

Migration as Compulsion, Networks as Lifelines: A Socio-economic Study of Odia Workers in The Honda Industrial Estate of Goa

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Abstract: *This study investigates the socio-economic dynamics of Odia migrant workers employed in Honda Industrial Estate, Goa, exploring how migration shapes their livelihoods and adaptation experiences through analytical lens of Social Network theory (SNT). The research is guided by two core objectives: identifying key push-pull factors influencing migration and assessing subsequent socio-economic and cultural changes. Using a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation with 15 Odia workers, the study reveals that migration is primarily driven by structural push factors such as rural unemployment, agrarian stagnation, and climate-induced distress; while being facilitated by social networks. Pull factors include higher wages (₹ 15,000 - ₹ 35,000 vs. ₹ 300/day), industrial growth, and perceived social tolerance in Goa; though recruitment through contractors creates dependency relationships emphasizing structural holes. The findings reveal a fundamental paradox: while migrants experience economic gains and maintain cultural identity, their employment remains informal and structurally vulnerable. Socially, adaptation occurs within closed community networks characterized by strong ties, with limited integration into local Goan society. The study concludes that migration serves as a survival strategy rather than a vehicle for upward mobility, emphasizing the need for inclusive labour policies and migrant welfare mechanisms in semi-industrial regions like Goa.*

Keywords: Livelihood, Migration, Odia Migrants, Social Network Theory, Vulnerability

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration shapes global societies through demographic, economic, and cultural patterns, representing both individual responses to resource inequality and collective outcomes of structural forces. The UN reports approximately 281 million international migrants (2020), yet internal migration, particularly in developing economies like India far exceeds cross-border movements.

India hosts one of the world's largest internally mobile populations. The 2011 Census reported 37% (450 million) as migrants, predominantly intra-state. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022) indicates rising employment-related migration driven by rural-urban and inter-state economic disparities. The 1991 liberalization accelerated internal mobility by expanding manufacturing, construction, and service opportunities, creating flexible yet insecure labour arrangements.

Odisha, despite rich natural resources, faces chronic poverty, limited industrialization, and climatic disasters. Over 9% of Odisha's workforce engages in seasonal or inter-state migration, predominantly to western and southern India (Planning & Convergence Department, 2023). Conversely, Goa attracts labour through its tourism-driven economy and 24 industrial estates. The Statistical Handbook highlights substantial Odia, Bihari, and Karnataka migrant presence in industrial and service sectors of Goa (Directorate of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation, 2022).

Migration studies in India emphasize macro-level trends but neglect micro-level realities in semi-urban industrial spaces. Much literature focuses on Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, creating an "urban bias" (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). This study broadens understanding by examining a smaller industrial town, addressing how migration to Goa impacts Odia workers' social and economic conditions through the lens of Social Network Theory, henceforth SNT.

1.1 Research Question

The pivotal research question is - How migration to Goa impacts Odia migrant workers' social and economic conditions?

1.2 Objectives

- 1) Identifying key push-pull factors driving Odia migrant workers to Honda, Goa.
- 2) Examining socio-economic changes and adjustment experiences among Odia migrant workers through Social Network Theory perspective.

1.3 Description of Study Area

Honda Industrial Estate in Sattari Taluka of North Goa, serves as the focal research site. Established in the early 1980s by Goa Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC); Honda houses major industries including Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Elsteel Modular Products India Private Limited and The Automobile Corporation of Goa Ltd. (ACGL) the primary employer of Odia migrants interviewed for this study. Unlike metropolitan destinations, Honda's smaller scale permits detailed examination of kinship ties, community networks, and contractor relationships shaping migrant experiences in semi-industrial contexts, making it ideal for understanding migration-network-livelihood intersections in contemporary India. The below image gives showcases all the industrial estates of Goa.

Image1.3.1- map showing industrial estates of Goa



Source (Goa Industrial Development Corporation. (n.d.). Units [Image]. Retrieved November 19, 2025, from <https://goaidc.com/units.php>)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Migration is driven by economic aspirations and adverse conditions (Manning, 2015). In India, internal migration exceeds international movements, with states like Odisha characterized by outmigration due to poverty, limited industrialization, and underemployment. Push factors include economic hardship, unemployment, systemic disparity (Planning & Convergence Department, 2023; Jena, 2019), social marginalization (Disha Foundation, 2020), landlessness, caste-based exclusion, and ineffective policy implementation despite schemes like MGNREGA.

Climate change reshapes migration patterns. Odisha's coastal communities face displacement from cyclones, droughts, and floods, particularly in districts like Kendrapara, Puri, and Ganjam, leading to seasonal and long-term migration (NITI Aayog, 2019). Whereas, environmental degradation in fishing communities drives outmigration (Nayak and Mishra, 2008).

