

Psychological Resilience of Unorganised Sector Workers During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown strategy has affected everyone around the globe. Due to non-functioning of economic activities, because of announcement of lockdown in India, workers of unorganized sector had to suffer from several issues and hardship. Many workers in this sector had to lose their jobs that led to several socio - economic problems. It is important to understand the psycho-social conditions of unorganized sector workers during this vulnerable situation. Psychological resilience is capability of a person to recover from trauma and stress. Resilient persons experience positive emotions even within the mid of stressful events, understand the advantages related to positive emotions, and use this data to their advantage when addressing negative emotional events.. This study aims to study the Psychological resilience among the unorganised sector workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected among 63 respondents using an interview schedule in the vegetable market of Oddanchatram, Tamil Nadu. Psychological resilience was measured using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) which has 6 questions to measure the level of resilience. The resilience levels were classified into low, normal and high level of resilience. It was found that nearly half of the respondents have a high level of resilience. Psychological resilience is a least studied concept in Indian context. It should be further studied to handle future pandemics and develop preventive strategies for better mental health.

Keywords: Psychological resilience, unorganised sector, COVID-19, Pandemic

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I. INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), due to the novel corona virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 SARS-CoV-2) was first found in December 2019 at Wuhan of Hubei Province of China and spread to many countries within a quick span of time. COVID-19, which started as an epidemic, continued to spread across countries and borders. On 11th March 2020, World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it as a pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown strategy has affected everyone around the globe. Workers from the unorganized sectors are the predominant ones who are facing a lot of problems during this pandemic. Lockdown has brought the lives of such workers to a standstill, as many were stripped of their employment opportunities. This can be compounded by the very fact that a number of them are not able to fulfil their daily requirements because of financial constraints. Immediate concerns that workers from unorganized workers face relate to affordability of health care, fear of corona virus infection, loss of employment, tackling family expenses and uncertainty about future resulting in severe psychological agony among them. Accordingly, it is important to study about the mental health issues among these marginalized people. While studying the mental health issues, it is also important to consider the resilient factor of this population as psychological resilience acts as a protective barrier for mental health and helps to reduce the psychological distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. SECTOR WORKERS IN INDIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Indian workforce is categorised into two sectors namely: organised and unorganised sector. Organised sector workforce in India is comprised of fine skilled and semi-skilled workers. These workers have benefits attached to their job and it is well governed by Indian constitution. Even the entire family of the worker will be protected by the labour laws.

On the other hand, unorganised sector contributes to 90 per cent of the Indian workforce (Kaushik & Trikha, 2020). It is said that unorganised sector forms the backbone of Indian economy. This sector consists of small farmers, daily labourers, foot path sellers, load handlers, housemaids, cooks, plumbers, vegetable/fruit sellers, brick kiln workers, weavers etc. They do not get much support from the government but still contribute much to the Indian economy.

As per ILO, global labour income has declined by 10.7 per cent and the biggest impact was in the lower-middle income countries (International Labour Organisation, 2020). While India is a lower-middle income country, the impact on economy is hugely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This leaves the unorganised sector vulnerable as they don't have enough laws to protect their rights and to safeguard their livelihood.

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III. RESILIENCE FACTOR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Resilience in a person reflects a dynamic union of things that encourages positive adaptation despite exposure to adverse life experiences. In psychological aspect, resilience can be defined as the capability of a person to recover from trauma and stress. Resilient persons experience positive emotions even within the mid of stressful events, understand the advantages related to positive emotions, and use this data to their advantage when addressing negative emotional events (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

In a study conducted among 9121 respondents in India, it was found that about sixty percent of the participants were highly aware about the virus (Sathyamurthi & Devi, 2020)

Song et al., (2020) studied the resilience factor among the general public in China. It was also found that strength of psychological resilience and active coping style were protective against depression, while passive coping style and anxiety severity were risk factors for depression. Similarly, optimism of psychological resilience was a protective factor for anxiety while passive coping style and depression severity were risk factors.

A study among 236 respondents reported that 5.9 per cent were suffering from moderately severe depression and 47 per cent was not suffering from any symptoms of depression after the COVID-19 outbreak (Sathyamurthi, et al., 2020).

