



“Impact Of Covid-19 Pandemic On Indian Rural Livelihood, Health And Economy”

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Citation: Mr. Suresh Kashinath Ghatge, et. al (2023), “Impact Of Covid-19 Pandemic On Indian Rural Livelihood, Health And Economy”, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4), 2095-2102 Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.6881

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Rural migrant workers swarmed the streets during the COVID-19 shutdown, marching “to their villages in search of” compassion and warmth. While “many made it to their homes”, a few did not, and they perished on the “streets and railway lines”. “The current study” sheds light “on the” hardships faced by “migrant workers” “and the effects of COVID-19 on India's” rural economies. The study's key finding indicates that “400 million workers in India's informal economy run the risk of becoming even” more impoverished “as a result of the crisis”. There will be a community spread as a result of the low testing and low reporting of COVID-19 cases. A large number of individuals will experience extreme poverty as a result of the reverse migration's excessive strain on the rural and agricultural economies. “COVID-19 will impact India's rural economy in the short and long terms”. The government's economic package primarily consists of long-term initiatives, but in order to safeguard migrant workers and marginal farmers, short-term initiatives like wage subsidies and monetary incentives should be provided. “The primary obstacle to the successful execution of programmes is widespread systemic corruption”.

keywords – “COVID-19, Migrant Labourers, Agriculture, Rural Economy, India”

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural farmers, who were expected to treble their income by 2022, were among the disproportionately affected people in India by the COVID-19 lockdown, as did the impoverished and those on daily wages. India's farming households earn an average of 8931 INR (~\$118) per year, of which 35% come from crops, 34% from wages, and 8% from animals. It is yet unclear how much the lockout will affect farmers' daily pay, livestock revenue, food insecurity, and agricultural output.

“Significant effects on agricultural output, livelihoods, and food security during” the lockdown “have been” documented in six prior studies. These studies demonstrate how the Indian lockdown may have significant effects on food security and agricultural productivity. Only two of these studies, though, were restricted to specific states and production systems and had an explicit focus on farming households. This research attempts to assess “the effects of the COVID-19 lockout on food security”, “livelihoods, and dietary diversity in India, taking into account variations by state and crop type”. To alleviate the negative consequences of the lockout on farm households, precise legislative and programmatic proposals requiring this degree of detail are needed.

1.1 BACKGROUND

“India has gone through one of the biggest and strictest lockdowns in the world as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic”, “which has had a profound effect on economies and cultures around the globe”. “This led to a sharp decline in GDP and had never-before-seen effects on incomes and standards of living”.

This effect has been exacerbated by the structural characteristics of the Indian economy, including its significant reliance on informality and absence of social safety nets. The majority of people in the workforce “make their living from the informal economy”, which is characterised by poor wages, unstable working

conditions, little to no social security, and a reliance on daily earnings for subsistence despite nearly three decades of strong economic expansion (Abraham, 2020).

Pre-existing vulnerabilities have been primarily impacted by the epidemic, “with some ethnic, gender, caste, religious, social, demographic, and economic groups suffering the most”. Since predicted structural transformation and formalisation have not materialised despite high rates of economic development, one important location for these vulnerabilities is the informal economy. A purposeful telephone survey of 4942 workers in 12 Indian states, most of whom were from vulnerable households and worked in the informal sector, revealed a sharp rise in unemployment and a sharp decline in wages during the lockdown. About 80% and 70% of the sample, respectively, saw a sharp decline “in food intake and distress as a result of their job loss”.

Given the severity of the suffering, it is imperative that “the nature of India's growth and development process be reevaluated”, as well as the process's capacity to provide stable employment for the workforce (Abraham et al., 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research article, according to Singh, B. P. (2020), looks at how :the COVID-19 lockdown filled the streets with migrant labourers who were marching to their villages in search of compassion and warmth”. “While many made it to their homes, a few did not, and they perished on the streets and railway lines”. “The current study sheds light on the hardships faced by migrant workers and the effects of COVID-19 on India's rural economies”. “The study's key finding indicates that 400 million workers in India's informal economy run the risk of becoming even more impoverished as a result of the crisis”. There will be a community spread as a result of the low testing and low reporting of COVID-19 cases.

