

Psychosocial Studies of Migration and Community: Introduction to the Special Issue

Dr.Mala kumari

M.A.(Ph.d)

(Psychology),LNMUDarbhanga

Abstract

The special issue on psychosocial studies of migration and community, we briefly reflect on the global increase in, and issues related to, both international and domestic migration, particularly from rural areas of less developed countries, which has fueled rapid urbanization and intercultural tensions in both post-industrial and developing countries. Quarry workers form a major part of the work force of the unorganised industrial sector. Various psychosocial stressors makes quarry workers vulnerable to various psychological disorders. The current study focuses on psychological distress, disability levels and the quality of community life existing among quarry workers. The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between psychological distress and disability. The community of quarry workers live in pathetic conditions. Statistics reveal that 97.6% have no sanitation, toilet or drainage facilities. The implications of the results are discussed and the need for professional guidance from psychiatric social workers.

Keywords: Acculturation, Globalization, Community, Immigration, Immigrants, migrants, Psychosocial factors.

Introduction

Hereditary trade characteristics determine the type of workforce in India, resulting in region and task specific movements. For example, the people from Bharuch in Gujarat migrate only for quarry work. Today, these migratory trends have developed into a system of employment wherein contractors select and employ migrant labourers for prospective employers. Migration, international or internal, has an impact on one's psychological health as well as their level of functioning. The process of migration is not simple or straightforward. Migration and its accompanying stressors induce certain amount of disability among migrating individuals and their families. Migration involves certain phases to go through; hence, it is a process. Many times, lack of preparedness, difficulties in adjusting to the new environment, the complexity of the local system, language difficulties, cultural disparities and adverse experiences would cause distress to the migrants. Moreover subsequently it has a negative impact on mental well-being of such population. Due to globalization, modernization, improved technologies and developments in all the sectors, the migration and its impact on human well-being is a contemporary issue; hence, here is an attempt to understand the migration and its impact on the mental health of the migrants based on the studies conducted around.

Literature Review

- Much of the existing literature on migration concentrates on the 'development-induced' economic migration that resulted from unequal development trajectories. McDowell and others (1997), define migration as one-way population movements from less-endowed areas to well-endowed prosperous areas through the 'push' created by poverty and a lack of work and the 'pull' created by better wages in the destination (Lee, 1966).
- Breman (1996) has argued that the continued existence of a large mass of unorganised workers belies expectations that workers would eventually shift from the traditional to the modern sector. An examination of the major industries in the informal sector reveals a steady replacement of local workers by migrants. He also finds that rural-to-urban migration share certain common characteristics with rural-to-rural migration.
- Chakrapani and Vijaya Kumar's (1994), study of Palampur labour states that there has been an increase in migrant incomes. Haberfeld and others (1999) research on migration in Durgapur found that households with migrant members had higher income levels as compared to those who had none. On the other hand, a review of migration studies by Kothari (2002) states that migration can both reduce and perpetuate poverty.

Why do people Migrate

People migrate from one place to another place for many reasons such as, education, employment opportunities and weather issues and so on. However there are a number of theories that have been developed to understand the different factors, which influence people to leave a particular place and move to another, e.g. provides laws of migration as follow;

- Every migration flow generates a return or counter-migration.
- The majority of migrants moves a short distance.
- Migrants who move longer distances tend to choose big-city destinations.
- Urban residents are often less migratory than the inhabitants of rural areas.
- Families are less likely to make international moves than young adults.
- Most migrants are adults.
- Large towns grow by migration rather than natural increase.

Types of migration

The concept of "migration" is wider which can be classified into several types based on the characteristics and the process involved in it;

Patterns of Migration

The patterns of migration have been identified as short distance migration, rural to rural migration, long distance migration, rural to urban and vice versa. In the international setting the migration patterns have been identified broadly as North American System, Western Europe System, Persian Gulf System, Asia-Pacific System and Southern Cone System. The migration happens mostly in the above patterns.

In India the patterns of migration have been changed due to social-cultural, economic, political and legal factors. As the result of industrialization and economic development people started to migrate in large numbers; it is usually from villages to towns, from towns to other towns/cities and to other countries also. The patterns of migration in India can be seen in terms of short distance, medium and long distance migration. Wherein short distance migration women have largely migrated because of the tradition of exogamy, it is even more predominant among the population of lower socio-economic status. Rural to rural migration has been decreasing and rural to urban and urban to urban migrations have been increasing, where medium and long distance migrations take place and here both sexes seem to be equal.

