

The Interplay of Stress, Health and Spirituality among migrant construction workers.

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Stress is a ubiquitous aspect of modern life, affecting individuals across various demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds including migrant construction workers. This paper aims to explore the complex interrelationship between stress, spirituality, and overall health among migration construction worker. The author has conducted a thorough review of the relevant literature, drawing insights from a range of scholarly sources, earlier field studies and observational research conducted by author that explore the Interplay of Stress, Health and Spirituality among migration construction workers. From the above, some of the findings are highlighted here

(i)Migrated construction workers experience numerous health problems due to their excessive working hours, deficiency of leisure time and recreational opportunities and stressors. Stressors include traumatic experiences, persistent pressures, and unfavorable occurrences, constituting a stressful life events,(ii) These stressful life are positively correlated with both physical and mental illnesses, according to a number of research. (iii) Proper rest and leisure is a pre-requisite to spirituality which in turn reduces the stress It is the responsibility of every relevant party, especially officials, engineers, along with supervisors who regularly have direct contact with workers for strict implementation of Right to rest and leisure and arrange for spiritual activities such as yoga and meditation in morning and evening to start with in the construction sites. It is also to arrange for spiritual activities such as yoga and meditation in the labor colonies. Attitudinal change of all concerned with the construction activities with spirituality is essential.

1. INTRODUCTION –

1.1 Concepts

Stress: Selye, H., (1956), Considered by many to be the father of stress research provide us this definition for Stress: “A non-specific response of the body to a demand”. In his book “The Stress of Life” published in the year 1946. A closer look at the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon reveals that the physiological stress reaction is our body's reaction to any threat, pressure, or else alteration that comes from either internal or else external sources. Stressors trigger the stress response. The stressors may be external or internal. A significant life event, physical threats, or threats to our self-image are a few examples of prevalent stressors. A fight or conflict with a friend, family member, or coworker, strict deadlines, loss of a someone or something we care for, etc. (Selye, H., 1956).

According to the author's experience on construction sites, migrant laborers face a variety of pressures because of poor working conditions, cramped housing arrangements, poor financial conditions, lack of rest, etc. These harsh realities can make it extremely difficult for workers to find time for personal activities, recreation, and rest.

Spirituality: The definition of the health provided by WHO (World Health Organization) in the year 1948 constitution is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". The WHO defines three aspects of well-being: mental, social, along with physical. One of these aspects is spiritual health. (Bhatnagar A.,2020).

Spirituality involves exploring universal themes that involve love, altruism, life after death, wisdom, compassion, as well as truth, with the understanding that some people, for example, saints or enlightened individuals, have reached along with displayed greater levels of development than the average person. Spiritually inclined persons frequently find that aspiring to manifest the attributes of these inspirational figures becomes a substantial aspect of their life's journey. (Spencer, M., 2012)

A correlation with transcendent or else sacred that gives one a strong sense of identity or else direction and not only has a significant impact on one's attitudes, emotions, beliefs, as well as behavior but is also essential to one's sense of meaning and purpose in the life, is a broad definition of spirituality. This framework gives rise to the notion of spiritual well-being. (Siddall, P. J., Lovell, M., & MacLeod, R. ,2015)

A God-centered worldview gradually gave way to a human-centered one and a humanistic style of living with the emergence of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century. Humanism gained prominence in the 20th century as a consequence of the post-World War II reconstruction of global society. In the 1960s, as secularism emerged as a lifestyle devoid of the God, sociologists forecasted the imminent decline of religion, anticipating it would become a mere historical footnote. As Green movements gained popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, individuals started to turn to spirituality and a return to nature. With a global knowledge of human connection to the divine and communalism, as well as a recognition of our interdependence with the ecology, a holistic spirituality has arisen in the twenty-first century. Spirituality is a condition of connectivity with the Other — whether divine, self, human, nature, or any combination — that nurtures the soul (the combination of mind, will, along with emotions), leading to a sense of security and a meaningful purpose in life. (Rosado, C. ,2000)

