



WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTRE JESUS AND MARY COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

RESEARCH PROJECT
2020-21

Tracing Distress and Enhanced Precarity: Gender Analysis of the Lockdown
in India

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DEDICATED TO SOUMYA JHA

This project is our collective labour, and we dedicate it to our dear friend and fellow traveller, Soumya Jha, whose untimely death on 25th May 2021 has left us shattered. Soumya was a fighter, as was evident in the way she silently and bravely fought her illness till the end. We admire the fact that in spite of her illness, she kept working on her portion of research and fieldwork till she could. Her contribution to our team through informed suggestions, and her dedication towards our cause, can be felt in the essence of this research. Thus, we dedicate our final efforts to her and hope that she will be proud of what we have together achieved in these difficult times.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



- To throw light upon the much-needed reforms in favour of women, especially for those from marginalized sections of society, and in keeping with the demands of social justice.
- To highlight the difficulties faced by the highly exploited sections of working women, such as those in paid domestic work, construction, garment production, etc., and the detrimental effects of the ill-fated lockdown on their everyday lives and livelihood well into the post-lockdown period.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



- The sample for our research included women workers from both the formal and informal sector.
- Most of the interviews took place telephonically as the pandemic limited our abilities to physically meet and gather information.
- Both primary and secondary data was used.

Chapter 1:	Tracing Distress and Enhanced Precarity: Gender Analysis of the Lockdown in India – An Overview
Chapter 2:	Working Women, Employment Stresses, and Household Dynamics During the Lockdown
Chapter 3:	The Price of Fashion: An Overview of Women Workers in the Garment Industry
Chapter 4:	The COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown: Domestic Workers and their Plight
Chapter 5:	Construction Workers in India and their Grief-stricken Exodus Post Lockdown
Chapter 6:	Lockdowns and Online Learning: Educational Inequalities Magnified

KEY ARGUMENTS IN EACH CHAPTER

1. WORKING WOMEN

- Working women dealt not only with the loss of their livelihoods but also bore the brunt of unequal distribution of unpaid household work.
- Along with that, there was a sharp increase in Domestic Violence cases.
- The impact of the lockdown was differential, given the wide range of economic backgrounds, regions, class, culture and occupations of the women in India.

2. GARMENT WORKERS

- The labour force in the garment industry is increasingly 'unorganised' and trapped in informality, given the nature of the majority work relations informing the industry.
- Home based women workers in the garment and textile industry face the most extensive brunt of informality. Most of such workers are paid on a piece rate basis, and they have no access to any form of social security provisions, unionisation or collective bargaining.

3. DOMESTIC WORKERS

- The sector is highly informal in nature, the structure is based on a pragmatic intimacy between the employer and employee rather than a formal contract.
- More than 50% of the workers didn't receive their salaries during the lockdown. Even after the unlock many were paid half the salaries by the employers stating financial constraints, but the work done by the workers remained the same.
- The workers also faced discrimination and were called as the carriers of the virus, due to which many lost their jobs, putting them in a lot of mental pressure due to the financial difficulties.

4. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

- Massive corruption & heightened negligence within the government bodies entrusted with the responsibility of labour welfare.
- Immense illegal activities amid the construction industry, especially at the construction sites, with regard to construction workers, particularly women construction workers.
- With no food and wages, construction workers were forcefully trapped in the cities during the lockdown.
- Most migrant construction workers were forced to walk on foot to their villages and no relief measures reached these migrant construction workers who were never legally registered with the government.

5. ONLINE EDUCATION

- The underprivileged sections were pushed to abject poverty to that extent that they had to choose between feeding themselves or their education.
- Increased burden of household work on women leading to mental and physical exhaustion.
- No relief measures were provided by the government/educational institutions/ village panchayats to prevent the ill-effects of the digital divide.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR PROJECT AND OUR OVERALL LEARNING AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH

