

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN KERALA

Nimisha Sreedharan

Department of Management, Kochi
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham
India.
nimishasreevk@gmail.com

Dr.V.Murale

Department of Management, Kochi
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham
India.
v_murale@asb.kochi.amrita.edu

Abstract— Recently, Kerala has been experiencing a large inflow of migrant workers from various parts of India. Higher wages, better job opportunities and a dearth of local labor make Kerala a preferable job destination for people from other states.

This is a conceptual paper on the Social Integration of Migrant Workers in Kerala. Its motive is to study the attitude of migrant workers towards the local population of Kerala and to check if their contribution towards the economy of Kerala is being duly recognized and accepted by the local people and also to determine the extent to which these workers are integrated towards the Kerala society.

The study measures the attitude of migrant workers towards Malayalees and examines the extent to which the attitude of migrant workers towards Malayalees is influenced by factors like daily wages, their native state, marital status and interest to continue in Kerala. At the same time this study also measures the attitude of Malayalees towards migrant workers and analyzes to what extent factors like occupation, gender and educational qualification influence their attitude towards migrant workers.

Above all, the study measures the integration level of migrant workers towards the society, using the two dimensional model of the Ethnosizer, classifying the integration level into Assimilation, Integration, Marginalization and Separation, based on the commitment of migrant workers towards their host state (Kerala) and the commitment towards their state of origin.

Keywords— Social Integration, Assimilation, Marginalization, Separation, Migrant workers

I. INTRODUCTION

Migration occurs when people move from one place to another and when they intend to settle down temporarily or permanently in the new place for various reasons. Migration often involves long working hours, poor access to basic amenities, bad working and living conditions and social isolation.

Poverty has become a major factor for migration recently. Higher wages, better education, employment and economic opportunities cause migration. Other reasons include repayment of debts, financing education and marriage of dependents etc.

According to a research conducted by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (Trivandrum) for the Kerala Government (2013), there are more than 25 lakh migrant workers in Kerala today with an annual arrival rate of 2.35 lakhs. Most of them are single males between 18-35 years old and are from West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The remittances by them to their native states are above Rs. 17,500 crores. 60% of them work in the construction sector and the remaining work in hotels, agriculture, trade and manufacturing sectors.

Like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Kerala is also experiencing a large inflow of migrant workers into urban areas. High wages and shortages of unskilled and skilled labor due to high education levels and emigration to foreign countries make Kerala an attractive job destination for workers from outside the state.

There are some existing labor laws which aim at improving the conditions of migrant workers and that help prevent their exploitation. Even though such laws and regulations exist, laws and regulations which concern the working conditions of

migrant laborers remain highly ineffective. Legislation fails because the state gives low priority to migrants and these workers get little support from civil society. The Kerala legislation has to focus their effort on creating laws which give social inclusion to migrant workers and enable them to live with honor in their host state. Kerala must put in place effective mechanisms to ensure the welfare of migrant workers, and given the possibility that many of them might settle down in their host state; help them in getting integrated with the local community.

This study is an effort for assessing the attitude of migrant workers towards the local people and understands the factors which influence this attitude. At the same time, the attitude of local people of Kerala towards migrant workers and to what extent these migrant workers are integrated to the society is also studied.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Integration

Social integration can be looked at as a process in which the members take part in dialogue to attain and establish peaceful relations of coexistence in a society. It doesn't mean forced assimilation.

Emile Durkheim (1895) studied how social integration was maintained by societies after modern economic relations replaced traditional bonds. Durkheim believed that a powerful force was exerted on individuals by the society. Individuals' values, norms and beliefs constitute collective consciousness or a shared approach of behaving as well as understanding in this world. Durkheim believed that it is the collective consciousness that binds people together and leads to social integration.

Measurement of Various levels of integration

The method to measure ethnic identity, the *ethnosizer*, ranges from 0 (full commitment to the host state) to 1 (full commitment to the state of origin). There are one-dimensional and two-dimensional models of the *ethnosizer*. In the one dimensional model, a stronger commitment to the host state implies a weaker commitment to the state of origin and vice versa. In the two-dimensional model, the *ethnosizer* measurement allows simultaneous intensification of connections with the host and origin states. Like Berry (1980), the 2D model of the *ethnosizer* categorizes in-migrants into four states:

