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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE IN-MIGRANT WORKERS IN KERALA

A Case Study in the Trivandrum District*

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ABSTRACT

The major objective of the paper is to examine the economic conditions of the in-migrant workers in Kerala. This has been done by analysing their savings, income and consumption pattern and nature of work before and after migration. The analysis is based on data from a sample of 166 in-migrants workers in the Trivandrum district, which has been collected through a primary survey during September-October, 2008. While existing studies provide evidences for short distance migration from nearby states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to Kerala, our study observed that long distance migration from states like West Bengal and Assam dominated the inflow of migrant workers in recent years. Informal information networks through acquaintances that have already migrated plays important role in migration of workers to Kerala. Poor economic conditions along with several other overlapping factors have been identified as the reason of migration. There has not been any change in the nature of employment of the migrants even after migration. However, there has been a shift from the low-income brackets before migration to high-income brackets after migration. We observed positive relationship of skill level and instance of migration with income level. Notwithstanding the improved income level the living condition for most of them is deplorable, most of them live together in either poor rented houses or work sites with one room shared by many and no provision of hygienic sanitation. The amount and pattern of food expenditure is found to be more or less same for all the migrants, whereas that of non-food expenditure varies from person to person. The savings and investment habit among the migrants is found to be very poor.

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* This paper is a part of a study that was carried out as a part of group Field Survey work during my M. Phil program (2008-2010) at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum (Kerala). However, the present paper is author's own initiative, and hence, the team members are not responsible for anything written here. I am thankful to Dr. U. S. Mishra, Dr. M. Parameswaran and T. R. Dilip of the Centre for Development Studies for their valuable comments and suggestions during the field work and writing of the paper, and to the remaining members of the Field Survey team (Arun, Kiran, Sanjaya, Neha, Karamjit and Kalyani) for their support during the field survey. The usual disclaimer applies.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE IN-MIGRANT WORKERS IN KERALA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The distribution of population on the globe has always been responded to the opportunities that different territories provide. The crucial motivation for migration is primarily economic. The greater the difference in economic opportunities between two regions, the greater is the flow of migrants between them. Though distance is usually a significant intervening obstacle, its negative influence can be largely offset by sizable income differentials (Barnum and Sabot 1975b; Schultz 1975; Lipton 1976). In addition to economic motive, people migrate to improve their education or skill level, to escape social and cultural imprisonment in homogeneous rural areas, to escape political instability and to join family and friends who have previously migrated to urban areas.

Migration causes changes in the distribution of jobs, income and economic resources in both the sending and receiving regions, and thus, structural transformation of rural and urban economy. Neither the social and cultural impacts of migration can be under looked. As people move, their cultural traits and ideas diffuse along with them, creating and modifying cultural landscape. Though the developmental and poverty reduction impact of remittances remains debated, there is ample evidence for its development impact. Remittances are an important addition to (or even principal source of) economic resource for poor rural households, helping them to smooth income flows and to invest in assets and human capital. However, remittance flows are seriously under reported, as flows through informal sources and in the forms of kinds and goods are not possible to capture.

Migration is a complex phenomenon and has different dimensions in terms of duration, nature of origin, destination and characteristics of migrants. In the migration literature different types of migration has been identified, for instance, internal and external migration, emigration, immigration, seasonal migration, rural-urban migration, return migration, step migration, chain migration and so on (see World Migration Report, 2008 for these concepts). As per the 2001 Census 307.2 million persons or about 30% of 1028.6 million populations in India were migrants, of which 42.1 million were inter-state migrants. Interstate migration is defined as movement of people from the place of residence to a state other than that of birth. In India most of the less developed states such as Bihar, Uttar

Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the Northeastern states etc. have experienced significant net out migration. Among others, while Kerala is well known for its out migration to the Gulf countries, states like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa along the western coast and Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh in the northwest, along with West Bengal and Jharkhand in the east are the net receiver of migrants. Though most of the inter-state migrants move from neighbourhood states, long distance migration is also not rare. For instance, migrants from the North-Eastern states, Bihar and Orissa migrated not only to West Bengal, but Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Gujarat. In other words rural-urban migration is the most obvious case and Metro cities are the major magnets.

The rest of the paper is organised in the following sections. Section 2 explains the context and objectives of the paper. Section 3 explains the data and survey methodology. Section 4 discusses the major findings. Section 5 concludes.

2. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

The outmigration of labour from Kerala to the Gulf countries is well known. This, coupled with the recent boom in the hospitality and realty sectors has crafted a construction sector boom in the region's economy. Looking at the trajectory of Kerala's Gulf emigration it is obvious that in the early phase the emigrants were mostly non-agricultural labourer with low educational qualification (though they also included some skilled workers like carpenters, masons, electricians, etc.). This helped in two ways- (a) reduce the unemployment rate, and (b) the money they sent back accelerated the construction industry, and thus, further helped to reduce unemployment. Though, the emigration of labour did not create any major bottleneck in the home economy in the early phase, the continuous emigration resulted in scarcity of labour, which was followed inevitably by increases in the wage rate. At present Kerala have the highest wage rates among the states in India. The daily wage of a construction labourer in Kerala was pegged between Rs. 250 to Rs. 300 in 2001, while it was Rs. 71 in West Bengal, Rs. 55 in Tripura and Rs. 47 in Madhya Pradesh.¹

The chronic shortage of labour felt in the construction sector in Kerala and the resultant higher wage rates received the attention of workers in other states and they began to move to Kerala in search of work. This has opened a new era of replacement migration to Kerala as the state is again becoming an in-migrating state after a break of about 60 years

¹ Source: <http://labourbureau.nic.in/WRI-2003-04%20Tables.htm>

since the 1960s. Though initially the migrants were from the neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu and mostly seasonal and short-duration (especially daily and weekly) migration, at a later period the state started getting migrants from far distant states like Bihar, Assam and West Bengal and places like Nepal. This change is much visible in many of the large-scale construction sites that the language spoken is often not Malayalam, rather Hindi, Bengali, Assamese or Nepali. As Rajan and James (2007) observed, the era of in-migration of labourer to the state is largely stimulated by “...emigration of workers from Kerala, demographic contraction of the supply of young workers brought about by the rapid demographic transition in the state, the higher wages charged by Kerala workers, the ability of Kerala workers to sustain themselves with remittances from relatives, the reluctance on the part of Kerala workers to do dirty and hard physical work”.²

This migratory movement of labourer, in turn, has a far-reaching impact on the migrant’s household as well as regional economy. Emigration brings changes in the economic status of the household through regular inflow of remittances. The injection of money induces the native household to change their consumption, savings and investment pattern in order to achieve a better standard of living. The present study tries to analyze the economic condition of in-migrant workers in Kerala. The extent to which migration provides (or could provide) a successful route to greater economic security could be traced on consumption and saving patterns of the migrants and their families. So, the central point of the study is to map out the consumption and saving patterns of the migrants. Migration can have direct effect on peoples’ livelihoods, to the extent that the migrants send money to their families to sustain livelihoods. Migration can also act as a social security mechanism for poor households and individuals. Households use and save remittances in order to smooth consumption over time and to access lump sums for times of heavy expenditure.

The major objective of the paper is to examine the economic conditions of the migrant workers before and after migration (in terms of the nature of work, skills level, consumption, income, etc.). It also tries to examine the savings and consumption pattern of the migrant workers and the factors influencing in-migration of workers to Kerala.

² Demographic Transition and Economic Development in Kerala: The Role of Emigration, Project Report Submitted as part of the MIR Study to the SANEI, 2007.

