

Impact of Covid-19 in the Lives of Migrant Workers, Daily Wagers and Other Labourers in Pathanamthitta

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Abstract: As the country grapples with the rise in COVID-19 cases, people have been forced to remain indoors during the pandemic but the worst affected are the migrant workers, daily wagers and other labourers. The purpose of this study is to examine the problems faced by migrant workers and daily wagers and to identify the research areas related to COVID-19. The approach to tackle the most noticeable awful circumstance is to develop and improve workers own skills and also to enter into the creation of Horticulture. The lack of adequate measures to address the issues of these workers has led to serious consequences with many of them being left with no money. Comparing the study with statements gained through interviews, we can conclude that the study shows a negative impact on the lives of toiling classes.

Keywords: COVID 19, Migrant Workers, Daily Wagers, Other Labourers.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The real test of the quality of life in a nation, as in a community, is how well the poorest people in it live” John C Holt, escape from childhood.

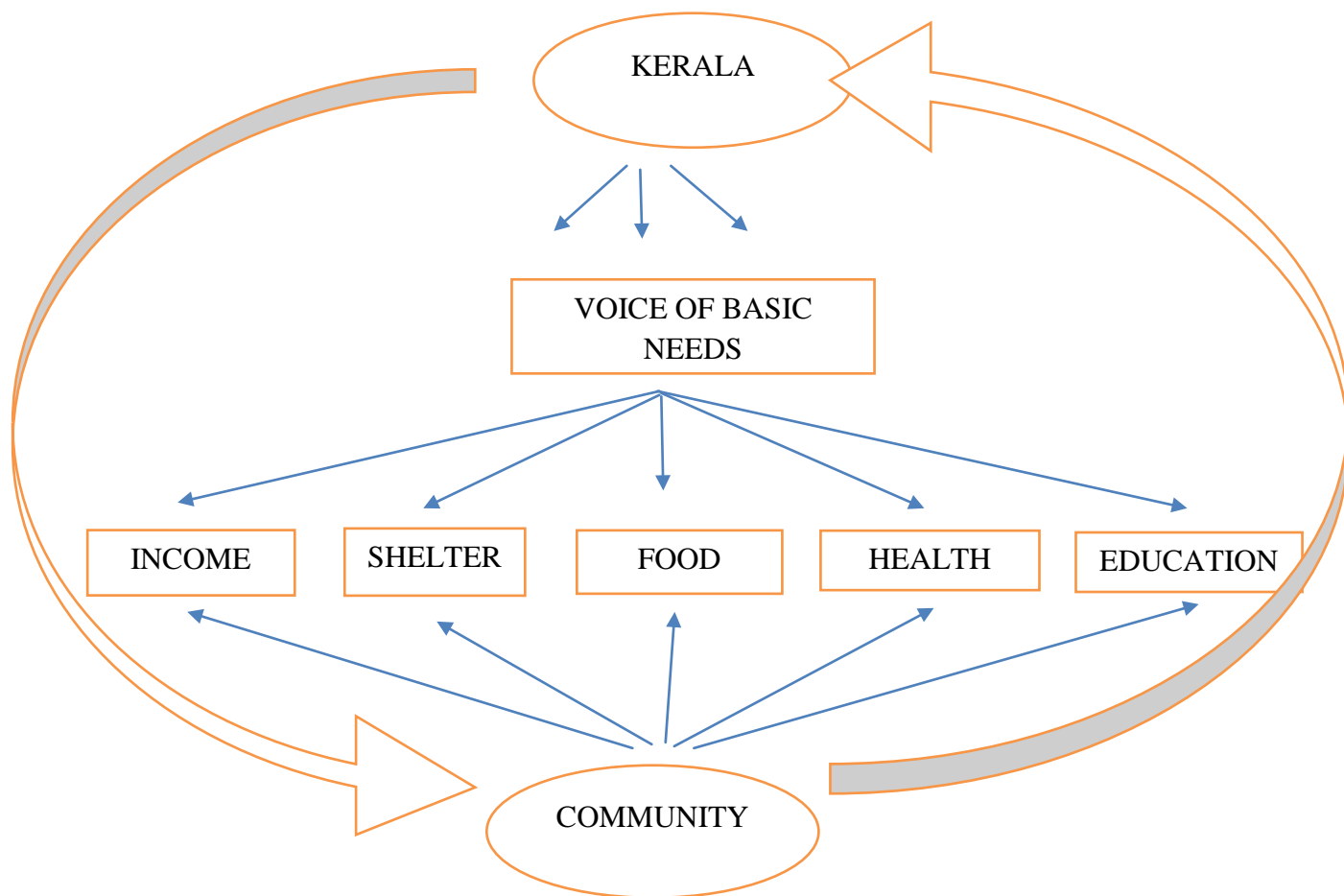
On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 was a global pandemic, indicating significant global spread of an infectious diseases. At that time, there were 118,000 confirmed cases of the corona virus in 110 countries. Soon, the virus was in all continents and over 177 countries, and as of this writing, Today, in early May 2020, there have been nearly 2,500,000 deaths worldwide, with over 111,039,835 confirmed cases. The human toll is staggering, and experts are predicting a second wave in summer or fall.

