
Social Distancing Effect on Workspace Nature and HRM: Evidence from Egypt and GCC

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Abstract: This study investigates the practices of human resources management (HRM) in Egypt and the Gulf Cooperation Council through the integration of quantitative data (social distancing in the workplace) and qualitative data (attitude toward altering the workplaces nature and human resources practices) using a survey of 140 HRM personnel from seven nations. The study found that social distancing explains 54% of the change in workplace nature, while social distancing and the change in workplaces nature explain 32% of the change in HRM practices. However, there is a distinction in the extent to which the characteristics of job location have changed, as the number of people is a variable for HRM practices due to COVID-19, with training needs and training tools changing the most during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Social Distancing; workplaces, Human Resources Practices; HRM, Crisis Management, COVID-19. JEL Classification: H12; J59, O32, M10

PRACTITIONER NOTES

What is currently known?

Recently the debate whether the practices of human resources management (HRM) have changed in nature according to social distancing as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

What this paper adds

1. The study used integration of quantitative data (social distancing in the workplace) and qualitative data (attitude toward altering the workplaces nature and human resources practices)
2. The study used a survey of 140 HRM personnel from seven nations (Egypt and countries of GCC: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), from January 2021 to February 2021 with a monthly data of social distancing for each country from February 2020 to January 2021.
3. The study found that social distancing affecting the change in workplace nature,
4. The study found that social distancing and the change in workplaces nature affecting the change in HRM practices.
5. The study found that the characteristics of workspace nature have changed, as the number of people is a variable for HRM practices under social distancing due to COVID-19 pandemic.
6. The study found that the training needs and training tools have changed the most during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. The study found a necessary that managers must adopt with this crisis by implemented the world health organization's recommendations and social distancing procedures. Also communicate with staff with untraditional methods and apps which indicated to change in era for HRM practices.

The implications for practitioners

1. The covid-19 pandemic leading the human resources professionals to deal with untraditionally constrains result to social distancing. Especially, HR planning, training needs and methods.
2. Organisations from countries with similar social distancing choose similar selection instruments for the practices of human resources management (HRM).
3. The covid-19 pandemic encouraged the use of electronic apps (Zoom, Microsoft themes) among managers and employees to have effective communication.
4. How necessary to be able to use and depend on technology in workplace especially the circumstances declared end of paperwork era.

Introduction

The COVID-19 virus has triggered a dramatic pandemic influence worldwide since February 2020. The rapid spread of the virus ignited movements to stop it from spreading further. The entire world was alerted, and 212 countries established lockdown plans. These lockdown restrictions have caused many businesses to strive for survival. In addition, many businesses referred to as —unnecessary or —nonessential have been compelled to comply with lockdown and cease services until further notice. Virtual workplaces and social distancing have been enacted for nearly all businesses and employees, inspiring work from home to minimise the influence of the fatal pandemic. To maintain operations and continuity, many Organisations have diverted strategies to digital offices and working from home. Hence, human resource (HR) and personnel departments had to face a unique mission to keep businesses running.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created traumatic situations for HR managers. In the context of dramatic adjustments due to the pandemic, organisations want to respond and adapt to the modifications and consequently manipulate the workforce (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Sheppard (2020) argued that, to prepare for further adjustments and turbulent times, businesses must adopt technologies that are platform-based and strengthen novel business fashions (Sheppard, 2020). Human resource management (HRM) assists employees to overcome the difficulties brought on by the sudden adjustments in working environment as well as challenges in society (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Additionally, employees require digital and collaborative skills for the new style of work (Sheppard, 2020).

Individuals must research new skills that expand their employability in the digital area (Sheppard, 2020). In this regard, HR managers must use difficult techniques that enable personnel to use superior applied sciences and replace digital capabilities (Parry & Battista, 2019). In addition, lifelong learning and growth ability are important, especially as training classes move online (Narayandas et al., 2020). Leaders of surveyed Chinese agencies did not preserve sources; however, they invested intensively to increase competitiveness (Narayandas et al., 2020).

Consequently, HR professionals have a facilitating and aiding role in this transformation, and they take responsibility to help employees by upgrading skills and abilities (Parry & Battista, 2019). While reskilling or upskilling of the workforce is essential, resilience ought to be equally prioritised for a company's strategy (Kirby, 2020). The vast survey of 869 teams and 11,011 workers in European international locations demonstrates that remote working is no longer precious for all employees, and team performance decreases when team members work remotely, particularly when they work more than eight hours per week (Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2019). However, performance factors, such as work characteristic, satisfaction, and commitment, should be considered (Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2019) when HRM coordinates flexible or

hybrid work. Furthermore, employees' well-being and health have implications on their outcomes. Consequently, work and personal existence combine in remote working from home and can be the core venture for HRM (Peasley et al., 2020).

The crisis management is based on responding to the crisis and assesses the situation and damage in order to adapt the situation to decrease loss, also repair by taking corrective actions to detect future crisis (Mitroff et. al., 1987). Since spreading of covid-19 pandemic, the HRM implementing the same phases as dealing with sudden crisis. The study suggests approach of crisis management phases to support and improve the human resources management due to the pandemic.

According to (Mitroff et. al., 1987) mentioned in classifications of organization crisis to four cells, the current study found that cell three represent the constrains of Social Distancing as a result to the covid -19 pandemic ,which included in one hand the internal environment and in the other hand people ,social & organizational factors. This cell included: failure to adapt or failure to change, organization breakdown, occupational health diseases.

The crisis reflected on HR planning objectives became unclear and low formalization. That agreed with Lam and Schaubroeck (1998) matrix, as one situation out of nine situations of HR planning suggested.

1. Literature Review:

Human resources occupy the basic rank of concern at the level of the contemporary world, being the most important component of development, and the basis for moving the wheels of growth and development. And countries of the developed and developing world focus on preparing programs. An ambitious human development based on scientific foundations. Human resources are the main wealth in any service or production organization. Human resource planning and development is one of the important means that organizations resort to in order to raise their efficiency and effectiveness. It depends mainly on the extent of success or failure of the efforts of the organizations in achieving their goals of survival and stability. Expansion, growth, productivity, profitability, improvement of services, and the achievement of the necessary advantage for this era full of various environmental changes.

1.1.Precautionary measures under Covid-19

Caligiuri et al. (2020) showed that the precautionary measures applied to face COVID-19 were an undertaking for HR departments. They faced problems concerning recruitment, selection, training, health, and safety. Carnevale and Hatak (2020) stated that corporations should be consistent and adapt to unexpected situations for the duration of the pandemic, which posed threats to the survival of organisations and organisations. They highlighted the significant function of HR departments to aid the

labour pressure in adapting to the new work surroundings and challenges.

The pandemic brought about many work-family stability troubles as the suspension of schools and childcare caused burdens for parents. Employees struggled to maintain work-family balance and found it extraordinarily difficult to cope with this scenario (Giurge & Bohns, 2020).

During the crisis, HR departments have been dealing with new challenges due to the sudden shift in the work culture. Nonetheless, they must ensure that employees are engaged and motivated, furnish appropriate communication channels for virtual and remote work, and confirm the fitness and protection of their workforce. Ulrich (1996) defined HR roles, which must align with organisational goals and business strategy, as re-structuring business enterprise processes, imparting assets and useful personnel resource while ensuring worker commitment and capability and the ability to adapt to change.

Coibion et al. (2020) estimated that 20 million jobs were lost by 6 April 2020, which is greater than jobs lost during the Great Recession. As a result, unemployment could rise further even after COVID-19 periods. Gerdeman (2020) cited that the COVID-19 crisis provides senior management with an opportunity to enhance a loyalty and trust-based ethics in the organisation.

