

---

## Socioeconomic Impact of Covid19 on Middle-Income Level Employee's Behaviour: An Explorative Study on Restaurants of Hyderabad, Sindh

---

Unaiza Altaf<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr Kamleshwer Lohana<sup>2</sup>, Dr Arifa Bano Talpur<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1\*,2,3</sup>Mehran University Institute of Science, Technology and Development, Mehran University of Engineering and technology. Jamshoro, Pakistan.

Corresponding Email: <sup>1\*</sup>[unaixa.altaf@yahoo.com](mailto:unaixa.altaf@yahoo.com)

**Received:** 29 June 2022

**Accepted:** 18 September 2022

**Published:** 13 October 2022

*Abstract: In early 2020 a disease named Coronavirus (COVID-19), has affected the pattern of living and working, and thus has impacted the industrial sectors and organizations worldwide has created changes in working patterns, and has affected employees. Different organizations have adopted new working ways like working from home and teleworking. The research is conducted to examine hurdles created by the global coronavirus pandemic on hotel employees' This paper reports the exploration and examines the fear of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on workers of restaurants about their families, career issues, behavioural changes, job insecurities, career optimism issues among working restaurant employees related to their mental health between those who are individuals employed in the prior time of covid 19 among the restaurant sectors in Hyderabad, Sindh. The findings have been gathered after analyzing qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews and observations from the respondents. The respondents were affiliated with the hospitality industry and mostly served as waiters in restaurants. The gathered responses revealed that Covid-19 lockdown measures in the city of Hyderabad disproportionately affected the employees of restaurants on many levels. Among financial constraints, health and social vulnerabilities impacted their day-to-day life. The further burden was loaded upon them by job insecurity, temporary unemployment, career switches, and work-life imbalances. The questionnaire developed to address the objectives of this research was mainly categorized into three themes. The three themes are career hurdles, economic challenges, and psychological and behavioral change. The following segment of the report will primarily represent and elaborate on the gathered responses in relation to the four themes.*

- *Job Insecurity,*
- *Temporary Unemployment,*
- *Career Switches,*
- *Work-Life Imbalances.*

**Keywords:** *The Hospitality Industry in the Pandemic, Employee's Behaviour, Job Insecurity, Career Optimism.*



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry has faced unpredictable challenges in time of Covid 19, Strategies have been emphasized to flatten and to follow restrictions many business were temporary closed and demand for many business declined. A lot of states has allowed restaurants to regulate their work by following SOPs, but even then hospitality industries has faced more challenges and had led many of employees jobless or insured about their career. Theses oppressive circumstances have fostered anxiety in employees about their work and have made them fearful for their employment future if we have a look on middle income level they have to face challenges to accept a bigger change in work market, As their income has already being declined and unemployment ratio has been increased, with high inflation in market, Though it is believed that this Global pandemic COVID 19 has impacted the health and economy of industrial side and employees and has left all in worst conditions but has created a bigger advantage to market who are keen to adapt new challenges thus has turned digital though it was a career change over for many mid-level employees but would have been a major issue to accept this challenge.

This study is about the behavioural changes in middle income level employees who faced challenges in the time of pandemic that has created uncertainty among employees and has affected them in many ways, especially restaurants employees has faced challenges in social, economic, health and career, in their lives, thus the aim of the study is to focus on the mid income level restaurants employees' behaviours of Hyderabad, Sindh. The main objectives are,

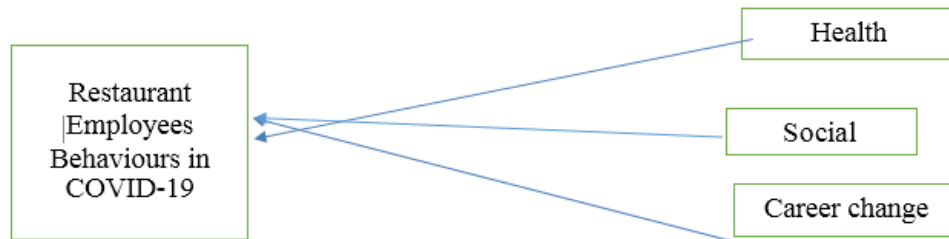
1. To understand the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and behaviour of middle income employees of hospitality firms.
2. To explore the challenges mid income level employer faced due to global pandemic in career change over
3. To predict coping strategies and future aspirants of the middle income employees of hospitality firms in response to pandemic.

