

Migration and Occupational Mobility: A Study with reference to the Return Migrants in a Fishing Village in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala

John Christopher J¹, Sundara Raj T²

¹Ph. D Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Periyar University, Periyar Palkalai Nagar, Salem -636011, Tamil Nadu.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Periyar University, Periyar Palkalai Nagar, Salem -636011, Tamil Nadu.

Abstract

Migration is an important means of occupational mobility. This paper examines the occupational mobility of return migrants among the fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala. Apart from identifying the features of return migrants and the reasons for their return, occupational mobility across three periods; before migration, while abroad and after return has been analysed with the primary data collected from 125 return migrants identified through snowball sampling technique. The data testifies that, though there is temporary mobility in the occupation of the respondents while abroad, ultimately the migration process did not result in the occupational mobility of the respondents. Further, occupational mobility of the respondents has been assessed by performing one way ANOVA test of the variables. Necessary recommendations, with implications at academic, policy and practical levels, have been put forward based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Migration; Return migration; Occupational mobility; Fishing Community.

Introduction

Migration as an important demographic process ever present in human history has drawn the attention of academics and researchers since as earlier as 1880s when Ravenstein (1885; 1889) put forward some general principles regarding the migration process. This

demographic process has been the means of cultural dissemination and socio-economic changes at the places of origin and destination (Gollerkeri and Chhabra 2016; Sekher 1997). Rahman et al. (2014) were of the opinion that the migrants, with their economic and social remittances, influence deeper into the societies of their origin in multiple ways. Even though quite a number of studies have been carried out in this line especially in the context of developing countries (Nelson 1969; Brigg 1973; Rahman and Hussain 2015), understanding of the phenomenon is still limited. A number of studies have been carried out to assess the economic impacts of migration (Skeldon 1997; Faist 2000; Oda 2004; Piper 2007; de Hass 2010; Ullah 2010; Sirkeci et al. 2012; Rajan 2012; Adams et al. 2012). M. S. A. Rao (1981) highlighted the importance of migration in economic development, man-power planning, commercialization or agriculture and urbanization in the place of origin. Some studies have also have focused on the social development as a result of migration (Rahman et al. 2014; Piper 2011; Van Naerssen et al. 2007; Nyberg-Sorensen 2012; Raghuram 2009; Faist 2008; Dannecker 2009; de Hass 2007).

While building his theory on migration, Lee (1966) pointed out that along with migration the momentum of return migration will always be there as migrants' initial expectations may not correspond to the reality at destination or they might fail to accomplish their original motives in the place of destination. Return migration, in fact, is a significant dimension of migration that has gained little attention of scholars and researchers as this aspect of migration has always been one of the less distinct features in the entire process of migration (Sekher 1997). This dimension of migration is particularly important for the sending communities because of the nature and extent of its impact on the social and economic life of the native villages of the returnees. If economic gain stands as the key motive behind outward mobility of migrants (Abella and Atal 1986), the reasons for return are often numerous and varied. Both individual and societal factors at the place of origin and destination have important roles in the homeward mobility of the migrants (Sekher 1997).

Not many studies have been carried out to deal with the problems and prospects of return migrants in India. It is the ultimate phase of migration wherein the counter flow of migrants takes place after completing the cycle of migration. It has been pointed out that return migrants plays a dynamic role in in the socio-economic development of their native villages as they bring in know-how, expertise, ideas and capital that induce local development (Ibid). Oberai and Singh (1981) have referred to the role of returnees in the modernisation of agriculture in rural Punjab. They observed that the money and skills returnees brought with

them enabled to introduce new agricultural technologies. Useem and Useem (1955) dealt with the positive impacts of western educated return emigrants in India.

Although Kerala has been witnessing large scale return migration especially from Gulf countries for numerous reasons, there is a lack of accurate and authentic information about the magnitude and nature of return migration at state level. Nair (1986) tried to bring out the reasons for return migration from Gulf countries and found that the most important reasons for return were expiry of contract (24 per cent), termination of job by the employer (32 per cent), and compulsory repatriation by host government (17 per cent). Another important finding of the study was that nearly 60 per cent of the returnees remain unemployed after return. In yet another study of return migrants, Nair (1987) made a comparison between the successful and unsuccessful migrants in terms of economic gains. The study established that 21 per cent of the samples were highly successful, 45 per cent moderately successful, 26 per cent non-gainer and 8 per cent failures. The Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thriuvananthapuram tried to assess the magnitude of return migrants from Kerala as part of its regular periodical Kerala Migration Monitoring Surveys (KMS) and Return Migration Surveys (RMS) (Zachariah and Rajan 2018).

