



Transformative changes in human resources management practices in the tourism sector amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

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The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a significant degree of uncertainty into the operational landscape of businesses within the tourism sector. These uncertainties have raised questions about how working conditions have evolved and may continue to change in the future. This phenomenon has not only had a widespread impact on the travel industry, but it has also extended its influence to the education sector, consequently affecting numerous other sectors in the broader economy. Within this context, the role of departments such as Human Resources (HR) has gained increasing prominence. These departments are entrusted with the crucial responsibility of monitoring workplace standards, particularly in terms of compliance with hygiene regulations and health procedures. The research was conducted in the accommodation service sector of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), encompassing businesses operating in various regions. A sample size of 20 was selected, with data collected from five different facilities situated across the Northern part of the island. This research seeks to shed light on the evolving landscape of human resources management practices in response to the transformative changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this objective, a qualitative research approach was employed. Oral interviews with business executives supplemented this strategy, giving the research findings more depth and context. The culmination of this study is presented in the final section, encapsulating the results and their implications. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resources, shedding light on the evolving landscape of work in the tourism sector.

Contribution/Originality: This research uniquely examines the impact of COVID-19 on HR practices in the tourism sector of Northern Cyprus, a developing economy. Through qualitative interviews, it sheds light on evolving work practices and compliance strategies adopted by tourism businesses. The findings offer original insights for navigating the pandemic's influence on HR in this context.

1. INTRODUCTION

The human resources department has always played a pivotal role within the tourism sector, overseeing essential functions related to personnel management and fostering harmonious relationships between management and staff. This role has assumed even greater significance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the functions of human resource management have undergone substantial changes. Human resource management, as a strategic approach, aims to optimize employee performance to support an organization's strategic objectives (Azizi, Altasi, Ziapour, Abbas, & Naemi, 2021; Johnason, 2009).

This study endeavors to elucidate the transformative alterations in human resources management practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, the research incorporates insights from businesses operating within the tourism sector and individuals with affiliations with these establishments. The study is further enriched by the contributions of academic experts in the field. A comprehensive literature review, serving as a secondary data source, bolsters the empirical findings.

Several factors, including the growing impact of globalization, shifts in consumer behaviors, heightened competition, and the unanticipated emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2019, have left an indelible mark on social and economic life (Bickley, Chan, Skali, Stadelmann, & Torgler, 2021). These changes have compelled businesses, as critical economic entities, to relinquish traditional paradigms and embark on a perpetual journey of self-renewal. They must continually adapt to meet contemporary demands, gain a competitive edge, and outpace their rivals (Burrows & Curran, 1989). This dynamic transformation manifests across various facets of their operations, encompassing technology adoption, customer relations, service quality, and product enhancement. Notably, this period has witnessed a profound shift in the expectations and perspectives of enterprises towards their employees.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the enduring importance of employees, alongside technology, products, and tools, as a key driver in achieving a competitive advantage and realizing the future objectives of businesses (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Amidst the current challenges, employees are increasingly seeking workplaces that offer opportunities for personal growth, meet their career expectations, implement equitable compensation structures, and prioritize social welfare over necessity. Human resources represent an asset for businesses and hotels, and despite advancements in technology and service quality, it is the competence and dedication of qualified employees that catalyze development and innovation. Tourism enterprises, recognizing this reality, strive to nurture and retain this invaluable resource, thereby contributing to their growth and differentiation on both national and international platforms (Kırpık, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic, commonly referred to as the "New Coronavirus Disease," has rapidly and profoundly affected the world, leading to its declaration as a global pandemic and a global health crisis by the World Health Organization on March 12, 2020. As many scholars have noted, this crisis represents a global emergency, spurring unprecedented collaboration among countries, governments, scientists, companies, communities, and individuals. This cooperative effort is envisioned not only to combat the coronavirus but also to address other pressing global challenges, such as climate change. The business environment is subject to an array of external influences, including global, economic, sociocultural, demographic, political, and technological factors. Changes in these dimensions reverberate throughout sectors, impacting job performance and related organizational outcomes (Wen, Kozak, Yang, & Liu, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, has inflicted widespread disruptions, affecting both developed and developing countries due to global economic constraints resulting from widespread quarantines (John-Eke & Eke, 2020). The pandemic is anticipated to engender multifaceted repercussions and transformations within the global business landscape. Due to the unpredictability of the pandemic's duration, uncertainty looms large on the global stage, casting a shadow of instability and eroding market confidence for an extended period. In response to these challenges, several countries have extended partial unemployment benefits to support employment and income, with additional employment protection measures in place (Blustein et al., 2020).

For instance, the Chinese government has guaranteed job security for migrant workers in the event of illness or restraining measures (Xu, 2013). Unemployment benefits have been expanded in some countries. In the Philippines, the Social Security Program will provide unemployment benefits to approximately 60,000 employees who face potential job losses due to layoffs or business closures. Some nations are offering social benefits and cash transfers to bolster income security and aggregate demand. The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated a near-

complete shutdown of the business world (Wen et al., 2021), impacting industries on an unprecedented scale and at an unprecedented speed. This crisis is unparalleled, constituting the first global crisis that directly affects every individual on the planet. The crisis's severity has increased due to widespread neglect, and its effects could be disastrous (John-Eke & Eke, 2020).

The adverse repercussions of COVID-19 have left tourism businesses in a precarious position. Most enterprises were forced to suspend their operations, with only essential services permitted to continue. Simultaneously, the pandemic has engendered challenges in employee-employer communications, with questions arising about how employees can feel safe while ensuring their health and well-being in physical workspaces. In this environment, the practice of management is evolving and adapting to the twenty-first century's shifting landscape. It is recognized that to navigate this period of perpetual change and advancement, managers must ensure that the right individuals are effectively executing their roles (Fischer, 1972).

