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# A Qualitative Study on Kerala Youth Diaspora



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**ABSTRACT:** The experiences and challenges the Kerala youth diaspora face are poorly understood. While there is some research on migration and diaspora in Kerala, there is a need for more focused research on the experiences of young people in the diaspora. The Kerala youth diaspora also faces challenges, such as adapting to new cultures, dealing with discrimination, and maintaining their cultural identity. Many young Keralite struggles to balance their traditional values with the demands of a new environment, which can cause stress and anxiety. This research paper aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of the Kerala youth diaspora and how they contribute to the development of Kerala and to examine the experiences of the Kerala youth diaspora and identify ways to support and engage with them. By engaging with the diaspora and understanding their experiences, this research paper can contribute to creating policies and programs that better meet their needs and support their engagement with Kerala. This can lead to a more inclusive and sustainable approach to development that leverages the potential of the Kerala youth diaspora and other diaspora communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Diaspora, Support Skill Development, Emigration, Government Engagement, obstacles

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Kerala, a small state in the southwest of India, has a long history of emigration, with Keralites migrating to various parts of the world for work, education, and other opportunities. The Kerala youth diaspora is a dynamic and diverse group with members from different regions, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds in Kerala. Kerala is known for its high literacy rate and human development index, and over the past few decades, this migration trend has intensified, particularly among Kerala's youth population. The Kerala youth diaspora has emerged as a significant demographic group, with young Keralites living abroad forming vibrant and diverse communities in various parts of the world, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the Middle East.

The Kerala youth diaspora is a significant and growing community that has contributed to the development of Kerala and the global community in various ways (K C and Rajan, 2003;2019). The diaspora consists of young people who have migrated from Kerala to different parts of the world for education, work, and other opportunities (Goswami, 2021). These young people are an essential resource for Kerala, as they bring diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences that can contribute to the development of the state and the country (Kurien, 2008; PAA, 2020).

The Kerala youth diaspora is a result of various push and pull factors. Economic factors such as lack of job opportunities, low wages, and poor living standards in Kerala have driven many young people to seek better opportunities abroad. The lure of higher salaries, better living conditions, and improved social and economic opportunities in developed countries has been a significant pull factor (Gupta et. al., 2022; Gupta and



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Mittal, 2022; Mandal et al., 2022). In addition to economic factors, the Kerala youth diaspora has also been driven by social and cultural factors. The desire for better education, exposure to diverse cultures, and the search for a better quality of life have motivated young Keralite to migrate.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Kerala youth diaspora represents a significant and growing demographic of young individuals who have migrated from Kerala to various parts of the world, seeking educational and employment opportunities and a better quality of life. While their migration has brought economic benefits to their host countries and families in Kerala through remittances, the diaspora faces many challenges that hinder their full integration, well-being, and effective contribution to their host communities and their home state.

Cultural adaptation poses a significant challenge for the Kerala youth diaspora (Rajan, 2020). Moving to new cultural environments, they encounter language barriers, different social norms, and values, leading to feelings of isolation, identity crisis, and a struggle to maintain a sense of belonging. Discrimination and prejudice based on ethnicity, race, or religion further compound their challenges, affecting their mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

#### 3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study on the Kerala youth diaspora is essential for enhancing our understanding of their experiences, informing policies and programs, promoting integration and well-being, leveraging their contributions for development, and fostering transnational collaborations. Ultimately, the study aims to positively impact the lives of the Kerala youth diaspora and contribute to their successful integration and meaningful engagement in both their host countries and their home state of Kerala.

The Kerala youth diaspora has the potential to make significant contributions to both their host countries and their home state. By studying their experiences and aspirations, we can identify ways to harness their skills, knowledge, and resources for the sustainable development of Kerala. This includes encouraging entrepreneurship, investment, and knowledge transfer and facilitating their engagement in decision-making processes that affect Kerala's development.

By conducting this study, we can understand the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of the Kerala youth diaspora. This knowledge will help us empathise with their unique circumstances and identify areas where support and interventions are needed. The study will contribute to strategies that promote the successful integration and well-being of the Kerala youth diaspora. By understanding the challenges they face, such as cultural adaptation, discrimination, and limited access to social services, we can identify effective interventions and support systems to address these issues and foster their overall well-being.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- understand the demographics and socioeconomic characteristics of Kerala Youth Diaspora.
- To identify the reasons for migration and the factors that influence the decision of Kerala youth to emigrate
- To investigate the Kerala youth diaspora's role in Kerala's development.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. This research paper utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and qualitative data sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the Kerala youth diaspora. Primary data were collected from 120 individuals of age between 15 and 30. The Focus group Method was used to collect data from these individuals. Six focus group interviews were conducted, each group consisting of 20 individuals. In addition to collecting primary data, this research paper also utilises secondary data sources like online articles, research papers etc., to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the Kerala youth diaspora. Data analysis was done with the help of MAXQDA and tools, including frequency tables, pie charts, bar charts, etc.

#### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study on the Kerala youth diaspora aims to comprehensively understand their experiences, challenges, aspirations, and contributions. respondents are under the age category of 15 to 30 and have studied or settled outside India.



# 7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE STUDY

## 7.1 Age Range of Respondents

Table 1: Showing the Age Range of Respondents

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15-20	11	9.16%
21-25	67	55.83%
26-30	42	35%

(Source: Focus Group Interview)

The table 1 provides a breakdown of respondents based on their age groups. The data indicates that out of the total respondents, 9.16% were between the ages of 15 and 20, comprising 11 individuals. The majority of respondents, constituting 55.83% of the total, fell within the age range of 21 to 25, with 67 individuals representing this group. The remaining 35% of respondents belonged to the age range of 26 to 30, with 42 individuals falling within this category. These statistics reveal a significant representation of young adults between the ages of 21 and 25 among the respondents, followed by a substantial presence of individuals aged 26 to 30.

### 7.2 District of Origin in Kerala

Table 2: Showing the Respondents' District of Origin in Kerala

District Of Origin	Number of Respondents	Per cent
Ernakulum	28	23.33
Thrissur	25	20.83
Kozhikode	20	16.67
Kottayam	16	13.33
Kollam	12	10
Kannur	10	8.33
Palakkad	9	7.5
TOTAL	120	100

(Source: Focus Group Interview)

The presented table outlines the distribution of respondents based on their district of origin. Among the total of 120 respondents, the largest percentage, accounting for 23.33%, hailed from Ernakulam district, with 28 individuals representing this group. Thrissur district followed closely with 20.83% of the respondents,

amounting to 25 individuals. Kozhikode district constituted 16.67% of the respondents, with 20 individuals in this category. Kottayam district accounted for 13.33% of the respondents, represented by 16 individuals. Kollam district had 12 respondents, comprising 10% of the total. Kannur district encompassed 8.33% of the respondents, with 10 individuals, while Palakkad district had 9 respondents, representing 7.5% of the total. These findings suggest a diverse range of respondents from various districts, with Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Kozhikode having the highest proportions, indicating a concentration of respondents from these regions.

### 7.3 Profession of The Respondents

**Table 3 Showing the Profession of the Respondents** 

Profession	Number of Respondents	Per cent
STUDENT	30	25
HEALTHCARE	19	15.83
EDUCATION	18	15
COMMERCE	17	14.17
IT	15	12.5%
ENGINEERING	13	10.83
FOOD	8	6.67
TOTAL	120	100

(Source: Focus Group Interview)

The table provides insights into the distribution of respondents based on their professions. Among the total respondents, 25% identified themselves as students, making it the largest group, with 30 individuals. The healthcare profession accounted for 15.83% of the respondents, with 19 individuals falling into this category. Education professionals represented 15% of the respondents, comprising 18 individuals. The commerce sector was chosen by 14.17% of the respondents, with 17 individuals belonging to this group. The IT industry attracted 12.5% of the respondents, with 15 individuals indicating their affiliation with this profession. Engineering professionals constituted 10.83% of the respondents, with 13 individuals falling into this category. The food industry, on the other hand, accounted for 6.67% of the respondents, with 8 individuals identifying themselves as part of this sector. These findings suggest a diverse range of professions among the respondents, with students representing the largest group,

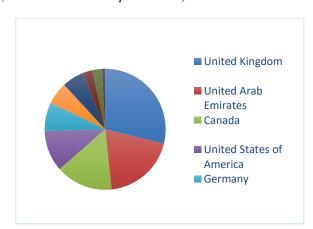


followed by individuals in the healthcare and education sectors.

