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**Impact of Pandemic COVID 19 on Employment in India;  
An Assessment  
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**Abstract**

*The present study has made an attempt to shed light on the impact of prevailing pandemic covid 19 on employment in India. In this circumstance, this study has made an attempt to bring out the scenario of distribution of employment of the country. For this purpose, the periodic labour force survey of NSSO (2018-19) and the CMIE report of unemployment has been used in the study. The study has found that the pandemic of Covid 19 has accentuated severe threats of unemployment on the labour market of Indian economy which was not faced before. In India the agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, trade, hotel & restaurants have collectively provided most employment in the country. The most vulnerable sections, less educated and less skilled person of the country usually work in these sectors in which job safety and security are almost nil. Mostly these types of workers are expected to be left either unemployed or under employed in the country during the time of pandemic Covid 19. The state wise comparison of employment has shown that the weakening states still lag in providing employment opportunities which they provided before the outbreak of pandemic. The advanced states with high economic growth and higher per capita income are in a better position than the weakening states to overcome the damages of prevailing pandemic.*

**Key words: Labour market, Employment, Economic growth, Per capita income, Covid 19.**

**Introduction:** The outbreak of Covid 19 has changed the human life around the world. This virus emerged in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and take only a few months to spread throughout the world. It is believed that larger number of human mobility at regional and international level is the main cause of the spread of the pandemic (Pal Et al, 2020). In this circumstance most countries around the world have taken several measures like social distancing, community lockdown, work from home, work online etc. to restrict the spread of pandemic due to its infectious nature (Sigala, 2020; Gretzel et al. 2020). Further the pandemic has created an unstable environment not only among the people of the world but

also it has an adverse impact on the economic activities of the World (Debata et al 2020). The developing countries like India have faced severe crisis when the govt. has declared nationwide lockdown starting on 25<sup>th</sup> march, 2020. The pandemic Covid 19 has not only affected the health sector of the economy but also it has severely affected the employment scenario of the nation (Singh, B. Pratap, 2020). The workers of the informal sectors especially migrant workers have faced severe crisis regarding their employment and they have no other choice but to return home during the period of lockdown (Khanna 2020). In India migrant worker is seen as the engine of country's development while during this time a large number of them are trapped at the destination (Dandekar and Ghai, 2020). Further some of the migrant workers have tried to reach their native place but they did not know whether they would get their previous job or not. Thus, the outbreak of pandemic has triggered a big threat to the livelihood of workers of the country (Aneja and Ahuja 2020; Chaudhary et al 2020). Now the question is, why do labours and/or workers of the country are mostly the victims of pandemic? It is evident that the country has not yet overcome from the presence of unequal and uneven development process, the reflection of which is seen in poverty and unemployment rate of the country. There is no doubt that Govt. of India has made rigorous contribution to achieve a decent growth of the economy since Independence. Side by side the Govt. has stressed more importance on creating employment opportunities for the people of the nation (Venkatanarayana. M and Naik. S.V, 2013). However, the achievement of high rate of growth of output specially during the first decade of twenty first century did not reflect in the growth of employment (Basu, 2018). For this reason, the country has a large number of labour force who are mostly involved in manual jobs in the unorganized sector where the safety and security of the job are almost absent (Kapoor 2020). Correspondingly, the work from home or work online is not only difficult for them but it is the most funniest thing of their life of doing work in such a process. Contrariwise the importance of worker in the unorganized sector cannot be denied as their source of income has been mostly affected due to this pandemic. They are work in the megacities in crowded condition that do not permit social distancing (Suresh. R et al. 2020). In this regard unplanned strategy of the Govt. will obviously set the economy towards back to some years. Hence, it is expected that good strategic plan along with good governance can help a lot to the people of the nation.

The present study has made an attempt to understand the possible impact of pandemic Covid 19 on employment in India. In this regard the study has considered the scenario of labour markets in terms of nature and status of employment before the outbreak of pandemic. On the other hand, to assess the impact of pandemic on the employment of the country the study has considered the different dimensions of employment during the periods of pandemic.

