

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS IN PUNJABIS IMMIGRATION- ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN ECONOMY

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Abstract

Push factors like lack of economic opportunities, political and religious persecution, or hazardous environmental conditions drive people from their country of origin and serve as a trigger for emigration. The availability of jobs, religious and political freedom and perception of a relatively liberal policy regime act as pull factors that make the desired country attractive. Push and pull are complementary that is, migration can only occur if the reasons to emigrate (the push) are accompanied by the corresponding pull at dream destination. Punjab popularly known as the “food bowl of India” also suffers from emigration to the western countries. It is an ironic state of affairs that the wage squeeze among low skilled jobs in Punjab is partially a consequence of large scale domestic migration from other states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Another major factor that stokes Punjabi fascination for alien shores is the desire to earn the “NRI” tag which is seen as a status symbol especially among Punjabi youth. The situation is further exacerbated by the role of travel agents.

It is fundamental to stop the movements of Punjabis and this cannot be solved by unilateral forms of policy actions that are limited in scope and suffer from informal and jurisdictional constraints. Transnational cooperation is the only way to address this transnational phenomenon. The paper tries to highlight the various push and pull factors in Punjabis immigration and its impact on Indian Economy.

Key Words: Immigration, push factors, pull factors, Punjabis.

Introduction

Migration is a truly global phenomenon, with movements both within nations and internationally across borders. Migrants make up more than 1 billion people, or one-seventh of the world’s population. Population diversity in most developed countries can be attributed to international migration, whereas in developing nations it is mostly internal migration that contributes to this diversity. Migration to “global cities” – those that are advanced producers of services, have large economies, are international gateways, and are political and cultural hubs of international significance – is increasing, with migrants equalling over a third of the population.

Objectives

1. To study various push and pull factors in migration.
2. To study push and pull factors in Punjabis immigration.
3. To study Punjabis immigration impact on Indian Economy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhawra (2013) notes that in the perception of prospective migrants, ends justify means due to lack of awareness and/or lack of faith in the legal channel which is perceived to be

cumbersome, non-transparent and impersonal in nature. On the other hand, the irregular migration channel via travel agents has elements of personal touch and assured success even if it is more expensive. The fact that a family member has migrated in an irregular manner does not, in any way, act as a stigma against the family back home, provided it was successful. The above analysis brings forward the combination of personal, family and societal pressures the average Punjabi youth is put under to emigrate abroad. These strains create a sense of desperation for which no price or risks are high enough.

Van Meetren et al. (2009) highlighted that irregular migration in Belgium and concludes that, typically, irregular migrants can be divided by their aspirations into three main categories: investment migrants, legalisation migrants and settlement migrants. While those with investment aspirations aim to raise their standard of living and return to their country of origin, the latter two focus on settling in Belgium either legally – mostly those with the legalisation aspirations – or in an irregular form. It can be discussed that Punjabis in Belgium fall into the last two categories.

TYPES OF MIGRATION

Migration can be classified in several ways. It is usually categorized: –

1. **By political boundaries** – Based on political limits and the boundaries crossed, such as districts, counties, state borders and international boundaries, further identified as the places of origin and destination. A widely recognized distinction exists between internal and international migration: –
2. **Internal migration** – Migration occurring within a country from crossing political boundaries, either within a state or between states, whether urban to rural, urban to urban, rural to rural, or rural to urban. The term associated with migrants arriving at their destination is “in-migrants”, and with those leaving their place of origin is “out-migrants”. This form of migration also includes movement between villages, blocks and districts.
3. **International migration** – Migration occurring across country boundaries. Such migrants are known as immigrants (coming into a foreign country) and emigrants (leaving their own country). This also includes continent-to-continent migration.
4. **By movement patterns** – Based on classifying people according to their social status, travel points and periodicity: –
 - **Step migration** – Migration initiating from a small settlement and moving to a larger one in the urban hierarchy over the years.
 - **Circular migration** – Cyclical migration experiences between an origin and a destination with at least one migration and return. Migrants share their time between multiple (at least two) locations, with their family, work, etc. While the frequency of movement may vary along with the length of stay at the destination, a circular migrant spends significant periods of time at the origin and destination.
 - **Chain migration** – Migration of families at different stages of the life cycle from one location to the next, who subsequently bring people from their home location to this new place.

