

Emergence of industrial working class and its characteristics

1. Emergence

Originated due to the Industrial Revolution (late 18th century onwards).

Transition from agrarian to factory-based production systems.

In India:

Textile mills – Mumbai.

Jute mills – Bengal.

Coal mines – Eastern India.

Railway construction.

Formation of a wage-dependent urban labour force.

2. Characteristics of Industrial Working Class

Economic dependence on daily wages.

Lack of job security and unstable employment.

Long working hours (12–14 hrs/day) in unsafe conditions.

Low wages, insufficient for basic needs.

Poor housing – overcrowded, unsanitary, lack of basic amenities.

Migrant workers with weak community ties.

Presence of women and child labour; wage discrimination.

Weak or absent bargaining power and unionisation (in early stages).

3. Labour Problems

Economic exploitation by employers.

Occupational hazards and frequent industrial accidents.

Unhealthy working and living environments.

Illiteracy and limited access to education.

Debt bondage and persistent poverty.

Social alienation due to migration and urban displacement.

4. Labour Welfare Measures

Early initiatives by philanthropic employers and social reformers.

State-led interventions:

Factory Acts – regulation of working hours, safety measures.

Minimum Wages Act.

Recognition of Trade Unions.

Social Security Laws – ESI, Provident Fund, Gratuity.

Welfare services: housing, healthcare, education, recreation, counselling.

5. Role of Social Work

Advocacy for workers' rights and fair labour standards.

Workers' education and literacy initiatives.

Health and welfare services in industrial workplaces.

Community development in labour colonies.

Counselling for personal, family, and workplace issues.

Policy engagement for progressive labour reforms.

Labour market-demand and supply, problem of recruitment and employment, automation and problems in employment

Labour Market – Demand & Supply

1. Concept

The labour market is where workers offer labour (supply) and employers seek labour (demand).

Wages are determined by the interaction of demand and supply, along with institutional and policy factors.

2. Demand for Labour

Derived demand – depends on the demand for goods/services produced.

Influenced by:

- Level of industrial activity.

- Technological change.

- Capital investment.

- Wage levels and productivity.

3. Supply of Labour

Determined by:

- Population size and growth.

- Age structure of workforce.

- Education, skills, and training.

- Migration patterns (rural to urban, international).

- Social and cultural norms (e.g., women's participation).

4. Equilibrium & Imbalance

Equilibrium: Demand = Supply → stable wage rate.

Excess supply: Unemployment.

Excess demand: Labour shortage.

Problems of Recruitment & Employment

1. Recruitment Challenges

Skill mismatch – vacancies but lack of qualified workers.
Geographic immobility – workers unwilling/unable to relocate.

Lack of transparency in hiring processes.

Discrimination (gender, caste, age, disability).

High recruitment costs for employers.

2. Employment Issues

Underemployment – workers employed below skill level.

Informal sector dominance – no job security, low wages.

Contract and gig work replacing permanent jobs.

Seasonal employment in sectors like agriculture and construction.

Automation and Problems in Employment

1. Automation Trends

Use of robotics, AI, and advanced machinery to replace manual tasks.

Industry 4.0: Smart manufacturing, data analytics, and autonomous systems.

2. Impact on Employment

Job displacement in routine and repetitive work.

Creation of new high-skill jobs in technology, maintenance, programming.

Widening skill gap – low-skilled workers struggle to adapt.

Polarisation of labour market – growth in high-skill & low-skill jobs, decline in mid-skill jobs.

3. Social Work Perspective

Need for reskilling and vocational training programs.

Advocacy for social safety nets (unemployment benefits, retraining support).

Promoting inclusive policies to protect vulnerable workers.

Support for workers facing job loss, stress, and adaptation

challenges.

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Wage determination, minimum, fair and living wages

Wage Determination

1. Concept

The process of fixing wages for workers based on economic, social, and legal factors. Influenced by demand & supply of labour, cost of living, productivity, industry norms, and government regulations.

2. Theories of Wage Determination

Subsistence Theory – wages should cover basic living needs.

Wage Fund Theory – fixed fund allocated for wages by employers.

Marginal Productivity Theory – wages equal value of worker's marginal contribution.

Bargaining Theory – determined by power of trade unions vs. employers.

Institutional Theory – influenced by laws, agreements, and social standards.

Minimum Wage

Definition:

The lowest wage legally payable to workers to prevent exploitation.

Features:

Fixed by law (Minimum Wages Act, 1948 in India).

Varies by occupation, skill level, and region.

Ensures a basic standard of living but may not meet all needs.

Purpose:

Protect unorganised and vulnerable workers.

