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A Strategical Framework Incorporating Language, Work and Knowledge to Manage Migrant Workers in Construction Industry

P Rama Krishnan¹, S Gopinath², R Dhanya³

¹M. Tech, Department of Civil Engineering, SRM University, Chennai, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, SRM University, Chennai, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, SRM University, Chennai, India

ABSTRACT: The labour shortage in construction industry has been increasing gradually day by day. To overcome this problem, the construction industry employs migrant workers from different states. Construction workers migrate from state to state for their needs. The cultural differences between project managers and migrant workers may give rise to communication problems and mismanagement. In order to obtain solutions for cultural characteristics among migrant worker and acclaim strategies to manage diversity among migrant workers, this research “A Strategical Framework Incorporating Language, Work and Knowledge to Manage Migrant Workers in Construction Industry” has underdone in Chennai city. The research involved in collection of data through Questionnaire survey from project managers who were experienced in managing migrant workers. Information was gathered from secondary source and a questionnaire was prepared and underwent a survey with migrant workers in Chennai city. A sample of 60 questions was taken for the study. The questionnaire survey was analyzed by using SPSS program. In addition to work-related strategies, project managers should also form concrete personal relationships with migrant workers to create trust and organize social activities to generate team spirit.

KEYWORDS: Cultural characteristics, Diversity, Communication, Knowledge, Work, SPSS (statistical product and service solutions.)

I. INTRODUCTION

Modernization and Industrialization has paved a good way to the construction industry. Expanding the fast growing construction sector, to overcome labour shortages the construction industry employs migrant workers from different states. Currently, there are 20 million construction workers in India. Cities like Delhi have more than 600 of them. Apart from metros other cities are also expanding at faster rate.

Migration from different states to other states in India has now become so rampant that its impact is felt in every aspect of life. Migration has paved a way to many people, who are unskilled and semi skilled and who find difficult to get jobs within their natives and locality. The economic globalization created more migrant workers and the developed states increased the demand for them, especially unskilled labours. Construction activity contributes to the economic development of a country. The construction industry is also finding their business in its highest level. The specific objectives are: (1) The purpose of this research is to identify the problems faced by migrant workers in construction. (2) To identify the problems and solutions encountered by project manager and others, while managing migrant workers. (3) Acclaim strategies for project managers and others to deal with cultural difference among migrant workers..

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Ziad Kronfol *, Marwa Saleh, Maha Al-Ghafry (2014) found that there are more than 15 million non-nationals are currently living and working in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The majority are blue-collar or domestic

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workers coming from the Indian Subcontinent. They often work under very harsh conditions. Reports say that, there is a high rate of psychosis and suicide among these people but no reliable data were available. Very few articles were found. The available literatures contributed by several brief vignettes to illustrate the various clinical aspects of this problem at risk population. E.G. Ochieng a, A.D.F. Price b (2009) explored the ability of project managers in Kenya and the UK in communicating effectively on multicultural projects. The study was about making communication effective .Using data from 20 interviews in Kenya (10) and UK (10), the results show that communications within multicultural project environments can be effective when project managers demonstrate an awareness of cultural differences. The paper recommended Development of effective cross cultural collectivism, trust, communication and empathy in leadership. Renaud de Camprieux, Jacques Desbiens b,1, Yang Feixue c,2 (2007) were involved in a research evaluated the opportunities and risks of a new project proposal, and also the selection of the data was used to support or justify the evaluation.A conceptual framework was developed to approach conjoint measurement and it was used to determine the results of a project risk considering various risk factors. Significant differences between them are reported. Stephan Trajkovski, Martin Loosemore (2005) focused on the Non-English speaking backgrounds. Because it may arise some problems while transferring information and conversation between supervisors, project manager and labours. This paper investigates the extent of this problem and its implications for occupational health and safety risks. It focused on the experiences of NESB operatives and more specifically, on their difficulties in understanding policies of safety and rules in site. It also recommended to provide safety training in languages other than English and to supplement this with translated print material. Martin Loosemore, Patrick Lee (2002) researched about the need of effective communication between the various cultural groups. It focused on interactions between English-speaking managers and non English-speaking operatives. It concluded that English is often the minority language on site and it may lead to communication problems. Recommendations were given to construction companies to improve inter-cultural communication in their workforce.

III. CONSTRUCTION MIGRANT WORKERS

In general scenario, construction workers are migrated from various states for their needs. Around 6 lakh migrant people are working in Chennai region from different states like Orissa, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra in various construction companies at different zones. A typical construction site would have several states of migrant workers working side by side. It is thus bound to happen for project managers and supervisors to interact with and manage a culturally diverse workforce. Operatives of different states of workers have different cultural characteristics, which may affect the way they undertake construction work and interact with others on-site. It is essential for project managers to be equipped with diversity management skills and knowledge to effectively lead a multicultural workforce.

