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Future of work

How has the covid-19 pandemic affected companies' HRM and how the decisions and new strategies of companies' HRM has affected employees' well-being?

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Abstract

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This thesis focuses on the effects of Covid-19 to organisations HRM and employee well-being. An extensive literature review was conducted and based on that, possible solutions and tips for HRM and employees were gathered to secure a better tomorrow for companies, HRM and employees.

Keywords: Covid-19, employee well-being, HRM, WFH, employee engagement

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Glossary

HRM Human Resource Management

WFH Working From Home

1 Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic presented multiple problems to individuals, families, employees, and organisations. The outbreak of the virus had a massive impact to the economy and the livelihood of people and organisations, and still does. The problems seen in the news all around the world woke an interest to study what kind of effects does the virus have towards everyone from an individual to a company to a country and the whole world. Cities were emptier than usual, and the public transport seemed to be not used at all and this inspired to study remote work more and how people and organisations are adjusting to it. Moreover, it sparked an interest on the effects, good or bad, that remote work might have to organisations and employees practising it. The goal of the paper is to discover more information about remote working and new ways of working overall, what kind of effect has it had to organisations, HRM and employees. The paper is trying to find answers to guiding research question which has to parts in it and that is: How has the covid-19 pandemic affected companies' HRM and how the decisions and new strategies of companies' HRM has affected employees' well-being? This paper is all about collecting information about new ways of working, organisational changes, employee well-being and how could the organisations maximise their performance under new and tough environment of changes.

In order to reach the goal that is set for the thesis and to be able to answer the research question, multiple existing articles, studies, research papers and other publications was collected and analysed. The outcome of this research paper is hoped to provide more information on the subject and to be able to be used to dig deeper in the already existing literature. There is a lot of research found from the topic since during the covid-19 pandemic it was and still is crucial for organisations HRM to make tough but critical decisions and strategies in order to support the organisations during tough times filled with uncertainty and changes in organisation structures and the ways organisations do business. Health of the employees should be a top priority to organisations and HRM and health includes physical and mental health of the employees. HRM had to act quickly and make sure employees adapt to new changes even faster to keep organisations as well off as possible during the crisis. However, the problem of the research found of the subject is limited in time and length of the research already made. Accurate conclusions cannot be made since the existing

studies and research are not long enough and the effects cannot be accurately proven to be true.

2 Literature review

This literature review is constructed from collected articles, research papers, and other publications to answer the question: How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected companies' Human Resource Management (HRM) and how the new decisions and strategies of companies' HRM, under the pressure of Covid-19 pandemic, has affected employees' well-being. The literature review will rely on existing publications of the subject and pursues to gather information and find out answers that could help the decision making of companies HRM post Covid-19, in order to keep both company performance and employee well-being at same or higher levels.

This literature review is made from the earlier publications that has been found by using different search engines such as Google Scholar where the keywords used, independently and combined, were Covid-19, HRM, and employee well-being. This literature review collects studies and publications under each of the keywords and pursues to find out the best resources in order to answer the guiding research question. This literature review follows the same setting as the research paper where the first shown is the research about Covid-19 followed by publications and research under the topic HRM, and lastly it will show relevant studies from employee well-being during Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus, widely known as Covid-19, has disrupted companies' HRM in unforeseeable ways and in multiple levels. HRM had to navigate through the pandemic with different problems like reduction and dismissals of staff and the rapid digitalisation of companies in order to stay functional during the lockdowns caused by the pandemic. Gigauri has done research how Covid-19 affected companies' HRM. Expert interviews were conducted by Gigauri and the findings will give some insight to Human Resource (HR) managers for the future. The research suggests that drastic changes are needed to be made by HR managers in Georgian companies in order to cope with the challenges caused by the pandemic. The paper conducts research to figure out what were the solutions companies adopt, how did the solutions work, and the paper also tries to give suggestions for the future HRM best

practises. It finds that companies should prepare a crisis management plan and new well-structured policies for employees to be able to work remotely and in the hybrid model. (Gigauri, 2021.)

Reza Nurul Ichsan, Khaeruman, Sonny Santosa, Yuni Shara, Fahrina Yustiasari Liriwati are researching what HRM will be after the Covid-19 pandemic. They have searched data from different sources such as online information, reviewing publications about good HR practises, and they have also studied various case studies in order to investigate what are the main objectives for companies' HRM after Covid-19 disruption. The findings of the paper were summarized as follows: HR needs to evaluate their corrective actions during the pandemic to be able to prepare for future crisis, Companies have to estimate the scale and capabilities of their HR to be more prepared and have the infrastructure in order to sufficiently complete tasks. (Ichsan et al., 2020.)

Francoise Contreras, Elif Baykal and Ghulam Abid have made a paper where they look at companies' management in particular during Covid-19 pandemic. They have gathered information about teleworking and e-leadership, how is it done during the pandemic, what are the challenges and what will change after the pandemic situation eases.

Francoise Contreras, Elif Baykal and Ghulam Abid say that effective e-leadership can truly add on the companies' productivity and will also be advantageous to employees while working remotely. They say that traditional leadership poses risks for companies' if it is implemented while companies have moved to a new way of working for employees - remote work. In order to thrive in a new work environment, Francoise Contreras, Elif Baykal and Ghulam Abid argue that managers and employees must adjust to the new work environment of remote working. They say companies should develop new abilities to be less hierarchical, retain a real connection with their employees to be able to see that they are doing well, and also establish strong relationship with their employees in order to maintain the company's competitiveness. (Contreras et al., 2021.)

