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SPECIAL ISSUE ON

**FACILITATION FOR FUTURE  
ROLE OF HR IN BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY**



**IMPACT FACTOR : 6.692**

**FACILITATION FOR FUTURE  
ROLE OF HR IN BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY**

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In Business Sustainability

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<b>CONTENT</b>
----------------

Sr. No.	Title	Page No.
1	<b>Facilitation For Future- Role Of HR In Business Sustainability</b> Dr. T. V. Rao	1
2	<b>Role of HR in Business Sustainability of the Education Sector</b> Dr. Rajani Gupte	10
3	<b>Facilitation For Future-Role Of HR In Business Sustainability.</b> Mr. D.R.Nagraj	15
4	<b>Facilitation For Future- Role Of HR In Business Sustainability</b> Mr. Shrikant Lonikar	19
5	<b>Facilitation For Future-Role Of HR In Business Sustainability.</b> Mr. A. S. Girish	24
6	<b>Facilitation For Future – Role Of HR In Business Sustainability</b> Mr. Prakash Panda	32
7	<b>“Facilitation For Future- Role Of HR In Business Sustainability”.</b> <b>A Case Study of Zero Budget Basic Model of ‘Management Development Program’ to sustain growth of an organisation.</b> Dr. Milind Kulkarni	37
8	<b>Transcending Talent Turnover using INR (Identify, Nurture and Retain) Model</b> Mr. Sahil Nayar, Ms. Harini Sreenivasan	45
9	<b>Facilitation For Future Role Of HR In Business Sustainability</b> Mr. Sharad Gangal	49

<b>CONTENT</b>
----------------

Sr. No.	Title	Page No.
10	<b>Nucore Transformation Journey: Thriving at uncertain times</b> Mr. Vineesh U. Sathianathan, Dr. R. Murugesan	53
11	<b>Requirements of Sales Representatives' Training for Business Sustainability</b> Prof. Ulhas Deshpande, Ms. Shreya Vij	60
12	<b>A Study on Employee Engagement Practices in Industrial Organisations</b> Dr. Shaly Joseph	66
13	<b>Understanding the Perception towards Mental Health Related Training &amp; Development Interventions at the Workplace.</b> Mr. Ameya Ambulkar, Dr. Dipak Chacharkar	71
14	<b>Analysis of Awareness of Platform Skill Amongst The Business Management Students, Pune, India</b> Mr. Prathamesh Nadkarni, Dr. Priya Singh	79
15	<b>The study of awareness of succession planning activities among the employees of a state public sector undertaking.</b> Dr. Akshay N. Ganbote	89
16	<b>HR Role in Employee Motivation and Engagement During Pandemic Lockdown and Beyond</b> Dr. Swati Karve , Ms. Kalyani Adhye, Ms. Tanvi Kelkar	94
17	<b>Creating Competent Manpower for Future- Role of HR in Business Sustainability</b> Dr. Abhijeet Shah, Mr. Nirvikar Hingane	102
18	<b>Employee Experience (EX) - The Feel and Perceptions of World of Workforce</b> Dr. K. Bhanu Prakash, Dr. P. R. K Raju	109

<b>CONTENT</b>
----------------

Sr. No.	Title	Page No.
19	<b>“PRIDE @ Work “: Way forward towards Sustainable HR Intervention</b> Mr. Dattatraya Ambulkar	115
20	<b>Analytical Study on Identifying &amp; Nurturing High Potential Employees and Approach of Business Leaders on Performance and Potential</b> Mr. Vinod Bidwaik, Ms. Vibhuti Pandya, Mr. Avdhut Musale	121
21	<b>Role of HR in Facilitating Organisational Learning for Research and Development</b> Ms. Vipra Tiwari, Dr. Susheel P. Kandalgaonkar	130
22	<b>Evidence-Based CEO Selection is the Key to Business Sustainability</b> Mr. Ritesh Shahi, Dr. Zubin Mulla	136
23	<b>Psychological Contract &amp; Its Implication On Employee Engagement Creating Sustainable Business Environment</b> Mr. Sushilkumar Warkar, Mr. Parth Jadhav	143
24	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility – An Exercise in Employee Engagement</b> Dr. Satbir Yadav	149
25	<b>Impact of Effective Employee Engagement HR Strategies on Business Sustainability- Evaluation under the Shadow of COVID-19 Crisis</b> Dr. Kirti Dharwadkar, Ms. Preeti Sakhare	159
26	<b>Transmutation of HR Practices with Special Reference to Employee Engagement through Digitalization in Covid Scenario: A Study on Financial Services Industry</b> Ms. Ileena Dutta Chakrabarty , Dr. Arunava Narayan Mukherjee, Mr. Himadri Shekhar Chakrabarty	167
27	<b>Developing Coaching Oriented Leaders for Business Sustainability – Post-pandemic imperative</b> Mr. Ramesh Srinivasan	182

