



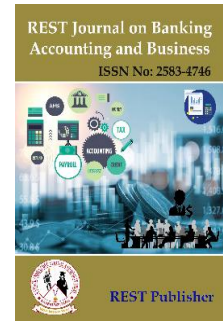
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Corporate Social Responsibility in Post COVID-19 Period

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Abstract: The paper offers some initial examination on how Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the developments of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The researcher argues that Covid-19 pandemic offers a great opportunity for businesses to shift towards more genuine and authentic CSR and contribute to address urgent global social and environmental challenges. The research study focuses on post COVID impact on CSR by the selected iron and steel industry to the societal development. For the study nine companies were selected namely, Godawari Power & Ispat Ltd., Jindal Power and Steel Limited, Hira Steel Limited, Jayaswal Neco Industries Limited, Shri Bajrang Power, and Ispat Limited, Prakash Industries Limited, Real Ispat, Sarda Energy & Minerals Limited, and Shivalay Ispat and Power Private Limited. The study also includes post COVID impact on CSR in Indian context. The study helps one identify some potentially fruitful research ideas. In terms of CSR, this paper encompasses its impact on CSR opportunities, trends, and consumer ethical decision making.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR Trends, Consumer Ethical Decision Making, Covid-19, Impact on CSR.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research study focused on the first period of lockdown. Academics were still busy with their usual research activities, researchers learn to adjust to a new reality and way of work (and life, though the boundary is diminished during lockdown) with online meetings with colleagues, research students, and of course quite 'dauntingly' online teaching. What's more, one has done this with little prior warning or training. Probably one of the most important ways to cope with this lockdown was to avoid any deterioration of mental and physical wellbeing is to take advantage of the situation to reflect on something that one cherish the most in the research, here it was CSR and consumer ethical decision making. In the modern marketing history, the Covid-19 pandemic represents one of the most significant environmental changes which could potentially have a profound impact on CSR, and consumer ethical decision making. The short-term impact of Covid-19 is immediately and effortlessly felt, due to the widespread lockdown and social distancing measures globally. However the pandemic will end, it is already set to have long-lasting profound economic, social, political, and cultural impacts. In this paper, some preliminary ideas on how this pandemic have influenced the field of CSR and consumer ethical decision making. The study tried to identify various contributions made by the selected iron and steel company on CSR in Chhattisgarh. For the study nine companies were selected namely, Godawari Power & Ispat Ltd., Jindal Power and Steel Limited, Hira Steel Limited, Jayaswal Neco Industries Limited, Shri Bajrang Power, and Ispat Limited, Prakash Industries Limited, Real Ispat, Sarda Energy & Minerals Limited, and Shivalay Ispat and Power Private Limited. The study here tried to create a link among various contributions made by these companies and overall contributions made by the various companies on CSR in the post COVID period.

2. CSR IN TIMES OF COVID-19

World Health Organization (WHO) considered COVID-19 a global pandemic. The contagious disease tremendously disrupted socio-economic circumstances of the planet. In the present era of COVID-19, the Government of India is inspiring companies to provide social support. According to Ministry of Corporate Affairs circular March 23, 2020, all expenditures incurred on activities related to COVID-19 would be added as permissible avenues for CSR expenditure. Funds may be spent for various activities related to COVID-19, under the following items of Schedule VII:

1. Eradicating hunger
2. Poverty
3. Malnutrition

4. Promoting healthcare, including preventive healthcare
5. Sanitation, including contribution to the Swachh Bharat Kosh set up by the Centre for promoting sanitation and making available safe drinking water
6. Disaster management, including relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.

