

Migration impact on left-behind Elderly's labour participation in Kerala

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Abstract

Objectives: An attempt was made to study the migration impact on left-behind Elderly's labour force participation in Kerala.

Methodology: This paper was entirely based on secondary data sources collected from various reports such as census of India, Kerala migration survey reports, economic review of Kerala etc. Correlation matrix has been used to find out the relationship between remittances and WPR of elderly among the districts in Kerala.

Findings: Migration not only reduces the number of potential care givers within the family, but it also result in a deterioration of the quality of family support and consequently to an annoyance of the elderlies' wellbeing and health conditions and also reduces the labour market participation of left-behind elderly. There is a negative correlation between international migration and the work participation of the left behind elderly members. Districts that account for higher rates of emigration show low levels of elderly participation in the labour market and vice versa.

Application/Improvement: The study suggested for taking the actions to alleviate the financial over dependence, ensure social security measures for the aged and the increased role of government in taking care of the aged. If the government is not taken any steps towards the aged now, it will become very difficult to provide proper care and security to the elderly people in the coming decades.

Keywords: Migration, Left-behind Elderly, Remittances, Workforce Participation, Dependency.

1. Introduction

Ageing of population is one of the most noteworthy trends of the 21st century. The number of aged persons as a proportion of the total population has increased all over the world. It has important and profound implications for all aspects of society. The main reason for this demographic transition is the decrease in fertility and mortality rates along with an increase in life expectancy. The health and well-being of the elderly are affected by many aspects of their social and physical environment. This includes life-style, marital status, family support and social networks, income, work, retirement and environmental factors like condition of housing etc [1]. India has the second largest number of elderly in the world and their proportion to total population is increasing continuously. Aging in developing economies like India is particularly complex because their populations age fast but at low levels of income. In addition, their labor markets tend to be largely imperfect with a significant share of the labor force in informal jobs under poor working conditions. Structural constraints including limited access to financial products and services, a restrictive business environment, and weak safety nets compound the difficulties of aging at an earlier stage of development [2]. According to 2011 census around 104 million populations is above 60 years which constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country. This number is expected to increase to 177.4 million in 2025. The main reason behind the increased life span is due to the socio-economic and health care developments. These factors are responsible for the higher numerical presence of elderly people leading to higher dependency ratio [1].

Kerala, the southern state of India, with desirable distinctions in human development indices, which are on par with that of many of the most developed nations, is far ahead in the demographic transition process compared to other Indian states. Life expectancy in Kerala has increased significantly in the last few decades. It is mainly due to the socio-economic and health care developments which led to the higher numerical presence of elderly people. Kerala has become an 'Aged society' and the percentage of aged population is close to that of

the developed countries of the world. According to 2011 census, elderly comprises 12.6 per cent of total population in Kerala with 11.8 per cent of elderly males and 13.3 per cent of elderly females. It is seen that Kerala at the very advanced stage of the ageing process.

There are both positive and negative implications of getting old on the positive side old age is associated with wisdom, respect and the potential for spiritual growth. It discharges elderly from family responsibilities and gives them freedom of action on the negative side it is associated with physical and mental decline, unhappy and unproductive. Most often they are suffer from depression, loneliness and alienation. These negative effects probably derive from a loss of authority, absence of a meaningful role in social life, marginality in social relationships, material insecurity, dependence etc [3].

2. Methodology

The main focus of the paper is to find out the impact of migration on left-behind Elderly's labour force participation in Kerala. For this purpose secondary sources of data are used. The data are largely collected from various census reports, Kerala migration survey reports, and Economic review of Kerala etc. To find out the relationship between remittances and WPR of left-behind elderly in Kerala, correlation matrix has been used.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Trends of population growth in Kerala

Kerala is heading for a significant phase in its demographic transition with the state moving towards achieving zero population growth rate, which will result in an increase in scarcity of labour (Table 1).

