

IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON MIGRATED LABOUR

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Abstract:

COVID-19 has been projected as worse than the Great Depression of 1930. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared CORONA (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic in the month of March 2020 (2nd Week). The WHO reached to this decision since the positive cases were rapidly showing the up-swinging trends towards 20 lacs with death toll crossed over to 1 lakh plus. The entire world (around 170 countries; all across the continents) is suffering miserably without having any vaccine to embark upon the virus to contain it immediately. As an only effective tool available to weaken the virus spread, the countries are helplessly exercising lockdown. This will surely affect the health of the economy of the countries and eventually the global economic condition. It is felt that this will bring the biggest slowdown of 100 years in the world. India; as a fast developing country will have to face an extremely severe effect of this natural phenomenon. The world has witnessed several epidemics such as the Spanish Flu of 1918, outbreak of HIV/AIDS, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and Ebola. In the past, India has had to deal with diseases such as the small pox, plague and polio. All of these individually have been pretty severe episodes.

Key words: Employment, Migration, Absolute Poverty, Economic crisis, Trough, etc.

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Introduction:-

The COVID-19 crisis has posed unprecedented economic challenges for governments across the world with certain sectors becoming more and more vulnerable to this pandemic. The plight of migrant labours in India during lockdown has shown fault lines not only in the economy but in the society too. The pandemic has worsened the condition of migrants in India as it has put the severe challenges to poverty eradication programmes and increasing the income of farmers. Nevertheless, migrated labours have different characteristics, migrated laborers in India can be either small landholding farmers or landless laborers. Among the populace, the migrants were found to be one of the most vulnerable groups in this lockdown, as their very

livelihood came to a complete standstill. The findings highlight the different plight of the migrants, who had the pressing need to head back home to safety despite the acute financial crisis and the travel problems.

The daily wagers were the worst sufferers of this lockdown. With the enforcement of the lockdown, not only were they without jobs but also were frustrated because of the cessation of their daily income on which they survived. A new normalcy of surviving in a state of constant panic came into place, with the people being asked to live in this uncertainty for a longer duration than what was anticipated in the beginning of the pandemic. A batch of novel practices came into existence as part of rigorous mitigation efforts, such as, “social distancing, household quarantine, facemasks, vigilant sanitization and hand washing, and avoidance of public gatherings, public transportation etc.”

