

## **Covid-19 and Women Empowerment of Marginal section in India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The global pandemic of Covid-19 has brought with it various new challenges for both men and women. With positive cases of the pandemic rising in number every day it highlights how very weak we are as human beings. India saw the first wave of women empowerment in 1950 when the government granted the universal suffrage (right to vote), followed by access to quality education for women. However, with the growing pandemic and constant lockdowns the socio-economic aspects of life of women, especially the marginal sections, has been deeply affected. Since all stays at home during lockdowns, with gendered roles subjecting women to most household chores, there has been a rise in the reports of domestic abuse and domestic violence, affecting the mental and physical health and security of women. Migrant women working in non-essential service industries such as food service and hospitality and domestic workers in predominantly female-heavy sectors are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and loss of employment. There is also a need to consider the loss of employment for women-headed households (often widowed/divorced/separated) with higher livelihood needs. Women in Healthcare are especially vulnerable owing to inadequate provision of safety equipments for their protection, exposing themselves and their family as well. The government must provide redressal mechanisms from law and enforcement to curb these new problems that hampers women largely from the informal sector and thereby regain or retain their empowerment.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Covid-19, Pandemic, Women empowerment, Marginal women, Domestic violence, Gendered roles, Women education, Women in Healthcare, Mental health, Migrant women workers, Domestic workers.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

With the unprecedented global health emergency, the Indian government announced a nationwide lockdown to prevent transmission of the corona virus on March 24, 2020 and met with a worst-case public health crisis. Universally the Covid-19 pandemic has severely and adversely impacted humanity irrespective of race, class, creed and gender, but with a more adverse effect on the poor and disadvantaged section. Given their lower level of immunity men may be more affected than women by the pandemic of Covid-19. However in India, while men's immune systems may be less equipped to fight the virus, the socio-economic consequences of Covid-19 has deeply affected women population as gender inequality has always been a persistent challenge.

In India women have historically been employed in five sectors namely agriculture, health, education, paid domestic work and manufacturing. The majority of women workers in these five sectors are self employed with 63 percent engaged in agriculture while most are regular workers. Anyone can be exposed to the virus but the poor section of society is most vulnerable as they do not have the means to cope on their own. India has a vast workforce with more than 450 million people in the informal sector (Sharma 2020) where 90% of women work in informal sectors, of which 20% work in urban areas (Geetika, Singh and Gupta 2011). The informal sector in India is the worst affected as it is highly insecure and unregulated, with few or no social security provisions. According to the International Labor Organization, 2020 the Covid-19 crisis is expected to have a long term impact on the informal sectors. Majority of them uses public transport systems such as buses, trains etc and are the most vulnerable communities that are exposed to the current global pandemic (Sengupta and Jha, 2020). Besides extreme poverty and food scarcity that are already prevalent among the informal sector workers continuous lockdowns has cut off most means of sources of work or earning of these section and they gradually run out of their savings. This eventually lead to poverty, undernourishment, growing financial insecurity and psychological stress of members of a household, especially women as there is a steady increase demands of their time running household chores and taking care of old and young members of the household. The pandemic also aggravates prevalent gender inequalities and vulnerabilities; and is characterised as a

gendered pandemic in combination with its classed and racialized dimensions (Harvey 2020). Covid-19 has unevenly impacted women and girls in the domains of health, economy, social protection, and gender-based violence (UN 2020).

With pre existent *norms prevailing on gender roles*, a woman's assigned roles as care givers and care takers of the rest of the household members intensified. She is burdened domestically and economically and many women loss their jobs and become dependent on other household members who are majorly male. Women – headed household are very hard hit as their situation became very insecure. Covid-19 pandemic has decreased the employability chances of women because of increase in hours of care work. Due to social norms women are already performing 76.2% of the total hours of unpaid care work, more than three times as much as men. Furthermore with schools closed during lockdowns care burdens dramatically increases for women, especially mothers in the household as they guide and supervise their school going children with their online classes and assignments etc; while caring for the sick and vulnerable elderly family members at the same time. Working mothers have to multi-task household chores with professional duties online. She plays the role of an educator to their school going children by adapting to learning online mode of teaching while facing tough and demanding conditions at home at the same time. Thus women and girls are exposed to contracting the virus from infected family members, and also reduce time spent on generating on income, operating business and in many cases loss of their present job. Women have the longest days, shortest rest and the highest stress, making them easy targets of the virus or any sickness. Even if they do manage to stay healthy, their condition requires special attention and action. Many women experienced feelings of isolation, limitations, restrictions, and being overwhelmed during the pandemic mostly due to the sudden changes in routine, from being at work to being unemployed , exacerbated by the burden of a series of responsibilities including managing the household with limited resources and child rearing. These further negatively impacted her psychologically and socially.

