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Labour In-Migration in an Industrial Cluster of a Hill State: A Case Study of Tehsil Baddi of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract:

This research paper is an exploratory work on in-migration of unskilled manpower in tehsil Baddi of Himachal Pradesh. The state has traditionally not been an in-migrating state because of its inhospitable topography. However, during the past two decades some areas in Himachal Pradesh have started attracting a substantial number of in-migrants from various parts of the country. This change in migrational profile of the state was a result of abrupt increase in employment potential which was facilitated by industrial package granted to the state in form of various subsidies and incentives. As a result, a number of industries have come up in different parts of Himachal Pradesh which utilize manpower of other states of the country; for native population is unable to meet the increased demand of manpower. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the various attributes of labour in-migrants in tehsil Baddi, where the volume of labour migration is supposed to be the highest in Himachal Pradesh. A total of 901 migrant workers were interviewed to bring out demographic, social and migrational profile of migrant workers. Results of the study reveal that migrant workers were mainly young unmarried males falling in productive age group (15-35 years). Substantial proportion of migrant workers hailed from economically backward states, namely Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Manufacturing and construction labour market were the two main sectors employing around 90 percent migrants. Other occupations which engaged migrants were working as domestic servants/ maids, helpers on shops/ restaurants/ dhabas, scrap dealers and contractors.

Keywords: In-migration, Migrants, Labour

1. Introduction

Migration from one place to another in search of better livelihood has been a characteristic feature of humans throughout history. Movement of people is directed from resource deficit regions to resource rich regions. Phenomenon of migration towards industrially prosperous regions in search of employment was first recognized by Ravenstein (1885, 1889). Using the United States census data, he found out that movement of people was directed towards industrialized regions in search of gainful employment.

In case of India as well, this is found to be true. Movement of people is directed from backward regions with less employability to developed regions with higher employment potential. Geographical concentration of means of production creates a demand of labour which usually remains unfulfilled by native population. Demand of large volume of cheap casual labour is fulfilled by in-migration from backward regions of the country.

As an industrial cluster, tehsil Baddi has been attracting a large number of migrant workers since its emergence on industrial map of India in early 1990s. Industries started flocking in this area after the Government of India announced a package of incentives to industrial units in Himachal Pradesh. Due to its locational advantage in terms of proximity to plains of the country and cities like Chandigarh & Delhi; and availability of vast patches of flat land owing to its semi hilly topography which is uncommon in otherwise hilly/ mountainous state; tehsil Baddi, which forms a part of Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh industrial cluster, has attracted around seventy percent of the total industrial investment in Himachal Pradesh since 1991 when first industrial package was granted to the state in form of tax concessions and subsidies. It has emerged as one of the biggest industrial hubs of India and the biggest pharmaceutical hub of Asia. This recently developed industrial cluster boasts of manufacturing of wide range of products ranging from traditional to high tech products like computer monitors, magnetic components, high quality precision components, telecommunication equipments, electronics, drugs & pharmaceuticals, processed food, textiles and spinning products etc.

Paradigm of industrial development in Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh area of Himachal Pradesh resulted in unprecedented in-migration of unskilled labour from backward states of the country. Migration to industrial cluster Baddi from backward states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar can be seen as a result of two counterbalancing forces viz. push at the place of origin and pull at the place of destination. This is further accentuated by demand-supply gap in labour market of tehsil Baddi where demand of cheap labour is not fulfilled by native population. This leads to influx of large number of gainful migrants from less developed states of the country to this industrial cluster of the state.

These migrants constitute an important segment of population of tehsil Baddi. They play an important role in shaping the economy of both the source and the destination areas. Migration not only affects the economy of the areas involved, rather demographic and social attributes also undergo a change, whenever people move from one place to the other. In view of importance of all the aforesaid attributes, an attempt has been made in this paper to study some of the important aspects of labour migration in tehsil Baddi of Himachal Pradesh.

2. Data Source and Methodology

This research work is based entirely on primary data. Field survey was conducted for the purpose of data collection. A semi structured interview schedule was prepared to gather all the relevant information from migrant workers. Multi stage cluster sampling was found to be the most appropriate to conduct the survey as it was not possible to get a complete list of all the migrant workers in tehsil Baddi. A total of 902 migrant workers were interviewed. Since the data collected was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, mixed methodology (a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative techniques) was adopted for data analysis and interpretation.

