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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Faisalabad; rural-urban migration; textile labour; informal employment; occupational health; social protection; Pakistan	Faisalabad's industrial growth has always depended, in part, on workers who move from villages and smaller towns into the city's textile and manufacturing economy. That movement is not simply a one-way journey from poverty to prosperity. Migration can bring cash income, diversify household livelihoods, and broaden workers' choices, but it can also push them into informal jobs, unsafe workplaces, and insecure urban housing. This article presents a narrative, review-based analysis of industrial labour migration to Faisalabad. It brings together migration theory, evidence on rural-urban mobility in Punjab, official population and labour statistics, and research on occupational health in Pakistan's textile sector. Lee's push-pull framework, Lewis's dual-sector model, Todaro's expected-income approach, the new economics of labour migration, and the aspirations-capabilities perspective are used to explain why people move and why the results of migration differ between workers and households. The review finds that the clearest local evidence concerns employment quality and occupational exposure. Migration may improve income and household welfare, yet social-protection coverage remains weak, and small weaving units face especially serious dust and safety risks. Evidence on migrant housing, recruitment through contractors, psychological well-being, and district-specific migration corridors is much thinner than policy discussions often suggest. The article therefore separates established findings from plausible but unverified claims and proposes a practical agenda for field research. It concludes that policy should make mobility safer—not attempt to stop it—through written employment records, portable social protection, enforceable occupational-health standards, affordable worker housing, and stronger rural livelihood options.
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Introduction

Rural–urban labour migration is one of the clearest signs of structural economic change. As production and employment become concentrated in towns and cities, workers move toward places where wages are paid more regularly and where industrial and service-sector jobs appear more accessible. Classical development theory presents this movement as a transfer of labour from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity industry (Lewis, 1954). Migration theory, however, also shows that the decision to move is shaped by conditions at origin and destination, the costs and risks of movement, access to information, and expectations about employment rather than by observed wages alone (Lee, 1966; Todaro, 1969). More recent work emphasizes that people move only when they possess both an aspiration to migrate and the practical capability to do so (de Haas, 2021).

Faisalabad provides an important setting in which to examine these ideas. Established as Lyallpur in the late nineteenth century within the canal-colony system, the settlement developed from an agricultural market town into a major industrial centre (District Administration Faisalabad, n.d.). Its contemporary economy is strongly associated with textiles, spinning, weaving, processing, garments, and a dense network of small and medium production units. The 2023 census recorded more than 9 million people in Faisalabad District, including approximately 4.39 million in urban areas, indicating the scale of demographic and infrastructure pressures surrounding the industrial economy (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2025).

The attraction of industrial work does not produce a uniform outcome. Evidence from Punjab indicates that rural–urban migration can improve migrant earnings and household welfare, yet migrants often remain poorly covered by social protection and other dimensions of employment quality (Mukhtar et al., 2018). In Faisalabad's cotton industry, occupational-health research has documented serious exposure to cotton dust and weak safety conditions, particularly in small weaving factories (Khan et al., 2015). These findings suggest a central tension: migration can be economically beneficial while simultaneously transferring health, income, and welfare risks to workers and their families. This article re-examines labour migration to Faisalabad in three connected ways. First, it treats the manuscript as a review-based analysis rather than as an empirical survey, because no original dataset is available. Second, it removes unsupported wage estimates and district-of-origin profiles that cannot be traced to verifiable evidence. Third, it distinguishes direct Faisalabad evidence from Punjab-wide or national evidence. This distinction is essential for academic credibility: a reasonable explanation is not the same as a demonstrated local finding.

Three questions guide the review. First, what pressures and opportunities make Faisalabad attractive to industrial workers? Second, how do migration and employment conditions interact to shape household welfare? Third, which risks are documented well enough to support immediate policy action, and which still require field research? Framing the article around these questions keeps the discussion close to evidence while recognizing that migration is lived through everyday decisions about work, health, housing, care, and family security.

The article also treats workers as people with strategies and aspirations, not merely as units of labour supply. A worker may accept an insecure job because it pays more regularly than farm work, because a relative has created an entry point, or because the household needs money for school fees or medical care. These motives do not make hazardous conditions acceptable. They explain why a policy response must improve the quality of available choices instead of assuming that workers can simply refuse risky employment.

Analytical Approach and Scope

The article is a narrative review of peer-reviewed research, official statistics, policy reports, and legislation relevant to migration, employment quality, and industrial labour conditions in Pakistan. Sources were included when they provided one of four forms of evidence: a theoretical explanation of migration; empirical evidence on rural–urban migration in Punjab; direct evidence from Faisalabad’s textile or weaving sector; or official information on population, informality, labour regulation, and social protection. The review is not a systematic review and does not claim exhaustive coverage. Its purpose is analytical synthesis and source verification. The evidence base is uneven. Occupational hazards in Faisalabad are supported by direct workplace studies, whereas claims about the exact origins of migrants, their current daily wages, their housing arrangements, contractor deductions, and psychological distress are not supported by an equivalent body of local research. Those issues remain important, but they are presented here as research questions rather than established facts. This approach reduces overstatement and makes the article suitable as a foundation for later fieldwork.

