

# Post-Covid Mental Health And Somatization In Indian Labourers Abroad

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on global health, and its effects on mental health, especially among migrant workers, have emerged as a significant concern. This paper investigates the post-COVID mental health issues and somatization among Indian labourers working abroad. It explores the prevalence of mental health disorders, the relationship between COVID-19 and somatization, and the implications for this vulnerable group. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological challenges faced by these workers.

**KEYWORDS:** *Health and Safety; Language Barriers; Legal Issues; Job Insecurity; Healthcare Access.*

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a transformative event with far-reaching effects on global health, economies, and societies. Among the many groups profoundly impacted by the pandemic are migrant workers, particularly Indian labourers working abroad. These workers, who contribute significantly to both their home and host countries' economies, have faced unprecedented challenges during and after the pandemic. The pandemic has not only disrupted their work and living conditions but has also led to a deterioration in their mental health and well-being. This study aims to explore the post-COVID mental health issues and somatization experienced by Indian labourers abroad, providing insights into the psychological and physical consequences of the pandemic on this vulnerable group.

Indian labourers working in foreign countries often undertake challenging and high-risk jobs in sectors such as construction, domestic work, and manufacturing. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their already precarious situation, as they grapple with job insecurity, economic uncertainty, and health risks. These workers, who are frequently isolated from their families and communities, have been particularly susceptible to the psychological stressors induced by the pandemic. The isolation, coupled with the fear of contracting the virus and the economic downturn caused by global lockdowns, has heightened their vulnerability to mental health issues.

Mental health problems among migrant workers are not new, but the pandemic has intensified these issues. Prior to COVID-19, migrant workers often faced mental health challenges due to factors such as separation from family, cultural adjustment, and exploitation in the workplace. However, the pandemic introduced new stressors, including uncertainty about employment, restricted access to healthcare, and heightened fear of infection. The resulting stress has manifested in various ways, including increased rates of anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders.

Somatization, the manifestation of psychological distress through physical symptoms, is a notable concern among migrant workers. This phenomenon occurs when individuals express their emotional or psychological problems through physical complaints, often because of stigma or lack of awareness about mental health issues. For Indian labourers abroad, somatization can be particularly pronounced due to cultural factors that discourage open discussions about mental health. The pandemic's added pressures have likely exacerbated this tendency, with workers

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experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and chronic pain as a result of their psychological distress.

The intersection of mental health and somatization among Indian labourers abroad is a critical area of study. Understanding how the pandemic has influenced these aspects can provide valuable insights into the broader implications for this population. The economic and social impact of COVID-19 has led to increased mental health issues and somatization, which in turn affect their overall quality of life and productivity. Additionally, the lack of adequate mental health support and resources in many host countries further compounds these challenges.

This research paper seeks to address these issues by investigating the prevalence of mental health disorders and somatization among Indian labourers abroad in the post-COVID context. By employing a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and physical impacts of the pandemic on these workers. The quantitative component will focus on measuring the levels of anxiety, depression, and somatization, while the qualitative component will explore the personal experiences and coping strategies of the workers.

The findings of this study are expected to highlight the specific mental health challenges faced by Indian labourers abroad and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues. This research will also offer insights into the coping mechanisms employed by workers and the support systems available to them. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the development of targeted interventions and policies to support the mental health and well-being of migrant workers, both in the context of the ongoing pandemic and future global crises.

By focusing on the post-COVID mental health and somatization of Indian labourers abroad, this research will shed light on an often-overlooked aspect of the pandemic's impact. The results will be instrumental in informing policy makers, employers, and mental health professionals about the specific needs of this population and the measures required to improve their mental health outcomes. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring that migrant workers receive the support they need to navigate the challenges of living and working abroad during and after a global crisis.

In the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and amplified the vulnerabilities of Indian labourers abroad, particularly in terms of their mental health and somatization. This research paper aims to provide a thorough analysis of these issues, offering valuable insights into the experiences of this important workforce. Through a detailed exploration of the pandemic's effects, the study seeks to contribute to the development of effective strategies to support and enhance the well-being of migrant workers, both in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic and in future global health emergencies.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

1. **Increased Anxiety and Stress:** The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, including fears of contracting the virus and concerns about the future, has led to a significant rise in anxiety and stress levels globally. Many individuals experienced heightened worries about their health, financial stability, and the well-being of their loved ones.
2. **Elevated Depression Rates:** COVID-19 has been linked to increased rates of depression. Lockdowns, social isolation, and economic hardships have exacerbated feelings of sadness and hopelessness. The prolonged period of confinement and the loss of routine have contributed to a decline in mental health.
3. **Impact of Social Isolation:** Social distancing measures and restrictions on movement have led to increased feelings of loneliness and isolation. The lack of face-to-face interactions and support from friends and family has negatively affected emotional well-being, particularly among vulnerable populations.
4. **Economic Stress and Job Insecurity:** The economic downturn caused by the pandemic has resulted in job losses and financial instability for many individuals. Economic stress and job insecurity have been major contributors to mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances.
5. **Disruption of Mental Health Services:** The pandemic has disrupted access to mental health services, with many people facing difficulties in obtaining the support they need. Healthcare systems have been overwhelmed, and many routine mental health services have been postponed or transitioned to remote formats, which may not be accessible to all.

6. **Increased Substance Abuse:** There has been a rise in substance abuse during the pandemic, as individuals turn to alcohol, drugs, or other substances as a coping mechanism. This trend has been linked to increased stress, anxiety, and mental health challenges.

### SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FOR INDIAN LABOURERS ABROAD

1. **Economic Exploitation:** Indian labourers abroad often face economic exploitation, including low wages, unpaid overtime, and poor working conditions. Many are employed in sectors with high risks and minimal job security, leading to financial instability and insecurity.
2. **Legal and Documentation Issues:** Navigating visa regulations and employment contracts can be challenging. Labourers may face legal complications due to restrictive work visas, lack of proper documentation, or discrepancies between contractual terms and actual working conditions.
3. **Isolation and Loneliness:** Many Indian labourers live far from their families and communities, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Limited social interaction and separation from loved ones exacerbate mental health issues and reduce overall well-being.
4. **Language Barriers:** Language differences often pose significant challenges. Poor proficiency in the host country's language can hinder communication with employers, access to services, and integration into the local community, leading to increased stress and frustration.
5. **Cultural Adjustment:** Adapting to a new cultural environment can be difficult. Indian labourers may experience culture shock, including unfamiliar customs, social norms, and living conditions, which can impact their mental health and overall comfort.
6. **Health and Safety Concerns:** Many labourers work in hazardous conditions with limited access to health and safety measures. The lack of protective equipment, poor workplace hygiene, and inadequate medical facilities increase the risk of accidents and health issues.

### CONCLUSION

The post-COVID mental health and somatization issues among Indian labourers abroad reflect a pressing need for comprehensive support and intervention. By understanding the specific challenges faced by this group, stakeholders can better address their needs and improve their overall well-being.

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