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The Impact of the COVID – 19 Pandemic on Job Security in Trinidad and Tobago

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TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT – THE IMPACT OF THE COVID – 19 PANDEMIC ON JOB SECURITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

COURSE CODE – HUMN 3099

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ABSTRACT

The COVID – 19 pandemic has had a negative impact on many aspects of life. It has caused many deaths and limited physical interaction between people. Governments of multiple countries implemented different solutions to combat and reduce the number of cases and deaths. One of these implementations include the shutdown of many industries in Trinidad and Tobago since March of 2020. The shutting down of these industries meant that many workers were sent home temporarily, and some were unfortunately sent home permanently. Many people are not sure if they will have a steady income in their household due to the implications caused by the pandemic. This study seeks to examine the level of job security, the effect of the COVID – 19 pandemic on job security in Trinidad and Tobago and implications that may be taken to help.

Keywords: COVID – 19, pandemic, job security, unemployment

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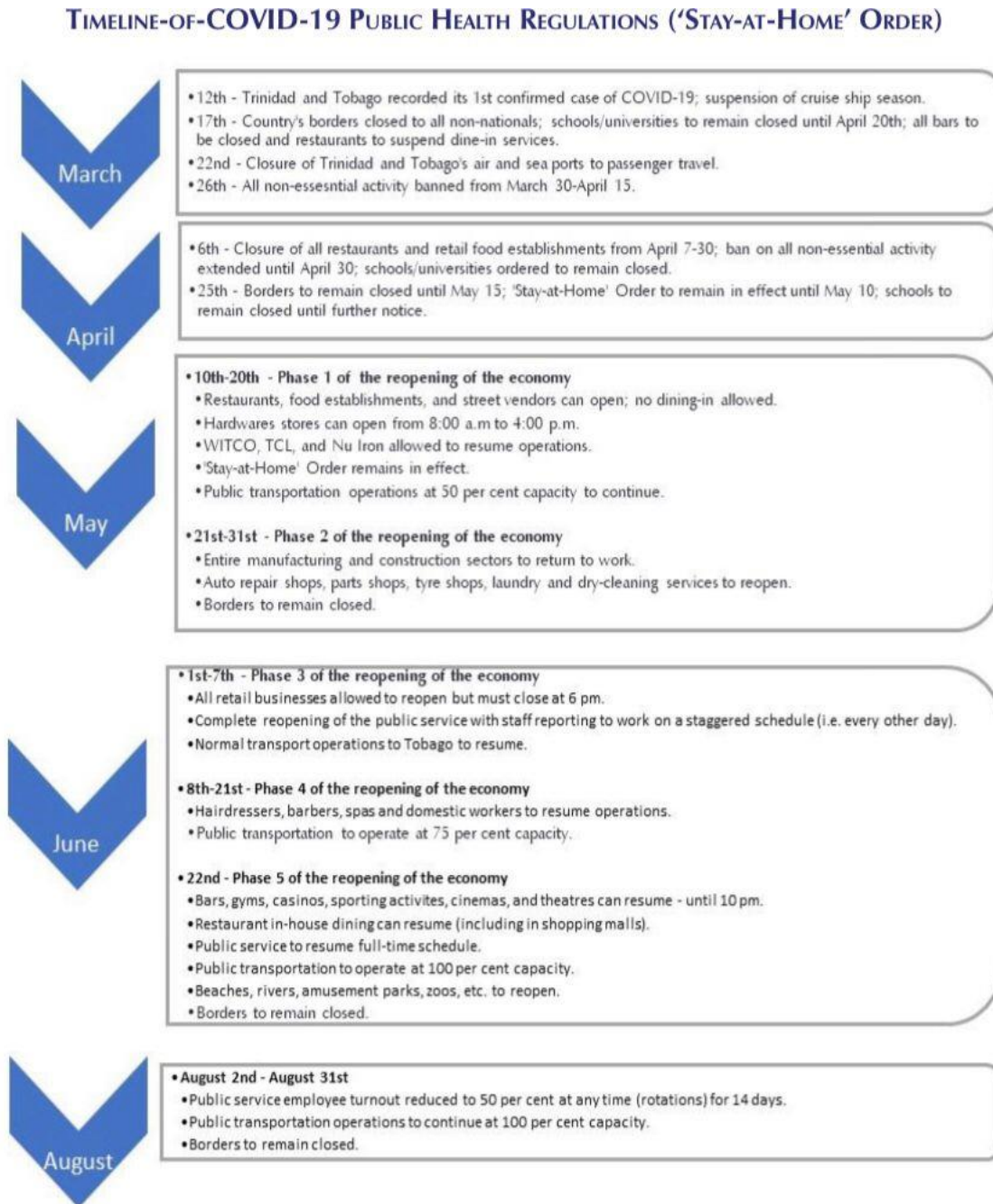


Figure 1. Image showing the Timeline of the Effects of COVID – 19 in Trinidad and Tobago in 2020 from March – August (Source: Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago)

Date and Quarter	Unemployment Rate (%)
<i>Quarter 1 (March 2019)</i>	<u>4.0</u>
<i>Quarter 2 (June 2019)</i>	<u>4.4</u>
<i>Quarter 3 (September 2019)</i>	<u>4.1</u>
<i>Quarter 4 (December 2019)</i>	<u>4.5</u>
Quarter 1 (March 2020)	4.2
Quarter 2 (June 2020)	5.1
Quarter 3 (September 2020)	6.1
Quarter 4 (December 2020)	7.2

Figure 2. Table showing the Unemployment Rate for 2019 and 2020 in Trinidad and Tobago (Source: *Labour Force Quarterly: Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago*)

