

# Review on Study of Crisis Communication Initiatives of Govt. of NCT of Delhi during Covid - 19 Pandemic with Special Reference to Migrant Workers

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## *Abstract*

Many of the concerns raised by the impact of pandemics like Covid-19 on the migratory population were addressed in this article. These effects are especially concerning for low-income families since they are less able to weather the financial storm that accompanies a recession due to their lack of savings, savings accounts, and other sources of income. Most of these employees make barely enough to get by on a daily basis, and they have no safety net to fall back on if they lose their employment. A sizable fraction of this at-risk group consists of migrant workers. As a result of the shutdown and the ensuing recessionary jitters, millions of migrant workers in India are expected to become unemployed. A large number of the migrant workers have already returned to their home towns, while others are waiting for the lockdown to be lifted. Those without written contracts or whose contracts are about to expire are most vulnerable, as are those working in unorganised industries. Contract employees in a wide range of sectors are expected to feel the effects of the shutdown and following recession first. Lockdowns and social distancing tactics are causing a decline in employment and income while also posing a threat to critical infrastructure including food production, transportation networks, and supply chains. This presents a problem in terms of guaranteeing food security and addressing already widespread malnutrition, especially among children, which is likely to lead to an increase in new-born and child mortality. There should be a reevaluation of national migration policy to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers who are fleeing or are returning to places experiencing health crises are provided with the support and safety they require. Food insecurity and a desire to return home among migrants is a pressing issue, and robust food systems are needed to address this.

*Keywords: Migration, Covid-19, labour force, lowdown, recession*

## *Introduction*

The relationship between migration and health is found to be multidimensional and bidirectional. Health status can drive a decision to migrate, but such relocation may in turn have an influence on health (Ginsburg et al., 2018). Circular migration has further been associated with the spread of health conditions or behaviours between destination and origin areas, affecting the health status of others. The structure of urban and rural populations in India and the dynamic component of migration are likely to exacerbate the Covid-19 epidemic in the country. Some estimates suggest that a considerable proportion of migrants who live in rural areas but work in urban areas may be vulnerable. Although the government's quarantine measures are warranted, they may not produce optimal results because many of the migrants would rather avoid the epicentres of the disease. This would have a negative impact on the health of the population as a whole. Research shows that the marginal immigrant imposes a net negative externality when a disease has an epicentre (Mesnard&Seabright, 2009). As previously suspected, research has shown that limiting international travel

does little to slow the spread of pandemics (Carter, 2016). The main difficulty is that by the time people become aware of an epidemic, enough people have already been infected to cause a real problem. For the purpose of investigating how an epidemic might unfold in space, numerous models have been built and deployed. Most of these models are founded on mechanisms representing migration or the spatial mobility of individuals who make contact with one another (Noble, 1974). To stop or lessen the impact of an emerging infectious illness, public health efforts often target three groups of people: (a) those living in the source area, (b) those leaving the source area, and (c) those moving from the infected area to other places. Several studies have examined the impact of migration on the spread of epidemics, but the impact of an epidemic on the migratory population is an additional essential facet of the problem. In addition to the obvious danger to public health, epidemics can quickly spiral into economic and migration disasters. A high number of internally migratory employees are unable to find new employment after being laid off in an outbreak, as a result of the government's efforts to curb the spread of the disease. Most of these employees make barely enough to get by on a daily basis, and they have no safety net to fall back on if they lose their jobs. Administrators and researchers took notice of this problem when they saw tens of thousands of migrant workers from across the city of Delhi congregating at bus terminals to cross into Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and other states following the announcement of the 21-day-long country-wide lockdown due to Covid-19 in India. Thousands of people gathered, all of them eager to get back to their homes in neighbouring states. Most modes of transportation were down, so many people were trying to trek hundreds of kilometres to get back to their rural homes. After cancelling all public transportation and stressing the importance of "staying put," the authorities eventually decided to reopen bus terminals and city borders and put hundreds of buses back in service. Further, the Central government asked state governments to take precautions to avoid a mass departure of migrant labour in the wake of the national lockdown. Fears that the Covid-19 epidemic could become a humanitarian calamity were exacerbated by the enormous exodus of migrant workers from cities in numerous states back to their communities. With the magnitude of the issue in mind, the government initiated a new programme called Migrant Workers Return Registration. The primary goals of the programme are (1) to keep track of the number of day labourers and migrant workers who got stuck in other states, and (2) to provide them with 14 days of quarantine facilities and accommodations after they return home. To facilitate the relocation of their citizens (daily labourers and migrant workers), governments around the country have developed websites and compiled data on their residents. The group's interstate travel was facilitated by a fleet of buses. Special Shramik trains were started by the Indian Railways to transport people like migrant labourers, tourists, pilgrims, students, and others. A Covid-19 recession in India would likely have a devastating human toll that would go far beyond the income lost by unemployed employees in the short term. Historical studies of recessions show that job loss during a downturn can lead to long-term unemployment and pay setbacks, negatively affecting the health of the unemployed and contributing to rising poverty. These effects are especially concerning for low-income families since they are less able to weather the financial storm that accompanies a recession because they have fewer resources at their disposal, including fewer sources of income and no access to social security (Papademetriou et al., 2010). Many of these people are members of the migrant labour force. Concerning the impact of pandemics like COVID-19 on the migratory population, this article addresses some of the key topics.