A large number of individuals will experience extreme poverty as a result of the reverse migration's excessive strain on the rural and agricultural economies. “COVID-19 will impact India's rural economy in the short and long terms”. The government's economic package primarily consists of long-term initiatives, but in order to safeguard migrant workers and marginal farmers, short-term initiatives like wage subsidies and monetary incentives should be provided. “The primary obstacle to the successful execution of programmes is widespread systemic corruption”.

Kesar, S., Abraham, R., Lahoti, R., Nath, P., & Basole, A. (2021) state that this study looks at the results of a large-scale survey that was done in April and May 2020 among “around 5000 respondents in 12 states of India to investigate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic containment measures (lockdown) on livelihoods, jobs, and food security”. “The impact, while unprecedented in scope, was not wholly unexpected given the largely informal structure of work and the relatively low investment in State-funded social security net”s. “About two thirds of respondents said they lost their jobs during the lockdown, and those who kept their jobs saw their pay drastically decrease”.

Furthermore, the loss of job swiftly translated into insecurity around food and a means of subsistence “due to the extremely low levels of the social security net”. “Nearly 80% of households reported consuming less food, over 60% reported not having enough money for a week's supply of necessities”, “and a third took out a loan to pay for costs during the lockdown”. “In addition, we apply a series of logistic regressions to” determine the relationship between changes in individual and household-level factors and loss of work and food consumption reduction. Our analysis leads us to conclude that, although “effective measures to support livelihoods and promote economic recovery are urgently needed”, “we also need to critically assess the current trajectory of development”, “since decades of high economic growth have not resulted in more secure livelihoods for the vast majority of the workforce”.

As stated by Ahuja, V., & Aneja, R. (2021). This study looks at how “the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic has caused unheard-of losses and disruptions worldwide”. “No nation, developed or developing, has been immune to its full impact”. “We have examined the effects of COVID-19 on India's economy and society thus far in this essay”. “Based on the existing literature, an impact assessment is conducted on the primary, secondary, and service sectors as well as the” effects on the environment, the informal sector, health, job losses, and migrants. Every industry has been disproportionately impacted, and losses within industries have also been disproportionate.

The effects on society are also severe, including a rise in domestic violence, mental illness, and job losses, among other things. Some beneficial outcomes include better wildlife, water, and air quality; however, the durability of these benefits depends on post-COVID human behaviour and future environmental regulations.

2.1. RESEARCH GAP

“The effect of COVID-19 on the rural development, health, and economy of” India also questions various research findings in the following ways: The literature reviews have revealed that although a lot has been researched on urban impacts, the rural zones are still a subject of limited research. Little prior research has surveyed the complex intersections of these diverse effects on rural peoples' viability, wellness, and economical sustainability.

There is a lack of finer distinction with regards to inter-state differences and intra-state social-economic differentiation in the current literature of rural India. Furthermore, there is scarce research examining the delayed socio-economic impacts, rural population's coping mechanisms, and measures carried out by various authorities targeted at rural communities in the long term. These gaps must be closed to help guide policies and interventions that will be relevant in preventing future crises adequately.

2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What has been done by the COVID-19 pandemic to the Productivity and income of the rural households in India involved in agriculture?
2. What health care accessibility problems emerged “in rural settings during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did it influence health and health care utilization”?
3. What socio-economic coping strategies have rural communities employed since the onset of the pandemic? To which extent has the implementation of these coping strategies been effective in supporting rural people's livelihoods and local economies?

2.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate “the effects of COVID-19 on the improvement in agricultural yields” as well as the income flows and food security of the rural Indian households.
2. To self identify the type of social reality affecting the accessibility to health care in the rural communities during the pandemic crisis and the consequences on health and on health services.
3. To establish the socio-economic measures that have been implemented by the rural communities to maintain local economies and reduce the “effects of the pandemic on the economy”, and the effectiveness and resilience of these measures.

