

<https://doi.org/10.58419gbs.v11i2.1122506>

WINGS TO FLY: MOTIVATIONS BEHIND GENZ'S MIGRATION INTENTION IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT:

As there is an increase in international migration and the dynamics of migration are becoming intricate, it is imperative to understand the drivers of migration on the intention to migrate. This study highlights the association between Migration Motivation and Migration Intention of Gen Zs in Kerala among a sample of 127 respondents by employing Purposive sampling. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data, and the data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools through SPSS software. The findings of the study revealed that the drivers of migration significantly affected Gen Z's Migration Intention in Kerala. Gender had a statistically significant difference in Migration Motivation. Also, the study found a positive relationship between migration motivation and migration intention. Overall, the study identified that the Gen Zs in Kerala have a desire for better prospects and an intent to explore the global lifestyle.

Keywords: Migration, Migration Motivation, Migration Intention, Gen Z, Generation Z, Kerala

1. INTRODUCTION

The massive industrialisation from the first half of the twentieth century is called as first “age of massive migration” (Hatton & Williamson, 1988). Numerous universities start to deliver their services internationally through the establishment of offshore campuses or the introduction of distance-learning programs (Bessey, 2012). An international perspective of academic performance can be achieved through study-abroad programs (Kim & Goldstein, 2005; Abbott & Silles, 2016). In both developed and developing countries, young people in rural areas prefer migration (Chen et al., 2014; Mihi-Ramirez & Kumpikaite, 2014). There is an increased migration of educated individuals because of internationalization (Cerdin et al., 2014)

In India, Higher wages and wage rates differ at the place of destination. Hence, rural people migrate to uplift their standard of living as the ultimate pull factor (MS A.



RAO, 1996). Also, the push factors may be another reason for migration. It includes monsoon failures, lack of jobs, debt, and starvation at the place of origin (Dhar, 2014). The migration behaviour of students should be considered for the Countries that compete for international students. India, the fastest growing country, prioritizing internationally mobile students is one of their strategic plans in the higher education policies (Hercog & van de Laar, 2017).

The trajectories in international education and migration are the outcome of increased movement of students from Kerala, which emphasises the significance of understanding the factors that lead to student mobility to foreign countries (Skariah & B, 2024) Lately, there has been an increase in the number of students from Kerala migrating to foreign countries, aiming for educational opportunities. (Irudaya & Zachariah, 2019)

This dynamic in global education is expected to be an important life decision of students in Kerala for the next decade or two. This highlights the policymakers to urge to develop policies that make migration risk-free and informed (Skariah & B, 2024). Students' migration decisions in the hunt for better higher education and better employment opportunities are influenced by various factors such as Unemployment levels, political factors, and economic instabilities (Khan et al., 2018). Comprehending the migration decisions of students will aid the academicians and decision makers to advance international policies and practices that may help academic institutions, government officials and international students. (Usman et al., 2025)

The significance of motivating Z generation to engage in an international experience is underscored by the growing globalization (Zhuang et al., 2015a). Previous literature has focused on understanding the drivers for migration Intention of older generations for employment purposes (Bednařiková et al. 2016; Wang & Cai, 2008). Migration motivation and Migration Intention of Z generation of Kerala for Higher education in foreign countries make this study novel.

The purpose of the study is to identify the drivers of migration Intention on gen z's in Kerala. This study addresses the research questions: "Does Migration motivation effect the migration intention of Gen Z's in Kerala?" and " To what extent is migration intention influenced by gender of Z generation in Kerala?".



2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Migration Motivation

Education and acquired skills play a crucial role in people's migration. Also, the expectation of getting a high return in the host country may be another reason for migration (Christian Dustmann & Albrecht Glitz, 2011). The drivers for migration of agriculturally educated rural youth are family background, employment expectations, quality of life and personal background (Bednaříková et al. 2016).

