

A Study on The Occupational Structure of Migrant Workers of Manipur

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ABSTRACT

Migrant workers play a vital role in the economic growth of the country. There has always been an issue of migrant workers where they move from one place to another for their livelihood even in the global context. This paper examines different occupation of the workers and the reasons for migration. Though migrant workers contribute to economy of a country yet they face numerous challenges that affects their livelihood and their conditions of work. As per 2011 Census, India has total 45.58 crore migrant's population which accounts for 37.6% of the population out of which 67.9% are females and 32.1 are males. Around 45% rise in migrant's population was recorded between 2001 and 2011. It also reveals that the main reason for females' migration is due to marriage while mostly males migrated in search of jobs. The Manipur state has 6.9 lakhs migrant workers out of which male's migrants are 4.4 lakhs while 2.4 lakhs are females. The research reveals that migrant workers in Manipur mostly engaged in construction, agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The paper delves into the problems of the migrant workers facing financial instability, employment opportunities, low wages, long working hours, lack of access to proper education, health care, and unskilled workforce in the economy. This paper will provide various policy recommendations and suggestions for the welfare and improving the living standards of the migrant workers.

Keywords: Migrant workers, occupational structure, migration, immigrants, employment, working conditions

Introduction

As per the census of 2011, the state of Manipur has 6.9 lakhs migrant workers out of which male's migrants are 4.4 lakhs while 2.4 lakhs are females. The patterns of migration in Manipur are significantly influenced by socio-economic factors and better alternatives of employment with

diverse job opportunities outside the state. These economic drivers compel individuals to seek opportunities outside their native regions, often leading to cross-state migration in pursuit of better livelihoods and opportunities. The poorer sections of the population are particularly vulnerable to these economic pressures, making migration a critical strategy for survival and means of employment to support for their family.

Understanding the dynamics of these migration patterns is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems for the migrant workers. A clear understanding of these migration patterns is vital for socio-economic support. Analyzing the occupational structure of migrant workers is crucial to understand the types of jobs these individuals typically engage in. This analysis provides valuable insights into the sectors where migrants are concentrated, and the place of their migration. By identifying the primary occupations of migrant workers, policymakers and researchers can better assess their contributions to the local economy and the challenges they face in their respective fields. Such an examination facilitates the development of targeted programs and policies designed to support and empower these workers.

Analyzing the occupational structure also helps identify the problems and challenges that migrant workers encounter in their daily lives. Migrant workers often face precarious employment conditions, including low wages, long working hours, lack of job security and lack of social benefits. They may also be exposed to hazardous working environments and experience discrimination and exploitation. By understanding these vulnerabilities, stakeholders can develop interventions to protect migrant workers' rights, improve their working conditions, and ensure they have access to essential services such as healthcare and social security. The informal sector includes jobs such as street vending, domestic work, and small-scale construction labor. These jobs typically lack formal contracts, social security, and health insurance, leaving workers vulnerable to economic shocks and exploitation. Despite the drawbacks, the informal sector often serves as the primary entry point for migrants into the urban labor market.

Informal sector workers are often paid low wages and lack access to training and technology that could improve their productivity. Without formal contracts, these workers are at the mercy of their employers and have little bargaining power to negotiate better terms of employment. Strengthening the linkages between the formal and informal sectors is essential for improving the economic prospects of these workers. This paper delves into finding the different occupations of the migrant workers and the reasons of their migration to different parts of the country. The study shall also suggest some important policy recommendations which can improve the welfare of the migrant workers thereby creating a conducive environment for work.

Literature Review

TR Panday (2018), '*Socio-Economic status of migrants and their household in Ranagaun*' shows that labor migration is a major livelihood option in the study area. The people mostly migrate to India for their livelihood. The household of migrants are mostly dependent on remittance for their living. The younger generation is increasingly migrating to Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the West. Remittance is the main source of income for most people in the study area.

