

Population influx in the metropolitan city, Guwahati, and regional development of other districts in Assam

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The study is conducted to understand - the cause of rapid population migration from rural to urban areas in Assam, the availability of basic amenities in every household, different aspects of imbalance in regional development and suggestions to overcome from all these challenges.

Methodology: The whole research was based on online survey data. Data on various issues being faced by the residents of Guwahati as well as small towns of Assam were collected from the respondents.

Main Findings: The increase in rural dwellers, students and service people blindly pouring into cities creates problems both for the city dwellers and planners. The problems are already visible in their daily lives.

Applications of the study: This study is useful in understanding the causes and impact of the imbalance in the regional development of the state of Assam.

Novelty/Originality of the study: There have been various researches on the regional development of Assam state before but in the recent 4-5 years urbanization in the city has increased which still indicates the need for change in policies and infrastructures. This study has been conducted to give solutions to the existing problems of increasing migration of residents from small districts to the main city of Guwahati.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is a complex economic and social phenomenon. (Yao et al., 2021). The social problems that arise specifically from the way people live in cities (i.e., urbanism) and the way cities grow (i.e., urbanization) reflect many of the same problems that socially concerned scholars have identified in general. (Ray & Borer, 2018). Hence, the city plays a significant role in overlapping, merging, and connecting many social problems within a specific geographical area.

The data is surprising. Approximately 3 million people move to cities each week, according to estimates by the United Nations in 2009 and the International Organization for Migration in 2015. Today, about 54% of the world's population lives in cities, up from 30% in 1950. According to sources, this is projected to grow to two-thirds of the world's population in the next 15 to 30 years. More than half of the city's inhabitants live in 1,022 cities and have a population of over 500,000. Currently, there are 29 megacities with a population of over 10 million, increasing from 41 to 53 in 1950 to 2030. There will be also 468 cities with over 1 million people, up from 83 in 1950. The Yale research group predicts that: By 2030, the city's land cover will expand by 463,000 square miles, covering nearly 10% of the Earth's land area. This is equivalent to 20,000 soccer fields paved daily.

(Lampard, 1966), suggests that a distinction should be made between the three aspects of the process of urbanization i.e.

- (i) Behavioural Aspects
- (ii) Structural Aspects
- (iii) Demographic Aspects

(i) Behavioural Aspects of Urbanization

Urban areas are a significant part of social change. Values, attitudes, behavior patterns of people amend here. Due to the size, population density, and the heterogeneity of the occupants, the degree of interaction here is very high resulting in the causes of behavioral changes.

(ii) Structural Aspects of Urbanization

The structural aspects of urbanization are largely dependent on economic changes and the structure of economic activity of the entire population. It refers to the conversion from an agricultural economy to the main industrial economy.

(iii) Demographic Aspects of Urbanization

The demographic aspect of urbanization is related to the overall population living in urban areas of certain areas is increasing, which also affects the absolute population and relative growth of cities within a defined area, that is, the number and size of cities increasing in some areas.

Assam, the north-eastern state of India, currently has a population of 3.6 crores as of 2021. Guwahati, the "Gateway of Northeast India," is the largest city in Assam, as well as the largest city in north-eastern India. It is the most populous city in the northeast and one of the fastest-growing cities in India. The area population of Guwahati city in 2021 was 1,135,000, a 1.61% increase from 2020. To catch up with the fast-growing small and medium-sized cities in India, planners and managers must now recognize that they are now focusing more on proper urban development (Report of Task Force for Developing Small and Medium Towns and Cities, 1976). While doing that, the developers also need to think about mitigating the high migration of the masses into the city.

Many might argue that efforts in mitigating the influx of rural population into the urban population can be done only in a utopian world. But, after conducting a survey and knowing the views and opinions of the common people, the results were really simple. The survey showed that the towns not having improved communication, educational and official institutes have acted as a push factor for the residents towards the city, Guwahati. It is to understand that although there are master plans for more than 29 towns in Assam, the focus at this point should majorly be on improving the existing issues of facilities received by one part of the population and deprived of the other half.