The review uses a simple evidence hierarchy. Direct studies conducted in Faisalabad are used for claims about local workplaces. Punjab- or Pakistan-wide studies are used to establish broader patterns, but their geographic limits are stated explicitly. Theory is used to interpret relationships among migration, work, and household welfare; it is not treated as proof that a particular group in Faisalabad behaves in a particular way. This distinction is especially important when discussing housing, mental health, recruitment, and wages, because these outcomes can vary considerably across neighbourhoods, occupations, genders, and employment arrangements.

Where the available studies disagree or leave a gap, the article says so. That choice is not a weakness of the review. It makes the argument more useful by showing exactly what a future survey, workplace assessment, or life-history study should measure.

Table 1: Evidence Base and Its Interpretation for Faisalabad

Analytical dimension	What the literature supports	Interpretation for Faisalabad
Migration drivers	Employment opportunities, income expectations, rural constraints, and mobility capabilities shape migration decisions.	Push and pull factors should be analysed together; migration is not caused by a single rural crisis or a single urban attraction.
Employment and household	Punjab evidence shows income	Industrial migration may

welfare	and welfare gains for many migrant households, but social protection remains weak.	improve cash income without producing secure or fully protected employment.
Informal employment	More than 70% of non-agricultural employment in Pakistan was informal in the 2020–21 Labour Force Survey.	Workers in smaller industrial units may face incomplete contracts, registration gaps, and weak enforcement.
Occupational health	Direct Faisalabad research documents cotton-dust exposure, respiratory symptoms, and poor safety conditions, especially in small weaving units.	Occupational exposure is one of the strongest locally verified dimensions of migrant-worker vulnerability.
Wages and working conditions	ILO fieldwork identifies gaps between legal wage-setting frameworks and implementation in textile and garment work.	Current Faisalabad wage levels require new primary data; unsourced district-specific wage estimates should not be treated as findings.
Housing, family life, and well-being	National and international evidence links insecure work with housing and family vulnerability, but direct Faisalabad migrant evidence is limited.	These outcomes should be investigated through household surveys and qualitative interviews rather than asserted as settled facts.

Note. The table separates direct local evidence from broader evidence. It does not present original survey findings.

Theoretical Framework

Push–Pull Factors and Intervening Constraints

Lee’s (1966) framework organizes migration around positive and negative factors at the place of origin and destination, together with intervening obstacles and personal circumstances. Applied to Faisalabad, origin-side pressures may include unstable agricultural income, limited local non-farm employment, environmental stress, and restricted access to services. Destination-side attractions include the possibility of wage work, regular cash payments, urban services, and assistance from relatives or acquaintances already working in the city. Distance, transport costs, family responsibilities, skills, gender norms, and access to information can either enable or prevent movement. The model is useful because it prevents a one-dimensional explanation. A worker may face strong pressure to leave a village but still be unable to migrate because of debt, illness, care responsibilities, or insufficient contacts. Another worker may move repeatedly rather than permanently, commuting or circulating between the village and the city. For this reason, future

research should distinguish daily commuters, seasonal migrants, temporary residents, and permanently relocated households.

Structural Transformation and Labour Absorption

Lewis's (1954) dual-sector model explains migration as part of structural transformation. A capitalist industrial sector expands by drawing labour from a traditional sector in which productivity and earnings are lower. Faisalabad's textile economy resembles this model to the extent that factories and small production units can absorb workers with limited formal credentials. Yet the model should not be read as a guarantee of rising wages or secure employment. When the labour supply remains large and organization is weak, industrial expansion may coexist with low bargaining power and limited social protection. Todaro's (1969) contribution adds the role of expected income. Workers compare the likely return from moving with the income available at origin, while considering the probability of finding work. In a labour market where short-term, piece-rate, or contractor-mediated work is available, migrants may continue to arrive even when employment is insecure because the expected urban return still exceeds the perceived rural alternative. This helps explain why migration may persist despite difficult working and living conditions.

Household Strategies, Risk, and Social Networks

The new economics of labour migration adds a household perspective to the individual decision models of migration. Stark and Bloom (1985) argue that households may send one or more members away to diversify income and protect consumption when local markets for credit, insurance, or employment are incomplete. This perspective fits the realities of rural households that use urban wages to manage seasonal agricultural income, education costs, debt, or medical emergencies. Migration is therefore not only a response to a wage gap; it can also be a form of risk management.

