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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, REMITTANCES, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM HOUSEHOLDS IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT, KERALA: A METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

International migration has become an important factor in shaping socio-economic development in many developing areas. Kerala, India, is a key example where large-scale migration to Gulf countries has resulted in significant remittance inflows. These inflows have helped improve human development indicators. This paper examines the methodology for establishing the relationship between migration, remittances, and human development among Muslim households in Malappuram District, Kerala. It uses secondary data from the Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) 2016 and other official sources. The study describes the sampling design, analytical methods, and the creation of a composite Human Development Index (HDI) at the household level. This method allows for a comparison between emigrant and non-migrant households across areas such as income, education, housing, and asset ownership. The findings underscore the need for multiple approaches in migration research and the importance of community-specific analysis for understanding inclusive development.

KEYWORDS: *Migration, Remittances, Human Development, Malappuram, Kerala, Muslim Households.*

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration has shaped economic growth, demographic shifts, and changes in the job market around the world. Today, labour migration from developing countries to wealthier or resource-rich economies has increased due to globalization, wage differences, labour shortages, and better transportation. For countries that send workers abroad, migration brings significant benefits through money sent back home, skill sharing, entrepreneurship, and opportunities for social mobility.

India is one of the top countries that send migrants, and Kerala is the state with the highest rate of migration in the country. Since the oil boom in the 1970s, many people from Kerala have emigrated to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain. These migration patterns have brought in large amounts of remittances that have changed Kerala's economy and society. In Kerala, the district of Malappuram stands out for its very high rate of migration and its Muslim majority. Migration has become a key part of family strategies for improving livelihoods, gaining education, renovating homes, and building wealth. Because of this, Malappuram is an ideal place to study the link between migration and human development.

This study examines the methodology of how international migration and remittances have affected the human development status of Muslim households in Malappuram district.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MIGRATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development refers to the growth of people's freedoms, abilities, and opportunities. According to the United Nations Development Programme (1990), human development includes three key dimensions: living a long and healthy life, accessing education and knowledge, and having a decent standard of living. Amartya Sen (1999) expanded this idea by defining development as freedom. He argued that income should not be viewed as an end goal but as a way to improve human well-being and individual choices. In this framework, migration can significantly impact human development through several channels. It often increases household income through remittances, which can improve nutrition, access to healthcare, spending on education, housing quality, savings, and productive investment. Migration can also help empower women by changing traditional family roles and responsibilities. Exposure to new social and cultural environments may raise aspirations and broaden perspectives. However, migration also presents challenges. It may result in family separation, emotional stress, reliance on foreign labor markets, and vulnerability to external economic or political shocks. Therefore, migration can be both

an opportunity and a risk, with its overall impact on human development depending on the specific social, economic, and institutional context in which it takes place.

3. KERALA'S ACHIEVEMENT IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: THE MIGRATION – REMITTANCE ROUT

Kerala provides a significant context for understanding the relationship between migration, remittances, and human development.One of the most important demographic transformations in the state since the early 1970s has been the large-scale emigration of workers to West Asia. Among Indian migrant workers, Keralites have historically constituted one of the largest groups, at times accounting for nearly half of the total. According to the Kerala Migration Survey, the number of Kerala emigrants living abroad in 2014 was estimated at about 24 lakh, compared with 13.6 lakh in 1998. During the same period, the number of return migrants increased from 7.4 lakh to 12.5 lakh, while the number of non-resident Keralites—those who have lived outside India at some point—rose from 21 lakh to 36.5 lakh. Earlier, Kannan and Hari (2002) observed that the number of Keralites working abroad was almost equal to the size of the organized-sector workforce within Kerala itself.

