



## Appraisal of the Occupation and Wage Status of Brick Factory Workers in Chandragiri Municipality, Kathmandu

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### Abstract

*The brick factories are manufacturing industries which apply labour intensive techniques. Workers in a large number have been involved in the brick factories but their occupation and wage status is unknown. The authorized government agencies have shown less concern to this aspect of the workers. To this backdrop, the present study was conducted to investigate the occupational load and wage status of the workers in brick factories. The study made use of descriptive research design, collecting primary data. The data were collected adopting interview and observation techniques. The analysis of data revealed that the brick factories involved under-aged workers and provided low wages. They have employed unskilled workforces on part time basis for long periods of time in low wages as compared minimum wage announced by Nepal Government and International Labour Organization (ILO). For instance, they provided only Rs. 330 per day for carrying the load of 1000 bricks. About ninety seven percent of labors were involved as part-time job holders working only six months in a year and only three percent of labors were found working as full-time job holders.*

**Keywords:** *Occupation, wage, manufacturing industries, crushing, mixing, drying*

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## Introduction

Brick construction is one of the manufacturing industries in which more people have been involved in the process of finding employment. It is a labour intensive, informal and unorganized industry (Das, 2015). Informal sectors have provided more job involving unskilled labour force (Sharma, 2012). Bricks are made as materials to construct buildings and for other engineering purpose such as bridge construction, wall construction etc. (Brown, 1914). People have been using bricks for constructing building as main raw material since 7000 B. C. in southern Turkey for ancient settlement (Murmu and Patel, 2018). It has proved more profitable and has enhanced the economic base compared to land cultivation and others (Das, 2015).

The traditional brick manufacturing process comprises the raw materials preparation process, crushing, drying, and firing processes. They can be orderly simplified into four major processes such as raw materials crushing, mixing, and drying and firing (Zhang et al., 2020). In these four processes, workers have worked under high-risk conditions, the firing process being the riskiest. Ijaz et al. (2020) have described the workers involvement in brick kilns to perform different tasks: bearing pain in body part especially pain in neck, shoulders, hips, upper back and lower back. Supporting the views, Acharya (2021) has reported the pain such as high levels of abuse, disability and injury. Das (2020) also regards it as injuries related to the work in brick factories, which is physically demanding.

Generally, workers cannot accept the risky job if there is no ample compensation and large non-monetary benefits. The job has to provide the workers with such incentives as health and safety risks (Viscusi, 1978). Iqbal (2006) views that the Mistry (Firemen and Production Incharge) receive better salary but are forced to work in serve conditions of heat, dust and pollution (Rahman et al. 2012, p. 57).

The brick manufacturing industries involve the illiterate and poor people in jobs, but their human rights are ignored and their living status is miserable (Sohail and Mahmood, 2020). In line with this view, Daly et al. (2021) points out that many Nepalese children, forced to leave their school education, are employed in brick factories on paid and unpaid tasks by their family especially in winter season. Likewise, John (2014) states that brick factories provide seasonal work to the workers, especially migrant workers who work for only a few months (Kubasiewicz et al. 2022, p. 517).

Most of the poor families are involved in brick factories; more of them are coming from the backward societies in Nepal. Supporting the views, John (2018) reports that the brick factory is such industry which does not have explicit public recognition and often involves more Dalit people in India. The brick factories are associated with poor environment, poor working conditions, and long working hours in a day. Das (2015) explains the dissatisfaction factors of workers in brick factories; for example, lack of conducive working environment, lack of welfare facilities and lack of healthy industrial relations, which is discouraging to them. However, more unemployed people are finding employment in these factories to fulfill their livelihood. So, this sector has great role to upgrade the nation's economy and to increase the gross domestic product of the country.

The issue related to labourer status in brick factory has been considerably serious in Nepal. Most of the unskilled manpower is engaged in factory and agricultural sectors with low wage in the world. These workers have played huge role in development activities in the country. In brick factories, most of the workers are unskilled and have worked to unload and upload. In Chandragiri Municipality, a large number of workers are involved in brick factories and their job status as well as wages is still unexplored. The study tries to explore the role of brick factories on promotion of occupation and wages status of the workers in Chandragiri Municipality, Nepal.

The major objective of this study is to explore the occupational status and wages of the workers in brick manufacturing factories in Chandragiri Municipality.

Nepal is encountering the problems of unemployment and low wage rate. The present study contributes by providing feedback to the government for formulating the labour oriented economic policy to promote employment and wage of the labours by fixing the reasonable labour wage. Likewise, it contributes to the planners to formulate the labour oriented planning to upgrade their economic status. It contributes to the scholars in searching the new problems prevalent in brick factories and in solving them to improve the labourers' working conditions and wage status.

