# SOCIO-ECONOMIC, COMMUNICATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL WOMEN FROM MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

## ABSTRACT

**Aim**: According to the report of Rural Development and Migration Commission 2018, more than 66 percent of Uttarakhand population lives in rural areas.

**Background**: Majority of the rural population in the hills either survive on subsistence agriculture or migrate for better livelihood opportunities. The Uttarakhand state has witnessed significant changes in its demographic structure with slow decadal growth of population in the hilly regions during the period 2001-2011. The excessive rate of male out migration has changed the overall demography and socio-cultural system of the state leading to a number of changes in the lives of rural women. Rural women face greater vulnerability and various problems due to male out-migration and limited livelihood opportunities. This study attempted to find socio-economic, communication and psychological characteristics of rural women from migrant households.

**Study design**: The descriptive research design was used to meet the objective of the study.

**Methodology**: The study was purposively carried out in Almora district of Uttarakhand. Out of the total 11 blocks, one block i.e. Dwarahat was selected randomly. Two villages viz. Talli Mirai and Kaphara were selected randomly and rural women in age group of 18-55 were selected purposely through census method. Pre-tested interview schedule was used for data collection.

**Results**: The findings of the study revealed that majority of the rural women were in the age group of 31-42 years, mostly married, majority of respondents belonged to General category, had middle level educational qualifications, had a medium-sized nuclear family, had small land holding, involved in farming activities and had low monthly income. Only 25 percent of respondents had received training in the last three years. Majority of them have medium level of innovativeness, change proneness, economic motivation and risk preference.

**Conclusion**: Majority of respondents (56.25%) had medium level of cosmopoliteness, had medium level of extension agency contact (54.46%), only a quarter of the respondents had attended a training program in the last three years. Majority (58.93%) of the respondents had medium level of innovativeness, slightly more than half of the respondents (52.68%) had medium level of change proneness. Majority of respondents (65.18%) belonged to medium category of economic motivation and about (62.50%) had medium level of risk preference.

**Key words:** Rural women, Migration, Socio-Economic, Communication, Psychological Characteristics

## INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand holds 20<sup>th</sup> rank in population among Indian states with a population of 10.09 million. Large number of people reside in villages and the rural population in the state is 7.04 million, while urban population accounts for 3.05 million (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2011). The hilly region of the state does not provide conducive terrain for development of industries or other sources of employment. In their absence, agriculture remains the main source of livelihood. Roughly, three-fifth of the working population of Uttarakhand is engaged in agriculture on less than one-fifth of the total cultivable area of the state. Wheat is the most widely cultivated crop, followed by rice and various types of millets, which are planted on the drier leeward slopes. Sugarcane is grown extensively in the gently rolling foothills of the southern region. Other important crops include pulses (legumes) such as pea and chickpea, oilseeds such as soybean, peanut, and mustard, and assorted fruits and vegetables. Many farmers of Uttarakhand practice animal husbandry. The largest concentration of cattle is found in the southern foothills. Goat and sheep are more common in the mountainous areas, although some cattle are kept in every village. Forests in Uttarakhand provide timber for construction, fuel wood, and raw material for various manufacturing activities, including handicrafts. Majority of the rural population in the hills either survive on subsistence agriculture or migrate for better livelihood opportunities. The development of hill districts with regard to infrastructure facilities like electricity, roads, irrigation, etc continues to be inadequate. The inter-district inequality in infrastructure facilities has led to increase in disparity in terms of income and livelihood opportunities between the hills and plains. The increasing trend of urbanization has significant implications for development process and migration is one of the most common outcomes of development process. Migration has long been an important livelihood strategy for people of the hilly region of the state. The development experience of the state over the last one and half decade has been quite encouraging with respect to achieving high economic growth. However, the growth has been mainly centered in the plain districts of the state and the hill districts lag far behind in the increasing prosperity of the state. Most of the economic opportunities are concentrated in plain areas of the state, leading to huge income inequalities across the hill and plain districts of the state. The final report on Outmigration from hill region of Uttarakhand in 2015 by NIRD revealed that the state has witnessed significant changes in its demographic structure, particularly during the decade of 2001-2011 - a period of high economic growth in the state. It has registered a moderate growth in population (1.74% per annum) during the decade 2001-2011 and the hill region of the state has witnessed a much lower growth in population (0.70 %) when compared to plain districts (2.82 %). Further, rural areas of hill districts registered lowest population growth rate of 0.38 percent during 2001-2011. On the other hand, population in urban areas of hill districts increased substantially during the period. Much of the growth in population in plain districts of Uttarakhand is due to migration from rural areas in the hill districts of the state.