In the highly competitive conditions engendered by the pandemic, organizations are fervently striving to gain a competitive edge. They are perpetually innovating within the framework of the pandemic's conditions to enhance their resources and secure competitive advantages. They recognize, crucially, that their employees are the one resource that rivals cannot easily imitate because they possess irreplaceable skills. This awareness underscores the importance of organizations investing in human resources and cultivating the development of these resources. This study aims to identify the Human Resources Management (HRM) practices that are effective in fostering employee commitment and job satisfaction within tourism organizations. These HRM practices represent a pivotal aspect of the organization's most valuable resource, its workforce. The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding HRM practices in the context of the tourism industry, offering valuable insights to academic journals and researchers aiming to understand the evolving landscape of human resources amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Importance of HRM Activities During Covid-19 Pandemic

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic process that focuses on planning, implementing, and maintaining strategies, programs, and policies to effectively acquire, motivate, develop, reward, and retain the workforce required to achieve an organization's goals and objectives (Tanke, 1990). HRM is vital for recruiting, training, developing, evaluating, and managing employees to fulfill the functions necessary for organizational success (Boone & Kurtz, 1998). HRM encompasses activities such as job analysis, workforce needs assessment, employee selection, training and development, career planning, performance management, wage planning, and employee motivation (Armstrong, 2006; Cho, Woods, Jang, & Erdem, 2006; Dessler, 2008).

The business environment can face unexpected disruptions due to environmental variables, necessitating adaptive measures by firms to address these changes (Çalışkan, 2010). Managers must make sure that the right people carry out their duties successfully in an era of constant change and growth (Azizi et al., 2021).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is an ongoing, strategically significant process aimed at achieving an organization's corporate goals through talent management, workforce planning, performance management, policies, and practices (Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997). It focuses on improving the quality of work life and employee productivity, particularly in the service sector, where the quality of services and customer satisfaction play pivotal roles (Saldamli, 2008).

The understanding of HRM has evolved in recent years to emphasize the development of human resources as strategic assets rather than consumable resources. Businesses have acknowledged that their employees are essential to achieving organizational objectives. In the current climate, HRM aims to reduce employee turnover, enhance employee commitment, increase business efficiency, and elevate organizational performance (Gürbüz & Bekmezci, 2012).

Businesses must adapt to changes in the skills and competencies needed by their workforce in an era of technological advancements and environmental change. HRM plays a critical role in recruiting, retaining, and developing qualified employees. Despite changing roles and responsibilities, HRM remains pivotal in managing these shifts effectively (Saldamli, 2008).

The global scale of health crises threatens both public health and businesses' assets and operations. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted activities across the world, leading to a halt in business operations. During this crisis, occupational health and safety, among other factors, became central concerns for HRM (Tomčíková, Svetozarovová, Coculová, & Danková, 2021). This study seeks to examine HRM practices amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It investigates HR planning, recruitment practices, occupational health and safety measures, changes in workforce size, and HRM challenges. The study relies on digital interviews with HR managers, and the data is analyzed through content analysis. Proactive approaches in HRM are considered crucial to preparing for future crises (Nastopoulous, 2020).

HRM plays a crucial role in managing a changing and challenging business environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced several unforeseen challenges, highlighting the need for adaptable HRM practices to respond effectively. Organizations are evolving their HRM approaches to ensure they can navigate unexpected events with minimal damage. This adaptation helps them retain and manage their workforce, fostering employee satisfaction and business success.

2.2. The Effects of Covid-19 on Social Life and Daily Habits

The year 2020 presented significant challenges to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economy in Northern Cyprus, as it did worldwide. The pandemic had especially adverse effects on the private sector and its workforce, which continue to impact the region adversely. The announcement of vaccination availability towards the end of 2020 raised hopes for the tourism sector in 2021 (Ali, Yilmaz, Fareed, Shahzad, & Ahmad, 2021).

Though the vaccine news generated optimism for the tourism sector, the first half of 2021 is set to be crucial. Challenges like vaccine production capacity, vaccine procurement by major countries, the unrecognized status of Northern Cyprus, and the nature of state-to-state vaccine agreements have made predicting the future difficult (Haleem, Javaid, & Vaishya, 2020).

The future of the tourism industry is subject to various factors, including the country's daily cases, vaccination rates, and agreements regarding quarantine exemptions for tourists. The Supreme Council of Health determined these factors, and changes will depend on the status of nations as displayed on the Ministry of Health website (Sultanoglu, Baddal, Suer, & Sanlidag, 2020). Given the current data, Northern Cyprus' position on the list of the main market, the Republic of Turkey, is expected to remain relatively stable. Nonetheless, vaccination strategies should be introduced to navigate this challenging period (Ali et al., 2021; Sultanoglu et al., 2020).

Efforts should be made to avoid repeating the vaccination injustices experienced in Northern Cyprus and other developing countries. A well-planned vaccination period should be undertaken, and countries must capitalize on their tourism potential. Government officials, agencies, and accommodation sector businesses should engage in effective planning to drive tourism forward (He & Harris, 2020). The "new normal," which places a strong emphasis on health and adherence to rules set by medical institutions, will shape the future of tourism. Monitoring the vaccinated population's rate in Northern Cyprus, daily cases, and the vaccination rates and daily cases of the countries allowing tourists will be essential (Sultanoglu et al., 2020).