Labour Force 2019 - 2020

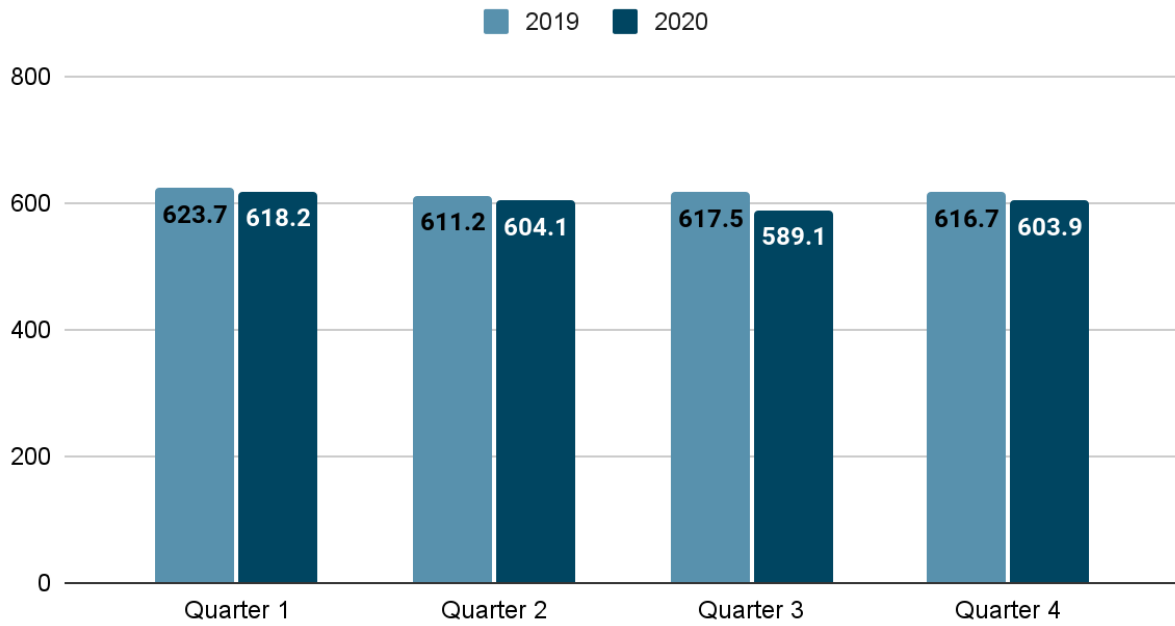


Fig. 3 Chart showing the Labour Force of Trinidad and Tobago for the Years 2019 and 2020 (Source: *Labour Force Quarterly: Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago*)

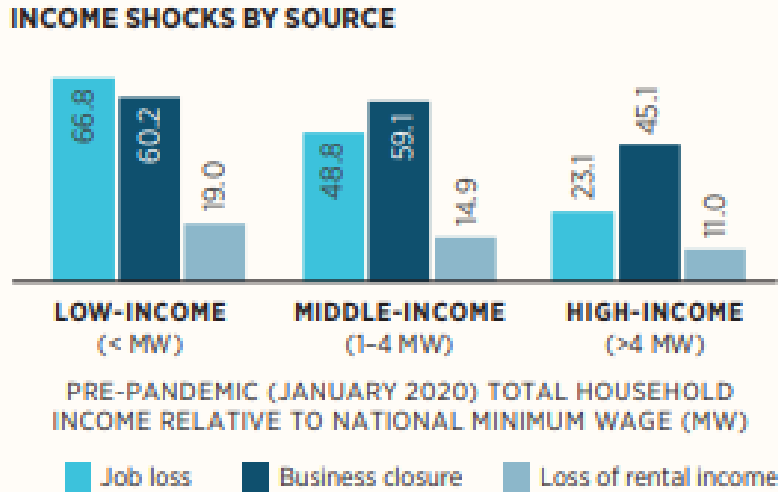


Figure 4: Image showing the Loss of Income and the Sources of the Losses in Trinidad and Tobago (Source: Inter – American Development Bank)

INTRODUCTION

On the 30th of March 2020, the Trinidad and Tobago government established new measures to limit the spread of COVID – 19 after some cases were present in the country. The measure was called the “Stay at Home” order. The government shut down all non – essential businesses. Citizens were asked to stay at home unless they were an essential worker such as a doctor or nurse or making a necessary trip such as going to the supermarket. The public transportation system operated at 50% capacity and the beaches were closed. When the second and third wave came there were tighter restrictions such as closing of all businesses except groceries, health centres and financial institutions for limited hours in a day. This affected and continues to affect prominent industries in Trinidad and Tobago like the tourism, entertainment, and food industries. The lockdown had a significant impact on owners of bars, restaurants, gyms etc. because they needed people to physically be in their businesses. It caused them to have to close and left their workers without a job and source of income. In May of 2020, When the measures started to loosen, these businesses were allowed to open again. However, they were only allowed to operate at a certain capacity, meaning that some workers worked less hours, and some lost their jobs. In Trinidad and Tobago, it can be argued that there is a low job security in the country due to the implications caused by the COVID – 19 pandemic. Low job security is bad for an employee because it can cause them to be stressed or anxious at the thought of losing their jobs and affects their financial wellbeing,

Rationale

The findings of this study will enhance the documentation and fill a void in scholarship on the topic. There is no research done on job security in Trinidad and Tobago during the COVID – 19 pandemic. These findings will fill that void and encourage other researchers to add to the topic.

Parameters

This study analyses the labour force of Trinidad and Tobago between the months of January 2020 to December 2021 which is the first year in the pandemic. It will also only examine socio-economic themes and factors.

