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Push and Pull Factors Influencing Migration among Tribal Agricultural Labourers : A Critical Gender Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present study has been done on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from primary sources and explored the pattern of migration among tribal agricultural labourers, the push and pull factors associated with migration and the influence of social discrimination and land alienation leading to migration of tribal labourers. About 55 per cent of the country's tribal population now resides outside their traditional habitats. While men were generally daily and seasonal migrants, women migrated permanently after marriage. Migration is associated with many economic, social, physical and political factors. While considering the male agricultural labourers, the major push factors forcing them to migrate were low wages, unemployment due to seasonality of jobs and growing indebtedness and the pull factors included better opportunity for higher wages, better employment opportunities and job security. In the case of female agricultural labourers, decline of natural resources, indebtedness, natural calamities and unemployment were the major push factors for migration and pull factor was dependency movement. While social discrimination, land alienation and substance use had a positive and significant effect on migration, self-confidence, health and nutrition, access to common property resources, political orientation and awareness about the about the developmental programmes and their rights had a negative and significant effect on migration.

Key words : Migration; Social discrimination; Land alienation; Wayanad.

The tribal population of in Kerala account for about 0.47 per cent of the total population and among its districts, Wayanad has the largest tribal population. Among the main tribal groups, *Kurichiya* community enjoys a higher social status. *Paniya* community comprises mostly the labourers and thus, are a medium-level status community. *Kattunaikan* community, who live an isolated life, are considered as low-status people among the tribal communities. Majority of the tribal population are socially marginalized, economically deprived and their access to education, health, employment and income generation opportunities are finite.

Today, migration is a global phenomenon and has been both boon and bane to humans, particularly the tribal people (Sundari, 2007). About 55 per cent of the country's tribal population now resides outside

their traditional habitats. It is known that migration of tribal population, increasingly distress-driven, has been increasing. Displacement and enforced migration have also led to an increasing number of Scheduled Tribes working as contract labourers in the construction industry and as domestic workers in major cities. Currently, one of every two tribal households relies on manual labour for survival. Migration is associated with many economic, social, physical and political factors. Due to many reasons like lack of employment, low job opportunities, marriage, food security, health issues, education etc., tribes' people are migrating from their native places to various parts of the country (Bagchi and Majumdar, 2010). The direct results of migration were large scale occupation to the tribal habitats and grabbing of forest lands by the non-tribal migrant population (Aerthayil,

2008). The study conducted by *Sachana and Kumar (2015)* reported that the impact of migration was multi-dimensional which totally destabilized tribal livelihood and natural resources. The study conducted by *Parganiha et al. (2006)* revealed that majority of migrants (97.5%) migrated because of lack of employment followed by small holding (90%), lack of irrigation (72.50%) and low wage rate (61.25%) in their natives. Mechanization of village level works (71.25%) and lack of money for social functions (38.75%) were noted as partial factors for their migration. Size of the family, expenditure, family possessions are the main factors which are creating a significant impact on the tendency of migration (*Chakraborty et al, 2021*).

Thus, the study will put light on the pattern of migration among tribal agricultural labourers, the push and pull factors associated with and the influence of social discrimination and land alienation leading to migration of tribal labourers.

METHODOLOGY

Mananthavady block was purposely selected for the study since the block records the highest concentration of tribal population among the other blocks. The tribal communities concerned in the study were *Kattunaikans, Paniyas* and *Kurichiyas*. From the block, two panchayats- Thavinhal and Edamunda with the highest population of *Kattunaikans, Paniyas* and *Kurichiyas* respectively were selected for the study.

From each selected panchayat, 30 men and 30 women tribal agricultural labourers were randomly selected. Thus, 60 agricultural labourers were selected from *Kattunaikan, Paniya* and *Kurichiya* communities respectively and thereby, a total of 180 respondents were selected for the study. Pretested interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the respondents. Focus group discussions, observation methods and other selected participatory tools was also used. Frequency, mean, percentage, and Pearson correlation were used for the analysis. Pretested interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the respondents. Focus group discussions, observation methods and other selected participatory tools was also used. Frequency, mean, percentage and simple correlation test were used for the analysis.

