

IMPACT OF COVID-19 THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION LENS**Dr Sangeetha.S** Assistant Professor of Commerce All Saints' College, Trivandrum**Dr Lissy Bennet** Assistant Professor of Commerce All Saints' College, Trivandrum**Abstract**

The Covid 19 pandemic has put the world in a stand still. Migration of Indians to GCC countries had multidimensional effect ranging from economic development to social and political changes. The present study made an attempt to analyse its impact on Covid 19 on International migrants in general. Most of the Indian Migrant labours who are living in gulf countries were also infected by the Covid - 19 pandemic. The Indian economy witnessed drastic changes due to the decrease in migrant remittances. The reason for that are of many such as job loss, low wages and salary, pressure from the host country to return back to their home country. Maintaining the flow of migration was a prerequisite for an Indian economy which largely depends on migrants to reduce poverty and unemployment. Hence, under this situation the international migrants can't survive in the host country for a long while. Majority of the Indian migrants returned to their home country due to the impact of Covid 19 along with the economic slowdown happening in these gulf counties. It's a threat to the Indian Economy which heavily depends on remittances of international migrants, particularly from GCC countries. Moreover, how to rehabilitate these return migrants is a great threat to the Indian economy. Hence this study is imperative to evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on international migration with special focus to GCC countries.

Keywords: International Migration, NRIs, GCC, Economic downturn, International Remittance International Migrant labours, Returnmigration, Return Migrants, Covid-19 Impact, Indian Economy

Introduction

The Covid 19 pandemic has put the world in a stand still leaving no scope for any sectors. The Covid -19 affected the International migrants too. Migration is a universal phenomenon that's fast emerging in its volume, scope, complexity and impacts. According to the data of the United Nations, 2019, India having 25.38million International migrants all over the world. The Ministry of External Affairs estimates that more than 32 million Indians live abroad. Our country, India was considered as the world's top remittance receiver, having an estimated inflow of USD 83.1 billion in 2019 according to the World Bank. From these, majority of the remittance were received from Gulf Cooperation Council which consists of six countries such as United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

Large number of international labourmigrants workers in the GCC countries(Gulf Corporation council) are facing a critical negative situation, due to the pandemic and also due to the economic downturn in the GCC countries during theyear 2008. Table 1 represents number of NRIs in GCC Countries.

Table:1 NRIs in Gulf Countries

Sl No	Countries	Total Number
1	United Arab Emirates	8095125
2	Saudi Arabia	10285945
3	Oman	1844978
4	Bahrain	704137
5	Qatar	1687640
6	Kuwait	2866136

Source: Indian Labour Migration update, 2019, ILO, Geneva

In the year 2020 International labour workers were facing the worst situation due to Covid -19 in the GCC countries (host countries). This situation makes the Indian International Migrants in turbulence. This crisis will also make impact on Indian economy, as majority of the international remittance were received from Gulf Countries

Review of Literature

World Bank (2020) revealed that covid-19 affected the international migrant workers in the form of unemployment, job loss and lockdown. The rate of return migration during the period June 2020 was also increased. The report suggested that Governments should address the major issues facing by the international migrants including health services and financial services.

Times of India (2019) reported that Indian diasporas abroad was the highest as compared to the rest of the world. According to UN population division, 15 million India migrants live abroad. Due to this large number, the remittance is also high, 68.91 billion dollars. The report said that the largest Indian migration was to UAE.

Clemens, McKenzie (2019) investigated whether the remittance affected the growth of economy. The study indicated that international remittance reduced poverty and increased the welfare the household units. He opined that, it was very difficult to prove whether international remittance will develop the growth of economy.

Naithani, P., & Jha, A. N. (2019) presented an outline of GCC countries; reasons for their reliance on migrated workforce; major challenges faced by migrants and suggested facilitating adjustment of migrant workers in GCC countries. The study suggested introduction of policy framework and laws and programmes to protect the interests of migrant workers. The report said that only if it was implemented and monitored properly, such policies and programme or law would become effective and produce results. The researcher observed that lack of formulation and implementation of labour laws and adherence to it by local employers was one of the major drawbacks in GCC countries' work environment.

