

A study on the Working and Living Condition of Migrant Workers in Rajakkamangalam Block of Kanyakumari District

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Abstract

This study was made to find out the working and living condition experienced by migrant workers in Kanyakumari District. Through a rigorous examination employing both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, several crucial facets pertaining to their livelihoods and daily existence have been revealed. The findings of this study illuminate the challenging circumstances faced by migrant workers in this region. Their work often entails prolonged hours, minimal wages, and inadequate social welfare provisions, indicative of vulnerabilities within the labor market. Living conditions emerged as a pivotal concern, with a substantial portion of migrant workers are lacking basic amenities like clean water, sanitation facilities, and proper healthcare access. To address these challenges, concerted efforts from various stakeholders are imperative. Policy interventions aimed at safeguarding labor rights, improving living conditions, ensuring access to healthcare, and fostering educational opportunities for migrant children are crucial steps toward enhancing the quality of life for these individuals.

Key Words : Migrant Workers, Working and Living Conditions, Push Factors, Pull factors

Introduction

Migration is a process through which people move from one place of residence to another. It has been a continuous social phenomenon since the dawn of human history. Movement and settlement have been the inherent nature of human beings since the dawn of civilization and it has taken place in a large scale in the post modern society.

In economic parlance, migration is perceived to take place when a person is engaged or likely to engage in a remunerative activity in a place of which he is not a native or national. The term "migrant worker" refers to a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

Industries situated in the urban areas require a steady supply of labour which induces migration from the adjoining villages and so rural-urban migration impacts the most on the labour market in sending and receiving areas. It also influences development in a number of crucial ways (Sundaravaradarajan, Sivakumar and Jahanmohan, 2011).

There are about 30.93 crore migrants constituting about 25.6 per cent of the total population in 2011. About 32.8 per cent of the migrants are urban and 67.2 per cent are rural, 29.3 per cent are men, while 70.3 per cent are females. The migrants constitute 24.9 per cent of the rural population of the country and 26.9 per cent of the urban population. Female migrants form 37.2 per cent of the total female population during 2011, which is 14.6 per cent in the case of the male population. Temporary migrants are about 5.62 crores in number which is about 17.8 per cent of the total migrants.

The total number of migrants in Tamil Nadu stood at 16.68 lakhs according to the 2011 Census, which formed 2.31 per cent of the total population of the State. The rural migrants accounted for 8.48 lakhs and the number of urban migrants stood at 8.20 lakhs and in relative terms, it accounted for 2.27 per cent of the rural population and 2.35 per cent of the urban population. Total male migrants stood at 8.19 lakhs and their female counterparts accounted for 8.48 lakhs and the relative share in their respective population formed 2.26 per cent and 2.35 per cent in the case of males and females respectively (Government of India, 2013).

Objectives of the Study

1. To study about the working and living conditions of migrant workers
2. To find out the push and pull factors of migration
3. To identify the problems faced by migrant labourers

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Scope and Methodology of the Study

The present study has been conducted to disclose the working condition of the migrant labourers in Rajakkamangalam Block of Kanniyakumari District, their wages, living standard, working hours, problems they face and the push and pull factors responsible for migration. The present study used data from primary sources. The primary data was collected by using a well prepared interview schedule.

The industries like hotels/canteens, hospitals, factories, shops provide employment to most of the migrant labourers in the organised setup in the study area. The number of migrant workers working in these sectors were listed out. There were 201 migrant workers and out of them 25 per cent, that is 50 migrant workers were selected as sample respondents for the present study. Simple random sampling method was adopted for selecting the respondents.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section analysis the aspects regarding the living and working condition of the sample migrant workers in the study area under the following heads.

State of Origin

The migrant workers normally come from North Indian states of Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand etc. The state of origin of the sample migrant workers is analysed in table 1.

Table 1
State of Origin of the Respondents

State	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Orissa	13	26
Jharkhand	10	20
Maharashtra	10	20
Bihar	10	20
Assam	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals that 26 per cent of the respondents have come from Orissa State, 20 per cent each are from Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Bihar States respectively and 14 per cent have come from the state of Assam. Thus it is evident from the analysis that majority of the migrant workers have come from the backward states of Northern India.

Source of Knowledge about the Present Job

The source from which the migrant workers came to know about the present job is discussed in table 2.

Table 2
Source of Knowledge about the Present Job

Source of Knowledge	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Friends	26	52
Contractors / agents	24	48
Total	50	100

Source : Primary Data

Table 2 reveals that 52 per cent of the migrant workers came to know through their friends and 48 per cent of them came and joined in the job through contractors / agents.

Daily Working Hours

Daily working hours of the respondents is analysed in table 3.

Table 3
Daily Working Hours of the Respondents

Working Hours	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to 8	7	14
9 – 10	25	50
11 – 12	13	26
Above 12	5	10
Total	50	100

Source : Primary Data

Table 3 shows that 50 per cent of the respondents work 9 to 10 hours a day, 22 per cent work 11 to 12 hours, 14 per cent work up to 8 hours and 10 per cent of the respondents work more than 12 hours a day. Thus it is evident that the migrant labourers are working more hours than the specified working hours of 8 hours a day.

