

The Causes and Consequences of Rural Urban Migration in Bangladesh : A Review of the Relevant Literature

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Abstract

This study aims at reviewing the existing theories and studies of rural urban migration which explore the causes and consequences of rural urban migration of a developing country like Bangladesh. According to most of the relevant studies of rural urban migration poverty, joblessness, homelessness, landlessness, economic degradation, mal adjustment of the community, river erosion and various natural calamities are the major push factors in migration process. Although pull factors are not so dominant, easy access of informal sector, higher income earning possibility, better service facilities, and bright city lights attracted people to make a settlement in the urban areas. Depending on reviewed document, the significant consequences of migration are create employment and cash earning, enjoying some civic amenities, overcrowding, difficulties of waste disposal, shortage of housing, inadequate educational facilities, poor water and power supply, traffic congestion and environmental degradation.

Key Words: Migration; Causes; Consequences; Rural; Urban

1. Introduction

Study of migration is one of the important aspects of social science, especially of population studies. Migration study deals not only with the movement of people from one place to another but also with the impacts of migration on urban growth and living standard of people. One of the most significant causes of rapid and irrepressible expansion of towns and cities is rural-urban migration. Thus, urban growth is mainly dominated by rural-urban migration.

Most of the existing research works on migration in developing countries have focused on rural-urban migration and urbanization. Though the incidence of rural-urban migration in

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any developing country is higher, a distinct selectivity with respect to age, sex, caste, marital status, education, occupation etc., occurs and the propensity of migration differs significantly among these socio-economic groups (Lee, 1966; Sekhar, 1993; Yadaba, 1988). In determining the nature and strictness of demographic and socio-economic impacts regarding population, different types of migration play a vital role. Many researchers have tried to establish some uniform migration patterns acceptable for all the countries of the world. However, migration studies based on ages show that mostly grown up/young people of both developed and developing countries have migrated in comparison with the people of other ages.

Generally, the differentials in migration which implies the selectivity of certain person or group to be more mobile than others have been studied mainly by age, sex, marital status, education and occupation. Some studies show that the determinants of migration vary from country to country and even from area to area within the country, which depend on socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors. High unemployment rate, low income, high population growth, unequal distribution of land, demand for higher schooling, prior migration pattern and dissatisfaction with housing have been identified as some of the prominent determinants of rural-out migration (Nabi, 1992; Sekhar, 1993; Yadava, 1988). Without adequate skill or education, migrated people in town and cities can find out diversified livelihood opportunities of different income levels. So the poor class people of villages consider migration as a livelihood coping strategy. On the other hand, many people also migrate from villages with a view to achieving the opportunities of better/higher education, employment and investment. The notion that after migration poor people can improve their position and lead a happy, healthy and solvent life by reducing poverty is not true in most cases. In most cases migration only changes the form of poverty; rural poverty turns into urban poverty.

Therefore, the paper reviews the different theories of migration which explore the major determinants of rural urban migration and then reviews the relevant literature about the rural urban migration of Bangladesh.

2. Theories of Migration

Explanations on migration theories are extensively discussed in the literature. There are many theories on migration that are complements to each other and also there is no unique theory which can explain all reason about internal migration. On the other hand, most of the theories are leveled as either push or pull theories by economists. They explain the factors which force an individual to leave a region or attract a person into a region. The idea of push-pull theory was first established by Ravenstein in 1885 who suggested that among push and pull factors,

pull factors were more important. Lee (1996) has divided the forces influencing migrant perception into negative and positive factors. Negative (push) factors including, the difficulties in rural areas such as poverty, unemployment, and land shortage are driving forces that urge the rural people to leave their homeland to find a new place to settle and to work. These push factors are basic factors which induce migration. The positive (pull) factors refer to job or income opportunities outside the homeland, which are so attractive that people want to achieve them. Lee assumes migrations mostly is a result of a combination of both push and pull factors.