Anindta Sengupta (2013) in his article '*Migration, Poverty and Vulnerability in the Informal Labour Market in India*' examines whether out-migration of rural workers is a gainful option to reduce poverty. The study also investigates the effect of rural urban migration on poverty among the in-migrant households living in urban areas in the probabilistic sense. The article presents that there is highly significant and negative relationship between education and poverty. It also shows that agricultural migrant families have higher chances of being poorer than non-agricultural migrant families.

Sundari S (2005), '*Migration as a Livelihood Strategy: A Gender Perspective*' presents the female migrant workers in Tamil Nadu highlighting the trends, pattern and nature of female migrants. The journal shows the improvement in employment and regular salaried jobs for women. It has also help overcome starvation for many families though it still lacks the economic well-being for about 43 percent families, particularly the female headed families.

Chetan KS and Dharam Pal (2024) in their paper presents that the majority of the migrant workers belongs to younger generation mostly illiterate of just educated up to middle school belonging to marginal sections of the society. Most of them are contract workers engaged in informal sector. Most of their living conditions are poor and some even homeless. The paper also suggested that the government should take up proper measures such as temporary housing, access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities and electricity.

P Baruah (2022) says that people from Northeast move to more developed cities of Southern, Northern and Western India for jobs working in different service sectors. They acquire different skills from the cities and some comes back to hometown to start their own business. While some are just being satisfied with their own aesthetic workplace and have no intention of starting their own entrepreneurial works. There are also challenges which are faced by the youngsters who comes back for start-up with their urbanized aspirations and contextual realities are at a state of contradiction with each other which does not match their aspirations.

R Lusome and RB Bhagat (2020), '*Migration in Northeast India: Inflows, Outflows and Reverse Flows during Pandemic*' in their journal mentions that Northeast India has been the

significant receiver of migrants in the past although the population is comparatively low. About one-third of people in the region are migrants as compared to about 37 percent country average. Manipur and Assam are out-migrating states, while the others gained migrants. An assessment of the reverse flow in the wake of pandemic and nationwide lockdown shows that half a million of interstate out-migrants returned constituting about 50% of interstate out-migrants from Northeast India. This opens an enormous challenge as well as a window of opportunity for the states to capitalize on the skill and the experiences of the return migrants.

Reimeingam Marchang (2017) in his journal, *'Out-migration from North Eastern region to cities: Unemployment, employability and job aspiration'* examines the levels and trends of out-migrants to cities. It shows that there is involuntary unemployment due to lack of employment opportunities due to under-development and slow economic growth. It also shows that the mismatched of educational development and employment growth creates unemployment.

KM Devi and A Islam (2022), *'Labour Migration: A fear of local population of Manipur'* in their paper examines the influx of inter-state labor migration and the advantages and disadvantages of their presence in Manipur. It shows that the migrants compete with the locals for jobs and other economic benefits. The paper also presents that overtime the migrant workers are far better off than the unemployed indigenous people. It also shares that migrant worker demands lesser wages which makes them more demand in the market which left the own local people unemployed.

Research Objectives

1. To study the occupational structure of the migrant workers.
2. To examine the reasons of migration.
3. To provide policy recommendations.

Methodology

This paper examines the occupational structure of the migrant workers and the causes of migration using secondary sources of data available from different sources, such as books, statistical hand books, economic survey reports, census data, and reports published by government.

