

Dispossession and Livelihood Vulnerabilities: Socio- Economic Impacts of Land Acquisition on the Landless Communities in Neoliberal Haryana, India

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Abstract: *Land acquisition and grabbing remain the central means of dispossession in neoliberal India, affecting every section of society, but disproportionately. This paper attempts to explore the socio-economic impacts of land acquisition on landless Dalits and backward-caste communities in Haryana. The people affected by the Industrial Model Township (IMT), Rohtak, are taken as the case study to understand the larger implications of land acquisition on the life and livelihood of marginalised communities. Issues such as occupational shifts, changes and challenges arise in livelihood, exclusion and marginalisation in the whole process and in the implementation of rehabilitation and resettlement policies etc. are addressed. Drawing insights from extensive field data, this paper critically examines how the development process failed to recognise the pain and concern of these communities despite being equally dispossessed.*

Keywords: Land Acquisition, Haryana, Landless Communities, Livelihood, Dalits, Rehabilitation, Industrialization, Caste

1. Introduction

Land ownership in India is closely tied to caste hierarchies, social power, and economic stability. The historical connection between caste and land has shaped rural life for a long time. Access to land represents control over wealth, resources, and social status. In states like Haryana, this connection is especially strong. Dominant castes, such as Jats, control large areas of land. Meanwhile, marginalized groups, such as Dalits and backward-castes, often do not own land. They rely on landholders for their economic survival and are left out of important development projects, which worsens their vulnerabilities (Anand, 2016)..

India's aggressive industrialization and urbanization in recent decades have driven the demand for land acquisition, often for large-scale infrastructure and industrial projects and Haryana is its centre, received the highest Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) due to its locational advantage, basic infrastructure and business-friendly political regimes¹ (Karna, 2024). The process of land acquisition has emerged as a significant concern for landless communities in India, particularly in states like Haryana, where traditional caste structures continue to marginalize certain sections of society (Chakravorty, 2013). Despite various policies aimed at land reform and redistribution, the landless communities comprising mainly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) remain excluded from key developmental initiatives, further exacerbating their economic vulnerabilities. Despite the land acquisition process having led to the displacement of both landowning farmers and landless laborers, farmers receive compensation for their land, landless communities, despite being equally, if not more, affected by land acquisitions, are frequently excluded from such schemes. And the impacts of land acquisition, widely studied from the perspective of landowners, remain under-explored for landless populations who rely on agrarian and allied occupations for their livelihood.

This paper seeks to address this gap by examining the socio-economic consequences of land acquisition on landless communities in the state of Haryana. Through an in-depth analysis of demographic data, occupation patterns, and livelihood shifts, this study provides insights into how policies, particularly the Haryana Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) Policy 2007 (amended in 2010), have either failed or neglected to mitigate the adverse impacts of land acquisition on these vulnerable groups. We try to address how changing caste dynamics, rural-urban relations and continuous exclusion of the landless communities

contribute to their further marginalisation and dispossession. This study provides a micro-level analysis of the larger socio-economic implications of land acquisition through the villages affected by the IMT, Rohtak as a testimony of land appropriation unfolding in global south. In conclusion, this paper calls for more inclusive approaches to land acquisition, particularly in caste ridden societies like Haryana, India, by recognising both the contributions and vulnerabilities of landless communities.

2. The Exclusion of Landless Communities in Development Processes and Dispossession through Land Acquisition:

Several scholars have analyzed the impacts of land acquisition on rural communities, focusing on how it exacerbates existing inequalities (Das, 2005; Fernandes, 2008; Kothari, 1996; Robinson, 2003). Historically speaking, the acquisition of land has remained a constant core of debate in European social science literature since the time of the English expulsion of peasantry in the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries for the accumulation of their land and labour. As part of Capitalist development, many scholars justified these expulsions in the name of 'development', 'modernisation' and its expansion to colonial plunder and genocide as a god mission to civilized non-European savages (Neeson, 1993; Banner, 2005; Rostow, 1959). Karl Marx sees the purpose behind these primitive accumulations as means of replacing other modes of production with capitalist ones and appropriating land and labour power into it. This involves a proletarianisation process of erstwhile peasantry and landless agrarian communities into the capitalist working class, whose further exploitation and accumulation reproduce capitalism, a path significant in the trajectory to socialism (Marx, 1976). However, the accumulation of land, not labour, remains a fundamental feature of capitalist development in the neo-liberal era, resulting in the complete exclusion of landless communities in the development process (Luxemburg, 2003). David Harvey (2003) appropriately called this new phrase 'Accumulation by Dispossession' (ABD).

