



## HUMAN RESOURCES NEW CHALLENGES FOR CANADIAN EMPLOYERS - ANALYSIS OF THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES STRUGGLING THROUGH 2022

**Housseem Eddine Ben Messaoud<sup>i</sup>**

Swiss School of Business and Management,  
Geneva, Switzerland

### **Abstract:**

The emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in December 2019 was a wake-up call for the human resources community. In some ways, COVID-19 was a real game changer, but in other ways, it was simply another flashpoint in an ongoing HR transformation. Many have lost their jobs, and employers and their human resources departments have had to adjust to the situation. Some industries succeeded in going through the pandemic while others did not. It is no wonder why many employees have reoriented their careers to other industries, especially those who used to work in tourism and hospitality. Today, these industries are facing more challenges than ever before, and the lack of employees is making the HR job more difficult and, in many cases, impossible to find employees. This paper is about the HR challenges before and after the pandemic. It is aimed at exploring how human resources management has evolved and changed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a historical perspective, we will first provide an overview of the history of human resources management in relation to the pandemic and then discuss the contemporary issues that have emerged following the outbreak. Then we will analyze the HR situation in Canada and how the pandemic has affected it and its backdown on hospitality and tourism.

**Keywords:** human resources, management, COVID-19, hospitality, tourism, Canada

### **1. Introduction**

To guarantee compliance with labor regulations, keeping records, training, employee relationship assistance, and solving workers' issues, the human resources department is necessary (Parviainen et al., 2017) The management staff is provided with instructions by the human resource administration group on how to actively guide humans as corporate assets. This includes the development of the operator choices, recommending the

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [housseem.ben.messaoud@gmail.com](mailto:housseem.ben.messaoud@gmail.com)

preparatory work of workers and improvement frameworks, enlisting and procurement of laborers with specific skills to attain the current and future goals of the institution.

In this area of work, human resource specialists are experts, not workers in a separate organizational task; they ensure that managers supply details about numerous concerns pertaining to personnel and how they aid the association reach its objectives. The performance assessment system is something that HR department does in to keep its staff motivated. One of the purposes of performance reviews is to encourage workers to work harder to reach the desired level of excellence in their work (Nguyen, et al., 2017). In terms of human resources practices, there is some research suggesting a beneficial connection between maintaining HR practices and work performance (Pak, et al., 2019). Many experts in the field of human resources have, up to this point, directed the addition of health protection features to traditional healthcare plans in order to facilitate recruiting and job maintenance initiatives (Patrick, Parul). The goal of this paper is to analyze the effects of COVID-19 on HR, the new challenges imposed on them and the potential solutions.

## **2. Review: Analysis of the Human Resources and Employees' Situation through and after COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **2.1 COVID-19 Effect on Human Resources and Employees**

One of the most radical workplace revolutions in recent years is being accelerated through COVID-19. It will permanently alter the way we work, interact with others, shop, study, interact, and place we work (Donthu, et al., 2020). Since the efficiency of HR practices is of the utmost importance for organizations, especially during times of crisis, these organizations need to prepare a mitigation strategy as a precautionary exercise for overlooking problems that come with new HR concerns and their implications. A particularly difficult atmosphere has been developed for human resources management (HRM) because of the COVID-19 pandemic and they are unable to perform as they did before (Zhong, et al., 2021). Management teams now must rapidly enter into the unknowns as they collaborate to help their workforce in adjusting to and adjusting with the radical shifts that have occurred in both the work setting and the social setting (Carnevale, et al., 2020).

Every organization has been profoundly impacted by COVID-19, and therefore, leaders need to come up with novel and inventive ideas to ensure the continued existence of their businesses and to assist employees in adjusting to the enormous problems that have been unleashed because of the outbreak. HRM professionals need to consider the reality that working remotely may lead to workers' solitude owing to the unavailability of interactions with other employees, absence of interpersonal guidance, and absence of one-to-one interaction (Howe, et al., 2021). These factors can be causes of stress that may jeopardize staff members' psychological health. The HRM has been required to make sure that workers working at home have the required capacity to undertake their type of work (Hamouche, 2021).

