



Socio-Economic Status of Informal Migrant Construction Workers in Bhubaneswar City: An Empirical Study

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Published Online: 19 May 2018	The article explains the socio-economic status of the informal construction workers working in the formal sector of Bhubaneswar city. It also describes the Education and Skill Involvement, Average Monthly Wage of the Workers, Respondents Activity before Migrating to Bhubaneswar, Skill Involvement and Type of House, and Type of Dispensary, Type of Occupation of construction workers in Bhubaneswar city.
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Introduction

Construction industry is one of the fastest growing industries which provide huge employment opportunities to the informal workers in India. After rapid growth of urbanization and industrialization, construction activities increased in an alarming rate. During five year plans, various construction activities like flyover construction, road, bridges and railway works have certainly developed in a faster rate. Construction after independence has emerged as growing activities in Indian cities. It is observed that since decades, construction industry has been generating employment at a faster rate than the industrial sector and thereby manifesting its significance in city's growth and development. In construction industry the contractor plays very vital role in recruiting from a large labour pool of unemployment, unskilled and unsecured laborers at a low wage rate.

The formal construction sector of Bhubaneswar city solely depends on the informal workers. The informal construction workers in formal construction sector are from an unprivileged category. The lack of security of job and income facilitate an irregular existence. Work for construction workers does not have any fixed location and the rights and the obligation of the workers are not properly established. The informal construction workers work in the industry not for attractive service but out of compulsion, they engage themselves in the work. They do not have any standardized and regular settled position in the construction industry. The formal sector certainly provides economic advantage to the informal workers but it fails to offer protection against humiliation and arbitrary treatment. In construction industry, large number of migrant workers migrates from village and peripheral area of cities and involves them in different unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled

work. They face difficulties in getting basic amenities like drinking water, sanitation, electricity, connectivity, housing and other benefits.

Construction is the largest economic activity in India. The generation of large scale of employment is a significant aspect of the construction work for both male and female workers. Construction is a fundamental, integral part of economic development and provides many of material benefits of progress. Madhok (2005) reports that work on construction sites is invariably divided along gender lines. The types of work that men do are labeled as skilled work and fetch higher wages than the work that women are allowed to do. In Kerala, John (2004) revealed that the social status of construction workers was not higher than that of the other poverty-ridden groups. Literacy levels, health status, and housing conditions of construction workers are below the State average.

During the research work it is observed that mostly the unskilled construction workers has come from the rural poor strata drawn from the Ganjam District, KBK district (Klahanie, Bolangir and Koraput).

Methodology

The present study represents an exploratory-cum-descriptive research design. The objective of present study is to study the socio-economic background of the construction workers in Bhubaneswar city. The universe of the study covers all the construction workers of Bhubaneswar city. The study has taken 200 sample cases from various governmental construction sites at different localities in Bhubaneswar namely Kalpana, Khandagiri, Unit-6, old town, CRP Square, Saheed Nagar, Samantarapur, forest Park, OUAT, Ekamra College, Airport Construction. The database of the study is drawn from a

wide variety of secondary sources while primary data are collected through observation and interview.

Findings

In the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city, most of the respondents are young and energetic. The collection of

information on socio-economic characteristics of workers is all the more relevant in case of construction industry. In the construction industry the work is hazardous and risky in nature. It is also observed that majority of illiterate and semi-literate respondents are found in unskilled and semi-skilled construction work.

