# The Impact of COVID-19 on Remote Working and Employee Engagement

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## Abstract

*The influence of COVID-19 on the planet is unfathomable. As a consequence of mandatory lockdowns, non-essential personnel were compelled to work from home. Even while working from home was formerly thought of as a one-time thing, it's the norm for many nowadays. Even while many companies are eager to get their employees back to the office, others consider the advantages of working from home or in a hybrid environment. HRD's role in ensuring that workers and managers have the skills, knowledge, and capacities to connect with their organizations, teams, and each other is critical as remote working becomes more commonplace. Since future variations (and other economic and political pressures) are always a possibility, we must learn from our mistakes and internalize the lessons we've learned. We examine these remarkable developments in employee engagement using academic and practitioner literature. We've come up with three ideas in response to the outbreak and the resulting "mandated" remote work. As a first step, engage workers in discussions about the organization's long-term goals and the need to realign personnel capabilities to improve overall organizational resilience. Secondly, we provide a wide range of procedures tailored to our clients' needs. Finally, give workers more freedom so they may be held accountable for their level of participation.*

## Introduction

In 2020, the term 'unprecedented' was used more often than before. The COVID-19 pandemic's worldwide impact has led to a rise in cases. Nevertheless, the only term that comes close to describing the pandemic's effect on the globe is unparalleled. There is "no one metaphor" that can encapsulate the social impact of COVID-19 (British Academy, 2021). Many people's working lives have been dramatically altered, and businesses have had to rethink how they interact with their scattered workers. Initial investigations have shown conflicting results about the influence on employee engagement, which needs to be clarified. Lockdowns and employees' adaption to working from home led to unprecedented technological dependency. It is reported by the ILO (2021) that high-skilled industries (such as technology and financial services) have seen development, while other sectors (such as hospitality, the arts, retail, and construction) have been negatively hit by the epidemic.

Significant revenue growth has been recorded by major tech firms such as alphabet (parent company of Google) and Apple (parent company of Amazon), as well as Facebook (Arora, 2020). Human resources departments (HRDs) have played an essential role in the success of companies that can adjust quickly to changes in the business environment and have advanced automation and digitalization programs. These new methods of working influence human labor, with women and young people being disproportionately impacted even if some companies have grown as a result

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(United Nations, 2021). As a result, HRD departments have been under increasing pressure to teach workers the skills and knowledge they need to utilize new technologies and adapt to new working styles while still operating successfully with the business.

The pandemic's impact has been disastrous, and it will almost certainly have long-term effects on society, culture, and the economy (British Academy, 2021). There have been more job losses resulting from COVID-19 than during the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, despite the efforts of governments in many nations to stabilize economies and reduce unemployment (Office for National Statistics 2020; International Labor Organization 2021). Even among those still employed, there is a great deal of uncertainty (Alexander et al., 2021). Employee engagement has been negatively influenced by socio-economic factors such as furlough and remote working, hybrid working, and inadequate health and well-being management (Bailey & Breslin, 2021). Employee disengagement has been reported to be on the rise and the decline, but the "Great Resignation" that is being felt throughout the world suggests that people are becoming disillusioned with their jobs. The effect of employee disengagement in the workplace might be enormous since solid levels of productivity and performance are directly linked to high levels of employee engagement (Burns, 2020).

Uncertainty has become our new regular as COVID-19 becomes a part of our everyday routine. Even though attempts are being made (Garton & Mankins, 2020) to navigate this ambiguity, it is clear that we need a comprehensive perspective of the effect of the pandemic on employee engagement, especially in light of compulsory remote working and fragmentation of the workforce. HRD's function in the changing workplace could be more precise. Arora and Suri (2020, p. 448) remark that HRD professionals must help the workforce adapt and be nimble at all times and phases of a crisis. Both managers and employees benefit from HRD's ability to build the skills required to be "engaging managers"(MacLeod & Clarke, 2011). HRD may also affect each employee's motivation by helping them grow personally(Fletcher, 2019). Because of this, it is necessary to ask whether our existing understanding and approach to employee engagement is appropriate when hybrid working is commonplace.