Ravenstein in Weeks (2008:p 272) specifies that, “oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings, and even compulsion, all have produce and are still producing currents of migration, but none of this currents can compare in volume with that which arises from the desire inherent in most men to “better” themselves in material respects”. In this way Ravenstein specifies that the people voluntarily migrated because of the aspiration to get forward more than the desire to get away from unhappy situation. On the other hand, Davis (1963) in Weeks (2008) disputes that this is not the desire to run away from poverty but the search of happiness or the panic of social slippage.

The social science model specifies that the decision for migration is depending on a cost benefit calculation which suggests that people leave their native village when the benefits exceed the cost. Lee (1966) in Weeks (2008: p273) suggests that there might be some intervening obstacles between wish to move and the concrete decision to do so. There are also two other migration categories, step migration and chain migration, which help to determine where migrants go. In step migration, people try to reduce the risk of their decision about movement by kind of inching away from home. For example, first the rural people may possibly walk to a nearby small town, from there to a bigger city and perhaps ultimately to a huge metropolis. On the other hand, chain migration also reduces risk by relating migrants to a reputable flow from a familiar origin to a predetermined goal where priori migrants have by now scoped out the circumstances and set the ground work for the new arrivals which is very similar to network theory (Weeks, 2008: 281).

Rural-urban migrants tend to be attracted by the new facilities in the town. This can be explained by bright city lights theory. According to this theory bright city lights attract the rural young people because of media and the stories of former migrants about entertainment patterns of type of urban life. This theory argues that rural dwellers are naively curious and attracted to the adventure of city life and largely unaware of the social problems they will encounter once they settled in the urban area. However, practically many studies have not proved this theory. But a super example of bright city lights theory is Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. All kinds of civic amenities like gas, electricity, water supply are decorated there to attract the rural people. Legally or illegally almost every slum dweller has a gas and

electricity connection. Though they cannot afford to have good foods, they have a TV set with dish connection. These types of civic amenities and entertainments are not available in remote rural areas. Eventually, all people are tending to the Dhaka. The total city population of Dhaka was 3440147 in 1981 and 14543124 in 2011 (UNFPA 2011). The corresponding population level of the city of Kolkata was 9194000 in 1981 and 14112536 in 2011 (UNFPA 2011). So, Dhaka city has grown faster than Kolkata. A large number of people can go back to their villages from Kolkata after completing their respective works because of good communication system in Kolkata. And civic amenities are also available throughout the rural areas of Paschim Banga.

Weeks (2008) specifies that there are various theories that explain the contemporary pattern of migration. Every theory is carried out in various ways around by the existing evidence. So, migration is a very numerous and complex process, and there is no general agreement among researchers about migration but all of the theory could add something to the understanding of migration.

Here, I am going to discuss the theories that explain causes of migration and social and economic factors with their effects. I have divided theoretical discussion on migration into three categories: the theory of migration in the context of neo-classical equilibrium, the new economic theory of migration and the network theory which are mostly applicable and useful for explaining the internal migration. It is noted that the neo-classical theory and the economic theory of migration relate to making decision about voluntary migration of individuals or households.

2.1 Theory of Migration in Neo-classical Equilibrium Perspective

Theory based on neo-classical economics treat migration as a component of rational markets tending towards equilibrium, driven by the (rational) economic decision making of individual migrants and/or their household. The migration theory in the context of neo-classical equilibrium works on both the micro level and macro level. At the macro level, neo-classical economic theory explains migration by geographical differences in the supply and demand for labor. The resulting differentials in wages cause workers to move from low-wage, labor-surplus region to high wage, labor-scarce region. At the micro level, neo-classical migration theory views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move on the basis of a cost benefit calculation. Assuming free choice and full access to information, they are expected to go where they can be the most productive, that is, are able to earn the highest wages. This capacity obviously depends on the specific skills a person possesses and the specific structure of labor market.

