

# Labour Dynamics and Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers in Odisha's Construction Sector: A Study of Bhubaneswar City

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## **Abstract**

The article examines the working situations of informal construction workers in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, employing a mixed-methods descriptive approach. It comprehensively investigates numerous aspects, including the construction process, labor supply chains, recruitment practices, skill development, working conditions, wage structures, job satisfaction, and socio-economic difficulties experienced by workers. The findings reveal a pronounced disparity: skilled workers experience better remuneration, higher job satisfaction, and higher satisfaction levels, while unskilled workers remain trapped in precarious employment, exploitation, and heightened vulnerability. The study underscores the critical need for targeted policy interventions to enhance welfare provisions, strengthen labor rights, and promote the gradual formalization of employment in the urban construction sector.

**Keywords:** Informal workers, construction industry, working conditions, wage patterns, job satisfaction.

## **1. Introduction**

The construction industry is a fundamental pillar of urban development, mostly in rapidly growing cities like Bhubaneswar, Odisha's capital. The sector remains highly labor-intensive, fragmented, and heavily dependent on informal workers who lack formalized employment relationships. These workers, often migrants, face irregular jobs, varying wages, and inadequate social protections. The term "work situation" encompasses the environmental and conditional aspects of the workplace, including processes, hierarchies, and socio-economic dynamics. This study focuses on informal workers in formal construction projects, exploring the construction process as a starting point for understanding labor dynamics. Construction is area-specific, temporary, and involves a hierarchy from consultants to unskilled laborers. Informal workers are treated as commodities, with no standardization in income or conditions. Key issues include health risks, absence of welfare schemes, and exploitation, particularly for migrants. The research adopts a descriptive design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive view of labor supply, recruitment, skills, working conditions, wages, job satisfaction, mobility, and employer-employee relationships.

Odisha, a coastal state in eastern India, relies heavily on migrant labor for its booming construction sector, driven by infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, ports, housing), mining activities, and urban development under initiatives like the Sagarmala project and Smart Cities Mission. Migrant workers, primarily from states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh, form a significant portion of the workforce. They often migrate seasonally or long-term due to limited opportunities in their home states. Migrant construction workers in Bhubaneswar encounter exploitative practices rooted in the "Dadan Labour" system (prevalent in Odisha), where contractors (Sardars/Khatadars) recruit via promises of monthly piece-rate wages but often withhold payments, provide minimal rail fare, and isolate workers in remote sites. Existing studies highlight migration as a driver of surplus labor in urban areas, contributing to unemployment and underemployment (Bremner, 1979). Construction workers represent a heterogeneous group with easy entry but high geographical mobility influenced by socio-economic factors (Subrahmanian et al., 1982; Das, 1992). Skills are acquired through experience rather than formal training, and the industry is categorized into unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled roles. Informal workers in formal sectors lack security, facing seasonal work, low wages, and risks. This study builds on these insights, focusing on Bhubaneswar's context.

Mohapatra, & Sarkar (2023) conducted a multistage cross-sectional study involving 520 urban construction workers in Bhubaneswar, revealing heightened injury risks among younger workers (<40 years) and those with limited experience. The study underscores inadequate attention to workplace health and safety, emphasizing the urgent need for local authority intervention. Open-access versions and the journal page are available for further details. Nanda (2018) provides early empirical evidence on the socio-economic profile, income, and living conditions of migrant construction workers in Bhubaneswar. The study highlights the challenges of informality, low educational attainment, and vulnerabilities in settlement and labor markets. Mohanty et al. (2024) explored occupational health risks in a study based in Bhubaneswar's rural health training catchment area, surveying approximately 260 workers associated with nearby construction sites. The findings confirm a high prevalence of injuries, driven by task-specific risks and low adoption of personal protective equipment (PPE). Mukherjee, Paul and Pathan (2016) divulges that as seasonal migrants stay for a short period in the city they do not get their children admitted to any municipal school in the urban area. Dogra (1991, pp 17-21) in his article "Horrendous plight of construction labour" opines that accidents and diseases account for a heavy loss of worker. Shanmugam (1997, pp 43) explains that some unhealthy and dangerous work surroundings can lead to dissatisfaction among workers which results in poor job performance and reduced productivity.

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of labor dynamics and challenges faced by migrant workers in Bhubaneswar's construction industry, a critical yet understudied sector in urban India. By employing a mixed-methods approach, it examines recruitment, skill acquisition, working conditions, wage disparities, and socio-economic vulnerabilities, highlighting the exploitation of unskilled workers and inadequate welfare provisions. The research contributes to sociology, labor studies, and urban development literature by contextualizing informal labor within Bhubaneswar's rapidly urbanizing landscape. It underscores the need for policy interventions to enhance labor rights and formalization, offering valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and practitioners addressing informal employment challenges.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of the study are:

- To examine the labor supply, recruitment patterns, and skill acquisition among construction workers.
- To assess the working conditions, wage structures, and income potential of workers.
- To evaluate job satisfaction, mobility, and employer-employee relationships.

The exploratory-descriptive research design has been used for this study. The primary data was collected through in-depth interview method. The secondary data was collected from government Reports and Statistics, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Academic and Research Papers, Smart City Project Documents, unpolished document. The study is conducted in Bhubaneswar city, the capital of Odisha, India, a rapidly urbanizing area with significant construction activity in both governmental and private sectors. The focus is on formal construction projects where informal workers are employed, particularly at key labor gathering points such as Kalpana Chawk, Forest Park, Khandagiri, CRP Square, Kalinganagar, and Samantarapura Chawk. The population consists of informal workers (skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled) engaged in formal construction projects in Bhubaneswar city, including masons, carpenters, electricians, laborers, and other categories of workers. A sample of 200 workers was selected to represent the diverse categories of workers in the construction industry. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents based on their skill levels and their availability at major labor gathering points or construction sites. This ensured representation of different skill categories and socio-economic backgrounds.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

