



AcE-Bs2022Cherating

<https://www.amerabra.org>

10th Asian Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies
Holiday Villa Beach Resort, Cherating, Malaysia, 08-09 Jun 2022



Company Strategies on Social Well-being during COVID-19 Pandemic: A systematic literature review

**Memiyanty Abdul Rahim¹, Nurulathira Anati Malek², Qurratu Aini Mat @ Muhammad³,
Denies Priantinah⁴**

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies

¹ Institute for Big Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (IBDAAI),
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

³AmBank (M) Berhad, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁴ Faculty of Finance and Accounting, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

memiyanty@uitm.edu.my, n.athiraanati@gmail.com, aini0995@gmail.com, denies_priantinah@uny.ac.id
Tel: +60195599915, +60134129096, +60183775493, +6281578039923

Abstract

The most recent crisis that has put businesses and people under threat is the emergence of Covid-19. The purpose of the study is to review articles on the company strategies for social well-being to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. This article is a review paper via the systematic literature review (SLR) method. The PRISMA is a review protocol that will be used as a basis to retrieve main themes and sub-themes. The contribution of this review should be in offering gaps in what should be ready and prepared next by the company if facing any crisis or pandemic.

Keywords: Businesses; Strategies; Covid-19; Sustainability

*eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2022. The Authors. They were published for AMER ABRA CE-Bs by E-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioural Researchers on Asians/Africans/Arabians) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7i20.3348>*

1.0 Introduction

The emergence of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has had an impact on the businesses as well as the lifestyles of society. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO, 2022). Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illnesses. However, anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

The pandemic has led businesses to be exposed to numerous challenges. According to the World Health Organization (2022), social well-being is an essential dimension of health along with physical and mental aspects. It can positively impact the quality of life, social interactions, and performance. Hence, the company needs to do something to ensure the social well-being of employees in the company will not be severely threatened by the pandemic. Companies must develop strategies to overcome the severe business setting and working environment. Strategy is a term that refers to a complex web of thoughts, ideas, insights, experiences, goals, expertise,

*eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2022. The Authors. They were published for AMER ABRA CE-Bs by E-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioural Researchers on Asians/Africans/Arabians) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7i20.3348>*

memories, perceptions, and expectations that provides general guidance for specific actions in pursuit of particular ends (Fred Nickols 2016).

On the other hand, a business strategy is a clear set of plans, actions and goals that outlines how a business will compete in a particular market or markets with a product or number of products or services (IMD, 2022). Social well-being can be defined as people's appraisal of their social relationships, conditions, and functioning in the social community (Dunaeva, 2018). The key to measuring social well-being is to measure internal reply to stimuli-feelings, thoughts and behaviours which show satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with the social environment. In practice, keeping well-being and social well-being separate is seldom possible. Hence, this paper aims to review articles about the company strategies to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that social well-being will not be affected.

1.1 The need for Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

According to Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003), SLR minimized the research bias through an extensive literature selection system and provided an audit evaluation trail towards the reviewer procedures, which is categorized as a scientific and transparent process. Hence, it can be said that the findings obtained from the SLR would be much easier to verify, interpret and follow through rather than traditional reviews (Glock & Grosse, 2021). Due to the benefits given by SLR, it will lead to the current literature review process a more accurate.

2.0 Methodology

In this part, several steps of finding the relevant articles regarding the company strategies to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic are being discussed among the steps involved in SLR, such as using PRISMA as a review protocol, resources, identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction and analysis.

2.1 PRISMA

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (SLR) and Meta-Analyses or PRISMA is one of the widely used standards in conducting a systematic literature review. The researchers began its SLR by developing appropriate research questions for the review. Later, the researchers elaborate on the systematic searching strategy, covering three main sub-processes: identification, screening (inclusion and exclusion criteria) and eligibility. Then, the researchers continue to appraise the quality of the selected articles in which the researchers describe the strategy applied to ensure the quality of the articles to be reviewed.

2.2 Resources

This systematic review utilized two main sources: Scopus and Emerald Insight.

2.3 The systematic review process for selecting the articles

Three phases need to be considered in the systematic review process for selecting the articles which are identification, screening, and eligibility.