King & Sondhi (2018) focused on a comparative analysis of two categories of international student migration. One is India to the global north, and the other is migration within the global north. The study found that there are similar motivations that can lead to both categories of students for migration. The study revealed that the background characteristics, career aspirations, cultural perspectives on travel and world-class universities stimulate the students to migrate.

(Usman et al., 2025) aimed to examine the factors driving international students to migrate abroad for higher education. The relationship between the drivers of migration namely five exogenous variables including social factors (Job opportunity, Culture), Economic factors (Scholarship opportunities, living cost) and political factors (war and persecutions) and one endogenous variable namely student migration has been analyzed mediated by Host country support and moderated by Gender and Geographical support. He has revealed that job opportunities, culture, and War and persecution do not have a significant relationship with students' migration decisions. Whereas Scholarship opportunities and living costs has proven to have hypothesized significance to Student migration. Host country support hypothesized to have a mediating relationship with all independent variables of the study has proved to have a positive significance, and the moderating effect of gender and geographical background does not affect the relationship between job opportunities and culture on students' migration decisions.

The factors such as economic conditions, professional opportunities, and personal circumstances may be the reasons for migration (Gray & Johnson, 2008). Students' initial motivation before they travel abroad, their understanding of foreign people after residing abroad, and the number of years lived in host countries are the most

important factors or determinants that drive them to continue to stay abroad to work permanently. Working part-time during their studies, foreign language fluency, and GDP per capita are other motivating factors that entice them to continue working abroad. (Cao, 2022). The motivational factors, specifically push and pull factors, had a statistically significant difference in gender to make the decision to study overseas, countries proven by using independent sample t tests Le Huu Nghia, (2019).

2.1.1. Motivational Factors of Migration

Motivational factors	Authors and year published	Conceptual framework
Social factors	(Bednaříková et al., 2016)	Social factors such as family background, personal profile such as gender, education, language proficiency and parental support for studies, employment opportunities are the key social factors that drive people's intention to migrate abroad.
Economic factors	(Usman et al., 2025)	Scholarship opportunities and Living costs are the major economic factors motivating the migration of students with a direct and significant association. Scholarship opportunity is considered a financial support for education that reduces barriers for students to migrate. Living cost consists the expenses like food, housing, and healthcare, which act as an economic pull

		factor for migration.
Political factors	King & Sondhi (2018)	The landscape of International student mobility is greatly shaped by various political factors such as geopolitical power dynamics, historical colonial ties and government policies related to education. All these factors foster a dynamic regime of flows, influenced by both national development strategies and international disparities.
Pull factors	(Skariah & B, 2024)	The promise of higher wages and economic stability in the host countries, and the recommendations from friends, family, and former students, have greatly influenced the student to migrate.
Push factors	(Le Huu Nghia, 2019)	The students have a concern about the poor quality of both the university education system and the local education system. There exist issues with academic freedom, admission processes, and the transparency in the assessment, which are treated as the students' push factors of migration motivation.

2.2. Migration Intention

Behavioural beliefs of the students were significantly related to the perceived value of studying abroad rather than the subjective beliefs and control beliefs, and the perceived value had a strong relationship with the intention to study abroad (Zhuang et al., 2015).

A strong relation to agriculture reduces the migration intention of agricultural students. The migration of students decreases if the parents support agricultural studies in their homeland, the parents own agricultural lands, or the students intend to work in agriculture (Bednařiková et al. 2016).

One of the best ways to increase the number of employees is to attract more international students, as international students are working part-time along with their studies. Students from different parts of the world intending to migrate for their studies and work, becoming fluent in a foreign language and understanding the foreign culture, can be considered as highly skilled employees. This has led the government officials to make plans to attract more international students to acquire higher education at foreign Universities (Cao, 2022).