1. **By decision-making approach** – Based on classifying migration as voluntary or involuntary, given certain sociopolitical factors or developmental factors.
2. **Voluntary migration** – Based on a person's free will, initiative and desire to live in a better place and to improve their financial status, among other factors.
3. **Involuntary migration** – Based on a person's being forced out of their home due to certain unfavorable environmental and political situations. This can be further sub classified as:
 - **Reluctant/impelled/imposed migration** – When a person is put in a situation that encourages relocation or movement outside their place of residence.
 - **Forced migration** – When a person is unable to return home (refugee), or undergoes a legal procedure to qualify as a refugee in the host country (asylee), or is forced to leave their home due to a conflict or development but does not cross any boundaries (internally displaced person [IDP]).

Causes of Migration

A myriad of favorable, unfavorable or neutral factors cause migration. Factors that determine why a person migrates are related to the place of residence from where migration starts, also known as the origin, and the place of new settlement, or where migration ends either completely or temporarily, also known as the destination. The favorable attributes of a location are pull factors, which attract a person (World Economic Forum, 2017). The unfavorable attributes operating at a location are the push factors, which force or compel a person to move away. Both pull and push factors can apply simultaneously at the place of origin as well as at the destination. Typically, the causes are economic, sociopolitical and ecological:

- 1 **Economic factors** – These relate to the labour market of a place, the employment situation and the overall state of the economy. The prospect of higher wages, better employment opportunities and prospects for wealth creation and the desire to escape the domestic social and political situation of their home region can draw migrants to their destination.
 - **Push factors** –
 - Unemployment or lack of employment opportunities
 - Rural poverty
 - Unsustainable livelihood
 - **Pull factors** –
 - Job opportunities
 - Better income and prospects for wealth creation
 - Industrial innovation and technical know-how for a new industry
 - Pursuit of specialized education

2 Sociopolitical factors – These include family conflicts and unification; the quest for independence; ethnic, religious, racial and cultural parameters; warfare, or the threat of conflict, among other factors that contribute to migration.

➤ **Push factors** –

- Political instability
- Safety and security concerns (ethnic, religious, racial or cultural persecution)
- Conflicts or threat of a conflict
- Slavery or bonded labour
- Inadequate or limited urban services and infrastructure (including healthcare, education, utilities, transport and water)

➤ **Pull factors** –

- Family reunification
- Independence and freedom
- Integration and social cohesion
- Food security
- Affordable and accessible urban services (including healthcare, education, utilities and transport)

3 Ecological factors – These include environmental factors, such as climate change and the availability of natural resources that cause individuals to migrate in search of more favourable ecological conditions.

➤ **Push factors** –

- Climate change (including extreme weather events)
- Crop failure and scarcity of food

➤ **Pull factors** –

- Abundance of natural resources and minerals (e.g. water, oil, uranium)
- Favourable climate

Push and Pull Factors in Punjabis Immigration

Push Factors

Push factors, such as the lack of economic opportunities, religious and political persecution, or hazardous environmental conditions drive people from their country of origin and serve as a trigger for emigration. The availability of jobs, religious or political freedom, and the perception of a relatively liberal policy regime act as pull factors that make the desired country attractive. Pushes and pulls are complementary that is, migration can only occur if the reasons to emigrate (the push) are accompanied by the corresponding pull at dream destination (Aggarwal and China, 2017).

In addition, surveys and studies reveal an alarmingly high secondary school dropout rate. In fact, a common refrain amongst Punjabi parents is that they have no other option than to send

their children abroad for stable employment since their low level of education is not good enough to secure a well-paying stable job in India. It is an ironic state of affairs given that the wage squeeze amongst low skilled jobs in Punjab is partially a consequence of large scale domestic migration from other states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This, along with deteriorating law and order situation, weakening level of governance and an overall decline in its ease of doing business, paints a picture of a state on a socio-economic downslope.

