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ON THE MOVE, UNCERTAIN GAINS: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF LABOR MOBILITY ON RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN BANGLADESH

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Introduction

Developing countries often drastically change their employment structures during industrial transformation, entailing labour mobility, which influences the social and economic development of the present globalised economy (Wang & Valerio, 2023). Internal and external labour mobility significantly affect the growth trajectories of individuals, households, and communities, impacting poverty levels and overall socioeconomic well-being (Faruque & Rahman, 2021). The profound economic impact of labour mobility is well-documented, with skilled migrants contributing more significantly to poverty alleviation than their unskilled counterparts (Hossain, 2010). Enhancing human mobility is essential for promoting economic efficiency, individual freedom, and improved quality of life (Wilson, 2012). Furthermore, research by David and Marouani (2013) underscores the complex link between migration, job markets, and development, showing how internal and external migration can boost regional growth and reduce poverty.

The motivations behind labour mobility are multifaceted. Often, it is due to limited opportunities at home and the desire for a better life. This "pull" factor, including better jobs, higher wages, and more stable income, drives people to move. In rural areas, migration can be a survival strategy, especially for poor, landless people from disadvantaged groups. For example, seasonal labour migration is common for such groups. Immigrants play a critical role in the economies of destination areas by filling essential roles and contributing more in taxes and social contributions than they receive. Return migrants positively impact their home countries by bringing back valuable personal, social, and financial capital (Faruque & Siddiqua, 2019). Walsh (2012) emphasises the importance of mobility in understanding modern rurality, suggesting that mobility enables households to achieve economic and familial sustainability, thereby challenging traditional notions of static rural societies.

Over the past five decades, Bangladesh has experienced substantial economic and social progress, with labour mobility playing a pivotal role in this transformation. Historically,

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Bangladeshis have relied on migration as a means of subsistence, with Labor movements dating back to the 18th century closely linked to economic growth (Briggs, 2020). In the contemporary context, labour mobility remains a vital economic driver, providing essential livelihood options for impoverished populations in developing countries (Leeson & Gochenour, 2015).

Despite its significance, labour mobility presents uncertain gains, particularly for rural livelihoods. This study aims to analyse the causes and effects of Labor mobility on rural livelihoods in Tangail Sadar, Bangladesh. Focusing on the changes brought about by labour mobility in these rural communities, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how labour mobility influences the economic conditions of the migrated life in rural Bangladesh.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Labour mobility encompasses internal migration, which refers to the movement of workers inside a country, and external migration, which pertains to the movement of humans between countries. The concept is based on the idea that workers act to maximise their economic self-interest, a core principle of the Neoclassical Economic Migration Theory. An influential theory in this domain is the Harris-Todaro Model, introduced in 1970. It suggests that people decide to move to maximise their overall well-being. In the past, the examination of the internal labour movement has primarily been on the individual level, utilising rational choice-based theories to clarify the reasons, traits, destinations, and mobility results for individual migrants or households. Katz and Stark (1986) contested the idea of the micro-rational choice model and argued that people may move from rural to urban areas, even if they expect to earn lower wages in the city. They stated that the desire to improve social standing or move up in the social hierarchy is an extra strong motivation for migration. They disagreed with Todaro's paradigm and argued that significant wage differences alone could not explain migration patterns. The neoclassical viewpoint focuses on migrants' ability to make choices and suggests that people migrate to maximise their advantages. However, according to Marxist perspectives, social structures significantly limit this ability to take action. Marxists argue that the ruling class in a capitalist economy exerts influence over seasonal migration patterns. They view this as a chance to take advantage of the working class and maintain control over resources (Breman, 1985). The Capability Approach, developed by Sen, challenges solely defining income-based poverty. In response to the prevailing influence of neoliberalism in development theory during the 1980s, livelihood views emerged as a viable alternative strategy.

