

## Reverse Migration of Workers during Covid 19 : A Case Study of Bihar

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### Abstract

*Migration of labour has always been an important issue in Bihar and has got momentum during the period of Covid-19. It has created socio-economic problems in the state. It includes dimensions like rural to urban migration, migration of male and female labours, migration of labours belonging to backward communities and forward caste and further the reverse migration. Hence, there is an urgent need for studying the problems of reverse migration in the light of Covid-19. Considering all these facts, an attempt has been made to analyse the problems of reverse migration of workers of Sheohar District of Bihar.*

#### **Methodology**

*Present work is based on Primary data. Data collected through the interview schedule. The study is concentrating on the migration of workers of Sheohar district of Bihar. The paper gives emphasis on important issues relating to migration like nature, causes, consequences, income level, findings, suggestions and prescriptions.*

#### **Result**

*Present study deals with the problems of Covid-19 on migrant workers. There is urgent requirement of Government help to those returned migrants by providing them proper training and financial support to setup business in order to successful re-migration in their native places. Public health system should be strengthened. Government should prepare policies for Migrant workers.*

#### **Conclusion**

*On the basis of present study there are a large number of migrants who have lost their jobs due to Covid-19. It is high time to establish co-ordination between the Center and State Government. Integration of migrants with development is the need of the hour.*

**Keywords:** *Migration, Female Labour, Covid-19, Backward Communities.*

### **A. Introduction**

The spread of corona virus from the epicenter of Wuhan in China to worldwide is attributed to migration and mobility of people. In India, the epidemics of the past was hardly concerned with migration and livelihood during the colonial India, all the major Indian cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and many other urban places usually suffered from influenza, smallpox, plague, malaria and cholera (Davis, 1951; Banthia and Dyson, 1999; Hill, 2011)<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Although epidemics in India lead to flight of people from cities in the past, the lockdown announced on 24th March, 2020 in the wake of Corona virus outbreak created and unprecedented exodus of migrant workers from various cities of India reminiscent of the mass migration during the time of partition in 1947. Peering that they may spread infections in the rural areas, authorities prevented their flight but many walked to their destinations. A large number of them lost their livelihood, standard in the city or on the way living in camps or make-shift shelters provided by the government (BBC, 2020)<sup>4</sup>.

Economic growth in India today hinges on mobility of labour. The condition of migrant workers to national income is enormous but there is little done in return for their security and well being. There is an imminent need for solutions to transfer migration into a more dignified and rewarding opportunity. Without this, making growth inclusive or the very least sustainable will remain a very distant dream.

The present study shows the impact of covid-19 on migrant workers. Migrant workers constitute backbone of Indian economy. But due to covid-19, migrant workers have faced multiple hardships. Migration as a livelihood strategy has been opted by millions of people in India. Most of the migration for work and employment is directed towards the urban centres. Migration in India is mostly influenced by social structure and patterns of development. The development policies initiated by various governments since independence have accelerated the process of migration. Uneven development is the main cause of migration. The development of disparities in the regional and different socio economic classes has well contributed. The landless poor who mostly belong to lower castes indigenous communities and economically backward regions constitute the major portion of migrants. Though these are the basic causes of migration but there are some exceptional causes which is extended under special circumstances. Covid-19 pandemic is an uncalled event which has created the cause of reverse migration. In covid-19, there was a complete lockdown which compelled factories and workplaces in shut down. Millions of migrant workers faced a lot of problems like loss of job and income, food shortage and uncertainty about the future with no work in hand and money in pocket. Many of them with their family were seen walking or by cycling thousands of kilometres to go back to their native villages. Many of them were arrested for violation of lockdown and some died on the roads. Hence, lock down during covid-19 is a burning example of causes of migration which has not only affected the sources of income of the workers but also their standard of living<sup>5</sup>.

It shows that this migration is reverse in nature, where people are migrating not for income/benefit but they are migrating to their native place for sense of security and safety of life. This is one of the innovations with cause of migration in present time. Present micro study describes the problems of migrant workers of Bihar. This study gives in faces in studying important issues relating to reverse migration of workers.

The policies and programmes of urban development and planning in India hardly launched any specific programs for the migrants. Many programs meant for the poor do not reach migrants due to various reasons especially lack of identity and residential proofs. Failure to recognise migrants as a stakeholder in urban Development is one of the biggest mistakes in achieving urban sustainability and realising the goal of sustainable development in India<sup>6</sup>. Though migrants are formal citizens; their substantive economic, social and political rights have not been fulfilled.

