

O'NEILL UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

Impact of COVID-19 on Human
Resource departments in
Indiana healthcare facilities

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Abstract

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to the deaths of over 530,000 American citizens and caused an economic downfall of 9.1% (8.8 trillion dollars) in the United States. The healthcare sector in the United States is usually called the recession-proof sector but even the healthcare industry was impacted drastically due to the pandemic. The role of the Human Resources (HR) department in healthcare is to ensure that the organization's employees are adequately managed, appropriately compensated, and effectively trained. One of the most important roles of the HR department is recruiting which is usually done through communicating job announcements to potential job seekers. In my research, I aim to study the impact of COVID-19 on the Human Resources department of healthcare facilities in Indiana. In order to study this, I use all the job announcements that were posted on Indeed (www.indeed.com) in January 2021. I employ the inductive reasoning method and use these job announcements to understand the COVID-19 policies that the organization has adopted. Then I observe trends and patterns and categorize the policies into sections - most adopted, moderately adopted, and rarely adopted. These categories display the wide range of policies that were adopted by the organizations to limit the impact of the pandemic and make employees and patients feel safe in their facility. Most of the organizations had mandated masks and PPE for employers in the facility required COVID-19 vaccine administration and underwent special infection control and prevention training to stop the spread of the virus.

Introduction

In modern business, the definition of Human Resources (HR) has undergone major changes in how it is perceived and its context. Any organization is a constitution of its member's skills, time, energy, creativity, experience, potential, and intellect (Thoman, 2018). HR was primarily a functional field of the company for the majority of the twentieth century. HR was performing the required duties to sustain staffing levels and ensure the proper functioning of the firms in accordance with the labor laws and union contracts (Thoman, 2018). Academicians and practitioners shared the mantra back when the term originated in 18th century Europe as today - people are the most important and "irreplaceable asset of any organization" (Thoman, 2018). This is because the humans(employees) of the organization are in charge of all decision-making that occurs at each and every level of the organization (Haslinda, 2009, p. 181). As the organizations have evolved from being primarily production-driven to now being primarily employee-centric, the responsibilities of the HR department have also increased in terms of "utility and influence to the firm overall" (Thoman, 2018).

Moving on to current times, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the employment rates and workforce practices of each sector and at its height forced more than 40 million people into unemployment (Employment Rate, 2020). This has put significant pressure on the Human Resources department of every organization and evolved their leadership and recruitment practices in the new "work from home" environment. This research specifically focuses on "*Studying the impact of COVID-19 on the Human Resource practices of healthcare facilities.*" On studying the unemployment trends of 2020, even the recession-proof industry, healthcare has lost around 1.5 million jobs in the middle of this health crisis which raised many questions on the management and administration of the healthcare sector (Shinkman, 2020). Among the healthcare sector, ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals have lost the most jobs as lucrative elective procedures are canceled in order to save resources for COVID-19 patients. Moreover, the inability of healthcare workers to work remotely and

economic downfall have also contributed to shedding the employees. It is possible to see significant movement towards home offices and distant work of teams. It is not possible to perceive current change only negatively (Beno, 2020). This study will study the impact of the coronavirus pandemic by observing differences in the work output of HR - job announcements. Healthcare is recognized as the recession-proof sector in the US. The unemployment rates in the health services area during the 2008 Great Recession remained steady and continued to follow the upward trend. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, we observe a great decline in employment rates. Although during prior recessions we have not seen any major changes adopted by healthcare facilities, this study finds that the human resources department has adopted several modified extensive policies, because the job announcements now have a separate section that specifies COVID-19 guidelines for the potential employees.

