



# **ROLE OF CORONA PANDEMIC ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY PRE AND POST COVID – 19 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADURAI DISTRICT (TN)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

HR managers are the unsung protagonists in healthcare, mostly because their jobs directly affect the lives of patients whom they seldom meet. They work directly with healthcare professionals to devise programs and key solutions that cater to the requirements of both employees and patients. It is significant work that is worthwhile in a number of ways. Since all health care is ultimately delivered by and to people, a strong perception of the human resources management problems is required to ensure the success of any health care program. Further human resources initiatives are necessary in many health care systems, and more widespread research must be undertaken to bring about new human resources policies and practices that will promote the welfare of individuals around the world. The COVID-19 has grandly shaken all hospitals, creating a complex and challenging environment for managers and human resource management (HRM) practitioners, who need to find ingenious solutions to ensure the continuity of their companies and to help their employees and health care employees to cope with this extraordinary crisis. The study suggest that managers and policy makers should focus sharply on improving the functioning of relevant HR management systems in health care organizations as one important means to improve patient care.

## **Keywords**

COVID - 19, Human Resource Management, Healthcare, Hospital Industry, Madurai city

## INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is an unprecedented health crisis that has strongly shaken the whole world, plunging it into great fear and uncertainty. It has heavily impacted economies, societies, employees, and organizations. This crisis has started first in the city of Wuhan (China), which has witnessed in December 2019 the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that has known a fast spread propelling its status to a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization.

Given the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, these countries have implemented several non-pharmaceutical measures intended to reduce its spread, such as social distancing. Lockdown measures have been imposed; people were quarantined; schools, universities, nonessential businesses, and non-governmental organizations have been temporarily closed; travels were restricted; flights were canceled; and mass public gathering as well as social events have been prohibited. Whence the importance, for the scientific community, to support organizations by providing relevant information related to this new pandemic. Therefore, the principal goal of this research is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on HRM, to identify the main challenges and opportunities, and to provide insights into future directions in HRM. COVID-19 pandemic makes all the healthcare systems as well as the pay serious attention to the areas of procurement, distribution, performance assessment, development, compensation systems and other related human resources management as the prerequisite and necessity. The importance of optimal health human resource management can be considered from the WHO's viewpoint.

Hospitals in modern days have to be competitive and also cost effective. In order to survive today's cut-throat competition, Patients i.e., Customers are the main source of decisive force on the hospital management. From hospital management point of view, patient's satisfaction and delight is the main concern. In order to satisfy patient's needs during their hospitals stay, hospital employees, hospitals infrastructure support and hospital services are on test all the time. An important resource in a hospital is human resource. Human resource management in hospitals applies the functions of general management- planning, organizing, directing, and controlling to each of one the tasks of human resource management-Procurement, development, compensation, integration, maintenance and separation.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To identify the factors contributing HRM practices in private multispecialty hospitals in Madurai.
- ii) To analyse the impact of COVID - 19 pandemics in the efficiency of HRM practices in Madurai hospitals.
- iii) To measure the level of satisfaction attained by hospital employees during pre and post covid period.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic poses substantive challenges to health systems globally, balancing additional service delivery needs required to manage the pandemic while preserving and enhancing access to essential health services. Health workers are both a central component of the pandemic response and among those most vulnerable to infection and mental health impacts due to their professional exposure. Low staffing levels, particularly nurse-patient ratios, are themselves associated with the spread of pathogens in health care settings and risk of outbreaks. Strategic workforce planning, support and capacity-building are required to guarantee health system operations. Many countries face pre-existing health workforce challenges, including shortages (estimated at 18 million globally, mostly in low- and lower-middle-income countries), maldistribution, and misalignment of needs and skills. The pandemic further impacts the availability and capacity of health workers to deliver essential services and meet surge needs. Health worker challenges during COVID-19 may include lack of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and other essential equipment; infection and quarantine; social discrimination and attacks; and dual responsibility to care for friends and family members.

