



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on socio economic condition of daily wage labours: Micro level study of Namchi South Sikkim

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Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 depressed the world in various forms, mostly in unorganised sector where majority of the skilled and unskilled labours are associated or depended for their income. Increase in unemployment rate, decrease in production, shutting down the international activities including trade and work from home strategy push the world towards massive economic crisis. In more particular the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in developing economies is more vulnerable where most of the people are living under poverty. The collateral damages of Pandemic is been seen in almost every sectors such as primary, secondary and tertiary sector. Replacement of actual appearance to virtual due to Pandemic is not practicable in some sector like in agriculture, manual production industries etc which create massive downfall in world economy. With the restrictions on movement of people locally, nationally and internationally or in other words complete national lockdown to control further spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19) sake the daily wage labours economic conditions. Generally labours who are directly depends on daily wage labours activities basically belongs to poor family background or they are usually migrated people like rural to urban, districts to districts, state to state, etc. It is not necessary that all daily wage labours are migrated since local people are also engaged in daily wage labours due to economic condition or there should be various factors which force them to engage in daily wage labours. Off course poverty, unemployment, and other social factors are highly active which force people to migrate from low income region to high income level, but it does not mean local people of the destination not involved in daily wage labour activities. In this study researcher try to find out the real impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in socio economic condition of daily wage labours since with the no work how they feed their children and how much they depress, how they survive with no income and what are the measures which they used to earn income. This study is purely based on survey, done by researcher after lifting the lockdown in Sikkim.

Keywords: Daily wage labours, skilled, unskilled COVID-19, Pandemic and socio economic condition.

Introduction

The outbreak of Corona virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) from Wuhan, China declared as a Pandemic by World Health Organization on 11th March 2020 (WHO 2020). Since this virus is a respiratory infectious disease which spread human to human through the respiratory tract, respiratory emissions and direct contact, therefore to prevent further cause the government of India imposed nationwide complete lockdown. This sudden nationwide lockdown threatened the livelihood of those people who professional depends on daily wage work or labours where share of migrant people is maximum due to shutdown of industry and workplace. In India thousands of people began to walk back to their original place due to economic loss, insecure future, shortage of food. In response to taking care of its citizens abstraction plan has been grounded by Government of India and states as well. The impact of Pandemic is high among the daily wage labours especially who live with family because they used to live without saving and other words they live under the vicious circle of poverty. Generally daily wage labours are migrated people who migrated from rural to urban due to lack of income opportunities. Compulsory quarantine in the first phase of Pandemic makes more vulnerable or got trapped in the fetters of poverty. The COVID-19 Pandemic ultimately changes the national and international scenario by pushing the world towards health crisis and India is not separated from this. Since problem of rural poverty is already exist and concern of the government and on the top of that livelihood crisis of daily wage labours drag the country's economy towards dark side. In a broad sense daily wage labours suffer in every aspect that is economically, socially and mentally. Since loss of job, no savings, loss of children education, food crisis are the major outcomes of Pandemic which not only creates economic and social stress to the daily wage labours but mentally stress as well, which force them to do suicide and leaving the family to their own fate. Off course central and state government provide necessary commodities to them in the hope that this will normalized their situation for the time being or this Pandemic will not last for a long period. But the primary concern of pandemonium migrated daily wage labours is to reach their native place so that they can survive and feed their children.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the impact of COVID-19 on socio economic condition of daily wage labours.
2. To understand the basic measures used by daily wage labours to overcome with this world health crisis

Methodology

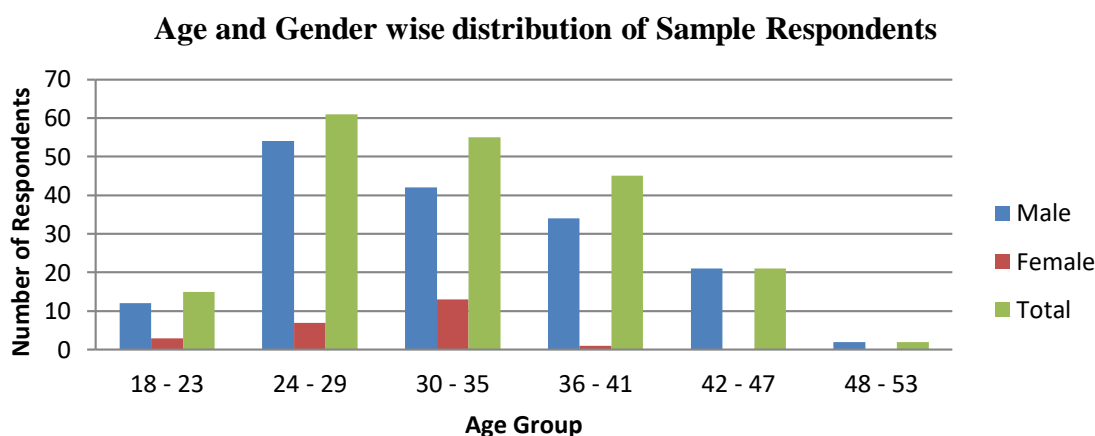
To verify the mentioned objectives researcher used survey techniques methods with structure questionnaire. While researcher selected 200 samples randomly from construction sites in and around Namchi bazer that is urban areas only. The reasons behind chosen of urban areas are, daily wage labours in construction sites, house mate, are the only available jobs for those who are migrated from regions and have less education whereas in rural areas options are maximum such as agricultural sector, construction sites and even in house work as well. The survey is been conducted after lifting the lockdown that is first half of the third quarter of 2021.

The situation in India became uncontrolled immediately after sudden announcement of nationwide lockdown done by Prime Minister (Jha and Kumar 2020). The life of daily wage and migrant labours had been threatened which are the backbone of many big cities. Off course nationwide lockdown is the only option to stop further spread of COVID-19 but uncertainty of the announcement drift the land where daily wage and migrant labours stand. The unplanned strategy of government of India put many lives in danger even many of them loss their live due to hunger and physical pressure. Mantel pressure, economic disorder and due to travel in the absent of transportation. In the mean time travel with family including children, pregnant women and aged people towards their native place due to loss of job made them mentally, physically and economically ill. Practically daily wage labours don't have any social, health and economic security therefore this uncertain loss of job due to lockdown creates chaos in every aspect in their life. Urban cities and cities are the hub for daily wage labours where they can earn and feed their children. In other words cities are helping them by providing employment in various forms mostly in construction sites. Since those who are engaged in daily wage labours belongs from illiterate, economically backward and extreme level of poverty background and due to these factor they prefer to work in less wage rate in urban areas which ultimately drag them towards vicious cycle of poverty particularly in emergency period like national emergency, economic emergency, social emergency and like in present time world is facing health emergency or pandemic. The most severe negative impact of Pandemic is loss of millions of jobs particularly in un-organized sector especially construction sector which paralysis the majority of people in the form economic un-stability. Losing of children education, health related issues and rising domestic violence becomes secondary impact of COVID-19 Pandemic for daily wage labours because their first concern is to reach their native place to survive (Nicola, *et la* 2020). One of the telephonic surveys conducted in North Central India founds that 42% daily wage labours living without ration, water and money (Bhaga,t et al 2020). Despite of economic impact the daily wage labours also gone through various psychosocial issues like anxieties and fears of isolation due to infected (Choudhari 2020). The increasing poverty among the daily wage labours due to financial constraint make their socio economic condition worse and worse. Increasing demand of food and other basic necessary such as health security, work even for single day develop some other health issues basically mental disorder. The daily wage labours do not have strength to stand and fight back to pandemic because they don't have social, financial and job security and the most important they didn't have any savings which plays an important role is such type (Pandemic) of situation (Kapoor 2020). Additionally restrictions on movement and gatherings of people force them to stay at home with no food and earning opportunities makes them more vulnerable in social and economic aspects. Along with these, children of daily wages workers loss their education due to lack of essential equipment such as mobile phones, internet, laptop and proper environment for learning at home. Since nationwide lockdown shut all the educational institutions in actual form and allow them to run their classes in online mode only which create inequality in the access to education to the children of daily wage labours because they failed to provide necessary items mention in above. Therefore pandemic not only hit the economic structure of the daily wage labours negatively but also the future of many children who belongs to daily wage labours family. In economics sense loss of job means increase in unemployment rate which lead to decrease in purchasing capacity of the individual which further lead to decrease in Gross Domestic Product of the country. This backward linkage caused by pandemic decrease India's GDP along

with increase in unemployment rate and decrease in domestic demand (Das and Patnaik 2020). Generally impact of pandemic is high in urban areas as compare to rural, since in rural areas people basically engaged in agricultural activities or in those activities which required less people or they automatically follow required measures. The secondary reasons for low economic impact of pandemic in rural areas is people general engaged in their own work means people engaged themselves in their own work like micro level kitchen garden, handicrafts and so on. Off course money circulation is low in rural areas as compare to urban but people survive and have been proof by this pandemic where millions of daily wage labours suffers economically, socially and through health as well in urban areas. It does not mean rural life is un-touched by COVID-19, people died, more infected but they survive without chaos.

