



GENDER EQUALITY: MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE MALAYSIAN WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Despite decades of efforts in promoting workforce diversity and inclusiveness of minorities in a workplace globally, gender equality is still the centre of discussion in some countries. According to the March 2021 Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) published by the World Economic Forum, it may take the next 135.6 years to reach gender parity based on the rate of progress of 156 countries that took part in the study on a scale from 0 (disparity) to 1 (parity) across four thematic dimensions. For example, a study conducted by Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) and research agent Vase.ai in 2020 reported that 56% of the 1010 Malaysian women they surveyed experienced at least one form of gender discrimination in their workplace. This study examined the gender equality issues in the Malaysian workplace and their consequences for practising human resource management (HRM) in the workplace. Conceptual and empirical studies published in major databases between 1997 and 2021 were reviewed. Using content and thematic analysis, emergent themes were discussed. For examples, 1) the nature and importance of gender equality at a workplace, both globally and in Malaysia, 2) the key challenges relevant to managing gender equality in the Malaysian workplace in light of COVID-19, and 3) HR waves and HR roles and their implications for integrating gender equality in HRM practices. Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made for future research and HRM practices.

Keywords: COVID-19, Gender Equality, Human Resource Management, Human Resource Roles, Malaysian Workplace.

1. Introduction

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of males and females (United Nations, 2021a). Despite decades of efforts in promoting workforce diversity and inclusiveness of minorities in a workplace globally, gender equality is still the centre of discussion in some countries, including Malaysia.

2. Research Problem

This study examined the gender equality issues in the Malaysian workplace and their consequences for practicing human resource management (HRM) in the workplace. It aimed to answer the following questions: 1) what is gender equality and what are the relevant measures? 2) what are the key challenges of managing gender equality in the Malaysian workplace, especially during COVID-19, as well as 3) what are the future roles of HR professionals for integrating gender equality in HRM practices?

3. Methods

To attain the above objectives, conceptual and empirical studies published in major databases between 1997 and 2021 were reviewed using a semi-systematic approach. Key terms, such as “gender equality”, “gender disparity”, “workplace gender equality”, “gender equality and human resource management”, “gender equality and human resource roles” were applied in the investigation. Relevant literature was reviewed to identify the gender disparity in Malaysia, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared to other countries. HR-related concepts, such as HR waves and HR roles were reviewed. Using content and thematic analysis, emergent themes were identified and discussed below.

4. Review of the Relevant Literature and Data Analysis

Based on a pragmatic and interpretative approach, the emerging themes are discussed in the following sections: 1) the nature and importance of gender equality at a workplace, both globally and in Malaysia, 2) the key challenges relevant to managing gender equality in the Malaysian workplace, especially during COVID-19, as well as 3) HR waves and HR roles and their implications for integrating gender equality in HRM practices.

4. 1 Gender Equality: Nature, Measures, and Challenges

Gender equality promotes equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for males and females (United Nations, 2021b). It takes into consideration the needs, interests, and priorities of both genders when developing a people-centered country in a range of settings, including a workplace (United Nations, 2021a; United Nations Women, n.d.; UNESCO, 2020; World Economic Forum, March 2021). In view of the importance of human rights and the needs to provide equal opportunities for individuals to reach their full potentials regardless of their background, the United Nations has launched 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to provide the guidelines for each country to achieve sustainability aims and practices from the aspects of People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity, and Partnership, between 2020 and 2030 (United Nations, 2021b; United Nations Women, n.d.). While all goals take into consideration gender dimensions, such as Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), the goal of achieving gender parity is specified in Goal 5 (Gender Equality) (UNESCO, 2020; United Nations Women, n.d.).

