

Impact of COVID-19 on Women in India: An Empirical Research

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has impacted the lifestyles of every individual all around the world and has impacted the economy of every nation. It has left a negative impact on India, especially on the Indian woman to a great extent. This period was a nightmare for most Indian women irrespective of class, education and other socio-cultural backgrounds. Violence against women has increased to a great extent, and along with that their work pressure has also increased greatly. Increased work pressure, abuse, harassment, job loss, made an impact negatively on the physical and mental health of the female to a large extent. The majority of the women have stated that at some point of time during the pandemic period the individual had gone through domestic violence, and that increases anxiety, depression among woman. On the other hand, due to gender biasness, women in India lost more jobs compared to men. In addition, lack of education, lack of availability of resources, lack of medical help have also increased the number of stillbirths, miscarriages and eventually given rise to the number of maternity deaths to a large extent.

Keywords: Mental health; COVID-19; Domestic violence; Depression

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has impacted the lives of every individual and their lifestyles, standard of living to a great extent. Sudden outburst of Coronavirus pandemic affects the overall speed of life and the economic condition of the nations. In emerging economies the effects of COVID-19 have impacted the standard of living of the middle class people. In most of the cases this pandemic has made the lives of Indian women and girls into a hell in some cases. As per the survey of 2021, most of the people from across the world believed that Coronavirus had impacted and will also impact women negatively [1]. In addition, violence against women has increased to a great extent during the pandemic period. Not only in homes several working and empowered women have lost their jobs and fallen into the well of depression.

Apart from that, maternity services have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as some of the services were suspended and this has given rise to the maternity deaths. In 2020, over 4 million children were born in India with the assistance of institutional deliveries and over 277 thousand births were practised at homes [2]. In the first half of 2020 over 112

thousand women in the state of Uttar Pradesh gave birth to their babies at home. On the other hand, 43% of women have agreed that the pandemic period has made the individuals anxious, depressed and ill due work overload in their homes. Most shockingly the rate of domestic violence has increased 15.3% [3]. The scenario was much less similar in all over India and in Delhi a woman panel asked the government to provide safety to women. Around 31% of all crimes against women registered in the year 2021 were domestic abuse, assaults and molestation at 20.8%.

In some cases, pandemic have helped working women to boost their career in the long run. In some of the case lock down have provide the much needed work opportunity to some of the woman especially in urban area. On the other hand, in most of the scenario child marriage, cyber violence and trafficking have also increased to a great extent. All this eventually has impacted the psychology of Indian women and has increased anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses along with physical illness. It is noticeable that the second wave of pandemic has impacted Indian women and girls to a great extent. It has also been observed that in rural areas of India women were more prone to infections due to lack of hygiene and proper guidance [4]. On

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the other hand, in comparison to men woman lost more jobs during the time of pandemic, which signifies gender bias essential to authority in emerging economies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods and materials play a crucial role in the successful accompaniment of the study. Selection of suitable methods and tools are essential as this helps researchers to ensure effective and impactful representation of the study. This entire study has been carried out with the help of case study research design. This helps researchers to obtain all the crucial and essential data related to all the aspects of the subject matter of the study [5]. In addition, interpretivism research philosophy has also been implemented to ensure successful accomplishment of the study. The major reason for selecting this research philosophy is that this helps researchers to ensure representation of valid and sound findings. Interpretivism research philosophy also helps researchers by proving the much required flexibility during the entire time of the research progress. In addition, an inductive approach has also been incorporated to generate new theories from the observation of the subject matter.

One of the major reasons for selecting this research approach is that this helps researchers to develop new theories for the sake of successful accomplishment of the study. Secondary data has also been collected from the authentic and reliable sources to ensure successful completion of the overall study. All the crucial and authentic data has been collected from authentic and trustworthy websites, peer-reviewed journals and articles. On the other hand quantitative methods have been implemented by looking into the demand of the study and to ensure robust and effective findings. In order to secure the success factor of the study all the aspects related to the subject matter have been evaluated critically. Excel sheets have been generated from the collected data in order to represent the findings effectively. Apart from that, reliability and validity of the research has also been maintained to strengthen the success factor of the study. Apart from that all the ethical approach has also been followed to ensure successful completion of the study.

