

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID ON EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY: COMPARISON BETWEEN GENDERS

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Abstract

As we all know, the pandemic has brought dreadful and disastrous impacts on the economy of India among all the other nations in the world. With a very high population density, high number of people living below the poverty level and tend to have very low living standards this country has a very wide inequality within the quality of life faced by each individual. So, the main objective of this report is to analyse the impacts of the Corona Virus pandemic on the different aspects of the livelihoods of people, their employment status and comparing these values between the male and female nationals of India. A structured questionnaire regarding the household schedule was prepared which covered the basic characteristics and activity status of the working household members. Information about the expectations of each person's expected income and employment status had been compared to their situations in four different reference periods: February 2020 (pre-COVID), April 2020 (during the implementation of the nationwide lockdown), April 2021 (when the lockdown was abolished) and November 2021 (current situation). Questions regarding the schooling status of the children in the family along with the availability of mid-day meals and other facilities were also covered. Lastly, one of the most important aspects were held which included the food and water concerns of the household involving the Livelihood Coping Strategy Index, food and market accessibility, state assistance and important concerns of the household were reviewed.

Keywords: Employment, Pandemic, Gender, Employability, COVID-19, Economics

Introduction

Before we talk about the impact of this pandemic in detail, we need to know what this disease is, Corona virus 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by the corona virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). By January 2020 the virus in its initial stage spread in many major cities in Mainland China reportedly about 3500 confirmed cases, the leaders enforced lockdown of millions of people in many cities and graphed containment zones. Soon after the festive season the virus spread throughout Europe as people returned from different parts of the world and unknowingly becoming the carriers of the virus, by March and April the virus spread at an unprecedented pace and reached all major parts of the world. By May there was a huge spike in cases and deaths in Italy and soon after there was another big spike in cases in US and after that Russia and a big spike in cases in India and it kept on unfolding in other parts of the world with cases exploding like bombs and spreading faster than a forest fire, the whole world was unable to breathe under the grasp of this deadly disease. To curb this rapid spike in cases the world leaders looked back at the History of humanity with pandemics and came up with a solution of quarantines and complete lockdowns. All international trade was cut,

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manufacturing of productive material was closed, all major cities around the world were in complete lockdown and citizens were restricted to go out of their homes, work from home was imposed where ever possible, classes of school going children and college students were conducted in online mode. All this had a major impact on markets and businesses around the world, the global economy was heading towards recession.

In India the people were struck with fear and worries about the future, calculating the days of survival without work and not being able to step out of their house. The lockdown was imposed from 25th march 2020 in India in which only essential workers were allowed to step out of their homes for work. The government gave various subsidies to the common people of the nation, the economic stimulus of Rs. 20 lakh crore, Direct transfer of money in bank account of people under Jan Dhan Yojan Reduced taxation, Loan Moratorium to poor, lower interest rates on loans to all industry, MSMEs, healthcare infrastructure was given top priority converting hotels, trains, stadiums into Covid-19 relief camp sites, etc.

In this survey we have shown the on-ground condition regarding the economic and state satisfactory condition of the citizens from Delhi NCR, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad. We tried to diversify our report by surveying people with different educational qualifications and different occupations with information on their family members we were able to notice different aspects of our diverse nation. We have collected our data in a systematic manner where we have collected a respondent's basic information about qualification levels, income in the Four Reference Periods, number of family members and their qualifications, primary and secondary sources of income, different age groups and genders, their satisfaction with the state given assistance during Covid-19, fulfilment of other schooling needs for children and their status of schooling regarding classes and other aspects, food insecurity update, their response to stocking up of stockpiles of food supplies for days/months, if they faced any hardships in getting food for their families, whether they had to borrow money to fulfil the daily requirement for food for their families, how many meals did each family member consume, and whether they had to sell any assets for their survival in this time of crisis.

Literature Review

1. Global Unemployment

The problem of global unemployment was caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. The research agenda includes exploring how this problem of unemployment may be different from previous unemployment; assessing the state of grief caused by job loss and loss of life; recognizing and addressing the right of scholars; examining inequalities that impact the inequality of the problem in poor communities and the working class; developing a framework for evidence-based interventions for unemployed people; and assessing the work-related family relationship and youth unemployment.

