Anusandhanvallari
Vol 2023, No.1
April 2023
ISSN 2229-3388

International Migration Concerns of Religious Minorities in Ramanathapuram District with Special Reference to Wives Left Behind.

[1]A. Arul Vinnarasi, [2]Dr. Essac Raphel OFM, CAP

[1]Ph.D Research Scholar**,** Department of Social Work, Anugraha Institute of Social Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

[2]Research Guide, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Anugraha Institute of Social Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

Abstract: In world's migrant population, Christian's composition accounts for 47 per cent along with Muslims and Jews. International migration is found to be common among religious minorities in India. This quantitative study aims to study the socio-economic and psychological problems of the Catholic women whose husband are migrated to international borders from Thiruvadanai Taluk of Ramanathapuram District. Applying purposive sampling with 135 Catholic women analysed frequency, Correlation and ANOVA statistical test and results showed a complex interplay of migration impacts among wives. Findings revealed that migration not only brings financial profit, but also several challenges and concerns for wives who are left behind in the village as they experience financial pressure, emotional discomfort and lack of communication. However, study found that women demonstrate resilience and personal growth in spite of these challenges. This study further necessitates enhancing financial planning and risk management for migrant household among catholic minorities suggesting counselling services, self-help groups and support network to mitigate these concerns.

Keywords: Migration, Religious minorities, Catholic Women, Emotional Distress and Financial Challenges.

Introduction

Migration is an age-old practice but in recent times it has become a way of life leaving considerable impact on the migrant and the dependent. International migration draws the attention of both migration sending and receiving countries (Ghimire et al., 2019). Christians constitute a majority 47 percent in migration population worldwide along with Muslims and Jews (Kramer & Tong, 2024). Socio-economic factors act as a driving forces of migration both nationally and internationally and leaving a lasting impacts on the individuals and their households(M. L & M. S, 2024). Understanding the context of international migration from the perspectives of religious minorities broadens the knowledge on challenges and concerns faced by these particular segments in India.

According to the TMS-Survey (2015), Ramanathapuram ranked as the third-largest migrant sending district and held first among top ten districts in Tamil Nadu with the highest number of migrant households. In Tamil Nadu, 8.5 per cent of households had more than one migrant, with Singapore, Malaysia and Gulf countries being the most preferred destinations for migrants with limited skills. Among the total migrant population in Tamil Nadu, Christians accounted for 9.7 per cent, with 16 migrants for every 100 households(Rajan et al., 2016).

Ramanathapuram is a dry, drought-prone backward area. The people survive through seasonal agriculture and fishing, which often fails due to climatic conditions. Lack of employment opportunities has also been a strong contributing factor to the labour migration of its male population. Most members of the Christian population from the rural villages of the Ramanathapuram district see migration as an opportunity towards economic development. The primary household headship and other activities are primarily entrusted to women when men migrate (Roy & Nangia, 2002). They shoulder the responsibility of running the family, educating children, taking care of elders and engaged in agricultural and allied activities. Most of the women now manage the household in rural areas, when men migrate for employment (Choithani, 2020).

Financial Dependency and Livelihood issues

The left behind family members very much depends on remittance as it is the major economic source that benefits of migrant families. The remittances are made use to meet basic needs like good food, shelter, educate children and settle them in marriage (Gartaula et al., 2012). Migration gives very big hope for the dependent families in this region. However, the challenges faced by the left behind family members is covered under the broader benefit called economic benefits.

Challenges on Left behind Wives

The absence of husband poses a big challenge for these women as they go about running day today lives (Arokkiaraj et al., 2021). Migration of husband brings in lot of changes in the lives of wives left behind both positively and negatively (Ghimire et al., 2019). Many a times they face both physical and phycological hardships which are not brought to the notice of the society. These women cope with challenging situations as they have to run to bank, attend all social functions, care for children and elderly, provide them with adequate health care and manage finance. Amidst this paramount work they least bother about their psychical and mental health. These women are often given under the care of elderly in laws who act as supportive presence or if the women are capable managing families they live alone with their children. In such context, this study aims to explore the challenges and issues faced by wives left behind in Catholic Christian communities where the migration practice is very common and the ways in which they navigate these challenges.

Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature, aims to understand Socio-economic conditions of wives of religious minorities who migrate abroad when their family remain in the village. This paper also seeks to explore the unique challenges and concerns of catholic wives left behind in the international migration context. Purposive sampling method was adopted to study 135 women from Christian community whose husbands work in another country. Semi-structured interview schedule with reliable Carl Ryff's psychological well-being scale of 18 items were administered. Both fisheries and agricultural background women participated in Thiruvadanai Taluk. Collected data were entered in SPSS-23 Version and analysed using frequency, ANOVA and Correlation to get a wholistic understanding of their challenges and issues.

Findings

The findings reveal the socio-economic impacts of international migration of Christian minorities on their family in a special way on wives left behind. The demographic profile, family profile and household profile of the migrant household is analysed through simple frequency distribution. One Way ANOVA examine the psychological well-being of left behind wives with selected background characteristics and finally Correlation was to conducted to see the strength of correlation between psychological well being with each of the subdomain.

Table .1 Frequency Distribution of Demographic Profile of Respondents(N=135)

Demographic Profile	Components	Number of the Respondents (N=135)	Per cent (%)
Age (In Years)	Up to 25	13	9.6
	26 to 35	71	52.6
	36 to 45	41	30.4
	46 and Above	10	7.4
	Illiterate	15	11.1

Education	Primary Level	28	20.7
	Middle School Level	17	12.6
	High School Level	25	18.5
	Diploma	7	5.2
	College and Above	25	18.5
Caste	SC	7	5.2
	BC	128	94.8
Occupation	House Wife	92	68.1
	Coolie	23	17
	Private Employee	16	11.9
	Self-Employment	4	3
Monthly Income of Respondent	Up to 3000	69	51.1
	3001 to 6000	55	40.7
	6001 to 9000	4	3
	9001 and Above	7	5.2

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents (N = 135), categorizing them based on age, education, caste, occupation and monthly income. The majority of the respondents (52.6%) were between the ages of 26 and 35 years, followed by 30.4% who were aged 36 to 45 years. Indicating that the age group 26 to 45 have a greater responsibility of establishing their family who seek migration as alternative. A smaller proportion (9.6%) were aged up to 25 years, while the least represented group (7.4%) were those aged 46 years and above. Regarding educational attainment, 11.1% of the respondents were illiterate. About one-fifth (20.7%) had completed primary education, while 12.6% had attained a middle school level. High school graduates and those with college-level education or above each accounted for 18.5% of the sample. A small proportion (5.2%) had received a diploma. The caste distribution indicated that the majority (94.8%) of the respondents belonged to the Backward Class (BC), whereas 5.2% were from the Scheduled Caste (SC) category. The largest proportion of respondents (68.1%) identified as housewives. Among the employed individuals, 17% worked as daily wage labourers (coolies), 11.9% were employed in private sector jobs and 3% were self-employed. More than half (51.1%) of the respondents reported a monthly income of up to ₹3,000, while 40.7% earned between ₹3,001 and ₹6,000. A smaller segment of the sample (3%) had an income ranging from ₹6,001 to ₹9,000, whereas only 5.2% reported earning ₹9,001 or more per month. These demographic characteristics provide insight into the socioeconomic background of the respondents, highlighting the prevalence of migration practice among Backward Class with lower income levels, limited educational attainment and a high proportion of housewives with foremost responsibility of caring for the family members.

