

Awareness of Status of Migrant Workers in the Lockdown Period of Covid-19

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Abstract

Introduction: The migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic are facing multiple hardships. As the factories and workplaces are shut due to the lockdown prevailing in the country millions of migrants are facing loss of income and food shortage. Aim of the study is to assess the awareness of the status of migrant workers in the lockdown period of COVID-19. **Materials and methods :** A cross sectional survey was conducted among the general population through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions and is circulated among the population. **Results and discussion:** Majority of the participants 73% were aware of the status of migrant workers in the lockdown. **Conclusion:** The government should provide health care and ensure that migrant workers health is not neglected in future epidemics and disasters. **Keywords:** Migrant workers; COVID-19; Lockdown; Multiple hardships; Government.

Introduction

The status of the migrant workers in this lockdown period has worsened. Apart from the COVID-19 deaths more than 300 deaths were reported with reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, exhaustion and denial of timely medical care. Despite the importance of migration between states, interstate migrants continue to face significant integration barriers in their destination states (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2020). The government has taken many initiatives in helping the workers by providing transport and relief camps. More than a million families depend on an internal migrant's earnings for subsistence, children's education and other economic requirements (Zachariah, Mathew and IrudayaRajan, 2001)

India has more than 45 million economic migrants who left their native in search of livelihood (Reja and Das, 2019). They are the most marginalised sections of the society who are dependent on daily wages for their living. Immediate concerns faced are related to food, shelters, healthcare, loss of wages and fear getting infected. They are prone to social, psychological and emotional trauma in these situations. Measures such as ensuring shelter, providing relief materials and identification of suspected cases will help them (Kluge *et al.*, 2020). The migrant workers face administrative, financial, legal and language barriers to access the health system (Who Regional Office for Europe, 2016).

Addressing the health needs of migrant workers should be made an urgent public health priority because the infection among these individuals could also lead to community infection eventually affecting the health of the entire population (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2019). Our team has rich experience in research and we have collaborated with numerous authors over various topics in the past decade (Arigaet *et al.*, 2018; Basha, Ganapathy and Venugopalan, 2018; Hannah *et al.*, 2018; Hussainy *et al.*, 2018; Jeevanandan and Govindaraju, 2018; Kannan and Venugopalan, 2018; Kumar and Antony, 2018; Manohar and Sharma, 2018; Menon *et al.*, 2018; Nandakumar and Nasim, 2018; Nandhini, Babu and Mohanraj, 2018; Ravinthar and Jayalakshmi, 2018; Seppan *et al.*, 2018; Teja, Ramesh and Priya, 2018; Duraisamy *et al.*, 2019; Gheena and Ezhilarasan, 2019; Hema Shree *et al.*, 2019; Rajakeerthi and Ms, 2019; Rajendran *et al.*, 2019; Sekaret *et al.*, 2019; Sharma *et al.*, 2019; Siddique *et al.*, 2019; Janani, Palanivelu and Sandhya, 2020; Johnson *et al.*, 2020; Jose, Ajitha and Subbaiyan, 2020). Aim of this

study is to assess the awareness among the general population of the status of migrant workers in the lockdown period of COVID-19 and to throw light on their sufferings.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted among 100 individuals according to mentioned guidelines and protocols of the institutional review board. The sample size was 100. The results and data were collected from the month of april to may 2020. The questionnaire is distributed among the general population through online google forms. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions which is multiple choice relating to awareness about the migrant workers. The survey results were collected and validated. Random sampling methods were used and descriptive statistics used. Association between variables were analysed using SPSS software. The types of questions followed were close ended. The data analysed was interpreted graphically.

Results

A total of 105 participated in the study in which 55.8% were female and 44.2% were male (fig 1). In this study there were 60.6% between the age of 18-30, 26% below 18 and 13.5% above the age of 30 . 73.3% of the participants were aware of the status of migrant workers in this lockdown and 26.7% not aware of the status (fig 2). 67.6% think the needs of the migrant workers are being addressed while the remaining disapproves (fig 3). 60% feel the lockdown has hit migrant workers' pay and food supply (fig 4). 65.4% are aware that most migrant workers live under flyovers and footpaths (fig 5). 59.8% are aware that there are about 130 million migrant workers in India (fig 6). 63.7% are aware of the government's relief camps (fig 7). 59.6% are aware that more than 14.3 crore people are dependent on these relief camps (fig 8). 70.9% are aware that these are the people who will play a key role in national reconstruction required after the pandemic (fig 9). 65.7% are aware that migrant workers face social isolation and mental health challenges during this pandemic (fig 10). 63.8% think the government has taken enough initiative to address the issues of migrant workers (fig 11). 61.9% think more than health their livelihood is at risk (fig 12). 62.1% are aware that migrant workers make up 80 percent of India's workforce (fig 13).