Discussion and results

Causes of migration:

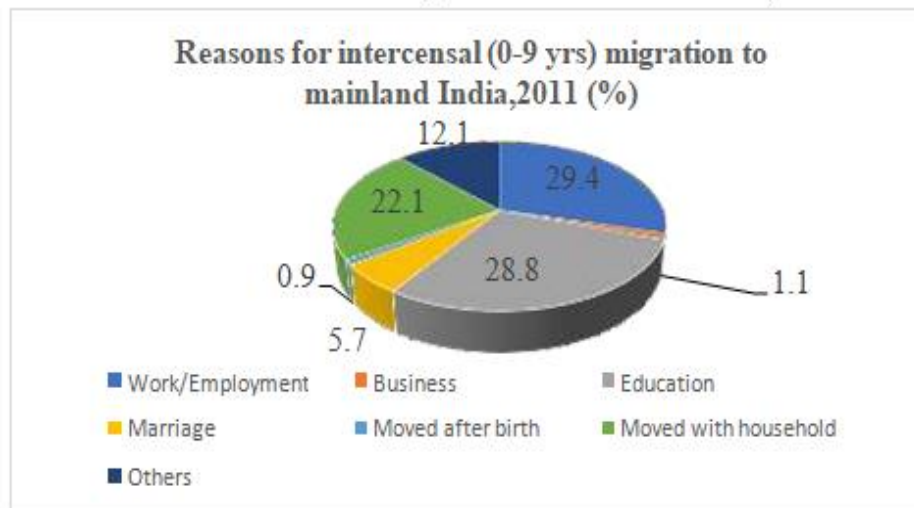
People migrate from one place to the other in search of better living conditions or to seek job

opportunities. Many Indians are migrating to other countries in search of employment as there is population exploitation in the country with insufficient job opportunities. Some people migrate not only for seeking jobs but also with the motive of higher pay scale in the developed countries. Workers may also migrate due to shortage of skills requirement in the country.

Manipur with a population around 3.64 million finds it hard for the government to provide the desired service sector for its people in the state. Many people migrate out of the state due to insufficient available sectors, undesired working conditions, low wages, corruption, or in search of better job opportunities. We also see that, due to the ongoing conflict of the ethnic clashes among the people of Manipur, a large number of people have also migrated outside the state. Manipur as a state, lacks in production of goods and services as it lacks raw materials or resources. So, there is insufficient job opportunities and low employment generation in the state.

Key Economic drivers of Migration:

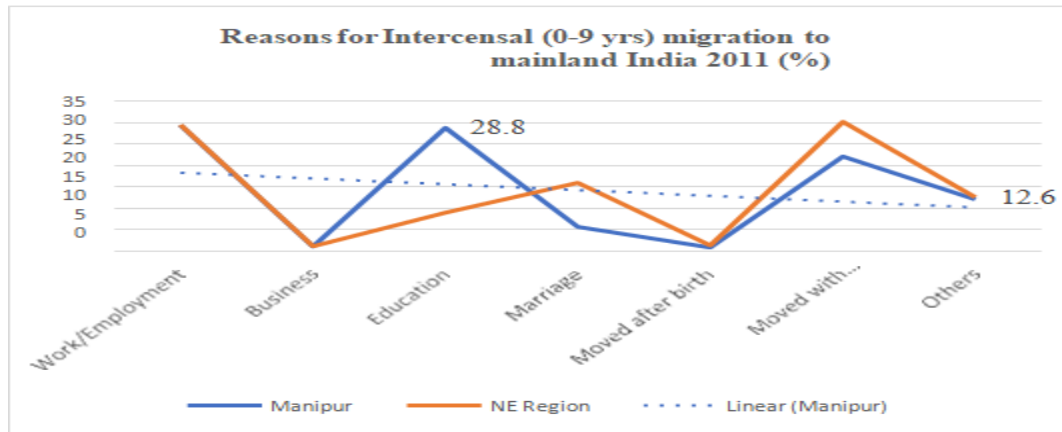
Fig 1.1 Reasons for intercensal migration to mainland India,2011



Source: Computed from Census of India 2011

From the pie-chart 1.1, We can see that there is a huge increase in work/employment which acts as an economic magnet drawing the people to migrate to mainland India for economic opportunities (jobs, higher wages, better livelihoods). Looking on to the education sector, we can see that education is also one of the key reasons for the migration which is a pull factor contributing to 28.8% suggesting that there is a better access to education outside the state when compared to state’s education sector.

