

Current Content

Vol. 39 No. 2, July – September 2021

Editorial

Dr. B.B.L. Madhukar, M.A (ECON) Gold Medalist, LLB (Gold Medalist), Ph.D., CAIIB., FIE, FICA

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Chief Editor

- Government Policies Towards Businesses During Pandemic: Special Reference to MSMEs
 - Rashmi Manhas
 - Ashutosh Kumar

- Policy Response to Post Covid-19: An Analytical Study of Indian Monetary and Fiscal Policies
 - Sunil Kumar
 - Jyoti Sharma

- Measures Taken by Small and Medium Size Organizations to Manage Performance During Covid Crisis Effectively
 - A. Suresh
 - K.R. Vigneshwar
 - R.G. Priyadarshini

- Employability Framework in the Post- Covid Scenario - A Literature Review
 - Shobha C.V
 - B. Johnson

- A Study of Covid-19 Effects on International Students in Canada
 - Ajay K. Garg

- Book Scan

From the Editorial Desk

Towards Making Organisational Sense of a Pandemic Experience

August 15, 2021 marks the beginning of the 75th year of Indian independence. It is a landmark date. This particular issue of 'Abhigyan' covers that date. It Was decided to mark the occasion by bringing out a special number of the journal. The Journal itself, over its, several decades of continuous publication; peer-level blind review status of the selection of papers, has acquired a special place in its area of specialisation.

It was decided to bring out a special number, focussed on the theme: “Impact of Pandemic on Organisations”. The response in terms of candidacy for inclusion of paper in the number was heart-warming. One element of the selection is before you to savour.

Covid-19 has been an unprecedented health experience of global dimensions. At the time of the writing of these lines, there is little unanimity on where it originated. How it will end seems a matter of various speculations. In fact, the flavour of the times seems to have become what is popularly being termed as 'Long Covid'.

At a rough estimate, it is reported that one out of twenty infected and cured patients of Covid-19 will have some after-effects of the ailment. It could be in the form of effects on the stomach, the brain, the heart, the lungs and the list is large. Fatigue seems to be common. There is little knowing how long the symptom will last or the extent of the correlation. Thus it is that the doctors seem to be handling the symptoms rather than being able to find a correlation between the types of Covid-19, nature of its impact, its effect on the human body et.al. In the meanwhile, the intensity of Covid-19 affliction seems to go in a yo-yo manner in different parts of the World. Some regions have developed a colour preference of red, amber and green for a regulatory response. Others seem to be focusing on quantitative response and trying to determine how many people can meet for how long and indeed where. If there is to be a uniform global system of response, for whatever reason, it is marked by its modest profile.

However, human life cannot freeze for months and certainly not for years. There is an attempt to keep life going and one has a mixed situation at hand. One has to try to understand the impact of the pandemic and the organisational response to it. This number of Abhigyan, amongst other things, tries to focus on the organisation's response to it. Within the limitations of the number of a journal, it tries to look at issues beyond regional and other boundaries.

Each paper, as per the practice of this publication, carries an abstract of the text.

In its extended period of spread, Covid-19 has not always found a unanimous scientific analysis or solution, as a response, to issues of concern. The response in terms of treatment, at times verges on the generic. There is a significant environmental focus. There is a strong school of thought which is of the view that only real antidote, in this case like in many other cases, is a basic immunity built in the human system. Even indicators such as C - reactive protein, D-Dimer according to this school of thought, are best left to settle on their own.

Commerce has not been left far behind. Just as the IT sector, the pharmaceutical sector; the testing segment

continue...

has garnered in rich business. The quantum of human suffering in its summation has been humungous. The response needs to evoke greater confidence for a definitive solution.

Organisations in such a context will have a medley of responses. Working from home seems to have become not only inevitable but a trend. As the longevity of Covid-19 becomes increasingly unpredictable, in effect, working from home has come to mean that one will not go to one's usual place of work. If one's headquarters of normal work is in New York and one takes a break of 3-weeks in London one can work from one's hotel room and still be treated as 'working from home'.

Putting all this in an office management frame is still to be fully resolved. There are issues of security, timings and collective consultation, should the need arise. Many organisations have large geographical spread not only of marketing but supply chain and there are always business sensitivities.

Covid-19 experience has downgraded the nature of personal meetings as an option of organisation life. Online communication has limited effectiveness in interactions which certain business communications require. Even if one overlooks the role of body language or the tone of communication or facial expressions there is little that the new norms of communication offer as options available in thought interaction. Slowly technological permutations and combinations are emerging in the form of clips, video interaction with spread out frequency. A mix and match is also being experimented with. The communication norms may have evolved but the business outcome and expectations remain much the same. Indeed, one is not quite sure if the outcomes of such deliberations are as inclusive as the circumstances require. Many thoughts of organisational effectiveness from Charles Handy or Uday Parekh may need a relook. The implications on work standards and organisational effectiveness are obvious.

