

Understanding Rural Exodus: Push and Pull Mechanisms in Youth Migration from Bundelkhand Region, Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The study was conducted in 2024 across the Banda, Jhansi, and Chitrakoot districts of the Bundelkhand region in India. Exploratory research design was used and a total of 180 respondents were selected using random sampling methods, ensuring an unbiased representation of the population across the study areas. The results revealed the key push factors, such as limited landholding (GMS: 135.05), crop failure (GMS: 129.16), and rainfed agriculture (GMS: 117.45), which force individuals to leave their homes in search of better opportunities. Unemployment, landlessness, and lack of education further exacerbate the situation. At the same time, pull factors like better employment opportunities (GMS: 168), higher wages (GMS: 144.78), and the growth of industries and housing sectors (GMS: 112.73) attract migrants to urban areas. Additional influences include better transportation, communication networks, and access to healthcare and education. The study reveals that both push and pull factors work in tandem to drive the migration of rural youth, as they seek better livelihoods, security, and socio-economic stability. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for developing policies aimed at mitigating rural exodus and addressing the underlying factors pushing youth to leave their native areas. The findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of migration in Bundelkhand and can help inform policy interventions to improve rural livelihoods.

Key words: Migration, Push factor, Pull factor, Rural youth

The phenomenon of migration appears to be quite variable, influenced by diverse factors that drive people to relocate in pursuit of meeting their basic or supplementary human needs. Structurally, there has been an increasing trend of migration from rural areas to urban centers and geographically from hilly and mountainous regions to the Terai, whether temporarily or permanently, which plays a significant role in altering the country's demographic composition [1]. Migration among rural youth is a complex phenomenon driven by various push and pull factors. Push factors are those that compel individuals to leave their current location and seek opportunities elsewhere for a variety of reasons [2]. Factors such as low productivity, unemployment, underdevelopment, poor economic conditions, lack of progress opportunities, natural resource

depletion, and natural disasters can drive people to seek better economic prospects outside their place of origin [3]. Pull factors are characteristics that attract migrants to a place, such as better employment prospects, higher wages, better facilities, working conditions, and amenities [4]. According to 2011 census India had 45.6 crore migrants i.e. 38% of total population. Between 2001-2011 the population was increased to 18% and also the migrants increased by 45%. In 2011, 99% of total migration was internal and immigrants comprised 1% [5]. The International Organization for Migrants [6] states that about 3.6% of the global population are migrants, with no universally accepted definition. In many developing nations, rapid population growth has reduced the amount of land available per person, leading to a sharp increase in both unemployment and underemployment.

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Additionally, the adoption of capital-intensive farming methods and the mechanization of various agricultural tasks have lowered the need for labour in rural areas [7]. Being enthusiastic, alive, inventive, and dynamic by nature, the youth constitute the most significant segment of our society. Youths exhibit strong passion, drive, and "willpower," making them the most important human beings and a tool for supporting a country's political, cultural, and economic growth. According to the United Nations, by 2050, the world population will increase by approximately 2.50 billion people, with the majority of this increase occurring in the developing world. Much of this growth will be among youth, who are expected to make up half of the world's population by 2050. Many young individuals choose to migrate in search of better economic opportunities, and there is an increasing demand for skilled youth. In this situation, the young migrants themselves act as a factor that attracts further migration, as the remittances they send back home enhance their own economic situations as well as benefit the Indian economy [8]. Young migrants leave their native towns with the intention of returning at some time, whereas others intend to relocate permanently. Migration often happens when individuals seek better opportunities to improve their lives. In such cases, the destination area attracts them with promises of better prospects, acting as a pull factor. On the other hand, migration can also be driven by unfavourable social or economic conditions in the place of origin, forcing individuals to leave. These problematic circumstances serve as push factors. Simply, pull factors encourage movement toward a new location, while push factors drive people away from their current home. Landless youth who struggle to access farmland within their communal lands often migrate to towns and cities in search of

