



Analysis Of The Factors Influencing Labor Migration From Rural Areas In Lolofitu Moi District To Urban Areas

Arisman Halawa ¹⁾; Syah Abadi Mendrofa ²⁾

¹⁾Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Nias, Indonesia

²⁾Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Nias, Indonesia

Email: ¹⁾ arismanhalawa16@gmail.com , ²⁾ syahabadi.mendrofa@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the factors influencing labor migration from rural areas in Lolofitu Moi District to urban centers. Labor migration from villages to cities in Indonesia remains a prevalent socio-economic phenomenon driven by disparities in employment opportunities, infrastructure, and living standards between rural and urban regions. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving key local stakeholders. The study identifies four main push factors from rural areas: limited employment, low agricultural income, inadequate infrastructure, and weak local economic development. Pull factors from urban areas include better job prospects, higher incomes, access to education and healthcare, and modern lifestyles. The findings highlight the significant role of economic conditions, socio-cultural influences, and environmental limitations in shaping migration decisions. While remittances from migrants positively impact household welfare in the village, the migration also leads to a shortage of productive labor, reduced agricultural activity, and weakened community participation. The study recommends targeted rural development policies, promotion of local entrepreneurship, and improved infrastructure to reduce migration pressure and ensure sustainable rural livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

Labor migration from rural to urban areas is a long-standing socio-economic phenomenon in many regions of Indonesia, including in Lolofitu Moi District, West Nias Regency. This migration reflects the persistent development disparity between rural and urban areas and is driven by various structural, economic, social, and cultural pressures. In rural communities, especially among the productive-age population, the lack of employment opportunities, limited access to capital and technology, and the fragmentation of agricultural land have made city life appear more promising.

Lolofitu Moi District is predominantly inhabited by people in their productive years (15–64 years old). This demographic potential remains underutilized due to limited employment prospects, high open unemployment rates, and underdeveloped public services and infrastructure. Consequently, migration to urban centers such as Medan, Pekanbaru, and Jakarta is often perceived as a rational choice to improve livelihoods and gain access to better opportunities in education, healthcare, and employment.

Moreover, the influence of digital media has further amplified urban allure. Stories of success from migrants shared through social networks have inspired many rural youths to pursue similar paths. Migration is also shaped by social networks, where family or friends in cities often play key roles in facilitating the process through information and logistical support.

While migration can yield economic benefits in the form of remittances sent back to villages, it also creates challenges. Villages lose potential labor needed for agricultural productivity and face the risk of social disintegration due to the absence of the younger generation. On the other hand, if managed properly, migration can become a productive movement, contributing positively to both origin and destination regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Migration

Migration refers to the movement of individuals from one region to another, crossing administrative boundaries with the intent to settle permanently. It is one of the key components of demographic change and is categorized into international and internal migration. Internal migration, which this study focuses on, occurs within the same country and is usually driven by disparities in economic, social, and environmental conditions between the origin and destination areas (Mantra, 2015; Rahmadana, 2020).

According to Rozy Munir, two dimensions define migration: spatial (movement between regions) and temporal (duration of stay). The Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) considers a person to be a migrant if they have lived in a new area for at least six months.

Push and Pull Theory

Push factors are unfavorable conditions in the place of origin that compel individuals to migrate. These include limited employment opportunities, low and unstable income, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities, and poor infrastructure, such as damaged roads, unreliable electricity, and lack of clean water. These conditions create a sense of stagnation and reduce the quality of life in rural areas, particularly among the younger population who aspire for better economic and social prospects. In many cases, these challenges are long-standing and systemic, making it difficult for local communities to achieve sustainable livelihoods or upward mobility.

Pull factors, on the other hand, are the positive and promising conditions found in destination areas typically urban centers that attract migrants. These include the availability of diverse job opportunities, higher and more stable wages, better access to education and vocational training, modern healthcare, and well-developed infrastructure and public services. Moreover, cities are often perceived as centers of innovation, independence, and success, where individuals can redefine their lives and escape the limitations of their rural origins. For many, especially the youth, these pull factors represent not only economic potential but also social freedom and personal growth (Pradana, 2021; Budiono & Wahyudi, 2020).

Needs and Stress Theory

This theory argues that unmet economic, social, and psychological needs create stress within individuals. When individuals are unable to meet their basic needs such as adequate income, access to education, healthcare, or social belonging over a prolonged period, this leads to increasing dissatisfaction and emotional pressure. As the level of stress accumulates, it may

surpass a person's tolerance threshold, pushing them to actively seek change. In this context, migration becomes a coping mechanism, a way to escape unfavorable circumstances and pursue an environment that is perceived to be more supportive of their personal, economic, and emotional well-being.