The process of migration has a definite influence on health, social, economic, cultural, religious and political aspects of human life and the region. Since the beginning the people have been studying the impact of migration on different aspects of the human life and among these, impact on the mental health of the migrants is one important area which has been attracting the people as well. When individuals migrate from one place to another place, the process involves a series of factors, such as preparations and fulfilling all procedures, reaching the destination, adjusting to the new culture and society, compromising with their beliefs and practices, accommodation, assimilation etc., this process may not be favorable to everyone. There are some special groups such as women, children, elderly, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, etc. who are more prone to certain mental health issues during the migration process.

Studies conducted in India

In the cross-sectional survey of people living in SangamVihar, New Delhi, the slum residents where majority of them is migrated from other states of India, found to be most at risk for mental illnesses. Poor social support, relationship problems with other members of the family, increased worry about health, easily getting angry and irritated, lack of satisfaction about the living

condition etc. are the major findings from the survey which indicate the poor psycho-social health status of the internally migrated population.

The majority of migratory quarry workers is mostly exhibiting varieties of somatic and neurotic symptoms for a long period of time. They have a poor awareness about their mental health as well as have a very poor help seeking behavior. The refugee children from Sri Lanka, who are staying in residential school in Bangalore, have come across a number of high stressful life events; some of them have witnessed the violence, some of them have lost their parents. The children are exhibiting adjustmental problems with the environment, low self-esteem and emotional problems. They have high psychological and social distress, which indicates a poor mental health status of the refugee children. The psychiatric morbidity was more (predominantly depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and generalized anxiety disorders) among Kashmiri migrants (33.66%), who were staying in Muthi camp at Jammu, compared with non-migrants (26%). The major observation of the study is that, there is a need for improving the socio-economic status of migrants and providing them effective psychiatric services.

The occurrence rate of psychiatric disorders among migrated refugee population (who came to India after partition) of Lucknow was 9.6% compared with non-migrant local population, which was 4.2%. The psychiatric patients (majority was suffering from psychoneuroses, depression and enuresis) among the migrated group were been suffering for >10 years and mostly belong to older aged group.

Migration Positively Associated With the Wellbeing of Migrants

Migration is found to be the factor for improvements in social and mental health status of migrants, who migrated to New Zealand from Tonga when compared with the native population; it is truer especially among women and the group who had a lower mental health status in their country of origin before the migration. There are factors which improved the mental health of migrants in place of destination that include, living as permanent residents for longer periods (<3 years), good employment opportunities, joining family members and/or community members who are already in the destination place, accessing better public services such as health care and being subject to less cultural restrictions.

Regional Pattern of Temporary labour Migration in India

Being a spatial phenomenon, the major contribution in migration research has been made by geographers rather than by demographers. Most of internal migrations are labour centric with a significant proportion migrating on a temporary basis. Research suggests that temporary labour migration plays an important role in household survival and is used as an income diversification and risk-coping strategy in agrarian economies such as India. Prevailing uneven regional development impels temporary intra and inter-state mobility of labour in various parts in India. For instance, women's labour mobility from Jharkhand and West Bengal in the transplanting season (*boro*) as well as the harvesting season (*aman*) of paddy crops and the seasonal migration of tribal groups from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat to work in sugar mills have been well documented in literature (Circular migration and multilocational: Livelihood strategies in rural India', Oxford University Press). Temporary labour migration is thus predominantly a rural phenomenon dominated by rural to urban migration. Persons belonging to poor and disadvantaged caste groups (scheduled tribes and scheduled castes) with low educational attainments have a high propensity of engaging in temporary labour migration (Temporary and seasonal migration: Regional pattern, characteristics and associated factors'; Economic and political weekly).

By definition, temporary labour migration or circulation is a move made for a short period with the intention of returning to the usual place of residence. Temporary absence from the place of origin of the migrant is a required condition for analysis and duration of six months is generally considered the limit for temporary stay. An important group of temporary labour migrants consists of seasonal migrants, who combine activity at several places according to seasonal requirements. The temporary labour migrant in this study is defined as a household member who stayed away from his or her village or town for one month or more but fewer than six months in the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment.

In India, several empirical studies have enriched migration research. Nonetheless, most of them are micro studies limited to few villages or small geographical regions, which do not provide any regional picture of temporary migration through the country. Few studies have presented patterns and determinants of temporary migration at national and state level (*ibid.*). But these estimates are aggregates of the country or state that conceal the intra-state or regional differentials. It is therefore, important to explore the regional pattern at intra-state level. The Unit Level Data of the 64th round of National Sample Survey (NSS) The NSS collected socioeconomic and migration-related information from 572,254 persons of 125,578 sample households, published in 2010. Migration rates, calculated to study the prevalence of migration are not necessarily based

on inflows or outflows; rather these are estimates that show how many persons per thousand are making a temporary move from a particular region. It is important to note that the data on temporary labour migration is collected at the place of origin.

