

## **Socio Economic Status Of Exodus Employees In Tamil Nadu**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This paper brings out the socio-economic condition of the exodus employees in Tamil Nadu. We analyse the income patterns, remittance structure, their consumption and nature of work especially in leather industries. Generally, Tamilnadu is boasting of good number of leather industries. It enables to improve the production of leather goods of very high quality. A large number of employees from northern states of India are travelling to Tamil Nadu for earning their lively hood. We came to know that large number of exodus labour arrive to Tamil Nadu through the informal networks which guide them in getting jobs in leather goods manufacturing industries. poor economic conditions in their native places and high wage rate and better employment opportunities in Tamil Nadu have been identified as few of the main reasons of their migration. Even after their migration, due to unsatisfied income level, the dwelling status of the exodus labourers are not much satisfactory, these exodus employees don't have good standard of living along with unhygienic sanitation. There are various reasons for the exodus labour to arrive in Tamil nadu. This paper tries to point out those factors and the post migration situation of these exodus labourers.

### **Keywords**

Exodus Labour, Leather Industry, Remittances, reasons for passage of labour, Tamil Nadu.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years we have seen a steep rise in the number of exodus labourers in many sectors such as civil constructions, leather industry, knitting industry, Agricultural products exporting company, readymade garments industry, tea estates, cement Industries, printing Industries, granite quarry and its processing industries, carpentry works, craftsmen, automobile manufacturing and its ancillary industries etc., from different states of our country.

They are arising year over the years due to the heavy unemployment factors in states like Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu, we receive a huge number of exodus labourers from the above-mentioned states.

Migration has also significant labour market effect. The major impact of the labour market is the reduction of unemployment through migration of unemployed youths and non-agricultural labourer.

Demographic contraction of the supply of young workers brought about by the rapid demographic transition in the state, the higher wages charged by local workers, the ability of local workers to sustain themselves with payments from relatives and younger generations working in IT and ITES in nearby cities and towns, the reluctance on the part of local workers to do dirty and hard physical work - all these have stimulated the era of replacement migration in Tamil Nadu.

Amidst this background, this study makes efforts to discuss the socio-economic conditions of the migrant workers in the surrounding districts of Chennai. More precisely the paper focuses on the nature of work, wages and income level, savings and consumption pattern, living conditions, sources and reasons of migration to Tamil Nadu and the flow of remittances and its impact on local economy.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Many studies have concentrated on the socio-economic status of Exodus Employees. The present review limits itself to status of women in organized sector, which are relevant to the study.

A review of literature was added to this study by referring to different journal and studies conducted by different individuals to show relevance to the study.

Cheng (2016) conducted a study on migrant workers is the trope of the threat of Southeast Asian labourers, which creates a necessity for strict regulations and control. Migrant workers as a social group are positioned in an oppressive relational space, marginalized and excluded from expressing their confined freedom. Within the trope that migrant workers are a threat, contradictions exist. Migrant workers are framed as antidote-like drugs that Taiwanese society is addicted to and relies on, yet they are simultaneously treated as diseases to be kept at a distance. Their existence is portrayed as both conspicuous and a latent danger. They are viewed as an out-of-control threat, yet are always defeated. Words such as regulations and legality are attached to migrant workers, whereas social harmony and order are associated with the government, such as health examiners or police officers.

Guha et al. (2020) studied on consequences of joblessness following lockdown insisted by COVID-19 pandemic on their income and remittances. Their findings show that additional days of unemployment during lockdown was directly associated with income loss amongst the labourers and was higher amongst the elderly and senior aged labourers engaged in profession which remained non-operational during lockdown following COVID-19 pandemic. However, the labourers who were either working or on paid leave suffered no income loss. From the present findings Further, it was concluded that income loss and remittances unsent amount was higher amongst the elderly labourers engaged in professions which remained non-operational during lockdown. The additional days of joblessness resulted in their hardship in terms of income and remittances.