3. DATA AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on primary survey data on the in-migrants workers in the Trivandrum district of Kerala, India. The selection of the Trivandrum is based on the concentration of in-migrant workers in different construction sites of the district. The sample unit in our survey is the migrant workers. We took the help of the local people to find out the construction sites where the migrant workers are working and the places where they are living. We have collected data by visiting both the places (either working sites or residence) whichever found convenient. In case of conducting interviews in the working sites we discussed with the employer or contractor under whom the migrants are working to identify the migrants who would like to give information about their migration and fix the most convenient date and time for interview so that their work would not be affected by the process of interview. In case of conducting interviews in the residing areas, we visited their dwellings mostly in the evening between 6-8 pm after they returned from work.

The survey has been carried out during September-October, 2008 and information has been collected for the previous one as well as for the previous month from the date of the survey on various migration particulars such as the process of migration, the motive behind migration, sources of information, their past and present occupational pattern and wage levels, the cost and benefit of migration etc. The detail data has been collected for 166 sample units (migrant workers) by using a structured questionnaire.³

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE MIGRANTS

The sample is comprised of relatively young migrant workers; the average age is 26.42 years. About 25.3% of migrants are below 20 years and 32.5% are of 21-25 years (see Table 1.A). All the sample migrants are male. The social groups (caste and religion) composition reveals that Schedule Cast migrants dominate the sample. About 47% of migrants belong to Schedule Cast, whereas General, OBC and ST account for 7.2%, 7.8% and 6% respectively (see Figure 1.A). About 96.4% of migrants are Hindu and the remaining are Muslim.

The average family size is 5 persons, with the maximum of 15 persons and minimum of two persons. More than three fourth of the migrants have a relatively smaller family size of bellow 6 persons (see Table 2.A). About 63.9% of the migrant workers are unmarried,

³ The questionnaire is available from the author on request.

whereas 34.9% are married, one worker is widowed and another one separated (see Figure 2.A).

Looking at the number of earning members in the family (excluding the migrant) it is revealed that about 24% of the migrants have no earning members in their family, about 58.4% have earning members less than two, 16.87% have more than 3 earning members excluding the migrant (see Figure 3.A). About 53.6% of the migrants have no dependent children (below age 14 years) in their home, whereas about 13.3% migrants have one, 20.5% migrants have two and 12.60% migrants have more than 3 dependent children at home (see Table 3.A).

For 84% of the migrants the respondent is the only migrant in the family, while the remaining 16% migrants have at least one migrant in the family. When the migrants were asked whether they want any other member of their family to join them, about 88% reported negatively.

4.2 ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE MIGRANT FAMILY

The economic status of the migrant family is one of the important areas that have to be focused on, because literature suggests that the low economic condition of the family is largely responsible for large scale of migration. The average monthly household income (excluding the migrant) for which information is available (for 141 migrants) is Rs. 2280, with maximum of Rs. 10000 and minimum zero. About 30% migrants have no earning members in their home and 13.9% migrants reported their family income as subsistence level. On the average, for more than two third of the migrants monthly family income is less than Rs. 2500 (see Table 1).⁴

Table 1: Household Monthly Income excluding the Migrants

Monthly Income level (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
No income (no earning member)	38	22.9
< 1500	23	13.9
1501- 2500	32	19.3
2501- 4500	22	13.3
4501- 6500	18	10.8
6501 and above	8	4.8
Reported as “subsistence income”	23	13.9
Do not know	2	1.2
Total	166	100.0

⁴ It also includes those who reported their family income as subsistence income.

We have collected information about the debt position of the migrants in their home as the people with higher debt levels are supposed to be less financially secured and more vulnerable and thus have higher tendency to migrate. Repayment of debt may be one of the factors that force the people to migrate. In our sample about 58.4% migrants have no debt in their home, while the rest have some amount of debt in home. The outstanding debt position of the migrants is given in Table 2. The average debt at home per migrant worker is Rs. 7500. Informal moneylenders are the major sources of borrowing (about 60.87%), followed by family/relatives (30%). The coverage of the banking system is very low. Only 8.69% migrants with debt borrowed money from commercial banks (see Figure 4.A). The spread of the micro credit is also very low; only one migrant has loan in SHG. This is both an indication and cause of weak financial situation of the migrants' families- as they not credit worthy so that cannot have access to commercial banks and further because of mall practices of informal moneylenders and high interest rates they tend to fall in debt.

While meeting the expenditure of marriage and other social functions is the major reason of borrowing for about one fourth of migrants with outstanding debt, expenditure in agriculture, day to day household expenditures, medical expenditure, and building houses & purchasing land are the other important areas for which the migrants borrowed money (see Table 4.A). However, borrowing for starting a business and financing education of dependents is found to be very less among the migrant workers.

Table 2: Migrants classified on the basis of Outstanding Debt

Amount of Debt (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
No debt	97	58.4
< 5,000	15	9.0
5,001- 15,000	24	14.5
15,001- 30,000	21	12.7
30,001- 45,000	5	3.0
45,001 and above	4	2.4
Total	166	100.0

Looking at the asset position of the migrants at home we found that the average land holding of the migrants' home is 3.05 bigha. About 34.34% migrants have no agricultural land at home, whereas 21.69% have land less than 2 bigha, 26% have between 2-5 bigha and the 8% have more than 5 bigha of agricultural land at home (Table 3). It is also found that 13 migrants have no homestead land.

Table 3: Agricultural Land Holdings of the Migrants at Home

Agricultural land (in Bigha)	Frequency	Percent
No	57	34.34
Less than 2 Bigha	36	21.69
2 bigha-5bigha	43	25.90
Above 5 Bigha	30	18.07
Total	166	100.00

4.3 SOURCES AND REASONS OF MIGRATION TO KERALA

West Bengal and Assam dominated the sources of migration to Kerala in the sample. About 58% migrants are from West Bengal and another 37.3% are from Assam (see Table 5.A). The other migration sending states to Kerala are Andhra Pradesh, Utter Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa, but the number of migrants from these states in our sample is very less. However, it does not imply that all the migrant workers in Trivandrum district are from only West Bengal and Assam. The concentration of migrants from West Bengal and Assam in our sample may be because of the area that we covered in our survey is fully dominated by migrants from these two states. This is not an exceptional phenomenon, because migrants from the same place prefer to stay in the same locality and as we observed that most of the migrants have been migrated to a place through acquaintances that have already migrated (see Figure 5.A). More than 58% migrants in our sample have migrated to Kerala through information from their friends and relatives, and another 41% have migrated through acquaintances that have already migrated to Kerala. This suggests that informal networks play important role in migration of workers to Kerala.

We investigate about the prior migration experience of the migrants to other places, because if the migrants have earlier experience of migration it will be easy for them to migrate to another place and also assimilate with the new conditions. While about two third of migrants migrated to Kerala for the first time, the remaining one third have earlier experience of migration to places like Karnataka, Assam, Delhi, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Bhutan. We also found that about two third of the migrants have first migrated after 2006, 23.49% migrants have first migrated in between 2001-2005 and 11.43% have first migrated before 2000 (see Figure 6.A). Considering the instances of migration to Kerala, about 50% migrants have migrated to Kerala within one year, 28% migrated within 2-3 years, 17.5% migrated within 4-8 years and 4.2% migrated before 9 years (see Table 6.A).

Several overlapping factors have been identified behind the migration story. The major reason of migration in our sample is found to be the poor economic condition and low wages in native region. On the average about 76% migrants reported the reason of migration as getting employment/better employment, another 46% reported as meeting household expenditure and 33.73% reported as accumulation of savings (Table 4). The other reasons reported by the migrants are to repay debts, financing education of dependents and marriage of dependents, etc. This suggests that migration is possibly for the creation of outside support system for livelihood. Further, dominance of economic reasons also suggests that it is primarily the differences in economic opportunities between different states that is pushing for movement of labor.

Table 4: Reasons of Migration

Reasons of Migration	Frequency	Percent
Get employment/better employment	126	75.90
Meeting household expenditure	77	46.39
Accumulate savings	56	33.73
Repayment of Debt	12	7.23
Marriage of dependents & Financing education of dependents	14	8.43
Purchase of land/ Construction of house	1	0.60
Total	166	100.00

Note: * the summation is higher than the reported total because of multiple responses.