The interventions cover protecting and supporting health workers, building capacity and optimizing roles, improving availability and rationalizing distribution, reviewing and strengthening policy and regulations and ensuring consideration of gender and equity. Where appropriate, links are provided to the most closely related and relevant World Health Organization (WHO) tools and guidance. The recommendations apply to, but are not limited to, health occupations that provide clinical services, such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, rehabilitation professionals and community health workers. Some of the recommendations may apply also to paramedical staff, laboratory staff, support staff who have contact with patients, social care workers and others who play essential supporting roles (such as cleaners and ambulance drivers).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance (including quality of care in health-care organizations) is an important topic in the organizational sciences but little research has been conducted examining this relationship in hospital settings. Human resource (HR) directors from sixty-one acute hospitals in England (Hospital Trusts) completed questionnaires or interviews exploring HR practices and procedures. The interviews probed for information about the extensiveness and sophistication of appraisal for employees, the extent and sophistication of training for employees and the percentage of staff working in teams **Michael A. West , Carol Borrill , Jeremy Dawson , Judy Scully , Matthew Carter , Stephen Anelay , Malcolm Patterson & Justin Waring (2002)**.

According to **Gourinchas (2020)**, COVID-19 has generated a situation where in a short period 50 percent or more of the workforce might not be able to work.

Trying to recover from this economic shock, companies have started reopening (**Major & Machin, 2020**), in the mid of this ongoing pandemic, under extraordinary rules and a new functioning (e.g., physical distancing in the workplace) (**Shaw, Main, Findley, Collie, Kristman, & Gross, 2020**) that no one can predict when it will end. Therefore, this pandemic has obviously led to the emergence of a complex and challenging environment for managers and human resource management (HRM) practitioners who needed to find ingenious solutions to sustain their company's business and to help their employees to cope with the challenges of this unprecedented situation. In this context, there are very few studies on the impact of COVID-19 on HRM, its challenges, and its potential opportunities for HRM in organizations, whereas managers and HRM practitioners need relevant information that will help them to go through this crisis effectively and efficiently, to be able to support their employees and to sustain their company's business. In fact, organizations are generally not sufficiently prepared to deal with crises when they occur (**Wang, Hutchins, & Garavan, 2009**).

Having the core components of infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes - or at least the related minimum requirements - in place at national and facility levels is essential to preparedness and outbreak response (5). In particular, competent IPC focal points and teams, effective implementation of IPC standard operating procedures at the point of care, and adequate equipment and staffing levels in clinical areas are critical elements to avoid pathogen transmission and spread of epidemics. Health workers must be well trained on IPC measures for COVID-19, equipped with the right personal protective equipment (PPE), and practise required safety measures to avoid infection in the workplace, household and community. (**World Health Organisation, 2020**).

## METHOD

The required data and information for the study have been collected from nearly 180 respondents of 10 private multispecialty hospitals in Madurai with the help of systematic closed-ended questionnaire. The respondents of hospitals were selected from the randomly selected areas of Madurai Metropolitan Area. As such, 15 hospitals have been selected for the survey. 5 hospitals, due to their restricted protocols have refused to participate in the survey.

This study is purely based on primary data through questionnaire distributed to the respondents of private hospitals. References from secondary sources like newspapers, journals, articles and websites are also taken into the study. Area of research is Madurai city of Tamil Nadu.

Questionnaire was collected from these hospitals which are as follows:

- 1) Apollo SpecialityHospital
- 2) Mahalakshmi Hospital
- 3) Rakki Hospital
- 4) Dr. Rabindran's Healthcare Centre Pvt. Ltd.
- 5) Flamingo Health Centre
- 6) RKB Hospital
- 7) Ragavendra Hospital
- 8) Be Well Hospitals
- 9) ESSVEE Hospital
- 10)Teja Hospital

## ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The collected data and other required information are processed to interpret the role of HR management in hospitals before COVID - 19 pandemic which are all compared to that post pandemic.

From the various chapters of HR management, three important criterial are only taken for the study which are as follows:

- i) Communication and Grievance Redressal
- ii) Evaluation and Appraisal of Performances
- iii) Training and Education

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1

Showing Socio Economic profile of respondents

Description	No. of respondents	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
< 30	48	26.67
31-40	69	38.33
41-55	36	20
> 55	27	15
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	114	63.33
Female	66	36.67
<i>Educational Qualification</i>		
Nursing	94	52.22
MBBS	36	20
> MBBS	22	12.22
Others	28	15.56
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single/Unmarried/Divorced/Deceased	62	34.44
Married	118	65.56
<i>Experience</i>		
< 5 years	41	22.78
5-10 years	37	20.56
11-15 years	72	40
> 15 years	30	16.67
<i>Post</i>		
Low Level	153	85
Middle Level	27	15