As the market competition is increasing during the pandemic due to the economic downfall, the HR department's role of selecting and screening a suitable job seeker from a pool of employees is becoming increasingly challenging. Due to this, the organization needs to employ recruiting strategies and tactics to hire only the employees that qualify and fit the company culture. Recruitment has been a primary predictor of a company's competitiveness (Machova, 2020). Learning how to recruit the best candidates has also become important for the healthcare sector (Machova, 2020) (Chapman et al., 2005; de Cooman & Pepermans, 2012). This set of circumstances have not changed with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

This research analyses all the job announcements from January 2021 in Indiana and observes patterns, similarities, and differences across organizational policies on COVID-19. Despite the widespread use of job listing websites for hiring little is known about how employers process and analyze the information presented (Gregorka et al., 2020; Hinojosa et al., 2015; Priyadarshini et al., 2019; Shahbaz et al., 2019) (Machova, 2020). Then, the job announcement data collected through Indeed is compiled in Excel and statistical analysis is conducted to study how prominent the policy was. Basically, the prominence of a policy is measured by how many organizations in our job

announcement data set to implement this particular policy? The results were divided into three categories based on how widely the policies were adopted: most adopted, moderately adopted, and rarely adopted. Based on the evidence, the most adopted policies were mainly the policies that were mandated by the CDC for the healthcare organizations to implement to avoid penalties and disciplinary actions. Moderately adopted policies were the ones that prioritized the primary stakeholders of the healthcare organizations: patients and the healthcare staff. These moderately adopted policies implemented during the COOVID-19 were intended to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and minimize its transfer at the earliest stage. The rarely adopted policies were the ones that helped the job seekers screen out the organizations. These policies were unique to the organization and differentiated them among others in the job market.

Literature Review

This research attempts to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on HR Practices. For this study, our dependent variable is human resource management practices. According to Storey (2007), in broad terms, HR management has been historically referred to as employment management. HR management is a distinctive approach to effectively manage employees such that they help their business gain a competitive advantage. This competitive advantage is achieved through the “strategic deployment of a highly committed” and capable workforce using “cultural, structural, and personnel techniques” (Storey, 2007). In short, Human Resource activities fall under the following five core functions: staffing, development, compensation, safety and health, and employee and labor relations (Brooks, 2015). The HR departments are also involved in organizational change and industrial relations or managing the organizational actions and values with growing requirements from collective bargaining and governmental laws (Brooks, 2015).

Though the role of the HR department varies from industry to industry, there are a few key functions that remain consistent throughout every field. These include: overseeing employee-benefits design, employee recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward management (DG Collings, 2018). HRM originated in 18th century Europe on a simple idea by Robert Owen and Charles Babbage during the Industrial Revolution. These men concluded that employees were a crucial part of an organization’s success (Nixon, 2019). They concluded that healthy employees led to increased organizational performance and unhealthy employees led to poor work quality (Griffin, 2008) (Nixon, 2019).

Work by Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), Max Weber (1864–1920), Frederick Herzberg (1923–2000), and David McClelland (1917–1998) helped set the foundation for organizational psychology and behavior and industrial theory and were interpreted in a way that validated the claims for an applied discipline (Ghodratollah Talebnia, 2016). Shortly after the theoretical evidence existed for the

need of strategic management of the workforce, the evolution in the business sector and also public policy sector has successfully transformed the employee-employer relationship and officially established it as “industrial and labor relations” (1913). This later transformed into what is known today as the Human Resources department (20th century) (Ghodratollah Talebnia, 2016). There are few basic roles of the HR department that remain consistent be it a private or a public organization (Ghodratollah Talebnia, 2016). These human resource activities fall under the following five core functions: staffing, development, compensation, safety and health, and employee and labor relations (Brooks, 2015). These functions are discussed in depth in the sections below.

Staffing

Staffing in general terms refers to the process of recruiting employees whose competencies meet the job description and position title qualifications. Effective staffing techniques are the cornerstone of successful human resource management in any industry and can enhance the performance of an organization and survival. (Jean M. Phillips, 2014)

Alison Barber in his book, *Recruiting Employees: Individual and Organizational Perspectives*, has defined recruitment “as a system of methods and actions with the fundamental goal of recognizing and inviting possible employees” (Machova, 2020) (Barber, 1998). Specifically, with regard to external recruitment, Breaugh describes it as “planned activities aimed at creating and focusing attention to job openings” (Breaugh, 2008) (Machova, 2020). As noted by Ployhart (2006, p. 869), “most definitions of recruitment emphasize the organization’s collective efforts to identify, attract, and influence the job choices of competent applicants” but the definitions by Barber and Breaugh fit my study the best (Gerard P. Hodgkinson, 2008) (Machova, 2020). Recruiting attracts potential job seekers to new posts and influences their interest in applying for the position and their desire to apply for and accept the job. (Machova, 2020)