**Methodology:** On the basis of the above objectives, the present study has used the data of CMIE (form February, 2020 to July 2021) and PLFS of NSSO (2018-19) of major 14 states of India\* in the analysis which constituted 90% population of the country (census 2011). The PLFS data of NSSO of the year of 2018-19 of leading states of the country has been

used for presenting the scenario of labour market in the country before the emergence of pandemic. On the other hand, the CMIE data of unemployment has been used to locate the changing scenario of employment during the prevailing periods of Pandemic Covid 19. In discussing the current scenario of labour market of the economy in terms of nature and status of employment, the proportion of people to the total population involved in different industries for their employment has been considered in the study. In describing the status of workers and their participation in the various industrial jobs, the industries have been classified into five segments, agriculture sector, manufacturing sector, construction sector, trade and hotel, and other services. Similarly, to assesses the impact of prevailing pandemic on employment, the labour force participation rate and unemployment rate of 14 leading states of the country has been considered in the study. Both cross and contrast tabulation methods and different graph have been used in analyzing the data in the study.

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 \*Name of the states included in the study: Punjab (PUN), Uttar Pradesh (UP), Rajasthan (RAJ), Gujarat (GUJ), Bihar (BI), West Bengal (WB), Odisha (ODI), Jharkhand (JH), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Maharashtra (MAH), Andhra Pradesh (AP), Karnataka (KAR), Tamil Nadu (TN), Kerala (KER).

## Result and discussion:

### Distribution of employment and probable crisis for pandemic in India:

In order to understand the crisis of pandemic on the employment sector, it is extremely important to know about the distribution of workforce of the country. The periodic labour force survey of NSSO (2018-19) indicates that the workforce participation rate of the country is 43.69 percent, while female workforce participation rate (17.97 percent) lags behind the male work force participation rate (68.91 percent). The participation of the rural female in the working sector is higher than the urban sector of the country. On the other hand the rural male people are most obedient than the urban male to participate in the working sector of the country. This is also one of the reasons of low rural unemployment rate than the urban unemployment rate.

Table 1: Sex and sector wise Percentage distribution of working status of the people (Age 15+)

	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Work force participation rate (WPR)	70.10	19.83	45.26	67.41	15.64	41.71	68.91	17.97	43.69
Labour force participation rate	74.80	20.85	48.15	73.07	18.01	45.74	74.04	19.59	47.08
Unemployment rate	6.29	4.90	5.99	7.75	13.16	8.81	6.93	8.28	7.20

Source: authors own calculation from PLFS data of 2018-19

In contrast to the above, the labour force participation rate is 47.08 percent which indicates a large number of people do not prefer to join the labour force of the country. This rate is extremely low for the female population as compared to male population of the country.

However, this data cannot clarify the asymmetric impact of outbreak of pandemic while it is established that both labour and workforce participation rate have been declined during the pandemic. On the other hand, it is a fact that almost 90% of workforce of the economy have been engaged in the unorganized sector, so it is quite natural that they mostly have faced the burden of the pandemic. The PLFS data of NSSO has shown that 72.16 percent of workers have been engaged either as self-employed or casual labour where work from home or work online is impossible to them. Contrariwise most of these workers were engaged in such activities that do not provide them a decent income. The imposition of lockdown of the government made the people to stay at home; in this regard most of these workers have faced a severe employment crisis during the outbreak of pandemic. In contrast the unusual nationwide lockdown of the country comes at a time when the-

Table 2: Percentage distribution of share of employment in different industries (Age 15+)

Sector	Industry	Share of employment in total employment	Self employed	Regular wage/salaried employee	Casual labour	Others	Total
Rural	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	56.49	72.49	0.93	23.39	3.19	100.00
	Mining, manufacturing & electricity	9.27	41.10	36.54	19.84	2.52	100.00
	Construction	12.42	13.62	4.35	80.15	1.88	100.00
	Trade, hotel and restaurants	8.76	70.10	23.61	5.03	1.26	100.00
	Others	13.06	29.42	61.80	7.80	0.97	100.00
	Total	57.14	56.43	14.59	26.47	2.51	100.00
Urban	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	6.26	70.90	4.82	21.84	2.43	100.00
	Mining, manufacturing & electricity	22.86	37.90	49.03	10.99	2.07	100.00
	Construction	9.90	19.71	15.29	64.62	0.39	100.00
	Trade, hotel and restaurants	23.91	63.74	30.40	4.93	0.93	100.00
	Others	37.06	25.84	68.04	4.87	1.25	100.00
	Total	42.86	39.88	45.51	13.26	1.35	100.00
Total	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	34.96	72.37	1.23	23.27	3.13	100.00
	Mining, manufacturing & electricity	15.10	39.02	44.65	14.09	2.23	100.00
	Construction	11.34	15.89	8.44	74.34	1.32	100.00