Migration is operationally defined as the

movement of the respondents from one place to another with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily in a new location for job. In this study, the pattern of migration, which is the type of migration based on permanency of stay and duration of residence migration was studied. The major push and pull factors which influence migration of tribal agricultural labourers as perceived by them were also identified and ranked.

The extent of migration was assessed by using the procedure developed by *Baby (1995)* and *Sandesh et al (2021)* with modifications. The scaling procedure is as follows:

Pattern of migration	Score
Daily migrant	1
Seasonal migrant	2
Permanent migrant	3

Push factors of migration	Pull factors of migration
Low wages	Better opportunity to earn higher wages
Unemployment	Better opportunity for employment or occupation
Indebtedness	Better job security
Natural calamities	Opportunity to obtain desired specialization, education, skill or training
Poverty and malnutrition	Preferable environment, living conditions
Depletion of natural resources	Better food
Social conflict	Better social network
Land Alienation	Dependency movement like migration of the bride to join her husband

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Table 1 reveals that in the case of *Kattunaika*, 96.67 per cent of the men and all women were daily migrants. They worked in the agricultural fields of other tribal and non-tribal people. Only 13.33 per cent of the *Kattunaika* men were seasonal migrants.

About 73.34 per cent of the male and 56.67 per cent of the female *Paniya* agricultural labourers migrated daily to nearby places for jobs. While 13.33 per cent of the men were seasonal migrants, 13.33 per cent of the men and 43.33 per cent of the women labourers were permanent migrants.

While considering *Kurichiya*, 66.67 per cent men and 36.67 per cent women migrated daily, followed

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on Migration

Category	Kattunaikan				Paniya				Kurichiya				Overall (N= 180)			
	Male (n= 30)		Female (n= 30)		Male (n= 30)		Female (n= 30)		Male (n= 30)		Female (n= 30)		Male (n= 30)		Female (n= 30)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Daily migrant	29	96.67	30	100	22	73.34	17	56.67	20	66.67	11	36.67	71	78.89	58	64.44
Seasonal migrant	1	3.33	0	0	4	13.33	0	0	8	26.67	0	0	13	14.44	0	0
Permanent migrant	0	0	0	0	4	13.33	13	43.33	2	6.66	19	63.33	6	6.67	32	35.56

by 26.67 per cent of the men who were seasonal migrants and 6.66 per cent of the men and 63.33 per cent women were permanent migrants.

By considering the overall data, 78.89 per cent men and 64.44 per cent women were daily migrants, 14.44 per cent men were seasonal migrants, 6.67 per cent men and 35.56 per cent women were permanent migrants. The male tribal labourers migrated daily for better employment and wages, whereas, female tribal labourers migrated permanently from their own places after marriage. The results are on par with the results of *Aerthayil (2008)* and *Sandesh et al (2021)*.

Push factors for migration: While considering the male agricultural labourers, the major push factors forcing them to migrate were low wages, unemployment due to seasonality of jobs and growing indebtedness. The tribespeople migrated to near- by places in search of better wages, employment opportunities. They also migrate due to natural calamities, poverty and malnutrition, decline of natural resources, social conflict and land alienation. The unexpected natural

calamities and extreme poverty and malnutrition forced them to leave their lands and migrate permanently to other places (Table 2).

While considering the case of female agricultural labourers, depletion of natural resources, indebtedness, natural calamities and unemployment were the major push factors for migration. The depletion of water bodies, land alienation, natural calamities compelled them to leave their lands and migrate. Increasing poverty and malnutrition, lower wages and social conflict also played an important role for accelerating tribal migration. The results are on par with the results of *Sachana and Kumar (2015)* and *Sandesh et al (2021)*.