With the economic slowdown due to the pandemic, competition for jobs has increased. 22.2 million US citizens have lost jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic leading to an enormous increase in the job seekers market (De Cooman, 2012). This gives a great advantage to employers as now they have a diverse pool to choose from. Employers can now aim to only offer jobs to the most qualified and experienced employees who are willing to work at a lower salary. Recruitment is emerging as a “key indicator of organizational competitiveness” (De Cooman, 2012). This requires employers to attract the most competent professionals in the field who fit in the organizational culture. It is very interesting to observe that the recruitment process has narrowly changed with the impact of the coronavirus (De Cooman, 2012). This makes me believe that the recruitment trends are deep-rooted and are a direct result of demographic evolution, while the pandemic is temporary. In addition to the increased competition, the recruitment process is gradually transferring to an online environment with the help of video conferencing software (De Cooman, 2012). This shift has been more gradual than it would have been a decade earlier as the upcoming younger generation of employees are “exclusively digital natives”(Machova, 2020).

Development

Development in HR management refers to employee development in terms of their personal growth by being a part of this organization (Developing Employees, n.d.) (Tansky, 2001). It is a continuous process that involves a combination of guidance and support of the employer and training programs provided by the organization to enhance the skills and knowledge employee's about the field (Developing Employees, n.d.). In healthcare, employees every year also need to satisfy their continuing education requirement in order to keep in compliance with their licensure and job eligibility.

Compensation

Caruth and Handlogten define *compensation* as any reward or payment, tangible and intangible, that is given an employee for the services performed (Donald L. Caruth

G. D., 2008). Employers tend to narrow the scope of definition as a package of financial rewards – wages, salaries, commissions, and bonuses plus health insurance and other types of indirect monetary services – provided to employees for their services (Donald L. Caruth, 2001). Compensation has three main purposes: to attract a sufficient number of qualified workers, to retain employees, and to motivate employees to perform to the fullest extent of their capabilities (Donald L. Caruth, 2001).

Workplace Safety

The concept of *Workplace Safety* aims at eliminating or reducing harm or illness to employees. The purpose of workplace safety is to protect an “organization’s most valuable asset - its people”(Introduction to the Human Resource Discipline of Safety and Security, 2017). Ensuring workplace safety is the responsibility of every employee in the company. With respect to health, most of the healthcare facilities do provide employee insurance and also undergo annual training programs for their employees on safe practices to avoid infection or harm when treating patients. During the pandemic to ensure employee wellness, many organizations have started holding mental wellbeing conferences and providing other resources to employees to ensure good performance (Introduction to the Human Resource Discipline of Safety and Security, 2017).

Employee and Labor Relations

Essentially, *Employee and Labor Relations* are concerned with preventing and resolving problems involving employees which stem out of or affect work situations. Employee Relations functions include Performance Management, Conflict Management, Corrective Actions, Counseling, Investigation, FMLA, Layoff, Leave Management, Service Audits & Service Awards, Unsatisfactory EPAR’s and Training (Employee & Labor Relations, n.d.). “Labor Relations is dedicated to creating and sustaining a positive work environment” (Employee & Labor Relations, n.d.). Labor Relations Functions include but are not limited to Grievance and Complaint

Administration, Conflict Management, Settlement agreements, and training (Employee & Labor Relations, n.d.). Labor Relations consist of giving advice and help to employees regarding “work rules, employment laws, legal issues, and any work contract situation” (Introduction to the Human Resource Discipline of Safety and Security, 2017). The HR department has the responsibility to train all employees on employment laws and have these laws easily accessible to every employee. If there is some type of issue regarding the employee/ employment laws, compliance laws, issues with labor unions of nurses or other contractors the hospital's HR department will be handling it (Introduction to the Human Resource Discipline of Safety and Security, 2017).

An important difference in the healthcare industry compared to other industries related to staffing is that the HR department officers cannot hire or fire an employee of the hospital (Griffin D. J., 2010). They do play a key role in facilitating the process. This is because the HR professionals are not trained with the medical knowledge and malpractice laws that are required (Griffin D. J., 2010). The ultimate decision to recruit or lay off an employee is the responsibility of the direct supervisor of the employee. HR personnel will ensure that the process is rightly carried out in relation to non-discriminatory practices and complies with the state labor laws and organizational values (Griffin D. J., 2010).

