



Changing Dimensions Of Post-Covid Labour Force Management In M.I.D.C., Jalgaon.

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Abstract: This paper analyses the labour force management at M.I.D.C., Jalgaon, by comparing data from both employers and workers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study aims to determine the pandemic's effect on job security, wages, working conditions, and the overall economic well-being of the industrial sector's workforce. The pandemic heightened the bargaining power of a majority of workers while simultaneously creating a significant challenge for employers due to a notable decrease in worker availability. Employers felt their retention strategies were more effective and widely adopted work-life balance policies. Also, a significant majority considered government support during the pandemic to be insufficient. The study concludes with recommendations for skill development, improved job security, and enhanced government support and awareness for businesses.

Keywords: Labour Force, COVID-19 Pandemic, Employers, Informal sector, MSME's, Government support, Technology adoption, Employment, Economic well-being.

I. Introduction

Labour force management is a critical function for any organization, serving as the strategic process of planning, organizing, and optimizing a company's workforce to meet its operational goals. It has evolved from a simple administrative task of scheduling and tracking attendance to a sophisticated, data-driven discipline that encompasses a wide range of activities. This includes forecasting labor needs, recruiting, training, and developing employees, managing their performance, ensuring health and safety, and fostering a positive work environment.

Labour is categorized based on various criteria, providing a comprehensive view of employment.

1. By Employment Structure: Differentiated into Formal (legally regulated, with benefits) and Informal (lacking formal contracts and social security) labour.
2. By Sectoral Classification: Divided into the Organized Sector (government and registered companies with regulated terms) and the Unorganized Sector (small, unregistered enterprises without formal benefits).
3. By Skill Level: Categorized as Skilled (specialized knowledge), Semi-skilled (some training), and Unskilled (manual labor without specific training).
4. By Nature of Work/Profession: Classified as Blue-collar (manual labor), White-collar (professional/clerical), and Pink-collar (service-oriented, often caregiving) jobs.
5. By Contractual Arrangement: Includes traditional Contractual/Temporary labour,

the modern Gig Economy (freelancers on digital platforms), and Casual labour (daily- wage workers).

6. By Sector of Economy: Grouped into the Primary (raw materials), Secondary (manufacturing), Tertiary (services), Quaternary (knowledge-based), and Quinary (highest-level decision-making) sectors.

II. Labour Force Management in India: Pre and Post-COVID-19

2.1 Pre-COVID-19 Period

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, India's labor market was characterized by significant growth in workforce participation, particularly for women, and a steady increase in employment within the industrial and services sectors (NITI Aayog, 2022). The period between 2017 and 2020 saw a rise in the overall labor force participation rate (LFPR), with a notable increase in the share of female labor (NITI Aayog, 2022). However, a large majority of the workforce, approximately 90%, was employed in the informal sector, which often meant a lack of social security, job stability, and fair wages (PRS India, 2021). Despite progress, challenges such as high youth unemployment and underemployment, as well as a significant gender gap in workforce participation, were persistent issues (PRS India, 2021). The government had initiated efforts to consolidate various labor laws into four codes to simplify regulations, but the full impact of these reforms was yet to be seen (Sengupta et al., 2020).

2.2 Post-COVID-19 Period

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe shock to India's labor market, with unemployment surging to 24.3% and the LFPR dropping by 12.5% in April 2020 (World Bank, 2022). While headline indicators showed a quick recovery, the crisis disproportionately impacted vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and informal workers, exacerbating existing inequalities (World Bank, 2022). Post-pandemic, a notable trend has been the downward transition of workers from salaried jobs to less secure self-employment and a shift from industry back to agriculture (World Bank, 2022). This has forced a re-evaluation of labor force management strategies, accelerating technology adoption and highlighting the need for improved health, safety, and social security for workers (Bharadwaj, 2022). While government initiatives like the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojna were introduced to support job creation (PRS India, 2021).

