

Labour and Employment in Punjab

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Abstract

Productive employment generation with decent work conditions is an important concern not only for the national employment policy but also for the national agenda of inclusive growth. Although the overall economic growth achieved by the Indian economy, particularly during the current decade, has been impressive, employment growth has not kept pace. At a time, when India is aiming to achieve double-digit economic growth, commensurate employment growth assumes crucial importance from the point of view of sustaining overall high growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employment generation is a primary driver for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The lack of employment opportunities generates both economic and social tensions and in many instances is among the major 'push' factor for international migration flows. The rising demand for labour in Punjab, during the initial phase of green revolution attracted labour from other states of India. However towards the end of eighties, the labour absorption capacity of agriculture in Punjab started declining. The substantial presence of migrant labour in Punjab and huge amount of surplus labour in agriculture has resulted in a paradoxical situation.

According to Gill (2002), the cropping pattern and agricultural technology led to a decline in employment opportunities in Punjab agriculture. The employment in cropping sector in Punjab declined from 48.04 crore man days during 1983-84 to 43.14 crore man days during 1996-97. The increased influx of migrant workers, led to the emergence of the peculiar scenario in Punjab. On the one hand, there is a large scale unemployment prevailing amongst the local labour and on the other hand, there has been substantial in migration of labour in Punjab. Also there is a relation between mechanization as well as labour employment. On the one hand mechanization displaces labour, on the other it creates more labour via increased production and higher intensity of cropping at mechanized farms.

Decent working conditions and improved quality of life for workers, enhancing employability through employment services and skill development on sustainable basis being the vision of the Ministry of Labour & Employment. Though the labour laws came into existence in India in the year 1881, the labour department was created in 1949. The department has been put under the overall control of the labour commissioner who is the chief inspector of factories. At present, the labour department Punjab implements 22 central and 5 state acts.

The main objective of the labour department is to maintain the industrial peace for better industrial relations between workers and the employers through investigation and settlement of industrial disputes to promote industrial harmony, so that the production in industries goes on uninterrupted so that there is no loss of man days and strikes and lockouts can be prevented.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based primarily on the secondary sources. The data is collected from various sources like Department of labour and employment, Economic and Statistical Organization, Punjab and Director of employment, Punjab. The major objectives of the paper are to study:

- a) Difference between the sanctioned and filled posts in various departments of Punjab

Table - 1
Minimum Wages in Punjab
Punjab: Minimum Wages w.e.f. March 1, 2011 to August 31, 2011

Sr.	Scheduled Employment	Category	Total Daily No. Minimum Wages (In Rupees Per Day)
1	Agriculture	with meal or foodgrain Without meals	138.29 153.81
2	Agriculture Implements, Machine Tools and General Engineering including Cycle and Electrical Goods Industry.	Unskilled Semi-Skilled (Lower) Semi-Skilled (Upper) Skilled (Lower) Skilled (Upper) Highly Skilled (Lower) Highly Skilled (Upper) Clerk Accountant/Graduate Clerk Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	147.73 154.85 161.01 164.69 175.73 185.57 192.85 167.09 174.53 192.85
3	Ahata attached to wine and liquor shops or Ahata attached to Beverages shops except soft drinks and carbonated Water.	Unskilled Semi-Skilled (Lower) Semi-Skilled (Upper) Skilled (Lower) Skilled (Upper) Highly Skilled (Lower) Highly Skilled (Upper) Clerk Accountant/Graduate Clerk Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	147.73 154.85 161.01 164.69 175.73 185.57 192.85 167.09 174.53 192.85
4	Automobile Repair shops and service stations (not attached with any public Motor Transport Company)	Unskilled Semi-Skilled (Lower) Semi-Skilled (Upper) Skilled (Lower) Skilled (Upper) Highly Skilled (Lower) Highly Skilled (Upper) Clerk Accountant/Graduate Clerk Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	147.73 154.85 161.01 164.69 175.73 185.57 192.85 167.09 174.53 192.85

