

Impact on Employee Engagement due to Covid-19 in India

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Abstract

Covid-19 is considered the most dreaded disease that has spread across all countries in the recent past. The research explores the impact on employees working in various companies in India. The researchers extracted data from various research journals, articles, and newspapers. This study presents an analysis of the impact on employee engagement due to Covid-19 in India and measures taken by many companies or industries in the field of healthcare and wellbeing. This research answers questions like how many industry sectors or companies have implemented employee engagement initiatives and how many employee engagement initiatives have been taken towards healthcare and wellbeing of the employees during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Employee Engagement, the researchers explore the various engagement aspects in companies in India.

Keywords

Covid-19, Indian Companies, Employee Engagement, Healthcare, Wellbeing Allowance.

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken the normal life and work environment of the people of the world towards a new direction. The organizations are adjusting themselves to the new normal of the virtual environment from the traditional environment. This new normal has raised the work of the human resource (HR) to modify and develop new employee engagement strategies. Most of the organizations (which were reliant on technology) allowed their employees to work from home. It has been analysed by many companies that working from home increases the productivity level of the employee because it gives the flexibility to maintain the work schedule. But work from the home process is also associated with many disadvantages which include lack of community interaction, lack of communication, difficulty in the management of work, loss of productivity, etc. In fact, after analysing the productivity and performance of employees, companies fired their employees by mapping the inflow of the work (P. Shahid, 2020). Because of this employees have faced stressful situations, such as increased workloads, longer working hours and reduced rest periods. In addition, layoffs, pay cuts, and furloughs have led to increased levels of job insecurity and economic loss, resulting in increased levels of uncertainty among employees. All this pressure at work represents an important threat to employee healthcare and wellbeing. So many different sectors of organizations have taken many initiatives in the field of healthcare and the wellbeing of their employees.

In this paper, various companies in India, which have taken different measures for healthcare and well-being allowance for their employees, are analysed via journals, articles, blogs, newspapers and social media.

1.1 Theoretical Foundation

During Covid-19 pandemic situations, human resource managers played a very important role by continuously evolving creative, effective and innovative ways to engage the employees healthily. Engaged employees of the company have a pragmatic attitude towards work and a high level of enthusiasm that brings excellence in their work

and keeps them committed to their company's goals and values. Companies know that workers who are completely engaged will lead the way to higher productivity, which leads to more customer satisfaction resulting in improvements in business and profit in the company (Chanana and Sangeeta 2020). According to the study in which Kahn (1990) described that engagement reveals the physical and physiological presence of performing an institutional role. Psychological conditions of availability, security and meaningfulness are the three frames that assist engagement to grow in a firm. Engaged employees express and engage themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically in their role performances. Employee engagement is the individual's satisfaction, involvement and enthusiasm for work (Harter et al. 2002). It is closely related to prosperity, job involvement and sentiments (May et al. 2004). The engagement of employees is composed of two important aspects, organization engagement and job engagement (Saks 2006). Companies that reinforce employee engagement, communicate with their employees honestly and accurately, wisely manage talent and at the right time, will sail through the current market turmoil and be successful in the future (Robison 2009). The two essential things among organizations and employees are Confidence and Communication. This amalgamation among the company and the workers is a necessity as both can deliver outstandingly in their achievements (Sarangi and Nayak 2016). Organizations and their workers are reliant on each other to fulfil their ambitions and targets (Chanana and Sangeeta 2020). In this paper, the researchers utilize the employee engagement theory of Kahn as the theoretical foundation. The researchers utilize all the three constructs exposed by Kahn (Kahn 1990).

1.2 Research Objective

The main objective of this research study was to do a comparative study of different Indian Industry Sectors that have taken employee engagement initiatives towards Healthcare and Well-being of the employees due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in India.

1.3 Research Questions

The researchers address specific questions across various industries and across companies within and across industries.