**Table 4 Showing Migrated Country of Respondents.** 

Migrated Country	Number of	Per cent
	Respondents	
United Kingdom	34	28.33
United Arab Emirates	23	19.17
Canada	18	15%
United States of	13	10.83%
America		
Germany	9	7.5%
Ireland	7	5.83%
Netherlands	7	5.83%
Kuwait	3	2.5%
France	3	2.5%
Kazakhstan	1	0.83%
TOTAL	120	100

(Source: Focus Group Interview)



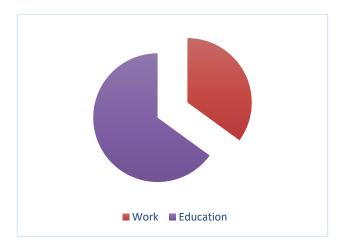
**Chart 1 Showing Migrated Country of Respondents** 

This table presents data on the countries to which people from Kerala migrated, along with the number of responses and frequency of each country. The data suggests that out of the total number of responses, 28.33% of people migrated to the United Kingdom, while 19.17% migrated to the United Arab Emirates and 15% to Canada. The United States of America attracted 10.83% of the respondents, while Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands each received 7.5%, 5.83%, and 5.83% of the respondents respectively. Kuwait, France, and Kazakhstan were the least popular destinations, Kuwait and France each receiving 2.5% of the responses and Kazakhstan 0.83%.

Table 5 Showing the Reasons of Respondents for **Moving Abroad** 

Reason for Moving Abroad	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Work	42	35
Education	78	65
TOTAL	120	100

(Source: Focus Group Interview)



**Chart 2 Showing Reasons for Moving Abroad** 

This table presents data on the reasons for moving abroad among the respondents, along with the number of responses and the frequency of each reason. The data suggests that a majority of 65% moved abroad for educational purposes and 35% of the respondents moved abroad for work-related reasons.

**Table 6 Showing the Motivational Factors To Move** Abroad

Motivational Factors	Number O=of Responses	Per cent
Career Opportunities	51	42.5
Better living standards	30	25%
Financial benefits	17	14.17%
Exposure to different cultures	15	12.5%
Family	7	5.83%
TOTAL	120	

(Source: Focus Group Interview)

This table shows data on the factors that motivated respondents to move abroad, along with the number of responses and frequency of each factor. The data



suggests that the majority 42.5% of respondents were motivated to move abroad by better career opportunities, while 25% sought better living standards. Financial benefits and exposure to different cultures were the motivating factors for 14.17% and 12.5% of respondents respectively. Family reasons were cited by only 5.83% of the respondents.

**Table 7 Showing the Obstacles Faced by Youngsters** in Kerala While Trying To Achieve Their Career Goals in Kerala

(Source: Focus Group Interview)

Obstacles	Number Of Responses	Frequency
Limited job opportunities	45	37.5
Low pay	32	26.67
Lack of technological advancement	20	16.67
High competition	15	12.5
Gender bias	8	6.67
TOTAL	120	100

The table provides an overview of the key obstacles faced by respondents, along with the corresponding number of responses and frequency percentages. Limited job opportunities emerged as the most prominent obstacle, with 45 responses, accounting for 37.5% of the total. This indicates that respondents perceive a scarcity of available employment options as a significant challenge. Following closely is the issue of low pay, which garnered 32 responses, constituting 26.67% of the total. This suggests that individuals are concerned about financial remuneration in their respective fields. Lack of technological advancement was cited as a barrier by 20 respondents, representing 16.67%. This finding indicates a perceived need for further innovation modernization in various industries. The competition was identified by 15 respondents, comprising 12.5% of the total, suggesting a competitive job market. Finally, gender bias was reported as an obstacle by 8 respondents, accounting for 6.67% of the total, highlighting the persistence of gender disparities in the workplace. Overall, these findings shed light on the diverse challenges faced by individuals in their professional endeavours, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues for a more inclusive and prosperous workforce.

The table presents the responses to a series of statements, offering insights into the perceptions and opinions regarding various aspects of Kerala, its educational system, and the role of the Kerala Diaspora.

In terms of career and educational opportunities for young people in Kerala, a significant number of respondents expressed a neutral stance, with 44 responses, representing 36.67% of the total. This suggests that while opportunities may exist, there might be room for improvement. Similarly, the educational system's effectiveness in preparing students for the job market garnered mixed responses, with 40 responses in the neutral category. This indicates a perceived need for enhancements to bridge the gap between education and employment. Regarding the impact of the Kerala Diaspora, a majority of respondents agreed that it has contributed to the promotion of Kerala's culture and traditions globally, with 60 responses in the agreed category, constituting 50% of the total. However, when it comes to the Kerala government's engagement with the Diaspora, the responses were more varied, with 37 responses falling into the agreed category and 15 responses in the neutral category. This implies that there might be scope for increased support and interaction between the government and the Diaspora. Moreover, the Kerala Diaspora was recognized as an important source of remittances for the state's economy, as indicated by the 48 responses in the agreed category, which represented 40% of the total. Lastly, a significant majority of respondents believed that the Kerala Diaspora holds the potential to drive change and development in Kerala, with 60 responses in the strongly agree category, suggesting a high level of optimism. Overall, these findings shed light on the perceptions and expectations surrounding career opportunities, education, and the role of the Kerala Diaspora in Kerala's cultural and economic landscape, highlighting areas that may require attention and further engagement.