Migration leads to the occupational and social mobility of migrants. There are studies which established a positive correlation between geographical mobility and occupational mobility which ultimately lead to upward social mobility. (Lipset and Bendix 1959; Joshi 1989). Sunanda Pande (1986) observed that generally migration, especially rural to urban, leads to occupational mobility. According to her, the context that promote occupational mobility of migrants include; migrants' changed attitude towards work, achievement based urban occupational structure and a pattern of social stratification based on universalistic values. In this context this paper tries to find out the occupational mobility of return migrants in the fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives.

- To bring out the demographic characteristics of return migrants.
- To analyse the reasons for the return of migrants from the fishing community.
- To assess the extent of occupational mobility as a result of migration.

Methods and Techniques

The present study is based on the primary data collected from 125 return migrants from the fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram District. The fishing community has been defined as comprising of those individuals and families who, by heredity, are part of the culture of fishing. It includes those individuals and families who belong to the castes whose hereditary occupation is fishing though they themselves may or may not be involved in the activity and excludes those individuals and families who may be actually practicing fishing but do not belong to the castes whose hereditary occupation is fishing (George 2002). Thus caste is considered as the basic criterion for inclusion in the community. The fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala comprises of three religious categories – Latin Catholic Mukkuvas; Dheevara Hidus, and Mappila Muslims (Lopez 2002).

This study is based in Pulluvila, a fishing village in Karumkulam Panchayat of Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala. This village was selected mainly for two reasons. First, on account of the demographic peculiarity of the village, being one of the most thickly populated villages in Karumkulam Panchayat. Density of population in the study area was estimated as 12119 (Raj and Christopher 2017). Majority of the residents in the village belong to the Latin Catholic Mukkuva community and fishing is their hereditary occupation. Second, the experience from the field revealed that a significant number of members from the community have migrated, especially, to the Arabian Gulf and their occupational mobility is not yet studied in detail.

Data for the study was collected from the return migrants in the village as they have completed their migration cycle and were readily available for data collection. Bovenkerk (1974) defines return migrant as a person who has returned to his/her country or region of origin after a significant period being spent abroad in another region. In this sense a return migrant is a person who has completed his cycle of migration after being away from his native place for a certain period and subsequently came back to the place of origin for settling down.

Sample respondents for data collection were identified through snowball sampling technique or 'chain method'. As per this method, the researchers first selected a few samples through convenience sampling from the village and other samples were identified with the help of the initially identified samples. This technique enabled the researchers to locate the samples

effectively within the limited time-span. In order to ensure the contemporary relevance of the study only those persons who have returned to their home village during the ten years period between 2008 and March 2018 have been selected as sample for the study. Data collection was carried out through personal interviews with the respondents with the help of a pre-tested structured interview schedule during March-April 2019.

In order to assess the occupational mobility of the return migrants, occupations of respondents at three points of time – before migration, while abroad and after return were grouped into certain categories and were compared with each other by drawing cross-tables. Further, one-way ANOVA test was carried out to statistically test the association between variables. Qualitative information to supplement quantitative data was gathered through focus group discussions with the respondents.

Findings and Discussion

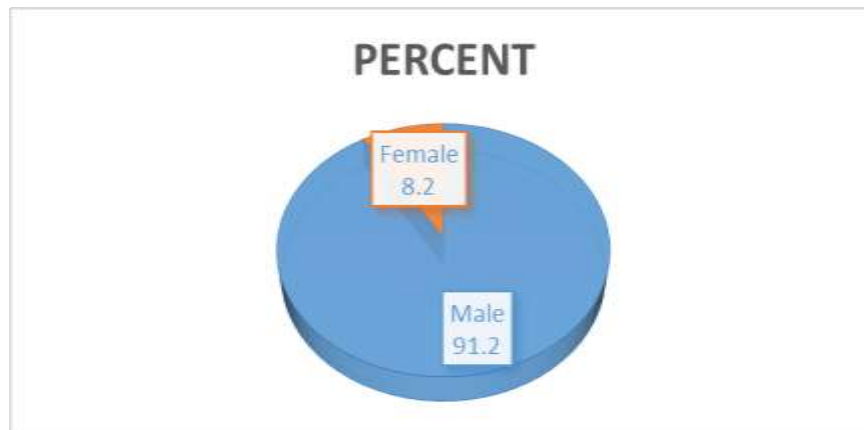
Who are the return migrants?

