

Covid-19: Impact On Migration

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Abstract

The Government of India declared Covid-19 as national disaster and imposed complete national lockdown to contain the spread of outbreak and suspended transportation and all economic activities and services. Migration is a livelihood strategy of millions of people in India. This brought turmoil in the lives of millions who are primarily involved in the informal sector. They lost their livelihood overnight and got stranded in different pockets. As speculated by ILO (2020), India is likely to face the job crisis because of the Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown, and migrant workers and workers in informal sector are likely to be badly hit. India is a leading country of origin of international migrants with about 17 million emigrants according to the latest estimates released by the United Nations (2019). India also continues to be the top remittance (USD 78.6 billion) recipient country as well (World Migration Report, 2020). Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the international migrants from India and the major migration corridors India shares with the world. Therefore, protecting the health of refugees and migrants through informed policies and interventions is critically important to public health protection of all citizens.

Keywords: Covid-19, Disaster, Impact, Worker, Migration, Displacement, Environment

Rationale

Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence, across either internal or international borders. The latest government data on migration comes from the 2011 Census, India had 45.6 crore migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001 (31% of the population). Between 2001 and 2011, while population grew by 18%, the number of migrants increased by 45%. In 2011, 99% of total

migration was internal and immigrants comprised 1%. The lockdown has severely impacted migrants, several of whom lost their jobs due to shutting of industries and were stranded outside their native places wanting to get back. Since then, the government has announced relief measures for migrants, and made arrangements for migrants to return to their native place. The Supreme Court of India, recognizing the problems faced by migrants stranded in different parts of the country, [reviewed](#) transportation and relief arrangements made by the government. On June 9, the Court [directed](#) central and state governments to complete transportation of remaining stranded migrants and expand focus of relief measures to facilitate employment for returning migrants. Government of India has rescued many emigrants from these affected countries prior to the lockdown in India. In some of the Gulf countries, many Indian migrants are locked down in a crowded neighbourhood, raising fears that it will become a coronavirus hotbed while some other countries have asked the migrant workers to stay home, and stopped paying them. The lockdown imposed in many of the gulf countries have dramatically slowed their economies. This loss will not only affect the workers but also the respective state economies (The Indian Express, 2020). Many of the international migrants are likely to return after the lockdown is lifted either due to jobless or to prevent such agonies to happen in future. The Government of India and state governments along with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and charitable societies have taken various steps to mitigate the effect of the lockdown on the vulnerable groups including migrant workers. These include providing shelter, relief camps with provision of food, health care and other basic necessities. In a recent report, government has proposed to send trained counsellors and community group leaders belonging to all faiths to the relief camps and shelter homes to deal with any consternation that the migrants might be going through (Press Trust of India, 2020).

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. There are conspicuous migration corridors within the country-Bihar to Delhi, Bihar to Haryana and Punjab, Uttar Pradesh to Maharashtra, Odisha to Gujarat, Odisha to Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan to Gujarat. It is quite likely that the incidence of Covid-19 may also rise sharply in out migrating poorer states due to return migration.

Review of Literature

Liem et al (2020) studied the migrants may be particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of Covid-19. Their ability to avoid the infection, receive adequate health care and cope with the economic, social and psychological impacts of the pandemic can be affected by a variety of factors, including: their living and working conditions, lack of consideration of their cultural and linguistic diversity in service provision, xenophobia, their limited local knowledge and networks, and their access to rights and level of inclusion in host communities, often related to their migration status. **Kluge et al. (2020)** that article identifies implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for refugees and migrants due to: (a) suspension of resettlement travel for refugees; (b) restrictions on population movements leading to potential refoulement of asylum seekers; (c) local transmission in refugee hosting countries; and (d) suspension of search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean. The authors recommend site-specific epidemiological risk assessments to determine the extent of the risk of Covid-19 introduction and transmission, along with case management protocols and rapid deployment of outbreak response teams if needed. Refugees and migrants can be affected by income loss, healthcare insecurity, and the implications of postponement of decisions on their legal status or reduction of employment, legal, and administrative services. Refugees and migrants are also overrepresented among the homeless. There is limited culturally and linguistically accessible information about Covid-19. Country responses have affected volunteer community service provision. **Poole et al. (2020)**, studied the affected by humanitarian crises are expected to be particularly susceptible to Covid-19 due to displacement, crowded housing, malnutrition, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) tools, and stigmatization. These settings lack the infrastructure, support, and health systems to mount a comprehensive response. Poor governance, public distrust, and political violence may further undermine interventions in these settings. Standard public health measures-to identify infectious cases, administer supportive care and novel treatments for the seriously ill, and trace contacts-are particularly difficult to perform in humanitarian settings. Given these increased vulnerabilities, humanitarian crises should be viewed as a priority for national and international bodies that seek to combat the unfolding pandemic. The authors argue that these guidelines alone may not suffice in humanitarian settings, and that interventions tailored to the needs of crisis-affected populations, delivered with transparent information, in the context of inclusive governance practices, are urgently needed in the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Objectives

