



# Impact of COVID-19 lockdown on seasonal migrant's food security in a South Indian district

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## Introduction

- More than 40 million migrant workers got stranded from March 24<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 following sudden announcement of Nationwide Covid -19 lockdown
- 90% of migrant workers lost their livelihood and 33% did not have enough money to buy food.
- Most Migrants had no financial or social security .

## Research Question

- To understand livelihood and food security status of migrants during and after lockdown in a remote village in Southern India.

## Methods :

- Study setting : A village in Vijayapura district in Karnataka state , Southern India.



- Study time : August-September 2020, when Migrants were in their home post lockdown

Study Sample :104 Migrants

- Sampling method: Initially 12 migrants who were part of an earlier study were contacted and telephonic interview was done, for subsequent recruitment Snow Ball Technique was used .

Method of data collection: Telephonic interview after taking consent to participate

- Survey instrument included socio-demographic characteristics, migration history, livelihood details, and coping measures adopted by migrants.

- USAID's HFIA's scale was used to assess food Insecurity status of migrants during lockdown (March-May 2020) and post lockdown period (June 2020 onwards) in the same interview.

- Information about their dietary patterns and changes during and post lockdown was collected

## Analysis

- Descriptive statistics used for basic analysis .
- Mc Nemer Chi-square test was applied to see the overall differences in those who experienced food insecurity conditions during and post lockdown periods.
- statistical analysis was performed using statistical package for the social sciences ( Version 22). For all tests, significant was achieved at  $p < 0.05$ . All statistical tests performed were two tailed.

