

THE ISSUE OF OUT-MIGRATION IN UTTARAKHAND

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Abstract

In Uttarakhand, with over 80% of its rural population residing in the hill districts, the predominant issues hindering development are the challenging mountainous terrain and scattered populace. Post its formation, out-migration was a prominent trend, resulting in population declines in districts and sluggish growth in other hilly areas. This issue is emphasized by the fact that from 2001 to 2011, the rural population decreased by 7%, while the urban population increased by nearly 35%, twice the state's average growth rate. Out-migration carries substantial economic, social, and political implications, necessitating government intervention. This study, utilizing secondary data from government and private sources, pursues two primary objectives. Firstly, it explores the extent of human migration from Uttarakhand's hilly regions. Secondly, it delves into the causes of out-migration. The research reveals that the lack of livelihood opportunities in their places of origin drives most migrants. From a policy standpoint, boosting the economic base, focusing on niche activities, and improving educational and healthcare infrastructure can help mitigate out-migration from Uttarakhand. Notably, employment, education, and healthcare emerged as the pivotal factors shaping migration decisions.

Keywords: out-migration, Uttarakhand

Introduction

The historical context of out-migration in Uttarakhand can be traced back to the colonial era when the British Army recruited local youth. Following India's independence, a significant shift occurred as people began to relocate to the plains in search of improved opportunities. This paper delves deeper into the intricate dynamics of out-migration in Uttarakhand, a prevailing trend in mountainous regions that is deeply entwined with socioeconomic and cultural factors.

Uttarakhand is administratively divided into two regions, comprising 13 districts, 102 tehsils, 95 development blocks, 670 nyaay panchayats, and 7,950-gram panchayats. Among the 13 districts in

the state, 4 districts (Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, and Nainital) are classified as plain areas, while the remaining districts are characterized as hilly regions. Geographically, it shares its borders with China and Nepal while being adjacent to Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana. The establishment of Uttarakhand as a distinct state is a testament to the persistent demand for statehood in the region.

In Uttarakhand, abandoning the hills has long been a common practice among those looking for better access to healthcare and education, as well as a wider range of employment opportunities. The 2011 Census revealed that Uttarakhand's overall population growth rate was 1.7%, with significant variations across the state's plains and mountainous regions. There has been an evident inclination of migration out from the state's mountainous parts as the hilly regions saw a population increase of 0.70%, significantly lower than the 2.82% growth observed in the plain districts, indicating a notable migration trend away from the hilly areas of the state.

Regrettably, the development landscape in Uttarakhand has failed to curtail the out-migration from its hilly districts, showing a recent acceleration in the trend. Most mountainous districts have experienced sluggish population growth, exemplified by a stark decline of 17,868 individuals in Almora and Pauri Garhwal between 2001 and 2011, underscoring the extent of out-migration. In parallel, rural areas in the plains, including Haridwar, Dehradun, and Udham Singh Nagar, have witnessed substantial development, leaving the hill districts comparatively underdeveloped.

It is estimated that only 10% of the land in hilly regions is irrigated due to small and dispersed land holdings making a significant portion of rural people dependent on subsistence farming or migration in search of better opportunities. The lack of development of infrastructure in the hill areas, particularly in roads, irrigation, and power, exacerbates the differences in income and standard of living between the plains and the hills.

Objective of the study

- The study aims to examine the trend of human migration from Uttarakhand's hilly districts.
- This study examines the major reasons behind migration.

Methodology

The Present study based on secondary data on migration. An interim report on the migration of revenue villages in Uttarakhand issued in 2018 by the 'Rural Development and Migration Commission, Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand is the major source of data. The data included migratory trends from 2011 to 2018, and it was analyzed using percentiles, indices, and other levels, which were also visually represented through graphics.

Literature Review

Sati (2020), shows in his research paper about the out-migration in Uttarakhand Himalaya. It is also mentioned that in 3 districts – Pauri, Tehri, and Almora, more than 10% of the population migrated after 2011 and major migration was internal from mountain districts to urban areas within their districts. Unemployment is the major problem in rural areas of Uttarakhand and 50% of migration is done only for employment. This study suggested that employment opportunities can be increased by the emergence of institutions, developing infrastructure, a good education system and also providing higher education to the people, and developing and providing new technologies in the agricultural sector which will ultimately minimize the out-migration of rural areas. This study shows the two types of migration that are semi-permanent and permanent, more people are seen migrating semi-permanent, and fewer people are seen migrating. Destinations of migrants are mostly seen in another district of the state which is 35.69% of people, 28.72% of people migrate out of the state, 19.46% of people migrate to nearby towns, 15.18% of people migrate to district headquarters and the remaining 0.96% of people migrate out of the country.