## **RESEARCH ELOBRATION**

This research is based on qualitative data in which open ended questionnaire used via interviews, which composes of many questions designed or randomly asked according to the data being obtained, there observations, situations, ratings were asked according to key areas of research to understand mid income level restaurants employees' behaviours and the impact in pandemic on health, social and career change over.

The questioner was composed on 12 questions apart from demographic questions. In demographic their age, work experiences and marital status was asked. Sample size of 10 was used according to (Creswell, 1998), Non Probability, Purposive techniques was used to carry out the sample.

**FIG 2.1: KEY AREAS FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH.**



This study aims to explore the impact on the middle level restaurants employees’ mental health, social and career change over during the pandemic.

**2. RESULTS OR FINDINGS**

The findings have been gathered after analysing qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews from the respondents. The respondents were affiliated with hospitality industry and mostly served as waiters in the restaurants. The gathered responses revealed that Covid-19 lockdown measures in the city of Hyderabad disproportionately affected the employees of restaurants on many levels. Among financial constraints, health and social vulnerabilities impacted their day-to-day life. Further burden was loaded upon them by job insecurity, temporary unemployment, career switches and work life imbalances.

The researcher used the obtained responses as qualitative data and transformed them into meaningful findings using NVivo 12 software. Data was divided into nodes for open-ended responses and case classification for close-ended responses. Later, information was segregated and segmented into four themes. The six themes are covid-19 challenges, career challenges, financial constraints, behavioural change, career optimism and psychological health. The following segment of the report will primarily represent and elaborate the gathered responses in relation to the six themes. These themes were further categorized into sub-themes. Following table no 3.1 shows the themes and sub-themes (codes) used in the software for thematic analysis of qualitative data.

**TABLE#3.1: GENERATION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES USING NVIVO**

Themes	Sub-themes
Covid-19 Challenges	Workplace SOPs
Career Challenges	Career Switch Employer Support Work benefits Unemployment
Financial Constraints	
Psychological Health	Behavioural Change
Career Optimism	



### **3. QUALITATIVE RESULTS/MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Covid 19 Challenges**

The arrival of Covid-19 in Pakistan and subsequent imposition of preventive measures like lockdown, social distancing and other standard operating procedures (SOPs) led to closure of many service-sector businesses like hotels and restaurants. Tourism and hospitality industry suffered a lot during the pandemic period. Mid and lower income level employees were at the forefront of the deadly contagion virus.

In the area of research, lockdown measures have had an even more significant impact on restaurant workers. The situation was worse for the participants who were left unemployed and couldn't find a job in a job-scarce market. Companies and businesses were already laying-off employees to overcome losses faced because of government preventive measures imposed countrywide.

It was learned through a preliminary question that 60 per cent of participants reportedly felt their professional life being affected because of Covid-19

#### **3.2 Workplace SOPs**

While understanding about the grave situation of pandemic, employees were aware about the risks posed by the new virus if they catch it from their workplace. Their willingness to work can be no doubted associated with the need to earn bread and butter for themselves and their families. Even when the government made it mandatory for businesses to follow standard operating procedures while operating, their instructions went unheeded by some business owners. In this research, 20 per cent of participants pointed out that the staff were not offered any safety precautions. While being most exposed to the virus, the respondents also complained about owners paying no heed to nation's policy to contain the virus and repeatedly violated SOPs.

#### **3.3 Career Challenges**

##### **3.3.1 Career Switch**

Half of the participants were still employed by their pre-covid employers but forty per cent of respondents had to switch their career due to Covid-19. Majority of them opted for the career as security guards and daily wage earners. Moving into a new industry was however not really an easy task. Having no similar experience landed them in troubled waters and they wished to re-join the hospitality industry.

*"I switched my career but the lockdown measures were important to follow for the greater benefit of humanity."* Respondent 02

##### **3.3.2 Employer Support**

The job security of the employees was also at risk during the period as owners of the businesses did not offer significant support to them. As statistics show, 40 percent of respondents did not receive any kind of support.

Where some offered less salaries, one of the employers was generous enough to provide groceries every month.

