



Global Talent Management and Expatriate Assignments A Strategic Analysis during COVID-19

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Abstract : The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered traditional practices of managing international employees (expatriate assignments) and global talent. This thesis investigates the impact of the pandemic on these areas, exploring the challenges faced by both expatriates and organizations. Travel restrictions and social distancing necessitated innovative strategies, including remote work arrangements and virtual expatriation. The research examines the increasing importance of remote work and its influence on talent acquisition, retention, and performance management practices. It further analyses the role of technology in facilitating these virtual talent management methods. Finally, the thesis extracts valuable lessons from this experience to inform future global talent management strategies. These lessons emphasize the need for adaptability, a focus on digital transformation within talent management, and prioritizing employee well-being. By understanding these impacts and adaptations, organizations can build more resilient and future-proof global talent management approaches in an ever-changing world.

IndexTerms - Expatriates; Global Talent Management; Remote Work; Flexibility; Health and Safety Measures; Pandemic; Mental Health Support; Increased Communication; Virtual Expatriation; Digital Tools; Organizational Strategies; Expatriate Assignments; COVID-19 Impact; Employee Well-being; Hybrid Work Models; Technological Adaptation; Talent Acquisition; Workforce Management; Crisis Management; Digital Transformation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has instigated major changes in the business world, with talent management and expatriation most affected in this phase. The global health crisis has forced organizations to open new horizons for creative thinking and developing innovative strategies for effectively managing international employees. The restrictive travel measures and heightened health protection measures have hindered the traditional expatriate assignment models for the workforce. According to Farndale et al. (2018), the pandemic has made visible how important agility, resilience, and adaptiveness are in global talent management practices. Learning from the challenges faced in conventional working methods during and after COVID-19, organizations have quickly come to terms with their new reality, where physical mobility is constrained, and remote work shifts to the mainstream. With remote culture being followed worldwide, digital technologies have been embraced, facilitating virtual collaboration, online recruitment, and remote performance management. Adaptation of remote work settings affects how business is done and how it employs people, manages them, and retains them across national borders. These are extremely important changes because the organizations that will be able to adapt to such disruptions will be successful in the world after the pandemic. This thesis answers the following research question: "How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the expatriate assignment landscape and practices in global talent management, and what could be learned from this experience to develop future practices and policies?" The question is timely and relevant because the period of the pandemic is far from over. It has entered the negative phase again, and the pandemic's vagaries can never be ruled out for another possible wave due to mutations. It is important to learn these different impacts so that organizations navigate the challenges of the pandemic era and beyond. Based on the analysis, this thesis will provide recommendations that could be applied to future practices and policies in global talent management. The pandemic has been greatly disruptive to the global talent management landscape. As companies focused on the possibilities of remote work, digital competencies, and virtual team management, several elements, such as instilling productivity and engaging employees, became essential. The question for the current study is to investigate how these changes have been carried out to provide a roadmap for developing more resilient and adaptive talent management frameworks in organizations.

1.2 Importance of this Research

This research offers the ideas for development of global talent management and expatriate assignment literature in the COVID-19 pandemic era. In this sense, organizational strategic responses and adjustments to manage the challenges in the post-pandemic wave must be relevant to the practitioner. The present study would contribute toward developing more resilient and adaptive talent management strategies in organizations that consider their underpinning in thriving within an increasingly dynamic and uncertain global business environment.

This study's holistic approach, which comprehensively considers multiple aspects through which the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is felt by expatriates while on assignment and by organizations relying on expatriation, is important. The policies and lessons drawn from the paper are best equipped to empower organizations with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate and be ahead of the wave of changes in the uncertain and changing world that is post-pandemic.

The research sought to understand the dynamics of the pandemic's influence on expatriate assignments and global talent management approaches. This report aims to make practical recommendations for current challenges and strategic reactions so that further organizational management policy benefits from the identified lessons. Organizations can gain overall resilience and flexibility at times of crisis to manage their global workforce effectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Contextualization of the Topic

"Global Talent Management and Expatriate Assignments: A Strategic Analysis" has gained renewed significance considering the COVID-19 pandemic, as organizations navigate unprecedented challenges in managing their international workforce and expatriate assignments. The pandemic has disrupted traditional modes of talent management and expatriate deployment, prompting organizations to reassess their strategies and practices in response to rapidly evolving circumstances. Remote work arrangements, travel restrictions, and health and safety concerns have compelled organizations to adopt innovative approaches to global talent management, including virtual expatriate assignments, cross-border collaboration, and digital technologies (Farndale et al., 2018).

As noted by Brewster et al. (2021), the pandemic has underscored the importance of agility, resilience, and adaptability in global talent management, as organizations strive to maintain productivity, engagement, and employee well-being amidst uncertainty and volatility. Expatriate assignments have been affected by travel disruptions, repatriation challenges, and the need for enhanced support mechanisms to address the physical, emotional, and logistical complexities arising from the pandemic. A strategic analysis of global talent management and expatriate assignments in the context of the pandemic involves evaluating the effectiveness of organizational responses, identifying emerging trends and best practices, and drawing lessons learned to inform future strategies and policies in a post-pandemic world. This involves examining the strategic approaches employed by multinational corporations (MNCs) to manage their global workforce and deploy expatriate assignments effectively.

This entails understanding the complex interplay between organizational objectives, talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies on a global scale. As noted by Cascio and Boudreau, (2016), effective global talent management requires aligning HR practices with business objectives, leveraging diverse skill sets, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and innovation across borders. Expatriate assignments, as a key component of global talent management, necessitate careful consideration of selection criteria, preparation, support mechanisms, and performance evaluation to ensure success in diverse cultural and business environments (Collings et al., 2019)

A strategic analysis of these practices involves evaluating the impact of geopolitical, economic, and socio-cultural factors, as well as emerging trends such as digitalization, remote work, and the COVID-19 pandemic, on global talent management strategies and expatriate assignments (Suutari & Brewster, 2017). By examining these dynamics, organizations can enhance their ability to attract, develop, and retain talent on a global scale while achieving their strategic objectives in an increasingly interconnected and competitive world.

In today's increasingly interconnected and globalized world, organizations are constantly seeking ways to expand their reach, access diverse talent pools, and maintain a competitive edge. This has led to a growing emphasis on global talent management (GTM), a strategic approach to attracting, developing, and deploying talent across international borders. Within this domain, expatriate assignments (EAs) play a significant role by enabling organizations to leverage the expertise and diverse perspectives of employees working in foreign locations.

2.2 Research Question

Choosing the research question "How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the landscape of expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies, and what lessons can be learned from the pandemic experience to inform future practices and policies?" To help understand the Timeliness and Relevance, Practical Implications, Long Term Implications etc. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered the global business landscape, affecting virtually every aspect of organizational operations, including talent management and expatriate assignments. This research question addresses a current and pressing issue that is highly relevant to organizations navigating the challenges of the pandemic era. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on expatriate assignments and talent management strategies is crucial for organizations seeking to adapt and thrive amid ongoing disruptions. By exploring the lessons learned from the pandemic experience, this thesis will offer valuable insights to inform future practices and policies in global talent management.

Expatriate assignments play a strategic role in the international expansion and operations of multinational corporations. By examining how the pandemic has influenced these assignments and talent management strategies, this paper will provide strategic recommendations for organizations to effectively manage their global workforce in times of crisis and beyond.

Overall, this research question offers a strategic and forward-thinking approach to understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies, while also offering actionable recommendations to inform future practices and policies in this critical area of organizational management.

2.3 Review

2.3.1 COVID-19 effect on the Traditional Expatriate Assignments

Traditional expatriate assignments (EAs) involve relocating employees to a foreign country for an extended period to fill expertise gaps, develop global leaders, or facilitate knowledge transfer (McNulty & Brewster, 2016). However, the COVID-19 pandemic's unprecedented global impact triggered severe disruptions to this model, largely due to travel restrictions, border closures, and elevated health and safety risks.

2.3.2 Disruptions and Their Impact

- **Travel Restrictions and Border Closures:** The widespread implementation of travel bans and border closures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted expatriate mobility (Bader et al., 2021). New assignments were often delayed or cancelled, while existing expatriates faced difficulties returning home or visiting their families, contributing to increased stress and uncertainty (Deloitte, 2020).
- **Health and Safety Concerns:** The escalating global health crisis posed significant concerns for expatriates' physical and psychological well-being. Health risks related to COVID-19, limited access to adequate healthcare in some host countries, and the fear of contracting the virus created additional strain on expatriates (Végh et al., 2022). Consequences for Expatriate Assignments
- **Shortened Assignments:** In some cases, expatriate assignments were shortened due to the challenges presented by the pandemic. This led to disruptions in projects, knowledge transfer, and the overall intended goals of the assignments (Bader et al., 2021).
- **Increased Costs:** The pandemic amplified the inherent costs associated with EAs. Additional expenses, such as pre-departure testing, quarantine measures, and potential evacuations added further financial burdens for organizations (Deloitte, 2020).
- **Declining Assignment Acceptance Rates:** Faced with increased uncertainty and safety concerns, employees became less willing to accept traditional expatriate assignments (Brookfield, 2021). It further challenged organizations' ability to deploy talent globally.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered international mobility, significantly disrupting the execution of traditional expatriate assignments. The combination of travel restrictions, border closures, and safety concerns posed considerable challenges for expatriates and the organizations managing these assignments (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). These disruptions have forced organizations to reassess their global talent management strategies and consider alternative approaches to managing international operations.

2.3.3 Challenges faced by expatriates and global talent management

Challenges faced by expatriates and global talent management during the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed below:

- **Isolation:** Expatriates often face feelings of isolation when working in foreign countries, and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue due to lockdowns and social distancing measures. It delves into the psychological impact of isolation on expatriates during the pandemic, highlighting the importance of maintaining social connections and support networks despite physical distancing measures.
- **Uncertainty:** Uncertainty emerged as a significant challenge for expatriates and global talent management amidst the rapidly changing situation. (Brewster et al., 2008) explore the uncertainty surrounding repatriation decisions during the pandemic, emphasizing the need for clear communication and support from organizations to mitigate anxiety and stress among expatriates (Brewster et al., 2008).
- **Logistical Hurdles:** Expatriates and global talent management faced numerous logistical hurdles during the pandemic, including difficulties in travel, accommodation, and access to essential services. Fernandes et al. (2020) discuss the logistical challenges faced by expatriates in accessing healthcare services and adhering to local health protocols in host countries.

The study underscores the importance of organizational support in addressing these hurdles (Fernandes et al., 2020). This study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by expatriates and global talent management during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for organizations to implement supportive measures and adaptive strategies to address the unique needs of their international workforce.

Impact on Global Talent Management (GTM):

Shift to Remote Work: The need for social distancing and travel restrictions led to a rapid shift towards remote work models in many organizations (Collings et al., 2021). This presented challenges for GTM teams in terms of:

- *Adapting communication strategies:* Ensuring effective communication and collaboration across geographically dispersed teams.
- *Onboarding and supporting remote expatriates:* Providing adequate training, guidance, and support in a virtual environment.
- *Fostering a sense of connection and belonging:* Building a strong team culture and reducing feelings of isolation among remote employees.
- *Increased Costs and Complexities:* The pandemic introduced additional costs for organizations managing EAs, including pre-departure testing, quarantine measures, and potential evacuations, as reported by Deloitte (2020). Additionally, managing a geographically dispersed workforce during lockdowns and travel restrictions increased the complexity of GTM processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique and significant challenges for both expatriates and GTM teams. These challenges included social isolation, mental health concerns, logistical hurdles, and adapting GTM strategies to a remote work environment. Organizations need to acknowledge these challenges, implement strategies to support their expatriate populations, and adapt their GTM practices to remain resilient in the face of future disruptions.

2.3.4 Managing Expatriate Assignments During the Pandemic: Strategies and Adaptations

The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations employing expatriates to re-evaluate their global talent management (GTM) strategies due to travel restrictions, border closures, and health concerns. This led to the emergence and adoption of various strategies to navigate these challenges:

Remote Work Arrangements:

Shift to Virtual Work Models: Organizations extensively adopted remote work models for expatriates whose roles could be effectively performed remotely. This involved leveraging technology for communication, project management, and collaboration (Collings et al., 2021).