Pull factors for migration : In the case of male agricultural labourers, the most important pull factors which accelerate tribal migration included better

Table 2. Push factors for migration as perceived by male and female tribal agricultural labourers

Items	Male		Female	
	Total Score	Rank	Total Score	Rank
Low wages	672	I	295	VIII
Unemployment	621	II	296	VII
Indebtedness	493	III	527	II
Natural calamities	353	IV	520	III
Poverty and malnutrition	320	V	376	V
Depletion of natural resources	232	VI	573	I
Social conflict	198	VII	371	VI
Land Alienation	186	VIII	489	IV

Table 3. Pull factors for migration agricultural labourers

Items	Male		Female	
	Total Score	Rank	Total Score	Rank
Better opportunity to earn higher wages	659	1	424	3
Better opportunity for employment or occupation	618	2	362	5
Better job security	542	3	387	4
Opportunity to obtain desired specialization, education, skill or training	341	4	217	8
Preferable environment, living conditions	292	5	458	2
Better food	236	6	232	7
Better social network	230	7	254	6
Dependency movement like migration of the bride to join her husband	175	8	651	1

opportunity for higher wages, better employment opportunities and job security. Due to the seasonality and scarce of agricultural jobs in their localities, tribal people migrated to near- by or seasonally migrate in order to get better wages and meet their ends (Table 3).

In the case of female agricultural labourers, they migrated mainly to join their husband after marriage. They migrated permanently from their places to their husband's place. The other major reasons include, preferable environment and living conditions, better employment and wage opportunities. The results are on par with the results of *Sachana and Kumar (2015)* and *Sandesh et al (2021)*.

Influence of different factors on migration of tribal agricultural labourers : To identify the influence of social discrimination and land alienation on migration of tribal agricultural labourers, correlation coefficient was worked out (Table 4). Social discrimination and land alienation were found to have a positive impact on social discrimination. Social discrimination significantly affected women (0.236**), whereas, it was not so significant in the case of men (0.167). The immigrants are treated as aliens in the mainstream society. The females are forced to migrate to places

away from their native places after marriage. Land alienation also contributed in increasing the rate of migration among tribal people, especially women (0.208*), while land alienation men was not so significant in contributing to migration among men (0.106). The correlation coefficient for the profile characteristics to migration for the whole sample population is given below.

The factors which had significant effect on migration were social discrimination, land alienation, substance use, self-confidence, health and nutrition, access to common property resources, political orientation and awareness about the about the developmental programmes and their rights. While social discrimination, land alienation and substance use had a positive and significant effect on migration, self-confidence, health and nutrition, access to common property resources, political orientation and awareness about the about the developmental programmes and their rights had a negative and significant effect on migration. The tribal community are ill-treated in the society, taking away their lands and rights forcing them to flee away from the mainstream society. The inherent substance use of alcohol, smoking and other ill habits aggravates their situation. Whereas, lack of self-confidence, poor health and nutrition, lack or reduced access to common property resources, low level of political orientation and lack of awareness about the about the developmental programmes and their rights accelerates the migration of tribal communities (*Borhade and Dey, 2020*).

CONCLUSION

Migration is a contemporary issue among the global population, especially, the tribal diaspora. With the change in time the trend of tribal livelihood and occupation is changing due to heavy population pressure at their source, damage of ancestral livelihood and occupations, indebtedness, poverty, poor basic facilities, deteriorating social cohesion and lack of alternative job opportunities at the source. In the case of male agricultural labourers, the major push factors forcing them to migrate were low wages, unemployment due to seasonality of jobs and growing indebtedness and the pull factors included better opportunity for higher wages, better employment opportunities and job security. In the case of female agricultural labourers, decline of natural resources, indebtedness, natural calamities and unemployment

Table 4. Correlation coefficient for the profile characteristics to migration for the whole sample

Variables	"r"
Social discrimination	0.4133**
Perception	0.0245
Age	0.0427
Educational status	-0.0515
Annual income	-0.0738
Size of land holding	0.0379
Land alienation	0.2198**
Indebtedness	0.0226
Wage	0.0090
Substance use	0.3756**
Exposure to mass media	0.0501
Social participation	0.1358
Self-confidence	-0.1041*
Health and nutrition	0.4195**
Access to common property resources	-0.2128**
Political orientation	-0.2506*
Awareness	-0.5251*

**Significant at 1%, *Significant at 5% level of significance

were the major push factors for migration and pull factor was dependency movement. The concerned authorities should take appropriate measures to check the migration among tribal population and also reduce the undesirable effects of migration on the tribal population.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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