HRM must enhance and invest in its digital infrastructure and compete with other departments that have greater digitalisation capabilities. Baptiste (2008) suggested that creativity in HRM practices is a requirement. HR personnel must develop new thoughts and recommendations to manage the employees correctly and successfully to obtain maximum productiveness while ensuring employees' positive morale. These HRM practices are evidence to help decide how employees cope within companies.

Koirala and Acharya (2020) noted that working from home means a more task-based work way of life system supported through data conversation. However, data protection, confidentiality, line management, payroll biases, and increased job administration are challenges for the pandemic situation. Staiger et al. (2020) demonstrated that employee pleasure is static due to the public health shock, but morale is a useful resource in this devastating situation. Bell et al. (2020) highlighted the decline in hiring and the lengthy time period before any improvement. Additionally, the study noted that for any improvement in the labour market, it will be essential to take recuperation initiatives and develop rescue packages for supporting present jobs and to avoid a slump of the labour market.

1.2.HRM functions under Covid-19

Ahuja and Bhattacharya (2007) indicated that HRM has been reconstructed

and converted due to the economy, technological advancement, changes, and new legal guidelines and policies. Additionally, political transformation and socio-cultural differences worldwide impact enterprise environments and impact markets, agencies, and individuals. Khurana and Bedi (2020) cited that HR practices can assist in creating a sustained aggressive advantage.

HRM practices and roles are more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but organisations are developing HR practice reforms and striving to maintain organisations' survival and success.

While previous studies have examined some aspects of HR practices in light of COVID- 19, there is a lack of research dealing with HR practices in the COVID-19 pandemic context and the prediction for change. This can be reviewed as follows.

1.2.1 Planning

The emergence of the corporate view of human resource planning in the mid-1970s, which continued through the 1980s, especially as advocated by Bell (1974), Bowey (1974), McBeath (1978), and Lynch (1980), consolidated this stage of conceptual growth (1982). Human resource planning follows and complements corporate strategy, according to this viewpoint. The initial understanding of this approach was that human resource planning was secondary to corporate strategy growth, however Edwards et al. (1983) argued that a human resource analysis could guide corporate strategy development. Human resource planning has been characterized by numerous writers over the last 3 decades according to their own disciplines, ideologies, orientations, and contextual frameworks. These contributions are divided into two categories: strategy-oriented definitions and process-oriented definitions in order to facilitate the argument.

One of the drawbacks of conventional human resource planning has been its distance from decision makers due to rigid formality and inflexible detail. Formal plans, embodied in agreed-upon papers, have traditionally been widely conveyed to key decision makers. Historically, such programs have enshrined detailed career frameworks and elements of job security (Russ, 1982), were criticized in the 1980s for leading to inflexible business responses in major Western corporations (Dyer and Hayer, 1984; Mills, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Informal preparation, on the other hand, allows for more flexibility in response and is relatively easier to implement, so it could be preferred in a small enterprise. The disadvantage of informal planning is that it can only exist in the mind of the CEO, and therefore its outputs may not be relevant to all key decision makers. There is no clear answer to the question of how structured you should be in terms of comprehensive reports and how flexible you should be with changes. Much depends on the organization's circumstances, such as the pace at which technology and markets change, and

large integrated organizations face challenges that are distinct from those faced by medium-sized decentralized or diversified organizations (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1989). However, because of the organizational learning created in the planning, the systems approach, especially its transformation portion, builds managers' ability to react to changing circumstances.

During the outbreak of COVID-19, organisations were pressured to adapt to the situation and proceed in an untraditional manner, even extending the recognition of utilising science and depending on it. Some corporations experienced employment downsizing to manage economic losses, self-scheduling to permit employees to set work times (Eurofound, 2020), and management of remote workspaces.

1.2.2 Polarisation

Due to the technological revolution polarisation turn to electronic. (Freeman,2002) defined the electronic polarisation as a system allows job seekers to registered themselves and their data to employment companies' websites to be selected and recruited, and that led to avoid wasting time and money to find the right person for the right job. So; E- polarization is a system to provide unemployed candidates job vacancies at organizations.

Polarisation, a human factor, must be considered when dealing with companies. Computer competencies and dealing with the public information network are now a minimum requirement. The ability to complete job duties from home is a necessity as well. HR managers must consider desire as a driver of changing the requirements of polarisation of the human element due to Covid-19.

1.2.3. Recruiting and selecting

Recruitment and selection –recruiting and selecting suitable applicants for jobs in any organization – are critical HRM functions. In this regard, the success of these two roles has a significant impact on the efficiency of a company's human resources (Gamage, 2014). Recruiting the wrong candidates will result in significant negative costs that companies cannot afford. As a result, the ultimate objective of recruiting and selection within the company is to hire the number and quality of workers needed to meet the organization's strategic goals while keeping costs to a minimum (Ofori and Aryeetey, 2011). For any form of company, recruitment and selection – the process of recruiting and selecting suitable applicants for jobs – are critical HRM functions. In this regard, the success of these two roles has a significant impact on the efficiency of a company's human resources (Gamage, 2014).

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The criteria for determination and appointment have recently become distinct in several ways as a result of Covid-19. The emphasis has moved to a greater understanding of emerging technologies. To enforce social distancing and health and safety practices, some firms perform both (online and face-to-face interviews).

1.2.4. Training and development

Kirkpatrick mentioned four categories (“levels”) to assess training effectiveness in a series of articles published fifty years ago – responses, learning, behavior, and performance (Kirkpatrick, 1959a, b, 1960). The first stage assesses trainees' immediate reactions to training programs, including satisfaction, perceived utility, and perceived difficulty (Warr and Bunce, 1995). The second level assesses the degree to which learning has taken place, with experience, ability, and/or attitude being used as indicators. Further levels assess how the training program has affected on-the-job behavioral and organizational outcomes, including turnover, volume of operation, cost-cutting, or quality metrics. Phillips (1977) went on to create a method for calculating the return on investment (ROI) in preparation, which is a ratio between the program's benefits and its full cost. Phillips and Phillips (2002, 2004) recently argued that the ROI of training is relevant in a variety of sectors including the public sector.

Training under Covid-19 has changed. Changes have occurred in training needs, education tools, especially assembly platforms, and techniques of evaluating coaching processes, hence, many companies execute the following steps to ensure efficiency of employee management: (Eurofound, 2020)

- a. Train management and supervisors to focus on motivation, to provide feedback and to provide sufficient recognition (“to lead with empathy”).
- b. Encourage employees to participate in professional development and training.
- c. Ensure employee well-being training to minimize the risk of employee burnout.
- d. Recruit temporary workers to support the understaffed services [partial or complete e- recruitment procedures should be taken into consideration].
- e. Train temporary staff to develop the necessary qualifications, in order to be able to replace absent or unavailable employees.
- f. Train Managers and supervisors how to direct remote employees and encouraging teamwork across on-site staff and employees working from home (Eur-lex).

- g. Train staff to perform new/additional duties and roles, enabling them to take over for colleagues and subordinates in the event of an emergency; consider cross- training between units. These workers will be able to perform vital tasks and/or fill in for colleagues in understaffed services/units.
- h. Provide training to volunteers agreeing to be temporarily redeployed (ILO-Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements).

1.2.5 Performance management and evaluation

The aim of performance evaluations is to improve organizational efficiency and productivity. The most critical single aim of performance appraisals, however, is to inform workers of their current status. Humans hate confusion by nature, and would rather hear bad news about their roles and futures in the company than not know what those positions and futures are. Lack of information will lead employees to raise questions about performance, whether their performance is satisfactory or not.

Employees must know where they stand and the progress of their performances in an organization for the following reasons (Wells and Spinks, 1994):

- a. To alleviate the confusion that all workers experience because they do not know what their supervisors think of their work.
- b. To offer incentives based on adequate or superior results, as well as management acknowledgment of such achievements.
- c. To recognise areas of unsatisfactory performance and to devise strategies for improving such performances.
- d. Assisting workers in setting career aspirations and redirecting their thoughts as it appears that their current goals will not be reached.

