# Social Networks in Migration

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## Abstract

The Valley of Kashmir is a key geographic and administrative region within the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, located in the northernmost part of India. Nearly every resident, especially in the Valley of Kashmir, continues to face a number of security concerns and issues throughout the year. This also applies to in-migrants. When it comes to commercial and industrial facilities, the Valley is essentially a blank canvas with a nearly pastoral feel. In terms of industrialisation, it is at the bottom. Even so, the Valley of Kashmir is home to countless numbers of in-migrants from nearly every Indian state and union territory. There has also been an increase in the number of in-migrants from 709,004 in 2001 to 1,146,368 in 2011, as reported by the Census of India. How the migrants reach and work in a conflicted zone is an important question and is widely missed by the available literature? The network linkages have played an important role in this migration process. Due to the conflict situation in Kashmir, all the in-migrants use information through different types of information sources available at both the origin and destination. Approximately 93% of in-migrants to Kashmir reported repeated migration, with a significant share in the 30–49 age group. Migration was largely facilitated through informal social networks—friends, relatives, agents, and even strangers—highlighting the central role of network-based information and support in shaping migration patterns. The article is an attempt to find these network information sources and their importance in migrant's livelihood strategies in Kashmir Valley and will be the first of its kind. There is very little information on migration and its trends in the Valley. The study has been carried out using well-structured, scheduled questionnaires in all ten districts of the Valley among in-migrants and local labourers. A total of 300 samples of in-migrants and 50 samples of local labourers, based on stratified random sampling, have been selected for the purpose of data collection through interviews.

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## Introduction

Migration of labour from one place to another is an important survival strategy and is a decision-making process. Migration has several economic, social and political impacts on the socio-economic life of migrants. The decision to migrate mainly depends on the extent to which the migrant is connected to ethical and social groups at home and in the terminus. Home network plays an important role in this regard. Migrant networks, as defined by Poros (2011), are

> interpersonal ties linking kin, friends, and community members in their places of origin and destination. But other kinds of social ties also exist for migrants. A social network is made up of individuals and organizations, often called nodes, which are tied together by different sorts of relationships, such as friendship, economic exchange, influence, and common interests.

Her work examines how migration processes influence the formation, enactment, and sustainability of migrant social movements, as well as their capacity for effective claim-making. Factors such as the selectivity of migration flows, the structure of migrant networks in the nations of origin and destination, and the patterns of movement between home and host countries play a critical role in shaping the stability and continuity of the networks involved in these movements and in their engagement with the state (Poros, 2008). Network is a source of sharing information about migration risks, security, job opportunities, employment structure, support system, etc. Network structures also help in establishing social values among agents and workers, which in turn affect migration decisions (Blumenstock & Tan, 2017). If network chains are available, the movement becomes easier, simpler and much comfortable. Migration social networks are used throughout by community members, family, friends, agencies, relatives and organisations. The networks may be strong among some while casual among others. According to their research, the average immigrant derives greater social capital from interconnected networks that offer social support, rather than from far-reaching linkages primarily designed for efficient information transmission (Blumenstock et al., 2023). Social capital refers to the benefits and resources that individuals gain through their social connections—such as trust, mutual assistance, emotional support, and access to job opportunities or housing. For migrants, especially in unfamiliar or conflict-affected destinations like Kashmir, social networks provide more than just logistical information; they offer a sense of belonging, reduce uncertainty, and enhance coping mechanisms. These networks serve as a form of embedded capital that migrants rely on to navigate challenges, find employment, and secure basic needs. Unlike large but impersonal networks that focus mainly on information flow, tightly-knit and interconnected networks

often deliver greater social capital by fostering trust-based relationships and reciprocal support, which are vital for migrant well-being and long-term settlement. Such interconnected networks have been found to be of greater importance during the survey.

Migration, driven by push or pull factors, often stems from poverty, insecurity, and limited opportunities. While it may offer better livelihoods, wages, and security, success largely depends on access to reliable information and support. Migration networks play a vital role—reducing social, psychological and economic costs (Nayan & Ullah, 2021), easing adaptation, and improving job access—though their impact varies by region and group. When informed by these networks, migration can help alleviate poverty, reduce exploitation, and enhance migrants' socio-economic conditions. Existing studies highlight how aspirations and capabilities to migrate are shaped by perceived geographical opportunity structures. The spatial patterns of migration offer insights into how movement is linked to achieving specific goals in both rural and urban settings—a dynamic explored in this article with particular reference to the Kashmir Valley (Haas, 2021; Schürmann et al., 2022).

Based on the place of last residence (POLR), the 2011 census data shows that a greater or lesser percentage of in-migrants from nearly every Indian state and union territory dwell in the Kashmir Valley. Unfortunately, no information is accessible (Turrey, 2020). There is a great deal of variance in the inflow of migrants in the various districts of the Valley since different migrants pick different places to stay. How do the migrants hear about the jobs in Kashmir, how do they come, where do they stay, and how do they contact the workplaces are the questions left blank by the existing literature and are answered by the current article.

## Pattern of Migration Networks

Migration and development are often used simultaneously, as migration has mostly resulted in livelihood development. The network linkages have played a positive role in this perspective. The networks in migration have been successful in shaping constraints to favourable conditions for positive development impacts of migration. The network linkages have helped in boosting not only the incomes of individuals but also of groups, communities and members of the family, especially in Kashmir Valley. Earlier, migration was largely limited to individual movers, with minimal benefits for non-migrants and limited remittances, aligning with the Neo-Classical Theory, which views migrants as atomistic actors focused solely on maximising personal utility. However, with the emergence of strong social linkages, the motivations for migration have evolved—shifting from purely individual utility maximisation to a broader emphasis on social relations involving households, families, friends, and communities. This also resulted in the increased diffusion of new ideas, knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial attitudes (Haas, 2010).

