

Programme: Master in Sociology
Postgraduate Department of Sociology,
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Semester II

Course: CC-6 (Sociology of Population Studies)

Unit-II Migration

(Part C: Causes and Consequences of Migration)

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the causes of migration.
- To understand the consequences of migration.

Introduction:

Humans as well as animals migrate from one place to another due to various reasons and in this section we will discuss about those factors affecting migration or say causes of migration. Whatever may be the causes it affects the country or region to where people migrate and also the country or region from where they migrate. Apart from the area of migration, people's lives are also impacted in various ways. Thus, in this section, we will discuss about the consequences of migration.

Causes of Migration

The important factors which cause migration or which motivate people to move may broadly be classified into four categories: economic factors, demographic factors, socio-cultural factors, and political factors.

1. Economic and Demographic Factors

The major reason of voluntary migration is economic. In most of the developing countries, low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment and underemployment are the major factors pushing the migrants towards areas with greater job opportunities. Even the pressure of population resulting in a high man-land ratio has been widely recognised as one of the important causes of poverty and rural outmigration. Thus, almost all studies indicate that most of the migrants have moved in search of better economic opportunities. This is true of both internal as well as international migration.

The most important economic factors that motivate migration may be termed as 'Push Factors' and 'Pull Factors'. In other words it is to see whether people migrate because of the compelling circumstances at the place of origin which pushed them out, or whether they are lured by the attractive conditions in the new place.

Push Factors

The push factors are those that compel or force a person, due to various reasons, to leave that place and go to some other place. For example, adverse economic conditions caused by poverty, low productivity, unemployment, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities may compel people to leave their native place in search of better economic opportunities. An ILO study reveals that the main push factor causing the worker to leave

agriculture is the lower levels of income, as income in agriculture is generally lower than the other sectors of the economy. According to the estimates of the Planning Commission over one-third of the rural population is below the poverty line. Due to rapid increase in population, the per capita availability of cultivable land has declined, and the numbers of the unemployed and the underemployed in the rural areas have significantly increased with the result that the rural people are being pushed to the urban areas. The non-availability of alternative sources of income in the rural area is also another factor for migration. In addition to this, the existence of the joint family system and laws of inheritance, which do not permit the division of property, may also cause many young men to migrate to cities in search of jobs. Even sub division of holdings leads to migration, as the holdings become too small to support a family.

Pull Factors

Pull factors refer to those factors which attract the migrants to an area, such as, opportunities for better employment, higher wages, better working conditions and better amenities of life, etc. There is generally cityward migration, when rapid expansion of industry, commerce and business takes place. In recent years, the high rate of movement of people from India as well as from other developing countries to the USA, Canada and now to the Middle-East is due to the better employment opportunities, higher wages and better amenities of life, variety of occupations to choose from and the possibility of attaining higher standard of living. Sometimes the migrants are also attracted to cities in search of better cultural and entertainment activities or bright city lights. However, pull factors operate not only in the rural-urban migration, but also in other types of internal as well as international migration.

Sometimes a question is asked which factors are more important, push or pull? Some argue that the push factor is stronger than the pull factor as they feel that it is the rural problems rather than the urban attractions that play a crucial role in the shift of the population. On the other hand, those who consider the pull factors as more important emphasise high rates of investment in urban areas leading to more employment and business opportunities and greater attraction for the city way of life.

This classification of motives for migration into push and pull factors is very useful in analysing determinants of migration, but all migratory movements cannot be explained by these factors alone. Moreover, sometimes migration may occur not by push or pull factors alone but as a result of the combined effect of both.

Push Back Factors

In India, and in some other developing countries also, another important factor which plays crucial role in migration is 'push back factor'. In India, according to Asish Bose, the urban labour force is sizeable, and the urban unemployment rates are high, and there also exist pools of underemployed persons. All these factors acts in combination as deterrents to the fresh flow of migration from the rural to urban areas. He calls this as a 'push back factor'. He further adds that if new employment opportunities are created in the urban areas, the first persons to offer themselves for employment are the marginally employed already residing in those areas, unless of course special skills are required.