It took merely a few months for the COVID-19 to close the majority of jobs. This caused the pandemic to give rise to a profound global economic crisis. By the end of March, 81 percent of all employees lived in nations with a current workplace shutdown that was either encouraged or obligatory, and by the end of June 2020, 93 percent of the globe's employees were under the closure policy still in place (Collings, et al. 2021). There are also indications that the epidemic has had detrimental effects on the way that workers view their jobs. Workers were however exposed to changing working circumstances because of the pandemic, since they may be at the highest danger of isolation, a feeling of no direction, and the related disastrous impacts on well-being (Carnevale, et al., 2020). Employers have been necessitated to make very tough choices because of the implementation of the guidelines to curb the transmission of the illness.

These decisions include temporarily closing their doors, modifying their business operations, converting their company's operations to operate from home, furloughing workers, or laying off employees. For example, a loss of jobs was seen in the tourism sector (Bagnera, 2020). People's work suffered as a direct result of the excessive levels of stress they were subjected to. The primary sources of stress were a person's sense of their own safety, the potential for and danger of contagion, information about obesity and the uncertainty, isolation and quarantine, shame and social isolation, and loss of income and job uncertainty. The employees also struggled to balance their personal and professional lives (Joo, 2020). The strain that is caused by the demands of a global digital context is quite exhausting; many workers are putting in longer hours to satisfy a variety of demands and are encountering challenges in their performance when working remotely in environments that are not ideal (Caligiuri, et al., 2020). All these observable difficulties at work arise in the context of job instability and the unpredictability of the future economy.

## **2.2 The Role of HR in Motivating Employees**

The enterprise's level of success is strongly correlated with the degree to which its management of business processes is sustainable. When it comes to attaining sustainability, one of the most crucial and driving components is generally agreed upon to be the workforce, particularly those individuals that drive the company ahead. The method of employee planning that is based on the evaluation of results ought to concentrate on ways to stimulate the inventiveness of workers, enhance their performance at work, and establish circumstances that are conducive to the operation of teams within the business (Lorincová, et al., 2019).

A strongly motivated employee will put in a lot of effort to achieving set objectives, demonstrating that they have the skills needed and an adequate understanding of their responsibilities, and earning the privilege to use the resources that they need (Mansaray, 2019). The three dimensions approach to HR practices can be used allowing for the differentiation between the following three HR bundles: the skill-enhancing HR bundle, the motivation-enhancing HR bundle, and the opportunity-enhancing HR bundle (De Reuver, et al., 2021). Employees can expand their skill sets through the use of the human

resource programs that are included in the skill-enhancing package, and as a result, they are exposed to a wider range of responsibilities and more difficult challenges on the job. This procedure provides workers with more chances for professional and personal advancement, which in turn boosts the employees' motivation levels while they are on the job. The social exchange theory suggests, with respect to motivation, that business owners should reaffirm laborers' views that their actions are recognized by providing them with the opportunity for development within the organization as well as monetary incentives this is in addition to providing financial incentives.

The opportunity-enhancing HR program leads to an empowered environment in the company, which in turn enables workers' motivation towards the company goal. Complete analysis of responsibility to persons and increased worker engagement result in an ethical structure that enhances workers' sense of trust in the strategic value and importance of their work (Beltrán-Martín, et al., 2018). According to the findings of certain studies, the strategies used for managing human resources have an influence on staff hard work with the link between the two being mediated by engagement and company engagement (Fei, 2019).

### **2.3 New Challenges Facing HR after COVID-19**

A plethora of consultant papers have issued warnings to human resources (HR) professionals about the necessity of adapting to upcoming upheavals, which include the digitalization, technology, and artificial intelligence. The conventional ways of thinking about HR practices and high-performance work systems need to be modified (Collings, et al. 2021). Wright and McMahan, who were pioneers in the discipline, described strategic human resource management as the sequence of organized HR distributions and activities targeted at allowing the firm to reach its objectives. Since that time, most of the research on strategic HRM has concentrated either on the link between HR processes and company performance or on the influence of those activities on intermediaries between the two variables.