Jain (2010), shows in his study about the labor migration and remittances in Uttarakhand. Six villages, two from each of the three districts are taken. Musoli and Dhapola Sera from Bageshwar, Kothi and Sawad from Chamoli, and Kangsali and Takoli from Tehri Garhwal. In this study, the maximum migration is shown by females in the age group of 20-29 and the reason for migration is marriage. Females have to migrate to another place after their marriage as per their culture and some of the females' husbands took them to other states or countries to live with them. Push factors in these regions are low agricultural productivity, lack of employment opportunities, lack of infrastructure, educational status, and low living standards.

Pull factors are better employment opportunities, better education, good health facilities, and relatives. According to migrants' groups, 66% of Rajputs migrated, 28% of Brahmins migrated, 4% are from SC and other are 2%. The study also focuses on the percentage of migrants who send remittances to their families, the volume and intervals of remittances, the mode of sending remittances, and the actual use of remittances.

Pokhariya & Jindal (2022), shows in their research paper about the effect of migration on the people who have migrated from Uttarakhand. The main reason for migration is the lack of necessities in rural areas of Uttarakhand and the lack of employment opportunities. Both the Garhwal and Kumaon region of Uttarakhand are studied and the conclusion is drawn that the highest migration is seen in the Garhwal region and male members of the family are highly migrated to other places. It is also mentioned that people migrate without family, married people are seen as highly migrated, and the high migration is seen in the age of 21-30 years old. Migration has a positive impact on the lives of migrants who have migrated from their places due to a better quality of life, better banking services,

better financial situation, saving increases, and a positive impact on self-employment and business of the people.

Keshri et.al. (2020), shows in his study about inter-migration in India, and the data was based on the census and change overpopulation year by year. An increase in the urban population and a decrease in the population of the rural area indicates migration by people. The data was identified or analyzed based on 1991 – 2001. This study was also based on alternative sources like NSS (National Sample Survey) which shows that seasonal and temporary migration is seen only because of employment which is 7 times larger than permanent migration.

Discussion and Analysis

Demographic change-

The demographic change indicates that emigration has become a prevalent phenomenon in the Hill Region of the State, particularly during the 2001-2011 decade. This trend is so significant and widespread that approximately 375 villages, constituting 2.75% of the total villages in the Hill Region, have been nearly abandoned due to out-migration. These villages have essentially transformed into "ghost villages." Notably, in Pauri Garhwal district, the highest number of such villages is 122, making up around 4% of the district's total villages, and they had only a single-digit population in 2011.

The Trend of Migration-

The trend of migration had significant momentum after the year 2000 when Uttarakhand became a separate state. It considered two types of migration: semi-permanent and permanent migration. Semi-permanent migration encompasses monthly, seasonal, and annual movements, where migrants maintain their homes in the villages where their family members engage in subsistence farming. These migrants send remittances back to their families, contributing to their income and overall livelihood. On the other hand, permanent migration involves individuals leaving their villages and relocating permanently to different regions within the state or country. In this case, they abandon their original settlements and agricultural lands. According to the 2011 census, there are 16,793 census villages, out of which 15,745 are inhabited, and 1,048 are uninhabited. Over the last 10 years, a total of 3,83,726 people in 6,338-gram panchayats have migrated on a semi-permanent basis. Additionally, there are 1,18,981 permanent migrants from 3,946-gram panchayats in the same time frame. The data indicates that there are more semi-permanent migrants than permanent migrants in all districts of the state. Migration can be attributed to various reasons, with the specific triggers being influenced by the circumstances within a household or region. These motivating factors are typically divided into two main categories, often referred to as "push" and "pull" factors. It's important to note that these factors primarily pertain to migration associated with the labor market. In the hill region of

Uttarakhand, the primary driving forces behind migration are the "push factors." According to the 2001 census, approximately 13% of the population relocated in search of improved employment prospects.