Objectives

This work is intended to examine the impact of the COVID – 19 pandemic on the general perception of job security and will assess the consequences of job security such as its effects on financial wellbeing. The results it will produce will fill gaps in the missing literature.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Inter – American Development Bank. Various newspapers articles and studies done in Trinidad and Tobago as well as outside of the country about the effects of COVID – 19 were also used to help with this analysis. These statistics that were gathered were used to account for the full labour market in Trinidad and Tobago of people over the age of 18. Employment during the pandemic and before the pandemic were compared. This is a socio – economic study which is guided by qualitative data.

Chapter Outline

In chapter one, there will be a review of literature on the topic. In chapter two, there will be a thorough outline of the timeline of the COVID – 19 pandemic in Trinidad and Tobago and all the implementations that the Government made. Chapter three will analyse the level of job security of Trinidad and Tobago. Chapter four will analyse the effect of job security on workers and business owners and chapter five will provide implementations the government and businesses can take to combat job insecurity.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the late months of the year 2019, an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown origin was reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This pneumonia would go on to be called the coronavirus disease (COVID – 19) or the medical term, SARS-CoV-2. “The global spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the thousands of deaths caused by coronavirus disease (COVID – 19) led the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic on 12 March 2020.” (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang, Wang & Bernardini, 2020). The pandemic changed life as we know it around the world. Due to the highly contagiousness of the disease and its deadly effects, countries had to implement various measures to reduce the number of cases. Some of these measures included lockdowns, mandatory wearing of a face mask and closed borders. “COVID – 19 has caused an unprecedented crisis to all industries around the world.” (Chang, McAleer, Ramos, 2020). Industries such as tourism, entertainment, food, construction “are suffering a sharp drop in demand”. These industries are being closed or forced to work through less hours, lower capacity of consumers and less workers. This has caused many people to wonder about the security of their jobs. Pacheco, Coulombe, Khalil, Meunier, Doucerain, Auger, & Cox (2020) carried out a study in Canada on ‘Job security and workers’ wellbeing amidst the COVID – 19 pandemic which revealed “workers who have temporarily lost their employment due to COVID – 19 perceived significantly lower levels of job security.”

Job security refers to “employee’s expectations about the stability and longevity of their job in an organization” (Lu et al., 2017, p. 30) Low job security means that the stability of a job in an organization is not safe or they are experiencing job insecurity. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) defined job insecurity as a “perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a

threatened job situation”. There are many reasons why people may experience low job security. Firstly “changes in an organization caused by quantitative job insecurity, such as layoffs, downsizing, and mergers, affect certain groups within the organization” and secondly “certain threats or stressors can be interpreted similarly or collectively by employees of different work units” (Mauno, De Cuyper, Tolvanen, Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, 2014) With the introduction of the pandemic, there has been a rise in cases of low job security. A study carried out by Sun Jung, Sik Jung and Hyun Yoon (2021) on the effects of job insecurity on hotel employees in South Korea during the pandemic and it showed that there was a decrease in job security.

There is also a big drop in the employment numbers globally. The World Bank carried out a survey in 2021 which was implemented this year in 24 countries of the Caribbean region with the goal being to measure the impacts of the pandemic in key areas such as the labour market, income and food security, gender equality, and household access to basic services. It showed that employment rates in most Caribbean and Latin American countries have decreased. The quality of available jobs has also declined, as has the number of hours of paid work per week. “The survey data found that 28 percent of people employed before the pandemic lost their jobs, and more than half (17 percent) of those with a job before the pandemic have left the labour force” (World Bank, 2021). “Many people who found themselves without a job were unable to swiftly re-enter the workforce, or withdrew entirely, impeded by mobility restrictions which prevented them from seeking employment.” (United Nations, 2020) This is one of the highlights of a joint virtual press conference led by Alicia Bárcena, the ECLAC Executive Secretary, and Vinícius Pinheiro, the Regional Director of the International Labour Organization. According to ilo.org “The *2020 Labour Overview* registers a strong increase in the unemployment rate that rose to 2.5 percentage points compared to the previous year, going from 8.1 per cent to 10.6 per cent. This means that the

number of job seekers who cannot find work increased by 5.4 million and reached 30.1 million. that some 23 million people were temporarily removed from the workforce and have lost their jobs and their income. As the economies recover, their return to the labour markets will create additional pressure on unemployment indicators for next year."

Besides the risk of unemployment, the literature also shows that there a link between financial wellbeing and job insecurity. Choi, Heo, Cho and Lee (2020) carried out a study on the links between job insecurity, financial well-being and financial stress where they came to the conclusion that "job insecurity was negatively correlated with financial well-being"

This review of literature is based on the impact of the COVID – 19 pandemic on job security. The review has showed that the pandemic has caused a decrease in job security of employees and workers. It also shows that job insecurity has affected the financial wellbeing of many persons in the labour force. However, this study has viewed many countries around the world including Caribbean countries but not specifically Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, there is limited information on the effects of low job security or job insecurity within the Caribbean and more specifically, Trinidad and Tobago.