To close this knowledge gap, we propose a conversation centered around three proposals for HRD professionals to consider when defining future objectives for employee engagement. Before any empirical investigations have been conducted, we may use proposals to describe how we understand the influence on employee engagement of COVID-19 and 'mandated' remote working.

## Literature Review

Human Resources Development (HRD) researchers are invited to join us in exploring new research pathways. The research on the influence of COVID-19 on employee engagement is addressed in our article from a holistic approach. An educated assessment of the current practitioner and academic arguments concerning employee engagement and the social effects of COVID-19 is presented with the aim that businesses may go ahead in a constructive and meaningful manner. As additional COVID-19 varieties, such as Delta and Omicron, are developed, COVID-19 will be around for a while. Finally, the pandemic has been regarded as a 'people catastrophe,' making human resources critical to the survival of organizations (McMackin et al., 2021). As a result, HRD practitioners must take advantage of the lessons learned to ensure that future lockdowns and other restrictions can be handled appropriately to create a positive work experience for employees and organizations and ensure that employee engagement and productivity are not negatively impacted.

Only a few studies have looked at the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee engagement because of the disease's recent emergence. As a result, we have relied on practitioner-oriented and trade publications to support our discussion and provide a comprehensive picture of employee engagement in a post-COVID era.

**Pre-pandemic Remote Working and Employee Engagement**
The word "employee engagement" was first used by Kahn (1990) to define the extent of the physical, cognitive, and emotional presence demonstrated by employees at work. Employee involvement has been connected with beneficial organizational results, such as improved innovation (Kwon & Kim, 2020), fewer absenteeism, higher quality, and profitability. Consequently, when the advantage of raised levels of employee engagement becomes obvious, HRD practitioners are typically depended upon to lead employee engagement efforts (Vance 2006). "HRD procedures and practices are major contributors to engagement and a growing emphasis on employee engagement from an HR viewpoint" hence (Valentin, 2014). However, in many circumstances, views of employee engagement are typically constrained to the outputs of an engagement survey, which needs to include the dynamic intricacies of managers' and employees' lived experiences (Sambrook, 2021).

Furthermore, it is crucial to evaluate how external factors impact employee engagement experiences and practices. Even though Shuck et al. (2021) have raised the issue of engagement in a retrospective look back over the previous 30 years, it is still possible to get a deeper understanding of engagement's function in connection to current sociopolitical problems (Kaduk et al., 2019). Enforced homeworking was one of the first steps used to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and has since become the new normal, benefiting many companies and employees. Before the outbreak, remote working rose. However, it was reserved for those with better salaries. The widespread belief that remote work was only appropriate for specific sorts of occupations was, in fact, widely held. Thus, the enforcement of homeworking was a novel experience to which many businesses and workers were obliged to react (Delany, 2022).

Before the pandemic, opinions on the advantages of working from home were divided. While some studies showed that home-working increased performance (Valentin 2014), other studies found that home-working caused social and professional isolation, which hampered knowledge sharing and intensified labor (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Researchers discovered that when home working was not voluntary, it had a detrimental influence on performance, such as work-family conflict. This highlights the necessity of knowing how home working affects performance when it is not voluntary. Increased productivity and reduced overheads from an organizational standpoint were noteworthy advantages for employers and their workers (Felstead and Henseke, 2017). As a result, there was some worry that 'digital presence cannot fully replace bodily presence" seen from the coworker's viewpoint (Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). There is a lack of contextual influence in the literature on homework, which shows homework at hitherto unimaginable proportions. Furthermore, the past study is skewed since persons who engage in remote work frequently are interested in doing so, as it was primarily voluntary (Kaduk et al. 2019).

