

Role of Migrant Labours in the Kerala State Economy

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Area/Section: Management.

Type of the Paper: Descriptive Study.

Type of Review: Peer Reviewed as per [C|O|P|E](#) guidance.

Indexed in: OpenAIRE.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6775560>

Google Scholar Citation: [IJMSTS](#)

How to Cite this Paper:

Aswani, T. D., & Bhat, Shivashankar, (2022). Role of Migrant Labours in the Kerala State Economy. *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMSTS)*, 7(1), 504-512. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6775560>

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMSTS)

A Refereed International Journal of Srinivas University, India.

CrossRef DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47992/IJMSTS.2581.6012.0204>

Received on: 16/05/2022

Published on: 30/06/2022

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *Migrant labour contributes to the economic growth of the economy. Agriculturalists, manufacturers, and service providers are increasingly turning to poor migrant labour for operations, according to field evidence and micro studies. Employers can practise a hire-and-fire strategy with migrant workers since they supply the most flexible workforce. Kerala has a large number of cyclical migrant workers. These workers have been crucial in keeping and growing Kerala's economy. The impact of migration of labour can be analysed in areas like the labour market, the public purse (tax revenue) and economic growth. The goal of this research is to see how much native labour is available in the rural labour market and to look at the current migratory worker structure.*

Methodology: *The methodology used in this study is Descriptive Research, which is mainly concerned with secondary data sources. Books, newspapers, journals, articles, and government websites are used to gather secondary data.*

Originality: *The breadth and function of migrant workers in Kerala's present labour market, as well as the availability of native labour in the casual rural labour market, are all discussed.*

Value: *By examining the sectoral-wise distribution of employment, the study will aid in determining the role of migrants in the Kerala economy.*

Findings: *In India, the rural labour market is shifting away from agriculture and toward secondary and tertiary industries. The overall employment in agriculture is declining every year whereas in the industrial and services sectors there is a gradual increase in the workforce. The lack of manual labourers is a key issue for the government. The influx of migrant workers into Kerala's labour market provided relief to the state's manual labour shortage since they provided a cheaper labour force. Migrant workers play a vital role in the labour supply and play a significant part to the state's economic development by imparting labour for a variety of economic activities that would otherwise be impossible to sustain owing to a labour shortage.*

Paper Type: *Descriptive study*

Keywords: Rural labour market, Migrant workers, Manual labourers, Economic development, Kerala Economy, SWOC analysis

1. INTRODUCTION :

Kerala's economy has shifted from an agriculture-driven economy to one dominated by the services sector [1]. This is mostly due to increasing demand for both public and private services as a result of greater cash flow from abroad [2]. Finance, real estate, and professional services, which include the IT industry, have all experienced rapid growth in Kerala during the 2010s. Between 2012-13 and 2018-19, this industry increased at a rate of over 9% in most years. This sector's contribution to Kerala's GSVA increased from 16.8% in 2011-12 to 21.6 per cent in 2018-19. The industrial sector in Kerala is no longer appealing to the entrepreneurial class, and considerable investment has shifted to the service sector, which is not subject to tight labour restrictions. Consequently, there has occurred a structural imbalance in the labour market between the nature and quantity of labour demanded and supplied. Keralites have been looking for higher wages and skilled labour outside India due to a high literacy rate

(96.11 per cent), better education, and a lack of professional and skilled jobs [3]. This trend has resulted in a decrease in the workforce availability in Kerala, particularly in unskilled jobs, in recent years, encouraging the migration of casual workers from other Indian states [4].

Internal migration within a state and external migration to a different state are two types of migration [5]. People are motivated to move due to two types of forces: pull and push. On the one hand, people migrate for a variety of reasons, including greater job prospects, higher earnings, higher quality education, better health, and better living situations [6]. Poverty, unemployment, population density, poor agricultural yields, and other issues such as raising families, lack of civil activities in residential areas, calamities, and internal battles based on caste, creed, and race are all push or distress factors [7]. So, these fragile economic and social conditions make the workers redundant and impelled them to migrate to another conducive place. Both of these factors contribute to the influx of casual workers from other Indian states to Kerala.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

The term “labour migration” refers to people moving for work from one state to another or inside their own nation of residency. In the recipient state, migration and remittances, generates increased incomes, alleviate poverty, improve health and educational outcomes, and assist economic development. However, for migrants and their families, these gains may come at a large societal cost.

