



Socio-Economic Impact of Pandemic on Street Vendors of Jammu Region India: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a deadly pandemic that has engulfed the whole world. It has led to adverse effects on society as a whole. Everywhere there is a lot of chaos and confusion among the people. The present paper is an attempt to understand the impact of pandemic on street vendors with regard to their issues and challenges which they are facing. Study is empirical in nature and it is based on eight months of observation of the researcher, focus group discussion, interview, and case study. The main objective of the study is to highlight the issues and problems which the street vendors are facing. It was found that in the COVID-19 crisis; most of the street vendors have lost their regular source of incomes. The study has further observed that the socio-economic status is tremendously declined among the street vendors. Continuously lockdown and fear psychosis is also a one of the major problems which the street vendors were facing.

Keywords: Pandemic; Street Vendors; Society; Issues and Challenges

Abbreviations: FGD: Focus Group Discussion; BP: Blood Pressure.

Introduction

COVID-19 is a deadly pandemic that has engulfed the whole world. It has led to adverse effects on society as a whole. Everywhere there is a lot of chaos and confusion among the people. People are forced to live within the four walls of their houses. Fear psychosis has taken place in society due to the COVID-19 virus which has created so many problems among the people [1]. The rising of pandemic affected social interaction and economic activities through the imposed social distances policies that have different level of strictness. Although the pandemic has left a visible impression across the sectors globally, the impact on marginalized sections, women and children has been enormous in India. Gender-based violence, lack of security, money and health have

added on to the existing misery of families living in poor and substandard conditions [2].

India has been a hotspot of the huge informal sector. 90 per cent of the working population in India still works in the informal sector; a sizeable portion includes rickshaw alas, migrant labourers, landless agricultural labourers, etc. Working at the informal sector comes with a fair share of problems. There's no job security, no sick leave, no paid leave, all in all, puts the employee under very bad conditions (The Economic Times, 2020 c.f. [3]. Humans are affected differently depending on their social class or caste, their gender and age, and the country where they live. In rich countries, many thousands have died and millions have lost livelihoods. In poorer countries, lockdowns have been imposed often with little prior planning (Vietnam and the Indian state of Kerala being notable exceptions [4].

It is observed that the lockdown is causing life-threatening situations during the pandemic. The Central government informed the Supreme Court that among 5 to 6 hundred thousand migrant labourers had to arduously walk to reach their villages. Several of them either died from the exhaustion of the inhumane journey or had been run over by vehicles. 60 million people working on the entertainment industry. Most of these people are without any source of income during the lockdown. Ten million people are directly impacted by it and are at risk of losing their livelihoods.

In the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, it has been seen that the pandemic is tremendously affected the socio-economic life of people. Continuous lockdown and fear psychosis further create lot of problems, panic, anxiety in to the society. The present study is focused on street vendors of Jammu region and highlights the various issues and problems which they are facing due to pandemic. No one is quite sure when this pandemic will end and as such uncertainty is present in the society. It was observed that the restriction of social - economic activities and social distance policy helped to prevent spreading of virus, but on the other hand daily wagers got tremendously affected. The five/ six months of strict lockdown which has badly impact on the socio-economic life of street vendors in Jammu region. Repeated lockdown have created lot of problems among street vendors such as struggle for basic need in everyday life.

Research Methodology and Objective of the Study

The present study is empirical in nature and it is based on observation, focus group discussion, interview and case study. Sampling methods (particularly snowball technique) used to collect data. The study is randomly selected eight

places of Jammu region where the street vendors are earning their livelihood. These places are. From the eight different places the study is taken 120 respondents with the help of Snowball technique. The main objective of the study is to examine the various issues and problems being faced by the street vendors during the pandemic. Study is conducted in three different time period and try to examine whether the socio-economic status remain same /declined/ increased.

Finding of the Study

Occupation	Income	Respondents
Vegetable Seller	13000-15000	30
Fruit Seller	13000-15000	30
Ice cream Seller	10000-12000	20
Water Ball Seller (golgape)	10000-12000	20
Others (Kulcha, mammoos)	13000-15000	20
Total		120

Table 1: Occupation and Income of the Street Vendors Before Pandemic.

From the (Table 1) It is clearly seen that majority of the street vendors earned their income above 10,000 in every month. The socio-economic life was quite stable and good. Most of the respondents stated that they did not face any kind of problems. Their socio-economic life revolved around street to street and they were quite happy with their jobs. But after the pandemic crisis the socio-economic life of street vendors is badly affected. This pandemic is not only affected the bread earner of the family but whole family members suffered a lot.

