

An Analysis of Social Health and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers

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Abstract

Migration has been a global phenomenon since the beginning of human race. People migrate from one place to another regardless of national and international boundaries for their economic and other social needs. As a developing country, India is also facing large number of inter-state and intra-state migration. Mostly it's seen as rural to urban migration. There are many factors that lead to migration. Generally it can be termed as pull factors and push factors. Kerala is a state that has a huge amount immigrants from various states of India and the core reasons that plays behind this phenomenon is the availability of jobs and other physical conditions. Today the majority of the workforce of Kerala is comprised of these immigrant workers at infrastructure, agriculture and other sectors. Even though it's the case still the native community of Kerala has not been ready to accept the migrant community and allow them to be the integral part of the society. This has obviously lead to a poor social health level of the migrant workers and also forced them to be compromised in the case of their wages, job security, allowances and provisions which are mentioned as their rights according to the law. Therefore this paper attempts to study the factors regarding the social health as well as the living conditions of the migrant workers of a particular village in Idukki District.

Key Words: Migration, Inter State Migrant Labour Act, Push and Pull Factor

Migration: An Introduction

The study of migration is a unique branch in the science of demography

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because of its complex inter-disciplinary nature. This phenomenon migration has gained attraction from the scholars of different disciplines such as sociology, demography, social work, geography and Economics. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling in a new location or on the behalf of a job for finding earnings for the family. The movement is often long distances and from one country to another but internal migration is also possible; indeed this is a global phenomenon. Migration is a complex phenomenon and has different dimensions in terms of duration, nature of origin, destination and characteristics of migrants. In the migration literature different types of migration has been identified, for instance, internal and external migration, emigration, immigration, seasonal migration, rural-urban migration, return migration, step migration, chain migration and so on (Banerjee, 1986).

Trends of Migration in India

India as a nation has seen a high migration rate in recent years. Over 98 million people migrated from one place to another in 1990s, the highest for any decade since independence according to the 2001 census details. However in 1970s migration was slowing down. The issues of migrants include unhygienic living conditions, improper waste management, improper sanitation facilities, lack of clean drinking water and also the problems such as lack of cleanliness and hygiene, for the migrant workers (Gulathi, 1990).

The increasing flow of people from rural to urban area has many positive and negative impacts. The mushrooming of slums near the cities/urban centres, due to continuous flow of migrants from rural area to the urban area is considered as a big challenge. A study done by economic and social commission for Asia and the Pacific observed that “migration from rural to urban areas continues at a rapid pace in many countries of the region, and it was often beyond the capacity of towns, cities and metropolitan areas to cope with the increasing numbers. The increasing trends of rural to urban migration should be seriously reviewed in the context of development of slums in urban area. No doubt, migration is essential for development and it is a desirable phenomenon but what is not desirable is the increasing flow of distressed migrates from rural to urban area which results into overcrowding of cities and development of slums (Singh, 2016).

Trends of Migration in Kerala

Kerala is witnessing large inflow of migrant labour force from different parts of the country in recent years. It was found that migrant worker presence in the state could rise as high as 4.8 million in 10 years going by the local demand, especially in construction sector which employs nearly 60 percent of them. About 75 percent of the workers come from West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa (Business Line, 2013).

Higher wages for unskilled labour in the state, large opportunities for employment and shortage of local labour, paradoxically despite the high unemployment rate in the state, led to the massive influx of migrant labour to the state. With signs of rapid growth of state's economy and the increase in activities particularly in the infrastructure and construction sectors, the immigration is expected to grow faster in the coming years (CSES India, 2007).

Concept of Social Health

Social health is one's ability to form meaningful personal relationships with others. Social health is how you get along with other people, how other people react to you, and how you interact with society. It is also an indication of one's ability to manage in social situations and behave accordingly. Matters such as stress can damage someone's social health. Being socially healthy enables individuals to interact and relate to others in a positive manner. A person's social health also impacts his ability to build friendships and form intimate relationships, and studies also show that positive social interactions can enhance a person's physical and mental health. Social health involves your ability to form satisfying interpersonal relationships with others. It also relates to your ability to adapt comfortably to different social situations and act appropriately in a variety of settings.

Social health is a term generally used to refer to two different concepts, though they are somewhat interrelated as well. In one sense it refers to the health of a person in reference to his or her ability to interact with others and thrive in social settings. It can also refer to the health of a society in general, and how the members of that society are treated and behave toward each other. This type of health is often considered of great importance in regards to individual health, especially as further information and research has established how social interactions can assist in improving other forms of health.

