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HR Activities Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic across Levels of Analysis

Keywords: human resource management; COVID-19; multilevel perspective; internalization process

JEL: J12; M12; M54

Abstract

Theoretical background: The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic heralded significant changes to existing HR activities followed by organizations and companies, trying to respond to government restrictions and new employment conditions. During these challenging times, employees are in the need of robust support by HR professionals in order to keep on performing, being motivated and thriving within their organizations and companies. Nonetheless, these modified HR activities are going through the stages of conception, actual implementation and, finally, they are experienced by employees. The intended, actual and experienced HR activities may evolve over time due to external and internal factors that are connected to pandemic. Understanding these changes is necessary for achieving effective HR management and optimal levels of organizational performance.

Purpose of the article: The aim of this article is to discuss the factors that affect HR activities through the framework of their internalization process. The factors that may be catalysts for changes of the HR activities on different levels: intended, actual and experienced activities over time are discussed and guidelines for future research are suggested.

Research methods: The article applies literature review of possible factors that may induce changes in intended, actual and experienced HR practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main findings: Absence of appropriate HR activities may increase anxiety and stress levels of employees. This negative impact can be potentially augmented by the perceived gap between employee expectations and the actual experience of these HR activities. In an effort to better understand these gaps occurring during the internalization process, we suggest that HR activities at the intended level may change due to business transformation, workplace transformation and employee well-being, while line manager's characteristics and interactions with HRM departments may be catalysts for change in the actual HR. Finally, the assessment of the outcome of HR activities,

the way in which they are delivered, and their continuity could be considered as important factors at the experienced level of the internalization process.

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The Workplace and Work-Life Balance during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Keywords: workplace; remote work; work-life balance; work-life integration

JEL: J28; J32; J53

Abstract

Theoretical background: The article presents the results of research on the relationship between the workplace and work-life balance experienced by employees. In the article, the workplace is understood as a physical space where employees are located. The first part of the article presents the results of the analysis of the literature on the subject related to the key issues. The subsequent part focuses on presenting the opinions collected by the authors during the empirical research conducted with the use of a questionnaire among professionally active people. The subject matter of the research was the workplace of the respondents in the context of work-life balance. The experiences of the respondents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed statistically.

Purpose of the article: The aim of the article was to identify the relationship between work and private life experienced by employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research methods: The theoretical part of the article was created as a result of the analysis of the literature on the subject which was conducted in the period between December 2020 and April 2021. The empirical part of the article presents the results of a survey conducted with the use of a questionnaire, in which the people from a number of enterprises took part as respondents.

Main findings: It was found that there is a relationship between the workplace and work-life balance experienced by employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be emphasized that under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to achieve work-life balance has become much more difficult.

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From Learning “Doing the Work of a Paramedic” to “Being a Paramedic” – the Results of Research on Students of the Last Year of Wrocław Medical University

Keywords: paramedics; values; motivations; competencies; professional identity

JEL: I1; I23; M54

Abstract

Theoretical background: The limited number of scientific studies on the specifics of the professional identity formation of paramedics makes it possible to conclude that this subject is insufficiently identified. In addition, the growing demand for medical professions, including paramedics, has led the authors to fill the research gap related to the recognition of the real professional identity of future representatives of the discussed profession. Accepting the fact that professional identity of paramedics is formed at different stages of the professional life of the person practicing the job, the authors took up the challenge of looking at the problem in question from the perspective of, *inter alia*, the identification of key determinants of the choice of this profession, the accompanying values and motivations, as well as the degree of fulfilment of expectations from the process of preparation for this profession offered in the framework of higher education.

Purpose of the article: The article draws attention to a very important stage in the process of shaping the professional identity of paramedics, which is the higher-level of education. Its purpose is to recognize the opinions of students of the last year of emergency medical care about their values, motivations that determined the choice of this field of study and the competences acquired by them. These elements determine the degree of satisfaction of students with the broadly understood process of study and, consequently, the forming of their professional identity.

Research methods: The article refers to the results of own research conducted among students of the last year in the field of medical rescue service at the Medical University of Wrocław. The study covered a four-year period and was done each time in the second quarter of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. The authors of the article conducted a diagnostic survey using the authors' survey questionnaire.