- RQ1: Which industry sectors were active towards Employee healthcare during Covid-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: Which industry sectors were active towards Employee wellbeing during Covid-19 pandemic?
- RQ3: Which industries were active towards Medical infrastructure during Covid-19 pandemic?
- RQ4: Which industries were active towards Equipment donation during Covid-19 pandemic?
- RQ5: Which Companies within the industries were active towards healthcare?
- RQ6: Which Companies within the industries were active towards wellbeing?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the most important ingredient for the company's success. Employee engagement is a human resources (HR) concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication an employee feels toward his/her job. Engaged employees care about their work and about the performance of the company and feel that their efforts make a difference. Employers can foster employee engagement through effective communication, offering rewards and discussing career advancement. Covid-19 pandemic has changed the business setup completely. Employees are predominantly working remotely from their homes and they do not have opportunities to work in physical proximity. People working remotely tend to feel undervalued and lonely because of less engagement (Singh P, 2020). Employers are hence forced to identify ways to keep the Employee Engaged so that productivity is not diminished, but improved. Appropriate human resource management strategies and implementations would increase employees' mental well-being, satisfaction, productivity, motivation and health safety at the workplace (By Mohammad Reza Azizi , Rasha Atlasi , Arash Ziapour , Jaffar Abbas , Roya Naemi, 2021).

2.2 Impact of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown on Employees and Industry in India

The Covid-19 pandemic first wave caused a loss of economy, health and human life in India. The government of India utilized its existing pool of resources to its full extent to tackle the impact. The economic activity of India got badly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic because of which thousands of people lost their jobs, or the major part of their incomes, in a very short period of time (Bapuji et al. 2020). Apart from reduced wages, there was a reduction in non-financial compensation of employees like payment for performance practice and employment relations. For instance, health benefits and life insurance, pension, savings plan, paid sick leave and bonuses (Bapuji et al. 2020). Covid-19 impact in India ruined the economic activity of industries and businesses across various sectors. Many lost their jobs

and some companies deducted the salary of their employees. There were multiple effects like people reducing their expenses, impact on demand and hence supply and increase of market goods. This also led to increase in unemployment. Millions of workers were forced to select government-supported job schemes from various sectors. The corporate world was also undergoing all aspects like layoffs, furloughs and resignations. Some companies had to adopt the dismissal of employees (Kumar 2021).

As per the need of the hour, most of the organizations started working online and initiated a work from home (WFH) regime. Due to lockdown, most of the organizations provided the facility to their employees to work from home. But work from home is difficult for employees as they do not feel the organizational climate at home. There is lack of concentration due to frequent invasion of family members. Work-life conflict arises due to this. Many a times, they do not have proper equipment and tools (computer, mouse, printers, scanners, headphones, webcam, internet connection and a dedicated workspace—a quiet place to work). Most of the employees feel stressed due to rising cases of COVID-19 in the world. They are not sure about their job security and also about their salary. Due to these problems, employees are unable to concentrate/focus on their work. Hence, there is a need for employee engagement. The prime responsibility of the organization is to take care of their employees' well-being and engage them properly. Those employees who are engaged well are producing 100% result. Leaders should provide some motivational talk lectures, boost their morale, and provide security and open environment so employees can raise their voice if they are having any issues. Leaders can use multimedia for communication. There should be a transparent policy, so that the employees do not feel stress about their job and engage in their job well. (Nisha Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). As per Vidi Madan (2020), the Central & State Government in India had given out a lot of guidance and issued orders to contain the spread of the virus to organizations and general public. Some of them included providing a safe place to work for the employees (even if they are working remotely) and reimbursement of the employee expenses as they work from home. Employers were also to provide information, instructions, trainings and supervision regarding safety and health to the employees. Employers also had to create an Emergency response team which would act as an intermediary between the top management and the employees to address any untoward issues.

2.3 Employee Engagement initiatives by Indian Industries towards Healthcare

Infosys has set up Covid-19 care centres for employees in Pune and Bangalore and tied up with Covid-19 testing labs nationwide. It has also collaborated with emergency ambulance providers, 1490 hospitals in 242 cities in India, in order to provide treatment for its employees and their family members. The company also provided 21 days of additional paid leaves for its employees who contracted COVID-19. (Phadnis S. 2021).

The employees of Capgemini India and their dependents, who contracted the COVID-19, were provided home care facilities under the company's medical insurance. The company partnered with healthcare firm Portea for health monitoring, ensuring better patient safety and professional medical assistance within the home environment. The company had instituted a ₹ 200 crores benevolent fund to support its employees and their families. (Phadnis S. 2021). The company had also committed ₹ 50 crores towards the Covid-19 intensive care unit facilities, for planting oxygen generation plants, other useful long-term medical infrastructure and relief operations in India. (Basu S. D. and Venugopalan A. 2021) .