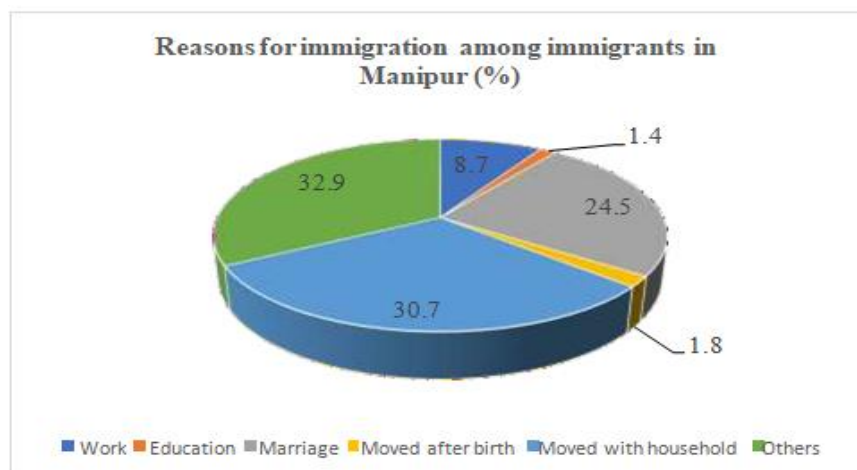
Fig. 1.2



Source: Computed from Census of India 2011

From the graph 1.2, we can see that work/employment (29.4%) is the largest reason for migration to mainland India indicating that there is a better economic opportunities like job, higher wages and better livelihoods etc. This suggests that there is economic disparity and also a lack of employment generation in Manipur which drives out the people to migrate to other states (outside NE states). Both Manipur and North East (~1%) show a very small proportion in business/moved after birth and this depict that Manipur’s business is progressing and contribute to the state’s economy.

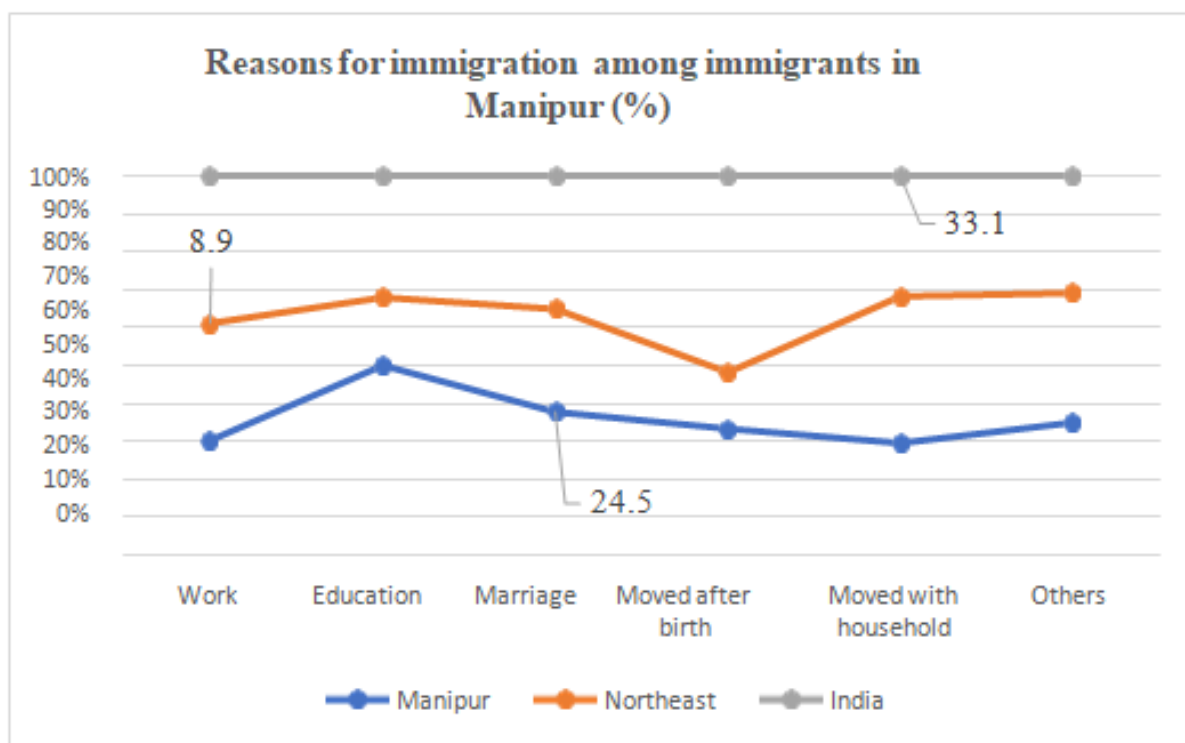
Fig. 1.3. Reasons for immigration among immigrants in Manipur (%)



