



A Comparative Study of Socio-Demographic and Economic Factors Related to Rural and Urban Male Labour Migration in Dinhata I and II Blocks, West Bengal, India

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Abstract: An attempt has been made in this paper to compare the socio-demographic and economic factors responsible for both rural and urban male labour migration from Dinhata I and Dinhata II blocks of Cooch Behar District, West Bengal, India. The socio-demographic factors include religion, social groups, family type, family size, number of dependents in the family and education level of the male migrant labourers. The economic factors include their remittance behaviour, such as the amount of remittance, time gap and pattern of expenditure of the remittance. Furthermore, this article tries to highlight the constraints in the study area, which push the male labourers outside. To conduct the study, primary data were collected from 211 migrants of Dinhata I and II blocks. Among them 161 were rural and 50 were urban migrants. The results demonstrated the varied impacts of socio-demographic and economic factors on rural and urban male labour migration.

Keywords: Rural male migrant labourers, Urban male migrant labourers, Socio-demographic factors, Remittances, Quality of Life.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Migration is one of the most dynamic processes, and there are different types based on the nature of the movement, duration of stay and nature of the location. Depending on the nature of the location, migration can be categorised into internal and external types. Internal migration is the migration from one state to another within a country or across the districts within a state. This type of migration is more common in developing countries than in developed countries. India, a developing country in the world, experiences internal migration because of huge regional disparities in employment opportunities between states and across districts (Mukherjee, 1991). Internal migration is dominated by male labourers worldwide and also in India (NSSO, 2007-08), where migrants belong to economically distressed groups as well as privileged groups in the society (Desai & Chatterjee, 2016). Migration of rural male labourers in India is higher in socio-economically weaker parts of the country, and the state of West Bengal is the third highest (3.34 crores) labour-sending state in the country (Census Handbook, 2011). In this state, Cooch Behar is a socially and economically backward district (HDR, 2004, De et al., 2017) with very few cottage industries. Although there are agricultural activities during the monsoonal period, several rural male labourers remain unemployed during the non-monsoonal time. This crisis in job opportunities pushes them to migrate to other industrial states for better wages (Desai & Chatterjee, 2019). Against this backdrop, the present study attempts to highlight the key features of rural and urban male labour migration, the associated socio-demographic and economic factors and the nature of such migration in two blocks, namely, Dinhata I and Dinhata II of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal, India.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD :

First, 12 villages of Dinhata I block (out of 129 villages) and 11 villages of Dinhata II block (out of 118 villages) were selected using the systematic random sampling technique. Thereafter, 211 male labour migrants, including 161 rural male migrant labourers and 50 urban male migrant labourers, were selected for interview from the 12 and 11 villages of Dinhata I and II blocks, respectively, with snowball sampling technique. These 211 migrant male labourers were interviewed with a structured schedule to fetch the primary data and obtain the results of the analysis.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

Socio-demographic characteristics of rural and urban male migrants

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Male migrants

| Socio-demographic characteristics | Rural migrant (%) | Urban migrant (%) |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Religion | | |
| Hindu | 75.40 | 94.20 |
| Muslim | 24.60 | 5.80 |
| Social Group | | |
| Unreserved | 12.00 | 31.88 |
| SC | 62.60 | 52.17 |
| OBC | 25.40 | 15.95 |
| Family type | | |
| Nuclear | 48.20 | 68.12 |
| Joint | 51.80 | 31.88 |
| Family size | | |
| Small (≤ 3) | 36.69 | 65.22 |
| Medium (4-6) | 51.76 | 20.29 |
| Large (7-9) | 9.29 | 14.49 |
| Very large (> 9) | 2.26 | 00.00 |
| Number of dependant in a family | | |
| Lower dependant (≤ 2) | 13.08 | 28.99 |
| Moderate dependant (3-5) | 61.05 | 57.97 |
| Higher dependant (> 5) | 25.87 | 13.04 |
| Migrants' education | | |
| Illiterate | 6.52 | 00.00 |
| Primary | 60.50 | 30.43 |
| Secondary | 24.12 | 25.79 |
| Higher secondary | 05.23 | 17.70 |
| Graduation | 03.26 | 14.49 |
| More than Graduation | 00.00 | 11.59 |