2.4 RESEARCH LIMITATION

The main limitations of Indian COVID-19 research on rural livelihoods, health, and economy include how to establish timely and credible data from the rural areas due to difficulties in accessing a cross-sectional sample and data collection.

Another limitation is in the despair to segregate the “direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic on the” rural populations because the factors are socio-economically connected. However, it is hard to predict the long term consequences of the pandemic and evaluate effectiveness of measures due to multiple factors: changing character of the virus; and differences in policies between states.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Some of the limitations that attended studies on the effects of COVID 19 outbreak on the rural populace and economy of India are; These challenges include factors rooted in data accessibility and quality or areas wherein data are scarce and in which population groups are often marginalized, thus skewing the results' applicability. Moreover, socio-economic factors in the rural context intertwine in a way that hinders the identification of the influence of the pandemic on a particular aspect of life and deciphering it from other causes and circumstances. In addition, the constantly changing situation with the virus and differences in governmental measures in diverse areas complicate the identification of the end line effects and assessment of the efficiency of measures taken.

3.1. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

From this analysis it is clear that using secondary data and qualitative analysis which involves survey administration, a mixed-method approach is appropriate for researching “the effects of the COVID-19 on Indian” rural population, their sources of income, health and economy. Secondary analysis entails mastery extra literature relating to previous research and reports besides government and non-government publications.

This will offer a general view on the consequences of the pandemic for rural India on the level of growth rates, morbidity and death rates, and policies implemented during the period under analysis. Secondary data sources will be best compared with qualitative research approaches which will elicit richer and more diverse self-accounts of rural customers. In order to accomplish this, one can use interviews, focus groups or cases involving such participants as farmers, health care providers and rulers of the regions affected by the disease. Strategizing on the sampling techniques such as purposive sampling will assist in identifying and targeting participants who have rich experiences based on the objectives of the study.

Data analysis will entail thematic coding that will keep identifying themes to further understand the extent of effects produced by the pandemic on livelihood patterns and health issues of the community in the rural regions. Thus, “the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches” ensures that we can examine both trends and concepts regarding the pandemic impacts on the rural area.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH AND ANALYSIS

They will again adopt secondary and qualitative research approach in the process of data collection to respond to the following research questions formulated for use in the study; What has been the effect of COVID-19 on Indian rural livelihoods? How has COVID-19 affected the Health and economy of India's rural populace? Firstly, in secondary data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative archival data collected from government departments, organizations, reports, journals, newspapers and other relevant sources will be collected and reviewed with an aim to create preliminary assessment of macro-level effects on different regions and social, economic status groups in rural area of India. This phase will assist in discovering the patterns, gaps and trends in the existing data collected from the patients undergoing treatment.

Next, quantitative approaches like questionnaires and surveys will be utilized to obtain primary quantitative data on the aforementioned aspects of the rural dwellers' lives. The participants will be purposively chosen to get a variety of attitudes on how the pandemic influenced the livelihood activities, health care, and economic stability.

Subsequently, thematic analysis will be used to analyse the qualitative data with a view of coming up with the culturally relevant thematic narratives that are in tandem with the quantitative results. This way it allows exploring overarching processes and enactments of the pandemic together with peculiar concerns and affinities of numbered individuals, complementing the view on the pandemic's diverse consequences in the context of rural India.

4. "DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION"

4.1. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME IN RURAL INDIA

"The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected agricultural productivity and income of farmers in Rural India in both the short-run and long-run concerning the rural economy". It will be possible to identify several general trends and interpretations of the obtained data depending on the type of agriculture and regional characteristics (ActionAid, 2020).

Specifically, at the beginning of the pandemic, there were distortions in agricultural logistics, which impacted the provision of products. This disruption together with migration and restriction of workers affected planting, harvesting, and marketing that happened within the rural areas. Therefore, production and yields of crops and food products were oscillating, and the resulting income was compromised for the farming-dependent population.