Objectives

Understanding the fact that both the city and the other districts cannot be matched based on the regional planning, the objectives are as such:

1. A comparative study of the areas keeping in mind their geographical advantages and limitations.
2. Understand the scopes of development in the small towns of the districts.
3. Understand how the implementation of certain town planning strategies can help as a pulling factor of the population and prevent population conglomerate in the city.
4. To discuss the views of the common population regarding the availability of the basic amenities in the areas and their opinions in improving the regional planning of the same.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Population influx is directly related to urbanization and urban development of the cities. These are the crucial aspects of Urban Geography. There have been researches conducted on urbanization and urban development which has helped greatly in conducting this research on population influx and estimating the scenario of population growth in the coming years in the areas of study. Researches and master plans can enhance the development of the area. But for how long if the population increases at this rate? Hence, a survey of various pieces of literature relating to each concept has been undertaken to do justice to the research work and the idea of mitigating the population influx by bringing a balance in the regional development of areas other than the metropolitan cities in Assam.

Population influx

Before learning about population influx, let's first know about the term "influx" and its effects in different realms of the environment. Everything that flows inward can be called an inflow, but the term is often used to refer to several things, such as water, people, and cash. A part of the migration is population influx. Immigrants are those who permanently change their habitual residence. Migration is also the movement of an individual or group from one place or residence to another if they intend to stay in a new place for a long time. Data on migration and urbanization are essential for cities to better manage migration. However, these data are not always available, especially in low-income countries, and if available, are not available or accessible at the city level, nor are they fragmented, inclusive, or comparable.

Migration in India is primarily influenced by social structures and development patterns. Non-uniform development is the main cause of migration. Then there is a difference between Various socio-economic layers. Landless poor people, mostly in the lower caste, are indigenous people and economically underdeveloped which make up the majority of immigrants.

Urban and Urbanization

The definition of a city is problematic, and there is no single globally accepted definition of what constitutes an urban settlement. What the national statistics agencies define as a "city" varies from country to country and often changes over time. Some countries define cities based on minimum population thresholds and population densities, while others use the administrative definition of what an urban area is. Urbanization or "urban transition" refers to "a shift in a population from one that is dispersed across small rural settlements, in which agriculture is the dominant economic activity, towards one that is concentrated in larger and denser urban settlements characterized by a dominance of industrial and service activities" (UN, 2018). Inadequate service and restricted access to funds often relocate citizens from rural areas to the city center in search of work. Young people are particularly attracted to urban areas because of their easy access to Technology, productivity, entrepreneurship, modernization (Saghir & Santoro, 2018).

(Bhuyan & Das, 1995) wrote "The Trend of North East Region's urban development, with particular reference to Assam", is important in this regard. After examining some of the urban settlements of Assam, they found that they were in the urban centers of Assam are mostly rural, and hence, delineating the actual town area from its adjoining fringe is quite difficult. The paper also mentions the urbanization of Assam explaining the lack of adequate urban infrastructure

for productive Activity. (Rao et al., 1986) analysed the urbanization of India which is the result of Population shifting from rural to urban, and the center of the city is growing at the expense of either Landscape or landscape services by modern transportation and communications systems. In this study, the pattern of urbanization in India suggests re-emphasizing the need to identify new urban patterns Foundations, and derivations of systems within cities and interconnected regional hierarchies of the national urban system. This paper also examines the urban structure and concludes the need for urban development policies.

The urbanization of India is one-sided, and the quality of urban life is declining because the majority of urban dwellers live without basic urban facilities. Many serious problems such as housing, basic urban facilities, environmental degradation, and urban quality of life pose a serious threat to the government. The study concludes that small and medium-sized cities in various states are facing serious development problems. The overall urban population growth rate in some states of India is very low, and the rate of land movement within and between states has increased in recent years.

Urban development

(Nath, 2007) described the process of urban growth, urban development constraints, urban policy, and strategy to create an integrated rural and urban model of urban development in India. The focus is on the big cities of India, which serve as the economic, political, administrative, and socio-cultural nerve centers of the country, and on the contrary, represent poverty and misery. This study proposes new approaches such as the concept of integrated growth of rural and urban areas with peri-urban development integrated with the corridor development approach to achieve a balanced state of urban development in Indian cities.