	Trade, hotel and restaurants	15.26	65.82	28.17	4.96	1.04	100.00
	Others	23.35	26.99	66.05	5.81	1.16	100.00
	Total	100.00	49.34	27.85	20.81	2.01	100.00

Source: author's own calculation from PLFS data of 2018-19

Country has faced a slowdown in GDP growth as well as rising unemployment that also have affected lots on the employment sector of the economy. The agricultural sector, mining, manufacturing, electricity, construction, and trade, hotel & restaurants which contributed 76.66 percent (PLFS 2018-19) of share of employment in total employment have reported million of job losses in the country due to pandemic.

The agricultural sector alone has contributed 34.96 percent of share in total employment that has also faced different type of crisis due to outbreak of pandemic. The imposition of lockdown comes at the time when demand for labour is getting higher for post harvesting operation, but due to mobility restriction a large number of people have lost their jobs in the agricultural sector. Similarly due to close of transportation the farmers were unable to reach the markets, thus a large number of farmers were unable to sell their produce at the market price. Hence as the large number of rural labour forces were engaged in agricultural sector, this has created an awful impact on the livelihood of the rural people. The trade, hotel and restaurants together have contributed 15.26 percent share of employment in total employment that have totally stopped their functioning during lockdown, the people who are directly or indirectly involved in the activities of trade, hotel and restaurants are facing employment crisis during pandemic. The mining, manufacturing and electricity together that have contributed 15.10 percent share of employment in total employment also are facing similar type of crisis during pandemic. The manufacturing sector of India has contributed 16-17 percent of GDP alone with 12 percent (2014) of country's workforce. This sector has confronted severe crisis during the outbreak of pandemic. Mostly the factories were closed or run with a smaller number of workers due to pandemic which ultimately are disrupting the manufacturing units of the country. Contrariwise the manufacturing units were facing severe disruption of international supply chains due to lockdown or mobility restriction in the several countries around the world. On the other hand, the shortage of labour is also one of the reasons of slowdown in the production of manufacturing units in the country. The migrant labours have mostly returned to their native place for loss of jobs and income. Similarly demand side disruption also has occurred due to less demand of nonessential commodities of the economy. As the large number of people were engaged in the manufacturing units of the country, the outbreak of the pandemic has stymied the economy towards high degree of uncertainties. The construction sector, an emerging industry of India which has contributed 11.34 percent share of employment in total employment is also confronting severe blow from the beginning of the outbreak of pandemic. It is expected that this sector also has faced supply chain disruption, labour shortage and less demand during the prevailing pandemic situation. In this circumstance it is expected by several researchers that the people who are engaged in this industry are going to face severe employment crisis during the post-pandemic situation. The other sector

basically is the service sector of the economy that has faced fewer crises during the pandemic situation. It is believed that this sector has low risk in terms of job losses. Mostly in the country the salaried/wage persons belonging to this section, have decent education, and for this most of them can continue their work from home or work online. Hence it is quite clear that impact of pandemic on the workers of the country depends on the nature and status of employment of the workers. Likewise, the crisis of employment and income due to pandemic are facing mainly the poor section of the community which ultimately enhance the economic inequality of the country. In India it is seen that the workers of services sector have enjoyed secure jobs in terms of income, while most of the jobs in these sectors are held by educated persons of the country. Table 5 illustrates that 33.06 percent of workers in agricultural activities are illiterate while it has declined to 7.97 percent of workers who have been engaged in others service sector. Contrariwise a higher proportion of workers having 12<sup>th</sup> pass qualification have been engaged in the service sector of the country. It is also worth noting that the workers having decent education qualification are mostly skilled workers, they have less probability of job loss. Alongside in the country almost 66.76 percent of worker in the agriculture activities, 43.62 percent of workers in mining, manufacturing sector, 61.46 percent of workers in the construction sector, 38.90 percent of workers in the trade, hotel and restaurants and 23.22 percent of workers in the other services sector who have completed education up to 8 standards (middle) are less educated-

