



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

EVALUATING THE RESILIENCE OF HUMAN
RESOURCES PRACTICES IN TRAVEL AGENCIES
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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واقع التعليم الفندقى فى ضوء أبعاد التنمية المستدامة (بالتطبيق على كلية السياحة والفنادق - جامعة المنصورة)

إعداد

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المستخلص

شكل تفشي فيروس كوفيد 19 تحديًا لاقتصاد السياحة العالمي. وهدد بقاء شركات السياحة بشكل خاص في البلدان النامية مثل مصر. وتعد المرونة أكثر من مجرد التعافي من الأزمة؛ فمن خلال تعزيز المرونة، يمكن للمنظمات الاستجابة والتكيف مع التغيرات الإيجابية والسلبية في بيئة العمل. ويعتبر العاملين عنصر أساسي في خدمات السياحة والضيافة. لذلك، ركزت هذه الدراسة على فحص مرونة ممارسات الموارد البشرية أثناء أزمة كوفيد 19. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يهدف البحث إلى تحديد العوامل المؤثرة على مرونة ممارسات الموارد البشرية في شركات السياحة أثناء جائحه كوفيد 19 في الأقصر وأسوان. من ناحية أخرى، التحقيق في الإجراءات التي وضعتها الحكومة لمساعدة شركات السياحة في التغلب على التحديات التي تواجهها خلال جائحه كوفيد 19. وتم توزيع استبيان علي مديري شركات

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السياحة التي تم اختيارها كعينة للدراسة في الأقصر وأسوان. وتم تحليل النتائج باستخدام برنامج Spss ، وأظهرت النتائج عدم وجود مرونة في تطبيق معظم ممارسات الموارد البشرية في شركات السياحة خلال جائحة كوفيد 19. ويتم تطبيق القليل من الممارسات المتعلقة بالسلامة والنظافة. وضعت الحكومة المصرية العديد من الإجراءات لمساعدة شركات السياحة على مواجهة المخاطر بسبب أزمة كوفيد 19. ساهمت النتائج في فهم كيف يمكن لممارسات الموارد البشرية أن تحافظ على القوى العاملة في السياحة وتعزز المرونة في مواجهة الجائحة العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرونة، ممارسات الموارد البشرية، شركات السياحة،

جائحة كوفيد 19

Evaluating the Resilience of Human Resources Practices in Travel Agencies during Covid-19 pandemic

Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has challenged the global tourism economy. It has particularly threatened the survival of travel agencies in developing countries, especially those with the greatest growth of international visitors, such as Egypt. Resilient organizations are proactive and recover better from hardship. Resilience is more than just recovery; it also implies a certain level of flexibility and the ability to adapt to both positive and negative influences of the environment. Employees are acknowledged as a critical dimension in tourism and hospitality services. So, this study focused on Examining the resilience of the human resource practices in the travel agencies category (a) in Luxor and

Aswan during Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, it aims to determine the factors which affect the resilience of the human resources practices in travel agencies in Covid-19. On the other hand, investigate the procedures put by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19 pandemic. The Data was obtained from a questionnaire initiated with managers of selected travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan. The data were analyzed using SPSS ver. 22. The survey results demonstrated that there was no resilience in applying most of human resources practices in travel agencies during Covid-19 pandemic. Few practices related to safety and hygiene were applied . The Egyptian government put many procedures to help travel agencies facing the risks due to Covid-19. The results contributed to an understanding of how HR practices can sustain the tourism workforce and enhance resilience in the face of a global pandemic.

Key words: Resilience, Human Resources Practices, Travel Agencies, Covid-19.

1- Introduction

The world has seen one of the worst crises known to the history of mankind in the form of COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused global unrest and devastation to the worldwide economy (Arora et al., 2020; Rajput et al., 2020). Because of its infectious nature and health hazards, the illness has caused widespread disruptions such as lockdowns, port and airport closures, tight staffing standards; limiting imports and exports and so on (Bherwani et al., 2020;Gautam and Hens, 2020;Rajput et al.

2020; Sharma et al. 2020). The economic shutdown has downgraded manufacturing, increased layoffs, high unemployment, slowed down demand and reduced industrial profits (Gautam and Hens, 2020; Rajput et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020). Many industries, including aviation, hospitality, tourism, entertainment, and transportation, are battling to stay afloat, and many businesses are on the verge of closing down (Sigala, 2020).

Tourism, as an industry that is very vulnerable to many risks, has become resistant to various problems over time (Novelli et al., 2018). COVID-19 is a unique and distinct from others, and it will have significant and long-term ramifications for the tourist sector (Chang et al., 2020; Sigala, 2020). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) reported the depth of the damage to the tourism sector, with 2020 being named the worst year for international tourism, with a drop of 73% in the number of international tourists. This trend continued in 2021, when the recorded decline in the arrival of international tourists reached 83% in the period January–March. The accelerating COVID-19 pandemic disrupted millions of jobs and households that rely on tourism and hospitality for their livelihoods and well-being (UNWTO, 2020). Depending on the length of the limitations and border closures, between 100 and 120 million direct tourist jobs are in danger (UNWTO, 2020). This massive disruption now tests destination and hospitality organizational reactions, speed, and levels of recovery, as well as the future results of these responses to exit the COVID-19 pandemic (Foss, 2021).

Resilience plays a crucial role in the survival of organizations. It is the ability to anticipate, survive in, and recover from a turbulent environment with the ability to return to the original or an improved state (Brusset and Teller 2017; Chowdhury and Quaddus 2017) .