Considering the epidemic and the transition in job tasks, there has been a change in the methods of performance evaluation. As for most important adjustments, there will be modifications for a post- epidemic period, and these changes may be directed towards evaluating the effects of self-discipline in attendance, departure, and presence in the workplace.

1.2.6 Benefits and compensation

Compensation can take the form of monetary or non-monetary extrinsic payoff offered by an employer in exchange for the employee's time, expertise, and efforts in fulfilling job requirements aimed at achieving organizational goals (Swanepoel et. al.,2014). Compensation is considered as a major function of human resources management. In order to recruit, retain, and motivate workers, compensation is essential for both employers and employees (Absar et. al., 2010). Compensation refers to claims on goods and services paid to an employee in the form of money or a form that can be quickly and easily converted to money at the discretion of the employer (Nel, et. al., 2011) Compensation, also known as remuneration, is the sum of all benefits given to employees in exchange for their services (Ray and Ray, 2011).

Financial incentives play a significant role in assessing job satisfaction. Earnings is one of the first harmonic components of work satisfaction since it has such a strong influence on it. People with high life costs have ontogenesis needs that push employees to demand higher pay in order to secure their future and happiness (Qasim et. al., 2012).

The trend of businesses increasing rewards and benefits to motivate workers to work in these precautionary measures during the pandemic under psychological pressure and fear of contamination during the corona pandemic during the Corona pandemic.

In certain conditions, organisations may consider going beyond normal time pay to inspire group of workers to work extra hours (International Labour Organisation (ILO)—flex time and “time banking” schemes, 2020). For example, an organisation may pay a babysitting allowance during school closures, which permit parents to work on-site (Eurofound, 2020). Firms will need to ensure that redeployed personnel are receiving the full compensation and allowances as in previous positions (ILO—flex time and “time banking” schemes, 2020), and some businesses will pay a redeployment allowance to incentivise employees (Eurofound -2020). Furthermore, firms will consider a transportation allowance to inspire personnel to go to the office, especially if employees are worried about public transport (Eurofound, 2020).

1.2.7 Motivation

Achievement orientation, which motivates a trainee to enhance his or her job performance by learning, is one of the most important aspects of conscientiousness. A highly achievement-oriented trainee places a high value on improved work performance (valence), believes that he or she could achieve an increment in work performance as a result of high effort in learning (expectancy), and believes that he or she could achieve an increment in work performance as a result of high effort in learning (instrumentality). This is consistent with expectancy theory, which posits valence, expectancy, and instrumentality as the key components of performance motivation (Yamnill and McLe (instrumentality) (Colquitt et al., 2000; Colquitt and Simmering, 1998).

Achievement orientation is the trainee's propensity to set precise and high goals that can attract interest, commitment, and action. As a result, the trainee is encouraged to take goal-relevant steps (Locke and Latham, 2006), resulting in constructive learning for the purpose of improving job efficiency.

A key factor is job fulfilment, which motivates a trainee to improve performance through learning. This is consistent with the expectancy idea that posits valence, expectancy, and instrumentality as the key elements of standard overall performance motivation (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). There has been no research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3. Human resources practices after COVID-19:

1.3.1 Managing workspaces:

Facing new challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, developing changes to the planned contingency is essential to a company's strategic plans, as it is imperative to make modifications in an unexpected situation (Simpkins, 2009). Data analysis will improve the existing interactions throughout an organisation, so it is essential to advocate for various ways of working, both in the office and from home (Golden, 2009). In Mexico, telecommuting is prominent in many organisations, and organisations have naturally carried out modalities where employees are no longer in the same physical space. Madero Gómez and Flores Zambada (2009) investigated a further step, asking about elements that impact a worker's inclination to be given a domestic place of business scheme.

During COVID-19 the following practices are in use: expanded workspaces, physical distances, and dispersed desks (ILO—Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work, 2020). Some examples of managing and expanding workspaces include the following: using available rooms (meeting rooms, canteen, warehouse, etc.), borrowing or renting extra offices, extending canteen and kitchen times for social distancing (ILO—Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work, 2020), and allowing the use of outside spaces for lunch (ILO—Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work, 2020).

1.3.2 Time management (scheduling) work

When considering monochronic and polychronic habits and patterns, it is useful to determine objective and subjective elements of time for feasible connections. Objective techniques to time typically consider time as a uniform commodity, with some people viewing time as important as money. Traditional research considers time in terms of portions available, assessing deficits or pressures that result from having too little time. More recently, researchers have examined individual perceptions of time.

Objective time is characterised by means of concrete or measurable portions of time, and subjective time is based absolutely on individual perceptions of the quantities of time available, relative to what needs to be accomplished. A subjective perception, which ranges between polychrons and monochrons thinking, makes it difficult to think of time as a structure. Structure represents a view of time related to planning and scheduling; some people perceive time as non-stop and smooth, and others perceive time as structured and purposive. The time shape questionnaire (TSQ) (Bond & Feather, 1988) consists of 26 questions assessing an individual's competencies to structure their time use in relation to their activities. Factor-analysis posted five underlying factors: purpose, structured routine, present orientation, fantastic organization and persistence.

Several warning signs of structure are additionally observed in a 64 -item psychographic scale referred to as the FAST scale: (1) focus, (2) activity, (3) structure, and (4) tenacity (Settle et al., 1972).

Time use in administration expects that an individual's focus of the monochronic or polychronic facet of personal time style influences their strategic time use, their perceptions of time pressure, and the quantities and order of time spent on duties (Gross, 1987). This affects personal effectivity assessments, whether one sees oneself as a true planner or a time waster. Good time administration is linked with orderly behaviour, with conscious ordering, sequencing, and combining of activities for the time available. Such a strategy assumes that time is normally used for one motive within a given period, that matters are performed sequentially, and that time is measured objectively in minutes and hours.

1.3.3 Occupational safety and health

The cutting-edge areas of commercial enterprise can be hazardous, with many manageable protections risks adversely affecting bodily and psychological health (Levi, 2011). Physical risks are factors of the work environment that can be dangerous, and the risk can be due to the environmental design or employees failing to comply with secure practices. Both expose personnel to hazards. For example, employees may fail to wear shielding equipment. The nature of the job can put employees into high-risk situations, such as farm workers who handle poisonous chemicals or healthcare workers exposed to infectious diseases. Safety dangers can happen through interactions on the job.

Concerning security from bodily damage and illness due to unintentional exposure to bodily risks has been under researched in the literature on mistreatment. For example, the entire *Handbook of Workplace Violence* (Kelloway et al., 2006) does not include a chapter on accidents or safety, nor is it mentioned in the index. The lack of safety content displays the rarity of sources that include both bodily and interpersonal risks in the same study. This is unfortunate as there are some findings suggesting that bodily and interpersonal dangers can be associated (e.g., Gazica & Spector, 2013).

1.4 Literature summary and framework development

The influence of COVID-19 on economic activities, markets, or commercial enterprises has received much research (Bartik et al., 2020; Brammer et al., 2020; De Massis & Rondi, 2020; Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; Hao et al., 2020; Manski & Molinari, 2020; Phan & Narayan, 2020; Ravina-Ripoll & Tobar-Pesántez, 2020; Seetharaman, 2020; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). Studies have examined the development of the pandemic and its repercussions on markets and enterprise units. This

study investigates the influence of prevention measures to confront COVID-19 on the HRM practices in developing countries.

Prevention measures to confront COVID-19 differ between countries; therefore, this study investigates the anticipated HRM practices in various countries in addition to different traits of corporations and sectors. The results lead to a distinction in HRM practices.