Table 3: Percentage distribution of share of employment in different industries by education (Age 15+)

	Illiterate	Below primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher secondary	Higher secondary +	Total
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	33.06	7.40	13.51	20.70	13.49	7.32	4.52	100.00
Mining, Manufacturing & Electricity	11.84	5.25	13.12	24.87	18.63	11.42	14.87	100.00
Construction	22.47	6.92	14.94	25.48	16.63	7.24	6.33	100.00
Trade, Hotel and Restaurants	10.25	4.62	11.78	24.00	19.13	13.66	16.55	100.00
Others Services	7.97	2.99	6.92	17.09	14.44	12.35	38.25	100.00

Source: author's own calculation from PLFS data of 2018-19

Table 4: Percentage distribution of share of employment in different industries by economic status (Age 15+)

	Rural poor	Rural non poor	Urban poor	Urban non poor	Total	% share of employment in total employment	
						poor	Non poor
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	44.87	47.45	4.61	3.07	100.00	17.30	17.66
Mining, Manufacturing & Electricity	12.21	22.87	29.29	35.63	100.00	6.26	8.83
Construction	30.25	32.35	22.86	14.55	100.00	6.02	5.32
Trade, Hotel and Restaurants	11.12	21.69	32.01	35.18	100.00	6.58	8.68
Others	9.64	22.32	24.12	43.92	100.00	7.88	15.47
Total	24.91	32.23	19.14	23.72	100.00	44.04	55.96

Source: author's own calculation from PLFS data of 2018-19

and less skilled. It is expected that mostly these workers have higher probability of being unemployed and losing their livelihood due to Covid 19 pandemic. Table 6 illustrates that almost 44.05 percent of total worker in the country are poor, among them 17.30 percent of workers of total employment in agriculture activities, 6.26 percent of workers of total employment in mining, manufacturing & electricity, 6.02 percent of workers of total employment in construction sector, 6.58 percent of worker of total employment in trade, hotel and restaurants and 7.88 percent of workers of total employment in the other services sector belong to the poor community of the country. It is also worth noting that mostly these workers of the country have higher probability of being unemployed and losing their income due to Covid 19.

**Understanding the distribution of labour force in different industries of major 14 states in the country:** To understand the state wise distribution of labour force in different industries in the country, the major states have been subdivided in to two categories, viz, high income states and weakening states according to the rate of growth and per capita income of the states. It is anticipated that the advanced states are more certain to recuperate speedily from the damages of pandemic while it is not so easy for the weakening states due to low growth and low per capita income. The following table 5 illustrates the state-wise distribution of labour force in different industries which indicates that among the advanced states Maharashtra has provided highest share of employment in the agriculture activities, Gujarat has provided highest share of employment in the mining and manufacturing industry, Kerala has provided highest share of employment in the construction ----

Table 5: State wise percentage distribution of share of employment in different industries by economic status (Age 15+)

Name of the states	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Mining, manufacturing and electricity	Construction	Trade, Hotel and restaurants	Transport, storage and communication	Other services
Gujarat	37.34	22.26	6.61	14.25	6.42	13.13
Maharashtra	38.89	14.02	6.72	14.21	6.07	20.09
Andhra Pradesh	38.53	12.28	10.93	13.91	6.63	17.71
Kerala	16.63	12.89	18.62	18.64	9.85	23.38
Tamil Nadu	24.64	21.52	12.85	15.25	6.37	19.37
Karnataka	34.76	14.52	9.03	15.42	7.16	19.11
Punjab	21.41	21.03	12.76	18.71	5.70	20.39
West Bengal	28.01	19.82	9.87	16.88	5.72	19.71
<b>#Advance states</b>	<b>31.00 (3.03)</b>	<b>17.22 (1.50)</b>	<b>10.37 (1.38)</b>	<b>15.63 (0.69)</b>	<b>6.58 (0.48)</b>	<b>19.19 (1.03)</b>
Rajasthan	37.12	15.07	12.93	14.27	4.36	16.25
Madhya Pradesh	48.83	8.96	10.53	11.94	3.54	16.19
Uttar Pradesh	41.27	13.26	11.55	16.15	4.05	13.71
Odisha	40.09	9.55	15.94	13.32	5.31	15.80
Bihar	35.86	10.76	13.66	17.92	4.78	17.02
Jharkhand	34.66	14.48	15.66	13.73	5.85	15.63
<b>#Weakening states</b>	<b>40.67 (2.10)</b>	<b>12.03 (1.06)</b>	<b>12.74 (0.88)</b>	<b>14.71 (0.88)</b>	<b>4.40 (0.34)</b>	<b>15.45 (0.46)</b>
India	34.96	15.10	11.34	15.26	5.69	17.66