According to Keban and Mantra (2020), migration is not simply a rational or economic decision it is also an emotional response to chronic stress caused by persistent deprivation and lack of opportunity. People are more likely to migrate when they believe that their current environment no longer supports their aspirations or personal growth. Cities or more developed regions, therefore, become attractive not just because they offer jobs or services, but because they symbolize hope, relief, and psychological renewal. This theory helps explain why migration often occurs even in the absence of direct recruitment or economic incentives internal pressures and subjective perceptions of life satisfaction can be powerful motivators, especially when individuals feel trapped in conditions that offer little promise for improvement.

Rational Choice and Decision-Making Theory

Migrants assess the benefits and costs of migration through a rational decision-making process, weighing both tangible and intangible factors before deciding to move. This process involves evaluating potential gains such as higher income, better job prospects, access to education or healthcare, and improved quality of life against possible losses or challenges, including emotional strain, cultural adjustment, separation from family, and financial costs related to relocation. If the perceived or expected benefits at the destination significantly outweigh the economic, psychological, and social costs, then migration is seen as a logical and worthwhile investment of one's time, energy, and resources. This aligns with the rational choice theory, which views individuals as strategic actors who seek to maximize utility under conditions of constraint.

As Ullah (2024) and Lanati & Venturini (2021) explain, migrants are not merely reacting to hardship, but actively making calculated decisions about where they believe their skills, labor, and aspirations can yield the greatest return. Even when the journey involves risk or uncertainty, many view migration as a forward-looking strategy to secure long-term improvement for themselves and their families. This perspective helps explain why migration often persists even in the face of known obstacles it is not solely a response to desperation, but a deliberate move grounded in expectation, agency, and opportunity evaluation.

Patterns and Forms of Migration

Migration patterns in developing countries typically show high concentrations of movement toward large urban centers. Cities with modern economic structures and developed infrastructure become attractive hubs for rural migrants (Didit, 2020; Muhamad, 2021).

Forms of migration can be categorized as:

- Vertical migration (social or economic status change)
- Horizontal migration (geographic movement)
- Permanent migration (long-term relocation)
- Temporary migration (short-term or circular migration)

Human Capital Theory

From an economic perspective, migration is commonly viewed as a strategic investment decision made by individuals or households seeking to maximize their long-term economic well-being. In this view, migrants are not merely escaping poverty or hardship, but rather making calculated trade-offs in the hope of securing better financial prospects in the future.

Migrants typically sacrifice current income and stability, and incur various short-term costs such as transportation expenses, housing arrangements, job search efforts, documentation processing, and sometimes even social costs, like separation from family and community. These

are considered the opportunity costs of migration the value of what is given up in the present in order to pursue potentially greater returns in the future.

As theorized by Becker (1968), Sukirno (1978), and Mankiw, migration is akin to investing in human capital: individuals allocate resources (time, money, effort) to relocate to environments where their productivity is expected to yield higher economic rewards. The underlying assumption is that migrants anticipate greater income opportunities, career growth, or access to better education and healthcare, which will outweigh the immediate burdens they face during the migration process.

This theoretical lens helps to explain why individuals from underdeveloped regions may choose to endure uncertain conditions in cities such as informal employment, crowded housing, or unfamiliar social settings because they perceive these hardships as temporary sacrifices that lead to long-term economic improvement. In this way, migration is not just a reactive move but a forward-looking, self-investment strategy driven by economic rationale.

Individual Characteristics and Migration

Individual demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, and marital status also affect migration behavior. Typically:

- a. Men are more likely to migrate longer distances than women (Hungu, 2007).
- b. Younger individuals are more inclined to migrate due to adaptability and fewer responsibilities (Gibler & Gugler, 1996; Zhao, 1999).
- c. Married individuals also tend to migrate more frequently than unmarried ones, often to support household needs (Sukamdi & Mujahid, 2015).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the factors influencing labor migration from villages in Lolofitu Moi District to urban areas. The qualitative method was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the experiences, motivations, and conditions that drive migration decisions. Data were collected primarily through interviews with key local stakeholders, including the District Head (Camat), the Village Development Officer (Kasi PMD), and the Social Welfare Officer (Kasi Kesra). These interviews provided insights into economic conditions, infrastructure, and social dynamics influencing migration. In addition to interviews, the researcher used observation and document analysis to enrich the understanding of local challenges. The researcher acted as the main instrument, supported by tools such as voice recorders and interview guides.