Source: Field Survey

In the study area, rural and urban male migrant labourers differ in their socio-demographic characteristics. Their family type, family structure and education level differ from each other. Most of the rural male migrant labourers are unskilled, whereas urban male migrant labourers are either skilled or unskilled. The labourers mainly belong to two religions groups, i.e. Hinduism and Islam (Table 1), because of the dominance of these two religions in the study area (Cooch Behar District religion census, 2011). Moreover, 75.40% of rural male migrant labourers and 94.20% of urban male migrant labourers are Hindus, whereas 24.60% of rural male migrant labourers and 5.80% of urban male migrant labourers are Muslims. If the number of male migrant labourers is considered according to social groups, 62.60% of rural male migrant labourers and 52.17% of urban male migrant labourers belong to Scheduled Caste category. Furthermore, 12.00% of rural male migrant labourers and 31.88% of urban male migrant labourers belong to the unreserved category, whereas 25.40% of rural male migrant labourers and 15.95 % of urban male migrant labourers belong to the Other Backward Class category.

Most of the rural male migrant labourers are from joint families (51.80%), and urban male migrant labourers are from nuclear families (68.12%). Joint families in rural areas suffer from large family size and a large number of dependents (Chadda & Deb, 2013) who rely on one or two earners in their families. Therefore, those earners are compelled to migrate (Eames, 1967). However, in urban areas, especially in the case of nuclear families, male labour migration is a choice, rather than a compulsion, to satisfy their job expectations and improve their quality of life (Hoodfer, 1996). Similarly, 51.76%, 9.29% and 2.26% of male migrant labourers in the rural areas belong to medium, large and very large families, respectively, whereas 65.22%, 20.29% and 14.49% of the labourers in the urban areas belong to small, medium and large families, respectively (Table 1). Likewise, most of the rural male migrant labourers have a moderate to high number of dependents in their families, whereas in urban families, the number of dependents is moderate. Additionally, 61.05% of rural male migrant labourers predominantly experience the burden of a moderate number of



dependents in their families and 25.87% endure the burden of a high number of dependents, whereas 57.97% of the urban male migrant labourers face the burden of a moderate number of dependents and 28.99% of them experience the burden of a low number of dependents (Table 1). The presence of a large number of dependents in families in rural areas is a major feature and push factor for rural male labour migration (Wondimagegnu & Zeleke, 2017).

Education level in the source region is also a determining factor in the case of both rural and urban male labourers. In the study area, the urban male migrant labourers have a higher education level than their rural counterparts. Most of the rural male migrant labourers are educated only up to the primary level (60.50%), followed by the secondary level (24.12%), higher secondary level (5.23%) and graduation level (3.26%). No rural male migrant labourer has achieved a level of education above graduation. Contrastingly, among urban male migrant labourers, population educated only up to the primary level is less than that in rural male migrant labourers (30.43%). They have mostly achieved higher education levels than the rural male migrant labourers. The findings revealed that 25.79% and 17.70% of urban male migrant labourers have achieved a secondary and higher secondary level of education, respectively, and that 14.49% has achieved graduation level of education and 11.59% above graduation level. No urban male migrant labourer is illiterate (Table 1). Achieving a higher level of education accompanied by any skill or vocational training makes male migrant labourers more amenable to being engaged in better jobs (Abdulloev et al., 2019). In rural areas, the absence of higher education among the male migrant labourers poses constraints in being engaged in any kind of skilled labour in their native place. Therefore, they migrate outside in search of jobs.

