

Disruption in HRM : The future avenues transforming workplace

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Abstract: In this paper possible future study directions on the subject of human resource disruptions are discussed. In this paper, we analyse the effects of three global mega-trends on HRM and the COVID-19 pandemic: the mobile workforce, the digitisation of business models, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence. We explain why HRM studies haven't considered some game-changing ideas that could give HR pros the tools they need to adapt to the changes brought on by these megatrends.

Keywords: Digital HRM, Disruption, Artificial Intelligence, Gig Economy, Virtual Work

1. Introduction

One definition of disruption offered by the Cambridge English Dictionary is "anything that stops a system, process, or event from proceeding as normal or as anticipated." The upcoming 2020 edition of the Cambridge Lexicon. Human resource managers are frequently reminded by studies that they must plan ahead for trends such as the rise of new technologies, the spread of automation, and the introduction of artificial intelligence. As a consequence of the knowledge divide between employers and their workforce, the phrase "future of work" has entered the language of human resources. The leaders of companies are increasingly seeking assistance from HR departments as they implement reforms. In 2017, Deloitte published the findings of a survey of more than 10,000 HR and business leaders in their report, Global Human Capital Trends, confirming that these expectations are seen as reasonable and that HR has a special role to play in bridging the divides between people and machines as well as between companies and communities and governments. Figure 2 from Deloitte's 2017 study. Human resources need only update its own standards to conform to the study's suggestions. After three years and hundreds of unsuccessful company transformations, HR managers still don't know which standards need to be changed and why. Why has there been such a dramatic change, exactly? On account of what had to be interrupted? The question for human resource administrators is: why should they change? When confronted with a question like this, human resource professionals frequently look to the research conducted in the area of human resource management (HRM) for answers. Human resource management scholars focus on "creating, implementing, and assessing policies, processes, methods, and initiatives related to the person in the company." Miner and Crane (2005). Many leading HR-related journals have recently issued calls for papers for special issues on disruption, transformation, and the "future of work" (for example, Human Resource Management has called for papers for special issues

titled "Strategic Human Resource Management in the Era of Environmental Disruptions" and "The Ecosystem of Work and Organisation: Theoretical Frameworks and Future Directed Research"). The gap between what is taught in the classroom and what is actually done in HR practice is widening when it comes to dealing with disturbances. Deadrick and Gibson (2009) and Denisi, Wilson, and Biteman (2014) are two examples of scholarly works that support this view.

The purpose of this paper is to map out potential future research directions on the subject of HR disturbances in the hopes of closing the divide between academic study and real-world application. Unlike prior attempts (Deadrick & Gibson, 2007), we base our work on the actual conditions of practice. To effectively address these challenges, HR theory and practice need to let go of these outdated presumptions and embrace new perspectives that align with the realities of the current business landscape.

The COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted the ways in which previously recognised global mega-trends have altered our perspective, methodology, and practice. The lessons learned from the recent economic downturn are providing a glimpse into the future of a more adaptable workforce and digitalised business models, as well as the ways in which the incorporation of digital technologies into human resources can aid practitioners in meeting the challenges of the modern workplace. We contend that the COVID-19 epidemic catastrophe served to highlight and draw attention to the factors we've outlined here. Furthermore, it emphasised the chances HR has to deal with them and facilitate the transition to the "next standard." In this article, we draw on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to demonstrate the disruptive impacts of the identified global megatrends and suggest strategies for how organisations can adapt to them.

Below, we examine two issues for each of the three worldwide megatrends: "What is disrupting HR practice?" the question of "What kind of paradigm shift is needed within HRM study to equip HR professionals with the information necessary to cope with these disruptions?" Our paper lays out three principles for future theory and empirical work in HRM and provides examples of research topics that could be pursued.

2. Disruptors

An extensive catalogue of developments affecting HR practice has been compiled by a wide variety of periodicals focused on practice (see, e.g., Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2020, and Deloitte, 2020). All publications agree that the mobile workforce, the automation of business models, and AI and machine learning are global mega-trends that will have profound effects on the "future of work." This paper will concentrate on these three trends.

