

# Implications of Migration: A Case Study of Industrial Migrant Labourers in Ludhiana

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## Abstract

The study attempts to analysis the status of migrant labourers working in the industries of Ludhiana city with respect to exploitation and discrimination that they face. The industrial migrant labourers are abominated by the locals and even suffer differentiation at the hands of the public and private organisations. The misery of these labourers can be estimated from the fact that the employers are prejudiced against these migrants as they are exploited during the routine and overtime work, payment of wages and other benefits, allocation of job, terms of employment etc. These migrants provide an important resource base for supply of labour and hence, there is a need to ensure congenial work environment for the comprehensive development.

**Keywords:** Migration, industrial labour, migrant labourers, discrimination of migrants and Ludhiana.

The path of development of our country has created a gap between agriculturally and industrially developed and backward areas wherein the former creates demand for labour and the later, supplies the same. Industrialisation has created a chasm between the rural and urban areas. Though, some areas of the country have developed manifolds, many are left far behind and do not have the capacity to support resident population. Apart from the natural change in the birth and the death rates, migration is becoming an important factor of urbanisation, social change, development and demographic issues (Sensarama, 1997). The different types of migration are emigration, immigration, chain migration, forced migration, illegal migration, mass migration, political migration, rural-urban migration, rural-rural migration, urban-urban migration and seasonal migration (Singh, 1980). People migrate for better opportunities to earn livelihood in the economically advanced areas (Ghaffari and Singh, 2004). Rural-urban migration has become quite noticeable in the recent past. The total number of rural out-migrants in India is about 74 million of which about 53 million migrated to other rural areas and 21 million migrated to urban areas (GoI, 2012). Rural-urban migration makes available cheap labour for industries and changes occupational structure for household in villages (Singh and Yadav, 1981).

Recently, there has been an increase in the concern about labour absorption in the urban areas which is worsening due to increase in job seekers and limited availability of jobs (Mehta, 1996). The Todaro model of migration concentrates on the fact that rural-urban migration is influenced by economic factors (Todaro, 1977). Initially, majority of the migrants get engaged in the informal sector which is less remunerative (Santhapparaj, 1996). The migrants who are unskilled with less educational and technical qualifications also become a part of the informal sector as casual or temporary labourers. These labourers are at the mercy of the employers for the determination of their wages and are fully exploited. Individuals who migrate due to poverty and unemployment have no other alternative than to immediately take up a job and hence, get employed in this sector (Duraisamy and Narasimhan, 1997).

### **Punjab Scene**

It is the migrant labourers who provide wheels to the economy of Punjab (Sharma and Jaswal, 2006). Other than the seasonal migration which takes place in the sowing and harvesting season of principal crops, the territory of Punjab is being thronged in by population from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and a few more states as both the farm and non-farm sectors have developed manifolds. Ludhiana, also known as the Manchester of India, is a hub of different types of industries like the hosiery, cycle and cycle parts, auto components, machine tools, sewing machines, generators, diesel engines, tyres-tubes and other consumer goods. The highly industrialized city offers a good opportunity for earning livelihood for the poor and destitute. Every fourth person in the city is a migrant from neighbouring states. Migration has improved economic position of the migrants, helped them to learn new skills and new cultural traits, while on the other hand, for the employers, migration has lowered cost of production due to lowering of wages, improved labour productivity by reducing inter-regional demand-supply gaps. However, Migration is posing a threat to both employment and survival of the local labourers. The migrants provide a competition to local labourers as the supply of labour is being increased as compared to the demand of labour and thus, making their wages cheap in almost all the sectors of Punjab as the labour supply has become more elastic (Singh *et al.*, 2003). Migration is often viewed as detrimental for growth by the locals and as a defence mechanism they look down upon the migrants and treat them as unwanted outsiders. The migrants are an imperative part of the economy of Ludhiana, which requires ample labour for its industries. The migrants are putting an effort to become a part of the local society and trying to adjust and adopt the local culture, tradition, religion, language, eating and dressing habits, etc (Mehra *et al.*, 2009). The prevalence of discriminatory attitude in the society will not encourage prospective migrants and will even detest the existing ones from settling in the city. There is a need to mull over this issue in order to retain cordial and progressive environment in the city.