Table 1: This table reviews the various works of literature on migrant labour in Kerala.

S. No.	Area	Contribution	Authors
1.	Construction workers from Bengal.	It focuses on the development of domestic remittance patterns among migrant construction workers from West Bengal in Kerala, which has since become obsolete because to covid-19.	Reja & Das (2021). [8]
2.	Mobility and social protection in Kerala.	The study investigates the concept of social protection by focusing on a Sunday market for migrants in Perumbavoor, Kochi, Kerala.	Prasad-Aleyamma (2011). [9]
3.	Migrant worker’s earnings and living.	This study is focusing on the earning and non-earning aspects of migrants from W. Bengal engaged in different types of work in multiple locations in south Indian states.	Arun & Ajay (2017). [10]
4.	Wage differences between the migrant and local labourers.	It focuses on how the high prevalence of internal migrants in Kerala's labour market has ensued in a high frequency of wage disparity, demanding a review of the state's labour laws wage policies and labour laws.	Baiju & Shaman (2019). [11]
5.	Insecurity of migrants.	It looks at the several aspects of migrant workers' vulnerability in a subnational context, namely in Kerala, India.	Behera (2018). [12]
6.	Keralite’s Gulf connection emigration and remittances.	For the period 1972 to 2000, this study seeks to create a time series estimation of remittances from outside the Kerala economy.	Menon, et al., (2017). [13]
7.	Economic conditions of the migrants.	It focuses on the flood of migrants from various states of India to Kerala, which is a profitable job market for employees from outside the state due to higher earnings, numerous job availabilities, and a labour shortage.	Saikia (2014). [14]

Source: Compiled by the author

The study based on ‘Tamil migrant’s income generation shows that the migrant workers earn significantly more money than those in their home states. However, they work extra hours and their actual pay may be lower because the cost of living in Kochi is higher in terms of food, shelter, and transportation [15]. By synthesising secondary information, this research concentrated on analyses of

labour migration to Kerala, important government efforts to increase migrant's social security, and the government's response to workers' misery during the covid pandemic periods [16-17]. This paper focuses on labour migration, particularly on migrant employees who are isolated from the rest of society and are unable to network with local workers and residents to learn about local wage levels, worker rights, and working conditions.

3. RESEARCH GAP :

Internal migration, migrant incomes, and their economic and social situations have all been studied by a number of academics and government officials. However, none of the studies has looked into the role of migrant labour in the Kerala economy. As a result, the current research emphasises on the contribution of migrant workforces to the Kerala economy.

4. RESEARCH AGENDA :

- (1) What is the availability of native workers in the rural labour market of Kerala?
- (2) What is the breadth of guest workers in today's labour market?

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- (1) To determine the availability of native workers in the labour market of Kerala.
- (2) To investigate the breadth of guest workers in today's labour market.
- (3)

6. ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM :

By 2020, Kerala is predicted to have 5 to 5.5 million inter-state migrants., with a population of 3,34,06000, and their numbers are expanding at a staggering 10% per year. According to the State Planning Board's statistical report for the year 2021, approximately 40 lakh Keralites work abroad, with another 13.73 lakh working in other states. It implies that there is a shortage of supply of labours in the Kerala labour market [1].

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

Kerala's newly educated workforce has become exceedingly mobile, eager to work anywhere in the world to make a living today [18]. They prefer white-collar jobs, depleting the state's supply of traditional/conventional labour. Kerala appeals to migrant workers because of its high wages, expanding urbanisation, and scarcity of educated labour. The scarcity of locally skilled labour creates space for migratory workers [19]. Workers from other states are preferred by employers because they seek cheaper wages than their native counterparts. In this context, a study of the dynamics of Kerala's casual labour market is proposed. Because Ernakulam is one of Kerala's districts with a large number of casual migrant workers [20].

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

The methodology used in this study is Descriptive Research, which is based on secondary data sources. Books, journals, newspapers, articles, and government websites are used to gather secondary data. The information has been collected by using the keywords rural labour market, migrant workers, manual labourers, and economic development through Google scholar and Sci-Hub. The required articles were obtained by electronic search and manually screened.

