



STUDENT MIGRANTS IN INDIA: A STUDY ON THE NORTH EAST STUDENTS IN CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present century India witnessed a tremendous increase in the level of migration of northeast youth, especially the student community, to the megacities of India. They migrated for different reasons and aspirations and face challenges in the new environment. This paper attempts explore the push and pull factors of students' migration to Chennai, the challenges faced in the new environment and their aspirations in life. The data for the studies was generated through structure interview schedule. I was analysed using SPSS and simple averages and percentages were drawn. Based on the findings the paper also suggests a solution to solve the problems so that the rich resources of the youth can be harnessed by their native states.

KEYWORDS

Northeast students, migrants, push and pull factors, challenges, aspirations

INTRODUCTION

Migration is the temporary or permanent movement of individuals or group (s) of people from one geographical location to another for various reasons. It has been an important area of study in social sciences due to its role played in economic development, social change, and political awareness. Because of its broadened scope and importance in various aspects of social studies analysis migration has become multi-disciplinary in approach.

Since the pre-historic times, migration has been an international phenomenon although there might be some differences in the types of migration at different times and in different regions. In the words of Lewis and Thompson, "Three factors probably determined in large measure the pre-historic distribution of the world: (i) the nature of the physical environment; (2) the techniques and tools the group had developed to make use of the resources found in its particular environments; (3) the social organization of the group." It also appears that in the ancient times since the river valleys had better transportation and fertile soil for cultivation the people felt attracted to migrate to the places which are near to the river valleys and lakes.

The modern trend of migration has its own characteristics. The trend has changed from just economic gain to building colonies for power. People gradually migrate to new areas provided it is not hindered by political and cultural issues. The volume of migration is influenced by prevailing socio-economic conditions at the place of destination and the attitude of the host community. Sometimes the social and economic security enjoyed by migrants encouraged them to invite their families, relatives, and friends to avail the same opportunities. The next stage of migration can be of the present day where usually qualified, competent and healthy people migrate in search of jobs and improving their life carrier.

During the second half of the 20th century, India witnessed a tremendous increase in the level of migration of people from rural to urban areas. The same century also witnessed the huge movement of Northeasterners to megacities of India in search of better prospects in life. The trend continued and peak during the year 2005-2010. Over 414,850 people from Northeast India migrated to other megacities of India during 2005 and 2010. It is 12 times growth from 34,000 populations in 2005 within six years. 66.35% of North East migrants migrated for higher studies while 35% of migrants migrate for employment opportunities (Chandra, 2011). There are various other reasons as well. They also encounter many challenges in the new city where they migrated.

The basic factors that have influenced the mobility of people from one region to another have been the uneven distribution of population, unbalanced utilization of resources, and variation in economic and cultural developments (Gutkar, *n.d.*). Besides these, natural disasters, lack of employment opportunities, financial crises, the influence of family members, availability of jobs, and easy access to the city's

informal economy are few specific factors that induce migration. Arora (1967) in his study of "the New Frontier Man: A sociological study of Indian Immigrants in the United Kingdom" subdivided migration factors into two parts-'push factors' and the 'pull factors'. The pull factor consists of the quest for a higher standard of living, better education facilities, etc. while push factors include the breakup of the joint family system. The reason for Northeast youth migration to the cities can also be studied under the two factors-the 'push factors' and the 'pull factors'. The push factors that push one out of the region are socio-political unrest in the region, lack of employment, lack of education facilities, defective or disturbed education system. The pull factors which pull the youth to the cities are employment opportunities both in government and private sectors, a better environment for study multiple with choice of studies.

Adaptation to a new environment is a big challenge for migrants. These challenges appear mostly in the form of language barrier, social and cultural gap, financial crisis, the pain of being separated from family, etc. In recent times the cities have become unsafe for northeasterners especially women. Unprepared they come, unprepared they faced and unprepared yet to face them (challenges). The way each individual spent their time, the way they mingle with the people, the motivation with which they do their studies, the problem they faced in the new environment are important areas that require special attention and study. The study will highlight all these issues.