Wipro facilitated complementary pre- and post-vaccination support as well as vaccination reimbursement for its employees and their spouses. The company also launched the nurturing wellness platform that offers doctors, nutritionists, health coaches, virtual consultations and 24*7 emergency care experts. Cognizant allowed its employees to avail of involuntary 14 days absence during the quarantine period and a special provision for insurance to cover Covid-19 treatment at home. TCS and Reliance Industries have undertaken vaccinations drives for their eligible employees and their dependents, through tie-ups with hospitals across locations. (Phadnis S. 2021).

HCL Technologies manages vaccination through its health care delivery arm HCL Healthcare. The company also reimburses vaccination costs for its employees and their families. (Alawadhi N. and Abrar P. 2021).

PwC India led a national Covid-19 task force to help the employees. The team also included city-level staff volunteers led by their regional leaders, working round the clock, to help the people with information on the availability of beds, medication and equipment support, plasma donation, testing and insurance. (Dave S. and Shukla S. 2021)

Procter and Gamble had a committee spearheaded by their CEO, function leaders and medical expert executives to deal with staff emergencies, health and safety of employees. The committee also extends support to its employees based on their needs. Tata Motors has partnered with mental health professionals to ensure their employee's wellbeing. It has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a confidential counselling service to its employees and their family members at no cost. (Dave S. and Shukla S. 2021).

At Accenture, the health and safety of their workers matter most. The company covers the cost of the Covid-19 vaccine, to their employees and their dependents. (Team E.T. 2021). The company is providing many facilities including care-at-home services, 24/7 telemedicine, increased insurance coverage, mental health support, virtual care for children and support for testing and vaccinations for more than 2 lakhs employees and their families in India. Accenture is also providing leave options for the employee who is taking care of his/her Covid-19 infected family member. The Covid-19 teams continue to work 24/7 to find additional ways to support their employees. (Money control News 2021).

Real estate developer Raheja Corp had set up a 24*7 centralized Covid war room executed by its employees to assist colleagues as well as non-employees for emergency services, such as providing doctors, oxygen, or hospital admission. In case of adverse events, they also provided the employee's family with one year's salary as a lump sum amount. It has also enhanced the medical cover and introduced a —benevolent scheme for those in need of financial assistance and advance salary to meet their expenses during the exigencies. (Shinde S. et al. 2021).

2.4 Employee Engagement initiatives by Indian Industries towards Wellbeing

During the pandemic's second wave, several companies rolled out policies to support bereaved families. Companies like Big Basket, Dalmia, Bharat Group, Vedanta, NTPC, Paytm, Flipkart, L&T, Infosys provided several measures to their employees like insurance cover for Covid related death, medical aid to family members, employment opportunities for spouse and grown-up children, support for the education of kids and immediate financial assistance to staff's kin from an emergency fund. Essar Capital set up a 'benevolent fund' which offered immediate financial assistance to the dependent family for any bereaved employees. NTPC provided additional like medical relief for dependents of bereaved families, accommodation and education to children till retirement, in addition to the benefits under various group insurance schemes (Bhattacharyya R. 2021).

Vedanta introduced a term life insurance policy that provides coverage equivalent to each employee's annual salary for five years, in addition to medi claim and group personal accident insurance policy, while also enhancing the medical insurance cover to 1.5 times the existing eligibility. Flipkart provided an insurance program for expenses in hospitalization and treatment at home, with a term life cover of 5 times their annual Cost To Company. It also provides a medical insurance and personal accident coverage of up to ₹ 5 lakh and ₹ 1 lakh respectively, to its delivery executives. Its Kirana partners are also covered under a Covid-19 insurance program with an assured hospitalization sum of up to ₹ 50,000. Paytm has launched a special 'Covid-19 Mediclaim' option for employees over and above their existing mediclaim policy that gives employees an option to have Covid-19 specific cover for their families and save general mediclaim for the entire year. PhonePe provides a Covid-19 allowance of up to ₹ 2 lakh to its employees to help manage emergency. Its medical insurance policy covers Covid-19, including domiciliary support in case of non-hospitalization. L&T provides term life cover and an option of additional Covid19 death insurance death ranging from ₹ 40 lakh to ₹ 95 lakh across various grades of permanent employees. Infosys covers medical treatments of Covid-19 infected employees under group employee insurance. Myntra covers medical insurance for its employees and their dependents in which Covid-19 related treatment expenses are included. (Bhattacharyya R. 2021).

