



SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF MIGRANT WORKERS TO KERALA: A CASE EXPERIENCE FROM PALA MUNICIPALITY

Jomy Cyriac

PhD Scholar, Department of Economics Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

Anees Rehman A

PhD Scholar, Department of Economics Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

Abstract

Kerala is known as god's own country. There are a lot of labourers migrated to the state Kerala especially from the states West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Tamil Nadu etc. There are around 2.5 million internal migrants in Kerala according to 2015 study conducted by the Gulati institute of finance and taxation. Among them, more than 1 million are Bengalis. Every year, the migrant worker population in Kerala increase by 2.35 lakh people. They are often ignored in comparison and suffer from comparatively poor living conditions. The main focus of the paper is to analyse the socio- economic conditions of the migrant workers in Kerala from different states of India. The data were collected randomly from 50 migrant workers from Pala Municipality. The simple percentage method was used for the analysis of the data. The results of the study concluded that all these socio- economic characters of the migrant workers showed that, they were more satisfied in the sense of earnings when compared to their native state. Even though, the working condition is not adequate but the wage is better. It is evident from this study that, there standard of living, status and their life profile have changed significantly.

Keywords: Socio-economic condition, Labour migration, push and pull factors

INTRODUCTION

Kerala is known as god's own country. There are a lot of labourers migrated to the state Kerala especially from the states West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Tamil Nadu etc.

There are around 2.5 million internal migrants in Kerala according to 2015 study conducted by the Gulati institute of finance and taxation. Among them, more than 1 million are Bengalis. Every year, the migrant worker population in Kerala increase by 2.35 lakh people. They are often ignored in comparison and suffer from comparatively poor living conditions.

Migrant labourers are mainly employed in construction activities, hotel, tea and coffee plantations etc. Without the help of migrant workers especially Bengalis, no activity hasn't done nowadays in Kerala. During early period, the migrants were mainly from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. But now the situation has changed. The state's unemployment rate is 12.5% against the all-India level of 5%, making it the third highest in the country after Sikkim and Tripura as per Economic Review 2016.

Economic review 2016 goes on to state that the unemployment rate among the youth is high in Kerala with 21.7%. A lot of Keralites working in the Gulf countries. In 2016, they numbered more than 2.5 million. Despite of the alarming rate of unemployment in Kerala, it is a resort for a large number of workers from the outside states. There are both economic and social imbalances among states in India and this leads to internal migration in general. High literacy rates, better education and lack of professional and skilled labour outside India. This trend then led to a decline in the availability of workforce in Kerala especially in unskilled jobs.

Kerala has the lowest population growth rate in the country and is say to become the state with zero population growth or even with a negative growth rate. According to 2015 study conducted by Mr. M.P Joseph et al. on the behalf of the Gulati institute of finance and taxation for the department of labour and skills of government of Kerala, there are over 25 lakh domestic migrant labourers in Kerala. The number of Bengali workers in Kerala was almost one tenth of that of the local population which was about 33 million in 2011.

They aren't just Bengalis. Assamese, Biharis, Nepali, Bangladeshi migrants can be seen working here in large number, collectively we call them **"Bengalis"**. They are many push and pull factors attracting migrants to Kerala. Migrant labourers are given comparatively higher wages. But their social and economic status is low.

There are several factors led to the labour migration from different states in to Kerala, the factors can be distinguished as push and pull factors

PUSH FACTORS

Migration has been a livelihood strategy for millions of rural poor in India for decades.

Low wages, limited and irregular employment opportunities, failed crops, family debts and droughts have been some of the major reasons that have pushed many people to leave their homes in search of jobs in Kerala too.

Labourers from Tamil Nadu have been lamenting about the lack of rains in their native place due to which agriculture is in crisis.

Workers from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and those from northern Karnataka were severely hit by drought.

The major source areas from where workers from come to Kerala are known for floods, cyclones as well as drought.

In addition to these typical reasons, several workers from the eastern and north-eastern states of India have cited have political instability, caste oppressions and communal violence in their native places as reasons for migration.

The enforcement of foreigners' act by the current government in Assam has accentuated the movement of undocumented migrants from Bangladesh in Assam to Kerala.

PULL FACTORS

Kerala offers the best wage rates in country in unorganised sector-almost double the national average in many categories.

In the absence of the availability of native labour due to the demographic advancement and resultant changes in the age structure of the local population, the state is almost completely dependent, also serve as additional pull factors.

The Muslim and Christian migrants feel quite comfortable in the state compared to other parts of India which is a significant on migrant labour.

The high wage rates and the sustainable job opportunities have made Kerala one of the most sought-after destinations in the country. Political stability, the comparatively peaceful social environment, and the relatively less discriminatory treatment meted out to migrants compared to many other potential destinations

reason for Kerala being chosen as their work destination. Hindi and Odiya services are offered for the Christian migrants in select areas in Kerala, and Muslim labourers tend to live in areas with significant presence of native Muslim community.

Some of the migrants who have come to Kerala with their families cited the availability of better educational and health facilities in Kerala as an additional impetus for sticking on here.

Some of the longest migration corridors in India have evolved during the past two decades, connecting Kerala with Assam, U.P, and West Bengal. Irrespective of the origin, the majority of the migrant workers appear to be from socially and educationally disadvantaged poor agrarian communities.

Kerala is one of the very few Indian states where the overall government response to migration has been positive and accommodative.

