



"Navigating the Storm: Government Responses in the COVID-19 Era"

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Abstract

This research critically evaluates the multifaceted role played by governments in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing informed conclusions from data gathered until April 30, 2022. The World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) serve as pivotal sources, furnishing comprehensive statistics across five countries. In debunking the notion of governmental resource inadequacy, the pandemic serves as a testament to governments' ability to mobilize for unprecedented challenges. The study underscores the significance of enhancing collaboration among public employees, enabling them to synergize experiences, learn from successes and failures, and foster co-learning and cooperation. This collaborative ethos strengthens the government's capacity to formulate robust solutions, not only for routine public service delivery but also for tackling epidemics and natural calamities. Addressing a concerning trend, the paper highlights the shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) among government personnel, particularly those who interface directly with the public, like medical professionals, contributing to heightened infection rates. This research further enriches our understanding of the interplay between pandemic management, public affairs, and government actions.

Keywords: Pandemic, Public Affairs, Government, India, COVID-19.

1. OVERVIEW

Every element of life, including business, technology, and society, has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 illness pandemic. It is crucial to have a trustworthy and effective government in order to successfully navigate through this challenging scenario. Long-term effects of our choices now will affect the welfare of our population, the economy, as well as the global economic system. The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed many lives and wrecked havoc on the global economy. However, not all nations are affected in the same way. With their first measures, some countries were able to halt the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

For instance, Australia experienced 1094 cases of the disease and 35 fatalities per million people in the second week of December 2020.

Australia's rate is better than that of the U.S. (51,655 incidences & 937 fatalities per million) as well as the U.K., which both had rates of 420 occurrences and 5 fatalities per million inhabitants (27,746 incidences and 954 fatalities per million) (2020 Worldometer)

1. There are three crucial occasions when the government must take action.

Governments all throughout the world are required to respond immediately to crises, even when they lack all the information. Governments will have to address problems including how to manage crises, how to maintain operations, and how to look after and include citizens.

Cognitive assistants and self-service tools can help organizations provide services that help people maintain healthy physical and mental health.

Recover and rebuild:- The administration is turning its attention to the upcoming issues now that the urgent response has concluded. They will need to reduce the length of the economic crisis, help people get back to work, regain the confidence of government agencies, and get the private sector back to full production. This is made possible in large part by technology and a change in the way things are done.

Plan ahead for the "new normal": Governments will eventually consider the future to determine what the "new normal" will be. They need to reconsider their business practices and look for more effective alternatives while considering the following issues:

1. **Why did that event occur?**
2. **How will they guarantee that this doesn't happen again?**
3. **What have people discovered about working remotely?**

No matter how challenging and complex dealing with this unprecedented global crisis is, the most attention will be directed to the most crucial social concerns where a partnership between the public and private sectors can have a significant influence. Governments are receiving assistance from the business sector to help them work harder, more effectively, and with greater resilience. Public impressions of how governments throughout the world have attempted to balance concerns about the health effects of the coronavirus with the rapidly deteriorating economic circumstances brought on by a coronavirus lockdown have been rather interesting. Through the use of the literature in the fields of applied risk communication, sociology, social psychology, and public policy, this study aims to provide information. The COVID-19 outbreak, which affected around 180 nations and killed close to 383,000 individuals while infecting over 6.5 million people (as of June 3, 2020).

Curfews and lockdowns, which are intended to suppress the virus, have been implemented worldwide as a result of the outbreak, which has stretched health care systems, disrupted education, hurt economies and businesses, led to job losses, and stretched out social life around the globe. All of this occurred as a result of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and its focus on public servants and the government.

On January 30, 2020, the first COVID-19 incident was reported in India. Since then, there have been an increasing number of cases, particularly during the current second wave of the outbreak. The strict worldwide lockdown was increased several times during the initial wave, and then there was an extremely sluggish opening with relatively little access outside of specified containment zones. In the second wave, some states implemented statewide lockdowns in the second quarter of 2021. Despite being a tiny outbreak, COVID-19 has a big impact on the economy. The nation-wide lockdown that was imposed to limit the spread of COVID-19 resulted in a sizable decline in GDP in the second quarter of 2020. (-24.4 %) The year-over-year decline reduced to -7.4 percent in 2020 Q3, and then growth resumed at 0.5 percent and 1.6 percent in 2020 Q4 and 2021 Q1, respectively. The national statistical agency's most

