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Impact of COVID-19 on Professions and Livelihoods of People in Kathmandu District, Nepal

Indra Mali Malakar
indraamali1982@gmail.com
Tribhuvan University

Ramesh Kumar Lama
Tribhuvan University

Bhaba Datta Sapkota
Assistant Professor
Tribhuvan University

Abstract

The working class, referred to as the proletariat in Marxist terminology, comprises all individuals who receive compensation through wage or salary-based employment contracts. This study examined the economic impact of COVID-19 in Kathmandu district among different professions of working class, or proletariat. Using a pragmatic approach with both deductive and inductive methods, the study focused on three purposively selected municipalities in Kathmandu: Kirtipur, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, and Gokarneshwor. Respondents included private school teachers, daily wage workers, small business owners, farmers, and transportation laborers. A cluster-stratified sampling design was used, with a sample of 324 determined by Cochran's formula. The study employed a descriptive research design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and key informant interviews (KII). The mean monthly income dropped from Rs.18,176.85 before the pandemic to Rs.9,518.52 during the pandemic. The lower coefficient of variation after the pandemic (31.1%) indicated a significant income effect. Financial problems were reported by 77.8% of private school teachers and a significant portion of other professions. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 104.864$, $p = 0.000$) highlighted significant livelihood problems across professions. Recommendations included cash distribution (48.1%), food support in scarce areas (28.7%), and improved access to medicine (21.3%). The study draws on Keynesian theory, noting government interventions to restore employment but reveals dissatisfaction with these efforts among local victims of the pandemic. It suggests further policy development to support agricultural productivity, create emergency funds for the working class, and explore post-COVID recovery strategies.

Key words: *employment, livelihood, pandemic & working class*

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Introduction

The working class, or proletariat, refers to those who earn wages but do not own the means of production (Oxford Dictionary, 2014; Lebowitz, 2016). In Marxist terms, they generate wealth through labor but lack control over resources like land or factories. Defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, working-class people often earn low wages and perform physical labor. COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was first identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019 (Zhu et al., 2020). The World Health Organization declared it a global health emergency in January 2020. Nepal's first COVID-19 case was confirmed on January 25, 2020, in a student returning from Wuhan (Gahatraj, 2020). The pandemic has severely impacted Nepal's economy, reducing expected growth from 8.5% to 2.27% (CBS, 2019 & 2020).

The lockdowns at country and sub-national levels, as well as the restrictions on the movement of people had led to the closure of non-essential businesses with negative outcomes on labour markets worldwide, particularly in the informal sector (FAO, 2020). Primary, secondary and tertiary sector's service, employment and production had largely been affected by the lockdowns, which led, among other things, to a reduction in the number of hours worked and to job losses. The lockdowns and restrictive mobility impacted people's physical, mental, social, and spiritual health and posed a threat to vulnerable population (Adhikari et al., 2021).

Sectors like tourism, hospitality, and aviation have been particularly affected, with the cancellation of Nepal's "Visit Nepal 2020" campaign and a decline in tourist arrivals from 70% to under 10% (Khanal, 2020). Mountaineering cancellations led to the loss of around 13,000 jobs (The Kathmandu Post, 2019). Manufacturing industries have struggled due to a lack of raw materials from China, and the fall in remittances has significantly hurt consumption. The wholesale and retail sectors, contributing 14.37% to Nepal's economy, were also suffering. Inflation risks loom as Nepal may have to import more costly goods from other countries (World Bank, 2020a). People remain uncertain about the virus and its long-term economic impact (Karn, 2021). In response, the Government of Nepal enforced a nationwide lockdown and activated mechanisms at federal, provincial, and local levels to manage the crisis. Strengthening the health system, standardizing quarantine facilities, and providing immediate relief to the most affected are urgent priorities. Additionally, addressing socio-economic impacts and preparing for long-term recovery was essential (Raising Nepal Daily, 2020).

Nepal's economy heavily relies on remittances (25% of GDP), tourism (8% of GDP), agriculture (26% of GDP), and essential imports. This dependency renders poor households and unskilled workers, particularly returnee migrants, vulnerable to income losses. Many lack access to social safety nets, making them susceptible to the abrupt economic slowdown (UNDP, 2020).

