

# Role of Migrant Labours in the Infrastructure Development and Its Effects in the Economy with Special Reference to Kochi, Kerala

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**Abstract:** The city of Kochi marks as one of the crucial areas wherein a large number of labour migrants from all around the country seem to have found solace in. The figures on this basis also seem to be growing over the previous years. The study deals with the role of labour migration in the infra-structural development of Kochi and its effect on the economy, wherein the supplied knowledge of data is collected through primary information from a fifty randomly selected respondents. The data was collected from Aluva, Kakkanad and Kaloar, which are claimed to be the major areas of migrant labour inhibitions. The overall study examines the factors and living conditions of the migrant labours, their impact on the economy and their role in infra-structural development. The study also focuses on the inter-relationship between certain factors that lead to their migration.

**Keywords:** Labour Migrants, Infra-Structural Development, Solace, Labour Inhibitions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

“Migration is often misperceived as the failure to adapt to a changing environment. It is, however, one of the main coping and survival mechanisms that is available to those affected by environmental degradation and climate change.” – Sylvia Lopez, IOM (International Organization for Migration)

Labor migration in general refers to the movement of people or a flock of people from one state or one country to another in search of employment. In the present scenario, Kerala in specific is found to be experiencing a large inflow of labour migration from various parts of the country. Studies show that most of these labour migrants are from the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu. These migrants play an important role in the economic growth of the state as well as in the development of the secondary sector and in terms of infra-structural development.

These migrants include both skilled and unskilled workers with a minority of them being experts and skilled workers and are mainly employed in construction sites, road works etc. and other related works in the sub-sectors such as the industrial works and other services.

The rapid growth of the migrant workers is witnessed in the State due to the shortage of local workers and higher wages are being offered to the unskilled workers of other states compared to what they are being paid in their homelands which will further attract them to the country.

Studies on labor migration has depicted that migration to Kerala have contributed more to poverty mitigation than any other factors and it is also noted that a million families depend on the migrant earnings for their children's education and other economic requirements. The present study focuses on the migrant labours, their working conditions and their adverse effect on the economy in the suburbs of Ernakulam, and their role in the infra-structural development of the same.

## II. MIGRANT LABORS IN KERALA

As per the data collected by the local bodies on April 8th, the state has a migrant worker population of about 3, 98,015. This includes 1, 08,031 workers located in urban local bodies and 2, 90,020 people in 39,057 camps in rural areas. The district wise division of migrant labours as collected by the local bodies published in “The Hindu” dated 10th of April, 2020 is explained as below.

**Table Showing the Migrant Population In Kerala**

| District            | No. of settlement | No. of people |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| THIRUVANAN THAPURAM | 1,859             | 20,973        |
| KOLLAM              | 1,446             | 14,139        |
| PATHANAMTH ITTA     | 1,508             | 13,442        |
| ALAPPUZHA           | 1,229             | 16,415        |
| KOTTAYAM            | 2,224             | 29,142        |
| IDUKKI              | 653               | 8,890         |
| ERNAKULAM           | 5,052             | 87,870        |
| THRISSUR            | 3,211             | 34,564        |
| PALAKKAD            | 849               | 11,405        |
| MALAPPURAM          | 8,029             | 80,449        |
| KOZHIKODE           | 6,935             | 42,835        |
| WAYANAD             | 810               | 7,542         |
| KANNUR              | 4,141             | 11,641        |
| KASARGOD            | 1,121             | 18,744        |
| TOTAL               | 39,057            | 3,98,051      |

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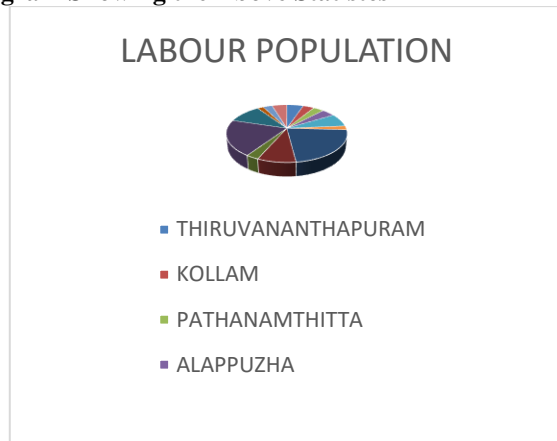
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Diagram Showing the Above Statistics



From the above statistics is based on observations from local bodies and hence the figures might differ as the observations shown are collected mostly from the migrant labors who possess ration cards with them. A number of others who are not yet been registered or identified is excluded from the same. It is clear that the labour migration within the state is found maximum in the districts of Ernakulam and Malappuram. This study mainly focuses on the labour migration and its effects on the economy in the city of Kochi, Ernakulam.