Jayaram & Varma (2020) focused on migrant crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown provides a unique opportunity to re-conceptualise India's labour reforms process. However, the opportunity has been thwarted by the binary created between economic growth and labour rights, strengthened by regional and central governments' policy responses for dismantling the labour protective framework, to further enable an economic model that bases itself on the extraction of vulnerable migrant workers, such that they are unable to access a basic or minimum floor of labour standards. Such policy will damage any possibility for addressing the core tensions in the labour

reforms process in a productive manner, such that India's economic model is not merely based on cheap and flexible migrant labour, but an inclusive and equitable growth with industrial peace and productivity as its central factors. Public empathy towards the conditions of migrant workers must be able to identify the migrant crisis as a direct result of the complete absence of labour governance architecture in the segments of the urban labour markets that employ them, fuelling impunity of employers to perpetuate extractive labour practices. The policy makers should ensure that the employers are liable for any violation of labour rights through institutional framework.

Kumar & Choudhury (2021) studied migrants faced difficulties in having access to health care facilities, ration facilities, and other amenities. The migrants who already face language, cultural, licit, regulatory, and practical barriers further got more alienated after the invocation of sudden lockdown by Indian Government under the Disaster Management Act-2005. They were like a helpless community, which the states and corporations utilized for their economic advancement when required, but thoroughly forsook them as anon as disaster struck. The migrants got devoid of humane treatment by the state and corporations during the Covid-19 lockdown. The Covid-19 epidemic underlined the solemn deficiencies in the Disaster Management Policy of the Government of India. It is important to stay away from sudden policy decisions that can affect the lives of mass population of a nation. It is necessary to stress the need for prioritizing internal migration in policymaking additionally.

Li & Li (2007) studied on how to improve migrant workers' income is to improve their education, by providing professional training and technical skills. Investment in human capital is needed to upgrade the wage levels of migrant workers in the labour market, rather than merely raising their minimum wage. The most profound gap between migrant workers and their city counterparts lies in social security. If reform of the existing household registration system has failed to link social security benefits such as pensions, health care and unemployment, then it has had little to do with the improvement of migrant workers' living conditions. Establishing a social security system that will cover the widest range of workers, including those who are migrating from place to place, is a matter of urgency. There is also a need to take good care of, and encourage, the positive attitudes of migrant workers toward society. Migrant workers should be treated as new citizens of cities, and institutional barriers that prevent workers from integrating into city life should be removed, so as to encourage them to embrace urban society.

Ndlovu & Tigere (2018) studied on reasons of massive migration Zimbabwean population to South Africa and Botswana during the period 2007 and 2009 is due to the economic slowdown and the prevailing negative political climate at that time. Indeed, Zimbabweans continue to cross the borders in search of better livelihoods even today. However, it would seem that this emigration might be having little or insignificant economic and social impact on the families left behind. The majority of those left behind continued to live in poverty. The money sent by emigrants to their relatives were not enough to meet the basic family needs. Most of the students with emigrant parents did not pay school fees in full and timely and, in some instances, fees were not paid at all. Children with migrating parents were found to be performing below the standard of their counterparts living with their parents at home, probably because of lack of close parental control and guidance.

Sapra & Nayak (2021) highlighted of migrant issues in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 situation in India offer an important study of the state-citizen relationship in the context of a public health emergency. The role of key institutions of the state with its bureaucratic arrangement of institutions, the civil society and the judiciary in their response to the crisis in the state of Telangana create patterns of exclusion and inclusion. The state failed to take initiatives to protect migrant workers. The Arogyasetu App, contact tracing and breaking the cycle of virus through lockdown were all indicative of an approach that relied heavily on such technology-based surveillance

that did not adequately engage with an anthropological engagement with the population and their epidemiological characteristics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is based on the first-hand information collected from the exodus labourers in Chennai. The selection of Chennai is based on the concentration of exodus labours in different leather goods manufacturing companies. We have taken assistance of the local social workers to tap them and reach them. Information is collected by visiting their dwelling place as well as work place (as whichever was convenient for both). we discussed with their employers under whom they were associated to know the employees who would like to give their interview and schedule the more convenient time so that their work is not disturbed.

