Covid-19 and Exodus of Migrants: Inference from Housing Prices in Delhi-NCR

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ABSTRACT:
The nation-wide lockdown to address the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in loss of job and income for a large section of working population in India. The problem became severe for the migrants who work in the urban informal economy. Among the various factors, the severity of their problem could be due to exorbitant housing prices in the cities. Against this backdrop the present study intended to explore the housing prices in Delhi-NCR, the home to millions of informal migrants, and to infer about its implications for the latter. The study finds that in recent years, apart from exorbitant rise, the housing prices in Delhi-NCR have been inequitable for various income groups. It might have resulted in high rental cost and unhealthy living for the informal migrants. As result, in the face of loss of employment and income, they might have thought it wise to return to their villages by any means.

KEY WORDS: Migrants, Informal, Prices, Housing, Cities

Introduction
The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented economic crisis for the entire world. Obviously, India is no exception to it. The economic crisis has emerged from the efforts to address the health crisis. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the Covid-19 crisis as a global health emergency and on March 11, 2020, it declared the same as pandemic. Following which, in order control the spread of infection in the country, the Government of India announced nation-wide lockdown on 24th of March 2020 and it continued in phases till 30th of May 2020. All the economic activities were put to a standstill within four hours of announcement. The lockdown led to a huge economic crisis for India. From wide spread hunger, unemployment to mass exodus of migrants from urban city centres, especially the metro cities. The crises in the economy have been wide ranging and devastating. Among the various associated economic crises the crises of migrants are the foremost. Extrapolating 2011 census, experts believe that there are around 420 million internal migrant in India. And as per UN