The immediate challenges faced by these migrant workers were related to food, shelter, loss of wage, fear of getting infected and anxiety.

**B. Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the knowledge about Covid-19.
2. To study the mode of return to village from workplace.
3. To examine the knowledge of government announcements.
4. To assess the effects of Covid-19 on income of migrant workers.
5. To suggest the policies to improve the living standards of migrant workers.

**C. Methodology of the Study**

The present study employs analytical and descriptive research. This study is based on primary data. Primary data collected from households through the interview schedule. The work is concentrated on the migrant workers of Sheohar District of Bihar covering thirty nine migrant workers. Migration affects all the concerned of societies. In the context of Covid-19, migrant labour poses a serious threat and challenge to society.

**D. Data Analysis and Results**

Migration helps to migrants to generate income and also provides a large number of employment opportunities. But due to covid-19, migrant workers faced a lot of problems. Reverse migration of workers is an important issue in the light of covid-19. Their urgent solution is need of the hour. Development of Bihar economy depends upon sound agriculture and better quality of employment with social protection and hence, these are the basic pillars for the further development. In this section, the study focuses on the problems of migrant workers of Sheohar District of Bihar after covid-19 pandemic.

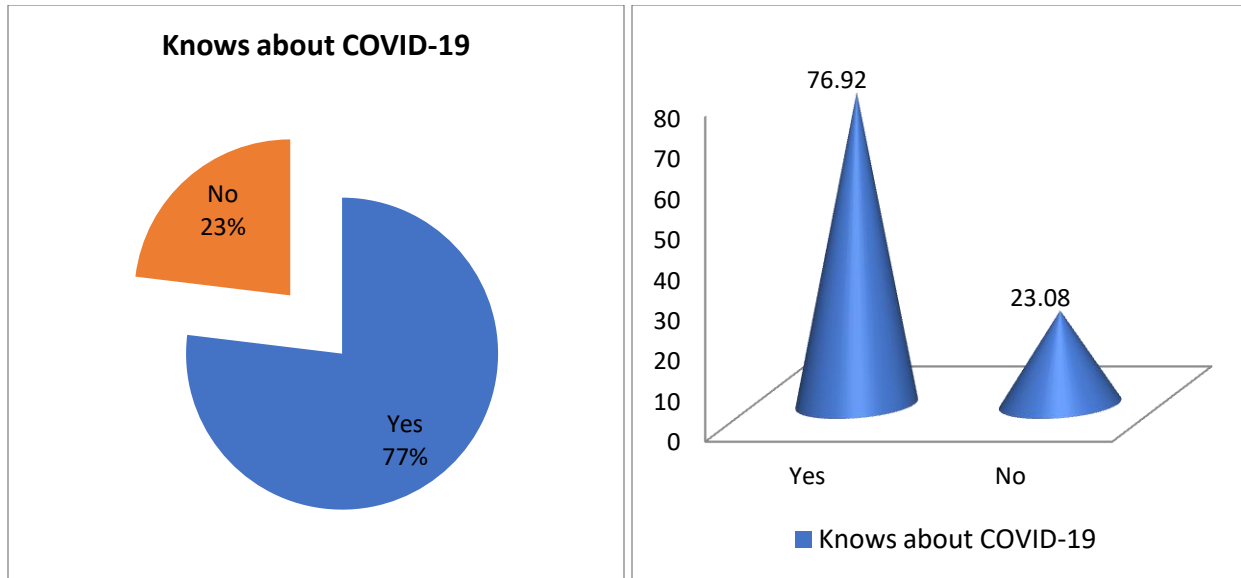
In this study, the information regarding knowledge of Covid-19, its symptoms, social distancing, mode of return to village from workplace, knowledge of government announcements, relief availed, faced police atrocities during travelling, future work plan, impact on income, etc. The observations have been explained with the help of following tables:

**Knowledge about Covid-19**

Table 1 shows the knowledge of respondents about Covid-19. About 76.92% of the respondents have knowledge about Covid-19 while 23.08% have no knowledge about Covid-19 pandemic.