The study's main goal is to examine the impact of migrant workers on the Kerala economy, with the goal of determining the availability of native workers in the labour market of Kerala and investigating the breadth of guest workers in today's labour market.

9. RESULTS OF THE STUDY :

9.1 Changing Structure of Workforce in Kerala:

In rural India and Kerala, agriculture is the largest employer. Kerala's rural labour market is shifting away from agriculture and toward non-agricultural industries. Agriculture's share of total rural employment has decreased. Industry, construction, and services, on the other hand, had an increase in share. This suggests that rural employment is diversifying, this should be accelerated even more for improved livelihood security. The construction industry has been a driving force behind this shift in employment [21].

9.2 The reason behind the reduction in the labour force:

Kerala's demographic structure has evolved to the point where the state's gains from the demographic dividend would be little in recent years. Kerala's birth rate has been quickly diminishing, hastening the demographic change. Kerala's workforce increased by 0.5 per cent between 2001 and 2011, The country as a whole grew by 3.3 percentage points. The working population in many North and East Indian states, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, and West Bengal, is predicted to increase considerably. Kerala's population, on the other hand, is rapidly ageing. Between 2001 and 2011, Kerala's population over 60 raised by 1.1 million, nearly matching the growth in the working force over a similar duration [22].

The workforce of Kerala was estimated to be 127 lakhs on January 1, 2018, founded on evaluations from the Labour Survey conducted in 2017-18 and the Census of India. There were 93.7 lakh men and 33.4 lakh women employed [23]. Male and female labourers as a percentage of the population, or labour participation rates, were 50.5 per cent and 16.4 per cent, respectively, in Kerala. These rates were only slightly lower than the national norms [24].

In terms of female labour force participation, Kerala has outperformed the India's remaining territories in 2017-18, the equivalent numbers for Kerala and India were 21.3 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively. At the same time, Kerala's women's unemployment rate was much higher than the national average [25].

Agriculture and related activities employed 21.3 lakh people in Kerala, accounting for 16.7% of the total employment. In Kerala, the share of the employees occupied in agriculture and related activities is substantially lower than the national average. The objective of producing quality jobs in the secondary and tertiary sectors has become an issue in Kerala as a result of the increasing transfer of the workforce away from agriculture to other industries [26].

In the state, the construction and manufacturing industries employed 24lakh and 15 lakh workers, accordingly. The services sector, which employed 65.6 lakh people in Kerala, is the most important source of employment. 19.7 lakh of Kerala's 33.4 lakh female labourers worked in the service sector [27]. In Kerala, there were 8.1 lakh women working in the education and health sectors combined. Kerala's tertiary sectors like information technology, health, finance, real estate, public administration, education, and professional services provide a significant amount of employment. In total, these activities employed 25.9 lakh people in the state, including 13.3 lakh women. These are jobs that require employees to have a high degree of education and competence. At the national level, employment in these activities' accounts for 4.6 per cent of total employment in Kerala. Women working in these fields account for 8.3% of all women employed in India in Kerala.

Table 2: Estimates of Employment by Sectors, Kerala and India, in lakh, January 2018

	Kerala		India	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
Agriculture	21.3	5.2	1971.6	591.8
Manufacturing	15.0	4.7	602.4	142.1
Industry	16.2	4.9	651.6	146.1
Construction	24.0	3.6	545.9	54.1
Service sector	65.7	19.9	1543.4	292.5
Total	127.0	33.4	4712.8	1084.5

Source: Compiled by the author

9.3 Contribution of Guest Workers in the Kerala economy:

The influx of guest workers into Kerala's labour market provided relief to the state's manual labour shortage, and they also provided a cheaper labour force. Migrant workers participate in nearly all of the same activities as native workers [28]. They carry out various agricultural tasks. Migrant workers play a vital role in the job market and donate significantly to the economic development of the state by supplying employment for a variety of economic activities that would otherwise be unfeasible owing to a labour shortage [29]. Despite the fact that guest workers are a vital source of labour, and have played a vital role in shaping the state's economy by allowing human resources, they have received little gratitude and attention in the state, and academics have ignored their conditions and contributions in studying them [30]. As a result, a variety of factors are considered, such as their socioeconomic rank, reasons for their assignment, employment and remittance patterns, working and living circumstances in

the state, connections with workers, native employees, and the general public, and the effects of their migration on themselves and other elements of the state's labour markets and economy.