Complete estimate showed that the growth of GDP for FY 2020-21 had been revised downward to a level of -7.3%. (DOEA, 2021). The economy is starting to get up again. On April 15, 2020, the government set up a few possibilities for easing restrictions in places outside of hotspots following the first COVID-19 outbreak and an early state-wide lockdown. On April 20, 2020, these modifications will take immediate effect. On April 29, 2020, nodal institutions will be established by the states to manage the interstate movement of people who are trapped, particularly migrant workers. On May 4, a limited amount of restricted economic activity in areas

designated as green and orange zones was authorized, and on May 25, domestic aeroplane travel was reinstated. The Prime Minister unveiled a 10-point strategy to revive the economy on May 12. Both financial and monetary measures that had already been planned are included in the strategy. The central government released the Unlock 3.0 legislation on July 29, allowing for a gradual return of activities across the country and limiting the lockdown to restricted zones only until August 31. On August 29, the government announced (Unlock 4.0) to further open the market in September, removing restrictions on metro rail in phases beginning on September 7th and allowing for educational, social, entertainment, sports, and other gatherings with up to 100 people. The PM announced on January 11, 2021, that the largest vaccination campaign in history would begin on January 17. Over the coming months, the program's goal is to immunize more than 300 million people.

Anyone over the age of eighteen can now acquire vaccines, and vaccine producers are permitted to resell up to fifty percent of their stock on the open market. (DOEA, 2021) 3\1.1 Administration of Public Affairs:

The two public relations categories of government relations and public affairs concentrate on how an organization interacts with the authorities, governmental regulators, and branches that deal with laws and regulations. Although the terms "public affairs" and "government" are frequently used interchangeably, there are certain differences that should be noted. Public relations has a component called "government relations" that assists businesses in communicating with government audiences. The branch of public relations known as public affairs helps an organization interact with the media, lawmakers, special interests, and the public. Government relations are more of an organization-to-government sort of communication where regulatory concerns are discussed, communication with governmental officials is conducted, lobbying campaigns aiming at informing legislators are launched, etc.

A "virtual environment" is now widely accepted in many spheres of society, including politics, business, and education, as a result of the practically universal lockdown and social distance regime created to stop coronavirus proliferation. The quick development of networking platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Skype to support one-on-one communication or to deliver improved services in a variety of private, personal, and professional contexts is one part of this trend.

For instance, several educational institutions have decided to use network technologies like Teams to remotely instruct all of their classes as long as the outbreak persists. the significant Alterations that "virtualization" has wrought in the lives of countless individuals.

4. THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

- 1) To comprehend the government's function in overseeing public issues during COVID**
- 2) To understand the tactics the government used to regulate public affairs during COVID**
- 3) To examine numerous problems and difficulties the government encountered throughout COVID**

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: Due to the outbreak's rapid spread and high level of unpredictability, a sophisticated statistical technique was needed to homogenies the data and provide accurate and reliable information.

In order to analyze the role that the government plays in containing the COVID-19 outbreak, a certain amount of data must be collected. We are employing secondary data that is easily accessible from international organizations (such the WHO, World Bank, and the IMF) with reference to the five countries of the world in order to conduct an analysis in this research. The most trustworthy sources of information are these organizations. Information was collected up to April 30, 2022, with the purpose of conducting a data analysis.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION.

Through their official portal, the World Health Organization gathered data on confirmed COVID-19 infections and fatalities from December 31, 2019, to March 21, 2020. This was done in compliance with international health regulations, and information from social media and the websites of legitimate ministers of health was included. Since March 22, 2020, the World Health Organization has used area displays to gather global data, and daily aggregate count data has been sent to the WHO's headquarters.

According to WHO case criteria, counts are often based on cases that occur in lab settings and accompanying mortality. However, due to regional adjustments, there may be minor differences. Both domestic cases and repatriation cases are counted.

Counts of newly reported cases and fatalities are calculated by subtracting previously combined figures from the most recent count. As new data becomes available, these counts are incrementally updated throughout the day. Every day, new trial and death numbers are completed by 23:59 CET/CEST. Due to this, users will be able to detect when specific modifications happen. The evictions would have been accurately attributed to earlier days if further information had been provided, allowing the statistics to be updated.

Recent day counts, trends, and global epidemic curves.

The worldwide event and fatality counts provided for the current day may be incomplete until counts for all regions for that day have been fully updated due to the dashboard's future availability. This aspect must be taken into account while analyzing global outbreak curves and trends.

a. *Vaccination Data* This vaccination data was gathered from a variety of sources, including direct supervisors from Member States, a World Health Organization review of publicly available official data, and data gathered and published by third parties, such as The World in Data. WHO cannot comment on the accuracy or completeness of the data because it has not verified any of the information found on third-party websites. The counts supplied by this resource may differ from those reported by other resources due to varying inclusion criteria and cut-off data dates.

