

**Volume: 6 Issue: 2
(April-June) 2026
(ISSN: 2791-2612)**



OPEN

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.v6i2.jscr.1>

Urbanisation and Migration in Bangladesh: A Multi-Theoretical Sociological Study

Shrabony Akter¹; Dr Khandaker Mursheda Farhana¹

Abstract

Rural-urban migration has become a defining feature of socio-economic transformation in Bangladesh, significantly influencing patterns of urban development. This study examines the drivers, dynamics, and impacts of rural-urban migration through a sociological lens using secondary qualitative data. Drawing on established theoretical frameworks, including push-pull theory, the Harris-Todaro model, structural transformation theory, and social network theory, the study analyses how migration decisions are shaped and sustained. The findings reveal that migration is driven by a combination of economic disparities, environmental vulnerabilities, and social factors, while urban areas attract migrants through perceived opportunities for employment and improved living standards. The study further demonstrates that migrants contribute substantially to urban economies, particularly through the informal sector, but also face challenges such as precarious employment, inadequate housing, and social marginalisation. Rapid and unplanned urbanisation has placed considerable pressure on infrastructure and services, exacerbating inequality and sustainability concerns. Despite these challenges, migration also strengthens rural-urban linkages through remittances and knowledge transfer. The study concludes that integrated and inclusive policy approaches are essential to harness the benefits of migration while addressing its adverse impacts on urban development.

Keywords: Rural-urban migration, urban development, Bangladesh, informal economy, social inequality, urbanisation, migration theory

¹Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh, Email: hrabonya5@gmail.com

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Licensee KMF Publishers (www.kmf-publishers.com). This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Rural-urban migration has emerged as one of the most significant demographic and socio-economic processes shaping contemporary Bangladesh. As a developing country characterised by rapid population growth, limited rural employment opportunities, and uneven spatial development, Bangladesh has experienced a continuous flow of people from rural areas to urban centres. This phenomenon is not merely a demographic transition but a complex sociological process that influences patterns of urbanisation, economic development, social stratification, and spatial inequality.

Migration, in its broadest sense, refers to the movement of people across geographical spaces with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently. Within this framework, rural-urban migration constitutes a dominant form of internal migration, particularly in developing countries where disparities between rural and urban areas are pronounced (Hossain, 2001). In Bangladesh, such disparities are evident in access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and employment opportunities, which collectively act as strong push and pull factors for migration.

The rapid expansion of urban areas in Bangladesh, particularly metropolitan cities such as Dhaka and Chattogram, is closely linked to the influx of rural migrants. Dhaka, as the capital city, has become a focal point for economic activities, offering employment opportunities in sectors such as garments, construction, transportation, and informal services. Consequently, it attracts a large

number of rural migrants seeking better livelihoods and improved living standards (Sohel et al., 2017). However, this influx has also led to significant challenges, including overcrowding, the proliferation of informal settlements, and increased pressure on urban infrastructure.

From a sociological perspective, rural-urban migration can be understood through various theoretical lenses. Classical migration theories, such as the push-pull model, emphasise the role of economic disparities and structural inequalities in shaping migration decisions. In the context of Bangladesh, push factors include poverty, unemployment, landlessness, and vulnerability to natural disasters, while pull factors include better employment prospects, access to services, and perceived opportunities for social mobility (Obaidullah, 2023). Additionally, structural transformation theories highlight the transition from an agrarian economy to an industrial and service-based economy as a key driver of migration.

The impact of rural-urban migration on urban development is multifaceted. On one hand, migration contributes to economic growth by supplying labour to urban industries and fostering the expansion of the informal economy. Migrants often occupy low-skilled and labour-intensive jobs that are essential for sustaining urban economies. On the other hand, the rapid and unplanned nature of urbanisation poses significant challenges to sustainable urban development. The growth of slums and informal settlements in cities like Dhaka is a direct consequence of the

inability of urban infrastructure and governance systems to accommodate the influx of migrants (Faeique, 2024).

