the effects of the pandemic on the hospitality sector, with initiatives such as subsidies, tax relief, and financial assistance helping businesses retain employees and maintain operations. However, many

respondents believed that government interventions were insufficient, calling for more robust policies to support the industry in times of crisis. The study further highlights the importance of socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) in addressing employee fears and anxieties during the pandemic. With widespread uncertainty and health concerns, hotels that adopted SRHRM practices—such as employee support programs, mental health initiatives, and workplace safety measures—were better positioned to retain staff and maintain operational efficiency. The contingency approach to talent management in hospitality suggests that crisis management strategies should be flexible and adaptive to the specific challenges faced by businesses at a given time. As the hospitality sector transitions into the post-pandemic era, the focus must shift toward long-term resilience and sustainable HR strategies. This includes investing in digital transformation, remote work models, and employee well-being programs to enhance workforce stability. Additionally, governments must take proactive measures to support the industry through targeted policies that encourage business continuity and employee retention. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on crisis management in hospitality, providing insights into how HR strategies can be effectively leveraged to mitigate the impact of pandemics on the industry. The research underscores the need for organizations to develop comprehensive crisis management plans that incorporate financial, operational, and employee-centered strategies to ensure business sustainability in the face of future disruptions. By integrating lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, hotel operators can build more resilient business models that prioritize both profitability and workforce stability. Moreover, the study calls for greater collaboration between industry stakeholders, including governments, business associations, and HR professionals, to develop policies and frameworks that support the long-term viability of the hospitality sector. As the industry recovers, it is crucial to implement strategic measures that not only address immediate challenges but also foster long-term growth and resilience. The study ultimately serves as a foundation for further research into crisis management in hospitality, highlighting the critical role of HR strategies in navigating disruptions and ensuring business sustainability.

Analysis of data and discussions

The main objective underlying the study is to assess human resource strategies adopted by hoteliers in sustaining their businesses during pandemics, specifically the COVID-19. All businesses irrespective of their strength and size tend to be affected by the coronavirus pandemic and as Thunstrom et al (2020) pointed out, firms that are able to put measures in place tend to gain more from such pandemics through innovative ways of reaching out to their customers. Pandemics do not only affect businesses performance in terms of profit, sales, and growth but employees who provide the service as well. The hospitality industry though is considered as one of the largest industries in Ghana and one of the most perceived affected by the coronavirus pandemic, it is prudent to assess how the industry particularly hoteliers are managing their human resource to ensure business sustainability since greater part of the cost incurred by them goes into the payment of wages and salaries. The researchers in determining the various human resource strategies adopted by firms in the industry during the period of COVID-19, conducted a telephone interview to ascertain the various strategies used by hoteliers to salvage their businesses during the pandemic. Data extracted from the interview which were collated can be presented in the table below:

Table 1: Prime human resource strategies for business sustainability

From table 1, it can be seen that the top three HR strategies adopted by hoteliers to salvage their businesses during the period of COVID-19 includes employees' layoff, getting the government to support their businesses and lastly asking employees to go on compulsory annual

Table 1: Prime human resource strategies for business sustainability

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Compulsory annual leave	23	6.2
Operationalizing established pandemic fund	0	0.0
Re-training employees to use alternative source of doing business	2	0.54
Reducing working hours	15	4.04
Encouraging early voluntary retirements	0	0.0
Laying off employees	292	78.71
Suspension of contract service providers and assigning their services that are not technical to permanent staff	5	1.35
Converting employees' full-time job to part-time	3	0.81
Expecting financial support from government	25	6.74
Temporal closure of business	6	1.62
Total	371	100

