
**Migrant Construction Workers in Chennai City: A Study of Their Lives
During the Pandemic**

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Abstract

Tamil Nadu is one urban state which is industrialized and fast growing after the 1990s. The manufacturing and service sectors have been growing quickly, which contributes to the state's enormous labour demand. As Rural to urban migration is increasing in India for both the short term and the long-term movements, the migrants depend largely upon the construction sector for employment. Chennai and other areas of Tamil Nadu have emerged as the construction industries main hubs and draws migrants from and within the state and from other states flowing into these sectors. As Tamil Nadu is the home for more than 10 lakhs migrant workers especially working in construction segments. Every year, almost a lakh young men and women move from villages to Tamil Nadu with dreams to get better jobs and quality of life. Covid-19 had a major hit on the economy and turned it upside down all at once. The pandemic has caused a huge recession across all the countries. Many people were affected by the disease, many lost jobs, the global economy and the individual's economic condition was severely affected. Considering the importance of establishing policies for migrants, especially towards the construction sector Firstly, the study examines the challenges faced by the migrant workers during pandemic with respect to provisions, residence, job, income, healthcare covid and non-covid related issues, mobility, and sanitation with the help of in-depth interview data collected from migrants' construction workers in Chennai city. Secondly the paper focuses on various policy measures undertaken by the Government of India and Tamil Nadu to resolve the problem of the migrant workers. Thirdly, the paper Provides suggestions that can help governments be better equipped to handle these issues in the future. Random sampling technique is used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data's which is collected from different areas of Chennai city, Vignette technique would be used to study the problems faced by the migrant's workers during pandemic the qualitative data is analysed using vignettes to analyses the problem of the migrants during pandemic.

Keywords: Migration, Migrant's, Covid 19, Construction Workers, Unorganized sector.

1. Introduction

Migration is a way to move between different parts of the same area or other geographical region. It usually means moving from the original place or the place of departing to the point of destination or the place of arrival. People who move, so the total population of a place or region can be divided into migrants and non-migrants or mover and non-movers at any given time...According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Migration is defined as a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. Migrant workers support the growth and development of their country of destination, while their countries of origin reap the benefits of their own remittances and the skills, they acquire all through the migration experience in their home countries(Chandrasekhar et al., 2014)However, the migration process poses a number of intricate challenges in the areas of governance, migrant-worker protection, links between migration and development, and international cooperation, among other things. The increasing pace of economic globalisation has resulted in a greater number of migrant workers than at any other time in history. Due to rising unemployment and poverty, many workers in developing as well as lower income countries have been required to look for work in other countries as 'Migrant worker'. Migrant workers make up 73% of the global population, according to estimates. Employ men top ort unities, particularly for low-skilled workers, have grown increasingly scarce in developed and technologically grown countries (Deshingkar& Akter, 2009)Workers and their families travel to other countries in search of work. In recent years, tremendous efforts have been made to acquire consistent and comparable data on migration of labour. The most alarming statistics in the area of inhabitant's study, approximately in total 244 million and constituted to 3.3 per cent of the total population in global index. Women account for nearly half of all migrants. Migrant workers make a contribution to the economic systems of their host countries, and the financial gain remittances which help to boost the economies of their respective countries of origin as well. Despite this, migrant workers are frequently subjected to insufficient social protection, making them particularly vulnerable to trafficking. The departure of skilled migrant workers makes them less vulnerable to exploitation; however, it also deprives some developing nations of the valuable labour that they require to grow their own economies. In gender-based study on migrant workers noted in many literatures problems faced by female is more than male workers. The ratio of asylum seekers and the migrants are faces same issues in different contexts in host countries but the problems remain same.

Migration is an important economic and social phenomenon for the development of the country. In India, there are around 453.6 million migrants, among whom 46 million have migrated from one state to another in order to seek employment in the dynamic industries (2011, Census) these migrant workers are primarily employed in domestic work. The largest sectors employing migrant workers are transportation, mines and quarries, agricultural, domestic work (20 million), textiles (11 million), brick kilns (10 million), and rant (40 million). Labour contractors have a lot of power over the developed patterns of labour migration across the nation. The economic development of a nation is closely linked with investments in infrastructure. The Indian construction sector plays a key role in channelizing investments for a sustainable growth.

