

Economic and Social Determinants of Migration: Insights from Kerala's Experience

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Abstract

Kerala is one of the small States of India in terms of area; the state is located in the south west corner of India. The connection between Kerala and Arabian Peninsula dates back to Centuries, which is facilitated through wide range of merchants and travellers. The constant flow of workers from the State of Kerala to Gulf Countries and other foreign nations resulted in scarcity of labour in the state, which was followed inevitably by increase in the wage rate. The wage rate in Kerala is over 147 percent higher than the national wage rate. (Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoI) The shortage of labour in Kerala and the resultant higher wage rates attracted the attention of workers from other states and they began to move to Kerala in search of work. This paper examined the major pull and push factors of interstate migration and the sources of migration networks. The study is largely based on the empirical findings obtained as a result of the primary interviews conducted on migrant workers in Malappuram district. The combined interaction of a number of factors is responsible for internal migration in the state like better working conditions in the state, government policy towards migrants, and existence of wage gap between Kerala and other states of India.

Keywords: Internal migration, Push factors, Pull factors, migration networking

Introduction

The causes and dynamics behind the decision to migrate have been analysed by various writers researching on migration. The studies on this ground mainly focus on the conditions which facilitate the migration process both at the origin and destination. Several researchers concentrated their work on the analysis of the relation between migration, expected return, costs, risk, networks, social capital etc. which facilitate the conditions for migration.

Network theories related to labour mobility explains the conditions connected with networks in society which facilitate the migration. For example, each migrant coming to Kerala creates a link between the sending area and the receiving state Kerala which creates further movement through the accumulation of migration specific knowledge often called as migration social capital. This reduces the cost of migration and risk associated with the labour migration. Sometimes this process will be self-perpetuating one, stimulating further migration and so on.

The literature on the determinants of migration has broadly classified the factors responsible for migration as push and pulls factors. A number of factors such as the wage difference between the areas, poverty in the sending areas, climatic and environmental issues of sending areas, employment opportunities in receiving areas, better government policies towards the immigration etc. are treated as determinants of migration. Both the pull and push factors are responsible for internal migration to Kerala.

The patterns of inter-district migration in Kerala which makes it clear that the central and northern parts of Kerala account for 20-25 per cent of the migrants as against south Kerala's share which had been less than 17 per cent over the census periods (US Mishra and SI Rajan 2018). Out of four migration streams in which the rural to rural and urban to urban migration streams were dominated by females. Male migration is largely due to economic reasons as against that of females which is primarily due to marriage. The relatively higher wages, large job opportunities and shortage of local labourers made Kerala a centre of job destination for workers from outside the State. Kerala's productive sectors are far behind and its major economic activities find a rebirth with the current inflow of migrant workers to the state. The different roles played by the internal migrants to the state not only in terms supplementing its work force but also in terms of maintaining the enthusiasm of state's economy have far reaching socio-economic implications

The employers in selected sectors faced some labour related problems, mainly labour shortage, higher wages and union problems by native workers. To overcome these problems employers started sourcing and employing migrant workers. Local workers were reluctant to take up unskilled and menial jobs in Kerala due to social status. Therefore, severe labour shortage followed which could be rectified by employing migrant workers which gave more benefits and less expense. This resulted in preference for migrants in order to meet the demand in some parts of the labour market which eventually led to the extensive appointment of migrant workers in Kerala. (Deepika VS & Savadatti PM 2018)

Objectives

1. To analyse the major pull and push factors of internal migration
2. To identify the sources of migration networks

Methods

The empirical part of the study was undertaken at Malappuram District in which 6.24% of internal migrants of the state are residing in the district (Economic Review, 2018). The survey was carried out in the form of interviews with the help of interview schedule among 400 randomly selected migrant workers. Both primary and secondary data are used. The primary data was collected from a representative sample of four hundred male internal migrant workers engaged in construction sector. Secondary data was obtained from publications of Labour Commissionerate, Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoI. Multi stage sampling method was adopted to select the samples. According to different experts' opinions and as per the study conducted by GIFT; construction is the main sector where interstate migrants are engaged in various parts of Kerala. So, in the first stage, among various employment categories construction category was selected purposively.