Occupation	Income March to May,2020	Income June to August,2020	Income Sep to Oct,2020	Respondents
Vegetable Seller	6000-7000	6000-7000	8000-10000	30
Fruit Seller	5000-7000	5000-7000	7000-9000	30
Ice cream Seller	1000-1500	1000-1500	4000-6000	20
Water Ball Seller (golgape)	Below 1000	Below 1000	4000-5000	20
Others (Kulcha, mammoos)	900-1200	900- 1200	6000-7000	20
Total				120

Table 2: Occupation and Income of the Street Vendors in Three Different Time Period.

From the (Table 2) the study is examined the occupation and income of the street vendors in three different period of time and try to find whether the socio-economic status is declined/increased or unchanged.

In the month of March to May, 2020 the income of the street vendors was tremendously decreased which is badly affected their socio-economic life. Vegetable and fruit seller reported that more than 50% of the monthly income decreased due to pandemic. They further reported that strict

lockdown and fear psychosis was the major responsible to decreased family income. Majority of the customers were fear of virus and they were not buy any vegetable and fruit to us, because they don't have PPE kit for that period of time. The study further found that beside vegetable and fruit seller, it was the other street vendors (ice cream, water ball, and others who are badly affected due to CORONA virus. They stated that about 80-90% of the family income decreased in the initial period of CORONA (March to May, 2020).

Most of the street vendors reported that fear psychosis (spreading of virus) and repeated lockdown was the major responsible to declined family income. They further stated that people are so much fear of CORONA that nobody buy their products. Their economic life is badly affected which is directly impact on their family income. One of the respondents shared his experiences about the issues and challenges he and his family are facing due to COVID-19 and lockdown.

He Reported that due to Corona Outbreak

I have lost almost 85-90 per cent of the monthly income since last five months of lockdown. I am working as a water ball seller and before pandemic; I was earned about 300-400 rupees per day. But due to COVID-19 virus I am just earning 1000 rupees per month. He further said, that due to fear psychosis of CORONA virus in to the society, most of the people did not come out of houses and which is directly impact on my family income. I don't have any social security such as saving in bank and I am totally depended upon daily wages. From the past several months, I and my family members are living under depression, and also facing blood pressure (BP) problem as I am unable to fulfill basic need to my family. Even my wife is suffering from diabetes and since last five months she is also facing BP problem which is also additional economic burden on me. At the end, he said that if the similar kind of situation remains same for next one year then my family would die due to depression and stress (Praladh Krishan, 47 years old).

In the second phase the study again conducted a field work and try to examine whether the socio-economic life changed or remained same as it was in the first phase. From the period of June to August, 2020, the date indicates that the family income of the street vendors remains same. There was no changed in the family income. Most of the respondents reported that continue lockdown and fear of virus among people was the major issues which they were facing. It was further observed that due to the less demand of their products such as ice cream, water ball (gol gapey), fast foods (burger, kulcha, mamooos, allo chat etc) their family income decreased which has directly impact on their socio-economic life.

If we compared the first and second phase of the survey, it is clearly observed that the vegetable and fruit sellers were earning around 5000-7000 rupees per month during the lockdown. But at the same time other street vendors were hardly earn below 1000 rupees. Most of the street vendors reported that their products come under non-essential commodity which is responsible to decreased their family income around 80-90 per cent.

The third phase was conducted in the month of September to October, 2020 and try to understand whether the economic life of the street vendors is changed are remain unchanged. From the above data, it was observed that most of the street vendors have gradually increased their family income. The vegetable and fruit seller earned 8000-10,000 rupees and 7000-9000 rupees respectively. While the other street vendors (ice cream, water ball and others) are also slightly increased their family income, (ice cream seller earned 4000-6000 rupees) (water ball seller earned 4000-5000 rupees). While others were also earned good amount of money as compare to previous one, (kulcha walas mamooos walas 6000-7000 rupees).

It was further observed that with the passage of time the economic life of the street vendors improved after the lift of strict lockdown. In the third phase it was seen that people were freely move from here and there. There was no much fear of CORONA virus but most of the people were followed their precaution measure such as wearing mask and use hand sanitizer regularly. Most of the street vendors also reported that they were following guide line which was given by the concerned authority. They further stated that though they have not fully cope up with the economic crisis but slightly their economic status is gradually increased as compare to first and second phase period.

Social Impact

We cannot ignore the social impact on human beings due to pandemic. It is observed that society is badly affected due to the virus. Restriction on socio- religious and cultural festivals which is further create lot of problems such as anxiety, depression, chaos and confusions among people. The study is highlights various social impact on street vendors due to pandemic and lockdown.

Declining Social Status

Social status is measured with living standard and consumption pattern in everyday life. To understand the problems, study is conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) with street vendors to highlights various issues and problems which people were facing during lockdown.

