

Challenges and Coping among Migrant Workers in Delhi

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ABSTRACT

Migrant workers typically move from places with lack of jobs or desired spots to places with a labour shortage and tempting opportunities for employment. This study focuses on reasons for migration, challenges faced by migrant workers, and how to cope with these challenges. The sample was of migrant workers who have migrated to and are currently living in Delhi. A semi-structured interview was taken from 10 males and 10 females. Thematic and narrative analysis was done to obtain result. The results showed reasons for migration (unemployment in native nation, poverty, economic opportunities in host nation, etc.), challenges faced by migrant workers (difficulty in finding job, shelter, food, accessing health services, providing education to their children's, they are constantly in debt cycle), and how migrant workers cope with these challenges (finding social support, forming groups with other migrant workers, educating themselves about government policies, etc.). This study tries to provide in-depth information about life of migrant workers and some recommendations for future betterment.

Keywords: *Challenges, Coping, Migrant Workers*

Migrant worker is a person who is about to be engaged in, is engaged in, or has previously been involved in a paying job in a State of which they are not a national. Migrant labour is the work done by people who have relocated from another country, their family, or their hometowns. Migrant workers contribute to the growth and development of their "host" nations or areas, while their "home" countries or regions gain from the skills they acquire while away, as well as any taxes or remittances sent "home."

Migrant workers generally relocate to locations with a labour shortage and appealing employment opportunities from places with a lack of jobs or desirable jobs. The labour shortage is caused by demographic and economic factors equally. The demand for labour in areas with strong economic growth and employment expansion frequently exceeds the supply of local workers.

For India's economy to flourish and for individuals to live in better socioeconomic conditions, labour migration is essential. In India, there are around 500 million blue-collar employees.

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Received: June 06, 2023; Revision Received: June 14, 2023; Accepted: June 16, 2023

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Reason for migration from native nations

Migrant workers depart from their native nations for a variety of reasons. Some people relocate to join family, pursue educational chances, or find employment or economic opportunities. Others relocate in order to get away from conflicts, persecution, terrorism, or human rights violations. Others relocate in reaction to the adverse consequences of environmental variables like disasters or climate change. These explanations fall into three categories: economic, social, and political ones.

Economic opportunities, poverty and lack of development, unemployment, political instability and conflict, social aspects, education and training and environmental factors.

Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers

The challenges faced by migrant workers vary greatly from basic necessities problems to major problems which include lack of benefits, issues with finding local employment, housing needs, financial security, lack of job security, cultural barriers, lack of legal protection, inadequate living conditions, exploitation by middleman, dangerous conditions, and fear and isolation. All of these difficulties are explained below:

Lack of benefits, issues with finding local employment, housing, finance, lack of job security, cultural Barriers, lack of legal protection, inadequate living conditions, educational issues, exploitation by middlemen, fear and isolation, and dangerous conditions.

Ways Migration Workers Cope

When migrating to a new place for work, migrant workers come across several difficulties. Language difficulties, cultural differences, homesickness, discrimination, a lack of social support, and difficulties accessing essential services are examples of these challenges. Migrant workers frequently develop coping techniques to deal with these obstacles. Here are some strategies for migrant workers to deal with the difficulties they face:

Building social networks, learning the local language, cultural identity preservation, seeking support from organization, managing finances, keeping in touch with family and friends, participating in recreational activities, seeking professional support, educating themselves about their rights, developing resilience and self-care.

Rationale

There are several researches on effect of Covid-19 on migrant workers and challenges faced by them during lockdown but not much on challenges faced by them in general. This shows that the challenges faced by migrant workers were not taken into consideration before the pandemic came. And this is the reason that they are not taken seriously and their problems are ignored as if they are here to suffer. This research focuses on the challenges faced by migrant workers in general and included all the aspects and how migrant workers cope with these challenges.