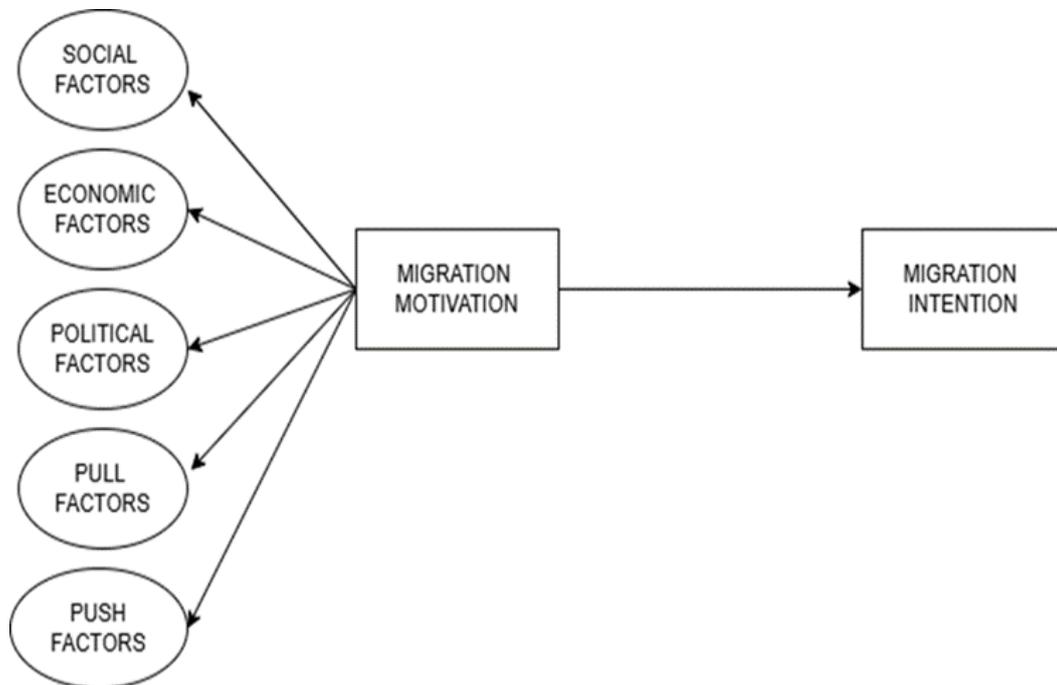


Figure 1: Conceptual structure of the study



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach and follows a quantitative analysis using SPSS software to analyse the relationship between Migration Motivation and Migration Intention among Genz's in Kerala.

Statement of the problem

The growing trend of migration among Generation Z in Kerala for higher education to abroad is influenced by several factors such as socio-economic conditions, quality of education in native nations, career opportunities and global exposure. As International education is gaining increased popularity, there is a lack of empirical research on this domain that specifically determines the motivational drivers influencing Gen Zs in Kerala to migrate abroad for their higher studies. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between migration motivation, such as Social, economic, political, pull and push factors, and the migration intention among Gen Zs in Kerala.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study is to identify the motivation behind Gen Z's intention to migrate abroad for higher studies. The proposed objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the drivers of migration Intention on Gen Z in Kerala.
2. To analyse the effect of Migration motivation on the migration intention of Gen Z in Kerala
3. To understand the influence of gender on the migration intention of Gen Z in Kerala

Limitations

The study is limited to the state of Kerala, making it non-generalizable to other regions. The study considered only 127 respondents as the sample size, as the population was infinite. As the study depends on self-reported data, there may be chances of response bias influenced by respondents' perception, misunderstanding of the questions and social desirability.

Hypotheses

H1: Gender significantly influences Migration Motivation.

H2: Social Factors, Economic Factors, Political Factors, pull factors, and Push Factors are strong predictors of Migration intention.

**Sample size**

The population for the study is not defined. Hence, Purposive Sampling is employed among 127 Gen Zs in Kerala.

