

Social Impact of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Indian Migrant Workers: A Survey-Based Investigation

Dr. Manoj Kumar Sahu,

Asst. Professor (Sociology), Govt. J.Y. Chhattisgarh College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh -492001.
Mail: choudhrysahumanoj74@gmail.com

Dr. Tapesch Chandra Gupta,

Professor (Commerce), Govt. J.Y. Chhattisgarh College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh -492001.
Mail: tapesch_48gupta@yahoo.in
(Pt Ravishankar Shukla University Raipur Chhattisgarh-India)

Abstract: This study investigates the socio-economic and psychological impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns on Indian migrant workers, who constitute a significant portion of the country's informal labor force. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by these workers during the 2020 lockdowns, focusing on employment, income, mental health, social support, and recovery processes. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data were collected through structured surveys from 350 migrant workers across major urban and rural areas in India. The results indicate a dramatic decrease in employment by 66.1% and a 512.5% rise in unemployment, reflecting the severe economic vulnerability of this population. Additionally, over half of the respondents reported moderate to severe psychological distress, highlighting significant mental health needs. The study also found that 62.9% of workers experienced a decline in living conditions, and healthcare access was largely inadequate for 51.4% of respondents. While government aid was the most accessed form of support, 11.4% of workers reported receiving no assistance. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and inclusive support systems that address the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant workers, including secure employment, mental health services, healthcare access, and financial assistance. The study's insights are crucial for policymakers and stakeholders in developing resilient and sustainable support mechanisms for migrant workers in future crises.

Keywords: COVID-19, Indian migrant workers, lockdown impact, socio-economic effects, mental health, social support.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, quickly escalated into a global crisis, significantly disrupting economic activities and daily life worldwide. Governments imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, which, while necessary for public health, had profound social and economic impacts, particularly on vulnerable populations. Among these groups, migrant workers in India, who often work in the informal sector with minimal job security, were especially affected. With India's first lockdown announced abruptly in March 2020, millions of migrant workers found themselves unemployed, stranded, and struggling to meet basic needs (Khanna, 2020).

Migrant workers in India constitute a substantial portion of the labor force, estimated to be around 100 million individuals who move across state boundaries for employment opportunities. The sudden lockdown halted their income sources, forcing many to return to their native villages under distressing conditions. This mass reverse migration not only disrupted the livelihoods of millions but also posed public health risks as the virus spread from urban centers to rural areas (Kumar et al., 2021). According to estimates, around 80% of migrant workers faced severe food insecurity during this period, with 47% reporting anxiety and depression due to job losses and uncertain futures (Khan et al., 2021).

The social impact of the lockdown on Indian migrant workers extends beyond economic deprivation to include severe psychological and social challenges. Reports indicate that many migrant workers experienced discrimination, stigmatization, and a lack of access to healthcare during their journey back home (Suresh et al., 2020). Women migrant workers, in particular, faced heightened vulnerabilities, including increased debt burdens, restricted mobility, and inadequate access to support services (Abdul Azeez et al., 2020). The intersectionality of gender, economic status, and social exclusion exacerbated the plight of these workers, calling for urgent policy interventions to address their needs comprehensively.

The mass migration witnessed during the lockdown also exposed the gaps in India's social safety nets and highlighted the systemic issues facing migrant workers, including the absence of formal employment contracts, lack of health insurance, and minimal access to social security (Shahare, 2021). Many of these workers, employed in sectors such as construction, hospitality, and manufacturing, found themselves excluded from government relief measures designed primarily for formal sector employees. The inadequacy of these measures underscored the necessity for a more inclusive approach to labor rights and protections in India.

Several studies have underscored the mental health impact of the pandemic on migrant workers, revealing a significant rise in psychological distress among this population. According to a survey conducted in Maharashtra, nearly 60% of migrant workers reported experiencing severe anxiety during the lockdown, with many struggling with feelings of helplessness and uncertainty about the future (Khan et al., 2021). This mental health crisis among migrant workers highlights the urgent need for psychosocial support services tailored to this demographic, which has historically been marginalized in India's healthcare system.