Table-01. Level of Education and Type of Family:

The general educational backgrounds of the respondents have been hierarchically arranged under six heads which are given in the table below:

Level of Education	Nuclear	Joint	Total
1.Illiterate	35(17.5)	16(8)	51(25.5)
2.Just Literate	25(12.5)	19(9.5)	44(22)
3.Primary	29(14.5)	22(11)	51(25.5)
4.Middle	14(7)	12(6)	26(13)
5.High	11(5.5)	13(6.5)	24(12)
6 Very High	2(1)	2(1)	4(2)
7.Very High	116(58)	84(42)	200(100)

From the above table, it is found that large number of 25% construction workers were illiterate and 17.5% belong to nuclear family and 8% of them were from joint family.. Only 22% workers were just literate, out of which 12.5% belong to nuclear family and 9.5% represented joint family. A good chunk of 25.5% the construction workers attained primary level of education. Among them 14.5% belong to nuclear family and 11 percent belong to joint family.13% construction workers had attained middle level of education. Among them7% percent workers belong to nuclear family. The analysis of relationship between the level of education and type of family did not show much difference. It is

observed that most of the workers in the construction industry were illiterate. They were subjected to undemocratic exploitation and mobility was restricted for those groups. The migratory nature of parents and temporary work deprived thee primary educated workers to receive middle education. Construction workers with education qualification beyond high school level have been pushed into such work because of acute unemployment, poverty of family and training disturbances. The poor unemployed highly educated workers were seen to blame their fate for having no gainful formal employments.

Table-02. Education and Skill Involvement

In the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city, the unskilled workers were found in large number in comparison to the semi-skilled and skilled workers because construction requires a large number of unskilled workers at the work site.

	Illiterate	Just Literate	Primary	Medium School	High School	College Level	Total
Skilled	2(1)	1(.5)	3(1.5)	2(1)	3(1.5)	1(.5)	12(6)
Semi-skilled	12(6)	16(8)	23(11.5)	16(8)	11(5.5)	1(.5)	79(39.5)
Unskilled	37(18.5)	27(13.5)	25(12.5)	8(4)	10(5)	2(1)	109(54.5)
Total	31(15.5)	44(22)	51(25.5)	26(13)	24(12)	4(2)	200(100)

Education has brought little meaning for the workers in the construction industry. The skill involvement of the workers depends more on the experience gathered rather than the education attained. The very high educational attainment was found higher among the unskilled workers in comparison to the semi skilled workers and skilled workers. Accordingly the percentage of high educational attainment is more with semi skilled and unskilled workers in comparison to skilled workers. The educational attainment of child depends on his family background. Most of the parents want to impart basic education to their children. Due to sheer poverty and they fail to provide basic level of education to their children.

Migration is the most important demographic issue in Bhubaneswar since 1981 and it has become a major factor in the process of industrialization, urbanization and social change. There are several factors solely responsible for migration in Bhubaneswar city like inadequate work in native place, search for employment to start business, craze for city living, better medical facilities, The migrants generally get into the city for employment reason and hence cannot afford luxury of being unemployed even for a short period to secure the best job. They immediately take up a job perhaps the unmindful of the wage that is offered. The non-migrants are better placed in the city in the sense that they can to some extent, wait for a good job in the formal

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sector or accept a job in the informal sector only if the wage is up to their expectation. Thus the position of the migrant ensures a very little or no bargaining strength against their employers who view them as a *chunk of cheap labour*. The

following table would give the information regarding the average monthly wage of the respondents in Bhubaneswar city.

Table: 03. Average Monthly Wage of the Workers

Migration	Rs500-1000	Rs1000-1500	Rs1500-2000	Rs2000 and Above	Total
Rural	70(3.5)	62(31.5)	07(3.5)	5(2.5)	144(72)
Urban	30(15)	26(13)	Nil	Nil	56(28)
Total	100(50)	88(44)	07(3.5)	05(2.5)	200(100)

From the above table it is seen that 72 per cent of the construction workers had come from the rural area and 28 percent respondents had come from the urban areas. Most of the construction workers who were manual unskilled workers had come from the remote part of Kalahandi, Koraput, Bolangir, Berhampur and they engage themselves at the construction sites of Bhubaneswar city. Majority of 35 percent workers migrated from the rural areas earned Rs 500-1000 per month. 15 percent workers migrated from the urban areas fall under the same wage structure. Only 31 percent workers migrated from the rural areas and 13 percent from the urban areas earn Rs1000-15000. All those

who earn between 1500-2000 and above were the respondents with rural background only. No urban migrant workers fell within the very high wage structure. Thus the most of the construction workers had rural background in the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city. Many workers engage themselves in different type of work before joining the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city. Some of them were busy with family agriculture work and some of them were in the business and the service sector etc. The following table reveals the respondents activity before migrating to Bhubaneswar.