The connection between spatial and economic mobility in India is profoundly dependent upon the idea of movement by span. In the momentary seasonal

migration streams commanded by the more unfortunate sections of the Indian populace towards reaping activities and development work, settlements are rare, investment funds are constrained, obligations are high, and the financial returns of movement are low. As per Deshingkar and Farrington (2009), a spearheading scientist on Indian relocation, these movements are for endurance or methods for dealing with stress, while semi-changeless round movements through social networks are examples of accumulative migration. In light of broad field work crosswise over numerous parts of India, her examination indicated that, on balance, movement was a significant course out of destitution through business broadening. The verifiable proof of the Great Indian Migration Wave additionally indicates a similar conclusion and shows a positive role of linkages in accumulative migrations in the long run (Tumbe, 2018).

However, the role of networks becomes even more critical in contexts marked by conflict and instability, such as the Kashmir Valley. Unlike other regions where migration is often voluntary and economically driven, Kashmir has witnessed significant forced out-migrations—initially of Kashmiri Pandits and more recently of local Muslim households—driven by persistent unrest, violence, and human rights violations. This conflict-induced out-migration has resulted in both internal displacements within Kashmir and across state borders (Rather, 2013). The Kashmir unrest from time to time has resulted in growing hostility towards in-migrants. Additionally, the army's presence in the Valley raises many worries about intrusion and insecurity for everyone and makes it difficult to do any task. A number of atrocities have also been added to the history of in-migrants in Kashmir as a result of the conflict there. Mass fleeing of in-migrants was also seen many times. New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) helps explain why economically motivated migration from rural or underdeveloped areas (including parts of Kashmir not directly affected by conflict) may occur even when wages are not significantly higher in the destination. Migration, in these cases, is a deliberate household strategy to stabilise income, hedge against uncertainties, and improve long-term welfare. The CMIE (2018–2019) report states that the state of Jammu and Kashmir is ranked second only after Kerala in terms of the wage rates for skilled labourers (₹592.8) and unskilled labourers (₹337.4). In contrast, Cumulative Causation Theory, as developed by Douglas Massey and others, explains how migration becomes a self-sustaining process over time. Each act of migration alters the social and economic context in both origin and destination areas, thereby increasing the likelihood of future migration. For example, as more individuals migrate from a particular region, social networks expand, information flows improve, and the cost of migration decreases—creating a feedback loop. This theory is particularly useful for understanding how both economic and conflict-induced migration can evolve into larger-scale movements, even when the initial drivers (e.g., violence or poverty) subside. In Kashmir, for instance, earlier waves of conflict-induced displacement have created dispersed networks that now facilitate subsequent migrations, regardless of whether the new migrants are fleeing violence or seeking economic opportunity. Despite the drawbacks, the Valley has seen an increasing trend from 2001 to 2011, and migration networks seem to be playing a crucial role in this process. No doubt the wages in Kashmir are high, but migrants always have a feeling of anxiety and fear

and having family linkages and connections in this case is a great source of reverence to them. An important aspect of labour migration in Kashmir, as found during the survey, is its livelihood-providing strategy. Migrants in Kashmir are mainly from rural poor and disguised areas who usually come in search of better work and higher wages. Most of the migrants responded work and employment as the core causes for immigration during the survey. It clearly reflects that migration to Kashmir is economically driven that typically involves voluntary movement by individuals or households seeking improved livelihood opportunities, higher wages, job security, or better living standards. In such cases, migration decisions are strategic and often informed by access to social networks, remittance potential, and long-term economic planning. Network structures here tend to be proactive and well-established, offering support systems. Although several factors affect their demand in the Valley, skill level and experience are given more importance. As such, the unskilled migrant workers may be subject to economic and social marginalisation. They may be employed in dangerous, dirty and degraded jobs. Kumar (2014) also revealed that migrants are the subjects of human rights violations. They do not earn much and have a hard life. They do not have proper access to most of the amenities as they face problems in communication, language, culture, occupation and religion and do not meet the demand properly.

Hussain (2012), in a study of the migrant labour force in Kashmir, examined that migrants who are mainly from Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh do not have bargaining power. They are fragmented and do not have communication channels, and thus cannot bargain and are motivated only in self-interest. Although they are earning much resulting in a large outflow of finance from the Valley in the form of remittances, but their individual earnings are affected. Lack of skill and education is also affecting the demand for labour and makes them vulnerable to risks. Migrants in this context are frequently displaced without adequate preparation, and the network structures they rely on are usually fragmented or emergent. These migrants face heightened vulnerability, limited resources, and constrained mobility options, often relocating not out of choice but as a means of survival. But only a small number of migrants are affected, as most of the migrants were found migrating in groups through proper network channels. These migrants reported a positive change in their living and have more bargaining power. Hussain (2012) and Haque (2014) also observed a positive satisfactory change in life of in-migrants in Kashmir than ever before due to presence of communication and network linkages. They are sending their families comparatively more remittances now that their wages have increased. It was previously impossible for them to send their kids to school, but now they can. They can now build their own homes due to their increased savings and daily consumption. They have been able to eliminate the negative impact of migration on the supply of labour. The migrants having social networks get jobs earlier without wasting time, work in high-wage regions and are able to adjust others and bargain through information already available using communications. Most of the in-migrants in Kashmir came through established network channels. Table 1 provides information regarding migration networks in Kashmir.