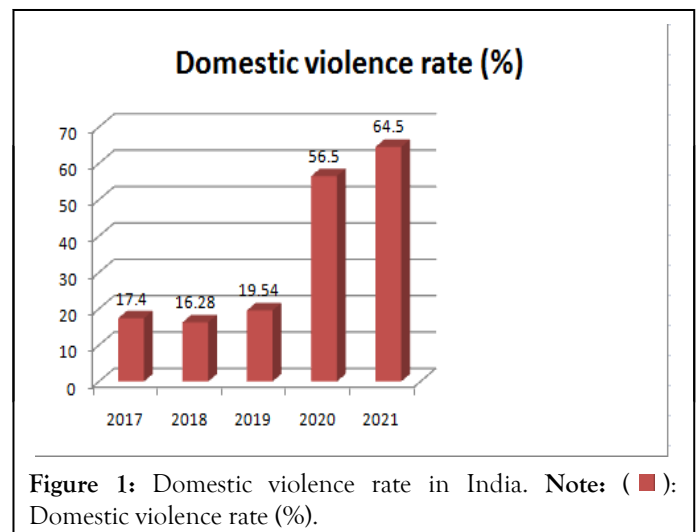
RESULTS

Domestic violence

Pandemic period is considered as one of the toughest periods for each and every individual across the globe. In the entire nation COVID-19 pandemic hand affected negatively all the aspects such as economies, employees, lifestyle and standard of living and so on [6]. In emerging economies this has impacted horrifically and the day to day lives of middle class people have been highly impacted due to the pandemic period. In this scenario, the lives of women have become worse as this made the lives of Indian girls and women into a nightmare. In the majority of cases Indian women had to go through domestic violence each day and pandemics have increased the rate of domestic violence to a great extent. Domestic violence is not new in India, for centuries Indian women have been facing domestic violence in terms of abuse, assaults and molestation.

Pandemic have eventually influenced the overall scenario to a great extent and made the lives of women hell in India. As per a

survey 48% women have declared safe from domestic violence and the remaining 52% women have faced some sort of violence at their homes during the lockdown [7]. Despite that most of the women have also been aggressive in their responsibilities have also increased during the pandemic period. The main reason for increasing domestic violence was the presence of offenders all the time. Job loss and interruption in income are the main reasons for this scenario. On the other hand, the crisis of food, lack of stability in life and attraction toward alcohol have also acted as the major reasons for the increasing number of domestic violence. All this has impacted the mental health of the woman to a great extent (Figure 1).



By looking into the above image it is evident that domestic violence has eventually increased during the pandemic time. At the time of lockdown mental pressure has increased greatly and the number of domestic violence cases has also increased to a great extent. In the year 2021, domestic abuse against women was at its peak in India. In addition, kidnapping, and abduction ranked eventually scored second in the list in that particular year [8]. Molestation and rapes were the headline in all over the country and apparently 43 thousand cases were reported in that year. These figures signify that the pandemic period was one of the toughest for Indian women in all over the nation. The individuals were not safe in their houses and in addition lack of education and lack of awareness have also led to mental illness and other physical illness among the Indian woman.

In the year 2021, around 45 thousand committed suicides due to mental pressure, abuse, violence and so on. Women in India were dealing with pandemic and at the same time with increased workload in household, anxiety, violence. This scenario was almost similar in all parts of India and in all classes. Socio-economic pressures have impacted daily life of the woman to a great extent.