Discussion

Our institution is passionate about high quality evidence based research and has excelled in various fields ((Pc, Marimuthu and Devadoss, 2018; Ramesh *et al.*, 2018; VijayashreePriyadharsini, SmilineGirija and Paramasivam, 2018; Ezhilarasan, Apoorva and Ashok Vardhan, 2019; Ramadurai *et al.*, 2019; Sridharan *et al.*, 2019; VijayashreePriyadharsini, 2019; Chandrasekar *et al.*, 2020; Mathew *et al.*, 2020; R *et al.*, 2020; Samuel, 2021)

In a study connected to the status of migrant workers it shows that 80% of the urban workers lost their jobs during the lockdown. The impact of international migration is greater in rural than in urban areas (Khan, Imran Khan and C., 2016) Among 11,159 migrant workers who are left stranded more than 90 % didn't receive ration supplies from the government. Addressing their health needs should be made an urgent public health priority because infection among these

individuals could also lead to community infection, eventually affecting the entire population's health. For instance, during the epidemic, migrant workers should be provided more accessible health care. Public health campaigns should be available in multiple languages and diffused through various communication channels and networks of migrant workers as soon as possible (Liemet *et al.*, 2020). In a study conducted all over India it shows that 61% of the migrant workers are receiving poor pay (Mukhopadhyay, Mukhopadhyay and Karmakar, 2014). With no work and no money and lockdown restrictions putting a stop to public transport, thousands of migrant workers were walking hundreds of kilometres to go back to their native villages (Alon *et al.*, 2020).

Many of the migrant workers were arrested for violating the lockdown being caught at inter state borders, forests between states (Verma, Singh and Singh, 2010). The government launched "Shramik" special trains for the migrant workers to go to their villages for free (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2016). Recently the government has announced plans to give free food grains for migrant workers (Joob and Wiwanitkit, 2020). Previously in our department numerous clinical studies have been conducted (Samuel and Devi, 2015), (Baheerati and Gayatri Devi, 2018), (Fathima and Preetha, 2016), (Rj and R, 2016), (Harsha *et al.*, 2015), (Dave and Preetha, 2016), (David *et al.*, 2019), (Shruthi and Preetha, 2018), (Farrell *et al.*, 2008), [23], (R and Sethu, 2018), (Swathy and Gowri Sethu, 2015), [26], (Renuka and Sethu, 2015) and (Timothy, Gayatri Devi and Jothi Priya, 2019) over the past 5 years. Now the present study focussed on epidemiological survey and the idea for this survey arose from the current interest in our community.

Limitations of the study

There must be an increase in sample size and inclusion of more criteria. The transport of the migrants back to their native was missed in my survey.

Future scope

The livelihood and struggles of the migrant workers in this pandemic should be addressed and should ensure them protection and proper living.

Conclusion

Majority of the people who participated in the survey were aware of the status of migrant workers in this lockdown period of COVID-19. The migrant workers are in a pathetic situation with poor pay, food shortage and shelter. They should be taken care of as they make 90% of India's workforce. The government should provide health equity and ensure that migrant workers health is not neglected in future epidemics and disasters.

Author contribution

All the authors contributed equally to design carrying with the study and analysis of the research.

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Conflicts of interest

None declared.

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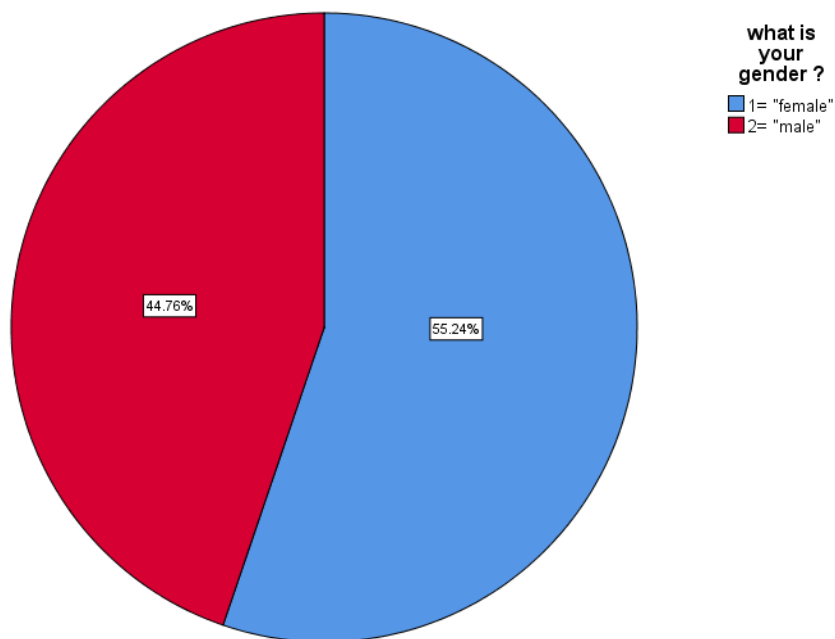


Figure 1: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of gender. (55.8%) were females (blue) and (44.2%) were male (red).

