

# Migration of labour and urban-rural linkages: a case study of rural India

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The present study seeks to analyze and explain the urban-rural socio-economic linkage on the basis of a sample survey of 200 rural households in a coastal district in Odisha, India.

**Methods/Statistical analysis:** Data for this study were collected by the authors by canvassing a structured questionnaire in person among the migrant workers at their worksites and place of living at the destination and other respondents at their native village during June-October, 2017. A five stage simple random sampling procedure was adopted for the purpose. Simple statistical tools were used to summarize the information in quantitative forms and discuss the findings of the survey.

**Findings:** The finding of our study concerning this dimension is quite interesting. Migration creates strong urban-rural linkages which influence the economy of the source households and the areas at the origin. Visits and communications facilitate the linkages while remittances strengthen them. The linkage is somewhat weaker in the case of the family migrants. The fact is that the strong urban-rural linkages are remittances are enough proof of the bond between the migrants and their households of origin. Contacts with urban based migrants lower the psychic costs of relocating, diminish the financial costs of resettling, accelerate the job search process and enhance the ease of obtaining a job. Strong social networks, by acting as information channels and links between villages and cities, help in migration. Migration also creates strong urban-rural linkages which influence the economy of the source households and the areas at the origin.

**Application/Improvements:** Rural-urban linkages play very crucial role in improving the livelihoods in rural areas. Urban areas also get the benefit from the linkages. The rural-urban linkages bring in skills and resources that help the development of rural areas.

**Keywords:** Migration, Urban-rural linkages, Remittance, Migrant, Non-Migrant.

## 1. Introduction

Adult male rural out-migrants are an important labour group in all the urban areas in India. Many of them live in the urban destinations as singles, leaving their wives, children and parents in the native places. They maintain links with their kith and kin left behind, through visits, communications and remittances. Such links are important threads although they are not enough compensation for the emotional deficiency and care vacuum created by their absence for those left behind. Despite sincere endeavor by migrants to improve the quality of their children through remittances funded education, the learning outcomes and educational attainment may fall short of the expectations due to absence of father care and guidance and the children left behind may be left further behind. Moreover, adult male migration from the rural areas may make heavy demand on women who are left behind and are required to shoulder all household responsibilities and production activities. One should no doubt appreciate the increasing role of women in decision making and the resultant women empowerment in migrant households but at the same time the mounting pressure of such responsibilities and the forced work they have to do in agriculture and elsewhere should not be lost sight of. Both women and children may face tighter time schedules and the probability of having children to work rather than to read may increase with migration. Above all, when migrants themselves suffer illness at their place of work, they also feel a care vacuum which may increase the recovery period. The problem becomes more serious in the absence of health care provisioning by the employers.

In such view of the matter, the migrants sometimes feel shaky in the midst of the dilemma –whether it is better to be apart to earn more or to stay together with abysmally low income. Given the importance of these dimensions of migration, a study of the interactions between rural-urban migration and urban-rural linkages, children's education, women's roles and responsibilities, and health issues of the migrant workers is worth perusing. Scholarly works involving rural-urban migration, spatial linkages are relatively scarce. Although systematic evidence is limited, some research works have documented these dimensions of migration in the context of other countries and states within India. A brief review of some of these research works is presented here to assess their contribution to knowledge, pinpoint research gaps and identify scope for exciting new research. Urban-rural linkage is established through regular visits of migrants to the source areas and keeping touch with the origin through other means. Cash and in-kind transfers make the linkage stronger. There are continuing links and very often the city is regarded as a kind of stopping place and stay there as a kind of sojourn [1,2]. A study on migrant workers in Tajikistan reveals migrants visiting their village regularly to keep contact with their children [3]. The study on labour migration in Kerala, have found that 50% of the migrants visited their home in the village once in a month [4].

