

10. THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL LOCK DOWN ON MIGRANT WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

A migrant worker is a person who either migrates within their home country or outside it to pursue work. Migrant workers usually do not have the intention to stay permanently in the country or region in which they work. The International Labour Organization estimated in 2014 there were 232 million international migrants worldwide who were outside their home country for at least 12 months and approximately half of them were estimated to be economically active, i.e. being employed or seeking employment (Mainstreaming of Migration in Development Policy and Integrating Migration in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda). In India about 120 million people or more are estimated to migrate from rural areas to urban labour markets, industries and farms. Migration has become essential for people from regions that face frequent shortages of rainfall or suffer floods, or where population densities are high in relation to land. Areas facing unresolved social or political conflicts also become prone to high out migration. Poverty, lack of local options and the availability of work elsewhere become the trigger and the pull for rural migration respectively.

During this after the their widespread of pandemic Covid-19 every one and especially migrant workers wish to go back to their home station because the workers think their lives are important than earning money for their livelihood. Beside the migrant workers were scared that COVID-19 would take a couple of more years to subside and the safest thing was to be at home. So many migrant workers expressed a fear of returning their native place. The purposes of this paper are to examine the problems and challenges faced by migrant workers while travelling to their hometown and the measures taken by Government of India to ensure their safety. The present study is based on primary data collected from the sample population who moved from Chennai district of Tamilnadu to their native rural areas. Structured Questionnaire was used for survey and information were collected with the sample respondents through telephonic conversation. Chi-Square test has been employed to identify the issues and challenges of migrant workers.

KEYWORDS

Migrant workers, Government scheme, Frequency, Descriptive statistics, Chi-square test.

INTRODUCTION

Migrant people often migrate from one place to another for livelihood improvement. Some of the reasons for the migration are population growth, political instability, civil wars, education, unemployment and marriage. So, people migrate to different places because of unemployment. Migrant workers thus suffer from overtime, isolation by society, low income, and lack of basic amenities. In some parts of India, three-fourths of the households are displaced. Labour laws for them are not properly enforced.

MIGRATION WORKERS IN INDIA

Migrant workers constitute backbone of Indian economy as migration is a livelihood strategy of millions of people in India. Out of 482 million workers in India, about 194 million are permanent and semi-permanent migrant workers as per 2011 Census. In addition, there are about 15 million short-term migrant workers of temporary and circulatory nature. At the state level, in-migration rates are higher in high-income states such as Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. Some of them are badly affected by the COVID-19 compared to low-income states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Odisha with relatively higher rates of out-migration. (4)

Indian migrant workers during the COVID-19 outbreak have faced multiple hardships. With factories and workplaces were shut down due to the lockdown imposed in the country, millions of migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future. Their families went hungry so thousands of them return their native place. Migrant workers majorly comprise of daily wage labourers working in the informal sector. They are mostly come from rural areas but live in cities for work for most of the year.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the challenges faced by migrant workers during their returning hometown
- To outline Government measures implemented to help migrant workers.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is based on primary data. The research has taken a random sample of 15 migrant people from Chennai district in Tamil Nadu. The primary data were collected from the sample respondents with the help of structured interview schedule through phone contact. The data is analysis by using Frequency, descriptive statistics and chi-square test. Data were processed and analysis were made using SPSS.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

To examine the stated objective the following objective has been framed:

H_0 : There is no association between level of education and awareness about measures implemented by Government for the welfare of migrant workers

H_1 : There is association between level of education and awareness about measures implemented by Government for the welfare of migrant workers

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Native place

They are mostly come from rural areas but live in cities for work for most of the year. More people came from rural to urban for Employment.

Table 1

Native place

Rural	Frequency	Percent
	15	100.0

Source: primary data

Table (1) showed that the 100 percent of the respondent came from rural areas.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Migrant workers majorly comprise of daily wage labourers working in the construction and household workers, factories and others. The workers are respectively illiterate people. Many of them work in the informal sectors.

Table 2
Employment and Education

Education	Frequency	Percent	Employment	Frequency	Percent
			Construction	6	40.0
Illiterate	7	46.7	Household Workers	3	20.0
Literate	3	20.0	Factories	2	13.3
Graduate	5	33.3	Others	4	26.7
Total	15	100.0	Total	15	100.0

Source: primary data

Source: primary data

The table (2) explore the majority of the migrant population is uneducated and they work mostly in informal sectors. Graduates work in other fields.

