

**REMOTE WORKING IN THE FACE OF THE PANDEMIC: CURRENT  
ISSUES, TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACTS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS.**

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Remote Working in the Face of the Pandemic: Current Issues, Technological Impacts and Future Implications. (11697)  
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## **ABSTRACT**

*The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought about a tremendous impact on work-life balance, disrupting traditional workflows, which in the foreseeable future might be the new normal in the face of existing realities and in promoting the health and safety of workers. The study research question is on remote working: implications for employees and organizations and the response of the human resource management in the face of current realities and what it means for the future nature of work. Furthermore, the impact of technological advancements on the nature of work, benefits, and challenges for HRM in modern management were examined. The study adopted a systematic review based on findings from the Scopus database. The finding of this study reveals the impact of technology on human resource management in an organization., the role of HR in the technological world, the emergence of technology in HRM, various challenges faced in working from home, and the implications for upskilling of employees. The study concludes that the HR function has a key role in helping employees navigate the changes in the world of work, particularly concerning skills development, work organization, mental health, and the sustainability of the organization, against the backdrop of this technological advancement.*

*Keywords: Human resource management, Pandemic, Remote work.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Human resource is a prosperous and continually developing area as the years go by, it is a crucial component of any successful organisation. Human resource professionals are in control of managing the day to day operations of an organisation such as recruiting, managing employees, seeing to the continuous training and development of employees, managing employee performance, providing feedback, motivating employees and maintaining protocols and procedures (Aeppel, 2015). Over the past decade, the evolution of technology has had a significant impact on how things used to be done which affected the operations of the human resource department and also reconstructed how people communicate.

Hence, we live in a global world where technology, especially information and communication technology, is changing how businesses create and capture value, how and where we work, and how we interact and communicate. Consider five technologies that are transforming the very foundations of global business and the organizations that drive it: cloud and mobile computing, big data and machine learning, sensors and intelligent manufacturing, advanced robotics and drones, and clean-energy technologies. These technologies are not just helping people to do things

better and faster, but they are enabling profound changes in the ways that work is done in organizations. As Murray (2015) contends, “Together these innovations are hurtling us toward a new industrial revolution. Savvy corporate leaders know they have to either figure out how these technologies will transform their businesses or face disruption by others who figure it out first.” Academic literature in business (Turban et al. 2009, VanHoose 2011), medicine (Demaerschalk et al. 2012, Ross et al. 2010), engineering (Kuhnle 2010, Smite et al. 2010), sciences (National Research Council 1999) and social sciences (Castells 1996, Wellman & Haythornthwaite 2002) echo this observation. Barley (2015) suggests that although digital technology is rapidly becoming as infrastructural as electricity, there is surprisingly little research on how it is altering work systems or the work that people do. The last great wave of technological innovation was all about social interaction. The next one may well feature the emerging general technology paradigm known as ubiquitous computing. Furthermore, this concept is not about one technology. Rather, it reflects information and communication environments in which computer sensors (such as radio frequency identification tags, wearable technology, smartwatches) and other equipment (tablets, mobile devices) are unified with various objects, people, information, and computers as well as the physical environment. The combination of these developments is giving us a new kind of world, “one that is hyperconnected and data-saturated, a world where an Internet of everyone is linked to an Internet of everything” (Wooldridge 2015). These new technologies, disruptive as they are, did not just appear overnight. Rather, many other developments in technology preceded them, and their effects on work and organizations over the past several decades have been far-reaching, as we shall see.

It is worthy of note that, work is defined here as the application of human, informational, physical, and other resources to produce products/services (Alter 2013). Given the increasing reliance on technologies to get work done within and across organizations, the question of how technology is changing work and organizations is highly salient for scholars of organizational psychology and organizational behaviour (OP/OB). If one accepts the premise that work does not exist without people and that OP/OB researchers are inherently concerned with the study of people within organizational settings, then OP/OB bears some responsibility for understanding the effects of technology on work and organizations. Research-based answers have profound implications both for research and practice about the kinds of organizational realities that might be produced. The study therefore embarks on answering the following objectives.

### Objectives

1. What are the implications of remote working for employees and organizations and impact on the nature of work?

2. How is human resource management responding to current realities and what it means for the future nature of work?
3. What are the benefits, and challenges of HRM in modern management?

## **2.0 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method sets out the pathway utilised to achieve the set objectives defined for the study. As suggested by (Jiang et al., 2021), a six-step review method is adopted. The study focused on examining the implications of remote working for employees and organizations and impact on the nature of work, how human resource management is responding to current realities and what it means for the future nature of work and the benefits, and challenges of HRM in modern management. Firstly, the review scope was defined, and relevant documents identified through predefined literature search strategies. As adopted in Saka et al.,( 2019), the scopus database was used to retrieve relevant documents with data types as Journal articles, book chapters, authorized documents such as reports and standards and conference article. Keywords used for the study were “Remote working”, “pandemic”, “implications” “benefits”, “challenges”. The final steps involved quality evaluation of retrieved data, analysis of the screened and collated data using text analysis. The results were finally interpreted as discussed below.