In the context of Bhubaneswar's construction industry, push-pull migration theory explains the continuous inflow of migrant workers from rural and tribal regions of Odisha and neighboring states. Persistent rural distress—manifested through agrarian uncertainty, landlessness, indebtedness, and lack of non-farm employment—acts as a strong push factor. Simultaneously, rapid urbanization, infrastructure expansion, and real estate growth in Bhubaneswar create a pull through steady demand for cheap and flexible labour. Informal contractor networks further facilitate this mobility, often binding workers through advances and debt. Dual labour market theory situates migrant construction workers within the secondary segment of the urban labour market. In Bhubaneswar, migrants are predominantly engaged as casual, daily-wage labourers without written contracts, social security, or job stability. Their concentration in hazardous and low-paid tasks reflects structural labour segmentation, where migrants are excluded from the primary labour market occupied by local or skilled workers. From a Marxian perspective, migrant workers function as a reserve army of labour, enabling capital accumulation by keeping wages low and labour conditions flexible. Informal employment arrangements allow builders and contractors to extract surplus value through long working hours, wage suppression, and minimal investment in worker safety and welfare. This reproduces systemic exploitation while sustaining urban growth.

#### 4. Findings

Work situation is a general term which means the environment or conditions to which the workers are subject to at the workplace. A study on work situation in construction industry must start with an analysis of construction process as such. Construction process is unquestionably labour intensive and involves a series of odd jobs without protection. It is area specific because of the localized nature of the demand of work. The duration of the work on given work sites is temporary in nature. The labour dynamics depend on the nature and pattern of supply of labour and skills, recruitment patterns, background experience and the process of wage determination.

In the formal construction sector, informal workers are characterized by the absence of formalized work relationship. Here labour is treated as an irregular commodity. The labourers do not have regular jobs and their income and working conditions are not standardized and controlled. In the construction industry, the stigma of unsystematic life, the absence of permanent work location, a varying low income and low wage are the fate of migrant construction labourers in Bhubaneswar City. In the formal construction sectors majority of workers are scared of their health and they claim that lack of social security has made life of workers hell. They do not have any comprehensive welfare scheme from the government side. In the formal construction sector, work is sought and found by the informal workers by means of personal contact. Construction work is not bound by age or sex. Both men and women, young and old generally do the same work under approximately the same working conditions.

#### 5. Labour Supply and Training

The building construction workers represent a heterogeneous group characterized by "easy entry" from the job. They move from place to place from one contractor to other at different geographical locations. Such geographical mobility among the workers is governed by a set of subjective factors moulded by the socio-economic background of the workers. People are assumed to move in a better direction of earning and living. So also is the choice and chance of the people towards a city life than country life, with the resultant change of job and place of work. As discussed in the previous chapter, they appear to have come from diverse background. Pre-job networking has also drawn them towards this occupation.

Table -1: Pre-Job Networking

Sl no	Sources of network	Total no	Percentage
1	Relatives, friends and neighbourhood	71	35.5
2	Direct contact with the contractor	99	49.5
3	Middlemen	20	10
4	By introduction of co-workers	07	3.5
5	Any other	03	1.5
	Total	200	100

From the above table, it can be obtained that majority of the construction workers get job in construction industry by personal contacts. But of the total respondents, a sizable chunk of 35.5 per cent workers got job through relatives, friends and neighbours. The construction workers gather and keep waiting at one place for someone to come and hire their services for a particular job. They go wherever they are taken. Studies reviewed earlier suggest that migration is a major cause of surplus labour in towns that it contributes to the rise of unemployment and under employment that it causes the growth that it leads to overall decline in the quality of urban life. The respondent’s habitat background and their experience in the construction industry were seen.

**Table -2: Habitat and Years of Experience**

Habitat	0-5 years	5to 10 years	10-15 years	Above 15 years	Total no (%)
Rural	72 (36)	42 (21)	19 (9.5)	11 (5.5)	114 (72)
Urban	37 (18.5)	17 (8.5)	02 (01)	Nil	56 (28)
Total	109 (54.5)	59 (29.5)	21 (10.5)	11 (5.5)	200 (100)

Majority of 36 percent of workers with rural origin were working as construction labourers since 0 -5 years and 18.5 percent urban workers were working as construction labourers for 0-5 years. 21 percent rural workers and 8.5 percent with urban origin were working in construction industry of Bhubaneswar city for 5 to 10 years. 9.5 percent rural workers were working for 10to 15 years in Bhubaneswar. All those found in the above 15 years category were only of rural origin. The above table reveals, it is seen that majority of construction workers were pre-dominantly of rural origin of longer years of experience in construction work. It is observed that majority of the construction workers from rural and urban area had been working in the construction sector of Bhubaneswar city for a period of 0-5 years. It is also observed that very few workers had-been working in the construction sector of Bhubaneswar for more than 15 years. No urban worker was found - working for more than 15 years in Bhubaneswar.

Information regarding the number of family members engaged in construction industry can be seen from the following table:

**Table 3: Number of Family Members Engaged**

SI. No.	Number of family members engaged	Total Number	Total Percentage
1.	1-3	65	32.5
2.	2-3	21	10.5
3.	3-4	4	2.0
4.	4 and above	1	0.5
5.	Self only	109	54.5
Total		200	100

32.5 percent construction workers engaged 1-3 members in same construction work. 10 percent of the responding engaged 2-3 members of the family in the same type of job. Similarly, family with 3 to 4 member engaged in the same construction work was found in case of 2 percent of workers. Single member case was found in case of majority of the workers in the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city.

The recruitment of labour in construction project of Bhubaneswar city under study is the responsibility of the principal contractor who is allowed to employ either directly or through sub-contractors or agents to maintain the required rate of progress. One of the principal contractors said: "I know how to get work done efficiently. Based on the nature of the project, I select sub-contractors and labourers whom I consider most suitable, and I expect them to work according to my temperament and approach to work. I often undertake more than one project at a time and manage them simultaneously." The labour contractor has been surviving as the chief mechanism for the recruitment of labour in the building construction sector of the city. In the recruitment process, the labour contractor acts as an intermediary between the principal contractor and the workers. The principal contractor solely depends on the labour contractor for supplying labour and matching the supply as per demand of various skills, fixing reasonable wages. Then the skilled workers are exclusively recruited for unskilled jobs such as earth work, loading or unloading of bricks shifting of stone chips and their concreting etc.

