

Brain Drain or Brain Gain: Understanding Overseas Migration of Students from Kerala

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Abstract

It is generally a distinguished fact that Kerala is renowned as one of India's most literate states, abundant with efficient and hardworking young generation. In accordance with NIRF 2020 evaluation, Twenty Kerala institutions are considered among the top 100 universities in India. However, in general perception students in Kerala have the strong aspiration to pursue higher education abroad and to obtain appropriate jobs / career advancement consistent to their inclinations. In the present scenario, Student migration becomes was an unfathomed aspects of global migration flows and trends in Kerala. This drive accelerated further in the last five years generating a fast peak in the swarm of Kerala students seeking higher education in various professions among various foreign countries especially in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and China. It is a common tendency of the majority of students pursuing higher education overseas aiming for securing permanent residency in the respective country and settle life there appropriately congenial to their desire and attitude. This study is an elaborate attempt to elucidate the reason for the migration of students in Kerala and cherishing the ambition in obtaining permanent residence after graduation/further study abroad. The present study is both narrative and analytical in nature by exploring this scenario vehemently.

Keywords: Migrant Student, Brain drain, Education.

Introduction

It is a well known phenomenon that Kerala is one of the formidable educational hub in India which drastically attracts migrant students from other Indian states and other countries as well. In recent times, Kerala has been experiencing extraordinary increase in students moving abroad especially to Europe, Canada, Australia etc., for higher studies / advanced education, and eventually settling there as permanent residence or nationality. In this regard, it is perceived that Kerala is witnessing a galloping stage, whereby there is a steady trend of youngsters moving abroad for higher education as well as settlement and Malayali students & migrants are stretched found all over the world. This exodus is continuing in rapid pace and in steady momentum.

It is estimated that the number of Indian students abroad in various categories were 40 lakh in 2012 and this proportion is expected to cross 75 lakh in year 2025. As a reliable source of information, the data presented by the Ministry of Education before the Parliament in February this year, it has been observed that there is a considerable increase of 68% in the number of students going abroad for higher studies from India. More precisely, the number of migrant Indian students increased from 4,44,553 in 2021 to 7,50,365 in 2022. Moreover, this spike has been consistently steady over the years – i.e. from 4,54,009 in 2017 to 5,17,998 in 2018, and 5,86,337 in 2019. Nevertheless, the Kerala High Court while exploring this situation

recently attributed the reason behind the trend of youngsters leaving the native place for better prospects to the lack of infrastructure and aesthetic appeal in Kerala's cities in general. It must be noted that the number of students migrated to foreign countries in 2019 was 30,948. Further, in overall 13,64,536 students are doing higher studies in the state in variety of aspects. More intensely, A comprehensive study by the Centre for Development Studies established that around 1.5 million people from Kerala were working or attending higher education overseas in conformity to their visions and ambitions. In detail, the study also revealed that the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) were the most preferred travel destinations of the migrant students of Kerala.



Relevance of the Study

It highlights the intensive impacts on Kerala society as a result of Migration of youths for foreign education/career application and subsequent / related shortage of human resources and availability in the home land.

This trend is likely to be persisting since "This is an outward remittances trend and lacking the possibility to turn into inward remittances since the preference of the most of the students underlying in choosing to stay back in those countries where they accomplish higher studies. Whereas there has been no advanced study on the economic impact of migration so far and hence this issue still needs to be explored and streamlined The implication of current students becoming the future Kerala diaspora and its consequent conomic impact needs to be elaborately studied as per Government initiative.

The main objectives of the study

1. To Study motivations and aspirations of young migrating people (aged 18-25),
2. To identify and find out the underlying reasons while leaving the country to abroad tracing the initial steps adopted by them in realizing this goal.
3. To distinguish the achieved with migration as a cause.

