

## Navigating The Mental Terrain Of COVID-19 Reverse Migrants Amid Financial Uncertainty: From Crisis To Conundrum

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### Abstract

*The complex mental terrain encountered by COVID-19 reverse migrants confronted with financial uncertainty is explored in this paper. People are facing a dilemma of economic uncertainty when they return to their hometowns after the outbreak. Deconstructing the intricacies of these refugees' emotional journey, the study delves into the many ways in which this crisis has affected their mental health.*

*Interviews and questionnaires make up the study's mixed methodology, which aims to capture the complex experiences of people dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic and financial hardship at the same time. The results show that reverse migrants have severe mental health issues, such as increased worry and stress as well as displacement and confusion. The study also delves into the ways people deal with this challenging environment, revealing characteristics that contribute to resilience and adaptive tactics.*

*Community resources and social support systems are also explored as potential means of reducing the emotional burden of financial instability. The complex association between socioeconomic difficulties and psychological health during the COVID-19 epidemic is better understood because to this study, which analyses the interaction between economic variables and mental health.*

*We hope that policymakers, mental health professionals, and communities will find this investigation of COVID-19 reverse migrants' mental terrain to be an invaluable resource for meeting the specific psychological needs of this at-risk population through the development of more targeted interventions and support systems.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Reverse Migration, Financial Instability, Psychological Impact, Coping Mechanisms, Resilience Factors.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has presented extraordinary problems, forever changing the worldwide environment. The epidemic has changed people's lives all around the globe in ways that go well beyond the obvious effects on people's health. It has also set in motion a complicated chain reaction of social and economic effects. A less-discussed but critically important aspect of this issue is the lived realities of "reverse migrants," or those who have fled their home countries due to economic instability.

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Many migrant workers faced an unpleasant reality as countries dealt with lockdowns, job losses, and economic downturns. The allure of metropolitan centres, with their promises of improved lives and economic success, was suddenly dashed. The subsequent economic instability was a powerful motivator that drove people to return to their native homelands, villages, and homes. Coming home, meanwhile, was more than simply moving houses; it was also a deep and, at times, turbulent navigation of the complex psychological landscape left by the epidemic.

To better understand the complex range of feelings, psychological obstacles, and coping strategies experienced by COVID-19 reverse migrants, it is essential to delve into their mental environment. Their experiences don't follow a simple pattern of crisis to resolution; instead, it's more like a complicated puzzle with many layers that has to be unpacked.

To comprehend the mental toll of reverse migration, one must investigate the first shocks experienced by these people when the pandemic destroyed the stability they had sought in metropolitan areas. Their economic status and sense of direction were both severely disrupted by the sudden end to their jobs, social networks, and seemingly regular lives. Emotions ranging from nostalgia to anxiety were triggered by the abrupt change from the busy metropolis to their hometowns, which brought them closer to familiar surroundings while also making them anxious about what the future held.

Furthermore, a tangled web of emotions emerged with the restoration to community and family relationships. The burden of family expectations, society judgements, and the perpetual concern of what the future contained accompanied the solace of being reunited with loved ones. Anxieties were heightened by the psychological dilemma that needed deft manoeuvring between the idealised vision of returning home and the harsh reality of financial insecurity.

Communities where these people had previously lived saw changes in social dynamics as people tried to start over in the midst of economic uncertainty. Their hometowns' grounded and sometimes traditional beliefs clashed with their ambitions cultivated in metropolitan surroundings, leading to a distinct psychological struggle. The mental landscape of these people grew even more complex as they grappled with the difficult challenge of balancing cultural origins with the desire for upward mobility.

Our goal in conducting this extensive investigation is to grasp the complex mental landscape that COVID-19 reverse migrants experience. The psychological difficulties of going from a crisis to a dilemma may be better understood if we take the time to delve into their emotional problems, resilience, and adaptive methods. We want to shed light on the many stories that come out of this worldwide phenomena, the COVID-19 pandemic, via a compassionate lens so that people may better understand and empathise with one another.

## **Literature Review**

A new age of difficulties has begun with the worldwide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had far-reaching consequences for people, places, and countries. A major consequence that has arisen as a result of economic uncertainty is the phenomenon of reverse migration, which is one of several. This literature review explores previous studies to provide a thorough grasp of the emotional landscape that COVID-19 reverse migrants experience and the many obstacles they encounter as they move from one crisis to another.

