



WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION AMID INDUSTRIAL DISRUPTION THROUGH AMBEDKAR'S LENS

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Abstract:

Dr. Ambedkar's life was full of struggles to achieve human rights, especially for women. He was not viewing women solely as an economic resource, but also recognized the crucial link between economic empowerment and overall societal progress, advocating for women's equal rights, including access to education, to achieve a more just and equitable society. He has always been a believer in women's organization. He had a strong belief that women can improve the condition of society. In the eradication of social evils women have rendered great services" (Kumar 217). The study encompasses the women's contribution in economic activities during a period of industrial disruption created due to suspension of NTC Mills in Maharashtra. The study uses primary as well as secondary data. The primary data is collected through interview schedule from workers and the womens of the households. The womens include wives, daughters and mothers of the workers. A Sample of a hundred women has been collected. The hypothesis has been proved with the help of paired t tests. The findings of the paper shows that womens' contribution has been very high in the families income during the suspension period. Looking into the educational levels of the women, the contributions could have been much higher if the woman would have been more educated as compared to the present educational levels. Hence following Ambedkars' perspective on women's education, there is a serious need to chalk out policies which could reach out to the downtrodden society especially the under privileged women.

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Introduction:

Women has been used as a reserve army when needed. During the suspension of mill operations, women in the household played a vital role in sustaining the family's income through their significant economic contributions. Workers from NTC mills have been without work since the mills have been declared

suspended i.e. from 20th March 2020 onwards. This led to severe financial strain, forcing families to rely on minimal incomes from other sources or deplete their savings. Many women turned to home-based work, such as making masks, papad, or incense sticks. Women started small businesses from home—like tailoring, selling vegetables, fruits, doing house maid



work. Those with some savings or access to credit e.g. via self-help groups invested in micro-businesses and many of them had to take rescue of the bishi system, very famous among the female workers. They supported household survival through multitasking—childcare, cooking, and working. Increased burden of unpaid care work with schools closed. Many women who had been dependent on textile mills began working in informal stitching units or switched to bidi (hand-rolled cigarettes) rolling. Women from historically marginalised groups were more severely impacted by the pandemic than others (People's archives of India 2021). Studies showed a rise in food insecurity and depletion of savings, but also highlighted women's resilience in adapting to new income sources. These factors collectively diminished women's ability to contribute to household incomes during the pandemic, leading to increased financial instability and hardship for many families in Maharashtra.

Literature Review:

Dalberg Team (2021) in their report on "Impact of Covid-19 on women in low-income households in India" elaborates on how women in India constitute a minority in the paid workforce. A small number of women report continued food deprivation and limited access to menstrual supplies and contraceptives through the pandemic. More women reported an increase in unpaid work and a decrease in rest than men. From lower-income households, Muslim as well as migrant women, and single separated/divorced women were among the hardest hit of covid. Women from lower-income households were also slow to recover both their paid work and income. Government welfare scheme and Self-Help Groups (SHG) were important in helping the women navigate the pandemic. MGNREGA, Jan Dhan, and PDS focused on women most in need during the same period. The SHGs network also continued to serve as a reliable

borrowing channel for both its members and women in the community

Perumalsamy, G. (2022), in his study titled "A Study on Impact of Employment on Women Workers of Textile Mills in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu", examines the demographic, social, and economic profiles of women employed in textile mills. The study aims to assess changes in their socio-economic status post-employment, evaluate their level of job satisfaction, identify workplace challenges, and suggest measures to improve their livelihoods. The research concludes that employment in textile mills has significantly contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of women in the region.

Dr. Karnika Dubey (2020), in her study on B.R. Ambedkar and Women Empowerment highlights B.R. Ambedkar's work for the Emancipation of women. The work explains that women were denied the right to enjoy freedom or meaningful experiences and were instead subjected to oppressive conditions. These included child marriage, polygamy, the sati system, illiteracy, and various forms of inhuman treatment. Women were often left powerless, forced to accept these practices as societal norms. The paper highlights the Hindu Code Bill which addresses several key issues impacting women's empowerment, many of which were identified and resolved through the efforts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In 1938, with Ambedkar's involvement, several protection acts were passed to safeguard the rights of children, women, and working mothers.

