



## Media Narratives and the Punjab Diaspora: Migration Aspirations, Challenges, and Socio-Economic Impact

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**Abstract:** Migration from Punjab has been a defining socio-economic trend, shaping the region's cultural and economic landscape. This study examines media narratives surrounding migration, analyzing how news articles, television reports, digital media, and Punjabi entertainment industries construct public perceptions. The research identifies four key themes; Migration as an economic driver, emphasizing remittances and infrastructure growth; The glorification of the "Canada Dream" in Punjabi music and cinema; The dark side of migration, including fraudulent immigration and illegal routes; and the social cost of migration, highlighting family separation and identity crises. By analyzing media coverage from The Tribune, BBC Punjabi, NDTV, Al Jazeera, and Punjabi pop culture, the study uncovers the duality in media representation, romanticizing migration while also exposing its challenges. The findings suggest that media not only influences migration aspirations but also shapes public discourse and policy debates on Punjab's migration culture. This study contributes to a broader understanding of media's role in framing migration and its socio-political impact.

**Keywords:** Punjab diaspora, Transnational migration, Remittance economy, Socio-economic impact of migration, Migration trends, Aspirational migration

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## INTRODUCTION

Migration from Punjab has been a significant and transformative phenomenon for both the region and its diaspora. Historically, the state has witnessed large-scale migration, driven by economic opportunities, the pursuit of better livelihoods, and the search for educational prospects abroad. As of 2023, around 12.5 million Punjabis live overseas, primarily in countries like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Sharma et al, 2023). The impact of this migration is twofold: it has contributed to economic development through remittances, which play a crucial role in funding infrastructure and boosting rural economies (Le De, Gaillard, & Friesen, 2013), but it has also led to social costs, including family separation, cultural shifts, and identity crises among the migrants and their families (Nayyar, 2023). The media, in all its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception of migration. Mainstream news outlets, such as The Tribune and NDTV, often focus on the economic benefits of migration, highlighting the role of remittances in transforming rural landscapes and funding infrastructural development (Ismail, Hassan, & Mohamed, 2024). Conversely, Punjabi cinema and music romanticize the concept of migration, portraying it as a pathway to success and a brighter future, particularly in countries like Canada (Schreffler, 2012). This glorification often masks the real challenges faced by migrants, such as exploitation, fraudulent immigration practices, and the emotional toll of separation from family (Sidhu, 2020). At the same time, investigative

media outlets have uncovered the dark side of migration, reporting on the rise of illegal immigration, visa fraud, and human trafficking (BBC Punjabi, 2020). These reports highlight the risks migrants face when seeking better opportunities abroad. On the other hand, media discussions on the social costs of migration such as the emotional struggles of families left behind and the impact on youth who grow up in a divided family environment are increasingly gaining attention in documentaries and news reports (Al Jazeera, 2022). Given the widespread influence of media in shaping public attitudes toward migration, this study aims to critically analyze how various media sources represent the economic and social impacts of migration from Punjab. Migration is often analyzed using Push-Pull Theory, which explains why individuals leave their home regions (push factors) and what attracts them to new destinations (pull factors). In the case of Punjab, push factors include unemployment, agrarian distress, and lack of educational opportunities, while pull factors such as higher wages, better quality of life, and liberal immigration policies in countries like Canada and Australia encourage migration. However, migration decisions are not based solely on economic realities. They are also shaped by how information is presented in the media. This is where Media Framing Theory becomes relevant. The way migration is framed, either as an aspirational success story or as a process fraught with risks affects public perception and decision-making. Punjabi films, music, and news media often romanticize migration, reinforcing the "Canada Dream," while investigative journalism exposes fraudulent immigration

practices and the hardships migrants face. Understanding these theories helps contextualize how media shapes both migration aspirations and policy discussions in Punjab. The focus will be on examining media portrayals of migration, including its glorification, challenges, and cultural implications, in order to offer a comprehensive understanding of its role in shaping migration perceptions in both Punjab and the broader Indian diaspora. With this theoretical foundation in place, it becomes essential to examine how media representations of migration influence public perceptions and migration patterns. This study seeks to analyse these portrayals across different media platforms through the following objectives.