Migrants utilize social capital for relocation (de Haas, 2010; Manning, 2015). SNT provides conceptual lens for analysing these dynamics, positing kinship and community ties as instrumental in facilitating migration and integration (Granovetter, 1973). However, established networks can enable exploitative practices through intermediary dependencies (de Haas, 2010), creating

paradoxes where networks provide opportunities while reproducing inequalities.

Economic necessity remains primary migration driver. Goa's higher wages, employment in tourism and construction serve as pull factors. Goa is perceived as relatively egalitarian with weaker caste boundaries, fostering economic and social mobility prospects (Directorate of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation, 2022). Despite valuable prior scholarship, limitations persist: macro-urban focus overlooks nuanced experiences in smaller industrial areas.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY & MIGRATION

This study examines Odia migration through SNT, offering analytical framework for understanding how interpersonal relationships facilitate and shape migration. Rather than viewing migrants as isolated individuals making rational economic decisions, SNT posits migration as deeply social phenomenon embedded within relationship networks.

3.1 Core concepts

Social Capital and Network Resources: Within migration contexts, social capital refers to resources information, financial assistance, emotional support, employment opportunities-accessed through network membership. These networks reduce migration costs and risks by providing crucial information about opportunities, housing, and destination life.

Strong and Weak Ties: Granovetter's (1973) distinction between strong ties (close family/community relationships) and weak ties (acquaintances/distant connections) proves relevant for migration. Strong ties provide emotional support and initial assistance; weak ties access diverse employment opportunities. Both function differently across Odia migration phases.

Structural Holes and Brokerage: Burt's (1992) structural holes concept-gaps between non-redundant contacts, explains labour-contractor and intermediary roles. These brokers exploit positioning between workers and employers, potentially extracting value while providing essential connections. This lens illuminates how network advantages create new dependency and exploitation forms.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative research grounded in interpretive methodology to explore Odia migrant workers lived experiences. The qualitative approach captures nuanced, subjective migration experiences that quantitative methods might overlook, allowing deep exploration of personal narratives, social relationships, and cultural adaptations.

The study utilises purposive sampling to identify participants meeting the criteria: (1) Odia origin, (2) employed in Honda Industrial Estate for at least more than 6 months, (3) aged 18-50 years, (4) voluntary participation. Snowball sampling followed, where participants introduced the researcher to community members, reflecting investigated network structures. The sample size of 15 respondents was determined due to primary data saturation. All participants were male, reflecting predominantly male-dominated employment-related internal migration.

Data collection occurred over three months using

semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation to access data and enhance credibility. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing analytical narrative. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines including informed consent, complete anonymization, voluntary participation, and secure data storage.

5. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 5.1 Demographic Overview of Respondents

Respondent	Age	Education	Caste	Job	₹ Income (in thousand)
1	26	SSC	ST	Helper	20,000
2	30	SSC	SC	Welder	25,000
3	25	Graduation	OBC	Helper	20,000
4	43	8 th	SC	Helper	20,000
5	40	SSC	OBC	Helper	20,000
6	29	12 th	General	Painter	25,000
7	37	SSC	SC	Welder	35,000
8	30	SSC	SC	Painter	21,000
9	21	SSC	SC	Painter	21,000
10	35	Graduation	SC	Painter	15,000
11	44	9 th	General	Painter	25,000
12	30	12 th	General	Painter	20,000
13	32	12 th	SC	Helper	20,000
14	42	12 th	General	Welder	20,000
15	33	SSC	General	Welder	20,000

Findings emerge from qualitative analysis of primary data from fifteen Odia workers at ACGL. The demographic profile (see table 5.1) reveals majority belong to Scheduled Castes and OBCs, highlighting deeply rooted socio-economic inequalities in Odisha's rural landscape where caste shapes occupational access. Age distribution (25-45 years) suggests migration involves economically productive groups with family responsibilities. Low education levels (SSC to Class 12) confine migrants to semi-skilled or unskilled labour roles, reflecting educational disadvantage and caste-based occupational segregation.

5.1 Push Factors Driving Odia Migrants to Goa

Migration from Odisha to Goa is driven by structural economic disparities and mediated by social networks. Respondents emphasized economic distress, limited employment, and kinship influence as central motivations. Prominent push factors included agricultural stagnation, seasonal unemployment, low rural wages, and recurring natural disasters. Erratic rainfall, indebtedness, and lack of irrigation facility rendered agriculture unsustainable. Frequent cyclones and floods caused economic instability. As one 29-year-old stated, "Work in the village is uncertain. During floods, we lose both crops and houses. Migration is not by choice, it's by situation."