While the promise of vaccines has rekindled hope in the tourism sector, the reality of vaccine production capacity and the epidemic's dynamics present ongoing challenges. The tourism sector's future looks forward to improved health, economic stability, and sociocultural recovery (Sultanoglu et al., 2020). The "new normal" in tourism means prioritizing health and following health institutions' guidelines, including social distancing, mask-

wearing, hand hygiene, and hygiene standards. Monitoring the vaccinated population, daily cases, and cases in countries designated as tourists and those they accept will be crucial for tourism recovery (Sultanoglu et al., 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Location and Sampling

The research was conducted in the accommodation service sector of Northern Cyprus, encompassing businesses operating in various regions. A sample size of 20 was selected, with data collected from five different facilities situated across the Northern part of the island.

3.2. Method of the Research

This section provides an overview of the research questions, methodology, study participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Data entry and analysis were carried out using the NVivo 11 program, and the resulting themes, sub-themes, and expressions were compared. The Cohen Kappa coefficient, which was calculated to be 0.88, suggests a high level of reliability, indicating a strong agreement between the themes and expressions identified (Sevim & Ayvaci, 2020).

The research addresses the emerging concept of COVID-19's potential influence on human resources management. The research questions focus on understanding the effects of the pandemic on human resource management practices and the changes it may introduce. Qualitative data collection, particularly the semi-structured interview technique, was employed, with 20 human resources managers and tourism professionals participating in the study. Qualitative research emphasizes the value of the research process itself, with an emphasis on the methods and procedures undertaken (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

3.3. Research Questions

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced businesses' human resource strategies, particularly in terms of retention, recruitment, and workforce planning?
2. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic shaped human resource practices, including personnel selection, training, motivation, and performance evaluation?
3. What broader organizational changes, including business planning, remote work support, job descriptions, and technological integration, have been implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how do these changes impact the workforce and HR dynamics?

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed NVivo 11 as the data analysis software. This section provides details about the research questions, methodology, study participants, data collection technique (interviews), and data analysis process. The researcher utilized the NVivo 11 application to input and analyze the dataset. Themes, sub-themes, and expressions derived from the data were systematically compared using the NVivo 11 software package. This software comparison was instrumental in ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the identified themes, sub-themes, and expressions (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

4.1. Demographic Information of Interviewers

The research area comprises lodging establishments located in Northern Cyprus. Due to the wide range of operations within the sector, a sample size of 20 was selected during the summer season, with data collected from five distinct hotel businesses situated across the northern region of the island. The following tables present the demographic information. Table 1 shows the demographic information.

Table 1. Demographic information of interviewers.

Code	Sector	Job title	Gender	Age	Education	Private/Government employee	City
I1	Tourism	General manager	Male	47	High School	Private	Kyrenia
I2	Tourism	HRM	Female	33	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I3	Tourism	HRM	Male	35	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I4	Tourism	HRM	Female	30	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I5	Tourism	HRM	Male	32	Bachelor	Private	Famagusta
I6	Tourism	HRM	Female	35	Master	Private	Famagusta
I7	Tourism	GM	Male	42	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I8	Tourism	HRM	Female	34	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I9	Tourism	HRM	Male	33	High school	Private	Famagusta
I10	Tourism	GM	Male	48	Bachelor	Private	Famagusta
I11	Tourism	HRM	Female	32	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I12	Tourism	HRM	Male	28	Bachelor	Private	Kyrenia
I13	Tourism	HRM	Male	36	Master	Private	Nicosia
I14	Tourism	HRM	Male	34	Bachelor	Private	Nicosia
I15	Tourism	General manager	Female	68	Bachelor	Private	Nicosia
I16	Education	Academic	Female	29	Master	Private	Kyrenia
I17	Education	Academic	Female	31	Master	Private	Kyrenia
I18	Education	Academic	Male	39	Ph.D.	Private	Kyrenia
I19	Education	Academic	Female	37	Ph. D	Private	Kyrenia
I120	Education	Academic	Male	41	Ph.D.	Private	Kyrenia

The Table 2 presents the themes and codes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

Table 2. Themes and codes.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
1. Current HRM practices of businesses and the effects of COVID-19	1.1. Policies you are implementing and will implement to retain your qualified workforce and competent personnel in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent and successful in the field to care about personnel • To increase belonging • To ensure the safety • Happiness and motivation of employees • To create team spirit and awareness by providing training • To offer good wages • To organize social events • To be rewarded at the end of the year.
2. Existing HRM practices of tourism enterprises in Northern Cyprus and the effects of COVID-19	2.1. Policies you are implementing and will implement to retain your qualified workforce and competent personnel in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To care about competent and successful personnel in their field • To increase their belonging • To ensure the safety • Happiness and motivation of employees • To create team spirit and Awareness by providing trainings • To offer good wages • To organize social events and to be rewarded at the end of the year. • Measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission and online training are implemented. • Education system and manager candidate program have been developed. • Online trainings and Webinars are used
	2.2. "Which channels (Newspaper postings, reference-peer-friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet recruitment sites • Reference peer recommendations • Internet

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
	advice, educational institution advice, websites, social media, etc.) are used for personnel recruitment in the current period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • University recommendations • Own internet • We use our site. • We use all the methods you specify. • Newspaper
	2.3. Which methods (Test, interview, medical report, etc.) are applied in the selection of personnel in the current period and whether COVID-19 will cause changes in this regard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, skill, open-ended tests, experience tests • Health report • Online interview • Foreign language tests • Personal inventory • We get a report from the doctor of the enterprise. • Chronic illness tests • Criminal record • Checking references • We will ask for a COVID-19 test. • phone interview • We apply all the techniques you specify. • Health and hygiene knowledge tests • Case analysis • Personality test • Reason for leaving your previous job. • Certificate
	2.4. Occupational health and safety training will be given about COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings are organized according to needs. • Face-to-face training was conducted. • It is carried out by distance education
3. The impact of COVID-19 on business planning and activities	3.1. The differences that the human resources unit can make in the career planning of the employees during the COVID-19 process	

4.2. The Examined Questions

The common answers given by the research participants to the research questions are as follows:

When the answers given to the theme "*Current HRM Practices of Businesses and the Effects of COVID-19*" are examined, the answers given to the sub-theme "Policies you are implementing and will implement to retain your qualified workforce and competent personnel in the field" are as follows, according to the frequency of repetition:

Fostering a workforce that is highly skilled and accomplished in their respective roles is vital. This involves prioritizing personnel well-being, cultivating a sense of belonging, ensuring employee safety, promoting happiness and motivation, instilling teamwork and awareness through training initiatives, providing competitive compensation, organizing social gatherings, and concluding the year with well-deserved rewards.