Furthermore, migration has profound implications for social structures and urban life. Migrants often face social exclusion, precarious employment, and limited access to basic services such as housing, healthcare, and education. Studies have shown that rural-urban migrants residing in urban slums experience lower quality of life and increased health risks compared to non-migrant urban populations (Koly et al., 2021). These conditions highlight the intersection of migration, poverty, and urban inequality.

At the same time, migration also generates positive outcomes. It can lead to improved living conditions for migrants through increased income and access to urban amenities. Migrants often send remittances to their families in rural areas, contributing to rural development and poverty reduction. Moreover, migration facilitates cultural exchange and social transformation, reshaping traditional norms and values.

Despite its significance, rural-urban migration in Bangladesh remains inadequately addressed in policy frameworks. Urban planning and development strategies often fail to integrate migration dynamics, resulting in fragmented and reactive approaches. Understanding the sociological dimensions of migration is therefore essential for developing inclusive and sustainable urban policies.

This study aims to examine rural-urban migration in Bangladesh from a sociological

perspective, focusing on its causes, patterns, and impacts on urban development. By analysing secondary qualitative data from existing literature, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how migration shapes urban spaces and social relations. The findings are expected to contribute to academic discourse and inform policy interventions aimed at managing migration and promoting equitable urban development.

2. Literature Review

The phenomenon of rural-urban migration has been extensively studied within the fields of sociology, economics, geography, and development studies. In the context of Bangladesh, a substantial body of literature has explored the causes, patterns, and consequences of migration, highlighting its central role in shaping urbanisation and socio-economic transformation.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Rural-Urban Migration

Theoretical frameworks on migration provide a foundation for understanding the dynamics of rural-urban mobility. One of the most widely used models is the push-pull theory, which explains migration as a response to disparities between origin and destination areas. In Bangladesh, push factors such as poverty, unemployment, land scarcity, and environmental vulnerability compel individuals to leave rural areas, while pull factors such as employment opportunities, better wages, and improved

access to services attract them to urban centres (Obaidullah, 2023).

Another important framework is the structural transformation theory, which links migration to broader economic changes. As economies transition from agriculture-based systems to industrial and service-oriented sectors, labour shifts from rural to urban areas. This process is particularly relevant in Bangladesh, where industrial growth, especially in the ready-made garment sector, has created significant demand for urban labour.

Sociological approaches also emphasise the role of social networks, cultural factors, and individual agency in migration decisions. Migration is not solely an economic phenomenon but is embedded in social relationships and community dynamics. For example, the presence of established migrant networks in urban areas often facilitates further migration by providing information, support, and resources.

2.2 Causes and Drivers of Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh

Empirical studies have identified multiple factors driving rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. Economic factors remain the most significant drivers. Limited employment opportunities in rural areas, coupled with low agricultural productivity, push individuals to seek alternative livelihoods in urban areas (Al-Maruf et al., 2022). Seasonal unemployment and underemployment in agriculture further exacerbate this trend.

Environmental factors also play a crucial role. Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and river erosion, which disrupt rural livelihoods and force people to migrate. These environmental pressures often intersect with economic vulnerabilities, creating complex migration patterns.

Social factors, including education, marriage, and family dynamics, also influence migration decisions. Studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to migrate in search of better employment opportunities (Haque & Islam, 2012). Additionally, migration is often a household strategy aimed at diversifying income sources and reducing risks.

Urban attraction is another key driver. Cities like Dhaka offer a wide range of employment opportunities, particularly in the informal sector, which absorbs a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The perception of better living standards and access to services further reinforces the appeal of urban areas.

2.3 Patterns and Trends of Migration

Rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is characterised by diverse patterns and trends. Migration is often circular or seasonal, with individuals moving between rural and urban areas based on economic opportunities. However, there is also a growing trend of permanent migration, particularly among younger populations seeking long-term employment.

Gender dynamics have also evolved. While migration was traditionally male-dominated, there has been a significant increase in female migration, particularly in the garment industry. This shift has important implications for gender roles, family structures, and social norms.

Afsar (1999) highlights the increasing complexity and diversification of migration patterns in Bangladesh, noting that migration is no longer a linear process but involves multiple forms of mobility, including temporary, seasonal, and permanent movements. This complexity reflects broader socio-economic transformations and changing livelihood strategies.