Main reasons of migration in the state of Uttarakhand are desire for better livelihood/employment, decline in fertility of land or decrease in agricultural production, lack of better education facilities, physical infrastructure and medical facilities, and destruction of crops by wild animals. Excessive rate of male out-migration in the hill districts of Uttarakhand has led to changes in the rural production system and socio cultural structure of the villages. Male out-migration from rural areas has resulted in women having to assume roles and responsibilities previously handled by men. This shift in household dynamics has significantly altered women's control over minor household expenditures and freedom of physical mobility. Prior to male out migration also, women in the hills played a significant and crucial role in agricultural and allied activities, but were given little credit. Male out migration has resulted in women bearing the sole responsibility of managing the household, agriculture and livestock. Rural women also face greater vulnerability on various fronts due to male out-migration and limited livelihood opportunities. Their ability and capacity to cope with the uncertainties and vulnerabilities in the hill settings is determined by the knowledge and skills they have.

Several literatures were reviewed related to socio-economic, communication and psychological characteristics of rural women. Pant and Kumar (2003) conducted a study on effect of different socio-personal characteristics of hill women and inferred that most of the respondents had small land holding, 59 % of the hill women belonged to young age group and 54 percent had medium level of education. A study conducted by Singh and Sharma (2003) on tribal women in hill agriculture reported that majority of the respondents were illiterate and extension contact of the respondents was very poor. Majority of the farm families belonged to marginal farm and low annual income categories. Kumar and Bhardwaj (2005) carried out a study on information needs of hill women in Kumaon division of Uttarakhand and concluded that nuclear family system was predominant (55.36%) in the village. The results of study conducted by Mishra *et al.* (2005) on women's access to farm information and technologies revealed that 70.00 percent of farm women were in the age group of 31-45 years, half of them were illiterate, 80.00 percent were part of a joint family, 46.00 percent households had farm area of more than two hectares. Agriculture was the main occupation of the respondents with pisciculture, horticulture and dairying as subsidiary occupations. Gupta and Tripathi (2006) conducted a study to understand the impact of communication interventions on technological empowerment of resource poor rural women. It was found that 56 percent of women belonged to middle age group and 75.80 percent had low level of literacy. Nuclear family system was predominantly (63.40%) found in the village. Majority of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and reported it as their primary source of income. A study on communication pattern among farm women by Singh *et al.* (2006) concluded that majority of women respondents had access to radio (55%) followed by television (28.30%), magazines (26%) and newspaper for entertainment and information purposes. Mande *et al.* (2007) reported that majority of farm women (80%) were middle aged with medium socio-economic status (53%) and small land holding (57%). It was found that 40 percent were illiterate. A study conducted by Nimoda (2013) on information and training needs of farm women on crop production technology results showed that 36.36 percent of farm women had

