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Occupational Mobility among Slum Dwellers: A Case Study of Delhi

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Abstract

Upward Occupational Mobility is observed in majority of occupations, be it of formal or informal sector. The present paper attempts to find out whether this occupational mobility is also observed in case of an urban slum dweller who migrates from his native place in search of earning opportunity, with a hope to improve his livelihood condition, and earn more than that he is earning at his native place. The paper also attempts to identify the nature of occupational mobility and examines the determinants that support or hinder occupational mobility of slum dwellers. Physical immobility to move from dwelling units for work is also examined in this research paper. The study is based on primary survey conducted in four appropriately selected slums in Delhi, which represent the slum population of Delhi.

Key Words: Slums, Upward Occupational Mobility, Downward Occupational Mobility, Physical Segmentation.

1.Introduction:

Ever since the advent of probabilistic models, issues of occupational mobility has invited both theoretical and empirical research in developed as well as developing countries. It is now widely acknowledged that people living in slums also access information on the urban labor market through various informal channels, and tend to experience occupational mobility by either moving from one type of occupation to another or through acquiring some skills/ experience during the course of their stay in slum. Several research studies have been conducted to measure occupational mobility of people living in urban as well as rural areas but very few research studies have been conducted to measure occupational mobility of slum dwellers. It is assumed that slum dwellers in the absence of gaining skill improvement usually remain in the same occupation with limited scope for occupational mobility. In the absence of skill development, training opportunities and due to segmentation of labor market, it is generally expected that slum dwellers continue to remain in the similar occupational ladder without any occupational mobility although they might have gained experience.

Occupational mobility for workers has been measured in terms of caste, skill and educational background, but the physical segmentation of the labour market, which remain tied to their physical boundary due to limited mobility and accessibility imposed by cultural and social constructs has received relatively less attention.

The physical segmentation refers to inaccessibility of people to utilize and perform jobs/ services primarily because of the distances that needs to be travelled in cities for the jobs offered. People living in slums usually are disinterested to enhance their occupational mobility or joins better jobs if it entails long distance movement in cities. They usually prefer to live nearby the sources of livelihood opportunities. Even inexpensive (intra-city) transport for commutation may not eliminate these labour market barriers. Thus occupational choices are greatly determined by the spectrum of jobs available within the geographical vicinity, where these slum dwellers reside.

In this background, the paper will test the above hypothesis along with an exploration of possibilities of occupational mobility for the workers living in the slums of Delhi who are mostly from lower income groups, largely found to be working in the urban informal sector.

2.Review And Theoretical Framework

The "over-urbanisation" [Mitra, 2006] thesis argued that migrants, mostly slum dwellers who move into the urban areas, are pushed out of the agriculture sector due to loss of livelihood opportunities and unemployment in rural areas. The people migrate from rural habitats to cities especially metropolitan centers in the hope of employment. Due to lack of skills and educational qualifications very limited opportunities are available in the high productivity industrial and service sector in the urban areas. So these migrants seek employment in less productive activities in the urban informal Sector. The income from urban informal sector occupations is too meager to afford decent housing. Hence these migrants dwell in unauthorized slum squatters perpetuating urban poverty. The decision to

migrate from rural areas is based on rationality that they are able to reduce the intensity of poverty if not escape it altogether. Even if they are unable to manage to acquire a formal sector job but they hope to experience upward occupational and income mobility even after joining urban informal sector.