Wang et al., (2020) studied the psychological response of the general public during the initial stages of COVID-19 outbreak. This study states that COVID-19 pandemic poses a challenge to psychological resilience. Poor health status was significantly associated with impact of the outbreak and that invoked stress, anxiety, and depression.

Gokhroo (2021) says that, as the unorganized sector workers mostly rely on their daily wages, it just the unemployment made them suffer but also the lack of savings made their livelihoods difficult. Consequently, the informal workforce suffered from loss of salary, unemployment and problem to maintain a proper livelihood.

Davydov et al., (2010) studied about the relationship of resilience with mental health. The relationship between resilience and good health has caught little attention in mental health. It can be suggested that resilience can be seen as synonymous with reduced vulnerability, with faculty to suit to adversity or cope with the problem.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Resilience factor hasn't been studied much in Indian context. Results of resilience assessment will describe whether it functions as a protective barrier against mental health issues. It is necessary that every individual should have proper mental health, especially during this pandemic to cope with this stressful situation. So, it is important to study the resilience factor of vulnerable categories such as unorganized sector workers to understand and identify the mental health challenges they face.

This study would contribute to the knowledge base regarding psychological resilience of the workers in unorganized sector during this COVID-19 pandemic in India. Through the

collected data, insight will be provided upon the level of psychological resilience among the respondents. Understanding the levels of resilience among the respondents are important to manage the current COVID-19 situation effectively and as well as to develop mental health response plans for future pandemics.

V. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aims to measure the psychological resilience among the unorganised sector workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The location of the study is Oddanchatram in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. People who work in the vegetable market of Oddanchatram who are above 18 years of age was studied for this research. The study was among a gender homogeneous group, male. Major employment in Oddanchatram is provided by this vegetable market which has a huge workforce of daily wage workers.

This study uses a descriptive research method and quantitative approach. The sampling design of the study is non-probability sampling design. The sampling is based on the convenience of the researcher. The data was collected using an interview schedule among 63 respondents. Demographic details of the respondents are collected using self-developed questionnaire. For the questions related to psychological resilience, Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith et al., 2008) was used. This scale is used to measure the psychological resilience and has both positive and negatively scored questions. The questions has the responses 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. The score of Brief Resilience Scale ranges from 1 to 5. This can be further classified into low resilience (1.00 - 2.99), normal resilience (3.00 - 4.30) and high resilience (4.31 - 5.00). Cronbach's Alpha for Brief Resilience Scale is 0.71.

Table 1 shows the psychological resilience among the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic characteristics considered here are age, educational qualification, marital status and occupation.

Table 1 Psychological resilience among the demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Level of Psychological Resilience				
		Low resilience	Normal resilience	High resilience	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	18 - 28	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	6 9.50%	3.00	0.000
	29 - 39	2 3.20%	5 7.90%	5 7.90%	2.25	0.754
	40 - 50	5 7.90%	9 14.30%	12 19.00%	2.27	0.778
	Above 50	6 9.50%	9 14.30%	4 6.30%	1.89	0.737
	No formal education	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 1.60%	3.00	0.000
Educational Qualification	School level	8 12.70%	13 20.60%	13 20.60%	2.15	0.784
	College level	5 7.90%	10 15.90%	13 20.60%	2.29	0.763
	Unmarried	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	5 7.90%	3.00	0.000
Marital Status	Married	12 19.00%	22 34.90%	22 34.90%	2.18	0.765
	Divorced	0 0.00%	1 1.60%	0 0.00%	2.00	0.000
	Widowed	1 1.60%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.00	0.000
	Shop owner	4 6.30%	13 20.60%	9 14.30%	2.19	0.694
Occupation	Manual Labour	3 4.80%	2 3.20%	4 6.30%	2.11	0.928
	Accountant	4 6.30%	3 4.80%	8 12.70%	2.27	0.884
	Others	2 3.20%	5 7.90%	6 9.50%	2.31	0.751

Note. Apart from these variables, few economic characteristics of the respondents were also studied. From the number of earning members in the family, It's inferred that single member and two member earning family respondents have higher level of resilience than more than two members earning family respondents. Respondents who have own houses have high resilience than the rented house respondents. Higher level of resilience is more in the respondents who sleep more than 7 hours than the respondents who sleep for 4 - 7 hours

Table 2 shows the correlation of demographic variables with the psychological resilience among the respondents.

