

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic in India through Gender lens

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Abstract:

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown have imposed which have resulted in unexpected shift in all aspects of work and life everywhere. The concept of work from home becomes new work rule. In India the effects of corona is not similar but more severe. The current pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems of the country. This paper presents a snapshot of the gender dimensions of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in the Indian economy. A Though this pandemic is not gendered, but it has very clear gender dimension to it like most Indian households do not have equal sharing of domestic chores, women does more unpaid work. This paper has discussed the issues pertaining to unequal burden of un-paid work and domestic responsibilities; the work from home implications for men and women and policy implications.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, gender, work from home, unpaid care, domestic violence etc.

Introduction

The Covid 19 pandemic is affecting the stability of the economy worldwide. Many affected nations have imposed lockdowns, the rules of lockdown varied from one country to another depending upon number of cases identified. The unprecedented lockdown due to Covid pandemic have a significant adverse effect on the Indian economy also. From midnight of 24th of March 2020, the Indian Prime Minister announced a nationwide lockdown. Before this, on 22nd March 2020 Prime Minister called for “Janta Curfew” from 7am to 9 pm, through which he urged people to stay home. Only few sectors like law and order, banking, health facilities and essential services providers remain functioning. India’s growth in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020 fell down to 3.1 percent according to Ministry of Statistics, Government of India. A million of workforce became out of job, a huge army of migrant workers returned to their native villages. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy’s

estimates on unemployment shot up from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April and the urban unemployment rate to 30.9%. The latest data from the Consumer Pyramid household level survey of the CMIE shows that the unemployment rate in urban areas increased sharply to 30% in the week ending March 29, about 3.5 times the rate of 8.7% for the week ending March 22. For rural areas, the corresponding figures were 21% and 8.3%. The overall unemployment rate increased from 8.4% to 23.8%. The data for the week ending April 5, 2020 estimates the rate at 30.9% for urban areas, 20.2% for rural areas and 23.4% at the all-India level. Pandemic has created two kinds of shocks i.e., an economic shock and health related shock. As this pandemic grows, a lot of evidences show that women's well-being, their mental health and ability to participate in the economic activities also got deteriorated. Higher proportion of women in the economy suffers from the social and economic effects of Covid-19.

Review of Literature: The present study includes the wide-ranging literature reviews on selected indicators.

Anand and Nanda (2020) stated that numerous evidences points to the extension of gender norms that attribute care roles to women in the domestic sphere, into the economic sphere as well. If there are edification learnt from the antecedent pandemics and public health crises is that women's economic independence and autonomy will bear the silent brunt, if not proactively alleviated. In past pandemics women have taken longer to return to their pre-outbreak incomes levels compared to men. In India, such trade off seems likely given the lower income earned by women or alternatively can push them into high risk trades. It is hard to craft emergency response that is gender sensitive if the foundational structures are erected insensitively.

A.Bhateja (2020) revealed in their study that apart from the structural quandary of capitalism and patriarchy, men are not yare to apportion the responsibility of domestic chores with their women. On an average, women spend 577% more time on domestic chore as compared to men. On an ordinary day, women spend most of their time performing domestic chores and inclining to the desiderata of children, elderly and their husbands. No wonder, proximately 71% of women are the first ones to arouse and the last ones to go to bed in an average Indian household.

Health and Hopkins (2020) exhibits in their study that pandemic is also expected to increase levels of violence. It is liable to cause a one-third minimization in progress towards ending

gender-predicated violence by 2030. They reported that violence increases by 20 per cent during periods of lockdown, there would be a supplemental 15 million cases of intimate partner violence in 2020 for an average lockdown duration of 3 months, 31 million cases for an average lockdown of 6 months, 45 million for an average lockdown of 9 months, and 61 million if the average lockdown period were to be as long as one year.

Shareena & Shahid, (2020) concluded in their study that workers working from home will be disposed to work if they are having good and ancillary environment to work from home. Understanding the desiderata of employees provides employers with an opportunity to avail their employees set up an auxiliary and controlled work environment, which may result in more number of workers exhibiting incremented inclination to work from home and thereby having higher job gratification and efficiency.

Gajendra and Harrison, (2007) revealed in their study that it is difficult to monitor a worker's effort at home, especially when occasionally being interrupted by private responsibilities and family members.

Section: I - Unequal burden of Un-paid work in household responsibilities:

Due to pandemic and lockdown, women have to bear the lopsided burden of unpaid care and unequal share in household responsibilities. Because most paid care work within the households has been adjourned which leads to blow additional physical and mental burden of the females. Housework and childcare were disproportionately the women responsibility. In a rigid patriarchal society like India this could have drastically regressive effects on gender roles and lesser women would perform well. Household is still considered the women domain. It is the women's responsibility whether they holds a job or not to take up all the domestic work than men. New task called home schooling added to common childcare responsibilities because children are out of school. Because of social norms, school closures, intensified care of older persons have put additional strain on the females of the family. According to UNESCO, globally 1.52 billion students and over 60 million teachers are now at home. In our societies, women take the primary responsibility of domestic chores. The followings data show the unequal gender roles for daily unpaid work in the household.