2.1. A flexible workforce

Employees have more options than ever before in terms of their work relationships, and it's up to their bosses to create settings that are flexible enough to support their preferences. For instance, millennials and members of Generation Z have certain standards of their workplaces, such as the ability to pursue meaningful work and a flexible schedule. Employers have usually failed to satisfy the expectations of these groups, despite the fact that they make up the majority of today's worldwide workforce (Deloitte, 2016). On the other hand, as the population ages, businesses are under increasing pressure to accommodate the needs of their senior employees by providing them with perks like increased workplace autonomy and a more casual dress code. The OECD anticipates fast expansion of the gig economy over the next few years, despite its youth (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2020) estimates that it

accounts for only 2% of the total employment market). In reality, the rise of digital technologies is predicted to shift the labour market towards task-based pay and away from full-time, stable positions (Schwellnus, Geva, Pak, & Veiel, 2019). Evidence from the COVID-19 epidemic shows that, compared to the time before the crisis, the next two years will see a rise in the demand for contract employees and independent contractors (McKinsey, 2020). These facts will have an impact on all businesses, not just those with more conventional methods of staffing. Organisational leaders will need to make some fundamental changes in how they think about labour, employees, and the workplace. When it comes to preparing HR pros for the upheaval that comes with a more mobile workforce, what kind of paradigm changes are needed in HRM research? we contend that this change necessitates a reconsideration of a central tenet of HRM study: the idea that the boundaries of work are set by the boss in terms of location, duration, and nature of the work performed. This presumption is fundamental to human resource management studies. Human resource management is rooted in Taylorism's functional organisational systems and largely based on models from (labour) economics. New types of organisations, such as relationship- and network-based ones, have emerged, and the human resource management discipline has made some attempts to adjust to them (see Ulrich & Dulebon, 2015, for a review). Nonetheless, the HR department's ability to write job titles is fundamental to the field's foundation.

Our entire understanding of human resources rests on the tenets of hierarchical systems, work classifications, and job descriptions.

We can't make any headway until we develop a more all-encompassing theoretical framework that accounts for the transient nature of organisations, the proliferation of online platforms, and the blurring of traditional borders between different types of groups. This perspective needs to be shaped around problem-solving by teams of random people with different sets of expertise (Bennis, 1969), with a particular emphasis on the connections between actors and their deeds in the midst of shifting temporal frameworks. Based on the foregoing, here is a suggestion for directions in future study:

Principle No. 1: To better understand the effects of an increasingly mobile workforce and develop effective strategies to address them, future theoretical work in human resource management should employ a wider frame of reference that emphasises the connections between actors and actions within diverse organisational structures over time.

The strategic relational human resources (SRHR) framework is one possible theoretical perspective for developing such a wide-ranging framework. Developing relational coordination—"a mutually reinforcing network of dialogue and relationships carried out for the goal of task integration"—is central to SRHR (Gittell, Seidner, & Wimbush, 2010, p. 491). Recent studies have shown that the concept of relational coordination, which proposes a bridging process that simultaneously incorporates social and informational elements, is useful for better recording the effects of workforce diversity. Despite its potential, there has been limited examination of the advantages and constraints of the relational approach to coordination in the context of interim organisational structures. The traditional bureaucratic approach of organising through a chain of command, hierarchies, and administrative systems may not be as effective in temporal forms of organisation. Instead, direct communication among frontline employees through cross-functional networks can facilitate collaborative efforts at the point of customer interaction. Therefore, future research should focus on understanding the advantages and constraints of the SRHR paradigm in the context of interim organizational structures..