Till not so long ago, concepts of private time and family time had reached some consensus. All that seems to be under review. Dualism and multiple styles, currently, seem to co-exist. Ultimately, some narrowing down, if not compartmentalisation of lifestyles, will become inevitable. Little organised documentation is being attempted on the kind of impact Covid-19 has had on organisation structures, job design and information flows. A famed Hotel in Singapore is reported to be running on Z/5th of its staff and still doing well. Concept of 'staycation' seems, to have in certain ways, substituted the concept of travelling on a vacation. There is a need for an identified scientific method to work through this. 'Work and activity' cannot stymie the emergence of a credible methodology.

Concurrency would be a part of the answer. Ensuring that the actual mapping of the ongoing is carried out in a credible and a scientific manner, is critical. The data in the field of pulmonology, testing and vaccinology is far more amenable to cross-time analysis. The existing documentation lends itself to cross-region, cross-age and perhaps also cross-culture experience. The management scientists need to put their act together in an increasingly sensitive manner to aid the response of organisations to the Covid-19 experience. Cross-disciplinary references may help. In the meanwhile, the movement of disease and its intensity has changed many times and returned to many territories, it had visited earlier. A prime question on the origin of this pandemic still needs a convincing answer. This is a bewildering situation.

Yet, incorrigible optimism will propel one forward to do what little one can, to keep a coherent record and documentation of experiences. One hopes the collection of papers which follow would be a contribution in that direction.

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Government Policies Towards Businesses During Pandemic: Special Reference to MSMEs

Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic has dealt with an exceptional shock to the global and Indian economy. The economy was already in a parlous state before Covid-19 struck. The prolonged country-wide lockdown disrupted demand & supply chains and led to a downward spiral in world economy. World trade is expected to have fallen between 13% to 32 % in 2020. Therefore, to rescue the economy, governments worldwide have announced impressive fiscal and monetary stimulus packages and brought about widespread changes in their trade and commerce policies. This paper discusses the Indian government's policies and measures during Covid-19 pandemic to overcome the national and international businesses' challenges. In response to the falling economy, the Reserve Bank of India lowered key interest rates, provided support to people regarding aid and subsidies, and implemented the SDGs. It has also revived MSMEs by introducing the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) scheme and provided the Prime Minister's economic relief and stimulus package to combat the challenges imposed by Covid-19.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Economic Crisis, Government Policies, MSMEs, Businesses

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Policy Response to Post Covid-19: An Analytical Study of Indian Monetary and Fiscal Policies

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as a traumatic experience worldwide. It has impacted economic activities adversely, and led to health crisis, job losses, affected trade & transport, market selloff, collapse of export revenues and financial ambiguity. The Indian economy has also reeled under the brunt of Covid-19 which impelled the government to fight by initiating community awareness programs, social distancing measures, lockdown, testing and quarantine plans & actions and support packages for the public etc. Government of India also introduced stimulus packages to revitalize the financial system and amended fiscal and monetary policies such as Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, PSU policy, deregulation of the agricultural sector, commercialisation of coal mining, etc. to reduce the impact of the pandemic. Overall, the proactive measures undertaken during the pandemic have laid the foundations for economic recovery to gain momentum going ahead. But on the contrary all packages increased the capital expenditure of the country and increased economic hardship. Therefore, it is suggested that government should focus on measures that lead to decline in the expenditure and yield high revenues by raising the tax revenue buoyancy through improved compliance and increasing receipts from monetisation of assets and strategic disinvestments.

Keywords: PM Awaas Yojana, Monetary Policies, Fiscal Policies, Policy Response, Covid-19

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Measures Taken by Small and Medium Size Organizations to Manage Performance During Covid Crisis Effectively

Abstract

The value of ensuring an effective management plan for an organisation during a crisis cannot be overemphasised, since it dictates the continued existence of the organisation and averts the possibility of closure of its work process. Its significance lies in the detection, whether from the internal or external environment, of the possible causes of the crisis, as well as the development of an efficient crisis management mechanism that will assist organisation to manage the crisis situation. The study aims to identify the factors that define effective performance management measures during Covid crisis scenario with respect to small and medium size IT and non-IT organizations. It was found that factors that influence the performance during work from home situation are Task and Time Management and the Rewards and Recognition.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Performance Management, Covid Crisis, IT, Non-IT

