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## Decolonising Social work in industrial settings: roles, challenges, and prospects in India

Subrata DAS and Shyam SINGH

### ABSTRACT

*Industrial social work is broad domain and a demanding specialization under the social work profession in the world and India. For the welfare of the industrial workers, the Government of India made it compulsory for the employment of Labour Welfare Officers in industrial settings through the enactment of various Labour Laws and Legislations such as the Factory Act, 1948, the Plantation Act, 1951, and the Mines Act, 1952. Professional Social Workers have many challenges and opportunities for their intervention in Industrial settings. The study conducted base on secondary data to highlight the social work activities in and organization. The paper's primary purpose is to explore the challenges and the perspectives of the social work practice in the industrial settings. Professional social workers usually use the six social work methods to address economic development, social the wellbeing of the workers, and wellbeing of the family members. In addition, all the social work methods consider women development and empowerment, health, education, and sustainable development of the workers and their family members.*

**KEY TERMS:** industrial social work, group work, casework, community organization, social welfare administration, and social work research

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper explores industrial social work as a broad domain under the social work profession. The government of India enacted the Factory Act, 1948, which focuses on the employment of labour welfare officers, their identity, eligibility and job responsibility. However, many studies and data show that professional social workers have challenges and opportunities for intervention in industrial settings. This research paper did base on secondary data to highlight the social work activities in an industrial organization. Professional social workers usually use the six social work methods: group work, casework, community organization, social welfare administration, social action, and social work research. The main objectives of these methods are to look into economic development, the social wellbeing of the workers, and the welfare of the family members. It will also help find the necessary steps to address women empowerment, health, education, and sustainable development. The primary purpose of this research paper is to explore the challenges and perspectives of the social work practice in an industrial setting. The profession successfully deals with the industrial dispute among the workers to employers, employers to trade union members, and maintenance of industrial relations. After that, this paper discussed the background, methodology, data analysis, discussions, recommendations, and conclusion.

## BACKGROUND

A social work practice in the industry started during the 19th and 20th centuries in a scattered way. Initially, it found that industries were facing production loss due to their employee's inactiveness and unhealthy conditions. They used to take alcohol regularly, which caused production falls in the industry and created problems in their families. As there was a massive number of alcohol users, the employers employed someone who looked into all the issues for better function of the industries (Sarkar, 2008).

According to occupational social work, industrials social work practice is mainly done in the organized sector. However, in the current scenario, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) deal with the worker's issues employed in unorganized sectors. These workers are engaged in the construction industry, carpet-manufacturing units, quarries, agriculture industry (Siddiqui & Sukhramani, 2008).

Social work education is a practice-based profession and also an academic discipline all over the world. It almost deals with every sector of society. Social work practice consists of a total of six methods which are very important to bring social change and promote social development. The industrial sector is one of the critical aspects of our society's story, where we can also utilize the methods of social work education. From the begging, the profession has had many ups and downs in its journey. Primary methods of social work help the client directly who needs help from the organization or agencies. Professional social workers are engaged in various services setting where they are assigned to provide social services to their clients. Industrial social work is a specialized field of social work practice that addresses the community's human and social needs of the work community through a variety of interventions, which aims o foster optimal adaptation between individuals and their environment (Chukwu, Chukwu, & Nwadike, 2017).

This research paper talks about transforming social work practice to corporate social responsibility for the last few decades. Using CRS (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities, professional social workers successfully address emerging industrial issues. Since the initiation of CSR activities, the workers have tried to integrate with the modern production process and business by solving the employee's psychological problems, mental stress, and fatigue. With the slogan of CSR in the business world, a social worker is taking care of all the internal stakeholders, meeting the needs of industries, and providing services to humankind (Sarkar, 2008).