Table no.1: Time devoted by women for daily unpaid work

Countries	Hours Per day
Mexico	6.23
India	5.51
Portugal	5.28
Australia	5.11
Turkey	5.03
Korea	3.47
Japan	3.44
France	3.44
Canada	3.43
Sweden	3.26

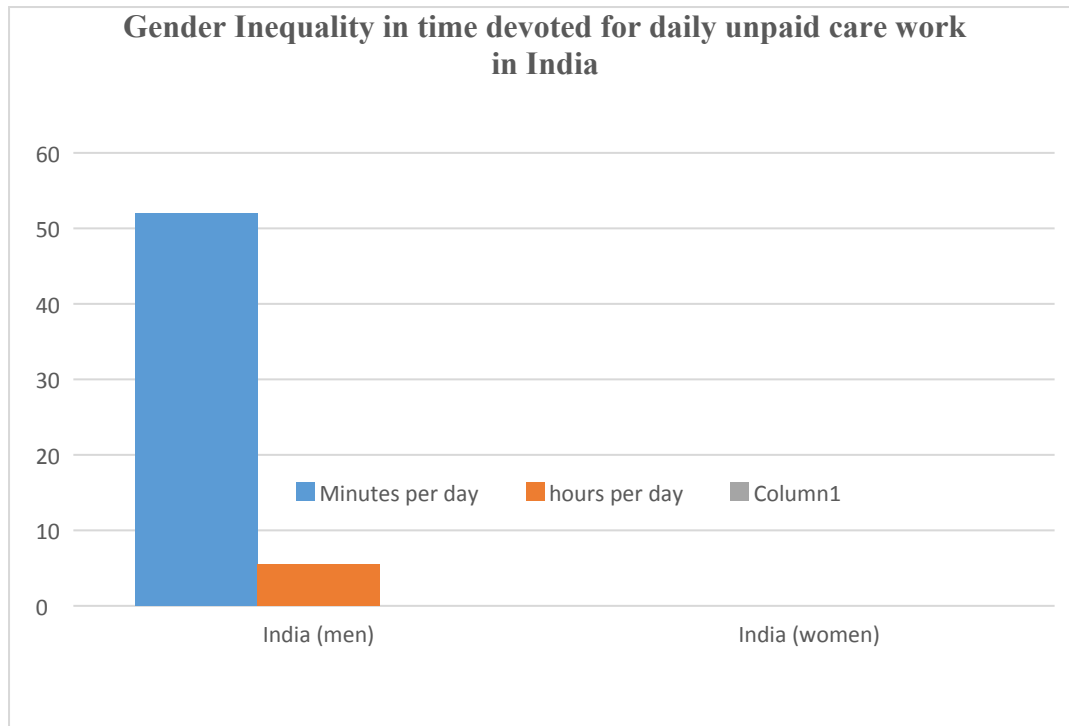
Source: OECD 2015 Data

Table no.2: Time devoted by men for daily unpaid work

Countries	Minutes Per day
Denmark	186
Australia	172
Sweden	171
Norway	168
China	91
Turkey	68
India	52
Korea	49

Source: OECD 2015 Data

Data in the above tables clearly depict that women have disproportionately high shares of unpaid care burden of the domestic responsibilities. In Indian context, women spend more time for doing these tasks and Indian men on the other hand are among the worst on this front, spending less than hour each day.



Section: II Adoption of work from home:

The new work rule “work from home” adopted by many enterprises due to Covid-19 pandemic in order to reduce the social contacts to a minimum. A large number of employees bound to work remotely i.e., work from home. But as workplace enters the home, it does not have same implications for men and women. In this section, experiences of the employees who are working from home are taken into consideration. Data have been collected from 30 males and 30 females working employees. All are working in the educational institutions, which is due to lockdown currently providing their services from home. Questionnaires sent to them by e-mail and got back responses are shared in this section of the paper.

Table no.3: Respondents who are willing to work from home

Do you like to work from home			
	Yes	No	Total respondents
Males	19(63.33)	11(36.66)	30(100)

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Females	12(40)	18(60)	30(100)

Table no.4:

While working from home, do you have a productive work and life balance			
	Yes	No	Total
Males	21(70)	09(30)	30(100)
Females	7(23.33)	23(76.66)	30(100)

Discussion:

It is found from the table no.3 that out of total respondents more than 63.33 percent male employees liked to work from home and only 40 percent female employees liked the concept of work from home. The reason behind these differences is that the burden of domestic chores, presence of children below the age of 10, presence of elderly people who need more care, absence of paid care workers etc. Table no.4 exhibits that 70 percent male employees responded positively that they are able to make a healthy balance between office work and social life. On the other hand, only 23.33 percent female employees are able to make healthy balance. The study found that most of the respondents who are willing to work from home also do not like work from home because of uncomfortable situation, lack of infrastructural facilities, technological challenges, pedagogical issues and lack of direct eye contact with students. But here gender differences also prevail because women employees did not accept the work from home mainly due to burden of domestic chores, presence of their children and elderly people at home. These care work and other domestic chores has put outsized portion of the domestic workload on women which restricts them actively participating in their professional field. So, the work from home has thrown a lot of challenges towards women. It is really tough to imagine that months of pandemic will propagate an equal division of

domestic labour between male and female members of households and bring a behavioural modification amongst men.

Section: III. Conclusion and policy Suggestions

The study shows that every aspects of life including the Coronavirus lockdown have a gendered impact on women. Due to lockdown, the situation of women became worse. Overloaded household responsibilities is one of the key constraint which affects women's ability to their professional life. Being confined to the four walls of home, due to coronavirus lockdown is difficult to every person in the country, but it becomes a real nightmare for women. The increased number of domestic violence cases reflects its threat to women in the country. This lockdown has gender dimension, because in the absence of paid household help, it doubled the burden of women who are working i.e **work from home and work for home**.

It is suggested that there is need to analyse the gender analysis while understanding the impact of lockdown on both the sexes of the society. This is a prerequisite to recognise the disproportionate impacts of the lockdown. Along with this, in order to make work from home rule successful in the teaching, number of necessary changes required i.e., reframe curriculum, advance technical equipment's, digital infrastructure etc. There is dire need to reiterate gender stereotypical discriminatory notions and to put patriarchy in isolation forever in order to make gender violence free world. Gender-specific economic and social policies required in the country for equality.