Rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment: The case of construction workers in Bangladesh

by

Md Selim Reza

Thesis submitted to Flinders University for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Business, Government and Law

16 July 2018

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

ANSECHR	Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
CDKN	Climate and Development Knowledge Network
CPC	Central Product Classification
BILS	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BWI	Building and Wood Workers' International
DMDP	Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RAJUK	*Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha* (or Capital Development Authority)
REHAB	Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh
RMG	Readymade Garments
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
SBREC	Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
SCMR	Sussex Centre for Migration Research
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
YRF	Young Researchers' Forum

SUMMARY

This thesis identifies individual recruiters as the key actors in recruitment and management of migrant construction workers in Bangladesh. It argues that the central role of individual recruiters in indirect labour recruitment and management practices produces precarious work conditions through exploitative employment relationships that contribute to various pressures and insecurities amongst the rural-urban migrant labourers and limit scope for labour protection. The study is focussed on migrant construction workers in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh where many rural labourers migrate and work. It generates and analyses empirical data collected through a survey and in-depth interviews of migrant workers, 100 and 15 respectively, and interviews with five individual recruiters. It contributes new insights to the fields of employment relations by unpacking the inter-connections between rural-urban labour migration, recruitment and precarious employment with reference to the migrant workers in the construction sector of Bangladesh. The original contribution of this study is to shine a light on the structure of recruitment practices to enhance understandings of employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector. This work can be beneficial to other global contexts where recruitment may also be key to precarious work conditions.

The thesis draws on existing literature on precarious work and performs an empirical study that complements theoretical conceptualisations of precarious work produced in the fields of employment relations by examining the connections between recruitment practices and precarious work conditions. The empirical results of this study reveal that rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Bangladesh involves a multi-tiered labour recruitment and management process in which the individual recruiters dominate in all respects through the discretion they have in determining the terms and conditions of employment. While the predominant role of recruiters offers the rural labourers easy access to work in cities, this work is stressful and can be characterised as *4D*: dirty, difficult, dangerous and disgraceful. The dominance of recruiters is conceptualised as producing "hyper-individualised employment" and this study for the first time unravels the extensive individualised layers in labour recruitment and management that contribute heavily to conditions of precariousness, and to the control and exploitation of migrant workers. Hyper-individualised employment is a specific pathway into employment relationship in which the individual recruiters dominate over the workers to create pressures and insecurities to force the workers to be highly dependent on them. Making the migrant workers individually subordinate to their recruiters, it generates a despotic employment relationship that contributes heavily to precariatisation of rural-urban migrant labourers in Bangladesh.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed.....

Date.....25/02/2018.....

Part of this thesis has been presented in the following publication and conferences:

Publication:

Reza, S. (2016). Hyper-individualized recruitment: Rural-urban labour migration and precarious construction work in Bangladesh. *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement, 2*(2), 40-61.

(This publication was awarded the “Best Research Higher Degree Publication Award 2016” at Flinders University, Australia)

Conferences:

Reza, S. (2017, November 20). *Rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment: The case of construction workers in Bangladesh*. Paper presented at the College of Business, Government and Law HDR Conference, Flinders University, South Australia, Australia.

Reza, S. (2015, June 11-13). *Labour migration and precarious construction work in Bangladesh: Myths and realities of neoliberalism.* Paper presented at the Conference on Migration and Late Capitalism: Critical Intersections with the Asia-Pacific and Beyond, The University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the blessings of the Almighty in giving me good health and strength to complete this thesis.

I was really privileged to have two wonderful persons, Dr Maria Giannacopoulos and Associate Professor Marinella Marmo, as my supervisors. They offered me generous support and guidance throughout their supervision. I received insightful advice, helpful criticisms and valuable suggestions from them that helped me think rigorously.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr Larissa Sandy who was my associate supervisor in the early stages of this thesis. I am really grateful to the incredible support she extended to me for pursuing funding opportunities for this study.

I am also grateful to the Research Higher Degree Proposal Committee at Flinders Law School for considering my PhD project important. I acknowledge the constructive feedback from Professor Margaret Davies and Dr Russell Brewer who reviewed my research proposal and gave valuable insights upon presentation of the proposal.

I am deeply thankful to Flinders University for the financial support I received through their highly competitive Australian Government Research Training Programme Scholarship. I am especially indebted to Professor Tara Brabazon, the Dean of Graduate Research at Flinders, for her extraordinarily inspirational and motivational support.

I owe special thanks to Dr Cécile Cutler for her incredible hard work in proofreading the final draft of my thesis. It has been a great blessing to get her editorial support. Any remaining errors are my own.

I am especially in debt to Associate Professor Feng Xu at the Department of Political Science, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She was the Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement* where part of this thesis was published. Her editorial comments, along with constructive suggestions from two anonymous reviewers, on my manuscripts really helped me think rigorously to theoretically frame this study during its early stage.

My heartiest thanks go to my teacher and later colleague Professor C R Abrar at Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), University of Dhaka. My life changed because of him. He believed in me and happily accepted many challenges to make me a field researcher. All my field-based research experiences are due to his countless intellectual support to me. I am indebted to Professor Tasneem Siddiqui for her immense support to my academic aspirations. I

also thank my other colleagues at RMMRU for their valuable support during my fieldwork in Dhaka. In particular, I owe a deep debt to Dr Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder and K N M Hossainul Huq for their endless support.

My friend Owasim Akram at European Union Delegation to Bangladesh has always been a great source of motivation to me. I have learned a lot from him. We had many productive discussions during my fieldwork in Dhaka. His original scholarship in informal sector workers and their poverty really benefited me to understand the inner dynamics of employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector.

I am profoundly grateful to my parents who have been a constant source of courage, empathy and comfort during my candidature. I am deeply indebted to my father Md Yakub Ali who shared a naïve perspective to understand my argument in this thesis. His unbiased comments provided me important directions. My mother Monira Begum has sacrificed a lot in her life for my comfort. Every time I rang her from overseas, she gave me endless courage and motivation. I am eternally indebted to her. I am also grateful to my parents-in-law for their empathy and courage.

Without the incredible patience and encouragement of my wife Farhana Fatema, it would have been impossible to finish writing this thesis. She is someone special to me. She has made endless sacrifices toward the completion of this thesis. She was the person who constantly motivated me to face everyday life challenges and stay focussed on writing the thesis. Her practical experience in precarious employment arrangements in Australia gave me important insights. She endured many troubles during my fieldwork. Moreover, she has been a wonderful woman in managing daily household chores to help me get adequate time for writing.

I am thankful to my beloved son Md Siyam Reza who was born in Adelaide when I was in an important stage of developing the research proposal for this study. I have seen him growing up throughout the process of completing this thesis. Every time I returned home stressed, he generously gave me a big smile and a great big hug. Struggling with the inevitable loneliness and isolation during the intense stage of writing, sometimes I had to deprive him from the quality time and true love and affection he deserved from me. In spite of this, his beautiful smiling face was very inspirational and engaging to me.

Last but not least, my heartiest thanks and gratitude to each migrant construction worker participating in this study. It would have been impossible to successfully complete the study without their active participation and endless support at every stage of the primary data collection. This thesis is about them and its richness is bestowed on their individual narratives. I have learned many things from them. I am truly indebted to them. I dedicate this thesis to them.

PREFACE

This happiness is in this land
I do not know where to go again.
I have a damaged boat
My life ends up stressful to bail the water out.

This thesis reflects not only my academic interests but passion and lived experiences I gained throughout my long engagement with the precarious work community in Bangladesh. I was born and grew up in a village in Bangladesh where farming was the core livelihood. When I was a child, I saw my family members migrating to cities for work during the lean harvest season. Leaving and returning to the village back and forth, they had little option other than working as informally recruited construction workers in cities. I had the opportunity to closely observe their daily life struggles related to the pressures and insecurities of their work. The predominant recruitment practices often helped them get work but contributed to various forms of precariousness that I was also affected by. Pressures in the workplace often contributed to work accidents and poor health of my family members interrupting my early education in schools.

My grandfather was a migrant construction worker who lived almost half of his life with chronic eyesight problems and respiratory diseases. His work-related health problems made him dependent on his sons, including my father, who were then financially stressed to afford adequate support for him. Financial hardship forced my father to think about permanent migration to a nearby town.

When I was only seven years old, my father permanently migrated from our village to a little town with an aspiration for better income security. We lived in a shanty and eventually my father purchased a piece of land to build a small house. An individual recruiter, along with a group of workers, started building our house. This allowed me an important opportunity in my childhood to see the migrant construction workers and their work thoroughly. This was the time when I first heard the lines of a mystic Bangla song translated and quoted above. The song was originally composed by 19th century Bangladeshi folk poet Lalan Shah Fakir and I translated it from Khan (2007, p. 113). I saw one worker singing the lines every now and then while working hard to build our house. One day he casually waved to me to ask if I was interested to know the meaning of the lines he was singing. I remember the brief discussion where he described the metaphoric sense embedded in the song relating to his uncertain and stressful work life.

Later, I moved to Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, to complete higher secondary education in Notre Dame College. I got accommodation in a student dormitory that was close to a new construction project. Living in the top floor of my dormitory allowed me an opportunity to see the

daily work activities and interactions of the workers and their recruiters in the construction site. It was a routine experience to hear their conversations, arguments and coarse languages distracting my reading and writing. I gradually started realising there was an exploitative control relationship embedded in dominance of the recruiters over the workers in the site. This made me enthusiastic to examine their employment relationships but I was then not ready to conduct academic research due to my academic naivety. Therefore, I moved to the University of Dhaka to complete bachelor and masters degrees in International Relations.

My research interest in labour migration and employment grew out of my studies in International Relations at the University of Dhaka that made me interested in the critical interlinkages between rural-urban migration and the political economy. As a field researcher in migration studies, I became familiar with the dynamics of internal and international migration and the impact of labour migration on Bangladesh's economy.

After graduating as the top of my class in my Masters studies (first position, first class), I started my research career as a Coordinator at the Young Researchers' Forum (YRF), which was the student wing of RMMRU at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. My responsibilities at YRF included collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and report writing. Through this work, I was involved in a research project entitled "Migration of the female street workers and their livelihood in Dhaka city" which gave me important and concrete insights about the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers in the country. I worked in a team led by Professor C R Abrar that surveyed and interviewed 100 female street workers in Dhaka. This project saw me collaborate with researchers at RMMRU, and this led to my appointment first as Junior Programme Officer and later Research Associate at this organisation. In these positions, I gained first-hand experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis, including statistics and the use of statistical software such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I drafted research reports based on fieldwork and led various research teams and provided training on data collection and analysis, and data storage. I was responsible for managing media relations and prepared media releases and briefing notes on the results of research carried out by the RMMRU and its partners. I developed skills in applied research, data analysis, project management and research communication through these experiences.

I was then promoted to Research and Communications Officer for the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium coordinated by the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, of which RMMRU was a consortium partner. I was responsible for conducting fieldwork using surveys, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews as the main data collection methods, data quality control, supervising research assistants in data analysis, and drafting research reports, journal articles and conference and other presentations. In this role, I worked on a research project that examined the impact of policies on labour migration in Bangladesh. In this project, I led a team

of researchers and was responsible for overseeing the interviewing of 200 migrants, including people thinking of migrating, returnees and cross-border migrants. I also worked as a leader of field researchers in a research study titled “Climate-induced migration in Bangladesh” commissioned by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN). Eminent migration scholar Professor Tasneem Siddiqui was the lead researcher in the study and under her supervision I carried out a comprehensive literature review on the impact of climate change on migration from coastal areas. My engagement with CDKN projects significantly enriched my knowledge in understanding climate change and rural-urban migration.

In 2013, I was awarded a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship. The UK-based Commonwealth Scholarships Commission awarded me the fellowship in recognition of my professional engagement with research and communications activities in Bangladesh. The University of Sussex hosted me for three months and through this fellowship I increased my skills in research communication and dissemination to reach both academic and practitioner audiences. During my time at Sussex, I was inspired by Professor Richard Black and Professor Dominic Kniveton at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research (SCMR). Reading their influential work in international migration and related social, economic and environmental transformations made me academically ambitious. I was specially inspired by Professor Ben Rogaly and his eminent research on the intricacies of employment relationships involving rural-urban migrant workers. At SCMR, I attended some presentations of PhD students in Migration Studies that eventually intrigued my academic interests.

I first came to know about Guy Standing and his “the precariat” notion when I was at Sussex. I read his work extensively in the library of the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex. At one stage, I became obsessed with Standing. When I returned Bangladesh from Sussex, my wife diagnosed “Standing syndrome” in me!

Before coming to Flinders University, I was involved in a regional research project that examined the impact of migration on poverty for construction workers in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. A total of 450 construction workers were interviewed in the three countries, and I was responsible for leading the field-based research team in Bangladesh. During the course of my involvement in this study, I acquired knowledge that I wanted to build upon through examining the structure of recruitment practices in Bangladesh’s construction sector.

The “Standing syndrome”, however, has been a key motivation for designing this project on the migrant construction workers in Bangladesh. During my early candidature, I read Sarah Swider’s book *Building China: Informal work and the new precariat*. The book has already been criticised for using “precariat” in its title, without directly conflating Standing’s eminent notion of “the precariat” to construction work in China. Lack of clarity in its conceptual approach perhaps confused me to

some extent but increased my thirst. Sometimes confusions lead to big dreams!

This PhD project has grown out of many such big dreams, and experiences and motivations outlined above.

1 INTRODUCTION

Construction work is a common but precarious source of employment for migrant labourers. In Bangladesh, many rural labourers migrate to cities and work in the urban construction projects. The predominant structures of their indirect recruitment produce poor work conditions that make construction work precarious for them. In this context, this thesis is concerned with the role of recruiters in generating the precariousness of construction work. It focusses on rural-urban migrant labourers employed as construction workers in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, in order to examine the connections between their recruitment practices and precarious work conditions. Identifying the key actors in the structures of their recruitment and management, it explores the employment relationships that contribute to their precariatisation.

1.1 Background

Construction is "an industry of migrants" (Buckley, Zendel, Biggar, Frederiksen, & Wells, 2016, p. 20). Many migrant labourers are employed in the global construction industry where the terms of employment and work conditions are predominantly poor. The industry is known to be responsible for the accidental deaths of at least 108,000 construction workers, which is 30 percent of all occupational fatal incidents in the world (ILO, 2015a). The poor work conditions in the global construction industry are known to be subject to contemporary changes in work arrangements and labour recruitment practices under neoliberalism. Flexible labour market policies, such as outsourcing and subcontracting, are the key developments that have generated multiple forms of non-standard employment contributing to poor work conditions in the industry (Buckley et al., 2016; ILO, 2001; Wells, 2006, 2007). The neoliberal practices of subcontracting have contributed to the indirect recruitment of construction workers through extensive layers of subcontractors. The poor work conditions of the migrant construction workers are substantially related to how the subcontractors recruit and manage the workers.

Subcontracting is a widespread labour recruitment practice in the global construction industry. It is a multi-layered contracting system to outsource labour recruitment for building construction where the production process is divided into a number of discrete activities (Costantino, Pietroforte, & Hamill, 2001; Yoke-Lian, Hassim, Muniandy, & Teik-Hua, 2012). Subcontracted employment has been widely normalised in the global construction industry to help minimise the cost of production. Subcontracting of labour is not possible without the subcontractors who supply low-cost labour through indirect recruitment. The subcontractors function to reduce costs associated with a permanent workforce by maximising flexibility of labour (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2012; Standing, 1999, 2008; Strauss & Fudge, 2014). Taking responsibility to manage the pressures and risks of production, they supply cheap and flexible labour to the builders. In order to do that, subcontractors manage labour in a manner that creates pressures on the workers. Labour

management practices of subcontractors are therefore characterised by uncertainty, extreme work pressures, exploitative work conditions and lack of bargaining power of the construction workers (Buckley et al., 2016; Lawrence & Werna, 2009; Swider, 2015b; Zeitlyn, Deshingkar, & Holtom, 2014). Recent developments in subcontracting practices in the global construction industry reveal a range of individual agents as subcontractors. Unlike the traditional business model of single subcontracting firms, the individual subcontractors share an intermediate employment relationship to link the job-aspiring workers to the builders and building contractors that they subcontract for.

The growing layers of individual subcontractors in the global construction industry have blurred the concept of direct employment by a single employer. The practices of indirect recruitment under neoliberalism have normalised the individual subcontractors' role as employers. Their role extends from recruitment to management of migrant labourers in order to accomplish the specific tasks they subcontract. Globally, many migrant construction workers are indirectly recruited by them (Buckley et al., 2016; ILO, 2001; Wells, 2006, 2007). For the rural-urban migrant labourers, in particular, their recruitment practices offer easy entry to urban construction jobs. This important dimension has traditionally popularised construction work to be one of the most common jobs for the rural labourers migrating to cities (BWI, 2006; ILO, 2001; IOM, 2005). It is estimated that more than 111 million construction workers are employed in 90 countries worldwide and a large proportion of them are migrant labourers (ILO, 2001). Although this figure represents the global construction industry as a big source of employment for the migrant labourers, very little is known about internal migration and recruitment and work conditions of the construction workers. The lack of academic research on rural-urban migrant labourers in the global construction industry and their employment relationships is influenced by two important factors.

First, the perceived importance of international migration has traditionally undermined the scope for academic research on internal migration. As pointed out by King and Skeldon (2010), "most migration scholars nowadays research international migration, even though, quantitatively, internal migration is more important" (p. 1619). Rural-urban migration has been a common livelihood approach in many developing countries. Despite the fact that the number of internal migrants globally is at least 740 million (IOM, 2013), nearly four times the number of international migrants, the research and policy issues have traditionally concentrated on so-called immigration and border issues due to their specific relevance to the developed countries (Skeldon, 2014). This general trend has contributed to the scarcity of academic research on the rural-urban migrant construction workers in developing countries. While there are a number of international conventions to protect the interests of international migrant workers, both forced and voluntary, there is an absence of any such convention applicable for internal migrant workers. Employment in the construction sector of developed countries generally involves a complex set of international migration legislation and therefore existing knowledge on work and employment with reference to construction work is dominated by the debates on work visa arrangements only (Anderson, 2010; Bahn, Barratt-Pugh,

& Yap, 2012; Pijpers & Velde, 2007). Internal migration, rural-urban labour migration in particular, for construction work in cities, generally does not involve complicated migration legislation and border control. Due to the informal nature of migration and job contracts, the rural-urban migrant construction workers have received little scholarly attention.

Second, empirical research on individual recruiters of migrant construction workers remains an exception in the fields of employment relations. This is because the traditional perspectives frequently used to discuss labour migration and employment under neoliberalism are hesitant to consider the individual recruiters as crucial actors (Rodriguez & Mearns, 2012). The role of individual agents in subcontracting has therefore not been problematised yet as the key actors in producing employment relationships for the migrant workers. As a result, the employment relations researchers have rarely considered subcontracted employment and its growing diversity as an important area relating to individual experiences of migration and work. In this context, the structure of subcontracted recruitment and its relationship to rural-urban migration and employment is a worthy area of study. Examination of the role of subcontractors and other individuals as recruiting agents is important in understanding the changing employment relationships that have profound impacts on the quality of employment in global and local workplaces.

Although the labour management functions of the individual subcontractors still remain inadequately researched in the fields of employment relations, subcontracted employment through individual agents and labour intermediaries is widely argued to be a core form of precarious employment under neoliberalism (Chang, 2009; ILO, 2015b; McDowell, Batnitzky, & Dyer, 2009; Quinlan, Mayhew, & Bohle, 2001; Strauss & Fudge, 2014). Such employment practices heavily erode labour-related security and contribute to precariatisation of workers (Standing, 2011, 2014b, 2014d, 2016a). The migrant construction workers have significant representation in expanding forms of such employment. However, the notion of precarious employment is ambiguous due to its limitations for conceptualising the features of such employment under neoliberalism. Existing literature on precarious employment considers the role of state regulations crucial in labour market formation and therefore discussions on regulations occupy a substantial part of the literature. Precarious employment is frequently argued to be intrinsically entrenched in the neoliberal policies of non-regulation that have promoted an employment system characterised by flexible and low-cost labour (Anderson, 2010; Kalleberg, 2009, 2011, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 1997, 1999, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Vosko, 2006).

In Asia, there is a trend to label the work in the informal sector as precarious. Because of differences in their level of development, historical trajectories and cultural traditions, Asian countries differ in aspects of precarious work. However, increased flexibilisation and insecurity in

employment have been recent features of precarious labour in the region (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 2017). It is regularly claimed that precariousness in the construction sector of Asian countries is backed up by the absence of regulation (Agarwala, 2014; Buckley, 2014; Raftery, Pasadilla, Chiang, Hui, & Tang, 1998; Swider, 2015a, 2015b; Wells, 2007). While the essence of precariousness is argued to be the essence of informality in the region, the linkages between formal and informal are complex and interlinked. Often they reinforce each other. This is because individual recruiters operate through interconnected networks of actors and across multiple regulation regimes (Fernandez, 2013).

As part of liberalising the economy by deregulating labour markets, reluctance to enforce labour regulations is evident in the construction sector of Asian countries. Deregulation of the local labour market creates the space for individual recruiters and eases their function of supplying low-cost labour for building construction (Chang, 2009; Mosse, Gupta, & Shah, 2005; Pattenden, 2012; Suresh, 2010; Wells, 2006, 2007). To the local builders, indirect recruitment though individual recruiters is traditionally an easy option to evade laws. The kind of regulatory structure in place for international migration does not exist in this area. This is because finding employment within the country does not involve crossing international borders or involving actors in international recruitment process. Thus there is little relationship between individual recruiters and the state with respect to internal migrant construction workers. As they do not have written contracts or other job related documents, they are excluded from legal provisions (Buckley et al., 2016; ILO, 2001; Kumar & Fernández, 2015; Wells, 2007). Because the existence of individual recruiters in labour recruitment is not acknowledged through national laws, their predominant role does not allow the state to engage in labour management. This enables the recruiters to avoid visibility and operate outside the purview and protection of legal regulations. Their day-to-day operations and associated practices put labour management issues beyond the state's capacity (Agarwala, 2014; Fernandez, 2013; Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012). The lack of state-based labour enrolment opportunities coupled with absence of regulation therefore normalises their role and thus the growth of their layers in recruitment processes.

Neoliberal developments are integral to the rural-urban migration and labour market practices in Bangladesh. Internal migration of labour in Bangladesh is intrinsically linked to urbanisation, a recent phenomenon. After liberation of Bangladesh from the Pakistani government in 1971, a sharp increase in the rate of urbanisation contributed to growing economic and commercial activities in urban areas (Afsar, 2003; Nabi, 1992). Therefore, rural-urban migration and recruitment of internal migrant labourers is a relatively new reality in the country, when compared with other countries in the region. Being born in the neoliberal era, Bangladesh embraced indirect recruitment practices from the very beginning. The rules of business and labour management strategies already prevalent in the world influenced the emerging country. In particular, deregulation of business and private investment since early 1990s has led to rapid increases in

urban construction activities and competition in the internal labour market (GoB, 2011a). These neoliberal developments have introduced a new world of work for Bangladesh's migrant construction workers who have traditionally been accepting indirect recruitment practices as an embedded phenomenon in their work life. Although subcontracting and outsourcing had always been common labour hire practices in Bangladesh, the contemporary nature of these practices reveals a new and distinct labour recruitment strategy that has emerged as the most viable option to the urban builders.

Bangladesh's construction sector is officially declared as a formal sector. In spite of this, informalisation, more specifically individualisation, of labour recruitment is the key aspect of precarious work that the internal migrant labourers are experiencing in the sector (Reza, 2016). As in many other Asian countries, Bangladesh's internal migrant labourers are generally familiar with such recruitment practices. What is new in the country is extended layers of individual recruiters that dominate contemporary recruitment practices, particularly for the migrant construction workers. Addition of layers of individual recruiters in multi-tiered recruitment practices in recent times has triggered specific areas of precariousness in construction that was perhaps less precarious in the past. In this context, it is important to empirically examine the interconnections among the layers of individual recruiters and their labour management functions that implicate significant impacts on work conditions of migrant construction workers in Bangladesh. This study sets out in this direction and its original contribution is to help understand the structures of recruitment practices and employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector. It aims to produce new knowledge that can be complemented to understand the growing diversity of precarious employment in other geographical settings.

1.2 Understanding precarious work

The main theoretical lens of this study, precarious work, is generally characterised by high levels of labour insecurity and lack of labour protection. It is a prominent theme in recent employment relations research (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Campbell & Price, 2016). Although the concept of precarious work is being increasingly used in academic and activist research, theoretical conceptualisations of precarious work are ambiguous because of conceptual slippage and confusions that have led the academics to either misinterpret or entirely overlook the theoretical foundations of precarious work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). The definition of precarious work is vague and multifaceted due to the multidimensional nature of precarious work and the differences in its understanding which typically depends on the geographic, economic and social structure of the political systems and labour markets. As a result, the concept of precarious work has been extensively debated and refined (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Campbell & Price, 2016; ILO, 2012; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; McDowell et al., 2009). A variety of terms, such as precarity, informalisation, casualisation, contractualisation, flexibilisation, nonstandard, irregular,

subcontracted, atypical and contingent work or employment, have emerged from particular national contexts. Precarious work has generally been conceptualised to include all forms of work involving job insecurity, limited statutory entitlements, both in the workplace and to social benefits, low wages and high risks of ill health.

As the ILO (2012) mentions:

> *Although a precarious job can have many faces, it is usually defined by uncertainty as to the duration of employment, multiple possible employers or a disguised or ambiguous employment relationship, a lack of access to social protection and benefits usually associated with employment, low pay, and substantial legal and practical obstacles to joining a trade union and bargaining collectively (p. 27).*

Precarious work is a multi-dimensional concept. Labour researchers have often theorised precarious work in connection to the structural changes of employment arrangements introduced by neoliberal developments. Political economists and economic sociologists, in particular, have explored how profit motivations had let the employers introduce flexible employment practices that cut costs and shift risks onto individual workers (Beck, 2000; Kalleberg, 2011; Ross, 2009; Standing, 2011, 2016a). Researchers in the fields of sociology of work have associated the concept of precarious work to workplace conditions and the quality of employment. They have referred precarious work to involve high employment insecurity, low regulatory protection, low wages, and a low level of employee control over wages, hours and work conditions (Cranford & Vosko, 2006; Vosko, 2010).

In spite of theoretical debates and confusions, precarious work has been frequently conceptualised as employment that is uncertain, unpredictable and risky in which the workers bear the risks of work (as opposed to businesses or the government) and receive limited social benefits and statutory protections (Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; Standing, 2011, 2014b, 2016a, 2017; Vosko, 2010). Defined in this way, the concept of precarious work not only encompasses the work conditions but a range of emerging employment arrangements that the workers are forced to accept. Among them, outsourced and subcontracted work arrangements are the key work arrangements, introduced by neoliberal policies, to attribute to contemporary rise of precarious work (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2012; Standing, 1997, 1999, 2010; Strauss & Fudge, 2014; Vosko, 2006). Precarious work is characterised by diversity of individual work experiences and their impacts may differ from one society to the other but they are fundamentally same in terms of diminishing rights. In particular, the migrant labourers experiencing precarious work face extreme forms of labour exploitation that flexbilise, subordinate and coerce them to continue with widespread insecurities in employment arrangements (Standing, 2011, 2014b, 2016a). Because the process of labour recruitment and labour management has important effects on the migrant labourers' work conditions, this thesis examines precarious work in this important area and builds on conceptualisations. It theorises the connection between recruitment practices and precarious

work and in doing so casts new light on migrant workers and their work conditions.

Given the complexity of defining precarious work, this thesis limits its scope to the nature of employment relationships characterised by poor work conditions. It measures precarious work through four dimensions of precariousness that represent instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social or economic vulnerability, as suggested by Rodgers (1989, p. 3):

(a) Temporal dimension: low certainty of continuity and availability of work;

(b) Organisational dimension: lack of workers' (individual and collective) control over work conditions, wages and the pace of work;

(c) Social dimension: legal, collective or customary protection against discrimination, unfair dismissal or unacceptable working practices, and social protection (access to social security benefits covering health, accidents, unemployment insurance, etc.); and

(d) Economic dimension: inadequate and irregular payment.

This PhD study purposefully draws the boundary around the theoretical concept of precarious work and hypothesises that precariousness in Bangladesh's construction sector is identified by the combination of the above factors. Since precarious employment is recognised as "the dominant feature of social relations between employers and workers in the contemporary world" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 17), it considers social contexts (i.e., same locality effects) of employment relationships important in understanding precarious work conditions. This theoretical position allows the study to examine the employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector by emphasising not only the dimensions of pressures and insecurities produced by indirect recruitment practices but the social relations of demand and supply in generating precariousness, as suggested by Standing (2011) and Vosko (2006). It therefore extends the scope of this study to examine the role of individual agents and their social connections to labour recruitment and management practices that produce precarious work conditions for the migrant labourers.

1.3 Theoretical framework: Mapping out the precariat

Given the theoretical ambiguities and conceptual slippage, the theoretical framework of this thesis is built on eminent scholar Guy Standing's theory of "the precariat" that is fundamentally derived from Marxian interpretations of global capitalism and struggles of the working class people. Standing (2011) conceptualises the contemporary changes in employment arrangements and their repercussions in producing multiple forms of insecurities in the life of working people. He refers to the precariat as a new "class" that lacks seven forms of labour-related security in relation to their employment: labour market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security. According to him, flexible

labour practices under global capitalism have contributed to the emergence and growth of this class. Benchmarking this new class with Karl Marx's "proletariat", he argues that the precariat has a distinctive bundle of insecurities and they are a "class-in-the-making" rather than Marx's "class-for-itself" (Standing, 2011, p. 7).

As he argues:

> *The precariat was not part of the 'working class' or the 'proletariat'. The latter terms suggest a society consisting mostly of workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionisation and collective agreements, with job titles their fathers and mothers would have understood, facing local employers whose names and features they were familiar with … The precariat has class characteristics … And it has none of the social contract relationships of the proletariat, whereby labour securities were provided in exchange for subordination and contingent loyalty, the unwritten deal underpinning welfare states. Without a bargain of trust or security in exchange for subordination, the precariat is distinctive in class terms (Standing, 2011, pp. 6-8).*

Distinguishing the precariat from Marx's class interpretations, Standing (2011) claims precariousness of working people as a new development of global capitalism that aims to make labour temporary, flexible and subordinate through flexible labour market policies such as subcontracting. These policies have already contributed to erosion of the standard employment relationship and thus diminished the rights of the workers. In particular, the subcontracting practices have induced contingent employment arrangements to flexibilise labour to the benefits of capital. Labour-capital relations in such practices are despotic where the employers control and subordinate the workers to maximise their labour productivity in pursuit of competitiveness in neoliberal markets. The precariat therefore represents the victims of neoliberal policies that have significantly curtailed the state regulations of the labour markets. While they are flexible and subordinate to their employers, they are vulnerable due to lack of rights and labour security. In absence of upward mobility, they are overrepresentative in "insecure forms of labour that are unlikely to assist them to build a desirable identity or a desirable career" (Standing, 2011, p. 16).

One of the core propositions of Standing's theory of the precariat is the process through which the employers subject the workers to their subordination in flexible arrangements. He conceptualises this process as "precariatisation" that isolates the workers and limits their space and opportunity for collective action. Precariatisation is a process through which the employers establish control over the workers by making them "subject to pressures and experiences that lead to a precariat existence" (Standing, 2011, p. 16). Taking this important conceptualisation of employment relationships for the precariat, the overarching theoretical framework enables this thesis to examine the specific conditions that create pressures and insecurities to subordinate the workers to their employers, with reference to construction work in Dhaka. It also extends the scope of this thesis to confirm the mechanism of precariatisation that the migrant construction workers experience in Dhaka. Thus this thesis is theoretically positioned on Standing's interpretations of the new class of working people, the precariat, and it endeavours to map out the characteristics of

the precariat in Dhaka's construction projects.

1.4 Bangladesh: Migration and work in construction

Bangladesh is a small country, predominantly rural in nature, located in South Asia. The country is least developed and it has a population estimated at around 162 million within a land area of 147,570 square kilometres, a per capita annual income of US$1,212 and a heavily foreign aid dependent economy (UN, 2016a, 2017; WB, 2016). The country is internationally known for a few important characteristics such as extreme poverty, cheap labour for global Readymade Garments (RMG) manufacturing, international labour migration and frequent natural disasters. According to the World Bank's latest statistics, 51.5 percent of people in Bangladesh earn less than US$3.20 a day and thus they live below the lower middle income class poverty line (WB, 2017). Bangladesh's labour regulation and work conditions have recently been covered in international media following the deadly collapse of Rana Plaza, a building complex which housed several RMG manufacturing factories, leaving 1,129 garments workers dead and a further 2,500 injured (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). In the past 40 years, more than 10 million Bangladeshis migrated overseas for employment and international remittance became an important source of foreign exchange earnings (GoB, 2017). Although Bangladesh is the origin of extensive communities of global migrants present in the Gulf States, Europe and North America, the country receives little attention from the international media because of limited geopolitical interest of the Western nations (Lewis, 2011). However, Bangladesh is exceptionally vulnerable to severe cyclones and storms and every few years pictures of severe flooding or cyclone damage make headlines in international media. Although international media limitedly highlights human sufferings due to natural disasters, they hardly examine the structure of Bangladesh's economy and livelihoods that have largely been shaped by the outrages of the disasters undermining agricultural development and inducing internal migration.

Bangladesh's agrarian economy is highly dependent on the extremely fragile ecology. Farming is primarily dependent on monsoon-based harvesting while land is productive but scarce and highly concentrated (Lewis, 2011; Nabi, 1992). Employment and income related to farming activities therefore fluctuate between seasons and years. Lack of year-round employment in villages has been attributed as the most important reason for rural-urban migration of labour. Vast majority of the rural labourers migrate to cities, during lean harvest season for farming, in search of income opportunities (Afsar, 2000; Alam & Barkat-e-Khuda, 2011; Herrmann & Svarin, 2009). Although recent national economic development policies in Bangladesh postulate that migration of rural labourers from the agriculture sector has pushed up agricultural wages leading to higher income levels for the landless workers, increasing migration of rural labourers has contributed to rapid urbanisation in the country.

However, migration to cities has been an important adaptation strategy for the rural people

affected by climate change. Being a deltaic country, Bangladesh is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and it regularly encounters climate shocks including tropical cyclones, tornadoes, drought, flood, riverbank erosion, salinity and water pollution. Due to climate change, millions of people are forecast to be displaced in upcoming years (Akter, 2009). The country has a big coastal area throughout different regions and a summer dominant hemisphere in the north-western region. Climate change is increasingly affecting the fertility of lands and human settlements (Kuhn, 2003). Climate change-related displacement has therefore been a vital cause of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh (Afsar, 2000; Martin et al., 2014; Siddiqui & Billah, 2014). Every year many people from climate-affected areas leave their homes and migrate to cities. Also, there are some people who stay in the city for a particular period of the year, known to be the most critical time for climate hazards, they however return to their villages. Thus rural-urban migration enables them to escape climate vulnerabilities and adapt with climate change-related hardships (Jones, Mahbub, & Haq, 2016; Siddiqui & Billah, 2014).

Weather-conditioned farming and climate-induced migration have been crucially associated to the growth of informal sector in urban areas in Bangladesh. Many migrant labourers coming from climate-affected villages get work in urban informal sector such as rickshaw pulling, street vending and domestic care (Siddiqui & Billah, 2014). Nearly 75 percent of the total labour force in cities is employed in the informal sector (GoB, 2015a). The migrant labourers arriving in cities can easily access informal jobs that do not require formal training or professional skills. Despite the lack of labour protection and employment benefits, a large proportion of the internal migrant labourers are traditionally found in informal jobs in cities that enable them to earn better (Amin, 1987). Because of this increasing trend, rural-urban migration is one of the most important reasons for rapid growth of urban population and thereby urbanisation in Bangladesh. With 34.3 percent of total population living in urban areas, the average annual growth rate of urban population was 3.6 percent during 2010-2015 (UN, 2016a). The trends of rapid urbanisation have led significant demographic change in the cities of Bangladesh, particularly in the capital city.

Dhaka, the capital city, is the largest city in Bangladesh. With 18 million residents, it is one of the fastest growing megacities and the most densely populated city in the world where more than 44,000 people live in one square kilometre area (Smith, 2017; UN, 2016a, 2016b). Dhaka is the 11th largest city in the world and 11.2 percent of the country's total population and 32 percent of the country's total urban population live in the city (UN, 2016b). It has been a popular choice to the rural-urban migrant labourers in terms of searching for informal jobs. Rapid urbanisation coupled with recent growth of many urban centres in Dhaka has created increasing demand for migrant labourers. Dhaka receives an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 migrant labourers every year, predominantly young unskilled rural labourers (Afsar, 2000, 2003; Sanderson, 2012). The age-selective nature of rural-urban labour migration in Dhaka is due to the fact that the number of young people in Bangladesh is higher than other age groups. Bangladesh is a country of youth

labour force where 23.4 million young people aged between 15 to 29 years represent around 40 percent of the total labour force (GoB, 2015a). Although the vast majority of the youth labour force are employed in the agriculture sector, there is little incentive to remain in agriculture due to contemporary changes such as declining agricultural productivity, price fluctuation of crops and mechanisation in small farm agriculture. These developments have curtailed the capacity of the agriculture sector to employ young rural labourers while the overall growth of the sector is very slow (Saha, 2002). As a result, rural-urban labour migration for more remunerative non-farm work has increasingly become a livelihood strategy for the young people and their households in villages. These changes have significantly contributed to increasing rural-urban labour migration for construction work in cities.

Construction in Bangladesh is a dominant sector in terms of its enormous economic contribution and employment. It has been a popular source of employment for the rural labourers migrating to cities. Their migration provides them with opportunities for better income in cities and thus helps their households minimise the financial stresses tied to their original occupation in their village. In 2010, the sector contributed 8.4 percent to Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and gained a 6 percent annual growth rate, higher than that of the largest sector in Bangladesh, agriculture (GoB, 2011a). Recent demographic changes, infrastructure and housing development activities and the massive expansion of private real estate businesses in the country have further boosted the growth of the sector. The sector involves more than 200 large construction firms and 5,000 small and medium-sized private contractors and real estate developers (Chowdhury, 2010). While in the past Bangladesh's construction sector was largely dependent on imported materials, all the construction materials are now being locally produced. It is estimated that there are more than 269 industries allied to the construction sector, consisting of more than 2,000 factories producing cement, steel, bricks, sand, paint, tiles and ceramics, pipes and fittings, cables, glass, stone, wood, glue, etc. (Sejuti, 2015).

Construction has been a significant source of employment for rural labourers in Bangladesh. A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey of farm and non-farm employment shows that in the three-year period through 2006-2009 more than 600,000 workers switched from agriculture to non-farm sectors in addition to another 3.6 million workers who joined various non-farm occupations (GoB, 2011a, 2011b). While the share of the farm sector in the labour force dropped by 4.5 percent during this period, nearly half a million people switched to the construction sector making the total number of construction workers 2.6 million in 2010 that was forecast to be 2.9 million in 2015 (GoB, 2011a, 2011b). The growth rate of employed persons in construction was 13.52 percent in 2010 and the sector offered employment to 6.6 percent of urban and 4.3 percent of rural labourers by employing 4.84 percent of the total labour force and 5.49 percent of the total youth labourers (GoB, 2011b). Bangladesh's latest development policy documents, including the Vision 2021, pointed to project construction as one of the main engines of high growth in upcoming years in

terms of employment.

According to the association of real estate developers in Bangladesh, known as Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), the sector employs 33,500 technical persons such as architects, graduate engineers, diploma engineers and management officials.[1] In addition to the mainstream construction workers, there are another 1 million people employed in allied industries such as cement and steel producing factories (Kabir, 2016). Once the number of people employed in these allied industries is considered, the construction sector's total employment is estimated to be more than 3.5 million. However, very few of this group are female workers in the urban construction projects (Choudhury, 2013; Rahman & Islam, 2013). The low participation of women in construction work is reflective of overall female participation in the national labour force. While female participation in the national labour force is 33.5 percent, the construction sector employs only 1.0 percent of total employed women in Bangladesh and thus only 7.94 percent construction workers are women (GoB, 2015a).