This paper's main objective was to study industrial social work practice, its challenges, and prospects in India. In addition, the study also brought the attention of the social work associations and social work practitioners for the development and growth of industrial social work. This paper provides some knowledge to the social work students involved in the industrial practice.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social work practice has become an essential profession in industry settings due to changing nature of work style and workforce. There are opportunities and challenges to help the work population, such as individuals, groups, and communities (Cheeran, George & Renjit, 2015). Industrial social work is a specialized field of social work in

the industries or business entities with eighty years of successful intervention. Though conducting social work intervention, social worker meets the human and social needs of the work community.

Many labour acts and legislation provided the appointment of professional social workers where there are a fixed number of workers. Section 49 of the factory act, 1948, made it compulsory to engage a labour welfare officer where 500 employees are working there. Subsection 58 of the Mine Act, 1952 talks about the appointment of labour welfare officer and the Plantation Act, 1951, and its section 18 give emphasizes deploying a labour welfare officer where 300 or more than that workers are working in the factory (Labour and industrial laws, Government of India, 2017).

Six social work methods are incorporated in any industrial setting to address all kinds of issues. These methods are casework, group work, community organization, social welfare administration, social work research, and social action. (Ngozi, Njoku & Ngozi, 2017). Out of those first three methods address the issues of employees and community directly. Casework deals with individual problems, group work and mitigates the problems through group work activates, whereas community organization methods go for community development closed to industries. On the other hand, another three-method social welfare administration social work research and social action assist the organization in different aspects such as programs planning, strategy making, effective implementation of proposed plans to bring positive changes (Sehgal, 2005).

Industrial social work looks into the broader organizational goals. Any industry utilizes the social work skills and techniques to meet the interest of the workers, trade unions, management, and the community because of their expertise in diminishing issues associated with worker job dissatisfaction, alienation, and boredom. Moreover, social workers engaged in mental health, community health, and occupational health services (Gibelman, 2005). Indicated the health aspect is the extensive domain for the welfare of the workers. As industries have a large number of working population, employees face challenges in accessing the services. There are many roles for social workers to perform in the health delivery system. Social work consults with and assists the doctors for better health delivery services through community clinics, in-patient facilities, company insurance plans, and utilization of treatment resources. Here social workers also make plans to solve the worker's problems by consulting with the doctors. Except for these job roles, workers utilize their social work skills to mitigate financial, family, legal, and individual psychological problems (Despard, Chowa & Hart, 2012).

Botcha (2012), in his paper, highlighted many problems and challenges of social work students in India. Since the seven and half decades of inception of social work practice in India, education has successfully achieved many things for its growth. Still the profession has some challenges in its approach. The significant challenges faced by the social work profession in India are standards, enhancing the recognition of the job and developing literature, prevailing low level of welfare activities given by the organizations, Lack of Indigenous Materials or Literature (Chougule, 2017 ). The lack of effective functioning of professional association handicap the professional development of social work education (Nanavathi, 1997). Even the data shows a disappointing thing of appointing persons from different subjects who do not have trained in social work become the members of boards of examiners and selection committees for selecting social work teachers by the universities and practitioners in the organization (Nair, 1981).

The author Papouli (2014), in the study of shows fieldwork training in social work, is an integral part of the profession. By which field educators help the students with their knowledge and experiences for better fieldwork practice. Even also help them at the time of job placement. In the same way, the University Grants Commission (UGC) focuses on the initiative for the field action project and fieldwork practice to develop social work education and training in India. However, in reality, the study says that field service projects provide learning opportunities to the students, growth opportunities are mainly missing (Botcha, 2012).

## METHODS

The study was conducted based on secondary data only. Data was collected taken from different journals, books, and internet websites. First of all, based on the study objectives, the researcher chose some articles from all the collected articles.