A considerable number of educated young individuals leave in pursuit of jobs. While women and older men continued farming in the villages, the majority of those migrating were young men. The population growth rate in hilly areas decreased from 18.04% in the 1981-1991 period to 12.28% in the 1991-2001 period and further dropped to 5.36% in the 2001-2011 period. In contrast, during the 1981-1991 period, the urban-plain region witnessed a population growth of 34.40%, which declined to 27.92% after the formation of the new state due to migration to Uttar Pradesh. However, it subsequently increased significantly to 30.38% in the 2001-2011 period. The overall population growth rate for the state during 2001-2011 was 18.8%. Several factors have driven this migration from Uttarakhand, including challenging rural living conditions, the impact of climate change, a high unemployment rate, the mountainous terrain, low agricultural productivity, and educational prospects. Improved infrastructure along river valleys, the establishment of institutions, and the growth of service centers have facilitated internal migration. Many migrants never returned to their communities, leading to concerns about depopulation, land abandonment, and food insecurity in rural regions.

Objective of migration-

The extensive migration, both within and out of Uttarakhand, has been occurring over several decades. However, in the earlier periods, out-migration primarily involved males embarking on long-term journeys with strong ties to their places of origin. Nevertheless, the nature of this outflow has evolved over the years, with migrations increasingly involving family members, which has notable implications for the places of origin and has resulted in the emergence of what can be termed as "ghost villages," as documented by the Uttarakhand Migration Commission in 2019.

The primary reason behind the high rate of out-migration from the hill districts is attributed to the lack of income opportunities and the limited access to quality education and healthcare facilities. Farming, which was historically the main occupation of the hill people, has become unsustainable and economically unviable due to the absence of irrigation facilities and unpredictable weather patterns. The phenomenon of out-migration in Uttarakhand has gained prominence, particularly after the year 2000, when the state was established. On a statewide level, it was observed that approximately 50.16% of the population migrated primarily for employment, with education (15.21%) being the second most significant reason. Migration for health reasons accounted for 8.83% of the out-migration. Various other factors, such as seeking improved facilities (3.74%), have also

contributed to the out-migration trend in Uttarakhand. An additional 8.48% of out-migration can be attributed to unspecified factors.

At the district level, employment emerges as the dominant factor driving out-migration. It represents the highest proportion in the USN district (65.63%) and the lowest proportion in the Bageshwar district (41.39%). Education is the second major driver of out-migration at the district level, particularly in the Chamoli district (19.73%), Pithoragarh district (19.52%), Tehri district (18.24%), Uttarkashi district (17.44%), Pauri district (15.78%), and Rudraprayag district (15.67%). In three districts, more than 10% of the population has migrated for health improvement, and this factor has primarily driven out-migration in Almora, Nainital, and Pauri districts, although other districts have also been affected by it. In contrast, Haridwar, Dehradun, and USN districts have experienced a relatively lower impact from this factor.

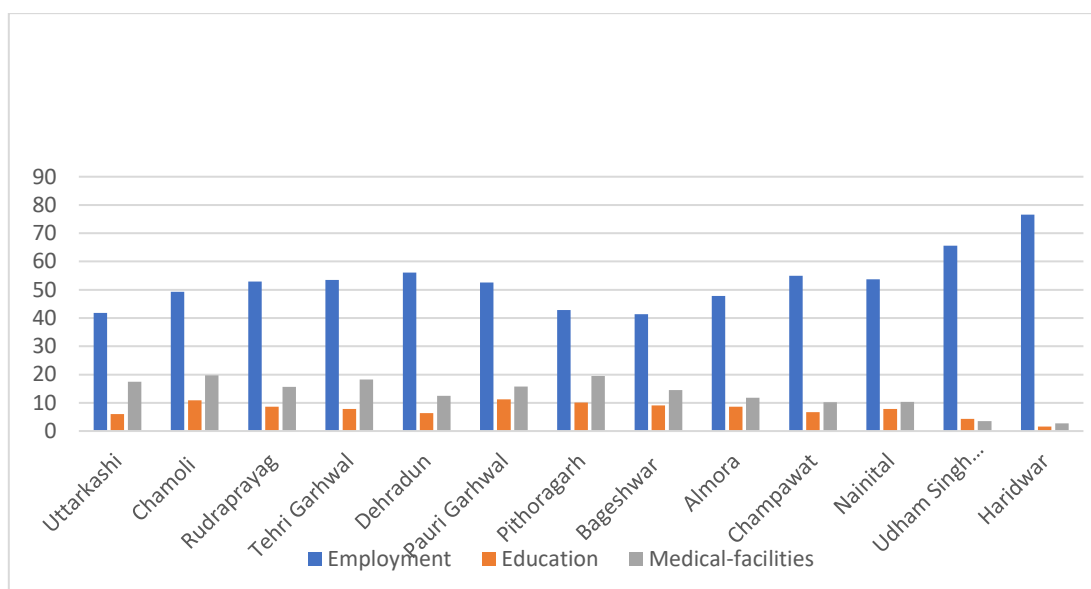


Table 1: The status of migration (%) in Uttarakhand from 2011 to 2018.