<b>Table-1</b>			
<b>Knowledge about COVID-19</b>			
<b>Sl.no</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Yes	30	76.92
2	No	9	23.08
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

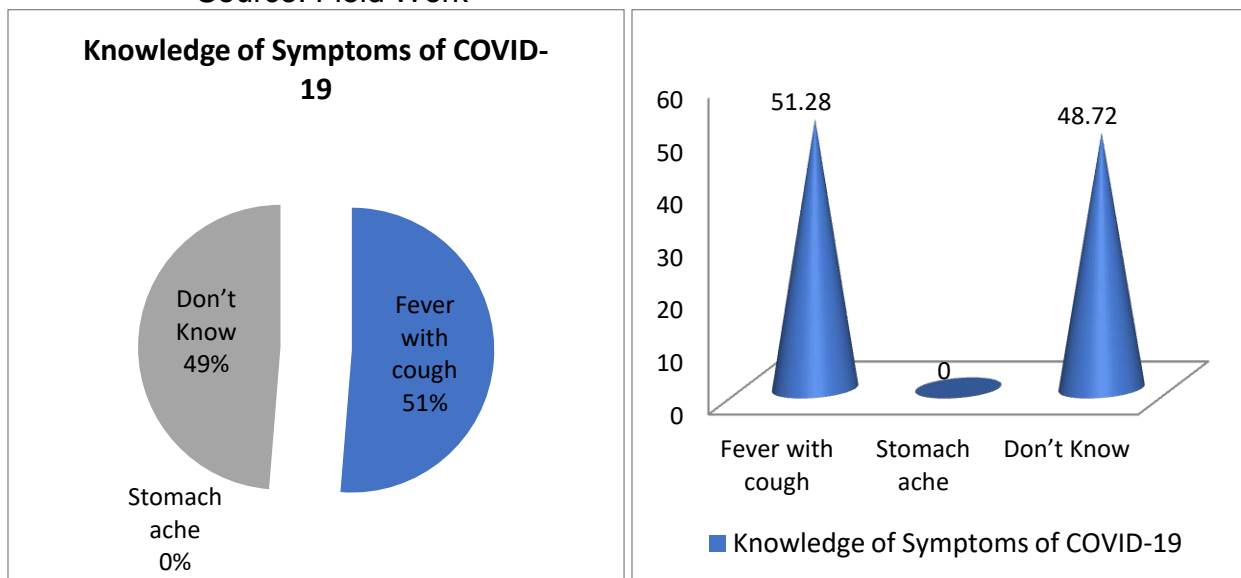


**Knowledge about Symptoms of Covid-19**

Table 2 further explains the knowledge about symptoms of Covid-19 among respondents. The study reveals that 51.28% of the respondents reported fever with cough as a symptom of Covid-19, 48.72% of them has no knowledge about the symptoms of Covid-19.

Table-2			
Knowledge of Symptoms of COVID-19			
Sl.no	Symptoms	NOs	Percentage
1	Fever with cough	20	51.28
2	Others	0	0.00
3	Don't Know	19	48.72
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

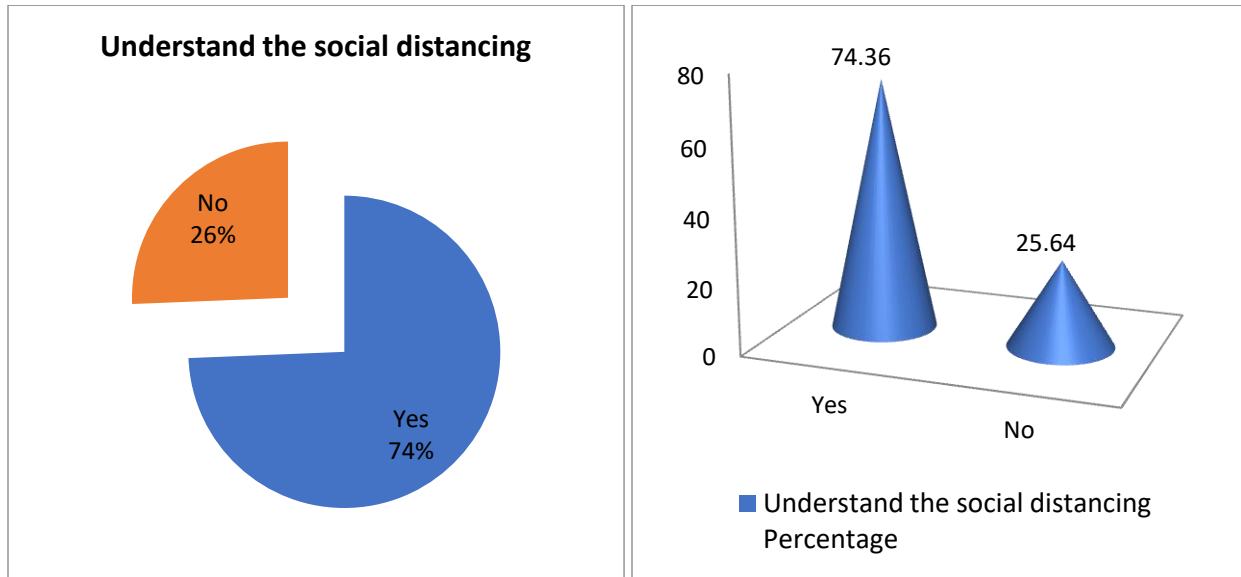


### Understand Social Distancing

Table 3 reveals that 74.36% of the respondents understand the meaning of social distancing while 25.64% of the respondents do not understand it.

