Original Article

Challenges Faced by Human Resource Management Team in Managing Workforce During COVID Pandemic Era

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Abstract - The COVID-19 pandemic era wreaked destruction on life and the economy globally. With the change in offices to remote workplaces, there has been constant pressure on HRM professionals to understand the uncertainty and implement the strategies that benefit the employees and companies. This study aimed to identify the HR department challenges workers faced during the COVID era. An empirical investigation of 7 service and manufacturing firms based across India shows that HRM faced various challenges while ensuring business continuity during the pandemic, specifically concerning employees' health and well-being. The study findings could be used by professionals to formulate strategies to enhance employees' well-being and build a more collaborative remote working environment.

Keywords - Challenges, COVID era, Pandemic, Human Resource Management, Workforce.

1. Introduction

Everyone can understand the basic problems that everybody in human resource management needs to specialize in. After all, the human resources department is crucial to a company's success as it plays an inevitable role in running the firm. Therefore, to handle this responsibility and to overcome all problems, HR must understand companies' everyday challenges and solutions. The success of the company depends mostly on human resources. During the covid era, different situations have come with a lot of challenges for the company. Those challenges affected mostly the employees who can't work remotely or who can't work from home. The human resource department is the most affected because most of its functions can be performed only in the field. The HR manager has to perform his role on the field in the company. Day-to-day decisions are going to take from the place of work. When the pandemic era started, there were several challenges occured. Those challenges in the human resource department are employee retention, work-from-home convenience, strategy building, and action-taking in present fieldwork. There were many health and safety issues for employees in the company. The human resource department was forced to change its working policy and working conditions for the benefit and safety of its employees. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unexisting situations in life and business worldwide. It first began in December 2019 in China as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) outbreak. This fast-spreading virus spread globally,

creating a pandemic (Hamouche, 2021). The virus required governments across the globe to minimize its transmission by immediate actions, and it impacted health and economies (Azizi et al., 2021). With the nationwide lockdown being imposed owing to COVID-19, many companies had to resort to the remote working structure which has its challenges both for employees and employers (Vahdat, 2021). Quarantine, being the norm during the two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to disruptions in business operations. This resulted in each vertical of businesses managing the challenge of social distancing practices, including the Human Resources (HR) managers. The remote working environment has made way for face-to-face collaboration, being replaced with e-mail and the use of audio-visual tools and aids. These conditions have posed additional difficulties for HR managers to deal with. With worker health and safety being the top priority of HR managers in India, the highly infectious nature of the COVID-19 virus has raised serious questions about how to move ahead in the new normal across sectors in the country (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). The COVID pandemic created an anticipation of the loss of pay and jobs among the people, which led to increased fear and insecurity among them. Managers are therefore, trying ways to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on cash flows and working capital by innovative means (Majumdar, 2021). HR managers have faced the issue of managing not only business continuity but also paperwork and providing solace to workers who had to be laid off or furloughed (M. A. B. A. Sulaiman, Ahmed

and Shabbir, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also brought various challenges to the functioning of organizations globally. In India, it brought the challenge of incomplete work transformation, i.e. employees working partly from the office and partly from home. This trend was seen for employees across all sectors, whether public or private (Arora and Suri, 2020). The idea of physical and social space for the employees underwent a major transition. During such a time, the relevance of human resource managers grew in both sectors as they were required to navigate working amidst quarantines, mandatory self-isolation, and administrative regulatory lockdowns. Also, its imperativeness was felt with the enhancement of the challenges in working with digital mediums and virtual interactions (Mukherjee and Narang, 2023).

Although we have several studies that examine the impact of COVID-19 on HRM (M. A. B. A. Sulaiman, Ahmed and Shabbir, 2020; Azizi et al., 2021; Hamouche, 2021), there is a gap in understanding of the need and result of HRM in the manufacturing and service industry in India during the Covid period. To understand how the HRM challenges evolved with the altered work patterns under this modus operandi. The current study aims to investigate the HRM challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic across various industries and sectors in India.