### Objectives of the Study

- To analyze how media portrays migration from Punjab, focusing on both its economic benefits and social challenges.
- To explore the social cost of migration as depicted in media, focusing on family separation, identity crises, and cultural transformations.
- To assess the dual role of media both as a driver of migration aspirations and a platform highlighting its negative consequences.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis approach to examine the portrayal of migration from Punjab in various media sources. The selection of texts is based on accessibility and relevance to ensure diverse perspectives. The selection of media sources in this study is based on their reach, credibility, and perspective diversity in reporting Punjab's migration trends. Regional media, such as *The Tribune* and *BBC Punjabi*, provide localized insights and in-depth coverage of migration-related issues affecting Punjab. National news outlets, including *NDTV* and *The Times of India*, contribute a broader Indian perspective, often linking Punjab's migration patterns to national economic policies and visa regulations. Meanwhile, international sources like *Al Jazeera* and *BBC World* offer a comparative viewpoint, highlighting global migration trends and their socio-political impact. The inclusion of Punjabi entertainment media, such as films and music, allows for an analysis of how cultural narratives influence migration aspirations. This diversified selection ensures a balanced analysis of how different types of media portray migration, reducing bias and enhancing the comprehensiveness of the study. Punjabi films such as *Jatt & Juliet* and *Ardaas Karaan*, along with songs like *Visa* by Sharry Mann and *Suit Suit* by Guru Randhawa, are analyzed for their portrayal of migration. Social media content, including influencer discussions on migration routes and student visas, is also considered. The study categorizes content into four key themes: (1) Economic Impact, focusing on financial gains and remittances (2) Glorification of Migration, analyzing its idealization in media (3) Illegal Immigration and Fraud,

examining unauthorized migration and scams and (4) Social Costs, exploring family separation and cultural shifts. A comparative approach assesses differences in migration portrayal across mainstream Indian, Punjabi-language, and international media. This analysis aims to provide insights into how migration from Punjab is framed across different media platforms, highlighting both its economic benefits and social challenges.

While this study primarily employs a qualitative textual analysis, integrating empirical data strengthens its validity. According to the 2023 Punjab Migration Report, approximately 1.2 million Punjabis applied for study or work visas in Canada alone, with remittances contributing nearly 15% of Punjab's GDP (Government of Punjab, 2023). Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Centre for Migration Studies (2022) found that 70% of Punjabi students pursuing international education cite perceived lifestyle benefits, rather than employment prospects, as a key motivator. Such statistical insights provide a factual basis for analysing media portrayals. Additionally, data on illegal migration cases and fraudulent immigration agents reported by Punjab Police and *BBC Punjabi* strengthen the discussion on migration's darker aspects.

### Migration as an Economic Boon

Migration has played a significant role in Punjab's economic landscape, with thousands of Punjabis migrating to countries such as Canada, the UK, the US, and Australia in search of better opportunities. The financial remittances sent by these Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) form a crucial part of Punjab's rural economy, funding infrastructure projects, improving household incomes, and facilitating better educational opportunities. However, while media narratives frequently highlight the benefits of migration, they tend to overlook critical challenges, such as economic dependency on remittances, labor shortages in agriculture, and brain drain in crucial sectors like healthcare and technology (Chakraborty, 2023).

