

Economic analysis of Registered In-migrant workers in catering Establishments of Tiruvallur District

Shanmugavel. K^{*1} and S. Manonmani²

^{1*2}Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, Annamalai University,
Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram – 608002 (India)

Address for Correspondence : Shanmugavel. K

^{*1}Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, Annamalai Nagar,
Chidambaram, Annamalai University – 608002 (India)

Email: shanmugavel.indian@gmail.com

Contact Details of Authors: ^{1*}Shanmugavel . K– 8754568092

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7667-0828>

²S. Manonmani-9842606480

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6202-1311>

Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic characteristics and livelihood support mechanisms of registered migrant workers in the service sector, particularly in hotels and restaurants, in the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu. The district has emerged as a major hub for industrial and residential development, attracting a large number of migrant workers from other states. The study reveals that these workers are essential to the food industry, but often face challenges such as low wages, long working hours, and limited access to social security benefits. The findings indicate that migration has improved family income and economic conditions for those back in their home states, but workers continue to face economic vulnerability due to high living costs and limited access to welfare programs. The study emphasizes the need for policies to improve labour regulation enforcement, access to skill development, and social security to enhance the economic status of these workers and support the growth of the food industry. The study's results show that government registration procedures for migrant workers have improved their social and economic conditions, and highlight the importance of continued government intervention to prevent undesirable incidents and ensure the well-being of migrant workers. The study contributes to the existing literature on migrant workers in India and provides insights for policymakers to develop targeted interventions to support this vulnerable population.

Key words : Interstate register migrant, Economic situation, causes of migration, Migrant worker contributions by catering establishment.

^{1*}Ph.D. Research Scholar, ²Assistant Professor

The service sector is a major contributor to economic growth and employment in India. Labour migration plays a crucial role in reducing regional disparities in employment and income levels. Migrant workers move from economically backward regions to areas with better employment opportunities. Tamil Nadu attracts a large number of migrant workers due to its expanding industrial and residential sectors, and a significant number of migrant workers from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and other states come to Tamil Nadu for employment and economic advancement. The service sector in Tiruvallur has expanded rapidly due to urbanization, industrial growth, and population increase. Migrant workers have become an integral part of this sector, contributing to both formal and informal service activities. Within the service sector, hotels and restaurants have created significant employment opportunities for migrant workers. Located near Chennai, Tiruvallur district has become an important service hub due to industrial development, transportation networks, and population growth. Hotels, small restaurants, fast-food outlets, and roadside stalls in Tiruvallur play a vital role in sustaining the hospitality industry by providing cheap and flexible labour through these migrant workers. The service sector, especially the hotel and restaurant industry, is one of the major sectors providing employment to migrant workers. This hotel and restaurant service sector offers various job opportunities to migrant workers, such as cooks, assistants, waiters, cleaning staff, and delivery personnel. Their contribution plays a vital role in sustaining the hotel and restaurant service sector and supporting the local economy of Tiruvallur district.

Objectives :

- Analysis on the socio-economic characteristics of register catering establishment in-migrant workers in the Tiruvallur district.
- Analysis on the livelihood support mechanisms and remittance behaviour of register catering establishment in-migrant workers in the Tiruvallur district.

Hypothesis :

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between access to livelihood support and the frequency of remittances.

Statements of the problem :

In the Tiruvallur district, migrant workers play a significant role in the service sector, particularly in hotels and restaurants. However, many of them work informally and face challenges such as low wages, long working hours, job insecurity, and limited social security. There is a lack of sufficient empirical evidence regarding the economic conditions of these workers in Tiruvallur district, as existing studies have prioritized analyses of industrial workers. Furthermore, the reliance on migrant workers to reduce costs perpetuates informal practices and wage stagnation. A comprehensive study is needed to assess their economic contributions, wage levels, working conditions, and broader socio-economic challenges. This will help in providing informed policy recommendations for labour welfare and regulation.