Methodology of the Study

In extensive study, this research adopted a quantity approach based on both primary and secondary data collection. In order to be ample precise, reliable and accurate, large scale face-to-face survey conducted for data collection including representatives youth aged between 18 to 26 on sampling basis maintaining 95% confidence level. In advancing, representative sampling administered by using two-stage stratification (i.e. by region and by settlement type (size) within each region), both in proportional to its size. The survey was managed by circulating wide range questionnaire contains comprehensive questions related to respondents' demographic structure, socio-economic characteristics, satisfaction with the selected living environment and different life aspects in the original place of Kerala, and in addition the key motives & inspiration for migration. To be more conclusive, Kochi has been chosen for this study to understand the internal migration and by means of it the main sources of secondary data for this study are collected from the research articles from the internet.

Data Analysis

A structured Questionnaire was prepared containing (three diagnostic blocks) such as

- A. Status of young people-While assessing the status of young people in Kerala a set of elegant questions presented based on persisting socio-demographic characteristics of young people, their perspectives about of the quality of life in Kerala as well as their level of trust in political institutions and establishments.
- B. Migration potential of young people-A set of questions circulated among the potential migrants and assessment accomplished on this basis.
- C. Driving forces of migration-This third block significantly covers identification and analysis of most predominant drivers leads to of migration.

Sampling:

Snowball sampling method was adopted to collect the information from the respondents Sample size was fixed at 150 Questionnaires had been distributed The collected data will be analyzed through statistical tools like reliability analysis, percentage analysis and, chi-square tests Statistical data analysis was conducted with the use of SPSS software package.

Key Findings & Research Implications

The integral findings and observations of this research essentially identified the key driving forces of Migration and reached final conclusion for the complicated question Why Do People Leave Their Homes?

1. Neighbourhood effect

The reflection of neighbourhood effect was very transparent in such society. "If someone in the neighbourhood or peer group goes abroad, it becomes a chain action, which in turn pursue others in near vicinity to follow suit. The peer groups shares collective information related to the money being spent and availability of various courses congenial to them and their aptitude. Middle class families depend on bank loans available to them and afford to repay in instalments, as usual practice. This situation enabled majority of the students proceeding go abroad to availing of educational loans from various banks in the state

2. Lack of Employment Opportunities

The one instance of a student called Govind, a 25-year-old from Thiruvananthapuram, who went to Canada in September 2021 with the purpose of joining a postgraduate course in Supply and Chain Management there is interesting. He opined that in his province (the Cape Briton in Nova Scotia), where he is presently settled is amassed by enormous numbers of students from Kerala, pursuing for different courses mostly with international reputation or relatively indigenous in nature. Prior to the decision taken for migration, preparation was done for the Kerala Public Service Commission exams in addition to bank tests to get suitable jobs as per his preference. However, at point of time, he felt about the futility in waiting for settling a career in native place and adapted his mindset to go abroad. Upon making final choice, he selected Canada since getting a PR (Permanent Residence status) was comparatively easier there. There is a feasibility that one person can also go on a student visa and get a PR subsequently. According to him, the trend is very prominent more than those days he left and as informed by his mother many young people in his neighbourhood becoming aspirants and going abroad for studies. In general, the following attributes generates aspiration among the young generation to study abroad, seek job and inspire for permanent settlement

3. Better career growth:

Students who come back to India after doing their studies abroad have better job prospects. A 2-year graduate degree abroad or a 4-year undergraduate degree helps them start their career at the point in a job without an education abroad after 4-8 years of working. Their career will grow at an exponential rate. The Possibility of getting lucrative jobs conducive to their career prospects and appropriate to the level of qualification

4. Better Living

option for improving personal as well as family financial situation. Sense of stability aspect persisting in migrating countries and feeling of social security & less corrupt social system circulation.

5. Status Symbol of Family

In present juncture, the social status of many families in Kerala necessitates their children to be educated abroad and nuclear family (children of one or two) situation make them affordable for middle class families to send their single or two children abroad. It becomes a status symbol for families and even being judged while their children are educated / professionally settled abroad in prominent countries such as Canada, Germany, USA and UK etc. In a wide perspective, Kerala will experience brain drain as it is going to lose the cream of human resources since they are our great strength and asset. The earlier trend was limited to highly professional courses like MBBS and now students at early stage even after finishing higher secondary school education migrating to other countries.

