

Migrant Workers home Coming: An Arduous Journey

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Abstract

In December 2019, a novel Coronavirus has resulted in the outbreak of a respiratory illness known as COVID-19. Human coronavirus is the major cause of the 'common cold'. This virus has emerged from bats, adapted in other small wild mammals, and now acquired efficient human transmission. The novel disease has turned into a global outbreak. The COVID19 outbreak is upending life for families around the world. Schools, childcare centre are closed for this outbreak. Everyone is finding themselves stuck at home for most of the day due to lockdown. Emerged in 2019, the disease began threatening the health and lives of millions of people after a few weeks. These have declared a public health emergency through the whole world. Now the disease achieved a pandemic status. The goal of this research topic is to stimulate investigations on how migrants people are affected by the COVID19 emergency. Migrants are not familiar with their new environment in which they temporarily lived in. they are now facing various social, psychological, and emotional trauma in such situations. Previously they were forced to leave their native places. Now, they are facing decimations from their native places. The paper has attempted to discuss the problems and trauma faced by migrant workers with the help of mass media and sociological viewpoint in this acute pandemic situation.

Keywords: COVID-19, Migrant workers, Outbreak and Pandemic.

Introduction

Migrant workers are those that either migrate within their home country or outside it to pursue work. They don't have any intention to stay permanently in any country or region (Yeates. 2009). Labor migrants are those who move for employment. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines migrant labor as casual, unskilled workers, and move systematically from one place to another to offer their services. Sometimes on a seasonal basis. This group is one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. They are the least protected. Sometimes come to the host countries where they perform the jobs that natives don't want to do. Migrant workers' jobs are called as "three- Ds" jobs; Dirty, Degrading, Dangerous (Abella, 2004). They are regularly subject to abuse, exploitation, discriminatory treatment. The situation has been made worse with some aspects of globalization, liberalization, and trade. After globalisation they were free to go outside their countries, in search of

work. Those countries are not always polite with them (Lenard, & Straehle, 2010).

During the outbreak of a communicable disease such as COVID19 with restrictions of activities, they tend to move back. They are stuck at borders in the state, district, and national levels for the coming back (Abi-Habb, 2020). Immediate concerns about what they are facing relate to food, shelter, healthcare, fear of getting infected, or spreading the infection. This is the most marginalized section of our society; developed on daily wages for their lives. They faced harassment, negative reactions from the local community. In this situation they spend in temporary shelters. Now for sudden lockdown in coronavirus, without any prior notice, they evicted from their temporary shelters and services (Pandey, 2020). Some of them are mothers with children, young girls, old aged, continuously trying to reach their homes (Mohanty, 2020). Still we don't know how many losses they have faced, what are their conditions, how painful situations they back in

their efforts. They were beaten up, charged for disturbing lockdown in India (Suffion, 2020). They are also fired with tear gas, because they protest to come back. The workers' claim is that they wanted to walk back to their native places. Some of them have broken into tears when asked about their loss. Every day, India welcomes migrant's from different fields. India is dealing with great fear especially, where the returnee is from the U. S. and Europe or from Mumbai, Pune, where COVID19 cases are high (Sankar, 2020).

Migrants suffered from lacking money, public transportation, without protection. With these sufferings they forced to take hundreds of miles back to their home villages, also with some deadly, terrific journey (Day, 2020). The coronavirus has created difficult situations for citizens across the world. However, these difficulties are may be more severe for migrants than others. They are not in such a position to maintain social distancing hygiene or any other good pieces of advice. They have to stay in camps, temporary settlements outside their houses (Saxena, 2020).

Migrant workers are the biggest losers for their short –term contracts in the job. At the same time, the COVID19 crisis shows how much the health and other services sectors are reliant on migrant workers. The hospitals are suffering from lack of staff and health workers, who are migrants (Chatterjee, 2020).

Methodology

The current study is a step to know the impact of COVID19 on migrant workers both physically and psychologically. Data were collected only through different mass media sources. Because of lockdown researcher is not able to conduct face to face interviews with the migrants. Also social distancing is a matter and a major cause of limitation to collect primary data. The paper is written on the base of secondary data, taken from authentic sources. The paper is also analysed the specific ways, how migrants have been affected by the pandemic with some own experiences as a citizen of India.