Source: Researchers fieldwork, 2020

le ave. Among all of these, laying off employees was considered as the major HR strategy hoteliers in Ghana adopted in order to ensure that they stay in business as can be witness in the table above. To the surprise of the researchers, two important strategies which were encouraging employees to go on early retirement and operationalizing established pandemic fund during the period of COVID-19 did not receive any support from all the respondents as none of the respondents claimed to be adopting these HR strategies. These findings clearly support the literature by Investor's Business Daily (2020) that, employees' layoff has become the language that most businesses are using in order to enable them meet statutory expenditures such as the payment of employees' wages and salaries. In the case of establishing pandemic fund, despite the awareness created by the World Bank in 2017 about the need for countries to adopt this strategy during periods of pandemics, countries such as Ghana have failed to develop relevant policies that will encourage firms to establish such fund. It is therefore not surprising that hoteliers have not adopted this strategy as a way of salvaging their businesses during such period of COVID-19. The literature by the World Health Organization (2018) actually contradicts this research findings as the writer claims this fund which normally takes the form of insurance is now becoming popular in the advance countries and many businesses in Europe and America are now appreciating the need to insure their businesses against pandemics. Looking at this contradiction, one can attribute it to the lack of knowledge and the importance organizations in developing countries such as Ghana attribute to insurance products as a way of safeguarding their businesses. The need to buy insurance products is still at the infancy stage in Ghana and it will not be surprise if hoteliers do not see the need to insure their businesses against pandemics. With regard to hoteliers encouraging employees to go on voluntary retirements not receiving any support from the respondents as an HR strategy to be adopted by hoteliers during the period of COVID19, the literature provided by Shultz et al (1999) supports this finding. According to them, the hotel industry provides services and because there is high customer/employee contact, most hoteliers prefer engaging young but well cultured employees between the ages of 18 to 35 that can meet the expectations of diverse customers that patronize in the services of these hotels. In light of this, adopting this strategy to reduce the number of organization's workforce will not be appropriate. Again, this strategy normally works best as HR strategy when a significant number of the workforce are nearly towards their retirement age with the organization. Since there are vast literature on the relationship between layoff of organizations employees and pandemic, the researchers wanted to test this available literature and its applicability in the hotel industry in Ghana. In doing this, the researchers extracted data obtained from telephone interviews with the respondents used for the study. The data centered on pandemics using COVID-19 and the Ebola virus outbreak as the basis and its relationship with employees' layoff by hoteliers who participated in the study. The results of the study based on the calculated chi square to determine the relationship between the two variables can be shown on the table below:

Table 2: Relationship between pandemics and employee's layoff

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External factor	Employee layoff	No Employee layoff	Marginal Row Totals
Pandemic	200	171	371
No Pandemic	150	221	371
Marginal Column Totals	350	392	742 (Grand Total)

Source: Researchers fieldwork, 2020

The calculated χ^2 with 5% level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom shows that a relationship exists between pandemics and employee's layoff in the hotel industry in Ghana. This buttresses the many existing literature such as Dewitt (2017) and Davidson (2016) where studies conducted in different countries revealed similar relationship between pandemics and employees' layoff. This again supports the findings in table 1 where hoteliers were asked the main HR strategies adopted by their firms to salvage their businesses during the period of COVID-19. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, literature provided by Roughan (2020) suggests that many countries such as Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Germany, Ghana and Canada have provided support to businesses especially the small and medium enterprises in view of salvaging their businesses so that employers will consider laying off their employees as the last option.

In Ghana, taking into consideration the policy by the Government to promote and support micro, small and medium scale enterprises during the pandemic period, there was the need for the researchers to seek the opinion of the respondents, government's support for firms in the hotel industry during the period of COVID-19. The perception of the respondents on government's support to businesses in the hotel industry can be presented in the table below:

Table 3: Perception of government support
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Perception of support	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	Mean	Overall ranking
Excellent	8.0%	11.0%	30.0%	16.0%	35.0%	3.612	5
Very good	10.0%	5.1%	33.0%	14.0%	37.9%	3.814	2
Good	2.0%	20.5%	13.0%	12.0%	52.5%	4.012	1
Average	13.1%	15.0%	31.9	1.5%	36.5%	3.732	3
Poor	16.0%	20.1%	21.2%	7.6%	35.1%	3.635	4

*1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree Source: Researchers fieldwork, 2020