Prevent “sweating” of labour with extremely low pay.

Fair Wage

Definition:

A wage above the minimum wage but below the living wage, ensuring fairness between workers' needs and employer's capacity to pay.

Range:

Lower limit → Minimum wage.

Upper limit → Employer's paying capacity & prevailing wage rates in similar industries.

Determining Factors:

Cost of living.

Productivity levels.

Employer's financial condition.

Industry wage structure.

Living Wage

Definition:

A wage sufficient to maintain a decent standard of life for a worker and their family, covering food, clothing, housing, education, healthcare, and some provision for savings/leisure.

Based on:

Standard of comfort above mere subsistence.

The concept endorsed by ILO and recommended in India by the Fair Wages Committee (1948).

Key Difference from Minimum Wage:

Living wage is aspirational and higher than legal minimum; focuses on well-being, not just survival.

Wage differentials

1. Definition

Differences in wages paid to workers for similar or different work due to various economic, social, and institutional factors.

Can exist between occupations, industries, regions, skills, or even within the same organisation.

2. Types of Wage Differentials

Occupational Differentials

Difference in wages across different occupations.

Example: Engineers earn more than clerical staff due to higher skills & training.

Skill-based Differentials

Higher wages for skilled and highly trained workers compared to unskilled labour.

Reflects productivity, training costs, and demand.

Industrial Differentials

Wage variation between industries.

Example: IT sector vs. textile industry.

Geographical/Regional Differentials

Differences due to cost of living, economic development, and demand-supply conditions in different regions.

Example: Higher wages in metro cities than rural areas.

Inter-firm Differentials

Different wages in the same industry but across different companies due to profitability, productivity, and wage policies.

Gender-based Differentials

Women often paid less than men for similar work, despite equal productivity.

3. Causes of Wage Differentials

Skill, experience, and training levels.

Cost of living variations.

Demand and supply of specific labour categories.

Union strength and collective bargaining power.

Profitability of industry/firm.

Government regulations and wage agreements.

Discrimination based on gender, caste, or ethnicity.

4. Social Work Perspective

Advocating for equal pay for equal work.

Promoting gender equity and non-discriminatory wage policies.

Supporting workers in low-paid sectors through training and upskilling.

Engaging in policy reforms to reduce unjust differentials.

Absenteeism and job turnover

Absenteeism

1. Definition

Habitual or frequent absence of an employee from work without valid reason.

Measured as:

$$\text{Absenteeism Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of man-days lost due to absence}}{\text{Total man-days scheduled}} \times 100$$

2. Causes

Poor working conditions and unsafe environments.

Low wages and lack of incentives.

Health problems, fatigue, or occupational diseases.

Job dissatisfaction and low morale.

Family responsibilities and social obligations.

Lack of transportation facilities.

Seasonal factors (agriculture, festivals).

3. Effects

Reduced productivity.

Increased workload on other workers.

Disruption in workflow and deadlines.

Higher costs for overtime or temporary replacement.

4. Remedies

Improve working conditions and workplace safety.

Provide fair wages and incentives.

Health and wellness programs.

Transport facilities for workers.

Strengthen employee engagement and morale.

Job Turnover

1. Definition

The rate at which employees leave an organisation and are replaced by new employees.

Measured as:

$$\text{Turnover Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of separations in a period}}{\text{Average number of employees}} \times 100$$

2. Causes

Low wages and poor benefits.

Lack of career growth opportunities.

Poor supervision or management practices.

Better job offers elsewhere.
Unhealthy workplace culture.
Job dissatisfaction.

3. Effects

Increased recruitment and training costs.
Loss of skilled and experienced workers.
Lower morale among remaining staff.
Possible drop in product/service quality.

4. Remedies

Competitive wages and benefits.
Opportunities for promotion and skill development.
Positive workplace culture and supportive supervision.
Recognition and reward programs.
Exit interviews to identify root causes and improve retention.

Problem of job commitment

1. Definition

Job commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment, involvement, and loyalty towards their organisation and job role.

The problem of job commitment arises when workers show low dedication, lack of engagement, and minimal willingness to contribute beyond basic requirements.

2. Causes of Low Job Commitment

Low wages and inadequate benefits.

Poor working conditions and unsafe environments.

Lack of recognition or appreciation for work.

Limited career growth and training opportunities.

Mismatch between job role and employee's skills/interests.

Poor relationship with supervisors or management.

Organisational instability (frequent layoffs, uncertain future).

High work stress and burnout.

3. Effects on Organisation

Reduced productivity and output quality.

Increased absenteeism and job turnover.