1. To study the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Migration.
2. To know the reasons for Intra-State and Inter-State Migration.
3. To know challenges faced by Migrant's workers during Covid-19.
4. To find out the various Relief Measures undertaken by the Governments.

Methodology

The present paper is based on secondary source of data. The secondary data is also collected from various reference books, Journals, Magazine Annual reports, Reports in Government, News paper and Internet websites.

Concept of Migration

Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence, across either internal (within country) or international (across countries) borders. The latest government data on migration comes from the 2011 Census. As per the Census, India had 45.6 crore migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001 (31% of the population). Between 2001 and 2011, while population grew by 18%, the number of migrants increased by 45%. In 2011, 99% of total migration was internal and immigrants (international migrants) comprised 1%. As per Census 2011, migration in India is majorly between rural to rural areas (47.4%), followed by urban to urban areas (22.6%), rural to urban areas (22.1%), and urban to rural areas (7.9%). Between Census 2001 and 2011, rural to urban migration increased marginally from 21.8% to 22.1% and urban to urban migration increased from 15.2% to 22.6%.

Reasons for Intra-State and Inter-State Migration

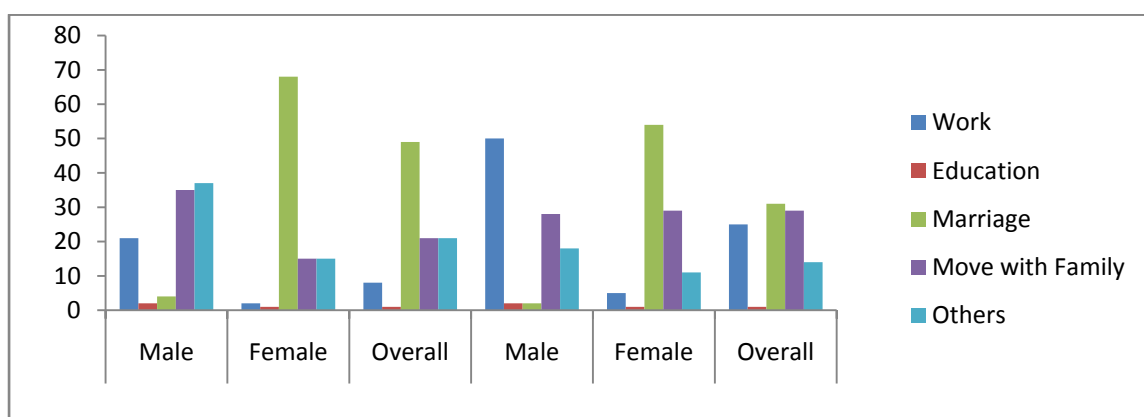
The movement of people, results in a more efficient allocation of human resources to sectors and regions where they are better utilized. In India, as in most countries, there are generally no restrictions on internal movement. The share of family related migration (marriage) has increased from 28% to 36% (as share of total migrants) between Census 2001 and 2011. While 87% women migrants move due to family related reasons, for men this share is 36%. 50% of men move due to work. The share of work-related migration decreased from 16% to 13% between Census 2001 and 2011. However, the Group noted that in terms of absolute numbers work-related migrants increased from 5.7 million to 6.9 million for rural areas and from 2.8 million to 4.8 million for urban areas.