Migrant Construction Workers: According to the 1979 Inter State Migration Act and the “Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Act”, a migrant worker is someone who works in a facility and who: (i) was employed in one State by the employer directly or indirectly through a contractor “for work in a facility of that kind in another State; or else (ii) has relocated on an individual basis from one State to another (thus the destination State) and obtained employment

there under a contract or else other arrangement for this employment, receiving salaries that may occasionally be announced by the Central Government”. (OSH code ,2020).Official Data about Migrant Construction Workers: In India, there were 454million migrants. According to a 2011 survey, there were roughly 50million migrant construction workers among 454million. (“Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2017”) And the survey for 2021is under way.On August 26, 2021, “the Indian government launched the e-Shram portal in an effort to build a nationwide database of the unorganized workers”. As of January 28, 2025, 305.83million people were registered on the portal, that include 27.60million construction workers. There are no specific dates available for migrant construction workers; only state-level data is provided. (E-Shram , Govt of India ,2023)

Stressful Life Events: Distinct, time-bound incidents with a definite beginning and end often signal major shifts in one's life, but can also be unpleasant, abnormal, and/or out of one's control. Stressful life events have a major adverse influence on one's physical and mental health. (Carlson, D,2014). Migrant Construction workers experience stressful life events (Stressors) in their life as experienced by Author in his long career

Right to Rest and Leisure: Article 24 of UDHR (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”) states, ‘Everyone has the right to rest, leisure including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay’. (UDHR ,1948) According to Article 43 of the Indian Constitution, the State shall endeavor to assure that every worker, whether in agriculture, industry, or another sector, receives a living wage, working conditions which assure a respectable standard of living, capability to fully “enjoy leisure time, along with social, cultural opportunities by appropriate legislation, economic organization, or else other means”. (Constitution of India,1950)

1.2 Need for the study:

Throughout his lengthy career, the author has worked with migrant construction workers and has seen first-hand the many issues they encounter, including ongoing Health and Rest and Leisure. Consequently, he was compelled to meticulously investigate their plight after retiring and doing his doctoral studies on the hardships encountered through migrant construction workers. Throughout the process of finding solution to their problem, Author reviewed spirituality and Stress and this article is one step forward in that direction.It is believed that a methodical sociological investigation is essential for the situation to explore the Interplay (have an effect on each other) of Stress, Health and Spirituality and its relation to Rest and Leisure among migration construction workers.

1.3. Aim:

This “paper aims to explore the complex interplay (have an effect on each other) between stress, spirituality, and overall health” and its relation with Rest and Leisure among migration construction worker and bring to the consideration of policymakers. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this complex issue and weaving them into a cohesive and well-supported finding out come.

2.0 METHODOLOGY:

The author has thoroughly reviewed the pertinent literature, incorporating findings from a variety of academic sources, past field research, and author observational studies that examine the relationship among stress, health, along with spirituality among migration construction workers. He further reviewed effect of rest, leisure and sleep on health and stress.

3.0 FINDINGS.

3.1 Review of Literature -Earlier studies

The research investigation highlights the significant worry that numerous migrant workers

have expressed regarding their extremely long working hours and the leisure time deficiency along with recreational opportunities. Standardized work schedules and regular breaks are absent, resulting in migrant workers often being compelled to endure extended periods without respite, adversely affecting their health. (John Jacob et al. ,2020)

All the males except few took the Gutka (a type of tobacco) which they chewed and felt enjoyed. However, for females, even the minimum leisure activities are absent as they do not get time for leisure. Before going to work they prepare the food and after returning from work again they prepare the food at night. They reported that after doing this much of the work they get tired and immediately go to sleep. (Nagla, M. ,2011)).

The primary attraction for construction sector is progress over time. No Migration Construction Workers ever received compensation for a day of relaxation. Over time, the worker's health is harmed and major physical and emotional issues arise from not getting sufficient rest on the seventh day of the week. (Akram M. ,2014)

For individuals, the leisure of migrants signifies Physical health, Psychological well-being, Restoration from employment, Emotions Identity, Reputation, establishing contacts and networks inside mainstream culture, among various minorities, and within one's own group, Inclusion, Cognitive/experiential function and Risks arising from unlawful recreational activities (Anna Horolets,2012),

Through a number of studies, Sandberg brought attention to the issue of migrant workers' poor sleep quality. In 2014, he discovered a negative correlation between hours slept and poor sleep quality and a positive and substantial correlation with the number of night awakenings along with the length of time falling asleep. Finally, he stated in 2016 that extended work hours can have an impact on the quality of sleep. (sandberg et.al , 2016)