- *Challenges and Considerations:* While remote work offered flexibility, it presented challenges like ensuring effective communication, addressing cultural differences, and mitigating feelings of isolation among geographically dispersed teams (Deloitte, 2020).

Virtual Expatriation:

Leveraging Technology for Knowledge Transfer: Organizations explored “virtual expatriation” by utilizing technology to transfer knowledge and expertise from existing employees in one location to others remotely, potentially eliminating the need for physical relocation (Caligiuri et al., 2020)

- *Benefits and Limitations:* This approach offered cost-effectiveness and reduced relocation complexities. However, it might not be suitable for all roles and could limit the development of cultural understanding and personal connections.

Repatriation Processes:

- *Adapting to New Repatriation Needs:* The pandemic increased the need for repatriation due to various reasons, such as family emergencies, travel restrictions impacting families, or personal health concerns. Organizations had to adapt their repatriation processes to handle these increased demands.
- *Focus on Well-being and Support:* Organizations emphasized the well-being and support of repatriating employees during this challenging time. This included providing emotional support, career guidance, and assistance with reintegration into the home office environment.
- *Increased Communication and Transparency:* Maintaining clear and frequent communication with expatriates throughout the pandemic was crucial, addressing their concerns and ensuring they felt informed and supported (Bader et al., 2015)
- *Investing in Technology:* Organizations invested in technology tools and infrastructure to facilitate remote work, virtual collaboration, and communication across borders (Deloitte, 2020).
- *Mental Health Support:* Recognizing the increased mental health challenges faced by expatriates during the pandemic, organizations offered access to mental health resources and support programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted how organizations manage expatriate assignments. By adopting remote work arrangements, exploring virtual expatriation as a viable option, adapting repatriation processes, and prioritizing communication and well-being, organizations have demonstrated flexibility and resilience in navigating the challenges of the pandemic. As the world continues to adapt to the evolving landscape, GTM strategies will also need to continuously evolve to support a geographically dispersed workforce and ensure the success of international assignments.

2.4 Impact of COVID-19 on Global Talent Management Strategies

- **Outcome-Focused vs. Activity-Focused:** The necessity of remote work increased the focus on outcome-based performance evaluations rather than monitoring day-to-day activities (Deloitte, 2020). Trust, transparency, and goal setting became essential. However, the remote work necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges in effectively monitoring activities, especially when employees are geographically dispersed. This shift towards outcome-based evaluation focuses on:
 - **Clearly defined goals and objectives:** Setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals became crucial. This ensured both employees and managers understood the expected outcomes and facilitated progress tracking.
 - **Emphasis on results:** Performance evaluation shifted towards assessing whether and how well employees achieved pre-defined goals rather than on how they spent their work hours. This encouraged employees to manage their work schedules and prioritize tasks efficiently to achieve desired outcomes.
 - **Increased trust and transparency:** With less direct supervision, organizations needed to trust their employees to manage their work independently and transparently communicate expectations, challenges, and feedback.
 - **Frequent Feedback and Check-ins:** Regular virtual check-ins and ongoing feedback mechanisms played a crucial role in managing remote teams (Collings et al., 2021). This supported productivity, collaboration, and timely guidance.
 - **Enhance communication and collaboration:** Frequent interaction helps avoid communication gaps, fosters a sense of connection, and strengthens team dynamics in a virtual environment.
 - **Provide timely guidance and support:** Managers can identify challenges or roadblocks early on and offer targeted support or resource allocation to ensure employees stay on track toward their goals.
 - **Boost employee engagement and motivation:** Regular feedback helps employees feel valued, appreciated, and connected to their work, contributing to increased engagement and motivation.
 - **Managing Remote Team Performance:** Developing and adapting performance metrics for remote teams became essential. Managers had to refine their methods for assessing, recognizing, and addressing performance issues within a virtual context (KPMG, 2020)

2.5 The Rise of Remote Work and Virtual Collaboration

2.5.1 Implications for Talent Acquisition and Retention

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a pre-existing trend: the shift towards remote work and virtual collaboration. This widespread adoption of remote work models has significantly impacted not only how companies operate but also how they attract, manage, and retain talent (KPMG, 2020). Here's an in-depth review of the literature exploring this shift, focusing on its implications for talent acquisition and retention:

Benefits and Drawbacks of Remote Work:

- **Increased Employee Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance:** Studies by Bloom et al. (2015) demonstrate that remote work arrangements can lead to increased employee satisfaction and improved work-life balance. This can be attributed to factors such as:
 - **Reduced commuting time:** Remote workers save time and money by eliminating or minimizing their daily commute, allowing them to dedicate that time to personal pursuits or spend more time with family.
 - **Greater flexibility:** Remote work models often offer employees more flexibility in scheduling their work hours, allowing them to manage personal responsibilities more effectively and potentially leading to reduced stress and improved overall well-being.
 - **Control over work environment:** Employees can create an environment conducive to their individual needs and preferences, which can contribute to increased focus and productivity.
- **Access to a Wider Talent Pool:** Organizations are no longer geographically restricted when searching for talent. This allows them to tap into a wider pool of skilled individuals, potentially leading to a more diverse and qualified workforce with a broader range of perspectives and experiences (Bick et al., 2021).
- **Reduced Overhead Costs:** Companies can potentially reduce overhead costs associated with office space, utilities, and equipment when employing a remote workforce.

- **Challenges in Fostering Company Culture:** Building and maintaining a strong company culture can be challenging in a remote environment. The lack of in-person interaction can hinder informal communication and collaboration, making it difficult for employees to feel connected to their colleagues and the organization.
- **Difficulties in Effective Communication and Collaboration:** Establishing and maintaining effective communication and collaboration can be more complex in a virtual environment. Misunderstandings and communication gaps can arise more readily due to the absence of non-verbal communication cues and face-to-face interaction.
- **Potential for Social Isolation and Blurred Lines:** Remote work can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness for employees who miss the social interaction and sense of belonging associated with a physical workplace. Additionally, the blurring of lines between work and personal life can make it difficult for some employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- **Technological Dependence:** Remote work relies heavily on technology. This creates a vulnerability to technical issues that can disrupt workflow and hinder productivity. Additionally, access to reliable internet connectivity and proper technology infrastructure is crucial for success in a remote work environment.
- **Management Challenges:** Managing a remote team effectively presents unique challenges. Managers need to adapt their leadership styles and develop new skills to ensure effective communication, provide adequate support, and maintain employee motivation and engagement remotely.

2.5.2 Implications for Talent Acquisition:

Increased Talent Pool: Organizations can now tap into a wider pool of skilled individuals regardless of their location, potentially leading to a more diverse and qualified workforce (Bick et al., 2021).

Shift in Recruitment Strategies: Traditional recruitment methods might need to adapt to accommodate remote hiring processes, such as increased reliance on video interviews and online assessments (Deloitte, 2020).

Focus on Soft Skills: With communication and collaboration taking centre stage in virtual environments, soft skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability become crucial factors in talent evaluation (Deloitte, 2020).

Improved Employee Satisfaction: Remote work models can contribute to increased employee satisfaction and reduced turnover by offering greater flexibility and work-life balance (Bloom et al., 2015).

Need for Effective Onboarding and Support: Transitioning new employees into a remote work environment requires specialized onboarding programs that emphasize building connections, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing the necessary resources and support (KPMG, 2020).

Importance of Employee Wellbeing: Organizations need to prioritize employee well-being initiatives for remote teams, addressing challenges such as social isolation and blurring work-life boundaries (Gallup, 2023).

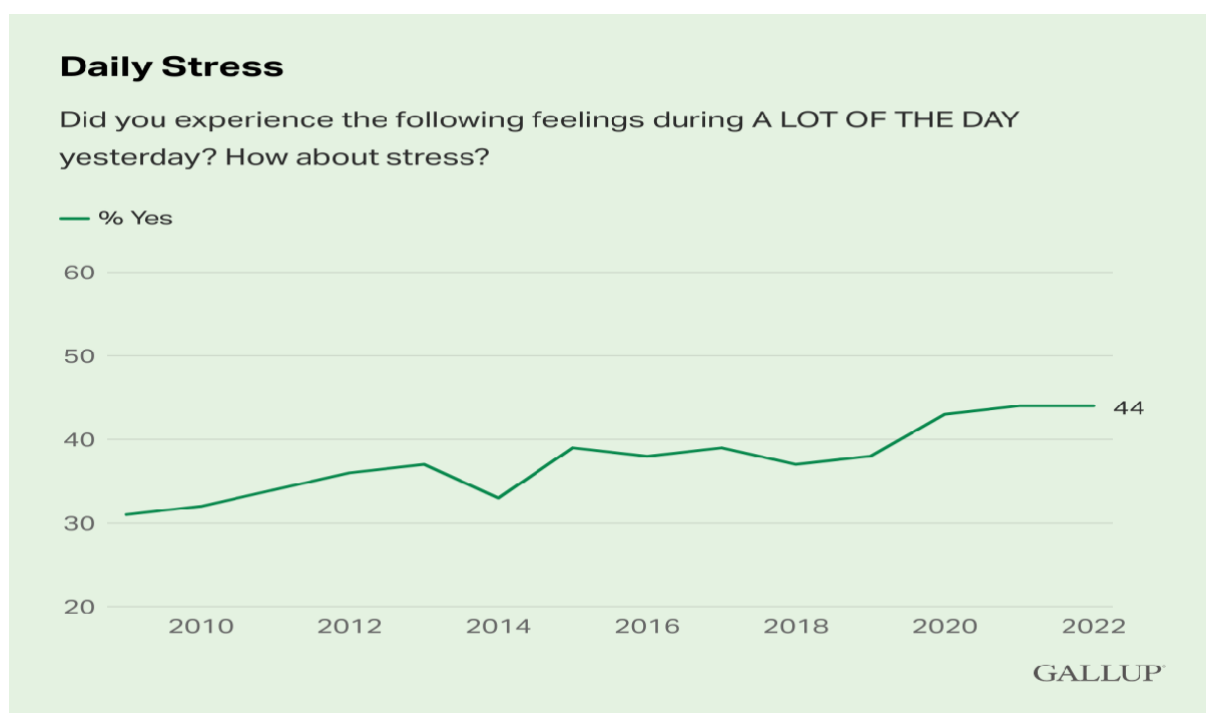


Figure 1: Daily Stress between 2010 to 2022

2.6 Role of technology in enabling virtual talent management practices

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work models and virtual collaboration, significantly transforming talent management processes. Technology has emerged as a critical cornerstone in enabling organizations to recruit, manage, and evaluate talent in this new paradigm (Collings et al., 2018).

Online Recruitment Platforms

- **Enhanced Reach and Efficiency:** Job boards like LinkedIn, Monster, and industry-specific platforms greatly expand the reach of talent searches and expedite the recruitment process. AI-powered matching algorithms analyze resumes and profiles to streamline the identification of suitable candidates (Collings et al., 2018).
- **Social Media's Impact:** Social media platforms are increasingly used for professional networking, employer branding, and even direct recruitment. Organizations actively leverage platforms like LinkedIn to connect with potential candidates on a broader scale (Deloitte, 2020).
- **Data-Driven Recruitment:** Online platforms capture valuable data, supporting analytics to inform targeted recruitment strategies and refine talent searches (Bader et al., 2021).

Virtual Interviews

- **Increased Accessibility and Flexibility:** Videoconferencing technologies (Zoom, Skype, etc.) offer flexibility and reduce costs by eliminating travel needs. This benefits both recruiters and candidates, especially in geographically distributed talent pools (Collings et al., 2021).
- **Challenges and Considerations:** While efficient, virtual interviews require strong technology infrastructure and adaptations in traditional interviewing techniques to ensure fair evaluations. Organizations must train interviewers to effectively interpret non-verbal cues within a virtual setting (Erederi, 2021).
- **AI-Augmented Interviewing:** Emerging AI tools analyze candidate speech patterns, facial expressions, and responses during virtual interviews. While promising, these technologies raise ethical concerns and require careful attention to avoid potential biases (Erederi, 2021).

Digital Performance Evaluations

- **Performance Management Software:** Specialized platforms offer streamlined goal setting, ongoing feedback mechanisms, and centralized tools for remote performance appraisals. These improve process efficiency and transparency in evaluation (KPMG, 2020).
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Digital platforms track performance metrics, project timelines, and satisfaction data, providing managers with a comprehensive and longitudinal view of employee performance (Bader et al., 2021).
- **Culture of Continuous Feedback:** Performance management software often includes features for both managers and employees to provide regular feedback, fostering a culture of continuous development even in a dispersed work environment (Collings et al., 2021).