The pandemic poses significant economic burdens, particularly for informal workers, small business owners, private sector employees, farmers, and daily wage laborers. In urban areas, the livelihoods of self-employed individuals and daily wage workers are at risk due to disruptions in agricultural supply chains, schooling, transportation, and wage labor. Without alternative livelihood strategies, the working class may continue to work under unsafe conditions, exposing themselves and their families to health risks (FAO, 2020). Whether wage workers or self-employed, were most at risk of losing their jobs and incomes. By definition, they do not have secure employment contracts, and therefore usually do not enjoy workers' benefits, social protection or workers' representation. In developing countries, over 90 percent of agricultural workers are informal (ILO, 2018, cited from FAO, 2020). The revenue collection of Nepal was reduced by 7.45% during the first wave of pandemics, and the country experienced a trade imbalance (Joshi et al., 2021). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate has been reduced by 0.2 percent in 2019/20, which was 7 percent in the previous year (Magar et al., 2021). Further the closer of the service sector excavated 31.5 percent of the total workers to lose their jobs (UNDP, 2020). It has been reported that of Nepal reported that the COVID-19 has pushed 31.2 percent of the total population to poverty (Rasul et al., 2021). Nepal drafted food governance related policy, the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act in 2018 which is related to SDGs1 and SDGs2. However, this Act did not foresee COVID-19 or similar crises scenario in the future. The pandemic has disrupted in lower availability of food (Joshi et al., 2021).

In the COVID years 2019/20 and 2020/21, the gross domestic saving and gross national saving were decreased as compared with the previous year's 2018/19, 2017/19 and so on. Similarly, in the COVID period, the demand of food increased and production of manufactured goods and in some extent, agricultural goods declined. Black marketing, unethical practice, shortage of goods, and deregulation also hit to raise price level in the economy. (Dangal, 2022). Although economic activities have partially resumed in various countries, productive capacities remain underutilized. Another notable consequence is the disproportionate impact on young workers. Approximately one-fifth of the total job losses following the COVID-19 lockdowns were among young people aged 18-29.

The most affected households as identified by the provinces in number have been presented below:

Table: 1

Most Affected Households and Relief Package During Lockdown

Province	**No. of Affected HHs**	**HHs with First Relief**
Province 1	327,736	90% (294,962)
Province 2	568,574	80% (454,959)
Bagmati	369,500	85% (314,075)

Gandaki	111,4675	95% (105,901)
Province 5	183,969	90% (165,572)
Karnali	93,096	70% (65,167)
Sudurpaschim	127,348	90% (114,6130
Total	**17,81,698**	**85% (15,15,249)**

Source: Calculation from GoN & WFP, Food Security & Vulnerability Update 3, May 6; 2020.

Table 1 reveals that almost all the provinces were affected by the pandemic. Gandaki province being more affected than other provinces. Karnali and Bagmati province getting less HHs with First Relief. The statistics may not have covered all 753 local bodies, but it's estimated that nearly 1.8 million households were most affected by the lockdown, out of a total of approximately 5.4 million households in Nepal. To alleviate the situation, relief packages were distributed, typically including rice, pulses, oil, salt, potatoes, sugar, and soap-cake, sufficient for 10 to 20 days depending on the locality. Local bodies and various social groups also organized direct meal distributions for returning workers and their families. Therefore, this study based on Keynesian Employment Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on economic aspect of people. Keynesian theory links unemployment to low demand, which can be addressed by government intervention to boost demand and restore jobs, as seen during COVID-19's impact on education and informal sectors (Keynes, 1936; Pokhrel, 2021). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach highlights resilience through five key assets—human, physical, social, financial, and natural.

Thus, how they manage their livelihoods strategies during pandemic? What are the difficulties felt by them? What efforts should be made to maintain agricultural supply chains and strengthen the market linkages for local producers, while promoting decent work? These are the principal issues of this study.

Method and Materials

Pragmatism views knowledge acquisition as a continuum, blending intersubjectivity, and adopts mixed methods for a flexible research design (Goles & Hirschheim, 2000; Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2007; Pansiri, 2005). This study, employed abductive reasoning to assess the economic impact of COVID-19 on professions and livelihoods of people in Kathmandu district, Nepal. Profession has been defined as working class people in this study. As a tools for data gathering, this study employed schedule questionnaire, KII, and FGD. According to National population and Household Census, 2021, Kathmandu district of Nepal is most densely populated (population density of 5,169 per sq. km) settlement zone with a history of significant migration. Therefore, this study site was chosen. The study area is divided into 11 municipalities, from which three clusters (Kirtipur Municipality, Kathmandu Metropolitan, and Gokarneshwor