The recruitment may be of three types such as (1) regular, (2) up to work and (3) daily basis. "Regular employment" means those who are employed on regular basis and get job more or less throughout the seasons by moving from one construction site to another. The job is exclusively fit to the skilled workers i.e. carpenters, mason whose number is very less. The workers are recruited on "up to work period basis". The workers work on a fixed construction site and they work and get wage till the accomplishment of the work. After the contract is finished, they move to another work site to search for another job. "Day to day employment" is the most typical feature of construction industry in Bhubaneswar city. The workers are recruited on daily basis. They may work today, but in the next day, they may not get a work. In this type of recruitment, there is no assurance of getting a job for any fixed period even on the given work situation.

In construction industry, the workers do not get regular work throughout the season. They get work on short term basis and in a precarious way. Every single day these odd job men must look for new work. They get information from their families, acquaintances, neighbours and friends. "Kalpana cinema hall chawk" of Bhubaneswar is the meeting place where hundreds of workers gather in the early morning with a hope to get a job. Basant is one of the female migrant workers who divulged that there are no safety tools like helmets, gloves, or belts. Injuries are common, but medical expenses are our own responsibility. If someone gets seriously injured, they are simply replaced. We are treated as replaceable labour. There is little respect, and verbal abuse is common. Since we are migrants, we feel we have no voice to complain".

## 6. Training

Training is the vital aspect of every worker's life. The skill of a worker is duly recognized and he is paid for it. Training of a worker aims at imparting knowledge to a worker to improve his skill and technique to find out a better job. In primitive society, training was also imparted to the worker. But it was hereditary

in nature. We call it ascriptive skill. The workers were learning work while they were working with the parents. For instance, the son of a mason learns the art of massonary from his father. The formal training is not imparted to masons, carpenter, smith etc. But, the electrician, and the waterman take formal training to acquire the achieved skill.

Unfortunately, in the construction sector, the training of worker was totally absent. They had not received any basic formal training by special trainer. In the construction industry, many workers were skilled, semi-skilled not by formal training but by virtue of long experience. Neither any employer nor any effective institutional agency imparted any kind of training to the informal construction workers .In Bhubaneswar city; there were no single formal institutions to impart training to workers at different levels of skills. The employer did not sponsor the name of the person who would impart training to workers. Most of the employer felt that if they imparted training to construction workers, then, the workers would be skilful and they would demand high wage which cannot be compensated by the employees.

For systematic training to the informal construction workers, the employer needs plenty amount of investment which was impossible. In case of informal the workers, the employer did not wish to impart training to workers because their job was temporary. The employers did not look at any short term benefits alone, they had to be dynamic to perceive the long term, useful of any scheme. The main purpose of workers training is aimed at raising the productive capacity of workers and continuity of jobs.

The temporary nature of job of the workers in construction industry makes the employer not to have extra commitment towards employees' welfare like training, special amenities etc. The employer does not take interest to impart formal training to the worker because deputation of worker for training may hinder the work-process and once the worker is trained, he will definitely demand high wages which may prove out to be an additional burden for the employer. No employer thinks about the worker's training for the employers training means "experience" only and they only employ the experienced workers

## **7. Skills Involved:**

The skill acquisition in construction industry is done largely through personal experience. Skill is the biggest security of the informal workers in the formal construction job market. The skilled workers in present labour market have greater advantage to dictate their wage rates and terms of employment. But unskilled workers fail to know about their wages and, therefore, becomes subject to exploitation in more than one ways. Today, the skilled workers are scarce and that increases that their demand in the labour market.

The job categories and occupational industry are categorized under as many as 25 heads (Subrahmanian, et, al, 1982: 50, Das, 1992). Subrahanaian (Ibid) distributes these 25 categories of workers under three heads: unskilled workers, semiskilled workers and skilled workers. The unskilled workers include weight lifter, dust lifter, digging worker, watchman and water man. Under the semi-skilled work category, centering workers .steel bender, concrete mixer, brick layer, glass fitter and scaffolder are included.

There are 14 categories of skilled workers. They are sand blast operators, carpenter, plastering operator, mason, tiles fitters, painters, plumbers, (iron) cement finishers, glaziers, electricians, blacksmiths, pipefitters, machine operators, white washers etc.

In the present research, three types of workers were found i.e. skilled semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The skilled workers constituted 6 percent of the total respondents. The semi-skilled workers were 39.5 percent. The unskilled category of workers represented 54.5 percent of the total respondents. Less the involvement of skill, more is their number as evidenced from the aforesaid data. There exist an inverse variation relationship between skill involvement and number of workers engaged in construction industry. In the odd job of construction, the skill is gained through experience. An attempt has been made to study the workers tenure of experience in construction industry vis-a-vis their habitat and educational background.

Table-4: Distribution of Respondent by Educational Background, Habitat and Experience in Construction

Sl.no	Migration	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	Above 15 years	Total No (%)
1	Rural	72 (36)	42 (21)	19 (9.5)	11 (5.5)	114 (57)
2	Urban	37 (18.5)	17 (8.5)	02 (01)	--	56 (28)
	Total	109 (54.5)	59 (29.5)	21 (10.5)	11 (5.5)	200 (100)
	Education Level					
1	Illiterate	31 (15.5)	14 (07)	04 (02)	02 (01)	51 (25.5)
2	Just literate	22 (11)	15 (7.5)	04 (02)	03 (1.5)	44 (22)
3	Primary School	29 (14.5)	14 (07)	05 (2.5)	03 (1.5)	51 (25.5)
4	Middle School	09 (4.5)	12 (06)	02 (01)	03 (1.5)	26 (13)
5	High School	14 (07)	04 (02)	06 (03)	-	24 (12)
6	Very High	04 (02)	-	-	-	04 (02)
	Total	109 (54.5)	59 (29.5)	21 (10.5)	11 (5.5)	200 (100)

This table gives information regarding the distribution of respondent by educational background, habitat and experience in construction industry. Highest numbers of respondents have gathered experience in the

construction industry up to 5 years and those who worked in the industry for more than 15 years, represent only 5.5 percent of the total respondents. None with urban background was found in the above 15 years category. With the increase in years of experience under each category, the number of respondent tends to decline. Workers with rural background had larger experience in the construction industry than those migrating from the urban areas. The problem of unemployment has been so acute that even very highly educated are found working in the construction sector till they are suitably absorbed elsewhere. All those highly educated workers were, found in the below 5 years of experience category.

