

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND WORK LIFE BALANCE OF TEACHING FACULTIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

During COVID-19 pandemic, the whole education system was shattered, and it was transformed from a traditional mode of teaching to a digital platform. It was difficult for the teaching fraternity to adopt this new mode of teaching.

This study explores Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and their impact on the work-life balance of teaching faculties in higher educational institutions during the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research is motivated by the need to understand how HRM strategies have been adapted to address the unique circumstances faced by educators during the global health crisis.

The research specifically focuses on the work-life balance of teaching faculties, with a gender-sensitive lens, recognizing potential variations between female and male educators. The findings illuminate the nuanced ways in which the pandemic has influenced work patterns, stress levels, and coping strategies among teaching faculties, providing a holistic understanding of the intersection between HRM practices and work-life balance.

Keywords: SHRM, HRM Practices, Work-Life Balance, Employee motivation, HEI, COVID-19.

1. Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a vital organizational practice through which the different members (employees, staff members, personnel) of the organization are governed, supervised, and appraised. The HRM activities are executed by Human Resource (HR) managers which ensure that all the employees, management, and company are working together to achieve the set targets of the firm (Kehoe and Collins, 2017). However, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted the entire human resource and organizational practices by changing the office working environment to a remote working environment. The sudden transition brought negative implications for the organization; it adversely impacted the productivity and efficacy of the employees and the company. The main reasons behind the poor performance of the employees were a lack of technical knowledge, lack of digital resources, irregular power supply, poor internet network, and lack of adequate digital infrastructure (Savić, 2020). Considering

the university, in the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the educational organizations were forced to close and all the faculty members, students, administration, educators, teaching staff, and non-teaching staff had to change their working practices from offline to online mode. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the traditional pedagogical teaching and learning practices need to be modified to suit the digital-based teaching and learning environment. However, the transformation from traditional to digital pedagogy was accompanied by several challenges such as poor online education readiness of educators, poor technical competence, pedagogy limitations, lack of teaching resources, and lack of training which created dissatisfaction among the faculty members to carry out their roles and responsibilities (Tasso et. al., 2021). Under such conditions, the role of HRM becomes essential to reduce the challenges that are faced by the faculty members and academic employees so that they work efficiently and contribute towards the development of the university and the academic progress of the students. It

includes providing training opportunities to the faculty members in the form of online sessions and workshops so that they acquire skills to teach in digital educational practices (Oyedotun, 2020). Based on the above facts, it can be said that the current research focuses on analyzing the role of strategic human resource practices in universities so that faculty members can be motivated to work efficiently after COVID-19. The research also provides valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of the strategic human resource practices gained by faculty members during COVID-19.

2. Literature Review

According to Pham (2017), 2020 as per reference HRM is responsible for carrying out several organizational activities such as recruitment, selection, motivation, maintenance, rewards, compensation, workplace relationships, training, career development, and job satisfaction. Considering the university background, HRM plays a key role in enhancing the workability of the faculty members by providing them with training and a constructive teaching and learning environment. It includes providing fringe benefits to the faculty members, and teaching, and non-teaching staff to increase their motivation and job satisfaction levels. For example, when fringe benefits (monetary and non-monetary) are provided to the faculty members, it attracts their attention, increases their performance, and encourages them to stay committed to the organization for a longer duration. Additionally, when HRM practices were adopted in universities in Vietnam in the form of improving policies and working environment, it led to the enhancement of lecturer job satisfaction levels.

Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 on the universities and educational institutions in Israel and found that all the educational organizations such as schools, colleges, universities preschools, and special schools were closed because of the infectious disease. It instructed all the organizations to resume their teaching and learning practices through an online platform with immediate effect. As a result, all the teachers were forced to teach online even if when they were not familiar with the digital teaching and learning pattern. It created a lot of discontent among them and degraded their teaching abilities to low levels. Under such conditions, the HRM played an important role in motivating the educators by providing them with training, education, and skill development opportunities so that they could develop competencies to teach on the online platform.

Iqbal et. al., (2011) conducted a study to examine the HRM practices in public and private universities in Pakistan that belonged to Punjab province. The study determined that HRM practices that were practiced in public universities were better in comparison to the private universities in terms of compensation, training & development, teamwork, and employee participation.

However, it was analyzed that the private universities showed better employee motivation and satisfaction in terms of performance appraisal systems. The adoption of compensation, teamwork, performance appraisal systems, and training strategies helped the HRM to retain talented faculty members in the organization for a longer duration.

Alea et. al., (2020) analyzed that the HRM also ensures that the digital infrastructure of the university is developed by introducing smart HR 4.0, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), web platforms, teleworking, virtual work, and work from home. By strengthening the digital base of the university, it will be easy for the faculty members to provide learning to the students without any interruptions. The provision of a strong digital infrastructure will help in enhancing human and machine interface skills and play a significant role in the enduring growth and retention of employees.