## **3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **3.1 Impact of technology on human resource management**

Extant studies have queried the ability of the HR department to improve the financial success of an organisation. However, there is the necessity for noting that any firm that wishes to remain competitive in the modern-day rapidly changing global marketplace needs to ensure effective addressing of the issue of achieving productivity through their staff. Of crucial importance, in this case, encompasses the role that HR plays in providing the effective improvement of organisational performance (Olivas-Lujan and Bondarouk, 2013).

The advent of internet technology has contributed significantly to the change in the way that HR professionals accomplish their tasks. Consequently, HR has become a crucial aspect relating to web development commonly identified as an electronic human resource (e-HR) (Looise, Ruël, & Bondarouk, 2011). ‘E-HR’ has gained popularity amongst the diverse HR departments across the globe. Despite the assumption several individuals that he refers to electronic, the definition that is often intended encompasses the extending, empowering, and enabling the function of the department

Olivas-Lujan and Bondarouk, (2013) in their study define e-HR as the overall HR strategy that often focuses on lifting HR by ensuring its shift from the physical HR department and considerably

isolated HR practices and ensuring its redistribution to the firm and its partners. E-HR thus often contributes significantly to tying and integrating HR activities to other corporate processes that include customer service, finance, and supply chain. The assurance of E-HR encompasses the fact that the HR serves as the strategy's owner and serves as the broker of services rather than the provider.

The different organisations often exhibit firm reliance on communication. Communication often plays a significant role in integrating the various elements of the organisation, coordination of activities, promoting teamwork, and contributing to the production of results. One of the notable functions of HR in different organisations often encompasses communicating new initiatives to the staff. The communication efforts of HR often occur in diverse ways. The upward communication methods commonly adopted mainly include open-door meetings, electronic mail, complaint procedure, and suggestion programs. On the other hand, the downward communication approaches often occur from administration to staff, which include the bulletin boards, orientation sessions, employee manuals, and newsletters.

Even though HR as a field often emphasises face-to-face interactions, the accessibility of internet-based technologies has contributed significantly to the shift in the emphasis towards the considerably more efficient and productive management associated with the switch from human to online services (Kintana, Alonso & Olaverri, 2006). The contemporary era of information technology is characterised by the presence of numerous opportunities aimed at facilitating the capability to transfer information to the staff. The considerably essential and urgent messages can be sent to the targeted individuals through the electronic mail system. These individuals can, in turn, transfer the necessary information to their subordinates in instances whereby not every staff is capable of accessing the system. Some of the common communication media adopted at the workplaces often include the internet, information systems, intranets, and human resources information systems.

### **3.2 The impact of emerging technologies on HRM**

The principal HR functions of attracting, selecting, developing, motivating, and retaining talented employees in organisations (Stone *et al.*, 2015) remain important, but potentially require different approaches in the future world of work (Holland & Bardoel, 2016). For example, as reported by Davenport *et al.*, (2010) we see companies adopting sophisticated data collection technology and analytics to improve methods of attracting and retaining talent, thus confirming the idea that technology is transforming the way that HR processes are managed, especially about collecting and using data.

Using interactive technologies can support line managers and HR professionals to enhance interactions and communication with their employees. In general, technology can provide new opportunities for HR. We have already seen that technology often increases efficiency in delivering services, decreases administrative-related work, and allows HR to contribute to the strategic direction of organisations (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Stone *et al.*, 2015). As Marler & Parry (2016) suggest, the technology-enabled shift from being primarily administratively oriented to being more strategically oriented, and the increasing availability of data might re-structure decision making processes creating new opportunities for HR people to be involved in “complex, judgment-oriented and professionally demanding tasks and responsibilities”. Emerging technologies might allow the further progression of this trend by, for example, allowing real-time monitoring of employee and workplace data via sensors and decision-making via complex algorithms (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). At its most drastic, the increase in automation and rise in self-employment and the gig economy might result in a significantly smaller permanent workforce, meaning that the role of HR will be fundamentally changed.

### **3.3 Challenges of HRM in modern management**

Technological advances are a challenging task of adapting the workplace to rapid technological changes which influence the nature of work and generate obsolescence. Advanced technology has tended to reduce the number of jobs that require little skill and increase the number of jobs that require considerable skill, a shift we refer to as moving from touch labour to knowledge work (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). There is new working technology. In this situation organizations have to change its technology. New technology creates unemployment and on the other hand, there comes a scarcity of skilled manpower. Like this, technological change brings difficulties and challenges to the organisation.

