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## Education Beyond Borders: A Micro-Level Study Of Student Outmigration From Madhiapali, Balangir, Odisha

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines a new trend in which students from Madhiapali, a small village in the Balangir district of Odisha, India, are pursuing higher education within the inter District of Odisha. Balangir has historically faced significant economic hardships and witnessed substantial outmigration for employment opportunities, yet currently there's a growing trend of students pursuing international education. This study offers an in-depth analysis of the motivations behind student departures, examining their personal circumstances and the obstacles they face. The study uses interviews, surveys, and group discussions to gather information. It finds that several factors are pushing students to leave, like the lack of good education facilities in their home village, influence from friends, exposure to the world, and the belief that studying abroad can bring better economic opportunities. The research also looks at how family support, teachers, social media, and scholarships help students make the move. The findings show that there is a change in what young people in rural areas hope for, with studying abroad becoming a way to overcome old barriers. However, the study also points out problems like money troubles, feeling out of place in a new culture, and the possibility of coming back home. This research contributes to ongoing discussions regarding educational migration from India's rural regions and emphasizes the need for developing policies that promote local growth while supporting individual aspirations.

**Keywords:** Educational Infrastructure Gaps, Education and Migration Nexus, Social Media Influence on Migration, Odisha Migration Patterns, Emerging Migration Corridors, Micro-Level Migration Study.

## INTRODUCTION

Madhiapali village, located in Balangir district, Odisha, is a rural area with a population of 10,918. It falls under the Balangir block and tehsil. The village covers roughly 2.49 square kilometers and features a predominantly farming-based economy. Like many rural areas in the region, Madhiapali experiences youth outmigration, likely driven by limited livelihood opportunities within the village.

Migration has emerged as a pivotal socio-economic process reshaping rural livelihoods and demographic patterns in India. It reflects not only the spatial movement of people but also deeper structural imbalances in regional development, employment opportunities, and access to resources (Deshingkar & Start, 2003). In states like Odisha, particularly its western districts such as Balangir, Bargarh, Nuapada, Kalahandi, and Sundargarh, youth migration has become both a coping mechanism and a survival strategy for many rural families (Mishra, 2016).

Western Odisha has historically suffered from chronic underdevelopment, seasonal agrarian distress, low industrial investment, and recurring droughts (Dash & Nayak, 2019). These conditions create powerful "push factors" driving the youth - typically aged 18 to 30 - toward urban and peri-urban destinations across India in search of employment, education, or upward mobility (Srivastava, 2011). Simultaneously, the promise of higher wages, access to consumer lifestyles, and peer networks in cities like Surat, Hyderabad, and Bangalore act as "pull factors" that fuel temporary and circular migration patterns (Bhagat, 2012).

Youth migration from Western Odisha is typically informal, seasonal, and male-dominated. Migrants often work in construction, textiles, or brick kilns, and their experiences vary across dimensions of caste, class, gender, and educational background (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009). While remittances help sustain rural economies and improve consumption levels, migration also leads to discontinuity in education, psychological stress, and weakened rural social structures (Kundu, 2007; Pattanaik, 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis starkly revealed the vulnerability of migrant workers, particularly those in informal sectors lacking legal safeguards or social protection networks (Chopra, 2021).

Despite the increasing volume of youth migration, there remains a gap in region-specific and particularly village specific research that centres on the experiences of youth migrants from Odisha. Student migration is a new and unique concept and problem in this 21st century, no one has raised this problem in a specific region-oriented way. Much of the existing literature either generalizes migration trends or overlooks how youth perceive and navigate their socio-economic realities. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the nuanced drivers and outcomes of youth migration and mobility in Madhiapali a village in Balangir District, Odisha, analysing its socio-economic impacts through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study draws upon both primary and secondary sources of data to gain a holistic understanding of student outmigration from Madhiapali village in Balangir district.

The study relied on primary data gathered through structured interviews, household surveys, and focus group discussions. The respondents included students currently pursuing higher education outside the state or abroad, their parents, local educators, and community leaders. A total of 50 households were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those with at least one member who had migrated for education. This approach helped capture first-hand insights into migration choices, financial strategies, educational aspirations, and the socio-cultural effects on families.