The total given dosages equal one dose, per the dosage process. However, it's possible that this isn't the same as how many people had the immunization (individuals who receive numerous vaccine dosages). The number of doses administered per 100 populations may exceed 100 if more than the vast majority of persons obtain both of the required vaccine doses while adhering to two separate dosing regimens. If there are two dosing schedules, then this is the situation.

Rates of 0.001 or less per 100 individuals may be set at 0.

The commencement date shown is the introduction date of the first vaccine administered when more than one vaccination is used in a country. The WHO does not necessarily endorse or recommend the companies or vaccines mentioned by specific manufacturers above others of a similar nature who are not listed. In a few cases, proprietary product names can be identified by the use of capital letters at the beginning.

The development of vaccines in India is expected to advance efforts worldwide to find pandemic cures, but both the production and domestic immunisation programmes confront challenges. The nation is one of the top producers of vaccines in the world, but initial scaling of vaccine production was slowed by supply chain bottlenecks, such as shortages of essential raw materials. India is a key supplier of COVAX, which provides immunisations to low- and middle- income nations. Delays in vaccine production and export have global repercussions. After a slow start, vaccination rates have recently surged; had they continued to rise at the same rate, India might have reached its goal of immunising 40% of the population by the end of 2021. To reach the authorities' goal, more vaccinations are necessary.

5.1 Government's Function in Managing Public Affairs

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a threat to the continuity of public service delivery, violating one of its core principles. Public officials in a number of nations have, however, shown an unanticipated willingness to acquire and modify service delivery in order to lessen the harmful impacts of the epidemic on society and individuals. In a number of locations where medical facilities are overloaded with COVID-19 sufferers, telemedicine has been implemented or improved in an effort to reduce disruptions in the provision of healthcare to persons with other ailments.

Online marriage is permitted in some locations, and cases are heard and decided in courtrooms via video conferences.

Despite the difficulties caused by the epidemic, public officials have shown flexibility in the provision of services that have benefited service users in these and other circumstances.

A). government-implemented plan

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first worldwide pandemic to have happened. As a result, one of the most important things the public sector can do is to assist it in better preparing for upcoming crises. Every government should have the institutional frameworks, policies, practises, infrastructure, strategies, contingency plans, and resources necessary to foresee, identify, and act quickly in the face of pandemics and other emergencies.

Public servants who provide services in a timely, equitable, and humane manner contribute to a better public perception of the government and, as a result, increase public trust. Because government employees are prepared to continue delivering services despite the COVID-19 illness epidemic putting their own lives in danger, people believe that the government is significant and cares about their well-being. The persistence of public personnel has led to an increase in public trust in several places. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the pandemic effort will be crucial to this trust's long-term viability.

B) Allocation of resources and distributive accountability

Emerging crises, like the COVID-19 epidemic, are unexpected by governments and present a significant challenge to the government employees in charge of planning and controlling them. Systems, procedures, and institutional structures meant to provide protection are impacted by the distribution and use of resources.

Communities from this kind of epidemics. Several administrations have been required to examine the resources that are available, rally others, and quickly place them in positions to combat the disease and all of the

Issues that it has impacted. Governments from all across the world have made contributions or are considering making purchases.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than US \$130 billion was spent. Elizabeth and John in 2020.

Public employees were instrumental in the distribution of resources during the epidemic, which had a significant impact on public confidence, the provision of vital services, the decrease of inequality, and lifesaving.

C) Techniques Used by the Government to Manage Public Affairs During COVID

While the COVID-19 virus has caused diverse degrees of destruction in various nations, the majority of governments are having a difficult time responding to the catastrophe. In this situation, assessments are essential instruments for exchanging learning about what functions, what functions poorly, what functions potentially, and for whom in real time. This document presents the findings of government-led analyses of COVID-19 replies.

5.2 Initiatives by the government.

A) Financial assistance programmes.

The initiatives included accelerated expenditure (about 0.3% of GDP, mostly attributable to the prior FY), deferred revenues (almost 0.3% of GDP), and government expenditure (almost 3.5 percent of GDP, of which over 2.2 percent was anticipated to have been used in the prior FY).

The improper behavior, such as giving up (about 5.3 percent of GDP). The majority of above- theline spending in the early phases of the response to the illness outbreak was allocated to social welfare in addition to health. 1.2 percent of GDP goes for financial and in-kind subsidies to lowincome households, while 0.5 percent goes into wage assistance and employment growth for those on low incomes, health insurance, and healthcare (0.1 percent of GDP). In October and November 2020, the centralized state increased its capital investment and provided interest- free loans to the states totaling around 0.2 percent of GDP as well as sector-specific aid programmes. Credit facilities for small business owners, poor households, particularly migrant and agricultural households, distraught electricity supply manufacturers – 0.4 percent of GDP – targeted assistance for agriculture – and other support programmers are initiatives that don't immediately affect the government's deficit role. A number of financial sector indicators for micro, small, and medium-sized businesses as well as non-bank finance companies are included in the business support package; however, additional aid for farming families will primarily take the form of tax exemptions credit and a line of credit for street vendors.