Figure 1 provides the framework for the impact of social distancing resulting from the precautionary measures due to the epidemic on the activities of HR administration.

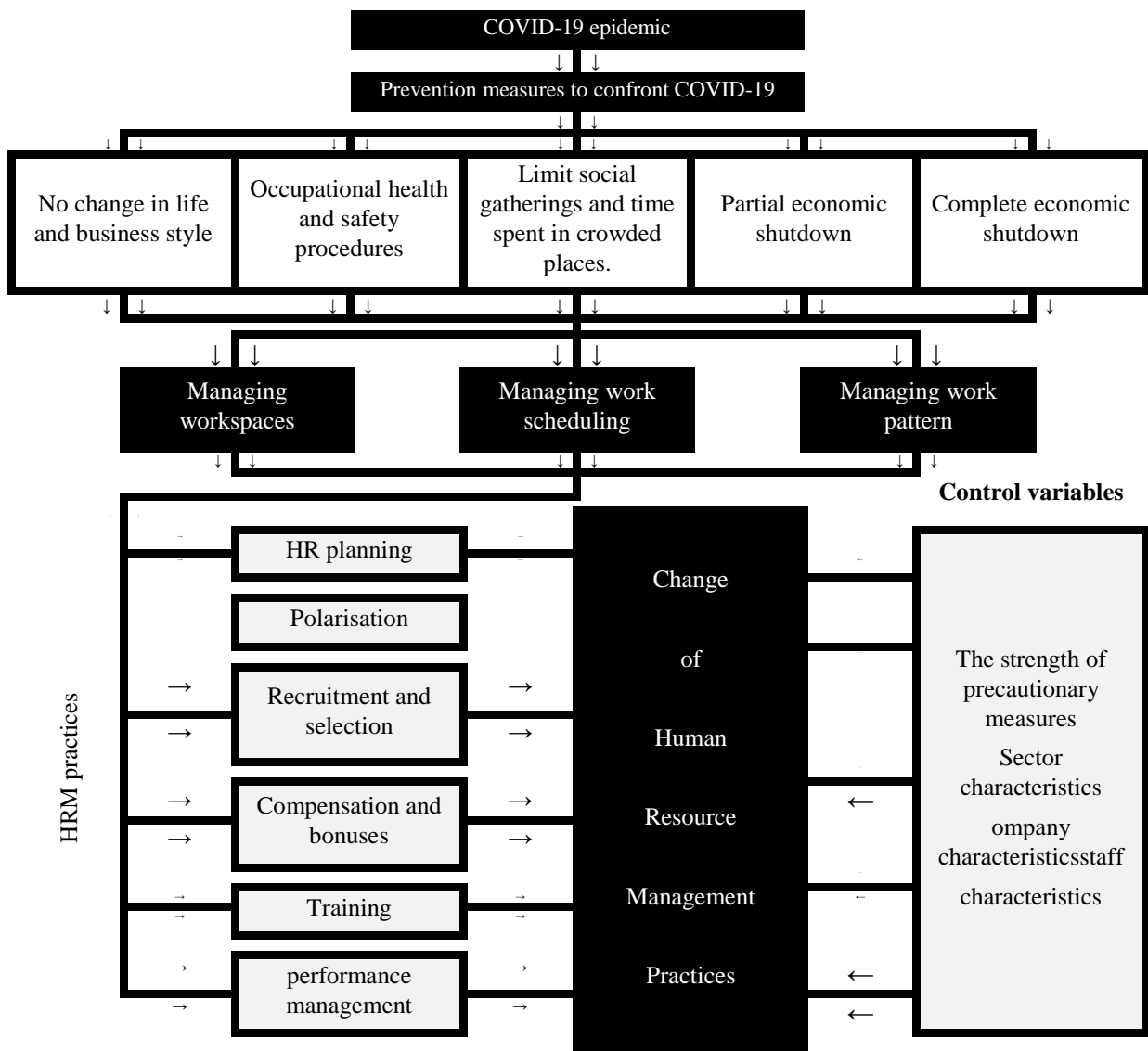


Figure 1: Study framework

2. Data and Methodology:

The data of social distancing covers the period 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021 and is the national data used for Egypt and countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The data consist of components from retail-recreation, grocery and pharmacy, parks, transit stations, workplaces, and residential locations (based on social distancing data according to community mobility reports to COVID-19).

To measure attitudes towards change in HRM, this study uses a multiple-choice questionnaire provided on a professional social platform (LinkedIn) on the nature of workspaces and HRM practices after March 2020. To examine the impact of social distancing on workspace environments and HRM, this study conducted a survey on a Google forum through emails to HR managers in each country.

The survey considers the following dimensions. (1) workers traits, which covered managing workspace, managing work scheduling, managing work pattern; (2) human assets practices, which covered HR planning, recruitment and selection, compensation and bonuses, training, and performance management; and (3) firm characteristics, which include the size of an organisations according to number of staff. (In the non-diversification of the measurement of the sectors, this variable was once excluded from the statistical analysis). The sample data includes 140 questionnaires (20 from each country) received in the last quarter of 2020.

The study used a unique methodology by combining quantitative and qualitative records to estimate the change in useful HR practices considering the social divergence ensuing from the precautionary measures of the COVID-19 epidemic. The quantitative statistics covered the rate of social distancing as a proportion of the cost of presence in the office in different international locations (as an impartial variable). The qualitative records were used to estimate of alternate in human practices (as a structured variable).

3. Results and Data Analysis

3.1 Data Description of social distancing for Sample countries

Figures 2–8 illustrate social distancing measures in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The statistical data are based upon average data of six indices, demonstrating the change from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021.

3.1.1 Bahrain

In Bahrain, the largest reduction rates were in workplaces in May, with an average monthly rate of 26,851%. As for the study period, Bahrain witnessed an 18.785% decrease in workplaces, on average. According to Figure (2)

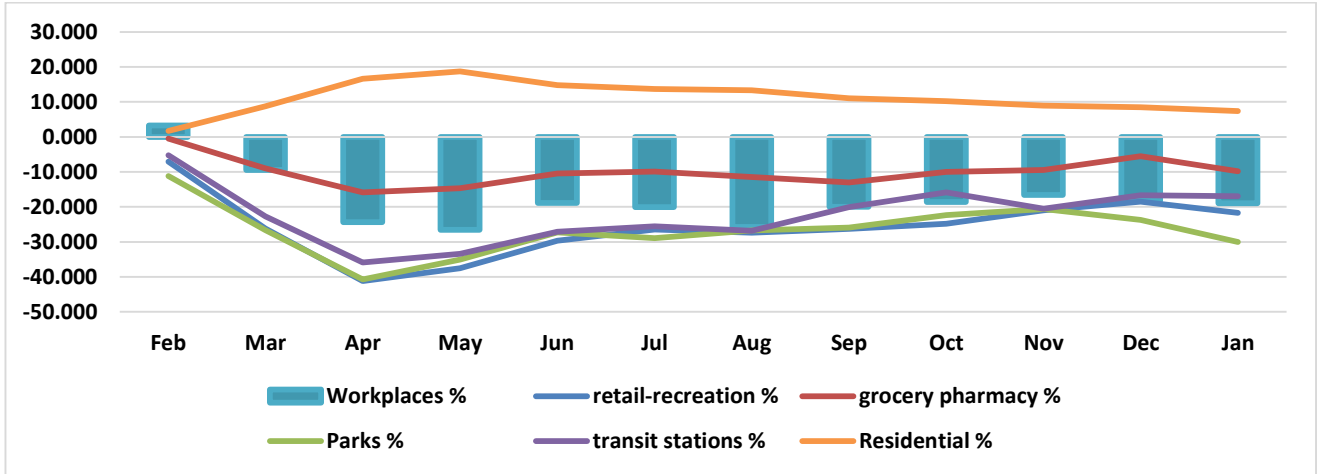


Figure 2. Social distancing for Bahrain from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.2 Egypt

Figure (3) shows the variation in social distancing rates in Egypt, where the largest decline in workplaces was in the month of April, with a monthly average of 35.367%. During the study period, Egypt witnessed a 15.1% decrease in workplace, on average.