The breakout of Novel Coronavirus and its vitiations on 2019 caused a global pandemic that was seen over the entire world (WHO, 2020). It had a serious threat to the global economy. During the pandemic times across the globe each and every inhabitant faces many struggles for lead their life especially migrants face more than native inhabitants. Our country also not existing from the fact. In India, the Disaster Management Act (DMA) 2005 imposed a 21-day total lockdown starting March 25, 2020. The lockdown was then phased out. The COVID-19 management was centralised within the DMA Act, with State and District Administrations involved. During this time period this period, certain activities were halted entirely or partially that did not contribute to the production and supply of critical products and services(Kaushik et al., 2020). The frequent outbreaks and its long-lasting effects have made the life of people miserable and their economic stability is at great risk (Jesline et al., 2021). Especially in India, it has created an overall change in the resource allocation and it was required to give more significance to the health sector. An unprecedented shutdown of economic activities for many months across the country led to huge loss of employment and income. Passenger trains and aircraft were suspended. As a result of the lockdown, migrants have been adversely affected, with some losing their jobs due to industry closures, and others stranded outside their home countries (M. Kumar, n.d.)India is one of the worst-hit nations by the COVID-19 pandemic and witnessed a devastating impact across all over the country. COVID-19 is not only a global pandemic and public health crisis; it has also severely affected the global economy and financial markets (Ramasamy et al., 2020). Significant reductions in income, a rise in unemployment and disruptions in the transportation, service, and manufacturing industries are among the consequences of the disease (Ali, 2021)One of the major repercussions of the country's lockdown measures has been an extraordinary influx of employees and families from major urban areas into rural India. Millions of labourers have been moving to big centers from their rural homes and villages for decades in search of employment and a living.

During this time period, migrant workers' vulnerabilities were greatly exposed. The COVID-19lockdownexposedmigrant workers' vulnerabilities. It showed clear policy lapsesinmigrant worker handling. The host states offer limited economic security but no social welfare to migrant workers. It is evident from the report of National human Rights Commission India (2020) that adequate social security mechanisms are not taken for them. Their access to current government schemes is also limited. Existing laws affecting inter - state migrant workers are not effectively implemented. Miserably in the same report gather many cases in selected four states in India, one of the incidences make us to goose bumps "Ram Sagar is residing in bihar and walked 5 km to reach a government-sponsored school in Majnu ka Tilla, Delhi. He has six kidsand a wife, and they all eat khichdi out of a plastic bag. "We lack. We queue for food. But it's all done by ourturn. Thekidsdon't getmilk (Jesline et al., 2021)

Tamil Nadu is the home for more than 10 lakhs migrant workers especially working in construction segments. Every year, almost a lakh young men and women move from villages to Tamil Nadu with dreams to get better jobs and quality of life. Covid-19 had a major hit on the economy and turned it upside down all at once. The pandemic has caused a huge recession across all the countries. Many people were affected by the disease, many lost jobs, the global economy and the individual's economic condition was severely affected many initiations were

taken by the government against migrants and asylum seekers (Irudaya Rajan et al., 2020) In Chennai, over 25 lakh migrant workers have been affected, constituting 71.44 percent of the labour force and 23% of the population. Currently, migrant workers from Chennai are returning to their home states during the nationwide curfew. 74% of migrant workers are from within the state, 24% are from other states in India and the rest are from abroad, that workers are engaged in the construction work, manufacturing, service, and textile industries (Jeyaranjan, n.d.)

During the pandemic time across India, over 40 lakh migrant workers have registered to return to their natives, but in Tamil Nadu, over 2.5 lakh have registered and over 33,000 want to return home. The State sent 10,000 migrant workers daily via the “Shramik Special Train”. More than 32,383 migrant workers have left the city, with many more unreported via buses and other means. From Chennai, only 25 Shramik Special Trains took migrant workers to 13 states, with 7 trains going to Bihar, 3 to Assam, and 3 to Jharkhand (Patel VD 2020). Prevention, regulation and cure of the disease has given more importance by the Government and a huge concern for resource allocation was their. Due to the lockdown and related economic impacts the social welfare programmes like, community kitchen, subsidies, tax reductions, covid-19 allowances, grain and required items distribution through Public Distribution System has increased the burden of the respective Governments. Resource allocation and distribution has become a great challenge. Most of the countries including India were unprepared to deal with these unanticipated changes and new real time policies had to be made in order to overcome the results. It was not practical to wait for development of immunity naturally because of the rising mortality rate and the risky restrictive measures to avoid the spreading. Like every other citizen in the country, internal migrants in India also tend to have good health but at times they are in the risk of falling ill or into long term diseases due to change in climatic and geographic factors, poor living conditions, exploitation by employers and adaptations to the new life style. In spite of all these factors and other factors the health of migrants is an important factor to be looked into. With the major hit of the pandemic on migrants, it is high time to analyse and study the health of migrants and importance they give to their health as compared to monetary factors. But many a times, migrants working in unorganized sectors go unnoticed (Health et al., 2020) Therefore, the reforms brought through by the Central and State Government do not reach them at all or do not reach them on time. This worsens the health and living conditions of migrants.