The socio-economic implications of this migration have been extensive, with remittances generating both macro- and micro-level benefits for individuals, families, communities, and the state economy. As noted by P. R. G. Nair (1986), although Kerala accounts for only a small share of India's territory and population, migration and remittances have had a disproportionately large influence on the state's economic structure. One of the most visible areas of this influence has been Kerala's outstanding achievement in human development. Despite relatively low per capita income and periods of stagnation in productive sectors, Kerala has consistently been recognized for high levels of social development. Scholars such as Franke and Chasin (1989), as well as Ramachandran (1996), have highlighted Kerala's unique development experience, where social indicators such as education, health, and quality of life improved substantially even without corresponding industrial expansion. Migration and remittances contributed to this process by improving household well-being, raising living standards, influencing poverty and inequality dynamics, and expanding access to education, healthcare, housing, and other basic capabilities. As a result, Kerala's human development achievements have attracted sustained attention at both the national and international levels.

4. RELEVANCE OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

The Muslim community occupies an important place in the development debate in India. Although India has achieved substantial economic growth since Independence and has made notable progress in reducing poverty and improving human development indicators such as literacy, education, and health, the benefits of this progress have not been distributed equally across all socio-religious communities. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) highlighted that Muslims, who constitute the largest minority community in India with 13.4 percent of the population, continue to lag behind in terms of several key human development indicators. However, the situation in Kerala presents a notable contrast to the national pattern. In Kerala, the socio-economic status of the Muslim community is significantly better than the national average on many human development measures. For instance, literacy—one of the most important indicators of human development—stands much higher among Muslims in Kerala than among many other socially disadvantaged groups in the country. According to the Census of India, the literacy rate of Muslims in Kerala was 89.4 percent, compared to 59.1 percent for Muslims at the national level. Similar advantages can also be observed in health outcomes and standards of living.

At the same time, migration has played a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic position of the Muslim community in Kerala. Labour migration from Kerala is the highest among Indian states, and Muslims constitute a disproportionately large share of these migrants. According to the Kerala Migration Survey, Muslims accounted for about 41.3 percent of Kerala's emigrants in 2014, even though their share in the state's total population was only around 26 percent. This migration pattern has had a substantial impact on remittance inflows. Out of the total remittances of ₹15,129 crore received by Kerala in 2014, Muslim households alone accounted for ₹7,029 crore, which represented about 46.5 percent of the total remittances. This share was even higher than the proportion of Muslim emigrants. Considering that Muslims constituted only about 26.5 percent of Kerala's population and 21.8 percent of its households, both per capita and household-level analysis indicate that the Muslim community in Kerala received a disproportionately larger share of remittance income. These patterns suggest that migration and remittances have been major factors contributing to the relatively better human development outcomes of Muslims in Kerala, making the community especially relevant in discussions of development, mobility, and social change.

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5. SIGNIFICANCE OF MALAPPURAM DISTRICT IN KERALA'S MIGRATION SCENARIO

The intensity and incidence of migration has been higher in Malappuram district as compared to other districts in Kerala. (Nair 1986, Prakash 1998, Zacharia, Mathew and Rajan 1999). Malappuram district was the origin of the largest number of emigrants in Kerala in 2014; (444,100 or 18.8 percent of the total); it also had the highest number of emigrants in previous years. Return emigrants per household was the highest in Malappuram district; 34.0 per 100 households. Malappuram district has the largest number of non-resident Keralites(both emigrants and return emigrants), i.e., 20.4 percent of the total of 3.6 million NRKs in Kerala in 2014. On an average, 100 households in Kerala have 43.8 NRKs. However, NRK per 100 households is 86.3 in Malappuram. The proportion of households with one more emigrants is as high as 34.9 in Malappuram. Malappuram has as much as 47.1 percent of its households with at least one NRK. In general, there was a northward shift in the district-wise origin of emigrants from Kerala. Among the 14 districts in the state, Malappuram received the largest amount of remittances, i.e., Rs. 10245 crores which works out to Rs. 121,000 per household. (KMS, 2014). Thus, Malappuram District plays a significant role in the emigration scenario of Kerala both in terms of number of emigrants as well as the magnitude of remittances.

6. DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily based on data drawn from the Kerala Migration Survey database. In addition to this principal source, the analysis also relies on a range of secondary materials, including reports published by the Census of India, the United Nations Development Programme, the National Human Development Reports of 2001 and 2014, the Kerala Human Development Report, Balance of Payments statistics published by the Reserve Bank of India, and various published and unpublished studies conducted by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, the State Planning Board, and the Centre for Development Studies, along with contributions from individual researchers. Together, these sources provide the empirical foundation for examining migration, remittances, and human development in Kerala.

Periodic migration surveys to monitor migration to and from Kerala have been conducted by the Centre for Development Studies since 1998, with subsequent rounds carried out in 2003, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013, and 2016. These migration surveys have generated a comprehensive database that helps measure migration and return migration while capturing the geographical dimensions of population mobility. The surveys also provide valuable information on the distribution of migrants by religion, caste, and region, as well as the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants and non-migrants, including age, sex, marital status, educational qualifications, and occupation. In addition, the surveys examine the broader impact of migration on Kerala's population structure and on the state economy as a whole.

The Kerala Migration Survey (KMS 2016) is the seventh in this series of studies on international and internal migration from Kerala undertaken by the Centre for Development Studies as part of an on going research project that began in 1998. KMS 2016 was conducted as a panel survey of the earlier KMS 2011, thereby enabling a more systematic analysis of changes in migration trends, return migration, and the socio-economic consequences of migration over time. This makes the KMS 2016 database particularly valuable for understanding the evolving relationship between migration, remittances, and human development in Kerala.

7. THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

In the KMS 2016, the sample size is kept at the same level as it was in the 2011 survey, namely 15,000 households. The total of 15,000 was distributed among the 14 districts in the same way it was done in the 2011 survey. Details are as follows: The sample size for a district was fixed as a minimum of 1000 households. As there are 14 districts, a total of 14,000 households were thus distributed in this manner. The balance 1,000 households were distributed among the larger districts as follows: 200 households each for Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam, 150 households each for Kollam, Thrissur, Malappuram and Kozhikode. Thus, as per the KMS 2011, the total number of sample households in Malappuram district was 1150.

In all the Kerala Migration Surveys, the ultimate sample unit is a household. The 15,000 ultimate sample unit (HH) is selected by a **stratified multistage random sampling method.** The rural and urban areas of each district in the state are the strata**.** There are 14 districts in Kerala and therefore there are thus 28 strata: 14 rural strata and 14 urban strata. The number of sample households in a district (for example, 1150 for Malappuram district) is distributed between the district's rural stratum and urban stratum proportional to the number of rural and urban households in the district according to the 2011 census. From each stratum, a certain number of localities (Grama Panchayats or Municipal Wards) were selected on the basis of the number of households in the stratum (proportional sampling). From each selected locality 50 households were selected by the systematic random

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sampling method (this is done in each locality at the time of the survey on the basis of the available list of households at the local level).

8. SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT

In Malappuram, 1150 sample household is distributed between the rural and urban strata depending up on the number of rural and urban households (ie, proportion to the number of rural/urban households) as per 2011 census. From each stratum, a certain number of localities were selected on the basis of the number of households in the stratum (proportional sampling). Thus, 20 rural locality (Grama Panchayat wards) and 3 urban locality (Municipal Wards) were selected. From each selected locality **50** households were selected by the systematic random sampling method.

Thus, in Malappuram district we have 1000 rural households (50X20= 1000) and150 urban households(50X3= 150), as per the KMS, 2011 (total 1150). As per the KMS, 2016 we have 978 rural households and 99 urban households (total 1077). As already stated, 73 households (22 rural and 51 urban) were either moved out of the area or were demolished.