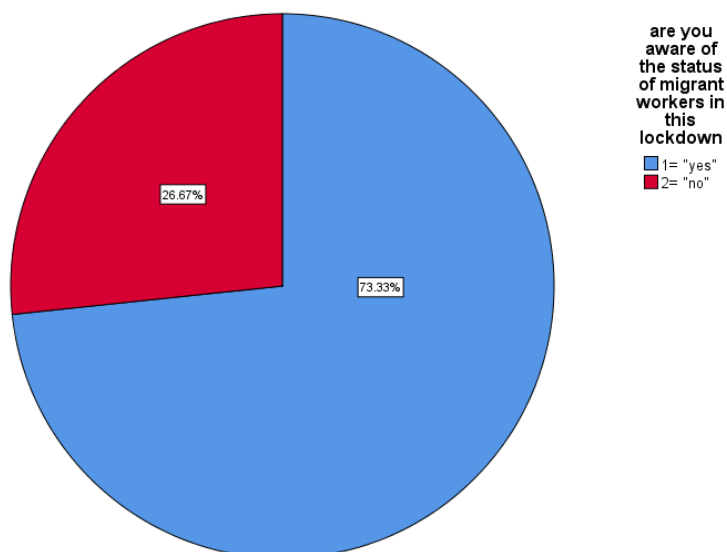


Figure 2: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the status of the migrants. The majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the status of migrants (73.3%) and 26.7% were unaware (red)

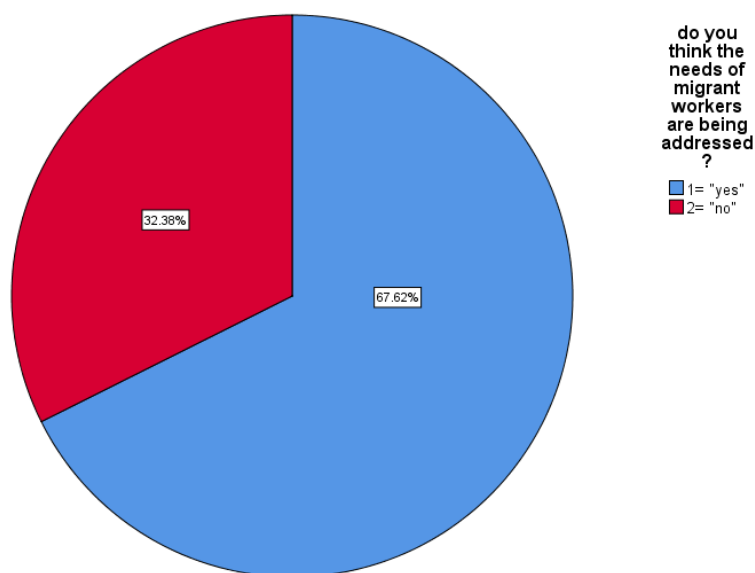


Figure 3: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the needs of the migrants being addressed. The majority of the participants were aware (blue) that migrant workers' needs were not being addressed (67.9%) and (32.4%) were unaware (red).

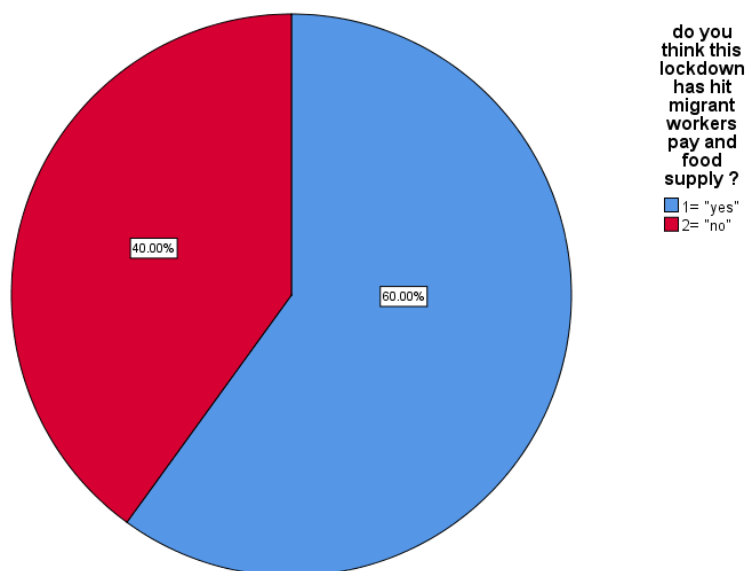


Figure 4: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness on pay and food supply of migrants during lockdown. Majority of the participants approved (blue) that their food and pay were affected (60%) and the remaining (40%) disapproved (red).