The term 'migrant' is used when a citizen of a country goes and lives in another country. Under this meaning terming the same citizen of a country who goes and lives in another city of the different states within the same country becomes questionable. Given the fact that the North Easterners are citizens of the same country, using the term 'migrants' to them just because they moved to the mega-cities away from their region has been criticized by some individuals. However, scholars use the same terminology while defining the urban migration to own citizens. Anthropologist uses the term 'urban migration' to the same fellow citizens who migrate from rural areas to urban cities. Taking advantage of this concept, North East Indians living in megacities like Chennai are termed as migrants.

Overview of Literature

Human migration being an international phenomenon has voluminous study both at the international and national levels. However, the present study being focused only on North-East Students' migration within India, only literature reviews related to the issue are highlighted here. Majumdar *et al* (2015) and Gutkar (*n.d.*) examines the process of migration and its impact using migration theories; Reimeingam (2016) analysed the level and trends of North Eastern migration to Bangalore; Chandra (2011), Reimeingam (2008, 2011), Remesh (2012), Wouters & Subha (2013) and Aamareswaran (2017) put forward the issues and challenges faced by northeasterners' migrants to megacities. Among the push factors highlighted by these studies lack of education

infrastructure, unresolved socio-political unrest, slow economic development, high rate of youth unemployment, etc are visible. The availability of the opposites of the push factor comprises the pull factors which is true from the rate of migration highlighted by Chandra (2011) in which 65% of North Easterners migrated for education while the remaining 35% migrants are employment-related. The common challenges highlighted in those studies are discrimination in the form of social profiling and racism, human trafficking, difficulty in inadequate accommodation, cultural gap, etc. Longkumer (2015) specifically studied the reasons and aspirations of students from Arunachal, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland who studied in Shillong, Meghalaya. Kipgen and Panda (2019) studied about migrants and their networks specific to the Kukis in Delhi hailing from Manipur.

From the review of related works of literature, it was found that in spite of the limited studies on North-East migrants to megacities of India most of the studies dealt with the general trend on their migration and the challenges they faced in the cities. No comprehensive studies on migrant students, except for Longkumer (2015) which was a study limited within North East, could be found. The present study in a tries to fill a part of the gap that lies with the related issue. With this in mind, the paper attempts to study the causes of the migration, challenges they faced in different situations, their conditions in the new environment and their aspirations in life.

Objectives

The paper attempts to explore the demographic profile, the push and pull factors, the challenges faced in the new environment and the aspirations of the studied population.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive design and cross-sectional. It employs a multistage sampling method to select the state where they come from - Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland and from the educational institutions, they studied in Chennai three – Madras University, Loyola College and Madras Christian College were purposively chosen. The population of the study comprised of all North East students doing their degree and masters. Non-probability – a convenient sampling method was employed to select respondents from the selected institutions. A total of 70 respondents were chosen as samples. Since the exact number of students was not known a lot of effort was put in to get the highest number of respondents so that the samples could properly represent the studied population. The collected data was analysed with the help of SPSS and percentages and simple averages were drawn.

Results and Discussions

The section involves tabulation, analysis, findings, and interpretation of the collected data. The data collected was analysed statistically and interpreted for a meaningful conclusion and generalization on the whole population.

Table No. 1: Profile of the respondents

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Freq. (N=70)	Percentage
I	Gender		
	Male	39	56
	Female	31	44
	Total	70	100
II	Native state		
	Manipur	25	36
	Meghalaya	13	18
	Mizoram	15	22
	Nagaland	17	24
	Total	70	100
III	The present course of study		
	Under Graduate	22	32
	Post Graduate	48	68
	Total	70	100
IV	Educational Institute		
	Madras University	26	38
	Loyola	24	34
	Madras Christian College	20	28
	Total	70	100
V	Number of years in Chennai		
	2 years	46	66

	3 years	15	22
	4 years	6	8
	5 years	3	4
	Total	70	100

Understanding of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents helps the reader to acquaint themselves with the background which is an important factor in the formation of one's perception and attitudes towards them. The various variables studied here are gender, educational qualifications, institute, number of years in Chennai and the native state where they come from.