The theoretical framework presented by Harvey (2003) in ABD model aptly captures the dynamics at play in Haryana's land acquisition processes and how it contributes to broader capitalist process of wealth accumulation. Many scholars working on land grabbing practices across the world theorized this phenomenon that economic liberalisation though created new economic opportunities but have disproportionately benefited urban elites and industrial capitalists by facilitating the concentration of wealth and resources in their hands, while the most vulnerable—landless laborers, Dalits, and backward castes—are further marginalized (Borras jr, Hall, Scoones, White, & Wolford, 2011; Borras jr. & Franco, 2012; Hall, 2013; Levien M., 2018; Nyantakyi-Frimpong & Kerr, 2017; Zoomers, 2010). Borras and Franco's (2013) analysis of land commodification and labour displacement is also highly relevant here, as it underscores how landless workers are doubly excluded—both from land ownership and from the formal protections that landowners receive during acquisition. Landless workers, particularly women and older individuals, face worsening economic conditions, as their reliance on common property resources such as grazing land and water bodies is disrupted (Agarwal, 1994; Rao, 2008).

A significant body of literature addresses the concept of development-induced displacement in India, explaining how land acquisition has been a fundamental feature of the state's developmental regimes, exuberated especially in the post-liberalization era (Fernandes, 2008; Cernea M. M., 2004; Mohapatra, 1999; Levien M., 2013). While the state frames these acquisitions as necessary for public purposes, such as infrastructure development or industrialization, the benefits of these projects often accrue to urban or industrial elites, while rural communities bear the brunt of displacement (Fernandes, 2008). These studies underscore how this state-sanctioned expropriation exacerbates existing inequalities, particularly for landless labourers who depend on land for survival but do not own it. Cernea's (1997) Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model also captures the vulnerability of these communities, showing how land acquisition leads to the loss of income, social security, and access to resources. Chakravorty (2013) highlighted that land acquisition in India is primarily state-led and directed towards facilitating industrial growth and urbanisation, causing the displacement of millions of rural populations such as peasants, tribal, Dalit and other service provider communities. Moreover, limited and often faulty rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) policies resulted in disproportionate impacts on rural communities, especially the landless are rarely compensated adequately.

Further, scholars like Jenkins et.al. (2014) emphasised the political aspects of land acquisition, mainly the deliberate exclusion of marginalised communities from the decision-making process. Since colonial times, land acquisition laws in India favoured landowners and derecognised the landless communities, despite equally being impacted by the loss of agricultural and common lands. This dispossession without recognition furthered their economic vulnerability as they were often not eligible to receive compensation. This legal exclusion is compounded by the political marginalization of these communities, who often lack the power to influence policy decisions or participate in resistance movements against land acquisition.

The impact of industrial projects like IMT on landless communities remains underexplored in academic literature. Most studies focus on the experiences of farmers who lose their land, often overlooking the landless who, despite not owning land, depend on it for their livelihoods. This article seeks to fill this gap by focusing on how land acquisition affects the landless communities particularly in a state where they have been historically marginalised and excluded from mainstream development on caste lines.

3. Background: Caste, Land, and Marginalization in Rural Haryana

Historically, caste-based inequalities have shaped the socio-economic landscape of India and are rooted deep in its cultural norms. It is more evident in Rural Haryana in particular, where caste hierarchy corresponds to land ownership rights. The Jats, economically powerful and politically most influential caste, hold most of the agricultural land of Haryana. By contrast, the Dalits and backward caste such as Chamar, Balmikis and Dhanaks etc., though constitute more than thirty percent of the state population, are mostly landless and primarily engaged as agricultural labourers or menial workers (Jodhka S. S., 1995;

Brass, 1990). Land in rural economies is not just a mere means of economic subsistence, but also a source of power, social and political and always remains a core of contestation. For landless communities, the lack of access to land has historically relegated them to subordinate positions in both social and economic hierarchies. This dynamic reinforces their dependence on landowners for work, leading to exploitative patron-client relationships (Jodhka S. S., 2014).