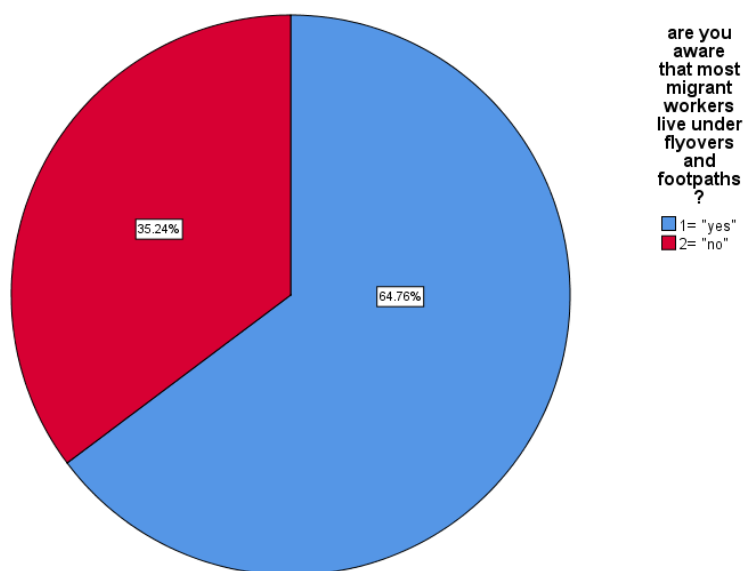


Figure 5: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness that most of the migrants live under flyovers and footpaths. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) that most migrants live under flyovers and footpaths (65.4%) and the remaining (34.6%) were not aware (red).

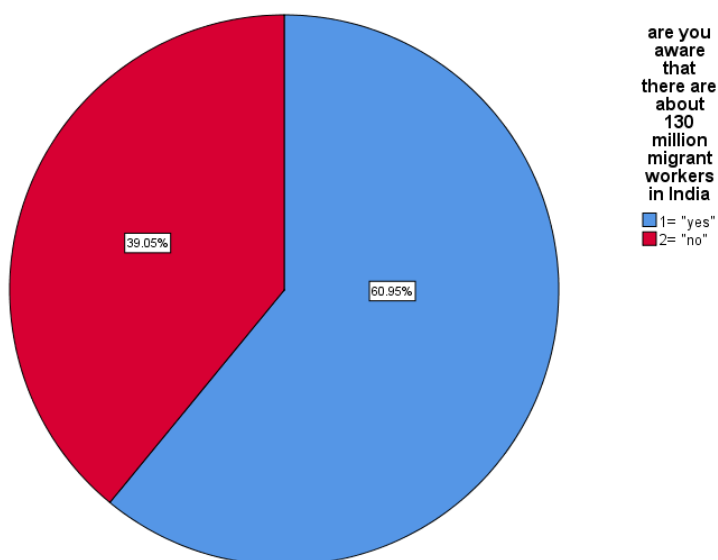


Fig 6: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the total population of the migrants. The majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the population of the migrants (59.8%) and remaining (40.2%) were not aware (red) .

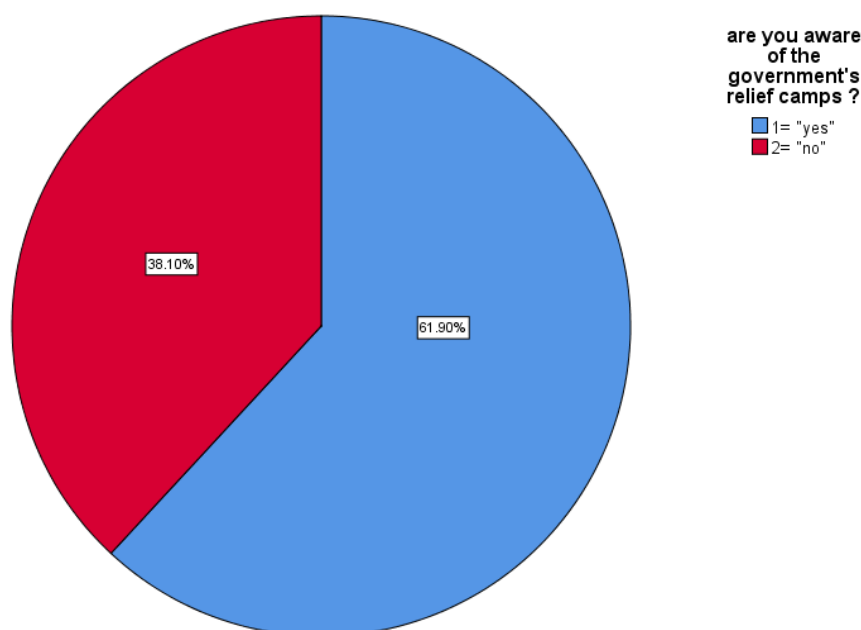


Figure 7: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the government's relief camps. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the government's relief camps (63.7%) and (36.3%) were unaware (red).