The estimated population of the present study is considered as 89579 migrant workers. The district has twelve municipalities and the migrant workers are scattered everywhere in the district. In the second stage, out of the twelve municipalities three were taken by using simple random sampling method. They are Tirur, Kondotty and Ponnani. In the third stage, 16 major construction sites were identified, by using snow ball sampling method. Around 40 to 60 workers were employed and engaged in different works related to building construction. Hence, in the fourth stage, 25 workers were selected from each site by using simple random sampling method. Thus, total samples of 400 construction workers were selected. The workers were interviewed by using a well-prepared interview schedule. For analysis of data the statistical tools and techniques like percentages, arithmetic mean, Chi square test etc. were used (Poovancheri, 2022).

Results and Discussion

Major Push and Pull Factors of Labour Migration to Kerala

The factors responsible for the internal migration of workers to Kerala can be analysed in terms of a number of variables. The history of Kerala migration, both internal and international labour migration can be traced back to early 1970s when large scale emigration from Kerala started especially to Middle East countries after the oil boom in Gulf countries. Gradually the labour market of Kerala experienced shortage of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, which began to attract the workers from Tamil Nadu in the early stage and workers from far distant places in the later stage who began to dominate the Kerala labour market. The large scale in migration to the state started only in the beginning of twenty first century.

Kerala offers the best wage rate in the country especially in unorganized sector. The difference in wage rate is considered an important determinant of Kerala migration. Moreover, there are so many other factors which led to the growth of internal migration to Kerala. The sustained job opportunities along with the peaceful social environment and relatively less discriminatory treatment of workers etc. attracted workers to the state.

In addition to the favourable situations existing in Kerala, there are a number of other factors as well, which contribute to the large scale in-migration to the state. They are attributed to the unfavourable conditions persisting in the native state like adverse climatic, problems like floods, cyclones, droughts, conflicts among the people, low earnings and limited job opportunities, indebtedness, crop failure, existence of poverty at the house hold level etc.

The push factors are analysed by taking the employment status of migrants before migration, the level of wages received in pre migration period, the house hold income level, poverty status of house hold in terms of APL and BPL, threat of natural calamities in native places, the debt position of migrants etc.

The pull factors are analysed in terms of existence of higher wages or the wage difference between the two states, better working conditions, Govt policy towards the migrant workers etc. Besides the push and pull factors, the working of migration networks also plays an important role in the growth of migrant population in the state.

Push and pull factors of the internal migrants in the study area is analysed on the basis of various factors like trends in migration, reasons of migration, wage gap, comparison of working conditions, working hours and days, etc.

Migrant Labour influx to the state

The respondents on the basis of their decade of migration is presented in Table 1

