

Rural-Urban Migration: A Comprehensive Analysis of Motivations and Impacts

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ABSTRACT

The occurrence of migration has persisted for centuries and is influenced by elements such as economic conditions, environmental catastrophes, socio-political circumstances, population growth and urban expansion, armed conflicts, and motives related to family reunification. This study investigates the migration patterns of rural populations to urban areas in District Kashmore, Sindh, focusing on the motivations, socioeconomic changes, and outcomes for migrants. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 180 respondents across three Talukas through structured questionnaires and multi-stage cluster sampling. The findings indicate that the primary reasons for migration were employment, education, and better living standards. Familial influence played a significant role, with most of the migrants reporting that their parents decided to relocate. Post-migration, improvements in socioeconomic conditions were observed: 52.78% of respondents invested in housing and private enterprises, 30.56% respondents have prioritized their children's education, and 16.67% reported higher and more stable incomes. The study concludes that the decision to migration from origin to destination results from the lack of basic facilities of education and better earning opportunities along with better living standards. However, migrants perceive moderate change in education and earning opportunities, while there are more investment opportunities in different sectors. Recommendations include strengthening rural development programs, expanding local employment opportunities, and improving educational infrastructure to address migration drivers and promote balanced regional growth in District Kashmore.

Keywords: Rural-urban migration, socioeconomic changes, employment, education, better living, District Kashmore.

INTRODUCTION

Change in population distribution is influenced by specific characteristics of the economic development process (Mahtta, et al., 2022), and by various stages of Development in a country (Pandey, Brelsford, & Seto, 2025). In particular, migration of the labour force from rural to urban markets has been a significant source of the growth in urbanization: Fauzia & Lee (2013) report that internal migration accounted for 40.3%, 44.1% and 54.3% of urban population growth in the developing world during the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, respectively.

Migration has been seen as a response of individuals to better economic and non-economic opportunities and an expectation of increased economic welfare in urban areas (Keleş, 2021). According to Mazumdar, the factors that *drive* individuals from rural regions to urban centers include the belief that population pressures in rural areas have almost depleted all available cultivable land, thereby compelling desperate people to seek a new life in the cities with only the hope of subsistence-level existence. Conversely, the *pull* theory highlights the appeal of urban living and the income disparity between rural and urban areas. Specifically, in the probabilistic models of Todaro (1969), migrants are drawn to cities by the anticipation of earning a higher income than what is available in agricultural work.. They are willing to accept the probability of urban unemployment, or lower wages and "underemployment" in the urban informal (traditional) sector (Aikaeli, Mtui, & Tarp, 2021). According to Todaro, migrants are prepared to endure joblessness in urban areas or accept reduced earnings in the urban informal economy, provided they anticipate eventually advancing to employment in the urban modern sector.. Rural-urban migration, the most crucial component of internal migration of any country, is a powerful symbol for regional inequality, in terms of economy, opportunities, and living standards (Wei, 2022) . Migration can be generally described as the relocation of residence from one administrative division to another, either for a defined duration or on a lasting basis. The phenomenon takes place for multiple reasons, and its driving factors differ across nations and even within the same nation, depending on prevailing socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural conditions.. High unemployment rate, low income, high population growth, unequal distribution of land, demand for higher schooling, previous migration patterns, and displeasure with housing have been identified as a number of the prominent determinants of rural out-migration (Aslany, Carling, Mjelva, & Sommerfelt, 2021). Migration is often considered a driver of growth and an important route out of poverty with a significant positive impact on people's livelihoods and wellbeing (Braimah, Gberville, Chidozie, & Osimen, 2025). It is widely agreed that migration and remittance flows alleviate rural poverty and play a role in enhancing household living conditions.. Simultaneously, rural-urban migration may increase the pressure on urban housing, environment, the quality of life, crime rate, and the pace of Development (Majumder & Rahman, 2023) . Indeed, the process of rural-to-urban migration has distinct impacts on migrants that can potentially disrupt the social fabric. Consequently, this study was undertaken to determine the purpose and changes in socioeconomic condition after migration of rural people to the urban areas: A case study of district Kashmore of Sindh province.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The occurrence of human migration has persisted since the dawn of human history. It is defined as the lasting relocation of individuals from one place of residence to another.. Everett Lee theorized that the migration is selective and is influenced by pull and push factors (Esmaeili & Mahmoudian, 2024) . According to Lee, the decisions to migrate can be categorized into factors associated with areas of origin, factors associated with the destination area, intervening obstacles, and personal factors (Peralta, Ancho, & Pelegrina, 2024) . Migration can therefore be viewed as a calculated choice by individuals to take advantage of opportunities that are scarce or unavailable in their country of origin. Migration is a phenomenon that has global, regional, and local significance in many areas, such as Development, politics, social relations, labour, humanitarian issues, the legal framework, security, and education (Mikac & Wahdyudin, 2021). The occurrence of migration has persisted for centuries and is motivated by elements such as economic conditions, environmental calamities, socio-political circumstances, population growth and urban development, armed conflicts, and family reunification motives. Zaman et al. (2023) explain that a range of push and pull factors shape migration patterns. Pull factors pertain to the conditions that entice individuals to move to a particular region or country. Examples of such pull factors include economic prospects like job availability, improved housing, and enhanced living standards.

Pull factors also encompass social and political aspects, including improved healthcare services, religious acceptance, and liberation from oppression.. The push factors influencing migration around the world also include economic factors such as lack of employment, low standards of living, and lack of food and shelter (Wolde, D'Odorico, & Rulli, 2023) . Social determinants driving push migration include inadequate healthcare and the absence of religious freedom, among other societal issues. Political push factors further encompass conditions such as armed conflict and terrorism, unjust legal frameworks, and limited governmental tolerance. Research by Parkins (2010) indicates that global migration has been on the rise in the last two decades by an estimated 35% overall. The increasing push drives the continued increases in global migration and pull migration factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive research design, wherein the researcher carried out a primary survey using a validated and structured questionnaire, administered through interviews in District Kashmore, applying a multi-stage cluster sampling technique.. In this regard, 60 respondents from all three Talukas of district Kashmore were purposively (migrants) selected to collect the related information. A aggregate 180 respondents were interviewed by ensuring that migration had not taken place more than 20 years ago.

DATA ANALYSIS

Initially, the data were compiled and systematically organized. All information was tabulated, condensed, and examined using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The software was utilized to compute frequencies and mean values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the key findings from respondents concerning their socioeconomic attributes (such as age, education level, marital status, household size, and housing), along with factors influencing migration, the decision-making process, push factors, and pull factors. The outcomes related to these aspects are detailed below under respective subheadings.

Table 1 Distribution of the respondents regarding their age (N=180)

| Age (year) | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|------------|--------------------|------------|
| 18-25 | 10 | 5.56 |
| 26-35 | 40 | 22.22 |
| 36-45 | 115 | 63.89 |
| Above 45 | 15 | 8.33 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The data (Table 1) reveal that the majority of 63.89 % of the respondents were 36-45 years of age, 22.22 of % respondents were of 26-35 years of age, 15 from the total respondents had the age of above 45 years and 5.56 % of the respondents were young with 18-25 year of age.

Table 2 Distribution of the respondents regarding their qualification (N=180)

| Qualification | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|--------------------|------------|
| Illiterate | 8 | 4.44 |
| Primary | 15 | 8.33 |
| Secondary | 42 | 23.33 |
| College | 20 | 11.11 |
| Graduate | 80 | 44.44 |
| Post graduate | 10 | 5.56 |
| PhD | 5 | 2.78 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The above table results indicate that a majority of 44.44% respondents qualification was a graduate qualification, less than one-fourth (23.33%) of them were secondary pass, 11.11% respondents had having college education, while 4.44% respondents were illiterate, and only 2.78% were PhD degree holders.

Table 3 Distribution of the respondents regarding their marital status (N=180)

| Qualification | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|--------------------|------------|
| Single | 75 | 41.67 |
| Married | 95 | 52.78 |
| Windowed | 10 | 5.56 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The data displayed in table-3 that the majority, 52.78% of the respondents were married, 75 out of 180 respondents were unmarried, and the remaining 5.56% of the respondents were widowed.

Table 4: Family size Distribution of the respondents regarding their family size (N=180)

| Family size | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1-3 | 40 | 22.3 |
| 4-5 | 105 | 58.3 |
| 6 | 20 | 11.1 |
| above 6 | 15 | 8.3 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The result of Table 4 reveals that 58.3% of the respondents had 4-5 family size, 22.3% of the respondents had 1-3 family size, 11.1% of the respondents had a family size and the remaining 8.3% of the respondents had six or more family members.

Table 5 Distribution of the respondents regarding their type of home (N=180)

| Family size | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|
|-------------|--------------------|------------|

| | | |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Own | 95 | 52.78 |
| Rented | 65 | 36.11 |
| Relative | 20 | 11.11 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The data (Table 5) showed that the majority, 52.78% of respondents, were living in their own houses, 36.11% of the respondents were living in rented houses, and the remaining 11.11% were in relatives' houses.

PURPOSE OF MIGRATION

Leaving the ancestral homes and lands is often a difficult decision. In many regions of Pakistan, it is a tradition for people to wish to be buried in the lands cultivated by their forefathers; however, they are generally reluctant to move elsewhere. Nevertheless, difficult circumstances sometimes compel individuals to relocate. There may be several reasons for leaving one's native home. The researcher included various factors to determine the primary causes of migration, the decision-making process, push and pull elements of migration, and the pre- and post-migration status of the population. Findings revealed that the majority of individuals migrated from rural to urban areas. The reasons for migration were as follows, and the collected data were systematically organized.

Table 6 Distribution of the respondents regarding the main determination of migration (N=180)

| Purpose of Migration | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Education | 25 | 13.89 |
| Employment | 135 | 75 |
| Better Living | 20 | 11.11 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The data (Table 6) confirm that employment remains the leading motive for migration, a trend consistently validated across multiple migration studies. For instance, Khatri, (2007), in a study on labour migration in South Asia, observed that approximately 70 to 80% of migration in countries like Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh was driven by economic reasons. Similarly, Arif and Irfan (1997) , focusing specifically on internal migration in Pakistan, reported that 71.5% of migrants moved for employment-related purposes, reflecting a comparable trend. Hence, the 75% result in the present study is well-aligned with existing data, confirming that employment remains the principal reason behind individual and family migration decisions in regions such as Sindh.

The study further reports that 13.89% of respondents migrated for educational reasons, a figure that is somewhat lower than in comparable studies, yet still within a significant range. For instance, Li & Shen (2024) found that 18 to 20% of rural-urban migrants in Latin America cited access to education as their primary motive. In Pakistan, Farooq & Iqbal (2015) observed that around 21% of migrants aged 15–24 relocated primarily for educational opportunities. The lower percentage observed in this study could be attributed to local contextual barriers, such as affordability, accessibility, or cultural expectations, which may limit educational migration among specific populations. Nonetheless, UNESCO (2022) asserts that education continues to be a growing factor, particularly among youth, as families increasingly view migration as a strategy for long-term socioeconomic improvement through education. Thus, while your 13.89% is slightly below global and regional averages, it still reflects the global upward trend of education-focused mobility, especially in younger demographics.

A notable 11.11% of respondents migrated for improved living conditions, including access to healthcare, safety, and infrastructure. This finding is closely supported by literature emphasizing non-economic motives in migration decisions. (Wang, Gao, Xu, Zhang, & Rosenberg (2022) found that 12.4% of internal migrants in China relocated for better living environments rather than economic reasons. Similarly, the OECD (2024) notes that 10 to 14% of migration flows in parts of Southern Europe are driven by aspirations for better civic amenities and lifestyle quality. In the South Asian context, Castles (2000) also emphasized that even where migration is often portrayed as economically driven, quality-of-life factors increasingly intersect with employment and education decisions, especially among families and older migrants. Thus, your result (11.11%) aligns well with this global literature and confirms the growing importance of holistic wellbeing in migration decisions, even if such motives are still secondary in volume.

Table 7 Distribution of the respondents regarding their migration decision (N=180)

| Migration Decision | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Self | 40 | 22.22 |
| Children's | 20 | 11.11 |
| Parents | 115 | 63.89 |
| Relatives/Friends | 5 | 2.78 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 7 reveals that 63.89% of respondents indicated that their parents decided to migrate, followed by 22.22% who made the decision themselves, 11.11% who said their children decided, and relatives or friends suggested a small minority of 2.78% who reported the decision. This distribution offers important insights into the household power dynamics and generational roles in migration decisions.