Rural-urban migrant labourers constitute the bulk of construction workers in the large cities and come from different parts of Bangladesh. They migrate to cities seasonally when they have few options to survive on farming. Many marginalised peasants and agricultural labourers migrate from rural areas to major cities such as Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet and gain employment in urban construction projects (Abrar & Reza, 2014; Chowdhury et al., 2012; Farhana, Rahman, & Rahman, 2012; Uddin & Firoj, 2013). The internal migrant labourers in Bangladesh consider construction work as the most favourable income option considering the predominantly easy access. When compared to another vibrant sector, RMG manufacturing, the recruitment process for construction employment is less demanding in terms of age, skills and education. Although recruitment practices in the RMG manufacturing sector have mostly been standardised due to its linkages with foreign buyers who maintain and pressurise the sector to maintain international labour standards, Bangladesh's construction sector is purely a domestic sector that does not share any international linkages. As a result, construction has emerged as a sector where informal recruitment practices are widely established and poor labour standards are normalised. Entering the sector as unskilled labourers coming from villages, the migrant labourers work in an environment marked by poor occupational safety and high rates of accidents (BILS, 2007). Local newspapers regularly report accidental deaths of construction workers in cities although many incidences remain unpublished.

Employment of the rural-urban migrant labourers in the urban construction projects is represented

[1] REHAB was established in 1991. The association had 1,151 members in 2016, mainly involved in building residential apartments and land development. Its members have constructed and sold more than 100,000 residential units, approximately 10,000 residential units and 6,000 land plots each year (REHAB, n.d.).

by poor work conditions and absence of labour protection (Abrar & Reza, 2014; Reza, 2016). The traditional practices of recruitment are characterised by unavailability of formal recruitment agencies and thereby lack of institutional commitment to the construction workers. Indirect recruitment practices, where the builders indirectly recruit construction workers through a multi-layered process involving a range of individuals, are long established in Bangladesh's construction sector. Lack of regulation in the sector is rooted in the absence of statistics on workers and their recruiters. Apart from estimation, the official statistics available on the construction sector do not reveal the genuine census of workers and their recruiters. Large proportion of the workers remain uncovered in the government censuses due to their constant mobility. Labour issues in the construction sector are therefore not covered in the available official data. While there are few micro studies on the construction workers in major regional cities, they hardly discuss recruitment practices and work conditions. These limitations have traditionally made the construction workers an underexplored labour group in Bangladesh, restricting the scopes for getting empirical facts about their recruitment and work conditions. This PhD is situated in this context to undertake an empirical examination of rural-urban labour migration and recruitment practices in Bangladesh's construction sector, through the theoretical lens of precarious work.

1.5 Objectives

The overall objective of this PhD is to understand how recruitment practices produce conditions of precarious employment for the migrant construction workers in cities. It aims to investigate the inter-connections between rural-urban labour migration, labour recruitment practices and work conditions in Bangladesh's construction sector through the theoretical lens of precarious work. By doing this, it aims to discover why construction work is precarious for the migrant labourers in cities. The study has three specific research objectives:

(i) To measure the extent and nature of labour recruitment practices for construction work;

(ii) To explore the possible intersections between rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment with reference to urban construction work; and

(iii) To develop an evidence-based instrument that will contribute to the literature on internal migration and precarious labour.

1.6 Research questions

In order to fulfil these objectives, this PhD sets out with four research questions:

(a) What is the nature of construction work, and what is its relation to rural-urban labour migration?

(b) What are the structures of recruitment practices, and who are the key actors in recruiting

migrant construction workers?

(c) How do the migrant construction workers view and negotiate recruitment in their migration experience?

(d) How do recruitment practices mediate employment relationships that render different forms of precariousness in Bangladesh's construction sector?

1.7 Methodological framework

In order to fulfil the objectives and answer the research questions outlined above, primary data for this thesis was collected through a three-month long field trip in Dhaka. Before commencing data collection, human ethics approval was sought from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University to ensure respectful treatment of the research participants and minimise potential risks and burdens in relation to participation. In order to access, recruit and treat the participants, Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (ANSECHR) guidelines were followed. Participation in this research was voluntary and the participants provided informed verbal consent as per the information provided to them. Participants were anonymous and all information they provided was managed in the strictest confidence.

A mixed methods approach was followed to combine quantitative and qualitative data gathering through a questionnaire-based survey and in-depth interviews. The survey followed the purposive random sampling technique through which a conscious selection of 100 migrant construction workers was undertaken on the basis of specific characteristics such as at least six months work experience in urban construction projects. The basis for recruitment was mainly the participants' experience of migration and work in Dhaka. The participants were selected from the age group of 15 to 50 years whereas 27 participants were adolescents aged 15 to 17 years. The ratio of male and female participants was not even and thus 86 male and 14 female labourers were surveyed. This is reflective of very low participation of women in construction work, as discussed above. In addition, construction work in Bangladesh is predominantly regarded as labour-intensive masculine work and the recruiters prefer male workers over female workers due to their physical strength and fitness for menial work for excessively long hours (Ahsan, 1997; Choudhury, 2013; Rahman & Islam, 2013). Overall, more than two-thirds of the survey participants were the sole member of their family migrating and working in Dhaka and all of their family members were living in villages. More than half of the participants had relied on farming as their only livelihood option in their villages before migrating. The majority of the participants did not have reading and writing capabilities and thus none had technical education or training in construction work.

The qualitative interview participants were drawn from the overall survey sample. A sub-sample of 15 participants was selected for in-depth interviewing. Purposeful sampling strategy was used to

select them. In addition, five individual recruiters were interviewed to obtain employers' perspectives on recruitment and management of migrant construction workers. The interviews with the recruiters were conducted in order to gain rich insights on the employment relationships by exploring their original knowledge in how they recruited and managed workers onsite. As suggested by Bloemraad (2007), the survey data laid the groundwork by testing the concept of rural-urban labour migration and its association with construction work in Bangladesh whereas the in-depth interviews uncovered the critical mechanisms structuring indirect recruitment practices and employment relationships by providing migrant construction workers' own narratives.

The survey and in-depth interviews were conducted in Bangla, the native language of the participants. The survey data was analysed by using SPSS. The interviews, recorded in a voice recorder, were transcribed in Bangla and then translated to English. The extracts of the transcripts were manually coded to thematically match with the research questions. Combination of statistical and thematic analysis of primary data extracted from the survey and in-depth interviews provided first-hand knowledge to produce empirical evidence that this dissertation is based on.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The second chapter presents the theoretical position of the thesis. It overviews the current knowledge on labour migration and precarious work and surveys and reviews previous studies and their contents. It discusses the traditional theoretical perspectives of labour migration and the Bangladesh context of rural-urban labour migration. It defines the main theoretical lens of this research, precarious work, by identifying and analysing current knowledge and understanding surrounding the research focus of precarious work. The chapter presents an overview of the recruitment practices and employment relationships in the global construction industry and their relevance to Bangladesh's construction sector. By doing this, the chapter hypothesises that individual recruiters are important labour market actors in determining work conditions and employment relationships for the migrant construction workers.

Chapter three discusses the methodological framework used to undertake the collection of data for this research. It explains the philosophical foundations and rationale for mixed methods research design, describes the sources and the procedures of recruitment of the participants and explains the methods of data collection and analysis. Describing the transcription, translation and coding process, the chapter indicates potential limitations in collecting and analysing data for this research.

Chapter four presents results of this study and conveys an image of construction work as perceived by migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Presenting the migrant workers' own account, it discovers the stressful work conditions in the construction projects. The chapter identifies the individual recruiters and their labour management practices, among other factors, supporting the

poor work conditions and the perceived image of the construction work.

Chapter five presents results of this study and investigates the relationships that the construction work has to rural-urban labour migration. It unpacks the structures of rural-urban labour migration for construction work, explores the prevailing conditions of employment in Dhaka's construction projects that interest the labourers from villages, and examines why rural labourers continue to migrate to cities for work that is predominantly marked by stressful conditions. The chapter identifies some factors to contextualise the rationale for choosing construction work over other available employment opportunities in the capital city of Bangladesh.

Chapter six uncovers the structures of recruitment practices, and explores the contexts and conditions of the recruitment process that the Bangladeshi migrant construction workers experience. It identifies the key actors in selection and recruitment of the rural labourers. The chapter unpacks a multi-tiered and individualised recruitment process in which a range of individuals dominates the process and discretionally determines the terms and conditions of employment. While these individuals are located and interconnected through social relationships, the chapter categorises their recruitment practices into four modes which are further extended to nine specific types of labour recruitment. By doing this, it presents the navigating and intersecting role of the individual recruiters.

Chapter seven presents empirical results to unravel the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects. It examines the role of individual recruiters in mediating the employment relationships. Examining the wider social context of the employment relationships between the migrant construction workers and their recruiters, the results presented in the chapter confirm an all-embracing role of the individual recruiters that the workers are highly dependent on. Discovering social effects on employment relationships and the exploitative payment practices of the recruiters, the chapter also identifies specific conditions of subordination and exploitation of the workers.

Chapter eight interprets the results of this study theoretically. It evaluates the in-depth meaning of the empirical findings and explains their theoretical and empirical significance. The new knowledge which emerges from the research is identified by examining and benchmarking this study's findings with others. In doing this, the chapter uniquely conceptualises "hyper-individualised employment" to characterise the dominant role of the individual recruiters and subordination of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. It argues that hyper-individualised employment is a distinctive form of employment relationship for producing the precariat.

Chapter nine concludes this thesis. The chapter outlines the original contribution of the study, summarises the major findings and arguments and argues that hyper-individualised employment is fundamental to precarious work conditions for the migrant workers. In light of this argument, it

presents a research agenda for future study of migration and labour and reflects on how migration and labour scholars should respond to this important phenomenon through critical analyses of structural changes of employment relationships in local and global workplaces.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical position of this research. It introduces the overarching theoretical framework and examines the philosophical foundations and theoretical perspectives which conceptualise precarious work. By doing this, it develops a theoretical position to examine employment relationships with reference to migrant labour in Bangladesh's construction sector. The chapter begins with a review of theoretical foundations of precarious work then it reviews contemporary changes in global workplaces to define the scope of precarious work. After that, the chapter discusses the key theoretical approaches in migration research to set the scope of this research followed by an examination of the structure of employment relationships and individualisation of migrant labour in the global construction industry. The chapter ends by proposing an appropriate theoretical framework for examination of migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment of the construction workers in Bangladesh.

2.2 Precarious work: The pursuit of theoretical coherence

Precarious work is a prominent concept in contemporary employment relations research, however, it has still been theoretically and conceptually ambiguous to define (Campbell & Price, 2016; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). The sources of conceptual ambiguities evolving around precarious work are due to the extensive body of interdisciplinary research that does not offer an adequate theoretical framework to think about employment relationships to precarious work conditions. The major theoretical perspectives that have been developed to explain the meaning and origins of precarious work do not consider the individual recruiters as the key actors in labour management. As a result, the theoretical discussions on how their labour recruitment and management practices produce precarious work conditions predominantly remain uncertain and confused in the academic discourse on precarious work.

2.2.1 Guy Standing's "the precariat" and Marxism

In spite of being an important theme in labour and work research, currently there is an ideological vacuum and lack of consensus theory about the mechanisms fostering precarious work (Kalleberg, 2009). The debates on theoretical ambiguities of precarious work have been renewed through popularisation of the term "the precariat" that was recently introduced by eminent scholar Guy Standing. The prominent concept represents a "class-in-the-making" that is a "new dangerous class". Analysing the human and economic costs of labour market flexibility, Standing (2011) argues that neoliberal restructuring has shifted economic risks onto workers, and in turn globalisation of economic life is rapidly giving rise to a new social class, "the precariat", a flexible workforce subject to overwhelmingly instable and insecure employment. They lack channels of upward occupational mobility and prospects of career identity: their economic, social and political

rights are limited to fragmented occupational identities.

Standing's (2011) conceptualisation of "the precariat" is theoretically rooted in Hegelian Marxism and he combines "precarious" and "proletariat" to interpret the relationship between labour and capitalism. Thus, his notion of "the precariat" is representative of Marxian analysis of exploitation of the working class by global capitalism. His theoretical conceptualisations of "the precariat" can be fundamentally aligned to socialist thoughts that reflect Marxian criticism of global capitalism. In this context, "the precariat" originates from the early work of Bourdieu (1998) who connected the notion of precariousness to Karl Marx's analysis of a reserve army of labour. According to Bourdieu (1998), precarious work is a new "mode of domination" (p. 85). Precarious work in this sense is theoretically argued to be a new type of regime that implicitly exercises social and political control over the labour force (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). For Bourdieu, precarious work is a consequence of broad historical trends that reproduce the existing order.

As he states:

> *Casualisation profoundly affects the person who suffers it: by making the whole future uncertain, it prevents all rational anticipation and, in particular, the basic belief and hope in the future that one needs in order to rebel, especially collectively, against present conditions, even the most intolerable (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 82).*

Classical social thinkers such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim have attributed precarious employment to the rapid social change associated with the emergence of the market economy in the nineteenth century (Webster, Lambert, & Beziudenhout, 2008). In particular, Marx's theories of the labour process and alienation have been widely adopted in theorising precarious work. By presenting the conditions of the working class primarily in terms of the precariousness of employment and existence, Marx defined the "proletariat" as a class characterised by precariousness (Jonna & Foster, 2016). In the Marxist sense, precariousness of the working class is a consequence of capital accumulation and the class struggles between capital and labour. Marx developed his concept of the "reserve army of labour" by linking it to the theory of precariousness of working class employment and working class life. Therefore, the theoretical construct of precarious work is significantly entrenched in Marx's narratives of the industrial reserve army of labour. In this regard, he explained the general law of capital accumulation as:

> *The law by which a constantly increasing quantity of means of production, thanks to the advance in the productiveness of social labour, may be set in movement by a progressively diminishing expenditure of human power, this law, in a capitalist society-where the labourer does not employ the means of production, but the means of production employ the labourer-undergoes a complete inversion and is expressed thus: the higher the productiveness of labour, the greater is the pressure of the labourers on the means of employment, the more precarious, therefore, becomes their condition of existence, viz., the sale of their own labour power for the increasing of another's wealth, or for the self-expansion of capital (Marx, 1887, p. 451).*

Marx's theory of capital accumulation conceptualises a capitalist employment relationship between the workers and their employers. Such employment relationship contributes to the depressed wage of the workers and the precariousness of their work life. Marx and Engels (2008) argue this to be a consequence of persistent struggles of the working class, intensified by global capitalism.

They argue:

> *The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes (Marx & Engels, 2008, p. 46).*

Explaining the power struggles between capital and labour in this way, Marxian theories offer an integrated theoretical approach and scientific investigation of the working class insecurity and exploitation. The notion of the proletariat in traditional Marxist theories claims that precariousness is a defining element in the existence and struggle of the working class (Jonna & Foster, 2016). While capital accumulation multiplies the proletariat, global capitalism degrades labour by producing stagnation that heavily affects the working class. Thus capital accumulation leads to capitalist exploitation of labour. Increasing the supply of labour, capital accumulation actually augments the industrial reserve army through the changes the global capitalism initiates to exploit the working class in favour of capital (Hymer, 1970).

Moreover, precariousness of work under capitalism extends not only to the conditions of work itself but to the physical basis of human existence. Marx's proposition of a reserve army of labour is, in this context, "a general supply of bodies to keep production flowing [which] allows capital to be unconcerned with the lifespan of the individual" (Fracchia, 2008, p. 46). Capitalism thus produces and reproduces generations of "needy individuals" who are basically a suffering population of workers, held in reserve for the changing exploitative needs of capital, to help production of the power that creates wealth for the capitalists (Marx, 1887, p. 404).

In spite of the rigour of the classic Marxian interpretations of precarious employment, Standing (2011) believes that the traditional working class-capitalist divide is inadequate to represent the complex layers of social-labour formations in contemporary global capitalism. He contends that his "the precariat" is an emerging class and it is not the same as Marx's class. Extending the traditional class structure theorised by Marx, he presents a new class structure comprising seven groups in which the precariat is the core. The new class structure, according to Standing (2011), reflects "class relations in the global market system of the twenty-first century" (p. 7). Based on Marx's delineation of the bourgeoisie, petite bourgeoisie, proletariat, and lumpenproletariat, he categorises each group according to its location in the neoliberal economy and its access to security. By doing this, he argues that the groups form a socio-economic security continuum from most to least secure. Standing (2011) asserts that flexible labour practices such as outsourcing

and casualisation are the main forces behind the formation of this new global social class, the precariat, encompassing temporary workers, casual workers, migrant workers and the working poor class. This precariat struggles as an insecure class and their insecurities are primarily attributed to the contingent nature of employment arrangements.

Standing attributes the emergence and growth of the precariat to the policies and institutional changes during the globalisation era (1975 to 2008). During this period, a global market economy was created on the basis of competitiveness and individualism that contributed to an economy "disembedded" from society. The contingent employment arrangements that the working class people are currently experiencing are therefore related to a new phase of global capitalism that aims to make labour temporary and flexible.

As he puts it:

> *The shift to temporary labour is part of global capitalism. It has been accompanied by a growth of employment agencies and labour brokers, which have helped firms to shift faster to temporaries and to the contracting out of much of their labour. Temporary agencies are giants shaping the global labour process (Standing, 2011, p. 33).*

Flexibilisation of labour is a key trend that has significantly affected the work life of working class people, making them vulnerable to neoliberal changes in labour markets. The pressures of globalisation, according to Standing (2008), have produced an agenda for casualisation of labour through "flexibilisation and informalisation of labour markets" (p.16). Casualisation of labour represents a key component of broader transitions from regular and permanent employment to insecure and casual employment. In the absence of state regulation and intervention in the labour markets, working class people are constantly experiencing insecurities tied to casualisation of their employment. According to Standing (2008), "now workers are enjoined to enjoy being active individuals in the risk society, facing the insecurities as a matter of personal responsibility" (p.19). For Standing (2008), globalisation, labour flexibility and re-commodification are associated with four closely related but distinctive trends of informalisation, casualisation, contractualisation and occupational commodification. In particular, the broader trends of contractualisation reveal that governments and employers are inclined to dismantle collectively bargained contracts. With the demise of collective bargaining mechanisms, the scope for individualised labour contracts has emerged as a norm in globalised labour markets.

Standing (2008) argues:

> *Contractualisation refers to the global trend towards individualised labour contracts. The motives for this are complex. The employment relationship is always an incomplete contract, since workers can always adjust their effort bargain, and there is always a process of informal renegotiating as an employment relationship unfolds. What individualised contracts often attempt to do is to tighten the conditions to minimise the uncertainty for the employer and to maximise the capacity to impose penalties for abrogation of the terms of the labour agreement (p. 25).*

The neoliberal developments in the labour markets characterise a key trend from regular to casual work status. Because of state policy and the relative absence of explicit state involvement, this trend had normalised individualisation of labour. Standing (2008) points out that many people are working with insecure employment status and with no rights or power to bargain. Such forms of informalisation have become institutionalised in the developing world, particularly in South Asia, where the business firms are increasingly informalising employment by turning to the use of subcontractors. The increasing practices of subcontracting are based on "as much labour as somebody sees fit" (Standing, 2008, p. 24). In these practices, labour is increasingly being individualised with the growing demands of global capitalism that stagnate employment security and expand the precariat.

Standing conceptualised individualisation of employment earlier in his influential book titled *Global labour flexibility: Seeking distributive justice*, published in 1999. Comparing the welfare capitalism in the West and state socialism in the East, he then conceptualised how employment arrangements became individualised in more flexible and insecure labour markets. He discussed the deterioration of job security that contributed to flexible and insecure employment during the 1970s. He conceptualised this specific period as the end of market regulations "to promote subordinated flexibility" (Standing, 1999, p. 76). He attributed this era to the growing rise of non-standard employment, which was mostly outsourced to agency personnel and subcontractors. Employment relationships produced through such individualisation of labour are generally characterised by "lack of workers' (individual and collective) control over work conditions, wages and the pace of work" (Rodgers, 1989, p. 3).

In this context, migrant labourers are particularly affected by these trends of individualisation of labour. Standing (2011, p. 105) argues that "global capitalism has been built on migrant labour". He believes that the migrant labourers' insecurities of employment are infused by systemic exploitation of global capitalism.

As he points out:

> *Migrants are being used to accentuate the growth of the global precariat … [They] are the light infantry of global capitalism … Most have to put up with short-term contracts, with low wages and few benefits. the process is systemic, not accidental (Standing, 2011, p. 113).*

Standing's conceptualisations of global labour flexibility and its effects on migrant labourers, a core element of the precariat, are ground-breaking. His purpose is not simply to describe but to theorise the precariat by offering a way of understanding how neoliberal developments have contributed multiple forms of insecurities into the life of working people (Allen, 2014). His theoretical contributions in relation to the interlinkages between global capitalism and changes in employment have further been advanced in his recent book *The corruption of capitalism: Why rentiers thrive and work does not pay*. In this book, he theorises "rentier capitalism" to explain how capitalism has

been corrupted as the security of many people has been weakened to strengthen the position of those who hold the bulk of society's wealth. Pointing to the emergence of a new economy or "platform capitalism", he explains a new regime of the intermediaries in which the workers have a substantial part of their already low incomes creamed off by organisations acting as brokers and intermediaries for a variety of short term and insecure types of work and service roles (Standing, 2016a). He sees these developments as integral to global capitalism which has produced a "rigged" system leaving those without much property with few rights. The precariat is therefore growing all over the world, accelerated by these developments.

2.2.2 Defining precarious work

The conceptual understanding of precarious work is largely drawn from a wide range of academic and activist research on labour and work (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Campbell & Price, 2016). Contemporary studies on labour and work have identified a broad array of terms and definitions to categorise labour and employment quality. These terms include precarity, precariousness, precariat, precarious work, precarious labour or employment, casualisation, informalisation, contractualisation, flexibilisation, non-standard, subcontracted, irregular, contingent work, atypical employment, etc. Although some of the terms may often be used interchangeably, they are all rooted in the emerging theories of labour and work corresponding to neoliberal developments or globalisation. Originating from *précarité* in French, the term precarity, in its English form, was used initially in a number of research studies undertaken by the International Institute for Labour Studies and the ILO in the late 1980s. It was then used extensively to conceptualise the spread of various forms of insecurity affecting the quality of jobs since the 1970s. Since then many scholars including Beck (1992, 2000), Cranford and Vosko (2006), Kalleberg (2009, 2011, 2012), Kalleberg and Vallas (2017), Rodgers (1989), Ross (2009), Standing (2011, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c), and Vosko (2006, 2010) have discussed the concept of precarious work and employment by directing their core focus on neoliberal changes in employment arrangements and labour market conditions. Although the term precariat[2] has long been used in European languages, Standing's (2011) prominent work *The precariat: The new dangerous class* popularised the term in English. Conceptualising the role of neoliberal developments in creating precarious existence of working people or "the precariat", it introduced a paradigm that comprised multiple forms of social insecurities in labour market, as discussed above.

While the vast majority of the research on precarious work has been led by work sociologists, the spatial and temporal contexts of precarious work constitute a major focus of sociology and its academic subfields such as sociology of work and economic sociology (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017).

[2] The term also exists in French (*precariat*), German (*prekariat*), Greek (*prekariáto*), Italian (*precariato*), Spanish (*precariado*), and Swedish (*prekariatet*).

This has contributed to a considerable body of academic research on social location and social context of precarious work. Many of these researchers have argued that the degree and forms of precariousness may vary depending on geographic locations, and the economic and social structure of the political systems and labour markets. As a result, the concept of precarious work has become multifaceted and at the same time contested (Wilson & Ebert, 2013). The debates and arguments surrounding workplace conditions and their social impacts have therefore become a continuum. Considering the importance of location and context of work, contemporary scholars including Allen (2014), Breman (2013), Doogan (2009), Munck (2013) and Seymour (2012) have contested that the scope of precarious work is being overestimated, misrepresented and thus theoretically incoherent. Arguing that precariousness of work has been permanent in the Third World countries but ignored in the academic discourse due to the limited geopolitical importance of those countries, they have contested that there is a recent rise of a "Westernised" concept of precarious work that narrowly focusses on the developed countries only. They have also described precarious work as a new phase of capitalism and thus the specific term such as "precarity" has been generally argued to be an organising tool for social movements in response to current trends in the neoliberal economy.

These debates have contributed theoretical ambiguities to understanding and defining the meaning of precarious work and its local context. While uncertain, unpredictable and risky are assumed synonymous, work arrangements such as part-time or temporary work are also assumed similar even in sharply different geographical settings of workplace. As a result, conceptual slippage and confusions have led the academics to either misinterpret or entirely overlook the theoretical foundations of precarious work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). Despite this, there is a consensus among the academics in regards to the typical characteristics of employment that identify the prevalence of precariousness in contemporary work arrangements.

As Vosko (2006) defines:

> *Precarious employment encompasses forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages and high risks of ill-health. It is shaped by employment status (i.e., temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time), and dimensions of labour market insecurity as well as social context (such as occupation, industry, and geography), and social location (the interaction between social relations, such as gender and race, and political and economic conditions) (pp. 4-5).*

This broad definition has frequently been adopted and then improved in many pieces of contemporary employment relations research to confirm emergence and prevalence of precarious work conditions. The scholars have frequently urged investigation of the nature and scope of neoliberal pressures in the labour market to understand the structural changes in the world of work and their repercussions for employment relationships. In this context, it is important to examine the neoliberal pressures and their specific relations to the changing nature of work.

2.2.3 Neoliberal pressures and the changing nature of work

The features of employment relationships have been rapidly changing. Precariousness is the central feature of the current world of employment (Anderson, 2010; Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Ross, 2008, 2009; Standing, 2011, 2014b, 2016c). Migrant labourers are the core element of precarious employment in the neoliberal era and they "make up a large share of the world's precariat", as argued by Standing (2011, p. 90). Globalisation is considered a significant force that has brought changes into the employment relationship between migrant labourers and employers. As it is facilitated by globalisation, increasing migration of capital and labour has shaped changes in structural and institutional features of work resulting in new forms of formal and informal employment. In many ways, internal and international labour migration has affected the supply and demand of labour and thus changed the features of work and employment (Standing, 1981, 1999, 2010, 2011). The dynamics of exchange of capital and work associated with labour migration have significantly influenced the structure, articulation and experience of employment relationships in local and global workplaces (Lansbury, Kitay, & Wailes, 2003; Rodriguez & Mearns, 2012). In this context, globalisation is the key force which has facilitated many structural and operational changes and permeated various new forms of employment. The multidimensional impacts of globalisation on employment relationships are attributed to flexible labour market policies that, since the 1970s, have produced considerable uncertainty, instability, insecurity and inequality in industrial societies by creating demand for greater flexibility and maximised profit (Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Standing, 1999, 2008).

Neoliberal work regimes are best known for introducing informal employment practices by creating demand and supply of migrant labourers who are subject to multi-dimensional insecurities and exploitation. These regimes have involved migrant labourers in highly precarious work experiences (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson, & Waite, 2015a; Standing, 2011, 2014b). At the same time, these regimes have created flexibility within the labour market through which migrant labourers are forced to take up various non-standard forms of employment including contractual, casual, temporary and part-time work (McDowell et al., 2009; Ross, 2008; Standing, 2014d). Neoliberal developments characterised by expansion of global competition, technological development, privatisation, deregulation of markets, and a continued decline in the power of unions urged nation-states and businesses to establish flexible employment systems in which workers, particularly the migrant labourers, bear more risks and receive limited or no protection. Such employment systems are epitomised by widespread flexibilities and the greater use of precarious work. Neoliberal restructuring has thus shifted economic risks onto labourers making them a flexible workforce subject to overwhelmingly instable and insecure employment (Standing, 1997, 1999, 2008, 2010, 2011). Lack of channels for upward occupational mobility and prospects of career identity force them to remain at the bottom end of the labour markets. Due to these changes in employment systems, the migrant labourers "have a relatively high probability of being in the precariat"

(Standing, 2011, p. 59).

There are many debates on the nature and extent of precarious work and it has been argued that the concept involves overstatement of temporariness and contingency in new employment patterns under neoliberalism (Doogan, 2009). Moreover, by arguing “we are all the precariat” scholars have refuted that precariat is a new class (Seymour, 2012, para. 39). In spite of these critiques, there is consensus among scholars that new forms of flexibilities have been introduced under neoliberalism and absence of labour protection is the key insecurity that workers have been experiencing. A large body of evidence produced by Arnold and Bongiovi (2013), Cross (2010), Hewison and Kalleberg (2012), Kalleberg (2009, 2011, 2012), Lee (2015), De Neve (2014), Ofreneo (2010), (Ross, 2008, 2009), Standing (1997, 1999, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014b, 2014d, 2015a), Vosko (2010), and Wilson and Ebert (2013) confirms that labour flexibility has become the central feature of the current world of work shaped by neoliberal developments. While labour protection encompasses a wide range of securities such as upward occupational mobility, safe work environment, income guarantee and the right to collective voice, much of the labour insecurities emanate from lack of commitment from principal employers. Indirect recruitment of migrant workers blurs the principal employers’ responsibility towards workers and such employment practices increase the intensity of precariousness by favouring capital against labour.

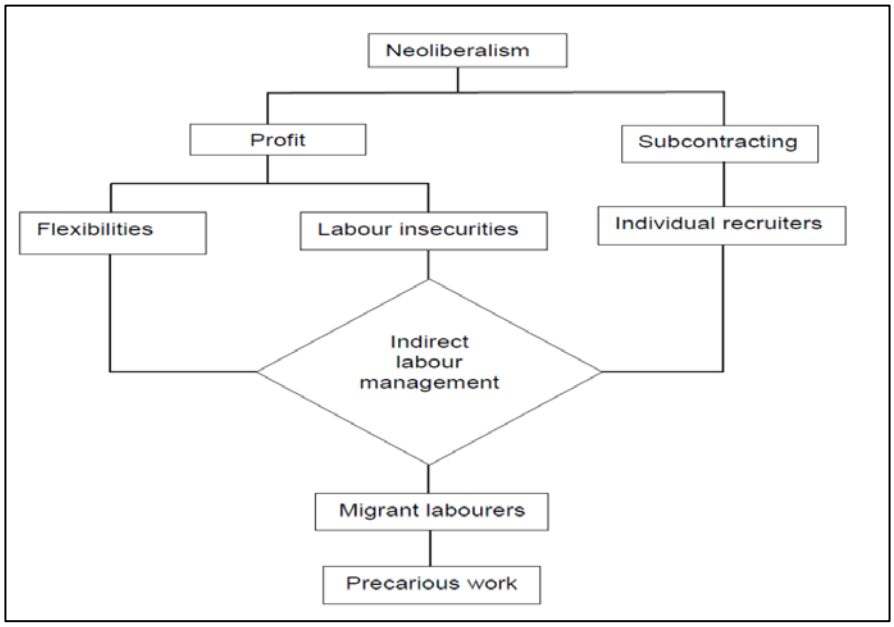

Figure 2.1: Global labour flexibility and precarious work for migrant labourers

Employers’ increasing demand for low-cost and flexible migrant labour has endorsed indirect recruitment practices such as outsourcing and subcontracting. Subcontracting of migrant labour, the most rational option to the employers for reducing cost, has now become widely legitimised. At the same time, this practice has initiated various forms of precarious work conditions (Standing, 2010). Globally this trend has created the basic problem of balancing flexibility for employers and security for migrant labourers, as shown in figure 2.1. For employers, indirect recruitment

strategies reduce costs, cut the permanent workforce, and maximise flexibility (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2012). On the other hand, labourers receive fewer benefits and protections. Although outsourced and temporary work is not the only form of precarious employment routinely offered to migrant labourers, the typical features of precarious work include a wide range of employment arrangements such as work provided through contractualisation.

2.2.4 Contractualisation: A strategy for informalisation of migrant labour

Contractualisation is a key trend in facilitating precarious employment through informalisation of labour (Standing, 2008). It characterises a flexible work arrangement in the neoliberal era that not only replaces permanent workers with fixed-term contract workers but normalises indirect recruitment through subcontractors or labour intermediaries (Chang, 2009; Strauss & Fudge, 2014). It therefore intensifies casualisation of labour. Employment arrangements in the contractualisation process usually offer low wages, few or no benefits, limited or no collective representation, and high job insecurity (Standing, 2008, 2016a). Contracted employment is an increasing phenomenon and currently many workers are recruited on temporary or short-term contract through labour contractors. This practice not only offers low wages but also exacerbates migrant labourers' uncertainty in relation to the duration of employment. The vast majority of migrant labourers in the world are forced to accept various types of insecure or inadequate work by being employed on temporary contracts (Anderson, 2010; Kalleberg, 2011; McDowell et al., 2009; Standing, 2008, 2011; Vosko, 2010).

Standing (2011, 2014b) shows that the migrant division of labour in developed countries reveals the overwhelming representation of migrant labourers in subcontracted low-waged and low-skilled employment. Such employment does not offer occupational mobility. Lack of or little social security positions them in the bottom layer of the work society. Income and employment related insecurities make their social and economic life unstable. Insecurities and instabilities heavily contribute to their unfreedom and exploitation (Lewis et al., 2015a, 2015b). Contractual employment is also characterised by a fragmented employment relationship where workers are indirectly recruited and managed by extensive layers of task-specific subcontractors. Through subcontracting and outsourcing, workers are indirectly hired and thus they become part of complex and multi-layered recruitment processes. Migrant workers are always overrepresented in expanding forms of such indirect employment (Standing, 1999, 2011; Vosko, 2010). Indirect recruitment implies a shift of production risks from the employers onto the workers while the latter receives few or no benefits. In this context, indirect recruitment increases economic and social insecurities of migrant workers thereby making them a core element of the precariat (Standing, 2011, 2014b, 2015a, 2016a).

While contractualisation is an important conduit to employment relationship that produces precarious work conditions for migrant labourers, the predominant theoretical perspectives of precarious work have frequently attributed neoliberalism to it. This has added another layer of

ambiguity in understanding precarious work theoretically. The predominant concerns about the nature of neoliberalism itself and its multidimensional relationship to availability as well as quality of work are still vague. This is because the importance of neoliberalism in precariatisation of labour has been poorly understood by viewing neoliberalism as "a global regulatory architecture, imposed from above, or as a metaphor for the ideological air that we all (must) breathe" (Peck, 2010, p. xii). As a result, academic research in formalising its meaning and demonstrating its empirical links to employment relationships and workplace conditions has remained inadequate. Considering this limitation significant to theoretical understanding of precarious work, scholars have suggested empirical examination of neoliberalism as a central concept of precarious work. They have suggested conceptualising neoliberalism as:

> *An economic and policy doctrine that equates marketization with the furtherance of human freedom and individual choice … all of which leave workers more dependent on employers … in favour of radically individualized forms of employment and outsourcing and downsizing measures (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017, p. 8).*

This theoretical position urges to extend the scope of future labour and work research to examine the operational character of neoliberalism which has already produced significant changes in the workplaces affecting individual experiences of work. Instead of limiting interests in neoliberalism as an unavoidable force operating without human intervention, it therefore leads to empirical examination of individuals and their lived experiences of work under neoliberalism. Informalisation of labour through extensive subcontracting is a pathway to produce individualised forms of employment whereby the employers and workers are both individuals operating at their own capacity in the workplace. In this context, the practice of contractualisation and its inner layers and their interrelations to the workers are important to look into.

The core essence of the employment relationship in subcontracted employment is the mechanism through which the workers are flexibilised to be subordinate to their employers through individualisation of work. In absence of state regulations of the labour markets, the workers are subject to dominance and control of the employers who create pressures and insecurities to force the workers to be highly dependent on them. Taking this understanding of the employment relationship under global capitalism, as theorised by Standing (1999, 2008, 2011, 2016a) and others, this study aims to examine global labour flexibility and its repercussions on the precarious work conditions of migrant labourers. By doing this, it improves the theoretical understanding of precarious work by conceptualising individualised employment as a mode of dominance in the workplace.

2.3 Theories of labour migration: Setting the scope

Seven out of 10 persons in the world are migrants and thus one billion of the world's seven billion people are migrants (IOM, 2013). Despite this, defining migration has traditionally been a controversial task. Although the definition of international migration is straightforward, it is very

complex to define internal migration. This is because unlike international migration, internal migration does not involve a complex set of regulations related to border protection and management. However, internal migration involves a number of temporal and spatial characteristics such as distance, duration, etc. and hence use of the definition is necessary for a specific research study. The focus of this research is on rural-urban migrant labourers and therefore the scope of the research is limited to the labourers who move from rural areas to urban areas within a country for the purpose of employment.

Migration scholars have defined and theorised rural-urban labour migration in diverse ways. Over the past few decades, migration has been a subject of continuous debate that reflects deeper paradigmatic divisions in social theory and development theory and ideological divisions between neoliberal and state-centrist views (de Haas, 2010b). In order to propose an appropriate framework for explaining recruitment of migrant labourers in Bangladesh, the section below discusses the key theoretical approaches in migration research.

Neoclassical migration theorists such as Lewis (1954), Hicks (1963), Todaro (1969), and Harris and Todaro (1970) have explained internal labour migration as a process of economic development. They have explained internal labour migration as a process whereby wage differentials due to geographical differences between supply and demand of labour create labour movement. Their central argument concentrates on wage. Thus neoclassical theorists primarily focus on mobility of labour between labour surplus rural areas to labour scarce urban areas on the basis of wage differentials. Harris and Todaro's (1970) work is considered the best known neoclassical work on defining and theorising rural-urban labour migration. According to them, rural-urban migration is primarily an economic phenomenon and the rural labourers compare the expected incomes in the urban sector with agricultural wage rates in villages and migrate if the former exceeds the latter. The two main propositions of the Harris and Todaro model are that the labour migration occurs largely for economic reasons and the migration decision depends on expected rather than nominal wage differentials. While the model's unit of analysis is individual, it limits its focus on the rationality of economic self-interest that influences the decision of migration. Because of their prime consideration of migrant as an atomistic and utility maximising individual, the neoclassical theorists have been widely criticised for disregarding other migration motives as well as migrants' belonging to social groups like households, families and communities (de Haas, 2010b; Fields, 1975).

The neoclassical theory of migration has been extended and challenged. A few other alternative theories have been developed including the human capital theory. First introduced by Sjaastad (1962) and later expanded by Todaro (1969), the human capital theory is based on micro-level analysis of individual choice that can be influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. Being an individualist theory based upon economic motives, it explains migration as a

consequence of rational and economic decisions made by an individual to maximise his/her human capital. The theory assumes that migrants tend to increase their skills to increase their chances of success. The central focus of this theory is a rational individual who migrates with the goal of maximising his or her benefits and gains. Thus the theory considers the migration decision as an investment with the purpose of improving the chances for employment and income. However, the theory has been criticised for presenting an overly optimistic view of migration which is not always a voluntary process to maximise gains (Massey et al., 1998).

Another extended version of neoclassical theory is the “push-pull” framework. First introduced by Lee (1966), it continues to emphasise the economic context of labour migration. It assumes that two equally important forces, one functioning at origin and the other in the destination, jointly create conditions for mobility of labour. Push factors such as poverty, high population density, lack of socio-economic opportunities, natural disasters, etc. and pull factors such as demand for labour, economic opportunities, availability of land, religious and political freedom, etc. denote economic disparities between areas of origin and destination that contribute to labour migration. However, this framework has been criticised too by maintaining that economic disparities between origin and destination areas are necessary but not a sufficient condition for labour migration. Moreover, the push and pull factors are largely a mirror-image of each other and hence it is difficult to determine which factors are dominant (de Haas, 2010b; Massey et al., 1998).

