



Social Networks and Family Ties: Understanding Migration Dynamics from Purulia District

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Abstract:

Migration in Purulia District, West Bengal, is a complex phenomenon deeply influenced by socio-economic challenges and strengthened by social networks and family ties. This study examines how social connections, particularly among friends and relatives, drive migration decisions and facilitate job placement for migrants. Additionally, the role of ongoing communication between migrants and their families is explored, revealing its importance in maintaining emotional bonds, supporting economic ties, and influencing further migration. The findings highlight the critical role of informal social networks in migration processes, the dominant influence of agents in job acquisition, and the varied visiting patterns of migrants, reflecting their efforts to balance work obligations with family connections. The study underscores the need for targeted policies that recognize the significance of these social dynamics in addressing the migration challenges in Purulia District.

Keywords: Migration dynamics, Social networks, Family Communication, Out-Migration, Job Placement, Socio-Economic Challenges.

I. Introduction:

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has long shaped the socio-economic landscape of regions around the world. In the context of Purulia District, West Bengal, migration has emerged as a vital coping strategy for individuals facing various socio-economic challenges. This district, characterized by its rural setting, non-perennial rivers, and underdeveloped irrigation systems, experiences a significant out-migration, particularly among the male population. 'The seasonal nature of agriculture, coupled with poor crop yields, drives many to seek better opportunities outside their home region, leading to

what is often described as "pseudo-unemployment" (Sen, 2024). This exodus, however, is not just a response to economic hardship but is also deeply rooted in social networks and sustained by ongoing communication with family members who remain in the district. The role of social networks in migration cannot be overstated. Social networks, which include family members, friends, acquaintances, and even community organizations, often serve as the bedrock of migration decisions. These networks provide potential migrants with crucial information about destinations, job opportunities, and living conditions, reducing the uncertainties associated with moving to a new place. For many in Purulia, the decision to migrate is influenced by the experiences and recommendations of those who have already migrated. These networks not only help in the initial stages of migration but also offer continued support, such as finding employment, securing accommodation, and navigating the socio-cultural dynamics of the new environment. The strength and reach of these networks often determine the success of the migration experience, as they can ease the integration process in the destination area and offer a safety net in times of difficulty. Equally important is the role of communication between migrants and their families in the home district. In an era where technological advancements have made communication more accessible, maintaining regular contact with family members has become a crucial aspect of the migration experience. 'This communication serves multiple purposes: it reinforces emotional bonds, provides moral and psychological support, and ensures the continued flow of remittances, which are often a lifeline for the families left behind' (Singh, 2014). Moreover, communication allows for the sharing of information and advice, which can influence

