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How can Human Resource Management motivate managers in times of crisis?

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Abstract. This work is an academic and critical review based on a scientific article published by the ScienceDirect Platform, part of the Elsevier scientific database. The original article, entitled Human Resource Management System Strength in Times of Crisis, was published in the prestigious American Journal of Business Research, founded in 1973, with a high impact factor. This Journal has an H5 index of 209 points on Google Metrics. It is considered that original research contributes to the training of undergraduate and graduate students and future managers. It is relevant to the field of crisis management, as it offers practical and theoretical insights that enrich the training of students and professionals. By emphasizing the relevance of managerial motivation, efficient leadership and Human Resource Management that is attentive to cultural differences, the study demonstrates how organizations can prepare themselves to face the complex and dynamic challenges of the current organizational scenario. The application of this knowledge by future managers may not only improve their ability to make decisions and establish solid organizational links, but also ensure the sustainability of operations in adverse environments, encouraging innovative and resilient practices.

Keywords: Crisis Management. Human Resource Management. Managerial Motivation. Leadership.

1. Introduction

Review:

SANDERS, K.; NGUYEN, P.; BOUCKENOOGHE, D.; RAFFERTY, A.; SCHWARZ, G. Human resource management system strength in times of crisis. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 171, p. 114365, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114365>

Keywords: Information sharing. Crisis management. HRM system strength. Co-variation model of attribution theory. Higher education sector

The first author of the article, Karin Sanders, graduated in Psychology at the University of Groningen (Netherlands) and was awarded, as “Performance-based rewards and innovative behavior” (2018) and “Do opportunities for doctors” by UNSW Business School (Australia). She is a human resources specialist and has published many articles and books “Formal Learning Stimulate Follow-up Participation in Informal Learning” (2017). She is a professor at UNSW Business School and visiting professor at Hanken School of Economics (Finland). Phong T. Nguyen graduated in Administration at the Hanoi National University (Vietnam), with a master’s degree in Human Resources Management and PhD in Management from the University of New South Wales (Australia). His research focuses on the topics of corporate governance, blockchain and diversity. He is a teacher at RMIT University (Vietnam). Dave Bouckenooghe has a PhD in Applied Economics Science from the University of Ghent (Belgium) with a specialization in the Psychology of the Organizational Change. He has published award-winning articles in international magazines and he’s a teacher at the Brock University (Canada) focused on changes and leadership development. Alannah Rafferty graduated in Fine Arts at the Macquarie University (Australia) and has a PhD in Organizational Psychology from the University of Queensland (Australia). Her research focuses on organizational change, stress and well-being in the workplace. She’s a teacher at Griffith University (Australia). Gavin Schwartz has a PhD in Administration from the University of Queensland. He is a teacher at the UNSW Business School. An award-winning researcher, his current research topics are: management and organizational inertia, with publications in specialized magazines and awards like the “Outstanding Reviewer Award” from the Academy of Management Review.

2. Academic and critical evaluation of the original work

For a better understanding of the topic for readers, the comprehension of two essential concepts in the original article is undoubtedly relevant. **Crisis Management** can be defined as a set of practices and tactics aimed at planning, responding and adapting to varied situations that threaten the stability of an organization. Hitt et al. (2021) explain that a crisis is characterized by the unpredictability and great uncertainty, requiring quick answers and clear guidance from leaders. They also highlight the importance of Crisis Management in relation to Human Resources Management (HRM), especially during critical events, like pandemics or economic crisis. This link is in the necessity of taking quick decisions and managing uncertainties,

not keeping aside the well being and the involvement of the employees. Sanders et al. (2024) also add that the efficacy of the HRM practices during crisis depends, to a large extent, of the leader's motivation and the ways their cultural beliefs affect their strategic choices. Furthermore, the concept of **Managerial Motivation** has an important role in the connection between HRM and Crisis Management. It refers to the internal drive that leads leaders to make the right decisions, influenced not only by the severity of the crisis but also the potential impact on the reputation of the organization. Sanders et al. (2024) also emphasize that the combination of motivated leaders and integrated HRM tactics is crucial for ensuring activities and cohesion between the teams. This will allow for the promotion of adequate and flexible strategic planning for competitive organizations (Calvosa, 2023), allowing companies to be agile and adaptable to times of crisis (Thomaz et al., 2024).

Sanders et al. (2024) work is structured in five sections: Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. The Introduction section presents an historical context, using the COVID-19 pandemic as an origin event to investigate the relation between organizational crises, reputation and HRM practices. The Theoretical Framework section presents as main theoretical topics the crises management, the organizational reputation, the cultural factors influence and the interaction between these elements in the HRM context. The Method followed these steps: collecting data during the first moments of the pandemic, analysing 2.439 messages about the COVID-19, conducted with academics from 34 universities. The Results showed that adverse crises, when associated with a positive organizational reputation, significantly increase the efficacy of the HRM practices. The Discussion section points the limitation of the researches in relation to the differences in the severity of the crises between the countries. Besides, highlights that the national cultural values, like the aversion to uncertainty, influence the efficacy of the HRM practices during crises situations. The Conclusion section, the authors highlighted the relevance of the HRM strategies culturally adjusted to preserve the employees' well being and maintain operational continuity.