The survey was conducted during the month of February and March 2021. We have collected information on various migration details like process of migration, sources of information, the reasons for migration, their past and present working procedures and their patterns of wages, costs and advantages of migration etc. A sum of 155 exodus employees have been interviewed by using a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire.

The entire analysis carried out in this paper is descriptive. The socio-economic condition of the exodus employees has been examined by carefully getting down the information related to migration characteristics such as demographic characteristics, wages, nature of work, living conditions, skill level, consumption pattern, savings and remittances to their loved ones in their native places etc.,

## KEY FINDINGS

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE EXODUS EMPLOYEES

First Table gives the descriptive characteristics of the sample exodus employees.

This sample comprises of relatively young migrant employees. 54.19% of the employees are below 31 years of age. 20% of the exodus employees are above 38 years of age. All the sample exodus employees are male and 83.8% are Hindus. While schedule caste (46.4%) dominates the sample while about 21.9% don't know their caste. While 54.19% of exodus employees are unmarried, 39.3% are married.

Before migration, about 35.48% of the exodus employees were employed in informal employment, 25.16% of the exodus employees were self employed in agriculture, 8.38% of the exodus employees were studying and 10.32% of the exodus employees were unemployed in their native places. Related to their literacy status, 45.1% of the exodus employees had achieved secondary education, 27.7% of the exodus employees are illiterate, 25.8% of the exodus employees have only primary education and only 1.2% of the exodus employees are graduate.

**Table A- characteristics of the sample exodus employees**

Age of the employees	Frequency	Percentage
17-24	40	25.8
25-31	52	33.5
32-38	32	20.6

39-45	31	20.0
Total	155	100
<b>Exodus employees based on their caste</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
General	18	11.6
OBC	14	9.0
SC	72	46.4
ST	17	10.96
Unaware about their caste	34	21.9
Total	155	100
<b>Exodus employees by religion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Muslim	15	9.6
Hindu	130	83.8
Others	10	6.4
Total	155	100
<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Never Married	84	54.19
Married	61	39.3
Widowed	4	2.5
Separated	6	3.8
Total	155	100
<b>Literacy Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Primary education	40	25.8
Secondary education	70	45.1
Graduate	2	1.2
Illiterate	43	27.7
Total	155	100
<b>Before Migration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>

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Self Employed in non-agricultural sector	32	20.64
Self-employed in agricultural sector	39	25.16
Employed in informal sector	55	35.48
Unemployed	16	10.32
Student	13	8.38
Total	155	100

Since poverty is their economic identity, majority of the exodus employees were enquired about their family background. Table B shows the Socio-economic conditions of the migrant family.

More than half of the family size of the migrant employees are 5 members. For about 21 percentage of the migrant families, their family size is 7-8 members. Only a small percentage of the employee's family are consisting of less than 3 employees.

One fourth of the exodus employees are not having any of their family members employed. They are the lone bread winners for their family. A good average of 56.12 percentage of the migrants are having 3-4 of their family members employed in their native places and other parts of India, whereas 28.70 percentage of the exodus employees are having more than 5 members employed in their families.

**TABLE -B. Economic conditions of the Exodus employee's household**

<b>Number of earning member (excluding the migrant)</b>		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
0 members	39	25.16
1-2 members	21	13.54
3-4 members	87	56.12
5 & above members	29	18.70
Total	155	100
<b>Family size of the exodus employees</b>		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3	20	12.9
4 – 6	96	61.9
7 – 8	32	20.64
More than 9	7	4.5

Total	155	100
<b>Number of dependent children in the family</b>		
Numbers	Frequency	Percentage
0	91	58.70
1	30	19.35
2	24	15.4
More than 3	10	6.4
Total	155	100

<b>Agricultural land holding in hectare</b>		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
No land	71	45.80
Less than 3 hectares	51	32.90
4-6 hectare	15	9.67
More than 7 hectares	18	11.61
Total	155	100
<b>Outstanding debt of migrant employee's family</b>		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
No Debt	31	20.00
Less than Rs.10,000	55	35.48
Rs.10001 – Rs.25000	63	40.64
Rs.25001 - Rs.50000	6	3.87
Total	155	100

**Table B** gives few key points about the Economic Conditions of migrant's households

Since a large portion of the sample migrant are unmarried, 91 out of 155 families are not having any dependent children to look after. A 6.4 percentage of the exodus employees are having more than 3 dependent families, then 15.4 percentage of the exodus employees are possessing 2 children to look after. While almost one fifth of the exodus employees are having with only 1 kid as dependent child.