**CONTENT**

Sr. No.	Title	Page No.
28	<b>Identification And Retention Of High Potential Employees</b> Ms. Lorraine Coelho, Dr. S. V. Bhave, Prof. Ramya Nair	189
29	<b>An Empirical Study: Employee Engagement and Linkage to Organizational Excellence.</b> Dr. Vandana Mohanty, Dr. Shivaji D. Mundhe	198
30	<b>HR Contribution In Coaching And Mentoring For Employee Development Through Career Enhancement For Business Sustainability</b> Mr. Barnajit Saha	207
31	<b>An Exploration of Key Determinants of Employee Engagement – A Strategic HR Tool for Business Sustainability</b> Dr. Subramanya Manjunath	218
32	<b>Workforce Productivity in steel manufacturing organizations in India : a gendered perspective including factors affecting contribution of Human capital</b> Ms. Nivedita Roy	233
33	<b>A study of the concept of employee engagement and its implementation in the industry</b> Dr. Leena Deshpande, Mrs. Sapna Gadh, Ms. Riddhi Munje	250
34	<b>Factors Influencing Employee Engagement In Mymul.</b> Dr. Swathi S.	259
35	<b>Digital Social Security: Conscientiously alleviating the indigent at time of catastrophe</b> Dr. Subir Bikas Mitra, Mr. S. C. Mahato	265
36	<b>A case study on improvements of Placements at Rajarambapu Institute of Technology by various means of coaching and mentoring</b> Dr. Abhijeet Shah, Mr. Amey Gaurvadkar	273

**CONTENT**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>37</b>	<b>Facilitation For Future - Role Of HR In Business Sustainability Importance of Coaching and Mentoring</b> Mr. Jayakara Shetty	<b>280</b>
<b>38</b>	<b>Facilitation For Future - Role Of HR In Business Sustainability Importance of Coaching and Mentoring</b> Dr. P. V. Raveendra, Dr. Vijaya Kumar G.	<b>287</b>
<b>39</b>	<b>New Generation HR practices and Organisation Sustainability advantage explored!</b> Dr. L. R. K. Krishnan	<b>293</b>
<b>40</b>	<b>Impact Of Hr Practices In Business Sustainability- Study On Brand, Money, Role, Reward/benefits &amp; Competency</b> Ms. Saloni Choudhary, Ms. Shivani Bhatnagar	<b>301</b>

## Impact of Effective Employee Engagement HR Strategies on Business Sustainability- Evaluation under the Shadow of COVID-19 Crisis

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**“Stakeholders want companies to make a profit, but not at the expense of their staff and the wider community.” Brian Gosschalk, CEO, MORI, quoted in Financial Times.**

### Abstract

Gallup poll, conducted survey in 2019 revealed that, “The world has an employee engagement crisis, with serious and potentially lasting repercussions for the global economy.” Most of the organizations mainly focused on employee engagement, still it is found only 32% of U.S. employees accepted that they are highly enthusiastic about their work and equally committed to their work. On other side worldwide around 13% of employees accepted that they are fully engaged in the work they do.

It has become an assumption among most of the management thinkers that giving meaning for their employees is essential for increasing an engaged and productive workforce in any business. We all like to see our employees to have a higher drive than to be just showing up to work and earning handsome income. This is the point where sustainability comes in picture. It is observed that, companies those focus on sustainability practices can relax their employee tussle between their personal values and their work by providing them a higher purpose to work in organization.

The example reference drawn from Unilever Company which stands with an employee rating of 87% is one organization that has supported the positive interrelation of Employee engagement and Business Sustainability. In his article wrote in Stanford Social Innovation Review Professor CB Bhattacharya and Unilever CEO Paul Polman based on the Unilever experience revealed how discovering diverse methods

to engage all employees—from top executives to assembly line workers—in their day-to-day business sustainability initiatives is the key to establishing a dynamic and sustainable business.