Ahmed Tanveera, Khan Muhammad Shahidb, Thitivesa Duangkamolb, Siraphatthada Yanandab, Phumdara Tawatb published a paper where they have studied the impact of HRM challenges has had to corporations during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have

identified the current challenges for HRM due to Covid-19 pandemic to be development and training activities for employees, how the company objectives and goals are met by the employees, how to deal with selection and recruitment process and employee engagement. Moreover, among the challenges that HRM has had, they study at how employee engagement and knowledge sharing effects the corporations' performance.

In their study the results show that employee engagement can do wonders for organisations. It shows that employee engagement has an important, positive and significant impact on the performance of an organisation. Moreover, they found that employee engagement through knowledge sharing had also a positive impact on the performance of an organisation. (Tanveera et al., 2021)

Mohammad Reza Azizi, Rasha Atlasib, Arash Ziapourc, Jaffar Abbasd, and Roya Naemie have compiled an extensive paper from already published publications that study and are related to HRM challenges during the pandemic. They pursued to identify unknown strategies, unusual decisions, and new challenges in the field of Human Resource Management caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. (Azizi et al., 2021.)

As their method of study, they conducted an extensive literature review of more than 1000 articles which they found from different databases such as LISTA, Scopus, Web of science, PsychINFO and PubMed. They screened the publications in order to remove duplicates and to select the relevant publications. In the end, after screening process, they reviewed selected papers and included a number of articles sourced from the electronic databases. They, then, made a framework of strategies for the HRM to battle the Covid-19 pandemic. (Azizi et al., 2021.)

As a conclusion, they found out that by appropriate implementation of HRM strategies such as flexibility, innovative changes in order to make business activities smooth and talent acquisition will better the motivation, satisfaction, productivity, mental well-being, and physical health of an employee. (Azizi et al., 2021.)

Paper made by Prof. Goodness, Nchuchuwe and Ibrahim also studies the effects of Covid-19 pandemic to HRM of companies. It pursues to identify the challenges caused by the pandemic which are affecting HR managers on a daily basis. It provides a look into the life of professional human resource managers and gives insights on how to

mitigate new challenges arising and how to make sure that the general workforce is not affected by them. Prof. Goodness, Nchuchuwe and Ibrahim's paper provides solutions and recommendations during and after the battle against Covid-19 pandemic.

(Goodness, Nchuchuwe and Ibrahim, 2021)

Sahar Vahdat (2021) studies the role of IT-based technologies in HRM to battle the challenges caused by Covid-19 pandemic. The author wants to examine what are the challenges for HRM resulting from the pandemic and how technology could help HRM and organisations overall to clear a path to a post-pandemic world. (Vahdat, 2021.)

The author has analysed selected articles, which are grouped in three different categories as follows: cloud computing, communication and information technology, and teleworking. The author has found solutions based on the study and provides it in the findings. (Vahdat, 2021.)

Sahar Vahdat (2021) finds that HRM made their employees' well-being and health a top priority during the pandemic. The challenges of keeping a safe distance between employees and limiting close contact services carried by employees are challenges that can be resolved with IT-based technology, according to the author. The findings show that in a lot of cases, business innovation is key on the battle against the pandemic. With web-based applications and solutions such as cloud computing, HRM will be able to allocate resources better and more efficiently. (Vahdat, 2021.)

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the working environment for many organisations and their employees when the way of working has changed drastically within an organisation, introducing employees and organisations with a totally new innovative and smart working practices which are showed to have a significant impact on the employees' well-being. (Manuti et al., 2021.)

This is exactly what Amelia Manuti, Maria Luisa Giancaspro, Monica Molino, Emanuela Ingusci, Vincenzo Russo, Fulvio Signore Margherita Zito and Claudio Giovanni Cortese (2021) wanted to cover in their study, where they pursue to examine from the employees' view, if and to what extent, the individual methods of coping during the pandemic, and different strategies of the organisation, such as sustainable HRM where support and involvement are valued high in an organisation, could strive positive

organisational behaviours such as extra-role behaviour and engagement. (Manuti et al., 2021.)

In their research they have given surveys to 549 participants who have then answered this questionnaire online. From the findings, they gathered results that confirmed their hypothesis of sustainable HRM practises to have a massively impactful role for organisational overall performance and the effectiveness of human resources in a time of global pandemic. They are also discussing in their paper about suggestions for a theory derived from their results and the development of HRM. (Manuti et al., 2021.)

In Teresa Galanti, Gloria Guidetti, Elisabetta Mazzei, Salvatore Zappalà, and Ferdinando Toscano (2021) paper, they argue that the change of working from the office to work from home (WFH), has both positive and negative outcomes during the Covid-19 pandemic. They studied different aspects of both work-related aspects as well as individual aspects such as job autonomy, social isolation, stress experienced during work from home, self-leadership effects on employees' performance, family-work conflict, and distracting environment. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

They analysed a set of 209 employees' online questionnaire and found that, for example, job autonomy and self-leadership affected remote workers' WFH engagement and productivity positively whereas social isolation and workers' family-work conflict affected employees WFH engagement and productivity negatively because it resulted to more stress on the employees. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

Laura Bordi, Jussi Okkonen, Jaana-Piia Mäkinen, Kirsi Heikkilä-Tammi published an article where they are examining if there are any effects to well-being at work caused by communicating digitally. They have analysed workshop discussions where they found six themes that have an effect on persons' well-being at work which are, according to their article, the following: flexibility in communication, expectations of being constantly reachable and online, new tools that have to be adapted, the amount of digital communication, technical problems, and the message quality. (Bordi et al., 2021.)