**New Normal, Remote Working and Employee Engagement**
According to Galanti et al. (2021) the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically driven most firms to embrace this working mode, frequently without equipping employees with the basic skills needed for remote work. 50% of Europeans will work (partially) from home after the epidemic, up from

just 12% before. Because of this "new normal," HRD will have urgent difficulty in training employees who must be able to manage virtual interactions successfully (Arora & Suri, 2020). Because of the pandemic Hern (2020) stated that workers' desire to do more of their jobs from home has grown. Many people in the United States and the United Kingdom have traveled from urban areas to more rural ones (Roper, 2021). For companies, the epidemic forced them to rethink the expense of office space and the potential savings that might be realized by adopting alternate working methods (Delany, 2021). On the other hand, they have the option to work from home and in the office at the same time, enhancing employee engagement (Gallup, 2022). Because of this, it is expected that the hybrid approach to working from home and the office will become increasingly common as the epidemic continues and after the pandemic. However, not all students have had a favorable experience with forced homework.

According to research performed during the first months of the epidemic, working remotely from home may be difficult because of work-home interference, inefficient communication, procrastination, and loneliness (Wang et al., 2021). Social support, job autonomy, monitoring, and workload are four factors influencing these barriers in virtual work environments. Another crucial individual difference element was also discovered that is employees' self-discipline (Wang et al., 2020). Research on this topic has been scarce, but this study shows that HRD practitioners need to consider a "broader than work context" in their employee engagement strategies by recognizing conflicts between work and family and environmental distractions as barriers to employee engagement when working from home (Galanti et al., 2021).

Employee engagement is a well-established issue, but the effect of mandatory homework needs to be better understood (Dillard & Osam, 2021). A recent study found that even when home working is not mandated, not all workers love it. As a result, the current reality in which employees have no option may negatively affect employee engagement (Carli, 2020).

## Employee Participation in the Creation of HRD Engagement Strategies

Global lockdowns occurred in March 2020 in several nations (BBC, 2020). When these lockdowns occurred, it was easier for specific firms and workers to adapt since they already had hybrid working or homeworking systems. For those who could not work from home because of a lack of technological infrastructure, rules, and practices were absent (Pass & Ridgway, 2022); instead of focusing on the availability of the necessary technology and software to support remote working, the capacity of workers and managers to sustain productive work habits while away from the office was the focus (Koekemoer et al., 2021). Existing managers and workers were balancing other responsibilities like homeschooling and self-isolation, while HRD was tasked with facilitating the shift while adjusting and learning new working methods. Online help and training workshops have replaced face-to-face assistance and training sessions. As a result of the pandemic, HRD must rethink how it operates and engages people to maintain a workplace free of face-to-face connections (Chanana, 2021). HR (Human Resources) had to adjust its strategic orientation towards hybrid working in certain firms, while other organizations used the chance to improve employee capabilities (Azizi et al., 2021). It became more difficult for human resources departments to engage and socialize new hires beginning their careers with a new company without meeting any of their coworkers.

The epidemic underscored the need for openness in the workplace, particularly in home working policies. Employees who work from home depend on their line manager for fairness in job distribution, compensation, and advancement prospects (Delany, 2021). As a result, Delany (2021) calls for rules and processes to be implemented to recognize and develop the potential of the remote

worker population. As employee engagement is all about the workers, Andriotis (2017) found that engagement initiatives should be built from the bottom up. Yet a recent analysis by Brione and Rees (2021) found that workers at FTSE 350 businesses seldom participated in the strategy-forming process, raising questions about openness.

Digital transformation has arisen as a recurrent need in the wake of the epidemic. Many companies have been investing in digitalization, and the influence of COVID-19 has resulted in the expedited fulfillment of this aim (Jagger, 2020).

Employees have a critical role in a company's digital transition. The rate of technological innovation is only going to accelerate in the future. Workers who need help to keep up with the quick speed of technology dependence and automation have suffered from this rapid acceleration. A workplace division has resulted from this, with some employees welcoming new ways of doing things online and feeling empowered and involved, while others feel left behind by such quick change. It's essential to keep in mind that everyone's participation and growth are crucial considerations. People who can retrain and learn new skills will be the ones who can survive the storm, according to Jagger (2020). Because of this, it is essential to guarantee that this does not lead to a loss of critical organizational skills owing to a lack of technical expertise.