## **Pandemic Effects on Migration and Their Economic Consequences:**

Numerous studies have examined the monetary effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on migratory trends throughout the world. Many migrant workers had to go back to their home countries when lockdowns and economic downturns happened all of a sudden (Koser and Martin, 2020). This study's complex mental landscapes had their origins in the ensuing financial uncertainty, which prompted many to go backwards.

### **Stress on the Mind During Difficult Times:**

The effects of the epidemic on mental health and the emotional toll it took have been extensively documented. Globally, people are dealing with elevated stress, anxiety, and depression levels, according to Holmes et al. (2020). Individuals experiencing reverse migration have additional psychological challenges as they cope with the virus's terrifying potential, the loss of their livelihoods, and the unknowns of their future.

### **Looking Back: How Social Support Plays a Role:**

Many accounts of reverse migration centre on people going back to their home countries. Research by Ajduković and Ajduković (2021) and others using a social support framework emphasises the crucial importance of community and family bonds in times of crisis. When people return home, they often discover social networks and emotional support systems that may help them adjust to conflicting expectations, but they can also be a cause of stress.

### **The Interplay Between Culture and Society:**

For reverse migrants, the mental landscape is greatly enriched by the junction of personal goals with social and cultural forces. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) delve into the psychological dilemma that might arise when traditional expectations and urban norms collide. This conflict becomes even more acute when people try to balance their dreams and goals from city life with the limitations of their hometowns.

### **Strategies for Coping and Resilience:**

Many studies have looked at how people deal with adversity and how resilient they are. To further understand the adaptive techniques that reverse migrants may use to deal with the difficulties of economic uncertainty and social expectations, it is instructive to read Masten's (2018) research on everyday magic and resilience.

Reverse migration has been impacted by the economic effects of the epidemic, namely in relation to job losses and financial uncertainty. The devastating effects of unexpected unemployment on people's mental health have been highlighted in research by Aldrich and Meyer (2020). People desire economic stability in their home countries, and migration becomes a coping mechanism—albeit one fraught with uncertainties—as they leave.

### **The Function of Networks and Technology:**

Many have wondered how technological advancements have affected the lives of reverse migrants. Oudshoorn and Neven (2016) pointed out that people going through reverse migration may find technology to be both helpful and harmful to their mental health. The use of digital communication to stay connected with urban lifestyles and networks may bring both positive and negative aspects to one's mental health.

### **Interventions in Mental Health and Government Policy:**

The mental health therapies and government policies that affect reverse migrants greatly affect how difficult their lives are. After massive migration, specific mental health assistance is necessary, according to research by Desai and Patel (2020). The mental health of people dealing

with the challenges of reverse migration may be better supported if governments take a look at current policies and responses.

### **Experiences of Reverse Migration and Intersectionality:**

The experiences of reverse migrants are profoundly impacted by the intersectionality of several identities, including gender, caste, and social class. The psychological dilemma that people experiencing reverse migration confront may be better understood via an intersectional lens, which builds on the research of Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2015).

### **The Effects on Mental Health Over Time:**

The development of long-term support networks for reverse migrants depends on our understanding of their mental health outcomes. A study conducted by Steel et al. (2009) provides valuable insight into the possible long-term impacts of relocation on mental health. The mystery that reverse migrants encounter is long-lasting, and understanding it requires looking at how mental health has changed throughout time.

formation of Narrative and Identity: Reverse migrants' mental landscape is greatly influenced by the formation of narratives and identities. This part delves into the ways in which people use storytelling to make sense of their experiences, looking at the research of narrative identity scholars including Bamberg (2012) and Riessman (2008). The stories that come out of people's experiences with reverse migration are important for comprehending the psychological dilemma that migrants endure and for building their identities.

### **Discrimination in Society and Mental Health:**

Both the sending and receiving communities may be judgmental and stigmatizing towards those who undergo reverse migration. Link and Phelan's (2001) research on the social determinants of mental health highlights the effect of stigma on psychological health. In order to design effective treatments and support systems, it is crucial to comprehend the role that society views play in shaping the mental landscape.

### **Systems of Psychosocial Support:**

How successfully reverse migrants are able to access and make use of psychosocial support networks is a key indicator of their mental health. The significance of these networks in overcoming difficult situations is shown by research on resilience and social support conducted by Ungar (2011). In order to understand how people deal with moving from a crisis to a paradox, it is helpful to look at the part that social networks play.