Looking at the asset position of the migrant household, it is found that land holding is also available but at a very lesser quantity. About 45.80 percent of the employees don't have any land with them. 32 percentage of the exodus employees are possessing less than 3 hectares. Only around 12percentage of the exodus employees are possessing more than 7hectares of agricultural land with them.

The poor financial situation and high debt burden would have forced these migrated employees to travel faraway distances where there is better wages paid when compared with their native places. outstanding debt of the family for a 40.64 percentage is Rs.10,001 to Rs.25,000. A very less percentage of about 3.87 percentage has a higher range of debt in range of Rs.25,001 to Rs.50,000. One fifth of the migrant's families are free of debts. A 35 percentage of migrant's are having family debt of less than Rs.10,000. Informal money lenders are the major sources of money lending, who are charging heavy interest rates, followed by families, friends and relatives. There are very few community developments centres who are affording to help the local peoples at zero percent interest. On enquiry, they said that very few organizations are helping loan against jewel and property with minimum interest rate. Less than 10 percentage of the exodus employees with debts have borrowed from commercial banks.

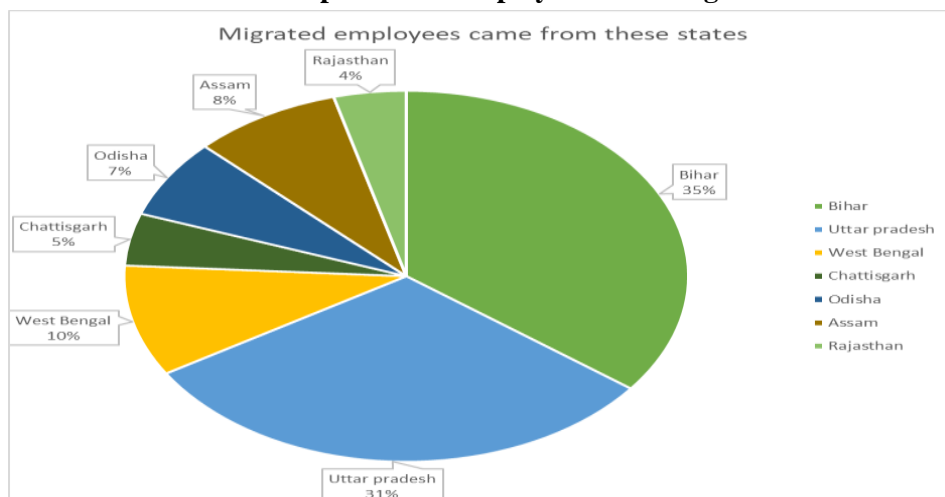
**Migration of employees and their sources of information**

Chart 1 provides the details about the native state of the sample exodus employees of our study. migrant employees from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are topping the chart with 35.36 percent and 30.85 percent respectively. Followed by West Bengal with 9.71 percent of our sample, remaining from Chhattisgarh holding 4.56 percentage, Odisha accounting for 6.86 percentage, Assam 8.52 and Rajasthan accounting for 4.14 percent. Thus, about 66 percent of the employees belong to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, while other state workers are also available in leather industries. Based on their skill sets and experience they are hired here. This, however, does not conclude that the migrant employees in Chennai Leather industries are dominated by Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

The concentration of exodus employees from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in our sample is because the location where we have surveyed is fully dominated by these two states. This is not surprising, because migrant employees are from the same place and they want to stay in same locality.