In a study of migrant workers in Greater Mumbai, it is observed that migrants paid regular visits to their place to meet family members and other relatives and also sent remittances in cash and kind to those left behind [5,6]. The migrants visited their villages regularly, communicated with their family members over phone or by sending oral messages and urban to rural monetary remittances are an important aspect of urban-rural linkages [7]. In line with what is usually expected, Opel's study [6] on rural-urban migration in Afghanistan indicated that migrants who lived with their family could not afford to visit their natives very often and had little connection with the origin [6]. But in the cases where the migrants were the significant bread winners of the households at the origin, they provided necessary support to the families in the villages by sending remittances. Migrant workers' strong links with their home communities were also observed) a study of migration in China where they played a lead role in rural development by effecting income diversification in the source areas [8]. The above review points to a number of blind spots in existing research.

First, the findings are mixed and diverse obviously because they are context and area specific studies. Second, the literature survey exposes the limited attention of researchers to the vital dimensions of migration such as links with kith and kin at the destination area. Third, these issues have been totally neglected by the scholars in whatever limited works they have done in respect of rural-urban migration in the Odisha context. There is thus a need for filling these research gaps and hence the present study.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Against this backdrop, the present paper seeks to analyze and explain the urban-rural socio-economic linkage on the basis of a sample survey of 200 rural households in a coastal district in Odisha, India. Data for this study were collected by the authors by canvassing a structured questionnaire in person among the migrant workers at their worksites and place of living at the destination and other respondents at their native village during June-October, 2017. A five stage simple random sampling procedure was adopted for the purpose. The district, the blocks, the gram panchayats, the villages and the households constitute the five stages in the process. Respondents of 100 migrant households, 50 returned migrant households and 150 non-migrant households from six villages in Patamundai, Rajnagar and Marshaghai blocks of Kendrapara district in Odisha were interviewed to elicit the required information. The 139 migrant workers from 100 selected migrant households were contacted directly by us at the destination and some of them were also interviewed at their native village on their visits during the Raja and Puja festivals of 2017. Simple statistical tools were used to summarize the information in quantitative forms and discuss the findings of the survey.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Urban –rural linkage

Migration in the study area is mostly in the form of internal movement of working age males from the villages to different urban centres within the country. An important dimension of such migration relates to urban-rural linkages effected by the migrant workers in the urban locations and the left behinds at the native place in a system of actions, reciprocations and reactions.

In this process the activities in the destination are influenced by and have a decisive impact on the activities in the origin areas. The flow of ideas and knowledge, and diffusion of innovation and transfer of resources from the receiving urban areas help in promoting development in the sending areas. The migrants keep contact with the source area as a responsibility to support the family and with the intension to return home during off-working age, for political participation and involving them in community/village associations. The urban-rural linkages and social and family networks also shape and condition the migration flows from rural to the urban centres [9].

### 3.2. Visiting the family at the origin

The migrants in our study area staying outside the state don't visit the villages frequently. They go to the village only for short visits. Table 1 presents information about the frequency of visits of the migrant workers to the source villages.

Table 1. Frequency of visits to the village

Times in the Year	Family Migrants	Percentage	Single Migrants	Percentage	All Migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	06	20.00	0	0.00	06	4.32
1	18	60.00	72	66.05	90	64.75
2	04	13.33	19	17.43	23	16.54
3	02	6.67	08	7.33	10	7.19
4	00	00	05	4.59	5	3.60
5	00	00	03	2.75	3	2.16
6	00	00	02	1.83	2	1.44
Total	30	100	109	100	139	100.00

Source: Primary survey

The table shows the number of times a migrant visited during the year preceding the survey. About 96 % of the migrants visited their village at least once in the last year. Only 4% did not make any visit to their villages because either they settled at the destination permanently or they did not visit the village every year. As the migrants migrated to urban locations outside the state, they did not visit the village frequently. The distance and cost do not allow them to visit their family very often. It has been found that 64.75% of migrants visited their village once in a year, whereas 16.54% visited twice, 7.19% visited their family thrice and only 1.4% visited their family regularly once in every two months. The migrants living with their family members at the destination did not visit their villages regularly, 20% of them did not come to the village at all, 60% of them visited their village once in the last year while 13.33% visited twice and only 6.67% visited thrice. None of them visited the village more than 3 times during the last year. The migrants with higher frequency of visit to the village (col.4 and 5) worked in the neighboring nearby state and were staying in the destination without families. This indicates that distance determine the frequency of visits to the village because it involves cost of transport and time required for the journey. The closer the region of origin, the shorter the gap between the visits and this is in conformity with the gravity model of migration. Similarly, if the migrants lived with their family at the destination they visited the village less. These results are both robust and obvious.

