
SOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT LABOURS IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The covid-19 has affected many countries, especially developing countries has effected more than developed countries. The covid-19 pandemic is proving the biggest challenge in history in social, financial as well as health after the Second World War .it was also a big recession after Second World War. It has affected human lives directly. The differential effect of the pandemic on some communities of the Indian population can be attributed to current differences in the distribution of wealth, access to facilities and the ability to rise from unexpected shocks. There is a community of migrant labourers in India, facing many heart-breaking impacts on their health, employment, live hoods, education etc.

Due to the perilous nature of labour jobs in India, many daily labourers are often migrants; they lost their livelihood due to the lockdown. This has created issues including separation from their family and no other option of employment and earning a living. The inter-state migrant labourers are forced to work with the lowest paying wage and insecure jobs; we can see their presence in every sector like - construction, hospitality, textiles, manufacturing, transportation, services and domestic work. Sometimes they act that some dangerous work, which denies by their local labourers.

Closure of economic activities, it's affected more on poor communities more. The central government lockdown and closed all businesses when covid-19 cases reached 500 in India. Local authorities started following strict containment zones to stop hotspots, in which migrant labour was trapped in their place of work. This rapidly losses in employment and also increased the chances of migrant labour falling into poverty and that time they face starvation also. Migrant labourers have suffered a lot of problems during the covid-19 pandemic. They are lacking employment, money and public transport they are forced to come back to their villages by walking with empty hands, and some of them died during the journey.

Keywords:

Migrant labour, Covid-19, community, social Impact, Employment, lack of money, livelihood.

Introduction:

In India, most of the lowest paying jobs are in sectors like construction, hospitality, textiles, and domestic labour (maids, drivers or watchmen), Also, some of these migrant labours might work as street vendors, labours in tiny and roadside works (tea-shops, stall, etc.) or

as help in salons and gyms to fulfil their needs. Migrant labours play an essential role in it. 40 million migrant labours are facing the situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown in India, also their families are dependent on them, and they are also facing big issues. This pandemic has made major issues like suffering because there is no food, living away from the family, and also losses in jobs. Those migrant labours who did not lose their jobs, They will be exploited in their workplace because of the decrease in numbers, and also they will be forced to do more and more work. Migrant labours will fall into poverty as they lose. In one month of lockdown, thousands of migrant labours had to travel the long distance from their workplace to their hometown by foot, lacking money and food they suffered many difficulties on the way. Female labours faced pathetic conditions while returning to their hometowns they had to sleep roadside, with their children, and they had to borrow money and food. Govt. of India announced a lockdown with four-hour notice, Took migrant labours surprise. The shutdown of commercial activities effectively stopped the primary source of income for many of these labour migrants who had no resources to survive the twenty-one-day lockdown period which was to be the first nationwide lockdown. Starting announcement of the lockdown by the Indian government did not consider any transport, financial or safety measures for this vulnerable group of population. Later after govt. of India provided many of support to migrants to come back to their homes, and also supported their livelihood.

About Migrant labours:

Migrant labours contribute to growth and development in their countries. Migrant labours play an essential role in India. Either they can be Male or female labours. Migrant labours within the country have been one of the weaker communities in terms of access to health facilities and technology, uncertainty in earning livelihoods, and lack of education. The impact of the pandemic on this community has been disproportionately high. While coming back home they faced lots of issues in travelling by foot, they walked. Indian migrant labours during the COVID-19 pandemic have faced multiple issues. With factories and workplaces shut down due to the lockdown, millions of migrant labours had to deal with the loss of income, lack of food and uncertainty about their future. Following this, many of them and their families went hungry. Thousands of them started walking home, with no means of transport due to the lockdown. In response, the central and state government took various measures to help them, and later arranged transport for them, 198 migrant labours died due to the lockdown, reasons of road accidents (This report has been taken according to Wikipedia).