Their article resulted to find that digital communication overall was seen as demanding but also emerged to provide more flexibility in one's work and so even enhanced well-

being at work because it made employees feel that they have more control of their work and so digital communication lead them to have more autonomy with their work. They also found that in order to decrease the digital communication induced load at work, management should balance with social aspects such as conventions, work habits and practices without the digital aspect of communication to enhance well-being at work. (Bordi et al., 2021.)

In the study published by Monica Molino, Emanuela Ingusci, Fulvio Signore, Amelia Manuti, Maria Luisa Giancaspro, Vincenzo Russo, Margherita Zito and Claudio G. Cortese, they argue that despite of the increased amount of remote working, which has proved to have benefits to employers and employees during the pandemic, such as keeping businesses afloat and operational and employees employed, it also has a negative impact on the ones implementing it. They are studying technostress and its negative consequences on workers. (Molino et al., 2020.)

Monica Molino, Emanuela Ingusci, Fulvio Signore, Amelia Manuti, Maria Luisa Giancaspro, Vincenzo Russo, Margherita Zito and Claudio G. Cortese described their study and results of the study as follows: “The present study had a double aim: to test the psychometric characteristics of the Italian translation of the brief version of the technostress creators scale and to apply the scale to investigate technostress during the Covid-19 emergency. The research involved 878 participants for the first study and 749 participants for the second one; they completed a self-report online questionnaire. Results confirmed the three-factor structure of the Italian technostress creators scale and highlighted positive relationships between workload, techno-stressors, work–family conflict and behavioural stress.” (Molino et al., 2020, Abstract)

Analyses on the role of the conditions that people work in remotely and some tools for the further examination of technostress and employee’s well-being were also provided. (Molino et al., 2021.)

In the study of Dodi Wirawan Irawanto, Khusnul Rofida Novianti and Kenny Roz, the authors are examining the impact of Covid-19 pandemic’s direct and indirect effect on employee well-being and ultimately on job satisfaction. They have focused on remote workers who had to change their environment of working because of the pandemic. They study the effects that remote working has on an individual’s job satisfaction by

looking at different aspects such as work stress and work-life balance. (Irawanto et al., 2021.)

The findings were made by conducting a study for 472 workers from Indonesia where their responses were analysed using a software. Dodi Wirawan Irawanto, Khusnul Rofida Novianti and Kenny Roz states the results of the study as: "The study revealed that working from home, work-life balance, and work stress have a significant effect, both directly and indirectly, on job satisfaction. Working from home as a new pace of work can sustain job satisfaction as the current working atmosphere for Indonesian workers. In response to the collectivist setting, working from home can be a positive sign that needs to be paid attention to for the organization." (Irawanto, Novianti and Roz, 2021)

Maria Charalampous, Christine A. Grant, Carlo Tramontano and Evie Michailidis made a systematic literature review on remote working where they wanted to get a deeper understanding on the life of remote e-worker. In their work, they pursued to get an understanding if there is an association between the five dimensions of well-being at work (psychosomatic, social, affective, professional, and cognitive) and remote e-working, within knowledge workers. The systematic literature review was made based on 63 studies that employed different methods of designs.

Based on the literature they found that there are both positive and negative aspects on remote working on the well-being of a remote e-worker. As a negative aspect, which they highlighted in their work, workers are seeing more threats in their professional advancement and professional and social isolation. (Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano and Michailidis, 2018.)

Rocco Palumbo's article is meant to get a deeper understanding on the habits of remote workers, it wants to know about the abilities of an employee to perform and manage their work-life interplay working from home. Rocco Palumbo investigated the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) to gain a deeper understanding on the habits of remote workers. The article pursues to know more about the abilities of an employee to perform and manage their work-life interplay while working from home. (Palumbo, 2020.)

The research for the article was done by looking at two different settings: first the perceived work-related fatigue and work engagement and secondly, the work-life balance which was directly affected by working from home were investigated. (Palumbo, 2020.)

In the findings, Rocco Palumbo's article shows that work engagement had a positive effect on remote workers' work-life balance, but it also shows that telecommuting from home also affected negatively on the public servant employees' work life balance. Employees were shown to have suffered more of life-to-work and work-to-life conflicts. (Palumbo, 2020.)

3 Methodology and limitations

This paper aims to examine latest and relevant literature on Covid-19 and its effects to HRM. It also aims to examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to HRM and the paper also aims to go further with how the changes in HRM strategies effected employees' health and well-being. This paper works as a general review on already published information about the impact of the pandemic to HRM and employees. It tries to show the relevant information that already exists and aims to broaden the field of study in order to find best possible solutions for future HRM and employees. In this paper, research is made by using search engines such as Google Scholar to find out all the relevant studies and information that connects HRM, Covid-19 and employee well-being. Search was made by using combination of keywords such as HRM, employee well-being, and Covid-19. Information was gathered during the years of 2020 to 2022. The paper was made purely on the information already published and the search was made manually, and the research paper does not consider epidemiological papers published. All the papers and articles used in this research paper are listed in the References section.

There are multiple factors that can be considered as limitations to this literature review presented. Firstly, the research that was done to produce this paper was done through different databases such as Google Scholar which leaves a possibility for the author to be subjective when selecting the already made research and literature that was then studied and analysed and used to make this paper. Secondly, by doing a general literature review with no funding and by gathering from information just from few

databases and resources, this paper will not have the features of a systematic literature review nor was it the goal of this paper. This paper's goal is to be informative in nature. The third limitation would be that the paper was created in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, so no long-term research is yet to be found in terms of the challenges or solutions that could be conquered or used during covid-19 pandemic or other crisis. Since the research was done based on other publications that are not yet well-backed by data to prove hypotheses, the already published research concerning the challenges or solutions for HRM and/or employees cannot be considered the most accurate information. Because Covid-19 is still ongoing, and the research made on that is also still ongoing. Therefore, future research should be focused on studies that has an element of longitude and that could then provide more accurate analysis, information, and conclusion.

