



“Covid-19 Impact on Women”

A Case Study in Tirupati of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Women participation in earning activities increased with the due to education and skill development trainings. They are positioned in different levels of organisation. Many of women are engaged in either in organised or unorganised sectors. Majority of women in Andhra Pradesh State joined in self-help groups and running own business units i.e., petty business viz. provisions shop, shops with pooja material near temples, beauty parlours, boutiques, tailoring shops, fruit shops, vegetable vendors, etc. The graduated women are engaged as teachers in private schools, working as sales girls in shopping malls, etc. Women, who are illiterates or having low level of education are working as sweepers, cleaners, helpers, etc. It is appreciable that women are working and earning, because it helps women to participate in decision making.

Women are the first affecters of any change happen in the family or in environment or in the society. The same has been proven with the spread of Covid-19 in all States and Union Territories of India which started in last quarter of 2019. Andhra Pradesh State is one in which Covid-19 shackled the lives of people especially women in 2020. With this backdrop, an attempt has made to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on women through case studies.

Key Words: *Women, Education, Training, Organised and Unorganised sectors, Environment Change, Covid-19, etc.*

Introduction

The participation of women in earning activities increased with the improvement in education and skill development trainings. Women are working in different levels of organisation. Many of women are working either in organised or unorganised sectors. Women joined in self-help groups are running own business units i.e., petty business viz. provisions shop, shops with pooja material near temples, beauty parlours, boutiques, tailoring shops, fruit shops, vegetable vendors, etc. The graduated women are engaged as teachers in private schools, working as sales girls in shopping malls, etc. The uneducated women are working as sweepers, cleaners, helpers, etc. It is appreciable that women are working and earning. This helps the women to participate in decision making process.

Women affect easily for any change happen in the family or in the society. In India the spread of Covid-19 started in the last quarter of 2019 in some states like Maharashtra, Kerala. But in the first quarter of 2020 it was spread to other states too. The country wide lockdown with strict Covid-19 rules imposed from 18th March 2020.

Covid-19 Status on 01-10-2021

S.No.	State/UT	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Cured/Discharged	Death
1	India	33766707	275224	33043144	448339
2	Andhra Pradesh	2050324	11503	2024645	14176
3	Chittoor	244079		240426	1917

Roles Performed by Women

Before Lockdown:

- Women perform multiple roles viz. cooking, rearing the children, caring elders and other members in the family, duty at workplace as employee or wage worker, owner of the shop, etc.
- The day schedule of women is very tight with different works especially in case of working women.
- There is a scope to participate in decision making process at home to some extent.
- Women are honoured by family members as their income boost to meet the needs of family.
- Women are confident with their Income Generating activities.

After Lockdown:

- Women's work-load of multiple roles increased i.e., time for the activities such as cooking, rearing the children, caring elders and other members has been increased and there is no rest for them due to lockdown.
- The total day women performed the caretaker role.
- Due to lockdown many women lost their job or work and thus their earnings either reduced or reached zero.
- The scope to participate in decision making at home neglected.
- Domestic violence or women harassment at home increased.
- Women are did not honoured by family the members as they are confined to kitchen.

Objectives of the study:

The study is executed with the following objectives.

1. To study the impact of Covid-19 on the Socio-economic status of educated working women.
2. To study the impact of Covid-19 on the Socio-economic status of uneducated working women.
3. To study the impact of Covid-19 on the health status women.

Sample selection and Methodology:

The Present paper is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data collected through interview and case study methods. Fifteen working women and fifteen housewives in Tirupati of Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh are purposively selected. Out of working women three are working as beauticians in a parlour, three as tailors in a boutique, six as sales girls in shopping mall, three are running petty shop near Tirumala. Fifty percent of the total sample are self help group members. Further four big shopping malls in Tirupati are visited after unlock 3.0. The study was conducted during the months October 2020 to January 2021. The secondary data collected from various sources which have been duly acknowledged.

Data Analysis:

The data collected was analysed and presented in the following pages under Results and Discussions. The impact of Covid-19 on the women in India was also discussed in this paper.

Results and Discussions:

The respondents reveal the fact that the majority of women working in unorganised sectors lost their employment during the COVID-19 crisis. The owners gave priority to men to continue them in job in their organisation. The study reveals that female working in provisions shops are escaped from job loss as they are engaged in cleaning and packing of the provisions. Among respondents who are married and possessed school age children in the household, women carried a heavier load than men in providing childcare after schools closed due to Covid-19. Working mothers, with school-age children in the household, are reducing their working hours compared to working women without young children and compared to men, as a result of the crisis. This may be because, the mothers might be reducing their working hours to be able to provide childcare. It is also observed that the working women experienced higher levels of psychological depression than housewives. than men.