The graphic elements present in the article aid in the interpretation of the data and concepts approached, aligning with the importance of clear visualization for academic progress, as highlighted by Chiavenato (2020) and Calvosa (2022). The figures emphasize the theories discussed, allowing a better understanding of the analyzed dynamics. The theoretical model presented in Figure 1 shows the relation between the crisis severity, the organizational reputation and the strength of the HRM system, widely discussed topics on the literature about management in contexts of VUCA (Mendonça de Souza et al., 2024). Figures 2a and 2b present how the severity of the crisis and the organizational reputation, combined with the aversion to uncertainty, affect the efficacy of the People Management system, reinforcing the importance of culturally adapted strategies. Figure 3 presents a comparative analysis of the internal communication practices in the participating universities, while the Figure 4 presents predictive results of the HRM system strength in different cultural contexts.

In the original work, the charts facilitate the reader's understanding by providing a visual representation of the concepts discussed, as highlighted by Chiavenato

(2020). Chart 1 presents the crisis management cycle in universities, making it easier to comprehend and compare the strategies adopted by different institutions. Chart 2 illustrates the decision-making flow, emphasizing the importance of communication, a fundamental element in organizational practices during crises. Chart 3 correlates the severity of the crisis with organizational reputation, confirming the impact of the organization's image on its capacity for recovery. Chart 4 analyzes the influence of cultural values on information sharing, highlighting variations in responses to global crises. The visualization of data, as argued by Fernandes et al. (2022a), makes analyses clearer and more accessible, facilitating the understanding of the complex interactions involved in crisis management. These graphical elements not only enrich the analysis but also render complex interactions more comprehensible, providing valuable insights for managers and academics.

Primarily, Sanders et al. (2024) present a theoretical set relevant to the formation of future administrators, especially, in the context of the DEGECAR Program. By emphasizing the cultural adaptability of the HRM practices and the transparent communication in crises, the study contributes to the development of essential skills for the digital and globalized job market (Flores et al., 2024). According to Almeida et al. (2024), the strategic approach on crises management and the constant capacitation are the base for professionals to deal with complex situations, linking directly the theoretical learning to real demands. By integrating these concepts in the professional environment, the students can develop skills like flexibility, resilience and leadership, according to the necessity of an ever-changing market (Melo Franco et al., 2024).

The central theme of the original work, as it is a recurring subject in Applied Social Sciences and of interest to the competitive job market, has the potential to encourage undergraduate and graduate students to participate more in extracurricular activities, such as extension and scientific research. Therefore, it is a theme capable of stimulating creativity and entrepreneurial activities. As well as promoting greater commitment and opportunities for academic success. Therefore, the original study encourages the development of fundamental skills to deal with crises of different natures, both in undergraduate and graduate studies (Rodriguez de Jesus et al., 2023; Sampaio Martins et al., 2022)

The DEGECAR Program focuses on the cultural adaptation of organizational practices. This could enrich extension activities, integrating theory and practice, as suggested by Fortunato et al. (2024a). By analysing the correlation between the people management and cultural factors, the article directs future research in areas such as educational innovation and strategic leadership. The inclusion of practical models and case studies in academic disciplines can also encourage more critical training, preparing students to deal with the specific challenges of their professional and regional realities (Queiroz et al., 2023; Calvosa et al., 2022, Silva Junior et al., 2021).

As a critical perspective of the reviewed work, although Sanders et al. (2024) presents significant contributions to crisis management, it is not possible to draw inferences about its applicability in the Brazilian context due to the cultural and structural differences that influence the crisis management in a diverse country like

Brazil. Another critical point is that, by focusing on large organizations, the study does not clarify whether its findings could be applied to small and medium-sized enterprises, as mentioned by Fernandes et al. (2022b). Nonetheless, the inclusion of practical examples focused to these business is essential to address local particularities. The crisis management, as suggested by Lopes et al. (2024), could be an opportunity for training professionals to be more prepared to deal with complex challenges, in organizations and in society. The application of the suggested model in Brazil could face regional obstacles, like significant differences in terms of infrastructure and resources, especially, in the most disadvantaged regions of the country (Fortunato et al., 2024b). For increasing their influence, would be necessary the investment in public policies and educational programs appropriate to the reality of the country, ensuring benefits both on academic and professional setting (Batista et al., 2022).

The original research is considered to contribute to the education of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as future managers. It is also relevant to the field of crisis management as it provides both practical and theoretical insights that enrich the formation of students and professionals. By emphasizing the the relevance of managerial motivation, effective leadership and HRM attentive to cultural differences (Januário et al., 2024; Vilas Boas et al., 2023), the study shows how organizations can get prepared to face the complex and dynamic challenges of the current landscape. Furthermore, by aligning the concepts presented by Predes Junior et al. (2025), this academic and critical reinforces the relevance of adaptative strategies in uncertain environments, particularly in emerging economies. The application of this knowledge by the future managers may not only develop their capacity to make decisions and establish strong organizational bonds (Xavier et al., 2012), but also ensure the sustentability of the operation in adverse environments, motivating innovative and resilient practices. Hence, the research transcends its original purpose by inspiring new directions not only for the academia, but also the professional Market (Martins et al., 2024; Melo Franco et al., 2023).

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