The overall ranking of the respondents' perception on government support to businesses in the hotel industry shows that, hoteliers are satisfied with the support provided by the government but believes that more can be done. In the view of the respondents, the provision of water, electricity subsidies and tax reliefs by the Ghana Government for a four-month period and the provision of loan facilities for businesses in Ghana are not enough for firms in the hotel industry to survive during the turbulent period of COVID-19. Looking at the respondent's perception on Ghana government support for businesses in the hotel industry and the report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2020, the researchers believe that for any of the HR strategies adopted by hoteliers in Ghana to achieve its goal, government support to aid firms in the industry to successfully implement these strategies is critical. For instance, in Japan, the government is supporting businesses through financial assistance up to JPY 1 million for firms to procure equipment and install telework facilities. From this financial assistance, it is believed that it will motivate firms to adopt the HR strategy of using information technology as alternative way of doing businesses during the period of COVID-19. Apart from this, for hoteliers to successfully adopt HR Strategy of encouraging employees to proceed on annual leave during COVID-19, provision of financial assistance by the Government is also necessary in order for hoteliers to meet the financial obligation of paying their employees wage during the period they are on leave. Report by OECD in 2020 suggests that, many countries such as Japan, Korea, Portugal and Denmark have policies to motivate businesses to encourage their employees to proceed on annual leave during the period of COVID-19 in order to reduce employers' burden on meeting their employees wage bill. For instance, the Japanese Government through the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare provides financial support of up to JPY 8,330 per day to support employers pay their workers who are on annual leave". This means that in Ghana, hoteliers will be motivated to adopt the HR Strategy of encouraging their employees to proceed on annual leave if such financial assistance to businesses is provided. "In Germany, France, Belgium and Netherlands, the provision of Short Time Work (STW) policies by the governments have helped businesses to adopt the HR Strategy of reducing hours of workers in order to mitigate the financial burden on employees in terms of meeting their financial obligations. For instance, OCED report in 2020 shows that employees in Germany are given 60% of the difference in their monthly net earnings due to the employer reducing the working hours of their employees during periods of pandemic such as the COVID-19. It is therefore believed that if the Ghana Government can also adopt this STW policy, it will encourage hoteliers to adopt the strategies of reducing their employees working hours or converting the jobs of their employees to part-time during the pandemic period. Most of the time, the reluctance by employers to adopt most of the HR Strategies are due to the employers ethical reasoning that they may bring financial hardships on employees.

Empirical contributions and originality of the study

The study looks at HR strategies adopted by hoteliers as a way of sustaining their businesses during the period of COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic is novel and there is no literature on the various HR strategies businesses particularly hoteliers in Ghana are adopting in order to sustain their businesses in view of the numerous government

restrictions by many countries and the highly drop in demand of services provided by firms in the hospitality industry. The study therefore serves as a foundation for other researchers to contribute to knowledge in the area. Many governments as a way of protecting their citizens consider employees layoff as a rare option that businesses should adopt during pandemics to salvage their businesses, but the study has revealed that if governments do not provide the necessary policies that will support the various HR strategies that are available for businesses, firms will always consider laying off employees as the best option to reduce their employees wage bill and sustain their businesses.

Agenda for Hospitality HRM

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected the political and economic development pattern in the world. It has profoundly changed the hospitality industry and human resource service mode of hospitality HRM. The normalization of pandemic prevention and control has brought revolutionary challenges to employees and employers. Through an in-depth analysis of the text of research on hospitality HRM during the pandemic period, this study offers the agenda faced by the development of research on hospitality HRM in the post-pandemic era.

The first issue is employee mental health. With the central concern of employees' positive behavior and psychological health, the hospitality industry should be concerned about employee anxiety, stress, nervousness, and negative turnover intention. Psychological assistance, training programs can be provided appropriately. Furthermore, strengthening leadership services and fostering an internal organizational environment for win-win cooperation are also vital.

