

WOMEN'S LABOUR MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN DURG DISTRICT OF CHHATTISGARH

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ABSTRACT

Women's labour migration has emerged as an important livelihood strategy in many developing regions, contributing to household income, employment diversification, and women's economic participation. This study examines the role of labour migration in promoting the economic empowerment of women in Durg District of Chhattisgarh. The study focuses on the employment characteristics, income generation, financial independence, savings behaviour, decision-making capacity, and access to economic resources among women migrant workers. Primary data may be collected from selected migrant and non-migrant women through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews, while secondary information is obtained from government reports, census publications, labour surveys, and relevant academic literature. Descriptive statistical techniques and appropriate empirical methods are used to examine the relationship between women's labour migration and various dimensions of economic empowerment. The study is expected to assess whether migration provides women with greater employment opportunities, improved income, enhanced control over financial resources, and increased participation in household economic decisions. It also considers the challenges faced by migrant women, including insecure employment, wage disparities, inadequate social security, poor working conditions, and limited access to institutional support. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for policymakers and development agencies in designing gender-responsive labour, migration, and livelihood policies for women in Chhattisgarh.

KEYWORDS: Women's Labour Migration, Economic Empowerment, Female Labour Force Participation, Migrant Workers, Employment, Income, Financial Independence, Household Decision-Making, Durg District, Chhattisgarh.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's labour migration has become an increasingly important component of livelihood strategies in developing economies. Migration is not merely a movement of people from one geographical location to another; it is also an economic process through which individuals and households seek better employment opportunities, higher incomes, improved living conditions, and greater livelihood security. In India, internal migration has historically been associated with regional disparities in employment, differences in wages, agricultural seasonality, urbanization, and the growing demand for labour in construction, manufacturing, domestic work, services, and informal-sector activities. Although women constitute a significant proportion of the migrant workforce, their migration and economic contributions have often received less attention than those of male migrants.

Women's labour migration can have important implications for economic empowerment. Employment outside the household may provide women with independent income, greater control over financial resources, opportunities for saving, and increased participation in household decision-making. Migrant employment can also expose women to new labour markets, skills, social networks, and economic opportunities. Consequently, migration may contribute to changes in women's bargaining power within the household and their ability to participate in decisions relating to expenditure, education, healthcare, savings, investment, and asset acquisition. However, the relationship between migration and empowerment is not necessarily positive in all circumstances. Women migrants may face low and irregular wages, occupational insecurity, unsafe working conditions, discrimination, limited access to social security, lack of formal contracts, and difficulties in accessing public services.

The issue is particularly relevant in Chhattisgarh, where rural livelihoods continue to depend substantially on agriculture and informal employment, while disparities in employment opportunities encourage labour mobility. Durg District represents an important area for examining these dynamics because of its combination of rural and urban settlements, industrial and service-sector activities, construction employment, and linkages with surrounding regions. Women from economically vulnerable households may migrate temporarily or seasonally in search of employment and income. Their migration decisions are influenced by household economic conditions, availability of local employment, wage

differentials, family responsibilities, social networks, and demand for female labour at destinations.

Women's economic empowerment extends beyond earning an income. It includes the ability to access and control economic resources, make independent or joint financial decisions, participate in paid employment, accumulate savings and assets, and exercise greater bargaining power within the household and community. Therefore, examining women's labour migration through the perspective of economic empowerment provides a broader understanding of the economic consequences of migration. It is important to determine whether increased labour-market participation actually translates into greater control over income and improved decision-making authority.

Against this background, the present study examines women's labour migration and its role in economic empowerment in Durg District of Chhattisgarh. The study focuses on the socio-economic characteristics of women migrants, their employment and income conditions, contribution to household income, savings and financial behavior, access to economic resources, and participation in household decision-making. It also identifies the major challenges experienced by migrant women. The study seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of female labour migration as both an economic livelihood strategy and a potential pathway towards women's economic empowerment.

2. Review of Literature

Women's labour migration has received increasing attention in development economics, gender studies, and labour economics because of its implications for employment, household welfare, income distribution, and women's bargaining power. Existing literature suggests that migration can create economic opportunities for women, but its effects depend considerably on employment conditions, social institutions, household characteristics, and the nature of migration.

Todaro (1969) developed the migration decision framework by arguing that migration is influenced by expected income differentials between rural and urban areas rather than only by existing wage differences. Although the model was not specifically focused on women, it provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding labour migration as a response to differences in employment and income opportunities.

