



COVID-19: Impact on migrant Workers in India

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Abstract

This paper discussed about that COVID-19 crisis effect on most vulnerable group such as migrant workers in India. Even though, novel-corona-virus origin in Wuhan city, China, December, 2019. The pandemic has disrupted global economic activities and increased toll on human lives. World Health organization has declared global pandemic. Similarly, India has first corona-virus case detected from Kerala. After that, Government of India has taken hard action against virus and imposed Janata Curfew. Later, 24 March 2020 onward Govt. of India has declared nationwide lockdown 21 days for the stop of transmission corona virus infection. Sudden nationwide lockdown, all economic activities stopped, factories and workplaces have shut down, millions of migrant workers lost their jobs. This Mass exodus has seen on national highways reverse back their native place. The study has also highlighted social exclusion and social stigma experienced by migrant workers during the pandemics. This study has critically analyses sectoral-wise impact migrant workers due to outbreaks COVID-19 crisis and policy intervention. They are merely Dalits, Adivasis, Other Backward classes and weaker section of Indian social order. This study is based on secondary data, which data collected from NSSO reports, census of India, journals, websites, newspapers, national and international organization reports.

Keywords: Migrant workers, COVID-19 Crisis, Livelihood, policy and Social Exclusion.

Introduction

Novel-corona-virus (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome virus (SARS-CoV-2) health havoc born in late, 2019 (Singhal, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic is origin from Wuhan City, China, December, 2019. WHO (World health organization, 2020) was declared corona-virus global pandemic. Meanwhile, On January 30, 2020, India reported the first case of the zoonotic “animal origin” virus known to have originated in China (Kachroo, 2020). According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as of April 18, 2020, there were 11,906 active cases and 480 deaths from the novel corona-virus in India. This pandemic has been human health crisis directly and indirect hit the human lives. COVID era has disrupted the global economy and the slowdown in the world economy. The severity and potentiality of virus government of India has taken preventive action imposed Janata Curfew and later, 21 days lockdown imposed (PMO, 2020). These sudden taken action lockdown and shut-down economic activities against COVID-19 pandemic. All worksites has shut down the people who lost their jobs and afraid of the uncertain future. Therefore, the existence data point out a widely differing reality about migrants in India. According to Census 2011, the total number of internal migrants would be 450 million and more than 30% higher than 2001. This is actual numbers perhaps are higher than what is captured by the census (censusofindia, 2011). Meanwhile, out-migration from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar are the biggest source states of migrants, followed closely by Madhya Pradesh (MP), Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal; the major destination states are Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala (Dhandekar & Ghai, 2020). The enormous migrant workers influx has compelled to go back their native place. Even though, they are lose jobs, without money, shelter, and other basic requirement during the pandemic. A study was conducted based on the telephonic survey of more than 3000 migrants from north-central India (Sahas, 2020). The study found that a lack of workers was lost their wages and livelihood. During a pandemic, 42 percent with no ration, the majority of the labourers were daily 33 percent stuck at destinations city without access to food, water, and money, 94 percent not have a workers identity card (Sahas, 2020). They were faced challenges such as sustainable livelihood, atrocities, social exclusion, employment and poor social conditions of the migrant workers have raised a lot of attention from national and international level during the COVID-19 pandemic (Shahare, 2021). Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 pandemic migrant workers have experienced new form of social isolation and social stigma. However, Social exclusion has different dimension, multiple notions, ideas, and experiences by the people. (Smith, 1776) Has elaborated that social deprivation is in the form of the “inability to appear in public without shame,” and large, of the difficulty experienced by depriving people of taking part in life. Social exclusion is poverty, and individuals are

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unable to gross basic needs of capabilities. Social exclusion is two forms active and passive exclusion, the active exclusion such as migrants or emigrants not given voting rights and passive exclusion such as marginalized community socially weaker section Indian society (Sen, 2000). Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic meagre job opportunities, and slowdown of Indian economy has increased anxiety and uncertain future of migrant workers. Govt. of India declared lockdown 24 march 2020, onward. Even though, COVID-19 pandemic has worsted hits vulnerable section of the society and hundreds of thousand marginalized and informal workers started to march back to their home. They are engaging informal sectors and play vital role in Indian economy. According to print media such as BBC, and Times of India 2020, mention news reports, the lockdown absence of the transport facilities, millions of migrant workers, their families with small children, pregnant women, and the elder walked thousands of kilometres barefoot toward home without food and money. Many of them were left deserted mid-way, facing food shortage and desolation, and some even died before reaching their native place.