TRENDS IN LABOUR MIGRATION TO KERALA

<i>STATE</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE SHARE</i>
Uttar Pradesh	14.83
Assam	17.28
West Bengal	20
Bihar	18.1
Orissa	6.67
Others	23.13

(Source-: Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation)

POPULATION OF MIGRANT LABOURS- DISTRICT WISE

<i>DISTRICT</i>	<i>POPULATION</i>
Ernakulum	>800,000
Trivandrum	>750,000
Kozhikode	>400,000
Palakkad	>400,000
Thrissur	>400,000
Kannur	>250,000
Kollam	>250,000
Others	>150,000
Total	>4,000,000

(Source- Source: CDS Survey 2016)

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to analyse the socio-economic status of migrant labourers in Pala Municipality. It gives a real picture of the socio-economic status of migrant labourers

The study has used both the primary and secondary data for the analysis. The primary data were collected from 50 migrant workers in Pala Municipality (wards XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII) Kottayam district.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of random sampling was used for the selection of sample workers. Both the descriptive and the analytical applications were adopted. The tool used for the analysis was simple percentage method. The sources of secondary data were the studies conducted by CDS survey and the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation carried out in 2016. The 50 migrant labours were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This segment of the paper aims at evaluation of the socio-economic status of migrant workers in Pala Municipality. The primary data collected are analysed and presented here in order to arrive at valid conclusion.

SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The socio - economic background of the migrant workers deal with the variables such as wages, educational status, monthly expenditure of the workers, monthly savings,

<i>DAILY WAGES</i>	<i>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Up To Rs.300	6	12
300-400	12	24
400-500	14	28
Above 500	18	36
Total	50	100

Source: primary data

From the table it is clear that 36% of the migrant workers is earning above Rs.500 per day. It is evident that vast majority of them working in construction sector. Between 400-500 constituting 28% of the labours working in hotels, shops.

<i>MONTHLY EXPENDITURE</i>	<i>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Up To 1000	31	62
1000-2000	14	28
2000-3000	4	8
Above 3000	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The table depicts 62% of migrant labourers are spending up to Rs.1000 per month. They have more saving habit. Only one migrant worker is spending beyond Rs.3000 per month. They have spent mostly on food items followed by transportation, gadgets and others.

<i>MONTHLY SAVING</i>	<i>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</i>
Up To 1000	1
1000-2000	4
2000-3000	14
Above 3000	31
Total	50

Source: Primary Data

The table presents the fact that 31 out of 50 migrant labourers are saving above Rs.3000 per month. They have better saving habit. 4 migrant labourers are saving between Rs.1000 to Rs.2000

<i>EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION</i>	<i>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
L.P	15	30
U.P.	25	50
High School	8	16
Above High School	2	4
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The table depicts that majority of the migrant labourers are below matriculation. Number of migrant labourers passed high school is only 8 constituting only 16%. Majority of the migrant labourers are school dropout.

REASONS FOR LABOUR MIGRATION

<i>REASONS FOR MIGRATION</i>	<i>NO.OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Higher Wage	30	60
Family Problems	6	12
Poverty	12	24
Other Reason	2	4
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The real reason or motive of the migration of the outside state workers is mainly due to higher wages prevailed in Kerala. From the table it is clear that higher wage constituting 60% with 30 numbers of respondents. Family problems and poverty constituting 12% and 24% respectively.

STATE OR PLACES OF THE MIGRANT LABOURS

<i>STATES/PLACES</i>	<i>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Assam	3	6
Bangladesh	4	8
Bihar	5	10
Jharkhand	2	4
Karnataka	3	6
Orissa	1	2
Tamil Nadu	7	14
West Bengal	25	50
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Vast majority of the migrant labourers belong to West Bengal constituting 50%. Second majority belongs to Tamil Nadu constituting 14%. Migrant labourers from Orissa, Karnataka and Jharkhand are low. Migrant labourers from Bangladesh constituting 8%. Migrants from Bihar is 5 constituting 10%. It is clear that migrant labourers from the west Bengal forms the majority of the migrant labourers in recent time.

SATISFACTION LEVEL OF THE MIGRANT WORKERS

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Fully satisfied	2	4
Satisfied	16	32
Moderate	20	40
Not satisfied	12	24
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

From the table it is clear that only 2 numbers of respondents are fully satisfied. 32 % of the migrant labourers are satisfied. Satisfactory category forms the majority with 40%. It is very relevant that 24% of the migrant labourers are not satisfied.

All these socio- economic characters of the migrant workers showed that, they were more satisfied in the sense of earnings when compared to their native state. Even though, the working condition is not adequate but the wage is better. It is evident from this study that, there standard of living, status and their life profile have changed significantly.

CONCLUSION

Migration is an important process all over the world. In Kerala, it is very significant. A lot of labourers are being migrated to Kerala from the states west Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, U.P etc. The main reason for the migration is the higher wage that is being offered in Kerala. There are so many Keralites migrated to foreign countries especially Gulf countries. On the other hand, Kerala is the destination place for the outside state employees. This is the reason why the Kerala is described as the “**Modern Gulf**”. The status and living condition of the migrant labourers is matter of much significant. Despite of the higher wage, they are facing so many problems in our locality. The most important problem is the isolation from the local people.

References

- Bai, M. M. (2008). *Kerala economy: Slumber to performance*.
- Commission, I. P. (2008). *Kerala development report*. Academic Foundation.
- Kurian, V. M., & John, R. (2014). *Kerala economy and its emerging issues*.
- Prakash, B. A., & Alwin, J. (2018). *Kerala's economic development: Emerging issues and challenges*. SAGE Publishing India.
- Sthanumoorthy, R. (2007). *Kerala economy: Achievements and challenges*.