As per WHO, migrants in general are pretty much vulnerable to discrimination, poor living and working conditions and lack of access to health, which leads to physical and mental health problems in them. (World Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, n.d.) Addressing the factors causing health issues in migrants are to be addressed rather than providing treatment after the illness. Difficulties in terms of approachability, treatment, health insurances are also to be addressed. Most of the health problems arise in less skilled migrants compared to highly skilled migrants since higher risk is attributed in less skilled labourers due to lack of occupational health coverage for them. High risk is involved in 3D Jobs i.e., Dirty, Dangerous and Demanding jobs which are also sometimes degrading like construction workers. Inclusive and equitable health services to all migrants is the only way to provide their right of health to the migrants. The study attempts to identify the problems faced by the migrant workers during pandemic in the Chennai City. A large proportion of migrants works as informal workers and thus face a denial of access

to subsidized food, public health facilities and other security schemes(John & Thomas, 2020) One of the objectives of this study attempt to culminate in a normative approach towards this problem of economic and social vulnerability among migrant informal workers during the Covid 19 Pandemic. By analysing the problems of migrants, target areas for welfare policies can be identified. Among different communities prevailing in Chennai, the study is conducted on the construction industry in Chennai city. Chennai is a city having its origins in the colonial past, and is one of the oldest Municipal corporations. Also, it is one of the fourth largest Metropolitan city of India. Over the past several decades, the city has expanded beyond its erstwhile limits. With the growth of infrastructural projects in Chennai, has rapidly developing metropolitan city, there is a high influx of migrants entering the construction industry and settling in slums, in and around the city. A large number of people from the Chennai region works as a Daily wages, small entrepreneurs (Chennai City Report, 2019) The study further focuses on various policy measures undertaken by the Government of India and Tamil Nadu to resolve the problem of the migrant workers during the pandemic.

2. Background and Literature Review:

The practice of migration has happened from time immemorial and can be traced from the beginning of humanity, as it first existed in the form of nomads who moved in groups from one place to another in the lookout for better resources, and later on as invasions by various rulers (Rolland, 2020)The Neo-Classical theories look at migration as an constituent ingredient for developing countries through which surplus labour in the rural sector supplies labour to the urban sector (Lewis, 1954). (Bhagat, 2009)Two main forces are found to create the pushes and pulls. Firstly, the rural population growth leading to Malthusian pressure on natural and agricultural resources ultimately pushing people out of marginal rural areas. Secondly, the economic conditions, especially higher wages attract people into cities.

During the pandemic, the people greatly impacted by the global crisis were the migrants who had moved to different parts of the country for jobs to support them and their own families (Singh, 2020). Many of these internal migrants were trapped in their receiving states with no job and money, facing a lot of troubles along with separation from their families in times of difficulty (Mishra, 2021).With the population of India being 1.3 billion as per 2011 census, the population would have increased enormously during the pandemic. In such a situation, most of the migrants being stuck in the state capitals where the number of slum dwellers are maximum, it is close to impossible to maintain social distance to reduce the spread (Londhe, 2020). It is also found from Census 2011 that the number of migrants has increased by 30 percent compared to 2001 (Census of India, 2011) and also their major settlements are in cities and states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala (Bengal et al., 2020). While the rest of the world stayed at ease in their homes with their families, the migrants were not fortunate enough and were stuck in the migrant land with no means to survive (Kaushik et al., 2020).As a result of which the migrants had to confront numerous difficulties and stress both mentally and financially(Aragona et al., 2020). Migrants were critical to be included in the labour force but were excluded from the benefits during such difficult times as a silence and denial by all the institutions which showed the inability of the states to play a universal role in maintaining a state-citizen relationship (Bibhu, 2021).There was a huge widespread rate of unemployment due

to job loss across almost all the segments, of which small traders, migrants, daily wagers, self-employed were the worst hit because they mostly belonged to the informal sectors and women were considerably more affected. The recovery rate of unemployment in the labour market was slow especially in the rural segments, where the educational qualification was only elementary level.

An increase in employment opportunities and welfare benefits to the unemployed and affected labour forces via strong and influential policies such as sound social protective schemes with the aim of promoting the labour-intensive sectors at the front through promotion and strengthening the micro and small enterprises, providing social and employment security benefits to labour forces (Shamala & Prasad, 2020). The link between paid and unpaid laborers is often being ignored by policyholders. Women mostly being engaged in unpaid jobs, hardly participate in paid jobs. The paper argues that the gender division of labour provokes unpaid women labour forces and impacts on their involvement in paid work (Ghosh, 2021) Covid-19 shrunk the economic health of all the countries. Substantial fall in the GDP of the country, loss of jobs, shrinking of small and medium enterprises due to greater people under below poverty line, there was migration crisis as an impact of employment crisis for which initiative to create employment opportunities were taken in the native locations by States, but its implementation might take time (Pant & Pathak, 2021)

Constitutionally all citizens have access to the same fundamental rights, but the low skilled migrant workers is extremely skewed in terms of access to information, entitlement and claim-making process during pandemic making them fall through the gaps in the popular policy imagination in India. There is a further need for the Indian development policies on health, education, labour and social protection to recognise the existence of this highly dynamic and mobile group rather than basing the conceptualisation of policies based on stable and sedentary population which is not reflective of the lived realities of urban spaces. The existing literatures have failed to fill the gap in the quality of employment migrant in urban areas during pandemic. The present study made an attempt to examine the challenges faced by the migrant workers during pandemic.