### Media Representation

Indian and international media have extensively covered the contributions of NRIs to Punjab's development. *The Tribune* regularly reports on how NRIs invest in their ancestral villages. For instance, a report titled "NRIs Send Crores to Develop Ancestral Villages" emphasized how foreign earnings are used to build schools, hospitals, and roads, transforming rural infrastructure (The Tribune, 2022). Similarly, *NDTV's* documentary "Dollar Dreams: Punjab's Dependence on Remittances" (2021) examined how NRI investments influence local economies. While the documentary showcased the benefits of remittances, it also pointed out concerns such as brain drain and the increasing over-reliance on foreign earnings. International media, such as *BBC Punjabi*, frequently report on how migration affects Punjab's social fabric. Several reports highlight that many villages have been left with an aging population, as the younger

generations migrate abroad for work or education (**BBC Punjabi, 2023**). Additionally, Punjab's agricultural sector has been significantly impacted by youth migration, leading to a growing reliance on migrant labor from states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (**The Indian Express, 2023**).

### **Economic Benefits of Migration**

One of the primary advantages of migration is its positive impact on Punjab's rural economy. Large-scale remittances have helped improve household incomes and increased purchasing power. Many families use these funds to construct modern homes, leading to a real estate boom in rural Punjab (**Hindustan Times, 2023**). Infrastructure development is another major benefit. Many NRIs contribute to building better roads, schools, and hospitals in their hometowns. For instance, NRIs from Canada and the US funded a ₹10 crore hospital project in Jalandhar, significantly improving healthcare facilities for local residents (**The Tribune, 2023**). Migration has also created better educational opportunities for young Punjabis. Many students rely on financial support from their NRI relatives to pursue higher education abroad, particularly in countries like Canada and Australia. This trend has led to a continuous cycle of migration, as students seek foreign degrees with the goal of settling abroad (**Economic & Political Weekly, 2022**).

### **Challenges Overlooked in Media Narratives**

Despite its benefits, migration has significant economic and social consequences that are often underreported. A major concern is Punjab's growing dependency on remittances. Over-reliance on foreign earnings has contributed to economic stagnation in local industries. Many young people prefer migration over entrepreneurship, leading to a lack of investment in Punjab's domestic economy (**Thandi, 2017**). This has resulted in decreased industrial growth and an over-dependence on money sent from abroad. Another pressing issue is the labor shortage in Punjab's agricultural sector. Since many young people migrate overseas, farmers struggle to find workers for their fields. As a result, Punjab has become increasingly reliant on laborers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A report by **The Indian Express (2023)** highlighted that nearly 60% of agricultural labor in Punjab now comes from other states, as local youth prefer moving abroad instead of working on farms. Brain drain is another major challenge. Many skilled professionals, such as doctors, engineers, and IT experts, leave Punjab for better career prospects abroad. This weakens Punjab's local job market and discourages innovation. A 2022 study found that 70% of Punjab's medical students plan to settle abroad, leading to a shortage of skilled professionals in the state (**Economic & Political Weekly, 2022**). While media narratives frequently highlight the economic contributions of NRIs, they also play a crucial role in shaping migration aspirations.

### **The "Canada Dream" and Its Glorification in Entertainment Media**

Punjabi entertainment, including films, music, and social media, has played a crucial role in shaping migration aspirations, particularly among the youth. The dream of moving abroad, often referred to as the "*Canada Dream*", has been deeply embedded in Punjabi popular culture. For many young Punjabis, settling in countries like Canada, the UK, or Australia is seen as a symbol of success and social mobility. The portrayal of migration in music, films, and online content has contributed to the widespread belief that going abroad guarantees a better quality of life. However, this glorification often overlooks the challenges of migration, such as financial struggles, cultural adaptation, and job insecurity. Moreover, it creates unrealistic expectations among youth, leading them to prioritize migration over local economic and professional opportunities (**Nayyar, 2023**). Media coverage of migration from Punjab varies significantly across regional, national, and international platforms. Regional media like BBC Punjabi and The Tribune provide firsthand accounts of migration, reporting on local experiences, fraudulent immigration agents, and the role of NRIs in Punjab's economy. Their coverage tends to be community-focused, often highlighting both aspirations and hardships. In contrast, national media such as NDTV and The Times of India frame migration in relation to broader economic policies, visa regulations, and diplomatic relations. These outlets often discuss Punjab's migration in the context of India's foreign policy, brain drain, and remittance contributions to the national GDP. Meanwhile, international media like Al Jazeera and BBC World focus more on human rights, exploitation, and illegal migration networks. For example, BBC Punjabi has extensively covered visa fraud scams, while Al Jazeera has documented Punjabi migrants being detained at the US-Mexico border. This comparison reveals how different media sources frame migration narratives based on their audience and ideological positioning.