Ambedkar’s (1917) seminal analysis of caste in India posits that the denial of land ownership to Dalits is a fundamental mechanism of socio-economic control. He argued that landlessness perpetuates cycles of poverty and social exclusion, ensuring that Dalits remain dependent on upper castes for economic survival. This form of structural exclusion continues to manifest in contemporary rural India, as highlighted by Jodhka (1995), who explored the unequal distribution of land in Haryana. In Haryana, land reforms and redistributive policies implemented post-independence failed to benefit landless communities significantly (Kumar, 1999). While some land redistribution took place, it mostly benefited small and medium farmers rather than the landless. As studies by Jodhka(1995) and Brass (1990) suggest, the benefits of these reforms were predominantly absorbed by middle and upper castes, while SCs and OBCs continued to be excluded. Further, unlike the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh, Dalits in Haryana did not witness much socio-political mobilisation (Singh, 1997). As a result, caste-based exploitation persisted, with Dalits and other marginalized communities remaining at the bottom of the social and economic ladder.

Economic liberalization and urbanization in India have triggered large-scale shifts in employment, particularly as rural labourers increasingly migrate to cities for work. However, while this diversification offers some relief from caste-based oppression in agriculture, it often results in insecure, low-paying jobs in the informal sector (Bhalla, 1995; 1999; Brass, 1990). But with industrialization, particularly in Haryana, the demand for land for non-agricultural purposes increased, mainly after the passing of the Industrial Policy 1997 and 1999. The State government also changed its strategies, like instead of relying on granting tax relief to attract businesses, it adopted infrastructure-led economic development (Kennedy, Robin, & Zamuner, 2013). The IMT project in Rohtak is a prime example of this. Established to attract industrial investment and spur economic growth in 2006, the project required the acquisition of vast areas of agricultural land. However, dominance of landowning castes like Jats and Ahirs in both political and economic spheres and their access to power and social capital gave them a leverage to disproportionately convert any forms of agrarian change; either led by private companies or by State authorities, in maximization of their benefits and marginalisation of other dependent communities (Gurunani, 2013; Cowan, 2018). Loraine Kennedy (2019; 2014) works show how these landowning elites mediate land acquisition processes by turning them into politically and economically advantageous arrangements. Similar patterns of dominant landowning castes mediating favourable terms for themselves and turning dispossession into opportunities for rentier accumulation has also been found in some other parts of

India (Balakrishnan, 2013; Sathe, 2017; Pai, 2010). By contrast, those lack formal titles but their livelihoods were tied to these lands, were left out of the formal compensation and rehabilitation process, resembling the persistent exclusion of these caste communities from state policies since independence.

Land acquisition in such societies not only leads to economic dispossession but also deepens existing social hierarchies and cleavages, as highlighted by scholars like Borrás and Franco (2013). Rajagopal (2002) termed these land acquisition processes as forms of ‘development cleansing’ by referring to their disproportionate impacts, particularly over landless Dalits and tribal communities who lack legal rights over land but survive on it. Haryana, with its high concentration of landless Dalit and backward-caste communities alongside rapid urban and industrial growth in recent decades, offers fresh insights into the impact of land acquisition on marginalized groups in neoliberal India