### III. RESEARCH GAP

From the extensive reviews made and referred it was noted that the studies that dealt with the role of labor migration on infra-structural development was limited. Hence, we found a research gap regarding this area of labor migration to Kerala and therefore constructed objectives regarding the same.

### IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on both skilled and unskilled migrant labors from various north-western states of the country. The observations are based on the primary data collected from the respondents from a limited area covering the major centers of migrant labor inhibitions in the city of Ernakulam such as Kakkanad, Palarivattom, and Aluva. Labor migration being a vast area on its own, the observations were made limited to urban areas of the city, by ensuring proper guidelines and safety measures that are to be followed regarding the pandemic situation of COVID-19. The study mainly emphasis on the role of migrant labors in the urban workforce and their impact on the economy

### V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the living conditions and to understand the other socio-economic characteristics of the migrant labors.
- To examine the factors that lead to their migration to Kerala.
- To understand their role in the infra-structural development in the city of Kochi, Ernakulam.
- To analyze their impact on the economy.

## VI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Labour migration being one of the important phenomena of social science has undergone several studies on the matter by various scientists, economists and others in both theoretical and practical manners. Most of the studies on labour migration in Kerala is about their emigration to the Gulf countries. Whereas among inter-state migrations Kerala is considered as the 'Gulf' of north, western states in India. Most of these studies have analysed the costs, returns and utilization of remittances etc. No specific theories, laws or models have been formulated for the same. An attempt is made here to review some important studies made on labour migration in Kerala.

- **Nair (1986) [9][10]** has studied on the impact and effects of labour migration at the household level in both its negative and positive aspects. He also analysed the problems faced by the emigrant families socially and psychologically and the changes in behaviours hence caused and other changes in their livelihood regarding children's education, career, marriage etc.
- **Gulati (1993)** analysed the effect of labour migration of male labourers on women in the year of 1990 from the collected data concentrated in a village of Trivandrum. The study showed how the migration has empowered the female flock from exploring various fields in which they were otherwise reluctant to get in contact with. It helped the women to expand their knowledge on banks, institutions and other services with more determination.
- **Nair (1998) [1]** made a study on foreign remittance and their form of utilization within 3 regions from 3 districts- Trichur, Malappuram and Trivandrum being regions where large number of emigrants to Gulf countries resided in the study dealt with various problems that are being faced by the economy such high rate of land, tensions aroused out of inflation due to the unproductive use of foreign remittances. The study also mentioned the inflow of remittances and measures introduced by the government to enlarge the benefits of foreign remittances to the society.
- **Devi (1998) [11]** analysed the impact of migration on female labourers from India to different Gulf countries like Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, UAE etc. They showed that some of them experienced a better and comfortable living than what they had in India, whereas others working as households, cleaners have experienced abuse and some even being exploited.
- **Zachariah, et.al, (2000)** tried studying the effect of labour migration on demographical aspects and its impact on gender issues, elder population, and the wives of emigrants. The study observed that the elderly population gained more care from children and the wives of the migrants even though being exposed to several problems at first, later was found taking up more responsibilities and self-confidence due to the absence of men in the family.