The success of any organization were the combination of employee engagement and sustainability initiatives is operative it is sure that it can create a culture that has a long lasting positive impact on the organization, employees, and for the communities they live in. There is need for both to understand the interdependency of one on other and accept that business sustainability is a significant tool to recruit, retain, inspire and motivate employees. The pandemic era has forced the HR professionals to relook their current strategies of engagements in keeping the business sustainable during crisis. This research paper will help to gage the shift in of strategies helped the business to come on track or improve its operations.

Employee Engagement initiative can covered by ability in –

1. Adopting new normal at workplace
2. Maintaining Mental wellness
3. Restructuring of Organizational structure
4. Introduction of new digital technology in processes

### Introduction:

The COVID-19 epidemic, which began in China in December 2019, has already spread throughout the world and will continue to expand in the near future. Apart from instilling fear and anxiety among the general public about who would be the next victim, the epidemic has also drastically altered the way businesses

operate. Working from home norms are altering the way workers and managers interact, which for many is a cause of anxiety about what 'business as usual' will look like in the future. This is especially important for the Human Resources Department, which is directly involved in the recruitment and management of talent.

### **HR Role in Covid-19 Scenario:**

HR personnel's across the globe are now majorly concerned about expressing the company's position on the COVID-19 problem to its employees. Several untrustworthy news sites are sharing misleading or unverified information about the pandemic online, raising employee concern and anxiety. Because offices across the world are now working remotely, the company cannot interact face-to-face with its employees, which may increase a sense of distance from top management and therefore from what the firm actually thinks.

Another point of consideration is sustaining employee morale. Activities like as team gatherings and open talks with top leaders are no longer viable in the absence of physical closeness. This, to some extent, erodes the personal touch, making it more difficult for employers to connect with their staff and help boost their spirits. Employees may also feel isolated since they work alone in their houses, away from the rest of the team.

The HR department is at the core of every organization's employee-centric needs. HR professionals are people-oriented individuals who understand how to manage the company's workflow by ensuring that every single person is functioning seamlessly and that the company's policies are continuously updated with employee engagement activities.

### **How is the Employee Behavior Changing?**

New regulations from governments all around the world force employees at all levels to work from home. However, contrary to HR assumptions, this is really increasing their productivity. A substantial amount of time that would have otherwise been spent commuting and getting ready for work has now been saved.

With the coronavirus forcing everybody into their homes for the foreseeable future, every profession that can operate remotely is operating; but, productivity has taken a hit. Here's how to keep your employees healthy, happy and performing.

- Online Meets
- Parents
- Engagement
- Activities

Many organizations do weekly office programs that involve group activities and games, this is the time to take it all online and keep employees relaxed and raring to go.

### **Revamping Employee Engagement Strategies**

A move from the employer's market to the employee's market exemplifies how disruptions may alter business dynamics. Unlike in the past, when change management was a conscious intervention, change is now a way of life. As a result, businesses are inventing agile approaches to coping with the complexity of dynamic business and personnel management. In today's personnel market, organizations are undergoing a dramatic transformation. . Because of the unavoidable changes in the talent landscape, organizations' talent demands are so severe that it is critical to understand.

Various talent pools will naturally have different motivators, and a lot is being done to fulfill talent engagement targets by the end of the year. However, the most pressing issue for all companies is talent engagement; what engages talent? To discover the correct solution, businesses must shift their focus from what they can do to what talent will absorb and connect with.

**Research Methodology:**

**Objectives:**

1. To identify the impact of Employee engagement activities on business operations
2. To evaluate role Engagement Activities in crisis handling
3. To analyze the integration of employee engagement and his performance during challenging time
4. To assess the impact of employee engagement activity on business sustainability

**Scope of the study:**

The study is conducted for companies operating in Pune, India. The samples are only HR professionals from various industry.

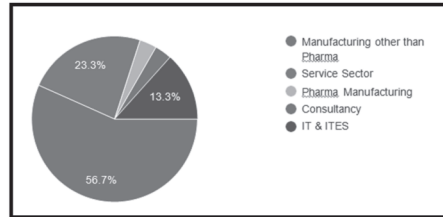
**Sample Design**

The total population size of selected 100 companies was around 100 HR Managers who are decision making authority. The total responses of 60 HR managers have been received by the researcher.