#### *Socio - Cultural impact*

In India even though *socio-economic inequalities* existed prior to the pandemic, Covid-19 has emerged as a crisis that negatively impacted all sections of society; and continuous lockdowns has aggravated inequalities in various aspects. Mostly the underprivileged sections are rendered impoverished and require support from the government system and policies implemented for their welfare. Research in Mumbai slum communities, which is the biggest Covid-19 spot, reveals the ways in which lockdowns exacerbate the marginalization of women, especially the poor section. Even in normal times women face extra burdens when infrastructure is inadequate. Sitaram Shelkar (Pani Haq Samiti, a non profit that focus on water access) held that about 4.5 million people in Mumbai lack access to a household water connection, forcing them to line up at common water taps. During lockdown, owing to summer heat and emphasis on frequent hand washing, household water needs have increased and even in the wee hours of the morning women spends a long time queuing up for water, where many face sexual and verbal harassment. For women living in slums, whose overall access was already limited, they experienced an important issue of access to toilets as the lockdown resulted in overcrowding of public toilets available in the slums. These results in unhygienic conditions and unsafe situations for women as there are constant surveillance by men on these public toilets which was less prevalent before the pandemic. Anxieties around infection is one dominant experience of many women migrant workers living in the slums. They are worried mainly due to the limited scope for social distancing owing to close proximities of their houses and that increases the chance of contracting the virus. Moreover, only a few women with various domestic problems are aware of the Government initiated tele-counselling services to address mental health issues.

The covid-19 crisis poses a challenge to food security and malnutrition (Khanna 2020). In many parts of India, socio-cultural norms in Indian families subject women to eat last (when all members of her family are done with their meals) and she has to make do with whatever is left behind. Research has shown that financial strain and food shortage due to the pandemic affect women's nutrition more than men's. Gender dynamics plays a crucial role in compromises, especially among the lower sections on the society, where women are at the forefront in skipping meals due to shortage of food, and comprising their sanitary and hygienic needs as a result of poverty. Covid-19 has negatively impacted marginal women and their children with closure of schools, Anganwadis, informal clinics, parks and other recreational facilities as a result of which their children are deprived of education and that of mid day meals on which many have been dependent on. Many children of marginal section dropped out of school and health access of many women is adversely affected by closure of local clinics.

There has been a rise in cases of *domestic violence* all across the world ever since the lockdown. Complaints on domestic violence have increased by 50 percent. 1 in 3 women faces some form of partner harassment as per WHO reports. After the lockdown India has recorded more than twofold rise in gender based violence and the total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March,2020 (March 2-8) to 257 in the final week (March 23-1April,2020). One major aspect for domestic abuses is related to *domestic chores based on gendered roles* where majority of the domestic work is socially and culturally assigned. Domestic work can be specially taxing for the woman if chores are not divided equally, especially in household where there are no live-in or part time domestic help owing to the lockdown. On 6<sup>th</sup> April the United Nations

Chief has acknowledged a steep rise in cases of domestic violence due to lockdown and has appealed for treating such cases as essential cases. *Compulsive staying indoors of incompatible couples* due to lockdowns aggravates the chances of different kinds of violence, many of which led to *divorce*. This highlights the uncertainty and insecurity of women's position irrespective of her background, in a country like India which still has social stigma and stereotypical attitude on its women. NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma said that in many instances in 2020, women's economic insecurity, increased stress levels, anxiety, financial worry, and lack of other such emotional support from her parent's side may have resulted in domestic violence (Assam Tribune, Jan 3, 2021).

The National Commission for Women has tried to respond to such problems and has launched a dedicated hotline (including circulating a whatsapp number) for women experiencing violence at home during this period. It is estimated that in the second week of April, nearly 2500 women in Delhi called the emergency helpline number. Out of this 1612 calls dealt with domestic violence. Between 25 March 2020 and 31 May 2020, more than 30,000 complaints of domestic violence were made by women which is higher compared to the data of last 10 years. Among the states, the highest number of complaints were received from Uttar Pradesh followed by Delhi, Haryana and Maharashtra. Among the nature of complaints the right to live with dignity and domestic violence occupy the highest number of complaints followed by harassment of married women or dowry harassment and molestation (NCW, January 2021).