To understand the gender equality situations in different countries, *gender disparity* is a concept that is used to identify different opportunities that women and men have to access the resources, status, and wellbeing that are established through the law, justice, and social norms in a context, such as a society (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). To track the magnitude and progress of *gender disparities* worldwide, the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) framework was introduced by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2006 to measure 4 thematic dimensions that consist of 14 indicators relevant to gender-based disparities, on a scale from 0 (disparity) to 1 (parity): 1) economic participation and opportunity, 2) education attainment, 3) health and survival, and 4) political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2020). The score of each dimension contributed to the overall gender disparity within a country (World Economic Forum, March 2021). Today, 156 countries are participating in this indexing framework (World Economic Forum, March 2021).

While these measures help a country and an organisation to trace how well they manage gender equality, achieving gender equality continues to be a challenge. For example, despite an increase of women pursuing education globally compared to the 1990s, women represented only 38.8% of the global labour workforce in 2020 (Hinchliffe, 2020). Harmful and unequal practices that deprive females of resources and opportunities continue to be a challenge globally. According to recent findings (UNESCO, 2020; Lim, 2021; United Nations Women, n.d.), 1) 1 out of 5 female below 50-year old experienced domestic and sexual violence within a 12-month period, 2)

female in 90 countries performed unpaid care and domestic work 3 times more than men, leading to lower incomes and fewer career opportunities, especially from the aspects of technical and managerial skills, 3) 48% of female was deprived of the freedom to choose own sexual relations, healthcare, and contraceptive use, and 4) gender disparity still present in senior leadership roles, such as those in the parliamentary seats (23.7%) and those in the senior management positions (less than 33%), globally.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2018) estimated the world will take 108 years to reach gender parity based on the rate of progression of 149 countries that took part in their study. To date, the March 2021 GGGR indicated that it may now take 135.6 years for 156 countries reported in their study to reach gender parity due to a range of business environment challenges arisen during COVID-19, including the economic performance of large countries (World Economic Forum, March 2021). These challenges continue to affect businesses and the workforce globally, including Malaysia.

4. 2 Gender Equality and COVID-19 in Malaysian Workplace: Key Challenges

Based on the GGGI Index framework of WEF, the overall ranking of Malaysia dropped from 104 out of 153 countries in 2020, to 112 out of 156 countries as per the March 2021 GGGR (World Economic Forum, March 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020). Out of the 8 regions categorised by the GGGI Index, Malaysia is ranked 16 out of the 20 countries in East Asia and the Pacific region (World Economic Forum, March 2021). With an overall score of 0.102 on the GGGI Index on the scale from 0 (disparity) to 1 (parity) in 2021, 1) *economic participation and opportunity* are ranked 104 globally (scored 0.638), 2) *education attainment* is ranked 70 globally (scored 0.994), 3) *health and survival* are ranked 74 globally (scored 0.972), and 4) *political empowerment* is ranked 128 global (scored 0.102) (World Economic Forum, March 2021). This indicates the need for Malaysia to look for ways to close the gaps of gender disparity in the upcoming years, especially from the aspects of *economic participation and opportunity* and *political empowerment*, as a country and in a workplace. The following sections review relevant key challenges in light of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on the Malaysian workplace.

4.2.1 Employment Rates and Labour Force Participation Rates

To understand the labour supply and demand situations in a country, such as Malaysia, it would make sense to examine the meaning of *labour force* and *labour force participation rates*. *Labour force* refers to the numbers of people who fulfilled the requirements for employment, including those who are employed and unemployed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). *Labour Force Participation Rates* (LFPR) can be used to measure the number of people in the working-age population that are either working or looking for work in the labour market in the country (International Labour Organisation, 2020). As LFPR can be used to measure the distribution of the labour force within a country, according to sex and age, rural and urban areas, as well as education levels, it is useful for 1) developing employment policies, 2) identifying training needs, 3) estimating the expected working lives of the male and female populations, including the rate of entering and retrieving from economic activity within the country (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Nevertheless, many factors contributed to the measurement of LFPR, including the economic and social impacts of COVID-19, for example in the case of the Malaysian workplace (Lim, 2021).