3. Results and Discussions

Findings of the study have been discussed under various sub-heads:

3.1. Demographic Profile of Migrant Workers

3.1.1. Sex Composition

As far as sex composition of the sampled migrants is concerned, out of a total of 901 migrant workers, 602 (66.81 percent) were males and 299 (33.19 percent) were females. Exceptionally high proportion of males in the sample was because it included only those migrants who migrated primarily for the purpose of employment.

3.1.2. Age Structure

Table 1 reveals that migrant workers were mainly young as 92 percent of them were below 35 years of age. Approximately 7 percent of the interviewed migrants were between the age group 36-45 years. Only eight migrant workers were reported between 45-55 years of age. None of the migrant workers were reported above 55 years of age. Youngest migrant worker in the sample was 15 years old and the oldest was 54 years old.

	Person		Male		Female	
Age Structure						
All Ages	901	100.00	602	100.00	299	100.00
15-21	157	17.43	110	18.27	47	15.72
22-25	228	25.31	156	25.91	72	24.08
26-30	269	29.86	165	27.41	104	34.78
31-35	173	19.20	121	20.10	52	17.39
36-45	66	7.33	44	7.31	22	7.36
45-55	8	0.89	6	1.00	2	0.67
Above 55	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Educational Level						
Illiterates	277	30.74	141	23.42	215	71.91
Literate	624	69.26	461	76.58	84	28.09
Literate without formal education	250	27.75	180	29.90	48	16.05
Primary	294	32.63	219	36.38	36	12.04
Matriculate	52	5.77	41	6.81	0	0.00
Senior Secondary	27	3.00	22	3.65	0	0.00
Technical Diploma Holders	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Above Senior Secondary	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Religious Composition						
All Migrants	901	100.00	602	100.00	299	100.00
Hindu	807	89.57	511	84.88	296	99.00
Hindu General	63	6.99	49	8.14	14	4.68
Hindu SC	324	35.96	208	34.55	116	38.80
Hindu OBC	420	46.61	254	42.19	166	55.52
Muslim	94	10.43	91	15.12	3	1.00
Place of Last Residence						
All States/ UTs	901	100.00	602	100.00	299	100.00
Uttar Pradesh	482	53.50	320	53.16	162	54.18
Bihar	319	35.41	228	37.87	91	30.43

Uttarakhand	59	6.55	24	3.99	35	11.71
West Bengal	19	2.11	13	2.16	6	2.01
Haryana	11	1.22	8	1.33	3	1.00
Assam	8	0.89	6	1.00	2	0.67
Occupational Structure						
All Migrant Workers	901	100.00	602	100.00	299	100.00
Unskilled workers in manufacturing industries	564	62.60	354	58.80	210	70.23
Casual labourers in construction	247	27.41	194	32.23	53	17.73
Domestic Servants/ maids	43	4.77	7	1.16	36	12.04
Helpers on shops/ restaurants/ dhabas	26	2.89	26	4.32	0	0.00
Scrap Dealers	17	1.89	17	2.82	0	0.00
Contractors	4	0.44	4	0.66	0	0.00

Table 1: Some Selected Attributes of Unskilled Migrant Workers in Tehsil Baddi of Himachal Pradesh

Source: Field Survey, October- December 2014

3.1.3. Literacy Level

Literacy level of migrant workers was about seventy percent. Incidence of illiteracy was higher amongst females as 72 percent of the total interviewed females were illiterates. There were many literates who never had any formal education or dropped out of the school before completing primary education. Proportion of such migrant workers in the sample was 27.75 percent. Notwithstanding 70 percent literacy among migrant workers, educational level was quite low; and gender gap in literacy level of migrant workers was pretty large. This points out towards social backwardness of this section of society. Proportion of matriculates was only 5.77 percent and senior secondary (3 percent) pass outs were even lesser. None of the females ever attended higher secondary school. There were no technical diploma holders or graduates amongst the migrants. This illustrates that this industrially developed belt of Himachal Pradesh draws unskilled job hunters.

