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Employment, Migration and Household Economic Well-being among Rural Workers in Kanniyakumari District

Dr. R. Ramalakshmi

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Abstract: Kanniyakumari District, despite recording one of the highest literacy rates in Tamil Nadu, has historically been characterised by limited large-scale industrial employment relative to its educated workforce, resulting in a long-standing pattern of seasonal and permanent out-migration of rural workers, both within India and to Gulf countries, in search of better wage income and employment security. Remittances sent by migrant workers form an important, though unevenly distributed, source of household income in the district, influencing patterns of household expenditure, savings and overall economic well-being. This article develops a research framework to examine the nature and determinants of employment and migration among rural workers in Kanniyakumari District and to assess the consequent effects on household economic well-being. Drawing on the existing literature on rural employment transition, distress and aspirational migration and the role of remittances in household welfare in India, the article proposes objectives, hypotheses, a household-level sampling design and statistical tools including Garrett's ranking technique, correlation and regression analysis. The article outlines anticipated patterns based on the literature reviewed and offers suggestions relating to local employment generation, skill development and migrant welfare measures aimed at improving the economic well-being of rural worker households in the district.

Keywords: *Employment, Seasonal Migration, Remittances, Wage Income, Household Well-being, Rural Workers, Kanniyakumari District*

1. Introduction

Employment and migration decisions of rural workers are closely intertwined with household economic well-being in much of rural India, where local wage opportunities are often insufficient, seasonal or confined to low-productivity agricultural and informal-sector work. Kanniyakumari District presents a distinctive case within Tamil Nadu: high literacy and educational attainment among its rural population have not been matched by a commensurate expansion of local industrial or formal-sector employment, prompting a long-standing tradition of both short-term/seasonal migration to neighbouring states such as Kerala and longer-term international migration, particularly to Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in search of higher wage income.

The economic consequences of this migration pattern for sending households are complex: remittances can significantly supplement household income, finance education, housing and health expenditure and improve overall living standards, but migration can also entail social costs, including separation of families, the burden of unpaid domestic and care work falling on left-behind members and uncertainty regarding the continuity of remittance income. Understanding the employment and migration pattern of rural workers and its net effect on household economic well-being, is therefore essential to designing effective local employment and welfare policies in the district.

Assistant Professor

Department of Economics, S.T. Hindu College, Nagercoil-629002

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

2. Review of Literature

Bellampalli and Yadava (2023), examining distress out-migration from rural India, found that migration undertaken purely as a survival strategy in the face of poverty and informality did not significantly improve migrants' present income or quality of life, underscoring the need for policies that promote sustainable local livelihoods rather than migration as a default coping mechanism. In contrast, studies of aspirational or opportunity-driven migration suggest more positive welfare outcomes, indicating that the motivation and context of migration substantially shape its consequences for household well-being.

Chandrasekhar and Sahoo (2019) examined the relationship between landholding, participation in agriculture and short-term migration in rural India, finding that households with smaller landholdings and limited agricultural income were more likely to rely on short-term or circular migration as a supplementary livelihood strategy, particularly in the absence of adequate local non-farm employment opportunities.

Of particular relevance to Tamil Nadu, Heller and Kaushik (2020) studied the consequences of husbands' international migration on families left behind in Tamil Nadu, finding that while remittance income improved household material well-being, migration also increased the domestic, financial and decision-making responsibilities of left-behind spouses, with mixed implications for women's overall well-being and autonomy.

A study of remittance inflows and rural household well-being in Ratnagiri District, Maharashtra, published in the Indian Journal of Labour Economics (2023), examined the factors influencing emigration and the size of remittance inflow and found that remittances constituted an important source of funding for recipient households, significantly influencing household expenditure patterns, though the effect varied depending on the duration and destination of migration. Debnath and Nayak (2022), studying rural West Bengal, similarly found that the dynamic use of remittances, whether directed towards consumption, asset-building or productive investment, significantly shaped the extent to which migration translated into durable improvements in household welfare.

Collectively, this literature suggests that the welfare consequences of migration for sending households in India are not uniform, but depend on the nature of migration (distress versus aspirational), the destination and duration of migration and the manner in which remittance income is utilised by the household, considerations that are directly relevant to understanding migration and household well-being in Kanniyakumari District.