Owing to lack of access to helpful neighbours or parental homes, tending to children at home, and lower courts of judiciary not working, the courage and motivation to take action has diminished and women have been forced to suffer silently. Her situation got worse after the government's decision to open liquor shops, as it heightened domestic abuse. According to the Thomas Reuter Foundation's findings of 2018, India is the most dangerous nation in regard to sexual violence against women. In India Covid-19 provided an ideal situation with frustrated men facing issues like job insecurity, unemployment and constant lockdown which resulted in craving for alcohol and further leading to indulgence (as it was initially unavailable but later reopened by the Government after 40 days of lockdown). The link between domestic and consumption of liquor has been highlighted by the women's movement but in spite of what she faces there has been no advisory issued at the national level to declare domestic violence as an emergency.

Aparna Joshi (Project Director of iCall, a mental health helpline) stated that harassment escalate behind closed doors where several unemployed men, while struggling to access tobacco and alcohol, unload their frustrations and anger through physical, verbal and sexual assault on women members of their household. Analyzing the situation Rekha Sharma, NCW Chairperson says, "The machinery under the protection of Women for Domestic Violence Act had not been identified as an essential service during the lockdown. Hence, protection officers and NGOs were not able to visit households of victims and police officers being at the frontline to tackle Covid-19 were overstretched to help victims effectively".

#### *Economic impact*

In regard to the uneven economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on men and women recent reports has highlighted that women workers have suffered more due to the pandemic-induced lockdown than their male counterparts (TOI, 17 Sep, 2020). An informal workers' survey conducted by Action Aid Association between May and June covering 20 Indian states shows more women were out of work post-lockdown compared to men. In fact, by mid-May, 79% of the women surveyed reported they were unemployed compared to 75% of men. Additionally, 51.6% of the women reported no wages during the lockdown period compared to 46% of men.

As per new data released by UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme, an estimated 87 million women and girls are living in extreme poverty in India in 2020 and this number is expected to increase to around 100 million by 2021 in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the pre-pandemic poverty rate for females in India was 13.3% compared to 12.1% for males. But by 2021, 14.7% of women and girls will be living in extreme poverty in India in comparison to 13.7% of men. This again shows the disproportionate economic impact of the pandemic on women. If this trend continues there would be a huge setback to women's empowerment in India and the world; and this will affect the health and prosperity of societies as a whole. Studies have shown that when women get empowered, educated and hold jobs, it leads to tangible improvements in the status of their families and societies. An educated mother can take better care of her children, vastly improving their chances at life. Working women tend to financially invest in the well-being of their families on priority; again improving the latter's material conditions. Moreover, when girls and women are educated and given equal opportunities at the workplace, they immediately increase the human resource, talent pool and brain power of the institutions they serve.

Therefore, providing equal opportunities for women and girls is not just a matter of natural justice but also qualitatively improves the conditions of societies, countries and humanity as a whole. In India's patriarchal social structure, women continue to be treated unequally and face myriad glass ceilings and as a result, there still exists gender pay parity etc. In times of a pandemic such as Covid-19, and when resources are scarce, patriarchal mores ensures that men get first right on resources while women bear the brunt of economic deprivation more than men whether they are jobs, wages, food or healthcare. But the long-term impact of such gender-based discrimination is

devastating and can put societies back many decades to close the gender poverty gap among individuals of ages 25 to 34.

#### *Migrant Women Workers*

During the pandemic migrant women workers are more vulnerable and face multiple deprivations from being poor and from their position as informal workers. Women face problems such as losing their livelihood, suffering human rights violations, and contracting Covid-19 (UN Women 2020). Women are potentially affected more because in many contexts they are considered to be less productive and subsequently have a lower position and rank in society (Chakraborty 2020).

In India *domestic workers* are mostly migrant workers in urban centres. The underage domestic workers in India are estimated to be about 12.6 million, 86% of whom are women (R.Mitra & A.Damle, the Labour women, The Wire. 2019). These workers are excluded from nearly all basic essential working condition: paid annual leave, medical leave, working time, minimum age coverage and social security. Post announcement of complete lockdown in India, domestic workers, whose sole income is mainly dependent on their individual employers, find themselves stranded and reliant on their employers' mercy. Many are often unpaid, exploited and abused by their employers. Therefore it is important that the government comes out with a comprehensive plan to address different aspects of violence which has been triggered by the present ongoing pandemic.

