Diversity Management in Pandemic Situation: COVID-19

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Abstract
The novel disease Covid - 19 presents many challenges for the organization to maintain the diversity at the workforce. Effective collaboration and communication during a pandemic situation will help the organization to maintain a workforce. Major challenges for organizations include social crises, fundamental changes in attitudes and behavior that create new organizational policies. The matrix has suggested the how the individual and organisation can cope with the current pandemic situation to fight in the market.

Keywords: COVID 19, Workforce, Diversity Management

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Introduction
The whole world is confronting Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of pandemic outbreak will be seen on the diversity workforce. The novel disease has extensive impact on the world economy; there are also immediate and direct impacts on the businesses for Diversity & Inclusion champions. The unprecedented global pandemic situation is greatly affecting routine lives of employees. The world had already faced the SARS, HIV and world war but COVID-19 has shocked the society, health systems, economies and governments worldwide. According to the previous studies, we have seen the Latinx community was held responsible for swine flu, Blacks blamed or Ebola and LGBTQ community discriminated for AIDS. Now Covid-19, we are seeing a rise in the aggression for the East Asia. The aggression in the people has increased after the confirmation by World Health Organization that the first case was detected in a 35-year-old woman who had been living in Wuhan, China. Covid-19 has significantly impacting the businesses and economic. China, the economic engine of the world, already experienced a drastic economic downturn in the last quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020 followed by Europe and the United States of America. It is estimated that India will follow soon, albeit with a delay!

The virus has constituted the global threats. This has led to the bans and restrictions on the businesses which have shaken the financial markets leading to disruption of many businesses. This pandemic situation has changed the working culture of the organization. The organization is staying innovative and flexible to support their employees. Covid-19 emerging into the one of the most difficult economic situations in the world since the Second World War, the consequences of the new virulent and virulent strain of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) will soon change the way we look at diversity and inclusion centers of the organization. According to the
CDC report, the Race and Ethnic diversity is a significantly most impacted diversity. After a span of time, the pandemic will decelerate to an extent which will allow many parts of our economy to restart. While it is not assured that how much time things will be back to normal like earlier. Also, there is no doubt that the road to economic recovery will be long and arduous. But sooner or later it will improve and create new opportunities to lift the economy. The organizations has support their employees by providing leaves, work from home facilities, salaries have created and maintained an inclusive environment. The organizations are also organizing employee engagement sessions like webinars, yoga, online games that have build the strong relationships with their employees and created a sense of loyalty which will likely translate into low turnover. The purpose of this paper is to study how organizations in India are managing the diversity in the current pandemic situation and how they can improvise their strategies to maintain the employee-employer relationship.

**Purpose of study**

The rationale behind this study is to examine the different ways of dealing with workforce diversity in the pandemic situation as well as to provide the effective diversity management techniques to the organization in the current pandemic situation.

**Research Gap**

The researcher covered the following research questions which have not been covered in the precious studies:

RQ1: To find the diversity management strategies dealing pandemic situation.

RQ2: To study the effective diversity management strategies to follow by the organization.

RQ3: To construct the lockdown strategy matrix dealing with pandemic.

