

---

## Exploring the Intersection of Migration and Industrialization: A Qualitative Study of Regional Development in the Durgapur Industrial Belt

**Asraful Islam**

---

PhD Scholar, School of Management & Labour Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India.  
[asraful02937@gmail.com](mailto:asraful02937@gmail.com)

---

**How to cite this article:** Asraful Islam (2024). Exploring the Intersection of Migration and Industrialization: A Qualitative Study of Regional Development in the Durgapur Industrial Belt. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 6486-6491.

---

### ABSTRACT

There is a common belief that industrialisation is essential to economic prosperity, and many developing countries are making plans to relocate their populations from less developed, agriculturally-based areas to more industrialised, urban centres. A wide array of factors such as social, monetary, political, cultural, gender, religious, ecological are taken into consideration. From the view point of migrant manufacturing workers, the present research tries to explore dynamics and inherent complexity of Durgapur's regional growth. The study addresses issues such as socio-economic condition, living standard, children's academic performance, patterns of remittances, and the impact of social networks on migration and job opportunities. This study incorporates and uses qualitative narrative to explore the rich history of Durgapur city and its different aspects attached to it and their relationship. This study addresses the complex dynamics of relationship of different dynamics associated with localised development in the evolution and emergence of a vibrant Indian city. The outcome of the research study will enlighten about the current regional development of Durgapur as a city and also will help us to understand the emergence of cities in developing countries like India.

**Keywords:** Migration, Development, Labour, Education, Women.

---

### Introduction

Regional development encompasses social, economic, and environmental progress within a geographic area, addressing disparities and enhancing residents' quality of life (Degórski and Degórska, 2021). It aims for balanced growth, advocating diversification across sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, services, and technology (Deogharia, 2018). Infrastructure improvement, including utilities and transportation, plays a crucial role in economic expansion. Human capital investment in health, education, and skill training fosters innovation and productivity. Recent trends emphasize environmental sustainability (Hardy and Lloyd, 1994), along with inclusivity, addressing social disparities for holistic development (Wilson, 2011). Assessing economic indicators, social factors, and environmental aspects is crucial for a comprehensive understanding and sustainable regional development strategy. In regions like Durgapur, industrialization historically drove economic growth, but concerns about environmental impact necessitate innovative solutions for sustainable development. Research on pollution's health consequences, prevalent in developed countries, is emerging in India, shedding light on environmental damage attributable to air pollution (Ghosh et al., 2014). Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering sustainable regional development.

Durgapur, termed the "Steel City" of Eastern India, originated in the 1950s as an intentional urban development, pivotal in India's early industrial growth (Shaw, 2009). Initially an industrial hub, it transitioned to a more

diversified economy emphasizing education and healthcare. Despite growth, a significant population remains engaged in manufacturing labor (Majumder, 2018). Migration from states like Uttar Pradesh and neighboring regions surged from 1950 to 1980, primarily for employment in steel plants. However, socio-economic conditions for migrants, reflected in studies by Das (2020) and Parasuraman (1993), show limited improvement over generations. Factors like inadequate education and skill development opportunities contribute to this stagnation. The study advocates a holistic strategy for Durgapur, emphasizing not only industrial expansion but also capital enhancement and social progress. The qualitative methodology delves into stakeholders' perspectives, providing nuanced insights into challenges and suggesting avenues for sustained growth in the region.

This research aims to understand the different aspects of regional development of Durgapur driven by urbanisation and industrialisation. The contribution of migrants workers on the socio-economic factors is significant. So, the study of the migrant workers, working in the manufacturing factories in the regions is very important. The study aims to explore the inter-relationship between socio-economic parameters, living standard of the residents, migrant remittance behaviour, social network and their contribution in the regional development of Durgapur.

### **Method**

This study uses a robust and well framed research design to capture different perspective and labourers and respondents experiences who are associated with the steel industry of Durgapur. Survey was conducted to get responses from the respondents who are working as labourers in the steel industry, people engaged in businesses linked with steel industry and households having a linkage with steel industry. Semi-structured questionnaire is used for data collection. All ethical consideration are followed to collect data especially from female participants and factory representatives. Thematic analysis is used to identify themes and different patterns which helps to explore and understand different socio-economic parameters, relationship with environment and the effect of industrialization and urban planning on regional development which encompasses different groups such as factory labourers, businessmen and the residents of the region.