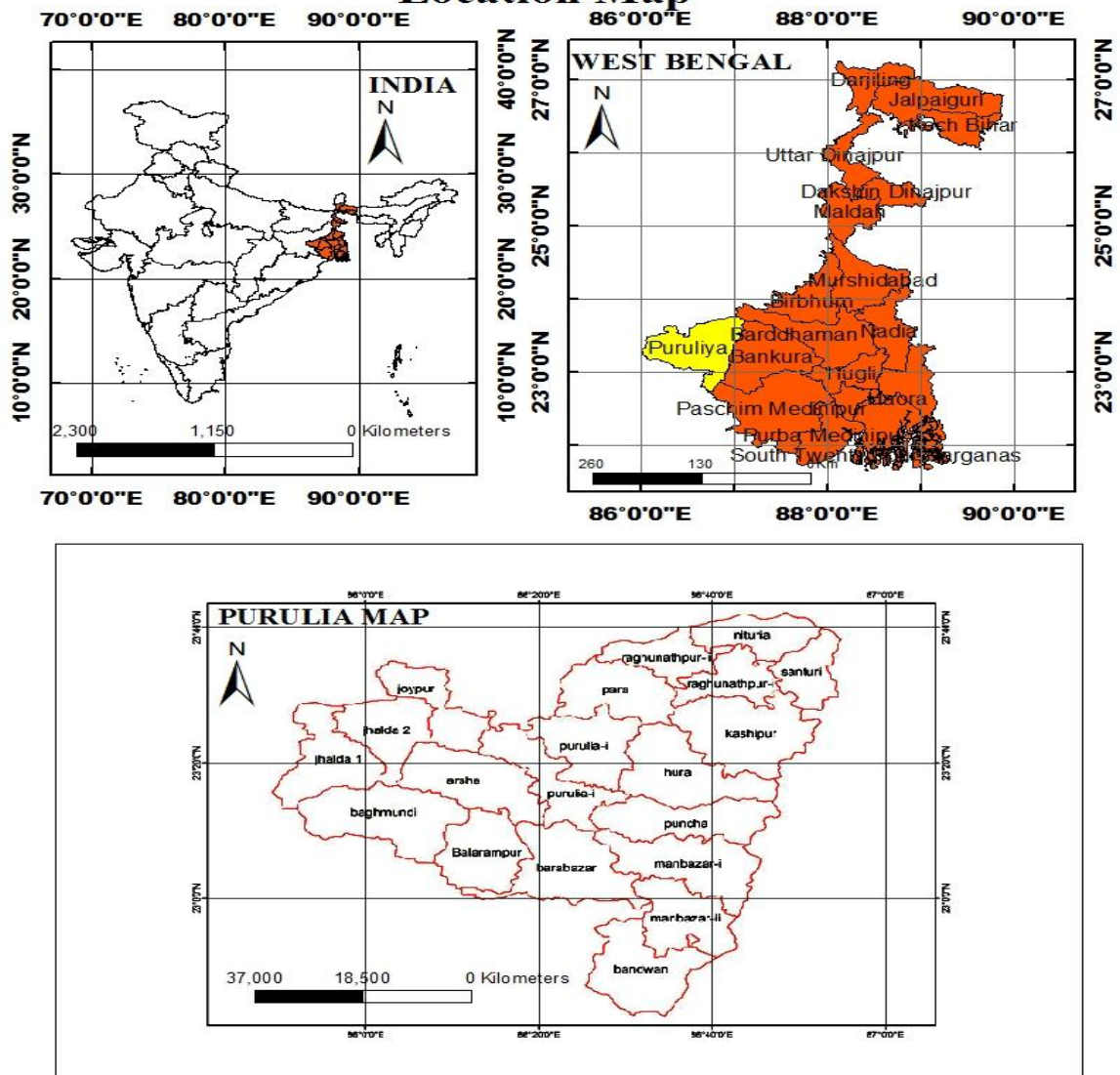


further migration decisions, such as whether other family members should join the migrant or stay behind. The impact of this ongoing dialogue extends beyond immediate economic benefits; it shapes family dynamics, affects social structures in the home community, and contributes to the broader migration narrative. Understanding the dual role of social networks and family communication is essential for comprehending the migration patterns from Purulia District. While economic factors are often cited as the primary drivers of migration, this article argues that social and familial connections are equally significant. By

examining how these networks and communication channels function, this study aims to shed light on the intricate socio-economic fabric of Purulia, offering insights into the broader implications of migration for both the individuals involved and the communities they leave behind.

Location and Boundary: Purulia District is situated in the western part of West Bengal, India. It is geographically positioned between latitudes 22°42' N and 23°42' N and longitudes 85°49' E and 86°54' E, covering an area of approximately 6,259 square kilometers.

Location Map





The district forms the westernmost part of West Bengal and is bordered by several regions that contribute to its distinct geographical identity. To the north, Purulia shares its boundary with the districts of Bankura and Bardhaman, both within West Bengal. The eastern boundary is also adjacent to Bankura District. On its western side, Purulia is flanked by the Indian state of Jharkhand, which lies across a vast stretch of the border. To the south, it is bounded by Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal and partially by Jharkhand as well.

Objectives: 1. To analyze the influence of social networks on migration decisions among individuals in Purulia District.

2. To examine the communication patterns between migrants and their families in Purulia District.

Data Sources:

This study employs a combination of primary and secondary data to thoroughly examine migration patterns in Purulia District, West Bengal. Primary data were obtained through a field survey conducted in 2022 across various blocks of the district. This survey used structured questionnaires to gather detailed information from respondents, focusing on the influence of social networks and family communication on migration decisions. The primary data provide direct insights into the lived experiences of individuals and families within the district. Secondary data were sourced from several authoritative references to support and enrich the analysis. Key secondary sources include the Primary Census Abstract (PCA) of 2011, which offers crucial demographic and socio-economic statistics pertinent to the study area. Additionally, academic books and peer-reviewed journals were consulted to contextualize the findings within the broader scholarly discourse on migration. Relevant websites were also used to access recent reports and data updates. This combination of primary and secondary data ensures a well-rounded and empirically grounded analysis.

II. Methodology:

The research methodology for this study was meticulously designed to capture the migration dynamics within Purulia District, West Bengal, through a mixed-method approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Sampling Method:

To select migrant households, the study employed snowball sampling, a non-probability

sampling technique that leverages social networks within the community. The process began with identifying key informants, including Panchayat Pradhans, Block Development Officers, and primary school teachers, who were instrumental in identifying initial participants. These participants then referred other households with migration experiences, creating a chain-referral system that enabled the study to reach a representative sample of migrant households across various villages. The data were analyzed after collection from field, using Microsoft Excel 2007, a widely accepted tool for statistical analysis and data visualization. Simple percentages were calculated to quantify the responses and identify trends within the data. To effectively present the findings, bar diagrams and pie charts were created using Excel. These graphical representations helped in illustrating the distribution and proportion of various migration-related factors, making the analysis clear and accessible.

