

RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of ethical leadership in HRM on employee's turnover intention post Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Goal: The paper aims to identify ethical leadership's efficacy in HRM and differentiate it from negative HRM leadership. Pandemic and post-pandemic challenges are evident, which can destabilize an organization, so we need to develop a business-ethics perspective on leadership for HRM.

Method: For the study, the data of 120 manufacturing companies' employees from Uttar Pradesh has been collected. The analysis of data has been done with the help of simple linear regression and T-test through SPSS.

Results: The research on the concerned issue and critically reflects on negative leadership issues that arise post-Covid-19. The analysis results have concluded that there is a positive impact of ethical leadership on employee turnover intention post-covid-19 in Uttar Pradesh, and there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents towards turnover intentions post-covid-19.

Limitations: The study is a small-scale study consisting of 120 employees from manufacturing companies; for future research, the data can be collected for conducting a large-scale study.

Practical implication: The study will be helpful for organizations to know about the impact of covid-19 on HRM and will lead to creating an understanding of the need of developing ethical leadership in HRM to deal with the turnover intentions of employees at the time of crisis.

Originality: There has been various previous studies which talk about the employees turnover intentions during covid-19, while there is no previous literature available which states about the turnover intentions of employees post covid-19 in Uttar Pradesh, India. Moreover, the study is discussing the situation from an ethical perspective which is an addition to the existing literature.

Keywords: Covid-19; Pandemic; Turnover intentions; Ethical leadership; Human Resource Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current situation of covid-19 has resulted in a demanding situation for human resource management, as it has incorporated a vital role in making the employees cope with the unexpected challenges in the workplace during the covid-19 and lock down (Kniffin et al., 2021). HRM has a significant role in helping employees overcome the difficulties of unexpected

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changes in the workplace and society (Tokarz et al., 2021). Because of the work and private life mix, industries have been negatively affected by covid-19 during remote work from home (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021).

HR managers must incorporate advanced technology-based strategies for their employees and update their skills (Barnes, 2020). Employees' health and well-being were a matter of concern for the HR managers as they affect their outcomes. Managers were trying to reduce the consequences of work from home; on the other hand, the pandemic was causing implications on the employees' mental health due to a lack of socialization (Li et al., 2020). Work from home was making it difficult for HR managers to monitor and control the employee's activities. Pandemic has caused an aggravated situation of losing jobs in the minds of the employees (Sarwar et al., 2023). Retention of qualified employees was a major challenge for HR managers for any organization. Therefore, integrating leadership with HRM has become the need of the hour, as focusing on either HRM or leadership alone will lose companies' outcomes (Demirtas, 2015).

Ethics' role in HRM is about fairness and compliance. When communication between employees and HRM is lacking, ethical leadership helps employees feel supported emotionally and psychologically (Toor & Ofori, 2009). Ethical leadership is also strongly related to the employees' well-being when employees perceive low HRM levels and lack resources. When employees are perceived to have a high level of HRM and ethical leadership, it increases their self-efficiency. Ethical leadership helps the employees utilize their full potential, which positively impacts employees' attitudes towards their work and HRM (Ponnu & Tennakoon, 2009).

Ethical leadership and HRM together create a sense of well-being in the minds of the employees. To do the ethical practices in HRM to be successful, we need to bind ethical leaders' values and HR practitioners. Both ethical leadership and HRM work together on people management (Bello, 2012). Employees can also seek guidance from both, which ultimately results in harmony in work and job satisfaction (Sabir et al., 2012). However, sometimes the disagreement between what is wrong and right could create a situation of the ethical dilemma between both, which creates a situation of misunderstanding, which is not all good for the organizations, so leaders and managers together should try to reduce those dilemmas which creates a situation of stress in the organization. Ethics in HRM has become a very sensitive and critical challenge for human resource managers (Yang, 2014). Therefore, the critical study has supported a positive and important ethical leadership role in HRM to bring positive outcomes and performance. Moreover, the study's objective is a) to know the impact of ethical leadership on employee turnover intention post-covid-19 in Uttar Pradesh. b) to know the difference in the perception of male and female respondents towards the turnover intentions post covid-19.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 impact of covid-19 on HRM:

HRM department is known to add value to the organizations and is the heart of transformation, and helps organizations navigate the present and unexpected future. Primarily, HRM is responsible for selecting, recruiting, developing, training, and compensating its employees (O'Donovan, 2019). As time evolved, challenges related to their responsibility, change management, leadership development, organizational effectiveness, etc., continue to evolve and create challenges before HRM year after year (Przytuła et al., 2020). Dealing with this was crucial for the organizations, but not more than the recent challenges held due to Covid-19; this has created a long-lasting implication on HRM, both at strategic and functional levels (Vihari & Rao, 2018).

