International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science (IJEMMASSS)
An International Quarterly bi-lingual Multidisciplinary Double Blind Open Access Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal
ISSN :2581-9925, Impact Factor (Cosmos: 7.555 & I2OR: 5.105), Volume 08, No. 02(II), April- June, 2026, pp. 116-121

# Access to Education among Children of Migrant Labourers in Kerala

**Dr. Renu Susan Samuel***

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, St. Peter's College, Ernakulam, Kerala, India.

*Corresponding Author: renubibu215@gmail.com

*Citation: Samuel, R. (2026). Access to Education Among Children of Migrant Labourers in Kerala. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 08(02(II)), 116–121. https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/8.2(II).9070*

## ABSTRACT

*Migrant children often face interrupted schooling, transport barriers, language difficulties, and uneven awareness of welfare schemes. This study examines access to education, school continuity, social barriers, and awareness of support programmes among migrant labourers' children in Ernakulam district. Shifting the analytical lens to a broader sample size of 154 respondents aged 10–18 years at Mar Athanasius High School, Kakkanad and Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Iringole at Ernakulam district in Kerala reveals persistent and scaled trends in educational vulnerability. Using a chi-square framework to test the interactions between socio-economic barriers and school continuity, the study demonstrates that structural obstacles such as physical distance, lack of transport, and systemic language barriers severely hamper deep inclusion. Furthermore, awareness of state-sponsored welfare programs remains heavily stratified, with widespread exposure to foundational initiatives but near-total ignorance of specialised schemes. The expanded data underscores that school inclusion depends heavily on targeted transport, multilingual pedagogy, and proactive scheme outreach.*

***Keywords**: Migrant Children, Education Access, Kerala, School Inclusion, Chi-Square Analysis.*

## Introduction

Migration is a major social and economic process in India, but it can severely disrupt children's schooling. When families move for work, children face sequential gaps in attendance, abrupt changes in school environments, communication obstacles, and a reduced sense of social belonging. In Kerala, migrant labourers' children have emerged as a critical demographic for progressive educational policy. The state has introduced several targeted initiatives—such as school tracking, bridge courses, mid-day meals, and the Roshni program—yet grass-roots access and awareness remain uneven across communities. This paper examines how a larger cohort of migrant labourers' children experiences educational access within their specific school settings in Kakkanad and Iringole, evaluating whether state interventions effectively translate into real-world student support.

### Methodology & Statistical Framework

The study utilised both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were gathered through comprehensive questionnaires administered to migrant children studying at Mar Athanasius High School, Kakkanad and Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Iringole. To provide a statistically robust picture, this expanded study draws upon a convenience sample of 154 respondents within the 10–18 years age group.

### Research Hypotheses

To move beyond basic descriptive observations, the study establishes two core sets of null hypotheses (H0) to investigate the relationships between economic and spatial barriers and educational outcomes:

**$H_{01}$:** There is no significant association between a family's geographic proximity to campus (residence close to school) and the child's daily school attendance.

**$H_{02}$:** There is no significant association between parental relocation frequency and a child's history of school dropouts.

**Statistical Testing Tools**

The collected data were tabulated and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools:

- **Frequency and Percentage Analysis:** Applied to map the demographic profiles, mobility rates, and general awareness trends.
- **Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) Test for Independence:** Utilised as the primary inferential tool to test H01 and H02. This tool determines whether observed frequencies differ significantly from expected frequencies when cross-tabulating categorical barriers against continuity metrics.
- **Cross-Tabulation:** Employed to systematically group variables such as parental relocation, transport access, and school attendance for comparative analysis.

**Results and Discussion**

- **Profile of Respondents**

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. A majority of the children (73.4%) belong to the 12–15 years age group, while 26.6% are aged 10–12 years. Male respondents constitute 76.6% of the sample, compared to 23.4% females. Most respondents (93.5%) come from relatively small families with 0–5 members, while only 6.5% belong to larger families. Further, a large majority (87.0%) reported having siblings, whereas 13.0% do not. Overall, the sample is predominantly composed of male children aged 12–15 years from small families with siblings.