**Q1. Company operating in which sector:**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Manufacturing other than Pharmacy	34	56.70%
2	Service Sector	14	23.30%
3	Pharma Manufacturing	02	03.30%
4	Consultancy	02	03.40%
5	IT & ITES	08	13.30%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Fig - 1 Sector of Operation**

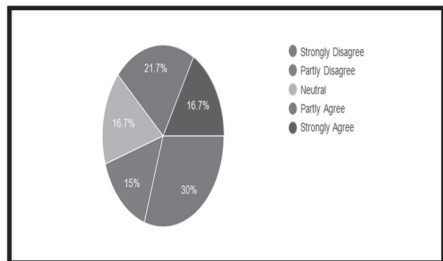


**Interpretation:** The total composition of the respondent shows that many i.e. 56.7 % are from manufacturing sector and 23.3 % are from service sector. The next respondent category is IT & ITES segment and only app 3.4 % respondents represent the pharma and consultancy segment.

**Q2. Do you observed that employee feel anxious about the future of our organization.**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	18	30.00%
2	Partly disagree	09	15.00%
3	Neutral	10	16.60%
4	Partly Agree	13	21.70%
5	Strongly Agree	10	16.70%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Fig - 2 Employee Anxiety Level Organization's Future**



**Interpretation:** As per above figure respondents overall 45 % HR Managers feel that their employees are not felt anxious about their companies future during pandemic. But the remaining almost 55 % HR Managers either agree that they observed increase in anxiety level

and concerned about organization future. This figure somewhere display the employees getting the lockdown heat and worried if it continues for longer period then it may possible that sustainability of business will hit badly.

**Q3. Does your organization comfortably shifted to WFH schedules**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Yes	37	61.70%
2	No	16	26.70%
3	May Be	07	11.60%
TOTAL		60	100

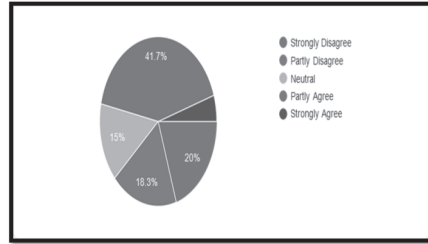
**Fig - 3 Comfort Level to Switch over to WFH Schedule**

**Interpretation:** As per above figure shows that around 62% HR Managers successfully shifted their daily operations from WFH schedule excluding those who are coming under essential services. But around 27% organization still had few challenges to transit to new mode of operation. This may be available infrastructure is either not sufficient or employees are not technologically aware. Around 11% are of the opinion that they somehow shifted but with lot of difficulties or partially operation on WFH or completely not able to shift. These figures are compelling that companies need to upgrade their technical infrastructure to stand strongly if such calamities appears suddenly in near future.

**Q4. Do you find it difficult to keep your employees engaged?**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	12	20.00%
2	Partly disagree	11	18.30%
3	Neutral	09	15.00%
4	Partly Agree	25	41.70%
5	Strongly Agree	03	05.00%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 4 Level of difficulty in Employee Engagement**

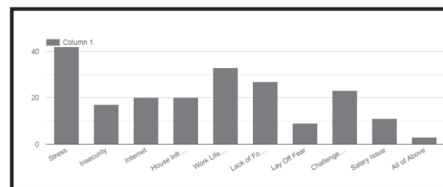


**Interpretation:** Above figure data corroborate clearly that 47% HR Managers accepted that in such an unprecedented situation they come across with challenges to keep their employees engaged through online mode. There are around 15% kept themselves away in expressing the level of difficulty they had in designing and executing the engagement activity for their employees. But almost 38% HR managers have carried out various engagement activities for their employees. These efforts of HR managers helped their employees to be connected virtually since last one and half year of pandemic and upheld their productivity level to required threshold.