Neo-classical migration theory sees constituent part of the whole development process, by which surplus labor in the rural sector supplies the workforce for the urban industrial

economy (Lewis, 1954). According to Lewis' theory, subsistence areas referring to rural- the agricultural sector where the labor force is suffering from unemployment and underemployment, and modernized areas – the industrial sectors where many employment opportunities are being generated and are also suffering from a labor shortage (Lall, Selod and et al., 2006). Under this circumstance, the surplus labor in rural sectors will supplement the labor shortage in urban sectors, and in this way rural-urban migration begins. Lewis' theory is criticized by some scholars. In the late 1960s, urban areas created high levels of unemployment, hence this theory might not tell the right story about rural-urban migration.

Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) elaborate the basic two sector model of rural-urban labor migration. This influential “Harris-Todaro model” has remained the basis of neo-classical migration theory since then. The original model is developed in order to explain the apparently contradictory phenomenon of continuing rural-urban migration in developing countries despite rising unemployment in cities. The model is born out of discontent with vague and “amorphous explanation such as the “bright lights” of the city acting as a magnet to lure peasants into urban areas”(Harris and Todaro, 1970). Harris and Todaro argue that, in order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to modify and extend the simple wage differential approach by looking “not only at prevailing income differential as such but rather at the rural to urban “expected” income differential, i.e., the income differential adjusted for the probability of finding an urban job”(Todaro, 1969). The expected income in the destination area not only depends on the actual or average earnings at the destination, but also on the probability of employment.

However, this model is also criticized by many authors. This model only explains the static problem, but migration is a dynamic phenomenon by nature. The assumption they have made on workers either employed in the manufacturing sector or unemployed has been criticized stating that unemployment could also be interpreted as underemployment in the informal sector. Furthermore, the assumption on migration led by expected income may overlook that migration can occur even when the urban expected income is below the rural income.

2.2 New Economic Theory of Migration

Neo-classical theory is based on the maximization of individual wages or incomes but the new economic theory is different. In this theory, migration is a result of letdown in capital markets which either don't exist or inadequate. According to this theory, people set up their decisions for the betterment of their household to conquer credit barriers. Continuing interaction between migrants and rural households suggests that a joint household model would be more appropriate than an individual-level model of migration decision. This theory also states that migrants try to reduce the risk rather than just enhance income. By this theory people subsidize their journey to decrease the risk inherent in societies with weak institutions

like no unemployment insurance, no welfare, no bank from where people expect financial support and well being for their household economy (Weeks, 2008).

Rural–urban migration can also be looked at as a family migration which emphasizes migration of a family member as a way to diversify the risk associated with family earnings in the absence of rural insurance market and or when income diversification opportunities in rural areas are scarce (Stark and Levhari, 1982 cited in Lall, Selod and et al., 2006: 22). Furthermore, Stark and Lucas (1988) add that migration of a family member can result from a cooperative arrangement struck between the migrants and his family. This theory better explains the households' and individual behavior than the neo-classical theory.

If the members of a family work in different fields then the risk of the total security and wealth of the family are reduced because of sickness or death of one of the workable family members. This is the developing and agricultural world insurance policy while they curve up the net optimistic returns from migration (Bloom et al., 1985:175; Massey et al., 1993: 436). Every household tries to improve their income and wealth compared with others. Wage differences are not essential for migration in this purpose but it will also be certain extent frustrations of not having superior income to go with the wealth of families that Bloom refers as relative deprivation (Bloom et al., 1985:439).

2.3 Network Theory of Migration

Previous theories portray wage differences and income diversification as key determinants of rural-urban migration in a developing country. Network theory specifies that having a family member already migrant or having migrant friend significantly increases the probability of migration for other family members. Migration network theory emphasizes that migration is embedded in political, ethnic, familial and communal relationships, including complex social networks and relationships, that strengthen collective agency migrants and their communities, and that influences and mediates the dynamic interaction between structure and agency in migration processes (Gold,2005;Castles, 2008; de Haas,2008).