In the focus group discussion (FGD), most of the street vendors reported that living standard is tremendously decreased due to the loss of regular source of income which is directly impact on their consumption patterns in everyday life. During the last five /six months of lockdown they are just buy essential commodity such as rice, atta, vegetable, etc. They further stated that they were unable to buy dairy/other products such as cheese, milk, sweet, chicken and meat due to the low economic status of the family. Due to the meagre income of the family they are not able to buy clothes for children as well as pay school fee. Majority of the respondents stated that they do not have any social security i.e. saving in bank as they are dependent upon daily wages. They are just full fill their basic need of the family. It was observed that the pandemic has badly affected the social life of street vendors.

Kinship Relation and Alienation

Kinship system is one of the important part of human being which is playing dominant role for social as well as economic security. The study tries to highlights issues and problems which the street vendors were facing in the pandemic crisis. From the focus group discussion, it was found that the kinship relation is badly affected among street vendors due to the pandemic crisis as well as continue lockdown. Most of the respondents stated that they are alienated from their relatives. Due to virus infection relatives did not visit each other houses. Alienation from relatives, their children's were suffering a lot and many of them were facing health issues such as depression, and anxiety. They further reported that their children are emotionally attached with their grand mothers and fathers, but since last seven/eight months their children are unable to meet their grandparents which is directly psychological impact on their children.

One of the respondent shared his experience that how his children are facing stress and also feel alienated from their grandparents since, last five months of lockdown due to CORONA outbreak.

He reported that, "I have three children and their age group is 5, 9 and 13 years old. The two younger children are emotionally and psychologically attached with grandparents. Most of the time they were spending their time with them. He also added that it is a grandparent who are taking care their social life from the birth on words. But due to COVID-19 virus and extension of lockdown, social distancing norms my children are facing lot of social stress and also feel alienated from their grandparents. Since, last seven months they did not meet their grandparents due to fear of virus infections. He further stated that, it was observed that due to alienated from their grandparents, most of the time they are living under stress, feel anxiety which is directly impact on their health as well as psychologically (Suriender Kumar, 41 years

old). It was observed that social distancing creates lot of problems among people in to the society. People are isolated form their family members, relatives, friends, community members which is directly impact on their health physically as well as psychologically.

The study further observed that due to the pandemic children are the worst sufferers. They are the most vulnerable group with in the family as such the parents are very much worried about them. Nobody allows them to go outside and play with their peer groups since the parent worry that they might become the victims of pandemic. Due to this pandemic, they are staying within the house throughout the day and busy watching mobile, laptop, and TV. This all has affected their health tremendously as watching these gadgets has led to many bad side effects such as problems of eyesight, mental stress, etc.

In the FGD, the study is further observed that in the pandemic crisis, it not only the kinship relation which has been affected but the socio-economic support which they were getting by their relatives at the time of financial crisis is also affected. It can be concluded that the pandemic has not only affected the socio-economic life of the people, but the kinship system is badly affected.

It was observed that the social relations/bond with in family got tremendously disrupted. Nobody comes to visit each other during this crisis and all the families are living aloof without any visitors. The kinship bond with in the families has weakened as now the families are preferring to remain isolated from their relatives and friends. It was also seen that the families are celebrating their social and cultural functions within themselves and in a simple way. They are not inviting their neighbors and their relatives due to the fear of pandemic. Due to this the interpersonal relations has got seriously affected.

Low Participation in Socio-Cultural Festivals/ Ceremonies

Socio-cultural festivals/ceremonies are one of the important part in human life as well as in to the society. It helps to bond the society with integration/unity among different section of the people. The study tries to understand what is the impact of CORONA virus on social cultural festivals/ceremonies in society as well as on street vendors. Study conducted a FGD with street vendors and try to highlights their problems which they were facing during the pandemic crisis and lockdown.

In the FGD, majority of the respondents stated that the socio-cultural ceremonies are badly affected due to the CORONA outbreak; continue lockdown and social distance

policy in to the society. Due to the fear of virus infections people were not actively participated in the festivals/ ceremonies such as celebration of marriages and other social festivals. It was further observed that due to the loss of regular source of income and low economic status of the family, majority of the street vendors were not participating in any social functions. Some of the street vendors also stated that they were doing part time job with marriage events (Particularly water ball and ice cream seller) and were earned good amount of money during the marriage seasons. But after the COVID-19 virus outbreak, there is restriction on social events. People are just celebrating their social functions in simple way. It can be concluding that in the pandemic crisis social life of people are tremendously affected. The social life got stuck due to fear psychosis, depression, chaos and anxiety. People are not able to participate actively in socio-cultural festivals.

Education Impact on their Children

In the pandemic crisis, most of the families are living under depression and anxiety. There is uncertainty and they are worried about the future and education as well as health of their children. To understand the problems among street vendors and their children, the study is conducted a FGD to highlights the issues and problems which they faced during lockdown in pandemic crisis.