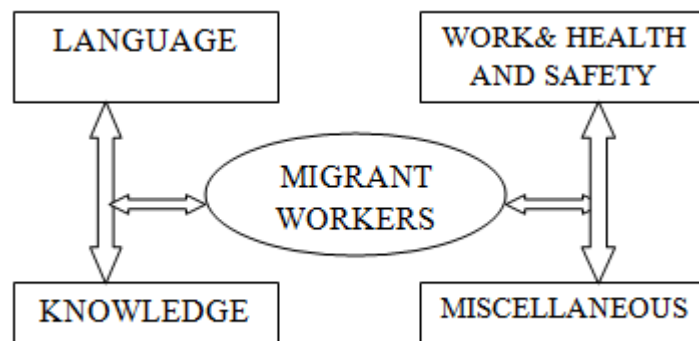


Fig. 1. Representation of problems faced by migrant workers

A. Language differences

The migrant workers originate from different countries. The mix of different nationalities gives rise to communication problems, which is the major source of communication. Language differences exist between project

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managers and migrant workers themselves. Problems such as lack of understanding and misunderstanding of instructions may arise owing to language differences. Migrant workers may not be able to fully understand the instructions and intentions of their project managers. This causes a breakdown in communication among workers that may escalate to bigger problems like conflict and low productivity. Language problems are the greatest barriers, when companies try to integrate migrant workers into the workforce. Therefore it is necessary to have cultural sensitivity when designing an inter-organizational communication strategy for the management of international projects.

B. Cultural difference

Cultural difference is a systematic framework for assessing and differentiating national cultures. This study analyzed national culture into five dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. These are reviewed next.

i. Power distance

Power distance index (PDI) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Employees in large power distance societies accept a hierarchical order in which everybody requires no justification for his position, whereas people in small power distance societies expect power to be equally distributed and demand justification for power in equalities found that work ethics and initiative are negatively correlated with the power distance index. This is because workers coming from high power distance countries perceive that they lack power, and they therefore migrant operatives from higher PDI countries have lower initiative than those from lower PDI countries

ii. Individualism

Individualism (IDV) index is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Individualism-collectivism dimension reflects the work goals of an individual. Employees' personal interests and goals are subjected to those of the organization concern is shown toward the organization than personal goals and more often than not, self-identity derives from and is enhanced by group membership Collectivist cultures. It should have high team-spirit and cooperation from employees. Migrant operatives from higher IDV countries have lower team spirit than those from lower IDV countries. Migrant operatives from higher IDV countries are less trustworthy than those from lower IDV countries.

iii. Masculinity

Masculinity (MAS) refers to the distribution of roles between the genders. The people in feminine countries are modest and caring, whereas those in masculine countries are somewhat assertive and competitive Migrant workers know that they need to obey instructions or they could be repatriated. It is found that one of the greatest barriers to effective communication is a poor work ethic. Workers with good work attitudes are likely to display can-do attitudes and work productively. These people may be slow moving in their speed of work and apathetic in terms of their reactions Migrant operatives from higher MAS countries have poorer attitudes than those from lower MAS countries. Migrant operatives from higher MAS countries have more passive-aggressive temperaments than those from lower MAS countries.

iv. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. If a society has a high UAI index, it will institute strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations to reduce uncertainty within the population. Nationalities with low UAI may ignore contractual obligations because they do not see the need to be controlled by rules and regulations. Migrant operatives from lower UAI countries ignore contractual obligations more frequently than those from higher UAI countries. Those Migrant operatives from lower UAI countries are harder to resolve disputes with than those from higher UAI countries In low UAI societies that operatives may also have a poor safety culture. It is found that workers have low safety consciousness and a poor attitude towards safety. Indian workers also do not adopt safe work practices that operatives from lower UAI countries have poorer safety awareness than those from higher UAI countries.

v. Long-Term Orientation

Long-term orientation (LTO) is associated with values such as thrift and perseverance. Values associated with short-term orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's "face." Differences in LTO are hypothesized to give rise to different work values. It is found that workers' poor work values lead to low

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productivity, low quality, and lack of quality assurance in India. Migrant operatives from lower LTO countries have poorer work values than those from higher LTO countries.

