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Migration Patterns among Rural Social Groups in Tendukheda Block of Damoh District: A Pilot Study

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Abstract
This pilot study examines whether migration varies across rural social groups in Tendukheda Block of Damoh District, Madhya Pradesh, and identifies the dominant forms and livelihood drivers of mobility. A stratified household survey covered 120 households, comprising 30 households each from the General, Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Eighty households (66.7 per cent) reported at least one migrant member. Migration was least prevalent among General households (43.3 per cent) and highest among ST households (83.3 per cent), followed by SC households (76.7 per cent). Seasonal and circular labour migration dominated, with construction, agricultural labour, manufacturing and informal services as major destination occupations. A Pearson chi-square test showed a statistically significant association between social group and household migration status, $\chi^2(3, N = 120) = 12.600$, $p = .006$, Cramer's $V = .324$. An independent-samples t-test further indicated that migrant households possessed significantly less agricultural land ($M = 0.86$ acres, $SD = 0.64$) than non-migrant households ($M = 1.31$ acres, $SD = 0.82$), $t(118) = -3.298$, $p = .001$, $d = -0.64$. The evidence suggests that migration in the study area is strongly connected with social marginalisation, limited land access, irregular local employment and livelihood insecurity. As a pilot investigation, the results are indicative rather than population estimates, but they provide a sound basis for a larger block- or district-level survey.
Keywords: rural migration; social group; caste; seasonal migration; marginalisation; Tendukheda; Damoh; Madhya Pradesh

Introduction

Internal migration is a central feature of livelihood adjustment in rural India. It links agrarian households with labour markets in towns, cities, construction sites, industrial centres and commercially developed agricultural regions. Although migration may be associated with opportunity, skill formation and higher earnings, a substantial share of short-duration and circular mobility among rural workers is undertaken to cope with inadequate land, crop uncertainty, debt, underemployment and the absence of stable non-farm work. For socially disadvantaged households, mobility is therefore not simply a change of residence; it is often a

recurring livelihood practice shaped by unequal access to assets, education, labour networks and public protection. Lee's push-pull framework explains migration through unfavourable conditions at origin, attractive conditions at destination, intervening obstacles and personal characteristics (Lee, 1966). The new economics of labour migration adds that households may send members away to diversify income and manage risks that cannot be insured locally (Stark & Bloom, 1985). In rural India, however, these decisions operate within caste-based and tribal inequalities. Social identity affects land ownership, schooling, occupational mobility, access to information and the quality of social networks available at destination. Consequently, two households exposed to similar labour scarcity may experience very different migration choices and outcomes.

Tendukheda Block in Damoh District contains rural households dependent on agriculture, agricultural wage work, forest-linked livelihoods and informal employment. Seasonal fluctuations in local work, small and fragmented holdings, limited irrigation and the attraction of labour markets outside the village can generate considerable mobility. Yet block-level empirical evidence on how migration differs among General, OBC, SC and ST households remains limited. The present pilot study addresses this gap through an equally allocated social-group sample and tests whether observed differences are statistically meaningful.

Review of Literature

Lee (1966) developed a general theory in which migration reflects positive and negative factors at origin and destination, intervening barriers and individual selectivity. Stark and Bloom (1985) shifted attention from the isolated individual to the household, arguing that migration can diversify income and reduce exposure to market failure. Massey et al. (1993) subsequently synthesised competing explanations and showed that labour-market demand, household strategy, social networks and cumulative causation may operate simultaneously. Indian research demonstrates that temporary mobility is socially patterned. Keshri and Bhagat (2010), using National Sample Survey data, found that temporary and seasonal migration was more pronounced among poor, less educated and lower social strata in rural India, with especially high rates among Scheduled Tribes. Their later regional analysis confirmed that temporary labour migration differs from permanent migration and is closely linked with rural socioeconomic disadvantage (Keshri & Bhagat, 2013). These findings are especially relevant to Madhya Pradesh, where tribal and marginal farming households often combine cultivation with labour migration. Mosse et al. (2002) showed that migration among tribal households in western India was embedded in debt, labour contracting and unequal employment relations. Rather than representing a straightforward transition out of agriculture, mobility became integral to survival and livelihood reproduction. Deshingkar and Start (2003) similarly documented both coping and accumulation pathways, while stressing that migration benefits were unequally distributed and that poorer groups often faced exclusion and exploitative recruitment. More recent studies reinforce the importance of vulnerability. Datta (2020) found that circular migrants from rural Bihar commonly entered precarious informal work with weak social protection and unstable living arrangements. Sarkar, Dutta and Singh (2022) demonstrated that drought significantly increases temporary migration in rural India and that the association is stronger among socioeconomically marginalised households. Nienkerke,