2.3.1 Identification

The first step is the identification, where the main keywords of the current research must be identified. The thesaurus, dictionaries, past studies, and other terms related to the current studies can be used to find the keywords. The researchers must ensure that the keywords used are reliable with the research questions of the article review studies. The search strings on the Scopus database and Emerald Insight Publisher as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The search string used for the systematic review process

Databases	Keywords used
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("measures" OR "precaution" OR "strategy" OR "method" OR "action") AND ("company" OR "business") OR ("cope" OR "coping") AND ("COVID-19" OR "crisis" OR "pandemic") AND ("sustainability" OR "survival")
Emerald Insight	Measures, precautions, strategies, companies, covid-19, sustainability, business, survival

2.3.2 Screening

As for the second phase, researchers will proceed with the screening process by following the researchers' inclusion and exclusion standards such as document type, language, year of publications, and subject areas (Shaffril, Samah & Kamarudin, 2021). The screening stage resulted in a total of 32 articles that can be used for the eligibility stage (Fig.1).

Table 2. The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Eligibility	Exclusion
Type of literature	Articles	Conference paper, book review, book chapter, proceedings paper
Timeline	2020 - 2021	< 2019
Language	English	Non - English
Scope of studies	Business, management, accounting and social sciences	Other than business, management, accounting and social sciences

2.3.3 Eligibility

The third phase is eligibility, where a number of 32 articles were ready to be checked carefully by experts. The researchers must pay more attention to the titles, abstracts, and the main contents of all the articles to guarantee that they met all the inclusion criteria.

2.4 Appraisal of quality

To ascertain the quality of the articles' content, the remaining articles 32 were presented to two experts for quality evaluation for data abstraction and analysis. Only 15 articles were eligible for the review using SLR method (Fig. 1).

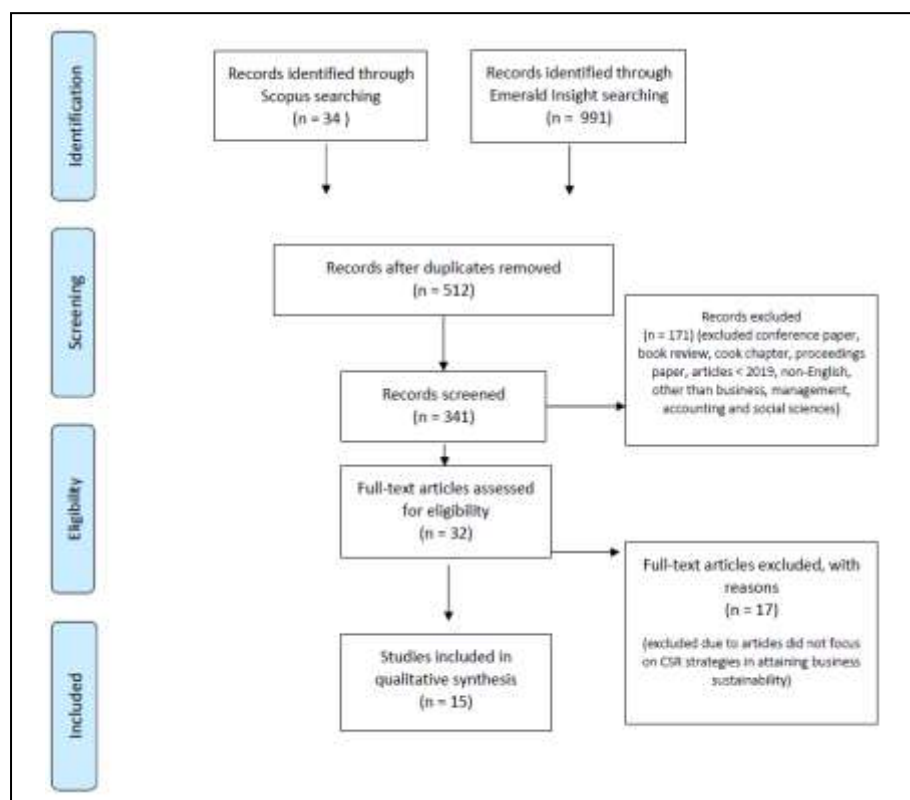


Fig. 1: The flow diagram of the study (Source: Shaffril et al., 2019)

3.0 Findings

The review has resulted in three themes and six sub-themes related to the strategies adopted by companies to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. The main themes are economic, ethical and philanthropic, and there are seven six sub-themes which are digitalization and ICT, supply chain, office reconfiguration, modified policy, charity and production support, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Main themes and sub-themes