On March 11, 2020, Covid-19 was officially labelled a "Pandemic" by the World Health Organization (WHO). In attempt to stop the spread of the virus, state governments in India have started issuing executive orders and implementing restrictions on public meetings, most notably under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). The Central government declared a "Janta Curfew" for March 19, 2020. Curfew for Janta was on March 22, 2020. On March 24, 2020, the government declared a nationwide lockdown to last for 21 days in an effort to stop the spread of the deadly virus. The governments of the many Indian states were instructed to strictly enforce the lockdown using a wide variety of law enforcement agencies.

To effectively respond to a public health emergency or pandemic, careful preparation and strategic thinking are essential. When dealing with a medical emergency, effective crisis communication is crucial. In the case of Covid-19 in a number of states, this type of communication is especially useful in addressing the concerns of vulnerable populations like migrant workers. Migrant workers are among the most vulnerable members of society, and crisis communication helps to meet their needs and concerns. For future study and studies, it is important to critically examine the remarkable flux of reverse - migration of migrant workers of Delhi during the period, the issues they encountered, and the crisis communication undertaken by the govt. of NCT of Delhi for them. Crisis Communication is an important function of the Public Relations' firms and

professionals. Traditionally, Crisis Communication dealt with any controversy or the problem faced by an organization or individual that affects either's company's image or the prestige of the individual. However, its scope has enhanced multifold with increased emphasis on the image of the brand in the corporate sector. Crisis Communication is used by the governments across the globe to deal with various kinds of crisis including economic or public health crisis.

The communication scholar Timothy Coombs defines crisis as "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" and crisis communication as "the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation."

Timothy Coombs also recognises three stages in Crisis Management. These stages and their functions are:

1. **Pre-Crisis Stage:** At this stage, the team analyses the potential risks or risk identification for the organisation and designs crisis management plans accordingly. There is also testing of these plan at least annually so as to remain prepared for the future which includes creating templates for the press releases and a broad strategy for media relations.
2. **Crisis Stage:** At this stage, there is identification of the crisis, selection of a team for the particular crisis that has occurred and then the frequency and the content of the messaging is decided upon for the external publics.
3. **Post Crisis Stage:** At this stage, a review of the success or failure of the Crisis management plan is conducted. The decision regarding the follow-up messaging to the external publics after the crisis is over is also taken in this phase

## **II.Literature Review**

**Ni Chen** in Beijing's Political Crisis Communication: an analysis of Chinese government communication in the 2009 Xinjiang riot (2012)emphasized that Xinjiang riot caused the Chinese government to be gravely concerned about its image and credibility both at home and abroad. Western crisis communication concepts/strategies/tactics were deliberately employed to help manage the riot crisis.