Objective of the study:-

1. To understand the effects of COVID 19 on Migrated labour
2. To focus on solution for migrated labour due to COVID 19

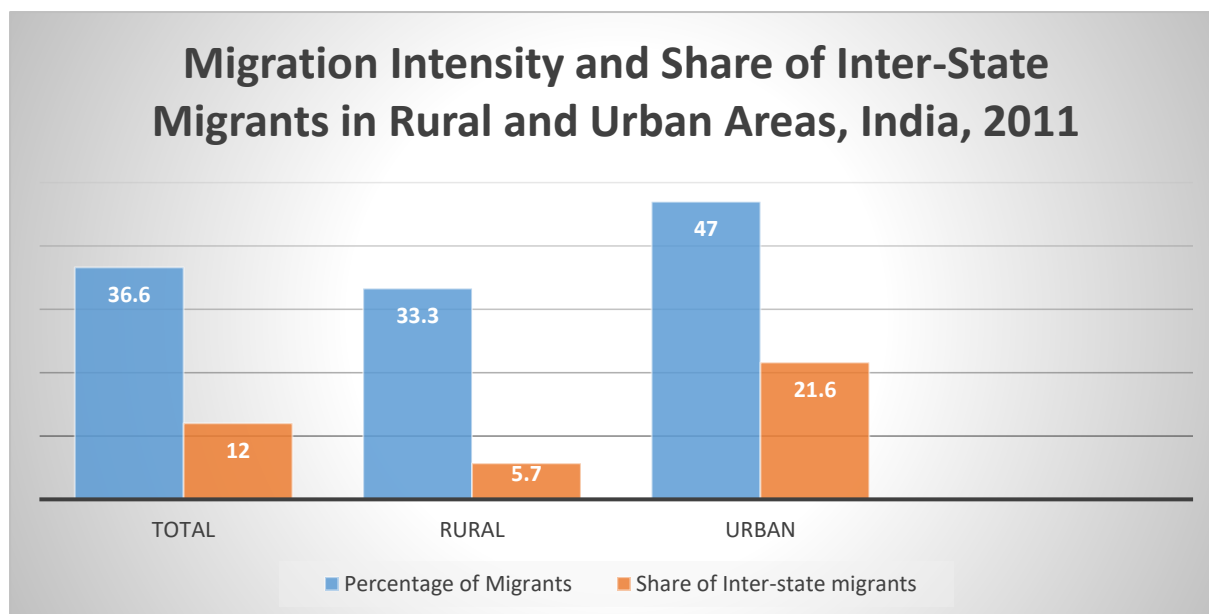
Research Methodology:-

The Research approach used in this project is a ‘Secondary Data Analysis’. The information existing in the following analysis is based on Government Surveys, Internet, Newspapers, Magazines and Books etc.

COVID 19- A crisis For Migrated Labour: -

India has a vast workforce with more than 450 million people in the informal sector (Sharma 2020). According to one estimate, about 90% of women work in informal sectors, of which 20% work in urban areas (Geetika, Singh and Gupta 2011). The informal sector in India is highly insecure and unregulated, with few or no social security provisions. The COVID-19 crisis is expected to have a long-term impact on informal sector workers (International Labor Organization 2020) as they are the most vulnerable communities and are more exposed to the current global pandemic (Sengupta and Jha 2020). Pachauri (2020) argues that COVID-19 will result in a long-term shock for poor people in the informal sector. Extreme poverty and food scarcity are already an issue for most informal sector workers (Khan and Mansoor 2020).

Migrant workers, and particularly women, are more vulnerable and face multiple deprivations from being poor and from their position as informal workers. Women face losing their livelihood, suffering human rights violations, and contracting COVID-19 (UN Women 2020). Women are potentially affected more because in many contexts they are considered to be less productive and subsequently have a lower position and rank in society (Chakraborty 2020). Female headed families are significantly affected by COVID-19 and are unable to meet household needs due to the lack of economic options. The pandemic also aggravates prevalent gender inequalities and vulnerabilities. COVID-19 has unevenly impacted women and girls in the domains of health, economy, social protection, and gender-based violence (UN 2020).



Source: D2 Migration Table, Census of India 2011

Urban Agglomeration (UA)	Percentage of migrants to total population	% Share of inter-state migrants to total migrants	Number of COVID cases in the respective districts as on 13th April 2020 (Total Cases by district 6761)
Delhi	43.1	87.8	898
Grater Mumbai	54.9	46.0	880
Kolkata	40.8	18.2	29
Chennai	51.0	11.8	149
BruhatBanglore	52.3	35.1	71
Hyderabad	64.3	7.1	236
Ahmedabad	48.7	24.1	134
Pune	64.8	22.3	190
Urban India	47.0	21.6	Share of COVID 19 cases in these metro cities to total cases is 38 %

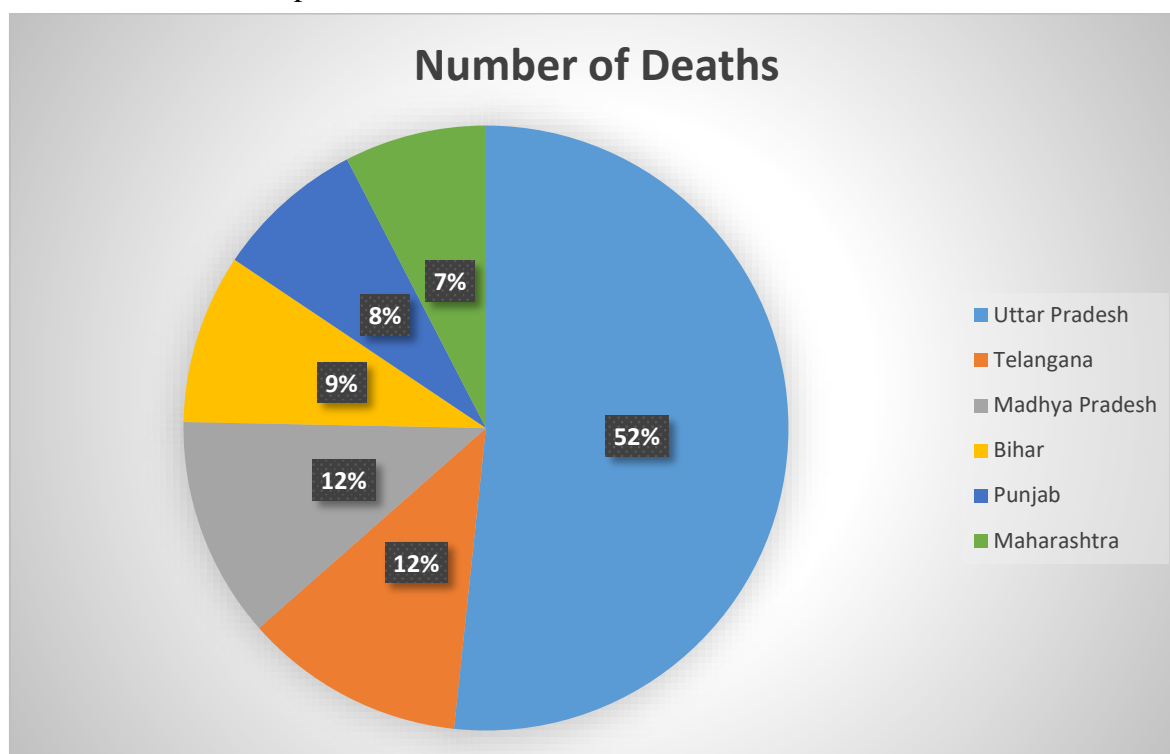
Source: Census of India 2011, D3 (Appendix) Migration Table,

