



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

PANDEMIC AND LIVELIHOOD COMPARISONS OF WOMEN IN KERALA

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Abstract

World wide, women depend on informal sector compared to men as source of employment .Pandemic and lockdown caused disruptions in the livelihood..Post pandemic, employment revival in the informal sector was sluggish.Women in comparison , rely more on informal sector as source of employment and were unable to be reinstated in their jobs.This coupled with gender gap in wages have posed serious questions regarding policy equity and effectiveness Labour force participation in informal sector in India is nearly 86% of the total labour force .Of this 91% are women who are socially and economically vulnerable and faces gender disparity in wages . Study was undertaken to get an insight about the impact of pandemic and lockdown on female unemployment

Keywords –, Gender gap, WLF, informal sector, policy equity,

Introduction

Unanticipated economic shocks brought about by Corona virus has disrupted the government policies regarding gender inclusive economic growth. NSSO estimated that 50% of people in construction sector became jobless whereas the corresponding figure for manufacturing sector is one tenth at 5% .In Kerala, heavy job loss was evident in sectors construction, transportation, Tourism and Hospitality, Arts and Entertainment

Women who were in the process of economic liberation became more economically vulnerable during the phase of stay at home and social distancing .

Female labour force participation in India shows paradoxical trends.Increase in female literacy and education does not show any correlation with increase in labour force participation.Demographic researches in India has observed that female labour force participation curve is U shaped in relation to education.This implies that women who are not educated and who are educated only up to tertiary level have the highest labour force participation

Women fulfil their self imposed responsibility of providing palliative care for the family was seen dropping out from jobs during pandemic period

As per the report of World Economic Forum, India has the lowest female labour force participation in South Asia. The share of Indian women which was 110 in 2006, fell by 39 places to 149 in 2020

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A significant trend in the post pandemic period was growing economic vulnerability of women. As per 2019 report by Google and Bain company, unemployment rate for men was 7% whereas that of women was nearly triple at 18% in the Pre pandemic period

International Labour Organisation report stated that nearly 400 million in informal sector faced displacement and are living in poverty

Majority of women in India belong to less skilled or moderately skilled category and therefore there is heavy dependence on unorganized sector for livelihood. Unorganised sector in India was worst hit by pandemic. Nearly 69% men were out of work during lockdown. But the corresponding figure of female unemployment during lockdown period is lower at 74%.

Retrenchment trends also show gross gender disparity. 24% of unemployed men were able to get back lost jobs where only 16% of women were unable to recover their lost jobs.

Short term measures to get back in the track of economic growth has led to the suspension of labour laws like Maternity benefit act, Equal remuneration Act which would impede the retrenchment of female workers and lead to further gender disparity in employment.

The pandemic and implementation of lockdowns has pushed more than two third of self-employed and casual workers to acute unemployment, financial crisis, indebtedness and economic distress.

Participation persons engaged in labour force in rural area decreased from 85.9% to 76.4% in men and 49.4% to 26.4% in women. Urban male workforce participation decreased from 79.2% to 73.7% and female labour force participation decreased from 24.4% to 20.4%. (PLFS 2019)

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the economic effect of Covid 19 on female employment
2. To assess the major economic problems and challenges faced by women during Pandemic and in the post covid period

Methodology and Database

The paper makes an attempt to assess the gender disparity effects of pandemic on unemployment through hybrid platforms. The study uses both primary and secondary data. The survey is conducted on 120 people. Kudumba sree unit of Puthuppariyaram panchayat was taken on the basis of purposive sampling

In the first stage 60 women were surveyed and then snowball sampling technique was used in which first stage respondents identified unemployed female informal sector workers from among their relatives and acquaintances.

Secondary data was collected from government reports, articles, journals and from internet.

Data analysis and discussions

The economic impact of 2020 corona virus pandemic in India has been largely disruptive.

Survey results reveal that 90% of the affected people were found to be in the age category of 20-40.

Gender wise, 69 % of females were unemployed .86 % of the respondents had education up to high school level and 12% had higher secondary education and 2% were graduates.The source of employment for these women were construction sector ,tailoring,food processing , catering, beauty industry, 55% of repondents had to acquire specialized training to acquire skill in their trade.