### 3.3. Duration of stay in the village

Migrants who visit their villages prefer to stay in the village for some time. The duration of their stay is determined by the number of days they are permitted by their employer to stay away from work and the requirement to oversee their family, attend socio-cultural functions, and do some productive and household work. Normally, the migrants cannot afford to stay long for enjoying leisure as that involves loss of income and may cause loss of job. The details are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Duration of stay in the village

Stay at Native Place (in days)	Family Migrants	Percentage	Single	Percentage	All Migrants	Percentage
0-30	28	93.33	10	9.17	38	27.34
31-60	02	6.67	90	82.57	92	66.19
61-90	00	00	09	8.26	09	6.47
Total	30	100.00	109	100.00	139	100.00

Source: Primary survey

It was found that 27.34% of the migrants stayed for a period up to 30 days, 66.19% of migrants had a stay between 31 days and 60 days and only 6.47% of the migrants stayed for 61-90 days while visiting the village on different occasions. But among the migrants who lived with their family members, 93.33% from them stayed for 30 days or less while visiting the village. During the course of our discussion it was revealed that they stayed for less number of days in the source area as they left their family at the destination. Migrants generally stayed for a longer duration during June to August to help the family in agricultural activities. It has also come out that single migrants had a stronger connection with the source region than family migrants.

### 3.4. Contact and means of communication with family members

Visiting the village of origin is no doubt the most effective and widely popular means of urban-rural linkage, but there are other means of regular contact as well. The IT revolution, remarkable expansion of transport facilities, and proliferation of courier services and speed post facilities have all facilitated the spatial linkage and contributed significantly to distance minimization through communication. Migrant workers use these media to have continuous contact with their family and community at the native place, in addition to making trips. Required information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Means of communication

Means of Communication	Family Migrants	Percentage	Single Migrants	Percentage	All Migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Telephone Calls	30	73.17	160	85.56	190	83.33
Oral Messages via other Migrants	08	19.51	20	10.70	28	12.28
Written Messages with other Migrants	03	7.32	05	2.67	08	3.51
Ordinary Mail	00	0.00	02	1.07	02	0.87
Total	41	100	187	100	228	100

Source: Primary survey

Notes: This is a multiple response question, so the total response is greater than 139

Tele communication happens to be the most prominent medium used by the migrants to keep touch with their family members. The remarkable expansion in the mobile phone sector has proved very beneficial in this context. The call rate per minute has been slashed and now everyone uses the cell phone. So the traditional methods of communication like communication through post are very rarely used. It is ascertained from the study that more than 83.33% of migrants use the cell phone medium to communicate with their family members, 16.67% use the traditional methods such as sending oral and written messages through fellow migrants and posts in maintaining links. 12.28% sent oral messages via fellow migrants. As discussed earlier many migrants visited the source region regularly and with them some of the migrants sent their messages. Sometimes migrants send written messages through migrants from the same/nearby village (s). Communications in the form of written messages through the postal and courier systems were very negligible accounting for less than one per cent. Among the family migrants 73.17% communicate over telephone while 85.56% of the single migrants have been found to have contacts through the cell phone medium.

### 3.5. Frequency of communication

The frequency of contact and communication with the family left behind in the source area is at least as important as keeping contact itself. It shows the strength of the bond between the migrant and the family members. We have attempted to capture this dimension by interrogating the respondents and the collected information is shown in Table 4. The above table shows the number of times an average migrant communicated with the family member during a definite period, i.e. the year previous to our survey. 17.26% of migrants communicated with their family members at least once in every week, 48.20% in every fortnight, 12.95% in every month, 9.35% in every two months, 7.91% in every 3 months and 4.32% of migrants communicated with the family within 4-6 months of time. The frequency of communication and the mode of the communication are inter-related. Due to the advancement of the telecommunication facility the frequency of the communication has increased.

