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SOCIO–ECONOMICS OF COVID-19 IN INDIA

EDITOR

Dr. Pooja Kansra



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PREFACE

Coronavirus illness (COVID-19) is an infectious disease and designated as “Public Health Emergency”. According to World Health Organization (WHO) a mix of social distancing, contact tracing, testing and isolation is essential to curtail the impact of coronavirus. However, social distancing was recognized as the utmost preventive measure to safeguard the masses from the adverse consequences worldwide. But, it includes hidden costs such as job loss, loss of livelihood, uncertainty, fear of infection, fear of sudden death of the family members and themselves. The current pandemic has affected social interactions as well the economic activities in the world.

As an academician, it is my responsibility towards my society and hence I tried to come up with an edited book “Socio-Economics of COVID-19 in India” with contributions from different authors from different corners of the country on a wide range of ideas and knowledge. On the whole the present book provides a comprehensive understanding of the various socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 such as digital education, e-commerce, intangible cost, agriculture sector, Omni channels, hostel industry, MSMEs, migrant labor and gender aspects. The diverse bunch of chapters on the above themes tried to investigate various issues conceptually as well as empirically. I hope readers will appreciate this endeavor and further advance the spirit of systematic enquiry to not only interpret what is happening, but also suggest ways and means to take the fruits of development to the masses. Written in an accessible style, this book will be useful for the policy makers, students, teachers and related institutions.

I hope the present volume will result in some meaningful contribution to the society and economy as a whole.

I would like to acknowledge the support I received from my contributors, reviewers, publisher, and well-wishers.

I hope you enjoy reading the book and we wish you success.

Editor
Dr. Pooja Kansra

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STRUGGLE TO MAKE A LIVING IN TIMES OF COVID-19: A CASE STUDY OF DAILY WAGE-EARNERS IN POOMANGALAM PANCHAYAT, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

It's been more than one year since COVID-19 had problems with us. The problems caused by COVID-19 pandemic are not over today. Although vaccination against the pandemic is progressing in the country, second wave of COVID-19 and its novel variations are causing a lot of concern. Scientists doubt the third wave too. In recent times, exactly since April 2021, India has been witnessing a surge in Covid-19 infections with the country seeing over 3 lakh fresh cases of COVID-19 daily. The numbers of COVID cases are increasing sharply in the irrespective of big cities and small villages. Doctors and nurses are sweating to save mankind. Economists are striving for ways to bring back the economy to stability. The pandemic has greatly affected the lives of common people of India. The majority of the people and the poor in India are either daily wage earners or working in the unorganized sector. They really earn to survive than to live. The pandemic had become a nightmare to their present and future subsistence. The problems caused by COVID-19 on their livelihood continue unabated. This paper focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on daily wage earners of Poomangalam Grama Panchayat in Kerala.

Keywords: COVID-19, economy, livelihood, wage

1. INTRODUCTION

The motto of today's era is to survive rather than to live. We are living in uncertain conditions. COVID-19 becomes a nightmare to the world. In India after a 14-hour voluntary public curfew on 22 March, Prime Minister ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days on 24 March 2020, limiting movement of the entire 1.3 billion population of India as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 pandemic in India and still follows the lockdown regulations due to the uncertain situations in the society. Many people lost their jobs and livelihoods because of COVID-19. The daily wage earners and the poor working in the unorganized sector suffered the most. Food kits provided by the Kerala Government during lockdowns helped alleviate hunger but still needed money for their needs. A job that provides a steady income is still a chore for the rural poor. Unlike the salaried employees, they only get wage when they go to work. Such issues in the unorganized sector are causing a lot of misery in their lives. There is a significant amount of income loss for rural households; loss of livelihoods for small and marginal farmers, landless families, and daily wage earners which has further compounded into thrusting them into severe poverty, unfavourable compromises and ill health. During COVID-19 lockdowns farmers were unable to work properly on their farmlands. Due to severe lockdown regulations, they were unable to bring their cultivated produce to the market and fetch reasonable remunerative prices which they were getting before. It led to distress sale and loss of livelihoods of those engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Other non-farming workers like cobblers, construction workers, weavers, tailors, small scale industrial workers, shopkeepers... etc, were also faced many difficulties to earn and to live.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of the daily wage earners of Poomangalam Grama Panchayat.
2. To examine the effect of COVID-19 on their employment opportunities and living conditions.

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey research is conducted among the daily wage earners who are residing at Poomangalam village. Primary data are collected from 50 selected households through a structured interview schedule from the respondents. Secondary statistics are collected from articles, publications, journals and from various internet sources to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the unorganized sector workers in India.