Main findings: Future paramedics, while undertaking higher studies in the said field, though internally convinced that their decisions were right, were guided by different values and motivations. Among the most important were the desire to pursue their passions, fulfill dreams, care for their own health, family and relationships with friends. Work as a value and the directly related need to help others, as well as the resulting economic benefits, were not

considered the most important for future paramedics at that moment. The identified dissonance pertaining to the degree of fulfilment of expectations towards the process of education and the degree of benefits gained from that process demonstrate a limited level of satisfaction from preparation for the studied profession.

Implications/Recommendations: The attempt made in the article to insight into the professional identity of future paramedics, and in particular the weaknesses and concerns identified in relation to the learned profession, certainly invite further research that can contribute to both improving the current education system and taking action by further actors in the subsequent stages of shaping this identity. Taking into account the From Learning “Doing the Work of a Paramedic” to “Being a Paramedic ” concerns identified by future paramedics and the enormity of tasks they are going to face, the professional predisposition as well as psychophysical characteristics of potential candidates should be taken into account at the stage of recruitment for the studies. In this context the teaching time should be increased for such subjects as psychology, patient communication and stress management. So far, the Polish education system of paramedics offers no planned career path, no vertical differentiation and promotion during professional work, which would certainly be a motivating factor. Continuous professional development should be an important element, which could enable them to develop their professional identity from learning “doing the work of a paramedic” to “being a paramedic”.

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Experiences of Job Loss among Migrants in Poland during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Study

Keywords: job loss; pandemic; coping techniques; migrants

JEL: E24; F22; J64

Abstract

Theoretical background: Job loss is considered a stressful personal experience that may have a negative impact on an individual's life. The rapidly increasing unemployment rate is not only a private matter but also a public concern entailing negative socio-economic consequences.

Purpose of the article: This research aimed to provide a better understanding of the experiences of migrants who lost jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland.

Research methods: The specific research questions that guided this study were: “What was the experience of job loss for the migrants who worked in Poland during the pandemic?”, “What were the coping strategies and how were they affected by COVID-19?”. The interview texts were analyzed using thematic analysis. A purposeful sampling strategy was supplied with snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 participants.

Main findings: Respondents applied several coping techniques, starting with finding a new job, emphasizing positive aspects, and keeping busy with self-development activities adjusted to pandemic restrictions. The pandemic has not forced any respondent to give up any particular way of coping with job loss, even in terms of social support, despite the risk of infection and the government's recommendation to isolate. Respondents reported also a very limited influence of pandemic on their job searching process, with the only difference to the detriment of non-EU migrants, who noted the emerging reluctance of employers to deal with visa and residence permit bureaucracy.

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The Duration of the Sports Career as a Determinant of the Second Professional Career

Keywords: sports career; second career; basketball players; professional reorientation

JEL: J20; J24; J26

Abstract

Theoretical background: A sports career is a specific activity because it starts at an early age, lasts a relatively short time, and usually athletes are most successful when their peers are just starting to develop their typical professional careers. In previous research on the second careers of ex-athletes, mainly the top performers were described, forgetting that many athletes play in the lower leagues and sport is also their main profession. In this study, athletes who played at different levels of competition were analysed.

Purpose of the article: The article aims to determine how the length of a sports career affects the second professional career of former athletes.

Research methods: The studied population were Polish basketball players of working-age after finishing their sports careers. The survey was conducted online in 2021 and 301 people took part in it. The average duration of a sports career of participants was 10.13 years. Former basketball players were divided into 2 groups according to their career length. The first group consisted of those whose basketball careers lasted at least 10 years (160 people), and the second group consisted of those whose careers were shorter than 10 years (141 people).

Main findings: Former players whose sports careers lasted for at least 10 years are more satisfied with them than those whose sports careers were shorter, but they assess their current career prospects worse. It may result from the fact that among those whose sports careers were shorter, a greater percentage have higher education. The results also show that those whose basketball careers were longer, are now more likely to work in the field of sport. In conclusion, it can be said that earlier retirement from sports, favours to a greater extent university graduating and also allows a faster transition to a second professional career.