2. Literature Review
2.1. HRM Challenges in India
Indian working environment is diverse regarding language, regional differences, and culture. One of the prominent challenges for HRM in India is managing a workforce with such wide diversity (Yadav and Lenka, 2020, 2022). In addition, the global competition in the labor market has increased, and these conditions in the country have created HRM challenges related to the acquisition and retention of employees (Gope, Elia and Passiante, 2018). Some of the main factors that managers need to handle to influence the decision of an employee's acquisition and retention include organizational, personal, socioeconomic status, work environment, growth opportunities, role clarity, organizational policies, compensation, autonomy, and recognition (Sinha and Sigamani, 2016). In addition, Gulati (2018), analyzing the HRM in the manufacturing industry in India, highlighted challenges for HR professionals due to the nature of the work. These include managing employees working in undesirable conditions, looking after their safety and welfare in the factory or managing workforce allocation between shifts. Furthermore, the author found the limitation of ensuring compliance with dynamic and complex laws across the different states. HR professionals need to adapt to the legal requirements and stay on top of the latest developments (Gupta and Bhaskar, 2016; Bose and Biswas, 2018; Gulati, 2018). Apart from the general challenges, there is also a need to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce and HRM.

2.2. Impact of COVID-19 on Workforce and HRM
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been profound on the workforce and HRM practices globally and in India, which has led to significant changes and challenges. Several authors (Gigauri, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Utitofon et al., 2021) have identified that prominent challenges are the adoption of remote working and the adoption of flexible work policies. The workforce felt that they had a noninterrupted connection with their work. Due to the availability of the internet, digital media, and mobile communication devices, the stress level of the employees was seen to increase (Battisti, Alfiero and Leonidou, 2022; Marsh, Vallejos and Spence, 2022). These conditions led to a decrease in their work-life balance (Gigauri, 2020a). Even flexible working requires HR personnel to create proper arrangements that support the transitions, such as developing the required skills and provisions of infrastructure to support remote working (Vyas, 2022). HR managers must also support the transition from physical to remote and remote working, providing ongoing support to help the workforce sustain the altered way of working (Shirmohammadi, Au and Beigi, 2022). Additionally, for the workforce working remotely, the expectations of their managers for working objectives and output are not understood clearly. Similarly, it was difficult for the managers to ascertain if the employees were actively working (ILO Monitor, 2020).

These conditions made managers in HR address digital miscommunication. They need to balance the work design between individuals and teams to ensure a smooth workflow without informal human interactions (Vyas, 2022). Furthermore, the areas that impacted HRM by the onset of COVID-19 included the increased stress on maintaining health and safety protocols, which included managing occupancy in the office, provisions of guidelines for safe return to the workplace, and sanitation measures, among others (Kloutsiniotis *et al.*, 2022; Selem *et al.*, 2023). The HRM had to extend its vertical to encompass analytics and data-driven decision-making to monitor employee performance, understand their needs, and make informed decisions regarding workforce management (Bieńkowska *et al.*, 2022; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2022; Zaman, 2023). Thus, COVID-19 impacted the workforce and HRM to emphasize remote work, the well-being of the employee and organization, and technology integration.

2.3. Critical HRM Challenges Faced by Organizations
Despite the changing economies, Asia continuously grew as a key force to reckon with in the global business scenario. Emerging economies like India have further contributed to the renewed interest in doing business in the Asian region. India's development as a major player on the global economic front has brought tremendous opportunities for businesses in the country, especially for foreign investments (Budhwar and Varma, 2011). New business concepts and developments have, however, led to special challenges for Human Resource

Management (HRM) issues (Arora and Suri, 2020). Though India has a competitive advantage due to its size and cheap workforce, HRM still faces growing concerns concerning the skill and preparation levels of the available talent (Budhwar and Varma, 2011). Providing proper training to the available talent, holding meetings, offering them challenging assignments and opportunities and building in them the importance of their role were some of the key challenges for HRM (Kumari, 2019). HRM also faces the challenge of recruitment in the competitive land space, prominently when organizations bear the brunt of slow revenue generation, restructuring, or downsizing and become less oriented to recruit tactically (Kumari, 2019). It becomes challenging for HR managers to supply the required skillsets for organizational growth (Kumari, 2019). Additionally, Edvardsson & Durst (2021) found evidence of HRM in Indian firms facing challenges of keeping employees motivated, especially when companies are using cost reduction strategies of pay freeze pay cuts, minimal training, and work intensification (Edvardsson and Durst, 2021 Paul and Shah, 2021). Furthermore, these findings were confirmed in a study by, (Roy, Scholarios and Taylor, 2017), who found that the HRM is required to maintain continuous productivity improvement in all conditions.

