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Challenges of Migrant Workers during Covid-19: with reference to the state of Odisha

Manoj Kumar Behera

Assistant Professor,
P.G.Department of Commerce,
Vikram Deb Autonomous College,
Jeypore (Odisha, India)

Sandip Kumar Sahoo

Faculty in MPMIR,
Department of Professional Studies,
Vikram Deb Autonomous College,
Jeypore (Odisha, India)

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Abstract:

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) brought many social and economic challenges to the world since its arrival. It has touched to all the part of the world. India is not an exception to this moreover; it is one of the worst affected countries in the world. The most affected states in India are U.P, A.P, Bihar, Assam, west Bengal and Odisha. Particularly in Odisha the reason of spreading of the virus is that the most of the people from Odisha are migrated to the other cities in the country for their employment. The returning of the migrants workers to the state, who did not screening or diagnose the virus within them properly. The challenges faced by these migrant workers due to this COVID19 have been the main focus of this study. As the migrant workers in India are mostly works in the crowded areas of the cities that do not permit them for adopt all the safety measures for the COVID-19. They face a lot of challenges in terms of health, income, job etc. This study analyses the situations in which the migrant workers are affected especially in Odisha. For the above purpose the data collected for is secondary in nature and same has been collected from the various known databases like GOOGLE SCHOLAR, EMERALD and PROQUEST etc. and for the study the researchers also refer different magazines and news articles from the various local and national newspapers. This paper can produce a deep insight and understanding of the challenges of migrant workers of Odisha.

Keywords: COVID19, Migrant Worker, challenges etc.

Introduction:

There is no need to introduce anything more about the CORONA as this word CORONA is now become the point of convergence in everywhere like in the news channels, newspapers, among the people, in all type of discussion platforms. The coronavirus dieses 2019 (COVID-19) create pandemic situations all over the world. The name coronavirus comes from the Latin word “corona” which means ‘halo’ or ‘crown’ like projection on their surface. The virus had originated from the

city Wuhan, China and slowly grasped the world. The world health organisation (WHO) also declared it as pandemic (R. Dutta & B.C.A.P Pani, 2020). In India the first case was identified on 30th January 2020, a 20 year female student who had returned from Wuhan city, China (M.A.Andrew et.al). There after 2 more cases were found in February. Subsequently, there was an increase in cases day by day across the country. Out of 32 state/union territories in India most of the cases have been found in the states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, etc. Where most of the people are migrant workers mostly from the states like Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand etc (R.Pal et,al, 2020).

According to census 2001, 31.5 crore population migrated from one state to other in India i.e., 31% of total populations as compared to 2011 census, 45.6crore population i.e. 38% of total population (M.Iyer, 2020). According to National Commission for Enterprise in the Unorganised sectors (NCEUS) around 92% of workforce in India were engaged in informal sectors who are migrant workers (NCEUS, 2007). In a developing country like India, it is difficult to survive in this pandemic because most of the people work in unorganised sectors as daily wage workers. Mostly, they are migrated from different parts of the county like – Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, etc. are the developing states of the country.

The people of these cities are mostly depends on the developed states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, etc. for their livelihood. Whereas the states like Odisha, most of the population depend upon agriculture and allied services which act as primary source of their family income. In the wake of the novel COVID-19, India took an initiative by imposing lockdown since 25th march 2020 that resulted in work stoppages in the field of productions and transportations. As a result, number of industries, factories was closed and nearly 91 million people lost their employment in April 2020, it was directly impact to the unorganised sectors workers who are generally, migrant worker. Since 3rd may 2020, 27.1% people were unemployed. Four of one person had lost their job during pandemic across India in march- April (Vyas, 2020). This further leads to the non-availability of basic requirement of life. This created many challenges to migrant labours throughout the country. This situation forced them to exodus to hometown. Most of workers got mental and emotional stress due to job loss many workforce faces many challenges each and every steps they forward to survive. In this study the researcher particularly focus on what are the challenges faced by migrant workers particularly from the states of Odisha during covid-19 pandemic.

