


## Chapter 5

# The Pivotal Role of Human Resource Management in Overcoming Employee Fear in Organizations of the Tourism Industry in Vietnam

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### ABSTRACT

*Amid the increasing threats of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam arose the human resource management challenges in the tourism industry and the loss of jobs and the scarcity of workforce due to lockdown, business bankruptcy, and unstable business conditions in many businesses including the tourism sector. Previous studies have identified the shortage of skilled labor as well as the perceived lack of highly qualified talents with vast opportunities for success economically. This has exacerbated at the heights of the COVID-19 crisis as many employees live in fear of losing their means of living whenever companies declare work stoppage, closure, and other threatening measures to lessen unfavorable situations. Recently published articles and government regulations were examined and evaluated to determine the role of HRM in addressing employee fear within the organization. Interpretations and recommendations were proposed to effectively shed light on its resolution. However, further studies are needed to further validate these findings.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the birth of the COVID-19 crisis, the people in the world are continuously struggling on how to restore their normal way of living and conduct. The countless of people contaminated with the virus daily and the rising deaths from different parts of the world have induced fear and chaos especially in those countries that are severely affected until the date in counting. The World Health Organization (2020) has confirmed the spread of COVID-19 in October 2020 to have swept 215 countries. Many studies have investigated the status of COVID-19 and the measures that have been taken by the government such as quarantine, restriction on travels, lockdowns, banned on movements of people, travel modes, and others, and how it severely affect the worldwide tourism sector (Gössling et al., 2020; Jarratt, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Accordingly, the World Tourism Organization estimated that 120 million jobs related to tourism will be at risk in 2020 that could cause a decrease in the international arrival of tourism of 58% to 78% (UNWTO, 2020). Vietnam is one of the emerging markets in South Asia maintaining a huge number of international tourists prior to the pandemic, however; a decrease in the number was experienced since the pandemic crisis during the first half of 2020 with a 57% decline in international tourist arrivals (GSO, 2020a; Nhandan, 2020).

Undeniably, the tourism industry has become a key economic sector in Vietnam and the focus of economic development. Anent to this, the surging demand for human resources is evidently high. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism reported that the increase in the yearly growth rate of demand would require 40,000 new employees and 25,000 that need retaining (Hien et al., 2020). However; they have also found in their study that the quality of the workforce in the tourism industry is low, labor productivity in tourism and hotels compared to Thailand, Singapore, Japan, and Malaysia (Nhat Nam, 2019). Accordingly, the demand for foreign workers particularly in the tourism industry is relatively high since the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) wherein Thai, Indonesian, Filipino, and Singaporean workers came to Vietnam in almost every 4-5 star hotel. Hence, the need to pay more attention to building local tourism employees as feedback from stakeholders dictates the lack of local workers in foreign languages hinders them to become effective tourism workers (Hien et al., 2020).

One of those heavily affected by the COVID-19 is the tourism industry particularly the management of human resources in consonance with the low sales and profitability. Dissanayake (2020) has pointed out that human resources are vulnerable to drastic changes amid the pandemic crisis globally and are compelled to establish and apply new policies and regulations, new work structures to ensure that employees' health and welfare are preserved and safeguarded while sustaining the effective functioning of the company. New studies related to COVID-19 have dealt with the

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