### **Media Representation**

Punjabi music and cinema have played a significant role in reinforcing migration aspirations. Many popular Punjabi songs romanticize the idea of moving abroad, often associating it with financial success, luxury, and social status. For instance, songs like "Visa" by Sharry Mann and "*Suit Suit*" by Guru Randhawa glorify migration, particularly to Canada, as aspirational and glamorous (**Homegrown, 2023**). These songs depict foreign countries as lands of opportunity where individuals can achieve instant success. Similarly, "London" by Money Aujla and "Visa Balliye" by Kaka Bhaniawala celebrate the idea of obtaining a visa as a major life achievement. Punjabi films have also contributed to this narrative. The Jatt & Juliet series (2012, 2013) portrays Canada as a land of excitement, love, and opportunity, reinforcing the belief that moving abroad leads to a better life (**The Indian Express, 2024**). Similarly, Ardaas Karaan (2019) highlights the

emotional and cultural aspects of migration but still presents it as an inevitable aspiration for many Punjabis. Such films, while entertaining, often neglect the difficulties associated with settling in a foreign country, such as job insecurity, discrimination, and the emotional toll of leaving one's homeland.

### Social Media Influence

Apart from music and films, social media has become a powerful tool in shaping migration aspirations. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are flooded with content that encourages and simplifies the idea of settling abroad. Videos such as "How to Settle in Canada in 2024" or "Easiest PR Routes for Punjabis" gain millions of views, reflecting the intense interest in migration (Chowdhury, 2024). YouTube influencers and immigration consultants frequently create content that makes migration appear effortless. Many vloggers share their experiences of life in Canada, showcasing luxurious lifestyles, high-paying jobs, and scenic landscapes, often omitting the struggles and hardships they face (Ramya et al., 2024). This selective representation can lead to unrealistic expectations among youth, making them believe that success is guaranteed as soon as they land in a foreign country.

Social media plays a powerful role in shaping migration aspirations, but algorithm-driven content often creates unrealistic expectations. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are often exaggerating migration success stories while downplaying financial struggles, visa rejections, and job insecurity. Algorithms prioritize viral content, meaning that videos showcasing luxury lifestyles abroad often overshadow realistic depictions of migrant hardships. For instance, content creators regularly post vlogs with titles like "How to Get a Canadian Visa in 2024 Without IELTS", generating millions of views. However, many of these videos fail to mention high rejection rates, strict immigration policies, and post-migration struggles. Additionally, fake consultancies use social media ads to attract unsuspecting students, promising guaranteed admissions to overseas universities. Many of which turn out to be fraudulent institutions as some fraudulent agents take advantage of these online narratives, using fake success stories to lure migrants and push them to illegal or exploitative migration routes.

### The Dark Side of Migration: Fraud, Exploitation, and Illegal Immigration

While migration is often portrayed as a pathway to prosperity, investigative journalism has uncovered a darker reality like fraudulent immigration practices, human trafficking, and exploitation of Punjabi migrants. Many families, desperate to send their children abroad, fall victim to fraudulent migration agents who promise easy visas, college admissions, or high-paying jobs in countries like Canada, the U.S., and the UK. Punjab has seen a rise in illegal immigration networks that charge exorbitant fees for unauthorized migration routes, often

putting individuals in life-threatening situations. Many migrants travel through unsafe routes via Mexico or South America, attempting to enter the U.S. illegally. Others find themselves stranded in detention centers or deported after being misled by fake visa consultants (Ramphal & Agarwal, 2022).

