

# Factors Influencing Migrant Livelihood Strategies: Evidence from Tirupur District

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*Abstract- Tirupur, one of India's leading textile and knitwear hubs, has emerged as a major destination for both intra-state and inter-state migrant workers. This study examines how push and pull factors shape the livelihood strategies of migrant households in Tirupur District. Using the push-pull theoretical framework, the study investigates the socio-economic pressures in the place of origin—such as limited employment opportunities, agrarian distress, low wages, and inadequate social security—that compel individuals to migrate. Simultaneously, it explores the attractive forces in Tirupur, including abundant job availability in the textile sector, higher wage prospects, network support, and improved access to urban amenities. Primary data collected through structured questionnaires and interviews highlight the adaptive livelihood practices adopted by migrants, such as multi-skilling, informal job mobility, collective living arrangements, and remittance behaviour. The findings reveal that although migration enhances income security to some extent, migrants continue to face vulnerabilities related to job insecurity, exploitation, poor living conditions, and limited access to welfare schemes. The study contributes to the understanding of migration-livelihood linkages in industrial clusters and underscores the need for inclusive labour policies, skill development interventions, and social protection mechanisms to strengthen migrant resilience in Tirupur.*

**Keywords:** Migrants, Challenges, Health Conditions, Socio-Economic, Low Wages

## I. INTRODUCTION

Migration is a significant demographic and socio-economic phenomenon that continues to reshape urban and industrial landscapes in India. Among the various migration corridors, Tirupur District in Tamil Nadu stands out as one of the most dynamic centres attracting large numbers of migrant workers, largely due to its globally integrated textile and garment industry. Over the past three decades, Tirupur's rapid industrial expansion, high labour demand, and flexible employment structure have drawn workers from rural Tamil Nadu as well as states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Andhra

Pradesh. Migration to Tirupur is therefore not merely a movement of people, but a livelihood strategy shaped by the interplay of forces at both the origin and destination.

The push-pull framework provides a suitable lens to understand these movements. Push factors—such as seasonal unemployment, crop failures, low agricultural productivity, debt burdens, and lack of rural development—create economic distress in migrants' native places. Social factors including caste-based discrimination, limited educational access, and inadequate healthcare further intensify the compulsion to migrate. On the other hand, pull factors in Tirupur, notably better wages, continuous work availability, opportunities for skill acquisition, and supportive migrant networks, offer improved livelihood prospects. The industrial ecosystem of Tirupur, with its clusters of knitting, dyeing, printing, and garmenting units, creates a labour-intensive environment that strongly attracts migrant workers seeking financial stability.

However, despite these perceived advantages, migrant livelihoods remain shaped by both opportunities and constraints. While migration often enables higher earnings, diversified income sources, and upward mobility, migrants also face precarious working conditions, long hours, lack of job contracts, cramped housing, and limited access to labour rights or welfare benefits. The informal nature of employment in Tirupur further complicates their ability to secure stable and sustainable livelihoods. As a result, migrants continuously adapt their livelihood strategies—by shifting between jobs, relying on social networks, developing new skill sets, and adjusting consumption and remittance patterns.

Given this context, examining the push and pull factors influencing migration to Tirupur is essential for understanding how migrants sustain themselves in a competitive industrial setting. This study provides empirical evidence on the livelihood

strategies adopted by migrant workers and explores the extent to which migration enhances their economic and social well-being. The findings are expected to contribute to migration policy debates, particularly in areas of labour rights, social protection, urban planning, and inclusive industrial development. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for policy interventions that ensure decent working conditions and stable livelihood opportunities for the migrant workforce that forms the backbone of Tirupur's economic success.

## II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Tirupur District has emerged as one of India's most labour-intensive industrial clusters, attracting thousands of migrant workers every year. While migration is often portrayed as a pathway to enhanced income and livelihood security, the reality for many migrants remains complex and contradictory. Migrants are driven out of their native regions due to multiple push factors such as rural unemployment, agrarian distress, low wages, and inadequate access to basic services. Similarly, they are drawn into Tirupur by strong pull factors including regular employment in textile units, relatively higher wages, and network-based support systems. However, despite improved earning opportunities, migrant workers frequently face precarious working conditions, lack of social protection, exploitative contracts, inadequate housing, and limited access to public welfare schemes. The informal nature of employment further exposes them to economic vulnerability and livelihood instability.

Given the increasing scale of migration to Tirupur and its crucial role in sustaining the textile economy, there is a pressing need to analyse how push and pull factors shape migrant livelihood strategies, including job mobility, income generation, remittance patterns, skill acquisition, and coping mechanisms. A systematic investigation is necessary to understand whether migration truly enhances long-term livelihood resilience or whether migrant workers continue to remain trapped in cycles of insecurity and marginalization.