**Literature Review**

Amabile (2011) refers to the current stage as “Disengagement Crisis” and also suggest that the evidences makes it a global issue – as it can be go to the decades affecting every industry. Navarese et al (2014) stated that the rapidly changing business environment, forcing the organisation to maintain their competitive advantage by seeking he original ways of working. He would have never thought that this statement would become so critical in 2020, in the current pandemic situation. Dignan (2019) keeps the importance of famous saying “living in the Present” and states that ‘best pratices’ of the organisation will be of no use because the new technology have replaced the bureaucratic working culture. The present situation challenges the organisational structure and models. Reeves, M. (2020) has explained how attitudinal shift shaped the crisis. He has mention that fundamental crisis gives a new shape to the business. According the study, the world war II increasing the participation of women in the workforce. Similarly, 9/11 attacks reformulate the transportation and security policies. The researcher Duffield, 1996; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004 have studied that race/ethnicity and class have considered the primary factor to be impacted during hazard events. Peterson, D. (2020) frames the current situation of biasness due to the Covid 19. He has mentioned that the pandemic situation brings the biasness towards one or other community. For example, there is increase in the hatred and aggression for the Chinese people and their country. Many countries have boycotted the Chinese products and calling corona virus a “Chinese Virus” and blaming Chinese government for its spread in the world leading to pandemic situation. “When people are afraid, they seek safety in numbers. But in the present situation, this
impulse increases the risk of infection for all of us. This is the basic evolutionary conundrum that we describe,” says Dezecache. “Deroy mentioned that social contacts are not new to the society, they are not extra which can be neglected. He says, we are not liberal to refuse the social acquaintances. They are part of our normal life. To keep the connections with our social contacts, social media plays vital role. It makes possible for large numbers of people to get in touch virtually to neighbors, relatives, friends and other contacts. “Our innate inclinations are cooperative rather than egoistic. But access to the Internet makes it possible for us to cope with the need for social distancing,” says Chris Frith.

Pink (2006), moves beyond the current disengagement theories and literature and states “for the past few hundred years thinking associated with the left brain has dominated” as we progressed through the previous industrial revolutions. However, the 4th Revolution (the Digital Age) and the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), has automated many of the tasks that had previously occupied workers so now “the future favors right brain thinkers”. In other words, logical, rational left-brain thinking is necessary yet no longer enough. The right brain skills of design, storytelling, emotional empathy, the big picture, playfulness and creating meaning is now what the current workforce will seek and Pink (2006) refers to this era as the ‘Conceptual Age’ – an era in which Covid-19 has catapulted us, as we are forced to contemplate of our futures – and disengagement in the workplace i.e. the mismatch of employee/employer expectations, values, reward systems and meaningless growth and development opportunities - as we navigate uncharted territories. Also (Mukherjee, 2020), the Covid 19 crisis has given the opportunity to become the policy entrepreneur to make cooperative strategies and associations to deal with the unpredicted future with the acceptable risk. Looking the situation of COVID -19 spread, the early lockdown was proven to be the suitable policy to control the spread (DimitriosMoris and Schizas, 2020) but testing rate was poor in the initial lockdown rate which increases the no. of cases in India than any other country with the similar population (Mukherjee, 2020).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Reeves et al., 2020</td>
<td>Sensing and Shaping the Post COVID – 19 Era</td>
<td>The paper investigates how the fundamental changes occur in the attitude and belief in the pandemics which forces the organization to modify the policies which persist in long run.</td>
<td>The societal crisis brings the change leads to innovation which arises due to the extreme needs occur in crisis. This pandemic changes the fundamental shift include work from home, taking care of health and hygiene extremely and emphasis on family security. Producer shift include remote working, streamlining operations, decentralized supply chain etc.</td>
</tr>
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| Bob Bolin, 2007            | Race, Class, Ethnicity and Disaster Vulnerability | Indepth study of race, class and ethnic inequalities in environmental hazards and disaster. | 1. Social inequalities have reduced over the period of time.
2. The increased use of political–ecological theory, spatial analysis, and studies of racial formation and class inequalities would strengthen disaster research by...
2. To analyse the data on testing and cases to understand the trend and infection situation. | 1. Lockdown is not the only way to manage the crisis. Lockdown policy doesn’t result in slowing the spread of COVID-19 virus because of delayed policy decision, poor implementation of lockdown, delayed travel restrictions and extremely less testing rate in the initial phase of spread.  
2. The policy makers should shift their focus on the (a) controllable aspects of an unpredictable future, (b) decision making criteria based on affordable loss or acceptable risks and (c) utilizing contingencies with effective use of evidence through cooperative strategies and alliances. |
| Willaim E. Donald, 2020 | COVID-19 and Future of Career | The paper articulates the author’s viewpoint on the impact of COVID-19 on the (a) career of individuals (b) future of organization and (c) national government. | 1. Society needs to value, recognize and appreciate the careers, income contribution by women.  
2. The organization need to evolve and utilize the technology to reduce the carbon footprints and enable their workers to work from remote area. The organization should focus on work-life balance and attract, hire and retain staff.  
3. National govt. needs to balance economic decision, invest in mental health services, greener and cleaner economy and also support organization to generate job. |
| Donnice Peterson, 2020 | Implication of COVID 19 and Bias | To paper consist of discussion regarding the Impact of COVID-19 and biasness towards the diversity workforce. | 1. The COVID-19 has increased the aggression towards the Asians.  
2. Women, multicultural people, daily workers are highly impacted.  
3. The organisation has reallocate their
Also, paper focus on organizational support to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on employees.