Examining the latest literature on food insecurity in the presence of Covid- 19 is important for policy makers and funders to make future decisions. Although research into the health effects of Covid-19 is emerging quickly, there is limited evidence of the food safety implications of this epidemic, particularly in scientific research (Jeehoon Han 2020). The current study aims to provide an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on the global food security context.

2. Midday Meal Scheme

The Midday Meal Scheme that is served in local schools is a key incentive for most families to send their children to school, as children receive one cooked meal free of charge. The scheme is targeted at providing students with hot cooked meals, often with proteins such as eggs. Since the inception of the scheme in 1995-96, the enrolment of children in schools has gone up from 33.4 million to 118 million in 2019-20. At its peak, it was benefitting 120 million children across 1.2 million schools. However, with the pandemic and the closure of physical schools, 115 million children have been affected and run a high risk of severe malnutrition. According to the Global Hunger Index, India already ranks poorly at 94 out of 107 countries in 2020.

3. Pandemic Government Policy

Our initial evidence indicates that at the start of the pandemic government policy effectively countered its effects on incomes, leading poverty to fall and low percentiles of income to rise across a range of demographic groups and geographies. The onset of the COVID-19 epidemic was marked by a sharp decline in employment and wages. At the same time, there was a huge response from the coalition government that passed billions of dollars to low-income and middle-income families (Bruce D. Meyer 2013).

Today most educational institutions in India have closed even the issuance of various guidelines in the middle of the opening of educational institutions from October 15, 2020. This closure has a significant impact on the education sector in India. This paper has made an effort to learn about the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the education sector in India as well as the role of social media, e-learning tools and government efforts to overcome this problem. This problem has a direct impact on teaching methods, student placement and the status of students studying abroad (Kandpal 2020).

4. COVID-19 crisis

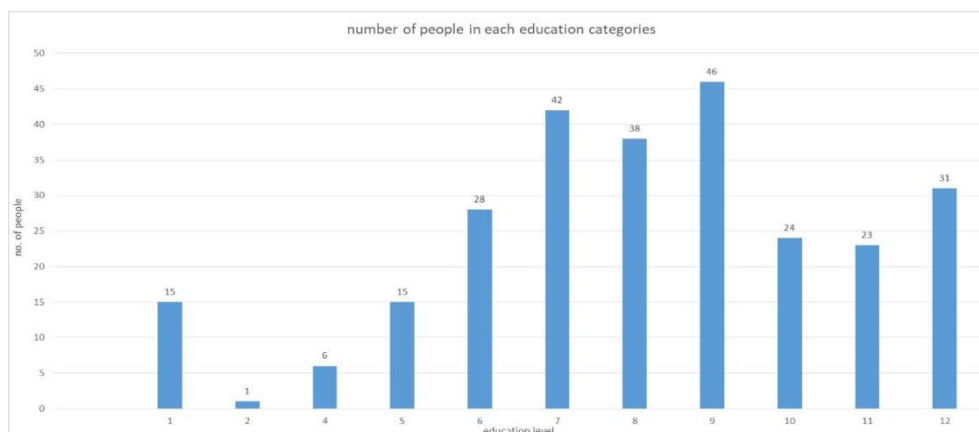
The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted existing gaps in public safety programs. As employees became ill, reduced their working hours or lost their jobs, paid sick leave programs, temporary services and unemployment benefits came in handy. This has helped to stabilize wages, but even in the most developed countries. Social protection, some workers with unusual jobs and their families miss out. The situation is worse in countries with large, informal sectors where a growing number of people are losing their jobs without earning a living. This policy brief discusses the measures countries have taken to support the livelihoods of those who cannot access unemployment benefits or short-term work schemes.