HRM has also seen a mismatch between supply and demand in the education system, leading to a shortage of skilled labor in India during this period. This skill shortage has made the employee market very competitive in India owing to the growing young population, leading to higher employee turnover. HRM is increasingly finding it difficult to hire the right skill set for the right job (Arora and Suri, 2020). Additionally, the young workforce in India has comparatively different aspirations compared to their experienced counterparts concerning job security, better wages, and working conditions (Mishra et al., 2018; Saini & Budhwar, 2013; Saran & Sharan, 2018).

They strive for a challenging job atmosphere with more autonomy. HRM needs to understand the aspects of recruiting the right talent among the younger workforce to meet the skill set needed in India. This can be achieved by developing policies of uniformity for different generations in the workplace to attract the right level of talent (Saini and Budhwar, 2013; Skýpalová *et al.*, 2023). This would help HRM enact proper retention strategies that reflect the changing developments of the workforce and retain the talented workforce in the country. Thus, the challenges of providing organisations with the required skill sets, motivating employees, and productivity are common for HRM in pre- and post-COVID conditions. However, with COVID altering the formal working structure, HRM became the need of the hour to ensure business process re-engineering. Keeping this in mind, an empirical review of existing studies is conducted to understand the challenges of HRM during the pandemic.

2.4. Empirical Review: HRM Challenges in India during a Pandemic

A study by Kaushal and Srivastava (2021) evaluated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on industry working. Qualitative activity analysis is done through interview responses from experts in organisations across the hospitality industry, tourism, and hospitality education services. The study's research showed that the challenges employees face are related to multiskilling and career development, focusing on the sense of hygiene and related standard procedures, motivation towards industry revival, and better crisis preparedness. HRM faced difficulties maintaining timely coordination between employees and teams for getting work done, managing fixed expenses and payroll, and employee motivation and morale. In addition to the problems identified above, a research study by Caligiuri et al. (2020) investigated HRM implications on managing organizations due to the COVID-19 pandemic through peer-reviewed research articles on the topic. The findings indicated that HRM faced key challenges in leading employees through the pandemic. Major hurdles faced by HRM were collaborating and leading from a distance, undertaking training and selection remotely, and managing employee health, safety, stress levels, and related issues owing to the pandemic, showing an absence of employee motivation hampering workplace productivity.

In alignment with the findings of the study by Caligiuri et al. (2020), Zhong et al. (2021) in their research study also reported similar findings. They have investigated the effect of the COVID outbreak on human resources-related problems and other practices through a processed literature review in business and management. The study identified nine key challenges faced by HRM across different industries during the pandemic, including employee development and work activities analysis during the crisis, paying the same compensation to employees who could not perform effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic, installing confidence in employees, managing workplace communication, job loss, employee performance, a flexible workforce, and related HR conflicts in the workplace. The findings suggest that the relationship between HR practices and the performance of the company during COVID-19 is dependent on the heterogeneity of the industry and the size of the organisation.

Similar to the findings, Azizi et al. (2021) have tried to determine uncertain challenges faced by HRM during the COVID-19 pandemic through narrative review approach analysis based on organizations' HRM strategies, using electronic databases similar to Web of Science and PubMed. The findings showed that HRM faced challenges concerning changes in social behaviours, a health crisis of employees and work-life imbalance, less productivity, lack of motivation, and health and safety at the workplace. They faced issues concerning managing internal workplace efficiency, flexibility, talent acquisition, and continuing business under the new normal.

