

# Women and Socio-Economic Inequality: Addressing Gendered Face of Covid-19 Pandemic in Jammu and Kashmir

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the widespread outbreak of corona virus epidemic, in India lockdown has been declared in every State and UT by the government. As covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected in different ways in the life of women and men throughout the country and a big challenge to economic and social life of people. The crisis of pandemic has created an unprecedented loss and disruption of equality in women's life. Against this backdrop, the main aim of this study is to focus on the impact of socio-economic inequality on women of Jammu and Kashmir caused by COVID-19 pandemic. In order to analyze the present research problem the researchers mostly relied on the secondary method of data collection through internet sources, books, journals, article and so forth. The distinct role of women from men in the society which is largely influenced by socio-cultural norms played significant role in gender differences. Outbreak of pandemic exacerbate gender inequalities in every sector from health to economy, security to social participation and protection, especially in those women who are the primary care giver of the family- in gendered division of labor and economic stability. Women take burden of household responsibility, bear a disproportionate brunt of economic, health crisis and gender-based violence in the life. Unfortunately the same pattern has following worldwide covid-19 due to which women face several socio-economic obstacles for the realization of everyday life for instance jobless, unemployment, violence, health issues, education and financial problem. The result of present research problem will be beneficial for to conduct the further related research work- for researchers, academicians etc.

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**KEYWORDS:** Covid-19 pandemic, Gender, Inequality, Jammu and Kashmir, Socio-economic

## INTRODUCTION:

Society in which we live has never been gender-neutral performance space. Investigations found that the disease that caused by newly discovered corona virus was subsequently named covid-19. January 30, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declares the outbreak of Public Health Emergency of international concern. Covid-19 virus caused different type of illness and SARA-CoV2 (Sever Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2) widely covers all regions globally and continue to its affect in the lives and livelihood, there is no reason to believe that this is not the pattern in Jammu and Kashmir territory as well.

Even before the strike of covid-19, the daily life of people was suffered from amid lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir. The complete lockdown was imposed

by the government of India on August 2019, on abrogation of article 370 of Jammu and Kashmir from the Indian constitution, that will continued throughout the march 2020. Due to these change had been followed by constraint. The strict restrictions on the movement and communication were also imposed on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. People were trapped into their houses because of the heavy restrain of armed forces in the region. During lockdown, there were also unavailability of internet connectivity and all telephone line was also cut there. The outcome of this lockdown in such way which results highly disruption of inequality in education because of schools were closed, no accessibility of healthcare facilities, unemployment-numerous people were jobless because they had lost job (ACAPS). This

phase of lockdown has particularly affected women and girls across Jammu and Kashmir. Women were remain restricted in the indoor during the siege, hence limiting their access to basic needs and resources, such as medical care, loss of livelihood and lack of food, health and other basic necessity for women like as sanitary pad (Rafiuzzanman).

After approximately six month cut off from the world Jammu and Kashmir was limping back to normal, govt. of India had began lifting slowly the restriction on movement and communication and restore access on 2G internet (Wani). Although after this lockdown, soon after the first case of Covid-19 confirmed in Jammu and Kashmir in March 2020 report published by The Times of India. Then once again lockdown imposed in Jammu and Kashmir with new rules and restrictions to the control an outbreak of corona epidemic.

This covid-19 crisis has a gendered face too. “Pandemic” was not gender neutral referred by the UN policy across domain including health, economy, security and social protection, the impact are exacerbated for women because they are women (GiHA WG). The unprecedented crisis like covid-19 pandemic has serious affect directly or indirectly on equality of women and girls. The economic decline during this pandemic phase had a regressive effect on gender equality. With the economic fallout during this phase are having its regressive influence on the gender-based equality. In other words, women faced/facing the consequences of pandemic disproportionately.

The status of women is not homogenous throughout the social and economic fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. There exists wide range of diversity on the status and role of women. But, in general it has been observed those women’s rights to inheritance, education, employment and political are considerably lower compared to that of men. Women are spotted in countless different roles and in traditional society have been characterized by inferior social status, dependency and overall sufferings. Women who go outside home for work is not only suffered but also those who stayed at home as well. A recent report published by the Indian Express quotes the recent **Periodic Labour Force Survey to state:** “The rise in the female labour force participation is also problematic. Under normal circumstances, considering the low rates of female labour force participation in India – for women aged 15 and above it stood at 24.5 per cent in 2018-19 – a rise in participation would be a positive development. However, much of the increase observed in 2019-20 was in the form of unpaid family work. In fact,

according to the survey, the employment rate for unpaid workers in household enterprises in rural and urban areas increased to 15.9 per cent in 2019-20, from 13.3 per cent in 2018-19. In the case of female workers, it increased from 30.9 per cent to 35 per cent over the period. This, as some economists have said, is indicative of rising underemployment.”(Editorial)

### **Economic impact on women:**

In Jammu and Kashmir, report of PLFS (Public Labour Force Survey) revealed that the highest rate of unemployment by the end of year of October, 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir that is (17. 8%) than that of other states Kerala (16.7), Jharkhand (16%), Odisha (15%) and Chhattisgarh (14.5 (News Network). Most of the women are in the lower economic strata are engaged in various types of economic activities. Their economic contribution is crucial for the survival of family and their work is rarely recognized. Women of Jammu and Kashmir, face a lot of challenges that stop them from entering the workforce as compared to their male counterpart or even their female counterpart in the rest of the country leading the percentage of unemployment in women being alarmingly higher than the women of other states. In recent study, report published by The Times of India mentioned the latest bulletin from CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy) and CEDA (Centre for Economic Data and Analysis): the number of women actively looking for work each month reduced by three million between 2019 and 2021. In four states average percentage of women employment saw decline over 50% in the Tamil Nadu (50.9%, Goa (56%), Jammu and Kashmir (61%) and Punjab (57.9%). The state Jammu and Kashmir shows 61% which shows that the highest decline of female employment out of these four states (kakodkar).