The ILO report on Kenya (1972) argued that it was not only the high wage formal sector job but also the income opportunity in the informal sector that attracted potential migrants to move to urban informal economic activities. Informal sector employment may be undesirable when viewed from the perspective of the formal-sector wage or salary earner, but it seems logical and desirable an independent source of attraction, when viewed from the perspective of the rural immigrant [ILO 1972: 224]. Breman (1976), however, argued that the idea of moving to better-paid jobs is mostly fictional because those who join the lower ranks of the urban informal labor system usually remain stagnant without any upward occupational mobility. Standing (1977) felt that "The ability to perform regular sustained work tends to evaporate through lack of skills, the undernourished diet and non availability of medical care and treatment". He argued that their physical and mental capacity does not provide them opportunities of occupational and income mobility, with the results they remain stagnant in spite of experience gained in service for a long period [Standing 1977: 41]. However, with globalization, the scope of capacity building measures through skill up gradation has provided slum dwellers opportunity of movement from low productivity jobs to high productivity jobs even in the urban informal service activities [Banerjee 1986; Mitra 1994; Gupta and Mitra 2002]. Change in spatial mobility from a squatter settlement to a resettlement colony can be perceived as a change in livelihood pattern in terms of employment and income. "A larger percentage of the population in slums (squatter settlements) is dependent on daily wage employment where earnings are both low and irregular" [Banerjee: 2005].

3.Methodology

Delhi, even though not an industrial city, has experienced fastest growth of several formal and informal manufacturing and service sector activities. Recently the expansion of Information and Technology (IT) sector and Business Process Outsourcing Services (BPOs) has added new dimensions to the economic scenario of the city. Many of the informal sector activities have possibly grown in response to the growth of the activities in the formal sector, though an equally large chunk of the informal sector activities might have come up due to population pressure. It would, therefore, be interesting to examine whether slum dwellers have been able to have upward mobility in occupational ladder and are drawing higher incomes from the services and jobs.

A comparison has been attempted in the paper to identify nature of jobs performed, levels of skills utilized for the job and incomes earned from the jobs for cohort groups of workers. The comparisons have been studied for 2000 and 2009 for the cohort group of workers dwelling in slum squatters of Delhi.

3.1Sample Selection

Four slums of South Delhi (Fig.1) were selected for the survey. The selection of slums was done in such a manner so that all major types of slums are selected. The selected slums have varied locations with specific site and situation parameters. These slums vary in social and cultural composition of population as well as economic characteristics and activities.

The slums chosen were Sonia Gandhi Camp, R.K. Puram, which is a completely residential area, Lajpat Nagar, which is famous for Central Market and can be regarded as Commercial area. The third area was Jamia Nagar, lying close to Jamia Milia Islamia University and hence can be regarded as educational cum residential area, which houses many students and other common people, thus opening avenues for slum dwellers like maids, cooks, Rickshaw Pullers etc. The last area chosen was B.P. Singh Camp, Badarpur border where people are engaged in economic activities in nearby areas of Haryana and work in either nearby power plant or in some industries in Haryana.

The surveyed households are found to have 784 people, 214 are found working since 2000 and 286 people are found working in 2009. The analysis has been based on 214 people who are cohort group of workers in the selected sample. Occupational mobility among slum dwellers has been studied using **Occupational Classification Scheme** developed by the **Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona (**Table1), according to which the numbers 1-10 would constitute an ordinal measure of the socio-economic status of the occupational classifications (Sovani et al, 1965:158-160).

Since in slums category 6 to 10 cannot be found, so while analysis these categories are being excluded. An assessment of the nature and extent of occupational mobility is done using the techniques of cross tabulation.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Occupational Mobility Among Slum Dwellers

It has been observed that slum dwellers has witnessed both Upward and Downward Occupational mobility but Upward mobility is slightly higher than downward mobility as can be observed from Table 2 .

The numbers in rows indicates number of workers in an occupational category in 2009 and the numbers in columns indicates number of workers in an occupational category in 2000. Out of total workers in Low professionals sector in 2000 i.e. 19 workers, 2 are working as highly skilled workers, 3 are working as small business owner and 1 is working as skilled worker in 2009, thus 6 workers or 32 % of workers have witnessed downward occupational mobility. In the same manner out of total unskilled workers in 2000 i.e. 55 workers, 1 is working as small business owner, 2 as skilled laborers and 10 as highly skilled labors in 2009 thus 13 workers or 24% of workers have witnessed upward occupational mobility. Thus when all concerned categories of occupation has been looked upon, it is observed that though slum dwellers has experienced both upward and downward mobility but upward mobility in occupation was slightly higher than downward mobility as a total of 22 workers i.e. 10% of total 214 workers are found to show downward mobility as against 36 workers of 17% who witnessed upward mobility. It has been also found that incidences of upward mobility are more in case of low status jobs as revealed from the Table 3.