"Small Cities and Towns in Global Era: Emerging Changes and Perspectives" by (Sandhu & Sharma, 2013) is a compilation of important research papers based on the theoretical aspects of urban development, the case of Indian cities. Of these, the study by (Robinson, 2013) entitled Culture of Small-town India is noteworthy. It provides deep insight and understanding of general urbanism in small cities in India, essentially in relation to the impact of the world economy and the changing behavior of urban dwellers. He has also seen the extent of the influence of the communication media on changing the lifestyle of urban dwellers, which is changing among the middle class, women, and others.

Another paper by Sandhu and Sandhu, "Urban Development and Small Towns in Punjab," is a detailed study of urban development in Punjab, with a particular focus on small towns. The authors effectively used various indicators such as medical facilities, educational facilities, water, sewers, roads, literacy levels, farmers, and slum populations to estimate the extent of urban development in the state. It is noteworthy that each aspect selected for the study of urban development patterns is analysed by class and a clear understanding of the degree of inequality in the distribution and availability of urban facilities in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The whole research on the topic **"A study on the population influx in the metropolitan city, Guwahati, and regional development of other districts in Assam"** was based on online survey data. Data on various issues being faced by the residents of Guwahati as well as small towns of Assam were collected from the respondents.

The research conducting area

While conducting the research, a total of 40 people were taken for the survey out of which 20 were from small towns and 20 were from Guwahati city. The study was a five-day online survey conducted from 28th of December, 2021 via a google form. The respondents were from Digboi, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Nagaon, and Guwahati.

Nature of the study

The nature of the study which will be followed in this study is Qualitative in research as the research will be a phenomenology study that deals with case studies, interviews, observations, etc.

Research Design

The research design for the subject is descriptive, with in-depth analysis of the data collected about the problems that face in receiving their basic amenities without shortage no matter from which district or place they belong in Assam. After receiving the responses, it was found that the basic needs of the residents need to be fulfilled before implementing a master plan.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique for the study was non-profitability sampling within which purposive sampling will be used to identify research subjects.

Sample size

The sample size is 40 and has been collected from several towns and cities of Assam i.e., 20 from Guwahati city and 20 from small towns and districts comprising of town: Digboi, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh, and Nagaon.

Methods and tools of data collection

The method used for data collection is primary and secondary methods. The tools used in the whole research process will be google forms, observations, and exploring the data available through journals and articles.

RESULTS

- Unequal distribution of facilities exists in different districts of Assam.
- The availability of fewer opportunities for employment in the small towns leads to the increasing flow of people to the city.
- Unavailability of basic facilities does not only exist in the small towns but it also exists in the city which shows that due to increase in the population, there is a result of scarce facilities in particular areas of the city.
- Better health services, Higher educational institutions, and commercial complexes are not available in many towns, bringing people to the city.
- The high rural-urban difference mainly leads to a high migration rate in Guwahati's environment.

The increase in rural dwellers, students and service people blindly pouring into cities creates problems both for the city dwellers and planners. The problems are already visible in their daily lives.

DISCUSSION

For a better understanding of any research, surveys are an integral part that helps to gauge the opinions and views of the individuals. The whole idea of the online survey was to understand the conditions of living in their respective places. There were a total of 40 respondents in the online survey out of which the number of students was 25 and the number of employees was 15. The questionnaire also targeted students and employees who moved from their original residence to the metropolitan city, Guwahati, in search of better opportunities and education. This way, more insights on the regional planning was gained and we were able to conclude that certain steps taken to enhance the planning in the small towns as well as the other districts can improve the living conditions of the existing residents encouraging them to stay in their original place instead of migrating to the city.