non-agricultural jobs, such as domestic work. Many young people prefer this over working as farm labourers in their own communities due to social stigma. As a result, they view migration as a more favourable alternative for securing a livelihood [9]. This study focuses on this level as it serves as the basis for analyzing youth migration patterns. By incorporating quantitative and qualitative data, the research aims to comprehensively understand the various factors influencing migration decisions. The findings will contribute to a nuanced assessment of the push and pull mechanisms driving rural youth migration in Bundelkhand, providing insights that can guide policy formulation and program interventions to address the challenges associated with migration in the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The investigation was conducted in the Bundelkhand region, of Uttar Pradesh. Bundelkhand is situated in central India and comprises 13 districts, including 7 in Uttar Pradesh (Jhansi, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur, and Jalaun) and 6 in Madhya Pradesh (Sagar, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Panna, and Datia). For the study, three districts are chosen purposively that are Banda, Chitrakoot, and Jhansi (Fig 1). These districts were selected due to their high incidence of rural out-migration, driven by economic distress, agricultural challenges, and limited livelihood opportunities. The region experiences frequent droughts, low agricultural productivity, and inadequate infrastructure, making it a key area for studying migration patterns.

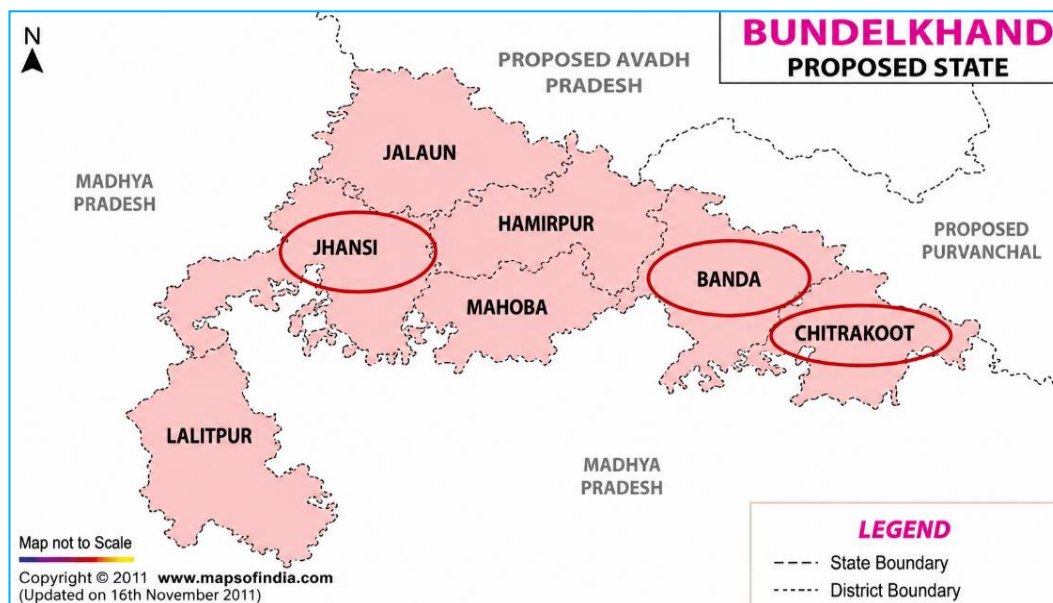


Fig 1 Map of study area

Data and methodology

This study follows a survey-based approach, primarily utilizing primary data gathered from respondents through a well-structured interview schedule. The researcher used a random sampling technique to select households from the Banda, Chitrakoot, and Jhansi districts, ensuring an equal distribution across these areas. There are 8 blocks in the Banda district, 5 blocks in the Chitrakoot district, and 8 blocks in the Jhansi district. From each district, two blocks were selected. From each block, two villages were selected. Thus, a total of 6 blocks and 12 villages were selected from all three districts of the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. In each village chosen for the study, we randomly selected 15 individuals. This

approach resulted in a total sample size of 180 respondents for the research.