4 Covid-19 pandemic

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus according to World Health Organization (WHO) (2020). WHO (2020) also says most of the ones who get infected will survive with just normal respiratory illness, but it can also be deadly to any age segment. Covid-19 poses a threat to older generations especially with already existing diseases and with lower and weaker immune system and recovery rate. The best way to prevent being infected is to stay far from others when you can and have a mask and wash hands and by staying home when sick. (WHO, 2020.)

Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world in only a short period of time. It has created a lot of turbulence in all kinds of different fields such as service workers, medical staff, first responders, children, adults, companies, cities, governments. It has created issues such as shortages on resources, public health emergencies, financial losses and other stressors for both individuals and groups. In addition to the already alarmingly stressed healthcare providers, Covid-19 pandemic may translate to psychological damages in the long run, that will have different effects in the future even after the pandemic. It may cause different kinds of safety, well-being and health issues along the way for individuals and communities such as confusion, stigma, insecurity, and isolation which can then translate to unhealthy behaviour such as substance abuse, extensive

emotional distress and noncompliance with the health authority. (Pfefferbaum et al. 2020.)

5 Human Resource management

During Covid-19, the most important concern for HR managers and for the organizations was to focus on safety and health issues. Due to the urgency of the situation, they had to act quickly and adopt new ways of working to be in a better position to make employer, employees, and the entire organization as efficient and productive as possible. They had to adopt new ways of working such as teleworking. (Ahmad, 2020.)

Teleworking is a way of working adopted by multiple companies during Covid-19. It means that an employee of a company will do their work from home or outside the workplace using modern telecommunications and technology. (Baska, 2020.)

Coronavirus pandemic is caused by the newly discovered contagious virus disease that is called Covid-19. Coronavirus was said to originate from a food source in a food market in Wuhan, China in December 2019, but currently the initial source where it originated is yet to be discovered. It transmits from human to human through nasal discharge or coughing that contains saliva and droplets that has the virus in them. (Lewis, 2020.)

This pandemic has become a huge challenge for organisations and the ways of working. It has disrupted organisational activities, organisations, and companies who had to adjust by developing or enhancing new ways of remote working such as replacing normal on-site day-to-day activities with video conferences and emails. (Lewis, 2020.)

HR professionals are faced with multiple challenges now that the economy is gradually reopening for business activities. They have to hire new medical personnel to try to continually manage the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace. They have to keep up with the latest information about the spread of the virus and consult medical staff to make new policies for isolation, recovery, and re-integration. HR professionals are also facing a big challenge of keeping personnel and employees healthy throughout the

pandemic. HR professionals are in a critical position to ensure the well-being of employees while working remotely and on-site. They must figure out ways to keep on-site employees healthy and remote workers motivated. There is also an exceeding need for added administrative work that is caused by the layoffs and sick leaves that are happening during the pandemic worldwide. (Goodness, et al., 2021.)

5.1 Human Resource Management

Michael Porter rebranded the concept of personnel management to human resource management in the 1980s. He is a renowned economist and believes that every organisation's success is attributed to its employees. This rebranding of 'personnel management' to 'human resource management' by Michael Porter sped up the technological changes in organisations and the industrialization during an economic downturn. The rebranding made possible for the employees was to be viewed as a significant resource that contributes majorly to the success of companies. (Goodness, et al., 2021.)

Since the rebranding, organisational productivity and competitiveness has improved vastly. While Kok et al. (2001) argued that HR Department was put over with the responsibility to provide support for the whole organisation in the past, recently all the organisations acknowledge that employees are essential asset of any business which was not the case decades ago. Personnel management was really restricted to the different activities such as placement, recruitment, and legal matters. HRM is vaster and covers more aspects and also includes strategic planning. (Goodness et al., 2021).

Both private and public organisations are nowadays considered to construct from individuals and are seen as more than just entities. As argued by Olasoji, (2019), the biggest responsibility for HR professionals is to coordinate employees' and individuals' efforts to achieve goals that benefit the whole organisations' effectiveness and productivity (Goodness et al., 2021.) This is why there has been a significant boost of interest in the end of the 20th century by researchers conducting studies about the subject of HRM (Michaels et al., 2001).

Igalen & Roussel (1998) believe that HRM, as a whole, covers all of the employee activities that are made to aim at the collective effectiveness of the organisation. This is

because of the reason that the whole measuring level of an organisation is measured on the basis of effectiveness of achieved goals. Thus, the role of HR professionals in an organisation is to model the whole HR development into achieving organisational goals and objectives. The same is believed by Byars & Rue, (2006) who say that in order to achieve organisational goals and objectives, the main focus of HRM should be on implementing a system of strategies and activities that pushes toward on the successful management of employees at all levels of the organisation.

5.2 Challenges for HRM

On top of prioritizing the best interest of workers and their corporations, leaders in HR have to meet those expectations despite the circumstances that COVID-19 has brought upon. With COVID-19, this has tested corporations' flexibility and adaptability to ensure best environment for the workers and that businesses continue to thrive. This has led businesses to heavily rely on digital solutions which, in turn, has forced them to evolve their structure and business priorities. One of the main challenges being having to limit face-to-face interactions and to maintain social distancing with others. (Vahdat, 2021.)