Urban sociology and migration, in many studies, offer critical insights into migration patterns and their impact on urban environments. Ravenstein's foundational research from 1889 serves as a basis for understanding migration laws and motivations, especially concerning urban formations. Scholars like Saskia Sassen (1991) emphasize the impact of global economic processes on urban migration, particularly in global cities. Exploring the multifaceted associations among political, economic, social, and cultural parameters unveils the conceptual relationships shaping migrants' experiences in urban landscapes. Social capital, emanating from social ties and networks, significantly influences migration processes, providing resources and support. Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986) assert that social capital helps in securing resources and is support for migrants. Additionally, studies underscores the importance of information flow in employment opportunities and social assistance during migration. Social capital fosters cohesion and a fosters feeling of association, crucial for migrating communities in adapting to new environments (Putnam, 2015). This interconnection of urban sociology, social capital, and regional development theories elucidates the nuances of migration networks, contributing to an understanding of regional development in the Durgapur Industrial belt. The study underscores the intricate interplay of economic and social parameters at local and global levels, influencing the perseverance and results of persons and groups involved in the development process, adding complexity to understanding regional development in the Durgapur context.

### **Living Standards and Quality of Life in Durgapur**

A recurrent subject emerged from the qualitative narratives that were collected from a variety of participants. In this study, the theme identified was Durgapur's living conditions and quality of life, particularly for people engaged in the steel sector. Most respondents revealed that the prevailing conditions of Durgapur are better compared to native place, but the overrrall consensus is, it cannot be said to be ideal.

**Housing and Amenities:** Many workers stated that their living conditions had improved after migrating to Durgapur. Despite being characterised as modest, with restricted room and facilities, their homes signified an improvement from the more primitive lodgings they had in their rural hometowns. Frequent note was made of the availability of utilities such as power, running water, and, in certain instances, improved sanitation facilities..

However, there were also concerns about the rising cost of rent and the lack of affordable housing options, which put a strain on their financial stability.

As one of the respondent vividly described his experience:

"Moving to Durgapur, despite its imperfections, has significantly improved my life. In the village, unemployment and limited facilities were challenging. Here, I have a job and access to basic amenities, providing a sense of purpose. Even with its issues, the move has positively impacted my family's daily life, especially with the convenience of a home toilet, marking a step up from our previous socio-economic challenges(Ajay, 24 Years, Bihar, Arariya-District)."

This personal account highlights the nuanced nature of the migrant experience in Durgapur. It underscores not just the economic factors but also the basic human dignities and conveniences that he sense as a development.

**Food Habits and Health:** When discussing food habits and health, respondents indicated a mixed experience. On one hand, the proximity to markets in Durgapur meant better access to a variety of food items, which was not always the case in their rural communities. On the other hand, the increased reliance on processed and fast foods was a source of health concerns. Many workers spoke about the physical demands of their jobs and the limited access to healthcare services, which affected their overall health and wellbeing. Reflecting on the theme of Food Habits and Health, one respondent shared their experience:

"In our village, the diet was mainly what we grew (Pulse, Rice and a seasonal Vegetable) - simple and repetitive. In Durgapur, our family's eating habits changed with access to diverse foods. While markets offer variety, busy schedules often lead to more processed foods, posing health concerns. Factory work's physical demands differ from village labor, causing unique health issues. Access to healthcare exists, but costs and quality vary. Unlike the village, where the community supported each other during illness, the city lacks that communal support, a missed aspect in our urban life. So, while we have better access to a variety of food and formal healthcare, the trade-offs in terms of our health and well-being are quite complex. Rehman, 32 years, UP, Ballia-District)."

This narrative captures the complex interplay between improved access to food variety in an urban setting and the associated health implications, highlighting the nuanced impacts of urban migration on lifestyle and health.

**Education and Employment:** The narratives revealed a sense of hope regarding education and employment opportunities in Durgapur. Workers expressed that, although the wages in the factories were not high, they were generally more stable and predictable than the income from agricultural work in their villages. This stability was

seen as crucial for planning their children's education. The availability of schools in Durgapur was considered an advantage, even though the quality of education and the cost of schooling were concerns for many families. One respondent reflected on the themes of Education and Employment, sharing their perspective:

"Moving to Durgapur brought a sense of hope, especially regarding my children's future. In the village, our livelihood depended on unpredictable agriculture, often insufficient. Factory work in Durgapur provides steady, albeit modest, wages, crucial for planning our children's education. Durgapur offers better school options, providing my children opportunities I never had. Yet, education costs are a constant worry, and juggling finances is common. While the schools are an improvement, I question the education quality. Despite stable income, the lack of upward mobility in factory jobs is concerning, presenting challenges for long-term prospects. I hope that with a good education, my children will have more choices than I did, that they won't be limited to the factory floor. (Raghunath Yadav, 42 Years, Mizapur, UP)."