6. Peer pressure and pressure exerted by parents

Peer pressure and pressure exerted by parents the spurt and intensity of agencies that facilitating overseas admission for students, influence of prevailing social conditions including moral standards of pertaining people, obtainability of education loans, better appearance air and internet connectivity, etc

7. The concept of migration is not limited to merely obtaining a degree from abroad, but also to develop an international outlook / prospect in the personal as well as career advancement. Students anticipate to get a wider exposure and immense experience. The hypothesis created by foreign universities while approaching Indian campuses that the outflow will be ceased can be predicted as a misconception to hasten students in this direction. Also there is high preference for the students for doing experimental

research in foreign universities, as it is rather advanced there. In addition, Salary or fellowship gap is another significant factor lures students to other universities.

- 8. Lack of Security:** Political disturbances and interethnic conflicts drive people away from their homes. Large number of people has migrated out of Jammu and Kashmir and Assam during the last few years due to disturbed conditions there.
- 9. Lack of infrastructure:** Students usually migrate from one place to another within India is because of the lack of infrastructure at their home place. As mentioned above students from most of the North-Indian states move to Karnataka and other places because these states can provide them with better educational infrastructure and better facilities.
- 10. Preferred educational courses:** Many of the institutions in India do not have wide variety of courses which serves as one of the reasons for the students to move out of their home place and learn their preferred subject or course at another place far from their hometown.

Economic Implications

.In general perception, it is visible that all the students are not choosing credible and recognised courses abroad, but there is formidable number of students as well highly influenced by the opportunity in foreign countries to do work simultaneously with studies. The part-time jobs that our students do in other countries like working in restaurants and shops may not be lucrative / unattainable in home state, or there is unwillingness to perform likewise here. There is an initiative in the state also to delegate a scheme for students to work while studying. However, the current student migration is not alarming since the migration is within certain limit at present . Ultimately, this migration resulted in over 25,000 vacant seats in engineering colleges and over 10,000 seats vacant in arts and science colleges all over Kerala state. It is a deep concern that if this current migration trend persisting, it will lead Kerala to becoming a state for the elderly people. While it is generally interpreted it can be termed also it as brain circulation.

By means of Brain circulation skills, know-how, and other experience gained by our migrants in another country - whether they have returned or not can be utilized in the home state as well. In this juncture, these highly skilled / experienced academic and technical migrants can in turn create social and professional networks to mobilise human & financial capital, enable transfer of skill and information technology deliver start-up ideas, collaborative business plans etc. Periodically, they can work as cross country linkages for whenever there are opportunities. In the globalised labor market, these skilled migrations can open doors for business ideas, entrepreneurship opportunities and investment plans. In general, conditioning our labour and technological policies are key and vital in achieving the benefits of brain sufficiently.

Conclusion

Students in Kerala are becoming pickier and more meticulous while choosing their educational career. They want to imbibe a global perspective and practical knowledge-based education. This expounded study concludes by proving that limited seats in governmental institutions, exorbitant fees in non-governmental institutions in home-country and quality of education in foreign country were the major reasons which motivates the students in Kerala to pursue their higher education in abroad. Here in this outlook it points out the propensity of the students to stay or get permanent residence after education is influenced by limited job opportunity in Kerala and the quality of life they will get in foreign country. Looking at the number of Keralites flee to abroad for higher studies, Government should investigate the possibility to lessen the migration and solution to increase the returning of students. Governments must take initiatives

to promote collaboration between higher education institution in Kerala and international universities. Indian universities should frame a policy for students to do part time work permit along with studies. It also suggests the home country Government and their educational universities to consider the relevance or importance of push-pull factor which motivate them to study abroad. Overall, this study depicts the better understanding of Keralites reason for pursuing higher education abroad.

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