2.4 Impact on Urban Development

The impact of rural-urban migration on urban development in Bangladesh is both positive and negative. On the positive side, migration contributes to economic growth by providing a steady supply of labour to urban industries. Migrants play a crucial role in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and services, which are essential for urban economies.

Migration also contributes to the expansion of the informal sector, which serves as a critical source of employment for low-skilled workers. The informal economy provides flexibility and opportunities for income generation, albeit often under precarious conditions.

However, the negative impacts of migration are equally significant. Rapid population growth in urban areas has led to overcrowding, housing shortages, and the

proliferation of slums. In cities like Dhaka, a large proportion of migrants reside in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare (Sohel et al., 2017).

Urban infrastructure is under increasing pressure due to the influx of migrants. Transportation systems, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions often struggle to meet the growing demand. This situation is further compounded by limited urban planning and governance capacity.

2.5 Social and Economic Implications

The social implications of rural-urban migration are profound. Migrants often experience social exclusion and marginalisation in urban areas. They face challenges such as job insecurity, low wages, and poor working conditions. Additionally, migrants living in slums are exposed to health risks and environmental hazards (Koly et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, migration can also lead to improved living conditions and upward social mobility. Migrants often achieve higher incomes compared to their rural counterparts, which enables them to support their families and invest in education and healthcare.

Migration also has implications for rural areas. Remittances sent by migrants contribute to rural development and poverty reduction. However, migration can also lead to labour shortages and demographic imbalances in rural communities.

2.6 Research Gaps

Although existing literature provides valuable insights into rural-urban migration in Bangladesh, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more qualitative studies that explore the lived experiences of migrants and the social dimensions of migration. Second, the relationship between migration and urban governance requires further investigation. Third, the long-term impacts of migration on social inequality and urban sustainability remain underexplored.

This study seeks to address these gaps by adopting a sociological approach and utilising secondary qualitative data to analyse the impacts of rural-urban migration on urban development in Bangladesh.

3. Theoretical Framework

Understanding rural-urban migration and its implications for urban development in Bangladesh requires a robust theoretical foundation that integrates economic, sociological, and structural perspectives. This study adopts a multi-theoretical framework, drawing on the push-pull theory, the Harris-Todaro model, structural transformation theory, and social network theory to explain migration dynamics and their urban consequences.

The push-pull theory of migration remains one of the most widely used frameworks in migration studies. Initially articulated by Lee (1966), the model conceptualises migration as a response to a combination of push factors

in the place of origin and pull factors in the destination. In the context of Bangladesh, push factors include poverty, unemployment, landlessness, environmental degradation, and vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and cyclones. These structural constraints compel rural populations to seek alternative livelihoods. Conversely, urban areas offer pull factors such as employment opportunities, higher wages, access to education and healthcare, and the promise of improved living standards (Hossain, 2001; Obaidullah, 2023). The push-pull framework is particularly relevant in explaining the large-scale movement of rural populations to major urban centres like Dhaka, where perceived opportunities outweigh the risks associated with migration.

While the push-pull theory provides a useful starting point, it has been criticised for its descriptive nature and limited explanatory power regarding labour market dynamics. To address these limitations, the Harris-Todaro model offers a more nuanced economic explanation of migration. Harris and Todaro (1970) argue that migration decisions are based not only on actual wage differentials but also on expected income, which incorporates the probability of obtaining employment in urban areas. In Bangladesh, despite high levels of urban unemployment and underemployment, migrants continue to move to cities due to the expectation of better economic prospects. This phenomenon is evident in the expansion of the informal sector, where migrants engage in low-paying but accessible jobs. The model helps explain why migration persists even in the face of

urban poverty and precarious living conditions.

Another important theoretical lens is structural transformation theory, which situates migration within broader processes of economic development. According to this perspective, migration is a natural outcome of the transition from an agrarian economy to an industrial and service-based economy (Lewis, 1954). In Bangladesh, the growth of the ready-made garment industry and other urban-based sectors has created a demand for labour that cannot be met solely by the urban population. As a result, rural labour is absorbed into urban economies, contributing to industrial growth and economic diversification. However, this transformation is often uneven and unplanned, leading to challenges such as urban congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and social inequality (Afsar, 1999).