**Eva-Karin Olsson** in Crisis Communication in Public Organizations: Dimensions of Crisis Communication Revisited (2014)found that most practices in disaster communication, whether stemming from crisis communication or risk communication traditions, have centered on an authority-centric 'push' culture where messages come from authorities and are principally distributed through mass media to the public.

**Mahboub Hashem** in Using Social Media in governance and Crisis Communication: **Case Study of the Lebanese Garbage Crisis**(2016) discussed the issue of using social media platforms in governance and crisis communication. They tried to analyze the current Lebanese trash crisis, its causes, and lack of finding a solution to it. Lack of proper handling of that crisis goes back to political bickering and corruption based on promoting business interests affiliated to them.

**Stephen R. Neely** in Social Media and Crisis Communications: A Survey of Local Governments in Florida: (2018) found that social media use by local governments, with a particular focus on the dissemination of emergency information. There are opportunities for future research which could considerably improve the knowledge base in this area. They undertook quantitative analysis, attempting to measure the extent to which local municipalities are employing social media to disseminate emergency information, as well as which platforms are most prominent, and which institutional/demographic factors influence the likelihood of adoption.

**Chritos Lemonkis and Antonions Zairis** in Crisis Management and Public Sector: Key Trends and Perspective(2020) concluded that the redesign of the organization of the business brings about wider organizational and administrative changes, which are necessary for its proper and effective functioning.

**Philipp Brandt and Jan Wörlein** in the article Government crisis communications during the pandemic compared the governmental response strategies seen in France, Germany, and the UK, and consider the new questions that the situation is creating for the social sciences. There are a number of other important

dimensions of crisis communication that these preliminary observations have left out. Even though all three countries face the same hazard, for example, they vary in the way scientific expertise appears in official settings and how uncertainty is framed. There are also questions about the division of labour within the government, and what different ministers get to say. And then there is the question of responses to different communication strategies from the public. Article was published on the CSO website on 21st April 2020.

**Kenneth Lee, Harshil Sahai and Michael Greenstone** of the University of Chicago and **Patrick Baylis** of the University of British Columbia conducted a short – term research titled ‘ Job Loss and Behavioural Change: The Unprecedented Effects of the Indian Lockdown in Delhi and found that people face financial crisis due to the pandemic lockdown .The country has witnessed such a pandemic after 1918 when influenza had spread in rural areas.

Some research organisations like ‘Research and Information System for Developing Countries’, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), IDFC, Thomson Reuters Foundation, Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), New York University, Azim Premji University have done short – term surveys on their living conditions during lock down and found their misery during the period. A compilation of press releases issued by the Government of India through the Press Information Bureau, Delhi, from January 17, 2020 and the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, links to important official communication/advisories are useful documents in this regard

### **III. Migration and Employment Conditions in India**

There is a general decline in migration, a drop in remittances, and a disruption of migrant systems when there is an economic crisis in the destination country (Curran et al., 2016). According to the Economic Survey 2016–2017, more than 9 million people move around inside the country every year, and the majority of them do so in search of employment or higher education. Although Delhi and Mumbai attract the most migrants, many individuals are moving to southern states' urban centres like Bangalore, Chennai, etc. Most of these people travel from the states of Bihar, UP, Bengal, and Assam. The majority of workers in India move either within their district or to neighbouring districts in the same state, according to the 2011 Census. About a quarter of all migration is to the neighbouring state. Workers are more likely to relocate to cities where better educational and employment prospects can be found. To the tune of 2.6% of all migration, international migration is a major factor (Census, 2011). Among the more than 30 million Indians living in foreign countries, approximately 9 million call the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) home (now known as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf). Most Indian migrant workers with less than a high school education end up in the Gulf or Southeast Asia. India received about US\$62.7 billion in remittances in 2016, making it the top recipient country in the world because to the contributions of both highly skilled and low skilled migrant workers (ILO, 2018). Internal migrants form a crucial part of India's economy. The Economic Survey 2016–2017 estimated that there are an estimated 100 million internal migrants in India, which make up about 20 per cent of the total workforce. They contribute an estimated 10 per cent of India's economic output (Al-Jazeera, 2020 )and play an important role in the economy of the country. Many of the internal migrants travel from poorer states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the north to work in the industrial hubs of more developed states like Gujarat and Maharashtra in the south, or to the metro cities.