This study aims at understanding the reason for migration of migrant workers to host countries/ cities to know the primary reason for migration. Further, the study focuses on challenges faced by them after coming to the host city. Lastly, it aims at understanding the coping strategies adopted by these individuals. Hence, our understanding of challenges faced by these migrant workers is imperative to bring about changes and implementations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Akinola, A. B., Krishna, A. K., & Chetlapalli, S. K. (2014) conducted a study on “health equity for internal migrant labourers in India: an ethical perspective”. In a developing

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country like India, with an exploding population, increasing urbanisation rate, and regional differences in development, the availability of suitable housing has long been a source of concern. Various housing policies, plans, and projects have been developed in the past, but these policies and programmes have never addressed the housing needs of the floating population, who only stay for a short length of time at their destination, worsening their status and producing unsanitary living conditions. Every individual has the right to appropriate housing, which is a basic essential for survival; thus, the country's expanding housing demand is something to consider. As previously said, the floating population refers to migrant labourers from the Low-Income Group (LIG) or Economically Weaker Section (EWS) of society who travel from one state to the next in quest of better jobs, facilities, and quality of life. The following study covers the socioeconomic backdrop and housing concerns confronting low-income Inter-State Migrant (ISM) labourers working in India's construction sector.

Ansari, P. A. (2016) conducted research on “internal migration: An analysis of Problems faced by the migrants in India—A step to the solution”. Three out of every ten Indians are internal migrants, according to UNESCO research titled *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India*. Internal migrants in India increased from 309 million in 2001 to 400 million in 2011. Migrants today face critical challenges with their identity, child education, health issues, issues confronting female migrants, legal aid, and other disputes. To address these issues and improve the well-being and advancement of migrant workers in India, the government and civil society, especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs), should take urgent initiatives. This study attempts to focus on various difficulties and solutions that can be implemented for the welfare of internal migrants in India, so that we can all develop towards societal growth.

Bala, A. (2017) conducted a study on “migration in India: Causes and consequences”. Migration is a type of permanent relocation that involves population spatial mobility between geographical units. Migration is defined by location of birth or residency in the Indian census. A person is considered a migrant if they were born somewhere other than the location of the census. The analysis of population migration throughout a major nation like India aids in a better understanding of the social dynamics of that nation. The paper explains the driving forces behind migration. People move from rural areas to urban areas in search of greater employment prospects, higher incomes, better pay, and better facilities because rural areas have fewer jobs, lower earnings, drought, a lack of basic amenities, landlessness, and other social reasons. A sizable portion of the migrant population, particularly in large and metropolitan cities, lives in marginal settlements, slums, and squatter areas with poor infrastructure services, endangering their health and contributing to urban area environmental degradation, traffic, and other issues. This essay makes an effort to comprehend migration as a concept, as well as its causes and effects in India.

Iyer, M. (2022) conducted research on “migration in India and the impact of the lockdown on migrants 1”. Recognising the difficulties experienced by migrants trapped in various regions of the country, the Supreme Court of India assessed the government's transportation and relief plans. This chapter discusses migration in India and details significant relief measures offered by the government and Supreme Court directions for the migrant population in relation to the shutdown. As of 2011, the bulk (70%) of intra-state movement was for marriage and family reasons, with differences between male and female migrants. While 83% of females relocated for marriage and family, 39% of males did the same. In all, 8% of persons relocated within a state for work. Some state governments, including as those

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in Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, have promised one-time financial pay-outs to returning migrant workers. The UP government granted a Rs. 1,000 upkeep subsidies for returning migrants who are obliged to quarantine.

Kone, Z. L., Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2021) conducted research on “self-employment and reason for migration: are those who migrate for asylum different from other migrants?”. This research investigates disparities in the likelihood of self-employment among migrants who relocated to the UK for a variety of reasons. According to the findings, those who initially migrated for asylum reasons are six percentage points more likely to engage in self-employment than those who migrated for work reasons, while those who migrated for work reasons are not significantly different from UK-born workers in this regard. We also discover that mediating factors such as network presence and years since migration affect the likelihood of self-employment differently for each group of migrants. Finally, there are differences in the number of self-employed people employed and the skill level linked with the activity of self-employment. Those who migrated for refuge are no more likely to hire others than those born in the UK, whereas those who migrated for work are two percentage points less likely to employ others than those born in the UK.