HCL Technology is supporting bereaved employees and their families by providing salary for a year, medical insurance for 3 years and extending support to their children's education for 5 years. If the spouse is willing to work, then the company is training them and providing them an opportunity to work at HCL. (Shinde S. et al. 2021)
Dabur supports the families of bereaved employees with a monthly salary for a year, in addition to the company's term insurance cover. The term insurance cover is for all employees of Dabur. PepsiCo has recently started offering advance salaries to its infected employees. (Verma P. 2021).

Salesforce India gave a one-time payout of ₹15,000 towards any Covid-19 related expenses for their employees' requirement to continue work from home. It is providing \$250 for the tools and equipment used to set up office at home, it also gave \$250 in 2020. Bajaj Alliance Life Insurance also provides support for their employees who are

quarantined at home, the expenses towards Covid-19 infections can be reimbursed on actual up to ₹20,000 for each employee through their existing mediclaim policy. If the patients get hospitalized, the company provides faster admission and claim assistance. VMware has nearly 11,000 employees in India, it pays a wellbeing allowance of ₹ 29,565 to their employees and their family members towards vaccination. The employees of Crisil, a rating agency, can avail 50% of annual bonus payment in advance towards their salary. In case of an emergency, the employees can take salary in advance, interest-free, fixed pay portion of up to 6 months towards Covid-19 medical and related expenses. Crisil also reimburses the expenses that happened due to Covid-19 treatment, which are not covered by medical insurance. Sun Life gave a one-time wellness pay out of ₹10,000 to all employees and toiled with insurance partners to give reimbursement of the expenses for home treatment due to Covid-19 infection for its employees and their families. Twitter India reimbursed expenses of their employees towards their home office set up and additional expenses towards day care. Target India offered their employees paid sick leave in addition to the granted sick leaves, time off and resources for family care. It is also provided an allowance to purchase work from home (WFH) needs for their employees. IBM India offered additional insurance coverage of ₹ 5 lakh per member for all employees and their dependents. IBM also procured 5 hundred (500) oxygen concentrators to support their employees and their families. BharatPe merchants on its network provided ₹300 instant cash back to their bank accounts towards vaccination. (Phadnis S. 2021).

Tata Steel provided social security scheme to the family members of its employees. Tata Company took over the education expenses of the children of its frontline employees who succumbed to Covid-19. (Livemint.com 2021). Firms like DDB Mudra, Swiggy, Chumbakare offered fewer working hours to help their employees and support their mental wellbeing (Ahuja S. 2021). Oyo offered 4-day week for their employees. (Phadnis S. 2021).

3. Research Methodology

In this research paper, the authors collected all the information through secondary data. The authors extracted various articles from research papers, articles, blogs and newspapers to provide insights on employees of India and different measures taken by corporate sectors towards their employees. The authors also focused their literature reviews on the impact of COVID-19 and the measures taken by companies for their employees in India.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1. Employee engagement initiatives by various companies to their employees and society

Various Employee Engagement Initiatives	Number of Companies Participated
Bearing Medical Expenses	72
Increasing Insurance Cover	22
Vaccination facility for employees	41
Provided Bed facility for Covid patient	38
Setting up Oxygen Plant	7
Donated Ventilators	18
Liquid Medical Oxygen Concentrator/Cylinder Donation	34
Provided Cryogenic Containers/Tank	4
Paid Leaves for Covid-19 infected	76
Incentives to employees	7
Donated funds for Covid-19 Care to Govt. agencies	12

Table-1 above shows the various employee engagement initiatives and donated fund for Covid-19 infected employees and to the government agencies. Of the total of 77 companies (table 2), we observe that 76 companies gave paid leave, 72 companies bore medical expenses and 41 companies provided vaccination to their employees.

Table 2. Employee Engagement Initiatives by Various Industries during Covid-19 pandemic

S. No.	Industry Sector	Companies
1	Aerospace & Manufacturing	Boeing
2	Automobile manufacturing	Hyundai
3		Maruti Suzuki
4	Analytical	Crisil
5	Airline	Spicejet
6	Banking	HDFC Bank
7		Axis Bank
8		UBS
9		Citi Bank
10		ICICI Lombard
11		State Bank of India (SBI)
12		HSBC India
13	Conglomerate	Tata Group
14		PwC India
15		Reliance Industries
16		The Essar Group
17		RPG Group
18		Adani Foundation
19		L&T Group
20	Electronics	Panasonic India
21		Bajaj Group
22	Entertainment	BookMyShow
23	E-Commerce	Paytm
24	FMCG	ITC
25		Dabur
26		Adani Wilmar
27		Procter and Gamble
28		Nestle
29		HUL (Hindustan Unilever)
30		L'Oreal
31		Ambay
32	Financial	PhonePe
33		JP Morgan
34		Sun Life
35	Fintech	BharatPe
36	Hospitality	Vedanta
37	Hospitality	Oyo Care
38	IT	Amazon
39		Flipkart
40		Infosys
41		Capgemini
42		Cognizant
43		TCS
44		HCL Technology
45		Accenture India
46		Google