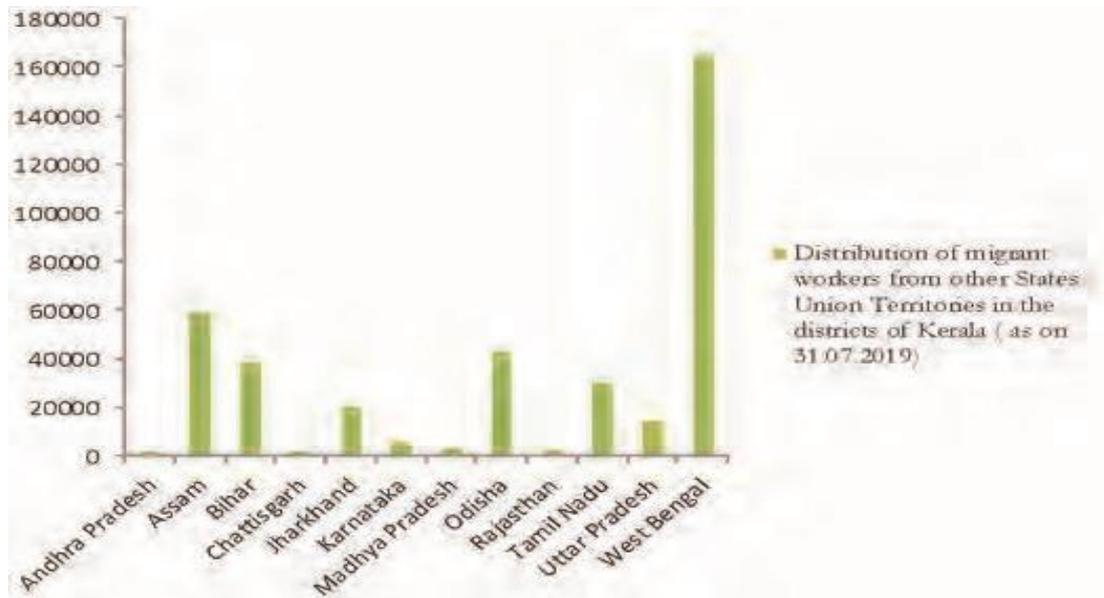


Fig. 1: Distribution of Guest Workers from the Various States.

Source: Labour Survey of Kerala [31].

Apart from the neighbouring states, the current shift in the casual work sector in Kerala reveals a considerable influx of migrant labours from other states like W. Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Bihar.