3. Objectives of the study

As per Census 2011, 450 million population which is 37.7 percent of the entire population of India are internal migrants (Misra & Gupta, 2021) One third of these internal migrants are interstate and inter-district of which two-thirds constitute migrant workers. The present study focuses on the human dimension of the construction industry – the labourer. The following are the objectives of the study focuses on:

- To identify the problems faced by the migrant workers during pandemic in the Chennai City.
- To identify the major expenditure incurred by the migrants and its impact on Income and Consumption of Migrant Households
- To analyze the impact of pre and post pandemic effect of migrants on decisions making.
- To examine various policy measures undertaken by the Government of India and Tamil Nadu to resolve the problem of the migrant workers.

4. Methodology

The research design refers to the overall strategy that has been chosen to integrate different components of the study. It ensures that the research problem is effectively addressed and acts as a blueprint to conduct the study. The research design used for this study is descriptive in nature. This study endeavored to develop a fuller understanding of the problems faced by the migrant workers during pandemic in the Chennai City employs primary data analysis. The study follows an in-depth interview using structure questionnaire. The area of research work mainly consists of North, South , East and West region of Chennai City. The collected data was analyzed using crosstabs and descriptive statistics. Secondary publication were used to the study.

4.1 Nature and sources of data This research work is based on primary data collected from the migrant labourers and employers of migrant labourers. Since the research problem is known and the information needs are clearly defined, a structured questionnaire is used for collecting the data. The survey method of data collection is used in this study.

4.2 Development and testing of the data collection instrument Structured questionnaires intended to capture the quantitative and qualitative aspects of migrant workers is the data collection instrument. The questionnaire is developed to cover the broader objective of the study. Initially, the variables or items for the questionnaire are selected based on a literature survey. Questionnaires are designed in such a way that the migrants give their responses using a multi-item scale as well.

4.3 Sampling technique

Random sampling was chosen as the research frame because it includes migrants from various zones of the Chennai City.

4.4 Research instrument

This study will make use of one structured questionnaires for the migrant labourers. Questionnaires are designed in such a way to capture the information that fulfils the study objectives.

4.5 Locale of the study

This study is conducted in the Tamil Nadu – Chennai.

5. Methodology and result analysis-

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Study Area, Sex, Marital Status, Age and Income Distribution of the Respondents

S.No.	Characteristics	Freq. (N=73)
I	Gender	
	Male	49 (67.12)
	Female	24 (32.88)
	Total	73(100.00)
II	Marital Status	
	Unmarried	30(41.10)
	Currently Married	27(36.99)
	Widowed	6(8.22)
	Separated	10(13.70)
	Others	0(0)
	Total	73(100.00)
III	Age of the Respondents	
	Below 18	9(12.33)
	18-23	12(16.44)
	24-29	21(28.77)
	30-49	27(36.99)
	Above 50	4(5.48)
	Total	73(100.00)
IV	Distribution of respondents in the study region	
	North Chennai	22(30.14)
	South chennai	18(24.66)
	East chennai	13(17.81)
	West Chennai	20(27.40)
	Total	73(100.00)
V	Income Distribution	
	Rs.400and less	12(16.44)
	Rs.401 – Rs.700	28(38.36)
	Rs.701 and above	33(45.21)
	Total	73(100.00)

Source: Primary Sample

Understanding the sociodemo graphic profile of the resspndents is important to help the reader understand their background, which is an essential element in forming one's perception and attitudes toward them(Baite& Xavier, 2020).The above table summarizes various variables such as gender, Age of the respondents, distribution of respondents in the study region, and income

distribution. The data collected elicits information on the construction workers in the Chennai city,. Among the surveyed respondents, At construction sites, more male workers are employed than female workers. The sample indicates there are fewer female construction workers (24%) as compared to the male workers (49%). Most of them migrated from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and from the Southern, Eastern part of Indian states. Bihar has the highest percentage of migrants, followed by West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Age is an essential factor for construction workers. The majority of construction sites surveyed consisted of relatively young workers. The study shows that the highest age proportion of the respondents belonged mainly under the age group of 30-49 years. The income earned by the construction workers in the north Chennai region in terms of daily, weekly, and monthly basis. The majority of the workers receive wages on a weekly basis. 12 per cent of respondents earn less than Rs 400 per month, 28 per cent earn an income between Rs 401- Rs 700 per month, and 33 per cent of male workers earn more than Rs 701 per month. The study indicates that most male workers earn between 401- Rs 700 per month.

