



COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects

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Introduction

COVID-19's effect on livelihood continues to grow as the effects have started to push beyond individuals into the economy. This main effect on economy is starting to weaken the advancement of gender equality within many nations. McKinsey states that women's job are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's job especially during this global pandemic. Women account for 39 percent of global employment, but on the contradictory, they account for 54 percent of job losses. The main reason behind this is women being responsible for unpaid care that occurs in their own household. A study done by McKinsey Global Institute states if gender equality issues were advanced, the global GDP would be about \$13 trillion by 2030, but if there was gender-regressive issues it would be \$1 trillion less (estimated using hypothetical scenarios). If we were only to solve the issue after the crisis, we could see losses of more than \$5 trillion in global GDP, which includes the loss from COVID-19. McKinsey Global Institute started this research work called "Power of Parity" back in 2015 and has been able to map gender-equality indicators across four main categories which are equality in work, essential services and enablers of economic opportunity, legal protection and political voice, and physical security and autonomy. This ongoing research has shown that even pre-COVID, the world has had an uneven standing when looking at gender equality. Through change and commitment, this uneven gender equality standing can be addressed in turn leading to improvement in the social and economic aspects of the world.



Key Highlights

1. In India, women account for about 20 percent of total employment before COVID-19, and they also account for about 23 percent of overall job losses. This is due to the gendered nature of work across multiple industries explains a fourth of difference between job-loss rates for men and women in India and societal barriers explain the rest.
2. The nature of work done by men and women is a key factor across the globe, as 4.5 percent of women's employment is at risk due to COVID-19 compared to men which is at 3.8 percent. Women represent 54 percent of the accommodation and food service, which is one of the most affected sectors due to COVID-19. Another sector which is equally impacted is the retail and wholesale trade sector, where women make up about 43 percent of jobs.
3. Women are also known to do about 75 percent of the world's unpaid work which includes childcare, caring of elderly, cooking and cleaning. In countries like India, this percentage could be closer 80 to 90 percent. This proves the negative correlation of the female labour-force participation. According to a survey done in India, women are also spending 30 percent more time on family responsibilities due to COVID-19.
4. Female entrepreneurship plays a huge role in the COVID-19's impact as in many countries female entrepreneurship accumulates large part of the labour participation. Scarcity in resources is a cause of this possible decline due to children using digital technology or the further investment in capital is used to accommodate the family.
5. Attitudes and mindsets contribute to the economic consequences women face as the role of women can be different than man in specific countries. According to the global World Values Survey, more than half of the respondents in South Asian countries agreed that men have more right to do a job when women jobs are scarce.
6. McKinsey Global Institute through its research has been to develop a metric called Gender Parity Score (GPS) using the four gender-equality categories mentioned before to determine the link between gender equality in work and gender equality in society. In 2014, the GPS of gender equality in society was 0.60 (0 to 1 scale, where one is full parity between men and women) and currently this score is 0.61. The GPS for gender equality in work is trailing behind, as it was 0.52 in 2014 and 0.67 currently.
7. The world is committed to improve gender equality in the workforce through maternal mortality, share of women in professional and technical jobs, and political representation. The level of female participation in the labour force is about two-thirds of men and has hardly changed between 2014 till now.
8. Ultimately, as countries continue to push forward with gender-equality initiatives, many will see various changes in female labour force participation. COVID-19 will continue to impact the workforce participation as the global economy adjusts to the ongoing crisis.

Read more: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>

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