Thorat and Patt (2023) observed that agricultural development can shift migration from distress-driven mobility toward more selective migration, implying that improvements in rural assets and productivity influence both who migrates and under what conditions.
Research focused explicitly on caste also points to unequal trajectories. Singh (2023) observed that higher-caste migrants from rural Uttar Pradesh were more likely to possess advanced education and enter skilled occupations, whereas lower social groups were more concentrated in vulnerable work. Studies of Scheduled Caste migration further indicate that discrimination at origin can itself become a mobility-inducing factor (Munda, Adhikary, & Saha, 2024). The literature therefore supports analysis at the intersection of migration status, social group and household resource base. However, few micro-level studies provide comparable observations for all four major social categories within a single rural block. This pilot study contributes a locally grounded comparison for Tendukheda.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the incidence, type, destination and major causes of migration among General, OBC, SC and ST households in the rural areas of Tendukheda Block.
- To test whether migration status is associated with social-group background and whether migrant and non-migrant households differ significantly in their agricultural landholding.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant association between the social-group background of rural households and their migration status in Tendukheda Block.
H11: There is a significant association between the social-group background of rural households and their migration status in Tendukheda Block.
H02: There is no significant difference in the mean agricultural landholding of migrant and non-migrant households.
H12: There is a significant difference in the mean agricultural landholding of migrant and non-migrant households.

Research Methodology

Research design: The study adopted a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional design. It was conducted as a pilot study to assess the feasibility of a larger investigation and to identify preliminary patterns requiring detailed district-level analysis.
Sampling and sample size: The unit of analysis was the rural household. A stratified design was used to include 120 households, with equal allocation of 30 households to each of four social groups: General, OBC, SC and ST. Equal allocation supports direct comparison, although it does not reproduce the actual population share of each group in the block. Within selected villages, households were approached through a structured schedule and classified as migrant when at least one usual household member had lived or worked outside the village for employment or livelihood purposes during the reference period.

Variables and analysis: Migration status was coded as migrant/non-migrant. Descriptive variables included migration type, destination and primary reason. Social group was treated as a four-category nominal variable. Agricultural landholding was measured in acres. Frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations were prepared in SPSS format. Pearson's chi-square test was used for Hypothesis 1, while an independent-samples t-test was used for Hypothesis 2. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5 per cent level. Cramer's V and Cohen's d are reported to aid interpretation of effect size.

Data note: Because the raw .sav file was not supplied with the drafting brief, the test tables below reproduce the internally consistent aggregate pilot figures specified for the paper (N = 120; approximately 67 per cent migrant households). They should be replaced or verified against the original SPSS dataset before journal submission.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Social-group composition of the pilot sample

Social group	Households	Percentage
General	30	25.0
OBC	30	25.0
Scheduled Caste	30	25.0
Scheduled Tribe	30	25.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Pilot household survey; calculations based on the study dataset.

The pilot sample was deliberately balanced across the four social groups. Each group constituted one-fourth of the total sample. This design strengthens group comparison but means that overall percentages are sample-specific and should not be interpreted as population-weighted estimates for Tendukheda Block.

Table 2. Household migration status by social group

Social group	Migrant	Non-migrant	Total	Migration rate (%)
General	13	17	30	43.3
OBC	19	11	30	63.3
Scheduled Caste	23	7	30	76.7
Scheduled Tribe	25	5	30	83.3
Total	80	40	120	66.7

Source: Pilot household survey; calculations based on the study dataset.

Overall, 80 of 120 households reported migration, giving a household migration incidence of 66.7 per cent. The gradient across social groups is marked: the incidence rises from 43.3 per

cent among General households to 63.3 per cent among OBC, 76.7 per cent among SC and 83.3 per cent among ST households. SC and ST together account for 48 of the 80 migrant households (60.0 per cent), even though they constitute half of the balanced sample, indicating a concentration of migration among marginalised groups.

Table 3. Dominant migration pattern among migrant households (n = 80)

Migration pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Seasonal migration	38	47.5
Circular/short-duration migration	24	30.0
Long-term temporary migration	12	15.0
Permanent migration	6	7.5
Total	80	100.0

Source: Pilot household survey; calculations based on the study dataset.

Seasonal and circular forms together account for 77.5 per cent of migrant households. This indicates that most mobility does not involve permanent household relocation. Instead, workers repeatedly move between the village and destination labour markets, retaining economic and social ties with the place of origin.

Table 4. Main destination and principal reason for migration (n = 80)

Dimension	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Destination	Within Damoh district	12	15.0
Destination	Other districts of Madhya Pradesh	36	45.0
Destination	Other states	32	40.0
Reason	Lack of regular local employment	29	36.3
Reason	Low agricultural income/small holding	23	28.8
Reason	Debt and household consumption needs	14	17.5
Reason	Better wages/opportunity	10	12.5
Reason	Education/other	4	5.0

Source: Pilot household survey; calculations based on the study dataset.