From a sociological perspective, social network theory provides valuable insights into the mechanisms that facilitate migration. This theory emphasises the role of interpersonal relationships, kinship ties, and community networks in shaping migration decisions (Massey et al., 1993). In Bangladesh, migration is often not an individual decision but a collective household strategy supported by social networks. Migrants rely on relatives and acquaintances in urban areas for information, accommodation, and employment opportunities. These networks reduce the risks and costs associated with migration, thereby reinforcing migration flows over time. Social networks also contribute to the

formation of migrant communities in urban areas, which can both support integration and perpetuate social segregation.

In addition to these frameworks, the concept of urban informalization is critical for understanding the impact of migration on urban development. The rapid influx of migrants into cities has led to the expansion of informal settlements and economies. According to Castells and Portes (1989), the informal sector is not a marginal component of the economy but an integral part of urban development in developing countries. In Bangladesh, migrants play a significant role in sustaining the informal economy, working in sectors such as street vending, domestic labour, and construction. While this provides livelihood opportunities, it also reflects the limitations of formal urban planning and governance systems.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives allows for a comprehensive understanding of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. The push-pull theory highlights the structural inequalities that drive migration, while the Harris-Todaro model explains the economic rationality behind migration decisions. Structural transformation theory situates migration within broader processes of economic change, and social network theory underscores the social dimensions of migration. Together, these frameworks provide a holistic lens through which to analyse the complex relationship between migration and urban development.

This study utilises these theoretical foundations to examine how migration shapes urban spaces, labour markets, and social relations in Bangladesh. By combining economic and sociological perspectives, the research aims to move beyond simplistic explanations and provide a nuanced analysis of migration as both a driver and a consequence of urban development.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on the analysis of secondary data to explore rural-urban migration and its impact on urban development in Bangladesh. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of migration, a qualitative approach is particularly suitable for capturing the economic and structural dimensions of the phenomenon. The methodology is designed to ensure a comprehensive and systematic analysis of existing literature and data sources.

4.1 Research Design

The research follows an interpretive qualitative approach, which emphasises understanding social phenomena through the analysis of meanings, experiences, and contextual factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than relying on primary data collection, the study synthesises findings from a wide range of secondary sources, including academic journal articles, books, policy reports, and publications by international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations. This approach

allows for a broad and in-depth exploration of migration dynamics in Bangladesh.

Secondary qualitative research is particularly relevant in this context because it enables the integration of diverse perspectives and findings from multiple studies. It also facilitates the examination of long-term trends and patterns that may not be captured through primary data alone. However, the use of secondary data requires careful selection and critical evaluation of sources to ensure reliability and validity.

4.2 Data Sources

The study draws on a variety of secondary data sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles on migration, urbanisation, and development
- Books and edited volumes on sociological and economic theories of migration
- Reports from international organisations such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- Government publications and policy documents related to urban development and migration in Bangladesh

These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research topic. Priority was given to recent publications to ensure that the analysis reflects current trends and developments.

4.3 Data Collection and Selection Criteria

The data collection process involved a systematic review of literature using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Keywords used in the search included “rural-urban migration in Bangladesh,” “urban development,” “internal migration,” “informal settlements,” and “urban poverty.” The selection of sources was guided by the following criteria:

- Relevance to the research objectives
- Academic rigour and methodological soundness
- Publication in peer-reviewed journals or reputable institutions
- Availability of qualitative insights or theoretical contributions

Studies that focused exclusively on quantitative analysis without providing qualitative interpretation were used selectively to support broader arguments.