Assumptions and conclusions of neoclassical economic explanations of labour migration led to widespread dissatisfaction and debate among the migration scholars. As a result, new theoretical perspectives emerged with a view to analysing migration decisions in a better way than the neoclassical theories. The most critical response to neoclassical migration theory, the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. The NELM theory rejected neoclassical models on the ground that they were incomplete and an extremely rigid way to consider the diverse realities of labour migration. It offered a new level of analysis by considering the diverse societal contexts of labour migration in developing countries (de Haas, 2010b). Shifting the core focus of migration research from individual independence to mutual interdependence, the NELM theory assumes that the migration decision is not made by individual actors in isolation, rather jointly made by larger units of people such as families, households or communities (Massey et al., 1993, 1998; Stark, 1978, 1991; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1986, 1999). It argues that migration decisions are influenced by a comprehensive set of factors in the origin areas while the family or the household is the most appropriate decision making unit. Migration decisions, in NELM theory, are undertaken not only to maximise income but also to minimise risks and uncertainties of income. Thus migration is both an income diversifying as well as risk reducing strategy through which a household diversifies their resources to respond to risks emanating from imperfections and failures in a variety of markets including the labour market and the credit market (Stark & Levhari, 1982).

The above discussion shows diverse ideas, concepts and hypotheses that relate to labour migration. Many of them have been contested and as yet no flawless single theory has emerged for migration research. Being a multifaceted, complex and diverse phenomenon, migration and its research requires interdisciplinary and multi-level analyses. Migration scholars have therefore suggested combining theoretical lenses to better comprehend the phenomenon empirically (de Haas, 2010a, 2010b; Massey et al., 1993; Skeldon, 2014). In particular, Skeldon (2014) suggested combining the NELM theory and network theory to identify the relationships between migrant networks and family risk minimising strategies, on the basis of synthesised empirical findings. Integrating the strength of the NELM theory that assumes significant role of the broader society including family or household in migration decision, this research embraces its core focus on the migration decision and its socio-economic context. It considers migration as a "calculated strategy" through which the migrant shares the costs and returns with the family and household he/she belongs to (Stark & Bloom, 1985). This perspective extends the scope of this research to examine labour migration as a livelihood strategy and the role of social networks including family ties, kinship or social networks in recruitment and employment of migrant labourers. This theoretical position allows this study to stand between the micro level of individual decision making and the macro level of structural determinants to investigate the social relations of migration and employment.

The theories that consider migration as a livelihood strategy originate from the NELM theory explained above. A livelihood is a combination of capacities, assets including material and non-material resources, and activities required for means of living (Chambers & Conway, 1992). As Ellis (1998) argues, a livelihood is more than just income and it encompasses not only the households' income generating activities, but also the social institutions (kin, family, compound, village, etc.), intra-household relations, and mechanisms of access to resources through the life cycle. Therefore, a livelihood strategy can be defined as a strategic or deliberate choice of a combination of activities by households and their individual members to maintain, secure, and improve their livelihoods (de Haas, 2010b). The core assumption of the livelihood approach is that people organise their livelihoods not individually, but within social contexts such as households and village communities. In this context, labour migration is one of the core elements of the strategies households employ to diversify, secure, and, potentially, durably improve, their livelihoods (Ellis, 2000). Empirical evidence from Afsar (2000, 2002, 2003), de Haan (1999), de Haan and Rogaly (2002a, 2002b), Kuhn (2003), Martin et al. (2014), Stark (1991), Sikder, Higgins, and Ballis (2017) and Zachariah, Mathew, and Rajan (2001a, 2001b) confirms that migration helps rural households in South Asian countries not only reduce fluctuations in the family income largely dependent on weather-dependent farming activities, but acquire a wider range of assets that insure against future shocks and stresses. The NELM approach considers migration as a livelihood diversification strategy and this household-oriented perspective explains migration from the

structural constraints and imperfect markets within which migration decisions are made. Therefore, it urges the study of migration and its outcomes through critical evaluation of the household activities in the wider social and economic context. Thus the livelihood approaches, rather than neoclassical or structuralist approaches, better reflect the realities of daily life for millions of migrants in developing countries (de Haas, 2010b).

Personal relations are considered an important factor influencing the capabilities to migrate. Creation of social capital through migrant networks not only helps to identify work opportunities in destination areas but reduces the costs and risks of migration (de Haas, 2010a; Massey et al., 1998). A migrant network is a location-specific form of social capital that builds upon social relations allowing access to economic opportunities such as employment or higher wages. It is a set of “interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 448). As the network theory assumes, migration of one family member opens up opportunities for the rest of the family members who stay back. The migration experience of one family member constitutes resources for all other members of a family. Thus migration initiates further migration. Continuation of migration widens the migrant network and further expands the opportunities for migration. The network framework assumes that migration is a self-perpetuating phenomenon where migrants help members of their families or communities by conveying information on work, providing financial assistance, facilitating employment and organising accommodation. By giving support in various forms through facilitation to settlement, they reduce the costs and uncertainties of migration and create the social structures to sustain the process (Boyd, 1989; Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014; Massey, 1990; Massey et al., 1998).

The rural-urban migration of labourers in Bangladesh reflects a complex set of social and economic aspirations. Considering this, a socio-economic perspective of migration appears to be appropriate for this research. It therefore integrates the livelihood and social network perspectives. Considering labour migration a common livelihood strategy for the rural people in Bangladesh (Kuhn, 2003; Martin et al., 2014), it assumes that social ties based on kinship and community membership facilitate labour migration from rural to urban areas. While migration networks decrease the economic, social and psychological costs of migration by determining people’s motivation and ability to migrate, the social network framework is particularly relevant for this research to reflect on internal labour migration and its wider social context. Opposing the neoclassical views, its scope allows examining why migration continues even when economic prospects such as wage differentials or employment opportunities are characterised by precariousness in destination areas. This integrated theoretical proposition not only allows investigation of the economic rationale of rural-urban migration but enables this research to examine the structures of migrant labour recruitment through unpacking the wider socio-economic contexts of migration networks.

2.4 Migration of labour for construction work

Like many other industries, the global construction industry is known to be subject to changes in work arrangements and labour recruitment. In spite of being characterised by flexible employment practices and poor regulations, it is one of the biggest industrial sectors in the world in terms of economic contribution and employment (Bosch & Philips, 2003; Buckley et al., 2016; ILO, 2001). Neoliberal developments have contributed to many significant impacts in this sector, particularly in creating demand and supply of construction labourers. Although a trend towards mechanisation or prefabrication has become a dominant feature of globalised construction work in developed countries, the economic viability of labour-intensive work in building construction has been contributing to the vast expansion of employment opportunities in less developed countries (ILO, 2001; Wells & Wall, 2001). Simultaneously, increased mechanisation and high productivity in agriculture have displaced rural labourers and motivated them to enhance their income by working in the urban construction sector (Anand, 2001; You-Jie & Fox, 2001). Typically, construction is the only form of non-agricultural waged employment available to them in cities. It is therefore an employment generating sector for the rural agricultural labourers. However, the nature of their migration and employment suggests a worldwide lack of reliable data on construction workers. It is estimated that developing countries produce 74 percent of the total employment and there are more than millions of construction workers worldwide of whom a very high proportion are rural-urban migrant labourers originating from rural farming (BWI, 2006; ILO, 2001; IOM, 2005).

Strong connections between the rural agricultural economy and the urban economy reveal that construction is a rapidly growing employment sector in Asia. Many Asian countries have had recent increases in construction employment and its significant share in economic performance. Over the past few decades, Asian countries have experienced labour migration with increasing availability of non-agricultural jobs while the growth of urban centres is a contemporary development phenomenon (Hugo, 2003; Suresh, 2010; Swider, 2015a). In this region, farming activities are largely dependent on weather conditions; harvest seasons are mainly monsoon-dependent. During poor weather conditions, the rural farmers do not have sufficient farming income to live on. This causes pressures on household livelihoods during the lean season of farming. Therefore, many rural agricultural labourers migrate to cities in search of livelihood. This kind of seasonal migration is attributed to lack of year-round employment in rural areas. The rural-urban migrant labourers consider urban construction work a viable livelihood option that enables them to cope with the season of poor farm income (Afsar, 2003; de Haan & Rogaly, 2002a; Deshingkar, 2006; Picherit, 2012). The bulk representation of migrant labourers in the Asian construction industry implies massive employment of this group for a highly arduous and physically demanding work. Although their migration and occupational shift from agriculture to construction creates some changes in their economic status, entrance to the urban labour market as unskilled labourers contributes to their poor work and living conditions. The interrelationships between urban

construction work and rural-urban labour migration are therefore worth critical examination through the lens of precarious work.

Globally, the precarious life of migrant construction workers reproduces the poor image of construction work. Whilst construction is a crucial sector for employment in many countries, it poses serious challenges related to its workforce and their dignity. It is affected by changing recruitment practices that have profound impacts on the quality of employment. Construction work is traditionally regarded as an unattractive and low status job. Often regarded as dirty, difficult and dangerous work, it shares a *3D* image[3] in the world of work (Connell, 1993; ILO, 2001). Becoming a construction worker has traditionally been considered as a relinquishment of honour and status in the human society. This trend has characterised construction as a low status job over the last few decades (Lawrence & Werna, 2009).

The work conditions and the terms of employment in the global construction industry are predominantly poor. As a result, the construction industry represents high rates of workplace accidents, fatal injuries and health hazards. The construction workers in developing countries work with poorer terms and conditions than the workers in developed countries (Wells, 2007). In spite of being one of the most dangerous sectors, it is one of the fastest growing areas of the labour market in many developing countries. Nevertheless the actual reason why construction is regarded as a low status job is much more related to the terms on which labourers are recruited than the nature of the work itself (ILO, 2001). The process and quality of recruitment has significant ramifications on the economic and social security of the construction workers. The poor image of construction work is not only related to how the work is routinely accomplished but how the work is regarded by the wider social world that the workers live in. In this context, construction work and its image and language require in-depth examination in order to explore their impacts on the economic and social life of the workers.

2.4.1 Structures of recruitment: Making labour individualised

Labour recruitment practices induced by the flexible labour market policies have established various non-standard forms of employment in the global construction industry. Migrant workers are vulnerable to changes in the demand of construction related employment that is predominantly characterised by a multi-tiered contracting system. As the ILO (2015a) points out, the work conditions in the global construction industry have significantly deteriorated because of "the flexible labour market policies, particularly 'outsourcing', in which the construction workforce is recruited through subcontractors and other intermediaries" (para. 4). The contingent nature of work in the construction industry is attributed to how the individual recruiters recruit and manage the migrant

[3] The concept of *3D* job originates from English neologism derived from the Japanese *3K* expressions: *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous), and *kitsui* (difficult), introduced by Connell (1993).

construction workers. As yet there is very little attempt to examine their role as employers. This is because much of the existing literature about labour migration discusses why migrants leave home and what happens to them upon arrival, thereby less is known about the forms of infrastructure that facilitate their mobility. Individual labour intermediaries are the starting point in the infrastructure of migration and thus the recruitment process (Fernandez, 2013; Lindquist et al., 2012). Therefore, conventional perspectives used to discuss the relationship between globalisation and labour migration do not necessarily problematise the role of individual recruiters as crucial labour market actors (Breman, 2003; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; Zeitlyn et al., 2014). In this context, individual recruiters' labour recruitment practices and their significance to the work experiences require detailed exploration.

A comprehensive review of evidence on recruitment practices and employment relationships in the global construction industry reveals that the practice of outsourcing construction workers through subcontractors or labour intermediaries is long established all over the world, but particularly in developing countries. Indirect recruitment accounts for as much as 80 to 90 percent of the workforce in the global construction industry (ILO, 2001). Extensive subcontracting, temporary and insecure employment, and poor work conditions characterise the construction industry where the majority of unskilled and semi-skilled workers are recruited without formal contracts or collective bargaining agreements (Buckley et al., 2016; Krings, Bobek, Moriarty, Salamon´ska, & Wickham, 2011; Wells, 2007). Their indirect recruitment has been largely associated with exploitative work conditions with lack of bargaining power and options for upward occupational mobility. These have characterised the migrant construction workers as a flexible and hardworking labour force that the urban builders commonly opt for (IOM, 2005; Sepehrdoust, 2013).

Irrespective of economic development and size of the construction sector in different countries, the practice of recruiting migrant construction workers through individual recruiters is very common. The bulk of the construction workforce is recruited on a demand basis through individual contractors, subcontractors or intermediaries. Thus recruitment practices are dominated by the individual recruiters. Prevalent recruitment practices in the global construction industry confirm their role as labour recruiters and managers in many countries including Brazil (Saboia, 1997; Zylberstajn, 1992), China (Swider, 2015a, 2015b), India (Picherit, 2012), Indonesia (Firman, 1991), Iran (Sepehrdoust, 2013), Kenya (Mitullah & Wachira, 2003), Korea (Yoon & Kang, 2000), Malaysia (Abdul-Aziz, 1995), Mexico (Connolly, 2001), Nepal (Jha, 2002), Nigeria (Odediran & Babalola, 2013), Tanzania (Jason, 2007), and European countries such as Ireland (Fellini, Ferro, & Fullin, 2007; Krings et al., 2011).

2.4.2 Individualised recruitment: Navigation to subordination

In the global construction industry, the dominance of individual recruiters is noted not only in mobilising labour from rural areas but determining the terms of employment in cities. In various

parts of the world, it is literally impossible for a rural labourer to find construction work in a city without being part of the groups that the individual recruiters retain (Firman, 1991; Jha, 2002; Mosse et al., 2002; Picherit, 2012; Swider, 2015a). Their central role in recruitment and management of labourers suggests a multi-tiered contracting system where several layers of individual intermediaries operate. Generally termed as “subcontractors”, they have extensive networks throughout all parts of the country. Exploiting the relative poverty of farmers and the rural-urban division that forms barriers to migration, they recruit poor labourers from rural areas to supply urban construction projects (Suresh, 2010; Swider, 2015b). Sometimes aspirant migrant labourers are offered cash advances at high interest rates to cover travel costs and pay off family debts. In India and China, where the vast proportion of global construction activities are concentrated, many builders and contractors in cities pass on cash advances to the individual subcontractors for recruiting rural labourers from the countryside who they can trust (Pattenden, 2012; Swider, 2015b; Vaid, 1999). The migrant construction workers pay the money back later in instalments. However, the recruiters make the workers subordinate in many ways. Available evidence in the literature shows that the individual recruiters not only facilitate the workers’ access to urban construction jobs, accommodation and utilities, but look after the workers by providing them access to healthcare and credit. In return, they extract profit and commission by underpaying and stealing the workers’ wage (Firman, 1991; Jason, 2007; Jha, 2002; Picherit, 2012; Wells, 2006). Many workers consider this profit making practice as normal and attractive and therefore they aspire to be subcontractors who are considered to be making more money than the workers (Mitullah & Wachira, 2003).

In most cases, the villagers among whom the migrant labourers are recruited already know the individual recruiters. However, in some cases, particularly in India, the unknown subcontractors visit villages and offer jobs and advance money to unemployed rural labourers. Without knowing much about the job offered in the city, the labourers accept the terms and conditions that the recruiters offer them verbally. Furthermore, unlike recruitment of labourers from villages it is very common in India, China, Nepal and Bangladesh that the rural labourers individually migrate to cities and sit in street labour markets from where they are hired on a daily basis by the subcontractors who maintain regular contacts with urban builders and contractors (Anand, 2001; Chowdhury et al., 2012; Jha, 2002; Mosse et al., 2005; Reza, 2016; Swider, 2015a, 2015b; Yoon & Kang, 2000). These street markets are particularly distressing places where the individual recruiters manage to hire day labourers at cheap rates. Because of the nature of commitment and terms of offered employment, the relationship between recruiters and labourers is very fragmented in this context and favours the recruiters to offer marginal wages on the spot. On the contrary, street markets are the most vulnerable places for the labourers to find work. A brief lifetime of offered work and abundant supply of poor labourers in the city creates pressures on them to compete in an informal labour market and embrace poor work conditions for their survival. This

pressure creates a structure of marginal wages and volatile competition within the structure where the labourers are constantly forced to take up jobs that offer an extremely low subsistence wage (Reza, 2016).

Irrespective of the places where the migrant construction workers are recruited, in all cases the individual recruiters do not guarantee regular or stable employment and therefore employment uncertainty is a dominant feature of their individualised recruitment practices. A critical review of the day-to-day functions of the individual recruiters reveals that they frequently navigate their role which makes differences in work conditions, wages and the allocation of risks. Although their navigating role and the associated control relationships are not straightforward to understand. They generally perform dual roles: sometimes they are merely middlemen in mobilising and supplying a team of unskilled workers and sometimes they take responsibility for supervision and accomplishment of the entire construction project (Jason, 2007; Jha, 2002; Yoon & Kang, 2000). Often they work onsite as team leaders for a group of workers attached to them. They pay the workers by time, task or piecework depending on verbal agreements and a trust relationship. Having the central role in the predominant contracted employment system, they are locally known by a variety of names: *Maistri*, *Jamadar* or *Mukkadam* in India (Mathew, 2005; Mosse et al., 2005; Pattenden, 2012; Picherit, 2012; Vaid, 1999), *Naikea* in Nepal (Jha, 2002), *Oyaji* in Korea (Yoon & Kang, 2000), *Kepala* in Malaysia (Abdul-Aziz, 1995), *Gato* in Brazil (Saboia, 1997; Zylberstajn, 1992), *Maestro* in Mexico (Connolly, 2001), *Mandor* in Indonesia (Firman, 1991), and *Sardar* in Bangladesh (Abrar & Reza, 2014; Reza, 2016).

Although they go by different titles, their backgrounds and functions are essentially the same. Most of them were once themselves unskilled migrant labourers. They acquire skills and eventually become team leaders and/or subcontractors after building extensive networking with the builders. Then they start to retain a group of workers attached to them and join projects that they contract from the builders or contractors. By doing so, they constitute a continuous link between rural labourers seeking work and urban builders who can offer work. They assure urban builder's money and the migrant worker's employment, and for this service they get a commission from the builders and also benefits from underpaying wages of the workers (ILO, 2001).

Theoretically, the nature and extent of individual recruiters' daily activities reveals that they perform two critical roles that conform to core assumptions of labour management practices under neoliberalism. By employing and managing a flexible labour force, they not only reduce the urban builders' direct and indirect expenses related to labour, but minimise production risks by assuring timely completion of assigned tasks (Standing, 1999). Thus they make the relationship between capital and labour indirect to the advantage of capital (Ball & Connolly, 1987; de Haan & Rogaly, 2002b; Firman, 1991; Vaid, 1999). Although these roles of individual recruiters are often very complex to understand, they mutually intersect in regards to labour recruitment and management.

Swider's (2015a, 2015b) recent work on Chinese construction workers has categorised the day-to-day operations of individual recruiters into three different but navigating interfaces: state, market and individual. At state role, they negotiate regulations making urban access a complex process, at the market level they identify and match employment opportunities in cities, and at the individual interface they themselves secure waged work as clients in the urban construction projects. Swider (2015a) argues that traditional perspectives on the dyadic worker-employer relationship are not sufficient to comprehend the sources of control and exploitation of the migrant construction workers as they are deeply rooted in the more complex triangle of the state, the market and the individual.

2.4.3 Identifying the key actors

Indirect recruitment and management of migrant labourers through individual recruiters produces multiple forms of precarious work conditions (Standing, 1999, 2008). The overview of existing literature and current state of knowledge, as outlined above, reveals that neoliberal developments have introduced various forms of employment arrangements that create paths of exploitation of migrant labour. These developments have intensified indirect, individualised to be more specific, recruitment practices where the engagement of individual recruiters is observed in every stage of labour recruitment and management process. The predominant role of individual recruiters in recruiting as well as managing migrant labourers in the global construction industry is largely attributed to the control of the employment relationship through which migrant labourers are seen as a viable source of low-cost flexible labour. Recruitment through individual recruiters provides a cheap and flexible labour supply to the builders and insecurities to the labourers. Therefore, considering individual recruiters as the most important labour market actors in shaping employment relationships as well as migration outcomes, individualised recruitment practices demand further investigation. This research is set in this specific context and it takes the important challenge to empirically investigate the navigating role of the individual recruiters and associated control relationships that generate precarious work conditions for the migrant labourers in cities. By documenting the workplace experiences of the migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects, it aims to fill the gaps and challenges in understanding crucial dimensions of their recruitment and management that add to precarious employment.

A series of labour recruitment and management roles that individual recruiters perform in the global construction industry reflects individualised recruitment practices for the migrant construction workers. Through engagement of individual recruiters, migrant labourers are recruited indirectly without guaranteeing job certainty while employment relationships between the employers and labourers are temporary. The core essence of individualised recruitment is attributed to neoliberal developments that have intensified flexible labour supply at low costs. In this context, individualised recruitment is central to precarious forms of employment that are increasingly enabling businesses to reduce costs associated with a permanent workforce and

maximise flexibility of labour (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2012; Kalleberg, 2009; Peck, 2010; Standing, 2008, 2011). The overarching role of individual recruiters and their control over migrant labourers simplifies the task of minimising labour costs and shrinking the scope for labour protection while passing production risks on to the migrant labourers. The predominant structures of individualised recruitment and employment relationship contribute to various forms of dominance and control relationships which have not yet been examined with reference to construction work in Bangladesh. As a result, research on the migrant construction workers' employment relationship and their experiences of precarious work conditions in Bangladesh remains exception. Considering this important gap, this study sets out to identify the key actors in recruitment and management of migrant labourers and examine their dominance in producing an exploitative employment relationship that contributes to various pressures and insecurities amongst the migrant workers in the construction sector of Bangladesh.

This position extends the scope of this study to examine the role of individuals in the labour recruitment and management practices that produce precarious work conditions for the migrant labourers. Situated in this specific context, its scope is to investigate what particular aspects of individualised employment create precarious work conditions for the migrant labourers. Within this, it aims to contribute new insights to the fields of employment relations by unpacking the complex inter-connections between rural-urban labour migration, recruitment and precarious employment with reference to the migrant workers in the construction projects of Dhaka. It also aims to produce original knowledge on the structure of recruitment practices to enhance understandings of employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced an overarching theoretical framework of the precariat to study precarious work under neoliberalism. It has investigated the theoretical underpinnings of the role of individuals and their operation as both recruiters and workers in generating employment relationships that contribute to precarious work conditions. It has clarified the theoretical rationale for examining rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment in Bangladesh's construction sector and has outlined the theoretical position of this research on the basis of received knowledge from the existing scholarly literature. By doing this, it has identified the gaps in the existing literature and defined the scope of this research to address the gaps. The subsequent chapters will build upon the knowledge presented in this chapter. The next chapter will explain the methodologies and present the rationale of the methods through which the empirical evidence for this research was collected.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to undertake the collection of data. It also presents an overview of the data generated and the method of analysis. It explains a mixed methods research design to achieve the research objectives. This study used a questionnaire survey of 100 migrant workers to test rural-urban labour migration and its association with construction work in Dhaka followed by in-depth interviews involving detailed exploration with 20 individuals, 15 workers and five recruiters. The implementation of a multi-method research design is integral to achieving the objective of developing a mixed methods approach where data from both quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined. The chapter illustrates how the results from the two different methods were integrated, and how these synthesised data sets were utilised to address the research questions. Individual methods are then described separately. The selection of the field sites is also discussed.

3.2 Research design

This mixed methods study adopted both descriptive and exploratory research designs. Descriptive research, also known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. It aims to answer the questions who, what, where, when and how (Creswell, 2014). In addition, exploratory research provides insights into, and comprehension of, an issue or situation. It helps to better understand a problem that has not been clearly defined (Stebbins, 2001). Embracing strengths of the two research designs, this study set out to examine rural-urban labour migration and its association with construction work in Dhaka. Mixing two research designs allowed gauging the recruitment and subsequent employment relationships through the lens of precarious work.

To address the research questions, this study adopted a two-pronged, mixed methods approach by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods through the use of survey and in-depth interviewing. The study followed the typical explanatory sequential design that occurred in two distinct interactive phases. This design started with the collection and analysis of quantitative data which prioritised addressing the study's research questions through testing the central concept. The first phase was followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. Thus the qualitative data collected in the second phase followed up the results of first phase, the quantitative data. In the discussion, how the qualitative results helped to explain the initial quantitative results is interpreted (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This design aimed to ensure rigour of data collected in two separate sequential phases. Moreover, it emphasised that the quantitative data collected in the first phase was exploratory in nature while the qualitative data confirmatory (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). After completing independent analysis, both sets of data were mixed

to obtain inferences during interpretation. It thus involved drawing conclusions or inferences reflecting on what was learned from the combination of results from the two strands of the study, such as by synthesising the results in discussion. Since this mixed methods study kept two strands independent, synthetisation of data was undertaken only in the final interpretation.

3.3 Philosophical foundations

Philosophical assumptions are essential to provide a solid foundation for collecting data for an empirical research study. Using the conceptual framework of research design elements presented by Crotty (1998) and Creswell and Clark (2011), this study adopted multiple paradigms. It began with a survey adopting a postpositivist worldview to inform the study with specific variables, empirical measures, and results of the tested concept in the survey. The postpositivist approach validates careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This approach is very useful in determining a small and discrete set of ideas for further investigation by testing the variables of the research questions and reducing the ideas into a small set. It extends scope to test preliminary concepts and identify the ideas that need to be tested additionally. Thus developing numeric measures of observation and studying the behaviour of the survey participants, the postpositivist approach enabled this study to identify the causes of rural-urban labour migration and determined the need to assess the outcomes of migration.

Then, moving to qualitative in-depth interviews in the second phase allows adopting a constructivist perspective. The constructivist approach, also called social constructivism, enabled this study to rely on the participants' multiple but complex views of the situation being studied. The goal of in-depth interviewing was to elicit multiple meanings from the selected participants, to build deeper understanding than the survey yields and to generate a theory or pattern of responses that explains the survey results (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Through interpreting the subjective meanings of the participants' experiences, this approach is useful in understanding the world that they live in. Open-ended questions for the interviews focus on specific contexts which the participants usually experience. Following the ideas of Berger and Luckmann (1966) on social constructivism summarised by Crotty (1998), this study assumes that subjective meanings reported by the interviewees are formed through interactions with other individuals and through social, historical and cultural norms that operate in their lives. Therefore, social interactions among individuals are the key aspects to investigate through the constructivist approach. Addressing the process of interactions among individuals such as labourers and their recruiters, the constructivist approach enabled this study to understand the participants' real life settings and thereby develop a pattern of their meanings.

Worldviews change according to types of designs and phases in the study, as Creswell (2014) describes. Using postpositivism and constructivism during survey and in-depth interviewing respectively, this mixed methods study adopted pragmatism while interpreting and mixing data.

Pragmatism is a pluralistic paradigm oriented towards “what works” and it allows using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about research problems in social sciences (Morgan, 2007; Patton, 2002). It also values both objective and subjective knowledge. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue, in pragmatism, the research questions are of primary importance, more important than either the method or the philosophical worldview, that underlies the method. Pragmatism is based on transformative perspectives because it enables researchers to adopt a pluralistic stance of gathering all types of data to best answer the research questions. In pragmatism, researchers therefore emphasise the research problem instead of focussing on methods, and use all approaches available to understand the problem (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatism therefore allowed the scope of this study to draw liberally from quantitative and qualitative data during interpreting and mixing to best answer the research questions.

3.4 Rationale

Mixed methods research maximises opportunities for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views and stronger inferences by ensuring more meaningful interpretation of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Adopting mixed methods approaches, this study promises to integrate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to increase its potential to reduce biases associated with a one method approach to research (Bloemraad, 2007; Cook & Campbell, 1979). For this study, the quantitative data laid the groundwork by testing the interconnections between rural-urban labour migration and construction work while in-depth interviewing uncovered the inner mechanisms structuring recruitment and precarious work conditions by providing migrant labourers’ narratives.

It is difficult to find one specific method for migration research. As Bloch (2007) suggests, migration research is increasingly interdisciplinary in nature and traditionally migration researchers have used different methods ranging from surveys to ethnographic studies within their academic discipline. The rationale for choosing the mixed methods design for this study comprises multiple considerations. First, using both forms of data allows confirmation and re-examination of the issues being studied. Open-ended responses through in-depth interviewing provide scope to elaborate on the issues and circumstances affecting the participants. In addition, mixed methods design has wide applicability in situations when quantitative results require further explanation (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Crotty, 1998). While quantitative results are important to get general explanations for the relationships among variables, a more detailed understanding of what the statistical tests actually mean is required. Qualitative data and results help to build that understanding. Like an earlier study of Weine et al. (2005), quantitative data in this study addressed some factors that predicted precariousness of construction work for rural-urban migrant labourers. In order to better understand the processes by which the labourers experience precarious work conditions, qualitative content analysis was conducted and additional insights were gained.

In terms of sequence of methods of data collection, this study can be categorised as a sequential mixed methods study. It began with a quantitative method (survey), followed by a qualitative method (in-depth interviews) involving detailed exploration. This sequential process is especially useful when unexpected results are expected to arise from a quantitative study (Morse, 1991). Moreover, this is easy to implement because the steps fall into clear, separate stages. Since data collection for this sequential mixed methods research was undertaken in two distinct interactive phases, this can also be called a qualitative follow up approach (Morgan, 1998). This is because quantitative data was analysed first and then building on the results, qualitative follow-up questions were prepared. Qualitative data was transcribed and analysed after returning from overseas fieldwork. Such process is particularly useful in cases where the collection of data is being administered overseas under the challenges of time constraints and budget limitations.

3.5 Participants recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited upon human ethics approval (project no. 6761) from the SBREC at Flinders University, Australia. Initially the approval was secured to include adult migrant workers only. While collecting data through fieldwork, mass presence of adolescent workers (aged 15 to 17 years) was noticed in Dhaka's construction projects. Adolescent migration for construction work is a very contemporary phenomenon in Bangladesh. When this project was originally designed in 2014, the phenomenon was seen but could not be foreseen how much more prevalent it would have become in a future. After observing this new reality in the field, an adjustment to the ethics approval was sought to interview adolescent workers and some individual recruiters for exploring the significance of adolescent migration. The new participant groups were included in the survey and in-depth interview after the modification of ethics approval was approved by the SBERC at Flinders University, Australia (see Appendix A).

The survey participants were recruited directly, with the help of gatekeepers. For this study, the individual subcontractors in construction sites were the gatekeepers whose permission and assistance were sought to recruit participants. By virtue of their personal or work relationships to the migrant construction workers, they were the key persons to control access to workers on construction sites. Before contacting potential participants, they were approached first onsite. Their permission allowed initial access to research sites and the potential participants (Homan, 2001; Kawulich, 2011; Liempt & Bilger, 2009). Assistance and approval of the gatekeepers helped craft an acceptable approach to the potential participants. Their support helped building trust and credibility with participants and facilitated identification and recruitment of the participants (Eide & Allen, 2005). Given the flexible nature of employment arrangements and predominant role of the individual subcontractors in recruitment, migrant construction workers in Dhaka frequently change workplaces as well as locations. Therefore, the direct recruitment approach through the help of gatekeepers was appropriate as it allowed the participants to discuss and understand the purpose

of research fully in their language, i.e., Bangla. Face-to-face interactions at a convenient location and time during breaks also allowed the workers to maintain privacy, independently make their choices and give their informed consent. The gatekeepers were approached with the Verbal Script (Appendix B), Letter of Introduction (Appendix C) and Information Sheet (Appendix D) approved by the SBREC at Flinders University, Australia. Moreover, the sites were entered wearing a Flinders University student identity card and the purpose of research was introduced according to the Information Sheet. Once permission of the gatekeepers in each construction site was secured, they were thoroughly briefed through the participant documents to ensure that they fully understood the nature and purpose of this study.

During the initial conversation with the gatekeepers onsite, the workers spontaneously came to join the conversation out of curiosity. This is because of the local cultural customs and the very nature of flexible work environment in Dhaka's construction projects that supports such curiosity of the workers. It was found that the workers in Dhaka prefer to stay in a group and they feel culturally appreciative to greet someone visiting the site or talking with their recruiters. After being fully informed of the study, the gatekeepers called all of the workers together and introduced me, as a researcher, to them. Then they briefly explained to the workers what I would be doing there. They also informed the workers that participation in my research would be voluntary and if anyone did not wish to participate in my research, he/she could do that without assigning any reason.

Thus gatekeepers' assistance through introducing me to the workers and clear explanation that participation in this research would be voluntary, allowed the workers to choose whether or not to take part. In order to ensure adequate understanding of the nature and purpose of the study, the workers were thoroughly briefed about the study and its purpose and procedures through the Verbal Script, Letter of Introduction and Information Sheet. I did this in the presence of the gatekeepers. I explicitly and recurrently informed them that participation in my research would be voluntary. Then I socialised with the workers after getting permission from the gatekeepers and subsequent briefing. Apart from those zones where work was undertaken, there were meal and living zones which were safe and ideal places on the worksites for socialising. The main purpose of socialising with the construction workers was to gain familiarity and trust through introducing myself as well as talking with everyone on each construction site. Socialising during breaks opened up opportunities for obtaining informed consent and thus to comply with the overarching principle of respect outlined in the ANSECHR guideline.

After that, I asked the gatekeepers to invite participation through informing the workers where I would be (i.e., one of the tea stalls situated off worksites) during the designated breaks and they could speak to me then. However, the participants who did not feel comfortable to talk there, they were allowed to independently choose a time and place convenient for them. An adequately private and secure place off the worksite was mutually selected for conducting interviews during

breaks. Given the very transparent nature of communication in accessing the participants, there was no scope of possible perceptions of obligation and/or pressure to participate. Since both the recruiters (gatekeepers/subcontractors) and the workers were simultaneously informed of the study in the presence of one another, this kind of complication did not occur. I gave them the opportunity to listen and comprehend the information to be involved in the research. I promised that information identifying individuals would not be transcribed and hence participants would not be identifiable in the resulting report or subsequent publications relating to the obtained data. I also clarified that they had the right to withdraw at any stage during the study without consequence. They were clearly informed that refusal to participate in this study would have no effect on their work in any way.

In addition, the participants were informed that they had autonomy to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence. They had the freedom to ask for any part of their interview to be omitted from the study. The purpose, benefits and risks were also clearly outlined in the participant documents I used. On the basis of my previous field-based research experiences with similar groups of participants and solid understandings about the local culture, I was able to interact with the workers freely, ensuring an open environment with opportunities to have any questions clarified.

Most of the survey participants did not have reading and writing skills and hence they were not able to fill in the survey questionnaire. I carried the survey questionnaire and verbally discussed it. Once willingness to participate and informed consent were both established, I asked the participants to verbally complete the survey questionnaire. Seeking their verbal consent, I read the questionnaire to them and filled in the relevant sections in front of them at the place of interview. The participants were able to see me completing the survey based on their answers in front of them.

3.6 Location of interviews

The location of interviews was selected through mutual discussion with the potential participants. Shared culture and language allowed me to converse frankly and thus enabled the selection of a secure place for interview. I always assured that the interview took place away from the construction sites, outsiders were not present during interviews and the place was within the reach of the nearby police station. The interviews usually took place at the tea stalls situated off worksites. Tea stalls in Dhaka are generally situated in semi-open spaces and surrounded by a few long benches as seating. The rear benches are locally considered suitable for the people who wish to privately chat for a while without any disturbance. Generally the sounds coming out of chats of the customers flocking around the front and corner benches do not reach the rear benches. Although this kind of tea stall is usually owned and operated by one person who can clearly observe the activities at each bench from inside the shop, however the conversations taking

place at the rear benches cannot be heard from inside the shop. Bangladesh's culture of tea stalls is very respectful of private conversations. Therefore, being well-observed by the owner, the rear benches of tea stalls were secure enough and free from any disruptions from the tea stall owner as well as the arriving customers.

Most of the interviews took place in the evening when workers relax at worksites and chat with their colleagues. In general, some workers living onsite had limited permission from their recruiters to go to the nearby tea stalls situated off worksites for chatting with colleagues, drinking tea or recharging mobile phone account in the evening. With few exceptions, most workers preferred that time stating that they would be more comfortable to talk with me then. A few workers wanted to talk with me before starting the day. In those cases, I collected mobile phone numbers from specific participants and set the meeting time in advance. At the scheduled time, I called them arriving near the worksite in the morning which allowed them to come to the nearest tea stalls at their convenience. Some participants changed their mind after confirming a meeting place. However, later they managed to call me back and let me know a suitable place where they wished to be interviewed. In particular, the labourers from street labour markets wanted to be interviewed early in the morning (e.g. 5.30am) before the peak hours of hiring start. While I met them for the first time in a project, they provided locations of the street labour markets where they usually congregate and wait to be hired. They also suggested a day and time. In most cases, it was the next morning and I was able to find the respective participant at a place agreed mutually. Then we went to a nearby tea stall to complete the interview.

3.7 Data collection procedure

I collected the primary data over a three-month period while on an overseas field trip to Bangladesh during late November 2015 to early March 2016. Following the suggestions of Creswell (2014), I collected the primary data in two distinct phases as shown in figure 3.1. In the first phase, I administered the survey during December 2015 to January 2016. Before going to Bangladesh, I developed the survey questionnaire on the basis of my previous fieldwork experience and a review of the relevant literature. I also translated the survey questionnaire in Bangla, the native language of the participants. Through completion of survey, I noted several critical issues that were not possible to explore in the survey. After completing the survey, I analysed the survey data through the SPSS software and compiled the most critical issues commonly raised by the survey participants for follow-up interviews. Based on those issues, I developed an in-depth interview questionnaire and translated it to Bangla. While developing the in-depth interview questionnaire, I aimed to frame open-ended questions so that the interview participants could narrate their real life experiences in their language. Since I was previously known to the follow-up participants, I was able to find them easily and they responded to the questions without any hesitation.

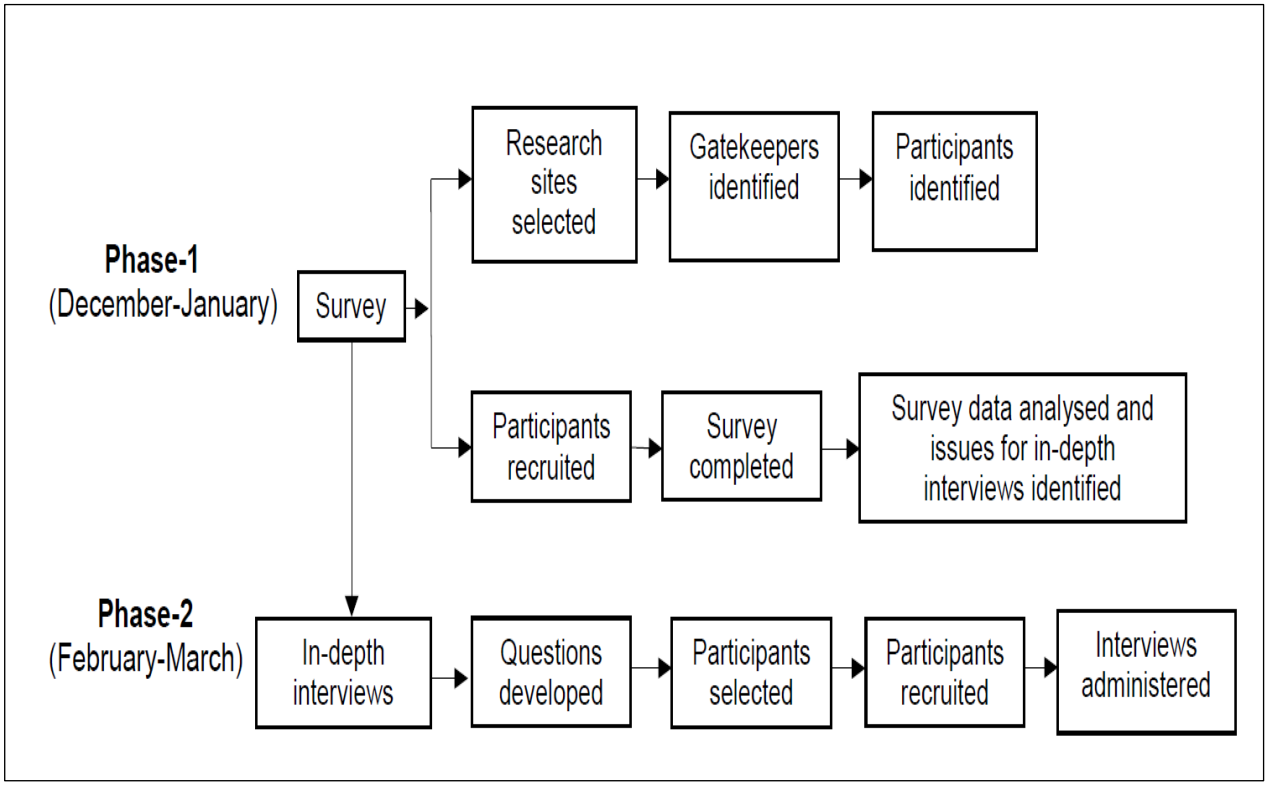

Figure 3.1: Procedures of data collection

The survey questionnaire took 55 minutes on average to be completed. The length of in-depth interviews was 1 hour 20 minutes on average. In-depth interviewing took more time than the survey because the in-depth interview participants were able to converse with me owing to our shared language and culture. As a result, they wished to talk about a wide range of issues concerning their work life. Although it was not always possible to stop participants from deviating from the key topic of discussion, I found the meaning of their narratives relevant later while transcribing and analysing the interviews. Moreover, since the interviews were conducted in safe and secure places in the absence of the workers' recruiters, the participants did not have any concerns over confidentiality in sharing their personal experiences spontaneously.