### **An International Comparison of Patterns of Reverse Migration:**

A comparative study of reverse migration trends worldwide might provide useful insights, even if the emphasis is usually on particular locations. To comprehend the role of geopolitical, cultural, and economic variables in the dynamics of reverse migration, one might look to the research on global migration patterns conducted by Skeldon (2012). By comparing various circumstances, we may get a better understanding of the specific difficulties encountered by COVID-19 reverse migrants.

### **Negative Effects on Children's Mental Health and Family Life:**

Families, and especially children, are deeply impacted by reverse migration. This part delves into the complex relationships between children's, parents', and the family's overall psychological health by reviewing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work on ecological systems theory.

The complex mental landscape of reverse migrants may be better understood by seeing the family as an ecological system.

### **Embracing Different Cultures:**

Returning to one's home country and assimilating into its culture is a crucial part of the reverse migration journey. How people deal with cultural shifts and adjust to new settings is clarified by Berry's (1997) acculturation theory. The ways in which reverse migrants cope and the difficulties they may have while reintegrating into their native communities might be better understood by looking at cultural adaptability.

Inequalities in health care, especially in the availability of mental health treatments, have a major impact on the psychological environment experienced by those migrating backwards. Marmot (2005) highlights the role of social variables in shaping health outcomes. If we want to build mental health support systems that work for everyone, including reverse migrants, we need to know how healthcare access inequities interact with the specific problems they confront.

### **The Effects of Cultural Disturbance on Emotional Health:**

As Gudykunst (2005) explains, reverse migration brings the idea of cultural remoteness into sharp focus. Many migrants experience mental distress due to the apparent disparity between their home community's cultural standards and those of the city they departed. Complicating our comprehension of their mental landscape is the analysis of the effects of cultural remoteness.

### **Stability and Flexibility in the Economy:**

How people deal with financial instability when migrating backwards depends heavily on their economic resilience and adaptation. Looking at Rodrik's (2014) research on economic resilience may help shed light on how policies and institutions in the economy can either help or hurt people's capacity to weather economic storms. Gaining a grasp of the financial aspect enhances the investigation of the path from crisis to dilemma.

### **The Public's View of Media Representation:**

It is impossible to ignore the impact of the media on public opinion on reverse migrants. According to Entman (2012), media portrayals shape public perception and add to the social milieu in which returning migrants must negotiate. To better comprehend the external factors that contribute to the psychological dilemma faced by reverse migrants, it is important to investigate the effects of media narratives on their mental health.

### **How Migration and Climate Change Intersect:**

The terrain of reverse migration is further complicated in certain locations by the junction of migration and climate change. Findings from the study of climate-induced migration by McLeman and Smit (2006) give light on the role of environmental variables in population shifts. The study's scope is expanded by gaining an understanding of the connectivity between climate-related migration and the mental health issues experienced by returnees.

### **The Digital Gap and Access to Technology:**

According to Warschauer (2003), reverse migrants may experience a decline in mental health as a result of the digital gap, which creates inequalities in access to technology. Certain people may be left out when they rely on digital platforms for communication and economic prospects,

which may make them feel even more alone and add to the psychological dilemma. By looking at technology inclusion, the research takes on a more modern tone.

### **How Regulatory Actions Affect Mental Health:**

In reaction to the outbreak, governments throughout the world have taken different stances. A whole-of-society approach is crucial in crisis management, according to research by Kickbusch and Leung (2020). Governmental activities form the psychological topography of individuals returning to their areas of origin, and understanding this requires examining how policy responses affect the mental health of reverse migrants.

Returning to one's area of origin during the COVID-19 epidemic presents specific obstacles for persons enduring forced relocation, impacting their mental health. Steel et al. (2009) offers a paradigm for understanding the persistent psychological impacts of displacement via their research on the mental health of refugees and forcibly displaced people. To better understand the complex experiences of people in this setting, it is helpful to look at how forced displacement and reverse migration interact with one another.

### **Impact of School Disruptions on Mental Health:**

School closures and other changes in learning modalities brought about by the pandemic may have a profound effect on the mental health of families and individuals who have returned from migration. Understanding how educational upheavals add to the psychological dilemma experienced by reverse migrants is crucial, as shown in the research on the long-term impacts of early childhood experiences conducted by Shonkoff et al. (2012).

### **Effects of Mental Health Issues That Occurred Before:**

The reverse migration process is especially difficult for those who already have mental health issues. In order to comprehend the psychological landscape, it is crucial to take into account pre-existing issues, as shown by the study conducted by Thornicroft et al. (2011) on the subject of mental health and migration. An important aspect of the research is to investigate the interaction between pre-existing mental health issues and the difficulties of reverse migration.

