

Analyzing the need for women empowerment during the economic slowdown: Evidence from Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract: The sudden economic crisis due to the pandemic has affected all the major industries, in almost all the sectors and, shut all the local business. It has been estimated that crores of migrants have returned to their home state and this has happened twice during the pandemic. Since, most of the migrants might not get the possible opportunities as compared to the pre-covid era, alternative arrangements have to be made in their respective home states so, that the population has a proper livelihood. Since women may not travel back to get employment opportunities, focusing on them can yield better results. This paper focuses on the role of women in economic development and its significance in handling the economic slowdown through employment generation in small towns and satellite towns. The methodology is based on secondary data analysis of Census 2011 data on migrant labors, and, National skill development data. This integration can help in determining the number of female beneficiaries by economic empowerment. In the results it has been observed that, in more than 10 states, the demand and the supply gap is negative. It indicates that in these states there is need for employment generation to fill the gap. The findings recommend empowering women who have minimal skills and education, and having a customized plan for each state depending on their literacy rate and demand for labor force.

Keywords: Migrants, women, economy, pandemic, skill-development.

1. Introduction

The Indian economy has suffered a lot of loss due to pandemic the spill over of which is going to be experienced in the coming decade (PIB, 2021). The lockdown has hit the domestic economy much more than the global recession. India's GDP is projected to contract by 7.7 percent (PIB, 2021). Many sectors are affected due to lockdown including manufacturing and construction. The consumption pattern has shifted

to online medium and there is an increase in rural demand (Arnab, 2020). Pandemic is a global crisis and people employed in the informal economy may be affected the most and will face a crisis. More than 195 million people will be out of their job, of which the maximum would be the low skilled jobs (International Labor Organization, 2020).

Migration of people is common in India, from rural to urban spaces. During the pandemic maximum number of migrants who returned to home state were from UP and Bihar due to lack of employment opportunities triggered due to the complete shutdown of all the activities. The major hub for their jobs were metro cities, thus making these cities responsible for spreading the corona virus. Impact of the corona virus on the migrant population resulted in 90% of them losing jobs in India (The Hindu, 2020).

Since all global economic activities may slow down for curbing the spread of COVID-19, the risk of COVID-19 leading to a global economic recession may be very high in 2020 and 2021(WHO, 2020). Economic recovery depends on the timing and level of government support, to those most in need (mainly composed of the informal sector, immigrants, and marginalized communities) is a key measure to save many lives. However, every crisis provides a unique opportunity to rethink the path of personal, social and social development. The COVID-19 pandemic has sent a clear signal to the Indian economy to adopt a sustainable development model based on self-reliance, including a useful and environmentally friendly framework. To implement this female labor force can play an important role. Local models for women empowerment can be incorporated in satellite towns to reduce congestion in the metro cities and smart towns and also to increase self-reliance of households, which can form the backup plan in any economic crisis like the pandemic (Krishnan, 2021).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Migrant Laborers

A migrant worker earns between Rs. 200-400/day and can support an average of four family members (Jan Sahas, 2020). Further, it has been observed that migrant workers do not have the basic rights under the law to protect their lives and dignity (Jan Sahas,2020). In the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant workers were trapped in the city and had to return home in extreme hunger, thirst and poverty. The reasons behind the increasing number of migrant workers, were mostly related to social and economic factors. It has been observed that approximately 30% of the population migrates from their place of birth (Table 1) and the major reason for migration for females is marriage (Table 2) whereas setting up business counts to be the least important reason. Many other problems and challenges mentioned above can be addressed, if these female migrants who are forced to migrate can be tapped by some means. The migration projection of data in 2011 Census, has been assumed to remain constant throughout projection periods up until 2035, where Component Method of projections were used.

