

Occupational Diversification and Rural-Urban Migration in India: A Review of Evidence and Some Issues for Research*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to review some of the existing theoretical and empirical studies on occupational diversification and rural-urban migration. Theoretically, the changing occupational structure has come to be explained from both the developmental and the distress angles. Empirical studies suggest that forces of development and distress are influencing rural occupational structure simultaneously. However, the extent of their influence is difficult to judge from the available evidence. The paper emphasises the need for a new focus in diversification studies to explain the phenomenon not only in terms of the micro-level dynamics but also from a broader perspective considering various macro processes. As regards rural-urban migration, given its peculiar nature, the phenomenon needs to be understood separately from the general process of diversification.

Introduction

Occupational diversification in an economy is usually considered to be a positive development as it is an important component of growth. The various population censuses and National Sample Survey (NSS) rounds in India suggest a slow but growing trend of diversification in rural areas in recent decades by way of an increase in the share of rural non-agricultural sector in the total workforce (Basant and Kumar 1989). A clear understanding of the phenomenon of occupational diversification can help to address better the following issues:

- i) What drives demand for non-agricultural employment by different types of rural households? How are different forms of employment influenced by levels and forms of agricultural development? What are the terms of employment for non-agricultural rural work, and how do these terms relate to social and

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political relationships within and outside the rural areas? Under what conditions is diversification in rural areas a fundamentally positive factor in the survival of the poorest groups? (Koppel and Hawkins 1994).

- ii) What has been the role of various natural resources like land, forests, and water in supporting and determining the livelihood of different sections of the rural community? How do changes in the natural resource base bring about changes in the occupational structure? In what way and to what extent are interventions for regeneration of natural resources likely to have a positive impact that can strengthen the occupational base?
- iii) When diversification has a strong urban linkage, studies focussing on the linkage would help address the impact of urbanisation on rural poverty, investment, savings behaviour and labour market development in rural areas. Further, one would also be able to get an insight into the nature of urban informal labour markets, which are dominated by migrant rural workers (Bremner 1996). The question of bringing about balanced rural-urban growth also depends upon an understanding of such a linkage.
- iv) What are the directions of impact of policies aimed at bringing about rural diversification and development? What are the best strategies, short-term and long-term, that can bring about balanced and equitable growth particularly in the context of distress rural diversification?

The present paper attempts to critically review some of the available theoretical and empirical studies on occupational diversification and rural-urban migration both in order to answer some of the above questions and to identify issues for further research.

Theoretical Perspectives

The process of changing rural occupational structure in developing countries is viewed in the development literature from two perspectives (Koppel *et al* 1994, Unni 1996). The first is the development perspective, wherein forces of economic growth such as agricultural modernisation, urbanisation, etc., have led to creation of job opportunities, leading to the emergence of a diversified occupational structure. This growth process, first analysed by Kuznets (1966), is mediated by agricultural transformation, attendant upon the mechanisation of agriculture accompanied by a rise in the productivity of agricultural labour and its surplus. The notion behind the argument is that growth of agricultural production and productivity may create a surplus, which may be invested in non-agricultural enterprises, where an increase in rural incomes due to agricultural prosperity may alter the pattern of demand for goods and services. Generation of agricultural surplus and a changing pattern of consumption demand could lead to an increase in demand for labour in the non-agricultural sector (Unni 1994). In the course of

development, increase in demand for services from both the primary and secondary sectors leads to growth of the tertiary sector. The expansion of the non-farm sector is, in Kuznets' scheme, prosperity-induced. Alternatively, it is also plausible that such agricultural prosperity (crop output per capita of agricultural population) will lead to an increase in demand for labour in agriculture, leading to better absorption of labour therein and there would be less spillover of excess labour into non-agricultural employment (Vaidyanathan 1986).

In sharp contrast to the development perspective is the distress perspective. McGee's (1971) thesis is sceptical of the growth prospects offered by agricultural labour and industrial transformation. McGee sees agricultural labour surplus more as a consequence of agrarian distress — a surplus that finds no ready absorption into productive employment in the industrial sector. The surplus labour then has no other option but to settle into a low-productivity tertiary sector. This expansion of the non-farm sector, from McGee's perspective, is distress-induced. Seasonal migration of the poorer households to urban areas in search of unskilled employment in the informal sector can be considered a typical case of such distress diversification. The deterioration trajectory is caused by factors inimical to growth and prosperity such as degradation and depletion of the natural resource base, agricultural stagnation and rapid population growth, compelling livelihood diversification of a distress nature.