- **Shylaja (2010) [3]** analysed the socio-economic and demographical factors regarding labour migration which was concentrated on both rural and urban areas. It was found in the study that many of the emigrant families have enhanced their status and living conditions and has maintained a good hygienic livelihood and have also owned several assets from the inflow of remittances they receive. Other factor like change from joint family to nuclear family, women empowerment, educational status of children are also been discussed.
- **Kannan and Hari (2002)** developed an estimated time series observation for the period of 1972-2000 on foreign remittances to Kerala's economy. The study showed that the economy has acquired an important share of the state income with the range of 17-24% during the early nineties and thereby has a direct benefit from the foreign remittance rate of India.
- **Misiriya (1990) [12]** conducted a study on the effect of labour migration on education. It was found that the growth of English medium schools in Kerala is the result of growing number of emigrants from the country which specifically helped the Muslim community who were educationally backward. It also examined the relation between the educational qualifications of the members of the emigrant families to that of the year of migration and found that the drop outs from institutions were not from these families. The families of emigrants preferred advanced private schools for their children with the improved living standards thus, showing that lab or migration promoted education among the emigrant families especially the Muslims of the state.
- **Salim (1999) [6][7][13]** analysed the impact of migration in the development of education concentrated within the Malabar region. From the study it was noted that the economic status of the people was remarkably enhanced due to migration. The enhancement in the economic status of the people led to the revival of education in this region. It was also found that because of migration, both the women and the Muslim community of this region was more benefited as the conventionality and harshness towards them were changed in the way that they were able to move from places to places. As per the study conducted, new ideas, attitudes, beliefs were considered as the social remuneration for migrants.
- **Mallick (2008) [2][5]** conducted a study that was focused on the Remittance of Private Consumption and Investment & its implication on Economic Growth. Through his study it was understood that there was a positive effect on private consumption, debt, money supply and on income. For this he used the consumption model of time series model. It was also found that even though it had no effect on the rate of growth of output but it had a negative effect on the private investment. For increasing the investment rate and growth of output it is necessary for the government to take active measures towards diverting unfruitful uses of remittance.
- **Jaleel (2009) [4][14]** assessed the socio-economic cultural impact of migration to Gulf countries within the Malabar region. In accordance with his study, it was seen that as a result of migration, the typical behaviour towards Muslim community was drastically changed from rejecting western education to initiating in starting educational institutions which included women's colleges that gave English education. It was seen that there were alterations regarding the way of living, spending on health and education. Due to emigration the typical Muslim community is now modernized and is able to take up opportunities in life. This led an immense evolution in the society.
- **Barbara Harriss-White and Valentina Prosperi (2014)** learned that migration is nothing but menace to job opportunities for the people of that particular area and has a negative effect on the labour markets on the migrated region. They also tend to have impact politically and socio economically on the labour markets.
- **Page and Sonia Plazathe (2005)** conducted a study where it was pointed out the offering of migrants to the economic development of their own country. Even though the highlight of the study was setting out the knowledge regarding movement of people and migrant remittance across the world, it also drew attention on the dealings with implications of development of flow of money, knowledge, and skills by the migrants to their home countries.
- **Prakash V. (2009) [15]** in a study about the "Inter Regional Migration of Worker: A Study of Migrant Construction Workers in Kerala" pointed out that the reasons for the occurrence of migration to Kerala when Kerala is already known for migrating to other countries. The study said that the main cause for such migration to Kerala was because people of Kerala are more interested in migrating themselves than to serve their own state.
- **BinodKhadria (2006)** during rapid growing inequalities conducted a study which explained the relation poverty in India and labour migration. The study recognized under the effect of global financial crisis and was placed against many debated during economic liberalization.

## VII.METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily based on the survey conducted among random migrant workers in the city of Kochi with a limited sample size of only 50 casual workers who are mainly engaged in daily-waged jobs in various construction sites located around the city. The respondents are selected randomly in major locations where the laborers are mostly found seeking jobs on a daily basis waiting for their employers. The survey was done performing direct personal interviews with the respondents with a properly structured questionnaire.



### VIII. DATA COLLECTION

The data needed for the study has been acquired from both primary and secondary means. Primary data was collected afresh through direct interviews with the respondents and therefore possess originality in character. The method used for the collection of primary data is questionnaire survey method from a representative sample of relevant population.

The survey includes direct personal investigation, evaluation and discussions with the respondents for concrete observations.

The secondary data was obtained from works which have been published and the data that has already been collected by another researcher. The sources for secondary data include works from journals and other references mentioned.

### IX. TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

The tools of analysis of the data collected were one-way ANOVA test for studying the living conditions and for understanding the socio-economic factors of the migrant labors, for examining the factors that lead to the migration of respondents were done by conducting a chi-square test and the role of migrant labors in the infra-structural development of Kochi was analyzed through frequencies and histograms.

[Note: Inferences for the study were drawn from a small sample. Hence, the generalization is not free from sample errors. Also, the study covers only a small portion of the vast area of 'Labor Migration' within the limited parameters under the Covid-19 pandemic.]

### X. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

From the analysis of data collected from the selected sample of respondents the following observations were made.

- The analysis of one-way ANOVA conducted on the socio-economic factors and living conditions of the respondents lead to the observation that the null hypothesis that was mentioned that – 'factors relating to both the characteristics are being improved and had also helped in the change in their living status' was accepted. A comparison made between the state of the respondents and the factors such as their community, income of family after migration, educational level, living conditions in Kochi, water and electric supply and their origin has provided the following information.

