IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES: AN EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

Effective management is critical for organizations to maximize resources towards their objectives. This literature review examines best practices and issues related to employee management, as well as how COVID-19 has affected these dynamics. The concepts of efficiency, communication, performance management, and work conditions are investigated using seminal management texts. The pandemic's abrupt workplace changes are evaluated in light of these established perspectives. The findings suggest that COVID-19 has increased isolation, work-life conflict, and uncertainty, all of which directly impact organizations' people management processes. However, innovative strategies based on care and trust can help overcome these new barriers. Studies show that communication, engagement, development opportunities, and well-being remain critical in productive work environments, although virtually-enabled approaches must compensate for the lack of in-person contact. Customizing performance reviews to individual situations and strengths increases their effectiveness. Promoting bonding opportunities, transparent information sharing, collaborative goal setting, and a focus on health helps to maintain team spirit despite ongoing disruption. The study suggests that managers rely on resilience developed during crises, utilize technology effectively, and lead with compassion.

Keywords: *Covid-19 Effective Management, Employees, An Evaluation*

INTRODUCTION

In a study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA) called Survey of Global HR Challenges: *yesterday, today and tomorrow*, change management was the top difficulty stated on a worldwide scale, despite national and regional variances, while organization effectiveness was cited as a challenge for 'tomorrow.' Effective management in today's organizations is complex, and at the heart of organizational behavior is the fact that managing people, or an organization's human resources, has been, is, and will continue to be a major problem and vital competitive advantage (Luthans et al., 2021; p.2). As Schraeder et al. (2014) noted, numerous changes in the nature of organizational environments have demanded parallel changes in the way organizations are managed throughout history. In addition, managers fulfill a variety of key functions in organizations and are widely acknowledged for having a meaningful impact on the whole atmosphere of the workplace (Lennox, 2013; As cited by Schraeder et al., 2014).

Organizations, according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2010), represent a social innovation that empowers us to achieve collective goals beyond our individual capabilities. They expand our reach, for better or worse, and can be likened to a chessboard where the game of life unfolds. To understand organizational behavior, or life within organizations, we must first grasp the game's nature, its potential, and its rules. An organization, be it a church, non-profit, business, state agency, or government body, is an intentionally coordinated collective unit composed of two or more individuals who work together consistently towards a shared goal or set of objectives (Robbins & Judge, 2017). It cannot exist without its people. In today's increasingly competitive global marketplace, managers must be agile and adaptable to help their organizations establish and maintain a competitive edge. Leveraging the power of technology and human capital is crucial for success (Ivancevich et al., 2013). Managers play a key role in fostering a positive culture and effectively managing their employees.

MANAGING EMPLOYEES IN AN ORGANIZATION

Good managers are highly sought after in today's complex, ambiguous, and ever-changing business environment. As Robbins et al. (2020) emphasize, their skills and expertise are crucial not only for achieving organizational goals but also for fostering employee satisfaction and

commitment. Well-managed organizations, they argue, build loyal customer bases and thrive even during economic downturns, while poorly managed entities struggle with shrinking client bases, lower returns, and potential insolvency, even in good economic times. Griffin (2016) underscores the manager's role in maximizing resources to achieve organizational objectives. Interestingly, there's no single profile for a successful manager. Age, gender, and industry are irrelevant; what matters is the ability to work effectively within an organizational setting (Robbins et al., 2020, p.29; 2021, p.35).

At its core, an organization is a group of individuals united by a common goal. Robbins et al. (2020, p.29) identify three key characteristics: a specific purpose (often expressed as goals), people working towards those goals, and a defined structure governing member behavior. Mullins (2010) elaborates that within this formal structure, individuals and groups interact, creating order, establishing processes, and focusing efforts towards achieving goals. People's actions within this structure are guided by the organization's purpose, and influenced by factors such as structure, technology, leadership styles, and management systems. Management itself, as defined by Robbins et al. (2021), refers to a set of activities focused on an organization's resources (human, financial, physical, and informational) with the aim of achieving its goals effectively and efficiently. Efficiency implies using resources wisely and cost-effectively, while effectiveness signifies making sound decisions and implementing them successfully. Griffin (2016) highlights that truly successful organizations excel in both areas.