This distress diversification has been alternatively put forward as residual sector hypothesis (Vaidyanathan 1986), which occurs when labour is not fully absorbed in the agricultural sector and the non-agricultural sector acts as a sponge for the excess labour. In this context, Bhalla (1989) identifies two kinds of distress diversification in which non-agricultural rural activities become residual labour force absorbers. The first is the case of supplementary workers who have no main occupation, but engage in some subsidiary work to supplement household income. The second is the case of persons with a main occupation who also engage in secondary activity.

Thus, two types of phenomena contribute to the growth of the non-agricultural sector: those representing development, captured by variables such as agricultural productivity, growth of income, infrastructure development, urbanisation and commercialisation; and others relating to distress, reflected in variables such as unemployment and poverty.

Some Empirical Studies

Unni (1994) and Dev (1994) have done empirical work supporting the development trajectory. They show that there exists a positive relation between agricultural development and the proportion of rural non-agricultural workers. Their analysis is based on NSS data, and the relationship appears stronger when the share of rural non-agricultural workers is regressed on per hectare agricultural productivity.

This evidence supports the hypothesis of Vaidyanathan (1986), who shows a significant positive relationship of the share of rural non-agricultural workers with rural prosperity, by taking agricultural output per capita of agricultural population as an indicator. Further, analysing the rural non-agricultural employment in India based on the NSS and Census data, Basant and Kumar (1989) suggest that during the last three decades, the share of the rural non-agricultural sector in the total rural workforce has increased. They show that it is primarily casual workers who shift from agricultural to non-agricultural activities during slack seasons. Emphasising the seasonality aspect, their study provides evidence to suggest that the involvement of labour in non-agricultural activities occurs countercyclically to the demands of the agricultural calendar and results in labour flows between the rural agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Jayaraj (1992), using Census data for 1,171 villages across 11 talukas of Tamilnadu, tries to identify the determinants of the level of non-agricultural employment. The author adopts a broad framework, which includes the development and distress perspectives. The basic focus is on spatial variations in the incidence of non-farm employment, which are both internal and external to the rural economy. The study shows that the phenomenon of non-agricultural employment is as much a function of agrarian prosperity as of agrarian distress, and that prosperity, like distress, could either promote or inhibit the growth of the agricultural sector.

Much of the evidence on growth of non-agricultural employment in India is at the macro level, based on NSS and Census data, which fail to capture the real nature of non-agricultural employment prevailing in different regions as they are highly heterogeneous. Further, the activities also differ according to the levels of agricultural growth in different regions, and these complexities cannot be captured or observed at the macro or meso level.

Another issue that has been identified in regard to the analysis based on secondary data is the apprehension about its reliability and adequacy. Bhalla (1996) cautions about use of NSS data as the sample size of the NSSO surveys is perhaps inadequate to capture secular changes in the structure of the workforce. In addition, Bhalla points out that the employment questions were introduced into the demographic block of a questionnaire on consumption expenditure. Thus, in order to understand the dynamism that exists in rural areas with regard to the nature of diversification, one has to look more towards micro-level studies.

Basant (1993), in a micro-level study of 30 villages in five districts of Gujarat, examines diversification among different households across various income groups. For households that did not operate any land, income from non-farm activities (72 per cent) seemed to be the major source compared with the case of those who also operated land (40 per cent). Diversification by households involved their participation in different activities, and also involvement in multiple economic activities by a single worker. Diversification into different activities by the households was influenced by

factors such as their access to land, family size, and nearness of the village to a town.

Basant and Joshi (1994) provide micro-level evidence of diversification of the development kind, where the agriculturists invest their surplus in non-agricultural activities, especially processing and trade, in the agriculturally developed six villages of Kheda district in Gujarat. The study basically establishes the linkage between agricultural prosperity, commercialisation and urbanisation, on the one hand, and growth of rural non-agricultural employment on the other.

