



Human Resource Management's Strategic Role in Employee Retention Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analysis Centered on Bangladesh

Mohammed Julfikar Ali^{*1}, Saima Sultana², Nuryneil M. Joe³

¹ Department of Business and Economics, Presidency University, Dhaka

² Department of Business Administration, Prime University, Dhaka

³ Instructor, Mindanao State University-Sulu, Philippines

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) towards employees by preventing the adverse effects of COVID-19. The Literature Review describes the principles of motivation that affect the retention level of employees. Quantitative methods have been used for this research in which a total of 100 respondents were selected on a scale of non-probability sampling. It was based entirely on original data. To collect the data, the study used a non-probability sampling strategy. Google Forms was used to disseminate the survey questionnaire to the people who responded. SPSS and Microsoft Excel are used to find results and visual representations. Descriptive, reliability, correlation analysis and regression analysis are used for the same purpose. The study found that HR managers should play their part in maximizing the satisfaction level of their employees, and the important elements are mentioned in the analysis part. Workplace guidelines and support, access to information on the pandemic with financial benefits, healthcare and quality of life, communication and promotional messages are some of the key aspects that organizations should consider maximizing their income potential and values accordingly.

Keywords: Employee Satisfaction, Employee Retention, Human Resources, Covid-19, Pandemic.

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***Corresponding Author:**

Prof. Dr. Mohammed Julfikar Ali, Chairman, Department of Business and Economics, Presidency University, Dhaka Email: dr.jali@pu.edu.bd

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, Covid-19 has started from Wuhan, China and has engulfed the whole world with its deadly claws. There has been a huge increase in the number of open cases and deaths since March 2020. Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a vital role in managing employees, especially in the case of COVID-19. There is a need to understand that HRM has an important role in motivating employees and ensuring that every employee is satisfied with HR practices. The employee panicked when the COVID-19 crisis struck. In Bangladesh, the

situation turned worse, and health professionals had to work excessively to control cases and provide quality care to patients. Worldwide now the number of open cases has reached 500 million. Similarly, the total number of deaths due to COVID-19 is also increasing day by day [1]. As stated by the World Health Organization, lockdown and restricting people from socializing is the only way to overcome the challenges [2]. The recent pandemic of Covid-19 has created a lot of disturbances across the world. After taking many lives across the world, the current pandemic has left a huge impact on the economic

well-being of economies, including the loss of jobs or cuts in their wages. The impacts of this factor vary from country to country. This means that its impact is adverse on some economies and mild in others. Still, most economies are having tough economic times. In the case of COVID-19, it was a necessary element to ensure employee satisfaction because it is an urgent situation and requires active consideration from the stakeholders [3]. This study aims to evaluate the role of HRM in the retention of employees during COVID-19 in Bangladesh. It further focuses on potential strategies that HR professionals can employ to manage and retain staff successfully. The core focus is to understand how HRM can significantly impact employee satisfaction and retention and how it can play a part in COVID-19 [4].

Statement of the Problem

Most of the employees in Bangladesh have already suffered because of COVID-19, and deaths have shocked the nation. In such a case, the employees became worried due to their jobs and poor HRM practices. The employees of Dhaka, Bangladesh have not been delighted with the HRM practices as they were not provided with the good salaries, incentives, rewards, and allowances that they deserve [5]. It is essential to evaluate all the role of HRM in ensuring the retention of employees, specifically during the COVID-19 crisis. In this way, it can be possible to determine what potential strategies the HR department can employ to retain employees, especially in such a critical situation where millions of people have lost their lives. The significance and value of this research are broad because it links with two different aspects simultaneously. On the one hand, the study will be helpful for the HR department of various company managing and retaining the employees during turbulent and critical times like the pandemic COVID-19. While on the other hand, the research would be an adequate base for future researchers on pandemics-related HR practices and studies [6].

OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the role of HRM in the retention of employees during COVID-19 in Bangladesh.

