

International Migration from Central Punjab : Push and Pull Factors

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Abstract

Due to distressing issues of unemployment and drugs, students are migrating from Punjab to other countries. This migration causes a substantial financial and capital drain from Punjab. Keeping in view the extent of international migration from Punjab, the present study on international migration from rural Punjab was conducted in the central plain zone of Punjab. Multistage random cum purposive sampling was adopted to select the sample from the central plain zone of Punjab. Percentages and averages were used for the analysis of the data. The study found that 65 per cent of emigrants were 21 to 25 years old, revealing the massive brain drain from rural Punjab. With the Canadian government being the most liberal among the developed countries in the grant of permanent residence, 40 per cent of emigrants chose Canada for migration in the study area. The average expenditure of 50 per cent of emigrants was 10 to 20 lakhs, whereas the average income of 70 per cent of respondents was less than ten lakhs. Respondents took loans from non-institutional sources and diverted loans from production to migration purposes to meet the migration cost. The major push factors of migration were increasing unemployment, peer pressure, agricultural distress, gender inequality, the dowry system, the declining income of agriculture, social issues like the drug menace, etc. The primary pull factors of migration include the desire to earn more, have a better life, a free society, acquire higher education etc.

Keywords: International migration, Emigrants, Rural households, Unemployment

JEL Classification: F10, F13, F22, O15

Introduction

The migration of skilled workforce from least developed countries to developed countries is a global phenomenon, and this has helped developed countries to be more stable and prosperous. In contrast, least developed countries are losing their pillars for the nation's development. Most people migrate from poor and least developed countries to rich and developed countries that are advanced in industrialization and mechanization. Educated skilled graduates are attracted to developed countries through incentives, scholarships, better living standards, political stability, better job opportunities, etc. It is generally argued that this outflow is compensated through remittances and brain circulation, but this has created a lack of educated and skilled graduates in the respective field, which has created a vast gap in the economic development of the country (Kattel and Sapkota, 2018).

India is the leading agricultural state, Punjab, is also home to a vast share of Indians living abroad. Punjab ranks second in sending international migrants after Kerala (Nanda, 2019).

Emigration from Punjab has been consistently growing

over the last many decades and is ranked among the top states in India from where large-scale emigration happened. At the state level, the socioeconomic differences exacerbate the incidence of emigration as 13 per cent of households in rural areas and only 6 per cent of households in urban areas showed the likelihood of sending migrants to international destinations (Nanda and Veron, 2015).

With the advent of the Green Revolution, Punjab has emerged as the most advanced state in agricultural development. Over time, though the agricultural sector experienced a decline in its share in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and workforce, it remained the most critical sector of the state economy (Grover *et al*, 2017). State's agricultural sector grew at 5.7 per cent per annum during 1971-72 to 1985-86, while India's corresponding figure was 2.31 per cent. Soon, the agricultural sector started to lose its sheen. Its growth rate fell to 3 per cent from 1986-87 to 2004-05 and further to 1.61 per cent from 2005-06 to 2014-15 (Gulati *et al*, 2017).

Due to distressing issues of unemployment and drugs, 1.5 lakh students migrated in 2018. Private emigration consultants gave these admissions to overseas colleges and universities in the state during the spring and fall season in

the year 2017-2018. The emigration process costs Rs 15 to Rs 22 lakh for the first year of study, depending on the institute, course, and country. Multiplied by the number of students flying out, that amounts to approximately Rs 27,000 crore going out of Punjab each year on account of student education. With the Canadian government being the most liberal among developed countries in the grant of Permanent Residency (P.R.) and opening up as many as 200 colleges to international students, Punjabi youth are making full use of the opportunity. As many as 1.25 lakh students from the state chose Canada this year for education — while only 25,000 picked Australia, New Zealand, the U.S. and the U.K., where laws and policies have become very stringent. Travel agents engaged in facilitating the Canadian visa for students say the trend had seen a spurt since 2016, when around 75,000 students from Punjab went to the country (Kaur, 2018). Keeping in view the enormous financial and brain drain from Punjab, an attempt has been made to analyze the socioeconomic aspect of migration and various pull and push factors affecting international migration in rural Punjab.

