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## A STUDY ON THE CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT PATTERN OF CASUAL LABOURS IN KAKKODI GRAMPANCHAYATH DURING LOCK-DOWN PERIOD

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### Abstract

Thousands of casual workers and self-employed in India have left for their jobs in the last few months after the covid-19 outbreak. Those who are still in cities working hours, lay-offs, furloughs and reductions in incomes. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) states that the number of workers vulnerable to the lockdown in India could reach 364 million or more, including those in casual work, self-employment and unprotected regular jobs (lacking social protection coverage) (Jadhve, Covid-19: Why casual workers and the self-employed are most likely to lose their work and incomes, 2020). The lockdown has resulted in significant fall in income and employment throughout India. Found a worsening of income and employment situation in India. The unemployment rate in India increased to 25.5 per cent by 5 May. Nearly 83 per cent of the households reported income loss in the month of April. Starvation seemed like a real possibility to a significant share of the population, as 34 percent reported that they cannot survive more than a week on their existing savings and food stock. Low-income households residing in urban areas were the worst affected by the lockdown.

**Keywords:** Lock Down, Epidemic, Casual Labours, Unemployment, Self Employment.

### Introduction

Covid-19 has caused the biggest health emergency of recent history with drastic economic consequences. In the absence of a cure or vaccine, the governments have adopted the policies of lockdowns (also called shelter-in-place policy), large-scale testing with contact tracing and isolation and voluntary social distancing to forestall its spread. The outbreak of covid-19 is a global pandemic and on March 14, 2020 the government of India declared Covid-19 as a "notified disaster". (Indervir Dingh, Jagadeep Singh, Ashapurna Baruah, 2020) Following this declaration by the central government, several state governments such as Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra proceeded to impose a complete lockdown in their states invoking the 123-year-old legislation which is Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

Some estimation proves that 20 per cent contraction in economic activity, the number of poor globally may increase by 420-580 million. As per International Labour Organization (2020), about 400 million workers in India are at the risk of being pushed into poverty due to slowdown caused by lockdown and COVID-19 shock. Most of these estimates are based on an extreme scenario; the size of population that will actually fall into poverty largely depends on the loss during the lockdown and the extent of recovery after easing of the restrictions. The existing studies have provided some insights into the loss during the first and the second phases of the lockdown in India (between 25 March 2020 and 3 May 2020). However, we still do not have estimates of the losses in the later phases.

### Objective of the Study

- To study the Challenges faced by casual labours in Kakkodi Grama panchayath during lock-down period.

### Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from 50 households in Padinjattumuri belongs to Kakkodi Gramapanchayath ward number 14 in Kozhikode district of Kerala state. Kakkodi is a Panchayath in Kozhikode district of Kerala. The panchayath borders Kozhikode Corporation on one side and the panchayaths Kuruvattoor, Chellannur, Thalakkulathur and Elathur, on the other sides. The panchayath divided into 21 wards. As per 2011 census reports the total population in 36,096 with 17,379 men and 18,717 women and the population growth is plus 20.22. The sex ratio is 1077 women to 1000 men. Majority of them are casual workers. The secondary data was collected from newspapers, internet, government reports, and magazines.

### Review of Literature

As per the journal magazine of India forum by Radihicka Kapoor titled by "The Unequal Effects of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Labour Market" (Radihicka, 2020) says about the casual workers in sectors such as construction are likely to have been hit harder



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by the Covid-19 shock than the skilled and educated in sectors like finance. Those at the bottom, with few skills, limited education & without security, would have been affected the most and they need the immediate support.

A study conducted by International Lab ourOrganization titled by “Covid -19 and the World of Work: Impact and policy responses” (International, 2020). This provides the possible impacts of Covid-19 on the world of work and proposes a range of policy options to mitigate these impacts and facilitate strong and fast recovery. This includes Current situation Why are labour markets are important and how will Covid-19 affect the world of work. And also, is study Impact on global unemployment and underemployment, Implications for labour income and working poverty and analyses the key policies that will mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

A report by John Hilton (Hilton, 2020) in his work “how has covid-19 impacted the casual work force?” Operates the vulnerable economic condition of casual labours during the time of covid-19 pandemic situation. Casual workforce has been hit hard by Covid-19 restrictions, with almost 70% of casual workers reporting they are suffering financially. This financial hardship experienced by casual workers was the result of many employers having shut-down hours due to Covid-19. Many of them have lost their jobs.