In the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are facing many challenges (Foss, 2021). Management solutions are becoming increasingly critical for an organization's long-term viability (Gečienė, 2021). The organizations are forced to manage working activities during the pandemic in order to avoid failure and overcome difficulties (Channa et al., 2019). By strengthening their resilience, organizations can prepare to better respond and adapt to changes in their environment, and recover, allowing them to continue performing in inappropriate circumstances and to survive in the long run (Gečienė, 2020).

According to Hillmann and Guenther (2021), with the onset of the crisis caused by the pandemic, resilient companies had already decided on priorities and understood how to arrange and continue operations while maintaining their skills and capabilities. This allowed them to make a smooth transition to alternative ways of working, such as teleworking.

Research problem

Human resource management (HRM) has a critical role in crisis situations. Human resources practices are important

in building resilience, which helps firms continuously adjust to change and subsequently enhance their organizational effectiveness (Bustinza et al., 2019). Employees are acknowledged as a critical dimension in tourism and hospitality services (Su, et al., 2021) . However, organizational resilience linked to crisis in tourism and hospitality has not yet been widely studied (Orchiston et al., 2016).

Despite the significance of human resources in building organizational resilience in crisis, however, the link between organizations' HRM and resilience capacity has not been well examined within the tourism literature (Brown et al., 2017). Rodríguez-Sánchez (2021) illustrated that future research should continue to explore the ways in which workplace resilience can be promoted from the HRM perspective. So, the research problem was the lack of studies that examined the link between human resource practices and resilience within the tourism industry during crisis.

Research objectives

This research aims to:

- 1- Examine the resilience of the human resource practices in travel agencies during Covid-19.

2- Determine the factors which affect the resilience of the human resources practices in travel agencies in Covid-19.

3- Investigate the procedures put by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19 pandemic.

Research questions

The research questions are as follows:

1- To what extent is the adoption of resilience in human resources practices in travel agencies during Covid-19 pandemic in Luxor and Aswan?

2- What are the factors which affect resilience of human resources management practices in travel agencies in Covid-19 in Luxor and Aswan?

3- What are the procedures put by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19 pandemic?

2- Literature Review

2.1 The COVID-19 and tourism

The COVID-19 (declared as a pandemic by WHO, 12 March 2020) significantly impacts the global economic, political, and socio-cultural systems (Peterson and DiPietro, 2021). Health communication strategies and measures (e.g. social distancing, travel and mobility bans, community lockdowns, stay at home campaigns, self- or mandatory-quarantine, curbs on crowding) have halted global travel, tourism and leisure (Božović et al., 2021). Being a highly vulnerable industry to numerous environmental, political,

socio-economic risks, tourism is used to and has become resilient in bouncing back from various crisis and outbreaks such as terrorism, earthquakes, Ebola and SARS (Novelli et al., 2018). The nature, conditions, and effects of COVID-19, on the other hand, show that this crisis is not only unique, but also has the potential to have deep and long-term structural and transformational changes to tourism as a socio-economic activity (Sigala, 2020). Indeed, the pandemic's most distinguishing qualities are its global and massive scope, multifaceted and interrelated repercussions, undermining present values and institutions, and contributing to a worldwide recession and depression (Prayag, 2020).

It is a truism that international tourism is facing its largest crisis since the inception of modern-day travel over the past century (Hunt, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 22% drop in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020 and a loss of US \$ 1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism and 120 million direct tourism job cuts representing seven times the impact of September 11, and the largest decline in the history (Cummings, 2020; Emen, 2020; International Labor Organization (ILO), 2020; McKinsey and Company, 2020; UNWTO, 2020; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2020).

2.2 Crisis and resilience definitions under COVID-19

Crisis refers to an accidental situation or threat from internal or external, human-made actions or naturally occurring phenomena such as disaster triggers. Crisis could lead to many related consequences for health, the economy and even national and global security (Qiu et al., 2017).

Dealing with crisis and disasters is not new for the tourism industry (Prayag, 2018), especially under COVID-19 – some researchers have discussed the recovery of destinations during COVID-19. Coronavirus has emptied tourists from tourist attractions due to restrictions lockdowns on the world's tourism industry (CondeNas Traveller, 2020).

The concept of resilience has been applied in multi-disciplinary settings. The term has also been extended to organizational behavior in the study of how organizations and communities behave in situations of crisis (Norris et al., 2008). Lengnick-Hall et al., (2011) focused on the understanding of resilience as an organizational capacity rather than a stable feature (i.e., organizations are either resilient or not). In other words, by focusing exclusively on resilience as it appears after a crisis or a traumatic event, we are only able to understand the past and the characteristics of resilience when the damage has already been done. Therefore, resilience research is attaching more importance to building resilience; that is, by making active efforts to ensure resources are available for individuals, teams, and organizations to cope with adversity.

Resilience is critical to a company's ability to recover after a disaster (Peterson and DiPietro, 2021). The remarkable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on corporate performance has been observed all across the world (Prayag, 2020). The time is now, more than ever, for firms to improve their resilience. Governments, particularly local

governments, play a critical role in business recovery in this difficult period (Sigala, 2020). However, the economic shock of the pandemic has affected businesses disproportionately, and it is becoming increasingly clear that different businesses require different types of support to build resilience (Mokline and Abdallah, 2021).

Williams et al. (2017, p. 742) define resilience as “the process by which a party (i.e. individual, organization, or community) builds and uses capability endowments to interact with the environment in a way that positively adjusts and maintains functioning prior to, during, and following adversity”. Peterson and DiPietro (2021) suggest incorporating this notion into crisis management to help organizations anticipate, adjust and respond to adversity.