Massey et al. (1993) similarly show that migration becomes self-reinforcing when networks, information, and institutional links reduce the costs of moving. A relative or friend can offer a worker a place to sleep, introduce them to a contractor, explain the rhythm of factory work, or help them return home when employment ends. Networks can make movement safer by reducing uncertainty, but they can also reproduce dependence if workers are tied to a single intermediary or accept deductions they do not understand. A careful Faisalabad study should therefore ask not only why a worker migrated, but who made the move possible and what obligations followed from that help.

This household view also clarifies why migration outcomes cannot be measured by the migrant's wage alone. A higher wage may be offset by rent, transport, food, medical bills, or the cost of maintaining two households. Conversely, modest urban earnings may be valuable if they arrive regularly and allow a family to avoid selling livestock or taking high-cost debt. The relevant question is whether migration expands the household's capacity to withstand shocks and plan for the future, not simply whether the worker earns more in a particular month.

Aspirations, Capabilities, and Unequal Mobility

The aspirations–capabilities perspective broadens the analysis beyond wage differences (de Haas, 2021). People may aspire to move because industrial work symbolizes independence, adulthood, social mobility, or a route out of restrictive local relationships. At the same time, migration requires resources: transport money, information, contacts, physical health, and the ability to leave dependants behind or move them later. These capabilities are unequally distributed. The poorest households may therefore be exposed to the strongest pressures but have the least freedom to choose when, where, and under what conditions they move.

Faisalabad as an Industrial Destination

Faisalabad's industrial identity developed from its earlier role as an agricultural market within the Lower Chenab canal-colony region. The city's planned origins, commercial links, and later manufacturing expansion created a close relationship between agriculture and industry rather than a complete separation between them (District Administration Faisalabad, n.d.). Cotton grown and traded in the wider region supported spinning, weaving, processing, and garment production, while industrial demand created jobs for workers from both urban and rural backgrounds.

The scale of the district is important. According to the 2023 census, Faisalabad District contained 9,075,819 residents, of whom 4,392,979 were classified as urban (PBS, 2025). These figures refer to the district rather than the city alone, but they demonstrate the size of the labour market and the need to connect industrial policy with transport, housing, sanitation, health, and social services. Industrial migration is not only a labour-market issue; it is also an urban-governance issue.

The industrial structure is heterogeneous. Large integrated textile mills operate alongside small weaving factories, power looms, workshops, processing units, and subcontracted production. Working conditions and legal compliance can differ sharply across these settings. Evidence from Faisalabad shows that smaller weaving factories can have poorer safety ratings and higher cotton-dust exposure than larger compact units (Khan et al., 2015). Any analysis that treats the textile sector as a single, uniform employer category will therefore miss the places where risk is most concentrated.

Industrial Diversity and the Geography of Work

Faisalabad's industrial economy should be understood as an ecosystem rather than as a single factory sector. A large mill, a registered medium-sized unit, a small power-loom workshop, and a home-based subcontractor may all contribute to the same supply chain while offering very different forms of employment. Their differences matter for migration because they shape recruitment, wages, working hours, access to records, and the likelihood that a worker can complain without losing the job.

Regional evidence on garment, textile, and footwear production shows that the industry can generate employment while still combining low wages, long working hours, and layered supply chains (Huynh, 2015). In Faisalabad, this means that a broad statement such as ‘the textile sector provides jobs’ tells only half the story. The other half concerns how value is distributed along the production chain and whether workers in smaller units receive the protections available in larger establishments. Industrial policy should therefore track employment arrangements as carefully as it tracks production or exports.

The spatial organization of work matters as well. When small units are embedded in mixed residential areas, workers may live close to the workplace but remain invisible to formal labour inspection. When workplaces are concentrated in industrial estates, transport may be a larger barrier, especially for women and workers on early or late shifts. Mapping factories, worker settlements, commuting routes, and recruitment points would connect labour policy to the actual geography of Faisalabad’s industrial life.

Drivers and Forms of Labour Migration

Rural Livelihood Pressure

Rural–urban migration in Punjab is closely connected to differences in employment opportunities and household livelihood strategies. Agricultural work is seasonal, and land access, farm size, input costs, water availability, and mechanization influence the amount of labour that rural households can productively employ. Migration can diversify income by adding wages that are less dependent on the timing of harvests. Evidence from Punjab indicates that migrant work can increase household income and improve living conditions, which helps explain why migration is often organized as a family strategy rather than an isolated individual choice (Mukhtar et al., 2018).

Environmental stress can intensify these pressures, but the relationship is rarely automatic. Climate change affects water availability, crop productivity, and livelihood security, and South Asia is projected to experience substantial internal climate mobility under high-impact scenarios (Clement et al., 2021). In practice, climate conditions interact with income, land ownership, public support, debt, and social networks. It is therefore more accurate to describe climate stress as a risk multiplier than as a single direct cause of migration to Faisalabad.