Organizations now must be more adaptive to the changes and unforeseen events, which increases the uncertainty among the employees and poses a threat to the firms (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005). However, due to the recent hit of Covid-19, organizations must find new solutions to the problems arising across them; this has created a demanding situation for human resource management to make the employees cope with the workplace's unexpected changes during the covid-19 (Carnevalea & Hatak, 2020). Reviewing the papers has highlighted that most industries negatively affected by covid-19 and HRM must cope with the main challenges related to 1) Cost-cutting, 2) undesirable layoff of employees due to the financial loss of the businesses, 3) shutting down of businesses (Azizi et al., 2021).

HRM has adjusted the employees into a new working environment and shifted them to remote work, which disturbed the person-environment fit and has created a lack of trust, lack of desire, and interest in their occupational level (Kopp, 2020). In addition to this, the closure of child care services and schools has increased their parental demand. Single and childless employees were even at greater risk because of Loneliness and lack of purpose (Achor et al., 2018). It has also created a requirement to re-skill the employees rapidly, and HR professionals were under pressure to redesign the HRM processes and system strategically to meet the market's demands, which got

affected during covid-19 (Adisa et al., 2022). It has also created a sudden need for learning new skills by the employees and incorporating advanced technology-based strategies that could increase their employability in the digital space and update their skills (Gigauri, 2020).

Adaptation of new HR practices (recruitment, selection, development, etc.) online became common, but understanding how these HR practices will impact the organization's culture influenced the decision-making of HRM (Fraij, 2021). Understanding the unpredictable environment that disturbed the P-E fit and resolving the potential misfit was a huge matter of concern before HRM during the pandemic (Maurer, 2020). Besides this, HRM must deal with employee stressors and mental health (Depression and psychological distress). In addition to this, HRM also must deal with employees' post-pandemic stress related to employees' recovery from a life-threatening disease, job insecurity, and feeling of job loss (Stanca & Tarbujaru, 2022). covid-19 has also influenced employees' perception of their occupational status related to the changes in monetary benefits, rewards, and recognition offered by HRM (Kramer & Kramer, 2020).

Workers from health care industries have even more devastating results because of inadequate rest, high work burden, and lack of protective equipment. A more efficient and proactive organizational approach is needed (Muller et al., 2020). Social distancing also harmed employees. Hence, HRM needs to maintain social interaction with employees through small meetings, virtual connections, networking, and sustain work relationships to motivate them. Similarly, according to Microsoft's study, Employees' well-being, customer orientation, and business continuity were another major challenge for HRM during the pandemic (Gigauri, 2020). Managers were trying to reduce the consequences of work-from-home; on the other hand, the pandemic was causing implications on the employees' mental health and well-being due to lack of socialization. Work-from-home made it more difficult for HR managers to monitor and control the employee's activities.

2.2 Impact of Covid-19 on employees turnover

Employee turnover is a concept related to switching jobs by the employees from a formally defined organization to the other (Irshad et al., 2020). The turnover can occur in two forms: voluntarily (When employees decide to leave the company by their own will) or involuntarily (When an employer asks the employees to leave the organization, which we have seen frequently during the covid-19 pandemic) (McElroy et al., 2001). Retention of employees is crucial for the organization as it leads to employee turnover (Akila, 2020). Recent studies show that the estimated cost of turnover in the USA due to burnouts is approximately \$4.3 billion annually (Scott et al., 2021). Similarly, employees' replacement cost is very high because training and hiring new employees are costlier than training and hiring the existing employee (Knight et al., 2013). Therefore, reducing the cost and establishing sustainable retention strategies are essential for organizations.

The literature review stated different dimensions that influence an employee's decision to stay or leave the organization (Jung et al., 2021). These states are highly influenced by employees' attitudes towards the organization, which typically create four broad mindsets 1.) Enthusiastic stayers stay with the organization for as long as they can or until they get retirement. 2.) Reluctant stayers stay with the organization as long as they have to, or until something happens to remove the barrier to leave. 3.) Enthusiastic leaver wants to leave the organization and leave, but it depends on certain conditions when they will leave. 4.) Reluctant leavers want to stay but must leave the job (Griffeth et al., 2012).