Studies	Year	Economic			Ethical	Philanthropic	
		Digitalization	Supply chain	Office reconfiguration	Modified policy	Charity	Production support
Mattera et al.	2021	/	/				
Rivo-Lopez et al.	2021					/	
Forcadell et al.	2021					/	

Palma-Ruiz et al.	2020		/			/	
Obrevonic et al.	2020	/	/				
Satyr et al.	2021		/				
Metwally et al.	2021			/	/		
Manuel et al.	2020	/	/				
Ramya et. al	2021				/	/	/
MacGregor et al.	2021	/					
He et al.	2020				/		
Ding et al.	2021					/	
Liu et al.	2021				/	/	
Parker et al.	2020			/	/		
Aguinis et al.	2020				/		

3.1 Economic

Economic falls under the main theme of company strategy to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. There are three sub-themes for this, namely, digitalization, supply chain and office reconfiguration.

3.1.1 digitalization

Digitalization is where involving the usage of technology and advanced system in providing new value to the business and increasing the chances of getting more successful opportunities events (Information Technology, 2021). A study by Mattera et al. (2021) showed that by implemented advanced technology and digitalization in the company it could help the company to balance their production as well as shift the core system to boost the economy of the company. This sub-theme of the economic theme has been supported by Obrenovic, Du, Godinic, Tsov, Kahn & Jakhongirov (2020) and MacGregor Pelikanova, Cvik & MacGregor (2021) mentioned that advances in technology and digitalization in company help in attaining company survival while dealing with COVID-19.

3.1.2 Supply chain

An organization with good planning, such as a diversified supply chain, will assist in maintaining the production during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Obrenovic et al., 2020). A supply chain, as defined by Kenton (2020), is cooperation or network between the supplier and the company in producing the product and services for the market. Further study by Manuel and Herron (2020) suggested that that utilizes the technology to overcome the supply chain shortage in the company. In a related study by Satyro, Spinola, de Almeida, Giannetti, Sacomano, Contador and Contador (2021) and from Palma-Ruiz, Castillo-Apraiz and Gómez-Martínez (2020) pointed out that production planning and control play an important role during Covid-19 pandemic in the industry since coordinating and planning will help the organization survive as well as to satisfy the demands from society.

3.1.3 Office reconfiguration

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some companies began to shift their operation to work from home so that the employees could keep their job (Metwally, Diab & Mohamed, 2021). Companies choose to do an office reconfiguration as cost reduction to survive in the business. This was also highlighted by Parker (2020) that a company needs to have a system to work electronically from home from their common working office so that the production can keep on running and deliver the best services.

3.2 Ethical

The second main theme is ethical and modified policy as its sub-theme.

3.2.1 Modified policy

In view of Aguinis, Villamor and Gabriel (2020), the organization decided to modify their organization policy to maintain its economic condition while dealing with the pandemic crisis. A study conducted by Manuel and Herron (2020) shows that most respondents were comforted by hearing the business efforts in helping their workers in overcoming the COVID-19 by including the employees in their new modified policies. This modified policy can be observed from the nature of their business, such as working from home, the new way of payment and the performance expected from each employee (Ramya and Baral, 2021; Parker, 2020).

3.3 Philanthropic

The third main theme is philanthropy, and its sub-themes are charity and production support.

3.3.1 Charity

Another way of surviving in the COVID-19 pandemic besides running the business is that they also give charity as part of their strategies to sustain the business. They shall always be visible to the other parties in the industry. Among the common philanthropic actions via sub-theme of charity taken by companies during the COVID-19 pandemic was donations as reported in Manuel and Herron (2020), Palma-Ruiz, Castillo-Apraiz, and Gómez-Martínez (2020) and also Rivo-López, Villanueva-Villar, Michinel-Álvarez, and Reyes-Santías

(2021). According to the findings of these researches, the donations covered a wide range of recipients such as front liners, food banks, schools and low-income families.

3.3.2 Production support

There are also companies that offer aid in terms of its services as part of their strategies, such as restructuring production plans for essential kits and tools needed by front liners to speed up the production and to support the drastic surge in demands. Among the equipment that has been given priority by the companies are protective equipment such as PPE, gloves and masks, ventilators, and disinfection gels (Manuel & Herron, 2020; Rivo-López et al., 2021).