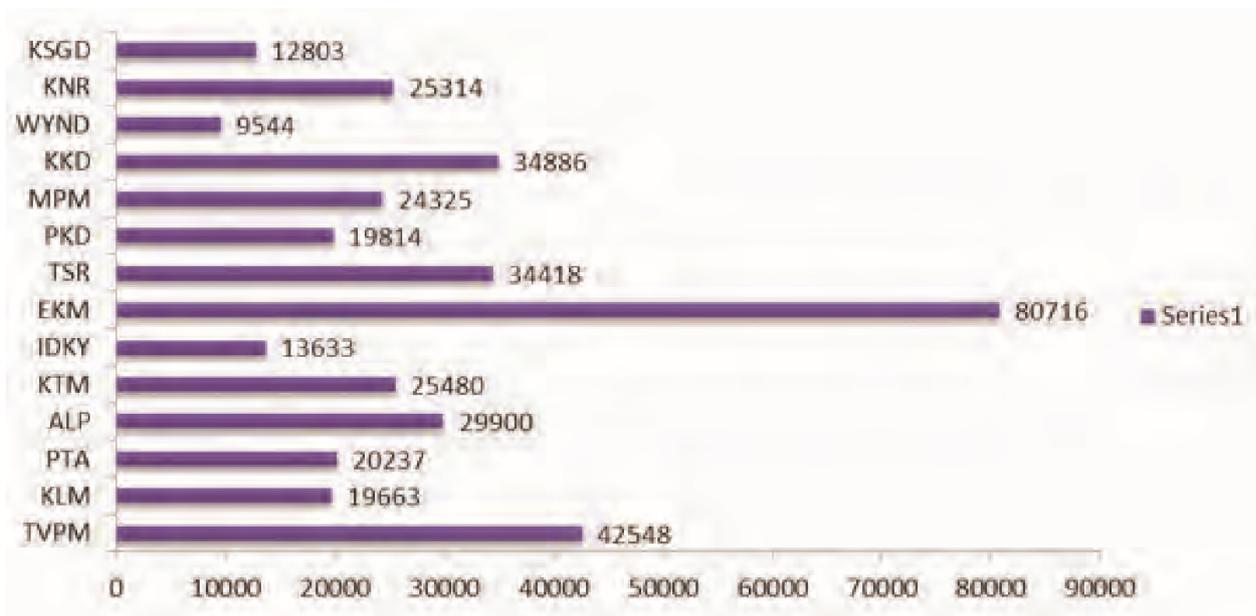


Fig. 2: District-wise internal guest workers in Kerala

Source: Labour Survey of Kerala [32].

As of July 31, 2019, the number of migrant workers had risen to 3,93,281 from 2,85,849 in 2018. West Bengal has the biggest number of migrants in Kerala. Figure 1 depicts the allocation of guest workers from various states. Ernakulam has the biggest concentration of migrant labourers. Figure 2 depicts inter-state migratory workers by the district in Kerala.

10. SWOC ANALYSIS :

SWOC analysis is a strategic planning and strategic management technique for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in corporate competitiveness or project planning or a situation [33-35]. It's also known as scenario analysis or situational evaluation. It's also known as scenario analysis or situational evaluation. In this paper, we have analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the workforce in Kerala.

Strength:

- (1) Assists in reducing labour shortages.
- (2) Migrants are more willing to work in low-wage, low-skilled positions.
- (3) Boosting economic growth.
- (4) Additional tax revenue for the host country.
- (5) Facilitates the emancipation of people from poverty.

Weakness:

- (1) Possibilities for exploitation and an increase in crime rates.
- (2) Public services are being strained.
- (3) An excessive number of low-wage labourers may enter the state.
- (4) Local overcrowding may become an issue.

Opportunity:

- (1) When compared to their home states, workers receive higher salaries and greater job options.
- (2) Contribute to the improvement of social and economic conditions.
- (3) Can be beneficial in areas where the bulk of the population is above the age of 65.
- (4) New concepts and ideas are being developed.

Constraints:

- (1) Migrants have time to adjust to their new surroundings.
- (2) Migrants may face difficulties with language, education, and assimilation.
- (3) It is possible for highly qualified individuals to leave that location.
- (4) Values in culture can shift throughout time.
- (5) It's possible that the local community will become more irritated.

11. FINDINGS :

- (1) Keralites prefer white-collar jobs, depleting the state's supply of traditional/conventional labour.
- (2) The scarcity of locally skilled labour creates space for migratory workers.
- (3) Workers from other states are preferred by employers because they seek cheaper wages than their native counterparts.
- (4) Around 5 million inter-state migrant workers are available in Kerala's labour market.
- (5) Guest workers are a vital source of labour, and have played a vital role in shaping the state's economy by allowing human resources.

12. SUGGESTIONS :

- (1) Migrant workers are more prone to be exploited by employers or intermediary brokers. It is the obligation of the appropriate authorities to eradicate or significantly reduce exploitation.
- (2) Due to the influx of a large number of low-paid workers, the wage level may decline. In order to balance the supply and demand for labour, the government must implement tight measures.

13. CONCLUSIONS :

Kerala's rural labour market is shifting away from agriculture and toward secondary and tertiary industries. The lack of manual labourers is a key issue for the government. The influx of migrant workers into Kerala's labour market provided relief to the state's manual labour shortage, and they also provided a cheaper labour force. Migrant workers play a vital role in Kerala's labour market and impart significantly to the development of the economy of the state by supplying labour for a variety of economic activities that would otherwise be unfeasible owing to a labour shortage.

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