Turnover also results in the organization's inefficiency and threatens the sustainability and implementation of new initiatives (Ongori, 2007). Similarly, when the employee leaves the organization, it creates a compressed organizational quality of services, innovation, and stress when the workload increases. This scenario got turned negatively with the massive hit of the pandemic all over the globe (Koys, 2001).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020), about 195 million full-time workers lost their jobs in 2020 (Gigauri, 2020). The pandemic has affected almost all occupational groups and made an impact on the low-skill and low-wage employees. Hence, employees with limited ability to work have suffered from high turnover, which ultimately resulted in the high volume of workers' migration from organized and unorganized sectors during covid-19 (Bergman et al., 2021); this also led to great career shock. Self-isolation, travel restrictions, and social distancing have reduced the employment level worldwide, resulting in job loss (Nicola et al., 2020).

Pandemic has created a division of jobs between the "good jobs" and "bad jobs." Organizations concentrating on high-performance employees increased because they will maintain their productivity in extreme times like covid-19, and contradicting this, the organizations concentrating on low-skilled employees decreased (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). After all, these types of employees decrease productivity and threaten the future.

Pandemic has caused an aggravated situation of losing jobs in the minds of the employees. Job

insecurity in employees has become common due to downsizing, layoffs, and mergers at this crucial coronavirus time (Wilson et al., 2020). The impact of job insecurity during covid-19 was seen as having a greater influence on generation y than generation x, which has resulted in reducing job engagement in generation y (Jung et al., 2021). Employment uncertainty was relatively high in the hospitality industries due to the virus and the lockdown, resulting in employment shock (Ntounis et al., 2022). In nursing management, the fear of covid-19 and the lack of training to attend to the covid patients have increased distressful anxiety among the nurses, which resulted in frequent absenteeism and turnover (Magnavita et al., 2021). Other industries, health complaints, organizational change, and risk-taking have influenced the employees' work-related attitudes and turnover intentions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 ethical consideration

In the current paper, a guarantee was made about the anonymity of the respondent's identity. After reading the entire document, respondents were requested to take the survey, with the first question relating to their readiness to do so (are you willing to take the survey?).

3.2 sample description

3.2.1 research design and approach

A quantitative study is conducted to analyze the results of primary data. It aids the researcher's statistical and numerical analysis of the variable relationship. Moreover, descriptive research design is used to collect the data from the respondents through survey. It help the researcher to answer when, what, and where questions in order to gain a thorough understanding of a phenomenon (Romanchuk, 2023). The data was evaluated using Statistical pacakage for social science (SPSS) software. Factor analysis was performed to simplify the data and explain the relationship among multiple variables while simple linear regression analysis was performed to impact of ethical leadership on employees turnover intentions.

3.2.2 sampling technique

Convenience sampling was used to collect the data. It helps the author collect the data easily and swiftly as per their convenience (Sekaran, 2000) because it takes samples that are conveniently placed near a location or internet service. Additionally, as the data in the present study is collected from the manufacturing industry convenience sampling is most suitable as this technique is often used by the researchers for collecting the data from the industries. When employees working in the organizations instead of choosing a fully representative sample is taken from the population which reflects those who were accessible.

3.2.3 sample size

The sample size of the study consisted of employees from Uttar Pradesh working in manufacturing companies. The manufacturing industries are taken as these industries is highly labour intensive due to which get highly impacted during pandemic. The data was collected with the help of an adopted questionnaire. A total of 120 responses were received. The measurement of the survey scale in the study utilizes a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The questionnaire contained a total of 16 questions and was divided into two parts. The number of male respondents was 50.8 percent, and the total number of female respondents was 49.2 percent.

