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Introduction:

There is little doubting that the retail market is among the most important in the United Kingdom. The wholesaling sector employs more than 3 million people in the UK. Many people choose a career in retail because of the variety of hours they can work. Enhanced dedication and involvement and improved efficiency are all benefits that come to organisations when workers get the option to use flexible work schedules (Sayyida et al. 2021).

The UK's retail sector contributes around 5.1 per cent of the country's overall GDP. Economic losses have been substantial due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic and the health service response. Quarantine regulations and social alienation have significantly affected the financial industry, resulting in a shift in the products and services we buy and how we buy them.

Make a case in favour of flexible working about diversity and inclusion at work and analyse the role of Human Resources in promoting diversity and inclusion through flexible working:

Make a case favour flexible working about diversity and inclusion at work:

Even though there has been advancement in recent generations in a growing range of activities, this alone will not address structural issues such as rights in the workplace, personal prejudice, or exclusivist heritage. Each worker's expertise and possibilities in the place of work aren't guaranteed by employing more workforce diversity.

To truly make a difference in the workplace, all employees must be emotionally included and have the resources to do their best work. Cultural diversity always seems to go hand-in-hand with inclusion, profoundly regarding personal experiences and enabling everybody at work to start contributing and perceiving themselves as a part of a company. However, the terms "diversity" and "inclusion" can be used interchangeably, and they do not necessarily refer to demographic characteristics. Everyone in a company can benefit from inclusion because every employee is different (O'Donovan, 2018).

As is customary in the UK, the Feelunique business is broken down into three geographic regions; each has slightly distinct demography from the others. In London, advertising and purchasing departments are located, which helps promote a youthful, better-variety led, and

much more transient pool of employees. Their tech staff and call centre in Jersey, on the other hand, is filled with a slightly ageing population that is native to the area, whereas their financial crew is headquartered in Northampton. Working from home, equipment was put in place pretty quickly, and the response from individuals was overwhelmingly positive. On the other hand, COVID-19 has thrown open a whole new universe of potential and opportunities for where employees can be situated. It has helped to smooth out some of their previously tense situations through cross-communication (O'Donovan, 2018).

Flexibility in the workplace is frequently equated with an employee's ability to accommodate various work schedules and responsibilities. In this context, however, versatility is used more as a mode of thinking, and a manner of being that will help make one's workplace more inclusive for everyone (Chung and Van, 2020).

We noted that workers should be adaptable to different ways of thinking as the impression of diversity shifts away from gender and ethnicity among newer generations.

Workers and managers will reduce potential obstacles once newer centuries or various ethnicities enter the workforce if they are flexible. If people with a flexible mindset run your company, progress will be made instinctually and spontaneously. Organisations without adaptable governance are more likely to experience an existential conflict that may compromise their corporate identity, profitability, employee retention, and even their public image as a place to work (Chung and Van, 2020).

Analyse the role of Human Resources in promoting diversity and inclusion through flexible working:

The most important function of HR managers is to foster an inclusive work environment through leadership and management. Ethical and inclusive, allowing every staff to develop, educate, and be part of the company's success. It's essential to train new hires and existing staff to adapt to changing working conditions caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, such as working remotely or creating new workplace norms and protocols that minimise social interaction (Muir et al. 2020).

Keeping tabs on diversity: Keeping an eye on variety in the workplace can help. Audits are an excellent way to accomplish this. For both present and prospective employees, this should be done. As a result, it will be possible to track the progress made.

Mentoring and a diverse workforce: Externally or internally, mentorship is possible, just as recruiting is. Some HR practitioners, for example, collaborate with community youth organisations or institutions. This aids in the early development of potential and ensures that more varied persons know the implications (Muir et al. 2020).

The organisation is processing method: Administration, in particular, has a significant impact on whether or not diversity and inclusion are implemented. Human resources may make sure that the executive team is prepared to re-evaluate the company's corporate culture. Managers can use diversity management methods to establish new values in specific principles, ensuring that they are visible and quantifiable as part of the HR implementation process. Tesco, for instance, has retained this policy to demonstrate its commitment to improved fairness and equality and diversity inside the organization (Farndale et al. 2018).