We further enquire the major reasons behind migration to Kerala. The major reasons of migration to Kerala are found to be higher wage, availability of work and better working condition. On the average about 90% migrants reported that they migrated to Kerala specifically because of higher wage rate in Kerala, whereas 12.65% migrants reported availability of work, and another 7.83% reported better working conditions as the main reasons of migration to Kerala (Table 5).

Table 5: Major Reasons of Migration to Kerala

Reasons of migration to Kerala	Frequency*	Percent*
High wage	150	90.36
Availability of work	21	12.65
Better Working condition	13	7.83
Accumulation of Savings & repayment of debt	6	3.61
Relatives and Acquaintances in Kerala	10	6.02
Others (e.g. no job, Kerala is secured than other places, etc.)	6	3.61
Total	166	100.00

Note: * the summation is higher than the reported total because of multiple responses.

4.4 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE MIGRANTS: PRE- AND POST-MIGRATION PERIOD

4.4.1 Employment Status and Skill Level of the Migrants⁵

Before migrating to Kerala about 12.7% of the migrants were unemployed and another 4.2% were students, whereas about 36% were employed in the informal sector, 27% were self-employed in agriculture and about 20% were self-employed in the non-agricultural sector (Table 6). Further, about 62% migrants were engaged in unskilled works before migration and only about one fifth were engaged in some kind of skilled works (Figure 1). Further, about 16.3% of migrants have no formal education, about 30% have primary education and 53.6% have secondary education, whereas only one sample migrant has experience of studying at the college level (Figure 2). All these provide an indirect indication that the nature of migration is forced migration, not prosperity driven.

Table 6: Activity Status of the Migrants on the Eve of Migration

Types of Activity	Frequency	Percent
Students	7	4.2
Unemployed	21	12.7
Employed in informal sector	60	36.1
Self-employed in agriculture	45	27.1
Self-employed in non-agricultural sector	33	19.9
Total	166	100.0

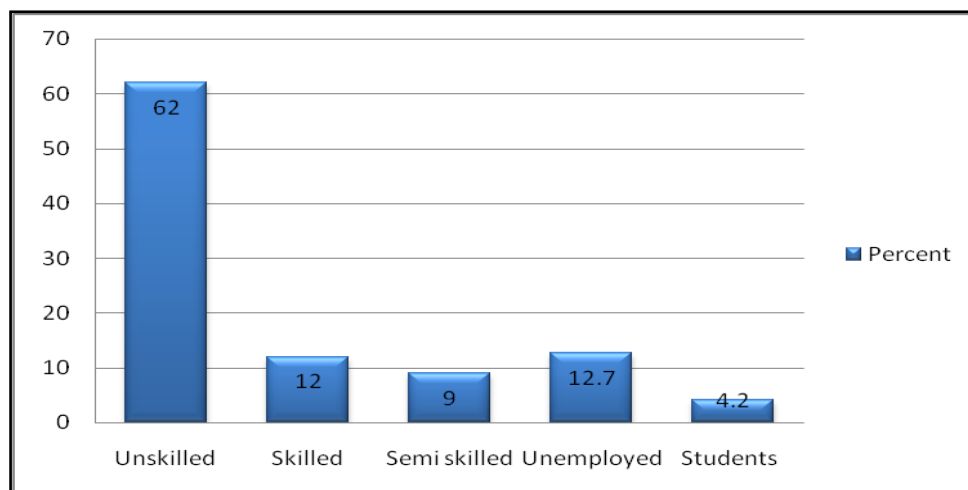


Figure 1: Skill Level of Employment before Migration

⁵ The term “skill” is very loosely defined in the present study. The definition is not based on whether the worker is skilled or not, rather whether the worker is engaged in activities with some kind of skill or not.

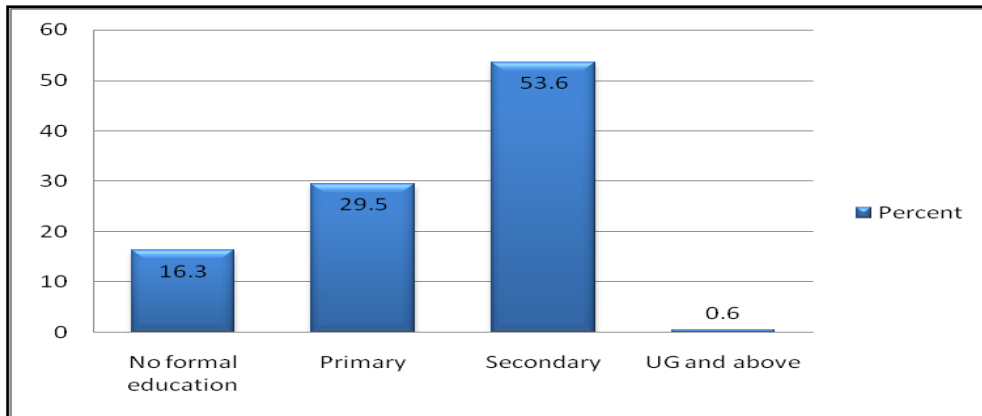


Figure 2: Level of Education of the Migrants

However, it seems that there has not been any improvement in the nature of works even after the migration. Almost all the migrants are engaged in temporary work. None of the migrants have signed any kind of formal employment contract or registered to any employment agency. Instead, they have engaged in some kind of informal agreement with some contractors in various construction sites of the district. About 90.4% migrants are engaged in such work agreements. The remaining 9.6% of migrants, who are working independently, either went to different work places in search of work or they used to stand in some market places from where somebody picked them up for work. It is found that about 71% migrants are working as helper to the mason in various construction sites, and another 12.65% are working as construction mason. The other activities that the migrants are working are bricks maker, casual laborer, carpenter & painting, truck helper, etc. (see Table 7.A). Considering the skill level, more than two thirds (about 71%) of the migrant workers are engaged in unskilled works, while about 15% workers are engaged in semi-skilled and skilled activities each (Figure 3).

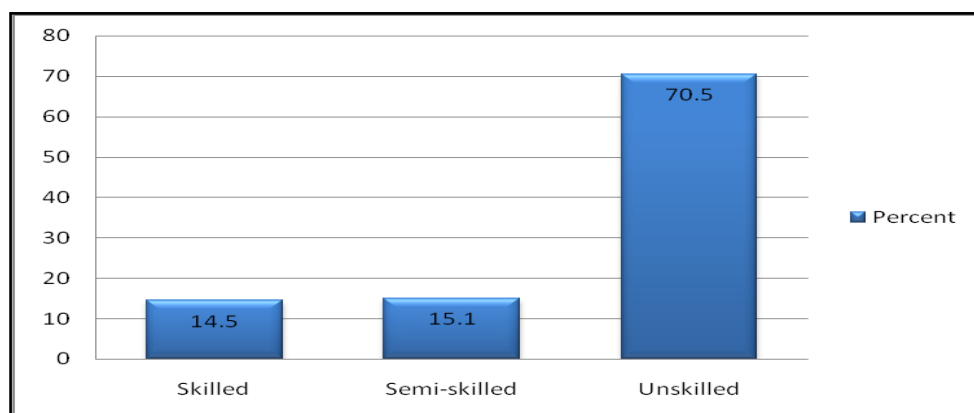


Figure 3: Skill Level of Employment after Migration

Looking at the mobility of the skill level in the post migration period, it is noticed that out of 20 migrants who were working in the skilled activities before migration 10 are still working in the skilled activities, but 2 of them are working in the semi-skilled activities and 6 are working in the unskilled activities (Table 7). It implies that of the skilled workers before migration 50% have moved downward in skill level after migration. Similarly, out of 15 semi-skilled workers before migration 7 are still working in the semi-skilled activities and one moved upward to skilled activities, but the remaining 7 moved downward to unskilled activities after migration. Again, out of 103 unskilled workers before migration 9 moved upward to skilled activities and 12 moved upward to the semi-skilled activities, while the remaining 82 are still working in the unskilled activities after migration. Of the 28 migrants who were unemployed and students in the pre migration period, 22 are working in the unskilled activities, 2 in the semi-skilled activities and 4 are working in the skilled activities. Thus, there are both upward and downward mobility of skill level in the post migration period: some skilled workers in the pre migration period are now working in unskilled and semi-skilled activities and some unskilled workers before migration are now working in skilled activities. However, a larger proportion of each skill level remained in the same skill level after migration.