Migrant workforce in urban areas, about 33% of the male workforce, and 56% of the female workforce is composed of migrant workers. The Group also noted that the stereotype of migrants as being relatively lower income is not true. In both urban and rural areas, about 31% of all migrant workers are in the top consumption quintile (one-fifth). In urban areas about 62% of all migrant workers are in the top consumption quintile. Nature of jobs in urban areas, 33% of the male migrants work in traditional services followed by 27% in manufacturing, and 16% in modern services. Among female migrants in urban areas, 34% work in public services followed by 23% in manufacturing. In rural areas, 37% of the male migrants are employed in primary jobs (agriculture, fishing, mining), followed by 20% in traditional jobs. Among female migrants in rural areas, 84% are employed in primary jobs.

Table: 1- Intra-State and Inter-State Migration

Reasons	Intra-State Migration			Inter-State Migration		
	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
Work	21	2	8	50	5	25
Education	2	1	1	2	1	1
Marriage	4	68	49	2	54	31
Move with Family	35	15	21	28	29	29
Others	37	15	21	18	11	14

Sources: Census 2011; PRS



As of 2011, majority (70%) of intra-state migration was due to reasons of marriage and family with variation between male and female migrants. While 83% of females moved for marriage and family, the corresponding figure for males was 39%. Overall, 8% of people moved within a state for work (21% of male migrants and 2% of female

migrants). Movement for work was higher among inter-state migrants- 50% of male and 5% of female inter-state migrants. As per the Census, there were 4.5 crore migrant workers in 2011. However, according to the [Working Group Report](#) on Migration, the Census underestimates the migrant worker population. Female migration is recorded as movement due to family since that is the primary reason. However, many women take up employment after migrating which is not reflected in the number of women moving for work-related reasons. According to the Economic Survey, 2016-17, Census data also underestimates temporary migrant labour movement. In 2007-08, the NSSO estimated the size of India's migrant labour at seven crore (29% of the workforce). The Economic Survey, 2016-17, estimated six crore inter-state labour migrants between 2001-2011. The Economic Survey also estimated that in each year between 2011-2016 on average 90 lakh, people travelled for work.

Covid-19 and Migrant Workers

Migration is considered as an integral part of the process of evolution and closely associated with human civilization. Intra and inter migration with respect to a particular geographical area is a continuous process. Make in India and Skill India, in the opinion of the Working Group, the continuance of India's transformation away from agriculture into a rapidly growing economy based on competitive manufacturing and services and ensuring that this growth translates into new opportunities for India is intrinsically tied to the success of migration. The Working Group, focused on actions that can be taken or facilitated by governments, whether at the Union, state or federal level to enhance free movement of citizens across India. Covid-19 and related lockdowns have posed a specific set of challenges to migrant domestic workers. For some, workload has increased and free Sundays have been denied as the whole family is staying at home and is demanding more constant assistance. Others have been let go by employers confined at home, refusing contact with outsiders and have tested positive to Covid-19. Other domestic workers have reported being abused by employers sending them for errands without adequate protective equipment, or withholding salaries and documents.

Migrants are more likely to be excluded from welfare systems protecting workers who lose their jobs and incomes due to lockdown-related closure and failure of businesses, layoffs and reduction in working hours-often despite their disproportionate contribution to welfare systems. They are often not entitled to guaranteed income, unemployment benefits, and food

vouchers, paid sick leave or even days off. Similarly, they might be excluded from relief and support packages governments are and will be rolling out in response to Covid-19 from assistance when resources are limited. Migrants already working in exploitative conditions before the pandemic may have limited options to look for other jobs, limited ability to move internally or across borders, and limited savings available to cope with hardship. In countries in which migration status is tied to a person's employer and job, workplace closure can also result in irregularity.