Finding and Analysis

Figure No. 1



Source: Field Survey 2021

After field survey it is found that majority of the daily wage labours are male which is 166 as compare to female counter parts which is only 34 out of 200 samples. According to data mention in above figure shows that majority of male labours are belong to 24 – 29 age group followed by 30 – 35 age group but at the same time number of female labours for the 30 – 35 age is more as compare to any other age group for the same gender. The socio economic condition, additional income, basic expenses of the family including children education and medication etc, are the main drivers which drive them to involve in daily wage labours force.

Marital Status of the sample respondents:

Table No. 1

Age wise Marital Status of the Sample Respondents

Age Group Distribution	No. of Male		No. of Female		Total
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	
18-23	00	12	01	02	15
24-29	53	01	07	00	61
30-35	42	00	13	00	55
36-41	34	00	11	00	45

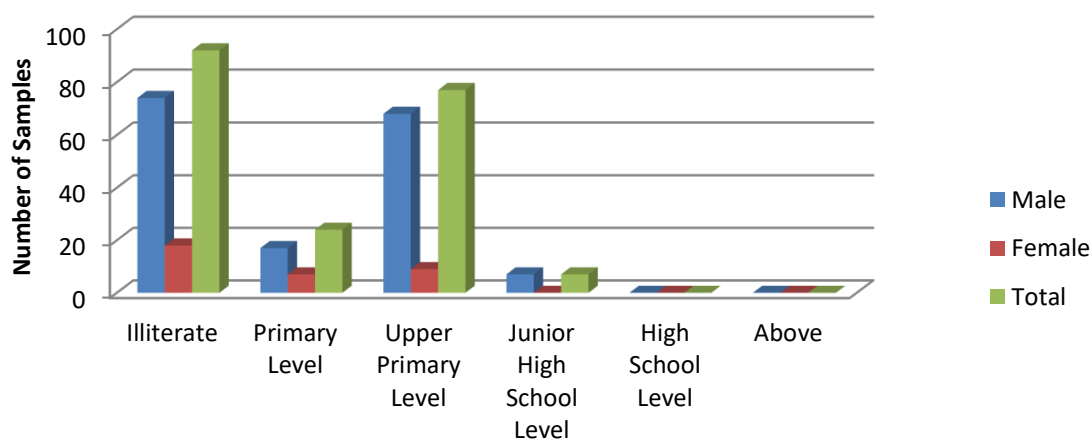
42-47	21	00	00	00	21
48-53	02	00	00	00	2
53 and above	01	00	00	00	1
Total	154	12	32	2	200

Source: Field Survey 2021

Marital status of the individual highly influences the expenditure of the person, since increase in family member need for income to equalise the consumption pattern of that family. Economically increase in population want more income due to expansion in consumption expenditure related to essential and social expenditure. Accordingly data mention in above table (Table No. 1) shows age wise marital status of the 200 samples who are engaged in daily wage labours force where researchers found that only 12 male and 2 female respondents are not married. Similarly, 186 respondents (154 male and 32 female) are married and they stay with their family in study areas. likewise data in above table also shows that the out of 200 samples majority that is 53 samples are married who falls under the age group of 24 – 29 years and this is natural phenomena because people used to get married after certain age which allow them to have children in right age which further help them (parents) to grow their children at the time of physically fit.

Educational Qualification of the sample respondents:

Figure No. 2
Eductaional Qualification fo the Sample Respondents



Practically level of education is always influence the capacity to earn. In economic word high investment in education gives high return that is why doctors and other highly educated individual earn more as compare to low level post which need less education. Similarly to become daily wage labours no one need to get high level degree since people are engaged in daily wage labour activities because of many reasons and one of this is their level of education. Accordingly this study found that 92 samples respondents (74 male and 18 female) out of 200 are illiterate which gives them no option other than daily wage labour activities as a primary source of their income. Similarly 24 and 77 samples out of 200 samples respondents only have primary and upper primary level of education which is not enough to get involve other than daily wage labours activities for their

income. One of the main reasons for their low level of education is their parent's socio economic condition which forces them to leave the school in the middle and ultimately they become daily wage labours.