### Media Representation

Investigative reports from credible media outlets have exposed fraudulent migration practices and the risks associated with illegal immigration. **BBC Punjabi and The Indian Express (2023)** reported extensively on fake student visa scams in Punjab. Unregistered migration agents lure students with promises of admissions into Canadian colleges, often using forged documents. Once in Canada, many students find out that their colleges do not exist or that they have been enrolled in low-quality institutions with no career prospects (BBC Punjabi, 2023). **The Tribune (2023)** exposed a network of illegal migration routes used by Punjabi migrants attempting to enter the U.S. via Mexico. The report highlighted cases where migrants, after paying lakhs to human smugglers, were left stranded in unsafe conditions, often facing arrest or deportation. Families of these migrants are frequently extorted for additional money under threats of abandonment in foreign countries (The Tribune, 2023).

Television news networks like NDTV and India Today have investigated cases of human smuggling, where Punjabis attempting illegal migration end up in U.S. detention centers. Many migrants undertake dangerous journeys through Central America, relying on smugglers known as "coyotes". Some face physical abuse, starvation, and even death during the journey (Ramya et al., 2024). For instance, an **India Today (2023)** and **The Tribune (2023)** report uncovered the struggles of young Punjabi migrants who, after paying ₹30-40 lakh to smugglers, were detained at the U.S.-Mexico border. The report included testimonies of migrants who described being crammed into overcrowded shelters, with little food or medical aid. Similarly, NDTV's special documentary "**Trapped: Punjabis in the Illegal Migration Racket**" (2022) followed the stories of individuals who were deceived by fraudulent agents and forced to take life-threatening routes through jungles and rivers to reach the U.S. Many were abandoned midway, losing their savings and facing legal troubles abroad. **BBC Punjabi (2023)** uncovered a fake student visa scam, where hundreds of Punjabi students in Canada faced deportation after agents provided fraudulent college admission letters. Movies like "**Dunki**" and "**Aajo Mexico Chaliye**" explore the grim realities of illegal immigration, aligning closely with the issues of fraud, exploitation, and life-threatening migration routes that plague many Punjabi migrants. These cases demonstrate that while some media sources promote migration dreams, investigative reporting through journalism and movies provides a crucial

counter-narrative, warning migrants of the risks involved.

### **Social Cost of Migration: Family Separation and Cultural Shifts**

Migration is often viewed as an economic opportunity, but it comes with profound social costs. Families are frequently separated, leading to emotional distress, marital breakdowns, and cultural identity crises. This issue is particularly visible in Punjab, where large-scale migration has left many villages without young men, disrupting traditional family structures. While financial remittances contribute to economic development, the absence of family members, particularly husbands and fathers, creates long-term psychological and social challenges. Children of migrants often struggle with dual identities, as they grow up in foreign cultures while trying to maintain their Punjabi roots. Those left behind especially wives and elderly parents face loneliness, legal battles, and emotional suffering (Kaur, 2020). Migration often disrupts traditional family structures, with profound consequences for women. Many Punjabi women find themselves abandoned by NRI husbands who migrate abroad and cut off communication, leaving them to face legal and financial battles alone. Reports indicate that thousands of women in Punjab are currently seeking legal recourse against absentee spouses (World Centre for Punjabi, 2024). This has led to an increase in support from NGOs and legal aid groups that assist abandoned wives in navigating complex legal procedures. Additionally, the emotional burden of single-handedly raising children and managing households places immense stress on these women.