In order to stay free from mental sickness and disease, study participants also said that having free time to go out for entertainment, relax and spend time with friends and family was crucial. Their lives were constantly stressful and repetitive because of their long workdays and lack of leisure. (Devkota et al., 2020)

Lack of sleep is also influenced by factors that include transportation, the distance between home and place of employment, the absence of proper bathrooms, and living arrangements when multiple employees share a room. “Notion of feeling fatigue because of lack of sleep, as well as resulting in workplace in injuries. The sense of worry and anxiety related to income, debt uncertainties of work that is frequently voiced by participants, safety, sharing the difficulties to the health”, along with well-being of the workers. (Dutta, M. J. (2017).

Abbasi in his field study discovered that Negative life events had a positive correlation with stress, anxiety as well as depression. Additionally, there was a negative correlation among spiritual health, depression and negative life experiences. Association between adverse life experiences and psychological discomfort was also moderated by spiritual wellness. (Abbasi, M. (2019)).

According to Lantz et al.'s study, the findings provide credence to the theory that socioeconomic disparities in health are caused in a variety of ways, including varying exposure to stress and adverse life events. (Lantz, P. M. et al , 2005).

In their study, Agarwal, S., & Kumar, N. discovered that young, female adults who were spiritual also had decreased levels of stress, anxiety, and sadness. However, young male adults' levels of stress, anxiety, as well as depression had been unaffected by their level of spirituality. Agarwal, S., & Kumar, N. (2020)

According to Najafi et al.'s research, spiritual well-being significantly influences one's ability to

deal with illness and recover from it. Spiritual health has a significant influence on mental health markers. Chronic patients' mental health issues can be less complicated by recognizing their spiritual requirements and utilizing appropriate care techniques. (Najafi, et al., 2022).

Smith et al. found that there was no significant relationship among positive religiousness and depressed symptoms, suggesting that higher levels of religiousness are connected with fewer symptoms. The results were not affected by demographic factors that included gender, age, or ethnicity; however, research including individuals “experiencing stress from recent life events showed a greater correlation between religiousness as well as depression. (Smith, T. B., McCullough, M. E., & Poll, J., 2003”).

McKnight in his interviews with contented people has revealed the different facets of spirituality like enthusiasm about life, a distinct purpose that infuses all of their “daily activities, acceptance of self along with others, lives, living gracefully, orientation towards giving, away from taking, optimism, peacefulness, routinely demonstrated courage (McKnight, R., 1984)

According to Rakhshani et al., there was a strong and inverse connection among spiritual health and stress, anxiety, and emotional well-being. Additionally, a robust and favourable association between spiritual health along with quality of life” (QoL) was discovered.

The investigation’s findings showed a strong correlation between life satisfaction and spiritual health, indicating that therapies that promote spiritual health may improve the QoL for working women. This implies that improving the psychological state of working women might be achievable by comprehending the variables affecting mental health and the moderating influence of spiritual health. (Rakhshani, et al., 2024)

The key finding of the study of Jatana, R., & Nahar, is that the increase in spirituality is inversely related to stress. In other words, spirituality safeguards from the adverse effects of stress. We inquired the respondents about the various stress relieving aids used by them for getting rid of the stress. All had similar ways to reduce stress. They mentioned they often watch movies, listen to music, pray to God use social media tools, freak out with friends, eat fast food, practise hard workouts. (Jatana, R., & Nahar, M. M., 2020)

The paper touches on the point that maintaining spiritual advancement is just as vital as assuring constant material progress, according to Khanna, A., & Kamboj, J. In addition to allowing one to experience perpetual true peace, true love, true happiness, long-lasting wealth, health, along with prosperity, it sets one free from grief, anxiety, illness, pain, depression, fear, misery, insecurity, disease, as well as phobias. It enhances the human mind's capacity to function more effectively in every way. A review of previous investigations on related titles is presented in this investigation, along with a shared conclusion for all of them. (Khanna, A., & Kamboj, J., 2016)

Chronic stress draws individuals down year after year, day after day. Lives, minds, and bodies are destroyed by chronic stress. Through long-term attrition, it causes havoc. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in a despised job or career. There are other ways to become spiritual, that includes practicing yoga, listening to religious music, or else sharing the problems with others. Yoga improves respiratory health, boosts muscular strength and flexibility, and more. In addition, it improves sleep patterns, lowers stress, anxiety, depression, along with chronic pain, and improves general wellbeing and work-life balance. (Yadav, R., & Khanna, A., 2014)

3.2 Findings -Observational Research.

This observational (Covert and naturalist) investigation has been conducted by the author at Labour Chowk, Greater Noida, UP as a preliminary study to his PhD and following are the some of the observations related to Right to rest and Leisure.