Shrestha (2019) analyzed that HRM played a significant role in motivating the faculty members at Tribhuvan University, Nepal by providing them with proper recruitment, selection, job design, and performance appraisal facilities. For example, the HRM introduced a specific performance appraisal system within the university that helped in analysing the competencies and performances of the faculty members effectively without creating any differences.

Mefi & Asoba, (2021) analyzed that due to Covid-19 restrictions, the teachers, educators, and academic employees were forced to use the digital platform to carry out teaching practices which adversely impacted their teaching efficacy. Under such conditions, the involvement of HRM becomes essential because they play a major role in reducing the challenges that are faced by the employees when working remotely and encouraging them to adjust to the new working environment.

3. Objectives

1. To study the various strategic human Resource Management Practices adopted by Indian Universities during COVID-19.
2. To compare the work-life balance of female faculties and male faculties during COVID-19
3. To study the several factors responsible for the implementation of SHRM practices in Indian Private Universities.

4. Strategic Human Resource Management Practices (SHRM)

4.1 Teamwork

During the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty members have faced numerous challenges in adapting to remote and online teaching, ensuring the well-being of students, and maintaining the overall effectiveness of education. The need for teamwork among faculty members has been crucial to successfully navigate these challenges (Elsafty,

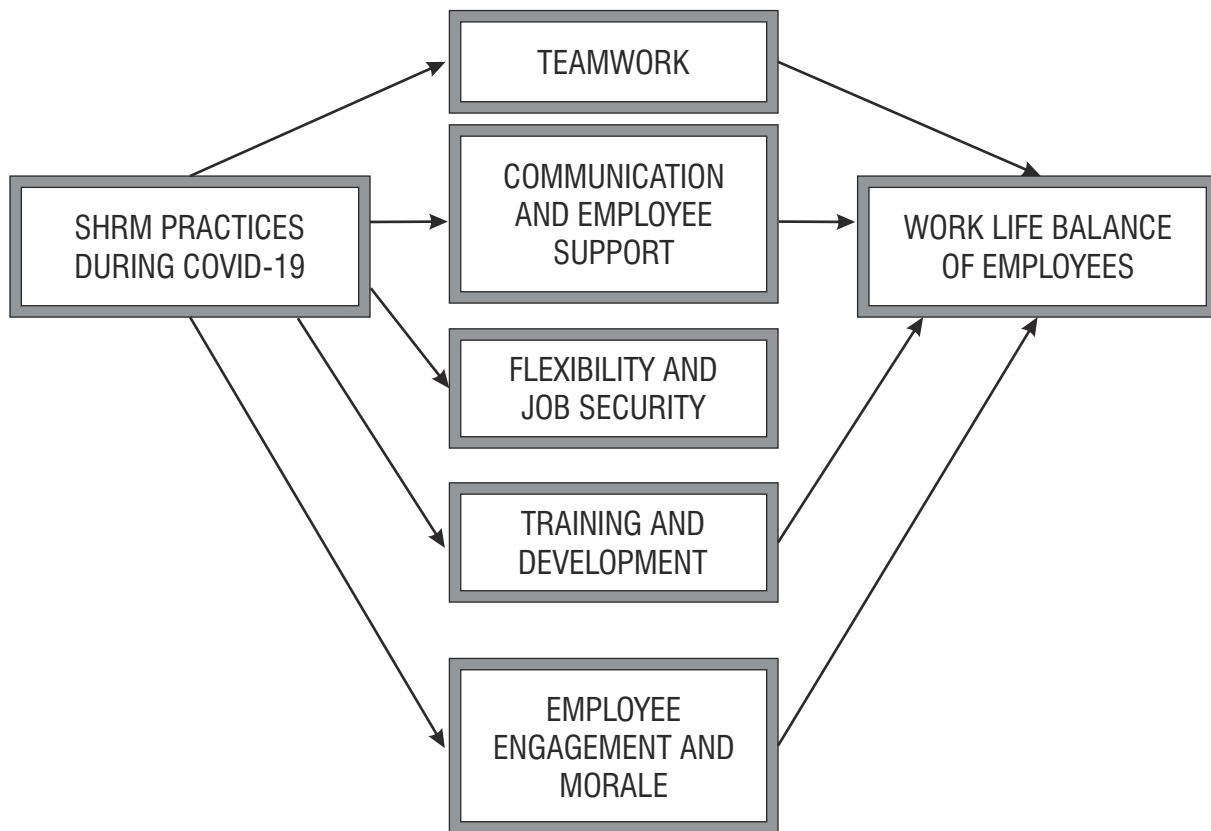


Fig 1. Strategic Human Resource Management Practices
(Source: Author's work)