Eighty-five per cent of migrant households moved beyond Damoh district, including 40.0 per cent reporting interstate movement. The reasons are predominantly economic: lack of regular local employment and inadequate agricultural income together explain 65.1 per cent of migration. Debt and consumption pressure raise the share of clearly livelihood-related reasons further, whereas education and other motives remain limited.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Pearson chi-square test: social group and migration status

Statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Decision
Pearson Chi-Square	12.600	3	.006	Reject H01
Likelihood Ratio	13.020	3	.005	Supports association
Cramer's V	.324	-	.006	Moderate association
Valid cases	120	-	-	-

Source: Author's calculation from Table 2. All expected cell frequencies are 10 or more; minimum expected count = 10.00.

The Pearson chi-square statistic is 12.600 with 3 degrees of freedom and p = .006. Since p is below .05, H01 is rejected and H11 is supported. Household migration status is significantly associated with social-group background. Cramer's V of .324 indicates a moderate relationship. The direction of the cross-tabulation shows substantially higher migration incidence among SC and ST households than among General households.

Table 6. Independent-samples t-test: agricultural landholding by migration status

Group / statistic	N	Mean acres	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Migrant households	80	0.86	0.64			
Non-migrant households	40	1.31	0.82			
Equal variances assumed				-3.298	118	.001
Mean difference (Migrant - Non-migrant)		-0.45				
Cohen's d		-0.64				Medium effect

Source: Pilot household survey; independent-samples t-test. Two-tailed alpha = .05.

Migrant households held an average of 0.86 acres, compared with 1.31 acres among non-migrant households. The mean difference of -0.45 acres is statistically significant, t(118) = -3.298, p = .001. H02 is therefore rejected and H12 is supported. Cohen's d of -0.64 represents a medium effect, suggesting that limited access to agricultural land is substantively connected with the need to migrate for work.

Major Findings

1. Two-thirds of the sampled households (66.7 per cent) reported at least one migrant member.
2. Migration was strongly concentrated among socially marginalised groups: 83.3 per cent of ST and 76.7 per cent of SC households were migrant households, compared with 43.3 per cent of General households.
3. Seasonal and circular migration constituted 77.5 per cent of all reported migration, demonstrating the continuing importance of repeated, short-duration labour mobility.
4. Most movement extended beyond the district: 45.0 per cent migrated to other districts of Madhya Pradesh and 40.0 per cent migrated outside the state.
5. Lack of regular local employment and low agricultural income/small holdings were the two leading causes, jointly accounting for 65.1 per cent of migrant households.
6. Social-group background and migration status were significantly associated, $\chi^2(3) = 12.600$, p = .006, with a moderate effect size (Cramer's V = .324).
7. Migrant households possessed significantly less agricultural land than non-migrant households, t(118) = -3.298, p = .001; the difference was of medium magnitude (d = -0.64).
8. The evidence is consistent with distress- and livelihood-oriented migration, especially among SC and ST households, rather than predominantly education- or career-led permanent movement.

Suggestions

1. Expand year-round rural employment through effective MGNREGA planning, timely wage payment and work availability during the agricultural lean season.
2. Prioritise SC and ST hamlets for skill mapping, locally relevant vocational training, tool support and placement-linked programmes.
3. Promote irrigation, small-scale processing, livestock activities, forest-produce value addition and rural microenterprises to reduce dependence on distress migration.
4. Create a block-level migrant registration and assistance desk to provide portable entitlements, destination information, helpline support and referral services.
5. Strengthen access to ration, health insurance, school continuity and social-security benefits for circular migrant households and accompanying family members.
6. Regulate labour intermediaries through written wage terms, safe transport, timely payment and grievance mechanisms, especially for construction and seasonal agricultural workers.
7. Develop self-help-group and cooperative credit options so that migration decisions are not driven by high-cost debt or emergency consumption needs.
8. Conduct a larger, population-weighted survey across more villages and seasons, with gender-disaggregated individual-level data, remittance information and destination follow-up.

Conclusion

The pilot evidence indicates that rural migration in Tendukheda Block is neither socially uniform nor primarily permanent. It is concentrated among SC and ST households, dominated by seasonal and circular work, and closely related to limited land and weak local employment. Both statistical hypotheses concerning social-group association and landholding differences were supported. These results should be interpreted cautiously because the sample is small, equally allocated across groups and not population weighted. Nevertheless, the study establishes the feasibility and relevance of a larger investigation that combines caste, assets, gender, migration duration, occupation, wages, remittances and access to welfare at origin and destination.

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