### **Objective of the study**

Keeping the above scenario in mind, the present study focuses on the industrial migrant labourers with regards to the discrimination and exploitation that they encounter in Ludhiana city.

### **Materials and Methods**

The focus of the present study is on the industrial migrant labourers who have migrated from different parts of the country to the industries in Ludhiana city. A sample of 500 industrial migrant labourers and 200 industrial local labourers was taken randomly from various large/medium and small scale industrial

units of the hosiery & knitwear and cycle & cycle parts industries of the city, the lists of the same were obtained from District Industries Centre (2007). The primary data was collected from a total of 390 migrant labourers and 155 local labourers working in small scale industrial units; and 110 migrant labourers and 45 local labourers working in the large/medium scale industrial units, through personal interview method on specially structured questionnaire, during the year 2008-09. Statistical tools like percentages, chi-square test and t test were used for the analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Place of Origin**

People migrate in search of better opportunities of livelihood. Majority of the migrants working in the industries of Ludhiana city have migrated from the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. There are various factors which influence and individual to migrate amongst which economic factors are as the most common determinants of migration (Mehra *et al.*, 2013). The opportunities for earning a livelihood and financial status of individuals in these states are not very appreciable. According to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2004-05), the percentages of people below poverty line in these states were 32.8 % and 41.4 %, respectively. High rate of poverty and better opportunities in other states influenced these labourers to migrate. A large number of migrants coming to Ludhiana city indicate better employment opportunities, good industrial development and better welfare facilities in Ludhiana city which thus, attract the industrial migrant labourers.

### **Social Discrimination**

#### **(i) Forms of Addressing and Use of Language**

The level of comfort at a new place depends upon the level of respect met with from the people living and working around. However, it is often observed that the industrial migrant labourers are mistreated and looked down upon as they are addressed by convenient/derogatory name by the locals, like '*bhaiya*'. In this process of being treated as unwanted outsiders they lose their name identity and confidence. The study highlights that a large percentage of the industrial migrant labourers (42.40) are addressed by both their original and convenient/derogatory names, while 41.40 % of these labourers are addressed by their original names only (Table 1). However, 16.20 % of the industrial migrant labourers are addressed by any name other than their original names which are derogatory. The overall relationship between the size of industrial units and the way the industrial migrant labourers are addressed is highly significant as indicated by the chi-square value of 30.52. This shows that migrants working in the large/medium scale industrial units are better off socially as compared to their counterparts in the small scale industrial units.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant Labourers according to Form of Address and Language used by Locals

Description	Small		Large/Medium		Total		Chi-square value Small v/s Large / Medium
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
<b>(i) Form of Addressing</b>							
Original name	165	42.31	42	38.18	207	41.40	30.52***
Convenient/derogatory name	39	10.00	42	38.18	81	16.20	
Both (Original and Convenient/ derogatory name)	186	47.69	26	23.64	212	42.40	
<b>(ii) Language used by Locals</b>							
Punjabi	9	2.31	5	4.55	14	2.80	2.12
Hindi	233	59.74	60	54.55	293	58.60	
Both (Hindi & Punjabi)	148	37.95	45	40.91	193	38.60	

Source: Field Survey, 2008-09

Note: \*\*\* Significant at 1 %

Language barrier is an important problem faced by any individual who migrates to a new place. Similarly, the industrial migrant labourers in Ludhiana face a problem in conversing with people as majority of the locals speak in Punjabi. However, the study shows that a high proportion of the industrial migrant labourers (58.60) are conversed with in Hindi language by the locals at the work place, followed by 38.60 % who are conversed with using both the languages (Hindi & Punjabi). A small percentage of the industrial migrant labourers (2.80) are conversed with in Punjabi language (Table 1). A similar trend is experienced by labourers working in both the small scale and large/medium scale industrial units as amongst the industrial migrant labourers from the small scale units as 59.74 %, 37.95 % and 2.31 % are conversed with only in Hindi, Hindi & Punjabi both and only Punjabi language, respectively. The percentages of the industrial migrant labourers from the large/medium scale industrial units that are conversed with only in Hindi, Hindi & Punjabi both and only Punjabi language are 54.55, 40.91 and 4.55, respectively. This trend of conversing with migrants, in an understandable language, is more out of selfish interest of the locals to get the day to day work done from these labourers, rather than out of concern for them.