The worldwide epidemic, on the other hand, demonstrated how narrowly focused such studies have been when it comes to addressing how businesses strategically manage their employees. For instance, because of the pandemic, there has to be a change in our gaining knowledge of how the workplace setting, including the working workplace as opposed to working at home, affects the behaviors and actions of employees (Collings, et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the impacts of the previously established worldwide trends on the way we comprehend, manage, and carry out our job. This perception is giving us a taste of what advancement with a diversified human resource and digital corporate strategies will look like, and how the implementation of digitalized innovations in Human resource management can help Human resource professionals to cope with different challenges (Minbaeva, 2021).

Digitalization is a major arising challenge it takes the process of migrating parts or all an operations and supply business processes and models onto online platforms using

newly developed digital technologies that include mobile and video communication, cloud services, automation, artificial intelligence (AI) (Amankwah-Amoah, et al., 2021). Digitalization changes the entire business setting changing the entire structure including human resources (Parviainen, et al., 2017). Artificial intelligence looking over the daily running of a business will lead to normal business lacking the need for human resources and thus laying off many workers.

#### **2.4 Solutions for COVID-19 Impacts and the New Challenges**

The pandemic has made HRM an especially difficult field to operate in, management now has the responsibility of assisting their workers in adjusting to and adapting to the profound changes that are occurring in both the work environment and the interpersonal level. The rules and practices of HRM have an influence on the conduct and effectiveness of employees, and the decisions made by the business influence the wellness of workers. The HRM office needs to handle workplace pressures, work stress, and other dangers within the context of health and well-being practices (Gigauri, 2020). Developing simulated sociability events, such as virtual lunches or coffee breaks, is one example of the kinds of things that many HRM professionals have done to encourage their staff members using HRM. During this difficult situation, these behaviors unquestionably assist workers in providing support for one another, even while they are separated from their places of employment since the well-being of the workers is a priority (Tuzovic, et al., 2018). For HRM practitioners to play a significant position, these managers should be supported and trained on ways to handle a digital team. This will aid the management teams to resolve these challenges and deal with the demands of working remotely, which will ultimately allow them to assist their members of the team (Hamouche, 2021).

To conform to the requirements of COVID-19, HR was tasked with ensuring that all safety and health guidelines were adhered to. This required the purchase of safety equipment, a reorganization of the working area to provide the necessary amount of social distance, and the coordination of health inspections and continuous monitoring (Adikaram, et al., 2021). The management teams of human resources may want to consider boosting HR systems that are relationship-oriented to reduce the increased risk of separation among staff members who do not have children and who are unmarried, as well as to better prepare those employees for unexpected events, such as the one we are currently experiencing, which can lead to emotions of loneliness and interpersonal isolation. These kinds of relationship-oriented HR solutions can assist workers in creating connections both inside and outside the company. New training that gives workers the knowledge to operate with technology will also empower the workers in the digital age. Change in the business technology is inevitable and thus adopting the Human capital will keep the business at an added advantage in the market and this will enable them to retain more workers.

