

Major Causes of Migration from Hills to Plain: A Case Study of Almora District, Kumaun Himalaya

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Abstract: The present study was carried out in six villages of the Halwabagh block of Almora district. A total of 60 respondents were selected randomly for the questionnaire based study to identify the major causes of migration from the hills to the plains. Findings revealed that the major cause of migration was unemployment (65%) which was followed by lack of quality education (22%) and drastic conditions for agriculture (13%). Lack of livelihood sources like large or small scale factories, industries, etc. in rural areas also compels the people to migrate to the plains. Besides unemployment the other causes of migration are lack of quality education and progressive decline in agricultural production, the probable causes of which might be the changes in climate, proliferation of invasive species and the damage caused by wild animals, especially wild boars and monkeys. It is, therefore, suggested that policy makers should address the factors responsible for migration in order to control the same.

Key words: Migration, Hills, Causes, Almora, Kumaun Himalaya.

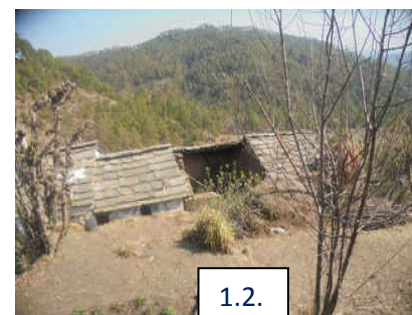
Introduction:

People have moved from one place to another since ancient period, which is an international phenomena resulted due to complex mechanisms, including social, economic, psychological, political and other deterrents [1]. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi permanent residence. Migration is a one of the components of population change and is influenced by the social, cultural, economic and political change [2]. Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand) was carved out of the Uttar-Pradesh on November 9, 2000 as the 27th state of the Republic of India. It occupies 53,483 sq.km. Of the total land area out of which 86% is mountainous and have a high rate of out-migration [3]. The livelihood of mountains is insecure and vulnerable because of limited options and lack of transport, whereas food insecurity is due to limited availability and low land fertility [4]. According to population census (2001) nearly, three fourth of Uttarakhand population lives in its rural areas and migration of all hill districts had been recorded except few. In Uttarakhand more than 1,000 villages have become ghost as hardly anyone lives in these villages [5]. According to a survey sponsored by the National Institute of Rural Development found that 90% of the migrants from the two districts Pauri Garhwal and Almora are long term migrants. Since the pace of migration from rural to urban areas of Uttarakhand is accelerating, therefore, understanding the causes of migration will help policy makers to mitigate the problems of rural inhabitants and hence control of migration. Keeping in mind the present study was planned to know the major causes of migration.

Methodology:

Almora is located at 79° 44 35 E longitudes and 29° 32 55 N latitudes with an average altitude of 1651 meters. The total geographical area of the district is about 3,090 sq. km. The present study was carried out in the months of February and March, 2016 in the Halawabagh block of Almora district. The study was based on both field survey and secondary data. The first author selected six (6) villages randomly and then 10 respondents from each of the villages for the questionnaire based survey. During the field survey each of the respondents was asked to answer questions on the basis of her/his preference

regarding the major causes of migration, from the hills to the plains. After gathering complete information, the data were analyzed and compiled with related literature and the report was then documented.



Figures: 1, 1.1: Questionnaire survey by first author to identify the major causes of migration: 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4: Abandoned Houses of the Migrants in the study area.

Result and Discussion: During the field investigation the following causes of migration from the hills to the plains were documented on the basis of the preference of the respondents of the study areas:

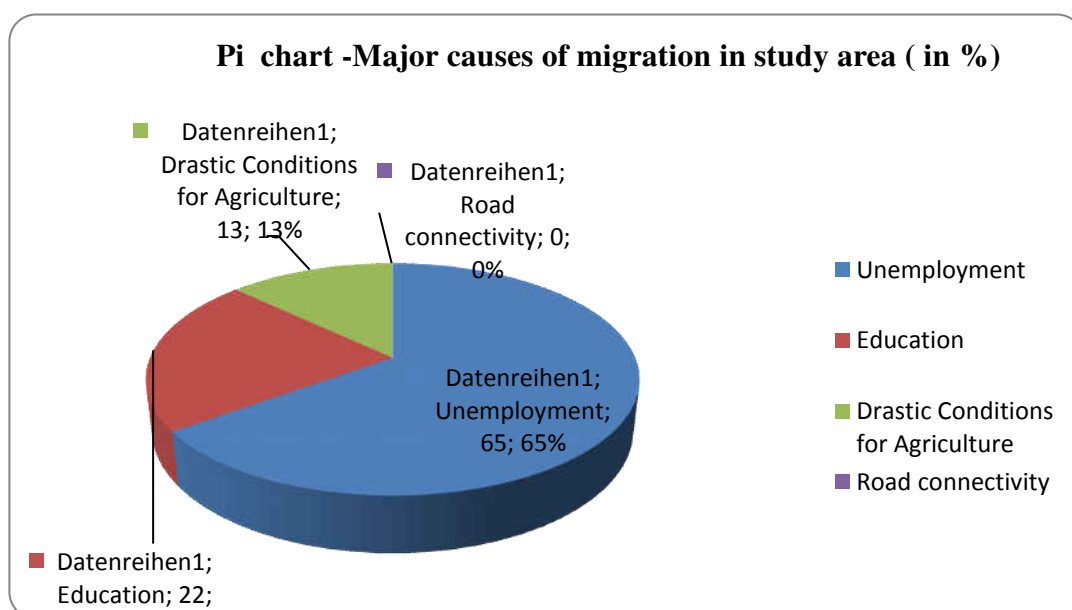
1) **Unemployment:** Majority of respondents (65%) stated unemployment to be a major cause of migration, as lack of job opportunities is the longstanding problem in the rural areas of Uttarakhand. Lack of livelihood sources such as small and large scale industries and factories as well as the non availability of alternative sources of income compels the people to leave the hilly areas and migrate to cities for attaining a better economic status. The creating of jobs and employment opportunities in rural areas may cause reverse migration from the plains to the hills in Uttarakhand.

2) **Education:** A good number of respondents (22%) replied that education is another main factor of migration. People stated, that though there was at least one school in every village, yet a large number of Hindi Medium schools were providing inefficient education due to the lack of teachers and basic infrastructure facilities. People also migrate to cities, so that their children could avail quality education.

3) **Drastic Conditions for Agriculture:** About 13% of the respondents stated that people migrate to the plains due to the harsh Agricultural conditions prevailing in the hills. People migrate towards the plains as they have better economic opportunities there. Rain-fed subsistence farming is practiced in hilly regions of Uttarakhand. The majority of people were associated with the agriculture occupation sometime earlier as it was the backbone of their economy, but as agricultural production has progressively been decreasing from the last few decades due to climate change, which has resulted in increased temperature and irregular rainfall and is producing drought like conditions in the area. According to the respondents not only the changing climate, but also the damage caused to agricultural crops and horticultural plantations by monkeys and wild boars has become a menace for the rural

people. These animals have made farming very difficult for them. Moreover, the wandering of leopards and tigers in the inhabited areas, the killing of cattle and domestic animals and even human beings at times, has made it difficult for the rural people to survive in these areas. They further stated that the proliferation of alien invasive plant species, especially *Lantana Camara*, *Parthenium hysterophorus* etc. have resulted in the conversion of fertile agricultural land to barren. Furthermore, the youth in rural areas now no more interested in agriculture and prefer to migrate towards the plains to generate higher income comparatively easily

4) Road connectivity: Road connectivity was not considered a major factor of migration. Respondents provided least preference to lack of road connectivity as a cause of migration. They stated that government had greatly improved road connectivity in villages thereby connecting the villages to markets and main roads. Road connectivity is, therefore, not a cause of migration according to the response of the local inhabitants.



Conclusion:

It was concluded from the study that the six villages in Hawalbagh Block of Almora District were facing the problem of migration and the causes assigned to it were unemployment followed by lack of quality education and the prevailing of drastic conditions for agriculture. The people of the study area are migrating towards cities for attaining better economic conditions and for providing quality education to their children as in these hilly areas there is no alternative source of income and lack of quality education prevails. It is suggested that policy makers should address the decline of agricultural production as it is an important source of rural economy. Efforts should be made to impart quality education so that youth could pursue their education in the areas they reside in. The Government should also generate employment for them by establishing small or large scale small industries and factories in rural areas for checking migration and promoting reverse migration, other schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) should also be implemented. It is further suggested that strategies should be prepared and implemented for controlling the population of wild boars and monkeys in the area, and if possible sterilization of monkeys and wild boars should be done.

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