



# Status Of Female Workers In India: A Study From Pre-Covid To Post-Covid Situation

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## Abstract

The outbreak of Novel Corona Virus has throttled the entire world economy. The pandemic has created a profound shock with different implications for both male and female. It is witnessed that women have served on the frontlines against COVID-19 and the impact of the crisis on women is stark. There has occurred an economic downfall due to this pandemic which has affected the gender inequality in the labour market both in short run and long run. Again, there has occurred a change in the job pattern especially in case of female as during lockdown period they were overburdened with household work and child care work. Female counterpart has shown interest towards the gig work where they may find flexibility in terms of timing or shift of job.

In this paper an attempt has been made to study mode of female employment during 2017/18-2021/22. Mode of employment is classified into three categories- self-employment, regular salaried employment and casual labour. The extent of casualisation has declined not because of the fall in casual labour but because of fall in regular salaried employment during the period 2017/18-2021/22. However, invention of Covid vaccine, social awareness, proper implementation of Covid protocols have played a vital role for handling this crisis gradually. With the passage of time, we are able to overcome the worst situation. In recent time, it is observed that the status of female counterpart in the workforce participation has slightly improved as compared to the previous situation.

**Keywords:** self-employment, regular salaried employment, casual labour

## **Introduction**

The Indian economy has been experiencing significant downturn since 2020 because of sudden outbreak of corona virus. This epidemic has made the recovery extremely difficult in the near future. There has occurred economic disruption which is the resultant outcome of temporary restrictions on public activities and regional lockdown. In fact, not only India but also the entire world has realized a bunch of unprecedented challenges. Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has impacted people from all walks of life. In context, females are the worst affected. During the first phase of lockdown due to the outbreak of this virus the female unemployment rate has observed higher. At this point of time, female counterpart has become flexible in terms of their work participation. After losing or quitting under compulsion the fixed salaried job they have opted to self-employment and gig works for their livelihood.

## Objective

In this paper an attempt has been made to study status of female workers during 2017/18-2021/22 in India. Female class being the most vulnerable section of the society were worst affected during this epidemic. Here the main focus is on the female mode of employment and extent of casualisation during the period under study. This paper is completely based on literature and survey reports with particular emphasis on current situation. However, Literature in the context of the status of women workers in India is not enough.

## Analysis

At the outset of the upsurge of Covid 19 virus, people have experienced the crisis differently, and a differentiated impact between male and female. It is observed that female section shouldered a comparatively heavier socio-economic burden. They have experienced a greater loss of employment than male counterpart. More specifically, women on an average have lost over two thirds of their incomes during the lockdown. At the same time their unpaid workload has increased which in its turn has made difficult for them to re-enter the work force. In pre-Covid situation, female work participation has been observed low. Their participation further has got skewed when the virus flared up. It is the declining number of job opportunities and job cut across the various sectors, higher occupancy of female in the household work during the pandemic which has further retarded the growth of female work force participation rate.

The part of 'development' is often associated with the expansion of employment opportunities as a means to encourage economic growth and also enhance well-being at the individual and household level. Hence, Labour intensive growth is often regarded as a means for both poverty alleviation and economic growth. In fact, labour is the source of all wealth and the backbone of the nation. In India the pattern of mode of employment has been changing rapidly during post reform period. Mode of employment can be of three types – self-employment, regular salaried employment and casual labour.

In this paper here the main focus is on the analysis of female mode of employment in recent years including the Covid situation.

Mode of Employment	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Self-employed	57.7	34.7	59.6	34.5	63	34.6	64.8	38.4	67.8	39.4
Regular Salaried	10.5	52.1	11	54.7	9.5	54.2	9.1	50.1	8.1	50.3
Casual Labour	31.8	13.1	29.3	10.7	27.5	11.1	26.2	11.5	24.1	10.3
<b>Casualisation Index (CI)</b>	302.86	25.14	266.36	19.56	289.47	20.48	287.91	22.95	297.53	20.48

Source: PLFS Reports

The above-mentioned analysis indicates that rural self-employment has increased throughout the period whereas in case of regular-salaried employment has started falling from 2019/20 as a consequence of this pandemic. The percentage of rural casual labour has also declined which is an outcome of nation-wide lockdown decision during the pandemic. On the other hand, in Urban India female self-employment has

increased marginally during the period under study. However, there has occurred a decline in regular salaried employment because of downsizing of various organisations in Covid situation during the period under study. Percentage of casual labour has also fallen.

For estimating the extent of casualisation the index of casualisation is applied in this context. For calculating this index, at first, the percentage distribution of regular salaried employment and that of casual labour employment is extracted from the existing data. After that the casualisation index is estimated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Index of Casualisation} = \text{Casual Labour/Regular Salaried} \times 100$$

During the post reform period it is realised that the extent of casualisation has been changing significantly in case of female workers. In fact, over the period it has fallen both in India. Here also it is observed that the casualisation index has declined. It can be inferred that the condition of female workers has improved in term of job security and social security during the period under study. However, the extent of female casualisation of labour is more in rural India as compared to urban area. Again, period specific analysis indicated that extent of casualisation has increased in rural (in 2019/20) and urban India (during 2019/20 and 2020/21) as a consequence of pandemic. It can be said that nation-wide lockdown has made several people jobless. Percentage of female regular salaried employment has fallen for which such result is obtained. Women were compelled to leave their jobs for various reasons.

It is worth mentioning that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a major global economic downturn. Across every sphere, the negative impacts of COVID-19 have aggravated for female simply by virtue of their gender and structure of the society. If we consider the impact on employment, it can be observed that there has occurred a shift in case of 'work from office/institution' to 'work from home' during this pandemic situation. This is quite tough specially on the part of working women who are mothers and wives. Most of the married working women are not at all satisfied with the work life arrangement amid covid. This has created a bad impact on their physical and psychological health. Sometimes they are compelled to quit their regular salaried job having no other alternative. The job loss for women post-lockdown has found much severe as compared to their male counterpart. At its peak, almost 53% women lost their jobs.

## Conclusion

This paper has made an attempt to insight the impact of Covid-19 on female working class. The worst effect of Covid-19 has been realised in terms of job loss, poverty increase and reduced per-capita income. The female workers are severely affected in rural urban India. The extent of casualisation has fallen during the period under study mainly because of fall in regular salaried employment. However, introduction of Covid vaccine and govt. initiative for mass vaccination drive and awareness among the people regarding this disease have improved the situation now a days. People have understood that they will have to fight against this virus for rest of their life. Govt. has also taken number of initiatives to improve the situation and accelerate the pace of economic development. As a result, the entire nation has become able to overcome the crisis.

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