

COERCIVE INFORMAL LABOR PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF MIGRANT LABOR IN MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN GUJRAT

This paper is an exercise in developing an analytical category to study informality in the manufacturing sector in India. This paper will contribute in the understanding of the following issues regarding informal labor in India:

- a) It will develop the concept of informal labor process to explain why informal labor has become a crucial component of certain manufacturing processes.
- b) It will describe and analyze different variants of informality that have developed to meet the specific needs of local industries.
- c) It will argue that employment data does not capture the dynamics of the organised sector in India and different theoretical perspectives and research strategies need to be complete the quantitative data that is available.

In order to understand the linkages between informality, production and accumulation, I will focus on the labor process. This is referred to in Burawoy (1982) as the process through which labor surplus is appropriated in the production process. I will develop a modality of labor process specific to India which I term as coercive informal accumulation process (De 2017). Informal coercive accumulation refers to all labor processes, which: hire wage labor, use coercive methods to decrease worker control over the pace and rhythm of work, and their bargaining power in determining wages. These processes are usually characterized by informal contracts, longer working hours, poor working conditions, social isolation, and inadequate access to basic amenities. These labor processes are usually employed in firms which produce commodities in a highly competitive market, where individual commodities are not easily differentiable, like garments, textile, unskilled process in construction etc. This includes production processes which are part of a larger chain of production also referred to as sub-contracting work.

I will then apply this concept of coercive informal accumulation to analyse my field investigation of migrant labor in manufacturing sector in Gujrat. I have worked with Aajeevika Bureau (henceforth AB) to study and understand the dynamics of informal labor in three sites which Aajeevika works within: Migrant tribal (from south west Rajasthan) working in the construction sector in Ahmedabad, migrant labor (mainly from north India) working in Garment factories in Ahmedabad and long distance migrant (from Orissa) working in textile mills in Surat.

Aajeevika Bureau's work focusses on informal migrant wage workers in the manufacturing sector. The nature of informality is very different in the manufacturing sector¹ then in the service sector. In the manufacturing sector machines are used to control the pace and rhythm of work, there exists a clear division between conceptualisation, supervision and execution of labor and these sectors have a distinct set of labour laws around it². Moreover, it has a very different modality from petty commodity production (Harris-White 2010) or self-employed labor. AB works with the poorest and most vulnerable sections of labour namely unskilled/low skilled migrant labor, while in Surat they have focussed on a long-distance Oriya migrants.

¹ I am going to include construction work in the manufacturing sector, as the labor process and dynamics of the worksite are similar to factories.

² unlike services like transport, trade and hotels etc.

My field work was useful to understand the different modalities of informality that develop based on the different: needs of and challenges faced by different industries.

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