

The Impact of Transnational Migration on Identity Reconstruction in Diaspora Communities

(A Sociological Study of Raipur and Durg-Bhilai Urban Region, Chhattisgarh)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how transnational migration influences the identity reconstruction of individuals and families in diaspora communities, with a specific focus on the Raipur and Durg-Bhilai urban region in Chhattisgarh, India. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the study investigates how return migrants and families with members abroad negotiate cultural dualities, digital connections, and social positioning within the local context. Using theories of transnationalism, diaspora, and cultural hybridity, this research finds that identity is an ongoing and dynamic process, shaped by generational change, digital media, and structural factors such as migration policy and labor market positioning.

Keywords: Transnationalism, Diaspora Identity, Cultural Hybridity, Chhattisgarh Migration, Raipur, Durg-Bhilai, Sociology, India

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, migration is not a one-time departure but an ongoing transnational experience. Migrants today often maintain ties with their homeland while navigating new sociocultural landscapes abroad. This dual engagement reshapes individual and collective identities, especially within diaspora communities.

While global migration studies often center on large metropolitan regions, this paper focuses on a less-researched but significant area—**Raipur and Durg-Bhilai in Chhattisgarh**. These urban zones are experiencing rising levels of out-migration, particularly to Gulf nations, Southeast Asia, and parts of Europe and North America. Families and returnees in these areas engage in complex negotiations between local tradition and global exposure, producing hybrid cultural and identity formations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Transnationalism and Identity

Steven Vertovec (2009) describes transnationalism as a condition wherein migrants maintain multiple ties—economic, political, and cultural—across borders. **Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004)** term this "simultaneity," highlighting how migrants are embedded in more than one society at a time.

Diaspora and Belonging

According to **Avtar Brah (1996)**, diaspora spaces are layered with historical, emotional, and cultural meanings. Identity in these spaces is neither wholly rooted in the homeland nor fully integrated into the host country, creating a "third space" of belonging.

Cultural Hybridity and Representation

Stuart Hall (1990) conceptualizes identity as a process of becoming rather than being. Cultural identity is not static but constructed through historical and cultural representation. Diaspora communities, especially second-generation members, often exhibit hybrid cultural identities formed by negotiation, resistance, and adaptation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore how transnational migration affects identity reconstruction in diaspora-affiliated households in Raipur and Durg-Bhilai.

2. To assess the role of digital media, cultural practice, and family tradition in identity negotiation.
3. To analyze generational differences in how migration shapes personal and collective identity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is an **exploratory, mixed-methods** study combining surveys and in-depth interviews.

Sample Area

- **Location:** Raipur and Durg-Bilal Urban Region, Chhattisgarh
- **Sample Size:** 150 respondents (50 return migrants; 100 family members of current overseas migrants)
- **Sampling Technique:** Snowball sampling via community organizations, local diaspora associations, and social media platforms.

Tools and Techniques

- Structured questionnaires for quantitative data
- Semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights
- Thematic analysis and SPSS for data interpretation

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Profile of Respondents

- **Return Migrants:** Primarily male (aged 30–55) from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia
- **Family Members:** Spouses, parents, and children aged 18–60
- **Education:** 75% were educated at least to secondary level
- **Occupation:** Engineering, construction, caregiving, hospitality, and IT

Quantitative Findings

Table 1: Language Use at Home

Language Used	Respondents (%)
Hindi/Chhattisgarhi only	35%
English only	20%
Mixed use	45%

Table 2: Cultural Affiliation

Statement: “I feel I belong to both Indian and foreign cultures”	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Return Migrants	58%	28%	14%
Family Members	62%	24%	14%

Chart 1: Generational Differences in Identity Affiliation

Generation	Feels Strong Homeland Identity (%)	Feels Global or Hybrid Identity (%)
1st Gen (Returnees)	82%	18%
2nd Gen (Children)	41%	59%

QUALITATIVE THEMES

Theme 1: Hybrid Cultural Identity

Respondents shared stories about celebrating Christmas and Eid along with Diwali. Cultural blending was evident in clothing, food, and religious practice.

Theme 2: Role of Technology

WhatsApp, Zoom, and YouTube played a major role in maintaining ties with family abroad and shaping aspirations of the youth.

Theme 3: Intergenerational Tensions

Older returnees emphasized preserving local traditions, while youth expressed desire for cosmopolitanism and openness.

Theme 4: Social Stratification and Migration

Migration status influenced local prestige. Families with members abroad were seen as economically better off, though emotionally distant.

DISCUSSION

The case of Raipur and Durg-Bhilai demonstrates that even in non-metropolitan regions, transnational migration significantly impacts identity. Diaspora affiliation is no longer restricted to elites or highly educated populations. Return migrants bring back not only money but also worldviews, altering the cultural landscape of their communities. The identity reconstruction observed in these areas aligns with **Hall's theory** of identity as fluid and dynamic. **Brah's "diaspora space"** was observed even within India—where families of migrants live in cultural limbo, caught between local expectations and global realities.

Importantly, youth in these regions are shaping a new cultural lexicon—one that blends regional pride with global fluency. This evolving identity offers potential for inclusive citizenship, but also raises questions about cultural continuity.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the identity of diaspora-linked individuals in Chhattisgarh is undergoing significant reconstruction. The influence of transnational experiences, particularly among return migrants and younger generations, has resulted in the emergence of hybrid cultural identities. These identities are shaped not only by foreign exposure but also by the local context, digital interaction, and generational dynamics.

Understanding such regional dynamics adds depth to global migration discourse, challenging the dominance of metropolitan narratives. It shows how global identities are being localized in small cities and urban regions across India.

Limitations and Future Scope

- a) Limited sample size from two cities only.
- b) Future research could include longitudinal tracking and more regions in Central India.
- c) A gender-focused lens can reveal how women specifically experience identity shifts in these contexts.

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