



Human resource management in healthcare: challenges and perspectives

Marina Kostić^a

^a Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Medical Studies Prokuplje, Serbia

Article info

Professional paper

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.46793/ICEMIT23.253K>

UDC/ UDK:

005.96:614

Abstract

Human resource management (HRM) in healthcare plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality healthcare delivery, patient satisfaction, and the efficient functioning of healthcare organizations. Managing human resources in healthcare presents specific challenges and requirements due to the nature of this industry. Effective Human Resource Management in healthcare demands expertise and careful planning to ensure that healthcare organizations can provide high-quality and safe healthcare to their patients. This comprehensive review scientific paper explores key aspects of Human Resource Management in the healthcare sector. The healthcare industry represents a unique context for Human resource management, given the complexity and high level of responsibility associated with the roles of healthcare professionals. The paper addresses the challenges, strategies, and perspective related to human resource management in healthcare, with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of this subject. Understanding the complexities of this topic is crucial for ensuring the provision of high-quality and safe healthcare services to patients.

Keywords: Human resource management, healthcare, human resources, industry, patient.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, human resource management has become a highly significant factor in almost every organization and its internal dynamics, with many institutions having dedicated departments whose scope of work revolves around human resources and competencies (Kuka, 2013). Human Resource Management (HRM) is a multidisciplinary approach to managing human resources within an organization and business that focuses on nearly all aspects related to employees (employment, motivation, development, communication, workforce, capacity, and potential). The aim of these departments is to provide the organization with an adequate number of qualified and motivated employees to achieve the organization's goals in an optimal and efficient manner. Therefore, it involves optimizing human resources and the workforce to achieve an organization's success. It can be said that human resource management in the healthcare sector plays a crucial role in providing high-quality healthcare, patient satisfaction, and the efficient functioning of healthcare organizations. Consequently, this sector inevitably faces numerous challenges, shaping the future directions and perspectives of development in this field. This involves recruiting and training medical staff, managing stress and workload, promoting patient safety and satisfaction, complying with healthcare laws and regulations, and addressing other relevant topics. Human resources in healthcare encompass medical and administrative staff, as well as other employees in the sector who play a vital role in providing healthcare and supporting patients, thereby contributing to the functionality and efficiency of the healthcare organization they belong to. In fact, effective human resource management in a healthcare institution directly impacts the improvement of the quality of healthcare services, greater efficiency in the operation of healthcare organizations, thereby ensuring positive patient experiences in meeting their healthcare needs.

2. The role of management in healthcare

One of the key indicators of a country's development and the quality of life of its population is the level of organization and functioning of its healthcare system, which is considered one of the most complex systems within a state. The

*Corresponding author

E-mail address: markost79.mk@gmail.com

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healthcare policy system is often of paramount importance in the hierarchy of social systems. It encompasses healthcare infrastructure with a wide range of programs and healthcare services for individuals, families, and communities in accordance with the obligation and concern for the health status of the population of each country (Jovanović et al., 2015). Users of healthcare services should be satisfied with the process and outcome of healthcare, which is one of the goals of social health insurance (Jacobs & Godarrd, 2002). The Strategy for Continuous Improvement of Healthcare Quality and Patient Safety of the Republic of Serbia (15/2009-112) emphasizes the obligation of continuous improvement of this quality not only by individuals, committees, healthcare institutions, and institutions but by society as a whole, as it forms the basis for providing healthcare to patients. In this sense, it is necessary and essential to precisely determine the responsibilities in activities and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of healthcare. The purpose of healthcare service is to meet the needs, and since the outcome, in terms of "measuring" health or achieving optimal health status, is often not measurable or difficult to measure, the relevant indicator of its quality can be the satisfaction of healthcare service users (Talević, 2016). For many years, there has been talk of a kind of discrimination in the healthcare system, in terms of dividing it into medical personnel, doctors - as an elite group of decision-makers who did not fully recognize the legitimacy of those employed in "non-medical" professions in the same system because they unjustly considered them subordinate to themselves and to medicine (Teodorović and Gajić-Stevanović, 2008).

