

CHALLENGES FACED BY DAILY WAGE WORKERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic put the whole world in an unprecedented crisis and lingering uncertainty with innumerable deaths, generalised economic depression, unemployment, quarantine, unavoidable lockdown, and travel-ban that was imposed globally as a necessity to tackle the pandemic. Among the populace, the daily waged workers in India were found to be one of the most vulnerable groups in this lockdown, as their very livelihood came to a complete standstill. The aim of this paper is to review the challenges faced by daily wage workers during the covid-19 pandemic in India.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Pandemic, Daily Waged Workers, Lockdown, Challenges

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I. INTRODUCTION

Corona virus is a pandemic disease that has impacted everybody for no reason and recognizes no color, religion, cast, language, proficiency, financial specialists, occupations, local area and so forth. It has impacted almost 40,000,000 individuals overall and could surpass the passing pace of 3,000,000 all around the world (Andrade, 2020).

The times of freezing/shutting impacted the whole Indian economy. A wide range of industries like hotels, transportation (roads, aviation routes and oceanic), auto areas, electronics areas, synthetic areas, IT areas, the travel industry, textiles, film industries and, surprisingly, agricultural industries have been impacted because of uncommon circumstances. There is no question that these areas are the genealogy of the Indian economy and can be raised with a substantial arrangement. In any case, exceptionally destructive and miserable is that these long stretches of shutting have totally changed the way of life of individuals who have a place with the general public of compensation laborers to the furthest reaches of standing by in any event, for some tea somewhere around once day (Rawal et al, 2020).

Day workers are called contract workers, day workers, sub-contractors, casual and seasonal workers. People involved in building construction, housework, dry cleaning, picking up rags, playing traditional instruments, cooking, hairdressing (barbers), cleaning pots at tea stalls and mini Tiffin centers, tailoring, beautician jobs, plumbing, paints, brick Work, peddling, machine shops, weightlifting at the train station and market, and other types of contract work are called daily wage workers.

II. MIGRANT CRISIS

The preeminent noticeable effect of the unexpected announcement of a cross country lockdown was the migrant crisis that started to unfurl in the early months of the lockdown. The limitations on economic activity forced by the lockdown implied that a greater part of the migrant workers in urban communities, particularly day to day breadwinners, were delivered jobless short-term.

As indicated by Singh et al (2020), the countrywide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 pushed the work migrants towards an unfortunate circumstance set apart by homelessness, hunger and unanticipated human tragedies (SWAN 2020). A new overview among migrant workers directed in April 2020 uncovered that 90% of them were not paid their wages in different states, 96% didn't get proportions from the government outlets, and 70% didn't get prepared food during the lockdown.

Migrant workers expecting to get back to their homes were abandoned with all method for transport having been halted and no elective courses of action set up right away.

Irudaya (2020) stated that the unexpected announcement of the cross country lockdown on 24 March 2020 prompted far and wide frenzy over their nearby, short-and long haul eventual fate of migrants at their states of objective. With no transportation to get back home, a significant number of them took challenging long excursions to arrive at their local spots. What we saw in its repercussions was a genuinely horrendous sight of franticness and hopelessness as large number of migrant workers took the roads towards their homes by walking without even a trace of other method of transport. Their predicament during this crisis has been because of insufficient and deficient reaction with respect to the central and state governments, particularly the states of beginning, objective and their managers.

The lockdown impacted the occupations of almost 4 crore interior migrants. Around 104 lakh of migrant workers moved from metropolitan regions to provincial areas of beginning in around 30 days from 1 May to 31 May 2020 utilizing different methods of transportations, including Shramik trains transport, truck, autorickshaw and strolling for large number of kilometers (Hindu, 2020).

III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

According to Das and Patnaik (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic complexly affects daily wage workers who rely upon daily wages to make due and support their families. Joblessness and expanded contest for accessible work, inadequate daily wages, and restricted occupation potential open doors caused a general income misfortune for daily wage workers after March 2020. Decreases in income levels lead them to change their consumptions and ways of managing money and for the most part settle for the easiest option of households.