Characteristics of Male migration in Rural and Urban areas

Table 2: Characteristics of Migration

| Characteristics of Migration | Rural (%) | Urban (%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Reasons for migration | | |
| Poverty | 55.97 | 00.00 |
| Unemployment | 33.98 | 28.99 |
| Job opportunity | 10.05 | 71.01 |
| Sector for work | | |
| Construction | 64.07 | 18.37 |
| Factory | 22.11 | 04.08 |
| Driving and tailoring | 03.77 | 32.65 |
| Government | 00.00 | 18.36 |
| Private/Public | 00.00 | 16.34 |
| Others | 10.05 | 10.20 |
| Migration term | | |
| Short term (<6months) | 24.37 | 53.06 |
| Intermediate term (6-10months) | 52.01 | 30.61 |
| Long term (>10months) | 23.62 | 16.33 |

Source: Field Survey

The major push factors for male labour migration in an area include poverty, unemployment, lack of job opportunity, large family size with high dependency, illiteracy, the small size of landholding per capita, lack of skill and lack of human capital (Singh et al., 2011). In the study area, the reasons for migration differ between the rural and urban male labourers. Most of the respondents from rural areas stated poverty (55.97%) (Debnath & Ray, 2019) as main reason for their migration. Moreover, 33.98% of the respondents stated prevailing seasonal unemployment during the non-agricultural period in rural areas as their cause of migration, and 10.05% stated lack of availability of alternative employment as the additional cause for their migration (Mandal et al., 2018). In urban areas, 28.99% of the male labourers migrate because of unemployment and 71.01% migrate with the expectation of getting the desired job (Table 2).

Male migrant labourers are employed in different secondary, tertiary or informal sectors depending on their skill, knowledge and literacy level. Table 2 indicates that most of the rural male migrant labourers are engaged in the secondary sector and that the urban male migrant labourers are mostly engaged in secondary and tertiary sectors (Banerjee, 2016). Moreover, the rural male migrant labourers are mostly engaged in construction works (64.07%), followed by factory works (22.11%), other sectors (business, sales, hawkers, etc.) (10.05%) and driving and tailoring



(3.77%). None of them are engaged in government or private jobs. However, the urban male migrant labourers are engaged in secondary sectors, such as driving and tailoring (32.65%), construction (18.37%), and also in tertiary sectors, such as government jobs (18.36%), private service (16.34%), factory works (4.08%) and others (10.20%). The engagement of urban male migrant labourers in the tertiary sector is determined by their skills and literacy level (Chaudhuri, 2004).

Labour migration can be categorised as short-term (<6 months), intermediate-term (6–10 months) and long-term migration (>10 months). From Table 2, it is evident that urban male migrant labourers prefer short-term migration (53.06%) as compared with rural male migrant labourers (24.37%). On the contrary, rural male migrant labourers are inclined towards intermediate (52.01%) and long-term migration (23.62%). Rural male migrant labourers tend to return home after a certain period, approximately 6 months or 1 year (Guilmoto,1998), because their engagement in daily wage-rated works hinders their repeated travel to their native place. However, as most of the urban male migrant labourers are engaged in salaried jobs and have leave opportunities from their services, they do not face such constraints.