## 8. Working Condition

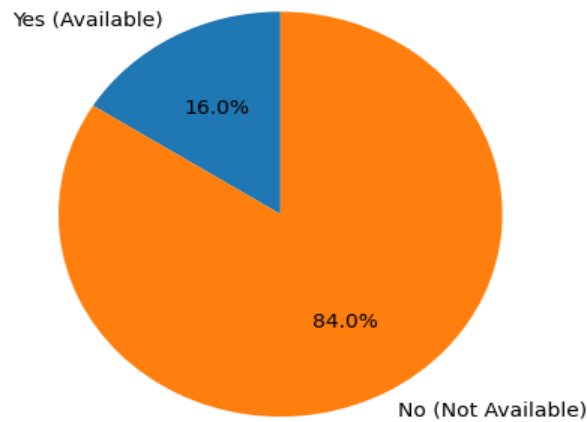
The construction workers are the life - blood of the construction taking place in Bhubaneswar city. They build big bridges, flyovers and sky cappers and live in Jhopadpatis, without the basic amenities such as municipal water supply, sewerage system and electricity. They work from dawn to dusk .But they have been denied their due rights , pride and sense of accomplishments and involvement in their work while we have always appreciated the aesthetic value of their work, yet they have always remained for us units of manpower to be abused and slaved.

In construction industry, the informal workers work in a very wretched working condition. Their condition is very precarious because of (i) the abundant supply of labour available (ii) the work is not specific in so far as labour may be spent in entirely different economic locations on consecutive days and (iii) finally, casual labour is not bound by age, both men and women, young and old do the same work under approximately the same condition. (Jan Breman; 1979; 135).

Ratnakar narrated that “We work for long hours at construction sites under open conditions, often exposed to heat, dust, rain, and noise. There is no fixed timing; work depends on the contractor’s demand and site pressure.” Sita replied that we continue working because we have no other option. Even though the work is hard and risky, it is necessary for our survival.”

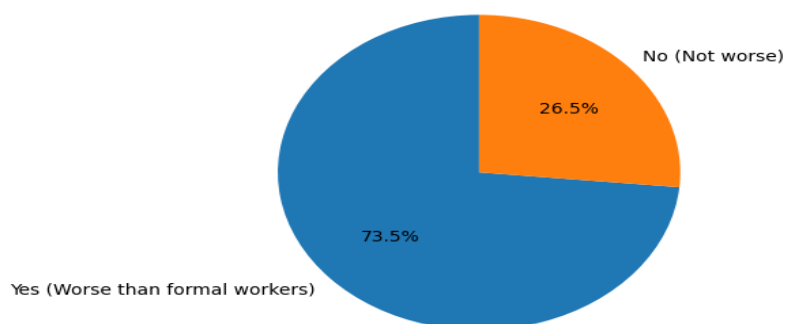
Sometimes, the contractor picks them up from the place of gathering in order to save time of the workers in reaching the work site which is normally at the interest of the contactors. Those reach the place of work on foot make it a point to start early in the morning and return home very late in the evening. After their return to their respective home, they cook for themselves and have their dinner. They felt to have sound sleep thinking about the availability of next day’s work.

Availability of Work in All Seasons



Construction work is seasonal in nature. Majority of the construction workers do not get employment in all seasons because (i) in rainy season, the construction work goes to a standstill position (ii) due to agriculture season, the workers went back to their native place to look after the agriculture business. When the agriculture season is over, they migrate to Bhubaneswar to find a job. But it becomes difficult for them to get another job. So 16 percent of the respondents opined that they got same type of work in all seasons. 84 percent stated that they didn't get any work in all seasons. The workers who got job in all seasons were basically skilled ones because in construction industry, their demand is more, and number is less. In the formal construction sector, the condition of the informal workers is different from the formal workers. Relevant information can be obtained regarding the condition of both types of workers in Bhubaneswar city from the following table.

Condition of Informal Workers Compared to Formal Workers



It is found that in the construction industry, the condition of the informal workers is worse than the formal workers. Majority of 73.5 percent of construction workers replied that their condition was worse than that of the worker in the formal sector. The reasons are (a) temporary nature of job caused monopoly of wage payment and exploitation, (b) lack of social security coverage, (c) lack of fixed wage, no leave with pay, (d) lack of trade unionism, (e) lack of accommodation, water facilities and lack of leisure which had certainly worsened their condition. The job of the formal sector workers is permanent and no case of exploitation is found among them because of trade unionism and leave with pay. Socio-economic security coverage is duly granted to the formal workers. A group of workers during the course of interview replied

that “We are poor and ill-fated people, and our work depends entirely on the wishes of the contractor. If the contractor calls us, we get work; if not, we remain unemployed. We have no power to bargain or demand fixed wages. Questioning wages or conditions may result in immediate removal from work. In such conditions, we accept whatever wage is offered, as survival is more important than fairness.”

### 9. Income Potential and Wage Payment

In the construction industry, large number of informal workers with their family migrates to Bhubaneswar to earn their bread. They prefer to engage their family members in the same type of occupation to supplement their family income. The income of a worker varies according to his skill. As such, a skilled worker earns more than the semi-skilled and unskilled workers. It is observed that in some construction sites, the income of women workers is a little bit less than their male counterparts. A worker may get less monthly income from the construction work due to more absence from work but he might have worked and earned much more during the days of absence. After the completion of work, the workers placed auto rickshaws for 2 hours during night which brought extra income to the family. The wages of construction workers are generally fixed under the minimum wages act from time to time.