**(ii) Problems Faced from Local Administration**

After migration an individual faces problems in adjusting in the new place. Apart from the difficulties at the personal level, an individual also suffers problems from the other sources (public and private organisations and institutions). The backward and oppressed migrants tend to face more problems. In the present study an attempt is made to analyse the hardships faced by industrial migrant labourers from such external sources of inconvenience. It is observed that on the whole, 21.54 % and 14.55 % of the industrial migrant labourers from small scale and large/medium scale industrial units, respectively, experience a problem from the local police (Table 2). Also, as many as 64.87 % and 69.09 % of the industrial migrant labourers from small scale and large/medium scale industrial units, respectively, face a problems from local government officials.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant Labourers according to Problems from Local Administration

Description	Small		Large/Medium		Total		Chi-square value Small v/s Large / Medium
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
(i) Problem from Local Police							
Yes	84	21.54	16	14.55	100	20.00	0.62
No	306	78.46	94	85.45	400	80.00	
(ii) Problem from Other Govt. Officials							
Yes	253	64.87	76	69.09	329	65.80	0.68
No	137	35.13	34	30.91	171	34.20	

Source: Field Survey, 2008-09.

Note: \*\*\* Significant at 1 %

The fact that majority of the industrial migrant labourers reported of facing inconvenience from local administration, speaks poor about these local bodies and indicates the lack of sense of social security among the industrial migrant labourers. To live and work happily in a society, social security is important of which the local administration is depriving the industrial migrant labourers.

### Discrimination at Work

#### (i) Type of Work

Despite the fact that migrants do not meet with a healthy social environment due to the impudent behaviour of the locals, they still continue to live in Ludhiana with the sole motive of working and earning a livelihood. However, the conditions at work are no good and they are often differentiated irrespective of their calibre and skills. Since the industrial migrant and local labourers work at the same place it becomes important to compare their status at the work place so as to study the comfort and adjustments made by the industrial migrant labourers. It was observed that a larger proportion of locals (87 %) as compared to the migrants (71.60 %) are given work according to their choice (Table 3). The relationship between type of labour and work being allotted according to choice is found to be significant as exhibited by the square value of 18.57. Though the labour are supposed to be enrolled as permanent labour according to the labour law, still about one-fourth of the migrants working in the industries of Ludhiana are not employed as permanent labour and are not on the payroll. Such a scenario demoralizes these migrants and reduces their confidence and faith in the local system.

**Table 3:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant and Local Labourers according to Type of Work

Description	Migrant Labourers		Local Labourers		Chi-square
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
Work of choice					
Yes	358	71.60	174	87.00	18.57***
No	142	28.40	26	13.00	
Permanent Employee					
Yes	387	77.40	165	82.50	2.23
No	113	22.60	35	17.50	
Work according to skill					
Yes	484	96.80	193	96.50	0.04
No	16	3.20	7	3.50	

Source: Field survey, 2008-09

\*\*\* Significant at 1 %

### (ii) Overtime Work

According to the labour laws, an industrial labour should work for 8 hours at a stretch, unless he is paid extra for the overtime work. Table 4 exhibits that more of the local labourers (96 %) are working for full 8 hours as compared to migrant labourers (81.80 %). The chi-square value of 23.72 indicates that there is a significant difference between the type of labour and number of hours of work (8 hours), and that more of the migrant labourers work for more than eight hours which are not acknowledged as overtime work. This explains that the migrant labourers are subjected more to exploitation as compared to the local labourers.