4.2 Mobility In Terms Of Wages

Mobility in occupation must influence the wages of workers either positively or negatively. To capture this, the real wages of workers has been calculated after adjusting it for inflation, using national average **Consumer Price Index** (CPI, which is published monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and is simply a weighted average of the prices of goods and services that households purchase) for the years 2000 and 2009. The mobility in terms of wages has been looked using the above mentioned methodology of cross tabulation .The wages of workers has been adjusted using following formulae

$$R = N/CPI * 100$$

Where R is real wage, N is Nominal wage, CPI is Consumer Price Index.

As per IMF, International Financial Statistics for India CPI for the year 2000 has been found to be 82.28 and for 2009 to be 135.64, with 2005 as base year. The Table 4 shows the result of cross tabulation of real wages of workers for the years 2009 and 2000.

When cross tabulation has been done for real wages, it has been observed that in terms of wages, mobility in slums was both upward and downward, and that too in the same proportion as 20 workers had shown upward mobility as against 21 workers who had shown downward mobility i.e. only 10 % of workers have shown the mobility(Table 5). This can be better explained as 20 workers out of total workers earning < Rs 1500 in 2000 are earning Rs 1500 to Rs 3000 in 2009 thus witnessing upward mobility as against 17 workers of category Rs 3000-4500 who are earning less than Rs 3000 in 2009 along with another 4 workers who were earning > 4500 in 2000 but are earning < 4500 in 2009 thus experiencing downward mobility .

4.3 Occupational Mobility and Physical Segmentation

To analyse the role of physical segmentation on occupational mobility of slum dwellers, an analysis of distance travelled by slum dwellers to reach their places of work has been done for the concerned time periods using the methods of cross tabulation(Table 6).

Out of total 86 workers in travelling < 2 km in 2000, 17 workers or 20 % of total workers were travelling < 2 km in 2009, another 31 workers or 36 % of workers are travelling 2-5 km in 2009. Only 2 workers or 2 % of total workers are travelling 5-10 km in 2009 who were working within the range of 2 km in 2000. When variable distance is looked upon, it has been observed that out of total 55 workers in travelling variable distance in 2000, 9 workers of 16 % of total workers are covering variable distance in 2009 but 36 workers or 65 % of total workers are travelling 2-5 km in 2009 along with another 10 workers or 18% of workers working within the range of 2 km.

When the same observation is done for other categories of distances travelled by slum dwellers, it has been found that majority of workers still travel up to 5 km to reach their work place. Only 2 workers out of total of 214 workers are found to cover more than 5 km to reach their place of work in 2009. This clearly reveals the role of Physical Segmentation of job opportunities that governs the occupational mobility of slum dwellers i.e. certain types of jobs are inaccessible to certain groups of individuals, primarily because of the distance factor within a city (high-income jobs may be available in a particular locality, but its physical distance from the place where one specific group of migrants resides could be so great that such jobs may remain inaccessible to them). Even

inexpensive (intra-city) transport for commutation may not eliminate these labor market barriers. Thus physical segmentation act as hindrance in upward occupational mobility of slum dwellers. It also motivates them to move from one job to another within the informal sector and is thus responsible for occupational mobility at the same level, thus leading to no upward mobility in terms of real wages. A fair proportion of total workers have been found to be travelling variable distance to reach their place of work. This is may be due to the lack of job opportunities at a particular place and they have to move to different places to find an opportunity to work, hence revealing the fluctuating nature of jobs in slums. This also acts as hindrance in providing opportunities for upward occupational mobility to slum dwellers. The role of Physical Segmentation in determining occupational mobility can further be analyzed if we look at the Table 7 i.e. cross classification of workers with distance they travel for reaching their work place. The table reveals that a huge proportion of workers in skilled and highly skilled category don't go more than 5 km for work. A majority of unskilled workers cover variable distance that itself marks the uncertainty in their occupation.