Gender is an important demographic characteristic that has very significant connections with many other variables in the study. The male respondents constituted a majority with 56 percent while the female respondents constituted 44 percent which is slightly less than half of the sample population. From the four selected states of North East India, the highest number of respondents was from the state of Manipur which constituted 36 percent, followed by Nagaland and Mizoram with 24 and 22 percent respectively and Meghalaya constituted the least with 18 percent. The respondents doing their undergraduate studies constituted 32 percent while the postgraduates constituted 68 percent. The higher percentage of respondents in postgraduates reveals that studying in cities like Chennai has opted more for higher education. This also links to the highest number of respondents that come from Madras University. The samples were collected from three institutions. Madras University constitutes the highest number of the respondent with 38 percent, followed by Loyola Colleges with 34 percent and Madras Christian College with 28 percent. The number of years of their stay in Chennai is an important variable to know their experience and adjustments to city life. Respondents with two years of stay in Chennai constituted the majority (66 percent), followed by the respondent with three years (22 percent) and a very less number of respondents with four and five years of stay in Chennai. These revealed that very few respondents did both UG and PG studies in Chennai.

Table No. 2: Push and push factors of migration

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Freq. (N=70)	Percentage
I	Education factor		
	Lack of adequate facilities	17	24
	Defective education system	10	14
	Lack of subject choice	22	32
	Inefficiency of faculty members	11	16
	Other reasons	10	14
	Total	70	100
II	Social factors		
	Problems of insurgency	7	10
	Ethnic clashes	4	6
	Frequent blockades and bandhs	28	40
	Drug abuse	1	2
	Other reasons	30	42
	Total	70	100
III	Reasons for choosing Chennai		
	Ability to get subject choice	14	20
	The place is conducive for studies	35	50
	Exposure to job opportunities	6	8
	No specific reason	15	22
	Total	70	100
IV	Who inspired you to choose Chennai		
	Parents Choice	22	32
	Friends	3	4
	Superior of the previous institution	6	8
	Own choice	38	54
	others	1	2
	Total	70	100

Unlike mainland India, where inter-state migration of college students primarily takes place because of a lack of educational infrastructure, inter-state migration of college students in North East India takes place due to a plethora of reasons (Longkumer, 2015). The reasons for migration are studied from two aspects – the push and pull factors. The push factors are those factors that compelled the respondents to leave

their native place and the pull factors comprise those factors that attracted the respondents. The push factors are studied under two main themes- education factor and social factor. Under education factors, the lack of subject choice constitutes the majority with 32 percent, followed by a lack of adequate facilities with 24 percent. The lack of adequate faculty members in terms of competency is also a major problem with 16 percent of respondents. The defective education system and other reasons not known constitute 14 percent each. This shows that the availability of subject choice is the main concern for many students. Under the social factors, 42 percent of the respondents have various other reasons not specified in the questionnaire while 40 percent of them said frequent blockades and bandhs were the reasons for them to leave their native place. This is expected as the highest number of respondents was from Manipur a state which has the highest number of bandhs and blockades. The problem of insurgency (ten percent) to some extent compels them to leave their state while ethnic clash (six percent) and drug abuse (two percent) did not have much influence on them.

The pull factors were also studied under two themes - Reasons for specifically choosing Chennai and the people who inspired them to choose so. Under the first theme, half (fifty percent) of the respondents said that they choose Chennai for its conduciveness in studies. About two-tenth (twenty two percent) of the respondents did not have specific reasons for choosing Chennai while another two-tenths (twenty percent) chose because of their ability to get a subject choice (twenty percent) respectively. Job opportunities that were expected by the researcher did not have many respondents with only eight percent choosing Chennai for it. Students are young mind need guidance and inspiration in their studies. Their reasons for attraction to Chennai were studied from the inspiration perspective. In contrast to the expectation of the researcher more than half (fifty four percent) selected Chennai with their own choice. This was followed by the parent's choice which constituted about one-third (thirty two percent) of the respondents. Friends (four percent) and superior of previous institutions (eight percent) constitute less than one-tenth each. Two inferences can be drawn from here. On the one hand, it shows that the students were able to make their own choice and decide what is good for them. On the other hand, it can be understood as a lack of guidance from the teachers.