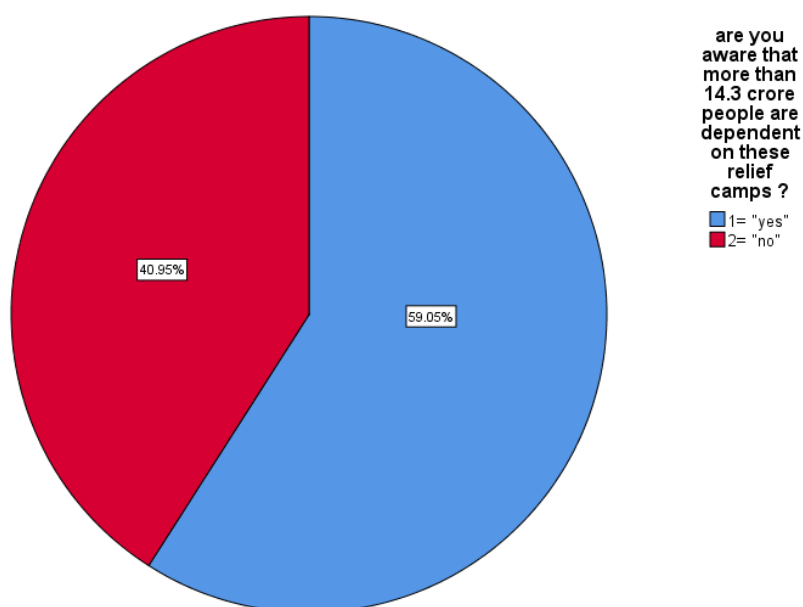


Figure 8: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the dependence of the migrants on the relief camps. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the dependence of migrant workers on the relief camps (59.6%) and the remaining (40.4%) were unaware (red).

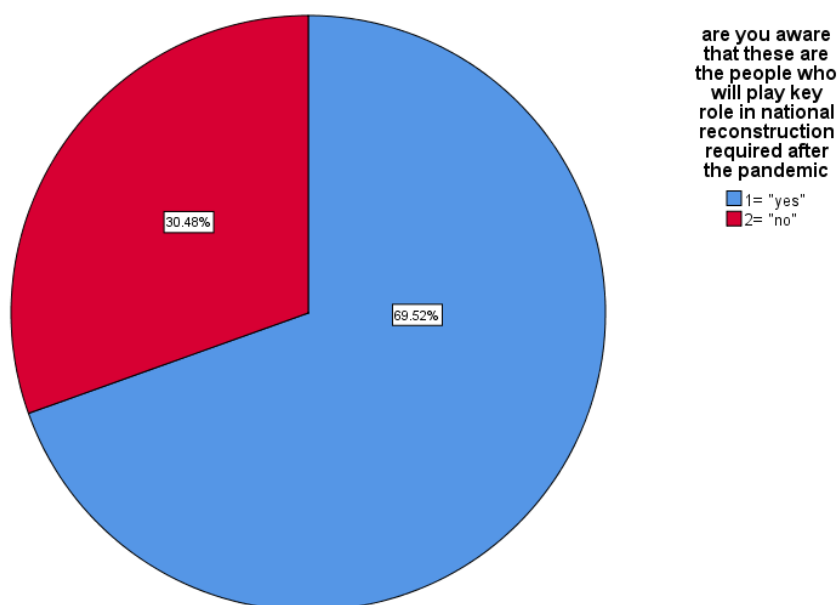


Figure 9: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the key role of the migrant workers in the reconstruction after the pandemic. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the key role of migrants (70.9%) and remaining (30%) were unaware (red).

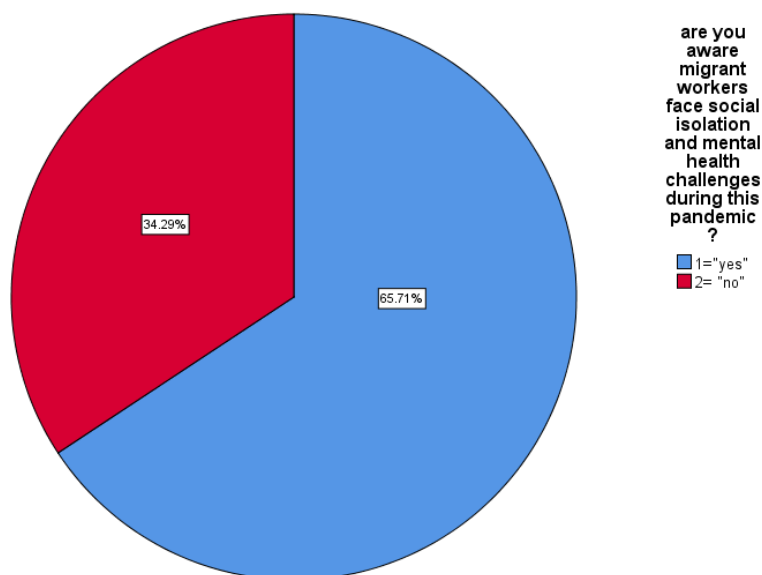


Figure 10: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the social isolation and mental challenges faced by migrant workers. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the social isolation and mental challenges faced by migrants (65.7%) and remaining (34.3%) were unaware (red).