### **IV. Government's Crisis Management Strategy for Covid - 19**

In order to combat Covid-19, India responded in a "pre-emptive, proactive, and graded" manner, according to central government officials who collaborated with the WHO. On the other hand, state governments all throughout India developed numerous methods and programmes to assist the weaker segments of society and confront the problem. The Delhi government constructed over 500 help facilities around the city to give food access for people in need in order to reduce expected hunger demands. Additionally, it asked businesses to not withhold workers' earnings from their paychecks, let them to "work from home," and to take care of even their domestic help even if they did not show up for work. However, their pleadings were

ineffective.

The Covid-19 Pandemic is one of humanity's most difficult and significant challenges since World War II. Health, education, the economy, social standards, and most crucially how we live our lives have all been impacted. Our daily lives have undergone a number of changes as a result, which researchers have dubbed the "new normal." These changes include an increase in the rate at which various technologies are adopted, the widespread acceptance of the "Work from Home" culture, the rapid uptake of tele-education, the boom in the digital economy, and adjustments in how we interact with other nations, among others. The Pandemic has significantly harmed the society's less fortunate members in terms of social security and financial hardship. Economic conditions, restriction to certain areas, and a lack of social interaction have an impact on residents' mental well-being. The abundance of false and misleading information has made matters worse for the populace and bred distrust and misunderstanding. The pandemic's effects on the many nations, communities, and global community are still being mapped.

Governments must prepare in advance for such pandemics and other possible hazards, especially given how quickly the disaster unfolded. Planning communication in a post-Covid 19 world should take into consideration the following factors.

- i. Mapping future challenges and risks for better preparation of the crisis management plan. The challenges can range from economic problems, health risks and even political instability.
- ii. Post – Covid - 19 World crisis management strategies should include government response along with the plan for resuming normal operations.
- iii. There should be database of the protocols that needs to be followed for the next crisis especially related to communication strategies to better mitigate the crisis.
- iv. Communication strategies should address the concerns of the various stakeholders who have suffered during the crisis such as business community, vulnerable sections like labourers, health workers, students, government officials. Such efforts would attract better response from citizenry and would help to support governmental efforts.
- v. Transparency is a key factor in communication between government and citizens. Government should clearly lay out the effect of the crisis on government revenues and their plan to tackle these losses. It would help demonstrate government's commitment and integrity to deal with the financial crisis. It would also attract public participation in the navigating solutions for the challenges faced in the Post – Covid - world.

Migrant workers in major cities are obliged to either remain in dangerous conditions in the metropolitan regions or return to their places of origin—village or smaller towns—due to economic crisis or epidemics like Covid-19. They initially transition from being the households' remittance revenue suppliers to becoming their dependents. Many of these migrant labourers are from the most hopeless and underdeveloped areas of the nation, where opportunities for employment and education are now limited (Kumar et al., 2009). This way, any health or economic problems at the destination also lead to an increase in people returning to their towns of origin (Castles, 2011). The pandemic may also pose a significant threat to food security and nutrition. Millions of people worldwide may experience starvation as a result of the Covid-19. The research that is currently available indicates that one of the primary causes of individuals leaving their places of employment and relocating is instability. Crisis worsens food shortages and restricts migratory populations' possibilities for making a living. Lockdowns and social isolation tactics are reducing employment and wages on the one hand, while disrupting supply chains, transportation networks, and agricultural productivity on the other. By the end of 2020, the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations predicts that 265 million people might be on the