Lack of industrialization and weak rural infrastructure compounded difficulties. Irregular MGNREGA schemes provided insufficient workdays. Underemployment combined with rising costs compelled migrants to seek stable income elsewhere. These findings affirm migration as survival strategy rather than aspirational pursuit, driven

by structural, persistent socio-economic inequalities restricting occupational mobility.

5.2 Pull Factors Alluring Odia Migrants to Goa

Pull factors centred on Goa's industrial growth and wage labour reliability. Most respondents were recruited through acquaintances or contractors with pre-existing ACGL links. Established Odia networks played decisive roles in shaping destination choice and securing employment, confirming social capital and network importance in internal migration. Higher wages, stable employment, and timely payments were key attractors. Workers mentioned Goa's perceived safety, cleanliness, and non-discriminatory work environment as positive motivators. Some cited "peaceful lifestyle" and "good supervisor behaviour" sustaining their long-term stays.

However, pull factors contained constraints. Intermediated recruitment through contractors means migrants enter dependent labour relationships limiting bargaining power. Contractors manage accommodation and negotiate wages, mediating migrants' work access. This dynamic reflects Burt's (1992) "structural holes" concept, where brokers exploit gaps between workers and firms. While migration decisions are shaped by economic improvement, they're equally conditioned by social dependency and informal labour structures. Social Networks dual role, as facilitators and control instruments—emerges as defining feature of this migration corridor.

5.3 Cultural Adaptation Among Odia Migrant Workers

Cultural adaptation reflects careful negotiation between preserving traditional Odia practices and embracing aspects of host culture. Dietary habits serve as central adaptation site. Traditionally accustomed to rice-based dishes like *pokhalo* (watered rice), migrants have gradually incorporated Goan influences, especially increased fish consumption. However, resistance remains toward coconut-based curries incompatible with Odia cooking. Long-term migrants show partial acceptance while prioritizing Odia preparation styles, suggesting selective adaptation balancing practicality with cultural preservation.

Clothing practices shifted from traditional cotton garments and *lungis* to Western attire like shorts and shirts, due to synthetic materials functional ease requiring less washing—important after long work hours. Festival observance demonstrates cultural identity persistence despite displacement. Though struggling to celebrate all thirteen Odia festivals, migrants organize small community observances or connect virtually during major events like Durga Puja and Jagannath Yatra. These modest celebrations, marked by nostalgia and symbolic continuity, highlight adaptation shaped by heritage preservation rather than migration induced assimilation.

5.4 Social Adaptation and Integration in Goa

Social adaptation reveals elaborate interaction between economic necessity, linguistic barriers, and communal solidarity. Communication challenges emerge as significant impediment, as migrants rely on Hindi due to limited Konkani knowledge. One respondent remarked, "Locals are good, but we don't mix much; after work, we stay with our own people." This Hindi dependence restricts local engagement, confining social worlds to co-ethnic

networks, illustrating SNT's homophily concept and strong ties within migrant communities. After demanding shifts, migrants devote remaining time to essential chores, leaving little scope for cross-cultural interaction.

Consequently, local friendships are rare; primary support comes from fellow Odia workers. Living arrangements—often four to six individuals sharing single rooms—strengthen intra-community bonds. Such spaces foster cooperation in cooking and cleaning while functioning as emotional anchors against isolation. Though communal cohesion mitigates alienation, it reinforces social insularity, as migrants rarely participate in Goan festivals, preferring private Odia traditional celebrations. Long stays build homesickness among the migrant workers. Post-work, migrants engage in lengthy phone calls with families, and during off-hours enjoy fishing together, yet Goan contact remains limited. As one 26-year-old stated, "I'm surrounded by people from my community, yet I miss my family a lot." Thus, while Odia migrants exhibit resilience within their networks, Goan integration remains partial and fragmented, marked by coexistence rather than assimilation.

5.5 Socio-economic Conditions of Odia Migrants

Within ACGL's bus production, migrants occupy stratified occupational hierarchy: helpers, painters, welders. About one-third worked as helpers, 40% as painters, remainder as welders. Monthly earnings ranged ₹ 15,000-35,000, depending on skill and overtime. Welders with greater technical expertise earned most; helpers remained at the bottom of the wage ladder. Most viewed income as significantly higher than Odisha earnings. As one painter exclaimed, "Even after sending money home, I can manage rent and food here. Back in the village, we could not earn even ₹ 300 per day." Improved cash flow enables remittances supporting families, children's education, and debt repayment.