**Q5. Please select the critical difficulties faced by employees during the Lock-down**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Rating
1	Stress	42	1
2	Insecurity	17	6
3	Internet	20	5
4	House Infrastructure	20	5
5	Work-Life Balance	33	2
6	Lack of Focus	27	3
7	Lay Off fear	09	8
8	Challenges of Engagement	23	4
9	Salary Issues	11	7
10	All of the Above	03	9

**Fig - 5 Employee difficulties during Lock-Down**



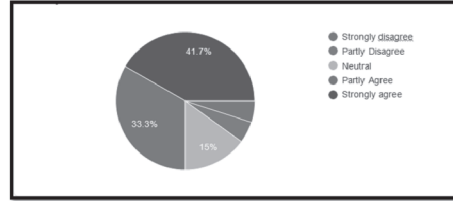
**Interpretation:** Above bar diagram data corroborate the multiple choices of various HR regarding the various difficulties faced

by their employees during lock down. During lockdown 42 HR managers out of 60 observed that the stress level of employees was very high throughout the period. Next to that is maintaining the work- life balance stand at second rank where 33 HR managers felt the people were unable to balance their work and family issues simultaneously. The third position difficulty was concentration which disturbed the focus of employee. WFH has hampered the informal discussions among colleagues and get the solutions for their problems, but WFH broken this cycle of informal communication. The next challenge was engagement activity which agreed by around 23 HR managers. Yes it was a sudden change in operation put forth big challenge for HR that what variety and innovative methods they should use to keep its employee engaged. Internet and allied house infrastructure stands at 5th position of difficulty and followed by feeling of insecurity, layoff fear, and salary issues. Very few HR managers faced all the issues. This is incredible that in-spite of businesses were running at under capacity still HR has played a crucial role in keeping important fear of insecurity, salary and lay off has been kept out from employee mind through their efforts.

**Q6. Do you agree that your engagement efforts help your employees to improve their productivity and efficiency in WFH?**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	03	05.00%
2	Partly disagree	03	05.00%
3	Neutral	09	15.00%
4	Partly Agree	20	33.30%
5	Strongly Agree	25	41.70%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 6 Impacts of Engagement Activity on Productivity & Efficiency**

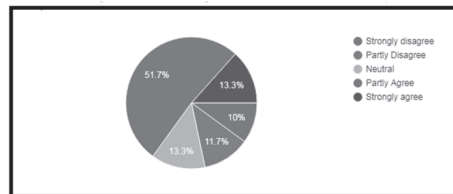


**Interpretation:** The efforts taken by HR managers during the pandemic period for employee engagement give the confidence to them that they are able to improve the productivity and efficiency of its employee though they were working from home. This is evident that almost 74% HR managers agreed to this view against only 15% managers are not very sure in improvement or maintaining the level of productivity they expected. But 11% HR managers disagree to the view that their activities were any kind of help to employees to improve their productivity or efficiency.

**Q7. How much you agree that pandemic may hit badly business sustainability in future**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	06	10.00%
2	Partly disagree	07	11.70%
3	Neutral	08	13.30%
4	Partly Agree	31	51.70%
5	Strongly Agree	08	13.30%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 7 Pandemic Impacts on Business Sustainability**



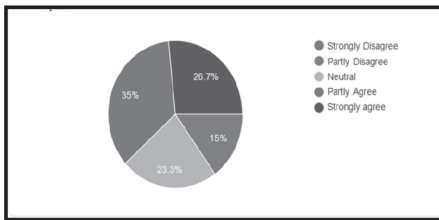
**Interpretation:** The above chart shows the concern of 65% HR managers towards the sustainability of business. Companies are operational but with many restrictions and continuity operation is uncertain for many organizations of the economy. The most badly hit is Hotel and Tourism sector as there are restriction on interstate movement. The other 35% section of HR

managers feels that the sustainability of their businesses does not have any threats in long run.

**Q8. Do you agree that efforts taken to keep employee engaged during this period is sufficient to bring the business on track post pandemic**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	NIL	NIL
2	Partly disagree	09	15.00%
3	Neutral	14	23.30%
4	Partly Agree	21	35.00%
5	Strongly Agree	16	26.70%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 8 Impacts of Engagement Activity on Business Sustainability**



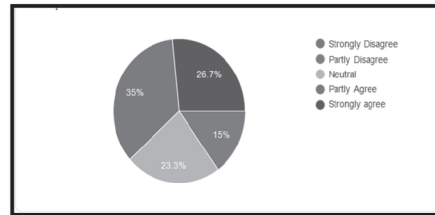
**Interpretation:** The chart has revealed a surprising element that HR managers have taken enormous efforts to keep their employee engaged during pandemic period but they are divided on the view how much it will help their business sustainability. The 61% HR managers are confident that their tireless efforts certainly sustain this temporary jolt to their businesses but considerable section i.e. 39% managers feels that their efforts may fall short in bringing sustainability only through engagement activity.