Table 2: Challenges caused due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions

<i>Challenges faced by the migrants due to Covid19 and lockdown</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
Any support received during the crisis	16	57	73
Any challenges in finding/continuing employment/livelihood during the crisis	54	19	73
Challenges in finding accommodation during the crisis	30	43	73
Challenges in availing adequate food during the crisis	42	33	73
Challenges in finding Healthcare during the crisis	28	45	73
challenges in mobility/travelling during the crisis	68	5	73

Source: Primary Sample

The above table depicts the challenges faced by the migrants during the pandemic time, during the phase I and II lock down majority of the migrants in the Chennai city has suffered a lot i.e the period of complete lockdown has made the migrants to hyper stress and depression. The sample indicates that majority of the migrants (57%) has not received any support from the migrants. During the initial phase of the lockdown majority of the migrants has faced the challenges of accommodation, food, health care during crisis. It’s been observed that majority of the respondents (54%) faced the problem of livelihood due to lack of employment opportunities

among the migrants has led to the huge loss of wages that impacted the overall livelihood of the migrants. 43 per cent of the migrants has faced accommodation issues as majority of the migrants were asked to vacate the place due to fear of Virus and lockdown. 42 Per cent of the migrants were not availing adequate food during the pandemic time. The economic hardship of the migrant workers was also coupled with food insecurities, their ration cards remained with their families in the village and were not able to access subsidized food, as they were not able to use ration cards registered outside. They were spending more on food. Aajeevika Bureau's 2020 report from the state of Ahmedabad points out that due to lack of proper local residential address and identity, they had no access to gas connection, they in turn purchase cylinders from outside for higher prices. Their financial instability also led them into a cycle of vicious indebtedness. During the III Phase the Government started to focus on migrants free rations i.e rice and other commodities were distributed to card holders and migrant workers even those outside the PDS network and NGO's has started the initiative of distribution of food to the migrants. Majority of the migrants (68%) faced the major challenge of mobility. The Heartbreaking images of migrant workers travelling barefoot shared in the social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram) has flooded the attention of the Government (Sars, 2020). The state government organized buses to provide free transportation for migrants to return to their homes. However, these were extremely overbooked, with migrants hanging from footboards and climbing rooftops in search of housing.

Table 3 Major Heads of Expenditure incurred by the migrants during pandemic

Expenditure	Yes	No
Food Security		
Able to buy enough food	28 (38.35)	45 (61.64)
Financing for basic needs		
Unable to pay for utilities	32 (43.83)	41 (56.16)
Borrowed Money for the basic needs	38 (52.05)	35 (47.94)
Healthcare		
Incurred huge cost for health expenditure	13 (17.80)	60 (82.19)
Wages		
Received any wages during pandemic	11 (15.06)	62 (84.93)

Source: Primary Sample

From the surveyed respondents it is observed that majority of the migrant construction worker's incurred huge expenditure during pandemic. 61.64 Per cent of the migrant workers were not able to buy enough and 56.16 Per Cent of the workers are unable to pay for utilities, 52.05 Per Cent of the workers borrowed money for the basic needs. Majority of the respondents (82.19 Per Cent) of the workers have not incurred huge cost for health expenditure. 84.93 Percent has not any wages during the pandemic.

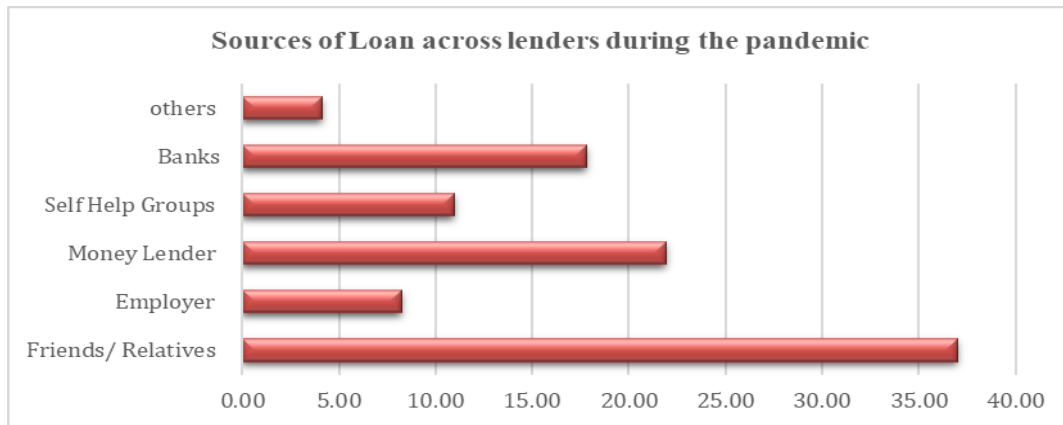
Table 4: Impact of the Pandemic on Income and Consumption of Migrant Households