CHAPTER TWO

TIMELINE OF COVID – 19 IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

In order to analyze the impact of the COVID – 19 Pandemic on job security in Trinidad and Tobago we must first highlight the full details of the measurements taken by the Government to fight against the virus. In highlighting all the lockdowns, quarantines and closures of businesses we will be able to later correlate these dates with the effects in job security. Trinidad and Tobago recorded their first case of the COVID – 19 disease on the 12th of March 2020. In the following days the total number of cases increased to a total of 4, causing the Government to implement public health measures. From the 16th March to the 18th of March, Keith Rowley, the Honorable Prime Minister on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, declared that the country will close the borders to everyone, except travelling healthcare workers and nationals of Trinidad and Tobago for the next two weeks, or 14 days. In addition to this, schools, tertiary institutions, bars, restaurants, cinemas etc. were closed. On 21st March, the Minister of National Security, Stuart Young, announced that the country’s borders would be closed to everyone. This included nationals and non-nationals. On the 26th of March, the Prime Minister announced the stay-at-home order which resulted in the lockdown of all non-essential services effective from 30th March to 15th April. The essential services the Government mentioned were “the Judiciary, Parliament, Primary emergency and protective services, hospitals, water, electricity, fire, civil aviation, funeral homes, public work facilities, prisons, Immigration detention centers, take away and delivery food services, caretakers, media and many others.” (Rodriguez, 2020)

On April 3rd, the National Security Minister Stuart Young announced in a press conference that the stay-at-home order would be extended until the 30th April. This meant that all bars, clubs,

restaurants, religious gatherings and much more would not be able to operate. On April 25th, the Honorable Keith Rowley announced that the order would further be extended to May 15th.

On May 9th, he showed plans to lift COVID – 19 restrictions on a six-phase basis with phase one starting on May 10. He then revealed in a press conference on May 16th that the second phase would be moved up from May 24th to May 21st. On the 30th of May he unveiled that phase three of the reopening of the country would commence on the 1st of June. It would last exactly 1 week, ending on June 7th. On the 6th of June, he announced that hairdressers, spas, barbers, domestic workers and other workers would be able to operate again from the 8th of June. He also allowed public transportation operations to rise to 75 percent capacity. On the 12th June, all places of worship would be open. On June 22nd, all public service workers would return to work on a fulltime basis. In addition to this, beaches and rivers will reopen as well as bars, casinos, gyms, cinemas and in-house dining in restaurants. All sports and physical activities will resume with limited spectators.

Due to a significant increase in COVID – 19 cases, on August 17th restrictions were put in place again. All in-house dining stopped. Gatherings of more than 5 people outside a house were prohibited while weddings, funerals and other ceremonies were limited to 10 people. Cinemas, water parks, beaches, rivers, places of worship, casinos and gyms were all closed once again. Sporting activities ceased again while public transportation had to reduce its operation capacity once more to 50 percent. Schools would remain entirely online and traveling from Trinidad to Tobago was only available to essential workers.

TIMELINE-OF-COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS ('STAY-AT-HOME' ORDER)