Monthly Salary

The monthly salary of the migrant workers is discussed in table 4.

Table 4
Monthly Salary of the Respondents

Salary (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to 5000	-	0
5001 to 10000	24	48
10001 to 15000	26	52
Above 15000	-	0
Total	50	100

Source : Primary Data

Table 4 reveals that 52 per cent of the respondents get monthly salary between rupees 10001 and 15000 and 48 per cent of the respondents get monthly salary between rupees 5001 to 10000. None of the respondents are paid salary above rupees 15000.

Benefits/ Facilities Provided

The employers who employ the migrant workers provide certain benefits/ facilities which is discussed in table 5.

Table 5
Benefits Provided by the Employers to the Migrant Workers

Benefits Provided	Yes	No	Total
Free food	25 (50)	25 (50)	50 (100)
Free accommodation	32 (64)	18 (36)	50 (100)
Free medical care	46 (92)	4 (8)	50 (100)
Bonus / festival allowances	50 (100)	0 (0)	50 (100)

Source : Primary Data

Note : Figures in brackets denotes percentage to respective total

Table 5 shows that 50 per cent are provided free food by the employers, 64 per cent are given free accommodation, 92 per cent are given free medical care and all the respondents (100 per cent) are provided bonus, festival allowances

Problems faced by the Migrant Workers

The migrant workers come across certain problems which is discussed in table 6.

Table 6
Problems faced by Migrant Workers

Problems	No. of Respondents (n = 50)
Lack of proper identification of employers	13 (26)
Problem associated with health	41 (22)
Problems at place of residence	36 (72)
Problems related to registration with the contractors	28 (56)
Family problem	32 (64)
Problem of change in food	42 (84)
Problem of change in living condition	45 (90)
Problem related to social security	40 (80)
Problem of language	50 (100)
Not getting the promised pay	46 (92)

Source : Primary Data

Note : Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Table 6 highlights the problems faced by the migrant workers. Problem of language is a major problem as it is faced by all (100 percent) of the respondents. The following problems are : not getting the promised pay (46 per cent), problem of change in living condition (45 per cent), problem of change in food (42 per cent), problem associated with health (41 per cent), problem related to social security (40 per cent), problems at place of residence (36 per cent), family problem (32 per cent), problems related to registration with contractors (28 per cent) and lack of proper identification of employees (13 per cent).

Push Factors of Migration

The push factors are those factors which force the labourers to migrate. The push factors of migration are discussed in table 7.

Table 7
Push Factors of Migration

Push Factors	No. of Respondents (n = 50)
Unemployment	50 (100)
Poor economic condition	50 (100)
Natural calamities	41 (82)
Drought and famine	2 (4)
Low wages	50 (100)
Lack of opportunities for advancement	50 (100)
Exhaustion of natural resources	20 (40)
Non availability of alternative sources of income	36 (72)

Source : Primary Data

Note : Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Table 7 reveals that the situations prevailing in the native place of the workers force (push) them to migrate. The major push factors are unemployment, poor economic condition, low wages and lack of opportunities for advancement said by all of the respondents (100 per cent) followed by natural calamities (82 per cent), non availability of alternative sources of income (72 per cent) and drought and famine (4 per cent).

Pull Factors of Migration

Pull factors for those factors which attract the labourers and induced to migrate. The pull factors are explained in table 8.

Table 8
Pull Factors of Migration

Pull Factors	No. of Respondents (n = 50)
Availability of better job opportunities	50 (100)
Higher wages	50 (100)
Better working condition	41 (82)
Better amenities	33 (66)
Environmental safety	29 (58)
Attractive environment	30 (60)
The promise of a better life	44 (88)

Source : Primary Data

Note : Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Table 8 depicts the factors which attracted (pulled) the respondents to this place. Availability of better job facilities and higher wages are the major pull factors as it is said by all (100 percent) of the respondents. The following pull factors are the promise of a better life (88 per cent), better working conditions (41 per cent), better amenities (66 per cent), attractive environment (60 per cent) and environmental safety (58 per cent).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted aspects of the working and living conditions experienced by migrant workers in Kanyakumari District. Through comprehensive data collection, including surveys, interviews, and observations, several key findings have emerged.

The research revealed that a significant portion of migrant workers in Kanyakumari District engage in various sectors contributing significantly to the local economy. However, their employment often entails long working hours, low wages, and limited access to social security benefits, highlighting vulnerabilities in the labor sector. Living conditions were found to be challenging, lacking basic amenities like sanitation, clean water, and adequate healthcare facilities. Such substandard living conditions pose health risks and adversely impact the overall well-being of the migrant population. Policy interventions and community-driven initiatives are essential to address these pressing issues. Effective implementation of labor laws, provision of decent housing, improved access to healthcare, and initiatives to enhance social inclusion are imperative to improve the lives of migrant workers in Kanyakumari District.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgency for collaborative efforts involving government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and policymakers to formulate and implement comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing the working and living conditions of migrant workers. Addressing these challenges will not only improve the lives of migrants but also contribute to the overall socio-economic development and inclusivity of Kanyakumari District.

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