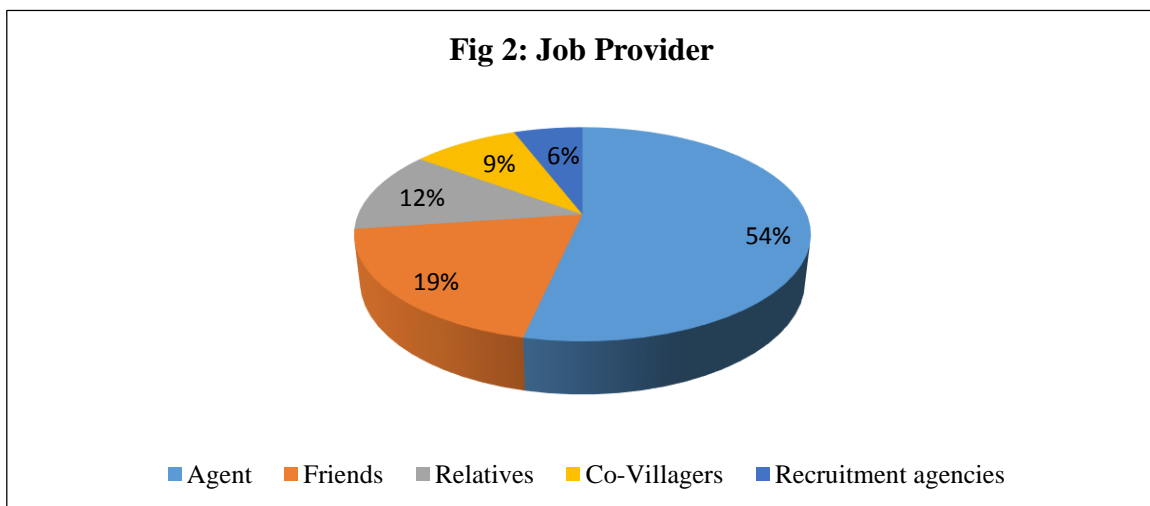
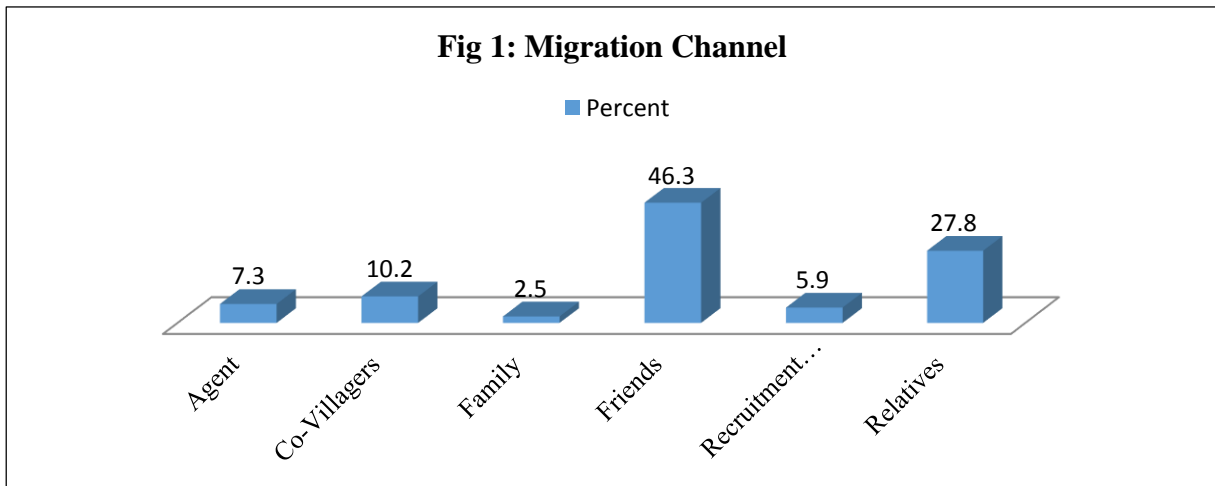
III. Result & Discussion

The table no.1 sheds light on the intricate web of social networks that drive the out-migration process, revealing a nuanced picture of how migrants navigate their journey and settle into new environments. Dominating the landscape of migration facilitation, friends are pivotal in connecting nearly half of the migrants (46.3%) with job opportunities or migration pathways. This underscores the profound impact of peer relationships in guiding migration decisions and providing crucial support during the transition. Relatives also play a significant role, assisting 27.8 percent. Their support highlights the importance of family connections, which often provide both practical and emotional backing in the migration process. Co-villagers contribute to the migration process for a smaller segment (10.2%). While their influence is less pronounced, their role illustrates the value of localized networks in migration dynamics. Agents support 7.3 percent, indicating a less central but still relevant role in facilitating migration, often acting as intermediaries in the process. Formal recruitment agencies assist 5.9 percent, revealing that while these agencies are less influential compared to personal networks. Immediate family members have a minimal role in the migration process.