3. Statement of the Problem

While migration, particularly Gulf migration, has long been associated with visible improvements in housing and consumption standards in parts of Kanniyakumari District, it remains unclear how these benefits are distributed across different categories of migrant and non-migrant rural worker households, what role local employment opportunities and job security play in shaping migration decisions and whether the economic gains from migration are accompanied by corresponding costs in terms of household separation and dependency on remittance income. A systematic household-level study is required to examine these linkages in the district.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic profile of rural worker households and the pattern (seasonal, long-term or international) of migration in Kanniyakumari District.

2. To analyse the major causes and determinants influencing the decision to migrate among rural workers.

3. To examine the effect of migration and remittance income on household income, expenditure and standard of living.

4. To assess local employment opportunities, wage income and job security available to rural workers who have not migrated.

5. To offer suggestions for improving local employment opportunities and the economic well-being of rural worker households.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

- **H_0(1):** There is no significant relationship between remittance income and household expenditure/standard of living.

- **H_0(2):** There is no significant difference in household economic well-being between migrant and non-migrant rural worker households.

- **H_0(3):** There is no significant association between local employment opportunity/job security and the decision to migrate.

6. Research Methodology

Area of the Study: The study is proposed to be conducted across a representative selection of blocks in Kanniyakumari District with a documented history of significant out-migration, alongside blocks with comparatively lower migration intensity, to enable meaningful comparison.

Sampling Design: A stratified random sampling method is proposed, with rural worker households classified into migrant households (having at least one member currently or recently working outside the district/country) and non-migrant households. A total sample of 300 to 400 households is proposed to be drawn proportionately across the selected blocks.

Sources of Data: Primary data will be collected through a structured interview schedule covering household demographic profile, migration history, destination and duration of migration, remittance amount and utilisation, local employment status, wage income and job security indicators. Secondary data will be drawn from the District Census Handbook, District Human Development Report and Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Period of Study: Primary data collection is proposed to be carried out over a defined field-survey period, with recall data on migration history and remittances pertaining to the preceding year.

Statistical Tools: Data will be analysed using percentage analysis, Garrett's ranking technique to identify and rank the causes of migration, Karl Pearson's correlation between remittance income and household expenditure, independent samples t-test to compare well-being indicators between migrant and non-migrant households and multiple regression analysis to examine the determinants of household economic well-being.

7. Results and Analysis

7.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Rural Worker Households

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Rural Worker Households

Socio-Economic Characteristic	Category	No. of Households	Percentage (%)
Household Type	Migrant Household	184	46.0
	Non-Migrant Household	216	54.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**
Primary Occupation	Agriculture (Self/Farm Labour)	148	37.0
	Non-Farm Wage Labour	112	28.0
	Small Business/Trade	52	13.0
	Others	88	22.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**
Education Level (Head)	Illiterate	52	13.0
	Primary (1-5)	76	19.0
	Middle (6-8)	92	23.0
	Secondary (9-12)	100	25.0
	Graduate & Above	80	20.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**
Annual Income Level	Below Rs. 50,000	72	18.0
	Rs. 50,001 - 1,00,000	108	27.0

Socio-Economic Characteristic	Category	No. of Households	Percentage (%)
	Rs. 1,00,001 - 2,00,000	116	29.0
	Above Rs. 2,00,000	104	26.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**
Social Category	SC/ST	84	21.0
	OBC	220	55.0
	General	96	24.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**

Interpretation: The sample comprises 400 rural worker households, with 46% being migrant households and 54% non-migrant households. Agriculture remains the primary occupation (37%), followed by non-farm wage labour (28%). Education levels are relatively high, with 45% of household heads having secondary education or above (25% secondary, 20% graduate), reflecting the district's high literacy rates. Income distribution shows that 45% of households earn below Rs. 1,00,000 annually, while 26% earn above Rs. 2,00,000. OBCs constitute the largest social category (55%), followed by General (24%) and SC/ST (21%).

7.2 Migration Pattern and Characteristics

Table 2: Migration Pattern and Characteristics of Migrant Households

Migration Characteristic	Category	No. of Migrants	Percentage (%)
Destination of Migration	Within Tamil Nadu	38	15.2
	Other Indian States (Kerala, Karnataka, etc.)	72	28.8
	Gulf Countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia, etc.)	112	44.8
	Other Countries (UK, Australia, etc.)	28	11.2
	Total	**250**	**100.0**
Duration of Migration	Short-Term (<6 months)	54	21.6
	Medium-Term (6-12 months)	66	26.4
	Long-Term (1-3 years)	80	32.0
	Permanent (>3 years)	50	20.0
	Total	**250**	**100.0**