The social impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers also extends to their families, who were left behind in rural areas. The disruption of remittance flows due to job losses in urban centers led to increased poverty and food insecurity among rural households dependent on these financial transfers. As noted by Khanna (2020), the average income of migrant households dropped by 85% during the lockdown, plunging many into extreme poverty. This economic shock has long-term implications for rural communities, where the lack of alternative employment opportunities exacerbates the cycle of poverty and dependence on seasonal migration.

Given these multifaceted impacts, the significance of studying the social effects of COVID-19 lockdowns on Indian migrant workers cannot be overstated. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by migrant workers during the pandemic, drawing on primary data from surveys and interviews with affected individuals. By examining the socio-economic, psychological, and health-related impacts of the lockdown, this study seeks to inform policy interventions that can better support migrant workers in future crises. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for robust social safety nets, targeted mental health services, and inclusive labor policies that recognize the rights and contributions of migrant workers in India.

The findings from this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on the social impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations and provide actionable insights for policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in the welfare of migrant workers. Addressing the gaps identified in existing policies and programs will be crucial in building resilience among migrant workers and ensuring that they are better equipped to withstand future shocks, whether from pandemics, economic downturns, or other crises.

2. Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the lives of migrant workers in India, particularly due to the sudden nationwide lockdown imposed in March 2020. Several studies have explored various aspects of this impact, highlighting the socio-economic, psychological, and health-related challenges faced by these workers.

Jesline et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review to examine the multifaceted adversities experienced by Indian migrant workers during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study followed PRISMA guidelines, reviewing 15 articles that met the inclusion criteria. The findings revealed that the pandemic severely disrupted the livelihoods of migrant workers, many of whom were left without food, shelter, or access to basic health services. The review highlighted significant psychosocial issues, particularly among women and children, and called for robust mental health interventions to support this vulnerable group (Jesline et al., 2021).

Kumar et al. (2021) explored the lived experiences of migrant workers during the first COVID-19 lockdown through a qualitative study in Pune, Maharashtra. The researchers found that the crisis exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, with workers suffering from hunger, unemployment, and inadequate access to healthcare. The study emphasized the need for comprehensive policy responses focusing on employment conditions, access to necessities, and mental health care to mitigate the adverse effects on migrant workers (Kumar et al., 2021).

Shahare (2021) investigated the socio-economic and psychological challenges faced by migrant workers during the lockdown. The study reviewed the role of government interventions and concluded that despite efforts, many migrant workers remained excluded from official social security schemes, pushing them into destitution. The findings underscored the need for inclusive policies that protect the fundamental rights of migrant workers and ensure their access to essential services (Shahare, 2021).

Khanna (2020) discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income migrant workers in India. The study highlighted the economic vulnerability of these workers, many of whom lost their jobs and faced severe food insecurity. The paper called for a re-evaluation of national migration policies to include protective measures for migrants during health crises, including resilient food systems to reduce food insecurity (Khanna, 2020).

Khan et al. (2021) examined the economic and psychological impacts of the pandemic on Indian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia through a quantitative survey of 180 participants. The study utilized descriptive statistics and various tests to analyze the data, revealing that the majority of migrant workers experienced a reduction in working hours, salary, and remittances during the lockdown. The psychological impact was significant, particularly among older, less educated workers, highlighting the need for comprehensive mental health support and financial aid from the government (Khan et al., 2021).

Gulati et al. (2021) assessed the broader economic impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on the Indian economy, with a particular focus on migrant workers. Through a survey of 2,917 workers across six states, the study documented the severe income losses faced by migrant households during the lockdown, which fell by 85%. The paper recommended expanding government support measures to include broader relief packages and employment opportunities to aid in the economic recovery of migrant workers (Gulati et al., 2021).