Temporary labour migration rates across the NSS regions have been calculated to highlight intra-state variation. There are 88 NSS regions delimited in the country, which may be assumed as geographical regions. The NSS region, essentially an intermediate unit between the district and the state, typically consist of several districts within a state with similar agro-climatic conditions and socio-economic features.

Regional Pattern of Temporary Labour Migration in India

There are 13,076,510 temporary labour migrants in the year preceding 2007–08 (reference period of the survey) and the migration rate at the national level is 20 migrants per thousand. The regional pattern of temporary labour migration shows that it occurs over a vast geographical stretch under varied socioeconomic milieu (Fig 1).

Beginning from the north, it is observed that temporary labour migration rate of mountainous region of Jammu and Kashmir is almost half (11 migrants per 1000) of the outer hills and Jhelum valley (20 migrants per 1000 each). Further down, an insignificant migration rate with less intra-state variation is found in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. Moving towards the south-west, it is observed that the southern region of Rajasthan maps the highest migration rate (48) followed by its northern (32) and western region (29). Gujarat, interestingly shows a higher temporary labour migration rate (34 migrants per 1000) than the national average of 20 migrants per thousand. Region-wise estimates in south-eastern Gujarat, reveal that its tribal belt with a history of seasonal migration, has a significantly high migration rate of 68 migrants per thousand. The remaining regions—Kutch and Saurashtra, have a moderate migration rate (25 each), while its northern plains have very low migration rates (6 and 2 respectively).

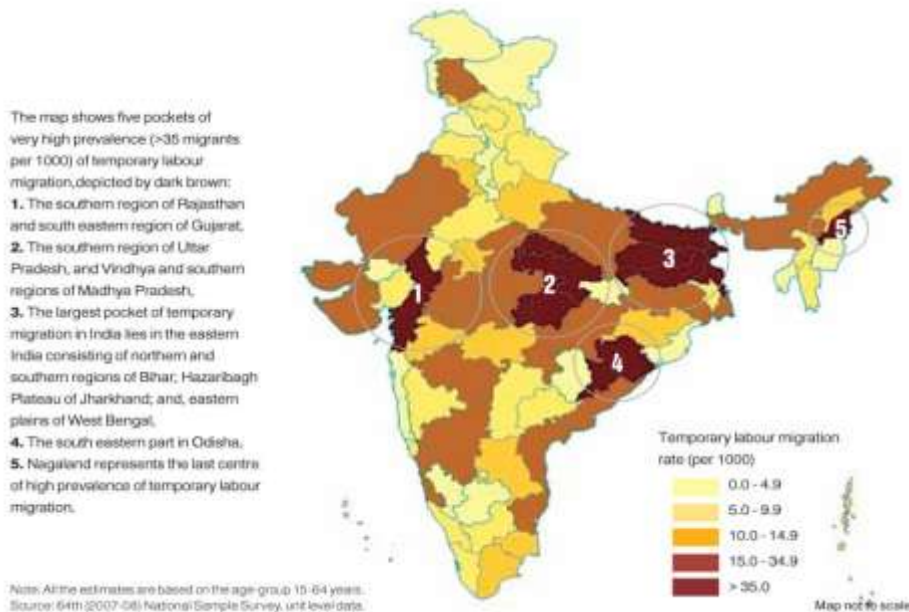


Fig. : Temporary labour migration rate (per 1000 population), India, 2007-08

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India, displays broad variations at regional levels. The migration rate ranges from as high as 45 migrants per thousand in the southern region (Bundelkhand) and 25 migrants per thousand in its eastern parts to as low as nine migrants per thousand in the northern Upper Ganga Plain. The high migration rates may be attributable to the economic backwardness of the southern and eastern regions as documented elsewhere (World Bank, 2008: Report 43573-IN). Bihar interestingly, one of India's predominant economically backward states, marks the highest temporary labour migration rate in India (50 migrants per 1000) yet is characterised by negligible regional variations.

Among the north-eastern states where each state, except Assam, is comprised of only one NSS region, Nagaland has a significantly high migration rate of 48 per thousand. In Assam the highest migration rate is observed in central Brahmaputra Plains (33) followed by the western plains (15), while other regions have lesser intensity of temporary migration. Meghalaya has a moderate migration rate of 18 migrants per thousand. Significantly high temporary labour migration rate can be observed in West Bengal in its eastern plains region (60), which is dominated by the paddy cultivation that requires a large amount of labour, as documented in micro-level studies. Jharkhand, which also has a very high intensity of temporary labour migration (36 migrants per 1000), displays a considerable intra-state variation in two of its regions. The relatively less urbanised and underdeveloped region of Hazaribagh Plateau has

almost twice (46) the migration rate as compared to the developed reaches of Ranchi Plateau (24).