In the FGD most of the street vendors stated their children educations are badly affected due to pandemic. Lockdown and social distance norms further create lot of problems in the education system. Majority of the respondents were not send their children in schools due to the fear of virus infections. The study further found that only 40 per cent children are able to get education through online mode. While the 60 per cent children did not received any education during lockdown as they are studying in government schools and their respective schools did not provide them any kind of online facilities. During the six months of lockdown their children did not get any education. It was found that most of the government schools do not have online facilities such as projector, internet connectivity and lack of trained teacher for online classes.

Another issue which the street vendors are facing in the new education system (digital platform). They said that they don't have any knowledge regarding the online classes/ process which is further create many problems among them as well as their children. Most of the respondents reported that they are taking help from the educated youth for online classes, but most of the time their children are not able to attend online classes due to the lack of proper knowledge such as how to attend online classes, how to connect online link for classes. They further said that on the one hand the pandemic has created a lot of panic and on the other hand

they are facing lot of problems in the new education system on digital platform.

Other issues which the children are facing during online classes were lack of proper internet connectivity in which they are not able to get proper education. In the FGD, majority of the respondents stated that in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, there was poor internet connectivity i.e. 2 G speed. This poor internet connectivity is creating a lot of problems on digital platforms.

During the online classes, many of the street vendors' children are facing health issues such as headache, eyesight problems and anxiety. Most of the respondents stated that their children were never face such kind of problems which they are facing on digital platform. Every day, their children were spent 4-5 hours for online classes which are directly affected their health. It was found that most of the children who are facing health issues are the age group of between 5 to 10 years. Due to the health issues among children their family members also face lot of problems such as depression and anxiety.

It can be concluding that the CORONA outbreak has tremendously impact on the education system, student's life and their health. There is an uncertainty going on in the past on year in to the society and nobody don't know what is going to be happen in future which is further create lot of problems in to the society such as depression, feel anxiety, chaos, confusion and fear psychosis.

Health Issues

Health is one of the most important part in our life. We ca not live without good health. If there is any health issue within the family, then the whole socio-economic life would get affected. The pandemic creates lot of panic and chaos in to the society. Due to uncertainty situation, most of the people are living under depression. It was observed that the most important sociological consequences of the CORONA out break for people is the creation of social anxiety among families. The study is conducted a FGD among street vendors to examine that what kind of health issues their family members were facing due to pandemic as well as lockdown.

From the FGD, it was observed that majority of the family members of street vendor's reported that they were facing depression, stress, and anxiety. They said that since last six months they are living constantly under depression which is directly impact on their health. Majority of the street vendors further said that women and their children are the worst affected due to depression and stress during the lockdown and also the loss of regular source of income of the family. They said that they don't have any socio-economic security

in which they can live without earning for 6-7 months.

But due to pandemic and lockdown they are forced to live inside the house, which is directly impact on their socio-economic life as well as their health. The study is further seen that 60 per cent of the street vendor's children are facing stress, anxiety and fear due to the loss of their education, forced to live inside the house. Since, last six months they are living under depression. On the other hand, social distancing further creates lot of social stress and anxiety. Most of the children feel isolated from their friends, family members, relatives and colleagues due to repeated lockdown which is directly impact on children health in the form of depression, social stress and also feel alienation.

In the FGD, it was observed that 50-55 per cent street vendors are living on rented houses in Jammu region. All of them have come from neighboring district and rural areas to earn their livelihood and also education for their children. They further said that since last six months they are unable to pay house rent due to the loss of regular source of income in the lockdown period. Every month they pay 1500-2000 rupees for house rent. The extension of lockdown from three weeks to five months which is created lot of health issues such as psychological depression, social stress and blood pressure among street vendors who are totally depended upon their daily wages. It was also observed that it is not only the bread earner who suffered a lot due to CORONA outbreak as well as the lockdown. But whole the family members of street vendors suffered socially and economically and also faced tremendous health issues.

Conclusion

From the past one year it has been observed that due to the COVID-19 virus socio-economic activities have stuck in to the society. The socio-economic life of people has been badly affected. Lockdown and social distancing policy have save the life of people, but on the other hand millions of people lost their regular source of income. People are forced to live within the four walls of their houses. Fear psychosis has taken place in society due to the COVID-19 virus which has created so many problems among the people such as panic, fear, and anxiety, social stress and depression.

There are so many socio-economic consequences which have emerged during the pandemic crisis among street vendors in Jammu region such as socio-economic life got

disrupted, kinship relation affected, declined social status of the family, and health issues. The education system also got tremendously affected and the student community is suffering a lot. It was also observed that most of the street vendors lost their regular source of income which is directly impact on their economic life of the family. It can be further seen that there is uncertainty in the society regarding when the virus will end due to which the people are living in fear and anxiety. The above social consequences that have emerged due to COVID-19 crisis are unseen by the society before.

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