Source: Computed from Table D-3, Census of India 2011

From the given pie chart 1.3, it can be seen Others (natural disaster, political instability, conflicts etc.) contribute to about 32.9 % for the immigration among immigrants in Manipur and also Marriage (24.5%) contribute to the immigration in Manipur and it increase the economic and social life in the family. Education (1.4%) which shows a minimal proportion suggests for a quality education and improve the infrastructure and thereby improving the state’s literacy rate in the state.

Fig. 1.4. Reasons for immigration among immigrants in Manipur

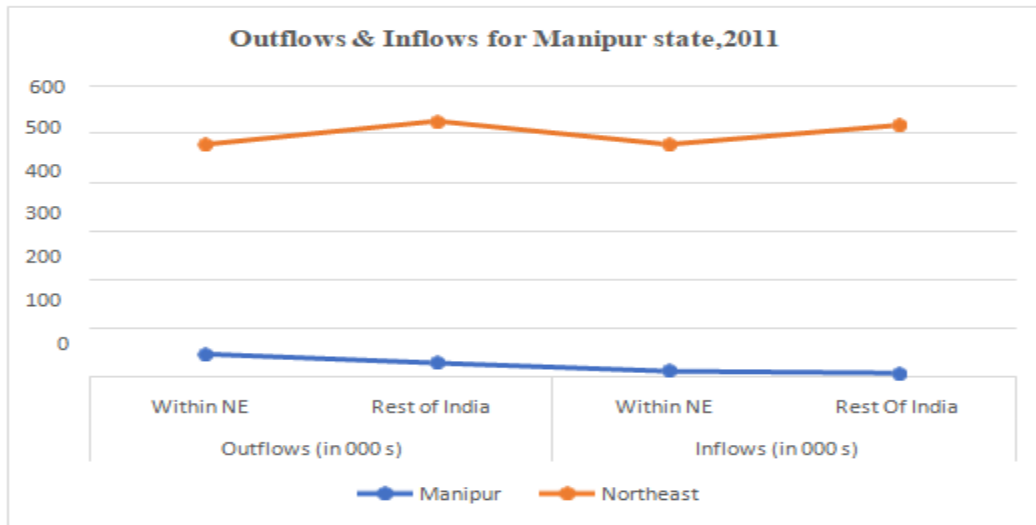


Source: Computed from Table D-3, Census of India 2011

From this graph, we can see that Moved with household (30.7%) is one of the primary drivers that attribute to the immigration in our state. It can be due to family unit phenomenon and this plays an important part in economic and social life.

Work/Employment (8.7%) also is one of the reasons which attracts the immigrants to migrate for employment opportunities within its boundaries. Education (1.4%) which is very minimal should improve its education system (quality education) and its infrastructure and develop its human capital and should invest in child’s education for the betterment of the society.