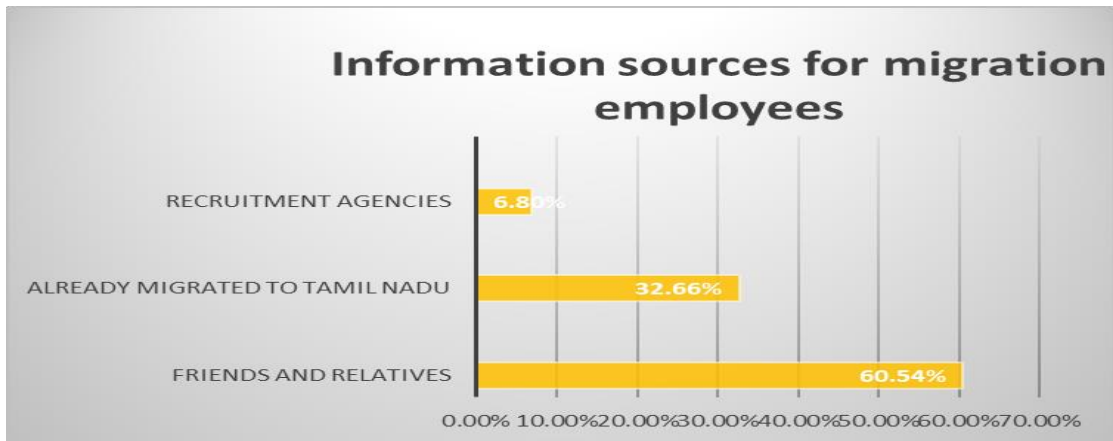
This is evident from the fact that employees migrated to Tamil Nadu through information and help either from their friends and relatives (60.8 percent) and acquaintances (32.66 percent) who have already migrated to Tamil Nadu. This information suggests that informal networks play a very key role in migration of employees to Tamil Nadu. Only 6.80 percent have come through the recruitment agencies.

**Chart 1: Distribution of sample exodus employees according to their native states**





**Chart 2: information sources for migration of employees**



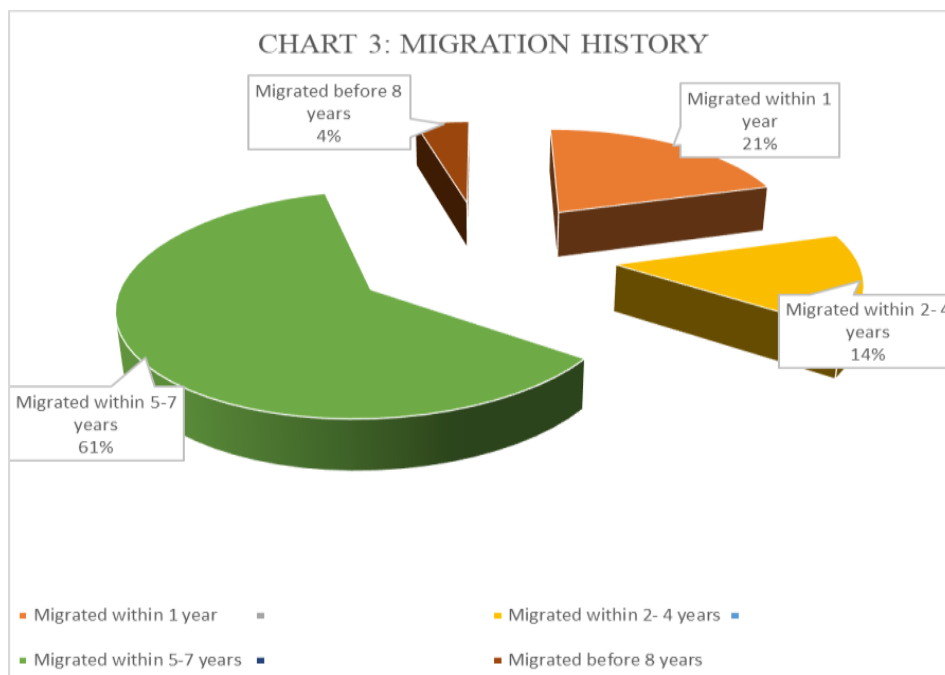
**5. Migration thought process, facilitation and their history**

On collecting data from the migrated employees about previous migrations to other cities and states before migrating to Tamil Nadu. It is very clear that these exodus employees have experiences of earlier migrations, so they get adapted to local taste and flavour. They make themselves integrate with the new places and learn the local customs and traditions as well. They even try to learn those local languages to ease away the disturbances with local communication for their dwelling.