4.0 Discussion

This paper aims to review studies on company strategies in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure fair social well-being. Companies have fast in moving from the previous state of not adapting to any changes in strategy to the new state of action. This can be supported as the majority of researchers have focused more on digitization, using technology in the supply chain, and doing some reconfiguration for the office. Also, the researchers have identified that companies adopted ethical strategies, which is modified policy as it is a sub-theme. Next is philanthropy, with charity and production support as its sub-themes. The nature of the pandemic that threatens health and safety at large has driven the companies to focus on social capital in contrast to the usual economic capital as the priorities have changed. They did provide food and financial assistance to the needy during a pandemic. Having economic responsibilities will help the organization to create profit by exceeding the demands of society (Carroll, Brown & Buchholtz, 2016). Especially during the pandemic Covid-19, society will support the organization that gives benefits to the society while maintaining the economy of the organization. Ethical responsibility is when the companies act in a fair and a just way. This means that the companies must conduct their business in a fair and best action even though there are no specific standards for it. When the company exceeds and goes beyond society's expectations, the company is most likely to be considered philanthropic. The main point of being philanthropic is that the actions taken by the company are voluntary, and it comes from the company's desire to be part of the society and would like to contribute to a better community as a whole. The importance of philanthropic actions during a crisis has been proven as it positively impacts the companies because of their benefit to the society, protection of the employees and gaining the trust of the stakeholders (Manuel & Herron, 2020). A study has also found that philanthropic actions increase consumer loyalty (Ding & Jiang, 2021). The actions that are known as corporate philanthropic disaster responses are already widely known even before the recent pandemic as various companies have carried it out during the tsunami in 2004 caused by the Indian Ocean earthquake as well as Hurricane Katrina that hit North America in 2005 (Manuel & Herron, 2020). The image building resulting from philanthropic actions by companies during a disaster will last long among the public, which will increase the economic return post-pandemic. It was understandable as the companies would need to find ways of cutting costs of the expenses to protect the interests of its shareholders and employees.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, the systematic review has highlighted the strategies adopted by companies to cope with COVID-19. There are three main themes, so-called three strategies such as economic, ethical and philanthropic. A present systematic review conducted on strategies used to attain fair social well-being has some limitations. The term of the period in selecting articles that focus only on COV-19. Therefore, it is highly recommended that in future conduct the research in a longer-term period as the impact of the strategy for the COV-19 pandemic can be observed further. Based on previous studies, this study agreed with Metwally et al. (2021), where a longer period in doing the research can cover full understanding on the researcher's behalf on the implication for the companies adopting certain measures. This is to ensure the result will be more accurate and convincing to implement. Lastly, the current strategy only highlights the positive impact of the strategy used in the organization. Hence, future research is highly recommended to insert together negative impacts while practising the strategies to cope with any new challenges that might occur in companies. The review concluded that during the pandemic, many companies have chosen to implement the strategies that suit their nature of business. This study contributes from theoretical and practical perspectives to the company for their preparation for facing any crisis in the future.

Acknowledgement

This study has been granted by funds from the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, under grant no. 600-TNCPI 5/3/DDF(FSPPP) (006/2021). This paper is one of the publication requirements required by the fund provider.

References

- Aguinis, H., Villamor, I., & Gabriel, K. P. (2020). Understanding employee responses to COVID-19: a behavioural corporate social responsibility perspective. *Management Research: Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*, 18(4), 421-438. doi:10.1108/mrjam-06-2020-1053
- Ahsan, A. (2020). What is a company? Retrieved June 25, 2021, from <https://www.marketingtutor.net/what-is-a-company/>
- Carroll, A. B., Brown, J. A., & Buchholtz, A. K. (2016). *Business & Society: Ethics, Sustainability & Stakeholder Management* (10 ed.): Cengage Learning.