To find the significance of HRM practices and employee satisfaction, especially in COVID-19.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative method was utilized to reach the

findings. This method made it possible to perform the statistical analysis and avoid bias. The questionnaire was being used for collecting the responses and achieving the desired outcomes. Quantitative research played a significant role in collecting data from a large sample size. This method made it possible to reach the findings and avoid discrepancies in the results. Data collected for the study using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a set of items that were divided into two sections which were presented to the respondents to answer. Questionnaires are divided into part A (demographic) and part B (independent variable and dependent variable). The five-point Likert scale is applied to determine respondents' answers "strongly agree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree." The population mentioned in this survey is employees all over Bangladesh. The survey was purposefully conducted among employees who struggled in the covid-19 pandemic situation, consisting of 200 employees, and out of those 200 employees, only 100 respondents attended the survey. Population selection is based on the accessibility of these research studies and the availability of samples. Research analysis begins after the survey data is collected. Data analysis is based on the respondent's demographic analysis, descriptive statistics of all factors, factor reliability analysis, and correlation analysis using SPSS-26.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 was first discovered in November 2019. Within a month it spread rapidly and became a major global issue. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on business. The world has been forced to stay indoors due to Coronavirus. According to Hasanat et al., COVID-19 has the most significant impact on the sector, resulting in a major decline in the import and export of products [7]. No import-export indicates employment involving complex manufacturing firms or high-risk direct communications. It has already stopped production, the consequences of which are the people doing this labor. Under the 'new normal' rule, most countries open their businesses and start production in June or July. However, we still have COVID-19, so performance is important [8]. COVID-19 was chosen as one of the independent variables of the study because it affects employee performance at all levels. COVID-19 forced businesses to work from home, which proved ineffective due to digital inequality, family-work conflicts, stress and sleep issues. Everything has

begun to follow the 'new normal' rule, yet the fears and fears of COVID-19 still exist [9]. Employees are the backbone of an entity because their existence is more than necessary for them. Retention of employees is a broad topic, and many companies take this provision seriously to maintain healthy production with their employees [10]. Retention of employees is directly tied to policies formulated and implemented by a company's human resources department. An organization must provide every employee with the means to meet their need of professionally and ethically. Al-Sharafi *et al.*, the retention of employees increases with their motivation. Motivation is then further divided into two different factors, which are intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors [11]. These motivating factors are essential for creating effectiveness and increasing their provision accordingly. According to Dhanya and Prasad *et al.*, motivation is a driving force that enables an employee to be reactive, efficient and productive [12]. Higher employee motivation can maximize employees' potential and satisfaction levels, ultimately increasing the values and productivity of particular companies. Elsafty *et al.* focused on assessing the role of HRM in employee retention and satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh [13]. Previous research has discussed motivation, which affects employees' retention levels, along with research conducted in the past. same area. Some have been included in research studies that have cited the techniques of firms to curb the negative impact of COVID-19. The researchers used a quantitative approach in which a total of 140 participants were selected according to a scale of "non-probability sampling". The variables under consideration are monetary benefits, non-monetary benefits, rewards, perks and bonuses. Correlation and descriptive statistics were considered as statistical tools to arrive at the conclusions. The results suggest that HR managers should play their part in maximizing employees' satisfaction levels and their commitment to work. HR professionals should focus on providing monetary and non-monetary benefits to employees so that they work dedicatedly, especially in the case of COVID-19. Rose *et al.* argued that in today's working environment, people have different aspirations to sustainably fulfill this employee's job [14]. Hence, there is the issue of employee retention. The research was conducted to evaluate the role of various variables, including organization commitment, job satisfaction and human resource practices, in managing employee retention and satisfaction. Survey

tools including the Liker scale were used to collect the data – the sample size of this research included 180 employees from selected IT companies in Bangalore. Correlation and one-way ANOVA were used to obtain the findings. The variables under consideration are human resource practice, job satisfaction, salary package and incentives. The research showed that job satisfaction and HR practices significantly affect organizational commitment, and ultimately, organization commitment affects employee retention. Research recommends that firms should strive to have good HR practices in place and keep every employee satisfied. This can help firms to have committed employees in the organization, and ultimately, it will focus on retaining employees. Mahal *et al.* argued that globalization has not only helped firms seek efficient teams; However, also in controlling the skillful, talented and expert staff [15].

Thus, the core role of HR practices in promoting employee engagement, organizational practice in retaining employees and employee commitment is of paramount importance. The main role of research includes examining, interpreting and evaluating the relationship between employee commitment and human resource practices and seeing whether these are negatively or positively correlated, as there are not enough research studies that assess whether there are any negative and positive relationship or not. Between employee retention and human resource practices in the Indian economy. About 100 employees from Bangladesh were considered. Human resource practices and employee commitment were found to be positively correlated. The results further revealed that HR professionals must provide incentives, rewards, motivation and bonuses to retain employees. Certain factors continuously increase the motivation level of the employees. These factors are divided into two main types, which are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Both internal and external motivational factors are valuable in providing maximum employee satisfaction. Theoretically, as Kuvaas *et al.*, internal motivating factors are non-monetary factors that can increase the level of satisfaction among employees, while extrinsic [16]. Therefore, each every one of these factors should have been considered exclusively active for value creation. Bear *et al.* identified the role of HRM towards its employees during the medical-based pandemic and financial downturn [17]. Some of the main factors defined by the author are: i) Workplace Guideline & Support, ii) Access to Information & Updates on Pandemic with