The narrative encapsulates migrant workers' mixed emotions about urban life, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in Durgapur. Despite imperfect living conditions, respondents see the move positively for improved amenities, food variety, and stable employment, creating a better foundation for their children's future. The complexity of adapting to a new environment with diverse possibilities is evident in their perspectives.

### **Socio-economic Status and Migration Dynamics**

Migration to Durgapur is often driven by the need for survival, with individuals seeking stability and better opportunities. The narratives reveal an influx of people, like the middle-aged factory worker, attracted for more prosperous lifestyle. However, the impact on socio-economic status is nuanced, as illustrated by a young mother's struggle to maintain an improved standard of living. Migrants sending remittances for their family who were staying in their homeland plays a significant role for their living but make the migrants to stay in a frugal condition. Women migrants have to face higher vulnerability, different gender based difficulties and other socio-economic problems. The discrimination present in the job market often land women in low paying and precarious jobs. Despite all this challenges the statement like Jyotimayi's, predicts optimism and resilience. Migrant women's leading this daily life full of difficulties but with a hope that the sacrifice they are doing today will bring bright future for her and her children. The networks which got established among migrant women's provide support and a chance of collaborative opportunity, signifying the importance and requirement of policies for the region. These narratives of the migrant women's present a complex interplay between migrations dynamics, its impact on different socio-economic parameters and the challenges of the migrant women in the region.

### **Social Networks and Development**

A social network plays a vital role in multifaceted development in boosting communication and exchange of knowledge. This social network plays a significant role in Durgapur for unskilled labour recruitment particularly in the steel industry facilitating mobility in labour market. These networks also provide financial support within its communities which have an impact on savings. The journey of the migrants to Durgapur reflects the importance of social network in job recommendation and settlements. Many of the workers highlighted the significance of collective development and growth of community assisted by social capital contributes in regional development. These experience narratives reflects the impact of social network on the life of the migrants their socio-economic condition and in the regional development of the region.

### **Factory workers' perspectives on development:**

The progress of the factory workers can be determined by the parameters of working condition, skill development, compensation and proper balance in work-life. The different narratives from the workers in the industrial area of Durgapur present a picture which is a combination of ambitions and challenges. As per the narrative of an aged worker, the development of the infrastructures and facilities in the region is more compared to the individual development who are working in the factories in lower wages. As per the narrative of a young worker, who has high aspiration for the quality of life of her children, it is becoming very difficult for her to create a balance to meet the daily requirements and long term requirements in life. Modern amenities improve living standards but also increase financial stress. Though, Durgapur had undergone a remarkable development in terms of physical infrastructure but the socio-economic parameters of the labourers working in the factories had not improved as expected depicting a mixed growth story of Durgapur.

## Discussion

This study aligns with core principles in regional development, migration, and urban sociology, highlighting the impact of social capital within migrant networks. Durgapur's transformation into an industrial hub reflects the concept of a growth pole, influencing regional development patterns. Respondents' narratives mirror urban sociology, addressing challenges in economic and social parameters during migration to metropolitan areas, as explored by scholars like Saskia Sassen. Bourdieu and Coleman emphasize social capital's role in migrants' movement and settlement in cities. The study advocates a holistic approach to address migrant workers' needs, focusing on education, skill development, healthcare, and equitable compensation. Enhancing human capital and physical infrastructure is crucial for effective strategies. Social networks' significance in facilitating migration and settlement calls for policies promoting community expansion and social cohesion. The study's limitations include a specific geographic scope and subjectivity due to qualitative data, suggesting the need for comparative studies with quantitative methodologies. Future research could explore socio-economic mobility among migrant laborers and their origin families for a more comprehensive understanding.

