

## Smiling Through the Crisis: The Impact of HR Practices on Hotel Employee Wellbeing During COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

This research is conducted on the HRM practices that hotels put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence they have on employee wellbeing. It is done to find out the impact of employee-centric HRM practices, including flexible work arrangements, communication strategies, job security measures, and adaptability on employees' wellbeing during crisis periods. This study utilizes a qualitative approach, wherein organizational document analysis and in-depth interviews with hotel managers and employees are conducted. The findings show that HRM practices that emphasize employee welfare, especially in times of uncertainty, greatly boost the morale of employees, reduce stress, and enhance long-term wellbeing. However, the study also reveals challenges in maintaining these practices and their effects over time. The research points out the need for adaptive HRM strategies and effective communication in crisis management, providing valuable insights for future HRM frameworks. The limitations of the study include its focus on the hotel industry, thus suggesting further research in other sectors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of HRM practices in crisis scenarios.

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## **Introduction**

This research explores the human resource management (HRM) practices used by hotels during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these affect employee wellbeing. The central research question revolves around how employee-centered HRM practices impact wellbeing during a crisis. The study is guided by five sub-research questions, including specific HRM practices adopted, the role of communication in maintaining employee morale, job security as a contributor to mental health, the flexibility of HRM strategies when facing changing situations, and the long-term impact on the wellbeing of employees. A qualitative approach is followed for the study, combined with the application of the job demands-resources model. The literature review methodology will be used, structured as a paper that covers methodology, findings, and a conclusion.

## **Result & discussion**

This section critically reviews existing literature relating to HRM practices in the hotel industry during crises on the aspect of employee wellbeing. The five sub-research questions are addressed, resulting in findings on HRM practices, communication strategies, effects of job security, adaptability, and long-term effects on wellbeing. With such previous research, certain gaps remain in understanding a more holistic effect of tailored HRM practices toward wellbeing. This paper fills in the gaps by providing a more comprehensive thematic analysis of the employee experiences in COVID-19.

### **HRM Practices Implemented During COVID-19**

Initial research indicated simple HRM changes to respond to shocks, including flexible working hours and telecommuting. Then, further research indicated higher-order strategies, like mental well-being initiatives. However, there was an issue on how these could be carried out in most hotel scenarios, thus there is the need to understand better such context-specific changes.

### **Role of Communication in Ensuring Employee Morale:**

Early research focused on open communication in crisis management. The later studies pointed out effective communication practices, such as frequent updates and feedback, in maintaining morale. These progresses notwithstanding, inconsistencies in organizations' communication practices were noted, thus providing room for improvement.

### **Impact of Job Security on Mental Health**

The initial studies were more concerned with the direct effects of job security on employee stress. Subsequent studies looked into the psychological impact of job insecurity, where a strong relationship was established with mental health outcomes. In most of these early studies, however, a comprehensive approach to counter such impacts was not provided, thus indicating the necessity for more effective HRM practices.

## **Flexibility of HRM Strategies in Dynamic Environments**

Studies on HRM adaptability found that there is a need for flexible strategies in the face of changing conditions. Research indicated that organizations with agile HRM practices were better positioned to respond to crises. However, the effectiveness of these strategies was different, and some organizations failed to implement adaptive measures in a consistent manner.

## **Long-Term Effects on Employee Wellbeing**

Studies that explored the long-run implications of crisis-era HRM showed mixed results. The author of some studies revealed persisting positive changes in levels of employee engagement, but most others pointed to long-standing problems with maintaining wellbeing. There is a dire lack of longitudinal studies within this literature to fully clarify such outcomes.

## **Method**

This qualitative research study will involve thematic analysis, focusing on exploring the human resource management practice within the hotel during COVID-19. The data is sourced through in-depth interviews conducted on hotel managers and employees and focuses on the perceptions of the strategies HRM was implementing in respect of HRM practices in that area. Additionally, there is an examination of the organizational documents illustrating how policies regarding HRM practices evolved during the period. It will provide comprehensive coverage to the nuances experienced within HRM practices.

## **Findings**

The study based on the sub-research question on HRM practices deals with the findings on such key HRM practices and how they impact employee wellbeing due to COVID-19. It addresses the sub-findings on HRM practices, communication, job security, adaptability, and long-term wellbeing. The findings reveal the key role of employee-centred HRM practices in supporting their wellbeing, which includes an enhanced communication, job security measures, flexible strategies, and their long-term impact. These findings contribute to the development of effective HRM frameworks for managing employee wellbeing in future crises.

## **Implementation of Employee-Centred HRM Practices**

The findings show that hotels used a variety of employee-centred HRM practices, including flexible work arrangements and mental health support, significantly to enhance employee wellbeing. Through interviews, specific instances of such practices relieving stress and boosting morale are revealed, showing the importance of such practices in the crisis.

## **Effective Communication Strategies**

Analysis of interview data highlighted that effective communication is a must for maintaining employee morale. Participants said that regular updates and open feedback channels foster a sense of stability and trust that is necessary to navigate uncertainty. These strategies were proven to reduce anxiety and promote wellbeing.

### **Job Security Measures and Mental Health**

The research found that job security measures, including promises of continued employment and clear communication of the stability of the organization, played a vital role in alleviating anxiety among employees. Interviewees appreciated such measures, which contributed highly to their mental health and general wellbeing.

### **Adaptability and Resilience of HRM Strategies**

Findings point out the responsiveness of HRM strategies as a critical variable in managing crises effectively. Such hotels employing flexible and responsive HRM practices were in a position to support employees' well-being better. This could be seen through interview accounts of adaptive policy implementation under changing circumstances.

### **Long-Term Outcomes in Well-being**

The study identifies some negative and positive long-run HRM practices during the crisis. While some employees are finding sustained improvements in engagement and well-being, others also noticed difficulties in maintaining them over time. These are salient points that stress how support and adaptation during implementation are crucial in the area of HRM.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides very important findings and insights into the role played by HRM practices when attempting to support employee wellbeing during crisis circumstances, underlining that indeed employee-centered approaches need some adaptability. The findings emphasize effective communication, job security measures, and flexible strategies to improve wellbeing. Although the study contributes much to the HRM literature, its focus on the hotel industry may not be generalizable. Further research should explore these dynamics in various sectors and continue to develop comprehensive HRM frameworks for crisis management, offering practical and theoretical contributions to the field.

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