Statement of the problem

The spread of Covid 19 in the gulf countries is a thread to the Indian economy. Since 2000 the labour market in India witnessed a positive transformation in tune with the New Economic Policy of 1991. Almost 8.8 million Indians were hosted by the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, while the labour market in GCC Countries witnessed drastic policy changes in favour of their citizens and skilled migrant labourers due to oil crisis happened in the gulf countries. These policy changes along with the economic downturn and the pandemic disease Covid 19 around the world put the Indian migrants in turbulence. During this period majority of the Indian migrants lost their job, some of them were also forced to even work at low wages. In addition to that GCC countries forced the Indian migrants to return back to their home country. These circumstances had an impact on Indian economy which heavily depends on NRK remittances by exporting a large portion of their labour force to GCC Countries. Under the above circumstances it was imperative to conduct a descriptive research in order to identify the impact of Covid-19 on international migration with special reference to GCC countries.

Significance of the study

Migration of Indians to GCC countries had multidimensional effect ranging from economic development to social and political changes. The present study made an attempt to analyse its impact on Covid 19 on International migrants in general. The Indian economy witnessed drastic changes due to the decrease in migrant remittances. The reason for that are of many such as job loss, low wages and salary, pressure from the host country to return back to their home country. Maintaining the flow of migration was a prerequisite for an Indian economy which largely depends on migrants to reduce poverty and unemployment. Hence, under this situation the international migrants can't survive in the host country for a long while. Majority of the Indian migrants returned to their home country due to the impact of Covid 19 along with the economic slowdown in these gulf counties. It's a threat to the Indian economy which heavily depends on remittances of international migrants, particularly from GCC countries. Moreover, how to rehabilitate these return migrants is a great threat to the Indian economy. Hence this study is imperative to evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on international migration with special focus to GCC countries. This present study will also help the prospective migrants to

decide their career and can plan their future while identifying the current situation of GCC countries, since international migration to GCC countries is no more attractive in nature. This study will also help the academicians to increase their knowledge level in the area of Impact of Covid 19 on International migration, particularly in GCC countries.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to analysing the Impact of Covid 19 on International migration and Migrant workers who are living in GCC Countries. It also focuses on the various dimensions of International migration and also throws light into the present challenges faced by the International migrant workers in the GCC countries and also focused those return migrants, who were forced to return to their home country due to pandemic disease Covid 19.

Objectives of the study

- ❖ To evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on Non Resident Indians
- ❖ To analyse the impact of Covid-19 on Indian economy
- ❖ To identify the major challenges faced by the Non Resident Indians in the home and host country.

Research design of the study

This study was descriptive in nature and secondary data was used for the study. Secondary data has been collected from World Bank's Data Bank. Oxford School of Management Studies, International migration Organization United Nations Population Division. Government of India's Different Ministries, Reserve Bank of India, International Monetary Fund, Centre for Development Studies, Newspaper reports and from various websites.

Impact of Covid-19 on Non Resident Indians and the Indian Economy

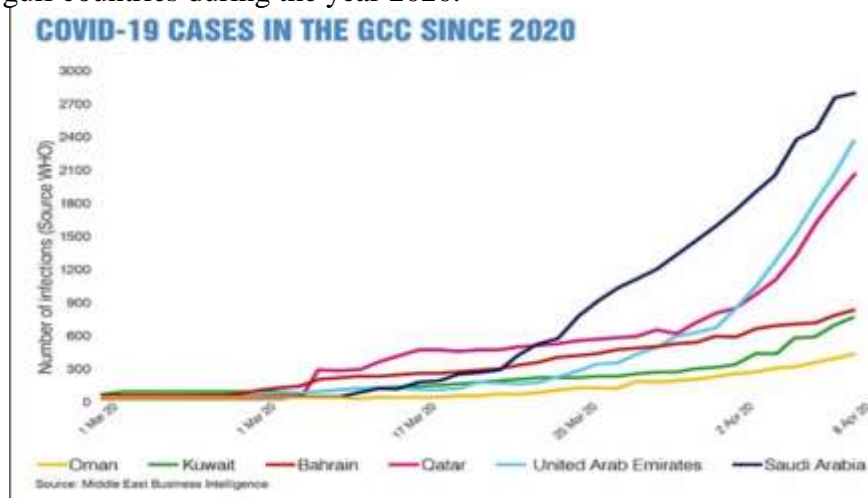
The main destination for the Non Resident Indians was the Gulf countries, because of their oil production. But due to this pandemic disease Covid-19 majority of the Non Resident Indians who were working and living in GCC Countries were forced to return to their home countries. But due to the restrictions from the part of government some are not able to move from one destination to other destination. Since in the host country, some of the migrant workers lost their job, so they can't send their remittances to their families. According to the statistical report of World bank, 2020 the flow of international remittance from gulf countries to Asian countries reduced by 23 percent. This will definitely make a negative impact toward the Indian economy, as Indian economy is considered as the top most remittance receiving country by exporting a large portion of labour force to GCC countries. At the same time they are also facing other issues in their host country such as facing risk of being infected, job loss, low wages and salary. Even though, after losing the job, some of the Indian migrants can't return to their home country. The following table represents the total number of cases reported by GCC countries