### **Review of the Literature**

Gupta (2003) has explored the informal labourers' status in brick factories and their working situation in factories. The study has employed primary data and descriptive research design. It has taken two brick kilns of India and their workers

as samples. It has been found that most of the workers worked on part time basis especially for six months from September to June. The workers' job depended upon the agro-climate features of the area of origin of migration. It has also found the brick kilns operated only for six month in winter season.

Wanjule et al. (2015) have discussed the brick manufacturing to identify the history of brick making in India. The study has employed secondary sources of data. This research has shown that China has produced the largest amount of brick which covered 54 % share in the world and India has produced second largest amount of brick in the world. The study has shown that India has produced 250 billion bricks yearly and has involved 15 million workers. It concluded that brick factories played huge role on employment generation in India.

Das (2015) has analyzed the socio-economic situation of the female workers in brick factories. The objective of this study was to explore the socio-economic status of the women workers in the brick factories. The study adopted mixed method and used both primary and secondary sources of data. The study has found that most of the women workers have lived in poverty, and they were exploited, and were deprived of the facilities available to the men workers. Their socio-economic status was very low and had the feeling of exploitation. The study revealed that girls and women have been facing the problems of rape, living as virtual slaves due to poverty, poor health and illiteracy. However, the industry has developed enough scope and strengthened the per-capita income of the workers.

Rupakheti et al. (2018) have explained the occupational safety and health vulnerability of the workers in the brick factories in Dhading district to investigate the status of labours in brick factories with reference to occupational safety and health vulnerability. It has adopted cross-sectional research design among the workers of five brick factories. It has used interview among 201 informants/workers to collect the data. It has employed Pearson Chi-Square test to examine the relationship between vulnerability and occupational safety and health. The discussion has shown that four-fifths of the workers were facing the occupational safety hazards and health vulnerability. The study has shown that younger and nonnative immigrant workers have worked in the chimneys with high health risk. It concluded that occupational safety and health vulnerability is very high in the brick factories.

Pandian and Duraisingh (2021) have discussed the occupational health hazards of the brick factory workers. The objective of this study was to explore the workers' problems and their employment status in brick factories. It has employed mixed method taking primary data of 120 workers of brick factories from Thoothukudi District of Tamil Nadu. The study has found that hundreds of workers were involved in brick factories. It has revealed that 60 percent workers were affected by the occupational hazards and 20 percent workers did not have satisfaction in their job. The workers were facing problems of health, seasonal work, long working hours, low income. The study has also proved that workers were not involved and organized in the labourers' union.

The present study has focused on assessing the occupational conditions and wages status of the workers in brick factories. The aforementioned studies have paid less emphasis on occupational and wage status of workers in Nepalese brick factories. The present study has attempted to fulfill such gap.

### **Research Methodology**

The study was conducted to investigate the status of the workers in brick factories in Chandragiri municipality. It has employed qualitative method and descriptive research design. The data was collected via primary source. Three brick factories were chosen, and one hundred workers were selected as samples. It has adopted interview guideline and observation checklist to collect data. The data was analyzed using some determinant variables such as age distribution of the workers, occupation situation of the workers, loading amounts and wages of the workers. It has used simple statistical tools to analyze the data, for example, percentage.

### **Results and Discussion**

The brick manufacturing factories in Chandragiri Municipality have become the employers for the migrants and immigrants workers in the country. The observation has revealed that a few immigrants worked on a contract basis, and they were working in the chimneys with high risk. Here, the study has included only migrant workers. The factories have involved the workers, both skilled and unskilled labourers, in different sectors of work in industry. The study has discussed the age of the workers, amount of the brick load carried by them, wages, and occupation situation of the workers.

## Age of the Workers

The discussion has focused on labourers' ages and their wages. Here, the employer has involved workers from different age groups and provided differential rate of wage on the basis of load carried by them.

**Table 1**

*Age distribution of the workers*

S.N.	Age (years)	Sample workers	Percentage
1	Under 15	3	3%
2	15-25	25	25%
3	25-35	45	45%
4	35-45	21	21%
5	45-55	5	5%
6	55-65	1	1%
7	Above 65	0	0%
Total		100	100%

*Source:* Field Survey, 2023

The table 1 showed that 3 percent of respondents were under 15 years of age and 25 percent of respondents were at the age of 15-25 while 45 percent of respondents were the age of 25-35. Similarly, 21 percent of respondents were aged 35-45 and 5 percent of respondents were age of 45-65 and 1 percent of respondents was at the age of 55-65. There were no workers found above 65years. From the age distribution, it was found that most of the respondents were at the age of 25-35. It was also found that the brick factories involved the workers aged below 15 years forcing them to perform hard and risky tasks at low wage rate which is against the provision of International Labour organization (ILO).