Table .2 Frequency Distribution's Family Profile of the Respondents (N=135)

Family Profile	Components	Number of the Respondents (N=135)	Per cent (%)
Type of Family	Nuclear Family	111	82.2
	Joint Family	24	17.8
No. of Children	Nil	36	26.7
	2	62	45.9
	3	35	25.9
	4	2	1.5
No. of Senior Persons in the Family	Nil	129	95.6
	1	6	4.4
Monthly Income of Family	Up to 20000	15	11.1
	20001 to 30000	59	43.7
	30001 to 40000	35	25.9
	40001 to 50000	18	13.3
	50001 and Above	8	5.9

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table 2 presents the family characteristics of the respondents including family structure, number of children, presence of senior members and household income. The majority 82.2% of the respondents belonged to nuclear families, with the remaining 17.8% living in joint family arrangements. Indicating people's preference for nuclear family set up and the rarity of joint family systems among the respondents. Regarding the number of children, 45.9% of the respondents held two children whereas 25.9% had three children. A notable proportion 26.7% of respondents reported having no children and merely 1.5% had four children. Thus, the findings indicate that the majority of the respondents maintained small-to-medium-sized families. The data showed that most respondents, 95.6%, lived in households without senior members, whereas only 4.4% had at least one elderly person in the family. This trend indicates a propensity toward recent independent family units with minimal intergenerational living arrangements. Considering household income, the highest number, 43.7%, of respondents fell into the income group of ₹20,001 to ₹30,000 per month; 25.9% into ₹30,001-₹40,000 per month. Additionally, 13.3% of families said that they earned ₹40,001-₹50,000, while 5.9% of families were with an income earned of more than ₹50,000 per month. A lower percentage, 11.1%, of respondents had an income of ₹20,000 or less per month. The findings indicate that many families earned a moderate income indicating the unskilled nature of employment of their husbands; very few were actually in the higher income bracket. Overall family profiles indicate a predominance of nuclear families with little presence of elderly persons, medium family sizes and households with middle income. These features give an important contextual understanding of the respondents' socioeconomic background.

Table .3 Frequency Distribution of Household Profile of Respondents (N=135)

Household Profile	Components	Number of the Respondents (N=135)	Per cent (%)
Type of House	Kutcha	17	12.6
	Titled House	7	5.2
	Centring-Hall & Kitchen	82	60.7
	Centring- One BHK	8	5.9
	Centring-Two BHK	21	15.6
Ownership of the House	Owned	119	88.1
	Rented	16	11.9
Type of Ration Card Holding	PHH	70	51.9
	NPHH	63	46.7
	NPHHC	2	1.5

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table 3 presents the household profile of the respondents, significant majority 60.7% living in a centring house with a hall and kitchen which is the most prevalent type of houses among lower income groups in the study area, while 15.6% resided in centring with two-bedroom houses, notable portion even though small 12.6% live in Kutcha houses and another 5.2% live in titled and 5.9% live in one bed room house. However, most of the respondents 88.1% owned their homes, which gives them a sense of security even though the house is small, while 11.9% lived in rented accommodations. Over half 51.9% held Priority Household (PHH) ration cards, while 46.7% had Non-Priority Household (NPHH) cards. A small proportion (1.5%) had Non-Priority Household Cards with Commodities (NPHHC). The findings reveal the economic conditions of the sample population with varied economic vulnerability of migrant households.

Table .4 Analysis of Variance of Perceived Psychological Well-Being by Selected Background Characteristics of Wives Left Behind

Background Characteristics	N (135)	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F	Sig.
Type of Ration Card Holding						
PHH	70	2.9825	0.95284	2,	5.108	**0.007**
NPHH	63	1.39044	1.39044			

NPHHC	2	0.70711	0.70711	132		
Type of Visa						
Business Visa	15	3.9296	1.20047	2, 132	5.750	**0.004**
Tourist Visa	12	4.0185	1.16783			
Labour Visa	108	3.1152	1.16889			
Source of Finance for Migration						
Own Saving	14	4.6587	0.99902	6, 128	5.419	**0.000**
From Husband's Family	3	2.5556	0.05556			
From My Family	5	3.3889	0.92546			
From Friends	2	3.0556	0.39284			
From Money Lenders	101	3.0842	1.11454			
From Bank	6	2.9537	1.62975			
Property/Gold Sold	4	4.6111	1.02840			
Investment Type						
Land	10	3.8833	1.33242	5, 129	4.925	**0.000**
Gold	52	3.6656	1.30848			
Educate Children	5	3.0556	1.17786			
Business	3	4.8148	0.47898			
Build House	2	2.5278	1.37493			
Pay Back Dept	63	2.8474	0.93650			