Later, when we went deep in conversation with their experiences in related to migration, we noted that about two third of the exodus employees migrated to Tamil Nadu for the very first time. Before migrating to tamilnadu they have migrated to few other states like maharashtra, karnataka, kerala, Delhi and jammu kashmir as well.

Chart 3: Reports the number of years that the exodus labour have been living in Tamil Nadu.

About 45.4 percent of the exodus employees have migrated within 1 year, 31.7 percent of the employees migrated within within 2-4 years, 13.6 percent of the employees migrated within 5-7 years and remaining 9.4 percent of the employees migrated before 8 years.



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However, those who migrated to Tamil Nadu long back have not been entirely been in chennai and surrounding areas, but they have also moved to other districts of Tamil Nadu such as Ranipet, Tirupattur and erode districts etc to work in leather goods manufacturing industries.

### Reasons of passage from their native states

There are various factors behind these exodus labours for their migration. The major factors of migrations are the economic condition and very poor wages in their native places. About 71 of the migrants expresses their reasons for migration was getting employment/ better wages. About 43 percent agreed that they migrated to meet the family expenses and 31 percent gave the reason that they came for accumulation of savings. There were multiple

the dependent children, making financial arrangement for their dependent children during their marriage. This suggests that migration is mainly done for the external support system for meeting their daily needs and requirements. Further, the supremacy of economic issues also recommends that it is primarily the difference in economic chances between different states that pushed for passage of workers to other states.

**TABLE C. REASONS OF MIGRATION FROM NATIVE STATES**

REASONS	Frequency (Percent)
Meeting family expenses	43 (27.74)
Accumulate savings	31 (20)
In search of better employment	71 (45.80)
Repayment of debt	19 (12.25)
Education & Marriage expenses of dependents	51 (32.90)
Purchase of vehicle for transportation/ make as a source of income	11 (7.09)
Purchase of land/construction of apartment	8 (5.16)
Total	155(100)

Note: Digit in the parenthesis represents percentage. The summation is higher than the reported total sample size because of multiple responses.

Further these migrants were questioned specifically as why did they choose Tamil Nadu, majority of the migrants respondents gave reason that because of higher wage rate and correct payment process, a group of migrants further reiterated that they migrate to Tamil Nadu because of availability of work and another group of employees rated that they have better working conditions in Tamil Nadu. A group of migrants, who have already visited other states for employment convinced that Tamil Nadu is a safe & secure place for them when comparing with other states.

**TABLE D. REASONS OF MIGRATION TO TAMIL NADU**

<b>REASONS</b>	<b>Frequency (Percent)</b>
Better Working condition	59(38.06)
High wage rate	97 (62.58)
Availability of work	24 (15.48)
Accumulation of savings and repayment of debt	19(12.25)
Friends and known people already working in TN	10(6.55)
Others (e.g., no job, still TN is a safe place than other places, etc)	12(7.74)
Total	155(100)

Note: Digit in the parenthesis represents percentage. The summation is higher than the reported total sample size because of multiple responses.

**Skill sets of exodus employees**

Before arriving to Tamil Nadu, about 73.79 percent of the exodus employees were employed in unskilled work. only 9.64 percent of the exodus employees were involved in activities and work where some kind of basic skill is necessary. About 16.57% of the exodus employees only had task which is requiring proper skills.