Apart from the findings above, Ayedee et al. (2021) have sought to evaluate the various problems faced by HRM during the COVID-19 pandemic through online interviews of HR managers. The study's conclusions revealed key challenges like compliance with government regulations, managing competitiveness, effective communication with the employees during the pandemic period, and related issues. Applying emotional intelligence by HRM was recommended as part of the study to combat the various challenges encountered. In addition, (Sharma and Sharma, 2022), in a study encompassing 112 female and 194 male working professionals in India, were surveyed to understand if the upheaval of COVID-19 can be managed using alterations in HR Practices. In this study, the author found that the prominent challenge created by COVID-19 arises from the need to engage the workforce in the changing work scenarios.
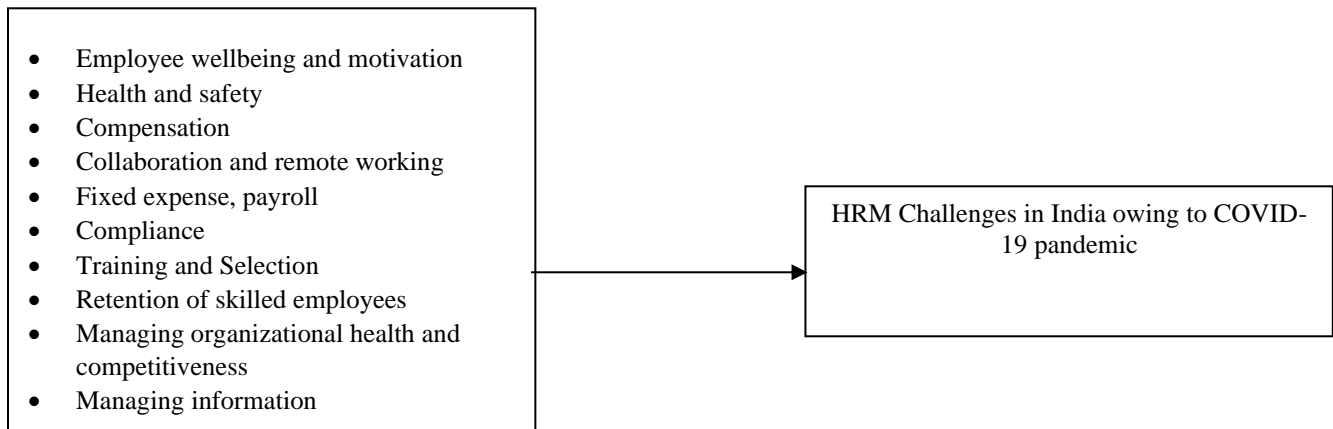
Also, adjusting to the new normal and working from distant locations while balancing the survival of an organization was challenging for HRM. The study's findings suggest that a firm's HR practices distinctly impact the stress level among the employees.

The current study has thus tried to determine the key challenges HRM faces while managing employees across industries during the COVID-19 pandemic through peer-reviewed studies on the topic in India and similar studies globally.

2.5. Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework for the current research study for investigating the HRM challenges of the COVID era across various industries and sectors in India is as follows.

HRM Challenges

- Employee wellbeing and motivation
- Health and safety
- Compensation
- Collaboration and remote working
- Fixed expense, payroll
- Compliance
- Training and Selection
- Retention of skilled employees
- Managing organizational health and competitiveness
- Managing information

→ HRM Challenges in India owing to COVID-19 pandemic

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

2.6. Literature Gap
Several studies (Gulati, 2018; Yadav and Lenka, 2020, 2022). have identified that challenges occur in HRM under the general conditions in which the firms operate. In addition, studies ((Caligiuri *et al.*, 2020; Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021) have identified that these challenges are further compounded by crisis of financial or health. However, there exists a gap in the literature concerning the findings of how the pandemic created unseen challenges for keeping organizations running. Also, there is a gap in the literature specific to how HRM faced challenges specific to the manufacturing and service industry, specifically in India. The current study aims to fill this literature gap. Through the centuries, there were global pandemics eras such as the mid-1300s of the Black Death and the Flu Pandemic of 1918, which wreaked havoc on whole societies. The research gap for "Challenges Faced by Human Resource Management (HRM) Teams in Managing the Workforce During the COVID-19 Pandemic" revolves around several emerging themes, with many aspects still unexplored or under-researched regarding their long-term impacts on HRM practices. Below are some potential research gaps could be further explored, such as Digital Transformation and Technology Adoption, Remote Work Adaptation and Work-Life Balance, Employee Engagement and Communication, diversity and inclusion, Job Insecurity and Employee Retention, training and remote development in remote set-up. : While technology adoption in HRM accelerated during the pandemic, there is limited research on how HR teams adopted and integrated new technologies like HRIS, AI-driven recruitment, and performance management systems, especially in small and medium enterprises. Despite the growing importance of employee well-being, research on how HR teams effectively supported mental health during the pandemic remains limited. There is limited understanding of how HRM teams tackled issues related to the work-life balance of employees transitioning to remote work. There is a lack of research on how HR departments effectively maintain employee engagement and communication in a predominantly remote environment. The pandemic may have exacerbated existing workplace challenges around diversity, inclusion, and equality. However, there is a gap in research regarding how HRM teams navigated these issues during the crisis. There is

a need to further understand the impact of job insecurity during the pandemic and HR teams' strategies to retain talent. The transition to remote work significantly disrupted traditional training and development programs, with few studies assessing how HR departments adjusted training modalities during the pandemic.