Nature of Residents of the Respondents:

Table No. 2

Nature of Residents of the Respondents:

Nature of Residents	Male	Female	Total
Local	00	00	00
Other Districts	13 (81.25%)	03 (18.75%)	16 (8%)
Other States	71 (87.65%)	10 (12.35%)	81 (40.5%)
International	82 (79.61%)	21 (20.38%)	103 (51.5%)
Total	166 (83%)	34 (17%)	200 (100%)

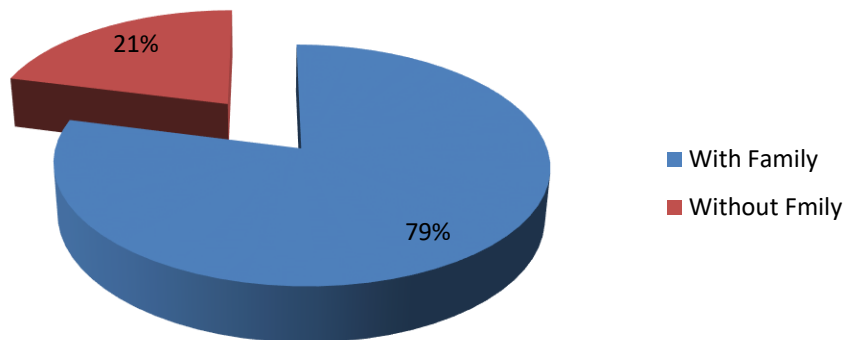
Source: Field Survey 2021

Nature of resident of the respondents' shows out of 200 that 51.5% samples were belongs from Nepal (International), 40.5% were migrated from other states of Indian Union and only 8% were migrated from other districts of Sikkim. While this study found that local migration of people who involve in daily wage labour activities is zero. During survey it was found that poverty, employment opportunities, social issues, absence of own land, family disputes, motivated by friends are the most common factors which push and pull people from other states and international as well the towards Namchi. Besides these, up to some extent men power supply agencies are also responsible for their outward migration. While absence of own land, joint family nature are more common in the other districts migration people. Therefore it can be said by looking data mentioned in table No. 2 that daily wage labours are generally migrated people due to economic and social factor.

Migration Pattern:

People generally migrate with their family towards urban cities in search of better opportunities such as children education, self employment, better health facilities, social issues and obviously one of the main reasons for their migration is earning which is almost invisible due to poverty. Similarly in this study researchers found that 79% out of 200 sample respondents migrated with their family whereas 21% leave their family behind that is in their origin place.

Figure No. 3
Percentage of Respondents



Source: Field Survey 2021

Family strength of the sample respondents who migrated with family and stay in study area

Table No. 3

Family strength of the sample respondents who migrated with family and stay in study area

Number of Respondents	Age group of the family members										Total
	Less than 5 Years		6 – 10 Years		11 – 15 Years		16 – 20 Years		20 Years and above		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
11	01	03	03	02	02	01	00	00	00	00	13
57	01	00	00	00	27	33	00	00	00	00	61
49	09	07	23	17	00	00	00	00	00	00	56
41	00	00	07	09	18	15	00	00	00	00	49
158	11	10	33	28	47	49	00	00	00	00	179

Source: Field Survey 2021

After survey it was found that 158 samples out 200 sample respondents migrated from different regions with their family where all members are belongs to less than 15 years old which means they are not labours. All of them are admitted in government schools and they are regular in schools. Since all samples are very concern about their children’s education in the hope that in future they can enjoy better life by getting better job. Further in this study researchers also found that discrimination on girl child and boy child is not practise in all sample families, even both the samples (Male and Female) are happy to help each other in Domestic and other essential works.

