How has HRM Evolved in a Post-Disaster Situation?

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Abstract

The post-disaster period following the Christchurch 2011 seismic disaster resulted in a variety of changes for HR practitioners. A multiple-case study analysis surrounding post-disaster experiences of 11 HR practitioners showed that the focus of HR practitioners evolved from immediate employee welfare, to creative retentive practices, to ensuring employee wellbeing. There also became an increasing awareness of the importance of employee-focused HRM, resulting in a changed outlook for some practitioners. The post-disaster period provided a potential learning experience for practitioners, along with an opportunity for practitioners to introduce new initiatives. As a result, some participants felt HRM gained increasing legitimacy within their organisations. Throughout the period, both employees and HR practitioners adapted to the 'new normal' at varying rates, influencing their ability to perform at work. The study brings awareness of the need for HR practitioners to utilise a more employee-centred style of HRM in both normal and post-disaster environments.

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1.   Introduction

A disaster has the potential to create a significant challenge for Human Resource (HR) practitioners. Research in the field of Human Resources Management (HRM) and disaster management has largely focused on disaster planning and mitigation, along with the early post-disaster response and recovery phases. However, the evolution of HRM post-disaster is under-examined, providing opportunity for further research. People have little experience in facing disasters as they are considered to be rare events; uncertainty shrouds organisational and individual responses. This lack of attention is significant because researchers, HR practitioners, and policy makers have limited information surrounding the evolution of HRM post-disaster, leading to an increase in ambiguity surrounding HRM's evolution in a post-disaster situation. In order to address this problem, the present study aims to explore how HRM has evolved for a number of Christchurch based HR practitioners.

Previous studies found employees required a varying range of assistance in the initial response and recovery phases, ranging from support of primary needs, such as food and shelter, to support of secondary needs, including laundry and social support (Sanchez, Korbin, & Viscarra, 1995). Employee needs have been shown to evolve as time progresses (Nilakant, Walker, & Rochford, 2013), and greater numbers of employees have left organisations due to shock such as a natural disaster, than low day-to-day levels of work satisfaction (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999). An organisational crisis can be used to bring positive change into an organisation and the HRM function through efficient adaptation to a new environment (Brockner & James, 2008).

The post-disaster period is signified by intensive ambiguity; HR practitioners are faced with uncertainty surrounding the future of the organisation and the HR function. The study takes place four years after the disaster; information is gathered through

reflections of HR practitioners, illustrating how HRM has evolved up to the present time. The study utilises semi-structured interviews with HR practitioners, focusing on how they perceived HRM evolved and challenges faced, both personally and in a working environment, and practitioner insights.

There is a significant gap in the academic literature surrounding how HRM evolved in a post-disaster situation, and little is documented to act as reference material for practitioners and policy makers. The study aims to further existing knowledge on the topic, while providing material HR practitioners can refer to aid disaster planning and in facing the ambiguous post-disaster phase. Lessons from the present study will be beneficial for both disaster and crisis events, as a disaster is considered to be a type of crisis. Ultimately, it is hoped that the present study will reduce uncertainty surrounding HRM and the post-disaster phase, for both academics and HR practitioners, while informing organisational responses.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides the introduction and rationale for the study.

Chapter two introduces and reviews literature from surrounding topics targeted at informing the study of HRM's evolution post-disaster, as there is minimal literature focusing specifically on HRM's evolution. An overview is provided of significant background information on crises and disasters, along with studies informing knowledge of post-disaster workforce support, employment related issues faced post-disaster, and scenarios resulting from rare events and crises illustrating HRM's post-crisis evolution. This post-crisis evolution is relevant for the study as a disaster is considered a type of crisis.

Chapter three discusses the methodology utilised in this study. The methodology chapter outlines the setting and importance of the study and chosen approach. The

chosen approach utilises an inductive, interpretive style of research. Qualitative data is gathered from rich interviews with HR practitioners who worked through the disaster. Data is then analysed using Eisenhardts' (1989) well recognised multiple-case study approach.

Chapter four outlines the findings of this exploratory study. The findings are divided into three sections; the response and early recovery periods, influences of the disaster on ongoing HRM, and HR practitioner insights.

In chapter five the key findings of the study are discussed and a model outlining the changing focus of HRM is derived and outlined. Limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice are outlined.

Finally, in chapter six, the research is concluded. Key concepts derived from the research are drawn together, identifying how the research has filled an important gap in present literature.

2.   Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The February 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand gave rise to this study. The earthquakes caused substantial damage and loss of life, and this had significant consequences for Christchurch businesses and individuals.

A post-disaster setting is highly ambiguous. Individuals typically have little experience in handling crises and little understanding of the consequences of their actions. This study aims to explore how HRM has evolved in a post-disaster situation and add to the limited existing literature on HRM and the recovery phase, as well as provide guidance for HR practitioners and policy makers. Much of the existing literature surrounding this topic is based around HRM-related crisis planning and response, and the early post-disaster phase. There is however, comparatively little research on how HRM has evolved in a post-disaster recovery situation and existing knowledge is very fragmented. As a result, this literature review draws on findings from related fields to provide potential context for HRM's evolution post-disaster, which could inform the present study. These fields include the background of HRM, crises, disasters, employee support, local labour issues, turnover after shock, organisational responses to disaster, and executive perceptions of disaster.

2.2. Background Information on HRM

The HRM function of an organisation has many responsibilities, however it is not often viewed as a value-adding component in organisations due to difficulty measuring financial worth in tangible terms (Guest, 2011). Byars and Rue (1991) proposed that HRM involves activities designed to coordinate and provide for the human resources of a firm. These activities include job analysis, human resource planning, recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, Human Resource Development (HRD), career

planning and development, employee motivation, change and cultural transformation, remuneration, and benefits (Stone, 2013). Thus, a synergistic HRM system provides the opportunity for employees to become a source of competitive advantage, capable of enhancing overall organisational performance through their daily work (Liu, Combs, Ketchen Jr, & Ireland, 2007). Ultimately, well established policies and procedures can be used by HR practitioners under normal circumstances, however in a post-disaster context these may need to be adapted to address changing employee needs while fitting within the boundaries of organisational resources (Nilakant, Walker, & Rochford, 2013).

2.3. Crises

The HR function is responsible for managing HRM activities in both normal and abnormal situations, which can include crises. Pearson and Clair (1998) posit the following definition: "An organizational crisis is a low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of an organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made quickly" (p. 66) from their review into the literature.

In a more recent study, Sayegh, Anthony, and Perrewé (2004) provided a definition of crises with respect to the management decision maker, where they suggest a crisis is unexpected, unfamiliar, and unusual. Researchers (Hutchins & Wang, 2008; Sayegh et al., 2004) describe an organisational crisis as having potentially major consequences for individuals and their organisations, which can also be a threat towards organisational performance and sustainability.

The authors appear to reach a consensus on the common factors which constitute an organisational crisis. It was concluded that key features of an organisational crisis include ambiguity, the need for rapid action, and threat to the viability of an organisation.

Disasters are a particular type of crisis, and HRM related research from other related post-crisis contexts can potentially be applied to a post-disaster situation.

2.4. Disasters

Norris (2006, p. 4) defines a disaster as "a potentially traumatic event that is collectively experienced, has an acute onset, and is time delimited; disasters may be attributed to natural, technological, or human causes". Disasters are rare events, with consequently little research relating to post-disaster HRM (Nilakant, Walker, & Rochford, 2013).

Typically there are three stages in a disaster: pre-disaster (including mitigation and preparedness), disaster (response) and post-disaster (recovery) (Lettieri, Masella, & Radaelli, 2009). Furthermore, Wilkinson, Chang and Rotimi (2014) suggest a segmented version of the recovery phase, consisting of chaos, realisation, mobilisation, struggle and new normal. Their study is targeted towards the construction industry; however it provides a useful method of separating the different phases inside of the recovery phase.

There is debate surrounding the prospect of disaster phases, with Neal (1997) proposing they are unsuitable, as he believes phases are mutually inclusive and multidimensional. His view is based on his experience in disaster related aid. The value of his findings arises from its illustration of how different individuals and groups experience different phases at different times and he therefore urges researchers to reconsider use of disaster phases. However, using disaster phases can act as a useful method of breaking up the different occurrences in a disaster situation, and are commonly used in literature (Lettieri et al., 2009; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Sanchez et al., 1995).

2.5. Workforce Support

An extensive search into the existing literature revealed little research on supportive practices in a post-disaster setting. Nilakant, Walker, Rochford, and van Heugten (2013) proposed that as the post-disaster phase continued after the Christchurch earthquakes, understanding the evolving needs of employees was essential. It was important that support was perceived as fairly distributed. Their study revealed that perceptions of fair distribution could be moderated by ensuring staff understood support was needs-based. Employee perceptions of organisations can be affected by the level of individual support received from the organisation post-disaster (Lilly, Kavanaugh, Zelbst, & Duffy, 2008).

As the post-disaster phase progressed, Nilakant et al. (2013) found that employee needs evolved. In the initial response phase there was a significant emphasis on satisfying primary needs, communicating, and ensuring the physical safety of employees (Premeaux & Breaux, 2007). As time progressed, HR practitioners began to focus on satisfying further needs of employees, including provision of flexible working arrangements. Notably, Nilakant, Walker, and Rochford (2013) discovered that organisations perceived as effective in meeting employee needs maintained two-way links between senior management and employees, where employees felt comfortable expressing concerns to managers and managers were open to accommodating varying employee needs. Employees faced uncertainty regarding their future and this led to additional stress.

The above findings echo that of Sanchez et al. (1995), who noted in their study of post-disaster employee strain, that a varying range of assistance was required as supportive mechanisms for employees as the disaster recovery progressed. Assistance was directed at both tangible primary needs such as food, water, housing, and tangible secondary support such as laundry, childcare, and social gatherings. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are frequently used to manage occupational stress after a significant

shock, and have been shown to lead to development of adaptive employees (Johnson, 2008; Premeaux & Breaux, 2007)

Nilakant et al. (2013) found that employee needs evolved as time progressed and were dependent on the individual. Employee adaptation to workplace change can be assisted through managers who understand that employees have varied levels of resilience (Siebert, 2006). Compassionate social support in a post-crisis situation has been shown to lead to a lower likelihood of dissatisfied employees (Byron & Peterson, 2002). Employees who felt they received fair support were more likely to be committed to the organisation and develop affective commitment (Harvey & Haines, 2005).

The concept of fair support can be explained through organisational justice literature. There are three types of justice: procedural, distributive, and interactional (Harvey & Haines, 2005). Procedural justice is fairness of the distribution method of outcomes, and distributive justice is how fair employees feel the outcomes were. This is usually through standardised policies and procedures, however in a post-disaster situation, employee needs vary and standardisation could have negative implications for employee welfare (Nilakant, Walker, & Rochford, 2013). Interactional justice considers whether or not employees feel they were dealt with sensitively and ethically during the allocation of outcomes.

2.6. Staffing

After a disaster there can be significant consequences relating to staffing, including retention issues and skills shortages. The New Zealand Government introduced a comprehensive labour market programme to address the skills shortage in Christchurch after the disaster (CERA, 2011). It also introduced a workplace initiative to encourage firms to use high performance working practices (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment). Four practices of note were: pairing a young and inexperienced worker

with an older worker for practical up-skilling, making virtual resource flows through outsourcing and partnerships, using international recruitment to fill high value jobs, and creating more opportunities to attract and retain skills. Innovative practices such as these can have positive implications in a post-disaster setting.

