

# Wage disparities between local and migratory paddy farm workers in Haryana

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## ABSTRACT

*Paddy is one of the most labour intensive crops of Haryana which absorbs both local as well as migratory labourers from adjacent states during peak paddy season. The present study is engrossed to find out whether the migratory labourers are receiving wages equal to the local labourers or is there any disparity in the same? Data on wage rates was collected from paddy farmers in Haryana. The reason of selecting paddy farmers instead of labourers is to avoid the response biasedness of regarding wages rates. Statistical technique viz., t-test is applied to achieve the objective. Results indicate that migratory labours at Jind get significantly lower wages than their local counterparts for various paddy farm operations. Similarly, migrants were accepting lower wages at Kaithal, Karnal and Palwal but the difference was not statistically significant. Overall, the districts where locals get alternative work opportunity readily available, have high disparity in wage rates and vice-versa.*

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## 1. Introduction

### Why people migrate?

Migration is a universal phenomenon covering movements for economic as well as non-economic purpose. Historically, migration existed for survival purposes (Singh, 1995). With the passage of time, mobility for economic purpose initiated. Migration decision is determined by social-cultural and political factors besides economic one (Haan and Rogaly, 2002; Singh and Singh, 2016). Moreover, improved communication network, transport facilities and positive experience of native fellow migrants inspire people to move. (Sinha, 1982; Bhagat, 2016). Generally, migration for economic reason is directed towards industrially or agriculturally developed region (Singh, 2003). North Western plain region of India is agriculturally prosperous and receiving migrants during peak agricultural season. Mainly, the inflow of migrants initiated almost simultaneously with the success of green revolution (Sidhu and Rangi, 1998). Such migrants move to enrich their standard of living (Singh, 2003). Initially, these migrants got employed during wheat harvesting, paddy transplanting and paddy harvesting (Gupta *et al.*, 1988). However, mechanisation of wheat harvesting has resulted in concentration of migrant's inflow to paddy farming. Paddy farming is one of the most labour intensive crops of Haryana absorbing local as well as migratory labourers.

### Inadequate Wages of Agricultural Labourers especially Migratory Labourers

Agricultural labourers receive wages lower than even the minimum wage rates prescribed by government of Haryana (Sharma, 2003). Evidences from previous studies found that migrants are working at comparatively lower wages than their local counterparts although performing same agricultural operations. (Sharma, 2003; Gill, 1998). Group leader of migrants (mukkadam) correspond with farmers; fix employment and wage rates for the whole group. He receives commission in the form of certain percentage out of wages of migratory labourers (Chandan, 1979).

**Objectives of the study:** The study has following specific objectives:

1. To identify the difference in wage rate of local and migratory labour for paddy transplanting in Haryana
2. To identify the difference in wage rate of local and migratory labour for spraying in paddy farms in Haryana
3. To identify the difference in wage rate of local and migratory labour for weeding in paddy farms in Haryana
4. To identify the difference in wage rate of local and migratory labour for paddy harvesting and threshing in Haryana

**Research methodology:** Four districts of Haryana were systematically selected for data collection from four administrative zones of Haryana<sup>1</sup>. Kaithal, Karnal, Jind and Palwal districts were selected on the basis of highest area under paddy crop in their respective zones. A sample of 240 farmers' viz. 60 farmers from each district was selected for study.

**Wage rates differences between local and migratory labourers for transplanting paddy:** Farmers have the choice of hiring between local and migratory labourers. Labour cost forms a major part of total cultivation cost of paddy in Haryana<sup>1</sup>. So, an effort is made through this study to find out the wage differences between both kinds of aforesaid labourers. Transplanting operation is performed either by group of local male and female labourers or through group of migratory male labourers. These groups are generally paid on the basis of per acre contract wage rate.

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<sup>1</sup> Haryana was divided in four administrative zones at the time of study ( during the year 2015-16).