Banamali revealed that “Our wages are not fixed or written anywhere. Sometimes payments are delayed for weeks, and we have to depend on advances. If we ask questions, the contractor can remove us from work the next day.”

Every construction worker wants he will work up to his ability and be paid his due wage according to his ability. But, it is a typical feature of construction industry of Bhubaneswar that most of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers don’t get their prevailing wage rate because their demand is less as their number is more. It is also marked out that the skilled workers are not exploited on the basis of their wage as their demand is high in labour market as is evident from the following table.

Table-7: Type of Skills and Wage Rate

Type of skills	Payment at prevailing wage rate	Payment at less than due	Total
Skilled	12 (6)	- -	12 (6)
Smi-skilled	10 (5)	69 (34.5)	79 (39.5)
Unskilled	25 (12.5)	84 (54.5)	109 (54.5)
Total	47 (23.5)	153 (76.5)	200 (100)

On the basis of skills and mode of payment of workers, it is found that all skilled (6.5) workers were getting their wage at the prevailing rate because the labour contractor didn’t want to annoy the skilled workers. Skilled worker leaving the work half way through could be a risk for the contractors. The labour

contractor knows well that getting a job for skilled workers is very easy because their demand is very high. A very few percent semi-skilled (5%) and unskilled (25%) were paid as per the prevailing wage rate because the labour contractor who provides the casual labourer to the main contractor takes out some amount as commission. This commission has an adverse bearing on the wage of labourers. One worker points out "when I should be paid Rs 60, I am only paid Rs 55. The balance amount of Rs 5 goes to the pocket of the labour contractor". The above statement proves that majority of the construction workers are not given their reasonable wage, although majority of them were paid regularly. They had no right to claim more than whatever amount was paid to them.

The supply of unskilled labour happens to be more than its demand for which some of the unskilled workers at times do not get job for them which results in a decline in their average monthly income. The following table gives information about the education level and average monthly income of the respondents.

Table-8: Education Level and Average Monthly Income

Sl.No	Income level	Illiterate	B.literate	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Very High	Total (%)
1	500-1000	35 (17.5)	23 (11.5)	20 (10)	07 (3.5)	13 (6.5)	02 (01)	100 (50)
2	1000-1500	11 (5.5)	18 (09)	28 (14)	19 (9.5)	10 (05)	02 (01)	88 (44)
3	1500-2000	02 (1)	02 (01)	03 (1.5)	-	-	-	07 (3.5)
4	2000 and above	03 (1.5)	01 (0.5)	-	-	01 (0.5)	-	05 (2.5)
	Total	51 (25.5)	44 (22)	51 (25.5)	26 (13)	24 (12)	04 (02)	200 (100)

The table 5.9 reveals that high level of education of respondents does not indicate any rise in their income. The situation evident is found rather to the contrary. Four respondents out of five from the highest income category were found from illiterate and barely illiterate category. In case of highly educated workers only one respondent could manage to earn Rs 2000 and above. None of them was found in the monthly income category of Rs 1500 to 2000. It can be concluded that in construction industry of Bhubaneswar city, worker's monthly wage is not determined according to their educational achievement. Rather, they earn their wage according to their type of skill and level of experience. Hence, the construction industry is one such case where the level of education has little bearing on the monthly income of the respondents.

From the following table (table 5.10) it can be observed that the higher the skill, the higher is the income and lower the skill, lower is the income. It is found that all the cases of unskilled and semi-skilled workers fall in the category of lower wage income group i.e. 500 to 1000. All the skilled construction workers constitute the highest income category. Thus, it can be safely concluded that there is a positive co-relation between skill level of workers and their income.

Table -9: Types of Skills and Average Monthly Income

Types of Occupation	Rs 500 to 1000/-	Rs 1000/- to 1500/-	Rs 1500/- to 2000/-	Rs 2000 and above	Total
Skilled	-	-	07 (3.5)	05 (2.5)	12 (06)
Semi-skilled	01 (0.5)	78 (39)	-	-	79 (39.5)
Unskilled	99 (49.5)	10 (05)	-	-	109 (54.5)
Total	100 (50)	88 (44)	07 (3.5)	05 (2.5)	200 (100)

From the table(5.10) it is seen that only 3.5 percent skilled workers earned Rs 1000 to 2000 and only 2.5 percent skilled workers earned Rs2000 and above. No skilled workers came under the wage structure of Rs 500 to 1000 and Rs 1000 to 1500. 49.5 percent unskilled workers earned Rs 500 to 1000. 39 percent semi-skilled workers and 5 percent unskilled earned Rs 1000 to 1500 per month. No semi-skilled and unskilled workers did fall under the wage structure of Rs 1500 to 2000 and above. Most of the skilled workers got better wage in comparison to the semi-skilled and unskilled workers. From the above table, it was found that majority of the respondents monthly salary came under Rs. 1000 to 1500 per month. The earning of a worker depended not only on the type of skill of workers but also on the number of the days they worked.

In the construction industry of Bhubaneswar, majority of the workers claimed that they had no other sources of income. They were solely dependent on construction work. Although, they made separate arrangements for extra income but they did not get time. After the day’s work completed, the workers came back home and did some extra work like selling vegetables, working in shops on contract basis. But their percentage was very insignificant.

Although overtime work can supplement the otherwise meager income of the respondent, very few of them had the opportunity to work on overtime basis. The construction industry of Bhubaneswar city is one such case where overtime work did not involve overtime wage. Sometimes, the workers are compelled to work more than the necessary labour time which may lead the workers to a lot of physical as well as mental torture. They are compelled to work on overtime basis without any surplus wage. Further, even if sometimes surplus wage is paid, the same is not at par with the job done. The workers are required to do work beyond the normal hours during the work relating to construction of R.C.C. roof centering etc. for which a very nominal tip is being paid.