Scope and significance of the study :

This study analyses the economic conditions of registered in-migrant workers in catering establishment in the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu, focusing on low-skilled and

semi-skilled worker. It examines various economic variables, including wages, working hours, and remittance practices, and also considers social factors such as living conditions and workplace challenges. Using primary and secondary data, this study highlights the often-underestimated contributions of migrant workers and aims to inform policymakers regarding labour welfare policies. It also emphasizes the importance of fair wages and improved working conditions for enhancing labour productivity and advocates for inclusive growth and dignity for migrant workers in the catering establishment.

Overview of Reviewed literature and Research gap :

The literature on Interstate migration of people from one place to another due to factors such as social development, economic growth, marriage, education, natural disasters, and political changes. The study analyses the demographic trends, socio-economic drivers, employment, and living conditions of inter-state migrant workers in India. It also assesses the legal protections provided by the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, and the challenges faced, particularly in the informal sector. To mitigate economic and social vulnerabilities, the study recommends an integrated, rights-based policy approach. This includes strengthening laws, improving social welfare programs, government interventions, and establishing updated data collection systems.⁵ The study examined the socio-economic conditions and legal protections for interstate migrant workers in the hotel sector of Tirunelveli district, and highlighted significant challenges in the enforcement of workers' rights. Of the 75 respondents surveyed, many

workers face wage cuts (66%), unpaid overtime (73%), and workplace accidents (66%). Despite laws such as the Interstate Migrant Workers Act of 1979 and ILO conventions, enforcement is weak, largely due to illiteracy and lack of union representation among migrant workers. Economic need influences 46% of migration decisions, with younger workers accepting poor working conditions. The study called for reforms such as awareness programmes, better enforcement, and improved social protection to improve migrant worker protection in India's hospitality sector.⁶ Using census data from 1991 to 2011, the study analyses interstate migration in India, focusing on trends in 16 major states. Maharashtra and Delhi are the major destinations, although Delhi has recently seen a decline. Gujarat is emerging as a growing destination, reflecting its economic growth. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the leading source states, with significant migration to Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. Bihar's migration also extends to Jharkhand and West Bengal. Gender-specific patterns show higher female migration in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan. These insights are crucial for policymakers to manage migration and promote balanced regional development.³ In India Poverty, unemployment and environmental issues are driving millions of Indians to migrate in search of better opportunities in metropolitan areas. This migration adversely affects the education of their children, as the existing education system is not adapted to the precarious nature of migrant families, Challenges include language barriers and socio-economic factors. Civil society organizations and NGOs are playing a key role in bridging educational gaps and creating safe learning environments by establishing schools and day care facilities

staffed by dedicated teachers. This research paper explores the challenges faced by these teachers and the support provided by NGOs, covering a range of perspectives through quantitative and qualitative data collection.² A study conducted in Doha, Qatar, found that Indian migrant construction workers face numerous challenges in employment, housing, health and social adaptation. Key themes included job insecurity, financial hardship, language barriers, overcrowded housing, limited healthcare access and mental and physical health issues, among others. The findings underscore the need for improved mental health services, sustainable employment policies, better living conditions and access to culturally appropriate healthcare.

Studies on registered migrant workers in the service sector (catering establishment) are limited. Most studies have focused on informal sectors such as construction and on unregistered workers, highlighting the socio-economic challenges faced by migrant populations, such as job security, living conditions, and access to welfare programs. Furthermore, an analysis of wage structures and employment conditions specific to the service sector (catering establishment) is also needed. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the contributions and challenges of registered migrant workers, thereby informing policy and labour welfare initiatives.

This study is based on fieldwork encompassing qualitative and quantitative methods; secondary and primary data have been collected. This data has been gathered from the records of workers registered with the Labour Department under the Inter-State

Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1979 (online portal registration up to December 2025), and from newspapers, magazines, and websites. The objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic activities and employment opportunities of migrant workers coming to Tamil Nadu from other states, particularly those working in the service sector (restaurant establishments), and to investigate the reasons for such migrations and the associated opportunities. Furthermore, out of the total of 1478 registered migrant workers (catering establishment), 5% of the migrant population was selected. From this group, 50 individuals were chosen, and primary data was collected. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the migrant workers. This was further strengthened through field surveys, direct field observations, informal discussions with workers, employers, and officials, and conversations with local citizens and workers.