## Demographic and socio-economic profile of the Migrant families

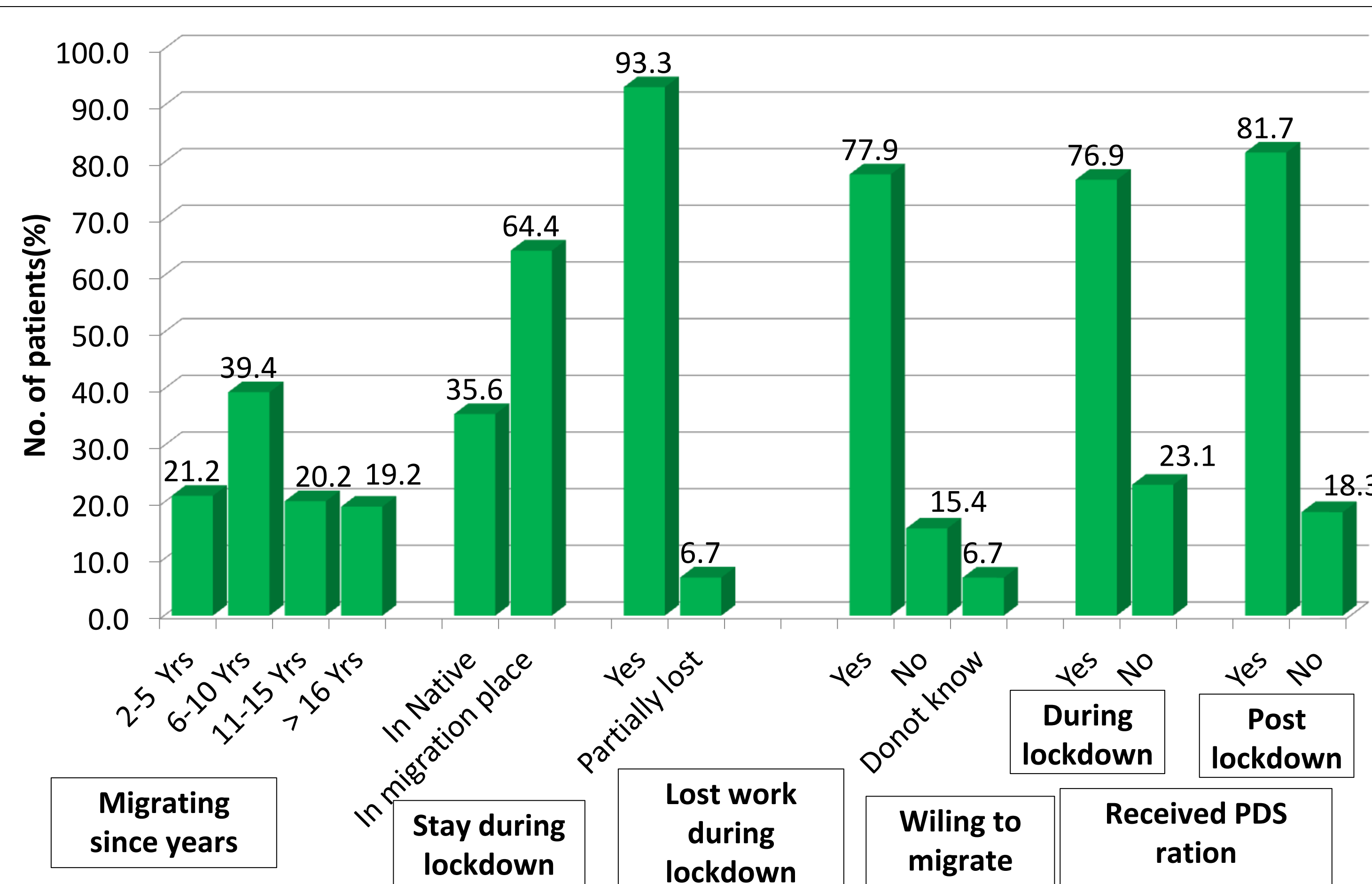
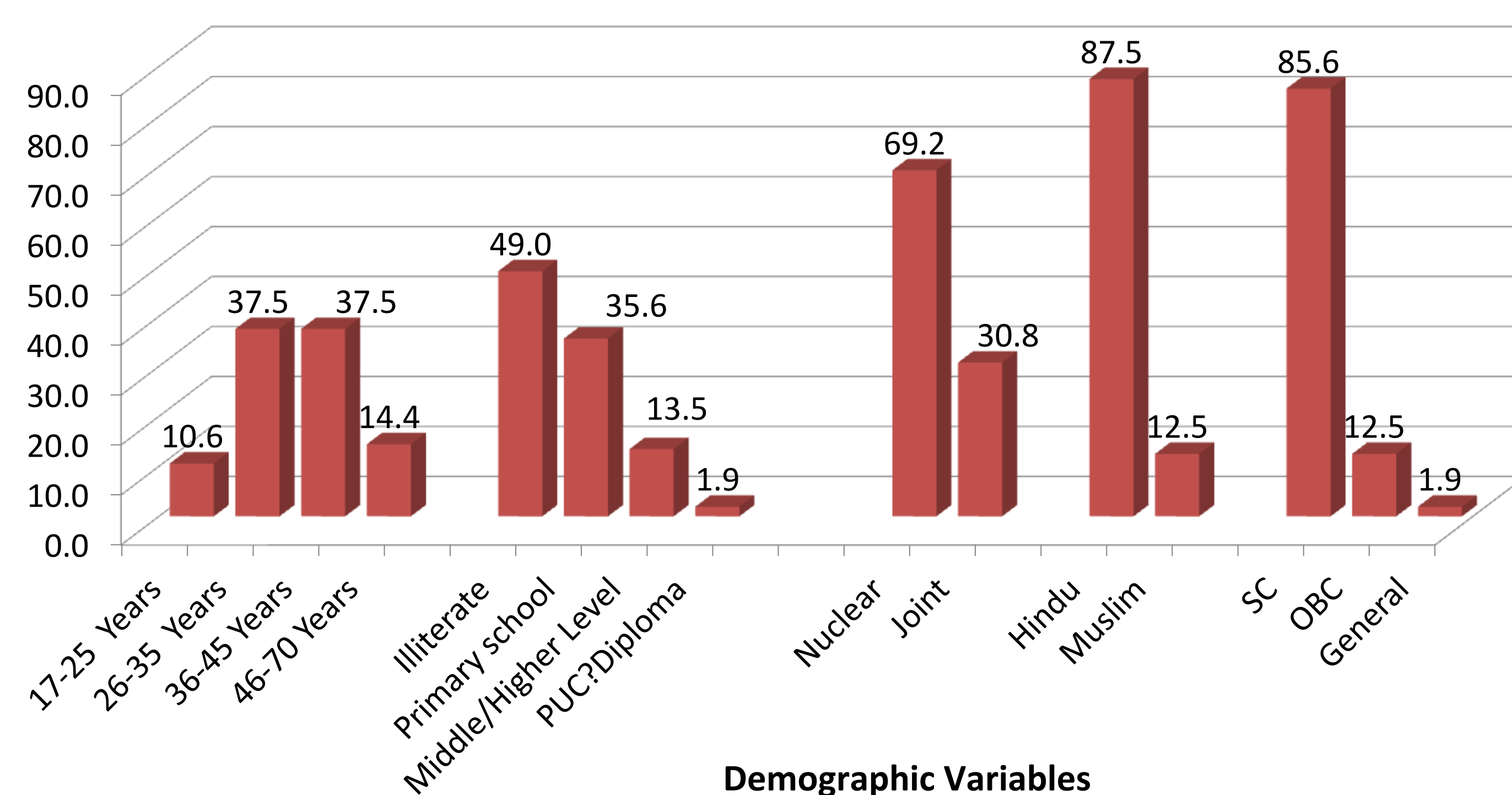