3. Research Methodology

The research tackle adopted is clarified in this section to fulfill the purpose of the current study. A primary research study would be conducted for this research study, to investigate challenges faced by the human resources management team in managing the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic across sectors in India. The influence of COVID-19 is a well-examined concept, but the changes undertaken by HRM during this time in India are not explored much by including employees' perceptions; therefore, the primary study method was the most optimal choice for understanding the changes by employees' views.

Research design implies that the research methods and techniques are to be considered part of the research study by the researcher to fulfil the objectives of the ongoing research study (Leavy, 2017). As the current research problem relates to issues that have not been explored before, an exploratory research design was applied to investigate the challenges faced by HRM. Quantitative data was collected from different service and manufacturing firms in India to evaluate the demographic characteristics of the employees and their general background to evaluate their knowledge about the challenges faced by HRM, and the data analysis was conducted to investigate impact analysis from responses collected from respondents to the survey.

The study aims to understand the HRM challenge faced in India during COVID-19; therefore, the targeted population of the study was the employees of companies from different sectors of India who were working with companies during COVID-19. Regarding the inclusion of the workforce, which could differentiate the challenges caused by COVID-19 from the normal challenges, the targeted workforce was the ones who had been associated with the same company for at least 5 years. Sample from this targeted population was derived using the purposive sampling method. The non-random sampling method enables the inclusion of respondents who are suitable for the study and could provide valuable responses per the study's objective; therefore, the sampling method was the optimal choice for the study. A survey of 189 respondents from 7 different service and manufacturing firms based across India was conducted via a structured close-ended questionnaire (shown in the appendix) as part of the data collection for the primary research to be undertaken. The close-ended questionnaire enables the collection of object-oriented information without any chance of deviation from the research area; thus, the tool was an effective choice for data collection. The chosen respondents were approached via e-

mail and provided with the questionnaire, which was required to be filled out after their working hours. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS tool, and the analysis results were free from any kind of personal bias and reliable and accurate. The results were tested at a 5% level of significance to minimize the chances of error with the outcomes. Also, to ensure the ethical requirement of a primary study, the responses and confidential information of the study participants were kept on a password-protected device, and the information was used only with the participants' verbal consent. The respondents were completely informed about the study's purpose and the usage of their responses. The participants were also given complete freedom of withdrawal from the study at any point in time. The secondary information presented in the study was also supported using credible citations, and credit of work was given to respective authors in the form of bibliographic referencing. Hence, the study ensured that the findings were ethical and reliable.

4. Data Analysis

The data for demographic and background analysis is via frequency analysis, while correlation and regression analysis have been applied to analyze the inferential section of the survey results.

4.1. The Demographic Profile Analysis

The demographic profile Analysis showed that most respondents were in the age group between 21-30 years (40%), followed by 41-50 years (29%), 31-40 years (18%) and above 50 years (13%).
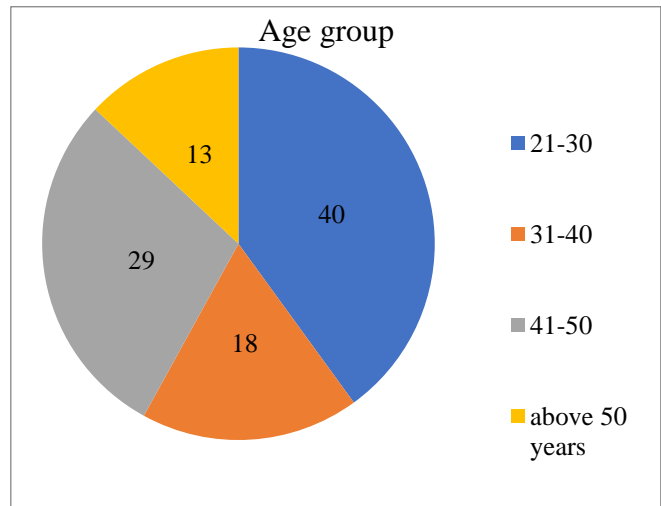

Fig. 2 Demographic profile analysis

4.2. Profession Background Analysis

In the study of professional background analysis, 36% of respondents were HRM Assistant Managers, while 27% were Managers, 19% were Senior Managers, and 18% were trainees. When asked if they were aware of the HRM challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, 80% of

respondents reported that they were aware, while 20% were unaware. Thus, the analysis reveals that the respondents are mostly people from the young to medium age group who hold managerial positions and know the HRM challenges.