municipality) have been purposively taken as a study area due to greater number of working-class settlements. The unit of analysis of this study were private school teachers, small business owners, daily wage workers, farmers, and transport workers. Therefore, this study employed cluster-stratified sampling design. As the universe is ill defined, the sample size was calculated at a 95% confidence interval using Cochran's formula: $n = (z^2pq) / e^2 = (1.96^2 \times 0.3 \times 0.7) / 0.05^2 = 323$. For equal distribution across the cluster, the final sample size was adjusted to 324, with 108 respondents from each cluster again seven different strata (private school teachers, farmers, daily wage workers, small business (formal and informal) owners, and transportation workers (driver and assistant drivers)) sample was taken 15*7*3= 315 which has been adjusted to 324 for equal allocation in the cluster and strata. From each stratum around 46 sampled were taken using simple random sampling. Quantitative data has been analyzed using SPSS with descriptive, analytical, and inferential methods and qualitative data has been transcribe and analyzed into narrative way. The pilot survey was conducted to check the validity of the tools. To ensure reliability of this study, the respondents were asked two times the same question to check the consistency of the responses. This study equally maintains the ethical considerations respecting respondents 'culture, profession, language, religion, caste as well as taking verbal consent while collecting information to complete the research study.

Results

Professional Status of the Respondents

Social status and livelihoods of the people are determined by their professions. Nature of professions may not be same to all people. It is determined by multiple factors such as skill, education, tradition, age, family background, and market demand. This has been briefly presented in Table (2)

Table: 2

Distribution of Respondents by Different Professional Status

Professions	**No**	**Percent**
Private School Teachers	45	13.9
Drivers	46	14.2
Assistant Drivers	46	14.2
Farmers	48	14.8
Small Shop Business Men	46	14.2
Street Shop Business Men	47	14.5
Daily Wage Workers	46	14.2
Total	**324**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 2 reveals that of the total respondents (324), mostly the equal allocation of respondent's professions have been taken which is in average equal to 14 percent.

Profession Wise Problems Faced by Respondents in Livelihoods

Livelihood is a way to survive. It is a means by which people acquire wealth, assets and income to sustain their lives. Different people acquire different professions contextually and their problems may vary under different situation. The pandemic brough multiple impacts including all professions from local to global scale. The respondents were asked about the intensity of problems on their professions and livelihoods which is presented in Table (3).

Table: 3

Distribution of Respondents by the Problems Faced During COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impacts on Livelihoods

	Problems faced in the livelihood during the COVID pandemic					Total
Professions	**It wasn't easy even for one time to fulfill hand-to-mouth**	**There was the problem of the money**	**There was a problem with the health treatment**	**It was difficult to pay school fees**	**No problem or difficulty in livelihood**	
Private teacher	0 (0.0)	35 (77.8)	10 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	45 (100.0)
Driver	2 (4.3)	31 (67.4)	7 (15.2)	6 (13.0)	0 (0.0)	46 (100.0)
Co-driver	7 (15.2)	39 (84.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	46 (100.0)
Farmer	0 (0.0)	44 (91.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.2)	2 (4.2)	48 (100.0)
Small shop business	0 (0.0)	22 (47.8)	18 (39.1)	6 (13.0)	0 (0.0)	46 (100.0)
Street shop business	4 (8.5)	37 (78.7)	2 (4.3)	4 (8.5)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
Daily wage workers	10 (21.7)	26 (56.5)	5 (10.9)	5 (10.9)	0 (0.0)	46 (100.0)
Total	**23 (7.1)**	**234 (72.2)**	**42 (13.0)**	**23 (7.1)**	**2 (0.6)**	**324 (100.0)**

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	104.864	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	114.828	24	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.002	1	.965

N of Valid Cases	324

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Of the total private school teachers, the majority of them (77.8%) reported “There was problem of money”, this was also stated highest among the respondents of “Drivers” (67.4%), “Co-driver” (84.8%), “Farmer” (91.7%), “Small shop business” (47.8%), “Street shop business” (78.7%) and “Daily wage workers” (56.5%). The chi-square value is 104.864 and its p-value is 0.000 concluded that there is significance difference between the problems faced in the livelihood during the COVID pandemic and among the professions.

Impact of COVID-19 on Income of the Respondents Before and During Pandemic

Earning is essential part of economic aspect. But it doesn't matter how much a person earns. Though it is not the end of development but it does essential function for the means. The important thing is how much he saves. Not only that if people are aware about the pandemic and ways to strengthening economic and can solve livelihood problems, they can manage their life easily in any kind of pandemic. The respondents were asked about their monthly income before and during COVID-19 pandemic. The comparative analysis of income is shown in Table (4).