The respondents have been classified into two categories – Return Emigrants (REM) and Return Out migrants (ROM). REM comprises of those returnees who had once emigrated out of the country and worked for some period of time abroad and have returned back and settled in their home village. Those individuals who had migrated out of Kerala but within India for some time and were resettled in their home village at the time of data collection have been classified as ROM.

Table 1: Classification of respondents based on the type of migration

Type of Migration	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
REM	116	92.8	92.8	92.8
ROM	9	7.2	7.2	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (92.8 per cent) were REM and only 7.2 per cent were ROM. It does not mean that only less out migrants return back home, rather it is because of the fact that only few people from the fishing community opt to out-migrate. In fact, this stream of migration is less explored by the fishing community in the study area. Most of them opt migration to the Gulf countries.

Figure 1: Sex of the return migrants

The sex wise distribution of the respondents shows that a significant proportion of the return migrants (91.2 per cent) are males and only 8.8 per cent of them are females. These figures, in fact, reflect the migration selectivity of the community. Data obtained in the supports the fact that migration from study area follows the general trend in terms of male selectivity (Zachariah and Rajan 2012). Male members from the fishing community migrate leaving behind their wives and other family members. This may be one of the reasons that compel them to return back to their home village after working abroad for a while.

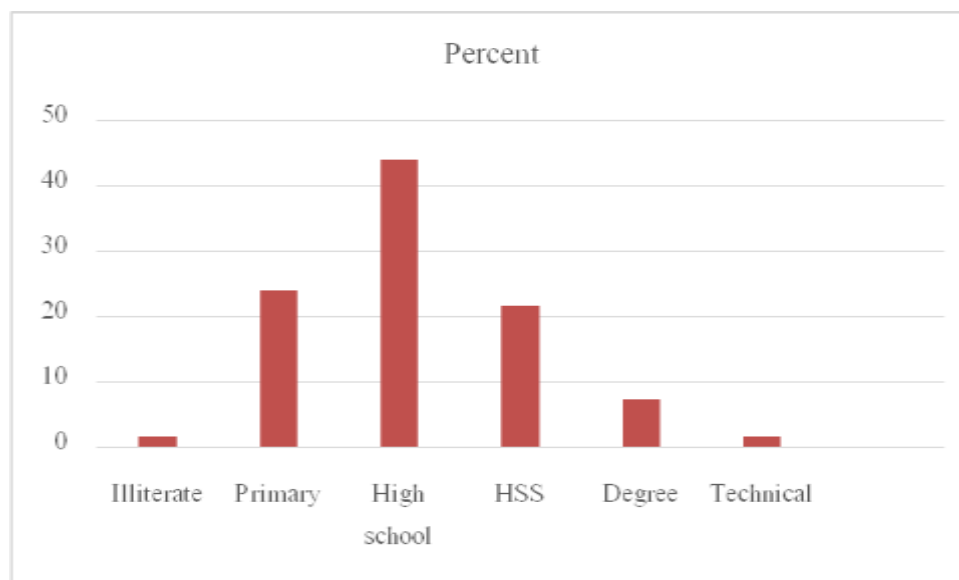
Figure 2: Educational qualification of return migrants

Figure 2 shows that the highest proportion of the return migrants had high school level of educational qualification (44 per cent) followed by primary school (24 per cent) and higher secondary levels (21.6 per cent). Another 5.2 per cent of the return migrants had obtained degree level educational qualifications and a marginal proportion of the respondents (1.6 per

cent) had some technical qualifications and an equal proportion of returnees were illiterates. These figures are, in fact, a replica of the educational standards of the fishing community in the study area. Studies have shown that educational level of fishing community in the study area was very low comparable to the most vulnerable sections of the state like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Mathiyas 2014). Since educationally and technically less qualified people from the fishing community migrate, they are often not able to convert the migration process into beneficial one.

The migration cycle

The migration cycle is assessed on the basis of the number of years the return migrants spent outside the state. Studies have shown that predominantly unmarried young people with low level of education migrate from Kerala (Mathew and Nair 1978; Prakash 1978; AERC 1981; Government of Kerala 1988). This observation is generally true in the case of the respondents as well.