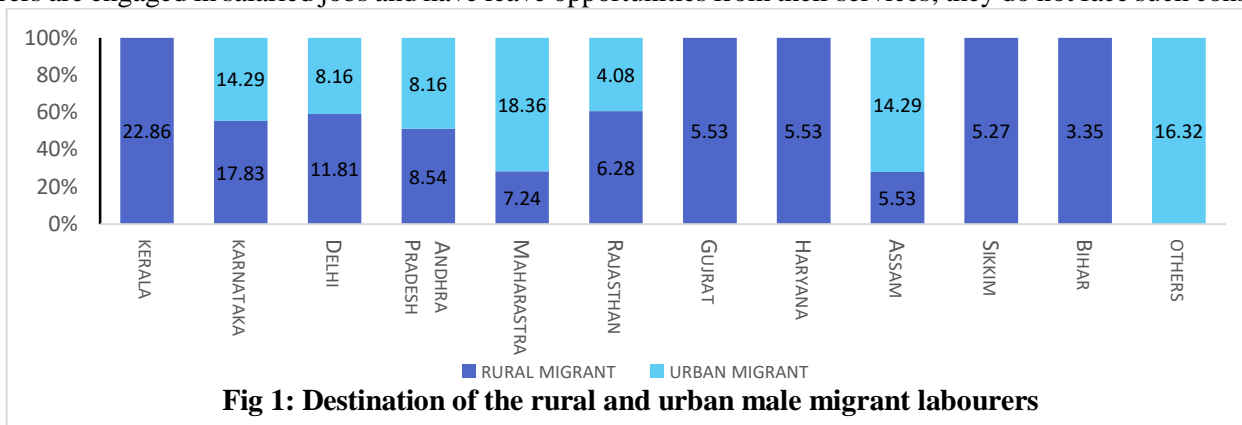


Fig 1: Destination of the rural and urban male migrant labourers

Destinations of rural and urban labour migrants

The destinations of the male migrant labourers also vary with the type of employment and skill. Many rural male migrant labourers prefer to migrate to Kerala (22.86%) because of the high demand for labourers in construction works at a higher wage rate than that offered in West Bengal (Chakraborty et al., 2020). Kerala is followed by Karnataka (17.83%) because of the certain boom in the informal economic sector in that state (Sridhar & Wan, 2010). Other places with good job opportunities in the labour market include Delhi (11.8%), Andhra Pradesh (8.54%), Maharashtra (7.24%), Rajasthan (6.28%), Gujrat (5.53%), Haryana (5.53%), Assam (5.53%), Sikkim (5.27%) and Bihar (3.35%) (Fig. 1).

Table 3: Economic Characteristics of Male Migrant Labourers

| Remittance behavior | Rural (%) | Urban (%) |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Amount of remittance in INR | | |
| Low amount of remittance (<=10000) | 64.80 | 37.00 |
| Intermediate amount of remittance (10001-20000) | 34.20 | 44.89 |
| High amount of remittance (20001-30000) | 01.00 | 13.10 |
| Very high amount of remittance(>30000) | 00.00 | 05.01 |
| Interval of remittance sent | | |
| Every month | 49.20 | 69.60 |
| After 6 month | 27.00 | 08.69 |
| When required | 21.00 | 20.30 |
| Not sent remittance | 02.80 | 01.40 |

Source: Field Survey

Amount of remittance

Rural and urban male migrant labourers send remittance from their destinations to their homes. The economic prosperity of the migrants' families depends upon the amount of remittance received by them. To provide good, healthy, prosperous living conditions, good education to their children and for a happy and satisfied life with their family members, male



migrant labourers work outside their native place. There is a disparity in the amount of remittance sent by rural and urban male migrant labourers (Table 3). Most of the rural male migrant labourers send a very low amount of remittance ($\leq ₹10000$) (64.80%), 34.20% send an intermediate amount of remittance ($₹ 10001-20000$) and only 1.00% send a high amount of remittance ($₹ 20001-30000$). In the case of urban male migrant labourers, 37.00% send a low amount, 44.89% send an intermediate amount, 13.10% send a high amount and 5.01% send a very high amount of remittance. As rural male migrant labourers are engaged in daily wage-rated works and urban male migrant labourers are engaged in different salaried jobs, the former send lower remittances and the latter send higher remittances to their families.

Interval of remittance

Male migrant labourers send their remittances to their homes at a certain interval, such as monthly interval, half-yearly interval or when required. It was observed that most of the urban male migrant labourers send their remittances at a monthly interval (69.60%) or only when required (20.30%) because most of their families are fully dependent on these remittances and some are not dependent at all. The regular sending of remittances always enhances the economic improvement of the left-behind families and, in turn, enriches the economic prosperity of the source region (Tumbe, 2015). However, rural male migrant labourers are more interested in sending remittances at 6-month intervals (27.00%) or when required (21.00%) and are less inclined to send remittances at monthly intervals (49.20%) (Table 3). Irregular income and less engagement in the formal labour force are the reasons for such disparities (Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2015).

