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Profile of the banjara community in Ratnagiri district

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Ratnagiri district of Konkan region of Maharashtra. Four tahsils were selected randomly from Ratnagiri district. The migrants were selected randomly from each tehsil, and from each tahsil three villages were randomly selected. Thus total 120 Banjaras (migrants) were selected for present study.

The study indicated that majority of the migrants were in middle age category with high school level of education having farming as a major occupation, favourable for perception about migration, medium category of family size, medium category of annual income, nature of migration is permanent, family members take decision for migration, medium category of economic motivation and moderate category of livelihood. It was revealed that slightly more than medium of migrants had medium level of migration behaviour index of migrants. The study reported that the selected variables like age, perception about migration, family size, nature of migration and livelihood were found significantly associated with migration behaviour index. The constraints analysis and suggestions given by migrants necessary to take into consideration for betterment of their livelihood.

Keywords: Migration behaviour, migration behaviour index, migration, livelihood, banjara community, banjaras

Introduction

India, with its vast natural resources, faces widespread poverty due to factors like unequal resource distribution, illiteracy, and migration. Migration, both internal and international, is driven by economic, social, and environmental factors, with rural-urban migration dominating. In Maharashtra, rural-urban migration is linked to agricultural development, as employment in non-agricultural sectors remains limited in rural areas. The Banjara community, historically nomadic traders, now faces severe economic challenges. Many have shifted from agriculture to manual labor in cities. Despite their rich cultural heritage, Banjaras remain marginalized, with limited access to education and economic opportunities.

The Banjara led a wandering life and moved to several parts of the nation carrying on their trade. Later on, with the introduction of transport facilities during the British rule, the people lost their traditional occupation of transporting goods on the back of pack-bullocks. Their economy became very dangerous with the loss of transport work. Later many of them moved to forests for their livelihood. Some continued to show their antipathy for losing their occupation and took to unlawful activities. However, now the major source of their livelihood is through labour in agriculture and non-

agriculture sector. Banjaras were doing trade by carrying stuff on the backs of the bullocks across India. They came to be known as Lamani, when they started manufacturing salt at the banks of Luni River in Rajasthan. They were called as Banjaras because of their roaming trade. The literature on available on Banjaras tells that they have migrated from Rajasthan and are now spread all over India. The word Banjara seems to have originated from the Sanskrit word 'vanijyakar' or 'vanaj', which means trader, and trade respectively. Banjaras used to rear cows for the purpose of trade. Later they started using only bullocks for transportation of the goods. The Banjara tribe survives in India since more than 5000 years. This tribe was leaving a progressive life in before Arya period in India.

Methodology

In this study, a multistage sampling technique was used to select the district, tahsils, and villages. At the first stage, the Ratnagiri district from the Konkan was selected. In the second stage, Dapoli, Khed, Mandangad, and Chiplun tahsils were selected from the district. The final stage consisted of selecting villages from each selected tehsil. Thus, 120 migrants from 12 villages were selected for the collection of required information. The selection of

Ratnagiri district was purposive based on the migration of Banjaras.

Table 1: List of selected Tahsils and villages

District	Tehsils	Villages	Number of migrants
Ratnagiri	Dapoli	Jalgaon	10
		Vakavali	10
		Gimhavane	10
	Khed	Dasturi	10
		Furus	10
		Sakhroli	10
	Mandangad	Paat	10
		Kumbale	10
		Kadvan	10
	Chiplun	Sawarde	10
		Mandki	10
		Vahal	10
Total	04	12	120

Research design

The ex-post-facto research design was adopted for this study since the phenomenon has already started and is continuing. Ex-post-facto research is the most systematic empirical inquiry, in which the researcher does not have direct control over the independent variables as their manifestation has already occurred or as they are inherent and not manipulatable. Thus, inferences about relations among variables were made without direct intervention from concomitant variation of independent and dependent

variables.

3. Result and discussion

The findings of the study as well as relevant discussion given below.

To study the profile of the Banjaras

The Banjara community is a traditionally nomadic group known for cattle rearing and trade. Over time, many have settled into agricultural and labor jobs. Despite their rich culture, they face challenges like poverty, low education levels, and limited access to resources. Studying their profile helps understand their living conditions, cultural practices, and economic challenges.

Age of the migrants

The data presented in Table No. 2 revealed that a substantial number of migrants (64.17%) fell within the middle-aged (28 to 48 years) category indicating that this particular age group is highly prevalent among the population under consideration. Out of the migrants studied, 19.17% of the migrants belonged to the 'young' age category and 16.66% of migrants belonged to the 'old' age category.