ASSETS AND PLACE OF ASSETS

The study revealed that the prolonged lockdown has left most of them without any savings and forced many to take loans. The number of property holders is low. Their Immovable assets are in their hometowns. So those who affected during the lockdown they are returning home town.

Table 3
Assets and Place of assets

Immovable Assets	Frequency	Percent	Place of assets	Frequency	Percent
			Urban	1	6.7
No	7	46.7	Rural	7	46.7
Yes	8	53.3	Missing	7	46.7
Total	15	100.0	Total	15	100.0

Source: primary data

Table (3) conclude frequency of property holder is low at 8 out of 15. Their frequency of Immovable assets is in hometown at 7 out of 8.

REASON FOR TRAVELLING

Migrant workers faced some problem during lockdown. The migrant people most of them dealing with unemployment problems and people's fears. They faced assault and harassment from the people. So they ready to travel during the lockdown.

Table 4
Migrant problem

Travelling Reason	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Unemployment	12	.86	.363
Quarantine	5	.36	.497
People fear	11	.79	.426
Food and Accommodation	5	.36	.497

Source: primary data

The table (4) indicate sum of the respondent encountered at unemployment 12 members, quarantine 5 members, people fear 11 members and food and accommodation. Some respondent meet all problems mentioned in the table.

REASON FOR MIGRANT

People migrate for a number of reasons. Some of the reasons for the migration are population growth, political instability, civil wars, education, unemployment and marriage. So people migrate to return home because of unemployment.

Table 5
Reason for Migration

Migrant reason	Frequency	Percent
Safety	1	6.7
Lack of Employment	13	86.7
Others	1	6.7
Total	15	100.0

Source: primary data

Table (5) explain most migration occurs for employment. 86.7 percent of the respondent has been displaced for lack of employment. 13.4 percent respondent displace for other reasons.

LACK OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Lockdown restrictions putting a stop to public transport, thousands of migrant workers were seen walking or bicycling hundreds of kilometres to go back to their native villages, some with their families. The quarantines and other containment measure which may drastically reduce public and private transportation services. Respondent's travel mode.

Table 6
Mode of Travel

Travel by	Frequency	Percent
Walking	4	26.7
Bicycle	2	13.3
Public Transport	4	26.7
Private Transport	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: primary data

Table (6) explain during the lockdown, he returned to his hometown through at the walking (30Km), two-wheelers (50Km), public transport (150Km) (ex: bus, rain) and private vehicles (150Km) (ex: car, lorry, van). This table shows that people travel with through the native places by walking at the percentage of the respondent 26.7 percent, by bicycle 13.3 percent, by public transport 26.7 and private transport 33.3 percent.

RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Migrant workers say they just want to go home. Because the workers think our lives seem more important than money now. Beside the migrant workers were scared that during the corona virus lockdown would take a couple of more years to subside and the safest thing was to be at home. So many migrant workers expressed a fear of returning their native place. So in cites facing unemployment during the lockdown.

Table 7
Unemployment rate

Month	Unemployment rate (%)		
	India	Urban	Rural
March 2020	8.75	9.41	8.44
April 2020	23.52	24.95	22.89
May 2020	23.48	25.79	22.48
Jun 2020	10.8	12.1	10.2

Source: CMIE Report for Unemployment Monthly Rate 2020

From the Table (7) shows the rate of unemployment during the lockdown period from March 2020 to Jun 2020. Unemployment rate high significantly to 23.48 per cent in May compared to 8.75 per cent in March. The unemployment rate is also high during the lockdown the urban from 9.41 percent in March to 25.79 percent in May and the rural area from 8.44 percent in March to 22.48 percent in May. Urban unemployment rate higher compare to rural. Unemployment rate fell significantly to 10.99 per cent in Jun compared to 23.48 per cent in May, showing signs of improvement in the job scenario in the country and return to the pre-lockdown period, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data suggests. The unemployment rate in urban areas for the month stood at 12.01 per cent, while it was recorded at 10.2 per cent in rural areas.

STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT

During the corona virus lockdown the migrant workers that going to their hometowns they could return to farming and take up small jobs. These situations create Overcrowding in agriculture. In other words it refers to a situation of employment with surplus manpower in which some workers have zero marginal productivity.