Secondary data was drawn from census records, government education statistics, district development reports, and existing studies on educational migration in Odisha. Statistical data was primarily obtained from the Census of India (2011), the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), and the District Statistical Handbook of Balangir. Reports from the Department of Higher Education, Government of Odisha, and educational migration studies by universities and NGOs were also examined to provide a broader context.

## REVIEW OF LITREATURE

### Educational Infrastructure and Regional Disparities in Odisha

- According to Odisha Economic Survey (2023-24), Govt. of Odisha, Odisha ranked 11th among states in per-capita income as per 2023-24 data. Odisha maintains one of the lowest debt-to-GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) ratios in the country. In 2024-25, revenue receipts reached Rs 2.11 lakh crore, reflecting a 13.7% increase over the revised estimates of 2023-24. Above that Several studies highlight that Western Odisha, including districts like Balangir, suffers from chronic underdevelopment in education infrastructure. Limited availability of quality institutions, lack of trained teachers, and poor learning outcomes create a push factor for outmigration.

- “In western Odisha, government schools are often under-resourced and face high dropout rates, particularly beyond Class X” - Odisha Economic Survey (2023-24), Govt. of Odisha. Furthermore, regional disparity reports indicate a developmental gap between coastal and western Odisha, contributing to educational migration as students seek better prospects elsewhere.

- The Article "Regional Disparities in Education in Odisha" by Pattnaik and Mishra (2022). explores the unequal distribution of educational opportunities and outcomes across different regions of Odisha, with a particular focus on youth migration. The study highlights that while Odisha has made progress in education, significant disparities persist based on region, caste, and gender. These disparities contribute to youth migration, as individuals seek better educational and economic opportunities elsewhere.

- “The backwardness of Western Odisha, compared to coastal districts, has remained a persistent issue impacting educational access and outcomes.”

- Pattnaik, S., & Mishra, R. (2022). Regional Disparities in Education in Odisha. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 57(12).

### Migration for Education: National and State Trends

- Educational migration is a growing phenomenon in India. A recent study by the Centre for Policy Research (2023) states that rural youth from backward regions increasingly migrate for better educational opportunities. This article highlights a significant trend of youth migration from Odisha to urban centers for higher education, particularly focusing on the Balangir district. This migration is largely attributed to the limited availability of technical and professional courses within the district and other rural areas of Odisha. The article also points out that this outflow of students is a consequence of the socio-economic conditions and lack of opportunities in their home regions.

- “Odisha sees large outflows of students seeking higher education in urban centers, often due to lack of technical and professional courses locally.”

- CPR Policy Brief (2023).

### Socio-Economic Factors Behind Student Migration

- The Government of Odisha. (2023). SEBC Survey Report. Bhubaneswar: SEBC Commission. conducted by the SEBC Commission, revealed that Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) constitute 39.31% of the state's population. This translates to approximately 19.49 million individuals out of a projected 2023 population of 49.56 million. The report also highlights significant educational and occupational disparities among SEBCs, with a large percentage having low levels of education and being employed in low-skill, informal sectors. They revealed that over 50% of respondents had only primary education or below. In regions like Balangir, such socio-economic disadvantages influence families to send children outside for better education and eventual employment.

- “Aspirations for upward mobility, combined with poor local institutions, push many OBC and SC families to invest in their children's migration for education.” - Government of Odisha. (2023). SEBC Survey Report. Bhubaneswar: SEBC Commission.

### Role of Government Schemes and Gaps

- According to The Hindu (2024). The Odisha government is actively working to curb youth migration by addressing the high dropout rates in the state, particularly among tribal students. The government's initiatives include the SWAYAM scheme, offering interest-free loans, and the Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme, providing financial incentives for students to pursue higher education. These efforts are aimed at

creating local employment opportunities and reducing the push factors that drive young people to migrate in search of work.

- Government Initiatives: The state government is trying to curb this trend by introducing various schemes:

- SWAYAM (Swatantra Yuva Udyami Scheme): Provides interest-free loans to empower young people.
- Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme: Offers a monetary incentive of Rs 5,000 per year to encourage students to continue their education.
- Mission Jeevika Plus: Aims to improve livelihoods for tribal people.

