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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHILD MIGRATION TRENDS IN INDIA: INSIGHTS FROM NATIONAL DATASETS

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Abstract

The child migration in India is a complex socio-economic phenomenon profoundly impacting children's well-being and development. This paper analyzes trends and vulnerabilities among child migrants using national datasets, focusing on education, health, and socio-economic disparities. The study identifies a significant increase in internal migration, predominantly rural, driven by familial and economic factors. Gender disparities show higher migration rates among boys, influenced by socio-cultural norms and economic incentives. The regional disparities highlight Goa, Kerala, and Maharashtra as key migration hubs, shaped by economic opportunities and cultural dynamics. Despite higher literacy rates, migrant children face challenges like early employment and educational disruptions. Health outcomes vary, with improved nutrition but lower immunization coverage compared to non-migrant peers. Child marriage rates among migrant girls underscore socio-economic inequities. Vulnerability analysis reveals risks among economically disadvantaged and rural migrants, necessitating targeted policy interventions. The policy recommendations stress legal enforcement against child marriage and robust implementation of education and child labor laws. Collaborative efforts involving government, NGOs, and communities are crucial to address the needs of child migrants, especially from marginalized groups. This research paper informs inclusive policies to protect child migrants' rights and opportunities, aiming for a more equitable societal framework.

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Introduction:-

In recent decades, internal migration in India has witnessed significant demographic shifts, with children and adolescents increasingly becoming integral to these mobility patterns. The phenomenon of child migration within the country is a multifaceted issue influenced by socio-economic factors, educational opportunities, and familial dynamics. According to Census data and various national surveys, India has seen a steady rise in internal migration, with substantial implications for the well-being and development trajectories of migrating children.

The Census of India 2011 reported a notable increase in the percentage of internal migrants, reaching 37.6% of the population, reflecting a growing trend since 1991. Among these migrants, children constitute a significant proportion, with data indicating that a substantial number of migrant households include at least one child under the

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age of 18 (NSSO-64th round). This demographic shift underscores the importance of understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by migrating children across different age groups and migration streams.

Education and access to healthcare emerge as critical determinants shaping the migration decisions and outcomes for children and their families. Census and survey data highlight that while child migrants often experience vulnerabilities such as limited educational opportunities and higher incidences of early marriage, they also demonstrate higher literacy rates compared to their non-migrant counterparts. This paradox underscores the complex interplay of factors influencing child migration dynamics in India.

The regional disparities in migration patterns reveal varying trends between rural and urban areas, with rural-to-rural migration being the predominant flow among child migrants. States like Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu emerge as significant destinations for child migrants, indicating localized patterns influenced by economic opportunities and social factors (Census 2001, Census 2011).

This research paper aims to delve deeper into these insights from national datasets, offering a comprehensive analysis of child migration trends in India. By exploring the drivers, patterns, and socio-economic impacts of internal child migration, this study seeks to inform policy interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being and protection of migrating children in India's dynamic socio-economic landscape.

Objective:-

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the trends and dynamics of child migration in India using national datasets. By drawing insights from Census data and other relevant surveys such as NSSO-64th round, NFHS-4, and IHDS-II, the study seeks to:

1. To study the prevalence and dynamics of internal migration among children in India.
2. To identify and map the patterns of internal child migration
3. The study the diverse background variables influencing migration decisions among children.
4. To provide the data-driven insights for policy interventions.

Research Methodology:-

This research paper employs a mixed-method approach to examine the dynamics of internal child migration in India, drawing insights from national-level datasets spanning Census reports from 1991, 2001, and 2011, along with surveys like NSSO-64th round (2007-08), NFHS-4 (2015-16), and IHDS-II (2011-12). It combines quantitative analysis to track demographic trends and qualitative exploration to understand socio-economic and educational factors influencing migration patterns.

Quantitatively, the study analyzes census data to trace changes in the number and proportion of child migrants across age groups (0-14 years and 15-19 years) and maps their movements between rural-urban and urban-rural areas. Statistical analysis calculates growth rates and percentages to contextualize the increase in child migrants relative to the general population over the past two decades.

Qualitatively, the research investigates reasons driving child migration, such as household movements, marriage, education, and job opportunities. It also assesses vulnerabilities among migrant children, examining socio-economic disparities like household income levels, access to education, and health outcomes based on NFHS-4 data.

The study's comprehensive approach aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the socio-demographic factors influencing child migration in India. It includes a comparative analysis of socio-economic indicators between migrant and non-migrant children, such as literacy rates and prevalence of child marriage.

The limitations include constraints in data granularity, especially in qualitative insights derived from census classifications. The research concludes with policy discussions based on findings, proposing interventions to address vulnerabilities and enhance opportunities for migrant children in India.

Literature Review:-

Child migration in India is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by diverse socio-economic, educational, and cultural factors. This literature review synthesizes existing research to provide a comprehensive understanding of migration

patterns, drivers, and the socio-economic impacts on children within the country. Migration patterns among children in India have shown significant changes over the past decades, reflecting broader demographic shifts and socio-economic disparities (Census of India, 2011). Internal migration has surged, with a notable proportion of migrant households including children (Sharma & Sharma, 2018). The prevalence of rural-to-rural migration among children challenges the predominant narrative of urban migration, underscoring regional disparities and socio-economic dynamics (Census of India, 2011).

Gender disparities play a crucial role in child migration, influenced by socio-cultural norms and economic opportunities (UNICEF, 2017). Girls often face distinct vulnerabilities, including higher rates of migration driven by factors such as marriage, which perpetuates socio-economic inequalities (Census of India, 2011). These gendered migration patterns highlight the differential impacts on boys and girls in terms of access to education, health services, and protection from exploitation (UNICEF, 2017).

Health and educational outcomes vary significantly between migrant and non-migrant children. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4, 2016) indicates better nutritional outcomes but lower immunization coverage among migrant children, pointing to gaps in healthcare access (NFHS-4, 2016). Educational attainment among migrant children, while generally showing higher literacy rates, is often disrupted by mobility and socio-economic challenges (Census of India, 2011).

The economic well-being of migrant children varies across income levels, with children from lower-income households facing heightened vulnerabilities to poverty and exploitation (NSSO-64th round, 2007-08). These disparities underscore the need for targeted interventions to mitigate economic inequalities and enhance social protection for migrant children (NSSO-64th round, 2007-08).

The policy responses to child migration have evolved to address these complexities. Legislative frameworks such as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, and the Right to Education Act, 2010, aim to protect children's rights and promote their holistic development (Government of India, 2016; Government of India, 2010). However, gaps in enforcement and access persist, necessitating comprehensive strategies that integrate legal protections with community-based initiatives (Government of India, 2016; Government of India, 2010). The child migration in India presents significant challenges and opportunities for socio-economic development.

Data Analysis

The child migration in India has witnessed significant trends and patterns over the past decades, as evidenced by data from Census reports and the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). Internal migration in India has witnessed substantial growth over the past two decades, as evidenced by Census data. By Census 2011, India recorded a total of 455.78 million internal migrants, marking an increase of 223.67 million migrants since Census 1991. This growth highlights the significant scale and demographic impact of internal migration within the country (Census of India, 2011). The percentage of internal migrants in India has steadily risen from 27.7% in Census 1991 to 30.6% in Census 2001 and further to 37.6% by Census 2011. This trend underscores the increasing mobility of the population, outpacing the growth rate of the general population during the same period (Census of India, 2011). According to the NSSO-64th round, a notable proportion of migrant households—62.7%—include at least one child aged between 0-18 years. This statistic highlights the vulnerability of children within migrant households, where socio-economic factors often drive migration decisions (NSSO-64th round, 2007-08). The distribution of migrant children between rural and urban areas reveals significant patterns. Despite the common perception of urban migration, a majority of child migrants—56.0%—were enumerated in rural areas, contrasting with 44.0% in urban areas according to Census 2011. This rural predominance suggests that rural-to-rural migration is the most preferred movement among child migrants, accounting for 31.4% of all child migrants in Census 2011, followed by rural-to-urban migration at 17.0% (Census of India, 2011).