## Socio Economic Status Of Exodus Employees In Tamil Nadu

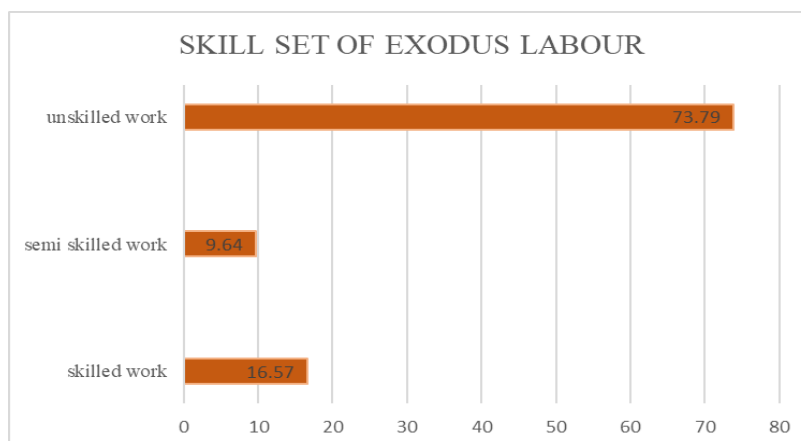


Chart 4: skills set of exodus employees before migration to Tamil Nadu.

There has been rarely any improvement in the nature of works after migration. Almost all the exodus employees are engaged in temporary works. None of them have registered themselves into any employment agencies and companies' recruitment sites. About 90 percent of the exodus employees are engaged in such agreements. The remaining exodus employees who don't have any work agreement, either go to different work places in search of any work or they wait near some factories where they will be called to work when need arises.

### SALARY AND INCOME

The income level for the exodus employees can be seen before and after migration. Before migration, their income level at their native villages and native states were very low. With those income they were not able to run their family and meet their basic needs. Du to this situation they start enter in to getting loans from banks and unauthorised sources of income. Mostly it is getting better and better only after the migration.

Before migration their daily income was very less, but after migration they received daily wage of about Rs.250, with maximum of Rs.400 and minimum of Rs.150. this is more than four to five times what they receive in their native places. The average number of working days for the exodus employees is 26 days per month, with maximum of 30 days and minimum of 20 days.

A comparison of the income level before and after the migration from their native places is really worth at this point to make a proper analysis whether migration really makes difference in the financial upliftment of the exodus employees.

Chart 5: Annual Income of the exodus employees in Tamil nadu

Salary Range	Before Migration	After Migration
Rs. 54,000 & Below	91(58.70)	8 (5.16)
Rs. 54000 - 90000	49 (31.61)	27 (17.41)

Rs. 90000 - 126000	15(9.67)	62 (40)
Rs. 126001 & Above	-	58 (37.41)
Total	149(100.0)	155(100.0)

- The total is 149 in this situation since 6 other exodus employees were unemployed, as such they didn't have any sources of income

### DWELLING CONDITIONS

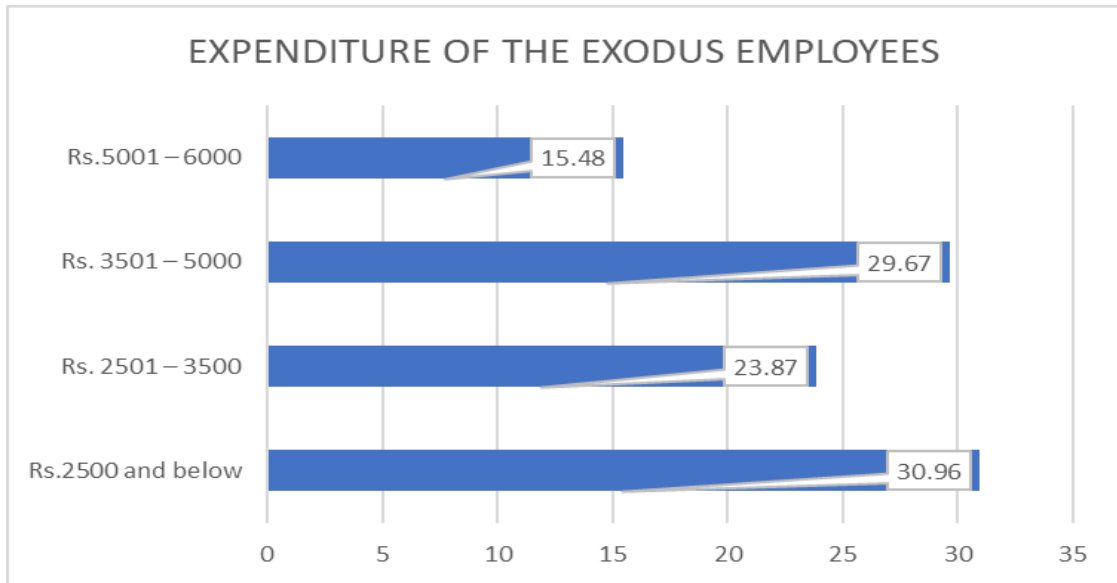
The dwelling condition for these exodus employees in the migrated places is not that much satisfying. Even though they get a better salary from their native places, they are satisfied with a low rent house. With 37% expressed that they live in the work site itself, where they are provided with necessary facilities for food and accommodation. The remaining 63% of the exodus employees are making their own arrangements. These locations are not that much ventilated and hygienic. Even they don't spend some money for a clean drinking water, instead they carry water from their work places in water cans. They share very small living places with less wash room facilities with underrated sanitization standards. These exodus labourers stay in groups and cook together.