The following questions were asked to the individuals regarding the Kerala Youth Diaspora. Their responses are summarized below.

What kind of support do you think young people need in Kerala to succeed in their careers?

The responses given by people are varied. Some respondents emphasized the importance of proper education and infrastructure, while others suggested that



more job opportunities and better pay are needed. Many respondents believe that young people need more educational facilities, as well as a supportive business environment. Some respondents also mentioned the need for a better work-life balance, flexible working conditions, and emotional support. Several respondents stressed the importance of job diversity and skill development. They also called for the government's support in creating job opportunities, removing unrealistic job and education reservations, and investing in higher education opportunities. Overall, the responses indicate that young people in Kerala need a range of support and opportunities to succeed in their careers. From better education, infrastructure, and employment opportunities to a more supportive business environment and emotional support, the suggestions provided by the respondents suggest that a multi-pronged approach is necessary.

# In your opinion, what are the effects of the emigration of young people from Kerala to other nations on the state and its economy?

The responses suggest that the emigration of young people from Kerala to other nations has significant negative impacts on the state and its economy. The loss of talented and educated youngsters is seen as a major concern, resulting in a lack of young and creative minds for research and innovation. The economy may suffer due to a shortage of skilled workers, and the state may become financially delicate. Moreover, the emigration of young people can lead to a decrease in the standard of living, a lack of technical manpower, and a rise in crime. However, some respondents argue that emigration can bring short-term economic benefits and lead to better career growth and a higher standard of living for individuals. Overall, the responses suggest a need for better education, job opportunities, and research facilities in Kerala to encourage young people to stay in the state and contribute to its development.

# What do you think is wrong with the Indian economy?

Based on the answers provided, there seem to be several issues that people believe are wrong with the Indian economy, including corruption, political intervention, high inflation, low pay, lack of job opportunities, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and a flawed education system. Some respondents also mentioned issues related to social inequality and a scarcity of resources. However, some believed that there was nothing inherently wrong with the Indian economy, but that improvements could be made in areas such as job opportunities and pay scales. Overall, the answers suggest that there are complex challenges facing the Indian economy, and a range of factors that need to be addressed to create a more prosperous and equitable society.

## What advice would you give to other young people considering going abroad for work or education?

The responses offer diverse perspectives on the decision to move abroad for career or educational purposes. The consensus is to conduct thorough research and consider various factors before making a final decision. Understanding the culture, laws, and job market of the destination country is emphasized, as well as evaluating the cost of living and the potential for long-term opportunities. Some respondents suggest gaining work experience before migration to enhance suitability for international positions and clarify professional goals. Others see moving abroad as an enriching experience that requires hard work and effective time management. However, caution is advised against solely seeking financial gains, with recommendations to carefully assess individual needs and long-term prospects. Exploring work opportunities and experiencing cultural differences abroad are encouraged to bring back positive practices to Kerala. While some emphasize the growth of opportunities in Kerala, others stress the value of overseas experiences. Ultimately, the decision should be based on personal goals, research, and a comprehensive evaluation of opportunities within and outside Kerala.

#### 8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Age Range of Respondents: The majority of respondents (55.83%) fell within the age range of 21 to 25, followed by 35% of respondents aged 26 to 30. This indicates a significant representation of young adults among the respondents.
- District of Origin: The districts with the highest ii. representation among the respondents were Ernakulam (23.33%), Thrissur (20.83%), and Kozhikode (16.67%). This suggests a concentration of respondents from these regions.
- **Profession:** The largest professional group among iii. the respondents was students (25%), followed by healthcare professionals (15.83%) and individuals