Table: 04. Respondents Activity before Migrating to Bhubaneswar

Sl No	Assist Family Agri work	Sitting Idle and No work	Business	Service	Working as wage labour	Total
Rural	41(20.5)	33(16.5)	04(02)	02(01)	64(32)	144(72)
Urban	11(5.5)	16(8)	04(02)	04(02)	21(10.5)	56(28)
Total	52(26)	49(24.5)	08(04)	06(03)	85(42.5)	200(100)

The activities of the construction workers before migrating to Bhubaneswar can be seen from the above table. A chunk of 26 percent sample workers were assisting their family members in some agriculture work. In this category 22.05 percent were from the village and 5.5 percent were from urban centers. Only 24.5 percent were sitting idle without any work. Here 16.5 percent were from rural areas and 8 percent were from urban areas. Only 4 percent workers were busy with low profile business. Majority of 42, 5 percent were working as wage labourers. Out of them 32 percent had migrated from rural areas and 10.5 percent migrated from urban center.

condition of the migrant construction workers was chaotically occupied, unsystematically developed and generally neglected. These are over populated and overcrowded, with ill repaired and neglected structure, lack of planning and haphazard growth of towns and cities resulted in growth of innumerable flimsy construction and sub standard house which are poorly ventilated often lacking such essential amenities as water and light. Under housing it has been our purposes to know about the nature of the house, i.e. Independent, shared or construction site building, the number of living rooms available and type of houses. Houses of construction workers are too poor as against that of the workers in the urban formal sector.

The construction workers of Bhubaneswar city live in very pathetic housing conditions. They live in Jhopadpatis and Chawl or in Kachha Ghar where they see saw sun inside the house in the day and moon in the night. The housing

Table-05. Type of Occupation

Type of Occupation and Wage	Shared	Independence	Construction Site	Total
Skilled	07(3.5)	04	01	12
Semi-Skilled	43(21.5)	32	04	79
Unskilled	57(23.5)	48	04	109
Total	107	84	09	200

The above table shows the type of the skill of the workers and different type of houses they lived in. Majority of

53.5% workers preferred to stay in shared houses. Shared house means the house rented or not occupied by two or

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more non- kin family members. It is clearly visible that out of 12 skilled workers 07 liven in shared houses and four lived in independent houses . It seems that the skilled workers are more preference towards shared houses. While a substantial majority of the respondents lived in shared houses , very few of them were found to have been living in construction site. As many as 24 percent of the unskilled and

16 percent of the semi-skilled workers lived in the independent houses. It is further observed that 42 percent workers lived in independent houses. Out of them 17.5 percent lived independently in their own houses and 24.5 percent lived in rented houses. Those workers who lived in their own houses were living with elder brothers or any relatives who were permanently staying in Bhubaneswar.

Table-06. Skill Involvement and Type of House

Sl.No	Type of Skill Involvement	Jhopadpatis	Chawl	Building	Total Number
1	Skilled	02(01)	03(1.5)	03(1.5)	12(06)
2	Semi-skilled	20(10)	25(12.5)	34(17)	79(39.5)
3	Unskilled	50(25)	36(18)	23(11.5)	109(54.5)
Total		72(36)	64(32)	64(32)	200(100)

Housing pattern data revealed three type of houses in which construction workers reside. Housing pattern of migrant construction workers included Jhopadies (36%), Chawls (32%) and buildings(32%) and buildings(32%). Those who have jhopadpaties houses comprise 2% of the skilled, 10% of the semi-skilled and 25% of the unskilled labour. Majority of the skilled workers (3.5%) resided in buildings. 17% of the semi- skilled and 11% of the unskilled were staying in the building also. Skilled and semi-skilled workers resided either in buildings, chawl or jhopardies relatively more of them residing in buildings. It is also seen that majority of the 25% unskilled workers stayed in Jhopadpaties in comparisons to Chawl (18%) and building (11.5%).