4. LIMITATIONS

1. One of the biggest constraints was communication with faced mask and COVID-19 protocols.
2. Couldn't get sufficient time to spend with the respondents and sometimes they were uncooperative.
3. On many occasion the respondents did not provide correct information regarding monthly income.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PANCHAYAT

Poomangalam Grama Panchayat is situated in Mukundapuram Taluk of Thrissur District, Kerala. It is under Vellangalloor Block Panchayat. The area of the Grama Panchayat is 10.94 sq. kilometers. The boundaries of the Panchayat are north - Irinjalakkuda Municipality, south - Vellangalloor Grama Panchayat, west - Padiyoor Grama panchayat and east - Velookkara Grama Panchayat and Vellangalloor Grama Panchayat. There are 13 wards in Poomangalam Grama Panchayat. The people in this region are engaged in agriculture, dairy farming and allied activities, small scale industries, self-employments, blue collar jobs etc.

Table 1: Demography of the Panchayat

Total population	13651
Male	6767
Female	6884
Density of Population	1052
Sex Ratio	1151
Literacy Rate	92.09
No. of Families	3407

Source: Secondary Data

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION

For conducting the study of the impact of COVID-19 on daily wage earners, 50 samples (27 male and 23 female workers) were randomly selected from the Aripalam ward (10th ward) of Poomangalam Grama Panchayat.

Table 2: Age composition of the sample

Age category	Number of workers	No. of Male	No. of female
Below 30	3	3	0
30-39	14	8	6
40-49	11	4	7
50-59	15	9	6
60 and above	7	3	4
Total	50	27	23

Source: Primary Data

The table highlights that majority of the sample population belongs to the age group of 50-59 years and 30-39 years.

Table 3: Classification on the basis of work

Mode of works	Number of workers	Percentage
Agriculturalists	2	4 %
Weavers	3	6 %
Tailors	6	12 %
Coolie workers	11	22 %
Construction workers	9	18 %
Industrial workers	3	6 %

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Shopkeepers	3	6 %
Auto-drivers	5	10 %
Sales men/ sales women	2	4 %
MGNREGA workers	4	8 %
Other works	2	4 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The table depicts the classification of the sample on the basis of the work they engage. They engage in different types of daily wage earning works like agriculture, weaving, tailoring, construction works, industrial works, driving, sales etc.

Table 4: Daily wages they earned before COVID-19 lockdown

Daily wage (in rupees)	Number of workers	Percentage
Below ₹ 400	1	2 %
₹ 400 - ₹ 500	12	24 %
₹ 500 - ₹ 600	24	48 %
₹ 600 - ₹ 700	10	20 %
Above ₹ 700	3	6 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows the daily wages earned by the sample before COVID-19 lockdown. Only one worker has the daily wage less than ₹ 400. Lion portion of the sample, that is, 48% of them receives the wage rate between ₹ 500 - ₹ 600.

Table 5: Average working days in a month before COVID-19 lockdown

No. of working days	No. of workers	Percentage
Less than 10	2	4 %
10 - 14	28	56 %
15 - 19	16	32 %
20 and above	4	8 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The table shows the average working days of the sample daily wage earners in a month before the COVID-19 lockdown. Only four workers among the sample were getting more than 20 days of work in a month. Majority of them, that is, 56% of the workers were obtaining only 10 to 14 working days and 32% of them were getting 15 to 19 days work in a month. Two workers were obtaining less than 10 working days in a month before the COVID-19 lockdown.

Table 6: Monthly income composition of the sample before COVID-19 lockdown

Income category	Number of persons	Percentage
Less than Rs.5,000	1	2 %
Rs.5,000 - Rs.10,000	25	50 %
Rs.10,000 - Rs.15,000	21	42 %
More than Rs.15,000	3	6 %
Total	40	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows the categorization of the sample on the basis of income. It is clear from the diagram that the lion percentage of sample, that is, 50% of them belongs to the income group of Rs.5,000 – Rs.10,000. The 21% of sample belongs to the income group of Rs.10,000 – Rs.15,000 and only 6% of sample belongs to the income group of more than Rs.15,000 per month. One among the workers has the monthly income of Rs.5,000.

Table 7: Average working days in a month after COVID-19 lockdown

]	No. of workers	Percentage
No working days	34	68 %
Less than 10	12	24 %
10 - 14	4	8 %
15 - 19	0	0 %
20 and above	0	0 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates the average working days of the sample daily wage earners in a month after the COVID-19 lockdown. 34 workers among the sample lost their job after the COVID-19 lockdown. Just 12 of them got less than 10 days of work. Only 4 of them obtained more than 10 to 14 working days during COVID-19 lockdown. No one among the sample received more than 15 days of work among the sample after severe lockdown measures in the selected area of study.