WHY EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

According to Griffin (2016), managers today are confronted with a range of interesting and challenging circumstances. Globalization, local economic rivalry, government laws, stakeholder forces, emerging technologies, the increase of social media, and other Internet-related worries face the regular executive who works sixty hours weekly, in addition to huge demands placed on their time, while facing growing complications presented by these issues. Swift fluctuations, unforeseen interferences, and little and big predicaments make their work even more difficult. The job of a manager is unexpected and full of problems, but it also offers several opportunities to make a difference. As a result, good managers may catapult a company to new heights of accomplishment, whilst bad managers can destroy even the most powerful companies (p.3).

Issues Relating to Effective Management

According to Ivancevich et al. (2013), the idea of managerial efficiency is based on systems theory, with two core suppositions, which are: firstly, that efficiency standards must replicate in the whole input-process-output cycle, and not just output, and secondly, effectiveness standards must mirror the organization's interrelationships with the external environs. As a result, managerial efficiency is a broad notion that encompasses how products or services are created or delivered (p.11).

Communicate effectively – one can never underrate the power of effective communication. Organizational longevity is linked to management's ability to receive, disseminate, and act on information, according to Ivancevich et al. (2013). They further posit that the process of communication brings people together within an organization, and it is information that connects the organization's actions to the demands of the environment as well as connects the organization's internal activities. Managers ought to share information with their employees often and in a timely manner. Additionally, they not only should be ready to give feedback, but also to receive feedback from employees.

Manage performance effectively – this includes providing opportunities for training, development and continuous learning within the organization. Mullins (2010) notes that the one essential ingredient of any successful manager is the ability to handle people effectively. Accordingly, a genuine concern for people and for their welfare goes a long way in encouraging them to perform well. Performance management, according to Hamouche (2021), is "a continual way of defining, assessing, and improving the actual performance of employees and teams while aligning performance with the organization's strategic goals." Huffmire and Holmes (2006) suggest that individual benefits such as bonuses, and team awards, such as profit sharing, should be made available, while underperformers should be identified through the performance evaluation system and not rewarded, but rather mentored and instructed to enhance their performance before being terminated if their results are not satisfactory.

Recognize effort and give credit where its due – People can be commended to success, according to Mullins (2010); and as a result, a manager should provide full credit and acknowledgment when it is due, and let people know they are valued. Too often, managers are insensitive to strong

performance, which may occur the vast majority of the time, and seem to take it for granted, but are ready to condemn when performance falls short of expectations on the rare instances when it does. In some instances, managers take credit for work done by their subordinates and do not give the credit, a trend too common in workplaces.

Equitable and fair practices and working conditions – It is important for managers to handle and manage compensation fairly, as well as provide proper work conditions with necessary and adequate work tools provided to employees in order for them to accomplish the work, they have been employed to do in meeting the organization goals and objectives.

Promote and encourage teamwork – A team, according to Colquitt et al. (2021), is made up two or more persons who collaborate over time with the aim of achieving common goals tied to a task-oriented purpose. For two reasons, teams are unique. First, team relationships are characterized by a greater reliance on one another than group interactions. Second, interactions within teams are conducted with a specific task in mind.

Be an example or role model – A manager should not only show or advise about the way to be followed but must also lead by example and model the behaviors they expect of their team. Apostle Paul writes to Titus in Titus 2:7 (NKJV), admonishing him to demonstrate himself as a model of good actions in all things; in doctrine, showing integrity, veneration, and incorruptibility. When a leader shows the example, the team is bound to trust them and this leads to loyalty.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EVALUATED ISSUES

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an incredibly challenging environment for organizations and their people, thrusting managers into the "unknown unknowns" as they help employees cope with and adapt to massive changes in both work and social settings. For example, employees who once spent most of their time within the physical office now need to rapidly adjust to virtual or remote settings (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Social distancing measures, mandatory shutdowns, and isolation periods, coupled with the fear of illness, have taken a toll on the mental health of citizens and workers. Additionally, disruptions to meaningful work, financial losses, and anxieties about the future have become common occurrences (Giorgi et al., 2021). However, Carnevale and Hatak (2020) argue that this unprecedented challenge also presents a unique opportunity for

academics and practitioners to translate groundbreaking research into actionable insights, aiding businesses in navigating this historical crisis.