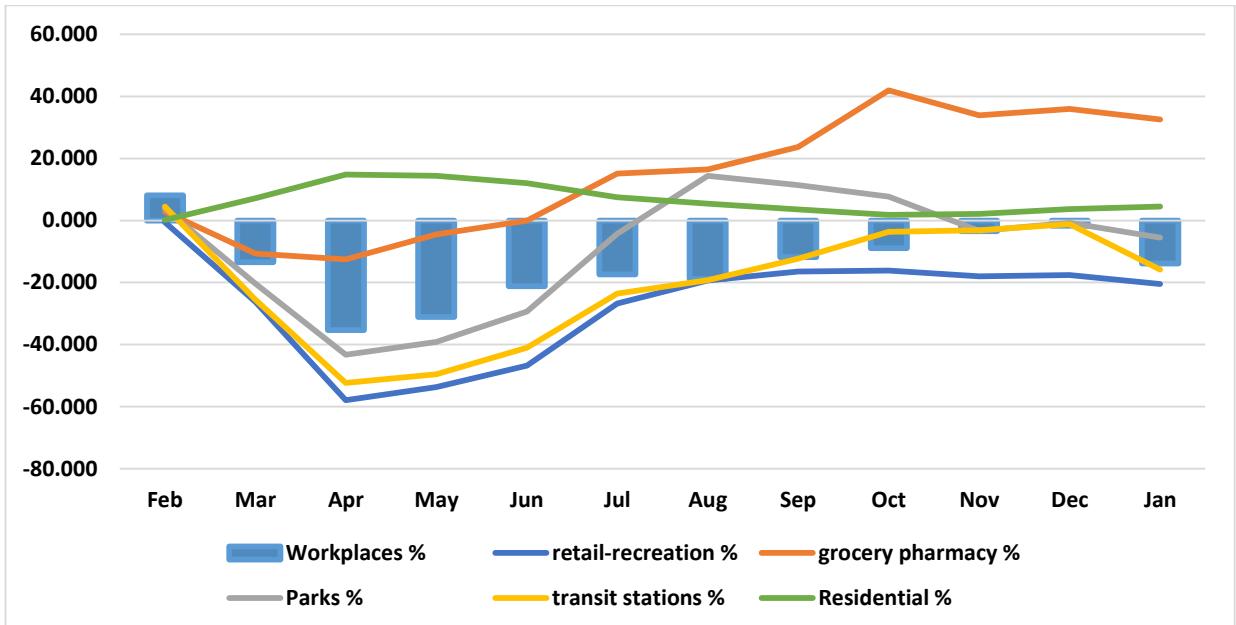


Figure 3. Social distancing for Egypt from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.3 Kuwait

Figure (4) shows the variation in social distancing rates in the State of Kuwait, where the largest decrease in the workplace was in May, with an average monthly rate of 68.355%. During the study period, the State of Kuwait witnessed a 32.7% decrease in the workplace, on average.

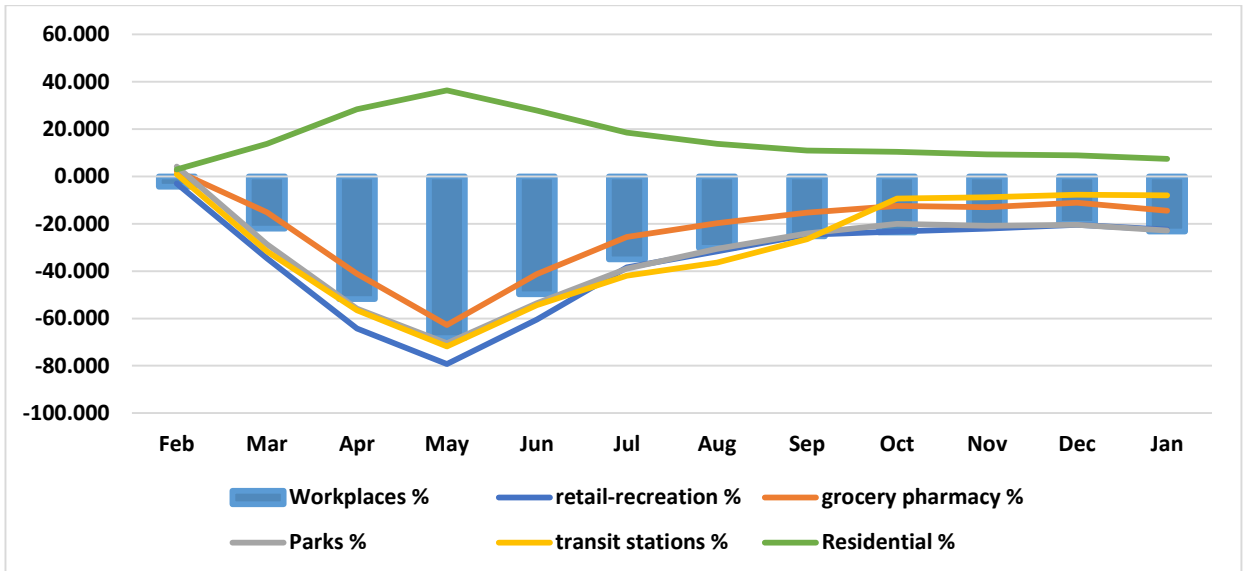


Figure 4. Social distancing for Kuwait from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.4 Oman

Figure (5) shows the variation in social distancing rates in Amman, where the largest decline in workplaces was in the month of April, with a monthly average of 41.46%. During the study period, Amman witnessed a 25% decrease in the workplace, on average.

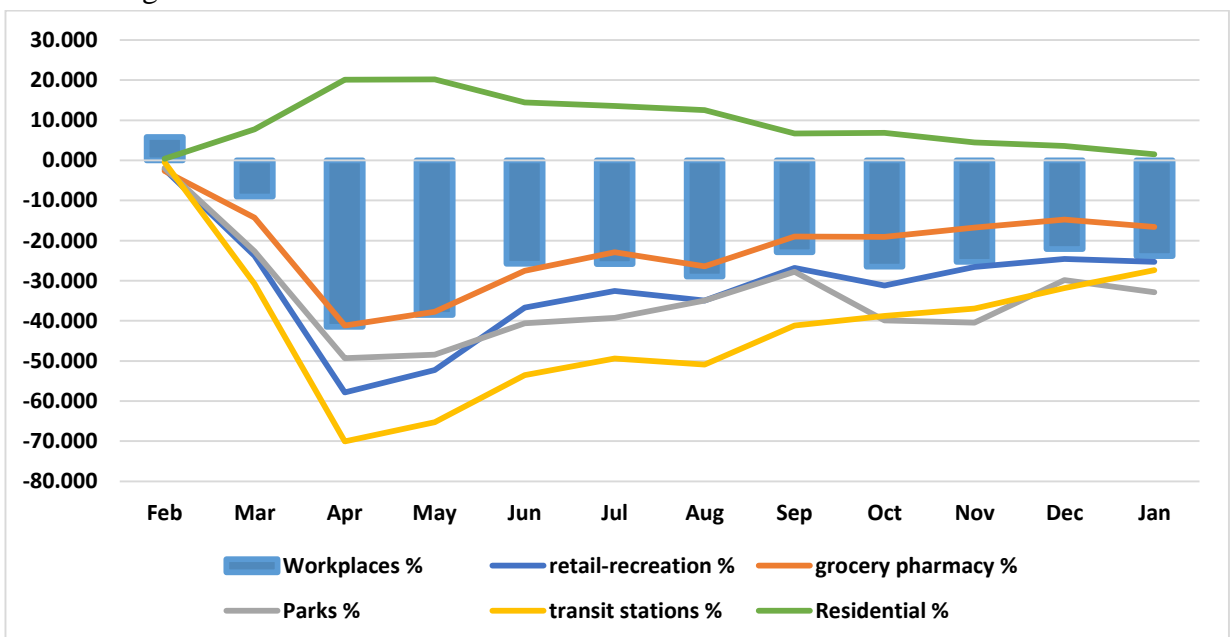


Figure 5. Social distancing for Morocco from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.5 Qatar

Figure (6) shows the variation in social distancing rates in the State of Qatar, where the largest decrease in workplaces was in May, with an average monthly rate of 38.613%. During the study period, Qatar witnessed an 11.788% decrease in the workplace, on average.