These effects were sought to be addressed through government stimuli including packages, and measures as relief meant to alleviate the impacts and its effectiveness depended with regional influences and smallholder farmer's accessibility (Hardy & Logan, 2020). Several studies show that larger farmers who have better access to technologies and markets were less affected than small farmers who struggled for the change in organizational structures of the supply chain.

Analysis of the data brings out the fact that some aspects of agriculture like staple grains and dairy products maintained fairly reasonable levels of demand even in the lock-down periods. However, some industries like agriculture and food processing industries that deal with short-life commodities and high quality produce such as fruits and vegetables suffered great losses because of disruption of the value chain besides reduced market demand. Social inequality of the impact is witnessed, and makes it very clear that rural economies remain very fragile in the face of external conditions, the need for more than one income earner, as well as the need for practices in agriculture that are far more resilient (Bertrand et al., 2020).

Adaptation measures, such as diversification of crops, sales through online mart, and collective endeavor in terms of sharing equipment, gadget, and labor during uploading seasons are other reflection from farmer's interviews. These actions that were, to some extent, successful, demonstrate how creative and organised rural communities had to become during a crisis situation.

Altogether, the essential consequences of COVID-19 on agricultural effectiveness and income in farming India have been devastating; however, the emergency has instituted a pace of innovation and change throughout the farming division.

Continuing on this path, such policies as those related to the rural infrastructure development, improved market access, and sustainable agriculture will indeed assist in the reconstruction of rural communities' economies, should they be hit by future shocks (Asante-Poku & van Huellen, 2021).

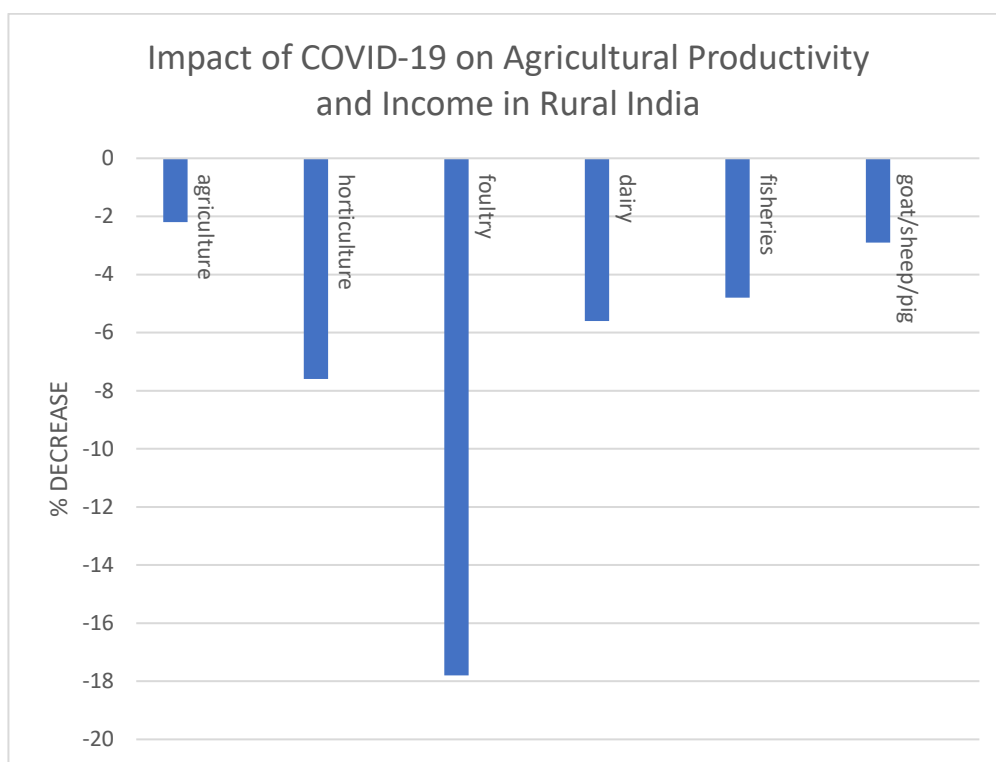


Figure 1 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nabard.org%2Fauth%2Fwrite%2Fread%2Ftender%2F1211203145Impact%2520Assessment%2520of%2520COVID.pdf&psig=AOvVaw3wyA7ymHjpZ3RZsVZLGx89&ust=1721461223964000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBQQjhxq>

4.2. HEALTHCARE ACCESS CHALLENGES AND IMPACT ON RURAL COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak served to deepen deprivation in healthcare in the rural areas of India and made powerful effects on the health status and the receiving services of the community. A brief review of the mentioned challenges and their relationship with communities in rural areas can be viewed based on the following findings from the data analysis.