47		Apple
48		Honeywell
49		SAP
50		Facebook
51		Salesforce
52		IBM
53		Intel
54		Microsoft
55		Wipro
56		Tech Mahindra
57		VMware
58		Target India
59	Insurance	Industry body FICCI & BVMW(German Association of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises)
60	Manufacturing	Minda
61		Rico Auto Industries
62		Tata Motors
63		Tata Steel
64		Hero MotoCorp
65		JSW (Steel Maker)
66	NGO	Reliance Foundation
67		Azim Premji Foundation
68	Pharmaceutical	Cipla
69	Public Sector	Coal India Ltd
70	Retail	Metro Cash and Carry
71		Grofers
72		Big Basket
73		Walmart, The Walmart Foundation And Walmart's Global technology
74	Real estate	Tata Projects
75		KEC
76		K Raheja Corp Real estate developer
77	Trading	Motilal Oswal

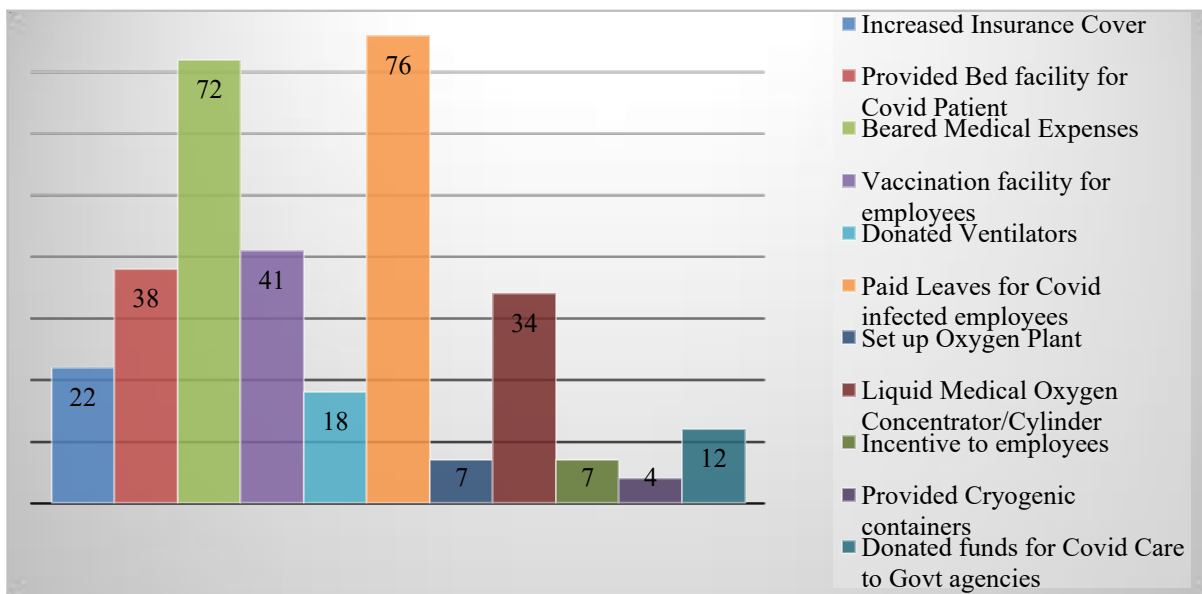


Figure 1. Various employee engagement initiatives taken by companies towards their employees

Figure 1 above shows that 76 out of 77 companies were involved in the employee engagement initiatives like Paid Leaves, 72 out of 77 companies have borne the medical expenses and 41 out of 77 companies have conducted vaccination drives or reimbursed the vaccination expenses of their employees. Only 4 of the 77 companies provided Cryogenic containers or tanks.



Figure 2. Employee Engagement Initiatives by Various Industries during Covid-19 pandemic

Figure 2 above shows that in addition to IT sector, companies in the FMCG sector too, have taken various employee engagement initiatives towards the healthcare and wellbeing of their employees during Covid-19 pandemic.