Managing diversity is a part of a company's Human Resources or People department. Some of the most critical aspects of workplace diversity management are handled by HR teams or employees, and these include:

- Aiming to create inclusive hiring plans and procedures
- broader approaches to labour policy than just hiring
- Most staff have access to diversity training and educational opportunities.
- With regards to communication, acting as a facilitator
- Communications that foster workplace diversity should be encouraged.

Regarding informal recruitment practices, gender disparities can be present, particularly in men-dominated businesses. To remedy this, HR could expand the length of their informal shortlist.

Human resources may help to foster fairness in the workplace by just being upfront about compensation and ensuring that women in equivalent roles are not paid less than men. Men and women can equally benefit from improving their work-life balance (Farndale et al. 2018).

By strengthening the organisation's ability to understand and interact with customers, diversity and inclusion can enhance product appeal and appeal to a broader audience. They can also assist organisations in engaging more directly with their labour forces when they require the input and support of all of their employees in areas such as regulating human distancing. HR needs to be aware of the unique problems working parents face in this context. As HR professionals, they

can help create a workplace environment and culture that supports the well-being of working parents by empowering flexibility, such as relocating shifts from the conventional 9-to-5 working time and trying to encourage regular communication and verification among coworkers on timetables and accessibility. Organisations must also be aware of the difficulties and barriers to those returning to the workforce (Suciu et al. 2020).

Finally, organisations will need to develop online workspaces that enable the user for all types of workers to perform strict conditions while simultaneously maintaining their personal and family responsibilities.

Make a case against flexible working about inequality at work and analyse the role of Human Resources in addressing the concerns of imbalance that may arise from flexible working.

Make a case against flexible working about inequality at work:

Covid-19 has resulted in fewer occupations and fewer hours for women than males, with severe ramifications for their earnings and financial stability. For reasons such as school and daycare closures, illness or the inability to pay for care after losing a paid job, among other things, women have had to carry an increased share of unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

For many women in the United Kingdom, the fight for parity in the workplace and in the workplace itself is still an uphill battle. Only seven out of the hundred firms are led by women, despite women making 81 cents for every dollar earned by males (Sullivan, 2019).

Over the past year, women's wages and economic stability have suffered significantly. While 29 per cent of males reported a salary reduction during the pandemic (compared to 22 per cent of women), the women who did lose revenue suffered 46 per cent on average, compared to 30 per cent for men. Part-timers lost 39% of their income on average, while casual workers lost 65% (Sullivan, 2019).

Throughout the pandemic, women had significantly more negative consequences (in nearly every category) due to their efforts to strike an appropriate balance between caring for their families and their professional obligations. According to Anna Whitehouse, a broadcaster and the founder of Flex Appeal, a movement to encourage the implementation of flexible working arrangements

across all UK jobs, women are disabled because they are typically responsible for taking care of kids. According to the study, women who accepted their company's opportunity to work primarily from residence risk hurting their careers because they aren't coming to the workplace to the same level as men following Covid (Chung et al. 2021).

Without considering our current work culture and gender norms, however, this growth of workplace flexibility could have unexpected negative consequences for gender inequality and the well-being of the workforces involved. Even with flexible hours, the gender-normative views of who is in charge of earning a living and who are in order of taking care of the home and family are not sufficiently challenged. Supportive family policies, such as earmarked parental leave for fathers, are critical to changing societal norms around gender roles, especially in the early years of a child's life. In many countries, the current working culture, including those like the United Kingdom, is dominated by men's ideas of the ideal worker. Extended hours are seen as a sign of a company's commitment to its employees and their ability to perform at their best. Flexibility in the workplace and the resulting erasure of distinctions between work and personal life can exacerbate these problems by encouraging employees to take their work with them wherever they go and to work whenever they want. Especially in countries where workers' bargaining power is weak, this could be exacerbated by the rise in insecurity we're seeing and will likely see shortly as a result of socio-economic disruptions realised throughout communities as a result of the pandemic due to their limited ability to increase the number of hours or intensity of paid work. This can be attributed to the fact that women already have higher expectations for unpaid work than men and lower bargaining power at work and home. This can widen the already widening gender wage disparity in the workforce (Forbes et al. 2020).