Migrant social networks influence and reflect broader social and economic structures, shaping migration outcomes for individuals and households. Migration is the movement of either individuals or groups of individuals or both. Studies,

**Table 1.** Percentage Distribution of In-migrants in the Valley Based on Network Channels.

| | | Network Information | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Migration Through | | Migrants Using Network | Migrants Not Using Network | Percentage of Migrants Using Network |
| Single | 72 | 72 | 0 | 100.00 |
| Group | 228 | 228 | 0 | 100.00 |

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the primary survey 2020.

Bhugra and Becker (2005) have found that single people who move experience various anxieties that can affect their psychological prosperity, including the deficiency of social standards, strict traditions, and social emotionally supportive networks, acclimation to another culture and changes in character and idea of self. Whereas integrated group migration benefits everyone in the group and has a positive impact, even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, by revitalising demand for local business, bringing migrants of different origins together around work centres and diversifying the cultural activities for all. This also helps in spreading the good practice material among the members of that group (OECD, 2018).

Group migration has also been the main form of in-migration in Kashmir. About 76% of the immigrants prefer to move in groups. The main reason for group migration to Kashmir is the conflicted image regarding the region, as responded by the migrants. Most of the migrants who come in groups stay together at a single location. But if there are more members in the group, they prefer to stay at different locations in small groups to grab more work opportunities. Migrants also reported that staying in groups is more secure than individually, especially when you are staying miles away, and that also in a conflicted region. This also helps them in saving more money as they have to pay small amounts toward accommodation rents. Migrants also benefit from the groups by sharing work opportunities when there is a scarcity of work at some locations. The remaining 24% of migrants reported travelling to Kashmir individually. For most among them, it was not a new experience, as they had been working in the region for 10–12 years and had gradually built strong local network ties. Table 2 provides information regarding migrant experiences in Kashmir for the first time and repeated workers.

**Table 2.** Distribution of In-migrant Using Networks Based on Type of Migrants—New and Repeated and Age of First Migration.

| Age of First Migration | | | Type of Migrant | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | Number of Migrants | Percent | New | Percent | Repeat | Percent |
| 10–29 | 200 | 66.67 | 12 | 4.00 | 198 | 66.00 |
| 30–49 | 91 | 30.33 | 7 | 2.33 | 62 | 20.67 |
| 50+ | 9 | 3.00 | 2 | 0.67 | 19 | 6.33 |

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the primary survey 2020.

Table 2 clearly highlights that most of the migrants in the Valley are in the age group of 10–29 years, whose migration experience is new and repeated. About 66% of the in-migrants in this age group are repeat migrants who have a long migration history in Kashmir. About 20.67% of the repeated migrants were in the age group of 30–49 years, and the rest 6.33% were 50 years of age and above. Overall, 93% of the total in-migrants in the Valley reported repeated types of migration during the interviews. Only 7% of the in-migrants reported a new experience as first-time migrants in the Valley. Out of these 7% about 4% were in the age group of 10–29 years, followed by 2.33% and 0.67% in the age group of 30–49 years and 50 and above years, respectively.

A typical finding in this movement study was that people who move in an earlier period are bound to move in a resulting period than people with no earlier relocation experience. This example can be credited to the selectivity of migrants, just as the significance of involvement in affecting ensuing conduct. Migrants who were coming to Kashmir for quite a long time were less danger loath than non-migrants or the first run through migrants and have more prominent monetary portability aspirations. Experienced migrants in a few work environments were likewise more ready to adapt to the vulnerabilities and problematic behaviour, and along these lines are in a superior situation to attempt migration. In spite of desires, it was likewise discovered that both repeated/pioneer and first-time/adherent migrants were about similarly prone to have had earlier internal migration involvement with the time of their first trip to Kashmir. Around 90% of pioneer and adherent migrants had internal migration experience with different states before making their first Kashmir trip. Lindstrom and Ramirez (2010) have also carried out a similar study at a global level with almost the same results. Pioneer migrants, who are in a stronger position than arrivals or first-time migrants, are daring risk-takers with high hopes for economic mobility because they are aware of the job hurdles. Whether migrating for the first time or returning, migrants consistently rely on social networks to access jobs, navigate risks, and secure basic needs like housing. For instance, Andrabi and Amin (2021) provide a poignant example: 'Like Sah, 62-year-old Mohamad Hasbul, a labourer from Malda, West Bengal, looked distressed as he sat in front of a shop in Kulgam. The father of seven daughters, Hasbul has been coming to Kashmir for decades'. 'Last night, the villagers came to us and offered their houses. Some said, we will stay with you if you're feeling unsafe and that response dispelled all of our fears', said Talha and Azad, migrant labourers from Kolkata. Unemployment at the origin acts as a strong push factor, but established contacts at the destination ease the transition. Even those with limited skills or education find work quickly through these support systems. These networks, rooted in trust and shared experience, serve as lifelines, guiding migrants safely and efficiently into Kashmir's labour landscape.
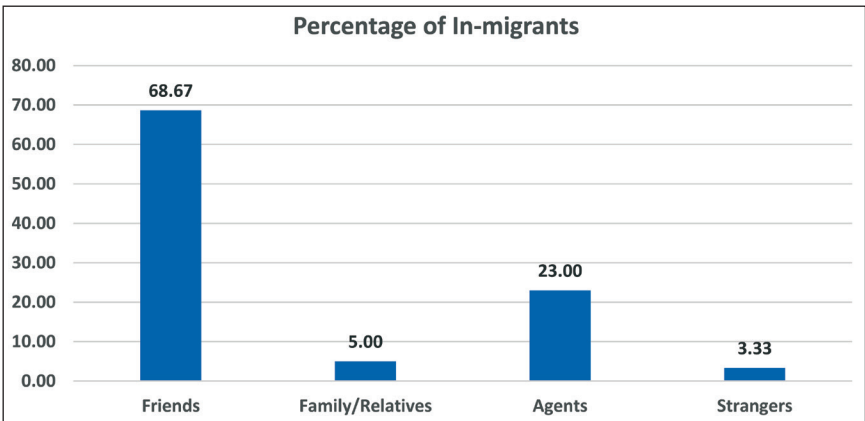
## Source of Network Information