Mak, J., Roberts, B., & Zimmerman, C. (2021) conducted research on “coping with migration-related stressors: a systematic review of the literature. This study looks into resettlement stress among African migrants in Australia and how they deal with it. Thirty semi-structured interviews with African migrants in Western Australia were conducted for the study. To manage stress, participants employed a variety of techniques, including reliance on family as a group and on God - frequently built through alliance rather than kinship. The article's main contribution emphasises the multifaceted approach for social work to migrant integration tactics. The study finds three key growing issues: the role of 'families' as community networks, the experience of prejudice, and the value of faith in God as critical migrant support elements.

Saikia, D. (2015) conducted a research on “migrant Workers in kerala: A study on their socio-economic conditions”. The socioeconomic situation of the migrant workers in Kerala is examined in this essay. Based on information from a sample of 166 migrant workers, we assess the income, spending, and saving habits as well as the type of job performed by migrant workers in the Trivandrum region. While previous studies have found evidence of short-distance migration to Kerala from states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka nearby, our research shows evidence of long-distance migration in recent years from regions like West Bengal and Assam. We discover that migrant workers' informal information networks from their home countries play a significant role in the movement of workers to Kerala. The main drivers of migration to Kerala have been recognised as poor economic conditions in the home country, high wage rates, and improved employment prospects in Kerala. Although there has been a shift from low-income brackets prior to migration to high-income brackets after migration, the nature of the migrants' job has hardly changed at all. Despite their higher wage levels, the majority of migrant workers live in appalling conditions. They share a single room at work sites or in subpar rental homes, neither of which have adequate sanitary sanitation facilities.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To explore the challenges faced by migrant workers in Delhi and coping strategies adopted by them.

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Objectives

- To understand the reason for migration.
- To explore the challenges faced by migrant workers living in Delhi.
- To understand the coping strategies adopted by migrant workers living in Delhi.

Procedure of Sample Selection

The researcher talked to migrant workers who lived in a nearby locality and then introduced herself to the potential participants and explain to them the purpose of the study. The researcher had to clear all doubts that were asked by the participants before involving them in the study. The researcher also had to ensure them of the confidentiality of the whole research process and that their statements would have no negative implications on them. The researcher took written/verbal informed consent from all participants to interview them and record their experiences (written).

Description of Sample

All participants from the sample were migrant workers from Uttarakhand, Bihar, UP. The sample comprised of both men and women were migrant workers. The sample of the study totalled to 20 participants, 10 men & 10 women who migrated and lived in Delhi. The sample selection was done on a voluntary participation and withdrawal basis.

Characteristics of the Sample

- All persons were aged 30 or above both men and women.
- The men and women were all residents of the Delhi who once migrated from other states.

Research Design

The present research was a qualitative study exploring the challenges faced by migrant workers and coping strategies adopted by them. The study takes a constructivism approach hoping to get a better understanding of the different challenges faced by migrant workers. The end goal of the research was to analyse the challenges faced by migrant workers and coping strategies adopted by them.

Variables

- Independent Variable: Migrant Workers
- Dependent Variable: Challenges and Coping Strategies

Description of tools employed

Semi structured Interview

The open-ended questions asked to the participants were. The questions aimed at finding out the reason for migration, how migrant workers earn now, challenges faced by them after coming to Delhi, how they manage everything now. In depth interviews with semi structured questions were conducted with a sample of 20 migrant workers asking them the following questions:

- Where are you from? Why did you come to Delhi?
- What work do you do?
- How long have you been doing this in Delhi?
- What are some issues that you have been facing in Delhi (financial, health services, social protection, livelihood, housing and sanitation, education services, food, water and other utility services)?

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- How do you manage everything now?