The second issue relates to the working environment safety. To cope with the pandemic prevention and control crisis, it is time for business associations to establish comprehensive cleaning and safety standards for enterprises. Furthermore, to achieve a work environment in the negative pandemic situation, HRM for the hospitality sector must be rigorous and flexible. Employees in the hospitality sector are close interaction with guests, making them work at risk in the context of the pandemic. HRM should offer strict workflow and standard checklists to guarantee employees security. Furthermore, employees' intentions, such as risk perception, are in the chain of the work environment. The need to increase HRM flexibility in hospitality industry to promote workplace safety is more urgent than ever today.

The third issue involves the disruptive HRM practice. On the one hand, hospitality HRM is facing major development opportunities. Adapting to the changes in the human resource market and the needs of human resource services, disruptive and innovative HR practices are the outlet for problem-solving, which has triggered creative thinking about the HRM perspective. Based on the finding, this study suggests hospitality HRM (1) applying PopTech such as social media, big data, AI, and robotics, speeding up the digital transformation of human resource services, (2) organizational reconstruction and business model reconstruction, (3) enhancing the internationalization of human resource services, and (4) deepening the dialogue between stakeholders including industry, social, and government. These strategies will bring unlimited development space for the develop the hospitality human resource services industry.

The post-pandemic era has arrived, the fourth focus is on recovery and transition. As the hospitality industry develops and recovers in the post-pandemic era, it is crucial to concentrate on the particular problems faced by the transformation and development of market segments and specific HR practices in the background of hospitality and to provide theory and strategic support to HR departments at different levels and types of development planning. Back to our findings, resilience is the main key access point to enhance the organization's capacity to recover.

Furthermore, from the perspective of different parties such as employees, organizations, HRMs, and customers, conducting forward-looking theoretical discussions are required to provide service support for the hospitality industry to seize a new round of significant industry development opportunities to achieve leapfrog development. Additionally, regional and area hospitality HRM case studies can summarize actions and strategies that can be taken in times of disaster.

Contingency approach for TM in hospitality during and after COVID-19

Contingency theory takes a situational approach and argues that effective management depends on the ability of a firm to adjust practices in accordance with the set of circumstances and conditions at certain time point (Luthans and Steward, 1977). The contingency approach in management is defined as identifying and developing functional relationships between environmental, management and performance variables (Luthans and Steward, 1977, p.183). The main idea of contingency theory is that there is no best managerial approach, only the most suitable in fitting the environment (Kelly and Fairley, 2018). Phillips (1999) identified the three most important environmental factors (namely market turbulence, competitive turbulence, and technology turbulence) affecting the performance of hotels. Empirical evidence suggests that managerial behavior and performance is contingent on external factors such as community, economic status, and external support (Doh et al., 2017). For example, Farndale et al. (2014) used contingency theory for explaining the practice of expatriation in multinational companies (MNCs) by showing how the strategic decision-making in global manpower arrangements depends on the external environment. In tourism and hospitality, the contingency approach is more frequently adopted during times of turbulence or crisis (e.g., Chau et al., 2022; Permatasari and Mahyuni, 2022). For example, Giousmpasoglou et al. (2021) stressed the necessity of having contingency planning systems. Prior studies have rarely investigated the adoption of contingency approaches in TM in hospitality, with the exception of King and Vaiman (2019) who advocated that successful implementation of TM at the

micro level (i.e., company level) is dependent on its alignment with the macro level external context of the firm, with a nested model of two circles of TM practices which firms should closely inter-align: a) the micro TM practices (e.g. recruitment, development, deployment, performance management, and engagement) lying in the inner circle; and b) the macro TM practices (e.g. macro talent functions & core processes, macro talent outcomes, and macro talent context & environmental factors) lying on the outer circle

The effect of socially responsible human resource management on employee fears of the threats of COVID-19