Table 1 : Wage rate differences between local and Migratory labour for paddy transplanting operation in various districts of Haryana

District	Wages of Local labour	Wages of Migrant labour	Difference		t value	p value
			Amount	%		
Kaithal	2267.742	2221.774	45.968	2.027	-1.398	0.165
Palwal	2991.667	2803.33	188.337	6.295	-1.717	0.089*
Karnal	2268.333	2247.5	20.833	0.918	-0.794	0.429
Jind	2655.833	2282.5	373.333	14.057	-10.891	0.000**
Haryana	2543.827	2386.625	157.202	6%	-4.034	0.000**

\*\*indicates significant at 5%level of significance level. \*indicates significant at 10%level of significance level

Source: Primary data

Table 1 indicates that farmers of Jind and Palwal Districts pay significantly higher wage rates to local labourers as compared to migratory labourers from adjacent states<sup>ii</sup>. These findings are similar to previous studies viz. Kaure *et al.*, 2011; Ahlawat, 2003. These aforesaid districts have comparatively less area under paddy crop and local labourers are still involved in traditional crops like cotton which has attractive wage rate and requires comparatively less manual effort. So, farmers have to pay high wage rate to persuade local labourers to work in paddy farms. Moreover, farmers of Jind have to accept the demand of local labour for tea, fodder for their cattle (Ahlawat, 2003: 317) and use of farmer's bike for commuting. However, migratory and local labourers at Kaithal and Karnal Districts receive almost similar wages for paddy transplanting<sup>iii</sup>. The results are similar to previous findings by Sidhu *et al.*, (2007). Contradictory to it, previous findings at Karnal indicated that local paddy labourers received wages higher than their migratory counterparts (Ahlawat, 2003:

318). Farmers stated that migrants determine the wage rates at each season and locals demand some one hundred to two hundred rupees higher than their rates. Migrants had to resort to low wages as they are outsiders and can't afford to skip the wages of any single day. Alternatively, locals have diversified work options at rural and urban areas if not hired by the farmers.

**Wages disparities between local and migratory labourers for spraying in paddy:**

Spraying activity is normally performed by local labourers as most of the migratory labour move back to their village after paddy transplanting. Table 2 indicates that paddy farmers of Jind pay significantly higher wages for spraying to local labourers as compared to their migratory counterpart's. Wage in kind are also converted into cash while computing wage differences between aforesaid labourers.

Table 2: Wage rate differences between local and Migratory labour for spraying in paddy operation in various districts of Haryana

District	Wages of Local labour	Wages of Migrant labour	Difference		t value	p value
			Amount	%		
Kaithal	134.516	134.516	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
Palwal	227.833	227.833	0	0.000	0.000	1.000
Karnal	173.333	173.667	-0.334	-0.193	0.043	0.966
Jind	271.333	200.5	70.833	26.106	-5.082	0.000*
Haryana	201.116	183.704	17.412	9%	-2.840	0.005*

\*indicates significant at 5%level of significance level

Source: Primary data

Local labour at Jind receives much in the form of tea, cattle's fodder and commuting facility from farmer. Thus, the wage differences are significant. On contrary to it, paddy farmers at Kaithal, Karnal and Palwal pay almost similar wages for spraying to both kinds of labourers.

The reason of wage disparity in Jind districts is that it has comparatively a large area under tradition cotton crop hence the local labourers mostly got engaged in cotton farming operation. Cotton farming has attractive wage rate and requires comparatively less manual effort. So, farmers have to pay high wage rate to persuade local labourers to work in paddy farms.

**Wage rate differences between local and migratory labourer for weeding operation in paddy crop**

Weeding activity is dominated by local female workers to such an extent that it's rare to find a local male worker in the fields performing this task. Weeding is performed on daily wage rate system. Local female labourers work till half day and receives wages accordingly<sup>iv</sup>. Contrary to results of Ninan (1984), present study found that female labourers are paid wages equal to their male counterparts.