Procedure

The study was conducted by adhering to the following methodology

Data collection of the study was done to collect information by using semi- structured interviews. The researchers also cleared all doubts asked by the participants and ensured them of the confidentiality of the whole research process. The participants were also safeguarded that any information provided by them would have no impact on their life in any negative way, during or even after the conduction of the study. Data was collected from migrant worker migrated to Delhi. Oral consent was taken from the participants.

Methodology of data collection is as follows

The interview process: The study used semi structured questioning technique for the in-depth interviews engaging participants in a conversation about why they came to Delhi, how migrant workers earn now, challenges faced by them after coming to Delhi, how they manage everything now. The in- depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants, 10 Men and 10 Women. Several participants were apprehensive to give any information and had to be reassured of the confidentiality of the process and that there was no pressure on them to share anything they didn't not wish to disclose. This was done to ensure the safety of information provided by the participants while also assuring them that the research intends no harm towards the participants or does not interfere in any way with their daily living at the homes.

Analysis

The data was collected through semi- structured interviews and the analysis of data was done by thematic and narrative analysis. The in- depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants, 10 Men and 10 Women. The study rendered itself to case study methodology. Case study methodology was applied as the sample size of the study was relatively small and case study methodology enables intensive study of certain characteristics in a small functioning unit, in this case, the migrant workers represent the sample unit. Case study approach enables the qualitative discussion. The data from interviews was analysed through thematic and narrative analysis. The researcher analysed the data thoroughly many times. This type of analysis is done to ensure that the research is in-depth and include every aspect deeply.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to assess the challenges faced by migrant workers in Delhi and how to cope with these challenges. The results and discussions in this chapter are presented in 3 parts supported by anecdotal references:

- Part 1 presents results on the reasons for migration of workers.
- Part 2 presents results on the challenges faced by migrant workers living in Delhi via semi- structured interviews.
- Part 3 presents results on the coping strategies adopted by migrant workers living in Delhi via semi- structures interviews.

Part 1: Reason for migration of workers

The reason of migration of workers to Delhi were captured through semi structured are presented below:

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The main reason for migration was economic opportunities in host nations. The migrant workers move in pursuit of better economic conditions to support themselves and their family since their home nations offer few job prospects or pay low wages.

Poverty and lack of development is another reason for people to migrate. They migrate in pursuit of higher living conditions because they experience poverty and lack of development in their home nations. Lack of access to basic necessities like healthcare, education, and comforts influence their decision to look for possibilities elsewhere.

Unemployment is another major reason for migration. People may migrate in search of work if there are high rates of unemployment or underemployment in their home nations. They can have a hard time locating acceptable employment, or they might get stuck in low-wage or unorganised industries with shaky work security.

People also migrate because of political instability and conflict. Political unrest, armed conflict, or persecution may cause migrants to leave their native nations. These people are frequently motivated by a need for safety and protection.

Migration also happens because of social aspects. Marriage, the reunification of families, and integrating into immigrant communities are all examples of social variables that might influence migration. To join family members who have already migrated, or to forge new social bonds and support systems, anyone may decide to migrate.

Part 2: Challenges faced by migrant workers living in Delhi

The preceding discussions are aimed at unravelling some of the challenges faced by the migrant workers living in Delhi collected through semi structured interviews.

Migrant workers have limited social protection that includes lack of access to the public distribution system, exclusion from public healthcare systems, poor access to housing, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and financial insecurity.

The challenges faced by the migrant workers living in Delhi were captured through having semi structured interviews with the participants in Delhi are presented below:

For the migrant workers living in Delhi the biggest challenge is the debt cycle they have because of constant need for taking loan from others during difficult times. Most of the time migrant workers have to take loan from other people such as their land lord, family, friends, or places they work at (factory, home). They take debt in case of emergency, for instance medical needs of family which include accidents, diseases, etc., admission of children in school, difficult times like covid-19 pandemic, loss of job, and sometimes even for daily bread. Basically, they need to take loan for everything that happens that exceed daily need for living.