### 3. Human Resources Challenges in the Canadian Tourism and Hospitality Industry

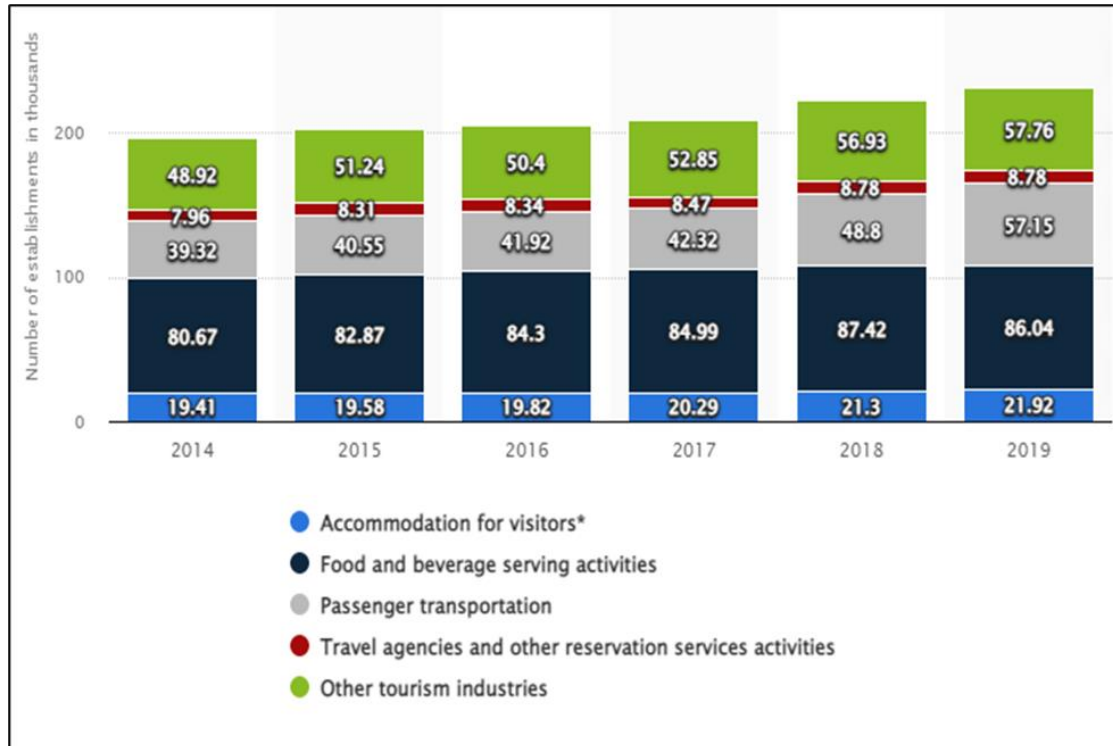
Canada's global tourism industry has been flourishing for the last two decades. A considerable number of visitors from all over the world have been visiting the country for different purposes such as site seeing and international studies. The rampant increase in international visitors has been attributed to the improved transport infrastructure and international relations that keep Canada on the top list of the most favored nations to visit all over the globe. The nation has consequently seen a rise in the number of organizations that deal with hospitality services and hotels within the industry. Further, increasing visitor employment opportunities for Canadians in tourism and hospitality provide the demanded services.

THC (2020) articulates that the primary sectors that have boosted the employment slots in Canada include the food and beverages sector, transportation, hotel and restaurants, the recreation industry, and entertainment. Statistical records indicate that the number of operating international tourism hotels rose from 739200 - 752200, a rise of over eleven thousand employees in two years (Statista, 2022) (between 2017 and 2019) which significantly shows that the industry expanded. In 2020, over two million people showed employment records in the Canadian tourism and hospitality sector.

#### 3.1 The Canadian Hospitality Industry Before the Pandemic

In 2019, the nation experienced some positive changes after a significant increase in the drive of investment in the industry. The government showed exemplary efforts to enhance business operations within the tourism and hospitality sector, which resulted in enormous profits. Further, the development of the sector led to massive revenues for the organizations in the industry, leading to more hiring of employees to serve the broad consumer base (Willie, 2019). The development of the companies also led to the growth of services such as corporate social responsibilities and the opening of other subbranches that positively affected the natives' lives. Less authoritative regulations allowed more businesses to have freedom and provided enormous merit to the creative industry.

According to Rebello (2017), the capitalist approach toward the economy helped advance the companies working within the tourism and hospitality sector. According to statistics, there was an increase in the number of employees working within the Canadian hospitality and tourism sector with incredible figures of 22.1 million visitors in Canada were experience which was a record-breaking instance for three consecutive years as affirmed by Canadian statistics (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2021). The table below shows the exponential rise in the Canadian tourism industry from 2014 to 2019 (Information retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1015160/canada-tourism-industry-unit-count-by-type/>).