### **Media Representation**

Mainstream newspapers have extensively covered the impact of migration on families, highlighting cases of abandonment and cultural disconnection. **The Times of India (2022)** published a report titled "Left Behind Wives of NRIs", which documented the struggles of women in Punjab whose husbands moved abroad and either cut off contact or abandoned them. Many of these women face legal battles to claim spousal support or reunite with their husbands. In some cases, husbands remarry abroad, leaving their wives in Punjab without financial or emotional support (Times of India, 2022). Another major concern is the cultural detachment of second-generation migrants. Articles such as "NRI Children Losing Touch with Punjabi Culture" (Kaur, 2022) discuss how Punjabi children raised abroad often struggle with their cultural identity. Many cannot speak Punjabi fluently, have limited knowledge of traditions, and face difficulties balancing their heritage with Western lifestyles. This creates generational gaps between migrant parents and their children, leading to identity crises and social alienation.

International media has also documented the social impact of migration on Punjab's villages. **Al**

**Jazeera's 2021** documentary "Punjab's Missing Men" explores how entire villages are left without young men due to mass migration. The film follows families where fathers and sons have moved abroad, leaving behind elderly parents and women to manage agricultural lands and household responsibilities. The documentary highlights the psychological burden on those left behind, especially elderly parents who face loneliness and lack of care in their old age (Al Jazeera, 2021). Similarly, a **BBC Punjabi (2022)** report covered the emotional struggles of elderly parents whose children have settled abroad. The report shared heartbreaking stories of parents living alone, relying on caretakers, or seeking emotional support through senior citizen communities, as their children rarely visit or send financial assistance.

### **Analysis**

The analysis of first objective reveals that while mainstream Punjabi media often glorifies migration, investigative reports provide a crucial counter-narrative. These stories expose the harsh realities faced by migrants who are misled or exploited. One of the biggest concerns is the rise of fake visa consultancies operating in Punjab. Unscrupulous agents promise visas through fake job offers or fraudulent university admissions. According to a **Hindustan Times (2023)** investigation, over 700 fake immigration consultancies were operating in Punjab, many of them unregistered and running without legal oversight. Victims often lose their life savings, and some even face legal consequences when caught with forged documents. Another alarming issue is human trafficking and exploitation. Many Punjabi women, seeking jobs abroad, fall victim to trafficking networks that lure them with promises of domestic work or hospitality jobs. Reports by **The Indian Express (2023)** highlight cases where women were sent to Gulf countries, only to be forced into exploitative labor conditions with no way to return home. The financial burden on families is another critical issue. Many middle-class families take huge loans to fund their children's migration, believing in promises of quick settlement and high-paying jobs abroad. However, when these promises fall through, families are left with crippling debt, leading to economic distress (Kaur, 2020). Additionally, mental health struggles among migrants are often overlooked. Many Punjabi students in Canada face loneliness, depression, and financial stress due to the high cost of living and lack of support networks. Reports from **Economic & Political Weekly (2023)** suggest that the pressure to succeed abroad, combined with financial burdens, has contributed to a rising number of suicides among international students.

As far as second objective is concerned, it is found that while migration provides financial security, it also disrupts family structures and weakens cultural ties. The absence of fathers in children's lives can have long-term consequences, leading to emotional detachment and behavioral issues. Studies indicate that children of NRI (Non-Resident Indian) parents often experience

loneliness, lack of parental guidance, and a sense of alienation from their extended families in Punjab (Kaur, 2020). Marital issues are another serious problem. Many Punjabi women, often referred to as "abandoned brides", are left in Punjab after their husbands move abroad and never return. According to **The Tribune (2023)**, over 30,000 women in Punjab are currently fighting legal battles to seek justice against NRI husbands who have abandoned them without divorce or financial support (**The Tribune, 2023**). Migration also alters gender roles and family responsibilities. Traditionally, men have been seen as primary breadwinners, but in the absence of husbands and sons, many women in Punjab take over family businesses and farms. While this shift empowers women economically, it also increases their emotional and mental burden, as they must raise children alone while handling financial pressures (Kaur, 2022). On a cultural level, language and tradition loss is a growing concern among the Punjabi diaspora. As more second-generation migrants grow up abroad, they lose fluency in Punjabi, engage less with traditional festivals, and adopt Western lifestyles. Punjabi cultural organizations in Canada and the UK actively try to preserve traditions through Gurdwara-based language schools and Punjabi music events, but the generational gap remains (**World Centre for Punjabi, 2024**).