COVID-19 has sent India's once fast growing economy into a tailspin and left huge number of individuals jobless. Growth has plugged into the negative territory. But poor people have been hit the hardest by the pandemic and the economic disruption. Although the nation had hauled millions out of poverty only recently, it's now facing the dire prospect of witnessing millions being pushed back to the margins once again as a result of the pandemic.

The corona virus crisis is going to produce unprecedented levels of effects on the migrant economy. The first is pretty direct: Because of social distancing and the lockdown, businesses are mostly shut and a couple of individuals are working. That means a lot of migrant workers are now either unemployed or waiting for something (positive) to happen.

In Kerala, around 3 millions of people were daily wagers, interstate migrant workers and other labours etc, they have become an indispensable part of Kerala's economy. The state also offers the highest wages for migrant workers for jobs in the unorganised sector in the entire Indian subcontinent. Further, the state has evolved several measures for the inclusion of the workers and was able to effectively respond to their distress during the national lockdown.

This research paper examines the plight of migrant workers, daily wagers and other labours how they sacrifice and overcome their life during the lockdown, key measures by the government to promote the social security of the workers and the state's response to the distress of migrant workers during lockdown, by synthesising the available primary evidence. The welfare measures as well as interventions initiated by the state are exemplary promising given the intent and provisions. However, some of them do not appear to have consideration of the grassroots requirements and implementation mechanisms to enhance access. The COVID-19 lockdown has the most daunting impact of such people whereby most of them have to fight for survival on a daily basis. The surveys clearly show that livelihoods have been devastated at unprecedented levels. Food frailty and financial weakness have expanded to faltering proportions.



The above diagram depicts the most affected areas which leave them unprotected, vulnerable to exploitation, poverty and food insecurity, and often without access to health care, social protection and the measures being put in place by governments. Many were unable to satisfy their essential needs.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

This paper is intended to study the impact of COVID 19 in the lives of migrant workers, daily wagers and other labourers in Pathanamthitta.

The daily wage workers are the strata of every industry without whom no event is possible. They are the pillars and the most basic foundation of every event and their services and support helps in the successful making of every events. The COVID-19 lockdown has a daunting impact on them and they faced many difficulties to satisfy their basic needs and essentials.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As India had been experiencing a rising unemployment issues and slower economic growth before COVID-19, as a result the India's economic condition worsened. This paper also focuses on the plight of COVID-19 on migrant workers, daily wagers and other labourers. The most affected is the daily wage workers and migrant workers as they face cuts in working hours, layoffs and reduction in their incomes.

The significance of this study is to find out solutions and alternatives for the problems faced by the workers because of COVID-19 pandemic. This research study will be beneficial to build up the living conditions of workers from bottom level to some higher level. Thus, we can higher our economic growth.