Industrial Employment and Cash-Flow Advantages

The most immediate pull of Faisalabad is access to industrial and related urban work. Even when jobs are insecure, weekly, daily, or piece-rate payments may provide a cash-flow advantage over seasonal rural income. Entry-level work may also require less formal education than many public- or service-sector occupations. These conditions can make industrial employment attractive to young workers and to households facing urgent consumption, health, or debt obligations.

However, access to work should not be confused with employment quality. Mukhtar et al. (2018) found that rural–urban migration in Punjab was associated with improved income and household welfare, but migrants' social-protection status remained poor. The practical value of migration may therefore lie in immediate income generation rather than in long-term employment security. A worker can be better off than before and still remain vulnerable to dismissal, illness, injury, or loss of income.

Networks, Recruitment, and Circular Mobility

Social networks reduce the cost and uncertainty of migration by providing information, introductions to employers, temporary accommodation, and help during periods without work. Migration theory consistently treats such networks as mechanisms that can sustain movement after an initial flow has begun (de Haas, 2021). In Faisalabad, kinship and village connections are likely to influence recruitment into particular factories or occupations, but the scale and structure of these networks require direct investigation.

The distinction between permanent and circular movement is also important. Workers living within commuting distance may travel daily or weekly, while those from more distant areas may share accommodation near industrial clusters or relocate with family members. These forms of mobility have different effects on transport costs, household separation, urban service demand, and remittance behaviour. The original practice of assigning a single migration type to each district should be avoided unless supported by survey data.

Gender, Age, and the Uneven Distribution of Opportunity

Migration is not experienced in the same way by all workers. Gender, age, marital status, education, disability, and household position influence both the opportunity to move and the work available after arrival. Men may be more able to travel alone or accept shared accommodation, while women may face restrictions related to safe transport, childcare, family expectations, and workplace harassment. These constraints can limit women's mobility even when textile work is available nearby. They can also push women into home-based or informal production that is difficult to see in standard labour statistics.

Evidence from Pakistan's garment sector shows why gender should be treated as a central analytical dimension rather than a supplementary variable. The International Labour Organization (2016) found that women were concentrated in lower-paid and more informal positions and that the sector's gender pay gap was substantial. The report included qualitative work in Faisalabad as well as other major textile locations, but its national and sectoral results should not be read as a complete profile of every Faisalabad worker. Its value here is to demonstrate that employment quality is shaped by more than migration status: the same urban labour market can offer very different returns depending on gender and job position.

Age also changes the meaning of migration. Young workers may view factory employment as a first step toward independence, skill acquisition, or marriage, while older workers may prioritize

stable income and health protection. New entrants can be particularly vulnerable because they may not know the legal wage, safety procedures, or complaint channels. A future study should record the age at first migration, age at first industrial job, and movement between occupations. Such a life-course perspective would show whether Faisalabad offers a pathway upward or simply a sequence of insecure jobs.

A human-centred account must also recognize the unpaid work that sustains paid employment. Someone must cook, care for children, arrange transport, manage remittances, and look after an injured worker. These tasks are often performed by women and remain invisible in wage comparisons. A household may report higher income after migration while experiencing greater time pressure and care burdens. Measuring these responsibilities would make the socioeconomic analysis more complete.

Employment Outcomes and Worker Vulnerabilities

Informality and Employment Quality

Informality is not a marginal feature of Pakistan's labour market. The Labour Force Survey 2020–21 reported that the informal sector accounted for more than 70% of non-agricultural employment, with substantial shares in both rural and urban areas (PBS, 2021). Informal employment can include workers without written contracts, reliable wage records, paid leave, injury protection, pension coverage, or effective access to complaint mechanisms. The category is broad, and not every informal job has the same conditions, but it identifies a structural gap between employment and protection.

In textile and garment work, legal minimum-wage systems exist, yet implementation varies across formal and informal settings. ILO fieldwork in Pakistan documented differences in working conditions and highlighted weaknesses in wage enforcement and collective bargaining, especially where employment relationships are fragmented or poorly documented (Zhou, 2017). This evidence supports concern about migrant workers in small units, but it does not justify an unsupported claim that compliance is universally zero. The more defensible conclusion is that enforcement is uneven and requires workplace-level measurement.

Employment quality is multidimensional. A job can be informal but relatively well paid, formal but physically dangerous, or secure in one respect and fragile in another. Huynh (2015) shows that wages, productivity, hours, and working conditions should be examined together in textile and garment industries. For Faisalabad, a useful assessment would therefore record written contracts, wage frequency, overtime, deductions, job tenure, social-insurance registration, leave, safety training, and the worker's ability to refuse dangerous tasks. These measures would reveal where insecurity is concentrated and would avoid treating 'informal' as a complete description of a worker's life.