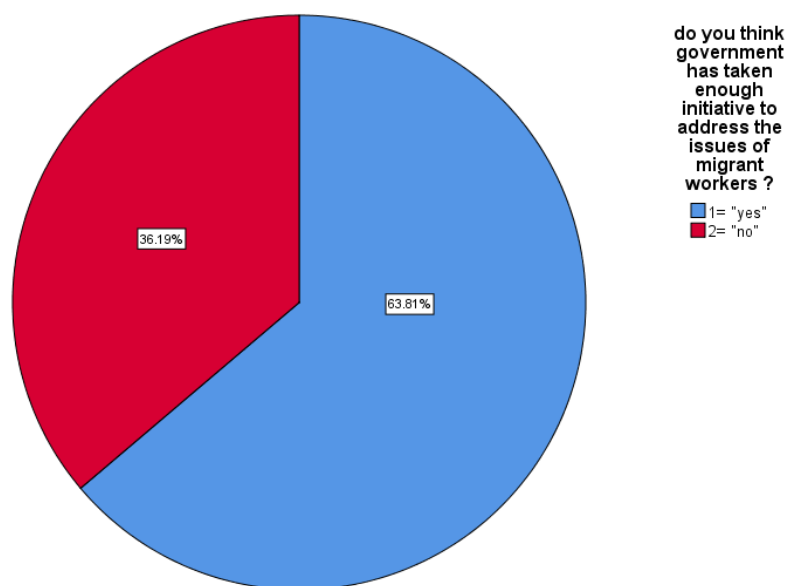


Figure 11: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the initiative taken by the government to address the issues of the migrants. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) that no initiatives were taken by the government to address the issues of the migrants (63.8%) and remaining (36.2%) were unaware (red).

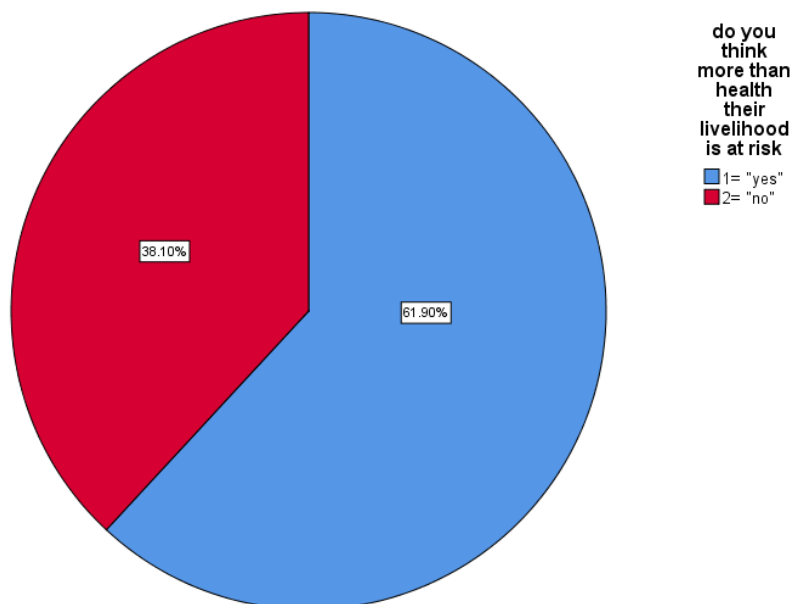


Figure 12: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the risk on their health than their livelihood. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the risk to their health (61.9%) and the remaining (38.1%) were unaware (red).

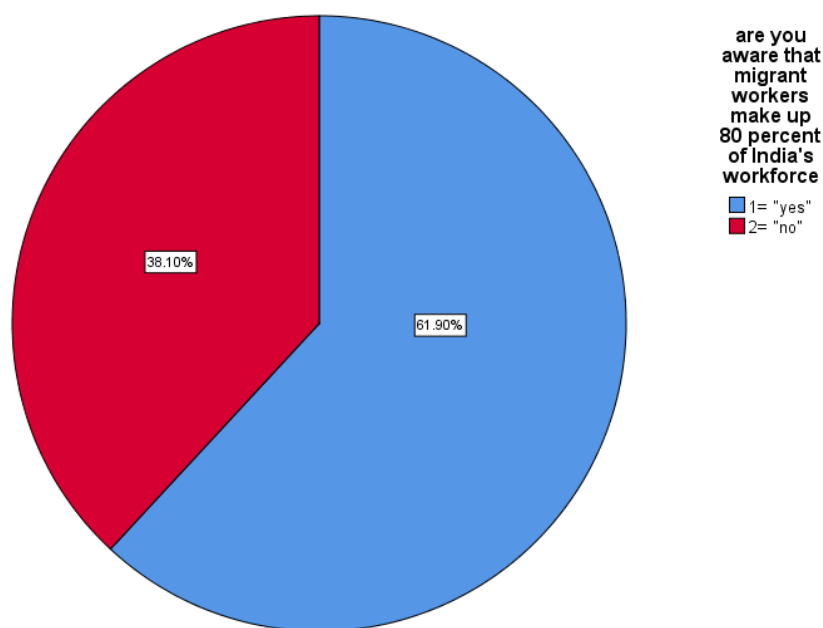


Figure 13: This pie chart represents the percentage distribution of the respondents on their awareness of the contribution of the migrant workers to the workforce. Majority of the participants were aware (blue) of the contribution of the migrant workers to the workforce (62.1%) and remaining (37.9%) were unaware (red) of the contribution of the migrant workers to the workforce