Data analysis

The study employs the Garrett ranking technique to identify and analyze the major push and pull factors influencing rural youth migration in the Bundelkhand region. Respondents ranked various migration factors based on their perceived significance, and the assigned ranks were then converted into scores using Garrett's formula. The mean scores were calculated for each factor, allowing for a systematic prioritization of the key drivers of migration. This method provides a quantitative assessment of the most influential push

and pull factors, ensuring an objective evaluation of the reasons behind migration and facilitating evidence-based policy recommendations for addressing migration.

Garrett's ranking technique

Garrett's Ranking Technique provides a numerical representation of limitations and recommendations for ordering. The main benefit of this approach over a simple frequency distribution is that the limits and recommendations are ranked according to severity from the respondents' perspective. The following is the percentage position formula proposed by Garret Garrett [10].

$$\text{Per cent position} = 100 \times (R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$$

Where;

R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} variable by j^{th} respondent

N_j = Number of variables ranked by j^{th} respondent

Garrett and Woodworth's table is used to translate percentage positions into scores. After adding the individual factor scores, the mean and total score are determined. The mean scores for each element are then sorted in decreasing order to make it simpler to identify the most essential components based on their assigned ranks. The factor with the greatest mean value is the most important one in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Push factors of migration of rural youth

Table 1 Push factors of migration of rural youth (n = 180)

S. No.	Particulars	Garrett mean score (GMS)	Rank
1.	Landlessness	91.90	V
2.	Smallholdings	135.05	I
3.	Crop failure	129.16	II
4.	Rainfed agriculture	117.45	III
5.	Drought	58.58	VIII
6.	Low wages	74.10	VII
7.	Unemployment/Insufficient Jobs	100.00	IV
8.	Indebtedness	47.53	X
9.	Less civic amenities	54.36	IX
10.	Lack of Education	75.36	VI
11.	Poverty	33.36	XI
12.	Poor living condition	28.45	XIII
13.	Poor healthcare	31.82	XII

Pull factors of migration of rural youth

Various factors influence migration decisions, each evaluated based on its rank and Garrett Mean Score (GMS) depicted in (Table 2, Fig 2). Topping the list is "better employment" with a GMS of 168, claiming the first rank (Rank: I), as it offers individuals improved job prospects and career advancement opportunities. Following closely is the allure of "higher wages" with a GMS of 144.78, securing the second rank (Rank: II), appealing to those seeking better financial incentives. The "growth of industries and housing sector" with a GMS of 112.73 takes the third rank (Rank: III), attracting migrants in search of job opportunities and urban development. Meanwhile, "industrial centres" with a Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 93.88 claim the fourth rank (Rank: IV), contributing to employment opportunities and economic growth. Additionally, factors such as "ample opportunities for business and trade" (GMS: 89.7, Rank: V) and "better transport and

Migration patterns are influenced by pull factors and push factors that drive individuals away from certain regions. Analyzing both the rank and the Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of these push factors (Table 1, Fig 1) sheds light on the challenges prompting migration. Topping the list is "smallholdings" with a GMS of 135.05, claiming the first rank (Rank: I), indicating the struggle of individuals with limited land resources. Following closely is "crop failure" with a GMS of 129.16, securing the second rank (Rank: II), highlighting the vulnerability of livelihoods dependent on agriculture. "Rainfed agriculture" takes the third rank (Rank: III) with a GMS of 117.45, emphasizing the risks associated with dependence on rainfall for farming. Meanwhile, "unemployment" with a GMS of 100 secures the fourth rank (Rank: IV), reflecting the challenge of job scarcity. "Landlessness" follows with a GMS of 91.9, claiming the fifth rank (Rank: V), underscoring the issue of inadequate land ownership. Factors such as "lack of education" (GMS: 75.36, Rank: VI) and "low wages" (GMS: 74.1, Rank: VII) further contribute to migration pressures, highlighting the limitations individuals face in accessing quality education and earning sustainable incomes. Conversely, "drought" (GMS: 58.58, Rank: III) and "less civic amenities" (GMS: 54.36, Rank: IX) underscore environmental and infrastructural challenges, while "indebtedness" (GMS: 47.53, Rank: X) and "poverty" (GMS: 33.36, Rank: XI) reflect economic hardships driving migration. Finally, "poor healthcare" (GMS: 31.82, Rank: XII) and "poor living conditions" (GMS: 28.45, Rank: XIII) indicate the struggle of individuals with inadequate access to essential services and basic living standards.