Massey et al. (1993: p 449) in weeks (2008: 283) explains in network theory, migrants set up interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. This theory states about peoples' social networks, that is, when individuals know people from the community who have migrated earlier, i.e. they have relatives or associates to the specific area then they are more likely to get interested to migrate there, because it decreases their psychological and financial cost as well as increases social security (Castles et al., 1998: 26). Migrants are a floating population, so, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation and for providing psychological support and continuous social and economic

information (Vertovec, 2002). Social networks often guide migrants into or through specific places and occupations and provide support when they face uncertain risk.

3. Migration Studies in Bangladesh and Elsewhere

Migration is a favorite topic of research in the developing countries like Bangladesh. Migration studies in different regions of developing countries have in general dealt with the economic aspect of migration. However, majority of these studies have dealt with the differentials and determinants of migration focusing mainly on causes and consequences of migration (;Afsar, 2000;Hugo,1991;McInnis, 1971; Mehta and Kohli, 1993; Selvaraj and Rao, 1993; Stoeckel et al., 1972; Wintle, 1992; Yadava, 1988). Here, I am trying to discuss from the previous literature about the background information on rural-urban migration and its socio-economic consequences.

The census data of Bangladesh is not sufficient to study the causes and consequences of migration because only some information about place of birth is available in the census schedule. As a result, most knowledge of migration is based on small sample surveys or micro level studies.

Rural-urban migration has influenced the poverty and the livelihood conditions as well as health status and life style of migrants. There is a two way relationship between migration and poverty. Skeldon (2002) views migration as 'creator and product of poverty'. Afsar (2003a) states her study that the situation of garments factory workers also provides the evidence between the link of migration and poverty. Different studies showed that 80% people have been able to reduce poverty through earning money who had no income before migration. Indirectly, migration has contributed to some extent in development of rural areas. Rahman et al. (1996), in their study, show that the headcount index of poverty is double compared with the non migrant household.

But Herrmann and Sverin (2009) have some different views in this regard. They state in their study that, the accelerated rate of migration from rural to urban areas in Bangladesh has been associated with a redistribution rather than a reduction of poverty. They also mention that, household base poverty estimates show that between 1996 and 2004, the part of the population in rural areas living below the national poverty line had decreased by 2% (from 55% to 53%), whereas in urban areas it had increased by 8% (from 29% to 37%). Finan (2004) shows in his study that the momentary migration is a regular livelihood strategy for the poor people in the southeast Bangladesh but its ability is limited to get them out of the poverty.

One of the major reasons of rural-urban migration is the year-long lack of employment in rural areas. Afsar and Baker (1999) have been able to find that two-fifth of the families of Faridpur and Rajbari faced lack of employment. It has also been found in their article that

these migrants became able to improve their condition. Migrants are not always able to make better income or reduce poverty; it largely depends on the nature of migration, the kind of physical, human and social capital of migrants, over and above the economic prospects both at the place of origin and the place of destination. Blackburn (2010) shows in his study that; income is an important factor to take decision about internal migration in the US. Glaseser et al. (2001) in Blackburn (2010) suggest that the local consumption attributes and lower transportation costs are also important factors to take decision about the location.

In order to improve lifestyle and livelihood, the poor women of villages, faced with the pressure of extreme poverty and lack of social security, migrated to urban areas and worked as domestic worker or construction worker before the establishment of garments sector. Then the rate of migration of women was low. When the garments sector extended young women force got easy access to labor market and started migrating. However, the demand for domestic worker in urban families is always high. In order to support household works and for childcare in upper and middle class families, the demand for domestic workers is created because of lack of institutional support and the rapid increase of the number of nuclear family. Previous literatures suggest that the male members of the families of Bangladesh are always a prevailing variable to find out the scenery and types of migration. Afsar (2002) and Kuhn (2000) have presented in their study how an adult male member of Bangladesh assists for internal or international migration. Rogaly and Rafique (2003: p 679) mention in their study that when husband migrates to a single earner household, wife combats different kinds of problem. They specify, "When men migrate, women in single-earner household must adjust their own behavior as a part of their investment in the social relations through which they access credit and other forms of support during their husband's absences".