Data Collection

Structured Questionnaire was used to collect the data. 140 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents, 127 were correctly filled out and returned, and these are considered for the analysis of the study. 5-point Likert scale is used as the measurement scale, which is labelled as “Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD)”. The research instrument consists of 3 sections, in which the first section consists of demographic details of the respondents, followed by items related to Migration Motivation and Migration Intention in the second and third sections, respectively.

Statistical tools for analysis

The study employed a mix of descriptive and inferential analysis to test the research objectives with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Descriptive statistics and percentage analysis were used with a graphical representation of the demographic profile using pie charts. To understand the influence of gender on migration intention, the non-parametric test, the Independent-sample Mann-Whitney U Test, was applied. Regression analysis was used to identify the relationship between migration motivation and migration intention.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**4.1. Measurement scale of the model**

The study incorporated 44 items for the study. Out of the total items, 38 items come under the migration motivation scale and 6 items under the migration intention scale. The present study adapted the migration motivation scale such as 9 social factors from (Bednaříková et al.,2016), (Usman et al., 2025), 9 economic factors from (Usman et al., 2025), 6 political factors from (Usman et al., 2025), 7 pull factors and 7 push factors from (Le Huu Nghia,2019), and the measurement scale of migration intention was adapted from (Zhuang et al.,2015; Petreska et al., 2024).

Constructs	Items	Substantial Literature
<p>Social factors</p>	<p>I think there are employment opportunities in foreign countries after graduation.</p> <p>I think availability of information regarding career and placement make job hunting easier.</p> <p>I think there are plenty of part-time job options to survive in the host country while studying.</p> <p>I think graduating from foreign country helps to generate new business opportunities.</p> <p>I think foreign culture experiences help to know the world better.</p> <p>I think foreign language proficiency makes us understand foreign culture better.</p> <p>I like to migrate to a neighboring foreign country for higher studies.</p> <p>I like to move to a foreign country that are ready to welcome international students.</p> <p>I think Campus support are given to international students during their study.</p> <p>I think having a strong alumni network would benefit in getting guidance after graduation.</p> <p>I think foreign countries offer scholarships after completing the course.</p>	<p>(Bednaříková et al.,2016), (Usman et al., 2025)</p>
<p>Economic Factors</p>	<p>I think foreign countries offer incentives to the international students.</p> <p>I think no tuition fees are charged by the foreign universities to the international students</p>	<p>(Usman et al., 2025)</p>

	<p>competence</p> <p>I like to migrate for improving chances of employment internationally.</p> <p>I like to migrate for pursuing foreign educational values</p> <p>I like to migrate for gaining professional skills</p>	<p>(Le Huu Nghia,2019)</p>
<p>Push Factors</p>	<p>I like to migrate due to competitive entries into universities in Kerala</p> <p>I like to migrate due to Unavailability of a desired Program in Kerala.</p> <p>I am migrating as I am asked to study abroad by family.</p> <p>I am migrating due to pursuit of immigration Opportunities.</p> <p>I am migrating due to poor educational quality in Kerala</p> <p>I am migrating due to fear of losing social and professional status and networks.</p> <p>I think migration is a risky decision but no other choice.</p>	<p>(Le Huu Nghia,2019)</p>
<p>Migration Intention</p>	<p>I like to migrate abroad to complete at least one semester.</p> <p>I like to migrate abroad to be a part of university-funded international visit.</p> <p>I have interest to study in foreign country.</p> <p>I will move abroad in the near future.</p> <p>I often think about leaving the country.</p> <p>I would like to remain in the country.</p>	<p>(Zhuang et al.,2015; Petreska et al., 2024)</p>

Source: Prepared by researcher

4.2. Test Reliability of the scale adapted

A construct reliability test was carried out to find out whether the research instrument used to collect data is reliable. The two basic principles to determine the construct reliability of a questionnaire is one, the reliability value of the questionnaire must be > 0.07 , two when the questionnaire is reassessed same outcome has to be obtained. Table 1 shows the results of construct reliability test. The test results reveal that for the 44 items the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.712 which is greater than the threshold value 0.07. Therefore, there exist a high reliability of items.