Lower innovation and problem-solving initiative.

Poor customer service and client dissatisfaction.

Negative workplace atmosphere.

4. Remedies / Social Work Perspective

Provide fair wages and better working conditions.

Recognition and reward programs.

Career development and skill enhancement opportunities.

Strengthen communication between workers and management.

Build a positive workplace culture with participation and teamwork.

Employee counselling and wellness programs.

Housing Problem and indebtedness

Housing Problems

1. Definition

Inadequate, unsafe, or unaffordable living conditions faced by workers, especially in urban and industrial areas.

2. Causes

Low wages → inability to afford decent housing.

Rapid urbanisation → overcrowding and slums.

Lack of affordable housing schemes.

Migrant labour influx without matching infrastructure.

Speculative land prices and high rents.

Absence of employer-provided housing in many industries.

3. Effects

Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and spread of diseases.

Fatigue and reduced work efficiency.

Social issues – crime, alcoholism, domestic tensions.

Educational difficulties for children due to unstable living conditions.

4. Remedies / Social Work Role

Development of low-cost housing schemes.

Slum rehabilitation and sanitation improvement programs.

Employer housing colonies with basic amenities.

Advocacy for housing subsidies and rent control.

Community participation in housing maintenance.

Indebtedness

1. Definition

A condition where workers are trapped in chronic debt, often paying large portions of wages as interest or loan repayment.

2. Causes

Low income and high cost of living.

Lack of savings culture or facilities.

Dependence on moneylenders charging high interest.

Medical emergencies, marriages, or festivals leading to borrowing.

Irregular employment and seasonal income.

3. Effects

Debt bondage – working to repay loans without end.

Mental stress, family tension, and low morale.

Reduced ability to meet daily needs.

Vulnerability to exploitation by employers or lenders.

4. Remedies / Social Work Role

Promotion of cooperative credit societies and workers' banks.

Financial literacy programs.

Access to low-interest institutional loans.

Emergency welfare funds for health and family needs.

Advocacy for legislation against exploitative lending practices.

Alcoholism

1. Definition

A chronic disorder characterised by compulsive and excessive consumption of alcohol despite negative consequences on health, family, work, and social life.

Recognised as both a medical condition and a social problem.

2. Causes

Work-related stress and poor working conditions.

Low wages and job insecurity.

Easy availability of alcohol near industrial or residential areas.

Social acceptance in certain communities or peer pressure.

Lack of recreational facilities.

Personal or family problems, depression, or loneliness.

3. Effects

On the Individual:

Health issues – liver damage, heart problems, mental health deterioration.

Reduced work performance and concentration.

Higher accident rates at the workplace.

On Family:

Domestic violence and neglect.

Financial hardship.

Emotional trauma for spouse and children.

On Workplace:

Absenteeism and job turnover.

Decreased productivity and quality of work.

Increased medical and compensation costs for employers.

On Society:

Crime, accidents, and law-and-order issues.

Increased public health expenditure.

4. Remedies / Social Work Role

Workplace awareness and education programs on alcohol abuse.

Counselling and rehabilitation services.

Provision of recreational and stress-relief facilities for workers.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) with confidential support.

Advocacy for strict regulation on sale of alcohol near factories and residential colonies.

Involving families in recovery and support networks.

Industrial health, disease and accidents;

Industrial Health

1. Definition

A branch of public health concerned with maintaining and promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of workers in industrial settings.

Ensures safe working conditions and prevention of occupational hazards.

2. Importance

Improves productivity and efficiency.

Reduces absenteeism and medical costs.

Enhances worker morale and job satisfaction.

Complies with legal and ethical obligations.

3. Factors Affecting Industrial Health

Workplace environment (temperature, lighting, ventilation).

Exposure to chemicals, dust, noise, and vibration.

Working hours and workload.

Availability of healthcare facilities.

Industrial Diseases

1. Definition

Illnesses directly caused by conditions or hazards present in the workplace.

2. Common Types

Pneumoconiosis (e.g., silicosis, asbestosis) – caused by inhalation of dust.

Lead poisoning – from handling paints, batteries, etc.

Noise-induced hearing loss – from prolonged exposure to loud machinery.

Skin diseases – due to exposure to chemicals or irritants.

Repetitive strain injuries – from repetitive tasks.

3. Causes

Poor ventilation and hygiene.

Inadequate safety measures.

Lack of protective equipment.

Prolonged exposure to hazardous substances.

4. Prevention

Regular health check-ups.

Personal protective equipment (PPE).

Workplace hygiene and ventilation improvements.

Safety training and awareness.