Table 7: Skill Levels of Employment before and after Migration

Skill level of Employment before Migration	Skill level of Employment after Migration			Total
	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	
Unemployed & Students	4 (14.3)	2 (7.1)	22 (78.6)	28 (100.0)
Skilled	10 (50.0)	4 (20.0)	6 (30.0)	20 (100.0)
Semi skilled	1 (6.7)	7 (46.7)	7 (46.7)	15 (100.0)
Unskilled	9 (8.7)	12 (11.7)	82 (79.6)	103 (100.0)
Total	24 (14.5)	25 (15.1)	117 (70.5)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage

4.4.2 Income Level of the Migrants

The income level of the migrants before migration is reported in Table 8. For about for 16.3% migrants the monthly income before migration was zero as they were student and unemployed and for another 9.6% migrants the monthly income was only “subsistence income from agriculture”. About one third migrants have monthly income less than Rs. 2000 before migration and for another 35.5% the monthly income was between Rs. 2000- Rs. 3499, whereas only for 6.6% migrants the monthly income was more than Rs. 3500 before migration (Table 8).

Table 8: Monthly Income of the Migrants before Migration

Income Category (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
999 and below	3	1.8
1000- 1999	50	30.1
2000- 3499	59	35.5
3500- 4999	8	4.8
5000 & above	3	1.8
Reported as “subsistence income”	16	9.6
Student and unemployed	27	16.3
Total	166	100.0

The average wage of the migrants after migration is Rs. 232 per day, with maximum of Rs. 350 per day and minimum of Rs. 100. This is more than three-four times higher than the wage rates in the native places of the migrants. The average number of working days for the migrants is 24 days per month, with maximum of 30 days and minimum of 15 days per month. Since most of the migrants are engaged in temporary activities the mode of payment for about 72% migrants is daily basis and for another 21% is weekly basis (see Figure 7.A). The average monthly income of the workers after migration is found to be Rs. 6000, with maximum of Rs. 10500 and minimum of Rs. 2250. For more than two third of migrants the monthly income is more than Rs. 5000 after migration as against only 1.8% before migration, and for only about 3.6% of them the monthly income is less than Rs. 3500 (Table 9). However, though the income level is reasonably good after migration; most of the migrants live in deplorable conditions. Most live in poor rented houses (56%) or work site (44%), with one room shared by many (see Figure 8.A). In most of the cases there is no provision of hygienic sanitation. About 91.6% of migrants stay in groups and cook together.

Table 9: Monthly Income after Migration (in Rs)

Income Groups (Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
2000 - 3499	6	3.6
3500 - 4999	46	27.7
5000 - 6999	92	55.4
7000 and above	22	13.3
Total	166	100.0

A comparative analysis of the income of the migrants before and after migration is worthwhile, at this point, to infer whether migration really makes difference in the financial well being of the migrant families. But such a comparative analysis becomes difficult in our case. The reasons are twofold: First, lack of information on income in the pre migration

period for all the migrants (as some respondent reported their income level before migration as “subsistence income from agriculture”), and Second, as some migrants had migrated before 15-17 years, therefore we cannot compare their income level at that time and that of now without making adjustments for the changes in price levels. Despite these problems, a close look at the income levels of the migrants before migration (Table 8) and after migration (Table 9) reveals that there has been a shift from the low-income brackets to the high-income brackets after migration, and thus, we it can be inferred that migration really improved the financial position of the migrants.

We have tried to explain the level of income after migration in terms of age of the migrants, skill level and instance of migration in Kerala. It is assumed that income level is positively associated with these variables. Table 10 explains how income level varies with age of the migrants. It shows that for all but 41 & above age group the median value falls in the income bracket Rs. 5000- Rs. 6999. It also shows that some migrants less than age 30 years falls in the lower income bracket (Rs. 2000- Rs. 3499), but no migrants above age 30 years falls in the lower income bracket. This indicates that age does not play a significant role in determining the income level of the migrants.

As expectation we observed positive association between the skill level and income of the migrants after migration (Table 11). About 45.8% of the skilled migrants have income level above Rs. 7000, whereas only 24% of semi-skilled and 4.3% of unskilled migrants cross that level. Contrary to this the larger proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled migrants fall in the income bracket of Rs. 5000- Rs. 6999.

Table 10: Monthly Income of the Migrants on the basis of Age

Age (Years)	Total Monthly Income after Migration (Rs)				Total
	2000-3499	3500-4999	5000-6999	7000 +	
15-20	3 (7.1)	14 (33.3)	21 (50.0)	4 (9.5)	42 (100.0)
21-25	2 (3.7)	13 (24.1)	29 (53.7)	10 (18.5)	54 (100.0)
26-30	1 (3.0)	7 (21.2)	19 (57.6)	6 (18.2)	33 (100.0)
31-35	0	3 (21.4)	10 (71.4)	1 (7.1)	14 (100.0)
36-40	0	3 (25.0)	8 (66.7)	1 (8.3)	12 (100.0)
41 +	0	6 (54.5)	5 (45.5)	0	11 (100.0)
Total	6 (3.6)	46 (27.7)	92 (55.4)	22 (13.3)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage.

Table 11: Monthly Income of the Migrants and their Skill Level after Migration

Skill after Migration	Total Income per Month after Migration (in Rs)				Total
	2000-3499	3500-4999	5000-6999	7000 +	
Skilled	2 (8.3)	3 (12.5)	8 (33.3)	11 (45.8)	24 (100.0)
Semi-skilled	1 (4.0)	2 (8.0)	16 (64.0)	6 (24.0)	25 (100.0)
Unskilled	3 (2.6)	41 (35.0)	68 (58.1)	5 (4.3)	117 (100.0)
Total	6 (3.6)	46 (27.7)	92 (55.4)	22 (13.3)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage

Similar to the age and skills level, a positive association is also expected for instance of migration with monthly income level of the migrants. The long back that a person is migrated more financially secured he will be, because he will be more familiar with the local conditions and can develop his skill which will help him to find out a better paying job. Data shows that none of the migrants who stayed in Kerala for more than four years falls in the lower income bracket (Rs. 2000- Rs. 3499), whereas for all migrants in the lower income bracket the instance of migration is less than three years. All the migrants with more than 9 years of stay in Kerala earn more than Rs. 5000, whereas 84% migrants with 4-8 years of stay in Kerala earn more than Rs. 5000, 58.4% migrants with 2-3 years of stay in Kerala earn more than Rs. 5000 and 66% migrants with less than one year of stay in Kerala earn more than Rs. 5000 (Table 12). The decline in the proportion of migrants in income level more than Rs. 5000 with the fall in instance of migration in Kerala indicates a positive relationship between the instance of migration and income level.

Table 12: Monthly Income Level of Migrants and Instance of Migration in Kerala

Instance of Migration	Total Monthly Income after Migration (in Rs)				Total
	2000-3499	3500-4999	5000-6999	7000 +	
0-1 year	3 (3.7)	25 (30.5)	45 (54.9)	9 (11.0)	82 (100.0)
2-3 years	3 (6.3)	17 (35.4)	19 (39.6)	9 (18.8)	48 (100.0)
4-8 years	0	4 (13.8)	21 (72.4)	4 (13.8)	29 (100.0)
9 years +	0	0	7 (100.0)	0	7 (100.0)
Total	6 (3.6)	46 (27.7)	92 (55.4)	22 (13.3)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage.