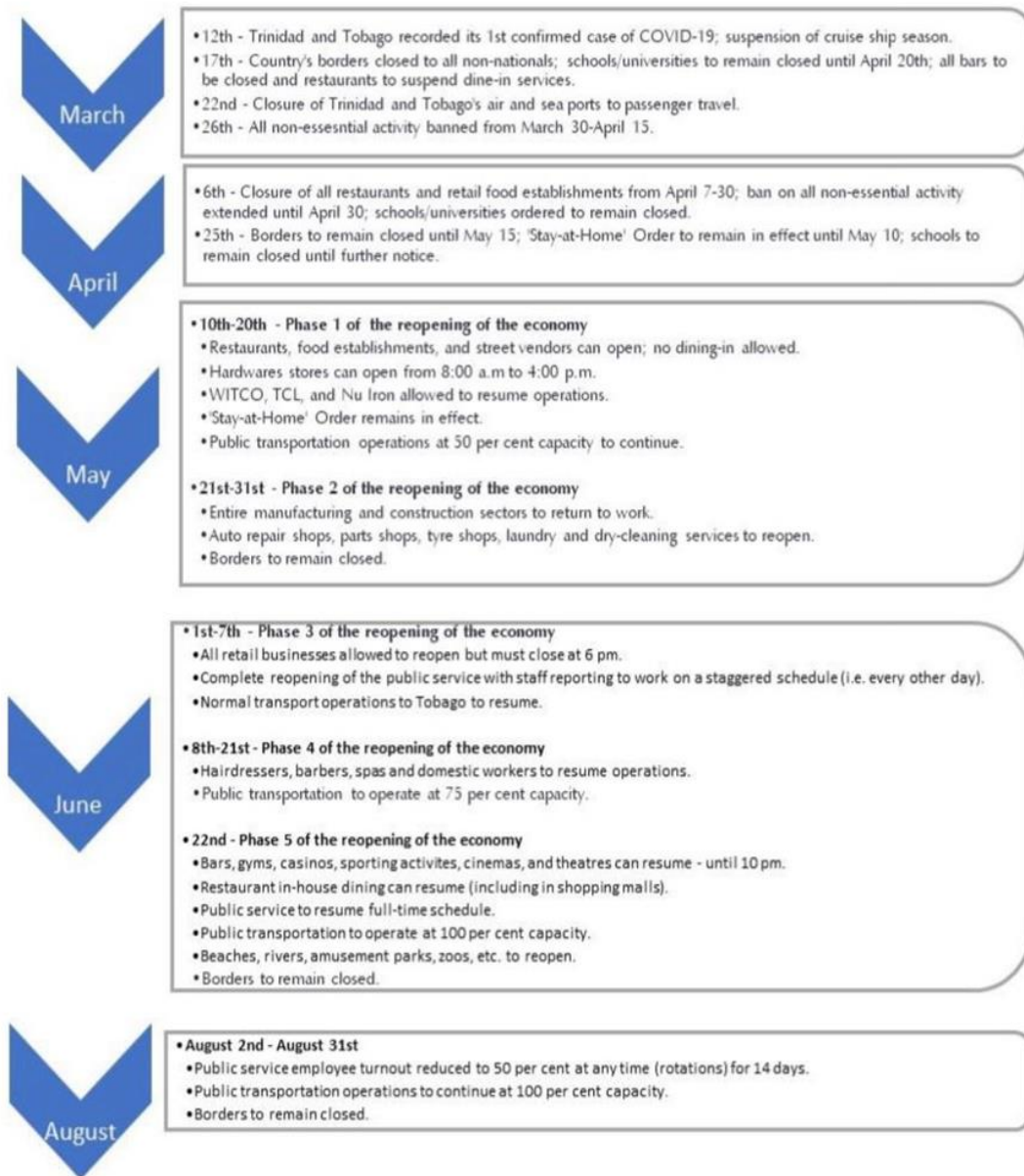


Figure 1 provides a complete picture of these main months of the pandemic from the months March to August. These COVID – 19 protocols stayed in place until the 24th - 26th of October where the protocols started to loosen. Gyms were allowed to reopen to 50 percent capacity, public servants were allowed to work again at full capacity and beaches were allowed to reopen. On November 9th the Prime Minister allowed in-house dining to resume at 50 percent

capacity with groups of no more than persons, cinemas were allowed to operate at 50 percent with the sale and consumption of food and beverages and Caribbean Airlines were allowed to increase flights between Trinidad and Tobago. These restrictions would remain in place until the end of 2020.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LEVEL OF JOB SECURITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This chapter will compare the unemployment rates in Trinidad and Tobago in the end of the year 2019 and in the year 2020 in order to attempt to measure the level of general job security in Trinidad and Tobago. It will also assess the information that the Chambers of Industry and Commerce has reported with respect to unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago and its effects. Sverke (2006) say that “there are researchers who base their definitions of job insecurity on the level of unemployment in society, which means that a rise in unemployment can be interpreted as a rise in general job insecurity. Although job security and insecurity are commonly seen from a personal point of view it can be seen from an external, public point of view.” “Job insecurity can be experienced either at a personal level or external level, such as in those situations where the researcher defines the population under investigation as being uncertain of how their future employment will progress” (Ferrie, 2001).

Date and Quarter	Unemployment Rate (%)
<i>Quarter 1 (March 2019)</i>	<u>4.0</u>
<i>Quarter 2 (June 2019)</i>	<u>4.4</u>
<i>Quarter 3 (September 2019)</i>	<u>4.1</u>
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Quarter 1 (March 2020)	4.2
Quarter 2 (June 2020)	5.1
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Figure 2 shows that data collected from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago about characteristics of the Trinidad and Tobago Labor Force indicates that the unemployment rate at the end of 2019 was 4.5 percent compared to the end of 2020 which was 7.2 percent. This was a 2.7 increase. This number is incredibly alarming seeing that figure 2 also shows that the overall change in unemployment from the first quarter of 2019 to the last quarter of 2019 did not even exceed .5 percent. This is a tremendous drop in the unemployment rate for the overall year. In the year itself, Figure 3 shows that at the end of first quarter of 2020 the labour force entailed of 618.2 thousand people, while at the end of the second quarter it reduced to 604.1 thousand persons. That means that in three months 14.1 thousand people moved from employment to unemployment. These numbers are mostly influenced by the COVID – 19 pandemic which had a major impact at the end of the first quarter of 2020. At the end of March 2020, the “Stay at Home” order along with the closing of all non - essential businesses happened. This measurement carried out by the Government resulted in a significant rise in unemployment. Figure 2 shows that the unemployment rate from March to June in 2020 went from 4.2 percent to 5.9 percent. The closure of non-essential businesses and services included the temporary unemployment of various places like gyms, cinemas, schools and bars. Businesses and employees would be without a job for two months or more during the second quarter as the restrictions only started to loosen in June.

The third quarter recorded another massive difference in unemployment as well as the labour force. Figure 2 shows that the unemployment rate went from 5.1 percent in quarter 2 to 6.1 percent in quarter three. This is a whole 1 percent increase in the unemployment rate. On the other hand, figure 3 shows that 604.1 thousand people were a part of the labour force in quarter 2 and 589.1 thousand people were a part of it in quarter 3. This means that another 15 thousand people

lost their jobs in this period. The reason for this next surge in unemployment is again due to the measurements that were taken to combat the pandemic. On August 17th another full lockdown was implemented in order to stop the second wave of the virus, meaning that more people were relieved of their jobs. Employees spent roughly a month and a half in this quarter at home with no job and nothing they could do about it. In a bi-annual Economic Bulletin released by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (2021), they say that “consequently, during the third quarter of 2020, there was an upsurge in retrenchments reported to the Ministry of Labour. However, during the final quarter of 2020, labour market conditions possibly improved as some of the COVID-19 related restrictions were lifted”.