Migration Characteristic	Category	No. of Migrants	Percentage (%)
Gender of Migrant	Male	198	79.2
	Female	52	20.8
	Total	**250**	**100.0**
Age Group	Below 25 years	58	23.2
	25-35 years	112	44.8
	36-50 years	58	23.2
	Above 50 years	22	8.8
	Total	**250**	**100.0**
Sector of Employment at Destination	Construction	82	32.8
	Manufacturing/Industry	46	18.4
	Services (Hospitality, Retail)	68	27.2
	Professional/Technical	36	14.4
	Others	18	7.2
	Total	**250**	**100.0**
Remittance Frequency	Monthly	158	63.2
	Quarterly	48	19.2
	Half-Yearly	24	9.6
	Annually / As Required	20	8.0
	Total	**250**	**100.0**

Interpretation: The analysis reveals that Gulf countries are the most preferred destination for migration (44.8%), followed by other Indian states (28.8%). Within Tamil Nadu migration is limited (15.2%), suggesting that local employment opportunities are insufficient to meet the needs of rural workers. Long-term migration (1-3 years) is the most common duration (32%), with 20% being permanent migrants. Male migrants dominate (79.2%), reflecting traditional gender patterns in migration. The age group 25-35 years accounts for the highest share (44.8%), indicating that young working-age adults constitute the primary migrant population. Construction (32.8%) and services (27.2%) are the main employment sectors for migrants. Monthly remittance is the most common frequency (63.2%), ensuring regular income flow to households.

7.3 Causes of Migration - Garrett's Ranking

Table 3: Garrett's Ranking - Causes of Migration

Cause of Migration	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
Lack of Adequate Local Employment Opportunities	25,760	69.62	I
Low Wage Income in Local Employment	24,320	65.73	II
Higher Wages / Better Prospects at Destination	22,880	61.84	III
Repayment of Household Debt	20,800	56.22	IV
Family/Social Network at Destination	19,520	52.76	V
Desire for Improved Standard of Living	18,240	49.30	VI
Irregular / Insecure Local Employment	16,800	45.41	VII
Lack of Career/Professional Growth Locally	15,360	41.51	VIII

Interpretation: Garrett's ranking identifies "Lack of Adequate Local Employment Opportunities" as the most significant cause of migration, followed by "Low Wage Income in Local Employment" and "Higher Wages/Better Prospects at Destination." The top three causes are directly related to the insufficiency of local employment in terms of both availability and remuneration. "Repayment of Household Debt" ranks fourth, indicating that economic compulsion plays a significant role in migration decisions. "Desire for Improved Standard of Living" ranks sixth, suggesting that while aspirational migration exists, economic necessity remains the primary driver.

7.4 Household Income, Expenditure and Remittance Patterns

Table 4: Income, Expenditure and Remittance Patterns - Migrant vs. Non-Migrant Households

Indicator	Migrant HH (Mean Rs.)	Non-Migrant HH (Mean Rs.)	Difference (%)
Total Annual Income	2,84,500	1,42,800	+99.2%
Income from Local Sources	84,200	1,42,800	-41.0%
Remittance Income	2,00,300	0	-
Total Annual Expenditure	2,18,600	1,26,400	+72.9%
Savings / Surplus	65,900	16,400	+301.8%
Housing Quality Index (0-10)	7.2	5.4	+33.3%
Asset Ownership Index (0-10)	6.8	4.6	+47.8%

Indicator	Migrant HH (Mean Rs.)	Non-Migrant HH (Mean Rs.)	Difference (%)
Food Expenditure Share	38.4%	52.6%	-27.0%
Education Expenditure Share	16.2%	11.8%	+37.3%
Health Expenditure Share	12.8%	10.4%	+23.1%

Interpretation: Migrant households report significantly higher total annual income (Rs. 2,84,500) compared to non-migrant households (Rs. 1,42,800), representing a 99.2% difference. Remittance income constitutes 70.4% of total income for migrant households, indicating their heavy dependence on remittances. Total annual expenditure is also higher for migrant households (Rs. 2,18,600 vs. Rs. 1,26,400), reflecting higher living standards. Migrant households demonstrate substantially higher savings/surplus (Rs. 65,900 vs. Rs. 16,400), representing a 301.8% increase. Housing quality and asset ownership are significantly better for migrant households. Importantly, the food expenditure share is lower for migrant households (38.4% vs. 52.6%), indicating a lower Engel's coefficient and better food security. Migrant households also allocate higher shares to education and health expenditure, suggesting investment in human capital and improved well-being.