Table 1: Number of migrants by place of birth - India 2011

	Category	Migrations by place of birth	Percentage
A.	Total Population	1210854977	100%
B.	Born within India	1205201066	99.53%
B.1	Within the state of enumeration	1148903503	95.33%
B.11	Born in the place of enumeration	763567558	66.46%
B.12	Born elsewhere in the district of enumeration	264108665	34.59%
B.2	Born in other districts of the state	121227280	45.90%

Source: Table D1 India, Census of India 2011.

Table 2: Reasons for migration of migrants by last residence - India 2011

Reason for migrations	Number of Migrants			Percentage to Migrants		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total migrants	455787621	146145967	309641654	100%	100%	100%
Work/Employment	41422917	35016700	6406217	9%	24%	2%
Business	3590487	2683144	907343	1%	2%	0%
Education	5457556	3296340	2161216	1%	2%	1%
Marriage	211186431	5346733	205839698	46%	4%	66%
Moved after birth	33855865	20078947	13776918	7%	14%	4%
Moved with households	65959915	29679662	36280253	14%	20%	12%
Other	94314450	50044441	44270009	21%	34%	14%

Source: Table D5, Census of India 2011

2.2 Economic empowerment

Empowerment or giving power to the women should be done by giving economic independence that would help them to contribute in the family. They should be involved in the decision-making process, including legislative, executive and judiciary bodies so that they can overcome all the hurdles and emerge as independent entrepreneurs and provide more employment opportunities in the surrounding areas.

Given that women account for the majority of the population living below the poverty line and often falling into extreme poverty (National Policy for the Empowerment of women, 2001). Given the harsh reality of social and family discrimination, macroeconomic policies and poverty reduction plans will address needs and challenges of these people. The implementation of the plans already targeted at women can be improved. Measures are being taken to mobilize poor women and pool services to provide them with a range of economic and social opportunities and the support they need for increasing their potential.

In order to improve women's access to consumer and investment loans, new micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institutions are being established, and existing institutions are

being strengthened to increase credit lines. Measures are being taken to ensure that sufficient credit flows are obtained through existing funds, so that all women living below the poverty line have easy access to credit (National Policy for the Empowerment of women, 2001).

2.2 Empowerment through skill development

A lot of schemes are already present to impart skill development (India Skills, 2020)). These programs can serve as the basis for developing expertise for small scale industries in satellite towns.

a. Long-term skills development through training in manufacturing facilities (ITI). National training institutions (women) provide vocational training specifically for women.

b. Training for women is initiated by the National Apprenticeship Support Program (NAPS) in all central financial institutions (CFI). NSTI (W) organizes NCVT-approved qualification courses in various fields such as office management, electronics, design and fashion technology, embroidery and computer design according to the Craftsman Training Program (CTS) and Craft Instructor Training Program (CITS) (MSDE, 2019).

c. Short-term skills development training The Ministry's flagship program Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana aims to encourage women to participate more in the labor market through appropriate training and gender mainstreaming of skills. The Mission Skill India program not only aims to provide women with the relevant skills employers are looking for, but also meet their needs by providing safe transportation, flexible working hours and childcare assistance. Although women dominate in the fields of clothing, beauty and health, and medical care, the migrant woman may also occupy an important position in non-traditional roles such as electronics and hardware.

d. Flexible delivery mechanisms such as mobile training classes, flexible afternoon trips combined with local training to accommodate women; ensuring safety and gender-sensitive Learning environment, recruitment of trainers, equal pay for equal work and complaint procedures to transform the migrant woman as entrepreneurs (Lavina, 2016). Additionally, the skills gap report also identifies sectors in which women may constitute the workforce (MSDE, 2019).