- i. Globalization
- ii. Workforce Diversity
- iii. Changes in a political and legal environment
- iv. Changes in the Economic Environment
- v. Mobility of Professional Personnel
- vi. Revolution in Information Technology.
- vii. Technological advances

Information Technology (IT) as a structural factor and instrument transforms the architecture of organizations, business processes, and communication, and is increasingly integrated into HRM. While IT has impacts on HR, at the same time managers, employees, customers, and suppliers increase their expectancies for HR functions. The importance of knowledge and human capital make extra suppression on HR functions and new competencies for HR professionals are expected.

### 3.4 Factors that lead to changes in the HR process due to technology

The technological advancements can be clear in contemporary society and have contributed significantly to the transformation of the business world. The majority of the businesses are reliant on computer technology for the effective delivery of services to their clients. This has had an impact on several departments in an organisation. Some factors influenced these technological changes in the HR process, and they are: economic conditions, technological advancements, improved accuracy and compliance, Speed and efficiency.

### 3.5 Implications for the nature of work

Ubiquitous computing, of course, is not the first technology to have effects on jobs. From steam engines to robotic welders and ATMs, technology has long displaced humans often creating new and higher-skill jobs in its wake. The invention of the automobile threw blacksmiths out of work but created far more jobs building and selling cars. Over the past 30 years, the digital revolution has displaced many of the middle-skill jobs that underpinned twentieth-century middle-class life. The number of typists, travel agencies, bank tellers, and many production-line jobs has fallen dramatically, but there are ever more computer programmers and web designers. Displaced workers with obsolete skills are always hurt, but the total number of jobs has never declined over time (Aeppel 2015).

Paradoxically, although productivity a crucial indicator of growth and wealth creation is at record levels, and innovation has never been greater, over the past several decades, median wages have not risen (Galston 2014). This pattern is inconsistent with economic theory, which holds that when productivity increases, any automation that economizes on the use of labour will increase incomes. That will generate demand for new products and services, which, in turn, will create new jobs for displaced workers (*The Economist* 2014). One explanation for this inconsistency is that advances in information and communications technology are destroying more jobs in developed economies than the advances are creating. In short, technological progress is eliminating the need for many types of jobs, and leaving the typical worker worse off than before (Brynjolfsson & McAfee 2014, Rotman 2013).

Not everyone concurs with this conclusion, however (e.g., Jacoby 2015). Although labour economists generally agree that the digital revolution is creating a great divide between a skilled and wealthy few and the rest of society, hollowing out the middle class (Autor & Dorn 2013), it is not clear whether this can be attributed entirely to the effects of technology, and the data are, at best, far from conclusive. One reflection of this change is the simultaneous increase in both job openings and unemployment relative to the early 2000s (Elsby et al. 2010). This suggests that the types of skills now demanded by employers do not match those of the existing labour force (Katz 2010). Other plausible explanations, including events related to global trade and the financial crises

of the early and late 2000s, could account for the relative slowness of job creation since the turn of the century. The problem is that it is difficult to separate the effects of technology from other macroeconomic effects (Rotman 2013). The advent of machine learning, in which computers teach themselves tasks and rules by analyzing large sets of data (*The Economist* 2015a) will surely lead to large-scale worker dislocation as areas such as speech recognition, pattern recognition, and image classification eliminate wide swaths of white-collar workers (*The Economist* 2015). We agree that many jobs currently performed by humans will be substantially taken over by robots or digital agents by 2025. Other jobs will disappear as a result of structural changes in the economy, such as the long-term drop in the demand for coal, as cleaner sources of energy become more popular.

Even if today's information and communication technologies are holding down employment, however, history suggests it is a temporary, although painful, shock. As workers adjust their skills and entrepreneurs create opportunities based on the new technologies, the number of jobs will rebound. At the same time, we believe that human ingenuity will create new jobs, industries, and ways to make a living, just as it has been doing since the Industrial Revolution (Mabry & Sharplin 1986, Smith & Anderson 2014; see also Bessen 2015 and Stiglitz & Greenwald 2014).

### **3.6 Benefits**

The benefits of new technology that go beyond the goals of the organization are too numerous and as such help management in the planning and initiation policies that will make the organization overcome its challenges. As an employee, it can sometimes be frustrating to hear how the actions of the company will benefit the organization as a whole while you as an individual are not feeling those advantages right away. But this does not mean that those decisions will not positively impact you in the end. Many new implementations of technology can improve the efficiency of departments. Take, for example, Human Resources. In regards to the introduction of biometric data of staff, many employees have already benefited fully from the streamlining of Human Resources processes. When those who serve and work alongside the organization can move faster, you are eventually going to feel the advantages and find them to be worthwhile. Good technology should benefit everyone who has to interact with it.