## Load of Bricks carried and Wages of the Workers

The table 2 presents facts relating to the number of brick loads carried out by workers in a day and the wages earned by them.

**Table 2**

*Number of daily loads carried and wages of the workers*

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Amount of bricks</b>	<b>Wages in rupees</b>	<b>No. of sample workers</b>
1.	1000 bricks	Rs. 330	3
2	2000 bricks	Rs. 660	10
3.	3000 bricks	Rs. 990	50
4.	4000 bricks	Rs. 1320	20
5.	5000 bricks	Rs. 1650	13
6.	6000 bricks	Rs. 1980	3
7.	7000 bricks	Rs. 2310	1
8.	8000 bricks	Rs. 2640	0

*Source:* Field survey, 2023

The table 2 showed that one worker was able to earn Rs. 2310 after carrying 7000 bricks in a day, but the observation has shown that s/he could be involved only for fifteen days in a month. The three workers were able to earn Rs. 330 per day after s/he carried 1000 bricks. Likewise, 50 workers were able to earn Rs. 990 after they carried 3000 bricks and 20 workers were able to earn Rs. 1320 in a day. The analysis of the data through observation has shown that 50 workers were always present at work and earned Rs. 990. The data via interview has revealed the above information but observation of the researcher found that the workers who carried the huge amount of load were not able to involve in their work daily. These workers worked only for six months in a year. The workers who carried loads received wages on daily basis. The respondents' experience was that after one year's services, they received an extra fifteen rupees for loading 1000 bricks.

The researcher's observation of the bricks factories showed that low-aged workers or child workers and high aged workers were impacted by the heavy work, and they were not able to earn more money and carry high amount of brick load. The strong and young workers carried greater amount of load of the bricks in short time because they were seen in race to carry the load of bricks hoping to earn more money than other workers.

## Occupation Situation of the Workers

In the brick factories, there were different type of workers such as full time and experienced workers, full-time and low experienced workers, and daily wages workers.

**Table 3**

*Employment status of the workers*

S.N.	Status of employment	Sample workers	Percentage
1.	Full time low experienced workers	2	2%
2.	Full time experienced workers	1	1%
3.	Daily wages workers	97	97%
	Total	100	100%

*Source:* Field survey, 2023

Table 3 shows that in the brick factories, there were three types of workers such as experienced, low experienced full-time workers and daily wages workers. It revealed that ninety seven percent of workers were involved as daily wages workers. Likewise, two percent workers were full time low experienced workers and one percent was full time experienced workers. It means most of the workers worked as daily wages workers and they worked only for six months in a year. Full time experienced and low experienced workers worked for twelve months in a year. This interpretation is similar to Gupta (2003) who argues that the workers were working as a seasonal worker and it is only for six months in a year.

**Table 4**

*Wage Rate of Fulltime Workers*

S.N.	Distribution of workers	No. of workers	Wage rate of Per worker
1.	Fulltime low experienced workers	2	Rs. 12,000
2.	Fulltime experienced workers	1	Rs. 16,000
	Total	3	

*Source:* Field survey, 2023

The table 4 has shown that there were two types of workers involved as fulltime basis workers. It has further shown that experienced workers were able to earn Rs. 16,000 in a month and they worked for twelve months in a year. Likewise, the low experienced workers were able to earn Rs. 12,000 in a month and worked for twelve months in a year. It leads to the conclusion that only three workers achieved fulltime job and received twelve months wages. The study also concluded that workers had been working with low wages which is the low amount of government declaration of labour wage and against the labourers' rights provision of International Labour Organization (ILO).

### **Conclusion and Implication**

The works in brick factories is considered very risky compared to the works of the other manufacturing industries. The wage rate of the workers showed that the economic status of the workers is lower compared to the government-declared wage rate and ILO's provision of the wage rate. Among one hundred sampling units taken from three brick factories in Chandragiri Municipality, only three workers were employed as fulltime workers; however, the wage rate was low. Ninety-seven out of one hundred workers were employed as daily wage workers and worked only for six months in the winter season. From the above observations, it can be concluded that the workers' occupational security is weak and risky. The study also concludes that the factories succeeded in promoting employment and economic growth of the nation, but the economic status of the labourers was not found as expected. This conclusion is similar to Paindain and Duraising (2021) who argued that the workers were facing a number of hazards and the brick factories did not promote the socio- economic status of the labourers.

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