The absence of a written contract can also affect a worker's bargaining position even when wages are paid on time. Without records, it is harder to prove the duration of employment, establish

responsibility after an injury, or challenge an unexplained deduction. Migrant workers may be especially exposed because changing residence or employer can interrupt the paper trail that connects them to an entitlement. Employment documentation is therefore not an administrative detail; it is part of the worker's practical ability to claim rights.

Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational health is the best-documented local vulnerability. Khan et al. (2015) studied 47 cotton factories in the Faisalabad region and collected information from 800 workers. Small weaving factories recorded the poorest occupational-safety assessments and the highest inhalable cotton-dust concentrations, while respiratory symptoms were commonly reported. The study concluded that power looms required particular attention because workers faced multiple hazards and weak preventive measures.

Earlier research in Tehsil Faisalabad also identified eyesight problems, headaches, and illness among weaving workers (Anjum et al., 2009). Evidence from another small-scale weaving cluster in Punjab similarly linked particulate exposure with worker health problems (Tahir et al., 2012). These studies do not prove that every textile worker experiences the same risk, but together they show that cotton dust, ventilation, lighting, machinery, noise, and protective equipment are central to any serious assessment of industrial migration. A migration study that records wages but ignores health costs would substantially underestimate the real cost of employment.

Evidence from other Pakistani textile centres strengthens the case for treating occupational health as a core migration outcome. Ali et al. (2018) found a dose-response relationship between cotton-dust exposure and lung function among textile workers in Karachi. Hussain et al. (2019) reported that workers and managers identified gaps in hazard awareness, safety mechanisms, and protective-equipment use, while Shaukat et al. (2020) showed that knowledge and safety practices varied across workers. More recently, a MultiTex pilot intervention in Karachi found that training, dust-control measures, and masks were feasible and improved knowledge, attitudes, and practices, although larger trials are still needed to establish effectiveness (Nafees et al., 2024). These studies are not Faisalabad surveys, but they provide credible national context and point to interventions that can be adapted and tested locally.

The broader health literature also cautions against treating symptoms as a temporary inconvenience. A systematic review of byssinosis in low- and middle-income countries shows that cotton-dust disease remains a contemporary occupational-health concern (Nafees et al., 2022). Repeated exposure can influence respiratory function over time, and workers may remain in hazardous jobs because they cannot afford to lose income or because illness is not immediately recognized as work-related. This creates a hidden transfer of cost from the factory to the worker's household and public health system. Workplace inspections should therefore combine environmental measurements with confidential health screening and referral, rather than relying only on visible safety equipment.

Punjab's Occupational Safety and Health Act provides a legal basis for employer duties and workplace protection (Government of the Punjab, 2019). The policy challenge is implementation across a fragmented industrial landscape. Large factories may be more visible to inspectors and international buyers, while small units can be dispersed through mixed residential and industrial areas. Risk-based inspection, worker education, dust control, machine guarding, hearing protection, and accessible medical surveillance should therefore be designed for small establishments rather than only for major mills.

Social Protection and Employment Records

Social-protection exclusion magnifies the consequences of injury or job loss. Pakistan's decent-work profile identifies continuing gaps in safe work, employment security, social security, and worker representation (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Migrant workers may face additional difficulty when their residence, employer, or contractor changes frequently. Without a written and verifiable employment record, it becomes harder to establish eligibility, contributions, responsibility for injury, or continuity of coverage.

Portability is particularly important for workers whose jobs are short-term or mediated by contractors. A registration system tied only to one employer assumes a stable employment relationship that many industrial workers do not have. A portable record could follow the worker across factories and districts, documenting wages, contributions, training, and injury claims. Such a system would need low-cost registration, simple language, accessible grievance channels, and safeguards against employer retaliation. It should complement labour inspection, not replace it with an app or database.

The practical test is whether a worker can use the system during a crisis. If an injury occurs, the worker or family should know where to report it, which documents are required, and how medical care or compensation will be arranged. If a contractor disappears or a unit closes, the record should still provide evidence of the employment relationship. These details are central to human security, yet they are often missing from discussions that focus only on migration numbers.

The policy objective should be portable protection rather than a system tied only to a stable, long-term employer. Digital wage records and employment registration can help, but technology alone is not enough. Registration must be simple for small firms, enforceable by labour authorities, and usable by workers who have limited literacy or digital access. Complaint procedures should also protect workers from retaliation and should not depend entirely on employer cooperation.