Impact of the Pandemic on Income and Consumption of Migrant Households	Completely	A Great Extent	Some what	Total
Reduction in Income	54 (73.97)	14 (19.17)	5 (6.84)	73 (100.00)
Reduction in Consumption	28 (38.35)	14 (19.17)	31(42.46)	73 (100.00)

Source: Primary Sample

It was plausible that the pandemic's hardships has destroyed the economies of several households nationwide, both in rural and urban areas, the study area noticed a continuous reduction in their income and consumption basket. 73.97 Per Cent of the workers income has reduced to a greater extent. As income decreases consumption level has not decreased to a greater extent.

Figure 1: Pandemic and Indebtedness



Source: Primary Sample

Table 5: Debt Particulars of Migrant Households (in percentage) during the pandemic

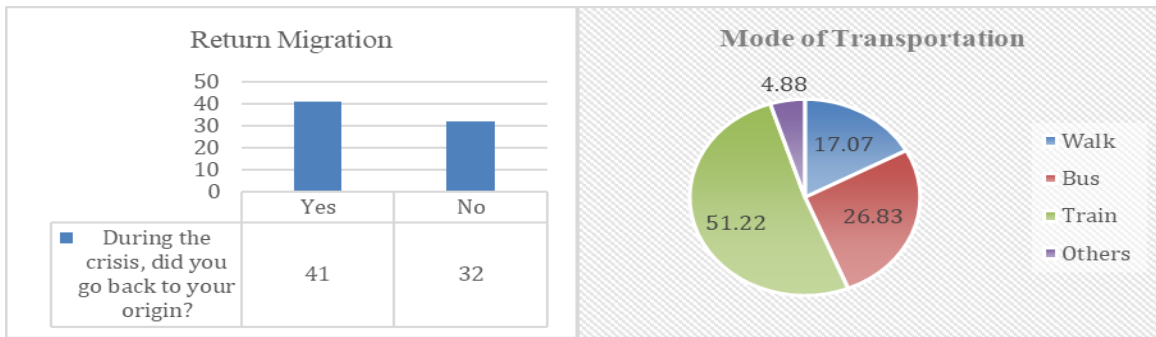
Debt Particulars of Migrant Household	Per Cent of debtness
Less than 5000	24 (32.88)
Rs. 5001- Rs. 10000	30(41.10)
Rs.10001-Rs.15000	12(16.44)
More than 1500	7(9.59)
	73(100)

Source: Primary Sample

Nearly all migrant households during the lockdown were forced to rely in some way on borrowing to fund their essential social upkeep. Nearly all migrant households during the lockdown were forced to rely in some way on borrowing to fund their essential social upkeep. Most homes had turned to hand loans from family members and relatives which were frequently

interest-free and occasionally amounted to friendly loans. Figure 1 shows the information related to sampled respondents it's been observed that majority of the migrants borrow money from their friends or relatives followed by money lender and banks. Interest paid to the self-help group is very low as compared to the other sources(R. Kumar & Abdin, 2021). The money borrowed from the formal source is very less as compared to the non-formal sources. Table 3 depicts the distribution of debt particulars of migrant households, 41.10 per cent borrowed money from the range of Rs. 5001- Rs. 10000.

Figure: 2 Depicts the Status of Return Migration in Chennai City



Source: Primary Sample

Among the respondents 41 Per Cent of the Migrants went back to their natives, many migrants were not allowed to stay back in the working site, migrants suffered a lot during this time period. 32 per cent of respondents has stayed back in the city majority of the migrants stayed back in the camps organised by Tamil Nadu Government. Those who returned back to the origin used train as the major mode of transportation it was only after phase III of lockdown the state government started arranging buses to take migrants back to their villages for free. On May 1, 2020, the Indian government introduced special 'Shramik Special' trains from many districts in the country for migrants. Since then, Indian railways have ferried over 3 million migrant workers by more than 2050 Shramik special trains; Prior to and after the government's repatriation, migrants encountered social issues in the destination(Sars-, 2020). The migrants who were interviewed described incidents of prejudice and being thought of as the carriers of the virus in their villages, at quarantine facilities, and in the city or state where they were going. Raju a migrant construction workers narrated the challenges faced by him during the pandemic saying how people started to discriminate them during the lockdown period, it was a nightmare to all the migrants who faced major issues of accommodations, food and mode of transportation and he walked miles to reach his native.