Table-1: shows the number of migrant workers in Tamil Nadu, specifically in the Tiruvallur district. It also illustrates the sectors in which they are predominantly employed. They are found in large numbers, particularly in the construction sector (41.28%) and the industrial sector (42.28%). They are also present in other sectors; for example, their contribution is significant in the informal sector, as daily wage labourers and domestic workers (13.06%). Similarly, there are also those working in restaurants (1.33%), where they are found to be working long hours for low wages. According to them, the income they earn here is higher than what they would earn in their home states. However, they state that despite the higher income, the cost of living is also higher here.

Table-1. In-Migrant worker contributions by major Departments.

S.no.	Departments	Numbers of Registration	Percentage
1	Construction	45983	41.28%
2	Catering establishment	1478	1.33%
3	Shops	2056	1.85%
4	Factories	47097	42.28%
5	Self-employment	132	0.12%
6	Agriculture	11	0.01%
7	Education	80	0.07%
8	others	14550	13.06%
Total		111387	100.00%

Source: Tiruvallur District labour Department Govt. of Tamil Nadu. (<https://labour.tn.gov.in/ism/users/login>).

Table-2. Socio economic condition in-migrant worker catering establishment

Socio economic	Content	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20	7	14%
	20-25	32	32%
	26-30	10	20%
	30 above	17	34%
	Total	50	100%
Gender	Male	38	76%
	Female	12	24%
	Total	50	100%
Marital status	Unmarried	32	64%
	Married	18	36%
	Total	50	100%
Duration of stay	Less 1 year	9	18%
	1-3 year	15	30%
	3-5 year	14	28%
	More than 5year	12	24%
	Total	50	100%
Educational Qualification	Primary	23	46%
	Secondary	25	50%
	Higher secondary	2	4%
	total	50	100%

Source: computed

Table-2. presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 50 participants in the study. Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents were between 20 and 25 years old (32%), followed by those aged 30 and above (34%), while 14% were under 20 years old. This indicates that the sample primarily consisted of young adults. In terms of gender, a significant portion of the participants were male (76%), with only 24% being female, indicating a male-dominated sample. Regarding marital status, 64% of the respondents were unmarried, while 36% were married, reflecting the relatively younger age group. Length of residence varied among participants, with the largest groups being those residing for 1-3 years (30%) and 3-5 years (28%), followed by those residing for more than 5 years (24%) and less than 1 year (18%). This indicates a mix of short-term and long-term residents among the participants. Finally, regarding educational qualifications, most respondents had primary education (46%) or secondary education (50%), with only 4% having higher education, showing that the sample generally had low to moderate educational qualifications.

Table-3. Livelihood Characteristics of Respondents in-migrant worker catering establishment

Livelihood	Content	Frequency	Percentage
Nature of job	Cook	13	26%
	Helper	14	28%
	Cleaner	12	24%
	Server	11	22%
	Total	50	100%
Working hours per day	Less than 8 hours	14	28%
	8-10 hours	18	36%
	More than 10 hours	18	36%
	Total	50	100%
Reason for migration	Unemployment	7	14%
	Low wages	15	30%
	Debt	10	20%
	Better job opportunity	18	36%
	Total	50	100%
Type of accommodation	Employer provided	10	20%
	Rented	27	54%
	Shared accommodation	13	26%
	Total	50	100%
Access to basic facilities	Yes	50	100%
	No	0	0%
	Total	50	100%
Availability of social security benefits	Paid leave	8	16%
	Medical assistance	10	20%
	None	32	64%
	Total	50	100%