This age distribution reflects the socio-economic dynamics of the Banjara community, where middle-aged individuals play a crucial role in the migration process due to their economic responsibilities and ability to adapt to new environments.

Table 2: Distribution of the migrants according to their education

SI. No.	Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Young (upto 27)	23	19.17
2	Middle (28 to 48)	77	64.17
3	Old (49 and above)	20	16.66
Total		120	100

3.1.2 Education of the migrants

The data in Table 3. Shows the data presented in Table 4, reveal that slightly less than one-third (34.17%) of the migrants were attended high school, while 25.83, 11.67, 11.67, 8.33% of them have attended college, primary and illiterate level of education, did diploma, respectively. Only 4.17 and 4.17% of the migrant families were found to have middle school and functionally literate. Overall, the

educational profile of the migrants reflects the socio-economic realities of the Banjara community, where varying levels of education influence migration patterns and the types of opportunities pursued by individuals. The educational profile indicates that migration is closely linked to the level of education, with higher levels often associated with a broader range of employment opportunities and lower levels with more constrained options.

Table 3: Distribution of the migrants according to their education

SI. No.	Education level	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	14	11.67
2	Functionally literate	5	4.16
3	Primary school	14	11.67
4	Middle school	5	4.17
5	High school	41	34.17
6	Diploma	10	8.33
7	College/post-graduate	31	25.83
Total		120	100

3.1.3 Occupation of the migrant

From Table 4. It could be seen that among the migrants, (49.17%) of them had 'framing' as main occupation. The remaining 19.16, 12.50, 12.50 and 6.67% were engaged in 'animal husbandry', 'labour/agricultural work',

'independent businesses and 'service' respectively. The occupational profile reflects a community that is balancing traditional livelihoods with emerging opportunities, indicating both resilience and adaptability in the face of changing economic and social conditions. The dominance of

animal husbandry and farming suggests that the community's livelihood is still largely tied to traditional, rural-based activities. However, the presence of other occupations indicates that some individuals are seeking to diversify their livelihoods, possibly leading to migration in search of better economic opportunities.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondent based on their occupation

SI. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Animal husbandry	23	19.16
2	Labour/agriculture work	15	12.50
3	Job	8	6.67
4	Independent business	15	12.50
5	Farming	59	49.17
Total		120	100

3.1.4 Perception about migration

The data from Table 5, it can be seen that more than three-fifth (62.50%) of the migrants had a 'favourable' perception about migration. On the other hand, 21.67% of the migrants had 'less favourable' and 15.83% had 'more favourable' level of perception about migration. This distribution of perception highlights a community that generally views migration positively but with a realistic understanding of its complexities. By acknowledging both the favorable and less favorable perceptions, strategies can be developed to support the community in making informed decisions about migration. The overall favorable perception of migration suggests that it is seen as a strategic choice for improving livelihoods within the Banjara community.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondent according to their perception about migration

SI. No.	Perception	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less favourable (upto 15)	26	21.67
2	Favourable (16 to 20)	75	62.50
3	More favourable (21 and above)	19	15.83
Total		120	100

3.1.5 Family size of the migrant

The data from table 6, it can be seen that half of the migrants (50.00%) had 'medium' size of their family, while 35.00% and 15.00% of them had 'small' and 'big' size of family. This distribution of family size reflects a community that is navigating the balance between traditional values and modern economic realities. By understanding these dynamics, more effective strategies can be developed to support the livelihood and well-being of the Banjara community. Family size is likely to influence migration decisions within the Banjara community.

Table 6: Distribution of migrants according to their family size

SI. No.	Family size (members)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Small (Upto 3)	42	35.00
2	Medium (4 to 5)	60	50.00
3	Big (6 and above)	18	15.00
Total		120	100

3.1.6 Annual income of the migrant

From the data Table 7. It was observed that, majority (79.17%) of the migrants were fall under the category of 'medium' annual income ranging from Rs. 64667/- to 432143/-, while 12.50% of them had 'high' annual income ranging from Rs.432144 and above. Further, only 8.33% of the migrants had 'low' annual income i.e. upto Rs.64666/-.

Table 7: Distribution of migrants according to their annual income

SI. No.	Annual income (Rs.)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (Upto 64766/-)	10	8.33
2	Medium (64667/- to 432243/-)	95	79.17
3	High (432244/- and above)	15	12.50
Total		120	100

This analysis of annual income highlights the economic stratification within the Banjara community and underscores the role of income in shaping migration behavior and livelihood strategies. The distribution of income among the migrants suggests that economic factors are a significant driver of migration. Those in the medium-income bracket may migrate to maintain or slightly improve their economic status, while those in the low-income group may see migration as a necessity to escape poverty. High-income individuals might migrate for better opportunities but are likely less dependent on it as a survival strategy.