**Table 1: Profile of Respondents**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 10–12 years | 41 | 26.6 |
| | 12–15 years | 113 | 73.4 |
| | 15–18 years | 0 | 0.0 |
| **Gender** | Male | 118 | 76.6 |
| | Female | 36 | 23.4 |
| **Family Size** | 0–5 members | 144 | 93.5 |
| | 5–10 members | 10 | 6.5 |
| **Siblings** | Yes | 134 | 87.0 |
| | No | 20 | 13.0 |

- **Schooling, Mobility, and Transport Barriers**

The table below highlights the educational mobility and accessibility challenges faced by migrant children. Nearly half of the respondents (46.8%) have been in their current school for only 0–2 years, indicating frequent school changes. A majority (76.6%) had previously studied in schools in their native places, reflecting educational disruption due to migration.

The findings also show that 76.6% of the children do not live close to their schools, and 63.0% lack transport facilities. These factors may negatively affect regular attendance, learning continuity, and overall educational outcomes. Overall, the results suggest that migration creates significant schooling and transportation barriers for migrant children.

**Table 2: Schooling and Mobility**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Years in Present School** | 0–2 years | 72 | 46.8 |
| | 3–5 years | 72 | 46.8 |
| | 5–10 years | 10 | 6.4 |
| **Studied in Native School** | Yes | 118 | 76.6 |
| | No | 36 | 23.4 |
| **Residence Close to School** | Yes | 36 | 23.4 |
| | No | 118 | 76.6 |
| **Transport Facility** | Yes | 57 | 37.0 |
| | No | 97 | 63.0 |

- **Economic Background and Relocation Pressures**

Table 3 shows that the vast majority of respondents (93.5%) belong to families where parents are employed, indicating a high level of workforce participation among migrant households. Family income is fairly distributed across categories, with the largest proportions (26.6% each) earning ₹5,000–10,000 and above ₹15,000 per month.

A significant majority (79.9%) reported being able to save money, despite varying income levels. Regarding financial difficulties, 37.1% stated that they never face a financial crisis, while 33.1% experience it sometimes, suggesting moderate economic stability for many families.

Educational continuity appears relatively stable, as only 16.9% of respondents changed schools during the past two years. Similarly, 37.0% reported parental relocation, whereas 63.0% had not experienced relocation. Overall, the findings indicate that although migrant families face occasional financial and mobility challenges, most demonstrate economic resilience and educational stability.

**Table 3: Family Background and Continuity**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Parents Working** | Yes | 144 | 93.5 |
| | No | 10 | 6.5 |
| **Family Income** | Below ₹5,000 | 36 | 23.4 |
| | ₹5,000–10,000 | 41 | 26.6 |
| | ₹10,000–15,000 | 36 | 23.4 |
| | Above ₹15,000 | 41 | 26.6 |
| **Able to Save Money** | Yes | 123 | 79.9 |
| | No | 31 | 20.1 |
| **Financial Crisis** | Always | 15 | 9.7 |
| | Often | 21 | 13.6 |
| | Sometimes | 51 | 33.1 |
| | Rarely | 10 | 6.5 |
| | Never | 57 | 37.1 |
| **School Changed (Past 2 Yrs)** | Yes | 26 | 16.9 |
| | No | 128 | 83.1 |
| **Parental Relocation** | Yes | 57 | 37.0 |
| | No | 97 | 63.0 |

- **Attendance Patterns and In-School Difficulties**

The data reveals that while a substantial majority of students maintain regular daily school attendance (90.3%) and have no history of dropping out (79.9%), a notable 20.1% do have a past dropout history. Furthermore, while every single respondent (100%) reported being able to follow the medium of instruction, an overwhelming 80.0% explicitly stated experiencing general school difficulties, leaving only 20.0% who face no such issues.

