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Covid-19 Impacts on Employment and Livelihood of Construction workers in Thoothukudi Area

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Abstract

Construction workers in the Thoothukudi area of Tamil Nadu have suffered after the release of the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19). Losing jobs and income because of the pandemic has resulted in many people working in the informal economy. There have been increases in both urban and rural areas of unemployment and poverty. According to this report, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the lives of marginalised people. This study discovered that while on lockdown, construction workers' mental health and the help they received from their employers suffered.

Aims of the study include

1. To study data on the socio economic situation of the sample surveyed.
2. To highlight the respondents' knowledge about the coronavirus pandemic should be evaluated.
3. To ascertain whether there has been a reduction in pay during lock down.
4. To monitor the mental health status when the school is in lock down.
5. To study the aid from builders.

This study involved workers in the Thoothukudi area, who numbered 90. Primary data and secondary data have been employed. Selection was made from construction sites, where construction workers resided. Data obtained from books, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, and websites were used as secondary sources. While different statistical approaches such as basic percentage analysis, averages, correlation analysis, ANOVA, chi square test, and probability analysis were applied to analyse the data from the primary source. All data collection was completed between December 2020 and February 2021. The current study wanted to investigate construction workers' economic and mental health status during lock down. Concerns about one's health, the economy, and livelihood increased each day as the disease progressed. Many Indians now live in uncertainty due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Keywords: COVID-19; Construction workers; Mental Health status; Labour intensive sectors; Employment and Livelihood.

Introduction

Due to the ongoing Novel Corona Virus COVID-19 outbreak, India is experiencing an unprecedented economic and social disaster (Kumar & Pinky, 2020). Because of various government control measures, especially policies in the informal economy, for

example in agriculture, export oriented ready made garments, and other labour intensive sectors, employment and livelihood of marginal people have been adversely affected (Genoni et al., 2020).

As well, the economic impact of social distancing measures, such as decreased demand and fewer hiring opportunities, is borne disproportionately by informal service and labour-intensive industries, such as construction workers, rickshaw pullers, day labourers, and small grocery shop owners (Islam et al., 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 outbreak, which resulted in a substantial healthcare burden and interruption of jobs, income, and livelihood in both rural and urban areas, is expected to worsen these effects (World Bank, 2020).

16.5 million people have been forced back into poverty, most of whom are rickshaw drivers, construction workers, transportation workers, transportation ticket agents, labourers, hawkers, construction workers, hotel, motel, and restaurant staff (Islam & Jahangir, 2020).

Around 95% of jobs in the agriculture sector are classified as informal. 72% of total employment in the service sector is classified as casual. In addition, 90% of full work is considered "relaxed" (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2020). Certain jobs in the entertainment, hospitality, and tourism industries are characterised by precariousness and vulnerability, and service jobs in general are bearing the brunt of the COVID crisis because of both the economic lock-down and the confinement measures (Fana et al. 2020). A review of the construction employees' mental health and the help received from builders during the lockdown has been completed.

Literature Review

During the first week of April 2020, an estimated 7,000 households lost on average 61% of their income. Another key finding of the survey was that 43% of households with BPL/Antyodaya cards did not receive any free rations. One week later, in response to the survey, 67% of respondents said they would run out of money and critical resources within the next two weeks.

Of the 3,196 employees who participated in the survey conducted by Jan Sahas (2020), 42% had nothing in their store to feed themselves for a single day, 33% had nothing in their possession to buy food, 40% had nothing in their supply store for two weeks, and 18% had goods stored away for more than four weeks. Additionally, construction workers were made to drink the water that was used to build the site, according to the poll.

Half of salaried workers with full time jobs reported having their salaries reduced or not paid at all, according to a survey of over 4,000 households conducted by Azim Premji University (APU, 2020). The majority of those surveyed stated that they were only able to afford to buy enough necessities for a week.

The country's unemployment situation will worsen, due to the pandemic and accompanying government control measures, earlier than expected due to a recent PRI report (2020). Riaz (2020) estimates that the number of people whose jobs have been put at risk by the government's efforts to combat the corona disease virus already exceeds 20 million.

Action Aid India conducted a survey of 11,520 respondents in the third week of May 2020 and discovered that a significant drop in wages had occurred, as well as reductions in wages and employment intensity. The study found that 57% of manufacturing workers had been working for more than 40 hours per week before the lockout. About 68% of those affected by the shutdown were out of work. Almost two thirds of construction employees worked more than 40 hours per week during the lockdown, and over seven-in-ten workers were unemployed for the entire lockdown period. A full wage was obtained by 35% of the responders, a wage was received by 48% of responders, and 17% of the responders only received a half wage.