Considering the possibility of future lockdowns or other unanticipated constraints, HRD employee engagement methods should consider a wide variety of talents. Individual and group requirements should also be considered; for example, more is needed to guarantee that all employees are adept at utilizing video conferencing software; instead, how the business can help each worker thrive despite adversity should be considered. A new emphasis has been placed on building individual and team resilience during the pandemic. Still, it is essential to remember that resilience requires training, practice, and growth and that HRD thus plays a crucial role(Dirani et al., 2020). According to a study by Sarkar and Page (2020), an organization's emphasis on resilience can only be successful if it has the full support of all levels. The same may be said for policies and practices related to health and wellness. The way wellness programs are utilized and executed across a company influences employee engagement, even though many firms have stressed the significance of well-being—taking breaks for walks, contemplation, and other forms of well-being programming. If employees believe these practices are being applied superficially, their engagement in them will suffer, as will their opinions of how the company treats them. Engagement will suffer if workers believe that the policies and procedures governing these practices are not open and accessible to everybody. As the MacLeod and Clarke (2011) emphasized, organizational integrity is an essential facilitator of employee engagement. These rules and procedures must not be seen as a 'tick-box' exercise by HRD but rather as a way to foster employee engagement. With this in mind, here's a first idea worth considering:

*Proposition 1:* To guarantee that all workers are involved in the organization's future direction and that employees' skills are re-aligned to promote resilience, HRD initiatives must be informed by employee engagement.

## Employee Engagement as a Customizable Practice

Personalization is becoming more important to consumers as they become more self-conscious (Burns 2020). According to studies in marketing, customers expect more satisfaction before they consume a product owing to enhanced psychological ownership via personalization (Li & Atkinson, 2020). According to Berg et al., (2021) this need for personalization extends beyond retail to sectors such as public health (e.g., vaccinations). We often treat employee engagement in the workplace as an individual choice (Berg et al., 2021). Still, as Dillar and Osam (2021, p. 512)

point out, employees are "not numbers or laboratory subjects, but real people with a myriad of life experiences, visible and non-visible traits that combine to form their identity" and "influence how they experience the workplace." Because of this, no one may be truly engaged at work if broad employee engagement techniques are used.

Since the epidemic, many researchers have concluded that most of their work needs more real-world applicability to meet today's and tomorrow's shifting labor demands (Dillard and Osam 2021). Furthermore, academic articles' recommendations made for practitioners typically need more context specificity (Kougiannou & Ridgway, 2022).

As the borders between home and work life become more blurred in homeworking, several issues affect the work experience, such as contact with family (Wang et al., 2020). According to Wang et al. (2020), work-to-home and home-to-work interferences are distinct. The term 'interferences' spans many issues, highlighting how the pandemic uniquely affected each individual. While childcare, home-schooling, caring responsibilities, and domestic activities are the most evident, during the pandemic, individuals experienced a magnitude of interferences that had previously not been considered, namely, a lack of workspace, house sharing, Wi-Fi, and technology limitations, to the impact of loneliness and anxiety. Employees (especially women) who have to balance parenting and job commitments during lockdown have a higher level of stress (Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). Consequently, the pandemic emphasized the individuality of people and the necessity for organizational adaptability.