4.4.3 Savings and Investment

It is found that the more than 73% of the migrants do not save money. Whatever money remains after consumption they send to home. For about 13.86% of them savings is less than

Rs. 3000, for 7.23% savings lies between Rs. 3000 - Rs. 5000 and for 3.6% the savings is more than Rs. 10000 on the total (Table 13).

Similarly, it is also found that the migrants hardly invest their money. Only 5 out of 166 sample migrants invested their money in buying land, construction of buildings, setting business and education of dependents. However, about 30% of the migrants have owned some kind of consumer durables. About 21% migrants have mobile phones, 1.8% migrants have music players and 6.63% of them have TV in the group where they stay (see Table 8.A).

Table 13: Amount of Total Savings of the Migrants (in Rs)

Amount of Total Savings (Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
No	122	73.49
Less than 1500	4	2.41
1501- 3000	19	11.45
3001- 5000	12	7.23
5001- 10000	3	1.81
10000 and above	6	3.61
Total	166	100.00

4.4.4 Consumption Expenditure of the Migrants

The average monthly expenditure is Rs. 2160; with maximum of Rs. 5000 and minimum of Rs. 900. Distinguishing between food and non-food expenditure it is found that the average monthly expenditure in food items is Rs. 1290 (maximum Rs. 2400 and minimum Rs. 660) and in non-food items is Rs. 870 (maximum Rs. 3800 and minimum zero). Moreover, the average annual expenditure is found to be Rs. 7511 (it includes food & non-food expenditure, medical expenditure, traveling expenditure to home, etc.). For 18.1% migrants the average monthly expenditure is less than Rs. 1500, while for 54.8% migrants it ranges between Rs. 1501- Rs. 2500 and for 11.4% migrants it is more than Rs. 3000 (Table 14). The amount and component food expenditure is found to be more or less same for all the migrants. This is mainly because of the fact that more than 90% migrants stayed and cooked together. But, the non-food expenditure varies from person to person. The coefficient of variation of expenditure for food items is 0.21, while it is 0.79 for non-food items.

Table 14: Monthly Total Expenditure of the Migrants (in Rs)

Expenditure Level (Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1500	30	18.1
1501- 2000	52	31.3
2001- 2500	39	23.5
2501- 3000	26	15.7
3001 and more	19	11.4
Total	166	100.0

We explore if the variation in monthly expenditure of the migrants is influenced by factors such as age, income and instance of migration to Kerala. Table 15 shows how monthly expenditure varies with respect to age of the migrants. It is found that about 76.2% of the migrants of the age group 15-20 spend less than Rs. 2500 per month, while 81.5% of the age group 21-25, 57.6% of the age group 26-30, 78.6% of the age group 31-35, 58.3% of the age group 36-40 and 72.8% of the age group 41 & above spend less than that amount per month. However, for all the age group but age group 15-20 and 36-40 the median value falls in the expenditure level Rs. 1501- Rs. 2000. The median value for the age groups 15-20 and 36-40 falls in the expenditure level Rs. 2001- Rs. 2500.

Table 15: Monthly Expenditure of the Migrants on the basis of Age

Age (Years)	Monthly Total Expenditure (in Rs)					Total
	< 1500	1501-2000	2001-2500	2501-3000	3001 +	
15-20	7 (16.7)	10 (23.8)	15 (35.7)	4 (9.5)	6 (14.3)	42 (100.0)
21-25	9 (16.7)	20 (37.0)	13 (27.8)	7 (13.0)	3 (5.6)	54 (100.0)
26-30	7 (21.2)	10 (30.3)	2 (6.1)	8 (24.2)	6 (18.2)	33 (100.0)
31-35	3 (21.4)	6 (42.9)	2 (14.3)	3 (21.4)	0	14 (100.0)
36-40	0	4 (33.3)	3 (25.0)	3 (25.0)	2 (16.7)	12 (100.0)
41 & above	4 (36.4)	2 (18.2)	2 (18.2)	1 (9.1)	2 (18.2)	11 (100.0)
Total	30 (18.1)	52 (31.3)	39 (23.5)	26 (15.7)	19 (11.4)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage.

Looking at the relationship between the monthly income and expenditure of the migrants (Table 16) it is obvious that the median value for the income groups Rs. 2000-Rs. 3499 and Rs. 3500-Rs. 4999 lies in the expenditure group Rs. 1501-Rs. 2000, while the median value for the income groups Rs. 5000-Rs. 6999 and Rs. 7000 & above lies in a higher expenditure group Rs. 2001-Rs. 2500. This suggests the positive relationship between the monthly income and expenditure of the migrants.

Table 16: Monthly Income and Monthly Expenditure after Migration

Monthly Income (Rs)	Monthly Total Expenditure (in Rs)					Total
	< 1500	1501-2000	2001-2500	2501- 3000	3001 +	
2000-3499	0	4 (66.7)	1 (16.7)	0	1 (16.7)	6 (100.0)
3500-4999	18 (39.1)	13 (28.3)	7 (15.2)	4 (8.7)	4 (8.7)	46 (100.0)
5000- 6999	11 (12.0)	28 (30.4)	25 (27.2)	15 (16.3)	13 (14.1)	92 (100.0)
7000 & above	1 (4.5)	7 (31.8)	6 (27.3)	7 (31.8)	7 (4.5)	22 (100.0)
Total	30 (18.1)	52 (31.3)	39 (23.5)	26 (15.7)	19 (11.4)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage.

Table 17 explains the relationship between the monthly expenditure level and instance of migration. It is hypothesized that at the initial period of migration the expenditure level of the migrants will be high as in the early months of migration some amount expenditure has to be done in the settlement and also being new to the place the migrants do not know the cheapest mode of transaction in the local place. But our study shows a different picture. The median migrants of less than one year of instance of migration fall in the expenditure group Rs. 1501-Rs. 2000, but the median migrant of the other three group of instance of migration falls in the higher expenditure group Rs. 2001-Rs. 2500. Again, while for 58.6% of migrants with less than one year of stay in Kerala the monthly expenditure level is less than Rs. 2000, for 52% of migrants with 2-3 years of stay the monthly expenditure level is more than Rs. 2000 and for 72.5% of migrants with 4-8 years of stay in Kerala the monthly expenditure level is more than Rs. 2000. Similarly, for 57% of migrants with more than 9 years of stay the monthly expenditure level is more than Rs. 2000. All these implies that as against the general proposition that expenditure level will be high for the newly migrated workers our study finds that the monthly expenditure level is higher for the migrants with long instance of migration than the short instance of migration

Table 17: Monthly Expenditure of Migrants and Instance of Migration to Kerala

Instance of Migration	Monthly Total Expenditure (in Rs)					Total
	< 1500	1501-2000	2001-2500	2501- 3000	3001 +	
0-1 year	19 (23.2)	29 (35.4)	18 (22.0)	10 (12.2)	6 (7.3)	82 (100.0)
2-3 years	8 (16.7)	15 (31.3)	12 (25.0)	10 (20.8)	3 (6.3)	48 (100.0)
4-8 years	3 (10.3)	5 (17.2)	7 (24.1)	6 (20.7)	8 (27.6)	29 (100.0)
9 years +	0	3 (42.9)	2 (28.6)	0	2 (28.6)	7 (100.0)
Total	30 (18.1)	52 (31.3)	39 (23.5)	26 (15.7)	19(11.4)	166 (100.0)

Note: Figures within bracket shows the row percentage

4.5 REMITTANCES

Remittances link migration and development of backward region from where migration does take place. Migration can have a direct effect on peoples' livelihoods, to the extent that migrants send money to their families to sustain livelihoods and social relations. It is by the remittances that migration acts as a social security mechanism for the poor households left back. We found that the average remittance sending by the migrants is Rs. 2541 per migrants in the last month and Rs. 26328 per migrant in the preceding year. It is found that about 25.3% of the migrants did not send any money to home, whereas 28.31% sent less than Rs. 2000, 24.7% of migrants sent between Rs. 2001- Rs. 3500 and about one fifth migrants sent more than Rs. 3500 in the last month (Table 18).