3.8 Methods of data collection

To collect data, face-to-face interview method was used. The survey questionnaire (Appendix F) comprised mostly closed-ended questions to obtain responses to standardised items. Closed-ended questions are appropriate when the dimensions of a variable are already known. It exposes all participants to the same response categories and allows standardised quantitative statistical analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). I asked the participants to select predetermined responses that I prepared on the basis of my previous fieldwork experiences with similar groups of people and relevant literature review. In order to ensure maximum comparability of responses, I provided a common stimulus to all participants. Therefore, in practice all questionnaires employed a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended items (Johnson & Turner, 2003).

In addition, I used a qualitative questionnaire (Appendix G) including open-ended questions for in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviewing through questionnaires is often used for exploratory research in which there is a need to know how participants think or feel or experience a phenomenon or why they believe something happens (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Open-ended questioning in qualitative questionnaires helps to explore an issue which is little known. It allows knowing what participants are thinking and dimensions of a particular variable that are not well-defined. Because participants are allowed to express themselves in their own words, open-ended questions offer rich information to understand participants' inner worlds in their own natural languages and categories (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Patton, 2002). Since the open-ended questions in the qualitative questionnaire were built on the results derived from the survey, in-depth interviewing was aimed to examine the quantitative data results in detail by purposefully selecting a sub-set of survey participants.

I also took a number of photographs that were used for analysing and narrating work conditions at construction sites. Photographs are considered mnemonic devices that are useful in recalling detailed information during analysing and writing periods (Fetterman, 2010). The photographs aided description of the real life settings of the participants and helped narrate their work environment by recalling specific details about the worksites while transcribing and analysing the interviews back at Flinders University. Thus photographs of the work environment were incredibly valuable in analysing the primary data and writing the work conditions sections in chapter four of this thesis where some of the photographs are reproduced.[4]

Moreover, upon permission of the participants I used a voice recorder to record all in-depth interviews. The audio recording of conversations provided a reliable record for later analysis. I was able to capture long verbatim quotations with the recorder and transcribe and analyse them properly by referring back to the audio clips over and over again (Fetterman, 2010). This helped to ensure I had an accurate interpretation of the conversations and to check the accuracy of the original transcripts against the audio clips back and forth.

3.8.1 Survey

I collected quantitative data for this study by means of a structured survey questionnaire containing questions in seven broad topics including the participants' demographic background, decisions for migration, recruitment, work conditions, occupational safety, remittances, and living conditions (see Appendix F). The survey questionnaire was long enough to meet the research objectives. There were 63 standard questions with some having follow-up questions. The female labourers were asked seven additional questions and the adolescent workers three additional questions. Few

[4] The photographs were de-identified using photo editing software. The human faces in the photographs were blurred and masked to comply Australian standards of ethical human research as per the ANSECHR.

questions had an “other” option allowing the participants to independently report an answer without being confined in the predetermined answers. Thus the participants had the freedom to report a real answer that may not be listed or standardised in the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was filled in by interviewing the participants face-to face because face-to-face interviews are considered more effective and less likely to break off during the interview than the self-completion modes (Fowler, 2009). I chose this option mainly to ease into the process of data collection considering the participants’ reading and writing competencies. The information requested from the survey respondents provided a reliable and valid measure of the factors that mediate the decisions of rural-urban labour migration for construction work in cities. In order to identify the demographic, motivational, situational and causal determinants of labour migration to cities, all survey respondents were asked about their understanding of what constitutes and contributes to the decision of migration. Detailed information was sought from them to make a genuine attempt to ascertain to what extent rural-urban labour migration and its outcomes are related to urban construction work.

Surveys provide an effective method for studies of the complex processes that underlie spatial mobility (Fawcett & Arnold, 1987). Survey research is widely considered as inherently quantitative and positivist that helps to draw generalisable inferences from survey data (Clark, 1982; de Vaus, 2014). Using the survey method for this study served two purposes. First, it carried out an in-depth exploratory work and extensive pre-testing in collaboration with members of the target groups to inform all parts of the research process. Second, it was crucial to maintain a flexible approach to data collection during the fieldwork stage (Bloch, 2007). In order to design an appropriate survey instrument, I did a scoping exercise that mainly involved a review of the relevant literature. In addition to that, my previous field based research experience with similar groups of people enabled me to form a profile of the main social, economic and demographic characteristics of the study groups in the different locations.

As suggested by Bilsborrow, Oberai, and Standing (1984) and Fawcett and Arnold (1987), the survey for this study was integral to understanding rural-urban migration as a process and an aspect of occupational change that has varying forms and meanings, that reflects multiple determinants, and that has potentially widespread consequences. The purposive sampling of the survey allowed me to overcome many limitations of traditional migration surveys. I was able to focus on family and social networks which are considered critical to understanding the patterns of population movements, including decisions. The measurement of such networks helped me conceptualising households and their linkages with individual migrant workers. Moreover, the surveys enabled me to document and analyse various micro level linkages between places of origin and destination, including visiting patterns and remittances. The survey also provided measures of satisfaction reflecting connections among factors determining migration decision, subjective motivations, and characteristics of employment in city. Thus analysis of the survey data

was vital to explore the structural features and typologies of rural-urban labour migration. In spite of being an individual decision, rural-urban migration has enormous effects on households of the migrant workers. Although this is not possible to measure the economic well-being of a household through a survey, obtaining multiple indicators helps in this regard. Furthermore, the survey data on many issues such as access to health facilities provided a very useful and realistic perspective to look into the costs of doing construction work as migrant workers in cities.

Using surveys for migrant workers is a well-established and valid data collection method. The intrinsic relationship between labour migration and urban employment has traditionally been established in many surveys. Clark (1982) identifies through survey data by DaVanzo (1978), Bartel (1979) and Grant and Vanderkamp (1980) that long distance moves have significant impacts on income. However, surveys have hardly been used to examine recruitment of migrant workers in urban sectors such as construction. As a result, survey data on issues surrounding recruitment of migrant construction workers are inadequate. Breman (1996) has reproduced some survey data to investigate dimensions of recruitment of rural-urban migrant labourers in India. In addition, the survey data by Pattanaik (2009), Pattenden (2012) revealed socio-economic impacts related to recruitment of migrant construction workers in India. Survey data by Ahsan (1997), Abrar and Reza (2014) and Afsar (2003) have been used to measure rural-urban migration and its relations with the construction sector in Bangladesh. Surveys have also been utilised to measure precarity associated with recruitment of migrant workers in other geographical contexts (Bélanger & Linh, 2013; Sporton, 2013).

In order to produce reliable quantitative data for testing the concept of rural-urban migration, the structured questionnaires consisting mostly closed-ended items have been extensively pretested earlier in similar studies. Many previous studies on migrant workers employed surveys for measurement of factors determining migration and its outcomes. A review of the literature reveals that sample surveys are quite prominent as a primary data source in studies of migrant workers (Fawcett & Arnold, 1987). While most of these surveys aimed to generalise characteristics of a segment of people, few were undertaken for descriptive analysis of data. Since this study adopts a mixed methods approach, it does not follow a strict sampling technique for its quantitative component. The survey mainly aimed to undertake a descriptive assessment of structural factors determining migration among 100 rural labourers. In order to do that, it focussed on obtaining insights into the structural nature of rural-urban migration and the role of individuals in it, rather than generalising the people who migrate to cities. Therefore the purposive sampling method fitted the best with the survey that allowed me to purposefully select the survey participants who have the potential to maximise understanding of rural-urban labour migration as an underlying phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

3.8.1.1 Sampling design

Well-designed sample surveys for migrant workers are generally considered a high quality data source which can unpack complex processes that underlie spatial mobility. Analysis of sample survey data is often complementary to macro-level analyses that describe broad migration trends and differentials (Fawcett & Arnold, 1987). For this study, selection of multiple sites through purposive sampling design applies to different types of construction projects and thus enhances opportunities for collection of comparable and complementary data at various locations where migrant construction workers are employed. An important feature of the design is the prospect of surveying migrant workers in urban construction projects which are different in terms of their nature, ownership and management. Therefore, this sampling design enables extensive data collection and simplifies the task of testing the variables in research questions.

Purposive sampling is a random selection of sampling units within the segment of the population with the most information on the characteristics of interest (Guarte & Barrios, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). It allows choosing the right participant possessing the capacity and willingness to be included in a study based upon a variety of criteria (Oliver, 2006). It allows a researcher freedom to decide what needs to be known and find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of their first-hand knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2006; Seidler, 1974; Smith, 1983). Thus it is basically a criterion-based selection in which particular settings, persons, or events and areas are selected deliberately in order to provide important information. It follows through preparing a list of essential attributes that are useful in locating and matching participants. Although participants are selected out of convenience, everyone in each research site has equal chance to be selected through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014; Keppel, 1991; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Using this sampling technique, I was able to select the survey participants independently of one another.

The large number, as well as lack of official census of rural-urban migrant labourers and migrant construction workers in Bangladesh, restricts a systematic random sample to be drawn. The paucity of data on migrant construction workers in Dhaka justifies this technique where access to migrant construction workers is possible through gatekeepers and pre-existing contacts as starting points (Bloch, 2007). Due to unavailability of a comprehensive list of all members of the study population, a criterion-based purposive sampling technique is to attain comparability in the study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This technique allowed me to select research sites according to specific criteria, i.e., nature of ownership, designed to enable comparative analysis between settings. Also, it enabled me to choose the sites randomly from a multiple of possible sites to represent a population of interest (Massey, 1987). Thus selection of multiple research sites on the basis of listed specifications greatly enhanced the validity of the survey data. The list of characteristics I used to select samples was prepared with an intention to best fit the participants. The samples selected through the list are statistically representative of an important segment of the migrant

construction workers in Dhaka city, if not representative of the whole community. Thus the sampling design makes clear that findings from this study cannot be generalised to a larger population except a specific proportion of migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Although the scope of the study was not large enough to obtain a nationally representative sample, research sites selected for this study captured some of the diversity of the migrant experience in the construction sector of Bangladesh. It is highly likely that the variables measured in the survey are similar across a variety of settings at national level.

In Dhaka, the *Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha* (RAJUK) or the Capital Development Authority is the planning and development management authority. It is responsible for building control. RAJUK's Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) is a composite plan, a package of Structure Plan, Master Plan and Detailed Area Plan, prepared to develop Dhaka in a planned way for twenty years (1995 to 2015). The DMDP is a multi-sectoral development plan outlining Dhaka's urban planning issues (Roy, Jahan, & Asaduzzaman, 2011). The DMDP map, as presented in figure 3.2, suggests particular zones for planned urban development. However, identifying the concentration of construction projects in Dhaka by using this map was complex. This is because many parts of Dhaka metropolitan area have not developed in a planned manner. In fact, construction projects were found all over the city and clustering them according to the development-prone zones as per the DMDP was not possible.

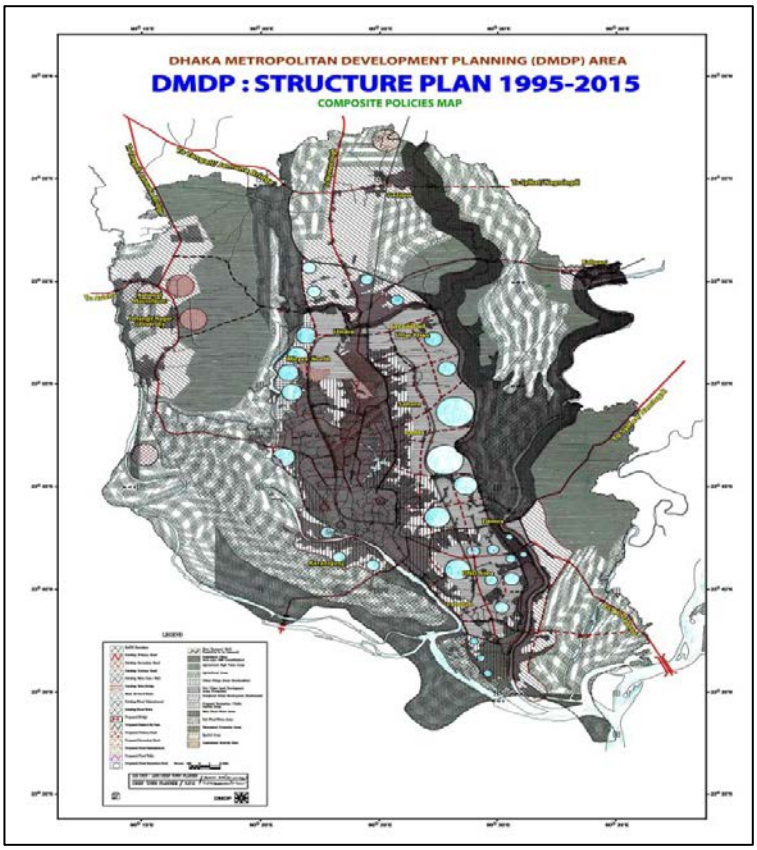

Figure 3.2: DMDP map

Source: RAJUK (1997)

To overcome the limitations of the DMDP map, I used the standard map of Dhaka metropolitan area, as shown in figure 3.3, and divided the map broadly into four zones: north, south, east, and west. The main purpose of dividing the map into four zones was to cover rural labourers arriving in Dhaka city through four main strategic entry points: Tongi in north, Saidabad in south, Mohakhali in east and Gabtali in west. All of these entry points have inter-district bus terminals except Tongi which has a train station. Every day hundreds of rural-urban migrant labourers from different parts of the country arrive in Dhaka by public bus and train and endeavour to get work in the construction projects in the vicinity.

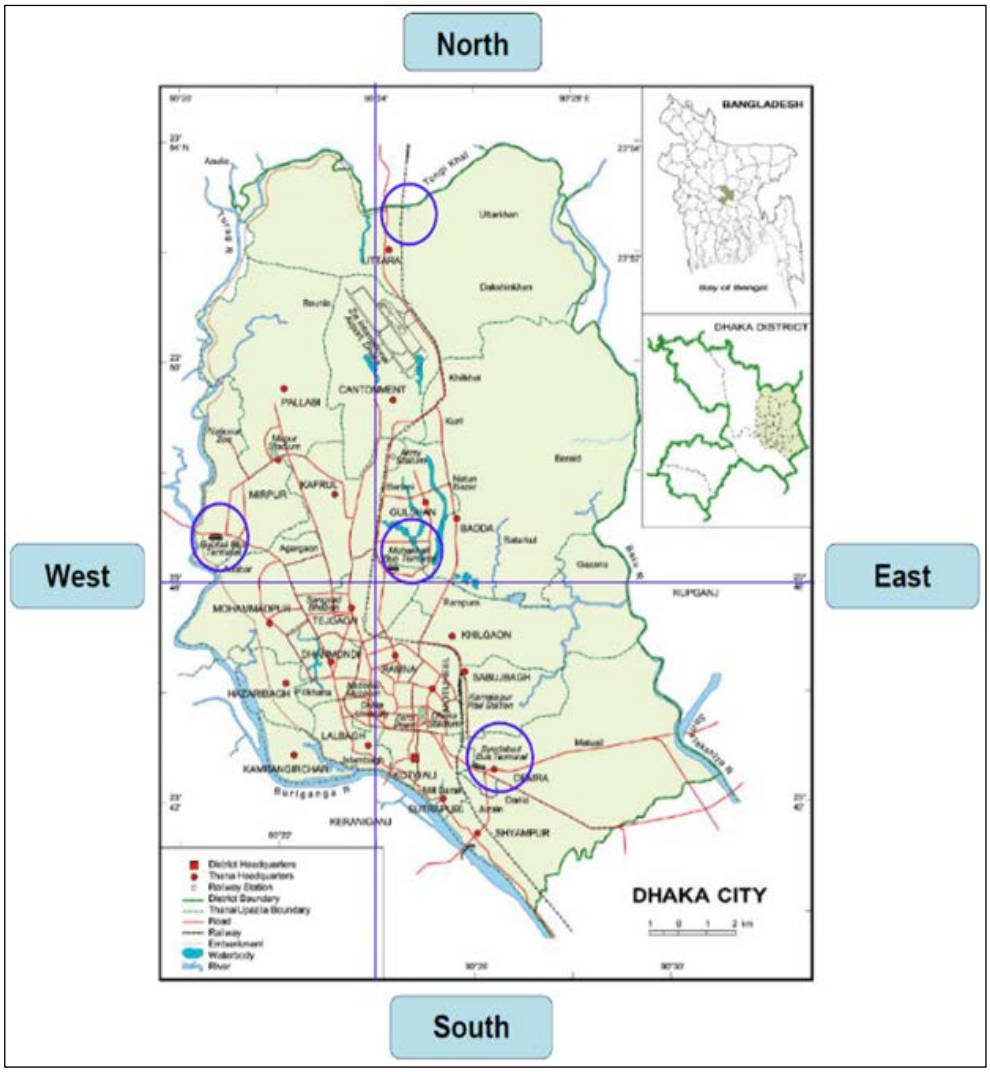

Figure 3.3: Map of Dhaka metropolitan area

Source: Ahmed (2014)

Initially I randomly walked in each zone at a time of the day to identify ongoing construction projects and their ownership. Some of the projects undertaken by private real estate companies had a small signboard showing the name of building company. Others required me to enquire in person with the guard. After identifying the ownership and the type of a project, I listed and measured the characteristics. Then I approached the project in-charge and/or the gatekeeper to

know further details of the project and the workers employed. After knowing about the workers, I matched the potential participants according to the list that includes the following criteria:

(a) origin in rural areas;

(b) living in Dhaka for at least six months;

(c) construction is the main occupation in Dhaka;

(d) age between 15 to 50 years; and

(e) earning member of a family or household.

I used these criteria to define rural-urban migrant workers and thus to include them in the survey. Elizaga (1972) identifies that it is very common in specialised migration surveys to determine migrant workers on the basis of duration of living in destination areas. Therefore, persons living at a place of destination continually for six months are considered as migrants. Taking this criterion, I selected those workers who had been living in Dhaka for at least six months at the time of interviewing. In addition, construction work in Bangladesh is considered laborious menial work for which the recruiters prefer young workers. Existing literature shows that majority of the Bangladeshi construction workers are in the age range of 25 to 39 years whereas the average age of the construction workers is 33 years (BILS, 2007; Hossain, Ahmed, & Akter, 2010). As a result, there is hardly any presence of older workers in the construction sector. Selecting the age group of 15 to 50 years enabled choosing the group that dominates the sector. Moreover, since the essence of precariousness is highly related to the stress and insecurities of the workplace transmitted to the household and its members (Standing, 2011; Webster et al., 2008), I purposively selected those migrant workers who are attached to their families either left in rural areas or living at destination. This criterion was critical in measuring how migration of labourers impacted on socio-economic conditions of other family members and the community as a whole. I was able to jot down the background information of potential participants by accessing and talking with people at each site. My cultural and language background helped me communicate with potential participants efficiently and know them through quick socialising.

Since my aim was to sustain a comparative quantitative analysis through purposive selection of multiple sites, I consciously selected the research sites where the migrant construction workers were diverse and the chance for negotiating access to them was high (Pettigrew, 1990). Having an appreciation of the nature and ownership of construction projects is to key to understanding how a project and its workers are recruited and managed. Therefore, selection of construction projects on the basis of their type and ownership relates to adequate opportunities for comparison of labour management, work conditions, and employment relationships in multiple types of projects. However, before categorising the construction projects, I defined and set the meaning of

"construction work". In Bangladesh, there is no official definition of construction work. Therefore, I adopted the broad definition provided by the ILO in its ILO Convention on Safety and Health in Construction. It defines construction work as "building, including excavation and the construction, structural alteration, renovation, repair, maintenance (including cleaning and painting) and demolition of all types of buildings or structures" (ILO, 1992, p. 1). Taking this basic definition, I categorised the construction of buildings according to the categorisation presented in section 5 (division 53 and 54) of the UN Central Product Classification (CPC) Version 2.1. It categorises construction work as "pre-erection work, new construction and repair, alteration, restoration and maintenance work on residential buildings, non-residential buildings or civil engineering works" (UN, 2002a, p. 149). Thus I selected the following three main types of construction projects located in four zones of Dhaka city:

(i) Residential: Residential projects are mainly single or multi-dwelling buildings built by private companies or individual owners for residential purpose. I selected 20 participants from these projects.

(ii) Non-residential: Non-residential projects mainly comprise three types of buildings for industrial, commercial and other non-residential purposes.[5] I selected 20 participants from each subtype of these projects; a total of 60 participants from the three subtypes of non-residential projects.

(iii) Civil engineering: Civil engineering construction projects are the infrastructure and establishment projects for public use. Overpasses, highways, streets, roads, railways, bridges, and sewerage, water, communication and power supply lines related projects are included in this category. I selected 20 participants from these projects.

The selection of multisite survey participants from the above three major building categories represents the key types and subtypes of construction projects in Bangladesh's construction sector. In order to identify the differences between an owner, builder, contractor and subcontractor, I adopted insights from the explanatory note on section 51 of the CPC Version 2.1. Its third paragraph explains that construction work can be undertaken by multiple agents such as:

> *Either by general contractors who do the complete construction work for the owner of the project, or on own account; or by subcontracting parts of the construction work to contractors specializing, e.g., in installation work, where the value of work done by subcontractors becomes part of the main contractor's work (UN, 2002b).*

[5] Industrial projects included buildings for factories, plants and workshops. Commercial projects included buildings for wholesale and retail trades, shopping centres and office buildings. Other non-residential projects included educational buildings, hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres, and religious buildings such as mosques and temples.

3.8.1.2 Survey data analysis

I analysed the survey data through SPSS software in the field. I counted the frequency of responses and prepared simple frequency tables with the help of SPSS. The tables provided the number of people and the percentage belonging to each of the categories for the variable in the question asked. Thus the frequency tables offered descriptive statistics to measure variability of responses from the entire sample (Bryman, 2016). The tables allowed me to compare the participants and determine the relationship among their responses (Leech, Barrett, Morgan, Clay, & Quick, 2009). The overriding importance of economic motives in the decision of migration was also revealed through the tables, as suggested by Byerlee (1974) and Elizaga (1972). Thus the survey data was useful to measure the economic rationale to link migration and employment. In this study, survey questions confirmed economic motives such as higher incomes and better employment opportunities. However, many other questions asked in the later sections of the questionnaire enabled me to find the intervening social, infrastructural and psychological factors to explain migration. A summary of these factors was very helpful in examining the predominant conceptual perspectives such as labour productivity that postulate migration of labourers from a low productivity rural job to a higher productivity urban job offering better wages (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Lipton, 1980; Todaro, 1969). The summary was also useful in examining the rationale for inter-sectoral change in occupation from agriculture to urban employment.

3.8.2 In-depth interview

Qualitative interviewing is the key technique and probably the most commonly used in qualitative research. Enabling a thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions, it allows the researcher to produce a rich, in-depth and varied data set in an informal setting (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). I administered 20 standardised open-ended interviews for this study, 15 to migrant workers and five to individual recruiters. The interview questionnaire for the workers had 39 questions with a few having follow-up questions (see Appendix G). The questions for the workers were standardised and open-ended, prepared on the basis of survey results. The main goal of in-depth interviewing was to obtain nuanced evidence of the structure of recruitment practices, the key actors and their connections with different conditions of employment in the construction sector. Since precarious employment brings to the fore the temporal as well as spatial aspects of work and migration (Anderson, 2010; Cwerner, 2001), the underlying aim of the in-depth interview questionnaire was to document the entire migration journey and the work conditions the migrant workers find themselves in. Therefore, the open-ended questions in the in-depth interview questionnaire asked about the reasons for the participants' experiences that could not be captured by the survey questionnaire. With particular interest in the structure of recruitment practices, the participants were also asked questions about the process of recruitment they underwent and the role of the individual recruiters in their recruitment, management and employment relationship. They were also asked questions about their personal views, expectations and opinions on the

recruitment practices they experienced. The open-ended design of the interviews allowed minimum control of interviewees' responses. Moreover, the interviews guided by a questionnaire and answers to the same questions, enabled comparison of responses (Bernard, 2012).

The 15 workers interviewed were drawn from the overall survey sample, as follow-up participants for in-depth interviewing. I selected them purposefully with preference to rich cases. I utilised my subjective preference and selected those who were able to share diverse experiences and had better capabilities to articulate their personal experiences and perspectives. The basis for recruitment was the participants' self-identification of willingness to participate in the in-depth interview process, as indicated by completion of the relevant question on the survey questionnaire (Hodgkin, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This strategy allowed following up with these participants to obtain their specific language, voice, reasons and detailed explanation about the research topic. The main aim was to select the information-rich cases, even very low in number, which can provide in-depth insights into people's lives (Patton, 2002). With regard to selecting the total number of participants for in-depth interviews (n=15), principle of saturation was followed and thus data collection was discontinued only at the moment when new data did not add further strength to investigation of the research issues (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mason, 2010). The interviews of the workers revealed the structure of labour recruitment practices predominantly practised in the construction sector of Bangladesh.

After knowing the workers' perspectives on the recruitment practices, I interviewed five individual recruiters to get employers' perspectives on labour recruitment and management. They were purposefully selected and interviewed upon their availability and interest to participate in the study. The questionnaire for the recruiters (Appendix H) had 15 open-ended questions focusing on their daily functions in relation to recruitment and management of workers. They were asked questions about how they selected prospective workers, recruited them from the villages and managed in the city. The length of the interviews was 32 minutes on average.

3.8.2.1 Transcription and translation

I transcribed the interviews and produced a verbatim account of all verbal utterances. The process of transcription was laborious taking more than seven months. It did offer me an excellent opportunity to familiarise myself with the data. I was able to develop a thorough understanding of the data through having transcribed it. Data transcription is known as "a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology" (Bird, 2005, p. 227) and recognised as an interpretative act, where meanings are created, rather than simply a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on paper (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Utilising all my language competencies, I produced thorough and rigorous transcripts from the verbatim account that retained the interpretative meanings of all conversations in a true and original way. To ensure accuracy of the transcripts, I paid close attention to check the transcripts back against the original audio

recordings.

Collecting data in one language and presenting the findings in another is common among social researchers. It requires time and effort and involves a complicated process of translation. The quality of translation significantly impacts on the validity of data (Birbili, 2000). The interviewees narrated their personal experiences in their native language Bangla. Born and brought up in Bangladesh, I was able to speak the same language. I transcribed the interviews, recorded on a voice recorder, in English after returning to Australia. As Filep (2009) describes, the process of translating interview data in multilingual and multicultural settings represents a complex situation in which not only the language but also the culture has to be dealt with, translated and interpreted. The process of translation becomes more complex when the language of data collection, like Bangla, involves grammatical and syntactical structures that do not exist in English. Many interviewees spoke in unclear and incoherent sentences and I translated the interviews in an interpretative way. Interpretative translation is considered a reasonable approach that does more justice to what participants had reported and makes the readers understand the local contexts of interviews better (Honig, 1997). My aim was to make the participants' language accessible and understandable to the readers while creating quotations. I edited the quotations to ensure that they read well without distorting the interpretative meaning and losing information from the original (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In a few cases, I edited the quotations by changing the structure of conversations and adding missing fragments to make the quotes more easily understood by those who are not familiar with the context (Birbili, 2000; Filep, 2009).

Gaining conceptual equivalence or comparability of meaning through translation is a major difficulty for social researchers (Birbili, 2000). This is because the participants' utterance may carry with it a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that may not be possible to transcribe or translate. Thus the emotional connotations in one language may not necessarily occur in another (Phillips, 1959). For example, the term frequently used in this study "poverty" may be understood by many as an expression conjuring up a similar situation in other cultures, but it might not be easy for English-speaking readers to pick up the full implications the term carries for a Bangladeshi rural labourer unless it is accompanied by more social and cultural information on the associations and connotations that the term has in a Bangladesh context. Similarly, the term "cousin" means something different in Bangladesh than in Australia. Therefore, I followed translation strategies suggested by Przeworski and Teune (1970) that emphasise equivalence of inferences, by validating the inferences within rather than across social systems. Although I was aware of gaining vocabulary equivalence, I focussed special attention to experiential and conceptual equivalence by utilising terms that refer to real things and real experiences in both Bangladeshi and Australian/British/European culture, even if not exactly equally familiar (Sechrest, Fay, & Zaidi, 1972; Temple, 1997). Since I am bilingual in English and Bangla, I was able to direct my efforts towards obtaining conceptual and comparability of meanings through using my proficient

understanding of both languages and intimate knowledge of the Bangladeshi culture. I was able to pick up on the full implications a term carries for the people under the study and ensure that the cultural connotations of a word are made explicit to the readers of the thesis. Thus I was able to ensure equivalence in terms of vocabulary, inferences, experience and concepts for this cross-cultural study.

To ensure anonymity of the participants, I assigned distinctive codes to the participants using one alphabetic letter (W for the workers and R for the recruiters) and numerical characters. For example, the 15 workers were coded as W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W6, W7, W8, W9, W10, W11, W12, W13, W14, and W15. The five recruiters were coded as R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5.

3.8.2.2 Coding

Coding is an important phase of qualitative data analysis that helps in organising data into meaningful groups. Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). While transcribing the interviews, I generated an initial list of interesting ideas in the data. Then I coded the extracts of the conversations manually to identify particular features of the data set from the content of the entire data set. Table 3.1 shows an example of codes applied to a short segment of data. Following the coding guide suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I wrote notes on the texts, used highlighters and coloured pens to indicate potential patterns, and pasted "post-it" notes to identify segments of data. The actual data extracts coded were later collated by copying extracts of data from individual transcripts into separate computer files. I then sorted the different codes into potential themes and collated all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. I reviewed all the coded data extracts for each theme and double-checked if they appeared to form a coherent pattern. I paid special attention to ensure that the extracts were coded inclusively and the context of data extracts was not lost (Bryman, 2016).

Data extract	Coded for
"Before coming here, they (individual recruiters) asked me, 'will you be able to carry and lift heavy sacks of cement? Will you be able to start work very early in the morning and continue till sunset?' I replied yes to all these questions … This is very difficult work … I wake up very early in the morning and finish work after sunset. I also lift heavy sacks full of sand or bricks … They advised me to stay polite and behave with other workers politely."	Physical fitness and ability to work long hours Difficult work: *3D* job characteristics Politeness is an attribute that the recruiters look for (For the recruiters, polite workers are loyal, non-complaining and non-disruptive)

Table 3.1: An example of codes applied to a short segment of data

3.8.2.3 Emerging themes

This study is a combination of statistical and thematic analysis of primary data. Frequencies of statistical variables obtained from survey data were used to identify the emerging concepts for further follow-up through in-depth interviewing and the in-depth interview transcripts were coded and summarised to identify the emerging themes to establish a grounded theory such as “hyper-individualised employment”. After initial coding, I identified some recursive points from the interview transcripts. Then I categorically grouped, themed, assembled and summarised them to be thematically matched with the research questions. While doing this I developed an initial thematic map to search for repeated themes or patterns and their relationships. Themes were then defined and refined to identify the essence of what each theme was about and determine what aspect of the data each theme captured (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus I conducted and wrote a detailed analysis on each individual theme in relation to the research questions.

Throughout the procedure of analysing qualitative data, I adopted a thematic analysis approach where my aim was to present a rich description of the data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. It is considered a theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is capable of interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Being a flexible research tool, thematic analysis can potentially provide a rich and detailed account of qualitative data by organising data minimally. However, in spite of being a widely used tool there is no clear guideline about how thematic analysis should be performed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, I followed the analytic tradition of grounded theory and the thematic coding I undertook is very relevant to this tradition.

The goal of the grounded theory analysis is to generate a plausible theory of the phenomena that is grounded in the views of participants (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Building empirically, grounded theory requires a reciprocal relationship between data and theory. This process involves refinement and interrelationships of the themes derived from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82), a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. They suggest that there is no hard and fast answer to the question of what proportion of a data set needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme. Thus the keyness of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question. By adopting a constructivist perspective, I presumed that meanings and experiences of individuals are socially produced and reproduced. Therefore, thematic analysis enabled me to seek to theorise the sociocultural contexts and structural conditions that embed the individual accounts.

Through thematic analysis guided by research questions, I interconnected the identified themes

and developed them into a theoretical model. This contributed to five emerging themes, as shown in table 3.2. These five themes are the most prevalent themes across the data set and they together capture an important element of the way in which the rural-urban migrant labourers experience precarious life in the construction projects of Dhaka. Thus they provide unique contributions to the conceptualisations of precarious work, the main theoretical lens for this study.

Theme	Essence
1) Indignity for stress	This theme captures issues focussing on how the migrant construction workers regard their work.
2) Easy entry, better money	This theme explains the interconnections between migration and construction work.
3) Social recruitment	This theme explains the role of individuals and their personal networks in indirect recruitment and management of migrant labourers.
4) Individualised labour	This theme explains how the recruiters flexibilise migrant labour through individualised recruitment and management practices.

Table 3.2: Emerging themes and their essence

3.9 Limitations

This mixed methods study has some potential limitations due the methodology it followed. The survey method is often considered as a weak method for collecting data on population mobility. The arguments presented against surveys are manifold. It is sometimes argued that surveys are limited to small samples representative of only a small segment of the nation's population. Surveys are usually limited to certain population categories or to either in- or out-migration and they are not large enough to permit detailed analysis and the making of many generalisations (Hamilton, 1961). In spite of these, well-designed surveys are practical options to test new hypotheses and thus increase our insights. Elizaga (1972) suggests that advances have been made in techniques of data compilation, measurement and analysis, but there have been no such advances in the methodological strategy of investigations of migration issues. As a result, there is no unique method for the study of migration. Therefore, this study has the limitations of using survey method for data collection.

Language and literacy of the participants are crucial issues to consider while collecting field data. I translated the original questionnaires from English to Bangla, the native language of the participants and then the responses were re-translated to English for the purpose of analysis. In order to ensure the best quality comparative measurement, several authors like Harkness (2006) suggest dual processes of the translation decentralising procedure and back translation where cross-checking the appropriateness of different concepts across languages and cultures is more

important than the literal wording. Back translation is a process whereby one bi-linguist translates from the source language into the target language while another translates from the target language back to the source language without seeing the original. Every question is then examined by a committee and where necessary, changes are made to the translations and/or the original English language version (Birbili, 2000; Harkness, 2006). Being a very time-consuming procedure this process usually requires more than one person involved in order to achieve good results. However, this process does not guarantee solving some inevitable discrepancies such as inadequacy and no-equivalence in translation (Birbili, 2000). In this study, I carried out the translations and checked and reviewed the translations without following the rigour of the back translation method. Given the time pressures, ethics and confidentiality of data, it was not possible to engage another translator or an outsider. Therefore, the translations might have some limitations.

Vulliamy (1990) points out that in those cases where the researcher and the translator are the same person the quality of translation may be influenced by factors such as the autobiography of the researcher-translator, the researcher's knowledge of the language and the culture of the people under study. However, being a native speaker of the language used by the participants, I aimed to minimise the limitations through presenting the questionnaire in the simplest colloquial form and detailed examination of the original question to check the appropriateness of different concepts across languages and cultures. Moreover, my fluency in the language of the write-up, bodily presence in the field and creative understanding enabled me to minimise the limitations.

Another limitation of this study is related to the fact that I was an ethnically matched interviewer. As Elam and Fenton (2003) highlight, because of shared language and culture, the interviewees might have concerns over confidentiality. However, while doing fieldwork, I did not experience any such issues. Rather shared ethnic identity enabled me to follow a more collaborative approach, eased my access to the gatekeepers and potential participants and helped me avoiding the need to employ interpreters.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the research methods used for this study. Involving survey and in-depth interviews, this mixed methods study adopts a pragmatist approach. The research design aims to explore real workplace experiences of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka and the role of recruitment practices in shaping those experiences. Adopting a pluralistic stance of gathering quantitative and qualitative data to best answer the research questions, this study demonstrates that construction work in Dhaka is marked by precariousness due to recruitment practices that enable exploitative employment relationships. The subsequent chapters will produce empirical evidence to examine this in detail. The following chapter will explore work conditions and the image of construction work regarded by the migrant construction workers in Dhaka.

4 WORK CONDITIONS AND THE IMAGE OF CONSTRUCTION WORK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the work conditions in Dhaka's construction projects and conveys an image of construction work regarded by the migrant construction workers. In doing this, it produces empirical evidence and analyses why the migrant construction workers in Dhaka predominantly consider construction as an unpleasant, hard and insecure job. Situated in the "indignity for stress" theme, the chapter provides migrant construction workers' personal perspectives on their everyday experiences of work. The migrant workers' own accounts indicate that they work in dirty, difficult and dangerous conditions. The perspectives of the recruiters are also discussed to contextualise the employment relationships surrounding the workplace conditions. The chapter presents some statistical data based on the survey. The interviewees are directly quoted in the chapter and specific contexts are discussed to inform subjective meanings of their experiences.

4.2 Construction in Dhaka: Work conditions

The image of construction work understood by the migrant construction workers in Dhaka is related to the way they perceive and perform their work. They reported a three dimensional image (dirty, difficult and dangerous) of their work, i.e., they considered their jobs to be dirty, difficult and dangerous. Because the construction work in Bangladesh involves high amounts of physical labour and hard work, it is commonly regarded as a laborious work in the local labour community. Field findings of this study reveal that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka regarded their work as low status. The workers perceived that their workplace conditions affected their social relationships and status. Such beliefs were embedded in their social relations and everyday interactions with their family members, friends, neighbours and other social contacts. Moreover, the workers' own perception about their work-related dignity was shaped by their fleeting and incidental interactions outside the workplace. The sections below present the workers' narratives on their workplace conditions and the three dimensional image of the construction work tied to that.

4.2.1 The dirty work conditions

The migrant construction workers in Dhaka reported that their work was "dirty". They believed that their work was treated as dirty when they happened to interact outside their workplace. Their negative perceptions about their own work are actually shaped by the way the construction jobs are undertaken. The workers in Dhaka's construction projects endure poor work conditions in order to accomplish their assigned tasks. The lifetime of a construction project involves a wide range of tasks beginning with site excavation through to finishing tasks such as painting. Unlike developed countries where most of these tasks are accomplished by utilising modern construction equipment and machinery, in Bangladesh construction projects are still highly dependent on menial labour. At

every stage of a construction project, the workers are required to handle huge amounts of soil, dust and construction materials. Due to manual handling, they frequently deal with piles of debris that eventually spread to their clothes and body. The process of accomplishing construction jobs therefore involves specific conditions that make the work messy and unpleasant for the workers.

As one worker reported:

> *People often hate us when we have nasty mud and debris on our clothes … We can reckon that when we are in dirty clothes. At that moment, I feel sad but there is nothing to do. We cannot change this anyway, it's our fate (Worker code: W7).*

The worker, as quoted above, was aware of the negative perception about the construction workers outside the workplace. Handling of soil and mud is integral to construction work in Dhaka. The construction workers accomplish their jobs in a messy environment where they are required to manually handle piles of debris. Although handling dust and dirt is very common in Dhaka's construction projects, as seen from figure 4.1, the worker's personal accounts suggest that the mud affects his status. Due to this negative perception outside the workplace, he regretted and felt helpless with the situation. However, the quote indicates that the unhappy feelings of the construction workers in Dhaka are significantly prompted by their fleeting and incidental interactions outside their workplace.