Critical Considerations

- **Addressing the Digital Divide:** Ensuring equitable access to reliable broadband and technology for all employees is essential to mitigate any potential socioeconomic gaps that may disadvantage some individuals (KPMG, 2020).
- **Training and Support:** Organizations should provide thorough training on all relevant technology platforms to promote digital literacy among the workforce and ensure effective adoption of virtual talent management tools (Deloitte, 2020).
- **Ethical Considerations with AI:** Scrutiny and validation of AI algorithms utilized in recruitment and assessment are crucial to ensure fairness and minimize the possibility of discriminatory outcomes (Erederi, 2021).

Technology has undeniably revolutionized talent management, enabling virtual practices that address the demands of a remote and distributed workforce. By embracing online platforms, virtual interviews, and digital performance evaluations, organizations can enhance efficiency, broaden their talent reach, and support continuous employee development. Addressing potential equity issues, providing robust training and support, and implementing an ethical framework around AI usage will be critical factors in the successful implementation of technology-driven talent management practices.

2.7 Lessons Learned in the Global Talent Management from the Pandemic Experience

Adapting to Remote Work: The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid shift to remote work arrangements for many organizations. This transition highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the workplace. Research by Kurland and Egan (1999) suggests that organizations that effectively implemented remote work policies and provided necessary support to employees experienced higher levels of productivity and satisfaction. They discovered the value of technologies such as video conferencing, collaboration tools, and cloud-based platforms in enabling remote work (Kurland & Egan, 1999).

2.7.1 Digital Transformation of Talent Management

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of talent management processes. Organizations realized the need to digitize recruitment, onboarding, and performance management processes to adapt to remote work environments. They found that leveraging technology not only enhances efficiency but also enables better employee engagement and collaboration. Digital tools such as applicant tracking systems, virtual onboarding platforms, and performance management software became essential for managing talent remotely.

2.7.2 Prioritizing Employee Well-being

The pandemic underscored the importance of prioritizing employee well-being and mental health. Organizations recognized that the well-being of employees directly impacts productivity, engagement, and retention. They learned the value of implementing wellness programs, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing mental health support services. Employee well-being became a critical focus area for HR strategies, with organizations investing in initiatives to support the physical, emotional, and social health of their workforce (Bakker et al., 2014).

2.7.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Future Talent Management Strategies

The pandemic highlighted existing skills gaps within organizations, particularly in areas such as digital literacy, remote collaboration, and adaptability. Organizations realized the importance of addressing these skills gaps through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. They recognized the opportunity to invest in employee development programs to ensure that their workforce is equipped with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing landscape. Upskilling and reskilling programs became essential for building a future-ready workforce capable of navigating uncertainty and driving innovation (Riggio et al., 2010).

2.7.4 Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

The pandemic exposed disparities in access to opportunities and resources among diverse groups. Organizations recognized the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion to create a more equitable and resilient workforce. They understood that diversity fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, making it a strategic imperative for long-term success. Organizations seized the opportunity to implement diversity and inclusion initiatives to attract, retain, and develop talent from diverse backgrounds. They recognized that fostering an inclusive culture is essential for building a workforce that reflects the diversity of their customers and communities (Collings et al., 2014).

In summary, the pandemic experience served as a catalyst for organizational change, prompting organizations to rethink their talent management strategies. It emphasized the importance of agility, digital transformation, employee well-being, and diversity and inclusion in shaping future talent management practices. By embracing these lessons and addressing the associated challenges, organizations can position themselves for success in a post-pandemic world.

2.8 Ways to adapt organizational practices and policies and the implications

Ways of How the organizations have adapted their practices and policies in response to the pandemic, and the implications for future workforce planning are discussed below:

2.8.1 Remote Work Policies and Infrastructure

Organizations swiftly transitioned to remote work arrangements to ensure business continuity during the pandemic. This entailed the development of remote work policies and the provision of necessary infrastructure and support for employees to work from home effectively. Research by Kurland and Bailey (1999) highlights the importance of clear communication, flexible scheduling, and technological support in facilitating remote work (Kurland & Bailey, 1999).

2.8.2 Digital Transformation of HR Processes

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of HR processes, including recruitment, onboarding, and performance management. Organizations leveraged technology to conduct virtual interviews, onboard new hires remotely, and track performance metrics in real-time. Research by Parry et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of digital HR solutions in enabling seamless talent management amidst remote work environments (Parry et al., 2021).

2.8.3 Employee Well-being Initiatives

Organizations prioritized employee well-being initiatives to support the physical, emotional, and mental health of their workforce. This included the implementation of wellness programs, mental health resources, and flexible work arrangements. Studies by Bakker et al.,(2014) underscore the importance of employee well-being in fostering engagement, productivity, and retention (Bakker et al., 2014).

Implications for Future Workforce Planning:

2.8.4 Hybrid Work Models

The pandemic prompted organizations to reconsider their approach to workplace flexibility. Many organizations are now adopting hybrid work models that combine remote and in-office work. This has implications for workforce planning, as organizations need to assess the impact on productivity, collaboration, and employee engagement in hybrid environments. Research by (Krajčík et al., 2023) suggests that hybrid work models can enhance work-life balance and job satisfaction (Krajčík et al., 2023).

2.8.5 Skills Development and Reskilling

The pandemic exposed skills gaps within organizations, particularly in areas such as digital literacy and remote collaboration. To address these gaps, organizations are investing in skills development and reskilling initiatives. This has implications for workforce planning, as organizations need to identify emerging skill requirements and provide training and development opportunities for employees. Studies by Riggio et al. (2010) highlight the importance of upskilling and reskilling programs in building a future-ready workforce (Riggio et al., 2010).

2.8.6 Flexible Work Policies

The shift to remote work during the pandemic has reshaped expectations around flexible work arrangements. Organizations are re-evaluating their policies to accommodate flexible work schedules and remote work options. This has implications for workforce planning, as organizations need to assess the impact on team dynamics, communication, and performance management. Research by Grant et al. (2013) suggests that flexible work policies can improve employee satisfaction and retention (Grant et al., 2013).

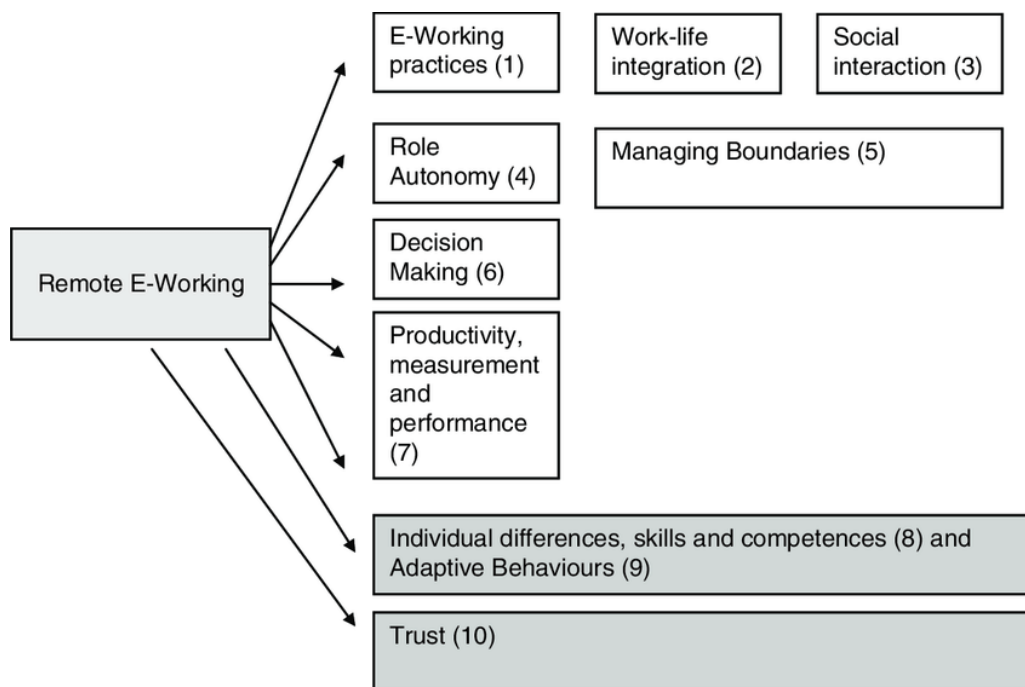


Figure 2: Remote E-Working

(Source: Grant et al., 2013)

2.9 The Imperative of Agility, Resilience, and Adaptability in Talent Management

The dynamic landscape of the modern business environment demands organizations possess essential qualities to thrive in the face of unforeseen challenges and opportunities. Among these critical attributes, agility, resilience, and adaptability stand out as crucial cornerstones of successful talent management. This thesis review delves into the importance of these principles and explores how organizations can incorporate them into their strategic planning to build robust and responsive workforces.

2.9.1 The Growing Importance of Agility, Resilience, and Adaptability

The ever-evolving nature of work, characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and unexpected disruptions like the recent COVID-19 pandemic, necessitates a shift in talent management strategies. Organizations can no longer rely on rigid, one-size-fits-all approaches. Instead, they must cultivate agility, the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to changes in the market, customer demands, and technological advancements (Bader et al., 2015). This necessitates an organizational culture that embraces experimentation, encourages continuous learning, and empowers employees to make decisions and adapt quickly (Scullion & Collings, 2018).

Furthermore, fostering resilience, the capacity to bounce back from unforeseen challenges and disruptions, becomes paramount (Scullion & Collings, 2018). This involves building robust contingency plans, fostering a culture of learning from setbacks, and encouraging a growth mindset among employees (Bader et al., 2015). Organizations must also prioritize employee well-being and mental health, which strengthens their capacity to navigate crises and adapt to changing circumstances (Gallup, 2023).

Finally, cultivating adaptability, the capability to adjust strategies, processes, and practices to thrive in diverse and evolving contexts, becomes crucial. This requires organizations to invest in upskilling and reskilling programs to equip their workforce with the necessary skills to navigate emerging trends and adapt to changing business needs (Bader et al., 2015). Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation encourages employees to embrace new ideas, experiment with new approaches, and adapt to changing circumstances effectively.

Integrating these principles into strategic planning is vital to building a future-proof workforce. Here are some key strategies organizations can adopt:

- **Building a Culture of Continuous Learning and Development:** Encouraging continuous learning through training programs, internal knowledge sharing platforms, and opportunities for professional development fosters an agile and adaptable workforce (Bader et al., 2015).
- **Creating a Diverse and Multi-Skilled Talent Pool:** Building a diverse talent pool with individuals possessing varied skills and perspectives fosters adaptability and encourages creative problem-solving approaches to emerging challenges (Scullion & Collings, 2018).
- **Developing Scenario Planning and Contingency Plans:** Proactively anticipating potential challenges and developing contingency plans equips organizations with the necessary resilience to navigate unforeseen circumstances effectively (Bader et al., 2015).
- **Investing in Technology and Data Analytics:** Utilizing technology to streamline processes, leverage data analytics to gain insights into workforce trends and performance metrics, and facilitate virtual collaboration enables agile decision-making and adaptation (KPMG, 2020).
- **Empowering Employees:** Empowering employees at all levels to make decisions, take initiative, and contribute their ideas fosters a culture of ownership and agility, enabling the organization to adapt and respond to changes quickly (Scullion & Collings, 2018).

By prioritizing agility, resilience, and adaptability in talent management and strategically embedding these principles into their planning, organizations empower their workforces to thrive in a dynamic and unpredictable environment. Investing in continuous learning, fostering a diverse talent pool, developing contingency plans, leveraging technology, and empowering employees are essential steps towards building future-proof workforces capable of navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in an ever-evolving world.

2.10 Implications for Future Practices and Policies

2.10.1 Recommendations for future talent management practices and policies

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges and opportunities for talent management practices and policies. As organizations navigate the complexities of remote work, shifting market demands, and evolving employee expectations, it is crucial to draw lessons from the pandemic experience to inform future talent management strategies. In this literature review, we explore recommendations for future talent management practices and policies based on the lessons learned from the pandemic.