Data Analysis

1. Data Source and Methodology

Primary survey has been conducted indicating that the individuals responding to the questionnaires were directly in contact with the students. Respondents from around Greater Noida were interviewed from different occupation. The questionnaire had been prepared in a brief and compact manner so as to cover all necessary topics which was required to make an evaluation. Each pupil individually went to different areas and spoke to the people about their living conditions. The responses were then formulated in an Excel sheet from where initiatives were taken by each student to prepare one graph each which was then explained in details.

The facts and figures used through the tabular and graphical representations are thus precise and depict a clear view of the economic impact of COVID on employment, employability: Comparison between genders.



- 2. Educational Qualification
- 3. Descriptive Statistics

In an economy, education qualifications of the population play a major role in nation building, it is what determines the standard of living and development of that particular country, helps in understanding and formulating better policies for smooth conduct of activities and fulfilment of other needs.

Here to depict the educational levels or categories we used the x-axis where we have plotted the education levels from 1-12 with each having significant consideration:

- 1. Not literate
- 2. Literate without formal schooling: EGS/NFEC/AEC
- 3. Literate without formal schooling: TLC

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4. Literate without formal schooling: others
5. Literate: Below primary
6. Literate: Primary
7. Literate: Middle
8. Literate: Secondary
9. Literate: Higher secondary
10. Diploma/certificate course
11. Graduate/ Equivalent Technical degree
12. Postgraduate and above

EGS: Education Guarantee Scheme NFEC: Non-formal education Courses AEC: Adult Education Centre

TLC: Total Literacy Campaign

On the y-axis we have plotted the total number of people from 0-50 with a scale of 5 with respect to the level of education.

Graph points out that there are 15 people those who do not have any form of literacy out of the total 269 people, 1 person in the 2nd category, 0 number of people in the 3rd category of Literate without formal schooling: TLC, 6 people in the 4th category, 15 people in the 5th category, 28 people in the 6th category, 42 people in 7th category, 38 people in the 8th category, 46 people in the 9th category, 24 people in the 10th category, 23 people in 11th category and 31 people in the 12th category of education level.

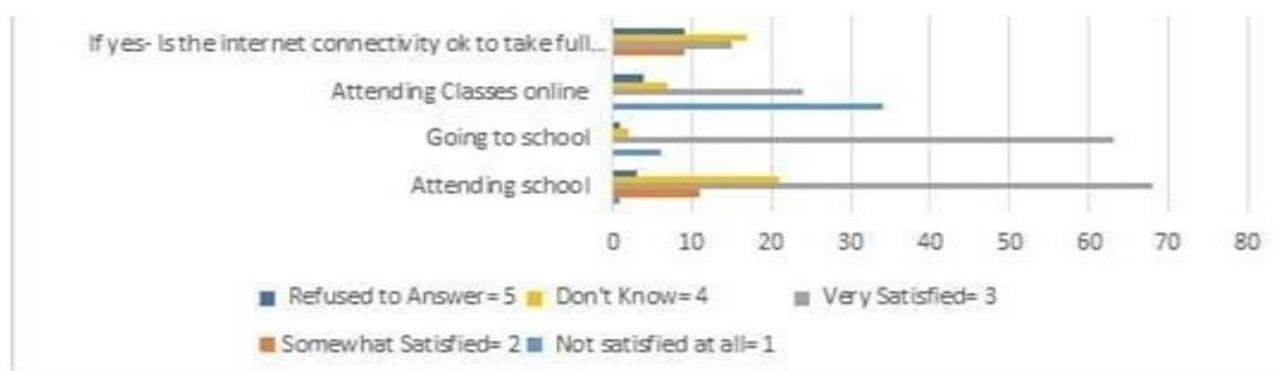
If we follow the trend line, we can see that in our survey the number of people is increasing with the education level which is a positive sign in terms of economic growth and development in the country. From the graphical data we can also make out that the lowest number of people is in the education category of Literate without formal schooling: TLC and the highest number of people being in the education category of Literate: Higher secondary.

4 Schooling Status of Children

COVID-19 has affected a large number of students across states, class, caste, gender and region. The shutting down of schools and the decision of shifting traditional classrooms to digital platforms is not only increasing learning inequality among children, but also pushing a large number of children out of school due to the digital divide.