**Table: 2Total number of Covid 19 cases reported by
The gulf countries as on 17th April,2020**

No	Countries	Total number of cases reported as on 9 th April 2002
1	UAE	5825
2	Saudi Arabia	6380
3	Oman	1069
4	Bahrain	1700
5	Kuwait	1524
6	Qatar	4103

Source: WHO, Website as on 17th April ,ORF's Covid-19 Tracker

The above table depicts that number of covid 19 cases reported in Saudi Arabia was 6380 ,followed by UAE 5825 , and Qatar 4103 as on April 17,2020..The following figure represent the trend of covid 19 cases in the gulf countries during the year 2020.



Source: Middle east Business Intelligence

Figure: 1 Covid cases in Gulf countries,2020.

The impact of return migration will affect both the countries of origin and destination. Due to increase of return migration, remittance from these GCC countries will also be reduced to make an impact on their household. In the wide sense, the impact of this household would make a negative impact on the growth of the economy. In Qatar and Saudi Arabia, an estimate of 79 and 38 per cent migrants were representing the entire population. These two countries were considered as the top most countries among twenty countries having highest number of Covid-19 cases as on June 15th, 2020.

COVID 19: The Major Challenges Faced By the Non-Resident Indians in the Home and Host Country

1. The return migrants who were returning to the home country poses the challenge of bringing in the risk of a fresh wave of infections.
2. Localization policy adopted by the Gulf countries, after the pandemic disease was also perceived as major challenge of Non Resident Indians in the GCC countries.
3. Job loss, low wages and salary, kafala system existing in different GCC countries are the other major challenges faced by the Indian migrants in the host country
4. Air fare was another major challenge faced by Non Resident Indians.
5. Inadequate rehabilitation facilities for the return migrants were also one of the major challenges faced by the NRIs in the home country.
6. Due to job loss/low wages and salary, sending money to their families and dependants is longer possible for the NRIs.
7. Another major challenge faced by the return migrants was lack of employment.

Conclusion

International migration plays a significant role and contribution to the economic development of the host and the home country. India is heavily depending on international remittances especially from gulf countries. Due to Covid 19 majority of the international migrants got affected in the host country and they lost their job, even they were forced to work with low wages. Return migration also affects the Indian economy, as Indian economy is considered as the large remittance receiving country by exporting a large portion of labour force to Gulf countries. How to rehabilitate the return migrants is actually a great threat to the Indian government. Therefore the future of international migration to gulf countries is no more attractive in nature. The government in the gulf countries adopted various measures and policies in order to protect their citizen such as localization. While taking into consideration Indian government should take effective measures in order to protect the international

migrants who were still locked in the host country and for return migrants, effective measures have to taken to rehabilitate them in the Indian economy. In short, the spread in the GCC country is a threat to the Indian economy.

Suggestions

1. Government regulation on Airfare should be enforced at least to the gulf countries.
2. Proper rehabilitation facilities should be adopted by the Central government for the return migrants.
3. Financial support (loan) should be provided to the migrants/migrant's family who were completely depends on international migrants' remittances. Due to job loss/low wages and salary/ International migrants won't be able to send money to their home country.

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