2.4 Empowerment through entrepreneurship

By helping women take responsibility, they can help create job opportunities, increase productivity and competitiveness, eradicate poverty, and achieve social goals. Enterprises may create wealth and employment opportunities. On the basis of Solow's (1956) pioneering work, he attributed economic growth to factors that increase labor and capital inflows. The Solow model is a neoclassical economic model based on the assumptions of entrepreneurial economic theory. Usually, the economy is based on a combination of production factors (capital, labor). Currently, recent work on economic growth focuses on integrating entrepreneurship into the economic growth model. Moreover, entrepreneurship is regarded as an important engine of economic growth. In addition, entrepreneurs not only create employment opportunities for themselves, but also create employment opportunities for others. In addition to creating jobs, entrepreneurship can also affect a country. General economic indicators in various ways; first, entrepreneurs enter the market with new products, innovations, technologies or manufacturing processes; second, the establishment of new institutions improves productivity and competitiveness; third, the creation of new companies will accelerate the structure revival. In other words, these migrant women can be easily trained by teaching appropriate skills. Thus, these programs can be directed to the female migrants and creation of small-scale industries.

2.5 Government Initiatives for empowerment

In order to promote the employment of migrant workers returning to their hometowns, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan has started working in 116 areas in a mission mode. As part of this campaign, rural infrastructure is being built with the participation of these migrant workers at a cost of about 50,000, rupees/crore. The Ministry of Transport has also initiated many roads and highway construction projects involving migrant workers. Facilitate the employment of migrant workers. The Rs. 10 crore financial plan sponsored by Atm Nirbhar Bharat is dedicated to creating employment opportunities for immigrants and informal workers, strengthening the small, medium and micro enterprise sector and developing the rural economy. It includes many initiatives for all these sectors. Coordinate and implement various measures to ensure that migrant workers return to work. In addition, the state of origin and the state of destination will coordinate the selection and testing of migrant working women workers in accordance with the agreement established by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare data and ensure that the existing schemes facilitate women entrepreneurship.

3. Method

The data was collected from the census and national skill development centers data (NSDC, 2019) to find out the female population which lacks education and skill and can be economically empowered as shown in Fig 1. The data analysis was done to state wise to determine the scope of skill development need in various states.