The building construction activity is seasonal in nature and by working for more days during the construction period; they can increase the quantum of earnings in order to fill their hungry stomach during the off season. Workers were compelled to work beyond normal hours only when less number of workers

were available compared to the quantum of work to be accomplished in a stipulated time. 84.5 percent workers did not have the occasion to receive surplus payment for overtime work.

Some workers in some construction sites were paid on daily basis, weekly basis and some were paid on monthly basis. The labour contractor was paying partial wage to the workers in every day or week for their maintenance and the balance amount was paid to the workers at the time of their departure for their homes. The main purpose of the partial payment was to prevent the workers from leaving the work sites until the work was accomplished.

Table -10: Skill and Type of Payment

Sl.no	Types of Skills	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Piece of work	Total No (%)
1	Skilled	01 (0.5)	03 (1.5)	05 (2.5)	03 (1.5)	12 (06)
2	Semi-Skilled	33 (16.5)	35 (17.5)	10 (05)	01 (0.5)	79 (39.5)
3	Unskilled	70 (35)	35 (17.5)	03 (1.5)	01 (0.5)	109 (54.5)
	Total	104 (52)	73 (36.5)	18 (09)	05 (2.5)	200 (100)

From the above table, pertinent information regarding the skills and type of payment of workers in construction industry can be obtained. It can be seen that 5(2.5) out of 12 (6%) skilled workers preferred to receive their wage on monthly basis. Among them, a negligible one respondent received his wage daily. It is evident that more is the level of skill of the respondent; more is the preference towards monthly payment of wage. They mostly prefer the monthly wage system because a lump sum payment at the end of the month can enable them to make some major purchase for their house. Very few who preferred piece rate work, were found in the skilled category. 16.5 percent semi-skilled and 35 percent unskilled workers received their wage on daily basis. Many of (17.5%) semi-skilled and unskilled workers received their wage on weekly basis.

One contractor remarked that "most of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers prefer to receive their wage on daily wage basis to manage their family. So, we try our level best to pay them wage on daily basis. "Our payment to worker depends on the payment we receive from our clients". Most of the workers irrespective of the level of skills preferred payment of wage on daily basis. The workers who preferred monthly payment were very few in number compared to those who received payment on weekly basis.

It is the very characteristic of the informal sector workers that there is no fixing about their place of work, amount of wage and the time of payment as against their counterparts in the formal sector, while all the workers in the formal construction sector, come under social security coverage. The concept is totally unknown to the informal sector. Under these circumstances, the informal workers do not get the due wage in spite of the fact that they know that they work for the formal construction sector. Such difference is more in case of unskilled workers than the semi-skilled and skilled workers. The unskilled workers lack

necessary potentiality and courage for bargaining for which they tend to suffer more. Most of the skilled workers consider themselves too comfortable in this respect. The relative scarcity of skilled workers would have pulled up the highest wages faster than the unskilled workers wage rates and thus widened the wage differentials.

### 10. Job Satisfaction, Job Change and Social Mobilization

Job satisfaction is the primary goal of every worker in the establishment. If a person’s job fits to his educational qualification and skill then he will definitely derive job satisfaction out of it. But in the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city, very few workers are satisfied with their job. It is also seen that majority of highly and very high qualified workers were very much dissatisfied with their work because their job did not fit to their qualification and skill. One of the college passed respondent said “today, we often question the value of education itself because the job market has become extremely precarious and uncertain. For people like us, the primary concern is not degrees or qualifications but earning our daily bread and ensuring survival. When the stomach is hungry, any kind of work becomes necessary, whether or not it matches our education. In such circumstances, education appears less meaningful than immediate employment, as survival takes priority over long-term aspirations.”. Mere dissatisfaction may not entitle them to go in for a change of job. Many workers had been working in the construction industry since decades. So they did not want to change their job because they were acquainted with their work. Some workers preferred to continue in the same work as they were getting direct help from the contractor and their payment of wages was regular. It is found that most of the skilled workers are satisfied with their job because they have good demand in the construction job markets or have better bargaining ability. The following table gives information about the level of education, types of skill and job satisfaction of the workers in the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city.

Table-11: Education, Type of Skills and Job Satisfaction

Education	Job Satisfaction		
	Yes	No	Total No
Illiterate	30 (15)	21 (10.5)	51 (25.5)
Barely illiterate	15 (7.5)	29 (14.5)	44 (22)
Primary	20	31	51
Middle	11 (5.5)	15 (7.5)	26 (13)
High	07 (3.5)	17 (8.5)	24 (12)
Very High	NIL	04 (02)	04 (02)
Total	76 (38)	124 (62)	200 (100)

Occupation			
Skilled	08 (04)	04 (02)	12 (06)
Semi-skilled	30 (15)	49 (24.5)	79 (39.5)
Un skilled	38 (19)	71 (35.5)	109 (54.5)
Total	76 (38)	124 (62)	200 (100)

The above table shows the job satisfaction of the workers in construction industry of Bhubaneswar city. 15 per cent illiterate workers were satisfied with their job. 7.5 per cent barely illiterate, 10 percent primary school educated, 5.5 percent middle school educated and 3.5 per cent high school educated were satisfied with their job. Not a single very highly educated respondent was satisfied with his job. 10.5 per cent illiterate, 14.5 per cent barely illiterate, 15.5 per cent primary educated, 7.5 per cent middle school educated. 8.5 per cent high school educated, 2 per cent very highly educated were dissatisfied with their present occupation.

It is observed that majority of illiterate workers were satisfied with their job because they knew that they could not be shifted to any other job. Among the primary and middle school educated, the percentage of dissatisfaction is more than the satisfaction. Basically, the high school and college level educated were very much dissatisfied with their present occupation, because it did not fit to their qualification. It is also amply clear that the higher is the level of education, the higher is the dissatisfaction with the present job. While co-relating the skill level of the respondents and their job satisfaction, it was found that higher is the skill, more is the satisfaction with the present job. 4% skilled workers out of total 6% are very much satisfied with their job. 19.5% semiskilled and only 20 percent unskilled workers were satisfied with their job. 2% skilled workers, 20% semi-skilled workers and 34.5% unskilled workers were dissatisfied with their present job. It seems that majority of skilled workers were satisfied with the present job because they got high wage, better facilities in comparison to semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The percentage of satisfied and dissatisfied among the skilled workers was more or less the same who expected the scope for themselves to rise to the skilled category. But it is observed that majority of unskilled workers were dissatisfied with their present job due to low wage, lack of care and exploitation by the employer. Another thing is found that those who were satisfied with their present jobs had been serving in the construction activity since a decade or more with little alternative to switch over to other occupations.