For the first point, lack of adequate healthcare and health facilities with bit resources in the rural areas was one of the major challenges in getting to access medical care during the pandemic. It was a common scenario in most of the Rural Health Centers where they lacked adequately equipped special beds, adequate Personal Protective Equipment-PPEs, appropriate diagnostic equipment, and Well-trained staff to manage the COVID – 19 Cases appropriately. Consequently, rural patients incurred longer times to receive diagnoses, treatments, and essential care and, thus, worsened health and mortality trends (Bhalotia et al., 2020).

The gaps in healthcare literacy also become apparent in the context of COVID-19 prevention and management, as well as in the peculiarities of rural populations' knowledge about their health and healthcare needs. Evidently, stigma and other falsehoods about the virus deepened people's skepticism about healthcare establishments and deployment of measures related to safety and vaccine taking (Bhattacharya & Kesar, 2020). Understanding of these challenges reinforces the necessity for specific interventions to address the problems of healthcare systems in rural areas, raise awareness of medical stock, as well as improve the general health knowledge of rural populace (Couch et al., 2020). Telemedicine services, mobile health units, and CHWs collectively enhanced differentiated tracers and successful infection investigations as well as follow-up as a result of effective government policies and timely interventions.

Hear from healthcare professionals and citizens of the challenges communities face and how they have adapted them: awareness campaigns, televisiting, and cooperation with NGOs and the government. Such actions give credit to the various rural communities and their ability to cope up with the confrontation of health care calamities (Breman & Van der Linden, 2014).