A little above 65% of the migrants communicated with their family members in every 15 days. If we look at the issue from the stand point of family status of the migrants at the destination it is found that family migrants exhibit irregular and infrequent communication behavior. Only 10% of them communicated in every month to their family members, 33.33% communicated in every 2 months, 36.66% in every three months and about 20% in 4-6 months. Unsurprisingly, single migrants maintain a more frequent and very regular communication with their family and with kith and kin at the native place of origin.

Table 4. Frequency of communication

Frequency of Communication	Family Migrants	Percentage	Single Migrants	Percentage	All Migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Every Week	00	0.00	24	22.02	24	17.26
Every Fortnight	00	0.00	67	61.47	67	48.20
Every Months	03	10.00	15	13.76	18	12.95
Every 2 Months	10	33.33	03	2.75	13	9.35
Every 3 Months	11	36.66	00	0.00	11	7.91
Every 4-6 Months	06	20.00	00	0.00	06	4.32
Total	30	100.00	109	100.00	139	100.00

Source: Primary survey

### 3.6. Attendance in social functions

Migrant workers, single migrants in particular, have a strong inclination towards their area of origin. Socio-cultural, religious and familial ceremonies are just additional temptations to visit their families and participate in the functions. Attending functions has, therefore, been an important medium of urban-rural linkage. Table 5 contains relevant data for the year preceding the survey.

Table 5. Proportion of social functions attended

Attendance of Family Function	Family Migrants	Percentage	Single Migrants	Percentage	All Migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Don't attend	03	10.00	00	00.00	3	2.16
Attended all	02	6.67	86	78.90	88	63.30
Half	05	16.67	18	16.51	23	15.57
One Fourth	09	30.00	03	2.75	12	8.63
Two third	11	36.67	02	1.83	13	9.35
Total	30	100.00	109	100.00	139	100.00

Source: Primary survey

It can be seen from the table that about 63.30% of the migrants attended the family and other social function in the source areas. Only 2.16% of the migrants did not attend any of the functions. It was because they lived with their family members and did not visit the villages during these special occasions. It has been found that 15.57% of the attended half of the social functions, 8.63% attended one fourth and 9.35% of the migrants attended two thirds. This suggests the migrants have a strong link with the source area for which they visited their villages during the social functions. The above table also shows that family migrants attended less number of social functions in comparison to single migrants. 10% of migrants living with family did not attend any social function in their village, 6.67% attended all, 16.67% attended half, 30% attended one fourth and 36.67% of them attended two thirds. In the case of single migrants, 78.9% attended all the functions, 16.51% attended half, 2.75% attended one-fourth and only 1.83% attended two-thirds of the functions in the source areas.

### 3.7. Sending remittances

In most of the cases, rural –to-urban migration is a family decision. This it is binding thread for strong links between the migrants at the destination and the left-behinds at the source. In the beginning the source households extend necessary financial support to the migrant and once in jobs, the migrants owe a moral responsibility to remit funds to their households for supplementing household income, improving living standards, financing education of the children, paying back loans, purchasing agricultural land, constructing houses and meeting socio-cultural expenses.

Again, it is remittances which act as the strongest link between the migrant workers in the cities and their households of origin, other media of linkage obviously take a back seat. The details of the remittances are presented in the preceding chapter. The decision to remit has a close link with broad demographic characteristics of the migrants and the relevant information is given in Table 6.

Table 6. Migrant characteristics and remittance behavior

Characteristics	Number of Migrants	Numbers of Migrants having Remitted	Percentage
1	2	3	4
1.Living Status			
Living Alone	109	98	89.90
Living with Family	30	11	36.67
All	139	109	78.41
2.Marital Status			
Married	67	48	71.64
Unmarried	70	60	85.71
Widow/Separated	02	01	50
All	139	109	78.41

Source: Primary survey

The table shows a summary picture of the remittance decision of migrants. Out of the 139 migrants, 109 (78.41%) sent remittances in the reference year. The migrants living alone at the destination are more inclined to send remittances than those living with family. About 90% of the single migrants have been found to have remitted as against only 36.67% of the family migrants. This is because single migrants have a stronger link with the family left behind than those who lived with family. When we look at this issue from the stand point of marital status, a more or less similar picture is discernible. Among the married migrants 71.64% remitted, but among the unmarried 85.71% remitted funds to their families of origin at the source area. The amount of remittances have been found to be influenced by three very important factors such as the occupation, size of income earned and the family status of the migrant at the destination. Available information is given in Table 7.

