

Question 2: Writing Analytical Review Report

1) What were the difficulties encountered by front-line workers working with different departments and agencies of the state government or local self-government bodies delivering COVID-19-related services or goods to citizens?

Since the global covid-19 pandemic has begun a lot of things have become complicated and difficult for everyone. People, generally in rural, are not aware of the details of the disease. Some of them are too frightened and some are just careless. One of the challenging jobs was to bring awareness regarding the COVID-19. In my vicinity, my father, as a primary school teacher, has served on frontline work. The aim was to reach out to everyone in my village and confront them every aspect of the pandemic situation, especially about the preventive measures & precautions (in case of infection) and the importance of early testing & vaccination. And this task comes with a lot of difficulties.

Some people are totally isolating their families from society and having a lot of fear. They think that if they get infected surely there will be a death. This fear results in them avoiding their RTPCR testing in case of suspicion. According to the government for every 1 positive case, 20 nearby people must be tested. Then these feared people tend to deny the contact and hence do not get tested. People do not understand that early testing is recommended so that the diagnosis and treatment become easy resulting in fewer chances of casualties. Some other people do not have surety about vaccines and falsely terrified about the side effects (even though there are none). Assuring and making them understand was a hard thing to do.

Another type of people believes that they are highly immune to any kind of disease. They say they never ever had to take any injections or vaccines and so they do not have to worry about covid either. They do not understand that they can still get infected and spread the virus. Some of them do not even believe that covid exists. They have been misguided by various conspiracy theories. Social media especially WhatsApp forwards have a major contribution to it. Because of this also some people started believing in and practicing home remedies which are wrong.

The *Aasha workers* and *Anganwadi sevikas* have also had similar experiences. Sometimes some people do not want to listen also. A lot of people fear (or you can they say do not want to get into) the institutional isolation that is why they do not engage with these people and do not reach out to healthcare for testing as well, until and unless they start having a severe health issue. Some people due to their financial conditions tend to avoid seeking health services as they are not affordable for them. But they have been told that government provides everything free of cost. Another reason is that health services provided at *Gramin Rugnalaya* (Primary health centers) are not that good and private hospital services are too expensive. There is always room for improvement in *Gramin Rugnalayas*.

By going door to door frontline workers were expected to gather the information related to health, age, co-morbidity (if applicable), anyone tested positive or diagnosed with covid, and their contact tracings. This information helps Government and local bodies to make strategies more effectively, but it was observed that people were not cooperating and saying everything is normal out of fear again which is wrong. Also, keeping themselves safe from the infection since they are exposed to almost every house in the village and maintaining covid protocols was also difficult for frontline workers.

Lack of resources especially vaccines and some medicines has also been a severe problem. Health workers in hospitals have faced the lack of testing kits and PPE kits in the initial days. During the peak of cases medicines such as remdesivir and some others were not available easily. Recently after the vaccination drive started, health workers have experienced a scarcity of vaccines too. Someday there used to be no supply of vaccines and on the other only 70-80 vaccine get supplied. Even there is a vaccine available, health workers had to be concerned about the crowd in time and they also had to prioritize some peoples over others for giving vaccines.

From these experiences, we can analyze that the major difficulties frontline workers faced is fear, misconceptions, lack of resources (in some cases), and the “Not going to listen” attitude from people. Also, a lack of good health infrastructure and a lack of faith in crippling health services, which are to be restored, is again a challenge. Before even the health services are in action, the people must be aware of what we are dealing with. Convincing them was, of course, difficult but bringing awareness was really a necessity.

2) In what manner, the front-line workers and their supervisors attempted to cope with these difficulties they faced?

Well, one of the solutions, in layman’s terms, was proper communication. Most of the people here are farmers or daily wage workers or people from unorganized sector and generally not highly educated. By sitting with them and explaining things in their own language was much needed. Those who were feared covid were told that there is no need to be worried about, but one should take care always. The preventive measures like a mask, sanitizer, and social distancing were elaborated on at every home. Setting up an example by taking vaccines in front of them assured them of no harm or other side effects. People are encouraged to take vaccines and asked to test themselves in case.

Frontline workers understood their concerns thoroughly and guided them accordingly. As a preventive measure eating healthy food, good sleep helps to enhance immunity. Instead of trying home remedies, one should contact the authorities as soon as possible. They have been also given information on whom, where, and how to contact and all the facilities that the government is providing.

The importance of early testing and early diagnoses was explained to them neatly, and assurance was given. Also, they were convinced to provide true information about them for their own beneficiary. People who got discharged from hospitals were urged to spread positivity and truth so that people do not fear institutional quarantine/isolations and diagnosis.

Those who seem careless were also counseled neatly by referencing the consequences of their actions. Sometimes when people do not even try to listen to frontline workers, they (frontline workers) used to bring someone else from the vicinity to whom these people listen. *Aarogyasetu* and *Cowin* apps were encouraged to use. Admins of What's App groups of our village were also advised to pay attention to fake/false messages to prevent misconceptions and misinformation.

Lack of resources was such a difficult issue to deal with and that cannot be handled at only the local level. In this scenario, higher authorities have been informed from time to time, and the supply chain was maintained active as effectively as possible. Local police have also been helpful to health workers regarding security. All of the frontline workers have trained and given proper protocols/guidelines to follow. That also really helped them to carry out their job without getting infected or without infecting others.

3)What is your analysis and reflections about your findings?

All the frontline workers have done an excellent job. They have executed everything thoroughly whatever they have been told to do. Still, the rise in cases and casualties have some other reasons that we should be concerned about. At the moment people are well aware of the situation and precautions but they are not ready to have imposed restrictions on everyone again and for any long period of time. The awareness drive should have been immediately followed by the vaccination drive at a large scale and that too before getting tremendous surge in daily cases. Earlier people hesitating to get vaccines when vaccines were available and now people want to get vaccinated but there is a shortage of them.

The higher the cases higher is the pressure on Health systems. Since people are now aware of the pandemic, they are seeking services from this system. The health infrastructure here is good but not sufficient for all. It cannot treat everyone at the same time. It cannot keep treating people all the time. These are just temporary solutions and not the end of root causes. Before the situation gets out of control anytime we should be ready with the countermeasures and I believe vaccination for all is the key.

The lockdown is not a permanent solution, neither the health infrastructure nor the frontline workers are. But they are necessary to buy some time and delay the casualties. The major milestones in fighting the pandemic such as bringing awareness and building sufficient health infrastructures are completed and with their help the vaccination should end the fight as soon as possible, allowing all of us to get back to normalcy. Now, at least in my vicinity, the short supply of vaccines seems to be a major issue. Hope the government takes strong decisions and makes sure everyone is vaccinated.