As a multicultural country, Malaysia has approximately 33.8 million population as per the government statistics in 2020, with the Bumiputera as the larger population (69.6%), followed by the Chinese (22.6%), Indians (6.8%), and Others (1%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The male population (16.8 million) outnumbered the female population (15.9 million) in

2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). According to the March 2021 report of the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2021), the labour force consisted of 16.02 million working-age population aged between 15 and 64 years (15.24 million employed and 782.5 thousand unemployed) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). While LFPR is reported as 68.5% as of January 2021 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021), it is projected that COVID-19 may trigger further the challenges of managing gender equality in the Malaysian workplace (Lim, 2021).

To manage the spread of COVID-19 in Malaysia, the Malaysian government introduced the Restriction of Movement Order (MCO) to provide guidelines to the public in a range of settings, including business settings and the workplace, effective from 18 March 2020 to date (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2020). Subsequently, different versions of MCO (versions 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0), Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO), and Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) were introduced, along with the regulations and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for each version, to restrict human activities and business operations, either nationwide or in selected locations for the last 14 months in Malaysia (Ministry of Health for Malaysia, 2021). Regardless of these restrictions, Malaysia is experiencing yet another wave of COVID-19 and mutation of viruses since January 2021, leading to another national-wide lockdown (i.e., MCO) between 12 May and 7 June 2021, as the numbers of new cases increased (Ministry of Health for Malaysia, 2021). The lockdown is extended again to 28 June 2021 (Teoh, 2021). To date, Malaysia is ranked 42 out of 222 countries and territories on the total COVID-19 cases reported globally (a total of 445457 cases as of 11 May 21) (Worldometer, 2021). The increase of COVID-19 cases and the changes and frequency of changes of these restrictions appeared to create confusions and substantial concerns among the public and businesses, including the HR professionals who need to enforce some of these restrictions in an organisation, such as workplace health and safety (e.g., tracking devices and records, leaves), employees' mental health and wellbeing, working from home arrangement, workforce planning (e.g., resulted from downsizing and restructuring), and labour cost (Fan & Cheong, 2021; Fong, 2021; Sunil, 2021; Tan, 2021; Arumugam, 2020).

Although the Malaysian government has provided some subsidies to the public and businesses in addition to implementing the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme, socioeconomic impacts are among many challenges for the organisations and labour force in the country (Lim, 2021; Sunil, 2021; Tan, 2021). In particular, those in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises, as well as the hardest-hit sectors, such as tourism and hospitality, retails and manufacturing (Lim, 2021; Sunil, 2021). The unemployment rate increased from 3.3% in February 2020 to 4.8% in February 2021, with the peak in May 2020 (5.3%) -- the highest over the last 27 years since 1993 -- according to the February 2021 Monthly Economic Indicators published by the DOSM (2021). The challenges triggered by COVID-19, such as downsizing, restructuring, and re-modeling of businesses, led to changes in many HR practices in organisations in Malaysia, including the needs to re-strategise workplace health and safety especially for those who need to work in different locations, and to re-skill or up-skill workforce for new job demands, to name a few (KPMG, 2021; Sunil, 2021; Tan, 2021; Writer, 2020).

Since the self-employed workforce represent 18% (or 2.7 million) of the total labour force in 2020, and that the economic and productive lives of women in Malaysia appeared to be influenced disproportionately and differently from men during COVID-19 in the sectors that they were engaged more actively in, it is projected that the pandemic and partial lockdown may affect different groups of workers and unpaid family workers socioeconomically during COVID-19 and exacerbate gender disparity issues at the workplace (Lim, 2021). For example, when comparing yearly LFPR by gender between 1982- 2019 and January 2020-February 2021, female LFPR appeared to drop 0.6% points, when male LFPR showed an increase of 0.2% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Further research also indicates that the female LDPR

is relatively low in Malaysia, as compared to other ASEAN countries (Lim, 2021). Going beyond the increased unemployment rate and decreased female LFPR, the following section discusses gender disparity from the aspects of the gender wage gap, senior management roles, and other workplace issues in Malaysia.