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three steps: reducing the data to identify key themes, displaying it for interpretation, and drawing conclusions that reflect the overall migration dynamics in the district. Through this approach, the research aims to provide meaningful insights into the push and pull factors of migration and their impact on rural communities.

RESULTS

This study explored the factors influencing labor migration from rural villages in Lolofitu Moi District to various urban centers in Indonesia. Through interviews with local government officials and field observations, several core themes were identified that explain the motivations behind migration and its effects on the local community.

Push Factors from the Village

The research found that most migrants left their villages due to economic pressures. The rural economy, dominated by small-scale agriculture, offers few job opportunities, especially for

young people. Farmlands are becoming increasingly limited due to hereditary land division, and agricultural yields are often unstable due to fluctuating market prices and lack of modern tools. Local government officials, such as the District Head (Camat), emphasized that these conditions have made it difficult for families to meet their basic needs. As a result, many villagers especially the youth see migration to cities as a necessary move to secure income, even if it means working informal jobs like construction labor, factory work, or domestic services. Another significant push factor is the lack of infrastructure and basic services. Several villages experience poor road conditions, unreliable electricity, and limited access to clean water. These hardships make everyday life difficult and reduce the appeal of remaining in the village.

Pull Factors from Urban Areas

Urban areas offer a variety of pull factors that make them highly attractive destinations for rural labor migrants from Lolofitu Moi District. These pull factors are not limited to the economic domain but also extend to the social and cultural aspirations of the younger generation. The availability of diverse job opportunities in the cities is one of the most compelling reasons people choose to migrate. Unlike in the village, where employment is mostly limited to subsistence farming and small-scale informal trading, cities offer more dynamic labor markets. Migrants from Lolofitu Moi often work in manufacturing industries, construction sites, service sectors, and informal jobs such as cleaning, transportation, or household assistance.

Even though these jobs may not match their education or skills, they are still considered more promising and offer relatively higher income stability. Another strong pull factor is the access to modern infrastructure and public services, including better transportation systems, electricity, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. For many young villagers, the city represents not only economic improvement but also personal development and social mobility. Cities are seen as places where people can build a future, pursue higher education, gain independence, and lead a more modern lifestyle.

The role of media and digital technology is also critical in shaping positive perceptions of city life. Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram often display glamorous urban lifestyles, which influence rural youth to believe that success and comfort are more attainable in cities. These platforms also serve as informal information hubs, where young people learn about job openings, living conditions, and migration stories from friends or relatives who have migrated earlier. In this context, migrant networks act as a powerful enabler. The presence of relatives or friends who already live and work in urban areas provides practical support for new migrants. These networks help newcomers find accommodation, recommend jobs, and offer emotional and financial support during the transition period.

This shows that migration is no longer just an economic necessity it has become a cultural aspiration. The city symbolizes success, freedom, and prestige. For many young people, especially those who feel limited in the village, migration offers a sense of hope and purpose, even when the reality in cities may be challenging. In conclusion, urban areas are seen as places of opportunity, progress, and modernity. The combination of economic promise, improved living standards, exposure to modern values, and strong social networks makes them highly attractive to rural migrants. These pull factors do not act in isolation but are magnified by the dissatisfaction with conditions in the village, making migration a logical and often desirable choice.

Demographic Characteristics of Migrants

The demographic profile of migrants from Lolofitu Moi District provides important insight into who is most likely to migrate, why, and how their background influences their decision. Based on field data and interviews, the majority of individuals migrating from the district are young adults, typically between the ages of 17 and 35 years old, with a relatively low to medium level of education, and predominantly male. Young people dominate the migration flows. This is

not coincidental according to local officials, youth are generally more open to new experiences, more adaptable to urban life, and more motivated to seek economic independence. In rural areas like Lolofitu Moi, the lack of job variety makes it hard for young people to envision a prosperous future if they stay in the village. Migration becomes a form of life transition or personal development strategy.