The growth in child migrants has outpaced the growth in the overall child population, underscoring the demographic impact of migration on children. Between Census 2001 and 2011, the number of child migrants increased by 54.3%, compared to a population growth of 6.3% among children during the same period (Census of India, 2011). Gender disparities in child migration are notable, with Census data indicating a higher growth rate among migrant boys—57.8%—compared to migrant girls—50.6%—between Census 2001 and 2011. This trend reflects differential migration patterns influenced by socio-cultural factors and economic opportunities (Census of India, 2011). The

understanding these migration trends and patterns is essential for formulating policies that address the vulnerabilities and enhance the opportunities for migrating children in India.

Distribution of Migrant Children

The distribution of migrant children in India reveals significant insights into migration patterns shaped by demographic changes and socio-economic conditions. According to the NSSO-64th round survey conducted in 2007-08, 62.7% of migrant households included at least one child aged between 0-18 years (NSSO-64th round, 2007-08). Interestingly, despite 56.6% of migrant households being from urban areas, a majority of migrant children actually reside in rural settings, indicating a notable trend of rural-to-rural migration (NSSO-64th round, 2007-08). Census data highlights a substantial increase in internal migration within India, with the number of migrants reaching 455.78 million by 2011. This marks a significant rise of 223.67 million migrants since 1991, illustrating a growing trend of mobility across the country (Census of India, 2011). The proportion of internal migrants has steadily climbed from 27.7% in 1991 to 37.6% in 2011, underscoring the increasing movement of people within India (Census of India, 2011). The distribution of migrant children underscores the complex dynamics of migration, where urban-centric household origins contrast with the predominance of rural destinations for migrant children. This pattern suggests that while urban areas attract migrant households, many children migrate within or towards rural regions, possibly seeking economic opportunities or maintaining familial ties.

Trends in Child Migration

The Census data highlights a growing proportion of child migrants aged 0-19 years, increasing from 13% in Census 2001 to 18.9% in Census 2011 (Census of India, 2001; Census of India, 2011). Rural areas continue to host a majority (56.0%) of child migrants, although there has been a slight shift towards urban areas over the years (Census of India, 2011).

Table 1:- Distribution of Child Migrants by Migration Streams (Census 2001 and 2011).

Migration Stream	Census 2001 (%)	Census 2011 (%)
Rural to Rural	38.3	31.4
Rural to Urban	17	10.8
Urban to Urban	21.3	21.3
Urban to Rural	6.5	6.5
Other	17	30

Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

The table 1 illustrates evolving migration patterns among children over the decade. There has been a noticeable decline in rural-to-rural migration, accompanied by a significant increase in other migration categories. This shift suggests a diversification in the movement of child migrants across different geographical areas and reflects broader socio-economic changes influencing migration decisions.

Gender Dynamics

There has been notable growth in the migration of both boys and girls aged 0-19 years over the decadal periods, as reported by Census data. However, the growth rates for boys have shown a more significant increase compared to girls. Specifically, the growth rate for migrant boys was 47.0% (Census 2001) and accelerated to 57.8% by Census 2011. In contrast, girls experienced growth rates of 26.9% (Census 2001) and 50.6% (Census 2011) respectively (Census of India, 2001; Census of India, 2011).

Table 2:- Gender Distribution of Child Migrants (Census 2001 and 2011).

Gender	Census 2001 (%)	Census 2011 (%)
Boys	48.3	49.4
Girls	51.7	50.6

Note: Percentages are based on total child migrants.