Table 8
Disguised Unemployment

Descriptive Statistics			
	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	11	.73	.458
Animal husbandry	9	.60	.507
Factories	0	.00	.000
Companies	3	.20	.414
100 days work	2	.13	.352

Source: primary data

Table (8) explain after returning home town the people do work like agriculture, animal husbandry, factories, companies and 100 days work. Table view mean value for the migrant people most of them depend on agriculture at .73 percent and animal husbandry at .60 percent.

LOSS OF INCOME

Low income workers in developing countries face a higher risk of income loss during the Covid-19. Migrant workers majorly comprise of daily wage labourers working in the manufacturing and construction industries. In the lockdown period the government not allow to work so no work and no money, beside in the period

worker loss their income. And decline in wages is unlikely for salaried. The income shock will negatively affect the food security and nutrition.

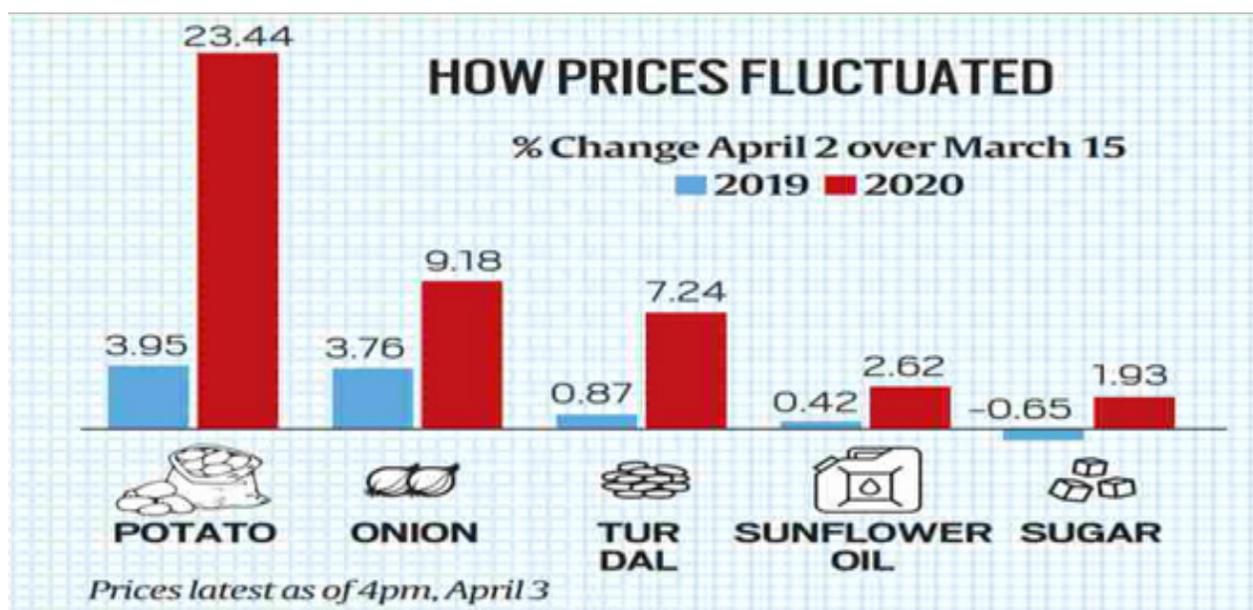
POVERTY

Rural household tend to depend more on domestic remittances from urban migrants, economic shutdowns in urban areas will hurt the poor in rural areas. Lockdown has been created due to the spread of covid-19 in India. As a result, many people are forced into poverty, such as wage earners and low-income workers. The unemployment situation creates income shock. The income shock pushed more people

under poverty.

CHANGE IN CONSUMPTION PATTERN

The consumption pattern has been affected and has shown a downfall due to fall income and lost jobs especially to the migrant workers. Supply chain is shock it create shortages of basic consumption goods and essentials (food, medicine). Shortage of basic consumption Increase at the same time price also rises. Food price rise and income fall historically poor household will fall back on the consumption of staples and reduce their consumption of meat, dairy and fruits and vegetables.



Source: The Indian express July-02-2020 (Wholesale price trends depend on movement of goods to consumption points.)