4.4 Data Analysis Technique

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is particularly suitable for synthesising findings from multiple sources and generating a coherent narrative. The analysis was conducted in several stages:

- **Familiarisation with the data:** Reading and reviewing selected sources to gain an overall understanding

- **Coding:** Identifying key concepts, themes, and patterns related to migration and urban development
- **Theme development:** Grouping codes into broader themes such as causes of migration, migration patterns, and impacts on urban development
- **Interpretation:** Analysing the relationships between themes and linking them to theoretical frameworks

This systematic approach ensures that the analysis is both comprehensive and transparent.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Ensuring the validity and reliability of qualitative research based on secondary data requires careful consideration. This study adopts several strategies to enhance rigour:

- **Triangulation:** Using multiple sources to cross-check information and ensure consistency
- **Source evaluation:** Critically assessing the credibility and methodological quality of each source
- **Transparency:** Clearly documenting the data collection and analysis process

By integrating findings from diverse and credible sources, the study aims to provide a reliable and well-supported analysis.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

As the study relies exclusively on secondary data, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants. Therefore, issues

such as informed consent and confidentiality are not directly applicable. However, ethical considerations remain important in terms of proper citation and acknowledgement of sources. All sources used in the study are appropriately cited following APA (7th edition) guidelines. The study also avoids misrepresentation or selective interpretation of data, ensuring that findings are presented accurately and objectively.

4.7 Limitations of the Study

Despite its strengths, the methodology has certain limitations. First, the reliance on secondary data means that the study is dependent on the quality and scope of existing research. Second, the absence of primary data limits the ability to capture the lived experiences of migrants in real time. Third, variations in methodologies across different studies may affect the comparability of findings.

However, these limitations are mitigated by the use of a systematic and rigorous approach to data selection and analysis. The study provides valuable insights into migration dynamics and urban development in Bangladesh, contributing to both academic research and policy discussions.

5. Findings and Analysis

This section synthesises findings from secondary qualitative sources to examine the patterns, drivers, and consequences of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh and its implications for urban development. The analysis is organised into thematic areas,

including migration drivers, patterns of settlement, labour market integration, urban infrastructure stress, social inequality, and rural-urban linkages.

5.1 Drivers of Rural-Urban Migration

The findings confirm that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is driven by an interplay of economic, environmental, and social factors. Economic motivations emerge as the most dominant driver. Limited employment opportunities in rural areas, coupled with low agricultural productivity and seasonal underemployment, push individuals to seek alternative livelihoods in urban centres (Al-Maruf et al., 2022). The structural constraints of rural economies, particularly land fragmentation and declining returns to agriculture, create persistent economic insecurity, making migration a rational livelihood strategy.

Environmental factors further intensify migration flows. Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate-related hazards, including floods, cyclones, and river erosion, contributes significantly to displacement and migration. Environmental degradation disrupts agricultural livelihoods and exacerbates rural poverty, forcing affected populations to migrate to urban areas in search of stability (Black et al., 2011). The intersection of environmental and economic vulnerabilities creates a form of "distress migration," where individuals have limited choice but to relocate.

Social and demographic factors also play a crucial role. Migration is often embedded within household strategies aimed at income

diversification and risk reduction. Families may send one or more members to urban areas to secure employment and remit income, thereby stabilising household finances (Haque & Islam, 2012). Additionally, social networks significantly influence migration decisions by reducing uncertainty and facilitating access to urban opportunities (Massey et al., 1993).

5.2 Patterns and Characteristics of Migration

The analysis reveals that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is characterised by diverse and evolving patterns. Migration is not a uniform process but encompasses temporary, seasonal, and permanent movements. Seasonal migration is common among agricultural labourers who move to urban areas during periods of low agricultural activity. However, there is a growing trend toward permanent migration, particularly among younger populations seeking long-term employment opportunities.

Gender dynamics in migration have also undergone significant changes over time. While migration was traditionally male-dominated, there has been a notable increase in female migration, particularly in the ready-made garment sector. This shift reflects broader socio-economic changes and has important implications for gender roles and empowerment (Kabeer, 2000). Female migrants often experience increased economic independence, although they also face challenges such as workplace exploitation and limited access to social protection.

Urban destinations are highly concentrated, with Dhaka serving as the primary hub for migrants.

The city's economic opportunities and central role in national development make it an attractive destination. However, secondary cities such as Chattogram and Khulna are also experiencing increased migration flows, indicating a gradual spatial diversification of urbanisation.