Table 1
Trends in Migration

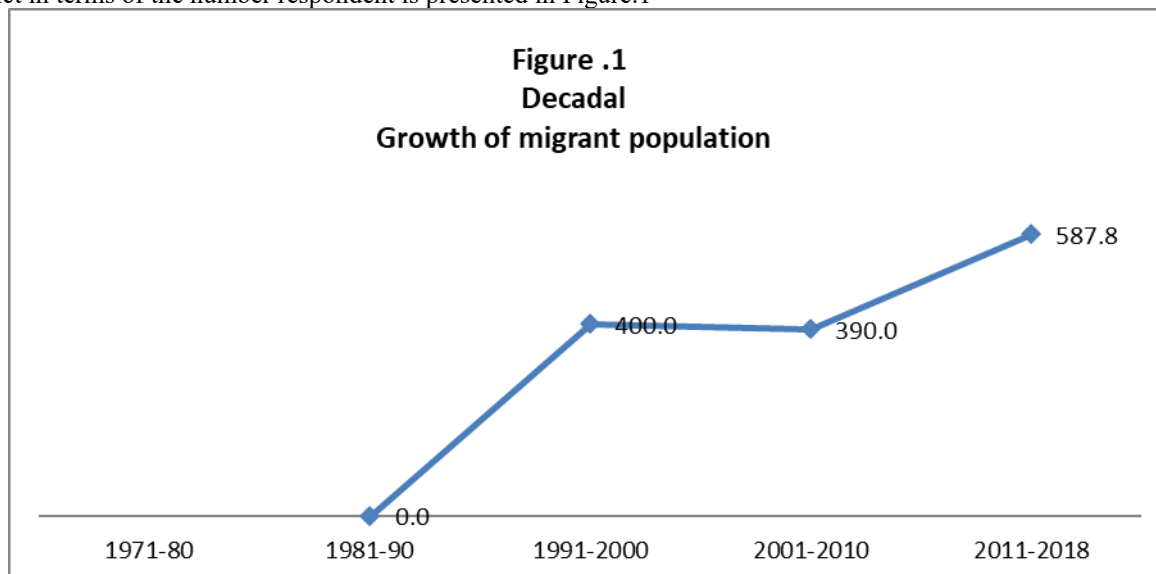
Sl. No.	Year	No. of Respondents	Percent
1	1971-1980	2	0.5
2	1981-1990	2	0.5
3	1991-2000	10	2.5
4	2001-2010	49	12.3
5	2011-2018	337	84.3
Total		400	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that the year of arrival started from 1970 onwards. The number of migrants increased marginally up to the 2000. A large influx of migration started only after 2011. Around 85 percent of the respondents reached in Kerala after 2011.

Growth Rate of Respondents

Data on arrival of migrant workers were directly collected from the workers. Growth rate of the migrant workers in the district in terms of the number respondent is presented in Figure.1



Source: Field Survey

The growth of number of sample migrant workers in the figure shows that the first two decades had shown no growth in terms of number of migrants. In 2001-10 the growth rate was 390 and it increased to 587.8 percent during 2011-18 periods.

Reasons for Migration to Kerala

Reasons for migration was verified on the basis of opinion of migrants. Most of the migrants were reported that they migrated to the state due to various reasons. Hence, multiple responses were allowed in this case. Reason for migration as reported by the internal migrants is presented in Table.2

Table 2
Reasons for Migration to Kerala

Sl. No.	Reason for Migration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Total Migrants
1	Better Working Condition	326	81.50%
2	Wage Difference	381	95.30%
3	Government Policy on Migrants	204	51.00%
4	Natural Calamity in Native Place	231	57.80%
5	Poor Economic Background in Native Place	365	91.30%
6	Unemployment in the Native Place	62	15.50%
Total		1569	392.30%

Source: Field Survey

The table shows opinion of migrants regarding the reasons for their migration to Kerala. Almost all the migrants reported that the wage gap between the origin and destination is the main reason for their migration. Similarly, more than 90 percent of the migrants said that the poor economic background of migrant workers in their native places is an important reason for the migration. A major chunk of the migrants also takes the view that better working condition in Kerala is an important reason for migration. At the same time, unemployment in the native state was not a major reason for migration. That is, pull factors like better wage in the destination, better working condition in the destination and favourable government policy for migrants in the state acts as a major role in internal migration to Kerala. Similarly, push factors such as poor economic background in native place and natural calamity in the origin state also played important role in interstate migration to Kerala.