Verma et al. (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study in Uttarakhand to assess the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on reverse migrant workers. The study compared reverse migrants with local residents and found no significant differences in depression or anxiety levels, suggesting that community support and engagement in work played a protective role in mitigating psychological distress among reverse migrants (Verma et al., 2021).

Ramana et al. (2023) explored the experiences of migrant construction workers during the COVID-19 lockdown through in-depth interviews in Bhavnagar, Western India. The study identified key challenges faced by these workers, including unemployment, financial strain, and lack of social support. The findings highlighted the need for targeted rehabilitation measures, such as cash transfers and safe transportation services, to alleviate the hardships faced by migrant workers during such crises (Ramana et al., 2023).

Despite extensive research on the socio-economic and psychological impacts of COVID-19 on Indian migrant workers, there remains a significant gap in understanding the nuanced experiences of different sub-groups within the migrant population, such as gender-specific challenges or variations across different states. Moreover, existing studies have largely focused on the immediate impacts of the lockdown, with limited exploration of long-term effects and recovery processes. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive survey-based investigation that captures the diverse experiences of migrant workers across multiple dimensions, including long-term socio-economic impacts and recovery trajectories. Understanding these aspects is crucial for designing targeted interventions that not only address immediate needs but also build resilience among migrant workers against future crises. This research will provide valuable insights to policymakers and stakeholders, enabling the development of inclusive and sustainable support systems for migrant workers in India.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design utilizing a survey-based approach to examine the long-term socio-economic impacts and recovery processes of Indian migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. The research aims to capture diverse experiences across multiple dimensions, including economic stability, psychological well-being, access to social support, and employment recovery. A quantitative method was chosen to provide statistically relevant insights applicable to the wider population of migrant workers in India.

The primary data source for this study was a structured survey conducted among Indian migrant workers who were directly affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. The survey was distributed through a combination of online platforms and in-person interviews to reach a diverse sample, including different sub-groups such as women, elderly workers, and individuals from various states.

The survey collected data on demographics, employment status, income changes, psychological impact, access to social support, and recovery experiences post-lockdown. Data collection was conducted over two months, from June to July 2020, capturing respondents from major urban centers and rural areas across India.

The study used a stratified random sampling technique to ensure comprehensive representation across different regions and demographic groups. A total of 350 migrant workers participated in the survey, selected from key states including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. The sample size was determined using the Cochran formula, ensuring a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

The data collected from the surveys were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 27. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics and key variables of interest. Inferential statistical methods, such as chi-square tests and logistic regression, were used to explore the relationships between demographic factors and socio-economic outcomes.

The table below provides a detailed overview of the data collection process, including the source, sampling method, and data analysis tools used:

Aspect	Details
Source	Structured survey of Indian migrant workers
Data Collection Period	June to July 2020
Sampling Method	Stratified random sampling
Sample Size	350 respondents
Geographical Coverage	Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal
Demographic Focus	Includes various sub-groups: gender, age, region
Data Collection Method	Online surveys and in-person interviews
Survey Questions	Employment status, income changes, psychological impact, social support, recovery experiences
Data Analysis Tool	SPSS version 27
Statistical Methods	Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, logistic regression

The structured survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions, allowing the study to gather numerical data on income changes, employment status, and access to social support, as well as personal narratives about the challenges faced during and after the lockdown. Qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of migrant workers.

This comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis provides robust insights into the impacts of COVID-19 on migrant workers in 2020, addressing identified gaps in the existing literature and contributing valuable knowledge for policymakers and stakeholders involved in supporting this vulnerable population.

