

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH OF MIGRANT WORKERS ESPECIALLY IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract:

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) includes the appreciation, prevention and control of workplace safety to promote the health of workers. The objective of the study is to make clear the definition of "migrant" used in occupational health research and its importance. This paper summarizes the occupational health and safety services available to migrant workers and identifies the challenges to research into the occupational health of migrant workers. Finally, recommendations for improving the safety and health of migrant workers are presented.

Keywords: Migration, Populations of Migrants, Work and Carrier Related Migration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu (TN) is the most mature state in India, as it has experienced more diversification since liberalisation. Moreover, the rural population in TN declined by 1.9 million in 2001 and increased to 2.3 million in 2011. The annual population growth rate in TN was far less than the state's aggregate population growth rate

because of urbanization. TN is the most urbanized state in India; the percentage of the urban population, which was 35.1 percent in 1991, increased to 48.4 percent in the 2011 Census. Though TN has a substantial informal economy in the urban and industrial sectors, it has seen the largest numbers of people shift their occupation from outside agriculture.



Reasons for migration

The people mostly migrate as refugees and migrate for their work and carrier. In this study we have taken work and carrier related migrants' lifestyle only.

2. WORK AND CARRIER RELATED MIGRATION

Work-related migration is categorized into two types: white collar work and laborer work. Most of the workers come to TN from seven states: Assam, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Odisha. Their major professions are construction, textiles, fishing, and agriculture. Tamil Nadu became the most sought-after state as the average wage is Rs

392 per day, which is higher than the national average of Rs 348.

People come here through agents, mostly from their respective states, who have already been staying in TN for several decades. Once they reach here, they will be under the custody of those agents for a few days, and they will be deputed on duty wherever a vacancy exists. The employers here claim that these migrant labourers never hesitate to do odd jobs. They also never bother about the food system. Whatever is available, they would consume, say the employers. Most importantly, they never form unions, show utmost sincerity in the work and even if any problem including health issues occurs, their agents or sometimes their colleagues will take care. So, we have less risk, said Anandanathan K. a manager of a textile firm in Karur. Anandanathan also said that his textile firm has around 100 migrant labourers and they never stick to time-bound work.

Historically, Tamil Nadu used to be the source of migrant workers, mainly from Karnataka and Kerala, and to a lesser extent, Andhra Pradesh. However, with increased industrialization and urbanization in the 1990s, the state began to experience labour shortages in the manufacturing and service sectors. This drew workers from the country's backward industrial zones, mainly from the north and east.

The entire manufacturing and service sectors in Chennai are increasingly reliant on migrant labour. There is no doubt that a large segment of these workers are engaged in precarious work with little job security or

decent pay. Nevertheless, such informal employment is comparatively attractive to workers who have very little access to most forms of livelihood in their home states. In the words of one such worker, In Chennai, we are paid Rs 400 to Rs 600 for a day's work, compared to Rs 75 to Rs 100 in Bihar. In effect, Tamil Nadu, from being a source of migrant workers, has evolved into a destination state for a bulk of informal sector workers. Chennai is a destination for 4% of the interstate migrants in this country.

The ever-expanding employment of migrant workers in various sectors across the state poses challenges. Employers primarily choose migrant workers as they work for much lower wages as compared to local people. In the case of the construction industry, a migrant worker can be hired for Rs 600 per day, whereas the latter demands a daily wage of Rs 1,100 to 1,200. Secondly, outsiders are less likely to self-organize for collective demands for increased wages, social security, or decent work conditions. This has resulted in discontent among a section of the local population. However, it is unlikely that such disquiet has led to organized hatred against migrants.

3. WHITE COLLAR WORK

Most white-collar jobs are central government jobs like Indian railways, income tax, and some other jobs. It accounts for only 25% of all workers who come to TN. Other departments where workers come to South India are 7% in information technology and 30% in other categories. White-collar workers

mostly come to TN with their families and settle there.