*Figure 1 Data summary*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Main Points</b>
Scope of social work profession in Industrial Establishment	Cheeran, George & Renjit	Scope and challenges of social work profession in industrial and models of social work in industry settings
Universal's Labour and Industrial Laws	Industrial Relation Code 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition, 2020	All the Labour and industrial laws, its provision, duties of the employers and workers
Social Work and industry-Issues and Challenging, Contemporary Social Work	Sehgal & Ranjana	Various industry-Issues and Challenging for industrial social work practice and suggestions
What social workers do	Gibelman	Definition of social work and its methods
Personal Financial Problems: Opportunities for Social Work Interventions.	Despard, Chowa & Hart	Benefit of social work Problems an intervention areas of social work profession
Social work practice in industry	Skidmore, Balsam & Jones	The areas of Social work practice in industry
Personal Financial Problems: Opportunities for Social Work Interventions	Despard, Gina & Hart	Role of social worker to mitigate the Personal Financial Problems
Review of Research Studies and Literature on Social Work Higher Education in India	Chougule	Social work in Higher Education and suggestions for improvement the areas
Social Work Education and Social Practice in India, Madras	Nair	Social Work Education and its history, objectives and methods
Field Learning in Social Work Education: Implications for Educators and Instructors	Papouli	Importance of field work practice for both the teacher and students
Problems and challenges for social work education in India: Some recommendations	Botcha	Various Problems and challenges in social work education in India and Recommendations to meet these challenges
A study on social work education in Karnataka	Jyothi	functioning of social work institutions, including university departments offering post- graduate programme in social work in the State of Karnataka
Method of social work practice	Chukwu, Chukwu & Nwadike,	social work methods and its practice
Industrial social work to corporate social responsibility: A transformation of Priority	Sarkar	The transformation from industrial social work to corporate social responsibility
Industrial social work: A Review of the literature and evaluation of employee assistant programme	Lee	Implication of employee assistant programs
Aspect of Industry and Occupational Social Work	Sinha	Industrial social work and different treatment methods
Social Work and Social Action	Siddique	Social work education and social action, a method of social work
Eight decades of existence and search for an identity: Educators perspective social work education in contemporary India	Baikady Cheng & Channaveer	Historical background, achievement and challenges of social work education in contemporary India
Work-Family-Conflict and Family- Work-Conflict as Correlates of Job Performance among Working Mothers: Implications for Industrial Social Workers	Ajala	Importance of counseling process addresses the family conflict, job performance and satisfaction
Corporate Culture and Employment of People with Disabilities: Role of Social Workers and Service Provider Organizations	Samant, Soffer, Hernandez, Akinpelu, Levy, Repoli, Kramer, Blanck	Role of social workers improve corporate culture, organization's value system and also helps in recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees.

## FINDINGS

### **Social work in industrial settings**

Social work methods such as group work, casework, community organization (primary methods) and social welfare administration, social action, and social work research (secondary methods) are used in industrial settings (Chukwu, Chukwu, Nwadike, 2017). Primary social work methods help the client directly who needs help from the organization or agencies. Professional social workers are engaged in various services setting where they are assigned to provide social services to their clients. According to Jyoti (2014), individuals are empowered to help themselves through social work methods rather than passive receivers of services.

### **Casework in industrial settings**

Social workers can use the method of social work in an industry set to address all the psychosocial problems of the employees in difficult situations or overcome adjustment problems in the work environment. Due to job loss, ill health, family or work-related issues, or financial issues, employees may suffer from anxiety, depression, and absenteeism. The industrial social worker helps the workers balance work-life and job responsibility effectively through counseling to improve the job performances in the organizations (Ajala, 2017). The problem is that the employee cannot work or participate in the production process. This method is considered essential for solving the psychosocial problem and facilitating the employee's work function. According to the issue of the employee, the caseworker makes a plan for improving social function through behavior modification. The worker follows the steps of the casework process, i.e., study diagnosis, treatment, evaluation, termination, and follow-up. Caseworks can undertake various activities under casework (Sinha, 2007).

