



# THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MIGRANT WORKERS PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the **SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO,2020)**. Many countries have imposed lockdown and curfews to curb the spread of the virus. Yet they followed different lockdown procedures. The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the physical health, social health, and economic development of the people. **Mental health** includes one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Health is a combined form of physical, mental, and social health of a person and the pandemic has impacted all of it in different ways to a different individual. **Human migration** involves the movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location (Human Migration, Wikipedia). Millions of migrants were suffered from sudden lockdown and loss of jobs. The study aimed to explore the out-turn of the coronavirus pandemic on the subjective agony of the migrants. Secondary data were collected from previous research similar to the study. The literature reviews were collected by surfing the terms **COVID-19, pandemic, mental health, and migrant workers**. The results have supported the aim of the study. The migrant workers have been affected psychologically by the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant workers are the people who work away from the natives to earn their livelihood. The study concluded that internal migrants who were asked to stay in the community shelters, public schools, and other camps have experienced the various intensity of psychological issues. Being aware of the situation, many migrants are still desperate to meet their family, relatives, and the native. Since some of the migrants could overcome the disputes with the help of family, owner support, individual coping strategy, religious practices within their houses. The various psychological support has been provided by NGOs' other clubs for the vulnerable group of people. But the migrant workers are not given much support

to help manage their mental health issues.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Mental health, Migrant workers.

### Introduction:

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income, and fear are the common triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. The first lockdown in India was implemented on March 24, 2020, for 21-days to curb the spread of the disease.

Stress, anxiety, substance abuse had been frequent during the pandemic. Many people have lost their jobs or getting minimal wages as a consequence of lockdown. Migrant workers are the people who move from one place to the other temporary or permanent for sake of jobs and earning. According to the World Economic Forum, an estimated 139 million migrants are present in our country. Many of the migrant workers have been asked to stay in the community shelters. They were struck at the district/state borders. Also, each state has implemented different lockdown protocols and this made it the migrants difficult to reach their natives. Because of the overnight shut down of public transport, people walked several hundreds of miles to reach their homes. Migrant people who worked for daily wages or minimum wages were running out of money, making them hard for day-to-day living. Because lack of prepared announcements and implementation of curfews has created fear, anxiety, and stress in people's lives.

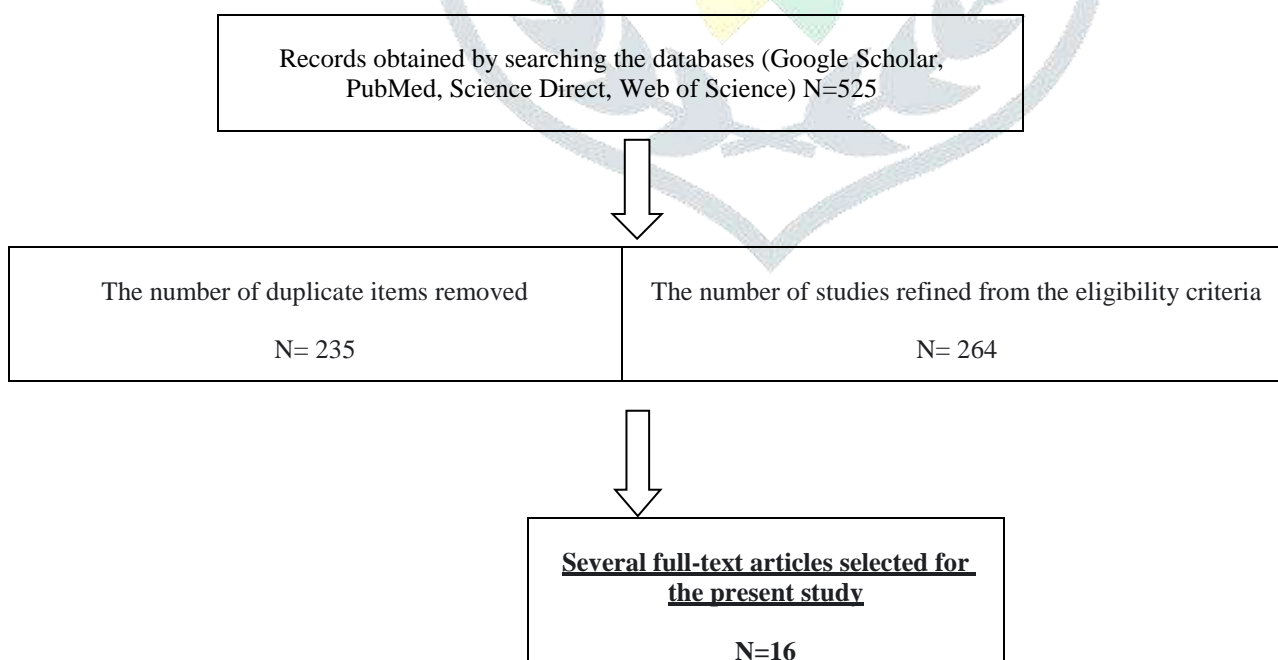
### Methods:

The current study utilized secondary data which has been collected from existing literature. The seven pieces of literature have been selected that support the current study. With the help of online resources and with search terms of 'novel coronavirus, pandemic', 'mental health', 'psychological consequences', 'migrant workers', 'Indian context', seven research papers were taken into study.

After collecting the relevant research article the study aimed to with two specific objectives. The current study intends to know the pandemic effect on the mental equilibrium of migrants and the psychological support provided by the authorities and community.

### Results:

A total of 540 results was obtained through the database search. A total of 525 results from science direct and 3 articles from the web of science and 25 articles were obtained from PubMed. After the initial screening of duplicates and refining the eligibility criteria (the year 2020-2021, Original articles, with citations) a total of 16 articles were considered appropriate for the present study.



**Discussion:****The mental health of Migrant Workers**

- a) Internal migrants are susceptible to new infection due to the factors such as occupational hazards, substance use, chronic malnutrition, unhygienic living condition, poor sanitized environment.
- b) When compared with the native population the migrant workers are prone to communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, silicosis, etc.
- c) The absence of the loved one's itself bring negative emotion among the migrants such as loneliness, helplessness, and depression.

**Emotional Distress among Migrant Workers**

- a) Migrant workers were made desperate attempts to run to the family. Due to the sudden outbreak and the curfews, the migrant workers were experienced high degrees of anxiety and fear. (welfare, 2020). They experience many adverse effects on psychological consequences and also, chronic poverty, malnutrition, cultural bereavement, loss of religious practices and cultural protection, substance abuse, and poor access to health care. (RanjanaChoudhari, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused severe stress, anxiety, and depression among internal migrant workers. And, migrants experienced depression and anxiety simultaneously. (Krishnan Kumar, 2020)
- b) The COVID-19 has made a situation for the migrants to have neither work nor to meet their families. The study suggested that about three-fourths of the migrants who participated in the study were screened positive for anxiety, depression, and high co-morbidity. (Krishnan Kumar, 2020)

**Psychosocial Issues among Migrant Workers**

- a) Migrant workers are the ones who move to unfamiliar places to search for jobs and livelihood. They are vulnerable to various social, psychological, and emotional trauma due to the neglect faced by the local community. (PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES AMONG MIGRANTS DURING COVID-19, 2020). During the COVID pandemic, many migrant workers were forced to leave the places due to the loss of jobs. Many migrants were stuck at the state and national highways as the transport facilities were completely shut down.
- b) The immediate concern faced by the migrants were related to food, shelter, health, and fear towards the spread of the virus to them as well as to their families. It made them more anxious and stress during the outbreak.
- c) Migrant workers constitute 37 per cent of the total population of the country. They leave their native, and family for work and most of them are given fewer wages, poor accommodation. Being a migrant worker isn't easy because they have already been dealing with chronic poverty, cultural differences, language difficulties, discrimination about their socio-economic status. The COVID-19 pandemic has become the major contributing stressor. The financial crisis, lack of social support, and psychological stressors such as uncertainty about the duration of the lockdown, job insecurity, and fear about the spread of diseases decreased the mental health of the migrant workers. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the internal migrant worker's physical, emotional and social health. (Srivastava, 2021)
- d) Migrants who had no job or other options returned to their native places. But the villagers and family members showed a lack of empathy to the migrants as they came from other places and the migrants faced family rejection.