As per the census of 2011, almost 70 percent of the internal migrant community comprise of women. As a part of unorganised sector women migrant workers are lowest on priority to the planners and policy makers. Plight of *migrant women* workers during lockdown was so varied that they could not be sufficiently covered by the media reports. After the lockdown was imposed in late March, lakhs of migrant workers were left jobless and as a result, they began to march to their native villages. In the absence of transport, thousands of them travelled home afoot or cycles or were huddled in load carriers and trucks. Most migrant women had to face issues of personal safety and lack of sanitation on the roads. Moreover, there is a hidden patriarchy that embraces the return of men and often questions the return of women back home in spite of the many days she travelled to reach her home. Such factor highlights the vulnerability of women migrants and amongst other migrant crisis the State needs policies on prioritizing her safety and health. Dozens of migrant workers lost their lives on their way back to their homes and many died due to hunger, exhaustion, smouldering heat and the road accidents.

*Migrant crisis* are shrouded with heartbreaking stories of women, especially young mothers with young children who were desperate to reach home. In one case a migrant woman and her daughter lost their lives in a road accident while heading home under the lockdown. Even though the government later launched trains, those already on the move are not able to access those facilities. They are walking alone or in a group, some carrying children on their heads. An image showing a woman carrying her two kids on her shoulders went viral which send out a loud message of this crisis that truly highlights the plight of the underprivileged section. They do not have enough food or means to survive in the urban areas nor do they have the means to reach their homes safely. (shethepeople, May 13. 2020). At a railway station in Bihar's Muzaffarpur, a child tries to wake his mother, tugged at the cloth covering her until it came off. But his mother lied there motionless: she had died of starvation, dehydration and extreme heat. The video of the child and his dead mother has been widely shared on social media and it is one of the most tragic visual evidence of what the migrants are undergoing amid the lockdown imposed due to the Coronavirus spread. (Outlook May 27, 2020). In another incident a seven month pregnant woman in a group of 20 was seen walking from Ghansoli in Navi Mumbai to their village in Buldhana in Maharashtra, a journey of over 480 km, told NDTV that there was no arrangement of food and water. The death of most women, being physically weaker and having to bear various women-related issues including pregnancy among others, are caused by hunger, dehydration, and exhaustion. There was a question on the failure of our nation to address this heart wrenching migrant crisis, stories of apathy and gender-based crisis especially on health of pregnant migrant women.

The nature of work available to migrant workers makes social distancing very difficult and increases their chance of contracting the virus; and even if they contracted the virus they are aware of the costly treatment which they cannot afford. Moreover their identity as migrants adversely impacted their chance of getting support during this pandemic with the presence of discrimination and stigmatization of migrant workers which is evident in terms of secluding them from various social security measures. The Government has initiated tele-counselling services to address mental health issues, but few migrant workers are aware of these developments and many felt only minimal or non-existent support from the government in the absence of any viable sources of income. For instance, a domestic helper working in Delhi for 8 years recounted on empty promises on provision of a ration card or jobs nor financial support as they never materialized. (Abdul Azeez et al. 2020).

#### *Women in Health care*

Biologically women are put at a higher risk when they have to go medically unattended during their pregnancy, or other related health issues. Evidence from past epidemics indicates that resources are often

diverted from routine health services and this further reduces the already limited access of many girls and young women to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as maternal, new-born and child health services.

During lockdown a higher percentage of women employed in health and education sectors have regular (88% to 90% respectively) and public sector jobs (44% and 57% respectively) which safeguards their employment and economic benefits to an extent. The health workers are working at a higher personal risk providing care and treatment of many affected by the pandemic. Women comprise of the majority of our healthcare workers (with more than 40% of doctors and almost 85% of nurses being women) and face a higher risk of infection, morbidity, and death as a result of their profession. Many women work as staffs, nurses etc. in ill-equipped hospitals with negligent conditions and shortage of personal protection equipment (PPE) makes them vulnerable and exposed to the contagious virus and other infections. They are often harassed and threaten by public especially in the initial stage due to social stigma on the novel corona virus. She is compelled to live in quarantine due to threats of infection and often stay overnight at hospitals, away from her own children and parents for the cause of saving humanity.