*"I was fired from my job and then managed to work as a guard."* Respondent 03

Although, dine-in was suspended, small restaurants got a chance to go online and offer home delivery of the services. Resultantly, the waiters switched their job to delivery riders. But still, it couldn't improve the financial conditions of employees and they were unable to afford much.

### 3.3.3 Work Benefits

The participants who luckily managed to stay in employment with their pre-covid employers, had to face pay cuts and were offered less salary than they usually received. Among respondents 20 per cent reported pay cuts by their owners terming fewer working hours and low turnout of customers as the reason. Managing household expenses with few cash at hand and rising prices of essential commodities made the matters worse for them.

*"No, I was not fired from my job but was offered less pay. All employees had to face this for a few months".* Respondent 1

### 3.3.4 Unemployment

By even worsening the situation, 20 percent of respondents were fired from their jobs, a few of them were temporarily laid off and promotion of Respondent no. 2 was delayed.

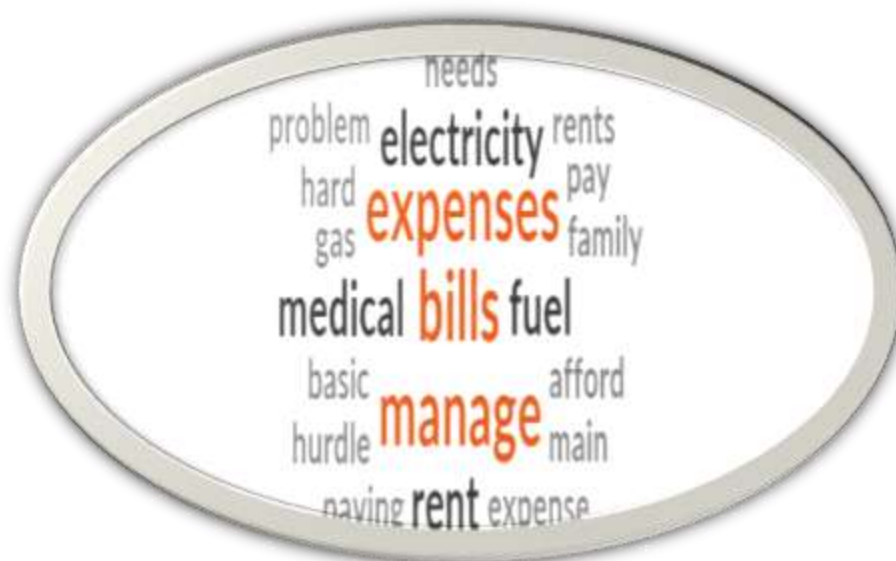
*"In the company where I used to work, my promotion was delayed and was asked to wait for six months to rejoin the job, so I started working as a waiter here."* -

Respondent no. 02

For the laid off employees, finding a new job seemed to be a herculean task keeping in view the grim economic profile and overall unemployment in the country. Prolonged business shutdown rose the fears of losses and bankruptcy while the owners were forced to take bitter decisions.

### 3.3.5 Financial Constraints

The word cloud shown in Fig 4.1 below shows the major terms expressed by the participants related to questions related to financial constraints and burdens faced by them due to Covid-19.



**FIGURE3.1:  
WORD CLOUD**

Paying house rents, electricity and utility bills along with medical expenses were cited as the most repeated financial constraints faced by respondents. Managing household expenses for a few months of unemployment and partial unemployment turned difficult. Meeting basic needs became unaffordable and hence the anxiety grew.

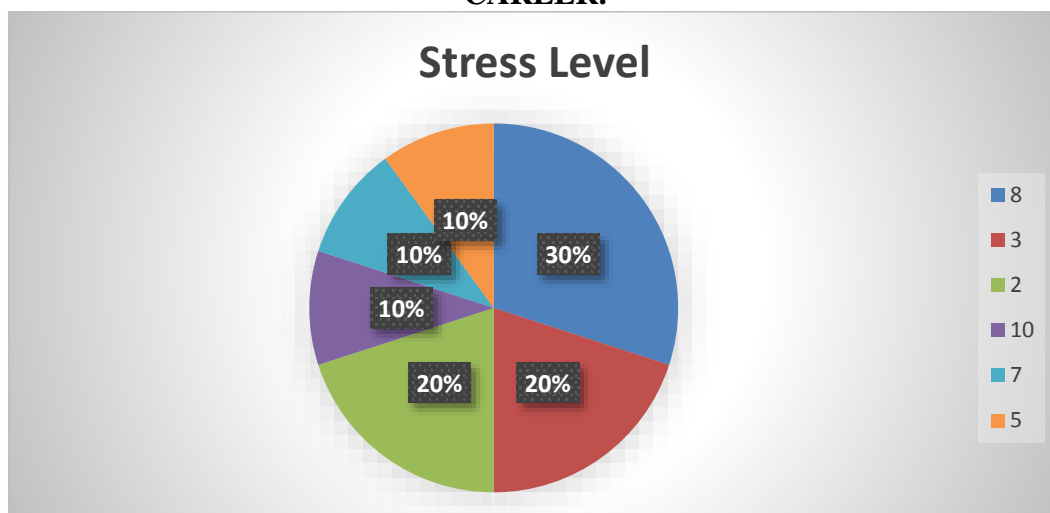
*“My son got infected and I was fired from my job, so it was very hard to manage medical expenses”*. Respondent 3