Case Studies:

Some of the selected case studies of working women as well as housewives are explained below;

Case Study 1: Woman running a shop (pooja materials) near Alipiri the footsteps of World-famous God Lord Venkateswara.

Alipiri is the starting point to go to Lord Venkateswara Temple, Tirumala by walk. Pilgrims offer coconut, camphor, etc to the Lord at the first step. Daily thousands of pilgrims walk to Tirumala from Alipiri. The sellers of the pooja material earn 1000 to 2000 rupees income. Out of this they earn a profit of 500 to 1000 rupees daily. Mrs. Nagamani aged 45 years studied up to fifth standard selling pooja material to pilgrims by taking a shop for rent near Alipiri. She used to earn around 700 rupees as profit daily. Her husband hired an auto and earning around 400 rupees daily after deducting the auto rent, fuel, etc. She is member in self-help group and took the loan from savings of the groups as well as from the bank to meet the requirements of family as well as business. She has to pay the instalments of loan every month. They have two children one is studying high school and another college education. Before March 2020 their family is running smoothly. But due to countrywide lockdown in March 2020 all shops and temples are closed. Transport also stopped. Thus, the wife and husband who are the earners lost their income. More over without income they have to pay for financial commitments. They are;

1. Shop rent to the owner.
2. Loan to the SHG with interest
3. Loan to bank with interest
4. School and college fee to their children

Though the government asked bankers to give exemption for the instalments, banks have collected with the interest. Especially SHG members who lost the income suffered a lot to repay the loans.

Case Study2: Woman working as helper in a Beauty parlour.

Mrs. Manjula (widower) studied up to primary education and working as helper to the beautician in a beauty parlour. Her shift is from 8am to 2pm. She is earning Rs. 8,000/- per month for discharging the duties of cleaning the parlour and beauty equipment, helping the beautician while serving the clients. In evening she used to sell fruits in nearby market and earning a profit of Rs. 5000/- approximately per month. She has one son studying bachelor degree. She is the earner in the family. She is in Self Help Group and took the loan from group savings as well as from the bankers. Before March 2020 she was able to run the family in a smooth manner. But due to countrywide lockdown in March 2020 all shops and markets closed down including Beauty Parlours and thus she lost the income. Thus without income she has to pay the financial commitments. They are;

1. House rent to the owner.
2. Loan to the SHG with interest
3. Loan to bank with interest
4. College fee to her son

After suffering for three months finally she joined as cook for a salary of Rs. 5,000/- per month on the condition that she should not go for work to other households due to spread of corona virus. As she has rice card, she got the rice and dal at FP shops at free of cost for certain months and at low rates for remaining months. But with less income she suffered a lot to pay for provisions, rent and loans.

Case Study3: Woman migration.

Mrs. Raji (aged 30 years) studied up to graduation. As her husband got job in private company in Sales section in Hyderabad, she went Hyderabad and started beauty parlour in her rented house. Dur to the spread of corona virus in Telangana strict rules are imposed to prevent the spread of virus. Many private companies reduced number of jobs. As a result, her husband lost the job. Further, due to lockdown clients didn't turn to her beauty parlour. Thus they depended on the elders or parents to meet the family requirements as stated below:

1. House rent to the owner.
2. Loan taken to invest in beauty parlour from bank.
3. Groceries

After suffering for six months, they decided to shift the family to native place Tirupati. Due to the restriction on transport they sold the beauty parlour equipment and other furniture in Hyderabad for low rates. After returning to Tirupati her husband joined in a private college as office assistant and she started tailoring shop in her own house. As her husband graduated, he acquired the job during covid situation also with a salary of 20,000/- per month. However, they were able to overcome the financial constraints with the help of their parents and other relatives.

Case Study4: Woman running private tutorials.