Table 2: Classification of return migrants according to the number of years spent abroad

Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 5	41	32.8	32.8	32.8
5-10	44	35.2	35.2	68.0
10-15	15	12.0	12.0	80.0
15-20	9	7.2	7.2	87.2
20-25	11	8.8	8.8	96.0
25-30	3	2.4	2.4	98.4
Above 30	2	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The table 2 reveals that a significant proportion of the respondents (68 per cent) worked up to 10 years abroad before their return followed by those who worked between 10 to 15 years (12 per cent) and 20 to 25 years (8.8 per cent). It is to be noted that 1.6 per cent of the respondents worked abroad for above 30 years. The mean year is 9.38 years. It can be derived that the respondents spent on an average 9.38 years abroad. From the group discussions it was noted that those who spent longer years abroad were those who migrated long ago when the conditions abroad were attractive and working conditions were fair. But as years pass through, opportunities in the Gulf countries, which were and are still the major destination of

the fishing community members from Kerala, became bleak and working conditions become unfavourable. Unfavourable working conditions and new laws of the land like 'Nidakhat' compel many migrants to return after a short span of time. It is clear that the respondents in their twenties and early thirties migrate to different parts of the world and after working on an average over nine years, return and settle back in their home village.

Where did they return from?

It is said that Malyalees are all around the world. One could hear Malayalam along the streets of Abudhabi, Frankfurt, Houston, Singapore and Nairobi. Onam is being celebrated in many lands and prayers in Malayalam are chanted every Sunday in churches across continents. Money in terms of Dollar, Dirham, Dinar, Euro, Pound, Riyal and Yen flow into different financial institutions in Kerala (KILE 2013). The countries and places where the respondents worked last before their return are given in table 3.

Table 3: Places where the return migrants worked last while they worked abroad

Place worked last	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bahrain	5	4.0	4.0	4.0
Israel	1	.8	.8	4.8
Italy	3	2.4	2.4	7.2
Karnataka	1	.8	.8	8
Korea	1	.8	.8	8.8
KSA	10	8.0	8.0	16.8
Kuwait	5	4.0	4.0	20.8
Muscat	7	5.6	5.6	26.4
Oman	3	2.4	2.4	28.8
Qatar	7	5.6	5.6	34.4
Singapore	4	3.2	3.2	37.6
UAE	73	58.4	58.4	96
UK	3	2.4	2.4	98.4
Uttar Pradesh	1	.8	.8	99.2
W. Bengal	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

It is evident that majority of the respondents returned from the UAE (58.4 per cent) followed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (8 per cent). This may be because of the fact that the most important destination of the migrants from the fishing community in the study area is the Middle East. Very few people from the community migrate to other parts of the world. The destinations of migrants within the country were West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The qualitative data collected through focus groups discussions with respondents revealed that though they were aware of other streams of migration to Europe and other continents, it is not accessible to them mainly because of two reasons. One, it is highly expensive. They find it very hard to find sources to finance such migration journeys. Migration to the Gulf countries is comparatively less expensive and in some instances their relatives or neighbours who run labour supply companies in the Gulf countries offer visa to these poor lot on the agreement that the amount of visa will be repaid from their wages while working abroad. The second reason is that they do not have any access to information regarding job opportunities and lack of contact persons who would arrange the initial facilities in other countries. One of the most important reasons for selecting the destinations was the presence of friends and relatives in the destination places from whom they get information and other supports. A lot of Malayalees are working in the Gulf countries; hence it is easy to get information and other kinds of supports to the new Malayalee migrants to these countries.

Reasons for Return

Migrants return to their home towns for a number of reasons. A previous study found that major reasons for return of migrants from the Gulf countries were expiry of contracts, reduction in wages, and repatriation of workers for illegal stay. Poor health and family problems were identified as reasons for return for some and some even returned because they felt that they have saved enough and did not feel the pressure to remain abroad longer (Sekher 1997). The major reasons for the return of the respondents in the present study are given in table 4.