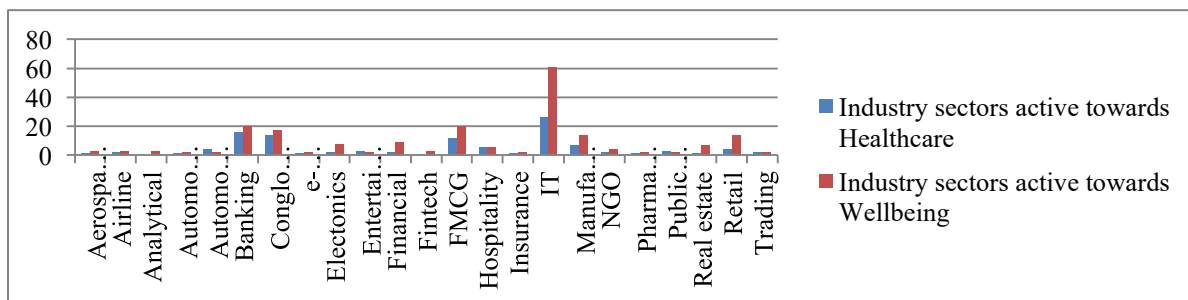


Figure 3. Industry sectors active towards Employee healthcare and wellbeing during Covid-19 pandemic

Figure 3 above shows the comparison between the industry sectors that have taken employee engagement initiatives towards the healthcare and wellbeing of their employees. From the above figure 3 we observe that IT sectors'

performance towards healthcare and wellbeing is far beyond that of the other sectors. However, Banking and FMCG sectors have also made better contributions. We can also observe that Automobile, Entertainment and Public sectors have done better towards healthcare as compared to the wellbeing of their employees.

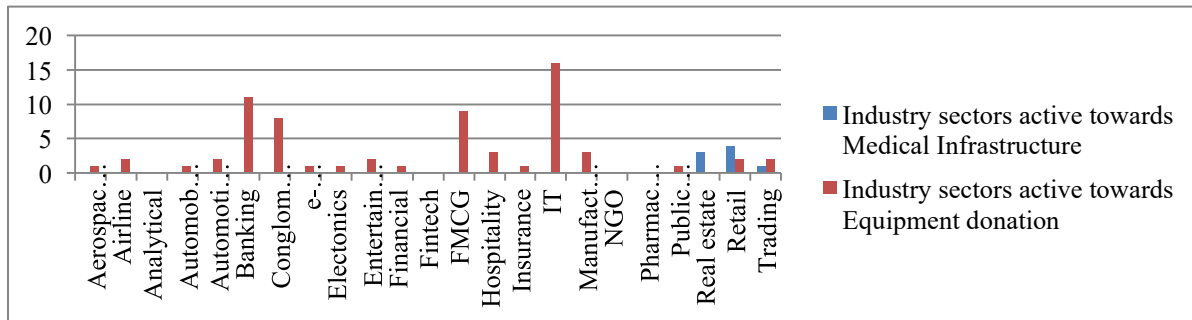


Figure 4. Industry sectors active towards Medical Infrastructure and Equipment donation

Figure 4 shows the comparison between the industry sectors towards medical infrastructure and equipment donations. Both of these subtopics come under the topic of Healthcare of the employees. From the figure 4 above we can observe that most of the industry sectors worked towards equipment donations, like Liquid medical oxygen, ventilators, Cryogenic tank. However, only 3 out of 21 industries worked towards medical infrastructure. The contributions of the Retail sectors topped the list for building medical infrastructure for Covid-19 infected patients. 18 out of 21 industry sectors donated equipment, in which IT, Banking, FMCG and Conglomerate sectors were active. The contribution of IT sector was at the top of the list.

