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Labour Migration in India – A Case Study of Tamilnadu

Dr.S.THANGAMAYAN

Associate Professor Head Department of Research and Development , Saveetha School of Law Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (SIMATS)

Dr.Asha Sundaram

Professor Saveetha School of Law Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (SIMATS)

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Abstract

Migration is an important feature of human civilization and it's a global phenomenon in modern times. It has been observed that economic development has been accompanied by large scale movements of people from rural to urban areas and one district to another district, one state to another state. Migration has been defined as crossing of the boundary of a legal, political and administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. It includes the movement of people from one place to another place in the hope of better opportunities, high standard of living, jobs etc. According to classical theories, migration is a rational decision made by an individual or group of persons to move from one undeveloped place to a developed place to gain new opportunities. There are a host of definitions of the term migration. Movement of persons from one state to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment. Labour migration is addressed by most States in their migration laws. In addition, some States take an active role in regulating outward labour migration and seeking opportunities for their nationals abroad. To a large extent, the variations in the definition are due to the difference in the nature, scope or purpose of the study or discussion.

Keywords

Labour Migration, Labour Welfare, Sector of Economy

INTRODUCTION

Migration is an important feature of human civilization. It reflects human endeavor to survive in the most testing conditions both natural and man-made. Migration in India has existed historically, but, in the context of globalization and opening up of the world economy it has assumed special significance for the country and the society. As a consequence of historical and economic factors, there are serious income disparities, agrarian distress, inadequate employment generation, vast growth of informal economy and the resultant migration from rural areas to urban, urban to urban and backward to comparatively advanced regions in the most appalling conditions. Migration of workers is a human phenomenon which has historical roots and wider implications. The search for the source of survival or quest for Eldorado, the blissful life, has ever remained the inspiring and the dovetailing force of migrations within countries or of trans-migration. Migrations have economic genesis with resulting socio-political cultural ramifications.

Indeed, mingling of different cultures has had positive consequences as well as placing strain on the culture and life of the upcoming society affected in either way by migration. Until recently, large out migration was viewed as the result of poverty and deprivation and development was thought as an antidote to levels of migration. Large investments of foreign assistance by the US in the Caribbean and Central America, or trade liberalization in Mexico, did not reduce pressures of migration in the region. European, in particular France's experience with co- development has also been no different. The discussions have, since, gradually shifted away from this perspective and now it is widely recognized that migration is an aspect of globalization. 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.

Statement of the Problem

The work force consists almost entirely of male aged between 18 to 35 years. High wage rates in Tamilnadu attract such labour. The housing and living conditions of the migrant labour are poor. They often live in worksites and factories, in crowded rooms with poor water supply, sanitation and limited space. The poor living conditions have raised fears of the spread of diseases among the local people. The availability of migrant labour with low cost creates local displacement and the cost benefit is to be weighed against productivity in all sectors and more specifically the industrial sector of Tamilnadu.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the quality of work life of migrant labour with local labour in the identified sectors.
2. To examine whether there exist differences between migrant labour and local labour in terms of wages and living expenses
3. To assess the social impact of migrant labour on the local labour.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the quality of work life of migrant labour and local labour.
2. There is no significant difference between migrant labour and local labour in terms of wages and living expenses.

Sampling Procedure

Primary Data were collected from migrant laborers and local laborers and from employers. As per the formula the recommended sample size is 183 at confidence level 95 percent and precision at 0.5. Thus the total migrant laborer sample size was fixed as 153 labour, 61 each from each sector and from each district. Sample had 25 local labour for each sector and from each district and thus the total local labour for the study is 270. Employers selected were 10 employers from each sector and each district (30 each) and thus the total employers for the study is 90.

Tools Used For Analysis

All data were collected and analysed with the help of appropriate statistical tools using SPSS to draw suitable conclusions and to make necessary suggestions. The Study is descriptive and analytical in nature based on primary data.

Table1. Sample Design Migrant Labour

District/Sector	Construction	Hotel and Restaurant	Domestic Workers	Total
Chennai	61	61	61	183
Thiruvallur	61	61	61	183
Kanchipuram	61	61	61	183
Total	183	183	183	549

Source: Sampling Design

Table 2. Sample Design Local Labour

District/Sector	Construction	Hotel and Restaurant	Domestic Workers	Total
Chennai	30	30	30	90
Thiruvallur	30	30	30	90
Kanchipuram	30	30	30	90
Total	90	90	90	270

Source: Sampling Design

Table 3. Sample Design Employer

	Construction	Hotel and Restaurant	Domestic Workers	Total
Chennai	10	10	10	30
Thiruvallur	10	10	10	30
Kanchipuram	10	10	10	30
Total	30	30	30	90

Source: Sampling Design

Table 4. Sectors of Employment of Migrant Labour In Tamilnadu

Occupation	Agriculture	Construction	Hotel and Restaurant	Manufacturing	Trades	Others	Not Reported	Total
Carpenter	-	0.54	-	0.14	0.14	0.81	0.14	1.90
Electrician	-	-	0.14	-	-	0.41	0.14	0.69
Mason	-	3.54	-	-	-	-	0.14	3.68
Sales Person	0.14	0.27	0.14	-	0.14	-	-	0.68
Tailoring	-	-	-	0.14	-	0.27	-	0.41
Skilled work	0.14	10.61	0.54	3.13	0.14	3.67	0.27	18.50
Unskilled Work	2.04	43.40	5.44	4.22	1.36	11.56	1.50	69.52
Others	-	4.91	0.54	0.67	-	0.15	-	2.45
Not Reported	-	0.27	0.14	0.14	-	0.68	0.95	2.18
Total	2.31	60.00	6.94	8.30	1.77	17.55	3.13	100

Source: Report submitted to Labour and Rehabilitation Department, Government of Tamilnadu – 2022.

The striking aspect of the Domestic Migrant labour in Tamilnadu is that they have come to fill almost all occupations and sectors of the economy. Of the total Domestic Migrant labour 60 per cent are in Construction sector, While 8.3 per cent in Manufacturing sector, 6.94 per cent in Hotel and Restaurant Sector, 2.31 per cent in Agriculture sector and 1.77 per cent in Trade whereas 17.55 per cent comes under other category and 3.13 per cent not reported. In the **construction sector** 43.40 per cent are in the unskilled sector, where 10.61 per cent are in the skilled work, 3.54 percent as mason/flooring, 0.54 per cent as carpenter, 0.27 percent as sales person and 4.91 per cent comes under other categories and 0.27 percent not reported. In the manufacturing **sector** 4.22 per cent are in the unskilled sector, where 3.13 percent are in the skilled work, 0.14 percent as carpenter and in tailoring, 0.67 per cent comes under other categories and 0.14 per cent not reported. **Hotel and Restaurant sector** 5.44 per cent are in the unskilled sector, where 0.54 per cent is in the skilled work and other category, 0.14 per cent comes under as Electrician and sales person. In the Agriculture **sector** 2.04 per cent are in the unskilled sector, where 0.14 percent is in the skilled work and sales person. In **trading sector** 1.36 per cent is in the unskilled sector, where 0.14 percent is in the skilled work, Carpenter and sales person. And In the **other categories** 11.56 per cent are in the unskilled sector, where 3.67 per cent are in the skilled work, 0.81 percent as carpenter, 0.41 percent as electrician, 0.27 percent as Tailoring and 0.15 per cent comes under other category and 0.68 per cent not reported.

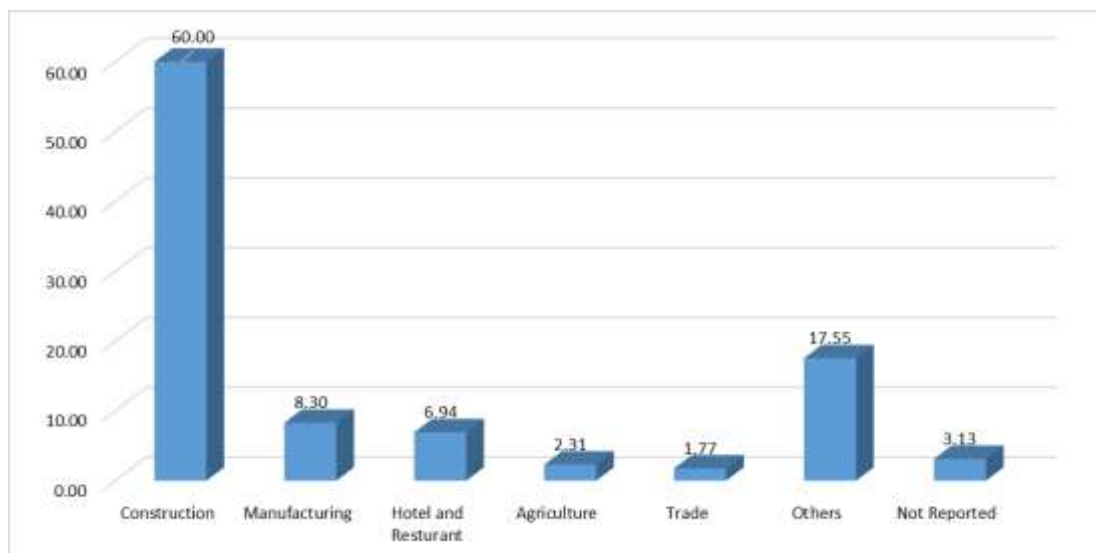


Figure 1 Sector of Employment of Migrant Workers In Tamilnadu

Table 5. Net Migration

Category	Males		Female		Persons	
	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021
In-migration	117,865	120,403	102,968	104,933	220,833	225,336
Out-migration	279,048	228,684	219,014	210,601	498,062	439,285
Net Migration	-161,183	108,281	116,045	105,688	277,228	213,963

Source: Dynamics of migration in Tamilnadu Dimension-2021.

Net internal migration in Tamilnadu was negative during 2011 and 2021; the state continues to lose population through migration to other states in the country. An important conclusion which emerges from these figures is that, between the two decades 2011 - 2021 and 2011 - 2021, out migration increased considerably, by about 59,000 persons. Out-migration of males during the recent decade was considerably lower than that during the previous decade, 2011-2021 (by about 50,000 persons).Out- migration of females also decreased but only by about 8,000 persons

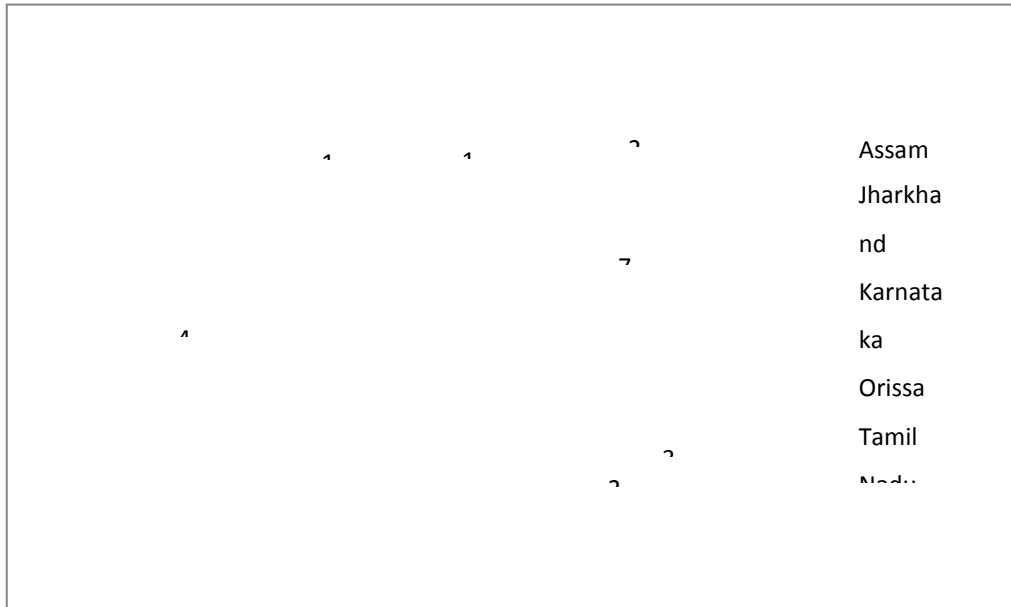


Figure 2 Origin Wise Inter State Migrant Workers in Tamilnadu

These Inter State Migrant workers are engaged in different areas such as agriculture, construction, hotel and restaurant, manufacturing and trade. It is seen that 60 percent of the migrant workers are engaged in the construction sectors, 8 percent in manufacturing, 7per cent under hotels and restaurants, 2 percent each under trade and agriculture and the remaining 21 percent engaged under other activities.

Labour and Labour Welfare

Labour and labour welfare is the cornerstone of human development policies undertaken by the Government to attain greater efficiency and productivity and ensure safety and security of its human resources. Labour market has witnessed significant transformation in the last two decades both in terms of employment conditions and industrial relations. Labour is a subject in the concurrent list where both Centre and state government are empowered to enact legislations. Tamilnadu has always recognized the value addition of the working class in the economic transition of the state which is reflected in the welfare measures enacted by the government. It is an accepted fact that labour laws and labour welfare schemes implemented by the State have been commendable compared to other parts of the country. Existing unique labour structure in the state have been achieved through the active intervention of the Government on right to work of one's choice, right against discrimination, prohibition of child labour, social security, protection of wages, redressal of grievances, right to organize and form trade unions, collective bargaining and participation in management. However, it has been facing challenges in terms of high rate of unemployment and underemployment, low rate of productive employment, inadequate levels of skills creation and training, low level of labour force participation and low worker population ratio and disparity in wages of male and female. Essentially, the state has to create employment opportunities and employment intensive growth and for which the labour force has to be allowed to move from low value added to high value added activities.

Major Findings of the Study

With respect to accommodation, it was observed that the majority of the labour both migrant and local labour, resided outside the workplace. As far as sector-wise distribution of accommodation is concerned, migrant labour irrespective of the sector in which they are working, have a similar accommodation status. The significant difference in the status of accommodation is seen only among the local labour.

With regard to the nature of house, the majority of migrant labour were residing in rental houses whereas local labour was residing in their own houses. Quality of facilities available in own house would be better than that of accommodation in rental houses and slums. While considering sector-wise distribution of nature of house, migrant labour, irrespective of the sector in which they are working, had similar nature of house. Significance difference in the nature of house is seen only among the local labour.

As far as provision for food was concerned, the majority of respondents both under migrant and local labourers are not provided food by the employers. Provision of food was better with local laborers. While considering sector-wise distribution of provision for food, there was no sector-wise difference seen among migrant laborers and local labour regarding provision of food.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that migrant labour has had its impact in Tamilnadu. Cheap labour for the industry has been an immediate benefit, but a healthy labour force and well maintained manpower is the key to productivity in the long run. Tamilnadu can take advantage of low cost labour, but cannot compromise on Quality of services for the industry and quality of work life of our men.

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