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table 4, presents the statistical analysis of various background characteristics using ANOVA. The mean differences in the measured variables were affected by the type of ration card, $F(2,132) = 5.108$, $p = 0.007$, with PHH holders having the highest mean ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.95$). The type of visa had a significant effect on the measured variable, with respondents on tourist visas having a mean of $M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.17$, $F(2,132) = 5.750$, $p = 0.004$. Source of finance for migration also had a high influence, $F(6,128) = 5.419$, $p < 0.001$, with those migrating based on sale of property or gold showing a mean of $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.02$. There was a significant variation in investment preferences, $F(5,129) = 4.925$, $p < 0.001$, with highest mean in favour of investment in

business (M = 4.81, SD = 0.48). This result shows that sources of finance and investment decisions have significant impact on the economic well-being of migrant households from among the religious minorities.

Table.5 Perceived Challenges by Wives Left Behind During Husband's Absence

Background Characteristics	N (135)	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F	Sig.
Problems as Wives Left Behind						
Very High	11	3.0556	1.21767	4, 130	3.617	**0.008**
High	27	4.0412	1.02736			
Somewhat	14	3.0397	1.45009			
Less	18	3.2469	1.32146			
Not at all	65	3.0752	1.10495			
Lack of Communication with Husband						
Very High	4	3.2639	1.05835	4, 130	5.259	**0.001**
High	14	3.5595	1.03831			
Somewhat	35	3.8016	1.30075			
Less	33	3.4731	1.16684			
Not at all	49	2.7154	1.03325			
Participation in Social Function						
Very High	7	2.5952	0.49557	4, 130	3.707	**0.007**
High	28	3.0952	1.15657			
Somewhat	32	3.6528	1.16654			
Less	40	3.6069	1.29359			
Not at all	28	2.7718	1.08786			
Suspicious Look/Comments						
Very High	3	3.2037	1.09196	4, 130	2.578	**0.040**
High	16	3.3472	1.00605			
Somewhat	21	3.5714	1.42141			
Less	36	3.6744	1.18047			
Not at all	59	2.9350	1.14425			

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table.5 on the analysis of variance showed the challenges faced by wives left behind. Significant difference (F=3.617, p=0.008) showed the problems faced by migrant's wives. Reporting high level of problem with highest mean score (M=4.0412, SD=1.02736). While comparing to the respondents who reported somewhat and not at all had lower mean score. This shows the perceived level of problem of left behind and their challenges in adopting to their husband's absence in relation to others. Significant differences were also found in wives' level of communication with their husband (F=5.259, p=0.001). Those who agreed some what had greater level of communication difficulties with highest mean score (M=3.8016, SD=1.30075) where as others had low mean score. It could be inferred that those who had good communication with their husbands tend to have less stress and difficulties.

With regard to "Participation in social functions", the level of social engagement among wives left behind also varied significantly (F = 3.707, p = 0.007). Those who reported "somewhat" frequent participation had the highest mean score (M = 3.6528, SD = 1.16654), while women who did not participate at all had lower mean scores. This suggests that engagement in social functions may help in coping with the challenges of being left behind.

Suspicious Looks/Comments from Society showed that women's experiences with judgmental looks or negative comments from society also differed significantly (F = 2.578, p = 0.040). Those who reported "less" suspicion from society had the highest mean score (M = 3.6744, SD = 1.18047), while those who did not face such judgment had a lower mean (M = 2.9350, SD = 1.14425). This suggests that societal perception plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional well-being of these women. The findings indicate that the experiences of wives left behind vary significantly depending on their level of communication with their husbands, social participation and societal perceptions. These factors contribute to considerable impact on their overall well-being and demanding the ability to cope with the challenges of separation.