The Labor mobility narrative of Bangladesh includes both internal and external

movements. Workers from Bangladesh have successfully obtained employment opportunities worldwide, namely in Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Urbanisation and the expansion of the garment industry serve as magnets for individuals to migrate to cities, while poverty is a force that compels them to leave rural regions (Skeldon, 1985; de Haan et al., 2000). The observed patterns of this type of migration are consistent with other theories, such as the dual Labor market theory, which studies employment opportunities; the new economics of migration, which highlights social linkages; and neoclassical economics, which analyses the push-pull dynamics. The theories in question have been examined by de Haan et al. (2000) and Siddiqui (2003).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive research design to explore Labor mobility in the Porabari Union of Tangail Sadar, Bangladesh. The study chose the Porabari Union because it has a strategic relationship with Tangail City and is home to about 4309 families, many of whom are immigrants looking for work from other unions. The study focused on 100 respondents who had permanently or seasonally relocated to Tangail City. The selection of the respondents is purposive because all the people who live in this union are not migrants. A carefully designed schedule was used to collect information on Labor mobility. The schedule addressed work status, migration motivations, demographic information, and the socioeconomic effects of migration. Data was gathered through in-person interviews at times convenient for the respondents to guarantee maximum involvement from June to July 2023. The collected information was carefully inputted into a database, and its accuracy was confirmed. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, were used to analyse quantitative data. Complete conformity to ethical principles was upheld, encompassing voluntary involvement, informed consent, and confidentiality. The study's drawbacks include the limited sample size, even though it offers important insights. Despite these drawbacks, this methodology provides a thorough and organised way to comprehend Labor mobility and how it affects the people living in Porabari Union.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The extent of Labour mobility typically relies on factors such as age, educational attainment, and the size of one's family (Wang & Valerio, 2023). Before addressing mobility concerns, the study examines the demographic conditions of the study area. Table 1 reveals that the migration rate is lowest among individuals under 20 (9%) and those above 50 (6%). The most significant proportion, 37%, migrated between 41 and 50. Individuals in their middle years are significantly prone to engage in migration due to their capacity to bear the expenses associated with movement. There were no migratory respondents older

than 60 in the study.

Table 1:Age of the Respondents

Age	Percentage of the Respondents
Below 20	9
21-30	22
31-40	26
41-50	37
51-60	06
Above 60	0
Total	100

Source: Computed by the author using primary data.

Typically, there is an inverse relationship between the size of a household and the ability to move or change jobs. According to Polinsky and Shavell (1976), households with more members are generally less likely to move than families with fewer members. The investigation yielded identical findings, as evidenced by the data in Table 2. 59 individuals relocated, with his family comprising 4-6 members, while a minor proportion, 11%, consisted of families with 8-10 members.

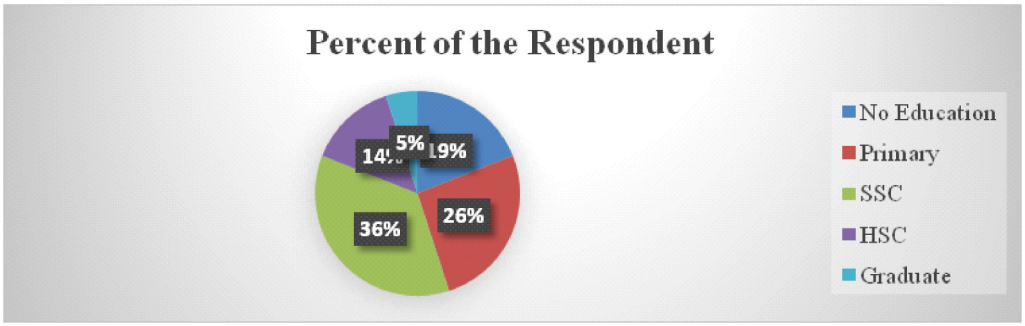
Table 2: Number of Family Members

Number of family members	Percentage of Migrated Labour
0-4	18
4-6	59
6-8	12
8-10	11
Total	100

Source: Computed by the author using primary data.

The study revealed that 27% of the participants had never received formal education, while 36% had not progressed beyond the primary level. According to Figure 1, the proportion of graduates in our sample is only 5%. Only 20% and 12% of individuals have successfully finished their secondary and higher secondary education, respectively. Furthermore, we have learned that higher education significantly impacts the creation and facilitation of chances for labour mobility. The study explored the current economic situation and the correlation between educational attainment and changes in livelihood following migration.