During the survey, it came to the picture that migration to the conflicted region is enlivened by the way that organisations assume a significant part in finding work or being separated in the occupation market. Along these lines, if a network character goes about as an unfavourable (positive) signal, individuals from that

network ought to secure more (less) abilities and wages than the prerequisite for something important to make up for the sign emerging from their local personalities. However, the network signals are established throughout the migrants, as found during the survey, but it is still limited to selected regions and communities. The migrant interviews reflected that Bihar and West Bengal have mostly used the migration networks and have been successful in engaging their relatives and friends in different kinds of work. Many migrants from these states have brought their families also and are working together as found in brick kilns, cement factories and joinery mills (Nayan & Ullah, 2021). This is also a reason that most of the in-migrants in Kashmir are currently married status.

The migrant workers have come to Kashmir using different types of sources of information. Every migrant relied on some form of network for information, even in the absence of formal structures. These informal ties built through kinship, friendship, or shared experience served as essential guides in navigating migration to Kashmir. Even the agents are working informally. This informal network plays the entire role in the migration of workers to Kashmir. All the respondents migrated to Kashmir through information and help from different sources, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that four types of assistance are available to in-migrants in Kashmir Valley for obtaining information. These sources of network information include friends, family/relatives, agents and strangers. The figure also shows that migrant workers are the key providers of information. In-migrants most often relied on friends in Kashmir to obtain information. About 68.67% of the in-migrants reflect that they entirely depend on friends at home and destination for obtaining information regarding workplaces, work opportunities, wage rates, required skills, accommodation rents and cheap travel routes to Kashmir Valley. During the interviews with migrants, it was observed that most migrants who were from villages have maintained a cordial relationship with other workers at



**Figure 1.** Showing the Different Types of Migration Networks Used by In-migrants as ources of Information in Kashmir Valley.

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the primary survey 2020.

home and remain always ready to help their fellow workers. Migrants view their shared presence not as competition, but as a collective asset to their community. Yet, many choose to work at separate sites, valuing independence while still drawing strength from the broader social network. The second important source of information is informal agents providing information to about 23.00% of the in-migrants. This is the only source of information where migrants have to pay for obtaining information. However, this is not a responsible one and charges only small amounts from the in-migrants. Only a few migrants responded that they paid more during their first visit, but it covered their travel costs from origin to destination. The main reason for lacking agents in Kashmir is the conflicted image about Kashmir. The migrants reported that there are many agents who charge more, likely one-month salary, at home and other states and provide responsible employment at destinations. But when it comes to Kashmir, we have to look for social networks rather than professional networks.

Family members and relatives also provide an important role in providing information to migrants and are one of the commonly used sources by most of the migrants. In fact, type of assistance is considered the most relevant, reliable and authentic source of information (Meeteren & Pereira, 2018). About 5% of the in-migrants in Valley used family and relatives as network sources for information assistance in Kashmir. These include family members, family relatives, and kith and kin and are usually accommodated within the personal residence as found during the primary survey and also reported by Nayan and Ullah (2021). Another, but small source of information is other sources including such as strangers. About 3.33% of the in-migrants reflect this source of information. These usually include migrants who do not have any friends and relatives outside at destination, and neither can they pay, fund or hire agent services. They collect information from unknown persons who may have visited or not visited the place of work. These strangers only suggest the work and do not guarantee its availability of work. They might have heard it from anywhere, as reported by the in-migrants. But this source is not as prominent as one might expect. In general, sources of assistance past the migrant organisation are less significant wellsprings of help than sources inside the migrant organisation. The significance of sources beyond the migrant network depends on the type of support they provide. It is also evident that different sources, depending on their location (origin or destination), offer varying types of information, as illustrated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Distribution of In-migrants Based on Location of Source of Information.

| Sources of Network/<br>Information Actors | Origin (%) | Destination (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Friends | 69 (33.50) | 137 (66.50) | 206 (68.67) |
| Family/relatives | 9 (60.00) | 6 (40.00) | 15 (5.00) |
| Agents | 47 (68.12) | 22 (31.88) | 69 (23.00) |
| Strangers | 10 (100.00) | 0 (0.00) | 10 (3.33) |

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the primary survey 2020.

