

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Crisis in Human Resources and its Management Strategies (*Case study: one of the country's energy organizations*)**

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In recent decades, the companies working in the field of energy have intended to compensate the past and recruit new human resources. The new wave of employments has been followed by positive and negative effects and its negative effects (such as excessive absorption and the accumulation of the number of employees in the companies, increasing the costs of additional human resources, etc.) have led to the crisis in some companies of the field of energy. This research has studied one of these companies and the strategies of facing the crisis of human resource in it. It must be noted that the factors of crisis appearing have been identified in another study and we have dealt with the provision of appropriate strategies for the human resources crisis from the first stage in this study. The research method is measuring descriptive method and the statistical sample includes a number of 200 managers and scholars of the company. Also we have used the statistical softwares in order to analyze the results. The results indicated that all the mentioned indices are from the strategies of crisis management in the company except one index (identification of the possible accidents which have been also paid attention to in the other indices in some way). The highest ranking mean is for the index of "adjustment of the policies and practices of human resources management in order to promote motivation, occupational satisfaction and employees' commitment" and the next index is the priorities of implementation of training courses for empowerment of the company. Also in the end some suggestions have been provided for this purpose.

**Keywords:** Crisis, Human Resources, Management Strategies

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, the changing conditions governing the organizations, increasing the competition and the need of its effectiveness in such conditions indicate their requirement of a valuable generation of the employees, a

generation which can be called as the organizations soldiers. Undoubtedly, these employees are the point which means the organizations are effective. Considering the changes within the organization, Mr. Sarawagi (2008)

introduces eight challenges of change in the employees' expectations, globalization, balance between work and life, increasing the moral aspect of the activities of human resources, organizational restructuring, management of variety in the work force and developing group attitude which the human resources facing with, (Sarawagi, 2008); and also in his book of Management Human Resources (2007) and with a look at both the changes within and out of the organization, Mr. Robert Mathis refers to four major challenges related to distribution and contrasts in human force, accessibility of the human force and the necessity of improving quality, economic and technological changes and the structural changes of the organization (Robert Mathis, 2007). What the different researchers agree about it is that the human resources cannot cope with the challenges it faces just through having traditional and conventional roles and it requires playing newer roles and value creation in other areas.

Ulrich (1997) mentions four tasks of strategic partner, administration affair expert, employees' supporter and change agency as the future roles of human resources. The strategic partner is about the compatibility of activities and practices of human resources with the general business strategy. The administration affairs expert is about the provision of routing tasks and administrative tasks of the human resources such as employment, training, services compensation, etc. with a better quality and lower cost. As the employees' supporter, the human resources must be aware of the employees' needs, care about their interests and support them against organizational changes. The role of change agency is about supporting the changes and effects of the business change in the human resources (Ulrich, 1997).

Lawler and Mohrman (2003) have considered three roles of administrative, strategic partner and business partner for the modern human resources (Lawler and Mohrman, 2003).

The characteristic of today's organization is dynamicity, complexity, ambiguity and tradition abscondence and dealing with crisis. In the path of crisis, the organizations are consistently under the influence of the surrounding environment and they have accepted change as an unavoidable necessity (Rashidi, 2014). With understanding the fact that the crisis has become the inseparable and essential part of the organizations of the third millennium, it is necessary to have the power of being compatible with the recent changes in various social and economic fields. In order to overcome the uncertain, complex and dynamic conditions, the only way the managers have is to empower the organization and employees through obtaining the knowledge and skill which quickly becomes obsolete. Hence, having capable and efficient human resources which are considered the base of national wealth and the vital properties of the organization will be followed by a major amount of advantages for companies, organizations and economic

enterprises (Bazaz Jazayeri, 2002). In the current era, one of the factors causing crisis in the organizations is inefficient use of the intellectual resources, mental capability and potential capacities of the human resources. Most of the organizations do not use the employees' capabilities in an optimized way and the managers are not able to utilize their potential capabilities. The scholars of change management and optimization of the organization have introduced the necessity of empowerment of the human resources as an influencing strategy for organizational performance and optimization and they believe that the human resources empowerment is one of the attitudes of the modern era which is used by the organizations right now and in fact, it is a response to the critical need of the contemporary era's management (Kinela and Dennis, 2004). In other words, one of the conditions of success of any organization for coping with crises and environmental changes and appropriately reacting to them is to have a strategic look at the human resources. In the same regard, the concept of development of human resources and a long-time look at providing the human resources for accessing the organization's success has been posed and its role and importance increasingly become more obvious and clearer. The significant point of this matter is that the human resources development requires paying attention to the crises, environmental changes and consistent examining of needs and necessities in order to access the necessary providence for responding them. In other words, any social system must consistently search and examine its surrounding environment in order to survive and be alive and be able to cope with threats, manage the crises and benefit from the opportunities through identifying the needs, opportunities and environmental threats. Hence, it is necessary for any organization to identify the facing challenges and determine the strategies of dealing with crises and manage the different aspects of crises.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