high socio-economic status, followed by medium socioeconomic status (35.45%). Maximum number of the farm women (39.09 %) had low social participation and 39.09 percent had medium information seeking behavior. Jantwal (2015) studied extension needs of 120 farm women in Almora and Nainital districts of Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. It was observed that 61.66 percent of respondents belonged to middle aged group and had small land holding. Majority of the respondents belonged to General Caste (89.16%) and 27.50 percent of farm women were educated upto primary level. Friends and relatives were regarded as the desired sources of information by majority of respondents (82.50%). Jahan and Khan (2016) carried out a study on participation of farm women in various agriculture and allied activities and stated that majority of the women belong to the age group of 20-40 years, were actively involved in pre sowing and sowing activities (53.53%) and had maximum share in post sowing activities (61.81%). Further, 55.68 percent were engaged in post-harvest activities and 58.42 percent respondents were involved in animal husbandry activities. Panwar (2017) conducted a study on the impact of vocational training programmes conducted by KVK for rural women and reported that maximum numbers of rural women (46.70%) were in middle age group, 44.16 percent had studied upto primary and middle school and 35.83 percent of the rural women belonged to medium level of economic motivation. Manohar (2018) carried out a study on training needs assessment of farm women in Rahuri, Maharastra and summarized that maximum number of respondent (41.67%) belonged to middle aged group followed by young age group (40.83%) and remaining (17.50%) belonged to old age group. Also 45.00 percent of the farm women were educated up to secondary school. Majority of the respondents (75.83%) were earning medium level of annual income, followed by low income (15.84%) and high income (8.33%). It was also found that 42.50 percent of the farm women had medium size land holding. Yadav (2018) conducted a study to find out the impact of male out-migration on work and status of hill women in Uttarakhand. The results indicated that maximum number of respondents (64.09%) belonged to middle age group (31-54 years), followed by old age group (20%), whereas only (15.91%) respondents belonged to young age group (20-30 years). Majority of the respondents belonged to General Caste (92.73%) and 7.27 percent respondents belonged to Scheduled Caste. The study revealed that majority of respondents (58.63%) belonged to medium size families, followed by small sized families (27.73%) and large families (13.64%). Sharma *et al.* (2020) carried out a study on socio economic profile of rural farmwomen in KVK operational villages of Rajkot district and reported that maximum number of the respondents (43.75%) had small land holdings and were in middle age group. They were educated upto primary level and resided in nuclear family. It was found that 17.50 percent had not attended any training program. More than half of the respondents had medium social participation (56.25%), followed by 26.25 percent respondents with low social participation and 17.50 percent respondents with high social participation. Malakar and Deka (2021) research on the topic entitled Study on Background characteristics and use of ICTs in agriculture and allied areas by the rural women of Assam revealed that about 42.25 percent of the respondents belonged to lower middle age group (35-47 years). Majority (94.75 %) of the respondents was married and 39.75 percent of respondents had

education upto high school level. More than half (60.25%) of rural women belonged to Other Backward Caste. A large majority 82.50 percent of the respondent family occupation was farming. It was also reported that television was used for gathering information on improved farming methods (88.47%), mobile phone for availing information about fertilizers (78.10%), radio for accessing information on weather (66.17%).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

There are 13 districts in the state Uttarakhand. Out of the six districts in the Kumaon division, the study was conducted in the Almora district of Uttarakhand. The district was selected purposively as it has negative population growth rate of -1.64 percent (Census 2011). In the year 2001, population of the district was 6.31 lakh. This number came down to 6.23 lakh by the year 2011 due to heavy out migration. The study was conducted on rural women in Almora district of Uttarakhand. Out of the 11 blocks in Almora district viz. Dwarahat block was selected randomly. Two villages, Talli Mirai and Kaphara were selected randomly for the present study.

All women of migrant households in the age group of 18-55 years (112 respondents) were considered for the present study. Women in this age group usually have the responsibility of managing the household work and in addition perform farm activities. All the respondents were interviewed personally by the researcher and data on profile characteristics of rural women was taken.

**Table 1:   Sample plan of the research**

| Level | Number | | Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| District (Almora) | 1 | | Purposive selection |
| Block (Dwarahat) | 1 | | Random selection |
| Villages ( Talli Mirai and Kaphara) | 2 | | Random selection |
| Respondents | Talli Mirai Village | 68 | Census |
| | Kaphara Village | 44 | |

**Personal and Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

This included information about the characteristics; age, education, caste, marital status, family size, family type, size of land holding and monthly income.

**Communication characteristics**

Under this section, information on cosmopoliteness, extension agency contact and training experience of respondents were collected.

## Psychological characteristics

This section included four independent variables; viz: innovativeness, change proneness, economic motivation and risk preference of the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Personal and Socio-economic characteristics of rural women of migrant households

➢ **Age**

It is clear from Table 2 that maximum number of respondents (44.65%) were in the category of middle age followed by 37.50 percent respondents in old age category and remaining 17.85 percent respondents were in the young age category. The average age of the respondents was 39 years. It could be inferred that most of the women who performs all households and field activities and took the responsibility after male out migration belonged to middle aged group (31-42 years) category.