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Professional Development of SME Sector Employees and the Challenges of Economy 4.0

Keywords: professional development; SMS sector; economy 4.0

JEL: J24; M54; O15

Abstract

Theoretical background: Employee development is particularly important in the context of ongoing internal changes and the external environment.

Purpose of the article: The understanding of what the professional development of employees in an organization is, what instruments support professional development and what challenges for the development of employees of enterprise economy 4.0 brings for the SME sector.

Research methods: The article uses a quantitative approach. The survey was conducted on a sample of 101 firms from Poland. Data were collected through a questionnaire.

Main findings: In the surveyed enterprises, predominates a typical approach to the issue of professional development of employees and there is no need for a radical departure from classic solutions in favor of using other (innovative) instruments of professional development.

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The Practice of Green HRM in Poland – with the Focus on Elements of the HR Function

Keywords: sustainable human resource development; sustainable HR function; green practices; pro-ecological practices

JEL: M12; M52; M53

Abstract

Theoretical background: Employees' behavior plays a crucial role in the organizational environmental performance. There are many factors which influence pro-ecological behavior among employees, however, this paper focuses on the practices related to green human resources management (HRM) and – in particular – to the HR function.

Purpose of the article: The purpose of this paper is to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the scope of using the practices related to the green HR function? 2) Which elements of the green HR function require further improvement?

Research methods: For the purpose of the article, literature studies and empirical research based on a survey method have been used. In her analyses, the author has included additional variables such as the origin of capital and company size.

Main findings: The organizations under study are in the preliminary stages as far as the implementation of green HRM practices is concerned. Both variables (the company size and the origin of capital) play a role in the implementation of the analyzed practices.

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Start-Up Founders' Competence Potential

Keywords: start-up; competencies; competence potential; venture outcomes; success

JEL: L2; L26; O32

Abstract

In order to respond to all the fast changes that are happening, it is necessary to act quickly and to be adaptable, both from the point of view of organizations and individuals, having necessary knowledge and skill and continually developing human potentials. The year 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how those changes can happen overnight and create a need for the companies' transformation. That is the new clear reason for the big interest in researching start-ups. Start-ups are innovative and fast-developing companies, bringing new solutions and new products, and working under extreme uncertainty, therefore, they require specific skills, knowledge, and other competencies of their founders. Competencies, on the other side, are predispositions, knowledge and skills needed to respond and adapt to changes. The aim of the paper is to propose a theoretical model of relationships between start-up founders' competence potential and outcomes of their ventures. The theoretical model is based on the Upper Echelons Theory presented by Hambrick and Mason (1984) and the scale measuring competence potential of employees in innovative enterprises proposed by Rakowska and Sitko-Lutek (2015). Competence potential of start-up founders is still not researched in depth, so the proposed theoretical method could be used as the practical research methodology.

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Algorithmic Human Resources Management – Perspectives and Challenges

Keywords: human resources management; HR analytics; algorithms; HRM ethics

JEL: M12; M54; O33

Abstract

Theoretical background: Technology – most notably processes of digitalisation, the use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data and prevalence of remote work due to pandemic – changes the way organizations manage human resources. One of the increasing trends is the use of so-called “algorithmic management”. It is notably different than previous e-HRM or HRIS (human resources information systems) applications, as it automates HR-related duties. Algorithms, being autonomous computational formulae, are considered objective and mathematically correct decision-making mechanisms. Limiting human involvement and oversight of the labour process might lead to serious ethical and managerial challenges. Many areas – previously being sole responsibility of managers (including HR managers), like employment relations, hiring, performance management, remuneration – are increasingly affected, or even taken over, by algorithmic management.

Purpose of the article: The purpose of this article is to review the development, perspectives and challenges (including possible biases and ethical considerations) of algorithmic human resources management. This novel approach is fuelled by the speeding processes of digitalisation, the use of artificial intelligence, big data and increased analytical capabilities and applications used by contemporary companies. Algorithms are formulas that autonomously make decisions based on statistical models or decision rules without human intervention. Therefore, the use of algorithmic HRM automates decision-making processes and duties of human resources managers, thereby limiting human involvement and oversight, which can have negative consequences for the organization.