4.2.2 Gender Wage Gap (GWP)

The *gender wage gap* (GWP) refers to the disparity of median earnings between men and women, as compared to men's median earnings on the basis of full-time and self-employment (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2021). Despite decades of effort in closing gender disparity globally, GWP is still the centre of discussion in some countries, including Malaysia (e.g., CPA Australia, 2020; Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2021). For example, the 2019 Malaysia Salaries and Wage Survey Report (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019) showed: 1) the yearly median salaries and wages of the male employees continued to be higher than the female employees between 2015 and 2019, excepts for 2016, and 2) the yearly mean salaries and wages of the male employees continued to be higher than the female employees between 2015 and 2019. Further research on gender wage gaps indicates that women's engagement in unpaid caregiving and household responsibilities is 3 times more than men's (Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), 2020; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). This unpaid family work is acknowledged officially as *vulnerable employment* as the "workers" are not entitled to health-care services and income replacement when they are sick or during COVID-19 lockdowns (Lim, 2021). Yet, this workforce contributed significantly to the informal economy in Malaysia (Lim, 2021).

4.2.3 Women in Senior Management Roles and Other Workplace Issues

Gender inequality is also shown in female participation in senior management roles in Malaysia. Although the percentage of women in senior management roles in Malaysia has passed the global milestone of 30% and rose further from 31% in 2020 to 37% in 2021, the highest record since 2007, Malaysian organisations remained one of the lowest performers in Asean (Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2020; Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2021; Grant Thornton Malaysia PLT, 2021). On one hand, there appeared to be positive changes, such as a rise of women in other chief executive positions beyond HR roles and the adaptation of flexible work and culture of inclusiveness, in some organisations in Malaysia in recent years (Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2020; Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2021; Grant Thornton Malaysia PLT, 2021). On the other hand, female workers continued to experience mistreatments in some organisations. For example, a recent survey conducted by Vase.ai in collaboration with Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) reported 56% of the 1010 Malaysian women they surveyed experienced at least one form of gender discrimination in their workplace (Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), 2020).

The discussion so far leads to the question of gender equality in the Malaysian workplace: Just how well each organisation integrated gender equality in HRM practices across different sectors and sizes of organisations? As organisations have undergone a range of structural, technological, and people-related changes to meet the challenges in their external business environment during COVID-19, the Malaysian workplace has experienced series of changes that impacted the workforce and potentially leading to gender disparity (Hinchliffe, 2020; Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2021; World Economic Forum, March 2021). To name a few, women's participation in employment and senior management roles may be affected by competing needs outside of the workplace, such as working mothers who have to perform extra responsibilities of unpaid caregiving, household responsibilities, and homeschooling while schools are closed during COVID-19 lockdowns (Hinchliffe, 2020; Lim, 2021; Grant Thornton International Ltd., 2021; World Economic Forum, March 2021). The findings above implied the challenges for HR professionals to improve gender equality issues in the Malaysian workplace.

4. 3 HR Waves and HR Roles: The Implications for Integrating Gender Equality in the Malaysian Workplace

The fact that the transformation and practices of HRM in an organisation are affected by both external business environment factors (e.g., legal-political, social-cultural, economic, and technological factors) and internal business environment factors (e.g., roles of HR professionals to facilitate the development of organisational culture, system, structure, and resources that sustain gender equality) made mapping and closing gender gaps in a workplace a complex and challenging task (United Nations, 2021b; United Nations Women, n.d.; Jalal, et al., 2020; Ungureanu, Bertolotti, & Pilati, 2020; KPMG, 2021). This indicates the need to examine the paradigm shifts of the HR roles conceptually to understand the frameworks that can be used to integrate gender equality in the HRM functions in an organisation.