Figure 4.1: Dust and mud in Dhaka's construction projects

The migrant construction workers often compared themselves with the salaried job holders in other sectors and consequently considered their own work as less prestigious. The workers occasionally had infrequent and brief contacts with some people who they perceived to be salaried job holders. They actually compared their own clothing as contributing to their low feelings.

One worker reported:

> *At the end of the day I am a 'labourer'. It is all about dignity. There is huge difference between a labourer and a job holder. For example, when I ride a bus after finishing work, no one wants to sit beside me seeing me wearing dirty clothes. People think that sitting beside me will degrade their prestige. I also feel penitent. But there is no option left to us. We work with dust and hence our clothes get dusty (Worker code: W1).*

The worker's frustrations associated with the image of construction work are clear from this quote. Comparing their treatment on public transport, the worker perceived the social identity of a construction worker to be undignified. The worker's personal experience on public transport suggests that the dirty clothes of the construction workers represent indignity and barriers to interact socially. Similarly, the workers' experiences in other public places are negative due to the dirt and mud they handle in their workplaces.

One worker reported:

> *I do not wish to have any future plan surrounding this work. I do not wish to continue this work for a longer period … [This is because] people do not respect us. They disrespect the work itself. Mud is everywhere … If we go to buy something from a nearby retail shop, other customers in the shop will stay away seeing mud on our clothes (Worker code: W13).*

Similar negative experiences to those outlined in the above quote are due to the workers' fleeting and incidental interactions outside the workplace. Their persistent frustrations in relation to dirty clothes have attributed to their mind-set that their work has no dignity in their society. Therefore, the migrant construction workers in Dhaka do not want their occupations to be carried on by their children. Due to lack of dignity and social status tied to construction work, none of the workers surveyed and interviewed for this study wanted their next generation to become construction workers in future.

As one worker reported:

> *No, I will never want my next generation to continue this work. If I had wanted this, I would have not given them education. This work is dirty because of dust. I wish my sons should complete their education and get salaried private jobs. I do not want them to do dirty work at all, like mine (Worker code: W3).*

The migrant construction workers in Dhaka frequently attributed their health concerns to the dirty work environment that demotivated them to engage their next generation in construction work. Many workers are employed in civil engineering projects where they are required to work in a severely disgusting environment, as seen in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Workers working in underground unsanitary sewerage

In Dhaka, the underground sewage pipes and the sanitary lines are highly obnoxious job locations where the workers are required to handle polluted water and sanitary rubbish. While working underground, the debris not only spreads onto their body but passes through their lungs contributing to their health concerns.

One worker elaborated:

> *No, I do not want my next generation to continue this work. This is seriously dirty work. I will never want my next generation to do this work. If anyone does this work, he will suffer from heart disease. The disgusting mess we work with passes through our lungs. The polluted water we work with is also disgusting. Sometimes the sewerage pipes bust and nasty water leaks. We must work there (Worker code: W7).*

The worker, as quoted above, describes the dirty work conditions he experiences every day. The overall negative perceptions about construction jobs are significantly related to the traditional processes of undertaking the jobs and the unavoidable handling of messy substances. Dirt, dust and filthy soil are frequently linked to the low status of the workers but there is something more important than these. The migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects reported that use of offensive language was common in their workplace. They reported frequent use of reprimanding and coarse language by their team leaders, project supervisors, contractors, and engineers. In particular, the female workers reported that they experienced coarse language and rebukes while their performance was slow.

One female worker reported:

> *I work with masons and when I help them properly, they do not behave indecently. However, if my performance is slow, they will rebuke me. That's normal here (Worker code: W14).*

This worker confirms that the use of coarse language in case of slow performance is common in Dhaka's construction projects. Therefore, they view this culture as normal. The female workers believe that their superiors have every right to scold them in case of poor performance. One of the main reasons why the use of coarse language is considered "normal" is due to the workers' narrow perspectives on employment relationships. They consider their relationship with their employers in terms of wages and payment only. They believe that problems like coarse language are traditionally embedded in their life and hence they consider this issue inferior to the money they primarily work for.

However, the traditionally normalised culture of rebuking in case of slow performance is not acceptable to all workers. In general, offensive language has had profound impacts on the workers' psychology. Although they were unable to protest about this practice, frequent use of coarse language was found detrimental to workers' self-esteem. The workers lost motivation when they experienced coarse language at work. Due to incidents involving coarse language, the workers often felt insulted and abused and thus left their work immediately.

As one adolescent worker explained an incident:

> *Sometimes they rebuke us by saying 'son of pig', 'son of a prostitute mother'. Look, we are human beings and we do have human physique. We are not machines. We should work according to whatever our body allows. In our previous worksite, one day we were all having lunch during lunch break. At that time, he [the recruiter] appeared and started rebuking us by saying, 'hey sons of bitches, your performances are very poor and the project is not progressing fast. You all are born in bitch's womb.' Seeing this, I left the work and went back to village. One of my co-workers who was just my age protested instantly and then the engineer beat him. He also left the work being upset (Worker code: W10).*

The incident described confirms the use of highly offensive language, designed to be offensive and to discipline workers, in Dhaka's construction projects. The worker's personal experience with the incident reveals that he felt insulted due to the bullying and personally abusive language used by his recruiter. The local context of using such highly offensive language in construction projects is associated with the recruiters' expectation of performance. Although often denied by the recruiters, the practice of using coarse language is perceived as normal to them. They treated this practice as integral to training the workers and keeping them focussed in the assigned tasks.

As one recruiter asserted:

> *All day I differ with the workers. When they make any mistake, I scold them. But after few minutes I hug them. I scold them for their own benefit. I scold them to enable them to be serious about learning work perfectly. I explain the reason to them why I have scolded (Recruiter code: R5).*

Claiming the importance of such practice in training and disciplining the apprentice labourers, many recruiters argued in favour of maximising labour productivity by scolding the workers. While most of the recruiters were once themselves probationary labourers, they referred back to their personal experience with coarse language and supported the practice of using coarse language at work. Thus they regarded scolding as an essential part of work, especially when managing and leading a group of workers.

Use of coarse language is so common in Dhaka's construction projects that the workers can hardly ignore this. Even in situations where the workers are not directly involved, they had heard heated arguments marked by rage between their recruiters and other people such as contractors. The everyday quarrels in the workplace contribute to their perceptions about the image of the construction work.

One worker pointed out:

> *There is no dignity in this work. I work for all day and work so hard but there is no respect. For example, my foreman does not get respect and he is often involved in heated arguments with other people like engineers and contractors. Seeing this, I do not think this work has any dignity (Worker code: W13).*

The context of the above quote suggests that the incidents of heated arguments demotivate the construction workers to regard their work positively. The workers see their superiors get involved in intense arguments with the builders and contractors and this aspect of work heavily contributes to their negative perception about their work. Due to this, dignity of work with reference to construction work in Dhaka is compromised in the workers' workplace environment. Locally known as a dirty job, construction work represents a poor image because of not only the debris the workers handle but the sense of indignity they relate to the work. Use of bullying and personally abusive language is an important factor that justifies their perceptions of indignity.

4.2.2 The difficult work conditions

Construction work in Bangladesh is "difficult" work, there is no doubt about this. The work is difficult not only because of the amount of physical labour it requires but the poor work conditions that the labourers experience in construction projects. The projects are primarily menial labour-intensive and therefore the workers need to work hard physically. In order to accomplish the assigned tasks, they often work long hours in an unhealthy work environment.

Working for extended hours is very common in Dhaka's construction projects. The workers surveyed for this study confirmed this with 76 percent of workers reporting that they did not have fixed work hours and thus their shifts and work hours were determined by their recruiters according to circumstances. They worked up to 18 hours a day, although many of them did not receive overtime in spite of working long hours. This is because working extended hours is considered a norm in Dhaka's construction projects. Time pressure for ensuring assignment-based progress

creates conditions that compel the workers to take on a huge workload and work long hours. The workers are required to work without any weekly days off or rest breaks. As a consequence, 74 percent of workers reported that they did not have any days off in the week preceding their inclusion in the survey. Many reported that they worked for several months at a stretch without having any days off.

One worker confirmed:

> *Our work continues for all over the whole year. We work all 30 days in a month. Except physical sickness, we work every day in a month. There is no leave. There is no official leave like weekends. We work continuously (Worker code: W1).*

This quote confirms that the workers in Dhaka's construction projects do not have a day off. In order to double check the work schedule of the worker quoted above, I informally spoke to his recruiter. The recruiter confirmed that he was working for the last 78 days without having any leave. The interviews with the workers revealed that their indirect recruitment was based on a "no work, no pay" principle. Without any leave, the workers were actually treated by their recruiters as day labourers.

One worker clarified this point:

> *We do not enjoy any leave here. We work all 30 days in a month. Even we work on Fridays.[6] If I am absent, that is absent and I will not get daily wage for that day. Leaves can be applicable for the salaried workers who are directly recruited but we are not recruited directly. Although our subcontractors pay at the end of month, we are actually treated as day labourers. We are not entitled to any leave (Worker code: W6).*

Leave in Dhaka's construction projects is occasionally determined by uncertainty of production. Lack of supply of materials seldom disrupts the production process. The workers have a common tendency to conceptualise this kind of disruption as leave. However, disruptions due to supply shortage lead the workers to unemployment and instability of income.

As one worker explained:

> *Except those days of sickness, I work throughout the whole month. I cannot take any leave … Normally I work throughout the whole year except those days of sickness. There are a few disruptions [due to supply of materials] as well. For example, while working here we faced disruption due to a shortage of construction materials. The shops were closed on last Friday. The contractor and house owner went on Saturday to buy some tiles and the whole day passed. Thus we did not have work on Friday and Saturday and we will not be paid for these two days. Since the supply of materials was not there, we had to stay without jobs. It happens occasionally (Worker code: W3).*

Sickness is commonly regarded as "leave" in Dhaka's construction projects. Working on the "no work, no pay" basis, the workers are not entitled to any sick leave. On account of sickness, the workers may be allowed to be absent but their leave due to sickness is not paid leave. The

[6] In Bangladesh, Fridays and Saturdays are officially declared weekly holidays.

interviews with the workers revealed that they often visited their village to attend their family during sickness. Their recruiters however did not pay for their absence. Moreover, due to the individualised process of approval for leave, the workers had little option except to wait for their recruiters' consent and payment of due wages.

The worker continued:

> *Leave depends on me actually. For example, my family has an issue and I have to go to visit them, I have to inform him [the recruiter] that I would like to leave work and go home tomorrow. He may advise me to go the next day instead of tomorrow. I have to argue with him that I must go home tomorrow to attend something urgent. After this, he may allow me to leave. Usually if I go home instantly, he will not pay the dues. He might tell me, 'you want to go home but I do not have enough money to pay your due wages today. You better leave tomorrow so that I can pay you some money.' In spite of emergency, sometime I must wait a day because I want to get some of the dues to take with me while going home. If it takes one week to attend my family [due to emergency], I will not be paid. No work, no pay here (Worker code: W3).*

In absence of leave, the workers in Dhaka's construction projects work restlessly and they always feel exhausted. The work is very monotonous for them. Excessive work pressures make them too tired to go out to socialise. Interviews with the workers revealed that they did not get adequate breaks during work. Lack of rest made them fatigued every evening. In particular, the young bodies of adolescent workers were seriously fatigued due to long work hours.

One adolescent worker reported:

> *After working hard all day, I feel very tired in the evening. After having a shower, I do not have the energy to move out of the project. Hence I hit the bed immediately after having dinner. The next day our work starts again at 7.00am and finishes after 6.00pm (Worker code: W13).*

While the terms of employment in Dhaka's construction project include no provision for leave, the workers endure excessive stress by working long hours. The ability to work hard for long hours is considered to be the most important attribute of a construction worker. The recruiters therefore consider physical strength to be the main quality of a good worker for their projects. In the selection and recruitment process, they discuss and verify the potential workers' physical strength at length.

For example:

> *Before coming here, they [the recruiters] asked me, 'will you be able to carry and lift heavy sacks of cement? Will you be able to start work very early in the morning and continue till sunset?' I replied yes to all these questions … This is very difficult work … I wake up very early in the morning and finish work after sunset. I also lift heavy sacks full of sand or bricks (Worker code: W2).*

Working from sunrise to sunset is a traditional concept in Dhaka's construction projects. Being a tropical country, summer is the predominant season in Bangladesh and hence the workers usually have long workdays. While being in Dhaka, I personally noticed many construction workers starting

their work before 6 o'clock in the morning and continuing until 6 o'clock in the evening. The "6 to 6" work hours included very short breaks for breakfast, lunch and snacks. In some projects where the time pressure was intense, the work hours were even longer than this.

As seen in figure 4.3, brick lifting is a strenuous job. Workers in Dhaka work very hard to lift bricks to top floors. Usually brick lifting starts early in the morning and the workers are assigned to move a whole pallet of clay bricks before sunset. The recruiters consider the physical ability of a worker to be the most important factor in determining his or her capacity to undertake the job of brick lifting.

Figure 4.3: Workers lifting bricks, to the 6th floor of a building, for the whole day

The traditionally made clay bricks in Bangladesh are heavy as shown in figure 4.4: a single brick weighs 3.32 kilograms. While visiting the construction projects in Dhaka, I noticed that some workers were capable of carrying 20 bricks, weighing more than a total of 66 kilograms at a time on their head. In this sense, they were capable of lifting thousands of kilograms in a whole day.

Figure 4.4: The weight of clay bricks in Bangladesh
Source: Multiple Light Bricks & Blocks (2017)

The construction workers in Dhaka usually start their work before sunrise and continue until night. Considering the amount of physical labour the workers put in, the recruiters reported that their work was extremely strenuous for a human body. They attributed long work hours to the inhumane nature of the construction work.

One recruiter confirmed this:

> *People say we the poor people work hard like donkeys. No other work in the country is as hard as this one. We start at 6 o'clock in the morning and finish at 10 o'clock at night (Recruiter code: R5).*

Effects of long work hours are detrimental to the health and psychology of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. They workers frequently mentioned that they had health issues due to long work hours. Irrespective of the types of jobs they undertake, they are required to work by standing or

sitting for a long time. Moreover, the unavoidable dust in the construction projects causes eye problems.

As one worker stated:

> *We always suffer from health problems. The main health problem I face is the pain in the body. This is because we work sitting down. While working on the floor, we need to sit for a prolonged time. Then we feel cramp in our knees and lower back. Sometimes dust enters our eyes and that causes itching and pain in our eyes (Worker code: W3).*

In particular, the adolescent workers reported that the work was very hard for them because of long work hours and lack of rest. After interviewing few adolescent workers, I realised that in addition to long work hours several other factors made the work particularly hard for them.

For example, one adolescent worker reported:

> *This work is hard and it gives many sufferings. Every day we get up early in the morning and take a shower at night [after finishing work] … Look, this is winter now and the water is freezing cold to take a shower at night (Worker code: W13).*

This worker relates his workplace experience to the long work hours and the difficulty of cleaning and washing related to this. In the winter, when the workers finish their work late the water available onsite is very cold. As a result, it becomes difficult for them to clean their clothes and have a shower. The difficult work conditions were particularly arduous for the young and adolescent workers. In Dhaka, I saw many adolescent construction workers taking workloads like adults, although their physical immaturity often does not permit them to endure such pressures. As a result, adolescent workers often felt exhausted and unwell. They reported various types of health problems including chest pain. One of the main reasons behind the adolescent workers' health problems was malnutrition. Interviews revealed that most of them originated from extremely poor households where they could not afford to have sufficient foods since their childhood. Growing up with malnourished bodies, they do equal amount of work that adult labourers do which contributes to excessive pressure on their young bodies and minds.

Although long work hours are reported to be a common characteristic of construction work in Dhaka, the workers expressed mixed perceptions about their work hours. Some said that working extended hours enabled them to pick up skills quickly and thus they accepted long work hours positively. Similarly, a few workers reported that working long hours enabled them to earn overtime and extra money to spend in the city.

As one worker reported:

> *I work from 8.00am to 10.00pm. [Before coming here] I thought that I would get some overtime in addition to the payment for regular work hours. Thus I would be able to earn some extra cash by working overtime and spend that liberally … After working the whole day, when I finish in the evening my body becomes exhausted. Having a shower, I just go straight to bed. I do not like going out to have unnecessary chats (Worker code: W5).*

However, calculation and payment of overtime in Dhaka's construction projects is not straightforward. Despite legal rules, many recruiters do not count and pay for overtime. This is because of the traditional practices in the entire sector that consider "long hours" as "normal hours". Due to lack of labour protection and unequal power positions, many workers give up claiming overtime.

One female worker hired from a street labour market reported:

> *If the day is long [during summer], they [the hirers] tell us to continue to work after 5.00pm. It may go up to 7.00pm. The wage remains the same though. We cannot claim overtime as we have already negotiated our wage from the street market (Worker code: W14).*

Like the workers, the recruiters also reported that construction work is difficult for the workers. In addition to physical attributes, the ability to withstand harsh and unhealthy work environments is an important consideration to the recruiters. The recruiters aim to get maximum performance and gain profit out of that. Although the recruiters' aspirations for high performance from the workers are related to their own profit, they pressurise the workers in order to please the builders and contractors they subcontract for. Taking the risks of production from the contractors, the recruiters actually transmit their own pressures to the workers they employ.

As one recruiter clarified:

> *I am always under pressure to deliver high performance that will ensure profit for my contractor. If my performance is found low, the contractor will not continue with me the next day. My pressure certainly passes in turn to the workers. The workers also understand that they have to perform in a way that will ensure some profit for the contractors. They know that it is they who the contractor makes profit through. They aim to perform in a way so that none of the contractors and workers experience financial loss. I always try to perform in a way so that the contractor can make some profit through us. It is understandable to us that they have employed us only to make some profit out of us … Sometimes I pressurise the workers to perform a bit more than they were initially supposed to. They accept such pressure [and they do not complain]. This is just to ensure the contractor's profit and so that we do not lose the job the next day (Recruiter code: R3).*

The recruiter, quoted above, clarifies how the workers are pressurised in Dhaka's construction projects to ensure profit for the builders and contractors. While this profit maximisation through optimum performance of the workers is the main consideration to the recruiters, there is no official guideline to measure a construction worker's performance in Bangladesh. In the absence of any institutional mechanism, it is the individual recruiters who discretionally assess the workers' performance and thus determine their work conditions including work hours and wages. The migrant workers are coerced to accept the conditions due to their poverty.

The recruiter maintained:

> *This is hard work and not all bodies can endure the work because of dust, sun and noise … When I recruit a labourer from the street labour market, I consider if his performance deserves the amount I am offering him. He must be hard working and I must make some profit by employing him … They [the labourers] want to get the work because they need*

daily cash. It does not matter how hard the work is (Recruiter code: R3).

This statement suggests that the construction workers in Dhaka work in very stressful work conditions. The ability to work hard is the main physical strength that the recruiters look for. The workers are employed to work hard in dust, sun and noise. In spite of this, the recruiter's key task is to earn profit by employing them. Poor work conditions along with pressures for high performance make construction work highly repressive for the migrant labourers. In most cases, the recruiters have specific profit targets and they are aware of the amount of profit they would like to make by employing a group of workers. The pressures and stresses that the construction workers experience in the workplace are actually designed to implement that.

As one recruiter disclosed:

> *Our wages are determined by the contractor. He implements projects through me. I accomplish the assigned tasks by employing the masons. While doing that, I earn some profit and in order to earn profit I instruct the masons in a specific way. I pressurise them to avoid any loss. I frankly tell them, 'if you do not perform sincerely, I will not be able to earn profit. If your performance is worth 8 Taka, I will pay you 6 Taka. But if your performance is worth 5 Taka, I cannot pay you 6 Taka.' This is how the contractor [and I] earn profit through them (Recruiter code: R4).*

The recruiter, a subcontractor employing a group of workers, clarifies how he intensifies the pressures and stresses to earn profit through the workers. On top of his own wages from the contractor, he compels the workers to earn at least 25 percent profit from labour. He instructs and pressurises the workers to accomplish the assigned tasks in a speedy way so that his own profit is ensured. The profit motivations of the recruiters are thus embedded in the traditional structure of subcontracting in Dhaka's construction projects. To serve the interests and profit of the builders and contractors, the work conditions in the construction projects have predominantly been structured to intensify pressure onto the workers. The image of construction work has therefore been contributed to by the poor work conditions that make the work difficult.

4.2.3 The dangerous work conditions

Occupational accidents are very common in Dhaka's construction projects. The survey for this study revealed 70 percent of workers personally experienced accidents in their workplace. The accidents included a fall from height, electrocution, wall/brick falling, severe fracture/injury, etc. Workplace accidents often lead to the workers' deaths. 22 percent of workers reported that they personally saw someone dying in a workplace accident. Another 78 percent reported that while they personally did not see anyone dying, many of them saw someone getting seriously injured or becoming disabled. While fatalities and injuries are very common, many of these occupational hazards are related to the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). From the survey results, it was clear that 69 percent of workers did not wear any PPE while working onsite. A large proportion of them reported that this was due to the fact that their recruiters did not provide protective equipment for their use.

As one worker outlined:

> *Operating machines is risky. The way we operate machines and do our work is not similar to what you see in developed countries. They wear helmet, glass and gumboot. The main reason is the absence of such practice in our country. There might be a few projects where protective equipment is provided, however personally I have never seen such a place … Neither have we asked our recruiter nor has he advised us anything about protective equipment. We really work carelessly. Our main target is to finish the assigned task as quickly as possible and hence we do not get time to look at our own safety and health (Worker code: W3).*

The statement makes it clear that the practice of wearing PPE is absent in Dhaka's construction projects. This can be attributed to profit maximisation motives of the employers who are reluctant to invest on workers' personal safety. When in Dhaka, I was unable to find any specialised shop trading in PPE for construction projects. This indicates what an unimportant consideration the construction workers' safety is. In addition to this, there was no training centre in the country to impart construction work related training and thereby train workers in how to use PPE in construction projects. As is evident in figure 4.5, the workers in Dhaka's construction projects operate a range of electric machines such as marble tile cutters, metal cut off saws and welders without wearing any PPE.

Figure 4.5: Workers operating electric machines without wearing PPE

The workers reported that they did not receive any basic PPE such as gumboots, gloves, helmet and goggles. They worked without these even when operating risky electric machines such as marble tile cutters. They considered operating electric machines without wearing PPE extremely risky and therefore they had a constant fear of injuries.

One worker explained:

> *Here we take risks by not wearing gumboots. Sometimes we work in bare feet. My feet may step on a leaking electric wire. That's a risk. While cutting tiles, a piece of tile may hurt my eyes. That's a risk too. The saw blade may break and a piece of the blade may hurt me (Worker code: W4).*

Many other workers were highly concerned about the potential risks of injury due to working without PPEs. I noticed the workers working in a high risk conditions such as making and reinstating pavements with hot bituminous materials. As is evident from figure 4.6, the workers did not have heat-resistant gumboots. Wearing rubber thongs, they were directly exposed to extremely hot substances that could injure them anytime.

Figure 4.6: Workers making asphalt pavements with hot-lay bituminous materials

While visiting construction projects in Dhaka, I found that a few contractors provided PPE to the workers. However, the quality of the equipment was poor and due to excessive wear some were unusable. I also found that despite the recruiters giving PPE to the workers, the latter were not interested in wearing them.

As one worker told me:

> *There are laws but we do not abide by them. There is a law to wear gumboots, helmet and uniform. We do have [a few of] of these but we don't wear them … The contractor does not force us to wear them. In fact, wearing a uniform feels warm. That is not usable because we work in mud and wearing a uniform and gumboots in sticky mud is impossible. Sometimes we work in deep water and working there wearing gumboots is hard (Worker code: W7).*

In addition to discomfort, lack of training and awareness on personal safety is the main cause of workers' unwillingness to wear PPE. While the poor quality of the PPE is an important issue for the workers in a tropical country like Bangladesh, absence of compulsion from the recruiters is attributed to the workers' unwillingness. Often the recruiters discretionally determine the circumstances for wearing a PPE and they decide when to use it and when not.

One recruiter reported:

> *Sometimes we do not use safety belts considering our own convenience. The belts are four feet long but we are required to work up to 20 feet long. The belts limit our movement and thus interrupt our performance. We just try to build a strong scaffold and stay cautious. All accidents happen because of bad luck actually (Recruiter code: R4).*

Because of the time pressure for finishing contracted projects, the recruiters prefer speedy completion neglecting personal safety of the workers. As a result, they perceive PPE as an interruption to performance whereas accidents are attributed to luck. This wisdom is basically rooted in the recruiters' profit maximisation motivations that help them ignore the risks and thus evade investment in the workers' personal safety.

The workers reported that another main reason for workplace accidents was workers receiving phone calls while working. It was reported that 79 percent of workers received phone calls during work. Despite recruiter's verbal restrictions, they received phone calls to talk with their family members, friends and co-workers. An important reason for receiving phone calls, as reported by the workers, was work-related uncertainties. They reported that mobile phone calls were important to them as they were continuously looking for work or trying to switch to better projects.

Death anxiety is a common phobia among the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. The frequent workplace accidents that they personally experience lead to a fear of death which is a constant worry. This worry creates intense psychological pressure on the workers and the fear of workplace death makes the work unattractive. Therefore, the workers often feel demotivated to continue the work.

One worker reported:

> *Sometimes I feel too anxious to continue this work anymore. When I see someone dying following a fall from a high scaffold, I get scared that I may also die this way. After ten minutes [of anxiousness], I try to convince myself and return to my work. I really feel worried (Worker code: W12).*

While anxiety about their own death is common among the workers, fear about losing limbs is also an important fact that makes the construction work dangerous. Considering the long-term impacts of workplace accidents and lack of support for medical treatment, the workers frequently reported fear of severe injury and losing limbs.

One worker commented:

> *This is extremely risky work. Risk means death … Any time an accident might happen … Many people have died this way. I have seen in person. At a time 3-4 workers died in front of me … There is no guarantee of life here and anytime I can die. A heavy pipe may fall upon me and I may not be able to escape instantly. I may die or lose my limbs such as my hand or leg (Worker code: W13).*

Risks and accidents associated with the work in Dhaka's construction projects have contributed to categorising construction work as dangerous in rural society from where the migrant construction workers originate. This is because occupational accidents have long-term effects on the workers' families and communities. Lack of financial support and inadequate medical treatment often makes an injured worker a "burden" for his family. Considering this reality, local people's perspectives on social effects of workplace accidents have shaped the dignity of the workers and the image of the work.

One worker reported:

> *None of my friends in my village knows about what I have been doing in Dhaka. I tell lies to them to avoid any prestige issues in the village. Otherwise, I will feel bad and they will think that I have embraced a prestigeless life … Back in our village, many people do not like this work. People do not even want their daughter marry a construction worker. They do not like the work because of the risks (Worker code: W11).*

As this statement confirms, due to the image problem the worker thinks that revealing the truth that he has been working as a construction worker in Dhaka will create a dignity crisis for him back in his village. This is because construction work is not socially accepted as a decent job in Bangladesh, and since the work does not require any technical education or training, there is a common perception that ending up in construction work is not prestigious.

The migrant construction workers frequently attributed the risks of occupational accidents and their constant fear about accidental deaths to the image of construction work as dangerous. They regarded the risks of accidents as one of the key reasons for their indignity outside their workplace. The workers believed that they were not respected by the outsiders because their work was very hard and involved high risks of life.

As one worker explained:

> *We do not get respect from outsiders. We are inferior to other people doing better jobs. This is because we wake up early in the morning, finish after sunset, lift sacks, mix cement and sand, lift bricks, etc. … There are risks too. We work outside on high scaffolds. If anything*

happens with the scaffolds, life will stop. I have not seen such incidents yet but I have heard that a worker had died falling from the 4th floor. Or some had fallen and his head or chest was severely injured. Such incidents happened to my neighbour. Sometimes I feel very anxious thinking about potential accidents. When I am instructed to work on scaffolds, then I keep thinking how I could accomplish the task by protecting myself from an accident (Worker code: W2).

It is clear that the bamboo scaffolding is a major factor contributing to workplace accidents. In Dhaka, bamboo scaffolding is a traditional building practice that the construction workers follow to work at heights. As seen from figure 4.7, the construction workers use bamboo to make high scaffolds and ladders to accomplish jobs at heights. Standing on the high scaffolds and ladders without safety belts, they work on narrow track. Falling off the bamboo scaffolds and ladders is very common in Dhaka and many workers die in their workplace due to this.

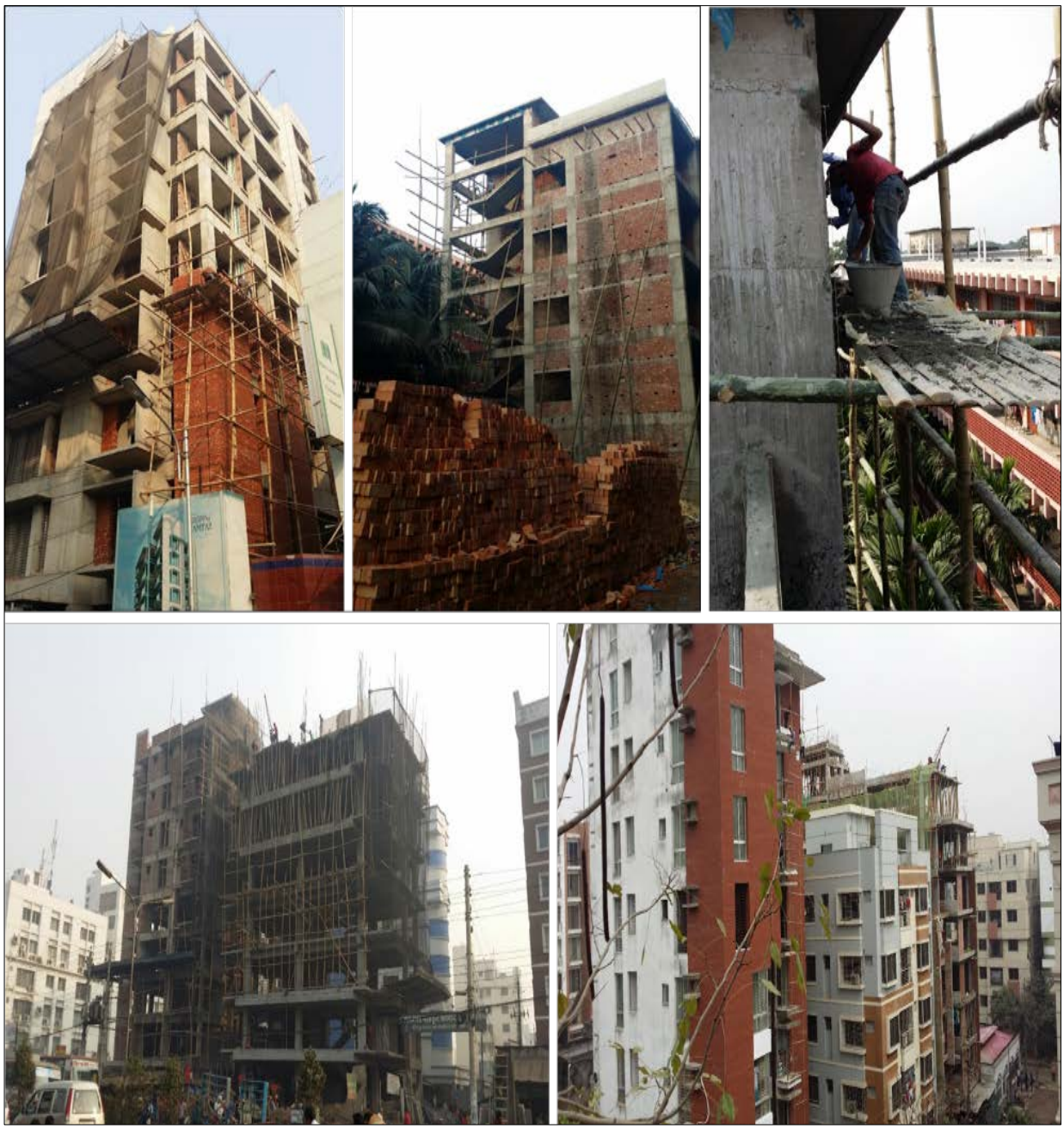

Figure 4.7: Workers working on high scaffolds and ladders made of bamboo

Slipping off the scaffolds often contributes to serious injury and death of the construction workers. Carrying heavy items along the narrow passage on the scaffolds is extremely risky. The workers therefore commonly cite scaffolds as a risky place to work. The apprentice workers are required to climb scaffolds that are comparatively lower. In spite of this, many probationary workers dislike the traditional practice of working on the scaffolds.

One worker stated:

> *When I joined this work first, I escaped after seeing the work that I was assigned to. I was instructed to work on a scaffold made 50 feet high. That was very risky. Carrying heavy metals through a narrow passage is really risky (Worker code: W6).*

Referring to the first observation, the worker quoted above identified scaffold as a risky place to work. While visiting the construction sites in Dhaka, the workers told me about accidental deaths of their colleagues due to electrocution. I noticed that most of the bamboo scaffolds and ladders were built at the edge of the sites adjacent to electric switchboards, transformers and overhead power lines, as seen in figure 4.8. The workers carry metals along their scaffolds and ladders and fatal accidents can occur when the metals come in contact with electricity.

Figure 4.8: Workers working near electric switchboard, transformer and overhead power line

In Dhaka's construction projects, electric power cables remain unorganised all over the sites. The workers work very close to the power lines. I noticed workers cooking, dining and sleeping beside electric switchboards and power cables. As is evident in figure 4.9, electric switchboards and power cables are located all over the place where the workers frequently walk. These switchboards and cables often turn into death traps because of momentary lack of awareness by the workers.

Figure 4.9: Unorganised power cables and switchboards in dining space and sleeping room

The survey findings reveal that 69 percent of migrant construction workers lived in temporary sheds and structures built on worksites. The poor living of the construction workers in the temporary sheds and structures is an important factor contributing to dangerous work conditions. The workers living onsite eat and sleep in casually built designated spaces, as seen in figure 4.10. I personally noticed that they slept on the floor where the risks from falling heavy bricks and other materials were high. This kind of living space was completely open and the workers suffered from cold during winter. Moreover, I found that cans of flammable substances such as diesel, necessary for excavating machines, were stored carelessly in the temporary sheds where the workers slept.

Figure 4.10: Poor living arrangements inside building structures and temporary sheds

All these factors add up to the nature of occupational hazards in construction work and their relationship to the overall image of the work in Bangladesh's local society. It is evident that the workplace conditions in Dhaka's construction projects are dangerous. The construction work in Dhaka is dangerous because of frequent occupational accidents, severe injury and death in workplaces and constant anxiety of workers' own death. The risks associated with construction work in Dhaka have contributed to the poor image of the work in the workers' villages affecting their social relationships and status.

4.2.4 Gender differences in work conditions

The female migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects have worse work conditions than the male workers. In addition to the overall poor work conditions, the female construction workers are vulnerable to some specific circumstances because of their gender identity. Toilets are a basic requirement of a workplace but the female construction workers interviewed for this study reported that among many issues, lack of access to separate toilets was the most critical problem they faced. This issue made the work harder for them. While visiting construction projects in Dhaka, I found that none of the projects had separate toilets for female workers.

One female worker explained:

> *There are some sites where there is no toilet facility at all. It is really difficult to work a whole day without going to the toilet. In case of an emergency, I knock on a neighbouring house's door and request them to allow me access their toilet. If the house owner is rich, they do not allow this. If there is a slum nearby the project, I go there (Worker code: W14).*

This statement shows how the female workers struggle the whole day without going to the toilet. Although there were a few construction projects where a temporary toilet was found, the workers in those projects reported that they made the toilet themselves for basic use only. I found that those toilets did not have adequate water supply and drainage and were very unhygienic.

One recruiter also outlined the sufferings related to toilets:

> *Sometimes the female workers have their meals on the footpath … When they need to go to the toilet, they will need to approach a nearby house's gateman and request him to get permission to access the toilet. If the gateman is kind, he will allow this, otherwise not. This is particularly inhumane for the female workers here. When their menstruation starts, they instantly leave work in that condition … Here they are having meals but they do not get water. They bring in their own water from home. If not, they will need to wait till prayer time to get some water [from the nearby mosque] … Really lots of sufferings here (Recruiter code: R3).*

Describing how vulnerable the female workers in Dhaka are, the recruiter showed concern about their situation. While visiting the female construction workers, they reported that the scarcity of drinkable water was acute. During lunch time, they did not get water to wash their lunch boxes or clean their hands. To get water, they often flocked around water reservoirs and ponds near their workplace where the water was predominantly polluted, as figure 4.11 shows.

Figure 4.11: Female workers having their lunch beside a water reservoir

In addition to the toilet and water problems, lack of basic safety equipment further increases the health risks of female workers. Since the recruiters do not provide any kind of safety equipment, they buy nonstandard and poor quality items to use in their workplaces. I found female workers using condoms and balloons instead of hand gloves to cover their fingertips.

One female worker reported:

> *Look, how bad my palms are. Sometimes I cannot have my meals using my hands. Cement has caused this decay and now the palms are always inflamed. I am worried about this. I am taking pain killer tablets. Everyone doing this work suffers from this problem … I use condoms to cover the tips of my fingers. They help protect my fingers from decay. The recruiters do not offer anything to cover hands (Worker code: W14).*

Another important problem that the female workers reported was indecent gestures and behaviour from their male colleagues and recruiters. Being a male-dominated work environment, the male workers are overrepresented in the construction projects in Dhaka. While very few female workers were found in the projects, they experienced various types of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature.

One female worker reported:

> *Sometimes they [the male colleagues and recruiters] propose indecent things such as sexual reckoning. There are some mean people who give bad offers while working but I reply that 'we are poor people. We feed ourselves by working only. We do not want to accept any indecent offers except work.' [This is why] people usually do not consider construction as a decent job (Worker code: W15).*

Due to the indecent behaviour of male colleagues and recruiters, the female workers reiterated that construction work was a difficult choice for them. Their own perceptions about the work reflected local cultural and social factors that do not consider the work good for women. I was told by the female workers that construction employment was not only difficult but demeaning for them. The female workers were predominantly employed in the entry level positions to assist the male superiors and they described negative perceptions of their local society in relation to the positions.

One female worker stated:

> *For female workers, this work is not good, because we work with different types of male personalities. Moreover, it is hard work that requires physical labour … This work does not have dignity. When someone learns that I work as a 'helper', they will not respect me. This is because I go and work with various types of males. [In our society] it looks odd (Worker code: W14).*

Working with male colleagues and recruiters, the female worker quoted above perceived that she was not respected because of her skill level. In addition to the frustrations with the "helper" position, the female construction workers in Dhaka perceived their work as difficult for another important reason. The female workers with children were unable to bring their children to their workplace. They relied on their family members and neighbours to look after their children when they were at work. Leaving young children at home increased the psychological pressures they felt while working.

As the worker continued:

> *The recruiters never allow me to bring my young child to workplaces. They scold … Once I took my young child [three years old] with me. But they instructed me to leave the child at home and warned that I would not be allowed to work if I brought my child with me again. Then they discontinued me. I feel very anxious leaving my child at home. She is too young and someone has to feed and sleep her. I leave my young child with her sister who is just six years old. I always feel anxious about them (Worker code: W14).*

While visiting construction projects in Dhaka, I confirmed that there was no day care centre for the children of female construction workers. I noticed that the working mothers in the construction projects were highly anxious about their children due to the rising trend of crimes such as child kidnapping in the city.

4.2.5 Lack of bargaining capacity

In addition to the dirty, difficult and dangerous work conditions, lack of bargaining capacity is prevalent in Dhaka's construction projects. A large proportion of the migrant construction workers do not have any options to seek redress in case of any dispute or discontent in their workplace. The survey findings of this study, as presented in table 4.1, reveal that the terms of employment in Dhaka's construction projects are predominantly verbal. In absence of written job contracts, the workers are unable to access legal protections in case of any disagreement with their recruiters regarding payment of wages and overtime. Due to frequent mobility, the workers do not have the

scope to form and participate in a trade union.

