

Migration, Assimilation and Well-Being of Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract : It may no longer be just anecdotal that every twelfth person in Kerala is a migrant worker from outside the state. For the past few years, the state has been witnessing large inflow of migrants from other states of India, which emerged as a result of demographic transition and Gulf emigration. Initially, the migrants were from the neighbouring states but, at a later period, the state started getting migrants from the distant parts of the country. Currently, migrants have turned to be a decisive force in the state and their increasing numbers have already started creating turbulences in the state. Over the past years, the increasing involvement of migrants in unlawful and criminal activities have generated apprehensions on their presence in the state. Moreover, at present, the Kerala society is not just hosting the first generation migrants, but there has been an increase in the second generation migrants making the situations more complex and diverse. In such a paradigm, the study ponders into the issues of migrants concerning their assimilation and well-being in the host society. Also, the study looks into the factors that impede the assimilation process, along with the perceptions of the migrants about the host society and the people. The study also tries to bring out the differences in the levels of assimilation among the migrants along the lines of religion, caste, state of origin, gender, stay duration and education. **Methodology:** The study is based on the empirical findings obtained out of the primary survey conducted on migrants employed in the Kanjikode industrial area of Kerala. The samples were selected through purposive sampling and the study employed techniques like observation, questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The findings are based on interviews conducted with 100 migrants. **Findings and Conclusion:** The study was an attempt of its kind in addressing the issues of assimilation and integration of interstate migrants working in the Kerala. As mentioned, the study could bring out differences in the levels of assimilation along the lines of different characteristics. The study could also locate the importance, and the role played by the peer groups and neighborhoods in accelerating the process of assimilation among the migrants. As an extension, the study also looked at the assimilation and educational issues of the migrant children living in Kerala, and it found that the place of birth, age at entry and the peer group plays a pivotal role in the assimilation process. The study through its findings recommends the need for incorporating the concept of inclusive education into the state educational system by giving due emphasis to the needs of the marginalized. The study points out that owing to the existing demographic conditions, the state will inevitably have to depend on migrant labor in future. Moreover, in such a paradigm, the host community and the government should strive to create a conducive environment for the proper assimilation of the migrants and which in turn can be an impetus for the fulfilment of the needs of both the migrants and the state.

Keywords : assimilation, integration, Kerala, migrant workers, well-being

Conference Title : ICSMI 2018 : International Conference on Sociology, Migration and Integration

Conference Location : San Francisco, United States

Conference Dates : June 06-07, 2018