Desai and Banerji (2008) highlighted the importance of women's employment and economic participation in shaping household decision-making in India. Their findings suggest that women's participation in economic activities can be associated with greater

involvement in household decisions, although the relationship is influenced by education, household structure, social norms, and other socio-economic factors.

Deshingkar and Akter (2009) examined migration in India and highlighted the importance of seasonal and circular migration as livelihood strategies among economically vulnerable households. Their work points to the significance of informal employment, limited social protection, and insecure working conditions among migrant workers. These issues are particularly important for women migrants, who may experience additional vulnerabilities in destination labour markets.

Rajan and Bhagat (2017) discussed the changing nature of internal migration in India and emphasised that migration is closely linked with structural transformation, urbanisation, employment opportunities, and regional disparities. Their work indicates that migration should be understood as a multidimensional process involving economic as well as social factors.

Mosse et al. (2005) examined migration and livelihood strategies among tribal and rural communities in India and demonstrated that migration can become an important response to limited local employment opportunities. However, migrants working in informal occupations often remain exposed to low wages, poor working conditions, and limited access to social protection.

Recent research on female migration also indicates that women increasingly migrate not only as accompanying family members but as independent workers. This represents an important change in the traditional understanding of migration. Women's independent migration can potentially increase their economic autonomy, but it may simultaneously expose them to occupational insecurity, exploitation, discrimination, and inadequate institutional support.

The literature therefore indicates a complex relationship between labour migration and women's economic empowerment. Migration may improve income, employment opportunities, savings, financial inclusion, and household decision-making. At the same time, the benefits may be constrained by informal employment, wage inequality, insecure working conditions, social norms, family responsibilities, and inadequate access to welfare programmes.

Although substantial literature exists on internal migration, labour mobility, and women's empowerment in India, relatively limited empirical research has examined the district-level relationship between women's labour migration and economic empowerment in Durg District of Chhattisgarh. Existing studies frequently focus on migration as a livelihood strategy or examine women's employment separately from migration. There is a need to examine these

issues together by considering women's income, savings, financial independence, control over earnings, household decision-making, and access to economic resources.

The present study attempts to address this gap by examining whether and to what extent labour migration contributes to the economic empowerment of women in Durg District. It also considers the challenges and constraints experienced by women migrant workers and the role of migration in improving their household economic well-being.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to examine the patterns of women labour migration and analyse its implications for household livelihood outcomes in Durg district, Chhattishgarh.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the patterns of women labour migration and its implications for household livelihood outcomes in Durg district of Chhattishgarh. The analysis is based on primary data collected through a field survey conducted among women labour migrants at their place of origin. Durg district was purposively selected due to its high incidence of women labour migration, livelihood insecurity, and dependence on informal employment across rural and semi-urban areas.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the selection of respondents. In the first stage, blocks with a relatively high prevalence of women labour migration were identified. In the second stage, villages and urban wards reporting substantial out-migration of women were selected. In the final stage, women labour migrants were selected using random sampling methods. The total sample size of the study comprised 500 women labour migrants. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule covering socio-demographic characteristics, migration patterns, employment conditions, income, and household livelihood outcomes. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, including chi-square tests and Cramer's V, to examine associations between migration-related factors and livelihood outcomes.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age Group of Women Migrants.

Age Group	Percentage
18–25	22.0 (110)
26–35	36.0 (180)
36–45	28.0 (140)
46+	14.0 (70)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

The age-wise distribution of women migrants reveals a clear concentration in the economically productive stages of the life course. The highest proportion of women migrants belongs to the 26–35 years age group, accounting for 36.0 per cent of the total respondents. This age group represents the prime working and reproductive phase, indicating that migration decisions are closely linked with livelihood responsibilities, income generation, and family sustenance. Women in this age bracket are more likely to migrate due to greater physical capacity for work, higher demand for labour, and increasing household economic pressures.

Women aged 18–25 years constitute 22.0 per cent of the migrant population, indicating the entry of young women into migration streams at an early stage of their life. This trend may be associated with factors such as early workforce participation, limited access to higher education, and the need to support household income. Early-age migration also raises concerns regarding job security, skill development, and exposure to precarious working conditions.