4.3. The Findings of Questions

When the answers given to the interviews "*Existing HRM Practices of Tourism Enterprises in Northern Cyprus and the Effects of COVID-19*" are examined, the answers given to the sub-question "Policies you are implementing and will implement to retain your qualified workforce and competent personnel in the field" are as follows, according to the frequency of repetition: "To care about competent and successful personnel in their field, to increase their belonging, to ensure the safety, happiness, and motivation of employees, to create team spirit and

awareness by providing trainings, to offer good wages, to organize social events, and to be rewarded at the end of the year". "Measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission and online training are implemented", "education system and manager candidate program have been developed", and "online trainings and Webinars are used".

"All personnel benefited from the salary support payment given by the Northern Cyprus state to tourism employees, and financial support is provided to the personnel who cannot be employed", "half salary is paid to the employees in full", "a fair and transparent management approach is applied; the funds allocated from the state budget for tourism employees of the TRNC Ministry of Labor are utilized ", "bonus support is also provided to the personnel", "performance evaluation system and an open communication system are used", and "flexible working hours are applied".

In addition to their standard remuneration, employees receive additional benefits, including fuel allowances, Eid bonuses, Ramadan food packages, regular monthly motivational draws, and traditional picnics held annually, surprise happy hour events, New Year's Eve gala programs, iftar events, and surprise meals.

"Discounted education for their children, transportation, food, social-sports facilities are implemented, policies that increase binding are implemented, job rotation and job familiarization practices are implemented", "study abroad has a positive effect on personnel", "working time can be reduced and break times can be increased", "continuous development programs are implemented", "Persons over the age of 65 are on leave, mutual respect and trust are established", "wages should be reduced instead of dismissal, and dismissals are made and the remaining personnel are paid". Regarding the sub-survey, "We can exchange ideas about what to do after the epidemic by trying to keep the morale of the employees high with video conferences. With COVID-19, personnel working in the service sector have become more valuable. There is a need for highly educated conscious personnel who will pay attention to hygiene conditions."

Regarding the related interview: "We have many projects. As the capacity of the state hospital and the construction of the emergency hospital have been completed and the vaccination studies have increased significantly, our workforce and personnel demand have increased. The personnel we have are currently working actively. We do not see any change in our policies, as the work we have done has a positive effect on our personnel both financially and morally."

All companies aspire to recruit leaders with exceptional talent and unique skills. Retaining these employees is also a top priority for organizations. Establishing a long-term connection with high-performing and highly competent employees can be achieved through effective employee motivation.

Upon examining the research findings, it becomes evident that human resources managers are making concerted efforts to enhance employees' sense of belonging within the organization. They achieve this through various means, including motivation-boosting activities and social events. Additionally, they place a strong emphasis on training initiatives and leverage online communication systems. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations ensured that employees continued to receive their wages. They also retain their employees by capitalizing on opportunities provided by the state in this challenging period. It can be stated that these collective efforts are aimed at maintaining a strong employee base.

The answers received from the participants regarding the sub-theme "Which channels (newspaper postings, reference-peer-friend advice, educational institution advice, websites, social media, etc.) are used for personnel recruitment in the current period" are as follows, according to the frequency of repetition: "Internet recruitment sites", "reference peer recommendations", "internet", "social media", "university recommendations", "own internet", "we use our site", "we use all the methods you specify", "newspaper".

Participants who indicated their intention to change the personnel recruitment channels after the COVID-19 pandemic were in the minority, while the majority expressed their commitment to continuing to recruit personnel through the existing channels.

Regarding the sub-theme, “A newspaper that is no longer used is only effective in finding blue-collar employees.” I expressed an opinion. The other two participants said, “We find every application made face-to-face on behalf of our own business more beneficial. We can better observe the external appearance and speaking style of the applicant.

However, because of the COVID-19 process, we plan to use the websites. We are in the plan to form the staff by pre-selecting the personnel candidates who send us their resume forms.” he said. Another participant said, “We use the TRNC Labor Office to find disabled personnel. However, application and selection exams in physical environments for personnel selection could not be carried out, were postponed, and are still not implemented. Applications such as electronic selection exams can be considered in the future.” expressed his opinion.

One tourism professional, speaking on recruitment in HRM, shared the view that "Providing the necessary personnel for the business to continue its operations in the short term is one of the fundamental objectives of human resources planning. Meeting future personnel requirements arising from investments or similar changes within the enterprise in the coming periods also falls within the scope of human resources planning."

Insights gleaned from this subtheme reveal that most participants employed online recruitment methods both pre- and post-COVID-19 and intend to persist with these platforms. The extensive adoption of technological advancements in the domain of HRM has expanded access to a wider pool of potential candidates while simultaneously prioritizing health and safety concerns.

“General, skill, open-ended tests, experience tests”, "health report", "online interview", "foreign language tests", "personal inventory", "we get a report from the doctor of the enterprise", "chronic illness tests", "criminal record", "checking references", “We will ask for a COVID-19 test,” “phone interview,” “we apply all the techniques you specify,” “health and hygiene knowledge tests,” “case analysis,” “personality test,” “reason for leaving your previous job,” and "certificate”.

Regarding the sub-theme, our participant said, "I think artificial intelligence robots will take an active role in personnel selection instead of humans in the long term" and stated that there may be digital personnel in the tourism sector in the future. Another participant: “Due to COVID-19, the tests and written exams to be held in March could not be held and were postponed to a later date. It is thought that if the process continues, it may differ, such as executing the same application by taking more strict measures, not all on the same day but on intermittent days. He expressed his opinion. Two of our participants said: “There is now a regulation called the personal data protection law of the people in the interviews. A medical report cannot be requested. You can no longer learn the private data of people. For example, such as blood group”.

“We do not intend to undergo any testing for COVID-19. After all, a staff member with a negative test result today may come to the company with a positive test result two days later and mix with the staff, and we cannot control this with recruiting. We think that occupational health and safety controls may be sufficient for the beginning.” he said. Another participant said, “We generally apply interview and behavioral suitability test methods in personnel selection. In the COVID-19 process, these methods can be made over the internet and differentiated. We can request that the health report and test answers from our candidates be sent to us via email. In this way, I think that personnel candidates can apply to our company without risk.”

Based on the research findings, the majority of participants now anticipate that technological communication tools, as opposed to traditional methods, will become more prevalent in the future. They consider these tools to be essential and foresee their widespread use following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, as revealed by information obtained from the relevant sub-theme, digital platforms are gaining significance, particularly in terms of health and safety, especially when it comes to the selection of personnel during the COVID-19 period.

The answers received regarding the sub-theme "Which methods are used in personnel training in the current period and whether COVID-19 will cause changes in this regard" are as follows according to the frequency of repetition: safety, health, hygiene, etc.). These trainings are via distance training. It is supported and will be

supported during the COVID-19 process; trainings are provided and will continue to be given in small units, both in relation to the virus and in accordance with social distance, "Distance Education", "certified trainings",

"Training programs are implemented from local universities", "leadership development program", "manager training program", "social media", "training with master trainers" were recorded.

Participants reported that occupational health and safety training specifically addressing COVID-19 is being provided, with training tailored to identified needs. Notably, a shift has occurred from face-to-face training to distance education modalities, reflecting the heightened emphasis on health and safety during the pandemic. One participant aptly remarked, "Distance education offers greater safety compared to in-person training, particularly in light of current circumstances.

Another participant said: "Posts, videos, etc. that will raise awareness within the scope of COVID-19 should be prepared and published on personnel boards or information screens. We think that training should be increased through computer and media systems to reinforce and learn emergency management after the epidemic process." expressed as. Another participant of ours: "In the normal process, our trainings are followed by making use of the infrastructure of the best universities in the TRNC. Another contributing factor for tourism professionals is that we are considering using online training in the COVID-19 process. For this, we need to both prepare our information systems infrastructure and determine the right external resources that provide online education." An experienced participant said, "Currently, we apply the measures that the government and chambers have given us as PDFs to our employees, and we explain these rules every day and provide one-on-one training. If this process takes longer, we will need to purchase definite training from health institutions." stated that.

"I think distance education will not be as effective as face-to-face education." He gave a negative opinion. When the answers given to the sub-theme are examined, it is possible to say that HRM managers apply various training systems for their personnel, and they concentrate on distance education, especially in the current period.

The answers received from the participants regarding the practices carried out to increase the motivation of the personnel and the effect of COVID-19 on the related practices are as follows: 'birthdays', special day parties and gifts (mother's day, father's day, New Year's Day, etc.), training seminars, iftar and dinner organizations, social events, fair working order and appreciation systems, happy hours, psychological support, staff family events (23 April etc.), friendly working environment, bonus, bonus system, 'online interviews-therapy', "outings", performance evaluation systems, team meetings and studies", balls, "parties", "sports activities", "ensuring hygiene and cleanliness of common areas", "healthy competitive environment", "food that gives resistance to the cafeteria menu" addition, "staff of the month", "charity activities", "offering the opportunity to work from home", "personal career", "guaranteeing not to lose your job", "health kit (mask, gloves, disinfectant) distribution", "chocolate distribution during holidays", "occupational health and safety practices", "OYAK Doctor program", "workshop", "We celebrate Employee Appreciation Week for 1 week in May", "Sodexo", "Extra leave" and private health insurance. Looking at the participant's views on the subject: "We moved the socialization processes online." According to the participants, all morale-boosting activities are postponed during the COVID-19 process. Other interviewers on the subject: "The activities will continue with the condition of maintaining social distance. Because our personnel need motivation now more than ever." expressed an opinion. A researcher said, "The implementation of measures such as cafeterias and service arrangements without being put on the agenda by the state has been received very, very positively by the employees. In the process, individual distance relations and importance came to the fore." expressed his opinion on the matter. Other interviewers of the research also said, "Of course, such activities have decreased during the COVID-19 process because we have entered a period when we should not be together; in fact, we should not be very close with people.

Therefore, it seems that it will turn into events that are more individual rather than collective. E.g., Chocolate was distributed during the holidays, but now, while chocolate is being distributed during the pandemic process, masks and disinfectants will be distributed. We think that we can increase the motivation of employees by giving

them supplements that can be reached more easily in daily life. For example, when the first pandemic started, we distributed disinfectants to all our employees, we gave them their masks, and we tried to motivate our employees even more with this kind of help so that no one would feel missing.” The most repeated statements by the participants regarding the sub-theme of "Current performance evaluation criteria and the changes to be caused by COVID-19" are as follows: "A job- and competency-oriented performance evaluation system is applied to personnel by HR and unit managers". "In the home working system, there may be relaxations in the work discipline of the personnel and on urgent matters with deadlines. However, for the personnel who are aware of their responsibilities and can establish the home working system effectively, both the business and the employees continue to work happily. To date, our organization has been operating remotely during this pandemic, and we have not encountered any issues so far. Notably, we have effectively reduced the risk of contamination to zero. This represents a significant advantage during this period. In summary, when the system is well-established and everyone understands their responsibilities, remote working is a highly effective system during this pandemic.

