

Challenges Faced by Children of Migrant Parents

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ABSTRACT

A "migrant worker" is a person who either migrates within their home country or outside for labour. Since Migrant workers usually do not stay permanently in a region in which they work, their families and children have to suffer because they need to adjust to a new atmosphere, and it is difficult for their children to get admission to schools and follow a new language. This study focuses on the challenges faced with respect to Learning and academic achievement, Medium of instruction, and Classroom Environment. The study used a qualitative design. The tool used for the study is a semi-structured interview schedule prepared by the investigator.

Keywords: Migrant workers, Learning and academic achievement, Medium of instruction, Classroom Environment

INTRODUCTION

In the view of UNESCO, providing equal access to education for all children is one of the greatest challenges of our times. The Right to Education provides the child with education which will enhance their abilities, individual judging capacity, and sense of moral, social and political responsibility. This will help them become contributing members of society and able citizens of the country. Parents have the primary duty to the education and upbringing of their children, and this responsibility must always be based on what is in the child's best interests. Family, Society, and the government must work to encourage the child to use this privilege. Indian constitution with the eighty-sixth amendment introduced Article 21-A in the Constitution of India which provides "free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine". Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, complimented Article 21-A for educating its future citizens.

According to the study conducted by Joseph, Narayana & Venkiteswaran (2013) on behalf of the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation for the Department of Labour and Skills of the Government of Kerala, "Over 25 lacks (2.5 million) domestic migrant workers from Bangladesh, Nepal, and other Indian states are present in Kerala. In 2013, the number of migrant workers in Kerala was almost one-tenth of that of the local population, which was about 33 million in 2011. It is estimated to rise as high as 48 lakhs (4.8 million) by 2023 despite the decline of migration of Keralites to other countries"

A "migrant worker" is a person who either migrates within their home country or outside for labour or seasonal work. Migrant workers usually do not stay permanently in a region in which they work. Migrant workers work outside their home country. It is their family and children who suffer because they need to adjust to a new atmosphere, and it is difficult for their children to get admission to schools and follow a new language.

Many times, immigrant parents are unaware of their children's right to an education. or are not familiar with the local public school system's organisational structure. As a result, changing schools becomes more challenging and takes time away from the student's education. After relocating, parents must concentrate their efforts on obtaining employment and supporting their families, which frequently prevents them from looking into educational choices for their children.

Along with the difficulties of children, teachers also face a lot of challenges to meet the educational needs of these children. It is the teachers who pay attention to students of different learning levels. More than anyone from the educational field it is the teachers who could clearly explain the problems and challenges faced by the students in their school environment and activities. This survey concentrates on the problems faced by the children of migrant workers with respect to Learning and Academic Achievement, Medium of instruction, and Classroom Environment.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is

- To find out the challenges faced by the children of migrant workers with respect to:
 - Learning and academic achievement
 - Medium of instruction.
 - Classroom Environment

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative design. The tool used for the study is a semi-structured interview schedule prepared by the investigator. The method used for sample selection in the study is the purposive sampling method. A total of six teachers from the school located in the Ernakulam district were interviewed to know the problems faced by the children of migrant students they teach. The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it has the benefit of providing rich data on real-life situations. The responses given by the teachers on the problem of children of Migrant parents are coded and analysed qualitatively.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The school from which the data was collected was established in 1936. In the initial stage, there were many children, but later, with the coming up of public schools, the number of students started to decrease. And now, allegedly, it has transformed into a school with a majority of children of migrant workers. There were 32 students in the school up to class 4 and 7 teaching staff, including an SSA teacher.

There were students from Bengal, Tamilnadu, Nepal, Orissa, Karnataka and Manipur. The teachers use Malayalam as a medium of instruction, and the SSA teacher will help with more clarification.

Learning and academic achievement

Migrant students face multiple barriers to learning and academic achievement. These include a lack of:

- Qualified and experienced teachers and staff
- Adequate Resources for instructional needs
- Attendance at schools
- Academic standards and curriculum, every time they move
- Timely enrollment and admission into the school
- Exposure to early childhood care and preschool education

A shortage of qualified and experienced educators significantly impacts migrant students' learning. Studies indicate that qualified teachers are crucial for fostering academic success, particularly for students facing additional challenges (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Many migrant students lack access to adequate instructional resources. This lack of support can lead to lower academic performance and increased dropout rates (Kumar, 2011). Frequent relocations force migrant students to adapt to varying academic standards and curricula, complicating their educational journey. This inconsistency can result in gaps in learning, as emphasized by Nambissan (1994), who found that children often struggle when transitioning between different educational systems. Timely admission into schools remains a significant hurdle. Delays can prevent students from accessing education at critical developmental stages, contributing to disengagement and dropout rates. Many migrant children miss out on early childhood care and preschool education, which are essential for laying a strong educational foundation. This gap in early learning opportunities can have long-term effects on academic achievement. Many parents work long hours, leaving children without adequate supervision or motivation to attend school.