C. Knowledge

Several cultural diversity studies in construction have been undertaken. It considered traits and cross-cultural differences at the level of construction workers/operators in their roles as migrant workers. Construction migrant workers focused on their low performance owing to regulations, qualifications, and management systems. To effectively supervise migrant workers of different nationalities, it is important to understand their traits and the problems and solutions among these traits to cope with diversity. This has resulted in various problems, including poor productivity and communication difficulties caused by different work ethics, culture, and customs between managers and migrant workers.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research involved in collection of data from 2 ways, namely the primary and secondary source. The primary source was survey, because it can be administrated on large sources. The data collection was made using a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire contains, demographic questions and second part contains structured questions. The response was given by the project managers, supervisors, site engineers, contractors and labours. The rate of respondents are on a 5 point Likert scale where 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-disagree. From this, the respondents were asked to give their opinion for the questionnaire.

The secondary source data were previously gathered by the researchers and authors. These were more readily available and often help to refine the research questions. Here the data pertinent to the migrant workers have been taken from various sources. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed by using SPSS software, and the results were used for developing a framework and to provide recommendation on practices to manage migrant construction workers.

V. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

All the respondents are from Chennai city. The majority of the respondents are in middle management (project managers, supervisors, site engineers and contractors) had more than 10 years of experience in construction industry. The questionnaire response was collected from 15 respondents. The respondents had supervised migrant workers from Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. None of the respondents belong to these states. SPSS program was conducted to find out the major problems faced by migrant workers. The population mean was fixed at 3 (on a 5 point Likert scale).

The criteria that scored maximum mean values are listed below:

- Presence of Team spirit is important as members of the Team accept a common task (mean = 4)
- Project manager are equipped with diversity management skills and knowledge (mean = 3.9)
- Migrant workers have mental health issues in construction sites (Mean = 3.6)
- OHS Training are given for Migrant workers (mean = 3.6)
- Migrant workers experience difficulties in reading and understanding English (mean = 3.5)

The criteria scoring high mean values are the major problems faced by migrant workers in construction industry (Language, Cultural difference, Work). The results are discussed further in detail.

VI. DISCUSSION

In construction industry, the workers from different states are effectively monitored in work. The results show that the project manager and co-workers has to work together as a team in harmony. The workers from different states are facing cultural differences as a significant problem in construction industry. So, the project manager should have vast knowledge and understanding about diversity and cultural differences among workers and also the project managers and supervisors need to interact with migrant workers and manage a culturally diverse workforce. Normally, migrant

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workers, work under harsh conditions. This situation has to be changed. Mostly, migrant labours are unskilled labours, so they have to be provided with safety trainings and safety equipments at site, before starting the work.

In construction site, the workers from different states speak several languages. The results show that the difficulties in understanding other language may lead to low productivity and delay of workforce. So, the project manager has to communicate more effectively with migrant workers and also to manage more efficiently for 100% workforce.

TABLE I
MS EXCEL DATA SHEET

Problems – Category	Observed Questions	Mean	Rank
Language	Migrant workers experience difficulties in reading and understanding English	2.5	3
Knowledge	Project manager are equipped with diversity management skills and knowledge	2.9	2
Work	Presence of Team spirit is important as members of the Team accept a common task	3	1
Health and Safety	Migrant workers have mental health issues in construction sites	2.6	4
	OHS Training are given for Migrant workers	2.6	4

TABLE II
SPSS DATA SHEET

Problems – Category	Observed Questions	Mean	Rank
Language	Migrant workers experience difficulties in reading and understanding English	3.5	3
Knowledge	Project manager are equipped with diversity management skills and knowledge	3.9	2

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Work	Presence of Team spirit is important as members of the Team accept a common task	4	1
Health and Safety	Migrant workers have mental health issues in construction sites	3.6	4.5
	OHS Training are given for Migrant workers	3.6	4.5

The questionnaire was analyzed using MS-Excel by assuming specific weightage and the following results were ranked based upon the mean values. The questionnaire was also analyzed using SPSS program and the following results were ranked based upon the mean values.

The results of MS-Excel and SPSS program were found to be exactly the similar in values. But SPSS gives the accurate results for the problems faced by migrant workers in all categories.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study investigated using a survey research design. The problems and solutions in characteristics among migrant workers from different states were sort on the frequency, which were observed by project manager. The findings show that the main difficulty the project manager faced with migrant workers is the cooperation and unity between project manager and co-workers.

The importance of cultural differences exists among migrant workers from different states especially in working style, attitude and methods of solving problems. So, there is a need of some strategies to efficiently manage migrant workers. The communication gap has to be reduced. Also the project manager may use the findings to help them to overcome challenges that they may face in managing migrant workers. Further research is to be made in future.

Based on the study, analysis and results a framework has to be created. The framework will provide a step by step measure to overcome the problems faced by migrant workers. The procedure will recommend the project manager to form concrete personal relationship with workers, to create trust among each others, to train workers safely, to develop high quality workmanship, to organize social activities, to engender inter-team spirit and to eliminate the root causes of disputes.

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