

Industrial Psychologist's Role In Controlling COVID-19's Psychological Effects At Work

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic recently brought about significant changes in the world. Employees who worked remotely reported feeling lonely, exhausted, and depressed. It is the duty of industrial psychology professionals to address the psychological health of their workforce. They assist line management by providing social and psychological counseling to staff members who are having issues. The current study's goal was to investigate how industrial psychologists can help manage the psychological effects of COVID-19 on workers. A social constructivist qualitative research design was used, with a homogeneous sampling technique. A qualitative survey and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 22 industrial psychology practitioners who were registered as interns and psychologists. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The majority of participants thought that COVID-19's arrival sped up workplace change. According to the findings, industrial psychologists play a crucial role in helping organizations prepare for the changes in the workplace by offering multi-level interventions. The implementation of interventions to support employees in their efforts to cope with the psychological effects of COVID-19 is advised for organizations.

Keywords: COVID-19, Psychological Impact, Industrial Psychology.

Introduction:

When it comes to assisting workers with social and psychological issues, the workplace is crucial (Bergh, 2021). These usually involve negotiating the constantly shifting workplace, like the significant shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Strict lockdowns, social isolation, and employees managing their personal lives while working remotely were all consequences of the pandemic. According to studies, the fear of getting sick, job insecurity, loneliness, and future uncertainty were some of the reasons why people reported feeling anxious and stressed during the pandemic (Giorgi et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). But COVID-19 also led to the acceptance of new ideas and abilities, which led to a radical rethinking of the workplace of the future (Volini et al., 2021). The function of the industrial and work psychologist is made clear in this respect. Industrial psychology professionals are in charge of handling psychological concerns in South African organizations.

Governments around the world were compelled to implement measures like social distancing and lockdowns in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic (Greyling et al., 2021). The majority of South African workers had been working from home for a few months at the start of this study. The majority of businesses have implemented new virtual working methods, including Zoom and Microsoft Team meetings, to enable employees to complete their work (Williams, 2021). Some workers experienced issues because working from home, made possible by sophisticated technologies, blurred the boundaries between work and family time (Troughakos et al., 2020).

To solve problems at work and improve work, industrial psychologists use psychological models to change behavior in organizations (Jex and Britt, 2014). According to (Schultz et al. 2020), one of the duties of industrial psychologists is to offer psychological interventions to companies, like workplace counseling, in order to address psychological issues.

In essence, an industrial psychologist helps employees perform at their best at work by providing workplace counseling. From the standpoint of industrial psychology, workplace counseling aims to address stress-related issues and support employees' personal growth. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the important role that industrial psychologists play in controlling the psychological effects of COVID-19 in the workplace (Schultz et al., 2020).

COVID-19:

Another major change in workplace culture was brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic began, work has accelerated and workplace change has escalated to a new level. The findings indicate that the participants identified the new work practices—such as managing a virtual office, working more remotely, integrating work and personal life, and experiencing a sense of constant change as being linked to the workplace culture shift. The participants considered how common depression and a sense of loss were at the start of the pandemic. The loneliness of the lockdown, the death of loved ones, and the risk to the workers' health may have made this worse. The study's participants saw a high level of job insecurity and uncertainty among the workers they assisted. According to the participants, some jobs changed, some organizations had to close, and some jobs were redundant. The results are consistent with a study, which discovered that the lockdown, social distancing policies, income loss, and future anxiety all had an impact on workers' mental health (Giorgi et al. 2020).

Employees supported:

Support is required for employees who are anxious as well as for them to reestablish routines. asserts that management should support workers' return to work with vigilance. This can be accomplished in three phases. The first involves addressing the human element and making sure that workers are thriving, coping, and emotionally healthy. Second, during a transition period, create additional points of contact throughout the day to inquire about the well-being of staff members as they resume a more regular schedule, whether at work or at home. These might include asking whether workers have the resources they require, assessing how they are handling their workload, and finding out if they are taking enough breaks. Last but not least, considering an organization's business side, management should make sure that tasks are completed and that task agreements are modified to take into account new work as the workplace evolves. Our study demonstrated that in order for employees to adapt to the new workplace, management support is necessary. Particularly after the pandemic, when workers had to adapt to a new workplace (Agba , 2020).

Industrial psychology:

An important aspect of industrial psychology is fostering employees' personal and professional development. With an intervention strategy tailored to each employee's unique trajectory, industrial and organizational psychologists are well-positioned in organizations to assist workers in the current post-pandemic phase. The intervention toolkit created to assist facilitators in managing the mental health of workers during a pandemic serves as an excellent illustration. The industrial psychology professions are addressed by the psycho-social intervention approach, which includes organizational restructuring, needs assessment, crisis management, open communication, and support and interventions for both individuals and groups. state that being at the forefront of this task and sharing resources to help with mental health issues in the South African community is part of the psychologists' role during the COVID-19 pandemic. To be ready for similar mental health issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, psychologists and mental health professionals must receive training in quick and effective treatment methods like psychological first aid, solution-focused brief psychotherapy, and longer-lasting treatment models (Graupner, 2021).

Role of the industrial psychology practitioner in COVID-19: The responses from the participants made it abundantly evident how important industrial psychology practitioners are in managing the effects of COVID-19 in the workplace. According to the participants, industrial psychologists play a crucial role as ethics managers in the evolving workplace. According to the participants, they were in charge of gatekeeping in organizations to manage ethics as ethics managers. claim that the foundation of industrial psychology practitioners is positive ethical behavior. Verify that

professionals in industrial psychology uphold moral principles and procedures in their workplaces. Therefore, it would appear that industrial psychologists should help managers either rethink how the new workspace should be managed as a safe environment or help make the workplace a safe place for workers to return to after the COVID-19 pandemic (Jex, 2014).

Recommendations:

- To address the mental health of their employees, organizations should invest in both proactive and reactive interventions. Since the COVID-19 pandemic brought forth new workload challenges, organizations should concentrate on managing job demands and assessing job support. For employees who work from home, a greater emphasis on the accessibility of interventions on virtual platforms is imminent. To provide proper mental health support, line managers must be trained to recognize the warning signs and symptoms of psychological illness in employees.
- The results of this study could be used by industrial psychologists to establish themselves as change agents, management consultants, ethics managers, and workplace counselors in order to effectively support organizations in managing the psychological effects of COVID-19. Counseling skills must be continuously developed by industrial psychology practitioners in order to support employees psychologically. In retrospect, it is evident that crisis management training ought to be given top priority in order to handle the psychological effects of the evolving workplace and traumatic events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study's findings demonstrate that industrial psychologists can use counseling theory and models to help workers cope with stressful and traumatic events like the COVID-19 pandemic. To be prepared to support employees as best they can, industrial psychologists should concentrate on enhancing their abilities in individual, group, and organizational counseling interventions.

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