After the 1970s onwards, and after the energy crisis, a new skill was known necessary for the decision makers of great companies and that was crisis management. In the same decade, the different activities of the companies have been doubted and the necessity of benefitting from special skill of crisis management became clear. Subsequently, the application of risk management principles resulted in a significant decrease in production costs and thus the growth and development of industries in return. Also in the world's energy industry, the increase of price of energy carriers resulted in reduction of costs (especially through balancing the human resources and reduction of their number); but a serious crisis was created in the next decades: in one hand, the reduction of the energy experts and on the other hand, creation of an

inter-generation gap (between the last generation of energy experts and the new ones). The Russian expert, Yergin called this crisis the lost Generation. In the next years, the companies working in the energy field were intended to compensate the past and attract and recruit new human resources. The new wave of employments was followed by some negative and positive effects. Its positive effects resulted to increase in productivity of the energy companies and its negative effects (such as excessive attraction and accumulation of employees number in the companies, increase in the costs of additional human resources, etc.) resulted in crisis in some countries including the companies of energy field of our country. This study has dealt with one of these companies and the strategies of facing the human resources crisis in it.

It must be noted that the factors of crisis appearing have been identified in another study and we have dealt with the provision of appropriate strategies for the human resources crisis from the first stage based on the approach of crisis management in this study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **A) Crisis Management**

In order for better understanding of the crisis concept we can refer to the crisis classifications. One of those is the crisis classification from the viewpoint of Parsons. Parsons states three types of crisis including:

1. Immediate crises: these crises have no previous alarm sign and also the organizations are not able to research about them and planning for eliminating them.

2. The crises appearing gradually: these crises are created gradually. They can be stopped or limited through organizational practices.

3. Continuous crises: these crises last for weeks, months or even years. The strategies of coping with these crises in various conditions depend upon the time pressures, control expansion and the greatness of these events.

Also, some of the theories and models of identifying the crisis help its deeper understanding. For example, crisis management Thierry and Mytraf has determined five stages for solving a crisis:

1. Identifying or tracking signs
2. Preparation and Prevention
3. Inhibition of destruction
4. Improvement
5. Learning

Also, three efficient stages have been suggested in crisis management including: facing the crisis, rethinking, renewal plan, feeling the crisis, intervention and taking step, the final steps in facing crisis. These stages result in reduction of negative consequences such as:

- Reduction of organizational citizenship behavior of the staff who are motivated from within.
- Increase the conflict of the role and additional work
- Identify the organizational problems with lesser accuracy
- More legal risk
- Preventing from the staffs' development and growth (Becton et al., 2008).

### **B) Strategic management of Human Resources**

Also, in order for better understanding of the concept of human resources we can refer to the models and theories of strategic management of human resources. For example, the human resources development model of Hitonen (2002) includes roles, consequences and competencies. The role is a set of closed behaviors and also the activities related to the people's occupation; therefore it has a personal approach about the occupation. His human resource development model has different levels including: management / evaluator / manager / developer and creator of human resource development devices / observing the occupational development of guider or facilitator / marketing and analysis of the needs / the responsible of organizational change / planner and researcher. Also the consequences have been classified in different groups.

In another model created by the Human Resources Society of America in 2002, a number of ten consulting companies were asked to mention the modern roles of human resources, and the following results were obtained:

Strategic partnership, optimizing rewards (better compensation of the services), trying to do the primary roles of human resources impeccably and using the quantitative criteria in evaluating the human resources for communicating the human resources with the earnings (SHRM, 2002).

According to the studies done (Caloghirou et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2005), the model of measuring the effectiveness of knowledge management in empowerment and stable development of human resources is also based on the matter that they require sharing and distribution of information and knowledge in the organizations. Five key aspects of empowerment are as following:

1. Self-efficiency, that is to say that the personal competency sense
2. Self-authority, that is to say that personal sense of selecting
3. Personal acceptance of the result, that is to say that the sense of ability of effectiveness
4. Meaningfulness, that is to say that the sense of valuableness of the work
5. Trust, that is to say that the certain and security

sense (Me'maar Zadeh Tehrani et al. 2008). In the same field, the different theoretical studies like (Poutanen et al., 2011; Lio, 2009; Yang and Rui, 2009; Liveness and Kleijnen, 2009; Ismail, 2005; Griffin and Neal, 2000) indicate the relationship between the knowledge management and creativity which is considered as an important aspect of human resources.