Data Sources and Methodology

Punjab state has been divided into five agro-climatic zones based on homogeneity, rainfall pattern, cropping pattern etc. Out of these zones, the central plain zone was selected randomly. Multistage random cum purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample. In the first stage, two districts, Amritsar and Tarn Taran were selected randomly from the central plain zone of Punjab. Two blocks were randomly selected from each district at the second stage of sampling, and at the third stage of sampling, two villages from each block were chosen. At the last stage of selection, 120 households were selected from selected villages. Only those agricultural households were purposively selected whose one or more family members migrated abroad. The information regarding socioeconomic characteristics, expenditure and

source of immigration was taken from the family members of households in the country of origin. Descriptive statistics were used to achieve the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

The result reveals that in the central plain zone of Punjab, from 120 surveyed households, 67 per cent of selected households had a single emigrant, 25 per cent had two emigrants, and 4 per cent of households had three emigrants (Table 1). There were around 3 per cent families which entirely migrated abroad. The above table reveals that out of 120 rural households, 172 emigrants migrated to the study area.

The data regarding socioeconomic indicators of emigrants is presented in table 2. Socioeconomic indicators include age, sex, education, landholding and occupation wise distribution of emigrants.

Overall, in the central plain zone of Punjab, about 65 per cent of emigrants were in the age group of 21-25 years, 12 per cent of emigrants had aged less than 20 years, 16 per cent had age group of 26 to 30 years, and 8 per cent had aged more than 30 years at the time of migration (Table 2). The results were in line with the study conducted by Kaur *et al.* (2021) who also reported that age and migration have a strong linkage as migration is undertaken mainly by populations belonging to young and mature age groups. It is primarily because migration is risky and has several challenges and opportunities.

In the central plain zone of Punjab, about 73 per cent of emigrants were males, and 27 per cent were females. The above table clearly shows the male preference for migration by selected households. The main reason for male importance in migration was the patriarchal system of our society, where males are considered bread earners in the family and males dominate the family. Parents hesitate to spend on female

Table 1. Number of emigrants and households surveyed in the study area

Particulars	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Households with single emigrant	40 (66.66)	40 (66.66)	80 (66.66)
Households with two emigrants	14 (23.33)	16 (26.66)	30 (25)
Households with three emigrants	2 (3.33)	3 (5)	5 (4.16)
Households with more than three emigrants	0 (0)	1 (1.66)	1 (0.83)
Number of family which entirely migrated	4 (6.66)	0 (0)	4 (3.33)
Number of Emigrants	87	85	172
Number of households surveyed	60	60	120

Note: Figures in the bracket indicates the percentage to the total number of households surveyed

migration as they will get married. Instead of spending on their education and migration, respondents preferred to spend on their marriage.

Education and migration share a strong relationship, as better-educated people have a bright chance of assimilating into the destination's socioeconomic environment (Browne, 2017). Overall, in the central plain zone of Punjab, 38 per cent of emigrants migrated after acquiring secondary level education, 33 per cent migrated after completing graduation, nearly 17 per cent migrated after receiving matric education, and less than one per cent were illiterate. About 12 per cent of emigrants migrated after completing post-graduation or diploma or nursing/GNM/IT (Table 2). The study conducted by Kaur *et al.* (2021) also found that a state with a higher education level was considered a better option to settle in foreign countries. Around 33 per cent of emigrants who migrated graduated in the study area. Still, due to the lack of job opportunities and low wages in the land of origin, they prefer to migrate abroad. The study results were also in line with the study conducted by Kattel and Sapkota (2018), where it was found that educated, skilled graduates were attracted to developed countries in the form of incentives, scholarships, better living standards, political stability, better job opportunities etc. Thus, migration has created a lack of educated and skilled graduates in the respective field, which has created a massive gap in the country's economic development.

Punjab is an agricultural state, so the operated area has an essential bearing on migration in the study area. Overall, in the central plain zone of Punjab, around 40 per cent of respondents whose family members migrated to other country comes under the landless, marginal and small farmer category. While 48 per cent of respondents belonged to Medium and semi medium farming families, 12 per cent belonged to large farming families. These figures clearly show that the operated area is a major pushing factor for migration in the study area. More than 40 per cent of respondents belong to the landless, small and marginal farm category (Table 2).