Due to the challenges the pandemic has presented, the main one being the limitation of close interactions with colleagues and customers, governments all around the world mandated businesses to either close shops or were instructed to have their workers to work from home. As the pandemic progressed in 2020, the level of absences due to sickness has increased more than before. Workers who were infected or may have had close contact to an infected individual are practically not able to work. This also meant that the workload has gradually increased as workers who are available have to step up to the responsibilities, and also in some respects – workers having to adjust and shift usual day-to-day tasks to digital alternatives. This forced HR to make strategic changes and careful planning, especially with sensitive positions, to ensure enough and best allocation of manpower resources (Goodness et al., 2021.) With the changes in organisations' HR strategies, organisations also had to battle with the technological adjustment for new ways of working. Organisations were even forced to equip employees with modern technologies in their own homes like laptops and internet connection for having to go digital suddenly and without a notice, even in jobs that requires physical presence and attentiveness. (Baska, 2020.)

HR managers had to adopt new ways of leading and supporting as employees shifted to working remotely. They not only had to ensure that the performance level was adequate for the ones working remotely, but also had to make sure that the on-site workers were getting enough support and proper integration with different work processes (Goodness et al., 2021.) A dramatic change in employees work environment will lead to big changes in employees' ability to find their place in a work environment. (Kristof, 1996).

Another problem that HR managers and professionals faced during the outbreak of Covid-19 was how to manage employees' communication between managers and other employees. They had to see that the communication networks and equipment was digitally up-to-date and easily manageable at the same time since ordinary outdated networks and equipment makes managing and communications extremely difficult for the workforce and managers. This problem was emphasized during the pandemic since now leaders had to identify which communication channels and equipment were suitable to each worker and team and especially for employees who work remotely. Different communication tools that were already on the market made it easier for managers and cushioned the blow. Tools like e-mails, online messaging, video conferencing such as Skype and Zoom were used to help out the growing need to communicate differently and quickly even though some workers were not exposed to them or completely lacked the skill to use them. (Bailey & Breslin, 2020.)

Organisations' workforces consist of differently skilled labour, both unskilled and skilled. If an organisations' workforces consist of labour mostly from remote communities it is a workspace environment that has been seen as a great risk, since it can speed up the spread of the virus. The employees themselves are seen as a great risk to spread the virus within a workforce and it is especially these kinds of workforces that usually contribute heavily to the spread of the Covid-19 virus more often. (George& George, 2020.) Within a workplace, Covid-19 is mostly spread in places such as canteens, exit points, rest rooms, elevators, corridors, changing rooms, and other shared areas. These are places with a lot of traffic within a workplace. (Goodness et al., 2021.)

Different styles of companies were affected by the spread of the virus but ones that were affected in an extreme fashion were the service-focused companies since they

had to shut down the core of the business by not being able to meet with customers face-to-face. Given the situation, service companies were forced to develop and lean on digital tools and ways of communicating in order to continue to offer their different services, such as coaching, training, and consulting, to customers. However, it did not have the same impact to these companies since customers were not able to adjust themselves with the rapid transformation to digital services and a lot of customers chose to wait for the pandemic to wear off and then invest to familiar services. (Gigauri, 2020.)

The pandemic also showed how the companies might face a problem with the corporate brand and how it actually is communicated to employees. Companies faced a problem where company brand does not correspond with the communicated brand. HR experts were struggling with the changes in the communicated brand versus the actual brand and saw drastic changes and swings either in a negative or positive form and this had an impact between employees and management. There were situations where the communication was not the most effective between management and employees that the company image might be crushed in the eyes of employees because of the poor attitude and communication toward employees. A lot of HR managers were in a situation where changes in regulations concerning employee safety and Covid-19 virus were communicated poorly, miscommunicated or there were problems interpreting new guidelines between managers and employees. (Gigauri, 2020.)

Another one of the major challenges that HR professionals face is how can they engage remote or on-site workers in a similar or better manner that they used to before the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, the levels of employee engagement may have significantly decreased since there has been a lot of structural changes for employees and organisations. HR managers have to develop and demonstrate new levels of understanding and therefore have to figure out new ways to do their work. They have to find a way to keep high levels of engagement with different styles, depending whether workers work on site or remotely, this could increase not just the employee performance but also the whole organisations performance. They also have to make sure they maintain knowledge sharing as a method to engage employees. This way, an organisation could perform better in more ways than one, since

organisations are made of people and people are the real assets of the organisation by having all the skills and abilities and knowledge. (Ahmed et al 2020.)

5.3 Possible solutions for HRM

One way for the management to accomplish tasks and be able to cover up the lost employee resources is to present new policies that not only encourage but incentivise employees to spend more time in the workplace and to work extra hours. This could lead to better results and more accomplished tasks within the company. However, there might be an issue of fatigue after working long hours. This issue can be tackled again by making sure that communication works both ways between managers and employees. It is important for the managers to check up with their subordinates regularly via phone calls, e-mails, and meetings. There might be other issues too should be also addressed if noticed such as having anxiety or feeling of isolation. It is important to address not just the physical fatigue but also the mental fatigue and health. Mental and physical health can be upheld by making sure that employees will have enough breaks during their work. However, this will not be needed if HR managers take steps to control and protect customers and employees from getting the virus. There are multiple ways to do this. According to the risk assessment made by NCDC (2020), Health and Safety Executive of United Kingdom (2020) and Travers (2020), by following guidelines conducted, contraction of Corona virus can be lessened. (Goodness et al., 2021.)