communication network" (GMS: 75.78, Rank: VI) play significant roles in migration decisions, providing conducive environments for economic activities and connectivity. "Better working conditions" with a Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 72.21 secures the seventh rank (Rank: VII), emphasizing the importance of workplace environments, followed by "job security" with a GMS of 67.16 (Rank: VIII). "Investment opportunities" (GMS: 66.18, Rank: IX) also feature prominently, signaling regions that are ripe for economic growth and development. Moreover, factors such as "availability of quality standard education" (GMS: 65.81, Rank: X) and "better medical and healthcare facilities" (GMS: 51.71, Rank: XI) cater to the needs of families and individuals seeking access to essential services. However, "more civilized and better socio-economic conditions" (GMS: 44.33, Rank: XII) and "better living conditions" (GMS: 17.77, Rank: XIII) seem to have comparatively less impact on migration decisions.

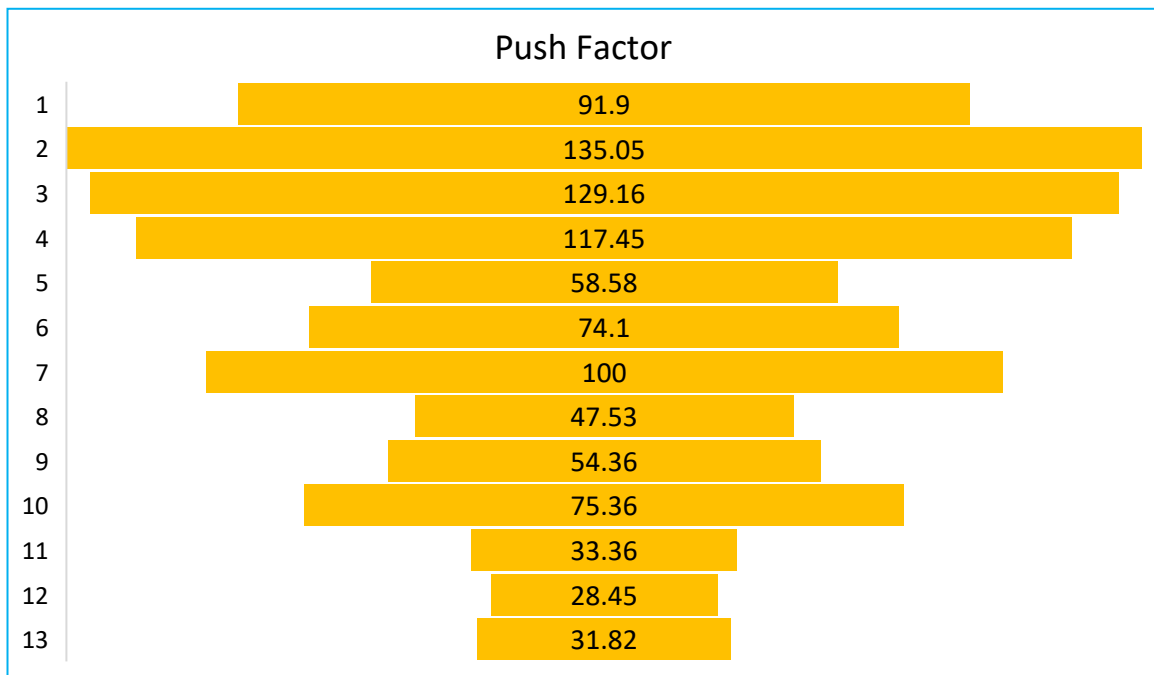


Fig 1 Push factors of migration of rural youth (n=180)