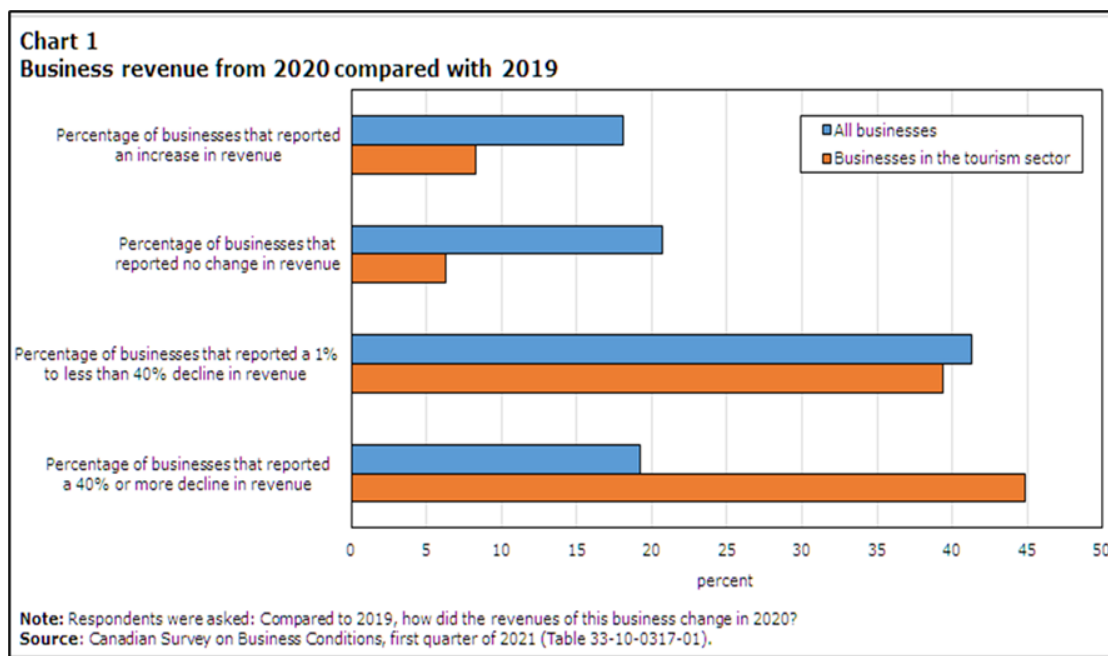
**Figure 1:** The exponential rise in the Canadian tourism industry from 2014 to 2019

Tourism spending has constantly been rising over the last five years in Canada. It has been considered a prime leading economic sector for the nation, creating job opportunities for middle-class natives (Theckedath, 2014). Over 1.8 million individuals in the nation have been employed in Canada within the tourism and hospitality sector. Since September 2018, tourism spending in Canada has been immense, with over 80.8 billion dollars recorded in 2018. This amount was considered a significant rise of 5.9% compared to 2017. The statistical figures imply that the industry experienced significant growth, with the number of international tourists in 2018 amounting to 18.6 million. According to the Advisory Council on Jobs and the Visitor Economy, entrepreneurs and business owners in the tourism sector and hospitality industry filed taxes that asserted future growth for their businesses (Newaz et al., 2020). Quick-service restaurants were also perceived to rise within the country between 2012 and 2019. The monthly average rates of hotels in the country indicated that the nation hosted more than 133.49 ADR (Average Daily Rate). This is one of the performance indicators that prove that the industry was on the rise, with the occupancy rates at hotels and restaurants assessed (Jayawardena et al., 2013).