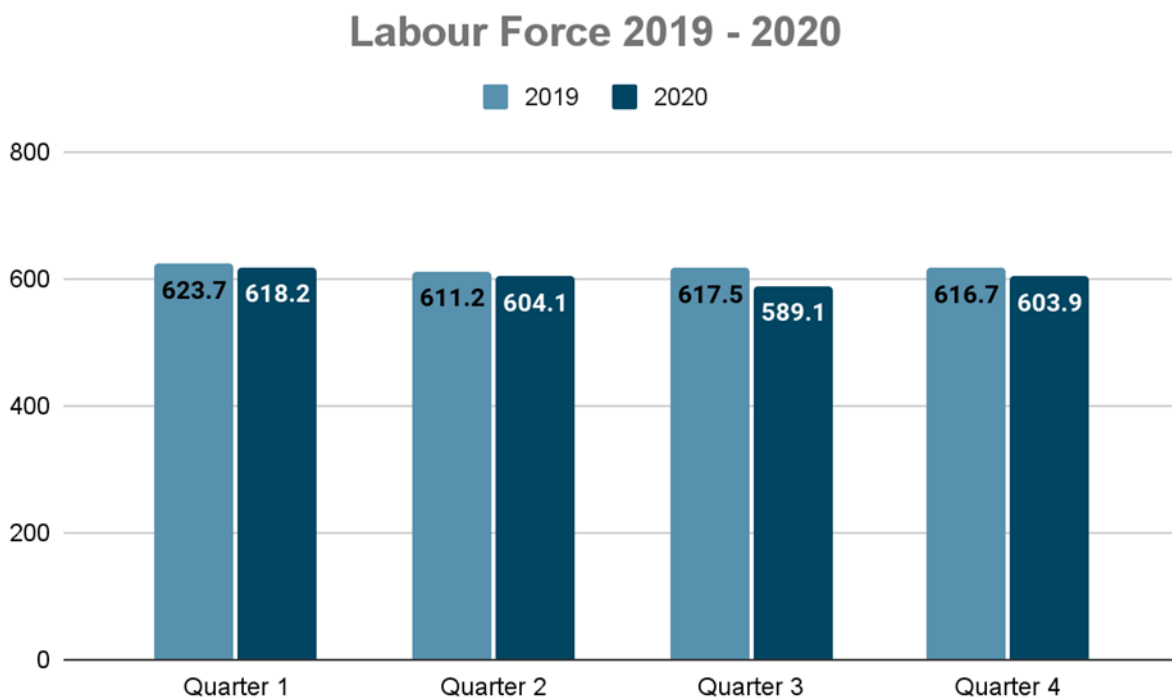


Figure 3 shows that in quarter 4, we see the first rise for the year in the labour force. The number rose from 589.1 thousand in quarter 3 to 603.9 thousand in quarter 4. Though it was not a significant increase it still showed a gradual sign of redemption for the labour market. This number

is believed to have increased because in this quarter, compared to the last two quarters, had 2 entire months, being November and December, that were not in lockdown. Businesses and the government were able to gradually allow more people to go back to work as well as offer more jobs. However, even though there was a rise in the number of persons with jobs, figure 2 shows that this last quarter had the biggest increase in unemployment rate from 6.1 percent to 7.2 percent. To put a number to these percentages, data from the Central Bank shows that the 6.1 percent were 36 thousand unemployed persons while the 7.2 percent were 43.5 thousand persons. The rise in the unemployment rate and the rise in persons with jobs may be explained through the way the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago obtains its statistics. “The Bank uses additional indicators such as retrenchment notices and print media advertisements to monitor overall labour market conditions” (Central Bank, 2021) The unemployment rate has increased because there are now more job seekers in the country.

This data indicates the tremendous drops in the labour force as well as the significant rise in unemployment rates in Trinidad and Tobago. Over the first three quarters there were massive decreases in the labour force and rises in the unemployment rates. This rise in unemployment and drop in persons with jobs can be interpreted as Trinidad and Tobago having low job security. The stability of jobs in Trinidad and Tobago is not safe due to the harsh but necessary measures that the Government must take in order to prevent the spread of the COVID – 19 virus and protect its citizens. Though in the last quarter there was a rise in persons employed, there was still an increase in the unemployment rate. This threatens job security even more because there are now more people looking for jobs which means that there is more competition for job positions.

In addition to these statistics, there are endless articles in newspapers talking about the level of unemployment the country has experienced. Marc Persaud, the Trinidad and Tobago

Chamber of Industry and Commerce director, stated that “Medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs), the country’s largest employer, are in “survival mode” right now” (Baboolal, 2020). He said this because these businesses are either closing completely because of the lockdown or they are being forced to work with a lower capacity so they have to send home their workers. “Some small and medium businesses have already sent home staff with no guarantee of re-employment and may permanently close down, due to loss of revenue during the ongoing “lockdown” against the Covid-19 pandemic” (Boodram, 2020). These were the thoughts of Vishnu Charran, Head of the Greater Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce and Kiran Singh, the President of the Greater San Fernando Chamber of Commerce. “500 people employed by the Couva/Point Lisas business sector are out of work, at present.” (Baboolal, 2020) This article posted in the Trinidad Express goes on to explain that “It is estimated that around 80 per cent of the business sector in this area, which comprise small and medium-sized enterprises and family-owned businesses, are not operating at this time. It is estimated that some 500 people, therefore, are out of work and not receiving any income,” said Couva/Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce president, Ramchand Rajbal.” In another article speaking on the negative effects of the lockdowns, it was reported that “the Covid-19 pandemic, however, has crippled economic activity in the Penal/Debe community, says president of the Penal/Debe Chamber Rampersad Sieuraj. Sieuraj said retailers were severely affected by the closure of business for almost two months and many have been forced to close their establishments or downgrade operations. This, he said, has resulted in unemployment and lowered standard of living in the communities.” (Baboolal, 2020)

Various industries were also affected more than others. For example, the food and entertainment industry suffered tremendous job losses. In a newspaper article that summed up a

meeting with the “Bar Keepers and Operators Association, Caribbean Association of Event Professionals, T&T Alcohol Beverage Alliance, T&T Members Club Association and representation from the cinema operators and food and beverage sectors. The various sectors all expressed their financial constraints from the impact caused by the pandemic, which has left thousands of employees unemployed” (Perez - Sobers, 2020) As for the entertainment industry, The Trinidad and Tobago Entertainment and Nightlife Association tried tremendously to reopen their sector. In an article written in “Loop News” about entertainment stakeholders lobbying the Government to reopen their sector, “Michael Blackman, known popularly as Mush, said people in the entertainment industry are suffering and no one is addressing their plight.”(Dowrich-Phillips, 2020) He went to explain how the shutdown of the entertainment industry has left hundreds unemployed because “it’s not only promoters, artistes and DJs that are affected” but “the list includes hairdressers, clothing stores, photographers, lighting companies and their technicians, sound system owners, caterers, bartenders, sound engineers, graphic artists, security companies, brand ambassadors and venue owners.”