The Government and various NGOs have cooperated and contributed in lowering plights of Indian women as a result of the ongoing pandemic. For instance, noteworthy is the role of women self help groups which were formed as a part of *National Rural Livelihood Mission* (NRLM). These women help rural areas cope with challenges of the pandemic from making mass and personal protective equipment to setting up of community kitchens to feed the poor and elderly, providing them banking services, and help in transferring of credit into their respective accounts. They also help spread information on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) such as hand hygiene, social distancing etc. among the illiterates and poor section. It is also worth to mention that over nine lakhs of female community health workers of *Accredited Social Health Activist* (ASHA) are risking their lives with no personal protective equipment and a meagre salary of Rs.4000 per month, in an endeavour to help and control the infected population in their communities. Another organization called *Plan International* (set up by British journalist John Langdon-Davies and refuge worker Eric Muggeridge in 1937) are concerned by how the Covid-19 outbreak would deeply affect the environment in which young children grow, especially the most marginalised girls, who are particularly affected by the secondary impacts of the outbreak due to harmful social norms and double discrimination based on age and gender. To meet the needs of girls and to protect them globally the organization work towards equitable, gender-transformative and protective of human rights. They held that Quarantine measures imposed as a response to pandemic are putting children at heightened risk of violence in the home and cutting them off from education, essential protection services and vital support.

#### *Position of women in the pandemic*

Even though there had been outbreaks of previous pandemics and public health crisis it is usually women's economic independence that bear the silent brunt, given the fact that she has a lower income and subjected to majority of gender roles and chores at home. Recent Lancet article points out that policies and public health efforts have not taken the gendered implications of the illness and the changing social organization despite the evidence from the past disease outbreak. (A. Shristy & N. Sharmishtha, ICRW, May 2020).

Even though there are laws to protect against domestic abuse, it is not easy for the judicial system to interfere or break into the stronghold of the households which is predominantly patriarchal. In a practical sense stereotypical ideologies of 'a woman's job is at home while a man is to earn' still exists in the Indian society. Debates had been raised on the importance of a gender-sensitive response. It has been analysed that there should be a focus on supporting women who face domestic violence; a recent court ruling in Delhi provides a roadmap publishing helplines, relaxing lockdown rules for women to leave home and seek support, and sensitising the police; and prioritizing women's employment. Initiatives to enhance digital access and skills should be targeted specifically to low income women. Direct employment programs providing necessary supplies should be expanded. For instance, the government in Andhra Pradesh is employing thousands of women to stitch masks. On the other hand, right from the initial stage of lockdown women volunteers in different states of North East India such as Assam, Mizoram etc. has stitched masks in large scales for their respective societies. In Mizoram, almost a week after lockdown in March 2020, a network of tailors come together to stitch protective masks, under the guidance of doctors and nurses, for medical professionals, policemen, truck drivers who are carrying essential supplies and most importantly the Local task Force who had dedicated their service to the community throughout the lockdown. (29 March, 2020. The Indian Express)

Jahnabi Phookan, 37<sup>th</sup> National President FLO (the Women's Wing of FICCI and the founder Vice Chairperson of FLO Northeast Chapter in 2007), hold that in her state Assam, and in all of India, women are expected not only to continue meeting the rigorous demands of professional life, but to also shoulder additional household responsibilities which have grown manifold as domestic helpers headed en masse to the safety of their own homes. Without easy access to domestic help and childcare facilities, it is difficult to balance working from home and working for home for the woman. She stresses that workplaces need to be more empathetic towards these women and create a working environment that respects their work-life balance; flexible working hours etc. Overall in India unemployment has increased, and a study by McKinsey stated that unemployment

surveys suggest that women actually account for 23% of overall job losses as a result of the pandemic. The gender wage gap is predicted to widen and women may soon find themselves having to accept lower wage terms to return to employment. During this pandemic almost everything has become digital and its inevitable dominance in the future indicates the significance of IT sector which can provide a lot of employment opportunities for women. The government therefore needs to support women workers with extensive training in this sector. Ms.Phookan, in her role as the National President, give importance to empowering women with entrepreneurship capabilities and professional excellence, enabling them to take up new challenges and avail of new opportunities.

In this way the paper attempt to study the adverse impact of Covid-19 pandemic on marginal Indian women in particular, and analyze on the extent on its impact on women empowerment.

### **Objective**

1. To observe the impact of Covid-19 on the marginal section of women in India.
2. To correlate the impact of Covid-19 on women and their empowerment.
3. To analyse the mental and physical impact of Covid-19 on the marginal section of women in India.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The paper is based on the following methods:-

- 1) Primary sources of data. The primary data is collected through questionnaire that was conducted online and administered through mail.
  - Technique is Structured Interview schedule and a questionnaire, using purposive sampling.
  - Number of respondents is 60 (consisting of 45 male and 15 female to maintain a balance of opinion).
- 2) Secondary sources of data such as books, Journals, printed materials, Publications, etc.