Source: author's own calculation from PLFS data of 2018-19

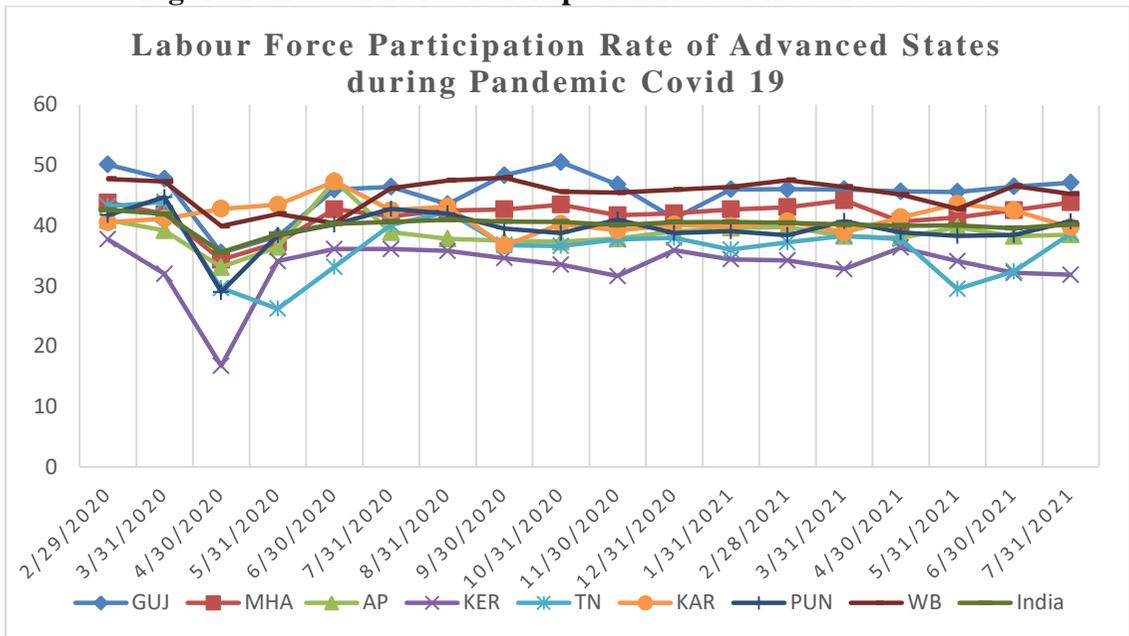
#Figure in parentheses is standard error industry, Punjab has provided highest share of employment in the Trade, Hotel and restaurants activities, Kerala has provided highest share of employment in both Transport, storage and communication activities as well as other services in the economy. Among the weakening states Jharkhand has provided lowest share of employment in the agriculture activities, Uttar Pradesh has provided lowest share of employment in other services and Madhya Pradesh is one of the states which provided lowest share of employment activities in the non-farm activities like mining and manufacturing industry, construction industry, Trade, Hotel and restaurants activities and Transport, storage and communication activities as compared to other states of the country. In addition to this, the state of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are providing larger

employment opportunities in the farm sector among the other states of the country. However, the impact of pandemic on the economy varies according to the infrastructure of the states, but when the Govt. has imposed restriction on the movement of people it extremely hurts the weakening states than the advanced states of the country. The economies of these states are quite dependent on the economy of the advanced states, actually they are the supplier of cheapest labour to advanced states which is affected due to prevailing pandemic. In addition to this, the restrictions on the movement of people have enhanced the burden of labour force on the farm sector of these states which ultimately has accelerated the unemployment rate of the states. Correspondingly, the prevailing pandemic not only increases the unemployment of the economy but also imposes lots of burden to the economy by increasing poverty and inequality of the masses.