Bangladesh is among the countries most affected by the prospects of climate change and by environmental pressure. In recent years, one of the main causes of rural-urban migration is vulnerable ecology. Hossain, Khan and Seeley (2003) show in their study that, seasonal migration is an important life strategy for those poor households who are affected by various natural disasters. Rogaly and Rafique (2003) find that seasonal migration is more common livelihood strategy in West Bengal among the poorest people who are usually most affected by natural disaster. In general, though a demand for agricultural labor prevail during four seasons when paddy is planted, laborers remain unemployed during the rest of the time of the year which accelerate seasonal migration. A large number of rickshaw pullers embark on regular journeys to village during the harvest season from Dhaka city (Majumder et. al, 1996). Rural-rural seasonal migration is also there so that the rural people affected by vulnerable ecology go to better location, can get more land for the production of staple food. Therefore migration set off by ecological vulnerability especially by floods (Afsar and Baker, 1999). From Kuhn (2000) study, Matlab thana in Bangladesh suggest that the seasonal migration

turn to permanent migration when the social ties are weak and the family do not have labor force to contribute in seasonal migration and also insist people those have networks in their migrated places. They help them to get into the labor market easily. Barbieri, F.A (2007) briefly discuss about the relationship among the recent pattern of migration, development and environmental change in the Amazon which have radically changed people's livelihoods and welfare.

Herrmann and Svarin (2009) state their study that the increasing frequencies of natural hazards which explain the weak development of agricultural sector and the recurrent threat to food security are principle reason for accelerate rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. Another important reason is positive development and higher earning potential in non-agricultural sectors. They also state that on the one hand a relatively weak agricultural development, which has been attributable to the recurrence of natural disasters like flood, storm, heavy rainfall, drought, river erosion etc. enforce people to search for employment opportunities outside agriculture on the other hand, a relatively strong development of the non-agricultural sectors, which has due to the expansion of the textile industries have enable many people to find employment in the non-agricultural sector. They also find that most of the urban migrant people are deprived of pure drinking water and proper sanitation facilities. At last they suggest that in order to prevent further rural-urban migration and the loss of labor force in agricultural sector Bangladesh needs to increase agricultural productivity so that it can provide better employment and higher wage opportunities.

Afsar (2000) has broadly discussed about the causes, consequences and challenges of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. She finds in her study that three-quarter of temporary migrants reported job search was the prime reason for their migration as opposed to one-fifth of permanent migrants. She mentions that through rural-urban migration create better and standard level of education facilities for the children of non-poor and non-slum households; it cannot create such facilities well for the children of poor and slum households. On the other hand, being deprive of modern urban facilities the migrants who are poor and slum dwellers are leading an inhuman life in unhealthy environment. She also mentions that permanent migrants and their spouses are found to be more progressive than temporary migrants. Similarly fertility decline remarkably with longer stay in the city and higher level of education of the spouses.

In Bangladesh, land is a very important aspect under the perspective of migration. The landless people take their migration decision more often than the landowners. The family those have land be able to manage the damage by natural disasters like periodic rain, flooding, drought, river erosion, land slide, soil erosion etc. but the landless households cannot handle the resultant effects (Kuhn, 2000). Hossain (2001) finds out in his study that people who had land properties above 50 decimals have more tendency to migrate than those who have land

properties of 50 decimals or below (6 to 50 decimals). The reason is that those who have comparatively more properties are not much involved in firm activities they like to be involved in labor market. On the other hand, as the landless people have not many choices they become permanent migrants. That is, the relation between land ownership and migration is not clear-cut.

Amin (2010) estimates the pattern of inter-regional migration in Bangladesh and the determinants associate with migration by regression analysis. He finds that about 57.7% of the respondents are unemployed before migration where as only 38.4% are unemployed after migration. He also finds that 69.2% of the migrants move Dhaka city for occupational purpose, 15.8% is for their educational matter, 53% for finding jobs, 31.4% for better income and 10.5% due to the transfer of their previous job. He also indicates in his study that the living standards of the migrants go up due to migration for some extent.