5.3 Labour Market Integration and Economic Contributions

Migrants play a critical role in urban labour markets, particularly in the informal sector. The findings indicate that most rural-urban migrants are absorbed into low-skilled and labour-intensive occupations, including construction, domestic work, transportation, and small-scale trade (Afsar, 1999). The informal sector serves as a primary entry point for migrants due to its low barriers to entry and flexibility.

Despite the precarious nature of informal employment, migrants contribute significantly to urban economies. Their labour supports key sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure development, and service provision. In the garment industry, for example, migrant workers constitute a substantial portion of the labour force, driving export-oriented economic growth (Lewis, 2011). However, labour market integration is often characterised by vulnerability and exploitation. Migrants typically work in conditions marked by low wages, job insecurity, and limited labour rights. The absence of formal contracts and social protection mechanisms exposes them

to economic shocks and occupational hazards. This precarious employment structure reflects broader inequalities within urban labour markets.

5.4 Urban Infrastructure and Housing

One of the most significant impacts of rural-urban migration is the strain on urban infrastructure and housing. Rapid population growth in cities has outpaced the capacity of urban planning and service provision systems. As a result, many migrants settle in informal settlements or slums, which are characterised by inadequate housing, poor sanitation, and limited access to basic services (Sohel et al., 2017).

The proliferation of slums in cities like Dhaka is a direct consequence of unplanned urbanisation. Migrants often cannot afford formal housing and are forced to reside in densely populated areas with substandard living conditions. These settlements are typically located in environmentally vulnerable areas, such as flood-prone zones, increasing residents' exposure to health and environmental risks.

Urban infrastructure, including transportation, water supply, and healthcare systems, is under increasing pressure due to the influx of migrants. Congestion, pollution, and service shortages are common challenges, reflecting the limitations of existing urban governance frameworks. The mismatch between population growth and infrastructure development underscores the need for more inclusive and forward-looking urban planning.

5.5 Social Inequality and Marginalisation

The findings highlight the persistence of social inequality and marginalisation among rural-urban migrants. Migrants often occupy the lower strata of urban society, facing barriers to social integration and upward mobility. Limited access to education, healthcare, and social services exacerbates their vulnerability (Koly et al., 2021).

Social exclusion is further reinforced by spatial segregation, as migrants are concentrated in informal settlements that are physically and socially isolated from formal urban areas. This segregation limits their access to economic opportunities and social networks, perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Health outcomes among migrants are also a major concern. Poor living conditions, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to healthcare contribute to higher rates of illness and reduced quality of life. Studies have shown that migrants living in slums experience significant health disparities compared to non-migrant urban populations (Koly et al., 2021).

5.6 Rural-Urban Linkages and Remittances

Despite the challenges faced by migrants, rural-urban migration generates important linkages between rural and urban areas. Remittances sent by migrants play a crucial role in supporting rural households and contributing to local development. These financial flows help improve living

standards, finance education and healthcare, and reduce poverty (de Haas, 2010).

Migration also facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills, and social norms between rural and urban areas. Migrants often bring back new ideas and practices, contributing to social and economic modernisation in rural communities. However, migration can also lead to labour shortages and demographic imbalances in rural areas, particularly when young and productive individuals leave.

Overall, the findings reveal that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is a complex and multifaceted process with both positive and negative implications for urban development. While migration contributes to economic growth and rural development, it also exacerbates urban challenges such as overcrowding, infrastructure deficits, and social inequality. The interplay between these outcomes highlights the need for integrated policies that address both migration and urban development holistically.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh and its impact on urban development. This section interprets these findings through the lens of the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier and situates them within broader academic and policy debates.

6.1 Migration as a Structural and Rational Process

The analysis supports the argument that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is both a structural and rational process. The push-pull framework effectively explains the role of structural inequalities in driving migration, while the Harris-Todaro model highlights the rational decision-making processes of migrants. Individuals migrate not only in response to immediate economic pressures but also based on expectations of future opportunities (Harris & Todaro, 1970).

This dual perspective underscores the complexity of migration decisions. Migration is not merely a response to poverty but also a strategy for achieving upward mobility. Even in the face of urban challenges such as unemployment and poor living conditions, migrants continue to move to cities because the perceived benefits outweigh the risks.