## Conclusion:

Migration to Durgapur, initially for industrial prospects, enhances service accessibility and income sources. However, challenges like higher living costs, health issues, and socio-economic stagnation arise. Social networks play a vital role in migrants' settlement. Policymakers must adopt a holistic approach, prioritizing migrant workers' needs: education, housing, healthcare, and employment practices. Industries should contribute to community development, fostering social cohesion. The research emphasizes a comprehensive strategy for regional development, considering economic, social, and human capital aspects. Addressing migrants' challenges is crucial for sustainable growth in regions like Durgapur.

## References

- Banerjee, S., Banerjee, A., & Palit, D. (2021). Ecosystem Services and Impact of Industrial Pollution on Urban Health: Evidence from Durgapur, West Bengal, India. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 193(11), 744.
- Bibri, S. E., & Krogstie, J. (2017). Smart Sustainable Cities of the Future: An Extensive Interdisciplinary Literature Review. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 31, 183-212.
- Connelly, M. P., Li, T. M., MacDonald, M., & Parpart, J. L. (2000). Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives. *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, 51-159.
- Das, S. (2020). Migrants, Work, and Sustenance in the Coalfield of Raniganj. *Journal of Labour and Society*, 23(3), 265-281.
- Degórski, M., & Degórski, B. (2021). Sustainable Regional Development: Environmental Practices. In *Regional Development Planning and Practice: Contemporary Issues in South Asia* (pp. 3-31). Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- Deogharia, P. C. (2018). Diversification of Agriculture: a Review. *Journal of Economic & Social Development*, 15(1), 46-59.

- Essers, C., Benschop, Y., & Doorewaard, H. (2010). Female Ethnicity: Understanding Muslim Immigrant Businesswomen in the Netherlands. *Gender, Work & Organisation*, 17(3), 320-339.
- Foray, D., McCann, P., & Ortega-Argilés, R. (2015). Smart Specialisation and European Regional Development Policy. *Oxford handbook of Local Competitiveness*, 458-480.
- Ghermandi, A., & Sinclair, M. (2019). Passive Crowdsourcing of Social Media in Environmental Research: A Systematic Map. *Global Environmental Change*, 55, 36-47.
- Ghosh, A., Gupta, A., & Spears, D. (2014). Are children in West Bengal Shorter than Children in Bangladesh?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21-24.
- Hardy, S., & Lloyd, G. (1994). An Impossible Dream? Sustainable Regional Economic and Environmental Development. *Journal of the Regional Studies Association*, 28(8), 773-780.
- Hopton, M. E., Cabezas, H., Campbell, D., Eason, T., Garmestani, A. S., Heberling, M. T., ... & Zanowick, M. (2010). Development of a Multidisciplinary Approach to Assess Regional Sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 17(1), 48-56.
- Leinhardt, S. (Ed.). (2013). *Social networks: A developing Paradigm*. Elsevier.
- Majumder, A. (2018). *Time, Space and Capital in India: Longing and Belonging in an Urban-Industrial Hinterland*. Routledge.
- Mukherjee, D. (2004). Problems and Prospects of Informal Manufacturing Sector: A Case study of Durgapur City. *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, 36(2).
- Paraskevopoulou, A. (2019). Gender and Precarious Work. *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, 1-18. Springer, Cham, 2019.
- Parasuraman, S. (1993). Impact of Displacement by Development Projects on Women in India. *ISS Working Paper Series/General Series*, 159, 1-12.
- Putnam, R. D. (2015). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. In *The City Reader* (pp. 188-196). Routledge.
- Ravenstein, E. G. (1889). The Laws of Migration. *Journal of The Royal Statistical Society*, 52(2), 241-305.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2013). Do Institutions Matter for Regional Development?. *Regional studies*, 47(7), 1034-1047.
- Rogošić, S., & Baranović, B. (2016). Social Capital and Educational Achievements: Coleman vs. Bourdieu. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 6(2), 81-100.
- Sassen, S. (1991). *The global city*. New York.
- Shaw, A. (2009). Town Planning in Postcolonial India, 1947-1965: Chandigarh Re-Examined. *Urban Geography*, 30(8), 857-878.
- Shishehgar, S., Gholizadeh, L., DiGiacomo, M., Green, A., & Davidson, P. M. (2017). Health and Socio-Cultural Experiences of Refugee Women: an Integrative Review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 19, 959-973.
- Thakur, D. (Ed.). (1997). *Coal and Steel Industries* (Vol. 3). Deep and Deep Publications.
- Wilson, B. (2011). Social Inclusion: Universities and Regional Development. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 17(1), 98-114.