2. Socio-Cultural and Political Factors

Besides these push and pull factors, social and cultural factors also play an important role in migration. Sometimes family conflicts also cause migration. Improved communication facilities, such as, transportation, impact of the radio and the television, the cinema, the urban-oriented education and resultant change in attitudes and values also promote migration.

Sometimes even political factors encourage or discourage migration. For instance, in our country, the adoption of the jobs for 'sons of the soil policy' by the State governments will certainly affect the migration from other states. The rise of Shiv Sena in Bombay, with its hatred for the migrants and the occasional eruption of violence in the name of local parochial patriotism, is a significant phenomena. Even in Calcutta, the Bengali-Marwari conflict will have far reaching implications. And now Assam and Tamil Nadu are other such examples.

Thus the political attitudes and outlook of the people also influence migration to a great extent. There have also been migrations from Kashmir and Punjab because of the terrorist activities.

Consequences of Migration

The consequences of migration are diverse. However, some of the important consequences discussed in this unit are economic, demographic, social and psychological. These consequences are both positive as well as negative. Some of these affect the place of departure while others influence the place of destination.

Economic

Migration from a region characterised by labour surplus helps to increase the average productivity of labour in that region, as this encourages labour-saving devices and/or greater work participation by the remaining family workers. On the other hand, there is a view that migration negatively affects the emigrating region and favours the immigrating region, and that migration would widen the development disparity between the regions, because of the drain of the resourceful persons from the relatively underdeveloped region to the more developed region. But the exodus of the more enterprising members of a community cannot be considered a loss, if there is lack of alternative opportunities in the rural areas. As long as migration draws upon the surplus labour, it would help the emigrating region. It will have adverse effects only if human resources are drained away at the cost of the development of the region.

Another important point is that when migration draws away the unemployed or underemployed, it would enable the remaining population of the region to improve their living conditions as this would enable the remaining population to increase the per capita consumption, since the total number of mouths to be fed into is reduced as a result of emigration.

However, the labour-sending regions may gain economically by the money brought in by the emigrants. In India, the influx of the rural migrants to cities and towns has resulted in a steady outflow of cash from the urban to rural areas. Most migrants are single males, who after securing urban employment generally send a portion of their income to their village homes to supplement the meagre incomes of their families. At the same time, it also affects the savings of the family as sometimes the migrants take money (family savings) with them, which is necessary for their travel and stay in a new place. In recent times, a sudden increase in migration to the Middle East has resulted in steep rise in the remittances of foreign money in our country. In 1979, it was found that the annual remittances to the tiny state of Kerala were estimated to Rs.4000 million.

The rising inflow of money from the Gulf countries has resulted in the building of houses and buying of agricultural land, and even investments in business and industry. This has also resulted in the rise in the levels of consumption in the family. Money is also being spent on children's education. On the other hand, the outflow of men has caused labour shortages and has pushed wages upwards.

Demographic

Migration has a direct impact on age, sex and occupational composition of the sending and receiving regions. Migration of the unmarried males of young working age results in imbalances in sex ratio. The absence of many young men from the villages increases the proportion of other groups, such as, women, children and old people. This tends to reduce the birth rate in the rural areas. Further the separation of the rural male migrants from their wives for long durations also tends to reduce the birth rate.

Social and Psychological

Urban life usually brings about certain social changes in the migrants. Those migrants who return occasionally or remain in direct or indirect contact with the households of their origin are also likely to transmit some new ideas back to the areas of origin. Several studies attribute technological change to the dynamism of the return migrants, who bring money as well as knowledge and experience of different production techniques, and this may lead to mechanisation and commercialisation of agricultural activity. A number of ex-servicemen, on retirement go back to their native areas and promote such practices in the villages. Contact with the urban and different cultures also brings attitudinal change in the migrants, and helps them to develop more modern orientation, including even the consumerist culture in their own areas.

On the other hand, migration which results in the absence of the adult males for long periods of time may cause dislocation of the family, and, under such circumstances, women and children often have to take over more and different types of work and other more important roles in household decision-making. Studies have revealed very disturbing effects of the male migration from Kerala. Neurosis, hysteria and depression are said to be on the increase among the emigrant workers' wives in Kerala. The gulf boom has also taken a toll of mental health of the families.