The Figure (1) explored the rise in prices of the essential commodities such as vegetables to purely supply-side issues, instead of production-linked problems. They also specifically pointed to the lack of transportation and labour to lift stocks from wholesale markets, leading to disruptions in the movement of stocks from production centres to the retail level, even as prices of certain commodities like edible oils have been impacted because of a slowdown in production due to factory closures and labour shortage.

LACK OF SAVING

Migrant workers mostly depends on informal sector so no saving and lived in factory dormitories which were shut due to the lockdown.

Table 9 - Saving

Savings	Frequency	Percent
No	10	66.7
Yes	5	33.3

Source: primary data

Table (9) describe the saving aptitude is low for the migrant workers. The number of savers is very low. 5 members only save at 33.3 percent and other 10 members not save at 66.7 percent.

Uncertainty about their future Migrant workers who decided to stay back during the exodus faced assault from their neighbours, who accused them of being infected with COVID-19. They thus could not venture out to buy food, work, healthcare, nutrition, housing and sanitation. Migrant workers faced uncertainly future.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Those who are familiar with government programs on migration are graduated.

These are the beneficiaries. According to research, uneducated people are unaware of government programs.

CHI SQUARE TEST FOR EDUCATIONAL AND KNOWLEDGE AT GOVERNMENT SCHEME OF THE RESPONDENTS

The chi square test of analysis was carried out to know the association between education and the knowledge of government programs. Over all education is significantly associated with knowledge of government scheme. Significant level is at 0.05.

Table 10
Educational and awareness about the government scheme of the Respondents

Education		Government Scheme		Pearson Chi-Square			
		No	Yes	Total	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Education	Illiterate	7	0	7	12.222 ^a	2	.002
	Literate	2	1	3			
	Graduate	0	5	5			

Source: primary data

H₀ sig value is 0.002 we reject the null hypothesis at 5 percent level of significance which means that we are confident of this result by 95 percent. So literacy has a significant and positive effect of knowledge about the government migrant scheme.

The table (10) show from this analysis, it is seen that the education knowledge was significant association with knowledge of government scheme and use of government scheme. The p value is less than 0.05.

AVAILED AT GOVERNMENT SCHEME

The government arranged transport, relief camps, labour laws and quarantine measures. To provide jobs and wages to workers, the average

daily wages under the MGNREGA, and further announced free food grains for the migrant workers. States also imposed strict measures for migrants to follow, either while leaving or after entering state borders and district boarders.

Table 11
Education and Availed at government scheme of the Respondents

Availed government scheme	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relief camps	4	.27	.458
Transport arrangement	3	.20	.414
Labour laws	3	.20	.414
Quarantine Measure	6	.40	.507

Source: primary data

The table (11) explain respondent follow this type of government policies after returning home town. In the sum of availed relief camps 4 members, transport arrangement 3 members, labour laws 3 members and quarantine measures 6 members.

To assess Government policies and program implemented to help migrant workers.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES

By the central and state governments implemented various measures to help them and later arranged transport for them. Many migrant also died due to the lockdown, with reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, exhaustion, road and rail accidents, police brutality and denial of timely medical care.

DIRECTIVES

- On 27 March the Home Minister ordered to ensure that migrant would not move the lockdown period.
- On 28 March National Disaster Fund (NDRF) for providing food and shelter to the migrant.
- On 29 March government orders landlord should not demand rent and employer should pay wages without deduction.
- The order regarding payment of wages was withdrawn in the guidelines for the lockdown extension issued on 17 May.
- On 16 May the government announced the National Migrant Information System (NMIS), an online database created by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The government planned to keep the workers updated by feeding their phone numbers in the system.

Relief camps

- Delhi government provided free food to 4 lakh people every day as of late march and 500 hunger relief centres. Provided food across the country in food camps run by the government and NGO's on april 5.

- On 12 April 37978 relief camps and 26225 food camps.
- The government of Kerala changed food and provided north Indian dishes, providing carom boards and recharge facilities for phones, as well as provide medical essential such as masks, sanitizers, and medicines.

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Buses

✓ On 28 May 91 lakh migrants had travelled back home in government arranged transport facilities.

✓ On 23 May 40 lakh migrants had travelled to their homes by buses.

Shramik Special Trains

✓ On 1 May the central government permitted the Indian Railways to launch "Shramik Special" trains for the migrant workers.