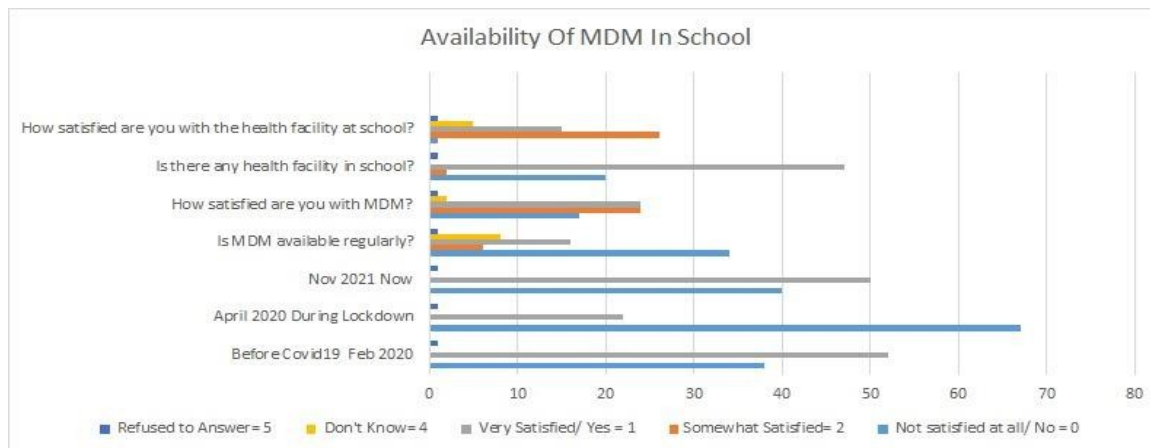
All schools and universities have created an online structure for day-to-day teaching and have also shifted online, postponed or cancelled many regular examinations, including entrance exams.

Some schools have even shut down due to insufficient funds and resources. The changes brought on by COVID-19 created an evident distinction between the rich and the poor and while the students who are privileged to have access to better facilities can still have the opportunity to avail of study material, online lectures and information, those belonging to harder luck are still struggling to achieve the bare minimum. In rural areas, students have limited or no Internet access and numerous students may not be able to afford computer, laptop or smart mobile phones in their homes. Online schooling has created a digital split among students. The lockdown has led to extreme distress for students in India that come from an economically deprived background.



In the above graph, it can be observed that most of the students used to go to school before the pandemic took place. During the pandemic 104 students attended the school. Out of which 73 students went to school after April 2021 that is in November 2021 and 69 students are attending online classes.

When asked about their connectivity of network, 50 students out of total 69 students, 9 students answered the connectivity was somewhat satisfied, 15 said very satisfied whereas according to 17 students said don't know and 9 refused to answer.



5. Mid-Day Meals in School

The scheme for Midday Meal was launched in 1995 in India to fulfil the satisfactory nutritional standings for school going children. As many poor households are unable to provide proper nutrition for younger children in the family the government program aims to provide Midday Meals to students as it solves two major problems, first it helps in proper nutritional growth of the young student which is very important as it helps in easy functionality for everyday work after attainment of adulthood, secondly it encourages the parents to send their child to school as it helps in more savings and provides for the requirement of food for younger members of the family. The questionnaire tried to look into whether there are any health facilities available in the school and do the school provide mid-day meals

Here the respondent's answers are described with:

0 = No/Not at all satisfied (light blue) 1 = Yes/very satisfied (grey)

2 = Somewhat satisfied (orange) 4 = Don't know (yellow)

5 = Refused to answer (dark blue)

We can see that that most of the respondents have agreed to the availability of health facility at the schools but the most of them are not satisfied with the health facilities at the school and showed that there are rooms for improvement. Though there are regularity in the midday meals where students get food but the quality of the food has not been satisfactory.