After the Christchurch earthquakes, relocating staff, skills training, recruitment, and interchangeable skills became key issues for HRM in organisations directly involved with the Christchurch rebuild (Chang-Richards, Wilkinson, Seville, & Brunsdon, 2013). Their research found insufficient work experience was a significant issue for construction companies, and that some organisations invested in overseas recruitment to source skilled workers. Overseas recruitment of engineers was often targeted at seismic prone countries. Human resource demands were focused on four types of businesses: engineering and design, construction, manufacturing logistics, and supporting administration (Chang-Richards, Wilkinson, & Seville, 2012). Most organisations interviewed said they were using, or intending on looking into, innovative HR practices such as people-sharing between organisations. Chang-Richards et al. (2012) found that there were significant remuneration increases due to the low supply of skilled workers. They also found that in the early post-disaster recovery stages many larger construction organisations had one member of the HR department dedicated to housing provisions for employees, and supporting and recruiting migrant workers.

2.7. Employee Turnover and Retention

Lee and Mitchell (1994) describe a shock to the system as an event that causes employees to make deliberate judgments regarding their jobs, which can lead to voluntary turnover. Furthermore, this event could be a disaster or crisis. Lee et al. (1999) discovered more people left an organisation due to a shock than day-to-day low levels of work satisfaction. A significant shock such as a natural disaster can lead to employees

reevaluating their work and lifestyle choices, and this can lead to employee turnover (Lee et al., 1999).

Another key influence on post-disaster turnover is the perceived care and support provided to employees. Lilly et al. (2008) investigated the impact of HR practices on low-income workers in the context of a natural disaster. Predictably, they found that if employee perceptions of trust towards the organisation were low, which could be due to a lack of support from the organisation after the disaster, commitment to the organisation was low. This finding provides insight into possible reasons behind post-disaster employee turnover.

One method of retaining staff that is often used in a post-disaster situation is the development of social capital (Aldrich, 2012). Social capital can be defined as "the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible" (Cohen & Prusak, 2001, p. 4). In an organisational setting, this could be strengthened through actions such as social activities or organisational culture development. Building social capital is directly linked to an increase in employee retention (Cohen & Prusak, 2001), and can aid individuals in developing resilience in a post-crisis environment (Aldrich, 2012).

2.8. Related Contexts

Lessons learned from crises which have related contexts can assist in developing an understanding of potential post-disaster outcomes. One lesson of note arises from a study conducted by Wang, Hutchins, and Garavan (2009). They suggest that an organisation's HRM function can aid organisations in developing operational capabilities to manage crises, and that HRM can facilitate crisis-related learning to lessen the stress of future crises. They also recommend that HR practitioners encourage a crisis-prepared

organisational culture with clear crisis management plans in order to aid employees in facing crisis and post-crisis events. A crisis-prepared organisational culture can be fostered by ensuring organisational leaders constantly review signs and assess the organisation's practices. They also recommend development of human capital, which refers to employee knowledge, skills and abilities, with a specific focus on adaptive capacity (Wang et al., 2009; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001). There is merit in gaining knowledge of crises and coping abilities, and learning from previous crises.

Weick (1988) highlights that early responses do more than set the tone – they shape the trajectory of the crisis. Liou and Lins' (2008) investigation into the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York illustrated connections between human resources planning and disaster planning. They stressed the importance of procedures that had minimal injury to staff and appropriate evacuation provisions, and that preparedness measures are communicated to employees. They also mentioned the value of decentralising documents in order to lessen complications in the response and recovery phases. This also allowed for a greater focus on the evacuation of victims in the event of a crisis. The New York terrorist attacks led to a shift in work orientations for a number of individuals (Wrzesniewski, 2002). Many changed their orientation to a calling orientation, where the purpose of work is to fulfil meaning to the individual. This change in worker orientations led to a change in recruitment strategies for some organisations – the New York Police Department changed their motto to "it's not just a job" (Wrzesniewski, 2002).

In crisis and disaster situations there will be changes in the internal and external business environment, which can lead to varying organisational responses. Hutchins and Wang (2008) found that HRD practitioners could aid organisations in the establishment of crisis communication systems, development of employee critical thinking and reflection skills, and encourage double-loop learning through strategically aligned learning interventions. Double-loop learning occurs "when errors are corrected by changing the

governing values and then the actions" (Argyris, 2002). Furthermore, it is beneficial to have employees engaged in double-loop learning as this will help them adapt to the changing post-crisis environment (Rita, 2010).

Whether managers view a crisis as a threat or an opportunity impacts how they approach the decision making process (Huy, 1999). In a more recent study, Brockner and James (2008) suggested that an organisational crisis that is handled effectively brings opportunities for positive organisational change, and Sayegh et al. (2004) recommend that a crisis be viewed as a decision opportunity which can lead to constructive growth when managed effectively. The initial response and outlook shapes how the post-crisis period will progress. This echoes Weick (1988), who posits that individuals firstly seek meaning, interpret the situation, and then take action towards resolving a crisis situation.

Executive perceptions of disaster can influence organisational levels of preparedness, responses, and the trajectory of the recovery phase after a disaster strikes. Barr (1998) notes "a key component in a firm's strategic response to unfamiliar environmental events is the interpretation managers develop about the event itself" (p.644). Nystrom and Starbuck (1984), suggested the concept of unlearning to encourage new ways of thinking within managers. Unlearning is where an individual questions their preconceptions, making way for new styles of thinking. In order to practice the technique of unlearning, they suggest managers engage in practice crises so they become more adaptable to new environments.

As disasters are infrequent they can be considered as rare events. Research into rare events has shown that they provide learning opportunities for organisations, giving managers opportunities to unlearn (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984). Learning from rare events is shown to provoke greater uncertainty than other learning due to ambiguous

outcomes and high involvement decision making, which can lead to greater difficulty in making decisions (Starbuck, 2009).

Rare events can provide opportunities for sudden audits of routines, habits and roles (Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe, & Weick, 2009). In their study surrounding the collapse of the roof of the Baltimore and Ohio Railway Museum, Christianson et al. (2009) noted that the crisis illustrated weaknesses in HRM activities, and provided practitioners with an opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness of HR activities. They discovered that the disaster provided HR practitioners with the opportunity to improve the skill sets of employees and reconfigure organisational structures.

Disasters can be viewed as opportunities to build capabilities. Crises have the potential to cause a catalytic effect, meaning they can help break down resistance to change, focus attention on issues, and lead to creation of new ideas with regards to an organisation's approach to crisis management (Birkland, 1997). There is the potential for HR practitioners and other managers to experience post-traumatic growth as a result of a crisis event, which is defined as "positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with challenging life circumstances" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p. 1).

In summary, to understand HRM's evolution in a post-disaster situation, it is important to have background knowledge surrounding the activities of the HRM function. It is also valuable to understand how a disaster is considered a type of crisis, and applicable lessons from connected crises; examples include the value of disaster planning (Liu et al., 2007) and viewing a crisis as an opportunity to initiate change within an organisation (Brockner & James, 2008). Understanding of diverse perspectives on topics such as disaster theory, workforce issues, staffing, retention, employee support, organisational responses, and executive perceptions of disaster will provide potential background in

understanding HRM's evolution. These factors all influence the evolution of HRM in a post-disaster situation.

2.9. Discussion and Implications

This review of the literature has identified a gap providing room for significant contribution on the topic of how HRM has evolved in a post-disaster situation, particularly in the later recovery phase. Most likely this could be due to the infrequency of disasters. Current literature does not provide a clear picture of HRM's evolution in a post-disaster situation, although Junhong and Alas (2010) suggest that HRM can be significantly affected by disasters. This has implications for HR practitioners who are provided with otherwise little guidance or insight into appropriate practices.

Exploring the outcomes, and challenges faced by practitioners post-disaster can provide valuable knowledge for researchers, HR practitioners, management, senior management, and line managers. It would seem that organisations who learn from rare events can aim to obtain competitive advantage through changes to organisational routines, and viewing crises as learning opportunities (Christianson et al., 2009; Starbuck, 2009).

Closing this gap through research into the evolution of HRM in a post-disaster situation would give practitioners insight as to how to proceed in the best possible way for their organisation, should they face a crisis event, and the potential problems that may occur. At the present time, HR practitioners and policy makers have little knowledge of how HRM can evolve in a post-disaster situation, due to disasters being rare events shrouded by ambiguity (Starbuck, 2009).

In a crisis or post-crisis situation, HR practitioners face a number of unforeseen challenges, and as a result it can be difficult to learn while engaged in the response and recovery phases. Exploring the nature of longer term post-disaster recovery will offer a

clearer outline of this type of situation and which approaches are most appropriate for HR practitioners facing crises. This literature search found employees required support after the disaster, and that their needs evolved as time progressed (Nilakant et al., 2013). Organisations and HR practitioners responded to the disaster with differing levels of resilience. A post-disaster context requires changes to organisational routines, along with the need to find beneficial and adaptive ways of conducting business (Christianson et al., 2009; Lampel, Shamsie, & Shapira, 2009; Starbuck, 2009). These are important implications for HR practitioners to consider when facing a post-disaster situation, and these implications require further consideration and research.

3.   Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Previously there has been little research surrounding the evolution of HRM in a post-disaster setting. The primary motivation for this study was to therefore gain greater insight into what happened to Christchurch-based HRM following the earthquakes, and how it has evolved up to the present, adding to our knowledge on how HRM has changed post-disaster.

This chapter explains my methodological approaches to meeting the above aims of the research. I will begin by outlining the setting of the disaster that gave rise to this research. I then outline my research approach, which includes reasons behind my choice of a qualitative, interpretive, and inductive study. I move on to explaining the multiple-case study approach and the reasons for its applicability in this study, along with how participants were selected, and the interview process. Finally, I will discuss the way I analysed data and explain how I utilised cross-case analysis, which led to theory development.

3.2. Setting

The study was conducted in the post-disaster setting of Christchurch, New Zealand, between July 2014 and February 2015. Christchurch experienced considerable seismic activity following 4 September 2010, when a magnitude 7.1 earthquake occurred in the Canterbury region. On 22 February 2011, there was a devastating magnitude 6.3 earthquake which resulted in the loss of 185 lives, caused substantial damage to the city, and was followed by unpredictable and destructive aftershocks. The interviews focus on changes to HRM after the February 2011 earthquakes, as this was a turning point for the city.

3.3. Approach

The central research question for this study was: 'How has HRM evolved in a post-disaster situation?'. Qualitative research was necessary to meet the aims of this interpretive study to explain rich individual experiences from the views of participants who experienced the disaster and its aftermath. Data also formed the basis of building a model for understanding the phenomena. Qualitative research can be more relevant to the reader due to vivid stories and descriptions gathered directly from sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It also provides the researcher with rich information that can be used to draw conclusions.

Exploration of qualitative data provides the researcher with a greater insight into life experiences, and allows the researcher to extensively explore phenomenon. Goulding (2002) noted that managers tended to trust qualitative research more than quantitative surveys due to data richness.

The interpretive paradigm tries to understand the social world from the perspective of individual experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). This is usually through approaches such as face-to-face interviews to gain insights, which can then be used to uncover meanings of social actors. Practitioner perceptions of HRM changes and personal experiences in a post-disaster situation are subjective to each individual. These perceptions will form the basis of my research and therefore the research lends itself to the interpretive paradigm.

This exploratory research is suited to an inductive approach as little is known about the phenomenon under investigation. Data analysis involved the development of themes based on data gathered from participants, rather than testing the accuracy of existing information as one would with a deductive approach (Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

3.4. Multiple-Case Study

Yin (2009) suggests the use of case study design to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, and to capture the expanse of phenomena. Case studies provide rich empirical descriptions to aid the researcher in illustrating characteristics of real life events in a holistic manner (Yin, 2009).

The topic is suited to a case study approach as the post-disaster situation is a contemporary and constantly evolving event, that cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009). Multiple-case study was chosen as opposed to a single-case study, as it provides a stronger base for theory building with more generalisable findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Each case has distinct, surrounding boundaries, and is considered as a separate entity (Merriam, 1997). Eisenhardts' (1989) multiple-case study method of analysis is well recognised within academic circles. It involves analysis of within-case data, searching for cross-case patterns, and finally shaping hypotheses.