Healthcare facilities

For this study, our independent variable is the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. WHO defines COVID-19 as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered strain of coronavirus, a type of virus known to cause respiratory infections in humans (WHO, 2020). This outbreak began in December 2019 in China and has today infected about 128 million people around the world. COVID-19 has dramatically shrunk the US economy with a 32.9% annual rate between April and June 2020 as the country was in lockdown (WHO, 2020). This pandemic has also impacted the functioning of HR departments across the globe now that all the industries have moved online. Healthcare facilities especially hospitals unfortunately cannot move online as they work 24*7*365 to provide healthcare services to the community. This research is focused on hospitals in

Indiana and aims to study the HR practices adopted by these hospitals during COVID. This research aims to study the impact on the Human Resource department by analyzing one of their key roles - developing and communicating job postings to potential job seekers. To date little is known about the impact of COVID-19 on healthcare organizations. This study aims to study the impact by studying job announcements.

WHO defines healthcare facilities as “hospitals, primary health-care centers, isolation camps, burn patient units, feeding centers and others (WHO, Health-care facilities, n.d.). In emergency situations, health-care facilities are often faced with an exceptionally high number of patients, some of whom may require specific medical care (e.g. treatment of chemical poisonings)” (WHO, Health-care facilities, n.d.). While this definition is widely accepted. A more simple and easy way to understand healthcare facilities in the context of this research is that healthcare facilities are places that provide health care. They include hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, outpatient care centers, and specialized care centers. Healthcare facilities might be exchangeably used with healthcare organizations later. This research focuses only on the healthcare facilities in the state of Indiana.

What are job announcements?

In recent pre-COVID times, the labor market has been characterized as a candidate’s market with a strong demand for employees (Machova, 2020). As the market competition is rising, identifying suitable employees from the pool of candidates is an increasingly demanding task (Machova, 2020) (Sander & Teh, 2019; Malega et al., 2019). During the coronavirus pandemic, the healthcare sector in the United States has suffered an extraordinary employment loss. From February 2020 to May 2020 we have observed an employment decrease of 13% which is roughly 503,000 people lost work in healthcare (State Employment and Unemployment Summary, 2021). Usually, the healthcare sector has typically been insulated during economic recessions but this pandemic has been unique with this aspect (State Employment and Unemployment

Summary, 2021). The unemployment rates in Indiana have increased from 3.2 to 4.3 from December 2019 to December 2020 which is a major increase of 1.1 over the year. That is over 88,100 Indiana residents have lost jobs during that time period (State Employment and Unemployment Summary, 2021). Observing the previous year trends where the unemployment rate is gradually decreasing in Indiana, we can conclude that the increase in unemployment as a result of the declining economy (declined by 3.5% in 2020) of the United States due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Current Employment Statistics survey (National), 2021). With the increasing competition to hire the right employees and screen the unsuitable employees, the HR department is given the task of forming job descriptions and communicating them to the people seeking jobs in the sector (Beenen & Pichler, 2014). Non-emergency, elective, routine medical services were delayed or canceled which resulted in a sharp reduction in healthcare revenues in 2020. In January 2021, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the unemployment rate in Indiana has reduced from 5.1 to 4.3 from November 2020 (Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Current Employment Statistics survey (National), 2021) (State Employment and Unemployment Summary, 2021).

A job announcement (also referred to as a *position announcement*) is a common description of the job title. This job announcement will consistently appear in all recruiting materials. A good job announcement specifically defines the job and its related responsibilities, benefits, and the qualifications required to be successful at it (How to Develop a Job Description, n.d.). It also mentions the date the position opened, when it will close, how to access the application form, and by what time the results will be announced to the job seeker. It is very important for the job announcement to be clear and concise as a study discovered that the attention span in human beings is getting shorter. In addition, the HR managers also need to make sure that the job description is attractive to the job seekers and is giving them a taste of the culture of the company and leadership/management style. Employers usually do this by mentioning the benefits section towards the beginning and also by providing a short comprehensive and captivating description of the organization and its achievements (How to Develop a

Job Description, n.d.). The ultimate goal of creating an efficient job announcement is to hire the most qualified individual for the position for a long-term commitment to the organization. Therefore job announcements play a very important role in screening the employees and only attracting employees that are suitable for the position.