Teachers remarked that the students are given special care under the strict instruction of the Collector. The students are provided with the necessary facilities for an appropriate education. The school followed the SCERT syllabus. The teacher's clusters are formed to discuss the challenges faced by the teachers and to find solutions to cope with those problems. They discuss things with each other and find out solutions and new aids to improve their teaching. The government has taken special initiatives to educate these children for the development of the nation and to ensure literacy.

The students sometimes show laziness as their parents leave home for work early in the morning and the parents don't get enough time to monitor the study of their children. In such cases, students stay at home bunking school. Teachers have to go home to bring them to school.

Medium of instruction

Language constraints make it difficult for children of migrant parents in Kerala to use the educational resources offered there. Migrant students speak their native language which is not the region's dominant language which has an impact on their academic progress. Thus language barrier act as a typical hindrance to educational success.

Nambissan (1994) notes that denying education in the mother tongue can lead to high dropout rates, particularly among tribal and migrant populations. Under the national Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan school education system, a few single-teacher schools have been established but still finding instructors who are fluent in different languages like Oriya, and Assamese is a great challenge. This goes along with the study of Kumar (2011) who examined the dimensions of vulnerability of migrant workers in Kerala. According to the report

"Language obstacles prevent migrant workers' children from using the educational resources available in Kerala. One of the issues with the education of immigrant children is the difficulty in finding teachers who are fluent in languages like Oriya, Bengali, or Assamese. But a few single-teacher schools have been appointed under the national school education programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The report also highlights the language hurdles that interstate migrants face in accessing health care and in protecting their rights."

When the teachers have to interact with the parents of the students, it becomes difficult, and this problem is resolved by the students themselves by helping the parents to communicate. Some of the parents didn't show any interest in educating their children, and teachers had to take the initiative to bring the children to school.

Classroom Environment

Students face problems in communicating with their peers as many of them are using different languages. This hinders peer interaction and the development of good relationships among peers.

Age difference among the students of the same class is another problem faced by them. Due to migration and unavailability of birth certificates, they are denied admission to schools. Sometimes the parents find it difficult to find schools near their work area. Enrollment of the children at the right time could prevent stagnation and dropout rate.

Migration affects the performance of children as they are denied access to preschool education, health care, and nutrition. This creates issues related to fatigue and laziness due to which participation in a variety of different activities is restricted. Acute malnutrition, illness, lack of immunizations and health facilities increases the frequency of school dropouts.

Cultural differences among students and teachers also affect the social condition of the classroom. It also leads to attendance problems as the celebrations are different in different states like, in Kerala, we celebrate festivals like Onam where as Holi or Pongal celebrated by the students in their native place are not celebrated in the state of Kerala. Children go to their native places which creates an attendance shortage for them. Common barriers to equal educational opportunity include cultural differences that hinder assimilation and breed prejudice and xenophobia against immigrant families. These biases may be informal but hurt a school's learning environment. Students are less likely to stay in school if they don't feel accepted or wanted as a result of their immigration status. Additionally, those who experience difficulties with cultural adjustment often fail to make connections and make friends in school, which affects their academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study based on the above observations recommends a few suggestions for ensuring improved education for children of migrant students.

- The Government in line with the Women's & Children's Commission should ensure the enrollment of children of migrant parents and bring out measures to eliminate the dropout rate of students.
- Proper education facilities must be arranged for their children which promote the study of children in the bilingual mode so that their regional language differences should not add to the language barrier in studies.
- Admission procedures can be made liberal to encourage the enrollment of children of migrant workers.
- Teachers must be given proper training so that they develop the ability to customise their teaching strategies and communication as per the need and levels of the students.
- Early childhood care and preschool training must be provided to the children of migrant workers.
- Periodic health checkups for children of migrant workers may be carried out as part of free health camps
- Cultural differences among peers can be overruled by encouraging cross-cultural activities in the class

These recommendations align with findings from previous studies that highlight the importance of supportive educational environments for children of migrant families. Research has shown that educational interventions, such as bilingual programs and inclusive teaching practices, significantly enhance academic performance and emotional well-being among these students (Smith & Liu, 2020; Johnson et al., 2019). The studies also emphasise the critical role of early childhood education in leveling the playing field for children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Garcia & Wei, 2018). Health initiatives have also been linked to improved academic outcomes, as children who receive regular health checkups tend to have better school attendance and performance (Miller et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Migrant workers travel in search of jobs and also for a better lifestyle. By closely entering into their family structure, we come to know that the children face many difficulties. They are in the midst of diversified culture along with their nativity. They neither belong to their native state nor the new state, and there arises a conflict. They find it hard to get along with the new conditions and lifestyle. This is very evident in the educational field. The majority live of the migrant family live in extreme poverty and the children have to work with their parents to support their families

Additionally, students who relocate experience negative social effects like separation from their peers as a result of linguistic and cultural obstacles. Children of migrant workers struggle to succeed in school on par with their peers. Migrant students experience educational discontinuity due to relocation, which slows down their academic progress and increases their chance of dropping out. The relocation has negative social consequences on students like isolation from peers due to cultural differences and language barriers. So the need to educate the children of migrant workers is much needed for the welfare of society.

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