Further, a general circular mentioned that the items in Schedule VII are broad-based and may be interpreted liberally for the purpose of donations being made with respect to COVID 19. The Corporate India welcomed announcement from the ministry. It shaped a win-win situation for companies having existing CSR obligation and funds at disposal who wanted to contribute to relief and meet statutory requirements of The Companies Act at the same time. In support of government's call to support COVID-19 responses have been overwhelming. Government funds received crores of rupees from various sources. Corporate strived not only in finding a reliable partner for implementation for the relief efforts whereas to locate different alternatives to track and monitor the use of funds donated along with assessing their impact. By the government announcement that any amount donated by companies in support of the fight against COVID-19 will qualify as CSR, a majority of the companies either contributed to the PM CARES Fund or for various other purposes that contributed towards protecting health and preventing hunger of the affected. Such activities were considered ethically and morally correct, however the companies broadly interpreted the circular in a way that would reap indirect benefits to their operations or simply contribute to the existing fund.

3. LIST OF DONATIONS TO PM CARES FUND

TABLE 1. Donation / pledges to PM CARES fund

Source	Amount donated (in Rs crore)	Amount pledged (in Rs crore)
Government agencies (including salaries)	4,308.3	1,250
Private companies, industry bodies, social organisations (including salaries)	5,369.6	772.4
Foreign donations		22
Individuals		53.77
Total	9,677.9	2,098.2

(Anoo Bhuyan, 2020)

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the post COVID impact on CSR in Indian context.
2. To study the post COVID impact on CSR by the selected iron and steel industry in Chhattisgarh.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Source of collecting data was secondary. Secondary data included articles, and researches carried out in the past, websites, and electronic journals etc. In the study researcher assured that maximum resources were used for data collection to ensure that all the related topics or areas are covered.

Addressing Key Issues: The pandemic impact on CSR assessment to various cross sectional areas was vigorous. During the crisis CSR and stock returns found to be positive when CSR is harmonious with a firm's institutional environment (Hong, et al., 2016). However, the following key issues were assessed to understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on CSR:

1. Societal risk and uncertainty- It seems to be a major issue in the pandemic. COVID 19 has exposed business organization to such uncertain risks and these companies were supposed to play a vital role in addressing these issues sincerely.
2. Supply chain - Next concern area is supply chain. Demand for medical products and shortages caused by stockpiling, demonstrated the fragility of some of global supply chains, especially when production was severely disrupted during lockdown. It was also seen that employees working this supply chain were effected at large as low wage workers were not getting properly ages, even some left without pay, employment was

effected greatly. Long with this supplier factory have also faced many consequences like cancelled orders, demand for huge discounts, delay in payments.

3. Political economy of CSR- The pandemic exposed new political economy of CSR that clearly reflected that log with organization government also plays a vital role to tackle this situation. Here it was not about funding rather it includes protecting employees, employing them, protecting various stakeholders, and producing socially viable products. This will further help in defining more elaborative organizations purpose that it is supposed to play in the society.
4. It is vital to analyze CSR research areas that have been challenged. These are namely, various stakeholder groups, supply chain responsibility, societal risk and the political economy of CSR. Once this has been identified it is relevant to recommend different measures to realign CSR related future research in order to tackle it.

6. PANDEMIC-DRIVEN CSR

Impact of Pandemic on CSR: COVID-19 pandemic had impacted society at large, especially lower income group that has widened inequality spectrum more. during the pandemic, for the smooth economy going, delivery healthcare person, food delivery persons, frontline workers in banks, healthcare, public transportation were recognized as critical. Although these people have contributed a big helping hand in smooth functioning of the economy they were not properly paid and were prone to getting infected (Gaustad and Utgård, 2020). The pandemic has challenged were CSR concepts, practices and assumptions. Organizations were actively occupied in broad range philanthropic CSR activities being motivated by utilitarianism and deontological factors keeping in view the needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

7. CSR IMPLICATIONS

The impact assessment study also suggested that the increase in the management solutions in the wake of the pandemic crisis will increase the importance of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions in CSR. The following are the specific observations:

1. It indicates that in the hospitality sector CSR value depends on the nature and environmental contexts.
2. The research examined different CSR effects on employees hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. In China, survey was conducted based on 430 employees in tourism. the result of the research showed that CSR had positive impacts on employees' hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism through the satisfaction of employees with corporate COVID-19 responses (Mao, et al., 2020).
3. Companies focus was shifted from pre planned CSR activities to the fight against COVID-19 that could fetch companies benefit from the operating segment in which company's operates.
4. Post COVID-19 policies were framed by the organizations but employees implemented it. Employee's reaction towards CSR activities helps to determine success of CSR and its implementation.
5. Earlier education is perceived as such CSR initiative which receives maximum funding, whereas during financial year 2020 CSR expenditure on education has been declined as compared to financial year 2019 i.e., from Rs 5718 crore in FY19 to Rs 5244 in FY20. Reason behind this can be reduced company's profit impacted CSR greatly.
6. Presently CSR is viewed as a company's comprehensive strategy that arises majorly from stakeholder pressure and performance considerations.

It has become apparent that the focus has been somewhat one sided in nature, with the bulk of attention going to the corporate processes, motives, and outcomes of such efforts (Vadera and Harsha, 2018).

Government's Role: In May 2021, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has come up with various initiatives in order to allow expenditure made by the companies to be termed as CSR expenditure. The most recent, on May 5, was the announcement that companies could use CSR funds for creating healthcare infrastructure, establishing medical oxygen and storage plants, and manufacturing and supplying oxygen concentrators, ventilators, cylinders, and other medical equipment for countering COVID-19. This comes on the heels of another clarification on April 22, when the government had clarified that CSR funds could be used to set up 'makeshift hospitals and temporary COVID-19 healthcare facilities'. The purpose of these new clarifications, according to experts, is to help companies with compliance as they finalize their CSR budgets for the current financial year in the coming months. Therefore, corporate in India, as they draw up their CSR budgets this year, are trying to strike a balance between taking stock of emerging healthcare requirements and their traditional social focus areas (Shekhar, 2021). MCA also intimated in June 2021 that spending funds on awareness campaigns and public outreach programmes to promote vaccination is an eligible CSR activity. In this light, corporate

India has committed Rs. 5806 crore towards India's fight against COVID-19. The government has also set up the 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES) to respond to COVID-19 crisis and provide relief to those affected. Further, Schedule VII was amended to include contributions to PM CARES as CSR along with the existing Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

CSR Trends: The changing CSR trend has been revealed both by Indian and foreign companies that organized support as well as targeted campaigns were initiated to diminish the unprecedented crisis impact. MANY COMPANIES contributed to the Government's PM CARES Fund. Some have also partnered with local authorities of respective state governments to donate medical/food supplies and scale other initiatives to cater to the needs of local communities. Some contributions have also been made by individual programmes and relief efforts. A survey was conducted by the Invest India, a national investment promotion and facilitation agency, on selected companies that were funding in the pandemic. It is inclusive of their COVID-19 CSR strategy, methodology of identification of projects, experience with implementation during the pandemic, and any persistent obstacles to efficient operations of their CSR teams. The following are the key findings of the survey:

8. CSR DURING COVID-19: EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

1. For start-up's success technology validation is the most important. Another funding area is partnerships and programmes. This can be done through making investment in funding for organizing accelerator camps, seed funding, pre-incubation support, skill development programmes, , and so on. This program will lead further to enhance entrepreneurship ecosystem of the country.
2. Technology validation is required to deal the associated risk with development of new technologies. This can be achieved by creating opportunity for systematic identification of potential barriers to commercialization and addressing them via necessary funding and technical and regulatory support throughout the development cycle.
3. Worldwide institutions require funds for research facilities, equipment, and labs. This produces physical and intellectual capital that can benefit many generations of start-up founders.
4. Majority of companies anticipate a dedicated programme for COVID-19 in some capacity. After this pandemic companies pivot their CSR priorities to address more significant social issues that were caused by the pandemic. These experiences will lead companies to include unexplored areas with regard to CSR.