Research methods: The article provides a critical literature review of theoretical sources and empirical evidence on the application of algorithmic human resources management practices. Scientific journals in the field of human resources management and technology applications have been reviewed, as well as research reports from academic institutions and renowned international organizations.

Main findings: Applications of algorithmic human resources management are an emerging field of study that is currently not extensively researched. Little is known about the scale of use as well as consequences of this more automated approach to manage human work. Scarce evidence suggests possible negative consequences, including ethical concerns, biases leading to discriminatory decisions and adverse employees’ reactions to decisions based on algorithms. After the review of possible future developments and challenges connected to algorithmic HRM, this article proposed actions aimed at re-humanisation of the approach to managerial decision-making with the support of algorithms, ensuring transparency of the algorithms construction and functionalities, and increasing reliability and reduction of possible biases.

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*From Scientist to Broker, and How Brokers Use Their Social Capital
to Develop Talents at Universities*

Keywords: social capital; competence development; knowledge transfer; coaching; mentoring

JEL: M53; M54; O31; O32; O34

Abstract

The social capital of an organization is one of the key success factors of enterprises that build their competitive position in the market. This resource, obtained from social structures, can also be used to achieve goals set for public sector organizations, such as universities. Universities operate in conditions of high uncertainty, changing roles, and expectations of stakeholders, which requires adaptability and flexibility of operation. In addition to improving the quality of research and teaching, one of the important evaluation criteria is also the ability to transfer knowledge to the economy and commercialization of research. One of the activities undertaken by universities to support employees in ongoing changes is the implementation of academic scouting, introducing departmental innovation brokers who play the role of coaches/mentors, supporting research and teaching staff by commercializing their research results. The aim of the article is to show how the social capital of departmental innovation brokers supports the development of competences of scientific and research scholars. Based on the conducted qualitative research, it was presented how brokers use their social capital to achieve multidimensional goals in relation to other people, as well as organizational goals resulting from the entrusted function. Factors hindering the cooperation of departmental innovation brokers with academics, which are manifested in various areas of social capital – structural, cognitive, and relational – were analyzed.

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The Development of Key Positions in Crises on the Example of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Keywords: COVID-19; talent; development; HRM; crisis

JEL: H12; M53; O15

Abstract

Theoretical background: Talent management refers to how organizations attract, select, develop and manage talented employees. Thus, talent development is an important part of the overall process. It can be observed that there are relatively few papers focusing primarily on talent development. Meanwhile, it is a more complex and fraught activity than many HR specialist recognize, thus, it is worth paying more attention and research. Even less papers covers talent development during COVID-19 as it is a relatively new problem and research is still ongoing.

Purpose of the article: The aim of the article is to present the results of research on the conduct of development processes by companies for talented employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research methods: For the analysis, literature studies were carried out and the quantitative study with the use of the author's questionnaire and CATI interview was organized in October–November 2020. The research sample included 102 purposefully selected organizations.

Main findings: Research indicates that organizations have been affected by the pandemic in terms of their personnel policies. They decided to take restrictions, but their degree was different for talents and other employees. The biggest restrictions affected training budgets, foreign trips and postgraduate/MBA studies. Organizations continued to run talent development programs in the pandemic, but their scope decreased. Changes in priorities were also noted – the importance of talent development before the pandemic was greater for respondents. During the pandemic, retaining talent and building their commitment came to the fore. The analysis also made comparisons with the results of author's own studies on subprime crisis, which show that the organization's actions in these two crisis situations have converged in many areas. In particular, it was decided to maintain developmental activities, but in exchange for more costly forms of development, talents were offered cheaper internal training, projects or job rotation. The differences include the inclusion of talent in strategic projects, "crisis headquarters", which was observed to a large extent during the subprime crisis, but did not appear in the pandemic results. It should be emphasised that the research was carried out in two different groups, which does not authorise clear conclusions, but only allows for very preliminary reflections on the behaviour of the organization in these two situations. Research results contribute to reducing the research gap in the talent development process during pandemic or crisis.