**Peter Grindrod CBE, 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lock-Down Decompression: Opportunities for management and differential control</th>
<th>Distribution of individual association into modules.</th>
<th>Decompression can be more controllable exercise to reduce the infection within the different regions and population strata.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Sonia McManus et al., 2007**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resilience Management</th>
<th>To identify the strategies which make one organization able to survive the major crisis than others.</th>
<th>The organization should not only focus on the resilience strategy in the crisis but to achieve the resilience they should include “Resilient Communication Strategy” and an “Emergency Planning Strategy”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**C. Bryce, P. Ring, S. Ashby & J. K. Wardman (2020):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience in the face of uncertainty: early lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic</th>
<th>To study the organizational resilience for the preparedness and initial response of pandemic.</th>
<th>Technological advancement and interconnections should be aligned with the planning and preparedness for the pandemic reaction and adaptation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Methods**

Data mining was done from the official data sources of various companies regarding employee inclusion and workforce diversity management. An event history of pandemic was analysed to understand the diversity management strategies used mostly by the organization. Data triangulation method was used to provide the post diversity management strategies.

**Diversity**

Until the mid 1980s, the term “Diversity” was not widely used by the management. As per the management literature review [Edelman, Fuller and Mara-Drita (2001)] the term diversity was acknowledged in 1987 and started using widely in 1990s. Williams & O’ Reilly, 1998 define diversity as “any attribute that another person may use to detect individual differences”. The definition of the diversity can be broad due to the differentiating factors which also can have the positive impulse on the perception of diversity programs (Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). However it is difficult to measure and study the wide factors of diversity. To narrow down the factors Phillips & Loyd (2006) has describe the diversity into two levels i.e. surface level and
deep level. Surface level diversity contains the demographic characteristics such as race, age and gender, while deep level diversity include functional differences such as educational background, work experience. Ely & Roberts, 2008; Ely & Thomas, 2001 defined diversity as “the characteristic of a group (of two or more people) which refers to demographic differences among group members in race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, nationality, sexual identity and other dimensions of social identity”.

**Diversity Management**

The term diversity management existed in the world since 1980 and emerged in the year 1990s. Diversity management can be defined as the process of planning, directing, organising and applying all the comprehensive attributes to all diverse employees of the organisation. According to Kreintner (2001:37) diversity is “Differences in the individuals as well as similarities that exist among them”. Diversity management is not only limited to provide the same employment opportunity but also managing the diverse workforce and creating the working environment that involves everyone. The organisations have already focused on the diversity management practices such as Mentoring program, equal opportunity, sensitivity training, zero tolerance policy, team building exercise, effective communication, fair treatment but with the necessary lockdowns and travel restrictions across the nation, in order to contain the COVID-19 from becoming a full-blown pandemic, businesses across the globe have come to an abrupt halt, clinging closer into a global recession. Covid 19 has changed the DNA of workplace worldwide. The common global goal of reviving the economy is dissolving traditional industry and organization boundaries, inspiring collective action. Many organisation adopt diversity their own perspective to become more creative and flexible to change.

