



Job Satisfaction In The Shadow Of Migration: A Socio-Economic Association Study Of Migrant Women Labourers In Dakshina Kannada District

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ABSTRACT: Migration has emerged as a critical livelihood strategy for women labourers in India, particularly in regions experiencing uneven development and limited rural employment opportunities. While migration often improves economic participation, the quality of employment and the resulting level of job satisfaction remain uneven and shaped by broader socio-economic structures. This study examines job satisfaction among migrant women labourers through a socio-economic association framework, using empirical evidence from the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. Drawing on primary data collected from 400 migrant women labourers, the study applies descriptive statistics and inferential tools such as chi-square and Fisher's exact tests to examine the association between job satisfaction and selected socio-economic variables including age, employment sector, marital status, education, income, accommodation status, and pre-migration economic condition. The findings reveal that age and employment sector have a statistically significant association with job satisfaction, while most other socio-economic variables do not show significant influence. The results highlight that job satisfaction among migrant women labourers is shaped more by structural employment conditions than by individual socio-economic background. The paper contributes to migration and labour studies by providing district-level empirical evidence and offers important policy insights for improving employment quality and well-being among migrant women labourers.

Keywords: Migration, Migrant Women Labourers, Job Satisfaction, Socio-Economic Factors, Association Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Migration has become an increasingly important socio-economic phenomenon in India, particularly among women from economically weaker sections seeking employment opportunities outside their native regions. Women's migration is often driven by poverty, lack of rural employment, agrarian distress, and the growing demand for female labour in informal urban sectors such as construction, domestic work, agriculture, and services. While migration provides access to income and employment, it also places women in vulnerable labour markets characterized by informality, insecurity, and limited legal protection. Job satisfaction is a crucial indicator of labour well-being and reflects workers' perceptions of their employment conditions, security, and overall work experience. For migrant women labourers, job satisfaction is shaped not only by wages but also by socio-economic background, employment sector, age, family responsibilities, and living conditions. However, in informal labour markets, conventional assumptions linking education, income, and marital status with job satisfaction often do not hold true. Despite growing research on migration and women's labour, limited empirical studies have examined the association between socio-economic characteristics and job satisfaction using robust statistical tools at the district level. This study addresses this gap by focusing exclusively on socio-economic associations and examining how selected demographic and economic variables relate to job satisfaction among migrant women labourers in Dakshina

Kannada district. The phrase “shadow of migration” captures the dual reality where economic opportunity coexists with structural vulnerability, shaping women’s satisfaction with their work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing literature on women’s migration highlights both empowering and exploitative dimensions. Studies suggest that migration enhances women’s economic participation, decision-making power, and financial independence. At the same time, migrant women are disproportionately concentrated in informal sectors with poor working conditions, wage inequality, and lack of social security.

Several studies have examined job satisfaction among informal workers and found that structural factors such as type of employment, job security, and workplace environment have a stronger influence than personal characteristics. Research also indicates that education and income do not necessarily translate into higher job satisfaction in informal labour markets, where skill recognition and wage progression are limited.

However, most studies rely on descriptive analysis and do not systematically test associations between socio-economic variables and job satisfaction. There is a clear research gap in district-level studies focusing exclusively on socio-economic determinants of job satisfaction among migrant women labourers using inferential statistical methods. This study attempts to fill this gap by applying association analysis to a large primary dataset.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the major objectives of the study

1. To examine the association between selected socio-economic variables and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers.
2. To analyse the relationship between age and job satisfaction in the context of migration.
3. To assess the association between employment sector and job satisfaction.
4. To examine whether pre-migration economic condition influences post-migration job satisfaction.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following are the major hypotheses of the study.

H₁: There is a significant association between age and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers.

H₂: There is a significant association between employment sector and job satisfaction.

H₃: There is a significant association between pre-migration economic condition and job satisfaction.