### **Trend of employment before and after the outbreak of pandemic Covid 19:**

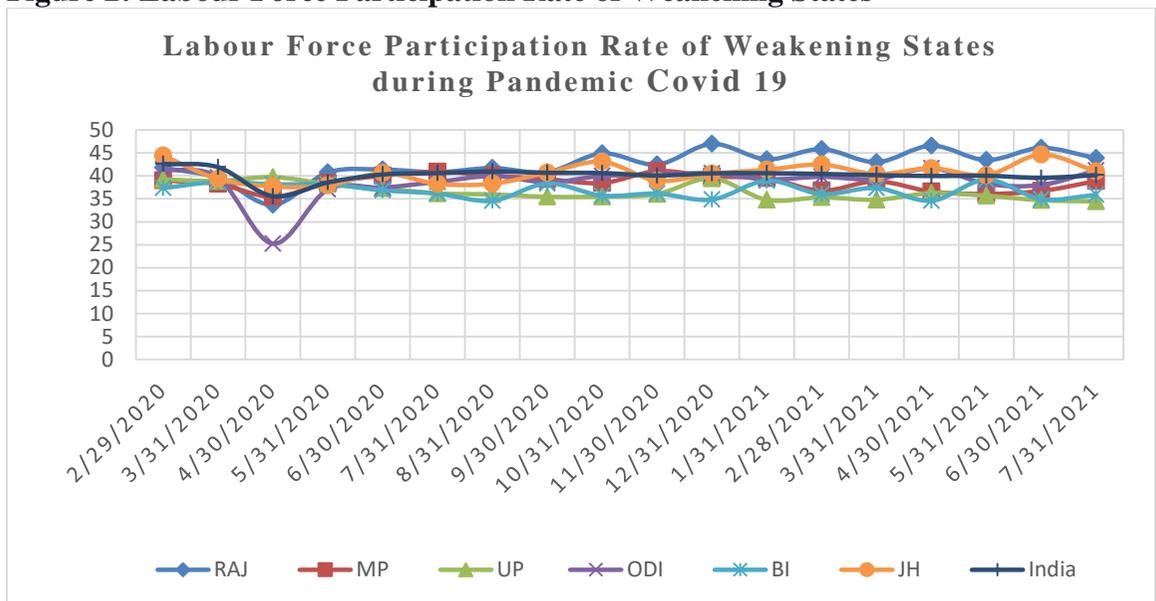
The issue of generating employment opportunities has got the bigger problem during the periods of pandemic. It is well established that more than 90 percent of labour force are engaged in the unorganized sector of the economy, among which most of them have suffered loss of jobs during pandemic. The pandemic covid 19 has affected almost all the industries of the country that ultimately resulted in the loss of productivity. The country has witnessed a sharp decline in the demand of consumer durable goods during periods of pandemic which has slowed down the investment, disrupted the workplace and distorted markets. Contrariwise the disruption of labour markets due to pandemic has made large job losses which ultimately enhances the unemployment and poverty of the country. There is no doubt that pandemic has made a great challenge to the policy makers and forced them to rethink on the developmental strategies of the nation. The Govt. of India has adopted different policies for accelerating the economy but the different waves of the pandemic have triggered concern to the nation. After one and half years of the outbreak of pandemic the country did not reach its previous path of development. The country's labour force participation rate has remained unstable during the time of pandemic, it had been reduced from 42.6 percent at the end of February, 2020 to 35.57 percent at the end of April, 2020 and reaching to 39.98 percent at the end of April, 2021 and at the end of July, 2021 it had reached to 40.17 percent (CMIE report of Unemployment 2021). Correspondingly the unemployment rate has shown similar type of fluctuation from the outbreak of pandemic, it has increased from 7.76 percent at the end of February, 2020 to 23.52 percent at the end of April, 2020 and at the end of July, 2021 it has reduced to 6.95 percent (CMIE report of Unemployment). However, the disruption created by the pandemic and its' impact on the different states' economy are likely to be extremely differential. The following figure 1 illustrates that all the advanced states of the ---