Table 1. Trends of population growth in Kerala, 1961-2011

Year	Population(In millions)	Growth rate
1961	16.90	---
1971	21.347	2.63
1981	25.453	1.92
1991	29.10	1.43
2001	31.84	0.94
2011	33.41	0.49

Source: [4]

Kerala continues to be the only state in the country where women outnumber men. The census figures show that the growth rate of population is continuously declining in Kerala from 1961-2011. In 1961-1971, population in the state has grown at a rate of 2.63 percent only. In the coming decades, population growth rate has declined very sharply in the state. Kerala registered a growth rate of above 2 per cent during 1961-71. The growth rate of population during the last decade 2001-2011 was a mere 0.49 per cent, the lowest rate experienced since the formation of the state. The growth rate during 2001-2011 in Kerala was the lowest in India. The total population of Kerala is projected to increase from 25.4 million in 1981 to 45 million in 2026 [1].

3.2. Age wise distribution of Elderly

Elderly population in 14 districts of the state in 2011 is given in Table 2. District wise census data indicate that highest number of elderly was in Ernakulam district (4.5 lakh) followed by Thiruvananthapuram (4.3). Lowest number of elderly aged 60 and above is in Wayanad (0.8 followed by Kasargod (1.3). The picture would be different if we examine the elderly's proportion to total population in the districts. According to 2011 census data, the proportion of elderly to total population is highest in Pathanamthitta district (17.82 per cent) followed by Kottayam (15.81 per cent). The lowest proportion of elderly population as per 2011 census is in Malappuram (8.31 per cent) followed by Wayanad (9.55 per cent).

Table 2. Elderly populations by districts in Kerala, 2011

Districts	Total number of elderly (In lakh)	Proportion of aged to total population
Thiruvananthapuram	4.3	13.01
Kollam	3.5	13.28
Pathanamthitta	2.1	17.82
Alappuzha	3.2	15.14
Kottayam	3.1	15.81
Idukki	1.3	11.59
Ernakulam	4.5	13.73
Thrissur	4.3	13.73
Palakkad	3.3	11.87
Malappuram	3.4	8.31
Kozhikode	3.6	11.69
Wayanad	0.8	9.55
Kannur	3.2	12.53
Kasaragod	1.3	9.78

Source: [4]

3.3. Migration and Elderly in Kerala

Increasing life expectancy is one of humanity's greatest achievements. People live longer because of improved nutrition, sanitation, medical advances, health care, education and economic well-being [5]. Among the all Indian states, Kerala has the highest proportion of elderly. This is same in the case of migration also. Kerala is one of the largest emigrant sending states in India, with emigrants numbering 2.2 million workers in 2011. Emigrant workers account for 17 per cent of Kerala's labour force, the majority of them working in the gulf countries. International migration provides employment to millions of unemployed people in Kerala every year, and resulted in the reduction of the unemployment rate by 32 per cent in 1998 and 34 per cent in 2011 [6]. It is not only important for the improvement of unemployment situation in Kerala but also has a significant impact on the state economy through the inflow of remittances. In 2011, Kerala received ₹ 497 billion, which accounts for 31 per cent of the NSDP. Remittance flows are expected to increase reservation wages and the demand for leisure and lower labour market participation of the left-behind migrant family members [7].

Increase in the house hold income through remittances increase the reservation wage of the left-behind members of the migrant house hold. The probability of left-behind members entering or staying in the labour market decreases when the market wage is below the reservation wage [8]. It is well accepted that international migration can have both positive and negative effects on non-migrants in the home country. First, there is the possibility that remittances sent from abroad will relax the household budget constraint and result in an increase in child schooling, health, and a corresponding decrease in elderly labor market participation [9]. Intergenerational contacts and interactions are expected to become more complex in future. With the increasing life expectancy and more migration of youngsters will surely affect the family relationship.

The large scale migration of young people can have many implications for the welfare of the elderly left behind [10]. It can produce both protections and risks for the left-behind elderly by changing their prolonged stress levels on the one hand, the migration of adults may reduce intergenerational, social and emotional support; increase the older isolation, all of which contribute to increased chronic stress of the left-behind elderly [11].