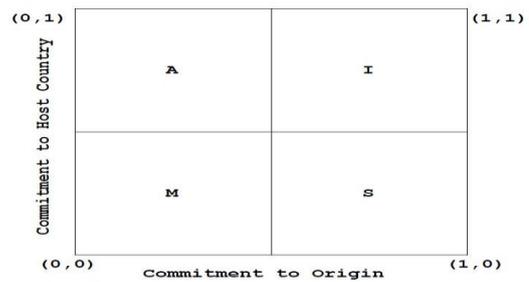
- 1. Assimilation, 2. Integration,**
- 3. Marginalization, 4. Separation**

Assimilation(A) is a strong identification with the society and culture of the host state, and a strong conformity to its codes

of conduct, norms, and values, and a weak identification with ancestry. *Integration* (I) is attained when a person shows strong commitment to the state of origin as well as commitment to the host state. *Marginalization* (M) is strong detachment from or weak dedication to either the culture of origin or the host culture. *Separation* (S) is the commitment to the culture of origin, even after years of emigration, coupled with weak commitment to the host culture.

Two dimensional Ethnosizer

Source: Constant et al. (2009)



The 5 Elements of Cultural Identity which Constitute the Ethnosizer

- 1. Language**
 - Languages spoken
 - Efforts taken in order to learn the language
 - Respect given for each other's language
- 2. Culture**
 - Leisure time activities preferred
 - Meals preferred
 - Participation in local events/festivals
- 3. Self-identification**
 - Self-identification with the host state
 - Self-identification with the state of origin
- 4. Interaction**
 - Friends in the host state
 - Friends from the state of origin
 - Interaction with people in the host state.
- 5. Migration history**
 - Interest to remain in the host state permanently
 - Interest to continue in the host state for a long time

Using this ethnosizer model, the social integration levels of the Migrant workers in Kerala were measured by the researchers.

Push and pull factors (E.G. Ravenstein, 1889) for migration

There are various types of push and pull factors that lead to migration.

Pull Factors: These are reasons for people migrating to a place because of desirable factors such as better climate, freedom and good food supply. Main pull factors that cause migration are better employment opportunities, better working and living conditions, more freedom and enjoyment, better education and healthcare facilities, good climate, safety and other such positive factors

Push Factors: These are reasons for people emigrating (leaving a place) because of difficulties (such as natural calamities, war, food shortage, etc.). Main push factors that cause migration are less job opportunities, poor living conditions, natural disasters and calamities, fear, forced labor or slavery, poor health care, loss of money, death threats, pollution, desire for more freedom, poor housing, tenant/landlord issues, discrimination, war and other such negative factors.

Theories of Migration

There are various theoretical models available to explain migration. Migration theories are important because they help us understand movement of population within their economic and political contexts. If emigration from Third World countries is a result of global economic problems, then this migration can be better managed with international economic agreements instead of having restrictive immigration acts.

Geographer E.G. Ravenstein (1889) introduced many migration laws in the 1880s which constitute the foundation of modern migration theory. Everett Lee (1969) reformed E.G. Ravenstein's migration laws to emphasize more on push (internal) factors. Lee also specified the effect that the *intervening obstacles* have on migration. He argued that certain variables such as political and physical barriers, distance and having dependents can hinder or stop migration. Lee mentioned that migration is selective in nature because variables such as gender, age and social class can influence how people respond to push and pull factors, and these conditions would also enable them to face intervening obstacles. Further, there are certain personal factors that can facilitate or obstruct migration, such as education, financial status, character, family links etc. For example, a young single, unemployed adult will respond to income and job factors and give less importance to the education system of the destination and that would be more of a concern for a family with children.

Neoclassical Migration Economic Theory Application of this theory can be seen in this study. This theory tells that migration is controlled by differences in the returns on labor among markets. Countries with insufficient labor supply and

high labor demand will provide high wages which pull immigrants in, from countries with excess labor supply. Harris and Todaro (1970) emphasized that migration is a result of wage differences across countries and markets that arise from varying degrees of tightness of labor markets. As per this theory, geographical difference in labor demand and supply and consequently the wage difference across capital-rich and labor-rich nations drive migration. Hence this approach mainly focuses on wages. If full employment is assumed, this approach would predict a linear relationship between flow of migration and difference in wages. (Borjas 2008; Bauer and Zimmermann 1999; Massey et al. 1993) Over 30% difference of wage is necessary if the profits from migration have to supersede the costs (Krieger and Maitre 2006; Mansoor and Quillin 2006). Migration can be determined by *expected* instead of actual earnings and the key variable is earnings weighted by probability of employment in the extended neoclassical models. (Massey et al. 1993; Bauer and Zimmermann 1999)

III. NEED FOR STUDY

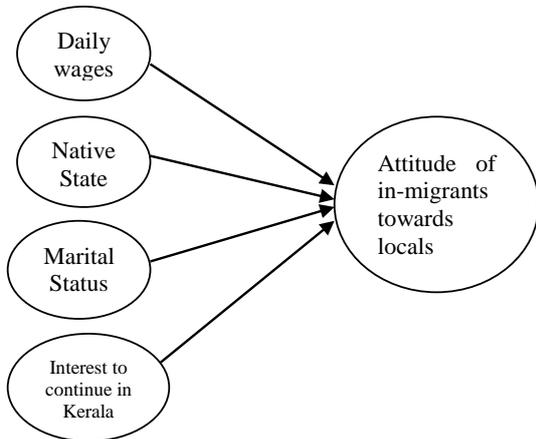
A lot of studies have been conducted regarding the various aspects of migration of Malayalees to other countries particularly to those in the Middle East. But researchers have paid very little attention to the increasing inflow of migrants to Kerala. It requires high priority in the research agenda of Kerala. There is a need for a detailed research on internal migration that must focus on addressing various issues related to the labor market, access to public services, poverty and environment. The labor market issues include the seasonality of migration, reasons for preference of migrant workers, recruitment methods, the skill sets of migrant workers etc. Access to education and health care of the migrant workers and their families and the implementation of social security schemes for them have to be looked into in detail. The effectiveness of implementation of different laws in relation to these migrants also needs to be analyzed.

There have been reports of widespread human rights violation by the police. This is an area that needs exploration. Migrants are sometimes being considered as criminals by some local people. But there are some migrants from other states that come under the criminal category according to the Police Department. To differentiate the migrant workers from these criminals, there is a need to possess identification documents for these migrant workers. One such program was introduced by Grameen Vikas Trust (GVT) in Madhya Pradesh. GVT developed an identity card system for the migrants by working with the local governments of villages. Migrants can protect themselves against harassment with these identity cards. The application of this scheme in Kerala can be studied.

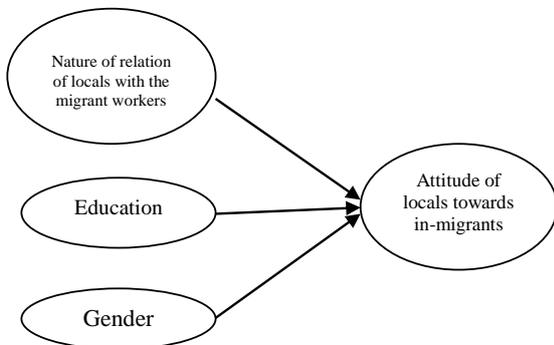
As a result of cultural and linguistic differences, the migrants face social exclusion, discrimination and stereotyping and this needs to be studied. Migrants come from various social and cultural backgrounds and are employed in various sectors. It is

important to study about the diversities and challenges of the migration process through proper research. Their problem of social integration in Kerala is an issue that needs to be studied. This requires an extensive study of different parts of Kerala and migrants in various occupations.

IV. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



Here the dependent variable is the attitude of in-migrants towards locals. The attitude of migrant workers towards locals is influenced by factors like daily wages, their native state, marital status and interest to continue in Kerala.



Here the dependent variable is the attitude of locals towards in-migrants. Factors like nature of relation of locals with the migrant workers, gender and educational qualification influence the attitude of locals towards in-migrants.

V. FUTURE RESEARCH

A study will be conducted by collecting data from migrant workers employed in sectors such as hotels and construction in Ernakulam as well as by interviewing Malayalees from the same area. Questionnaires will be used for data collection. Based on the data collected, the study will measure the attitude of migrants towards Malayalees and vice versa. It will also determine the integration level of these migrant workers towards the Kerala society.

VI. CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper aims at assessing the attitude of migrant workers towards Malayalees and vice versa. The paper studies the factors that deter the local people of Kerala in integrating the migrant workers in to the Kerala society. This study also measures the integration level of migrant workers to the Kerala society based on the two dimensional model of the Ethnosizer which categorizes the integration level into Assimilation, Integration, Marginalization and Separation, based on the commitment of the migrant workers towards their host state (Kerala) and the commitment towards their state of origin.

The issue which needs attention is that do the less educated unskilled and semiskilled migrant workers feel comfortable to work in Kerala. It is seen that the wages in Kerala are much higher than the wages the migrants receive in their home state. The neo classical economic theory explains this social phenomenon of migration. Wages and demand for labor are high in Kerala.

The focus of this study was to examine to what extent the locals of Kerala want the migrant workers to be integrated to the society and culture of Kerala and what are the problems of integration of these workers.

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