Interesting differences in information sources are observable at the origin and destination. Generally, in-migrants who progressed to Kashmir more often pursued information at destination (Kashmir) than origin. Almost 55% of the in-migrants sought information at destination, and friends played the most important role as information actors. The rest 45% of the in-migrants obtained information at origin mostly from friends, followed by agents. It is also important to see that friends as a source of information played a majority role at destination only, whereas family or relatives, agents and strangers have played majority roles at origin from where the migrants come. Strangers played no role at destination as all of them were found providing information at the origin. Family members and relatives are providing information with little differences at source and destination. These include return seasonal migrants who went back to home after every summer to spend winters at home because of scarcity of work availability in Kashmir during this season. But they return immediately after the winter season to grab more work opportunities. There are migrants who work throughout the year, but they are only a few in number. It was found during the survey that 92.00% of the migrants are seasonal workers only in the summers from March to October, and only 24.00% of the migrants were found working throughout the year in Kashmir. From a theoretical standpoint, this seasonal pattern, no doubt, raises critical issues related to precarity, labour market segmentation, and temporary integration and also faces instability consistent with concerns raised in labour migration literature about exploitation and vulnerability in informal labour markets. Although there are laws in place all over the world to protect the rights of migrant workers, most migrants are unaware of them, and they are rarely enforced. The absence of formal labour rights frameworks for these workers exacerbates their vulnerability, especially in a conflict-prone context like Kashmir (Hussain, 2012). Cyclical migration is driven by both environmental and economic factors. For instance, harsh winters in Kashmir halt most outdoor economic activity, leading to limited or no work availability. Conversely, summers bring high labour demand and better wages, especially in sectors like construction, horticulture, and tourism, incentivising seasonal in-migration (Turrey, 2024). When seasonal migrants return back to Kashmir for work, they make their all efforts to bring family members and relatives with them to work together. As the wage rates in Kashmir are high, this source of information helps boost family incomes within no time. When members of the family and relatives work together, they do not have to rely on others for group formation and distribution of income. Besides, those who are return migrants have knowledge about the work opportunities, wages, accommodations and places of work and thus do not face difficulties in finding work in Kashmir. That is why most of the migrants reported that this is the most authentic and reliable source of network, especially when it comes to household migration rather than individual migration.

The family or relational and individual network linkages are the most appropriate measurement, including the financial status of out-migrants and returned migrants, as contrasted with the status of potential migrants. Such micro-level aberrations in status are normally considered as a rousing power for movement. Effective migrants serve as good examples for yearning non-migrants,

as failed return migrants may lessen the stream or divert it to elective areas. In this connection, Boyd (1989) underlined that 'Family, friendship and community networks underlie much of the recent migration to industrial nations. Current interest in these networks accompanies the development of a migration system perspective and the growing awareness of the macro and micro determinants of migration'. Initially, migrants work on guidance provided to them by the information agents and after getting familiar with the local environment, they become decision-makers regarding their employment choices. This shift in agency is reflected in their work patterns: while many start with contract-based jobs, others engage in daily or task-based labour. Over time, as they gain knowledge about local skills, wage structures, and job locations, their employment nature evolves accordingly.

## Nature of Work: Employment Based on Network Information

Greater parts of the interstate migrant workforces who move occasionally looking for a business are commonly poorly educated due to poverty. A large part of the work accessible to them is manual in nature, or they are occupied with occupations that require insignificant abilities. In the best-case scenario, they are engaged in helping a skilled individual and gain proficiency with their abilities at work in the long run to deal with talented/skilled work. Many long-term experienced migrants are skilled and engage other workers as work assistants to form separate groups and work together. The migrant labourers arrive at specific destinations dependent on their sources, organisations, work conditions, expertise levels, etc. Industry may require explicit sort of labourers and they want to get labourers according to their specifications. However, many migrants who are already working in the industries and have established their base involve their new fellow workers on request also (Turrey, 2020). But most of the migrants were found working separately, forming their own groups. These groups are network-based and mostly from similar communities as found during the survey. There are various kinds of agreements that can be made between employers and workers at the destination (Jeyaranjan, 2017). In Kashmir, usually these in-migrants are absorbed in the informal sector at the initial stage. Their nature of work employment mostly remains limited to contract-based work. Besides, they get absorbed on a daily basis and in task-based work, also. Figure 2 provides information about the nature of work employment of the in-migrants using network linkages as a source of information.

When the data about the likely objective is accumulated and the choice is made to move, the following stage in the coordination is to search for work/employment. The rest of the facilities are almost already arranged by the fellow workers present at destination. Most of the migrants, about 62.00% were absorbed in the contract-based work. About 22.00% of the migrant workers were working on a daily wage basis, and the rest 16.00% were engaged in task-based work. Utilising the labourers in a roundabout way through the temporary contractors is the current pattern in Kashmir and is the most widely recognised one, as found during the primary survey. In fact, even well-organised modern units use contractors to hire a sizable portion of their labour force. For such businesses, a group of contractors
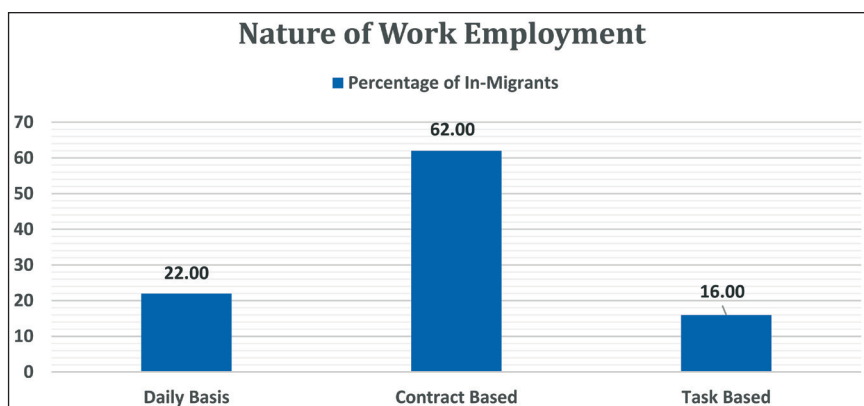
**Figure 2.** Percentage Distribution of In-migrants in the Valley for Nature of Work Employment Based on Information Source.