The study further shows that growth of the rural non-agricultural sector is linked to agricultural prosperity and commercialisation mainly in large villages because of the relatively large internal market. The analysis also shows how distress and development factors can operate simultaneously in the same region. At the same time, the study reveals that the identification of distress diversification is complicated at the micro level because shifts to non-agricultural activities out of distress may take various forms. The data show that both households with large landholdings and the landless contribute to the non-agricultural workforce in the region. This means that diversification takes place at both ends of the spectrum; with landed households diversifying into productive non-agricultural activities like trade and agro-processing, and the poor into less productive non-agricultural activities, like casual wage labour.

Jayaraj (1996), in his micro-level study in the North Arcot district of Tamilnadu, observes that households with access to land enjoy relatively better access to non-agricultural employment. He develops a framework where development of the rural non-agricultural sector is viewed as one of the components of the overall socio-economic transformation, and analyses spatial and temporal variations in the incidence of rural non-agricultural employment. He finds that gender, caste, and land limit access to employment in the non-agricultural sector, while education improves access to employment in the non-agricultural sector.

Occupational diversification of the development kind is observed in yet another micro-level study. Kumar (1996) argues that with economic growth, there has been a relative shift away from agriculture towards industry and services in Bhuvil, a village in the developed pocket of Kheda district in Gujarat. Occupational diversification has occurred even among landless households, such as artisans and Scheduled Castes who have diversified into various economic activities such as government services and other odd jobs in factories and shops. Sharan and Dayal (1996) also observe this kind of occupational diversification of the marginalised sections of society among the Ghasis of Ranchi.

A micro-level study by Unni (1996) in two talukas, irrigated and semi-arid in Mehsana district of Gujarat, indicates that non-agricultural activities have a positive impact on rural livelihoods in various ways. Besides enhancing the income of households in general, they enable agricultural households to survive year-to-year weather fluctuations. She observes that non-agricultural employment strengthens the

base of rural livelihoods, through increase in incomes, but also increases the degree of inequality in the distribution of rural income.

The studies reviewed above reveal that as agricultural growth takes place and its base expands, the linkage effect results through increased demand for farm inputs, farm services and consumer goods, which are strong enough to raise non-farm employment. This results in a positive relation between the level of agricultural development and non-farm employment. Further, these studies have observed that diversification of the development kind could also be due to higher levels of education and increasing accumulation of capital. However, these studies have focused mainly on the developed pockets. Hence, the strong evidence in support of the development phenomenon. One needs to also look at how the expansion of non-agricultural employment in backward areas reflects the inability of agriculture to adequately support the rural population and forces many, the rural poor in particular, to diversify their employment channels for sheer survival (Shylendra and Thomas 1995).

Understanding Diversification: Need for a New Focus

Macro-level studies are concerned mainly with the description and explanation of inter-regional and inter-temporal variations in the participation of households in non-farm activities. Further, the available evidence on occupational diversification shows a complex pattern of activities undertaken in rural areas, with varying degrees of emphasis on farm and non-farm work. What is also important in understanding the determinants of economic diversification in rural areas is the impact of the structure and functioning of the labour markets. The economy functions in an integrated way wherein the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors are interlinked, and rural and urban areas are closely interdependent (Bharadwaj 1989; Unni 1994). Most of the empirical studies at the macro and micro levels mainly indicate that occupational diversification is a result of changes in the agrarian processes. Further, they attribute it to either seasonality of agrarian operations or declining agricultural surplus resulting from declining yield or declining per capita land availability, or to linkage effects created by commercialisation of agriculture by way of demand for activities like supply of inputs and services, marketing and processing of agricultural produce. In the current debate this view is considered narrow from the point of view of capturing the total reality of the rural labour processes as it ignores the broader structural changes influencing rural labour differentiation (Koppel and Hawkins 1994).

Hence, studies trying to explain the phenomenon of diversification must incorporate perspectives that go beyond the narrow agrarian differentiation process (Koppel and Hawkins 1994; Vaidyanathan 1997). It is important to not only develop a comprehensive analytical framework that captures the demand and supply-side factors in non-agricultural employment but also to look at outcomes in terms of level of non-agricultural employment and wage rates, incomes (Vaidyanathan 1997) and

impact of diversification on poverty (Unni 1998). In this context the perspective to be considered could be a derivative of a broader social, economic and political process closely correlated both with local processes involving changing social significance of the family, community and rural enterprises with wider processes involving the changing relationship between the State and the economic organisation of rural areas (Koppel and Hawkins 1994).