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Employability Framework in the Post- Covid Scenario - A Literature Review

Abstract

Employability has today become a major problem due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this paper is to explore the theoretical concepts and models of employability to ascertain the gap between knowledge and skill imparted by various educational and training institutes and its absorption. The literature review focuses on two aspects, i.e., the existing pre-Covid-19 literature and the emerging concepts of employability, post- Covid-19. Different approaches to employability, starting from the studies by Gazier (1998), Hillage and Pollard (1999) to later ones like 'organisation approach', employability in terms of individual transferable skills, career management, perceived employability, etc. have been analysed. Literature related to the emerging concept of employability post-Covid-19 are focused more on competency, career resilience, learning with experience / problem based learning, innovation and creativity, adaptability and sustainability. An employability framework has been developed and proposed based on the Four Quadrant Model of Human Knowledge by Ken Wilber.

Keywords: Covid-19, Employability, Labour Market, Resilience, Sustainability

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A Study of Covid-19 Effects on International Students in Canada

Abstract

The study seeks to investigate the experiences and implications of Covid-19 pandemic on international students in Canada by adopting quantitative approach using the Likert scale questionnaire, completed by international students on a random sample basis. Weighted means and Fisher's exact hypothesis testing on association were used to analyze the data. The research probes how international students perceive and experience Covid-19 pandemic from the point of view of their personal, social, and schooling life during the imposed lockdown. The study reveals that the country of origin is a strong predictor of how international students perceive their social experiences. The nationality or cultural context in which they have been brought up are found to be significant in their Covid-19 experience as international students in Vancouver, Canada.

Keywords: Covid-19, International Students, Personal Experience, Social Experience, Schooling Experience

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Book Scan

The New Normal: Reinventing Professional Life and Familial Bonding in the Post Covid-19 Era, Ajay Kumar Dey and Harivansh Chaturvedi, Bloomsbury, India 2021, Pages: 331, Rs. 1199/-

It is undeniable that covid-19 has reshaped all spheres of our life in a significant way. This made us reset our personal and professional lives. The book is a sincere effort to capture a breadth of changes (across different levels and domains) brought by covid-19 at one place.

The key strength of this book lies in its ability to comprehensively collate and present, intellectually and culturally varied perspectives from distinguished scholars across the globe. The book unfolds the effects of covid-19 on personal and professional lives by looking at it from multiple lenses. This makes it relevant for a wide range of audiences particularly scholars, policy makers and organizational practitioners.

For a reader, the book is a perfect blend of interesting qualitative and quantitative pieces organized into five sections. The first section is devoted to mapping the different aspects of personal life impacted by covid. The next section touches on the socioeconomic impact of covid on migrants, professionals, university students and family budgeting. And the subsequent three sections cover the varied nuances of how and in what ways covid-19 has influenced professional life. The first section highlights both sides of the coin, and thus offers a very balanced picture around the impact of covid-19 on familial bonding. Collectively, this section underlines the advantages in terms of strong family attachment, enhancement of well-being, empathy, compassion which ultimately resulted in satisfaction in all domains of life. On the flip side, it brings out how the mental well-being of people has plummeted due to the depletion of social networks, and social isolation.

The second section focuses on the socioeconomic effect of covid-19. It covers a wide range of issues such as migrant problems, unemployment, job-skills mismatch and entrepreneurship. Covid-19 lockdown has impacted all strata's of the society adversely. This section sheds light on how the local epidemic in Wuhan has mushroomed into a global pandemic and set the existential fears in migrants. And how the Indian national agencies, government bodies and policy makers struggled between the choice of saving lives and safeguarding livelihoods. In the past one year, Covid has disrupted the livelihood of people by altering the job market terrain. The case study of Malaysia offers an exemplary solution in this direction by explicating how Malaysia embraced the micro-credential initiatives as the feasible, flexible and affordable solution to address the unemployment and job-skill mismatch challenge for professionals and university graduates. Additionally, the study on Indonesia adds to the solutions to manage family budgeting during covid-19. However, despite all the economic and social upheaval faced during covid-19, budding entrepreneurs kept the spirits high. Their success stories indicated how their contributions eased the lives of people during covid time.

Covid-19 has blurred the boundary between office and home. The third section reflects on the impact of covid-19 on employee perceptions, professional identities and work efficiency. This section maps the employee experience of WFH paradigm of a US based organization. Covid-19 has reshaped the professional identities of employees by strengthening occupational and agentic self-efficacies. However, at the same time, this global pandemic has thrown many employees related challenges of WFM. Women employees are affected the most as they have to juggle between work and family especially in a time when other support systems have collapsed. The section ends with the discussion of how self-reflection exercises during pandemic can energize one's personal and professional life.