Remote Work and Flexible Work Arrangements:

The pandemic has demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of remote work arrangements. Organizations should embrace remote work as a permanent feature of their talent management strategy, offering flexibility and autonomy to employees. Research by Golden and Veiga (2008) suggests that flexible work arrangements enhance employee satisfaction, work-life balance, and productivity (Golden & Veiga, 2008).

Digital Transformation of HR Processes:

The pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of HR processes, including recruitment, onboarding, and performance management. Organizations should invest in digital HR solutions to streamline administrative tasks, improve data analytics capabilities, and enhance the employee experience. Studies by (Widaryanti et al., 2021) emphasize the importance of digital HR technologies in enabling agile and efficient talent management practices (Widaryanti et al., 2021).

Employee Well-being and Mental Health Support:

The pandemic has underscored the importance of prioritizing employee well-being and mental health. Organizations should implement comprehensive well-being programs that address physical, emotional, and social needs. Research by Bakker et al. (2014) highlights the positive impact of well-being initiatives on employee engagement, retention, and organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2014).

Upskilling and Reskilling Initiatives:

The pandemic has revealed the importance of investing in employee development to address skills gaps and support career advancement. Organizations should prioritize upskilling and reskilling initiatives to equip employees with the skills needed for future roles and technologies. Studies by Riggio et al. (2010) emphasize the role of continuous learning in building a resilient and adaptable workforce (Riggio et al., 2010).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives:

The pandemic has highlighted disparities in access to opportunities and resources among diverse groups. Organizations should strengthen their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by implementing inclusive hiring practices, fostering diverse leadership, and creating supportive work environments. Research by Nowaskie & Roesler, (2022) emphasizes the business case for DEI, including improved innovation, decision-making, and financial performance (Nowaskie & Roesler, 2022).

In conclusion, the lessons learned from the pandemic underscore the importance of agility, resilience, and adaptability in talent management practices and policies. By embracing remote work, digital transformation, employee well-being, upskilling, and DEI initiatives, organizations can build a resilient and inclusive workforce capable of thriving in a rapidly changing world.

2.11 The Imperative of Flexibility, Innovation, and Employee Well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of work, necessitating a paradigm shift in global talent management strategies. This review explores the critical roles of flexibility, innovation, and employee well-being in shaping post-pandemic workforce strategies and their potential implications for the future of global talent management.

2.11.1 The Rise of Flexibility and its Impact:

- **Adapting to a Dynamic World:** The pandemic underscored the need for organizational agility in the face of unforeseen disruptions (Bader et al., 2015). Embracing flexible work arrangements, such as remote and hybrid models, empowers employees and allows organizations to adapt to rapidly evolving market demands and talent pools. Studies suggest that flexibility can lead to increased employee engagement and productivity (Bloom et al., 2015).
- **Attracting and Retaining Talent:** In an increasingly competitive global talent market, offering flexibility becomes a key differentiator for attracting and retaining top talent, particularly those who value autonomy and work-life balance.
- **Global Talent Management Implications:** Remote work arrangements blur geographical boundaries, allowing organizations to access a wider pool of talent globally. This presents exciting opportunities to identify and attract highly skilled individuals previously limited by location. However, managing a globally dispersed workforce necessitates robust virtual communication strategies, cultural sensitivity, and consistent policies across different locations (Scullion & Collings, 2018).

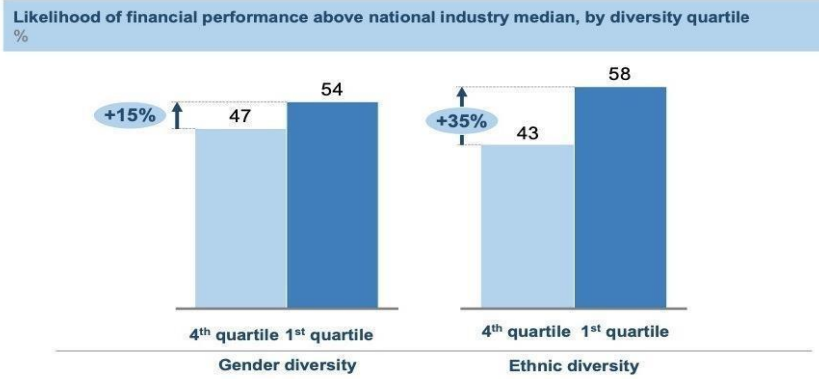
2.11.2 Fostering Innovation in a New Era:

- **Unlocking Creative Potential:** In today's dynamic environment, innovation stands as a crucial driver of organizational success (Bader et al., 2015). Cultivating a culture that fosters creativity, experimentation, and continuous learning empowers employees to generate new ideas and adapt to changing circumstances (den Boer et al., 2021)
- **Embracing Diversity and Inclusion:** Building diverse and inclusive teams with individuals from varied backgrounds and experiences fosters a wider range of perspectives, enriching the innovation process (Hunt et al., 2015). This becomes even more relevant in a global talent management context, as diverse teams bring together knowledge from different cultural contexts, leading to more comprehensive and innovative solutions.

Analysis of the data from the group of 366 companies revealed a statistically significant connection between diversity and financial performance. The companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15 percent more likely to have financial returns that were above their national industry median, and the companies in the top quartile for racial/ethnic diversity were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median (Exhibit 1)

Exhibit 1

How diversity correlates with better financial performance



SOURCE: McKinsey Diversity Database

Figure 3: Correlation of Diversity with Better Financial Performance

Exhibit 9

Diversity has a positive impact on many key aspects of organisational performance

Diversity management helps to...	Rationale
...win the war for talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong focus on women and ethnic minorities increases the sourcing talent pool, a particular issue in Europe. In a 2012 survey, 40% of companies said skill shortages were the top reason for vacancies in entry-level jobs
...strengthen customer orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and minority groups are key consumer decision makers: for example, women make 80% of consumer purchases in the UK Gay men and women have average household incomes that are almost 80% higher than average
...increase employee satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity increases employee satisfaction and reduces conflicts between groups, improving collaboration and loyalty
...improve decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity fosters innovation and creativity through a greater variety of problem-solving approaches, perspectives, and ideas. Academic research has shown that diverse groups often outperform experts.
...enhance the company's image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social responsibility is becoming increasingly important Many countries have legal requirements for diversity (e.g., UK Equality Act 2010)

SOURCE: *Women Matter*, McKinsey & Company, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013; Thomas Barta, Markus Kleiner, and Tilo Neumann, "Is there a payoff from top-team diversity?", *McKinsey Quarterly*, April 2012; Martin Dewhurst, Matthew Pettigrew, and Ramesh Srinivasan, "How multinationals can attract the talent they need", *McKinsey Quarterly*, June 2012; *Diversity wins!*, McKinsey & Company, November 2011; McKinsey qualitative survey; *The War for Diverse Talent*, Green Park, September 2010; Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies*, Princeton University Press, 2007; McKinsey analysis

Figure 4: Impact of Diversity on Many Key Aspects of Organizational Performance

2.11.3 Prioritizing Employee Well-being for Sustainable Success

- **The Importance of Holistic Well-being:** Investing in employee well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, is not just an ethical imperative but also a strategic investment (Gallup, 2023). A healthy and well-supported workforce is better equipped to handle stress, adapt to change, and contribute effectively to organizational goals.
- **Connecting Well-being to Performance:** Research suggests a strong link between employee well-being and key performance metrics like engagement, productivity, and creativity (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). By prioritizing well-being, organizations foster a positive and supportive work environment that contributes to long-term sustainable success.
- **Global Talent Management Implications:** Prioritizing well-being transcends geographical boundaries. Organizations need to be mindful of cultural nuances and design well-being initiatives that address the diverse needs and challenges faced by employees across different regions (KPMG, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for a future-oriented approach to global talent management. By embracing flexibility, fostering innovation, and prioritizing employee well-being, organizations can create an adaptable, engaged, and globally connected workforce. These are not isolated practices; they work synergistically to create a virtuous cycle where flexibility empowers well-being, which in turn fuels innovation and ultimately leads to organizational success in a globally competitive landscape.

2.11.4 A Dynamic Landscape and Interconnected Implications

The pandemic's impact on the future of work extends beyond individual models. These emerging trends are interconnected and influence each other. For example, flexible scheduling can complement both hybrid and remote work arrangements. Embracing these changes necessitates a holistic approach that considers the interplay between individual needs, organizational culture, and technological advancements.

Looking forward, organizations that adapt to these evolving trends by embracing flexibility, hybrid models, and remote work have the potential to build a more resilient, adaptable, and globally competitive workforce in the years to come.

2.12 The Enduring Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for a paradigm shift in the world of work, leaving a lasting impact that continues to reshape professional landscapes. This review delves into the long-term implications of the pandemic on the future of work, exploring the potential of hybrid work models, flexible scheduling, and remote work arrangements.

2.12.1 The Rise of Hybrid Work Models

- **Finding the Intersection Bridging the Gap:** Hybrid work models offer a harmonious blend of on-site and remote work arrangements, providing employees with flexibility while maintaining some degree of in-person collaboration (Bader et al., 2015). This may appeal to a broader range of individuals, catering to those who value both flexibility and aspects of the traditional office environment.
- **Long-Term Trajectory:** Hybrid models are likely to become increasingly prevalent in the post-pandemic era. Studies suggest they can lead to increased employee satisfaction and productivity (Bloom et al., 2015). However, challenges remain, including ensuring fairness and equity for remote employees and fostering a strong corporate culture in a dispersed workforce (Scullion & Collings, 2018).
- **Flexible Scheduling: Empowering the Individual Moving Beyond the Traditional:** Flexible scheduling empowers employees to customize their work hours to suit their personal commitments and lifestyle preferences. This caters to diverse needs and potentially leads to increased employee engagement and retention.
- **Long-Term Implications:** The pandemic has normalized flexible work arrangements, with a growing number of employees seeking such options. Organizations that embrace flexibility are likely to attract and retain top talent, particularly those seeking work-life balance and autonomy. However, establishing clear performance expectations and communication protocols within flexible work arrangements is crucial (De Smet et al., 2012).

2.12.2 The Continued Relevance of Remote Work

- **Location: Independence and Talent Acquisition Beyond Borders:** Remote work allows individuals to work independent of physical location, expanding the talent pool available to organizations and potentially fostering greater access to diverse perspectives and skills (KPMG, 2020).
- **Long-Term Implications:** Remote work is likely to remain a significant component of the future workforce, particularly for knowledge-based jobs. However, investment in robust technology infrastructure, development of effective virtual communication strategies, and addressing issues like social isolation among remote employees are critical for long-term success (Williams, 2021).

2.12.3 Implications for Global Talent Management

- **A World of Opportunity Global Talent Acquisition and Collaboration:** Remote work opens doors to accessing a global pool of talent, fostering a more diverse and skilled workforce. Effective cross-cultural collaboration strategies and technology solutions become crucial to facilitate seamless communication and project management across geographical boundaries (Hunt et al., 2015).
- **Challenges and Considerations:** Managing a globally dispersed workforce requires addressing issues like cultural sensitivity, diverse time zones, and ensuring equal opportunities for all employees regardless of location (Bader et al., 2015).

2.13 Enduring Impact of the Pandemic on Global Talent Management

The COVID-19 pandemic has irrevocably altered the landscape of work, prompting a significant shift in how organizations manage their global talent. This review delves into the key findings gleaned from the literature, illuminating their long-term implications for expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies. Additionally, the review emphasizes the need for continuous research and adaptation to navigate the evolving challenges and opportunities of the global business environment.

2.13.1 Key Findings

Rise of Hybrid and Flexible Work Arrangements:

The literature reveals a rise in hybrid models, blending on-site and remote work, offering employees greater flexibility and potentially appealing to a wider talent pool. However, ensuring equity and cultivating a strong corporate culture in a dispersed workforce remain crucial challenges (Bader et al., 2015; Scullion & Collings, 2018).

Flexible scheduling empowers employees with work-life balance and autonomy, potentially leading to increased engagement and retention. Nevertheless, establishing clear performance expectations and communication protocols within such arrangements is essential (De Smet et al., 2012).

Remote work facilitates location independence and access to a diverse global talent pool, yet necessitates robust technology infrastructure, effective virtual communication strategies, and addressing potential social isolation (KPMG, 2020; Collings et al., 2021).