**Diversity Management Strategies Dealing Pandemic Stress**

The organisations are educating and supporting their employees to deal and fight with the current pandemic stress. According to the WHO survey (2020), employees have faced the stress and anxiety to fight with pandemic situation. In pandemic situation, the organisation has come forward and ensured their employees to be treated prime. The organisations have supported workforce to deal with the pandemic situation in the following ways:

- Mentoring Program
- Effective Communication
- Health Benefit
- Career Development Opportunity

Mentoring Program – The continuous impact of corona virus has made many employees worried, anxious and devastated. Employees are reacting differently to this pandemic. The mentors should support their trainees and encourage them to prioritise their health first. Every organisation has started work from home facility due to which employees must be feeling disconnected personally and professionally. To reaffirm the relationship between mentor and mentee, it is important for the mentor to fight this physical shift by keeping in touch using emails, chats, video conferencing call.
Effective Communication – Two way communication is very much important in this difficult time. The manager should not pressurise their subordinate for only focusing on the deadline of the work. To disseminate critical information, company should enable two way communication by validating emergency notification systems.

Health Benefits: During the pandemic situation, the organisation must prioritise the employee’s safety and their well being. Keeping the safety of their employees, many organisation has added the covid 19 treatment into their health policies. The organisations is supporting their employees (in case of detected positive for Corona) by providing medicalaim policy, keeping touch with the infected employee through video calls, chats, text etc. Also organisations are conducting yoga sessions, motivational session, employee engagement activities to build inner strength of their employees.

Career Development Programs: Covid 19 has turned the all aspects of business and bring the use of digital media to the full extent. To support and increasing the knowledge of their employees, the organisations are orgaising the webinars, running professional development programs, providing training through digital platform.

On the basis of data available on company websites, it has been notice that out of all the diversity management practices, the organisations are mainly focusing on the above mentioned strategies to support diversified workforce in the current difficult situation. The above mentioned diversity management strategies have helped the employees become stressfree, unanxious and encourage them to concentrate on their work. The pandemic has changed the everything around us that’s why organisations has also encouraged the employees to maintain the work-life balance resulting in experiencing the innovative way of social interaction as virtual interaction grows among the colleagues as ever before.

Diversity Management Strategies Supporting Diversified Workforce

Current lockdown and work from home situation has impacted the diversity and inclusion efforts by the organization. It will be too early to understand that what organizations can absorb from this pandemic. Also, how it will help to resume the business back to normal with the improved norm. Following ways can help to promote diversity after the lockdown:

1. Inclusion

The inclusion of all the employees is deliberately important on the long video conference call. The manager must ensure the involvement of their subordinate when they mediate conversation. It should not be acceptable that someone should dominate or interrupt others’ ideas. The call could be recorded for the future analysis of data to study the rhythm of inclusion or exclusion.

2. Performance

The work from home situation has given the opportunity to the managers to be less partial in handling the important decisions for their subordinates. Feedback, performance and remuneration assessments - processes often driven by distortions - should become more analytical and metric-based. When the person who
accidentally stops in the boss' office to brag about their successes can no longer go through there, managers have the opportunity to be less partial in managing important career decisions. They should take it.

3. Leadership

D&I leaders should be upstander in the time of crisis like covid 19. The leaders should take the initiative to share the accurate data, to educate employees about covid 19 and take action while seeing or hear any harrassment and discrimination. According to WHO (World Health Organisation) the social sigmatised group are more hesitant to seek medical assistant because they feel fear of harm and violence. To avoid discrimination, people may hide their illness which contribute to the situation more likely to spread the virus. In the current situation, leadership diversity is just not stopping the discrimination and harrassment but also taking the right step for their employees. In the current situation of uncertainty, lack of control and spread of misinfomation leads to the risk of biasness, xenophobia and racismism which impacted the employee workforce. The societal and fundametal shift in the business create the new organisational policies which impacted the job satisfaction of the workforce. The job classification, living situation, family structure, immigration status and work from home alternative perpetuate ineqialities due to ever changing policies. Therefore, organisations should focus on strenthen the diversity encourage inclusive environment. The leaders must follow the inclusive leadership practices to support diversified workforce. The COVID – 19 has formed the leaders and policy maker into the policy entrepreneurs with the emphasis on transforming the aspects of unpredicted future, affodable loss and acceptable risk and employing contingencies through effective strategies and unions (Mukherjee, 2020)