Overall, in the central plain zone of Punjab, 86 per cent of respondents whose family members migrated abroad were dependent on agriculture and allied activities for livelihood, and around 9 per cent of respondents in the central plain zone of Punjab were labourers who worked as casual or permanent basis. Only 5 per cent of respondents were engaged in non-farm activities (Table 2), which clearly shows that agriculture is the main occupation of respondents.

Overall, in the plain Central zone of Punjab, the most widely chosen destination country was Canada (37 per cent), followed by Australia (26 per cent), Dubai (11 per cent), the U.K. (6 per cent), Italy (5 per cent), New Zealand (4 per cent) and other countries (11 per cent) (Table 3).

The reason for maximum migration to Canada was due to the liberal laws of Canada's government to promote migration from other countries. In their study, Kaur (2018) also found that with the Canadian government being the most liberal among the developed countries in the grant of permanent residence and opening up as many as 200 colleges for international students, Punjabi youth are making full use of the opportunity.

Overall, in the central plain zone of Punjab, around 42 per cent of respondents whose family members migrated had an annual income of less than five lakhs, 30 per cent had an annual income between 5 to 10 lakhs, 17 per cent had an annual income between 10 to 20 lakhs, 10 per cent have income above 10 Lakhs per annum (Table 4). On the other hand, 50 per cent of emigrants spent from 10 to 20 lakhs on migration, 19 per cent of emigrants spent less than three lakhs, 13 per cent spent 3 to 5 lakhs, 13 per cent spent 5 to 10 lakhs, and nearly 3 per cent of emigrants spent more than 20 lakhs. This table reveals that households had to take debt to meet the expenses of migration.

As discussed in the above table, the average cost of migration was Rs.10 to Rs. 15 lakh, but 70 per cent of selected rural households income was less than 10 lakh per annum. The only source of income was agriculture, and around 33 per cent of rural households were small and marginal farmers, and 9 per cent were labourers households in the study area. So, they have to depend upon loans for migration. There were four to five source of migration expenses. Institutional sources do not provide loans for private institutes for study purposes. About 34 per cent of respondents in the central plain zone of Punjab took loans from institutional sources and used them for migration expenditure; hence they diverted the loan from agriculture to migration expenses (Table 5). Non-Institutional sources included commission agents, big landlords, private financiers, etc. They charge heavy rates of interest from respondents. It is noteworthy in the study area that nearly 16 per cent of respondents sold their land/plot/gold/machines for migration expenses in the central plain zone of Punjab.

Around 37 per cent of emigrants did not send any remittances in the central plain zone of Punjab (Table 6). It was due to the reason that they migrated only one or two years ago. Around 63 per cent of emigrants sent remittances as most of the households had agriculture as their only source of income, and most of the emigrants took credit from non-institutional sources for migration.

The reasons or the factors that affect migration are also called drivers of migration. These are usually a multitude in number, as the decision to migrate is never influenced by a single factor; instead, it is a combination of several contributing factors that play a decisive role in

Table 2. Socioeconomic characteristics of Emigrants in the study area

Particulars	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Age (Years)			
Less than 20	13 (14.9)	7 (8.23)	20 (11.6)
21 to 25	56 (64.4)	56 (65.9)	112 (65.1)
26 to 30	7 (8.04)	20 (23.5)	27 (15.69)
31 to 40	4 (4.6)	2 (2.4)	6 (3.48)
More than 40	7 (8.04)	0 (0)	7 (4.06)
Sex			
Male	64 (73.56)	61 (71.76)	125 (72.67)
Female	23 (26.44)	24 (28.24)	47 (27.33)
Education			
Illiterate	1 (1.14)	0 (0)	1 (0.58)
Primary	1 (1.14)	6 (7.05)	7 (4.06)
Matric	6 (6.89)	23 (27.05)	29 (16.86)
Secondary	39 (44.82)	26 (30.58)	65 (37.79)
Graduation	31 (35.63)	25 (29.41)	56 (32.55)
Post-Graduation	3 (3.44)	0 (0)	3 (1.74)
Diploma	2 (2.29)	5 (5.88)	7 (4.06)
Nursing/GNM/IT	4 (4.59)	0 (0)	4 (2.32)
Land Holding			
Landless	5 (8.33)	3 (5)	8 (6.66)
Marginal (below 1ha)	9 (15)	7 (11.66)	16 (13.33)
Small (1-2 ha)	13 (21.66)	11 (18.33)	24 (20)
Semi-Medium (2-4ha)	11 (18.33)	12 (20)	23 (19.16)
Medium (4-10 ha)	14 (23.33)	21 (35)	35 (29.16)
Large (10& above)	8 (13.33)	6 (10)	14 (11.66)
Occupation			
Agriculture	29 (48.33)	36 (60)	65 (54.17)
Agriculture + Allied*	20 (33.33)	18 (30)	38 (31.67)
Non-farm activities	3 (5)	3 (5)	6 (5)
Labour	8 (13.33)	3 (5)	11 (9.16)