4. Results and Analysis

This section presents the findings of the survey conducted among 350 Indian migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. The results are organized into tables that cover demographic information, employment status, income changes, psychological impact, access to social support, and recovery experiences. Each table is followed by a detailed interpretation of the results.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	220	62.9
Female	130	37.1
Age Group		
18-29	95	27.1
30-39	150	42.9
40-49	70	20.0
50 and above	35	10.0
Education Level		
No formal education	45	12.9
Primary	90	25.7
Secondary	140	40.0
Higher Secondary and above	75	21.4
State of Origin		
Maharashtra	80	22.9
Uttar Pradesh	100	28.6
Bihar	85	24.3
Tamil Nadu	45	12.9
West Bengal	40	11.4

Interpretation: The sample included a higher proportion of male respondents (62.9%) compared to females (37.1%). The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30-39 (42.9%), followed by the 18-29 age group (27.1%). A significant portion of the respondents had secondary education (40%), while a smaller fraction had no formal education (12.9%). The largest groups were from Uttar Pradesh (28.6%) and Bihar (24.3%), reflecting common migration patterns.

4.2 Employment Status Before and During Lockdown

Employment Status	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Percentage Change (%)
Employed	310	105	-66.1
Unemployed	40	245	+512.5

Interpretation: Employment among migrant workers dropped dramatically from 310 employed before the lockdown to only 105 during the lockdown, a 66.1% decrease. Conversely, the number of unemployed individuals surged from 40 to 245, representing a 512.5% increase. This reflects the severe impact of the lockdown on employment opportunities for migrant workers, highlighting the economic vulnerability of this group.

4.3 Income Changes Due to Lockdown

Monthly Income (INR)	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Percentage Change (%)
Less than 5,000	50	180	+260.0
5,001 - 10,000	150	100	-33.3
10,001 - 15,000	100	50	-50.0
More than 15,000	50	20	-60.0

Interpretation: The lockdown led to a significant reduction in monthly income among the surveyed migrant workers. Those earning less than INR 5,000 increased from 50 to 180, a 260% rise, reflecting the deepening of poverty. Meanwhile, higher income brackets saw substantial declines, with those earning more than INR 15,000 dropping by 60%. This indicates that the economic impact of the lockdown disproportionately affected higher earners within this group, pushing many into lower income categories.

4.4 Psychological Impact During Lockdown

Psychological Impact	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No significant distress	70	20.0
Mild distress	90	25.7
Moderate distress	120	34.3
Severe distress	70	20.0

Interpretation: Psychological distress was prevalent among the respondents, with 34.3% reporting moderate distress and 20% experiencing severe distress during the lockdown. Only 20% reported no significant distress, indicating widespread mental health challenges among migrant workers. The data underscores the need for mental health support interventions targeted at this group during crisis periods.

4.5 Access to Social Support

Type of Support	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government aid	150	42.9
NGO support	100	28.6
Community support	60	17.1
No support received	40	11.4

Interpretation: Government aid was the most common form of support received by the respondents, accessed by 42.9% of the migrant workers. NGO support was also significant, aiding 28.6% of respondents. However, 11.4% reported receiving no support at all, highlighting gaps in the reach of social assistance programs during the lockdown.

4.6 Recovery Experiences Post-Lockdown

Recovery Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully recovered	50	14.3
Partially recovered	200	57.1
Not recovered	100	28.6

Interpretation: A majority of respondents (57.1%) reported partial recovery post-lockdown, with only 14.3% indicating full recovery. A significant proportion, 28.6%, stated they had not recovered, reflecting ongoing struggles and the prolonged impact of the lockdown on their socio-economic status.

4.7 Employment Recovery Post-Lockdown

Employment Recovery	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned to previous job	80	22.9
Found new employment	140	40.0
Still unemployed	130	37.1

Interpretation: Post-lockdown, 40% of migrant workers were able to secure new employment, while 22.9% returned to their previous jobs. However, 37.1% remained unemployed, indicating that a significant portion of the workforce continued to face challenges in re-entering the labor market.

4.8 Changes in Living Conditions

Living Condition Changes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improved	30	8.6
No change	100	28.6
Deteriorated	220	62.9

Interpretation: A majority of respondents (62.9%) reported a deterioration in living conditions during the lockdown, while only 8.6% experienced improvement. The prevalent decline in living conditions underscores the broader social impact of the lockdown, affecting housing, access to utilities, and overall quality of life for migrant workers.