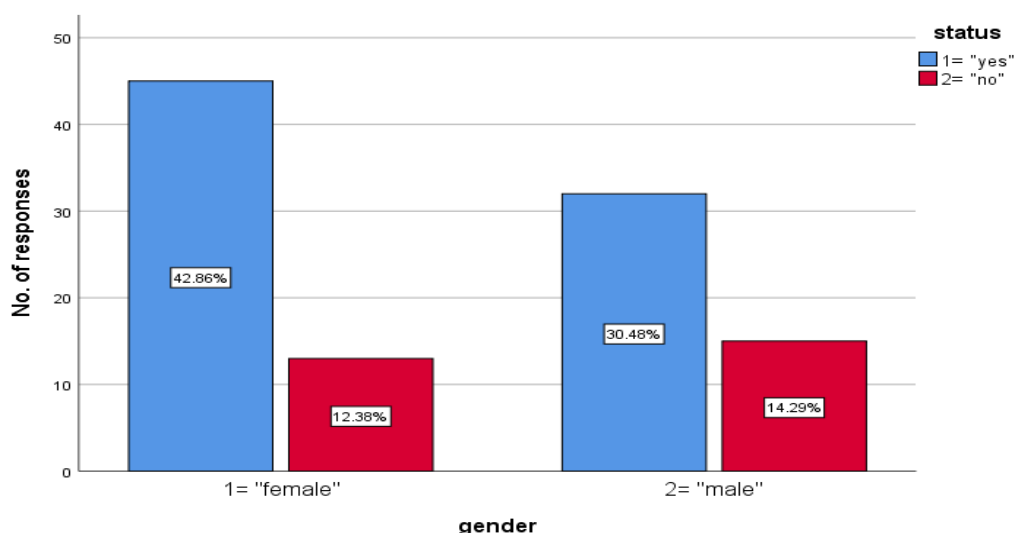


Figure 14: The bar graph depicts the association between gender and the respondent's awareness of the status of migrant workers during COVID-19. X axis represents the gender and Y axis represents the percentage of respondents. Blue bar denotes who were aware of the status of the migrants and red bar denotes who were not aware. The females were more aware of the status of the migrant workers during COVID-19 than males. The chi square test was analysed and the P value = 0.274, ($p > 0.05$) and is statistically not significant.

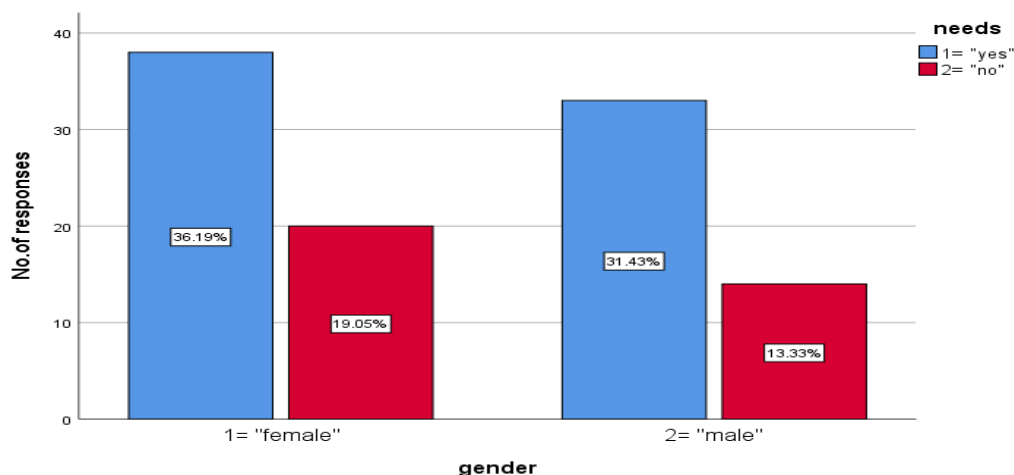


Figure 15: The bar graph depicts the association between gender and the respondent's awareness of the needs of the migrant workers being addressed. X axis represents the gender and Y axis represents the percentage of respondents. Blue bar denotes who are aware of the needs of the migrants and red bar denotes who are not aware. The females were more aware of the needs of the migrant workers during COVID-19 than males. The chi square test was analysed and the P value = 0.609, ($p > 0.05$) and is statistically not significant.