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the primary survey 2020.

flexibly supply the required number of workers. The employer and the real worker are not directly or immediately connected. The contractors receive the wages, and they either pay the employees directly or through lower-level middlemen. These contractors are a mix of immigrants and natives. At the same time, a contract is established solely between the business employer and the contractor. Neither the contractor and the employer nor the contractor and the actual worker has a documented agreement. The agreement is just verbal. The primary survey data collected shows that 100% of the respondents have stated that they do not have any written agreement.

The daily-base workers are those who mostly engage in self-employed work. They mostly do not work under the contractors but form their individual groups and work separately. Their bargaining power is more than those working under contractors, but they have to find the work themselves. They directly contact the work providers and employers and decide about the working conditions and wage rates. These workers, in turn, obtain wages as per the terms and conditions of the daily or periodic work and charge extra for overtime. The daily-base workers hesitate in doing contract jobs, as many of them reported that contracts involve risk and hard work. Migrants often work overtime, yet rarely receive additional compensation for the extra hours. The daily-base works are time-bound and easier, and we also get time to relax. Few migrants responded that they work with the contractors, but their wages are based on the number of days involved and not on the contracts, and there are also differences in the working hours of contract workers and daily base workers. As in numerous regions, the main admittance to work is through contractual agreements or contractors. Work is gotten by these contract-based workers on an everyday schedule or daily basis when there is a shortage of labourers working on contracts. However, the daily-base workers do not have access to regular daily work and have to compromise by living in small and overcrowded rooms.

The task-based in-migrant workers are fewer in number but contribute significantly to the local labour market in Kashmir. Task-based work is a

contractual employment arrangement between one employer and one or more migrant workers characterised by a limited duration or a pre-specified event to end the task. There is no fixed wage rate for these task-based works, and they differ from district to district and even within a district in the Valley. The task-based work is a type of very short-term contract ranging from one to two days only. The migrants in this type of work were mostly found working in the agriculture sector. Hiring workers according to a task-based working system has proved many times costly for an employer and the workers in the event of a dispute. The problem arises when the task work is not properly discussed and selected. A worker cannot demand additional payment if work beyond the normal hours is a result of the nature of the tasks that are not assigned to the worker, but is a question of the worker's own choice, miscommunication or inadequate skill. Importantly, it is important for tasks assigned to a worker or workers to be performed during the working time provided. Although the contract works may last long or finish early. Task-based work usually does not require any specific skills like digging of land, tunnelling of latrine trenches, cutting of grass and paddy, etc. Whereas contract-based works are long-term and require specific skills like cementing of buildings, construction of houses, etc., the daily-based works usually include assistance works like assisting a mason, carpenter, etc. These are the main types of work where the in-migrants were found working in large numbers from different states and union territories of India.

## Areas of Origin of the In-migrants

Social and economic transformations are ever-present in any society. Different societies have varying rates of growth. People move around as a result of these phenomena, differences between regions and societies, and this trend is growing. The Economic Survey of India (2017) estimates that inter-state migration in India was approximately 9 million per year between 2011 and 2016, while the 2011 Census places the total number of internal migrants in the country (representing both intra- and inter-state development) at an astounding 139 million. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the biggest source states, followed closely by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal; the main target states are Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala (Sharma, 2017). Kashmir Valley is also receiving in-migrants in large numbers. The 2011 census data reflected an increase from 709,004 migrants in 2001 to 1,146,368 in-migrants in 2011. A significant portion of Kashmiri society has been made up of migrants. They mostly come from Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and other Indian states (Singh, 2013). According to studies, the Valley's inflow of migrants primarily comes from underdeveloped and underprivileged areas, including Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. Although migration in India is mostly limited to short distances, migrants in Kashmir are from far-away areas travelling long distances, and social networking played a vital role in this process (Bhagat, 2011).

Based on POLR, the 2011 census data shows that a greater or lesser percentage of in-migrants from nearly every Indian state and union territory dwell in the Kashmir Valley. Due to the extremely low intake from certain states and union

regions, less than 10 migrants, such as Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Puducherry, that individually contribute less than 0.1% and consequently, these regions are not displayed here. These immigrants have been discovered dispersed across the Valley, coming from all around the nation. There is a great deal of variance in the inflow of migrants in the various districts of the Valley since different migrants pick different places to remain.

Table 4 gives an account of the in-migrant population from major Indian states and union territories in the various districts of the Kashmir Valley, with the exception of local intra-district and inter-district migrants within the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Despite the fact that the 2011 census data includes migrants from several Indian states and union territories, it has put most of the in-migrants in 'Last residence within India' category. These are in-migrants, no doubt from within India, whose original or last place of residence has not been clearly mentioned. This category alone occupies about 98% of the in-migrants shown in Table 4. No reason has been provided by the census, even on being asked, for putting these in-migrants in an unknown category. During the primary survey, I got responses from all the in-migrants regarding their area of origin from which they migrated. Only one or two percent of the in-migrants initially hesitate in revealing their regional identity, but when I revealed the purpose of my interview, they responded honestly. So, why the census has not categorised the in-migrants regionally raise questions on the authenticity of the census data.

If we look at the in-migration proportions from states and union territories only as given in Table 4, it can be seen that most of the in-migration has taken place from West Bengal, followed by Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These three states account for about 67.22% of the total in-migration, with West Bengal accounting for 35.84%, Bihar 16.53% and Uttar Pradesh 14.85%. However, it was found during the primary survey that most of the in-migrants were from Bihar, followed by West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The census data also put Punjab at fourth place with 5.24% of in-migrants. The bold values in Table 4 indicate the highest number of in-migrants in each district from various Indian states, providing a clear understanding of migrant preferences regarding their destination. A district-wise picture reflects that overall, Srinagar district has been the favourite place of destination for in-migrants from most of the states and union territories. Whereas most migrants from a few states choose other districts of the Valley as their destination, like most in-migrants from Bihar and Jharkhand prefer Kulgam district as their destination. Similarly, most in-migrants from West Bengal and Chhattisgarh preferred Baramulla as their favourite destination. Figure 3 provides an overall picture of the Valley in terms of the percentage of in-migration flows from major states and union territories of India.