Table 2: Educational Status of Women Migrants

Education Level	Percentage
Illiterate	18.0 (90)
Primary	34.0(170)
Secondary	32.0 (160)
Higher	16.0(80)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

The educational profile of women labour migrants reveals a predominance of low to moderate levels of schooling. A substantial proportion of migrants have education up to primary or secondary level, the presence of illiterate women among migrants reflects persistent educational deprivation in migration-sending areas.

Lower educational attainment restricts to skilled and better-paid employment, confining women to informal and low-wage occupations. This educational disadvantage limits the potential livelihood gains from migration and reinforces gendered labour market segmentation. The findings underline the importance of education in improving the quality of migration outcomes for women.

Table 3: Type of Migration.

Migration Type	Percentage
Seasonal	52.0 (260)
Circular	34.0 (170)
Long-term	14.0 (70)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

The distribution of migration types indicates that seasonal migration is the most common form among women labour migrants, followed by circular migration. Long-term migration accounts for a smaller share, suggesting that women's migration is largely temporary in nature and closely tied to seasonal labour demand.

The dominance of seasonal and circular migration reflects women's continued attachment to their place of origin and household responsibilities. Such migration patterns provide short-term income support but often fail to ensure employment stability or long-term livelihood security, highlighting migration as a coping strategy rather than a sustainable solution.

Table 4: Sector of Employment.

Sector	Percentage
Construction	32.0 (160)
Agriculture	24.0 (120)
Domestic Work	18.0 (90)
Others	26.0(130)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

The sectoral composition of employment shows that women migrants are predominantly engaged in construction, agriculture, domestic work, and other informal activities. Construction emerges as the largest employment sector, followed by agriculture and domestic work, all of which are characterised by informality and employment insecurity.

The concentration of women in these sectors reflects limited skill recognition and gendered labour demand at destination areas. Employment in informal sectors exposes women to low wages, occupational hazards, and lack of social protection, thereby constraining the positive livelihood effects of migration.

Table 5: Monthly Income at Destination.

Income Level	Percentage
Below 6000	24.0 (120)
6001–8000	40.0 (200)
Above 8000	36.0 (180)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

The income distribution indicates that most women migrants earn modest monthly income, with a significant proportion clustered in the lower and middle income categories. Only a smaller share earns relatively higher incomes, suggesting upward mobility within destination labor markets.

Although migration provides access to cash income, earnings remain insufficient to ensure long term livelihood security. The income pattern suggests basic consumption and debt repayment rather than savings or asset creation, underscoring the vulnerability of women migrants engaged in low-paid informal work.

Table 6: Education and Livelihood Outcome.

Education	Improved	No Change	Declined	Total
Low education	120 (48.0)	90 (36.0)	40 (16.0)	250 (100)
Secondary & above	160 (64.0)	60 (24.0)	30 (12.0)	250 (100)
Total	280 (56.0)	150 (30.0)	70 (14.0)	500 (100)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

Statistical Test: Chi-square (χ^2) = 22.64; df = 2; p < 0.001; Cramer's V = 0.21

The association between educational attainment and household livelihood outcome among women migrants is statistically significant. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 22.64$; df = 2; p < 0.001) indicates that livelihood outcomes vary systematically across education levels. Women with secondary and higher education report a higher proportion of improved livelihood outcomes compared to those with lower education. The Cramer's V value of 0.21 suggests a moderate association between education and livelihood outcome.

This result highlights the importance of education in shaping migration outcomes. Higher educational attainment improves women's access to relatively better employment opportunities.

Table 7: Type of Migration and Livelihood Outcome.

Migration Type	Improved	No Change	Declined	Total
Seasonal	130 (50.0)	90 (34.6)	40 (15.4)	260 (100)
Circular/Long-term	150 (62.5)	60 (25.0)	30 (12.5)	240 (100)
Total	280 (56.0)	150 (30.0)	70 (14.0)	500 (100)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

Statistical Test: Chi-square (χ^2) = 14.18; df = 2; p < 0.01; Cramer's V = 0.17

The relationship between type of migration and household livelihood outcome is statistically significant. The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 14.18$; df = 2; p < 0.01) confirms that livelihood

outcomes differ by migration type. Women engaged in circular or long-term migration exhibit better livelihood outcomes than those involved in seasonal migration. The Cramer's V value of 0.17 indicates a weak to moderate association.