Natural Resources and Occupational Diversification

In the literature on diversification not much of an attempt has been made to relate clearly the process of occupational diversification to changes in the status of the natural resource base. Natural resources such as land, water, and forests, which could be either common or private property resources, play a crucial role in determining the nature of livelihood strategies adopted by the rural households and the resultant occupational structure. At the same time, outside interests and interventions in natural resources are likely to bring into play the local livelihood system with external factors that are either inimical to or supportive of the existing livelihood system (Koppel and Hawkins 1994).

The existing studies on occupational diversification and natural resource management have tried to focus on the role of the changing resource base in bringing about occupational diversification, the impact of such diversification on the management or development of local natural resources and how interventions in natural resources regeneration can affect diversification, particularly of a distress nature. Occupational diversification or distress migration from rural areas can sometimes result from environmental degradation. Breman (1985) observes that in the semi-arid areas of South Gujarat, forestry work was a major source of employment for the tribals during the slack agricultural seasons. However, since this source of income and employment has become much less significant owing to deforestation during the last few decades, outmigration from these villages to urban areas for alternative sources of employment during the slack agricultural seasons has increased over the years.

Chopra and Gulati (1997) address the question of regenerating the natural resources by defining common property rights in the arid and semi-arid regions of Western India where outmigration stems largely from push factors such as environmental degradation and decrease in common land. They establish, through a simultaneous equation system, that a higher extent of outmigration depicts a higher level of environmental degradation. Regeneration of the natural resource base, therefore, would help to reduce migration. The authors emphasise that in the case of common resources like land, if property rights are well defined through proper institutional arrangements and outside intervention, labour would move towards creation of common assets. This would bring about an improvement in the environment, leading to a decrease in outmigration. Hence, the same resources support

higher levels of population.

Further, Chopra and Gulati (1998), in their micro-level study, show how institutional creation in common property resources influences distance migration. Basing their analysis on the work of two NGOs in Rajasthan, the authors observe that creation of common property rights significantly slows down distance migration. Outmigration and participation in Common Property Resource (CPR) management are interrelated. Institutional build-up improves participation in management of commons, helping to reduce distress migration.

Similarly, the study by Balooni and Singh (1994), in the Panchmahals districts of Gujarat, also shows how intervention by outside agency can help to reverse seasonal migration. The study shows that intervention by an NGO in a lift irrigation scheme in 1976 and later in a farm forestry programme in 1982 helped to transform the tribals of a semi-arid backward village from a resource-poor to a highly productive area. This intervention not only provided the tribals with additional income from trees and crop output but also increased their number of days of local employment, which lowered the rate of seasonal migration from 75 per cent in 1976 to 5 per cent in 1993.

The above finding shows the importance of understanding clearly the role of natural resources in supporting rural livelihoods and in determining the demand for non-agricultural employment. Another critical question, particularly from the point of view of policy is, what is the likely impact of regeneration of natural resources like forests and land on the livelihood strategies of different sections of the rural community?

Rural-Urban Migration

The last few decades have observed massive seasonal or permanent migration of peasants from rural to urban areas in the Third World countries. This has been extensively documented, and there has also been an enormous growth of theoretical literature and empirical evidence towards an understanding of the realities of rural-urban migration (de Haan 2000). The phenomenon has also led to a considerable debate on the process of capitalist penetration into rural areas and its role in influencing the existing socio-economic differentiation in the countryside.

One of the prominent theoretical arguments on rural-urban migration views it as individual utility maximisation behaviour (Todaro 1969; Hariss and Todaro 1970), where wage differentials between the urban and rural sectors are considered to be the prime determinant of migration. The neoclassical expected income model of Todaro, with its numerous variants, seems to focus on individual potential migrants, and argues that holding much less constant, people will migrate if they expect to do better than they would if they did not move. The neoclassical theory of migration is largely based on the Lewis model, where the institutionally given urban wage rate and the wage differential between the urban and rural sectors form

the basis of framework. This implies that migration from the rural to the urban sector results when the actual rural wage rate falls short of the expected urban wage rate. However, the neoclassical model, which is the most dominating framework in the context of rural-urban migration, assumes that rural migrants are a homogeneous category of poor people, ignoring the fact that their migration is not always based on a strategy of maximisation, but of survival. The circulation of labour or migration from rural to urban areas is at times a response to economic necessity. The Todaro model does not consider non-economic factors such as pressure of population, inequalities in the distribution of land-owning and other institutional mechanisms that lead to migration from rural to urban areas. However, an application of Todaro's model of rural-urban migration for all-India and three major states, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and West Bengal, did not provide enough evidence to support the hypothesis that rural-urban migration takes place primarily in response to expected income differentials (Sundaram 1986).

