



IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra11761>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra11761

ABSTRACT

It comprises daily wage workers, women, children, people living in poverty, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, youth, and indigenous populations. One such segment badly affected by the pandemic was women and the empowerment of women. In a patriarchal society like India, women are oppressed. Analyze the changes that women experienced as a result of the covid 19 pandemic, as well as the consequences the women faced during the pandemic and its effects on their means of subsistence, consumption patterns, and human rights. To study the challenges women faced during the epidemic, how it affected their lives and livelihoods, and to provide solutions for this issue. The Covid 19 pandemic has had a significant influence on women in India and throughout the world.

KEYWORDS: Covid 19, Women Empowerment, Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

The covid 19 pandemic was a catastrophic event in which the entire world became a victim, with nearly all countries in the world shutting down to protect their citizens from the deadly virus, but this resulted in a butterfly effect that not only affected the economy of a country but also the citizens of the world. It comprises daily wage workers, women, children, people living in poverty, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, youth, and indigenous populations. One such segment badly affected by the pandemic was women and the empowerment of women. In a patriarchal country such as India, it is difficult for women to assert themselves, and their decision-making authority is very low, which suggests a rigorous division of family chores, with all domestic work performed by women. But there are also low-income working women and women from impoverished backgrounds who were so severely impacted by the covid 19 pandemic that they were compelled to live on the streets due to their financial circumstances. Low-income working women support themselves mostly through part-time employment as maids, chefs, gardeners, washerwomen, caregivers, etc. During the lockdown, these individuals were unable to generate money due to the restrictions, resulting in a low-income level and the full financial burden falling on the head of the household. Due to women's dual roles as working women and homemakers, there is a double load placed on them, which was exacerbated by the pandemic. Women are required to perform all household duties in addition to supervising their children for the duration of the day as a result of online lessons, which is a monumental undertaking that causes mental strain and tiredness. Due to the pandemic epidemic, young girls were exposed to the dangers of child labor, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment at home, and domestic violence. The pandemic deprived girl children of their right to education due to a lack of savings for their further education and a nationwide lockdown that made it nearly impossible for poor girl children to afford a medium to study, thereby marginalizing them as a category of society due to the digital divide among students. Due to the pandemic, around 10 million females in India dropped out of secondary education. Many girls who were in school before the Covid-19 outbreak did not return because their families were unable to invest in their education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All genders specifically women are exposed to vulnerability and it has escalated during the pandemic. This study is to know how the pandemic made a change in the lives of women in India.



EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM

Women all over the world and in India as well are deeply impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To analyze the changes the women faced due to the covid 19 pandemic and the implications they had to face during the pandemic and its effects on their livelihood and the changes in their consumption patterns and their human rights.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To analyze the problems women faced during the pandemic, how it impacted their lives, and livelihood and to come up with recommendations to tackle this problem.

PROBLEMS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women in the healthcare industry are disproportionately exposed to COVID-19.

About 70% of the global healthcare workforce consists of women, making them particularly vulnerable to exposure to COVID-19 and stigma within their communities for working near COVID patients. In addition, the gender pay gap in the global health workforce is 11%; lower income translates to a diminished capacity to acquire essential supplies or gain access to care. The undervaluing of women's work is detrimental to women and healthcare systems, and underinvestment hinders crisis readiness.

2. Unemployment and the overrepresentation of women in the informal sector increase their susceptibility to crises.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 195 million jobs could be lost worldwide as a result of the epidemic, the bulk of which are in female-dominated sectors. In addition, over 740 million women worldwide work in the informal sector and as low-wage workers, jobs that are at risk of extinction owing to COVID-19 and which frequently lack rights against exploitation and harassment.

Migrant women employed in non-essential service industries, such as food service and hospitality, and domestic workers in sectors dominated by women (e.g., housekeeping, child care) are more susceptible to being laid off or exploited under COVID-19

3. Women and adolescent girls bear a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities, which hinders their economic empowerment.