**Q9. Do you believe that organization’s response during pandemic will affect the employee engagement after their rejoining?**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	07	11.70%
2	Partly disagree	05	8.30%
3	Neutral	14	23.40%
4	Partly Agree	20	33.30%
5	Strongly Agree	14	23.30%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 9 Impact of Organization response during pandemic on Employee**

**Engagement**



**Interpretation:** The chart has revealed a surprising element that HR managers have taken enormous efforts to keep their employee engaged during pandemic period but they are divided on the view how much it will help their business sustainability. The 61% HR managers are confident that their tireless efforts certainly sustain this temporary jolt to their businesses but considerable section i.e. 39% managers feels that their efforts may fall short in bringing sustainability only through engagement activity.

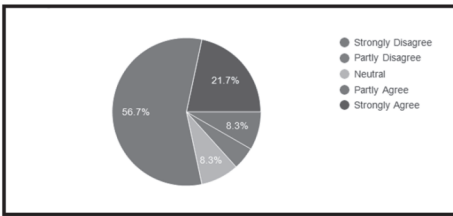
**Interpretation:** Above figure gives the confirmation that the response of organizations towards their employees during the pandemic certainly affects the engagement of employee when they

return back to their work around 80% HR managers are of the opinion that it will definitely affect their engagement and only 20% feels that there will not be change in their involvement.

**Q10. Do you believe that in post pandemic era your organization may see cultural shift in employee behavior**

Sr. No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	05	08.30%
2	Partly disagree	03	05.00%
3	Neutral	05	08.30%
4	Partly Agree	34	56.70%
5	Strongly Agree	13	21.70%
TOTAL		60	100

**Fig - 10 Evidence of Cultural Shift Post Pandemic in Employee Behavior**



**Interpretation:** Considerably 78% of respondents are of the pinion that once the employee joined the organization they may see the cultural shift in their behavior. Only 22% do not agree to this view and believe that there will be no change in their organizational culture. But as employees are facing lot of challenges on family, work and medical fronts will surely give feeling of extended bonding and relief if organizations extend the hand of help during their crisis. This may bring the deep sense of ownership and belongingness towards their organization.

**Q14. State any important HR factors that negatively hit the business growth of your organization due to this crisis**

Sr. No	Category	Summary of HR Factors affecting negatively Business Growth of the Organization
1	Internal	Absenteeism, Customer demand, increasing cost, Evolution of manual systems to digital, budget cuts, Automation, Appraisals and pay hikes stopped
2	Social	Fear of social interaction with strangers, group activity, loss of trust
3	Economical	Govt policies, BS IV, increase in living cost, rise in medical expenditure, insurance
4	Management Approach	Virtual connectivity barriers, Leadership style, Mgmt rigidity, HR has not allowed to be strategic partner; Devaluation of employee engagement, Low cross functional interactions in organizations, poor & slow decision making, lack of collaboration & sense of unity, Communication gap, Non attention to critical issues
5	Others	Skilled Manpower Availability, Freezing of new recruitments, Health issues

**Q15. State how as an HR you played a role of catalysts in your organization**

Sr. No	Summary of HR Role as Catalysts in the Organization
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Focusing on Flexibility and optimization.</li> <li>➤ Always tried hard to keep employees moral up. Kept them motivated, informed about companies upcoming expansion plans, success stories and stay in touch with the employees.</li> <li>➤ HR supported in various ways like talking/discussing with employees, engaging in new projects, provide good infrastructure at home</li> <li>➤ Helping the employees to maintain the work life balance by arranging various training program.</li> <li>➤ Online counseling sessions organized</li> <li>➤ Employee wellbeing, provide psychological safety, flexi HR policies, employee health benefits.</li> <li>➤ Arranging for regular wellness sessions (mental &amp; physical well-being)</li> <li>➤ Facilitate the learning platform for both technical and non-technical learning WFH</li> </ul>