Breman (1985) also criticises the Todaro model by taking the case of large-scale displacement of labour in the tribal hinterland of South Gujarat. His study shows how the migrants who find work in the cotton ginning factories in Bardoli (migrant place) earn a lower daily wage than the labourers staying behind in Valod (originating place) to work on roads or canals there. Breman's study concludes that seasonal migration is a matter of survival or, at best, of consolidation, and hardly ever results in accumulation or re-investment in the home area.

Alternatively, inter-temporal family contract models of migration also have been constructed (Stark 1980; Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Lucas 1988). These emphasise risk spreading (Stark and Levari 1982) by families in the presence of imperfections in rural capital markets (Stark 1982) as a strategy to overcome constraints on production and investment activities as a result of missing or incomplete credit and insurance markets in rural areas. The basic premise of these alternative models, which are based on household utility maximisation, is that the decision to migrate is not taken by an individual; the family members also have a role to play. Stark and Lucas (1988) suggest that labour migration by one or more family members can be an effective mechanism to self-finance local production activities and acts as self-insurance against local income risks. Stark and Levari (1982), and Taylor (1986) also argue that migration plays a risk-reducing and insurance-enhancing role in production and investment decisions. Hoddinott (1994) models migration as an outcome of a joint utility maximisation by the prospective migrant and the other family members. These models of behavioural decision-making thus emphasise that circulation of labour is a form of risk reduction by spreading the risk spatially and occupationally while maximising consumption.

Apart from testing the validity of the above developed models, the discussion on rural-urban migration in India seems to have focussed on determining the relative

importance of push and pull factors in inducing migration. Income differentials are seen as the major pull factors, while seasonality risk, market failures, erosion of assets and landlessness are seen as push factors. Most of these studies have also tried to address the demographic aspects of migration (Gupta 1984, Kundu 1986, and Oberai and Singh 1980). Their analysis is based on NSS and Census data at regional as well as national levels, depicting the extent and magnitude of rural-urban migration. However, a major limitation of studies based on secondary data is that they do not throw any light on changes in economic conditions, including consumption and lifestyle, that migrants undergo in urban areas in adapting to their new environment. Besides, such studies also fail to capture the problems that migrants face in leaving the security provided by the family, the community, well-established work patterns, economic and social relationships, to live and work in a harsh and hostile environment and among people most of whom are strangers.

Dasgupta and Laishley (1975) have tried to identify the social, economic and demographic factors in village life associated with migratory movements and who really are the migrants. Their work reveals that factors related to both village base and urban relations induce migration. The factors that they identify at the village base are land shortage and low fertility and skewed distribution of land, and the resulting high proportion of landless agricultural workers. The two major urban-related factors that they identify are commercialisation of agriculture and access to towns.

A major study on migration has been that of Connell *et al.* (1976), which tries to understand migration as an imbalance in access to resources that exists between regions, families and villages. It examines the conditions that influence the decision to migrate, the destination, occupations pursued, income from migration and other socio-economic characteristics of the migrants. The study shows that it is inadequate access to income generating land in the village and the hope of improving living conditions in the village that encourage households or individuals to migrate. The migration that they document is seasonal, circular and permanent in nature.

The study also documents in detail the benefits of remittances, the expenditure pattern of the migrants and their preferences over the use of the remittances. According to the study, the expenditure pattern of remittances reflects the poverty and resultant lack of investment opportunities that migrants are faced with. They observe that remittances are utilised mainly for meeting everyday household needs, and when basic requirements are met, remittances often flow into conspicuous consumption. It was observed among several agricultural labour migrants from Eastern Uttar Pradesh to Punjab in 1973 that income from remittances is mainly used to defray consumer debt in their home villages so as to avoid the need to sell land. In many villages the level of investment in agriculture was found to be very low. The pattern of investment shows that some households invested their remittances in education, thus stimulating

further migration. Another major use of remittances is for payment of bride price, which exists in some villages. The study also revealed that remittances are not an economic phenomenon alone but also involve a social angle in that they become an instrument for migrant households to seek a continued stake in the village economy and social hierarchy.