A study conducted by Professor Mark Wooden, University of Melbourne (Wooden, 2020) titled “Casual workers and Covid-19” study the role of Covid -19 in the economic situation of the casual labours. The Covid -19 downturns has particularly affected workers in insecure employment. Most of them are lost their jobs and for those that have maintained employment, some have even been blamed for helping spread the disease with in workplaces. To compare any of the employment sector in casual labour all sectors are adversely affected due to Covid pandemic, they have lost their jobs, lifestyle, family entertainment etc.

A study conducted by Xavier Estupinan, Mohit Sharma, Sargam Gupta and Bharti Birla titled “Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Labour Supply and Gross Value Added in India” (Xavier Estupinan, 2020). It says that the impact of covid-19 pandemic on labour supply. The first order supply shock through labour supply reduction associated with the containment measures taken by the Government of India to control covid-19 spread. The expected monthly wage loss of casual workers and regular and salaried employees is estimated to be Rs. 33.8 and GVA between 13 percent and 19 percent during the lockdown period from 25th March to 31st May 2020.

### Nature of Casual Employment

A casualworker is a worker on a temporary employment contract with generally limited entitlements to benefits and little or no security of employment. The main attribute is absence of a continuing relationship of any stability with an employer, which could lead to their not being considered “Employees” at all. Casual workers are differ from other non-permanent workers in that they may often possess fewer rights and less production. Using 2020 population figures (which generate an estimate of 473 million workers), around 118 million workers in India are casually employed, representing around 25 per cent of the total **Indian** workforce, while slightly more than half or 246 million are self-employed.

### Covid And Casual Employment in Kerala

The first COVID-19 case in India is reported in Trissur District. The growth in number of cases was very small up to 1 May 2020 but there has been a spurt in growth in July and August 2020 by September 1 the total cases was 76,526 and deaths 299. As on September 8, the districts having the largest number of cases is Thiruvananthapuram districts viz. Malappuram, Ernakulum and Kozhikode districts rank second, third and fourth position the districts reported the largest number of deaths is Thiruvananthapuram. Kerala has implemented lockdown for 69 days this may be classified in to 3 phases on the basis of nature of lockdown.

First phase of 27 days (March 24 – April 19), a lockdown similar to curfew was implemented. All modes of passenger transport road, rail, water and air were stopped. All education institutions, places of worship, functions and gatherings were stopped. Except a few essential services such as shops, medicine, petrol pumps, LPG distribution etc. all other activities were stopped. This has paralysed all most all production of goods and services in the state economy.

In the second phase of lockdown of 14 days (April 20 – May 3) a few relaxations were given.

In the third phase of 28 days (May 4 – May 31) more relaxation were given. GSDP or state income is defined as the aggregate of all the money value of final goods and services produced within the geographical boundaries of the state, without duplication during a period of one year.



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Kerala has about 6 to 7 lakh migrant workers from other states and a good portion of them were returned to native states due to the pandemic. But it is not going to create a labour shortage due to return of Keralite migrant workers from 22 other states and gulf countries, spurt in unemployment rate and the mobility of the unemployed labour force to the jobs done by the migrants. The possibility of large-scale return of Keralite from the Gulf and fall in remittances will have serious economic consequences in Kerala.

Table: 1
Loss of Employment due to 69 days of Lockdown

Table with 3 columns: Industry Division, Total Workers (%), and Loss of employment (More than 50%). Rows include Total Primary, Manufacturing, Construction, Total Secondary, Trade, repair of motor vehicles, Transportation and storage, Accommodation and Food service, Information and communication, Financial and insurance, Administrative and support service, Public administration and defence, Education, Human health and social work, Arts, entertainment and recreation, Other services, Total Territory, and Total.

Source: NSO (2019) Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018

As per NSO survey of the total workers in Kerala, primary sector account for 20.11%, secondary 31.07% and tertiary 48.48%. Lockdown has inflicted not much damage to agriculture and allied activities. The loss of employment in manufacturing sector was more than 50%. Construction sector suffered severe loss of employment due to lockdown (More than 50%) In tertiary sector, the following sub-sectors suffered more than 50% loss of employment. They are trade, repair of motor vehicles, accommodation and food services, financial and insurance, education, arts, entertainments and recreation and other services. This is an unprecedented loss of employment during the period of 69 days.