Unlike statistical generalisation, where results are used to make inferences about a population, a case study approach utilises analytic generalisation (Yin, 2009). Analytic generalisation is where individual's cases are viewed as separate entities, comparable to laboratory experiments, and theory can be developed through constant comparison of case findings.

Yin (2009) recommends the use of between four to ten cases for the multiple-case study approach, while Miles & Huberman, (1994) suggest using a maximum of 15 cases. For this study I chose 11 cases, a figure lying between the two recommendations.

3.5. Selection

In this research project 11 cases were analysed. Each case presented the views of individuals in HRM related roles, and how they felt HRM had changed since the

February 2011 earthquakes. These cases were later compared and contrasted to gain a picture of how HRM has evolved in a post-disaster situation.

Purposive and convenience sampling were used to obtain participants, with participants being selected based on their positions within organisations and willingness to be interviewed (Given, 2008).

Nine HR practitioners and two managers with HR responsibilities were selected as interviewees based on the criteria of being in a Christchurch-based HR-related role prior to the February 2011 earthquakes, and up to January 2014. Consideration was given to the length of service and HR responsibilities of each individual when selecting participants. Each individual interviewed was considered as a separate case study.

3.6. Interview Approach

Table 1

Case Details

Case	HR Practitioner(A) or Manager with HR Responsibilities (B)	Public/Private Sector	Still at Same Organisation as February 2011	Industry sector	Position Title
1	A	Public	Yes	Governmental Services	Human Resources Advisor
2	A	Private	Yes	Manufacturing	Human Resources Manager
3	A	Public	Yes	Governmental Services	Human Resources Manager
4	A	Private	No	Consulting	Consultant
5	A	Private	No	Infrastructure	Human Resources Manager
6	A	Private	Yes	Education	Human Resource Manager
7	A	Private	No	Construction/Infrastructure	Human Resources Advisor
8	B	Private	No	Manufacturing	Administration Manager
9	B	Private	Yes	Manufacturing	Production Manager
10	A	Private	No	Construction	Human Resources Advisor
11	A	Private	No	Construction	Human Resources Manager

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[1] Information as of January 2014.

[2] Position titles have been changed to generalised HR practitioner titles reflecting their position within the organisation to ensure confidentiality.

Data was gathered from in-depth interviews, as the study required an approach which allowed for exploration of meaning (Ron, 2004). In-depth interviews allowed for holistic understanding of the interviewee's situation (Berry, 1999). Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to allow the researcher to explore topics (Husain, Bais, Hussain, & Samad, 2012). This provided rich answers and a broad overview of the interviewee's situation, which was beneficial for exploratory research.

Face-to-face interviews were chosen to build rapport with participants, which encouraged the interviewee to be more open and honest. Face-to-face interviews also allowed the interviewer to gauge the emotions of the interviewee using visual cues. This knowledge was used to decide on follow-up questions (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013).

Research was conducted prior to the interview to find any relevant press releases or online material for each organisation, and this further strengthened the collected data, as the interviewer had further insight into the background of each organisation. Interviews were recorded on an audio recording device and later transcribed into a computer database.

3.7. Interview Process

Individuals were contacted through email or telephone and provided with an information sheet and a consent form. If they were comfortable with both documents and could provide signed consent, they were then invited to participate in the research. A date and time for the interview was then established with the participant.

Interviews were conducted between July 2014 and December 2014. During the interview participants were asked to describe:

- Organisational responses to the earthquakes and the influence of those on ongoing HRM

- Challenges faced in the longer term post-disaster period, and resulting practice and policy changes

- Impact on culture and attitudes towards HRM

- Personal experiences and insights as a HR practitioner in a post-disaster situation

In addition to these topics, the semi-structured nature of the interviews also provided the interviewer with the ability to ask follow-up questions and clarify ambiguous answers. They were structured around a set of topics and questions, and additional questions emerged from both the interviewee and interviewer as dialogue progressed (see Appendix G.). If participants offered the opportunity to view relevant documentation or reports, this was also used to gain an overview of how HRM evolved within their organisation. Interviews took between 15-45 minutes.

3.8. Analysis of Interviews

Transcriptions were proofread multiple times prior to beginning analysis. The transcribed interview scripts were imported into the software NVivo after they were transcribed in Microsoft Word. NVivo was used to open code data, and this coding was used to identify themes.

I began by using within-case analysis, where I completed a detailed write-up for each individual interview. This aided me in becoming intimately familiar with each individual case, viewing them as separate entities, and aiding discovery of unique patterns

(Eisenhardt, 1989). Cases were reviewed multiple times to ensure I felt immersed in the data.

I then used between-case analysis, and searched for similarities and dissimilarities to identify themes (Eisenhardt, 1989). To assist this analysis I created data displays such as flow charts and other graphics (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data was reviewed line by line using open-coding and scrutinised for every possible meaning (Goulding, 2002). Open-coding was used to minimise risk of closing any directions future theory may take (Urquhart, 2012). Memos of initial thoughts and insights were also attached to documents or pieces of code. Coding was done using nodes, which can have sub-nodes when a category needs to be divided into sub-categories (see Appendix A.). From this information, initial codes were developed and defined. As analysis progressed, definitions constantly evolved due to iterative development of codes between the various cases. Each theme was defined through constant comparison with the data until the themes became clearly defined (Eisenhardt, 1989). After extensive analysis, the final set of 32 codes were developed and utilised. Examples from multiple cases were utilised in developing the findings to strengthen the validity of each theme.

Hypotheses were then shaped through comparisons of themes and relationships which formed preliminary propositions. These propositions were then tested with comparisons between themselves and the data as part of replication logic (Eisenhardt, 1989). Theory building was conducted through constant comparison of data with emerging theory and existing literature (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Comparison of emerging theories and existing literature enhances internal validity and generalisability. After iterative constant comparison between emerging theories and existing literature, closure was reached.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

This study followed University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to beginning the study, and participants were assured of their confidentiality. Throughout the findings section interviewees are referred to by their case numbers. Quotations of a sensitive manner have had their case numbers removed as additional protection. There were no acts of deception involved, and data was stored confidentially. Participants had the opportunity to access findings, and risks were minimised for all participants.

At the beginning of each interview the researcher talked through the consent form and information sheet to ensure the participant had a full understanding of the project and conditions of participation. Prior to the interview the information sheet was viewed by the participant and the consent form was signed. No inducements were offered for participation in this project.

Participants were offered the opportunity to check transcripts of their interview as they were audio recorded prior to transcription. They were also offered the opportunity to view findings of the research after completion.

4.   Findings

The findings that emerged from the data can be divided into three basic categories. These are response and early recovery, influence on ongoing HRM, and practitioner insights. The response and early recovery category focuses on themes identified in the response period and initial recovery period, while the influence on ongoing HRM category focuses on themes relating to the disaster's influence on ongoing HRM. The practitioner insights section combines insights relating to participants' experiences in the post-disaster period, with lessons learnt.

4.1. Response and Early Recovery Period

The disaster resulted in immediate changes to HR practices and the role of HRM in the response and early recovery period. Changes included creation of positive working environments, physical and psychological staff safety, and increasing flexibility. These changes evolved as time progressed.

4.1.1. Positive working environment.

Participants noted the need for work to be a positive and safe environment in the initial response period. Employees were faced with high levels of stress due to the earthquakes, and to lower their stress levels in the workplace employers realised that it was important to have a compassionate and supportive working environment. Practitioners perceived this was valued by employees and connects to findings by Byron and Peterson (2002), who found that employees that were provided with compassionate social support post crisis were less likely to be dissatisfied with their companies.

Leaders played a key role in establishment of a positive working environment. In some organisations middle and senior managers were encouraged to show compassion by HR

practitioners (C1, C.3). Organisational leaders also had influence on how HR teams responded to the crisis, one example being a senior leader encouraging the HR team to create a Welfare Officer role to "listen, be with people, be available to people" (C.1).

HR teams also influenced creation of a positive work environment. Interviewees (C.2, C.3, C.4, C.5) noted that HR practitioners became more welfare driven, examples including providing debriefing sessions before and after shifts (C.3), hiring a psychologist (C.4), and introduction of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs framework as an illustration to the organisation of what would likely occur next, with an initial focus on safety and security: "So the emphasis, I guess was that the needs from an employer's perspective of the employees wasn't work driven. It was welfare driven and their needs were of greatest concern.." (C.4)

Participants noted that HR practitioners became more interactive in order to aid creation of a positive working environment and gauge employee needs (C.1, C.3):

> *One of my colleagues used to say will we go and do our Charles and Camilla round, which meant going around and just chatting to people and seeing, because that's when people would tell you about some things. (C.3)*

4.1.2. Physical staff safety.

Another key aspect of the initial response period was ensuring the physical safety of staff. Premeaux and Breaux (2007) found that, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, physical safety of employees was a key concern for HR practitioners. One key issue that HR practitioners faced after the Canterbury Earthquakes was being aware of the locations of employees in the response period to ensure their physical safety (C.1, C.3, C.4, C.6, C.7). Different organisations had varying levels of awareness of employee locations:

Well, initially it was very much finding out where everybody was, what had happened because our building was totally written off, and finding somewhere to actually put people to keep the organisation running, very much so, and to try and get staff together and we realised that we didn't have enough information about people. We couldn't even find some of them because the database was out of date. (C.1)

Ahh, there wasn't an awareness of people, where people were nor did they have a umm, very ahh, structured emergency response framework and that included obviously the ability to know people's contact details umm, and be able to track them down. (C.7)

Other HR teams used more innovative techniques to keep track of staff, such as maps including data on the locations of staff homes and their welfare situations (C.3), house calls to employees in need, and managers/HR practitioners calling individual employees to check their welfare (C.3). Some organisations also organised the provision of emergency response kits to aid employees in feeling safe and secure (C.2):

We did everything from going out to speak with an [employee] who had a meltdown at home and couldn't come into work and getting them the right support, to doing the cooking when there was no food and no shops open... (C.3)

In the early response period staff turnover increased as employees or their families influenced the decision to relocate to other cities (C.1, C.5, C.8). Employees or their families may have felt unsafe facing ongoing unpredictable earthquakes:

But, for a period of time there the retention of people - why stay in Christchurch? My family is over it, we're still having aftershocks, the house is a disaster, we're walking away. A big, big challenge... (C.5)

4.1.3. Increased flexibility.

Participants found employees required increased flexibility around work. It was identified that employers needed to be sensitive to employee needs while being flexible (C.11). This is consistent with the earlier findings of Morris and Levine Coley (2004) who found that work flexibility had anxiety neutralising properties. External stressors such as ongoing earthquakes, earthquake repairs, and family issues, led to HR practitioners implementing practices such as flexitime (C.1, C.7), leave to handle personal issues (C.1, C.5, C.7, C.8), the ability to work from home (C.1), open door policies allowing children in the workplace (C.7), and loans for employees in need (C.5):

> *One, we're more mindful around reminding people around stress and wellbeing and we're also continually looking at perhaps a bit more flexible around work practices and how we can have people operating and working and accommodating their personal needs as opposed to being you must work here and you must work these hours and you must do this. I think the ability to be a bit more flexible.* (C.5)

Staff with varied skillsets were sometimes sent on secondment to other organisations that required their skills, which led to HR practitioners allocating responsibilities of the employee who was on secondment to others (C.1).

Participants noted that in the wake of the disaster, expectations of employee output became compromised and employers needed manufacturing targets to be flexible. HRM's focus became welfare driven rather than production focused (C.4, C.5), and expectations of manufacturing targets were not pressed the same way as pre-disaster: "We didn't push our expectations for manufacturing targets because we just felt at that stage, it was just too hard on a number of the staff" (C.9).

4.1.4. Psychological safety.

Participants reported that in the response period employees felt vulnerable and required compassionate treatment from HR staff. Employees suffered losses of friends and family (C.5, C.8), and it was a period where additional compassion was required for those living on their own (C.1, C.2). Part of the role of HR practitioners was described as being a "listening ear" (C.3), and leaders were encouraged by HR practitioners to show compassion (C.3). Some organisations hired specialist psychologists as a temporary measure to ensure employee psychological safety (C.3, C.4).