**Economic impact**

- a) Not only in India but also migrants residing in other countries have faced severe mental health and economic issues. The majority of the Indian migrants who were living in Saudi Arabia earned less than 1000 SAR per month and have a family member of 5 or more than 5. The loss of jobs and less income affected the mental health of the Indian migrants as well as their family mental status. The majority of the migrants have been reported nervousness, depression, loneliness and sleeping trouble, and difficulty in concentrating on things. The migrants above the age of 40 and more family members have experienced more anxiety and depression than migrants below the age of 40. (Khan, 2021)
- b) Almost many migrant workers reported financial crisis because of lockdown. The lack of transportation during the lockdown, lack of access to food water and shelter during the lockdown, money saved for education used for necessities and inability to meet daily living turned out to be a major stressor during the lockdown. (Srivastava, 2021)

**Psychosocial Intervention**

- a) Migrant workers face many psychological issues in their everyday lives from basic needs to mental well-being. The Chandigarh psychosocial intervention was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The components of the intervention are basic needs, privacy, security, medical needs, trust, the safety of the family and society, self-esteem, support for decisions, and voice for the group. The intervention was used to resolve the major psychological conflicts faced by the migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. This

model helped the migrants to see beyond the problems and happened to help the migrants to give more importance to their basic needs.

- b) Lockdowns, though potentially effective in controlling disease outbreaks, can be unsettling for people. (Madhav, 2017). A study was conducted to understand the effect of psychological capital and internal locus of control on psychological distress and affect balance. The results revealed that people with high psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) experienced low psychological deterioration, distress, and a strong association with well-being and emotional control. The internal locus of control moderately mediates with affect balance and people can overcome their negative feelings and mood swings during the crisis (Schurer 2014). People with hope, optimism, resilience and internal locus of control can able to control their distress and various negative psychological issues.

### **Conclusion:**

The secondary data was used to collect the data and sixteen research papers were used for the present study. The study aimed to explore the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health among internal migrants. Migrant workers are the vulnerable group for poorer mental health. Migrant workers are the people who work outside their native, leaving their family for earning. There are millions of migrant workers in India and most of them are working for daily/minimal wages with poor residence, experiencing discriminating behaviour from the authority, poverty, lack of access to education, health care facilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the migrant workers were asked to accompany them to community centres, regional schools, tents for days. They were provided with food and lodging by the government but ignored the emotional and moral support to them. The government itself isn't sure about the duration of the lockdown and spread of the disease. The migrant workers were not sure about the end of the lockdown, there were no transport facilities as they walked thousands of miles to see their families, no job assurance and the left unhelpful by the Government of India but favouring the privileged society.

The present study concludes that migrant workers suffered from anxiety, psychological distress, substance use disorder. They were not given any proper awareness about the disease and curfews. The numerous of misinformation on social media about the spread and mortality rate developed more anxiety within the migrants. They were suffered from a severe economic crisis, lack of social support, less accessibility to health centres, poor hygiene. But some people can manage their economic conditions by going for some temporary work. Some of the migrant workers with the support of family members and owners have managed to overcome economic problems. The study concluded with the sheer truth that the Government haven't taken much responsibility to look after the health, mental health, economy and transport of the migrant workers and public.

### **Limitations of the study:**

The limitations of the present study are that it considered the psychological and economic effect of the pandemic on migrants and ignored other disadvantaged groups. The study hadn't mentioned the various psychological support provided by non-governmental organizations.

### **The implication of the study:**

The researcher suggests the government and regional authorities should take care of the people's wants and needs during the crisis. As the political leaders and authorities should bring awareness to the people about the disease, lockdown protocols, hygiene works in urban and as well as in rural regions. Also, the community leaders and other officers should lend their hands to disadvantaged and socially deprived people. Mental health service camps can be established in all the regions and regular screening can be done to the public. Also, various working, educational, health services should appoint mental health care professionals to help the needy.

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