Table 1 Test of Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	No.of Items
.712	44

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	78	61.4
Female	49	38.6
Total	127	100
Marital Status		
Married	6	4.7
Unmarried	121	95.3
Total	127	100

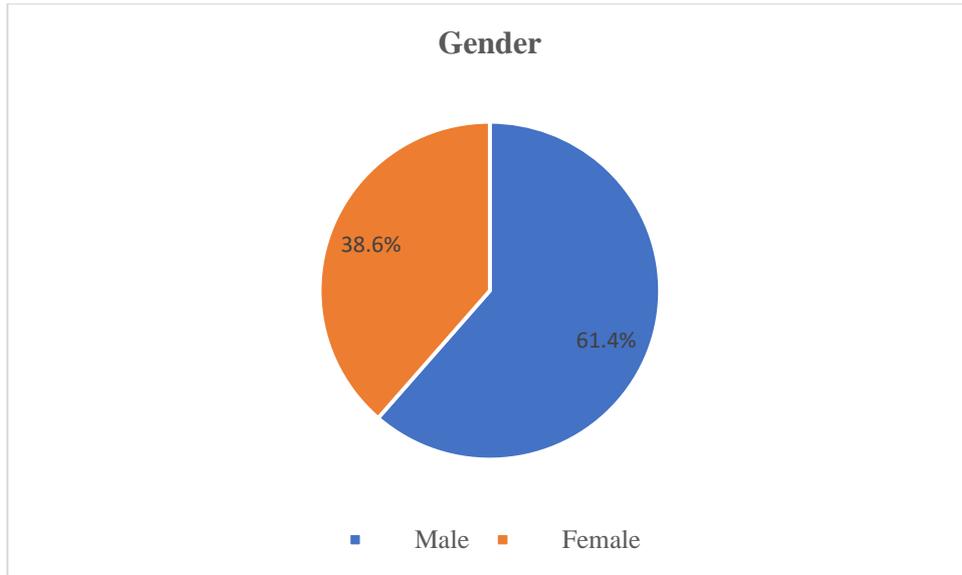


Figure 2: Gender distribution

The above chart represents the gender distribution of the samples of the study. The sample consists of 127 respondents, of which 61.4% are male and 38.6% are female. This shows that there is a male dominance in the sample.

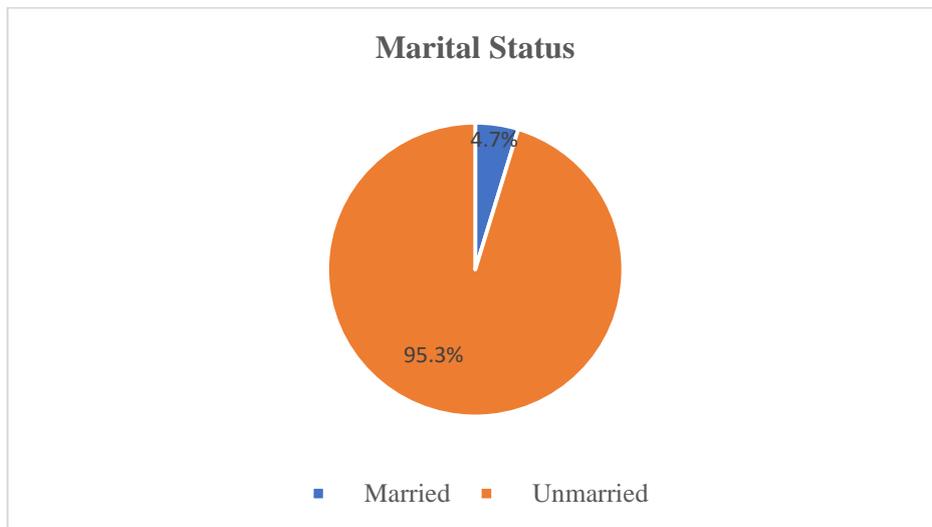


Figure 3: Marital status

The chart depicts the distribution of marital status of the gen Zs in Kerala. Among the total respondents, 4.7% are married, and 95.3% are unmarried. Here, the sample includes higher representation of unmarried respondents.