4. Methodology

This article is based on the information collected from the landless households of four villages, i.e. Baliyana, Kheri Sadh, Bohar, and Kharawar, directly affected by the establishment of IMT, Rohtak. Around 3700 acres of agricultural land were acquired from the neighbouring villages of Rohtak city for industrial development in various phases between 2006-11 by the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (HSIIDC). These villages were purposefully selected because of their high concentration of landless SC and OBC population, which is around 30%. A total of 120 households were surveyed in two phases, first in 2021 and later in 2024. Demographic information such as caste, gender, age, educational qualification and caste occupations was collected and compiled in table no 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Variable	Category (N/%)			
	Baliyana	Kheri Sadh	Bohar	Kharawar
Village	44 (36.7)	53 (44.2)	20 (16.7)	3 (2.5)
Caste	Scheduled Caste		Other Backward Caste	
	103 (85.8)		17 (14.2)	
Gender	Male		Female	
	106 (88.3)		14 (11.7)	
Education	Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Matric and Plus
	33 (27.5)	11 (9.2)	30 (25.0)	46 (38.3)
Age Group	19-30	31-45	46-60	61+
	8 (6.7)	57 (47.5)	40 (33.3)	15 (12.5)
Caste Occupation	Labour	Artisan	Business	Service Provider
	101 (84.2)	10 (8.3)	5 (4.2)	4 (3.3)

Source: Compiled from field data

We adopted a mixed method combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Socio-economic information such as level of income, shift in occupational and livelihood pattern after land acquisition and access to common resources etc. were collected through structured questionnaires. Additionally, qualitative data such as the psychological impact of land acquisition, changes in patron-client relationship, participation in land acquisition process, shift in social relations etc., were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Opinions of community elders, government

officials and employers of companies located in IMT were also noted for cross verification. We also highlighted cases of experience-rich individuals for a more nuanced analysis.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency, average and percentage were employed to summarize the demographic data, while a Pearson Chi-Square test was used to analyze changes in occupations before and after land acquisition. This study used both primary and secondary sources of data collected from books, journal articles, web pages and news articles. State policies documents related to land acquisition and R&R schemes were also reviewed to understand the inclusion (or exclusion) of various communities. The results offer critical insights into the gaps in policy and the disconnect between government promises and the realities faced by landless communities on the ground. Hence, the current paper not only provides an impact assessment of the socio-economic impacts of land acquisition on landless communities but also a field-based policy-evaluative study of Haryana's R&R policies.

5. Findings and Analysis:

It is critical to understand the complex relationship between caste, land and power in Haryana in order to explain the exclusion of landless communities from land acquisition process. Historically majority of land in Haryana is owned by dominant castes like Ahirs and Jats, which has strengthened their socio-political domination. In contrast, landless groups have continued to be excluded in terms of social mobility, political power and economic status.

The 2011 census data indicates that the majority of the landless population of Haryana are from Dalits and backward castes. About 92.1% Dalits and 51.2% of backward castes have no land ownership, underscoring severe caste inequalities in land ownership (Anand, 2016). The reliance of these communities on landowning castes for jobs and survival perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and helplessness, with landowners controlling wages, working conditions and social interactions. As Haryana has undergone industrialisation, this caste dynamics has significantly influenced who reaps the fruits of development. Dalits and other landless communities lacking both political influence and access to land are often sidelined from decision-making processes. This exclusion is very much visible in the case of IMT Rohtak where these landless communities, despite being dispossessed from their economic subsistence and sources of livelihood in the form of village commons and agricultural land, were simply omitted from the entire processes. They remained ineligible for compensation and rehabilitation grants under R&R policies, and also unrecognised in official files of HSIIDC, the government agency responsible for acquiring land, identifying affected households, administering compensation and rehabilitation grants and developing the land.

Occupational Shifts and Livelihood Diversification

A significant impact of land acquisition cases is the shift in occupational patterns of affected communities. Key findings of the study confirmed occupational changes among landless households in the studied villages. But this shift was not sudden and started well before the IMT landed

in Rohtak. Landless communities of Haryana in general and Rohtak in particular started seeking jobs in informal non-agricultural sectors since the 1980s due to the growth of industrial and urban economy in regions surrounding the National Capital. This was both liberation from caste discriminatory rural societies and a means of upliftment for them (Jodhka S. S., 1995; Jodhka S. , 2012).

However, the land acquisition process accelerated this shift, as landless laborers were effectively cut off from agricultural work due to the loss of farmland. As Table 2 indicates, the percentage of respondents employed as agricultural labourers dropped from 21.2% before acquisition to just 1.7% after. Meanwhile, employment in non-agricultural sectors increased from 39.8% to 61.0%. This shift reflects the broader economic changes taking place in Haryana, where industrialization and urbanization have transformed the labour market.