Problems of Refugees and Displaced Persons

Sometimes forced movements of people take place due to political and religious disturbances or wars. Such movements shift people to the neighbouring countries as refugees. The United Nations (1984) defines "a refugee as every person, who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

Thus many international movements of population involving very large numbers have occurred due to compelling reasons of political, religious or racial character. Perhaps the largest movement of people in this century has occurred in the Indian sub-continent. The partition of the country in 1947 into the Indian Union and Pakistan led to large exodus of the refugees into each nation from the other. Estimates indicate that not less than 7 million persons went to Pakistan from India and more than 8 million people came to India from Pakistan. Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 also caused a large number of people from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to move into the north-eastern states of India as refugees, and this became a permanent problem for the region, as much as "Bihari" Muslims continue to be problematic for Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Some of the largest forced international migrations in history have occurred in recent times in Asia. For example, in the 12 years following 1975 more than 1.7 million refugees have left Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, in 1979, produced a flow of refugees which has led to some 2.7 million being temporarily settled in Pakistan and 1.5

million in Iran. Most of these refugees are still in the camps in the neighbouring countries. Recently, due to political disturbances in Sri Lanka, large numbers of Tamilians have entered India, and are staying in Tamil Nadu.

It is found that on humanitarian grounds the refugees are often given shelter by the governments of various countries. However, the sudden influx of the refugees creates enormous pressure on the native society. It leads to short supply of essential commodities, ecological imbalances and health hazards in the countries of asylum. The large magnitude and the various economic, political and social dimensions of the exodus of the refugees create many problems, particularly for the countries of destination. Sometimes they cause political complications in the receiving countries. They organise themselves by forming groups, and pressurise the governments for some concessions. For example the United Kingdom, Canada and Sri Lanka are facing political and racial crises due to migration. Sometimes this causes clashes between the natives and migrants. Sri Lanka is a recent example of this.

But, in some instances, the refugees do make a positive contribution to the development of the host country, when settled in sparsely populated areas, by clearing and cultivating land.

Migration Policy

In India, little attention has been paid at the policy level to control the pattern of either international or internal migration. At the international level, the country does not have even up to date statistics of the immigrants and the emigrants although most of the international migration is controlled by passports and visa permits, etc. Questions have been raised about the brain drain from

India in various forums, but nothing has been done to stop it as there are considerable numbers of educated unemployment in the country. It is only recently that the ministry of labour established a cell to protect the interests of the Indian emigrants, who are working as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in other countries, especially in the Middle East.

At the national level, the government has not shown any concern for the problems relating to internal migration, and has, therefore, not formulated any policy. Although rural to rural migration, as indicated earlier, constituted the dominant migration stream among both the males and the females, very little is known about the factors that govern this migration except through the 1981 Census. Since major part of rural to rural migration is associational or for unspecified reasons, it is necessary to understand it more clearly.

There has been significant seasonal migration of agricultural labourers in different parts of the country, especially those parts which are experiencing the green revolution. Not much information is available about the volume of this stream of the migrants or their duration of stay.

As rural to urban migration is next only to rural to rural migration, and is quite sizeable, it is influenced by the urbanisation policies and programmes. In the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans, the need for a balanced spatial distribution of economic activities was emphasised, and stress was laid on the need to prevent the unrestricted growth of big cities.

Recognising the problems associated with the rapid growth of big cities (million plus), the government is now trying to adopt policies which would help in controlling migration to big cities and metropolises. During the 1980s, emphasis was on the provision of adequate infrastructural and other facilities in the small, medium and intermediate towns so that they could serve as growth and service centers for the rural region. The Planning Commission

emphasised the needs for positive inducements to establish new industries and other commercial and professional establishments in small and medium towns.

Thus, in the absence of any specific migration policy, it is difficult to predict the major directions of future migration flows. However, considering government's emphasis on developing small, medium and intermediate cities, it is expected that intermediate cities and medium towns will attract more migrants in the future. Although industrial cities, with expanding industries, will continue to attract new migrants, the young educated males and females may have a greater tendency to seek white collar employment in small towns and cities.

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