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Migration to Kerala: A Study on the Socio-Economic Conditions of In-Migrant Construction Workers.

KEY WORDS: Interstate migration, push and pull factors, socio-economic condition.

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a process by which people move from their state of origin to another state, within the boundaries of India, in search of jobs which give them high wages, a better quality of life, better facilities & other push & pull factors that contribute to the reasons of their migration. It is evident from the studies that the majority of the migrant workers are engaged in construction activities.

Due to the large influx of migrants to Kerala, they are living and working under vulnerable conditions. To curb this situation an intervention is necessary. This paper highlight the socioeconomic issues of interstate migrants are working in construction fields, push and pull factors that are responsible for migration.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a complex phenomenon and closely related to economic and social factors as well as economic development. The studies on migration argue that migration is by and large closely linked with two basic arguments, that is, people are compelled to migrate due to development - driven factors and/or distress driven factors. Otherwise, on the one hand, migration of people is mainly motivated by better employment opportunities, higher wages, good quality education, and health conditions and better living conditions at destinations. On the other hand, it is compelled by push or distress factors at homes such as lack of employment, low wage rates, agricultural failure debt, drought and natural calamities (Srivastava, 2003; Lee, 1969).

It has been pointed out that large scale out-migration, especially of unskilled construction workers from Kerala to Middle East countries contributed to a severe shortage of construction workers in Kerala and this pushed up the wages in the local labour market (Prakash, 1998). The state located in the south-western tip of the Indian peninsula has been witnessing a large inflow of migrant laborers from the state of East India (West Bengal, Orissa) Northern India (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh) and North-east (Assam, Manipur). This has helped to offset the shortage of labour caused partly due to the out-migration to other states and emigration to other countries. This paper deals with the working and living conditions of in-migrant construction workers and to highlight the push and pull factors responsible for the inflow of migrants to the study area.

Literature Background

Lewis's (1954) theory says in the case of individual utility maximization, the decision to migrate to cities would be determined by the wage differentials plus the expected probability of obtaining employment at the destination.

Fei, Ranis (1961) theory of migration talks about the dual economy comprising the subsistence agricultural sector characterized by the surplus labour and unemployment / underemployment and the modern industrial sector characterized by the full employment. In the modern sector, wages are maintained at levels much higher than the average wage in the agriculture sector.

Lee (1969) theory argues that migration is due to push and pull factors. Pull factors refers to better employment, high wages, better life conditions and good health and education opportunities at destinations. On the other hand, migration is impelled by push (distress) factors at home such as lack of employment, low wage rates, agricultural failure, debt, drought and other natural calamities.

Kundu and et al (2007) analyze the pattern of migration in urban areas and its socio-economic correlates. The analysis is based

on the National Sample Survey's reports on employment and unemployment; Economic deprivation is not the most critical factor for migration decisions, people migrate from both poor and rich households although the reason for migration and the nature of job sought by them are different.

Statement of the problem

Migrant workers are employed in almost all sectors in Kerala. Construction is the single most important sector in which unskilled migrant workers are employed to perform a variety of tasks. Malappuram district receives substantial remittances from the Middle East and other countries and this is the main factor behind the increased construction activities. These migrant workers are working and living in a vulnerable situation. So this study is seeking to know about the working and living conditions of in-migrant construction workers in Edakkara Panchayath and examine the factors which are responsible for inflow of migrant to the study area.

Objectives

1. To examine the working and living conditions of in-migrant construction workers in Edakkara Panchayath.
2. To find out the push and pull factors that lead to an inflow of migrants to the study area.

Methodology

This is a micro-level study. There are a selected for the present study is confined to the Edakkara Panchayath, in Malappuram district, having a heavy presence of migration labours. Primary data collected through a structured interview Schedule. A Snowball sampling technique was used. The study is based on a sample of 100 in-migrant labours.

State of origin

The below table shows the state of origin of migrants workers. West Bengal and Assam dominated the source of migration to Kerala it does not imply that the migrant workers in Edakkara Panchayath are from only West Bengal and Assam. The concentration of the migrants from West Bengal and Assam in my sample maybe because of the area researcher covered in my survey is fully dominated by the migrants from these two states. This is not an exceptional phenomenon, because migrants from the same place prefer to stay in the same locality.

Table 1 State of origin

State of Origin	Percent
West Bengal	32
Assam	29
Bihar	27
Orissa	12
Total	100

Source: primary survey

Age group of sample migrants

The is clear from table 2 the sample migrants are comprised of relatively young migrant workers. All the sample migrants are male.

Table 2 Age group of sample migrants

Age(inYears)	Percent
Below20	2
20-30	79
30-40	10
40-50	8
Above50	1
Total	100

Source:primary survey

Caste back ground of the migrant workers

Figure 1 shows the social groups (caste and religion) composition it reveals that OBC dominated the sample. The majority of the migrants belong to the Muslim community.

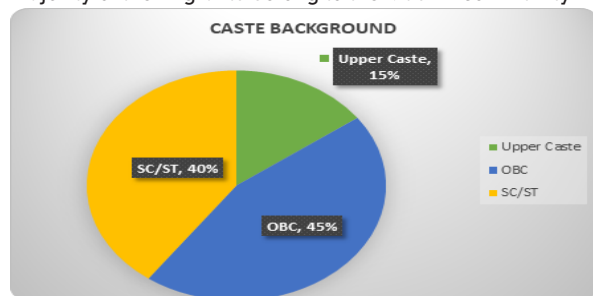


Figure 1 Caste background of the migrant workers

Educational qualification

The study reveals that 5% of the migrants are illiterate, the majority of the migrants are literate with no formal education, about 22% have primary education, only a few migrants have secondary education whereas only 8 sample migrants have experience of study at the high school. All these indicate that the nature of migration is forced migration, not prosperity driven.

Reason for migration to Kerala

The major reasons for migration to Kerala are found to be higher wages, availability of work, and better working conditions. Which is shown in the below table.

Table 3 Reason for migration to Kerala

ReasonsofmigrationtoKerala	Percent
Highw age rate	80
Availability of wages	12
Better working condition	5
Accumulation of saving	3
Others(nojob,Kerala is secured than other places)	0
Total	100

Source:primary

Occupational status in Kerala

While dealing with the occupational status of the migrant workers, it reveals that 94% of working in the construction fields. Out of the, 73% are helpers, 6% of them are bricklayers. The came of the result was that the researcher focused much on the migrants who working the construction field.

Housing status of the migrants in Kerala

The majority of the migrants are live in deplorable conditions. Most of them stayed in the lodge (63%), worksite (17%) with one room shared by many.

Table 4 Housing status of the migrants in Kerala

Particulars	Percent
Lodge	63

RentHouse	20
Owner'splotfreeofcost	6
Owner'splotwithnominalcost	11
Total	100

Source:primary survey

Occupational health among migrants

Migrant workers face serious occupational health problems due to poor working conditions, lack of safety measures, and prolonged working hours. The migrants are more vulnerable to safety risks at the workplace.

Table 5 Occupational health among migrants

Sort of diseases that are normally affected	Number
Chronic fatigue with increased cold-cough-fever and diarrhea	87
Chronic pain in various body parts	82
Injuries	61
Respiratory diseases	22

CONCLUSION

Pooreconomic conditions along with several other overlapping factors have been identified as the reason for migration. The major reason for migration to Kerala is reported as the higher wages, availability of work, and better working conditions as compared to their state of origin. The migrant workers are living and working under vulnerable conditions.

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