The job change in relation to duration of work is a better indicator of the mobility process of a workforce. In the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city, the low wage earning and casual nature of job do motivate them to change the job. But their earning profile and poor education background must not be enabling them to perceive effective desire for a change or in fact to change a job of higher income advantage in other economic activity within or outside the city.

Table -12: Income and Job Change

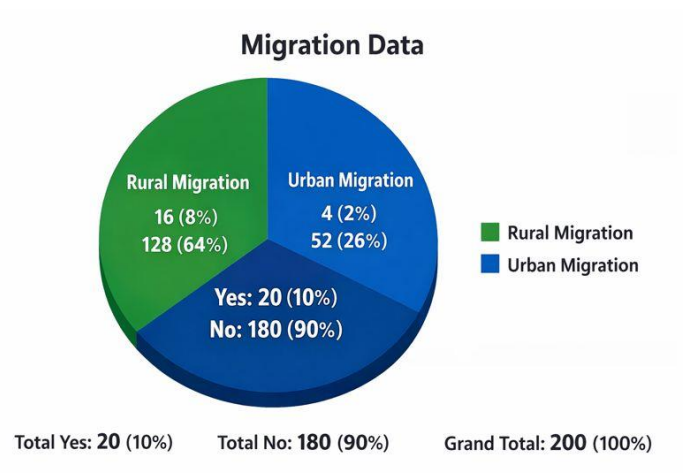
Sl.no	Job Change	Rs 500- 1000	1000- 1500	1500- 2000	2000 &above	Total
1	For permanent Job	30 (15)	30 (15)	04	02 (01)	66 (33)
2	For Better Wage	09 (4.5)	16 (08)	-	02 (01)	27 (13.5)
3	Want of Employment	13 (6.5)	07 (3.5)	-	-	20 (10)
4	Better Working Condition	07 (3.5)	04 (02)	-	-	11 (5.5)
5	Want no Change	41 (20.5)	31 (15.5)	03 (1.5)	01 (.05)	76 (380)
	Total	100 (50)	88 (44)	07 (3.5)	05 (2.5)	200 (100)

From the above table, it is seen that majority of 30 per cent workers with income group of Rs.500 to Rs.1000/- wanted to change their job because they were interested for a permanent job. It is also seen that majority of higher income group (Rs.1000 to 2000 and above income category) wanted to job change for permanent job. Even 1 per cent of higher income group of workers (2000 and above) wanted to change their job because they aspired for better wage. The lower income group of workers wanted to change their job for better working condition (5.5%). It is seen that even not a single respondent of high income group wanted to change his job and wanted to maintain the status quo. Among the income group of Rs.500 to 1500, 10 per cent sample Workers wanted to change their job because they were interested to get a job near the native place.

Majority of workers were interested to join a permanent job. They wanted to be a peon or even a watchman, sweeper, a cleaner in a government office where there is security of employment and the job would be less strenuous. A large chunk of worker those who desire to change their job, move around the income category from Rs.500 to 1500. Those very few from the higher income categories in the construction industry (6%) who wanted the change of the present job, had permanent job and better wage in mind. The analysis of the supply of labour in the formal construction industry of Bhubaneswar city may be supplemented with a careful examination of the mobility of workers. In the construction industry, the mobility is exclusively conditioned by the availability of jobs. Mobility means the movement of workers from one employment to another in pursuit of certain well led objectives. Mobility is rare in case of the construction workers of Bhubaneswar city. The semi- skilled workers with due efforts can get promotion into a skilled and the skilled workers can get promotion to the level of high skilled workers without any formal training. The mobility profile of the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city indicates that construction workers can be said to be mobile only in a peculiar sense of moving from one work site to another under the same or different employer or from one casual to another casual work and from lower

paid to higher paid work but they are more or less of the same occupation and largely within the construction sector.

Table- 13. Migration Status and Scope for Mobility



Scope for vertical mobility for unskilled workers in the construction industry was rarely possible. Every worker joins his work with some hope that he will be elevated, but when he is deprived of it, frustration grows in his mind. From the above data, it is seen that 10 percent workers were elevated to the higher status and the rest 90 percent did not find scope for mobility. It is observed that only 8 percent workers who migrated from the rural areas, had perceived any scopes for promotion and only 2 percent migrated from urban area, had got promotion. In construction industry, job is temporary nature. They did not get chance to work at a particular construction site or with a single employer. So their seniority or merit was not considered. In case of the unskilled workers there was no ray of hope for promotion. Little mobility was possible for those who were close to the mistry or the employer. For example, an assistant mason got promotion to a mason after many years. Similarly, skilled mason keeps contact with the main contractor and becomes a sub-contractor and later on contractor.

### 11. Employer-Employee Relationship

In construction industry of Bhubaneswar, some workers felt that the employers were God for them. They provided food, clothing and shelter. This was the feeling of most innocent rural and poor workers. On the other side, some workers opined that the employees were born with exploitative nature. They never listened to the genuine demands of the workers. When the researcher asked the contractors some questions regarding the complaint of the employees, one of them said "we never try to exploit the workers because we were the workers a few year ago and we know the problem of a worker. Some workers unnecessarily blame us. We always want to establish a healthy and sound employer-employee relationships in the establishment" The employer-employee relationships in construction industry are not only contractual but also superficially cordial. Amidst dissatisfaction the employees found certain good things in their employer.