Figure1:Education level of Respondents



Source: Computed by the author using primary data

Occupational Mobility

The study identifies a substantial socioeconomic condition alteration before and after migration. Table 3 displays the alteration in means of livelihood, that is,horizontal occupational mobility. Before migration, around 11 individuals in rural areas were unemployed due to employment unavailability. Seven (07) were employed in construction after the migration, while NGOs hired the remaining three (03). Securing employment in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is a common pursuit for recent graduates. Approximately 55 individuals were employed as agricultural day labourers in the rural region. They relocated to urban areas in response to the diminishing farming activities and harvesting caused by a scarcity of agricultural land and the effects of climate change. After relocating to the metropolitan region,18 individuals started to work as construction workers. Additionally, 17 individuals began driving rickshaws, while the remaining 20 continued working as day labourers in other sectors, such as cleaning and carrying items at vegetable and fish markets. Approximately 15 marginal farmers were displaced from their land due to river bank erosion. They subsequently migrated to urban areas and transitioned into the occupation of construction workers. The study identified three (03) women who relocated to the city area after their divorce and secured employment as domestic workers. About five (05) small business owners moved; two remained business owners, while the other three worked in others' businesses. They could not continue operating in rural areas and moved to the city to deal with the loss of business.

Table 3: The Occupational Mobility of the Respondents

Livelihood Status			
Before Migration		After Migration	
Livelihood	No of Respondent	Livelihood	No of Respondent
Unemployed	11	construction worker	8
		Service in NGO	3
Day labour (In Agricultural land)	55	Day labor	20
		Rickshaw Puller	17
		Construction worker	18
Farmer	15	Construction worker	15
Shopkeeper	6	Shop Assistant	6
Housewife	3	Housemaid	3
Rickshaw Puller	5	Rickshaw Puller	5
Business	5	Shopkeeper	3
		Business	2
Total	100	Total	100

Source: Constructed by the author from the survey

Table 4 displays the total number of respondents impacted by the factors that motivated their migration from their original location to the urban areas. Various push factors compel individuals to migrate, including diminishing arable land, unprofitable agriculture, climate change, insufficient educational opportunities, and limited access to healthcare facilities. Simultaneously, migratory individuals have access to all these amenities in urban areas. As a result, the rate of labour migration from rural to urban areas is gradually increasing.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Occupational Mobility

Factors	Percentage of Reported Respondent
Declining Arable land	14
Unprofitable farming	15
Climate change (drought, flood, heavy rainfall, river bank erosion, etc.)	35
Lack of health facilities	5
Lack of education facilities	9
Lack of employment	11
loss in business	6
Poor transportation system	5
Total	100

Source: Constructed by the author from the survey

This study involved 100 migrant respondents who provided information about the reasons for their mobility. Climate change is a significant driver for migration among a considerable

proportion of responders (35%). Due to climate change, individuals experience an extended period of intense precipitation, resulting in floods for around six months, followed by a prolonged period of drought for the remaining six months. Residents of riverine communities experience persistent river bank erosion. These numerous extreme incidents greatly diminish the quality of their lives. They experience significant losses, including homes, crops, and means of living. They are unable to generate income during the dry season. Six percent of respondents reported experiencing business losses. Due to poverty, many people bought items for their shops but could not afford them. Rural areas lack well-maintained roads; hence, rickshaw pullers must exert additional effort throughout each trip due to the subpar road conditions. Consequently, the rickshaw puller failed to generate sufficient income. Approximately 5% of the population consisted of rickshaw pullers who expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequate transportation system. There is a lack of adequate health facilities, particularly in rural areas, especially regarding maternal health services. Furthermore, there is a lack of sufficient educational institutions for their children's schooling. Approximately 5% of the participants indicate a deficiency in health facilities, while 9% report a scarcity of academic options. At least eleven individuals stated that educated people have no options for better professions. Nevertheless, individuals in urban settings have greater access to livelihood options than those in rural areas. Urban regions provide ample health amenities, water sanitation facilities, educational institutions, and employment opportunities for individuals of different backgrounds. These characteristics serve as attractions for their migration to urban areas.

Change in Income Level per Month.