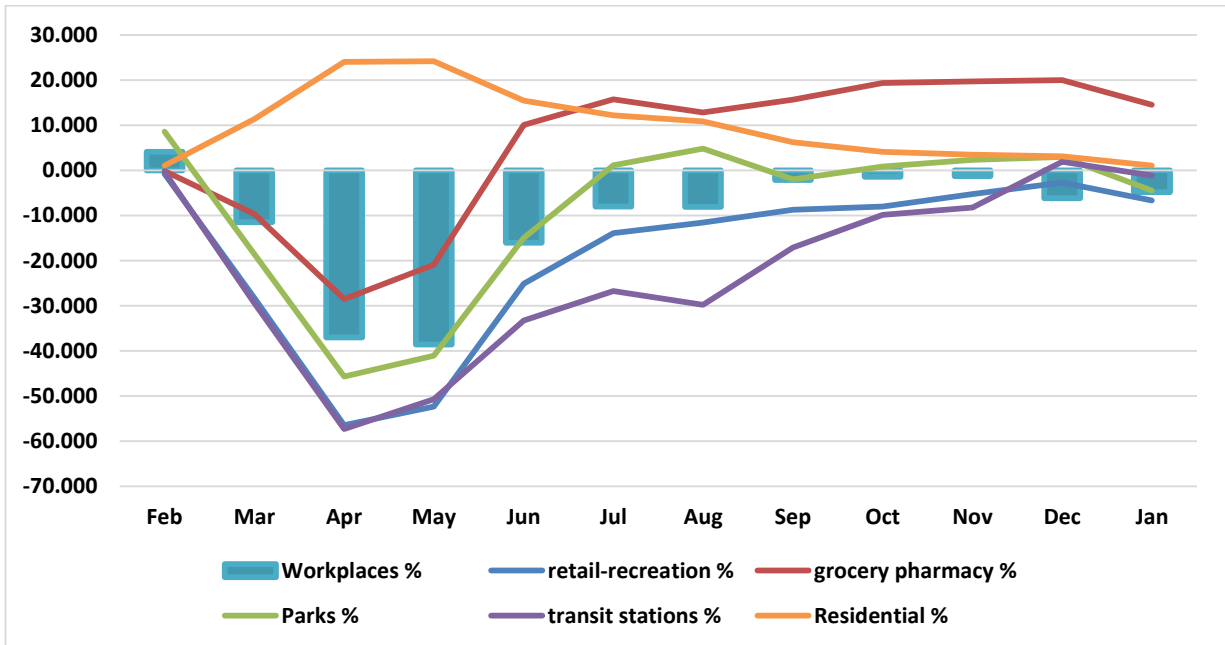


Figure 6. Social distancing for Qatar from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.6 Saudi Arabia

Figure 7 shows the variation in social distancing rates in Saudi Arabia, where the largest decline in the workplace was in the month of April, with a monthly average of 54.1%. During the study period, Saudi Arabia witnessed a 25.9% decrease in the workplace, on average.

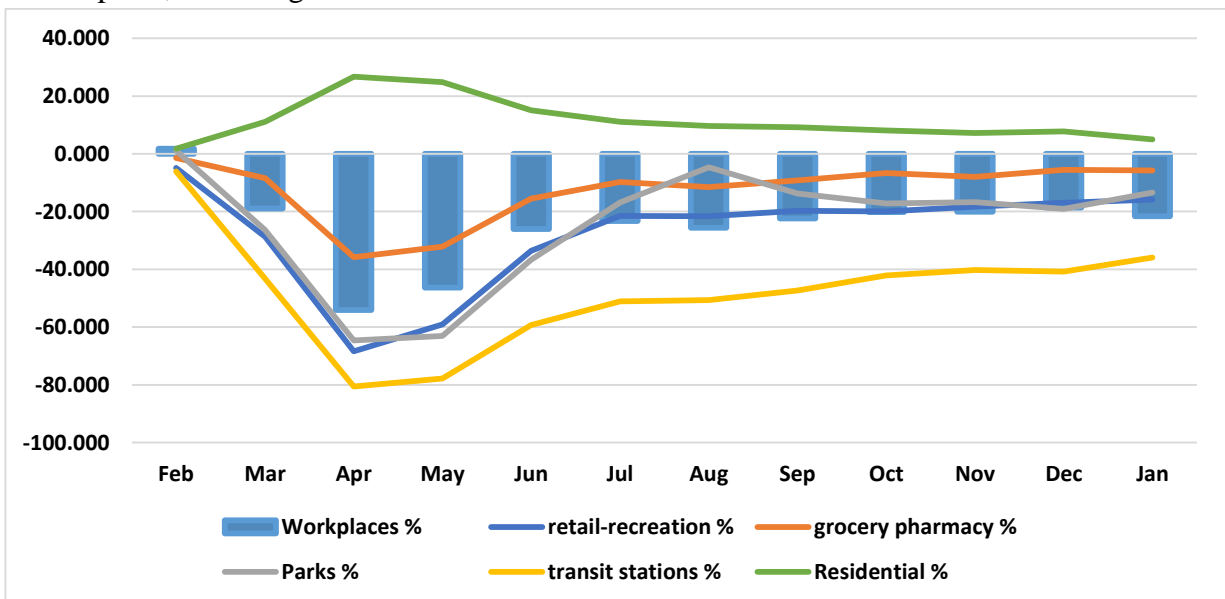


Figure 7. Social distancing for Saudi Arabia from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.7. United Arab Emirates

Figure 8 shows the variation in social distancing rates in the United Arab Emirates, where the largest decline in the workplace was in the month of April, with a monthly average of 29.6%. During the study period, Saudi Arabia witnessed a 23.6% decrease in the workplace, on average.