The frequency examination provided basic information about the knowledge level of respondents, but to identify the challenges, there is a need for having more deeper evaluation. Though the identification of challenges could be made directly by impact examination, before evaluating the impact, the need is to understand whether the selected challenges are relevant or have some contribution to influencing HRM or not. For this, correlation analysis was performed to help determine the magnitude of the linkage of results between the HRM challenges faced by the firm and different HRM workings. The table representing the correlation magnitude in terms of Pearson correlation is shown in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the significance value of all the statements is 0.000, which is lower than the significance value of 0.05.

Thus, there is the possibility that the identified HRM functionalities are working as a challenge for the companies in India. The linkage between the statements and the challenge aspect will be assessed to verify this. Pearson correlation value indicates the magnitude of linkage. Herein, for the statement managing employee well-being, the value is 0.673; for managing employee health, it is 0.683; for managing employee safety is 0.669; for managing organizational competitiveness, it is 0.660; for collaborative remote working, it is 0.670; for managing information technology for smooth workflow is 0.674, and for crisis Management and Business Continuity is 0.702 which is > 0.5 All the statement correlation values are more than 0.5 representing that there is at least moderate association between the selected HRM aspects and the challenges borne during COVID-19. Hence, there is the possibility that the identified HRM aspects were the challenges borne by companies during COVID-19. The further hypothesis would be tested at a 5% significance level to assess this impact.
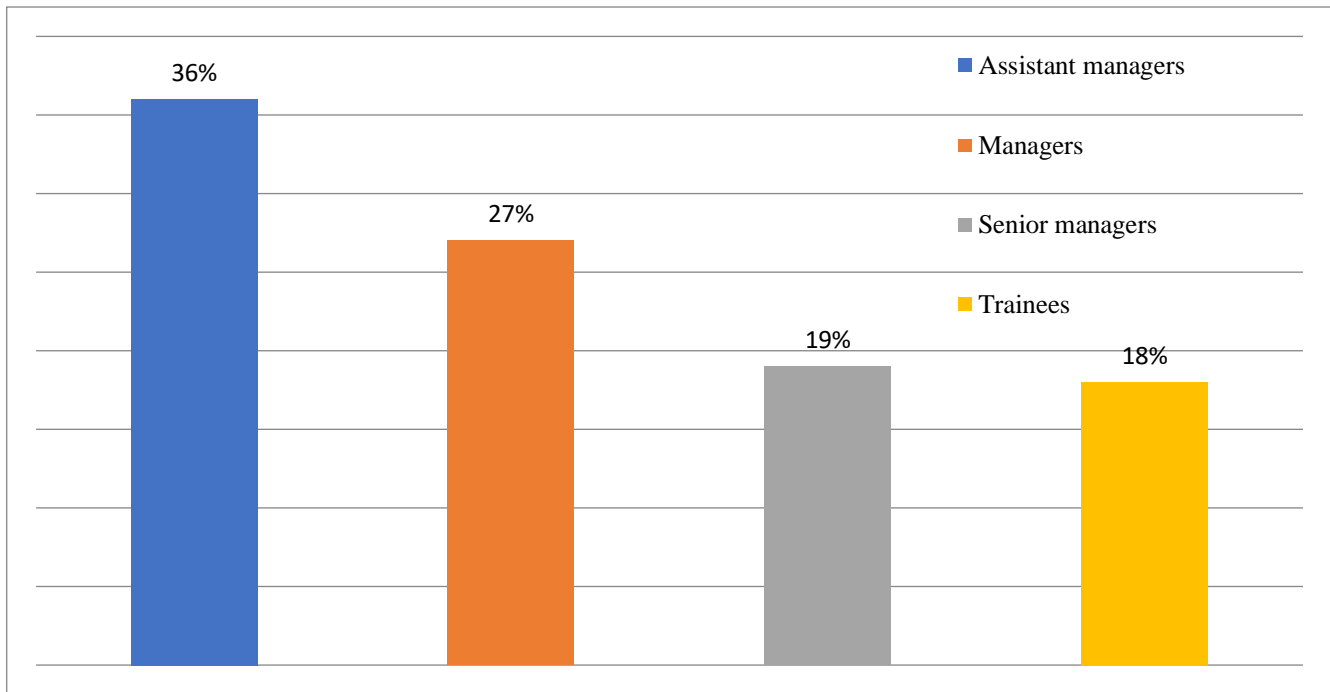