#### 1. ANOVA

**Table 1.1**

|                                  |                | Sig. |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------|
| Community                        | Between groups | .797 |
|                                  | Within groups  |      |
|                                  | total          |      |
| Income of family after migration | Between groups | .067 |
|                                  | Within groups  |      |
|                                  | total          |      |
| Level of schooling completed     | Between groups | .156 |
|                                  | Within groups  |      |
|                                  | total          |      |

|                               |                |      |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------|
|                               | Within groups  |      |
|                               | total          |      |
| Living in Kochi               | Between groups | .085 |
|                               | Within groups  |      |
|                               | total          |      |
| Type of house living in Kochi | Between groups | .107 |
|                               | Within groups  |      |
|                               | total          |      |
| Electricity & water supply    | Between groups | .181 |
|                               | Within groups  |      |
|                               | total          |      |
| Origin of water supply        | Between groups | .215 |
|                               | Within groups  |      |
|                               | total          |      |

#### Interpretation

As shown in the above the table the comparison between groups of every factors has a significant value greater than the expected one(i.e.Sig.value>0.05), and therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Homogeneity tests were also performed by setting 0.05 as the significant value.

#### 2. CHI-SQUARE TEST

The chi-square test was conducted to understand the factors that lead to their migration to Kochi. For this the observations made on their reason for migrations was kept independent and dependency test on the other factors were analyzed and bar charts on every conclusion were drawn for the ease of verification. The findings showed the following results.

#### Reason For Migration \* Reason For Selecting Kochi For Migration

**Table 2.1**

|                              | value              | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson chi-square           | 8.607 <sup>a</sup> | 6  | .197                              |
| Likelihood ratio             | 10.1200            | 6  | .120                              |
| Linear-by-linear association | .182               | 1  | .669                              |
| N of valid cases             | 50                 |    |                                   |

#### Interpretation

From the above table, the calculated value = 8.607 with a p-value of 0.197, greater than 0.05. So, we reject the alternate hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is significance between the reason for migration and reason for selecting Kochi for migration.



**Reason of Migration \* Nature Of Work Before**

**Migration**

**Table 2.2**

|                              | value               | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson chi-square           | 23.454 <sup>a</sup> | 6  | .001                              |
| Likelihood ratio             | 26.465              | 6  | .000                              |
| Linear-by-linear association | 4.130               | 1  | .042                              |
| N of valid cases             | 50                  |    |                                   |

**Interpretation:**

From the above table, the calculated value = 23.454 with a p-value of 0.001, less than 0.05. So, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is no significance between the reason for migration and the nature of work before migration.

**Reason for Migration \* Minimum Wage Received In A**

**Daily Basis**

**Table 2.3**

|                              | value               | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson chi-square           | 33.750 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | .001                              |
| Likelihood ratio             | 37.260              | 12 | .000                              |
| Linear-by-linear association | 6.277               | 1  | .012                              |
| N of valid cases             | 50                  |    |                                   |

**Interpretation**

From the above table, the calculated value = 33.750 with a p-value of 0.001, less than 0.05. So, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is no significance between the reason for migration and minimum wage received in a daily basis

**Reason for Migration \* Whether Employed Before**

**Migration**

**Table 2.4**

|                              | value               | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson chi-square           | 13.530 <sup>a</sup> | 6  | .035                              |
| Likelihood ratio             | 17.912              | 6  | .006                              |
| Linear-by-linear association | 8.218               | 1  | .004                              |
| N of valid cases             | 50                  |    |                                   |

**Interpretation**

From the above table, the calculated value = 13.530 with a p-value of 0.036, less than 0.05. So, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is no significance between the reason for migration and whether employed before migration.

**Reason for Migration \* Type Of Work In Kochi**

**Table 2.5**

|                              | value               | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson chi-square           | 47.985 <sup>a</sup> | 15 | .000                              |
| Likelihood ratio             | 51.097              | 15 | .000                              |
| Linear-by-linear association | .984                | 1  | .321                              |
| N of valid cases             | 50                  |    |                                   |

**Interpretation**

From the above table, the calculated value = 47.985 with a p-value of 0.000, less than 0.05. So, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is no significance between the reason for migration and the type of work in Kochi.

From the above information it was concluded that the reason for migration for majority of the respondents was poverty that lead to their migration to Kochi due to its high-wage rate. The majority of the labour migrants were semi-skilled with an experience of work in their native states with a good number of them working in the household sector.

- The role of labour migrants in Kochi's infra-structural development was also studied through testing frequencies on the type of work the respondents were engaged in while in Kochi. A frequency distribution table was prepared and histogram was formed with respect to the collected data.