Payment of wage • Payment calculated at daily rate (73 percent) **BUT** ▪ Paid weekly (1 percent) ▪ Paid monthly (19 percent) ▪ Paid at discretion (53 percent) ▪ Recruiter did not follow specific schedule to pay due wages (73 percent)
Overtime • No overtime for working over eight hours a day (58 percent) **BECAUSE** ▪ Overtime NOT counted at all (46 percent) ▪ Overtime counted BUT never paid (12 percent)
Protection • Did not have any written contract (100 percent) • Could not say anything on wage or overtime (77 percent) **BECAUSE** ▪ Risk of losing the job (63 percent) • No opportunity to seek redress in case of dispute in workplace (68 percent)

Table 4.1: Survey results on payment, overtime, labour protection and living

In absence of opportunities for dispute reparation, the workers could not secure mediation when something went wrong with their recruiters. They reported that they feared losing their job if they were to complain about anything. Losing the job could lead to starvation and hardship and therefore they preferred to continue in spite of the disagreement with their recruiters.

As one female worker reported:

> *In the case of a dispute, there is no room to secure mediation here. Even if something goes seriously wrong, I do not protest because I need to continue my work for some days to support my family. Even if I get angry, I keep silent. I just have patience and continue the work (Worker code: W15).*

Although this female worker showed her patience and continued her work despite her discomfort, few male workers reported that they wished to discuss the issue of contention with their recruiters. However, their endeavours were not successful as the recruiters dominated the discussion showing anger.

One worker reported:

> *In case of any dispute, I try to discuss with him. But if he is angry with me, I do not dare to argue with him (Worker code: W9).*

The workers reported that leaving work and exiting from the construction project was the only

option they could choose in case of prolonged dissatisfaction. This allowed them to return to their village after getting payment of due wages. Thus they had to wait a long time to find other alternative recruiters and work in the city.

As one worker stated:

> *No, I can't secure redress in any case of disagreement here. If I see that the dispute has become too bad, I will ask him [the recruiter] to calculate my due wages and pay me immediately so that I can leave the work and go home. I will find a work opportunity with another recruiter and go for that (Worker code: W1).*

The bargaining capacity of the migrant construction workers was marked by the absence of participation in a trade union. While visiting Dhaka, I tried to locate a trade union for migrant construction workers. I found a few names but their activities were very limited. The workers were not even aware of their existence. Investigating further, I found that the workers' continuous mobility, as well as temporary nature of their jobs was the major constraint in forming and participating in trade unions.

As the worker quoted above continued:

> *We do not have any union here. We help ourselves. We are very mobile and there is no certain place to stick to. Today we are here but tomorrow we may need to move to some other project … We are continuously moving. That's why we cannot participate in any kind of trade union (Worker code: W1).*

Unionism was not possible for the workers because of the lack of permanency. Frequent mobility did not allow them the scope for participation in unions. However, due to lack of bargaining capacity and absence of a trade union the workers preferred to stay reticent and non-complaining in spite of disagreement. In interviews, the workers recurrently referred to the term "good worker" in association with their situation. They stressed that their recruiters always desired workers with the attributes of a "good worker". They therefore preferred to continue their work being non-complaining, even in unacceptable situations. They wanted to perform and conform to the ideal image of the good worker that their recruiters promoted.

To explore the inner dynamics of the good worker image, I asked the workers and their recruiters about exactly which personal attributes were commonly expected from the workers. They reported a few attributes such as politeness, body structure and quick performance. It was revealed that the recruiters preferred these attributes not only to accomplish assigned tasks on time but to stay hassle-free and non-disruptive when managing workers onsite.

One worker reported:

> *A 'good worker' means a worker who can deliver quality work, a great amount of work and perfect work. Even if a worker has all these attributes but he is not polite enough, he will not be considered. Above all is the prestige of the subcontractor. In spite of being a low performer, a worker with polite behaviour is always valued by the subcontractor. A*

subcontractor will not feel mentally comfortable if a worker is not polite (Worker code: W4).

The polite and well-behaved workers being the top preferences of a recruiter, the workers' interviews helped me find another dimension of politeness. They referred politeness to respectful approach and the ability to perform extraordinarily fast. Thus they believed that the capability of completing a task, with respect, within the shortest possible time is the most important attribute to prove themselves good workers.

As one worker explained:

> *A 'good worker' means he works well and his behaviour is polite. For example, I am asked to do certain jobs with some pieces of steel. The work may take a whole day. However, I should finish the jobs by 3.00pm anyway, without showing any disrespect. Thus I will be seen as a good worker. The quicker a worker can work, the better he is in the eyes of the subcontractor (Worker code: W5).*

While the quick performance with perfection was essential, performance in Dhaka's construction projects related primarily to the physical ability to work hard. The recruiters therefore considered the outlook of the labourers' body structure before recruiting them. They believed that a good worker must have some particular qualities such as physical fitness, capacity to fetch and lift heavy materials, assist the superiors and respect senior colleagues.

One worker noted:

> *If someone from my village requests me to bring him to Dhaka, I will be happy to bring him here. Seeing his body structure, I can assess if he is capable of doing the work he will be recruited for. If he fails to perform properly and wants to leave work after two days, I will allow him to leave [rather than wasting time here]. A 'good worker' means he is able to fetch and lift materials and assist his superior properly. He should have the ability to do his work perfectly. Moreover, he must respect his senior colleagues (Worker code: W11).*

Physical strength is one the important factors for masculinity of construction jobs (Fielden, Davidson, Gale, & Davey, 2000, 2001; Ness, 2012; Wolkowitz, 2006). In Dhaka, however, the recruiters frequently attribute body structure to assess the physical strength of the labourers. Although this is not the only factor in determining a labourer's prospects for getting work in construction projects, particular age and gender groups experience stricter assessment than others. The recruiters of the adolescent labourers, in particular, consider body structure as the most important factor in recruiting labourers from villages.

One recruiter stated:

> *Before selection, I just see if the aspirant labourer does have a good body structure. Then I consider if he will be suitable for the work to be assigned. Then I consider age. A labourer of 15 years will be okay for the work I offer (Recruiter code: R4).*

This recruiter clearly considered certain types of body structure and specific ages for the work he was offering in Dhaka. The process of such assessment is completely discretionary where the recruiters look at the prospective labourers' bodies and check the limbs by pressing hard, if

necessary. Like the adolescent groups, the female workers in the street labour markets had to go through a similar assessment of physical attributes. While their hirers were predominantly male, they had to accept an open-eye assessment of their physical outlook before getting work.

One female worker told me:

> *Often they do not hire short women saying that they are weak and unable to lift heavy sand bags by carrying them on their head. Many hirers say like this. Some hirers do not wish to hire mid-age labourers as helpers. They say that they are not able to lift and carry heavy cement bags (Worker code: W15).*

The discretionary practices of selecting workers on the basis of physical outlook put the female workers in indecent and uncomfortable situations. On the basis of such assessment, the hirers discretionally decide the types of work the female workers would not be fit for. The female workers reported that this practice was very common and without being part of this they would not get work. While there was no formal recruitment process for the migrant construction workers in Dhaka, they had to accept such recruitment practices without complaining.

4.3 Conclusion

The above discussions reveal that the construction work is regarded a dirty, difficult, dangerous, and low status job by the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. The poor work conditions and the image of construction work reported by the workers and their recruiters are rooted in the terms of recruitment that impose severe physical, psychological and social costs on the workers. Making the female and adolescent workers particularly vulnerable to the poor work conditions, employment in Dhaka's construction projects characterises precariousness. In spite of this, the construction projects in Dhaka represent employment for a significant proportion of rural labourers migrating to the capital city of Bangladesh. In this context, it is important to investigate the relationships that the construction work shares with rural-urban labour migration in Bangladesh. In order to do that, the key question "why do people migrate for construction work in Dhaka despite it being dirty, difficult, dangerous, and low status?" has been examined. This question led to an examination of the structural features of rural-urban labour migration for construction work. The next chapter will explore the factors that contribute to rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Dhaka.

5 THE MIGRATION-CONSTRUCTION NEXUS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the connections between the construction work and rural-urban labour migration in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on Dhaka. It explains the structural context and socio-economic dimensions of rural-urban labour migration for construction work, and explores the prevailing conditions of employment in Dhaka's construction projects that attract the labourers to move from their villages. In doing this, it analyses why the rural labourers continue to migrate to cities for construction work that is predominantly regarded as a low status job. Situated in the "easy entry, better money" theme, the chapter provides the migrant construction workers' own perspectives and reasons for this. Their accounts reveal a range of comparative advantages that they consider in choosing construction work over other options. The hardship they accept in the city is a necessary cost in their quest for a better earning.

5.2 Migration for construction work

The rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Dhaka is related to a range of factors that suggest a complex migration-construction nexus. The empirical evidence collected through the survey and in-depth interviews reveals that the rural labourers migrating to Dhaka for construction work compromise between physically demanding work and better earning. The migrant construction workers in Dhaka go through a multifaceted structure of migration involving various forms and patterns of labour mobility between rural and urban areas. Due to the nature of mobility of labour, their migration involves many spatial and temporal differences surrounding their work experiences. As the results of this study reveal, the following factors are intrinsically related to the structure of rural-urban migration for construction work in Dhaka.

5.2.1 Seasonality

The results of this study confirm that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are not permanent. Their work period in the city and the patterns of return to their village confirm that seasonal migrant labourers are very prevalent in Dhaka's construction projects. They predominantly originate from agrarian rural villages where their primary livelihood is related to farming. The survey results of this study, as presented in table 5.1, revealed that 68 percent of workers worked in the construction projects for the entire year except the peak harvest months. The rest (32 percent) worked for specific periods throughout the year including lean harvest months and the eve of festivals. In fact, short-term employment in construction was a supplementary income option for these workers. Consequently, 67 percent of workers reported that their main livelihood was farming and farming related seasonal employment in their village. Being a weather-reliant and monsoon-based livelihood, farming related work opportunities in villages were inadequate to sustain their households. Most of the workers (73 percent) reported that income in villages was insufficient to

live on and they migrated to Dhaka to supplement their income. They reported that farming was not profitable anymore due to recent increases in the wage rate of rural labourers and scarcity of labour in the peak harvest season. Therefore, they wanted to get regular employment and better earnings. However, their migration to Dhaka's construction projects was not permanent, rather they had close contact with their household members in their village. Altogether 83 percent of workers reported that they regularly visited their village to look after their families, support household work and work themselves during the peak harvest season.

Work period in city • Whole year except the harvest months (68 percent) • Specific days/months only (32 percent)
Primary livelihood in village • Farming-based livelihood sources in village (67 percent): ▪ Seasonal employment in farming (7 percent) ▪ Farming in own land (21 percent) ▪ Farming in leased land (20 percent) ▪ Agricultural labour (19 percent) • Other livelihood sources in village (33 percent): ▪ No fixed source (17 percent) ▪ Non-agricultural labour (6 percent) ▪ Small trade activities (9 percent) ▪ Others (1 percent) • Income in village was insufficient to live on (73 percent)
Visiting village • Visiting village on regular basis (83 percent workers): ▪ To look after the family (31 percent) ▪ To support household work (7 percent) ▪ To work in the peak harvest season (35 percent) ▪ Occasional visit on the eve of festivals (10 percent)

Table 5.1: Survey results on work period in city, primary livelihood and visits to village

In Bangladesh, many rural labourers migrate from their villages to large cities in search of work during the lean season of farming in villages (Afsar, 2000). This pattern of migration suggests that people come long distances and they work in cities for a short period. Bangladesh's weather-reliant farming activities do not offer year-round employment for the rural labourers and hence a large proportion of the rural labourers stay unemployed during the lean season. Being an agrarian country, Bangladesh's farming activities are mainly crop-based. Rice is the main crop of the country. Production of rice involves a wide range of activities including sowing, seedling, planting, irrigating, fertilising, reaping, harvesting and storing. The country's rice-based farming activities

mainly take place during December to May. This period is considered the most suitable season for producing the typical types of *Aman* and *Boro* rice (Kabir, 2015). The monsoon period is from June and until October and during this period farming activities are very limited due to heavy rainfall and inundation. Therefore, many rural labourers migrate to Dhaka and other cities in search of work, leaving their families in village. Since the rural labourers are unskilled for manufacturing and service work in cities, they get menial work that does not require skills. Construction work, rickshaw pulling, street vending and working as a day labourer are the most common options they choose in cities. However, seasonal migration of rural labourers to Dhaka involves seasonality not only in rural agriculture but also in urban employment opportunities. There are certain types of informal urban jobs where the demand for labour is acute during specific periods of the year. For example, on the eve of religious festivals many rural labourers migrate to Dhaka to supplement their income by doing some short-time jobs such as pulling rickshaws and vending on streets for a couple of weeks. These seasonal employment opportunities in cities provide migrant labourers with a quick income during the peak period of urban economic activities.

Seasonal migration of construction workers in Dhaka reveals a circulatory pattern. While seasonal migration takes place during a particular part of the year, circular migration is commonly understood as repeated seasonal migration (Hugo, 2013). Moreover, the seasonal migration takes place during a specific period of the year but circular migration reveals circularity of movement between rural and urban areas. This kind of migration allows the migrant labourers to simultaneously be engaged with both the village and the city. Circular migrant labourers return to their village from time to time and repeatedly move to the city (Deshingkar & Farrington, 2009). Thus they remain connected to both places and both occupations. A significant proportion of the construction workers in Dhaka are therefore circular migrant workers who visit their village from time to time. Seasonality is intrinsically linked with this form of migration and many workers stay in their village during the peak farming season. They do not necessarily produce crops themselves but rather work as agricultural labourers when the demand for labourers is high.

Crop production does not require the same amount of labour in each stage of production. For example, in order to plant the rice seedlings farmers require sufficient labour. Due to high demand for labour, wage rates increase in rural areas during the period of rice plantation. Many labourers therefore return from city to village to work on rice plantations at this time for quick income. After the rice is planted, the demand for labour in villages starts decreasing and then the labourers start returning to the city. Again farmers need sufficient labour once the rice is mature enough for harvesting. Harvesting is the most critical stage and farmers employ the maximum number of labourers to maximise the turnover of crops. The migrant labourers in the cities again start returning to their villages. This is how the rural labourers repeatedly migrate and return to city, responding to the demand of labour in villages.

In-depth interviews with the migrant construction workers in Dhaka confirmed that seasonality of farming activities was one of the main factors that facilitated their migration. While the seasonal migrant workers in the construction projects work for short periods, during the lean farming season, their short-term employment and the money earned through this enables them to adjust their household debts. Thus their migration helps their families adapt to farming-based income uncertainties and financial hardships during specific times of year.

One adolescent worker confirmed this:

> *We come to work in Dhaka seasonally. Working for a certain period of time, we return to our village. Mainly we do agricultural work in our village. We spend most of the time of the year in the village doing farming. Here we come to work for a few months only. Over 12 months of a year, I work four months in Dhaka and the remaining eight months in the village … There was no work in our village when I came here. At that time flooding started and all rice plants and farmlands were inundated due to heavy rains. In the rainy reason, there is no [agricultural] work in village. Then some of us come to Dhaka and do this work … During this lean season, we need to adjust our household loans and advances. Coming to Dhaka, we can earn some cash (Worker code: W13).*

This worker clearly remains connected to his primary occupation for most of the time in a year. Working in Dhaka for a specific period, he earns money that goes to repay the loans and advances taken in the lean farming season. Thus he returns to his village back and forth. Due to seasonality of farming in village, the work period of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka is often brief but recurring.

One recruiter confirmed this:

> *Most of the workers were involved in farming related work before coming here … I have some workers who work here seasonally only. They work here two months at a stretch and return to their village after that. Again after a few months when they do not have work in their village, they come back and join the project (Recruiter code: R1).*

The recruiter confirmed that the workers he employs are predominantly involved in farming related jobs in their villages. When the workers are unemployed at home, they migrate to Dhaka for construction work. While seasonality of farming significantly affects household income, it is one of the main factors to induce adolescent migration to Dhaka. Many adolescent labourers migrate to earn and support their families; as a result, they start their work life with physically demanding work in the city to cope with seasonal financial hardships in their rural households.

One adolescent worker narrated this reality:

> *I came here because of financial hardship in my family … My father does farming in the village but he does not have enough work in the lean season. Now I have financial responsibilities to my family. I work here and send money back to my family (Worker code: W10).*

Although these quotes confirm that rural labourers supplement their income by migrating to Dhaka, there is some evidence suggesting that the migrant construction workers supplement their income

by keeping their connections to their villages. In this context, seasonal migration is intrinsically related to flexibility of employment in Dhaka's construction projects. The interviews revealed that the workers preferred flexibility in employment in order to keep themselves attached to their supplementary income activities in village. These activities allowed them to earn some quick cash within a short period and at the same time they could stay with family and look after their personal assets. The close connections that the migrant workers maintained with their family networks allowed them to follow up the trend of these quick cash earning opportunities. Thus they were able to catch the best time for seasonal businesses in village.

As one worker said:

> *Back in my village, fishery trading is a seasonal business. I trade fish during the period when catching Jatka [baby Hilsha] is restricted by the government. I have a boat in my village. I go to visit the village during that season and catch fish [to trade]. My younger brothers also join me. Catching Jatka the last season, I earned over 200,000 Taka. That is a very short season of 15 to 20 days during Asshin [early September]. When that season comes, I just leave work without giving any notice to my subcontractor. He understands that we are poor people and we should do something to supplement our income. He does not pay me for those days as I remain absent (Worker code: W7).*

However, flexibility related to seasonal migration of workers creates pressures on the recruiters in Dhaka's construction projects. The recruiters reported that retaining workers during the peak harvest season in villages was difficult for them. Due to uncertainties related to labour turnout, they had to encounter problems like delayed completion and intense time pressures.

One recruiter explained:

> *When I will start the next project, it may not be possible to join that project by retaining the same group of workers I have now. Some from this group may go back to their village for farming [in the peak harvest season]. I will need to bring another group then. Every month the group changes … They switch very frequently (Recruiter code: R5).*

This comment points to the seasonality of farming activities as being a significant factor contributing to migration of the workers in Dhaka's construction projects. It confirms that the workers engage in supplementary income opportunities back in their village by taking advantage of flexible employment arrangements. Labour turnout in Dhaka's construction projects is therefore significantly related to the circulatory pattern of seasonal migration of the workers.

5.2.2 Availability and continuity of work

In addition to seasonality of farming, one of the main reasons why labourers migrate from villages to Dhaka's construction projects is the availability and continuity of construction work. Migrant construction workers reported that their current employment was better than the previous one in terms of availability and continuity. The workers did not have constant employment in villages and since building construction activities are predominantly urban, construction projects are less available in villages than Dhaka. As a result, construction-related work opportunities in rural areas

are scarce and this scarcity of long-term employment in rural areas prompts migration of labour from villages to the capital city.

As one worker explained:

> *Dhaka is better than my village in terms of work opportunities. In our village, out of ten days we can work for five days only. The other five days we do not get work. Here I can work all ten days. I do not stay jobless here. Unlike Dhaka, buildings are not being constructed at large scale in villages. That's why we do not get this work continuously in the village. Availability of work is the best thing here (Worker code: W2).*

Construction work in rural areas is not available for long-term employment due to lack of rural development which is considered to be one of the main reasons for unemployment and inconsistent employment in villages. Bangladesh's rural development policies reveal that the government has always focussed on core farming activities in villages (GoB, 2011a, 2015b). In order to tackle food crises, crop-based farming activities have been made top priority. While various types of strategies have been promoted to diversify the farming activities, seasonal rice farming has still been the most common option for the peasants. Because of this, a large section of the rural people live on rice farming that does not require year-around labour.

One recruiter stated this:

> *In our locality, there is no factory. All we have there is rice farming only. When they [the rural labourers] do not have work during the lean season, they do not have any alternative other than migrating to Dhaka for work (Recruiter code: R5).*

The above quote of the recruiter confirms that the migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects do not have alternative employment options in their village, other than rice farming. In order to avoid unemployment, particularly during the lean harvest season, migration to Dhaka is the only option they have to secure long-term employment.

5.2.3 Urban mobility

In addition to the problems related to seasonality and unavailability of year-round employment in rural areas, the opportunities for urban mobility are an important factor to attract labour migration. I categorised urban mobility in Dhaka into two types: adaptive mobility and variation mobility as reported by the migrant construction workers. Adaptive mobility is the migrant workers' opportunity to move out of their workplace to adapt to changes in work opportunities. Due to flexible work arrangements, migrant construction workers in Dhaka can easily move out of their original workplace in case of insufficient work opportunities. Thus they can adapt to employment uncertainties in the city. This kind of flexibility is considered to be an advantage for the migrant workers allowing them opportunities to switch to another construction project or assignment when the current one is finished or not available.

One recruiter confirmed:

> *If there is no work for a day here, they [the workers] can go to the street labour markets. Someone will be there to hire them for somewhere (Recruiter code: R3).*

This recruiter confirms that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are rarely unemployed even in case of unavailability of work in their projects. Due to flexible employment arrangements, they are free to arrange work from the street labour markets, if they have no work in their projects. In addition to this opportunity for adaptive mobility, the migrant construction workers are free to choose from a wide range of work options, if they do not like their current job. This opportunity for variation mobility is the workers' flexibility to choose from a range of work options in Dhaka. The migrant construction workers reported that Dhaka was better than their village in terms of opportunities to choose a suitable work category. While they had only one type of work in their village, i.e., farming, they perceived that in the city they had a range of opportunities to switch to another type of work if the current one did not suit them. Thus they reported the opportunities for intra-sectoral changes through which they can shift to different types of work within the sector they work. Variation in work categories is therefore a significant factor for migration of the labourers in Dhaka's construction projects.

One worker stated:

> *Working in Dhaka, I am very pleased. One thing unavailable in my village is available here. That is work. In villages, there is only one type of work and that is farming. That does not change. I have to work as an agricultural labourer and work hard in farmlands. Here I can see different types of work. If I do not like this work, I can do another type of work (Worker code: W7).*

Extensive work opportunities in Dhaka enable the migrant workers not only to adapt to work uncertainties and but choose work from a wide variety. Thus the migrant construction workers can move from one project to another, also, they can change their work and choose a different one. They perceive these flexible opportunities in a way that presents Dhaka as a better earning option than their village.

5.2.4 Better incomes

Aspiration for better income is another important factor leading to rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Dhaka. Construction work in Dhaka offers better income to the migrant labourers than their original occupations. According to the survey results, 81 percent of workers reported that they were able to earn and save better by working in Dhaka's construction projects. I found five significant factors that led to better savings and income: better wage rates in the city, free accommodation, confined urban life, delayed payment, and spouse contribution.

5.2.4.1 Better wage rates

The interviews with the migrant construction workers in Dhaka revealed that seasonal and inconsistent employment in villages did not provide adequate income to the rural labourers. In addition, the wage rate in villages was usually lower than that in cities. Although the wage rate for

agricultural labourers has recently increased in villages due to the scarcity of labourers in the peak harvest season, the wage rate for construction work in villages is still lower than cities. In some cases, the wage rate in cities is twice that of the village. The workers interviewed reported that they migrated to Dhaka not only with hopes of obtaining consistent employment, but of earning better by working long-term.

One worker stated:

> *Here the daily wage rate is higher than village. I would have got 140 to 150 Taka daily in the village. Here I am getting 280 Taka daily (Worker code: W2).*

While the better wage rate in Dhaka is an important motivating factor for rural-urban labour migration in the construction projects, the prospects of wage increments are also important motivations. According to migrant construction workers, the rate of wage increment in their villages was too slow compared with Dhaka, hence they reported better earnings in Dhaka due to rapid increases in wages.

As one worker explained:

> *When I came to Dhaka, the highest rate of daily wage of a day labourer in our village was 200 Taka, whereas the first monthly salary I got here in Dhaka was 8,000 Taka. My salary has gradually increased and now it is 18,000 Taka. In my village, there is no option to move upward. My daily wage in the village may increase from 200 Taka to 250 Taka. That is not enough. Here I have learned the work and by doing this work my earning in one month equals to whatever I would have earned in three months in my village (Worker code: W7).*

As the above quote indicates, wage rate increments in Dhaka are closely related to skill acquisition capacity of the migrant workers. There is no fixed time or rate. In the absence of official assessment procedures, it is the recruiters who assess the workers' skill acquisition and thus determine the increment rate of their wages.

One recruiter confirmed this:

> *If a worker in the northern districts works in his village, he will earn daily 200 Taka maximum. But if he comes to Dhaka and joins this project at 'helper' position, he will earn 350 to 400 Taka daily. After picking up skills within a few months, he will become a mason and earn 400 to 500 Taka daily. Thus he will see gradual increase in his income (Recruiter code: R2).*

The recruiter clarified the wage gaps between the rural areas and Dhaka and outlined the prospects of rapid wage increments. His quote confirms that in Dhaka's construction projects the wage rates are better and the rate of wage increments are faster than in the villages. Together these contribute to better wages and overall better incomes for the migrant workers doing construction work in Dhaka.

5.2.4.2 Free accommodation

Another important factor that led to better incomes for the migrant construction workers in Dhaka

was free onsite accommodation. While visiting the living arrangements of the migrant construction workers, I noticed that most of them except those hired from street labour markets lived onsite in the structures and temporary sheds built at the early phase of construction projects. Thus they lived in the building that was already under construction or in a shed adjacent to the building. This kind of living arrangement does not require any costs. As a result, they live free and their living and workplace are the same. The living conditions in this type of arrangement have been discussed in chapter four. Here I want to focus my analysis on how this kind of free living arrangement is related to the migrant workers' better savings and income. Many workers interviewed for this study reported that they considered free onsite accommodation as a built-in incentive tied to Dhaka's construction projects allowing them to save their money in the city.

As one worker explained:

> *Free accommodation is the best advantage that this work offers. If I want to work in a garments manufacturing factory, I will need to rent accommodation and pay rent. For the first month, the salary might be 6,000 Taka. After paying rent and buying meals, I may be able to save only 3,000 Taka. On the contrary, here I will save 6,000 Taka after deducting all expenses. Thus I will be able to send 6,000 Taka to my family each month (Worker code: W11).*

This quote suggests that the migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects are well aware of other sectors and monthly income there. Compared with the RMG manufacturing, another competing sector employing hundreds of thousands of migrant labourers from villages, they reported that the saving rate in Dhaka's construction projects was higher than other sectors due to the free onsite accommodation that enabled them to save more.

5.2.4.3 Confined urban life

The migrant construction workers interviewed for this study reported that their social life style in Dhaka was different from what they had in their village. In fact, I found that their life was mostly confined to the project boundary. Due to overwork and restrictions from their recruiters, they were frequently not allowed to go outside the boundary. Their meals were cooked onsite and in some cases they had the chance to go out only for shopping necessary groceries. Otherwise, they were not allowed to go out for a walk or mingle with outsiders outside the project boundary. This was because the recruiters wanted them to stay away from potential chaos in the city. However, this kind of confined social life also prevented unnecessary spending in the city. Living a life without city friends meant the migrant workers were able to save their money.

One worker explained:

> *While I was in my village, I had friends and we used to get together every evening. I used to spend money for that … Here in Dhaka, I do not have any friends to mingle with … Who should I spend the money with? I look after myself only. I do not spend a single penny outside … I do not buy any special food for myself too. The money I spend is only on three daily meals and a few biscuits when I get hungry after mixing sand and cement at around 12.00pm. That's why whatever I earn here I can save all of that (Worker code: W1).*

Compared with rural life, the migrant construction workers in Dhaka do not have many opportunities to socialise. Irrespective of the impact of a confined life on their psychological well-being, in most cases the workers reported the advantages of having such life in the city. In particular, the young migrant workers reiterated that because of the restricted social life in Dhaka, they were able to save money out of their income. They indicated that they perceived this reality as beneficial for them.

One worker explained the benefits of having a restricted life in Dhaka:

> *Back in my village, I had work. But I had too many friends there and I had to get together with them. That's why I came to Dhaka. I have none in Dhaka. No family and no relatives here. The only thing I have here is work. Work and work only. I can seriously focus on work here keeping myself away from other things … I could have done this work in my village. The only difference would have been the savings. I would not have been able to save money working in the village as I had friends there. All friends are not the same. They would have called every now and then and asked me to go with them. If I had not gone with them, they would have misunderstood me. Without spending money, friendship is hard to maintain. I understood that I would not be able to save money by working there and therefore I came to Dhaka (Worker code: W5).*

It is clear from this quote that the limited scope for spending money is significantly related to the confined social life in Dhaka. The money spent for socialisation and recreation is often perceived as an unnecessary expense and is less relevant in the city than the village. It suggests that the migrant construction workers have fewer social ties in the city than the village. Being away from social relationships helps them save money from their income.

5.2.4.4 Delayed and irregular payment

The migrant workers interviewed reported that the practices of delayed payment helped them save money. In Dhaka's construction projects, migrant workers do not get the full amount of their daily wage paid every day although their wage is calculated at a daily rate. As shown in the figure 5.1, large portions of the wages are retained by the recruiters. They pay the due amount altogether after the month ends. This practice is locally called *Khoraki*, meaning survival money. Every evening a portion of the daily wage, around one-third, is paid to the workers. In most cases, it is 100 Taka. However, this money is usually not paid as cash in hand. Rather the recruiters spend most of this amount primarily for purchasing daily meals for the workers and keep note of the amount as cash reimbursement to the workers. The small amount of money left after buying daily meals goes to the workers for meeting their daily pocket money expenses. While visiting the projects, I found that the actual cash amount that went to the workers as daily expenses was 20 to 50 Taka. Thus the workers' wages were actually retained by their recruiters and due wages were paid altogether at the end of the month. At the time of paying the cumulative amount of due wages, the recruiters adjusted the money already reimbursed daily as *Khoraki.* They also adjusted the money that the workers received as cash advances before migrating, advance money taken by the workers after migration, and the money the recruiters spent for purchasing the workers' medicines

in case of their sickness.

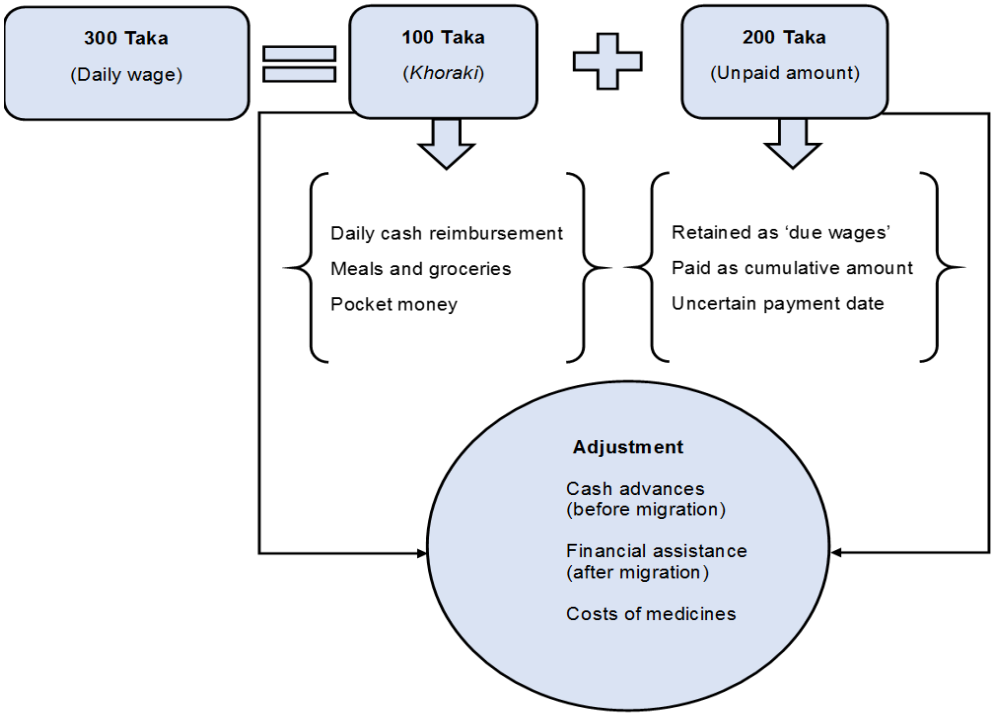

Figure 5.1: Wage payment practices in Dhaka's construction projects

However, the so-called monthly payment of due wages did not follow any specific day or schedule. Sometimes it was the 10th day of the next month, depending on the transactions between the contractor and the recruiters. In this context, the payment of wages was not only delayed but also irregular. In spite of this, the migrant construction workers considered this practice of delayed and irregular payment beneficial for them to save better.

One worker stated:

> *We each get 100 Taka daily as Khoraki. The whole money paid as Khoraki is not given into my hands. From that money, the foreman shops for groceries from the market and divides the expenses among us. After doing that, he distributes the rest of the money that has remained unspent. Thus every day I get 40 Taka as pocket money. To me, Khoraki and paying our due wages together at the end of month is good for us, because we cannot help to save the money. The money will run out quickly, if the full amount is paid daily (Worker code: W2).*

This comment suggests a few dimensions related to the payment of *Khoraki* and associated savings. Although the accommodation was free and the workers had substantially confined life in Dhaka, they reported that they had a tendency to spend money extravagantly in the city. Spending on recharging their mobile phone account and purchasing cigarettes and tobacco was the most common spending that the workers reported. The recruiters added that a key concern in relation to the workers' extravagant spending was due on gambling and drugs that they often fell prey to. In many cases, the workers experienced such unwanted situations through their brief interactions with outsiders.

However, my background conversation with other workers on a similar topic revealed that the foreman took the responsibility to shop for groceries for the workers' daily meals because (allegedly) it gave him the opportunity to steal money. The workers reported that they realised this, however they did not have enough courage to follow up the matter with the foreman. While it may appear that the foreman has additional responsibilities for the workers he recruits, in many ways all he does is to serve his own interests. For instance, it is the foreman's choice that determines what the workers should eat in their meals. Selecting and purchasing specific types and amounts of foods for the workers, he actually wants to keep the workers' healthy for the purpose of maximum labour productivity. Moreover, he takes on the specific role of shopping for groceries because he wants to avoid any interruption in terms of supplying daily meals to the workers. Thus by ensuring a regular supply of meals, he wants to keep the labour force fit and disciplined at the worksite.

I wanted to delve further into this by asking a few foremen in different construction projects about this. My conversations with them suggest that the reason why foremen take responsibility for purchasing meals for the workers is to ensure that no one skips meals at the worksite. They reported that if the full amount of *Khoraki* was given to the workers, they would skip meals in order to save money. Thus they might become sick which could in turn affect the labour turnout risking timely completion of a project.

Another important dimension that I found in relation to this issue was the foreman's personal image of the workers he recruits and supervises. He wants to help the workers refrain from extravagance while purchasing meals. Taking the responsibility of purchasing meals himself, he exercises his discretion to determine the amount of money to be spent on meals and ensures that the workers do not spend too much. Thus he helps the workers save money by spending rational portions of their income in Dhaka. While the workers see the process themselves, they appreciate their recruiter's insightful management of money to help them save better, however; this strategy also helps maintain the foreman's personal image as acceptable to the workers. If too much money is spent on food the migrant workers might leave him, complaining that they could not save money by working with him. This might demotivate the aspirant migrant labourers in the villages from where he would recruit labourers.

However, the practice of giving *Khoraki* is mainly a part of the labour retention strategy that the individual recruiters exercise in Dhaka's construction projects. From the interviews with the workers, I realised that their recruiters wanted to retain them for a long time and hence they were paid late. This practice created a situation where the migrant workers did not want to leave the project until their due wages were fully paid. *Khoraki* is therefore one kind of "wage bondage" that keeps the workers tied to their recruiters for due wages. Considering the practical effects of such practice, the workers however regarded this as beneficial for them.

As one worker argued:

> *I think the reason why they [the recruiters] do not pay us the full amount of our daily wage is after getting payment all the workers might leave the project together. They pay us in fractions so that we can send money to our families and save some money with them [through retention of due wages with the recruiters]. I think this is beneficial for me although I do not get my full daily wage paid daily (Worker code: W10).*

Although the above quote indicates labour retention through delayed payment of daily wages, few workers opposed this argument. They maintained that the practice was to assist them to save money in the city only and no other intention was associated with this. Supporting their own position in favour of partial payment or *Khoraki*, they argued that this practice was to benefit not only the labourers working in Dhaka but also their families in village.

As one worker argued:

> *I do not think that Khoraki is a strategy for retaining workers. There are workers who themselves do not want to take payment of the full amount every day. They think that if the full amount is paid every day, they might spend all the money [in the city]. They prefer retaining a portion of their daily wage with the foreman so that they can save the money and send that to their family at the end of the month. Taking a big amount of saved money, workers can make best use of that. Sometimes he [the foreman] tells us, 'it is not a good idea to take the whole amount lest you spend the whole money here. If you take the full amount of money and spend all of that money extravagantly here, you will not be able to organise money in case of urgent need of money for your family. No one can predict emergency. I may get a serious accident too causing my absence. If you need to go to your village instantly, I may not have money ready to give you at that time. This is not our own village and we do not have relatives here to approach for borrowing money. This is Dhaka and here one cannot favour the other. For this reason, if I retain your wage I will certainly pay that later. If you do not do this, in spite earnest request, I will not be able to organise money for you in case of your urgent need.' That's why it is we who allow him to retain a portion of our daily wage (Worker code: W1).*

This long quote suggests mutual agreement between the workers and their recruiters on retention of wages. The reciprocity of this agreement suggests that the workers want to save their money better and the recruiters want to guarantee that by strategising the payment procedure. Whatever the rationale is, it is evident that delayed payment is an important factor leading to the workers' improved savings in Dhaka compared to their village. Referring to past experiences in their village, some workers reported that the full amount of their daily wage was paid daily in villages which did not help them save money until they migrated to Dhaka. Both workers and their recruiters therefore perceived delayed payment in Dhaka as a helpful way to save money.

As one worker outlined:

> *In the village, I can earn 300 Taka daily but I have to spend all that money for meals and other stuff. It is very hard to save money there. Whatever I earn daily all gets spent daily. All the money I get every day in the village gets spent in full. Here I get my wages at the end of month and that is good for saving (Worker code: W12).*

It appears that in the village it is hard to save because of lack of retention options. The recruiters also confirmed this point, arguing that delayed payment helps the workers save money in Dhaka.

They reported that payment of due wages after the end of the month was beneficial for the workers to enable them to save a big amount of money for their families in village.

One recruiter confirmed:

> *Everything in village is on a daily basis. Daily income finishes daily just by buying daily meals there. Here a worker receives his salary for the 30 days of a month together [usually] on the 10th day of the next month … Together they can save a big amount of money and then send it to their family (Recruiter code: R2).*

Saving money to send to the family members in the village was a key concern of the migrant workers. In addition, investment of savings was an important consideration. The workers therefore believed that delayed payment of wages made a greater amount of money at the end of month. Even if the due wages were paid after a few months, which was quite common, they regarded that as beneficial in terms of saving money. They argued that this practice enabled them to utilise their savings effectively back in their village. This appreciated advantage was not available in their village.

One worker reported:

> *Getting a few months' due wages together is good to have a big amount of money for investing somewhere. This is not possible in the village … Daily income runs out daily there … If I take the savings to my village, I will certainly be able to do something by investing. This will help me to prosper … In Dhaka, money is not readily available as our salary is retained by the employer. If the money is not with me, I will not be able to spend unnecessarily and my inability to spend lavishly means greater savings. The moment I receive my due wages, I will send that straight to my village keeping a small amount for me. With that little amount of pocket money, I can restrict myself by keeping away from unnecessary spending in the city (Worker code: W7).*

It is evident that retention of wages contributes to greater savings by preventing the workers from unnecessary spending in the city. It also helps them invest their savings in their villages. Previous studies, such as Breman (1996), Mosse et al. (2005) and Picherit (2012) on migrant construction workers in Indian cities, have argued that delayed payment created wage stress for the migrant workers. The findings of the study presented here are contrary to this. Interviews with the migrant workers and their recruiters in Dhaka's construction projects revealed that partial and delayed payment is appreciated among the migrant workers and this practice attracts the labourers from villages. While the practice of delayed and irregular payment represents comparative advantages between work in city and village, the construction work in Dhaka is reported to be an attractive work opportunity to earn better by saving money through delayed payment and retention of wages.