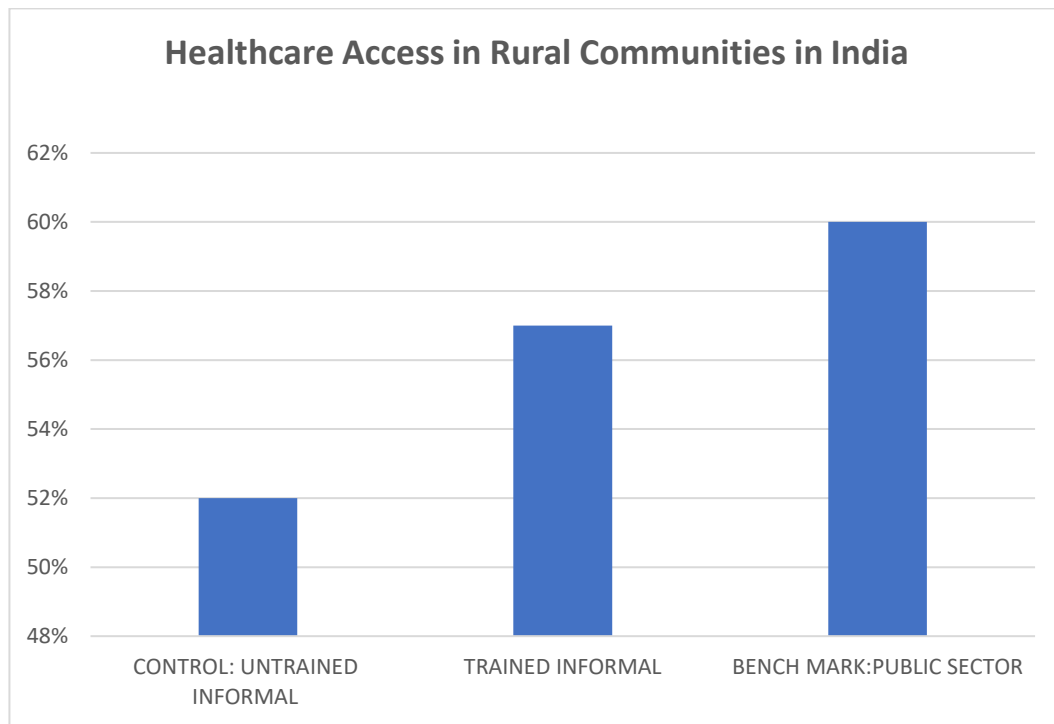


Figure 2 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fballardbrief.byu.edu%2Fissue-briefs%2Fhealthcare-access-in-rural-communities-in-india&psig=AOvVaw2h2ecc7BMgSB9xcgRGh3eg&ust=1721458884999000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=oCBQJhxqFwoTCMjwxJ3EsocD>

4.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC COPING STRATEGIES IN RURAL INDIA AMIDST COVID-19

“Referring to COVID 19 Rural India indicated a range of socio economic strategies to deal with the unique and unprecedented impacts on livelihoods and economy Possible”. Several trends and interpretations of these strategies and their efficiency can be distinguished from the result of data analysis (Chakrabarti, 2016).

First and foremost, the COVID19 health crises of shutdowns and limitations in the movement of people heavily affected the rural living-based agricultural systematic livelihoods of wage employment, and petty trade businesses. Erratic supplies, limited market access and economic losses were witnessed and this saw many households lose their incomes and go to bed hungry. Research shows that socio-economic coping strategies are somewhat oriented according to the areas where one operates, personal and resources, as well as available social support systems in those regions, among the socio-economic groups (Chen, 2014).

Another common adaptation was source diversification through which people in the rural area sought other means of earning income for example engaging in backyard farming, poultry, cottage industries among others after their main source was cut off (Duraisamy & Duraisamy, 2017). This diversification did not only create other sources of income to the households but also improved the food security and the ability to recover from future shocks.

The other important discovery is hence the adoption of technologies in performing livelihood related tasks as well as accessing markets. Surveys have revealed enhanced usage of mobile based platforms for selling agricultural produce, local handicraft, and other local products through internet selling. This digital transformation helped in maintaining linkages to the markets and breaking dependence on physical markets while continuing trading during movements restrictions (Deshpande & Ramachandran, 2020).

Understanding of these socio-economic coping strategies underlines the capacity of rural people in effectively and efficiently managing crises. Thus, community qualitative data collected from interviews reveal the importance of social network and community organization in the sharing of goods, cooperation, and decision-making in confronting the uncertainties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (International Labour Organisation, 2018).

But difficulties remained especially for the vulnerable groups like the landless, the migrant workers and the women-headed households, who were the worst affected by various forms of problems with regard to their adoption of governmental relief programs and facilities. The analysis of the available information shows that coping resources are utilized with varying success depending on the socio-economic status, geographical characteristics, and available support (Bhattacharya et al., 2013).