**Figure 1: Labour Force Participation Rate of Advanced States:**



Source: author’s own construction from CMIE data of Unemployment, 2021

**Figure 2: Labour Force Participation Rate of Weakening States**



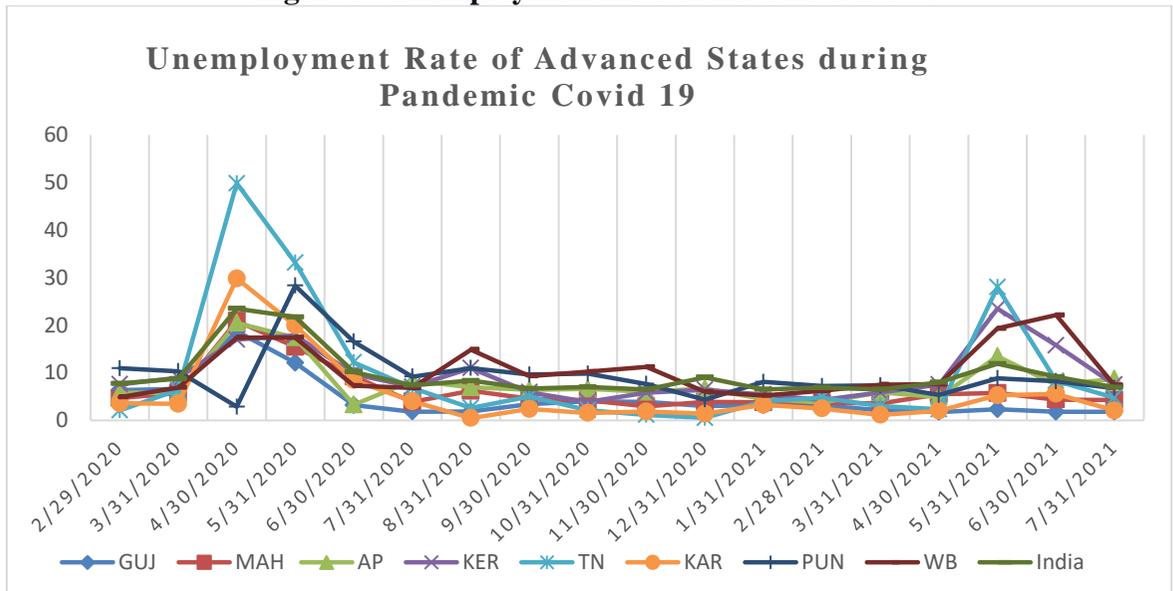
Source: author’s own construction from CMIE data of Unemployment, 2021

country have shown downward trend in the labour force participation rate during pandemic periods while Gujrat, Maharashtra and West Bengal have witnessed a moderate trend during same periods of time. Contrariwise Kerala, a promising state of the country, has witnessed a severe reduction in the labour force participation rate among the advanced states of the

country. Figure 2 illustrates that Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha have witnessed comparatively better situation among the weakening states of the country. However, the comparison between advanced and weakening states indicates that the advanced states have registered severe fluctuation in employment than the weakening states of the country. Actually, a large number of labours of the different parts of the country are worked in different industries of the advanced states which is awfully affected during the periods of pandemic. Mostly a certain percentage of these labours are migrant, they have no alternatives other than to return home during the outbreak of pandemic. For this reason, the country has witnessed a massive reverse migration from urban to rural area that ultimately enhance the disguised unemployment of the country. In this regard it is seen that the farm sector employment plays a crucial role in absorbing those labour who are being unemployed due to pandemic.