The model of creation, maintaining and increasing the agility in the organization through focusing on the human resources also has five stages:

The first stage: checking and stability of the internal and external environment of the organization

The second stage: determining some factors and motivators which challenge the organization in order for accessing agility

The third stage: identifying and breeding the organization's capabilities in the presence and consulting with the master authorities and executive assistants

The fourth stage: evaluating the public indices of organizational agility (empowering factors)

The fifth stage: after a determined period, the process of measuring the performance is done in order to determine the agility level of the organization.

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Several researches have been done on the measuring of productivity, efficiency and crisis management. All of these cases help the subject of this paper but they do not deal with the subject directly.

Of course, based on the statements of the manager of health and hygiene organization of the company, in the second conference of health management in disasters, accidents and passive defense of the mentioned company, 120 crisis management projects are on the agenda of the company's health and hygiene organization regarded to the discussions of passive defense.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive measuring method has used in this study and it is considered of applicable studies in terms of the purpose. It is subjectively related to the management of human resources and crisis management.

### Statistical population and Sampling

The statistical society of this study consists of the managers of Energy Company with the superior organizational degrees including 418 persons which are working in 5 management sections and 4 offices. Due to the limited society and the multi-values variables, the following equation has been used in this study for

determination of the required sample volume:

$$N = \frac{N \times \left(\frac{Z\alpha}{\epsilon}\right)^2 \times P(1-P)}{(N-1) \times (\epsilon)^2 + \left(\frac{Z\alpha}{\epsilon}\right)^2 \times P(1-P)}$$

N is the statistical society volume, Z is the standard likelihood value,  $\alpha$  is the error level, P is the successfulness proportion and  $\epsilon$  is the desired accuracy

of the researcher (Azar and Mo'meni, 2005). In this study, the certainty level is considered 95 percent and the accuracy equals to 5 percent; and due to the fact that there was no estimation of the successfulness proportion, we considered its value equal to 0.5 and the sample volume increases to the maximum possible value in this status. Regarded to the above, the required sample volume for this study has been calculated equal to 200 persons.

### Data collecting instrument

To collect data, the interview tool has been used with the organizational documents for obtaining information and viewpoints of the experts. Moreover, due to the required sample volume, we considered 300 questionnaires for collecting data and then during about 4 weeks, we distributed these questionnaires between the members of the statistical society which had been selected randomly. 200 questionnaires were filled and returned from the distributed questionnaires. After preparation of the questionnaire, in order to examine the reliability of them, we distributed 25 questionnaires among the company's employees as the pretest and the results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for all the variables and the whole questionnaire was higher than 0.7. On the other hand, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the experts of the field. The questionnaire's questions were optimized and corrected regarded to the viewpoint of the experts and scholars and based on the studied society. All of the questionnaires were measured according to the five levels Likert scale. Thus, the questionnaire has the required validity and reliability in order to be distributed in the statistical society of the study.

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In section of analyzing the data and in the part of the illative statistics, we used the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test for checking the normality or abnormality of distribution of the data, T test for examining the variables' status and SPSS test for processing the information and testing the hypotheses. Meanwhile, regarded to the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test, the contents had normal distribution.

**Table 1.** The results of Kolmogorov – Smirnov test for the variable of strategies of crisis management of the human resources

Conclusion	Hypothesis Confirmation	Error Value	Significance Level	Variable
Normal	Ho	0.05	.301	strategies of crisis management of the human resources in the company

Because the value of significance level is equal to 0.301 and larger than the error value (0.05), then we conclude the null hypothesis, that is to say that the

variable of strategies of crisis management of human resources in the company is normal.

The significance analysis of the strategies of human resources crisis

H<sub>0</sub>: the index is not from the strategies of human resources crisis in the company.

H<sub>1</sub>: the index is from the strategies of human resources crisis in the company.