Surprisingly another key element in recruiting is marketing. In recruiting, most scholars refer to marketing in terms of organization. They often forget to present/convey a positive message through their job announcements (Fowler, 2020). It is often found that when recruiters focus not only on displaying the organization in a positive light but also considering that they are reinforcing a positive message through their announcements, more job seekers were attracted to the organization (Fowler, 2020).

The final stage in the recruiting process for the HR department is usually brainstorming effective strategies for communicating the job announcement to the maximum number of potential job seekers. Today the most worthwhile and functional medium is by using the Internet almost across all the industries. The second most effective way is by using search firms and consultants but the monetary cost for conducting this is very high. Educational/ Job fairs, referrals, newspaper advertisements, and target letters/ emails are popular ways to advertise the job position with low to moderate monetary cost (Machova, 2020). As for every HR practice, it is very important to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for the recruiting process too (Machova, 2020).

Data and Methods

Earlier research concludes that the human resources department is directly linked to the success of an organization and employee satisfaction level (Machova, 2020). One of the most important tasks of the HR department in any organization is recruiting. Recruiting requires effectively sort out the best person for the position from a pool of job seekers. The HR department uses screening methods to exclude employees who do not fit the company's culture or whose qualifications do not match the job title. All the information regarding the position, qualifications required, work expectations, approximate salary, and a few company policies are mentioned in a document called job announcement. Developing and communicating these job announcements are the responsibility of the HR department(Machova, 2020). This is one of the most important jobs of HR as they have the ability to attract potential employees which ultimately define the culture and success of the company. Hence, by studying the impact of COVID on the HR department one can study how the organizations have adapted themselves to the pandemic. This research focuses on job announcements made by healthcare organizations in Indiana and aims to study them through an inductive approach.

The first step is to determine where employers post the job announcements and access them. I narrowed a source where the majority of healthcare employers in Indiana post about job openings at their facilities - Indeed (www.indeed.com). Indeed is the #1 job site in the world and provides free service to job seekers, where they can upload a resume, create job alert emails, search for jobs and apply to them directly. In addition, Indeed also helps job seekers by providing them with useful articles about job searching, interviewing, and hundreds of free resume templates and cover letter samples.

The second step is to filter the job announcements from the source (www.indeed.com). To do this I created an anonymous account on Indeed. I filtered my job interests as 'healthcare' and location as Indiana. Then I decided to set a time frame for the study and set it to January 2021 (www.indeed.com). We decided to study the

latest data because healthcare is a dynamic field and studying the latest data can be helpful to observe current trends in the field which can later be used by future researchers and HR managers/scholars to understand their approach. I used all the job announcements posted by the healthcare facilities in Indiana in January 2021 on Indeed and collected data to observe major policy changes and observable trends.

The third step is to compile this data and record it in Excel. This was done by opening each job announcement in January 2021 and associated links for COVID policy (if any). Next, using Excel, I entered data about organization name, job title, job description changes, changes/ COVID-19 policies mentioned on the link, job type(virtual or live), and mode of interview(virtual or live) in different columns for January 2021.

The fourth step is to observe similarities, differences, and trends among the job description changes and covid policies implemented by different healthcare facilities. Statistical analysis was conducted on this data to better understand how widely each policy was implemented. These observations are talked about in further detail in the Results section of the paper.

The fifth step is to compare the covid policies implemented by the healthcare organizations and comparing it to the official CDC guidelines. This will help us understand to what extent are the healthcare facilities following the guidelines and study the variances if any

Analysis and Results

In order to observe the impact of the COVID-19 on the HR department, I studied all the job announcements on Indeed for January 2021. After recording all the data, I started observing trends of similarities and differences in the policies that each healthcare facility had implemented. Later I compiled all the observable trends in the data and performed statistical measures to find what policies were most commonly adopted by most organizations. I decided to categorize these policies into three categories: most adopted, moderately adopted, and rarely adopted.