4. Equal participation

The manager must ensure the equal involvement of their subordinates during the meetings, conference calls, employee-engagement activities. They should treat them fairly also manager should recognize and acknowledge the efforts of teammates in the meetings. Irrespective of any characteristic of individual or population such as age, gender, race, ethnicity should not be serving as a basis of differentiation.

Research Findings

The execution of pandemic strategy mentioned in the below Lockdown Strategy matrix supporting workforce diversity. The matrix has suggested the how the individual and organisations can cope with the current pandemic situation to fight in the market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy/ Level</th>
<th>Resolve</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Return</th>
<th>Reimagine</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Level</td>
<td>Social Capital (John Brehm&amp; Wendy Rahn, 1997; Christos A. Makridis and Cary Wu, 2020)</td>
<td>• Self Improvement (George et. al, 2005; Gabriel et. al, 1996; Sumati Gupta &amp; George A)</td>
<td>Personal Hygiene (Kelly D. Blake et al., 2010)</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibility</td>
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## Conclusion

The pandemic situation has brought us to remain in the lockdown situation for quite some long time. It has totally changed, how organizations operate and control. History shows that such crisis is not temporary - instead they fundamentally transform the working situations (Reeves, M. et. al, 2020). The diversity management team must focus on pandemic strategy to deal the current pandemic situation at both levels i.e. individual and organizational. The current pandemic situation has shined the diversity, equity and inclusion in new ways. The shift in the current working experiences and new perspective have open the opportunity for learning and development to embrace diversity at individual and organizational level. The researcher has connected the 4Rs of strategies dealing with the pandemic with the diversity management at individual and organizational level. The pandemic has changed the everything around us for which the organisation must prepare themselves to fight with the economic crisis. The below mentioned four Rs offers the basis for the future empirical research in the field of diversity management in pandemic situation. According to the previous research, the organisation must focus on following Rs for getting back to the new normal:

**Resolve** : Keep all employees safe and well informed while ensuring business continuity. This includes the basics of checking on everyone safety, ensuring there is clear communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Level</th>
<th>Business Continuity (Goh, Moh Heng, 2009)</th>
<th>Anticipate (Kendra and Wachtendorf, 2003; Somers, 2009; Burnard and Bhamra, 201; Stephanie Duchek, 2019)</th>
<th>New Working Conditions (Bualy, Al Raghdah et. al, 2020)</th>
<th>Redesign Operations (C. Bryce at al., 2020)</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Expanding Opportunity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adaptation</strong> (Carley, 1991; Carley and Harrald, 1997; Limnios et al., 2014; Stephanie Duchek, 2019)</td>
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### Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>New Working Conditions</th>
<th>4Rs of Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolve</td>
<td>Keep all employees safe and well informed while ensuring business continuity. This includes the basics of checking on everyone safety, ensuring there is clear communication.</td>
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</table>
Resilience: Manage resources carefully while adopting a through the cycle mindset. This includes managing cash and resources on a day by day basis. The ability of firm to effectively absorb and develop situation specific response then engage in transformative activities to capitalise on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organisation survival (Lengnick Hall et al., 2011)

Return: Support employees in getting back to work, productively and in good spirits. This step can be quite

Reimagine: Rethink operating model and ways of working in the next normal. How can we start

The selfless action of the organisation must act as the catalyst for the fair treatment with the employees and re-evaluation of values and contribution of each employees. In the general terms, this paper proposed individuals, organisationan insight to sustained the diversified employees in an ecosystem.

References