The impact of COVID-19 is undeniable, and without the understanding, empathy, and commitment of every leader and employee, things will never truly return to "normal." Communication has been particularly challenging due to the uncertainty around job losses and the unknown, leading to increased stress levels. Performance management has also become an uphill battle, with managers struggling to measure performance in the new remote work environment. According to Aguinis & Burgi-Tian (2020), many businesses overwhelmed by the pandemic found it difficult to evaluate staff performance and administer performance-related compensation, leading to reduced or even discontinued performance appraisals due to the unique and complex nature of the pandemic (As cited by Hamouche, 2021). Additionally, evaluating performance during this crisis is inherently challenging due to the altered work environment. The pandemic has fundamentally changed how people interact, with lockdowns shifting daily life structures towards more home time and increased reliance on virtual technology (Saladino et al., 2020). This can lead to longer working hours and less family time, potentially causing conflict. Work conditions are also affected, with employees potentially lacking ergonomic furniture and experiencing increased health issues and medical costs. The pandemic has blurred the lines between work and personal life, making it harder to "unplug" from work obligations (Chawla et al., 2020; As cited by Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

Teamwork has also been impacted, with physical meetings replaced by virtual interactions. While things are slowly returning to normal, the pandemic has widened the gap between teams, diminishing the personal bond that comes from shared physical space. Remote work can lead to feelings of isolation due to a lack of close collaboration, peer guidance, and one-on-one engagement, contributing to stress and negatively impacting workers' psychological health (Prasad & Vaidya, 2020; As cited by Hamouche, 2021). Family disruptions and the need to juggle multiple responsibilities while working from home can also take a mental and emotional toll (Prasad & Vaidya, 2020; As cited by Hamouche, 2021).

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT POST-COVID-19

While the pandemic has presented numerous challenges, managers have an opportunity to innovate and be creative by coming up with coping mechanisms to deal with the new normal. A few strategies are outlined below:

Virtual teambuilding activities – In order to cope with the stress that comes with working from home and the absence of physical meetings with colleagues, a strategy that an organization can implement is virtual teambuilding activities, every so often to promote cohesion and enhance togetherness among employees. This also promotes staff engagement and the feeling of belonging among staff.

Frequent one on ones – Another effective way to enhance performance and encourage employees is for managers to hold one on one meetings, which keep communication lines open and a continuous loop of giving and receiving feedback. This also helps the employee and the manager and organization to keep track of performance in spite of the distancing, and timely support is also provided where performance is wanting and good performance is also acknowledged and rewarded.

Digitization of processes – The post-pandemic era calls for managers and employees to be creative and highly innovative to get work done as roles are changing, and processes getting more and more automated. To support effective management of employees, it is necessary for managers to develop ways of engaging technological tools more and more. Use of tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc. for virtual meetings and various project management tools like Trello and Wrike for managing projects online which keep the organization moving in its goal accomplishment. As Hamouche (2021) notes, Covid-19 provides opportunities for organizations to increase employee autonomy, improve digital competencies, and expand the scope of their competency development, and while the pandemic has placed new technology as a strategic partner for businesses, it has also aided in the survival of enterprises and the reduction of the distance between employees and management while ensuring their wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created seismic shifts in the workplace, profoundly impacting how managers lead teams and foster employee engagement. As discussed, factors like isolation, blurred

work-life lines, and dispersed teams have increased stress while making it harder to collaborate and stay productive. Core management responsibilities around communication, performance evaluation, and providing equitable conditions have become more complex. However, this crisis also allows for innovation - discovering new ways to connect virtually, customizing goal-setting, and prioritizing wellbeing can position organizations to thrive.

As managers adapt policies and demonstrate care for employees coping with uncertainty, they build resilience. Strategies highlighted around maintaining open dialogue, recreating bonding opportunities online, enabling flexible self-directed work, and emphasizing work-life balance help mitigate the challenges of remote management. Rather than returning to pre-pandemic norms, managers have a chance to reinvent management practices centered on transparency, autonomy and trust. By keeping employees' best interests at the core - from physical and mental health to skill development opportunities - the new normal can be redefined advantageously for both managers and teams. While long-term impacts remain unfolding, the insights gained allow managers to lead with compassion through disruption while strategically strengthening the organization.

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