We will now describe the major changes that were adopted by healthcare facilities during COVID-19 which were studied via the help of the output of the HR department - the job announcements.

Most adopted policies (> 75% organizations)

Almost every job announcement from January 2021 provided information on policy changes and regulations that the healthcare facility has undertaken due to COVID-19 or at least provided a link in the job description that directed us to COVID-19 guidelines for that facility. Among those job announcements, 2/3rd further mentioned that they were following the “CDC guidelines”. Most of the healthcare facilities talked about the safety of their patients and their staff. PPE kits were mandatory for staff. Facilities also mentioned that they will be providing these to the staff. They also specifically mention that cloth masks will not be allowed and appropriate PPE must be worn. Alcohol-based sanitizers must contain 60-90% alcohol to adhere to hand hygiene recommendations. Sterile gowns, gloves, and eye protection is universal before entering a patient’s room. All the job announcements mentioned that there was now enhanced cleaning, disinfection, and sanitization in and around the facilities to ensure a safe environment.

Over 2/3rd of the job announcements indicated that their staff has undergone a special training program for infection prevention and control for the pandemic. Cleaning

and disinfecting of environmental surfaces and technologies using an EPA-certified disinfectant must be used at regular intervals. The majority of the job announcements mentioned that their staff needs to be mandatorily vaccinated for the coronavirus. According to the advice of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice, healthcare personnel must be offered the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. “Healthcare personnel include all paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials” (The Importance of COVID-19 Vaccination for Healthcare Personnel, 2020). Many job announcements also mentioned that there were now limited waiting times for the patients.

Moderately adopted policies (~30-75% organizations)

About half of the job announcements mentioned the change in staff policy for feeling sick. They strongly recommended their staff to stay at home (quarantine for 14-20 days) if they or any of their family members were experiencing any symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. Their family would also be given one free virtual consultation for COVID screening if needed. About half of the job announcements mentioned that temperature measurement and other screenings are conducted daily for the employees before their shifts start. Hand hygiene policy violations are now leading to disciplinary action. All the staff will have to be tested actively at regular intervals for the coronavirus to ensure the safety of themselves, the patients, and the community.

Around 2/5th (40%) of announcements mentioned that inpatient admissions need to be scheduled beforehand and a health risk form needs to have consented. For online visits, a telehealth form needs to be filled and consented to by the patient. The employees working on COVID-19 floors or with COVID-19 patients are provided with special equipment to prevent the spread of infection.

Rarely adopted policies (<30% organizations)

I came across a very interesting policy implemented by Stratford healthcare in Carmel, Indiana. They had a policy that granted two weeks of paid time off for the staff that had tested positive/showed strong symptoms or had immediate household members that had tested positive.

A hospital had a very interesting program called breathing therapy that was developed for the staff and the patients who have been exposed to the coronavirus to help them improve their breathing techniques. Even the staff who were not exposed to the virus could use this program for free to help them with increasing oxygen flow in their bodies and with stress relief during these tough times. Deaconess Health System in Evansville has many coping resources for its employees. They have ensured that the physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals have enough resources to keep them mentally, emotionally, and physically well during the pandemic.

When the policies adopted by the healthcare organizations (which were collected from job announcements and compiled in the Excel database) were compared to the official CDC guidelines I was able to observe certain trends and similarities and differences. The research concludes that over 92% of the job announcements in our database had mentioned that they were implementing all the mandatory CDC guidelines. The policies that fell into mostly adopted policies category were adopted directly from the CDC guidelines. The main incentive for the healthcare organizations to adhere to the CDC guidelines was to avoid penalties and disciplinary actions. After studying these policies I believe that the healthcare organizations would have still implemented the most adopted policies to control the spread of coronavirus in healthcare organizations and the entire community. By comparing the CDC official guidelines this study was able to recognize to what extent the CDC policies matched the healthcare organization's guidelines for COVID-19. In addition, the study also recognized what policies from the CDC guidelines were implemented and made preliminary assumptions on why the rest of the policies were ignored.