2.3 Impact of Pandemic on Labour Force Management

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a major disruptor to labour force management, especially in industrial estates like M.I.D.C., Jalgaon. Before the pandemic, these areas already faced a significant skill gap, struggling to find workers with the technical and vocational skills needed for modern manufacturing. The pandemic worsened these issues, as lockdowns triggered a mass reverse migration of migrant workers, crippling production. This crisis highlighted the vulnerability of the workforce and the urgent need for resilient strategies focused on worker welfare, skill development, and integrating technology to create a more adaptable and stable workforce.

III. Review of literature

Cai, M., & Luo, J. (2020) analyses "The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the manufacturing industry from a supply chain perspective". It details how the initial spread of the virus caused production disruptions, logistics setbacks, and increased bankruptcy risks for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It concludes by proposing countermeasures to help the manufacturing sector recover from the pandemic and prepare for a post-COVID-19 world, emphasizing the trend towards regionalization and digitalization.

Causa, O., Abendschein, M., Luu, N., Soldani, E., & Soriolo, C. (2022) in their report on "The Post-COVID-19 Rise in Labour Shortages" provides an overview of the factors contributing to labor shortages since the pandemic. It highlights how the crisis accelerated long-term trends such as demographic shifts and a decline in labor force participation, while also introducing new factors like

increased retirements, caregiving responsibilities, and a re-evaluation of work-life balance. The paper also discusses how the shifts toward remote work and e-commerce created new demands for skilled labor, further complicating the issue of shortages.

Chaturvedi, R., & Karri, A. (2022) in their article on "Entrepreneurship in the Times of Pandemic: Barriers and Strategies." The study uses a mixed-method approach to investigate the challenges faced by entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic. It identifies key barriers such as organizational readiness, infrastructural support, technological inadequacy, and financial crises. The paper also suggests strategies to overcome these hurdles, including marketing, strategic networking, and digitization.

Pathak, M. D., Kar, B., & Panda, M. C. (2022) in this study, titled "Chaos and complexity: entrepreneurial planning during pandemic," is a qualitative investigation into how entrepreneurs in Odisha, India, responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research challenges the notion that entrepreneurs have superior foresight and planning abilities, finding instead that most business owners exhibited a reactive rather than proactive response. Key challenges identified include reduced cash flow, supply chain disruptions, and an unstable workforce, while a few entrepreneurs saw the crisis as an opportunity for innovation. The paper concludes that the pandemic created an extremely complex and chaotic business environment, making traditional planning difficult.

Nath, P., Mandela, S. N., & Gawali, A. (2023) in this article, titled "Loss, Recovery and the Long Road Ahead: Tracking India's Informal Workers Through the Pandemic," analyzes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on informal workers in India. The study, based on a panel of 2778 workers, found that six months after the hard lockdown, one out of five people were still out of work. The paper highlights that urban workers, women, workers over 60, and graduates were less likely to recover from the shock. Overall earnings for informal workers were reduced by half compared to pre-pandemic levels.

IV. Objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the impact of COVID-19 on labours in M.I.D.C, Jalgaon.
2. To examine labour force management advantages and difficulties adopted by industries in M.I.D.C., Jalgaon.
3. To recommend effective policies for addressing the challenges of labor force management in the industrial sector of M.I.D.C, Jalgaon.

V. Research Methodology & Analysis

The research methodology section outlines the systematic approach used to conduct this study. A well-defined methodology ensures that the research is difficult, objective, and can be replicated by others. Primary data is the original data collected by researcher directly from the field. The researcher intends to collect the primary data by filling up the Questionnaires from the actual field along with the structured & unstructured interviews as per the requirement. This study had primarily used primary data which had been collected directly from the field. To gather this data researcher had used questionnaires and conducted schedule and interviews. Data had been collected from labours and employers of MSME's in the M.I.D.C, Jalgaon. Secondary data was gathered from magazines, journals, research papers, and research articles, reports from organizations like the ILO, PLFS, government websites and news articles on the pandemic's economic and social effects on the workforce. This combination of data sources allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both direct experiences and broader trends. The final sample size had been determined using the Cochran Formula for both the labours and the employers. Primarily considering factor of safety 480 questionnaires are distributed in labours but actual responses collected are 410 and out of 277 questionnaires distributed among employers 220 valid responses were collected.