The pandemic's sociological, economic, and cultural effects have highlighted the disparity between the rich and poor. Layoffs, other government assistance programs, and redundancies have all contributed to the fragmentation of the workforce. "There were major discrepancies between those who lost their jobs and those who continued working from home while being paid as usual" (Butterick & Charlwood, 2021). As the epidemic progresses, employees in occupations that enable them to work remotely and those in employment that need them to be in the same area simultaneously have different experiences. In addition, recent research has found that women are more likely to be afflicted by the epidemic. A woman's increased involvement in childcare, household chores, and other non-work activities makes her more susceptible to home interference while she works from home than a man. As a result, women have less time and energy to devote to their careers (Dillard & Osam, 2021). The result is that women must work flexibly around their family responsibilities, frequently working outside of 'work hours to keep up. While flexibility is possible with remote working, it affects virtual presenteeism during work hours. According to these interferences, relying on employee involvement and absenteeism as an indication of engagement is no longer suitable. Gender disparities may be addressed by techniques such as flexible working, although they are not accessible to everyone (Carli, 2020). There are no longer discrete workplace and home environments (Vaswani, 2020). Organizations must approach employee engagement holistically.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, managers, HR practitioners, and engagement advocates have been scrambling to find new strategies to engage their increasingly dispersed workforce. This has resulted in tiredness and, despite good intentions, too many unneeded check-ins through videoconferencing. In the midst of the epidemic, the expectation of being "always-on" put even more strain on people already under a lot of stress (Karl et al., 2022).

There is a pressing need to reframe engagement in the same way that push-pull communication approaches are reframed. As opposed to bombarding workers with engaging activities, HRD professionals could build 'bundles' of engagement practice that employees can 'pull' or draw from. This will help avoid the reverse impact and produce a feeling of exhaustion. The CIPD states that

employee engagement can be used as an 'umbrella term' that combines various aspects of engagement into a holistic area of people strategy (Gifford & Young., 2021); perhaps this idea needs to go further and with organizations providing an umbrella of engagement practices. This method would promote tailored engagement, enabling individuals to connect with practices that best match their lives, career objectives, and preferences outside of work.

Reflecting on increasing homeworking, this packaging strategy might contain engagement activities that consider the whole family (Vaswani 2020). Redefining what it means to be engaged is the first step toward reframing employee engagement. Embedding a tailored strategy to employee engagement is now more critical than ever since job engagement means something different to everyone. This strategy relies heavily on the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The first proposition's emphasis on not leaving any workers behind is reflected in the importance of inclusiveness. This leads us to our second proposition,

*Proposition 2:* Customized practice packages that concentrate on flexibility and diversity should be used to reinvent employee engagement tactics.

## Autonomy Will Motivate Employee's to Take Personal Responsibility

An essential consideration in employee engagement is how stakeholders are involved. Maintaining touch and engagement with workers has been the primary focus of the front-line manager. Line managers serve as a vital link between the company and its workers, particularly when employees are required to work from home.

According to Delany (2021), managers need to keep a close and personal touch with their employees working remotely. Gallup (2022) explored that line managers are under increasing stress due to this expectation, and they are also dealing with the additional strains of their COVID-19 responsibilities (such as sickness, home-schooling, caring, and shielding).

A wide range of abilities are needed to manage remote employees, including coaching and mentoring, expectations management, and the ability to understand digital body language (Delany, 2021). Many people get promoted to management positions because of their technical expertise rather than because they have the interpersonal qualities needed to be successful leaders. Thus, we must ask whether line managers can perform this function in a distant context. Because of this, it is expected that the increased use of home-based work will lead HRD to rethink the scope and growth of this employee group.

The moment has come to rethink who is accountable for fostering employee satisfaction. Organizations have set up networks of engagement champions to assist line managers in implementing engagement programs, but the extent and effect of their roles still need to be well-documented. As previously stated, Wang et al. (2021) consider Autonomy a critical aspect of virtual work. The notion that workers should be held responsible for their level of involvement in a remote working environment arises when this concept is applied to employee engagement. Line managers and engagement advocates must have the freedom to customize their engagement strategies to match the needs of their teams and people. As we said before, engagement strategies should become more personalized. By putting workers at the center of their engagement practices and as partners in developing engagement initiatives, we further the point (Pass et al., 2018). An employee's ability to balance work and non-work to enhance their performance and well-being is well known (Wang et al., 2021). There's also evidence to suggest that 'in the pandemic environment, autonomy could favorably aid in managing home-work stressors such as childcare obligations but might adversely impair home-work boundary self-management.' This is according

to Wang et al. (2021, p. 47). As a result, there are fewer work-from-home distractions due to increasing Autonomy, which empowers and trusts people to work as they see fit.

