

Crisis Induced Human Resource Practices for Managing Hospital Surge Capacity amidst a Dual Crisis: An Exploration of the Staffing practices.

Samadi Madiwala

Sessional Lecturer

Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

and

Adelaide Institute of Higher Education, Melbourne, Australia

samadi.madiwala@vu.edu.au

Abstract

Crisis induced human resource practices (CIHRP) are the HR practices supposedly initiated as a consequence of crises. Managing human resources in a hospital, during a crisis can be challenging given the surge capacity (SC) concerns. Hospital SC deals with the ability to manage sudden or dramatic boosts in patient numbers. Research on CIHRP are notably low in the health care sector, specifically from developing countries including Sri Lanka. Hospitals in Sri Lanka were hit harder by the pandemic, followed by an economic recession. Based on the context based human resources theory and crisis management (CM) literature, this study aimed to explore the enablers and barriers of implementing CIHRP to manage the SC in Sri Lankan hospitals, with special reference to staffing. Applying a qualitative approach, 33 semi-structured interviews with line managers were conducted in four hospitals. Thematic analysis was performed on the transcribed data, assisted with NVivo. This study identified four themes under enablers; rostering system driven by interim staffing practices, access to auxiliary staff and volunteers, nursing managers with prior crisis experience and staff collaborations across hospitals. Three themes were identified as barriers; lack of preparedness and exposure among auxiliary staff and volunteers, insufficient funding to facilitate the interim staffing practices and employee wellbeing concerns. The barriers were more noticeable among the public hospitals. These findings add to HRM and CM literature and may inform HRM decision making in local hospitals in times of crisis.

Keywords

Crisis induced human resource practices, Surge capacity, Staffing, Hospitals, Crisis management.

Biography

Samadi Madiwala is currently a Sessional Lecturer at Victoria University and at Adelaide Institute of Higher Education in Melbourne, Australia. Samadi worked as a Senior Lecturer attached to the Faculty of Management and Finance, at University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka. She obtained her PhD in Human Resource Management from Victoria University in 2025. Her teaching responsibilities include human resource management, quality management, change management and operations management. Her research interests lie in the strategic role of human resources particularly in times of crisis and employee involvement approaches in quality management.