

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN COVID-19

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Abstract:

March 2020 witnessed unprecedented attack of Corona virus throughout the world. India was not an exception to it. This was the virus which was unknown so far. There were no known preventive medicine and the spread of the virus was like wind. There were several lakhs of people affected by this pandemic. No Government was prepared to deal with such a situation. The entire public was gripped with fear. World over the scientists were working round the clock to invent vaccine to prevent the pandemic.

As the initial intensity of the spread of Corona virus was reduced, after taking review of the situation, the Government started opening of the economy in a phased manner. Some relaxations were given, placing some restrictions to avoid further spread of the virus, to the industries and the shop keepers.

The total lockdown imposed on the 22nd March 2020 was prolonged until 2021. Pune being the industrially advanced district in the state of Maharashtra the labour force was severely hit. Pune is automobile and IT hub. Besides several other major industries are located in and around Pune city. Construction industry in Pune is also a prime segment. All these industries were having workforce migrated from across various states like Bihar, UP, M.P. Karnataka etc. Therefore, the workers preferred to go back to their original places. The Govt. of India organized free ration to these displaced workers for a continuous period till the normalcy was restored.

Now the third wave of the pandemic is receding and the restrictions have been lifted to a great extent. Now trains are running regularly. Those who have taken the vaccine are allowed to travel. Hence gradually work force is returning back. It is hoped that the industrial production will shortly reach the pre-covid level shortly.

Keywords: Corona Virus Pandemic, Total Lockdown Condition, Migrated Work Force, Vaccination Drive, Hopes of Revival and Restoration of Normalcy.

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Introduction:

March 15th 2020: The day the news of spread of Corona virus pandemic gripped the humankind all over the world. The Corona Virus also called COVID -19 was first detected in Republic of China and in a very little time spread all over the world. About 182 countries of the world including all the developed countries are very badly affected by this worst ever corona virus.

When we talk of speed, we give simile of Wind. Corona virus really spread all over the world like a wind. This virus is transmitted through drop lets and not through air. This virus has so far, no definite vaccine which could cure it. Almost in every country Pharma drug Research & Development professionals in coordination with the virologists

worked day and night to find a most effective vaccine which can cure corona virus affected patients. The only known effective remedy available to save from Corona virus is social distancing. People will have to maintain minimum of 1 to 1.5 meters distance between them, only then we can arrest its spread.

This was the first phase of the pandemic when the Government was not well prepared for providing the due healthcare to the patients attached by Corona virus. As a result, this attack turned out to be very serious all over the world, loss of human life was quite substantial. The Government of India and the several non-Governmental organizations relentlessly worked hard to provide the needed healthcare facilities. The Government had made every effort to arrest the loss of human life. The scientist's world over were also working hard to invent a preventive vaccine for this Corona virus. There was break through and vaccine was invented in US as well as in India. The testing of the vaccine for human treatment were carried as per the World Health Organization's guidelines and finally on its approval the commercial production began. It was a gigantic task to vaccinate millions of people all over the world. In India the Government took up the challenge and on a war footing in a phased manner the vaccination program was undertaken.

Impact of Covid -19 Human Resources: (Phase – I)

In the first phase when the lockdown was imposed everything was at standstill. The state of Maharashtra is industrially an advanced state. Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nashik, Solapur, Kolhapur are the industrial towns where the migrant work force population is quite sizable. In the absence of working of the factories they became jobless and there were no signs when the economy will be opened and they can resume their jobs. They started to move to their original places may be Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc. There were no trains, no bus service and thousands of the workers started walking with their families to their own places. Although the Government and NGOs started providing them food but it was not enough.

By listening the Corona news everyone was getting shocked and the migrant workers wanted to be amongst their own families and relatives. By whatever available means the workers went back to their places. And when intermittently there were partial relaxations in opening of the factories and the commercial establishments the owners could not start their units as no skilled or unskilled workforce was available.

In the meantime, the Government of India announced several relief operations wherein the Government started giving free ration to all those workers who were the victims of displacement because of the pandemic. It also announced several schemes which provided self-employment opportunities in their places of origin. The shock and impact of the pandemic was so severe that the workers were not willing to come back to their initial places of employment as in the pre-corona situation.