Wage Gap

Respondents reported that better wage in Kerala is the most important reason for migration. The actual wage gap between origin state and Kerala is assessed and presented in Table 3

Table 3
Paired Sample Statistics on Daily Wages in Kerala and Native States (in Rs)

Sl. No.	Wage Details	No. of Respondents	Mean (in Rs)	Std. Deviation	Average Difference in Wage (in Rs)	Std. Deviation of Wage Difference
1	Daily Wage in Kerala	338	672.781	87.49	402.84	117.87
2	Daily Wage in Native State	338	269.941	77.41		

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that estimated average wage in Kerala was nearly two times more than the average wage in native state. That is, average difference in wage was around double of the wage in native states. Hence, we can conclude that wage difference is a major determinant of internal migration to Kerala. Paired sample t-test was performed to examine whether there is any significant difference in the wages received by the migrants from Kerala and from the native states of the internal migrants. Test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the wages received by the migrants from Kerala and from the native states, $t(337) = 62.833$, $p < .001$. It can be inferred from the results that

wages received from Kerala and from native states by the internal migrants are different and they got considerably higher wages from Kerala.

Working condition at destination

More than three-fourths of the respondents gave better working condition in Kerala as a reason for migration. Hence, it can be concluded that better working condition acts as a major influential factor in determining internal migration in Kerala. Working condition in Kerala and in the native states is assessed on the basis of working hours, working days and perception of workers about working condition. Working hours in Kerala and native states is compared and presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Paired Sample Statistics on working hours in Native States and Kerala

Sl. No.	Working Hours	No. of Respondents	Mean of working hours on a day	Std. Deviation	Average Difference in hours	Std. Deviation of hour Difference
1	Working Hours in Kerala	338	8.49	1.085	-1.589	1.825
2	Working Hours in Native State	338	10.077	1.517		

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that the estimated average working hours in native states was greater than working hours in Kerala. That is, average difference in working hours of native states and Kerala was more than one and half hours. Hence, it can be concluded that working hours was a major determinant of internal migration to Kerala. Paired sample t-test was performed to examine whether there is any significant difference in the working hours of the native states of the internal migrants and in Kerala. Test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the working hours in the native states of the internal migrants and in Kerala, $t(337) = -16.009$, $p < .001$. It can be inferred from the results that working hours of Kerala and that of native states of the internal migrants are different and they get considerable relaxation in working hours in Kerala.

Similarly, number of working days available in a month in Kerala and in the native states of migrants also helpful to assess better working conditions. The actual working days during a month in origin state and Kerala is compared and presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Paired Sample Statistics on working days during a month in Kerala and Native States

Sl. No.	Working Days	No. of Respondents	Mean of working days in a month	Std. Deviation	Average Difference in days	Std. Deviation of day Difference
1	Working Days in Kerala	338	25.44	3.368	0.692	4.231
2	Working Days in Native State	338	24.746	3.348		

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that estimated average working days in Kerala was greater than working days of native states. But the analysis shows that the average difference in working days were less than a day. Still, we can conclude that number of working days is also a determinant of internal migration to Kerala. Paired sample t-test was performed to examine whether there is any significant difference in the working days in the native states of the internal migrants and in Kerala. Test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the working days in the native states of the internal migrants and in Kerala, $t(337) = 3.008$, $p = .003$. It can be inferred from the results that working days in Kerala and in native states of the internal migrants are different and they get more working days in a month in Kerala.

Perception about the working condition

The response on overall perception of working condition by the respondents is presented in Table 6

Table 6
Perception about Working Condition

Sl. No.	Perception about Working Condition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Comfortable	280	70
2	Somewhat comfortable	119	29.8
3	Uncomfortable	1	0.3
Total		400	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that all the respondents except one were comfortable or nearly comfortable with their working condition. Estimation of the response scale on perception of working condition gives a score of 1079 out of 1200 (a one to three score where 1 = “uncomfortable” and 3 = “Comfortable”). The obtained score is closer to the total score of 1200 which implies that migrants were comfortable with their working condition.