Table-3			
Understand Social Distancing			
Sl.no	Response	NOs	Percentage
1	Yes	29	74.36
2	No	10	25.64
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

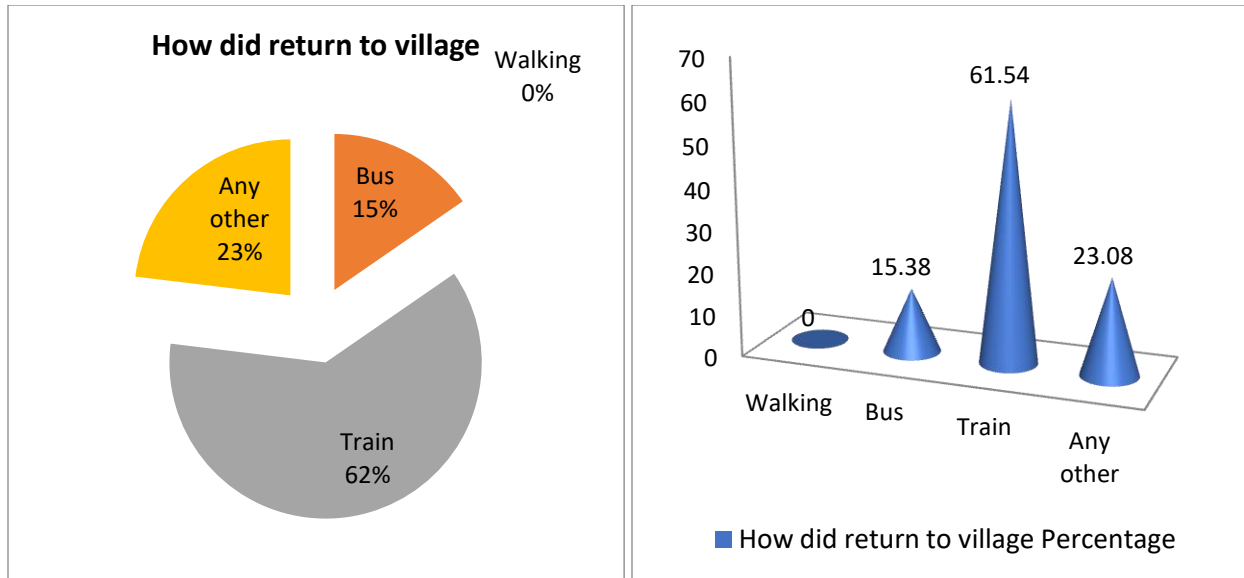


### Mode of Returning Village

Table 4 shows the mode to return village from workplace. The study reveals that 61.54% of the respondents returned village by trains, followed by 23.08% by other means and 15.38% by bus.

Table-4			
How did return to village			
Sl.no	Response	NOs	Percentage
1	Walking	0	0.00
2	Bus	6	15.38
3	Train	24	61.54
4	Any other	9	23.08
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source : Field Work