The picture is almost the same in 2000 also, as in 2000 too many skilled and highly skilled workers were not moving more than 5 Km as can be seen from Table 8

This makes clear that even inexpensive (intra-city) transport for commutation may not eliminate the labor market barriers.

5.Conclusions

Thus it has been observed that slums too witness Occupational Mobility, both upward and downward, but the proportion of upward mobility is slightly higher than downward mobility in terms of occupation. The chances of upward occupational mobility are found to be higher in low status jobs as compared to high status jobs. But this upward mobility has negligible impact on real wages of slum dwellers as the sample has shown the same proportion of both upward and downward mobility in terms of real wages . This is mainly due to the Physical segmentation of job opportunities in urban areas along with the fluctuating nature of available jobs to slum dwellers .Even the inexpensive means of transport is not able to reduce the impact of physical segmentation on Occupational Mobility .

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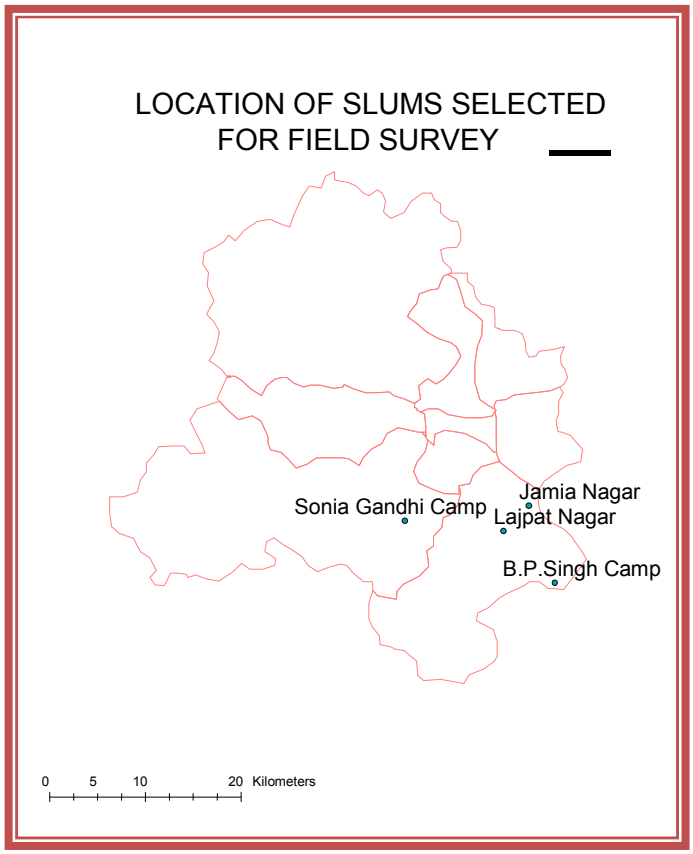

