



EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract: According to 2011 census, women as an independent social group constituted 48.3% of country's population. But when it comes to participation in the workforce, they formed only about 31% of the total workforce. In the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, which uses pre-pandemic data, India ranks 112th of 153 countries in offering equal opportunities to women and men. In particular, women often don't have the same access to health care and education as their male counterparts. This paper tries to highlight the effect of Covid19 pandemic on the work participation rate of women in India

Index Terms - women, employment, LFPR, WPR, pandemic, survey.

introduction

Women employment is necessary because it is one of the important indicators of women empowerment. It makes woman economically independent and personally self-reliant. As a result of woman employment family income increases so that family can spend more on education, health etc. The status of women employment has been the cause of serious concern for the entire spectrum of policy makers ever since the country's independence. India was also already in bad shape in terms of female unemployment. The female labour force participation (FLFPR) has been declining rapidly in the last 20 years. Even before the pandemic, less than a quarter of women in India were in the labour force, putting India among the bottom 10 countries in the world in terms of women's workforce participation.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To understand the situation of women employment in India
- To analyse the effect of the pandemic on the job market for women

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

There is not much data available on the effect of the pandemic on women employment. This paper is based on different surveys, both online and offline, conducted by different agencies and CMIE database..

4. CONCEPT OF EMPLOYMENT

Employment consists of two concepts, Labour Force Participation Rate and Work Force Participation Rate. Labour Force includes both employed and unemployed persons or, in other words, 'an economically active' population which are employed or seeks to supply labour for production. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is defined as the number of persons in the labourforce per 1000 persons. The number of persons employed per 1000 persons is referred to as the Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) or the Worker Population Ratio (WPR). A large portion of women employment is not accounted in national income statistics as they are unpaid family labour.

5. OVERVIEW OF WOMEN EMPLOYMENT

In the post-Independent period, the First and Second Five Year Plans put women at the nucleus of its "welfare" perspective, along with other disadvantaged groups like the destitute, disabled etc. For the first time in the Sixth Five Year Plan, the concept of 'women development' was conceived with special emphasis on the three core areas – health, education and employment. The Sixth Plan once again brought into focus the importance of women employment as a key development indicator. The Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Five Year Plans in their inclusive growth model emphasized the development of women. Most of women are employed in the unorganised sector. Self-employment only captures one half of women's work. In 2018-19, 47% women are in wage employment. Of these, 22% are in regular employment and 25% work in casual labour. Women from poorer households have a higher economic activity rate, suggesting that poor women cannot afford to abide by the social expectation of female seclusion. However, researchers note that as household income per capita increases, women start to leave the

workforce. Since family status is linked to women staying inside the home, domestic work becomes more attractive as the family income increases.

6. EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE JOB MARKET FOR WOMEN

Here we can point out certain major observation come out from different studies and surveys on the effect of the pandemic on women job market.

6.1 The corona virus pandemic has affected the presence of women in the job market. A McKinsey Global Institute report suggests that, in India women made up 20 percent of the workforce before COVID-19; but unemployment surveys suggest that they actually account for 23 percent of overall job losses.

6.2 Low and declining women's labour force participation rates in India have been a longstanding concern. Majority of the women who are counted as being in the workforce remain concentrated in the informal sector. In the non-farm sector, women are usually located as home-based workers, domestic workers, construction labourers, petty retailers and textile and garment factory workers, beauty, salon and spa services providers, in fitness industries and in the BPOs as customer care representatives of domestic and multinational companies. The national lockdown imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected livelihoods in all of these sectors and therefore women employment has been affected badly.

6.3 Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's (CMIE's) Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS) database of 170,000 households, Ashwini Deshpande, professor of economics at Ashoka University in Haryana, found that the fall in employment among men was 29%, compared with a figure of 39% for women. Four out of every 10 women who were working during the last year lost their jobs during the lockdown, Deshpande found.

6.4 Small and growing businesses (SGBs) where women are employed have been one of the hardest-hit segments during the pandemic. According to a report in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, the COVID-19 crisis is especially threatening SGBs in low-income nations. In fact, the report adds, nearly 40 percent of SGBs in emerging markets are staring at potential failure in the next half of the year.