Fig. 3 Profession background analysis

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Firm-Faced HRM Challenges

Statements	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Firm-Faced HRM Challenges	1.000	
Managing Employee Well-Being	0.673	0.000
Managing Employee Health	0.683	0.000
Managing Employee Safety	0.669	0.000
Managing Organizational Competitiveness	0.660	0.000
Collaborating Remote Working	0.670	0.000
Managing Information Technology for Smooth Workflow	0.674	0.000
Crisis Management and Business Continuity	0.702	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

- H_0: The HRM changes are not the significant challenges borne by companies during COVID-19.
- H_A: The HRM changes are the significant challenges borne by companies during COVID-19.

In the above-stated hypothesis, the challenges borne by the companies during COVID-19 are the dependent variable, while the HRM changes included in the study are the independent variables. Herein, a model will be developed to assess the linkage between the variables. As the factors are interlinked, regression analysis could be applied to study their relationship. The analysis results for the dependent and independent variables are shown in Table 2. Table 2 states that

the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values are 0.837 and 0.831, respectively. The model consists of more than 1 independent variable; therefore, the effectiveness of the model is examined using an adjusted R square. The value of 0.831 shows that about 83.1% of the variation in the challenges borne by companies during COVID-19 are HRM-based.

For the model, it is 133.33, which is more than the required level of 1; therefore, more precision in identifying challenges was derived by including HRM-based aspects as the independent variables. To test the impact, the p-value of the variables needs to be assessed. The p-value for all the statements was 0.000, less than the required level of 0.05.

Table 2. Regression analysis of firm-faced HRM challenges

Challenges	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T-Stat	p-Value	F	R Square	Adjusted R Square
(Constant)		-3.027	0.003	133.133	0.837	0.831
Managing employee well-being	0.219	5.840	0.000			
Managing employee health	0.249	6.741	0.000			
Managing employee safety	0.187	4.796	0.000			
Managing organizational competitiveness	0.033	1.102	0.000			
Collaborating remote working	0.181	4.560	0.000			
Managing information technology for smooth workflow	0.200	5.189	0.000			
Crisis Management and Business Continuity	0.199	4.973	0.000			

Dependent Variable: Firm-Faced HRM Challenges

Thus, the null hypothesis of having no significant challenges borne by companies during COVID-19 due to HRM was rejected. This reveals that HRM-based challenges were present during COVID-19. The coefficient value of the challenges will be examined to assess each of the identified challenge contributions. The standard coefficient reveals that with a 1% rise in each of the challenges, i.e. managing employee well-being, managing employee health, managing employee safety, managing organizational competitiveness, collaborative remote working, managing information technology for smooth working, and crisis management and business continuity, the challenges for the companies increased by 0.219%, 0.249%, 0.187%, 0.033%, 0.181%, 0.200%, and 0.199% respectively. Hence, all the HRM responsibilities were considered challenging for companies during COVID-19.

5. Discussion

The outbreak of COVID-19 created difficulties for organizations across the world. With the need to shift to the remote working environment, there has been a requirement for more efforts to connect with employees and ensure their productivity. Dayal, Thakur and Asamoah-Appiah (2021) highlighted that this change resulted in imposing challenges like finding high-quality job applicants, reducing employee turnover, maintaining a strong employer brand, and

cultivating a positive work environment. Further, Mohammed Ali Bait Ali Sulaiman, Ahmed and Shabbir (2020) discussed the challenges in the form of job assurance, employee productivity, employee health, uncertainty, and communication. Even Sami and Roychowdhury (2021) identified flexibility maintenance, productivity, employee motivation, virtual coordination, and ensuring employee well-being as the challenge. Though all these researches assessed the challenges for organizations, the focus has not been much on understanding Indian employees' perspectives towards HRM challenges. This study assessed the mindset of employees working in the service and manufacturing sectors. The overall assessment identified that there are majorly 7 challenges borne by employees. These challenges relate to well-being, health, safety, organizational competitiveness, remote working, information technology, and crisis management. Among these issues, the major challenge has been maintaining employee health and well-being. Remote work has resulted in shifting employees towards an isolated work environment wherein there is trouble balancing family and work.