The lowest number of in-migrants was from Manipur, followed by Goa and Chandigarh. These three states account for only about 0.56% of the total immigrants in the Valley. Although this is not the entire picture, as already mentioned. The in-migration trend has changed in the Valley from 2001 to 2011. The 2001 census data showed most of the in-migrants in the Valley from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Punjab, Bihar and West Bengal. Although these four states

**Table 4.** Distribution of In-migrants on the Basis of Origin, Place of Last Residence (POLR) and All Durations, Major States.

| Origin | Kupwara | Badgam | Baramula | Bandipore | Srinagar | Ganderbal | Pulwama | Shupiyan | Anantnag | Kulgam | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | Destination | | | | |
| Himachal Pradesh | 49 | 13 | 57 | 23 | 85 | 64 | 14 | 8 | 40 | 21 | 374 |
| Punjab | 55 | 39 | 99 | 39 | 291 | 92 | 57 | 18 | 94 | 53 | 837 |
| Chandigarh | 0 | 5 | 15 | 0 | 18 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 45 |
| Uttarakhand | 5 | 3 | 38 | 25 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 131 |
| Haryana | 29 | 29 | 64 | 8 | 126 | 60 | 33 | 7 | 53 | 68 | 477 |
| NCT of Delhi | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 290 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 302 |
| Rajasthan | 9 | 10 | 82 | 21 | 286 | 115 | 8 | 0 | 14 | 5 | 550 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 183 | 101 | 220 | 107 | 889 | 340 | 71 | 13 | 339 | 109 | 2,372 |
| Bihar | 182 | 160 | 208 | 84 | 491 | 160 | 118 | 196 | 471 | 570 | 2,640 |
| Manipur | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Assam | 20 | 11 | 26 | 8 | 73 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 9 | 161 |
| West Bengal | 596 | 922 | 1,090 | 440 | 1,009 | 147 | 523 | 221 | 555 | 221 | 5,724 |
| Jharkhand | 54 | 15 | 73 | 64 | 60 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 19 | 105 | 420 |
| Odisha | 7 | 39 | 30 | 6 | 39 | 0 | 2 | 17 | 4 | 22 | 166 |
| Chhattisgarh | 0 | 2 | 45 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 63 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 15 | 13 | 52 | 4 | 118 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 15 | 3 | 228 |
| Gujarat | 4 | 2 | 24 | 1 | 31 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 72 |
| Maharashtra | 23 | 18 | 88 | 12 | 139 | 6 | 12 | 2 | 32 | 19 | 351 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 5 | 14 | 54 | 3 | 65 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 18 | 5 | 175 |
| Karnataka | 13 | 6 | 35 | 8 | 64 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 16 | 27 | 189 |
| Goa | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 28 |
| Lakshadweep | 9 | 6 | 13 | 1 | 28 | 22 | 1 | 2 | 19 | 0 | 101 |
| Kerala | 2 | 2 | 14 | 11 | 51 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 90 |
| Tamil Nadu | 1 | 6 | 35 | 2 | 362 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 41 | 5 | 457 |
| Last residence within India outside Kashmir | 115,430 | 99,094 | 192,300 | 57,257 | 194,740 | 70,005 | 114,860 | 50,607 | 180,880 | 71,195 | 1,146,368 |

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the Census of India 2011.
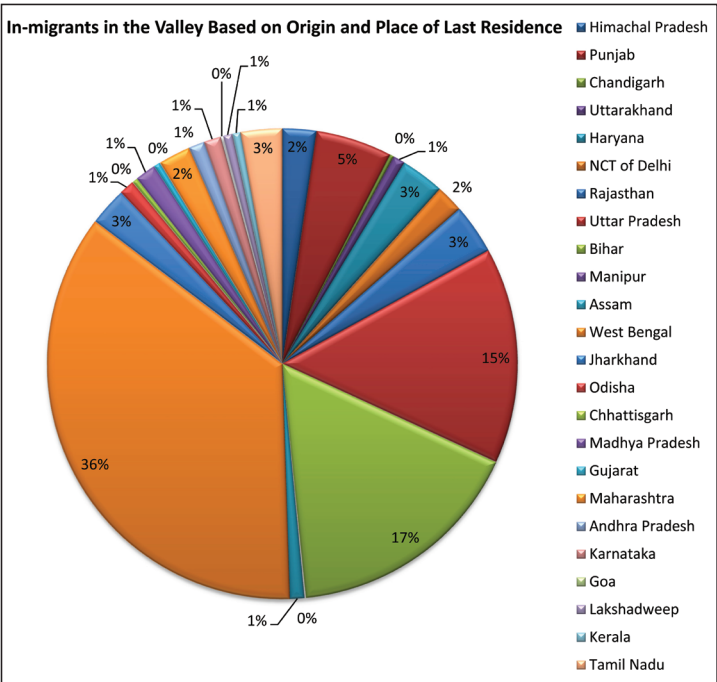
**Figure 3.** Percentage Distribution of In-migrants in the Valley on the Basis of Origin and Place of Last Residence (POLR), Major States.

**Source:** Computed by the author based on the Census of India 2011.

have maintained their top position in the 2011 census data, their contributions have changed, with West Bengal on top, followed by Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Punjab alone accounts for about 5.24% of the in-migrants.