Table 8: Classification on the basis of COVID-19 infection

COVID-19 cases	Result	Percentage
COVID-19 infected	6	12 %
COVID-19 not infected	44	88 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: Primary Data

The table shows the classification of the sample on the basis of COVID-19 infection. 6 among them were tested COVID-19 positive. One among them was seriously affected. All are safe and tested negative now. 44 among them are safe and 3 of them tested COVID-19 negative after quarantine days due to COVID-19 contacts.

5. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- 1 Poomangalam Panchayat has a good sex ration of 1151 females for 1000 males. The sample village is highly densely populated than the state average.
- 2 Villagers of Poomangalam Panchayat are mostly engaged in manual jobs in the unorganized sector. The sample includes agriculturalists, weavers, tailors, coolie workers, construction workers, industrial workers, shopkeepers, auto-drivers, sales men/ sales women, MGNREGA workers and other manual workers.
- 3 Sample respondents are not getting sufficient wage for their job. 74% of the sample respondents were getting less than 600 rupee per day. Even if they are getting wage, they are not getting enough working days in a month before the COVID-19 lockdown.
- 4 After the COVID-19 lockdown their average working days in a month was decreased to 10 days 24% of the sample respondents and to zero for 68% of the respondents. It was a panicking finding from the study.
- 5 Quarantine and sitting in COVID-19 observation situations created fear and other related issues like lack of quarantine facility, sequester by the neighbours made a few respondents' living conditions worst.
- 6 Even though a few respondents faced certain issues as said above, Community Kitchen initiative by the Kerala Government through the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) with the support of Self Help Groups (SHGs) like Kudumbasree has provided free meals to the poor families in the region. They also provided services to those who are in quarantine, isolation and self-observation in the panchayat.
- 7 In this terrifying situation of COVID-19 lockdown 12% of the sample respondents were affected by the COVID-19 and they say that it was very difficult to move on their life because of lack of income. But

the free COVID-19 treatment by the Kerala Government helped them a lot to handle the expenses incurred other than their personal expenditures.

- 8 Distributing food kits to all ration card holders in the Kerala state helped the poor daily-wage earners to solve their problem of hunger. Majority of the respondents positively commented on this novel initiative by the Kerala government in this crisis situation.
- 9 Government, panchayat, NGOs, political parties, church, volunteer organizations and youngsters were active to help the needy during times of crisis. They provided free meals, quarantine facilities, hospital services and medicines to the people in the panchayat.
- 10 Regional Cooperative Bank of Poomangalam provided credit facility to the people in the panchayat. One family member was provided with 25,000 rupee loan facility at 5% rate of interest. Repayment clauses were relaxed due to severe lockdown in the state.

6. CONCLUSION

India is momentarily observing an instantaneous wave in the number of COVID-19 outbreaks. Although the nationwide lockdown has been worthy to abate the extent of massive COVID-19 issues, the country's ever-mounting population, particularly elevated population density and impoverished and inadequate socioeconomic living circumstances are critical obstacles in India's struggle against COVID-19. Since the time of the COVID-19 lockdown, there has been an overwhelming crisis of employment opportunities in local labour markets. Low wage rates, shortened working days and insecurity in the employment sector made the life of daily-wage earners worst and they are striving to meet the ends of their life. The study in the Poomangalam panchayat was alarming in these drastic situations of lockdown. Thanks to the Kerala Government, government bodies, NGOs, political parties, Social Help Groups, church, religious organizations, volunteer groups, rescue associations and youngsters for providing free food and other necessary services to the poor and needy in this hardship. Nevertheless, to go forward we have to curb the emerging COVID-19 cases in the nation and should flatten the curve of COVID-19 positives. The government has to relax the lockdown then to make the life of the common man normal. However, to survive than to live is more crucial now to have a better prospect in the coming days.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Dr. Pooja Kansra is presently working as an Associate Professor of Economics at Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab (India). She has a teaching experience of thirteen years. Her areas of research includes health economics, labor economics, gender economics, insurance and informal sector. She is a life-time member of Indian Economic Association. She is an avid researcher and presented papers in various national and international conferences. She is the recipient of five best paper awards from reputed institutions such as IBS, NIT Srinagar, Delhi University and Lovely Professional University. She has to her credit various research papers published in Scopus Indexed Journals including *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, *Journal of Health Management (Sage Publications)*, *Global Business Review (Sage Publications)*, *International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries (Springer Publications)*, *Health and Population: Perspectives and Issues (MOHFW)* etc. She has published several books on the various aspects of health economics and COVID-19. She was granted a copyright for development of a “Health Information Tool” by the Copyright Office, Government of India. She is an editorial board member/reviewer in several national and international journals. She has designed curriculum and as well as pedagogy for the effective learning in Lovely Professional University. She is an active member of Board of Studies of Economics at Lovely Professional University.



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