Leadership plays a seminal role in responding to any crises. The fourth section describes what role does leaders play in supporting their organization, employees and other key stakeholders during crisis times. It highlights the role of leadership in designing new working norms that help facilitate employee morale and well-being during crisis. And how information flow within the organization can influence quality of crisis leadership. It ponders on how organizations can realize organizational effectiveness through employing

humanistic leadership and through finding meaning and purpose at work during covid. Extant organizational research scholarship has noted the benefits of meaning and purpose in work on employee outcome variables. It requires the need to realign business, leadership and education in response to covid- 19.

The fifth section has five chapters focusing on the impact of covid on business and education system. This section argues in favour of rejigging the existing crisis management models and suggest the development of a crisis mind-set as an important skillset to handle crisis like covid efficiently. Covid-19 has shaken many management fads and made organizations resort to telework. And consequently, the role of HR has become all the more critical in the post covid times. Covid-19 has disrupted the traditional educational practices especially in developing countries. This has made education system to reinvent new modes of teaching and assessment. This section underlines the set of challenges faced by academia in adopting online learning and ponders on the possible solutions to counter these.

Overall, the book is a timely contribution towards understanding the disproportionate impact of covid-19 on various domains. Although the impact of covid-19 is still unfolding, the book hints at the hope for the constructive reset in the coming times.

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The New Normal Challenges of Managing Business, Social and Ecological Systems in the Post Covid-19 Era by Harivansh Chaturvedi and Ajay Kumar Dey, Bloomsbury, India, 2021, Pages: 401, Rs.1199/-

The pandemic caused by the novel corona virus (Covid-19) originating from the Chinese city of Wuhan in early 2020 can aptly be designated as a black swan event of this century. Even after one and half years of its initial spread, the Covid-19 virus is causing tremendous damage all around the world. The infection numbers and the fatality figures are scaling new records every day. The medical fraternity and governments worldwide are finding it difficult to manage the catastrophic effects of this virus. Apart from the loss of life, governments and businesses have to handle the loss of business and economic slowdown caused due to the long spells of lock-downs announced by the governments in almost all countries. The disruptions to businesses and daily activities were something that no one was prepared for, and the Covid-19 pandemic has created a new normal for the citizens, businesses and governments. In this context, the book titled “The New Normal Challenges of Managing Business, Social and Ecological Systems in the Post Covid-19 Era”, edited by Dr. H. Chaturvedi and Dr. Ajoy K. Dey provides new insights into the effects and implications on the post Covid-19 era.

This edited book contains 27 articles divided into five sections authored by eminent scholars from India and abroad. The five sections in this book are Higher Education Rebuilding Itself, Surviving the Crisis, Evolving Business Models and Organizational Strategies, Way Forward for the Economy and Impact on the Ecosystem and Society. In the section covering articles related to higher education, the authors discuss how Covid-19 affected the higher education sector and strategies for overcoming the pandemic crisis. In the second section, articles discussing the impact on different vital industries like health insurance, healthcare, automotive and aviation are analysed. The essays bring an international perspective by examining the scenarios in neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh and the domestic situation. The third section focuses on discussing the evolving business environment after the pandemic and provides a strategic roadmap for tackling it. This section contains discussions of organisational strategies that need to be developed to handle complex post Covid-19 challenges like securing an organisation's information assets when employees are forced into a work-from-home model. The fourth section contains articles analysing the multi-sectoral impact on economic activities in different countries. The fifth and final section of the book includes papers that throws light into the effects of Covid-19 on the environment, climate and ecology. This section contains articles that addresses

critical issues like waste management challenges due to Covid-19, managing the food availability to socially and economically backward strata of the society and policy interventions required to meet the post-covid socio-economic and ecological impacts.

The articles in this book are written with a strong research focus using lucid and straight forward language. This book should be a good knowledge resource for a wide range of audiences, including academicians, students, research scholars, industry practitioners, and policymakers in government and non-government sectors. The authors of the articles, senior academicians and industry experts with considerable experience, bring in a body of knowledge that should benefit the targeted audience. To conclude, we should note that the Covid-19 crisis that has grappled the health of citizens and slowdown in the world economies is still ongoing and expected to last longer than earlier forecasts. At the time of writing this review, the World and India in particular witnessed a very stressful second wave of Covid-19 infections. The articles in this book should provide guidance on how these emerging challenges may be addressed.

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