TYPE OF JOB		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CASUAL WORKER	18	15.0	15.0
	CONSTRUCTION WORKER	31	25.8	40.8
	DOMESTIC WORKER	19	15.8	56.7
	CATERING AND HOTEL WORK	18	15.0	71.7
	SALES PERSON	14	11.7	83.3
	BEAUTICIAN	10	8.3	91.7
	TAILORING	10	8.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	

Based on primary survey

Casual workers constituted 15% of the respondents whereas construction workers formed 25.8% of the total respondents .Sample reveals the vulnerability in employment as nearly 56% of the workers work casual workers and construction workers. Domestic workers and catering workers were about 15% each.14% of the workers worked as sales persons in various shops some of them had their own petty shops.The share of people engaged as beauticians and tailors were 8.3 % each

Cross tabulation was run to understand whether nature of job influences job loss,.The result reveals that94% of the casual workers lost their jobs.In case of construction workers , the percent jobloss was 80%.Only 30% of the domestic workers lost their jobs during Covid.The reasons for jobloss of domestic workers included social distancing concerns for the safety of children and the aged in the family,job loss of the employer, shifting of family to native place during Covid .

TYPE OF JOB * JOB LOST OR NOT Crosstabulation

		JOB LOST OR NOT		Total
		YES	NO	
TYPE OF JOB	CASUAL WORKER	17	1	18
	CONSTRUCTION WORKER	25	6	31
	DOMESTIC WORKER	6	13	19
	CATERING AND HOTEL WORK	3	15	18
	SALES PERSON	5	9	14
	BEAUTICIAN	5	5	10
	TAILORING	2	8	10
Total		63	57	120

Women who are engaged in catering and hotel management showed more buoyancy in surviving pandemic and their job loss was only 16%. With the support of Kudumba sree units, 55% of the women diversified their activities in preparing biriyani packets and lunch packets, chips, payasam and other items and sold these as road side vendors. Closing down of big hotels actually favoured small hotels and small scale preparation of homely food were generally regarded safer. Among sales persons those who owned petty shops fared better. Those who worked as sales women in big shops were laid off either temporarily or permanently

In the case of beauticians 50% of the people lost their jobs and some of them who had opened their saloon on the basis of personal loan found it very difficult to repay their loans. In case of tailors only 25% lost their jobs and it was a temporary job loss

Chisquare p value is .000 which reveals that there is significant association between type of job and job loss.

To analyse whether there is a significant difference between Precovid and post covid Income, Wilcoxon signed rank test was run the p value of the test for the two tailed asymptotic significance was 0.00 indicating that there is drastic reduction in post covid income

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.992 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	45.830	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.197	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 2 cells (14.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.75.

Ranks

INCOME DIFFERENCE	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
POST COVID Negative INCOME - Ranks	106 ^a	53.50	5671.00
PRECOVID INCOME Positive Ranks	0 ^b	.00	.00
Ties	14 ^c		
Total	120		

a. POST COVID INCOME < PRECOVID INCOME b. POST COVID INCOME > PRECOVID INCOME c. POST COVID INCOME = PRECOVID INCOME

Friedman Test	Mean Rank
PRECOVID INCOME	1.94
POST COVID INCOME	1.06
Exact Sig.	.000

Mean rank of Pre Covid income is 1.94 whereas mean rank of Post Covid income is lower at 1.06 P value is highly significant which leads to the conclusion that there is significant difference in mean ranks between Pre Covid and Post Covid income

Ranks

MEAN RANK OF MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED	Mean Rank
LOSS OF INCOME	3.70
DIFFICULTY IN REEMPLOYMENT	3.14
SALE OF ASSETS	2.64
INCREASED DEBT BURDEN	2.91
LACK OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT	2.60

58% of the sample opined that loss of family income was the major problem faced during pandemic period with a mean rank of 3.70 .Difficulty in re employment ranked second among the problem faced with a mean rank of 3.14.

37% of displaced women found it very hard to get back their jobs.15% are still in the process of job search.Loss of jobs have increased sale of assets and increased debt burden.People were of the opinion that there should have been financial support for re employment with a mean rank of 2.60. The Friedman test p value for overall significance was highly significant p=.000

CONCLUSIONS

Women constituted less than onefourth of the total labour force.After Pandemic, their share in unemplyed is more than one fouth of the total unemplyed .This has deep implications on the ability of women to be self reliant.As evident from the success of self help groups in providing female unemplyment,it may be concluded that Self Help Groups have played a significant role in helping women to tide over Covid-19. Even though it has injected much needed income flow and had small multiplier effects on the economy,women need governmental institutional support as a long term solution. Restructuring efforts should be strengthened and new avenues like online platforms must be explored to improve reemplyment chances of women

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Women Workers in Informal Sector in India: Understanding the Occupational Vulnerability

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