METHODOLOGY

We collected the data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data collection was through questionnaires. The population was all daily wage workers, migrant workers in Pathanamthitta district. Out of these we have selected 30 respondents which form the sample of study. Secondary data collection was also used information collected from magazines, journals and weekly reports of Government of India.

We directly approach them and took a survey. We took responses from almost 8 daily wage workers, 11 farmers, 6 migrant workers and 5 other labourers. The rapid survey was piloted among 30 respondents in total. The samples of respondents were selected in a systematic way and slotted all the responses in a purposive way. We conducted the survey by dividing the survey instruments into three different categories.

- The first section surveyed respondent's personal data (age, gender, education, region, sources of income, household size)
- The second section enquired respondent's primary work activities and earnings prior to lockdown and after the lockdown. Then a comparison on the work and earning estimates of these two periods helps us in the identification of the impact of lockdown due to COVID-19.
- The third section of the questionnaire examines the impact of households, including financial securities, food availability, health and education of households.

This may include behaviour-type questions regarding paid and unpaid jobs, working conditions, company operations, and so on, as well as opinion-type questions about information, attitudes, and opinions about specific work-related issues. Rapid surveys place constraints on the survey design, content and operations. Depending on the sampling frame, sampling strategy and data collection mode, rapid surveys face important limitations in terms of coverage and representation. Limits on the number of questions that can be asked on a given topic, as well as the length of interviewer training, can have an impact on identifying working activities.

This is especially true for informal, casual, or part-time work, work in family farms and businesses, unpaid care work, and direct volunteering, all of which require a series of recovery questions to be included in the application.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on the status of work and on the income of workers.
2. To find out the most affected sector.
3. To measure extend of help availed by workers through government schemes.
4. To suggest ways for improving the livelihood of most affected workers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While the entire industries are facing a challenging situation, the plight of everyday wagers and vendors are so critical that it needs immediate attention.

- Krishan Kumar, Aseem Mehra and Sandeep Grover, 2020 on the article "The psychological impact of COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown on the migrant workers. The survey investigated whether the impact has been more prominent on the lives of migrant workers. They found out that the migrants are more prone to social, psychological and emotional trauma. The study was conducted in Chandigarh, North India. The respondents were people more than the age of 18 and found out 73% positive for depression and 50% positive for anxiety.
- Mohsin Shaji, Wenju Ren ,2020 on "Impact of COVID 19 pandemic on Micro, Small and Medium sized Enterprises operating in Pakistan (MSME)" aims to assess the impact of COVID 19 outbreak on business and provide Policy recommendations to help MSME in reducing business losses and survive through crisis and suggest Policy recommendations for the survival of MSME in Pakistan.

- Marc Cubruch, June 18 2020 examined the trajectory of COVID 19 pandemic and its economic impact on low wage workers on the article "On the frontlines: Protecting low wage workers during COVID-19. The study is about the unique risks for low wage workers, maintaining the wellbeing of low wage workers, and how to protect these workers from this COVID 19 pandemic.
- Raj Chetty, John N Friedman, Nathaniel Hendren, Micheal Stepner and the opportunity insight team (September 2020) on the article "The Economic Impact of COVID 19: Evidence from a new public database built from private sector data". The study builds up a publically available database that tracks cross activity at a granular level in real time using anonymized data from private sector, therefore suggests that the most effective approach to mitigating economic hardship in the midst of a pandemic may be to provide benefits to those who have lost their incomes to mitigate consumption losses while investing in public health measures restore consumer confidence and ultimately increase spending.
- Humayun Kabir, Myfanwy Maple and Kim Usher,(2020) on the article "The impact of COVID 19 on Bangladesh Readymade Garment workers (RMG)". The study articulates the RMGs workers existing vulnerability during COVID-19. After the study a sufficient evidence is not yet available therefore Bangladesh RMG sector requires urgent coordinated and effective actions.

3. ANALYSIS

Although the plight of refugees due to the continuing COVID-19 crisis has been highlighted by many analysts, less is known about how low-income families living in urban shanty towns are faring.

