

Impact of Migration on Crime Against Women and Children in West Vidarbha

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Abstract:

This study explores the relationship between migration and the rise in crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha, a region in Maharashtra with significant agrarian distress and high migration rates. Using data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (2015-2023) and migration statistics from the Census of India and NSSO reports, the paper finds a correlation between increased migration and higher incidences of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and child abuse. The study uses spatial and socio-economic analysis to highlight how migration-induced vulnerabilities, such as economic instability and social dislocation, contribute to these crimes. Recommendations are made for improving social protections and law enforcement for vulnerable migrant populations.

Keywords: Migration, Crimes against women, Crimes against children, Socio-economic vulnerability, Domestic violence, Trafficking, Rural-urban migration, GIS analysis

Introduction

Migration has long been a significant factor in reshaping the socio-economic and demographic landscape of rural India. West Vidarbha, comprising the districts of Amravati, Yavatmal, Akola, Buldhana, and Washim, has been particularly impacted by large-scale migration. This migration is often driven by agricultural distress, including low crop yields and farmer suicides, and has led to increased migration from rural to urban areas within and outside the region. The movement of large sections of the population, especially women and children, has led to increased socio-economic vulnerabilities and heightened exposure to violence and exploitation. This study examines the impact of migration on crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha, focusing on domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and child abuse

Study Region

Location and Extent: Western Vidarbha is located in the central part of India, with no coastline within 500 miles. The Vidarbha region lies in the eastern part of Maharashtra and includes 11 districts: Amravati, Akola, Washim, Yavatmal, Buldhana, Nagpur, Wardha, Chandrapur, Bhandara, Gondia, and Gadchiroli. Among these, the five districts of Amravati, Akola, Washim, Yavatmal, and Buldhana are considered part of Western Vidarbha.



Western Vidarbha is geographically located between latitudes 19°15' N and 21°45' N, and longitudes 76°00' E and 79°15' E, covering an area of 45,384 square kilometers. This area accounts for 14.75% of Maharashtra's total land area. To the north of Western Vidarbha lies Madhya Pradesh, to the east is Eastern Vidarbha, to the south are Marathwada and Andhra Pradesh, and to the west are the districts of Jalgaon and Aurangabad.

Western Vidarbha is a part of the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra. It includes the five districts of Amravati, Akola, Washim, Yavatmal, and Buldhana, with a total area of 44,784 square kilometers, which is 14.55% of Maharashtra's total geographical area. According to the 2011 Census, the total population of Western Vidarbha is 25,150,969, which accounts for 22.38% of Maharashtra's total population. Forests cover 11.65% of this region's total area.

Objectives

1. To analyze the impact of migration on the socio-economic status of women and children in West Vidarbha.
2. To assess the correlation between migration and crimes against women and children.
3. To evaluate the role of socio-economic vulnerabilities such as unemployment and poverty in increasing crime rates.
4. To provide recommendations for policy makers to strengthen social protections and law enforcement in migrant-heavy regions.

Methodology

The methodology of this study involved a multi-pronged approach to understanding the relationship between migration and crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha. First, data collection was carried out from multiple sources. Crime data from the NCRB (2015–2023) for Amravati, Yavatmal, and Akola districts, as well as Maharashtra overall, was analyzed. Migration data, primarily focusing on seasonal and permanent migration patterns, was sourced from the Census of India (2011) and the NSSO Report on Migration (2021). Additionally, socio-economic indicators such as literacy rates, unemployment, and poverty were gathered from District Statistical Handbooks and NSSO (2021). For the GIS and spatial analysis, ArcGIS software was used to create heat maps, highlighting crime hotspots in areas with high migrant populations. This visual representation allowed for the identification of regions most affected by crimes against women and children. To establish a quantitative link between migration and crime, correlation analysis was performed, including regression models to assess the impact of migration on crime rates. Finally, field surveys were conducted among selected migrant communities, capturing qualitative data on the lived experiences of women and children, focusing on their vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and social challenges. This comprehensive methodology ensured both quantitative and qualitative insights into the socio-economic vulnerabilities of migrant populations and their exposure to crimes.

NCRB Crime Statistics (2015–2023)

The NCRB provides annual crime statistics that give detailed insights into crimes against women and children. The table below shows relevant data for Maharashtra and West Vidarbha.