Financial Benefits, iii) Health-Related Quality of Life, iv) Communication and Promoting Message. These four factors have also been taken into account in this research. As shared by Wong *et al.*, workplace guidelines and supports are always a sigh of relief during a challenging time that helps employees regain their confidence and motivation [18]. It increases the arousal level of the employees and accordingly meets their needs. Along with the financial benefits, access to information and updates on the pandemic is one of the most practical and effective benefits that entities can provide to their end users. Especially during difficult times like pandemic, an organization should not hesitate to provide temporary health benefits to its employees, as it is one of the essential retention techniques available to them. According to the opinion shared by Khoshnevis *et al.*, some companies give specific bonuses to their employees during challenging times to deal with the situation. The same factor applies in the context of this research, in which the analysis of epidemic bonuses is discussed accordingly [19]. It has also been seen from the previous analysis that companies cut the salaries of the employees during their tough times, leaving them completely dissatisfied with the policies of the entity and ultimately increasing the turnover of the employees. The research was conducted in the same domain, initiated by Khalil *et al.* [20]. The researcher identified the importance and implications of various motivational factors used to retain employees for an

extended period. The researcher took into account both monetary and non-monetary benefits, and the frequency distribution was taken into account. The researcher accordingly managed to find a significant relationship between motivational outcomes and employee satisfaction. The research was conducted and presented by Kuvaas *et al.* [16]. The research was conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), which visualizes the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The study was conducted through the quantitative method, with the primary data collection method used. Data collection was through a closed-ended questionnaire in which descriptive statistics and linear regression were applied. Based on applied statistical metrics, it has been found that the relationship between intrinsic/extrinsic motivations with employee satisfaction is high and joyful which ultimately help to retain them for a specific amount of time. The research also idealized that these motivating factors arise in tough-economic times, such as the present day.

Conceptual Framework

This study aims to measure the relationships between employees' motivations and employee retention practice of HRM during covid-19. Thus, based on the related theories and literature presented a framework known as a hypothesis model has been developed to discuss these relationships.

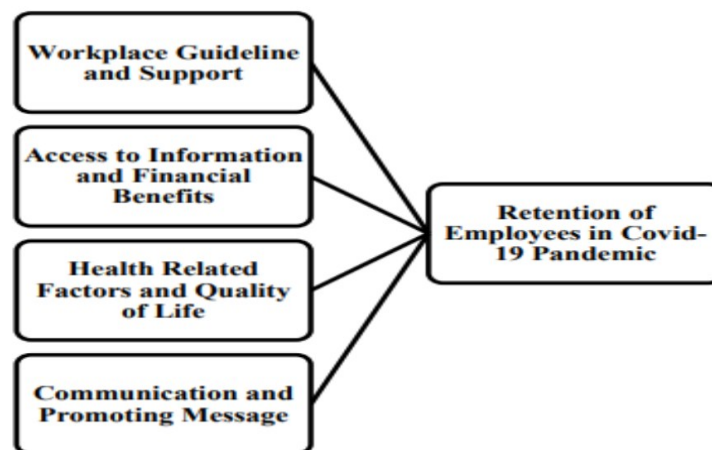


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

Based on the facts from the conceptual framework, this study aims at examining the following hypotheses:

H1: There is relationship between workplace guidelines & support and retention of employees.

H2: There is relationship between access to information on pandemic with financial benefits & retention of employees.

H3: There is relationship between health-related & quality of life & retention of employees.

H4: There is relationship between communicating & promoting messages & retention of employees.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this analysis, detailed information obtained from questionnaire survey is presented and discussed below to demonstrate the research objective.