Ullah (2003) states in his study that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is explained by five factors; searching for work, landlessness, loss of income source, easy access to informal sectors, joining relatives/families. He finds that about 1,100 readymade garment factories in Dhaka employed more than 400,000 skilled and unskilled workers and around 8 % of migrants are influenced by information about obtaining a job in the readymade garment sector to move to the city. He also finds that a large number of migrant families living in slum and squatters move to the cities due to urge for a better livelihood.

Hossain (2001) does a study on 10 villages in Comilla and in his study, the rate of migration is found significantly higher for the people who belong to the age groups (20-24) and (25-29) years (about 13 %), followed by age group (30-34) years (6.8 %). He states in his study that individuals with higher education are more likely to migrate. He also shows that the rate of migration is observed to be highest (about 21%) among population who are unemployed and lowest (0.7%) who are engaged in household work/other. Among the migrants about 27% are employed in service/job, 16% are engaged as laborers about 10% in business, about 9% are engaged in studies. Over 38% migrants migrate due to poverty while another 30% do so to find out a better job opportunity. He also illustrates in his study that the risk of out migration is 11 times higher for a person involve in non-agricultural occupation than for a land-owner person. The rural-urban migration tendency is 2.7 times higher for households with 2-3 adult male members than for households with single adult male member and it is 19.3 times higher for household with more than 3 adult male members.

Getting education is another important factor for rural out migration. Different studies show that most of the higher educational institutions are situated in urban areas. So people gather there in study purpose. Akar (2010) states in his study that migration trend is always higher in the city neighborhoods which is rural areas but on the urban periphery in Turkey and migrants built newer squatter settlements on these undeveloped lands. This is because that these places

provide very good schools those who hold rich resources, urban facilities, very high quality of education and high academic achievement of students.

Weber et al. (2007) examine a subsample of the US Panel study of Income dynamics dataset for 1993, consisting of 701 household heads aged 25-64 residing in non metropolitan counties. By tracking the movements of the households between 1993 and 1999 and assess their poverty status in the latter year, they find out whether there are any difference in the poverty status of household that have migrated versus those that have not. They mention in their study that better educated rural adults are more likely to move to urban areas and access better quality jobs. They also find that, for people with an equivalent level of education, on the risk of poverty among those who are likely to move is no different to the risk of poverty among those who are likely to stay behind in a rural area. Probably this happens because rural populations in developed countries such as the United States tend to be quite wealthy.

In Bangladesh, most of the migrated people migrate to Dhaka and that's why most of the migration based researches have been prosecuted in Dhaka. Rahman et al. (2007) and Haider (2010) directed their migration study over Rajshahi, one of the largest divisional cities in Bangladesh.

Rahman et al (2007) state in their study that the maximum number of migrants (98.7%) have age more than 24 years and 0.2% migrants belong to the age under 20 years. They find by logistic regression analysis that place of birth, educational qualification, type of family and monthly incomes have significant influence on causes of migration.

Haider (2010) points out four types of causes of migration such as: natural factors, economic factors, social factors and political factors. The most significant natural factors are Monga (lean economic condition/seasonal food scarcity), river bank erosion, and storm. Here Monga is the classic 'push' factor affecting millions of people especially in northern part of Bangladesh. Poverty and unemployment are the most significant economic factors. He states that mainly poverty worked as the main factors of every steps of migration. Population explosion, social inequality and violence are in social factors. He finds that 54% migrants can fulfill all of their needs by migration but 46% migrants cannot fulfill their economic, social, political and other needs by migration.

4. Conclusion

In most of the developing countries have environmental, social, economic and cultural factors that play an important role in rural urban migration. Rural people in socially and environmentally degraded areas with low income and poor access to social services could migrate to urban centre to get a better livelihood and social infrastructure which are driven by urban civic amenities, urban culture and lifestyle. And the persistent migration from rural areas to a few large cities has serious impacts for the level of productivity, the state of urban

infrastructure and environmental conditions since, with migrants, cities grow faster than the capacity of the economy to support them. So concern should be made for reducing the disparities of rural and urban areas.

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