Companies and organisations should focus on the hygiene aspect heavily in order to stop the spread of the virus within the workplace, which can be done by maintaining hygiene, cleaning, sanitation and safety regulations made by experts of the field. The key for following the regulations is communication with the workforce by regularly putting up fliers, giving announcements and sending information via different platforms such as videos and emails. If communication is good but still not enough, these health and safety regulations can be kept up also by monitoring high traffic areas such as canteens with cameras and by putting effort to supervision and correction if needed. Managers should also present new guidelines to lessen unnecessary travel and guide employees to stay isolated for a certain time after every journey. (Goodness et al., 2021.)

Therefore, a healthy work environment does not only mean ensuring the physical well-being of employees. Leaders should also take into consideration the mental and physiological health of their staff. This could mean reshaping the strategy to contain the virus in the workplace by acquiring private healthcare workers to regularly evaluate workplace and workers' conditions, purchasing safety equipment such as medical masks, hand sanitizers, washing and testing stations, and so on. The evolution of the pandemic has also brought up the importance of regularly conducting risk assessments in the workplace, pre-planning the procurement of health and safety inventory, and consultation with occupational health experts wherever suitable. (George & George, 2020.)

Survey made by Gartner on remote working during Covid-19 suggest that managers have adapted well to the on-going technological development and are in a good position to help out their employees in the adaptation to different economic and social situations. In this survey, Gartner introduced new models and ways of managing workers who work remotely. (Gartner, 2020.)

In Gartner's survey, there were few key factors such as normalizing self-direction, which was seen as a solution where employees would not be supervised so much and that there would be more self-directed work which is something that the majority of remote workers demand. Employees will then have more time and focus to put on their work and so the output of an individual increases. (Gartner, 2020.)

Another one was enabling new relationships. This means that it is important for the HR managers to be able to recognize and connect employees who have difficulties to connect to other colleagues or who are in distress. (Bailey & Breslin, 2020.)

In addition, it was put together that remote workers are getting almost twice as much corrective criticism from the managers and that the criticism is focusing on the work that was not fruitful. In order to maintain a fairness and equality, managers need to focus on giving straightforward feedback and enable two-way communication between the manager and remote worker and address the remote workers openly. Managers need to emphasize the positive outcome and affirm remote workers noticeable advancement at their work. (Gartner, 2020.)

Next is reassessing team expectations. Gartner's report stated that fully remote workers seek the suggestions of and collaborate with at least 3 other teams throughout their day-to-day tasks. This is opposite to managers' usual expectations where they assume that remote workers rely only on their personal ideas. This goes to show that leaders should be expected to create and set a certain benchmark not only for each member, but also for other teams as a whole to ensure that individual effectiveness and collaborative success. Conversations highlighting individual and team goals are crucial. (Gartner, 2020.)

Werner & Desimone (2012) believed that managing company's human resources was successful if everyone in the company had a comprehensive understanding of the company's goals and objectives. They concluded that successful HR management was greatly influenced by the level of understanding of the company's objects and goals within the workforce as a whole. It was also said to be a challenge since it can be quite complicated to make each individual in a company understand the goals and objectives of the whole company, however this is said to be one key factors to company's successful result. (Werner & Desimone, 2012.)

One possible way of meeting the challenges HR professionals is having during the Covid-19 pandemic is to introduce ways of knowledge sharing in the corporation's culture. Knowledge sharing is something that could possibly help the organisation to get back on track with the changes that are occurring during the pandemic, and it is also a way to engage employees on another level which can not only improve employees' well-being, but also drive corporations' result. (Ahmed et al., 2020). Abukhait et al. (2019) found in their study that knowledge sharing will have positive effect on the behaviour employees, especially on their innovative behaviour. Other research also found that his positive cycle of innovative behaviour of employee's, combined with organisations own innovation could in fact result in major positive changes in organisations performance (Al-Ababneh, 2014). Innovation coming from engaged employees combined with organisations own innovation could create pools of new ideas which then could be transformed to better products or services that the organisation is offering. By keeping high levels of engagement with different styles, depending whether workers work on site or remotely, could increase not just the employee performance but also the whole organisations performance. By maintaining knowledge sharing as a method to engage employees, an organisation could perform

better in more ways than one, since organisations are made of people and people are the real assets of the organisation by having all the skills and abilities and knowledge. (Ahmed et al., 2020.)

Employee engagement is a very important factor when considering organisations and employees' success. Employee engagement levels can actually predict the performance of an employee and therefore even the organisation's success and financial performance. Employee engagement or disengagement appears to have a major impact on employee's success and therefore is crucial aspect for the organisation to consider of. The level of employee engagement can be seen in different things and more often than not appears to have a direct connection to the productivity and efficiency of the company, company culture, company image, staff dismissal rates and, of course, customer satisfaction. Employees and organisations with high levels of employee engagement can be witnessed by seeing that employees focus and pay more attention on their work, complete tasks, and object with minimal confusion but with maximum effort and even competition. Employees are well-informed of the objects and tasks and are passionate of their work and output, making sure that they contribute in the organisations success. Employees who are highly engaged to their work show enthusiasm, major level of involvement, dedication and are inspired and inspiring to others. (Ahmed et al., 2020.)

Based on the research of Tejaswi and Raya (2014), organisation's performance should be well planned and articulated to the employee and that organisations should focus on six areas of work which are rewards, values, equity, control, communities, and workload. They argue that proper employee engagement is done through talking and conversing, transferring opinions and ideas and this can be labelled as employees' self-expression whereas employee integration is seen in specific work and can be seen as self-employment. All in all, most of the studies associated with employee engagement are putting their focus and efforts on the individual and organisational outcomes and also to the factors that has influence on employee engagement. (Ahmed et al., 2020.)