“When our business was open, we tried to protect ourselves from the COVID-19 virus by maintaining social distance between our customers and employees, using masks and disinfectants.”, “We attach great importance to the idea of working from home, occupational health and safety, and, above all, people working without feeling at risk. While these numbers were increasing in foreign countries before the cases were seen in North Cyprus, we were already keeping our staff under control. We have taken measures to prevent personnel from travelling abroad and working from home for those in the risk group in North Cyprus. “

In this respect, I can say that we are one of the first companies in North Cyprus to decide to work from home. We work online. Our company's internet and online infrastructure are in very good condition. Therefore, we did not have any difficulties in the transition process.”, “While people who work remotely have the chance to use the hours they spend on the road, in the elevator, and in public transport more efficiently, they are also free from the negative effects of traffic ordeals and the stress of being late. They avoid distractions from the office. They are in control of the time instead of working 9-6 hours on workdays. They have more time to devote to their loved ones, friends, and hobbies.”, and “With the ease of work brought by technology and therefore the internet, we carry out our business from our homes without any problems, in health conditions, day by day.

Skype to communicate live.” expressed his views. When the answers given to the sub-theme are examined, it can be said that most of the sectors have adopted the home working system in general and that enterprises in the manufacturing and service sectors have difficulty adapting to this system. Regarding the sub-theme “There is a change in the job descriptions or job requirements of the employees during the COVID-19 process”, the answers received according to the frequency of repetition are as follows: “There will be changes in the job descriptions and requirements.

In this process, we changed our internal organization rather than the job description and duties of our employees. We have planned our workplace in this direction by taking care that our customers maintain the social distance between them and our employees. However, modifications related to COVID-19 will need to be made to the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) rules. In addition, job descriptions of the new personnel to be employed to follow up on the COVID-19 standards will be determined from the beginning, and 'Process Follow-ups' will be defined with the Hygiene and Quality Department, which are the relevant departments.

In North Cyprus, the paperwork and certification procedures continue in the old-fashioned way. We can even wait for days to get a signature on a document. In this period, I can foresee that maybe no time will be spent on such detailed work where the work can be completed in a shorter time and the workforce can be used more efficiently. E.g., instead of spending an hour for a signature, it can be done in five minutes with the signature program. It is possible to switch to the e-signature system. In fact, I think it is possible to work more efficiently during this period. Since people don't have a social life to focus on, the only thing they focus on is their health and work. During this period, working hours in my own company were eliminated. People work in the evening hours;

they do not have lunch breaks. They keep their breaks shorter because there is no one around to socialize with. As a result, productivity has increased significantly. That's why I think that working systems can progress online and digitally from now on.", "There will be changes. For example, since the person in the security department is responsible for the security of the hotel, he can measure the temperature of the person entering the hotels.

This can be added to their task. We thought: While the staff in the kitchen is working, we will install a camera so that experts in the field can monitor the staff in the kitchen on the televisions in the living rooms used by F&B. This camera will work 24/7. There he will be able to monitor the staff in the kitchen department.", "Especially remote working will change some processes positively and negatively. I think that with the changes in the existing strict office rules and requirements, there will be developments in the formation of new ethical rules. Just like in Zoom, the microphone and camera must be turned off during the meeting.

For now, we can only think that muting the microphone will be a rule instead of leaving the phone volume on in meetings. At a similar point, if we consider that turning off the camera makes a significant contribution to the broadcast quality, I think this will be an unwritten rule in communication." and "There will be changes in the emotional and behavioral characteristics of the employees rather than their mental characteristics. For example, in terms of communication, it was necessary to provide one-to-one eye contact and one-to-one service with guests. But since there will be a little more distance in the next process, it will lead to customer dissatisfaction. In addition, protective measures will be taken while working.

We need to be able to enter the season in a ready way by providing psychological support to the personnel as well as training in areas such as hygiene, occupational health and safety, pandemic, and combating epidemics. We provide training on the way the personnel work in the hotel (social distance, wearing masks, wearing visors, etc.), and our quality departments are trying to organize and carry out the related studies. But this must continue until a vaccine is found. It will be kind of before the pandemic, after the pandemic."

It would be correct to evaluate the post-COVID-19 process in two parts. In the first period of the new normal process, it is inevitable to save on the number of personnel since the occupancy rates will be relatively low in hotels that will operate at 50% capacity. However, with the improvement of all conditions and the achievement of 2019 occupancy rates, COVID-19 conditions may require extra burdens and the employment of new personnel for businesses. Our recruitment for new projects continues. There is no reduction; when the COVID-19 process is over and people return to their social lives and normal work patterns, if there is an increase in the projects received, there will be an increase in the number of our personnel. Now, we continue our business as if we were working from the office, and "The Company with production will constantly need personnel. On the other hand, the number of personnel will decrease in the enterprise with low production." When the answers given and the opinions of the participants are evaluated together, it is thought that the number of personnel of the companies will decrease regardless of the business line with COVID-19 and the slowdowns in the markets in general. It is also foreseen that the number of personnel will increase or decrease depending on the demand in the sectors. When the answers given to the sub-theme "There is a differentiation in the relative values of different works done in a business during the COVID-19 process" are examined, "I think there will be changes in the values of different jobs".