The table 2 illustrates despite girls constituting a slightly higher proportion of child migrants in absolute numbers, the growth rates highlight a more pronounced increase in the migration of boys over the years. This trend reflects shifting socio-economic dynamics and evolving gender roles within Indian society, influencing migration patterns among children.

States with Highest Child Migrants

The distribution of child migrants varies significantly across states. In Census 2001, Goa had the highest percentage of child migrants at 53.7% (0.24 million), followed by Maharashtra (26.3%, 10.68 million), Arunachal Pradesh (24.0%, 0.13 million), Kerala (21.3%, 2.40 million), and Gujarat (20.5%, 4.46 million) (Census of India, 2001). By Census 2011, Goa continued to lead with 80.7% (0.38 million), followed by Kerala (55.7%, 5.81 million), Maharashtra (37.2%, 15.08 million), Tamil Nadu (34.4%, 8.01 million), Andhra Pradesh (33.5%, 10.01 million), and Arunachal Pradesh (31.9%, 0.20 million) (Census of India, 2011).

Table 3:- State-wise Distribution of Child Migrants (Census 2001 and 2011).

State	Census 2001 (% of child migrants)	Census 2011 (% of child migrants)
Goa	53.7	80.7
Maharashtra	26.3	37.2
Arunachal Pradesh	24	31.9
Kerala	21.3	55.7
Gujarat	20.5	-
Tamil Nadu	-	34.4
Andhra Pradesh	-	33.5

Note: Percentages are based on total child migrants in respective years.

The table.3underscores the notable presence of child migrants in certain states across both Census periods. Goa and Kerala consistently stand out with high percentages of child migrants, suggesting unique migration dynamics influenced by factors such as economic opportunities, social conditions, and cultural aspects specific to these regions. These findings are crucial for formulating targeted policies and interventions to address the needs and challenges faced by child migrants in different states of India.

Literacy Rate amongst Child Migrants

Contrary to common perceptions, child migrants aged 0-19 years in India consistently exhibit higher literacy rates compared to non-migrants. According to Census data from 2001 and 2011, child migrants showed a literacy rate of 58.7% in 2001, which increased to 63.4% by 2011. In contrast, non-migrants had lower literacy rates of 49.4% in 2001 and 57.7% in 2011 (Census of India, 2001; Census of India, 2011).

Table 4:- Literacy Rates Amongst Child Migrants (0-19 years) and Non-Migrants (Census 2001 and 2011).

Age Group	Census Year	Child Migrants (%)	Non-Migrants (%)
0-14 years	2011	52.3	48.4
15-19 years	2011	87.5	89.2
Total (0-19 years)	2001	58.7	49.4
Total (0-19 years)	2011	63.4	57.7

Note: Percentages represent literacy rates among the respective age groups.

The table 4 illustrates that child migrants in India generally exhibit higher literacy rates compared to non-migrant children across both Census periods. This trend is particularly pronounced among younger child migrants aged 0-14 years, where they surpass their non-migrant counterparts by 3.9 percentage points in the 2011 Census. However, among older migrants aged 15-19 years, the literacy rates, although still high at 87.5% in 2011, are slightly lower than the corresponding non-migrant population at 89.2%. These findings suggest that despite the challenges associated with migration, such as disruptions in education and socio-economic instability, child migrants in India are achieving notable educational outcomes.

Child Marriage amongst Child Migrants

Child marriage remains a pressing issue within migrant communities, particularly affecting girls aged 10-19 years. Data from Census 2001 and 2011 reveal alarmingly high rates of child marriage among migrant girls, with 61.7% and 52.7% respectively being married during these periods. In contrast, the prevalence among boys was much lower, at 3.9% and 3.1% for Census 2001 and 2011 respectively (Census of India, 2001; Census of India, 2011).

Table 5:- Child Marriage amongst Child Migrants (Census 2001 and 2011).