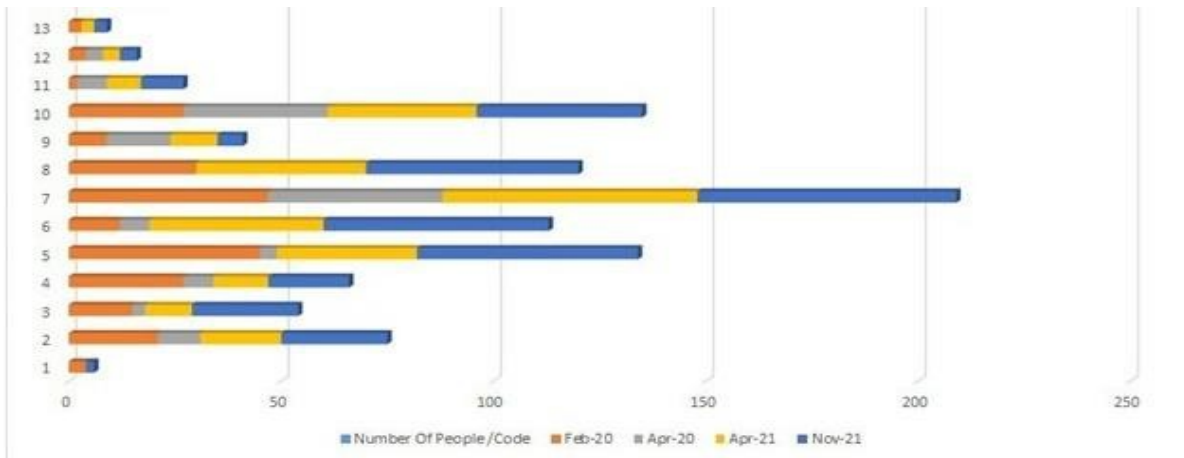
People were very satisfied with MDMs before Covid-19, during lockdowns their satisfaction levels dropped significantly because nothing was done in response to closure of schools, post Covid-19 the satisfactory levels came back to normal with people having positive opinion about MDMs.

6. Principal Activity Status

The condition of primary occupation (PS) in which a person spends a relatively short period of time (indicator of overtime) during the 365 days preceding the survey date is considered the normal state of a person's primary function. If a person engages in any economic activity for a period of 30 days or more during the preceding 365 days the person is deemed to be employed under this form. The state of work in which a person spends the longest time compared to the previous 365 days before the date of the survey is considered to be the normal function of a person's primary occupation. (PS), is determined using a long-term indicator and refers to the state in which the employee spends most of the year. The standard of work of a principal is also used to distinguish him / her from outside the workforce. For example, if a person is 'working' and / or

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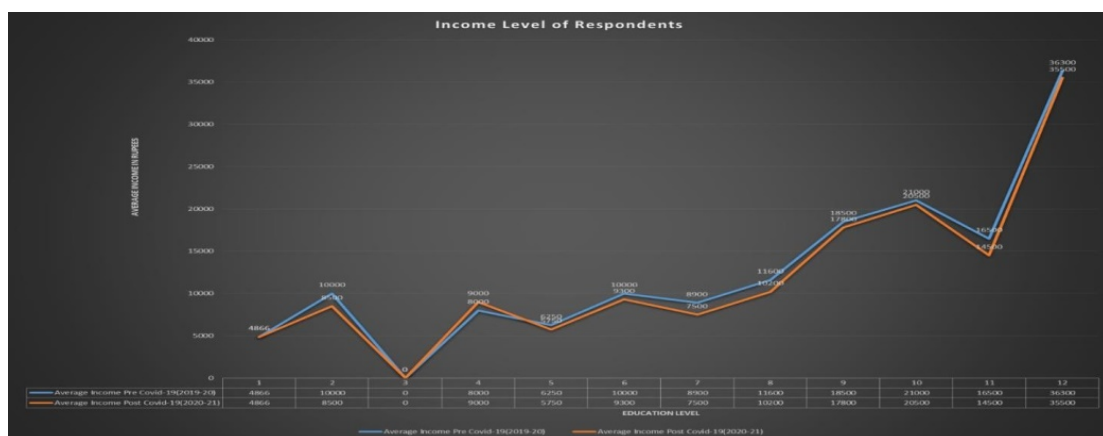
‘seeking or being available to work’ for most of the year preceding the report day it means that he or she is considered part of that work as his primary occupation.