Source: computed

Table-3. shows that the respondents are employed in various occupations, including assistant (28%), cook (26%), cleaner (24%), and server (22%), with employment distributed relatively evenly across these jobs, although the proportion of those working as assistants and cooks is slightly higher. Most participants worked 8-10 hours daily (36%) or more than 10 hours (36%), while 28% worked 8 hours. This indicates that the majority of respondents had long working hours, reflecting the demanding nature of their jobs. Economic reasons were the primary drivers for migration: better job opportunities (36%), low wages in their hometown (30%), debt (20%), and unemployment (14%). This suggests that migration

was largely driven by the search for improved livelihood conditions. More than half of the participants lived in rented accommodation (54%), while shared accommodation (26%) and employer-provided housing (20%) were less common. This highlights that migrant workers rely more on rented housing than on employer-provided facilities. All respondents (100%) reported having access to basic amenities, indicating that minimum infrastructure needs were met. The majority of respondents (64%) reported having no social security benefits, while 20% had access to medical assistance and 16% had paid leave. These findings reveal a lack of formal social security, a common issue among low-wage migrant workers.

Table-4. Remittance Patterns and Challenges of Respondents in-migrant worker catering establishment

Remittance	Content	Frequency	Percentage
Do you send money to your native place	Yes	25	50%
	No	25	50%
	Total	50	100%
Frequency of remittance	Monthly	10	20%
	Occasionally	16	32%
	None	24	48%
	Total	50	100%
Average amount remitted per month	Below 5000	11	22%
	50001-10000	2	4%
	Above 10000	12	24%
	None	25	50%
	Total	50	100%
Purpose of remittance	House hold consumption	5	10%
	Education and health expenses	6	12%
	Debt repayment	14	28%
	None	25	50%
	Total	50	100%
Major problem faced in destination area	Job insecurity	19	38%
	Low wage	16	32%
	Poor living and health issue	10	20%
	Discrimination	5	10%
	Total	50	100%

Source: computed

According to Table-4: half of the respondents (50%) reported sending money to their hometowns, while the remaining 50% did not. Among those who sent money, 32% sent money occasionally, and 20% sent money monthly. This indicates that the frequency of remittances among migrant workers varies considerably. Regarding the amount sent, 24% of respondents sent more than 10,000 rupees, 22% sent less than 5,000 rupees, and 4% sent between 5,001 and 10,000 rupees. Notably, 50% of the respondents did not send any money, suggesting that they either live with their families here or have other financial priorities. The main purposes for sending money included debt repayment (28%), children's education and healthcare expenses (12%), and household consumption expenses (10%). These findings indicate that economic obligations, particularly debt repayment, are major driving forces behind remittances among migrant workers. Respondents faced several

work and life-related challenges, including job insecurity (38%), low wages (32%), poor living conditions and health issues (20%), and discrimination (10%). This highlights the precarious work and living conditions often faced by migrant workers, which can also impact their ability to send remittances consistently.

Hypothesis testing :

Null Hypothesis (H₀) :

There is no statistically significant association between the two categorical variables under study.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁) :

There is a statistically significant association between the two categorical variables under study.

Table-5. Chi-Square Test for Remittance to home for in migrant workers

Test	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.400	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	62.813	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.140	1	.013
N of Valid Cases	50		

Note: 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. Minimum expected count = 3.50

Explanation with Significance :

The Chi-Square test is used to examine whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables in the study. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 46.400 with 3 degrees of freedom, and the significance value ($p = 0.000$) is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically significant association between the variables under study.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square value (62.813) also has a significance value of 0.000, which further confirms the presence of a significant relationship between the variables. The Linear-by-Linear Association value is 6.140 with a significance value of 0.013, which is also less than 0.05. This suggests that there is a significant linear trend between the variables, especially when the variables are ordinal in

nature. The analysis is based on 50 valid cases, ensuring adequate sample size for interpretation. However, it is noted that 25% of the cells have expected counts less than 5, with the minimum expected count being 3.50. Although this slightly violates the Chi-Square test assumption, the results can still be considered reliable, as the violation is minimal. Since the significance values for all three tests are less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant association between the variables considered in the Chi-Square analysis.