3.4. Role of migration and remittances in the WPR of elderly

Migration appears to have provided the single most dynamic factor in the otherwise dismal economic scenario of Kerala in the last quarter of the 20th century [12]. It is one of the positive outcomes of the Kerala model of development [13]. The enormous emigration from Kerala to the Gulf countries has brought extraordinary and dynamic changes in the socio-economic characteristics of the people of Kerala. The immediate and direct benefits of migration are the huge volume of foreign remittances brought to Kerala in the form of remittances. Migration and remittances are supposed to have affected the elderly also in many ways; in depriving them of the care from their children, in increasing loneliness and anxiety among them, in improving their economic and financial security, in enhancing their ability to seek expert medical help etc [14].

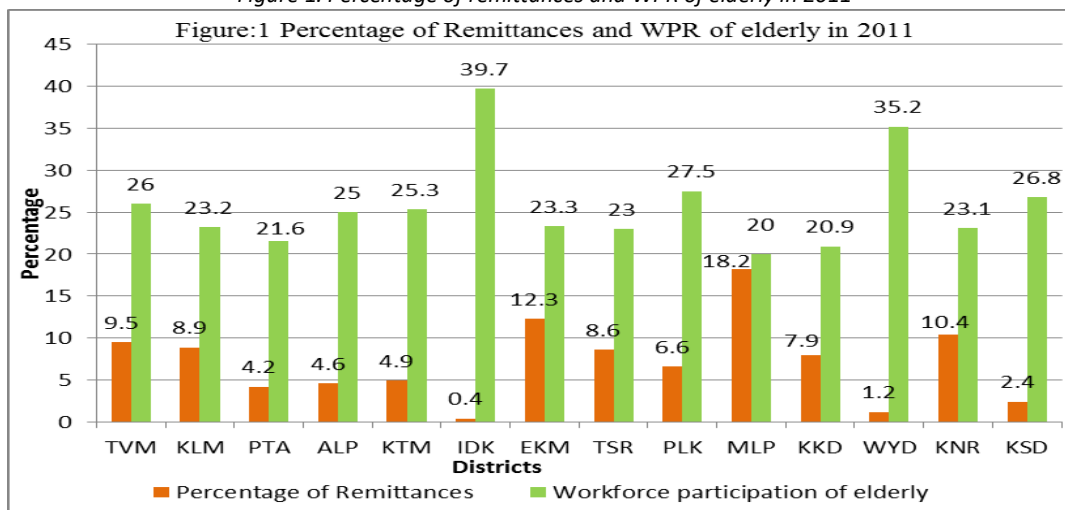
Table 3. Emigrants, remittances and WPR by districts 2011

Districts	Number of emigrants (in lakh)	Remittances (in Crore)	Workforce participation of elderly
Thiruvananthapuram	2.3	4740	26.0
Kollam	1.7	4423	23.2
Pathanamthitta	0.9	2079	21.6
Alappuzha	1.4	2296	25.0
Kottayam	1.2	2419	25.3
Idukki	0.08	182	39.7
Ernakulam	1.4	6127	23.3
Thrissur	1.9	4293	23.0
Palakkad	1.4	3293	27.5
Malappuram	4.1	9040	20.0
Kozhikode	2.1	3904	20.9
Wayanad	0.3	578	35.2
Kannur	2.8	5145	23.1
Kasaragod	1.2	1176	26.8
Kerala	22.8	49695	24.4

Source: [15], [4]

The majority of the elderly tend to work even after the age of retirement due to the inadequate old age security, both emotional and material [16]. However, the work participation ratio of the elderly tends to decline with the advancement in age. The districts of Idukki and Wayanad, top in terms of work participation rate. The elderly work participation rates of these districts are 39.7 per cent and 35.2 per cent respectively (Table 3). The fact is that, these districts have least emigrants and remittances receiving. The highest emigrants and remittances receiving district Malappuram have the lowest elderly work participation rate (20 per cent). It is an accepted truth that, increase in households' income via remittances leads to the withdrawal of certain members, especially the elderly members, from the labour market. Thus gulf emigration has, directly and indirectly, influenced the work participation rate too much in the state.