Due to social standards, women undertake 76.2% of all unpaid care work hours, which is more than three times as much as males. During public health emergencies such as COVID-19, the care burdens for the sick, fragile elderly family members, and youngsters who are at home due to school cancellations grow considerably.

This increases the risk of women and girls catching the virus from infected family members and limits the time available for income generation, business operations, and other economic activities.

In times of crisis, gender-based violence intensifies, preventing women and girls from participating in economic activity.

Crises frequently intensify underlying attitudes that contribute to gender-based violence through stress and disturbance. As with other forms of crises, child marriage and survival sex increase as negative coping strategies. Gender-based violence can hinder women and girls from participating in economic activities, reduce their productivity, and give abusers power over their earnings.

More often than boys' education, girls' education is disrupted by crises, with lasting effects on the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the economy.

During times of crisis, school closures are likely to affect the education of girls. Instead of finishing their education, girls frequently take on additional caregiving tasks, domestic labor, or other income-generating occupations outside the family when they are withdrawn from school. In regions where societal norms result in greater enrollment and retention discrepancies between girls and boys, temporary interruption caused by a crisis such as COVID-19 can result in a permanent departure from school. Families' inability to pay school fees due to income loss during the crisis, poor coping methods such as child marriage, and the loss of educational infrastructures like girls' peer networks and teachers are major causes for concern. This has detrimental long-term effects on girls' access to chances and resources to improve their life, as well as their educational, economic, and health outcomes.

During times of crisis, inequitable inheritance and property ownership rules have a devastating effect on women and girls.

Women and men are entitled to equal legal protection of their property rights, including inheritance and succession, under international human rights law. With the increasing number of COVID-19-related deaths, however, many widows, daughters, and divorced women are either prohibited from claiming their ownership rights in the event of death or dissolution of marriage or cannot do so in practice. Social norms and damaging



cultural practices about widowhood can also obstruct land transfer or ownership. When court systems are closed due to a crisis such as COVID-19, the dangers for women attempting to protect their rights might increase significantly.

The gender digital divide will hurt women's capacity to access crucial support and services or adapt enterprises or employee positions to social distance limits.

In comparison to men, women are 14% less likely to own a mobile phone and 43% less likely to engage online. As a result, women would be unable to receive vital cash transfers and other financial services through the digital channels that are presently being favored by governments due to social distancing tactics. The digital gap can also make it difficult for women to participate in distance learning, for women entrepreneurs to migrate to e-commerce platforms and prospects, and for women employees to maintain their positions through remote work. In addition, the digital gender gap will have a negative influence on girls' possibilities for distance learning, while those who do connect online will be more vulnerable to online harassment, abuse, and sexual exploitation.

The diversion of resources from existing services during this crisis will have a severe impact on women's health and have economic repercussions.