### 3.2 The Pandemic Effect on Human Resources in Tourism and Hospitality in Canada

Despite the upsurge within the last decade in Canada's hospitality and tourism sector, there have been immense changes witnessed on the COVID-19 onset and continuous spread (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020). The pandemic has been a global menace that has stirred profound changes in different humankind tenets, from business to fundamental lifestyle facets (UNCTAD, 2020). The outbreak led to enormous fatalities, which led to global

organizations and authorities reinforcing strict measures to reduce the fatalities. Measures to cut down the transmission chain and reduce the infection rates among global demographics resulted in the economic crisis in different areas and in different ways as affirmed by WHO (2020). The Canadian tourism sector has consequently witnessed significant changes in the number of operating restaurants, tourist inflow, and other areas that comprise the hospitality industry (Swaikoski, 2020). The new social norms of keeping social distance and 'stay home, stay safe regulations disrupted the industry leading to a sudden halt in hotels and restaurants. Besides, significant changes were seen in the lockdown measures that drastically reduced the influx of tourists in the country, both local and international, to the attraction sites and hospitality facilities. The graph below shows the decline in the Canadian tourism and hospitality sector after the COVID-19 outbreak (Tam et al., 2021).



**Figure 2:** The Decline in the Canadian Tourism and Hospitality Sector after the COVID-19 Outbreak

The rise of COVID-19 triggered both short-term and long-term impacts on the nation's population. The tourism and hospitality sector witnessed a sharp decline in visitors amid the pandemic. Despite the attempts to reinforce technological innovations, the industry was brought to its knees based to severe effects that led to a decline in tourism activities, scale-down operations of the tourism and hospitality organizations, and eventually declined economy (Dube et al., 2021). An economic downturn was implemented across this industry, with significant job losses.

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate on the socio-economic consequences of this epidemic on tourism using examples based on Canada's tourism and the hospitality industry on the effects witnessed in the human resource tenet (Duro et al., 2021). The global residents were disrupted in their financial sources and were therefore no longer



able to visit the country's recreation centers and hotels. Besides, the locals lacked the financial potential to engage in local tourism, resulting in a decrease in performance in economic failure of meeting luxury-based services. According to Gupta et al. (2020), the conditions surrounding joblessness based on the closure of some companies and industries alongside the restriction measures led to the laying-off of millions of Canadians working in different sectors.

Tragically, COVID-19 is currently ruining the Canadian travel and tourism sector. In March 2020, the Canadian government implemented frontier limits and travel bans to stop the coronavirus from spreading throughout the area (Gray, 2020). It had consequently stopped travel to and from Canada for an unsure amount of time. However, an exemption was made for necessary travel, such as transporting merchandise and some workers. Since April 30, 2020, the exemption has been in force for truck drivers, in addition to the staff of trains, airplanes, and ships, to bring medical and essential supplies and cargo out across the boundary. This led to the closure of hotels and hospitality institutions, leading to the suspension of employees (Roy et al., 2021). Some of the premises used as hotels were used as quarantine centers and reduced Canadians' interactions within public and social scope. Research indicates that international and local travelers were reduced by 77% in 2020, leading to enormous losses for the tourism and hospitality industry. A prime example of the losses within the sector is depicted by Germaine hotels with over five premises closed. Statistics indicate that over 200000 and 250000 individuals lost permanent jobs in Canadian hospitality and tourism amid the COVID-19 crisis.

### **3.3 Human Resources and the Industry of Tourism and Hospitality Continue to Struggle through 2022**

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered long-term adverse effects on tourism and hospitality. Apparently, despite the opening of closed business premises and organizations within the tourism and hospitality industry, immense struggles prevail. In 2022, most firms are still straining to re-open because of the implications of reduced visitors and hard times accompanying the economic crisis. The five-star hotels and business that depends on international tourism have been slow to resume because of the slowed recovery of norms and economic affluence. According to the insight provided by Lawson et al. (2020), smaller Canadians have resumed routine operations such as vessels and minor airport entry operations. This depicts the uncertainties surrounding the industry since there is a reduced influx of clients, which may see the firms and the industry to incur enormous losses (Booyens, 2022). Some organizations have preferred gradual opening and resumption, with some of their premises left unattended until confirmation of peak resumption.