Given the shift of the management paradigm in some countries, the work of HR has evolved radically in recent years and can be categorised into 4 HR waves or stages of HR evolution, proposed by Dave Ulrich (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). *HR Wave 1 (HR administration)* refers to the era when the role of human resources is restricted to mainly administrative duties, such as performing recordkeeping, file maintenance, and other administrative functions (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). In *HR Wave 2 (HR practices)*, *HR professionals* focus on innovation and integration of HR practices to provide a consistent approach to HR in various aspects, such as recruitment and selection, compensation and rewards, training and succession planning, and communication (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). In *HR Wave 3 (HR strategy)*, HR practices focused on the connection of individual and integrated HR practices to business success through strategic HRM (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). To illustrate, HR professionals in this wave will expand their roles, priorities and activities to develop the culture and leadership in an organisation to achieve their business strategy (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). For organisations that recognised the future of HR, they have entered *HR Wave 4 (HR from the outside in)* in which they examined external business conditions proactively to align the workplace and workforce with the needs in the external stakeholders (Ulrich, et al., 2012; Saleh, et al., 2015). i.e., HR professionals would look outside their organisations for the customer, investors, and communities to define successful HR. These HR waves provide a theoretical framework for the managers and HR professionals in the Malaysian workplace to examine the current roles of HR in an organisation, as compared to the desired position the organisation wants HR to be in the future.

Ulrich further suggested four major roles of future HR that are associated with the HR waves discussed above, namely Administrative Expert, Employee Champion, Strategic Partner, and Change Agent (Ulrich, 1997; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). These HR roles outlining the values that HR can add to an organisation. Firstly, the *Administrative Expert* (AE) role required HR professionals to improve the efficiency of both their own HR function and the whole organisation (Ulrich, 1997). For example, in the effort of managing gender equality at a workplace in Malaysia, HR professionals can implement e-HR to trace the progress and outcomes of gender equality initiatives employed in the organisation, such as job design, job analysis, performance management, compensation management, career development and management, and health and safety. By improving the efficiency in HR administrative processes, HR professionals can focus on higher-level HR initiatives, such as strategising and executing HR strategy.

The second role, *Employee Champion* (EC), focuses on balancing organisational, group, and individual needs (Ulrich, 1997; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Although female LFPR may call for increasing use of flexible work arrangements in future work to fulfill the needs of the organisation and individuals (e.g., working mothers) to a certain extent, the relationship of the employees with the organisation becomes transactional. i.e., Employees may give their time for

work but they are reluctant to engage in organisation fully. Under this new role, HR professionals are to find ways to increase employee engagement so that the employees feel committed to the organisation and contribute fully. While it is challenging to attend to the social needs of the employees through organising social events during COVID-19, HR should seek other ways to engage female workers, for example, organising professional services and peer support groups for those in need.

Along this line, HR professionals can focus on balancing organisational, group, and individual needs in various ways. Firstly, HR should orient and train the line management about the importance and causes of high employee morale and to find ways to achieve it during this challenging time, such as using online workshops and conduct employee survey to identify possible threats of employee morale while the organisation is undergoing downsizing, restructuring, and re-modelling of businesses during COVID-19. This is important, especially when employees believe that: 1) the job demands exceed the resources provided to meet these demands, 2) the goals are unclear, 3) the priorities are unfocused, or 4) the performance measurement is vague. Secondly, besides training the line management, HR needs to ensure that senior management is aware of the status of employee morale, especially the vulnerable workers. Thirdly, HR should convey employees' opinions to the management and participate in management discussions that may affect the workforce. Employees should have confidence that when major decisions are made that may affect them, HR is involved in the decision-making process to represent employees' views and to support their rights for common goods (Aust, et al., 2020). For example, workplace health and safety implementation, compensation adjustment, restructuring, and downsizing during COVID-19. Lastly, HR should offer employees equal opportunities for personal and professional growth as well as resources needed for employees to meet their job demands, such as upskilling and re-skilling for future work (Hancock, et al., January 2020). By balancing the organisational and career needs of the employees, HR professionals may increase the psychological contract and career development needs of the employees, especially those less represented groups, such as females in senior management roles in the organisation.