Research Objective:

- To understand the challenges faced by the migrant workers of Odisha
- To elucidate the opportunities for the migrant workers of Odisha

Research Methodology:

The present study is a descriptive study. For this study the secondary data is used and the same has been collected from the published articles, news articles and newspapers etc.

CHALLENGES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN ODISHA:

The growing chain of COVID19 creates panic situation among the millions of migrant workers all over the India. The migrant workers of Odisha are not an exception to this, where most of the migrant workers are basically daily wage earner. Who maintain their family's need from their daily income. It is difficult for them to survive in the city without any income source for livelihood. The migrant workers are under gone through multiple challenges in different situations due to lockdown declared by government of India suddenly on 23th March 2020 which carried down up to 8th June in different phases. The challenges has been mentioned and explained in 4 different categories in this study. such as, i) social challenges, ii) economic challenges, iii) psychological challenges and iv) Physical Challenges

SOCIAL CHALLENGES:

Here in this study the researchers try to explain the some of the challenges faced by the migrant workers related to the perception of the people in the society towards the migrant workers who are returning to their home soil in this pandemic. Some of the social challenges like:

Social exclusion:

Social exclusion is adversely associated with perception of the society migrant workers were undergone through high prevalence of anxiety, psychological, and emotional-trauma disorders due to socio-environmental challenges, such as loss of social status, discriminations (Mucci et al, 2019). It creates anxiety in the society during this pandemic situation where we should focus on the mass awareness, level of literacy, and the social structure of the area where a disease cluster is located. Because of the fear of the social exclusion, the affected migrant workers are knowingly hiding their illness and to avoid discrimination they prevent themselves from the proper health care result of which some of the workers lost their lives (S.Meher, 2020).

Quarantine:

After exodus to home town another challenges comes out. Due to lockdown all district/ states border were sealed by administration to breakdown the chain of covid-19 diseases. The different state governments made very strict rules for the people who wants to cross the inter district or state border during lockdown and they are forced to live in a temporary shelter prepared by the government for the migrant workers. Because of this rule people start perceiving differently towards the quarantine peoples. This leads to some kind of depression which further leads to the suicide in some cases (Nelson, 2020).

To maintaining social distance:

During this lockdown and shutdown imposed by the government, large numbers of migrant workers were getting back to native place by their own arrangement as there is no transport facility available for the same. This force the migrant workers to move by walk or bicycle by doing this they are unable to maintain sanitisation, social distance among each other as huge number of people are travelling together. This is another challenges faced by the migrant workers that they are getting affected by the virus knowingly or unknowingly.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES:

In this category of the challenges, the researchers are tried to point out those challenges which are affecting the financial position of the migrant workers.

Decline in Employment during the Lockdown:

In Odisha, most of the populations are migrated to the various part of the country. Though, Odisha is a developing state of India, where one third of population are below poverty line. For which most of the workforce depends upon other developed states for work while around approximately 20 lakhs are migrant labours in Odisha (S.Meher, 2020). Due to lockdown situation (April 2020) most of the migrant work force are lost their jobs, faces economic crisis and lost their livelihood. Even most of the workers are exploited by their employers by cut down their salary/wages by fifty percent.

Increased cost of living:

Most of the migrant workers were from weaker sections of society. Due to lockdowns, there is a lack of transport, lack of productions, lack of workforce, and lack of raw materials leads to scarcity of the basic amenities in the market. Because of this non-availability of the products, the demand for the same has gone up which results in hike in the cost of living for the workers. This increased cost of living creates a huge challenge for the migrant workers for their survival in this pandemic.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES:

The challenges related to the mental condition of the workers have been mentioned by the researcher in this category of challenges.