Employee fears of external threats represent negative psychological emotions involving uncertainty or danger resulting from undesirable events or harm from outside of the organization (Lebel, 2016). It is acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in China and spread worldwide, leading to profit declines and bankruptcies among hotels, restaurants and travel agencies. Compared to other industries, lockdown and social distancing policies directly caused steep declines in hospitality and tourism, because the sector relies on population mobility and personal service provided by employees (Yang et al., 2020). Hundreds of thousands of employees in hospitality and tourism companies faced threats to their health and job security because of the uncertainty and threat of loss brought by COVID-19, including major hotel chains such as Marriott and Hyatt. Evidence shows that fear of external threats leads to employee silence in organizations (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009), reduces creativity (Deng et al., 2019), and damages employee well-being, performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Raja et al., 2020). Therefore, overcoming employee anxiety and fear in the wake of the disastrous outcomes of COVID-19 and promoting employee psychological recovery drew significant attention from hospitality and tourism scholars and practitioners (Zenker and Kock, 2020). To date, most research concerns the outcomes of employee fear (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Raja et al., 2020). However, the antecedents of employee fear seemingly have been neglected. It is acknowledged that HRM practices have a direct impact on employee psychological states, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in the hospitality and tourism industry (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020; Madera et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2007). Specifically, the role of socially responsible HRM (SRHRM) is highlighted during crisis situations. SRHRM emphasizes a bundle of practices aimed at improving employee socially responsible capabilities, motivations, and opportunities, often with humanitarian objectives and benefits (Shen and Benson, 2016; Shen and Zhang, 2019). SRHRM involves recruiting and retaining employees with a sense of social responsibility, providing CSR training, and assessing employee social responsibility in performance appraisals, compensation, and promotions (Zhao et al., 2019). For example, hotels and travel agencies trained and rewarded employees involved in socially responsible work during COVID-19 for receiving hospital medical staff, assisting community residents, providing transfer services, and voluntarily working in cabin hospitals. These practices could significantly impact employee perceptions (Shen and Zhang, 2019). However, most previous research focuses on the relationship between SRHRM and employee attitudes and behaviors under normal operational conditions (Jia et al., 2019; Shen and Benson, 2016; Shen and Zhang, 2019; Zhao et al., 2019). With the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, the pandemic caused hospitality and tourism companies to assume greater social responsibility and deal with relieving employee fears. The impacts of SRHRM on employee fears of external threats need greater and more in-depth exploration. Generally, SRHRM affects employee attitudes and behaviors through organizational identity or social exchange (Newman et al., 2016; Jia et al., 2019). The effects of SRHRM practices during COVID-19 may differ from HRM under normal circumstances. It is possible that SRHRM influences employee emotions and fears in other ways during a major crisis. This research set out to investigate the social and psychological processes of how SRHRM influenced employee fears of threats through social support theory (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Hobfoll et al., 1990). This theory refers to the supporting and helping actions from government, society, organizations, family and friends, and it is essential in promoting well-being and reducing stress (Hobfoll, 2001). COVID-19 necessitated HRM intervention through demonstrating social responsibility because government agencies were not always reliable and available while individual power was weak (Watkins et al., 2015). Therefore, HRM had to assume greater social responsibility and this is especially required during a major crisis (Voegtlin and Greenwood, 2016). According to social support theory, SRHRM is an important source impacting employees and organizational resources that may transform into individual resources through employee perceptions (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this process, staff perceptions of organizational trust might mediate the effects of SRHRM in assisting employees to overcome fears of external threats when experiencing economic and social dissonance. Organizational trust is defined as the willingness to believe in an organization and have confidence of its benevolence and capabilities (Gould-Williams, 2003; Jia et al., 2019). Organizational trust usually links HRM and employee attitudes as a mediating mechanism in the hospitality and tourism industry (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020). SRHRM represents organizational benevolence with respect to employees that improves their feelings, perceptions, and attitudes (Alfes et al., 2013; Jia et al., 2019). SRHRM can promote organizational trust as a result of providing care and support to employees, protecting individual resources, and reducing negative emotions like fear (Halbesleben et al., 2014). It is proposed in applying social support theory that SRHRM is negatively related to employee fears of external threats. Furthermore, the environment plays a role that influences the effectiveness of SRHRM, as it did with COVID-19. Based on an open systems view, organizations are not isolated islands; they are in systems impacted by external and internal environments. The environment and social resources interactively affect individual resources (Hobfoll et al., 1990; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Event system theory suggests their