✓ On 3 May the Ministry of Home Affairs mildly reprimanded the state governments for hurriedly requesting for trains to transport migrants, stating that the trains were primarily mainly meant for those who were stranded due to the sudden lockdown and not the migrants.

✓ The central government then faced criticism from the opposition, with the Indian National Congress promising to sponsor the tickets of the migrants on 4 May.

✓ The government then announced that the railways would offer an 85% subsidy on the train fares, with the state governments funding the remaining 15%.

✓ 4277 Shramik Special trains had transported about 60 lakh people, as of 12 June.

RELIEF MEASURE

✓ Most important measure On 13th Jun priministernarantramodilanchrs1000 crore employment scheme to provide income support to migrant workers who returned to their home states during the covid-19 lockdown.

✓ 3 April the central government had released 11092 crore to states and

UT s under the NDRF, to fund food and shelter arrangements for migrants.

√ To help provide jobs and wages to workers, the average daily wages under the MGNREGA were increased as of 1 April.

√ On 14 May Finance Minister Sitharaman Further announced free food grains for the migrant workers.

LABOUR LAWS

√ The government of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat sought to temporarily revise their labour laws in early May with the purpose attracting industries and investments.

√ Labour unions criticized this as being harmful to the migrant workers while giving more authority to the employers,

√ Ten of them then wrote to the ILO on 14 May regarding the same, to which the ILO responded by reassuring them that it had contacted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

QUARANTINE MEASURES

√ State government opened thousands of quarantine centers to houses them, with some states imposing mandatory institutional quarantine. States also imposed strict measures for migrants to follow, either while leaving or after entering states borders.

SUPREME COURT HEARING

√ On 30 March the Supreme Court of India agreed to hear a petition on behalf of the migrant workers.

√ On 16 May the Supreme Court rejected a PIL to direct the District magistrates to identify and provide free relief and transport to the Migrant workers.

√ On 26 May the Supreme Court ordered the centre and states to provide free food, shelter and transport to stranded migrant workers.

STATE GOVERNMENT MEASURES

√ The state government was among the first to launch measures against Covid-19. The state government had announced a 3,280 crore relief package on 24 March. It included financial support of 1000Rs to all ration card holders, free rice and other essential commodities in the wake of lockdown. It also provided registered street vendors, auto rickshaw drivers, Migrant labourers and construction workers in the state with similar provisions. It had also announced extension periods of three months to make loan and tax payments for all citizens, and one month to pay house rent for workers including migrants across the state. Currently, the government operates 311 relief camps and shelters for migrant workers.

√ Earlier it had allocated sum of 60crore from disaster relief fund to deal with the crisis. It had also taken steps to provide medicines for the two months to patients with hypertension, diabetes mellitus, HIV and TB while also monitoring pregnant women who are due within that time. The government had started screening passengers arriving at the airports in January. It had screened 2,10,538 passengers as of 1 April. As of 16, more than lakh passengers have been placed under quarantine.

√ The government has established helpline for public. It also released an app for officials to monitor people under home quarantine. The government has announced a compensation of 50 lakh to the families of those who die during Covid-19 duty.

√ On 31 March in the wake of ht nationwide lockdown, the government announced a one month rent freeze for student and workers, including migrant labourers. It also extended the time to make payments including loans and taxes by three months.

√ On 2 April, the government announced care package of 1000 and

monthly allowed ration of food supply for each household.

✓ On 13 April, the Coimbatore district administration made usage of face masks compulsory for all.

✓ On 26 April the state government enacted a new ordinance to punish who try to block burial of cremation under Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939.

✓ The government agreed to allow flight operations from 25 May 2020. It limited incoming flights to Chennai International Airport to 25. Passengers showing symptoms will be subjected to tests to hospitals if found positive, while ones without symptoms or with symptoms shall undergo 14 day home quarantine. All passengers are stamped with quarantine seals.

CONCLUSION

The covid-19 is spreading around the world and affecting people worldwide. Migrant workers should not be seen as a problem today. The study revealed that the government took more action for migrant people. The research has concluded those who are familiar with government programs on migration are graduated. These are the beneficiaries. According to research, uneducated people are unaware of government programs. So we need to find a solution to this. In particular, migration of human capital should be tailored to economic growth and poverty alleviation to support economic growth. The government should therefore make systematic plans to improve the living standards of migrant workers and increase economic growth.

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