➢ **Caste**

The Table 2 shows that three-fourths of the respondents i.e. 75.00 percent belonged to General Category and rest 25.00 percent of the respondents were from Scheduled Caste category. None of the respondents belonged to Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. It could be inferred that most of the households from where male out migration was highest belonged to General Category.

➢ **Education**

The Table 2 presented below, reveals that maximum number of respondents (28.58%) were educated upto middle level school, followed by 23.22 percent who had completed secondary education and 16.97 percent of the respondents were educated upto graduation. Same proportion of respondents was neoliterate and had primary level of education (11.60% each). The rest 8.03 percent respondents were illiterate. None of the respondents had higher secondary education.

➢ **Marital status**

It is evident from Table 2 that maximum numbers of respondents (83.04%) were married, followed by 11.60 percent of the respondents who were widowed and remaining 5.36 percent were unmarried. None of the respondents were divorcee.

➢ **Family size**

As shown in Table 2, majority number of respondents (81.25%) belonged to medium size family comprises of 4-7 members, followed by 12.5 percent respondents who were part of small size family (upto 3 members) and remaining 6.25 percent belonged to large family with more than 7 members. The average family size in the study area was of 5 members.

> **Family type**

It is clear from the Table 2 that majority of the respondents (69.64%) belonged to nuclear family and remaining 30.36 percent of the respondents were part of joint family. None of the respondents belonged to extended family type.

> **Size of the land holding**

From Table 2 it can be concluded that majority of the respondents (83.93 %) have small size land holding, followed by 10.72 percent respondents who own medium size land holding and remaining 5.35 percent of the respondents had large size of land holding. The average size of holding in the study area was 8.31 nali. It was observed that fragmentation of landholding in the villages has resulted in decrease in the size of the land holdings.

> **Monthly Income**

Data regarding monthly income of the respondents has been presented in Table 2. It shows that majority of respondents (68.75%) belonged to low income category, followed by medium and high income category (25.90% and 5.35%, respectively). It can be concluded that majority of the people in the study area lived in precarious conditions due to limited livelihood opportunities in the hilly areas.

**Table 2: Personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

| S. No. | Characteristics | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Age | Young ( 18- 30 years) | 20 | 17.85 |
| | | Middle ( 31- 42 years) | 50 | 44.65 |
| | | Old ( 43 - 54 years) | 42 | 37.50 |
| 2. | Caste | General | 84 | 75.00 |
| | | Scheduled caste | 28 | 25.00 |
| 3. | Education | Illiterate | 9 | 8.03 |
| | | Neoliterate | 13 | 11.60 |
| | | Primary level | 13 | 11.60 |
| | | Middle level | 32 | 28.58 |
| | | Secondary | 26 | 23.22 |
| | | Graduate or other | 19 | 16.97 |
| 4. | Marital status | Unmarried | 6 | 5.36 |
| | | Married | 93 | 83.04 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Widow | 13 | 11.60 |
| 5. | **Family size** | Small (Up to 3 members) | 14 | 12.5 |
| | | Medium (4-7 members) | 91 | 81.25 |
| | | Large ( >7 members) | 7 | 6.25 |
| 6. | **Family type** | Nuclear | 78 | 69.64 |
| | | Joint | 34 | 30.36 |
| 7. | **Size of land holding** | Small (2-11 nali) | 94 | 83.93 |
| | | Medium (12-20 nali) | 12 | 10.72 |
| | | Large (21-30) | 6 | 5.35 |
| 8. | **Monthly income** | Low ( Rs. 2000-6000) | 77 | 68.75 |
| | | Medium (Rs. 6000-10000) | 29 | 25.90 |
| | | High (Rs 10000-15000) | 6 | 5.35 |

**Communication Characteristics of the rural women of migrant households**

➢ **Cosmopoliteness**

It is clear from Table 3 that majority of respondents (56.25%) had medium degree of cosmopolitenes, followed by the respondents with low level of cosmopoliteness (34.82%) and remaining 8.93 percent had high level of cosmopoliteness. As majority of hill women were busy with in household and farm activities, they rarely had a chance to interact with people from outside their own community/village.