2.13.2 Implications for Expatriate Assignments and Global Talent Management

- **Global Talent Acquisition:** Remote work unlocks access to a global talent pool, fostering a more diverse and skilled workforce. However, effective cross-cultural collaboration strategies and technology solutions are critical for success (Hunt et al., 2015).
- **Redefining Expatriate Assignments:** Traditional long-term assignments may be supplemented by shorter-term projects or virtual team leadership, leveraging the advantages of flexible work arrangements.
- **Managing a Dispersed Workforce:** Organizations need to address cultural sensitivity, diverse time zones, and ensure equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of location (Bader et al., 2015).

Choosing the research question “**How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the landscape of expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies, and what lessons can be learned from the pandemic experience to inform future practices and policies?**” To help understand the Timeliness and Relevance, Practical Implications, Long Term Implications etc.

The global business environment remains dynamic, requiring organizations to continuously adapt and conduct ongoing research to thrive in the face of evolving challenges and opportunities. This includes:

- Investigating the long-term effectiveness of hybrid models and their impact on collaboration, innovation, and employee well-being.
- Developing best practices for managing a globally dispersed workforce, including cultural sensitivity training, virtual team-building activities, and addressing potential social isolation issues.
- Evaluating the changing needs of talent in the post-pandemic era and adapting talent acquisition strategies accordingly.

By embracing novel work arrangements, organizations can build a more resilient and adaptable global workforce. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these trends and fostering a culture of continuous learning are crucial for success in the evolving landscape of global talent management. As the world of work continues to transform, ongoing research and adaptation will remain essential to navigate future challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This thesis uses a concurrent mixed-methods survey design. This research design is good for presenting quantitative and qualitative data. It is invaluable for determining an extensive understanding of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies. Combining both data types for the phenomena under research enables robust insights.

3.2 Survey Design

The survey in this research was designed to include a wide range of questions that fall into the following classes: closed-ended quantitative, open-ended qualitative, and closed-ended qualitative. Such classes enable multiple dimensions of the research topic to be reflected.

- **Closed-Ended Quantitative Questions:** These questions consider numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. Some examples of such questions are the frequency of practice, the number of people among the expatriates affected by the pandemic, or the extent to which changes occurred in the expatriate assignment.
- **Closed-ended Qualitative Questions:** Multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. Multiple-choice questions allowed the respondents to answer from pre-defined options, ensuring uniformity in the responses received. Likert-scale questions measured attitudes and perceptions, ranging from strongly agree to disagree strongly, providing quantitative data that reflects qualitative factors such as satisfaction or perceived effectiveness.

The survey was fully and carefully divided into sections to address all aspects of the research question step-by-step. These sections included demographic information, impacts of COVID-19 on expatriate assignments, organizational response and strategies, and perceived effectiveness of these strategies.

3.3 Sample Selection

The targeted population of this survey was specifically professionals between 18 and 45 years of age associated with global talent management or who have been on expatriate assignments. Purposive sampling was done to get participants with exposure and experience. Particularly, the age group was selected to cover early and middle careers, which will likely have high variance in terms of the challenges and changes in adaptation associated with expatriate assignments amidst the pandemic.

The survey was solicited through email invitations via professional networks, LinkedIn, and industry contacts. Since sensitive information about the benefits package was being solicited, no incentives were used; hence, the responses remained clean of any bias. Therefore, the intent was to capture the voluntary and spontaneous views of professionals involved in the hands-on management of expatriate assignments.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The survey was conducted through Google Surveys, which facilitated the distribution and collection of information correctly. It was live for two weeks, allowing all participants in the study to respond. Email reminders were sent at intervals to encourage a high participation and response rate. Those invited to the survey were required to access it by following the unique invitation link shared through email. The platform used assured the safety and anonymity of the responses, which ensured the integrity and privacy of the participants. The platform monitored the number of respondents up to its set target of a sample size of 50 participants.

3.5 Integration of Findings and Future Recommendations

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated to fully understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the future of expatriate assignments and global talent management strategy in general. Records were integrated to marry numerical data with thematic insight to paint a fuller picture of organizations' challenges and changes.

The results were exhibited with the help of graphs, tables, and charts, which made them even more lucid and comprehensible to interpret and describe. The following are several kinds of graphs and tables drawn to enable the illustrations:

- **Bar Charts:** Utilized to present the frequency of responses to multiple-choice questions and Likert scale ratings.
- **Pie charts:** These show the categorical data distribution, such as the types of technological tools used in remote work.

3.6 Future Recommendations

Based on the integrated findings, the following strategic recommendations have been developed to advise organizations about practices to improve global talent management in the post-pandemic period. The recommendations have endeavored to speak about the following:

- **Remote Work Policies:** Develop detailed remote work policies that support various flexible work arrangements and address expatriates' particular needs.
- **Technology Investments:** Investment in all digital devices for effectively collaborating with employees working apart, including virtual onboarding and digital performance appraisals.
- **Employee well-being:** Programs designed for expatriates' mental and physical well-being. These may include virtual mental health services and regular check-ins.
- **Training and development:** Providing training and development opportunities by acquiring skills to help workers succeed in a virtual and digital work setting.
- **Crisis Management:** Organizations must create effective plans for managing crises and contingencies to build the resilience required to combat upcoming disturbances effectively.

3.7 Future Scope

Given this study's limitations, future research could build on these findings by employing a larger and more diverse sample, using longitudinal designs to track changes over time, and incorporating additional data sources such as interviews and case studies. Additionally, further research could explore the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global talent management and expatriate assignments and examine the effectiveness of different organizational strategies and interventions.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data from 50 participants, the graphs for their analysis were plotted. Different variables were quantified, and their relationship between them was observed. The following charts, diagrams, and polls demonstrate the relationship analysis, highlighting the effect of COVID-19 on global talent management and expatriate assignments.

For the graphs, each rating corresponds to the following:

1. Very ineffective
2. Ineffective
3. Moderately Effective
4. Effective
5. Highly Effective
- 6.

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

4.1.1 Number of Years of Work Experience of Participants

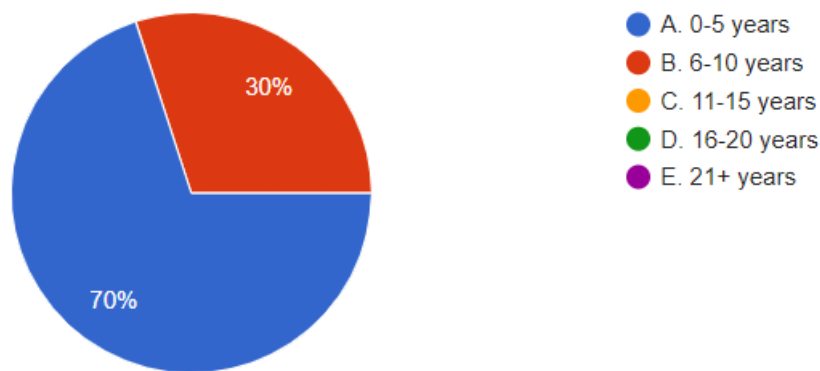


Figure 5: Response on Work Experience of Participants

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

The majority of the participants had work experience of 0 to 5 years, whereas one-third of the total participants had experience of 6 to 10 years. Thus, we can understand that the majority of the individuals who participated in this study were freshers.

4.1.2 Number of Years of Expatriate Experience of Participants

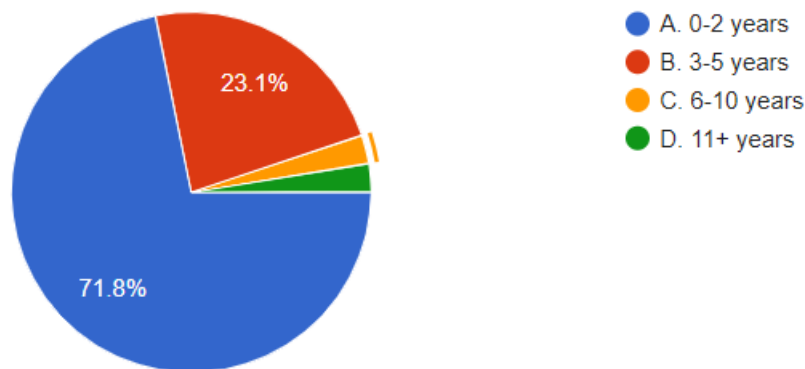


Figure 6: Response on Expatriate Experience of Participants

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Among all the participants, 71.8% had expatriate assignments for 0 to 2 years. Of the remaining 28.2%, 9 had expatriate assignments for 3 to 5 years, and 2 had expatriate assignments for 6-10 to 11 years, respectively.

4.1.3 Effect on Expatriate Assignment due to COVID-19

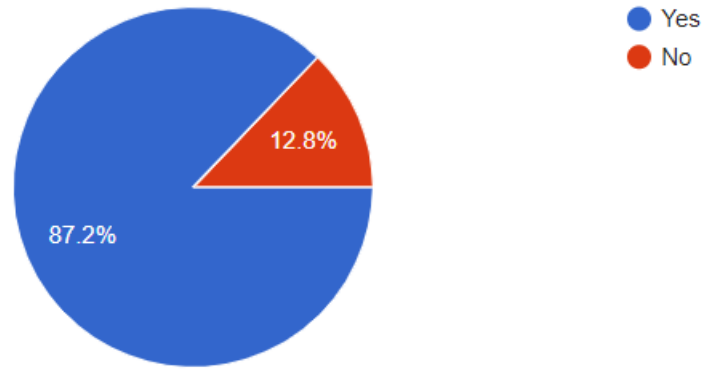


Figure 7: Response on the Effect of COVID-19 on Expatriate Assignment

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Effect of COVID-19 on Expatriate Assignment

Of the 50 participants, 44 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering this number, we carried the analysis forward by collecting responses from the participants who were affected during this crisis.

4.1.4 Problems Caused in Expatriate Assignments due to COVID-19

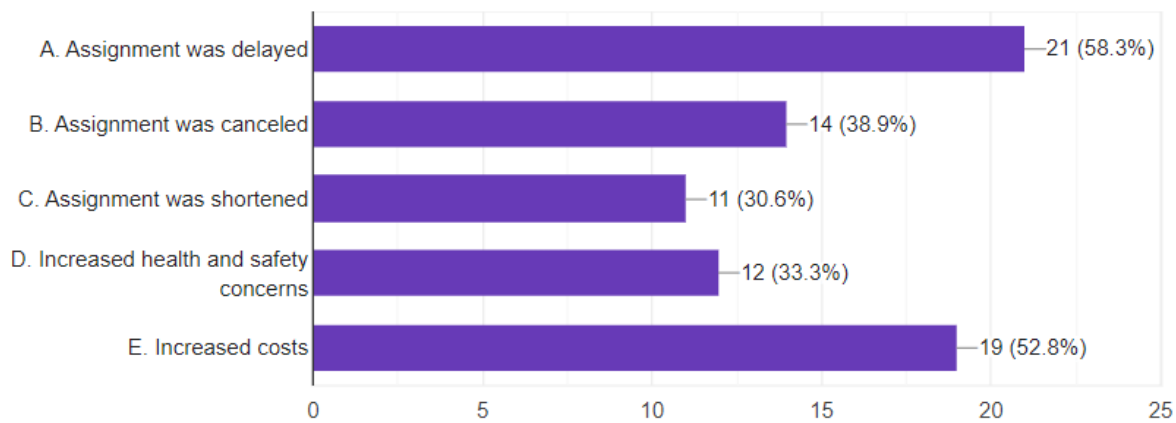


Figure 8: Response on Problems Caused During COVID-19

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

After being asked about problems caused in the work of the participants due to the pandemic, most of the participants faced a delay in assignments. The problems that followed this were increased assignment costs, with a high rate of 52.8%, followed by assignment cancellations and increased health and safety concerns.