Results and Discussion

Migrant workers population in India

Table No.01, Migrant workers in Census of India, 2011, Table of migration.

Migrant workers	Migrant workers population in Percentage of total population
Male	3.2
Female	1.5
Total	2.6
Migrated from other State	
Male	29.5
Female	12.3
Total	24
Migrated from other District within State	
Male	29.3
Female	25.2
Total	28
Migrated Within District (Intra-District)	
Male	38.1
Female	61
Total	45.5

Source: Census of India 2011, Migration table, D series.

Table 1 has shows overall male migrant workers more than female migrant partner workers, furthermore above table shows more than migrant workers intra-district compared to inter- district and inter-state. Even though, Female migration more intra-district compared men migration while rural to rural women migration reason of marriage. The men migration from rural to urban because, the availability of better modern facilities and job opportunities.

COVID-19 impact on socio-economic status of Informal workers

India is the emerging economy in the world. Meanwhile, Informal workers in total employment (unorganized sectors plus Informal workers in organized sectors) have stable, around 92 percent (ILO, 2018) Nearly 364 million or more, including those engaged in informal work, self-employment, and no regular job (No social security Insurance) (ILO, ILO, 2020). While, 85 percent of non-agricultural workers in informal sectors, 90 percent of the migrant workers belong to deprived castes such as Dalits, Adivasis, and religious minorities in rural area (Vanneman & Desai, 2015). India is the low middle-income country in the world, and recently due to the pandemic Indian economy fell and employment rate highest 23.5 percent worst hits all sectors, only leaving the agriculture sector (CMIE, 2020). Meanwhile, policymaking and government is more attention toward agricultural sectors, because primary sectors backbone of rural economy and agrarian society.

Migrant workers population engaged sector-wise in India

Distribution of Workers in Usual Status (PS+SS) By Broad Industry Division (Percentage)

		68 TH NSS Round 2011-12	PLFS 2017-18
Agriculture	Rural Male	59.4	54.2
	Rural Female	74.9	73.2
	Urban Male	5.6	5.4
	Urban Female	10.9	5.4
Mining & Quarrying	Rural Male	0.5	0.5

	Rural Female	0.3	0.2
	Urban Male	0.9	0.6
	Urban Female	0.3	0.2
Manufacturing	Rural Male	8.1	7.7
	Rural Female	9.8	8.1
	Urban Male	22.4	22.4
	Urban Female	28.7	25.2
Electricity, Water	Rural Male	0.3	0.5
	Rural Female	0.1	0.0
	Urban Male	1.4	1.3
	Urban Female	1.0	0.6
Construction	Rural Male	13.0	14.5
	Rural Female	6.6	5.3
	Urban Male	10.7	11.7
	Urban Female	4.0	4.1
Trade, Hotels, & Restaurants	Rural Male	8.0	9.2
	Rural Female	3.0	4.0
	Urban Male	26.0	24.5
	Urban Female	12.8	13.0
Transport, Storage, Communication	Rural Male	4.2	5.2
	Rural Female	0.2	0.3
	Urban Male	11.7	12.7
	Urban Female	2.7	3.3
Other Services	Rural Male	6.4	7.6
	Rural Female	5.2	8.6
	Urban Male	21.4	21.5
	Urban Female	39.6	44.4
Total	-----	100.00	100.00

Source: Periodic labour force survey 2017-18, 68th NSS round 2011-12.

Rural Regions Table 2 shows the period 2017-18, rural India, 55 percent of male workers in usual status(ps+ss) and 73 percent female workers in Usual Status (ps+ss), engaged in the agriculture sector. The proportion of the NSS 68th round 2011-12 and PLFS 2017-18 male and female ratio decreased in the agriculture sector. Overall rural India has been increased share of employments construction and other services. Furthermore, distress agriculture sector and lack of local job opportunities. Rural migration volume has increased due to urbanization and more job opportunities unorganized sectors.

Urban Regions Table 2 Shows in urban India period 2017-18, among male workers in usual status (ps+ss), the industry sector, trade, hotels, and restaurants, sector engaged around 24.5 percent even manufacturing, and another service nearly 22.4 percent and 21.5 percent, of total workers in usual status(ps+ss). During 2017-18, Industry sectors, transport, storage, communication, construction, and agriculture sectors provided livelihood around 12.7 percent, 11.7 percent, and 5.4 percent of urban male workers' usual status(ps+ss). However, among them female workers in 2017-18, other sectors registered the highest numbers of workers 44.4 percent, followed, manufacturing, 25.2 percent, trade, hotel, and restaurant 13 percent and agriculture 9.1 percent. Even though, urban male and female workers' engagement in the agriculture sector felled but other sectors increased.