"Yes, for example, we have not taken any measures for COVID-19 until now. This epidemic was not an issue that anyone had worked on before, but now everyone must have a little bit of knowledge. Changes in financial terms and in the customer's portfolio will vary compared to the past few years. Business processes related to hygiene and health issues will become more important. In the future, it will be necessary to invest more in these areas and develop new solutions. In this process, I think that hotels that can make different applications about health and hygiene will be successful." and "We realized something during the COVID-19 process: we can keep things remote and in turns. It clearly shows that the staff will decrease in the future. Things turn a little more automated, and we connect remotely.

There may be changes in our ways of doing business—employing, that is, taking on payroll—run on a project basis. It can be seen as a kind of hiring of human resources.” is in the form. In general, when the relevant sub-theme and the expressions given to the whole theme are evaluated together, it is possible to say that COVID-19 has caused changes in job description, requirements, evaluation, differentiation, and personnel employment in general according to sectors and will continue in the future. When the answers given to the sub-themes within the theme of *"The Impact of COVID-19 on Business Planning and Activities"* are examined, the answers received from the participants in the sub-theme "The differences that the human resources unit can make in the career planning of the employees during the COVID-19 process" are as follows: Differentiation with COVID-19 We don't think it will.

Considering the participant's views on the sub-theme, “Sensitive processes provide positive aspects in the promotion of people. For example, their stance and solution to situations, their calmness and guidance in the team, and their problem-solving skills can show themselves in these sensitive periods.

These people are being observed by us, and planning will be made to be promoted positively at the appropriate time and process.”, “Within the scope of the program, considering their career expectations and the needs of our organization, we offer our employees different career paths, including the managerial path and the individual contribution path.

In this way, our employees can develop their expertise while advancing on the path that provides individual contribution in line with their career goals, and they can develop in team management by managing their teams on the managerial path. We will continue to carry out our plans and career programs in this way by continuing with a more people-oriented approach during the COVID-19 process.” and “In career planning, companies like us will need to direct employees more towards increasing their versatility, technology aptitude, and communication skills.

This process has shown more clearly that job descriptions and required competencies can change at any time. For this, it will be necessary to encourage flexibility in career planning, faster learning, and preparing B and C plans for adverse situations.” Considering the answers given to the sub-theme and the opinions received, it can be said that COVID-19 may be effective in career planning and that career planning should be given importance with the necessity of being proactive against different pandemics that may occur in the future. Regarding the sub-theme “There may be a difference in the wages paid to the employees during the COVID-19 process”, the most repeated answers by the participants are “the wages continue to be paid without any change”.

“There is no legal problem in our company regarding job security. Employees who benefit from the short-time working allowance know that they will continue to work with us after this process is over. We make them feel comfortable by constantly providing this information. Our company has an indefinite term employment contract. The dismissal rate is very low.

Our company has a culture of job security. Our employees do not have job security concerns. As a human resources specialist, I think that people out there are worried about jobs and job loss, that many of them have a lower income level, and they understand how important job security is.” and “Before this process, we immediately warned our personnel who did not comply with the hygiene rules. If he continued his behavior, we would explain it appropriately. However, we are considering adding a new rule to the articles of the contract prepared within the scope of job security. If this rule is that our personnel who cannot comply with the hygiene rules continue this behavior after the first warning, it is to add an additional clause that can go up to dismissal.”

"Together with the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) expert, we will carry out the testing, process, and control of all kinds of rules related to COVID-19 from external sources.", We can get outsourcing services for several departments, such as Information Technology (IT). In this case, we will check whether they fulfill all their legal obligations since we will be the top employer of the outsource company, and we will see that they comply with all kinds of OHS and Pandemic rules by requesting documents. It is an inevitable fact that it focuses on the activities that provide competitive advantage in businesses, that is, the work it does best, and the rest of the work is outsourced, increasing the quality of the company in the market environment and enabling it to reveal the best job

it knows. As a result of the measures taken due to the pandemic process, the outsourcing application should continue. Because with the outsourcing application, the cost is reduced, the main policy is to focus on the basic competencies, to improve the existing, to reduce the risk, and to increase the quality, and giving up on these does not paint a positive picture as steps to be taken on behalf of the company brand.

Since outsourcing will not be abandoned, it is necessary to keep up with the current situation. How many personnel are working on this subject and what the necessary measures will be is explained with a short training. Afterwards, a business plan should be prepared because of the measures taken, the applicability of these measures should be tested, the company's work should be continued, and our company completely imports the production raw materials. In this process, our main importer is China.

The current COVID-19 situation has led to the prolongation of the raw materials coming to us as a process. For this reason, we purchased raw materials from Germany and Russia to reduce the risk of COVID-19. In the next process, we are looking for a COVID-19 control certificate for the products we import, and we shared this situation with our suppliers.

It is unfortunate that a significant number of foreign employees in North Cyprus lack proper work permits and health insurance, rendering them vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation highlights the need for enhanced compliance with labor regulations and fair treatment of all workers, regardless of their nationality. While the pandemic has underscored the importance of healthcare and employment security, it has also temporarily slowed the brain drain phenomenon, as individuals may be hesitant to relocate to unfamiliar environments amid uncertainty. This trend may encourage countries to prioritize their domestic employment resources, potentially accelerating national development initiatives.

In companies of international size, whatever the procedure requires will be handled. Already, employing foreign workers will be possible in compliance with the procedures. So, considering factors such as the quarantine period when foreign employees enter the country, there will be a decrease in foreign personnel recruitment compared to previous years.

Time and conditions will be the best medicine.”, “There is no change for the blue collar, and there may be a change for the white collar depending on the company's field of activity. I do not think that the human resources market will be affected universally in the process, but as I said before, it may change according to company activities. The human resource market will go because the time has come for a universal change and conditions need to improve. COVID-19 does not and should not affect this.”, “If we consider the tourism sector, this rate may decrease. Our people may experience uneasiness when they see foreign employees during their holidays or business trips. During this time, the country's citizens won't be amenable to people moving to another country and working there. For this reason, the number of foreign workers will also decrease.