5.1 Effect of pandemic on Migrants future decision: pre and post pandemic decision making among the migrants - Some concluding Observations

The lockdown has been in effect for more than one and half year. Now, it appears that a new normal has been established but migrants are very much concerned about the pandemic. General opinion of the migrants are they want to save more so that dissaving's can take place during pandemic. During pandemic Migrants had struggled a lot for their basic livelihood these

‘peripheral’ workers from the historically marginalised social groups have started migrating back to the urban agglomerations out of utter hopelessness. Amidst all these developments, the Indian government found busy reviving economy by giving ‘stimulus packages’ to the capitalist class while further abating whatever laws were left to the rescue of the laboring poor (Naik & D, 2021). The study identifies that all the respondent (73) will save their part of the income vigorously.

Vignettes as a research tool

Vignettes are often scenarios or stories in written or pictorial form which participants can comment upon. Whether researching in the qualitative or quantitative tradition.

Using vignettes within the qualitative paradigm - Qualitative paradigm, participants are usually asked to respond to a particular situation testing what they would do, or how they imagine. Vignettes are ideally suited to understandings and perceptions and construction type research questions, they can also be used for experience, accounts of practice and influencing factor type research questions.

A migrant construction worker, aged 35 Years working as a construction worker in chetpet ,Chennai before the lockdown he was receiving a salary of Rs.7000 on weekly basis and he’s family is staying in Orissa he has three kids and he has to send the money to his wife for basic consumption and paying interest for the debts purpose due to these lockdown he lost his job, don’t have the proper accommodation to stay, he struggled a lot to reach his native even after o far I did not find any good job opportunities at par with the salary which I was earning abroad. Also our family has some debts which I can only settle if I work abroad for a high salary as the salary is very low here I. He could not work under MGNREGA ever since he returned to the village. With every passing day, we are struggling to survive here. We are waiting for the lockdown to go so that we can migrate again. He mentioned that these pandemic taught him a good lesson of saving a part of the income to use it for unpredicted situation.

5.2 Steps taken by the Government of India with regard to Migrant Labour during COVID-19.

As a first step, the Central Government approved the use of State Government Disaster Response Funds to establish camps for migrants along highways. Second, the Ministry of Home Affairs allowed the States to transfer migrants by bus. This allowed the migrants to return to their nations of origin, and approximately 58 lakh migrants benefited from the opening of railways with the Shramik Special Trains.

State governments have been directed by the Ministry of Health and Family Affairs to operate migrant worker relief camps that provide food, sanitary and medical assistance. Under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, eight crore migrant workers were given free food grains without ration cards for two months. Moreover, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan also encouraged public and private agencies to construct new affordable housing complexes for migrants and urban poor.

One nation one ration card initiative was launched in 2021 to provide portable benefits under the public distribution system, allowing rations to be obtained at any fair price shops in India. one-Time cash transfers are being offered by some state governments, such as Bihar, Rajasthan and

Madhya Pradesh to returning migrant workers. Returning migrants who are required to quarantine will receive a maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 from the UP government.

In addition to all these initiatives, the central government also followed up with the states on their responses. According to the Supreme Court, the central and state/UT governments must provide free train and bus services to migrants as well as free food to stranded migrants, and simplify and speed up the migrant registration process. Additionally, migrants should be provided free last-mile transport, health screening, and other services by the state receiving them. Moreover, migrants were not charged with violating lockdown regulations.

(Pant & Pathak, 2021) a majority of migrant workers are from North and eastern parts of the country, mostly working in textiles, constructions, hospitals, daily wagers etc. Reverse migration started when they literally had low or no income, they were unable to remit money back home and were in a dire strait. The Central government too was expecting a fiscal deficit due to the fall in tax revenue. The key element for the crisis are attributed to weak demand as the consumption expenditure went down due to fall in income levels. This required the government to provide aid or assistance by investing in infrastructure, fund transfer in their accounts, tax incentive etc to increase the consumption expenditure. There was a huge supply chain disruption, Foreign trade came to a standstill and India's BOP was also affected badly. The state intervened and provided money transfers to the farmers, increased MNREGA wage rates and supported MSMEs. The government also provided 30,000 crores to provide collateral free loans for SMEs. PF deductions were reduced to 10%. Additional 30,000 crores were provided to NBFCs and housing finance companies, thereby infusing money into the economy. Similar liquidity injection into the economy to the extent of 90,000 crores has been worked out for power Distribution Company. A long-term recovery was expected from these measures. Despite job losses for many migrants, employers cut wages for those who remained employed due to their service in essential sectors. In order to meet their basic expenses, such as food, clothing, medicines, and accommodation, they were concerned. The fact that they had been away from their worksite for several days together led to a mounting panic among those who reached their homeland. In contrast, those who lost their jobs were concerned about how and if they could return to their hometowns (Jesline et al., 2021). They were uncertain when and whether they would be able to return because of the prevailing travel restrictions and the lack of transportation facilities. The dread of being forsaken by their employers and the creeping fear of being abandoned with no job, wages or place to stay was indeed a traumatic experience for them (Chander et al., 2020).

