Lockdown-led Unemployment - Social Disparities

What is the issue?

- Data from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)'s Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS) was released recently.
- Alongside massive unemployment, there are socio-cultural disparities in the impact resulted by the lockdown and unemployment.

What is the current overall employment scenario?

- The average number of employed persons between March 2019 and March 2020 was over 403 million.
- In other words, this was the scenario one year preceding the lockdown.
- In April 2020, this number came down to a little over 282 million.
- This is roughly a 30% drop from the earlier figures.
- In other words, employment in April 2020 was 70% of the average in the preceding year.

What is the impact on disadvantaged sections?

- In India, there are clear gender and caste disparities in the early lockdown-induced job losses.
- Consequently, women have suffered relatively more than men (rural women more than urban women).
- Also, Dalits (Scheduled Castes), specifically rural Dalits, suffered relatively more than upper castes.
- Rural women's employment has suffered the maximum relative loss.
- Evidently, the effects of the pandemic-induced lockdown have not been neutral with respect to social identity.

What does the CMIE data suggest?

A comparison of April 2020 (post-lockdown) with November-December 2019 (pre-lockdown) employment status reveals certain trends.

- The drop in male employment is greater than female by 17.6 percentage points.

- However, the possibility of losing jobs is more for women.
- Women who were employed in the pre-lockdown phase were 23.5 percentage points less likely to be employed in the post-lockdown phase.
- This is compared to men who were employed in the pre-lockdown phase.
- Male heads of household were 11.3 percentage points more likely to be employed in post-lockdown phase than female heads.
- The caste differences are relatively smaller than the gender differences.
- But the lockdown affected employment of the SC-ST-OBC groups relatively more adversely than the higher ranked group of castes.
- Women and Dalits have suffered disproportionately more job losses.
- However, the reality is that, risky, hazardous and stigmatized jobs are exclusively their preserve.
- All frontline health workers (ASHA/ Accredited Social Health Activists) are women.
- On the other hand, evidently, manual scavengers are exclusively being Dalits.
- Thus, for most women and Dalits, the choice seems to be between unemployment and jobs that come with disease, infection and social stigma.
- In all, the pre-existing inequalities along gender and caste lines are only likely to get reinforced with COVID-19-led economic changes.
- It calls for recognition and redressal by concerted government measures.

How vulnerable are women?

- Between 2004-5 and 2017-18, the male-female gaps in educational attainment have narrowed considerably in India.
- However, gaps in labour force participation have widened.
- Female labour force participation rate is persistently low in India over decades.
- It has declined sharply over the last 15 years.
- **Globally -** It is expected that in the Covid-19 pandemic, women are likely to be more vulnerable to losing their jobs compared to men.
- There are nearly 220 million women employed in sectors that are potentially vulnerable to job cuts.
- Of the 44 million workers in vulnerable sectors globally, 31 million women face potential job cuts, compared to 13 million men.

Source: Indian Express



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering