

Reverse Migration in Kerala - An Impact among NRKS amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: Reverse migration is a movement of migrants to their home country after residing at least one year in another country due to various reasons. In Kerala, the major share of income is from remittance of expatriates. Due to the heavy pandemic COVID-19 outbreak, many of the migrants especially Gulf returnees who have returned to Kerala for breaks or holidays were stuck and were in the fear of losing their livelihood. The situation still persists even in the later or end stage of the pandemic even though many returnees are trying to build a new life in Kerala. The impact of reverse return in the pandemic period thus has to be analysed.

Keywords: Reverse Return, COVID-19, NORKA ROOTS, Repatriation, Rehabilitation

1. Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 has affected the entire world. It had far reached impact on the livelihoods and even lives of the people across the world. India is also not an exception.

Amidst the pandemic situation, many of the migrants return to their homeland due to job loss, poor living condition and other safety reasons. Many migrants came back to the home discontinuing their studies due to the adverse situation of COVID-19. In Kerala, NORKA (Non - resident Keralites Affairs) Roots provide assistance for those returnees to come back and rehabilitate their life in Kerala.

2. Statement of the Problem

The unavoidable return of NRKS will be a blow for Kerala's economies. Many migrants returned from abroad and outside the state to Kerala due to the COVID-19 situation. Unfortunately, most of the NRKS returned losing their job and prestigious life abroad. Many of the students who were studying abroad also came back losing their education. Repatriation and further rehabilitation of the returned NRKS involve some difficulties and problems which can or cannot be solved by the State Government. It includes health issues, travelling problems, unemployment, education or reduced standard of living of mobile workers. So, study about socio - economic status and family welfare of NRKS, the difficulties faced by NRKS in repatriation and further rehabilitation and facilities provided by Government for returned migrant students forms the problems of study.

3. Scope of the Study

Millions of migrant workers are anticipated to be left unemployed in India due to the lockdown and subsequent fear of recession. Lockdowns and social distancing measures dried up jobs and incomes, whereas they also disrupted agricultural production, transportation systems, and supply chains on the other. The study focused on Southern and Northern parts of Kerala State among NRKS who returned back to the home land due COVID - 19 pandemic. The impact of reverse migration on socio – economic status of NRKS, difficulties faced by them and Government policies

and facilities provided for return migrants and repatriated students were also studied.

4. Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the impact of reverse migration of NRKS on socio - economic status and welfare of the families in Kerala.
- 2) To find out the difficulties faced by NRKS on their repatriation travel.
- 3) To examine the facilities provided by Government for continuing the studies of students repatriated from abroad and outside the state.
- 4) To analyse the initiatives taken by the State in the reintegration of the return migrants through NORKA Services.

5. Review of Literature

Mr. P. Korbog John, in a doctoral thesis titled "Incomes and Savings of Kerala Migrants" submitted to the University of Pune, has observed that after 1983 one in every four Kerala migrants has returned to his home State, creating new and difficult situation back home.

Dilip Saika (2008) in his study analyses the economic conditions of the in - migrant workers in Kerala by analysing their saving, income, and consumption pattern and nature of work before and after migration.

Pablo Bose, Elizabeth Chacko, Shawna Morgan and Sulochana Sekhar (2011) in their work 'Is labour migration changing the landscape in Kerala?' explains the pattern of labour migration and associated economic, demographic and socio - cultural changes in Kerala.

B A Prakash (2013) in 'Return emigration of Indian emigrant workers from the West Asia' gave a report on a survey of return emigrants in Kerala conducted by Rajiv Gandhi institute of Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram and Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, New Delhi.

Jackline Wahba (2014) in 'Return Migration and Economic Development' reviews the economics literature on return

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migration by documenting the extent of return migration and shows that it is far from negligible.

Nidheesh M K and Rahul Chandran (2016) in their work 'The return of the Gulf Malayalee' speak about the latest problem that Gulf Malayalees are facing. It is the crash in the crude oil price. Many Malayalee migrants have already lost their job and many are experiencing cut down in their salaries.

M. M. Ruksana (2016) in her work 'Emigration and Remittances: A Study on Kerala Economy, focused the educational attainment of emigrants and the impact of remittances to the economic development of Kerala.

Maximilian Schiele (2020) in the work "Life satisfaction and return migration: analysing the role of life satisfaction for migrant return intentions in Germany" analyses the role of life satisfaction for the intention of migrants to return to their country of origin.

Asma Khan & H. Arokkiaraj (2021) in their study, "Challenges of reverse migration in India: a comparative study of internal and international migrant workers in the post - COVID economy" explained the involuntary and forced nature of reverse migration due to the sudden lockdown, the irresponsible behaviour of the employers, lack of preparedness and planning among the government and social hostility against the migrants.

Balwinder Kaur and Shivangi Shubham (2021) in their work, "COVID- 19 Crisis Through a Reverse Migration Lens " studies the principal factors behind the movement of reverse migrants and reasons driving their decision regarding future movement.

6. Research Methodology

Research Problem: The present study deals with the problem to study the impact of on reverse migration such as socio - economic status and family welfare of NRKs, difficulties faced by them for repatriation and rehabilitation and facilities and policies of Government for helping the returned NRKs and repatriated students.

Research Design: "Descriptive research design " is used to carry out the study. This research design would help the researcher to gather the primary and secondary data to analyse the various aspects of the study.

Area of the Study: The study focused the impact of reverse migration in Kerala; an Indian State located in South west region. Kerala spread over 38863 Square Kilometre. Kerala lies between north latitudes 8°.17'.30" N and 12°.47'.40" N and east longitudes 74°.27'47" E and 77°.37'.12" E. As per 2011 census, Kerala population is 3.34 crore and population growth rate are 4.86 percentage.

Sampling: The official return migration data with respect to Kerala is not available. During COVID-19 outbreak, Kerala Government had done the registration of returnees through Non - Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) cell in international airports of Kerala and other centres. Thus,

samples of return migrants are randomly selected from southern and northern parts of Kerala. The study is conducted based on random sampling, with a sample size of 150. The collected data is analysed using tabular and percentage methods.

Data Collection: Both primary and secondary data is proposed to be used in this study in order to meet the requirements of the purpose. For collecting primary data, a structured pre - tested questionnaire is used for collecting data from the selected customers mostly by way of Google Forms and rest by personal or telephonic interview.

Classification and Analysis of Data: The primary data can be classified on the basis of socio - economic status, awareness of rehabilitation facilities, Government services utilised, demographic characteristics, etc.

Tools of Analysis: The collected data is analysed using tabular, percentage and graphical methods. The primary data are summarized by using statistical measures and Quantitative techniques.

Period of the Study: The study is completed in a period of 1 year (2021 - 2022).

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: General profile of the respondents

| Particulars | Classification | No. of respondents | % |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Gender | Male | 96 | 64 |
| | Female | 54 | 36 |
| Age | Below 18 | 29 | 19.33 |
| | 18 - 30 | 35 | 23.33 |
| | 31 - 45 | 47 | 31.33 |
| | 46 - 60 | 20 | 13.33 |
| | Above 60 | 19 | 12.68 |
| Education | SSLC | 18 | 12 |
| | HSC | 29 | 19.33 |
| | Graduate | 54 | 36 |
| | Post Graduate | 32 | 21.33 |
| | Others | 17 | 11.34 |

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Table 1 is the general profile of 150 respondents. The table shows that 64% of respondents are Male. Majority of the respondents are from age group of 31 - 45 and majority are graduates.

Table 2: Reverse migration of NRKs - impact on socio - economic status and welfare of the families

| Particulars | No. of respondents | % |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Affected the socio - economic status | 82 | 54.67 |
| Affected family welfare | 68 | 45.33 |

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Table 2 shows whether socio - economic status or welfare of families of NRKs were largely affected by reverse migration. The results show that socio - economic status is largely affected.

Table 3: Opinion of repatriated Students about the facilities provided by Government for continuing the studies

| Opinion | No. of respondents | % |
|-----------|--------------------|-------|
| Excellent | 26 | 17.33 |
| Good | 72 | 48 |
| Neutral | 31 | 20.67 |
| Poor | 16 | 10.67 |
| Worse | 5 | 3.33 |

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Table 3 shows opinion of repatriated Students about the facilities provided by Government for continuing the studies. Majority of the students ranked the services as good.

Table 4: Opinion about COVID-19 services

| Opinion | Number of respondents | % |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Highly satisfied | 24 | 16 |
| Satisfied | 57 | 31.33 |
| Neutral | 40 | 26.67 |
| Dissatisfied | 15 | 10 |
| Highly Dissatisfied | 14 | 9.33 |

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Table 4 shows opinions of repatriates about COVID-19 services provided by the State Government. Majority are satisfied with the services.

8. Findings

- 1) Majority of the respondents are Male.
- 2) Major number of migrants is from the age group of 31 - 45.
- 3) Majority of the respondents are graduates.
- 4) Reverse migration during COVID-19 mostly affected the socio - economic status of the returnees rather than family welfare.
- 5) Most of the repatriated student migrants are satisfied with the facilities provided by the state Government for their further studies after the pandemic.
- 6) Majority of the respondents are satisfied with the COVID-19 services provided by the Government.
- 7) Awareness about the NORKA services and schemes provided for migrants are very less to them.
- 8) Most of the respondents are not members of NORKA Roots.
- 9) Majority of the respondents does not applied for NORKA COVID-19 Services.
- 10) Most of the respondents are trying to rebuild their life in the home country.

9. Suggestions

- 1) NORKA should do something to create awareness about their various programmes and schemes.
- 2) State Government programmes and policies implemented for the migrants have to be worked out in its full sense.
- 3) Financial assistances and pension schemes for returned NRKs should be communicated to them properly.
- 4) Special care should be provided for returned NRKs by the Government to impoverish them as they are not

completely recovered from the pandemic loss.

- 5) If skills and ideas of returned NRKs are used in the state, it may upgrade the quality and culture of the work.

10. Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic is a deadly disease the world face after the Spanish flu also known as the 1918 flu pandemic. The unexpected and certainly the sudden outbreak of the pandemic put everyone in trouble. From the study, it is clear that the influence of the pandemic affects the NRKs, as many of them are suffering from the loss of their prestigious job abroad. But the Government has provided necessary facilities for upliftment of these people to ensure them with a better standard of living in their home land through NORKA Roots. There still exists a problem of unawareness about these Government policies among people. Proper communication of these will help them to overcome the problems with socio economic factors and ensure family welfare.

Conflicts of Interests

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