This approach aims to identify ‘employees’ in those who were considered ‘unemployed’ or ‘outsiders’ on the basis of the long-term principle of the UPS method. For example, all persons reported to have been employed and / or unemployed for less than six months will be treated as outsiders based on UPS conditions. Similarly, if a person is considered to be working and working only for a short time, he or she will be classified as ‘unemployed’ based on the UPS method.

In the above graph it can be observed that in the month of APRIL 2020 half of the people fall under the category of did not work but was seeking or available for work. During the second wave which was during APRIL 2021 as observed from the graph high number was increased in seeking jobs and were engaged in domestic activities. Some attended educational institutions and few of them worked as regular salaried or wage employees. Further, when lockdown was relaxed still there were number of people seeking or available for work. Many of them have started attending domestic duties and were also engaged in free collection of goods.

7. Income Levels



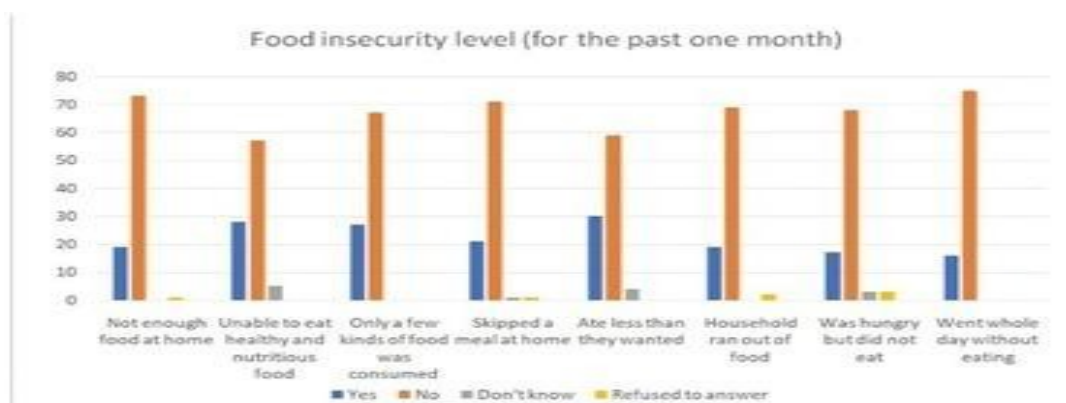
As we have classified the education levels of our respondents and categorized them into 12 significant groups it’s time to now correspond and coordinate them with their levels of income. Over here we have accumulated the data of different individuals with different income levels into averages for various education categories, we have taken into account the income of respondents from February 2020, April 2020, April 2021 and November 2021 and calculated the average into two groups of data 1) Average Income Pre Covid-19 & 2) Average Income Post Covid-19. On the vertical-axis we have plotted the average income in rupees from 0-40000 and on the horizontal- axis we have plotted the education levels with their respective average incomes of Pre Covid-19 and Post Covid-19. The Average Income Pre Covid-19 is depicted by blue line and Average Income Post Covid-19 is depicted by orange line.

From the graphical data we can see the change in average income of various respondents with respect to their education qualifications. The graphical data does not show much difference between the two periods, but it is important to keep in mind the recovery and difference of income changes with different jobs. As our data contain respondents from small scale businesses and also well-paid doctors the change in average income is getting cancelled out because of the fact that occupations like doctors we given extra income for overtime in Covid-19 crisis whereas the other jobs we surveyed did not show much of a difference in average income between the two periods. We can surely see by the graph that the change in income is higher with lower education levels and the change is lower with higher level of education. This shows that the income impact of Covid-19 was much worse with the lower educated group of population.