Mrs. Sujatha (aged 35 years) post graduated in mathematics. Her husband completed graduation. They belong to nearby village of Tirupati town. They started running private tutorials in Tirupati by taking a house for rent. They possessed two children. Approximately 70 students are attending and their earnings were approximately 25,000/- per month. This was sufficient to meet their household expenses viz rent, groceries, electricity, etc. But, due to lockdown all educational institutions were closed. Thus, they lost their income from March 2020. Though the educational institutions were reopened from September 2020, majority of the parents were not willing to send the children to the tutorials may be due to the loss of income or any other reason. Thus, all of sudden she lost the income source from April 2020 and even after reopening of educational institutions her income was less than 5000/- per month which was not sufficient even for rent. So, they were unable to continue the tutorials with less number of students and closed the tutorials. They went back to their village.

Case Study5: Women working as sales girls in shopping malls.

The researchers observed different big shopping malls located in Tirupati after Unlock 3.0. The shopping malls engaged more than fifty of employees before lockdown engaged 10-15% after unlock 3.0 and the majority of existing employees are male. When women employees were interviewed, they expressed that male employees are given preference than the female. They also expressed that the management is suffering with financial crisis due to decline of sales. Even for festivals the new stock not arrived. Due to the reduction in employees the working hours has been increased 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. without shift.

Case Study6: Women working in private educational institutions.

The management of private educational institutions especially corporate schools gave the preference to women to recruit as teachers believing that they are capable to deal with the children. But due to lockdown all the educational institutions closed and as per the government instructions started online classes. As a result, the management started giving half of the salaries to the staff. They also removed certain female staff as the students are not attending classes physically. Thus, the management wants to overcome the deficiency in fee collection from the students. Majority of the staff who lost the job are female. So, they suffered a lot due to loss of salary as they have their own financial commitments.

Case Study7: Women working in fitness centres.

Many women are working as trainers in fitness centres located in Tirupati. As government imposed lockdown restrictions in India that fitness centres must be closed. They were not permitted to open till Unlock 3.0. Thus the women trainers lost their income source.

Provisions by Government:

The Central Government and the State Government of Andhra Pradesh took measures to help the people of below poverty line which are explained below.

1. Distribution of free monthly rice.
2. Doubled the monthly quota of rice.
3. Financial assistance to SHG women by reimbursing the interest on group loans.
4. Pre and post covid care awareness programmes with the help of health functionaries and volunteers.
5. Establishment of free covid care centres.

6. Financial help to the recovered people from covid-19.
7. Supply of masks and sanitizers to all the people.
8. Free covid tests/ check-up.
9. Free vaccination.

A study conducted on Covid-19 impact reveals the following findings:

The findings of the study are explained in the following lines;

1. The study reveals the fact that Covid-19 influenced the Socio – Economic status working women irrespective of their education.
2. Further it is clear that with increased workload on women during lockdown, threw women into psychological stress.
3. Covid-19 influenced the physical and psychological health of women.
4. Many of the women working in unorganised sectors staying in rented houses in and around Tirupati, migrated to their native villages due to job loss.
5. Banks did not exempt EMIs during lockdown and the SHG women forced to pay the bank loans along with the interest.
6. The governments doubled the rice distribution to the eligible families.
7. State government of Andhra Pradesh too the initiation to issue the rice cards immediately to all the eligible families.
8. It is observed that the single women without any income source not eligible to obtain the rice card such women suffered a lot due to loss of income.
9. Woman harassment at home increased as liquor shops were reopened in Unlock 2.0 and the prices were abnormally increased. The meagre income of the family is spent by alcohol addicts and thus the violence against women increased.
10. Majority of women went into psychological stress due to enhanced multiple works.
11. Covid-19 led to digital learning. It made mandatory to have gadgets for all school going children in the family. So it became overburden to many of women to provide the gadgets to their children.
12. Due to lack of knowledge in latest technology, women were unable to understand the digital needs of their children.

Suggestions:

1. SHG women should be supported financially to restart their petty business.
2. The government should take measure to control the prices of commodities.
3. Children of below poverty line and SHG women children should be provided with proper digital learning gadgets.
4. The government should check the management of the private organizations who are not supporting women to continue their jobs.
5. The governments should include the single women in eligibility criteria for issuing rice cards.

Conclusion:

Covid-19 shattered all the countries irrespective of the status. Being the second most populated country India took the decision of country wide lockdown from 18th March 2020 to minimize the human loss. Though it was a good decision taken by the Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi that time, it resulted in loss to women in the sense of employment, income, equity etc. Still the world is facing the Corona Variants and it may continue for further years. So, there is a need to make aware the people about the present and future situations of corona virus.

Governments and NGOs, women associations must take the measures to empower women to overcome covid-19 impact.

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