Many of the surveyed participants rely on friends and family to tide over temporary setbacks. We asked their social networks about job cuts, as this would undoubtedly lead to higher levels of stress than otherwise.

We conducted the survey to analyse the impact of COVID 19 on the lives of toiling classes especially migrant workers and daily wage workers. The survey was conducted in a small village "Nedungadappally", Pathanamthitta district. We had recorded response from almost 30 workers. The survey was conducted by direct questionnaire. Surveys may be customised to cover a wide variety of subjects in the workplace.

3.1 Gender

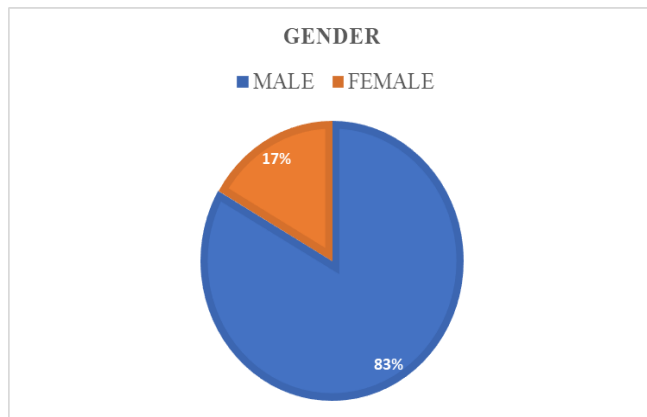


Table 3.1

Overall, our survey continues to indicate a massive shock to the livelihoods and wage earnings of these families. As expected, the vast majority of the workers in these residential areas around 83% of our respondents were male and 17% were females out of a total of 30 respondents. As a result of this pandemic both the session of people are facing several difficulties. Many of the difficulties had led them to depression, loneliness and a big failure.

3.2 Age

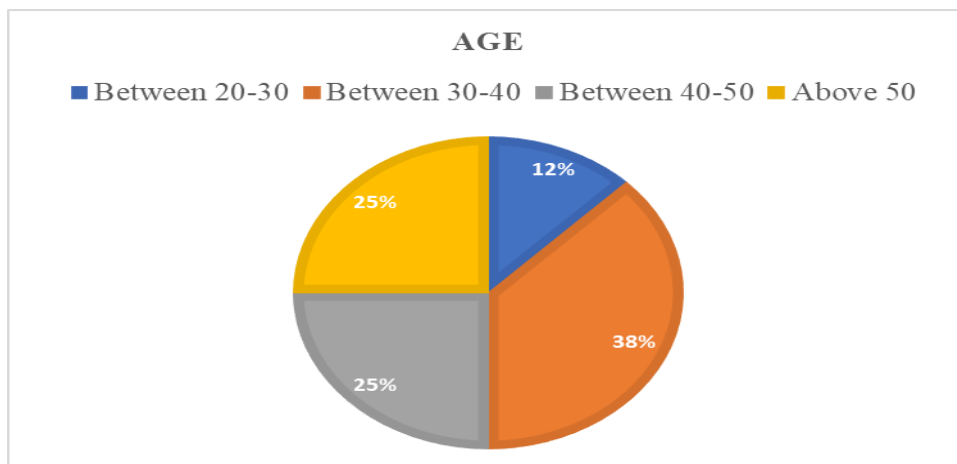


Table 3.2

The survey was conducted among different age groups of people. 12% of the respondents were between the age of 20-30, 38% of the respondents were between the age of 30-40, 25% were between the age of 40-50 and rest 25% of them were aged above 50.