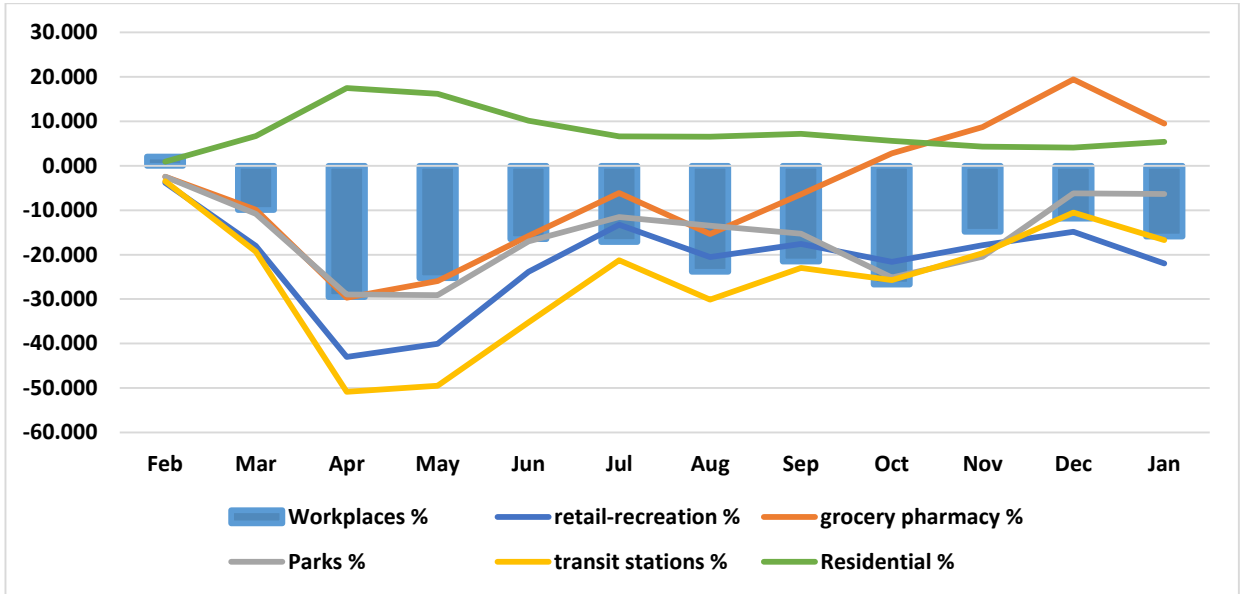


Figure 8. Social distancing for the United Arab Emirates from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.1.8 Social distancing for sample countries

The rates of social distancing can be compared between the GCC countries in Figure 9. The results demonstrate that the highest changes in social distancing were made in Kuwait, while the lowest changes in social distancing were made in Qatar.

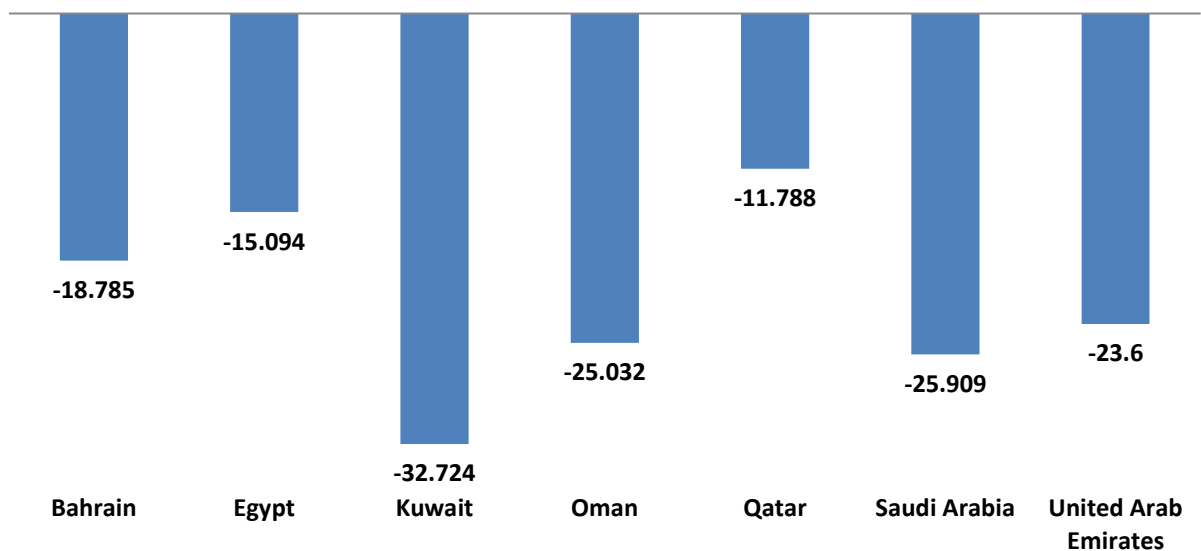


Figure 9. Average social distancing by country from 15 February 2020 to 19 January 2021

3.2 Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis is used to ensure the consistency of the results if the survey lists are redistributed to a sample with equal characteristics; the Alpha coefficient is 0.6614, which is an applicable charge in the social sciences.

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

3.3.1 Impact of social distancing on workspace nature

The study measured the trends of change in the nature of the workplace through five phrases. Table 1 outlines the attitudes towards change in workplaces considering social distancing.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of change of workspace nature

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Coefficient of variation
1	To what extent does social distancing affect managing workspace after March 2020.	4.1571	0.9911	0.238411
2	To what extent does social distancing affect the number of employees in the workplace after March 2020.	4.4286	0.4966	0.112135
3	To what extent does social distancing affect managing work scheduling after March 2020.	2.8714	0.395	0.137564
4	To what extent does social distancing affect work hours after March 2020.	2.1857	0.5442	0.248982
5	To what extent does the staff's recommendations for social distancing affect work pattern after March 2020.	4.5571	0.5401	0.118518
Change of workspace nature		3.64	0.3074	0.084451

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through the descriptive statistical analysis, the study finds that statement (2) has the greatest agreement among participants. This is the phrase about capacity of workers in the workplace. Statement (4), concerning the change in working hours, had the lowest agreement. However, there is a wide agreement about the change of workspace nature at 91.55%.

3.3.2. Impact of social distancing and workplace nature on Human Resource Management

The study measured the trends of changes in HM through 12 phrases (numbers 6–17). Table 2 outlines the attitudes towards the change in HRM considering social distancing and workplaces nature.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of change on HRM

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Coefficient of variation
6	To what extent does human resources planning (planning personnel requirements) change after March 2020.	4.2	0.4014	0.095571429
7	To what extent does the polarisation process change after March 2020.	3.4571	0.7527	0.21772584
8	To what extent does the recruitment and selecting process change after March 2020.	3.5429	0.808	0.228061757
9	To what extent doe interviews with job candidates change after March 2020.	4.6286	0.4849	0.104761699
10	To what extent does compensation and bonus management change after March 2020.	1.9143	0.2809	0.146737711
11	To what extent does the motivation process change after March 2020.	1.9643	0.3479	0.177111439
12	To what extent do training process procedures change after March 2020.	4.05	0.2187	0.054
13	To what extent do trainee evaluation procedures change after March 2020.	3.0643	0.2989	0.097542669
14	To what extent do training needs change after March 2020.	4.5143	0.5016	0.111113572
15	To what extent do training tools change after March 2020.	4.9643	0.1862	0.037507806
16	To what extent doe the performance management procedures change after March 2020.	3.05	0.2187	0.071704918
17	To what extent do the performance appraisal tools change after March 2020	4.0929	0.4931	0.120476923
Change on HRM		3.6202	0.1992	0.055024584

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through the descriptive statistical analysis, we find that statement (15) has the largest rate of agreement between the sample, dealing with training tools. Statement (8) has the lowest rate of agreement. The participants anticipate a year towards a change in work, with an agreement rate of 94.49%.

3.4 Hypothesis tests

3.4.1 Change in workplaces nature under social distancing

The study used panel analysis to examine the impact of social distancing on the change in workplaces nature considering the size of the company.

Table 3. Impact of social distancing on the change in workplaces nature

	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-ratio	p-value	
const	2.84690	0.120087	23.71	<0.0001	***
SD	-0.0335164	0.00294844	-11.37	<0.0001	***
CZ	0.0207298	0.0425418	0.4873	0.6269	
Mean dependent var		3.640000	S.D. dependent var		0.307414
Sum squared resid		6.056901	S.E. of regression		0.215025
LSDV R-squared		0.538908	Within R-squared		0.537359
LSDV F(8, 131)		19.13854	P-value(F)		7.93e-19
Log-likelihood		21.17969	Akaike criterion		-24.35938
Schwarz criterion		2.115399	Hannan-Quinn		-13.60082
rho		0.520287	Durbin-Watson		0.887646

Note: Model 1: Fixed-effects, using 140 observations, included 7 cross-sectional units. Time-series length = 20. Dependent variable: WN. Joint test on named regressors: Test statistic: $F(2, 131) = 76.0783$; p-value = $P(F(2, 131) > 76.0783) = 1.18444e-022$.