As a result, organizational resilience refers to a company's capacity to absorb, adapt to, and capitalize on disruptions caused by environmental changes (Linnenluecke, 2017). From an organizational standpoint, resilience is characterized as (Mokline and Abdallah, 2021):

- The capacity to adjust and maintain desirable functions under challenging or straining conditions.
- A dynamic capacity of organizational adaptability that grows and develops over time.
- The ability to bounce back from disruptive events or hardships.

2.3 HRM practices during Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic

It is established that human resource practices (HRPs) are closely linked to organizational performance (Subramony, 2009). HRPs such as training, job design, compensation, and incentives directly affect organizational performance and employee job satisfaction (Tim et al., 2013) .

According to Dissanayake (2020), there are many HR practices which adopted by companies during pandemic situations. These practices can be introduced as 6Cs, which comprise; (a) curtailing and compensation, (b) communication, (c) coordination and collaboration, (d) creating a caring culture, (e) cleaning and hygiene, and (f) creativity as follows:

2.3.1 Curtailing and compensation

Compensation management refers to the rewards that employees receive for performing their job. It encompasses monetary (base pay/bonuses) and non-monetary rewards (employee benefits) (Martocchio, 2017). It can influence employees' motivation, performance (Safuan and Kurnia, 2021; Sembiring et al., 2020), and retention (Elsafty and Ragheb, 2020). The study by Elsafty and Ragheb (2020) showed that financial benefits such as bonuses during COVID-19 are associated significantly with employees' retention.

Service sector and labor-intensive industries of an economy are the hardest-hit, and atypical employees, such as part-timers and contract-based employees, are the most vulnerable victims in a pandemic (Dissanayake, 2020) . Such companies are unavoidably to apply strategies like shortening business hours, suspension or closure of business, at least for a short period (Lee and Warner, 2006).

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, various nations have enacted laws to provide financial assistance to employees and organizations during this health crisis, as well as to encourage people to follow stay-at-home orders (Hamouche, 2021). For example, in the United States, the government has approved temporary paid sick leave, which provides employees with two weeks of paid sick leave for isolation, COVID-19 treatment, or taking care of a member of their family infected by COVID-19 (Andersen et al., 2020). Short-term compensation, known as part-time work, has been implemented to keep the economy afloat while safeguarding businesses and employees' jobs (Hamouche, 2021). Providing employees with a temporary reduction in working hours assists organizations facing a drop in demand to retain their employees and avoid layoffs (Giupponi and Landais, 2020).

2.3.2 Communication

According to Lee and Warner (2005), the decisions on layoffs, pay-cuts and changed leave systems are of an adverse nature. Despite these, the issues related to reporting to work, making payments, handling retention and returning to work need attention in the event of a disaster (Dissanayake, 2020). As a result, leave policies to be adopted in the organization in such an emergency situation should be extremely clear and well communicated to the entire workforce (Mann, 2014).

Maintaining a proper channel of communication with the staff has been a focal point in HR decision-making in service sector organizations (Lee and Warner, 2005). Jacobson and Sowa (2016) emphasized the need of

communicate the correct information to employees, especially in the case of tough HR decisions made by the management. They have recognized that such communications can be done through certain employees themselves as a mechanism for getting employees ‘engaged’ in the crisis situation (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

Therefore, during compulsory lockdown, to avoid staff turnover has increased sharply and overcome insecurity of all employees, Given the real risk of social isolation that is associated with full-time teleworking, every effort should be made to help teleworkers stay connected with supervisors, colleagues, and the organization as a whole (ILO, 2020a).

2.3.3 Coordination and collaboration

Organizations have advanced towards the implementation of some HR practices through job design and task restructuring by coordinating and cooperating with the whole workforce (Dissanayake,2020). Therefore, resilient organizations, namely those implementing systems that engage employees in decision-making and problem-solving processes (Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

Training plays an important role in a period of crisis, such as pandemics (Devyania et al., 2020; Hamouche, 2020). It helps to develop the needed skills for employees; increases COVID-19 awareness, reduces the risk of the virus spreading, and prevents mental health issues (Quaedackers et al., 2020). It also helps to support employees in the process of transitioning toward remote working (Akkermans et al., 2020). Training employees on how to

use ICT is vital to helping them work and communicate with their boss and coworkers while they are away from the office (Greer and Payne, 2014).

Some organizations have implemented flexible work scheduling, alternative work arrangements, and policies granting additional time-off for employees (Jacobson and Sowa, 2016). Mann (2014, P.168) examined the preparedness for crisis by the HRM of a local government and revealed that "clear lines of communication between the HR department and other departments" as well as "collaboration among departments," are critical in a disaster.

2.3.4 Creating a caring culture

Among many of the good HR practices in a period of crisis ; taking care of the health and safety of the staff, paying special attention to the health conditions of pregnant women, and facilitating them with special leave systems are important (Dissanayake, 2020). In order to maintain a caring organizational culture, the organizations have taken steps to provide financial support for their staff, which came in the form of interest free loan schemes, reinstatement of bonuses, and introducing one-month discretionary bonus payments (Sulaiman et al., 2020) .

COVID-19 is associated with a range of concerns, such as fear of falling ill and dying, being socially excluded,being

placed in quarantine, or losing a livelihood (Hamouche, 2021). Symptoms of anxiety and depression are common reactions for people in the context of COVID-19. Mental health and psychosocial support should be made available to all workers (Akkermans et al., 2020).