After the identification of the sample units (1077), they were classified according to the migration status. (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Distribution of Sample Households According to Migration Status in Malappuram District

Sl. No.	Type of Household	Number of Households	Percentage
1	Non-Migrant	655	60.8
2	Emigrant	345	32.0
3	Return emigrant	64	5.9
4	Out migrant	13	1.2
	Total	1077	100.0

Source: Compiled from KMS, 2016 data base

Then we classify the gross sample according to the religious status across the migration status. From that we select net sample (ie, emigrant Muslim households and non- migrant Muslim households - Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Type of Household in the Net Sample

Sl. No.	Type of Household	Number of Members	Percentage
1	Non-Migrant Muslim households	374	56.1
2	Emigrant Muslim households	293	43.9
	Total	667	100.0

Source: Compiled from KMS, 2016 data base

Thus, the sample size of our study is 667 Muslim households in Malappuram district, of which, 374 (56.1 percent) are non-migrant[1] households and 293 (43.9 percent) are emigrant households[2]

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9. TECHNIQUE OF ANALYSIS

In our study, we analysed the impact of emigration in two segments. In the first segment, we examined the impact of emigration by comparing the human development status of emigrant and non-migrant Muslim households in terms income, education and health status. In the second segment, we construct a composite index to measure the impact of migration on the human development status.

The data analyzed through simple statistical techniques like averages, ratios, percentages etc. and various statistical tests like **' t- test'**, **χ^2 test , Cramer's V, Mann-Whitney U, Wilcoxon Signed Rank test** etc. used to test the statistical significance of the association between variables and to validate the hypothesis. For presenting data, different types of diagrams, tables etc. are used.

[1] *Non-migrant household - a household from where no one had ever gone abroad for employment at the time of the survey.*

[2] *Emigrant household - the household having at least one member of the family working abroad for one year or more and continuing there at the time of the survey .*

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10. CALCULATION OF A COMPOSITE INDEX FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

To construct the composite human development index, this study uses 12 indicators to assess differences in human development between Muslim emigrant and non-migrant households in Malappuram District. The selected indicators are: per capita annual income, per capita annual expenditure, per capita current savings, per capita current investment, percentage of bank account holders, per capita land ownership, house ownership, quality of house, number of consumer durable assets owned, quality of cooking fuel used, literacy rate, and average years of schooling. These indicators capture major dimensions of household well-being, including income, consumption, savings, asset ownership, housing quality, financial inclusion, education, and living standards. Since the study is based on household-level analysis, the household is taken as the basic unit of analysis. The sample consists of 667 Muslim households, including 293 emigrant households and 374 non-migrant households.

For each household, a human development index was first constructed by taking the simple average of the standardized values of the 12 indicators. This generated a separate index value for each of the 667 households in the sample. The households were then classified into emigrant and non-migrant groups. A composite human development index for emigrant households was obtained by averaging the index values of the 293 emigrant households, while a similar composite index for non-migrant households was calculated by averaging the index values of the 374 non-migrant households. These two composite indices were then compared and statistically tested to examine whether a significant difference exists in the level of human development between emigrant and non-migrant Muslim households in Malappuram District.

To get a sense of the **inequality** in human development, the ratio of HDI between the emigrants and the non-migrants was also calculated:

$$**RMHDI = \frac{HDI_{MIgrants}}{HDI_{Non\ Migrants}}$$

**(Since each indicator is measured in different units, it is standardized by using the general formula used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the construction of Human Development Index. Thus for any variable the individual index can be computed with the help of the general formula:*

$$Standardized\ Value = \frac{Actual\ Value - Minimum\ value}{Maximum\ Value - Minimum\ Value}$$

Thus, we get the values of all the variable ranges from zero to one, zero shows the worse position and one shows the perfect situation).

*** (RMHDI = Ratio of Migration induced Human Development Index)*

11. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Migration has significantly influenced Kerala's development, particularly in districts such as Malappuram. The methodological framework adopted in this study demonstrates that human development can be effectively assessed at the household level using a multidimensional composite index. By comparing emigrant and non-migrant Muslim households across twelve indicators, the study offers a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which migration affects living standards. The inclusion of multiple indicators and the comparison of distinct household groups underscore the necessity of multidimensional analysis for understanding development outcomes. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of integrating migration research with human development analysis and highlight the value of community-specific approaches for understanding inclusive development processes in Kerala.

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