Expenditure pattern of the remittance

The study clearly revealed that the remittances are spent for different purposes, the most important being basic needs, child education and health care of the family members. A comparative analysis of the expenditure pattern of the remittance was performed between the rural and urban male migrant labourers. The findings showed that in rural areas, most of the remittances are used for fulfilling the basic needs of the families and livelihoods, which indicates a subsistence type of male labour migration (De Haas, 2006). Nonetheless, in urban areas, remittances are mostly spent for child education and healthcare or sometimes for other activities, such as shopping and leisure (Fig. 2). These kinds of expenses determine the well-being of the families.

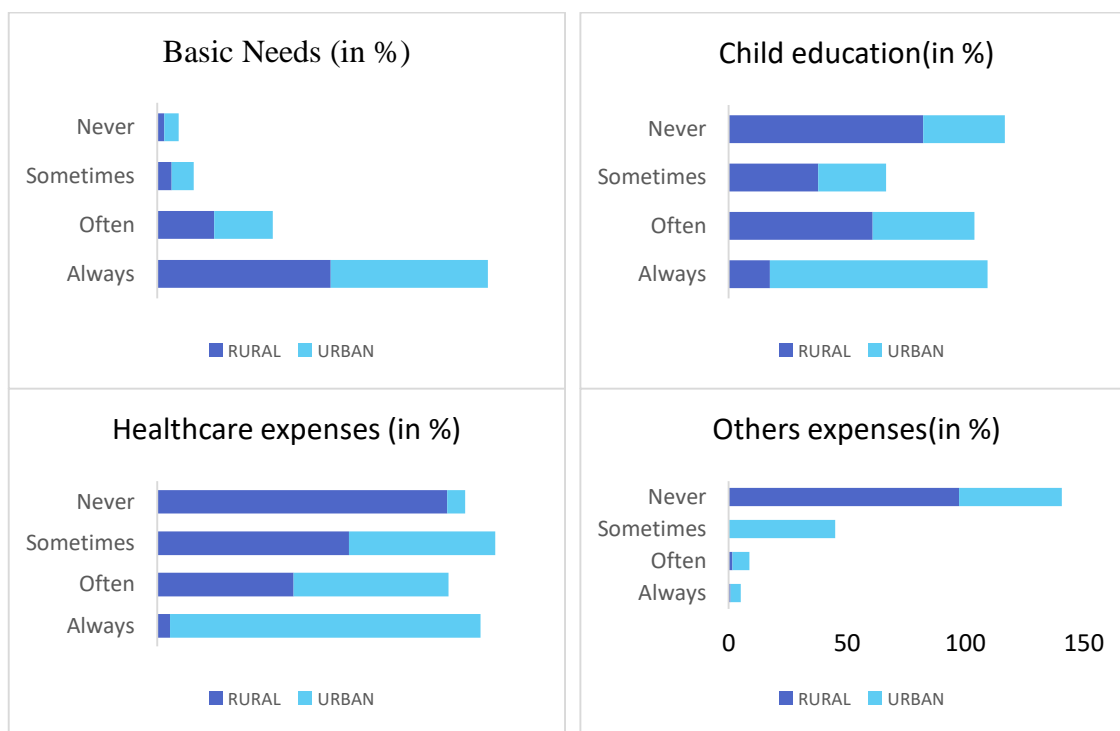


Fig 2: Expenditure Pattern

Investment and Savings

Investment and savings are other ways of utilising the remittance, which can ensure the future security and well-being of the families of rural and urban male migrant labourers. While the families of very few rural male migrant labourers are keen on investing the received remittances, most of the families of urban male migrant labourers try to invest their



remittance regularly. However, not all urban families invest the remittance. As seen in Fig. 3, the families of most urban male migrant labourers are interested in saving the remittance, whereas only very few families of rural male migrant labourers do so.