Table 1: Role of Social Network in Out- Migration Process.

Migration Channel	Percent	Who help to Get the Job	Percent
Agent	7.3	Agent	53.47
Co-Villagers	10.2	Friends	19.34
Family	2.5	Relatives	12.3
Friends	46.3	Co-Villagers	9.05
Recruitment agencies	5.9	Recruitment agencies	5.84
Relatives	27.8		



It is known from the figure no. 2 that agents emerge as the primary facilitators in job placement, assisting 53.47. Their prominent role underscores their importance in bridging the gap between migrants and employment opportunities. Friends contribute significantly to job acquisition, helping 19.34 percent which highlights the

continued importance of personal networks in securing employment. Relatives play a supportive role in job placement for 12.3 percent, demonstrating their contribution to the employment process. Co-villagers & Recruitment agencies also assist in finding jobs.



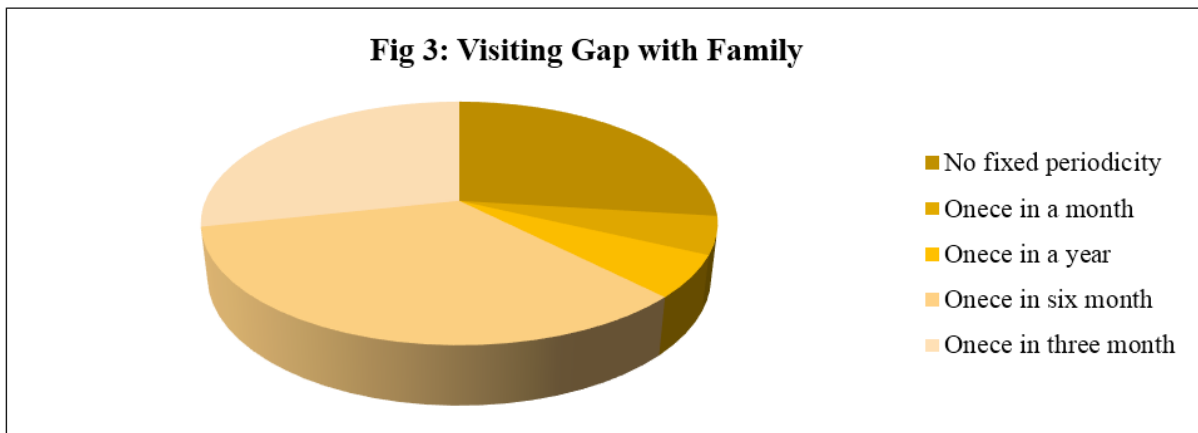
Table 2 provides insights into the frequency of migrants' visits to their family. The data reveals several key patterns. The largest group of migrants (34%) visits their family every six months. This semi-annual frequency suggests a balanced approach where migrants manage to

maintain family connections while also fulfilling their work commitments. It reflects a compromise between the demands of migration and the importance of family ties. A significant percent of migrants (28.4 percent) visit their family every three months.

Table 2: Visiting Gap with Family

Visiting Period	Percent
No fixed periodicity	27
Once in a month	5
Once in a year	5.6
Once in six month	34
Once in three month	28.4

Fig 3: Visiting Gap with Family



This relatively frequent visiting pattern indicates a strong commitment to family relationships and possibly more flexible work conditions that allow for regular visits. Nearly a quarter of migrants (27 percent) do not adhere to a fixed visiting schedule. This irregularity could be due to unpredictable work schedules, financial limitations, or logistical challenges, illustrating the varied nature of migrant experiences in maintaining family connections. A smaller percentage of migrants (5.6%) visit their family once a year. This infrequent pattern suggests significant barriers, such as high travel costs or demanding work schedules, which limit the ability to visit more frequently. A few percent (5.3%) manage to visit their family once a month. This represents the most regular visiting pattern, indicating strong family

bonds and potentially less restrictive work conditions or proximity to home.

IV. Conclusion

The results reveal that informal social networks, especially friends, are crucial in facilitating migration, while agents are the primary source of job placement assistance. Friends' significant role in migration support underscores the reliance on personal connections, while agents' dominant role in job placement highlights their essential function in helping migrants secure employment. Most migrants visit their families either every six months or every three months, balancing their migration-related obligations with family commitments. The significant proportion of migrants with no fixed visiting schedule points to



the variability in personal circumstances affecting their ability to maintain regular family contact. Infrequent visits, such as once a year, reflect more significant challenges faced by some migrants in sustaining family relationships.

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