Social exclusion and discrimination experienced by migrant workers during the COVID-19

Social exclusion by the people because of COVID phobia, many of the migrant workers lost near and dear life because of a lack of food, water, shelter, medical facilities, and transportation. Social exclusion is the stigma of the mental notion. Migrant workers have suffered a different kind of discrimination during the pandemics. They lost their fundamental rights, malnutrition, hunger, poverty, anxiety, and frustration of the virus infection and behaviour of the people toward migrant workers. Discrimination and xenophobia are on the rise, as afraid. The virus is weapon zed to scapegoat minorities (Noel 2020). Meanwhile, Social stigma current pandemic on health is the negative impact between a person or group of people who share certain similarities and a specific disease. However, People, attitudes, stereotyped, discriminated against, migrants treated isolated, and experience loss of social condition among society because of the contact history of Pandemic (WHO, 2019). Migrant workers are the most vulnerable section of society. Meanwhile the novel-corona-virus is a communicable disease. However, million informal workers are suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, socio-psycho stigma of virus infection from them. The pandemic crisis has more attention on social security, the protected health and safety of their human rights. Therefore, factories shut down, all other economic activities and transportation facilities closed for against transmission of virus infection. Even though, migrant workers lost their jobs, shelters and negative impact on lives. They are starting reverse back their native place, during lockdown migrant workers hundreds of thousands of kilometres journey many of them lost life on the highways, roads, railway track accident and some even committed suicide for hunger and afraid virus infection. The pandemic migrant workers have experienced exclusion from the society found them. Even though, the Constitution of India safeguards of Indian citizen even though by article 17 abolished untouchability, article 14 equality before the law, and equal protection of the law, article 15 prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and article 21 protection of life and

personal liberty (Bakshi & Kashyap, 1982). The first phase of the lockdown is closed cross-border by states and hundreds of thousands struck on the border of states these of the no food, no water, and people were dying hunger and committed suicide to afford of COVID-19 virus and negative behaviours on them Social exclusion is directly related to the mental health of migrants (Li and Rose, 2017). Furthermore, internal migrant workers suffer from a high prevalence of anxiety, psychotic, and post-traumatic disorders due to socio-environmental adversities, such as social conditions, discrimination (Baldassarre & et.al., 2020). Meanwhile, during the pandemic, migrant workers to return back native before enter village to the compulsory quarantine or isolation. This has provided temporary shelters on return to their native place and physical distance, social distance, increasing the feeling of loneliness due to the mental stress even may lead to suicide (Nelson & Adams, 2020). However, migrant workers are marginalized section of society and poor socioeconomic condition. They are small hand holders or landless laborers due to Pandemic lost jobs and no saving money. Even though, During the COVID-19 crisis has India ranks in the global hunger index, 2020 is 94 out of 107 countries. It is a serious condition of the hunger index, behind our neighbour countries Nepal and Bangladesh. Zero hunger is eliminated in the Sustainable development goal 2030 but Middle East Africa and South Asia in especially India has severe situation hunger (The global hunger index 2020). This more effect on disadvantages group of people are suffering multiple poverty levels. They are Dalits, Adivasis, Other backward classes and low income people. However, According to the World Food Programme, nearly 130 million people have acute food insecurity across 55 countries. They are migrant workers and poor people have deprived basic needs in the under developing or emerging economy during the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, Novel corona virus pandemic crisis have dire effects on informal sector workers. Because they lost their jobs and no social protection, before entering cross border migrant should be quarantined there they experienced social stigma and socially excluded from the mainstream of the society (WFP). Even though, During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis lack medical facilities and negligence of hospital takes care of patient. Many of them died not due to corona virus but medical negligence. Because high treatment cost is out of reach from the migrant workers and poor people. Therefore, they are afraid to virus infection and dead. Furthermore, the economic activities have shutdown and exacerbated impact on migrant workers (Sharma, 2020). They are deprived socioeconomic, religious-culture and societal lower ladder in Indian social order. Moreover, they lost livelihood and nationwide lockdown, no basic facilities no shelter, no money, no transport facilities has compelled to reverse back to home. Even though, they have experienced social stigma, social isolation because coming from urban, not only socio-economic but also psychic, the mental stress of the virus. Meanwhile, Migrant workers have faced multiple types of discrimination such as social exclusion, virus stigma, no social security or no social protection, no health insurance and no availability of affordable housing colony urban poor. Even though, the many states in India has deluded labour law and increased working hours such as Uttar Pradesh another states (indianexpress, 2020). Although, during the pandemic crisis has fell back to chronic poverty and increased deteriorate socio-economic condition of migrant workers.