Number of income earner in Family**Table No. 4****Number of income earner in Family**

Number of income earner in family	Male	Female	Total
1	33	06	39 (19.50%)
2	133	28	161 (80.50%)
3	00	00	00
4	00	00	00
5	00	00	00
Total	166	34	200 (100%)

Source: Field Survey 2021

According to data mention in Table No. 4, majority of respondents 80.50% have two number of income earners in their family whereas out of 200 sample respondents 19.50% samples are dependent on singles persons income for the basic expenditure of their family. Out 39 sample workers who are belongs to that family where only one member is earning income 6 samples are female against 33 male counterparts. After survey it is found that male counterparts of this category are alcoholic and they do nothing. So it's become solid responsibilities of female or mother of the house to take care of their children and provide all necessary requirements, including education and health. But in the case of those families from where only male counterparts are working as a daily wage labours the picture is different. Since they used to do all domestic work and they desire not to work in daily wage basic. Another reason for participation of male section is nature of the family which is nuclear and the presence of infant and school going children which need some special care, so for that reasons most of the female happily stay at home. When researchers asked them about their situation at the period of lockdown they express in following words:

“As a daily wage labour it was very difficult for us to manage necessary items most importantly food. Since we don't have any saving even we don't have bank account, whatever we earn that is mostly consume by us in terms of daily consumption, education expenditure of the children, health expenditure, and some chase for emergency use. Therefore in most of the time during lockdown our consumption depends of supplies provided by friends, contractors, NGOs, Associations and Government.

On the top of that researcher also come to know that family tension related to financial crisis and domestic violence was also active at the time of lockdown according to 7% female respondents out of 34 female samples. This things happen only in those family where male counter parts are alcoholic, means those who are not associated with alcohol they don't have such kind of tension and situation.

Income pattern of the respondents before, at the time of lockdown and after lifting the lockdown (Monthly Average Income)

Since in the absence of the savings daily wage workers are hardly manage to sustain during lockdown period. In other words it is a one way go means whatever they earn they spend on consumption which make them living for present. Below table (Table No. 4) shows monthly income pattern of the daily wage labours in an around Namchi bazer, where majority of the sample up to 9000 Rs. / Month before lockdown and 24 samples out of 200 used to 11000 Rs / Month. This type of income pattern tells that all the samples are earning normal income to sustain till the available work is done. But at the time of lockdown their income becomes less than 1000 Rs / Month which is earned by engaging themselves in potters who transport essential commodities from essential shops and Government office to its destinations. But immediately after lifting lockdown the monthly average income of daily wage labours increase which is more than whatever they used to earn before lockdown and at the time of lockdown according to table No. 5. While researcher found that availability of labours, date of completion of the work and temperament of raw materials are the main reasons which increase the wage rate of the daily wage labours in study area.

Table No. 5

**Income pattern of the respondents before, at the time of lockdown and after lifting the lockdown
(Monthly Average Income)**

Monthly Average Income in Rupees	Number of Respondents		
	Before	At the time of Lockdown	After
Less than 1000	00	196	00
1001 – 2000	00	04	00
2001 – 3000	00	00	00
3001 – 4000	00	00	00
4001 – 5000	00	00	00
5001 – 6000	00	00	00
6001 – 7000	00	00	00
7001 – 8000	11	00	00
8001 – 9000	86	00	00
9001 – 10000	79	00	00
10001 – 11000	24	00	15
11001 – 12000	00	00	57
12001 – 13000	00	00	81
13001 – 14000	00	00	31
14001 – 15000	00	00	16
15001 and above	00	00	00
Total	200	200	200

Source: World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), P-10 Retrieved from <https://COVID-19.who.int/> excess on 19/09/2021 from Gangtok

Conclusion

After survey it was found that the average income of the daily wage labours is increase after lifting the lockdown. In between the lockdown period all the samples are dependents on friends, contractors, government Aids and NGOs for their basic need basically food, rent and health support. Further it was also found that education of sample's children is mostly effected in the initial stage of lockdown according to samples due to unavailability of smart phones, since in the lockdown period online education is the only mode of teaching. But at the time survey it was found that 100% samples provides smart phone to their children which help them to continue their school education through online mode. Further this study also found that savings plays an important role in human life because it gives you a opportunity to survive at the time of emergency like in lockdown period when people are jobless specially to those who work on daily wages basis. Since the average working days of daily ways labours who work on construction sites especially is 20 days in a month because of many reasons such as rain, unavailability of raw materials, health related issues and so on, therefore in this connection savings plays an important role for their survive. While in general it is worth to say that their economic situation at the time of lockdown was worse or they survive in dark economy because of no savings.

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