

# Migration from Hills to Plains: A Study of Kumaon Region in Indian Mid Himalayas

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## ABSTRACT

Migration from hilly regions to the urban regions of plains has been a significant socio-economic phenomenon in Kumaon of Indian mid Himalayan region. Mostly it is driven by the search for better livelihood opportunities and to improve the living conditions. This study explores the pattern of migration from hills to plains, having focus on Haldwani city which is a major urban center in this region. The research investigates through the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data both and examines the various factors that are responsible for the migration in the study region. Moreover, the study is also focused on economic contributions of migrants in terms of remittances in supporting their hill households. This paper provides insights into the dynamics of migration and its implications with the help of conclusions make through analysis of primary data collected and contributes to the broader discourse on migration in the Kumaon region of Indian mid Himalayan context.

**Keywords:** Migration, Rural-Urban, Interdistrict, Factors, Pattern.

## INTRODUCTION

Migration refers to the geographic movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose to establish a new permanent or semi-permanent residence for several reasons like social, cultural, economic, and other factors [1] and migrants are those whose last usual place differs from the present place [2]. Migration is a feature of social and economic life across many countries [3] in the world. There were around 281 million international migrants (3.6 percent of global population and one in 30 persons) [4]. The trends in Indian migration as per census 2011 shows that there was about 88.0 percent intra-state and 12.0 percent inter-state migration in country where 85.0 percent male and 89.0 percent female migrated intra-state while in inter-state migration the gender distribution is 15.0 percent and 11.0 percent respectively [5]. Migration from rural hilly areas to the urban parts of the plains has become a socioeconomic transformation in the Kumaon region of Indian Mid Himalayan region. This movement of people from hills to the plains is largely fueled by the pursuit of better livelihood opportunities, improved living conditions along with access to better education and healthcare. Challenging terrain, very little or lack

of employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure work as the agents to push people to urban centers specially in plain region from these areas to seek alternative livelihoods. According to the report of Uttarakhand Rural development and Migration Commission as per the Census 2011, in Uttarakhand more than 52.0 percent of the total population resides in plain region of state and the population growth rate of hills in state is quiet far behind the plains (0.70 in hills and 2.82 in plains between 2001-2011) [6] this shows significant variation across the state's plains and mountainous regions [7]. The main reason behind this growth is massive migration in search of better opportunities [8]. Thus, out-migration become a widespread phenomenon in hilly areas of the state, more so in recent decade 2001-2011 [9]. This paper aims to analyze the patterns, drivers, and impact of migration, where generally the migration take place from rural interior parts to the plains of the region, focusing on Haldwani city of Kumaon. By the examination of the demographic, economic and social dimensions of migration this study seeks to highlight the status of migrants after migration. Exploring the influencing factors at both the origin and destination regions

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provide insights into the broader dynamics of urbanization and regional development in hill areas of the study region. The findings of this study are expected to contribute for sustainable policy discussions, for future researchers etc.

#### **Review of Literature:**

Various studies in the past were done keeping in mind the problem of out-migration from the state. Kandari (2013) [10] in his study suggest that the increase in workforce participation of female in agriculture & allied activities and low wage employment will revive the economy but it will also pave way for restricting the persistent process of male migration from the region. He suggests that the government support becomes essential to this section of the population. Singh & Singh (n.d.) [11] finds the reason of migration in Upper watershed of Kosi in district Almora of Kumaun Himalaya are scarcity of agricultural land, difficult to meet f3, insufficient social services, insecurity, unemployment etc. in their study. Nagalia (2017) [12] in her study found that low agricultural productivity, lack of education and health facilities, low availability of employment opportunities, frequent natural disaster, demonstration effect, loss of employment of artisans and traditional musicians etc. are the causes of out-migration from Uttarakhand. Joshi & Joshi (2018) [13] studied the problems of migration from Uttarakhand and suggested that diversification in agriculture, market-oriented cultivation, improvement of irrigation, soil and water conservation, development of agriculture sub-sectors, organic production, orchard cultivation are some of the focusing fields which can be helpful to check large migration from the state. Mehta & Maikhuri (2018) [14] conducted their study in Garhwal region of Uttarakhand and suggested that there should be a modified tourism policy which will create many opportunities for employment even at village level and helpful in reducing migration at the same time providing quality education and skill training will develop opportunity for several small industries in the state. Neha & Pandey (2022) [15] in their study on out-migration from Uttarakhand finds that social, economic, and psychological related factors determine the decision of out-migration from the state which led to depopulation and land abandonment in the rural of the state. So, the studies included in review

were based on reasons, effects, and suggestions regarding out-migration from the state.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To study the socio-economic status of respondents in the study area.
2. To study the causes (Push or Pull) behind the migration of respondents.
3. To study the impact of migration on economic status of respondents.