occurrence impacts actors' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Morgeson et al., 2015). Events such as the COVID-19 crisis present complex environments that due to novelty (event is varied and is an unexpected or new phenomenon), disruptive (event changes normal, day-to-day activities) and critical (event is important, essential and a priority) (Morgeson et al., 2015). COVID-19 has been disruptive and critical to the hospitality and tourism industry, and its unexpectedness caused widespread, sharp performance decreases in the industry in which employees faced layoffs or job losses. It brought unprecedented challenges for hospitality and tourism HRM practices to embrace social responsibility and demonstrate compassion and warmth for employees. Unfortunately, the impacts of SRHRM on employee fears when faced with extreme dangers and uncertainty, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, remain conceptually and empirically unexplored. Employee fears of external threats are psychological states or feelings of uncertainty and danger as a result of undesirable events (Lebel, 2016). Therefore, this research analyzed the moderating effect of the event strength of COVID-19 on the relationship between SRHRM and employee fears. This research was aimed at making three contributions to the literature. First, it determined the effects of SRHRM on employee fears of external threats during COVID-19, thereby enriching the strategic HRM research in crisis situations. Second, it shed light on how SRHRM helped to overcome employee fears of external threats through enhanced organizational trust based on social support theory. In so doing, it explored the underlying mechanisms of SRHRM's impacts on employee fears. Third, it examined the moderating effects of the event strength of COVID-19 on the relationship between SRHRM and employee fears, and expanded the boundary conditions of SRHRM. The research conceptual model is shown in Figure .

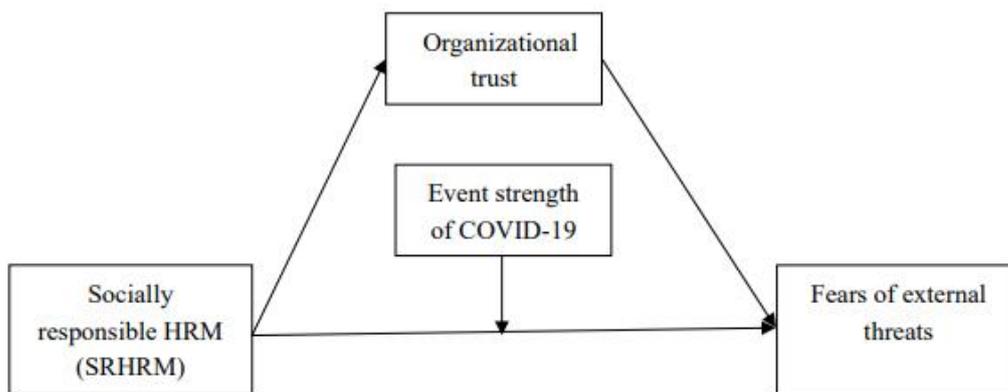
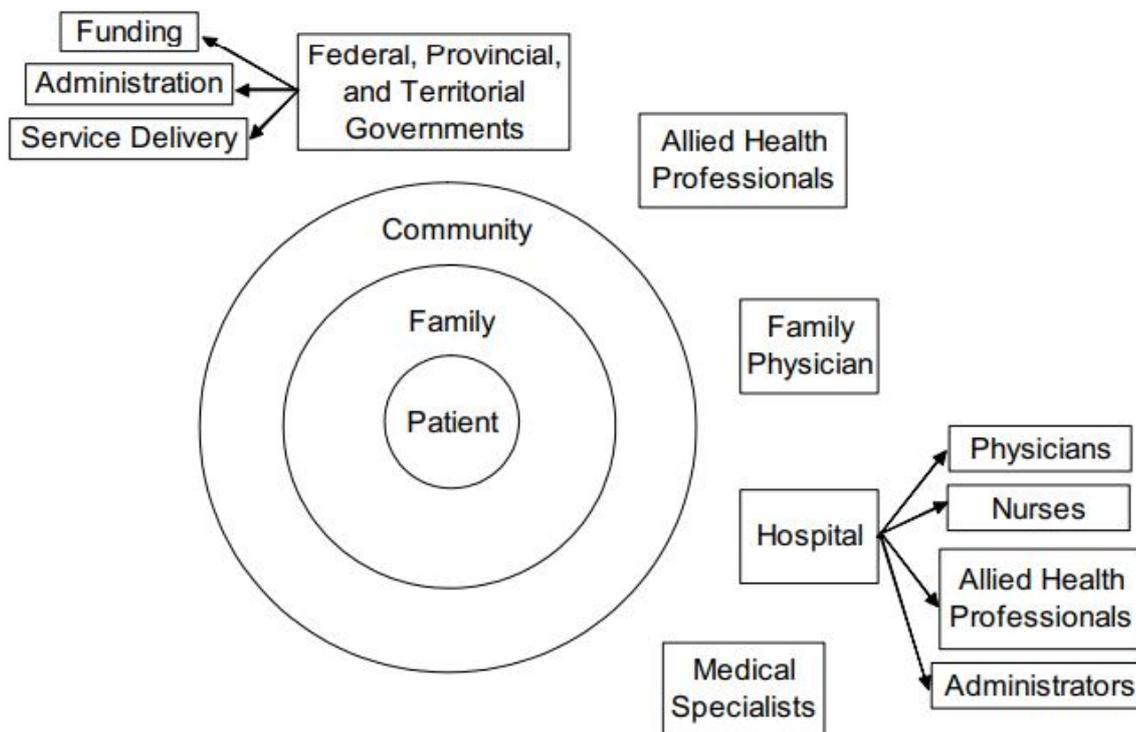


