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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### How did COVID-19 pandemic affect the employment of young people in Port Moresby?

The Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (PNG NRI) has released its Discussion Paper No. 199: “Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the employment of young people in wholesale and retail service sector in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea” written by Dr Francis Odhuno, Dr Joseph Muniu and Dr Diana Ngui.

Using data collected through a field survey, the authors looked at changes in three outcomes: changes in the number of days the young people worked in a week; change in their employment workload; and their feelings about the future of their employment. The analysis showed that:

- Generally, there was a freeze in hiring during the pandemic and in some instances, layoffs and furloughs affected young people working in the city’s retail and wholesale service sector.
- Those who worked for more than four days a week and those who were able to work from home were more likely to report an increase in employment workload than those who did not.
- Sections such as finance and accounting where automation could replace labour reported reduced number of employees but occupational groups that serve customers in the frontline were less likely to report a decrease in number of employees
- Those who worked for three days or less in a week were more pessimistic about the future of their employment; they feared losing their jobs if the pandemic persisted.
- There were no marked differences in the effects of gender on employment outcomes of young people.

The authors conclude that:

- Furloughs (rather than layoffs) should be used cautiously since young people made to work less days during the pandemic were likely to be concerned about their future employment prospects. It is not clear whether all those on furlough leave got their jobs back after the pandemic subsided.
- The option of working from home should also be used cautiously. It can lead to some employees being overworked.
- Private sector employers need not disrupt employment in essential services as these sectors were not adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Majority of frontline workers are female, targeted policies to cater for employment effects of pandemics on young employees should not be gender specific.

The report was launched by Associate Professor Ora Renagi, OL Vice Chancellor of PNG University of Technology at the PNG University of Technology in Lae, Morobe Province.

The Publication and Media Release can be accessed on the PNG NRI website <https://www.pngnri.org>.

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