Standard Deviation	Mean	Frequency	Index
1.01049	3.0950	200	Identifying the possible crisis accidents in the field of the company's human resources
1.04044	3.2700	200	Providing information and appropriate public relation at the time of human resources crisis
1.15918	3.4450	200	Rethinking the past events and accidents of the managers of human resources in order to understand their mistakes
1.01098	3.4450	200	Provision of strategic recommendations of the managers of human resources for the required changes in order to avoid from occurring of similar events
.84138	4.2250	200	Providing learning opportunity for all of managers to prevent from crisis in the future
.82523	4.3200	200	Elimination of bureaucracies and the barriers of the decisions related to the human resources at the time of crisis
.72761	4.3850	200	Sufficient awareness of the senior managers from the issues of management of human resources
.69454	4.4950	200	Compiling policies and practices of management of human resources to elevate motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment
.74643	4.3750	200	Development of the potential points of human resources after the crisis
.71727	4.4100	200	Collecting information at the time of crisis for analyzing the problem
.95105	3.7450	200	Classifying the possible crisis of the human resources using the past experiences and predicting the strategies of coping with it
1.06563	3.4900	200	Participatory compiling of crisis management in the field of attracting, utilizing, motivating, paying, optimizing, welfare, etc.
.99485	3.9850	200	Providing precise and determined analysis of the crisis effect on the performance of human resources after the end of crisis
.72292	4.4000	200	Holding special training courses for increasing the capability of human resources (as the members of crisis management team)
.82815	4.2600	200	Using the regular methods for finding out the crisis-prone and vulnerable points of the human resources management

**Table 2.** Significance of the strategies of crisis management of the human resources in the company

Significance Level	Frequency	T coefficient	Index
.000	199	6.503	Identifying the possible crisis accidents in the field of the company's human resources
.185	199	1.330	Providing information and appropriate public relation at the time of human resources crisis
.000	199	5.429	Rethinking the past events and accidents of the managers of human resources in order to understand their mistakes
.000	199	6.225	Provision of strategic recommendations of the managers of human resources for the required changes in order to avoid from occurring of similar events
.000	199	20.590	Providing learning opportunity for all of managers to prevent from crisis in the future
.000	199	22.621	Elimination of bureaucracies and the barriers of the decisions related to the human resources at the time of crisis
.000	199	26.919	Sufficient awareness of the senior managers from the issues of management of human resources
.000	199	30.441	Compiling policies and practices of management of human resources to elevate motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment
.000	199	26.051	Development of the potential points of human resources after the crisis
.000	199	27.801	Collecting information at the time of crisis for analyzing the problem
.000	199	11.078	Classifying the possible crisis of the human resources using the past experiences and predicting the strategies of coping with it
.000	199	6.503	Participatory compiling of crisis management in the field of attracting, utilizing, motivating, paying, optimizing, welfare, etc.
.000	199	14.002	Providing precise and determined analysis of the crisis effect on the performance of human resources after the end of crisis
.000	199	27.388	Holding special training courses for increasing the capability of human resources (as the members of crisis management team)
.000	199	21.517	Using the regular methods for finding out the crisis-prone and vulnerable points of the human resources management

Regarded to the two above tables, the significance level of all the indices is smaller than the error value of 0.05 except an index for identifying the possible crisis events in the field of the company's human resources; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for all the indices except this index and the contrast hypothesis is confirmed. Hence, it can be concluded that in the certainty level of 95 %, all the mentioned indices remain in the model. That is to say that except this index, the rest of the indices are from the strategies of human resource crisis management in the company.

To rank the human resources crisis management strategies in the company, we used Freedman test in order for ranking the factors due to the mean score. In this test, the H0 and H1 hypotheses have been defined as follows:

H0:  $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$

H1: at least one of the means is not equal.

If the value of significance level is larger than the error value, the null hypothesis is concluded and if the value of significance level is smaller than the error value, H1 is concluded.

Conclusion	P	Error Level	Freedom Degree	Chi <sup>2</sup>	Number
H1 confirmed	.000	0.05	13	667.809	200

Because the significance level is 0.000 which is smaller than the error value of 0.05, the means are not equal at

least for one of the factors; therefore, the ranking of factors is as following regarded to the ranking mean:



**Table 3.** Ranking of crisis management strategies for human resources in the company

Ranking Mean	Index	Rank
9.43	Compiling policies and practices of management of human resources to elevate motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment	1
9.09	Holding special training courses for increasing the capability of human resources (as the members of crisis management team)	2
9.07	Collecting information at the time of crisis for analyzing the problem	3
8.94	Development of the potential points of human resources after the crisis	4
8.87	Sufficient awareness of the senior managers from the issues of management of human resources	5
8.68	Elimination of bureaucracies and the barriers of the decisions related to the human resources at the time of crisis	6
8.47	Using the regular methods for finding out the crisis-prone and vulnerable points of the human resources management	7
8.31	Providing learning opportunity for all of managers to prevent from crisis in the future	8
7.49	Providing precise and determined analysis of the crisis effect on the performance of human resources after the end of crisis	9
6.36	Classifying the possible crisis of the human resources using the past experiences and predicting the strategies of coping with it	10
5.56	Participatory compiling of crisis management in the field of attracting, utilizing, motivating, paying, optimizing, welfare, etc.	11
5.54	Rethinking the past events and accidents of the managers of human resources in order to understand their mistakes	12
5.19	Provision of strategic recommendations of the managers of human resources for the required changes in order to avoid from occurring of similar events	13
4.01	Identifying the possible crisis accidents in the field of the company's human resources	14

Also for the average rank of the "strategies", the strategy of "Compiling policies and practices of management of human resources to elevate motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment" with a score of 9.43 is the highest rank and the strategy of "Identifying the possible crisis accidents in the field of the company's human resources" with the score of 4.01 is the lowest rank.

## CONCLUSION

Also, to conclude about the next variable (human resources management strategies) all the 15 indices have been examined. The results showed except one index (identification of possible events which has been paid attention to in the other indices in some way), all the mentioned indices are from the strategies of human resources crisis management in the company. The highest average rank is related to the index of "Compiling policies and practices of management of human resources to elevate motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment" and in this subject, the document of development of human resources of the company emphasizes on "the necessary infrastructure in

order to maintain the human resources and creating appropriate motivation and supporting them in the way that the sufficient organizational commitment is created in them and they are satisfied and spend their work life in the determined activities in the organization". In this context, in 2008 Chapman and Zarrat did a research under the title of the organizational citizenship behavior and the performance of employees in University of Missouri located in San Diego. The statistical society of this research included 300 employees of the University of Missouri. In this study, they came to the conclusion that the practices of human resources management for elevating motivation, organizational relationships, organizational support and the superior support of a strong relationship and the creation of organizational citizenship behavior influenced the employees' performance (Chapman & Zarrat, 2008). This term makes sense through the active participation of the employees in managing the organization's affairs such as participating in meetings, sharing ideas with the others and being aware of the current issues of the organization (Graham, 1991).

Also the next index was the priorities of holding the training courses for empowerment. If we consider the human resources as the members of the crisis

management team, it is necessary to consider the satisfying their training needs, providing the required information and knowledge, breeding them for making decision in critical conditions, facilitating the rules for professional training and empowerment out of the country and generally the trainings causing increase in value of the human resources.

The research background indicated that the company's crisis management policy has been drawn based on a statute and in that statute; the company has been committed to predict an effective system of crisis management for appropriate reaction against the crises and decrease the consequences of these events as more as possible. In the fourth paragraph of this statute the "identification of the modern methods and updating the crisis management system" has been referred. According to the same paragraph, all the 14 indices measured in this study can be paid attention to under the title of "the strategies of human resources crisis management in the company regarded to the ranking of these indices (from the highest average including the compiling policies and practices of human resources management for elevating motivation, occupational satisfaction and employee's commitment to the lowest one)".

## SUGGESTIONS

Due to the above conclusion and regarded to the fact there are about 120 crisis management projects on the company's agenda with the purpose of paying attention to the discussions of passive defense, and also considering the accessibility of "crisis management statute" in order for preparation for coping with the crisis, the company's managers are recommended to do the following activities:

A) Formation of the passive defense and crisis management committee in order to:

- examine the appropriate strategies, plans' progress and the compiled programs for all of the 14 measured indices and the strategies of this paper such as information and communication

B) Promote the security level, prevent from accidents and supply the human force health as more as possible, secure provide of missions and increase production in this industry, evaluate the current security status in the industry and suggest the promotion strategies and improve them

C) Train the crisis management and also supply and integrate the improvement and development viewpoints of training courses related to this field and link (hinge) the appointments and promotion of the employees to pass different training courses and maximize the likelihood of participation and presence of employees in the implementation of training plan through three methods of one week, compact four-day and single period.

D) Pay attention to the participatory leadership and

participate the employees in decisions as more as possible, create a mechanism to use the tacit knowledge of experienced employees and use them for training the other employees, use the employees of different departments of the organization to solve the critical issues, support the new ideas related to human resources crisis management.

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