Table 2: Occupational Profile

Occupation	Before Acquisition (n)	Percentage (%)	After Acquisition (n)	Percentage (%)
Farming	2	1.7	0	00
Agricultural labour	25	21.2	2	1.7
Non-agricultural labour	47	39.8	72	61.0
Animal husbandry	19	16.1	7	5.9
Artisan	11	9.3	5	4.2
Service provider	3	2.5	3	2.5
Other	11	9.3	29	22.9
Unemployed	0	00	2	1.7
Total	118	100	118	100.00

Source: Compiled from field data

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to determine whether the distribution of occupations changed significantly after land acquisition. The result was a statistically significant difference in occupational distribution before and after land acquisition, indicating a substantial impact of land acquisition on the employment of affected communities.

$$\chi^2 = 43.370, df = 7, p < 0.001$$

$$\text{Linear-by-linear association: } 6.733, p = 0.009$$

Many landless individuals reported that their new jobs in the informal economy were precarious and poorly paid. The lack of formal employment opportunities, coupled with the preference of industrial employers of situated at IMT to hire migrant workers over locals, has left many landless individuals in a vulnerable economic position. Women and elderly were disproportionately affected as they were primarily engaged in agricultural work and animal husbandry before the acquisition.

Findings of the study reveal a sharp decline in traditional livelihood patterns such as animal husbandry, as it dropped to 5.9% as a primary source of income from 16.1% after land acquisition. However, as a secondary source of income, almost all of these families used to have non-milch animals like pigs, sheep, goat, birds and 1-2 cows, if someone was able to manage fodder. These livestock were not only used as collateral in the time of crisis but also as a sure means of food security. There were around on average, 21.71 non-milch animals per family in these villages before land acquisition, which has significantly

reduced to 4.79 as the loss of access to village commons and grazing land made it difficult to maintain livestock. This decline has greatly impacted the overall health and food security of these households, especially women and elderly individuals are affected more adversely as they have a larger dependency on animal husbandry and village commons for economic subsistence and day-to-day chores.

Socio-Economic and Psychological Impacts

The socio-economic effects of land acquired for IMT, Rohtak over landless gone beyond the sudden loss of employment. Information collected from the field indicates that the income levels of some individuals increased after land acquisition, but overall economic conditions of many landless families have worsened. The average monthly income of respondents before land acquisition was Rs. 5,820, which has now increased to Rs. 10,129. However, this marginal rise over 10-15 years has not led to any significant improvement in their living conditions.

One of the reasons for not of improvement in living standards is the rising cost of household expenses in a post-acquisition society. The loss of access to agricultural land and village commons has forced almost all landless households to rely completely on the market to meet their daily needs. In the earlier agrarian setup, many of their nutritional and household needs like fuel, fodder, grazing lands, vegetables, leafy greens, grains etc. were largely fulfilled at little or no financial cost. Now, however, these have completely shifted to the market, increasing financial dependency. Almost 65 percent of respondents reported difficulties in managing their household, citing the destruction of habitat and livelihood on the one hand, and rising cost of living and complete market dependency on the other. Women and older family members, in particular, have lost both their independence and the income they previously earned through agricultural labour or animal husbandry. They are now completely dependent on the household's sole earning member, adding further financial strain to the family.

The landless communities have also been significantly affected psychologically by the land acquisition. Nearly two-thirds of our respondents reported increased level of mental stress and health issues, particularly due to the precarious nature of their current jobs and the breakdown of the social fabric in their villages. The loss of social relations with the landowning class, often structured around patron-client relationships, has left many feeling isolated and unsupported. Sarita, a young woman from Kheri Sadh, shared her experience: "we used to work in the field of Jats and they required our labour for farming. There was a mutual relationship between our communities. They used to come to our marriages and we also borrow money from them in the time of need. But after acquisition, this mutual relationship has disappeared."