Policy initiative

The government of India has taken action against fight COVID-19 pandemic migrant workers and poor people has released relief fund Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana a relief package of rupees 1.70 lakh crore (PIB, 2020). Distribution of free food through the PDF system of migrant workers of the different ration shops and cash transfer support for the most vulnerable section of society the pandemic. PMGKY, cash transfers included Rs. 1000 to distribute to around 3 crore women holding Jan Dhan Account for the three months, Anna Yojana or PMGKAY, connected with the Public Distribution System (PDS), targeted beneficiary food rations free of cost to 80 crore beneficiaries registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). Furthermore, The Union government increased wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) from Rs.182 to Rs.202. The government of India order state governments to use building and construction workers welfare fund to provide relief to 3.5 crore registered workers. However, the state Disaster Relief Fund rules to provide food and shelter for migrant workers (Srivastava, 2020). The government has been provided a safeguard for stranded migrants, enforcing rent freeze, ensuring payment of wages, and enforcing government quarantine at the destination. Therefore, State governments also have taken the initiative safety of our people, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Delhi government (Hindustantimes, 2020).

Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has been a direct and indirect hit on migrant workers. The informal sector overall worldwide nearly 60 percent workforce, while In India it's more the 85 percent workforce informal sector. Meanwhile, the corona-virus is a communicable disease due to infection of the respiratory system. Furthermore, COVID-19 virus origin in Wuhan city China, in Middle November 2019, while in India first case was found January 2020, in Kerala. World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) was declared a global pandemic and health emergency in the world. Similarly, 24 March 2020 India government was imposed first 21 days of national nationwide lockdown. Therefore, the economic activities shutdown, and transport facilities stopped. Migrant workers have lost their jobs, shelter, no money and uncertain future. They are compelled to reverse back to villages. Even though, all transport facilities not available to mass exodus seen on high ways and railway tracks while, they are reverse movement barefoot, cycle, rickshaw, without food, water. They mass migration migrant workers together with children, women and pregnant women. Many they died before reached native place. Even though, they were experienced social stigma, social exclusion and discrimination of fundamental rights. Migrant workers are return back from urban, people are fear of virus infection while maintain social or physical distances. Before enter village they should be quarantine or self isolation. Migrant workers were excluded from society, quarantined and isolated away from the family. They were suffered socio-psycho thrum and loneliness, anxious, and frustrated, among them committed suicide. Migrant workers most of them engaged in informal activities. Even though, unorganized sectors do not provide social security health insurance, old age pension security and jobs guarantee. Furthermore, Informal sectors has absorbed rural migrant workers in menial works such as daily wages workers, rickshaw pulling, construction workers, hotels, restaurants, and self-employee. They are migrated most of them single but few of them migrated with family. They are illiterate, semi-skilled migrant workers in the informal economy. They are around 90 percent share of unorganized sectors urban labour market in India. Even though, during the lockdown they have been experienced more

humiliated, social stigma, and socially excluded, while some countries that targeted minorities used weapons of the virus. Meanwhile, the government of India has been taken action against the fight virus such as PMKAY packages, free ration through the PDS, and enhanced MGNREGA wages 182 to 202 Rupees. Even though some states have deluded labour law and enhanced working hours such as Uttar Pradesh and others states governments. However, The Government of India has taken an Initiative to provide effective accountable labour law and inter-state migration policy. Meanwhile, According to the British Broadcasting company “migrant workers no have proper document and no identity cards” (BBC, 2020). Therefore, many of them unable get benefits government welfare schemes. However, the government of India with coordination between the central and states different nodal agencies such as labour bureau and labour board prepared migrant workers data base registration. This data survey can be used know about beneficiary and delivered services through common centre service for the intraoperative service such as ration card, job card, identity card, health insurance, financial inclusion, welfare programs even voting right from the destination place. Even though, future-ready as such unwanted natural emergency and protect the fundamental rights of migrant workers in the informal sectors. They are most those marginalized (Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes), minorities, other backward sections and social-economic weaker sections of the society. The government should implement an effective policy for the migrant workers as skill development program through vocational training for the alternative job opportunities of the informal sector workers and agriculture. The current scenario India transformed into the digital India era government can effective implementation multiple uses social security pan India card for migrant workers. They can be access welfare schemes and other services such as old age pension, health insurance and other facilities pan India model. Meanwhile, the government should be increased Budget on health sectors and rural development, also require effective inter-state migration policy on migrant workers rights.

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