*Proposition 3:* Increase Autonomy to empower people to be responsible for their involvement

## Discussion

COVID-19's impact on everyday living must be considered. Consequently, we live in an unpredictable world, affecting how businesses interact with their employees. This epidemic has caused individuals to think differently about their own lives. Many workers are rethinking their roles and adopting a more "transactional" approach to their work because they want a sense of purpose. 'Employees are getting more secure in their expectations regarding how, when, and where they want to work,' says the IPA (2022). Demands for remote and flexible working are no longer the exception. HRD must be at the forefront of championing new ways of working that adopt an inclusive approach to engagement strategy development (Proposition 1), reimagine engagement practices as bundles to maximize flexibility (Proposition 2), and empower employees to be accountable for their engagement (Proposition 3).

As a result of COVID-19, our behavior and concept of involvement have been fundamentally altered. No one event resulted in pre-pandemic employee involvement; instead, it grew over time via daily encounters and connections (Shuck et al., 2021). Aside from the relevance of context in research, the pandemic has shown that context is essential in practitioner settings. However, as Dillard and Osam (2021, p. 511) point out, everyone's requirements are different. According to this statement, we must pay attention to the crucial significance that identity plays in one's developing self if engagement research is focused on bringing and being ourselves at work. Contextualization underscores our second notion that employee engagement techniques should be transformed into personalized practice packages emphasizing flexibility and inclusiveness.

Before COVID-19, remote working was reserved for the most senior members of an organization, and there were varying degrees of support for the practice. Allen et al., (2015) found good characteristics, such as higher performance, whereas others found harmful elements, such as isolation and diminished information exchange (Crandall & Gao, 2005). Although COVID-19 has offered an unexpected chance for employees to demonstrate their ability to work from home, this trust has been won the hard way via an increase in virtual presenteeism (Hadjisolomou et al., 2021). As a result of the pandemic, managers have been compelled to lose control of their responsibilities. As a result of increasing work-life balance and enhanced sentiments of trust, increased homeworking has been connected to increased engagement (in the short-term) with work; however, the long-term influence on career remains unobserved. We recognize this requirement for trust in our third thesis, which states that more Autonomy will enable people to take responsibility for their actions.

The pandemic must impose homework, which removes individual choice. According to Galanti et al. (2021) forced homework is a critical pandemic component. Because we've all had to do it, homework has become a shared experience, improved participation, and minimized the isolation often associated with remote working before COVID. Our first premise states that workers should be included in creating employee engagement initiatives because of the changing nature of the interaction. There are lost chances to participate in work-related development activities when isolation sets in (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Although Bennett et al. (2021) note that videoconferencing might compensate for some of the negative characteristics of isolation by boosting belonging, the shared experience of working in the office has been overlooked (Bennett et al., 2021). According to Wang et al. (2021) people in a remote work environment need to be

proactive in their relationships with their coworkers. Work-from-home interruption adds an extra hurdle for people who feel the need to disguise non-work activity.

The work-from-home and work-from-home dichotomies are highlighted by the necessity to mask non-work activities. Children and dogs were frequent distractions in our initial lockdowns, as were coworkers and the irregular shipments caused by internet buying habits (Carli, 2020).

The reasons for not having a distinct workspace, apart from our personal lives and an over-reliance on lousy internet access, have become obsolete. As a result, is our tolerance for merging work and home becoming less acceptable, organizations championed by HRD practitioners must consider the effect of COVID-19 and remote working on employee engagement if they want to solve the mounting tensions that many employees confront by balancing the increasing conflict between their professional and personal lives.

## Conclusion

The study has outlined three ideas for getting employees excited about their work in this study. A lack of knowledge of the function of HRD in addressing employee engagement was discovered as a result of this research. COVID-19's influence on employee engagement has been researched in-depth in the literature, which informs our perspective.