Migrant people are attracted to the district of Tiruvallur for various reasons, particularly service sector (catering establishment) :

Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, and its neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur and Kanchipuram, have emerged as a major hub for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Information Technology/IT-enabled services (IT/ITES). Tamil Nadu stands as a leading manufacturing hub in India, particularly in the Tiruvallur and Kanchipuram districts, boasting a strong foundation in diverse sectors such as automobiles, textiles, electronics, and leather goods. Tamil Nadu ranks first in the country in terms of the number of factories and industrial employment. It has earned the title of 'Asia's Detroit' for its dominance in the automotive sector. Excelling in exports across electronics, automotive components, and apparel sectors, and supported by robust government support and infrastructure facilities (SIPCOT, TIDCO), the state has solidified its position as an industrial powerhouse. Furthermore, it is promoting growth in high-potential sectors such as electric vehicles, aerospace, and renewable energy components.

As a result, the population density is high here, and the service sector, particularly the food industry and retail businesses, focuses on catering to the needs of the people. Therefore, there are numerous job opportunities in these sectors, making this district a preferred destination for migrant workers. At the same time, it is considered a safe district. Hence, migrant workers invite their family members and friends, which is evident from the fact that they are from the same state and even the same village. They also live as nuclear families. Similarly, unskilled, semi-skilled, and less educated individuals choose this sector. Moreover, there are also people with prior experience in this sector, especially in the food industry, who earn higher salaries. People from other states say that the salaries here are high, but the expenses are also high. These migrant families have transferred their ration cards here and are receiving subsidized goods, which has helped reduce their expenses.

When examining whether migrant workers (especially in catering companies) have excessive working hours and how they are affected by them, the truth is that this is not the case. Working hours are divided into shifts and implemented with the consent of the migrant workers. Even in the absence of legal regulations, they are employed based on humanitarian principles. At the same time, migrant workers voluntarily work overtime and receive commensurate wages. When asked why they work long hours, they reply, "We came here to earn money." While in some places they are exploited with inhumane working conditions and low wages, those workers leave those places. Sometimes, if they have received an advance payment, they are forced to work until the debt is repaid; these

practices are reprehensible. In such situations, they must be vigilant and cautious. Government intervention becomes necessary in these circumstances.

This study reviews the economic conditions of registered migrant workers in restaurants in the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu, a state known by the epithet “Tamil Nadu, the land that sustains those who come here.” It addresses issues related to income, employment, and access to social security. The study’s findings indicate that these workers are essential to the food industry, but they are often engaged in low-wage, informal jobs with long working hours and limited benefits. While migration has improved family income and economic conditions for those back in their home states, they continue to face economic vulnerability here due to high living costs and limited access to welfare programs. The lack of social security further exacerbates their insecurity. The study emphasizes policies to improve labour regulation enforcement, access to skill development, and social security to enhance the economic status of these workers and support the growth of the food industry. The study’s findings indicate that after the government implemented registration procedures for migrant workers, their social and economic conditions improved. However, if the government keeps the migrant population under its purview, certain undesirable incidents can be avoided in the future.

Limitations of the study :

This study has analysed the migrant

people across the district based on the online portal records registered under the Tamil Nadu Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979—up to Dec 2025. Only selected registered in migrant workers the service sector particularly catering establishment.

References :

1. Economic Survey of Tamil Nadu, Government of Tamil Nadu state planning commission report 2024-2025.
2. Joseph, Lincy, Cherian, Bincy, Mrs Dash, Samuel, Khanam, Mehev, Masih, Priyanka and Mrs. Divya, (2025). A Phenomenological Study on Indian Migrant Workers Working in Doha. *International Journal of Environmental Sciences*. 11 (22s): 5450-5469.
3. Lahiri, P., and B. Bhattacharyya, (2025). *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 8(1) : 1-31.
4. Life and times of migrant workers in Chennai region Government of Tamil Nadu state planning commission report 2024-2025.
5. Mathan, M., (2025). *Indian journal of legal review* 5 (12): 460-468.
6. Sagar, Mekala and Y. Sreenivasulu, (2025). *The social science reviews a multidisciplinary journal*. 3(4): 287-297.
7. The Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Conditions of Employment and Service) Act, 1979 - Online Portal Registration.