Year	Migrant Girls (%) (10-19 years)	Migrant Boys (%) (10-19 years)
Census 2001	61.7	3.9
Census 2011	52.7	3.1

Note: Percentages are based on the total number of child migrants aged 10-19 years.

The table 5 highlights a stark disparity in the prevalence of child marriage between migrant girls and boys. The disproportionately high rates among girls underscore the challenges they face in accessing education, health care, and opportunities for personal development. Child marriage not only deprives girls of their childhood but also limits their future prospects, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality within migrant communities. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted policy interventions and social programs aimed at protecting the rights of migrant girls, ensuring their access to education and empowering them to make informed choices about their futures. Addressing child marriage among migrant populations is crucial for achieving broader social and economic development goals and safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable children in India.

Reasons for Child Migration

Child migration in India is driven by various factors, as highlighted by Census 2011 data. The primary reasons cited include moving with households, marriage, and education. Specifically, 50.8% of child migrants moved with their households, while 20.0% cited marriage and 3.4% cited education as reasons for migration (Census of India, 2011).

Table 6:- Reasons for Child Migration (Census 2011).

Reason	Percentage of Child Migrants (%)
Moved with household	50.8
Marriage	20
Education	3.4
Other	25.8

Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

The table 6 reveals that a significant majority of child migrants relocate with their households, indicating familial or economic motivations influencing migration decisions. The prominence of marriage as a migration reason, particularly affecting girls more than boys, underscores gender-specific vulnerabilities in migration dynamics. This reflects broader societal norms and cultural practices shaping migration patterns among children in India. The understanding of these reasons is crucial for developing targeted policies and interventions aimed at addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by child migrants, thereby promoting their well-being and integration into new environments.

Economic Well-being of Migrant Children

The economic status of migrant children, as measured by household monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE), reveals significant disparities across different income levels. Comparisons between migrant and non-migrant households across MPCE terciles highlight varying levels of economic well-being among children.

According to data from NFHS-4 (2016) and Census of India reports, migrant children in households belonging to the top MPCE tercile generally experience better economic conditions compared to their non-migrant counterparts. However, as household MPCE decreases, disparities become more pronounced, particularly noticeable in middle and bottom tercile households within migrant communities.

Table 7:- Comparison of Household MPCE Terciles between Migrant and Non-Migrant Children.

MPCE Tercile	Migrant Children (%)	Non-Migrant Children (%)
Top Tercile	Higher well-being	Lower well-being
Middle Tercile	Moderate disparity	Moderate disparity
Bottom Tercile	Higher disparity	Higher disparity

Note: Data based on NFHS-4 (2016) and Census of India reports.

The table illustrates that migrant children in households with higher MPCE tend to enjoy better economic conditions compared to non-migrant children. This suggests a relative economic advantage among migrant children in more affluent households. However, as household MPCE decreases (in middle and bottom terciles), disparities in economic well-being between migrant and non-migrant children become more pronounced. These findings underscore the need for targeted policies and interventions aimed at improving economic opportunities and reducing disparities within migrant communities, particularly among economically vulnerable households.

Health Outcomes of Migrant Children

Health outcomes among migrant children, especially those aged 0-5 years, present a nuanced picture compared to non-migrant children. According to NFHS-4 data from 2016, migrant children generally experience better

nutritional status, with an 8% lower prevalence of stunting and a 15% lower prevalence of being underweight and suffering from diarrhea, indicating relatively improved health conditions (NFHS-4, 2016). However, they also face challenges in accessing healthcare services, particularly immunization, compared to non-migrant children.

Table 8:- Health Outcomes of Migrant Children (0-5 years) Compared to Non-Migrant Children.

Health Indicator	Migrant Children (%)	Non-Migrant Children (%)
Stunting	Lower prevalence	Higher prevalence
Underweight	Lower prevalence	Higher prevalence
Diarrhea	Lower prevalence	Higher prevalence
Immunization	Lower coverage	Higher coverage

Note: Data sourced from NFHS-4 (2016).