4.1.5 Effectiveness of Remote Work Arrangements during COVID-19

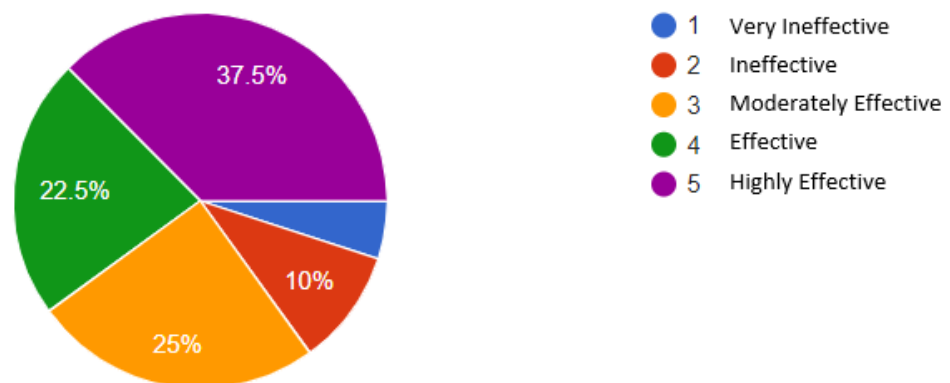


Figure 9: Response on Effectiveness of Remote Work Arrangements

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

On an effectiveness scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being highly effective, most participants rated remote work arrangements made by their organizations as highly effective in solving their work issues caused by COVID-19.

4.1.6 Effectiveness of Virtual Expatriation during COVID-19

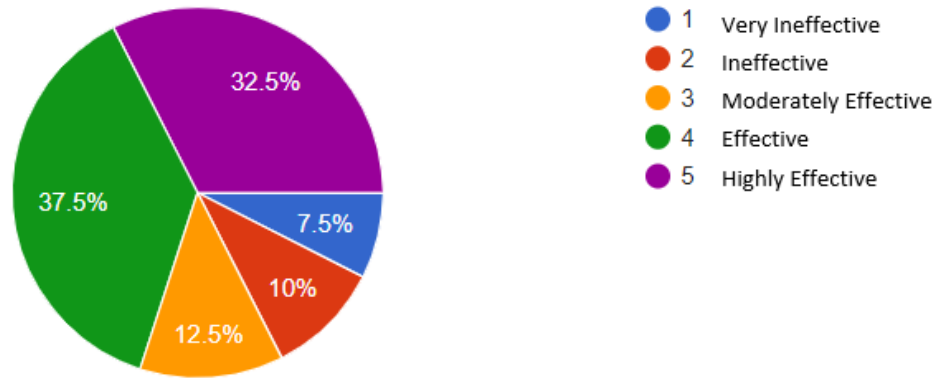


Figure 10: Response on Effectiveness of Virtual Expatriation

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

From the pie diagram shown above, we can see that most of the participants found the option of virtual expatriation to be highly effective in their work. However, 2 participants found virtual expatriation ineffective, and only 1 of them found it very ineffective.

4.1.7 Effectiveness of Enhanced Health and Safety Measured during COVID-19

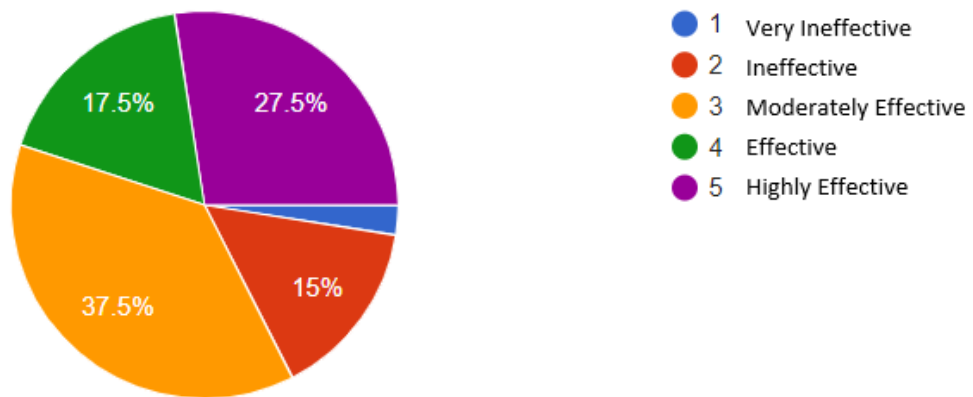


Figure 11: Response on Effectiveness of Enhanced Health and Safety

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

The results for enhanced health and safety measures were slightly different. The majority of participants were moderately affected by these changes in their work system.

4.1.8 Effectiveness of Increased Communication and Support during COVID-19

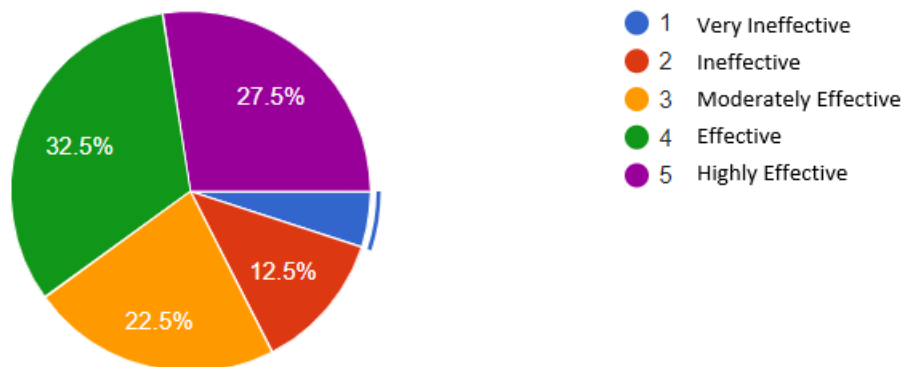


Figure 12: Response on Increased Communication and Support

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Most individuals found increased communication and support through implementing technologies highly effective. However, there was a slight drop in the percentage, and 22.5% of the participants voted for increased communication and support to be moderately effective.

4.1.9 Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Programs during COVID-19

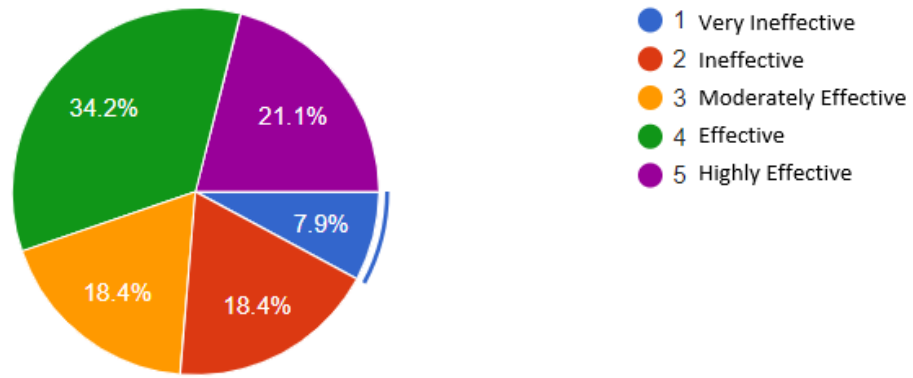


Figure 13: Response on Mental Health and Support

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

When the organization implemented mental health support programs, considering the stress caused by the pandemic, the results were non-biased. Most of them gave mixed answers between highly effective, effective, moderately effective, and ineffective.

4.1.10 Effectiveness of Flexible Work Arrangements for Future Global Talent Management

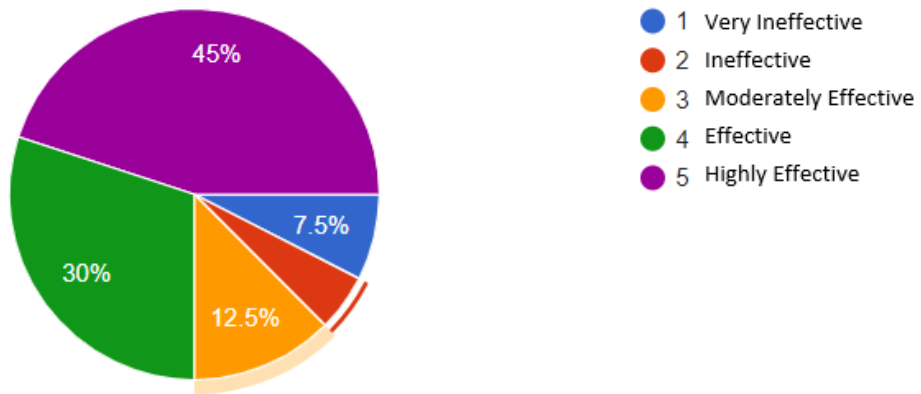


Figure 14: Response on Flexible Work Arrangement for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

When the question of flexible work arrangements made due to the pandemic was asked, the answers were biased, with 45% of the individuals voting that this method was highly effective.

4.1.11 Effectiveness of Remote Work Options for Future Global Talent Management

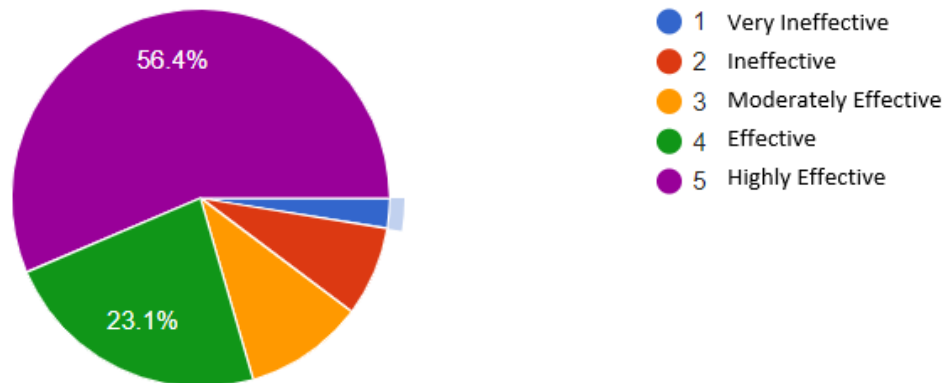


Figure 15: Response on Remote Work Options for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Similarly, the option of remote work received the most votes amongst all other work arrangements made by the organizations, and the majority of the participants voted it to be highly effective in their work.

4.1.12 Effectiveness of Digital Recruitment Platforms for Future Global Talent Management

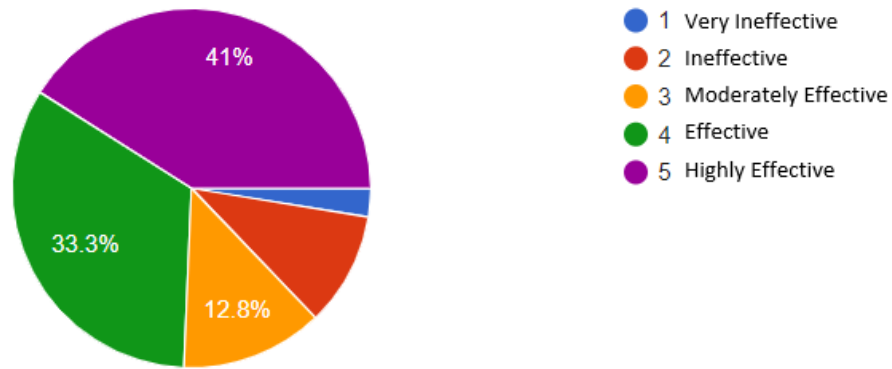


Figure 16: Response on Digital Recruitment Platforms for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

When the question of digital recruitment platforms was raised, the trend continued, with the majority choosing this method to be highly effective at their workplace.

4.1.13 Effectiveness of Virtual Performance Evaluations for Future Global Talent Management

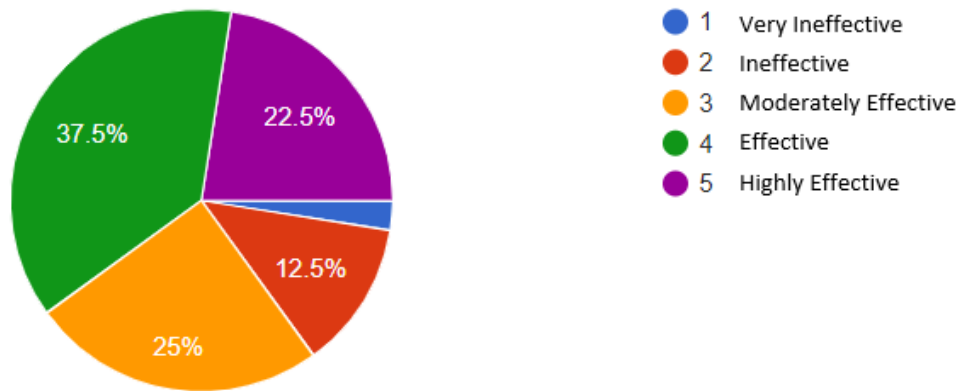


Figure 17: Response on Virtual Performance Evaluations for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

During COVID-19, when the entire world worked remotely, performance evaluations were carried out virtually to keep employees’ spirits high at all times. This method proved useful, with a majority of participants voting it to be effective at their workplace.