Table 2 Pull factors of migration of rural youth (n=180)

S. No.	Particulars	Garrett mean score (GMS)	Rank
1.	Better employment	168.00	I
2.	Higher wages	144.78	II
3.	Better working condition	72.21	VII
4.	Job security	67.16	VIII
5.	Growth of industries and Housing sector	112.73	III
6.	Ample opportunities for business and trade	89.70	V
7.	Industrial centres	93.88	IV
8.	Investment opportunities	66.18	IX
9.	More civilized and better socio-economic condition	44.33	XII
10.	Better transport and communication network	75.78	VI
11.	Availability of quality / standard education	65.81	X
12.	Better medical and healthcare facilities	51.71	XI
13.	Better living condition	17.77	XIII

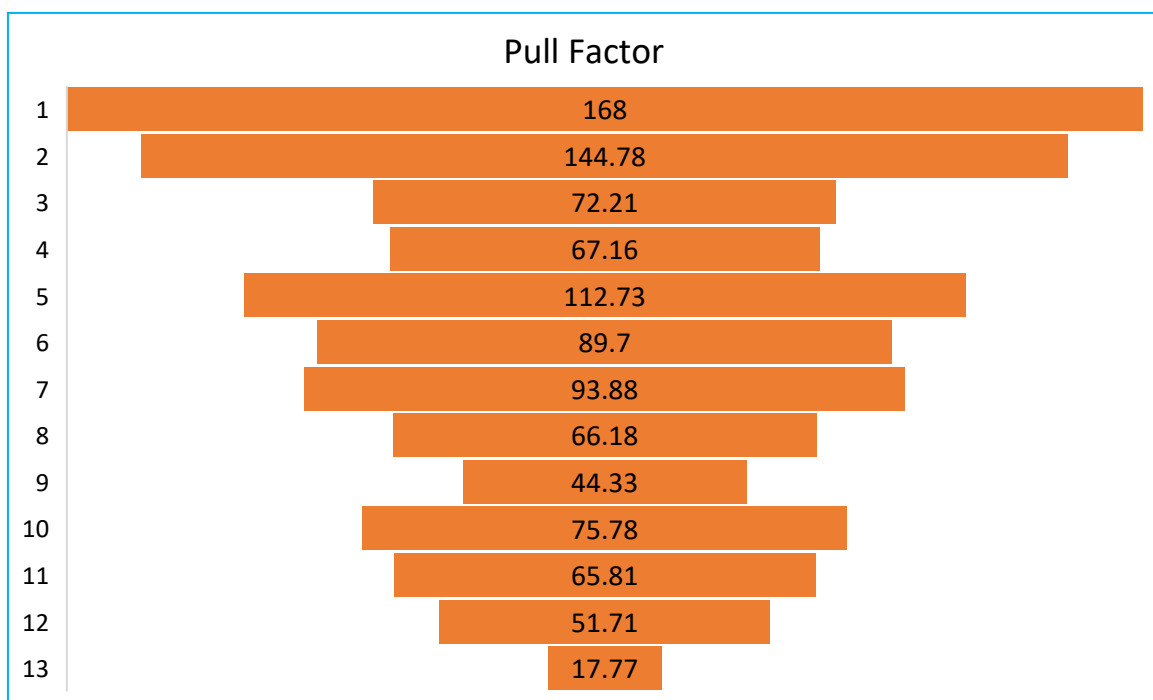


Fig 2 Pull factors of migration of rural youth (n=180)