VI. Findings

- A significant portion of the workforce (22%) remained uncomfortable with new technology and tools post-COVID, even as 18% reported being comfortable or highly comfortable.
- Despite a small percentage of workers (4%) experiencing a decrease in income, the majority (over 60%) saw their income increase or strongly increase after the pandemic.
- Job security was a persistent concern; while the percentage of workers feeling insecure remained high and unchanged pre- and post-COVID at 32%, the number of those feeling secure dropped from 17.1% to 10%. A majority of workers (62%) were satisfied with their employers' post-COVID health and safety measures, while only 16% expressed dissatisfaction.
- The pandemic increased the bargaining power for a majority of workers (64.9%), while only 10% felt their ability to negotiate for better wages had decreased. The availability of workers was a significant challenge for employers, with a notable increase in those reporting low availability post-COVID (from 33.6% to 42.7%).
- Employers viewed their efforts to attract and retain workers as more effective in the post-COVID period, with the perception of "effective" efforts rising from 55.9% to 63.2%.
- Approximately half of employers (48.2%) have fully adopted strategies to support work-life balance, while only small percentages (11.8%) have not.
- A majority of employers (45%) felt the workforce adequately adapted to post-COVID requirements, although a notable portion (30%) remained neutral on the matter.
- A significant majority of employers (68.2%) perceived government support during the pandemic as insufficient.

Before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, industrial estates like M.I.D.C. Jalgaon faced a unique set of labor force management challenges, often mirroring national trends but with localized intensity due to the specific industrial composition and regional socio-economic factors. Many industries in MIDC Jalgaon relied on migrant labor from other parts of Maharashtra and neighboring states. Their sudden departure and slow return had severely impacted production capacities, job insecurity, and financial distress further impacting worker morale and livelihood.

The problems of labor force management in industrial estates like M.I.D.C. Jalgaon underwent a significant transformation from the pre-pandemic era to the post-pandemic period. While pre-existing issues like skill gaps and in formalization persisted, the pandemic introduced new, acute challenges related to worker mobility, health security, and economic instability. Understanding these shifts is crucial for developing effective labor force management strategies for the future of industrial development in regions like Jalgaon.

VII. Conclusions:

This study significantly provides the understanding labor force management within the industrial context of M.I.D.C. Jalgaon, especially concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A notable portion of the workforce was still uncomfortable with technology post- COVID, while most saw an increase in their income.

Job insecurity remained a significant concern, although a majority of workers were satisfied with their employers' health and safety measures. The pandemic increased the bargaining power of most workers, but also led to a decrease in worker availability for employers. Employers perceived their efforts to attract and retain workers as more effective post-COVID and had widely adapted work-life balance policies. Most employers felt their workforce had adapted adequately, but a significant majority also considered government support during the pandemic to be insufficient.

VIII. Recommendations:

1. Workers should acquire new skills to adapt to a changing technological landscape.
2. Labours must have try to save some money in terms of emergency fund for future crises.
3. Employers should offer clear pathways to permanent positions with benefits to improve job security and worker efficiency.
4. Employers should prioritize safety by conducting regular audits and training, while the government should establish a more effective support system with pre-approved, collateral-free loans for businesses and collect data on informal jobs to inform better crisis response policies.
5. A significant number of employers (65%) in M.I.D.C. Jalgaon are unaware of various government schemes designed to support MSMEs. This lack of awareness is causing them to miss out on key opportunities for growth. These schemes, offered by both the central and state governments, provide critical support for areas such as credit access (e.g., PMMY, CGTMSE), technology upgrades (e.g., MSME Champions Scheme), quality and environmental standards (e.g., ZED certification), and general industrial development (e.g., DIC Schemes).

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