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

The impact of human resources on health sector reform

When examining global health care systems, it is both useful and important to explore the impact of human resources on health sector reform. While the specific health care reform process varies by country, some trends can be identified. Three of the main trends include efficiency, equity and quality objectives [3]. Various human resources initiatives have been employed in an attempt to increase efficiency. Outsourcing of services has been used to convert fixed labor expenditures into variable costs as a means of improving efficiency. Contracting-out, performance contracts and internal contracting are also examples of measures employed [3]. Many human resources initiatives for health sector reform also include attempts to increase equity or fairness. Strategies aimed at promoting equity in relation to needs require more systematic planning of health services [3]. Some of these strategies include the introduction of financial protection mechanisms, the targeting of specific needs and groups, and re-deployment services [3]. One of the goals of human resource professionals must be to use these and other measures to increase equity in their countries. Human resources in health sector reform also seek to improve the quality of services and patients' satisfaction. Health care quality is generally defined in two ways: technical quality and sociocultural quality. Technical quality refers to the impact that the health services available can have on the health conditions of a population [3]. Sociocultural quality measures the degree of acceptability of services and the ability to satisfy patients' expectations [3]. Human resource professionals face many obstacles in their attempt to deliver high-quality health care to citizens. Some of these constraints include budgets, lack of congruence between different stakeholders' values, absenteeism rates, high rates of turnover and low morale of health personnel [3]. Better use of the spectrum of health care providers and better coordination of patient services through interdisciplinary teamwork have been recommended as part of



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ew of the major stakeholders in the Canadian health care system health sector reform [4]. Since all health care is ultimately delivered by people, effective human resources management will play a vital role in the success of health sector reform.

Human resources implications of the factors

While collectively the five main areas addressed in the article represent health care issues affecting and affected by human resources practices, they are not all equal in terms of their influence in each country. For instance, in Canada there are fewer health care issues surrounding the level of economic development or migration of health workers, whereas these issues are much more significant in developing countries. In the United States, the level of economic development is not a significant issue, but the accessibility of health care based upon an individual's financial situation certainly is, as evidenced by the more than 40 million Americans who have no health care coverage. Germany's issues with the size of its health care worker base have to do with too many physicians, whereas in Canada one of the issues is having too few physicians. Table 2 summarizes some of the implications for health care professionals with regard to the five main issues raised in the article. One of the main implications of this paper, as shown in Table 2”, is that HRP will have a vital role in addressing all the factors identified. Solutions to health care issues are not just medical in nature.