Table 2

Showing frequency distribution of responses from communication and grievance redressal pre and post COVID - 19 pandemic

Description	No. of respondents		Percentage	
	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19
Full Coverage	83	25	46.11	13.89
Better Coverage	24	31	13.33	17.22
Partial Coverage	42	61	23.33	33.89
Some Coverage	12	34	6.67	18.89
No Coverage	19	29	10.56	16.11

The above table depicts that there are some differences between the responses for the coverage of communication and redressals and sorting out of grievances faced by the employees. 46.11 % of responses confirmed full extend of the benefit before pandemic, but with the difference of 32.22%, only 13.89% agreed that these benefits are wholly covered. 17.22% of hospital employees felt better coverage post pandemic where 13.33% of them felt better pre pandemic period. When they asked about partial coverage, approximately 10% differs of the coverage was provided partially for the respondents as mentioned above. Some coverage is only provided after pandemic where 18.89% on post pandemic and 6.67% on pre pandemic. For 16.11% of respondents, no coverage was provided post pandemic where 10.56% agreed pre pandemic period.

Table 3

Showing frequency distribution of responses from performance appreciation and evaluation pre and post COVID - 19 pandemic

Description	No. of respondents		Percentage	
	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19
Full Coverage	72	46	40.00	25.56
Better Coverage	18	27	10.00	15.00
Partial Coverage	46	55	25.56	30.56
Some Coverage	14	20	7.78	11.11
No Coverage	30	32	16.67	17.78

The above table depicts that there are some differences between the responses for the coverage of appreciation for their impeccable performance and evaluation of those performances of the employees. 40 % of responses confirmed full extend of the benefit before pandemic, but with the difference of 14.44%, only 25.56% agreed that these benefits are wholly covered pre-pandemic. 10% of hospital employees felt better coverage post pandemic where 15% of them felt better pre pandemic period. When they asked about partial coverage, approximately 5% differs of the coverage was provided partially for the respondents as mentioned above. Some coverage is only provided after pandemic where 7.78% on post pandemic and 11.11% on pre pandemic. For 17.78% of respondents, no coverage was provided post pandemic where 16.67% agreed pre pandemic period.



Table 4

Showing frequency distribution of responses from performance appreciation and evaluation pre and post COVID - 19 pandemic

Description	No. of respondents		Percentage	
	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19	Pre Covid - 19	Post Covid - 19
Full Coverage	79	31	43.89	17.22
Better Coverage	33	39	18.33	21.67
Partial Coverage	34	36	18.89	20.00
Some Coverage	20	31	11.11	17.22
No Coverage	14	43	7.78	23.89

The above table depicts that there are some differences between the responses for the coverage of appreciation for their impeccable performance and evaluation of those performances of the employees. 43.89 % of responses confirmed full extend of the benefit before pandemic, but with the difference of 26.67%, only 17.22% agreed that these benefits are wholly covered pre-pandemic. 21.67% of hospital employees felt better coverage post pandemic where 18.33% of them felt better pre pandemic period. When they asked about partial coverage, approximately 1.11% differs of the coverage was provided partially for the respondents as mentioned above. Some coverage is only provided after pandemic where 17.22% on post pandemic and 11.11% on pre pandemic. For 23.89% of respondents, no coverage was provided post pandemic where 7.78% agreed pre pandemic period.

However, this study was mainly confined to some region hospitals only of Madurai city. It does not cover hundreds of other hospitals in the city, district and state.

## CONCLUSION

In the field of medicine, crises are inevitable. However, no one can predict a crisis with the magnitude of COVID-19, which has accelerated the disruption of traditional methods of HRM and has created significant challenges for managers and HRM practitioners, who were not fully equipped in terms of information, resources, and competencies to cope with the complexity and the novelty of this pandemic.

Besides these challenges, COVID-19 has opened the door to opportunities that even medical centres should know to be able to properly direct their future actions in HRM. This paper is a general literature review that provides relevant and useful information which can help managers and HRM practitioners to understand the main challenges and opportunities related to COVID-19. The insights provided in this paper into the future directions in HRM should help them to develop an intervention plan adapted to the needs of their hospitals and employees.

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