2020). Here are several aspects highlighting teamwork among faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic:

a. Collaborative Curriculum Development

Faculty members have collaborated to redesign and adapt their curriculum for online delivery. This involves sharing resources, and best practices, and collectively finding innovative ways to engage students in a virtual environment.

b. Research Collaboration

Faculty members have continued to collaborate on research projects, adapting to virtual collaboration tools. Despite physical distancing, teams have found ways to share data, and ideas, and collaborate on publications.

c. Community Building

Faculty members have actively contributed to building a sense of community within their academic institutions. This involves creating virtual spaces for social interaction, networking, and mutual support.

d. Flexible Assessment Strategies

Faculty teams have worked together to develop fair and effective assessment strategies suitable for remote learning. This may include exploring alternative assessment methods, considering challenges students may face, and adapting grading policies to accommodate the circumstances.

e. Professional Development and Training

Teams of faculty members have organized and participated in professional development workshops and training sessions to enhance their skills in online teaching methodologies. Sharing expertise and experiences has been valuable in building collective competence (Elsafy, 2020).

4.2 Communication and Employee Support

During covid-19 pandemic, to support University faculty members, it was very important to keep effective communication and a range of resources to address their unique needs. Some strategies for communication adopted by Higher educational institutions are as follows:

a. Regular Communication

Higher educational institutions established a regular and transparent communication channel to keep faculty informed about the latest developments, policy changes, and safety measures related to COVID-19.

Institutions use a combination of emails, newsletters, virtual town hall meetings, and online forums to disseminate information (Elsafy, 2020).

b. Clear Guidelines

Higher Educational Institutions provided clear and updated guidelines on remote teaching, research, and

administrative duties. They addressed any changes in expectations, deadlines, or evaluation methods. Higher educational institutions offer training sessions or workshops to help faculty adapt to online teaching tools and technologies (Elsafty, 2020).

c. Mental Health Support

Higher Educational institutions acknowledged the emotional impact of the pandemic, and they offered various health resources to staff. Detailed information regarding counseling services, employee assistance programs, and wellness initiatives was shared by HEIs.

A supportive environment was provided by the Institutions (Elsafty, 2020).

d. Technology support

Higher educational institutions provide all the important technology and infrastructure for remote working. They provided all the help for accessing online teaching platforms, collaborative tools, and IT troubleshooting.

4.3 Flexibility and Job Security

The pandemic has brought many challenges and opportunities for the staff in terms of flexibility and job security. When remote teaching was in demand for adaptability, job security was a major concern. Institutions that prioritize these things foster more resilient academic staff.

a. Flexibility: Flexibility was of utmost importance to cater to the diverse needs and challenges faced by faculty members. Childcare responsibilities, health concerns. Faculty members showed flexibility by adopting various modes of teaching, online classes, and recorded lectures.

b. Job Security

1. Budgetary Challenges: Institutions were facing major financial challenges which led to concerns about job security among faculties.

2. Contractual and non-tenure track faculty: These faculties had limited job protection they were facing challenges related to contract renewal and job continuity.

3. Tenured Faculty: Tenured faculty had a position that particularly provided a huge level of stability compared to non-tenure track roles.

4.4 Training and Development

1. Technology Proficiency

a. Online Teaching Tools:

As the transformation from an old teaching methodology to an online platform was difficult to adopt, it was important to provide them training on various online teaching tools and platforms, such as video conferencing software, learning management systems (LMS), and collaboration tools. Gigauri, (2020). Such kind of training helped them to engage and deliver lectures effectively.

b. Digital Content Creation:

Various training programs were conducted to help faculties concentrate on creating digital content such as video lectures, interactive presentations, and online assessments.

c. Pedagogical Training

Effective Online Teaching Strategies: faculty members were provided with all the guidance on how to adapt teaching strategies for online education.

d. Online Assessment Training

Faculty members were provided with training on how to use online assessment tools and platforms to conduct quizzes, exams, and other forms of assessment in virtual classrooms (Gigauri, 2020).

4.5 Employee Engagement and Morale

It was challenging to maintain employee engagement and morale among faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic for the well-being and productivity of employees (Gigauri, 2020). The strategies to support faculty members are:

a. Recognition and Appreciation

Institutions have implemented many recognition programs like, "Faculty of the Month" to highlight exceptional contributions.

b. Collaborative Platforms

Institutions developed online platforms to connect, share ideas, and collaborate. This built a sense of community among the staff members.

