

Migrant Labour and Leisure: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Trade Union Leaders estimate that there are about six lakh workers in the unorganized sector in Chattisgarh. The exploitation of people who work in the unorganized sector is very high. It is increasingly recognized that with the expansion of transport and communication people have started migrating from village to cities, from cities to cities and from also one country to another. The migrants particularly who migrate from villages to cities by crossing one state to another state brings a change in their livelihood pattern, which also includes their leisure pattern also. However, little is know about the situation of migrant construction labour in India, their working pattern and particularly about their leisure activities, which ultimately affect the overall life of people. Leisure is indispensable from the life of human being, therefore, it is necessary to understand the leisure activities of migrant construction labour group, so that the some policies and programmes can be made to address leisure issues. The study seeks to understand the leisure activities pattern and also the factors which inhibits the absence or presence of leisure activities among the young migrant construction labour groups in Rohtak city of Haryana state.

KEY WORDS: *Migrant Labours, Leisure Activities, Industrialization.*

INTRODUCTION

Trade Union Leaders estimate that there are about six lakh workers in the unorganized sector in Chattisgarh. The exploitation of people who work in the unorganized sector is very high. Workers are being exploited at meager daily payment between Rs. 40 and Rs. 60 as against the stipulated minimum wage of Rs. 100 a day. Each district in the state has different daily wage amount set by the collector but it is largely around Rs.100 a day. A majority of laborers are unaware about the official rates and accept whatever amount is paid by the employer. In many cases, they are forced to work extra hours every day and are paid less than what is promised. Workers in unorganized sector are subjected to extreme injustice as they cannot raise their voice. Since workers are dependent on daily earnings to survive, they rush to offer their labor at any price and the employers cash in on their helplessness. Further, if these labors are migrant to other place, further they are subjected to exploitation as well as they are devoid of the leisure activities which they get at the place of their origin.

India's unorganized workers who work long hours (when they get any employment at all), are forced to migrate to find work, toil in dangerous and often inhuman conditions, and have no fixed employer or any assurance of minimum earning comprise 94 per cent of the country's workforce. They start working as children and continue till they are too old or till illness or disability overtakes them. They are the "unfree"- bound by grinding poverty, exploitation, discrimination and constant flux. These "unfree" people include 95 per cent of all female workers and 89 per cent of all male workers in India and together they contribute more than 60 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (Goswami:2009:17).

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one state to another state brings a change in their livelihood pattern, which also includes their leisure pattern also. Studies of migrant labours suggest that a large percentage of these people leave behind their place of origin and tries to adapt the pattern of their new working place which in turn also affect their leisure time.

Understanding of leisure pattern of labour migrants, an unaccounted group but still contributing lot in providing skilled labour to the agriculture and construction sector is paramount importance. However, little is know about the situation of migrant construction labour in India, their working pattern and particularly about their leisure activities, which ultimately affect the overall life of people. Leisure is indispensable from the life of human being, therefore, it is necessary to understand the leisure activities of migrant construction labour group, so that the some policies and programmes can be made to address leisure issues. The study seeks to understand the leisure activities pattern and also the factors which inhibits the absence or presence of leisure activities among the young migrant construction labour groups in Rohtak city of Haryana state. During the initial stages of industrialization there was no concept of formal distinction between leisure and work. There is no concept of holidays, leave and safety for the migrant workers. Women migrant workers had to work even when they are expecting because there is no concept of maternity leave. She had to do heavy jobs like loading, picking up of heavy stones and other construction material even during her pregnancy. She had to work along with her children. She has no leisure activity and rest during her work time.

CONCEPT OF WORK

Work is the basic necessity of life. Work is the basic condition of existence and survival of human life. Without work life is aimless and dull and the idle brain only thinks of wrongs. It is well said that idle brain is a devil's workshop and work is worship.

To an individual in modern industrial society work is usually identified with the means of living. In the olden days women help the concept of work as "to make best efforts to feed her family and to make her husband satisfy and happy with the family" (Dubin:1975:37). Freud Dubin and Chinoy explained work is unpleasant activity. Fundamentally work is a social activity with the two main functions of producing the goods required by the society and binding the individual into the pattern of interrelationship from which society is build up (JAC Brown: 1954:188). In 19th century the sociologists carried a reaction to their ideas about the religious motivational work. The early utopian also had taken a non-religious view of the role of work in men's life. They saw the need of leisure in the overall development of man.