The majority of the financial aid provided to the agricultural industry is used to build new physical infrastructure. The amount of money allocated by the government for spending on healthcare and the general welfare of the populace has increased, for example (350 billion rupees).

From April 2021 to June 2021, additional free meals will be given to 800 million people who have been afflicted by the current pandemic of diseases at an anticipated cost of over \$260 billion. The national government also accelerated the distribution of funds from the "Crisis Response Plan" to state governments and increased a loan programme for regional capital expenditures until FY 2021-22 (150 billion rupees).Economic Surveys, 2021-2022).

B) Supportive monetary and macroeconomic policies

The RBI had reduced the "reverse repo" and "repo rates" as of March 2020 by 155 and 115 basis points (bps), to 4 and 3.35 percent, respectively, and announced liquidity metrics like "Long- Term Repo Operations (LTROs)," a 100-bps reduction in the CRR (cash reserve ratio), and a rise in the MSF (marginal standing facility) to 3 percent of the SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio).The RBI has made it simpler to receive loans and to borrow money through the end of August. By lowering the necessary ordinary market valuation of public share capital and the lower limit of listing duration, the "Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)" has also made it simpler to address the debt issue.

The RBI further loosened rules on May 22. These included increasing the major exposure limit, removing some restrictions on how state governments might obtain funding, facilitating the credit process for exporters and importers, and lengthening small business recapitalization facilities. The RBI increased the advantage of short-term agricultural loan on June 4 through August 31,

2020 under the interest subsidization and prompt repayment incentives programmers .The GST Council announced a lowering of the interest rate assessed on late small business files in a statement issued on June 12th.

The RBI gave banks the order on June 21 to assign a risk weight of 0% to credit lines extended under the instant credit line guarantee scheme. Lenders had until December 2021 to reduce the amount of reserve money they needed to hold on hand for MSME loans. monetary policy statement (2020-21)

On May 4, 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a fresh set of liquidity and financing initiatives, including a special long repo operation (SLTRO) for smaller financial institutions and on-tap financing for infrastructure and health services related to COVID.

The process for handling distressed retail and MSME loans has been restarted (and extended for MSMEs), and lenders can now propose loan restructuring as part of the COVID-related process through September 30, 2021. Additionally, for a maximum of two years, lenders may postpone payments or alter the terms of loans created under the prior settlement plan (August 2020). Finally, financial institutions must employ countercyclical provisioning buffers to hold aside funds for loans that aren't being repaid until the end of March 2022. The deadline for completing both the ECLGS plan and a number of payment system regulations was put back by the RBI to September 30, 2021, in early May. 2020-21 Statement of Monetary Policy.

C) Supporting measures for the exchange rate and payment balance

On March 16, 2020, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established a second FX swap with a \$2 billion, six-month, and auction-based duration. For the fiscal year 2020-2021, the FPI's corporate debt investment cap has been raised to 15% of outstanding shares. Non-residents are no longer limited, as was the case in the past, to just dealing in a limited number of central government securities. India has changed its FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) policy such that any corporation from a country that borders India must obtain government approval before making an investment.

6. CONCERNS

Since the year's beginning, the COVID-19 has been generating problems all around the world. A public health issue has abruptly grown to the size of a big worldwide crisis due to the interconnectedness of our society and economy and the constant dissemination of information through numerous media channels.

Instead of ventilators or medical professionals in ICUs, COVID-19 is connected with migrant labourers returning their belongings to the local community from hundreds of kilometers away.

It was obvious that India's job market was in poor shape because the majority of the sector was shut down. It is estimated that 10 million people returned to their towns in the initial wave, with half of them travelling on foot or by bicycle. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), 400 million Indians are at risk of living in poverty as a result of the economy. 2020 UN report. The majority of informal employees are employed by MSMEs, which are now the contemporary sector's middlemen or service providers. On the other side, employees struggle with payment issues, which the government views as a major concern. Payroll taxes, additional levies, and limited access to subsidized loans for large businesses all impede the expansion of MSME. Despite the fact that more than half of the population has a phone, only a small percentage of people can

telework. Direct patient interaction and physical presence are required for occupations in manufacturing and retail. Families without access to wide area networks have already experienced a faster decline in income. The government increased the budget by 20 trillion rupees, or almost 10% of GDP, in reaction to the crisis. As a result, the damage was minimal. The RBI also had a sizable plan to make it simpler to obtain money. 2020 UN report Communication skills are essential for crisis management. Government must scurry to control the problem since they must create up policies on the moment to handle ambiguous situations.