6.2 Urbanisation without Adequate Planning

One of the key insights from the findings is the phenomenon of “urbanisation without adequate planning.” The rapid growth of urban populations, driven largely by migration, has not been matched by corresponding investments in infrastructure and services. This has resulted in the proliferation of informal settlements and the deterioration of urban living conditions.

From a structural transformation perspective, this reflects the uneven nature of economic development in Bangladesh. While industrial growth has created employment opportunities, it has not been accompanied by

comprehensive urban planning and governance reforms (Afsar, 1999). This imbalance highlights the need for integrated development strategies that align economic growth with urban infrastructure development.

6.3 Informal Economy as a Double-Edged Sword

The role of the informal economy in absorbing migrant labour is another critical issue. On one hand, the informal sector provides essential livelihood opportunities for migrants, enabling them to survive and contribute to urban economies. On the other hand, it perpetuates precarious employment conditions and limits opportunities for upward mobility.

This duality reflects broader debates in development studies regarding the role of informality. While some scholars view the informal sector as a dynamic and adaptive component of urban economies, others emphasise its association with vulnerability and exploitation (Castells & Portes, 1989). In the context of Bangladesh, the informal economy appears to function as both a safety net and a constraint.

6.4 Social Networks and Migration Sustainability

The findings also highlight the importance of social networks in sustaining migration flows. Social network theory provides a compelling explanation for the migration, as networks reduce the costs and risks associated with relocation (Massey et al., 1993). Once migration pathways are

established, they tend to become self-perpetuating.

However, while social networks facilitate migration, they may also contribute to spatial concentration and social segregation. Migrants often settle in areas where their networks are located, leading to the formation of densely populated informal settlements. This concentration can limit social integration and reinforce inequalities.

6.5 Gender and Migration Dynamics

The increasing participation of women in rural-urban migration represents a significant transformation. Female migration challenges traditional gender roles and contributes to women's economic empowerment. However, it also exposes women to new forms of vulnerability, including workplace exploitation and inadequate social protection.

This duality highlights the need for gender-sensitive policies that address the specific challenges faced by female migrants. Ensuring safe working conditions, access to healthcare, and social protection is essential for maximising the benefits of female migration.

6.6 Migration, Inequality, and Urban Sustainability

The relationship between migration and urban inequality is a central theme in the findings. Migration contributes to economic growth but also exacerbates social and spatial inequalities. Migrants often occupy marginalised positions in urban society, with limited access to resources and opportunities.

From a sociological perspective, this reflects the broader dynamics of urban stratification. Cities in developing countries are often characterised by stark contrasts between affluent and impoverished areas. Migration intensifies these disparities by increasing the concentration of low-income populations in informal settlements.

At the same time, migration poses challenges for urban sustainability. The environmental impact of rapid urbanisation, including increased pollution and resource consumption, raises concerns about the long-term viability of urban development. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that integrates migration management with sustainable urban planning.

6.7 Policy Implications

The findings and analysis have several important policy implications. First, there is a need to address the root causes of migration by promoting rural development and reducing regional inequalities. Investments in agriculture, rural infrastructure, and employment opportunities can help mitigate the push factors driving migration.

Second, urban planning and governance systems must be strengthened to accommodate population growth. This includes expanding affordable housing, improving infrastructure, and enhancing service delivery. Inclusive urban policies that recognise the contributions of migrants are essential for sustainable development.

Third, labour market policies should focus on improving working conditions in the informal sector and promoting formalisation. Providing social protection and labour rights for migrant workers can enhance their well-being and productivity. Finally, policies should leverage the positive aspects of migration, such as remittances and knowledge transfer, to promote development in both rural and urban areas.

In conclusion, rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is a complex and dynamic process that plays a central role in shaping urban development. While it offers opportunities for economic growth and social mobility, it also presents significant challenges related to inequality, infrastructure, and sustainability. A comprehensive and integrated policy approach is required to harness the benefits of migration while addressing its adverse impacts.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored rural-urban migration in Bangladesh as a complex and multifaceted socio-economic process with profound implications for urban development. Drawing on secondary qualitative data and grounded in established theoretical frameworks, the analysis demonstrates that migration is driven by a combination of structural inequalities, environmental pressures, and social dynamics. Rural populations are compelled to migrate due to limited economic opportunities, declining agricultural viability, and vulnerability to natural hazards,

while urban centres attract migrants with the promise of employment and improved living conditions.