Table 18: Remittances Sent in the Last Month (in Rs)

Amount (Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
Not send	42	25.30
1000-2000	47	28.31
2001- 3500	41	24.70
3501- 6000	30	18.07
6001 and above	6	3.62
Total	166	100.0

We also look at the frequency of sending remittances and to whom it is sent, as they are important determinants of the spending of remittances. It is observed that most of the migrants sent remittances monthly (22.29%) or with a gap of 2-3 months (42.77%), while only 3.6% migrants sent money once in a year, 8.43 % sent only once since the time they have migrated, and 12.65% have never sent money to home (see Table 9.A). We try to explore what determines the amount and frequency of sending remittances. The number of earning members in the family (excluding the migrant) could be one of the important factors that influence the amount and frequency of sending remittances to home by the migrants. It is assumed that if the migrant is the only earning member in the family, then the frequency of sending remittance and its amount would be high. However, unexpectedly we observed that out of 13 migrants who have not sent money to their families, 7 migrants have no other earning member in the family (see Table 10.A). In order to find out the reasons behind this unexpected result we further cross-classified the migrants with respect to the frequency of sending money and the instance of migration (see Table 11.A), and with the expectation found that out of these 13 migrants who have not sent money to the family, for 10 migrants the instance of migration is less than three months. However, in other cases also the

frequency of sending money is higher for migrants which have 1-2 earning members in their family compared to no earning members.

Further, it is noticed that 47% of migrants send money to father, 8.4% sends to mother, 18% send to wife, 7.23% send to brother and 6.63% send to uncle or other family members (see Table 12.A). Most of the migrants sent remittances through the bank accounts of either self or family members or friends and relatives (about 58%). The other modes of transferring remittances are Money order, Post office and other migrant workers (see Figure 9.A).

The developmental potential of remittances can be accessed through investment out of remittances. If remittances are used for productive purposes then it will lead to economic development of the family as well as the region. It is observed that about 80% of remittances are used in meeting household expenditure. However, some respondents also reported regular investment in agriculture, education of dependent, buying land & building house, while about 8% reported that they do not know where the remittances are spent (Table 19). However, we have not found any relationship between the patterns of spending remittances and to whom remittances are sent. A very higher proportion of remittances spent in household consumption irrespective of to whom the money has been sent.

Table 19: Areas of Spending the Remittances Sent to Home

Area of Money Spending	Frequency	Percent
Household expenditure	132	79.43
Expenditure in agriculture	8	4.8
Expenditure in Education of dependent	14	8.4
Repayment of debt	11	6.6
Marriage and other Social functions	3	1.81
Buying land and building house	6	3.61
Saving and others	4	2.41
Don't know	13	7.8
Money not sent	21	12.7
Total	166	100.00

Note: * the summation is higher than the reported total because of multiple responses.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the economic condition of the in-migrant workers in the Trivandrum district of Kerala. The analysis is based on data from a sample of 166 in-migrants workers in the Trivandrum district, which has been collected through a primary survey during September-October, 2008. While existing studies provide evidences for short distance migration from nearby states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to Kerala, our study observed that long distance migration from states like West Bengal and Assam dominated the inflow of migrant workers in recent years. While about one third of the sample migrants had prior migration experience to other places, the informal information networks through acquaintances that have already migrated plays important role in migration of workers to Kerala. Poor economic conditions along with several other overlapping factors have been identified as the reason of migration, of which the most important are getting employment/better employment, meeting household expenditure and accumulation of savings. The major reason of migration to Kerala is reported as the higher wages, availability of work and better working conditions.

There has not been any change in the nature of employment of the workers even after migration as almost all the migrants engaged in temporary work and about 70% of them engaged in unskilled areas. Though a higher proportion of migrants of each skill level remained in the same skill level after migration, we notice both upward- and downward-mobility of skill level after migration, however; some working in skilled areas before migration are working in unskilled and semi-skilled areas and others working in semi-skill or unskilled areas are working in skilled areas after migration. However, there has been a shift from the low-income brackets before migration to high-income brackets after migration. Though no specific relationship is observed between age and income of the migrants after migration, we observed positive relationship of skill level and instance of migration with income level. Notwithstanding the improved income level the living condition for most of them is deplorable. Most of them live together in either poor rented houses or work sites with one room shared by many and no provision of hygienic sanitation.

The amount and pattern of food expenditure is found to be more or less same for all the migrants irrespective of their other characteristics as more than 90% of them stayed and cooked together, whereas that of non-food expenditure varies from person to person. We observed positive association between income level and expenditure of the migrants. However, as against expectation we found positive association between monthly expenditure and instance of migration to Kerala and no association between age and expenditure of the

migrants. The savings and investment habit among the migrants is found to be very poor, whatever money remain after consumption they send to home. Even larger amount of remittances sent to home are used for meeting household expenditure and very little are invested in agriculture, education of dependent, buying land and building house, etc. and used for repaying debt.

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APPENDIX-A: TABLES

Table 1.A: Age Composition of the Migrants

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
15-20	42	25.3
21-25	54	32.5
26-30	33	19.9
31-35	14	8.4
36-40	12	7.2
41 and above	11	6.6
Total	166	100.0

Table 2.A: Percentage Distribution of Migrants by Family size

No. of Household member	Frequency	Percent
0-3	25	15.10
4 - 6	104	62.70
7 - 8	29	17.40
9 +	8	4.80
Total	166	100.00

Table 3.A: Percentage Distribution of Migrants by the Number of Children bellow age 14

No of Children	Frequency	Percent
0	89	53.6
1	22	13.3
2	34	20.5
3	18	10.8
4	1	0.6
5	2	1.2
Total	166	100.0

Table 4.A: Purpose of Borrowing

Purpose of Borrowing	Frequency	Percent
Expenditure in Agriculture	15	21.74
Marriage of family members	17	24.64
Household expenditure	12	17.39
Building houses and purchasing land	11	15.94
Medical Expenditure	11	15.94
Business and financing education of dependents	3	4.35
Total	69	100.0

Table 5.A: State of Origin of the Migrants

States	Frequency	Percent
West Bengal	96	57.8
Assam	62	37.3
Andhra Pradesh	2	1.2
Uttar Pradesh	2	1.2
Tamil Nadu	2	1.2
Orissa	2	1.2
Total	166	100.0

Table 6.A: Instance of Migration in Kerala

Years	Frequency	Percent
0-1 year	82	49.4
2-3 years	48	28.9
4-8 years	29	17.5
9 years and above	7	4.2
Total	166	100.0

Table 7.A: Type of Activity of the Migrants

Type of Activity	Frequency	Percent
Bricks maker	8	4.82
Contraction mason	21	12.65
Construction helper	118	71.08
Casual labor	10	6.02
Truck helper	4	2.41
Carpenter & Painting	5	3.01
Total	166	100.00

Table 8.A: Consumer Durables owned by the Migrants

Consumer Durables	Frequency	Percent
No	117	70.48
Mobile phone	35	21.08
TV (in the group)	9	6.63
Music player	3	1.81
Total	166	100.0

Table 9.A: Frequency of Sending Remittances by the Migrants

Frequency	Frequency	Percent
Monthly	37	22.29
Once in 2-3 months	71	42.77
Once in 3-4 months	14	8.43
Once in a year	6	3.61
Only once after migration to Kerala	14	8.43
Not sent yet	21	12.65
Do not know	3	1.81
Total	166	100.0