The study also estimates the post-migration income of these individuals who have migrated. Table 5 displays the income level of the proportion of participants in the study area. Most respondents, precisely 45% and 38%, reported earning between 10000-15000 and 15001-25000 before migration. The most significant percentage of respondents, with earnings of BDT 15001-25000 and 25001-35000, respectively, are 34 and 42 after migrating. Approximately 9% of individuals earned less than BDT5000 before and after migration, whereas no one earned less than BDT15000. Eleven (11) persons made more than the two new income levels, which began above BDT 45000.

Table 5: The Income per Month (before migration and after migration)

Income range (BDT)	Percentage before migration	Percentage after migration
0-10000	9	0
5001-15000	38	0
15001-25000	45	34
25001-35000	6	42
35001-45000	2	13
45001-55000	0	6
55001-65000	0	5
Total	100	100

Source: Calculated by the author from the survey

The Expenditure per Month

According to Table 6, the majority of persons (48%) spent less than 15,000 BDT each month. The second-highest number (46%) spent less than 25,000 BDT before migration. Within this budget, they must cover all expenses, such as food, clothing, medical care, education, rent, entertainment, etc. No one can exceed a monthly budget of BDT 45000. However, following the movement, their spending capacity experienced a significant surge, with five individuals able to spend more than BDT45000. Before migration, the percentage of individuals who remained below the 15000 BDT threshold was 48%. However, after migration, this figure decreased significantly to only 16%. According to the study, migration increased the capacity for expenditure. They could get better health facilities, and their children could get better education after migrating to the urban area.

Table 6: The Expenditure per Month

Before migration		After migration	
Expenditure	Percentage	expenditure	Percentage
00-15000	48	00-15000	16
15001-25000	46	15001-25000	48
25001-35000	4	25001-35000	22
35001-45000	2	35001-45000	9
Above 45000	0	Above 45000	5
Total	100	Total	100

Source: Calculated by the author from the survey

Savings per month

Following migration, there was a rise in both income and expenditure. Individuals can live more improved and superior lifestyles compared to previous times. Table 7 shows that some persons can save after migrating. Before migration, a minimum of 20 individuals were unable to save any money, whereas, after migration, 9 individuals were unable to save. Approximately 14 individuals and 17 individuals have the potential to accumulate savings of 1500 BDT and 1500-3000 BDT, respectively. The maximum amount that can be saved is 4500 BDT before migration. Following the migration, there was a notable rise in the individuals' savings capacity, with a minimum of 18 individuals able to save more than BDT 5000 each month.

Table 7: Saving per Month

Before migration		After migration	
Savings Amount	Percentage	Savings amount	Percentage
Negative	20	Negative	9
0	34	0	16
100-1500	15	1000-3000	33
1500-3000	17	3000-5000	24
3000-4500	14	Above 5000	18
Total	100	Total	100

Source: Calculated by the author from the survey

Conclusion :

The study assesses how economic, demographic, and livelihood factors affect labour mobility in the particular area of study. It focuses on how age, education, and family size affect livelihood, income, spending, and savings. The findings reveal that age significantly affects labour mobility. The study shows that individuals between 41 and 50years of age have the highest mobility rates. In contrast, the youngest demographic (under 20 years) and the oldest demographic (over 50 years) have the lowest migration rates. It is worth noting that no individuals over 60 reported any mobility. Family size significantly impacts Labor mobility; households with 4-6 people accounted for most Labor migrants. The study also explored significant changes in livelihood and economic status after migration. Individuals relocate to the Porabari Union in Tangail Sadar for several reasons, including the lack of viable means of sustenance, the impact of climate change, the scarcity of arable land, the decline of small-scale enterprises, and the erosion of river banks. After migration, people must change from their prior occupations, transforming some into construction workers,

day Laborers, shopkeepers, and rickshaw pullers. The study reveals that shifting from one job to another resulted in a significant increase in income levels, as a substantial section of the population transitioned from earning less than BDT 15,000 to higher income categories after migrating. Expenditure patterns also shifted after migration, indicating a higher ability to spend on necessary and optional items. They can accumulate up to 5000 BDT monthly savings through Labor mobility. The study also reveals the push and pull factors that influence Labor mobility, such as lack of employment opportunities, lack of diversity of livelihood, insufficient educational institutes, insufficient health facilities, climate change, etc. This study finds valuable insights into the workers' mobility in rural areas of Bangladesh.

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