

Chapter 12

The Effects of COVID-19 on Human Resource Management in Aviation Companies: The Case of Europe

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ABSTRACT

Within the scope of the study, general information about the world aviation sector and specific information about the European aviation sector are given. The position and predictions of the aviation industry before and after COVID-19 were shared. Human resources management practices that continue to be implemented in the aviation industry and human resources management practices that are expected to be implemented after COVID-19 are mentioned. In this context, general information is given about the areas that are expected to affect the need for human resources in the use of digitalization and electronic devices. It has been evaluated that the use of existing human resources, both within the scope of digitalization and in line with the expectations after COVID-19, will both preserve the current position of the human resource and contribute to the efficiency of the aviation industry.

INTRODUCTION

It would not be wrong to say that the airline is the relatively cheap and fastest option for passenger transportation today. Increasing technological developments have effected the aviation sector as well as every sector. In the commercial civil aviation sector, not only aircraft and flight personnel are involved. Human resources in the aviation sector consist of components such as ground personnel, Cargo personnel, passenger services personnel, security personnel who perform at least as important functions as flight personnel. Mergerison et al. (1986: 32), stated that when it comes to human resources in the aviation industry, it is traditionally focused on pilots rather than air crew. However, this is not the case today. All

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employees in the aviation industry tend to be viewed as a whole. Of course, every employee is expected to have the specialities and competencies related to his or her job.

Compared to other sectors, human resources in the aviation industry are extremely sensitive to possible errors. The faultless nature of aviation necessitated greater care and attention to human resources management in the aviation industry. In this context, issues such as each individual in the aviation sector undergoing standard training, updating these trainings periodically and establishing a continuous feedback mechanism regarding new developments should be followed meticulously without leaving any room for negligence.

Personnel management, which is the predecessor of the term human resource management, stands out as a relatively narrow-scoped approach that monitors only the work related and workplace situation of the personnel in charge (Kurnaz & Eryılmaz, 2021:96). However, in order to respond to the developing needs over time, the concept of personnel management has been expanded and has turned into a discipline that covers almost every subject related to human resources, which is a very important resource for business. This new discipline attracted great attention in a short time and offered solutions for the effective and efficient use of human resources in order to make businesses successful. So much so that some universities even opened human resources departments (Kurnaz, 2020:26).

Developing technology, digitalization, facilitating people's Access to technology and the internet, and increasing technology literacy have inevitably effected human resources management like every other field. In this context, some services that were first performed by human resources in the past are performed by digital and electronic devices. However, this situation does not affect the importance and indispensable qualities of human resources for the enterprise. It is considered that human resources will not lose their importance in the short term, especially in sectors such as the aviation sector, which are based on high expertise and where personnel continuity is important.

The Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably affected the aviation industry as well as all other industries in the world. Travel bans applied from time to time around the world and the incredible decrease in the number of passengers have caused a serious decrease in the revenues of the aviation industry and human resources have also had their share from the reflections of this loss of income. Aviation companies have implemented options such as laying off some of their employees' wages or putting employees on temporary leave. This has negatively affected the motivation of human resources which is considered the most important resource for businesses. Among the negative situations in question, a decrease in the sense of organizational belonging and a decrease in job satisfaction can be counted. Particular attention is paid to employee satisfaction in sectors such as the aviation industry, where human-induced errors can cause very high material and moral losses. Otherwise, an increase in the number of accidents and high compensations will inevitably increase.

After the above-mentioned break, it became necessary to rethink human resources management in the aviation industry and to learn from past experiences in the development of future human resources management practices and strategies. Increasing the efficiency and loyalty of the existing human resources, determining the basic conditions necessary for selecting suitable personnel for the job and revising the determined conditions, correctly identifying on-the-job training and other training needs will be among the most important tasks of human resources management in the new period.

Businesses in the aviation sector have to determine their strategies in line with the needs and requirements of the new post-Covid-19 era. At this point, aviation enterprises should carry out all their activities according to their strategic plans and operate in a unity of understanding. Human resources management activities are also an important component that should not be considered separately from

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