In examining the innovative HRM practices of turbulent times, Jacobson and Sowa (2016) found the management is taking measures for responding to immediate morale issues of employees in organizations. In addition to, some HR departments stepped in to get employees engaged in managing the existing turbulent environment, addressing the workplace stress, arranging wellness programs and developing new skills (Dissanayake,2020) . Hamouche (2021) reveals that more than one third of Chinese organizations (35%) are providing employees with psychological counseling services during the pandemic time.

2.3.5 Cleaning and hygiene

Under the policy framework for fighting Covid-19 based on International Labor Standards, ILO (2020b) the need for protecting workers and strengthening occupational health and safety measures at workplaces has been stressed. Recent news reports show that workplace cleaning has gained prominence during the current spread of COVID-19 too. Under the HR planning to minimize the impacts of coronavirus, HR departments are encouraged to make certain cleaning supplies available to company employees during the pandemic (Hamouche, 2020) .

Employees while performing their routine tasks in organizations are prone to getting infected with the Covid-19 virus (Dissanayake,2020). Usually, in organizations the ‘Health and Safety Section’ which is the special wing of human resource management is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all employees (Sulaiman et al., 2020). Employees are productive assets, their health and safety are critical to any organization's success (Hamouche, 2021). Accordingly, employees can be provided with things such as hand sanitizer, tissues, spray disinfectant, and soap/paper towels to ensure personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

Encouraging all employees to use common hygiene best practices (such as sneezing into their arm, covering their mouth when they cough or sneeze, and promptly disposing of used tissues) is also reported under supportive HR practices in dealing with pandemics in organizational environments (Hamouche, 2021). Further, it is advised to perform routine environmental cleaning of the workplaces, giving special attention to frequently-touched surfaces (Dissanayake, 2020).

2.3.6 Creativity

Dissanayake (2020) claims that work organizations and HR experts are unprepared for global pandemics. However, when encountered, they cannot negate the obligations towards their employees and the business (Sulaiman et al., 2020). Thus, unexpected pandemics stimulate the creativity of HR departments (Hamouche, 2021). This means, HR department has to be creative in work rescheduling, restructuring, responsibility sharing, teamwork technology

use, adopting new hygiene techniques, introducing new working modes and so on in a pandemic (Gravett, 2020). For instance, work organizations adopt teleworking as a mode of remote working during the period of Coronavirus (Dailey ad Mitchell, 2020).

However, ILO (2020a) reports that teleworking is not recommended under all circumstances and for all types of jobs. The organizations need to be imaginative and innovative in developing and/ or proposing the most appropriate working modes suited to their jobs and workforces (Gravett, 2020). Training arrangements would require creativity not only to achieve efficiency but also to avoid ambiguity and chaos in work environments (Dailey and Mitchell, 2020).

2.4 Factors affecting organizational resilience

According to Su et al., (2021), there are many factors influencing resilience through HR practices as follows:

2.4.1 Financial constraints

A healthy financial position and access to finance are essential for businesses to survive and succeed when there are significant reductions in revenue (Su et al., 2021 cited, in Gössling et al., 2020). In times of crisis, small and medium enterprises face major threats to their financial performance and, ultimately to their survival (Pal et al., 2014). The spread of COVID-19 has already had a high human cost, and with public health systems struggling to cope, these costs will continue to grow. The policies put in

place by governments to slow the transmission of COVID-19 have led, in many countries, to a massive demand and supply shock. This has led to significant trade disruptions, drops in commodity prices, and the tightening of financial conditions in many countries. These effects have already led to large increases in unemployment and underemployment rates and will continue to threaten the survival of many firms worldwide (World Bank Group, 2020).

2.4.2 Leadership

One of the most important measures of organizational resilience is leadership. Leadership should view crisis from an optimistic and opportunistic perspective, because leadership can affect employees' performance and commitment (Su et al., 2021). During a crisis which characterized by uncertainty, leaders are confronted with difficulties that are unknown and poorly understood. A small group of executives at an organization's highest level cannot collect information or make decisions quickly enough to respond effectively (D'Auria and De Smet, 2020). Leaders can better mobilize their organizations by setting clear priorities for the response and empowering others to discover and implement solutions that serve those priorities. Another crucial part of the leader's role, is promoting psychological safety so people can openly discuss ideas, questions, and concerns without fear of repercussions (Renjen, 2020). Successful and resilient leader will learn to detect risks and create a crucial route that leads to the achievement of goals and the accomplishment of missions (Southwick et al., 2017).

2.4.3 Organizational culture

The organizational culture of resilience is one in which there is an atmosphere, or organizational climate, wherein growth is promoted, support is abundant, and crisis is viewed as an opportunity (Everly et al., 2013).

2.4.4 Business vision and mission

Having a vision is one of the seven habits of successful people and recommends beginning with the end in mind, deeply understanding the goals, values , and desired outcome, and applying this understanding to every task that is undertaken along the way (Altioka, 2011). When the purpose is strong and obvious, members of the organization see their work as important, which enhances job satisfaction, reduces job turnover, and helps the business overcome adversity more quickly (Southwick et al., 2017).

2.5 HRMP role in developing Workplace Resilience during Covid-19 pandemic:

It is established that human resource practices (HRPs) are closely linked to organizational performance (Subramony, 2009). HRPs resilience such as training, job design, compensation, and incentives directly affect organizational performance and employee job satisfaction (Tims et al., 2013). The use of HRPs in enhancing organizational performance is driven by the assumption that they enable increased motivation and the development of other capabilities by employees (Gečienė, 2021). Appropriate HR policies can provide a coherent synthesis of behavioral

approaches suited to employee development, that also have substantive organizational outcomes (Branicki et al., 2016).

