
An Analysis of the Uneven Impacts of COVID-19 on Women-Owned Small Businesses in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has created varying degrees of social and economic consequences across different social groups in Sri Lanka. The government of Sri Lanka took several steps to reduce the spread of the virus by imposing travel restrictions and strict health guidelines. However, the threat of the virus continues to affect the economic activities of certain vulnerable groups in the country. In the face of this life-threatening pandemic, women-owned small businesses have experienced varying effects. This research examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women-owned small businesses. The objectives of the study are to find out which factors cause uneven impacts to these women-owned small businesses during the third phase of the pandemic and to find out solutions to revive the businesses of the most vulnerable women business owners. This study is based on qualitative data, collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews from a target sample of 15 women who run their own business within the Kandy municipal area. Findings of the study include the factors which cause uneven impacts, such as, the level of human capital of the target group, use and access to digital technology in the business, marital status and the socio-economic background of the women business owners. With the identification of these factors, the study also highlights the need for effective policies to revive and support women-owned small businesses by providing them with the knowledge to manage businesses at times of crisis, and also by providing them effective financial assistance.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Gender, Human-Capital, Uneven Impacts, Women-owned small businesses*

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