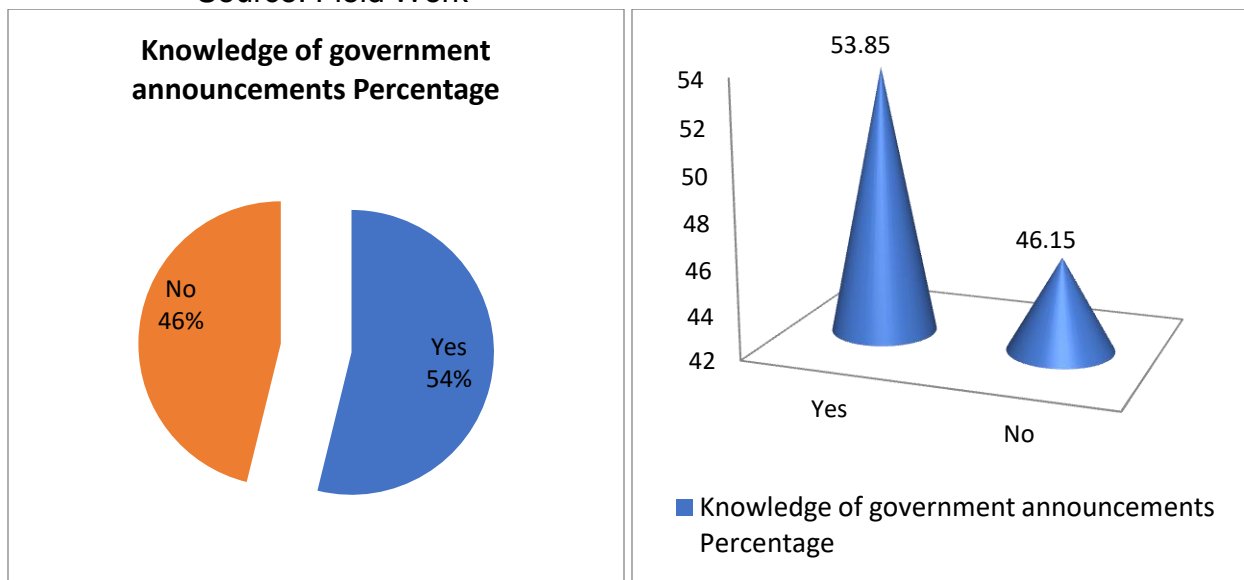


### Knowledge of Government Announcements

Table 5 shows respondents' knowledge about government announcements. Table reveals that 53.85% of the respondents have knowledge about government announcements while 46.15% of them have no knowledge about government announcements.

Table-5			
Knowledge of Government Announcements			
Sl.no	Knowledge	NOs	Percentage
1	Yes	21	53.85
2	No	18	46.15
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

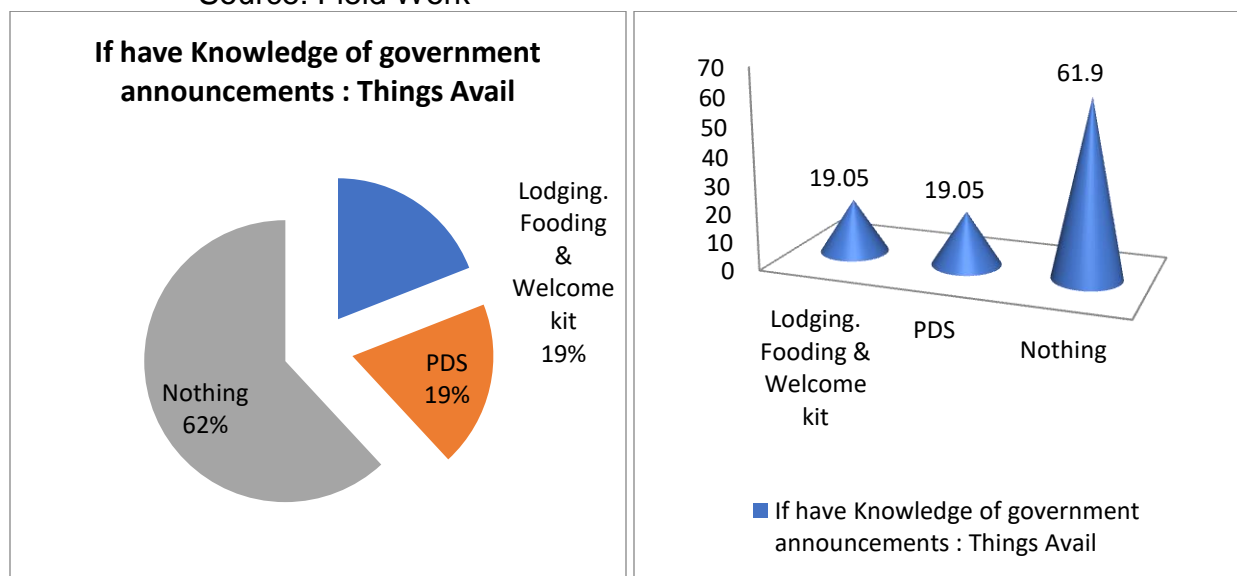


### Facilities Availed as per Government Announcements

Table 6 gives information about facility availed as per government announcements by respondents. The table shows that out of 21 respondents having knowledge about government announcements, 19.05% each have availed lodging, fooding, etc and PDS while 61.90% of them (21 respondents) did not receive anything.