Test for differing group intercepts: Null hypothesis: The groups have a common intercept. Test statistic: $F(6, 131) = 0.161546$; p-value = $P(F(6, 131) > 0.161546) = 0.986346$

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through inferential analysis, the study finds an impact of social distancing on the change in workplaces nature, as social distancing explains 54% of the change in the characteristics of workplaces, significant at the 1% level.

3.4.2 HRM under social distancing and change in workplace nature

The study used panel analysis to examine the impact of social distancing and the change in workplaces nature on HR practices considering the size of the company.

Table 4. Impact of social distancing and the change in workplaces nature on HRM

	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-ratio	p-value	
const	2.00760	0.218039	9.208	<0.0001	***
SD	0.00836193	0.00328041	2.549	0.0120	**
CZ	0.0563497	0.0336132	1.676	0.0961	*
WN	0.447776	0.0689708	6.492	<0.0001	***
Mean dependent var		3.620238	S.D. dependent var		0.199237
Sum squared resid		3.745623	S.E. of regression		0.169742
LSDV R-squared		0.321157	Within R-squared		0.316821
LSDV F(9, 130)		6.833593	P-value(F)		5.24e-08
Log-likelihood		54.82241	Akaike criterion		-89.64482
Schwarz criterion		-60.22840	Hannan-Quinn		-77.69087
rho		0.565235	Durbin-Watson		0.784219

Note: Model 2: Fixed-effects, using 140 observations, included 7 cross-sectional units. Time-series length = 20. Dependent variable: HRM. Joint test on named regressors: Test statistic: $F(3, 130) = 20.0956$ with p-value = $P(F(3, 130) > 20.0956) = 9.19352e-011$

Test for differing group intercepts: Null hypothesis: The groups have a common intercept. Test statistic: $F(6, 130) = 0.167372$ with p-value = $P(F(6, 130) > 0.167372) = 0.985011$

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through inferential analysis, the study finds the impact of social distancing and the change in workplace nature on the change in HR practices, as social distancing explains 32% of the change in human resource practices, significant at the 1% level.

3.4.3 Similarity of the dimensions of the change in workplace nature.

The study test expressions (1)–(5), the nature of the workplace, using the Fred Mann test to determine the significance of the difference (Table 5).

Table 5. Friedman Test for the dimensions of the change in workplaces nature

Ranks		Test Statistics ^a	
	Mean Rank	N	140
Q1	3.62	Chi-Square	411.297
Q2	3.91	df	4
Q3	2.08	Asymp. Sig.	.000
Q4	1.23		
Q5	4.16		

a. Friedman Test

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through inferential analysis, there is a difference in the aspects of the change in workplaces nature, as the coefficient (Chi^2) at degrees of freedom 4 and estimated at (411,297) is significant at the 1% level.

3.4.4 Similarity of the dimensions of the change in HRM practices.

The study tests expressions (6)–(17), 12 dimensions of HRM practices, using the Friedman test to determine the significance of the difference (Table 6).

Ranks		Test Statistics ^a	
	Mean Rank	N	140
Q6	8.52	Chi-Square	1284.648
Q7	5.58	df	11
Q8	5.89	Asymp. Sig.	.000
Q9	9.89		
Q10	1.48		
Q11	1.61		
Q12	7.88		
Q13	4.37		
Q14	9.59		
Q15	10.93		
Q16	4.32		
Q17	7.93		

a. Friedman Test

Source: Authors, according to statistical analysis

Through inferential analysis, there is a difference in HRM practices, as the coefficient (χ^2) at degrees of freedom 4 and estimated at (1284,648) is significant at the 1% level.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Although COVID-19 began in China in 2019, after March 2020 many organisations were exposed to a set of unprecedented restrictions due to the pandemic. Countries worldwide enacted measures that changed the nature of work for many companies, including social distancing, which was compulsory in some regions. General closures and curfews decreased working hours and the number of employees in offices.

This study explores HR practices in Egypt and the GCC countries through the integration of quantitative data (social distancing in the workplace) and metadata (trends towards changing the nature of workplaces and HR practices) through a sample of 140 individuals from the seven.

The results indicate that social distancing has affected the nature of offices at the 1% level and that social distancing explains (54%) alternative workplaces. In contrast, there is an impact on of social distancing and the changing nature of HR practices. Social distancing and the change in the nature of work (32%) significantly explains the change in HR practices considering the size (number of employees) of an organisation. However, there is a difference in the extent to which the dimensions of job location change, and then the quantity of personnel is greater. Due to COVID-19, in addition to HR practices, training needs and tools was the most modified.

4.2 Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has introduced difficulties as well as possibilities for HR managers to take transformational leadership in different sectors. Therefore, this study recommends the action plan for organisations to adapt to resist the impact of the epidemic and social distancing; See table (7). Identify the output gap, Identify the operations gap, Identify the inputs (resources), Evaluating the company's strategic location considering the precautionary measures to confront the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, Business model redesign, Re-planning human resources, Obtaining the support of organisations employees to develop the business model, Job descriptions considering the new business model, A plan for qualifying the human component for the new job requirements, Providing training programmes for the human component, Evaluate the performance of the human factor and Reassess the strategic position of the organisations while taking corrective actions. Organisations from countries with similar social distancing choose similar selection instruments for the practices of human resources management (HRM).

This study recognises that the outcomes provide guidance for managing the COVID- 19 pandemic and implications of social distancing for many companies. Future research could investigate the impact on manufacturing capacity in the midst of sluggish supply chains, especially as it affects profits. Additionally, monetary stability and long loans in the banking sector are fertile topics for additional research on COVID- 19 and social distancing.

Managers must adopt the pandemic in the light of uncertainty of the crisis duration and replace the traditional work methods also depend on technological apps and programs which allow them to communicate with staff.

Employees must be able to use technology during the pandemic, also the recent circumstances considered a declaration of the end of paperwork.

Table 7. Executive layout to advance HR practices of social distancing.

No.	Stage	Executive Mechanism	Implementation Officer	Expected Duration	Budget
1	Identify the output gap	A comparative measurement between actual and planned performance	Top management	One day	According to the size of the organisations and the type of its activity
2	Identify the operations gap	Determine the processes to be achieved with the available resources, considering the constraints of social distancing to bridge the output gap	Production and operation manager	One week	
3	Identify the inputs (resources)	Determine the human and material resources and technology that achieve planned operations considering the restrictions of social distancing to bridge the output gap	Production operation manager and HR manager	One week	
4	Evaluating the company's strategic location considering the precautionary measures to confront the emerging COVID-19 pandemic	SWOT analysis	Top management	One week	
5	Business model redesign	A supreme committee that includes all senior managers in addition to the board of directors	Delegating senior administration to one of the advisory bodies	Three weeks	
6	Re-planning human resources	Determine the personnel needs for the new business model	Top management	One week	

No.	Stage	Executive Mechanism	Implementation Officer	Expected Duration	Budget
7	Obtaining the support of organisations employees to develop the business model	Meetings with workers and a general conference of the company	HR department	Two weeks	
8	Job descriptions considering the new business model	Conduct job description	HR & public relations departments	One week	
9	A plan for qualifying the human component for the new job requirements	Identification of training needs	HR department	One week	
10	Providing training programmes for the human component	Training programmes	HR department	Four weeks	
11	Evaluate the performance of the human factor	Performance appraisal reports	HR department	Four weeks	
12	Reassess the strategic position of the organisations while taking corrective actions	Implement SWOT analysis	HR department	Four weeks	

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