- in the education sector (15%). This indicates a diverse range of professions among the respondents.
- iv. Migrated Country: The most common destination countries for respondents from Kerala were the United Kingdom (28.33%), the United Arab Emirates (19.17%), and Canada (15%). This suggests a preference for these countries among Kerala's youth diaspora.
- Reasons for Moving Abroad: The majority of respondents (65%) moved abroad for educational purposes, while 35% moved for work-related reasons. This highlights the importance of education in driving migration among Kerala's youth.
- Motivational Factors: Better career opportunities vi. (42.5%) and improved living standards (25%) were the primary motivational factors for moving abroad among the respondents. This indicates a desire for personal and professional growth and a higher quality of life.
- Obstacles in Kerala: Limited job opportunities vii. (37.5%) and low pay (26.67%) were identified as the primary obstacles faced by youngsters in Kerala. This highlights the need for more employment opportunities and better compensation.
- viii. Perception of Kerala Youth Diaspora: Respondents showed a neutral stance regarding career and educational opportunities for young people in Kerala, indicating a potential need for improvement. However, they agreed that the Kerala Diaspora has contributed to the promotion of Kerala's culture and traditions globally (50%). Respondents also recognized the Kerala Diaspora as an important source of remittances for the state's economy (40%) and believed it has the potential to drive change and development in Kerala (50%).

#### 9. SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- Enhance Education System: Improve the educational system in Kerala to better prepare students for the job market and increase the availability of educational facilities.
- Increase Job Opportunities: Address the limited job opportunities and low pay by promoting job creation, attracting investments, and fostering entrepreneurship in Kerala.
- Support Skill Development: Focus on skill development programs to equip young people with the necessary skills and competencies for a competitive job market.
- Strengthen Technological Advancement: Invest in technological advancements and innovation to enhance the competitiveness of industries in Kerala and create more job opportunities.

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- Government **Engagement** with Diaspora: Strengthen the engagement between the Kerala government and the Kerala Diaspora to tap into their potential for economic and social development.
- Address Obstacles: Address the identified obstacles such as limited job opportunities, low pay, technological advancement, of competition, and gender bias to create a more and favourable inclusive environment youngsters in Kerala.

#### 10. CONCLUSION

Young people in Kerala need a range of support and opportunities to succeed in their careers. From better education, infrastructure, and employment opportunities to a more supportive business environment and emotional support, the suggestions provided by the respondents suggest that a multi-pronged approach is necessary. The loss of talented and educated youngsters is seen as a major concern, resulting in a lack of young and creative minds for research and innovation. The economy may suffer due to a shortage of skilled workers, and the state may become financially delicate. However, some respondents argue that emigration can bring shortterm economic benefits and lead to better career growth and a higher standard of living for individuals. Overall, the responses suggest a need for better education, job opportunities, and research facilities in Kerala to encourage young people to stay in the state and contribute to its development.

There seem to be several issues that people believe are wrong with the Indian economy, including corruption, political intervention, high inflation, low pay, lack of job opportunities, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and a flawed education system. Some respondents also mentioned issues related to social inequality and a scarcity of resources. However, there were also some who believed that there was nothing inherently wrong with the Indian economy, but that improvements could be made in areas such as job opportunities and pay scales. In conclusion, the answers suggest that there are complex challenges facing the Indian economy, and a range of motivational factors need to be addressed in order to create a more prosperous and equitable society so as to avoid future brain drain.

In conclusion, the analysis of the data provides valuable insights into the characteristics and perspectives of young people in Kerala. The findings reveal a significant representation of young adults between the ages of 21 and 25 among the respondents, followed by a substantial



presence of individuals aged 26 to 30. The data also indicates a diverse range of respondents from various districts, with Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Kozhikode proportions, having the highest indicating concentration of respondents from these regions. In terms of professions, students represent the largest group, followed by individuals in the healthcare and education sectors.

Regarding migration, the data shows that the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and Canada are popular destinations for people from Kerala. Education emerged as the primary reason for moving abroad, followed by work-related reasons. Career opportunities and better living standards were identified as the top motivational factors for moving abroad, while limited job opportunities and low pay were highlighted as significant obstacles faced by young people in Kerala. The data also reveals a mixed perception regarding the effectiveness of Kerala's educational system and the engagement of the Kerala Diaspora, with opportunities for improvement identified. Additionally, respondents expressed a need for better infrastructure, job opportunities, skill development, and government support to help young people succeed in their careers.

Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of addressing challenges related to education, employment, and infrastructure in Kerala to create a supportive environment for young people. It also highlights the potential impact of emigration on the state and its economy, emphasizing the need for measures to encourage talented individuals to stay and contribute to the development of Kerala. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to make informed decisions and implement strategies that foster inclusive growth and address the aspirations and needs of the youth in Kerala.

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