Table-6			
Facilities Availed as per Government Announcements			
Sl.no	Facilities Availed	NOs	Percentage
1	Lodging. Fooding & Welcome kit	4	19.05
2	PDS	4	19.05
3	Nothing	13	61.90
<b>Total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

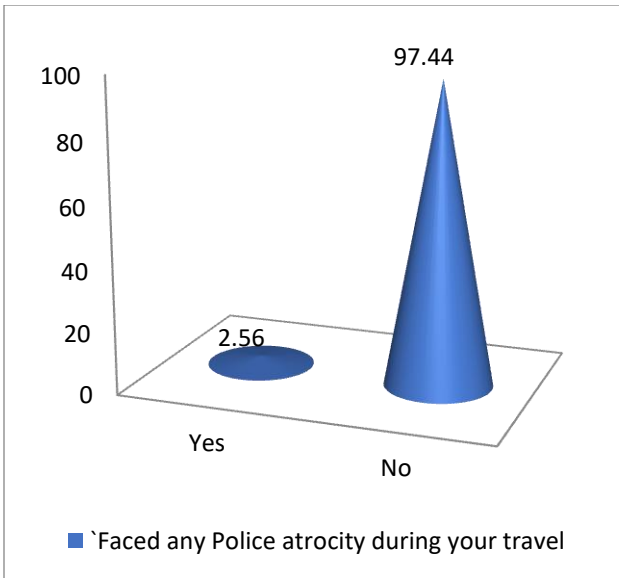
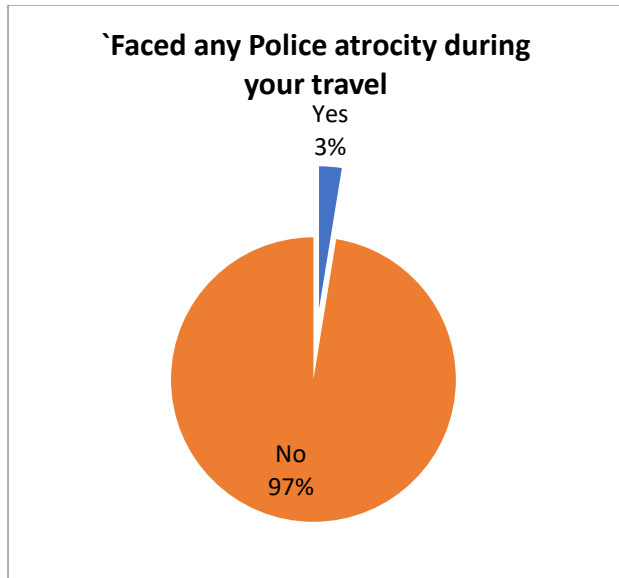


### Police Atrocities during Travel

Table 7 reveals that 97.44% of the respondents have faced no police atrocities during travel while 2.56% of them have reported police atrocities during travel.

Table-7			
Police Atrocities during Travel			
Sl.no	Response	NOs	Percentage
1	Yes	1	2.56
2	No	38	97.44
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

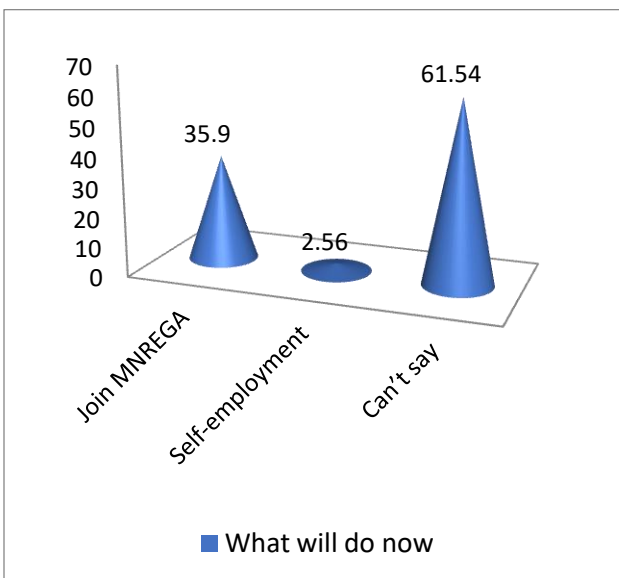
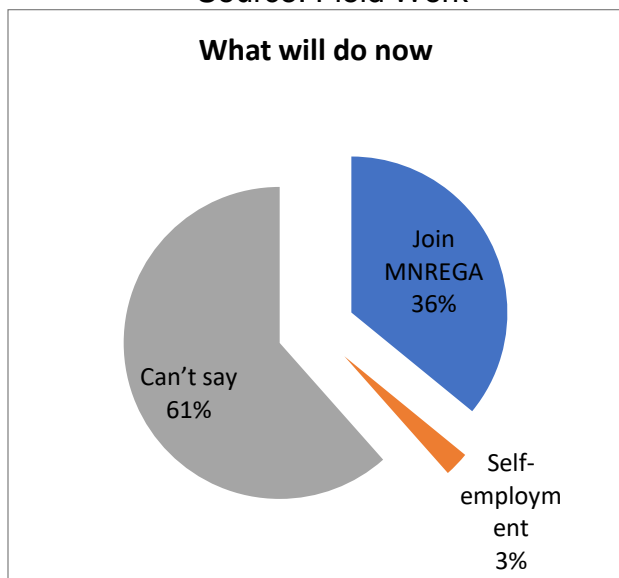