Covid-19 is also shaped by people's work and working conditions. Migrants make up a disproportionate share of the workforce in sectors that have remained active throughout the crisis, such as agriculture, construction work, logistics and deliveries, personal care and health-care provision, garbage collection and cleaning services. In addition, migrants are often also over-represented in some of the industries hardest hit by the crisis, such as food services, non-essential retail or domestic work or in the most precarious positions in any sector. These unprotected, undeclared positions will represent a substantial share of the millions of people Covid-19 has pushed and will push towards underemployment and unemployment-a group in which migrant workers are overrepresented (ILO, 2020; US Department of Labor).

Challenges faced by Migrant's workers during covid-19

Migrant workers during the Covid-19 lockdown have suffered many hardships. With economic activities being virtually out of gear due to the lockdown announced by the Prime Minister on 24th March, 2020, almost 4 crores of workers went jobless. They also had to face the problems of shortages of food. It was at this time that they started remembering their near and dear and suffered from a sense of isolation at their places of residence. Hence, they thought to return their homes by whatever transportation means they had. Some of them caught unsafe transportation means such as trucks and lorries and thus met with a series of accident on their way to homes. According to the international organizations like International Labour Organization and World Economic Forum, an estimated 40 crore migrant workers live in different parts of the country. Majority of them hail from the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa. These labourers had to face challenges related to conveyance, food, shelter and social stigma. Some of the data issued by the state governments are serious.

Relief Measures undertaken by the Governments

In March 2020, the Union Home Ministry directed the States to make use of National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for providing food, shelter etc. to the migrant workers. Further, in the last week of March 2020, the Central and State Government asked the landlords not to press for rent from the tenants until the period of lockdown is over. Moreover, the Union Home Ministry directed the State government set up relief camps for these workers on their transit route. In May 2020, the Central government announced the setting up of National Migrant Information System to enable the National Disaster Management authority to create a data base related to the numbers, movement and arrival of these workers to be shared by various state governments, later in order to make welfare planning.

The Central government directed the State governments are running relief and shelter camps in different states. There is no definite estimate available at the moment but not less than 10 million migrant workers are stranded. While their families at the place of origin are being supported through various measures under Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana announced on 26th March 2020, the stranded migrant workers are hardly getting anything except food in the camps. It is suggested that each stranded migrant worker in cities should be given Rs 6000 (i.e., minimum rate of MGNREGS Rs 202 per day X 30 days) by the Central Government in addition to the financial support by the State Government per month for at least three months. It would be advisable to give monetary support in cash to the stranded migrant workers in camps, designated shelters and other places in cities.

Other Relief Measures

Starting of health insurance scheme for internal migrants may be helpful for the state government as well as migrants at the destination especially during any epidemic or pandemic. For instance, in Kerala, a health insurance scheme known as Awaz Health Insurance Scheme is offered to support migrants. This scheme is also helpful to provide valid documents to migrants, and helps the government to have record of migrants. There may be large number of international migrants who might lose jobs due to COVID- 19 pandemic and forced to return. Therefore, there is a requirement for the government to help those return migrants by providing them guidance, training and financial support to those who wish to set up business in order to successfully reintegrate them in the place of origin. For example, in

Kerala, there is a scheme by Norka Department for Return Migrants which offers return migrants, who wish to set up a business in Kerala, a capital subsidy and interest subsidy for their investment. There is a need to strengthen the database on migration and migrant households through Census, National Sample Survey (NSS), NFHS and Migration Surveys. The available data are very old and also not available on time. As migration has affected the households in almost all dimensions in both rural and urban areas, an effective inclusion of migrants in our official statistics and access will be helpful in formulating robust and inclusive policy and programmes in the country.

Conclusion

Migration is associated with economic endeavours leading to inter and intra state migrations. But the situation arose due to pandemic Covid-19 is panic and became a tragedy in the history of India. The outbreak of Corona Virus with continuous reporting of fatality of the disease created consternation among the workers staying miles away from their near and dears. The imposition of lockdown and shutdown in phased manner also created uncertainty on their food security. The migrants without job and money have no other option to sustain in the host city except coming back to their native land. This desperate movement of huge number of migrants in the pandemic situation has created a bigger challenge for the state to address the life and livelihood issues simultaneously with a limited resource and infrastructure facilities. The increasing trend of Covid-19 and its prolong nature has posed challenge for the state government to contain it and revive the economy at the earliest.

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