That situation can result in mental health disorders like anxiety or depression. Even the different working environments that use information technology further complicate the process. Therefore, findings indicate that the

major work during the time was required to ease the situation for employees by having more communication. The overall workplace environment is different, but the team is still one. Team building strength can help one face any challenge like this pandemic era. Hence, more than the competitive pressure and burden of integrating the new environmental needs, the management of the well-being and health of the employees were major HRM challenges in India during COVID-19. The employees also need a work appreciation for these difficulties. The employee may also become insecure during his job, so he can be mentally disturbed and stressed. This feeling of insecurity about employment negatively affects his work activity. So, there should be problem-solving actions to be taken by authorities for employees.

6. Recommendation

In response to the study findings, the researcher recommends the following strategies for better crisis management in future and for supporting employees in a post-pandemic environment.

- To adjust to the uncertain environment, it is advised to promote the implementation of remote working policies and infrastructure wherein using collaborative software could improve employees' productivity even in remote work environments.
- Employee well-being-based initiatives should be a priority for the companies wherein events like meditation classes, counselling services, and virtual wellness programs should be launched to improve employees' work-life balance and mental health.
- Companies should consider remote work facilities and legal policies for isolated worker teams.
- The working technology should improve much more than at present, which can fight any pandemic situation.
- The working conditions should try to improve, which will help in the covid era.
- As it is known as the pandemic era, the problem-solving aids should be ready in advance. The employee caring aids and tools should be ready in advance. e.g. medical facilities safety for women employees (pregnant women).
- Provisions should be made to make employees game changers in problematic situations so they can face the situations.
- There should be security provisions should be included in company rules and regulations for employees so that they can feel security in their job.
- Stress management activities can help employees to become more active and stressed out.
- A healthy work environment creates more confidence and team building in employees.
- Lastly, new mediums of communication and collaboration, like Microsoft Teams or Zoom, should be used to have virtual meetings and sessions to raise engagement.

Implementing these strategies by companies would help build a more supportive work environment and reduce the influence of HRM challenges.

7. Conclusion

The literature's study reveals nine major issues with human resources that many businesses face. According to the study's findings, COVID-19 significantly affects human resource management. Deep researchers require their expertise for the department's theoretical and empirical work.

The portion of human resource-related activities that confront new issues in human resources and designate a number of research avenues for more investigation in this area. In conclusion, the study identifies that the COVID-19 outbreak has not just changed the working of organizations across the world but also has caused the shift of working towards a troublesome environment.

The change from office-based working to remote working created lots of challenges for HRM, raising the role of HR professionals in addressing the complex issues of the workforce. The existing studies explored the challenges, but as less focus was on the Indian employee's perspective, this study bridged that gap by highlighting that though there are many HRM challenges for service and manufacturing companies, the major problem had been with managing employee well-being and health. To cope with the issues, there was a need for the development of HRM professionals to create a more inclusive environment for the workforce and make employees feel engaged to ease the difficulties.

HRM professionals and organizations could use these findings in the future for better management of crises and for understanding the needs of employees. Also, as the insights from the research highlight the key areas affected by the crisis, the suggested strategies could be implemented by professionals to target employees more effectively and enhance their productivity.

Even the study's findings had academic contributions, as the study highlights how the COVID-19 effect was not restricted to just health but its impact extended to the employee's well-being and productivity.

The research had valuable deductions, but due to limited time and financial resources, the evaluation of challenges was restricted to the service and manufacturing sector and even to the examination of 189 respondents. Future studies could focus on including a larger sample for having generalized results and even the long-term impact of COVID-19 on HRM could also be evaluated. Even future studies could examine how the change amid COVID-19 benefited the employees. Overall, the study had a pivotal role in defining the areas of development for HRM practice and deriving organizational success during a crisis.

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Appendix-Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic

1. Age
    a) 21-30 years
    b) 31-40 years
    c) 41-50 years
    d) Above 50 years

2. Designation
    a) Trainee
    b) Assistant Manager
    c) Manager
    d) Senior Manager

Section B: General Background

3. Are you aware of the challenges faced by HRM owing to the COVID-19 pandemic in India?
    a) Yes
    b) No

Section C: Inferential Section

4. Did your Firm face HR challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic?
    1) Strongly disagree
    2) Disagree
    3) Neutral
    4) Agree
    5) Strongly agree

5. What are the major challenges faced by HRM in managing the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic in India?

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Firm-Faced HRM Challenges					
Managing employee well-being					
Managing employee health					
Managing employee safety					
Managing organizational competitiveness					
Collaborating remote working					
Managing information technology for smooth workflow					
Crisis Management and Business Continuity					