Migrant workers face so much difficulty while looking for home. They usually live in clusters in one room before marriage for a low price. Sometimes they also have to live on streets or grounds. And even after getting a rented apartment they face difficulty in paying rent in difficult times.

- They also have difficulty in accessing health services and health risks.
- They also face difficult in getting good education and providing it to their children.
- They also face difficulty in living a healthy and quality lifestyle.

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- Food is another problem for the migrant workers.

There is also a vulnerability to crises and disasters. When covid- 19 pandemic hit India, many migrant workers had to reverse migrate to their home town. They faced so much problem with food, health services, shelter. Their landlord asked them to leave if they cannot pay. The borders were closed so they could not go to their hometown too.

There is also less job opportunities and eventually they have to do these types of work. And because of this they start to think that these types of jobs are better than education as even after education they won't be able to earn good money. So, it's better to do this work and earn money to help the family survive.

Part 3: Coping strategies adopted by the migrant workers living in Delhi

The coping strategies adopted by the migrant workers living in Delhi were captured through semi structured are presented below:

Migrant workers seek emotional support from their family, friends, spiritual/ religious activities (praying/meditating). Whenever they are in a low phase, they take support from these people. Some of them also believe that their god will not let anything bad happen to them or even if something happens, it's for good.

They always support their friends and family who have also migrated. They are always there for their loved ones and support them emotionally, financially, etc.

They educate themselves about their rights, government policies for them. They also help other migrant workers by educating them about schemes for them. They also seek help from external sources like NGO's, government schemes, organizations, or their boss. They are able to afford living because of various schemes by government which reduce their burden like free education for children's, free hospital visits and medicines.

They engage in drinking, smoking and other drugs to disengage from the stress which is not a positive way of coping and most of the time they spend money on alcohol, gambling, schemes for money and lose it. They spend their money on alcohol which leads to more problems and stress.

They live in groups and feel safe with their people. They help each other and people who they work for also help them. They also take loan from other people in case of emergency and later pay it off without any interest.

They work almost every day to sustain life here. For most of the participants their significant also work to earn for living. This leads to tiredness, mood swings, etc.

They learn local language and culture in order to make connections and make living easy. They also learn watching other do things such as earning by themselves, providing education for children's, etc.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to find out challenges faced by migrant workers in Delhi and coping strategies adopted by them to face these challenges.

Semi structured interview was used in this qualitative study on migrant workers. Total sample of 20 migrant workers included 10 women and 10 men from different states who migrated to Delhi.

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The following conclusions have been drawn based on the discussions presented in the above sections.

The findings of the study reveal that the migrant workers living in Delhi faced many challenges ranging from basic necessities to quality of life. As migrant workers are major part of population it is important to work toward their betterment. Every human deserves their basic needs to be fulfilled and opportunities to work.

The primary reasons for the migrant workers to come to Delhi are unemployment, poverty, economic opportunities, lack of development, social aspects like marriage, political instability and conflict.

The primary challenges commonly faced by migrant workers living in Delhi were limited social protection, lack of access to the public distribution system, exclusion from public healthcare systems, poor access to housing, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, financial insecurity, constant debt cycle, providing education to their children's, vulnerability to crises, etc.

The primary coping strategies commonly adopted by migrant workers under study were emotional- focused strategies which includes seeking emotional support and building social networks, disengagement to forget all the worries and be stress free by drinking and smoking, and helping other migrant workers to build a community and have a sense of safety. Other coping strategy used by migrant workers is problem- focused strategy which includes learning about host city like leaning about their culture, language. They educate themselves and other migrant workers about their rights and how to use them. They also take help from external sources.

The following recommendations have been made for providing better opportunities, services and quality of life for migrant workers.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Lakhchaura, M., & Tara, D. (2023). Challenges and Coping among Migrant Workers in Delhi. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2), 2117-2126. DIP:18.01.213.20231102, DOI:10.25215/1102.213