



An Analysis on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Labour Engaged in Brassware Industry of U.P. (With Special Reference to District Mirzapur)

Deepali Walia^{a*}, Sudhansh Sharma^b

^{a,b}Department of Commerce, J. S. Hindu P.G. College, Amroha MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, U.P., India
Email Id: deepalichabbra@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper concerned is descriptive in nature. The objective of the paper is to investigate about the working, economic and living conditions of labour engaged in brassware industry of Mirzapur. It also throws light on the day to day challenges faced by the labour engaged in the aforesaid industry. The studies presented are based on random sampling and secondary data.

The brassware industry of Mirzapur is at the verge of extinction due to lack of technology, high cost of raw material and low profit margin. The labour engaged in this industry is poor and unskilled which is exploited by their employers. The paper suggests some measures to enhance the efficiency of labour along with improved productivity of the industry concerned.

Key words: Socio-economic conditions of Labour, Brassware Industry, Inefficient Marketing Strategy, Competition.

PAPER/ARTICLE INFO

RECEIVED ON: 08/09/2019

ACCEPTED ON: 22/12/2019

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Deepali Walia, Sudhansh Sharma (2019), "An Analysis on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Labour Engaged in Brassware Industry of U.P. (With Special Reference to District Mirzapur)", *Int. J. of Trade and Commerce-IJTC*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 298-306

1. INTRODUCTION TO MIRZAPUR

Mirzapur is located between latitude 23.52° to 23.32° and longitude 82.72° to 83.33°. It is spread over an area of 4521 sq. km. It is surrounded by Varanasi and Sant Ravidas Nagar on the north, Allahabad on the west, and towards south east its boundaries are contiguous with Varanasi district, Sonebhadra and the state of Madhya Pradesh. The district measures 64 km from east to west and 32 km. from north to south. District falls under the Vindhyachal Mandal and the headquarter is Mirzapur town. The district has four tehsils namely Sadar Mirzapur, Llalganj, Madiyan and Chunar. The district is divided into 12 blocks. It has 1 lok sabha and 5 assembly areas. (Wikipedia Mirzapur)

Presently Mirzapur city has the following major industries

1. Woolen Carpets and Durries
2. Brass and German Silver Utensils
3. Plaster of Paris Idols and Toys
4. Sandstone blocks and slabs

2. HYPOTHESIS

The labours engaged in the brassware industry of U.P. specially at Mirzapur are very poor and the owners of this industries exploit them and not give them proper wages, therefore, the status, standard of living, economic conditions could be improved when the labour get their wages according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948.

3. MIRZAPUR'S BRASSWARE INDUSTRY

Brass is an alloy of Copper and Zinc. This industry is unorganized, scattered and confined to the cottages of artisans. It is a home based industry with various linkages and relationship.

The industry is simple and it still uses old and outdated techniques of production. It faces the problem related to raw material, infrastructural design, unskilled labour, shortage of credit etc. The **major issues** of the aforesaid industry of Mirzapur can be summed up as follows:

1. **Expensive Raw Material**- With the advent of GST the price of raw materials have risen up and most workers at Mirzapur cannot afford these. Copper and Zinc are the two major raw materials for brass manufacture.
2. **Decreased Profit Margin**-Increased cost of raw material due to GST reduces the profit margin, thus, leading to a downfall in the wage rate of labour.
3. **Migrating labour**- Decreased profit margin is covered by decreasing the wage of labour. This forces the labour to migrate to other works.
4. **Lack of Credit**-The nature of industry is demand based i.e. when demand arises workers work in the industry and after the project they are rendered temporarily unemployed as the unit owners do not have enough money to give to workers.
5. **Outdated technology**- Lack of credit facilities itself suggest lack of investment in technical know-how of the industry. The industry is unorganized and using traditional techniques of production.
6. **Power cut problem**-Mirzapur city faces frequent power cuts which in turn reduces productivity. Use of generators, increase the cost of production. Moreover hardly a few artisans can afford a generator.