Respondents' Demographic Analysis

As the survey has been conducted for the present study. The total sample size is 100 ($n = 100$), and the survey is driven by employees all over Bangladesh. Respondents' demographic profiles included gender, age group, work section, year of service, and position group. These data have been shown in tables (Table 1) as follows:

Table 1: Demographics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	68	68.0
Female	32	32.0
Age		
Below 25yearsold	19	19.0
26-40yearsold	76	76.0
41-55yearsold	5	5.0
Education Background		
Certificate	17	17.0
Diploma	15	15.0
Bachelor's degree	53	53.0
Master's degree	10	10.0
Professional Degree	5	5.0
Work Section		
Operation	79	79.0
Non-Operation	21	21.0
Year of Service		
Notmorethan1 years	25	25.0
2-5years	61	61.0
5-7years	9	9.0
7-10years	2	2.0
10-15years	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

Out of 100 respondents, 68.0% are males and 32.0% are females. The outcomes have shown that the respondent who answers the questionnaire is generally 26-40 years old, which aggregated 76.0%, 76 respondents out of 100. Out of 100 of the respondents, a greater part of the respondents has bachelor's degree background, which

aggregated to 53.0%, and pursued by the minor respondents have Professional Degree, which indicates 5.0%. Most of the respondents have been serving for 2-5 years which accounted for 61.0%, and the least percentage is 10-15 years with 3.0%.

Respondents' Descriptive Analysis

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for Each Variable

Variables	Total Mean	Standard Deviation
Workplace Guideline and Support	3.43	1.157
Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits	3.66	1.130
Health Related Quality of Life	3.92	.971
Communication and Promoting Message	3.57	1.018
Retention of Employees in Covid-19 Pandemic	3.75	1.123

The first column shows the importance of workplace guidelines and support for overall employee satisfaction as well as their retention level. The mean value for the same output is "3.43". Most respondents "agreed" because HRMs should play an essential role in providing workplace guidelines and support to their employees. This increases the level of retention of employees during the pandemic of COVID-19. The second and third columns show access to information and updates on the pandemic, along with financial benefits/health-related quality of life, and their importance in increasing employee retention and satisfaction. The mean values found in the chart against

the same output are "3.66" and "3.92". This means that most respondents "agreed" with the fact that HRMs of entities need to provide access and updates on the pandemic and financial benefits to be kept with them for extended periods, especially in the post-COVID-19 global during the pandemic. There is another factor with the narration of the communication and promotional message. The mean value against the same attribute is "3.57", indicating that respondents agreed with it. Last but not least, the fifth column shows the retention of employees in the COVID-19 pandemic. The mean value for the same output is "3.75". This means that most respondents "agreed" with the fact.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Verdict
Workplace Guideline and Support	.787	1	Acceptable
Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits	.784	1	Acceptable
Health Related Quality of Life	.838	1	Acceptable
Communication and Promoting Message	.836	1	Acceptable
Retention of Employees in Covid-19 Pandemic	.819	4	Acceptable

The reliability analysis in Table 3 shows that all variables recorded a Cronbach alpha above 0.70, which is acceptable for the study. The highest value of Cronbach's alpha was calculated at 0.838, represented by health-related quality of Life with 1 item, and the lowest value was at 0.784, access to information and updates on the pandemic with financial benefits. This reliability test proved that the items used in the study were consistent for

each variable.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Based on the results of Table 4 below, it has a significant, moderate relationship; between all four independent variables with Retention of Employees in the Covid-19 Pandemic. Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Correlation

	Correlations	Retention of Employees Covid-19 Pandemic	Workplace Guideline and Support	Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits	Health Related Quality of Life	Communication and Promoting Message
Retention of Employees Covid-19 Pandemic	Pearson correlation	1				
	Sig. (two-tailed)					
	N	98				
Workplace Guideline and Support	Pearson correlation	0.594**	1			
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000				
	N	98	98			
Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits	Pearson correlation	0.611**	0.434**	1		
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
	N	95	95	100		
Health Related Quality of Life	Pearson correlation	0.564**	0.462**	0.491**	1	
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	95	95	100	100	
Communication and Promoting Message	Pearson correlation	0.566**	0.602**	0.579**	0.751**	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	95	95	100	100	100

From the table above 7.4, It has been found that the variables have a positive relationship to overcome the adverse effects of COVID-19. Workplace guidelines and support are an important measure to increase employee retention. The Pearson correlation factor that correlates to the same evaluation is "0.594", which is high, meaning that the correlation between such variables is significant. Access to information and updates on the pandemic along with financial benefits and pandemic bonuses and quality of life are other elements that link powerfully with employee retention. The Pearson correlation against these two elements is "0.611" and "0.564", which means that higher provision of these benefits during the COVID-19

pandemic, the higher the retention of employees. Finally, total compensation and appreciation are other tools that human resource managers can use to increase the level of satisfaction and retention of employees. The correlation factor is low, showing a value of "0.566". This is largely located, which is enough to recognize that the relationship between compensation/appreciation with employee retention is significant during the pandemic.