7.5 Utilization of Remittance Income

Table 5: Utilization of Remittance Income by Migrant Households

Use of Remittance	Amount (Rs.)	Percentage of Remittance	Rank
Food and Household Consumption	62,160	31.0	I
Education of Children	36,080	18.0	II
Housing Construction / Renovation	30,080	15.0	III
Health Care	24,040	12.0	IV
Debt Repayment	20,040	10.0	V
Savings / Investment	16,040	8.0	VI
Marriage / Social Ceremonies	8,020	4.0	VII
Purchase of Assets (Land, Vehicle)	4,010	2.0	VIII
Total	**2,00,300**	**100.0**	**-**

Interpretation: The utilization of remittance income shows a balanced pattern between consumption and investment. Food and household consumption accounts for the largest share (31%), followed by education (18%), housing (15%)and health (12%). These four categories together account for 76% of remittance income, indicating that remittances are primarily used to meet basic needs and invest in human capital. Debt repayment accounts for 10%, suggesting that migration is partly driven by the need to repay pre-existing debt. Savings and investment account for only 8%, indicating limited productive use of remittance income. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Debnath and Nayak (2022), who observed that while remittances improve immediate well-being, their potential for durable welfare enhancement through productive investment may be underutilized.

7.6 Local Employment Conditions for Non-Migrant Workers

Table 6: Local Employment Conditions for Non-Migrant Workers

Indicator	Agricultural Workers (%)	Non-Farm Workers (%)	Overall (%)
Regular / Permanent Employment	18.6	34.8	26.2
Casual / Irregular Employment	52.8	38.4	46.4
Seasonal Employment	28.6	26.8	27.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Satisfied with Current Wage Rate	24.3	36.6	30.0
Perceived Job Security (High)	16.4	28.6	22.0
Access to Social Security (PF, Insurance)	8.6	18.8	13.2
Opportunities for Skill Development	12.4	22.3	16.8
Considered Migration (Last 1 Year)	48.6	36.6	43.0

Interpretation: The analysis of local employment conditions reveals a predominance of casual/irregular employment (46.4%) and seasonal employment (27.4%), with only 26.2% enjoying regular/permanent employment. Agricultural workers face more irregular employment (52.8%) compared to non-farm workers (38.4%). Only 30% of workers are satisfied with their current wage ratesand a mere 22% perceive high job security. Social security coverage is extremely low at 13.2%and skill development opportunities are limited (16.8%). Alarmingly, 43% of non-migrant workers have considered migration in the past year, indicating that a substantial pool of workers remains potentially vulnerable to migration pressures due to poor local employment conditions.

7.7 Determinants of Household Economic Well-being

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis - Determinants of Household Economic Well-being (Log of Per Capita Annual Income)

Independent Variable	Unstd. Coeff. (β)	Std. Error	Std. Coeff. (Beta)	t-value	Significance
(Constant)	8.246	0.324	-	25.45	0.000***
Migration Status (Migrant=1)	0.542	0.086	0.384	6.30	0.000***
Remittance Income (Log)	0.224	0.048	0.296	4.67	0.000***

Independent Variable	Unstd. Coeff. (β)	Std. Error	Std. Coeff. (Beta)	t-value	Significance
Education Level	0.184	0.042	0.248	4.38	0.000***
Age of Household Head	0.008	0.004	0.092	2.00	0.046*
Household Size	-0.056	0.028	-0.108	-2.00	0.046*
Landholding Size	0.326	0.118	0.164	2.76	0.006**
Access to Institutional Credit	0.218	0.092	0.148	2.37	0.018*
Occupation: Agriculture (Ref: Non-Farm)	-0.124	0.082	-0.092	-1.51	0.131
Occupation: Others (Ref: Non-Farm)	0.086	0.096	0.052	0.90	0.369
Social Category: OBC/General (Ref: SC/ST)	0.162	0.098	0.096	1.65	0.100

$R^2 = 0.584$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.574$, F-value = 54.82, $p < 0.001$

*Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05*

Interpretation: The regression model explains 58.4% of the variation in household economic well-being ($R^2 = 0.584$), with the F-statistic indicating the model is highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Migration status emerges as the strongest positive determinant (Beta = 0.384, $p < 0.001$), followed by remittance income (Beta = 0.296, $p < 0.001$), education level (Beta = 0.248, $p < 0.001$)and landholding size (Beta = 0.164, $p < 0.01$). Access to institutional credit also shows a significant positive association (Beta = 0.148, $p < 0.05$). Household size shows a modest negative association, reflecting the pressure of larger households on per capita income. These findings confirm that migration, remittancesand human capital (education) are key determinants of household economic well-being in the district.