Another major factor that stokes Punjabi fascination for alien shores is the desire to earn the “NRI” tag 1, which is seen as a status symbol especially among Punjabi youth. This situation is further exacerbated by the role of travel agents. Taking advantage of the large demand for emigration, travel agencies became a visible part of the commercial scape in Punjab. Walking through a bazaar in Ludhiana or Amritsar, one cannot escape the hoardings of travel agencies offering their services. In fact, looking at figures of irregular emigration, Ludhiana and Patiala stand on top for regions within Punjab, possibly due to better exposure of youth in these big cities to travel agents, who are prevalent in urban areas. Caste, alongside kinship, also plays a key role in facilitating chain migration. Transnational caste networks are a major force driving migration to Europe.

Pull Factors

The instances of irregular migration from the Punjab in recent years have been substantial as is evident from the figures of criminal cases registered relating to illegal migration. The role of networks is essential for facilitating the movements of Punjabis whether intra families or intra caste.

Geography is another important pull factor. Many studies have highlighted that Punjabis look at EU countries as springboards to their ultimate destinations, such as the UK, USA and Canada. Belgium’s close location to the UK, a major destination for the Punjabi diaspora, makes it their ideal transit station.

Educational facilities also constitute an important pull factor. Prospective migrants in Punjab commonly enrol in university courses and get part time jobs, thus ensuring a stable standard of living. However, many students coming from poor educational backgrounds and unable to balance work-school responsibilities fall out of courses and remain in an irregular capacity. Travel agents based in Punjab and Delhi typically facilitate this phenomenon, and relatively liberal student visa procedure further enforces this process. It is important to understand the underlying motivations of migrants — this is where a factoring of pull and push factors comes in handy.

Impact on Indian Economy

The state of Punjab is split between India and Pakistan, its name of Farsi origin signifies the “five rivers that have blessed it with ideal conditions for wide scale agriculture”. Advances in agricultural practices during the 1970s catalysed the state’s agricultural productivity and the region became known as the food bowl of India. Thus, despite being amongst the smallest states of the Indian Union, it is relatively wealthy compared to other parts of the country. However, a closer look at recent socio-economic data reveals a relative decline in its growth rates and productivity. The expected progression of Punjab from agricultural economy to industrial powerhouse and service-sector leader never took place. Food processing, essential

for agricultural prosperity, never bloomed – for instance, Punjab exports wheat but imports wheat flour.

In the past 2 decades, Punjab's agricultural productivity has fallen considerably and farmer indebtedness has reached phenomenal levels. Studies done by the Punjab Agricultural University shows that almost 89 per cent of Punjabi farmer households are reeling under debt – estimates peg the debt at around INR 50,000 (EUR 666) for every hectare of landholding. Unsustainable and intensive farming practices have decreased the ground water table, polluted the soil with pesticides and turned agriculture into a losing proposition. As a result, the Indian food bowl has witnessed, for the first time in its history, farmer suicides.

The social structure in the village, which was traditionally based on caste, landholdings, family background, and educational achievements, has now added a new distinguishing factor among families: those with members abroad, who are kept on a higher pedestal, and those without. NRI families are typically more wealthy about 10-12 per cent of Punjab's GDP is reliant on remittances from abroad not factoring in the unofficial flows and they are not afraid to showcase it through the purchase of land, houses and cars.

Conclusion

The availability of jobs, religious and political freedom and perception of a relatively liberal policy regime act as pull factors that make the desired country attractive. Push and pull are complementary that is, migration can only occur if the reasons to emigrate (the push) are accompanied by the corresponding pull at dream destination. It is fundamental to stop the movements of Punjabis and this cannot be solved by unilateral forms of policy actions that are limited in scope and suffer from informal and jurisdictional constraints. Transnational cooperation is the only way to address this transnational phenomenon.

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