Women employment rate in India

The Indian woman had to go through several issues during the lockdown. Despite domestic abuse the working woman had to face gender discretion greatly and that has increased the number of job loss in women. It has been observed that in comparison to male workers, women workers have lost their jobs. Gender

biases, inequality in wages and the burden of unpaid care have eventually pushed more women out of empowerment and into depression. Majority of women within the age group within 18 to 25 have stated that their mental health was greatly impacted at the time of COVID-19 pandemic [9]. Women lost their jobs from all around the world and this has eventually increased the unemployment rate among women especially in emerging countries like India. During the lockdown period the labour market suffered a lot and this negatively impacted the overall manufacturing sectors in India to a great extent.

By looking into the current scenario it is clear that after being locked down the labour market is healing from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. As per the report of 2021 the participation has increased to 47.9% in comparison to previous years [10]. The woman from across the India is facing sexual harassment gender inequality and other issues and it is everything that has influenced the entire factor greatly. Not only women lost their jobs but at the same time their health both physical and mental as impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In rural areas and outer courts of the cities the majority of women are associated with the job of domestic help and during the pandemic period the majority of the women have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 protocol. It is affected that women lost two 3rd of their income during the pandemic.

On the other hand, loss of social addiction has also increased the mental pressure in women compared to men. Apart from that unemployment and increased workload in the household have given life to mental illness, anxiety and depression in the majority of women. Additionally domestic violence and abuses have even surely increased the overall mental illness among women in India. In rural areas the mental health of women has impacted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic compared to urban areas in India. In comparison, the depression among women has increased 38% in India and expansion, anxiety have also increased 73% and 44% respectively [11]. On the other hand it is also evidence that the increased pressure in domestic help, job loss and increased domestic violence in women have naturally increased mental health shoes among women during the pandemic time.

Pandemic was a crisis period for each and every human being all over the world. This period has impacted the education sector, other industries such as the manufacturing sector, automobile IT and so on [12]. Because of the COVID-19 protocol several organisations have to cut off some of the employees and this gave rise to sudden unemployment. In this scenario women from all over the world have to deal with other issues along with unemployment. It has been observed that female workers were forced to leave compared to male employees. In India it has been observed that female workers lost more jobs in comparison to the male workers and that has led to anxiety, depression. During the pandemic time the number of anxiety, depression has increased to a large extent among women. Along with that females had to go through other issues such as gender discrimination, abuse, harassment, violence at their house.

Apart from that females have also gone through unequal wages and unpaid care and have impacted their mental and physical health and also led to poverty in some cases. In the year 2021

rural Indian women had lost their jobs and the number was 80% [13]. It is evident that Indian women eventually spend more time doing unpaid care work at home than men. On an average Indian woman spends 9.8 times more time doing household chores and at the time of pandemic this unpaid work raised unto 30%. During this time the amount of abuse, violence has also increased along with their mental pressure. It became directly for many woman to survives that period not because of the pandemic but the amount of torture and abuses have increased and the lives of some of the Indian woman have become night mare (Figure 2).

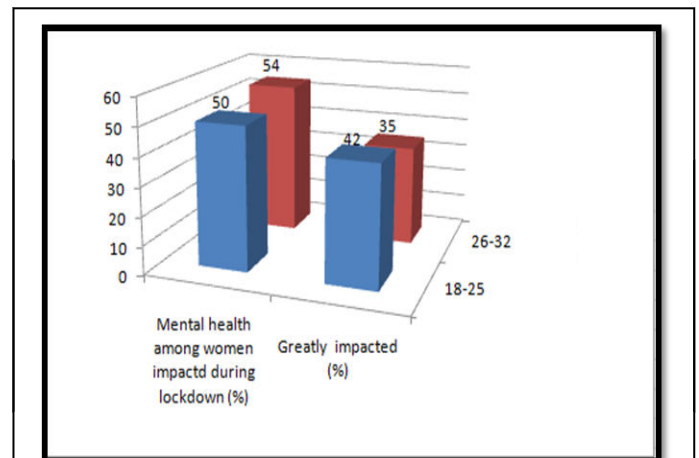


Figure 2: Mental pressure among woman in COVID-19 period. **Note:** (■):18-25; (■):26-32.