The Impact on Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Ethical Decision Making: Inevitably this crisis has put companies under test for its commitment to ethical business conduct and CSR. Some may argue that the financial strains, both short-term and long term, caused by the outbreak could significantly pushed firms to pursue short-term gains, sometimes even through fraud and misconduct, and reduce long-term CSR investment, probably due to lack of slack resources and mounting pressure for survival. It was observed that many companies not only have resisted unethical business practice during this crisis, but also have proactively engaged in various CSR activities, particularly those that can offer immediate help and assistance to the fight against the situation. Undoubtedly, the current pandemic offers a wide range of significant opportunities to those with a more mindful and acumen approach to CSR. Example: Telecommunications giant Vodafone introduced free access to unlimited mobile data for many of its pay monthly customers and upgraded its vulnerable pay monthly customers to unlimited data offer for free (BBC, 2020a). A firm practicing authentic CSR will have strong rapport among its customer and the general public as they have built up strong expectation from leading brands, particularly their favorable brands, during the current crisis with regard to their efforts in combating the virus. Consumers feel proud of their brands that help their employees, donate money and equipment during the crisis. The established bond between the brand and consumer during this crisis era will be more meaningful and lasting than during "peaceful" times.

Covid-19 pandemic offers companies great opportunities to actively engage with their CSR strategies and agendas. On the other hand, the pandemic has pushed many firms out of business, and if not to the brink of collapse. Now It is vital to understand what drives some firms to be more ethical and socially responsible, particularly when resources are restricted and survival is under threat. The ethical decision making pays attention to the combined impact of various factors like situational/contextual factors and personal factors. Personal factors consist of consumer moral values, moral identity, personality traits, implicit morality beliefs, and so on. Situational factors comprise social influences, characteristics, group and intergroup dynamics, and many more. (Ford and Richardson, 1994; Treviño, 1986). During pandemic situational/contextual factors allows one to understand the ethical decision making of consumers at that period and after the pandemic as well. In all over the world, during the pandemic it was observed that consumers were indulged in stockpiling for food, medicine, utility products and likewise. Here consumer decision making was irrational due to the

crisis. At the same time, some argue that this was rational behavior that arises due to emotions, anxiety, and fear and so on. Consumers got time and opportunity to them to reflect actual meaning of consumption. It was not confined to consumption whereas it included its impact on the society at large. Before pandemic consumers were overloaded with choice, but now the pandemic has shocked consumers with the idea and even a highly probable reality that their basic needs might not be met in the sense that food and basic necessities might not be available to them. However, after pandemic consumers value their needs being met, that was ignored earlier. It changed consumer perspective how to pursue higher social and self-actualization needs. It is expected that consumers have shift towards responsible and prosocial consumption in the sense that consumers consciously reflect on how to consume and make product/brand choices to be more responsible to themselves, others, the society, and the environment.

9. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Findings derived from the study apply to Indian companies as well as companies selected from the Chhattisgarh that are enlisted below:

1. Sustainability – This is one of the fundamental challenges for companies, to train and inform employees about CSR related and sustainable development issues.
2. Authenticity and transparency – huge companies are involved in CSR mainly medium sized ones. But companies are differentiated through their sustainable development strategy that are transparent and act authentically.
3. Find internal network of CSR ambassadors.
4. The pandemic seems to be a way to transform and adapt. After this scenario business approach towards CSR has made a shift were societal concern and being ethical has been highlighted more now.
5. Standards and certifications – Organizations working towards CSR, have some good work to reflect and have strong aspiration to step towards next level. Sustainability reporting can be taken to next level by applying for recognized standards can be a good idea.
6. The study found that nearly all the selected companies and companies on Indian context have dedicatedly made efforts towards societal development.