3.3 Education

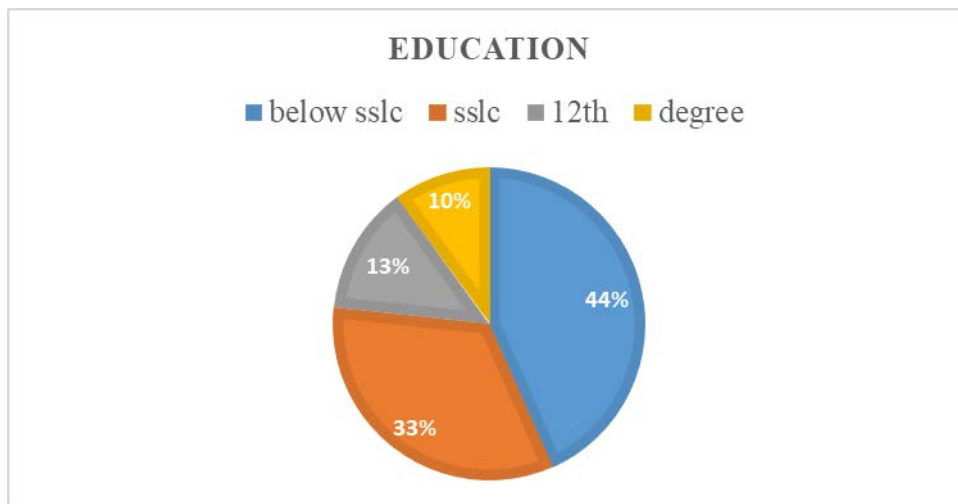


Table 3.3

When enquired about the educational qualifications of our respondents we came to know that around 44% of them are below matriculation level, 33% is having a 10th grade education, 13 % is having higher secondary education and 10% of them are graduates.

3.4 Source of Income

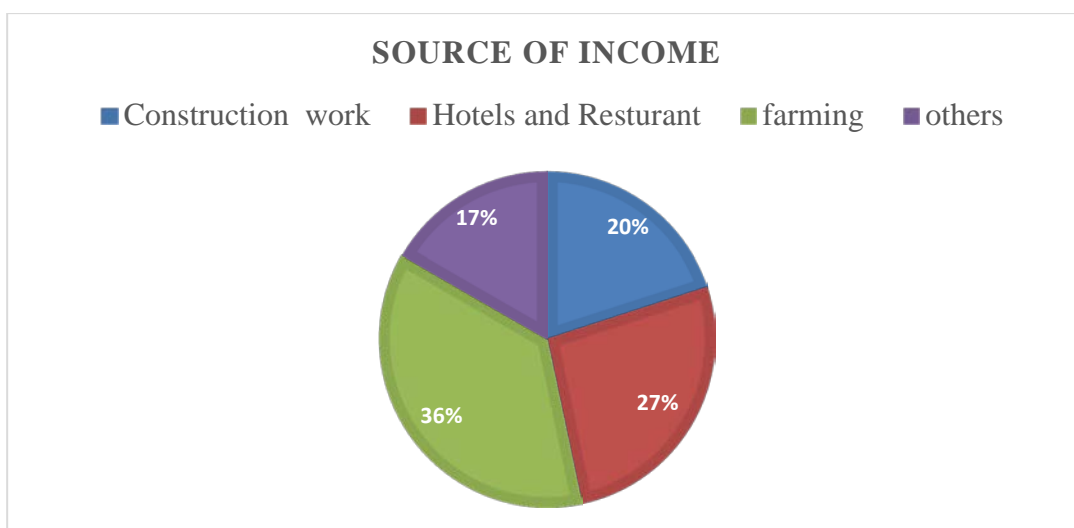


Table 3.4

Among the responses, the most of them were the farmers (about 36%) and then hotel and restaurant workers were 27 %, construction workers were 20%. And 17% of respondents are other daily wage workers.