The majority share of parental authority (63.89%) in migration decision-making is consistent with findings from several studies that emphasize the central role of family heads, particularly parents, in migration choices, especially in collectivist societies. For instance, Thieme and Wyss (2005) in a study of migration from Nepal found that decisions were mainly taken by parents or elders, often driven by long-term family strategies rather than individual preferences. Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) , in her work on Latino migration to the U.S., described migration as a "household strategy" wherein decisions are typically made by older family members aiming to secure economic and social mobility for the family unit. In the South Asian context, Siddiqui (2003) observed that in most rural Pakistani and Bangladeshi households, mothers and fathers, particularly fathers, held dominant authority in making life-altering decisions like migration. Thus, your finding of 63.89% is strongly supported by cultural and socioeconomic patterns prevalent in many patriarchal and family-centric societies.

The fact that 22.22% of respondents reported making the decision themselves highlights an emerging shift toward individual agency in migration, particularly among youth and unmarried adults. This is in line with recent studies showing increased individual-based migration, especially as more people migrate for employment or education independently. For example, Bakewell (2010) discusses the growing number of "aspirational migrants" who act outside traditional household authority due to changing social norms, educational exposure, and urbanization. Furthermore, in studies of youth migration in South Asia, Kabeer (2002) found that an increasing number of migrants, especially those aged 18–35, make decisions autonomously, even when still embedded within family networks. Therefore, the 22.22% figure in your study reflects this global trend toward individual decision-making, particularly in cases of labour and student migration.

A smaller but notable 11.11% of respondents indicated that their children decided to migrate, which suggests a reversal of traditional generational roles in some households. This dynamic has been increasingly documented in migration literature, especially in aging societies or in contexts where younger members are more mobile, literate, or exposed to technology and global ideas. For instance, King et al. (2016) found that youth often act as "pioneers" in family migration chains, convincing or guiding older family members toward relocation. This pattern may also reflect children taking financial responsibility or seeking better futures for their families, especially when parents are dependent. In such cases, migration decisions initiated by children are framed as acts of duty or care, particularly in immigrant households from rural backgrounds.

The smallest category, 2.78% indicating influence from friends or relatives, shows a relatively limited role of social networks in decision-making at least at the formal level. This contrasts slightly with other studies, which often highlight the significant role of migrant networks in facilitating and encouraging migration. For instance, Massey et al. (1993) emphasized the importance of migrant networks in providing information, reducing risk, and influencing migration behaviour.

Table 8: socioeconomic changes in the lives of migrants (N=180)

| Socioeconomic Changes | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Invest in housing, private enterprises | 95 | 52.78 |
| Education of male and female children | 55 | 30.56 |
| High and stable incomes improve living standards | 30 | 16.67 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

Results in Table-8 show that approximately 52.78% of migrants reported investing the gains from migration in housing, agriculture, and private businesses. Meanwhile, 30.56% indicated that they utilized these benefits to educate both their male and female children, and the remaining 16.67% agreed that the primary advantage of migration was a higher and more stable income that enhanced their standard of living.

These results are consistent with existing literature that highlights the economic benefits of migration. in low-income settings. According to Poole (2022), under the *New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM)* framework, migration is often a collective household strategy intended to overcome market constraints and enable investment in physical and human capital. The observed pattern, prioritizing investments in productive assets and children's education, supports this theory and suggests a long-term orientation among migrant households.

Furthermore, Amjad, Irfan, & Arif (2015) found that in Pakistan, remittances are predominantly channelled toward housing construction, land improvement, and schooling, particularly among rural households. The fact that more than half of the respondents in this study invested in housing, agriculture, or private business reflects a strategic use of migration income to enhance future economic security and reduce dependency on uncertain labour markets. The finding that 30.56% of respondents invested in their children's education echoes global patterns. Gabrielli & Impicciatore (2022) note that in developing economies, one of the most powerful long-term outcomes of migration is the intergenerational transfer of opportunity through education, which can break cycles of poverty.

Meanwhile, the 16.67% who reported general improvement in living standards through high and stable income may reflect short-term consumption gains rather than long-term investment. This suggests that while migration offers financial relief and stability, not all households convert these gains into lasting

assets. This could be due to external constraints such as inflation, health emergencies, or debt, which are known to absorb a significant portion of remittances in poor communities (Cheema, Rafique, & Abbas, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Study concludes that the decision to migration from origin to destination results from the lack of basic facilities of education and better earning opportunities, along with better living standards. However, migrants perceive moderate change in education and earning opportunities, while there are more investment opportunities in different sectors. Recommendations include strengthening rural development programs, expanding local employment opportunities, and improving educational infrastructure to address migration drivers and promote balanced regional growth in District Kashmore.

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