Other impacts that have been identified as long-term have been seen in the reduced number of employees willing to resume jobs. This has been attributed to the increased fear among members of the public who feel insecure about resuming work in the sector because of social interactions that expose them to COVID-19 infections. The

novel coronavirus first originated in Wuhan, China, where it was later spread to other parts of the world because of international travels (Boley et al., 2022). As a result, most people still feel anxious in areas where they are exposed to interactions with people from the international sphere. The immense worries have crippled the tourism sector because it requires people willing and dedicated to interacting with visitors worldwide (Gupta et al., 2022).

Despite the increased competition in employment and job-seeking operations, the effect is that thousands of vacant jobs have been left unattended, leading to the reduced human capacity to attend to the needs of the market (Boudreau et al.). The tourism sector has always lacked sufficient human resource potential since its needs range from transport personnel to hospitality-based professionals. The industry is rated second in providing jobs and has several subsequent employments emanating from its operations.

The other profound struggle witnessed in the sector is the sector's increased salaries for the industry employees but failed convincing power for the people working for the sector. Most workers feel demotivated after losing some of their colleagues and family members to the global pandemic and therefore are not entirely focused on fulfilling their delegated duties (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020). The individuals keep seeking constant leaves and off-duty time to recover from the shock. Additionally, the strategy to ensure that all people are vaccinated has benefited the industry but has met enormous opposition from some employees. During the pandemic, the younger population also sought other means to cater to their livelihoods, such as online trades like forex and cryptocurrencies, which has led to staffing problems for the industry and might be a long-term effect (Salari et al., 2022). Despite the support by the government to create awareness of the quality of vaccines, people are still uncertain of their mandatory reinforcement. Therefore, others prefer to lose their jobs rather than be vaccinated.

The novel Coronavirus created tremendous havoc worldwide over the last five centuries. The Canadian tourism and hospitality sector was crippled by the outbreak leading to the closure of some of the significant business premises in hotels, transportation, and tour-based sectors. The reinforcement of the draconian limits on mobility led to paralysis of tourists and social-based interactions such as recreation centers leading to suspension of employees for the sector and, in the worst-case scenario, loss of jobs (Wall-Andrews et al., 2021). Despite Canada earning considerable income from the tourism sector, the nation's GDP was greatly affected by COVID-19, with many people losing jobs and reduced living standards witnessed among civilians (Buheji et al., 2020). Although the government has established initiatives to revive the industry, constant challenges witnessed in 2022, like reduced motivation among employees, lower staff and human labor supply for the industry, and other issues in employees adjusting to the new environment. These challenges should be resolved to ensure that a fast recovery of the industry occurs since many people will suffer from job losses and economic crises.

## 4. Conclusion

The paper focuses on the important part that human resources are playing in achieving both operational and long-term success in the COVID-19 pandemic era. To effectively manage human resources, one must have the primary aim of meeting the ever-evolving requirements of an employer and always maintaining a dynamic and competitive work environment. It is necessary to conduct routine audits of the benefit packages provided to employees in order to ascertain the associated expenses for the employer.

The additional modification can be made to the bundles enabling the possibility of extending employee pay by providing them with the option to participate in either growth skills programs, backpacking times, or improvements to the savings plan for retirement. This gives the employees the ability to choose how long their pay is extended. The pandemic has put to light the necessity of expanding our knowledge of how the work environment influences the behaviors and actions of employees. With digitalization, the workforce can be offered new training that helps them adapt to the revolution in the business.

Today, HRM is necessary to properly handle these issues, and this requirement will assist ensure that human resource management professionals are able to successfully confront the various opportunities to make vital contributions to the organization's effectiveness.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author

Housseem Eddine Ben Messaoud is the CEO of Gestion Hôtelière de la Capitale and his main work consists of HR recruitment and placement. His enterprise was affected by the pandemic and led him to do a lot of research to find innovative ideas to keep him standing. Through his studies, at Swiss School of Business and Management in Switzerland, for the MBA program he decided to concentrate most of his work on HR and the effect of the pandemic. 2022 is the year in which he mostly published articles and reviews related to Human Resources.

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