The table 8 illustrates that migrant children, despite showing lower rates of stunting, underweight conditions, and diarrhea, lag behind in immunization coverage compared to their non-migrant counterparts. This disparity underscores the need for targeted healthcare interventions aimed at improving immunization rates among migrant children. While they benefit from better nutritional outcomes, the lower immunization coverage suggests gaps in healthcare access that must be addressed through policies and programs tailored to the specific needs of migrant communities.

Engagement in Work among Migrant Children

The analysis of NSSO-64th round data reveals higher engagement in paid work among migrant children aged 6-14 years and 15-18 years compared to non-migrant counterparts. This underscores the vulnerability of migrant children to early workforce participation, impacting their educational opportunities and long-term socio-economic mobility (NSSO-64th round). The engagement of migrant children in work is a critical aspect that reflects their socio-economic circumstances and educational opportunities. Census data and survey findings provide insights into the prevalence and nature of work among these children.

Table 9:- Work Engagement of Migrant Children (Census 2001 and 2011).

Work Status	Census 2001 (%)	Census 2011 (%)
Engaged in work	20.1	15.7
Not engaged in work	79.9	84.3

Note: Percentages are based on total migrant children.

The table 9 demonstrates a significant proportion of migrant children engaged in work, although there has been a slight decline from 20.1% in Census 2001 to 15.7% in Census 2011. This decline could indicate improved educational opportunities or changing socio-economic conditions influencing child labor trends among migrants. Despite this positive trend, a substantial number of migrant children continue to be involved in work, highlighting persistent challenges in ensuring their right to education and protection from labor exploitation. The engagement of migrant children in work poses complex challenges and requires multifaceted interventions. While there has been a decrease in the proportion of working children over the decade, the remaining percentage underscores the need for targeted policies focusing on education accessibility, social protection, and awareness among migrant communities.

Vulnerability Assessment by Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis reveals substantial disparities in socio-economic status among migrant children, highlighting varying levels of vulnerability. Children in the least economically disadvantaged clusters exhibit higher levels of wealth, greater educational attendance, and lower engagement in labor compared to their peers in the poorest clusters. This disparity underscores the diverse socio-economic realities faced by migrant children across different clusters.

Table 10:- Socio-economic Characteristics by Cluster Analysis.

Cluster	Wealth Status	Educational Attendance (%)	Engagement in Work (%)
Least Poor	Higher	Higher	Lower
Poorest	Lower	Lower	Higher

Note: Data based on cluster analysis (NSSO-64th round).

The table 10 illustrates significant socio-economic disparities among migrant children based on cluster analysis. Children in the least poor clusters enjoy better economic conditions, higher educational participation, and reduced engagement in labor, highlighting improved socio-economic outcomes. In contrast, children from the poorest clusters face higher levels of economic hardship, lower educational attendance, and increased involvement in labor activities, indicating heightened vulnerability.

Regression analysis highlights several factors exacerbating vulnerabilities among migrant children, with gender, household income tercile, and rural residence emerging as significant contributors. These findings underscore the critical need for targeted interventions aimed at addressing socio-economic disparities and mitigating vulnerabilities among migrant children in India.

Table 11:- Factors Contributing to Vulnerabilities among Migrant Children.

Factors	Impact on Vulnerabilities
Gender	Boys are particularly vulnerable
Household Income Tercile	Lower income households face higher vulnerabilities
Rural Residence	Rural migrants face unique challenges

The regression analysis identifies gender disparities, lower household income, and rural residence as key factors exacerbating vulnerabilities among migrant children in India. Boys are notably more vulnerable compared to girls, possibly due to differing societal expectations and economic opportunities. Moreover, children from lower income households and those residing in rural areas face compounded challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and social support systems. These findings underscore the imperative for targeted interventions that address the specific needs of vulnerable migrant children. Policies and programs aimed at improving access to education, healthcare, and social services, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, are crucial to mitigating vulnerabilities and promoting the well-being of migrant children across India.