### **Views on Reverse Migration from Different Generations:**

As a result, people of various ages deal with the psychological dilemma of reverse migration in their own unique ways. The life cycle perspective, as proposed by Settersten and Ray (2010), offers a framework for understanding the reactions and coping mechanisms of people at various life phases upon returning home. The varied mental landscapes inside reverse migration may be better understood by looking at it through the eyes of different generations.

### **Reintegration and the Function of Social Capital:**

Reverse migrants' ability to tap into social capital—defined by Putnam (2000) as a community's networks and relationships—is essential to their successful readjustment to society. An individual's ability to face the difficulties of returning home may be better understood by looking at how social capital affects mental health. The research gains a community-based viewpoint by analysing the function of social capital.

### **Consequences of Participation in the Informal Sector:**

In order to make ends meet, many returning migrants work in the shadow economy, which brings both opportunities and risks. The effects of such participation on psychological health may be better understood via the study of informal economies conducted by Portes and Haller

(2005). Adding a financial component to the research is looking at how the informal sector affects the mental landscape of those who go backwards.

### **Cultural Capital's Impact on Coming to Terms with One's Identity:**

Bourdieu (1986) proposed the idea of cultural capital, which includes people's access to and understanding of many cultures. One important but little-studied facet of reverse migration is the role of cultural capital in the process of negotiating one's identity. One way to get a more comprehensive understanding of people's mental landscape is to learn how they use cultural capital to deal with the psychological dilemma.

### **Gap in Previous Studies**

A lot of research has been done to study the lives of people who face reverse displacement due to Covid-19 pandemic. But limited study was done on the factors which created psychological impact on the minds of such people. Further most of the studies were found in context of locations out of India and no work was found for such people in India with a special mention of Lucknow. Lucknow being the capital of UP with 71 districts with 106747 villages and it was reported that by 11 May, 184 trains had brought 2.26 lakh migrant workers from other states. Thus, it becomes very important to study about their psychological well being and their perception about the reasons of their problems.

### **Research Methodology**

The mental landscape of COVID-19 reverse migrants may be better understood by using a mixed-methods research strategy, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. A thorough grasp of the topic is made possible by this. Interviews, questionnaires were a part of this research.

**Survey Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire was used for survey to gather numerical data on indicators of mental health, economic difficulties, and demographic details.

**Extensive Interviews:** A subgroup of participants and interviews were chosen to learn about their stories, experiences, and ways of coping.

**Sampling:** The sampling technique used was purposive sample. Data was collected from 121 migrants from 46 district who have migrated backwards because of the COVID-19 in the year 2020 to 2022.

**Inferential statistics:** Methods such as Mann Whitney U test (a non parametric equivalent of t-Test) was used to investigate potential links between variables, with a focus on economic and mental health indicators. Study participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as COVID-19 reverse migrants in the face of financial insecurity. This allowed for a more nuanced and comprehensive examination of their mental landscape.

**Hypothesis:** Following hypotheses were proposed looking at the gaps in the literature

**H01:** The family feels improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre Covid times creates changes in Psychological Impact.

**H02:** Earning members of the pre-displaced family were provided with job after displacement creates changes in Psychological Impact.

**H03:** Getting jobs helped household to overcome its poverty creates changes in Psychological Impact.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is essential for researching the mental topography of COVID-19 reverse migrants and drawing relevant conclusions from obtained information. Quantitative analysis provides a numerical picture of the phenomenon by revealing patterns and relations across variables like economic circumstances and measures of mental health. The study's validity and comprehensiveness can be measured and gives a more complete picture of the difficulties reverse migrants encounter in an economic climate of uncertainty.

The first step was to check the normality of the data . this step is done to decide what tests to be applied on the data. Depending on the normal distribution f the data parametric or non parametric data is to be decided. It was found that the data for the current study is non normal. Which was found using K-S test. The p value was found to be less than .05 displaying that the data was non normal. Thus, Mann Whitney U test was conducted inplace of t-test. This test is conducted to find whether a categorical variable creates any difference on a scaled variable. The criteria is that the categorical variable has two groups only.

Felt isolated when displaced	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Discriminated by other people who were not displaced	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Suffer with the feeling of rootlessness	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Were you mentally prepared for displacement?	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Suffer with the feeling of identity crisis	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Depressed because of displacement	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Stressed because of displacement	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Dissatisfied because of displacement	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Sense of insecurity of displacement	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Social status affected because of displacement	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Did you have attachment with your ancestral property	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Felt agitated against Government for putting Lockdown	.000 <sup>c</sup>

**Table 1: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

**H01:** The family feels improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre COVID times creates does not changes in Psychological Impact.