Table1: Differences in Household Food Insecurity Conditions of migrant workers during COVID-19 lock down and post lock down period 2020. (N=104)

Domains	HFIA Conditions	DURING LOCKDOWN (March - June)		POST LOCKDOWN (July - Sept)	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
Anxiety and uncertainty	Worry about Food	15 (14%)	89 (66%)	101 (97%)	3 (3%)
	Unable to eat preferred food				
Insufficient Quality	Eat just a few kinds of foods	28 (27%)	76 (73%)	103 (99%)	1 (1%)
	Eat Foods they really do not want eat				
	Eat a smaller meal				
Insufficient food intake and its physical consequences	Eat fewer meals in a day				
	No food of any kind in the household	62 (60%)	42 (40%)	103 (99%)	1 (1%)
	Go to sleep hungry				
	Go a whole day and night without eating				

## Mc Nemer's Chi square test Statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.0001$ )

Table2: Difference in Household Food Insecurity Access conditions frequency of occurrence during lock down and post lockdown period .

Domains	HFIA Conditions	During Lockdown		Post Lockdown	
		Rarely	sometimes + often	Rarely	sometimes + often
Anxiety and uncertainty	Worry about Food	58 (65%)	31 (35%)	3 (100%)	0
	Unable to eat preferred food				
Insufficient Quality	Eat just a few kinds of foods	36 (47%)	40 (53%)	1 (100%)	0
	Eat Foods they really do not want eat				
	Eat a smaller meal				
Insufficient food intake and its physical consequences	Eat fewer meals in a day				
	No food of any kind in the household	28 (67%)	14 (33%)	1 (100%)	0
	Go to sleep hungry				
	Go a whole day and night without eating				

## Mc Nemer's Chi square test Statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.0001$ )

## Results and Interpretations

- Majority(75%) were less than 50 years age belonged to disadvantaged social group & were illiterate(>50%). 93% migrated along with their spouse to work and were grouped in Unskilled labor .

- Mean duration of migration each year was 7-8 months ,with average income for that period of INR 95,000 (USD 1300), 80% migrated to same places at a distance 300-500 kms (outside state) every year.

- 65% of the participants were in their migrated work place during lockdown , 93% of them had lost their livelihood during that time and returned home after Government allowed migrants to return back .

- Majority of migrant House holds experienced the food insecurity conditions in each of the 3 domains during lockdown

- 77% received free ration under Public distribution system during lockdown. Coping mechanisms included borrowing money from friends , relatives and by advance amount from agents who coordinate between migrant workers and employer .

- 74% told they reduced fruits, snacks/ dairy products & meat, eggs both during and post lockdown period. This suggests migrants compromised their quality of diet owing to cost of these food items .

- Among those who had responded YES to experiencing food insecurity conditions in each of 3 domains, The frequency of experiencing food insecurity- sometimes to Often was significantly high during lockdown period compared to post lockdown.

## Conclusions

- In this study, majority of seasonal migrants experienced food insecurity while stuck in their migrated places during lockdown due to loss of livelihood .

- This food insecurity among migrants reduced significantly after their return home.

- Access to PDS supplies given by the Government irrespective of their official eligibility helped in alleviating the food insecurity.

- Implementation of the *One nation One PDS Card scheme* under which Public Distribution System(PDS) beneficiary can access their supply anywhere across India will help prevent severe food insecurity among vulnerable groups in future.

- An urgent policy to address financial and social security needs of migrants to alleviate their suffering during crisis periods is the need of hour.

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