In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic was a great opportunity for some of the women to get a better opportunity to expertise and utilize work from home, a better opportunity to boost their skills and income. However the number of these scenarios is comparatively negligible to the woman who had to deal with several issues. Lack of income and lack of access to essentials has made women susceptible to diseases including COVID-19. In India the woman employability rate has also dropped in the year 2021. In the year 2020 the woman employability rate in women was 47% that will drop to 41% in 2021 that signifies the overall circumstance to a great extent (Figure 3).

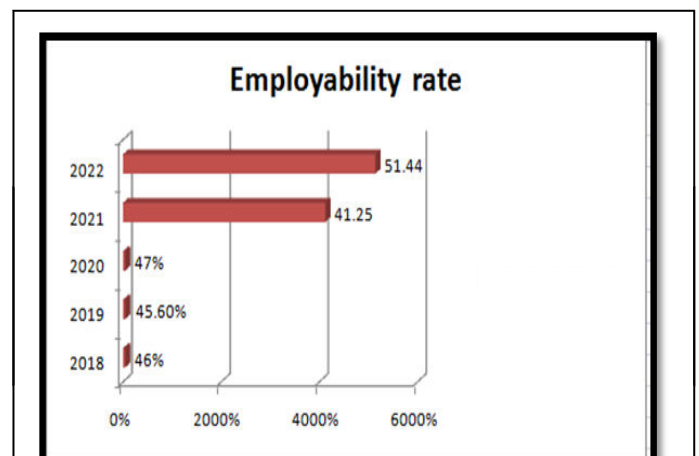


Figure 3: Employability rate in India. **Note:** (■): Employability rate.

Maternity deaths rate in India

Maternity deaths have also been influenced during the pandemic period in rural parts of India. Due to the nationwide lockdown many women have failed to reach hospitals on time and this has increased the death rate to a great extent. In comparison to 2018 maternity deaths have increased during the pandemic unto 25% [14]. The COVID-19 pandemic have also shown the lack of suitable governed policies and facilities in Indian and moreover lack of awareness related to the hygiene and safety related to maternity care. Apart from that it is noticeable that that ratio is capable of portraying that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the overall health of women. COVID-19 pandemic has led to adverse effects on the health of individuals.

This condition has a high impact on the maternity life of every woman which may fall under negative conditions of the main society. This has been raised throughout the world due to huge less effective strategy and policy of government. It is evident that creation of contentment zones, lack of availability of vehicles and lack of facilities in terms of expert candidates, resources and so on, has ultimately impacted maternity care to a great extent. This scenario has not only impacted the health of the women but at the same time this has impacted the health of the new born baby to a great extent. [15] After the pandemic the situation was a bit under control and availability of vehicles, and availability of resources have made the scenario better from the earlier.

Major statistical report has shown that antenatal care services in India have affected 22.91% and the immunisation system has also reduced at this time with 20% [16]. This has depicted that avoidance of proper maternity care in the hospital has raised the level of mortality. This has raised concerns that the government might take more strategy and policies which facilitate maternity care of women. Many underdeveloped states in India have received a low rate of proper food and useful requirements which has affected major the health of women. This in turn has impacted the overall health of mother and baby to a great extent. On the other hand this signifies that lack of proper strategy of the Indian government and most essentially the willingness of the family members of the expecting mothers have ultimately impacted the overall health

Pregnancy complications and careless activity on women may receive huge obstacles in the maternity life of women. Severe bleeding, high blood pressure, unsafe abortion, complications on delivery and infection may cause complications in pregnancy [17]. As a consequence, in the lockdown period many people get jobless and this time women do not get better care for lack of doctors and proper treatment. Conditions during the pandemic time have become worse for the pregnant woman as the work pressure at their homes has increased to a great extent and make the overall atmosphere suffocating for the woman. Apart from that this situation has also led to severe conditions such as pregnancy loss or stillbirth [18]. It has also observed that during the COVID-19 period there were 3213 live births, 77 miscarriages and 824 undelivered pregnancies. These numbers are not only smoking but at the same time this signifies the lack of policy and lack of awareness. There were several women that

required postpartum care but due to lack of doctors, resources, and awareness of the families this has greatly impacted.