To address the acute health requirements caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, funding will be redirected from current programs that provide vital health services. Moreover, overburdened health systems restrict access to services. This is exacerbated by women's wage loss, which reduces their ability to obtain available health care. These issues prevent women and girls from receiving the highest degree of care possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that all global response and recovery efforts comply with the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act's (WEEE Act) gender analysis and integration requirement (Section 3(c)) by making funds immediately available and directed towards efforts including, but not limited to: a. Additional personnel and technical assistance to conduct and integrate gender analyses as defined in Section 3(c) of the WEEE Act into response and recovery efforts; and b. Ensuring programs meet the requirements of Section 3(c) of the
1. Prioritize the safe and meaningful participation of women, girls, and other vulnerable populations in all stages of COVID-19 response, relief delivery, and recovery decision-making processes. This involves proactively ensuring that women and girls are included in leadership bodies, are actively engaged in generating community- and context-specific responses, and are consulted throughout the several stages of program design, implementation, and assessment.
2. Provide funding and implement programming to address the specific economic repercussions on women around the world, particularly low-income, migrant, and other vulnerable women. This support should embrace both the informal and formal sectors and should increase financing for the following programs:
 - a. Maintaining and expanding existing cash transfer and broader subsidy programs, while also removing conditionality linked to girls attending school or families delaying daughters' marriage, to ensure already-vulnerable women, girls, and their households are not pushed further into poverty by COVID-19;
 - b. Supporting women as entrepreneurs and workers through stop-gap financing measures for firms suffering losses due to COVID-19. Measures should include money for financing and capital to help economic recovery, as well as support for women entrepreneurs to transition their enterprises to e-commerce, promote remote working, and develop into high-demand areas as a result of COVID-19.
 - c. Prioritizing consumer protection safeguards, particularly at the microfinance level, to ensure that women are not trapped in a cycle of debt as a result of COVID-19. Prioritize cash- and savings-based approaches whenever possible to support very poor populations;
 - d. Ensuring supply chains take measures to promote women's job security in light of the instability caused by COVID-19 and enact safeguards to prevent the exploitation of women, girls, and marginalized populations that may be exacerbated under COVID-crisis conditions.
 - e. Investing in training, skills development, and job placement programs for women to access jobs in industries responsive to COVID-19 (e.g., healthcare product manufacturing, information and communications technology, and food and accommodations);
 - f. Addressing and minimizing disruptions to girls' education; Promoting greater access to labor-saving, women-friendly technology. During this crisis, provide food assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable populations.

Incorporate a gender-based violence prevention and mitigation plan, as well as the 'Do No Harm' concept, into all COVID-19 emergency response funds and action plans. Funding should be allocated to support ongoing gender-based violence programming to increase prevention and support survivors in the face of likely increases in gender-based violence, such as domestic or intimate partner violence during social distancing and lockdowns or increased rates of child marriage as a result of economic hardship and other factors.



5. Allocate money to ensure that social services, including health, education, and other care-related tasks, can continue at pre-outbreak levels, recognizing that countries whose economies have been severely damaged by COVID-19 will not be able to fund social services at the same levels. Debt relief methods and other forms of finance cannot come at the expense of spending on social services.

6. Continue and increase support for longer-term initiatives that advance gender-equitable social norms and infrastructure, such as childcare services and programs to support the participation of men and boys in household duties, especially given their additional time at home under stay-at-home measures, to alleviate the disproportionate unpaid care burdens of women and girls. In addition to supporting the prevention of gender-based discrimination and violence, these policies should enhance the voice and leadership of women at all levels. Require comprehensive monitoring, assessment, and learning, including the use of standard indicators to analyze the extent to which U.S. Government initiatives, projects, activities, and programs in response to COVID-19 either exacerbate or minimize gender gaps in the economy and more generally. Prioritize the gathering of gender- and age-disaggregated data from foreign assistance programs addressing the effects of COVID-19, and the establishment of new accountability measures to ensure implementation.

GENDERED IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN INDIA

COVID-19 causes women to suffer disproportionately whether through impact on their incomes, savings, agency, or access to healthcare.

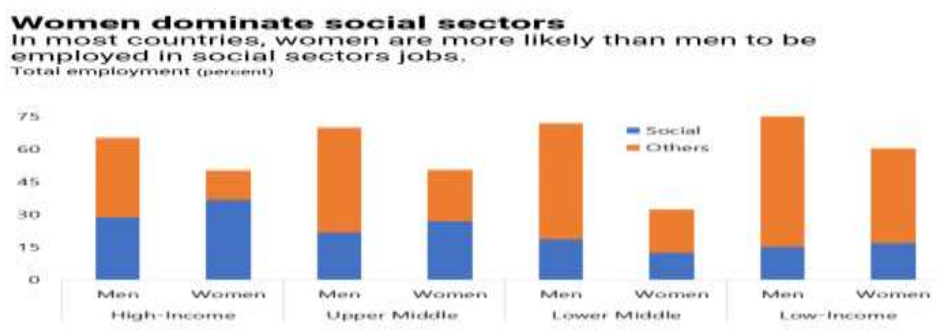
a) Women’s Livelihoods and Income Security:

The nationwide lockdown imposed by the Government of India and overall economic turmoil created by the COVID-19 crisis created compounded economic impacts that are felt especially by women and girls- who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or are living close to poverty. Between March and April 2020 alone, an estimated 17 million women in both the formal and informal sectors, were left jobless.

b) Women’s Social Welfare:

COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing social barriers and decreased women’s ability to access essential services. The challenges include difficulties in accessing adequate food and nutrition, and gaps in access to basic healthcare as supply chains for essential medicines and reproductive health services are interrupted. The pandemic has had a long-reaching impact on mental health and has increased the prevalence of oppressive manifestations of gender inequality, like domestic violence (estimated that over 31 million cases of gender-based violence would occur if the lockdown in India went on for 6 months.)

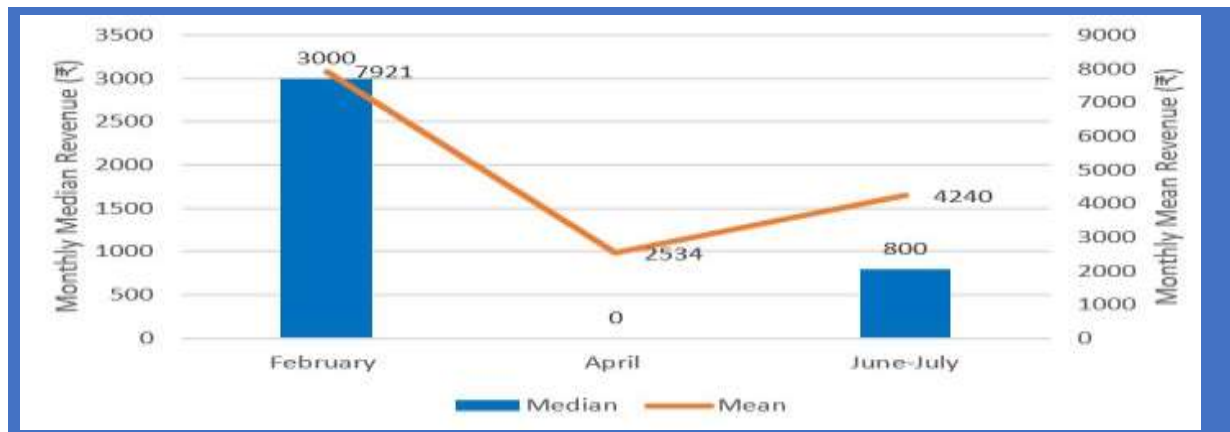
Additionally, given the uncertain nature of the impact of the pandemic and the length of time, it will last, along with the very nascent understanding in the ecosystem of how successful or effective the response to it has been, it is vital to look at the long-term impact of COVID-19 on women in India.



Sources: ILO and authors' calculation.
Note: Social sectors are defined as the sum of the following sectors: wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food service activities, real estate, business and administrative activities, education, human health and social work activities, and other services.



The large-scale closure of childcare facilities and schools now implemented in an increasing number of OECD countries is likely to cause considerable difficulty for many working parents, and for working mothers in particular, given gender disparities in care responsibilities. As has been well-documented many women were already working “double shifts” before the crisis; the closure of schools and childcare facilities is only compounding the difficulties many women face in balancing work and family. Moreover, a further complication is that grandparents, who are often relied on as informal care providers, are particularly vulnerable and are required to minimize close contact with others, notably with children. Without family networks to rely on, many working parents will have few options other than caring for their children at home.



In India, women make up a significant proportion of all healthcare workers and more than 80 percent of nurses and midwives. Yet, when it comes to decision-making roles in the health sector, they are largely absent, and they get paid much less than their male counterparts. Only 13 percent of the members of the national COVID-19 task force are women

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Covid-19 consequences on women entrepreneurs

At the time of writing this manuscript (September 2020), a Google search on COVID-19 impact and women entrepreneurs yielded over 240,000 results from diverse resources. A rapid assessment of the results, focusing mainly on authoritative reports and peer review literature, revealed three recurring themes.

