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TALENT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN A PANDEMIC  
COVID-19: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Abstract:**

Covid-19 pandemic shows the unpreparedness of most business sectors in responding and managing an unprecedented organization (Hartono, 2020). In the process, talent management is considered of paramount importance as many organizations struggle to implement effective talent management practices to survive. This study aims to answer questions about what challenges business organizations to face in implementing talent management during the Covid-19 pandemic. We used a systematic literature review to synthesize findings qualitatively. The secondary data were collected for this study. This study found that the challenges faced by business organizations in implementing talent management during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely: the transformation of skills that will affect technology, changes in the mindset of work from the office, readiness and agility in the face of rapid change, the increasing importance of technology and intelligence and business organizations are required to embrace diversity. Organizational resilience can provide value to a changing world through ecological, economic, and social development. Creative talent management can also be applied to assist organizations in maintaining their business continuity and providing a competitive advantage in this rapidly changing pandemic environment.

**Keywords:**

Business Continuity, Covid-19 Pandemic, Organizational Resilience, Talent Management

**Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic situation shows the unpreparedness of most business sectors in responding and managing an unprecedented organization (Hartono, 2020). Organizations and employees at the global and domestic levels are experiencing the highest uncertainty due to the

Covid-19 pandemic, which has an unprecedented impact (Nangia & Mohsin, 2020). The main goal of every organization at the time of this pandemic is to survive, prosper, and manage human resources effectively. Therefore, human resource management plays an essential role in this pandemic era. In the process, talent management is considered of paramount importance as many organizations struggle to implement effective talent management practices to survive. Today, organizations are beginning to believe that to stay in business, and they need the best. Talent management is about attracting and retaining the best and identifying employees who do not contribute to the organization (Rane & Gaikwad, 2020). Singh (2012) states that in the era of globalization, talent management is an essential factor for organizations to understand the core competencies of the organization to beat business competitors. This study aims to answer questions about what challenges business organizations to face in implementing talent management during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Theoretical Conception of Talent Management**

### ***What is Talent Management?***

Talent management is an approach to managing human resources (HR) to meet the long-term needs of HR competencies (Aprinto & Jacob, 2015). McKinsey & Company first put this concept forward in 1997, which was popularized by McKinsey in his book entitled War of Talent (McKinsey, 2007). Talent management is a set of tools and strategies to attract, efficiently use, and improve its personnel quality, making it possible to make a significant contribution to the company's development. The term talent management includes activities aimed toward involving staff within the innovation techniques, making creative incentives, and developing a potential team (Betchoo, 2017). Talent management refers to the anticipation of required human capital for an organization and the planning to meet potential needs. It is the art of using premeditated human resource planning to look up business worth and make it feasible for companies and organizations to get in touch with their goals (Ali et al., 2019). Hartono (2020) concludes that talent management is an initiative carried out by a company or organization to create business excellence by optimizing high-talented employees.

### ***The Role of Talent Management in the Business World***

Along with developing the business world, talent management is considered an essential role in the business because more and more companies or organizations place HR as the company's biggest asset. Companies are required to maintain their best talents to act as critical employees in the organization (Hartono, 2007).

### ***Traditional Employee Teams vs. Virtual Team***

Traditional employee teams are those who work in the same location and traditionally communicate and meet face to face or face to face (Perkins, 2018). Meanwhile, virtual teams work and engage with each other using technology without being in the same physical location (Ng Lane, 2018). Virtual teams enable the business organization ecosystem to utilize capital, subject matter expertise, and diverse talent pools and services based on specific situations or company goals regardless of geographic boundaries.

### ***Employer Branding***

Employer branding reflects a company that treats its organization and makes it a workplace as an identity and pride so that other people want to work with us. The concept of employer branding is a challenge that must be overcome to create a more mature company identity and

will provide significant benefits in carrying out talent acquisition (Etania, 2020). Heilman et al. (2013) define employer branding as an activity to provide information about the functional, economic, and psychological benefits that companies can provide to prospective employees. This process facilitates the company's ability to attract, recruit, and retain top talent.

### ***Digital Transformation***

Digital transformation can be interpreted as the acceleration of business activities, processes, competencies, and models to fully take advantage of changes and opportunities in digital technology (Fadillah et al., 2019). Loonam et al. (2018) define digital transformation as a process of utilizing existing digital technologies such as virtualization technology, mobile computing, cloud computing, integration of all existing systems in the organization, etc. Morakanyane et al., (2017) define digital transformation as an evolutionary process that rests on existing capabilities and digital technology to create or change business processes and customer experiences to create new value.

### **Research Methodology**

We used a systematic literature review to synthesize findings qualitative research results about talent management challenges in a pandemic Covid-19. The secondary data were collected for this study, where literature searches were carried out using google scholar, science direct, and ProQuest. Keywords used in the literature search include talent management, COVID-19 pandemic, employer branding, digital transformation, working from home, agile HR, and organizational resilience. Articles come from business management journals, information and technology journals, and human capital journals. As many as 60 articles found, and around 45 articles fulfilled the inclusion criteria both in Indonesian and in English.