Table: 4

Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Income Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic

Monthly Income Status Before pandemic	**No.**	**Percent**	**Monthly Income Status During Pandemic**	**No.**	**Percent**	**Difference**
Rs.5000-Rs.10000	35	10.8	Rs5000-Rs10000	152	46.9	
Rs10000-Rs20000	181	55.9	Rs10000-Rs20000	163	50.3	
Rs20000-Rs30000	84	25.9	Rs20000-Rs30000	9	2.8	
Rs30000 above	24	7.4	Rs30000 above	0	0.0	
Total	**324**	**100.0**	**Total**	**324**	**100.0**	
Mean	18176.9		Mean	9518.5		8658.3
Median	18000.0		Median	10000.0		8000.0
Std. Deviation	6634.3		Std. Deviation	2956.0		-
Variance	44013920.7		Variance	8738046.0		-
Skewness	.533		Skewness	.398		-
Std. Error of Skewness	.135		Std. Error of Skewness	.135		-
Minimum	6000.0		Minimum	5000.0		1000.0
Maximum	35000.0		Maximum	20000.0		15000.0
C.V	36.5%		C.V	31.1%		5.4%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Out of the total respondents, the monthly income before COVID-19 pandemic was 'Rs10000-Rs20000" (55.9%) sharing the highest proportion followed by 'Rs20000-Rs30000" (25.9%), "Rs5000-Rs10000" (10.8%) &"Rs30000 above" (7.4%) respectively whereas the monthly income during COVID-19 pandemic was "Rs10000-Rs20000" (50.3%) sharing the highest proportion followed by "Rs5000-Rs10000" (46.9%), "Rs20000-Rs30000" (2.85) &"Rs 30000 above" with nil percent respectively. The mean monthly income was Rs 18176.85 and Rs 9518.52 before and during COVID-19 pandemic. There was difference of Rs8658.3 in monthly income between before and during the pandemic. Similarly, the median for monthly income before and during was Rs18000 & Rs10000 respectively and the difference was Rs8000. Furthermore, the minimum and maximum monthly income before and after pandemic were "Rs6000 & Rs35000" and "Rs5000 & 15000" respectively. The difference of Rs1000 and Rs15000 were seen in the minimum and maximum monthly income before and after pandemic. The Coefficient of Variation (C.V) before and after pandemic was 36.5 percent and 31.1 percent respectively before and after pandemic. The less C.V (31.1%) during pandemic than C.V (36.5%) before pandemic reflects the less regularity/variability in the monthly income after pandemic and reveals the effect of COVID-19 on income during pandemic (Table 4).

Effect of COVID-19 on the Different Professions

The respondents were asked to give their opinion on the effect of COVID-19 in different professions. The variation of effect on different professions is presented in Table (5)

Table: 5

Effect of COVID-19 on Different Professions

Professions	**No.**	**Percent**	**Position**
Private schools' teachers	21	6.5	5th
Foot path seller	70	21.6	3rd
Small commercial Businessmen	12	3.7	6th
Farmers	49	15.1	4th
Daily wage workers	74	22.8	2nd
Drivers or co drivers	98	30.2	1st
Total	**324**	**100.0**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Of the total respondents, more of them reported that "Drivers or co drivers" (30.2%) were more affected by COVID pandemic occupying the first position followed by "Daily wage workers" (22.8%), "Footpath seller" (21.6%), "Farmers" (15.1%), "Private School Teachers" (6.5%) and "Small commercial Businessman" (3.7%) respectively.

The FGD conducted among the profession including Drivers*, revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted drivers' livelihoods. One of the respondents shared that he lost his job and was unable to cover family expenses, pay loans, or afford medical treatment. Despite government promises, no assistance came. Another driver described*

enduring extreme hardship, surviving on one meal a day, and begging for help from friends and relatives. He eventually took labor jobs to feed his children, and the pain of that period still lingers.

***Private school teachers in the FGD** reported that the pandemic severely impacted the education sector. They worked long hours for low pay, and when schools closed, they lost their jobs and salaries. Although the school offered half salaries for a while, it wasn't enough to sustain their families, especially with rising living costs in Kathmandu. One of the teachers, the sole provider for four people, expressed frustration over the lack of financial support and delayed payments when online classes began. This experience made them reconsider private sector jobs, realizing the importance of self-reliance and having alternative income sources, such as starting a business.*

Livelihood Strategies Adapted by the Respondents During Pandemic

The respondents were asked about livelihood strategies adapted during the pandemic when they had no work or job, or no business or no selling, no sale of production. The result is presented in Table (6).