It should also be noted that 20 per cent of responses did not consider their personal lives getting affected by the pandemic and its preventive measures like economic lockdown. On the other hand, some employees had to cut off many expenses to meet the most basic ones. One respondent’s wife had to work as a maid to manage some household expense as his husband had no work and stayed at home.

### 3.3.6 Psychological Health

The pandemic induced unemployment, career switches and pay cuts has created a miserable impact on the mental health of restaurant employees. Sixty per cent of the participants rated their stress level related to health, social and career to be between 6 and 10 on a scale of 1-10. The scale represents 1-4 as Not Stressed while 5-10 as stressed. Fig 4.2 shows the percentage of ratings on a pie chart.

**FIG 3.2: MENTAL STRESS LEVEL RELATED TO HEALTH, SOCIAL AND CAREER.**



### 3.3.7 Behavioural Change

Regarding behaviour with family amid several crisis during the pandemic, eighty percent of participants had a good behaviour with family and were of the opinion that the career hurdles and financial constraints should not interfere with core family values. The frequency of the word ‘Normal’ was highest as a weighted percentage among others in questions related to it.

*“It was normal as they already suffer a lot due to less household income”*. Respondent 5

*“I was happy as I got more family time”*. Respondent 9

However, twenty per cent of respondents admitted that their behaviour turned more aggressive.



*"I was so panicked, angry, and cranky sometimes with my family."* Respondent 3

### 3.3.8 Career Optimism

The targeted sample of low-income employees despite facing several career setbacks, remained optimistic regarding future career endeavours. The alternative mechanisms adopted by restaurants like take-away and home delivery services can prevent laying off of employees and offer some kind of job relief. The increase in trend of online working and its further growth can improve the work standards, make work schedules flexible and firms can get more profitable.

The lessons learnt from Covid-19 would enable firms to stay vigilant and be more prepared for future similar disasters. With the consumers growing more health conscious, restaurants are obliged to ensure food safety precautions and ensure quality of food to retain existing customers and expand their business.

Respondent No. 4 pointed out the benefits for customers as due to online system, they could simply call and order any item they required. It saves them their time and fuel expenses. Respondent No. 3 however was pessimistic regarding remote working/better future. According to him,

*"I don't think that any improvement could happen as humanity has almost died and we don't want our society to be better in the future and that's why the ratio of crime and begging is more than the ratio of working environment."*

But to survive in the technology era, lower- and middle-class employees emphasize on trainings to better cope up with changing working environment and changing customer needs. As indicated by one of the participants, *"We cannot easily adopt the digital market unless we are provided trainings to reach this level"*.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This study is conducted to explore the impact of Covid-19 on career mainly of middle income level employees and how workers are coping up in this stressful conditions, with reference to their mental health, Social and Career. The stress is mainly associated with financial crises on account of being socially inactive and moulding their career turn, and being insecure about jobs it helps to understand hospitality firm's employee's mindset especially mid-level restaurants of Hyderabad, since small café and restaurants are where very low or mid class level joins to earn for the sake of family, and are being neglected or laid off without notice, they live in the fear of job insecurities, the purpose of this research is to highlight the behavioural, career and social impacts on employees and to help individual to groom society by being productive about health and social concerns to avoid mishaps and being able to accept challenges of life.