The findings highlight that rural-urban migration plays a dual role in shaping urban development. On one hand, migrants contribute significantly to economic growth by supplying labour to key sectors, particularly the informal economy, which serves as a vital source of employment in urban areas. Migration also strengthens rural-urban linkages through remittances and the transfer of knowledge and skills, contributing to rural development and poverty reduction. On the other hand, the rapid and largely unplanned influx of migrants into urban areas has led to serious challenges, including overcrowding, the proliferation of informal settlements, and increased pressure on infrastructure and public services.

The study further reveals that migrants often experience social and economic marginalisation, characterised by precarious employment, inadequate housing, and limited access to essential services. These conditions not only affect the well-being of migrants but also contribute to broader patterns of urban inequality and social stratification. The persistence of these challenges underscores the limitations of existing urban governance and planning frameworks in Bangladesh.

In conclusion, rural-urban migration should not be viewed solely as a problem but as an integral component of the country's development trajectory. Effective policy responses must adopt a holistic approach that addresses both the causes and consequences

of migration. This includes promoting rural development to reduce push factors, strengthening urban planning and infrastructure to accommodate population growth, and ensuring social protection and labour rights for migrant workers. By adopting inclusive and sustainable strategies, Bangladesh can harness the potential of migration as a driver of equitable urban development.

References

- Afsar, R. (1999). Rural-urban dichotomy and convergence: Emerging realities in Bangladesh. *Environment and Urbanisation*, 11(1), 235-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789901100106>
- Al-Maruf, A., Pervez, A. K. M. K., Sarker, P. K., Rahman, M. S., & Ruiz-Menjivar, J. (2022). Exploring the factors of farmers' rural-urban migration decisions in Bangladesh. *Agriculture*, 12(5), 722. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture12050722>
- Black, R., Adger, W. N., Arnell, N. W., Dercon, S., Geddes, A., & Thomas, D. (2011). The effect of environmental change on human migration. *Global Environmental Change*, 21(S1), S3-S11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.10.001>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

- <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Castells, M., & Portes, A. (1989). *The informal economy: Studies in advanced and less developed countries*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- de Haas, H. (2010). Migration and development: A theoretical perspective. *International Migration Review*, 44(1), 227-264. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00804.x>
- Haque, M. E., & Islam, M. M. (2012). Rural to urban migration and household living conditions in Bangladesh. *Dhaka University Journal of Science*, 60(2), 253-257. <https://doi.org/10.3329/dujs.v60i2.11529>
- Harris, J. R., & Todaro, M. P. (1970). Migration, unemployment, and development: A two-sector analysis. *American Economic Review*, 60(1), 126-142.
- Hossain, M. Z. (2001). Rural-urban migration in Bangladesh: A micro-level study.
- Kabeer, N. (2000). *The power to choose: Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka*. Verso.
- Koly, K. N., Islam, M. S., Reidpath, D. D., Saba, J., Shafique, S., Chowdhury, M. R., & Begum, F. (2021). Health-related quality of life among rural-urban migrants living in Dhaka slums. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(19), 10507. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph181910507>
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3(1), 47-57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>
- Lewis, W. A. (1954). Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour. *Manchester School*, 22(2), 139-191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9957.1954.tb00021.x>
- Lewis, D. (2011). *Bangladesh: Politics, economy and civil society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mannan, K.A., & Farhana, K.M. (2026). *The Principles of Qur'anic Research Methodology: Deriving the Process of Knowledge from Revelation*. KMF Publishers. Open Access (CC BY 4.0). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.book.pqrm.26.02.12>
- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-466. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462>
- Obaidullah, S. K. (2023). Rural-to-urban migration in Bangladesh: From the perspective of poverty and life standard.
- Sohel, M. S., Islam, M. M., & Muhibbullah. (2017). Rural-urban migration and

urban transition in Bangladesh: A
case study of Dhaka city.