An investigation is conducted by Beland et al. (2020) on the impact of COVID-19 on the employment and salaries in the United States. According to the findings of the COVID-19 study, which looked at various aspects of workers' job and financial security, COVID-19 increased unemployment, decreased hours worked, and reduced the labour force participation of participants.

Fana et al. (2020) claims that social distancing measures and practises from the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the most vulnerable segments of the workforce, specifically women, non-natives, those with non-standard contracts (i.e. self-employed and temporary workers), the less educated, and low-wage workers.

Research shows that the economic crisis is causing increases in income inequality and poverty in all of Europe, according to Palomino et al. (2020). Some of these differences relate to the segregation of different groups of workers based on their employment statuses and circumstances.

Based on information from France, Barrot et al. (2020) discovered that social distancing measures cause the greatest reduction in employment in the

service industries (e.g., hotel and restaurant services, arts and leisure, agriculture, service activities, food, wholesale and retail, and construction), and the smallest reduction in employment in computer services, telecommunications, and consulting, and scientific and technical activities. It is also found that in the sectors of mining, arts and leisure, technical exercises, and food, hotel, and restaurants, social distance causes the greatest reductions in value-added growth.

Objectives of the Study

The main goals of the research are as follows

1. To study the socio-economic circumstances of the respondent sample.
2. To evaluate the respondents'awareness about coronavirus pandemic
3. To find the level of pay reducedduring lock-down.
4. To measure themental health status during lock-down
5. To highlight thesupport received from builders.

Methodology

The participants in this study were 90 construction workers from the Thoothukudi area. Both primary and secondary data were used.The construction workers selected from construction sites. The personal interview method carried with a pre-tested schedule. The structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data.The secondary data were collected from various books, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines and websites.Different statistical methods such as basic percentage analysis, averages, correlation analysis, ANOVA,chi-square test and probability analysis were used to analyse the data obtained from the primary source. The data were collected from December 2020 to February 2021.

Table 1: Age wise Classification of the Respondents.

Age	Respondents	Percentage
Below 20	4	4.44
21 – 30	13	14.45
31 – 40	19	21.11
41 – 50	38	42.22
51 and above	16	17.78
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

Table 1 shows that 4.47% of respondents were below the age of 20, and 14.45% were between the ages of 21 and 30. More than 21 percent of respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, while 42.2 percent of respondents are between the ages of 41 and 50. Seventeen and eight-tenths percent of respondents are between the ages of 51 and over. It worked out that the mean age of participants was 40.94 years. This conclusion can be drawn from the findings, which show that most respondents are in the 41-50 age bracket.

Table 2: Gender wise Classification of the Respondents.

Sex	Respondents	Percentage
Male	63	70.00
Female	27	30.00
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

The table to the right indicates that 70% of respondents are male, while 30% are female, out of the total sample size of 90 people.

Table 3: Education Qualification of the Respondents.

Education qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
School Level	41	45.55
College Level	7	7.78
Technical Level	17	18.89
Illiterate	25	27.78
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

As shown in Table 3, out of 90 survey respondents, 45.55% had higher education, followed by 27.78% who were illiterate, 18.89% who were trained at the professional level, and 7.78% who had a college education.

Table 4: Marital Status.

Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Married	69	76.67
Unmarried	17	18.89
Widow/ Widower	4	4.44
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that 69 of the 90 survey respondents are married, which is 76.67 percent of the total. Similarly, approximately 17% (18.89%) are unmarried, and approximately 4% (4.44%) are widowed/widower, respectively.

Table 5: Family Size of Respondents.

Family Size	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below 3	64	71.11
3 – 5	18	20.00
Five and above	8	8.89
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

Overall, about 71.11% of respondents have a family size of three to five members, with another 20.00% having families larger than three. Roughly 8.89% of the respondents have families of five or above. Most of the people in Table 5 had families with three to five members. It turns out that the family's average size was 2.76.

Table 6: Occupation Background.

Occupation background	No. of respondents	Percentage
Agricultural Labourer	9	10.00
Coolie	54	60.00
Masson	13	14.44
Centring Foreman	9	10.00
Plumber	5	5.56
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

It is demonstrated from Table 6 that 90 construction workers have a work background. Approximately 9 (10% of the workforce) have a background in agricultural labour, 54 (60% of the workforce) are coolies, 13 (14.44% of the workforce) have prior experience working with Masson, and 9 (10% of the workforce) have prior experience as foremen. Of the construction workers, only 5 (5.56%) have a set of a plumber.