3.5 Work Status

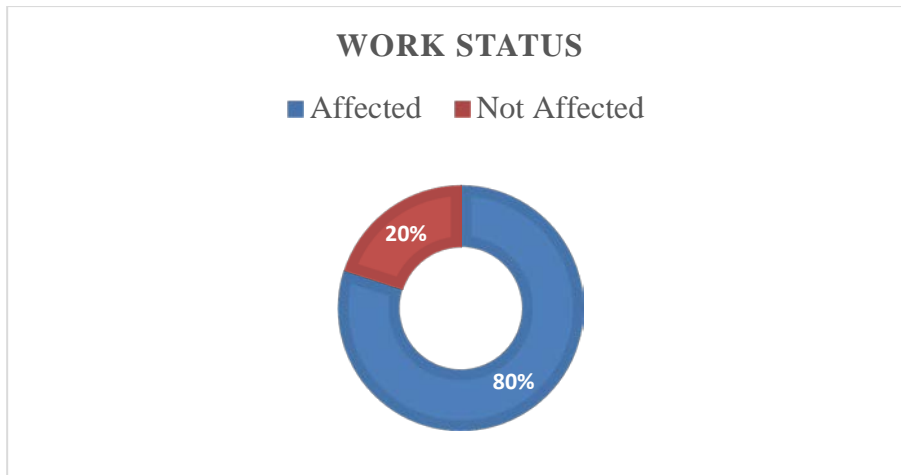


Table 3.5

Around 80% of the responses shows that their work status got affected and 20% of the responses shows that they were not affected.

3.6 Unemployment

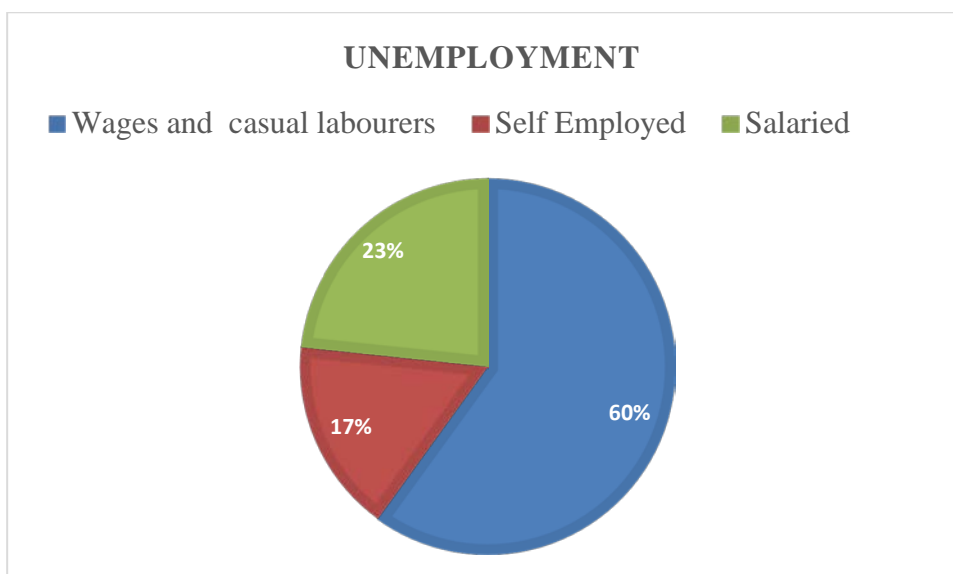


Table 3.6

From all the responses we can interpret that around 60% of Daily wage workers and casual workers got affected, 17% of self-employed workers got affected and 23% of salaried workers got affected.