Factors Affecting Migration

Employment opportunity-

The primary driving force behind migration from hilly regions, particularly Uttarakhand, is deeply rooted in the pursuit of employment and livelihood opportunities. In these areas, households from varying economic backgrounds, including the economically disadvantaged and those relatively better-off, are compelled to engage in multiple sources of income generation to bolster their financial well-being. The prevalence of diverse economic activities is a reflection of the challenges associated with the underdeveloped economy in these regions. As a result, out-migration has emerged as a pivotal strategy for the residents of the hill districts to secure their livelihoods.

Employment and livelihood stand as the most dominant factors continuing the migration flows from the hill regions. This multifaceted phenomenon can be understood as the confluence of two distinct processes. First, it serves as a deliberate household strategy aimed at bolstering income, and second, it often arises as an involuntary response to crises. In economically disadvantaged areas, people depend on various sources of employment primarily due to the absence of a singular employment option for their sustenance. In hilly Uttarakhand, nearly 70% of the population relies on agriculture and its allied activities as their primary source of livelihood. Other employment prospects are notably scarce in the hilly terrain, with tourism and government services representing the sole available alternative sectors for employment. This dearth of employment opportunities is particularly pronounced for individuals with higher education, who often find it challenging to secure white-collar positions commensurate with their qualifications in these hilly areas. Consequently, this situation further exacerbates the inclination for migration, particularly among males. Moreover, the generation of employment in small-scale shops and enterprises is not occurring at the desired rate in hilly regions. Data from economic censuses reveals a stark contrast, with only a 5% increase in the number of small-scale shops in hilly areas between the second and third economic censuses, while in plain regions, this increase was significantly higher at 53%. Furthermore, available data indicates that a substantial proportion of migration occurs within the age group of 20-39, accounting for 56.78% of all migrants. This statistic underscores that a majority of people are compelled to migrate during the prime of their employable years.

The phenomenon of migration in Uttarakhand is inherently tied to the pursuit of employment and livelihood opportunities, which are often scarce in hilly areas due to economic underdevelopment. Households, both economically disadvantaged and relatively better-off, employ diverse income-generation strategies to enhance their financial well-being, with migration being a crucial lifeline for securing livelihoods, particularly among the working-age population.

Reason for migration	Job transfer	Income/employment opportunity	Lack of employment opportunity	Education and training	Others	total
Number	68	73	184	45	21	391
percentage	17.39	18.67	45.06	11.51	5.37	100

Table 2: Reasons for migration in Uttarakhand, 2018

Educational facilities-

The reason consistently cited by respondents in surveys for migration pertains to the inadequacy of educational facilities in rural Uttarakhand. Within Uttarakhand, there are 1689 schools where a single teacher is responsible for instructing more than 70 students. Notably, rural districts such as Bageshwar, Almora, Pithoragarh, and Rudraprayag exhibit the highest prevalence of this situation. Furthermore, it's worth highlighting that only 5% of public schools are accessible in rural Uttarakhand. Despite having a literacy rate exceeding 78.8%, Uttarakhand outpaces the national average. The literacy levels of the population residing in the hill areas are considerably higher than those in the plain areas of the state. However, these differences have substantially diminished over the past decade, with a more rapid improvement in literacy levels observed in plain districts of the state. In terms of gender, literacy levels among females are lower in both hill and plain areas of the state.

Migrant workers, tend to have comparatively better educational attainments in comparison to their non-migrant counterparts. Nearly half of them have achieved high school or higher secondary level education, and another 36.4% hold graduate or higher degrees. This suggests that one of the motivations for migration is to improve the educational levels of their members, primarily males so that they can secure more lucrative employment opportunities outside the household. Consequently, nearly one-tenth of migrant workers migrated initially to enhance their educational qualifications, while approximately 19% of them migrated with the expectation of finding better economic prospects in urban areas.