5	Ayurvedic and Unani pharmacies	Unskilled	147.73
		Semi-Skilled (Lower)	154.85
		Semi-Skilled (Upper)	161.01
		Skilled (Lower)	164.69
		Skilled (Upper)	175.73
		Highly Skilled (Lower)	185.57
		Highly Skilled (Upper)	192.85
		Clerk	167.09
		Accountant/Graduate Clerk	174.53
		Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	192.85
6	Bakeries including Biscuit making establishments	Unskilled	147.73
		Semi-Skilled (Lower)	154.85
		Semi-Skilled (Upper)	161.01
		Skilled (Lower)	164.69
		Skilled (Upper)	175.73
		Highly Skilled (Lower)	185.57
		Highly Skilled (Upper)	192.85
		Clerk	167.09
		Accountant/Graduate Clerk	174.53
		Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	192.85
7	Brick-Kiln Industry	Unskilled	147.73
		Semi-Skilled (Lower)	154.85
		Semi-Skilled (Upper)	161.01
		Skilled (Lower)	164.69
		Skilled (Upper)	175.73
		Highly Skilled (Lower)	185.57
		Highly Skilled (Upper)	192.85
		Clerk	167.09
		Accountant/Graduate Clerk	174.53
		Truck/Tempo/Bus Driver / Supervisor / Stenographer	192.85

Source: Department of labour and Employment, Government of Punjab

b) Group wise representation in various sanctioned and filled posts of Punjab government.

Sanctioned and filled posts by various groups in Punjab has been shown in table 1. It is clear from the table that in 1980, 256628 posts were sanctioned but only 244074 posts were filled. And the number of filled posts is always less than sanctioned posts. Till 2000, no posts were filled for terrorists and riot affected people as well as people on the compassionate ground. The percentage share of ex-servicemen employees in filled posts has also declined from (3.59%) in 1980 to (1.09%) in 2008.

Various countries are exporting a significant proportion of their workforce. This can have a major impact on the local labour market. countries can

look to ILO for support to see how migration policy fits best with employment policy .the ILO formulates international labour standards in the form of conventions and recommendations setting mini standards of basic labour rights, freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, equality of opportunity and other standard regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work related issues. Countries of origin need to be aware of the impact of emigration on their own labour market. While in many cases migration can help ease unemployment. It can also distort the local labour supply .Indeed the large scale emigration of highly skilled workers through migration may lead to brain drain which can discourage investment and thus reduce growth.

ILO can offer countries in the region expertise across a wide range of employment issues for both national and international employment. ILO can also help countries create employment alternatives at home, so that workers do not feel obliged to go abroad in search of decent work. One option is the 'Local Economic Development' approach.

The second national commission on labour submitted its report to the government on 29 June 2002. Its main recommendations were:

- Introduction of umbrella legislation for workers in the unorganized sector
- Emphasis on up gradation and development of skill of workforce by training
- Encouragement to SSI, agri-business and rural sector for higher employment generation
- Bringing attitudinal changes and change in the mind set and work culture where the employer and the worker work as a partner with emphasis on participative management
- Consolidation of social security legislation and establishment of social security system.

· Abolition of child labour

The problem of child labour continues to pose a challenge before the nation. Government has been taking various pro-active measures to tackle this problem. It is essentially a socio-economic problem inextricably linked to poverty and illiteracy, it requires concerted efforts from all section of the society .in 1979, and government formed the first committee called Gurupadswamy committee to study the issue of child labour and to suggest measures to tackle it. The committee observed that as long as poverty continued, it would be difficult to totally eliminate child labour and hence any attempt to abolish it through legal recourse would not be a practical proposition. Based on the recommendations of this committee, the child labour (prohibition and regulation) act was enacted in 1986. Then a national policy on child labour was formulated in 1987. To eradicate child labour, seventy-six child labour projects have been sanctioned under the national child labour project scheme for covering 150,000 children.

In the context of preparation of 11th five year plan (2007-12), the planning commission set up a

TABLE - 2

GroupWise Representation of Scheduled castes, Backward classes, Ex-servicemen, Wards of Freedom Fighters and Handicapped in Punjab Government Employees (number)

Year	Sanctioned Posts	Filled Posts	Scheduled Caste employees	Backward Class employees	Ex-servicemen Employees	Wards of freedom fighter	Handicapped	Terrorist & riots affected	Compassionate ground
1980	256628	244074	45102 (18.48)	22289	8771	—	—	—	—
1990	329471	307953	64392 (20.91)	29397 (9.55)	10351 (3.36)	356 (0.12)	1391 (0.45)	—	—
2000	375646	336959	80800 (23.98)	32815 (9.74)	9253 (2.75)	554 (0.16)	2160 (0.64)	—	—
2005	389559	326922	75240 (23.01)	29299 (8.96)	5362 (1.64)	443 (0.14)	2437 (0.75)	1185 (0.36)	2531 (0.77)
2006	382665	317628	73473 (23.13)	28523 (8.98)	4427 (1.39)	248 (0.08)	2276 (0.72)	1434 (0.45)	3036 (0.96)
2007	376405	307856	73557 (23.89)	29801 (9.68)	4221 (1.37)	359 (0.12)	2812 (0.91)	1970 (0.64)	4854 (1.58)
2008	373586	297986	74970 (25.16)	28065 (9.42)	3254 (1.09)	297 (0.10)	2945 (0.99)	2652 (0.89)	6236 (2.09)

Source: Economic and Statistical Organization, Punjab

Note: 1. Figures in brackets show percentages to filled posts.