➢ **Extension agent contact**

From Table 3 given below it is clear that slightly more than half of the respondents (54.46%) had medium level of extension agency contact, followed by 38.40 percent of respondents, who had low extension agency contact category and remaining 7.14 percent had high extension agency contact. It was observed that women generally did not contact any extension personnel for advice regarding agriculture and allied activities. They usually consulted the village leaders, elders and friends.

➢ **Training Exposure**

It was observed that very few respondents had exposure to training programs due to poor extension services in the area and few training activities in the village. It was found that

only 25 percent of the respondents had attended training program in the last three years. Topics of training included tailoring, stitching, beauty parlour and computer courses.

**Table 3: Communication characteristics of the respondents**

| S. No. | Communication characteristics | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Cosmopoliteness | Low ( Up to 2 ) | 39 | 34.82 |
| | | Medium (3-4) | 63 | 56.25 |
| | | High (> 4 ) | 10 | 8.93 |
| 2. | Extension agency contact | Low ( Up to 5 ) | 43 | 38.40 |
| | | Medium (6-11) | 61 | 54.46 |
| | | High (> 11) | 8 | 7.14 |
| 3 | Training exposure | Attended | 28 | 25 |
| | | Not attended | 84 | 75 |

**Psychological Characteristics of Rural women of migrant households**

➢ **Innovativeness**

It is clear from Table 4 that majority (58.93%) of the respondents had medium level of innovativeness. This was followed by respondents with high level of innovativeness (21.43 %) and 19.64 percent had low level of innovativeness. This may be due to the fact that majority of respondents belonged to middle aged category (31-42 years) who are likely to have adequate farming experience and say in decision making.

➢ **Change proneness**

It is clear from Table 4 that slightly more than half of the respondents (52.68%) had medium level of change proneness and reveals that most of the respondents had moderate tendency to accept changes. Further, 45.53 percent of respondents had high change proneness and 1.79 percent of respondents had low level of change proneness. The tendency to accept changes easily by a substantial number of women may be due to the influence of the migrant member of the household.

➢ **Economic motivation**

It is clear from the data presented in the Table 4 that majority of respondents (65.17%) belonged to medium category of economic motivation, followed by 25 percent of respondents with low level of economic motivation and only 9.82 percent of respondents exhibited high level of economic motivation.

➢ **Risk preference**

The Table 4 shows that majority of respondents (62.50%) had medium level of risk preference which indicates that rural women were ready to take risks to a certain extent. It was also observed that 30.35 percent of respondents had high level of risk preference, and remaining 7.15 percent of respondents had low risk preference.

**Table 4: Psychological characteristics of the respondents**

| S.No. | Psychological characteristics | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Innovativeness | Low ( 11- 16 ) | 22 | 19.64 |
| | | Medium ( 17-21 ) | 66 | 58.93 |
| | | High (22-26 ) | 24 | 21.43 |
| 2. | Change proneness | Low ( Up to 2) | 2 | 1.79 |
| | | Medium ( 3-4 ) | 59 | 52.68 |
| | | High (> 4) | 51 | 45.53 |
| 3. | Economic motivation | Low ( 6- 7 ) | 28 | 25 |
| | | Medium (8-9) | 73 | 65.18 |
| | | High (10-11) | 11 | 9.82 |
| 4. | Risk preference | Low (11-14 ) | 8 | 7.15 |
| | | Medium ( 15-18 ) | 70 | 62.50 |
| | | High (19-21 ) | 34 | 30.35 |

**CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the findings related to profile characteristics, it was concluded that majority of respondents (44.65%) were in the category of middle age, three-fourths of the respondents i.e. 75.00 percent belonged to General caste, maximum number of respondents (28.58%) were educated upto middle school followed by 23.22 percent who had completed secondary education and 16.97 percent of the respondents were graduates. Majority of respondents (83.04%) were married and have medium size family (81.25%). Most of the respondents (83.93 %) owned small size of land holding and about (68.75%) belonged to low income category. Majority of

respondents (56.25%) had medium level of cosmopoliteness, had medium level of extension agency contact (54.46%), only a quarter of the respondents had attended a training program in the last three years. Majority (58.93%) of the respondents had medium level of innovativeness, slightly more than half of the respondents (52.68%) had medium level of change proneness. Majority of respondents (65.18%) belonged to medium category of economic motivation and about (62.50%) had medium level of risk preference.

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