

## **Informal Labour Blues: Effects of Covid-19 and Beyond on Women Belonging to Backward Castes in Hyderabad, India**

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**Abstract:** COVID-19 struck people all over the world, indiscriminately, altering human living conditions as we know it. It had disproportionate effects on those less fortunate, especially women in marginalized communities. This research delves into the short-term and potential long-term effects of COVID-19 on women belonging to backward castes engaged in informal labour work in the city of Hyderabad, state of Telangana, India. This in-depth ethnographic inquiry observed the research participants within their localities for over a year (2020-2021) and adopts an approach rooted in intersectionality and complexity. Semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews and participant observation were employed across a sample of 30 women participants. Findings indicate that the economic impact of the pandemic on informal labour is multifold where women's jobs are the household's only salvation. Participants reported receiving none to scattered benefits from governmental and non-governmental actors. As is the case in informal labour markets, lack of job security and safety nets skyrocketed participants' anxiety for a secure future. The gendered effects of the pandemic are observed through women's unfulfilled dietary needs and their increased household work. Domestic violence is prevalent in these communities. There is high trust in available COVID-19 vaccines.

*Keywords:* Gender and informal labour; Gendered effects of COVID-19; Backward caste communities; Women as informal labour; Inequality.