Table.6 Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Perceived Strategies for Overcoming Stress and Loneliness

Perceived Strategies	Components	Number of the Respondents (N=135)	Per cent (%)
Strategies to Overcoming Stress & Loneliness	Regular Visit to Church	70	52
	Participation in Anbiyam	44	32.5
	Counselling from Priest/Nuns	21	15.5
	Counselling in Hospital Setting	-	-

Source: Computed from the field survey

Table 6 presents the frequency distribution of respondents' perceived strategies for managing stress and loneliness. The data indicates that majority 52% of respondents consider attending church regularly as most commonly reported coping mechanism while considerable portion 32.5 % of respondents consider participation in Anbiyam - a small Christian community gathering which gives them strength to cope up with stress and loneliness, indicating that importance of social network within the catholic community. Additionally. 15.5% of the respondents seek counselling help from priest and nuns. Notably, none of the respondents indicated receiving counselling in a hospital setting. These findings suggest that faith-based and community support play a significant role in helping individuals cope with stress and loneliness.

Table.7 Correlation of Perceived Psychological Well Being of Respondents with Subdomain

	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relation	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance	PWB Total Score
Autonomy	1						
Environmental Mastery	.711**	1					
Personal Growth	.672**	.667**	1				
Positive Relation	.570**	.559**	.630**	1			
Purpose in Life	.430**	.310**	.387**	.393**	1		
Self-Acceptance	.715**	.702**	.654**	.469**	.566**	1	
PWB Total Score	.840**	.809**	.829**	.767**	.653**	.851**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Correlation was conducted to examine the Left behind wives' psychological well-being with subdomain. Results revealed that, there is strong correlation between Autonomy and Environmental Mastery (0.711), Personal Growth (0.672), Self-Acceptance (0.715) and over all well-being. Environmental Mastery enhancing Personal Growth (0.667), Self-Acceptance (0.702) and over all well-being (0.809). Women's Personal Growth strongly linked with Positive relation (0.630), Self-Acceptance (0.654) and over all psychological well-being (0.829). Strong Positive Relation contributed to total well-being (0.767). Sense of Purpose in Life was positively correlated but had a moderate correlation. Women's Self-Acceptance with the strong score (0.566) linked with total psychological well-being score (0.653). Self-Acceptance, environmental mastery and personal growth contributed more positively to overall well-being. While Purpose in life had moderate with many of the subdomains of Psychological well-being.

Discussions and Analysis

The study's findings provide a clearcut understanding of the socio-economic conditions, challenges and coping strategies of Christian wives left behind by migrant husbands. The demographic characteristics of the migrant household showed majority living in nuclear families with moderate income and most of them owning home. Even though women in nuclear families enjoy freedom living without the interference of in laws it has its own challenges for these women in child rearing and at times of breakdowns. A significant majority of the families owned Priority Household (PHH) ration cards which revealed their economic dependency forcing women to enter into remunerative activities. The economic profile of the respondents further adds more insights into the economic

problems faced by these household as many of them depended on money lenders or selling property and gold to meet the migration induced expenses. The findings also necessitate the need for financial security strategies and risk management practices among these households.

The analysis of variance in the aspect of women's perceived social and psychological well-being clearly indicates that women experienced many problems without the psychical presence of their partner. In such situation the regular and cordial communication becomes the primary source of support for these women. Respondents with high mean score for agreeing "Somewhat" shows the strained communication with the partner adding to stress and loneliness. The researcher's interaction with women revealed that the challenges they faced in the long-distanced relationship was mainly when their neighbour and villagers look with suspicion and at times communicate to their partner which adds to marital conflict among spouses. Social participation significantly impacted well-being indicating that women who participated in social functions less had higher mean score while those reported hight and no participation resulted in low mean score. It is inferred that when women have to participate high level in social and on the other side with no level of participation affects their well being where as moderate level results in better well-being.

The frequency distribution of respondents regarding the strategies adopted to cope with stress and anxiety emphasize the crucial role of faith-based and community support in coping with stress and loneliness. Regular visit to church and prayers is the most common strategy, suggesting that religious participation provides emotional comfort and social stability. Participation in Anbiyam highlights the importance of small community gatherings in fostering resilience through shared experiences and mutual support. Counselling from priests or nuns is a less common approach as it may have other social constrains, while the absence of hospital-based counselling suggests catholic community make use of the available support network within the community rather than going to hospital settings.

