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## Exploring the Dynamics of Short-Term Migration among Tribal Women in Korba Chhattisgarh: Theoretical and Conceptual Analysis

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



**Authors**

**Sarita Sonwani**

Research Scholar

Department of Migration Studies

&

**Prof K. C. Das**

Head, Department of Migration Studies,  
International Institute of Population Sciences

Mumbai, Maharashtra, INDIA

### Abstract

*This paper investigates the complex aspects of short-term migration among tribal women, employing a robust theoretical and conceptual framework. The study draws upon sociological, anthropological, and gender-related perspectives to understand the experiences of tribal women engaging in migration, particularly in the context of Korba. The theoretical framework encompasses key perspectives such as Push-Pull Theory, Livelihood Diversification, Gender and Migration, Migrant Network Theory, Intersectionality, and Seasonal or Circular Migration. Through a comprehensive analysis, the paper aims to develop a conceptual framework that guides the interpretation of findings, shedding light on the challenges, opportunities, and unique dynamics faced by tribal women during their migration journeys.*

### Key Words

*Short-Term Migration, Tribal Women, Push-Pull Theory, Livelihood Diversification, Seasonal Migration, Intersectionality.*

### Theoretical Analysis of Short-term Migration

The theoretical framework is one of the most imperative aspects of the research process. The magnitude of theory-driven ideas and substitutes is emphasized relative to the collection of a topic, the expansion of research questions, the conceptualization of the literature review, the design approach, and the analysis plan for the study. The theoretical framework aims to present relevant theories that can be related to the investigation of the research questions of the present study. It also intends to provide an understanding of the fieldwork.

The theoretical framework related to short-term migration among tribal women can draw upon various sociological, anthropological, and gender-related concepts. Some key theoretical perspectives that can help understand this phenomenon include:

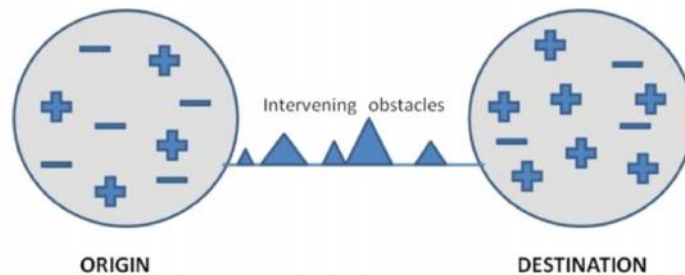
#### Push-Pull Theory

This theory explains migration as a result of the interplay between “push” factors (negative conditions in the place of origin, such as poverty, lack of opportunities, or conflict) and “pull” factors (positive conditions in the destination, such as better job prospects or improved living standards). “This theory is propounded by Everett Lee proposed a comprehensive theory of migration in 1966. He begins his formulations with certain

factors, which lead to the spatial mobility of the population in any area. factors associated with the place of origin, the place of destination, Intervening obstacles, and Personal factors.

“Lee suggests that individuals involved in migration have a near-perfect assessment of factors in the place of origin due to their long association. Another important point is that the perceived difference between the areas of origin and destination is related to the stage of the lifecycle of an individual. A long association of an individual with a place may result in an over-evaluation of positive factors and an under-evaluation of

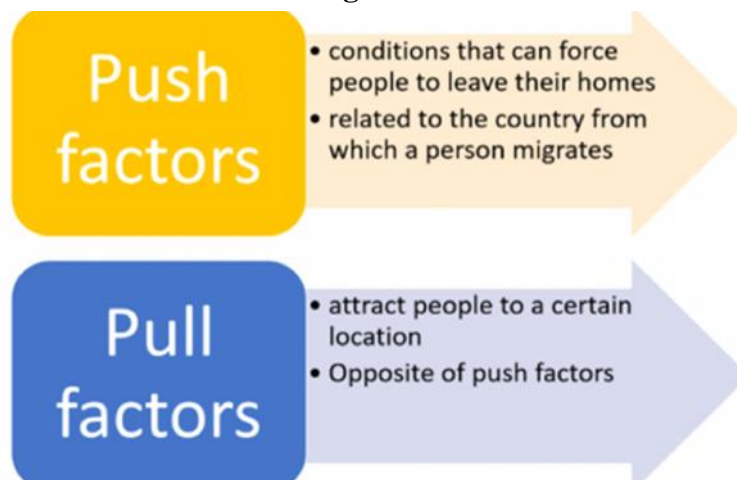
**Figure 01**



(Source-Lee, E. (1966). *A Theory of Migration*)

