

Equal Risk, Unequal Burden: Female Care Workers in the Time of COVID-19 and Policy Intervention

Hema Prakash, Vinod Sen and Ankur Yadav

Among other various inequalities, division of work is seen as a potential powerful equalizer. The formulation of policies supporting equality in work should be considered when there is a motive for holistic development amid the socio-economic downturn. Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in India suggests that females are at a greater disadvantage than males in sharing crisis distress and securing jobs. A direct effect of the shift in the institutional provisions on the household is like an increasing care burden, eventually decreasing the time autonomy. Preventive measures of social distancing during lockdown have curtailed the demand for such labour and services. This study discusses the challenges of female care workers-paid and unpaid, in COVID-19 and the need for policy interventions as pandemic relief measures.

I Introduction

The gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic is undeniable. It suggests a disproportionate impact on the heterogeneous group of the workers' population. To minimize the rapid spread rate of Coronavirus infection, containment precautionary measures had resulted in the complete nationwide lockdown. It had almost paused all the economic and social activities on a major and minor scale. The shutting down of schools, offices, health, and care centres has shifted their provision onto the households. This is very likely to increase care work of females. Additionally, the preventive measure against infection to be followed at an individual level such as - cleaning, care for a quarantined family member, social distancing, providing exceptional care to children and the elders, hygiene safety measures have put an additional burden of quality care demand on women to cater to the family's basic requirements.

This shift in the institutional provisions on household female caregivers restricts them from participating in the labour force. Also, it hinders the job and creates difficulties to continue a job and perform it well from home. The increasing

Hema Prakash, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management Studies, Marwadi University, Rajkot-Morbi Road, Rajkot 360003, Gujarat, Email: hemaprakash24@gmail.com.

Vinod Sen, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak 484886, Madhya Pradesh, Email: senvinod79@gmail.com

Ankur Yadav, Assistant Professor, GNIOT MBA Institute, Knowledge Park-2, Greater Noida 201310, Uttar Pradesh, Email: phd.ankur@gmail.com