4.1.14 Effectiveness of Continuous Learning and Development Programs for Future Global Talent Management

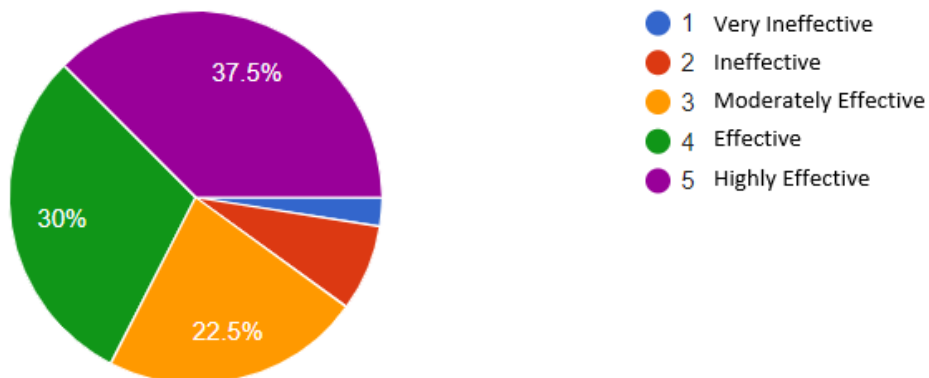


Figure 18: Response on Continuous Learning and Development Programs for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Along with the work done remotely, the organizations virtually promoted continuous learning and development programs. According to the responses, most participants found this gesture to be highly effective.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, certain questions were asked, and participants were set free to choose one or more options from the choices provided. In the choices provided, we have judiciously included all the points as discussed in this thesis before.

4.2.1 Challenges Faced during Expatriate Assignment due to COVID-19

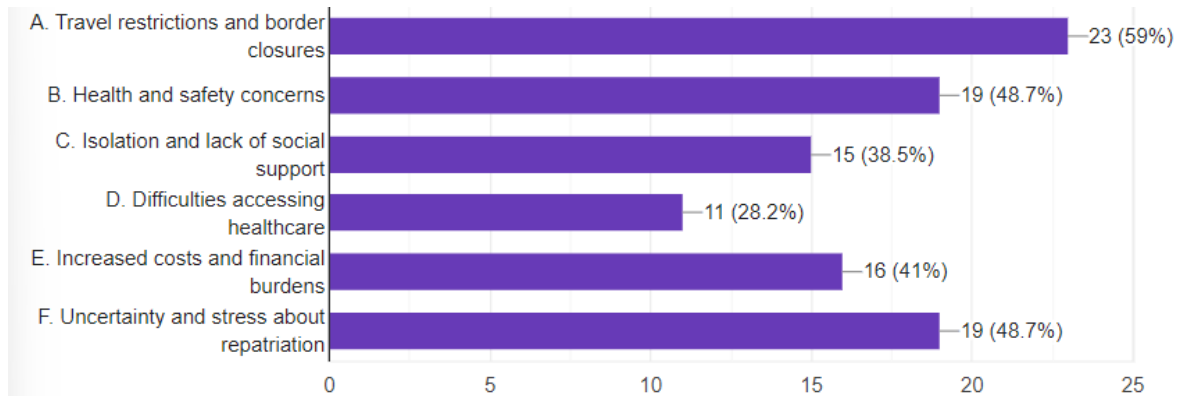


Figure 19: Response on Challenges Faced by Expatriates during COVID-19

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

When we analyzed the different set of challenges faced by the individuals during the crisis, most of them were affected due to travel restrictions and border closures between and within countries. The next problem in line was health and safety concerns along with uncertainty and stress about their jobs. However, these individuals were least bothered by difficulties accessing healthcare. Each country tried to ease the healthcare requirements of the citizens, making it one of the least important issues that would bother the working expatriates.

4.2.2 Strategies Implemented by Organization for Expatriate Assignment Management during COVID-19

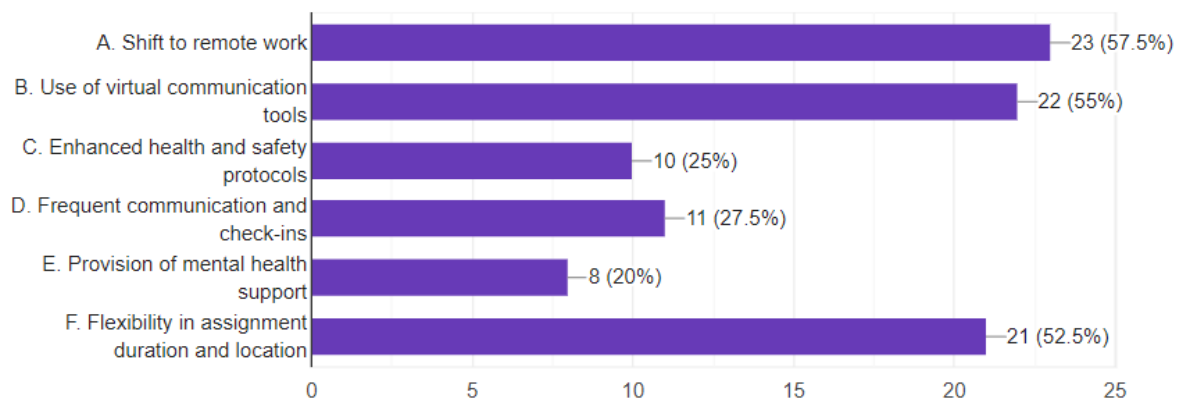


Figure 20: Response on Strategies Implemented by Organizations

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Realizing the issues faced by the employees, organizations worldwide came up with strategies and solutions to meet all the necessities and bring back the efficiency and spirit of individuals. In all these strategies, shifting the work remotely, using virtual communication tools, and providing flexibility in assignment duration and location was found to be most helpful.

4.2.3 Lessons Learned during Expatriate Assignment Management

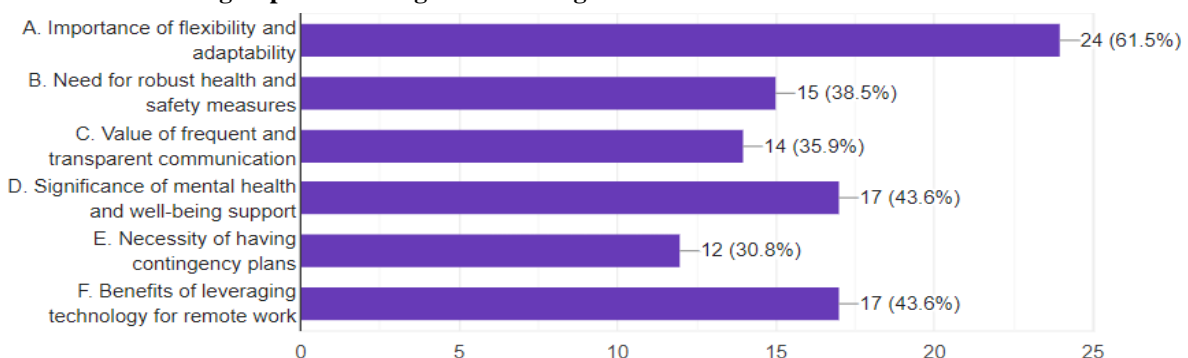


Figure 21: Response on Lessons Learned during Assignment Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Based on the questions posed and options given for the lessons learned from the strategies and their implementation during COVID-19, majority of expatriates voted that they found flexibility and adaptability to be useful in their work; however, the need for contingency plans have been voted least important by the individuals.

4.2.4 Recommendation for Future Global Talent Management

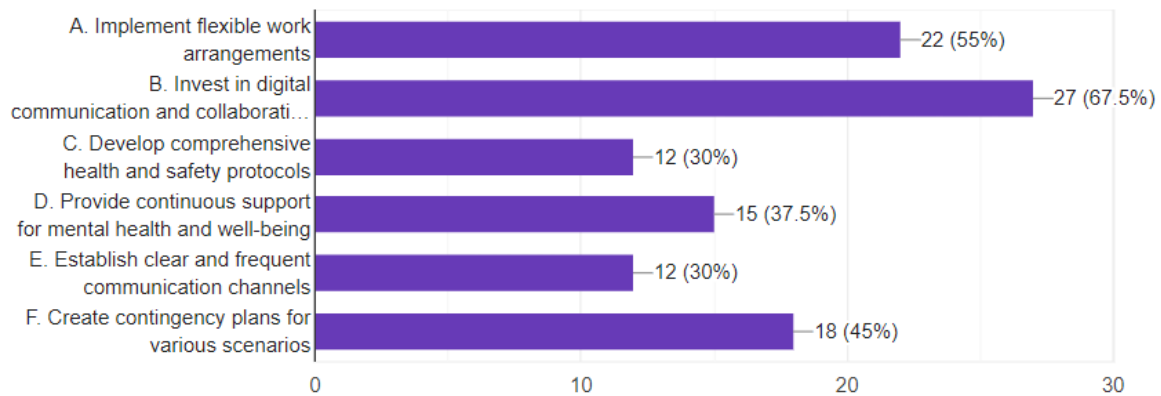


Figure 22: Response on Recommendations for Future Talent Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

After understanding the effectiveness of each strategy planned to help the working of organizations and implementing them in the work culture, certain recommendations were put forward by the employees for future scenarios like this that might arise. Since all the operations happened online, the individuals believed that investing in digital communication and collaboration tools will go a long way to establish a successful online work culture. Next in line comes implementation of flexible work arrangements and creating a contingency plan for any such scenario in future. Every organization must be ready for such phases and keep the strategies ready to holistically deal with the situation.

4.2.5 Ways of Work Management through Technology during COVID-19

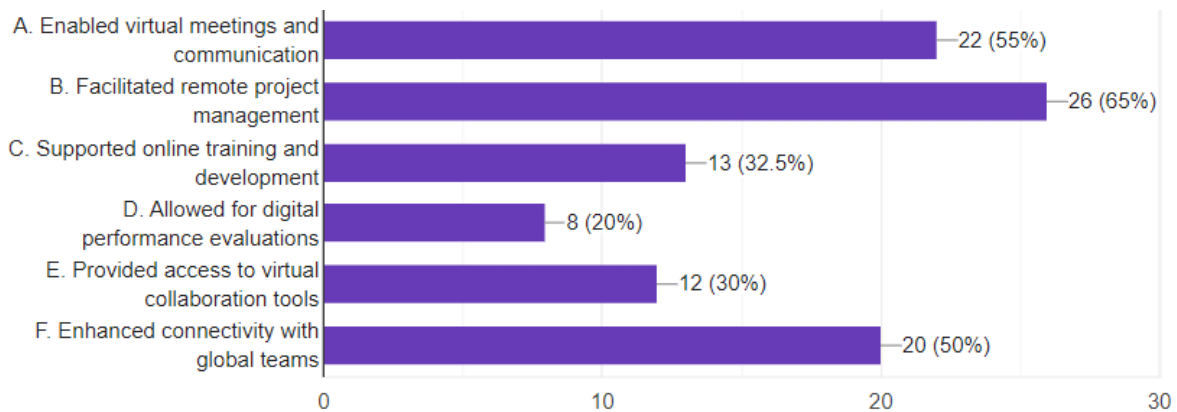


Figure 23: Response on Ways of Work Management

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

While the employees were working remotely, several strategies were introduced by the companies and implemented for work management. In all these strategies facilitating remote project management was mostly implemented by the companies, followed by enabling virtual meeting and communication and enhancing connectivity with global teams.

