

Family, Neighborhood Relation and Personal Networks in Internal Migration

By

Ms. Soumya Mohanty

Research Scholar

International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai

soumya7@indiatimes.com

Family, friendship and community networks underlie much of the recent internal and international stream of migration to industrial and commercial centers. Current interests in these networks accompany the development of a migration system perspective and the growing awareness of the macro and micro determinants of migration. This article presents an overview of research findings conducted in different settings on the determinants and consequences of personal networks in migration. It is found that women are hardly visible in such research. Thus, taking this into consideration paper also presents the role of family and personal networks in the life of female migrants from a study conducted in low income community of a metropolitan city in India. It is hypothesized that duration of migration has effect on personal network and illiterate migrants have weak personal network than literate. In addition, it calls for greater specification of the role of networks in migration research.

Introduction

By the late 1980s, a growing body of research existed regarding the role of social networks in the etiology, composition, direction and persistence of migration flows, and in the settlement and integration of migrant populations in receiving societies. There now exist many ways of conceptualizing and studying family, friendship and community ties as key ingredients in international migration. Not surprisingly, there is no one orthodox treatment of personal networks and surprisingly hardly any research work has been conducted on personal networks of female migrants.

Women are clearly lower in status and have, on average, more limited financial resources than men. In addition, women belong to smaller voluntary organizations (McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982), and have fewer job-related associations, hence accumulating a smaller pool of extra-neighborhood contacts. Given these observations, we might expect them to be more needy of the aid provided by neighbors. On the other hand, women have greater contact with kin, who may substitute for neighbors in the provision of both daily and longterm support (Fischer 1982; Young & Willmott 1957). Therefore, it is unclear from a need perspective what gender differences in neighbor networks we might anticipate.

Objectives

First the current interest in social networks is linked to other developments in international migration as hardly any literature is available in Indian context on female migrants. Research areas which consider and/or emphasize the role of personal networks, particularly those based on family ties, in explaining the origin, composition, adjustment and dynamics of migration are then reviewed. Neighborhood relation of female migrants in the receiving society and its importance in shaping female migrants' life is studied.

Data sources

For this study, Primary data collected as part of PhD work on female migrants by using multistage sampling design in low income communities of Mumbai metropolis is used to study

neighborhood relation of female migrants in the receiving society and its importance in shaping female migrants' life. For this study, female migrants who are aged 15-45 years, whose place of birth is other than Mumbai and duration of stay in Mumbai is at least six month with maximum of 10 years are considered eligible respondents for this study. A total of 585 married and unmarried female migrants were interviewed during this phase. In order to assess the strength of social ties of migrants, respondents were asked about their kinship-family ties at place of origin (married migrants were asked about their in-law's place), participation in family matters at place of origin, membership of organization/groups, neighborhood composition, preference for specific group as neighbours, compatibility with neighbours, belief or trust on neighbours and reciprocation with network members on different issues in the receiving society. Respondents were also asked about their religious activities, household activities and leisure time activities.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with female migrants where information on their personal network is collected in detail. Female migrants were asked to name two persons in their life in the receiving society whom they consider most important than others. Information was collected on demographic and socioeconomic aspects, reciprocation of financial and emotional support.

Methodology

Family relation is studied in terms of contact and participation in decision making in different important occasions at the origin. Explanations of links between statuses and personal networks in neighborhoods are focused on more instrumental or pragmatic considerations. Neighborhood ties are considered a response to need: those with limited alternatives will turn to neighbors as a handy source of emotional and instrumental support. Need may be financial or emotional. Personal networks of female migrants are viewed within neighborhoods as a function of available time.

Uni-variate, bi-variate and multivariate techniques are used to analyze the quantitative data. To study the effect of individual level variable on outcome variables are studied by using the Chi-square technique. The qualitative data is translated into English; codes are assigned and are analyzed by using ATLAS. Ti. software.

Preliminary findings

The preliminary findings suggest that unmarried female migrants rely more on neighbors than married migrants since presence of spouse limits their multiplex neighbor networks. The need view suggests that low-SES (socio economic status measured by using assets and living condition index) persons will be more involved with neighbors than will economically advantaged persons. The contribution of age to neighbor networks is complex.