The number of people who moved to the city was 17 Number of people who stays at their original residence was 23. The respondents were asked if they get all the necessities without any shortage at their current residence. Drinking water, Sewage, Sanitation, Communication (transport facilities), Medical (for critical purposes), Convenient stores, Amusement (parks, theatre halls, malls) were the options provided to them. Analyzing the responses, drinking water is available without any shortage to almost every respondent in their respective areas. However, some responses showed a shortage in their area. When asked about the availability of proper sewage facilities at their place, 16 of them responded a "yes" and 24 of them responded a "no" and this includes people from both Guwahati city and other districts and small towns. This can be understood that people living in the city also face a shortage of sewage facilities which brings us to realize that there is an unequal distribution of proper sewage facilities. Before going to implement master plans, the basic amenities should be taken care of.

sanitation has always been a problem not only in Assam but all over India. About 1/7th of the world's populace defecates within the open in absence of toilets, of which 60% live in India. Assam has more than 12 lakh households that had no access to the toilet. Human wastewater represents the maximum threat to our rivers, lakes, ponds, and water table. 80% of India's river pollution is with excreta and the impact on public health is devastating. (Hazarika, 2015) The unequal distribution of proper sanitation facilities, if untreated, can bring much more havoc than one can even imagine.

Transportation and communications are key elements of infrastructure, and they are the foundation of them based on which Regional development can occur. When asked about the communication facilities available in their respective places of living, 24 of them responded a "yes" and 16 of them responded a "no". Out of the 24, most of them were from Guwahati city and Dibrugarh district. This is obvious because of the cities being bigger than the other towns will have better transport facilities for better daily commutes. Guwahati being the main hub provides facilities like Ola and Uber and also city buses for the residents which makes it possible for people to travel within the city easily. This is one among other reasons why all the official institutions are present here. This brings people for every small official work to the city which means, if one person leaves the city, 4 more will come to the city in place of him.

On the contrary, small towns like Digboi, Balijan, and Sivsagar provide fewer transport facilities which do not help the residents to have a better daily commute. The people living and working there with better income buy a vehicle and the ones without the capacity to afford a vehicle ultimately rush to the city for work opportunities. Both the cases affect the environment though. Health Infrastructure is an immediate indicator to understand the fitness care delivery provision and mechanisms in a nation or state. (Paul et al., 2019)

The purpose of changing one's place of residence was responded as majorly in search of more career opportunities, education, and better facilities in the city. In the Guwahati region, better economic opportunities generally motivate and enforce rural inhabitants to move to the city. There is another group, that is, smallholders and marginal farmers. Agricultural workers migrating to cities due to limited land ownership can't feed them enough. In addition, there are no various services and facilities such as higher education, appropriate medical facilities, communication means, etc. Young

people are forced to move from nearby rural areas to cities. The various drivers of the population in cities can be summarized as follows: Lack of good work opportunities, food shortages, etc. Forced relocation may occur due to floods or erosion of embankments leading to poor crops, loss of property, and ultimately depopulation in the rural areas. (Borah, D. J.)

Upon asking this question, the respondents replied by responding- “High cost of living”, “Drinking water”, “Traffic problem”, “unavailability of medical labs”, “lack of higher education and education facilities”, etc. Road traffic problems are one of the most significant problems in urban areas. Spending time on traffic has become an integral part of big cities, a lifestyle that is harmful to health and the environment. People in the city mostly use public transport for their daily commute as it is quite expensive to own a car and to drive to their daily workplace situated in a quite distant area. 27 of the respondents use public transport while 13 use private transport for their daily commute. Overall, every respondent agreed that improving the existing facilities can be a factor in keeping people in their place rather than becoming a push factor.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion and suggestions

- Setting up administrative buildings in places other than the city can be convenient for everyone, decreasing the chances of people rushing to the city for every other official work. This can also increase employment, which is again a significant factor of migration to the city.
- Improving the communication facilities will make daily commutes easier.
- Setting up better educational institutions can attract students to study there.
- Setting up Commercial places will make the existing small places more convenient for the residents.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The study is based on theoretical explanations and online surveys. This study, today, is significant in the new line world of urbanization. The way urbanization is moving towards the high level of development in the cities is also bringing havoc to the population living there. Not only that, but Urbanization is also bringing in unprecedented natural calamities, never experienced before. Undoubtedly, the mitigating process of high influx of population cannot be achieved in a month, a year, or even two, but steps can be taken towards improving the other small towns of the countries other than the main city and bring a balance to the development of the regions as well as the environment.

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