3.2. Social Profile of Migrant Workers:

3.2.1. Religious and Caste Composition

A study of religious composition of the migrants reveals that out of a total of 901 sampled migrants, 807 (89.57 percent) were Hindus and remaining 94 (10.43 percent) were Muslims. Out of 807 surveyed Hindu migrant workers, 6.99 percent belonged to general category, 35.96 percent belonged to scheduled castes and 46.61 percent belonged to the other backward classes. Hence, 93.01 percent of the sampled migrants came from socially backward classes comprising of scheduled castes, other backward classes and Muslims.

3.2.2. Marital Status

A study of marital status of migrants brings out that most of the male migrant workers were unmarried (62 percent). All the females, on the other hand, were married.

3.3. Migrational Profile of Migrants

3.3.1. Place of Last Residence of Migrants

An examination of place of last residence of migrants reveals that Uttar Pradesh (53.50 percent) and Bihar (35.41 percent) were the chief source states of migrants. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were followed by Uttarakhand (6.55 percent), West Bengal (2.11 percent), Haryana (1.22 percent) and Assam (0.89 percent) respectively. Migrant labourers from the neighbouring states Punjab were conspicuous by their absence. Other neighbouring state Haryana was reported as place of last residence by just 1.22 percent migrants. Thus, neighbourhood effect was not observed because of prosperity of both Punjab and Haryana.

3.4. Reasons of Migration

All the respondents included in this study were those who cited employment as the prime reason for their migration. It was revealed during the field survey that though employment was the principal reason of migration, it was not the exclusive factor controlling migration.

3.4.1. Push Factors

Unemployment at the place of origin was cited as a prime reason for migration by more than ninety percent respondents. Other associated factors were non remunerative agriculture, small size of landholdings and chronic poverty which pushed migrants from the place of origin to a place with higher employment potential.

3.4.2. Pull Factors

Availability of employment at the place of destination was the most important pull factor. Apart from availability of employment, social networks of migrants also play a significant role when it comes to the choice of the place of destination.

3.4.3. Occupational Structure of Migrants

Table 1 shows that respondents were unskilled workers in manufacturing industries, casual labourers in construction, domestic servants/ maids, helpers on shops/ restaurants/ dhabas, scrap dealers and contractors. None of the migrants worked in any skilled sector.

3.4.4. Remittances

Remittances are one of the most important reasons of migration. All the migrants who have left their families behind remit back to home.

4. Conclusions

This research paper reveals that migrant labour market was male dominated. As the sample of the study included economic migrants, most of them were young falling in productive age group (15-35 years). None of the migrants were above 55 years of age. Literacy level among migrant population was seventy percent, but educational level of migrants was pretty low.

A large proportion of migrants were Hindus (90 percent) and only a tenth of the total migrants were Muslims. Most of the migrants came from socially backward sections viz. scheduled castes (36 percent), other backward classes (47 percent) and Muslims (10 percent).

Less developed states namely Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were the chief states of origin of migrant workers in manufacturing industries in tehsil Baddi. Neighbourhood effect of Punjab and Haryana could not be seen because both these states are economically more advanced than Himachal Pradesh. A number of job opportunities, both in skilled and unskilled sector, are available in these two states which not only absorb local manpower rather attract people from others states of the country as well.

Around 95 percent migrants had migrated to tehsil Baddi during the decade preceding the year 2014, the year when survey was conducted. As all the migrants were economic migrants and did not have long term plans to settle permanently in tehsil Baddi, they returned to their native places once they had crossed their productive years.

Poverty and no employment opportunities at the place of origin were the main reasons of migration.

Around ninety percent migrants were engaged in manufacturing and construction labour market. Other occupations which engaged migrants were working as domestic servants/ maids, helpers on shops/ restaurants/ dhabas, scrap dealers and contractors.

Remittances were spent on household consumption items, education of children, construction of pucca houses, marriages etc.

Thus, it is clear from the study of demographic, social and migrational profile of migrants in this industrialized tehsil of Himachal Pradesh that it attracts migrants from poverty ridden Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and employs them in unskilled sector.

5. References

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