3.7 Availability of Ration

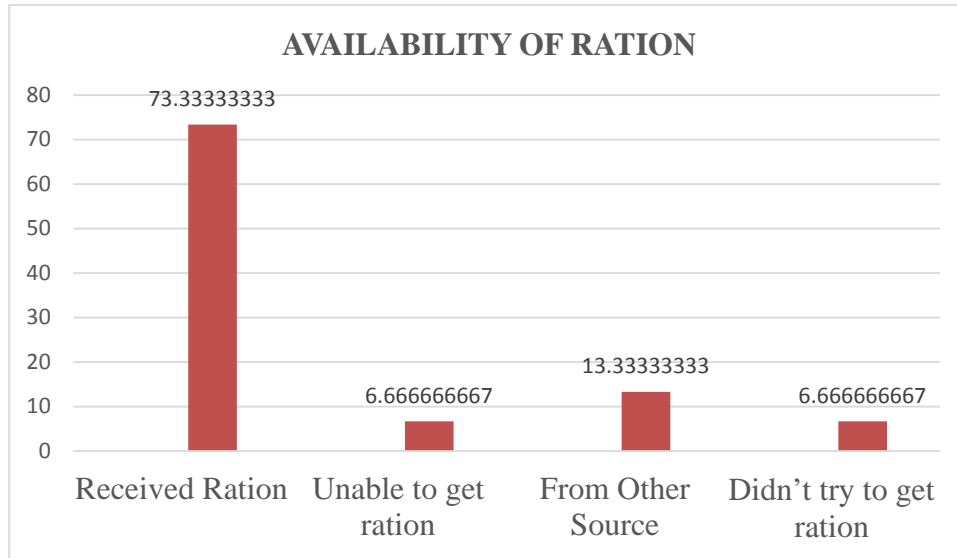


Table 3.7

About 73.3% of them received rations, 6.6% were unable to receive rations, 6.6% didnt even tried to collect ration, 13.33% received from other sources.

3.8 Non-Marketability

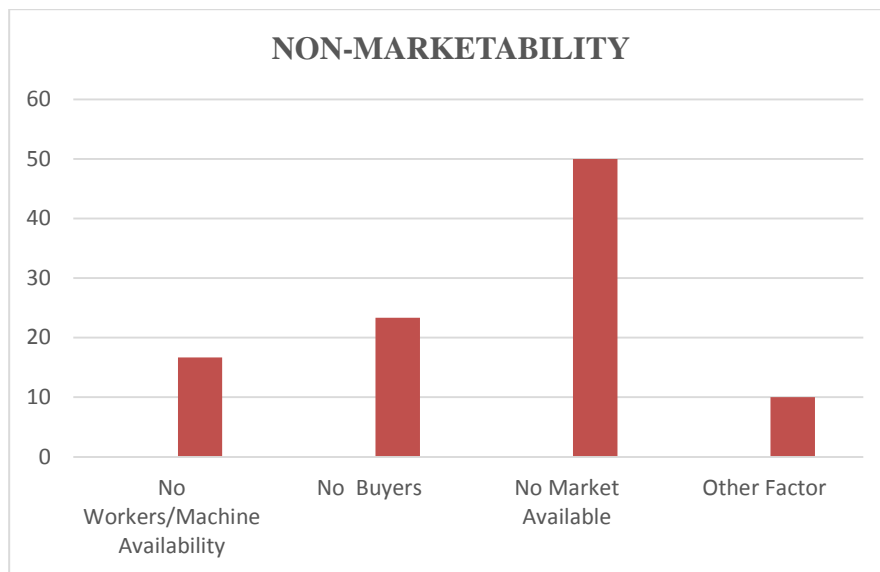


Table 3.8

The reason for non-marketability that we analysed from the survey is as follows. About 17% is because of unavailability of machines/ workers, 23% because of no buyers. 50% because of no sellers and rest 10% is because of other factors.