Housing, Family Life, and Urban Services

Housing is frequently discussed as a major migrant-worker problem, but direct published evidence for Faisalabad is limited. The city's population growth and industrial concentration make pressure on affordable rental housing, sanitation, transport, and health services plausible, yet the location, quality, and cost of migrant accommodation require systematic mapping. Terms

such as slum, katchi abadi, dera, hostel, and shared room may refer to different legal and material conditions and should not be used interchangeably without field observation.

Family arrangements also vary. Some workers migrate alone and remit income, some commute, and others relocate with spouses and children. Each arrangement distributes costs differently. Living apart may reduce immediate urban expenses but increase care burdens and emotional strain; family relocation may improve household unity while increasing housing, schooling, and health costs. These trade-offs are important, but the original manuscript's claims about depression and substance use were not supported by cited local evidence. Psychological well-being should be measured directly with ethically appropriate tools rather than inferred from poverty alone.

Migration also reorganizes everyday life. A worker who lives alone in Faisalabad may send money home but miss family decisions, religious events, or the daily care of children. A worker who brings the family may gain companionship and reduce separation, yet face higher rent, schooling costs, and pressure to accept any available job. These are not simply private matters. They shape attendance, job retention, health-seeking behaviour, and the household's ability to respond when work stops.

The language used to describe migrant settlements should be equally careful. Shared rooms, hostels, rented houses, informal settlements, and employer-provided accommodation carry different levels of security and different risks. A housing survey should record rent, crowding, tenure, water and sanitation, distance to work, and exposure to eviction or harassment. It should also ask workers where they feel safe and what they would change first. Those questions would produce a more grounded picture than applying a single label such as 'slum' to every low-income settlement.

Well-being should be approached with the same discipline. Stress, loneliness, job satisfaction, dignity, and control over household decisions are meaningful outcomes, but they require appropriate questions and ethical procedures. A short validated scale can be combined with interviews that allow workers to explain what improvement means in their own terms. This is especially important because a worker may describe migration as successful despite hardship if it has enabled children to stay in school or allowed the family to repay debt.

Child Labour and Intergenerational Risk

National evidence confirms that child labour remains connected to household poverty, working conditions, and interruptions in education (UNICEF, n.d.). It is reasonable to be concerned that unstable migrant income, injury, or high urban living costs may increase pressure on children to work. Nevertheless, a causal claim about migrant families in Faisalabad requires household-level data. Research should examine school attendance, age at entry into work, type of occupation, working hours, and whether children combine work and education.

The policy response should combine enforcement against hazardous and prohibited child labour with income security for adults, school access, and support during illness or unemployment.

Removing a child from work without addressing the household's lost income can shift hardship rather than resolve it. The welfare of children is therefore linked to the employment quality and social protection of adult migrants.

The intergenerational dimension deserves attention because migration decisions are often made with children's futures in mind. Families may accept crowded accommodation or long working hours in order to pay school fees, but a sudden injury or wage interruption can reverse those gains. Research should follow not only whether children work, but also whether migration changes their school continuity, nutrition, access to health care, and expectations about their own futures. The objective is to understand the chain linking adult employment, household security, and children's opportunities.

This also explains why child-labour enforcement must be paired with adult protection. If a child leaves work but the household loses the income without receiving support, the family may experience a different form of deprivation or send the child into a less visible occupation. Effective policy combines enforcement with wage protection, accessible schooling, health coverage, and support during unemployment or injury. The principle is straightforward: protecting children requires reducing the insecurity that pushes families to depend on their work.

Research Contribution

The article's main contribution is both conceptual and methodological. It brings migration theory into direct conversation with employment quality and occupational health. Much writing on rural–urban migration focuses on whether income rises after movement, while industrial–health research focuses on exposure inside the factory. These literatures should be combined because a job can raise household income and damage health at the same time. The net effect of migration cannot be understood by wages alone.

A second contribution is evidence grading. The review identifies which conclusions are supported by direct Faisalabad research, which rely on broader Punjab or national evidence, and which remain plausible hypotheses. This is especially important in local case studies, where precise-looking tables can create a false impression of empirical authority. Removing unsupported district-specific wage ranges and migration profiles strengthens rather than weakens the paper because it clarifies what future research must measure.

Discussion: What Migration Changes—and What It Leaves Unresolved

Taken together, the evidence suggests that industrial migration changes the timing, reliability, and social meaning of household income more clearly than it guarantees a secure occupational future. A worker may move because the city offers a regular cash flow, yet remain vulnerable to dismissal, sickness, rising rent, or a sudden fall in orders. The household can gain resilience in one dimension and lose it in another. This is why the article does not ask whether migration is good or bad in the abstract. It asks under what conditions mobility becomes a durable improvement rather than a temporary transfer of risk.