The existence of unemployment in the native region is considered as a major push factor of migration. Regarding the rate of unemployment in Kerala, according to the 5th Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey 2015-16, conducted by Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoI, among the major states, Kerala has the highest Unemployment Rate (UR) of 12.5 per cent as against the all India level of five per cent. Among all states, only small states like Sikkim, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh have a higher unemployment rate than Kerala. In spite of having highest rate of unemployment in Kerala, migrant workers from other states are continuously attracted to this small state. The data obtained from the field survey makes it clear that (Table 2) only 15.5 percent of workers migrated to Kerala because of the factor of unemployment in their native state. The number of people unemployed in pre migration period was only 15.5 percent and majority of the sample workers were employed before coming to Kerala. This fact makes it clear wage difference is the major determinant of internal migration to Kerala than unemployment in native state of migrants.

Migration Networks

There are a number of interpersonal linkages which connect migrants with the other people who wish to migrate in the origin state. It may be through friends, or relatives, or commission agents, of the same state. Sometimes the workers who reached to Kerala in early period of migration act as a link in connecting the migrants of far distant places to the state of destination. This practice is true in the case of migrant workers of Kerala. The migration networks reduce the cost of migration and eliminate the risk associated with migration to some extent. The social integration between the migrants and local people will be ensured through the migration networks.

Sources of Migration Network

In the case of international migration there are a number of agencies like, agency for foreign labour migration affairs, private agencies, newspapers, internet and through friends and relatives etc. who provide information regarding the vacancies in the foreign country and recruitment procedures, visa requirements, cost of migration etc.

Formal networking is possible in many cases in international labour migration, but in the case of internal labour migration, informal networking takes place. In the present study, the respondents were asked to report how they got the information about labour migration or through which agency they first came to Kerala, and who helped them to find the first job in Kerala. The information regarding sources of migration network is presented in Table 7

Table 7
Sources of Migration Network

Sl. No.	Sources of Migration Network	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Friends/Relatives	244	61
2	Other Personal Acquaintances	140	35
3	Institutional Sources (including internet)	16	4
Total		400	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that more than 95 percent of the sources of internal migration network to Kerala were informal sources like friends, relatives, acquaintances, etc. Chi-square test was performed to examine whether there is any significant

difference in sources of migration network among internal migrant workers in Kerala. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in sources of migration network among internal migrant workers in Kerala, $\chi^2(2) = 195.44$, $p < .001$. thus, we can conclude that friends or relatives were acts as a major link of migration network in internal migration to Kerala.

Conclusion

The factors responsible for migration movements are broadly classified into push and pull factors. Network theories related to labour mobility explains the conditions connected with networks in society which facilitate the migration. Kerala offers the best wage rate in the country especially in unorganized sector. The difference in wage rate is considered an important determinant of Kerala migration. The sustained job opportunities along with the peaceful social environment and relatively less discriminatory treatment of workers etc. attract workers to the state. The data obtained from the field survey makes it clear that only 20.5 percent of workers migrate to Kerala because of the factor of unemployment in their native state. The number of people unemployed in pre migration period is only 15.5 percent and majority of the sample workers were employed before coming to Kerala. This fact makes it clear that it is not the unemployment in native state which determines the pattern of migration, but the wage gap between Kerala and native states caused for the mass movement of workers to the state. Due to the low and subsistence level of wages in native state that affects the household's economic status like income, poverty level, indebtedness etc. All these factors together act as a push factors in labour migration.

The existence of better working conditions in the host state attracts workers from different parts of the country. The combined interaction of a number of factors is responsible for internal migration in the state like better working conditions in the state, government policy towards migrants, and existence of wage gap between Kerala and that of their native states. Besides these factors, a number of other factors like development of transport and communication facilities also play a dominant role in determining the pattern of migration. In short, various push and pull factors played a major role in determining internal migration to Kerala.

Formal networking is possible in many cases in international labour migration, but in the case of internal labour migration informal networking acts as a catalyst. The migrant workers come to Kerala with the help of friends, relatives, informal personal acquaintances, and institutional sources. The networking system of migration plays significant role in determining the flow of migration or migration decision of workers. Majority of workers get information regarding job and destination details from friends and relatives who have already migrated to the state.

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