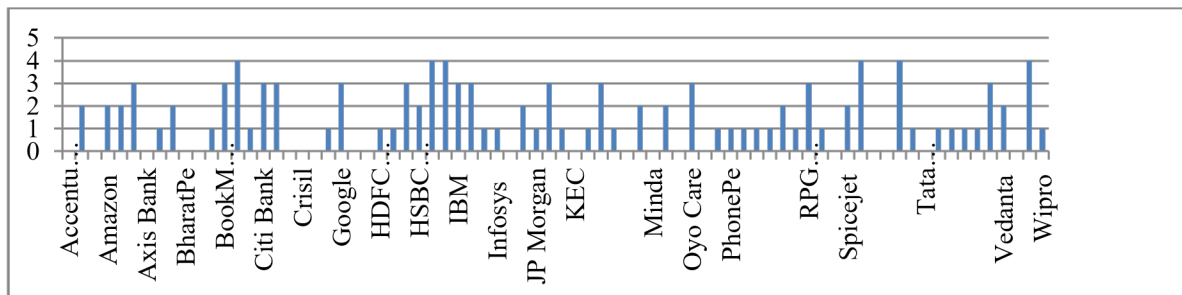


Figure 5. Companies active towards Healthcare of Employees

Figure 5 shows the companies that were active towards the Healthcare of the employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. We observe from figure 5, that the contributions from companies like Capgemini, HUL, Hyundai, State Bank of India, Tata Group, The Walmart Foundation and Walmart's Global technology are maximum.

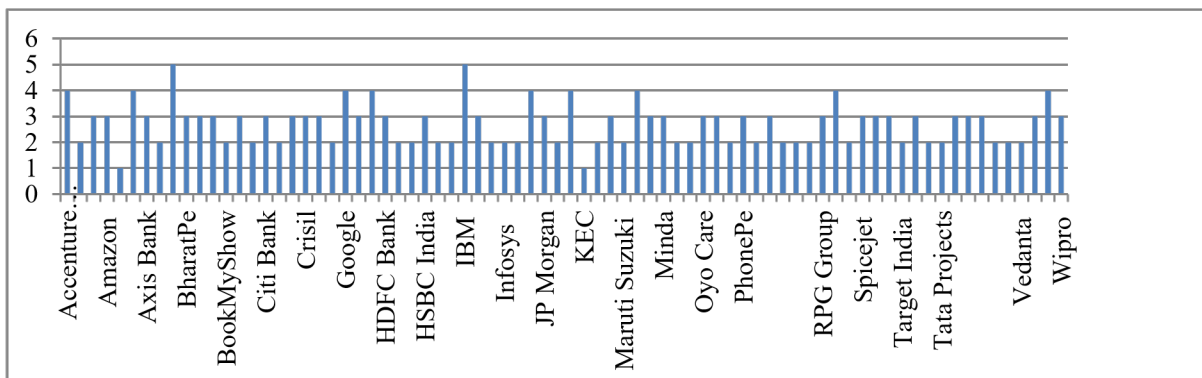


Figure 6 - Companies active towards Wellbeing of Employees

Figure 6 shows the companies that were active towards the Wellbeing of the employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. From figure 6 we can observe that the contributions of Bajaj Group and IBM are high towards the Wellbeing of the employees.

Discussion

In this research study, the researchers collected data from a sample of 77 companies through newspapers, articles, blogs, research journals and social media. It was observed from the results above as to how the 77 companies across various industry sectors performed employee engagement initiatives towards their employees and society. The above results showed that 76 companies gave paid leaves and 72 companies bore the medical expenses of their Covid-19 infected employees. The above results also showed that among the 23 industry sectors, the IT sector was more active during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also the IT sector took many employee engagement initiatives towards healthcare and wellbeing for their employees and towards equipment donation. In addition, the retail sector was the most active sector towards medical infrastructure donation. The results also showed the companies across these various industry sectors that were active towards healthcare and the wellbeing of the employees.

5. Conclusion

The first wave of Covid-19 caught the people of the world unprepared. But upon commencement of the second wave of Covid-19, the employees and organisations were prepared to fight. In this research paper, the authors analyzed 77 companies across various industry sectors like FMCG, IT, Banking, Retail, Manufacturing, Conglomerate, Electronics, Real estate, Financial, Hospitality, Entertainment, Trading, Aerospace, E-commerce, Automobile, NGO, Airline, Insurance, Pharmacy, Public Sectors, Analytical and Fintech. In addition to the efforts of the Government of India, various companies across these industry sectors extended help to their employees. The companies had taken various employee engagement initiatives towards their employees' healthcare and wellbeing.

6. Limitation

This research is limited to the information based on secondary data from research journals, articles, blogs and newspapers only. Covid-19 being a recent phenomenon and the literature review being limited and not exhaustive, even the secondary data is limited to newspapers, articles and blogs.

7. Future Research

This research study needs to be expanded with an exhaustive literature review. In addition, the research should also be enhanced with and validated through primary data. The research can further develop a conceptual framework from recent pandemic interventions towards existing theories.

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