After considering all of the data Ichsan et al. (2020) gathered, analysed, and summarized in their research and findings, they came to a conclusion that HR professionals and organisations should focus on few key factors when making

important decisions concerning employees. They gathered that organisations should focus on these following topics: HR capabilities, ensuring sufficient infrastructure to finish tasks, having and updating the estimated need of HR by the company, having a strategy to determine HR governance, knowing and making sure that the company has the needed human resources (employees) to complete tasks and, evaluating all the actions of the company that are made to correct any situations. (Ichsan et al., 2020.)

Other ways of battling the challenges and worries raised by Covid-19 pandemic are to include strategies like strengthening efficiency internally, preparing to be as flexible as possible as an organisation, acquiring the right people and talent, and also by making the right changes for the organisation according to assessments in order to keep and better business activities (Azizi, 2021). In order to have a remote work environment that thrives, organisations' managers will have to adjust their organisation structure to keep the organisations less hierarchical and at the same time, they should build and upkeep their relationships with their workers to be able to establish a competitive environment that also holds true genuine concern on their employees' health and well-being (Contreras et al., 2021). Top management and HR teams should also make strategies that focus on the "what if" situations. In this way organisations, will be much more ready for similar catastrophes, similar to what Covid-19 pandemic caused. These kind of "what if" scenarios can prove to be really beneficial to organisations and the designing of these strategies will not burden the organisations too much. It is also crucial to keep up a frequent communication and interaction with employees since this will make it far easier for HRM to keep employees up-to-date, and engage and encourage them during the ongoing crisis and also possible future ones (Gigauri, 2020.)

The actions of pioneering managers and HR leaders during this ongoing pandemic will show the way to the future of respective companies and employees. Different kinds of web-based solutions will remain to be of immense importance with the growing number of employees working from home. Many studies show that the challenges and changing environments of a company, caused by a crisis or other problems, can be solved by business innovation and business innovation has become a necessity to organisations. (Vahdat, 2021.)

6 Employee well-being

As Covid-19 hit and the outbreak was soon labelled as a pandemic, it forced a shift in the way people worked. Many organisations opted on shifting from a “normal” way of working where you work on-site in the workplace to another way which was working from home (WFH). This made it possible for the employees who were able to do it, to work from home. (Galanti et al., 2021.) Eurofound (2020) estimated that from the European workers, approximately half worked from home either full time or partially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a great shift from the number that was prior to Covid-19 pandemic which was 12% (Eurofound, 2020). At the moment the numbers are almost the same for many organisations and therefore, employees have opted to have WFH as a way of working even when the world is slowly opening after the biggest outbreaks. (Ceurstemont, 2020).

Italy, for example, quickly adopted different measures to confine people into their homes in order to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. For several months, Italy took on the approach in the Spring of 2020 and continued to do so as other European countries followed suit in the early part of 2021 in order to contain the spread of the virus. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

As all changes in life, work life and organisations, employees working from home remotely has its positive and negative aspects (Konradt et al., 2003). More often these kind of changes in the way of working are carefully planned, approved, and implemented by an organisation and the key is that they more often than not have had a choice whether to take action or not when introducing a new way of working. Organisations have also had the time to effectively design and prepare for a change in order to allow adaptation to happen peacefully for organisation and employees in order to maintain overall efficiency and productivity of the organisation as a whole, which can then ensure that the organisation is fit to proceed with same results or even better them and also to keep employees work-life balance intact. (Allen et al., 2015) (Gajendran et al., 2007) (Toscano et al., 2007). However, now that there was an outbreak of a pandemic, organisations and employees were forced to reinvent their ways of working in no time and it lead to a lot of issues such as employees not having efficient and proper training or skills or equipment to do their work remotely. (Molino et al., 2020) (Wang et al., 2021) (Vander et al., 2020).

As mentioned earlier, there has been positive and negative outcomes and aspects reported by studies that have investigated remote work (Vander et al., 2017). It comes to show that remote working as a subject of investigation has been quite explored (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). Working from home as a new way of working has had an effect on the productivity and well-being of employees with no or minimal amount of prior experience of remote work and to study the work conditions of working remotely during the pandemic is imperative in order to identify the specific work conditions affecting remote work. (Vander et al., 2020).

6.1 Changes and challenges for employees

The world came to a stop after the outbreak of Covid-19 virus. It shaped and keeps shaping the life and livelihood of individuals, families, communities, and organisations. When looking at organisations, both public and private sectors are facing not only economic difficulties and challenges, but also cultural and managerial changes and challenges left and right while trying to provide necessary goods and services for consumers who desperately need them. (Manuti et al., 2020.)

Employees were forced to work remotely, organisations had to cut employees and practice layoffs, and in many cases production/manufacturing of goods was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic if not closed entirely because of the financial losses from the economic downfall. Organisations and people working in these industries had to adapt quickly and make changes. Managers and employees had to adapt and adjust to the new situation where this enormous affective, behavioural, and cognitive burden was laid on them. Being totally unprepared for the situation employees and managers had to show and develop new skillsets such as innovation, resilience, adaptability, and optimism in order to survive the unexpected circumstances Covid-19 pandemic blessed them with (Manuti et al., 2020.)