Table 4: Reasons for return

Reasons for return	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Expiry of contract	17	13.6	13.6	13.6
Issues with the employer	11	8.8	8.8	22.4
Responsibilities are fulfilled	5	4.0	4.0	26.4

Health issues	21	16.8	16.8	43.2
Stayed too long abroad	7	5.6	5.6	48.8
Earned sufficiently	1	.8	.8	49.6
Difficult working conditions	22	17.6	17.6	67.2
Employment terminated by the employer	7	5.6	5.6	72.8
Compulsory repatriation by the host govt.	3	2.4	2.4	75.2
Family problems	9	7.2	7.2	82.4
Not beneficial	20	16.0	16.0	98.4
Others	2	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

Reasons for the return of migrants were many and varied. The predominant single factors that forced the migrants to return are the difficult working conditions at the places of destination (17.6 per cent) followed by health issues (16.8 per cent), and not being beneficial (16 per cent). Expiry of contract is the major reason for 13.6 per cent of the respondents. These findings, in fact, do not correspond with the findings of earlier studies. This may be because of the nature of the work that the respondents undertook while abroad. As seen earlier, persons with low educational qualifications and little technical knowhow migrate to the Gulf countries. Hence they are mostly offered unskilled works which is too hard for them. They often have to work in very high temperature and humidity which cause them severe health problems and are finally forced to return back home. It is to be specially noted that a significant proportion of the respondents returned because they did not find migration beneficial. Discussion with the respondents revealed that it was not because they were gainfully employed back home, but the money they earned while abroad was lower than what they earned back home. It should be specifically noted that just one person returned because he felt that he had earned sufficiently and did not feel the need to stay longer. But for the majority, the return was more stressful as their responsibilities back home were only half way through. During the discussion a few returnees also pointed out that their economic condition even deteriorated because of their migration.

Migration and Occupational Mobility

Occupational mobility refers to the capacity of labourers to switch between occupations in order to secure gainful employment or meet demand for labour. It is true that migration, especially from rural to urban promotes occupational mobility. Industrialisation and improvement in the fields of mass media of communication speeded up the migration process wherein the migrants are able to realise the value of education in order to achieve better occupational positions (Pande 1986). In the present study occupational mobility of return migrants was assessed at two levels: (i) by analysing the occupations of the respondents before migration, while abroad and after return and; (ii) by analysing change in occupation of the returnees between the three periods– before migration, while abroad, and after return. Table 5 presents the picture of the occupation of the respondents before they started their migration journey.

Table 5: Occupation of the respondents before migration

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployed	28	22.4	22.4	22.4
Construction work	1	.8	.8	23.2
Fishing	71	56.8	56.8	80.0
Small vendor	1	.8	.8	80.8
Fish vendor	1	.8	.8	81.6
Tailor	1	.8	.8	82.4
Painter	4	3.2	3.2	85.6
Driver	7	5.6	5.6	91.2
Electrician	1	.8	.8	92.0
Plumber	2	1.6	1.6	93.6
Mechanic	1	.8	.8	94.4
Business	2	1.6	1.6	96.0
Clerk	1	.8	.8	96.8
Salesman	1	.8	.8	97.6
Cashier	1	.8	.8	98.4
Other technician	1	.8	.8	99.2
IT professional	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents (56.8 per cent) were engaged in fishing and 22.4 per cent were unemployed before their migration. All other occupational categories were comparatively negligible. The table, in fact, reflects the state of occupational diversity of the fishing community in the study area. The fishing community is one of the least occupationally diversified communities in the state. Moreover, individuals who manage to find some 'decent jobs' seems satisfied with their occupation and income back home. Information gathered from focus group discussions also support this assumption. Most of the respondents preferred their children find some jobs back home.

For assessing the occupation of the respondents while abroad, their last occupation in the destination places were considered and the findings are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Occupation while abroad

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployed	3	2.4	2.4	2.4
Construction work	3	2.4	2.4	4.8
Household worker	5	4.0	4.0	8.8
Fishing	33	26.4	26.4	35.2
Fish vendor	2	1.6	1.6	36.8
Helper/Cleaner	43	34.4	34.4	71.2
Equipment operator	2	1.6	1.6	72.8
Welder	7	5.6	5.6	78.4
Painter	3	2.4	2.4	80.8
Driver	4	3.2	3.2	84.0
Electrician	3	2.4	2.4	86.4
Plumber	1	.8	.8	87.2
Mechanic	1	.8	.8	88.0
Store keeper	2	1.6	1.6	89.6
Salesman	3	2.4	2.4	92.0
Accountant	1	.8	.8	92.8
Office attendant	3	2.4	2.4	95.2
Foreman	2	1.6	1.6	96.8
Supervisor	2	1.6	1.6	98.4

Nurse	1	.8	.8	99.2
Armed forces	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The most predominant category of migrants were working as helpers or cleaners (34.4 per cent) followed by fishing (26.4 per cent). People engaged in other occupations were comparatively less. This may be because of the fact that mostly unskilled or semi-skilled people from the fishing community migrate. Hence they are unable to find highly paid, high profile, skilled occupations. Christopher and Raj (2018) have dealt in detail about the adverse inhuman conditions and human rights violations that migrant Malayalee fishermen in the Arabian Gulf countries had to undergo.