7. **Inefficient marketing strategies**-Since the brass utensil industry is scattered and unorganized and are confined to the cottages of artisans there is lack of a uniform marketing system.
8. **Competition from other brass manufacture centres**-There are many brass ware manufacture centres in Uttar Pradesh itself which gives a tough competition to the deteriorating brass-utensil industry of Mirzapur.
9. **Poor socio-economic condition of labour**- The labour engaged in this industry is poor and unskilled. They have improper working and living conditions which reduce their work efficiency.

4. WORKING CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

The labour engaged in this industry works at three levels which are as follows:-

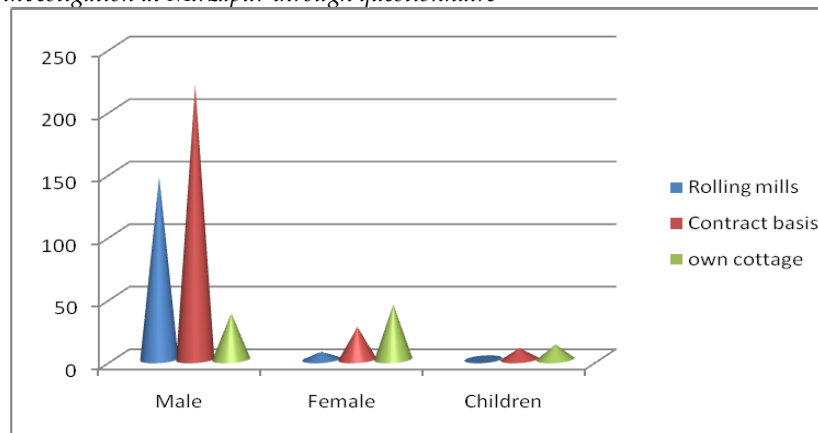
1. Working in factories or rolling mills
2. Working at cottages on contract basis
3. Working at own cottages/self employed.

In a primary survey conducted to investigate through questionnaire the nature of work of 500 labourers engaged in brassware industry of Mirzapur the following results were obtained.

***Sex-wise distribution of labour according to nature of work:-**

Nature of Job	Male labour	Female labour	Child labour	Total
Rolling mills	146	6	0	152
Contract basis	220	26	9	255
Own cottage Industry	37	44	12	93
Total	403	76	21	500

Source: Self investigation at Mirzapur through questionnaire



It is evident from the above table and diagram that 255 out of 500 workers work in cottages on contract basis i.e. 51 % of workforce is engaged on contract basis in the cottage industry. 30.4% workers i.e. 152 out of 500 work in rolling mills which produce brass chakka sheets. Only a few workers 18.6% i.e. 93 out of 500 are self employed and work in their own cottages. The aforesaid

table also reveals the-sex wise distribution of workers where male workers are maximum in number followed by female workers and child labour.

The condition under which a person works exerts a deep influence upon his health, efficiency psychology and work quality. Good working conditions enhance the productivity of a worker.

These conditions can be understood in the following heads:

1. **Poor General environment-** It includes proper ventilation, lighting and temperature. Ventilation can be natural through windows and ventilators or artificial through fans and other mechanical appliances. If industry indulges in creation of poisonous and harmful gases, effective ventilation is a must. Proper lighting either through natural or artificial way is required for protecting the eye-sight of workers. The temperature should be moderate in the working place.
2. There is lack of proper ventilation and lighting in the small cottages of artisans in brass utensil industry of Mirzapur. Moreover, huge power cut problem in the city aggravates the problem of lighting and temperature.
3. **Long Working Hours-**In accordance with Factories Act 1948 normal working hours are not more than 9 hours per day and 48 hours per week. The compensation of overtime work is twice the rate of ordinary pay. The overtime limit should not exceed from 54 hours per week or 9 hours per day work. Mirzapur brassware industry is scattered and unorganized and not within the ambit of aforesaid law. Workers work according to their order or demand of consumers. If they have a huge order work for 16-20 hours a day without getting overtime compensation.
4. **Unscheduled rests and holidays-** A holiday or work rest is essential for enhanced efficiency of every worker. A continuous work schedule causes fatigue and tiredness, thus, reducing the labour productivity. The workers of brass ware industry take rests according to their wish. Since the industry is confined to the cottages of artisans they do not have a proper schedule. But the workers of rolling mills have schedule for holidays and rests.
5. **Risky and hazardous process-**Certain processes of brassware industry involve a high degree of risks as compared to others. In the process of moulding, casting and soldering there is a two fold risk i.e. being burnt and injury during hammering. The local cottages do not have safety measures including gloves and masks to avoid fine particles during scraping process which can cause breathing problems.
6. **Poor sanitation** – The brassware industry is confined to the cottages of artisans which are congested and dirty. They lack basic sanitation facilities. They do not have proper drainage system. Though the situation is slightly better in the rolling mills.
7. **Poor health conditions-**As explained through above points that 70% workers have unsatisfactory working conditions. They have poor lighting, ventilation and sanitation and improper safety measures in hazardous processes. All this deteriorates the health conditions of workers engaged in the brass ware industry.