2.2. Digitalisation of business models

Business model automation is widely recognised as a major disruptor across many sectors. The adoption of digital technologies has had far-reaching effects on the processes by which businesses produce and distribute value to their clientele. Moreover, businesses need to rethink their operations by incorporating new technologies into their management, procedures, and overall strategy (Deloitte, 2017). Since the COVID-19 problem began, the trend towards digitalising company models has accelerated. It's safe to say that many C-suite execs concur with Microsoft's CEO when he says, "We've seen two years' worth of digital change in two months." Business models are increasingly being digitalised, and there needs to be a distinct conceptual divide between being digitised (as a product of digitisation) and being digital, according to the literature on strategic management (as a consequence of digitalisation). Digital transformation, as defined by Ross and Beath (2019), is the process of improving business operations by taking advantage of technological developments in this area. However, the process of going digital is very different. It has nothing to do with human resources or any other aspect of business, but rather the development of data-rich client solutions provided in the form of streamlined, individualised service (Ross & Beath, 2019). Human resources digitisation involves using digital tools to achieve practical efficiency and cost optimisation, while also implementing a comprehensive digital approach across all systems and processes. However, as highlighted by Conroy and Minbaeva (2020), simply "doing digital" through HR digitisation is not enough to achieve true digital transformation. To fully embrace the digital age, HR departments need to shift their focus towards "being digital" by prioritising the customer experience and continuously refining their procedures to better equip employees to serve the needs of the company's evolving clientele. This requires a commitment to ongoing experimentation and adaptation. To be sure, digitalisation relies heavily on digitisation. Human resources departments in corporations have implemented app-based strategic labour planning, streamlined performance management procedures, and digitised employment. Knowledge about how to provide customers with solutions that are enhanced with data can be gained through data-oriented methods that provide these prospects. This is why "digitised is not digital," the terms digitisation and digitalisation are almost always used interchangeably. The "duality of digital" emphasises both the importance of digitally changing the centre and the necessity of introducing fundamental changes to the way in which business value is delivered. Nothing concerning behaviour was discussed during the shutdown. Instead, we emphasised flexibility, quick thinking, and a can-do attitude. Despite the fact that output was maintained throughout the pandemic, our qualitative research⁴ reveals that leaders were primarily concerned with the health and happiness of their staff members. How businesses would respond to the paradox of digital was also a glimpse provided by the crisis. The crisis hastened the process of automation across all industries; businesses have embraced new technologies and adjusted to work around their limitations in order to survive. The next step is for HR to ask, "How can we in HR use the advantages of collective digital fluency to enhance the digital services we provide to the organisation?" Human resources departments at many businesses have rapidly digitised their operations, rethinking the entire employee journey online. This includes everything from new hire paperwork to training to annual reviews. To a greater or lesser extent, different people were able to make the mental shift. Those who were successful used innovative approaches and thought outside the box to make the most of current technologies across traditionally separate domains. For instance, Next door, like millions of other businesses, overnight had to adapt to the new reality of "working from home" for all employees. Human resources implemented a system focused on attracting candidates from the outside in order to switch all workers over to a digital, customer-centric platform. Changes were needed in the substance, but the framework and technology were already in place.

Some companies also made an additional, important move, benefiting from the greatest collective digital fluency ever seen in HR procedures. They were able to learn from the lockout by thinking critically about the places, things, and people within their organisations that contributed most to satisfying consumers. And so, armed with this information, they came up with novel approaches to value creation that emphasised rent accrual via the value created by corporate human capital rather than expense reduction (Chadwick, 2017). Because of the emphasis on digital duality, these businesses were able to recover from the crisis with less damage and more preparedness for the future. They were also able to increase their market pace, employee output, and overall stability (BCG, 2020). Due to the lack of research into human resources' part in this procedure, we propose the following rule of thumb:

Guideline 2: To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of digital technology on HR practices and develop effective strategies for responding to it, future research in HRM should focus on examining the processes, drivers, and consequences of the "duality of digital." This term refers to the simultaneous need to transform the core of HR operations through digital means, while also making fundamental changes to how HR contributes to overall business success. Investigating this phenomenon will help uncover the effects of digital disruption and inform future approaches to managing it.

Literature on electronic human resource management makes a suitable jumping off place for such endeavours. Bondarouk, Parry, and Furtmueller (2017) analysed forty years of studies on the effects of e-HRM and how businesses have adapted to them. As a result, they came to the conclusion that e-HRM generally lives up to its promise of increased productivity. It's undeniable that "e-HRM has the potential to simplify and enrich; guide and support; and shorten and speed up the chase of corporate and employee goal achievement" (Bondarouk et al., 2017, p. 114). Despite this body of work's extensive documentation of HR's "digital face-lift," we still know very little about how HR manages or, even better, leads fully digital (as opposed to merely digitised) changes. Because digital technologies enable HR to reimagine its value proposition and shift its emphasis from workers to customers, practitioners require empirical proof to support this shift.

2.3. AI and machine learning

The impact of the digital transformation on human resources is predominantly fueled by data and analytics, but AI, machine learning, robotics, and automation also have significant roles to play. Angrave et.al. (2016) state that other management functional fields are leading the way in implementing analytics technology and exploring big data, while human resources is falling behind. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, as only a small proportion of companies expressed an interest in HR analytics. Nokia's analytics team utilised comprehensive workforce-demographics data and COVID-19 data from Johns Hopkins University's CSSE to provide decision-makers with accurate information about their workforce. However, HR analytics initiatives are often abandoned during times of crisis, as the analytics function is not deemed "essential" to business operations. The economic downturn created a divide between companies that viewed analytics as a passing trend and those that recognised the value of people analytics as a logical solution (Minbaeva, 2017). HR departments face numerous obstacles when attempting to leverage analytics, including concerns over data accuracy and integration. HR professionals often struggle to pose relevant research questions and construct and execute analysis models.. Significant retraining is required for this role (Huselid & Minbaeva, 2019). Human resources professionals, like everyone else, will need to continue their education throughout their working lives if they want to keep their employment and advance in their chosen fields. Human resources professionals who want to be successful in the "future of work" must develop their data