Women of India had to deal with several obstacles at the time of pandemic and this have eventually made thirty lives more difficult for the Indian woman. In some of the regions women were not able to access medical help at the time of their pregnancy and this has increased the number of maternity deaths. Lack of availability of doctors, resources, and food has impacted the healthcare of pregnant women and newborn babies to a large extent. Lack of awareness and policies and willingness of the family members of the pregnant women have their pregnancy and postpartum difficult. This situation eventually led to several miscarriages, stillbirth and so on.

DISCUSSION

From the above discussion it is evident that the overall circumstances for Indian women at the time of COVID-19 pandemic were difficult to a great extent. By looking into the results of this particular study it is noticeable that in India the majority of women had dealt with several obstacles and issue that led to worldwide crisis COVID-19. At some point that time period was one of the toughest for the majority of human individuals and in India it was a bit more difficult for the woman. Women had faced issues in each and every aspect and at their houses females were not safe. It has been noticed that domestic violence has increased at that point of time to a great extent. Not only that women had to go through mental and physical abuse, assault, harassment, inequality in pay check and so on.

In 2021, the majority of cases have been registered related to violence against women. On the other hand, depression, anxiety has also increased among Indian women. It is evident that crime against women has increased to a great extent. One of the major reasons behind the increased number of crimes was job loss, poverty, drinking habits and spending 24 hours with the abusers. In most of the cases females had to face violence from their husband and other family members. Apart from that the workload has also increased for the woman up to 31% and this has eventually given rise to anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses. Females have also faced difficulties to avail medical help at the time of COVID-19 pandemic. Expecting mothers have to go through several issues during the pandemic period and this has eventually increased the number of maternity deaths.

In addition, lack of essentials, lack of availability of the doctors and vehicles have also increased the number of stillbirth due to forced delivery at homes. On the other hand, women also went through unemployment during the pandemic time. Inequality is not new in India; it has been faced by women for centuries. At the time of COVID-19 pandemic, women candidates have lost more jobs compared to the male workers. In addition, unequal wages and unpaid care have also led women to unemployment and poverty. This eventually has made the lives of the female workers more difficult than male and on top of it crime against women has made the circumstances more difficult for women. From all the aspects and by assessing the graphs it is clear that women in India have faced many difficulties from all perspectives and that has made their lives a nightmare.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most difficult times for each and every individual and it is considered to be the hardest time in the past 100 years. The nationwide lockdowns have impacted socio-economic development all around the world to a great extent. Lifestyles of every individual have been impacted to a great extent due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances have impacted more on the emerging economies and in India the life of every individual was full of challenges. The lives of Indian women were a bit difficult to a large extent and this in turn has also impacted the individuals mentally and physically. Domestic violence, gender inequality, gender stereotypes are not new in India. Indian women have been dealing with these aspects for several decades. During the time of COVID-19 pandemic crime against women has increased to a great extent and this not only has impacted the health of the individual but at the same time this has led to mental illness. In addition, the majority of women have lost more jobs compared to men and by looking into the graphs it is clear that gender biasness, stereotypes have eventually increased the number of unemployment among women. On the other hand COVID-19 has also impacted the Health Care sector and access to health care for women to a great extent. Lack of availability of medical staff, doctors, and other essentials have made the life of pregnant women difficult. Not only have that, lack of awareness and education of the family members and government policies also impacted the healthcare of pregnant women and newborn babies negatively. Number of stillbirth, miscarriages has also increased at the time of the pandemic. Apart from that, the mental health of the Indian women was severely affected due to the excessive workload and increased amount of violence, job loss, and unequal wages and so on. In some cases the scientific period has served the return of activity for some women to expand their expertise and utilize work from home to a great extinction but the number is negligible. Hence it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic period was not only challenging for the woman but at the same time it was a battle for the survival from COVID-19 and other hazards.

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