We observed a difference between the policies that were adopted by the nursing homes and assisted living facilities. These facilities had strictly implemented no visitor policies to protect the vulnerable elderly population against infections. Due to the no-entry policy, a lot of policies of other policies are not implemented as vigorously as they are implemented in the hospitals and surgery centers. For example, in our job announcement dataset, we observe retirement homes, skilled nursing facilities, and assisted living facilities do not have policies about the utilization of sterile gowns, gloves, and eye protection. However, they do require the usage of PPE kits and social distancing. On the other hand, policies like residents should not spend time in each other's personal quarters, residents must stay in ventilated public areas (e.g., the dining room) or engage in small group outdoor activities, but they must always keep a distance of at least 6 feet between them(Considerations for Retirement Communities and Independent Living Facilities, 2021). Volunteers and non-essential workers and visitors are “not permitted anymore”(Considerations for Retirement Communities and Independent Living Facilities, 2021). I believe such policies are implemented because the patients at these facilities are at the highest risk of contracting the infection and also have compromised immune systems (Considerations for Retirement Communities and Independent Living Facilities, 2021). Multiple federal agencies have developed resources on emergency preparedness for older adults *before, during, and after* possible emergencies (Considerations for Retirement Communities and Independent Living Facilities, 2021). Further detailed research must be conducted on these facilities to gain an in-depth understanding of how COVID impacted them.

Conclusions/ Implications

Conclusion

Going back to research, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the HR department in healthcare facilities? My research found that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the key HR function *recruiting*. We studied this impact via studying the output (job announcements) of a comprehensive internal process of hiring. After compiling the data and conducting statistical analysis I have sorted the data into three categories: most adopted policies, moderately adopted policies, and rarely adopted policies.

Most adopted policies are those that were adopted by over 75% of the organizations in our job announcement data set. Policies under this category include the usage of PPE kits, usage of alcohol-based sanitizer, usage of EPA-certified disinfectant, and utilization of sterile, gowns, gloves, and eye protection. Staff is also required to undergo special infection control and prevention training and mandatorily get vaccinated for the coronavirus. All these policies focus on stopping the spread of the virus and ensure the safety of the staff and the community. These policies are the ones that were issued mandatorily by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for healthcare facilities. Healthcare facilities needed to address the CDC guidelines in order to avoid any disciplinary action or penalties. In addition, hospitals, diagnostic centers, physician's offices, and other healthcare providers will implement these basic policies to reduce the spread of infection. Some of these policies like hand hygiene, regular interval surface cleaning, usage of sterile gloves, gowns, and eye protection are already a part of the hospital safety routine procedures but they are now implemented with greater emphasis and increased frequency. The majority of the healthcare organizations are requiring mandatory vaccination for coronavirus for their staff, this may screen out any potential job seekers (healthcare providers or hospital administration staff) who are scared of the side effects, have allergies to components of the vaccine, or cannot be vaccinated for religious reasons. In my opinion, the incentive behind healthcare facilities adopting

these policies is to limit the spread of the coronavirus and avoid disciplinary action. Since these policies are quite common among most if not all healthcare organizations, these policies do not play a major role in differentiating the organization in the market for the job seeker. Although these policies do show the potential employee that the organization is following the national guidelines and adhering to the nationwide standard of care that displays the facility in positive limelight to the community.

Moderately adopted policies are those that were adopted by approximately 30-75% of the organizations in our job announcement data set. These policies mostly focus on the well-being of the staff. The policies also take into consideration the primary stakeholders of healthcare facilities, the patients. Policies in this category include mandatory screening for the staff like temperature measurements before each shift, regular mitigation testing, quarantine guidelines, inpatient visit policies, and telehealth policies. These policies will help job seekers gain an insight into an organization's culture and its priorities. In addition, these policies differentiate one organization from the other in the job market and build a positive impression for the job seekers. These policies also help screen job seekers for the employers as if the organization's policy and priorities do not match the job seekers they will usually not be filling out the application.

Rarely adopted policies are those that were adopted by less than 30% of the organizations. Examples of these policies include granting employees two weeks of paid time off or supporting the employees by providing them access to breathing programs and other coping programs. They make sure that their employees feel supported and appreciated for the work they are doing for the betterment of society. These are the policies that make an organization stand out among the rest. After reading multiple job announcements these unique policies will be probably remembered by the applicants. These policies show the extra step that the healthcare facility is taking to show concern for employee safety and well-being.