- Ding, L., & Jiang, C. (2021). Restaurant proactive philanthropic activities and customer loyalty: a scenario-based study during the COVID-19 pandemic period. *International Hospitality Review*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). doi:10.1108/ihr-08-2020-0045
- Forcadell, F., Aracil, E. (2020). A purpose-action framework for Corporate Social Responsibility in Times of shock. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, (312). DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.127789
- Glock, C. H., & Grosse, E. H. (2021). The impact of controllable production rates on the performance of inventory systems: A systematic review of the literature. In *European Journal of Operational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2020.05.033>
- He, J., Mao, Y., Morrison, A. M., & Coca-Stefaniak, J. A. (2020). On being warm and friendly: the effect of socially responsible human resource management on employee fears of the threats of COVID-19. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(1), 346-366. doi:10.1108/ijchm-04-2020-0300
- Information Technology. 2021. Gartner Glossary. Retrieved July 6, 2021, from <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/digitalization>
- Kenton, W. (2020). Company. Retrieved June 25, 2021, from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/company.asp>
- Kenton, W. (2020). Supply Chain. Retrieved July 6, 2021, from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/supplychain.asp>
- Liu, M. T., Wang, S., McCartney, G., & Wong, I. A. (2021). Taking a break is for accomplishing a longer journey: hospitality industry in Macao under the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(4), 1249-1275. doi:10.1108/ijchm-07-2020-0678
- MacGregor Pelikanova, R., Cvik, E. D., & MacGregor, R. K. (2021). Addressing the COVID-19 challenges by SMEs in the hotel industry – a Czech sustainability message for emerging economies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). doi:10.1108/jeee-07-2020-0245
- Manuel, T., & Herron, T. L. (2020). An ethical perspective of business CSR and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Society and Business Review*, 15(3), 235-253. doi:10.1108/sbr-06-2020-0086
- Mattera, M., Soto Gonzalez, S., Alba Ruiz-Morales, C., et al. (2021). Facing a global crisis – how sustainable business models helped firms overcome COVID. *Journal of Corporate Governance*. DOI: 10.1108/CG-07-2020-0309
- Metwally, A. B. M., Diab, A., & Mohamed, M. K. (2021). Telework operationalization through internal CSR, governmentality and accountability during the Covid-19: evidence from a developing country. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). doi:10.1108/ijoa-11-2020-2500
- Obrenovic, B., Du, J., Godinic, D., et al. (2020). Sustaining enterprise operations and productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic: "Enterprise effectiveness and sustainability model".
- Palma-Ruiz, J. M., Castillo-Appraiz, J., & Gómez-Martínez, R. (2020). Socially Responsible Investing as a Competitive Strategy for Trading Companies in Times of Upheaval Amid COVID-19: Evidence from Spain. *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 8(3). doi:10.3390/ijfs8030041
- Parker, L. D. (2020). The COVID-19 office in transition: cost, efficiency and the social responsibility business case. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 33(8), 1943-1967. doi:10.1108/aaaj-06-2020-4609
- Pittway, L. (2008). Systematic literature reviews. The SAGE dictionary of qualitative management research. SAGE Publications Ltd. doi:10.4135/9780857020109
- Ramya, S. M., & Baral, R. (2021). CSR during COVID-19: exploring select organizations' intents and activities. *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). doi:10.1108/CG-09-2020-0426
- Rivo-López, E., Villanueva-Villar, M., Michinel-Álvarez, M., & Reyes-Santías, F. (2021). Corporate Social Responsibility and Family Business in the Time of COVID-19: Changing Strategy? *Sustainability*, 13(4). doi:10.3390/su13042041
- Satyro, W., Spinola, M., de Almeida, C., et al. (2021). Sustainable industries: Production planning and control as an ally to implement strategy. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 281. DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.124781
- The University of Scranton. (2021). Five ways corporate social responsibility promotes sustainable business. Retrieved June 25, 2021, from <https://elearning.scranton.edu/resource/business-leadership/five-ways-corporate-social-responsibility-promotes-sustainable-business>
- Dunaeva, V. (2018). New Approaches in Social Well-Being Studies. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 566-573.
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a Methodology for Developing Evidence-Informed Management Knowledge using Systematic Review. In *British Journal of Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00375>
- World Health Organization. (2022). Coronavirus Diseases (COVID-19). https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1
- World Health Organization. (2022). Health and Well-Being. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>
- IMD - International Institute for Management Development (2022). <https://www.imd.org/imd-reflections/reflection-page/business-strategy/>
- Nickols, F. (2016), Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking. Available from: http://www.nickols.us/strategy_etc.pdf [Last accessed on 2019 May 30].
- Wilshusen, Peter & MacDonald, Kenneth. (2017). Fields of green: Corporate sustainability and the production of economic environmental governance. *Environment and Planning A*. 49. 0308518X1770565. 10.1177/0308518X17705657.