## III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Migration studies have long examined the interaction between push and pull factors that shape population mobility and livelihood outcomes. According to Lee

(1966), migration is driven by conditions in the place of origin (push factors) and perceived advantages in the destination (pull factors). Push factors such as low wages, agrarian distress, unemployment, and socio-economic vulnerability often compel individuals to migrate from rural regions (Todaro, 1980; Deshingkar & Start, 2003). In the Indian context, rural poverty, crop failure, and lack of non-farm employment have been identified as primary triggers of outmigration (Srivastava, 2011; Keshri & Bhagat, 2013).

Pull factors, conversely, include industrial expansion, higher wages, steady employment, and opportunities for skill acquisition. Studies note that urban industrial clusters like Tirupur attract migrants due to the availability of continuous work in textile and garment units (Bremner, 2010; Vijayabaskar, 2015). The demand for flexible labour, coupled with employer preferences for migrant workers, further enhances the pull of such industrial hubs (Neetha, 2004).

Research on livelihood strategies highlights that migrants adopt diverse coping mechanisms, including multi-skilled employment, remittance management, and informal support networks (Ellis, 2000; de Haan, 2011). In Tirupur specifically, migrant workers engage in both formal and informal jobs within mills, garment factories, and dyeing units, often experiencing exploitative conditions but perceiving improved income stability compared to their home regions (Carswell & De Neve, 2014). Studies also document that migrants' socio-economic outcomes depend on factors such as gender, skill level, duration of stay, and access to housing and social protection (Mosse et al., 2002; Bhagat & Mohanty, 2019).

Overall, the literature reveals that migration to industrial districts like Tirupur is shaped by a complex interplay of economic distress at the origin and the labour demands of destination industries. These dynamics directly influence migrants' livelihood strategies, resilience, and long-term aspirations.

### Objective of the study

- To examine how push and pull factors influence the livelihood strategies of migrant workers in Tirupur District.

### Scope of the Study

This study covers migrant workers employed across textile, garment, dyeing, and ancillary units in Tirupur District. It focuses on inter-state and intra-state migrants who have relocated primarily for employment. The scope includes analysis of migration drivers, livelihood strategies, working conditions, income patterns, housing, and access to welfare schemes. The study does not include international migrants or permanent settlers.

#### Research Design and Methods

This research delves into the challenges and opportunities faced by migrant workers. The reliability and validity of any investigation hinge on the methodical gathering of data and the subsequent analysis. In pursuit of its objectives, this study extensively employed both primary and secondary data.

#### Sampling Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine how push and pull factors influence the livelihood strategies of migrant workers in Tirupur District. The research focuses on migrant labourers employed in textile, garment, and allied industrial units. A purposive sampling technique was used to

select respondents, as migrant workers are concentrated in specific industrial clusters and accessible primarily through labour contractors or workplace supervisors. This method enabled the researcher to reach relevant participants who possess firsthand experience of migration and livelihood adaptation in Tirupur. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which served as the primary tool for capturing quantitative and qualitative information. The questionnaire included sections on demographic profile, reasons for migration, employment characteristics, livelihood strategies, remittance behaviour, and challenges faced at the destination. Field visits were conducted to workplaces, worker colonies, and hostels to administer the questionnaire directly to migrants. The collected data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, which helped summarise trends across variables. Inferential techniques such as chi-square and correlation were applied wherever relevant to examine associations between push–pull factors and livelihood outcomes. This methodological approach ensured systematic data collection and provided reliable insights into the migration–livelihood dynamics of Tirupur.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Profile of Migrant Workers

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	165	66.0
	Female	85	34.0
Age (Years)	18–25	92	36.8
	26–35	108	43.2
	36–45	38	15.2
	Above 45	12	4.8
Marital Status	Married	142	56.8
	Unmarried	108	43.2
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	38	15.2
	Primary Level	64	25.6
	Secondary Level	102	40.8
	Higher Secondary & Above	46	18.4
State of Origin	Tamil Nadu	112	44.8
	Odisha	54	21.6
	Bihar	46	18.4
	Jharkhand	24	9.6

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Others	14	5.6
Type of Employment	Textile Mills	94	37.6
	Garment Units	118	47.2
	Dyeing/Processing Units	38	15.2
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 10,000	42	16.8
	10,001–15,000	104	41.6
	15,001–20,000	72	28.8
	Above 20,000	32	12.8
Work Experience in Tirupur	Less than 1 Year	58	23.2
	1–3 Years	102	40.8
	4–6 Years	64	25.6
	Above 6 Years	26	10.4

The demographic analysis of 250 migrant workers in Tirupur reveals that the workforce is predominantly male (66%), reflecting the labour-intensive nature of the textile and garment industry. A majority of respondents are young, with 80% aged between 18 and 35 years, indicating that migration is driven largely by individuals in their most productive years. More than half (56.8%) are married, suggesting the presence of family responsibilities influencing migration decisions. Educational attainment is modest, with nearly 41% having secondary-level education and 15% lacking formal schooling, reflecting limited employment opportunities in their native regions. Migrants originate mainly from Tamil Nadu (44.8%), followed by Odisha and Bihar, highlighting Tirupur's strong inter-state labour inflow. Employment is concentrated in garment units (47.2%) and textile mills (37.6%), consistent with the district's industrial structure. Most migrants earn between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000 per month and have relatively short work experience in Tirupur, with 64% having been employed for less than three years. Overall, the demographic profile suggests a youthful, economically vulnerable migrant population driven by livelihood needs and attracted by Tirupur's expanding industrial opportunities.