At this stage also the Government had also imposed several conditions to the manufacturers for compliance before starting production. One of the conditions was if there is a single corona-patient in the factory the establishment was to be closed. Even the manufacturers were not able to procure raw material as well as they were unable to dispatch their finished goods. The Government of India announced several sops for getting easy credit from their bankers but it was again a time consuming process. The Government also asked the financing institutions and banks to grant instalment holidays so that the borrowers were not classified as defaulters attracting penal interest levy. However, this was not enough to commence the production and start services.

Impact of Covid -19 Human Resources: (Phase – II) : The real movement of skilled and unskilled workforce started when trains started running with specific conditions of corona-checks as well as allowing those who have taken

the vaccine per Govt. scheme. There were several places like Mumbai / Pune / Kolhapur where the tinge of the pandemic was very severe. At these centres there was demand for workforce but no one was willing to come to these places because of the threat of Corona -19 pandemic.

It was only at the end of the second phase of Covid-19 that the restrictions were gradually withdrawn. The industries started gradually with limited availability of skilled labour, with problems of procurement of raw material etc. This was a peculiar and unusual situation when there was a demand for labour and at the same time unemployment situation was also prevailing.

The second phase Covid-19 pandemic started by middle of March 2021. In the second phase because of the experience of the first phase several steps which were taken helped to tame down the virus attack. In various countries several variants like Delta and Omicron and combination of both the strains viz., Delmicron of this virus came into existence which posed a new challenge. Even during this second wave there were strict restrictions and the industrial as well as various other works were halted.

In the second phase so far as IT industry is concerned a new system of work from home was introduced thereby the industry could continue their operation. Of course, in the beginning the response was lukewarm but now the human resources in this IT segment have been well settled. In fact, there is one view that employers are benefitted because of this new style of functioning. The assessment by the experts indicates that the output per employee is improved considerably. Many companies vacated their rented accommodation which they had engaged for housing their staff. Now we see that there are advertisements from some IT companies that they need human resources who can permanently work from their home.

The real estate sector had a big blow because the return of their labour to their home states. On the one hand there was no demand because of the uncertainty prevailing because of the corona climate and non-availability of labour to complete the incomplete schemes. The real estate sector too is returning back to normalcy in the city. About 45,000 workers or 60% of those gone back to their native places have returned to Pune.

The MCCIA conducted a survey in September that included 150 small, medium, and big businesses from the Pune district. According to the poll, on average, the surveyed enterprises reported their current level of output has increased from 50% in August to 55% in September 2020. On average, the number of employees working has increased from 56 percent in August to 67 percent in September 2020, according to the polled organisations.

Impact of Covid -19 Human Resources: (Phase – III)

The third phase of Covid -19 started about December 2021 and now by the time this paper is being finalized the third phase of Corona Virus is in its last stage. Now the restrictions placed on the day-to-day operations have been almost removed and there is a normalcy even in the economic activity. Every time when the Covid-19 pandemic is receding the Govt. of India and the respective State Govt. used to take a review of the situation and gradually and in phased manner the economy was opened up.

Now because of the massive vaccination campaign implemented by the Govt. of India slowly the Corona-19 fear is declining. The workforce which had gone back to their original places, started to come back to their pre-corona locations. The factories also started and now the economy is settling down.

Now the World Health Organization has announced that for incoming few years we have to bear with Corona -19 virus in different variants which is a hanging sword. But because of the availability of booster dose to increase the

immunity the damage will not be as severe as that of the first and second wave.

According to a survey undertaken by the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA), 68 percent of the workforce has returned to work in more than 150 industries in and around Pune. The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) reports that over 60% of migrant workers have returned to work, whereas Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (Maha-Metro) maintains that 90% of workers have returned to work. Around fifty per cent of security persons who had left the city during the Covid situation are back on duty and the figure seems to be rising each day.

Conclusion:

Now gradually the industrial activity is reviving very fast and majority of the industrial organizations have achieved production level at pre-corona period. The Government of India has also provided the needed support to the industries for early revival. Now a mind-set of all the concerned is well prepared to stay with Covid-19 as we are familiarized with influenza or dengue. The initial fear of Covid-19 has been vanished. By and large people are now accustomed to wearing mask and sanitization and washing the face frequently and keeping safe distance. Let us hope that whatever little fear is still there is dispelled shortly and the economy will be back on the wheels.

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