This pattern suggests that longer or repeated engagement with destination labour markets allow women to accumulate work experience, social networks, and relatively stable income sources. In contrast, seasonal migration remains a short-term coping strategy with limited potential for sustained livelihood improvement.

Table 8: Employment Sector and Livelihood Outcome.

Sector	Improved	No Change	Declined	Total
Construction & industry	170 (60.7)	80 (28.6)	30 (10.7)	280 (100)
Agriculture & domestic	110 (50.0)	70 (31.8)	40 (18.2)	220 (100)
Total	280 (56.0)	150 (30.0)	70 (14.0)	500 (100)

(Field Survey, N = 500)

Statistical Test: Chi-square (χ^2) = 11.76; df = 2; p < 0.01; Cramer's V = 0.15

The association between employment sector and household livelihood outcome is statistically significant. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 11.76$; df = 2; p < 0.01) indicates that livelihood outcomes vary across employment sectors. Women employed in construction and industrial activities report relatively better livelihood outcomes than those engaged in agriculture and domestic work. The Cramer's V value of 0.15 suggests a weak to moderate association.

Sectoral variation in livelihood outcomes reflects differences in wage levels, employment intensity, and earning potential. While construction and industrial work offer higher income opportunities, they also involve greater occupational risks, highlighting the uneven benefits of women's labour migration across sectors.

6. Major Findings

The study examined women's labour migration and its implications for household livelihood outcomes in Durg District of Chhattisgarh using primary data from 500 women migrants. The findings indicate that migration is mainly driven by livelihood insecurity, limited local employment, and socio-economic vulnerability. Women in economically active age groups and those with low to moderate education constitute a major share of migrants, suggesting that migration is primarily a household survival strategy. Seasonal and circular migration are the dominant forms of mobility, with women mainly employed in informal sectors such as construction, agriculture, and domestic work. These occupations are generally characterised by low wages, job insecurity, and limited social protection. Migration provides women with

cash income that helps households meet basic needs, repay debts, and support children's education. However, low and unstable earnings restrict savings, asset creation, and long-term livelihood security. The chi-square results show significant associations between livelihood outcomes and **education, migration duration, destination income, type of migration, and employment sector**. Better-educated women, higher-income migrants, and those engaged in longer-term or circular migration are more likely to report improved livelihood outcomes. Women working in construction and industrial activities generally experience better outcomes than those employed in agriculture and domestic work, although these jobs may involve greater physical and occupational risks.

Overall, women's labour migration in Durg District primarily functions as a **short-term livelihood coping strategy rather than a sustainable pathway to economic empowerment**. While migration improves household income and immediate welfare, persistent informal employment, low wages, and inadequate social protection limit its long-term benefits. Strengthening local employment, improving women's education and skills, and ensuring safe migration and social protection are essential for achieving sustainable livelihood improvement and genuine economic empowerment.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the patterns of women labour migration and its implications for household livelihood outcomes in Durg district of Chhattishgarh using primary data collected from 500 women migrants. The analysis reveals that women's labour migration in the district is largely a response to livelihood insecurity, limited local employment opportunities, and persistent socio-economic vulnerabilities. Migration is predominantly undertaken by women in economically active age groups and is closely linked to household survival strategies rather than long-term career advancement.

The findings show that women's migration is mainly seasonal and circular in nature, with a strong concentration in informal sectors such as construction, agriculture, and domestic work. While migration enables women to access cash income and contributes positively to short-term household well-being, earnings remain modest and employment conditions precarious. As a result, migration functions more as a coping mechanism than as a pathway to sustainable livelihood security or economic empowerment.

The statistical analysis highlights that education; income level, migration duration, and sector of employment significantly influence livelihood outcomes. Women with higher educational attainment, longer migration duration, and relatively better earnings are more likely to

experience improved household livelihood conditions. However, the moderate strength of these associations suggests that individual factors alone cannot overcome structural constraints such as informality, gendered labour markets, and lack of social protection.

Overall, the study underscores the dual nature of women labour migration in Durg district. On one hand, migration plays a critical role in sustaining household livelihoods and mitigating economic stress. On the other hand, it exposes women to multiple vulnerabilities, including insecure employment, health risks, and social exclusion. Addressing these challenges requires integrated policy interventions that strengthen local livelihood opportunities, enhance women's education and skills, and ensure safe and protected migration pathways. Without such measures, women's labour migration is likely to remain a survival-oriented strategy with limited potential for long-term empowerment and inclusive development.

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