Industrial Accidents

1. Definition

Unplanned events in the workplace causing injury, disability, or death.

2. Common Causes

Unsafe machinery and equipment.

Negligence or lack of training.

Slippery floors, poor lighting, or obstructed pathways.

Fatigue or carelessness.

3. Effects

Physical injury or loss of life.

Loss of income for worker's family.

Loss of productivity and increased insurance/compensation costs.

4. Prevention

Strict adherence to safety protocols.

Regular maintenance of machinery.

Safety drills and training.

Use of PPE and safety guards.

Social Work Role

Advocate for better safety and health policies.

Organise health camps and awareness programs.

Facilitate rehabilitation and counselling for injured workers.

Support enforcement of occupational health laws.

Condition of work and problem of social security

Condition of Work

1. Definition

The overall environment, terms, and arrangements under which employees perform their duties.

Includes physical, economic, and psychological aspects of the workplace.

2. Elements of Working Conditions

Physical Environment – lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, noise control.

Hours of Work – regularity, overtime, rest periods.

Safety Measures – protective equipment, emergency protocols.

Wages & Benefits – fair pay, overtime compensation.

Facilities – canteens, restrooms, drinking water, first-aid.

Workload & Pace – avoiding excessive strain or monotony.

3. Problems in Working Conditions

Long working hours and forced overtime.

Unsafe machinery and inadequate safety gear.

Poor sanitation and ventilation.

Lack of rest breaks and leave facilities.

Monotonous or stressful work leading to fatigue.

4. Social Work Role

Advocacy for better working standards and legal compliance.

Awareness programs on workers' rights.

Liaising with employers for workplace improvements.

Problem of Social Security

1. Definition

Social security refers to measures ensuring economic security and welfare for workers and their dependents, especially during unemployment, sickness, disability, or old age.

2. Importance

Protects workers from financial hardship during contingencies.

Maintains living standards during income loss.

Promotes loyalty and stability in the workforce.

3. Problems in Social Security

Limited coverage – many in informal/unorganised sectors excluded.

Insufficient benefits – payments too low to meet basic needs.

Delays in disbursement of benefits.

Complex procedures and lack of awareness among workers.

Weak enforcement of social security laws.

4. Examples of Social Security Measures in India

Employees' State Insurance (ESI) – for medical care and cash benefits during sickness.

Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) – retirement savings.

Gratuity – lump sum on retirement or resignation.

Maternity Benefit Act – paid leave for women workers.

Workmen's Compensation Act – compensation for injury or death at work.

5. Social Work Role

Educate workers about entitlements and help with applications.

Assist in accessing social security schemes.

Advocate for expansion of coverage to unorganised sectors.

Support policy reforms for faster and more equitable benefits.

Problems of unorganized labour , bonded labour and child labour

Unorganised Labour

1. Definition

Workers not covered under formal labour laws, social security benefits, or trade union protections.

Includes agricultural workers, construction labourers, domestic workers, street vendors, gig workers, etc.

2. Problems

Low and irregular wages.

No job security or written contracts.

Lack of social security (ESI, PF, pension).

Poor working conditions and unsafe environments.

Long working hours without overtime pay.

No collective bargaining power.

3. Social Work Role

Organising workers into cooperatives or unions.

Awareness on legal rights and welfare schemes.

Advocacy for inclusion in social security programs.

Bonded Labour

1. Definition

A system where workers are forced to work to repay a debt or loan, often inherited, with little or no wages.

Abolished in India under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 but still exists in some areas.

2. Causes

Chronic poverty and unemployment.

Dependence on moneylenders charging high interest.

Caste-based exploitation and social inequalities.

Illiteracy and lack of legal awareness.

3. Problems Faced

Loss of freedom and human dignity.

Physical and mental exploitation.

Inter-generational debt bondage.

Denial of education and healthcare.

4. Social Work Role

Identification and rescue of bonded labourers.

Rehabilitation and vocational training.

Legal aid and advocacy for strict enforcement of laws.

Community development to reduce vulnerability.

Child Labour

1. Definition

Employment of children below the legal working age in any form of labour that deprives them of education, health, and normal childhood.

Prohibited under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 and other laws.

2. Causes

Poverty and family indebtedness.

Lack of access to free quality education.

Demand for cheap, docile labour.

Family tradition in certain trades.

3. Problems Faced

Physical harm and stunted growth.

Illiteracy and lack of skill development.

Psychological trauma.

Exploitation and abuse.

4. Social Work Role

Rescue and rehabilitation programs.

Ensuring enrolment in schools.

Awareness campaigns for parents and employers.

Collaboration with NGOs and government agencies to eliminate child labour.