**Q16. Does your organization extended the help to society during the crisis please state the method**

Sr. No	Summary of Participation of Organization to Help the Society
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During lockdown period, Company was distributing food packets to various communities, police department through canteen s services. Also distributed masks, sanitizers to employees</li> <li>➤ Direct donations to Some Local Grampanchayat for supplying food grains to people below poverty line, Organized vaccination</li> <li>➤ Tried to provide oxygen, cabs for senior citizens.</li> <li>➤ Donated masks &amp; sanitizer to hospitals &amp; Frontline workers; distributed water bottles &amp; food to contractual employee families &amp; at railway stations for migrant workers.</li> <li>➤ Under CSR initiatives donated ventilators to hospital</li> <li>➤ Food, Safety kits, ventilators, beds in hospital etc under CSR</li> <li>➤ Distribution of masks, donated PPEs and Medical supply to local villages</li> <li>➤ Through CSR we help some Orphanages by giving them required</li> <li>➤ Distributed grains to villages or slums around, we had a special initiative connected both associate fitness and CSR</li> <li>➤ Given a contract to the women of villages to create good quality homemade mask, which helped them in money generation. Those masks are been used in the factory by employees.</li> <li>➤ Food Donation Campaign is been done.</li> <li>➤ Paper bags - creation by villagers.</li> </ul>

**Conclusions & Observations:**

The researchers during their survey found few positive and some thought provoking outcomes. Though the situation is very unprecedented and unpredicted HR has played significant role in improving the work culture and bonding among employees and management through their efforts.

In a positive outlook lots of efforts have taken by many organizations to extend the helping hand to their employees during their testing time by providing financial help, medical support, work infrastructures at home and stress management activities. Few examples are set by the organizations by giving salary hikes; no layoffs and feeling of assets to its employees are really commendable. But few organizations failed to address the issues of their employees. The management conveniently shred their responsibility towards its employees during challenging time. The

fact they forgot that employees are growth partners of any organization their ignorant approach during this pandemic certainly affect the employee engagement in coming days and the business sustainability in long run. The researcher completely agree with the fact that it equally tough period for business too but mutually beneficial way is the best options organizations have to remain strong to sustain in long run. There is no boundary for good work in this connection many have gone extra mile but few HR professionals have the feeling due to financial constraints, management approach and other limitations at some places they could have gone further than what they did.

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# Transmutation of HR Practices with Special Reference to Employee Engagement through Digitalization in Covid Scenario: A Study on Financial Services Industry

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## Abstract

The study summarizes the evolution of Digital Human Resource (HR) Management and its potent effects on employee experiences, especially in the context of an unprecedented crisis of a pandemic like Covid-19. While the pandemic has encouraged remote working and forced manoeuvring of existing skill-sets, it has also established the complementarity of “working for family” to “working with family”, giving a new dimension to work-life balance. We borrow from the work-family enrichment literature of Greenhaus and Powell (2006) and make an attempt to elucidate how the positive interaction of staying with family and working from home keeps the employee engaged and absorbed in both the roles effectively. Our study supports the theoretical framework by the responses from an online survey and telephonic interviews conducted across select employees of the financial services sector in India. The survey results explain how employees have not only been satisfied with their own performance but also with the post-pandemic handling of employees by the respective HR departments and their organizations, notwithstanding the extended working hours. Thus, this representative survey justifies the relatively better performance by the financial services sector in an otherwise gloomy economic condition in India and stresses the importance of employee enrichment.

**Keywords :** financial services sector , HR Practices , Employee Engagement

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only disturbed the physical and mental health of men and women but has also disrupted the life at the workplace. Be it the adjustment to virtual offices to working extended hours amidst the panic and uncertainty of the pandemic, the roles and responsibilities of the Human Resource Management (HR) department has risen manifold. Apart from their regular exercise of trying to keep the employees productive, motivated, engaged and connected, they also have to take into account the employee’s general health and well-being. The impersonal mode of communication through e-mails and video conferencing instead of face to face collaboration has made it a challenging mandate for the HR managers. Further, with fresh recruitments slowing down and retrenchments gradually rising, the HR’s job in intimating about compliance and adaptability to changing policies and procedures to accommodate the business and employee needs, has assumed much significance.

While the concept of Digital HR is relatively novel, its application is being felt most recently during the pandemic, especially in a country like India. Sectors which have adjusted quickly to the transition and boast of employees who have a sense of satisfaction at their workplaces have been less affected during the pandemic. It is expected that large amount of digital transformation could pose challenges to leaders and senior management making it difficult to lead a service business (Bartsch et al., 2020) and hence their role becomes crucial during the