while simultaneously updating the general public in real time. There are always conflicts and difficulties while speaking in ambiguous circumstances. A whole-society approach is especially crucial in this moment. People are requested to take part in community support, self-quarantining, and other containment measures for lengthy periods of

time for which we are unsure of the duration. People from all walks of life may lessen the burden on taxpayers and avoid serious law and order issues from further taxing the public sector by cooperating as the "whole of society."

The most important thing is to use strategies based on historical and current evidence rather than acting in a way that is politically expedient. Strategies based on verified evidence assist create plausible scenarios and ensure that resources are used as effectively as feasible.

7. RECOMMANDS

Although COVID-19 poses a significant threat, it also presents an opportunity to learn and create fresh approaches. How well this problem is handled will depend on how well each administration is able to address it head-on, include society, and collaborate. B. Hyland-Wood et al., 2021 11 Because social structures are constantly changing, everyone has the chance to gain knowledge from this catastrophe. Because it is a test of our democratic systems of government, what we do now will have long-term effects.

In order to maintain civilization during extended periods of self-quarantine and lockdown, employers, colleges, and schools must collaborate to promote remote jobs, homeschooling, and online education. Governments may be helped by international cooperation with research labs and institutions to take positive action to lessen the risk of bad things happening. The public is more likely to embrace special measures that are supported by solid data. Using reliable data as a primary factor when implementing special measures may also assist win over the public.

Making sure that crisis communications are effective can be achieved in large part by being truthful and accurate when disseminating information, informing the public of what will happen next, and displaying some empathy while discussing policies.

It is a sensible strategy that many countries have put in place specific systems of governance to coordinate activities within the scientific, technology, and industrial system in order to enhance institutional coherence and mutual cooperation and to make it easier to achieve shared objectives.

Traditional emergency management practices, conventional protocols, and procedures seem to be insufficient. To combat the pandemic and its grave repercussions, a supplementary strategy must be used in addition to these customary practices, and occasionally in place of them.

To guarantee that government and public communications are consistent in this spreading disease, communication via the government's central command is essential. By educating a sizable section of the public to do the required actions, behavioral communication campaigns can make it easier to implement the legislation. If governmental policies are successfully communicated to the public, they can be strengthened.

8. Conclusion

There doesn't seem to be much doubt that the coronavirus outbreak will have significant effects on public relations professionals everywhere, not the least of which are the long-term lessons learned about how to communicate health, scientific, and wellness themes. In addition, the public affairs profession experienced financial hardships during the pandemic that were equivalent to those experienced by many other industry sectors and service sectors, with many professionals being forced to participate in furlough programs. Despite the fact that the most of the information is anecdotal, there appear to have been considerable employment losses across the industry.

Governments should therefore seek to build and reinforce contingency plans so that public employees always appear to have access to the safety equipment they require for their line of work and safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has refuted the frequently cited claim that governments lack the resources to address future issues. Due to unforeseen circumstances, some governments have been forced to spend significant quantities of money, possibly more than they would have if they had included it in their budgets for providing public services. This assessment provides crucial information that might improve future resilience as well as current policy responses to the crisis.

As COVID-19 has demonstrated, effective leadership is essential during periods of turbulence and uncertainty. Leaders in the public sector should be supported as they develop. The government must make investments in effective government workers and high-quality government services. The budgets of governments must always include funds for emergencies and calamities like this pandemic. In order to improve teamwork, cleaning, and coordination, as well as their chances of coming up with effective strategies for outbreaks and crises as well as the work of providing services generally, public servants must be given the opportunity to network, collaborate, start sharing, and learn from economic development and social progress as well as mistakes. Governments must establish and maintain efficient, long-term, public-sector, well-coordinated institutional arrangements that can help public servants be ready and proactive, look for evidence during crises, such as an epidemic, find solutions quickly, and respond appropriately in time to avoid serious consequences.

Author's Note:

In undertaking this research paper, I have sought to illuminate the intricate interplay of government actions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leveraging data available until April 30, 2022, from authoritative sources including the WHO, World Bank, and IMF, this study endeavors to deepen our understanding of governmental responses. The exploration emphasizes the value of collaborative learning among public employees and underscores the critical issue of limited Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) availability for government personnel. This work contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding pandemic management, public affairs, and government efficacy.

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