Despite the efforts to reopen the businesses, it was still very hard for multiple businesses to get back on their feet. Kiran Singh, President of the COC for San Fernando explained after the first opening of the country “that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of small businesses were unable to reopen due to a lack of capital.” (Kisson, 2020) In this same article, Rampersad Seuraj, President of the Penal Chamber of Commerce explained that in Penal/Debe “the re-opening of businesses on Monday did not reflect an increase in business activity in the town centres. He said there was no flock of shoppers to businesses and almost zero pedestrian traffic on the streets.” In the article, the President stated “Penal/Debe has been very negatively impacted by Covid-19. We welcome the phased reopening of businesses but this has not reflected in greater business activity. One needs

to recognise that Covid-19 only accentuated the grim economic activity in Penal/Debe after the closure of Petrotrin, being a fence line community.”

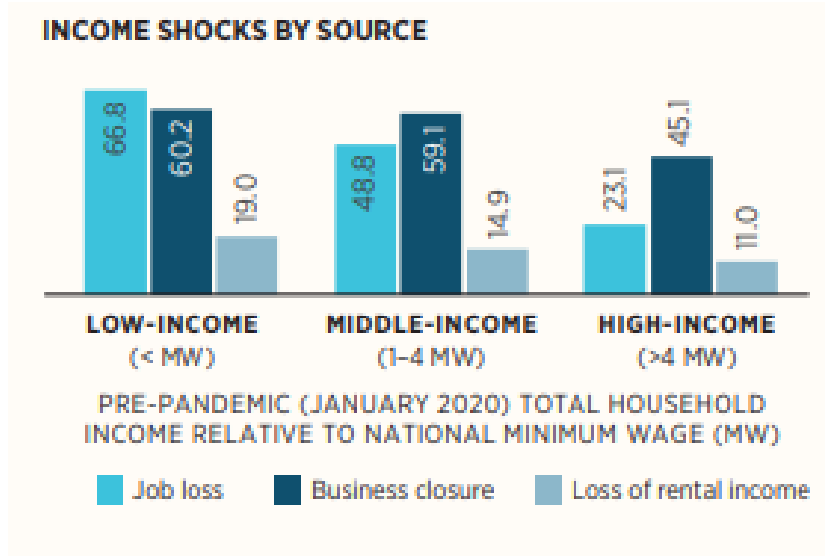
These different Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce have shown that the effects of the pandemic on unemployment have been huge. It can be interpreted that there are high levels of job insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago due to the lockdowns and its effects on businesses.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF JOB SECURITY

One major effect of low job security or job insecurity is poor financial well-being. Choi, Heo, Cho and Lee (2020) carried out a study on the links between job insecurity, financial well-being and financial stress where they came to the conclusion that “Job insecurity was negatively correlated with financial well-being”. In this same study they also say that financial wellbeing can be measured from the level of income a person or household suffering from job insecurity has and if the income has dropped.

Trinidad and Tobago have had tremendous job losses and income reductions in the year of 2020 due to the pandemic. In various Caribbean countries including Trinidad and Tobago, the Inter-American Development Bank did an online socioeconomic survey over a period of two weeks, from April 16 to April 30, 2020 in which they attempted to unravel the true magnitude of the crisis that is COVID – 19 and its effects on the economy and livelihoods of citizens. Approximately 4,700 responses were collected for Trinidad and Tobago. This study will be used to account for the wider population. Their survey revealed that “70.1 percent of households reported an income loss in April of 2021. The percentage of households reporting an income level below the minimum wage increased from 12.4 percent in January 2020 to 47.1 percent in April 2020” (IDB, 2020) The study revealed that there were three main factors that contributed to this drop in income level. The three factors were business closure, employment loss and loss of rental income. Businesses had to be closed due to the implementations of the lockdowns and closure of non-essential businesses. Employment loss came from the closure of these same businesses and loss of rental income came from people who stopped receiving payments for their rental of real estate or vehicles.



The pandemic affected all levels of income but not in the same way. The survey used three levels of income: low income, middle income and high income. Low income was anyone making lower than the minimum wage, middle income was anyone making 1 - 4 times the minimum wage and lastly, the high income was anyone making more than 4 times the minimum wage. Figure 4 shows the losses to income for all three income levels and the source of loss for each one. In the figure it can be seen that “households that reported earnings below the minimum wage in January 2020 were more severely impacted in all income sources, particularly employment loss (66.8 percent)” (IDB,2020) on the other hand middle income suffered 44.8 percent in employment loss and high income suffered 23.1 percent. The figures are similar for business closure as well as low income has the highest again with 60.2 percent while middle income was not far behind with 59.1 percent and high income had 45.1 percent. Lastly, loss of rental income was 19 percent for low income, 14.9 percent for middle income and 11 percent for high income.