CONCEPT OF LEISURE

The notion of leisure as freedom gave away to leisure as free or discretionary work. It became synonymous with non-work time, time earned through work or time freed from work to be used for whatever pursuits, one desired. Rather than being viewed as polar extremes in a contest of obligation, work and leisure became polar extremes in a context of time, one could not be at all leisure if one is engaged in activities for which payment is received. Leisure activities are those activities done during one's free time, were rationalized as being essential to the work process, because they provide relaxation and refreshment from labour.

According to J. Dumazedier (1968) leisure should be distinguished from free time, that is time left free not only from regular employment but also from over time and from time spent in travel to and fro from the work place. He added that free time should also include leisure as well as other activities that take place outside the context of gainful employment. Dumazedier also emphasized that leisure is freedom from obligations and this include freedom from a certain class of obligation. For example, the personal need of eating, sleeping, caring for children, domestic tasks, social and religious obligation must be attended

to in one's free time. John Neulinger described leisure in a similar fashion, holding that pure leisure is intrinsically motivated and in the opposite of the extrinsically motivated work. According to Neulinger, "pure leisure requires freedom in the sense of absence of external control but implies the condition of being able to enjoy satisfaction derived from the intrinsic rewards without having to pay attention to potential extrinsic ones". So both leisure and work go side by side in human life. Neither the importance of leisure nor of work can be ignored, work gives economical security and leisure gives relaxation and freedom from routine life. So both leisure and work are important for the overall development of human life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the working pattern of migrant construction workers
- To study the pattern of leisure and ideal thinking about leisure activities.
- To study the satisfaction from work regarding wages, holidays, working hours and working conditions and leisure activities.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is conducted mainly to have a sociological understanding of working pattern and leisure pattern of construction migrant workers. This study is exploratory in nature, therefore does not require formulation and testing of hypothesis.

FIELD OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted near construction site of the building where the temporary huts are placed for their residential accommodation. There is lot of construction work which is going in the M. D. University Campus, Rohtak, and therefore, construction workers are required to take up this job. We took the list of workers from the *Thekedar* (Contractor) which helped us in deciding the sampling. There are number of workers who are also staying adjacent to the construction site along with their families. Therefore, it is good opportunity to interact with the families also for finding out additional information for the study. We also made it essential to concentrate on information in relation to our objectives of the study. The list procured from the contractor had 62 workers which included men and women. Out of 62 workers, 38 are men and 24 are women. These construction workers are directly appointed by contractor, and therefore, university or government is not directly involved for assessment of their working conditions. However, one has to abide by workers Act of 1946 whether it is in organized or unorganized sector.

The construction does not require any specialized skills, so the workers are migrants from the other states as they can be employed at the low wages. They are attached with the contractors, so whenever the work is finished at one place, these migrants' workers are shifted to the other site where the construction work is going on. The work of the workers is defined ranging from digging, placing bricks, construction, flooring and lot more things for the construction. The output of each worker is well defined and workers are responsible for the output, when the work is not in time or up to the mark, twisting tactics are resorted to. There is no concept of union which makes bargaining for their wages or working conditions.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The instrument of data collection used for this study is an interview schedule group interview and observation. The schedule consisted of questions related to socio-economic background, working pattern, time schedule and leisure activities. Since, the contractor is around construction site, so we were not comfortable to interview them during their working hours, therefore, we decided to interview them after their working hours around their residences.

ANALYSIS:

India is basically an agricultural country and nearly 70 per cent of our population lives in villages. However, the fast development of urban centres accompanied by transport and communication facilities has brought about a massive shift of labour from villages to cities and from one state to another in search of employment. Our data also depicts that the construction labour has migrated from one state to another particularly from less developed state to developed one.

Table-1 : Distribution of the Respondents on the basis of State of Migration

State of Migration	No of Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Chattisgarh (Bilaspur)	22(61.11)	14(38.88)	36(58.06)
Uttar Pradesh (Bundelkhand, Jhansi)	08(57.14)	6(42.85)	14(22.58)
Bihar (Oriayya)	08(66.66)	4(33.33)	12(19.35)
Total	38(54.83)	24(38.70)	62(100.00)

Source: Field data

Most of the construction labour i.e. 36 (58.06 per cent) has migrated from the state of Chattisgarh and district Bilaspur. Out of 22 males 14 have been accompanied by their wives. Equal number of migrants 8 (57.14 per cent) are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who have come from Bubelkhand and Jhansi region of Uttar Pradesh and Oriyya region of Bihar. Fifty per cent of Bihari migrants are along with their wives whereas 6 migrants from Uttar Pradesh are along with their wives. It was interesting to report that the migrants who are along with their wives were also having children of younger age-group with them. But as soon as they become 7-8 years old they send them back to their native places so that they can study. They reported that since there is no provision of school at the construction site, therefore, they have to send their children back to their native places where there other family member like mother, wife or brother are there to look after them.

Table-2 : Distribution of the Respondents according to Age-Group

Age-Group (In years)	Respondents	Percentage
21-25	1	1.61
26-30	46	74.19
31-35	9	14.52
Above 36	6	9.68
Total	62	100.00

It is clear from the table that most of the construction labour falls in the category of 26-30. This group consists of nearly 74.19 migrant labourers. In the age-group of 21-25 there is only 1 (1.61 per cent) respondent; whereas in the age-group of 30.35 there are only 14.52 per cent respondents are there. However, data depicts that overall migrant laborer are younger in age-group.

Table-3 : Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of their education

Educational-Level	Male	Female	Total
Illiterate	15(41.66)	21(58.33)	36(58.06)
Primary	15(83.33)	3(16.66)	18(29.03)
Middle	8(100.00)	-	8(12.90)
Total	38(61.29)	24(38.70)	62(100.00)

For the migrant labour the education is not required to earn their livelihood, which can be clearly inferred from the data. Majority of the respondents i.e. 36 (58.06 per cent) are totally illiterate, whereas 18 (29.03 per cent) had schooling up to primary level. Only 8 respondents had their education up to the middle level. No one had education beyond middle class. It is interesting to note that in comparison the males a significant per cent of females are illiterate. Only 3 females had education up to the primary level.

Table-4 : Distribution of respondents on the Basis of Marital Status

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Married	58	93.54
Unmarried	4	64.51
Total	62	100.00

There are 58 (93.54 per cent) of respondents who are married and only 4 (64.51 per cent) are unmarried and there are no cases of divorces and widows/widower.

Table-5 : Distribution of respondents of the basis of Number of Children

Number of Children	Total	Percentage
Nil	3	5.17
1-2	43	74.13
3-4	8	13.79
5	4	6.89
Total	58	100.00

Note: 4 cases are unmarried and therefore not included

It is clear from the table that most of the respondents have 1-2 children in the family. There are 5.17 per cent of respondent who do not have any children, however they are young and got recently married. Only 8 (13.79 per cent) respondents have 3-4 children in the family, whereas 4 (6.89 per cent) had five children. They reported that they want to have less children but among their family members there were deaths of infants therefore, they are not sure whether their children will survive or not. Since the children of the younger age-group or before schooling are with them as there is no facility of schooling for their children. However, all of them reported that they would like to give education to children at the site where they earning their livelihood but under circumstances they have to send them back for their education.

Table-6 : Reasons for the Migration Reported by the Respondents

Reasons for Migration	Respondents	Percentage
More Employment Opportunities	22	35.48
No work in the Villages	11	17.74
My other relatives have also come	20	32.25
Higher wages outside	09	14.51
Total	62	100.00

It is clear from the table that majority of workers i.e. 22 (35.48 per cent) have migrated to their place of origin because of economic reason to satisfy their basic needs of food and clothing. 20 (32.25 per cent) were motivated to migrated because their other relatives migrated and they also followed them, whereas 11 (17.74 per cent) felt that there is no work in the villages. 9 (14.51 per cent) of the respondents felt that they have to this far of place because of the higher wages. In their villages they only get Rs.30 and if they go to the cities around their places they will get Rs.50, but here they are getting Rs.100 per day. However, in

some cases they are getting more than that depending upon their work. There is no difference between the wages of male and female per se. Among the male members the difference is there between the types of work related to the construction. When we asked about the differentials in the wages between the works of the workers they promptly replied that it depends upon the work like flooring, plaster etc. which requires more skill as compared to lifting of loads etc. They also reported that although the timings of their work begun from 8AM to 5PM and one hour lunch from 1PM to 2PM, but if there is pressure for the work they can also take overtime which results in the extra wages.