About Covid-19:

Covid-19 originated in Wuhan city of China in November 2019. This pandemic is a part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) The first cases of COVID-19 in India were reported on 30 January 2020 in three towns of Kerala, among three Indian medical students who had returned from Wuhan, the centre point of the pandemic and the World Health Organization approved it as Global pandemic on 11 March 2020. It spread all over India due to virus infection. In addition, the virus has spread to almost all the countries of the world, including large economies in the world. This includes mainly India, Italy, America, France, England, Brazil, Russia and Germany. This country provides

a balance in the Economy of the Entire world. These days the rapid spread of the coronavirus has had a very bad effect on the Economy. Humans are Direct affected due to coronavirus. 20 million people in India are migrating to around 48 countries (This report has been taken according to Wikipedia) these foreign Expatriates send 79 billion dollars annually to India which is 2.7% of India's GDP. According to World Bank Report "covid-19 crises through a migration lens," the number of people doing jobs and wages from their state and home to other states and places is 40 million. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Rajasthan have the maximum number of migrant labours. (According to the International Labour Organization, migrant labour update 2018). Labours working in other countries are returning home due to covid-19. Infection rates started to drop in September. Daily cases peaked in mid-September with over 90,000 cases reported per day, dropping to below 15,000 in January 2021. A second wave beginning in March 2021 was much more destructive than the first wave, in every part of the country there was a shortage of vaccines, hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and other medical supplies. On 30 April 2021, India becomes the first country to Reach 400,000 new and active cases in 24 hours. By 23 December 2021, India had 78,190 active cases which were the lowest in 573 days. This number fell to 21,530 in March 2022.

Objective

- To explore the impact of COVID-19 on Migrant labours.
- To analyze the situation of migrant labours during covid-19.
- To study the effects of covid-19 on their livelihoods and jobs.
- The effect and changes during the pandemic.
- To know the step taken by Govt. for protecting migrant labours.

Research Methodology

The study depends on secondary data collection through key search "Migrant labours", "Social impact", "community", and "Employment" on Google scholar search. A manual search of the references was carried out. Articles from several non-academic sources (e.g. news, websites etc.)

Literature review:

Coronavirus in India has caused unique challenges for the country. The large population of 1.3 billion living in diverse States with differing levels of health infrastructure, social, cultural and economic inequalities are the major reasons for this. The readiness of State Governments to deal with the virus has differed substantially. Having faced the Nipah virus in 2018, Kerala resorted to extensive testing, contact tracing, etc., to minimize the spread. Similarly, Odisha as a State has witnessed several natural disasters, and adequate measures were taken by State government to deal with it. Migration can be regarded as movement of people from one place to another for a certain period of time (Boyle et al. 1998).

According to the psychosocial issues among migrants during COVID-19 listed by the , internal migrant workers are suffering from high degrees of anxieties and fears due to various concerns in COVID pandemic, and are in need of psycho-social support (G.O.I.,

2020). The continuous reverse migration of millions of migrant workers to their native villages can prove to be detrimental for the mental health and rural India may be particularly susceptible to suicide in near future due to the heavy economic load of jobless migrant workers (Nelson, 2020). Reports of the migrant workers having a serious nervous breakdown and depressive psychotic disorders have started appearing in the print media (Shastri, 2020).

Findings:

This study found that govt. has taken several steps to support migrant labours to come out of the pathetic situation, also implemented many schemes to fulfil their needs and overcome the crisis, and improve their livelihood. Also govt. has created job opportunities for those who lose their jobs in the covid-19 pandemic, and stay in their homes without a job.

The following steps are taken by Govt.:

Special train facilities

To bring those migrants who are stuck in different states govt. has taken an initiative to send them home back, started running over 4000 'Shramik Special Trains'. Over 40 Lakh (45,00,000) were sent to their hometowns. However, the concepts of 'social distancing' were compromised during the process, and poor management of the government resulted in delays of the special trains, and a shortage of food and water. The first special train to transfer migrant labours to their homes started on 9th May 2020. The 'total lockdown' was started across the country on 23rd March 2020. The government took into consideration the bad situation of migrant labours after one or half-month delay. At the very beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, the government failed to make strategies to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the migrant population. Due to covid-19 not only the late response has created damage amongst the migrants, but also a rise in COVID-19 cases has been seen just after the initiative was implemented.