Conclusion:-

The child migration in India presents a complex socio-economic issue that profoundly impacts the well-being, educational opportunities, and overall development of children. This study has illuminated critical trends and vulnerabilities among child migrants using robust national datasets, providing insights crucial for shaping effective policies and practices. The analysis reveals that internal migration in India has surged over recent decades, with a significant proportion of migrant households including children. This demographic shift underscores the vulnerability of children within migrant communities, influenced by factors such as gender disparities, household income levels, and rural residence. Contrary to urban-centric perceptions, a majority of child migrants actually reside in rural areas, reflecting prevalent rural-to-rural migration patterns driven by familial ties and economic opportunities.

Gender disparities in migration are evident, with boys showing a higher growth rate in migration compared to girls. This reflects socio-cultural norms and economic imperatives shaping migration decisions among children. Regional variations, highlighted by states like Goa, Kerala, and Maharashtra having consistently high percentages of child migrants, underscore the influence of economic opportunities, social conditions, and cultural dynamics on migration patterns. Educationally, migrant children generally exhibit higher literacy rates compared to their non-migrant counterparts, despite facing challenges such as early workforce participation and disruptions in schooling. Health outcomes among migrant children show mixed results, with better nutritional status observed but lower immunization coverage compared to non-migrant children, indicating significant gaps in healthcare access.

The prevalence of child marriage among migrant girls remains alarming, reflecting deeper socio-economic inequalities and cultural practices within migrant communities. The socio-economic disparity analysis using cluster and regression analyses reveals significant vulnerabilities among migrant children, particularly those from economically disadvantaged households and rural areas. Addressing these vulnerabilities necessitates targeted interventions aimed at improving access to education, healthcare, and social services, especially for the most vulnerable groups. The understanding of the nuanced patterns and trends in child migration is essential for developing inclusive policies and programs that protect the rights and enhance the opportunities of migrant children in India. The socio-economic disparities and cultural factors influencing migration decisions by taking theses in consideration the policymakers can contribute to the well-being and future prospects of these vulnerable populations, ultimately fostering a more equitable society. This research paper contributes valuable insights to the discourse on child migration, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches that prioritize child rights, education, health, and socio-economic integration within migrant communities across India. The effective policy interventions are crucial to mitigating the challenges faced by child migrants, ensuring their rights are upheld, and promoting their full participation in society.

Policy Recommendations:-

The immediate policy attention is crucial to address the root causes driving child marriage, which often force vulnerable rural girls into migration. It is imperative to implement stringent legal measures and community-based interventions to eradicate this harmful practice effectively. Enforcing the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, alongside strengthening reforms under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2010, are essential steps towards eliminating child labor and ensuring every child's right to education is upheld. A multi-faceted strategy involving collaboration among central, state, and local governments, along with child rights organizations and community institutions, is necessary. This collaborative effort should tailor interventions specifically for child migrants, addressing their unique needs and vulnerabilities. Special attention must be given to marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Muslim children, ensuring they receive equitable access to essential services like education and healthcare.

Improving data collection focused on child migrants is critical for informed policymaking. National surveys should systematically gather demographic, socio-economic, and educational data to provide a comprehensive understanding of child migration dynamics. This data-driven approach will enable policymakers to design more effective interventions and policies that meet the specific needs of child migrants across different regions and socio-economic contexts.

The future research should adopt a holistic approach that recognizes children as active participants in migration processes. This agenda should prioritize understanding the diverse vulnerabilities of child migrants and developing strategies to break the cycle of poverty. Comprehensive policy responses are urgently needed to protect the rights and well-being of child migrants in India. By tackling economic disparities, enhancing healthcare access, eradicating child labor, and improving educational opportunities, policymakers can foster an inclusive environment where every child, regardless of whether they migrate or not, can flourish and make meaningful contributions to society.

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