3.3 questionnaire construction

Ethical leadership in HRM was measured by adopting ethical leadership scale from (Brown et al., 2005) and measuring the effectiveness of the leader/superior towards their employees while measuring the employees' turnover intentions; the scale adopted from (Mobley et al., 1979). The questionnaire was distributed among the respondents through emails and other social media platforms. The very first section was given to the demographic features of the employees which include, their age (coded as: 18-25, 26-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 and above), state, gender (coded as: male

and female), and educational qualification (coded as: elementary school, junior school, high school, intermediate, graduate, post graduate, diploma and others). The second part of the questionnaire contains ten questions about ethical leadership in HRM, and the third part contains six questions about turnover intentions.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 scale reliability and factor analysis

Table-1 shows the factor analysis and scale reliability of all the factors in the scale. The scale consists of 10 items considering the independent variable "ethical leadership in HRM" and the next six items considering the dependent variable. The Cronbach's Alpha of both independent variable (0.716) and independent variable (0.722) has values higher than the preferable score value, which is 0.70, and the Cronbach's Alpha of 16 items together is 0.837, which means that the scale is adequate and reliable enough to measures the items in the scale. The KMO value of the independent variable (0.821) and dependent variable (0.735) is also studied separately, and the results for both the factors are more than the threshold value of 0.5. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of all the 16 items together is also studied, which is more than the threshold value of 0.5, which is 0.846, and this clarifies that the sample size of our study is adequate to carry on the study (Field, 2005).

Bartlett's test is significant in the study as the value for both the dependent and independent variables separately is .000 (p-value < 0.05). The value of this test of all 16 items together is also .000, which is also significant. Therefore, the KMO value and significance of Bartlett show the significance of factor analysis for the data.

Table-1 also shows the factor loading of every item in the scale, which is sorted by size. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), "factors with eigenvalue below one should be omitted and factor loading less than 0.5 will be eliminated". The data given below have an eigenvalue of more than 1.0 and the cumulative variance for the independent factors is 68 percent, and the percentage for dependent factors is 70 percent separately. Moreover, the percentage of cumulative variance for all 16 items together is 69 percent which is good to carry on the research.

Table 1 - Factor analysis and reliability

Variables	Scale items	Factor Loading	KMO	% Of cumulative variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Ethical leadership in HRM	Discuss the ethics and value with them?	.903	.821	68.513	.716
	Defines success not just by the results but also by the way they are obtained?	.894			
	Listens to what they say?	.869			
	Make a fair and balanced decision?	.788			
	Can be trusted?	.749			
	Discipline employees who violate ethical standards?	.644			
	Ask," then what is the right thing to do while making the decision?	.592			
	Sets an example of how to do the things and the right way in terms of ethics?	.734			
	Has the best interest of employees in mind?	.729			
	Ethically conduct his/her life?	.900			
Turnover intentions	Which is the most important element for better employment opportunities?	.942	.735	70.342	.722
	Are you probably looking for a new job next year?	.939			
	Often think about quitting?	.844			

Their prospects might not be good if they continue in the organization.	.753
Decided to stay with the current organization.	.745
Which are the influencing factors to leave the job?	.503

4.2 Simple linear regression

To check the normality of data, the ten items in the first section of the questionnaire and the rest six items in the section second of the questionnaire were added together and named factors A and B, respectively. To check the normality A and B were our dependent factors, and gender was our independent factor. The skewness and kurtosis measures should be close to zero as much as possible. The measures should not be too large as compared to their standard errors. To test the same, we must divide the measures by their respective standard error, and this will help us achieve our z-value, which should be somewhere between -1.96 to +1.96. As it is clear from the data, all the skewness and kurtosis values, when divided by its standard error, fall neither below -1.96 nor above +1.96, which means that our data is approximately normally distributed for both males and females. The Shapiro-Wilk values depict that the p-values for both males and females are above 0.05; thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that the data is normally distributed. Therefore, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicates that our data is approximately normally distributed.

To test hypothesis one, simple linear regression is used in the study. Simple linear regression is used for the studies, consisting of one independent variable and one dependent variable. In our study, the first ten items in the scale represent the independent variable "ethical leadership in HRM," and the next six represent the dependent variable "turnover intention."

The table-2 shows that the significance value of variable A is .000, which means that the significance value of the independent variable is less than the alpha value of 0.05 (p-value < 0.05), which means that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the research results conclude that ethical leadership positively impacts employee turnover intention in Uttar Pradesh. The analysis of the following linear regression equation formed from this analysis output is:

$$y = A + Bx$$

$$\text{Work satisfaction} = 2.781 + .528 (\text{Ethical leadership in HRM})$$

Table 2 - Significance value

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.781	1.358		2.048	.043
	A	.528	.041	.766	12.932	.000

a. Dependent Variable: B

The table-3 of the model summary shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The R square is .586, which is good for the study. This outcome means that the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable by 58 percent.