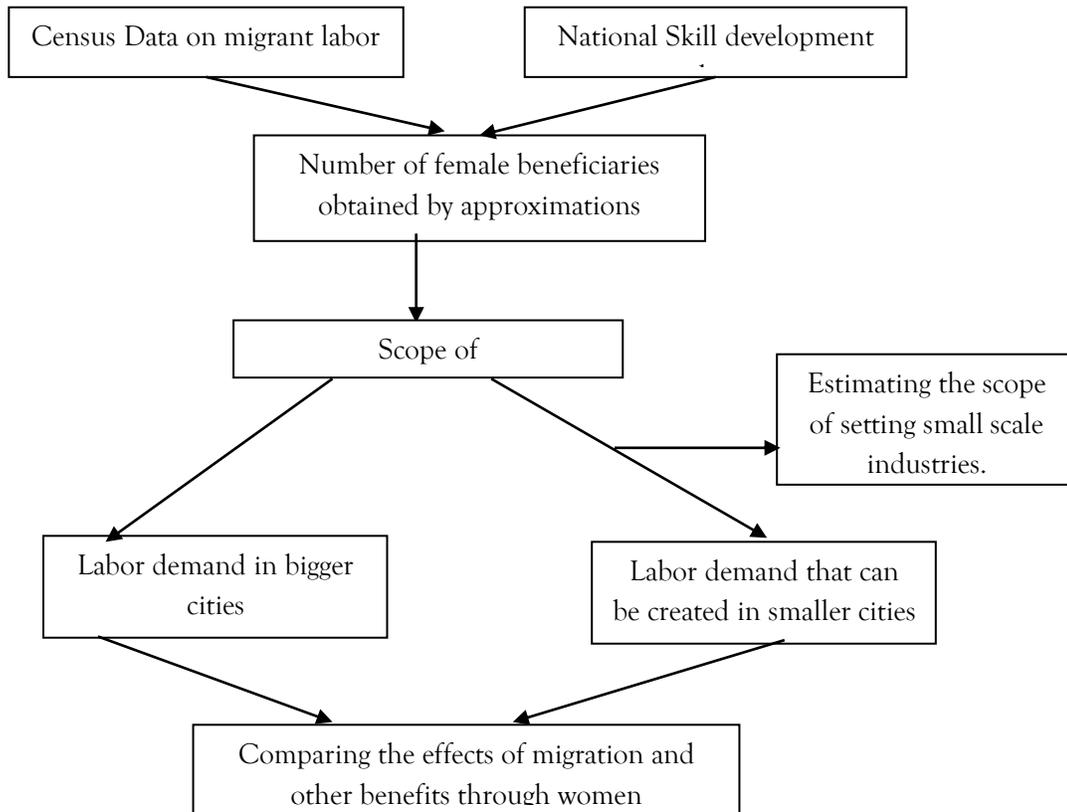


Figure 1. Factors determining the effect of women empowerment on female migrant laborers

4. Findings and Discussions

From the census data (2011) the number of female migrant workers is 65,404,356, crores as compared to the total number of migrants which is 98,301,342 crores, and most of the migration occurred after marriage. The literacy rate of female is lower than the male literacy rate (as shown in Table 3) which leads to these women taking up unskilled labor as the most feasible option to meet the needs of the household. Rural literacy is also seen to be lower than the urban literacy rate. When a migration happens in such situation, labor wages are usually lower and they are given unskilled work.

Table 3. The literacy rate of male and female according to census 2011.

States	Total population	Urban population	Sex ratio	Literacy rate	Male literacy	Female Literacy	Urban Literacy	Rural literacy
Odisha	4.2	7	978	72.9%	82.4%	64.4%	85.7%	70.2%
UP	19.9	22.3	908	69.7%	79.2%	59.3%	75.1%	65.5%
Himachal Pradesh	0.68	10	974	83.8%	90.8%	76.6%	91.4%	82.9%
Punjab	2.77	10.4	895	76.7%	80.4%	71.3%	83.2%	71.4%
Haryana	2.5	34.9	877	73.0%	80.9%	64.6%	84.1%	79.9%
Rajasthan	6.86	17	926	67.1%	79.2%	52.1%	79.7%	61.4%
Gujrat	6.03	42.5	918	79.3%	87.2%	70.7%	87.6%	73.0%
Madhya Pradesh	7.2	27.63	930	70.6%	80.5%	60.0%	82.9%	63.9%
Jharkhand	3.29	24	947	67.6%	78.5%	56.2%	83.3%	62.4%
Chhattisgarh	2.56	23.2	991	70.0%	80.3%	60.2%	84.1%	66.0%
West Bengal	9.13	31.9	947	73.0%	79.5%	66.1%	84.8%	72.1%
Maharashtra	11.24	50.8	929	83.0%	85.2%	64.8%	88.7%	77.0%
Karnataka	6.11	23.6	968	75.6%	82.9%	68.1%	85.8%	68.7%
Andhra Pradesh	8.46	28.2	992	67.7%	75.6%	59.7%	80.5%	61.1%
Tamil Nadu	7.21	34.9	995	80.3%	86.8%	73.9%	87.0%	73.5%
Kerala	3.34	47.7	1084	80.3%	86.8%	73.9%	95.1%	93.0%

The literacy rate of females as shown in the graph (Figure 2) shows that the states like Jharkhand, Rajasthan, UP which has the lowest female literacy rate have also suffered the most in pandemic. These migrants were the major spreaders of corona virus (The Hindu, 2019). The relationship that can be established here is that the literacy rate affects the migration of unskilled labor.

