



Advancing Human Resource Management Interventions to Support Workforce Mental Health

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Abstract

The World Health Organization (2010) has estimated that between a quarter to half the population are likely to experience debilitating mental health challenges in their lifetime. Mental health relates to challenges with wellbeing that inhibit the performance and functioning of workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the need for systematic human resource management (HRM) innovations for mental health. The purpose of this study is to contribute to management understanding of mental health and wellbeing of the workforce across different organizations, with a focus on improving employees' mental health through HRM interventions. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 HRM professionals from varied organizations in the public and private sectors. The main pre-determined questions addressed HRM strategies to improve wellbeing for managers and workers, especially in demanding work environments. The participants were also asked to address HRM policies and practices that can improve the mental health of the workforce. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. A grounded theory approach was utilized for the qualitative analysis of the data. The findings suggest that HRM professionals have developed a growing interest in mental health at work, whoever they have not yet fully designed the role of HRM to support mental health. The participants stressed the impacts of the pandemic on employees' wellbeing. Consequently, HRM professionals reported top management's changing attitudes and beliefs about mental health, and a consequent increase in management's willingness to invest resources in seeking new interventions to advance this important issue.

Keywords: HRM; Wellbeing; Employees; Pandemic; Management