Md. Kayemuddin (2014) in his study on "Impact on the Workers on the Closure of the Jute Mills in Bangladesh" examines the impact of jute mill closures in Bangladesh on workers. The study explores economic, social, and psychological consequences and evaluates the role of different agencies in worker rehabilitation. The key findings can be categorised as Economic and Employment Impact, Social and



Psychological Effects, Impact on Health and Education, Self-Employment and Rehabilitation Efforts. Workers experienced a drastic income reduction, leading to poverty, received lower wages in alternative employment, Compensation payments were delayed. Many workers suffered mental distress, decline in social status and self-esteem.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study if the women of the household has significantly contributed economically to the family's income during the suspension of mills.
2. To study the challenges faced by the women workers during the period of suspension of mills.
3. To propose suggestions based on the findings of the study that can improve the economic condition of concerned women.

Hypothesis:

H0: the women of the household has not significantly contributed economically to the family's income during the suspension of Mills

H1: the women of the household has significantly contributed economically to the family's income during the suspension of Mills

Research Methodology:

The category of women in the study includes mother, wife and daughter who have contributed significantly to the family's income. Economic contribution implies whether they have performed any activity which has given them some amount of income earning. The time period taken is before mill suspension i.e. before March 2020 and after mill suspension i.e. after March 2020. A Sample of hundred women has been collected who are family members of the mill workers. The mill workers include both men and women. The hypothesis has been proved with the help of paired t tests since we wanted to know the women's contribution before and after mill suspension. The minimum income earned by the women is Rs.4000/- and maximum earned per month is Rs 12000/-.

		Paired Differences							
			Std.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Mean	Deviation			
Pair 1	WOMENS_CON_AF_NONOPE WOMENS_CON_BEF_NONOPE	3765.00	2786.5614	278.6561	3212.0858	4317.9142	13.51199	.000	

Findings:

To compare **women's contribution to household income before and after mills were declared non-operational:**

Mean Difference:

On an average, women's contribution in family income increased by ₹3765 after mills became non-

operational. This is a substantial rise, showing a positive shift in economic responsibility. it means that, on average, the values for women's contribution after non-operational are 3765 units higher than before non-operational. Another way to interpret the mean income is to identify that the mean income has been very low to live a dignified life in urban areas like Mumbai



which has a high amount of standard of living.

Standard deviation:

It measures how spread out the values are from the mean. A higher standard deviation means the values vary more widely. The standard deviation is **2786.5614**. This suggests that individual differences between before and after contributions vary by about 2786 units around the mean difference.

Standard Error of the Mean (Std. Error Mean):

The standard error tells us how precisely the mean represents the data. It's the standard deviation divided by the square root of the sample size. The standard error is 278.6561. This means the average difference of 3765 has a margin of uncertainty of ± 278.65 due to sampling variability.

t-value (13.511):

A very high t-score, indicating a strong difference between the before and after conditions. The t-value comes from the t-test, which compares the means of two groups to see if they are statistically different. A larger t-value generally means a more significant difference between groups.

df (Degrees of Freedom)

In the table: **df = 99**

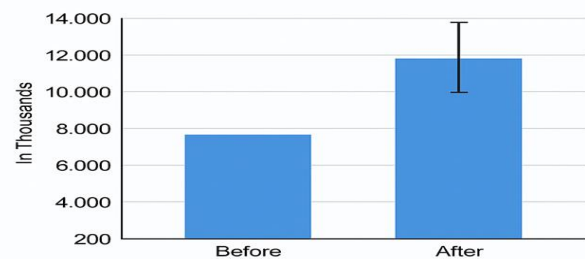
That typically means your sample size is **100** (since $df = n - 1$ in a paired sample t-test). The higher the df, the more reliable the statistical estimate tends to be.

Significance Value ($p = .000$)

The p-value is less than 0.05, in fact $< .001$, meaning the result is statistically highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the women of the household has not significantly contributed economically to the family's income during the suspension of Mills is rejected. There is a statistically significant difference between women's contributions before and after non-operational.

Women's Contribution to Household Income

Before and after mills became non-operational



The increase in women's contributions to household income after the mills became non-operational is statistically significant. This suggests women stepped up economically during the crisis, possibly through alternative livelihoods, informal sector work, or home-based activities.