### **Induction of new worker**

Due to the changing nature of the workforce and upcoming issues, industry sectors face many problems in the production process. Employees are migrating from rural and urban areas to state their new job. Each individual has a different level of skill setting and potential to perform their duties. They may have some positive feelings of hope, expectation, and wishes. Along with such optimistic hopes, they also have fear, anxiety to adjust to the new work environment. Here we find a vital role for a social worker: conducting an induction program for newcomer employees. A social worker can quickly introduce the new organization setup, its rules-regulation, terms and conditions, and work policy in the induction program (Sehgal & Ranjana, 2005).

### **Adjustment of the worker's problems**

In a work environment, the employee may face adjustment problems if they do not meet their expectations, challenges, and personal growth. Moreover, unhealthy relationships with family members, colleges, and management may put in low performance. Here social worker can improve their social or work function through individual counseling and behavior modification therapy. Adjustment problems may come from many aspects such as an aging workforce, increased stress, violence and unsafe working condition, corruption, health hazards, and mental health problems (Cheeran, et.al. 2015). Adjustment Problems can be solved through various steps like study, diagnosis, treatment, evaluation, and follow-up process. a social worker accepts the entire employee irrespective of gender, caste, and religion as a worthy individual. Each employee has different kinds of problems in their family and workplace. So a caseworker or social worker must give importance to all of them equally. The worker also facilitates the client to express their feelings for proper diagnosis of the issues. In lastly, the caseworker formulates the plan of action for treatment to solve the problems. The casework method also helps in other areas, such as assisting workers in reducing their absenteeism due to industrial adjustment problems.

### **Group work in the industry**

Social group work can be defined as two or more people associated with each other by social relationship for mutual benefit. Social group work is an integral part of achieving personal and professional goals in the industry setting. In a contemporary scenario, there are many presents and upcoming industrial issues from the industrial

revolution in terms of training and development, industrial relationships, the violence of workers' rights, and industrial disputes. In this situation, to overcome these problems, industrial social workers or labor welfare officers may play vital roles in minimizing the labour problems to keep peace and harmony (Samant, et.al, 2009). The employees with everyday problems can consult with the labour administration to stable their rights through labour bargaining. They are helping the groups to avoid differences and work in cooperative manners. Here social workers form a group with a common objective to mitigate their personal and professional relationship as well as helps in maintaining a healthy industrial relationship.

### **Types of groups**

Here social group workers play a vital role in modifying the employee's behavior in positive change through proving social work principles and social work techniques. Group work increases social functioning as well as promotes a relationship with others workers. Social workers form three group types for the employee's personal and professional benefits in any industry setting. A social action group intends to accomplish a specific task to develop employees, management, trade unions, and workers. If there is a lack of welfare services for the employee, they can go for collective action to change the working laws and policy (Siddique, 1984). Remedial or therapeutic groups provide emotional and psychosocial support to the different levels of employees in the work settings. Nowadays, in the era of rapid industrialization, a common work-life problem that leads to industrial production falls. These common problems may be family issues, drug addiction, health problems that lead to behavioral difficulties towards production. A reciprocal group can play an essential role in problem-solving through information exchange programs among the employees. The standard group is a platform where employees come and sit together to share their ideas, success stories, and problems so the other employee can learn something from the discussion. The reciprocal group can be formed structured by the social workers, generally weekly or monthly. The role of group work is to guide the interaction and facilitate sharing process for better learning and understanding of the participants or employees.

### **Community organization method in the industry**

Community organization is none of the primary methods of social work done for the community development by the community people themselves. However, in the case of industrial areas, the employers must do some corporate social responsible responsibility (CSR) or community development programs to its immediate locality, i.e., Construction and maintenance of road transport, toilets, schools, and colleges (Sarkar, 2008). An industry always utilizes the available material and non-material resources of the industry area for its profit. So in return, the companies are responsible for improving the nearby locality by the trained and skillful social worker or community development worker. Here, the worker's duty is to identify the community needs and make a plan with the company's help, trade union (T.U.), Non-Government Organizations, and community people (Sinha, 2007).