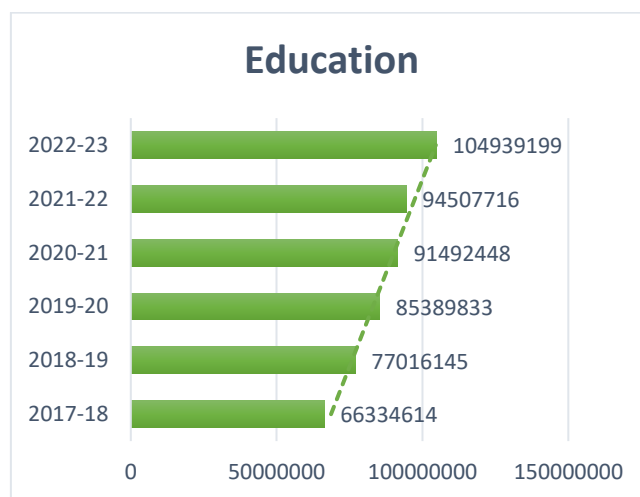


Table 3: budget allocation for education facilities according to Uttarakhand survey 2022-23

Health Amenities-

The dire state of healthcare facilities has prompted people to migrate in pursuit of better health services. The inadequacy of healthcare infrastructure in Uttarakhand is glaring, as evidenced by the insufficient number of hospitals. One critical issue worsening the healthcare crisis is the reluctance

of government doctors to work in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand. A report by the Planning Commission reveals that between 2002-03 and 2007-08, the Uttarakhand government appointed 912 doctors based on the recommendations of the Public Service Commission. However, only 573 doctors joined the Department of Health. More than 60% of the sanctioned doctor positions remain vacant in the hill districts, despite the existence of a legal obligation that requires doctors and other professionals to serve in these regions.

The dire state of healthcare in the Uttarakhand hills is further underscored by the fact that due to the unavailability of doctors at the block-level community health centers, approximately 132 women had to deliver babies in ambulances in the past one and a half years in Pithoragarh District while in route to district hospitals. Government data confirms that there are only 59 doctors available, compared to a sanctioned strength of 173, and only 445 paramedical staff members are available, while the sanctioned strength is 752 for the districts.

In light of these circumstances, it is evident that the poor state of healthcare facilities and the shortage of medical professionals in the hill districts of Uttarakhand have played a significant role in driving migration as people seek better healthcare options elsewhere.

Indicators	Present Status
Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)	101(2017-19)
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	39.1(2019-21)
Under- 5(IMR)	45.6(2019-21)

Table 3: Health indicators of Uttarakhand according to the survey of Uttarakhand 2022-23

Conclusion

The overall growth path of Uttarakhand has been impressive since its formation. However, this growth has created huge regional inequalities within the State. The growth process could hardly create productive employment and income opportunities in the Hill region of Uttarakhand. There is hardly any visible progress made toward developing remunerative agriculture in most of the villages in the Hill Region. Outside agriculture, employment opportunities in construction grew significantly, but local people were mostly unwilling to undertake manual work. Their access to skilled jobs in the construction sector was severely affected due to the lack of such skill training. The employment opportunities in other sectors such as trade, transport, and government services improved in the Hill Region but remained limited to a few people. Thus, a lack of remunerative livelihoods coupled with an obsession for salaried jobs has forced a large number of youths to migrate to cities in search of salaried jobs that are of relatively longer duration irrespective of earnings. The situation has become quite grim in some areas as there are hardly any people left in the villages. Such destitution needs to

be reversed. A large number of people, mainly youth, have out-migrated semi-permanently and permanently. In several areas, only the old-aged people and women were left living with minimum basic amenities. Migration has led to depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas, which has severe repercussions on the farming systems. The rate of out-migration has increased mainly since 2000 and has aggravated in recent times. Unemployment is one of the major impediments to out-migration. Since the rural areas are devoid of infrastructural and institutional facilities, augmentation of employment is not possible. Further, the output from traditionally practiced subsistence cereal cultivation is not enough to carry livelihood sustainably. These factors have manifested a large out-migration of youth from the region, and if it continues, the out-migration will have severe adverse implications on the rural areas and their economy. Several steps should be taken to minimize out-migration and attract the migrants to come back to their respective villages.

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