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Migration and Women Empowerment in India: An Overview of Pattern of Female Migration, its Causes and Consequences

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Migration and Women Empowerment in India: An Overview of Pattern of Female Migration, its Causes and Consequences

Prem Kumar

Abstract- **Trend and pattern of migration reveal socio-economic condition of the population. In India, pattern and level of internal migration among males and females are quite different. The reasons of migration among females are entirely different from those of males. Gender gap in employment and empowerment is manifested by the strikingly different pattern of migration among female and male population.**

I. Introduction

Alarmingly high gender gap between males and females in labour force participation rate is one of the main serious concerns in India's socio-economic development process. Causes and consequences of low female labour force participation rate have been analysed by researchers. Migration pattern influences labour force participation rate. Employment is one of the main reasons of migration. But, its dominance over other reasons of migration may vary among males and females. Further, freedom of mobility plays crucial role in socio-economic empowerment. Hence, understanding of females' migration pattern may provide a pivotal perspective to look into female labour force participation rate and socio-economic empowerment of females.

Government of India conducts census after every ten years. Census could not be conducted in 2021 due to the covid pandemic. 2011 Census data on migration is the last census data available at this time. However, National Statistical Office's survey on 'Migration in India', conducted during July 2020 – June 2021, as part of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) provides recent data on migration. 66.54% of total migrants were females in India as per the 2011 Census. This figure includes all types of migration, i.e., inter and intra state, rural-rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural migration. The share of female migrants is higher in rural India than all-India's figure. In rural India, 79.10% of total rural migrants were females while 53.61% of rural migrants in urban India were females. These figures clearly indicate that share of female migrants to total migrants is more than that of male migrants. But, females' migration is more in rural areas than that in urban areas. Causes and consequences of female migration need to be understood to assess socio-economic processes which affect women empowerment.

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II. Methodology

The main data source is National Statistical Office report on 'Migration in India (July 2020 – June 2021) which was conducted as part of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). 2011 Census data has also been used. Comparative analysis of male and female migration pattern has been done to understand gender gap in labour force participation rate and socio-economic processes which cause gender gap. The main objective of the study is to get an overview of causes and consequences of female migration and assess its linkage to women empowerment and female labour force participation rate.

III. Females Migration in Rural and Urban Areas, and Gender Gap

In all states of India, share of female migrants to total migrants who migrated from rural to rural areas is higher than share of female migrants who migrated from rural to urban areas. The gap is very high except north eastern states and Kerala. The high share of female migrants to total migrants gives an impression that more women migrate as compared to males. But, share of female migrants declines in the case of rural to urban migration. In two north Indian states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, share of male migrants to total migrants from rural to urban areas exceeds that of females. These two states are economically backwards and lack behind many states in social indicators. Clearly, development plays crucial role in female migration patterns. Generally, it is argued that rural to urban migration is a sign of socio-economic upward mobility, but rural to rural migration is just a displacement.

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Table 1: Share of Female Migrants across States

	Percentage of female migrants to total migrants from rural areas of states to urban areas of India	Percentage of female migrants to total migrants from rural areas of states to rural areas of India
Jammu & Kashmir	56.47	79.57
Himachal Pradesh	51.55	81.13
Punjab	60.62	78.79
Chandigarh	51.61	62.88
Uttarakhand	52.3	75.2
Haryana	57.96	87.04
NCT of Delhi	56.59	80.47
Rajasthan	54.44	84.56
Uttar Pradesh	48.58	89.1
Bihar	47	89.84
Sikkim	53.93	65.16
Arunachal Pradesh	51.39	56.51
Nagaland	50.9	51.78
Manipur	64.64	67.92
Mizoram	52.76	52.82
Tripura	64.78	77.47
Meghalaya	54.43	41.08
Assam	54.93	76.84
West Bengal	61.72	85.32
Jharkhand	55.14	86.94
Odisha	50.31	81.3
Chhattisgarh	57.67	79.34
Madhya Pradesh	54.7	80.51
Gujarat	53.58	76.88
Daman & Diu	43.92	64.83
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	42.71	70.32
Maharashtra	53	67.82
Andhra Pradesh	53.59	71.57
Karnataka	52.99	71.19
Goa	57.45	64.82
Lakshadweep	44.4	58.41
Kerala	63.04	63.5
Tamil Nadu	55.6	68.94
Puducherry	56.18	62.75
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	50.74	53.26

Source: Calculated from data provided by Census of India, 2011

Delhi, capital of India, is one of the most preferred destinations for people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Workers from these two states migrate to Delhi for employment opportunities. Since, it's a big city and India's capital, migration to Delhi provide both employment opportunities and socio-economic mobility. It's also a destination for students from these two states. It should be noted that number of male migrants exceeds number of female migrants. 41.48% of total migrants from Bihar to Delhi were females. The figure is 49.21% in Uttar Pradesh. In both states, share of female migrant to total migrants who migrated from rural areas to Delhi is less than that of share of female migrants who migrated from urban areas.

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Table 2: Share of Female Migrant to Total Migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to Delhi

Last residence	Last area	Percentage of female migrant to total migrants
Bihar	Total	41.48
Bihar	Rural	40.82
Bihar	Urban	44.56
Uttar Pradesh	Total	49.21
Uttar Pradesh	Rural	47.34
Uttar Pradesh	Urban	53.95

Source: Calculated from data provided by Census of India, 2011

IV. Female Migration Pattern and Socio-Economic Empowerment

Reasons of migration play crucial role in socio-economic development of migrants. Consequences of migration due to social institutions or processes are different from that of migration for employment and educational purposes. Marriage is the main reason of migration among female migrants. As per National Statistical Office's report on 'Migration in India, July 2020 – June 2021', 86.8% of female migrants migrated due to marriage reason. Merely, 1.7% of female migrants migrated due to employment and related issues. Employment is the main reason of male migration. 49.6% of male migrants migrated due to employment related issues. Out of this, 6.7% of male migrants migrated due to loss of employment opportunities. In rural areas, percentage of female migrants due to employment related issues is lower than that in urban areas. In rural areas, 0.8% of female migrants migrated due to employment related issues. The corresponding figure is 3.6% in urban areas.

In both rural and urban areas, migration rate among female is higher than male. But, the gap is more in the rural areas. In rural areas, migration rate among females was 48 % in 2020-21 while it's merely 5.9 % among males. In urban areas, migration rate among females and males are 47.8% and 22.5% respectively. In both rural and urban areas, Inter-state migration among females is low as compared to males. In rural areas, the gap is of 29.7 per cent points while it's 15 per cent points in urban areas. In terms of types of rural-urban migration, the share of rural to rural migration is highest among females (63.3%) while the share of rural to urban migration is highest among males (33.5%). Clearly, female migration pattern is dominated by rural to rural and intra state migration.

V. Conclusion

If current female migration pattern continues to remain in future, it would be almost impossible to empower Indian females economically as female migration is driven mainly by social reason (marriage) while male migration is driven mainly by employment related reasons. Hence, possibility of empowerment due to migration is lower among females than males as rural to rural and short distance migration patterns are more prevalent among females. Government policies for female empowerment must adopt measures to facilitate female mobility for educational and employment opportunities.

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