Table -14: Good Thing Found With the Employer

SI. No.	Good thing sound with employer.	Total Number	Total Percentage
1.	Cordial Behaviour	62	31
2.	Special benefits given by him	19	9.5
3.	Understanding and sympathies.	66	33
4.	Any other	15	7.5
5.	No need to know anything about our employer.	38	19.0
	Total	200	100

In each construction site, some good things are found with the employer. Majority of 31 percent workers opined that they liked their employer for good behaviour which attracted many informal workers to the formal construction sector. Majority of 33 percent respondents felt that they liked their employees for their good understanding capacity and sympathetic attitude. Only 9.5 percent workers stated that they found some special benefit from the employer. They were either close to the contractor or leaders of the workers. 7.5 percent workers liked the attitude of employer viz, punctuality and casual payment of wages for equal work. Only 19 percent worker didn't want to know anything about their employer. The employer knows how to get his work done and some of the workers felt that they have no option left than to work for the employers. The employers hardly tolerate late arrival at the work site.

Table -15: Types of Treatment by the Employer for Mobility

SI. No.	Employee's treatment for late coming	Total Number	Total Percentage
1.	Deduction from salary	28	14
2.	Scolding and assault	39	19.5
3.	Warning	106	53.0
4.	Threat to throw out	5	2.5
5.	No scope	22	11.0
	Total	200	100

The above table gives information about the treatment given by the employer when a worker comes late to the work site. It is seen that 14 percent workers claimed that as they came late to the work site, the employer deducted their wage. 19.5 percent workers were scolded and insulted by their employer for their

late arrival. Majority of respondents told that when they got late to reach the work site, they were warned by the employer. Only 2.5 percent workers were threatened by the employer to be thrown out from job and percent made it point to reach the workplace in time leaving no scope for the employer to misbehave. An attempt was made to see the nature of discrimination in the construction industry of Bhubaneswar city. Discrimination included the withdrawal of some facilities and benefits to some of the workers as against the offer. It was seen that late coming to the work site was allowed to some as against some others. Regular payment with additional benefits in cash and kind was given to some as against the others. Out of the total respondents, a sizable chunk of 52.5 percent respondent, believed that the discrimination in its worst form existed in the construction industry.

Table-16: Basis of Discrimination

SI. No.	Discrimination on the basis of	Total Number	Total (%) Percent
1.	Caste	09	4.5
2.	Religion	36	18
3.	Region	48	24
4.	Language	09	4.5
5.	Any other	03	1.5
6.	No discrimination	95	47.5
	Total	200	100

From the forgoing table, it can be seen that discrimination is made on the basis of caste, religion, language, colour of the skin. Discrimination on the basis of region is seen to be most rampant in the construction industry followed by discrimination on the basis of religion. Out of the total respondents of 52.5 percent felt discriminated, 42 percent felt that they were discriminated on the basis religion and region. Discrimination in construction industry of Bhubaneswar city brings greater frustration to the mind of the employees and becomes like a last straw at the camel back.

One of the workers replied that “At the worksite, we are treated differently because we are migrants. We are paid less than local workers for the same work and are given the hardest tasks. Our language, place of origin, and lack of local identity make us easy targets for abuse and neglect. We are the first to be removed when work slows down and the last to receive wages or benefits. Because we are outsiders and work under contractors, we have no one to speak for us and no power to resist this discrimination.”

## 12. Key Policies and Schemes

The primary framework is the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (BOCW Act), a central legislation that mandates state-level Welfare Boards to provide social security. It applies to workers engaged in construction for at least 90 days in the preceding year, aged 18-60. Funding comes from a 1% welfare cess on construction costs exceeding ₹10 lakh, collected since 1998. The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 (UWSSA) establishes National Social Security Board to formulate schemes like life/group insurance, health/maternity benefits,

and old-age protection. It covers 90% of India's informal workforce but suffers from poor funding (1.3% of GDP on social protection vs. global 20% average). e-Shram Portal (2021) refers to a national database for unorganized workers, registering over 280 million by 2023. It provides a unique ID for accessing schemes like accident insurance (₹2 lakh coverage) and links to PM-SYM pension. Construction workers can register online for streamlined access to BOCW benefits. In Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY, 2018) there is Health insurance up to ₹5 lakh/year for secondary/tertiary care. Over 50 crore informal workers covered, including construction laborers via e-Shram linkage. In Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) & Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), there is Low-premium insurance (₹436/year for PMJJBY life cover of ₹2 lakh; ₹20/year for PMSBY accident cover of ₹2 lakh).

In Odisha, unorganized workers employed in the organized sector—such as contract laborers, construction workers, and casual workers in formal establishments like factories, mines, or infrastructure projects—are primarily supported through state-level welfare boards and social security schemes. These align with the national Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, but are implemented via dedicated bodies like the Odisha Unorganized Workers' Social Security Board (OUWSSB) and the Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board (BOCWWB). The OUWSSB focuses on broader unorganized categories, including "labourers" who may work in organized settings, while the BOCWWB targets construction workers, a classic example of unorganized labor in organized projects. Registration via portals like e-Shram (national) or state boards is key for accessing benefits. Recent expansions (e.g., 2023) have included more categories and hiked payouts. Key schemes emphasize accident/death benefits, disability aid, maternity support, and education assistance, with no or minimal contributions required (bina mulya style, though not formally named as such in Odisha).

### **13. An Overview**

The study examines the working conditions of informal construction workers in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, adopting a mixed-methods research design. It analyzes key dimensions of the construction sector, including labour supply mechanisms, recruitment processes, skill differentiation, wage structures, job satisfaction, and broader socio-economic challenges. The findings indicate a clear stratification within the workforce: skilled workers experience relatively higher wages, greater employment stability, and better job satisfaction, whereas unskilled workers remain trapped in insecure employment marked by exploitation and heightened vulnerability. Critical issues identified include inadequate occupational safety measures, low and irregular wages, and the absence of effective welfare provisions, with migrant workers being disproportionately affected. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted policy interventions aimed at strengthening labour rights, improving safety standards, and promoting the formalization of employment in Bhubaneswar's construction sector. It contributes to sociological inquiry, labour studies, and debates on urban development and inequality.

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