Furthermore, after some training with the new tech, you should be able to increase your productivity and increase your skills at the same time. Ultimately this helps the organization and the individual. You might see the benefits from increased productivity in promotions or raises, or just simply in a less stressful environment. Hence, the advantages of new technology depend on the organisation-specific mission, but one very popular goal surrounding workplace technology is improved communication. This could include communication with peers, higher-ups, and even customers. Either way, improved communication will likely make your job easier and less



stressful. The bottom line is that good technology should benefit everyone who has to interact with it. And if your organization is following best practices by investigating technology, transparently explaining the benefits to their teams, and getting everyone up to speed with timely training, then there is nothing to fear and only progress to be gained. Thus, technological change has been beneficial to both organizations and their employees. The adoption of technological innovations by organizations has exploded over the last few decades with global spending on technology across all industries reaching an estimated \$2.6 trillion (Schroeder, 2008).

Moreover, technological change can bring the product to the market quicker and expand the skill set of employees, with organizations moving to things such as telecommuting. Technology can increase participation and involvement with remote employees. Technology can expand the potential pool of participants that are working and collaborating on the project through share databases, internal intranets, and the internet Schroeder, (2008).

In the same vein, New technology can also help organizations stay more in touch with their market; rapid changes in the economic landscape of today's business environment require action to meet customers' expectations. The addition of new technology can also benefit an organization by helping to shape its strategic vision as well as helping it to gain a competitive edge over its competition Norton, (1995).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSIONS**

To successfully implement a technology change, several areas need to be effectively addressed to avoid challenges with internal conflict or resistance by staff to the change which can be managed. Employee training, communication, and a multi-generational workforce should all be considered and planned for when selecting new technology. These can be addressed with a well-defined implementation plan, an effective training plan, and open communication between employees and management. In addition, technological development has become a mainstay in our society: it has an impact on almost every function of our lives. We have truly become an information and technology-based society. Considering the contributions that technology has to our lives it is doubly important that the institutions which provide the frameworks for our organisation management can make use of the tools which have become so important for our organizational operations. Thus, the degree and speed of this impact depend to a large extent on developments in the technologies themselves and the willingness of organisations to adopt them. This review also indicates that the HR function has a key role to play in helping employees to navigate the changes in the world of work, particularly concerning skills development, work organisation, and mental health.

While the key activities involved in HRM are to support managers in employees in going about their daily work (CEB, 2018) are unlikely to change, the role of the HR function may become even more important as both the potential benefits and risks of emerging technologies for employees develop. Whether the HR function can successfully undertake this role depends upon their own skills development and their understanding of technologies and their implications. Jesuthasan (2017) suggests that sustaining digital engagement in the future workplace will become a key part of the HR role. We would go beyond that statement and propose j actually, the role of the HR function is also to develop and support employees to ensure their growth and wellbeing, as well as the sustainability of the organisation, against the backdrop of this technological advancement.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some of the recommendations borne out of these findings:

1. There would be a positive change for the health and safety officers as employees and organization at large. Since they will not be going out regularly, but they'll be working from home, this will reduce their exposure to hazards like weather storms, transportation problems, exposure to Carbon monoxide, and dangerous chemicals. But since every coin has two sides, in this case, way safer from home and the organisation would spend less on health and safety generally to prevent accidents in the workplace, etc.; health-related issues will be such as sitting in front of the computer for too long, which might also cause damage to their eyesight, except of course they can maintain the recommended distance from the screen, they will be able to perform very well. So, working from home can be managed to have the improved condition of the working environment. The organisation will spend less on health and safety gadgets since mostly, employees would be working from home and in a safe environment.
2. The supervisor or head of the team or the HR Manager should define the task and goals for the different teams and there should be a timeframe for these tasks and also allowance for feedback, in case there is any trouble or difficulties. When you allocate tasks and goals with time, there will be productivity and also competition. So people working from home will know that they're having a task within a frame of time and this will help the people on campus too to know that they are being monitored and at the same time they know they're not alone but have their colleagues working from home and have to deliver with the same standard and same rules guiding them since they're working for the same organisation.

3. The role of the HR Manager during the crisis is to identify the problems and find a solution to them, when they're able to do this it'd improve the company, basically they must be proactive. On the light side, when there is no crisis, there should be motivation and rewards given to people who perform well.
4. In adapting to renewed situations, the line manager should be resilient, strong, focused, proactive, and task-oriented to solve problems. However, this might be different for different people because we have different background knowledge, behavioral attitude to situations.
5. Employees working from home have more flexibility with hours, they have few interruptions from work, friends call, or meetings and they're focused on the assignment at hand, they'd be able to allocate specific time to do work at home. These are a positive impact on the employees.

The negative side on the employee is that it reduces interaction with others, for instance, if they need help in certain areas, it might be hard to get this help, also because of reduced interactions work might tend to get boring given the fact that there is no one to exchange ideas with those who can easily put them through.

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