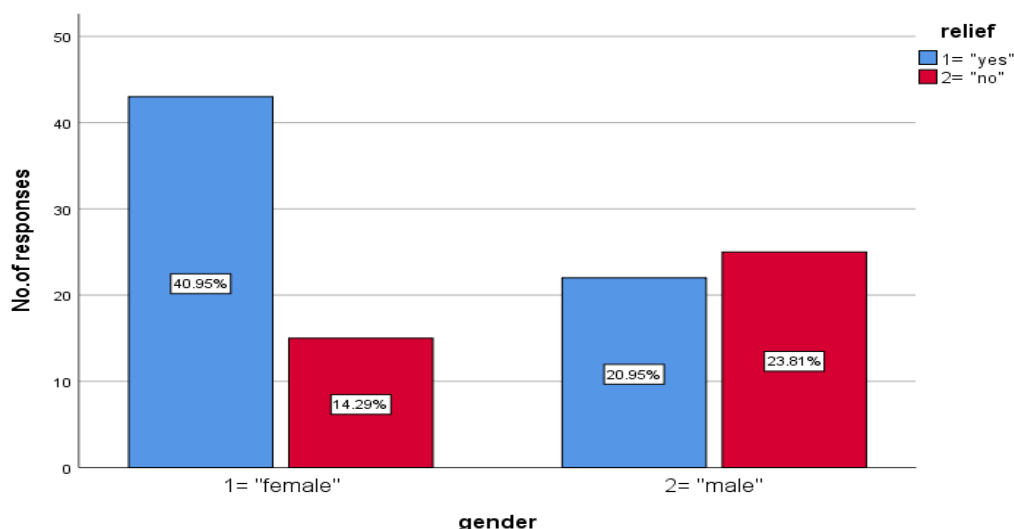


Figure 16: The bar graph depicts the association between gender and the respondent's awareness of the government's relief camps. X axis represents the gender and Y axis represents the percentage of respondents. Blue bar denotes who are aware of the government's relief camps and red bar denotes who are not aware. The females were more aware of the government's relief camps during COVID-19 than males. The chi square test was analysed and the P value = 0.04, ($p < 0.05$) and is statistically significant.

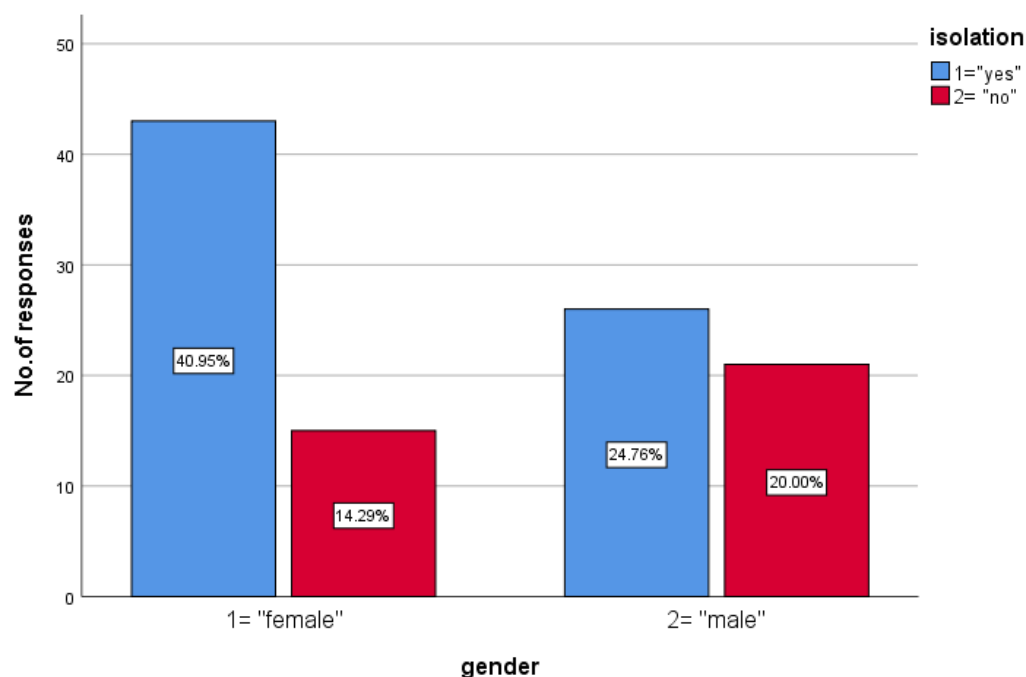


Figure 17: The bar graph depicts the association between gender and the respondent's awareness on the social isolation and mental challenges X axis represents the gender and Y axis represents the percentage of respondents. Blue bar denotes who are aware of the social isolation and mental challenges faced by the migrant workers and red bar denotes who are not aware. The females were more aware than males. The chi square test was analysed and the P value = 0.43, ($p > 0.05$) and is statistically not significant.