Employees are an organization's most valuable assets, and their potential creates a competitive advantage (Qehaja and Kutllovci, 2015). According to Gunnigle et al., (2013), HRM and organizational resilience are inextricably linked. Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) stated that it is central to adopt constant HR practices in order to develop cognitive, behavioral, and contextual resilience. Galvin et al. (2014) explain that practices provided by HRM play an important role in the organizations' survival and adaptability in the dynamic environment.

Given the importance of a resilient workforce in improving organizational performance and reducing work-related stress, it follows that specific organizational HRP should promote employee resilience (Huang et al., 2016). However, the existing studies pay limited attention to the role played by HRPs in developing employee resilience (e.g., Branicki et al., 2016; Bustinza et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2016; Kossek and Perrigino, 2016).

The resilience developed through HR practices should reflect on employee capabilities to develop skills and to survive and succeed in adverse and turbulent situations (Bustinza et al., 2019). Resilience provides an organization with the ability to overcome emergencies and crisis, adapt to unforeseen situations, and maintain its core functionality (Gečienė, 2021). Therefore, an organization's ability to respond to various disruptions depends on the organization's goals and level of maturity in a crisis (Huang et al., 2016). To become resilient, an organization must be

able to absorb the effects of the crisis and adapt to the current situation to survive, continue and strengthen organizational resilience (Bustinza et al., 2019) . According to Hillmann and Guenther (2021), with the onset of the crisis caused by the pandemic, resilient organizations had already decided on priorities and knew how to organize and continue, operations and maintain their capabilities.

The study of Su et al. (2021) focused on how human resources (HR) practices were adopted to develop organizational resilience during the crisis. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 tourism and hospitality managers during Vietnam’s lockdown. The findings reveal valuable HR resilience-building practices that these businesses implemented before, during and after the lockdown. The results contribute to understand how HR practices can enhance organizational resilience in the face of a global pandemic.

The study of Dissanayake (2020) aimed to examine and inform the basic HR practices to be adopted in a pandemic and prospects for HR professionals in handling such situations. Findings suggest a typology of HR practices identified with ‘6Cs’ for the successful handling of human resources in organizations in a pandemic. These ‘6Cs’ include; (a) curtailing and compensation, (b) communication, (c) coordination and collaboration, (d) creating a caring culture, (e) cleaning and hygiene, and (f) creativity. Further, the study finds a cluster of post-pandemic HR practices to be used, mostly for the service sector organizations, when attempting human resources recovery.

3. Methodology

Primary data depended on a quantitative approach that was based on a questionnaire. Saunders et al. (2016) showed that quantitative research is principally associated with survey research strategies. The survey strategy allows for the collection of quantitative data, which can be analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. The current research was conducted using a survey research strategy through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is a single data collection technique that is known as a monomethod quantitative study. It examined the relationships between variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical and graphical techniques. The questions are expressed clearly so they are understood in the same way by each participant.

3.1 The Population and the Sample

The population of the study were the travel agencies category (a) in Luxor and Aswan. The number of travel agencies category (a) in Luxor and Aswan is 136 companies in 2019 (The Egyptian Travel Agents Association, ETTA, 2019). The choice of Luxor and Aswan was due to the fact that there was a shortcoming in the application of previous studies on travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan, and the focus was on Greater Cairo. Moreover, the period of distribution of the questionnaires was from December to February 2022, and during this period, the work of travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan increased because they are winter tourist destinations.

A comprehensive inventory of the community was made and the questionnaires were distributed to all travel agencies category (a) in Luxor and Aswan. One representative from each company was targeted. A total of 60 questionnaires were answered by managers. Therefore, the response rate was 44%. The relatively low response rate was due to the fact that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the work in travel agencies is irregular.

3.2 The Instruments of the Research

To achieve the aim of the study, a quantitative approach was adopted that based on a questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was developed and directed to managers in the selected sample of travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan. It aimed to examine the resilience of human resource practices during Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it aimed to determine the factors which affect the resilience of the human resources practices in Covid-19.

This study depended on Dissanayake (2020) and Su et al., (2021) to identify the human resources management practices which support resilience during Covid-19 pandemic. The resilience approach taken in this research aims to understand the ability of travel agencies to adapt and emerge from difficult situations in a stronger position, and to explore the factors that contribute to this ability.

While the factors which affecting resilience through human resources practices in Covid-19 were extracted from Su et al., (2021).The questionnaire included four main questions. The first question asked about the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In the second part, resilience human resources practices during Covid-19

pandemic were examined. The third part related to determining the factors which affect the resilience of the human resources practices in Covid-19. Furthermore, in the fourth part, the respondents were asked about the procedures put by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid 19 pandemic. The scale was measured on five point Likert scales ranging from one which stands for strongly not applied and five which stands for strongly applied.

3.3 Collecting and Analyzing Data

Collecting data depended on online questionnaires, which were directed to managers of travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan. Online questionnaires were sent to all travel agencies, but 70 questionnaires only were collected from the total population. Ten questionnaires were not valid for analysis and 60 questionnaires were valid to be analyzed. The responses were analyzed by SPSS Version 22. In SPSS, reliability assessment was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the adapted questionnaire. Frequencies and percentages were applied to demographic characteristics. Mean and standard deviation were calculated for the human resources practices to examine the extent of flexibility in applying these practices during Covid- 19 pandemic.

Moreover, Frequencies and percentages were calculated to determine the most factors which effect on resilience through HR practices in Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, frequencies and percentages were calculated to investigate the procedures put by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-

19. Finally, two correlation between number of employees, years of experience and applying HRP during Covid-19 pandemic was calculated.

4. Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the questionnaires which directed to managers in travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan, the following results were extracted:

Table 1: Reliability coefficient of research variables

No of items	Cronbach's Alpha value
45	.89

In the table one, the internal reliability of the items was verified by computing the Cronbach's alpha. The estimated value of Cronbach alpha for all variables in this research was higher than 0.7 which indicated that present study variables are reliable and there is internal consistency between them.

Table 2: Demographic data of the sample

Demographic data		Fre q.	%
Gender	Male	48	80%
	Female	12	20%
Age	Less than 21	1	1.7 %
	21-30	6	10%
	31-40	41	68.3 %

**EVALUATING THE RESILIENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES
PRACTICES IN TRAVEL AGENCIES DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

	41-50	11	18.3 %
	more than 50	1	1.7 %
Years of experience in the current position	less than 5 years	5	8.3 %
	5-10	24	40%
	more than 10	31	51.7 %
Position	General manager	28	46.7 %
	Human resources manager	18	30%
	Tourism manager	7	11.7 %
	Excursion manager	5	8.3 %
	Airline manager	2	3.3 %

In table 2, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were clarified. The percentage of males was 80% while the percentage of females was 20%. More than 68% of the respondents were aged between 31-40 years, and 18.3% of the respondents were aged between 41-50 years. The collected data for the position clarified that the majority of the sample were general managers (46.7 %) and 30% were human Resources Managers. A majority (51.7%) of the respondents worked in the current position for a period of more than 10 years, 40% of the respondents

worked for a period of between 5-10 years, while 8.3% of the respondents worked for a period of less than 5 years.

Table 3: Number of employees in the travel agency

No. of employees	Freq.	%
less than 30 employees	46	76.7%
from 30 to 60 employees	7	11.7%
61- 90 employees	2	3.3%
more than 90 employees	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%

Table 3 illustrated the number of employees in the travel agencies which answered the questionnaire. The majority (76.7%) of the travel agencies have less than 30 employees. While 11.7% of the travel agencies have a number of employees ranging from 30 to 60. Moreover, 8.3% of travel agencies have more than 90 employees.

Table 4: Human Resources Practices during Covid-19 Pandemic

Practices	Mean	Std. deviation	Attitude
Compensation			
Reimbursement of foregone salaries	2.25	1.144	Not applied
Providing discretionary bonus to	2.15	1.022	Not

**EVALUATING THE RESILIENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES
PRACTICES IN TRAVEL AGENCIES DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

employees			applied
Financial support for employees through interest free loan schemes	2.30	1.499	Not applied
The sick employees can have two weeks of paid sick leave for isolation, treatment related to COVID-19	4.12	.454	Applied
Mandating employees to take paid leave	2.72	.454	Neutral
All employees have been retained	2.88	.715	Neutral
Communication			
Employees received accurate and clear information about work conditions and HR practices to respond to changes	2.50	1.157	Not applied
Encouraging employees to provide suggestions to handle difficult situations in the epidemic	2.42	1.197	Not applied
Mangers assist employees in their work roles when facing unpredictable risks	2.30	1.168	Not applied
Coordination and collaboration			
Employees had training on different aspects related to crisis	1.85	1.086	Not applied
Employees had training in the transition toward remote working and the utilization of ICT	1.87	1.268	Not applied
Providing training for health and safety practices	2.30	1.279	Not applied

Increasing the awareness of staff about the COVID-19	1.85	1.147	Not applied
Providing additional time-off for employees	2.22	.993	Not applied
Creating a caring culture			
Psychosocial support is available to all employees	2.30	1.279	Not applied
Taking care of the health and safety of the employees	1.85	1.086	Not applied
Freezing recruitment to avoid layoffs	1.83	1.195	Not applied
HR department engaged employees in managing the workplace stress during crisis and developing new skills	2.22	1.026	Not applied
Cleaning and hygiene			
The personal protective equipment such as hand-sanitizer and medical face masks were available to all employees	2.68	.469	Neutral
Encouraging all employees to use common hygiene best practices	3.26	.445	Neutral
Routine cleaning of the workplaces, giving special attention to frequently-touched surfaces	4.50	.504	Applied
Providing health insurance to employees	2.62	.903	Neutral
Staff have vaccinations approved by the Ministry of Health to reduce the spread of the	3.72	.454	Applied

**EVALUATING THE RESILIENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES
PRACTICES IN TRAVEL AGENCIES DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

epidemic			
The social distancing restrictions had applied	2.77	1.155	Neutral
Creativity			
Using a teamwork technology	2.22	1.026	Not applied
Employee opinion surveys about everything related to the crisis	2.40	1.028	Not applied
Putting alternative work schedules (e.g., four-day workweeks, flex hours)	3.07	.971	Neutral
Putting alternative work arrangements (e.g., teleworking, job sharing)	3.37	.712	Neutral
Preventive measures against future human resource shocks at (similar) pandemics were taken	2.50	.982	Not applied
Total mean (m)	2.58		Not applied

As explained in table 4, most of human resources practices in travel agencies during Covid-19 pandemic were not applied. These practices are such as: Employees had training on different aspects related to crisis (m=1.85), Employees had training in the transition toward remote working and the utilization of ICT (m =1.87), Increasing the awareness of staff about the COVID-19 (m =1.85) and Encouraging employees to provide suggestions to handle difficult situations in the epidemic (m =2.42). This disagreed with Devyania et al. (2020) and Hamouche (2020) who explained that training plays an important role in a period of crisis, such as pandemics.