8. Food Insecurity Level

COVID-19 has profound and far-reaching effects on public health and poses a serious threat to global development. Apart from the direct effects of the virus, the epidemic can have many indirect effects on food insecurity. Disruption caused by the epidemic has the potential to affect all 'four pillars' of food security including access, utilization and sustainability and marketing. This not only affects the food availability directly but also indirectly through the demand side due to the impact of housing closure on income, physical access to food and access to economic food. The effects of COVID-19 on food security are global and systematic, but there are also local impacts that need to be considered. The paradox of food security is that poor and vulnerable people need to adjust their response to meet their food needs at the local level. Working with the markets of these groups of people is tedious and flexible. This is a fundamental consideration when it comes to taking action and deciding how and where different types of support are made.

Many schemes were introduced by government during the period of COVID-19. This includes free distribution of food which was an initiative which took place in many COVID centres and school where the people were given free food.



Because of the schemes introduced by the government, it has shown a great impact during the COVID phase on food security level in India. When the questions were put in front of people regarding the food security the replies were great from the economic point of view.

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As shown in the graph people never faced any problem like not enough food available at their place, unable to eat healthy and nutritious food, skipped meal at home, ate less than needed. This shows the level of satisfaction the people who were suffered due to COVID but were not able to face the food security problems.

9. Food Insecurity Level

Livelihood Coping Strategy Index shows us status of the respondents to secure the necessities of life, we have asked the respondents questions regarding the impact of Covid-19 on their ability to purchase and provide the basic necessities of life. By the data given above in our survey the answers we received were:

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Majority of the respondents disagreed with the questions asked like whether Sold household assets/goods (radio, furniture, refrigerator, television, jewelry), Reduced non-food expenses on health (including medicine), Reduced non-food expenses on education, Sold productive assets or means of transport (sewing machine, wheelbarrow, bicycle, car), Spent savings, Borrowed money, Sold house or land, Purchased food on credit or borrowed money (Purchase on credit), Sold last female animals, Children (under 15 years old) started working to contribute to household income (e.g. casual labor), Were dependent on food, rations and/or support from neighbours and relatives as only food/income source. But in terms of spent savings about 40% of the respondents agreed, even if we see people did reduce their non-food expenses on health. Some of the respondents also had to borrow money to purchase food (about 25%), 26% of others were also dependent on food sources and financial support from relatives or close friends or even by the state. There were also some cases where the respondents had to sell their house/land or other assets in the last 12 months.

Livelihood Coping Strategy Index

BEHAVIOR	No, because no shortage of food	No, because they have engaged in this activity in the past one year	Yes	Not Applicable
Sold household assets	75%	3.5%	9.5%	11.9%
Reduced non-food expenses on health	66.6%	5.9%	23.8%	3.57%
Reduced non-food expenses on education	80.4%	2.3%	10.7%	16.6%
Sold productive assets or means of transport	63.25%	5.95%	17.8%	13%
Spent savings	58.42%	2.38%	39.2%	0%
Borrowed money	66.8%	3.5%	25%	4.7%
Sold house or land	59.6%	11.9%	11.9%	16.6%
Purchased food on credit or borrowed money (purchase on credit)	70.2%	4.7%	25%	0.1%
Sold last female animals	70.4%	3.5%	8.3%	17.8%
Children (under 15 years old) started working	70.4%	3.5%	8.3%	17.8%
Were dependent on food, rations and/or support from neighbors and relatives as only food/income source	60.9%	7.1%	26.1%	5.9%

10. Food Insecurity Level

Apart from the notion that the Indian Government has been allocating funds specially to serve and assist the nationals who have very low incomes job, large families to feed, no access to nutritious food and fresh drinking water, through this survey we have seen that this hasn't really been effective for most of the people who were questioned. The education in government school, where we can see that majority of the people refused to answer and the next few did not quite know about the condition of government schools which might be because they did not have children or maybe did not go to schools. Out of approximately 65 responses we can see that around 48 people said they were very satisfied with the government schools followed by 27 who were somewhat satisfied and 22 who were not happy at all.

The best response was gained in the section of medical aid where over 80% responded with very satisfied followed by the 49 out of 65 being somewhat satisfied. This reflects the advancement in the health sector of the country which would in the long run result in higher life expectancy, higher recovery rates and lower death rates, proceeding towards a healthier nation.