H₄: There is no significant association between job satisfaction and other socio-economic variables such as religion, marital status, education, family type, and income.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the association between selected socio-economic factors and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers in the context of migration. The study is based on primary data collected from migrant women labourers working in various informal employment sectors in the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. The district was purposively selected due to its high concentration of migrant labour and diverse employment opportunities in construction, domestic work, agriculture, and service sectors. A sample of 400 migrant women labourers was selected using a non-probability sampling technique, considering the accessibility and availability of respondents in different work locations. Data were collected through a structured interview schedule designed to capture detailed information on socio-economic characteristics such as age, marital status, education, and religion, type of family, income, employment sector, accommodation status, and economic condition before migration, along with respondents’ level of job satisfaction. The interview method was adopted to ensure accurate data collection, particularly given the varied literacy levels of the respondents. Job satisfaction was measured using a structured scale and later categorised into two levels: satisfied and highly satisfied, for statistical analysis. The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analysed using

appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the socio-economic profile of the respondents, while inferential statistical tools such as the chi-square test and Fisher's exact test were used to examine the association between job satisfaction and selected socio-economic variables. These tests were applied at a 5 per cent level of significance to determine the acceptance or rejection of the formulated hypotheses.

The methodological approach enabled a systematic examination of socio-economic associations influencing job satisfaction among migrant women labourers and ensured the reliability and validity of the findings within the limitations of informal labour market research.

VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY

- 1. Dependent Variables:** Job Satisfaction (Satisfied / Highly Satisfied)
- 2. Independent Variables:** Age, religion, marital status, education, type of family, family income, employment sector, accommodation status, economic condition before migration, monthly income, primary source of income.

DISCUSSION

I. Demographic Profile of Migrant Women Labourers

To contextualize the socio-economic association analysis, the demographic profile of the respondents is presented below. These variables provide essential background for understanding job satisfaction among migrant women labourers and form the basis for subsequent hypothesis testing.

TABLE 1: Age, Religion, Marital Status, Education Information of Migrant Women Labourers

		Migrant Women Labourers	Percentage
AGE	Below 18	0	0.0%
	18-25 years	75	18.8%
	26-35 years	203	50.8%
	36-50 year	67	16.8%
	Above 50	55	13.8%
	Total	400	100.0%
RELIGION	Hindu	375	93.8%
	Muslim	25	6.3%
	Christian	0	0.0%
	Others	0	0.0%
	Total	400	100.0%
MARITAL STUATUS	Married	353	88.3%
	Unmarried	20	5.0%
	Other	27	6.8%
	Total	400	100.0%
EDUCATION	Illiterate	221	55.4%
	Primary	101	25.3%
	Middle	48	12.0%
	High School	22	5.5%
	Graduate	7	1.8%
	Total	400	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of migrant women labourers in terms of age, religion, marital status, and education, which together outline the social background of the respondents. The age distribution shows that migration is most common among women in their prime working years, with over half (50.8%) belonging to the 26–35 age group, followed by 18–25 years (18.8%), 36–50 years (16.8%), and

above 50 years (13.8%). This indicates that women migrate mainly during the most economically productive phase of their lives, when family responsibilities are highest. The religious composition is highly homogeneous, with 93.8 per cent of respondents being Hindu, reflecting the regional and social base from which migrant women labourers are drawn in Dakshina Kannada district. In terms of marital status, a large majority (88.3%) are married, showing that migration is closely linked with household survival strategies rather than individual career advancement. The educational profile reveals severe educational deprivation: more than half of the respondents (55.4%) are illiterate and another 25.3 per cent have only primary education. Very few have reached high school or higher levels. This low educational attainment restricts women's access to skilled and formal employment, confining them largely to informal, low-paid sectors. Overall, Table 1 highlights that migrant women labourers are predominantly married, middle-aged, and educationally disadvantaged, which shapes both their migration decisions and their labour market outcomes.