Table: 2
Distribution of Workers in Usual Status in Kerala (2017-2018)

Table with 5 columns: Category, Self employed, Regular wage/Salary, Casual labour, All. Rows include Male, Female, and Person.

Source: NSO (2019) Periodic Labour Force Survey 20



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Of the total employment in Kerala, the share of self-employed is 37.8%, casual labour 29.3% and regular wage/salaried, 32.9%.The entire self-employed, casual labour and a major share of regular, wage/salary employed come under informal sector (Nearly 84%). The lockdown has resulted in huge loss of employment of the self-employed and casual labourers. Informal sector workers worked in all sectors viz. primary, secondary and tertiary. Almost all migrant workers from other states are casual workers. The subsectors which suffered severe loss of employment are mining and quarrying, construction, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services, real estate, arts, entertainment and recreation. The lockdown has pushed more than two third of self-employed and casual workers to acute unemployment, financial crisis, indebtedness and economic distress. (Prakash, 2020)

Due to COVID-19 there is no demand for some of the services and activities. Example: travel and tourism, which provide direct employment to more than 10 lakh people Similar is the situation with regard to entertainment activities (Film production, cinema theatres, drama, stage programs etc.) Majority of the private educational institutions are closed due to lack of demand (nursery schools, parallel colleges, coaching centres, other private educational institutions etc.).Lack of demand for passenger transport led to the stoppage or substantial reduction in transport services (buses, tourist vehicles, taxis, autorikshwas, metro rail, rail and air transport). There is a total ban on all categories of sports activities all this has resulted in unprecedented loss of employment.

The outbreak of the pandemic and implementation of 69 days lockdown in the state has resulted in unprecedented loss of GSDP and employment in all sectors of state’s economy. It is likely that the recession will become a depression in the near future. During the year 2020-21, the GSDP is likely to register a negative growth. The lockdown has resulted in huge loss of employment in all sectors. In sectors like industry and construction it ranged between 50 to 80 percent. Most of the subsectors of tertiary sector registered a loss of more than 50 percent of employment. Due to a curfew like situation, there was a huge loss in employment of informal sector workers. The impact of the loss of employment was severe in the case of self-employed and casual workers in the state. The 69 days lockdown has pushed more than two thirds of self-employed and casual workers to acute unemployment, financial crisis, indebtedness and economic distress.

Table: 3  
Comparison of Monthly Income: Before and During Lock-Down Period

Gross monthly income	Before lock-down	Percentage	During lock-down	Percentage
Less than 5000	5	10%	23	46%
5000-10000	12	24%	23	44%
10000-15000	24	48%	2	6%
15000-20000	9	18%	2	4%
Total	50	100%	50	100%

Source: Primary data

The table shows that before lock-down, 48% of the labour earn a monthly income between 10000 to 15000 rupees. 24% of the labour earn 5000 to 10000 rupees, 18% of the labour earn 15000- 20000 rupees. 10% of the labour earn less than 5000 rupees. During the time of lock- down 46% of the labour earn an income of 5000 rupees and below, 44% earn 5000 to 10000 rupees and 6% earn 10000 to 15000 rupees and only 4% earn an income of 15000 to 20000 rupees.

Table 4  
Challenges faced by Casual labours During Lock Down

Challenges	Number	Percentage
Breathing problem	14	28%
Head ache and other health issues	6	12%
Mental stress	20	40%
Isolation	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary data



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The above table shows the challenges faced by the casual workers due to the implementation of lock-down. Among 50 samples 40% of labours face mental stress 28% have breathing problem and 20 % face problem of isolation and remaining 6% have head ache and other health issues.

**Findings and Suggestions**

Covid-19 pandemic had come with serious economic and welfare consequences. While the developed world has well-functioning social security system to shield its citizens from its adverse consequences, people in developing countries are at the risk of falling into deprivation. Imposing the lockdown had further increased the hardship of people. The present study, using the data from a primary survey, finds large fall in employment and income during various phases of the lockdown in Kakkodi Gramapanchayath. Majority of the casual labours face stringent financial difficulty due to the lock-down. The income of the workers has reduced four times when compared to the past. The employment pattern of casual labours changed tremendously. Majority of the people loss their job temporarily. Among 50 people 40 people have lost their jobs. During the pandemic period consumption of workers reduced. Majority of the labours face mental stress due to lock down. A covid-19 reconstruction package should be formulated and implemented by the state government for the casual workers. Special counselling programmes should be organised by authorities to provide moral support to labours.

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