5.2.4.5 Spouse contribution

The gender segmentation of migrant labour in Dhaka's construction projects enables the female workers to contribute to their family income. The interviews with the female workers and their recruiters revealed that this was an important pull factor for the female labourers' migration to Dhaka. By migrating and working in Dhaka's construction projects, they not only got an opportunity

to work but to support their family financially. The female construction workers reported that they did not have similar opportunities back in their village.

As one female worker confirmed:

> *In my village, we had a hard time. All work available in the village was for male labourers only … But that was not available continuously. There was no work for female labourers … I was just a housewife and looked after the household matters like taking care of the cattle (Worker code: W14).*

This quote provides evidence that although male labourers in villages get more work opportunities than the female labourers, work in the village is not sufficient and regular enough to live on. Due to gender segmentation of work in rural areas, women living in Bangladesh's villages do not have work opportunities. However, migration to Dhaka's construction projects offers them opportunities for earning and thus they can eat better in Dhaka than in their village. Joint income is therefore an important consideration for the female construction workers.

As the female worker further explained:

> *In the village, my husband was the only earning member in our family. We did not have our own farmlands. He worked as an agricultural labourer on other people's lands. It was very hard to survive there and I could not even afford basic meals … Every day I had to skip one meal as it was very difficult for only one earning person to fill so many people's needs in our family … Now I can at least feed myself three times a day in Dhaka … Both my husband and I work here and whatever amount we earn together, we can at least buy our meals for that (Worker code: W14).*

It is evident that the female workers in Dhaka's construction projects originate from poor households in villages. Severe poverty is the main factor for their migration to Dhaka. Low income and inability to purchase basic daily meals forces them to migrate. Once they have migrated the most common work they undertake is construction. My interviews with them revealed that their migration and work in construction enabled them to live marginally in the city. Despite that, they considered marginal city living as a major improvement in their living compared with their extremely poor life in their village.

Unlike the construction sites-based male workers, the female construction workers usually lived in slums. They did not live on the construction sites. They were usually hired from the street labour markets and thus every day they returned to their slums after work. While interviewing the female construction workers, some offered me a quick look at their accommodation and daily living arrangements in order to better realise their marginal living standard. I found that they were living in congested slums where the residents had to struggle to get their turn in the kitchen to cook meals. The number of toilets was also insufficient. I found that people were living there in a very unhygienic environment. I saw left over and rotten food particles here and there. Strong and unpleasant smells were everywhere. The livings rooms, kitchen and toilets did not have sufficient light. The supply of water was also insufficient in the overcrowded place. In spite of all these, the

female workers reported that Dhaka was better than their village to them. This was primarily due to their perceived capacity to purchase basic foods in the city. Investigating further, I found that although the female workers were satisfied with their ability to purchase foods in the city the quality of foods they purchased was poor.

One female worker stated:

> *Whatever I earn here, I do not have better option than this life. People buy standard quality long grain rice but I buy the cheapest broken rice. [Look at my rice pot] every day I need two kilograms of rice for my seven family members. Before going to work, I cook a whole pot of rice and the children eat that throughout the whole day. Being poor, I am unable to afford any other things except this rice. Still I think we can at least survive this way … Working in Dhaka is better than borrowing in the village … I did not want savings. I just wanted to survive (Worker code: W15).*

It is clear from this worker's comments that migration of female labourers for construction work in Dhaka enabled them to live marginally in the city but this was acceptable to them. The main reason that the female construction workers were satisfied with their marginal life in the city was due to their capacity to buy rice, the main local food. Working in Dhaka's construction projects, they gained the capacity to buy cheap broken rice, the poorest quality of rice, which still appeared to satisfy them. Thus they considered that construction work in Dhaka was good for them and they were living better at least in terms of affording three basic meals a day for their families. Construction work in Dhaka enabled them to support their family with their income contribution, thus they were able to live better in Dhaka, compared than their village.

5.2.5 Cash advance

Availability of cash advance is another important factor that attracts the rural labourers to migrate and work in Dhaka's construction projects. The survey results show that 49 percent of workers took cash advances from their potential recruiter before leaving village. They took the cash to meet travel expenses, clear their debts, and meet family expenses before migrating to Dhaka. They argued that the opportunity to get cash advances before migration was an attractive feature of construction work in Dhaka.

As one worker reported:

> *I did not spend my own money to meet travel costs. I took advance money from the subcontractor and that has already been adjusted from my wages. I do not have any problem with that. Rather I am grateful for the generous support. Without advance money, it would have been impossible for me to come to Dhaka and find work (Worker code: W8).*

This comment invalidates a few previous studies such as Breman (1996) and Pattenden (2012) that found that migrant workers' debt bondage was associated with cash advances in India. The Indian practices of offering cash advances involve punitive interest rates. In Dhaka's construction projects, I did not find such evidence in spite of rigorous exploration with the recruiters and the workers. Migrant construction workers in Dhaka considered advance money from their potential

recruiters as a generous support enabling them to meet travel costs and settle in Dhaka. Due to local contexts of employment relationships, the migrant workers and their recruiters were known to each other and their social relationship did not create a debt bondage situation in their workplace. Moreover, flexible recruitment practices and employment arrangements allow the workers to leave their work anytime without any compulsion. In the context of reciprocal social connections between the workers and their recruiters, the predominant concepts of bonded labour or similar cannot be related to Dhaka's construction projects. In fact, the demand for labour is high in Dhaka and the recruiters always want to ensure regular labour availability. In order to do that, they offer a wide range of assistance to the workers. Recruiters I interviewed reported that they also made advance payment to the workers in case of emergency.

As one recruiter reported:

> *Among many other work options in Dhaka, people choose construction because here they get cash and they can earn better. If anyone needs urgent cash on the 15th day of a current month, the manager will pay his dues. Moreover, if I see that a worker is performing well, I am happy to give him 10,000 Taka as advance money in case he needs that for his family. But he has to continue the work and pay back all that money later (Recruiter code: R1).*

The money that the recruiter mentions as advance money in the above quote was actually payment of due wages. It was evident from the existing practices related to delayed payment in construction projects that any kind of payment received by the workers before the payment date was considered as advance money. For instance, as the recruiter states if a worker asks for urgent cash on the 15th day of an ongoing month, he will actually ask for his due wages that are expected to be paid in the next month. This is a terminological fallacy that the workers and recruiters use in Dhaka. It originates from traditional payment practices in construction projects while similar practices of advance payment, before the stipulated payment date, are not available in other sectors in Dhaka such as RMG manufacturing. While interviewing the migrant construction workers and their recruiters, I noticed this practice of early payment of due wages was termed as advance money. My background conversations with the recruiters suggested that this kind of terminological fallacy was used by the recruiters to remind the workers about the money already reimbursed to them. Thus the recruiters were able to avoid any potential confusions and disagreement regarding the amount of due wages during the payment of wage. However, taking payment of due wages in the name of advance money meant the workers received money before the payment date. This practice of taking advance money is embedded in the social networks-based trust relationship between the workers and their recruiters that reflects mutual empathy on the workers' financial crises, as discussed further in chapter seven. The workers regarded such opportunities for getting advance money as beneficial for them.

5.2.6 Lack of education and required skills

The survey for this study revealed that 43 percent of workers were illiterate and 38 percent did not

complete their primary education. None had formal technical education in construction work. My interviews with the workers and their recruiters suggested that there was no requirement for education in order to get work in Dhaka's construction projects. As a result, anyone could get work without having literacy capabilities. Moreover, no previous skills or training was required. Consequently, 84 percent of workers reported that they did not have adequate knowledge about construction work when they first started the work. Many did not have even a basic understanding about the work. In addition, 64 percent of workers reported that they did not have any kind of first-hand experience in relation to construction work when they migrated. While a few in this group had some basic knowledge about the work, they had not worked in the sector before. The survey also revealed that all workers acquired work related knowledge and skills on-the-job.

The workers reported that they learned the work by following others. My interviews with them revealed that most of the workers started their career as apprentice helpers. Initially their recruiters assigned them some elementary menial work at helper position to adapt to the work environment. The core responsibility of a helper was to provide standby support to a mason. Being superior and more experienced than helpers, the masons were the trainers of the helpers. They constantly instructed the helpers to fetch necessary tools and construction materials close to them. Standing by the masons, the helpers got opportunities to see the processes used in completing the tasks.

One worker explained this on-the-job skill acquisition process:

> *I picked up the skills after coming here. Before that, I did not know how to mix cement and sand for making concrete mixture. At first I had to learn this. Then I noticed how the mason was applying the concrete mixture on walls. I followed him. Then I noticed how a mason was plastering the walls. I followed him. Thus I picked the skills gradually by following only (Worker code: W2).*

The recruiters also confirmed that entrance to construction projects in Dhaka did not require any kind of previous knowledge, skill or training. They maintained that all the workers they recruited acquired their expertise through following their seniors and learning on-the-job. This practice suggests that skill acquisition is solely dependent on individual capacities of the workers and the learning opportunities provided by their superiors.

As one recruiter reported:

> *These workers came from their village without having any previous skills. They learn here on-the-job. I mix the newcomers with the already experienced workers so that the new labourers can learn quickly. Following the superiors for two days, they promptly pick up the skills (Recruiter code: R3).*

While learning on-the-job is the only method of acquiring skills, it also represents gender differences in workplace. My interviews with the female construction workers suggested that in their case the process of learning through following others was not as simple as in cases of the male workers. Due to local cultural beliefs, the female workers were not comfortable learning work

from the expert males. They learned the work by following their female colleagues only. As a result, avoiding male contact they always stayed in the group of unskilled workers.

As one female worker reported:

> *When I first started this work, my performance was bad. By following other female workers, I picked up the skills within a few days. Another female worker showed me the work … She was already working there and she helped me get the work. She showed me how to mix sand, water and cement. She did not tell the subcontractor about me. I followed and worked with her. The subcontractor did not know if I was experienced or not. He paid my wage to her to pass on to me (Worker code: W14).*

Clearly, female construction workers get work and learn through their peers of the same gender. The gender realities in the construction projects are determined by the local cultural beliefs that dominate the female workers' opportunities to access work and acquire skills. Gender relations existing among the male and female workers actually restrict the latter's opportunities to come into direct contact with their male counterparts and too advance to more skilled positions.

5.2.7 Comparative advantages

In addition to the factors discussed above, there are a few comparative advantages and trade-offs that attract the rural labourers to construction work in Dhaka. My interviews suggested that the migrant workers were well-informed of these comparative advantages and thus they made conscious choices to take on construction work in Dhaka. The comparative advantages reported by the workers are substantially related to employment situations in origin and destination areas, i.e., the comparative advantages over their original occupation and the advantages over other available occupations in the city.

Since most of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka originate from farming-based rural areas, they reported their existing work was better than the original one in their village. They maintained that farming activities were no longer profitable due to several factors including the shortage of labour, price fluctuation of produces, and increased costs of irrigation and pesticides.

One worker outlined the problem of the labour costs in farming:

> *I have seen that nowadays farming is not profitable any more … That's because I have to pay labour costs … The cost of agricultural labour and the price of crops has become equal. How much profit will I make? It's similar to giving away all the crops to the labourers. Even my own labour does not get paid. My family cannot survive this way. That will be a complete loss. Therefore, I have left farming (Worker code: W3).*

Originating from poor backgrounds, the workers believed that they did not have sufficient capital to start trading or to start a small business. Thus they perceived that construction work was the only suitable option to them that did not require any kind of investment. This perception led to increasing migration for construction work in Dhaka. On the other hand, the interviews with the workers revealed that they found their work better than other available options for them in the city.

They reported the RMG manufacturing sector was a potential alternative; however, they reasoned that construction work had more advantages compared with RMG manufacturing. One of the main advantages was related to the level of educational qualifications that RMG manufacturing work required, another was rented accommodation. Comparing both sectors, the workers reported that construction work offered better opportunities.

One worker reported:

> *If I want to work in a garments manufacturing factory, I will need educational qualifications that I don't have. They do not pay straight after joining … Here I can get Khoraki immediately after joining. With that money I can buy my meals and I do not need to pay for accommodation … Working in RMG manufacturing factories will require renting accommodation. I will need extra money for that. Here I do not need that (Worker code: W7).*

As the above quote suggests, construction work in Dhaka does not require initial financial investment like other jobs such as RMG manufacturing. On top of this, another important factor that the workers considered while comparing their existing work with the RMG manufacturing jobs was a sense of flexibility. They believed that construction work in Dhaka allowed better advantages in terms of flexibility.

One worker explained:

> *The main advantage of this work is the flexibility. If I don't feel motivated, I can stop work for today. If I work with someone on a monthly contract basis, then I have to answer a lot of questions before going on leave [in spite of serious illness]. Here if I do not feel well in the morning, I can say that I will not work today. That's all. The subcontractor will not insist on me working. What I will lose is the daily wage for the day. No work, no pay (Worker code: W3).*

This worker notes the advantage of flexibility to get leave during his sickness compared with the hard and fast rules in the RMG manufacturing factories. The recruiters also confirmed flexibility of leave in Dhaka's construction projects. Interviews with them revealed that the workers preferred flexibility in relation to leave and absence and it was an important reason for choosing construction work over RMG manufacturing jobs in Dhaka.

One recruiter told me:

> *In construction, if a worker is unwell he is allowed to take a day off and it is okay if he does not turn up. On the other hand, in a similar situation RMG factories will cut his monthly wage at a rate higher than he usually receives. They will deduct 100 Taka if his daily wage is 50 Taka. In case of an emergency in the village, he may need to complete lots of formalities including a gate pass to obtain leave. He will cry but they will not allow any leave. On the contrary, here a worker can just leave without asking anyone [in case of an emergency in village]. No one will ask him anything if he is absent for a day because of illness (Recruiter code: R3).*

The idea of flexibility and of getting unpaid leave during sickness and on occasions for urgent family matters in village is an important consideration in choosing construction work over other

available options such as RMG manufacturing jobs in Dhaka. Such flexibility is related to the terms of employment that are mostly formalised in the RMG manufacturing sector but informal and individualised in the construction sector.

5.3 Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter reveals a range of factors that Bangladesh's rural labourers consider when migrating for construction work in Dhaka. These factors contextualise the rationale for choosing construction work over other available employment opportunities. The chapter reveals that construction work in Dhaka, despite being a physically demanding low status job, is regarded as the most suitable work for the rural labourers who have limited options to choose from. The migrant construction workers' own accounts suggest that given the lack of choice, the prevailing terms and conditions of employment in Dhaka's construction projects encourage them to migrate from their village for construction work. However, the terms and conditions of employment are fundamentally rooted in the structures of recruitment that they experience. In this context, it is important to investigate recruitment of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. This necessity leads to the detailed examination of the structures of recruitment practices in Dhaka's construction projects which will be explored in the next chapter.

6 RECRUITMENT PRACTICES AND THE KEY ACTORS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter uncovers the structures of recruitment practices. It identifies the key actors in recruitment of migrant labourers for construction work and explores the contexts and conditions of the recruitment process that the migrant labourers experience. In doing this, it analyses how the rural labourers are recruited for the construction projects in Dhaka. Situated in thematic discussions led by "social recruitment" theme, the chapter discusses the role of individuals as recruiters of the migrant construction workers. It reproduces empirical evidence and explains the central role of individual recruiters in indirect recruitment and management of the construction workers. Examining the modes of recruitment, it explores the navigating role of various individuals in determining work conditions and employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects. The chapter starts with briefly outlining the modes of recruitment, then moves on to present empirical evidence for explaining each mode in detail. Through the analysis of data and relevant contextual discussions, it explores why individual recruiters are the key actors in prevalent recruitment practices in the construction projects of Dhaka.

6.2 Modes of recruitment

The results of this study reveal that recruitment of migrant labourers for construction work in Dhaka is predominantly indirect. In all three major types of construction projects, such as residential, non-residential and civil engineering, neither the builders nor the contractors are involved in the labour recruitment process. Each construction project is contracted through a number of stages whereby the builder or owner of a project subcontracts the entire project to an individual contractor. The contractors are usually attached to private real estate development companies and they subcontract the project to various persons for specific tasks. Starting from preliminary excavation to final closeout, the lifetime of a project requires several task-specific subcontractors, such as one for excavation, one for building the structure, one for establishing electricity, one for plumbing, one for painting, one for carpentry, etc. All these subcontractors are individuals who have their own teams of workers. In most cases, they retain their particular teams to accomplish the tasks they subcontract from project to project. Thus they move from one project to another with their teams of workers. However, due to flexible employment arrangements workers might leave the team midway or upon completion of the subcontracted task. This may particularly affect labour turnover when the subcontractors join a new project. The switching phase is therefore critical to the subcontractors in terms of labour. As a result, the subcontractors are required to recruit labourers constantly, particularly before they start a new project. Moreover, when the workers leave in the middle of the task, it necessitates recruitment of new labourers to fill the labour shortage.

Indirect recruitment of migrant construction workers is long established in Dhaka where there is no

public or private official recruiting agency. Regardless of the variety of the construction projects in terms of their nature, ownership and size, recruitment process is same. In general, the builders and contractors informally recruit migrant construction workers through various individuals such as subcontractors and their personal networks located in cities and villages. In the absence of an official recruitment agency, these individuals overwhelmingly dominate the recruitment process, however, identifying their role as recruiters is not straightforward. This is because recruitment of migrant construction workers is a multi-tiered process that involves several layers of individuals in each stage. Moreover, a wide range of social and local cultural factors determines the employment relationship between workers and their recruiters. Such an employment relationship characterises the navigating and intersecting role of individuals which makes it complex to thoroughly understand their role in the labour recruitment process. However, the terms and conditions of employment in Dhaka's construction projects are discretionally determined by these individual recruiters who recruit individual labourers to work for them.

Due to the indirect recruitment practices, the migrant construction workers usually get work through their personal social networks. The survey for this study reveals the significant role of social networks in obtaining preliminary information on work opportunities in Dhaka. As figure 6.1 shows, 37 percent of workers received preliminary information about their work from their relatives, friends or neighbours. Another 28 percent of workers received information from a migrant worker from their village or another village in their locality. Moreover, 20 percent of workers received the information from an individual subcontractor while only 9 percent of workers independently migrated without having any information regarding possible work.

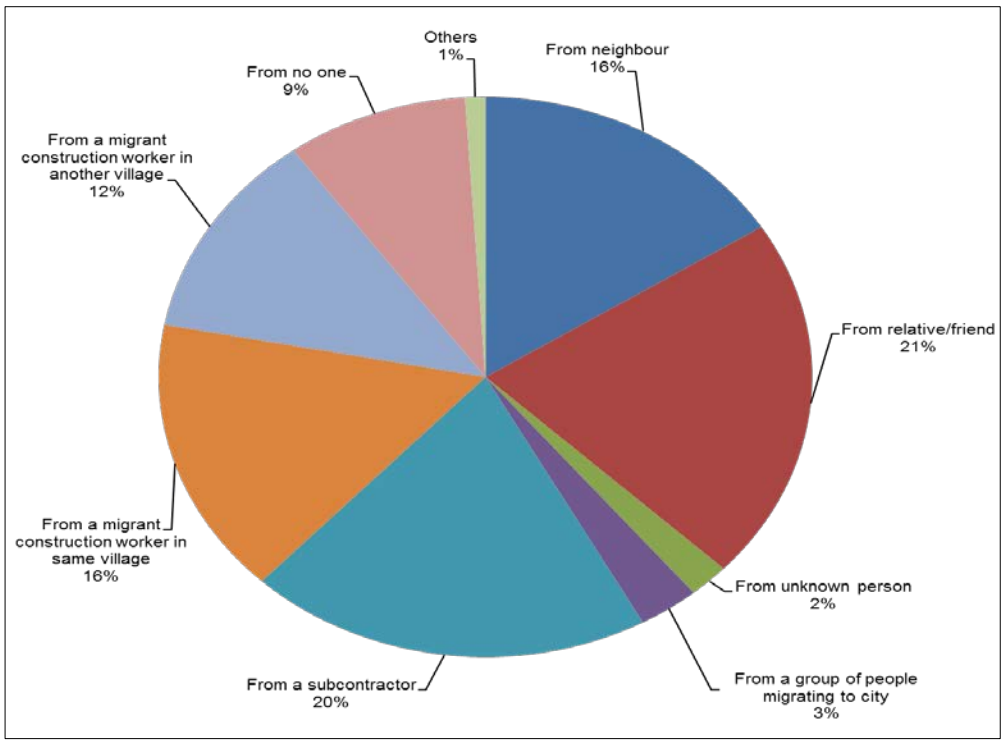

Figure 6.1: Sources of work-related preliminary information

The survey results also reveal that 80 percent of labourers were offered construction work in Dhaka before they left their village. They reported a range of individuals, such as their current team leader, a subcontractor, a fellow worker, a neighbour, a relative or a friend who offered them work before migrating. The survey responses, in fact, confirm existence of a wide range of individuals in the recruitment process in Dhaka's construction projects.

In-depth interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters reveal that there are nine types of recruitment practices in Dhaka's construction projects. Considering the physical location of the recruiters and the labourers, I have categorised the recruitment practices into four modes: recruitment within a project, recruitment in a village, recruitment on demand, and on-street labour hire. The four modes are further extended to nine specific categories, as shown in figure 6.2.

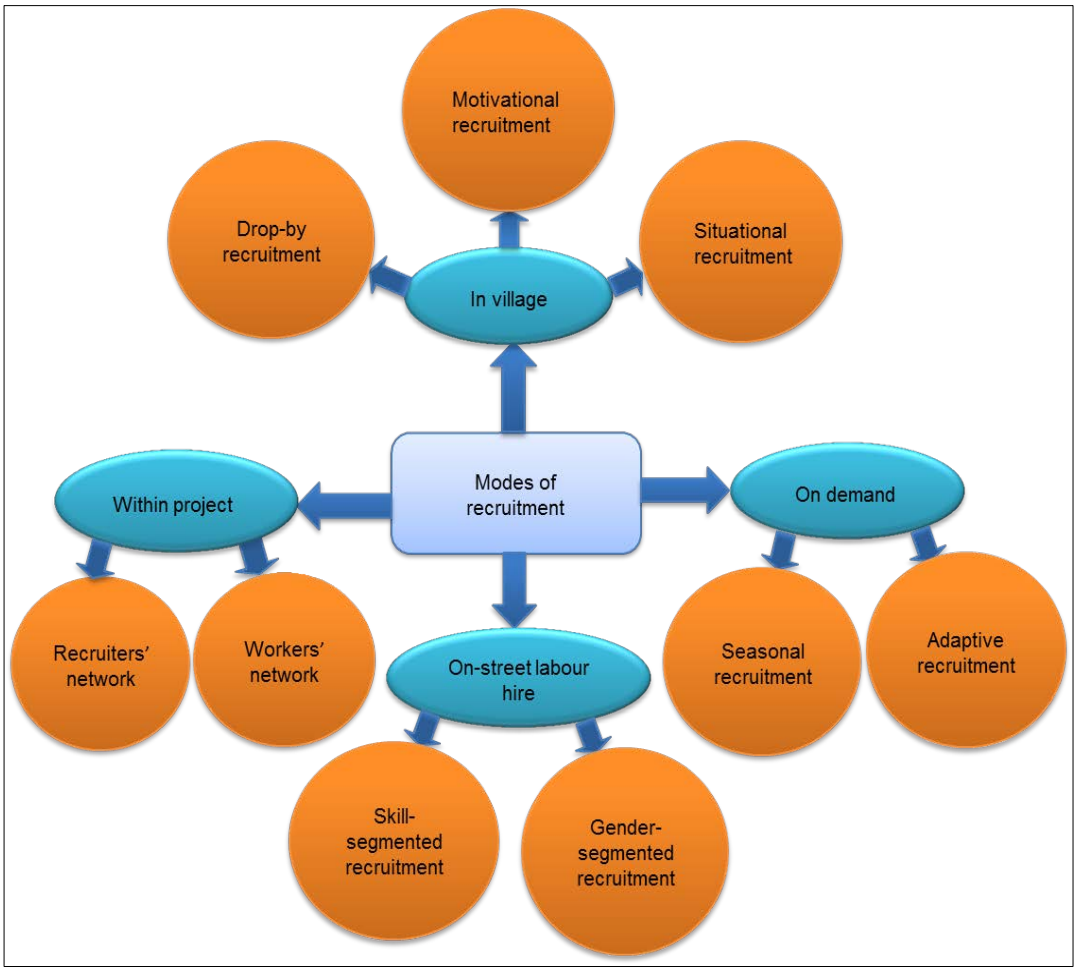

Figure 6.2: Modes of recruitment

Migrant construction workers are often recruited through the social networks of the individual recruiters and migrant workers already working in Dhaka. In the "within project" mode of recruitment, as shown in figure 6.2, the recruiters are physically located within the construction projects in the city. Rural labourers are collected and recruited for a project through existing recruiters and migrant construction workers already working on the project.

On the other hand, the “in village” mode of recruitment shows that the recruiters and the labourers are physically located in the village. Recruiters and potential migrant labourers drop by the villages, potential migrant labourers approach the recruiters to express their interest, and some situational factors help the recruiters and potential migrant labourers come together in the village.

The “on demand” mode of recruitment shows seasonal recruitment and adaptive recruitment. The recruiters visit their own village to get labourers to fill labour shortages during the peak harvest season in the village and they recruit labourers to adapt to time pressures or project completion challenges.

The “on-street labour hire” practices reveal skill-segmented recruitment and gender-segmented recruitment on the spot. Recruiters hire labourers from street labour markets, located at various points in the city, matching their preferred skills and gender.

The sections below discuss these modes of recruitment in detail.

6.2.1 Recruitment within project

The “within project” mode of recruitment occurs when recruiters are physically located within the construction projects in the city. They themselves operate in the city but recruit labourers from villages through the help of their social networks. A large proportion of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are recruited from villages through the personal networks of the subcontractors and workers. Labour recruitment through social networks suggests a complex process through which the subcontractors and the migrant workers working in the city connect with rural labourers. A range of local cultural and social factors is involved in this connection. In the “within project” mode of recruitment, the experienced recruiters and migrant workers play the key role in collecting and recruiting rural labourers. The subcontractors and migrant construction workers utilise their social networks in a number of ways to recruit labourers from villages.

6.2.1.1 Recruiters’ social networks

In Dhaka’s construction projects, the subcontractors are individual recruiters who collect and recruit labourers through their own social networks without visiting villages in person. Whenever they are in need of labourers, they contact their personal networks in the villages to find labourers on their behalf.

One subcontractor confirmed this practice:

> *Whenever I need, I bring labourers from the village. I ring my friend living in the village and ask him to find some labourers for me. I also tell him that I am happy to offer some advance money if they want. My friend will visit some houses in his locality and thus collect some labourers. After his confirmation, I will transfer him some advance money. Then he will send the labourers to me in Dhaka (Recruiter code: R5).*

In this way although he stays in Dhaka, the subcontractor utilises his social networks in his village

to recruit migrant labourers for the project he is subcontracting in Dhaka.

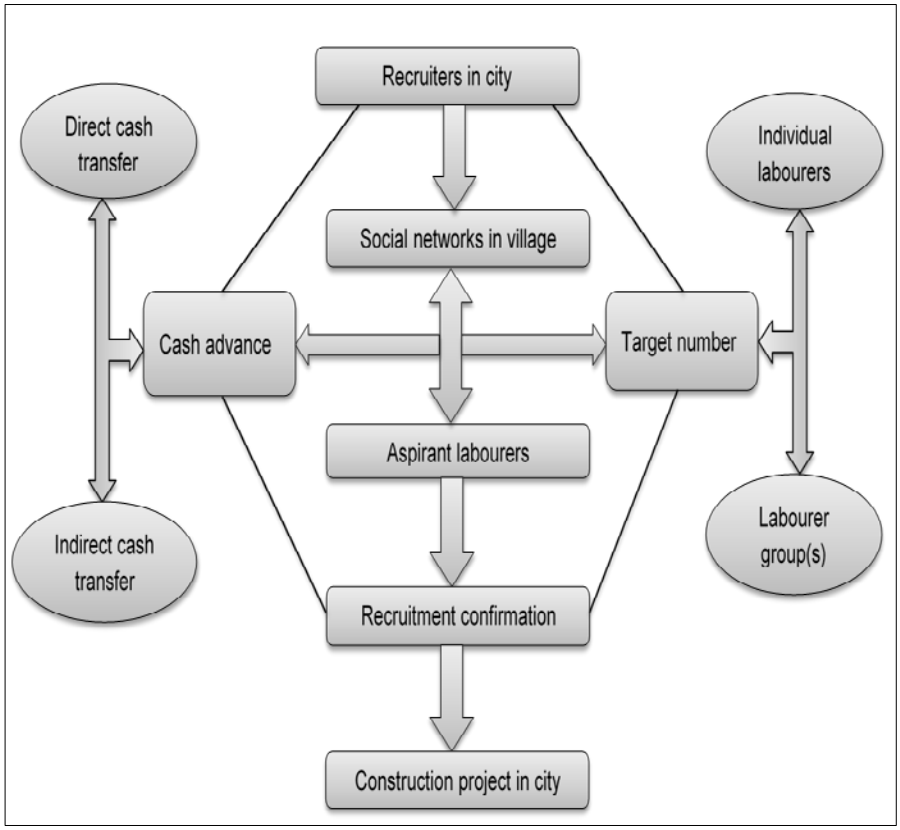

Figure 6.3: Labour recruitment through recruiters' social networks

As figure 6.3 shows, in the "within project" mode of recruitment, a subcontractor does not visit the village in person to recruit labourers. Being located in Dhaka, he continues his engagement with the ongoing project in spite of the labour shortage. In order to search and recruit new labourers for his team, he contacts friends, relatives, neighbours and previous colleagues or team members staying in the village. They help him find aspirant labourers who wish to migrate to Dhaka for construction work. Although the subcontractor stays in the city, he keeps regular contact with his social networks in the village and gets updates from them, in regards to progress in recruitment process. Whenever an aspirant labourer is found, the subcontractor is instantly informed. He then confirms recruitment of the labourer by directly speaking to him by mobile phone. However, the recruitment confirmation depends on two circumstances related to advance money and the number of labourers required. In most cases, the aspirant labourers demand some cash as advance money to meet travel costs and family needs.

As one recruiter reported:

> *The advance money we offer [before migration] is not only to cover the travel costs but for some other reasons too. Sometimes we offer a large amount as demanded by the aspirant labourers. Before a labourer decides to leave his village, he may ask up to 5,000 Taka for his family. We give that amount and adjust his wage when he arrives here (Recruiter code: R1).*

Circumstances related to advance money, in the “within project” mode of recruitment, reveal that the aspirant migrant labourers receive advance money in two ways. The subcontractors may directly send them the money from Dhaka through mobile cash transfer or they receive the money from the subcontractors’ social networks in the village through which they get the preliminary information in relation to the work. Either way, the advance money is treated as “token money” to confirm recruitment of rural labourers for work in Dhaka.

In relation to the number of new labourers to be recruited, the subcontractors may need only a few or a large group of labourers. Therefore, the aspirant labourers are confirmed one by one and they are advised not to leave their village until the subcontractor’s target number is fulfilled. This way a subcontractor recruits a group of labourers through their own social networks. Recruiting a group of labourers helps the recruiters fill labour shortages quickly. However, recruiting only a few individuals is easier than recruiting a large group or team of workers. In order to ease preparatory tasks ranging from organising travel to placing labourers in project accommodation, individual recruiters usually prefer individuals over a group or team. While most of the individuals come to Dhaka by trusting individual recruiters, one-to-one communication and associated promises before migration favour the latter by simplifying their tasks of managing and overseeing labourers upon their arrival. Another important benefit the recruiters get by preferring individuals over a group is the lowest chance of “group dynamics” and peer influence resulting from potential interactions of group members that can negatively impact on migration decision. Furthermore, the practice of offering cash advances implies that offering large amount of advance money to a group or team of labourers is riskier than offering small amounts to individuals. Thus the recruiters can easily adapt to uncertainties of investment in case a labourer does not turn up in Dhaka.

An important dimension of recruitment through the recruiter’s social networks is the relationship between the recruiters in Dhaka and their social networks in the village. While interviewing the recruiters, I got the impression that the recruiters themselves did not pay any kind of monetary commission to their relatives or friends for helping them recruit labourers from villages. In fact, all recruiters denied any kind of financial transactions between their networks and themselves. However, the local cultural context of social relations between the recruiters and their networks indicates that the recruiters occasionally offered them non-monetary treats and gifts for their involvement in the recruitment process.

As one recruiter explained:

> *I do not offer any commission to my friend. But when I visit the village, we have tea together and sometimes I recharge his mobile phone account (Recruiter code: R5).*

Despite this comment, my background discussions with other recruiters revealed that they offered similar treats and gifts not only while they visited village but they favoured their friends and relatives in several ways. Even when staying in Dhaka, they sent them gifts such as dresses and

an occasional mobile phone account recharge. They reported that they did this with an intention to maintain close contact with their networks in the villages through which they could search and recruit migrant labourers for the projects they subcontract in Dhaka.

6.2.1.2 Workers' social networks

Another type of labour recruitment in the "within project" mode suggests involvement of migrant construction workers in the labour recruitment process. Like the subcontractors, the migrant workers already working in Dhaka's construction projects recruit labourers from their villages. As seen in figure 6.4, they act as mediators in the recruitment process upon approval from their subcontractors. In general, they contact their social networks to find out about aspirant labourers who wish to join them in Dhaka. While they often do this with the intention to assist their subcontractors, labour recruitment through workers' social networks requires direct involvement of the migrant construction workers as recruiters. Their direct involvement suggests two important benefits for them. By recruiting labourers themselves, they minimise the risks of non-completion of the projects they are based in; and in recognition of their involvement as recruiters, they achieve their subcontractor's favours in terms of skill acquisition.

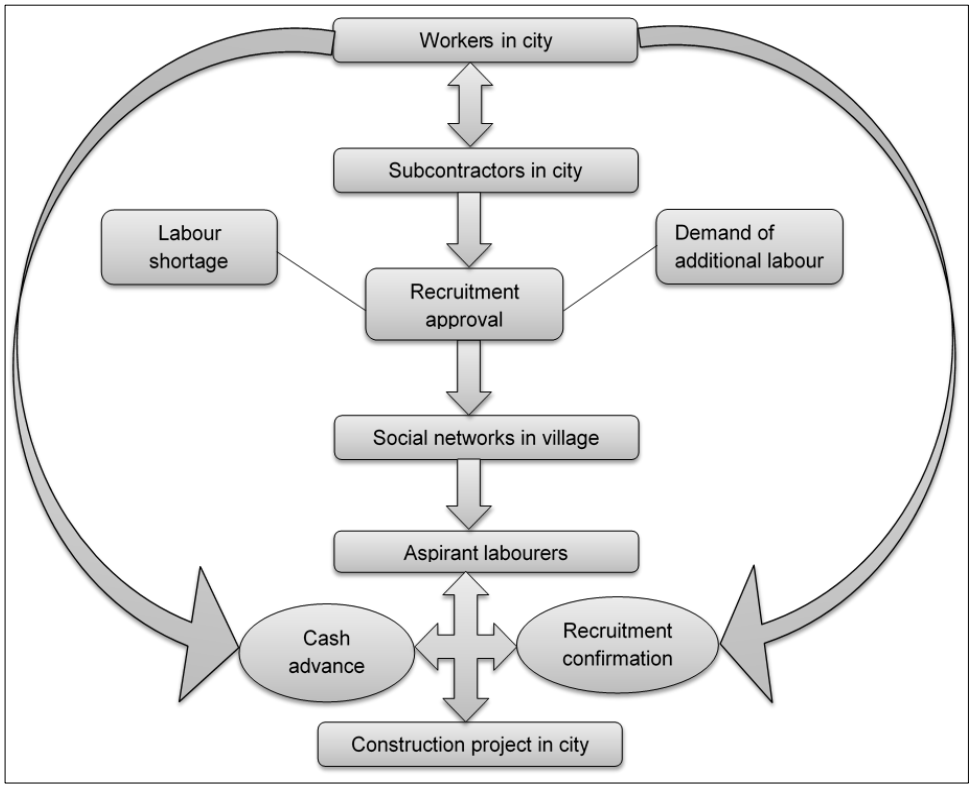

Figure 6.4: Labour recruitment through migrant workers' social networks

Interviews with the migrant construction workers revealed that in some projects the workers were aware of the overall project management by their subcontractor. They shared their subcontractor's concerns in relation to project completion. As a result, they were adequately informed of daily labour turnout and progress of their project. In these projects, the workers and their subcontractors

were found to have an approachable mutual relationship. In case of uncertainties in relation to labour turnout, the workers took the responsibility of recruiting labourers for their subcontractors.

As one worker reported:

> *When our foreman left the project, the subcontractor told me, 'I am badly in need of some workers now. Ring your contacts and keep searching for people from your own village. Let me know if any of your friends is interested to work in Dhaka.' Then I rang one of my friends and asked if he was interested to come to Dhaka to work with me. He replied that it would be wonderful if he could work and stay together with me in Dhaka. He responded positively because he was unemployed at that time. Then I asked him to come to Dhaka. Depending on verbal conversation, he came and worked with me (Worker code: W1).*

The subcontractors perceived this practice, as outlined above, as beneficial for them. This is because recruiting labourers through the networks of existing workers helps them minimise their own risks and involvement in the recruitment process. This is regarded as a time saving practice that does not require travel to villages. Thus a subcontractor can recruit labourers while staying in Dhaka. In particular, when a subcontractor needs labourers urgently, they ask workers in their existing team to help them recruit other workers.

One recruiter confirmed this:

> *I ask the workers, already working with me, to find some labourers from their own network. If they really help searching, they can collect some labourers for me (Recruiter code: R4).*

This practice of recruiting rural labourers through construction workers already in Dhaka guarantees safe return of the advance money that the subcontractors distribute to the potential labourers in village. The existing workers mediate between the potential migrant labourers in villages and the subcontractors in the city. They get advance money from their subcontractors and then pass that on to potential labourers. The subcontractors consider this a low-risk practice as the existing workers are involved in the process. As a result, often they offer large amount of advance money to bring labourers from village.

One worker reported:

> *Here are my two nephews. They were already working here and rang one day to ask me to join them by bringing some workers along with me from my own village. I came with three workers … When my nephews first offered me this work, I asked them to get some advance money from their subcontractor for me [and the other labourers coming with me]. They said they would do so. The next day they sent 10,000 Taka through mobile cash transfer and I distributed the money among ourselves (Worker code: W9).*

While this practice of recruiting labourers through existing migrant construction workers' social networks appears to be an outcome of the reciprocal relationship between the subcontractors and the workers, it indirectly creates opportunities for the existing workers to get closer to their subcontractors. Bringing in unskilled labourers from villages, the existing workers often get opportunities to train them on-the-job. Thus a skilled worker gradually becomes a team leader or

foreman nominated by the subcontractor. A group of unskilled workers then work under his supervision. He oversees their performance and pays them after being paid by the subcontractor. The key benefit of the reciprocal relationship between a fresh unskilled labourer and a skilled worker is assurance of obligation. With an aim to pick up the skills, the unskilled workers follow instructions without any objections, moreover, they respect their superiors and prove themselves to be disciplined and hardworking. In return, the skilled workers expect them to do more than what is assigned. By doing additional work, the unskilled workers want to satisfy their superiors and maintain a respectful relationship in the workplace. This kind of obligation helps the skilled workers get maximum output from the apprentice workers that they lead and supervise. Additional work performance also guarantees their profit through timely completion of a project. Therefore, the skilled workers prefer recruiting unskilled labourers from their villages.