Table No. 3: Admission related issues

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Freq. (N=70)	Percentage
I	Source of information of the institution		
	Friends	31	44
	Internet	22	32
	Newspapers	3	4
	Organizations	1	2
	Others	13	18
	Total	70	100
II	Factors for getting admission		
	Own merit	49	70
	Friends' help	10	14
	Reservation	3	4
	Recommendation	7	10
	Others	1	2
	Total	70	100
III	Most difficult moments in getting admission		
	Late from home	15	22
	Not knowing the places	31	44
	Lack of required certificates	8	12
	Lack of money	7	10
	others	8	12
	Total	70	100

Table No. 3 presents the issues faced by the respondents concerning admission in the institutions. This was studied under three broad areas – sources of information about the institutions, factors for getting admission and the most difficult moments faced in getting the admission. With regards to the sources of information the study revealed that nearly half (forty four percent) of them got information through their friends, about one-third (thirty two percent) of them through internet, less than one-fifth (eighteen percent) through other

means and a negligible percent got through newspapers (four percent) and community-based social organizations (two percent). The information through friends become the handiest and trusted one with regards to information about the admissions.

Factors for getting admissions studied the areas that helped the students to get admission in the institutions. The study revealed that nearly three-fourth (seventy percent) responded that they got it through their own merits, a slightly higher than one-tenth (fourteen percent) got it through the help of friends, while one-tenth (ten percent) got it through recommendations from various influential members, and a negligible percent got through reservations (fourteen percent) got it through the help of friends, while one-tenth (ten percent) got it through recommendations from various influential members, and a negligible percent got through reservations (four percent) and the remaining two percent got it through other means.

Admission time is a rush time and the seekers usually have face problems and tensions from various angles. The study showed that a lack of familiarity with the places constitute the most difficult moment for almost half (forty four) of the respondents, late arrival from home constitute a little above one-fifth (twenty two), lack of required certificates and other reasons constitute a little more than one-tenth (twelve percent) each and financial constraints constitute one-tenth (ten percent).

Table No. 4: Accommodation related issues

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
I	Types of accommodation		
	Hostel	36	52
	Rented house	20	28
	Paying guest	13	18
	Unauthorized accommodation	1	2
	Total	70	100
II	Main criteria for choosing the accommodation type		
	Cheap rate	10	14
	Distance from college	31	44
	Friends circle	1	2
	Environment for studies	28	40
	Total	70	100
III	Difficulties faced in searching for accommodation		
	Discriminated as North East person	11	16
	Not aware of the places and availabilities	31	44
	Financial shortage	11	16
	Language barriers	4	6
	Other reasons	13	18
	Total	70	100
IV	Satisfaction with the present accommodation		
	Highly satisfied	18	26
	Satisfied	39	56
	Neither	6	8
	Not satisfied	6	8
	Highly unsatisfied	1	2
	Total	70	100

Accommodation is one of the most important issues that migrants face in their new places. Table No. 4 presents accommodation related data of the respondents. The whole subject is sub-divided into four - types of accommodation, the main criteria for choosing the accommodation, difficulties faced while searching for accommodation and satisfaction over the type of accommodation one has.

Based on the data more than half (fifty two percent) percent of the respondents got accommodations in different hostels in the city, nearly about one-fourth (twenty eight percent) of them were in rented houses, nearly one-fifth (eighteen percent) were in paying guest type of accommodation and a negligible percent (two percent) were in unauthorized accommodation. Unauthorized accommodation refers to those people who stayed with friends without being known by the concern authorities/owners.

In searching for accommodation different aspects need to be taken into consideration. Some of those aspects enquired by the researcher were the rate of the type of accommodation, distance from college, friends circle and environment for studies. Almost half (forty-four percent) of the respondents searched for accommodation based on distance from college which is a very important concern for regular students. Two-fifth (forty percent) of them searched accommodation based on the environment for studies which is also a very important concern for students as their primary objective of coming to Chennai was to study. Financial concern was the criteria used by 14 percent and only two percent of them were concerned about their friend's circle.

Looking for accommodation in a place new to them put the respondents vulnerable to so many difficulties. From the data collected it was known that almost half (forty four percent) of the respondents face difficulties due to their lack of knowledge about the places and the availability of accommodations in the city. Other reasons not specified in the interview schedule were difficult for almost two-tenths (eighteen percent) of the respondents. Discrimination for being a northeasterner and financial constraints constitute less than two-tenth (sixteen percent) and language barriers were a problem for less than one-tenth (six percent) of the respondents.

From the types of accommodation, their satisfaction level was measured through five scale rating. More than two-tenth (twenty six percent) were highly satisfied with the type of accommodation they had, more than half (fifty six percent) were satisfied with it, less than one-tenth (eight percent) of the respondents could not say whether they are satisfied or not, the same percentage of respondents said they were dissatisfied and a negligible two percent said they were highly dissatisfied.