3.1.7 Nature of migration of the migrant

Table 8. It could be observed that majority of the migrants 70.00% had 'permanent' nature of migration. While, 19.17% of the migrants had 'seasonal' nature of migration and 10.83% had an 'Occasional' nature of migration.

Table 8: Distribution of migrants according to their nature of migration

SI. No.	Nature of Migration	Frequency	Percentage
1	Occasional migration	13	10.83
2	Seasonal migration	23	19.17
3	Permanent migration	84	70.00
Total		120	100.00

This analysis of the nature of migration provides a comprehensive view of how the Banjara community navigates their livelihood challenges through different forms of migration, each with its own set of implications and needs. Understanding the nature of migration can help in designing targeted interventions. For permanent migrants, programs that support integration into urban economies, access to housing, education, and social services are essential. For seasonal and casual migrants, initiatives that provide better working conditions, legal protections, and support during migration periods could be crucial.

3.1.8 Migration decision making of the migrant

Migration decision making is the degree to which the Banjaras and their kith and kin have participated in the decision to migrate. Information in this regard is presented in Table.

Table 9: Distribution of migrants according to their migration decision making

Sl. No.	Migration decision makers	Frequency	Percentage
1	Self	27	22.50
2	Family members	35	29.17
3	Parents	13	10.83
4	Relatives	16	13.33
5	Spouse	19	15.83
6	Friends	5	4.17
7	Others	5	4.17
Total		120	100.00

From the Table 9, it could be observed in case (29.17%) migrants decided to migrate were taken by family members. While 22.17 percent migrants took their own decision (self). In case of 15.83, 13.33 and 10.83% of the migrants the decision to migrate were taken by 'spouse', 'relatives' and 'parents' respectively. However, in case of 4.17% each of the migrants this decision was taken by 'friends' and 'others'.

This analysis of migration decision-making highlights the complex interplay of individual autonomy, family dynamics, and social networks within the Banjara community, shaping how and why migration decisions are made.

3.1.9 Economic motivation of the migrant

Economically motivated people are more oriented towards maximization of profit as they place relatively more value on economic ends. Thus economic motivation can be one of the factors influencing migration behaviour of the migrated families in order to earn more. With this consideration, economic motivation of the migrants was studied, the data of which are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Distribution of the migrants according to their economic motivation

Sl. No.	Economic motivation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (Up to 16)	17	14.20
2	Medium (17 to 22)	38	65.00
3	High (23 and above)	25	20.80
Total		120	100.00

It is evident from the data reported in Table 11 that more than half (60.00%) of the migrants had 'medium' level of economic motivation, followed by a 'low' (14.20%) and 'high' (20.80%) level of economic motivation.

Livelihood of the migrant

The Table 11. It can be seen that a majority (66.67%) of the migrants had 'moderate' livelihood followed by 'low' (18.33%) and 'high' (15.00%) level of livelihood. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of the livelihood conditions within the Banjara community and helps identify areas where targeted interventions can make a significant impact. The observed distribution of livelihood levels highlights a spectrum of economic conditions within the Banjara community. A large proportion of migrants experience moderate livelihood, indicating a stable but not highly prosperous economic situation for the majority. The presence of low and high livelihood levels among the migrants underscores the economic variability within the community.

Table 11: Distribution of the migrants according to their livelihood

Sl. No.	Livelihood	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Upto 19)	22	18.33
2.	Moderate (20 to 29)	80	66.67
3.	High (30 and above)	18	15.00
Total		120	100.00

4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the profile of Banjaras in Ratnagiri district, the majority (64.17%) of the migrants was in the 'middle' age group, the majority (34.17%) of the migrants were completed their 'high school' level of education, the majority (50%) of the migrants belonged to the 'medium' families, the majority (49.17%) of the migrants were occupied in the 'farming' as an occupation, the majority (62.50%) of migrants identified as 'permanent' migrants, the majority (62.50%) of migrants had a 'favourable' perception of migration, the majority (29.17%) of migrants had migrated with their 'family members', the majority (79.17%) of migrants reported a 'medium' income, the majority (66.67%) of migrants had a 'middle' category of livelihood, the majority (65.00%) of migrants had a 'medium' level of economic motivation.

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