Mental health crisis:

The covid-19 pandemic has leads to psychological manifestations like depression, anxiety, panic disorder etc. Due to lockdown situation suddenly declared work stoppages, and bans of mobilization create panic situations among the migrants worker. Due to COVID-19 pandemic migrant workforce were under pressure of by jobless and economic crisis. There is an anxiety comes on the mind of workforce which may leads to suicide due to depressions. There are some reasons which may impact to mental health are as follows:

- Vulnerability of communicable disease:

Where the migrants workers are practically more vulnerable to infections because of their to social economic status, occupational hazardous, unhygienic leaving conditions prevailing in their urban accommodations, lack of proper sanitations and pre respiratory infections for which revers migration May leads to victims of new area of diseases transmissions.

- States of mind regarding existing occupational diseases may lead to vulnerable viral dieses
- Absence of family support during crisis also impact to mental health due to depressions.

The Studies found that mental health issues are significantly higher among single, unskilled, illiterate daily wage labourers with higher years of migration and lack of housing and proper sanitation facilities (Firdaus 2017).

PHYSICAL CHALLENGES:

The physical challenges are given below

Transportations:

Most of the migrants workers usually working in small industrial units like garment/ textile industries, construction industries, transportation industries, shoe making industries had struggled b for their survival during lockdown period and employers were unable to extend their support. When there is no work there is no pay, a questions arises, “How they can survive?” So they started exodus to native places (s.meher 2020). But due to lockdown situations restrictions of public transport is a major problem to migrant workers which create tragedies of physical torture to workforce thousands of migrant workers were seen walking or bicycling hundreds of kilometres (or even more than a thousand kilometres) to go back to their native villages, some with their families. As well as death due to mile long walk have come to lime light also. Some of the workforce had arranged their own way for get back to hometown. Some migrant workers were arrested for violating the lockdown rules, after caught in inter- state boarder , forest between states and even boat across river, 21 workers of Odisha reached at Gopalpur port, Ganjam Odisha on 28th April 2020 they started journey from Chennai from 24th April 2020 by purchasing a private boats.(wikipedia) .There were many cases shown that most of the workers were died due to accidents.(Hindustan Times) according to the news on the Hindustan times dated june 2,2020 ,

Shortages of food materials:

Food shortage is a major challenges faced by the migrant workers during pandemic. Workforce is leave their work place gets back to hometown due to lack of foods. Hunger and uncertainty instigated them to fight against covid-19 return their native place. A survey published by ‘The Hindu’ states that 96% migrant workers did not get rations from the government, and 90% of them did not receive wages during the lockdown (Wikipedia).

Reverse exodus:

As per promise of government to generate employment in rural area but due to lack of employment in their hometown they reverse exodus to cities while restriction of lockdown were decreased some extent as a part of unlock 1.0 in from 8TH June 2020. Whereas cities too shortages of labour for production. For which government reopen the railway service to facilitate the migrant workers (wikipedia). But organisations are run with 50 % workers to maintaining social distance in premises, for which employer were increases the hours of work leads to increase in working hour from 8hrs to 12hour or more without applying welfare provisions for the workers. The workers are getting less hour of rest resulted in psychological stress and mental illnesses.

Limitation:

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- The study is restricted to the secondary source of information, it could be done by other ways like survey, questionnaire etc.
- This study is only focusing on the challenges faced by the migrant workers in Odisha only.

Conclusion:

As we all witnessed that this pandemic situation is going to continue for some more times to come. So we have to live our life with it only as the researchers are rightly pointing out the situation as new normal. Definitely, there is no other option for the live and livelihoods both must continue together in this difficult situation and uncertain time. It has impacted all the people belongs to all category and little severe to the migrant workers. The challenges faced by the migrant workers need to be focused more and try to prepare them to adopt the pandemic situation and act accordingly. Some challenges have been addressed by the different government effectively some are still need to address. Obviously, the need of specific policies and strategies are required to adopt towards the rebuilding the normal situation of the people, particularly to the migrant workers. In this pandemic situation the migrant workers need to educate themselves by the initiatives taken the central and state governments to fight against the COVID19 and maintain all the SOPs to stop the spreading of the virus. By doing this they are going to help the state, country as well as to themselves which leads to the greater solution to the challenges faced by them.

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