A journey of coming back home

Usually returning home amid the COVID 19 lockdown brings cheer to many migrants. It was tragic that for coming home they walked miles, scorched in heats, begged for water. People shut the door on them, refused to come close (Barik, 2020). They were felt like COVID19 explosive, carrying the virus. While the Government started to send train, bus for migrant workers, they asked to pay for the tickets (Dastidar and Siddique, 2020). As for the political conflict, which should bear the cost of their journey, the poor migrant workers took the hardship of money from their savings. Many of over 4200 migrant workers of Uttar Pradesh ferried through 'Shramik Special Trains', said they had been charged for the journey (Harigovind, 2020). In fact they got no meal till they being quarantined.

When migrants are forced to return, they were almost in a weak financial state. Typically they had to spend a large amount of savings on the journey. Not only that, while travelling they faced less access to food, water, sanitation, medical support. They have suffered in both economically, psychologically, physically extremely bad situations.

The migrant workers who have been left in various parts of the country, following the central Government announcement of nationwide lockdown in March to stop the spread of coronavirus, got injured (Siddique, 2020). Many of them have died in road accidents. Approx ten thousands of daily wage migrants workers suddenly found themselves without jobs or source of income. With the looming fear of hunger, men-women-children were forced to being around journeys' like cycling, hitching rides on Lorries, water tankers, milk vans etc. They were always alone; some had young children and pregnant wives too.

Body in Surveillance

The Home Affairs Ministry ordered to intercept and quarantine the migrants for two weeks, to control the virus. Earlier reports and images are emerged in Television of beating migrants with batons for breaking quarantine

rules, allegedly spraying disinfect. But what can they do; poor facilities, lack of food forced them to flee (Thacker, 2020). About seventy people fled from a quarantine centre of Bihar, because they said, "Instead of Coronavirus, hunger will kill us" (Baruah, 2020). They are also deprived of water, bathroom, and medicines. Several people in that worker suffer from hypertension, diabetes, asthma, heart disease. Most of their medicines have gotten over. In Delhi a fifty-year-old diabetic patient died at quarantine centre for lack of food on time (Mathew, 2020).

Stigmatization and social exclusion with COVID19 for migrants

The people who are coming home with a terrific journey treated like a "social boycott" from their native places. Migrant workers even being negative of COVID -19, faced stigma from their places (Kumar and Mohanty, 2020).

Stigma is the negative identification of a person's characteristics, treating them as they are not deserving of respect or less worthy. Sociologist Ervin Goffman describes through the *stigma* that, stigmatized people are separated from the "normal" groups. This separation implies a process of discrimination. The majority of migrants experiencing stigmatization, they are labelled as criminals. They are not only affixed for being poor or their appearance but only for their occupations and migrations (Link and Phelan, 2020).

Migrant workers after coming home villages in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha have been harassed by others in the village. They shunned by their natives, even after completing the mandatory 14-day quarantine period. In some districts, workers said they are slurred for being lower caste and suspected as COVID -19 patients because they could be less sanitized.

Sociologist Howard S. Becker said in labelling theory, that individuals decided as deviant after being labelled as that (William and McShne, 2010). These workers are facing continuous negative stereotypes after being labelled as "Coronavirus Carrier".

Migrants are in the "dirty", "distressful" image after coming back at their own residences. These workers said, they always feel that local people suspected them of being in the disease of COVID-19. Villagers are separating them, looking at them with a different eyes. Some workers shared their feelings through mass media of being separated from their close relatives also. Family members are speaking with them in a different tone. In many jobs, occupations, it was noted only local people get priorities. When the migrants sought help or services, they treated with suspicious eyes. Nobody wants to close to them. They are continuously becoming a group of socially excluded. After releasing from self-quarantined the migrant workers of Rajasthan said, "Villagers are scared of them" (Kumar and Mohanty).

Conclusion

The present study revealed that workers who were first going to other cities, states, and countries for living hood, now their own home is not welcoming them with respectful eyes. During a very long time they were one of the main pillars of economic sources of their native places, States, Countries and for their families. They are suddenly objected as a "Diseased person". They are in the list of undesirable characters evoke with stigmatization. However, there are no legal policies to protect them, that they can receive equality. Public health campaigns are needed to reduce this elimination. Approaches are required to reduce stigma relating discriminations against these peoples. It is necessary to establish social norms to respect their rights. Stigmatizations, discriminations are compelling migrants to hide their sufferings, health problems, because people suspecting their normal cold as coronavirus. And these are becoming a sever cause of pain.

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