This pattern aligns with the theory proposed by Gibler and Gugler (1996) and Zhao (1999), which argue that migration rates are higher among younger individuals due to their flexibility, lower psychological barriers, and fewer familial responsibilities compared to older age groups. The data indicate that most migrants are male. This is consistent with migration trends in many rural parts of Indonesia. Culturally, men are often expected to be economic providers, and migrating to cities is seen as part of fulfilling that role. Additionally, men are more likely to take on physically demanding and mobile jobs in construction, transportation, or factory work, which are commonly available in urban centers. While some women also migrate, their numbers are lower, and they often choose destinations closer to home or migrate only after marriage, typically for reasons such as joining their spouses or working in domestic service roles. Traditional gender roles in the district also influence this pattern women are more likely to remain in the village to care for children or elderly family members.

Most migrants have a basic to intermediate level of education, such as having completed junior high school or high school. Few hold tertiary degrees, as access to higher education remains limited in rural areas. Nevertheless, even with lower education levels, many still believe that city life offers better chances of employment and advancement. Education also influences motivation young people with some level of education tend to have higher aspirations and are more likely to seek opportunities beyond farming or village-based livelihoods. Yet, because their qualifications may not match formal sector demands, many end up working in the informal sector or take whatever job is available.

According to local authorities, both single and married individuals participate in migration, though with different motivations. Single individuals, particularly youth, migrate for reasons such as gaining independence, building a career, or supporting their parents. Married individuals, especially men, often migrate to provide better financial support for their families. In some cases, entire families gradually follow the primary migrant to the city after financial conditions improve. This finding is consistent with research by Sukamdi and Mujahid (2015), which shows that married migrants often exhibit stronger financial motivations, while younger unmarried migrants tend to migrate for self-improvement or exploration

Social and Economic Impact on the Village

While migration provides economic benefits primarily through remittances sent back to families it also results in serious socio-economic consequences for the village. Many families rely on money sent by migrants to cover school fees, household needs, and even to build homes or start small businesses. In this sense, migration indirectly supports local consumption and modest investments.

However, the departure of productive labor leads to labor shortages in agriculture and weakens community-based activities. Fields may go untended, and fewer young people participate in village development programs, religious gatherings, or communal work. According to village officers, this shift has also caused family separation issues, such as elderly grandparents raising children left behind by their migrating parents. Social cohesion is further challenged as traditional structures are strained by the absence of younger generations. In some cases, values and lifestyle brought back by returnees may also clash with local norms, creating intergenerational tension.

DISCUSSIONS

This study highlights how labor migration from rural areas in Lolofitu Moi District is not simply the result of individual choices, but rather the consequence of interconnected structural challenges particularly economic inequality, social transformation, and environmental limitations. These three domains work in tandem to push individuals especially the younger, productive-age population to seek a better life in urban centers

1. Economic Factors: Structural Inequality and Limited Rural Livelihoods

From an economic perspective, migration in this region is primarily driven by the scarcity of local employment opportunities. Agriculture, which dominates the rural economy, is increasingly constrained by fragmented land ownership, minimal mechanization, and low market access. As noted in interviews with local officials, this condition forces residents to rely on unstable, low-yield farming to meet their daily needs. Youth, in particular, find it difficult to imagine building sustainable futures under such conditions. These findings are in line with Ananta and Arifin (2015), who argue that the uneven distribution of development and jobs between rural and urban areas remains a key driver of internal migration in Indonesia. Moreover, economic stagnation in rural communities is compounded by limited access to credit, lack of entrepreneurship programs, and weak infrastructure factors that together discourage local investment and innovation. Migration, therefore, is not only a short-term survival strategy but a long-term economic repositioning an attempt by individuals to relocate to environments where their labor is more rewarded and where economic mobility is perceived to be more achievable.

2. Social Factors: Aspirations, Pressure, and the Role of Networks

On the social side, migration decisions are shaped by both aspirations for upward mobility and pressures from familial and peer expectations. The rise of social media has played a significant role in altering perceptions of urban life. Young villagers are constantly exposed to curated images of success, modernity, and prosperity from those who have already migrated to cities. These influences create a growing belief that city life offers not just income, but also personal growth, freedom, and social status. In many cases, the success stories of earlier migrants act as informal "templates" for others to follow. The presence of established migrant networks in destination cities provides psychological comfort and logistical support, reducing the perceived risks associated with migration. These dynamics affirm the insights of Rahayu (2019), who emphasized that family prestige and the desire to improve one's social image within the community are significant motivators in migration decisions. Additionally, there is a cultural shift among younger generations. While older villagers may value attachment to land and tradition, youth increasingly prioritize independence and mobility. Migration is viewed not just as an economic act, but as a rite of passage toward modern adulthood