7.8 Comparison of Migrant and Non-Migrant Household Well-being

Table 8: Comparative Well-being Indicators - Migrant vs. Non-Migrant Households

Well-being Indicator	Migrant HH	Non-Migrant HH	t-value	Significance
Per Capita Annual Income (Rs.)	72,180	38,620	8.42	0.000***
Per Capita Expenditure (Rs.)	55,480	34,180	6.74	0.000***
Housing Quality Index (0-10)	7.2	5.4	5.28	0.000***
Asset Ownership Index (0-10)	6.8	4.6	5.82	0.000***
Health Index (Subjective)	7.4	6.2	4.16	0.000***
Education Level of Children (Years)	10.2	8.6	3.94	0.000***
Access to Institutional Credit	52.4%	38.2%	-	χ^2=8.24, p=0.004**

Well-being Indicator	Migrant HH	Non-Migrant HH	t-value	Significance
Financial Stress Index (0-10)	3.8	5.6	-5.18	0.000***

*Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01*

Interpretation: The independent samples t-test reveals statistically significant differences between migrant and non-migrant households across all well-being indicators. Migrant households have substantially higher per capita annual income (Rs. 72,180 vs. Rs. 38,620, $t = 8.42$, $p < 0.001$) and per capita expenditure (Rs. 55,480 vs. Rs. 34,180, $t = 6.74$, $p < 0.001$). Housing quality, asset ownership, health statusand children's education are all significantly better for migrant households. Access to institutional credit is also higher among migrant households (52.4% vs. 38.2%, $\chi^2 = 8.24$, $p < 0.01$). Most notably, the financial stress index is significantly lower for migrant households (3.8 vs. 5.6, $t = -5.18$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that remittance income reduces financial vulnerability. These findings confirm the positive association between migration and household economic well-being, supporting the findings of Heller and Kaushik (2020) and Debnath and Nayak (2022).

8. Hypothesis Testing

Table 9: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Test Value	p-value	Decision
$H_0(1)$: No significant relationship between remittance income and household expenditure/standard of living	Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.672$	0.000	Rejected
$H_0(2)$: No significant difference in economic well-being between migrant and non-migrant households	Independent t-test	$t = 8.42$	0.000	Rejected
$H_0(3)$: No significant association between local employment opportunity and migration decision	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 32.84$	0.000	Rejected

Interpretation: All three null hypotheses are rejected at the 1% level of significance. There exists a strong positive correlation between remittance income and household expenditure/standard of living ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the significant role of remittances in improving household well-being. The independent t-test confirms significant differences in economic well-being between migrant and non-migrant households ($t = 8.42$, $p < 0.001$). The chi-square test reveals a significant association between local employment opportunities and the decision to migrate ($\chi^2 = 32.84$, $p < 0.001$), validating that poor local employment conditions drive migration decisions.

9. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal several important patterns regarding employment, migration and household economic well-being among rural workers in Kanniyakumari District. First, migration is predominantly driven by economic necessity, with "lack of adequate local employment opportunities" and "low wage income" identified as the primary causes. This pattern of distress/compelled migration is consistent with the findings of Chandrasekhar and Sahoo (2019), who observed that households with limited local employment opportunities are more likely to rely on migration as a livelihood strategy.

Second, Gulf migration accounts for the largest share (44.8%), reflecting the district's long-standing tradition of international migration. The dominance of construction and services sectors as employment destinations indicates the nature of work available to migrants. The age profile of migrants (primarily young adults aged 25-35) suggests that migration is an intergenerational livelihood strategy, with younger members of households undertaking migration to support family well-being.

Third, migrant households demonstrate significantly better economic well-being across multiple dimensions. Per capita income is nearly double that of non-migrant households (Rs. 72,180 vs. Rs. 38,620)and savings/surplus are more than four times higher (Rs. 65,900 vs. Rs. 16,400). Housing quality, asset ownership, health statusand children's education are all significantly better for migrant households. The lower financial stress index for migrant households indicates that remittance income provides a buffer against economic shocks.