Regression Analysis of Factors

Regression analysis is done to examine the simultaneous effects of several independent variables on a dependent variable that is interval scaled. In this study we

have done regression analysis to find out the significance level between Role of HRM and retention of employee. The regression analysis has been shown below in table 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5: Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.803a	.645	.634	.46268
a. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Guideline and Support, Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits, Health Related Quality of Life, Communication and Promoting Message				

Here the model summary via regression analysis, in the study is 0.355 ($1 - 0.645 = 0.355$).
it has been found that the R-squared value is $R^2 = 0.645$. So Table 7.5.2: ANOVA test of Regression Analysis
according to the equation ($1 - R^2 = e$) error term we found

Table 6: ANOVA test of Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	47.553	5	11.888	55.534	.000 ^b
Residual	26.117	94	.214		
Total	73.671	99			
a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Employees					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Guideline and Support, Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits, Health Related Quality of Life, Communication and Promoting Message					

The ANOVA test is done to show that if our study either significant or significant for the positive and direct relationship between Role of HRM and retention of employee. The table 7.5.2 of ANOVA test clearly shows that the result of regression analysis for the study is significant because its significance value is 0.000b which is below the standard value 0.05. Thus, we can say that there is significance in retention of employee.

Table 7: Coefficients Results of Customers Satisfaction.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.259	.287		.902	.369
	Workplace Guideline and Support	.271	.080	.250	3.382	.001
	Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits	.233	.088	.215	2.645	.009
	Health Related Quality of Life	.053	.076	.057	.690	.492
	Communication and Promoting Message	.391	.075	.410	5.193	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Employees						

This table shows the coefficients results of factors of retention of employee. Where we can clearly see that only three factors Workplace Guideline and Support, Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits, Communication and Promoting Message have significant relationship with retention of employee as their significance result is below 0.05. But other factor Health Related Quality of Life result is not significant due to its above result 0.492 which is higher than standard value 0.05.

DISCUSSIONS

The analysis helped in achieving a definite conclusion about the topic. Based on the results, it is concluded that HR can play a significant role in retaining employees in COVID-19. We have shown five analysis that is demographic frequency analysis, descriptive statistics of all factors, reliability analysis of factors, Pearson correlation analysis of all factors, regression analysis [18-22]. Where we have seen that in all analysis, we got positive and significant result of all factors. The elements including Workplace Guideline and Support, Access to Information and Updates on Pandemic with Financial Benefits, Health Related Quality of Life, Communication and Promoting Message can play a major part in the retention of employees of Bangladesh. The dependent variable was retention of employees and the independent variables included rewards, workplace guideline and support, access to information and updates on pandemic with financial benefits, health related quality of life, communication and promoting message. But in regression analysis as we have seen in coefficient table that health related quality of life is not significant which means it does not have positive or significant relation with retention of employees [23-26]. Throughout the study we came to know that all factors mentioned in the questionnaire were found agreed by the respondent. But in regression analysis as we have seen in coefficient table that health related quality of life is not significant which means it does not have positive or significant relation with retention of employees. So, HR should focus on improving the health-related quality of life to increase the level of employee retention.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature also supported the findings as different researchers supported the argument that incentives, rewards, salaries on time, allowances, and other non-monetary benefits can help in the retention of healthcare providers specifically in the time of COVID-19. It is further concluded that healthcare facilities should provide extra benefits to employees whenever they demonstrate quality in their work. Three factors of this study were found significant, and one factor is found insignificant, so major endorsement is that employees can be provided with health-related quality of life so they work at their optimum level during the pandemic situation. The Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for organizations, particularly

in employee retention, as businesses faced disruptions and uncertainties. Human Resource Management (HRM) played a pivotal role in navigating these challenges by implementing strategies that supported employee well-being, ensured job security, and fostered engagement during a time of crisis. In Bangladesh, where the economic impact was significant, HRM's ability to adapt and innovate was crucial in maintaining workforce stability. By addressing concerns such as remote work arrangements, mental health support, and flexible policies, HR departments contributed to sustaining employee morale and loyalty. The strategic involvement of HRM not only mitigated employee turnover but also helped organizations emerge stronger post-pandemic.

Recommendations

Based on this study, it is recommended that Human Resource Management departments prioritize the development of flexible work policies, continuous communication, and mental health support systems to enhance employee well-being and retention. Investing in skill development programs can foster long-term loyalty by empowering employees to adapt to future challenges. Additionally, HR should leverage data-driven insights to anticipate turnover risks and proactively address employee concerns. These strategies will not only strengthen organizational resilience but also ensure a more engaged and committed workforce, especially in the face of future crises.

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