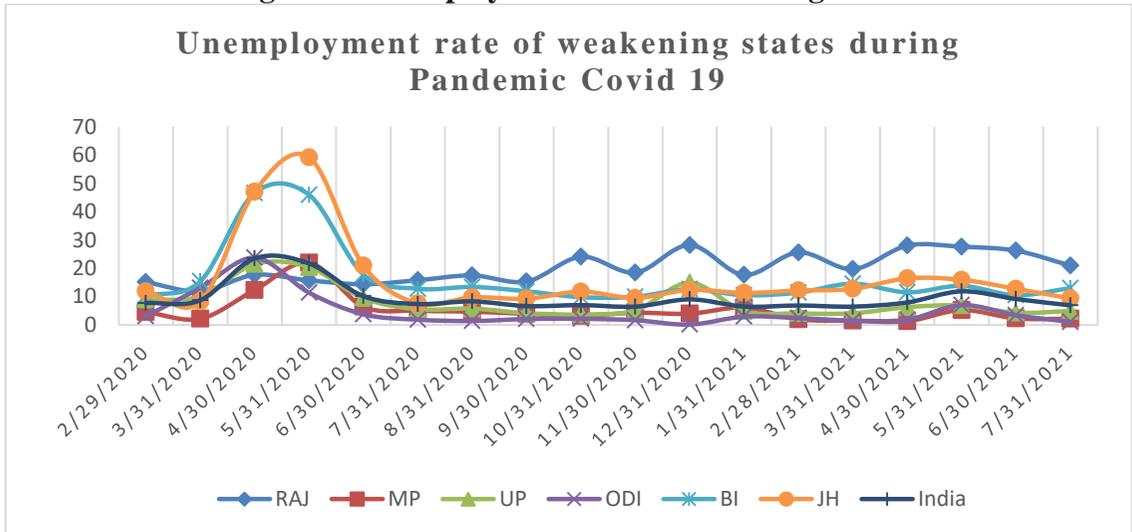
The figure 3 and 4 illustrates the unemployment rate of advanced and weakening states of the country respectively. Both the advanced and weakening states have registered higher unemployment rate during the different waves of pandemic. Correspondingly India has registered

**Figure 3: Unemployment Rate of Advanced States**



Source: author’s own construction from CMIE data of Unemployment, 2021

**Figure: 4 Unemployment rate of weakening states**



Source: author’s own construction from CMIE data of Unemployment, 2021

lowest unemployment at the end of July, 2021 since February, 2020. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal among the advanced states and Rajasthan, Bihar and Jharkhand among the weakening states have enumerated highest unemployment rate than the national average. However, all these states of the country are the major sufferer of the disruption of demand and supply chain issue, mostly all these states are the supplier of cheapest labour to the country which is affected during the periods of pandemic.

**Summary and conclusion:** This study has attempted to reveal the possible impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the employment in India. There is no doubt that pandemic has raised many eyebrows’ regarding the health system of the country; ultimately this has pushed the country to build different health care system for the people of the country. Alternatively, the pandemic of Covid 19 has accentuated severe threats to unemployment on the labour market of Indian economy which was not faced before. In India the agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, trade, hotel & restaurants have collectively provided 76.65 percent (PLFS 2018-19) of employment in the country. Though, the less educated, less skilled and most vulnerable sections of the country are worked in these sectors. Mostly they are engaged in the informal sector of the country in which job safety and security are almost nil. The work from home or work online is not only impossible to them but it is a top most joke in their life to work in such way. Hence the burden of pandemic has not only raised the unemployment or reduced the labour force participation in the labour market; it has also raised the poverty and inequality of the masses. In this regard the state wise trend of employment has shown that the weakening states still lag in providing employment which they provided before the outbreak of pandemic. It is expected that the advanced states are in a better position than the weakening states to overcome the damages of pandemic due to its’ high economic growth and higher per capita income.

Thus, to overcome from the threats of unemployment and underemployment due to pandemic, it is very urgent that govt. should create well comprehensive policies that promote employment. On the other hand, to prevent vast job losses the govt. should implement minimum basic security to all workers regarding income. Contrariwise, different employment policies of the govt. can play significant role by providing jobs to the job loser. Similarly, to increase the participation of labour in economic activities of the country, it is extremely important to raise demand of the commodities. The demand of the commodities increases only when the income of the people increases. In this circumstance direct income support to the vulnerable people of the country can help a lot to increase demand of the goods.

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