Fig.1 – Location Of Slums Selected For Field Survey

Table 1 – Occupational Classification Scheme According To Socio- Economic Status

S.NO	OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES
1.	UNSKILLED MANUAL WORKERS	Laborers, Servants, Bidi- Workers
2.	SKILLED MANUAL WORKERS	Gardener, Cooks, Carpenters, Masons, Leather Workers, Handloom Weavers, Cotton Mill Workers
3.	LOW PROFESSIONALS AND ADMINISTRATORS	Astrologers, Priests, Nurses, Primary Teachers, Lowest Administrators, Police Constables, Postman
4.	SMALL BUSINESS	Hawkers, Small Businesses, Small shops, Contractors
5.	HIGHLY SKILLED AND SUPERVISORY MANUAL WORKERS	Motor Repairers, Goldsmiths, Tailors, Foremen and Supervisors, Machine Operators.
6.	CLERKS AND SHOP ASSISTANTS	Clerks, Government, Municipal and Other Shop Assistants.
7.	INTERMEDIATE PROFESSIONALS AND SALARIED POSTS	Engineers, Secondary Teachers, Auditors, Accountants, Chemists
8.	MEDIUM BUSINESS	Building Materials and Contractors, Grain and Grocery Shops, Retailers, Repair Shops
9.	HIGH PROFESSIONS AND SALARIED POSTS	Doctors, Lawyers, Military Officers
10.	BIG BUSINESS	Owner of Workshops and Factories, Owners of Large Shops

Source :- Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics , Poona

Table 2 Occupational Mobility Among Slum Dwellers 2000 & 2009

		OCCUPATION IN 2009					TOTAL
		UNSKILLED	SKILLED	SMALL BUSINESS	HIGHLY SKILLED	LOW PROFESSIONALS	
OCCUPATION IN 2000	UNSKILLED	42	2	1	10	0	55
	SKILLED	11	6	11	5	2	35
	SMALL BUSINESS	1	1	40	2	3	47
	HIGHLY SKILLED	0	0	3	55	0	58
	LOW PROFESSIONALS	0	1	3	2	13	19
Total		54	10	58	74	18	214

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 3 – Occupational Mobility among Slum Dwellers 2000-2009

S.NO	OCCUPATION	UPWARD MOBILITY	DOWNWARD MOBILITY
1	UNSKILLED	13	0
2	SKILLED	18	11
3	SMALL BUSINESS	5	2
4	HIGHLY SKILLED	0	3
5	LOW PROFESSIONALS	0	6
	TOTAL	36	22

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 4 – Mobility In Terms of Wages 2000-2009

		WAGES IN 2009				Total
		<1500	1500-3000	3000-4500	>4500	
WAGES IN 2000	<1500	24	20	0	0	44
	1500-3000	0	83	0	0	83
	3000-4500	0	17	57	0	74
	>4500	0	0	4	9	13
Total		24	120	61	9	214

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 5 –Mobility In Terms Of Wages 2000 & 2009

WAGES	UPWARD MOBILITY	DOWNWARD MOBILITY
<1500	20	0
1500-3000	0	0
3000-4500	0	17
>4500	0	4
TOTAL	20	21

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 6 :- Variation In Distance Travelled For Work 2000-2009

		DISTANCE TRAVELLED IN 2009				TOTAL
		<2 KM	2-5 KM	5-10 KM	VARIABLE	
DISTANCE TRAVELLED IN 2000	<2 KM	17	31	2	36	86
	2-5 KM	26	19	0	27	72
	5-10 KM	1	0	0	0	1
	VARIABLE	10	36	0	9	55
Total		54	86	2	72	214

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 7 – Variation of Occupation with Distance 2009

		OCCUPATION IN 2009					TOTAL
S.NO	DISTANCE	UNSKILLED	SKILLED	SMALL BUSINESS	HIGHLY SKILLED	LOW PROFESSIONALS	
1.	<2 KM	6	3	19	20	6	54
2.	2-5 KM	3	4	39	28	12	86
3.	5-10 KM	0	2	0	0	0	2
4.	VARIABLE	45	1	0	26	0	72
5.	TOTAL	54	10	58	74	18	214

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009

Table 8 – Variation of Distance with Occupation 2000

		OCCUPATION IN 2000					TOTAL
S.NO	DISTANCE	UNSKILLED	SKILLED	SMALL BUSINESS	HIGHLY SKILLED	LOW PROFESSIONALS	
1	<2 KM	12	29	19	16	10	86
2	2-5 KM	9	3	27	24	9	72
3	5-10 KM	0	1	0	0	0	1
4	VARIABLE	34	2	1	18	0	55
	TOTAL	55	35	47	58	19	214

Source:- Field Survey 'Oct 2009