These statistics show that there are high levels of loss of income which means that there is poor financial well-being amongst those suffering job insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago. Low-

income households in Trinidad and Tobago had the most job loss and most severe impact because of the pandemic. Though it can be said that all levels of income experienced financial stress which led to poor financial wellbeing, low-income households experienced poor financial wellbeing the worst. “Income moderated the relationship between the financial well-being and financial stress such that this relationship was stronger when income was reported to be high rather than low” (Choi, Heo, Cho and Lee, 2020)

The amount of COVID – 19 income relief and salary relief the government had to provide are other indicators of deteriorating financial well-being in Trinidad and Tobago. After the COVID – 19 pandemic was officially declared by the World Health Organization, many ministries and businesses asked the government to implement grants in order to help unemployed citizens. For example, “On March 15, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development held a news conference in which Minister Jennifer Baptiste Primus called for the implementation of a “pandemic leave,” within the public service” (Trinidad Express Newspapers, 2020). This “pandemic leave” was never granted but it was one of the first calls for assistance from a Ministry. The United States Agency for International Development (2020) says that “the government in Trinidad and Tobago introduced a Salary Relief Grant and Rental Assistance Grant in April 2020, which provided income and rent payment support to eligible individuals who lost their income or employment as a result of COVID-19.” In addition to this “the government top-ups to existing cash transfer programs, such as Food Support, Public Assistance Grant and Disability Assistance Grant” According to the Ministry of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago (2021) the “2020 overall cost of these social interventions was approximately Four Hundred and Eighty-Two Million Dollars (\$482 million)”. The pandemic caused the requests for loans and grants to skyrocket. IDB (2020) states that “35.5 percent of the 4700 Trinbagonian households that they surveyed requested loans,

transfers, or remittances from family or friends.” They go on to say that “The incidence was higher in low-income households”

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLEMENTATIONS

The following chapter seeks to highlight and provide implementations that both businesses and the Government can carry out in order to combat low job security. Before these new recommendations, it must be shown that the government has introduced various social programs and policies to help with the unemployment levels.

One implementation that the government must do in order to successfully decrease job insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago is introduce social policies to combat it. Almeida and Santos (2020) argued that “the impact of COVID – 19 on increasing unemployment and job insecurity must be supported by social policies that assist the most vulnerable people who have lost their jobs.” In this case, the most vulnerable people are the low-income households. One policy that the government already has in place is the No Mask, No Service policy and this is working fantastically. The Chambers of Industry and Commerce (2020) reported that “it is critical we all comply to the No Mask, No Service policy, this will keep our employees and customers safe, as well as ensure that the other phases are brought forward earlier.” The wearing of the mask will significantly lower the chances of the spread of the disease which means that workers will be able to go out and work freely. “By simply following the guidelines such as wearing masks, washing hands frequently, staying home if you are sick, going to be tested if you have symptoms and limiting physical contact, the spread of the virus could be significantly curtailed. (COIC, 2020) The Chamber also supported the immediate implementation of the policy. One social policy that should be implemented is to provide liquidity support to registered businesses in the country. They should be able to gain some support as their business is either completely shut down, working at a lower percentage of capacity or recovering from previous lockdowns and closures. Weber and

Newhouse (2021) revealed out of all the countries in the world that introduced social programs, “71 percent have adjusted their labor regulations to the crisis. Within the set of labor market policies, 54 percent of the measures increased firm liquidity through tax relief, credit and payment facilities, utility support, and deferral of social security contributions, to help businesses of all sizes to survive and keep their employees.” Local voices are also preaching this same idea. “We reiterate our call for the government to reconsider providing financial support to the businesses which have been affected. Possible options could be deferral of tax and VAT” (COIC, 2021)

Other implementations include the diversification of exports. In a time like this, companies must be able to diversify their exports in order to adapt to the changes of the markets. An example of this is companies in Trinidad and Tobago moving away from investing in the energy sector and exploring other sectors such as agriculture. “It is important that companies continue to foster growth and diversify their exports.” (Almeida and Santos, 2020) It is important that companies do this because they will be able to export whatever is in demand at the moment if they diversify their exports. This does not only apply to private companies but public as well. The government must diversify their exports so they can improve their revenues and profits. This means they will be able to make revenue and ensure job security for their employees and even themselves.

Lastly, an implementation that can be carried out is the digitization of companies. The emergence of the pandemic has caused many companies to introduce remote work from home. Many people only need a laptop and their internet service to make a living. “The digitalization of companies can make an important contribution to the emergence of new professions in the fields of technology, marketing and social networks.” (Almeida and Santos, 2020) With so many companies operating online now there are many opportunities out there for workers. This means that workers do not have to come into a physical workplace and risk the chance of contracting

Covid - 19. Instead, they can remain in the comfort of their homes and carry out whatever tasks they may need, knowing that their job is not at major risk of closing as it is online. Another benefit of the digitization of companies is that people can learn new digital skills and make themselves more marketable online which will improve their chances of high job security.

CONCLUSION

The whole world has been affected by the COVID – 19 pandemic. It has affected most economies worldwide and has left many people unemployed and unsure about the future of their jobs. This study was intended to examine the impact of the COVID – 19 pandemic on the general perception of job security and to assess the consequences of job security such as its effects on financial well-being. Information was gathered from multiple secondary resources such as the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter – American Development Bank. The unemployment statistics during the pandemic and before the pandemic were compared in order to achieve the objectives. The objectives were all achieved. The findings of the study showed that for the year of 2020 in Trinidad and Tobago, there were low levels of job security. Unemployment rates were at its highest it has been in years and the labour force numbers dropped tremendously. A major effect of job security in Trinidad and Tobago is poor financial well-being due to the loss of income. Implementations that can be used to raise the general perception and level of job security include the Government introducing new social policies to help businesses and workers, diversification of exports and digitization of companies. The findings of this study can help show the importance of job security to workers as well as help the Government and businesses increase their revenues in order to keep their workers employed. There were some limitations that this project had. Firstly, the methodology used numbers from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago which are not fully accurate because the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago has not updated their statistics since 2019. Another limitation is that the study uses a sample of people for the income loss which may not be applicable to the whole population.

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