Moreover, Reimbursement of foregone salaries ($m=2.25$), Providing discretionary bonuses to employees ($m= 2.15$) and Financial support for employees through interest free loan schemes ($m= 2.30$) were not applied. This may be due to the challenges which faced travel agencies during Covid-19 pandemic which lead to slow recovery from the crisis. This agreed with Dissanayake (2020) who identified that there are many financial hardships which emerge during crisis which may lead to a weakened capacity for new recruitments, training programs, bonus payments, employee welfare programs etc. On the other hand, this result disagreed with Elsafty and Ragheb (2020) who determined that rewards can influence employees' motivation, performance and retention.

Furthermore, the practices of Psychosocial support are available to all employees and taking care of the health and safety of the employees were not applied during Covid-19. This result disagreed with Hamouche (2021) who revealed that providing employees with psychological counseling services in the pandemic time is very important. Moreover, Dissanayake (2020) illustrated that taking care of the health and safety of the staff is among the good HR practices in a period of crisis.

Putting alternative work schedules (e.g., four-day workweeks, flex hours) ($m=3.07$), and Putting alternative work arrangements (e.g., teleworking, job sharing) ($m=3.37$) were neutrally applied in the travel agencies of Luxor and Aswan. These practices should be applied according to Hamouche (2021) who clarified that short-term compensation, commonly known as part-time work,

keeps the economy afloat while safeguarding businesses and employees' jobs. Giupponi and Landais (2020) added that a temporary reduction in the employees working hours is important to assist organizations facing a drop in demand in retaining their employees and to avoid layoffs.

Furthermore, there are a few practices were applied. These practices are such as: The sick employees can have two weeks of paid sick leave for isolation, treatment related to COVID-19 (m=4.12), Routine cleaning of the workplaces, giving special attention to frequently-touched surfaces (m=4.50), and Staff have vaccinations approved by the Ministry of Health to reduce the spread of the epidemic (m=3.72). This result agreed with Hamouche (2021), Who illustrated that employees are productive assets, their health and safety are critical to any organization's success.

On the other hand, few practices related to safety and hygiene were neutral in their application. These practices are such as The social distancing restrictions had applied (m=2.77), The personal protective equipment such as hand-sanitizer and medical face masks were available to all employees (m=2.68), Encouraging all employees to use common hygiene best practices (m=3.76). This result disagreed with International Labor Standards, ILO (2020b) which stressed the need of protecting workers and strengthening occupational health and safety measures at workplaces have been stressed. The total mean of these practices is 2.58 which means that the human resources practices weren't applied during Covid-19 pandemic, which affects the ability of travel agencies to recover from the crisis.

Table 5: The correlation between years of experience and applying Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic

		years of experience	total2
years of experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.287*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	60	60
HRP	Pearson Correlation	.287*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	60	60

Table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship between years of experience and HRP as the value of correlation was .287* and the significance was .026. This result clarified that there is a strong positive relation between years of experience and applying HRP. This indicates that as years of experience increases, the applying of Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic increases.

Table 6: The correlation between number of employees and applying Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic

		no of employees	total2
number of employees	Pearson Correlation	1	.373**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	60	60
HRP	Pearson Correlation	.373**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	60	60

Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship between number of employees and applying HRP as the value of correlation was .373** and the significance was .003. This result clarified that there is a strong positive relation between number of employees and applying HRP. This indicates that as number of employees increases, the applying of Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic increases.

Table 7: Factors affecting resilience through HR practices in Covid-19

Factors	Fre q.	%
Financial constraints	33	55%
Leadership	29	48.3

		%
Business vision and mission (maintaining the current workforce and developing their skills)	20	33.3%
Organizational culture (employee welfare was central to decision-making)	17	28.3%

- The respondents can choose more than one answer

Table 7 illustrated the most factors which affecting resilience through HR practices in Covid-19. The financial constraints were the first factor which effect on the resilience of HR practices in Covid-19. This agreed with Pal et al. (2014) who identified that at times of crisis, small and medium enterprises face major threats to their financial performance and ultimately to their survival. Thus, Financial constraints hinder flexibility in applying HR practices in Covid-19.

Leadership was the second factor which affecting resilience through HR practices in Covid-19. According to Southwick et al. (2017), during a crisis, leaders are confronted with difficulties that are unknown and poorly understood. A small group of executives at an organization's highest level cannot collect information or make decisions quickly enough to respond effectively. But a successful and resilient leader will learn to detect risks and create a crucial route that leads to the achievement of goals.

The managers of travel agencies determined Business vision and mission as the third factor which affecting resilience through HR practices in Covid- 19. This is agreed with by Southwick et al. (2017) who clarified that when the purpose of the organization is strong and obvious,

employees see their work as important, which enhances job satisfaction and helps the business to overcome adversity more quickly.

Finally, organizational culture affects the resilience of HR practices. Everly et al. (2013) explained that the culture of resilience is an environment wherein resistance and resilience are not only fostered but are the core fabric of the culture itself (Everly et al., 2013). So, employee welfare should be central to decision-makers.