One issue faced was that some managers who were based in other cities expected Christchurch-based HR departments to continue transactional HRM, for example practices such as distribution of employment agreements, as a first priority (C.2). However, the initial priority of HR practitioners was to assist with meeting employee welfare needs (C.2, C.5): "The first response was care and welfare and what can we do and it was at a level that was unusually high" (C.5).

There were greater levels of hardship than prior to the disaster (C.5), and practitioners learned the value of understanding individual employee sensitivities, while being aware of employee surroundings and personal lives (C.11).

Participants realised that in the response period, employees required some assistance with meeting primary needs. Welfare funds were created to assist employees in need of financial assistance (C.1, C.3, C.5). Organisations also provided additional provisions to assist staff, including meals cooked by members of the HR team (C.3), and use of refrigerators and washing machines (C.4).

4.2. How the Disaster Influenced Ongoing HRM

4.2.1. Personalised HRM.

Participants noted how the focus of HRM became more personalised and people-focused, rather than transactional (C.1, C.4, C.5, C.9, C.10, C11). This caring approach was pushed by organisational leaders (C.1, C.3), however some members of HR teams were resistant to change their mindsets as they were accustomed to more authoritative HRM approach:

> *He was still in the personnel era. He'd been a personnel manager and he'd probably done that quite well but he was very much still a personnel manager.*

> *HR became much more personalised. Umm, and that was really important and for some of our HR staff that was not how HR was for them but for me, personally, because I'd been a counsellor and things like that, it was quite easy.* (C.1)

Personalised, empathetic HRM was described as becoming "the norm" (C.11) and owners, managers, and HR practitioners began to place a greater emphasis on understanding the family situations and backgrounds of individual employees to provide greater levels of support (C.1, C.9, C.11):

> *When it comes to umm, employing staff, we umm, we're asking more questions... Umm, and just through doing that, we're able to determine that we've had one person that we have taken on, he was, he had been living in his car. Umm, so just, yeah, just getting more in-depth with their background.* (C.9)

> *We had a management, executive management day yesterday and one of the owners was saying, we need to know every person's name, about their family, about their life and have those conversations.* (C.10)

Participants mentioned how HR practitioners became more open to casual conversations with employees (C.3, C.4, C.5, C.7). Employees are now more likely to approach HR practitioners to discuss personal or work-related problems than prior to the disaster as the HR team became viewed as approachable. Prior to the earthquakes there was a "distrust of management", however HR practitioners believed that their personalised approach broke these barriers and gained employee trust (C.1).

4.2.2. Communication.

The communication challenges faced during and after the earthquakes illustrated the importance of effective organisational communication. Organisations began to communicate individual and team goals more clearly through key performance indicators and team meetings (C.10), and began utilising organisation-wide newsletters to promote unity within the organisation (C.3, C.10). Newsletters were often written by HR practitioners (C.3, C.10), but were sometimes ghost-written by HR practitioners on behalf of organisational leaders to support leaders in gaining credibility (C.3).

4.2.3. Policy and process changes.

Participants mentioned how the earthquakes caused organisations to reflect upon themselves and their processes and policies (C.1). The disaster highlighted flaws in organisations' crisis management skills, and as a result HR practitioners reviewed crisis plans (C.4), worked on improving crisis management skills (C.5) and processes surrounding who to contact in the event of a natural disaster (C.7):

> *From a health and safety perspective, from a practice and policy around emergency procedures, I think clearly us and many companies have got sharper and better at what do we do in a crisis and how do we manage that. (C.5)*

Participants noted that organisations began to follow after-hour workplace location policies stringently (C.2), and inductions became more informative to ensure new employees understood disaster response plans and intensified earthquake-related health and safety procedures (C.5).

Changes to policies that occurred in the response period often continued into the later recovery period, including flexibility policies. Policies surrounding staff flexibility became more relaxed than pre-disaster. Participants mentioned the need to continually investigate flexible working practices (C.5), and in some cases working from home policies, flexitime, advance leave payments and secondment remained in use as the recovery progressed due to their proven successes (C.1). However, providing this flexibility could be difficult as organisations still needed to remain operational and viable (C.2, C.7):

> *So we've had to maintain a degree of flexibility ongoing and it's been really hard for a lot of people and some managers to go, well just a minute. It's four years down the track, you know, why should we keep doing this?* (C.7)

In one instance disaster proved to be a catalyst for change with regards to staff mobility. This example illustrated the need to have systems and processes in place that allowed for relocation of staff between branches. This was to ensure employees with optimum skill sets were in suitable roles at suitable locations (C.7).

4.2.4. Psychological safety.

Participants noted the importance of gauging employee stress and needs. One example was formation of a staff conduit, where employees would report back to HR practitioners if they were concerned about the welfare of an individual (C.6).

Use of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) was common amongst participants (C.1, C.3, C.5, C.7), and counselling provided an outlet for staff stress and aided in providing a sense of psychological safety for employees. Employees were taught through training administered by HR practitioners to effectively manage stress (C.5):

> *Some of our leadership development work now is focused on dealing with pressure and stress and being effective under pressure. So, I think that's something we've thought about for a long time but perhaps the earthquake has just highlighted how stress has a negative impact on performance and how can we help with that.* (C.5)

Participants noted that staff became distracted at work due to issues at home (C.2, C.5, C.9). This became an issue in the early response period, but has continued up to the present as stressors have continued and evolved. There has been an increasing use of EAP counselling for marital breakups, bullying, anger, and relationship issues (C.5). This is consistent with recommendations from Premeaux and Breaux (2007) who encouraged incorporation of EAPs into an organisation's crisis management plan to aid employees in dealing with emotional grief following disaster.

Some employees faced post-traumatic stress disorder which decreased their output, and required counselling (C.4). The practitioners noted that in the initial post-disaster period employees' focus and concentration decreased and stress increased (C.3), and that it could be difficult to keep employee attitudes optimistic when communicating with stressed clients (C.6). Some employees began to show impacts of the stress and exited their organisations (C.5), however other employees continued to work for the organisations and faced build-up of pressures. In some cases this had a negative impact on health and led to increased absenteeism which continues to build up to the present:

People have, have managed to remain and fight, fight to get what they needed to get and suddenly they're getting it and basically they're giving themselves permission to fall apart now. (C.6)

Our sickness has increased umm, probably doubled since before 2010…Umm, and we've just tracked it going up each year umm, so that's been quite a challenge just making sure that we've actually got enough staff on deck. (C.6)

The above findings are consistent with Norris et al. (2002) review of the existing post-disaster literature, where they found individuals suffered from psychological problems, health problems, and chronic problems in living after the disaster. These influenced all aspects of individual lives, including work life. Participants found that increased stress needed to be counteracted with supportive networks and a positive working environment (C.10).

HR practitioners aimed for work to become a safe environment for people, where employees were provided with a sense of belonging (C.4), whether it was as an escape from their personal lives (C.1) or the knowledge that they would be accepted despite their diminished personal finances (C.10):

Knowing they had somewhere to come that they weren't going to be umm, how would you put it, judged for being broke or umm, understood that they were living in garages and you know, things like that. So, and just, yeah, kind of being almost their home away from home. (C.10)

Another challenge associated with staff support was balancing employee care while retaining focus on the bigger picture of the HRM's role (C.5):

Helping people is obviously very satisfying but I think it's quite draining and over a period of time ultimately you get tired of that because we're not here to be a welfare state but we want to care for our people. Just to balance one very significantly towards caring and stress and helping people and providing an ally for that and I think we did that remarkably well and continue to do it pretty well. But it probably got out of balance for a while and, therefore, you spent more time being camp counsellor than perhaps honing into performance and you don't lose sight of the bigger picture stuff that the ultimate job is. (C.5)

Participants felt it was important to provide welfare for staff in need, however it was important to balance time allocated to staff welfare needs with transactional HRM tasks and strategic HRM needs (C.5). Practitioners perceived that some employees began to view HR practitioners as counsellors, with whom they could openly discuss problems, and there needed to be a balance between caring practices and strategic HRM. HR practitioners described constantly helping people as "quite draining" (C.5). In the early response and post-disaster periods there was a strong focus on employee welfare, and as time progressed the emphasis decreased as immediate employee needs for support also decreased (C.1).

Employees demonstrated differing levels of resilience in the disaster and post-disaster phases. Participants found that some employees moulded themselves to the post-disaster environment, doing whatever was necessary to adapt, whereas others struggled to move forward and hold themselves together (C.1, C.6). Participants found that when dealing with staff, both initially and up to the present, there was no "one-size-fits-all" approach (C.2, C.4).

The pressure of the rebuild resulted in some organisations over-working staff, which could potentially result in burnout. One organisation deliberately tried to ensure

psychological safety by having realistic working hours, rather than putting excessive pressure on staff.

Participants found that an important factor in staff retention was building a community feel within their organisations (C.8, C.10, C.11). They created a sense of community through shared barbecues, lunches, and functions (C.8), while some organisations introduced social clubs, team-building events, and Facebook and LinkedIn profiles (C.10, C.11):

> *Everyone is motivated by money, because you need money to live. But it doesn't make you stay somewhere* (C.8)

Some participants found that in the response and recovery periods of the disaster it became difficult for them to balance personal needs with work requirements (C.5, C.7). Practitioners found it could become easy for personal needs to become secondary and that it was important to remember to look after these needs.

It could be difficult to manage the stress that arose from balancing HRM and personal lives, where HR practitioners were often involved in conflict and underlying layers of tension. It could become difficult to find middle ground without reaching personal excess (C.5, C.7):

> *I got drunk for about three weeks. It was a bizarre time of the world. It was almost a bit like a bit of anarchy. So, there was a lot of excess, personal excess, dealing with just an unusual situation.*

4.2.5. Evolving focus of HRM.

The focus of HRM post-disaster evolved in 3 distinct overlapping stages (C.5). The first was meeting immediate welfare needs of employees. This was largely in the response and early recovery period, where employees faced uncertainty surrounding their future and the future of the city. This phase included establishment of a positive working environment (C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4, C.5), ensuring physical (C.1, C.3, C.4, C.6, C.7) and mental (C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4, C.5, C.8, C.11) safety, and support of basic primary needs (C.1, C.3, C.4, C.5).

Organisations faced post-disaster employee turnover, which led to HR practitioners taking preventative measures. The second stage identified was one of initiation of creative practices to aid staff retention. This occurred in the recovery period. Examples included increased flexible practices (C.1, C.5, C.7, C.8, C.11), organisational cultural improvement (C.3, C.7, C.10), investment into leadership (C.1, C.3, C.5, C.7, C.10), and creative non-monetary remuneration (C.6, C.8, C.10).

The third identified stage was managing the ongoing impact of stress. Some employees faced ongoing post trauma (C.4), it became difficult to have enough staff at work (C.6), and employees faced chronic cumulative stress (C.5):

> *The third phase is this which we're still in which is the chronic cumulative stress and that will be this generation. So I think that's going to carry on for a long, long time yet. There are families here in this building who don't have resolution, so they haven't moved on.* (C.5)

4.2.6. Changing role of HRM.

The disaster prompted changes to HRM's role within the organisation, often resulting in extended responsibilities. Participants found that post-disaster the role and responsibilities of HR practitioners began to change. HRM became more welfare focused rather than transactional and HR practitioners began to interact more with employees to gauge employee needs. As a result HR practitioners became viewed as less authoritative and less associated with management (C.1). The disaster caused employees to look toward HR practitioners for guidance on next steps, whereas previously employees had little reason to communicate with HR practitioners (C.4). Respondents believed that these changes have had a long-lasting effect which continues to shape their ongoing role into the present, and that employees have become more comfortable communicating with HR practitioners and will now drop into offices for casual conversation (C.4, C.5).