Since, it is behaviour-based research on employees of middle income who work hard to earn for family and are disturbed mentally, financially and even in career phase due to pandemic this contribution will help society to create awareness about sense of security, health, social and career switch over on an employees who has been laid off or had to work on low income then before, no doubt a lot of work has been done in terms of pandemic and risk behaviour's since ages but still there is a room left in every corner so the main focus is in the region of Hyderabad Sindh. The findings have been gathered after analysing qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews and observations from the respondents. The respondents were



affiliated with hospitality industry and mostly served as waiters in the restaurants. The gathered responses revealed that Covid-19 lockdown measures in the city of Hyderabad disproportionately affected the employees of restaurants on many levels. Among financial constraints, health and social vulnerabilities impacted their day-to-day life. Further burden was loaded upon them by job insecurity, temporary unemployment, career switches and work life imbalances.

## **5. REFERENCES**

1. Raifman, J., Bor, J., & Venkataramani, A. (2021). Association between receipt of unemployment insurance and food insecurity among people who lost employment during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. *JAMA network open*, 4(1), e2035884-e2035884.
2. Ruffolo, M., Price, D., Schoultz, M., Leung, J., Bonsaksen, T., Thygesen, H., & Geirdal, A. Ø. (2021). Employment uncertainty and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic initial social distancing implementation: A cross-national study. *Global Social Welfare*, 8(2), 141-150.
3. Kim, S., Kim, P. B., & Lee, G. (2021). Predicting hospitality employees' safety performance behaviors in the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 93, 102797.
4. Chen, C. L., & Chen, M. H. (2021). Hospitality Industry Employees' Intention to Stay in Their Job after the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(4), 144.
5. Irawanto, D. W., Novianti, K. R., & Roz, K. (2021). Work from home: Measuring satisfaction between work–life balance and work stress during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Economies*, 9(3), 96.
6. Goldfarb, Y., Gal, E., & Golan, O. (2022). Implications of employment changes caused by COVID-19 on mental health and work-related psychological need satisfaction of autistic employees: A mixed-methods longitudinal study. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 52(1), 89-102.
7. Ahmad, B., & Bilal, S. (2022). Does fear of COVID-19 undermine career optimism? A time-lagged quantitative inquiry of non-managerial employees. *Kybernetes*.
8. Bartik, A. W., Bertrand, M., Cullen, Z. B., Glaeser, E. L., Luca, M., & Stanton, C. T. (2020). How are small businesses adjusting to COVID-19? Early evidence from a survey (No. w26989). National Bureau of Economic Research.
9. Bufquin, D., Park, J. Y., Back, R. M., de Souza Meira, J. V., & Hight, S. K. Employee work status, mental health, substance use, and career turnover intentions: An examination of restaurant employees during COVID-19. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 93, 102764.
10. Datta, A., & Deb, S. (2021). Group work over a digital platform: Understanding middle-class struggle in pandemic. *Social Work with Groups*, 44(1), 34-38.
11. Jung, H. S., Jung, Y. S., & Yoon, H. H. (2021). COVID-19: The effects of job insecurity on the job engagement and turnover intent of deluxe hotel employees and the moderating role of generational characteristics. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 92, 102703.
12. Madeira, A., Palrão, T., & Mendes, A. S. (2021). The Impact of Pandemic Crisis on the Restaurant Business. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 40.





13. ManaAli, S., Khalid, N., Javed, H. M. U., & Islam, D. M. (2021). Consumer Adoption of Online Food Delivery Ordering (OFDO) Services in Pakistan: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 7(1), 10.gement, 93, 102766.
14. Nadeem, M., & Khaliq, N. (2021). A study of community knowledge, attitudes, practices, and health in Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of community psychology*.
15. Raude, J. (2020). Determinants of preventive behaviors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in France: comparing the sociocultural, psychosocial and social cognitive explanations.
16. Tan, W., Hao, F., McIntyre, R. S., Jiang, L., Jiang, X., Zhang, L., Zhao, X., Zou, Y., Hu, Y., Luo, X., Zhang, Z., Lai, A., Ho, R., Tran, B., Ho, C., & Tam, W. (2020). Is returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic stressful? A study on immediate mental health status and psychoneuroimmunity prevention measures of Chinese workforce. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 87(April), 84–92.
17. Yu, J., Park, J., & Hyun, S. S. (2021). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' work stress, well-being, mental health, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee-customer identification. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 1-20.