### SAVINGS AND THEIR EXPENDITURE

Remittance link movement of labourers and development of backward region from where they started to move. Migration can regularly have definite impact on people's livelihoods, to the level that exodus employees send money to their families in native places to fulfil the requirements that arises there due to the domestic needs and social needs. It is very important that the migration of the employees acts a social security mechanism for the very poor houses that are left back in their native places.

The monthly expenses of these exodus employees is maximum of Rs.6000 and minimum of Rs.2170.

Expenditure Level (Rs.)	Frequency (Percent)
Rs.2500 and below	48 (30.96)
Rs. 2501 – 3500	37 (23.87)
Rs. 3501 – 5000	46 (29.67)
Rs.5001 – 6000	24 (15.48)
Total	155(100)



## CONCLUSION

This paper reveals the economic status of migrant labourers in Chennai and its surrounding areas of Tamil Nadu. This analysis is based on the data from a sample of 155 migrant employees of the Chennai district. While other studies provide proofs for short distance migration from nearby states of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In our survey, we had a major strength from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A good portion of the migrant employees show that they have earlier experiences of migration to various states of India.

There is no such major change in the nature of workers even after migrating to several places and several states. Their skill set is also the same like they were in the starting time of their careers. Most of the time they are engaged in temporary work and majority of them about 85% are unskilled areas. Each and every time the exodus labour travels from one area to another area, they are again pushed to the same level of work, very rarely there is an upward or downward shift of work level and skill level. Career management is never given importance, skill development is also not at all considered.

Sometimes there is a positive relationship of income level with skill level and instance of migration. Notwithstanding the improved income level, the living condition for most of them is depleting. Most of the exodus employees dwell together in either worksites or poor rented places with least ventilation and air facilities adding pity that it will be shared by many workers with no provision of clean toilets and washrooms.

The informal information networks through the relatives, known peoples, friends etc who have already migrated to Tamil Nadu play a very important role in migration of workers to Tamil Nadu. Poor economic situations along with several other alarming indicators like getting employment, meeting family expenses and accumulation of savings, purchasing of land and vehicle etc., have been identified as the top reasons for passage of employees from their states to Tamil Nadu. The major reason of migration to Tamil Nadu is reported as the higher rate for wage employees, availability of work, better working conditions and secure place etc.,

The amount and pattern of food expenditure is found to be more or less the same for all the exodus employees irrespective of their other characteristics, whereas that of non-food

expenditure varies from person to person. The savings process among the exodus employees is not that much high. Whatever the smallest amount of money they save is sent to their families to meet their various types of expenses, in which unexpected types of emergency expenses also occur. These employees are not able to invest much in agriculture, purchase of land, building house, purchase any vehicle etc and mostly they are used to repay their debts.

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