Table 3

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.766 ^a	.586	.583	2.751

a. Predictors: (Constant), A

Table-4 highlights that the significance value of the ANOVA table is .000, which is less than the alpha value of 0.05, which tells that there is a simultaneously significant relationship between both the dependent and independent variables.

Table 4

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1265.680	1	1265.680	167.224	.000 ^b
	Residual	893.112	118	7.569		
	Total	2158.792	119			
a. Dependent Variable: B						
b. Predictors: (Constant), A						

4.3 Independent t-test to test the hypothesis 2

An Independent T-test is used to compare the data having two mean values, and we want to compare those means are significantly different or not. The table-5 below depicts that females have only slightly more agreement to the particular factor B, representing the dependent variable "turnover intentions." The standard deviation column talks about how mean values take deviation, and the standard error mean column represents the error in the sample mean.

Table 5

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
B	Male	61	19.30	3.831	.491
	Female	59	20.81	4.566	.594

Table-6 depicts Levene's Test for Equality of Variances values having the F value of the variables is more than 0.05, which is B "3.786". It highlights that value of F is higher than the significance value 0.05, and the significance value is also more than 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis is accepted. Moreover, the P-value of the T-test is also slightly more than the Alpha value 0.05, which also signifies that the null hypothesis is accepted for all the values. Therefore, the results conclude that there is no significant difference in male and female respondents' perception of turnover intentions.

Table 6

Independent Samples 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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
B	Equal variances assumed	3.786	.054	-1.976	118	.050	-1.518	.768	-3.040	.003

Equal variances not assumed			-1.970	113.166	.051	-1.518	.771	-3.045	.008
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5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION OF STUDY

Covid-19 has impacted different sectors of the economy worldwide, but the risk of future health crises of this far-reaching nature is almost guaranteed (Desmond-Hellmann, 2020). During the pandemic, HRM dealt with P-E fit problems, remote working, employees' mental stress, and retaining talent; on the other side, they faced a financial crisis that cut employees' salaries and made them leave the organization. The huge turnover during the pandemic has also resulted in the migration of employees in large numbers, increasing the virus's risk (Iqbal et al., 2021). Therefore, HRM needs to incorporate ethics and ethical leadership HRM as a major factor in dealing with the situation. Ethical leadership in HRM creates a sense of well-being in the employee's minds as it is a fruitful avenue for bringing power to affect the organization's strategic decisions and people management. According to (Sale et al., 2022) the social exchange theory's findings, ethical leadership is essential to establishing a personal ethical climate at work and lowering employees' intentions to quit. Similarly, (Lin & Liu, 2017) in his study stated that ethical leadership is positively associated with turnover intentions of employees. Moreover, the effects of work fatigue and psychological contract violation on employee turnover intention were greatly mitigated by ethical leadership (Li et al., 2022).

To test the study results, the data is being analyzed with the help of simple linear regression, and a t-test is applied to know the agreement score of male and female respondents to test the difference in their perception of ethical leadership in HRM towards the turnover intentions. The results of the analysis have concluded that for hypothesis 1, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the research results conclude that ethical leadership positively impacts employee turnover intention post-covid-19 in Uttar Pradesh. The results of hypothesis 2 have concluded that the null hypothesis is accepted for all the values. Therefore, the results conclude that there is no significant difference in male and female respondents' perception of turnover intentions post covid-19. Moreover, it notes that increasing fear of pandemics was associated with job dissatisfaction, increased mental stress, and turnover intentions. Therefore, ethical leadership comes to the fore to rescue the situation and build trust in employees for their well-being in troubled times.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study will be helpful for organizations to know about the impact of covid-19 on HRM and will lead to creating an understanding of the need of developing ethical leadership in HRM to deal with the turnover intentions of employees at the time of crisis. The study also discusses the need of incorporating the Utility, Responsibility, and Virtue model for ethical leadership, which is a small means to gather the focus of industries to build an environment of trust care and responsibility for their employees with the help of ethical leadership so that they feel connected to the organization and will affect their turnover intentions positively.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study is a small-scale study consisting of 120 employees from manufacturing companies; for future research, the data can be collected for conducting a large-scale study and insisted on manufacturing companies from Uttar Pradesh, India, another type of industry with another country or country region can be considered.

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