5.3 Measures taken by Government of Tamil Nadu during COVID-19

The Government of Tamil Nadu at the beginning, initiated the Rapid Response Teams at both State and District levels, 24 hours control room, thermal scanning of travellers especially those from China, isolation wards in four cities and running awareness campaigns.

The Governor of Tamil Nadu declared COVID-19 as a notified disease in Tamil Nadu on the 13th of March 2020 under the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939 which gave a push to the responsible authorities to take action on time. Followed by this, Tamil Nadu's COVID-19 Regulations were released which stated the detailed duties and responsibilities of hospitals in diagnosing and treating COVID-19 and further prevent the spread through all ways possible.

Isolation wards were created for diagnosed patients in hospitals, areas detected with positive COVID cases were declared as containment zones and for travellers from COVID-19 affected countries, 14 days mandatory home isolation was also implemented which was extended to travellers from other states too. During April 2020, the Government of TamilNadu issued an advisory for quarantine of migrant workers with covid positive and also conducted health camps for them. Other policies introduced by the central government for the migrant workers were implemented by the state governments for the migrants in their states respectively. Apart from these measures, the Tamil Nadu Government insisted the owners of the rented accommodations of migrants not to demand rent for a period of time.

In many studies, it has been found that only 4% of the total population of migrants were provided with rations allotted by the government. As a result, 29% of migrants did not receive rations despite having ration cards (Farooqui and Pandey, 2020), which is a very pathetic situation. The economic crisis in the country followed by disruptions in the supply chain and a decline in demand led to almost 90% of migrants losing their jobs or having their salaries reduced (Shahare, 2020). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), wages of migrant workers declined by 22.6% post-lockdown (Gothoskar, 2021). Around 35% of migrants in 179 districts of India were found to be without food all day, according to a survey conducted from May 30, 2020 to July 16, 2020 (Pandit, 2020).

6. Conclusion:

This study emphasised the forced and involuntary nature of reverse migration due to the unexpected shutdown, the government's lack of anticipation and planning, the employers' reckless behaviour, and social animosity toward the migrants. Lack of migrant data and registration in welfare schemes excluded most of them from the relief package benefits. The plight of Migrant workers from Chennai city of TamilNadu during the pandemic is indescribable. Initially, the migrant workers had shifted in just four hours before the lockdown started and the commercial activities shut after that left the migrant workers in a despicable state without any money at hand for fulfilling their essential needs (Irudaya Rajan et al., 2020). The Central as well as the State Governments started focussing on migrants only from Phase III lockdown throughout the country. Besides that, most of the migrants had to lose their job and left penniless which led them to dissave, borrowing from informal sources at high interest rates, leaving them indebted. There were initiatives taken by Tamil Nadu government but illiteracy in the Tamil language was a huge barrier for migrants. In that event, it is definitely the responsibility of the Central and State Governments to create awareness and improve the financial knowledge of the migrants coupled with insurance schemes exclusively for migrant workers in unorganised sectors. This will possibly help in the betterment of the standard of living of the migrant workers in India as a whole.

In addition, migrants had to face issues related to accommodation, safe drinking water, food and sanitation which are considered as basic human rights and some of which are listed in the Sustainable Development Goals either. Together with these problems for basic sustenance, they had to face a lot of discrimination and were considered threat to the state since the people around them feared the spread of COVID through them. This calls for the Central and State

Governments to bring in laws that protect the right of migrant workers too since they are also the citizens of India and shield them from vulnerabilities faced by them in their day-to-day life on a humanistic ground.

Though the State and Central Government came up with different beneficial schemes and policies during COVID-19, most of the migrants were unable to reap its benefits since they were not registered migrants under the State. This situation can be improved by tightening the rules and regulations, thus ensuring all migrants working under the unorganized sector of a state are registered. This can help the government for policy formulation and execution. On the other hand, food supply chains have to be strengthened (Khanna, 2020) for the smooth functioning of the economy and to avoid poverty, hunger and starvation which ultimately paves the way for low productivity, lower income, reduced consumption patterns and so on. (Kumar et al., 2020) The government should also focus on improving provision of mental healthcare services, along with the physical health of this vulnerable population.

The initiatives taken by the Central government towards migrant workers is applaud able but the Tamil Nadu government was not able to take up appropriate measures. This may be due to lack of proper data, very a smaller number of registered migrants in the state etc. while executing the central government's policies in the state of Tamil Nadu. For better policy making, government must integrate with the civil society which has good outreach with the migrant communities at the grassroot level This calls for proper maintenance of data on internal migrants by the respective authorities and organizations in a well-ordered manner for supporting the Government in policy making and reforms.

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