Regarding reducing workplace inequality, the Equality and Human Rights Commission in England and Wales recommends that companies implement flexible work policies. The answer does not lie in putting an end to flexible work arrangements but instead encouraging more men and women to adopt them. Flexibility is not sufficient to address the issue of gender inequality. A shift in the way and when people work isn't enough to solve complex and culturally-specific problems.

The role of Human Resources in addressing the concerns of inequality that may arise from flexible working:

Because of the numerous forms of gender inequities in the workplace, this has been described as an "inhospitable environment for women." Some instances of how employment discrimination has a detrimental impact on females' earnings and prospects include the salary gap between men and women, the lack of women in leadership positions, and the more extended amount of time it takes for women (as opposed to males) develop in their professions. To put it another way, workplace discrimination adds to women's inferior socioeconomic standing in the workplace. Especially noteworthy is that such discrimination against women can be traced back to human resources (HR) rules and HR-related decision-making. Employees may also face personal discrimination in the form of sexist remarks when they contact organisational decision-makers during HR processes or when the results of HR-related decisions are communicated to them. Gender inequities in company leadership, hierarchy, policy, attitude, and environment can be perpetuated through human resource management practices. Discrimination against women is also a problem that directly affects organisational policymakers (Guest, 2017)

When it comes to taking on unpaid caregiving duties, women are pretty likely than men to ask for flexible work schedules. When it comes to requesting flexible work schedules, men are less likely than women to do so because of the actual or potential effect on their professional advancement. This propagates the presumption that 'women's work' is associated with flexible work arrangements. Formalised flexible working hours in the workplace can help dispel this myth and encourage a more equitable adoption of such agreements. For a long time, it has been hypothesised that men's participation in treatment and house chores could be increased if they could use flex. Human Resources can address these issues to the concerns of inequality that may arise from flexible working (Wu, 2018).

Human resource managers have been at the forefront of the pandemic's changes. Their responsibilities included navigating new health and safety regulations, assisting managers in adapting to the new normal, reducing staff in some situations, and maintaining compliance with administrative processes.

- Incorporate new regulations for occupational health and safety into your operations.
- Develop innovative approaches to vacation time.

- Combine systems to achieve optimal effectiveness.
- Make use of technological advances to increase employee participation.
- Increase the number of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- Respond to the increasing incidence of remote employment opportunities.

Adoption of human resource diversity initiative policies and family-friendly policies can help minimise gender discrimination, modify other frameworks, procedures, and behaviours, and enhance gender equality in the workplace. A specific goal of such systems is to raise the percentage of women working across all divisions and at all organisational levels if they are successful. Furthermore, adding more women in management positions communicates to corporate members that the organisation takes diversity seriously, which positively impacts the organisation's atmosphere and, eventually, on the organisation's culture. Consequently, specific human resource policies can help to eliminate gender disparities across all other management systems, procedures, and behaviours (Riva and Russo, 2020).

This epidemic necessitated a significant amount of organisational transformation. While the changes and trauma affected both employees and leaders, it is in the best interests of HR to put the main lessons learned to use to assist the workplace in evolving and transforming in novel ways. Policy, rules, and objectives for diversity should be developed and promoted. Make sure that companies' ethical behaviour includes explicit standards and regulations relating to your commitment to fostering a culture of honesty, acceptance, and inclusion for the whole of your workers.

Conclusion:

This epidemic highlighted that human resources are essential and well-deserved a place at the table after adjusting and managing this catastrophe. The ability of an organisation's human resources department to adapt and change in the future may very well decide the organisation's existence. Over the past several years, the "future workforce" concept has gained popularity. It appears as though that slogan has finally come to fruition. Even though many businesses are still dealing with high availability and restoration challenges, diversity and inclusion have slipped down their list of critical strategies. While diversity, equity, and inclusion are all put at risk during a crisis or recession, human resource management must realise the crucial role in

recovery, resilience, and overall performance in the future. First and foremost, human resource managers must grasp that diversity, equity, and inclusion are not a choice or a "pleasant" – they are a need.

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