3. Qualities and Responsibilities of Healthcare Managers

A healthcare manager, like managers in other fields, needs to possess specific qualities, abilities, and skills in order to serve as a leader. Through acquired knowledge and exceptional communication skills, they can maximize their contributions through the management of human resources and more complex tasks within a healthcare institution. These tasks involve knowledge of relevant areas such as economics, marketing, efficient use of equipment and resources, and effective leadership, among others. Management implies adherence to laws and ethics and calls for social responsibility (Georgescu, 2013). There is a growing body of literature analyzing the personality profiles of successful managers, often highlighting emotional intelligence as one of the most important characteristics. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to manage oneself and relationships, and it is manifested through four core competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills), which are further defined by specific competencies and traits (Goleman, 2000). This personality trait can be considered one of the most important for healthcare managers' profiles, as well as for personnel selection in healthcare and human resource management positions in general. It's important to emphasize that job satisfaction of each individual and the collective group or team is crucial when considering this perspective. Job satisfaction is one of the relevant factors influencing an employee's intention to leave their job (Moore, 2002, as cited in Mihajlov & Mihajlov, 2015). The manager of human resources is responsible for the recruitment, training, and professional development of employees, as well as handling workforce issues, employee rights, and responsibilities. They often resolve interpersonal conflicts and ensure a high-quality management system. It is often necessary to build a model for promoting employees based on their knowledge and abilities, as the basis for evaluating the performance and efficiency of personnel in their roles, which will determine their continued status within the organization (Stefanović et al., 2012), as well as the overall success of the institution where they are employed. In many institutions, including healthcare facilities, managers often find themselves in leadership roles, responsible for making key decisions regarding the structure and function of departments, offices, or institutions in general, especially when they are under pressure and need to make critical decisions (Trifu & Croitoru, 2013). The contemporary management concept of nearly every healthcare institution should focus on employees' profiles, their personal and professional capacities, potentials, work performance, specialized knowledge, and experience. This approach ensures the organization's flexibility to meet all the community's needs and demands (Stonić et al., 2011). Stress is one of the most common factors that healthcare employees face daily. This means that adaptation and self-preservation mechanisms to maintain or restore psychological homeostasis are activated regularly among healthcare workers (Kostić, 2020). Since individuals consciously and unconsciously create the stressful context of their lives (and work), self-awareness plays a crucial role in investing conscious effort and striving to preserve optimal mental status and psychophysical capacities (Kostić, 2022). At the institutional level, such a task is part of the job description for human resource managers.

Human resource management in healthcare involves overseeing personnel and staff in healthcare institutions and organizations to ensure the efficient delivery of healthcare services and patient satisfaction. This field faces unique challenges and demands due to the specific nature of the healthcare sector. Human resource managers in healthcare are responsible for recruiting qualified medical and administrative staff, providing education, enhancing expertise, and improving professional skills. In this context, monitoring and evaluating employee performance are important to identify problems, strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and provide constructive feedback. It is important to note that due to the specific healthcare system in which they work, healthcare employees often face physical and emotional challenges. Therefore, human resource managers work to ensure safe working conditions and provide support to maintain the health of the staff. In healthcare, there are very strict rules and regulations concerning employees and patient rights, and human resource managers must be knowledgeable about these legal requirements and ensure their implementation and compliance. Ethical dilemmas and ethical behavior of healthcare employees, respecting individuality, and protecting patient privacy are also challenges that healthcare managers often encounter. Human resource management in healthcare is crucial for ensuring the effective and high-quality delivery of healthcare services, as well as supporting the well-being of staff in the demanding healthcare environment.

Considering that healthcare is accessible to every member of society, it can be concluded that the scope and range of activities and work within the healthcare system are extensive. Continuous efforts are needed to improve its quality and efficiency. Decisions regarding its functioning are strategically important and often involve reform to meet the increasing demands of modern civilization and the healthcare challenges that individuals face throughout their lives. This is confirmed and underscored by recent events that society and healthcare systems worldwide experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the circumstances, almost all practices in healthcare services were transformed to adapt to the high-risk situation, where the mortality rate was substantial. The primary goal was to overcome the pandemic. Healthcare plays a specific and highly complex role in the structure of any society. It is one of the most sensitive areas with a crucial social function. Consequently, there are broader implications for society as a whole that also affect the process of reforming this system (Teodorović and Gajić-Stevanović, 2008).

4. Conclusion

The importance of analyzing and studying this topic is significant both from the perspective of management science and theory, as well as from a practical standpoint due to the crucial need for making correct and timely strategic decisions. These decisions have a direct impact on the further development and potential reform of the healthcare system, where employees may assume new, more complex, and responsible roles. All levels of a country's healthcare system should have an adequate number of competent managers in line with the identified optimal needs for providing high-quality healthcare to patients. Quality often matters more than quantity, so there is a need to modernize the healthcare system by investing in the education of institution managers, as well as all other staff members. This will ensure optimal and necessary support for the institution's management and the overall governance system. On the other hand, by providing relevant information to all employees about the significance of a manager's role within the team, their acceptance will be enhanced with respect. This, in turn, will ensure adequate support, creating a pleasant working atmosphere at all levels and increasing overall efficiency and effectiveness in the healthcare sector. The decisions made by managers can have long-term consequences for the development of the healthcare system and its potential reform, which may entail new, more complex, and responsible roles for all employees within a healthcare institution. Thus, continuous analysis and research in this field are essential to adapt and improve the healthcare system to meet the evolving needs of both the healthcare industry and society as a whole.

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