Social health has described the overall state of well-being for societies and the individuals who live and participate in them – a sociological yard stick for measuring how people interact with each other within the moral, legal and communal rules and regulations that govern the societies in which they live.

Methodology

The primary objective of this paper is to study the social health and the living conditions of the migrant workers in a village at Idukki. Regarding the living conditions, availability of other provisions there are certain disparities among estate and non-estate workers. The study follows descriptive research design method. The samples are selected from the male population who are working in estate and non-estate fields, including construction, agriculture etc. By using convenient sampling (under non-probability sampling) the data was collected from 55 samples with the help of an interview schedule. The data is analysed through SPSS. The collected data is presented via graphs and charts

Major Findings

Table No 1: Socio-Demographic Details (n=55)

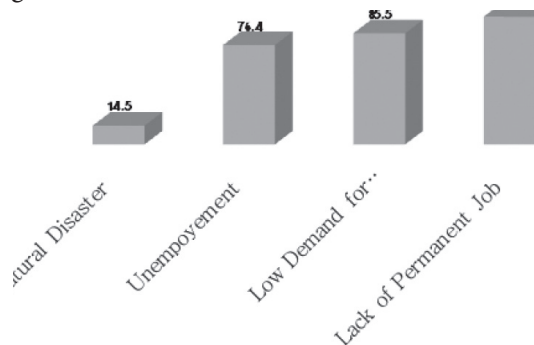
Social Status	Frequency	Percent
Age		
19-24	22	40.0
25-30	26	47.3
31-35	7	12.7
Type of Work		
Estate	22	40.0
Non-Estate	33	60.0
Educational Status		
UP	50.9	28
HS	36.4	20
Illiterate	12.7	7
Duration of Migration		
4-11 Months	8	14.5
1-3 Years	30	54.5
4-6 Years	15	27.3
7-9 Years	2	3.6

Majority of the respondents were aged between 19-30 years of age. . Regarding the educational qualification of the respondents, 50.9% of the respondents are having upper primary education and 36.4% of the respondents were having high school education and the remaining 12.7% of the respondents were completely illiterate. Among the 55 respondents 60% of the respondents were from Non-estate sector and the remaining 40% of the respondents were from Estate sector. The data depicts that young population, who lack higher education are prone to migrate.

Almost half of the respondents are having only 1-3 years of migrated life in the current area of study. 27.3% of the respondents are migrated for about 4-6 years and 3.6% have 7-9 years of migrated life experience. While there is also a 14.5% respondents who have only 4-11 months of migrated life. Majority of the respondents are willing to stay back as the employment condition is very much favourable for them in terms of financial aspects.

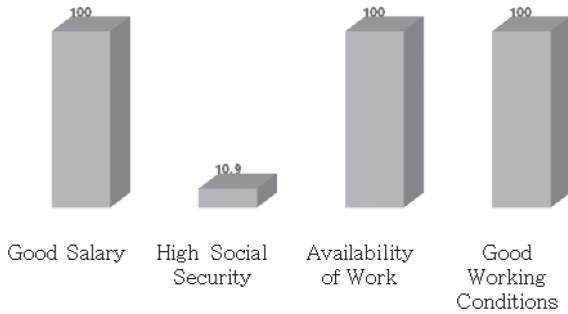
Factors of Migration

There are a good number of factors behind migration. Broadly we can divide the factors in to 'push factors' and 'pull factors' (Vivek, 2014). The factors which compel a person to migrate to another place is called 'Push Factors'; the factors which attract a person to another place is called 'Pull Factors'. The following diagrams show these factors.



Graph No 1: Push Factors

Natural disaster (14.5%), Unemployment (76.4%), low demand for unskilled labour (85.5%) and lack of permanent job (98.2%) are the main reasons for the respondents to migrate to Kerala.



Graph No 2: Pull Factors

Social Health	Frequency	Percentage
Free Interaction with Local Residents		
Yes	45	81.8
No	10	18.2
Get Along with Native Co-workers		
Yes	52	94.5
No	3	5.5
Conveying Ideas to the Local Residents		
Yes	48	87.3
No	7	12.7
Hindrances for Conveying the Ideas to the Local Residents		
Language Hindrances	7	12.7
Not Applicable	48	87.3
Attitude of Local Residents		
Cooperative	37	67.3
Indifferent	18	32.7
Comfortable Niche for Working with Other		
Yes	55	100
No	0	0
Cooperativeness of Native Co-workers		
Yes	52	94.5
No	3	5.5

Only 81.8% respondents are able to interact freely with the local residents and remaining 18.2% can't but 94.5% of the respondents were able to get along with the native co-workers, which is much better compared to their ability in

interaction with the local residents. While conveying ideas to the local residents only 12.7% of the respondents seems to be failing and 87.3% of the respondents find success in the same case and for those 12.7% respondents language is the main reason that is hindering them from conveying their ideas to the local residents.