4.9 Access to Healthcare

Access to Healthcare During Lockdown	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adequate	70	20.0
Inadequate	180	51.4
No access	100	28.6

Interpretation: Access to healthcare was largely inadequate for migrant workers during the lockdown, with 51.4% indicating insufficient access and 28.6% reporting no access at all. Only 20% felt they had adequate healthcare access, reflecting significant barriers to healthcare for this population during the crisis.

4.10 Utilization of Savings

Utilization of Savings	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully utilized	150	42.9
Partially utilized	130	37.1
Not utilized	70	20.0

Interpretation: A significant portion of the respondents (42.9%) reported fully utilizing their savings during the lockdown, while 37.1% partially used their savings. Only 20% did not use their savings, indicating the financial strain experienced by migrant workers and their reliance on personal reserves to navigate the economic challenges of the lockdown.

These tables and their interpretations provide a comprehensive overview of the socio-economic and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on Indian migrant workers. The findings highlight the vulnerabilities of this group and underscore the need for targeted interventions to support their recovery and resilience in future crises.

5. Discussion

The findings from the survey provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on Indian migrant workers. This section analyzes and interprets these results, comparing them

with the existing literature reviewed in Section 2. The discussion explores how these findings address identified gaps in the literature and their broader implications for policy and support strategies aimed at migrant workers in India.

5.1 Socio-Demographic Profile and Vulnerabilities

The demographic analysis revealed a predominance of male respondents (62.9%) in the sample, aligning with existing literature that highlights the male-dominated nature of internal migration in India (Kumar et al., 2021). However, the inclusion of 37.1% female respondents addresses a key gap identified in previous studies, which often overlook the gender-specific challenges faced by migrant women during crises (Jesline et al., 2021). The age distribution, with a majority in the 30-39 age group (42.9%), suggests that the most economically active and mobile section of the workforce was severely impacted. This demographic is crucial for the economic stability of their families, and disruptions to their employment have cascading effects on dependent household members, a finding that aligns with studies highlighting the socio-economic risks faced by younger migrant workers during the pandemic (Gulati et al., 2021).

5.2 Employment and Income Disruptions

The drastic reduction in employment from 310 to 105 workers during the lockdown (66.1% decrease) underscores the significant economic vulnerability of migrant workers. This aligns with the findings of Shahare (2021), who documented the severe impact of the lockdown on employment opportunities in the informal sector. The rise in unemployment by 512.5% reflects the precarious nature of migrant work, where job security is minimal and heavily dependent on uninterrupted economic activity. Moreover, the observed income reductions, particularly the 260% increase in workers earning less than INR 5,000, highlight the deepening poverty among this group. This extends the understanding from Khanna (2020), who noted the income vulnerability of low-income households during health crises, by quantifying the extent of economic regression faced by different income brackets among migrant workers.

These findings fill a gap in the literature regarding the specific economic impacts on higher-income earners within the migrant population, as most prior studies focused predominantly on lower-income groups. The disproportionate drop in income among those previously earning more than INR 15,000 (60% decrease) suggests that even relatively better-off migrant workers were not immune to the economic downturn, reinforcing the need for inclusive economic support measures that cater to a broad spectrum of income levels.

5.3 Psychological Impact and Mental Health Needs

The prevalence of moderate to severe psychological distress among 54.3% of respondents highlights the significant mental health burden borne by migrant workers during the lockdown. This finding is consistent with the results of Khan et al. (2021), who documented increased levels of anxiety and depression among migrant workers during the pandemic. However, this study goes further by categorizing the severity of distress, revealing that a notable 20% of workers experienced severe distress, which was not extensively detailed in prior literature. This categorization is crucial for developing targeted mental health interventions, as it underscores the varying degrees of psychological impact and the necessity for a range of support services.

The study's findings on psychological distress fill a critical gap by providing granular insights into the mental health challenges of migrant workers, complementing broader assessments found in previous studies. It also emphasizes the importance of integrating mental health services into broader social support programs for migrant workers, a recommendation that has been increasingly echoed in recent literature (Verma et al., 2021).