**Table 4:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant and Local Labourers according to Work Overtime and Related Issues

Description	Migrant Labourers		Local Labourers		Chi-square
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
Working hours					
8 hrs	409	81.80	192	96.00	23.72***
More than 8 hrs	91	18.20	8	4.00	
Work overtime					
Yes	165	33.00	19	9.50	40.72***
No	335	67.00	181	90.50	
Number of hours of overtime					
Nil	335	67.00	181	90.50	
Less than 2 hours	85	17.00	15	7.50	
2-4 hours	65	13.00	4	2.00	
More than 4 hours	15	3.00	0	0.00	
Wages for overtime	(N = 165)	(N = 19)			
Yes	145	87.88	19	100.00	
No	20	12.12	0	0	

Source: Field survey, 2008-09

Note: \*\*\* Significant at 1 %

Since economic factors are the main motivating forces to migrate, the migrant labourers are eager to work overtime in order to earn more money. The table highlights that as much as 33 % of the migrant labourers are working overtime as compared to 9.50 % of local labourers. The chi-square value of 40.72 indicates a significant relation between type of labour and overtime of work. As much as 17 % of the migrant labourers compared to 7.50 % of the local labourers work for less than two hours of overtime. The percentages of the migrant and local labourers that work for 2-4 hours are 13 % and 2 %, respectively. As much as 3 % of the migrants work for more than 4 hours, while none of the local labourers do so. While all the local labourers receive wages for the work overtime, about 88 % of the migrant labourers received the same which highlights that the migrant labourers are discriminated and exploited. It also highlights the plight of these migrants who despite of being subjected to unjust and unfair differentiation, continue to work.

### (iii) Facilities and Provisions

The migrants migrate to achieve better financial status and keep on working in the deplorable environment, both social and physical; hence, the locals take them for granted and subject them to discrimination. It is observed that more of the migrants (24.80 %) as compared to the locals (11 %) working in the industries of Ludhiana city expressed that their health is being affected at the work place due to the existing working conditions (Table 5). This shows that more of the migrant labourers are exposed to unsafe working conditions or are appointed at the work stations which affect their health. There is a significant difference between the types of labourers whose health is being affected at work as indicated by the chi-square value of 17.79. Further, there is a significant difference between the types of labourers and the provision of safety at work as indicated by the chi-square value of 4.92, since the percentages of migrant and local labourers who reported that availability of provision for safety at work are about 56 % and 67 %, respectively. As far as provision of refreshment free of cost is concerned, only about 2 % of the industrial migrant labourers reported of receiving the same as compared to 12 % of the local labourers. This again highlights the plight of migrant labourers and unjust work environment. Similarly, a larger percentage (64.50 %) of the industrial local labourers receives uniform allowance as compared to migrant labourers (29.20 %). The explanation as given by the employers was that many of the migrant labourers were recently employed and were on a probation period, hence did not receive any benefits of uniform allowance. However, this hints favouritism for the locals and desire to please them more as compared to the migrants. Also, there is a significant difference between the type of labour (migrant and local) and overall working conditions at the place of work as highlighted by the chi-square value of 10.39. As many as 33 % of the industrial migrant labourers expressed that the working conditions are bad as compared to 17 % of the industrial local labourers. More of the industrial local labourers expressing that the working conditions are good and satisfactory coincides with the fact that these labourers are better off than the migrant labourers which makes them feel superior to the migrants.

**Table 5:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant and Local Labourers according to Provisions and Facilities Available in the



Industrial Unit

Description	Migrant Labourers		Local Labourers		Chi-square
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
Health affected at factory work					
Yes	124	24.80	21	10.50	17.79***
No	376	75.20	179	89.50	
Provisions for safety at work					
Yes	279	55.80	134	67.00	4.92**
No	203	40.60	66	33.00	
Refreshment free of cost					
Yes	12	2.40	24	12.00	26.99***
No	488	97.60	176	88.00	
Uniform allowance provision					
Yes	146	29.20	129	64.50	4.23***
No	354	70.80	71	35.50	
Overall working conditions					
Good	35	7.00	78	39.00	10.39***
Satisfactory	298	59.60	88	44.00	
Bad	167	33.40	34	17.00	
Extra benefits other than salary					
Yes	331	66.20	159	79.50	12.03***
No	169	33.80	41	20.50	
Amount of wages					t-value
<2700	63	12.60	1	0.50	2.51**
2701-3000	203	40.60	42	21.00	
3001-3300	173	34.60	83	41.50	
>3300	61	12.20	74	37.00	
Index of Wages	2.46		3.15		