**3. FREQUENCY TABLE**

**Table 3.1**

|                     | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Construction worker | 17        | 34.0    | 34.0          | 34.0               |
| Casual worker       | 7         | 14.0    | 14.0          | 48.0               |
| Truck helper        | 3         | 6.0     | 6.0           | 54.0               |
| Gate keeper         | 6         | 12.0    | 12.0          | 66.0               |
| Household worker    | 11        | 22.0    | 22.0          | 88.0               |
| Street vendor       | 6         | 12.0    | 12.0          | 100.0              |
| Total               | 50        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

### Interpretation

The histogram conveys that majority of the respondents are engaged in construction works in Kochi which represents the role they play in the infra-structural development of the city.

The frequency test also shows a mean value of 3.1 and standard deviation of 1.909 with the total number of respondents being 50.

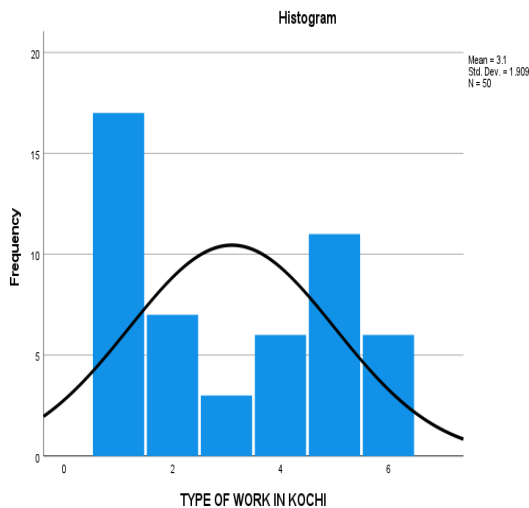


Figure 3.1

### • Impact Of Labour Migration On Economy

As per the study conducted by B.A Prakash about Gulf Migration and its Economic Impact: The Kerala experience, it was understood that the major economic impact of labor migration is made by the remittance the migrants send to their home [8].

Most of the labors find developing countries as their destination for migration. Migration has been a key important factor in the development of a country. In Kerala, Kochi is one of the main destinations for migrants. Comparatively, availability of work and the increased amount of income are the main factors that led labors migrate to Kochi. Migration can have both positive and negative impact on the life of a migrant as well as on the place from they are coming. Migration can reduce the rate of unemployment, poverty, attain skills, better education for children and increased income. It has effect on both sending and receiving place. Migration has social impact, psychological effect as well as economic impact on their region. When a person leaves their home place, it effects the development and output of that region. On the other hand, they bring in an increased amount of income. This amount has a great impact on the economy of their home state. Most of the family's rely on the income of the migrant for livelihood, education, etc. Some of the unskilled migrants return acquiring skills and knowledge. A major problem that some of the region faces is shortage of labors. Thus, the receiving region doesn't have to worry about the shortage of labor. The most important benefit is the remittance that the migrants send/bring to their own region. The term remittance means the amount of money the migrants earn and bring back to their region. The wage that they receive in the Kochi is comparatively more than the wage they get at their own region. It has helped many

families to educate their children and to enhance their living. People who have been living in a backward region, who couldn't afford to pay the schools for their children's education, are now able to do all that from the income they get as a migrant.

### XI. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the analysis of data collected the following conclusions were made;

- 1) The socio-economic characteristics and living conditions of the labour migrants has improved after migration to Kochi compared to their living status in their native states. The facilities available here and the type of work and salary they receive contributes to the same.
- 2) The major factors that influenced the respondents to migration was mainly due to poverty and the low wages they received in their native states. Reasons for selecting Kochi for migration was due to the high wage rates and large number of opportunities here.
- 3) Most among the respondents were semi-skilled workers with a working experience from their native states, and were found doing household works and constructions works in Kochi.
- 4) Majority of the respondents were engaged in construction works on a contract basis with an average daily income of 5000-1000 Rupees within a work duration of more than 9 hours along with paid overtime works. This also mentions the role of migrants in the infra-structural development of the city.
- 5) Maximum numbers of respondents were from the state of Bihar, who were males aged between 40-50 years with most of them having no educational qualifications and has a work experience of more than 3 years in Kochi.
- 6) The financial capacity of most of the respondent families has increased after migration that leads to improvement in the living status of their families in their native states.
- 7) Major issue faced by the migrants in their working environment was verbal abuse and some of them were also subjected to accidents and injuries at the time of work that was minimal at work place.

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