Table 7: Nature of Work of the Construction Workers.

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Material loading	17	18.89
Brick Handling	19	21.11
Water curing	15	16.67
Cement Mixing	21	23.33
Stone Shaping	9	10.00
Cleaning	4	4.44
Helper	5	5.56
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

It can be deduced from Table 7 that of the construction workers who participated in the study, 18.89% were in material loading activities, and 21.11% were in brick handling and 16.67% were in water curing, 23.33% were cement mixing, 10.00% were stone shaping, 4.44% were cleaning, and 5.56% were helpers.

Table 8: Family Income Per Month of the Respondents.

Family Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Less than Rs. 5,000	19	21.11
Rs.5,001 – Rs. 10,000	32	35.56
Rs.10,001 – Rs. 15,000	21	23.33
Rs.15,001 – Rs. 20,000	12	13.33
Above Rs. 20,001	6	6.67
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

Table 8 shows the maximum number of people who can be found in the Thoothukudi region (35.56 percent) with a family income of Rs. 5,000 or less, followed by the 21 percent who earn between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 15,000 per month. Another 19 percent have an income of less than Rs. 5,000. Additionally, 12 (13.33%) are making Rs. 15, 001-Rs. 20, 000 every month, and 6 (6.67%) are making more than Rs.20, 001 every month. Gross monthly family income of the household comes to Rs. 9944.94.

Table 9: Support Received From builders.

Support received frombuilders	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	59	65.56
No	31	34.44
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

More than 65.56% of builders supported the workforce by providing them with basic necessities during the lockdown.

Table 10: Lost Occupation.

Lost Works	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	66	73.33
No	24	26.67
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

It is confirmed that 73.33% of construction workers have lost their jobs during the lockdown.

Table 11: Pay Reduced.

Pay Reduced	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	67	74.44
No	23	25.56
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data

Returning migrant construction workers report that their pay had been reduced by about 50% because of the concentration of labour.

Table 12: Anova for Sex and Awareness about Corona Virus Pandemic.

Sex	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between Groups	37.22	2	6.431	24.08	0.077
Within Groups	21.02	89	0.644		

The table value of 0.077 is greater than the calculated value of 0.077. (0.05). The research hypothesis has been rejected, as Ho is accepted (H2). Therefore, it can be said that the awareness of the coronavirus pandemic does not differ significantly between the ages of the respondents.

Table 13: Correlation of Socio-Economic Variables and Support received from builders.

Variable	R	Sig
Age	-0.482	0.311
Education	0.351	0.136
Sex	0.104	0.131
Marital status	-0.545	0.302
Family size	-0.311	0.315
Nature of work	-0.221	0.203
Family Monthly Income	-0.365	0.293

Source: Computed from Primary Data

An attempt has been made to control the arithmetic relationship between thesocio-economic variables andsupport received from builders during the lock-down period. The above table gives a correlation of socio-economic variables and support received from builders. It concluded no significant relations between socio-economic variables and support received from builders during the lock-down period.

Table 14: The Effect of Socio-economic Characteristics on the Mental Health status during Lock-down using the Chi-square Test.

Socio-Economic variables	Chi-Square values	P Values	Significance
Age	18.95	0.010*	Significant
Sex	22.46	0.001*	Significant
Nature of work	31.01	0.351	Not Significant
Family Size	12.11	0.284	Not Significant
Marital Status	19.13	0.001*	Significant
Educational Qualification	36.41	0.342	Not Significant
Monthly Income of Family	9.14	0.001*	Significant

* *Significant level of 5 per cent*

The above table demonstrates that construction workers' mental health status while locked down is significantly correlated with socioeconomic variables, such as age, sex, marital status, and family income per month, with a P-value of 5% or lower. Therefore, the null hypothesis for these variables was rejected. Work status, family size, and educational attainment do not have a meaningful impact on the mental health of construction workers. This means that for these variables, the null hypothesis has been accepted.

Conclusions

The current study wanted to investigate construction workers' economic and mental health status during lock-down. Concerns about one's health, the economy, and livelihood increased each day as the disease progressed. Many Indians now live in uncertainty due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

The survey is among the mental health indicators of construction workers in India during the time the COVID-19 pandemic began with lock-down related data. During lock-down, as many as one-third of them exhibited the mental health status of construction workers. This shows that besides their effect on human morbidity and mortality, the consequences for the countries and the rest of the world are equally devastating. It is imperative that policymakers consider the impact of their decisions on public health, as well as planning interventions to combat the pandemic. In order to achieve this, national efforts will have to be complemented by international organisations, such as the United Nations, and development partners.

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