Table 7 presents the occupation of the respondents after their return to their home village completing their migration cycle.

Table 7: Occupation after return

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployed	23	18.4	18.4	18.4
Construction work	2	1.6	1.6	20.0
Household labourer	1	.8	.8	20.8
Fishing	64	51.2	51.2	72.0
Small vendor	1	.8	.8	72.8
Fish vendor	5	4.0	4.0	76.8
Helper/Cleaner	1	.8	.8	77.6
Equipment operator	1	.8	.8	78.4
Welder	3	2.4	2.4	80.8
Painter	4	3.2	3.2	84.0
Driver	10	8.0	8.0	92.0
Electrician	2	1.6	1.6	93.6
Business	3	2.4	2.4	96.0
Clerk	1	.8	.8	96.8
Office attendant	2	1.6	1.6	98.4
Computer operator	1	.8	.8	99.2
Supervisor	1	.8	.8	100.0

Total	125	100.0	100.0	
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It is clear from the above table that after return, majority (51.2 per cent) of the respondents went back to their traditional occupation of fishing. Another significant proportion (18.4 per cent) remained unemployed. Proportion of return migrants engaged in some other occupations was comparatively negligible. This finding does not correspond with the findings of previous studies that many return migrants in Kerala either started their own business or turned into some kind of self-employment (Sekher 1997). There are multiple reasons for this fact. One reason is that, not many respondents returned with much improvement in their financial positions, which could have been invested in new business or self-employment. Another major reason is, majority of the respondents who worked abroad as helpers or cleaners did not get a chance to learn any new skills. Hence they were forced to return to their traditional occupation or remain unemployed.

In order to assess occupational mobility, change of occupation of the respondents between periods is assessed with the help of cross tables. For this purpose occupations have been classified into unskilled work (Construction worker, household worker, fish vender, helper and cleaner), skilled work (equipment operator, welder, painter, driver, electrician, plumber and mechanic), White collar work (store keeper, salesman, accountant, office attendant), highly skilled work (foreman and supervisor) and professionals (nurse and armed force). Fishing is maintained as a separate category as it is the traditional occupation of the respondents and a significant proportion of the respondents had been engaged in this occupation. Table 8 presents the occupational mobility of the respondents between periods before migration and while abroad.

Table 8: Occupational mobility between the period before migration and while abroad

Occupation before migration	Occupation while abroad							Total
	Unemployed	Unskilled	Fishing	Skilled work	White collar	Highly skilled	Professional	
Unemployed	2 (1.6)	16 (12.8)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	4 (3.2)	0 (0)	2 (1.6)	27 (21.6)
Unskilled	0 (0)	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2.4)
Fishing	1 (0.8)	26 (20.8)	32 (25.6)	9 (7.2)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	71 (56.8)

Skilled	0 (0)	8 (6.4)	0 (0)	8 (6.4)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	17 (13.6)
White collar	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.4)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	5 (4)
Highly skilled	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)
Professional	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)
Total	3 (2.4)	53 (42.4)	33 (26.4)	21 (16.8)	9 (7.2)	4 (3.2)	2 (1.6)	125 (100)

*Figures within brackets represent percentages.

The table reveals that the proportion of unemployment has reduced from 21.6 per cent to 2.4 percent as a result of migration. But majority (12.8 per cent out of 21.6 per cent) of those who were unemployed before migration were employed as unskilled works when they went abroad. The most significant trend seen in the table is that the proportion of people engaged in unskilled works has gone very high from mere 2.4 per cent before migration to 42.4 per cent while abroad. This is because of the fact that mostly unskilled workers from the study area migrated to the Gulf countries. It is to be specially noted that even some people who were employed in skilled (6.4 per cent) and professional works (0.8 per cent) before took up unskilled workers while abroad. This is because many of the migrants from the study area migrate to the Gulf countries in the visas supplied by the labour supply companies. Labour supply companies either take sub-labour contracts from bigger companies or supply manpower to other bigger companies. Nature of their work is not the same always. It may vary depending on the contract the company may manage to secure. Thus the workers employed by the labour supply companies may have to perform a particular kind of job at one point of time and quite a different one at another time. Thus not only they do not gain mastery in any skills, there is a kind of 'deskilling' taking place as we see in the present situation. Another point to be noted is that a significant proportion of respondents (26.4 per cent) were engaged in fishing even after migration. This shows that this poor lot has no escape from their laborious traditional occupation.