- “Despite scholarship schemes, many tribal students still migrate due to limited higher education options in tribal-dominated blocks.” The Hindu (2024). Odisha Govt introduces support scheme to curb dropout.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/odisha/> (DOI)

## RESEARCH GAP

### Knowledge Gaps

The study addresses a significant knowledge gap by focusing on student outmigration for education at a micro-level, specifically from Madhiapali village in Balangir, Odisha. While existing literature emphasizes labour migration and urban educational trends, little is known about rural student mobility, especially in Western Odisha. There is a lack of data on the socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural push-pull factors influencing educational migration from underdeveloped regions. Furthermore, gender dynamics, caste-based barriers, and the long-term impact on both migrants and their home communities remain underexplored. This study aims to bridge these gaps by providing empirical insights through field-level qualitative and quantitative research.

### Theoretical Gaps

The theoretical gap in this study lies in the limited application of migration and educational mobility theories to rural, underdeveloped regions like Madhiapali in Balangir, Odisha. Existing theories often overlook micro-level socio-cultural contexts, localized aspirations, and structural barriers influencing student outmigration. Additionally, there is inadequate integration of frameworks addressing intersectionality - such as caste, class, and gender in shaping educational decisions. This research attempts to contextualize and expand these theories within a rural Indian setting, offering localized theoretical insights.

### Geographical Gaps

The geographical gap in this research study stems from the lack of focused academic inquiry into student outmigration from rural and underdeveloped regions like Madhiapali in Balangir district, Western Odisha. Most existing studies on educational migration are concentrated in urban areas or more developed regions, neglecting the unique challenges and drivers faced by students in remote villages. Existing research on educational migration at both state and national levels tends to neglect the distinct socio-economic challenges and infrastructural gaps experienced in Western Odisha. This study aims to fill that gap by offering region-specific insights and highlighting the distinct factors influencing student migration from this marginalized geographical area.



## Methodological Gaps

A key methodological gap in the existing research is the lack of micro-level studies that combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches, especially in the context of rural areas such as Madhiapali in Balangir. Most prior research relies heavily on macro-level quantitative data, overlooking the nuanced, lived experiences of migrating students and their families. There is limited integration of qualitative methods such as interviews, case studies, and focus group discussions to capture the socio-cultural dynamics of outmigration. This research addresses the gap by using a mixed-method approach, blending statistical analysis with detailed qualitative perspectives to provide a fuller picture of student outmigration trends.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses an in-depth micro-level analysis of student outmigration trends from the village of Madhiapali in the Balangir district of Odisha. The study seeks to examine how socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, and infrastructural limitations shape students' decisions to leave their native region in pursuit of education. The study focuses on the age group of 15–30 years and examines their preferred destinations, courses, and institutions. It also seeks to understand the push and pull factors such as lack of quality education, employment aspirations, social mobility, and parental influence. Additionally, the study evaluates the impact of outmigration on the local education system, family dynamics, and community development. The outcomes of this study will contribute to developing region-specific policies aimed at strengthening educational infrastructure and minimizing the need for students to migrate out of compulsion.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the economic and social background of the migrating students and their families.
2. To identify the main reasons why students from Madhiapali village choose to move outside for higher education.
3. To examine the role of local educational infrastructure and how its condition influences students' decisions to leave.
4. To assess the impact of student outmigration on the local community, families, and the educational aspirations of younger children.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the key reasons that lead students from Madhiapali village to migrate for higher education?
2. How does the lack of local educational facilities influence the decision to migrate?
3. What are the economic and social backgrounds of the students who migrate?
4. What are the financial challenges faced by students and their families when pursuing education outside the village?

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Madhiapali, a small village in Balangir district of Odisha, has witnessed a growing trend of students migrating to other towns and cities in search of better education. In recent years, the village of Madhiapali in Balangir district, Odisha, has experienced a steady rise in student outmigration for higher education. Despite government efforts particularly 5T Education to promote rural education, local institutions continue to suffer from poor infrastructure, limited academic options, and a shortage of quality of faculty. These conditions force many students to seek better opportunities in distant cities and states. Although this trend highlights the ambitions of rural youth, it simultaneously exposes the persistent inequalities in their access to quality education. Outmigration often leads to financial burdens on families, emotional stress

among students, and a weakening of the local education system. Yet, there is a lack of micro-level research that captures the real experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by these migrating students. Without a clear understanding of these factors, policy responses remain inadequate. This research seeks to address the gap by analysing the underlying causes, trends, and impacts of student outmigration from Madhiapali, while also suggesting measures to enhance the local educational system.