5. LIVING CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

Housing is one of the three basic needs of man including food and clothing. The living condition of a person has a significant impact on his health and efficiency. A good house i.e. comfortable and hygienic home is requirement for all. The poor workers of brassware industry of U.P. and

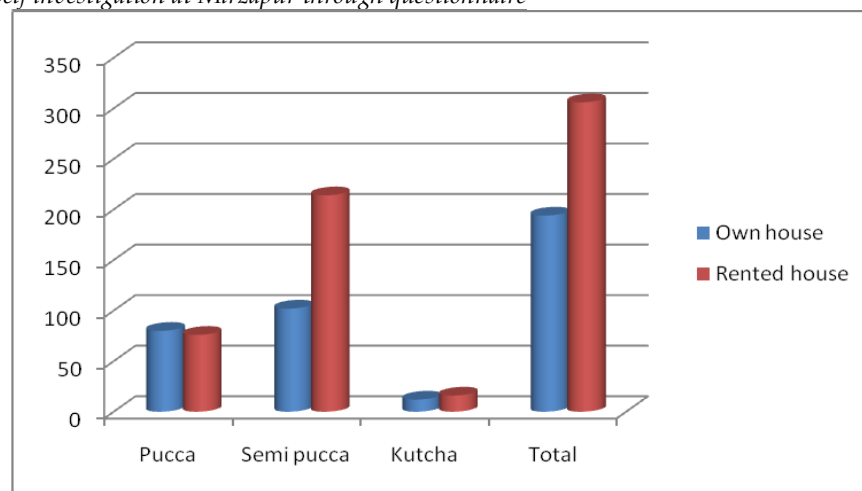
specially Mirzapur have poor dwelling conditions. The houses of the aforesaid labour are small and congested and their family size is large as compared to the capacity of the house. Most of the workers work at their own cottages or at the cottages of artisans on contract basis. There is improper ventilation, sanitation and lighting. Working at their living place causes more hazard because temperature of furnace, injurious gases and metal dust deteriorates the environment.

In a survey conducted on the type of houses of 500 workers engaged in the brassware industry of Mirzapur, the following results were obtained. It is clear that more than 60% workers reside in rented houses and about 40% workers are having a own house. Maximum workers stay in semi - pucca hoses. This depicts the poor housing condition of majority of labour engaged in brassware industry of Mirzapur.

***Housing conditions of brassware artisans**

Type of house	Own house	Rented house
Pucca	80	76
Semi-pucca	102	214
Kutchha	12	16
Total	194	306

Source: *Self investigation at Mirzapur through questionnaire



5. LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WORKERS

For an industrial worker, education does not only mean school or college education but it also includes skill or technical education in the process of production. Thus, the education of industrial workers can be studied under the following heads:

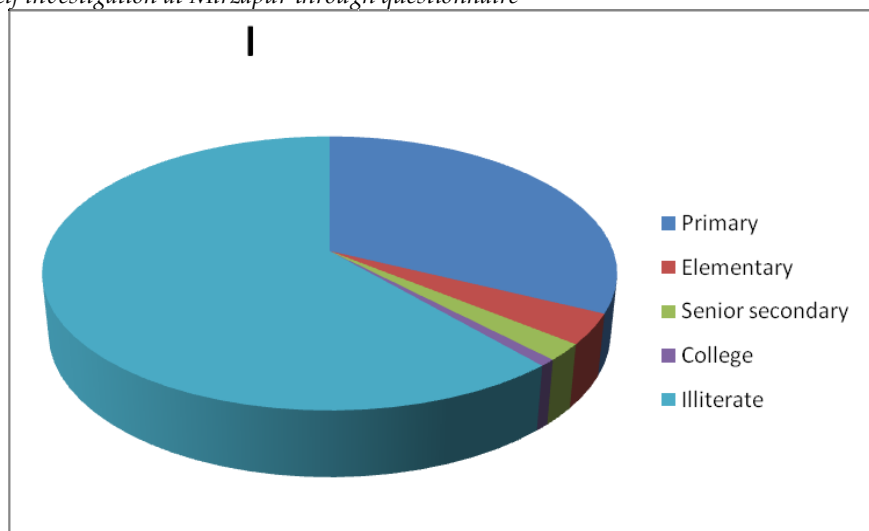
- 1. General Education-** Majority of workers engaged in U.P. brassware industry are illiterate. Only a few have completed their primary education. Negligible percentage of workers have completed secondary and college education. Thus, the labour engaged in the aforesaid industry can hardly read and write. In a survey conducted by the investigator on general education of 500 workers the following results were obtained.

Female education is much lower than their male counterparts. Child labour engaged is mostly illiterate as they never got a chance to visit a school. Some children were school dropouts.

* Education Status of labourers in brassware industry of U.P.

Education	Males	Females	Child	Total
Primary	146	10	5	161
Elementary	11	7	0	18
Senior secondary	10	0	0	10
College	4	0	0	4
Illiterate	232	59	16	307
Total	403	76	21	500

Source: Self investigation at Mirzapur through questionnaire



Technical Education/Training- The training facilities to artisans of this industry is almost negligible. The training centres are their houses or dwellings and their parents are their instructors. The children start to help their parents who work at their cottages. There is no formal training given to workers engaged in the industry. Neither the employer nor the state government bothers about providing technical training to workers engaged in this industry. There are only a few formal training programs organised by All India Handicrafts Board, U.P. State Brassware Corporation etc. Though now a days U.P. government has launched One District One Product Program. But this facilitates Brassware development only in Moradabad.

6. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

The economic conditions of labour are determined by the rate of wages, family size, income per head, level of expenditure, saving and indebtedness etc. The conditions of labour in the brassware industry of U.P. can be summed up as follows:

- 1. Low rate of wages-** The brassware industry of U.P. is confined to the cottages of artisans. It is totally unorganized and scattered and does not come under the ambit of Wage Laws of the

government i.e. Minimum Wage Act, 1948. The labour are mostly uneducated and unskilled so they are usually exploited by their employers.

2. **Large family size-** The workers engaged in this industry are illiterate and grab low wages even then they have large families as they think more children means more earning members through child labour. They hardly realize the expenditure required to raise more children.
3. **Low per head income-** Since the labour engaged in the brassware industry of Uttar Pradesh has low wage rate and large families their income per head is very low. Since most of the members are engaged in the same work so no one gets a high income.
4. **High Level of Expenditure-** Labour engaged in this industry is extravagant, intoxicants, regular gamblers etc. So even after getting low wages they have high expenditure because of their bad habits of smoking, drinking, gambling etc. This worsens the economic condition of their families.
5. **Low savings and high indebttness-** Since the level of expenditure of brassware workers is more than their income so there savings are negative. Means there is no savings and the workers take loans at high rate of interests from non-institutional money lenders to meet their expenditure.

PROCESS WISE WAGE RATES IN BRASSWARE INDUSTRY OF U.P.

Name of Process	Average wage rate per day for 8 hours in Rupees.
Silli-Gulli or Billet making	300
Pattern making, moulding and casting	250
Soldering	200
Scraping	200
Engraving	170
Enamelling	250
Polishing	180
Skilled rolling mill workers	4200 per month
Unskilled rolling mill workers	3100 per month

*Self investigation through questionnaire at Mirzapur.

The above table depicts the poor economic condition of labour engaged in brassware industry of Uttar Pradesh specially at Mirzapur. Low wages and high expenditure increases the indebttness of labour. High rates of interest charged by non-institutional money lenders further worsen the situation. Thus labour engaged in brassware industry of U.P. has poor socio-economic condition.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

An efficient, healthy and tension free labour is a pre-requisite for the success of any industry. It is a significant factor on which the productivity of any industry depends.

Thus, below a few suggestions are listed to improve the working, living and economic conditions of labour engaged in the brassware industry of Uttar Pradesh with special emphasis on Mirzapur district.

1. **Provision for decent rate of wages-**As already discussed the brassware industry is unorganized and scattered .It is confined to the cottages of artisans. Therefore, it does not fall under the ambit of government wage laws. The government should ensure the availability of a decent wage rate to all employed in the unorganized sector. Though for



unorganized sector Social Security Act has been introduced in 2008 and its implementation has many loopholes which have to be worked.

2. **Better working conditions-** The government should ensure availability of minimum basic requisites for setting up of any production unit. There should be proper ventilation and lighting. The workplace should have proper sanitation facilities along with safe drinking water. There should be measures to deal with any emergency medical situation.
3. **Measures to reduce risks involved in hazardous processes-** Brassware manufacture undergoes various processes right from moulding, hammering, soldering, scraping, polishing etc which involves various risks like burns as labour work near the furnace, hammering can cause injuries. Soldering, scraping have risks associated to breathing etc. The government should ensure availability of first aid measures at the industry. Masks and gloves should be made available at the industry. Proper safety uniform should also be issued to workers.
4. **Provision for training and skill development-**Government should ensure time to time training programs for labour engaged in the brassware industry of U.P. so that they can upgrade their technique and methods of production. Skilled labour fetches higher wage rate thus improving their standard of living. Huge investment should be made to ensure free and compulsory education upto at least primary level so that no worker is left illiterate.
5. **Hours of work-** The workers in brassware industry have no fixed work timings. Some days they do not work at all and some time they work for 16 hours or more without getting extra payment. The government should take action against those unorganised brass ware industry owner who are not strictly following. Factory Act with regard to maximum working hours of labour of unorganized sector and provisions for extra wage for overtime work should be given.
6. **Availability of cheap credit for decent housing-** The workers of aforesaid industry are poor and majority of them live in rented houses which are extremely congested, expensive and dirty. Cheap loans for making pucca houses will boost the morale of the workers. Though the present government has recently launched Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna but many of the workers are unaware and are afraid of any government scheme due to corruption and red tapism.
7. **Awareness and adult literacy programs-** The workers engaged in the aforesaid industry have large family size and are illiterate. They should be taught how to read and write along with the dangers of high population growth. Most of the labour has a habit of smoking, drinking alcohol etc. They should be made aware of the dangers of substance abuse.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **District Census Handbook. Mirzapur (2011).** Published by Directorate of Census Operations, Uttar Pradesh.
- [2]. **Gazetteer of India Uttar Pradesh District Mirzapur. (1988).** Published by the Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- [3]. Brief industrial profile of Mirzapur district. Published by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India.

- [4]. **Gupta, Krishna Gopal. (2011)** "Critical study of declining conditions of brass metals utensil industry in Vindhyachal Mandal" (with special reference to Mirzapur district), Ph.D. Thesis Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University, Jaunpur.
- [5]. **Mirzapur**", Wikipedia The free encyclopedia, accessed 19 September 2019.
- [6]. **Mohammad, Sajid (1992).** "Export Potentialities of Brassware Industry of U.P.", Ph.D. Thesis Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
- [7]. **Rajeev Ranjan Yadav (2018).** "Brassware Industry in Mirzapur District: U.P. Major Issues", Ph.D. Thesis of Hari Singh Gour University Sagar
- [8]. **Rajendra P. Mangain Sher Verick (2017),** The state of employment in Uttar Pradesh Unleashing the potential for inclusive growth. Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow.
- [9]. **Sekar, R. Helen. (2007).** "Impact of technological change on the demand for child labour in brassware industry of Moradabad" .V.V. Giri National Labour institute, Noida.