Prior to the earthquakes HRM was considered as a purely transactional part of the organisation that handled basic HRM responsibilities such as recruitment and retention, rather than a strategic part of the business. Some practitioners perceived that contact with HR practitioners was viewed as a last resort. However, HRM was now considered to be at the forefront of change (C.7):

> *HR was the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We're now, you know, at the forefront of change within the organisation.* (C.7)

One HR practitioner interviewed was the catalyst for decentralised HRM within their organisation, as they were the first HR employee based outside of Auckland. The practitioner was hired to support Christchurch-based staff after the disaster, and introduced a number of supportive and developmental practices for employees. The

success of this initiative resulted in decentralisation of HRM to other centres throughout the country.

4.2.7. Legitimacy of HRM.

The disaster and post-disaster gave HR practitioners the opportunity to illustrate the value of HRM through effective HR practices, being professional, and establishing credibility (C.3). The earthquakes proved that HRM could be helpful in multiple ways by establishing roles in a crisis and legitimising them (C.3), and as a result organisations began to invest greater resources into HRM. Examples included expanding the size of HR teams (C.7, C.10), and increasing investment into HR activities (C.7, C.9, C.10, C.11).

In the immediate post-disaster phase HR practitioners found they needed to make decisions quickly without consent from superiors (C.2, C.5). Employees adapted to changes very quickly when necessary and in the time of crisis expected a lesser extent of consultation to what was normal (C.5):

> *Because people actually, I think, need leadership and decisions rather than necessarily consultation. Because it's about surety and getting on with it. (C.2)*

Participants perceived that HR teams began to gain more respect, trust, and confidence within organisations (C.3). HRM's positive actions post-disaster illustrated the value of HRM, and this provided traction at the senior management team table (C.3, C.7), and senior buy-in for new initiatives increased (C.7):

> *Umm, I think I was fortunate that umm, the work I did, ahh really raised my profile and raised the profile of HR, that we were here and, and we really were*

here to support the business and we got a lot of senior buy-in to the activity that we were doing. (C.7)

Senior management began to show greater interest in HRM, and as a result a CEO, for example, began to show interest in the results of the annual staff survey when they had ignored it in the past (C.1). One change that has occurred up to the present in one organisation, was where the first two topics at the senior board meeting became safety and people to ensure that management had a people focus (C.10). HRM became considered as a strategic part of the business (C.7, C.11). The disaster provided HR practitioners with the opportunity to gain additional credibility and allowed them to introduce new practices and culture changes they would not have had the leverage to introduce pre-disaster (C.1, C.7).

4.2.8. Recruitment, retention, and turnover.

Following the disaster, the Christchurch labour market became extremely competitive as the rebuild commenced. Organisations had to utilise innovative solutions to recruit and retain employees.

One solution mentioned by participants was the use of migrant workers (C.7, C.8, C.10). Often workers were not English speaking, and communication would be through hand gestures, translated signs, and translators (C.8). One participant noted this could lead to miscommunication between employees, an issue that was not always recognised by upper management:

They're not in the thick of it and seeing how much it is happening and how much miscommunication's going on. They don't realise the, the nature of the beast kind of thing.

Accommodation was another challenge faced when hiring migrant workers. One solution that removed some pressure from new recruits was that HR practitioners administered rented housing for new migrants when they initially arrived, while new recruits sourced permanent arrangements (C.7).

HR practitioners began to use innovative techniques to ensure a positive start for migrants. HR practitioners provided community links by providing contact details for Plunket if migrants had a family. HR practitioners also organised for migrant workers to be given priority for rental accommodation with some property agents (C.7). Caring behaviours targeted at enhancing social capital assisted in retaining staff, a key necessity in the competitive post-disaster labour market.

Some HR practitioners faced difficulties in integrating the cultures of new recruits with the culture of their organisation (C.7, C.9). The disaster resulted in some buildings being deemed uninhabitable, and as a result one interesting case had to transfer into separate offices rather than being in one shared building. As time progressed the culture of each separated office began to become less unified (C.1).

The earthquakes provided opportunity to initiate culture change within organisations as organisations began to evolve towards a new post-disaster normal, leaving room for new initiatives. With well-executed initiatives, positive organisational culture change can lead to an increase in rates of retention (C.10). This could prove difficult as some managers were accustomed to a more authoritative and insensitive approach (C.1, C.10).

> *We still had a few managers that didn't actually understand what support meant, which is hard.* (C.1)

In one interesting case, managers who could not change to fit the more sensitive approach were exited from organisations (C.10), and it was observed that people were no longer leaving organisations due to earthquakes but poor management (C.5).

Staff recruitment and retention proved difficult due to competitive remuneration packages offered by other organisations, and organisations needed to try and match gradually increasing market rates due to a rising cost of living and competitive labour market (C.5, C.10, C.11). Case nine found that recruiting male staff was difficult as they were often employed in the competitively paid construction industry.

Organisations also faced issues surrounding recruitment of employees with good person-organisation fit. This led to organisations tightening hiring procedures by asking strategic questions in interviews (C.9, C.10) and clarifying organisational missions, values, and taglines to ensure they attracted the right types of individuals (C.7):

> *The biggest barrier has really been about getting the right people in the door and if their mind can't cope with working in a loving, positive environment, actually dealing with it quite quickly umm, so that, because they just end up freaking out and freaking the whole team out.* (C.10)

HR practitioners realised that the post-disaster environment called for a more incorporative approach, where employee opinions were taken into consideration when planning policies and procedures with beneficial outcomes for both employee and employer. This new approach was attempted to counteract the attraction of other organisations and decrease employee turnover by enhancing non-monetary remuneration and treating staff well. This was achieved through goals such as: aiming to become an employer of choice (C.10), introduction of practices such as lean manufacturing to streamline processes, and incorporation of employee feedback into processes (C.8). HR

practitioners realised that it became difficult to do a good job for clients if turnover was high, and it could be difficult to source employees who matched organisational values (C.10).

Since the disaster an increasing amount of recruitment has occurred through word of mouth. Migrant communities living in hostel accommodation would discuss where to look for work, and then approach relevant organisations seeking employment (C.8). Introduction of employee referral bonuses acted as an incentive for employees to refer acquaintances and friends for roles, as they tended to have a good person-organisational fit (C.10).

HR practitioners perceived that employees began to question whether they enjoyed their job and lifestyle directly after the earthquakes (C.8). This led to re-evaluation of what was important and they left their organisations accordingly:

> *You know and you're in a job that maybe you're not passionate about, it's like, do I really want to continue doing this?* (C.8)

In the initial response period HR practitioners could be reluctant to leave their organisations if they felt they were well treated (C.1, C.2), however in contrast, HR practitioners who felt undervalued exited their previous organisations (C.7).

4.2.9. Training and development.

In the competitive labour market that resulted from the disaster, HR practitioners began to realise that to be competitive and retain staff there needed to be greater investment in professional development. Increased legitimacy of HRM allowed for introduction of new tools such as competency and career frameworks (C.7):

> *Growing our people is critical because people love challenge. They love excitement.* (C.7)

As a result, the disaster prompted an increasing emphasis on training and development, including: introduction of position descriptions and KPI's to clarify responsibilities (C.7, C.10), introduction of 360° feedback linked to employee development (C.10), and introduction of a Life Styles Inventory (LSI) based on self-description and feedback from others to allow staff to build on strengths and weaknesses (C.10). Leadership development programmes were introduced to work on strengths and alignment of core values to get the most out of each individual, and HRM moved from being transactional to developing future leaders (C.10).

4.2.10. Culture.

Participants found that post-disaster the culture of HRM became more caring (C.1, C.3, C.10). There became a greater emphasis on resilience, building friendships, and soft conversations (C.10). Increased credibility for HR practitioners provided the opportunity to act as a catalyst for cultural change (C.7). Organisations tried to strengthen relationships and unity within their organisations to ensure people wanted to stay (C.8):

> *We try and keep the family feel umm, and I think that's also, hopefully what makes people sort of stay, if they like the job.* (C.8)

Managers and leaders were encouraged by HR practitioners to act in a caring manner towards staff (C.1, C.3, C.7, C.10). They were provided with training on how to provide feedback in a sensitive manner and there was a heightened focus on rewarding strengths rather than punishment for weaknesses (C.10):

How do we delegate effectively or umm, how do you treat your people effectively to create that upward spiral of positive energy. (C.10)

4.2.11. Creative practices.

It is well known to HR practitioners that creative practices are necessary in many instances, however post-disaster creative practices can greatly benefit an organisation's ability to attract and retain staff in an unstable environment. Participants noted the importance of valuing employees through creative practices and rewards as a means of retaining staff. This became of paramount importance post-disaster as the labour market became increasingly competitive, and organisations began to constantly search for something extra they could do for staff (C.6).

Organisations attempted to build social capital by rewarding staff and bringing people together. Studies have shown that building social capital is directly linked to increased employee retention (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Building social capital in a post-disaster situation is specifically beneficial as it can aid individuals in developing resilience (Aldrich, 2012).

Organisations began to work on rewarding staff through innovative techniques such as: weekly lucky-draw entries for positive achievements where the winner receives a voucher (C.8), additional praise (C.9), companywide events to celebrate companywide achievements (C.8), employee and safety champion of the month awards, and incentivising achievement of targets through small rewards such as provision of a bottle of wine (C.10):

Umm, so once again, it's just umm, breeding that we recognise people's extra step up and so it's getting that recognition, I'm not just doing a job and I'm not appreciated. (C.9)

Employees aren't just motivated by money and we have a number of our staff who have been offered more money but have not left because of other things that we're looking after. (C.10)

4.3. Practitioner Insights

4.3.1. Staff support.

Interviewees noted significant lessons from working in HRM during the recovery period. Themes relating to mental and physical post-disaster support were outlined earlier, however practitioners also made personal reflections relating to these issues including how little it takes to truly support people (C.1):

It's not very much that you need to do to support them but it is often is the thing, it's often not done. It's just simply the noticing, the listening, and it just surprises me. You don't have to do major things. It's just the minor things you have to do that the people get the support from, but you have to understand what it is they need. (C.1)

Practitioners observed that employees who do not feel supported post-disaster will not work at the same level as pre-disaster (C.5), and many people just wanted to talk to HR practitioners openly about their experiences (C.6). As mentioned earlier, participants stressed the value of spending time with people, being visible and accessible, and having one-on-one conversations (C.7). Staff support became considered a "social responsibility" as a good and fair employer (C.7):

Staff in particular, again, if you help them and support them and provide as much clarity and you're there and you help them along the way, people do find their balance again. (C.5)

4.3.2. Workplace culture.

Practitioners learned how workplace culture played an influence on the trajectory of HRM in a post-disaster situation. Practitioners aimed to have a supportive, resilient culture with a strong sense of unity to further organisational progress. The disaster strengthened the need to constantly look at workplace culture and leadership, and to deal with negative issues as they arise (C.3):

> *It was a hugely busy time for them and I think for me, what it's done is umm, consolidate that, as an HR practitioner, umm, the importance of workplace culture and actually dealing with the issues that, that are negative and sorting out umm, the whole culture to make it a good place to be so that when something happens, systems and processes are in place.* (C.3)

HR practitioners needed to respect, listen, and work with employees, just as much as employees worked with the organisation (C.9).

4.3.3. Varied employee needs.

As mentioned earlier, employees had varying levels of needs. HR practitioners learned that people faced similar problems and stressors, however different personalities reacted to these in different ways (C.1, C.4, C.6). The disaster was very different to a typical HRM situation (C.1), and it was important to gauge the reactions of different employees and use this information to support them (C.4):

> *You could have a whole lot of people in the same situation, but they all reacted differently. We had people that were panicked. We had people that were very, so stoic and you knew that something was going to break somewhere along the line. We had people that just wanted to run away.* (C.1)

Participants reflected on how it was valuable for HR practitioners to show awareness of the varying levels of resilience of staff (C.2), and to move into a positive productive space, and then be able to help staff move into that space (C.7). It was noted that people find their own way with sufficient help and support: "The city is resilient. People are resilient; you do get through it" (C.5).