“Push factors are conditions that can force people to leave their homes and are related to the country from which a person migrates. Push factors include non-availability of enough livelihood opportunities, poverty, rapid population growth that surpasses available resources, “Primitive” or “poor” living conditions, desertification, famines/droughts, fear of political persecution, poor healthcare, loss of wealth, and natural disasters. Pull factors are exactly the opposite of push factors they attract people to a certain location” (Avasarkar A.,2012)<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 02**



(Source: Researcher Conceptual Analysis)

In the context of tribal women, push factors might include limited economic opportunities, lack of educational facilities, and social norms, while pull factors might involve seasonal job opportunities, better wages, or access to resources in urban or non-tribal areas.

## Livelihood Diversification

Livelihood diversification refers to the strategy of individuals or communities seeking alternative sources of income to reduce their vulnerability to economic fluctuations. “Ellis defines livelihood diversification as ‘the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and to improve their standards of living’ pointing out, rightly, that livelihood diversification is not necessarily synonymous with income diversification” (Ellis, F.1997)<sup>3</sup>. Livelihood diversification is an

important strategy by which rural people may work to achieve sustainable livelihoods, it is one that generally operates in conjunction with other strategies which also contribute to the formation of sustainable livelihoods. Strategies that complement livelihood diversification, are migration (often in itself a part of livelihood diversification) and agricultural intensification.

## **Gender and Migration**

This perspective focuses on the gender-specific experiences of migration, acknowledging that migration can affect men and women differently. Factors such as the role of women in the household, access to resources, and cultural norms may influence the decision-making process and experiences of tribal women in short-term migration. “The integration of gender analysis in migration studies first emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s with a conception of gender as an individual-level, static category determined at birth. Scholars have referred to this stage as the ‘add women and stir’ approach” (Hondagneu. et al.),<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, the Gender and migration perspective is a critical theoretical framework that highlights the distinct experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by men and women during migration processes. It recognizes that migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon and that gender roles, norms, and power dynamics significantly shape individuals’ migration experiences. Here’s a theoretical analysis of the gender and migration perspective. First and foremost, it defines gender Roles and division of labor as we know in many societies, including tribal communities, traditional gender roles dictate the responsibilities and expectations for men and women. Migration can disrupt these gendered divisions of labor, leading to shifts in roles and responsibilities. For tribal women engaged in short-term migration, this could mean taking on new economic roles and responsibilities both in the destination area and back home. Afterward, it looks at Gender-based vulnerabilities and risks that may differ between men and women during migration. For instance, women may face higher risks of exploitation, discrimination, and violence. In the context of tribal women, the lack of social support systems and unfamiliar urban environments may exacerbate these vulnerabilities. Additionally, it defines decision-making and agency means how Gendered power dynamics can influence the decision-making process around migration. In some cases, women’s decisions to migrate may be influenced by male family members, limiting their agency. Understanding the extent of agency tribal women have in deciding to engage in short-term migration is crucial for addressing potential issues related to consent and autonomy. Moreover, it also defines. Henceforth Remittances sent back home by migrant women can contribute to household incomes and community development. This influx of financial resources can lead to increased decision-making power for women within the household and foster empowerment in their communities. However, understanding gender-specific migration experiences is vital for formulating inclusive migration policies.

Policies that address the unique needs and challenges faced by tribal women during short-term migration can help ensure their well-being and promote gender equality. In conclusion, the gender and migration perspectives are essential for recognizing the nuances of migration experiences among tribal women. It highlights the need to consider gender-specific dynamics when studying and addressing migration-related issues, ultimately leading to more inclusive and gender-responsive policies and interventions.

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality acknowledges that individuals’ identities and experiences are shaped by multiple social categories, such as gender, ethnicity, and class. “Intersectionality refers to the simultaneous experience of categorical and hierarchical classifications including but not only limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality. Understanding how tribal women’s identities as both tribal members and women intersect can provide insights into the specific challenges they face during short-term migration. Intersectionality is a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of individuals’ experiences, particularly when it comes to groups that face multiple forms of marginalization or social categorizations. In the case of tribal women engaged in short-term migration, their identities as both tribal members and women intersect to shape

their unique challenges and experiences during the migration process. Here it is described how intersectionality helps provide insights into their specific challenges.