4.6 Factors responsible for the implementation of SHRM practices in universities:

a. Organizational Culture: The universities that have a culture of innovation, employee development, and collaboration focus on implementing SHRM practices effectively.

b. Leadership Support: Leadership has a crucial role in the implementation of SHRM practices in an organization. They optimise the available resources and foster a culture of continuous improvement

c. Resource Availability: The resources available in the organization impact the implementation of strategic human resource management practices.

d. Regulatory Requirements: Universities must ensure adherence to Compliance with regulatory requirements and legal frameworks governing employment practices in India while designing and implementing SHRM policies and procedures.

e. Market Competition: Private universities operate in a competitive environment, where attracting and retaining talented faculty members is essential for success. SHRM practices such as competitive compensation packages, career development opportunities, and employee benefits play a critical role in positioning universities as employers of choice and maintaining a competitive edge in the market.

f. Industry trends: Universities that screen industry

advances and target their HRM practices against industry trends are better positioned to adopt innovative and effective SHRM initiatives.

5. Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H0): There was no significant difference in the work-life balance between male and female faculties of Universities in India during Covid-19 pandemic.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There was a significant difference in the work-life balance between the male and female faculties of Universities of India during covid-19 pandemic.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Study Sample

This study investigated the strategic human resource management practices used by higher education institutions during Covid-19. To ensure data correctness, dependability, and wide distribution of the research sample, this study used the random sampling technique to pick teaching faculties from Higher Educational Institutions of various ages, qualifications, and positions.

This study used a combination of online and on-site distribution to make sample collecting more convenient.

6.2 Data collection method and tools

In January 2024, a total of 400 questionnaires were

circulated among the teaching faculties of private universities in Maharashtra. Out of 400 questionnaires, 280 teaching faculties returned the questionnaires. After removing invalid questionnaires that were completed too quickly, inaccurately, with omitted answers, or duplicates, only, 200 questionnaires were considered for the research. So the sample size of this research is 200. The sample's gender distribution was 50% male and 50% female; the age distribution included 16.9% of participants aged 25 and below, 37.2% aged 26-35, 28.5% aged 36-45, 14.8% aged 46-55, and 2.6% aged 55 and above; the education distribution included 20.6% with a high school/junior college education, 43.3% with bachelor's degrees, 10.3% with master's degrees, and 2.1% with doctorate degrees.

6.3 Data Analysis

An independent sample t-test was conducted to test the hypotheses of whether the level of work-life balance between female and male faculties of Indian Universities during COVID-19 differs significantly or not.

Independent variables: Gender of the faculty members

Dependent variable: Work-life balance of the faculty members

7. Interpretation

The group statistic table shows that a thin slight

Table 1. Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Work-Life Balance	1.0	100	12.160	2.3601	.2360
	2.0	100	12.380	2.3302	.2330

Table 2. Independent Sample Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std Error Difference	Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Work Life Balance									
Equal Variances assumed	.050	.823	-663	198	.508	-2200	-3317	-8740	-4340
Equal Variances not assumed			-663	197.968	.508	-2200	-3317	-8740	-4340

difference of mean value for females is (M=12.160, S.D. = 2.3601) while for males is (M=12.380, S.D. = 2.3302)

Levin's test of equality of variance indicates that the f-significant value is greater than 0.05, hence we will take values of "equal variance assumed."

As it is evident from the table that the two-tailed

significant value is 0.508, which is quite higher than 0.05, t (-0.663) and C.I. = (-0.8740 - 0.4340)

Therefore, we reject the hypotheses and conclude that the work-life balance between male and female faculties during COVID-19 was insignificant.

8. Research Findings

Indian universities employed a variety of SHRM practices to adapt to the challenges posed by COVID-19, including remote work policies, virtual collaboration tools, and flexible scheduling options. Many Universities implemented training and development programs to upskill faculty members in online teaching methodologies and technology use. Institutions that demonstrated proactive and innovative approaches to SHRM were better equipped to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on faculty morale and productivity. There was no significant difference between the work-life balance of female and male teaching faculties of Universities in India during COVID-19.

9. Results and Discussion

This pandemic has thrown many challenges at educational institutions worldwide, which had a significant impact on the work-life balance and motivation of faculty members of universities in India. The objective of this study was to check the relationship between SHRM practices adopted by private Universities and the work-life balance of faculty members of Indian Universities

and the difference between the work-life balance of male and female faculty members of Universities in India. The findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of these challenges and highlight the importance of effective HRM strategies in supporting faculty well-being during times of crisis.

10. Conclusion

The outcome of this research contributes to the available knowledge of strategic human resource management in the education sector, particularly in the time of crisis. The finding of the study would be helpful for policymakers and HR professionals to optimize HRM practices and foster work-life balance among faculty members. The findings stress that there is no need for targeted intrusions and support mechanisms to address gender inequalities in work-life balance among faculty members of universities during any crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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