**Future Work Plan**

Table 8 deals with future planning of work of respondents. The study reveals that 61.54% of the respondents have no future plan and they are not in a position to say something while 35.90% have planned to join MNREGA and 2.56% have made their mind for self employment.

Table-8			
Future Work Plan			
Sl.no	Response	NOs	Percentage
1	Join MNREGA	14	35.90
2	Self-employment	1	2.56
3	Can't say	24	61.54
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work



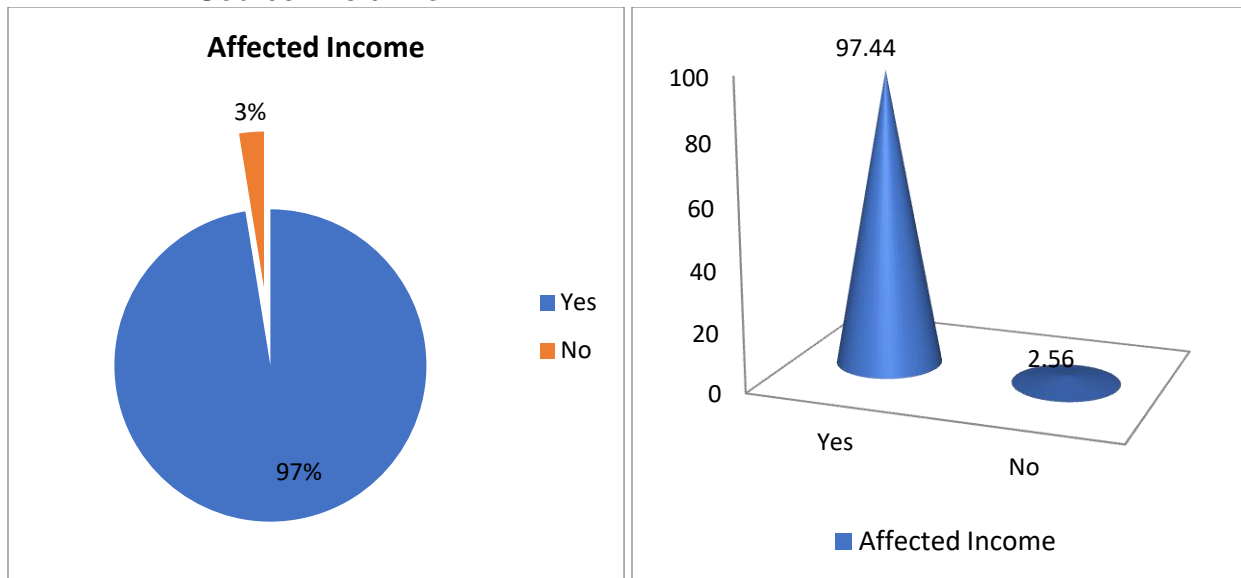


**Income Affected by Covid-19**

The study has further examined the effects of Covid-19 on income. Table 9 reveals that 97.44% of the respondents have reported that the pandemic has affected their income while only 2.56 % of them do not think so.

<b>Table-9</b>			
<b>Income Affected by Covid-19</b>			
<b>Sl.no</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Yes	38	97.44
2	No	1	2.56
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Work