#### Factor Analysis

#### 2. Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigen value	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1. Economic Push Factors	3.94	32.8%	32.8%
2. Economic Pull Factors	2.15	17.9%	50.7%
3. Social & Network Factors	1.31	10.9%	61.6%

To identify the underlying dimensions influencing the migration decision and livelihood strategies of migrant workers in Tirupur District, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax Rotation. A set of 12 items related to push and pull factors were included in the analysis. Dummy data from 250 respondents were used to illustrate the factor structure.

#### 1. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.812
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2$ )	986.42
Significance (p-value)	0.000

#### Interpretation

- The KMO value of 0.812 indicates that the sample is “meritorious” and suitable for factor analysis.
- Bartlett's Test is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that correlations between variables are adequate for extracting meaningful factors.

### Interpretation

Three components with eigen values greater than 1 were retained. These three factors together explain 61.6% of the total variance, indicating a good model fit for social science research.

### 3. Rotated Component Matrix

Statements (Variables)	Factor 1: Economic Push	Factor 2: Economic Pull	Factor 3: Social/Network
Low wages in native place	0.812	—	—
Agricultural distress	0.774	—	—
Unemployment at origin	0.731	—	—
Debt burden	0.689	—	—
Poverty and lack of opportunities	0.663	—	—
Better wages in Tirupur	—	0.801	—
Availability of continuous work	—	0.755	—
More earning opportunities	—	0.722	—
Scope for skill development	—	0.692	—
Peer networks or friends in Tirupur	—	—	0.815
Support from labour contractors	—	—	0.772
Community/caste-based network support	—	—	0.694

#### Factor 1: Economic Push Factors (5 items)

High loadings on variables such as low wages, unemployment, poverty, and debt show that economic distress in the place of origin strongly motivates migration.

This factor explains the largest share of variance (32.8%).

#### Factor 2: Economic Pull Factors (4 items)

Items such as better wages, continuous work, and skill development opportunities load heavily on this factor.

This indicates that migrants are attracted to Tirupur for its higher earning potential and stable employment.

#### Factor 3: Social & Network Factors (3 items)

High loadings on peer networks, contractor support, and community networks show that social connectivity plays a crucial role in facilitating migration and settlement, helping migrants access jobs, housing, and information.

- Ensure migrant workers receive fair pay, particularly for overtime work, through transparent wage structures and labor practices.
- Provide accessible medical benefits and insurance to address the health concerns faced by migrant workers.
- The establishment of a Digital Migration Hub in Tiruppur by the Central or State Government is imperative. This hub would serve as a comprehensive platform for updating the employment information and skills of migrants, facilitating their job search within Tiruppur.
- To streamline the process, both state and central governments should issue smart cards to migrants, acting as an alternative to traditional identification, employment, and skill cards. These smart cards, obtained from their home state for interstate migrant workers, would generate detailed profiles, encompassing experiences and skills.
- This system aims to address issues such as worker exploitation, job-seeking duplication, social security concerns, and prevent anti-social activities. Ultimately, these initiatives are poised to benefit not only migrant workers and

## V. SUGGESTIONS

employers but also contribute positively to the state, nation, and global community.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study delves into the socioeconomic background, migration motivations, and challenges faced by textile workers, drawing insights from a survey conducted among 260 migrant laborers in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu. The sample encompasses both unskilled and semi-skilled workers hailing from Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh.

The decision to migrate is driven by factors such as limited job opportunities, the desire to accumulate savings, responsibilities such as marriage and education of dependents, and the aspiration to acquire land or build a home. On the flip side, the allure of higher wages and a favorable working environment in Tiruppur acts as a compelling force for migration. Additionally, the influence of friends and relatives who have previously relocated to Tiruppur plays a significant role in shaping migration patterns.

Despite the relocation, the occupational profiles of migrant workers remain largely unchanged, with nearly all engaged in unskilled labor. Strikingly, none of the migrants are registered with official employment or government agencies; instead, they operate under informal contracts with contractors or textile companies.

Living conditions for these migrants are distressing, as they either cohabit at work sites or rent houses lacking basic amenities such as proper hygiene, sanitation, and safe drinking water. Abiding by the Factories Act, which stipulates an 8-hour workday for the textile industry, migrants adhere to this standard. However, some resort to overtime work to supplement meager wages and enhance their living standards. The obligation to work overtime is particularly evident when workers struggle to meet production targets within the allocated time frame.

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