Table 2 Correlation of demographic variables with the psychological resilience among the respondents

Particulars		Correlations				
		Age	Educational Qualification	Marital status	Occupation	Level of Psychological Resilience
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.005	.465**	-.527**	-.354**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.971	.000	.000	.004
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Educational Qualification	Pearson Correlation	.005	1	.141	-.213	.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.971		.270	.093	.759
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Marital status	Pearson Correlation	.465**	.141	1	-.286*	-.342**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.270		.023	.006
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Occupation	Pearson Correlation	-.527**	-.213	-.286*	1	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.093	.023		.619
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Level of Psychological Resilience	Pearson Correlation	-.354**	.039	-.342**	.064	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.759	.006	.619	
	N	63	63	63	63	63
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Note. The demographic details were correlated with the level of psychological resilience and found that, age has positively correlated with educational qualification and marital status, Educational qualification has positively with other demographic variables except occupation, Marital status has positively correlated with age and educational qualification, Occupation has negatively correlated with other demographic variables and positively with the level of psychological resilience. Level of Psychological resilience has positively correlated with educational qualification and occupation, negatively correlated with age and marital status of the respondents.

Table 3 Association between the demographic variables and the level of psychological resilience among the respondents

Associated Variables	Chi-Square Test			
	Test Used	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (p) (2-sided)
Age and level of Psychological resilience	Pearson Chi-Square	1.861	4	0.761
Educational Qualification and level of Psychological resilience	Pearson Chi-Square	1.861	4	0.761
Marital status and level of Psychological resilience	Pearson Chi-Square	12.554	6	0.051
Occupation and level of Psychological resilience	Pearson Chi-Square	5.256	6	0.511

Note. Table 3 shows the association between the demographic variables and the level of psychological resilience among the respondents. The 'p' value of all the demographic variables are higher than that of the alpha value 0.05. From this, it is understood that there is no association between the demographic variables, age, educational qualification, marital status, occupation and the level of psychological resilience.

VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study focuses on measuring the level of psychological resilience among the unorganised sector workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is found that nearly half of the respondents (42.9%) have a high level of resilience. More than one-third of the respondents (36.5%) are having a normal level of resilience. Vast majority of the respondents (88.9%) belong to the married category. Among them equal number of the respondents have a normal and high level of resilience.

Through this study, it is found that the married respondents have normal and high level of resilience more. When the respondent belong to less number of working members in their family, they are more resilient. This is because they have to work to earn because their family depends on them for livelihood. India being a country that follows family values, it is understood that the family support plays a huge role in shaping a person's resilience levels. Psychological resilience is a least studied topic on Indian context. Social support of family and friends will play a major role in enhancing the level of resilience during hard times like a pandemic. Understanding the factors that contribute to better psychological support and build up resilience are important to cope during the stressful times.

Government should encourage social work researches regarding the unorganised sector workers so it can identify the at-risk members for socio-economic and mental health issues and provide early intervention thus by improving the quality of life of the individual as well as the community. Social workers can provide social work interventions to the people who are experiencing severe mental health challenges who are identified through the research.

Social workers can be specially trained to handle crisis situations like COVID-19 to provide various interventions such as psychological first aid, debriefing, community based mental health interventions and so on. Social workers can render their services in all phases like assessment, crisis intervention and treatment, thus by providing integrated services under one roof (Wong, 2014). Considering all these advantages, psychiatric social workers must be appointed by the government in more numbers considering the frequency of disasters in the recent periods.

VII. CONCLUSION

Lockdown strategy by the government has affected the workers in India especially the vulnerable sections like unorganised workers. Staying at home because of lockdown will reduce the risk of corona infection but increases the risk of unemployment and socialization. Many of these people

work for daily wages and with no job security. Due to the lockdown, many of these people lost their jobs and was not able to provide for themselves or their family. Even though, this research has found out that most of the respondents have high level of resilience, it is important to understand the psycho-social conditions of unorganized sector workers during this vulnerable situation. Workers from unorganised sector have a low job security and work benefit due to the nature of their jobs. Taking all these into account, government should be more considerate of these vulnerable categories and provide them with the needed resources and support during tough times like this COVID-19 situation. Researches which concentrates on the psychological resilience must be encouraged as the presence of psychological resilience will act as a barrier against mental health challenges such as depression and stress.

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