Income Gains and Hidden Costs

The available Punjab evidence supports a cautious conclusion: migration can improve income and household welfare, but those gains coexist with weak social protection (Mukhtar et al., 2018). The household's balance sheet includes more than wages. It includes transport, rent, food, remittances, debt repayment, health costs, and the value of unpaid care. A migrant worker who earns more but loses several hours each day to commuting may experience little improvement in disposable income. A worker who accepts a lower wage in a safer workplace may be making a rational long-term choice, even if a short survey records the lower wage as a failure.

The Importance of Institutions

The difference between opportunity and exploitation is shaped by institutions. Labour law, inspection, social insurance, employer records, worker organizations, transport, housing, and health services determine how much of the value created by industrial work reaches the worker. Where these institutions are weak, households absorb the consequences of injury, unemployment, and poor housing. Where they are accessible, the same movement into industrial work can provide a more stable path to education, savings, and upward mobility. Migration policy should therefore be integrated with labour and urban policy rather than treated as a separate population issue.

Why Local Evidence Still Matters

Evidence from Karachi, Punjab, and national surveys is useful, but Faisalabad has its own industrial history, production mix, commuting patterns, and local governance arrangements. Results cannot simply be copied from another city. The most valuable next step is not another general statement that migrants face hardship; it is a well-designed study that shows where, how, and for whom risks occur. Such evidence could identify which interventions should be universal and which should be targeted to small weaving units, women workers, young entrants, circular migrants, or particular industrial clusters.

A humanized research agenda should also make space for workers' own definitions of progress. One worker may value higher pay; another may value predictable hours, a respectful supervisor, or the ability to return home every week. Families may prioritize school attendance, debt reduction, or a safer neighbourhood over a higher nominal wage. These perspectives do not replace quantitative indicators, but they help explain why people make choices that can appear contradictory from outside. Listening carefully is part of measuring outcomes accurately.

Proposed Empirical Research Agenda

A future study should use a mixed-method design rather than relying only on a cross-sectional questionnaire. A stratified sample could be drawn from major industrial settings, including large mills, small power-loom clusters, garment units, processing facilities, and related informal workshops. Workers should be classified by migration status, duration in Faisalabad, place of

usual residence, frequency of return visits, recruitment channel, occupation, gender, and family arrangement. A comparison group of non-migrant workers would allow employment and health differences to be assessed more carefully.

Quantitative analysis should begin with data-quality checks and descriptive statistics. Non-parametric tests such as the Mann–Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis test may be appropriate for skewed wage, debt, or health-expenditure data, but test selection should follow the observed distribution rather than being predetermined. Multivariable regression can then examine whether migration status is associated with employment quality, social-protection coverage, or health outcomes after controlling for age, education, occupation, factory size, work duration, and exposure. Qualitative interviews should explore recruitment, bargaining, housing, family separation, and workers’ own definitions of improvement.

Research access and ethics will be as important as statistical technique. Factory owners may fear that participation will expose non-compliance, while workers may fear dismissal or retaliation. Researchers should seek permission through appropriate channels without allowing employers to control which workers participate or what they say. Interviews should be conducted privately, consent should be understandable, and no identifying information should be shared in a way that could harm participants. Health questions should include referral information when a serious symptom is reported.

The analysis should also make uncertainty visible. Migration status is not a single treatment that is randomly assigned; people who migrate may differ from non-migrants in motivation, education, health, networks, and prior resources. A cross-sectional comparison can describe differences but cannot by itself establish that migration caused them. Longitudinal follow-up, matched comparison groups, or carefully designed retrospective histories would provide stronger evidence. Even when causal identification is not possible, transparent measurement can still improve policy decisions.

Table 2: Suggested Variables for a Future Faisalabad Migrant-Labour Study

Construct	Illustrative indicators	Data source	Possible analysis
Migration pattern	Origin, year of arrival, circular/permanent status, return frequency, household members present	Worker survey and life-history interview	Typology and cluster analysis
Employment quality	Written contract, wage frequency, hours, overtime, deductions, job tenure, paid leave	Worker survey and payroll verification where available	Mann–Whitney U, regression
Social protection	PESSI/EOBI registration, injury	Worker survey and administrative	Logistic regression

	compensation, health verification coverage, pension contributions		
Occupational exposure	Dust, noise, ventilation, PPE, machine guarding, work duration, symptoms	Workplace observation, exposure measurement, health questionnaire	Kruskal–Wallis, exposure–response models
Household welfare	Income, remittances, rent, food security, debt, school attendance, health expenditure	Household survey	Propensity-score or multivariable models
Well-being and agency	Job satisfaction, perceived dignity, stress, decision-making, future migration plans	Validated scales and qualitative interviews	Mixed-method thematic integration

Note. The tests listed are options, not a substitute for a preregistered analysis plan based on the final research questions and data distribution.