<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/DistrictWiseList354.pdf> accessed on 13th April, 2020)

Migration is a livelihood strategy adopted by millions of people in India. Most of the migration for work and employment is directed towards the urban centers. About half of the urban population are migrants and one fifth of them are inter-state migrants (See above Figure). Rural to urban migrants are mainly concentrated in 53 million plus urban agglomerations (with one million and more) that comprises 140 million out of 377

million urban population of the country equivalent to 43 percent of total urban population as per 2011 Census. Out of 53 million plus cities, eight of them are mega-cities with a population of 5 million and more (See above Table). As on 13th April 2020, the respective districts of eight mega cities reported about two-fifth of corona virus positive cases. The incidence of COVID 19 shows that these metropolitan areas are the centers from where the disease has been spreading to the near as well as far off places.

According to Hindustan times, about 198 migrant workers have been killed during lockdown. There were at least 1,461 accidents over the course of the nationwide lockdown between March 25 and May 31 in which at least 750 people were killed, including 198 migrant workers. There were 1,390 who got injured, according to the data. Migrant workers, killed during their efforts to go back home, comprise 26.4% of the overall deaths during the lockdown whereas essential workers comprise 5.3% of the total deaths. The overall deaths involving other road users stands at 68.3 percent.



Source: *Hindustan Times, June 02, 2020*

Out of the reported deaths, Uttar Pradesh accounted for over 30% (245) of the total deaths followed by Telangana (56), Madhya Pradesh (56), Bihar (43), Punjab (38) and Maharashtra (36). “Since the lockdown began, nearly 200 migrant workers have lost their lives while walking, cycling back home, traveling in HMV and LMV commercial vehicles, and in mass fatality crashes involving state organized buses. One of the recurring reasons for mass casualties in most of the incidents was speeding and driver fatigue due to continuous driving on tenuous routes”.

All the crisis occurred during could be avoided by constructive steps by the Government. Though various relief programs run by the authorities yet these obstacles has been experienced by migrant labours. It is expected that Government should focus more on protectionism and security of such population.

Result and discussion: -

The present study attempted to explore the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers. The themes that emerged illustrate the widespread impacts of the pandemic on migrant workers and their families. The unplanned lockdown consequent to the spread of COVID-19 has resulted in the plight of people in the informal sector, especially the most vulnerable migrant workers. The dominant experience was the loss of livelihood and the increase of debt. Most of the migrant workers worked for daily wages. Unfortunately, Government has undertaken ineffective, unplanned and inefficient strategies which are utterly failed.

Conclusion: -

The COVID-19 pandemic has ubiquitous impacts on people across the globe. The vulnerable segments of the population, however, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and the case of migrant workers in countries like India is an issue of grave concern. The present study is one of the first documenting the experience of migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis in India. The study shed light upon the dismal state of migrant workers and their families, due to the unplanned lockdown and subsequent period of socio-economic and health crisis. The major issues arising from the study about migrant workers experience include the loss of livelihood and debt. The participants had to compromise many essential requirements in their daily living. The burden of responsibility and captivity made the life of labours stressful. Migrant workers experienced a significant disruption of access to services as a result of lockdown and restrictions.

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