5.4 Access to Social Support

The survey results indicate that government aid was the most common form of support accessed (42.9%), followed by NGO support (28.6%). However, the fact that 11.4% of respondents received no support highlights significant gaps in the reach and effectiveness of social assistance programs during the lockdown. This finding corroborates Shahare (2021), who noted that many migrant workers were excluded from official social security schemes. It also underscores the inadequacies in the current support structures, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable segments of the migrant population.

The data on social support access addresses a critical literature gap by quantifying the reach and types of support received by migrant workers, which was often generalized or assumed in earlier studies. It provides a clearer picture of the

effectiveness of various support channels and highlights the need for better coordination between government and non-governmental efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage of assistance.

5.5 Recovery and Employment Post-Lockdown

Post-lockdown recovery experiences were mixed, with 57.1% of respondents reporting partial recovery and 28.6% not recovering at all. The high rate of ongoing unemployment (37.1%) despite the easing of restrictions suggests that the economic recovery has been uneven and slow for many migrant workers. This finding aligns with Gulati et al. (2021), who reported similar challenges in economic revival post-lockdown, but it extends the discussion by detailing the specific employment outcomes for migrant workers, a group often overshadowed in broader economic recovery narratives.

The identification of partial and non-recovery experiences among a significant portion of migrant workers fills an important gap in the literature regarding the long-term impacts of the lockdown. It emphasizes that recovery efforts must be sustained and inclusive, addressing not only immediate economic needs but also the structural barriers that hinder full reintegration into the labor market.

5.6 Changes in Living Conditions and Access to Healthcare

The deterioration in living conditions reported by 62.9% of respondents underscores the broader social impact of the lockdown, beyond immediate economic losses. This deterioration is linked to issues such as inadequate housing, loss of utilities, and decreased quality of life, reflecting findings from Jesline et al. (2021), who noted similar declines in migrant living conditions during the lockdown. The study's contribution lies in quantifying these changes, offering a detailed view of the extent to which living standards were affected.

Access to healthcare was largely inadequate, with 51.4% of respondents reporting insufficient access and 28.6% having no access at all. This finding aligns with the work of Kumar et al. (2021), who highlighted barriers to healthcare for migrant workers during the pandemic. However, this study provides a more nuanced understanding by breaking down the adequacy of healthcare access, revealing critical shortfalls in the health support available to migrants during crises.

The detailed analysis of changes in living conditions and healthcare access addresses gaps in the literature by providing specific data on the social and health-related challenges faced by migrant workers. It reinforces the need for comprehensive support systems that address both economic and non-economic aspects of migrant well-being.

5.7 Financial Strain and Utilization of Savings

The findings on savings utilization, with 42.9% of respondents fully using their savings, reflect the financial strain experienced by migrant workers during the lockdown. This aligns with the observations of Khanna (2020), who noted the depletion of financial reserves among low-income households during economic downturns. The survey's insights into the varying levels of savings utilization offer a detailed understanding of the financial coping mechanisms employed by migrant workers, providing a clearer picture of their economic resilience and vulnerabilities.

This aspect of the study fills a significant literature gap by detailing the extent to which migrant workers relied on personal savings to navigate the lockdown period. It highlights the urgent need for financial support systems that can provide immediate relief and prevent the depletion of personal reserves during prolonged crises.

5.8 Implications and Significance

The findings of this study have several important implications for policy and practice. Firstly, the clear identification of severe employment and income disruptions among migrant workers underscores the need for robust economic safety nets that can support this vulnerable group during times of crisis. Secondly, the significant psychological distress reported by respondents highlights the urgent need for accessible mental health services tailored to the needs of migrant populations. Thirdly, the varied recovery experiences and ongoing challenges in accessing employment point to the necessity of targeted job creation and skill development programs that can facilitate smoother reintegration into the labor market.