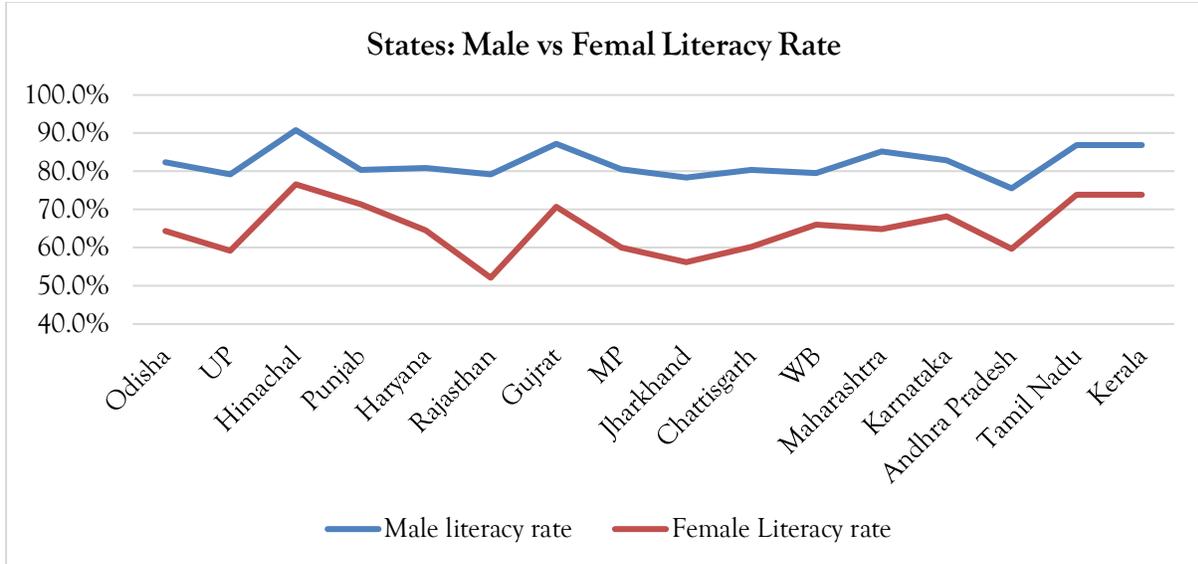


Figure 2. The comparison of male and female literacy rate (source census 2011)

Skill mapping of various states shows that states like Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh can be targeted for entrepreneurship through skill development. Various schemes under national policies can be directed in these states to prevent migration and empower women.

This should be done along with advertising the beneficiaries involved on TV, radio, newspaper, office premises, etc. The capacity building of the financial institution officials should be done regularly through trainings, workshops and doubt removing sessions by internal/ external agency. Central agencies should provide immediate notification and updating migrant data and various related schemes. Awareness and publicity are missing, so knowledge updation should be done. An online portal should be maintained which can be done in coordination with the central and the state governments to categorize the female migrants and update the list periodically.

The important economic variables found which can affect the women empowerment tapped in the unskilled sector are education, availability of training, economic freedom which can prevent them from migrating to bigger cities.

Limited possibilities and high demand for labor, the existing infrastructure of educational institutions is insufficient. There are not many highly qualified and well-trained trainers. This not only reflects the inadequacy and the training infrastructure should also be adjusted according to the number of training applicants.

Table 4: State wise demand-supply gap identification for skill mapping (Source: NSDC)