Table-6 : Distribution of the Respondents on the Evaluation of their Working Conditions

Work related Queries	Yes	No	Total
Do you like general conditions of work	43(69.35)	19(30.64)	62 (100.00)
Are you satisfied with the working hours	41(66.12)	21(33.87)	62 (100.00)
Are you satisfied with the wages	35(56.45)	27(43.54)	62 (100.00)
Are you satisfied with the attitude of Thekedar	27(43.54)	35(56.45)	62 (100.00)

We asked couple of question to our respondents regarding their working conditions at the construction site. In terms of overall condition of the work, majority of the respondents i.e. 43 (69.53 per cent) replies that overall they are satisfied with the work and immediately they compared it with their place of origin. Regarding the timings of work also three-fourth respondents were satisfied but regarding the wages 27 (43.54 per cent) reported that they are not satisfied with the wages. In terms of the attitudes of the *Thekedar*, majority of them i.e. 35 (56.45 per cent) reported that they are not satisfied with the attitude of the *Thekedar* as it does not have human touch. They are treated as machines.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND MIGRANT WORKERS

Here the efforts are made to see what is the ideal thinking of migrant workers to spend their leisure time, what are their leisure activities and what is their idea of leisure and how they perceive leisure. It is interesting to note that for males the leisure time is wandering near their site of construction and nothing else. However, when they get wages twice in a month they sit together and enjoy a drink that is the only leisure activities for them. All the males except four take the Gutka (a type of tobacco) which they chew and feel enjoyment. However, for females even the minimum leisure activities are absent as they do not get time for leisure. Before going for work they prepare the food and after returning from the work again they prepare the food in the night. They reported that after doing this much of the work they get tired and immediately go to sleep. Only once in a month they go to market and which they admitted that is the only leisure activity for them. All the migrant labourers reported that they also watch movies on Videos once in a month by taking Video Discs from the market, and off course they enjoy it. On further probing about the leisure activity back at their place of origin, they immediately became excited and started telling the leisure activities namely, fishing in the pond, cycling, going to the friends/relatives nearby villages, going to the fields, fair and celebrating festivals. They said that there is enough scope of leisure activities at their place of origin. Couple of the respondents reported that here at the construction site they cannot go to some other places as they feel insecure being as outsiders. They were narrating one of the incident that "when they were wandering near by the houses which they recently constructed, and talking about them, then one of the women came from those houses and started telling them that from next time you should not be seen/visible around these houses or I will complaint about you to your *Thekedar*. This was the disappointment to the labourers that even the only leisure activity they can enjoy is walking which is also restricted.

Furthermore, we asked about the idea of leisure they perceive. They gave the answers in the multiple forms. Majority of them said that doing a light household-chore like making special dish in a relaxed mood is also a kind of leisure which is away from the monotonous life. A good number of respondents felt that leisure is just freedom from worries, and it does not require any extra thing. Almost all the women and also some males felt that even play with kids and taking care of them is also a sort of leisure activity. Many respondents felt that going out is a important leisure activity, however, some felt that to have a sleep without any disturbances is also a kind of leisure activity and also resting and gossiping without going anywhere is also a part of leisure activity. Almost all the respondents opined that in today's world of communication best way of leisure is to watch television, watch movies and listening songs.

CONCLUSION

Leisure activities among migrant labourers have been analyzed. Findings suggests that migrants had lesser exposure to mass media, however, once in a month they watch movies and listen songs which is only the major leisure activity present among them. A large proportion of migrants reported watching movies during their spare time, perhaps due to the only leisure activity at the place of their destination. Exposure to print media is negligible as most of them are illiterate and not interested in reading news of the place of their destination. However, if they get chance to read the news of their native places they will become interested and that too for literate persons who can read the newspaper. Almost all the respondents reported that for them leisure time is when they go to their places of origin which is twice in a year for nearly 20-30 days. They reported that they enjoy their stay over there. In these days they fully enjoy by meeting people, playing cards, going to fair and celebrating festivals.

Case: Kesar, 40 years old daily migrant wager continued to jostle with 500 others in a labourers's mart to find work. She considers herself lucky if she is hired for three days in a week. "Do not ask, I am just like a dead person despite being alive. The whole day I wait for people who come here in search of workers. But I have to pray that they pick me. I have to take care of my five children," Said Kesar. I consider myself lucky if I find work even for three days in a week because people cash in here on workers' desperation and pay just Rs.60-70 to women, said Kesar, whose average earning is about Rs.160 a week. People hoping to get work as daily labourers come at 8 am and sometimes wait till 5 pm hoping to be hired for another day. We cannot think of any leisure activity because our primary target is to get work and the whole time goes in search of that.

Lata, 48, who said: "People come to Pick up workers promising Rs.60 a day, but after the work is complete, they pay around Rs.40-50 saying that the work was not satisfactory or half done. Despite knowing that I am being exploited I have no other option but to accept the amount because I cannot afford to oppose these people". Leisure always comes when you are free from worries of livelihood so it is unthinkable for us.

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