Health is one of the vital factors which has got a positive bearing on the mind and body of the construction workers in Bhubaneswar city. Construction is risky and pain staking. The heavy and constant pressure of work results in some peculiar health hazards. Some of the construction workers state that they have become acquainted to such health hazards. As one of the respondents replied *if we think of*

health hazards we cannot work. A good chunk of 22% respondents denied having any serious diseases and the rest 78% suffered from certain diseases which are called cataract i.e. chronic eye disease and lumbago. I.e. severe joint pain.

In construction industry the workers come in contact with different chemicals which caused serious diseases like bronchitis, asthma, loss of hearing and cancer. Some of them complained minor joint pain and back pain because of constant standing or bending in a particular place of construction site.

Another general problem of Bhubaneswar city which is shared by majority of construction workers is that dwellings of the workers are very clumsy and unhealthy. These are some places which are mosquito prone. Both Nasha (addiction) and Masha (Mosquito) had adversely affected the health condition of the workers in construction industry.

Table-07. Skill Involvement and Type of Dispensary

Sl.No	Skill Involvement	Public Dispensary	Private Dispensary	Not Used	Total No
1	Skilled	02(01)	08(04)	02(01)	12(06)
2	Semi-skilled	39(19.5)	30(15)	10(05)	69(34.5)
3	Unskilled	46(23)	31(15.5)	32(16)	109(54.5)
Total		87(43.5)	69(34.5)	44(22)	200(100)

It can be seen that a large number of construction worker (43.5%) used government public run dispensary. That is due to the existence of capital hospital, unit –VI and municipal hospital. Thus the great preference of the construction workers for free medical service can be attributed not only to their poor economic condition but also to the free medical services available from different specialists. And large numbers of them are afraid of exorbitant cost of the medicine that the doctor prescribed.

Only 34.5 percent who preferred private dispensary are the people who can afford paying service charges as well as the cost of the medicine. These workers feel that government

hospitals are dirty and do not provide adequate personal care. They feel that doctors in government hospital are callous and less effective because they are not paid medical fees in the hospital. They also claim that the same government doctors in private clinic treat the patient very carefully. They also claim that in public dispensary doctors do not listen to their complaints patiently. They prescribed medicines whatever they liked. In private clinic, the doctors diagnose the disease carefully. Although it is little more expensive, but it provides better service to the workers. The rest 22% did not use any dispensary. It is also observed that large number of skilled workers (4%) used private clinic,

because they are economically sound. Majority of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers used the public dispensary. With regard to the nature of treatment, 20.5 % construction workers proffered allopathic medicine. Majority of workers (50%) used homeopathic medicine. Out of 200 sample workers, only 12 respondents preferred to use ayurvedic medicine. Only 1.5% workers preferred naturopathy. Most of the workers preferred to use homeopathic medicine to allopathic medicine because homeopathic medicine is the cheapest. Thus, the general preference of the construction workers is largely for public dispensary and homeopathic medicine.

Conclusion

The construction work involves a series of responsibilities which are handed over from one or more type of hierarchy to others and the sum total work done by them results in the completion of work. The construction workers play vital role for the growth of economic activity in the city. But their contribution is not duly recognized. They used to work in hazardous working condition without caring the safety of their life and they build big sky scrapers, hotels, railway station and other construction activities. But they live under abject poverty and utter depression. They build schools and colleges. But they fail to send their children to school and college due to poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. Most of the migrant workers are forced to live in poor living condition and work in an unhygienic condition. They lack proper identity in the society. They remain excluded from public services, protection and opportunities for advancement in a growing economy. The informal construction workers do not get appropriate social security coverage due the casual nature of their work.

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