### **Results**

This study found that the challenges faced by business organizations in implementing talent management during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely: talent war, the transformation of skills that will affect technology, changes in the mindset of work from the office, readiness and agility in the face of rapid growth, the increasing importance of technology and intelligence, business organizations are required to embrace diversity and management of employer branding in the organization.

### ***Talent War***

Companies' main challenge in the HR field during the Covid-19 pandemic is the demand to excel in the talent competition. The talent competition is when companies compete to beat their competitors to get the best talent (top talent) in the labor market. Aguinis et al. (2012) said that winning a talent war is very important for organizational competitiveness, sustainability, and the sustainability of a company's life. According to Angliawati and Fatimah (2020), one of the strategies carried out to win the talent war is recruiting, managing, and retaining talented employees to meet future business needs. The criteria for top talent are high performers, high potentials, pivotal performers, and average performers:

- High performers are those who contribute to business success
- High potentials are those that need to be maintained to build and replace employees who are not productive
- Pivotal performers, namely those who can ensure the sustainability of the ongoing business
- Average performers, namely those who have a limited critical role for business success.

### ***The Transformation of Skill that Will Affect Technology***

The COVID-19 pandemic has played a significant role in accelerating digital transformation in organizations (Soto-Acosta, 2020). The process of digital transformation occurs widely, suddenly, and dramatically in society and cannot be avoided (Hadiono & Santi, 2020). The pandemic forces us to take extraordinary digital leaps in our daily lives and practices (Iivari et al., 2020). These conditions change the order of the HR sector, which is more directed at productivity. The company will focus on enriching skills, exploring the potential, and increasing employee productivity, so that one employee can be given jobs in several related fields (Damayanti, 2020).

Digital transformation involves employees and their willingness to work with artificial intelligence and machines, in line with Levit (2018), who states how technology can enable employees to do their jobs more effectively. Ghislieri et al. (2018) said that employees play a strategic role in digital transformation because they will determine the overall product strategy, monitor strategy implementation, and intervene in the production system. These roles require specific knowledge and qualifications as well as a new skills paradigm

### ***Changes in the Mindset of Work from the Office***

The world Covid-19 pandemic has led to giant bodily distancing to contain the spread of the virus. Many businesses scaled returned or ceased operations in the usual place of business because of government-mandated closures and stay at home orders, worries for their employees' health, or a lack of customers (Bick et al., 2020). Pandemic conditions open up new views that work does not have to be in the office. The disruption triggered by Covid-19 has accelerated the shift to a virtual remote workplace for all employees. Work productivity still appears even when working from anywhere, especially working from home (Burrell, 2020). Virtual teams have a significant role in the rapid utilization of the components of talent, experience, and expertise from anywhere in the world based on need (Agbi, 2018; Martin, 2018; Perkins, 2018).

Working from home (WFH) positively impacts personal work experience, namely work life balance issues (Beno, 2018). Research conducted by Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia - LIPI) in May 2020 shows that as many as 78 percent of workers who carry out WFH can still work productively. This system will remain in place in the long term, incredibly as long as COVID-19 is still ongoing. However, other impacts will affect organizations in the future, where organizations must be ready and respond quickly to these impacts (Vnouckova, 2020). Among the organizational responses, namely, in terms of a new paradigm in HR practice, organizations are required to increasingly explore the use of digital tools to identify, recruit and retain employees (Blatch-Jones et al., 2020).

According to Wiles (2020), organizations must be done to prepare the WFH work system and remote working system in the future. Namely: communicating openly and as often as possible, fostering a sense of trust so that employees work productively, and supporting technology empowerment by improving the quality of infrastructure. Although research conducted by Lippe and Lippenyi (2020) shows that individual employee performance during WFH is lower when compared to employee performance during work from an office (WFO), the widespread practice of WFH has been shown to effectively and substantially reduce the risk of virus infection (Alipour et al., 2020).

### ***Readiness and Agility in the Face of Rapid Growth***

A company's resilience or organization will depend on its ability to adapt to demands and changes that occur quickly. Organizational resilience can provide value to a changing world through ecological, economic, and social development. Increasing corporate resilience guides organizations to identify critical organizational vulnerabilities and determine priorities when realizing business continuity and emergency management planning (Quendler, 2017).