Year	Crimes Against Women (Maharashtra)	Crimes Against Children (Maharashtra)	Crimes Against Women in West Vidarbha*	Crimes Against Children in West Vidarbha*
2015	31,216	7,118	~1,800	~450
2016	31,388	7,735	~1,900	~480
2017	32,758	8,091	~2,000	~500
2018	35,497	8,705	~2,200	~550
2019	37,144	9,193	~2,400	~590
2020	35,497	8,400	~2,300	~540
2021	37,704	9,928	~2,600	~620
2022	40,529	10,050	~2,750	~650
2023	~42,000 (Estimated)	~10,500 (Estimated)	~3,000 (Estimated)	~680 (Estimated)

Source: NCRB Crime in India Reports (2015–2023)

Migration Statistics

Migration trends in West Vidarbha have steadily increased due to ongoing agricultural crises, leading to high rates of rural-to-urban migration. The data from the Census of India (2011) and NSSO (2021) show the following trends:

Year	Migration Rate (Rural to Urban in Maharashtra)	Migration Rate (Rural to Urban in Vidarbha)	Migrants from West Vidarbha Districts*
2011	22.1%	23.5%	~350,000
2015	23.8%	24.2%	~360,000
2021	24.5%	25.8%	~380,000
2023	~25% (Estimated)	~26% (Estimated)	~390,000 (Estimated)

Sources: Census of India (2011), NSSO Report on Migration (2021)

Socio-Economic Indicators

The socio-economic conditions of migrants from West Vidarbha play a crucial role in exacerbating their vulnerability to crime. The table below highlights relevant socio-economic data.

Indicator	Amravati (2021)	Yavatmal (2021)	Akola (2021)	Maharashtra (2021)
Literacy Rate (%)	83.25	80.88	85.35	82.34
Female Literacy (%)	77.10	73.45	79.98	76.45
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.5	10.3	8.9	7.6
Poverty Rate (%)	24.5	25.8	22.0	17.35

Sources: Census 2011, NSSO (2021)

Results and Discussion

The study reveals a clear relationship between increased migration and a corresponding rise in crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha. By examining crime data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and migration statistics from the Census of India and NSSO reports, we can see how migration-related socio-economic vulnerabilities contribute to higher crime rates. This section discusses the trends observed in crime rates, their spatial distribution, and the socio-economic factors that exacerbate the vulnerabilities of migrant populations.

1. Crime and Migration Trends:

The analysis of NCRB data from 2015 to 2023 shows an alarming increase in crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha, particularly in districts like Amravati, Akola, and Yavatmal. Crimes against women in West Vidarbha rose from approximately 1,800 in 2015 to an estimated 3,000 in 2023, while crimes against children, such as trafficking and child labor, also saw significant increases, rising from around 450 in 2015 to an estimated 680 in 2023. This coincides with the rising migration rates in the region, which grew from 23.5% in 2011 to 26% in 2023. Migration, particularly rural-to-urban movement, exacerbates socio-economic dislocation, making women and children more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

2. Spatial Distribution of Crimes:

Using GIS analysis, crime hotspots were identified in peri-urban regions where migrant populations are heavily concentrated. These regions, such as the outskirts of Amravati and Yavatmal, have experienced a sharp rise in crimes against women and children. Migrant families often settle in these areas due to affordable housing, but these settlements frequently lack basic infrastructure and social services. Law enforcement is weak, and social protection mechanisms are either insufficient or absent. As a result, women in these areas face increased risks of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking, while children are more prone to exploitation in the form of child labor and abuse.

3. Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities:

Migration-induced socio-economic vulnerabilities are critical factors contributing to the rise in crime. High unemployment and poverty rates among migrants increase their susceptibility to exploitation. For instance, Yavatmal had an unemployment rate of 10.3% and a poverty rate of 25.8% in 2021, both higher than the state average. The lack of economic stability pushes many women into unsafe environments, where they face domestic violence and are targeted for trafficking. Similarly, children from migrant families often drop out of school and are forced into labor, making them vulnerable to abuse.

Low literacy rates, particularly among women, further amplify these vulnerabilities. In Yavatmal, the female literacy rate was 73.45% in 2021, lower than the state average of 76.45%, limiting their awareness of legal rights and access to help. The lack of adequate legal aid and support services for migrants in rural and peri-urban areas leaves these populations unprotected.

Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence of the correlation between migration and the rise in crimes against women and children in West Vidarbha. The analysis reveals that migration, driven largely by agrarian distress, has intensified socio-economic vulnerabilities within these communities. Key findings indicate that increasing migration rates are associated with higher incidences of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and child abuse. The spatial analysis further demonstrates that peri-urban areas, where many migrants settle, experience heightened crime rates due to inadequate infrastructure and weak law enforcement.

Moreover, socio-economic indicators such as high poverty, unemployment, and low literacy rates among migrants exacerbate their vulnerability, leaving women and children at greater risk for violence and exploitation. The findings underscore the necessity for policymakers to implement robust social protection measures, enhance legal awareness, and improve law enforcement mechanisms to safeguard these at-risk populations. Strengthening community support systems and increasing access to education and legal resources are essential steps toward mitigating the adverse effects of migration on crime and ensuring a safer environment for women and children in West Vidarbha.

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