## Conclusion

Despite low urbanisation, limited industrialisation, and the ongoing conflict, the Kashmir Valley continues to attract a significant volume of work-related migration. This phenomenon underscores the importance of informal social networks in sustaining labour mobility into regions that are otherwise marked by precarity and instability. Migration to the Valley has resulted in a range of positive outcomes for in-migrants, including livelihood opportunities and economic security, particularly for those from rural areas. The migration patterns reveal a clear rural-to-rural and urban-to-urban stream, driven largely by skill compatibility and spatial familiarity. Most in-migrants are repeat migrants who rely heavily on established social networks for access to jobs, housing, and initial support. These networks—comprising friends, family, agents, and even strangers—serve as critical sources of both instrumental and relational social capital, aiding in the navigation of unfamiliar socio-economic landscapes. From a theoretical perspective, the findings affirm the relevance of network theory and NELM by

demonstrating how migration decisions are implanted in societal relationships and are not merely outcomes of individual economic rationality. The reliance on social ties over formal institutions points to the persistence of informal structures in labour market integration, especially in conflict-affected and peripheral economies like Kashmir.

In terms of policy implications, there is a need to recognise and complement these informal networks with institutional support mechanisms. This could include developing migrant resource centres at source and destination locations, facilitating safe housing, ensuring access to legal aid, and providing skill certification for better job-matching. Moreover, gender-sensitive policies should be framed to address the specific vulnerabilities and contributions of female migrants. In sum, the role of social networks in shaping migration trajectories and outcomes in Kashmir highlights the need for migration governance frameworks that are grounded in local realities and responsive to the informal mechanisms that underpin mobility.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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# Appendix

### Field Questionnaire for Migrants

Date: _____     Schedule Number: _____

Place of Interview: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

## Section 1: Profile of In-migrants

| S. No. | Particulars | Specify | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Name | | |
| 2. | Age (in completed years) | | |
| 3. | Sex (male-1, female-2, other-3) | | |
| 4. | Religion | | |
| 5. | Caste (1. SC, 2. ST, 3. OBC, 4. GEN) | | |
| 6. | Current marital status (single-1, married-2) | | |
| 7. | Number of family members | | |
| 8. | If married, no. of children | | |
| 9. | Years of schooling | | |
| 10. | Vocational degree | | |
| 11. | Languages known (hindi-1, working knowledge of kashmiri-2, others-3) | | |
| 12. | De facto state and district | District | State |

## Section 2: Migration Networks and Wages

| S. No. | Particulars | Options |
|---|---|---|
| 13. | Age of first migration | |
| 14. | Individual migration through | 1. Single<br>2. Group<br>3. Any other |
| 15. | How did you know about a job in Kashmir? | 1. Social network (relatives, friends)<br>2. Agents<br>3. Close kin<br>4. Others |
| 16. | Is this your first job here? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 17. | Mode of employment | 1. Daily basis<br>2. Contract-based<br>3. Task-based |
| 18. | Mode of recruitment | 1. Contractor<br>2. Employer<br>3. Self-employed<br>4. Agents<br>5. Others |

*(Appendix continued)*

*(Appendix continued)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 19. | If 3 in 28, nature of self-employment | 1. Own enterprise<br>2. Employer<br>3. Both |
| 20. | Performance particulars | 1. Size of the unit<br>2. Number of workers<br>3. Family worker<br>4. Other migrant workers<br>5. Other local workers |
| 21. | If, through agents, did you receive any advance payment? | 1. One-month salary<br>2. Small amount |
| 22. | Do you have to pay the agent for the job? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 23. | Working time per day | From.......... To.............    (…Hours) |
| 24. | Daily wage rate | 1. Piece rate (Rs.......)<br>2. Time rate (Rs.......) |
| 25. | Do you get paid for overtime work? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 26. | How often do you receive your wages? | 1. Daily<br>2. Weekly<br>3. Monthly |
| 27. | Do you take a loan from the employer? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 28. | Do you remit money back home? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 29. | If 'yes' in 28, % of salary<br>Mode of sending (banks-1, private individuals-2, others-3) | |
| 30. | How many days do you work in a year? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 31. | Do you get sick leave? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 32. | If 'no' in 31, what do you do?<br>If 'yes' in 31, how many days? | |
| 33. | Do you get paid leave? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 34. | Do you have a labour union? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 35. | Do you have bargaining power? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 36. | Do you have negotiation networks with other immigrants? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 37. | If yes, how do the networks help | |
| 38. | Do you have regularity and security in your work? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 39. | Do you have a fixed workplace? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 40. | Industry of work? | |

## Section 3: Impact on Labour Market and Support System in Conflict

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 41. | Do you participate in social functions here? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 42. | How do you communicate with local workers? | 1. Very little communication<br>2. No communication<br>3. Has learned the local language |
| 43. | How do the local people treat you? | 1. Welcomed<br>2. Hated<br>3. Both |
| 44. | How is your relationship with the local labourers? | 1. Satisfactory<br>2. Unsatisfactory<br>3. Both |
| 45. | Do you work with local workers | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 46. | Do you indulge in conflict with the local workers? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 47. | Do you face difficulties in finding work due to local workers? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 48. | Are you blamed for stealing jobs? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 49. | Do local unions approach you? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 50. | Are you aware of any migrant workers' collective/organisation? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 51. | Did you register yourself anywhere? | 1. Yes<br>2. No |
| 52. | Do you get help in times of conflict? | |
| 53. | What type of help do you get?<br>How do you cope with conflict situations? | |