“Intersectionality allows for an understanding of how economic disadvantages intersect with gender and tribal identities. Tribal communities may face economic marginalization and lack of opportunities, and within these communities, women may face additional gender-specific economic challenges, such as limited access to education and job opportunities. Short-term migration might be seen as a coping mechanism to address economic disparities for tribal women” (Hurtado,2018)<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, tribal women face intersectional barriers in accessing resources and services both in their tribal communities and the destination areas. They may encounter challenges in accessing healthcare, education, and legal services due to their gender and tribal identity, leading to increased vulnerability during migration.

However, the intersectional barriers to accessing resources and services both in their tribal communities and the destination areas. They may encounter challenges in accessing healthcare, education, and legal services due to their gender and tribal identity, leading to increased vulnerability through migration. The intersection of gender and tribal identity also influences the kind of support tribal women receive from their families and communities during migration. Social expectations related to their roles as women and tribal members can impact the extent of support and resources available to them.

Therefore, this approach helps to develop more nuanced and targeted interventions to address their needs and promote social justice and equality.

## **Seasonal or Circular Migration**

Seasonal or circular migration is a common pattern among some tribal communities, where individuals, including tribal women, move to urban or non-tribal areas for short periods and then return to their place of origin. This cyclical pattern of migration is influenced by various economic, social, and cultural factors. “The regional pattern of temporary and seasonal labor migration in India assumes sharp focus when seen in the light of data from the 64th round of the National Sample Survey. The phenomenon is more prevalent in rural areas of the country’s northern and eastern states. This paper also examines the association between temporary migration and its determining factors, particularly economic status, landholding, and educational levels. It observes that there is a significant negative association between economic and educational attainment and temporary migration, both in rural and urban areas. In general, socio-economically deprived groups such as Adivasis and those from the lower castes have a greater propensity to migrate seasonally, which also reflects its distress-driven nature”<sup>6</sup>.

“Seasonal and circular (also known as cyclical, oscillatory) migration, has long been part of the livelihood portfolio of poor people across India (historical study of migration in Western Bihar, it is now recognised that migration is a part of the normal livelihood strategy of the poor” (Rao, U.1994).<sup>7</sup> and does not occur only during times of emergency or distress. Although panel data on seasonal migration in India are lacking, a “growing number of micro-studies have established that seasonal migration for employment is growing both in terms of absolute numbers but also about the size of the working population as a whole.

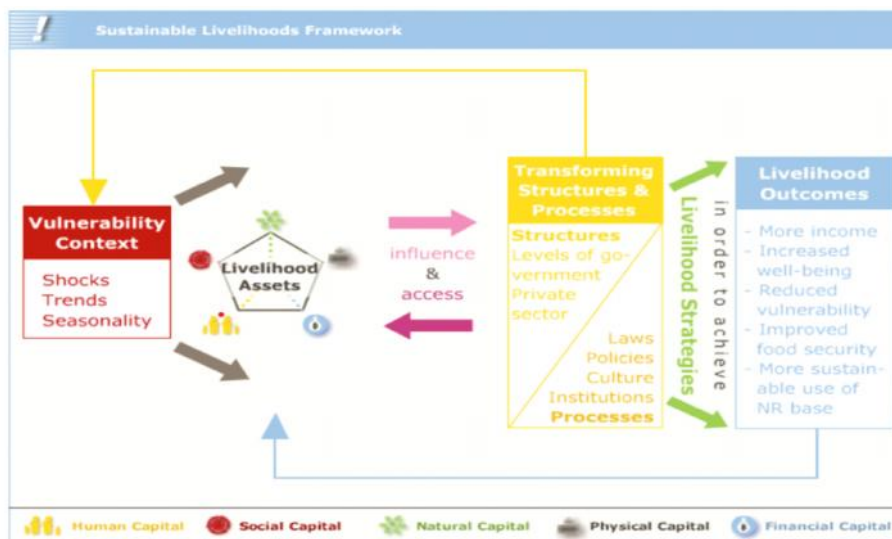
“According to the NCRL, the majority of seasonal migrants are employed in cultivation and plantations, brick kilns, quarries, construction sites, and fish processing. These ‘new’ economics of labor migration also recognized the household as the unit of decision-making according to the incentives and constraints it faces. “

So, these economic, social, and cultural factors that drive seasonal or circular migration among tribal women are essential for crafting policies and interventions that address their specific needs and challenges. It also highlights the adaptive nature of migration strategies within tribal communities as they respond to changing economic and social dynamics.

## DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and its Frameworks

“The household evaluation framework is based on the concept of Sustainable Livelihoods (SL), which dates back to the work of Robert Chambers in the mid-’80s”<sup>8</sup>. Since then, numerous development agencies have adopted concepts related to livelihood and have carried out various actions to link it to the effects of development projects focusing on action against poverty. This framework conceptualizes, how people operate within a vulnerability context that is shaped by different factors – shifting seasonal constraints (and opportunities), economic shocks, and longer-term trends and how they draw on different types of livelihood assets or capitals in different combinations which are influenced by “The vulnerability context, the range of institutions, and processes, and how they use their asset base to develop a range of livelihoods strategies to achieve desired livelihood outcomes” (De Stag , R., et al., (2002)<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 03**



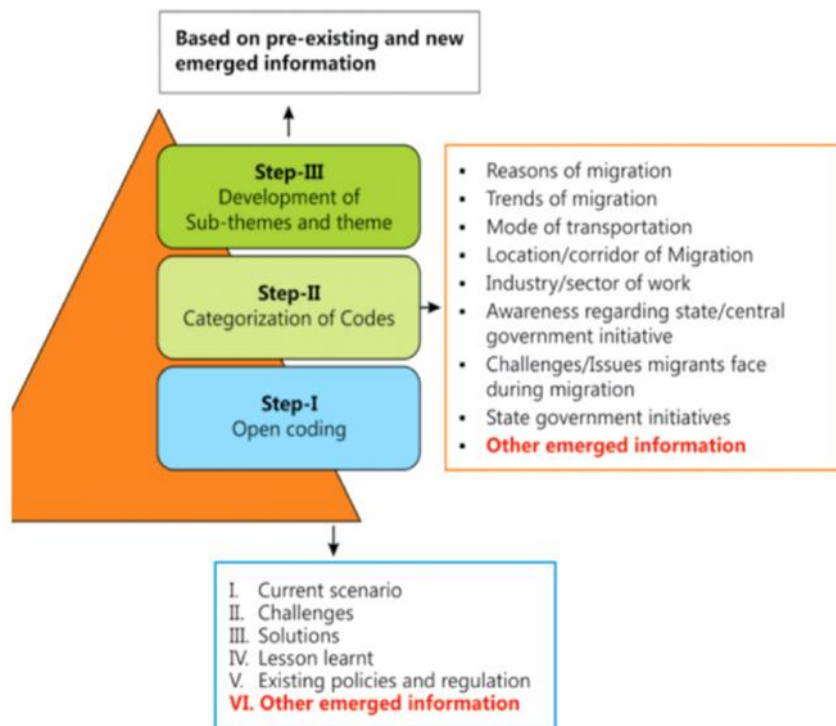
(Source: DFID (2000): Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets. Department for International Development)

The sustainable Livelihoods Approach in the case of tribal migrant women can provide valuable insights into the challenges they face, the opportunities they can leverage, and the potential interventions needed to enhance their well-being and sustainable livelihoods. It can also help identify ways to strengthen the positive impacts of migration and address any negative consequences on their lives.

## Conceptual Analysis of Short-Term Migration among Tribal Women

“Research in the social sciences is concerned with complex social behaviors, group dynamics, and unique human settings. Researchers have different patterns of thought and modes of thinking. As such, they often use different words to explain phenomena, thereby causing conceptual confusion. A study without a sound conceptual framework typically lacks focus, contains irrelevant theory, and suffers from weak methodological arguments” (Van, d.,2020).<sup>10</sup>.