Yet improvement is quantitative rather than qualitative. No respondents held permanent contracts; they worked on renewable short-term or contractor-based agreements without social security, insurance, or provident fund benefits. Economic stability remains precarious, contingent on employer demand and contractor mediation. Thus, migration offers short-term financial relief without structural empowerment. Employer-provided housing absence is highlighted by communal living where workers share rooms, cook together, and contribute equally to rent and utilities. Such cooperative living reflects community solidarity but also highlights housing absence.

Notable is high remittance behaviour: nearly three-fourths of income is sent to families back in Odisha. This dependency sustains household economies at source but leaves migrants with little savings or destination investment. One respondent mentioned that his remittances is saved as dowry for his sister's wedding. After remitting hefty salary chunks, workers are left with meagre sums sustaining them in Goa. Consequently, socio-economic progress remains risky rather than bettered—uplifting families back home without fundamentally altering their occupational position. Though expressing satisfaction with Goa's tolerance and safety, belonging remains transitional. Many view Goa as temporary workspace rather than home, reflecting the circular nature of internal migration.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored how migration to Goa transformed Odia workers social and economic conditions by getting employed at Honda Industrial Estate. Findings reveal that, migration operates primarily as coping mechanism rather than aspirational choice, driven by persistent rural unemployment, agrarian decline, and environmental vulnerability in Odisha. Goa's expanding industrial base, particularly ACGL, provides migrants with steady income and improved financial stability compared to pre-migration conditions. However, this economic uplift is tempered by informality, social security lack, and contractor dependence.

Socially, while migrants maintain strong intra-community networks and cultural continuity through shared living and festivals, integration in to the Goan community remains minimal due to linguistic barriers, social barriers, and time constraints. Their existence is characterized by circular migration, with sustained emotional and financial ties to native villages. Thus, migration improves material well-being but doesn't significantly enhance social mobility or long-term security.

Social networks serve as the backbone of this migration. Kinship and community ties reduce risk and uncertainty by providing initial host region support. Yet the same networks can reinforce dependency structures through contractors and intermediaries. From SNT perspective, this reflects social capital's ambivalent power: while weak ties facilitate job access, they also sustain asymmetric control relations. Migrants limited formal recruitment channel access perpetuates their vulnerability, situating them within informal labour hierarchies depending on trust, loyalty, and subordination.

Findings strongly support SNT's analytical utility in understanding internal migration dynamics, demonstrating how core concepts such as strong ties, weak ties, social capital, structural holes provide comprehensive framework for analysing opportunities and constraints characterizing contemporary Indian migration experiences. Overall, Odia workers in Goa occupy paradox space, achieving relative economic progress yet remaining structurally vulnerable. Their narratives accentuate the need for inclusive labour policies recognizing migrants as integral contributors to Goa's industrial growth.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Findings highlight urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions addressing unskilled migrant workers structural vulnerabilities in semi-industrial regions like Goa. Persistent employment informality, social protection absence, and contractor dependence highlight systemic gaps in India's labour governance framework. Policymakers must prioritize employment formalization through portable social security mechanisms such as universal e-Shram registration and integration with provident fund and health insurance schemes transcending state boundaries.

Strengthening interstate coordination between sending and receiving state labour departments can ensure effective data sharing, grievance redressal, and migrant household inclusion in welfare delivery systems. Mandatory written contract enforcement and transparent recruitment

processes would curb exploitative contractor-mediated employment practices. Additionally, industrial policy should promote employer accountability through social audits and mandatory welfare contributions for contract labourers.

Community-level interventions, including migrant support centres, affordable housing schemes, and multilingual help desks, can enhance social integration and reduce isolation. By bridging policy silos between labour, welfare, and housing sectors, the state can transform migration from survival to inclusive development pathway.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While providing valuable insights, several limitations affect generalizability and scope. The 15-respondent sample, though sufficient for qualitative analysis and theoretical saturation, represents a relatively small subset of broader Odia migrant population. All participants were male ACGL workers within one industrial estate, potentially not capturing diversity across industries, skill levels, or employment arrangements. Female migrant absence reflects gendered industrial migration nature but limits understanding of gender-differentiated experiences.

Cross-sectional data collection captures single time-point experiences rather than tracking complete migration cycle changes. Long-term outcomes, including eventual return migration patterns or permanent settlement decisions, remain beyond scope. Self-reported interview data carries potential social desirability bias, though participant observation helped mitigate this concern. While SNT provides valuable analytical framework, exclusive focus on this lens may have overlooked other important factors—structural economic forces, policy environments, individual psychological factors—operating independently of social networks.

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