*Allied activities include dairy, horticulture, mushroom and beekeeping etc.

Note: Figure in parentheses indicates the percentage to the total.

inducing or inhibiting migration. The decision to migrate to international destinations is always a tricky one as this type of migration contains high risks and high gains. The factors that affect migration are usually categorized as push and pull factors. These factors vary for both the place of origin and the place of destination. The push factors include increasing unemployment, peer pressure, agricultural distress, corruption, population growth, gender inequality, the dowry system, the declining income of agriculture, indebtedness, lack of social security, political instability, social issues like

drug menace, etc. The international destinations also generate several pull factors such as economic development, better educational and administration facilities, family unification, better living conditions, greener pastures of employment, high remuneration from work, gender equality, free society, a clean environment etc. (Kaur *et al.*, 2021).

Information regarding push and pull factors were taken from heads of households in the country of origin. Overall, in the central plain zone, around 56 per cent of respondents reported unemployment as a significant factor of migration, 7

Table 3. Country-wise distribution of emigrants in the study area

Country	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Canada	34 (39.08)	29 (34.11)	63 (36.62)
Australia	22 (25.28)	23 (27.05)	45 (26.16)
New Zealand	3 (3.44)	4 (4.70)	7 (4.06)
U.K.	3 (3.44)	7 (8.23)	10 (5.81)
U.S.A.	4 (4.59)	1 (1.17)	5 (2.90)
Greece	1 (1.14)	2 (2.35)	3 (1.74)
Italy	1 (1.14)	8 (9.41)	9 (5.23)
Singapore	2 (2.29)	1 (1.17)	3 (1.74)
Dubai	12 (13.79)	7 (8.23)	19 (11.04)
Malaysia	2 (2.29)	0 (0)	2 (1.16)
South Korea	1 (1.14)	0 (0)	1s (0.58)
Germany	1 (1.14)	3 (3.52)	4 (2.32)
Spain	1 (1.14)	0 (0)	1 (0.58)
Total	87 (100)	85 (100)	172 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates the percentage to the total.

Table 4. Annual income and cost of migration in the study area

Particulars (Income) Rs./annum	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall	Cost Incurred	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Less than two lakhs	7 (11.66)	4 (6.66)	11 (9.16)	Less than three lakhs	17 (19.54)	16 (18.82)	33 (19.18)
2 to 5 lakhs	18 (30)	22 (36.66)	40 (33.33)	3 to 5 lakhs	12 (13.79)	11 (12.94)	23 (13.37)
5 to 10 lakhs	18 (30)	19 (31.66)	37 (30.83)	5 to 10 lakhs	11 (12.94)	11 (12.94)	22 (12.79)
10 to 20 lakhs	9 (15)	11 (18.33)	20 (16.66)	10 to 20 lakhs	44 (50.57)	42 (49.41)	86 (50)
More than 20 lakhs	8 (13.33)	4 (6.66)	12 (10)	More than 20lakhs	3 (3.44)	5 (5.88)	8 (4.65)
Total	60 (100)	60 (100)	120 (100)		87	85	172 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates the percentage to the total.