4.3.4. Management.

HR Practitioners learned the value of supporting managers in the initial response period (C.4, C.7). Some managers naturally cared more about staff welfare, while others were focused on profits and outputs (C.4). There was a need to balance out these factors. In the event of an emergency, HR practitioners needed to remove pressure from managers by being more hands on and "fluffy". This provision of support, from HR practitioners to managers, built relationships and credibility which was not present to the same level pre-disaster. This connects to the earlier mentioned theme of increased legitimacy of HR, where practitioners learned the value of strengthening relationships with managers and proved HRM's abilities to strategically support the organisation. This also provided them with additional traction at the board table (C.7):

> *It's really important that you're also predominantly there for the managers and the reason I say that is the managers are dealing with their own shit. They're dealing with the clients' shit and they're dealing with their staffs' shit and who's looking after them? And so it's really important that you create a very strong bond with your managers. (C.7)*

> *Those were the building blocks and they're very solid building blocks that I've been able to use the development of those relationships, the building of trust, the implementation of key things that they saw added value to be able to now add the,*

the cream on top through the implementation of all these new tools that help our
culture grow and help our people grow, help us retain our people. (C.7)

4.3.5. HR practitioners personal work-life balance.

The initial response and recovery phase were a demanding, time intensive period for HR practitioners. However, the disaster created new opportunities to gain credibility. Practitioners who did not have young families noted that this made it easier to focus on assisting the organisation in the initial response period (C.1, C.6):

So for me, personally, because I had time, and yeah, I didn't like the earthquakes
and I live by myself so that was a bit scary sometimes but basically, the work was
good because it was a good focus for me. (C.1)

I felt as if I was doing something for somebody, or with somebody more than
anything. (C.1)

However, those with family commitments found it difficult to balance family support and personal issues, along with provision of employee support in an HR role (C.5, C.7):

"When you're heading the HR department you have to, at this time, you are
ultimately the head of the people stress resource, or the people resource. So, the
earthquake affected people, therefore, you had to run in front there. So, quite
selfless and thankless in many ways because your own family is suffering and
you've got your own pressures and you're trying to obviously put on a brave face
and deliver for the other staff." (C.5)

4.3.6. Earthquakes as a life experience.

Some practitioners found that the earthquakes provided them with another perspective on life and aided them in personal growth (C.5, C.6). This finding aligns with a definition provided by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) of post-traumatic growth, which is described as "positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with challenging life circumstances" (p.1).

Surviving the disaster and its aftermath broadened those involved (C.5). The disaster changed practitioners' mind-sets and influenced their approach to HRM and learning (C.5). Participants found they gained an understanding of how different personalities react in varied situations, and how people have their own timelines to grieve (C.6).

Although the city may move another step forward in the recovery, some individuals may be stuck one step back (C.7). All individuals faced their own challenges through the disaster and post-disaster periods, and this could make it difficult to relate to people in varying situations (C.7).

Practitioners who faced personal issues such as housing repairs, found they could relate to issues employees faced and felt empathetic (C.6). One practitioner perceived that people felt as if they have gotten "through the worst", and this provided strength (C.5):

> *I actually think that the change has been around, as I said earlier, around just what it does to your mindset and how you've learnt from that and how you therefore approach difficult situations with perhaps a bit more perspective and calmness because you've dealt with the worst situation, got through it and I think that experience helped.* (C.5)

Respondents discovered that both HR practitioners and employees needed to keep an "air of optimism" about their present and future situations in order to progress past difficult times (C.7):

> *Look after your people, be flexible, be innovative, care for your people more and you will get through it*. (C.5)

5.   Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how HRM evolved in a post-disaster situation. The findings of the present study add to the limited body of post-disaster HRM related research and provide considerations for HR practitioners, both in facing a crisis situation and preparatory measures. Findings relating to the evolving focus of HRM, employee needs, opportunities for HRM changes, and variation of post-disaster practices, policies, procedures, and outlooks, are discussed, and a model explaining the evolving focus of HR practitioners is provided. The section begins with a summation of findings where patterns emerged to form the basis of a model; this model is featured below. I then discuss limitations of the research and recommendations for future research.

5.1. Explaining the Evolution of HRM

The evolving focus of HRM (see Appendix B.) can be represented in the below model:
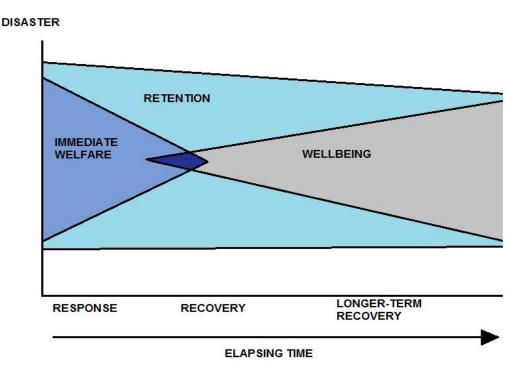

Figure 1. Evolving focus of HRM.

5.2. HRM's Evolving Focus

5.2.1. Immediate welfare.

The disaster resulted in loss of life, housing and infrastructure issues, work related issues, and personal issues, and it disrupted daily routines for both employees and HR practitioners. This new situation required heightened support from the organisation and HR practitioners that was not necessary pre-disaster.

The response and early recovery phase had a specific focus of how HRM could facilitate employee welfare. Often organisations would provide extreme levels of support in the initial response phase as they were uncertain on what the best response was. Practitioners perceived that employees faced extreme levels of stress, and this resulted in attempts to create a compassionate and supportive working environment. Practitioners attempted to meet these needs through provision of supportive practices to meet basic primary needs, and psychological supportive practices such as counselling and use of psychologists. Practitioners also attempted to accommodate employee requirements for flexibility to handle personal issues. An initial focus on immediate welfare needs alongside provision of supportive mechanisms for employees is common within post-crisis literature, indicating it is an essential task for HR practitioners facing a post-crisis scenario (Nilakant, Walker, Rochford, et al., 2013; Premeaux & Breaux, 2007; Sanchez et al., 1995).

Practitioners experienced employees as having varying welfare needs, and some employees wanted to voice personal and work-related concerns with HR practitioners. The post-disaster period was a stressful and turbulent time, and levels of care and support shown by HR influenced whether individuals chose to stay employed by the organisation after facing the disaster. This initial focus on welfare had the potential to strengthen relationships between employees, managers, and HR practitioners. However, as time progressed and the labour market became increasingly competitive, HR

practitioners began to realise that to retain employees there would need to be a greater emphasis on creative practices and potential culture change.

5.2.2. Retention.

The focus of HRM then evolved into practices supporting retention of employees. In the post-disaster phase, employee turnover increased to greater levels than prior to the disaster. The aftermath of the disaster resulted in a labour shortage, causing additional stress for HR practitioners and heightening the need to focus on promoting employee retention. Post-disaster employee turnover was partially due to feelings of unsafety and uncertainty felt by some employees and their families.

Some employees began to question whether they were in a job they enjoyed. Significant shock, such as a natural disaster, has been shown to lead to reevaluation of work and lifestyle choices and potentially lead to employee turnover (Lee et al., 1999).

Organisations began to realise that they were under new, extreme pressure to retain employees, and HR practitioners attempted to do this through creative practices, organisational culture changes, and a varied approach to HRM from HR practitioners. HR practitioners faced a previously unforeseen scenario. Practitioners could view this new situation as either a threat or an opportunity. The scenario presented the opportunity for organisations to adapt their HRM processes, practices, and organisational culture to suit the new post-disaster environment. A natural disaster, as a rare event, provided opportunities for sudden audits of routines, habits, and roles (Christianson et al., 2009). The present study evidenced how this occurred in practice with an increasing investment in career development, an increasing emphasis on rewarding employees, and an increasingly empathetic and caring organisational culture.

This opportunity for change and introduction of creative retention oriented adaptations required openness at three levels – openness of employees, openness of the HR

practitioner to new initiatives, and openness of HR practitioners to changes in their approach to HRM (see Appendix C.).

Openness of employees can be determined through observing employee reactions to change and seeing how accommodating they are to new ideas. In this study HR practitioners' levels of openness to new initiatives were determined by analysis of findings surrounding implementation of new initiatives, and whether practitioners openly facilitated and endorsed these changes. Varying levels of openness to HRM approach changes were observed through careful analysis of findings, relating to where HR practitioners openly chose, or chose not to, alter their personal approach and attitudes towards HRM.

Openness of employees was vital to ensure the success of creative retention-oriented adaptations. HR practitioners identified that employees were more agreeable to new practices and changes in the response and recovery periods than prior to the disaster. One practitioner suggested that employees required guidance and leadership from managers and HR practitioners, rather than consultation in the ambiguous post-disaster scenario they faced. If employees were open to alterations initiated by HR practitioners there was a greater likelihood of success of new initiatives. If employees were closed to the idea of new initiatives, there would be a lesser extent of buy-in and support from employees. This could lead to failed initiatives.

Alongside this were the HR practitioners' own openness to ideas. This type of openness was necessary for HR practitioners to realise and utilise opportunities presented by the post-disaster environment. Practitioners who were open to viewing the crisis as an opportunity to learn were more likely to initiate HRM changes, as were practitioners who were quick to adapt to the new normal. Positive organisational change can occur when an organisational crisis is handled effectively (Brockner & James, 2008; Sayegh et al., 2004). The present study found that HR practitioners who were open to creative

thoughts, employee input, and identifying the needs of individual employees and the organisation, were more likely to take advantage of the opportunity to change and introduce new practices, cultures, and outlooks.

The combined openness of both HR practitioners and employees to new ideas and initiatives influenced the feasibility of altered approaches. Altered approaches could include cultural changes, changes to a practitioner's individual approach to HRM, differing roles or increased responsibility for HRM, and altered HR practices and policies. If changes were successful they provided the opportunity for HRM, and the HR practitioner who acted as a change agent, to gain legitimacy within the organisation. Increased legitimacy within the organisation could potentially lead to increased financial support and buy-in for HRM and new initiatives.

Another factor that influenced the HR practitioners' uptake of altered approaches was the extent to which they experienced changes in their personal outlook. This connects to the factor of openness to ideas, which encompasses opportunity for practitioner-driven changes in a professional capacity, whereas alteration of personal approaches is a very personal, reflective, and internal change. Rare events provide learning opportunities (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984) and the disaster in this study provided HR practitioners with experiences they could either learn from, or choose to ignore.

Most participants reported an altered personal outlook, however there was variation, with some mentioning colleagues who were less open to changing their approach to HRM. These colleagues preferred to maintain the same approach as pre-disaster.

Throughout the post-disaster period, employees faced uncertainties and stressors within their personal and working lives that were not present prior to the disaster. This meant that some employees required support and understanding in greater depth than pre-disaster. Practitioners realised that to adapt to a new normal and support employees, they

would require a caring, empathetic outlook on HRM. Their openness to personal outlook alterations, and original personal outlook and approach, determined whether they changed their approach to HRM as a practitioner. Some HR practitioners found they, and the organisation, needed to change their approach to HR and personalise HRM to ensure individual employees felt valued within the organisation. Some respondents suggested that the new, more empathetic approach was already a norm within their organisations, however others considered it a new norm or an attitude given increasing emphasis.

5.2.3. Wellbeing.

Employee wellbeing was a key concern throughout the post-disaster phase. However, it gained increasing focus following initiation of creative retention-focused practices as it became evident that employee stress could continue to be a long term concern for HRM.

Employees faced varying levels and types of significant post-disaster pressures. HR practitioners noted that as time progressed there was an increasing uptake on EAP counselling for personal issues. Respondents highlighted the need to make the workplace a positive, safe environment to minimise employee stressors. This focus on employee wellbeing acted as a long term investment towards employee retention, which reflected findings of Byron and Peterson (2002), who noted that post-crisis compassionate social support leads to a lower likelihood of dissatisfied employees.