### **Analysis of data**

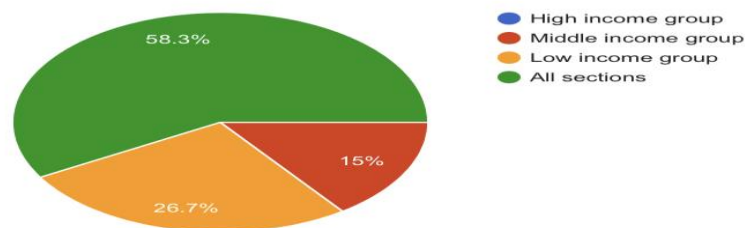
Information has been collected from respondents with multi-cultural background. The participants consist of both men and women with diverse background. Male respondents have been taken into account so as to have a balanced opinion on various issues.

#### **Covid -19 & women empowerment in India**

Questions Responses **60**

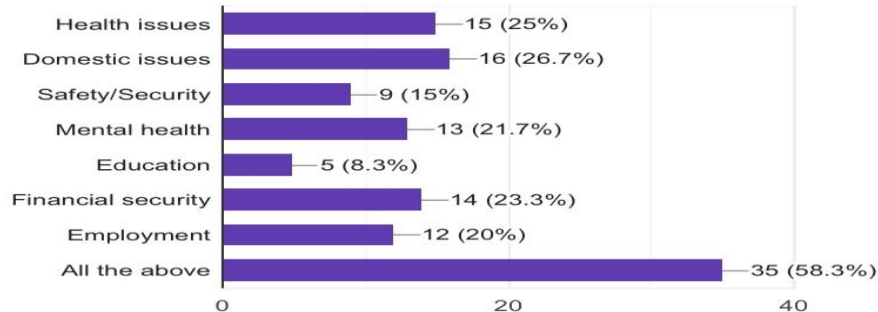
1. In your opinion, which section of women in India are mostly affected by Covid-19?

60 responses



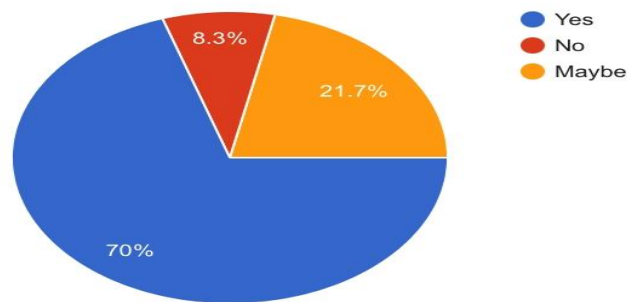
2. In what way do you think the marginalized women are affected by Covid-19 ? (Check all that apply)

60 responses



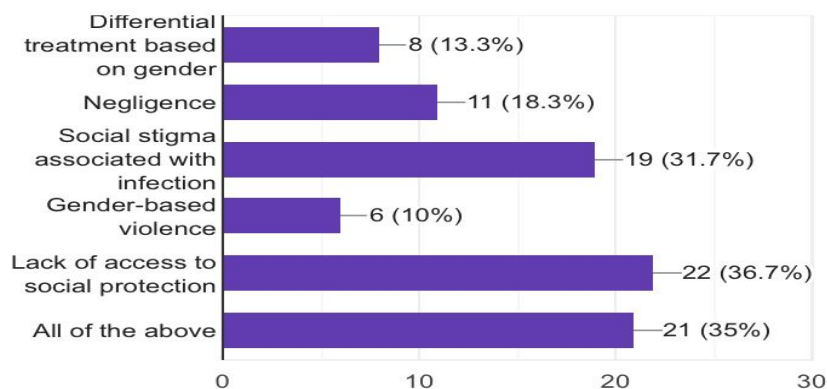
3. Are young school going girls of marginal sections affected by Covid-19?