per cent said peer pressure, 6 per cent reported drug menace, and 5 per cent reported inadequate educational facilities in their country of origin (Table 7). The main push factors for female migration were the dowry system (13 per cent) and gender inequality (5 per cent). Among pull factors, the desire to earn more (44 per cent) and a better lifestyle in western countries (37.79) were the significant factors of migration. Other pull factors identified in the study area were free society (19.95 per cent) and family migration (2.32 per cent).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The main pushing factor of migration was shrinking landholding in the state, as 40 per cent of respondents were

landless, marginal and small landholders. The respondents found that the income from agriculture is declining as the input cost in agriculture is increasing. Respondents do not want their family members to settle in Punjab due to declining income from agriculture and fewer employment opportunities. To control the flow of migration government should create non-farm employment in rural areas in the form of setting up of industries. Government should also create self-employment opportunities. The study further revealed that 64 per cent of emigrants migrated at the age of 21 to 25 years; this age group is considered to be the most productive age group. Most of the youngsters (38 per cent) migrated after completing the secondary level of education. Therefore,

Table 5. Source of migration expenses in the study area

Particulars	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Savings	8 (9.19)	7 (8.23)	15 (8.72)
Diversion of loans from Institutional sources	30 (34.48)	28 (32.94)	58 (33.72)
Non-Inst loan	34 (39.08)	35 (41.17)	69 (40.11)
Family Friend	2 (2.29)	0 (0)	2 (1.16)
By selling land/plot/machinery/vehicles etc.	13 (14.94)	15 (17.64)	28 (16.27)
Total	87 (100)	85 (100)	172 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates the percentage to the total.

Table 6. Remittances sent to families by emigrants in the study area

Particulars	Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
0 no remittance	36 (41.37)	27 (31.76)	63 (36.62)
0 to 3 lakhs	12 (13.79)	6 (7.05)	18 (10.46)
3 to 5 lakhs	5 (5.74)	13 (15.29)	18 (10.46)
5 to 10 lakhs	14 (16.09)	19 (22.35)	33 (19.18)
10 to 20 lakhs	8 (9.19)	13 (15.29)	21 (12.20)
More than 20 lakhs	12 (13.79)	7 (8.23)	19 (11.04)
Total	87 (100)	85 (100)	172 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates the percentage to the total.

the central and state government must take initiatives for some scholarship incentives for students. More employment opportunities should be created specifically for students where they can work part-time, as is done by students in other countries. They should be given skills through skill development centres. More courses should be opened by colleges and universities according to the need of modern times so that they can easily be employed after completion of their education. The study revealed that 50 per cent of respondents spent 10 to 20 lakhs on migration, but only 17 per cent had an annual income of 10 to 20 lakhs in the study area. Around 40 per cent of respondents took a loan from a non-institutional source, 34 per cent diverted from an institutional source, and 1 per cent sold their land or plot to arrange funds

for the migration of their family member. Due to the high cost of migration and declining agricultural income, small and marginal farmers are caught in a vicious circle of debt. The study further revealed that 30 per cent of emigrants received money after migration from their country of origin for fees and further expenses. It shows that international migration from rural Punjab does not involve only a brain drain but a vast capital drain, which policymakers should take seriously. The main pushing factors for females were dowry and gender inequality. Females are not considered safe in Punjab. They don't have equal freedom as their male counterparts. Around 47 per cent of female emigrants thought dowry, and 19 per cent considered gender inequality the main pushing factor for migration. The government should give incentives to

Table 7. Factors affecting migration in the study area

Particulars		Amritsar	Tarn Taran	Overall
Push Factors	Unemployment	46 (52.87)	50 (58.82)	96 (55.81)
	Peer pressure	8 (9.19)	4 (4.70)	12 (6.97)
	Drug menace	5 (5.74)	6 (7.05)	11 (6.39)
	Gender inequality	4 (4.59)	5 (5.88)	9 (5.23)
	Dowry system	12 (13.79)	10 (11.76)	22 (12.79)
	Declining income of agriculture	7 (8.04)	5 (5.88)	12 (6.97)
	Inadequate educational institute	5 (5.74)	3 (3.52)	8 (4.65)
	Total	87 (100)	85 (100)	172 (100)
	Pull Factors	Desire to earn more	35 (40.22)	41 (48.23)
Better lifestyle		35 (40.22)	30 (35.29)	65 (37.79)
Free Society		11 (12.64)	13 (14.94)	24 (13.95)
Family migration		4 (4.59)	0 (0)	4 (2.32)
Acquiring higher education		2 (2.29)	1 (1.17)	3 (1.74)
Total		87 (100)	85 (100)	172 (100)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates the percentage to the total.

households with only daughters to improve the sex ratio in the state. To make females secure, the government should make strict laws for the security of females.

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