Table 10.A: Frequency of Sending Remittance and Earning Members in the Family

Frequency of sending money	Number of Earning Members in the Family				Total
	No	1-2	3-4	5 & more	
Monthly	5	26	8	1	40
2-3 months	20	45	9	1	75
3-4 months	3	10	2		15
Once in a year	1	3	1	1	6
Only once	4	5	4	1	14
Not send yet	7	6	0	0	13
Do not know	1	2			3
Total	41	97	24	4	166

Table 11.A: Frequency of Sending Remittance and Instance of Migration to Kerala

Frequency of sending money	Instance of migration					Total
	Less than 3 months	4 months - 1 year	2-3 years	4-8 years	9 & more years	
Monthly	3	13	16	4	4	40
1-2 months	3	10	10	3	0	26
2-3 months	3	22	9	14	1	49
3-4 months	0	3	4	6	2	15
Once in a year	0	1	4	1	0	6
Only once	5	9	0	0	0	14
Not send yet	10	2	1	0	0	13
Don't know	0	0	3	0	0	3
Total	24	60	47	28	7	166

Table 12.A: To Whom Remittances are Sent

Relation	Frequency	Percent
Father	78	46.98
Mother	14	8.43
Wife	30	18.07
Brother	12	7.23
Other family members	11	6.63
No	21	12.65
Total	166	100.0

APPENDIX-B: FIGURES

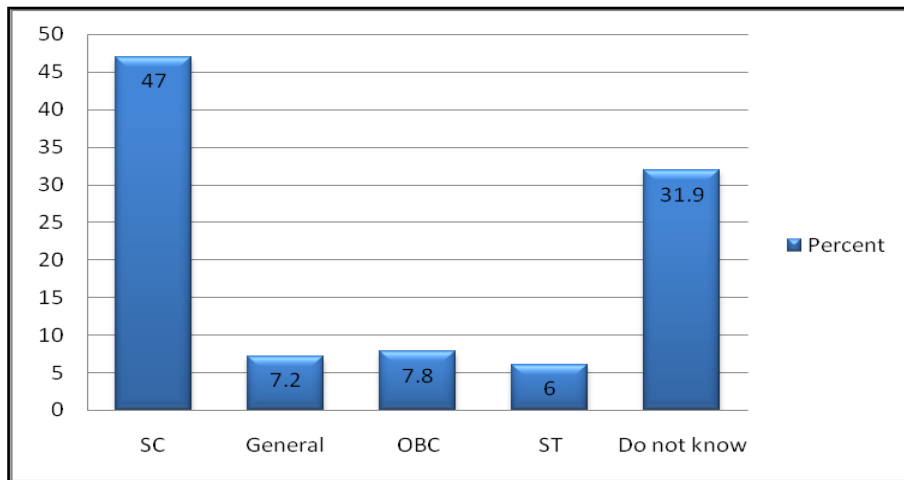


Figure 1.A: Percentage Distribution of Migrants by Castes Groups

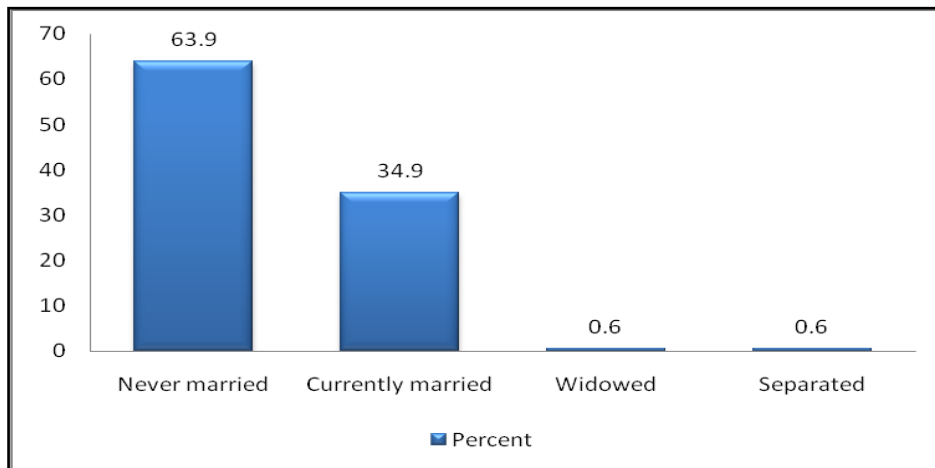


Figure 2.A: Percentage Distribution of Migrants by Marital Status

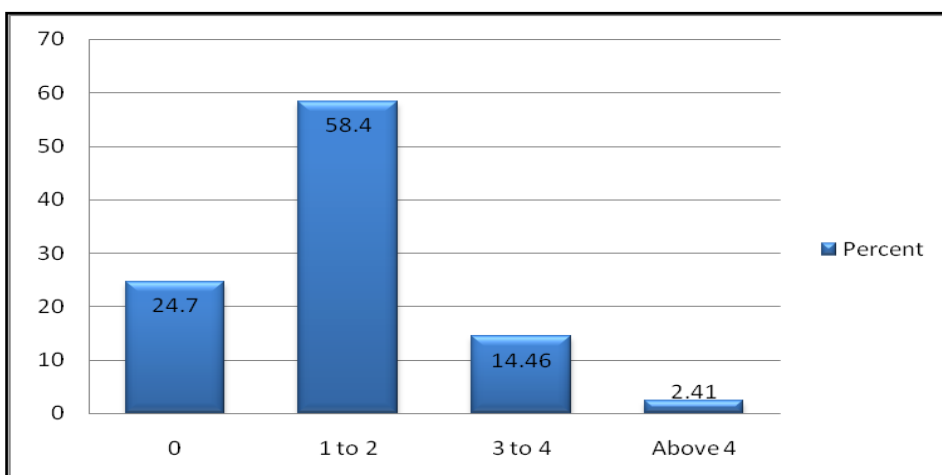


Figure 3.A: Percentage Distribution of Migrants by Earning Members in the Family (excluding the migrant)