Thirdly, *the Strategic Partner* (SP) role requires HR professionals to work collaboratively with key stakeholders in an organisation to achieve HR and organisational outcomes (Ulrich, 1997). For example, HR can identify and formulate the best HR and organisational architecture for the organisation to reduce the gender wage gaps and other forms of gender discrimination at the workplace. Some of the well-established models that can be used by HR to add values to the organisation include: 1) Jay Galbraith's star model (strategy, structure, rewards, processes, and people) (Kates & Galbraith, 2007), 2) McKinsey & Company's model (strategy, structure, systems, staff, style, skills, and shared values) (McKinsey & Company, 2013; Abdeldayem & Aldulaimi, 2020), and 3) Michael Porter's Organisational Values Chain (Aust, et al., 2020). Upon implementation, HR should conduct an organisational audit to monitor and to ensure that the selected organisational-architecture plans help to achieve the strategic goals. In addition, HR needs to find ways to renovate the organisational architecture, when and where it is needed. For example, HR managers should introduce state-of-art approaches to the senior management if the company wishes to create a team-based organisational structure that engages everyone, especially the less represented workers to improve gender equality in the future workplace. Lastly, HR needs to join forces with operating managers to review the initiatives implemented in the organisation to ensure that gender equality initiatives can lead to desired business outcomes. This indicates the needs for HR professionals to develop their competencies in work processes, business strategies, and HR models, for improving gender equality at the workplace.

Due to the pace and the demand for change in information era which are triggered further by COVID-19 pandemic, such as globalisation, technological advancement, and access to information (Hancock, et al., January 2020; Zeidan & Itani, 2020), organisational change is

complex and dizzying. Unlike some organisations that will take time to gain control and master change, successful organisations will demonstrate the capability to adapt, learn and act quickly. In this last role, *Change Agent* (CA), HR needs to develop the organisation's capacity to embrace and capitalise on change. For example, initiate and facilitate organisational change (i.e., strategic, structure, technology, people) that support gender equality and transform employee behaviours to meet the business needs. For instance, to engage female workers in middle and senior management roles to create high-performing teams, reduce the cycle time for innovation, as well as design and implement new technology in a timely way.

Depending on which HR wave an organisation is currently positioning itself; the emphasis on one HR role rather than another role appears to affect the level of attention and resources used to integrate gender equality in the HR vision, mission, and practices. For example, for an organisation that positioned itself in *HR Wave 1*, there is a likelihood that the *Administrative Expert* (AE) role may be emphasized. For those in *HR Wave 2*, HR professionals may focus more on *Administrative Expert* (AE) and *Employee Champion* (EC) roles, while *HR Wave 3* may emphasise on *Administrative Expert* (AE), *Employee Champion* (EC), and *Strategic Partner* (SP). As for those in *HR Wave 4*, they may embrace all 4 HR roles. i.e., organisations at this stage may employ all 4 HR roles to integrate gender equality at the workplace. Therefore, HR professionals in the Malaysian workplace should examine the current position of HR in the organisation in light of HR waves and HR roles, as compared to the desired position the organisation wants their HR to be in the future when mapping and closing gender gaps in the workplace.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings above result in the following conclusions. Firstly, the nature and measures of gender equality, such as 17 SGDs and GGGI framework are useful tools for measuring and benchmarking gender disparity in 4 thematic dimensions: 1) economic participation and opportunity, 2) education attainment, 3) health and survival, and 4) political empowerment. For example, the measures of gender disparity in the Malaysian workplace indicate the need for government, businesses, and HR professionals to improve gender disparity relevant to *economic participation and opportunity* and *political empowerment*, as a country and in a workplace. However, further research on the influence of the political, economic, historical, and ethnic background of the Malaysian workforce would be useful for such initiatives.

Secondly, COVID-19 appeared to speed up organisational change and showed socioeconomic impacts in the Malaysian workplace. For example, increased unemployment rates, reduced female labour force participation rates, increased gender wage gap, the needs to increase women engagement in senior management roles and the needs to reduce gender discrimination in the workplace. By positioning current and desirable HR waves and HR roles, HR professionals, managers, businesses, government institutions, and educational institutions can work collaboratively to map and close gender gaps in the Malaysian workplace, bearing in mind the gender disparity measures discussed in the study.

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