Table 5: Social life and related issues

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
I	Change of social environment		
	Accepted the change positively	53.2	76
	No care about it	15.4	22
	Given a change would like to change it	1.4	2
	Total	70	100
II	Relation with local people		
	Very good	11	16
	Good	28	40
	Neutral	26	37
	Bad	4	6
	Very bad	1	2
	Total	70	100
III	Opinion about community-based organizations of North East people in Chennai		
	It gives support	35	50
	It gives a platform for exposure	15	22
	Not needed	8	12
	It increased groupism	10	14
	others	1	2
	Total	70	100

Table No. 5 represents their opinion about the social environment they live in. Regarding their opinion on the change of social environment from the native place, absolute majority (seventy six percent) of them accepted the changes positively, while 22 percent of them did not care much about it and two percent of them said that they would prefer to go to other places if given a chance to do so.

The respondents were asked to assess their relationship with the local people through a five-point scale. 16 percent of them said their relations with the local people was very good, 40 percent of them said it was good, 37 percent of them stood neutral to the point, a small percentage of six and two percent said it was bad and very bad respectively.

Many of the respondents were registered members of the community-based organizations (either student or religious fellowships) in the city. Enquiring on their opinion about those organisations half (fifty percent) of the respondents said it gave them social and emotional

support, 22 percent of them said it provided platform for exposure, 12 percent of them were of the opinion that such types of organizations were not needed, 14 percent of them opined that such types of organizations increased groupism among them and two percent of the respondents could not give any opinion on the question.

Table 6: Prospects in lives

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
I	Aim in life		
	Higher studies in the present field	36	52
	Coaching for civil services	27	38
	Self-employment	4	6
	No specific aim	3	4
	Total	70	100
II	Preferred place of work after studies		
	Native state	25	36
	Within North East but outside the native state	7	10
	Anywhere in India	17	24
	Outside India	4	6
	Not decided so far	17	24
	Total	70	100

Table No. 6 presents the future aspirations of the respondents which comprise their aim in life and a preferred place of work after studies. Among the respondents, a little more than half (fifty two percent) aim at pursuing their studies in the same field, 38 percent of them aimed for civil services, six percent aimed for self-employment and the other four percent did not have any specific aim. Regarding the preferred places of work after their studies majority (thirty six percent) of them preferred their native place for work, 10 percent preferred to work within northeast but outside their native state, 24 percent preferred to work anywhere in India, six percent of them preferred to work outside the country and the rest 24 percent of them had not decided so far.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The paper profiles some pertinent aspects related to northeast students studying in Chennai. It profiles their demographic details, the push and pull factor for their migration, pertinent issues with their admission and accommodations, their social adjustment to the new environment and their future aspirations. The study shed a deeper understanding of northeast students who in Diasporas in various megacities of India in general and the south in particular. The demographic data shows higher numbers of PG students among the respondents wherein all the four states and the three institutions were taken for sample collection are significantly represented. The lack of subject choices and lack of adequate facilities; frequent bandhs and problems of insurgency constitute the major push factors while conduciveness of the place for study and availability of subject choices constitute the major pull factors. A high percentage (fifty four percent) of them made their own decision in choosing Chennai for their studies. In the admission aspects, friends and the internet comprised the major sources of information about the institutions; a high percentage (seventy percent) of them got admission through their own merits, and lack of knowledge about the places and being late from home were the most difficult moments faced during admission. With regards to accommodation, the majority were accommodated in different hostels; distance from institution and environment for studies were the major criteria when looking for accommodation; being unfamiliar with the places was the most difficult thing in searching for accommodation and all of them but ten percent were satisfied with the type of accommodation they had. Though there might be some difficulties with the change of environment the majority of them accepted them positively and cultivated cordial relations with the local people. At the same time majority feel that the community-based organizations of North East people provided them social and emotional support. Studies on their aspirations showed that the majority of them wanted to go for higher studies in their present field while a good percentage of them aspired to take coaching for civil services. And the majority of them preferred to work in their native states after their studies.

Raising the standard of education and providing adequate educational facilities can give opportunities to many northeast youths to study in their states and providing job opportunities can fulfill the aspirations of many to work in their native states. In doing so, the concern states can

harness the rich resources and energy of the vibrant youths and utilized them for the growth and development of its state.

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