Among the entire respondents, 67.3% says that the local residents are very cooperative and for the remaining 32.7% of the respondents those local respondents seem to be indifferent or not cooperative. The entire respondents i.e. 55, feels a comfortable niche for working with other local and non-local workers. Regarding the cooperativeness of the native co-workers, only 5.5% of the respondents had very bad experience.

Awareness on Welfare Measures under Inter State Migrant Labour Act, 1979

The Inter-state migrant workmen (regulation of Employment and conditions of service) act, 1979 (ISML Act, 1979) is a major act that deals with the issues of migrant worker in India. The act envisage that every migrant workers need of job card, working permit, they have to work under a licensed employer, minimum wages, life insurance and job security has to be ensured for the migrant workmen etc (Babu, J, 2012).

During the study period it was found that only 10.9% of the respondents have knowledge about the ISML Act and the welfare measures and the remaining respondents does not have any idea about the Act and the welfare measures mentioned in it. Only 41.8% of the respondents know that they are working under a licensed employer and the remaining respondents are not at all aware about those matters. Regarding the availability of a job card, only 14.5% of the respondents are availed with a job card according to government instructions and it is same in the case of availability of the working permit for the respondents. Only 14.5% of the respondents have a working permit and the remaining majority of the respondents don't have a working permit with themselves; only 27.3% of the respondents receive equal wages compared with the other native co-workers, and the remaining 72.8% of the respondents doesn't receive or know about the equal wages. All these show the poor implementation of ISML Act, 1979 and lack of awareness of the migrant workers on the provisions under ISML Act, 1979.

Social Work Intervention to Deal with the Issue of Migrant Workers

The Social Worker has a definite role in addressing the issues of migrant workers. The Social Worker can analyse the situations of the workers and also the attitude of the employers towards them mainly in providing equal wages, availing with job card and working permit and also acquiring licence to employ migrant workers from other states. The Social Worker can play the role of an advisor to the employer and other government officials regarding all the above mentioned matters and also he/ she can take necessary legal actions and procedures through the help of power structures for ensuring truth and justice is provided.

Suggestions to Improve the Social Health of the Migrant Workers

- It was found that even though the respondents are able to work freely in their workplaces most of them are not fully satisfied with their social health. So the attitude and prejudice mentality of the common native people should change.

- Local clubs and other social service institutions should try to interact with the migrants and make different opportunities for them to get interacted with the local residents, such as ensuring the participation of the migrant workers in common activities such as cleaning activities, club celebrations, annual events and other meets. The panchayath governing bodies can also took initiatives in those activities.

- It is essential to give awareness to the migrant workers by the employers regarding the state and its cultural and other social aspects, which are very different from the native states of the migrant workers.

- Make the workers aware about the ISML Act through awareness sessions under the guidance of panchayat officials.

- Employers can take a part in providing such awareness to the workers under him.

- The panchayat should take serious steps to ensure that all the migrant workers working with in the panchayat limit has working permit, and job card as it has a major role in ensuring the job security for the workers as well as availing them with equal wages and minimum wages according to the ISML Act.

- There must be a data bank with the panchayat authorities regarding the name and address of the employers who have licence to employ migrant

workers under them.

- The name and contact details or identity details of all the migrant workers within the panchayat limit should also be collected by the authorities in order to avoid chances of risks and catastrophes.

Conclusion

The study is concerned with the social health and the living conditions of the Migrant Workers. While comparing with the other native local workers the researcher was able to find that majority of the migrant workers in the panchayat doesn't receive equal wages. It was also found that most of the migrant workers don't have working permit and job card and the employers are also not availed with licence to employ migrant workers. The panchayat also lacks adequate data about the migrant workers in the panchayat and also their whereabouts. Ultimately we can say that the migrant workers in the panchayat are not aware of the ISML Act and the welfare measures mentioned in the Act which in return appears to be the reason why the employers are exploiting the migrant workers.

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