I believe since companies will pay their employees according to their income expenditure status during this period, they will not give priority to foreign employees who will have higher costs.” and “We do not employ foreign personnel. However, the procedures and principles for obtaining a foreign worker employment permit, and the occupational health and safety practices and sanctions to be applied to both the employee and the employer in case of employing a foreign worker without obtaining a permit should be updated again. It is a difficult process for employers who import and export, and everything cannot be done with remote working and/or interviews.

Although COVID-19 has been reset in our country, it may continue in other countries. For this reason, I think that the issue of employing foreign workers will be suspended. Even if it is not suspended, it will be a difficult process for both the employer and the employee.” was detected. Upon evaluating the collected answers and opinions, it can be concluded that the employment of foreign personnel during the COVID-19 period is contingent upon the decline in the number of cases and the commencement of the normalization process. However, the decline in demand from companies harms their economy, leading them to prioritize hiring domestic employees in response to this situation.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In today's competitive and globalized world, the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in driving organizations to success and achieving peak performance is of paramount importance. To adapt to increasing competition, stay abreast of rapid developments in information technologies, enhance market adaptation, and expand into new markets, fostering a culture of total quality is essential, with employees contributing significantly to these efforts.

This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resources within the context of the tourism industry. A review of online academic studies, literature, and the current state of businesses in the sector suggests that managerial approaches and discourses towards human resources are likely to undergo substantial changes in the post-COVID-19 era.

Even after the pandemic subsides, people are expected to maintain hygiene protocols and social distancing practices in their homes, workplaces, and other social interactions. The so-called "new normal" in the tourism industry will necessitate innovative approaches. Health and hygiene will assume central roles in service standards. Consequently, certain rules and practices will evolve, favoring unconventional approaches to business and social life. In this context, it is anticipated that employees may lean more towards individual work than teamwork in their professional lives.

Furthermore, the pandemic has accelerated the use of mobile computing technology for remote work, not only for white-collar employees but also for blue-collar workers in the business world. As a result, employees' attitudes, demands, and expectations regarding work and professional life are expected to undergo significant changes. Business rules may become more flexible, accommodating employees. This transformation will not be limited to the employee's perspective; it will also alter the priorities and perspectives of enterprises.

In the future, it is expected that enterprises will prioritize addressing internal issues, focusing on their employees and local citizens. This shift represents a departure from the past strategy of globalizing at all costs. People will place more emphasis on local governance and forge new coalitions and networks.

Moreover, environmentally conscious bioregions, characterized by strong protectionist measures and advanced technology, will emerge. Considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resources, this study offers several recommendations based on an examination of academic studies published online and an inductive evaluation of business and media viewpoints.

Numerous authors, including those in this project's citations (Cho et al., 2006; Cho, 2004; Tuna & Çelen, 2020), have extensively explored the field of HRM with a focus on employee training and development. Moreover, it is advisable for employees to communicate feelings of burnout and special circumstances they may encounter during this period with their respective companies. In response, companies should provide support, such as allowing changes in work location or schedule or granting necessary breaks, to help employees cope with burnout. Given the COVID-19 pandemic's global and highly uncertain nature, which Kırpık (2020) emphasizes as being characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), this situation presents significant challenges for businesses all over the world.

The tourism industry is grappling with the profound impact of this epidemic. Every sector undergoing this process must continuously reinvent itself due to the uncertainties and complexities that it entails. The challenges are heightened by the fact that the situation remains largely unknown and unpredictable. Fear and panic are natural responses to such an unfamiliar situation. To proactively address this evolving landscape, businesses need to remain highly focused, and HR managers should not wait until a point of no return is reached. Rather, they should implement long-term, health-oriented measures and strategies, both short- and medium-term, with a paramount emphasis on safety and caution.

In summary, the HRM department plays a pivotal role in the tourism industry. This role is even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, where HRM activities have undergone significant changes. HRM is

fundamentally a strategic approach to managing human resources within an organization, aiming to enhance employee performance to help the company attain a competitive edge and meet its strategic objectives. The pandemic has accentuated the importance of HRM and the need for proactive, health-centered strategies to address the current challenges.

6. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HRM in the tourism sector offers significant theoretical and practical implications. The recommendations and insights provided emphasize the critical role of effective communication and safety measures in times of crisis. The importance of transparent management practices and strong leadership emerges as a central theme, contributing to the theoretical understanding of HRM under challenging circumstances. By highlighting the multifaceted approach required to address the pandemic's challenges, this research provides practical guidance for businesses to navigate the evolving needs of their workforce while maintaining operational continuity. Furthermore, the proposed framework for minimizing layoffs presents an invaluable contribution to both HRM theory and practice. It offers a structured approach to striking a balance between financial stability and employee retention during and after crises, which is particularly relevant in today's uncertain business environment. These sequential measures provide a pragmatic guide for organizations, offering a roadmap to mitigate potential layoffs and navigate the challenges posed by global crises. As such, this research extends the theoretical foundations of HRM by addressing practical challenges faced by businesses and offers a comprehensive approach to HRM in times of crisis. This research enhances our understanding of HRM in the context of a global pandemic and provides actionable recommendations for businesses in the tourism sector. It combines theoretical insights with practical strategies, making it a valuable resource for both academics and industry professionals seeking to adapt to the evolving dynamics of HRM in challenging times. The comprehensive framework for minimizing layoffs ensures that organizations can effectively respond to the economic and workforce-related challenges presented by COVID-19, thus contributing to the resilience and adaptability of businesses in the face of uncertainty.

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