The author never witnessed any responsibility from either party or a job giver requesting the chosen laborer's identity. No documentation of laborers or job givers. Regarding working hours, working conditions, accidents, safety precautions, human treatment, rest and leisure, and payment transactions, the entire day's work execution is entirely up to the employer and the fate of the employees. Authors observed that some people wait till 1400 hours and even up to 1600 hours and are ready to work late night.

They could receive a day, two days, or even seven days. In addition to having to provide for the family residing with them, some of them also have to transfer money to families in their villages, making their lives extremely challenging. They are experiencing stress and poor health as a consequence of their financial difficulties. As a result, they are prepared to operate without break or else rest.

Additionally, the author travelled to their villages, Aiccher, Barondi, and Baronda. They reside in extremely congested as well as unhygienic conditions. There are seven rooms in an incomplete house, and five people are staying in one room. A single, shared water (tap) facility for the entire building

Some workers want to work and eat, but they are willing to labor for any pay and for any amount of hours. Due to poor ventilation, (the fan is not working in spite of complaints) he could not sleep last night and it has been repeated many times. In some cases, because of broken sewage line, he could not get proper sleep at night. Some complained that contractors picked them up at 11 am and worked up until 9 pm without any break feeling fatigued and sleepy They are more worried about their families; debt children they don't get sleep.

In totality, they lead a very difficult life where in food, money takes lead over good sleep, rest and leisure thereby stress and health.

4.0 DISCUSSION

In author's experience, Migrant Construction workers face Chronic stress and spirituality can be one of the solutions to improve and maintaining their good health.

1. The Honourable Supreme Court had broadened the ambit of Article 21's 'right to life and personal liberty' by establishing the right to sound sleep as a fundamental right. A study published in the American Chemical Society's Journal of Proteome Research indicated deprivation of sleep leads to a reduction in the levels of protective proteins in the brain, resulting in neuronal death. Insufficient sleep adversely influences mood, significantly damages health of the brain, as well as enhances the digestive disorders threat along with neuropsychiatric difficulties. The fundamental nature of the right to sleep is elucidated in Article 21. The supreme legal system of dynamic India is always developing, introducing novel provisions for the welfare of the country and its population, in response to the shifting demands to defend and preserve their rights. (right to sleep, 2023)

Research indicates that migrant workers in the construction industry often face significant challenges in achieving adequate rest and leisure time. These challenges can be attributed to demanding nature of their work, contractual nature of their employment, along with often face issues such as limited healthcare access, piecemeal wages, only few educational opportunities, as well as unsafe or else unsanitary living, working circumstances. The harsh realities can make it extremely difficult for workers to find time for personal activities, recreation, and rest. Migrant Construction workers undergo stressful life events (Stressors) in their lives including inadequate rest, leisure and sleep affecting mental and physical health as experienced by Author in his long career. Traumatic events, ongoing demands, and

adverse events are examples of stressors that make up stressful life events. Several investigations have found a favorable correlation among these hectic lives and mental and physical disorders. Migrant construction workers' physical and mental health can be significantly impacted by pressures, that can result in a number of detrimental health outcomes. However, existing research has highlighted the potential role of spirituality in coping with stress among this population.

During the process of finding solution to their problem, Author reviewed spirituality and Stress and this article is one step forward in that direction. Due to their long workdays, lack of free time and recreational possibilities, stress, and limited access to relaxation and leisure, migrant construction workers face a number of health issues. They also suffer from a lack of sleep.

Addressing the unique difficulties faced by migrant construction workers needs a comprehensive, holistic approach that considers the interplay of stress, health, and spirituality.