A general expansion in costs of a few food and non-food things since the beginning of the pandemic could have potential ramifications on the costs, everything being equal. Loss of income after the pandemic began, compounded by expansion in costs of fundamental things in business sectors might adversely affect what is happening. It is seen that to cover their increment family expenses they took obligations. They noticed that they acquired money from companions or family members or moneylenders, while a few noticed that they purchased merchandise using a credit card from shops and market.

According to Singh (2021), daily-wage workers with low incomes removed their children from school, in light of the fact that because of COVID-19 pandemic schools shut and classes went on the web. Without any a smart phone they couldn't instruct their children.

It is additionally seen that they likewise mentally affected because of COVID-19 pandemic. They additionally announced that they experienced discouragement because of loss of income and disconnection during their period. There was an expansion in pressure and nervousness among households during the time of government-forced lockdown as working in daily-wage occupations is the best way to accommodate their households (Singh, 2021).

IV. IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown limitations caused extraordinary job misfortunes. The amount and nature of business potential open doors both disintegrated and are assessed to not have returned anyplace near the pre-pandemic numbers yet.

As indicated by Rosa and Basole (2021), many overviews researching the COVID-19 effect on weak workers, including our own, have shown that around 60%-80% of workers (self-employed, easygoing as well as salaried workers without job security) lost work during the lockdown in April and May 2020. The CMIE data show that the lockdown impacted around 43% of the public labor force. Indeed, even as late as December 2020, the two CMIE data showed that 20% of the individuals who lost work during the lockdown were unemployed. Ladies and more youthful workers were substantially more liable to lose their jobs and less inclined to recuperate. There was additionally an expansion in familiarity during this period, with beforehand salaried workers getting back to the work market as self-employed or easygoing workers.

The effect on livelihoods is just a single part of the economic effect of the lockdown. The lockdown limitations further harmed an economy that was at that point dialing back preceding the pandemic.

Rao (2021) stated that the economy has contracted by 15.7% in the principal half of the year, and areas with social separating prerequisites keep on being under limitations and a few states are seeing an upsurge in new cases. The bank credit to business area keeps on being repressed and private speculation keeps on being low even after the staged unwinding of the limitations.

As indicated by Chinoy and Jain (2021), households at the highest point of the pyramid are probably going to have seen their incomes safeguarded, and savings rates constrained up during the lockdown, expanding "fuel in the tank" to drive future utilization. In the mean time, households at the base are probably going to have seen extremely durable hits to jobs and incomes, which will hurt their utilization.

V. CHALLENGES FACED BY DAILY WAGE WORKERS DURING LOCKDOWN

SWAN (2020) conducted a survey of 16,863 workers, immediately after the announcement of the lockdown. It reported that 50% of the workers had ration only for 1 day, and 72% for a maximum of 2 days. Out of the total surveyed workers, 82% had not received quota ration from the government, and 68% of them had no access to cooked food. The study further finds that Karnataka, Haryana, Delhi and Maharashtra were among the worst-performing states concerning workers' access to food. In Delhi, 47% of workers had no access to a cooked meal; the share was 51.5% in Haryana, 67% in Karnataka and 76% in Maharashtra. In Delhi and Maharashtra, close to 95% of workers had no access to the government ration

CITU (2020) conducted a survey of 8,870 stranded workers noticed that 29% of the workers did not have rice, 51% had no wheat flour, 52% had no pulses, and 54% had no cooking oil with them. Further, the survey finds, 65% of the workers did not receive either dry or cooked food from the government. Out of the total respondents who had received food from the government, 70% reported that the quantity of food was significantly less than officially announced benchmark levels. Almost 500 people had neither a ration card nor an AADHAR card, and hence they were not eligible for the dry ration by the Government of Delhi. One-fourth of the total respondents did not have bank accounts.

A study by Sahas (2020), surveyed 3,196 workers, reported that 42% of them had no ration left, even for a day, 33% had no money to buy any ration, 40% had ration in their stock for 2 weeks, and only 18% for a maximum of 4 weeks. The survey also found that construction workers were forced to drink water used for construction.