Occupational mobility of the respondents between the periods while abroad and after return is assessed by comparing the occupations of the respondents' last occupation while abroad with their occupation after return and is presented in table 9.

Table 9: Occupational mobility between the periods while abroad and after return

Occupation while abroad	Occupation after return						Total
	Unemployed	Unskilled	Fishing	Skilled	White collar	Highly skilled	
Unemployed	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2.4)
Unskilled	14 (11.2)	8 (6.4)	23 (18.4)	6 (4.8)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	53 (42.4)
Fishing	0 (0)	2 (1.6)	31 (24.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	33 (26.4)
Skilled	3 (2.4)	2 (1.6)	6 (4.8)	9 (7.2)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	21 (16.8)
White collar	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.4)	3 (2.4)	2 (1.6)	9 (7.2)
Highly skilled	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	4 (3.2)
Professional	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.6)
total	23 (18.4)	13 (10.4)	62 (49.6)	18 (14.4)	6 (4.8)	3 (2.4)	125 (100)

*Figures within brackets represent percentages.

The table reveals that majority of the migrants after their return either took up their traditional occupation of fishing (49.6 per cent) or remained unemployed (18.4 per cent). It is to be specially noted that a sizeable proportion of those who were working as unskilled labourers (11.2 per cent) while abroad turned unemployed after their return and around 8 per cent out of 16.8 per cent of the respondents who were employed as skilled workers found some skilled or professional work after their return. Only a very small proportion in this category (2.4 per cent) remained unemployed after their return. It is evident from the table that there is a kind of downward occupational mobility between the two periods – occupation while abroad and after return- especially in the case of unskilled labourers. There is a decline in all categories of occupation except fishing. Skilled workers reduced from 16.8 per cent to 14.4 per cent and white collar jobs reduced from 7.2 per cent to 4.8 per cent. All the migrants who were employed in white collar jobs while abroad fell into unemployed category after return.

Occupational mobility of the respondents, ultimately, is assessed by comparing their occupations before starting their migration journey and after return and is presented in table 10.

Table 10: Occupational mobility between periods before migration and after return

Occupation before migration	Occupation after return						Total
	Unemployed	Unskilled	Fishing	Skilled	White collar	Highly skilled	
Unemployed	13 (10.4)	4 (3.2)	1 (0.8)	5 (4)	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)	27 (21.6)
Unskilled	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	3 (2.4)
Fishing	8 (6.4)	5 (4)	58 (46.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	71 (56.8)
Skilled	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)	9 (7.2)	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	17 (13.6)
White collar	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	5 (4)
Highly skilled	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)
Professional	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)
Total	23 (18.4)	13 (10.4)	62 (49.6)	18 (14.4)	6 (4.8)	3 (2.4)	125 (100)

*Figures within brackets represent percentages.

The above table indicates the occupational mobility between the period before migration and after return. The overall picture shows that most of the people who were engaged in fishing before migration (56.8 per cent) returned back to the same traditional occupation after return (49.6 per cent). The proportion of unemployed category also remained almost the same (21.6 per cent before migration and 18.4 per cent after return), but the proportion of unskilled category has gone up almost five times from 2.4 per cent to 10.4 per cent. A detailed analysis reveals that around half of the unemployed persons (10.4 per cent out of 21.6 per cent) and majority of the respondents engaged in fishing (46.4 per cent out of 56.8 per cent) before

their migration went back to their initial status after return. Thus it is evident from the cross-table that there is not much mobility in occupation between the two periods.

Further occupational mobility of the respondents has been assessed by performing one way ANOVA test of the variables and the result is presented in table 11.