### **Help the organization for community organization work**

Professional social works usually encourage people's participation, social consciousness, and feelings. Community Organization includes many community development programs to improve any industrial belt's social, economic, and cultural aspects. It is a process by which employees, management, trade unions, local government, and NGOs have collaborated to develop all. Community organization is the first step that influences community development programs. The community development programs follow different activities such as improving the health- hygienic condition of the locality, infrastructure development, water development projects and health awareness programs, and many more (Gibelman, 2005). Nowadays, there is an increased population in the industrial community and a high rate of social issues. To address all the problems, the employers willingly provide a range of social services and social welfare activities for the community people. In such cases, looking for proper health facilities and educational opportunities for children and adults are essential domains to welfare. Here, the two words one is community development and the other one is the community consciousness has been given due consideration by the management.

### **Social responsibility of industry**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are the self-motivated initiatives done by the companies with their welfare concerns. Corporate social responsibility is the means of sustainable development in the corporate world. Here social workers help the management to find out the necessary activities (Sarkar, 2008).

### **Social action method in the industry**

Social Action is an organized mass movement to improve the social, economic, and cultural condition positively. Only a successful social action can fulfill the demands of the workers. For that reason, the need for industrial social workers is significant. The trade union members utilize their skills, strategies, and knowledge for putting their demands on the successful way. There are six main critical principles of social action. The first one is the principle of credibility building. The principal says the industrial social workers create faith and confidence among the workers and believe in them. The industrial workers and the community people understood that the worker is all in all and is here for their community development. Then the following principle is the principle of legitimization. Here, the worker makes others understand that they can do activities through proper documentation. The following principle of dramatization emphasizes needful and active strategies that can do a particular movement, i.e., slogan, valuable speeches, and street plays, to concentrate the respective authority. The fourth principle is the dual approach. The approach included the activities of confrontation and constructively based on the principle of multiple strategies. Furthermore, lastly, the principle of various programs is taken to address the ethical issues (Siddiqui, 1984). Social workers undertake various activities, such as developing healthy leadership of trade unions, removing the feelings of untouchability creating acceptance and recognition of family planning, and pressuring the government to enact new labour legislation for workers.

### **Social work administration**

Social work administration is the secondary method of social work. Social Welfare Administration is a process through which social policy is transformed into social services. Through the social welfare administration, social workers can help the employers and trade union members formulate welfare policies, and programmes for workers can also help the employers distribute the intramural and extramural services to the workers (Chukwu, et. al.2017).

### **Social work research in industry**

Social work research is seen as an integral aspect of development for any sector. Social work research is conducted by researchers who have in-depth knowledge of social phenomena, which will help the organization to implement developmental programs and planning processes. Social worker researchers assist the organization because they have more information about the company, nearby community, working policy, work culture. A holistic social work approach should address industrial issues related to factors causing production loss and hampering its growth. Social work research is predominantly applicable to all social work methods practicing in industrial settings. Only effective planning and programs can help any organization to reach out their targeted goals in time (Chougule, 2017). Moreover, social work research is more concerned with social issues and as well as industrial problems. Social work researchers are permanently closed to the grassroots-level situation, and they better know its impact on the employees, organization, and community. Social work researchers or social work research can help any organization by doing a systematic and scientific research study. The study's findings on a particular topic provide much information on limitations, suggestions to do their work in better ways.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Challenges**

The findings revealed the challenges and prospects of social work in industrial settings. In India, social workers are not recognized, and their job responsibilities are not fixed as per the provision. The social worker works under the purview of the personal labour department on behalf of the organization. Because of the organization's work structure, social workers work independently for the welfare of workers. Moreover, they have substantial additional job pressure rather than pure social work activities.

Fieldwork training for the master of social work students who will join as a labor welfare officer is essential. However, many research findings in India show problems have been found during field placement for masters students (Chougule, 2017). There are no available industrial setups nearby the educational institute that will provide industrial fieldwork training. If there are available industries, it is observed that either the organizations do not show any interest and allow the MSW students for their fieldwork or the institution did not include the industrial placement training in the syllabus.