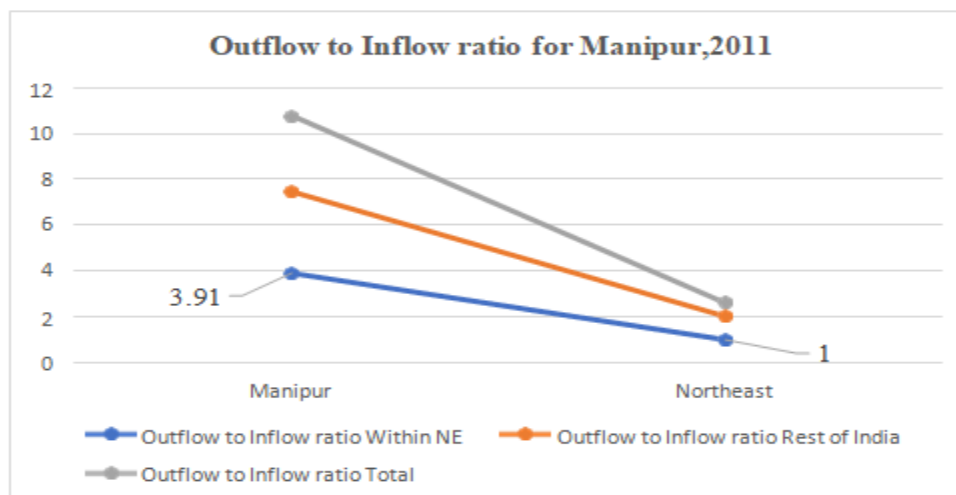
Fig. 1.5. Outflows & Inflows for Manipur state, 2011



Source: Computed from Table D-2, Census of India 2011

From graph 1.5, we can see that from Manipur, 47,000 migrate within North East for better living opportunities or employment opportunities. The pulling factor also helps in attracting the people to hunt for job/employment opportunities in the other states of India.

Fig. 1.6 Outflow to Inflow ratio for Manipur, 2011



Source: Computed from Table D-2, Census of India 2011

From this we can see that the outflow to inflow ratio for Manipur within North East shows

3.91%, this mean that for every person moving into Manipur from rest of India nearly about 4 persons are migrating to the rest of India. This shows that there is a population drain in the state and there is a need to increase the state's education.

system and work/employment opportunities so that people didn't migrate to other states. When compared to North East states and rest of India, Manipur shows outflow- inflow ratio (3.32%) and this appears to be relatively affected by out-migration.

Policy Recommendations

Manipur, like any other states, have been experiencing both in-migrant and out-migrant workers. Migrant workers often faced lots of challenges including discrimination, socio-economic issues, and lack of awareness of their own rights. Some of the recommendations to be taken into considerations are given as follows:

- Proper awareness or information should be taught to migrant workers so as to be able to avail support services.
- Proper education should be given so that the workers can have better job opportunities with a better living condition.
- The government should take proper details of the out-migrant workers and take necessary measures so as to ensure a healthy living for the workers migrating to any place.
- Establishing migrant welfare boards so as to provide services, including health care, education and social security.
- Offering micro-finance options to support migrant entrepreneurs and small-scale enterprises.
- The state government should implement proper education facilities and entrepreneurial schemes especially to the rural areas.
- The state should provide vocational training and skills development programs to raise employment opportunities and awareness of starting their own business. This will increase employment and also boost the economy within the state without having to migrate to another place.

Conclusion

Migration in Manipur is one of the complex and pervasive phenomena which is driven by socio-economic and environmental factors. We can see that most of the migrant workers work in the

informal sector and moving from rural-urban is fueled by higher wages or better employment facilities. Migrant workers play the role of a double-edged sword and as a result the state government should provide better job facilities and as migrant workers are the backbone of any industrial sectors, they must be paid with higher wages and better job security which would in fact improve their standards of living. The government should provide welfare schemes, access to health care and also educational opportunities for their children. Migrant workers contribute significantly to the economy of Manipur wherein they fill labor shortages and also helps in bringing up new business plans which help in the development of Manipur.

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