6.2 Effect on employee well-being

Factors like family-work conflict and social isolation were proved to be important job demands for remote workers and they were associated in all of the three tested outcomes of the study made by Galanti et al., (2021). They were seen as factors that can have a great impact on remote workers work engagement and productivity by

decreasing it and were also factors in increasing job stress of a remote working employee. (Galanti et al., 2021). The results found by Galanti et al., (2021) were in line with previous studies made by other researchers of the topic and also will improve the information already known about the engagement, stress, and productivity of working from home employees. Their findings also suggest that employees and organisations should weigh these factors that could decrease work performance and add stress for a remote worker in order to develop different strategies or guidelines on how to better observe and notice and then manage these issues to be able to get positive outcomes that are expected from remote workers. To be able to tackle these problems of isolation and engagement, it is particularly important for the HR officers, employees, and organisations to have a strategy implemented that would increase employees' opportunities to communicate with superiors and colleagues because communication can have a major impact on these problems. If found within an organisation, tools for communication should do a lot for these matters. It is important to equip remote workers with the right proper technology resources in order for the employees be able to interact socially and exchange ideas and information with colleagues and superiors. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

Many companies have therefore amped up their spending to acquire new software and technological tools for the companies to offer a platform for workers and remote workers where they would be able to experience "face-to-face" interaction among everyone in the organisation. It is a way for the companies to try to mitigate the isolation and stress problems caused by the lack of the real face-to-face interaction and an effort to imitate the "real thing" as well as possible under the circumstances. This may however also increase concerns of digital privacy and possible fears of surveillance in the workforce caused by the newly implemented technology connected to their work. Another worry for managers and HR professionals is that with the new technology comes new kinds of issues such as distractions and interruptions. If not well communicated and structured, these new exchanges between managers and employees made possible by new technology might make a dent to employees' performance by adding unwanted distractions and interruptions. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

Distraction is indeed another theme that is seen as a great problem regarding working from home. The study results of Galanti et al., (2021) show that distracting environments with acoustic distractions, family-work conflict and even the lack of

privacy may have a role that affects remote worker's work. While surprisingly proving not to be a predictor of increased stress or decline in remote workers productivity, distracting environment is shown to have an effect on employees' motivational drivers which may be noticed in employees' behaviour as a decrease in engagement. Unlike distracting environment, the family-work conflict shows major negative impact towards every variable in Galanti et al., (2021) study. The reason for this might be the continuing pandemic that has forced employees to work from their homes with their significant others, family members or other habitats. This crowded environment with people who are focusing on their own educational and work commitments alongside and under the same roof are therefore further complicating employees' family and work-life balance. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

The study also shows that resources like self-leadership and autonomy can play a crucial role on managing ones' personal work. If employee has skills such as autonomy and self-leadership and is able to manage themselves accordingly, they will have the means to have a positive outcome when it comes to employees work engagement and productivity. A skilled employee in self-leadership and autonomy could potentially have a great favourable outcome towards their own work and towards the organisation, tackling the WFH problems of lack of engagement and employee productivity. This goes to show that it might be smart for managers and HR professionals to promote self-leadership and autonomy to everyone working from home. This promotion can be done in different ways such as developing self-observation strategies, implementing training interventions for employees, and promoting work-related goal-based schedule, priority and deadline schemes for the employees working from home. The findings of the study show that there is room for new processes that could be implemented to support the employees, their work, and their future in the organisations. Advancements could be made in the area of employee training to empower employees to develop self-leadership behaviours and increase their own competency to favour organisations objectives and goals. (Galanti et al., 2021.)

7 Conclusion

This paper which research methodology is literature review is constructed from collected articles, research papers, and other publications to answer the question: How has the covid-19 pandemic affected companies' HRM and how the new decisions and

strategies of companies' HRM, under the pressure of Covid-19 pandemic, has affected employees' well-being.

During the covid-19 pandemic it was and still is crucial for organisations HRM to make tough but critical decisions and strategies in order to support the organisations during tough times filled with uncertainty and changes in organisation structures and the ways organisations do business. Health of the employees should be a top priority to organisations and HRM and health includes physical and mental health of the employees. HRM had to act quickly and make sure employees adapt to new changes even faster to keep organisations as well off as possible during the crisis.

Key elements for organisations, hrn and employees were found by the literature review done based on the already published research, articles and studies, and they were the following: Health of employees/hygiene aspect, employee engagement while most are working from home, clear communication, sufficient training and tools for the transfer of the way of working (remote work), knowledge sharing, self-leadership or autonomy and the promotion of them. All of the said aspects were proven to be helpful tools for HRM to manage employees and to help employees with the adaptation and stress. These were also shown to be really helpful and supporting from the employee well-being view. The key take however was the employee engagement and how practising it in different forms can provide deep sense of commitment from the employee view but also could then provide innovation, enthusiasm, commitment and motivation towards the organisation via the employees. Employees being the biggest asset for a organisation, HRM should focus on making employees feel their need and try to make them as committed to shared goals and objectives as possible. By succeeding to lay the ground with well planned, different, passionate, and innovative strategies of employee engagement, Human Resource Management can prove to be truly significant for the organisation's performance and future success.

There are multiple factors that can be considered as limitations to this literature review presented. Firstly, the research that was done to produce this paper was done through different databases such as Google Scholar which leaves a possibility for the author to be subjective when selecting the already made research and literature that was then studied and analysed and used to make this paper. Secondly by doing a general literature review with no funding and by gathering from information just from few

databases this paper will not have the features of a systematic literature review nor was it the goal in this paper. This paper's goal is to be informative in nature. Third limitation would be that the paper was done during covid-19 pandemic, so no long-term research is yet to be found in terms of the challenges or solutions that could be conquered or used during covid-19 pandemic or other crisis. Because of not being long term research, the already published research concerning the challenges or solutions for HRM and/or employees cannot be considered the most accurate information because covid-19 is still ongoing, and the research made on that is also still ongoing. Therefore, future research should be focused on studies that has an element of longitude and that could then provide more accurate analysis, information, and conclusion.

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