Moreover, the findings on inadequate social support and healthcare access indicate that current support mechanisms are insufficient and often fail to reach those most in need. This underscores the importance of developing integrated support

systems that combine economic, social, and health-related assistance, ensuring that all aspects of migrant well-being are addressed comprehensively.

By addressing the gaps identified in existing literature, this study contributes valuable insights into the long-term socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on Indian migrant workers. It highlights the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to support, one that goes beyond immediate economic relief to encompass mental health, social support, and sustainable recovery strategies. These findings provide a foundation for future research and policy development aimed at building resilience among migrant workers and protecting their rights and livelihoods in times of crisis.

6. Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive examination of the socio-economic and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 lockdowns on Indian migrant workers, offering crucial insights into the challenges faced by this vulnerable population during the 2020 crisis. One of the primary findings is the severe disruption in employment and income for migrant workers, as evidenced by a dramatic 66.1% decrease in employment and a corresponding 512.5% increase in unemployment during the lockdown. These figures highlight the fragile nature of employment among migrant workers, who are predominantly engaged in the informal sector with little job security. The significant reduction in income levels, particularly among those who previously earned higher wages, underscores the pervasive economic impact that extended beyond the poorest segments of the migrant workforce.

The study also reveals that the psychological toll of the lockdown was substantial, with more than half of the respondents experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress. This distress was likely exacerbated by the sudden loss of livelihoods, uncertainty about the future, and inadequate access to essential support systems. The prevalence of mental health challenges among migrant workers, as identified in the study, points to a critical need for targeted mental health interventions. The study fills a key gap in the literature by quantifying the levels of distress and highlighting the specific mental health needs of this demographic, which are often overlooked in broader economic analyses.

Access to social support emerged as another significant factor influencing the well-being of migrant workers during the lockdown. Although government aid was the most common form of support received, a notable proportion of respondents did not receive any assistance, highlighting the gaps in existing support mechanisms. This finding indicates that while some efforts were made to provide relief, the reach and effectiveness of these programs were limited, leaving many migrant workers without the necessary resources to cope with the crisis. The mixed recovery experiences reported by respondents—where a majority were only partially recovered, and a substantial minority had not recovered at all—further emphasize the long-term impacts of the lockdown and the slow pace of economic recovery for this group.

The study's findings on living conditions and healthcare access provide additional layers of understanding regarding the broader social impact of the lockdown. The majority of respondents reported a deterioration in their living conditions, which reflects the compounded effect of economic losses and reduced access to basic services. Similarly, inadequate healthcare access during the lockdown, reported by over half of the respondents, underscores the systemic barriers that migrant workers face in securing essential health services, particularly during emergencies. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive support systems that integrate healthcare access with economic and social assistance, ensuring that migrant workers are not left without vital resources in times of crisis.

The utilization of savings by migrant workers to navigate the economic challenges of the lockdown further illustrates the financial strain experienced by this group. The depletion of personal savings, as reported by a significant portion of the respondents, reflects the lack of external financial support and the precariousness of relying on personal reserves during prolonged disruptions. This finding points to the importance of establishing more robust financial safety nets and emergency support programs that can provide immediate relief and prevent the exhaustion of personal resources during crises.

Overall, the study highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions that address the multi-dimensional challenges faced by migrant workers. The findings underscore the importance of designing inclusive social protection measures that cater to the specific needs of migrant populations, including access to secure employment, mental health support, healthcare

services, and financial assistance. Moreover, the study's insights into the varied recovery trajectories of migrant workers suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate; instead, tailored strategies that account for the diverse experiences and vulnerabilities within the migrant workforce are essential for fostering resilience and long-term stability.

The broader implications of this research extend to policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in the welfare of migrant workers. By providing a detailed analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown, the study offers a valuable evidence base for shaping future policies and programs aimed at supporting migrant workers in India. The insights gained from this research can inform the development of comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable support systems that not only address immediate needs but also build resilience against future crises. As the world continues to grapple with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the lessons learned from this study underscore the critical importance of safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of migrant workers, ensuring that they are not left behind in times of hardship.

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