With strong, established teams and high levels of trust, the businesses that quickly adapted to remote working needed to have standards surrounding presenteeism (Koekemoer et al., 2021). Trust-building strategies and efforts should be developed in the future to help businesses cope with future turbulence.

Instead of wishing for a "return to normal," people are terrified that the "old normal" will return—possibly the worst thing that organizations can do. By reverting to old habits, the trust that has been built up through time will be lost.

### Implications of the Study

HRD initiatives on employee engagement are more important than ever to guarantee workers' participation in the organization's future orientation. Consider how workers' abilities might be re-aligned to match future directions, focusing on enhancing resilience in the face of prolonged uncertainty.

**Table 1: Implications of propositions**

| Propositions | Propositions | Implications |
|---|---|---|
| **Proposition 1** | To guarantee that all workers are involved in the organization's future direction and that employees' skills are re-aligned to promote resilience, HRD initiatives must be informed by employee engagement. | To ensure their problems and views are taken into consideration, employees should be included in developing HRD strategies. Resilience and other critical abilities may be incorporated into the strategy. |
| **Proposition 2** | Customized practice packages that concentrate on flexibility and diversity should be used to reinvent employee engagement tactics. | We must remember that no two people are identical and that not all engagement activities are appropriate for all participants. Employees should have the freedom to choose the activities they wish to participate. |
| **Proposition 3** | Increase autonomy to empower people to be responsible for their involvement | Everyone is aware of the most effective methods of enlisting their support. It's on management to allow its staff to operate in the best manner. |

Employee involvement has improved, but these efforts must now be reframed to emphasize the importance of flexibility and inclusiveness. We urge HR professionals to think about how tailored practice packages influence employee engagement.

There must be increased workers' responsibility for their engagement, and managers must be given the freedom and flexibility to change procedures based on their own experiences. This reallocation will solve this problem to assuage concerns that line managers may need to be better equipped to handle employee engagement while simultaneously dealing with the effect of COVID-19 on other parts of their operations.

**Directions for Future Research**

To further understand how COVID-19 affects employee engagement across all industries and workforces, not only those whose work can be done from home, we must now shift our focus to new research paths. As previously stated, the epidemic has affected the globe in various ways. Only now are the full ramifications of the epidemic becoming apparent? The return to the workplace and one's sense of physical and psychological safety are among the many issues created by realizing that work will not return to "normal." Consider how diverse cultures and ideologies affect involvement (Shuck et al., 2021).

The effect of layoffs, redundancies, and job redeployment on companies, particularly at the team level, is essential. There was a split in the team, with some members working from home and those still exposed to COVID-19. It was a different experience for those who worked from home and had to contact people outside of their homes.

As a result, our society's notions of employment status have been altered by the designation of essential employees. A change in the power structure of an organization might be a result. What effect has this had on the team's dynamics and unity? Teams will be expected to function in hybrid modes in the future. What impact would it have on teams if companies allowed employees to work flexibly? How do they plan to keep everyone in the loop when it comes to working together? There is a need to study the effects of workforce fragmentation and segregation at all levels of an organization, from the top to the bottom of the team. Is there a way to promote and build a hybrid and transparent work environment that improves employee engagement and productivity?

The 'Great Resignation,' in which many people quit their jobs, has gotten a lot of news coverage. Recruitment shortages have put workers in a position of enhanced power, and they are demanding more from their employers than just a good salary. Furthermore, the epidemic has caused individuals to reevaluate their familial and domestic situations. Because of this, the organization's mission has recently come into sharper focus. A worldwide labor shortage in some fields, including healthcare, has been reported in several countries struck by the epidemic. The balance of power between companies and workers shifts due to these shortages. How HRD can guarantee that firms react and connect with their workers to retain talent is still being determined, and further study is needed.

The epidemic has brought to light the value of an organization's mission, the need for top executives to lead with integrity, and the significance of involving managers who know their staff on an interpersonal basis. In essence, in Macleod Review, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) it was first emphasized engagement fundamentals 12 years ago. Are the "4 enablers" still relevant in a COVID-19-influenced world, or do we need to examine them?

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