Table: 6

Livelihood Strategies Adapted by Respondents During the Pandemic

Livelihood Strategies	No	Percent
Borrowing money from others or relatives or friends	152	46.9
Using the saved money from salary	157	48.5
Taking help from NGO/INGO or institution or organization	7	2.2
Reduction in the food consumption	8	2.5
Total	324	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 reveals that greater number of respondents reported "Using the saved money from salary" (48.5%) occupying the highest position followed by "Borrowing money from others or relatives or friends"(46.9%), "Reduction in the food consumption" (2.5%) and "Taking help from NGOs/INGO or institution or organization" (2.2%) respectively as livelihood strategy.

Government Role to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic

Different key persons were asked with regard to government role while addressing the pandemic situation. For this purpose, 5 key informant interviews were conducted, they opined different arguments on government role to mitigate the intensity of pandemic.

***The deputy mayor of Kirtipur Municipality** highlighted the challenges and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. When the virus spread to Nepal, the government implemented a nationwide lockdown, restricting movement and launching awareness campaigns. Relief efforts targeted economically vulnerable workers, with data collected at the ward level to identify those in need. Quarantine facilities and Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) were established, though many were advised to self-isolate due to overwhelming numbers. As*

the crisis deepened, issues like food scarcity and stigma against COVID-19 sufferers grew. Health workers and law enforcement enforced safety measures, while oxygen plants were procured to address shortages, saving lives at Kirtipur Hospital and Tribhuvan University's Ayurvedic Hospital. Community support and vaccination drives across multiple centers, including Balkumari Panga and Champadevi, played a crucial role. The coordination between local, provincial, and federal governments helped manage resources effectively. Relief efforts initially fell short, and relief packages were distributed based on employment status, with a focus on unorganized workers. These individuals were enlisted for tasks like road cleaning, receiving daily wages. However, the distribution process faced challenges, prompting suggestions for worker identification cards to streamline future aid. The pandemic revealed the need for emergency budgets and the importance of financial literacy. Cultural practices like "Namaste" were emphasized to promote resilience. Moving forward, worker identification cards and strengthened social welfare programs would be key in improving preparedness for future crises.

A social worker from Kirtipur Municipality's Ward No. 7 *reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic, several initiatives were implemented, including the distribution of medicines, virus-killing sprays, and relief packages containing essentials like rice, lentils, and soap. Priority was given to students, renters, and daily wage laborers. Free vaccines were offered, though some locals were reluctant to get vaccinated, and COVID-19 patients faced social stigma, often being barred from shops. Limited ambulance access and individuals hiding their COVID-19 status to claim insurance payouts increased tensions. The economic strain led to a rise in theft and misuse of relief packages, with some using them for gambling instead of necessities. Additionally, even wealthier individuals took advantage of free food distributions.*

To better prepare for future pandemics, the social worker emphasized the importance of proactive planning, timely budget allocation, financial literacy, and public awareness campaigns. Ensuring access to free healthcare, education, and offering tax exemptions to institutions that create jobs were suggested as ways to promote economic stability and recovery.

Opinions of Respondents on behalf of Government Role and Responsibilities During the Pandemic

The respondents were asked to give their opinions with respect to government role and responsibilities while addressing the pandemic. The opinions given by respondents are presented in Table (7).

Table: 7

Respondents' Opinions on behalf of Government Role and Responsibilities During Pandemic

Opinions	**No**	**Percent**

Distributing the food in scarce area	93	28.7
Identifying the middle class and distribute cash	83	25.6
Flow information about saving, storing and using properly the consuming food	34	10.5
Make available the cash to people	156	48.1
Inform to people about disease by government	53	16.4
Make available easily the vaccine by government	53	16.4
Make available and accessible the medicines	69	21.3
Establish the food bank in different places	48	14.8
Make accessible or easily available the medicines or health equipment in hospitals or clinics or health posts	2	0.6
Total	324	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.
*Percentage may exceed 100 due to multiple responses.