The first theme concentrates on assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs, mostly on the financial aspects and their effects on business and livelihood. The second theme focuses on theorizing about why the pandemic's impact has been more severe on women entrepreneurs than on men counterparts. Though not as prevailing as the first two, the third theme focuses on analyzing governmental and policy responses, and in fewer cases, offers recommendations for specific measures to alleviate the adversity faced by women-owned businesses.

First, women-owned businesses are affected disproportionately and differently from men-owned businesses because of pre-existing gender inequalities that COVID-19 has further deepened, thus exposing women's vulnerabilities in the wake of the pandemic. Second, there is a need to address the unintended consequences of working from homes, such as an alarming increase in domestic violence and mental distress. Third, as governments seek to lift lockdowns, there is a need for creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem that empowers women entrepreneurs to mitigate the consequences of future, sudden operational interruptions effectively, facilitate their access to aid and assistance programs, and fully integrate them into the digital economy and across the supply chain. Finally, there is a necessity to leverage women's representation and inclusion in charting economic recovery policies that are more gender-sensitive.

The Place of Women's Voices

Our assessment reveals that women entrepreneurs' voices are missing in the abundance of studies and reports published on the pandemic's impacts. To fill this gap, this study adopts an innovative co-creation approach to capture women's experiences and facilitate a collective representation of women entrepreneurs' recovery needs. Based on Participatory Research (PR) methodology, in-depth qualitative knowledge of the consequences of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs is first generated and then framed into a prioritized action plan for recovery by using a robust mathematical tool for collective ranking. PR is an umbrella term that indicates inclusivity and direct participation of the stakeholders in the research process to achieve actionable change, rather than respondents like in conventional research. Such action-based research approaches value participants' outlook, offering "the right and ability to speak up, participate, express oneself, and have that expression valued by others" (2019). As PR is often criticized for not being robust enough, the authors opted to reinforce the methodology with the quantification of qualitative data, which is explained further in the methodology section.

Covid-19 Consequences on Women Entrepreneurs

Figure 2 presents the percentage of women entrepreneurs Tier-wise who reported on a list of 20 consequences compiled from the in-depth interview thematic analysis results. These items were presented to women in three main categories: business and supply chain, demand and client base, and staff management.



It is interesting to note that apart from the loss of liquidity and the reduced mobility, there is a considerable difference between Tiers for the highly ranked items. Tier 1, the experienced entrepreneurs, mainly reported on the hindered business growth. All other impact items are equal to or less than 67%. While for Tier 2, handling personal distress and anxiety has been reported by all, followed by business interruptions, impact on business logistics, challenges in reaching out to clients who do not use digital platforms, and reduced clients and sales. All other impact items are equal to or less than 67%.