4.2.6 Measures Taken by Respective Organizations to Support Individual Well-Being

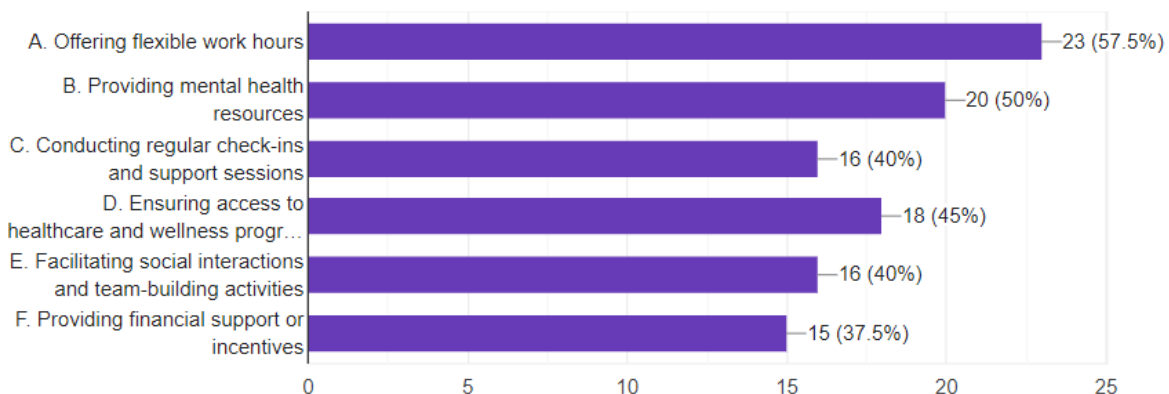


Figure 24: Response on Measures Taken during COVID-19

(Source: Author’s Own Interpretation using Google Form)

Since individuals from different organizations participated in the survey, we analyzed the measures taken by their respective organizations to understand different measures implemented. Flexible work hours and mental health resources were provided by the majority of companies, whereas ensuring access to healthcare, providing financial support and facilitating social interaction, was incorporated by a few companies.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the dramatic transformation that the corporate environment of expatriate assignments and the practice of global talent management underwent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents the results of data analysis, illustrating the pandemic's impact on expatriate assignments and organizational practices, and explores the implications of these results for future practice and policy. Both qualitative and quantitative data from 50 respondents were considered in the analysis, providing an expansive view of the challenges and strategies organizations have implemented in the contemporary moment.

5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

5.1.1 Number of Years of Work Experience of Respondents

The majority of the respondents had between 0 and 5 years of experience, and one-third had between 6 and 10 years. This shows that the study, for the most part, included people starting their career paths, which might have affected their perceptions of the pandemic's influence on expatriate assignments.

5.1.2 Number of Years of Expatriate Experience of Participants

Most respondents, 71.8%, had no more than two years of expatriate experience, while 28.2% had from three to ten years. This testifies to the fact that the majority of the respondents were relatively recent expatriates whose perception may account for their view of challenges and changes under the influence of the pandemic.

5.1.3 Effect on Expatriate Assignments due to COVID-19

As many as 44 respondents out of the total of 50 reported the impact of the COVID-29 pandemic on their expatriate assignments. This proportion is very high and indicates how wide the general effect of the pandemic was on global mobility and expatriate work arrangements.

5.1.4 Company's Expatriate Assignment Problems Due to COVID-19

Though assignment delays were the most common problem in this pandemic, respondents found several other issues. The majority of respondents experienced issues from increased assignment expenses, assignment cancellations, and, most importantly, issues regarding health and safety. Taken in the aggregate; these findings demonstrate that the disruption for expatriates took place on multiple levels.

5.1.5 Effectiveness of Telecommuting in COVID-19

Further, most respondents rated the effectiveness of remote work arrangements in countering the challenges presented by the pandemic very highly. This comment indicates that remote work is most effective when it comes to business continuity and employee safety during high crises.

5.1.6 Use of Virtual Expatriation of Workforce During COVID-19

Most participants rated the effectiveness of virtual expatriation for work as 'effective' or 'highly effective'. Still, a few of the respondents rated it as 'ineffective' or 'very ineffective,' which suggests that although virtual expatriations are generally well accepted, they are not suitable for all kinds of work or all personal preferences.

5.1.7 Efficacy of Augmented Health and Safety Measures during COVID-19

Most of the heightened measures relating to health and safety were given mixed reviews; most participants placed them at a very low to moderate level of effectiveness, which shows that the measures were necessary but then implemented and affected people in other contexts and locations in different ways.

5.1.8 Improved Communication and Support in the Context of COVID-19 Efficacy

Most participants rated heightened communication and support through technological means highly effective. Still, a measurable percentage found this measure only moderately effective, thus pointing to further room for improvements in how organizations support their expatriates during crises.

5.1.9 Efficacy of COVID-19 Mental Health Support Programs

Different participants' reactions to mental support programs were either good, effective, or poor. This indicates that some people benefited from these programs, while others felt that the support, they received was not good enough or not according to their needs.

5.1.10 Flexibility Work Arrangements and Their Effectiveness in Global Talent Management

Most participants rated flexible work arrangements at the very top as being most effective for global talent management in the future. Therefore, this conveys that flexible work or workplace arrangements should be maintained to cope with change and employees' needs.

5.1.11 The Effectiveness of Remote Work Options for Future Global Talent Management

Everything mentioned is highly rated, with participants stating that it is the best for working on the future of global talent management strategies. This finding supports that remote work arrangements will likely be a mainstay beyond the pandemic.

5.1.12 The Efficacy of Online Recruitment Platforms for Global Talent Management Now and in The Future

Digital recruitment platforms had a high effectiveness rating; their role became evident in effective talent acquisition timeframes before, during, and after the pandemic. This testifies that digital platforms are becoming increasingly relevant to modern human resource management.

5.1.13 Effectiveness of Virtual Performance Evaluations in Future Global Talent Management

The participants considered virtual performance appraisals to be successful. This suggests that performance management processes could adapt and still be successful in remote work settings, in which the organization could evaluate employee performance through digital tools.

5.1.14 Continuous Learning and Development Programs: Effectiveness in Getting the Best Out of Global Talent Management

Most respondents reported that continuous training and development were most beneficial. Again, this points to the need for lifelong professional training to ensure a competent and flexible workforce.

5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

5.2.1 Challenges Encountered Throughout the Expatriate Assignment Because of COVID-19

From the qualitative responses, it was found that significant problems are highlighting the pandemic outbreak: travel and border restrictions, health and safety concerns, and constant uncertainty and stress regarding job security. These challenges illustrate the pandemic's overall and severe impacts on the lives and work of expatriates.

5.2.2 Organizational Strategies and Adaptations

Organizations are adopting all these and many more strategies to face the challenges thrown by the pandemic. This includes remote work policies, digital expansion and enhancement, and better support for expatriates through virtual mental well-being services and working-time flexibility. All these measures are to help reduce the impact of the pandemic on the expatriates and support them in being effective in their functions.

5.2.3 Effectiveness of the Organizational

The diversity in perceptions of organizational strategies' effectiveness goes even further: New ones related to remote work arrangements and digital tools applied seemed to be valued as the most effective. Nevertheless, it seems to suggest that the variation in the perceived effectiveness of mental health programs and new developments in health and safety measures enhancement may require more finely tuned and encompassing support.

5.3 Future Implications and Recommendations

5.3.1 Embracing Working from Home

Thus, organizations must continue integrating remote work into their talent management strategies. Flexibility allows for a better compromise between satisfaction, work-life balance, and productivity. This means that organizations have to develop strong remote working policies that address the specific needs of expatriates.

5.3.2 Investing in Digital Transformation

The coronavirus emergency emphasizes the pressing need to digitalize all HR processes. In the digital age, organizations must invest in digital tools for recruitment, onboarding, and performance management to ensure HR processes' smooth functioning and efficiency.

5.3.3 Employee Wellbeing

Ensuring employee wellbeing, including mental health, is an underpinning aspect of a wholesome talent management strategy. Strongly developed employee wellbeing programs that consider physical, emotional, and social needs advance engagement and work directly toward positive impacts on general levels of performance and staff retention. Generally, check-ins, mental health resources, wellness programs, and other such general initiatives could support expatriates practically.

5.3.4 Building Organizational Agility and Resilience

Organizational agility and resilience in the face of periods of more muscular disruption depend on tremendous efforts in developing contingency planning and an organizational culture of learning and staff empowerment. Investment in up-skilling and re-skilling programs will enable people to work in dynamic environments.

5.3.5 Communication and Support

These productive modes of support, combined with increased communication and use of technology in the pandemic, need to be sustained. Similarly, the feeling in place and, consequently, a lower sense of isolation and stress experienced by expatriates can be connected with regular check-in and virtual calls, available helplines for tapping support, and even easily reachable emergency lines.

5.3.6 Design the Mental Health Programs

The mental health-related programs of any organization will have to be designed with the requirements of the expatriates to access such services virtually and with the knowledge and motivation to implement them. These types of programs should be implemented and re-implemented based on the viability determined by the organization's feedback mechanisms to the employees.

5.4 Summary

The pandemic of COVID-19 has severely affected expatriate assignments and global talent management. Organizations worldwide are ensuring remote work and digital tools and increasing supportive measures for business continuity and employee well-being. These strategies vary in effectiveness but point out the need for an approach that is designed and responsive to the unique needs of expatriates. Organization leaders exploit the learnings the pandemic has birthed in building talent practices, making them even more robust and adaptive. By infusing workforces with remote work, digital transformation, well-being, and agility, they could be resilient to adapt to the post-recession world. Therefore, continuous research and adaptation will be the key critical success enablers, surpassing the emerging trends and leading toward successful global talent management strategies within an ever-changing business environment. A more encompassing discussion and results section below elaborates on the just-mentioned data, which will showcase the impact of COVID-19 on expatriate assignments, the effectiveness of organizational strategies, and the future implications for practice and policy. How these quantitative and qualitative data combine supports comprehensive insights to inform future research, strategic planning in global talent management, and many other ways.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the findings

In conclusion, the study has presented a strategic analysis of global talent management and expatriate assignment during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the above analysis, it is seen that the pandemic presented severe challenges to expatriate assignments and global talent management strategies. To deal with such issues, remote work and virtual collaboration played a key role helped them stay connected and continue their business operation. The literature revealed various practices like remote work policies, digital transformation, employee well-being initiatives, hybrid work models, skills development and reskilling, and flexible work policies to adapt to the situation and stay competitive in the market. To get deeper insight, the research performed both qualitative and quantitative research. The research has highlighted the complex situation of expatriate assignments and global talent management due to unforeseen challenges and demanded the adoption of technological solutions to overcome the challenges.

As per the analysis, organizations should embrace remote work as it offers opportunities to stay connected and continue with their business operation. They are also required to prioritize the well-being of the employees to ensure that they are mentally and physically fine and have a stable work-life balance. The development of agility and resilience can help companies to survive and thrive in a fast-changing and unpredictable world. Organizations should also maintain good communication to convey the critical information to the required people or group and stay up to date with their existing market situation. These evidence-based practices can help companies increase organizational resilience in the case of future shocks and stay competitive in the market.

6.2 Limitations

The research has a small survey size due to which it did not present a comprehensive insight into the subject matter. The small and potentially non-representative sample size may have restricted the applicability of the findings to larger populations of expatriates and organizations. In this situation, a larger and more diverse sample would have been helpful to get a more comprehensive picture of the expatriate community's various experiences and perspectives.

The research also presents insufficient evidence related to how expatriate experiences and organizational responses are impacted by the impact of cross-cultural differences. Cross-cultural differences in work norms, communication styles, and organizational practices can have a substantial impact on expat experiences and the effectiveness of organizational efforts. It is vital to consider cultural elements since it can provide a more sophisticated view of expatriate assignments and talent management.

6.3 Future Research

Based on the above analysis, the research on the long-term effects of the pandemic on expatriate assignments and global talent management methods can help get a broader picture of the topic. Such research can help future researchers understand the evolution of career paths and organizational culture and develop future practices and regulations to address such concerns in a more efficient manner. Future research can also work on the importance and challenges of digital solutions to understand how such technologies present opportunities and what concerns need to be addressed to tackle such situations.

As the current research lacked cultural elements, future research can examine how different cultural contexts impact expatriate experience and organizational responses. It can present insight into the impact of cultural variables on expatriate assignments and talent management methods to improve their support for expatriates in different situations. Further research is also needed to assess the impact of various well-being treatments in promoting expatriate resilience and performance. In this consideration, the research can examine how mental health support programs and wellness initiatives affect expatriate well-being and organizational outcomes.

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