Migration is influenced by both push and pull factors. Key push factors include small landholdings, crop failures, rainfed agriculture, unemployment, and landlessness, forcing individuals to migrate due to economic instability. Lack of education, low wages, drought, poor civic amenities, indebtedness, and poverty further drive migration. The findings of Danejo *et al.* [11] reported that youth migration from rural to urban areas is primarily driven by limited social amenities, lack of employment opportunities, and the pursuit of education. Additionally, many migrate to engage in various income-generating activities, seeking financial stability and better living conditions in urban areas. This underscores the role of economic necessity and infrastructural deficiencies in shaping migration patterns, further reinforcing the significance of employment and livelihood opportunities in influencing migration decisions. Similarly, in Burera, many youths have migrated to Kigali city and Uganda in search of better employment opportunities, with a significant proportion (71%) expressing intentions to move to urban areas. Environmental hardships, financial insecurity, and limited access to essential services further contribute to migration pressures Mutandwa *et al.* [12]. Conversely, urban centers offer better employment prospects, higher wages, and industrial growth, making migration an attractive option. The presence of business opportunities, improved transport and communication networks, and access to essential services reinforce this trend. While socio-economic advancements play a role, economic incentives remain the primary motivator for migration. Kumar [13] also highlights that while migration improves living standards and opportunities, it brings challenges such as income disparities and inadequate housing. Addressing these issues through targeted policies can contribute to a more equitable and inclusive urbanization process in India. Mutandwa *et al.* [12] found that youth in Rwanda migrated for job opportunities, better social services, education, and improved infrastructure. Additionally, poverty, high population density, and unfavorable social conditions further pushed migration, highlighting both economic and social drivers. Asiiimwe and Musinguzi's [14] findings indicate that unemployment and low wages are key indicators of poverty in Uganda, and they are the motivating factors for migration among migrant workers from other countries are similar to those pushing Ugandan youth to seek employment in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, Nanzip [15] pointed out that unemployment is a key push factor for youth migration, as many leave their countries of origin in search of better employment opportunities overseas. Conversely, pull factors such as better employment, higher wages, industrial growth, and job security attract migrants seeking financial stability. Business opportunities, transport networks, quality education, and healthcare also encourage migration. While better living standards and socio-economic conditions play a role, economic hardship remains the primary push, while employment and financial prospects act as strong pull factors. Asiiimwe and Musinguzi [14] identified economic factors as the major drivers of migration, particularly among skilled individuals in developing countries seeking better job opportunities and improved living standards abroad. Alarima [16] also identified

better employment opportunities, higher wages, and improved living conditions in cities as key pull factors attracting rural youth to urban areas. These factors highlight the economic advantages and enhanced quality of life that cities offer, making migration a viable option for many. Khan *et al.* [17] found that pull factors such as better employment opportunities, improved living standards, personal development, the presence of relatives, and an attractive environment also play a significant role in Gulf migration. According to Maurya *et al.* [18], higher wages, better jobs, and better standards of living in cities are the major pull factors motivating rural youths to migrate toward cities. Migration is primarily driven by economic hardship and inadequate rural opportunities such as unemployment, poverty, small landholdings, low wages, poor infrastructure, and environmental stress, while urban and overseas areas attract migrants through better employment prospects, higher wages, improved living standards, education, healthcare, and enhanced socio-economic opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Youth migration in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is primarily driven by economic distress, agricultural challenges, and inadequate infrastructure. Small landholdings, crop failure, unemployment, and financial insecurity create conditions where migration becomes a necessary livelihood strategy. Additionally, environmental factors such as drought and poor living conditions exacerbate the situation, further pushing individuals to seek opportunities elsewhere. To mitigate distress migration, policies should focus on enhancing rural employment opportunities, promoting agricultural sustainability, and strengthening infrastructure. Investing in education, skill development, and rural industrialization can provide viable livelihood alternatives, reducing migration pressures. Furthermore, planned urban development is necessary to accommodate incoming populations without overburdening resources. Migration reflects both economic aspirations and structural deficiencies in rural areas. A balanced approach integrating rural development and sustainable urbanization is crucial for managing migration effectively, fostering long-term economic stability, and ensuring equitable growth across regions.

Author contributions

A.S., A.P.V., P.K.O., B.K.G., DM, B.P.M., R.K.R., A.; contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study. A.S., DK, was responsible for data collection, data curation, and analysis. AS: Writing—original draft preparation. RK contributed to the reviewing of the article and all authors involved in the editing of the manuscript before submission.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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