Table 11: ANOVA table showing the association between occupations of respondents

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Occupation before migration and while abroad	Between Groups	12.786	6	2.131	3.060	.008
	Within Groups	82.185	118	.696		
	Total	94.971	124			
Occupation while abroad and after return	Between Groups	26.942	6	4.490.		
	Within Groups	61.660	118	523	8.593	.000
	Total	88.603	124			
Occupation before migration and after return	Between Groups	11.147	6	1.858		
	Within Groups	77.456	118	.656	2.830	.013
	Total	88.603	124			

The table shows that there is a significant difference between the mean squares the of the occupation of the respondents before migration and while abroad (2.131 and 0.696 respectively) and the F value at 6 degrees of freedom is calculated as 3.060 with a significance value of 0.008 ($p = .008$) which is below 0.05 significance. Hence it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between occupation of the respondents before migration and while abroad. Output of ANOVA analysis of occupation while abroad and after return shows 0.000 significance value ($p = .000$) for an F value of 8.593 at 6 degrees of freedom. Since the p value is less than 0.05 at 6 degrees of freedom we can conclude that the difference between occupation of the respondents while abroad and after return is statistically significant. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between the sums of means for within the groups and between the groups of occupation before migration and after return (11.147 and 77.456 respectively). The p value calculated is 0.013 which is also less than 0.05 significance level. Hence it is concluded that the difference between occupation of the respondents before migration and after return is statistically significant.

Conclusions, Implications and Future Directions

The findings revealed that majority of the return migrants were male (91.2 per cent) emigrants (92.8 per cent). The highest proportion of the returnees (44 per cent) had the educational qualification of SSLC. Those with educational qualification above HSS level were negligible and even 1.6 per cent were illiterates. For the fishing community, migration is a temporary phenomenon. On an average the migrants spent around 10 years abroad before their return. The major destination of the respondents was the Arabian Gulf especially the UAE (55.2 per cent). The major reasons for their return include; difficult working conditions (17.6 per cent), health issues (16.8 per cent) and the feeling that migration was not beneficial (16 per cent). Among the respondents, majority (56.8 per cent) were engaged in their traditional occupation of fishing followed by the unemployed category (22.4 per cent) and while abroad 34.4 per cent of the respondents worked as helpers/cleaners and another 26.4 per cent were engaged in fishing. After return majority of them have either turned into their traditional occupation of fishing (51.2 per cent) or remained unemployed (18.4 per cent).

The cross-tables comparing the occupation of the respondents across periods revealed that even though migration leads to reduction in unemployment and occupational mobility to some extent, it is a temporary phenomenon. In fact there is a kind of 'deskilling' taking place during the period between occupation while abroad and after return. Thus it can be concluded that even though migration is temporarily beneficial to the fishing community, ultimately it does not lead to occupational mobility of the community. New skills and techniques learned while abroad remain unutilised once the migrants return back to their native place. One way ANOVA test of the variables also revealed that there is significant difference between the cross-occupations of the respondents' between periods.

The above findings have implications at the academic, policy and practical levels. At the academic level apart from contributing knowledge to the disciple, the study has opened up unexplored fields related to the area of study. Implication of migration from the fishing community in Kerala is not studied sufficiently. It necessitates further empirical studies. From policy point of view, the findings of the study invites policy makers to come up with policies that would help to better utilise the skills and expertise of the return migrants for the socio-economic development of the nation and local communities. The following recommendations are put forward at practical level to make the migration process more

beneficial to the fishing community in Kerala and better and efficient utilisation of the skills of return migrants and their rehabilitation.

- Migration is a great opportunity in the 21 century globalised world. But migrants from the fishing community are unable convert it into a great opportunity because of their backwardness in educational and technical qualifications. Hence responsible authorities and voluntary organisations should come forward with innovative strategies to promote higher and technical education among the fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram district. One of the ideas would be starting combo-courses combining degree courses with technical education and skill training aiming at the migration aspirants. Steps should be taken to ensure that individuals from the community migrate with at least with one technical skill.
- The voluntary organisation working along the coastal belt in Kerala may take necessary steps to make the migration aspirants well informed about the job opportunities abroad and qualifications required for each category of job. For this purpose migrants' and return migrants' forums may be organised in each fishing village.
- At present there are no avenues for utilising the skills and expertise of the return migrants in the fishing village under study. In this context new initiatives may be undertaken in the village. Since the fishing community in the said village is so closely associated with the Catholic Church, the church authorities may take necessary steps to start new ventures in the village in the cooperative society model. The migrants from the village may be made members of this society and fund for the new ventures may be collected from the members. Return migrants in the village may be entrusted with the responsibility of managing the ventures. Supermarkets may be one of the ventures that can be started under this cooperative system. Profit earned from such ventures may be utilised to give loans to return migrants for starting self-employment units. This would ensure an additional income to the migrants and their families and open up an employment opportunities when they return back home.

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