Table 3 : Wage rate differences between local and Migratory labour for weeding in paddy operation in various districts of Haryana

District	Wages of Local labour	Wages of Migrant labour	Difference		t value	p value
			Amount	%		
Kaithal	337.903	339.516	-1.613	-0.477	0.191	0.849
Palwal	451.167	451.167	0	0.000	0.000	1.000
Karnal	542	538.667	3.333	0.615	-0.128	0.898
Jind	375	333.333	41.667	11.111	-4.52	0.000*
Haryana	425.885	414.774	11.111	3	-0.502	0.616

\*indicates significant at 5%level of significance level

Source: Primary data

Table 3 indicates that local female labourers and migratory male labourers receive almost similar wages for weeding at Kaithal, Palwal and Karnal district. Even, local labourers at Jind are paid significantly higher wages as compared to their migratory counterparts. Overall, one of the main reasons for high wage demand of local labourers is lack of availability of migratory labour. Contrary to it, farmers stated that wage rate for weeding compresses at areas where weedicides are applied at paddy field.

**Wage rate differences between local and migratory labourers for paddy harvesting-cum-threshing**

Table 4 indicates that farmers of Jind pay significantly higher wage rates for harvesting to locals as compared to their migratory counterparts. The reason being that paddy harvesting operation coincides with cotton picking operation. Local labourers prefer to work in cotton farms as it is comparatively high paid job with less manual efforts. Moreover, Jind have large area under cotton crop hence it ensures comparatively more employment for local labourers. So, farmers at Jind have to pay high wages to persuade locals to work in paddy farms. Similarly, wages of local labourers are slightly higher than migratory labourers for paddy harvesting at Palwal.

Table 4: Wage rate differences between local and Migratory labour among various paddy harvesting and threshing operation

District	Wages of Local labour	Wages of Migrant labour	Difference		t value	p value
			Amount	%		
Kaithal	3810	3768.33	41.67	1.094	-0.557	0.579
Palwal	4995	4741.67	253.33	5.072	-1.55	0.124
Karnal	4507.5	4462.5	45	0.998	-0.847	0.399
Jind	3925	3591.67	333.33	8.492	-7.262	0.000*
Haryana	4307.71	4141.04	166.67	3.869	-2.58	0.01*

\*indicates significant at 5%level of significance level

Source: Primary data

However, farmers of Kaithal and Karnal pay almost equal wages to both local and migratory labourers. The reason being that unlike Jind and Palwal districts, agricultural local labours of these two districts (Kaithal and Karnal) have major employment in paddy farms only. Farmers stated that in fact migrants fix the wage rates and locals demands always more than these fixed wage rates of migratory labourers.

**2. Conclusion**

A large pool of migratory labourers is observed each year in paddy fields of Haryana during the peak season of paddy crop. These migratory labourers have to work at lower wage rates as compared to the local labourers. The reasons of their lower wages are lack of employment and unionisation among migrants. Migrants at Jind district were accepting significantly lower wages as compared to their local counterparts. The reasons of high wage rates of local labour at Jind are

availability of work in alternate crop i.e. cotton which ensures high wages and less manual effort as compared to paddy. Similarly, Palwal district have less area under paddy crop hence local demands higher wages as the migratory labour supply is low. Farmers of Kaithal and Jind districts stated no significant wage difference between local and migratory labour as the area under paddy crop is high and migratory inflow is large hence the wage balance is maintained between both kind of labourers. Overall, the wage rates of local labour are higher as compared to migratory labourers.

The study will be helpful to govt. and concerned authorities in understanding the extent of wage disparities faced by migrants and frame policies accordingly. It will help the future researchers to know the present phenomena of wage disparity between local and migratory labour and broaden the study further. The study may be extended to include more districts of Haryana.

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<sup>i</sup>This information of paddy cost cultivation in Haryana during 2016-17 is retrieved on dated 30.11.2019 from Cost of Cultivation Scheme, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India ([http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/Cost\\_of\\_Cultivation.htm](http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/Cost_of_Cultivation.htm)).

<sup>iv</sup> Farmers stated that women labour work from 9.00a.m to 1.00 p.m. i.e. for 4 hours (half day as one day is considered for 8 hours)