4.4. Testing the relationships between Gender and Migration Motivation

H1: Gender significantly influences Migration Motivation.

Table 3 Independent -Sample Mann-Whitney U Test

Total No.	127
Mann-Whitney U	3112.500
Wilcoxon W	4337.500
Test Statistic	3112.500
Standard Error	194.064
Standardized Test Statistic	6.191
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.000

Table 4 Hypothesis test result

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
	The distribution of Migration Motivation is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .050.				

The Mann-Whitney U test proved with a U value of 3112.500 and a standardized test statistic Z of 6.191, a statistically significant difference between gender and migration motivation. The results depict that male and female respondents diverge in their level of motivation for migration. Here, the related P value is 0.000, which is less than the significance limit of 0.05. Thus, the study supports the alternative hypothesis (H1).

4.5. Testing the relationship between migration motivation and migration intention.

H2: Social Factors, Economic Factors, Political Factors, pull factors, and Push Factors are strong predictors of Migration intention.

Table 5 Regression Analysis result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
MM → MI	.885 ^a	.784	.775	.68428	.784

(MM – Migration Motivation, MI – Migration Intention)

Regression Analysis is employed to identify the relationship between Migration motivation and Migration intention. Social Factors, Economic Factors, Political Factors, Pull factors, and Push Factors are included as predictors of Migration motivation factors in this study through a substantial literature review. As displayed in Table 5, all five factors significantly predict migration intention ($P < 0.05$). The results show a 78.4% variance in Migration Intention ($R^2 = 0.784$), indicating that these factors have a significant role in the intention of Gen Zs to migrate. R-value 0.885 reveals a strong positive relationship between all five predictors and Migration Intention. Hence, the analysis supports H2.

5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the association between migration motivation and migration intention of Gen Zs in Kerala. It also tries to answer the question of "to what extent gender influences the migration intention of Generation Z". Social, economic, political, and pull and push factors were considered as migration motivation drivers for the study. The study revealed that the above-stated drivers significantly affected Gen Z's migration intention in Kerala. Gender had a statistically significant difference in migration motivation. Le Huu Nghia (2019) proved in his study that migration motivation is statistically differentiated between males and females. Hence, the test result supported the previous research. Men and women think about the benefits and the risks of migration differently. Also, the study found a positive relationship between migration motivation and migration intention. There is a higher level of motivation that confirms a concrete intention to migrate. Overall, the study identified that the GenZs in Kerala have a desire for better prospects and an intent to explore the global lifestyle. The Z generation has a desire to seek opportunities that are beyond their home country. They are ambitious, aspiration-driven, and heartily intent towards migration. Gen Z's migrate abroad for higher education because, they are encountered with challenges like adaptation to new culture, academic demands and strong command of language proficiency (Ida Grace & Mishra, 2024).

As there is an increase in international migration and the dynamics of migration are becoming intricate, it is significant to understand the influence of other dimensions of motivation on Migration intention. Cultural, psychological, and environmental factors can be considered in future studies, as it may aid in developing a more comprehensive understanding of Migration intention. Motivators such as career advancement, financial incentives and public recognition

has a significant role in enhancing migration intention(Sivaraja et al., 2025).To comprehend how the migration intention of people changes over time, Longitudinal research can be conducted. Widening the geographical scope of the study can help in examining how the motivational drivers of people to migrate vary across different regions and countries. Conducting in-depth studies, such as focus groups and case studies, will aid in understanding the dimensions that are not explored through surveys.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to all the respondents for their immense participation in this research work.

Ethical considerations

The authors perceived ethical considerations throughout the research stages, including receiving respondent's consent to publish their information.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

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