Under the third objective the analysis reinforces presence of the glorification of migration in entertainment media often results in unrealistic expectations among young Punjabis. Many begin to view migration as the only path to success, often overlooking the challenges and risks associated with it. This mindset discourages individuals from exploring local career opportunities, entrepreneurship, or skill development within Punjab (**Ramphal & Agarwal, 2022**). One major issue is the increasing number of students taking high-interest loans to finance their migration dreams. According to a study published in the **Journal of Indian Migration Studies (2023)**, many students take on significant financial debt to study in Canada or Australia, hoping for permanent residency. However, not all succeed, and some struggle with low-paying jobs, visa issues, and cultural adaptation challenges. The media fails to highlight these harsh realities, creating a misleading picture of life abroad. Another concern is the brain drain effect. As more skilled individuals migrate, Punjab faces a shortage of professionals in key sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology. This weakens the state's economy and development potential (**Chowdhury, 2024**). If local opportunities were given the same level of media attention as migration, more youth might consider staying in Punjab and contributing to its growth.

This analysis aligns with the previous findings on media glorification, reinforcing how aspirational migration narratives shape both economic choices and cultural perceptions. However, beyond economic and

cultural aspects, the impact on family structures also requires deeper examination.

## CONCLUSION

Migration from Punjab has been a defining socio-economic trend, driving economic growth through remittances while also posing significant social and cultural challenges. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) contribute to infrastructure, education, and household incomes, improving living standards and transforming rural communities. However, migration also leads to family separation, emotional distress, and identity crises among children growing up disconnected from their Punjabi heritage. Economic dependency on remittances has hindered local industry growth, causing brain drain in sectors like healthcare and technology, while labor shortages in agriculture have forced reliance on migrant workers from other states. Media plays a key role in shaping migration perceptions, with Punjabi entertainment often glorifying the "Canada Dream," overshadowing the harsh realities of job insecurity, cultural adaptation, and financial struggles, while investigative journalism exposes fraudulent immigration practices and illegal migration risks. While migration has undeniably expanded Punjab's global presence, its long-term impact on society and local industries must be addressed through balanced policies that promote local job opportunities, regulate migration processes to prevent fraud, and encourage realistic media portrayals to help individuals make informed decisions. Given these findings, it is evident that while migration has provided economic benefits, it has also led to unintended social and cultural consequences. Therefore, in addition to understanding migration's impact, it is necessary to explore policy measures that can help manage these challenges effectively.

While migration has undeniably transformed Punjab's economy and society, it is essential to develop policy interventions that balance migration benefits with local economic and social stability. First, stricter regulation of migration agents is needed to curb fraud and illegal immigration. The Punjab Government should implement mandatory licensing and background verification for all immigration consultancies, with severe penalties for fraudulent practices. Second, reducing Punjab's dependency on migration requires improving local job opportunities. This can be achieved by investing in high-tech industries, promoting entrepreneurship, and providing incentives for skilled professionals (such as doctors, engineers, and IT experts) to remain in Punjab rather than seek opportunities abroad. Punjab could establish technology hubs, increase funding for local startups, and offer tax breaks to businesses that create employment.

Additionally, media plays a critical role in shaping migration narratives and should be leveraged to promote realistic portrayals of migration. The Punjab Government, in collaboration with universities and

NGOs, should introduce media literacy campaigns in schools and colleges to educate young people on the risks of fraudulent migration schemes. Social media platforms must also regulate misleading content that oversimplifies migration, ensuring that influencers disclose legal migration challenges. Finally, policy discussions should focus on strengthening Punjab's economic self-sufficiency, reducing the compulsion to migrate by creating an ecosystem where staying in Punjab is just as attractive as moving abroad.

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