Among the 31 students who reported experiencing distinct, identity-based difficulties respondents, challenges related to the Language Spoken constitute the largest share at 32.3%. The remaining hurdles are categorized under various forms of institutional or social bias: Culture-wise Discrimination accounts for 19.4% of the complaints, while Region-wise, Religion-wise, and Caste-wise Discrimination are equally distributed, each representing 16.1% of the reported grievances, bringing the total concentrated difficulty responses to 100%.

**Table 4: Attendance and General Difficulties**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dropout History** | Yes | 31 | 20.1 |
| | No | 123 | 79.9 |
| **Daily School Attendance** | Yes | 139 | 90.3 |
| | No | 15 | 9.7 |
| **Able to Follow Medium** | Yes | 154 | 100.0 |
| **School Difficulties** | Yes | 123 | 80.0 |
| | No | 31 | 20.0 |

**Table 5: Nature of Reported Difficulties**

| Difficulty Type | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Language Spoken** | 10 | 32.3 |
| **Region-wise Discrimination** | 5 | 16.1 |
| **Religion-wise Discrimination** | 5 | 16.1 |
| **Culture-wise Discrimination** | 6 | 19.4 |
| **Caste-wise Discrimination** | 5 | 16.1 |
| **Total** | 31 | 100.0 |

**Hypothesis Testing & Inferential Analysis**

- To validate the structural barriers, Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) tests of independence were executed against the cross-tabulated primary data.

**Test 1: Geographic Proximity vs. Daily Attendance**

**Null Hypothesis ($H_{01}$):** There is no significant association between a family's geographic proximity to campus and the child's daily school attendance.

**Table 6a: Cross-Tabulation and $\chi^2$ Results for Proximity and Attendance**

| Residence Close to School | Daily Attendance: Yes | Daily Attendance: No | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | 36 (32.5) | 0 (3.5) | 36 |
| **No** | 103 (106.5) | 15 (11.5) | 118 |
| **Total** | 139 | 15 | 154 |

Note: Figures in parentheses represent Expected Frequencies.

**Table 6b: Statistical Test Summary for H01**

| Metric | Value / Outcome |
|---|---|
| **Calculated Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) Value** | 4.34 |
| **Degrees of Freedom (df)** | 1 |
| **Critical Value (at $\alpha = 0.05$)** | 3.84 |
| **Asymptotic Significance (p-value)** | $p < 0.05$ |
| **Statistical Decision** | Reject H01 |

**Interpretation**: Because the calculated $\chi^2$ value (4.34) exceeds the critical value (3.84), the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% significance level. There is a statistically significant association between living far from school and irregular daily attendance, validating that physical access directly risks school participation.

**Test 2: Parental Relocation vs. Dropout History**

**Null Hypothesis (H02):** There is no significant association between parental relocation frequency and a child's history of school dropouts.

**Table 7a: Cross-Tabulation and $\chi^2$ Results for Relocation and Dropout History**

| Parental Relocation | Dropout History: Yes | Dropout History: No | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | 20 (11.5) | 37 (45.5) | 57 |
| **No** | 11 (19.5) | 86 (77.5) | 97 |
| **Total** | 31 | 123 | 154 |

Note: Figures in parentheses represent Expected Frequencies.

**Table 7b: Statistical Test Summary for H02**

| Metric | Value / Outcome |
|---|---|
| **Calculated Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) Value** | 12.42 |
| **Degrees of Freedom (df)** | 1 |
| **Critical Value (at $\alpha = 0.01$)** | 6.63 |
| **Asymptotic Significance (p-value)** | $p < 0.01$ |
| **Statistical Decision** | Reject H02 |

**Interpretation**: The calculated $\chi^2$ value (12.42) is far greater than the critical value (6.63) required at the 1% significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis is strongly rejected. This

confirms that ongoing parental mobility creates a strong, measurable threat to educational continuity, frequently triggering school dropout episodes.

