

Module E1: Pandemic, Migrants, Refugees and Public Health

Title: Livelihood and Psychological Health of Gold Jewellery Migrant workers from West Bengal: The Brunt of COVID-19 pandemic

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CRG's 'Seventh Annual Research & Orientation Workshop & Conference

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The sudden outbreak of the novel Covid-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the otherwise disdained vulnerable migrant workforce who live precariously moving from rural to urban areas not out of choice but for endurance. Migrants are cardinal economic actors who contribute to economic activities ensuring growth. However, as an outcaste community, they have been exposed to arduousness in accessing ration, health care and other basic amenities necessary for sustenance. They have been disproportionately affected while returning to their native place during the lockdown phase. West Bengal reports a high proportion of return of migrant workers. Under a circumstance of high lack of empirical evidence, it attempts to venture into a critical examination of the after-effects of the pandemic on the livelihood of such returnee migrants based on the factors influencing their employability status in addition to their socio-economic and psychological status. Accordingly, two objectives have been set –

1. To measure the pandemic's impact on the livelihood of gold jewellery migrant workers from Paschim Midnapore in West Bengal.

2. To investigate the impact of the pandemic on the psychological health of the gold jewellery migrant workforce.

Design/Methodology/approach: 200 migrants engaged in gold jewellery making have been selected from the underprivileged areas of the Ghatal sub-division of Paschim Medinipur District (West Bengal) like Daspur – I, Daspur – II, Ghatal, Chandrakona – I, Chandrakona – II. A number of individuals drop out of schools to engage as gold jewellery workers in states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Delhi, etc. To measure the impact on the livelihood of migrant workers, their employability status and socio-economic situation during the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic phase shall be considered and assessed by employing Ordered Logistic Regression, Wilcoxon, Effect size test, Welch's t test, etc.

Originality: The outcomes delivered by the study may be beneficial in the formulation of development policies for this emerging vulnerable segment of society. West Bengal is one among the top states supplying workers in the migrant labour force. Fresh empirical insights from the proposed investigation would have high acceptance towards the policymakers, ruling government establishments, critics and other concerned authorities.

Research Implications: The improbable employment aspects in the current scenario raise concerns about the livelihood agenda of the returnee migrant workforce to sustain during the times of distress. A grass-root level analysis of the migrants who have returned to West Bengal during lockdown may unravel their employability and livelihood conditions. An in-depth examination of the socio-economic and psychological status of the migrant workforce may portray the disruptions and genuine concerns of the migrants who are often subject to neglect and stigmatisation. The pandemic has disrupted the livelihoods of the migrants in the informal sector and exposed the maladies of opting such unfavourable livelihood means. The precarious state of this vulnerable segment needs immediate social protection facilities. It may assist in revising the labour standards for voiceless migrant workers while providing welfare facilities through economic and social aids. It may help to amend the existing gaps in enacted laws that cause disparity and debar a migrant from enjoying the guaranteed rights. In addition, the issue of the health rights of migrant workers can also be dealt with to extend care and protection to the migrant workforce. The communication of the same to the

government and the concerned authorities may help revise and update the social protection schemes according to the best interest of the society.