2. In this table contingency paid, work charged, and contract basis staff is not included.

TABLE - 3

Representation of various categories in total number of semi, government employees working in corporation/ boards/ municipal committee corporations/ improvement trust market committees/zila prishad/panchayat samities as on 31 st march 2008 in Punjab

Boards and corporations	Municipal committees	Improvement trust	Market committees	Zila Prishad	Panchayat samities	Grand Total	% to Grand Total	Items
105724	30241	1052	5400	8175	5324	155916	—	Sanctioned posts
Filled Post								
80697	20310	796	3705	3744	3172	112424	86.18	Male
6760	5625	87	386	3924	1239	18021	13.82	Female
87457	25935	883	4091	7668	4411	130445	100	Total
16737	15143	168	816	1537	917	35318	27.08	Scheduled castes
7709	1947	50	421	811	431	11369	8.72	Backward classes
541	85	1	16	375	35	1053	0.81	Ex servicemen
136	27	5	15	59	31	273	0.21	Wards of Freedom Fighters
355	384	5	39	136	65	984	0.75	Handicapped
80119	10	32	27	45	313	0.24	0.24	Terrorist affected
3345	701	27	242	51	154	4520	3.47	Compassionate ground
23654	1999	64	465	46	46	26274	—	Pensioners During The yr
2997	540	16	145	26	69	3793	—	Retired During the year

Source: Economic and Statistical Organization, Punjab

TABLE - 4

Number of unemployed according to qualification in punjab

Year	Matriculate fresher	Under Graduate fresher	Graduate freshers	Post Graduate freshers	Graduate engineers	Doctors allopathic	Agriculture Specialist	m.ed and b.ed teachers
1980	72215	27660	28221	6454	246	44	331	18480
1990	158989	42893	35934	10581	437	27	643	23425
2000	174238	60490	27021	6990	1020	126	460	34459
2005	138762	68245	27780	7478	635	105	154	31618
2006	124149	71741	28672	10347	994	132	161	32002
2007	129832	69518	24552	9051	693	105	127	28247
2008	149374	67060	21465	8984	740	86	108	26305

Source: Director of Employment, Punjab

working group on labour laws and other labour regulations under the chairmanship of secretary, ministry of labour and employment, government of India. Under the constitution of India, labour is a subject in the concurrent list where both the central and state government is competent to enact legislation. As a result, a large number of labour laws have been enacted catering to different aspects of labour namely, occupational health, safety and employment, revision of mini wages, mode of payment of wages, payment of compensation to

workmen who suffer injuries as a result of accidents or death or disablements, bonded labour and child labour etc.

Most workers are outside union and have little bargaining power. Employers are skilled in using social division to divide workers from one another. There is a strong need for labour organizations like MAZDOOR EKTA MUNCH (MEM) In Gurgaon. MEM's mission is to build the power of workers and their families and secure their dignity and rights where they work and live. Its goal is to fight for and

protect workers labour right and citizenship rights. it is based on the principal of collective action and leadership, eliminate discrimination based on caste, gender, region, age etc., accountability to workers and their families, democratic and transparent decision making etc.

3. SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Government need to collect and disseminate good labour market information and to embark on programmers that promote employment across all level of skill. There is a high demand from abroad for particular skill or profession; government may also want to train more people to take these opportunities. Short term skill oriented courses

should be started to update the skill of labour. The longer duration of working hours should be reduced and there should be a provision for the social security for the labour to take care of the education, health etc. in rural areas. Non farm employment should be generated and it requires serious efforts and initiative on the part of the government, so that investment is encouraged in the relevant non farm activities. A suitable plan should be chalked out for the migrants as well as local labour. Workers face immediate survival needs that go beyond the issues of wages and benefits. we need to build coalition with different types of organizations but building workers organization is no longer possible without building public support, developing workers leadership and developing democratic organizations.

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3. www.pstalker.com/ilo/o-employment.html.labour market development. the study has tried to examine the changing status of labour in Punjab