6.5 With an overstretched health system encouraging home isolation, women will face a heavier burden of not just running the household but also taking care of the family. In an ideal world, the burden should be shared by both men and women, but today the priority is for the man to rejoin the labour force. In short, in an economic downturn, women's employment is not a priority.

6.6 There is little doubt that Indian women were doing more of the housework and childcare than men, both before and after the covid-19 outbreak. According to the CMIE database, Deshpande found, the median woman was putting in a little under 5 hours of housework in a day, and the median man a little under 90 minutes a day, at the end of last year.

6.7 In an online survey conducted jointly, Sonalde Desai, professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, US, and Ravinder Kaur, professor of sociology at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, found that from an already high base, there was a large increase in the time women were spending on housework and childcare. From, for instance. Their sample being urban and well-off, most of 55% of women doing the cooking before the lockdown, 79% were now doing the cooking the increase came from women substituting for the work that paid domestic workers had been doing for the household before covid-19.

6.8 According to a survey by Azim Premji University among rural casual workers, 71% of women lost their jobs after the lockdown; the figure was 59% for men. Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) also suggest that job losses in April 2020, as compared to April 2019, were larger for rural women than men.

6.9 A rapid rural survey conducted by Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) showed that in large parts of the country where rain-fed agriculture is prevalent, there was no agricultural activity during the lean months of March to May, 2020. In areas of irrigated agriculture, there were harvest operations (such as for rabi wheat in northern India) however, these were largely mechanized. In other harvest operations, such as for vegetables, there was a growing tendency to use more family labour and less hired labour on account of fears of COVID-19 infection. The activities such as animal rearing, fisheries and floriculture were also adversely affected by the lockdown. These affected women employment

6.10 Various studies show that when households own animals, be it milch cattle or chickens or goats, women are inevitably part of the labour process. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the demand for milk fell by at least 25% (as hotels and restaurants closed), and this was reflected in either lower quantities sold or in lower prices or both. For women across the country, incomes from the sale of milk to dairy cooperatives shrank. Non-agricultural jobs have suddenly come to halt as construction sites, brick kilns, petty stores and eateries, local factories and other enterprises shut down completely.

6.11 In the last few years, women have accounted for more than one-half of workers in public works, but no employment was available through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) till late in April 2020. The first month of lockdown thus saw a total collapse of non-agricultural employment for women. In May 2020 there was a big increase in demand for NREGS employment.

6.12 The government schemes have been a major source of women's employment in the last few decades, especially in the health and education sectors, where women work as Anganwadi workers or mid-day meal cooks. The pandemic has adversely affected these sectors. During the COVID-19, Accredited Social Health Activists or ASHAs, 90% of whom are women, have become frontline health workers, although they are not recognised as "workers" or paid a regular wage.

6.13 Even now that India's lockdown is being lifted, Kumari noted, not all women will be getting their jobs back—many of those jobs are simply gone, and many others will go to out-of-work men first. Those who do get back in the workforce may have to compromise with inferior work or lesser salaries. Under the 2005 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which has served as the government's flagship scheme for distributing work to the poor, women aren't getting good jobs. They're only getting the work men won't take.

7. CONCLUSION

As the world finds itself challenged by the deadly corona virus and the impending slowdown, developing countries like India seem to face a major problem. The ILO, in Rapid Assessment of the Impact of the Covid-19 crisis on Employment, has warned that "those who are most likely to lose their work and incomes are casual workers and the self-employed". What is worrisome is the fact that around three-quarters of women employment in India is non-regular—either self-employed or engaged in casual work. Therefore, women already have or are likely to experience greater loss of employment than men. According to Ranjana Kumari, the director of the Centre for Social Research, a New Delhi-based women's rights group, the problem is all the worse because "the gender lens is completely missing from policymaking, economic initiatives, or infrastructure development. None of these crucial areas have women at their core." The decline in women in the workforce will be a huge loss for India. Therefore, ILO economist Steven Kopsos has rightly said, "Failure to allow women full access to the labour market is an under utilisation of human resources that holds back productivity and economic growth". It is time for women to be seen as equal partners in the task of transforming the economy.

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