Table 8: Procedures by the government to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19

Factors	Fre q.	%
Increasing employees awareness of the importance of the vaccine and facilitating of getting it	50	83.3 %
The government provided a package of incentives including tax breaks, deferment of tax payments, postponing land rental fees and reduction in the price of electricity	25	41.7 %
The government has adopted laws to structure and temporarily prohibit collective layoff in organizations	19	31.7 %
Laws have been adopted to support employees during the lockdown and closure of schools, e.g., employees were given paid leave to take care of their children	21	35%

Banks were encouraged by the government to reduce interest rates for enterprises that were significantly impacted by Covid-19	14	23.3 %
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- The respondents can choose more than one answer

It is obvious from table 8 that the Egyptian government has put many procedures to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19. The most procedures which were clarified by the managers of travel agencies were Increasing employees ' awareness of the importance of the vaccine and facilitating their getting it, For example, laws have been adopted to support employees during the lockdown and closure of schools, e.g., employees were given paid leave to take care of their children and The government provided a package of incentives including tax breaks, deferment of tax payments, postponing land rental fees and reduction in the price of electricity respectively.

5. Conclusion

Resilience is critical to a company's ability to recover after a crisis. It is central to adopt constant HR practices in order to develop resilience. Such practices provided by HRM play an important role in the organizations' survival and adaptability in the dynamic environment. This research aimed to examine the resilience of the human resource practices in travel agencies during Covid-19. Moreover, it aimed to determine the factors which affect the resilience of the human resources practices in travel agencies in Covid-19. Primary data depended on a quantitative approach that was based on a questionnaire. The population of the study were the travel agencies category (a) in Luxor and Aswan.

A comprehensive inventory of the community was made and the questionnaires were distributed to all travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan and 60 questionnaires were collected. The responses were analyzed by SPSS Version 22.

Most of Human resources practices in travel agencies during Covid-19 pandemic were not applied. These practices are such as Employees had training on different aspects related to crisis, Employees had training in the transition toward remote working and the utilization of ICT, Increasing the awareness of staff about the COVID-19 and Encouraging employees to provide suggestions to handle difficult situations in the epidemic. Which means that there was no resilience in applying these HR practices during Covid-19. In addition, Reimbursement of foregone salaries, Providing discretionary bonus to employees and Financial support for employees through interest free loan schemes were not applied. This may be due to the challenges which face travel agencies during Covid 19 pandemic which lead to slow recovery from crisis but rewards can influence employees' motivation, performance and retention. Which means that there was no resilience in applying these HR practices during Covid 19. On the other hand, the practices of Psychosocial support is available to all employees and Taking care of the health and safety of the employees were not applied during Covid-19.

Putting alternative work schedules (e.g., four-day workweeks, flex hours), and Putting alternative work arrangements (e.g., teleworking, job sharing) were neutrally applied in the travel agencies of Luxor and Aswan. This explains that there was some flexibility in applying these

HR practices. A temporary reduction in the employees working hours is important to assist organizations facing a drop in demand to retain their employees and avoid layoffs.

Few practices related to safety and hygiene were applied. These practices are such as: The sick employees can have two weeks of paid sick leave for isolation, treatment related to COVID-19, Routine cleaning of the workplaces, giving special attention to frequently-touched surfaces, and Staff have vaccinations approved by the Ministry of Health to reduce the spread of the epidemic. Other practices related to safety and hygiene were neutral in their application. These practices are such as The social distancing restrictions had applied, The personal protective equipment such as hand-sanitizer and medical face masks were available to all employees, Encouraging all employees to use common hygiene best practices. But employees are productive elements in the travel agencies, their health and safety are critical to any organization's success.

Furthermore, the results clarified that the most factor which affecting resilience through HR practices in Covid-19 was the financial constraints which followed by leadership. Which means that these factors are important to support resilience of HR practices during Covid-19 pandemic. The Egyptian government put many procedures to help travel agencies overcome the challenges they face during Covid-19. The most procedures which were clarified by the managers of travel agencies were Increasing employees awareness of the importance of the vaccine and facilitating of getting it, Laws have been adopted to support employees during the lockdown and closure of schools, e.g., employees were given paid leave to take care of their

children and The government provided a package of incentives including tax breaks, deferment of tax payments, postponing land rental fees and reduction in the price of electricity respectively. These procedures mitigated some of the risks face the travel agencies due to the pandemic.

The results showed that there are many practices of human resources were not applied during Covid-19 pandemic in travel agencies in Luxor and Aswan. This means that there is no resilience in applying human resources practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. This affects the ability to recover quickly from the crisis, which negatively affects the company's activity and demand for it. On the other hand, there is a strong positive relation between years of experience and applying HRP. This indicates that as years of experience increases, the applying of Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic increases. Finally, there is a strong positive relation between the number of employees and applying HRP which means that as the number of employees increases, the applying of Human resources practices during Covid-19 pandemic increases.

6. Recommendations directed to managers of travel agencies

Many recommendations were directed to managers of travel agencies to be resilient in applying HR practices during Covid-19 pandemic as follows:

1. HR managers would be required to pay more attention to HR practices in a pandemic environment.

2. Planning for pandemic situations must be on the priorities of every travel agency.
3. Financial benefits such as bonuses during COVID-19 are vital to support employees to do better.
4. The travel agency must put a reserve amount of money in order to be able to overcome the pandemics.
5. Travel agencies should depend on part –time work and flexible work scheduling to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak and to safeguard businesses and avoid employee layoffs.
6. Maintaining a proper channel of communication with the employees during a pandemic has been a focal point in HR decisions- making.
7. Travel agencies should provide training programs to employees in a period of pandemics on how to use ICT, programs to develop the needed skills for employees and to increase the COVID-19 awareness.
8. Taking care of safety and healthy aspects for the employees during the pandemic to ensure personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness.
9. Leadership should be resilient and view crisis from an optimistic perspective, because this can affect employees' performance and commitment.

10. Managers should learn lessons from the current pandemic and be prepared for future unexpected crisis relevant to the work of travel agencies.

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