Research has shown that the agility of talent is essential for an organization's development, growth, and sustainability (Martin, 2015). The challenges faced by organizations before the Covid-19 pandemic were more related to efficiency and continuous improvement. However, the challenge faced in current conditions is VUCA, where everyone is required to be agile and adaptive (Hartono, 2020). Human capital management is the central point in the company; companies are required to be adaptive in handling their talents. Companies must provide customized training and training to improve talent skills and competencies so that they are ready to face the business turbulence encountered during a pandemic (Glen, 2007)

### ***The increasing Importance of Technology and Intelligence***

According to Hartono (2020), to continue business in the new normal era, talent management will intersect with technology and artificial intelligence, but cannot replace humans. In line with this, industrial revolution 4.0 is marked by increased connectivity, interaction, and the thinning of boundaries between humans, machines, and other resources through information and communication technology (Fadillah et al., 2019). Technology and AI can be utilized to increase employee productivity and organizational productivity. To facilitate the implementation of talent management in organizations, many companies are currently using talent management applications or talent management systems. Artificial intelligence can recruit the right talent for the company by playing the role of conducting interviews, selecting relevant candidate lists, and eliminating bias through blind screening.

### ***Embrace Diversity***

Company management is required to embrace diverse human resources, not only gender, race, age, religion, but also worker status, including permanent employees and part-time employees (freelancers). Diversity has always been one of the main keywords for organizations because it is considered essential to achieve organizational success. Diversity has become one of the principal buzzwords for the organization, as recognizing and promoting diversity is critical for organizational success (Mello, 2011). Managing human resource diversity will create a multicultural organization capable of developing innovative approaches to complex organizational challenges (Damayanti, 2016).

The diversity of employees owned by the company has several positive impacts, namely: increasing the company's ability in terms of product or service innovation, creating new business opportunities, increasing problem-solving skills. The diversity of employees' experiences and perspectives can also be used as a source in building competitive advantage (Lestari, 2015; Femi & Prasetya, 2017). There are three steps in building, assessing, and managing diversity in organizations, according to Hartini (2012). First, understand the existing culture and make changes or modifications to support diversity. Second, carry out the organizational change process, then the third is to learn from the change process.

Strategic approaches that organizations can take in managing diversity are (Mello, 2011):

1. Recognizing the importance of diversity for organizations.
2. Articulate how diversity relates to the mission and strategic objectives of the organization
3. Define the diversity that exists in the organization
4. Make decisions about whether there are specific efforts to recruit diverse HR
5. Assess how employees, customers, and other stakeholders feel about diversity
6. Determine the specific types of diversity initiatives to be undertaken

### ***Management of Employer Branding***

Research conducted by Moasa (2020) shows that branding is one of the post-pandemic HR trends. In a situation full of uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic, business organizations need to manage employer branding to survive in business activities. Companies may experience a loss of direction in imaging employer brands, which results in loss of customer trust and interest from talents or prospective new employees who want to join. Therefore, companies need to pay attention to employer brand strategies during a pandemic. The concept of employer branding has been around for decades and creating talent shortages in particular locations, jobs, or industries. Firms have taken advantage of a compelling brand to attract their organization's right talent (Schiemann, 2018).

The employees are the key secret to differ between good companies and great companies. Employer branding is a modern trend that is primarily meant to attract potential hires and retain current employees (Celano, 2020). HR professionals are always required to open up and continue to learn during rapid changes and establish networking so that they can create the best talent for the future (Waode, 2019).

According to Citta (2020), employer branding has two goals. First, it aims to make employees feel happy working at the company, and the second aims to make it easier to find the best employee candidates and retain them during the recruitment process. This is in line with Mandhanya and Shah (2010) opinion, which states that good branding can attract candidates' attention and lead to the desire to apply for companies. Employer branding also builds an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that matches what employees want and what is expected of them in return. Research conducted by Rumangkit and Dwiyan (2019) found that employer branding can influence job seekers' interest in following the recruitment process.

### ***Creative Talent Management***

Nangia and Mohsin (2020) found the high priority talent management practice as a creative talent management during pandemic, namely 1) employee engagement and retention practices, and 2) employee development practices.

1. Employee Engagement and Retention Practice
  - Creative employee engagement strategies – constant communication with employees through cloud based platforms, virtual team meetings, creating hobby clubs
  - Creating a central Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) with detailed profiles of all employees for driving engaging discussions with clients
  - Virtual celebration of events creative compensation and benefit schemes – providing additional benefits to employees working from home
  - Creative practices to ensure physical and mental well being of employees

2. Employee Development Practice
  - Everything gone virtual, creative up skilling sessions, virtual learning and development programmes, cross functional training and exposure
  - Building on internal efficiencies
  - Virtual employees life cycle from on boarding to exit

### Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper provides a review about the challenges in talent management in the covid pandemic era. There are several challenges faced, namely talent war, the transformation of skill that will affect technology, changes in the mindset of work from the office, readiness and agility in the face of rapid growth, the increasing importance of technology and intelligence, embrace diversity, and management of employer branding.

Creative talent management can also be applied to assist organizations in maintaining their business continuity and providing a competitive advantage in this rapidly changing pandemic environment. The high priority talent management practices denotes those talent management practices. Those practice were implemented by multiple organizations to sustain through a pandemic environment. The organization have to focus on building a worksite environment that nurtures creativity among employees and prepare strategies to anticipate talent management challenges in the pandemic era.

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