Policy Implications

Make Employment Relationships Visible

A practical starting point is accurate employment documentation. Workers should receive clear records of employer identity, occupation, wage rate, hours, deductions, and social-protection registration. Contractor involvement should not erase the responsibility of the establishment benefiting from the labour. Joint or clearly allocated responsibilities are necessary so that workers know where to report wage disputes, injuries, and dismissal.

Target Occupational Risk in Small Units

The evidence points toward small weaving units as a priority for occupational-health intervention. Inspection strategies should use risk indicators, including dust levels, ventilation, machine condition, noise, work hours, and previous incidents. Low-cost engineering controls, housekeeping, worker training, and appropriate protective equipment can reduce exposure, but sustained improvement requires enforcement and employer accountability. Health screening should be linked to referral and treatment rather than used only for data collection.

Build Portable Social Protection

Social insurance should follow the worker across jobs and contractors. Registration systems need to accommodate short job tenure and multiple employers without losing contribution histories. Outreach through industrial associations, unions, worker organizations, and community networks

can help workers understand eligibility and complaint procedures. Portability is especially important for circular migrants who move between Faisalabad and their home districts.

Connect Labour Policy with Urban Planning

Worker welfare cannot be addressed only inside the factory gate. Transport routes, safe and affordable rental housing, water, sanitation, primary health care, and schooling determine whether migration produces sustainable gains. The city and district administrations should map industrial employment clusters together with worker settlements and commuting patterns. Such mapping would allow services to be planned around actual mobility rather than around permanent-resident assumptions alone.

Strengthen Rural Options Without Restricting Mobility

For many households, migration is a rational response to unequal opportunity rather than a sign of poor decision-making. Policies should therefore expand rural skills, non-farm employment, climate resilience, and public services without treating migrants as a problem to be stopped. Better rural options increase workers' bargaining power because migration becomes a choice rather than the only available survival strategy. The aim is not to freeze people in place, but to reduce forced and unsafe mobility.

From Mobility to Decent Work

The central policy lesson is that mobility and protection must be planned together. Rural development can reduce the pressure to move, but it will not eliminate movement—and it should not be designed to do so. Industrial regulation can improve urban jobs, but it will not solve rural insecurity by itself. A balanced approach gives workers more than one viable option: the option to stay, the option to move, and the option to leave an unsafe job without losing access to basic protection.

For Faisalabad, this means linking four kinds of action. First, employment relationships must be made visible through records, registration, and accountability across contractors and establishments. Second, occupational-health protection must reach small units, where direct evidence suggests that risk is concentrated. Third, housing, transport, water, sanitation, health care, and schooling must be planned around actual worker mobility. Fourth, rural policies must strengthen skills, non-farm work, climate resilience, and public services so that migration is not the household's only survival strategy.

These measures are mutually reinforcing. A worker with a written record is more likely to establish eligibility for protection. A worker with health coverage is less likely to push an injured child into work. A worker with affordable transport and housing can search for a better job instead of remaining tied to the first contractor encountered. A household with a stronger rural livelihood can negotiate from a position of choice. The goal is not a perfect labour market; it is a

labour market in which the costs of industrial growth are not quietly shifted onto the people with the least power to absorb them.

Limitations

This article is limited by the availability of local evidence. The reviewed studies provide strong information on occupational exposure and useful evidence on migration outcomes in Punjab, but they do not establish the current size, origin composition, wage distribution, housing pattern, or gender profile of Faisalabad's migrant industrial workforce. Official labour statistics are valuable for national and provincial context but cannot replace a dedicated city and sector-level survey.

The review also focuses mainly on textile and weaving work because that is where the strongest evidence is available. Labour migration into transport, construction, food processing, domestic work and services may follow different recruitment and risk patterns. Finally, migration outcomes can change rapidly with inflation, energy costs, export demand and labour regulation. Claims about current wages or conditions should therefore be dated and supported by newly collected data.

Conclusion

Industrial labour migration has been central to Faisalabad's growth, but its meaning cannot be reduced to either opportunity or exploitation. Migration can increase income, diversify rural household livelihoods, and expand workers' aspirations. At the same time, informal employment, weak social protection, and occupational exposure can shift a large share of industrial risk onto workers. The evidence from Punjab shows that welfare gains and insecurity can exist together, while direct research in Faisalabad confirms that workplace health hazards are especially serious in small weaving settings.

A credible research and policy agenda must begin by distinguishing what is known from what is assumed. Exact wage ranges, migration corridors, housing conditions, contractor practices, and psychological outcomes require new primary evidence. Until that evidence is collected, the strongest policy case rests on findings already supported by research: employment needs to be documented, occupational risks need to be controlled, and social protection needs to reach workers whose jobs and residences are mobile. Faisalabad's industrial success will be more sustainable when labour mobility is accompanied by enforceable rights, safer workplaces, and genuine opportunities for workers and their families.

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