#### **Research Methodology:**

- a) **Selection of Study Area** – The study area for this study is selected the Haldwani city which is in the foothills of Kumaon Himalayas. It serves as a critical urban hub and as a gateway for migrants from the hill regions of Kumaon. The main features like its strategic location, and the expanding economic opportunities make it a prime destination for the migrants from the hills who were seeking livelihood options in the plains of this region. The selection of this city in present research is due to the diverse migrant population which provides a comprehensive representation of social, economic, and demographic profiles of the migrants.
- b) **Sample Design and Size** – The sample design for this study was structured to ensure a representative understanding of migration patterns from the hills of Kumaon. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select and identify the respondents who were migrated from the hills of Kumaon specifically for the livelihood purpose and this approach was chosen for making focus on households that directly reflect the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the migrating population from these hills. A total sample size of 50 respondents was determined based on the scope of the study and the need for statistical validity.
- c) **Data Collection and analysis**– The collection of primary data for this study was done through a well-structured interview schedule and group interviews with the respondent migrants covering demographic details, household composition and their individual details. Various government reports, journals, newspapers, and internet was used as sources to collect the secondary data.
- d) **Statistical Tools** – Descriptive & Inferential Statistics, both were adopted for the analysis of data.

e) **Limitations of the study** – The study was limited to the Haldwani city in plain region and based on only those migrants who were migrated from the hills of Kumaon region in Uttarakhand state.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

a) **Socio-Economic, Demographic status of migrants** – The socio economic and demographic profile of the respondents is given in table 1.0 which reveals that according to the social profile of respondents the highest percentage is of Schedule Caste (55.17 percent) followed by General Caste (34.48 percent) respondents. 62.06 percent are married among migrants and this suggests that the migrants are primary earners to the family and are likely to be motivated by the need to support their family. Despite 31.03 percent respondents achieving higher education, the level of skill remains notable low at the time of migration among respondents as the data shows only 13.79 percent respondents were skilled in any type of work. This type of mismatch

may point to lack or less approach to vocational and skill development programs in the study region, further exacerbating unemployment and underemployment challenges. The composition of household among the respondents also provides valuable insights for the study, the predominance of nuclear family households (75.86 percent) and the average size of family (4.84) indicate a trend toward nuclear family structures. The high dependency ratio (average 3.19 dependents per household) shows the significant economic pressure on primary earners in the family and this burden likely drives the decision to migrate. The reliance on agriculture and allied activities as the main occupation and source of income which underscores the subsistence-based nature of livelihoods of households in the study region. The practicing agriculture on an average of 2.46 Nali in rainfed terraced fields highlights the challenges of these fragmented and small landholdings in ensuring the sustainable incomes for livelihood.

**Table 1.0**

**Socio-Economic status of Respondents**

S.No.	Socio-economic background of respondents	Frequency (Percentage)
1.	Percentage of respondents by social status General Schedule Caste Other Backward Class	34.48 55.17 10.34
2.	Percentage of married respondents to the total respondents	62.06
3.	Percentage of respondents who achieved higher education to the total respondents	31.03
4.	Percentage of respondents who were skilled in any discipline at the time of migration	13.79
5.	Percentage of respondents who belongs to single family to the total respondents	75.86
6.	Average Family Size of respondents	4.84
7.	Average number of dependents in families of respondents	3.19
8.	Average number of earning members in family	1.62
9.	Average Land holding size (in Nali)	2.46

**Source:** Primary data (N=50)

[**Note:** 1 Nali = 0.02 hectare = 0.04 acre Source: <https://www.99acres.com/nali-to-hectare-utyp>]

b) **Factors of migration among respondents** – The migration commission of Uttarakhand has identified the main reasons for migration in state as employment/livelihood, medical facility, education, infrastructure, agricultural land (less production/ Less productivity), migration by watching family member, loss of agriculture and other reasons [16]. Migration in the study region is often influenced by social networks, and this played a significant role in shaping the patterns of migration. 65.51 percent respondent

was influenced with friends or relatives, which was the major factor for the decision of migration among them. This highlights the critical role of social connection in facilitating migration and this network effect also makes migration process smoother for migrants from remote rural areas of hills. Generally, the reasons behind migration are categorized as two-type of factors i.e., Push Factor & Pull Factor in which socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental factors act [17] as a medium of migration. To calculate the factors (push or pull) of migration among the migrants in the study region, formula is adopted

which was previously used by Sridhar et.al (2013) [18] and Chaudhary (2021) [19].

$$Y_i = (\text{No. of Pull reasons for migration class}) / (\text{Total No. of reasons for migration chosen})$$

Where the value of  $Y_i$  varies between 0 to 1 [While going towards 1 pull factors are more responsible for migration].