Correlation analysis of psychological well-being and its subdomains revealed that the Self-acceptance of women strongly contributed to environmental mastery enhancing their personal growth. Even though women face lot of challenges and concerns in husband's absence their self-acceptance and environmental mastery contributed to greater level to face life remain mentally strong. However, purpose in life does not strongly correlate which leads to further study of another influencing factor.

Conclusion

The study highlights the multifaceted impact of international migration on wives left behind, encompassing economic, emotional and social dimensions of catholic religious minorities. While migration provides financial opportunities for families, it also creates challenges, particularly for women managing households in their husband's absence. The findings reveal that financial strain, lack of communication and emotional distress are significant concerns, yet some women demonstrate resilience and personal growth over time. As they develop self-reliance and coping mechanisms by locally availing support system like regular participation in religious activities. The economic dependence on informal funding sources underscores the need for better financial planning and support systems. This study very much align with the findings based on qualitative study by Jasmin (2018). Additionally, based on the findings, recommendations are proposed to support wives left behind by migrant husbands. Professional counselling services, self-help groups and Catholic community networks should be established and available support system could be strengthened to help women cope with emotional stress and social isolation. Such initiatives could provide a platform for mutual support and resilience-building to navigate the challenges of migration-induced separation.

References

Books

[1] Rajan, S. I., D'sami, B., Raj, S. A., Sami, B. D. ', & Rajan, I. (2016). Tamil Nadu Migration Survey 2015. https://cds.edu/wp-content/uploads/WP472.pdf

Edited Book Chapters

[1] M. L, G., & M. S, J. (2024). The Dynamics of Migration in India: Challenges and Opportunities. Futuristic Trends in Social Sciences Volume 3 Book 2, February, 147–159. https://doi.org/10.58532/v3beso2p5ch1

Articles from Journals

[1] Arokkiaraj, H., Kaushik, A., & Rajan, S. I. (2021). Effects of International Male Migration on Wives Left Behind in Rural Tamil Nadu. Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 28(2), 228–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521521997964
[2] Beebi, E. K. M. (2012). Gulf Migration and Women - a Sociological Study on the Wives of Muslim Gulf Migrants in Malabar Left Behind By Their Husbands. KANNUR UNIVERSITY.
[3] Choithani, C. (2020). Gendered livelihoods: migrating men, left-behind women and household food security in India. Gender, Place and Culture, 27(10), 1373–1394. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1681366
[4] Gartaula, H. N., Visser, L., & Niehof, A. (2012). Socio-Cultural Dispositions and Wellbeing of the Women Left Behind: A Case of Migrant Households in Nepal. Social Indicators Research, 108(3), 401–420. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9883-9
[5] Ghimire, A., Bhujel, S., & Tiwari, R. (2019). THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MEN'S MIGRATION ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SARLAHI, SAPTARI AND DHANUSHA DISTRICT A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MEN'S MIGRATION ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SARLAHI, SAPTARI AND DHANUSHA DISTRICT THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MEN.
[6] Jasmin, S. P. K. (2018). The Struggle for Survival: Impact of Gulf Migration on Women Left-Behind in Malabar. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), 5(6), 635–639. www.jetir.org
[7] Kramer, S., & Tong, Y. (2024). The Religious Composition of the World ' s Migrants. www.pewresearch.org
[8] Roy, A. K., & Nangia, P. (2002). Impact of Male Out-migration on Health Status of Left behind Wives - A Study of Bihar, India. 22. http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/
[9] Singh, K. M., Singh, R. K. P., & Kumar, A. (2013). Male Worker Migration and Women Empowerment: The Case of Bihar, India. SSRN Electronic Journal, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2318966

Internet Web Page

[1] Kramer, S., & Tong, Y. (2024). The Religious Composition of the World ' s Migrants. www.pewresearch.org