## STUDY AREA

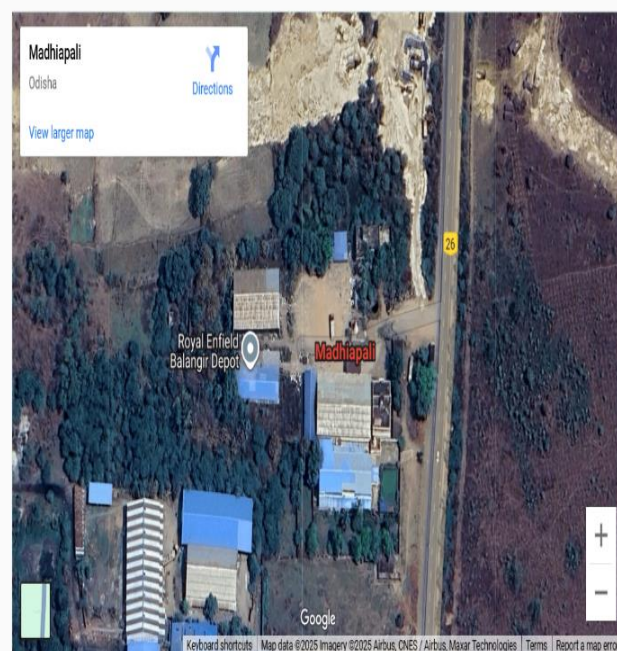
Madhiapali is a small but socially vibrant village in the Balangir district of Odisha, India. Geographically, it lies within the western belt of the state, a region that has historically been associated with both cultural richness and developmental constraints. Balangir is bordered by Bargarh and Subarnapur to the north, Nuapada and Kalahandi to the west, and Kandhamal to the south, forming part of the larger Koshal region. This area is predominantly rural and agricultural in nature, with a significant share of its population dependent on monsoon-fed farming for their livelihood.

The region experiences a tropical climate, characterized by scorching summers, a brief yet heavy monsoon, and relatively cooler winters. Rainfall patterns are erratic, and in years of low precipitation, agricultural output is severely impacted. This climate vulnerability is a long-standing factor influencing migration in the district.



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### Google Map of Madhiapali



The Map data on this website is provided by Google Maps, a free online map service one can access and view in a web browser.

Madhiapali is home to nearly 1,200 to 1,500 residents, living across small, dispersed hamlets. The housing patterns are mixed - some households retain traditional mud-and-thatch structures, while others have upgraded to brick-and-tile or concrete houses. Infrastructure development has been gradual, with electricity and drinking water now available in most homes, although road connectivity remains patchy, especially during heavy rains when certain stretches become difficult to navigate.

Agriculture is the backbone of the village economy, with paddy as the dominant crop, supported by pulses, oilseeds, and some seasonal vegetables. The majority of agricultural holdings are either small or marginal, with limited use of modern machinery. Livestock rearing serves as an additional source of income, but it is



insufficient to ensure economic stability. With limited job options beyond agriculture, many young people migrate in pursuit of better educational and employment opportunities.

The village has only a primary school, while students must travel to a nearby panchayat centre for secondary education. Students seeking senior secondary, vocational, or higher education must travel to the block headquarters or district town, which is not feasible for daily commuting due to inadequate transport facilities. This gap in local educational infrastructure is a major driver of outmigration among the youth.





Madhiapali's social fabric is shaped by a mix of caste identities, economic status, and occupational differences. Families belonging to higher-income brackets, often bolstered by remittances from relatives working in urban centres or outside the state, are more likely to send their children to distant educational institutions. Lower-income households, though aspiring for better education, struggle with the costs of tuition, accommodation, and living expenses in towns and cities.



Culturally, the village remains strongly tied to its traditions, with festivals like Nuakhai, Rath Yatra, and Makar Sankranti celebrated together, strengthening community unity. Folk music and dance, especially Dalkhai and Karma, are still practiced during festive occasions. However, access to television, smartphones, and the influence of returning migrants has gradually expanded the perspectives of the younger generation, increasing their awareness of opportunities outside the village.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings of the study reveal a multi-dimensional picture of student outmigration from Madhiapali, shaped by both push and pull factors.

**Scale and Direction Outmigration** - The village survey reveals that about 65% of households have at least one member who has migrated for education during the last ten years. The majority of these students relocate to district towns like Balangir or Sambalpur for higher secondary education, while those pursuing professional degrees tend to move to larger urban centres such as Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela.