3.9 Government/Public Support

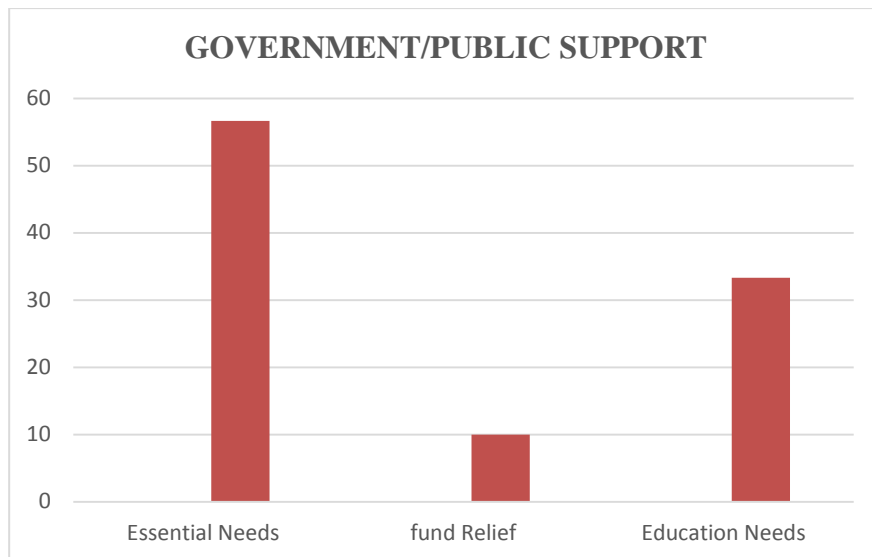


Table 3.9

Government support is available for the following needs such as essential needs, fund relief and educational needs. Around 57% of Essential needs, 33% of educational needs and 10% of fund reliefs were provided by the government.

4. SUGGESTIONS

Crisis highlights the chasms in a society. This crisis is deepening ours. Business owners fail to make payroll, either because they are unable to send the payments to their employees physically and are not set up to make electronic transfers, or because the business recession means they don't have the funds. Many micro and small enterprises that are informal and formal will eventually fold. Most self-employed employees have lost their income because they are trapped in their homes and/or have seen demand dry up, many of them survivalist micro-entrepreneurs, hawkers and small vendors, domestic assistance, or gig workers. For the socio-economically disadvantaged, operating remotely is not a choice for depending on physical labour and delivering location-based income services. So we can dig our way out of this crisis by the following ways;

- First, the fiscal calculus is changed by an economic downturn like this. To help the economy stabilise, recover, and expand, the government has to loosen its fiscal restraint.

- Secondly, to tide over the recession, corporations need capital. Not only should there be a loan moratorium, but the government also needs to ensure that start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises are provided with working capital at low interest rates. There is a need to understand the impact on bank capitalisation. The government must promote investment in infrastructure once the pandemic is under control, which is one of the quickest and most direct ways to create jobs.
- Reducing the tax enforcement burden is critical; now is a good time to simplify payments and widen the net, in particular for small companies, even though no additional revenue is needed at this time.
- By offering wage incentives directly to employees through digital payments, governments will benefit companies. This will ensure that the workforce is tracked and documented, allowing the government, now and in the future, to reach out to them. At a time of strained cash flow, it will allow corporations to retain employees.
- The government must make it possible for all employees to have universal access to social security networks, including dental, maternity, disability and pension benefits. Crises like this one not only underscore the need for healthcare, but during periods of distress and demand shocks, such advantages may also help smooth consumption.
- There have been several ways of sorting out the regulatory logjams that have plagued us for many years by harmonising the maze of labour laws into four codes, but the rules for the codes have yet to be established. Investors highly value assurance. A clear, consistent and implementable labour code is good for business and investment as well as for employees. Leaving our labour codes vague undermines one of the objectives.

These are the suggestions that we propose to solve the problems of Migrant workers and Daily wage workers.

5. CONCLUSION

In order to stop these workers from experiencing the pangs of life and get lucrative jobs at the locations of their homes, all the above steps were taken.

The degree to which the plight of these workers is discussed in the days to come must be seen. In addition, it is important that industry and business should be revived in order to witness the green shoots in our economy. It is not possible without migrant workers being working.

Therefore, what is needed is the implementation of a massive reabsorption strategy for these migrant workers with appropriate social security measures, some of which have already been announced by the Centre. It will be fascinating to see the degree to which these migrant workers return to their workplaces.

We analysed how the COVID 19 pandemic affected the status of work and income of workers and found out the most affected sector. Studied about the help availed by Government to the workers and also suggested ways to improve the livelihood of the affected workers.

The COVID-19 lockdown and global pandemic caused the lives of millions of employees to be lost. Therefore, the central government, along with the state government, must take comprehensive measures to protect the lives of migrant workers and, on an immediate basis, release an adequate package of relief to avoid the further deaths and misery of millions of migrant workers. Only if migrant workers were counted as migrant workers could the social security package be successful and, therefore, the first step would be to create digital profiles to provide migrants with identification documents. Nonetheless, in doing so, a clause must be made to keep us from being such a database.

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