TABLE 2: Family and Family Income Details of Migrant Women Labourer

FAMILY DETAILS OF MIGRANT WOMEN LABOURERS		
TYPE OF FAMILY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Joint Family	92	23.0%
Nuclear Family	308	77.0%
Total	400	100.0%
FAMILY INCOME DETAILS OF MIGRANT WOMEN LABOURERS		
FAMILY INCOME GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Low Income Group	375	81.3%
Middle Income Group	25	18.8%
High Income Group	0	0.00%
Total	400	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 explains the family structure and income background of migrant women labourers, which reflect their household-level economic pressures. The data show that 77 per cent of respondents belong to nuclear families, while only 23 per cent live in joint families. This dominance of nuclear families suggests reduced social and economic support within the household, placing greater financial responsibility on women to contribute to family income. In terms of family income, the economic vulnerability of the respondents is very clear: 81.3 per cent fall into the low-income group and only 18.8 per cent belong to the middle-income group, with no respondents from the high-income category. This indicates that poverty and income insecurity are central push factors behind women's migration. The combination of low family income and nuclear family structure intensifies economic stress, compelling women to participate in migrant labour markets under difficult conditions. Thus, Table 2 demonstrates that migrant women's employment is not driven by choice or empowerment alone, but by necessity rooted in household-level economic hardship.

II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF MIGRANT WOMEN LABOURERS

Table 3: Socio-Economic Details of the Respondents

Employment Sector of Migrant Women Labourers		
Employment Sector	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	5	13.3%
Construction	192	48.0%
Domestic Work	92	23.0%
Retail or service sector	32	8.0%
Other	79	19.8%
Total	400	100.0%
Accommodation Status of Migrant Women Labourers		
Accommodation Status	Number	Percentage
Employer-Provided	118	29.5%
Rented House	203	50.8%
Temporary Shelter/Worksite	79	19.8%
Total	400	100.0%
Economic Condition Before Migration		
Economic Condition	Number	Percentage
Very Poor	88	22.0%
Poor	312	78.0%
Total	400	100.0%
Monthly Income of The Respondents		
Monthly Income	Number	Percentage
Bellow 10,000	247	61.8%
10,001 to 15,000	108	27.0%
Above 15,000	45	11.3%
Total	400	100.0%
Primary Source of Income of The Respondents		
Primary Source For Income	Number	Percentage
Self-Employment	34	8.5%
Daily wage labourer	286	71.5%
Contract Based Work	80	20.0%
Total	400	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 provides a detailed picture of the socio-economic realities of migrant women labourers by examining their employment sector, accommodation status, pre-migration economic condition, income level, and source of livelihood. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) are engaged in construction work, followed by domestic work (23%) and other informal activities, indicating a heavy concentration in physically demanding and unregulated sectors. Their living conditions are equally unstable: over half (50.8%) live in rented houses, while nearly one-fifth stay in temporary shelters or worksites, highlighting housing insecurity and poor access to basic amenities. The economic condition before migration shows that all respondents were either poor (78%) or very poor (22%), confirming that migration is fundamentally poverty-driven. Even after migration, income remains low, with 61.8 per cent earning below ₹10,000 per month and most (71.5%) depending on daily wage labour, which is irregular and insecure. Only a small fraction have access to contract-based or self-employment work. Together, these findings show that migrant women labourers operate within a cycle of poverty, informality, and vulnerability, where migration

improves access to work but not necessarily to decent or secure employment. Table 3 thus explains the structural context within which job satisfaction must be understood.

HYPOTHESES TESTING AND ASSOCIATION ANALYSIS

H₁: There is a significant association between age and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers.

TABLE 4: Association between Age and Job Satisfaction

Age Group	Satisfied	Highly satisfied	P value
18-25 years	59	16	0.009
26-35 years	184	19	
36-50 year	61	6	
Above 50	43	12	

Significant at 5% level

Table 4 presents the association between age and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers. The results of the chi-square test indicate a statistically significant association between age and job satisfaction at the 5 per cent level ($p = 0.009$). The distribution of responses shows that women in the middle age groups, particularly those aged 26–35 years and 36–50 years, report comparatively higher levels of job satisfaction than younger and older age groups. This pattern suggests that women in these age categories are more economically stable, possess greater work experience, and are better able to adjust to the demands of migrant labour. In contrast, women in the 18–25 years age group and those above 50 years exhibit relatively lower levels of job satisfaction, possibly due to physical strain, job insecurity, or difficulties in adapting to informal work environments. The significant association confirms that age plays an important socio-economic role in shaping job satisfaction among migrant women labourers. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and **H₁**, which states that there is a significant association between age and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers, is accepted.