Even though most of the respondents said claimed that they were somewhat satisfied with the Agricultural Mandi system, yet more than half seemed to be overly unhappy with this matter. In depth conversation with a farmer revealed that there were high levels of collusions within the traders itself which made it very hard to survive in the market and secure profits.

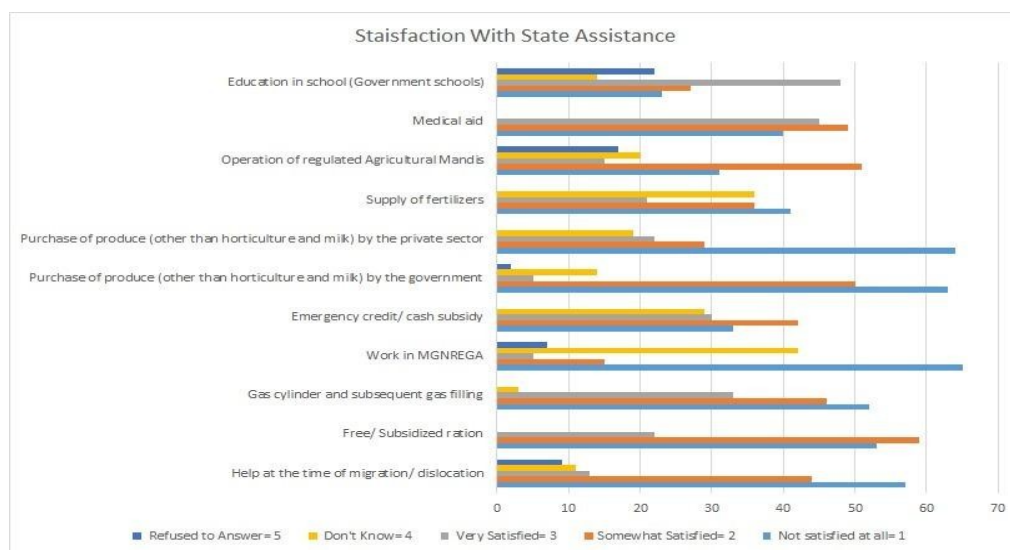
For the next two responses, i.e. the private sector and the government purchase of produce other than horticulture, similar patterns were noticed in the graphs. In this, maximum people were claiming that they were unfamiliar about this concept and thus did not benefit from this in any way.

With most of the answers bending towards somewhat satisfied with the emergency cash or subsidies received from governments, there was a tie between the number of people who had been overwhelmed by the governments support whereas some were not satisfied at all.

Work in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 ensured that each and every person of the working population living in the rural/ remote areas, who are willing and able to work but are unable to work should be provided with a 100-day job by the MGNREGA Act so that none of the people are unemployed and can work even if to earn a small amount of income to support their families. To surprise, 90% of the people did not have any idea about this concept and thus were not satisfied at all.

The opposite was observed when asked about free/ subsidized rations and gas cylinders received. Plenty responses indicated that these were the only two areas in which they benefitted the most with aid from the state and were able to save up a lot and not worry about the food intake of the members of the family while they were seeking for a new job. These two sections numerically show over half the responses to be somewhat satisfied even though there have been people who haven't received that amount of assistance from the government as well.

Lastly, during the time of migration/ dislocation during the time of COVID when everyone was returning to their villages because of the lockdown also had to do in their own expense very few people received money in order to help themselves and their families get settled down during the dreadful situation.



4.0 Conclusion

From the contents covered in this paper we have analysed thoroughly all the major impacts which has fallen on the lower- and middle-income tire people of the economy of India. This gives us a clear and vivid picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people working in different occupations having different skill sets and their vulnerability when it comes to comparing their income levels and whether they have been having absolute access to food and safe drinking water alongside, supporting their families and coping up to have a mean living standard. This would further help us to evaluate the measures these households are taking in order to cope up and survive amid the tough living conditions being created.

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