Review of Literature

(Luecke and Barton 2004) in the study "Crisis Management: Master the Skills to Prevent Disasters" said that a crisis is defined as a change, whether unexpected or gradual, that creates an urgent problem and requires immediate externalization.

(Regester and Larkin 2008) in the study "Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations: A Casebook of Best Practice" said that understanding a crisis as a “change” rather than a “problem” is essential for managers to adopt a proactive crisis response strategy.

(Smith 2005) in the study "Beyond Crisis Management: Managing Issues Before They Become Crises" said that pre-crisis preparation is a fundamental step in developing alternate strategies within the disaster management cycle.

(Carter 1991) in the study "Disaster Management: A Disaster Manager’s Handbook" said that crisis management approaches must be tailored to service businesses, as previous epidemic crises disrupted the disaster management cycle at the mitigation and preparedness stages.

(Jaques 2007) in the study "Issue and Crisis Management: Exploring Issues, Crises, Risk and Reputation" said that crisis management should be divided into two key phases: Crisis Management and Pre-Crisis Management, with the latter playing a critical role in mitigating losses. Paraskevas and Altinay (2013) in the study "Crisis Management in the Hospitality Industry" said that businesses face challenges in recognizing danger signals, particularly during epidemic crises, which can lead to delayed responses.

(Pollard and Hotho 2006) in the study "Corporate Crisis Management: Strategy Development and Implementation" said that strategic crisis management includes defining organizational missions, goals, and external environmental analysis to prepare for potential threats.

(Smith 2005) in "Beyond Crisis Management" emphasized that crisis management is an ongoing process rather than merely service recovery, requiring proactive strategies during non-crisis periods.

(Lai and Wong 2020) in the study "Crisis Management in the Hotel Industry: Lessons from COVID-19" said that while general crisis management theories exist, the hospitality industry lacks detailed, specific crisis management practices tailored to epidemiological crises.

remote work models, they are implementing alternative measures to support employees.

(World Health Organization 2003) in the study "World Health Report 2003: Shaping the Future" said that past epidemic responses were geographically limited and did not prepare businesses adequately for the global nature of COVID-19.

Chu et al. (2020) in "Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Global Tourism" said that lockdown measures forced businesses to halt operations, creating significant revenue losses.

(Nicola et al. 2020) in the study "The Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Global Industries" said that the hospitality industry was among the hardest hit by the pandemic, with declining revenues leading to mass layoffs. Ozili and Arun (2020) in "Spillover of COVID-19: Impact on Global Markets" said that global stock markets lost \$6 trillion in wealth between February 24 and 28, 2020, directly affecting the hospitality sector's sustainability.

(Fernandes 2020) in the study "Supply Chain Disruptions and Business Sustainability in the COVID-19 Era" said that approximately 75% of companies experienced severe supply chain disruptions due to the pandemic, challenging inventory management strategies. Chbeir (2020) in "The Decline of Lebanon's Hospitality Industry Due to COVID-19" said that hotel occupancy rates in Lebanon dropped from 75–80% in 2019 to 28% in February 2020, with some major hotels shutting down entirely.

(Tahoun 2020) in the study "Economic Crisis Management During the Pandemic" said that unlike past epidemics such as SARS and H1N1, the COVID-19 crisis had a prolonged psychological and economic impact, forcing businesses to reassess their crisis management strategies.

conclusion

The study highlights the significant impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry and the critical role of human resource management in sustaining hotel operations during crises. Employee layoffs emerged as the most widely used strategy, though it posed challenges to workforce stability and morale. Government support provided some relief but was deemed insufficient by many hoteliers. The study underscores the need for socially responsible HRM, flexible workforce strategies, and proactive crisis management frameworks. Moving forward, investing in digital transformation, employee well-being, and government collaboration will be essential for building long-term resilience in the hospitality sector and mitigating future disruptions.

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