Implications

The above policies are informing potential job seekers that the organization does care for them and their safety and wellness are a priority for the organization. This further helps in screening out the organizations for the job seekers.

Due to the pandemic, the healthcare facilities have realized the importance of designing an emergency preparedness plan during the pandemic. They have also made temporary contracts with their suppliers in case of a shortage of essential gear or equipment. Following this many facilities have entered a joint venture with the physicians and state health departments to address concerns and support other healthcare centers during the pandemic. Few of the cleaning protocols will stay even after the pandemic is over. In addition, Pay is absolutely back at the forefront – base pay, crisis pay, pandemic pay, overtime, etc. In addition, to attract and retain healthcare providers we need to go beyond money and provide them with unique benefits and assurance like policies on how often we can replace safety resources and how we provide relaxation and time away from the facility. Cross-training has become more critical than ever. For example- Operating Room nurses who may have lost hours due to the cancellation of elective procedures can be a beneficial resource to deploy in COVID units if they are trained to do so. Staffing has not remained the same it is now mainly through contract and travel agencies. The employees in travel agencies have 400-500% higher hourly rate than healthcare would pay their regular employees which is a major expense.

One of the biggest strengths of this research is that it is one of the first few studies that are being conducted on observing the impact of COVID-19 on the HR department of healthcare facilities. This study will help break numerous myths created by the media and other sources on the effect of the pandemic. In addition, this study will lay the foundation for future research studies that aim to study the impact of COVID-19 on the US healthcare sector. The data for this research is collected during the pandemic hence will avoid recall bias. The use of inductive reasoning in this study is to provide a

starting point to human resources and healthcare management scholars. This study is providing them a broad reliable perspective on how COVID-19 has modified the human resources process. This is further narrowed down to one's assumptions and reaches an informed conclusion.

This research can be helpful for the HR managers to understand the impact of the pandemic and study the policies that were implemented before and after the pandemic. They can understand what policies implemented during the pandemic had a positive impact and helped with employee retention and satisfaction and compare it with policies that were ineffective or had a negative impact. This will help them to devise more effective strategies for future pandemics or in handling other emergencies.

The answer to a widely discussed question today "What can we do to become better prepared for future pandemics?" lies in observing what mistakes were made in the current and improving on those. The data used in this research gives an insight into what policies were implemented during the pandemic and the effectiveness of each policy can be studied by the Human resources scholars.

These results can be generalized to other healthcare facilities throughout the nation. This is because as the entire United States, the majority of the healthcare facilities in Indiana are non-profit which were used in this study. During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone compared the coronavirus pandemic to the influenza outbreak in the United States. This shows that scholars were looking in the past to study what policies and changes were successful in reducing the previous pandemic. They would then modify those policies to current circumstances and implement them. Hence, for future pandemics, it would be helpful for human resources and healthcare scholars to look back at the effectiveness of policies implemented during the coronavirus pandemic and use them to combat future pandemics. In addition, this research has given us an in-depth knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be extremely helpful to study the effectiveness of the policies implemented. To take it one

step further I would encourage scholars to study the current policy and formulate an emergency plan on what measures could be taken in case a pandemic in future hits.

One weakness of inductive research methods is that even though we have accurate data we might reach false conclusions. I have tried to minimize this error by using a reliable and error-free data source. But as researchers frame the questions lead to the desired answer. In addition, the results for this research might not be applicable to states that have very different healthcare system structures and networks like California. In this paper, each organization is treated as the same without differentiating on basis of for-profit/non-profit or organizational size.

Finally, the paper concludes with few research recommendations for future researchers. The organization size and type were not taken into consideration while conducting this research. This is an opportunity for further research to observe the impact of COVID-19 based on organization size (small, medium, and large) and organization type (hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, assisted living homes, rehabilitation facilities, and more). If the study was to be conducted again, it would also take into consideration the impact on the time taken to fill the position. Due to the strict policies impacted we might assume that it would take longer to fulfill job roles after the pandemic, so it would be interesting to observe if certain job positions took longer to fill than the others. Another extension of this research would be to categorize each job announcement based on organization type and observe the differences in the numbers (which would be vacancies in that organization type).

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Appendices -



Appendix 1: Five key roles of HR department