**Socio - Economic Profile of Migrant Student's** -Data suggests that most migrant students come from middle-income families who can bear the cost of hostel accommodation or private rentals in towns. In contrast, economically weaker households often have to depend on scholarships, loans, or support from extended family to send their children away for studies. The gender profile shows a narrowing gap, with an increasing number of girls migrating for education, although male students still form a slight majority.

**Financial Strain and Household Adjustments** - For many families, financing migration-related expenses requires significant budget adjustments. Some households reduce spending on non-essential items, while others lease out part of their farmland or take seasonal labour work to supplement income. The cost burden is higher for professional courses, where tuition fees, books, and city living costs add up quickly.



**Social Impact of the Village** - The ongoing migration of young people from the village brings with it both beneficial and adverse social effects. Positively, this trend has provided younger children with role models and inspired greater educational aspirations. Returnees often bring back new skills, ideas, and social networks that can benefit the community. On the negative side, the steady decline of the local youth population has reduced the agricultural workforce and lowered involvement in cultural activities at the village level.

In summary, the case of Madhiapali reflects a broader rural reality in western Odisha, where educational aspirations are high, but local opportunities remain limited. Student outmigration is both a symptom of infrastructural deficits and a strategy for socio-economic mobility. Although migration provides individuals with new skills and wider exposure, it also creates financial strain and leads to demographic changes in the community. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that improves local facilities while still enabling students to benefit from broader educational networks.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study holds considerable significance for understanding the emerging trend of student outmigration from rural regions like Madhiapali in Balangir, Odisha. Traditionally, migration studies in Odisha have focused largely on labour migration, distress mobility, and seasonal outflow of workers to other states. However, student outmigration for educational purposes remains an underexplored dimension, especially at the micro-village level. This research therefore contributes to broadening the scope of migration discourse by documenting the voices, experiences, and aspirations of rural youth who move away from their native place in search of better academic opportunities.

From a policy perspective, the study provides crucial insights into the deficiencies of local educational infrastructure and highlights how these gaps act as push factors driving students away. By highlighting the limited presence of higher secondary schools, professional courses, and career-focused institutions in rural Balangir, the study can guide government efforts to minimize educational migration. The results can assist policymakers in formulating region-specific strategies, including upgrading local colleges, enhancing transport services, widening scholarship programs, and establishing vocational institutions with a focus on skill development.

For academia, this work contributes to migration studies by situating student outmigration within the framework of socio-economic transformation in rural India. It enriches existing theories of migration and mobility by showing how educational aspirations intersect with class, caste, gender, and regional inequality. In this way, the study addresses an important research gap and contributes to existing literature on rural development and youth migration.

At the community level, its significance lies in showcasing the evolving mindset of rural youth, who now view education beyond their village as a means to achieve upward mobility. It also sheds light on the challenges faced by families, including financial strain, cultural adjustment, and the erosion of local social fabric due to the steady outflow of young people. By recording these ground realities, the study offers a foundation for community leaders, educators, and civil society groups to tackle local challenges and work towards collective solutions.

Lastly, the study carries personal and social relevance for students and families in Madhiapali and similar villages of western Odisha. It validates their aspirations while also recognising the barriers they encounter. By situating their lived experiences within broader developmental debates, the study ensures that the voices of marginalised rural youth are not overlooked in discussions of educational planning and rural upliftment.

## CONCLUSION

The micro-level study of outmigration from Madhiapali village in Balangir district, Odisha, reveals that inadequate access to quality education and limited career opportunities are the primary drivers compelling students to migrate. The lack of higher education institutions, poor infrastructure, and insufficient support systems in rural areas force aspiring youth to seek better prospects in urban centers and other states. This trend reflects the determination of rural students to pursue personal and professional growth, yet it also highlights the deep-rooted disparities in regional development. While migration may offer individual benefits such as exposure, better training, and employability, it often results in the loss of human capital for the local community. The phenomenon contributes to brain drain, leaving behind a weakened social and economic fabric. To address these challenges, it is essential to improve rural education through targeted investments, enhance infrastructure, and introduce vocational and career-oriented programs at the local level. Promoting inclusive development and educational equity can help retain talent within rural areas and ensure that students do not have to leave their communities in search of opportunities. Sustainable solutions must focus on creating a balanced environment where education and growth are accessible to all, regardless of geographic location.

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