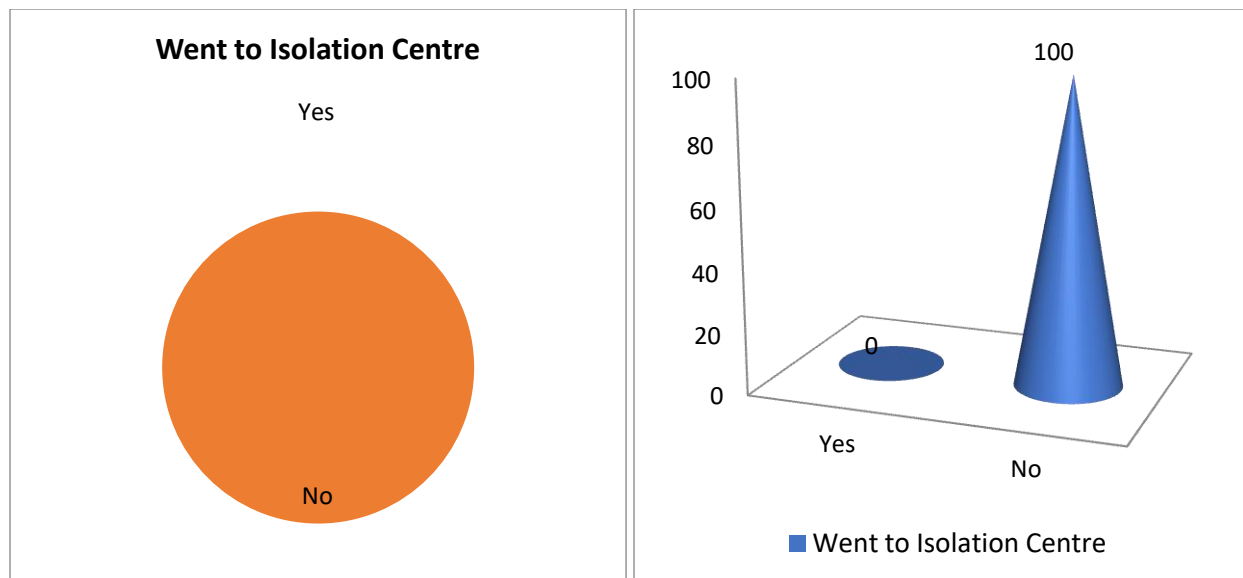


**Availed Isolation Centre**

Table 10 shows the respondents who went to isolation centre and availed facility. The study reveals that no respondent has gone to isolation centre and availed it.

<b>Table-10</b>			
<b>Availed Isolation Centre</b>			
<b>Sl.no</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Yes	00	00
2	No	39	100.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>102.56</b>

Source: Field Work



### ***E. Discussion***

The study mentioned above shows the effects of covid-19 on migrant workers. Bihar is a poor state. Bihar has a population of 104.1 million in 2011, which was about 8.6 % of countries total population of 1210.6 million. In 2018-19, Bihar's population is estimated to be about 122.0 million<sup>7</sup>. There is need to accept decentralisation policy. It is high time to establish coordination between the central and state government. Government and other agencies need to be mobilised to fight covid-19 by taking help of village panchayat, self-help groups and other stakeholders of society. Migrants cannot be neglected as a stakeholder in development. Integration of migrants with development is the need of the hour. This study deals with the problems of covid-19 among migrant workers.

Following observations have been made from this study:

1. About 76.92% of respondents have knowledge about covid-19 and rest respondents have no knowledge about it.
2. About 56.28% of respondents have knowledge of symptoms of covid-19 and 74.36% of them have understood the meaning of social distancing.
3. The study shows that 61.54% respondents have returned village by trains and rest by other means.
4. The study describes that 53.85% of respondents have knowledge about government announcements.
5. The study also shows that out of 21 respondents having knowledge about government announcement, only 19.5% each have availed lodging, fooding, etc. and PDS while 61.90% of them did not receive any thing.
6. The study also reveals that 61.54% of the respondents have no future work plan while 35.90% have planned to join MNREGA and 2.56% have made their mind for self employment.

7. The study has also examined the effects of covid-19 on income. 97.44% respondents have admitted that covid-19 has affected their income.

### ***F. Conclusion***

The observations mentioned above are the outcome of the present field work of migrant workers of Sheohar District of Bihar. It is clear from the study that there are a large number of migrants who have lost their jobs due to Covid-19 pandemic and forced to return to their native places. Therefore, there is an urgent requirement of government help to those returned migrants by providing them proper training and financial support to set up business in order to successful re-migration in their native places. It is also suggested that each migrant worker should be given Rs 6000/- under the scheme of MNREGA by the central government in addition to the financial support by the state government per month for at least six months. It would be advisable to give monetary support in cash to migrant workers. Public health system should be strengthened, investment should be increased during supply and equipments need to be made available at massive scale. Initiative of health insurance scheme for internal migrants may be helpful for the state government as well as migrants at the destination especially during any epidemic or pandemic. Further, the government should prepare policies and take necessary steps to meet such epidemic or pandemic in future.

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**Notes** :*This study is a field work based on primary data concerned with the research area, Sheohar district of Bihar.*

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