60 responses



4. During emergencies such as the pandemic in developing countries like India, why do you think women and girls suffer the most? (Check all that apply)

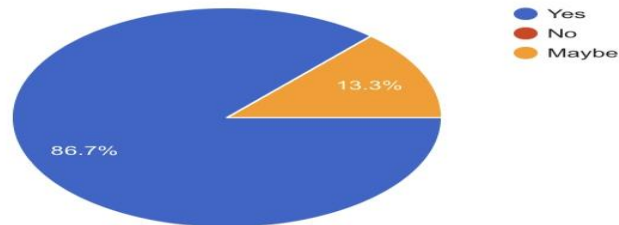
60 responses



5. Do you think the Government should expand women's form of work in post Covid-19 so as to empower them?

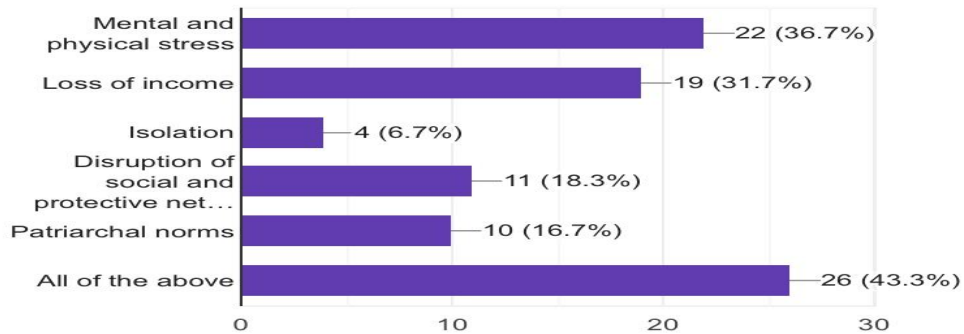


60 responses



6. What can intensify the risk of domestic violence on women during the pandemic/lockdown? (Check all that apply)

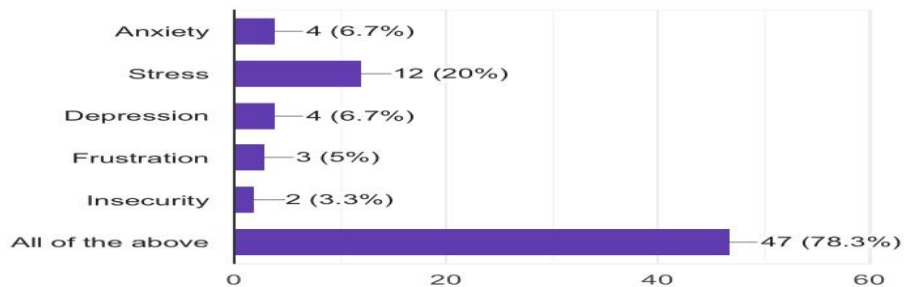
60 responses



7. In what nature would the mental health of women be affected during lockdown? (Check all that apply)



60 responses

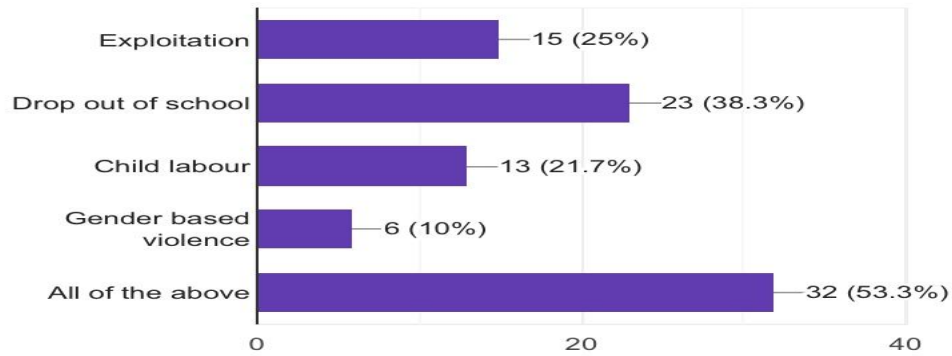




8. How would economic stress on marginalized families affect girls' positions?  
(Check all that apply)



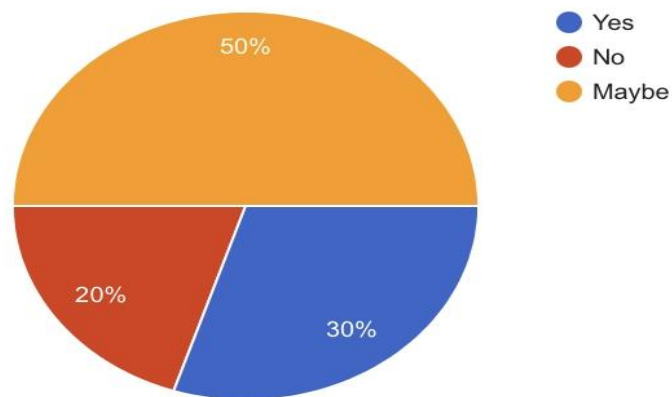
60 responses



9. Do you think women in India are less empowered than before in post Covid-19?

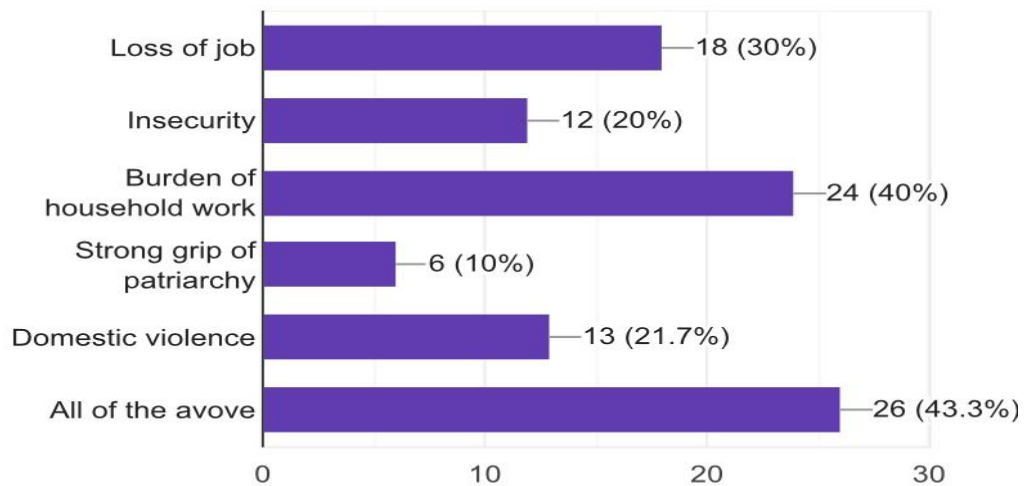


60 responses



**10. In what ways do you think women in general are less empowered than before in post Covid-19? (Check all that apply)**

60 responses



**III. FINDINGS**

The above charts have highlighted various opinions on Covid-19 and its impact on Indian women, especially its marginal section. 58.3% of the respondent feels that all sections of women are affected by Covid-19. On the issues that affected marginalized women more than 50% attribute it to health issues and domestic issues. 70% believed that school going girls of marginal sections are definitely affected by Covid-19; and it is felt women and girls suffer the most during the pandemic and its lockdowns due to lack of access to social protection (36.7%) and social stigma associated with the infection (35%). Over 80% feels that the Government should expand women’s form of work in post Covid-19 so as to empower them. Among issues that can intensify risk of domestic violence over 36% attribute it to mental and physical stress, 31% on loss of income, and 18% attributing to disruption of social and protective network, while 16% opted on patriarchal norms. In regard to the nature of impact on the mental health of women emphasis is given on stress, but however anxiety, depression, frustration and insecurity are given equal emphasis. Among economic