In Odisha, the highest temporary labour migration rate is observed in the southern region (39) which consists of India's most backward district trio Koraput, Balangir and Kalahandi, while its other regions have a moderate to very low level of migration. In Chhattisgarh only Mahanadi basin shows a high temporary labour migration rate (24). Madhya Pradesh, one of the high temporary migration intensity states, has large-scale variations in migration rates, with the highest in the southern region (51) to the lowest in the south western region (20). It could be noted that all the hilly and plateau regions namely Vindyan Plateau (38), Central Plateau (33) and Malwa Plateau (29) have a very high prevalence of temporary migration; while the south western region is relatively more developed in terms of mines, industries and urbanisation and is also dominated by non-tribal population.

All of the south Indian states, including Maharashtra, have very low temporary migration rates at aggregate level but there are some pockets with moderate to high level of temporary migration rate within these states too. For instance, the inland central region in Maharashtra shows the highest migration rate (29) while in Karnataka it is highest in inland northern region (24). In Andhra Pradesh, both the coastal regions show moderate intensity of temporary migration while in the remaining regions it is less. Insignificant intra-state variation is observed in the migration rates in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Although temporary labour migration appears to be mainly a north Indian phenomenon, some backward interior regions of south Indian states have a significant prevalence of temporary labour migration which appears to defy the overall development status of their states. These pockets of high temporary migration prevalence have also been documented in micro level studies. For example, there is evidence of large-scale seasonal labour migration of the tribal population from south eastern Gujarat to nearby rural and urban areas despite the high growth status of the State. Studies have also shown that Gujarat has a history of seasonal migration from its dry, hilly, and tribal dominated areas. The adjoining region of Rajasthan too has attracted several village level surveys due to its diverse ecological and human landscape, with rugged Aravali ranges housing concentrated pockets of poor tribal communities. There has been a long history of seasonal migration of workers from Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern plain region of West Bengal. It seems temporary labour migration has increased in these areas in last decades—accrued to the increase in rice production in the 1980s and the 1990s. In fact government's rural employment programmes, particularly Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, have not been very successful in reducing migration from rural areas. With a few exceptions, all these centres of high temporary migration are hilly and dry areas, in the interior of the country, with a high proportion of tribal

population (Bihar may be an exception but the whole state is backward). Most importantly, these regions consist of some of the most backward and poorest districts of the country.

Conculsion

Evidence indicates that as many as 140 million of India's rural poor migrate seasonally to cities, industries, and farms in search of work. These are migrants who move back and forth undertaking a vast array of casual work in construction, manufacturing, services, and farm sector. They are part of India's unorganized, informal workforce estimated over 350 million that remains excluded from services and rights as workers and citizens, in their rural homes and in their places of work in urban, industrial, and rural areas .Movement of workers happens from impoverished rural regions to the more affluent urban and industrial pockets. The historically established list of out-migration regions such as UP, Bihar and Jharkhand have expanded to include states such Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh. Even within the more prosperous states there is considerable intra-state movement of workers. While mega cities and industrial clusters have always been the major magnets of migrant workers, states such as Kerala have become significant employers of long-distance migrants .Poor wages, erratic employment, hazardous work conditions and lack of essential services define the experience of migrant workers. Access to public entitlements in India are linked to proof of residence which migrants are unlike to possess – this results their exclusion from subsidized food-grains, housing, health care and other benefits available to local citizens. Rural migrants are unable to cast votes in cities which alienates their voice. As a result, migrants survive on the margins, i.e. on construction sites, brick kilns or polluted manufacturing zones on the peripheries of cities. When they live within the city, it is often in informal settlements, that are deemed illegal by civic authorities, and hence placed outside planning and provisioning .Despite their vast numbers states and industry has largely been unable to provide migrant workers with effective legal or social protection. A serious constraint in framing effective policy is the lack of credible data on incidence of internal migration. Relentless dilutions in labour legislation continue to weaken the claims of workers – especially migrant workers – to rightful entitlements in their world of work .Economic growth in India today hinges on mobility of labour. The contribution of migrant workers to the economy is enormous but remains to be done in return for their security and well-being. There is an urgent need for solutions to transform migration into a more dignified and rewarding opportunity. Without this, making growth inclusive or the very least, sustainable, will remain a very distant dream.

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