Figure 1. Percentage of remittances and WPR of elderly in 2011



Source: [16], [4]

TVM-Thiruvananthapuram, KLM-Kollam, PTA-Pathanamthitta, ALP-Alappuzha, KTM-Kottayam, IDK-Idukki, EKM-Ernakulam, TSR-Thrissur, PLK-Palakkad, MLP-Malappuram, KKD-Kozhikode, WYD-Wayanad, KNR-Kannur, KSD-Kasargod

Remittances are the principal means by which emigration impacts upon the economy. In addition, emigration from the state has important implications for reducing population pressure, unemployment and, in general, changing the life style of the people in the state [17]. The flow of remittance has a greater role in the process of poverty reduction and changing consumption patterns also [18]. No doubt, Malappuram is the highest remittance receiving district in the state (9040 million rupees) followed by Ernakulam (6127). Majority of households in Malappuram, either directly or indirectly, depends on remittances to meet their day-to-day

expenses. Idukki and Wayanad are the least remittance receiving districts. The lowest work participation of elderly is seen in Malappuram (20 per cent) (Figure 1). This district is known for sending the largest number of men to the Gulf. The adjoining district Kozhikode also registers very low levels of elderly workforce participation and accounts higher number of emigrants. Districts that account for higher rates of emigration and remittances show low level of elderly participation in the labour market.

3.5. Relationship between remittances and WPR of elderly

The present analysis is an attempt to examine the relationship between remittances and workforce participation of elderly. Following inter correlation matrix reveals the relationship among the variables of workforce participation of elderly and remittances (that is, X_1 ... X_5). The variables are elderly workforce participation (X_1), elderly sex ratio (X_2), total number of elderly (X_3), number of emigrants (X_4) and remittances (X_5). Table 4 reveals that there is negative correlation of elderly workforce participation (X_1) with the variables, that is, elderly sex ratio (X_2), total number of elderly (X_3), number of emigrants (X_4) and remittances (X_5). The values of correlation of X_1 with X_2 ($r = -0.564$), X_3 ($r = -0.674$) and X_4 ($r = -0.701$) and X_5 ($r = -0.711$) is significant at 1% level. It may be determined that that the higher remittances level is the cause of low level of work participation rate among elderly on the other hand, there is positive correlation between the variables X_2 with total number of elderly (X_3), number of emigrants (X_4) and remittances (X_5). There is also a positive relationship between number of emigrants and remittances.

Table 4. Correlation matrix of relationship between remittances and WPR of elderly

	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5
X_1	1	-0.56425	-0.67359	-0.71129	-0.70067
X_2		1	0.466148	0.50181	0.38971
X_3			1	0.591763	0.73573
X_4				1	0.892869
X_5					1

Source: Computed by the authors

4. Conclusions and policy suggestions

The study about the left-behind elderly in the migrant families in Kerala throws light on many crucial issues. The increase of the process of demographic ageing in a society has number of socio-economic problems. The proportion of the elderly in Kerala population has been increasing steadily over the last five census periods. In 1961, the elderly constituted 5.8 per cent of total population and rose to 12.3 per cent in 2011 and expected to rise about 35 per cent by 2051. In absolute number they were only 9.86 million in 1961 and they were 41.93 million in 2011. As the proportion of elderly people increases in the state, this will impose a heavy burden on state expenditure by providing social security. The present study makes it clear that there is a negative correlation between international migration and the work participation of the left behind elderly members. Districts that account for higher rates of emigration show low levels of elderly participation in the labour market and vice versa. Both male and female elderly are economically dependent on the younger population. In future, every household in Kerala has to take care of an aged father or mother or both. The government needs to consider some measures or policies for the elderly in terms of their relevance, contribution to society, medical requirements etc. Actions should be taken to alleviate the financial over dependence, ensure social security measures for the aged and the increased role of government in taking care of the aged. If the government is not taken any steps towards the aged now, it will become very difficult to provide proper care and security to the elderly people in the coming decades.

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