The tremendous impact of covid-19 pandemic has also affected the women who are employed in organized labour. By December 2020, 13% fewer women had jobs or were looking for jobs, as compared to 2% fewer men, clearly showing that in India, women are more likely to lose jobs during the pandemic than men. There is no reason to believe that this is not the pattern in Jammu and Kashmir as well (Chakraborty). ‘Stay at home’ has been a burden for women who have to take care of their children, elderly or other dependents. With home working, women are forced to to take care of the home and their work responsibilities at the same time.

### **Violence against women:**

Violence against women should be understood in their respective cultural context of gender of nations. In India male supremacy and female subservience is an accepted social norm. Wife beating is a socially

accepted phenomenon in the lower income household in India. During the different stage of life, women are the subject to some kind of violence or other not only in the India but in world too. This acts of violence range from battering, assault, incest and rape to dowry death and female foeticide in India. Violence should be understood in a wider perspective. Not merely in terms of generic male violence versus female victims but also in terms of how caste, class, religion etc. mediate the use of violence against women. There is also a clear linkage between economic marginalization and violence. Male violence against female is due to the various factors such as inferiority complex, personality disorder, lower self-esteem, stress; jealousy, inadequate earnings and the need to cover up this inability etc. During pandemic, the report of High Court of Jammu and Kashmir mentioned the statement of National Commission for Women to state: ‘within the week of after imposition of lockdown, about crime against women there are 257 complaints are received by the Complaint and Investigation Cell and also the case of domestic violence increased to 60 from 30. In Jammu and Kashmir, for the help of women, MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres) had established helpline number. Where the drastic increase in the calls related to domestic violence related was found mentioned by the report of Women’s Media Center. However, with the extended lockdown and restriction on communication and movement women suffer from various obstacles. As per the statement social welfare department has exposed the shocking facts about gender-based violence in Jammu and Kashmir during the first month of covid-19 pandemic that is 16 cases of rape, 64 cases of molestations that were reported (Khullar). Further, survey conducted by the Union Ministry of Health i.e. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) released data 9.6% of women experienced domestic violence in J&K from 2019 to 2020. This report also revealed that widespread of domestic violence and harassment is rose in rural area than urban area. In rural area, 11% women between the age group 18-49 experience domestic violence and 5% sexual violence. Whereas in urban area, the 5.9% women in the age group of 18-49 have experienced domestic violence and 1.4% have experienced sexual violence (Bhat).

#### **Impact on sexual and reproductive health:**

Though health inequalities are more discernible between and among various economic groups, significant differences in the health outcomes by gender remain within economic class the pity is gender is not recognized as factors, which contribute to health inequality while socio-economic class, race or caste are recognized as factor. Gender and poverty

interact much closed and prevent women from enjoying good health. The opportunity cost of seeking health care is often very high for women in rural areas. Community norms and values relating to women’s and men’s sexuality and reproduction often perpetuate the already existing gender biased in health care (Shanthi). Women and girls in Kashmir are faced with intersectional discrimination as they living in a situation of conflict. The public health crisis in the Kashmir region has been accelerated by the lockdown due to covid-19 pandemic- pregnant women have forced to travel on foot to hospital while in labour, and there has been an increase in the number of stillbirths, foetal distress and cases of postpartum anemia. The pandemic in Kashmir, as in many parts of the world, has brought the existing deficiencies in the health system in Kashmir to fore, especially the non-availability of primary health care for women, which has lead to them developing secondary symptoms and serious mental health problem (Adiga). As per the study of Women’s Regional Network stated most of the women face the hardship for their health during the widespread of covid-19 especially pregnant women. Due to the suspension of transport facility, lack of infrastructure like operation theaters and shortage of staff, pregnant women have experienced increase difficulty in order to access the proper health.

#### **Conclusion:**

The study shows that the impact of covid-19 pandemic is never gender-neutral. It continues to affect lives and livelihoods around the Jammu and Kashmir. the insights highlighted in this research study can help further not just in knowing several other issues women’s food and livelihood security being affected by the pandemic, their vulnerability to mental health problems but also help decision makers to mitigate some of the negative impacts of the pandemic on women by designing and implementing appropriate policies and programs. In simple words, and anticipation of the diverse potential effects of Covid-19 can help us design surveys that can better capture impact that would otherwise remain invisible, and to guide policy for mitigating adverse effects. Along with this, to identify several gendered effects, we need to draw on our understanding of pre-existing gender inequalities and social norms as well as examine literature that illuminates how people cope with social and economic crisis, not just temporarily but also in the long run.

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