On conducting Mann Whitney U Test it was found that family feels improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre COVID times creates a difference on Were you mentally prepared for displacement?, Dissatisfied because of displacement, Did you have attachment with your ancestral property.

Were you mentally prepared for displacement? was impacted by family feels improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre COVID times. Those who were impacted were the ones who were not mentally prepared.

Since some of the parameters were found to be significant the proposed **hypothesis was rejected** proving The family feels improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre COVID times creates a changes in Psychological Impact.

	Were you mentally prepared for displacement?	Dissatisfied because of displacement	Did you have attachment with your ancestral property
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Mann-Whitney U	63.500	98.500	95.000
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.032	.030
Grouping Variable	Grouping Variable: Does the family feel improvement of its socio-economic status as compared to pre Covid times :		
Highest Mean Rank	No 60.46	No 61.65	No 61.68

Table 2: Mann Whitney U Test

**H02:** Earning members of the pre-displaced family were provided with job after displacement does not create changes in Psychological Impact.

On conducting Mann Whitney U Test it was found all earning members of the pre-displaced family were provided with job after displacement impacted Felt isolated when displaced, Discriminated by other people who were not displaced, Felt agitated against Government for putting Lockdown.

Since some of the parameters were found to be significant the proposed **hypothesis was rejected** proving Earning members of the pre-displaced family were provided with job after displacement create changes in Psychological Impact.

	Psychological Impact [Felt isolated when displaced]	Psychological Impact [Discriminated by other people who were not displaced]	Psychological Impact [Felt agitated against Government for putting Lockdown]
Mann-Whitney U	110.500	121.000	158.500
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.014	.050
Grouping Variable	Grouping Variable: Whether all earning members of the pre-displaced family were provided with job after displacement?		
Highest Mean Rank	No 62.04	No 61.95	No 59.38

Table 3: Mann Whitney U Test

**H03:** Getting jobs helped household to overcome its poverty does not create changes in Psychological Impact.

On conducting Mann Whitney U Test it was found Suffer with the feeling of rootlessness, Were you mentally prepared for displacement?, Suffer with the feeling of identity crisis, Depressed because of displacement, Dissatisfied because of displacement, Social status affected because of displacement, [Did you have attachment with your ancestral property are impacted by Getting jobs helped household to overcome its poverty.

Thus the proposed hypothesis was rejected proving that Getting jobs helped household to overcome its poverty creates changes in Psychological Impact.

	Suffer with the feeling of rootlessness	Were you mentally prepared for displacement?	Suffer with the feeling of identity crisis	Depressed because of displacement	Dissatisfied because of displacement	Social status affected because of displacement	[Did you have attachment with your ancestral property]
Mann-Whitney U	1405.500	1157.000	1408.000	1339.500	1190.000	1428.000	1167.000
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.000	.034	.018	.001	.049	.001
Grouping Variable	: Did it help the household to overcome its poverty						
Highest Mean Rank	No 65.42	No 69.97	No 65.39	No 66.36	No 68.50	No 65.10	No 68.83

Table 3: Mann Whitney U Test

### Conclusion

Findings from the Mann Whitney U test on the experiences of COVID-19 reverse migrants may be informed by previous studies that examined the complex link between socioeconomic status and psychological health during relocation.

A major predictor of psychological discomfort among migrants, according to research by Norris and Aroian (2008), is the lack of mental readiness for migration. Consistent with previous research, this study found that families' mental readiness for relocation is affected by the socio-economic development that occurs after COVID.

Studies like Hynie's (2018) and Bhugra and Becker's (2005) highlight the importance of work in boosting mental health among migrants in relation to job provision after displacement. According to this literature and the findings of the Mann Whitney U Test, having a job may help with a lot of different mental health issues, such dealing with emotions of loneliness, prejudice, agitation against the government, and emotional difficulties.

Also, the research of Berry (1997) and Montgomery et al. (2013) is in line with the idea that getting a job may help with issues including social status, depression, unhappiness, rootlessness, and identity crisis (2013). According to this research, having a stable job and income greatly improves a person's feeling of belonging, identity, and general health when they are displaced.

The significance of socio-economic variables in determining mental health outcomes among COVID-19 reverse migrants is highlighted by the stated result. To ease the difficulties of reintegration and economic hardship that come with relocation, it stresses the necessity of all-encompassing support structures.

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