As mentioned earlier, respondents suggested that stress also began to influence levels of absenteeism and that there was, in some cases, an increase in bullying and anger in the workplace. This resulted in an increasing emphasis on looking after employee health and wellbeing, and ensuring that employees were not being overworked. Practitioners found that since the disaster they allocated more time to one-on-one sessions with staff to understand their needs. There has become an increasing emphasis on managing stress in

the workplace, with some organisations increasing their investment in stress management training.

Conducting HRM in an empathetic manner was a key concern throughout all periods of HRM's evolution, as the disaster illustrated the need for HR practitioners to value and support employees, rather than purely focussing on the bottom line. This is a lesson for HR practitioners to apply to both everyday HRM and post-disaster HRM.

These developments produced tension between providing a well-balanced focus on employee wellbeing and strategic HRM. The HRM function needs to support employees while being involved in strategic HRM to contribute to the profitability of the organisation. To fairly manage both employee wellbeing and strategic HRM it may be necessary for organisations to clearly set HR-related objectives, and potentially extend the size of their HR team.

5.3. Varied Levels of Employee/Practitioner Adaptation

Both individual employees and HR practitioners adapted to the post-disaster environment in methods and rates that differed for each individual. This influenced the responses of practitioners throughout the post-disaster period. Practitioners perceived that while some employees were quick to adapt to a "new normal", others had difficulty adapting to new challenges that arose in the post-disaster period. HR practitioners also adapted to a new normal at varying rates, and in their own individual ways. This influenced their focus, output, and the rate at which they were able to engage with assisting the organisation and its employees. Employees and practitioners who were quick to adapt were able to assist the organisation to a greater extent than those who were slow to adapt. Some HR practitioners felt facing the disaster provided them with empathy towards individuals who faced similar situations.

HR practitioners found that they needed to be sensitive to varying employee levels of need. Varying rates and methods of adaptation of employees have been a concern for HR practitioners throughout the response and post-disaster periods. They continue to be a key concern as individuals continue to be at different stages towards reaching a new normal, and each individual faces their own challenges.

5.4. Summary

The model illustrates how the focus of HRM evolved from immediate welfare, to retention, to employee wellbeing. Within these areas of focus, there were key decision opportunities faced by practitioners. Initially, the focus of HRM was on facilitating initial welfare needs. Secondly, interrelationships formed inside the creative retention-focused HRM stage, where practitioners faced opportunities to better their HRM processes. These interrelationships included openness of employees, openness of the practitioner to initiating changes, and the openness of the practitioner to alterations in their own personal outlook. Finally, it shows how the new long-term focus became employee wellbeing, representing a continuation of an increasingly empathetic culture towards HRM as built from the initial welfare focus during the response and retention-focused periods.

These findings are significant as disasters are situations characterised by high ambiguity, demanding rapid responses with little awareness of potential consequences. By adding to the limited and fragmented literature that surrounds HRM's evolution post-disaster we have greater insight into the factors at play and can assist practitioners and policy makers in their decision making. There is little research into HRM post-disaster due to the rarity of disasters, making it an ambiguous scenario. These findings provide guidance for HR practitioners as to how the focus of HRM could change post-disaster and what occurred during each evolving stage. Practitioners can learn from this study prior to a disaster, and should increase their focus on ensuring a positive culture and attitude within their

organisation. This would result in less uncertainty for HR practitioners if a disaster did occur.

5.5. Limitations

This exploratory study aimed to provide an illustration of how HRM evolved following the Christchurch earthquakes. It involved 11 interviewees, a limited number of participants in order to gain in-depth perspectives. Sample size was not problematic as I aimed to create theoretical generalisations rather than statistical generalisations (Yin, 2009).

There was potential for some loss of detail due to participant difficulty in recalling events. It could be difficult for some participants to recall their initial responses to the disaster as the February 22 earthquake occurred in 2011, which is approximately four years prior to the time of writing. As participants began to discuss their experiences and rapport was built, recollections of participants became more detailed. As the focus of this study was to explore present-day outcomes of the evolution of HRM, this was not a significant problem.

As material gathered was data-rich and very broad, using the data to its full potential was a considerable challenge. The vast amount of data and the exploratory topic meant that careful analysis of the data, and becoming intimately familiar with each case, was necessary for exploring similarities and dissimilarities.

5.6. Recommendations for Future Research

One avenue for future research could involve investigating the extent to which the patterns shown in these cases generalise the evolution of HRM, as derived from the findings of this study. For example, it would be interesting to apply the model to other

disaster or crisis situations, and analyse its accuracy and the width of its applicability. Future research could also potentially extend or modify the derived model.

A second avenue for future research could be to investigate how HRM in organisations has evolved at a later period. A longitudinal, multiple-case study, revisiting organisations yearly to observe how HRM has evolved, would be an interesting and valuable addition to the literature. Notable findings including: increased legitimacy of HR, the changing role of HR, and the subject of how HRM in organisations became more empathetic post-disaster, would also provide interesting topics for further research.

Exploration into the evolution of HRM within certain industry sectors, providing the ability to make comparisons between separate sectors, would be an interesting addition to the literature, as would comparisons of changes that occurred in organisations with branches spread across the country or internationally, versus changes that occurred to organisations only based locally.

It would be interesting to explore the current findings from an employee perspective, as the present study only took into account practitioner perceptions of HRM's evolution.

5.6. Implications for Practice

The findings of the study suggest that HR practitioners engage in crisis planning well before a crisis event as this will lessen ambiguity, and that HR practitioners aim to build a positive organizational culture prior to a crisis event. I also suggest that HR practitioners who are yet to experience a disaster focus on adapting a more empathetic, personalized approach to HRM. This will potentially lessen pre-disaster and post-disaster employee turnover and increase employee loyalty to the organisation. HR practitioners should engage in creative, retention focused practices to aid the organisation rather than these being purely reactional as I believe they will result in greater employee satisfaction and a positive reputation.

6.   Conclusion

This qualitative, exploratory study used an interpretive, multiple-case study approach as to explain the rich individual experiences of participants who experienced the disaster and its aftermath. The study explored how HRM evolved post-disaster, and information was analysed and compared as individual cases, resulting in a vast amount of rich data. Data was analysed using Eisenhardts' (1989) multiple-case study approach, where I looked for similarities and dissimilarities between individual cases.

The study provides a clear illustration of how HRM evolved following the event of the 2011 Christchurch seismic disaster, through the viewpoint of HR practitioners. Notable findings were largely outlined in the discussion section, where I explained how HRM evolved for HR practitioners in this study.

Throughout the post-disaster period, practitioners and employees experienced varying levels of adaptation. There was an initial focus for HR practitioners on satisfying employee welfare needs, where they aimed for employees to have a positive and supportive working environment where employees felt they could work to the best of their abilities. HR practitioners provided psychological support, and the post-disaster environment began to illustrate the value of empathetic HRM.

Secondly, there was a focus on creative retention focused practices, where HR practitioners aimed to retain and recruit employees in the competitive, labour tight market that the disaster caused. HR practitioners faced a decision opportunity where they could choose whether or not to change their practices and approach to HRM in order to stay competitive. The success of changes was influenced by the openness of employees to changes, openness of the practitioner to introducing changes, and openness of the HR practitioner to changes in their approach and mindset.

Practices utilised included increased flexibility for employees to meet personal needs, increasing emphasis on training and development, and creation of social capital. Successful implementation of immediate welfare support and creative retention focused practices furthered the chance of increased legitimacy of HRM and the HR practitioner within the organisation.

The focus of HRM later evolved into ensuring employee wellbeing. The disaster highlighted the value of wellness initiatives as the post-disaster environment became a stressful and turbulent time. There became an increasing emphasis on health and wellbeing, minimising employee stressors, and further emphasis on empathetic HRM.

This research fills a gap in the sparse literature surrounding HRM's evolution into the later post-disaster phase, and provides grounding for further research. It is also beneficial for HR practitioners as it provides reference material they can use in crisis planning, as well as during the response and post-disaster periods. These findings have implications regarding the need for organisations and practitioners to ensure an empathetic attitude towards HRM, and the need to utilise creative, retention focused practices prior to a disaster, rather than as a response to retain employees.

The post-disaster period is ambiguous and unclear, and provision of reference material will benefit HR practitioners and policy makers. Clear understanding surrounding evolving post-disaster HRM focuses and processes will lessen ambiguity for HR practitioners, and have a direct, positive influence on employees.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Codes

List of Codes

Code	Description
Positive working environment	Attributes described by the interviewee as forming the basis of and/or designed to create a positive working environment post-disaster.
Physical staff safety	What HR practitioners mentioned their organisations did to ensure physical staff safety in the response and initial post-disaster period.
Lowered productivity expectations	Examples from participants where they suggested that employees output expectations were lower than the norm.
Flexibility	How HR practitioners accommodated employee flexibility post disaster.
Psychological safety	How participants HR teams/organisations ensured the mental safety of employees post disaster.
Primary needs	How participants and their organisations ensured that basic primary needs of employees were met.
Personalised HRM	How the practitioner feels HRM became more focused on understanding each individual employee and their personal lives.
Communication	Practices used post-disaster to communicate with employees.
Unity	Methods HR or organisations used to encourage post-disaster unity within organisations or teams
Policy changes	Basic post-disaster changes to formal policies.
HRM functions responsibility	The role and functions of HRM and how they changed post-disaster.
HRM legitimacy	Changes with regards to the legitimacy of HRM within the organisation – factors interviewees identified with regards to

	changing levels of respect and responsibility given to the HR function of an organisation.
Recruitment	Examples mentioned by interviewees relating to post disaster changes to the recruitment function.
Retention	Examples mentioned by interviewees relating to post disaster changes to the retention function.
Turnover	Examples mentioned by interviewees relating to post disaster employee turnover.
Training and development	Changes to training and development activities post disaster.
Culture	Perceived changes by the interviewee to organisational culture post-disaster.
Creative practices	Practices that are outside of the normal HR functions of an organisation, usually targeted at increasing post disaster retention rates.
Challenges	Post-disaster challenges.
Personal	Challenges caused by the effect of the disaster on the personal lives of employees.
Mental health	Challenges influenced by the disaster in association with the mental health of employees.
Cultural	Challenges influenced by the disaster with regards to organisational culture.
Resilience	Challenges caused by the disaster with regards to employees varying levels of resilience.
HR practitioner personal needs	Challenges faced by HR practitioners post-disaster relating to their personal lives and personal needs.
Reflections	Reflections made by HR practitioners regarding what they learnt from the experience of being an HR practitioner in a post-disaster situation.
Staff support	Personal reflections by HR practitioners with regards to how to support employees

	in a post-disaster situation.
Culture	Personal reflections by HR practitioners with regards to organisational culture in a post-disaster situation.
Varied needs	Personal reflections by HR practitioners with regards to varying employee needs and required levels of support in a post-disaster situation.
Management	Personal reflections by HR practitioners with regards to management and relationship building with management in a post-disaster situation.
HR practitioner personal work life balance	Reflections made by HR practitioners with regards to their personal work life balance.
Earthquakes as a life experience	Lessons HR practitioners took out of the disaster and post-disaster experience, how these added to their wealth of knowledge.

Appendix B: Focus of HR Practitioners

Case number	Main changes	Reasons for changes	Initial focus	Medium term focus	Long term focus
1	•More personal approach towards HRM – lesser barriers between HR practitioners and employees.	•Employees required additional support from HR practitioners in the immediate post-disaster period where they required welfare needs to be met. •Upheaval of organisational norms led to the opportunity for the HR practitioner to introduce a more personalised approach to HRM. Interviewee had always favoured more personalised approach.	•Employee safety. •Policy change – working from home, flexitime. •Listening and attempting to meet employee welfare needs. •Immediate welfare – primary tangible needs.	•More personal approach to HRM. •Lesser barriers between HR practitioners and employees. •Increasing focus on staff unity.	•Increasingly personalised approach to HRM. •Continuation of lesser barriers between HR practitioners and employees.
2	•No notable changes given sophisticated pre-disaster practices.		•Staff unity. •Employee welfare. •Ensuring employees felt valued.	•Building employee resilience by running programmes sourced through external providers.	•No notable changes given sophisticated pre-disaster practices.
3	•Greater employee support in initial post-disaster period.	•Support was necessary due to ambiguity and risks to physical and mental safety. Resulted in strengthened	•Provision of EAP and specialist psychological support. •Emphasising positive	•Proactive approach to HRM – handling issues as soon as they arise. •Establishing	•Constantly working to ensure positive workplace culture.