Source: Field survey, 2008-09

Note: \*\* Significant at 5 % \*\*\* Significant at 1 %

There was a significant difference between the type of labourers who reported of getting extra benefits like production incentive, bonus, etc. as indicated by the chi- square value of 12.03. The percentage of migrant labourers who reported of receiving the same is around 66 % as compared to around 80 % of the local labourers. Also, the amount of wages that are paid to the migrant and local labourers varied. The study shows that only 1 % of the sampled local labourer receive wages less than ₹ 2700 as compared to about 13 % of migrant labourers. The percentages of industrial migrant and local labourers that receive wages between ₹ 2700 to ₹ 3000 are around 41 % and 21 %, respectively. Around 35 % of the migrant labourers and 42 % of the industrial local labourers receive wages varying from ₹ 3000 to ₹ 3300. A larger percentage of local labourers (37 %) receive wages more than ₹ 3300, as compared to only 12 % of the migrant labourers. There is a significant difference between the type of labourers (migrant and local) and the wages paid to them as indicate by t-value of 2.51. The index of wages for industrial migrant labourers is 2.46 as compared to 3.51 for industrial local labourers. Sine more of the locals are paid higher it exhibits favouritism and bias nature of the employers towards local labourers.

**(iv) Behaviour of Locals**

It is important to study the comparison between industrial migrant and local labourers regarding behaviour  
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of the employer and treatment at the work place so as to judge any injustice faced by the industrial migrant labourers. The foregoing analysis in Table 6 shows that 29.40 % of the industrial migrant labourers expressed that the behaviour of their employer is good, while 2.20 % reported it to be bad and 68.40 reported it to be satisfactory. The percentages of the industrial local labourers who expressed the above mentioned behaviours are 20.50, 6.00 and 73.50, respectively. There is a significant relationship between the two types of labourers that expressed the behaviour met with from the employer to be good, bad and satisfactory as indicated by the Z value of 11.02. More of the industrial migrant labourers (14.40 %) as compared to local labourers (8.50 %) expressed to be facing biasness at the time of recruitment. The chi-square value of 4.48 indicates a significant difference between the two types of labourers and discrimination faced at the time of recruitment. As much as 17.00 % and 9.50 % of the industrial migrant and local labourers expressed that they face discrimination during the routine work. The Z value of 6.35 shows a significant relationship between the two types of labourers and discrimination faced by them during the routine work. The percentages of industrial migrant and local labourers that reported about refusal of wages for their work are 0.20 and 3.00, respectively. The association between the two types of labourers that were refused wages is significant as indicated by the Z value of 9.90. As many as 22.20 and 11.00 % of the industrial migrant and local labourers respectively, reported that they are abused and manhandled in the industrial unit during the routine work which indicates a low level of respect, mistreatment, injustice and exploitation met with by the labourers at the industrial units of which the migrants were worse off.

**Table 6:** Distribution of Industrial Migrant and Industrial Local Labourers according to Behaviour of Employer and Related Issues

Description	Migrant Labourers		Local Labourers		Chi-square
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
Behaviour of employer					
Good	147	29.40	41	20.50	11.02***
Bad	11	2.20	12	6.00	
Satisfactory	342	68.40	147	73.50	
Discrimination at the time of recruitment					
Yes	72	14.40	17	8.50	4.48**
No	428	85.60	183	91.50	
Discrimination at routine work					
Yes	85	17.00	19	9.50	6.35***
No	415	83.00	181	90.50	
Wages Refused					
Yes	51	10.20	6	3.00	9.90***
No	449	89.80	194	97.00	
Abuse/manhandling by Labour In charge					
Yes	111	22.20	22	11.00	11.64***
No	389	77.80	178	89.00	