impact on marginalized girls over 38% opted on Drop-out of school as a major impact. Overall question on whether women are less empowered after the pandemic 30% agreed on it and 20% disagreed while 50% are indecisive. Majority of the respondent feels that burden of household work is a significant factor that de-empowered women in this pandemic and its lockdowns.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Overall we can say that the Government of India does respond to the economic crisis during this pandemic but the important issue is whether it reaches the actual beneficiaries in different states, especially in the process of access to food security that takes place during the Public Distribution System. With the existence of socio-cultural systems of class and gender complexity women, especially those experiencing patriarchal power trapping in remote rural areas, are at a particularly disadvantaged position in terms of access to different State and Central governmental schemes.

The Government needs to develop a socially strategic approach keeping in mind pro-poor and pro-women as they are the marginal sections of our society. For instance, it is important to provide a special social protection program to support women who are single parent and the main breadwinner in their family (Lan Mercado, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020). Thus it is essential to analyze impact of covid-19 pandemic from a gender perspective in order to achieve a holistic study and also guiding humanity in facing such situations effectively

and justly. It is crucial to ensure that all the progress in women's empowerment that has been achieved so far is not erased by the pandemic. Amidst the ongoing economic costs of the global health turmoil, women should have equal economic opportunities as compared to men. Governments could incentivise corporate social responsibility measures that ensure gender equitable hiring by companies in the post-pandemic phase and continue to support and fund all social schemes for women including those that promote literacy, health and sanitary, and skilling because giving women equal opportunities will positively and holistically affect the whole world, but will deteriorate if the condition of women deteriorates.

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