



26 - 28 February 2026

Rotterdam , Netherlands

Understanding Internal Labour Migration: Motivations and Network Dynamics among Migrant Construction Workers in Bhubaneswar

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Abstract

Internal labour migration represents a vital yet underexplored dimension of India's development trajectory. This study examines the economic and social drivers influencing workers from various districts of Odisha to migrate to Bhubaneswar, while also highlighting the role of social networks in sustaining this migration stream. The research is based on primary data collected through field surveys at major construction sites in Bhubaneswar. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed to assess the determinants of migration. A comparative analysis of mean wage rates between migrants' current workplaces and their places of origin established wage differentials. In addition, the study explored the contribution of social networks in providing information, facilitating recruitment, and supporting migrant integration. Findings reveal a significant wage differential, confirming income enhancement as a major pull factor. Bhubaneswar's expanding construction sector, characterised by higher wages, more regular employment, and reliable payment systems, emerges as a key attraction for workers from Odisha and neighbouring states including West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. Beyond economic incentives, social networks play a decisive role in reducing uncertainty, lowering migration costs, and enhancing migrants' sense of security. These networks serve as informal yet powerful mechanisms for sustaining labour mobility and ensuring smoother urban adaptation. This study offers a nuanced understanding of internal labour migration in India by foregrounding the interplay between economic opportunity and social capital. It contributes to migration scholarship by linking structural economic factors with community-driven support systems, providing insights for



policymakers, urban planners, and labour rights advocates engaged in shaping inclusive urban development.

Keywords: Internal Labour Migration, Construction Workers, Odisha, Bhubaneswar, Migration Motivations