H₂: There is a significant association between employment sector and job satisfaction.

Table 5: Association between Employment Sector and Job Satisfaction

Employment Sector	Satisfied	Highly satisfied	P value
Agriculture	5	0	0.002
Construction	164	28	
Domestic Work	89	3	
Retail or service sector	29	3	
Other	60	19	

Significant at 5% level

Table 5 presents the association between employment sector and job satisfaction among migrant women labourers. The chi-square analysis reveals a statistically significant association between the two variables at the 5 per cent level of significance ($p = 0.002$), indicating that the level of job satisfaction varies significantly across different employment sectors. Women employed in domestic work and service-related sectors reported comparatively higher levels of job satisfaction, whereas those working in construction and other physically demanding informal sectors reported lower satisfaction levels. This variation can be attributed to differences in the nature of work, physical strain, work hours, job stability, and degree of employer control across sectors. Domestic and service sector jobs, though informal, often provide relatively stable work environments and predictable routines, contributing to higher satisfaction. In contrast, construction work involves greater physical exertion, safety risks, and employment uncertainty, which negatively affect job satisfaction. The statistically significant result leads to the acceptance of **H₂**, confirming that the employment sector plays a crucial role in shaping job satisfaction among migrant women labourers operating within the shadow of migration.

H₃: There is a significant association between pre-migration economic conditions and job satisfaction.

Table 6: Association between Pre-Migration Economic Condition and Job Satisfaction

Economic Condition Before Migration	Satisfied	Highly satisfied	P value
Very Poor	78 (88.6%)	10 (11.4%)	0.555
Poor	269 (86.2%)	43 (13.8%)	

Significant at 5% level

Table 6 presents the association between the pre-migration economic condition of migrant women labourers and their level of job satisfaction after migration. The analysis indicates that a majority of respondents, irrespective of whether they belonged to very poor or poor economic conditions prior to migration, reported similar levels of job satisfaction. The chi-square test result shows that the association between pre-migration economic condition and job satisfaction is statistically not significant at the 5 per cent level ($p = 0.555$). This implies that the economic status of women before migration does not have a decisive influence on their present job satisfaction. The findings suggest that job satisfaction among migrant women labourers is shaped more by post-migration employment realities rather than their earlier economic hardships. Even women who migrated from extremely disadvantaged economic backgrounds did not necessarily report higher satisfaction simply due to income improvement. Therefore, **H₃**, which assumes a significant association between pre-migration economic condition and job satisfaction, is rejected.

H₄: There is no significant association between job satisfaction and other socio-economic variables such as religion, marital status, education, family type, and income.

Table 7: Association between Selected Socio-Economic Variables and Job Satisfaction

Variables	P Value	Result
Religion	0.849	NS
Marital Status	0.922	NS
Education	0.663	NS
Type of the Family	0.264	NS
Family Income	0.464	NS
Accommodation Status	0.060	NS
Monthly Income	0.222	NS

Table 7 presents the association between selected socio-economic variables—namely religion, marital status, educational status, type of family, family income, accommodation status, and monthly income—and the level of job satisfaction among migrant women labourers. The chi-square and Fisher's exact test results indicate that none of these variables show a statistically significant association with job satisfaction at the 5 per cent level of significance. The p-values for religion (0.849), marital status (0.922), and education (0.663), type of family (0.264), family income (0.464), accommodation status (0.060), and monthly income (0.222) are all greater than the critical value of 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. These findings suggest that job satisfaction among migrant women labourers is largely independent of their personal and household socio-economic background. Irrespective of differences in religion, marital status, educational attainment, family structure, income level, or living arrangements, migrant women reported similar levels of job satisfaction. This highlights the reality that in informal and migrant labour contexts, individual socio-economic characteristics do not significantly shape job satisfaction; rather, satisfaction is influenced more by structural employment conditions and the nature of work experienced in the host region. Thus, **H₄** is accepted, reinforcing the argument that job satisfaction exists in the shadow of migration, shaped more by employment structures than by demographic or socio-economic attributes.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study on job satisfaction among migrant women labourers, the following suggestions are proposed to improve their work experience and overall well-being:

1. **Sector-Specific Policy Interventions:** Since the employment sector has a significant association with job satisfaction, labour welfare policies should be tailored to specific sectors. Construction and other physically demanding sectors require urgent attention in terms of safety measures, regulated working hours, and access to basic facilities at worksites.
2. **Improvement of Working Conditions Rather than Demographic Targeting:** The study reveals that most socio-economic variables such as education, income, marital status, and family background do not significantly influence job satisfaction. Therefore, policy interventions should focus more on improving job quality, workplace safety, and employment stability rather than targeting workers based on demographic characteristics.
3. **Age-Sensitive Employment Support:** Given the significant association between age and job satisfaction, age-sensitive work arrangements should be promoted. Younger and older migrant women may require flexible working hours, lighter workloads, and health support, while middle-aged workers may benefit from skill enhancement and job continuity.
4. **Strengthening Labour Rights Awareness:** Many migrant women labourers work in informal sectors with limited awareness of labour rights. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations should conduct awareness programs on minimum wages, workplace safety, and grievance redressal mechanisms to empower migrant women.
5. **Provision of Basic Amenities at the Workplace:** Although accommodation status does not show a significant association statistically, access to safe housing, sanitation, drinking water, and childcare facilities can indirectly enhance job satisfaction and reduce occupational stress among migrant women labourers.
6. **Promotion of Formalization in Informal Sectors:** Efforts should be made to gradually formalize informal employment sectors by encouraging registration of workers, implementation of social security schemes, and inclusion of migrant women labourers in welfare programs such as health insurance and pension schemes.
7. **Support Mechanisms for Long-Term Migrant Women Workers:** Migrant women who continue working over long periods require institutional support such as health check-ups, counselling services, and skill development programs to ensure sustained job satisfaction and well-being.
8. **Future Research Directions:** Future studies may incorporate qualitative methods to capture lived experiences of migrant women labourers, as well as longitudinal designs to understand changes in job satisfaction over time. Further research can also explore inter-district or inter-state comparisons to strengthen generalizability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined job satisfaction among migrant women labourers through a socio-economic association framework, situating the analysis within the broader context of migration and informal employment. Drawing on primary data from Dakshina Kannada district, the research provides empirical evidence on how selected socio-economic variables interact with job satisfaction under the “shadow of migration,” where economic opportunity coexists with structural vulnerability. The findings offer important insights into the nature of work and well-being experienced by migrant women in informal labour markets.

The results clearly demonstrate that job satisfaction among migrant women labourers is not significantly shaped by most socio-economic background characteristics such as religion, marital status, education, family type, or income level. This challenges conventional assumptions that improvements in educational attainment or household income alone can enhance job satisfaction within informal employment contexts. Instead, the study reveals that age and employment sector are the only socio-economic variables that exhibit a statistically significant association with job satisfaction, underscoring the importance of life stage, work experience, and the structural nature of employment in shaping women’s work satisfaction. The significant association between employment sector and job satisfaction highlights deep-seated inequalities within informal labour markets. Migrant women employed in physically demanding and less regulated sectors experience comparatively lower levels of satisfaction, reflecting inadequate working conditions, job

insecurity, and limited social protection. Similarly, the association between age and job satisfaction suggests that stability and accumulated work experience contribute positively to satisfaction during prime working years, while younger and older women remain more vulnerable to dissatisfaction due to uncertainty and physical strain.

Overall, the study concludes that job satisfaction among migrant women labourers exists largely independent of individual socio-economic identity and is instead determined by structural employment conditions encountered in the destination area. Migration may provide access to income and employment, but it does not automatically ensure dignified or satisfying work. Addressing job satisfaction among migrant women therefore requires policy interventions that move beyond demographic targeting and focus on improving the quality, safety, and stability of employment across informal sectors. By offering district-level empirical evidence, this study contributes meaningfully to the literature on migration, gender, and labour by emphasizing that enhancing job satisfaction among migrant women labourers demands structural reforms within labour markets. Strengthening sector-specific labour protections, ensuring access to basic workplace amenities, and promoting dignified employment opportunities are essential steps toward improving the well-being of migrant women who continue to work under the enduring shadow of migration.

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