Employment:

Govt. of India has launched many schemes for Migrant labour Employment such as Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan (GKRA): a scheme launched on 20 June 2020, to improve the effect of covid-19 on migrant labours. The scheme aims to give 125 days of employment to migrant labours, the scheme covers 116 districts in 6 states (Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand).

MGNREGA: The role of MGNREGA for migrant labours with the experience of the covid-19 included National wide lockdown is as a lifeline. Lockdown lasted more than two months resulting in many migrants losing their jobs all over India. They originated from undeveloped rural locations or cities as migrants. MGNREGA provided agriculture work like harvesting or post-harvesting during the Rabi crops month of April-May. The employment provisions available locally for migrants need to be strengthened to reduce the gap between income at the source and the destination. Local income generation also comes with more assurances in case of pathetic circumstances such as COVID-19.

Social Protection:

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana: under this Scheme cash is transferred directly to Women PMJDY Account-holders Rs.500 per month from April-20 to the next three months.

One Nation One Ration Card: This Scheme was Launched On 1st August 2021, it is aimed at a One Nation One Ration card that migrants can purchase ration from anywhere in the country by using their ration card. The scheme will help in providing grains, rice and wheat flour at the subsidiary rate to the weaker community.

With the loss of jobs and remittances to their respective households, a loss in purchasing power of these labours will result in a depressed demand even if normality is restored in the future. Cash in hands of labours ensures that labours have enough resources to sustain themselves during any crisis and also ensures that some kind of consumption is restored in the future.

Govt. special cared for women migrant labours, and as we know women face more problems Compared to male labours while returning home they suffered many difficulties like sleeping on the roadside, caring for their children, managing food for them etc. facing physically and mentally challenges. Govt. not only protected them at workplaces but also provided social support like sanitation and health care facilities. Schemes to ensure better participation in the labour market through self-help and also access to finance and credit schemes also need to be further incentivized so that migrant women have a more strong support structure available to them.

Health:

Migration brings numerous stress factors for migrants; they stay on the roadside without shelter and safety concerns, lack of food, jobs etc. Migrant labours faced physical and mental health issues during the covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in mental illness (anxiety) and physical illness. Govt. of India had launched many schemes for them so that they can get their livelihood better, from time to time provide double Ration, and jobs opportunities, so that they can stable their mental health.

Conclusion:

This study provides knowledge about migrant labours crisis due to covid-19, who are employed in informal Sectors. Migrant labours have faced many struggles with workplace shutdowns because of lockdowns all over the country and it had an impact on their livelihood including mental and physical illness. While returning homes some of them lost their lives due to a shortage of food and money. India has announced an employment scheme for migrant labours – the ‘Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan’ (Poor Welfare Employment Campaign); however, there is no equivalent programme for International migrants. Government need to provide minimum income support to the migrants and their families who were depends on daily wages for survival and not getting any social welfare schemes implemented by the government during the crisis. If government provides health insurance

schemes for migrants may benefit both the state government and the migrants at the destination, particularly during an epidemic or pandemic. It also helps the government in keeping a record of migrants and migrants benefit from health insurance. A large number of migrants had returned to their native places and if they don't go back to their respective workplaces then the government should take measures to provide employment opportunities to the return migrants in the domestic labour market. In this study, it is quite clear that covid-19 pandemic has shown great lessons in human life. The first covid-19 wave taught that "if there is life, there is a way" and the Second wave taught life and money both are important. It can be said that in the first wave people were fighting or struggling to save their lives. And till the Second wave of covid-19, people suffered due to lack of money. Covid-19 has taken many lives and also affected humans life badly, especially those who are unstable like migrant labours etc. It will take many more years to come out from the effect of covid-19. With the help of govt. of India, migrant labours are returning to their workplace and engaging in their livelihood.

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