Table 7 reveals that of the total respondents, more respondents opined that government should "Make available the cash to people" (48.1%), "Distributing the food in the scarce area" (28.7%), "Identifying the middle class and distribute cash" (25.6%), "Make available and accessible the medicines" (21.3%), 'Inform to people about disease by government' (16.4%), "Make available easily the vaccine by government" (16.4%), "Establish the food bank in different places" 914.8%) and "Make accessible or easily available the medicines or health equipment in hospitals or clinics or health posts" (0.6%) respectively, were the steps on strategy for livelihood by government during pandemic.

Discussion

The pandemic has severely affected nearly all sectors of Nepal's economy. A study by Ganesh Man Singh Academy estimated daily losses of NRs 10 billion (US$11.58 million) due to the lockdown. The National Planning Commission predicted over six million people faced unemployment, while the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated 3.7 million Nepalese experiencing employment challenges. This study also found that majority of the working-class people in the study area had problem of money during the COVID pandemic and there was problem of livelihood among the different professions which was evidence by chi-square test showing the significance relationship

between problems faced in livelihood during COVID pandemic and among different professions.

Between 1.6 and 2.0 million jobs were likely to be disrupted in Nepal in the current crisis, either with complete job loss or reduced working hours and wages. The present scenarios indicated that students in Nepal were affected differently by the pandemic. For instance, a few schools and colleges in urban areas had started to run online classes to mitigate the impact on learning. However, running online classes did not seem to be feasible for most rural schools in Nepal. It is estimated that only 56% people in Nepal had access to internet. According to Pandit (2020), only 13 % schools might be able to run online classes (though 35% schools have access to internet). This study also found that the pandemic had also severely impacted the education sector. Private schools' teachers had worked long hours for low pay, and when schools closed, they lost their jobs and salaries. Though the school offered them half salaries for a while, it wasn't enough to sustain their families, especially with rising living costs in Kathmandu they were frustrated over the lack of financial support and delayed payments when online classes began. This made them rethink about private sector jobs, realizing the importance of self-reliance and having alternative income sources, such as starting a business.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted food access, especially for low-income families, daily wage earners, and the unemployed due to reduced financial capacity and limited food stocks (Adhikari et al., 2021). Demand for fresh produce and animal products declined in cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Chitwan (Joshi et al., 2021), similar to other developing economies (Workie et al., 2021). This crisis underscored the urgent need for safety nets for vulnerable groups, as nearly 90% of migrant workers in informal sectors lost their jobs, resulting in a 14% decline in remittances in 2019/20 (World Bank, 2020c). Rising food prices further strained disadvantaged households, exacerbated by border closures and transportation restrictions, particularly in the Terai region (Subedi, 2020). Food utilization suffered from contamination and spoilage due to poor safety practices and limited availability (Adhikari et al., 2021). Approximately 3.7 million workers in Nepal faced risks, with an estimated 1.6 to 2 million jobs disrupted. This disruption included complete job losses, reduced hours, underemployment, and decreased wages, affecting 1.3 million men (30% of the male workforce) and 631,000 women (24% of the female workforce) as of 2018 (Source: ILO Briefing Note, 2020). This study also found that income of respondents was halved during the pandemic evidenced by the average income before and after pandemic as mean income before and during pandemic were Rs18176.9 and Rs.9518.5 respectively.

Conclusion

Private school teachers overwhelmingly reported financial struggles during the pandemic, with other professions such as farmers, co-drivers, street vendors, and drivers also facing

significant challenges. The chi-square value (104.864, p-value 0.000) indicated significant differences in livelihood challenges across professions during the pandemic. This analysis showed a clear difference in the impact on livelihoods across various professions during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, most respondents had stable monthly earnings, but during COVID-19, incomes significantly declined, highlighting the severe financial strain caused by the crisis. Drivers, daily wage workers, street vendors, and farmers were among the most affected, with many facing job loss, delayed payments, and difficulty in meeting basic living expenses. FGDs revealed that both drivers and private school teachers struggled to make ends meet, often relying on borrowed money or personal savings to survive during this challenging period. The Kirtipur Municipality responded to COVID-19 with relief efforts, including food distribution, medical support, and vaccinations. Despite challenges in identifying workers for aid distribution, the pandemic underscored the need for improved emergency budgets, worker ID cards, financial literacy, and stronger social welfare programs. A social worker emphasized proactive planning, public awareness, and free healthcare access to better prepare for future crises. Thus, it is recommended that the several government measures during the pandemic should include providing direct cash support, ensuring food supplies in areas facing shortages, and improving access to medicine and healthcare resources.

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Competing interests

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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