Other findings of the study:

During mill suspension most of these women continued in the economic activities in order to support the family expenses. Some of these women are single mothers and widows and also married women. Since the economic burden on the single mothers and widows was high it was necessary for these groups of women to continue some sort of economic activity in order to contribute to the family income.

During the suspension period around 43% percent of men were engaged in the economic activities outside the mill but around 81% percent of women were engaged in the economic activities which was much higher as compared to the male counterparts. This shows that the household responsibilities have been more than equally shared by the women of the households.

Another important finding from the data reflects a fact that the aging workers had hardly any second income source during the suspension period and so did the women of the same households also. Most of these aging workers migrated to their natives during the suspension period and they were more involved with agriculture and allied activities where their efforts



were just a means of their survival which could be hardly converted into economic terms.

The women have contributed in the economic activities by engaging in several activities like household work stitching, tailoring, providing tiffin service, catering service, working as maids, selling mineral water, working in hotels, working as home based workers. Some of the women workers who were already doing some extra income activities now had to stretch themselves to get more from the extra income activity in order to support their family expenses. Like women had to spend extra hours at vendor shops selling vegetables or fastfood items.

Another important finding that comes across is that most of the women have been educated only till the primary section and some have gone till secondary education. Since the educational standards have been poor, the earning capacity of the women have been meagre. Hence there is a serious need to improvise on their educational standards. As strongly believed by Dr Ambedkar that education of woman can uplift the entire family (Datta, 29)

Challenges faced by women during mill suspension:

In urban areas, women were engaged in domestic work (cleaning, cooking), and in other households where permitted selling vegetables, snacks, or tea from roadside stalls or door-to-door, running community kitchens and co-operatives to earn and serve during the crisis. Challenges which were faced by the women :

- Double Burden : Balancing unpaid domestic work, childcare, and income activities
- Income has been very low to live a dignified life in urban areas like Mumbai which has a high amount of standard of living.
- Health Risks: many had to postpone the medical emergencies due to lack of financial resources.
- Disruption of SHGs/ Bishi : Many groups paused lending, reducing support as regular income was disturbed.

- Lack of Recognition : Their work often remained invisible or undervalued.
- Many women did not accept 9am to 5pm work as they have to carry out other responsibilities at home.

Policy Suggestions :

- Women could have contributed more if they would have been more educated. If they would have been educated, their earnings would have been higher and not the existing meagre amount. Also we can find that women had been saving through bishi which is an informal way of saving practised by many of them. Savings through Self-help groups is much better but practiced rarely in this case.
- Women worked during this phase raised mental stress leading to many psychological issues.
- For women, taking care of children is compulsory (remember caring is not always love, a sociological perception) if we provide some options for women to take care of their children while they are on work, their contribution would be more without being less stressed out.
- There is more emphasis needed on adult education as the existing age group of the womens have been between 25 to 65 which comes into the category of adult population.
- Strengthen SHGs and other forms of funding to make them financially stronger. Formal recognition of women's unpaid and informal labor in policy frameworks.
- Provide safety nets specifically targeting women-headed households.

Conclusion:

The non-operational status of National Textile Corporation (NTC) mills in Maharashtra can be attributed to several interrelated factors. In March 2020, NTC mills suspended production due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19. This abrupt halt affected over 5 mills in



Maharashtra managed by NTC including Poddar, Indu and Tata mills. Many mills were temporarily or permanently closed due to health concerns, supply chain disruptions, and lack of demand. Women used basic skills and minimal capital to earn from home while also managing household duties. The women taking the step to support the family's economic burden even though they were not much educated or capable, the Households could resolve the situation. Women's contributions prevented extreme poverty or starvation in many families. They diversified income sources, helping families adapt to uncertainty. Their role redefined traditional gender norms, at least temporarily, with more value being placed on women's labor and adaptability.

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Cite This Article:

Ms. Toraskar D. & Dr. Phad S. (2025) *Women's Contribution Amid Industrial Disruption through Ambedkar's Lens. In Electronic International Interdisciplinary Research Journal: Vol. XIV (Number II, pp. 122–127).*

Doi- <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15785309>