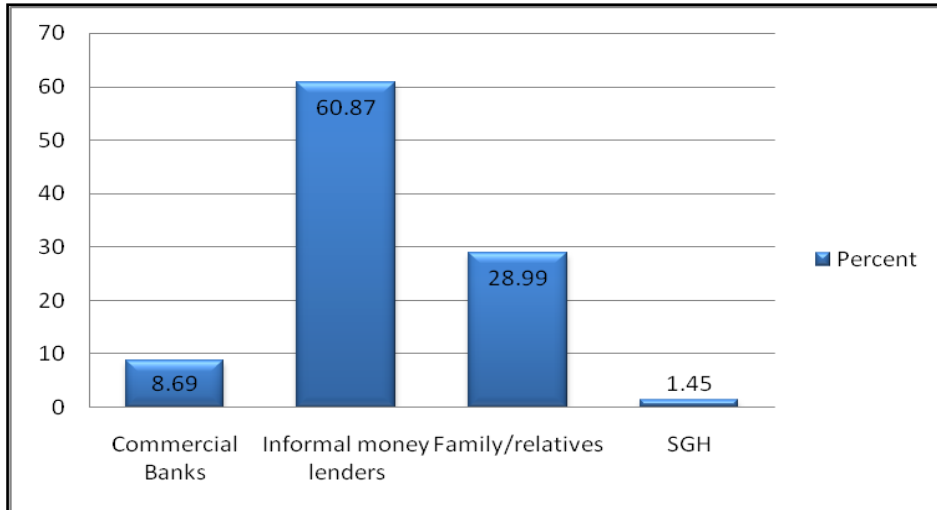


Figure 4.A: Source of Debt of the Migrants' Family

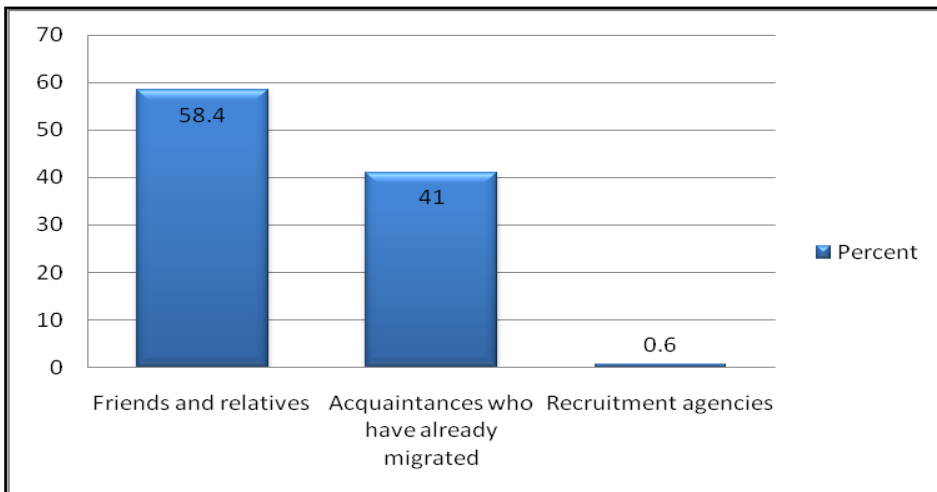


Figure 5.A: Source of information of migration opportunities

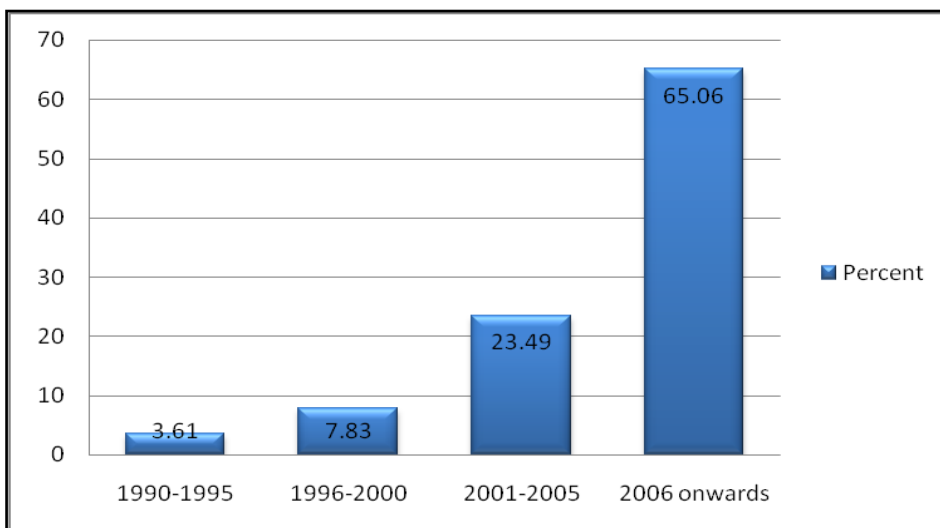


Figure 6.A: Year of first migration of the Migrants

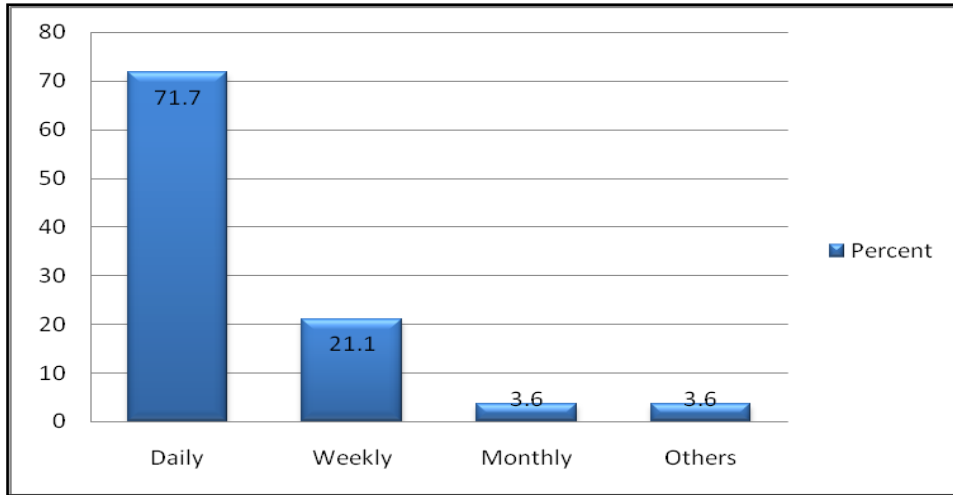


Figure 7.A: Mode of payment of the Migrants (after Migration)

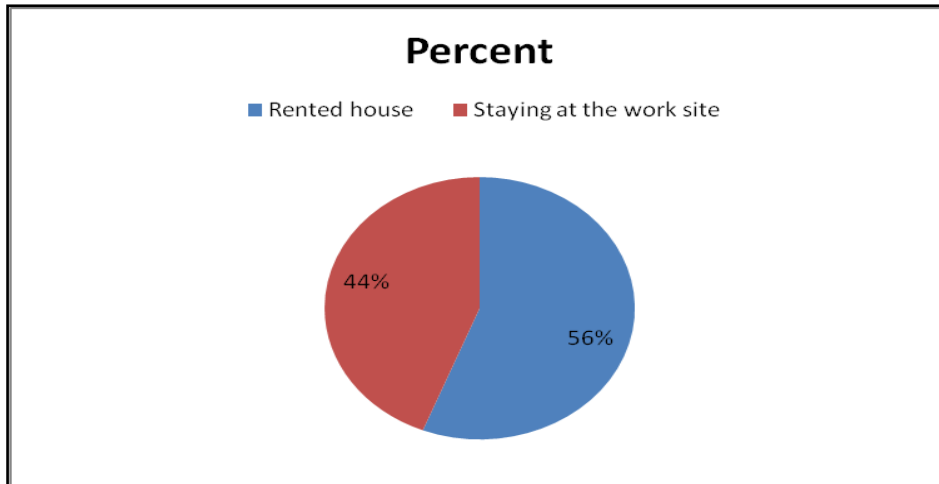


Figure 8.A: Type of Dwelling of the Migrants (after Migration)

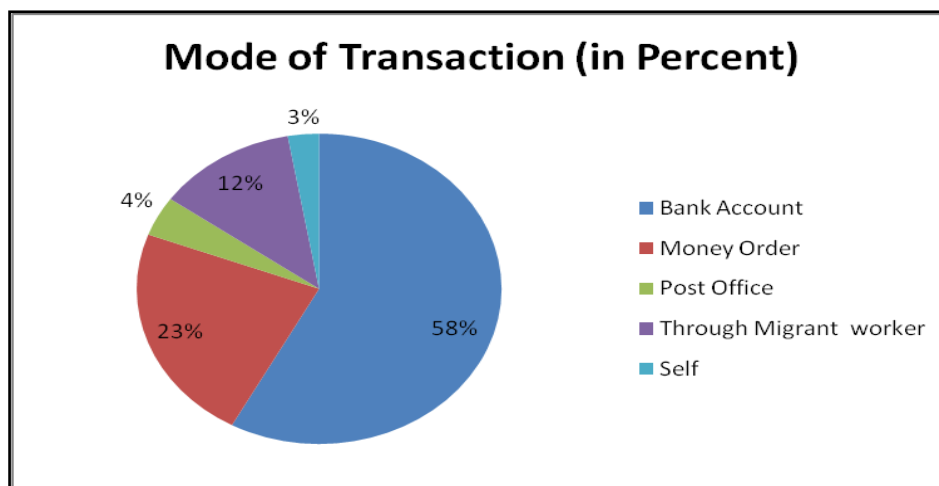


Figure 9.A: Mode of Sending Remittances to Home