Figure 1

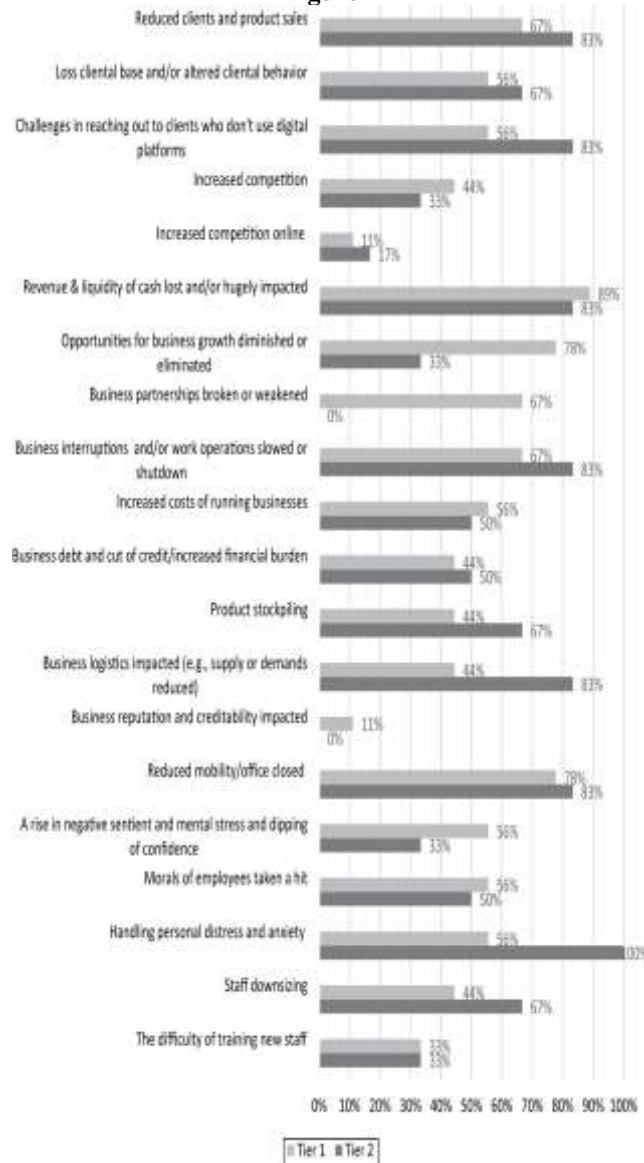
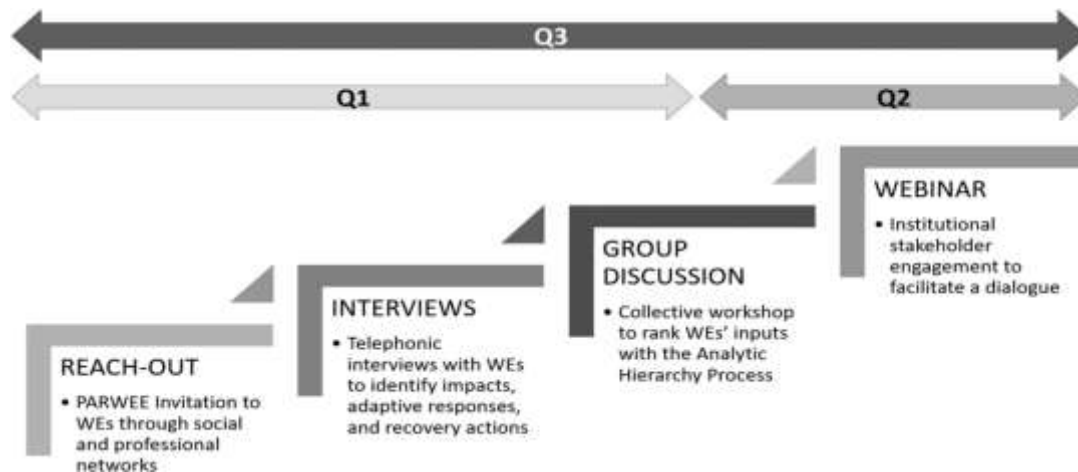




Figure 2



CONCLUSION

Our assessment reveals that women entrepreneurs' voices are missing in the abundance of studies and reports published on the pandemic's impacts. To fill this gap, this study adopts an innovative co-creation approach to capture women's experiences and facilitate a collective representation of women entrepreneurs' recovery needs. Based on Participatory Research (PR) methodology, in-depth qualitative knowledge of the consequences of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs is first generated and then framed into a prioritized action plan for recovery by using a robust mathematical tool for collective ranking. The covid 19 pandemic, was a catastrophic situation in which the whole world became the victim, with nearly all the countries in the world shutting down just to protect their citizens from the deadly virus, but this shutting down led to a butterfly effect that affected not only the economy of a country but also the citizens of the world. which includes various categories of the population like daily wage laborers, women, children, people living in poverty situations, older persons, persons with disabilities, youth, and indigenous people

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