**Table 1.1**

**Factors of Migration (Push or Pull)**

Category of factors	Respondents (%age)
Push Factors	57.42
Both Factors	11.23
Pull Factors	31.35

**Source:** Primary data (N=50)

The decisions of migration generally are shaped by the combination of push and pull factors, where economic constraints and opportunities play pivotal roles. The data reveals that the predominant push factor is inadequate job opportunities at the place of origin of migrants, with 57.0 percent respondent migrants cited this as a primary reason for migrating them. The economic stagnation in these areas characterized with seasonal or subsistence level jobs and that forces individual to seek better opportunities in plains of region. The second most significant push factor is the dependency ratio is high among households (22.0 percent) which places significant financial pressure on individuals and push them for

better economic prospects. Small and scattered fields is another (19.0 percent) factor and natural disasters (2.0 percent) is also a push factor to migrate the respondents but it ranks lowest among the surveyed migrants. Pull factors highlight the strong attraction of urban areas among the migrants. Better living standard desire (82.0 percent) emerges as the most compelling reason and reflects that migration is predominantly a livelihood strategy for economic security and mobility. Attractive environment and facilities (12.0 percent) also act as a significant pull factors. Some other pull factors, is the lowest ranked (6.0 percent) among the respondents this reflects that the migration decisions are predominantly individual.

**Table 1.2**

**Reasons of Migration (Push or Pull)**

Push Factors	%age	Pull Factors	%age
Lack of adequate job	57.00	Getting better job opportunities	82.00
Dependency ratio is high	22.00	Attractive environment and facilities	12.00
Small & Scattered landholdings	19.00	Other factors	6.00
Natural disaster	2.00	----	---

**Source:** Primary data (N=50)

**c) Economic Status of Respondents** – Table 1.3 provides significant insights about the impact of migration on the economic status and their skill enhancement. Findings indicate that migration has played transformative role in the improvement of respondent’s socio-economic condition. Increase in skill level is observed when the respondents have migrated and it was rise from a mere 13.79 percent to 62.06 percent. This reflects that migration not only provide them better employment opportunities but it also enabled them to acquire new skills and

contributes for better wage and job security. The average monthly income more than doubled after their migration which highlights the economic benefits of migration by signifying better job opportunities in migrated region in comparison to their place of origin. The remittances send by respondents per month to their households at their place of origin is Rs. 7200.00 which reflects the critical role of migration, supporting the family members for meeting their household expenses etc., thus improving the overall wellbeing of the family left behind.

**Table 1.3**

**Economic Status of Respondents**

S.No.		Before Migration	After Migration
1.	No. of Skilled respondents (%)	13.79	62.06
2.	Average monthly income (Rs.)	4900.00	15600.00
3.	Average monthly remittance send to households’ fby migrants (Rs.)	---	7200.00

**Source:** Primary Data (N=50)

Does the migration helpful for making life better among respondents?

Results of the paired-t test indicated that there is a significant large difference between Before and After,  $t(99) = 60.7, p < .001$ . The test statistic  $t$  equals

Parameter	Value
P-value	0 ( $P(x \leq 60.7151) = 1$ )
t	60.7151
Average of differences ( $\bar{x}_d$ )	10700
SD of differences ( $S_d$ )	1762.33

**Note:** Calculated at: <https://www.statskingdom.com/paired-t-test-calculator.html>

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION:

The present study reveals a transformative impact on socio-economic conditions of respondents through migration. The social status of respondents indicates that marginalized sections are more inclined towards migration among respondents. The higher percentage of respondents who are married, higher percentage of nuclear family highlights migration as a livelihood strategy for primary earners who have significant economic responsibilities. There is lack to access to the vocational training in the study region which was pointed out by the low percentage of skilled respondents at the time of migration. The high dependency ratio in the family and marginal, fragmented, rainfed landholdings further reinforce the economic constraints driving migration. The migration of respondents was heavily influenced by social networks as a strategy for economic upliftment and better quality of life. The most important aspect of this research about economic impact shows that migration significantly improve the skills levels of respondents, and increasing monthly income reflects the availability of higher wages and better job opportunities after migration to the plains and overall reflects as a positive financial impact of migration on respondents. Finally, in this study migration has proven to be a viable livelihood strategy for the migrant respondents, resulting in improved socio-economic status & skill levels and financial security. However, addressing the root cause of migration through enhancement in skill, sustainable rural development, promoting village & agriculture related tourism, financial inclusion, employment promotion

60.7151, which is not in the 95% region of acceptance: [-1.9842, 1.9842]. The After minus Before (10700), is not in the 95% region of acceptance: [-349.6845, 349.6845]. The 95% confidence interval of After minus Before is: [10350.3155, 11049.6845].

through Self Help Groups and infrastructural improvement will be able to reduce the economic disparities and bridging the rural-urban divide in the region and will be able to make life better for residents in their place of origin.

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