Source: Field Survey, 2008-2009

Note: \*\* Significant at 5 % \*\*\* Significant at 1 %

## Conclusion

Majority of the migrants working in the industries of Ludhiana city come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as these states suffer from lack of employment opportunities and poverty. Migrants are an important part of any economically aware society and thus, need to be behaved with respect and humanity. However, majority of them face low level of respect from the locals as they are addressed by convenient name like *bhaiya*. This means that these labourers are not respected and treated as an equal part of the society. There is a need for the employers to ensure congenial work environment by taking steps to ensure that the dignity of these migrants is kept intact. These migrants provide an important resource base for supply of labour and hence need to be protected. Though language barrier is one of the problems faced by any individual who migrate to a new place but majority of the industrial migrant labourers are conversed with in Hindi language by locals, though, out of selfish interest for convenient routine working. Most of the migrants are not treated well by various government officials who make their living in the city, uncomfortable. The fact that mmajority of the industrial migrant labourers are facing inconvenience from local administration, speaks poor about these local bodies and indicates the lack of sense of social security among the industrial migrant labourers. The local police and other private and government organisations are there to serve people irrespective of their origin and thus, should not discriminate migrants. Efforts need to be made to frame special separate cells in these organisations which deal with the problems of these labourers efficiently and justice be done with them. Such steps provide a sense of security to these labourers which indirectly help both, these labourers and the economy of Punjab.

The industrial migrant labourers face exploitation in terms of refusal and are manhandled at the place of work. This indicates biasness of the employer and labour in charges against the migrants which make their struggle to earn and survive, difficult. These labourers face discrimination at the time of payment of wages which indicates indiscipline at work and poor condition of industrial migrant labourers at work. The migrants felt that the local labourers are supported, encouraged and appreciated more by the employers and also, that the locals were given more of the supervisory jobs as compared to them. Efforts need to be made to give equal opportunities to both local and migrant labourers so that they do not feel discriminated, stand an equal chance for growth and thus, get respected. The employers should take all the necessary actions to avoid discrimination between the locals and migrants so as to make them comfortable and increase their productivity at the work place. The employers need to be understanding and concerned towards the migrants so as to win their loyalty and sincerity. The employers need to abide by all the labour laws which include provision of stipulated structure of wages, allowances, safety and health measures, provident fund, ESI fund, employee welfare fund, uniform allowance, H.R.A, D.A etc. so as to make them feel secure both physically and financially. The hard work of the industrial migrant labourers should be recognised in a way similar to that of the industrial local labourers. There should be transparency in the payment of wages so as to avoid discrimination or favouritism. Such steps build up the confidence in these labourers and they become more loyal and work more sincerely as they have a feeling of being fairly treated and thus have fair opportunities.

The industrial migrant labourers should not be forced to work for more than the stipulated eight hours if the extra hours are not considered as overtime work. The government needs to make special efforts to ensure that the migrant labourers are not forced to work overtime. However, if they have to work then provisions need to be made to ensure that they are being paid adequately for extra hours of work.

The grievance cells for migrant labourers, for dealing with misconduct and discrimination at work place, need to be established and the proceedings in them need to be speedy and effective so that the labourers are encouraged to come up with their problems without fear. The employers should take prudent steps to ensure that these labourers are not forced to work overtime without pay as it is unethical. If not so, the workers feel exploited and are thus, demoralised to work.

The problems of migrant labourers need to be solved with cooperation and coordination between labour unions and other social and government organisations. The labour unions help in bringing the labourers together and convince the employers to sort out the problems faced by them. The NGOs need to provide a socially correct base for the labour unions. However, the trade unions defend the local labourers and do not speak up for the migrant labourers. It is high time that the migrant labourers be considered equal to the local labourers and thus, the labour unions work to protect their rights. The government of India has made an act in order to protect the rights of the inter-state migrants in 1979 namely “Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act. However, the acts made by the government are not being enforced properly due to corruption, over stretched, inadequately structured, manpower deficient and resource crunched government organisations. Migrants, apart from being an important resource base, are individuals who deserve to be respected and given an equal chance to create their place in a competitive place of destination. Co-operation and consideration on the part of the locals will lead to a comprehensive development.

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