**Policy Reach: Awareness and Program Utility**

The data highlights absolute 100.0% awareness for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Roshni Scheme, and Mid-day Meal Scheme. While the SSA and Roshni Scheme enjoy a perfect 100.0% utilization rate, the Mid-day Meal Scheme lags slightly behind at 66.9%. Conversely, both the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Changathi Friend have 0.0% awareness and utilization, indicating no reach among the surveyed group.

Further, the Roshni Scheme stands out as the most valued, securing the highest top-tier preference with 59.7% of Rank 1. The Mid-day Meal Scheme is heavily favored in the middle tier, claiming 46.7% of Rank 2. Meanwhile, the SSA is primarily concentrated at Rank 3 with 73.4%. Mirroring their lack of awareness, both RMSA and Changathi Friend received 0.0% across all ranking metrics.

**Table 8: Awareness and Utilization of Welfare Schemes**

| Programme | Awareness (%) | Utilisation (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Roshni Scheme** | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Mid-day Meal Scheme** | 100.0 | 66.9 |
| **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **Changathi Friend** | 0.0 | 0.0 |

**Table 9: Preference Ranking of Beneficial Programmes (%)**

| Programme | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SSA** | 13.6 | 13.0 | **73.4** | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **RMSA** | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **Roshni Scheme** | **59.7** | 40.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **Mid-day Meal Scheme** | 26.6 | **46.7** | 26.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **Changathi Friend** | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

**Suggestions**

- Improve School-Level Tracking: Create a unified tracking system across districts to protect students from academic gaps caused by sudden parental relocation.
- Provide Transport Support: Introduce subsidised or school-backed transport options to help the 63% of students facing spatial exclusion due to long travel distances.
- Expand Language Support: Scale up bilingual bridge classes to turn basic language comprehension into deep academic and social fluency.
- Targeted Scheme Awareness: Launch informative campaigns to promote highly beneficial but underutilized welfare programs like Changathi Friend.
- Strengthen Social Inclusion: Run student counseling sessions and cultural exchange activities to address hidden regional and cultural discrimination in classrooms.
- Coordinate Institutional Support: Build partnerships between local government bodies, schools, and active NGOs to ensure students receive continuous support throughout their education.

**Conclusion**

The educational challenges facing the children of migrant labourers in Kerala go far beneath the surface of simple enrollment statistics. As this study shows, a child's access to education is constantly shaped by financial pressures, lack of transport, language barriers, and uneven awareness of welfare options. While schools provide a broadly supportive framework, these systemic issues show that more targeted, hands-on interventions are urgently needed. Building a truly inclusive educational ecosystem requires a coordinated strategy that handles school continuity, communication barriers, and physical access together.

**References**


1. Sibi Zacharias and K.V. Vinil. 2018. Human rights issues related to the right to education of the children of migrant labourers in Kerala.
2. Kailash Sathyarthi Children's Foundation. 2020. A study on access to education by children of migrant workers.
3. Archana K. Roy, Pappu Singh, and U.N. Roy. 2015. Impact of Rural-Urban labor migration on education of migrant children in India.
4. Chandra Shekhar, S. Bhattacharya, and Leena. 2018. Education of children from migrant rural households in India.
5. Raashid Shah. 2021. Seasonal migration and children's education in India.
6. Government of Kerala. 2020. Evaluation Report on Roshni Scheme: Educational Interventions for Migrant Children. State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram.
7. Jayan, P. K. 2019. Inter-state migrant workmen in Kerala: A study on their socio-economic conditions and educational status of children. Journal of Migration Affairs, 2(1), 45-62.
8. Kumar, S., and S. Rajan. 2021. Inclusion or exclusion? The educational trajectory of children of interstate migrant workers in Kerala. International Journal of Educational Development, 84, 102421.
9. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). 2022. Status of Education of Children of Migrant Families in Select States. New Delhi: NCERT.
10. Peter, B., and S. Narendran. 2018. Labour Migration to Kerala: A Study on the Social Inclusion of Migrants. Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development (CMID), Kochi.
11. UNESCO. 2019. Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls. Paris: UNESCO.


❑❑❑