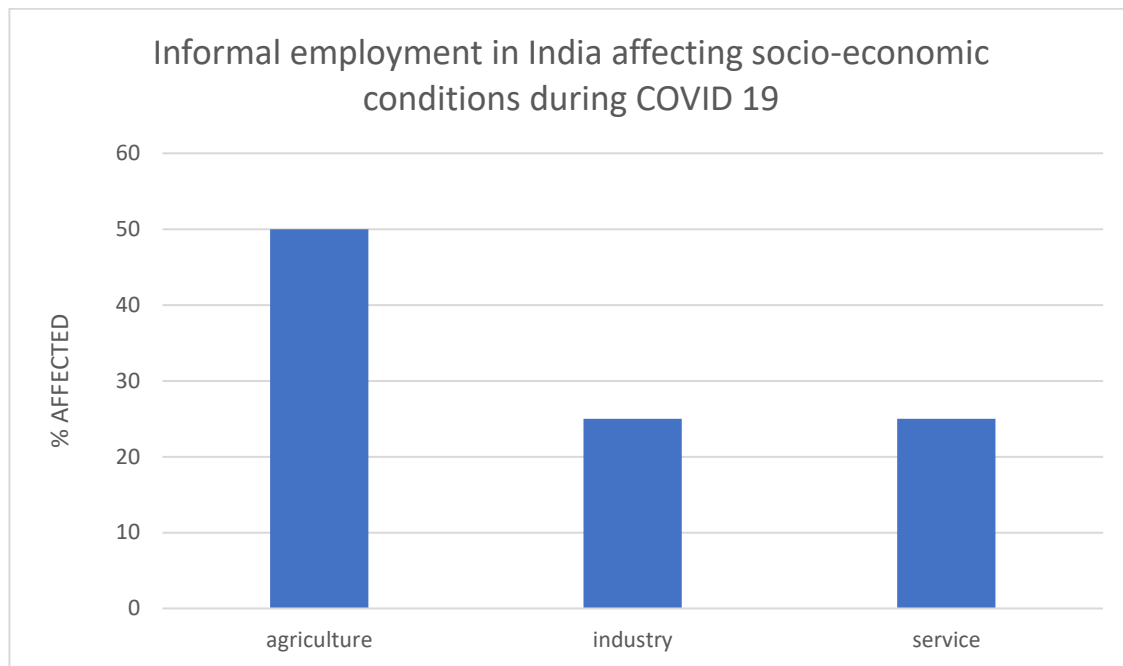


Figure 3 https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.frontiersin.org%2Fjournals%2Fsociology%2Farticles%2F10.3389%2Fsoc.2021.629693%2Ffull&psig=AOvVaw2fLk6sD6wrgnWzAYOPyf8_&ust=1721461285416000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBQQjhxqFwoTCLCXop

5. RESULTS

“The COVID-19 pandemic has brought massive changes in the lives of the rural people of India”, both in terms of their livelihood, health, and economy. Lockdowns and reduced mobility disrupted agricultural commodities’ supply chain, “frugal” income-generating activities, daily pay-earning, and informal employment especially in rural areas. Some of the impacts of COVID 19 on households include loss of household income, increased food insecurity attributed to disruption of market systems. This economic stress was further compounded by preexisting weaknesses within the rural healthcare sectors and systems that continued to fail to meet consumer demand and even inability to manage the extra challenges presented by the COVID’19 pandemic. Due to reduced access of the vulnerable groups to health care units, their health status was compromised when health care services were decentralized to effectively reach the rural population. COVID-19 kindled issues of the inequality in accessing health care and worsened previous health inequalities. However, common to all these difficulties, the rural communities successfully implemented their endeavors and adapted to the existing conditions with locally developed solutions. These were measures such as diversification of income sources, use of technology especially in markets and health care and lastly support structures from the community. People were able to overcome basic immediate problems with the help of government programs and humanitarian aid.

6. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Indian rural living standard, health system and economy in a special way; changes in the human and material dimensions of vulnerable rural households and communities, along with rural adaptation strategies that counterpoise risk and resourcefulness. It affected farming, manual earnings, and petty businesses hence causing income losses and food deficiencies to many families. Access to healthcare was also affected, which drew attention to inadequate healthcare facilities and paucity of knowledge about them.

However, rural inhabitants of Latvia remained rather flexible and accommodating as evidenced by the variety of sources of income, post-crisis approach to using newest technologies in work and life, and solidarity of rural communities. Socio economic coping mechanisms assisted in reducing short term effects and supported local economy. As for the future prospects of the observed trends, further development of challenges in the sphere of health care accessibility, infrastructure support, and targeted protection measures is essential.

Any policy interventions must focus on improving the access to resources, encouraging sustainable income generating activities and building capability to ensure rural India’s revival in the post COVID situation.

6.1 FUTURE SCOPE

The future research should consider covering the qualitative studies for the impact of COVID pandemic on the rural India and further research should be done in the form of Longitudinal study. These involve assessing the

recoveries that are ongoing, assessing the efficiency of the policies that are being implemented and finding out ways and policies that are lasting to use in future in case of a disaster.

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