Breakdown of Traditional Social Relations

The social relationship between landowners and landless labours in the agrarian society of India has long been characterised as both exploitation and mutual dependence, and the same holds true for Haryana. Landless households depended on landowners for jobs and social support, whereas landowners relied on the labour class for

agricultural work. Despite being exploitative and unequal, these relationships provide a degree of social security for landless communities. Although Haryana has witnessed urban mobility among Dalit youth since the 1980s, and seasonal labourers from Bihar, Jharkhand and UP have increasingly replaced local workers during peak agricultural seasons, women and other family members from landless households have continued to provide regular services to landowning castes.

However, these social dynamics have been disrupted by the acquisition of land for the industrial township. With land gone, landowners no longer need the labour of landless castes, leading to a breakdown in these traditional relationships and resulting in isolation and increased vulnerabilities. Forty-five percent of respondents have reported a decline in social security and support from their former patrons. This shift in land use from agriculture to industry has transformed the social fabric of rural Haryana, particularly in these villages. Furthermore, the preference for migrant labours over local workers, mainly due to their willingness to work for lower wages, by the industries established in IMT, Rohtak has pushed local communities to the margins. This shift has also triggered new tensions between local labourers and migrant workers, further worsening the socio-economic hardships faced by landless households.

Exclusion from Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policies:

Land mainly farmlands and village commons were acquired from the affected villages by invoking the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) 1894 in three phases across 2006-2011 but most of the land were acquired in the first two phases and compensation and rehabilitation grants were paid under the Haryana Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, introduced in 2007 (amended in 2010). The acquisition process was mostly remained 'peaceful' and state acquired more than 3700 acres through what they described it as 'consent acquisition' amid land wars across India (Levien M. , 2018). Landowners were compensated handsomely and believes to be well above the valuation rates at that time. Farmers were induced through various other benefit sharing incentives like a long-term annuity for 33 years in addition to lump-sum compensation, residential and commercial plots in developed land, civil amenities, etc. However, as the findings of the study indicate, the policy largely excluded landless communities despite annihilating their livelihoods previously tied to agriculture through labour exchange. While landowners were compensated for their lost land through a floor rate, first time introduced by Haryana in India, landless labours, whose livelihoods and survival also depended on that land, were not eligible for any form of compensation including one-time mitigation allowances prescribed by many other states at that time or later in national R&R policy 2013. Haryana R&R policy 2007, despite being regarded as one of the progressive, *kisan-friendly* (farmer-friendly) and pragmatic model of land acquisition in India of that time, simply refused to recognise landless communities as project-affected persons.

The 2010 amendment of the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) policy, applicable from phase II onwards, acknowledged Dalits and service provider communities as an inseparable part of agrarian society. It

recognises the adverse impact of land acquisition for non-agricultural purposes on these communities (Govt. of Haryana, 2010). Accordingly, the policy promised skill training and employment opportunities in the industries established on acquired land, with a separate fund earmarked for this purpose. However, these provisions remain largely unfulfilled. Among the 120 families surveyed, none received any form of compensation. Only 5.8% reported being employed in the IMT, Rohtak; that to temporary jobs, while nearly 92.5% of respondents are either self-employed or working in the informal jobs like security guards, drivers, painters, or daily-wage workers, without any formal support from the state government or industries operating in IMT, Rohtak. The skill-development funds were never operationalised and 97.4 percent of respondents confirmed that neither technical training nor employment was offered.

This reflects clear forms of exclusion from compensation and rehabilitation grants, even though concerns of these communities have been formally recognised at national, state and global levels, entrenching caste and class inequalities further. The reliance on village commons for fodder, water, and other resources was a crucial aspect of rural livelihood that was overlooked in the acquisition process. This oversight reflects a broader neglect of informal land use patterns in policy planning and marginalisation of landless communities who, despite being integral to the rural economy, are frequently left out in development processes, with government policies often failing to recognise their contribution or vulnerabilities furthering already existing caste and class inequalities.