Stressors trigger the stress response. Physical threats, threats to our self-esteem, and significant “stressful life events are a few examples of common stressors. Stressful life events have a major adverse influence on one's physical and mental health. Migrant workers have expressed regarding their excessive working hours and the deficiency of leisure time as well as recreational opportunities”. Worker's health is harmed and major physical and emotional issues arise from not getting sufficient rest on the seventh day of the week. Long work hours have been found to have an impact on the quality of sleep. Their lives were constantly stressful and repetitive due to their long workdays and lack of leisure. Stressful life events were positively correlated with stress, anxiety and depression. One of the numerous ways that socioeconomic disparities in health are created is through varying exposure to stress and adverse life experiences.

A sense of meaning, belonging, and fortitude that can help lessen the detrimental effects of stress on one's health can be found in spirituality. A sense of purpose, belonging, and fortitude that can help lessen the detrimental effects of stress on one's health can be found in spirituality. The relationship among migrant construction workers' stress, health, and spirituality is a complicated and multifaceted issue. Given the significant challenges faced by migrant construction workers, many individuals in this population may turn to spiritual practices and beliefs as a means of coping with the stresses of their work and daily life.

Investigative universal themes that include “ love, selflessness, compassion, wisdom, life beyond death, as well as “truth while acknowledging that certain people, for example saints or else enlightened individuals, have attained and displayed higher degrees of development than the average person is essence of spirituality”. Additionally, there was a negative correlation among spiritual health and depression and unfavorable life experiences. The association between adverse life experiences and psychological discomfort was also moderated by spiritual health, which has a major impact on how well people deal with sickness and recover from it. Spiritual health has a significant influence on mental health indicators. Chronic patients can have fewer problems from mental diseases if their spiritual needs are recognized and adequate care is provided. There was no discernible relationship between positive religiousness and depressed symptoms, suggesting that higher levels of religiosity are connected with fewer symptoms. A crucial and inverse relationship was found among stress and spiritual health, anxiety along with spiritual health, depression and spiritual health, and contented people's enthusiasm for life, a clear sense of purpose that permeates their daily activities, acceptance of themselves and others, lives lived gracefully, orientation towards giving in contrast to from taking, optimism, peacefulness, and regularly displayed courage. Additionally, a robust and favorable association between spiritual well-being and QoL was discovered. “Demonstrated a clear link between spiritual health along with life satisfaction, implying working women’s Quality of life might be raised by treatments which support spiritual health. Established a clear link among spiritual health and life satisfaction, suggesting that working women’s Quality of life may be elevated by treatments which support spiritual health.

Sustaining spiritual development is equally vital. It allows one to experience perpetual true peace, true happiness, true love, and long-lasting health, wealth, and prosperity”. It also releases person from grief, pain, disease, illness, depression, fear, suffering, anxiety, misery, insecurity, as well as phobias. A study revealed connection between spirituality and stress. The findings indicate that a spiritual person is one who always looks for pertinent solutions to problems and strategies to manage stress. However, spirituality, which in turn lowers stress, requires adequate rest and leisure.

5.CONCLUSION

Some key recommendations for supporting the well-being of this population include: Migrant Construction Worker Wellness Advocacy for Migrant Construction Worker Rights Longitudinal Impacts of Stress on Migrant Construction Workers.

Starting with the construction sites, it is the responsibility of all relevant parties, particularly engineers, officials, and supervisors who frequently interact directly with workers, to strictly enforce the right to rest and leisure and set up spiritual activities that include yoga, meditation in the morning as well as evening. In labor colonies, it is also to organize spiritual pursuits that include yoga and meditation. It is imperative that everyone involved in spiritual construction efforts modify their mindset. The expenditure required for providing the infrastructure to have rest and Leisure should be incorporated in the bid documents. During Covid times, short meetings called Tool Box Talk (TBT) were arranged with all the workers in construction sites before the start up of work regarding guidelines to be followed etc. Similar arrangement can be made on daily basis for spiritual activities.

Author has suggested certain steps such as (i)Attitudinal change of all concerned with the construction activities is crucial. (ii)The expenditure required for providing the proper rest and leisure for migrant workers should be incorporated in the bid documents so that bidders to consider it before quoting for the contract.

NGO and worker advocacy, as well as government initiatives, can play a crucial role in ensuring the rights and well-being of migrant construction workers.

By prioritizing the well-being of this vulnerable population, we can work towards a more equitable along with just society which values the dignity and rights of all workers, instead of their migratory status.

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