Fourth, the utilization of remittance income shows a balanced pattern between consumption and investment. While food and household consumption accounts for the largest share (31%), significant portions are allocated to education (18%), housing (15%)and health (12%), suggesting that remittances contribute to human capital development and improved quality of life. However, the low share allocated to savings and productive investment (8%) indicates potential for improving the long-term welfare impact of remittances.

Fifth, local employment conditions for non-migrant workers are characterized by irregular employment (46.4%), low wage satisfaction (30%), low job security (22%)and minimal social security coverage (13.2%). These conditions explain why 43% of non-migrant workers have considered migration, indicating that the migration pressure is likely to persist unless local employment conditions improve.

Sixth, the regression analysis confirms that migration status, remittance incomeand education are the strongest determinants of household economic well-being. Access to institutional credit also emerges as a significant factor, highlighting the importance of financial inclusion in enabling households to manage migration-related expenses and invest in productive activities.

10. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are offered for improving local employment opportunities and the economic well-being of rural worker households in Kanniyakumari District:

6. **Effective Implementation of MGNREGA and Local Employment Guarantee Schemes:** Strengthen the implementation of MGNREGA and other local employment guarantee schemes to reduce distress-driven short-term migration among the most vulnerable rural worker households. The high proportion of workers considering migration (43%) underscores the urgency of local employment creation.

7. **Skill Development and Vocational Training Programmes:** Develop skill development and vocational training programmes aligned with locally emerging sectors such as tourism, food processingand allied agriculture to expand local, non-farm employment opportunities. The limited skill development opportunities identified in the study (16.8%) indicate significant demand for such programmes.

8. **Financial Literacy and Remittance-Management Guidance:** Provide financial literacy and remittance-management guidance for migrant households, encouraging productive investment of remittance income in education, health and micro-enterprise rather than consumption alone. The low share of remittances allocated to savings and investment (8%) suggests potential for improvement.

9. **Support Services for Left-Behind Families:** Establish support services, including counselling and community support networks, for left-behind spouses and family members of international migrant workers. The social costs of migration identified in the study warrant attention to the well-being of left-behind family members.

10. **Migrant Welfare and Grievance-Redressal Facilities:** Establish migrant welfare and grievance-redressal facilities at the district level to safeguard the interests of both short-term and international migrant workers from Kanniyakumari District. This would address the vulnerability of migrant workers to exploitation and ensure their rights are protected.

11. **Promotion of Local Small Enterprises:** Promote local small and medium enterprises through credit linkages, entrepreneurship trainingand market linkages to create sustainable local employment opportunities. The limited non-farm employment options in the district necessitate focused efforts on enterprise development.

12. **Strengthening Social Security Coverage:** Extend social security coverage (provident fund, health insurance) to rural workers, particularly those in informal and seasonal employment. The

extremely low coverage (13.2%) identified in the study indicates a significant gap in social protection.

13. **Regular Wage Review and Enforcement:** Conduct regular review of minimum wages and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure fair wages for local employment. The low wage satisfaction (30%) and high migration propensity (43%) suggest that wage levels are a critical factor in migration decisions.

11. Conclusion

Migration, both seasonal and international, remains a defining feature of rural livelihoods in Kanniyakumari District, reflecting the persistent gap between the district's educated workforce and locally available employment opportunities. This study has examined the linkages between employment, migration and household economic well-being through a comprehensive household-level investigation covering 400 rural worker households. The findings confirm that migration is predominantly driven by economic necessity, with lack of adequate local employment and low wage income emerging as the primary causes. Gulf migration accounts for the largest share (44.8%)and migrant households demonstrate significantly better economic well-being across multiple dimensions: per capita income is nearly double that of non-migrant households (Rs. 72,180 vs. Rs. 38,620)and savings/surplus are more than four times higher (Rs. 65,900 vs. Rs. 16,400). Remittance income is primarily allocated to food consumption (31%), education (18%), housing (15%)and health (12%), contributing to human capital development and improved quality of life. Local employment conditions for non-migrant workers are characterized by irregular employment, low wage satisfactionand minimal social security coverage, with 43% of non-migrant workers considering migration. The regression analysis identifies migration status, remittance incomeand education as the strongest determinants of household well-being. The study recommends strengthening local employment generation, skill development, financial literacy for remittance managementand migrant welfare measures to improve the economic well-being of rural worker households and ensure that the economic gains of migration translate into sustained improvements in well-being in Kanniyakumari District.

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