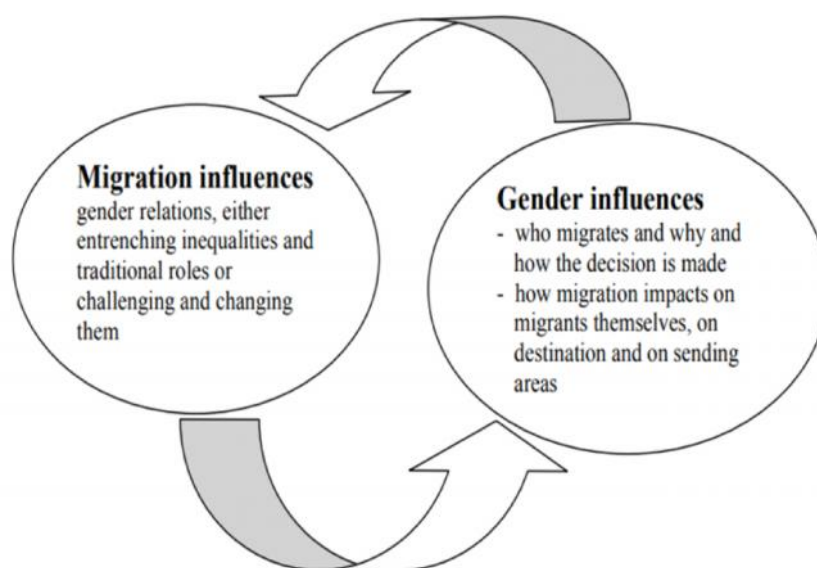
**Figure 04:** Depicting Data Analysis Process of the Study



(Source: Researcher Analysis)

Figure 04 depicts that in the present study how all interviews were transcribed verbatim to produce the initial set of transcripts. Moreover, these transcripts were crosschecked against the original recordings to produce the final set of transcripts. Additionally, the finalized transcripts were coded and sub-coded. However, the initial list of codes and sub-codes was used to find relationships among emerging themes and categories that were studied using memos, graphic representations, and conceptual frameworks through an iterative process. The results are compared and discussed. Therefore, the above figure explains the data analysis process conceptually

**Figure 05:** Gender and Migration



(Source: Researcher Analysis)

Despite the rising number of tribal female migrants, women are not given equal importance as compared to men in migration, since they are still not received as equal actors worthy of being accounted for. Thus, while viewing tribal women migrants as dependents, it may often ignore their economic contributions, and an analysis based solely on official figures would give an inadequate account of the actual migration flow of tribal women. The decisions of tribal women to migrate are informed by the twin forces of opportunities and constraints and are taken primarily by the family, and when taken independently, familial cultural and societal considerations have a greater influence. The exploitation of women by the money lenders and other powerful and dominant persons leads to a situation where the women are most vulnerable.

In the case of the situation where the tribal women migrate along with their husbands, the new area of habitation is an alien one with no established social nets. The tribal women are faced with the problem of child care, hostile host community, difficult working environment, lack of benefits, etc. In many cases, tribal women migrate several times to several destinations, which leaves them with no social security and network. Short-term migration which is temporary in nature and occurs under distress conditions are the unique characteristics of migration in Chhattisgarh. This type of Short-term migration in Chhattisgarh is found mostly in Adivasi areas. Unmarried tribal women migrating in search of work are a new face of migration from the region. Overall, the tribal female migrant workers are mostly illiterates from poor landless families who have no work in their village and have to migrate out for survival. The short-term migration pattern of these women is irregular who are not registered.

## Conclusion

Tribal female migration- both autonomous and associational that identifies variables particular to women is proposed. Thus, the associational migration of married women, generally assumed to be merely passive, accompanying migration may indeed be induced by economic factors. If the goal or motive of migration is economic betterment and/or status mobility, the divergence between the goal attainment strategies of male and autonomous female migrants is immediately apparent: for men, wage-earning employment is the sole avenue to economic betterment and status mobility for women, marriage provides an additional or alternative approach to the same end. Even where female migration is responsive to wage and opportunity differentials in urban areas, it is difficult in cases of family migration to ascertain whether the decision to migrate was based on the incentives for the household head (assuming the male head of household) or for women in the household. These difficulties in disentangling the diverse causes of female migration may account for the prevalence of two assumptions; (1) that it is mainly family or marriage migration and thus reflects male migration or (2) that it is a response to perceived rural/urban differentials in opportunities, it is unlikely to differ significantly from male migration.

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