verge of hunger (Dahir, 2020). One of the nations with significant child malnutrition is India. Children under 5 are affected by stunting, wasting, and underweight to varying degrees (around 38.4%, 21%, and 35.7%, respectively). A person's immunity is weakened by malnutrition, increasing their likelihood of getting sick and making them more vulnerable to the illness. As the key factor in 69% of deaths of children under the age of 5 in India, under nutrition is a significant underlying cause of child mortality in that country (UNICEF, 2019). According to contemporary theories of migration, decisions to move or stay and overall patterns of movement are closely correlated with the economic climate in places of origin and destination, the connections that connect people between origins and destinations, and the experiences that people have accumulated at destinations as individuals and as a community (Haas, 2012). Evidence from the Asian Financial Crisis and the Global Economic Crisis suggests that cumulative migrant experiences and common migrant relationships may have an impact on migrants' tendency to return to their country of origin following an economic quake (Curran et al., 2016). Many migrant workers who fled major cities during the crisis may never return; instead, they would prefer to scrape by on their unprofitable farms or look for employment in smaller towns. It will cause a temporary scarcity of human resources in the industries by depriving industrial hubs like Delhi, Gurugram, Surat and Tiruppur, Mumbai, etc. of labour for a protracted period of time. An epidemic is a situation that puts a country's capacity to successfully protect its citizens, minimize fatalities, save the economy, and recover quickly to the test (Rachaniotis et al., 2012). Governments at the federal and state levels are developing plans to address the situation. The states and union territories have also been urged to simplify the procedures and inform these vulnerable people about the government's actions, such as the free distribution of food grains and other necessities through the public distribution system (PDS). A group of organized employees who could lose their jobs as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak will get unemployment compensation, according to the Union government. The labour and employment ministry want to expand the programme and make it possible for workers to get unemployment benefits if they are exposed to the coronavirus (Jha, 2020). However, given the severity of the problem, these actions are insufficient. The government may take far more action to safeguard its citizens and economy. The coronavirus outbreak has been accompanied by unparalleled, overwhelming uncertainty. It is difficult to predict how long and how much the pandemic will affect people's lives and the nation's economy. To address this situation, the government must develop a thoughtful plan. Greater collaboration between government organizations charged independently with migration and health mandates is needed at the 190 Journal of Health Management 22(2) national level. Additionally, it is necessary to reevaluate national migration policy, which should take into account the safety and aid of migrants arriving from or facing the possibility of returning to places afflicted by health crises. The development of resilient food systems may lessen migratory populations' feelings of homelessness and food insecurity. The effect of health crises on migration needs further study, especially in separating health from other reasons for migration.

## **V. Conclusion**

In India, migration is typically not seen favourably, and those who go there struggle to get utilities like rationing, medical treatment, and other amenities. After the Indian government declared a sudden lockdown under the Disaster Management Act-2005, migrants who already confront linguistic, cultural, legal, and practical restrictions felt even more isolated. They resembled a defenceless community that the states and businesses occasionally used for their own economic progress but completely abandoned when calamity hit. During the Covid-19 lockdown, the state and companies treated the migrants inhumanely. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the grave flaws in the Government of India's Disaster Management Policy.. The responses of Indian governments in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic drew attention to the following points:

- the government of India was ill-prepared to withstand any widespread epidemic or catastrophe situation.
- Indian government and world bodies including WHO completely failed to properly and timely assess the severity of the Covid-19 epidemic.

-There exist serious flaws in the pandemic policy of the government of India and there is an urgent need to address those flaws and introduce a new pandemic policy that is more humane, adaptive, and inclusive in nature.

-the epidemic highlighted the government's limited reach in successfully implementing the lockdown.

Thus, it may be inferred that India's pandemic and emergency replication tactics differ, and these differences urgently require discussion. The plan should be more compassionate so as to improve the inclusion of all members of the internal immigrant population in society, especially women and children. Additionally, it is advised that the public be consulted before introducing any law that may have an influence on the lives of the general people. Avoiding rash policy decisions that could have a significant impact on the lives of huge numbers of people is crucial. Additionally, awareness of the necessity of giving internal migration top priority in policies has to grow. There is also a need to change the negative view of internal migrants in Indian society.

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