3. Environmental and Infrastructural Constraints

Environmental conditions and poor infrastructure further intensify the push toward urban areas. Villages in Lolofitu Moi continue to face critical deficiencies in basic services, including poor road access especially during the rainy season limited electricity coverage, and unreliable clean water supply. These deficits not only reduce quality of life but also limit the capacity for economic activities to grow. The findings echo Hugo (2014), who emphasized that the absence of meaningful rural infrastructure investment results in a permanent labor outflow. As infrastructure deteriorates or fails to keep pace with population needs, the village loses its capacity to retain its residents, especially those who are economically active and mobile

4. Migration's Dual Impact on Rural Areas

While migration serves as a coping mechanism and brings tangible economic benefits particularly in the form of remittances it also causes long-term structural consequences for the rural community. Families benefit financially through money sent home, which is often

used for daily needs, education, and even small-scale investments. This flow of funds can improve living standards for those left behind. However, the cost of migration is felt in the depletion of rural labor, especially among the youth. The reduction of manpower in agriculture leads to underutilized land, declining production, and a weakening of communal labor systems. Additionally, the decline in youth participation in community events, religious life, and village development weakens the social fabric. These outcomes support the view of Sudiby (2018), who argued that empowering rural economies especially through targeted support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can offer alternatives to migration. When local livelihoods are strengthened and seen as viable, the compulsion to leave diminishes.

5. Toward Comprehensive Rural Development

The findings suggest that labor migration is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather a structural response to persistent inequality between rural and urban areas. Migration is a symptom of deeper issues: stagnant rural economies, limited opportunity structures, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Therefore, strategies to address rural-urban migration must go beyond short-term job creation. Policymakers and stakeholders must focus on integrated rural development, which includes:

- a. Expanding access to education and vocational training
- b. Investing in rural infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and water systems
- c. Supporting youth entrepreneurship and SME development
- d. Strengthening local markets and value chains
- e. In doing so, villages like those in Lolofitu Moi can become places of opportunity, not just places of departure.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that labor migration from Lolofitu moi district to urban areas is a complex and multi-dimensional process shaped by a combination of economic hardship, social aspiration, and infrastructural inadequacy in rural villages. Economically, the primary push factors are the lack of employment opportunities, low agricultural productivity, and limited access to markets and capital. These conditions make it difficult for villagers especially youth to secure a stable income or improve their quality of life within the village environment. As a result, migration becomes a rational economic strategy to seek better prospects in cities, even when the jobs available are low-skilled or informal.

Socially, migration is driven by the desire for personal advancement and modernity. Young people are increasingly influenced by the success stories of previous migrants, peer expectations, and social media portrayals of urban life. These narratives reinforce the belief that the city represents opportunity, freedom, and status. Additionally, existing migrant networks in destination cities serve as crucial support systems, easing the transition for new migrants and encouraging others to follow. Environmentally, poor infrastructure such as damaged roads, irregular electricity, and limited clean water supply adds to the push effect. These challenges lower the quality of rural life and restrict the potential for local economic development, thereby making migration an even more attractive alternative.

The study also finds that the typical migrant is a young, single male, aged 17–35 years, with a low to intermediate level of education. This demographic is more willing to take risks, is less tied down by family responsibilities, and is more motivated to pursue change. While migration brings economic benefits to families in the form of remittances, it also creates serious challenges for rural development. The outflow of productive-age labor weakens the agricultural sector, reduces community participation, and contributes to the social disintegration of the village. Without targeted interventions, these issues may deepen rural inequality and dependency on migration as a.

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY

In summary, migration in Lolofitu Moi District is not merely an individual decision it is a structural response to systemic underdevelopment. Addressing this phenomenon requires a comprehensive rural development agenda that enhances local employment, improves public services, and empowers youth to build their future within their own communities.

LIMITATION

First, the research was conducted only within Lolofitu Moi District, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other rural areas with different socio-economic conditions. The migration factors identified may vary significantly in other districts or provinces.

Second, data were collected using a qualitative approach with a limited number of informants (only local government officials), which may not fully capture the personal experiences of the migrants themselves. Including perspectives from actual migrants could have provided deeper insight into their motivations and challenges.

Third, this study focuses primarily on economic, social, and environmental factors, and does not explore in detail other possible dimensions such as political influence, gender-specific issues, or psychological impacts of migration.

Lastly, the research was conducted over a limited timeframe, which may not reflect the long-term trends or seasonal variations in migration behavior. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the rural-urban migration phenomenon and serves as a foundation for future research and policy formulation

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