New CSR amendment foresees to cover up all the eligible companies under CSR and would strengthen the compliance on CSR. Companies involved in CSR are creating social value, are indulged to infuse new technologies, and contribute towards social development. Companies also get indulged in developing social models addressing environmental and social concerns. From this new amendment companies yet not indulged in CSR will get involved in this and will be able to fetch benefits by being part of the social change involving environmental and social solutions (Thakur and Datta, 2019). In future it is expected that companies will be more structured towards CSR and will include mechanisms that better line up with SDGs. (Sustainable Development Goals). CSR will further assist in more technological innovations. In the long run all this efforts will in turn benefit various stakeholders. Further this will also lay impact driven footprints for improved development.

10. PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

1. CSR compliance is not sufficient for the organizations to be able to face the problems affecting company's operation and society. From past years it has been found that companies are playing comfortably with CSR and have not put much effort in that.
2. Focusing on CSR is not just confined to build company's reputation or attract talent.
3. After this pandemic, CSR was great help to measure the degree to which the corporate culture was fundamental in reacting to a crisis. It have been much easier for the companies having committed employees and easily adaptable to the changes.

11. CONCLUSION

CSR commences from the organizations employees itself but CSR is intended for the general public. The pandemic has uncovered many neglected segments that will lead company's boom in coming years. During this pandemic companies asked employees to work from home taken into consideration their safety measures. In case of emergency duty, employees were asked to use masks and wash hands with sanitizers frequently and maintain social distance. To conclude, organization practicing CSR and facing the pandemics challenges will certainly have survival for longer period. It can be well concluded from this situation that Indian CSR at right path in making more impactful CSR policies in order to better define CSR concept and get adjusted with it. It is well concluded that all the selected companies and

study made on Indian context have worked genuinely towards societal development. In future CSR policies will be more impactful towards economic, political, environmental and social concerns. After this pandemic companies have good opportunity to pay back to the society in various ways. CSR activities linked with SDGs ensure that CSR spending aligns with and augments national priorities. In CSR implementation some shortcomings were observed that need to be resolved at earliest to ensure maximum impact on ground. Various initiatives in this regard can be:

1. On pan India basis channel should be created for project identification.
2. Companies to work earnestly in creating sustained impact towards CSR rather than just fulfilling the statutory obligation.

It will pave way to make better utilization of CSR funds wherever it is required. Need is felt to ensure that spending on CSR has various effects on economic, social, and environmental impacts. To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought CSR to the forefront. Worldwide companies irrespective of their size have accepted the challenge and augmented the government's efforts by re-orienting their CSR strategies. In future one hopes that companies work on CSR with same enthusiasm after this pandemic as well. Government should endeavor to ease the corporate looking for impactful CSR opportunities under the larger effort. In India IT will enhance ease of business operation by strengthening initiatives and facilitating knowledge transfer between different stakeholders. All over the world government has established economic aid packages to alleviate the imminent pressure on most vulnerable businesses, such as small businesses and travel /tourism/hospitality firms. From the pandemic it is clear that good leadership plays a vital role in encouraging firms to maintain ethical business practices and to fulfill their commitment towards CSR. For example, Jack Dorsey, the founder and boss of Twitter pledged to donate 1bn US dollars towards effort to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic (BBC, 2020c, BBC, 2020). Bill Gates has been diligently encouraging global cooperation on this front. Therefore this pandemic represents a great context to examine how institutional factors and leadership influence firms' CSR and ethical conducts. In the long run optimistic view is that after this pandemic majority of the companies will realize that for long term survival creating a balance between profitability and working in harmony with stakeholders is important. After this crisis, business will face huge expectations from the society and for maintaining that company needs to have strong CSR commitment and effective CSR strategies and efficient implementations. Fundamental changes to one's lives will affect their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions so that judicious marketers will adapt their policies and strategies to reflect. Changes to behaviors is well evident (such as in tourist choices and the move to online shopping and entertainment) but alterations to attitudes, values, beliefs are likely to be subtle. In the same way, while Covid-19 drove sector, firm, and organizational innovation, research needs to explore the effectiveness drivers and to detail which changes will prove beneficial in the long term.

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