literacy, data-analytics abilities, "consumer of analytics," "boundary spanners," and change advocate skills in order to effectively apply the findings of analytics initiatives (Minbaeva, 2017, 2018). An important point to remember is that analytics can impede normal system operation, stop it dead in its tracks, and cause real damage to the business. So, statistics has the potential to shake things up. Analytics is just an instrument, and like any other weapon, it can be used for good or evil. Think of IBM as an illustration. The formula the business adopted used points as the basis for employee evaluations. With more marks, employees were less likely to be let go (www.reddit.com). The algorithm, however, was badly built in that it awarded more points to those who were comparatively new to the position. That is to say, workers who had been with IBM for a shorter period of time were rewarded more highly than their more seasoned colleagues. So, the typical tenure of an IBM employee was 30 years for those with no marks, and 15 years for those with the most. Employees' abilities were not reflected in the scores. Notably, the majority of the company's senior employees (80%) were deemed "good enough to remain at present employment levels or be promoted" in an internal assessment. On the other hand, the algorithm's findings indicated that 20,000 senior employees would be forced into early retirement, voluntary departure, or cessation of employment. To paraphrase Angrave et al. (2016): "unless analytics is incorporated in a complete and thorough analytical model, the more restricted information accessible in a display format may be misconstrued by managers with limited tolerance for or comprehension of HR." The advent of machine learning and artificial intelligence has been met with similar criticism. Recent research by Raisch and Krakowski (2020) highlights the potential dangers of uncritically implementing AI in the workplace. Specifically, they point out the apparent contradictions between augmentation and mechanisation and contend that an excessive focus on either will have unfavourable effects on business and society. Arguments about logic and effectiveness motivate the adoption of AI-based automation. The whole sector could be "entering in a sprint towards the zero-margin reality of commoditised labour" (Davenport & Kirby, 2016: 204) if technology is given too much weight. As shown on page 17 (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020). In contrast, "a co-evolutionary process in which humans learn from computers and machines learn from people," is how augmentation is described (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020, p. 10). It's common for machine learning to begin with the work of a human specialist, though the nature and level of that participation can change. Machines can't make moral decisions like people can.

Because of this, it is the human-introduced beliefs that form the basis of machine-human relations. It's possible those beliefs are flawed, prejudiced, or hidden. This means that "augmentation results are never completely consistent, reliable, or persistent" because "continued human participation suggests that human biases endure" (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020, p. 18). Because of this, putting too much focus on enhancement usually ends in disappointment. As a result, groups ramp up their efforts, which only ensures that they will fail again. In conclusion, applying automation or augmentation without proper consideration or balance can lead to self-perpetuating negative feedback loops and other unintended corporate and social repercussions. In light of the upheaval caused by digital technologies, how can HRM scholars best support HR pros? Researchers in HRM have a responsibility to educate HR workers on how to prevent common pitfalls when using digital tools. Many companies, for instance, have rethought their talent plans and are placing renewed emphasis on hiring data scientists in reaction to the potential of artificial intelligence and machine learning. In turn, this exacerbated the data scientist skill gap, which has led to hundreds of unfilled jobs and competition with tech startups for top talent. This disparity is, however, short-lived because of the progress made in machine learning, which will eventually allow the data scientists' work to be mechanized (McKinsey, 2020). The obstacles to augmenting are these. HR will gain corporate legitimacy and the chance to become a real leader of

business transformations if it takes an active role in tackling these issues. Similarly, we have barely touched on the possibility of a paradigm change in HRM studies. Human resource management (HRM) is the study of "developing, implementing, and assessing policies, procedures, methods, and programmes related to the person in the company," so this question is central to the discipline (Miner & Crane, 1995: 5). With the advent of digital tools, it may be insufficient to simply concentrate on people. We must strike a balance between automation and augmentation methods if we are to expand our focus to include the interactions between computers and people. As a result, we can move on to the third rule:

To better comprehend the impact of technology-driven disruptions such as analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, and to develop an effective response to them, future empirical research in HRM should investigate how digital technologies, using a balanced combination of automation and augmentation, can aid HR in establishing credibility within their organizations. This statement, "academics do have an important role," is one that we wholeheartedly support (Angrave et al., 2016, p.8). Academics play a crucial role, and not just in the classroom; they also have deep knowledge of research methodology and the ability to build robust models. They can also help when it comes to carefully scrutinising the ideas behind models and matching research questions, data, and analytical methods in relation to the advent of AI. Moreover, academics can bring attention to the odd conflicts, which helps organisations embrace them and come up with strategies to deal with them. (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020). But in order to do so, scholars need to become "bilingual interpreters" for practitioners and engaged partners. "an extension of our job can be to co-create knowledge with the managers whose behaviour we research," argues Gulati (2007, p. 781), which would be a great way to improve the field. This calls for a dramatic change in HRM study methodology. A researcher cannot simply go to an organisation when they have a data need, collect as much data as possible, and then shut the door with a sign reading "Do Not Disturb—Running STATA." Beginning with the pursuit of a compelling research topic, practitioners should be included in the research process every step of the way. It is through such partnerships that academics can teach professionals that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169) and that professionals can teach academics that there is nothing so theoretical as good practice.

3. A way forward: HR transformation

Implications for Organisations:

Disrupted HR has significant implications for organisations. Firstly, it has led to the creation of new HR roles, such as HR data analyst and HR technology specialist, which require new skillsets and competencies. Secondly, it has led to the automation of many HR processes, such as recruitment, onboarding, and performance management, which has resulted in increased efficiency and cost savings for organisations.

However, disrupted HR also presents challenges for organisations. The increased use of technology has raised concerns about data privacy and security. Furthermore, the automation of HR processes has resulted in a reduced human touch, which may lead to decreased employee engagement and satisfaction.

Implications for Employees:

Disrupted HR also has significant implications for employees. The adoption of digital technologies has resulted in new ways of working, such as remote work and flexible schedules, which can increase

employee autonomy and work-life balance. However, it can also lead to increased job insecurity due to the rise of automation and artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, the use of data and analytics in HR can lead to increased monitoring of employee performance, which may lead to a lack of trust and decreased job satisfaction. It is important for organisations to balance the benefits of technology with the human aspect of HR to ensure that employees feel valued and engaged.

Human resource experts (academics and practitioners alike) would be wise to take notice of the challenges their field is currently experiencing and adapt by rewriting the terms of the game. The growth of HRM as both a study and practice area has demonstrated the inadequacy of gradual fine-tuning (Kaufman, 2012; Ulrich & Dulebon, 2015). "After close to 20 years of hopeful rhetoric about becoming 'strategic partners' with a 'seat at the table' where the business decisions that matter are made, most human-resources professionals aren't nearly there," Keith Hammonds (www.fastcompany.com) wrote in his infamous blog post "Why We Hate HR" in 2007. They can't sit down, and the table is sealed away in a meeting area they can't access. Human Resources has the key today and is sitting at the table, but everyone else seems to have vacated (Cappelli & Tavis, 2017). Since disruptive shifts and megatrends are now arriving from the outside, strategy is no longer developed in meetings. As a result, it takes place in close contact to consumers, away from the organisation's established structures, and with a reimagined sense of time. Human resources is still cooped up inside the office, stuck in the box of auxiliary tasks that Porter's value chain has carved out for it, bound to the hamster cycle of annual processes, and unable to see clearly because of the imposed position it has taken on for itself as the strategy's executor. How can HR become a driving force in the organisation? We paraphrase a comment made by Jeffrey Immelt (2017) to provide a solution to this question: Human resources needs to be absolutely sure that it has to change, and that doing so is an absolute necessity. Human resources workers need to position themselves at the strategic inflection point, or the moment just before "fundamentals are about to shift. It's possible that the upheaval will pave the way to greater success in the future. And yet, it could also be the beginning of the end (Grove, 1996, p.3). From there, HR will be guided towards "the beginning of the end" by doing things better, cheaper, faster, and smarter (i.e., constant development). Those working in human resources will need to alter their practices if they want to achieve greater success. Disrupted HR has fundamentally changed the way organisations manage their workforce. The adoption of digital technologies has resulted in the emergence of new HR practices and the reshaping of traditional ones. Disrupted HR presents both challenges and opportunities for organisations and employees, and it is important for organisations to strike a balance between the benefits of technology and the human aspect of HR. As technology continues to evolve, it is crucial for HR professionals to remain adaptable and continuously upskill to ensure that they can effectively meet the needs of their organisation and employees.

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