6. Discussion:

The findings of this study reveal the multifaceted impacts of land acquisition on landless communities, particularly in terms of caste-based exclusion and livelihood shifts (Shergill, Kaur, & Tiwana, 2018). The significant decline in agricultural labor and the rise in non-agricultural employment suggest that land acquisition has accelerated the occupational diversification trend noted by Bhalla (1999) and Kumar (1999). However, their exclusion in labour process, rather than their absorption after land dispossession, reflects a larger pattern of contemporary capitalist development. This process creates 'surplus populations' who are pushed into precarious, informal and low-waged labour markets with minimal job securities, while state policies prioritise capital accumulation over livelihood security (Li, 2011). It also demonstrates Harvey's theory of accumulation by dispossession that land acquisition in Haryana not only serves the interests of urban and industrial elites but at the same time traditional hegemonic castes while further marginalising those without formal land rights (Kennedy, 2019).

The exclusion of landless communities from the R&R policy highlights another critical flaw in Haryana's approach to land acquisition. Kennedy (2014) and Chatterjee (2013) argue, the caste polarization orchestrated by dominant castes, such as the Jats, severely restricts the ability of marginalized groups to assert their rights. This exclusion is further reinforced by the lack of formal recognition for landless households in policies, leaving them without access to compensation or alternative livelihood support.

Serageldin (2006) observes that despite years of legal battles and social movements, the question of equity continues to be absent in Indian R&R policies. The findings of the study also indicates that land-use rights were disregarded in the entire process, along with concern of women, the elderly and families dependent on livestock-based livelihoods.

By privileging land ownership over land-use rights through legal and dispossession process, the land acquisition in Haryana undermines both equity and sustainable development (Serageldin, 2006). Compensation mechanism failed to consider livelihood dependencies such as livestock and agricultural labour, making landless community socio-economically vulnerable. Moreover, the industrial project dispossessed these communities without generating alternative livelihood options, perpetuating joblessness and social marginalisation, as the anticipated transition from farm to factory never materialised (Li, 2011). Consequently, land acquisition in neoliberal India, as also observed elsewhere (Levien M., 2018; Goldman, 2011), entrenches caste-based hierarchies and exacerbates rural inequality, rather than promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

7. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, a few policy recommendations can be made to minimise the negative consequences of land acquisition on landless communities. First, the Haryana R&R Policy should be revised to incorporate provisions for landless communities whose livelihoods depend on acquired land. Therefore, compensation packages must be extended to include allowances for loss of access to village commons and alternative livelihood programs. The state can also adopt the national policy, 'Right to fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013' in all cases of state-led acquisition that have more progressive and inclusive policy provisions for landless communities.

Second, there needs to be a greater emphasis on skill development and employment generation for landless communities, particularly in the industrial sectors where land is acquired. While the 2010 amendment to Haryana's R&R Policy promised technical training for affected households, implementation has been weak, as evidenced by the low uptake of such programs in IMT Rohtak.

Finally, a more inclusive approach to land acquisition is required, as Jenkins et al. (2014) argue, any meaningful reform must address the specific vulnerabilities of landless communities, including Dalits and women, who are often left out of development narratives. This could be achieved through participatory planning processes that involve all affected stakeholders, not just landowning farmers.

8. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and psychological impacts of land acquisition on landless communities in Haryana particularly in the context of IMT Rohtak, highlighting key areas of exclusion and marginalization. While the shift to non-agricultural occupations may indicate a broader trend of rural transformation, the dissatisfaction with new livelihoods underscores the precariousness of employment

in the informal sector. The exclusion of landless communities from Haryana's R&R Policy reveals deep-rooted caste biases that continue to shape rural development in India.

By addressing these issues through more inclusive policies and targeted support programs, there is potential to mitigate the adverse effects of land acquisition on the most vulnerable segments of society. Without these reforms, landless communities in Haryana and other parts of India will continue to be pushed further into the margins, excluded from the benefits of the development projects that displace them. The case of the IMT project in Rohtak serves as a critical example of how land acquisition can deepen inequalities when it fails to account for the needs of the most vulnerable. Future research should focus on the long-term impacts of land acquisition on inter-caste relations and the social mobility of landless communities.

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(Footnotes)

¹Haryana alone received around 4% of FDI received by India and in between 2019-2024, more than \$9.7 billion.