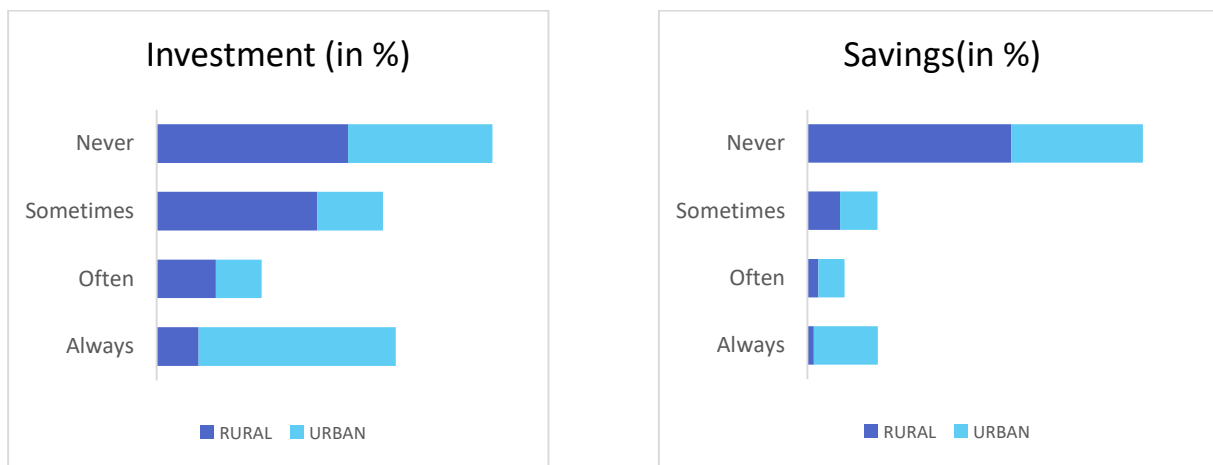


Fig 3: Investment and Savings pattern

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

This study was solely based on a primary-level field survey on male labour migration from both rural and urban areas. The findings are somewhat interesting to conclude. Among the religious groups, Hindus are the ones who commonly migrate outside. Among the social groups, Schedule Caste is the most prevalent group in the district, which takes the leading role in male labour migration. This is followed by Other Backward Class in the rural areas, which indicates their backwardness in the district. The family structures of rural and urban male migrant labourers suggest that rural male labourers who are more susceptible to migration belong mostly to medium and very large-sized joint families with moderate to high dependency. On the contrary, urban male migrant labourers belong to nuclear, small-sized families with a low dependency. This scenario highlights the fact that alleviation of poverty in the family is the major reason for male labour migration in both cases. Other triggering factors of rural male labour migration are lower education level, poverty and seasonal unemployment in the district, which push them from their native place and limit their engagement in non-skilled jobs. In addition, the higher education level of the urban male migrant labourers and the absence of desired job opportunities that are commensurate with their knowledge and skills in the study area compel them to migrate for jobs in tertiary and quaternary sectors. Most of the rural male migrant labourers prefer to migrate to South India, particularly Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, because of the high demand for labourers and the higher daily wage rates in the secondary sector in those places. On the contrary, urban male migrant labourers prefer to move towards Western or Northern India, such as the states of Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujrat, for better opportunities of secured jobs in different sectors. Engagement of rural male migrant labourers in informal sectors is characterised by intermediate or long-term migration, and the remittance sent by them is low and irregular. Contrastingly, urban male migrant labourers are mostly salaried workers who are short-term migrants and send an intermediate, high or very high amount of remittance regularly at monthly intervals to their families. In the study area, rural male labour migration is generally of subsistence type, wherein the remittances are used mainly for fulfilling the livelihood rather than economic development. Finally, it can be concluded that rural male migrant labourers are poor, less educated, socially deprived groups who endure the burden of large families with a high number of dependents. This situation compels them to migrate and engage in different types of daily-rated works that can fulfil their family needs. The better education level and lower family burden of the urban male migrant labourers offer the flexibility to choose the desired jobs without compulsion, which helps to improve their quality of life.

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