States	In Millions																	
	Demand						Supply						Gap					
	2012-17			2017-22			2012-17			2017-22			2012-17			2017-22		
	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Minimally skilled
Odisha	0.377	0.514	1.431	0.731	0.948	2.709	0.261	0.305	1.742	0.550	0.549	3.508	0.115	0.209	-0.311	0.181	0.399	-0.799
UP	1.795	1.474	1.358	2.537	2.050	1.812	1.063	3.227	2.435	1.180	3.727	2.487	0.732	-1.752	-1.077	1.357	-1.676	-0.675
Himachal	0.049	0.142	0.384	0.052	0.149	0.436	0.043	0.026	0.052	0.043	0.026	0.053	0.006	0.116	0.332	0.009	0.123	0.383
Punjab	0.087	0.350	0.381	0.080	0.301	0.411	0.064	0.033	0.367	0.050	0.026	0.289	0.023	0.317	0.014	0.030	0.275	0.122
Haryana	0.187	0.634	0.968	0.191	0.667	0.951	0.196	0.076	0.456	0.134	0.052	0.311	-0.009	0.558	0.512	0.057	0.615	0.640
Rajasthan	0.217	1.087	6.240	0.540	3.091	5.267										-0.323	-2.000	0.900
Gujrat	0.295	1.169	1.631	0.268	0.934	1.432	0.297	0.230	0.456	0.326	0.283	0.974	-0.002	0.939	1.175	-0.058	0.651	0.458
MP	0.178	0.821	2.992	0.173	0.671	2.375	0.585	0.597	3.103				-0.407	0.224	-0.111	0.173	0.671	2.375
Jharkhand	0.377	0.514	1.431	0.731	0.948	2.709	0.261	0.305	1.742	0.550	0.549	3.508	0.115	0.209	-0.311	0.181	0.399	-0.799
Chattisgarh	0.216	0.447	0.747	0.271	0.545	0.818	0.303	0.446	0.956	0.318	0.474	0.930	-0.087	0.001	-0.209	-0.047	0.071	-0.112
Andhra Pradesh	4.141	1.161	0.975	2.374	1.386	1.004	0.285	0.225	3.286	0.124	0.382	3.067	3.856	0.936	-2.311	2.250	1.004	-2.063
Tamil Nadu	1.896	1.511	1.718	2.807	2.440	3.313	1.065	0.258	2.179	1.137	0.278	2.519	0.831	1.253	-0.461	1.670	2.162	0.794
Kerala	0.498	0.566	0.424	0.663	0.725	0.519	0.448	0.565	0.621	0.448	0.564	0.474	0.050	0.001	-0.197	0.215	0.161	0.045
Incremental demand and supply Gap from 2012-2022																		
Maharashtra	NA	NA	NA	5.766	5.360	4.396	NA	NA	NA	0.115	1.308	3.218	NA	NA	NA	5.770	5.360	4.400
Karnataka	NA	NA	NA	0.425	1.084	0.235	NA	NA	NA	0.009	0.264	0.172	NA	NA	NA	0.417	0.819	0.063

Table 4 shows the gaps between demand and, the supply for different states in various sectors. The sectors with significant gaps were highlighted as shown in the table. Based on that training should be given as per needs of the labor market. It also requires a set of ideal theoretical and practical learning experiences and wages are low and they lack recognition. Some of the females are unable to pay fees and may not understand government plans, which also leads to poor liquidity of such plans. Whether a person acquires skills through on-the-job training or formal education, there is no difference in the industry. Many companies have created their own competence centers to cultivate talents. Due to the very limited involvement in the commercial sector, the progress of such initiatives is slowing. In the past, skills development was not a government priority, and this area has been neglected. Because this model requires a lot of capital investment, people are unwilling to endorse this model. Issues related to unreachable infrastructure and slow processing of bank loans demoralize start-up entrepreneurs. In rural areas, this becomes more difficult because people don't know credit lines and various programs supported by the government or other financial institutions. People can receive training, but cannot be employed. The participation of industry professionals in training programme, development has become increasingly important so that migrant woman can learn from certified professionals and replicate the same business models at a smaller scale at the rural and semi urban areas. This makes it important to know the states and

sector where this should be implemented. The states where the supply of labor is more and the demand is less creating a negative gap. This gap can be filled with employment generation in rural or satellite towns (Krishnan, 2021) through women entrepreneurship.

5. Conclusion

Women's empowerment is associated funding or historical lack of funding (Salim, 2018). The social changes and funding that lead to successful women's entrepreneurship have two potential benefits: economic growth in developing countries and poverty eradication. The micro-finance program initiated by government now becomes an important engine for the growth of women's entrepreneurial activities in various states. The rural poor are specifically targeted at women who were previously excluded by banks and other credit institutions. These women if trained and provided with specially customized schemes can form the pillar in rural economy which can serve as backup for global crisis like pandemic.

This research can form help in making government policies aimed at women empowerment and entrepreneurship. Micro-finance schemes can also be formulated to fit the rural female population from this research. It also encourages inter policy analysis and a combination to give maximum benefit to women migrants.

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