The demand of the social work profession is getting faded out because of negligence in the emplacements opportunities. Many research studies say that organizations in India hire non-social work students to the post of labour welfare officer. Nowadays, for the employment of labour welfare officers, many candidates from different educational backgrounds are also considered eligible for the above post. Still, they do not have the fieldwork skills and knowledge that assist them in the new job role.

In this day and age, in India, those joining as labour welfare officers from different educational streams are found unable to perform all the tasks of a labour welfare officer. Most of them do not have the proper social work knowledge and skill set, which will help them deal with all the industries' stakeholders such as management, employee, and trade union members. Because of this, mismatched skills give birth to industrial disputes as a labour welfare officer must look for industrial relations. (Baikady, et.al 2020).

### **Prospects of social work in industrial settings**

Social work practice had started during the 19th and 20th centuries in a scattered way. It found that the industries had production loss due to their employee inactiveness and unhealthy condition. They consumed alcohol, which brought many problems in their working life and their society and family life. To overcome the difficulties, the employers started employing social workers who provided drug counseling and family counseling. During that time, Employment Assistant Programs (EAP) and Alcoholism Programs (A.P.) were initiated to solve all kinds of worker's issues. However, gradually, the field of social work practice in industries has been spreading out day by day. Varieties of advanced occupational social work models have been incorporated, such as; Employee Service Model (ESM), Consumer Service Model (CSM), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Employee Organization Service Model (EOSM) and Work-Related Public Policy Model (WPPM). Due to rapid industrialization, every industry faces its challenging nature and work policy. Parallel, they have different industrial issues, i.e., emplacements issues, employee grievances, and management problems with the community and trade unions members (Botcha, 2012). A social worker can assist the employers by addressing all of the problems prevailing in the industries. Through the effective use of social work methods, a professional social worker helps the organization solve individual, group, and community problems. Moreover, the other forms of social work education, like social action, social research, and social welfare administration, also enrich the organizational function for industrial growth and development. From the above discussion, we recommend the following:

1. For the last eight decades, social work education has existed in India, but the social work curriculum still largely influences western ideologies (Baikady, Cheng, and Channaveer, 2020). So, we need to focus on our won curriculum development based on the indigenous knowledge best suited and fitted for social work practice in industry settings.
2. All the social work students (BSW and MSW) should be facilitated by the educational institutions and the industrialists for fieldwork training (Papouli, 2014).
3. The students who have completed MSW must be considered priorities in the job in industrial settings. They are more trained and qualified to address all the employee's issues than the students from other branches (Nair, 1981).
4. Lastly, the main thing is that the labour welfare officer or personal manager, whatever posts they hold related to social work, they should be allowed to work independently without any over-job pressure. A professional social worker always needs to work with them, but there should be no influential factors by the management or trade unions that may interfere with the social work practice (The Factory Act, 1948).
5. The professional association of social work educators needs to focus more on the indigenous knowledge of practice in theory and fieldwork training. Also, efforts are required for the recognition of social work education (Baikady. Cheng, and Channaveer, 2020).



## **CONCLUSION**

In the industrial age, the growth and development of any industry depend on the productive employee and their work satisfaction. The welfare concern of Section 49 of the Factory Act, 1948, Subsection 58 of the Mine Act, 1952, and The Plantation Act, 1951, and its section 18 made it compulsory to appoint a labour welfare officer. However, in India, many research studies said that employers follow the unfair means of recruiting labour welfare officers. However, nowadays, the social work profession faces many problems performing their pure social work duties effectively due to the organization's additional work pressure, trade union influences and changing scenario of work culture, and different kinds of employee's issues. Still, the social work practice is considered the best-fitted profession to mitigate all types of industrial problems (Jyothi, 2014).

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