Table 7. Size of remittances (Amount in Rupees)

Occupation at the Destination	No of Migrants	Average Income Earned	Average Amount of Remittances	No of Remitees	Average Income earned	Remittances Per Remit tees	No. of Single Migrants Sending Remittances	Average Income Earned	Average Amount of Remittances Single Migrants	No. migrated with Family Sending remittances	Average Income Earned	Average Amount of Remittances With Family
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Plumbing	105	107796	35592 (33.01)	93	110400	40185 (36.39)	84	109200	42576 (38.98)	9	121600	17863 (14.69)
Business	10	143160	32988 (23.04)	05	145200	65976 (45.43)	04	144000	78720 (54.66)	1	150000	15000 (10)
Others	24	98196	22500 (22.91)	11	99600	49091 (49.28)	10	99000	52600 (53.13)	1	105600	14000 (13.25)
Total	139	108683	33144 (30.50)	10 9	110906	42266 (38.10)	98	109580	45074 (41.13)	11	122727. 27	17252 (14.05)

Source: Primary Survey

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to income earned

In the year preceding an average sample migrant earned Rs.108683 at the destination area. The highest income is recorded in the case of businessmen (₹143160) followed by plumbers (₹107796) and other workers (₹98196). The average amount of remittance per migrant has been ₹33144 or 30.5% of income earned. Plumbers have been the best remitters with ₹35592 or 33.01% of income earned, businessmen come next with ₹32988 or 23.04% and migrants pursuing other activities are at the lowest end having remitted ₹22500 or 22.91% of their income. We have already observed in Table 6 that all the migrants are not remitters.

From the 139 sample migrants 109 reported to have ever remitted and 30 were non-remitters. The average amount of remittances per remitting migrant has been ₹42266 or 38.10% of income earned. The remittance figures work out to ₹40185 or 36.39% of income, ₹65976 or 45.43% of income and ₹49091 or 49.28% of income for the remitting plumbers, businessmen and other workers respectively. Among the 109 remitting sample migrants, 98 lived as singles and 11 lived with family at the destination. Expectedly, remittances were higher for the migrants who live as singles than those who live with family. The overall amount of remittance per remitted migrant comes to ₹45074 or 41.13% of income earned for the single migrants as against ₹17252 or 14.05% for the family migrants. The average amount of remittances have been ₹42576 or 38.98% of income, ₹78720 or 54.66% of income and ₹52600 or 53.13% of income for the single migrants pursuing plumbing, business and other activities respectively at the destination. The respective figures for the family migrants are lower i.e. ₹17863 or 14.69% of income for the plumbers, ₹15000 or 10% of income for businessmen and ₹14000 or 13.25% for other categories of workers. The discussion on linkages presented above is revealing. Urban-rural linkage is strong in the case of the migrants and their areas of origin. The link is little weaker in the case of the family migrants who, obviously, have relatively lesser attachment with their native villages

#### 4. Conclusion

Migration is directly related to migration experience. When some individuals of a given rural origin migrate they create networks at the urban destination and some others from the same locality follow the pioneer migrants gradually. Contacts with urban based migrants lower the psychic costs of relocating, diminish the financial costs of resettling, accelerate the job search process and enhance the ease of obtaining a job. Strong social networks, by acting as information channels and links between villages and cities, help in migration. The finding of our study concerning this dimension is quite interesting. Migration creates strong urban-rural linkages which influence the economy of the source households and the areas at the origin. Visits and communications facilitate the linkages while remittances strengthen them. The linkage is somewhat weaker in the case of the family migrants. The fact is that the strong urban-rural linkages and remittances are enough proof of the bond between the migrants and their households of origin.

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