As regards the impact due to absence of migrants, the study observes that the negative impact of male emigration on agricultural production is reduced if women normally do farm work or can move into it easily; but a large emigration can produce a drastic shortage of men. This would lead to a shift to easy crops of low value, at least until the migrants return with more favourable adaptations or remittances.

Breman (1985), based on his study of seasonal migrants in South Gujarat, observes that for the tribal population, seasonal migration is more of a 'holding operation,' which enables them by and large to maintain their relative position in the village and to avoid alienation of land as far as possible. The continued migration for the past few decades has hardly improved the quality of tribal life, particularly for the large and growing underprivileged. Yet the cash income derived from labour outside the home area is not in itself enough protection from social and economic deterioration. In this context, one could try and probe the question that Connell *et al.* (1976) poses, viz, that labour migration stems from inequality, but are the existing socio-economic differences also increasing as a result of this?

Seasonal migration of the kind referred to by Breman represents diversification, particularly of the distress nature. Diversification by way of seasonal migration has certain peculiar dimensions both in terms of the causal factors and its impact, making it necessary to understand the phenomenon separately from the general process of diversification. Apart from the foregoing questions about seasonal migration, there is also the issue of migrants working and living in inhuman conditions (Breman 1996), raising questions about the desirability of the whole process. Such concerns have led to arguments for arresting or reversing the phenomenon. In fact, developmental agencies working in areas where such seasonal migration is widely prevalent normally aim at reducing migration through appropriate interventions. Though such a policy stance goes against the general notion of migration as a positive phenomenon, it is precisely such policy arguments that call for a better understanding of seasonal migration (Shylendra and Rani 2000). In what context does migration need to be reversed and in what context may a proactive stance be taken?

Conclusion

The phenomenon of occupational diversification, given its potential for alleviating rural poverty and unemployment, has thus been examined in the literature quite extensively in terms of its nature and magnitude, causal factors and impact on the household economy. The phenomenon in rural India at the macro level is

characterised by an increase in the share of non-agricultural workforce engaged mainly in the tertiary sector and having casual status. Theoretically, the changing occupational structure has come to be explained from two perspectives. First, from a developmental angle, the changing workforce composition is attributed to factors like agricultural prosperity and growing urbanisation with their attendant positive linkages, enabling the labour force to diversify in order to tap new income and employment opportunities. Diversification under such conditions is more a growth or prosperity-induced one. The second perspective is of the distress kind where poverty, population growth and depleting resource base compel the labour force to diversify under duress, including resorting to seasonal migration to distant places. The empirical studies reviewed suggest that the phenomenon can be seen operating at both ends of the spectrum. In other words, the changing occupational structure in India is being influenced simultaneously by forces of development and distress. However, the extent of influence of these two forces is difficult to judge from the evidence provided by existing studies owing to their limitations. The empirical studies, which focus on the macro or regional level, relying only on secondary sources of data, have failed to capture the micro-level dynamics of diversification. On the other hand, those studies with a micro or village-level focus, by confining themselves mostly to a specific area, are limited by their inability to relate the local labour processes to the broader context and change. It is here that the need is felt for studies that not only explain the phenomenon in terms of its local nature and dynamics but also provide a broader perspective that is a derivative of political, social and economic processes. In terms of broadbasing the studies on diversification, another important dimension is the relation between diversification, particularly of the distress type, and natural resource management. Even though the evidence is very limited, distress diversification seems to be having clear links with the changing natural resource base like degradation of forests. The studies suggest that improving the local resource base and its management can potentially reverse the trend of distress diversification.

As regards rural-urban migration, the studies reviewed suggest that widespread labour migration in India is explained more by structural factors like inequality in land ownership, poverty and agricultural backwardness than by models dealing solely with motivations of maximising the family's income and employment. Hence, rural-urban migration might help the rural poor to overcome their problem of survival, but may not lead to their real economic consolidation. Again, given the prevalence of distress migration, there is a need for studies that can help understand the phenomenon better, particularly for addressing policy initiatives aimed at reversing the trend of distress migration.

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