Case number	Main changes	Reasons for changes	Initial focus	Medium term focus	Long term focus
		relationships between HR practitioners and leaders, who acted as the "faces" of the organisation.	leadership philosophy, which was also in place pre-disaster. •Personalised HRM to ensure employee welfare. •Employee safety.	credibility for HRM; already had quite good credibility however demonstrated HRM's relevance in crisis through work with leaders.	
4	•Change from being work driven to ensuring employee welfare. •HR practitioners more approachable, long term focus on employee wellbeing.	•Ambiguous situation, employees required heightened support. •Employees facing ongoing post-disaster stressors.	•Change from being work driven to ensuring employee welfare. •HR practitioners guiding and educating leaders, brought in specialist support.	•Development of crisis management plans in preparation for future disasters. •Approachable HRM, listening.	•Employee wellbeing – counselling for those with long term stress.
5	•HR practitioners now mindful of stress and wellbeing. •Focus on accommodating personal needs.	•Employees can't perform at normal/high levels if stressed. •Encourages employee retention.	•Supporting employees. •HR practitioners increasingly approachable.	•Increasing flexibility in order to retain employees. •Creative, retention focused practices.	•Managing ongoing employee stress. •Accommodating employee needs surrounding flexibility for post-disaster personal issues.
6	•Previously employees responsible for sourcing relief staff, then HR took over,	•Post-disaster period stressful for employees, HR tried to lessen their responsibilities.	•Employee and client welfare. •Immediate safety.	•Policy changes – taking pressure away from employees.	•Managing employee wellbeing – dramatic absenteeism increases.

Case number	Main changes	Reasons for changes	Initial focus	Medium term focus	Long term focus
	creating a pool of relievers.				
7	•New emphasis on understanding individual employee needs and motivations.	•An understanding that different employees are at varying stages of post-disaster recovery and require varied levels and methods of support.	•Immediate employee safety. •Open door policy for employees – HR practitioners.	•Flexible working arrangements. •Increasing use of creative rewards for employees. •Focus on culture change. •Introduction of new frameworks.	•Continuation of strengthening culture change. •Increasing legitimacy at senior board level. •Trying to move employee mindsets into a productive space.
8	•Greater emphasis on "family" culture.	•Retain employees, help them feel welcomed in the workplace.	•Trying to retain people – many employees relocated and exited the organisation. •Creative practices to ensure employee morale – for example lucky raffles for employees.	•Working to retain and source employees – strengthening family culture. •Strengthening employee unity. •Employee recognition, awarding successes.	•Ensuring employees feel welcomed and cared for in the workplace. •Workplace located in badly affected eastern suburb – earthquake caused them to emphasise the "family" nature of their business.
9	•Greater understanding of employee backgrounds.	•Many staff from severely affected east side of town.	•Ensuring staff safety. •Listening to employees, finding out their situations, finding out how much to expect from them.	•Sourcing full time staff. •Increasing awareness of varied staff situations.	•New focus on understanding employee backgrounds to ensure adequate support – beginning at recruitment phase. • Greater

Case number	Main changes	Reasons for changes	Initial focus	Medium term focus	Long term focus
					emphasis on rewarding positive achievements than pre-disaster.
10	•Emphasis on recognising positive achievements •Managers encouraged to create "climate of caring".	•Retain and satisfy employees through positive reinforcement.	•Being sensitive and flexible to employee needs. •Increasing emphasis on understanding employee backgrounds.	•Employee recognition, awarding successes. •Now very employee-focused. •Emphasis on training. •Focus on creative HRM processes to become an employer of choice.	•Emphasis on best practice HRM to retain employees. •Emphasis on welcoming, positive organisational culture.
11	•Positive organisational culture change.	•Retain employees and create a welcoming and productive working environment.	• Organisational culture change; pre-disaster and early post-disaster there was a negative organisational culture where employees struggled to provide feedback effectively.	•Increasing emphasis on employee unity, retaining employees through activities. •Increasing emphasis on appreciating staff, ensuring they feel psychological safety. •Valuing and rewarding employees.	•Maintaining competitive remuneration to retain employees. •Recruiting and retaining employees who fit into a positive organisational culture. •Ensuring employees are not overworked to minimise stress.

Appendix C: HR Practitioner and Employee Perspectives of Change

Case number	HR practitioner role in changes	HR practitioner personal outlook alterations	Employees perspective on changes
1	•Interviewee drove changes. Some members of HR Team including HR Manager cautious.	•Interviewee experienced to changes in outlook, encouraged change from other HR Team members.	•Employees appreciated personalised HR approach.
2	•Felt the organisation was already very caring, and had sophisticated, well developed systems, and as a result there were few HRM changes.	•Interviewee didn't notice any changes, but felt good systems and processes were already in place. Acknowledged that changes could be underlying.	•Few changes as organisation already had sophisticated systems.
3	•Saw opportunity to further support organisation and utilised it by meeting immediate employee welfare needs. Led to increased legitimacy which further strengthened relationships with leaders involved in positive leadership programme which was introduced pre-disaster. Disaster provided opportunity to illustrate value of HRM.	•Interviewee seemed open to changes in outlook, consolidated need to constantly work on organisational culture •Highlighted the need to handle issues as soon as they arise, and reinforced the need to have a positive culture which is open to new ideas.	•Made leaders the "face" of the organisation. HR practitioners supported leaders from behind the scenes. Leaders were then seen to support employees, who would bring back suggestions for HRM improvements.
4		*Respondent is HR consultant – introduces change to various organisations.	
5	•HR practitioner introduced a number of creative, retention focused practices.	• HR practitioner approach became increasingly personal towards employees.	• Employees appreciative of increased flexibility and understanding from HRM.

Case number	HR practitioner role in changes	HR practitioner personal outlook alterations	Employees perspective on changes
6	• HR practitioner was the driver of changes.	• Found they could identify with disaster affected employees and developed empathy.	Mixed •Employees appreciative of HR taking on board some of their previous administrative responsibilities, however uninterested in providing input into selection of wellbeing initiatives. Practitioner sought employee input into choosing employee benefits (i.e. gym membership), employees didn't respond after multiple attempts.
7	•Promoted changes – examples included open door policy, and new psychometrics introduced by HR team.	• Personal outlook alterations.	•Employees appreciative of increased flexibility and understanding from HRM. • Support of employees illustrated legitimacy of HRM within the organisation and provided additional leverage to the HR team, allowing for more changes.
8	• Supported HRM changes; examples included strengthening unity and employee recognition.	• Personal outlook alterations.	• Employees appreciative of care and understanding from HR practitioners – aided employee retention.

Case number	HR practitioner role in changes	HR practitioner personal outlook alterations	Employees perspective on changes
9	• Drove HR changes – emphasised the need to decrease targets during periods of high post-disaster stress.	• Experienced personal outlook alterations; "we've definitely had to change our way of thinking" – still being aware of the disaster after effects.	• Employees appreciative of increasing listening and understanding from HR practitioners. • Some employees ask "why change what already works", and are hesitant to accept changes, however when shown the changes are beneficial they experience outlook changes.
10	• Introduced numerous HRM changes. •HR roles created early post-disaster; employer wanted to be "employer of choice" in competitive labour market.	• Experienced personal outlook alterations. •General Manager became more compassionate.	• Employees appreciative of care and understanding from HR practitioners – aided employee retention.
11	• Introduced numerous HRM changes.	• Personal outlook alterations, however they said they had always personally had a best practice, caring approach to HRM.	• Employees appreciative of care and understanding from HR practitioners – aided employee retention; greater planning and emphasis on positive outcomes resulted in lesser resistance.

Appendix D: Human Ethics Approval

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2014/41/LR

2 July 2014

Kate Stevenson
Department of Management, Marketing & Entrepreneurship
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Kate

Thank you for forwarding your Human Ethics Committee Low Risk application for your research proposal "How has HRM evolved in a post-disaster situation?".

I am pleased to advise that this application has been reviewed and I confirm support of the Department's approval for this project.

With best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Lindsey MacDonald
Chair, Human Ethics Committee

Appendix E: Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship

Project: How has Human Resources Management evolved in a post-disaster situation?

You are invited to take part in a research project investigating the nature of Human Resource Management in the recovery phases following the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes. The project is conducted by Kate Stevenson and information gathered may be used by Leading and Managing Resilient Organisations as a wider study on the same topic. The aim of this project is to understand the factors that shape longer-term HRM practices after a disaster.

Your involvement in this project will be to participate in a face-to-face interview, which is a discussion on the topic outlined above. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to provide an accurate representation of the information shared. However your name and identity will be removed and only the researcher and supervisor will review these. You will be offered a copy of the interview transcript to review and amend if necessary. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of all information provided, prior to the project's submission. Once the project is completed, you will be provided with a summary of the research results.

This research has two outcomes. This project will be conducted by Kate Stevenson as a thesis for a Master of Commerce qualification. It may form part of broader research conducted by the Leading and Managing Resilient Organisations research team at the University of Canterbury, (see http://tinyurl.com/mjl4m8x). The project leaders, Dr Venkataraman Nilakant ven.nilakant@canterbury.ac.nz and Dr Bernard Walker bernard.walker@canterbury.ac.nz, phone 03 364 2987 ext 8621 or 6343 will be pleased to discuss any questions you may have about your participation in this project.

The results of the project will be included in the thesis and may be published, but you can be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered during this study; the identity of participants will not be made public without their consent. To ensure confidentiality, your interview scripts and tapes will be coded, so no names will be included in the findings. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the University of Canterbury Library.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Thank you for your time, it is greatly appreciated.

Appendix F: Consent Form

Consent Form

UC UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship

Researchers: Kate Stevenson (kate.stevenson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

The Leading and Managing Resilient Organisations research team, University of Canterbury (website http://tinyurl.com/mjl4m8x)

Project leaders;

- Dr Bernard Walker bernard.walker@canterbury.ac.nz, ph 03 364 2343

- Dr V Nilakant   ven.nilakant@canterbury.ac.nz ph 03 364 2987 ext 8621

Project: *How has Human Resources Management evolved in a post-disaster situation?*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project in the Information Sheet provided. On this basis, I agree to take part as a participant in this project, and I consent to the publication of the results of this project with the understanding that my confidentiality will be preserved. I understand and agree to the audiotaping of the interview.

I understand that I may at any time withdraw from this project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided, prior to the project's submission.

I understand that I can contact the student researcher or senior supervisor at any time if I have any questions about the study.

I note that this research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Participant's Name: ………………………………………………..............................

Participant's Signature: ………………………………………………….........................

Date:………………………………………………………..

Interviewer's Signature: …………………………………………….................................

Appendix G: Interview Questions

1. Organisational level:

- Can you tell me a bit about organisational responses to the earthquakes, both initially and longer term
    - o Have any of these influenced ongoing HR?
- Can you tell me about some of the HR challenges faced in the longer-term disaster period – once services were restored and people returned to work
    - o Did you have any practice or policy changes as a result?
- What kinds of things happened with the culture and attitudes to HR?

2. Personal level:

- Can you tell me about your own experiences of doing HR during this period – how did it affect you at the time?
- How has it affected your approach to HR long term?
- What did you learn from the experience of being an HR practitioner in a post disaster situation?
- How have you used these learnings in current practice?
- Personally for you, what is one key thing you've taken out of the whole experience?
- Looking back, what would you have done differently?
- Do you have anything to add?