Another field study, by Jaacks et al (2021), of 7,000 households found that on average they lost 61% of their income. Further, the study found that 43% of the households with Below Poverty Line (BPL)/Antyodaya cards had not received any free rations. Of the total respondents, 67% reported that they would run out of money and essential items in less than 2 weeks.

APU (2020) conducted a survey of almost 4,000 households revealed that half of the salaried workers witnessed a reduction or their wages were not paid. Nearly 75% of the respondents had money only to buy 1 week's worth of essential items, at maximum. Most of the respondents informed that they had no Jan Dhan accounts, and they had hardly received any money transfer.

Gramvaani (2020) stated that 88% of the respondents in Bihar, 63% in Jharkhand and 69% in Madhya Pradesh had not received rations from the government. In a survey of 1,726 domestic workers across 11 states of India, from 24 March to 4 May 2020, the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA, 2020) noted that 41% of the surveyed domestic workers had lost their whole income in March, and the proportion jumped to 61% in April. The AIDWA survey also noted that only 35% domestic workers in March and 27% in April had received full income.

According to CSDS (2020), the problem of unemployment was reported to be 'quite serious' or 'very serious', as 60% and 64% of 'skilled' and 'manual' workers, respectively, had no employment. It was also reported that 68% of them were facing a monetary crisis. It is hardly surprising that a substantial segment of the respondents incurred indebtedness or were forced to sell their assets and belongings to get by. A large number of them obviously had to confront significant levels of food insecurity: in fact, one in every eight households reported 'frequent lack of food for the entire day'. Among the respondents, there were 'return migrants' from rural to urban India as well; 22% of them reported walking back home, and 42% of them had taken more than 3 days to complete their journey. Almost one-third of the surveyed migrants were forced to undertake the return journey as they had run out of money and no support was in sight.

ActionAid India (2020a), conducted a survey of 11,520 respondents found loss of livelihood, reduction in the intensity of work and a massive decline in wages. This study noted that in the manufacturing sector, before the lockdown, around 57% workers had been working for more than 40 hours in a week, but during the lockdown, 68% workers had no work. Similarly, in the construction sector, 62% of the workers had worked more than 40 hours in a week, and in the lockdown period, 71% of the workers were completely unemployed. Out of the total respondents, only 35% had received a full wage, 48% had received no wage, and 17% had received only a partial wage during the lockdown period. The same institution (ActionAid India, 2020b) conducted another round of surveys during the last week of August and first week of September 2020. In the second round, the study noted that 48% of the respondents were unemployed and 42% were

partially employed. The share of respondents who did not receive their wages during the period of lockdown had increased from 48% during the first round to 64% during the second round. The survey reported that 24% of the respondents had no income, whereas 73% had an income of less than ₹5,000 per month. There are a couple of positive findings, such as the share of respondents who received food grains through the public distribution system (PDS) increasing from 45% in the first round to 79% in the second round; this also had a positive impact on food sufficiency, that is, during the first round, 82% of the respondents had lacked food sufficiency, and the share declined to 68% during the second round.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented the challenges faced by daily waged workers during the Covid crisis, as far as their economic, social and health conditions. It brought into spotlight the difficulties, weaknesses, as well as the physical and psychological distresses and segregations looked by the migrants under the invasion of this pandemic in the Indian setting, alongside the issues of the resultant circular migration.

There was right around a shortfall of readiness, or any intelligible structure of intercession, by the association government to manage the conspicuous challenges that arose in the prompt repercussions of the unexpected lockdown, and it was to a great extent left to the state governments to bear the obligation of crisis the executives; as it works out, given their asset limits, health foundation, and so forth, the sufficiency of reactions across states would in general be very blended. Gradually and progressively, there has been a few practical dexterity between the association government and state governments to address a portion of the squeezing challenges, however all in all, it would scarcely be a misrepresentation to maintain the point of view that the genuinely necessary fundamental bundle of help for the workers has been incredibly insufficient till date

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