According to the 2011 census, rural and urban male migration for employment was 9.5% and 13.1%, respectively. While the percentage of urban males that migrated after birth was significantly higher than that of those that moved with their household, at 11.5%, this is slightly lower than for females. The proportion of females moving with households was about 14.3%, which reveals that female migrants are more dependent in nature than males. Therefore, the trends of female rural migrants in Tamil Nadu have undergone a drastic change in 2011 due to marriage. But the flow of urban migration was only drained for economic reasons.

REPORTS

As per a Press Information Bureau (PIB) report published in April 2022, based on the 2011 census, there are over 34.87 lakh migrant labourers in Tamil Nadu and of this, 7.13 lakh are women. Instances of assault and abuse against migrants are common across the state. Out of the 65.8% rural female migrants, 42.7% had migrated for marriage and 8.9% moved with the household. Female migration for reasons such as employment and education accounted for only 2.6% and 0.9% in 2011. The economic reasons of female migrants have far less than the male migrants.

4. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES

There are totally two types of migration by North Indian people to Tamil Nadu. The first type is white-collar workers and central government staff, and the second category is workers (coolies).

In the first category, people live in hygienic environments. But in the second category, workers live in small rooms with more than 10 people. The maximum room size is 10 sq. ft by 10 sq. ft, and all workers use only one toilet and one rest room. They did not maintain the rest room and bathroom, and one shocking result is that they are using only one body soap for all roommates. Workers in the second category are suffering from health problems as a result of poor water and food quality as well as living in an unsanitary environment.

90% of the north Indian population is consuming gutka and pan parag. It's not good for their health. It damages the liver and disturbs the metabolism of fats and carbohydrates. It damages the kidneys. One of the bad habits of North Indians has consumed pan masala and spitting on their living spaces and public places.

White-collar workers and government employees are eligible for the provident fund and health insurance that are mandatory benefits provided by their working companies. But the second category of labourers is mostly contract workers; they are not permanent employees. Permanent employees are only eligible for the provident fund and health insurance. Most North Indian

workers are temporary, and they are considered coolies. Some workers in working factories (example: the Thirupur cotton factory) are eligible for insurance, but other daily coolie workers are not. The coolie worker's job is painting, selling some products on the roadside, and doing construction work. The salary of these workers is a maximum of \$300 per day. They do not have a monthly salary.

It is necessary to carry out systematic study, to explore how these economically significant yet frequently vulnerable workers might be helped. Researchers should find the characteristics of the migrant workers including their racial and ethnic background, current professional abilities, and language proficiency, as well as their immigration status (temporary, permanent, or undocumented).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

NGOs, trade unions and researchers along with labour department should supervise periodically on the implementation of labour laws and assuring the basic amenities in their work place. All workers should be given identity cards and should be included for the beneficiary of ESI, PF, monthly salary, weekly off, over time payments etc.

6. CONCLUSION

Workers who migrate between states appear to travel on an invisible path to Chennai. They are almost all young, and many of them are not married. They are neither skilled nor well-educated enough to easily

meet the requirements of the location. The nature of a work contract is only temporary, but it gives the appearance of being permanent by paying wages once per month. Notwithstanding, compensation is determined consistently. Few receive a yearly bonus or long-term benefits like ESI and PF. Working for the same employer for years does not guarantee their existence. They must locate their home, family, and way of life as permanent fixtures in their origin.

They are compelled to live in the poorest conditions and without basic amenities. Additionally, they lack complete citizenship. They are not covered by the destination's urban poor's social security system. The state has a moral responsibility to grant migrants full citizenship by enacting appropriate policies. It is currently acting as a mute observer, leaving the migrants to the employers' will. It can without much of a stretch guarantee respectable everyday environment for the traveller labourers, the lowest pay permitted by law for them, nonwage advantages, and medical care, and stretch out all the government assistance measures to them too. It could establish a separate welfare board for migrant workers and solicit a separate tax from each employer. The state ought to be aware that migrant workers are the foundation of the state's booming economy. Rather than just policing them, the state ought to incorporate them into its administration by developing comprehensive strategies.

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