As one worker reported:

> *I am a mason and I brought a few helpers [from my village] to work with me … It gives comfort to work with my own people. The workers coming from outside start washing their hands and feet immediately after the Asar.*[7] *Even if the mason does not finish his work, they will wrap up everything and leave him. In this kind of situation, the mason feels helpless. This is not possible for a mason to do the tedious things onsite. For this reason, most of the masons retain helpers coming through their own networks or being personally familiar. Having our own people can make the balance of work. (Worker code: W3).*

As this comment shows, the worker's personal preference is for unskilled workers due to their work commitment. His perceptions denote that the unskilled labourers coming from his own village are more considerate and obedient than outsiders; therefore his engagement in the recruitment process as a recruiter enables him to work more comfortably in Dhaka.

6.2.2 Recruitment in village

Unlike the "within project" mode discussed above, the "in village" mode of recruitment is characterised by the physical location of recruiters in the village. Interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters revealed that some workers were recruited after meeting their recruiters face to face in their village. Based on their experiences, three types of recruitment emerge: drop by recruitment, motivational recruitment and situational recruitment.

6.2.2.1 Drop by recruitment

The drop by recruitment suggests a recruitment practice where the recruiters and the labourers are both located in village. The recruiters may work in the city but visit villages without having the specific intention to recruit labourers. In general, the subcontractors and the migrant construction workers visit their villages from time to time, particularly during festivals. At that time they hang out, have fun and mingle with the residents in their village. Despite having no predetermined intention for recruitment, they may come across aspirant labourers in the village who wish to migrate to the

[7] In Bangladesh, *Asar* refers to daily prayer time before sunset.

city upon availability of work. In many cases, the aspirant labourers also do not have a predetermined intention to migrate to the city for work at that very moment. Thus neither the recruiters nor the aspirant labourers have a predetermined intention as the recruitment occurs unexpectedly by chance.

As one worker reported:

> *Initially no discussion took place between the subcontractor and me in relation to work … He was then visiting the village on the eve of Eid[8] … One day while chatting in front of a retail shop in our village, he said, 'I am subcontracting a project in Dhaka and I may need a worker.' I said I might be able to join him without any issue (Worker code: W4).*

This comment suggests that the recruitment occurred in a social setting. While the preliminary information in relation to availability of work was shared in a casual discussion, neither the recruiter not the labourer had pre-determined motivation. Moreover, it is evident from the quote that aspirant labourers in villages often do not get sufficient information regarding terms and conditions of the work that they would get in the city. This is because of the social relationship between the recruiters and labourers that helps complete the recruitment process in a casual way. As a result, the aspirant labourers often do not consider getting work-related information in detail before they migrate.

The worker further commented:

> *I was not fussy about wages. I was confident that he would offer me the wage similar to what others were getting in his project. I knew that he would determine my wage after observing my performance only. I understood that he would offer me whatever I would be eligible for. No discussion on my wage took place before I came here. I did not ask him anything about my wage either. I trusted him and I would never question him even if he offers me low wage (Worker code: W4).*

Interestingly this worker did not ask the recruiter anything in relation to wages, the most critical part of employment terms. It is evident from the quote that the rural labourers trust their recruiters despite not having negotiations on the terms and conditions of work. Since both the recruiter and the labourers are located in the same village, perhaps their shared locality has an important effect on this. The recruiters' location and social position makes them responsible for the overall well-being of the labourers they recruit. They therefore put all their efforts into avoiding any kind of negligence that could denigrate their social prestige back in the village. On the other hand, due to the reciprocal relationship the aspirant labourers not only trust their recruiters but also try to provide their best performance to keep them satisfied. The labourers also put all attempt to avoid any unwanted situation that could harm their social image in their village. Thus the shared local identity puts both the recruiters and the labourers in a practical and functional employment

[8] *Eid* is a religious festival celebrated by Muslims. As a Muslim majority country, Bangladesh celebrates two *Eids* each year: *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha.*

relationship which will be discussed further in chapter seven.

Another dimension of the reciprocal relationship between the recruiters and the labourers suggests that the labourers in villages are adequately informed of the market rate of wages. This means the rural labourers are socially connected to the migrant construction workers in Dhaka and thus they get information about the wage rate. This social connection, as well as awareness of wage rates, enables them to verify the wages that the recruiters initially offer them. Conversely, the recruiters do not want to disappoint the labourers as they are also aware of the labourers' awareness. Due to flexible terms and conditions of recruitment, the recruiters think that the labourers might leave work if they offer an uncompetitive wage. Therefore, the employment relationship, built upon the drop by recruitment practice, between the recruiters and the workers is essentially self-checked and guided by the labour market situation.

One recruiter confirmed the market trend of wage:

> *There is a market trend … Whether a labourer has skills or not, we must start with 300 Taka minimum a day. Now it is impossible to employ a labourer for less than that. After few months, we increase the amount by 10 to 20 Taka monthly (Recruiter code: R2).*

The demand and supply mechanisms operate in a way that means both the recruiters and labourers are informed of market trends. The recruiters need labour and the labourers need work; however, the employment relationship is so fragile that both can leave without any restrictions. Since labour shortage is a critical challenge for a recruiter to accomplish a project on time, he intends to retain workers by offering them competitive wage in line with market rates. On the other hand, getting new work is a challenge for the workers and therefore they wish to stick to their recruiters upon payment of competitive wages. In a few cases, the workers might not be aware of the market trend but their own perspectives on wages could help accept whatever they are offered.

As one worker reported:

> *I asked him about the type of work I would be doing in Dhaka. He then replied that it could be just excavating. I said yes as I was confident of my capability in doing this type of work. After coming to Dhaka, he told me that my monthly salary would be 8,000 Taka. I thought that out of this money I would be spending 2,000 Taka for meals and still 6,000 Taka will be saved. At that moment, I thought it would be sufficient for me (Worker code: W7).*

Clearly, the worker's own perception helped him accept the wage he was initially offered because he thought that he would be able to save an adequate amount of money out of his wage. However, determining wage for the workers requires practical knowledge about the ongoing market rates. While in Dhaka, I spoke to a few builders and contractors. My informal discussions with them revealed that one of the main reasons why they did not engage directly in labour recruitment and management processes was the potential stress in relation to wage determination. They commented that the subcontractors had proper knowledge about the concurrent market rates of wages and hence they were the right people to be involved in the labour recruitment process.

While the drop by recruitment suggests the recruitment process is through the subcontractors visiting the village, it is not limited to subcontractors only. It can also involve migrant construction workers visiting village. They can recruit rural labourers from their own network upon approval from their subcontractors. The involvement of migrant workers in the drop by recruitment reveals that sometimes their subcontractors request them to find labourers in their own village and bring them to Dhaka where their projects are located.

One worker reported:

> *My current recruiter found me through my cousins. They were then visiting my village. He rang my cousins and said, 'I need some workers in Dhaka. Is there anyone [in your village] interested to come with you? Could you please help get a few workers for me?' My cousins replied that they would try to get some workers soon. I came with them (Worker code: W2).*

This shows that migrant construction workers already working in Dhaka but visiting their village recruited this worker. The background discussions revealed that neither the worker nor the recruiter was pre-determined for the recruitment. It occurred by chance whenever the subcontractor needed some additional labourers to finish his project.

6.2.2.2 Motivational recruitment

Motivational recruitment is another type of recruitment practice that represents physical location of both the recruiters and the labourers in the village. Unlike the drop by recruitment where recruiters approach the potential labourers through casual discussions, the motivational recruitment practices are the opposite. Here the aspirant rural labourers are self-motivated to migrate to the city and they approach the recruiters in the village. The motivated rural labourers use the recruiters to get work in the city. They express their personal interests to the recruiters and thus they migrate to Dhaka to work in construction projects. A range of factors contributes to their motivation. Unemployment in their village is the most common reason for their motivation.

The structure of motivational recruitment reveals that recruitment confirmation depends on a few circumstances including availability of work in the city, the relationship between the person the labourers approach and the subcontractors, etc. The aspirant labourers approach either a subcontractor or a migrant construction worker who is already working in the city. In any case, the process of recruitment takes a longer time than the other modes discussed above.

One worker reported:

> *It is I who went to him [the recruiter]. I requested him earnestly that everyone was working in Dhaka and I would also like to go to Dhaka anyway. He then assured me it would not be a problem … After knowing my intention, he told me, 'it is not possible to give you work instantly. However, as you seem very serious, I will let you know whenever I need a worker. I will give you a phone call and you will go to Dhaka.' After eight days I received a phone call from him asking me to come to Dhaka … He did not say anything about the terms and conditions of work. My only intention was to leave the village in any way. He called me to come to Dhaka and I came straight after the call (Worker code: W1).*

This worker was eager to get work in Dhaka immediately. Although the subcontractor did not confirm the recruitment instantly, he indicated that he would be able to consider it upon his return to Dhaka. During my informal discussions with the subcontractor, it was evident that he did not have any work opportunity to offer at that moment. Nevertheless after returning to Dhaka, he assessed the request further and confirmed accordingly. He based his assessment on a few things such as if the labourer would be physically capable of doing the work. In addition, he assessed if the labourer was polite and had a good character. However, these assessments were informally completed though verbal conversation among the subcontractor and his social networks in the village. I asked him why these assessments were so necessary and he explained that sometimes young labourers in villages might have strong motivations but have very weak health. Since construction is hard work, those labourers give up after a few days. This kind of situation creates an image problem for the subcontractor in his village and therefore he does not recruit a labourer without knowing their full details.

In motivational recruitment, the aspirant labourers usually approach the subcontractors visiting their village. However, in a few cases they seek help from migrant workers too. Migrant construction workers go to visit their village and at that time the aspirant labourers approach them to seek help to get work in Dhaka. In this case, the migrant workers speak to their subcontractors and get approval before promising work.

One worker reported:

> *I got this work through my cousin. He also works here … He went to visit his village and I approached him at that time. My cousin replied, 'you wish to go to Dhaka? I stay there myself. If you wish to go, I will take you along with me.' … He later confirmed [after speaking to his subcontractor] that he would take all responsibilities to bring me to Dhaka (Worker code: W10).*

It is evident from this comment that family relationship is an important dimension of motivational recruitment. In Bangladesh's rural areas, the local culture helps people get close to each other. Often this leads to close relationships similar to a family relationship. As a result, rural people often use various kinship terms such as "uncle", "brother" and "cousin". This kind of relationship is crucial in finding work opportunities in Dhaka because the rural labourers are not familiar with the urban environment and hence they want to trust somebody to help them migrate and settle in the city without experiencing any unwanted situation. The social relationships therefore play an important role in getting work through migrant workers.

As one recruiter reported:

> *For example, one worker is working with me for a long time and while visiting his village he would call me saying that he had got someone in his village interested in coming to Dhaka. He could ask for some advance money. Then I would send him some advance money and he would bring the labourer. This way he could bring ten labourers. Out of the ten labourers, all may leave the work later except two. The remaining two labourers may bring another two*

> *labourers from their village. We [the subcontractors] supply the advance money but the migrant construction workers who already work in Dhaka recruit the new labourers through their own networks and acquaintances (Recruiter code: R1).*

From this quote, it is clear that direct involvement of migrant construction workers in recruiting labourers from their village is important. It also confirms that the recruiters offer advance money that helps the migrant construction workers recruit labourers from their own networks and acquaintances. The example given by the recruiter suggests that direct involvement of the migrant workers in recruitment not only eases the task of recruitment for him but guarantees safe return of his advance money. However, indirect labour recruitment through migrant workers creates barriers to labour protection. The labourers coming to the city cannot access the subcontractors directly and hence their ability to negotiate employment terms and conditions is often curtailed. On the other hand, the migrant workers who engage themselves in the recruitment process double their pressures by forfeiting their own rights to their recruiters and taking extra responsibility to look after the labourers they bring in. Therefore, motivational recruitment creates pressures on both the workers who are recruited and those who recruit them.

6.2.2.3 Situational recruitment

Situational recruitment is characterised by some particular factors that help the recruiters and aspirant migrant labourers meet in the village. The labourers may want to leave their village due to several factors such as climate change, social or political problems, drug addiction, household poverty, death of a family member, family tension, etc. Either the labourers or recruiters approach first depending on the context in which they meet each other.

One worker reported:

> *Our home was on Char[9] land. After riverbank erosion, we did not have lands to build house. My younger brother died and I had two sisters. I was the only son in our family. My parents were alive … I felt that I should not stay unemployed … We did not have any farmland. I did not have the capital to start a business either. It was not possible for me to work as a day labourer [because of social prestige] in the village. Considering these, I came to Dhaka … I approached my friend. He was visiting our village then. I asked him if his project was in need of a worker. He replied that he would discuss this with his subcontractor after returning to Dhaka and let me know … After getting approval from his subcontractor, my friend confirmed. Then I came to Dhaka (Worker code: W6).*

A few situational factors were important here in helping him meet his friend in the village and move to construction work in Dhaka. First he approached his friend who was already working in Dhaka and visiting the village at that time. Knowing about his intention, his friend discussed this with his recruiter and then confirmed his recruitment. This way a migrant construction worker can recruit another migrant labourer from his networks with approval from his recruiter. However, this kind of recruitment does not involve any pre-determined motivations rather specific circumstances necessitate the recruitment. As a result, in the case of situational recruitment, the migration

[9] *Char* is a Bangla word for a riverine island.

decision is determined upon the confirmation of work in the city.

One female worker extended this point:

> *In the village, my husband used to catch fish and after selling fish in the market he used to buy foods for us daily … The river my husband used to catch fish in was suddenly taken over by some politically influential people and they imposed big payments to get permission for fishing. That was not affordable for us. We are poor. We cannot feed well, let alone pay permission fees for catching fish … I came with my relative [the wife of my cousin] … She brought me here and showed me how to find work as she was already working here … It was the pressure of poverty that pushed me to Dhaka. Another factor was the sudden end of fishing opportunities for my husband in our village (Worker code: W15).*

Obviously, in this case a sudden situation impacted on the female labourer's decision to migrate. The role of kinship in situational recruitment is evident in this case. I discussed the dynamics of situational recruitment with the subcontractors at length and a few of them confirmed that they often became part of it especially when they visited their village. They stated that they helped their relatives, friends and neighbours to migrate to Dhaka. Considering special circumstances such as extreme poverty, debt, unemployment, climate shocks, death of a family member, etc., they willingly offered work to them. It is evident that this kind of recruitment is characterised by family ties and social relationships between the subcontractors and the labourers whereby the latter originate from specific vulnerable situations. Apparently situational recruitment therefore is considered a favour from the subcontractors to the vulnerable rural labourers.

6.2.3 Recruitment on demand

Unlike the recruitment modes discussed above, the "on demand" category of recruitment is characterised by pre-planned recruitment of a group of labourers. While visiting a village, the recruiters may recruit labourers one by one and thus form a group to bring to the city. Although the recruiters are primarily urban project-based, they visit their own village with the intention of bringing labourers either to fill a labour shortage or to adapt to time pressure and project completion challenges. Recruitment on demand is therefore divided into two categories: seasonal recruitment and adaptive recruitment.

6.2.3.1 Seasonal recruitment

Seasonal recruitment is an "on demand" recruitment practice that represents recruitment during a specific period of a year, for example the peak harvest season. At this time, the recruiters visit their village with the intention to recruit a group of labourers together. They themselves distribute the advance money among the potential migrant labourers. In most cases, they return to the city along with the group they recruit. The interviews undertaken revealed that due to availability of high wage work in villages during peak harvest season, many workers in Dhaka's construction projects leave their work and return to their village, as discussed earlier in chapter five. Mass absence of workers during this period creates completion challenges for the subcontractors. To fill the gap in labour turnout, the subcontractors themselves go to their village to bring back a group of labourers.

One recruiter confirmed this:

> *After a few days the peak harvest season will start. I will therefore need to go to the village to bring some labourers. I will manage 10 to 12 labourers and form a group. If someone wants advance money, I will offer it. Then I will return to Dhaka with the group (Recruiter code: R5).*

Seasonality in the villages has a significant effect on labour supply in Dhaka's construction projects. In order to cope with labour shortage the subcontractors in Dhaka plan their travel to the village. They visit with cash in hand and offer advance money to the aspirant migrant labourers. Often they meet the labourers' travel costs, including bus fares, out of their own pocket. While interviewing the construction workers and their recruiters, I discovered that there were some trade-offs between the farming work in the village and construction work in the city during the peak harvest season. Although at that time the wage rate was higher in the village than the city, some rural labourers still wanted to come to the city because advance money offered by the subcontractors was a lucrative offer to them. They utilised the money to adjust their household debt, feed the cattle, repair and maintain irrigation pumps, purchase fertilizer, insecticides, etc. Moreover, their own perspectives revealed that the construction work in the city would last longer than the farming work in the village. Thus they believed that they would be able to continue the construction work for a longer period and adjust the advance money through long instalments. This way they would achieve two benefits; first they would get work for a long period and second the advance money would help them invest in farming related activities to get better returns.

I was very eager to explore further why the rural labourers wanted to leave their village during a particular period of time of year especially when the wage rate and demand for labour in rural areas was higher than the city. To be specific, I wanted to investigate why the rural labourers wanted to come to the city at a time when many migrant labourers in the city left their work. Informal discussions with the construction workers and their recruiters in Dhaka revealed that during the peak harvest season there would always be some labourers unemployed in village, due to early completion of farming. Moreover, there were some labourers in village who temporarily stopped farming just because of lack of finance. The subcontractors actually took advantage of this to recruit the rural labourers who were relatively poor compared with others and unable to continue their farming work in the peak harvest season. As a result, the supply of rural labourers even in the peak harvest season was not a problem for the subcontractors. They could easily attract a group of poor labourers by dint of the advance cash that the labourers and their families badly needed to continue farming in their village.

Considering the factors discussed above, seasonal recruitment can be viewed as an opportunistic model of recruitment whereby the recruiters take advantage of the unemployment of financially struggling rural labourers. On the contrary, the rural labourers take advantage of instant cash offered by the recruiters as advance money. The migrant construction workers reported that the

leverages between farming and construction work operate in a way that forces them to swap between the two to ensure the highest returns. Seasonality of farming activities in rural areas has the most significant role in identifying which work will offer them the highest return.

As one worker reported:

> *My long-term plan is I will do farming in my village during the peak harvest season … And in the lean season I will come to Dhaka to do construction work. The main benefit of doing so is I will always get work either in agriculture or in construction. Thus I will be able to look after my own farmlands when it is peak harvest time … Many people do this (Worker code: W2).*

This statement suggests that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka want to stay attached to their primary occupation back in their village. The rationale for this kind of attachment, as revealed from background discussions, is to ensure that they grow plenty of crops to feed their family. The workers believed that since they originated from a farming background they should continue growing the main rice crop to ensure year-round smooth food supply for their family. They perceived that the construction work in Dhaka was all-time available work and hence they would be able to join the work anytime they wish. On the other hand, since farming is a specific season-based work, they thought they should invest all their efforts in seasonal farming to grow sufficient crops to live on. The interviews with the workers indicated another important social dimension in relation to this. The workers shared that they held a belief such as "purchasing rice from market is no good for farmers".[10] This socially constructed belief was quite widespread among the workers. They believed that purchasing instead of growing rice is denigrating for peasant families and it proves incapability and insincerity to the inherited occupation.

6.2.3.2 Adaptive recruitment

Adaptive recruitment is another "on demand" recruitment practice through which the recruiters recruit some individual labourers or a group of labourers to adapt to time pressures or project completion challenges. In adaptive recruitment practice, the subcontractors located in Dhaka want quick completion of the recruitment process. In most cases, the subcontractors do not visit village due to their commitment to ongoing projects in Dhaka. However, they send their representative to the villages to complete the recruitment process. In the case of a sudden labour shortage, they try their own social networks first. If it becomes impossible to recruit labourers through social networks, they then send someone from Dhaka to bring labourers from villages, on their behalf.

One recruiter explained:

[10] Such belief is originally based on traditional Bangla proverbs and religious notions that dignify rice production as the core farming activity for the farmers. Due to the increasing retail price of rice, it is widely believed by the rural community that purchasing rice, instead of growing, creates barriers to economic prosperity of rural households.

> *For instance, I am now badly in need of some additional labourers for my project. I already have some contacts in the village. If they are unable [to recruit labourers shortly], I will send someone there. I will ask him to find some labourers and he will look for the labourers interested in migrating to Dhaka. The interested labourers will assess my wage offers, advantages and payment dealings and then leave their village (Recruiter code: R2).*

If the recruiter sends his representative to the village to bring labourers to his ongoing project in Dhaka, he achieves two main benefits. Firstly, by sending a representative he can verify the potential migrant labourers' work background; secondly, it saves time and travel. When he sends his representative, he hands over cash to distribute among the aspirant labourers as advance money to meet their travel costs. Thus his representative returns to Dhaka with the labourers. In fact, although the subcontractor sends his representative to recruit labourers on his behalf, his involvement in the process ensures continuous contact with possible labourers in village. This is because of the social connections that link the rural labourers and the subcontractor closely. Moreover, before leaving the village the aspirant labourers assess the image of the subcontractor and his payment dealings; they also assess the offered wage rate. Their assessment requires talking with a few other villagers who may know the subcontractor. Thus the social settings in rural areas enable both the subcontractor and the labourers to come into contact although the former is physically located in the city. In this context, the subcontractor's representative is basically an added layer in the recruitment process who connects the labourers and the subcontractor for the purpose of recruitment.

Although adaptive recruitment predominantly occurs during an ongoing project, in some cases subcontractors may complete adaptive recruitment before the start of a project. In those cases, the subcontractors may already retain some workers from previous completed projects and need additional workers for the new project. Therefore, they may recruit some workers to form a big group of workers to begin the new project. In this case, subcontractors may visit the village themselves and return with some labourers to mix with already retained workers.

As one worker explained:

> *The subcontractor's house is next to ours in the village. We used to see each other always. Sometimes we have tea together. Often he goes to visit his family in the village. Usually he takes a contract from engineers [based in Dhaka] first and after getting the contract he goes to the village to bring in some labourers like us. He starts a new project only after bringing labourers like us. While visiting the village, he offers work. He offers some cash advances too (Worker code: W13).*

While visiting various construction projects in Dhaka, I was curious to explore how the subcontractors get the money to offer to the potential migrant labourers in the village. My interviews with the subcontractors revealed that they actually got lump sums from their contractor. The contractors passed on hard cash to the subcontractors to enable the latter to bring labourers from the villages, before starting a project. Thus the money the subcontractors offered as cash advance was basically passed on by the contractors who took the contract from the project

builders or owners.

One subcontractor confirmed this:

> *After getting a contract for a project, the contractor first makes a phone call to me and discusses if I could help him [accomplish the project]. Then I promise him that I will be able to complete the project upon receiving some advance money so that I can bring some labourers from the village. After receiving the advance money from the contractor, I bring some labourers from my locality and thus start the project. Usually I visit the village, stay there for a few days and return to Dhaka with the labourers. After that, I start the specific tasks I am subcontracting (Recruiter code: R5).*

The actual process of such recruitment reveals that the subcontractor recruits labourers individually and then forms a group. He then leaves the village with the group. My discussions with the contractors and subcontractors revealed that every subcontracted assignment had a particular timeline for completion and therefore time pressure was an important consideration in relation to labour recruitment. While recruiting labourers, the subcontractors usually consider two main issues: the number of labourers they recruit should ensure quick and timely completion of the subcontracted tasks and they must recruit capable labourers who can endure time pressures. Thus the subcontractors want to employ and manage the labourers in a way that guarantees their profit by accomplishing the assigned tasks in time. However, in order to do this, they often recruit fewer labourers than required. By overworking the labourers, they earn more profit as fewer labourers incur fewer costs.

6.2.4 On-street labour hire

The “on-street labour hire” practices are typified by labour recruitment from particular points in Dhaka where the migrant labourers congregate with the intention to get work. These places are known as street labour markets where the potential recruiters and the labourers meet each other face to face on the spot and negotiate wages and terms of employment before hiring. In Bangladesh, many rural-urban migrant labourers individually migrate to Dhaka and sit in street labour markets where the subcontractors who maintain regular contacts with builders and contractors hire them. These are often spot markets where the recruiters meet workers in person, as found in other parts of the world (Anand, 2001; Chowdhury et al., 2012; Jha, 2002; Mosse et al., 2005; Swider, 2015b; Yoon & Kang, 2000). These open labour markets are generally located at certain points in Dhaka, predominantly near busy bus stops where the migrant labourers congregate every morning in a huge volume and wait to be hired for different construction sites on a daily basis. In addition to the subcontractors, a specific kind of recruiter, locally known as *Sardar,* hires labourers from the street labour markets on a daily basis. *Sardars* are not subcontractors but they are suppliers of small groups of labourers for specific tasks. Often the subcontractors recruit day labourers through the *Sardars*. Interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters revealed that the labourers were hired from street markets based on their skills and gender. Two types of on-street labour hire practices emerge from the data collected: skill-

segmented recruitment and gender-segmented recruitment.

6.2.4.1 Skill-segmented recruitment

Skill-segmented recruitment is an on-street labour hire practice through which the recruiters hire migrant labourers who have the specialised skills that they need. Labourers' specialised skills denote their capability to accomplish specific tasks such as excavating, concreting, plastering, tiling, painting, etc. However, the labourers in the street labour markets have not generally acquired these skills through any formal institutional training, rather they learn on-the-job. Gaining extensive experience means they can certify themselves verbally while being present in the markets. At the time of visiting the street labour markets in Dhaka, I noticed that every morning, hundreds of labourers congregated at designated points in the city, waiting in groups. Starting from 5.30am, the markets continued until 1.00pm maximum. I saw the labourers sitting with a set of personally purchased tools required for the work he or she was skilled in. Possessing proper tools is a requirement to get work in the street labour markets. The hirers or recruiters do not provide the tools and they do not hire any labourers who do not have their own tools.

One female worker reported:

> *If someone does not have own tools, they will never get this work here. They might get another job but not this one. If a recruiter wants to hire me for excavation, he will first ask me if I have the proper tools such as a spade. No one will hire me if I do not have that (Worker code: W15).*

The street labour market represents significant differences between the migrant labour groups in Dhaka's construction projects. The distinction between the two groups, workers who work and live onsite and the workers in the street labour markets, suggests that the migrant construction workers living onsite come alone from their village leaving their family at home. On the other hand, workers in the street labour markets have families in Dhaka and their family members may be involved in some other types of work. Although the wage rate in street labour markets is usually higher than that in project-based onsite work, the time period of offered work in street labour markets is shorter. Moreover, background discussions with the workers in street markets revealed that their wage rate was higher because they had to pay rent for accommodation whereas the workers doing project-based onsite work generally had free accommodation on their worksite.

The migrant construction workers in Dhaka, those who worked and lived onsite, were asked about their personal experiences in relation to on-street labour hire practices. One worker reported that he was never recruited from the street however he had often helped his subcontractor recruit labourers from street markets. He explained that the labourers waiting in the street were segregated according to their skills and thus it was easy to select them according to the skills he needed.

As he explained:

> *For example, the labourers sitting there with a basket and a spade are hired to fetch sands and stone nearer to the project location. They are hired on a daily rate. If I need a helper to lift bricks or sand upstairs, I may recruit a labourer from there. After explaining the task in detail, I will negotiate the daily wage and bring a labourer to work for me (Worker code: W3).*

I followed up the worker as to how he assessed the skill level of the waiting migrant labourers in the street labour markets. He then explained that labourers sat in separate groups according to their skills and after identifying the relevant group he approached the group with his offer. Interested labourers asked him about the details of the work and wage rate.

As he further extended:

> *It is easy for me to get an idea about the skill level of the labourers waiting there. The tilers will sit in a separate group. The labourers with baskets and spades will sit in a separate place. The helpers of masons will also sit separately. There are some segments. If I need tilers, I will go straight to the tilers' section. I will tell them that I will need a helper. Some of them will spontaneously respond to my call. Then daily wage will be negotiated on the spot (Worker code: W3).*

The interviews with the recruiters revealed that they actually utilised their personal judgement to assess the skill level of the labourers in the street labour markets. Due to frequent visits and constant dealings with this particular group of labourers, they had gained extensive experience and knowledge in relation to street labour markets. The subjective knowledge of the recruiters helped them assess the labourers' skills and negotiate wage accordingly.

As one recruiter reported:

> *I have all the knowledge to assess if a labourer is a newcomer or experienced. His equipment will speak. If he is experienced, his spade and basket will prove that he is already experienced. The spade possessed by an experienced labourer must have some signs of wear whereas a newcomer's spade will look new (Recruiter code: R3).*

Although this recruiter reported that he determined labourers' wage on the basis of his subjective judgement of skills, the workers reported that there was no specific rate for a labourer in street markets. Wage rates fluctuated every day depending on the demand and supply of labourers in the markets. When the demand for labourers was high, the wage rate was high too. On the contrary, when the supply of labourers was abundant, the wage rate decreased. The migrant workers' own perspectives revealed that they had no idea about which factors affected the availability of work offers and wage rates in the market. Therefore, they set their own rates just by observing what rates other labourers in the market were accepting.

As one female worker reported:

> *Here the wage rate fluctuates every day. Every day there is a certain rate and we know what rate is going on for that day. The hirer will offer me following that rate. I ask other labourers waiting in the market, 'sister, what rate are you getting today?' Hearing from them, I ask for my wage accordingly … Some days the wage is high but some days the wage is low (Worker code: W15).*

From this comment, it can be seen that the female migrant labourers in Dhaka's street labour markets experience wage fluctuations that heavily affect their daily earnings. When a labourer sees someone accepting work offer with a low wage rate, then she starts accepting low rate too. This practice indicates that the migrant labourers in the street markets are vulnerable to considerable uncertainty and instability in relation to income. For the recruiters, street labour markets are the most favourable place to hire cheap labourers when the fluctuations are high. For the labourers, street markets are the most vulnerable place to find work. A brief period of offered work and the abundant supply of poor labourers in the city create pressures for the female migrant labourers to compete in the informal labour market for their daily survival.

6.2.4.2 Gender-segmented recruitment

On-street labour hire practices characterise a gender-segmented recruitment process through which the recruiters recruit female labourers only. In fact, this is the only way the female labourers are recruited. They are predominantly recruited for a range of tasks often described by the recruiters as "light work". The range includes excavating, lifting, brick crushing, hammering, scrubbing and cleaning. The recruiters claimed that these were the common tasks that female labourers hired from street labour markets did. The interviews with the recruiters revealed that their specific preference for female labourers was related to wage differences. They paid female labourers less than male labourers and this ensured their profit.

One recruiter reported:

> *There are some tasks in a project where female labourers are commonly employed. For example, there are some light work where we prefer female labourers over males. This is because of the subcontractor's own profit. He will need to pay a male worker 500 Taka, but a female labourer for the same task will be paid 300 Taka (Recruiter code: R1).*

This recruiter specifies that inequality favours the subcontractors who choose female labourers over the male labourers in the name of recruitment for light work. This inequality shows that the female labourers' wage can be 40 percent less than male labourers'. In spite of accepting this unequal wage, availability of work for female labourers in street markets is scarce. While visiting the street labour markets, I noticed hundreds of female labourers sitting idle and gossiping. They were waiting in the hope of getting work but most of them went home without work. Observing them for a whole day, I found that every day a large number of female labourers congregated on the streets but failed to get work and it was clear that living without work was very common for them.

As one female worker reported:

> *I do not get work every day. Sometimes I get six days, sometimes four days and sometimes two days a month. It depends. But I come to the street market and wait there every day. I just wait there hoping to be hired. The day I do not get work I feel disappointed … I often decide to accept a lower rate because if I do not get work for a day, the money will not come*

> *and it will be hard for me … When I do not get work, I believe that luck did not favour me that day (Worker code: W14).*

There is a daily struggle for women to get work from the street labour markets. In spite of accepting low wages from the potential recruiters, this woman did not get daily work. Unavailability of work contributed to her disappointment. Since the female labourers in the street markets are basically day labourers, their daily income is mainly spent on basic needs such as meals. Returning home without work therefore means starving or debt. Background discussions with the female labourers revealed that in order to cope with the situations related to unavailability of work they either starved that day or borrowed money on high interest rates to purchase daily meals.

Since there is no guarantee of getting work in the street labour markets, female labourers do not bring their lunch or food along with them while coming and waiting in the markets. In some cases, they lease a room in a slum near the location of the street labour market. As discussed earlier in chapter five, I visited a few slums around the street labour markets in Dhaka where the female migrant labourers live.

One female worker reported:

> *I leased this room here because I wanted to stay close to the street labour market. Everyone living around this place goes to that market. This location saves time. After completing all necessary household work in the early morning, I can go to the street market and wait there to be hired. Once confirmed, I usually request the recruiters to allow me [few minutes] to go back to my room so that I can take some food with me for the whole day. They usually allow this. Some recruiters are good and they wait until I return. However, some are bad and they do not wait although they confirmed. In some cases, when I go to bring food from my room, they leave me in the meantime and select another female labourer instead (Worker code: W15).*

This comment suggests that in the absence of any guarantee of getting work the female labourers do not take food with them until they are sure of work. However, the brief time they take to fetch food is also marked by uncertainty as the hirers may not be willing to wait and thus they may select another labourer. Considering the time pressure and insecurity, it can be argued that the street labour markets in Dhaka operate in an intense way revealing insecurities at every layer of operation.

The most critical problem evident in case of gender-segmented recruitment is the security concerns for the female labourers. The street labour markets operate in a way that does not specify the location of the workplace. Hiring from certain points in the city, the recruiters transport the female labourers to various project locations. As a result, the family members of the female labourers do not know where they are finally transported to. This increases the insecurity for the female labourers in street labour markets.

As one recruiter of female labourers explained:

> *In case of hiring from street labour market, a female labourer's family only knows that she has gone to the market in search of work but they do not know where and which project she has gone to today. If an accident occurs, it is difficult to trace her address and family details (Recruiter code: R3).*

Gender-segmented on-street recruitment practice creates various types of risks for the female labourers. While their recruiters get cheap labour by offering lower wage than the male labourers, this recruitment practice does not guarantee continuous employment. Unpredictable work opportunities, unstable income and security risks characterise this recruitment practice.

6.3 Conclusion

The chapter is built upon empirical evidence that reveals that the individual recruiters dominate the recruitment process and they discretionally determine the terms and conditions of employment. Empirical evidence and contextual discussions presented in this chapter reveal that recruitment of migrant construction workers in Dhaka is a multi-tiered process. The recruitment practices discussed above show a wide social context of recruitment that helps the rural labourers interact with their recruiters. In all nine types of recruitment practices discussed above, the role of individuals, as recruiters, is predominant. These individuals include a range of people in village and city. They include subcontractors and the migrant workers themselves. They are socially inter-connected with each other through their friends, relatives and neighbours and therefore they navigate and intersect throughout the process of recruitment. Their extensive layers confirm that they are the main actors in the structure of recruitment in Dhaka's construction projects. Their labour management functions contribute to employment relationships that significantly influence the employment conditions and migration outcomes for the migrant construction workers. In this context, it is important to investigate the migrant construction workers' employment relationships and the role of individual recruiters in shaping them. The next chapter will therefore examine the workers' experiences of working with the recruiters.

7 WORKING WITH THE RECRUITERS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter unravels the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects and the role of recruiters in shaping them. It examines the migrant construction workers' experiences of working with their recruiters. It is particularly focussed on how the workers deal with the recruiters and their extended layers in their workplace. Given the complex structures of recruitment practices, the workplace experiences of Dhaka's migrant construction workers are determined by the employment relationships that they go through. The chapter therefore examines the migrant construction workers' own views and lived experiences regarding the prevalent structure of the employment relationships that they find themselves in. Situated in thematic discussions led by the "individualised labour" theme, the chapter explains how the recruiters flexibilise migrant labour through their individualised labour management practices. Probing into these practices, it explains the workers' own views that help them continue their work with their recruiters.

7.2 Employment relationships and the role of recruiters

The interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters reveal that the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects are embedded in the indirect recruitment practices. The employment relationships represent that the individual recruiters dominate in all respects through the discretion they have in determining the terms and conditions of employment. The predominant role of the recruiters is not limited to workplace only, they make the workers dependent on them in all respects. Extending from workplace to personal life of the workers, their dominant role is evident in job searching, upward career mobility, and offering personal support to the workers. The workers perceive the extensive role of their recruiters as enabling but their lived experiences suggest that the recruiters create various forms of pressures and insecurities which make the workers individually subordinate to them.

7.2.1 Recruiters in job hunting

The workers' views on their indirect recruitment and employment relationships revealed that their recruiters had the capacity to help them find jobs in Dhaka. Upon completion of one project, the recruiters found another to relocate the workers attached to them. Thus the recruiters continuously relocated the workers from project to project. By finding new projects, the recruiters actually guaranteed continuous employment of the workers in their teams. The workers perceived the job hunting capacity of their recruiters to be an obligatory responsibility that enabled them to be employed without interruptions.

One worker reported:

Once this project is completed, the person [the subcontractor] who brought me will find new

> *project for me. It is his responsibility, not mine. Our subcontractor starts finding the next project while undertaking an ongoing project. We constantly get projects one after another. He already has an offer to start contracting another project immediately … That will be an industrial project (Worker code: W12).*

This comment shows that the workers consider it is the subcontractor's responsibility to find new opportunities once the current project finishes. In Dhaka's construction projects, the subcontractors usually take all responsibility to place the workers in another project when their current project is accomplished. However, in the absence of a written contract, this is a verbal commitment only. The perceived mutual trust between the workers and their recruiters functions as a catalytic factor to impose the responsibility of finding new projects onto the recruiters although the recruiters are always not capable of offering continuous work to the workers.

As one recruiter reported:

> *If I do not have any work [or project] to offer, I will dismiss the workers saying that currently I do not have any work for them and therefore they should leave me. Then some of them may try finding work with another recruiter, some may return to their village (Recruiter code: R2).*

Uncertainty of employment is very high in Dhaka's construction projects and the recruiters are not always able to offer constant employment. The individual recruiters, as perceived by the workers to be the guarantor of continuous employment, occasionally dismiss the workers on account of unavailability of employment. Background discussions with the recruiters revealed that the lifetime of a construction project and thus the availability of work can be affected by several factors. A project may unexpectedly terminate or halt due to various reasons including bad weather conditions, lack of materials, inadequate labour turnout, interrupted funding from the builders and contractors, machinery collapse, technical faults, design alteration, etc. Since most of the workers in Dhaka's construction projects are recruited from the recruiter's own networks, the recruiters are under constant pressures to find and offer continuous work to the workers they recruit. Inability to offer continuous work can affect the recruiters' personal image which might, in the long term, dissuade the potential rural labourers from joining their teams. With a view to maintaining their personal image as competent recruiters in terms of the capacity to offer long-term employment, they continuously search for projects to fit the workers they recruit and retain.

One worker reported:

> *After finishing the earlier project, I moved here. Upon completion of that project, one day our recruiter confirmed that he was going to contract the Moghbazar flyover project [the current one] too. In fact, while we were working on the earlier project, some preliminary work on the current project had already started. The recruiter confirmed then that we would be moving to this project shortly (Worker code: W6).*

The recruiter of this worker confirmed that the next employment was organised while undertaking an ongoing project. The workers often appreciate this kind of job hunting capacity of the recruiters. However, the recruiters' capacity to find work opportunities is usually determined by their

relationship with the builders or contractors who subcontract them for specific tasks in construction projects. The relationship between a contractor or builder and a subcontractor may not guarantee constant availability of projects, but it is likely that the former helps the latter by fitting them into suitable options at a specific time. However, the contractors or builders themselves may not have projects ready to be offered all the time. The workers' views revealed that they considered these practices good for them as they were usually not double pressured to find work in addition to the pressure of timely completion of assigned tasks.

One worker reported:

> *The only advantage of being recruited through the subcontractors is the continuity of work. They always have some work to offer. I do not see any other advantage except this. We can get work constantly and hence we remain attached to them. They also retain us for their own benefits (Worker code: W3).*

Migrant workers prefer to remain attached to particular subcontractors, or recruiters, believing that they have the capability to find and offer work to the workers. The subcontractors have work to offer and the workers need assured availability of work. The employment relationships between the workers and their recruiters are guided by this important factor.

7.2.2 Recruiters as employers

Due to the extensive role of the recruiters in job hunting and job matching, most of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka strongly supported indirect labour recruitment through individual recruiters. Accepting indirect recruitment as a normal phenomenon in their work life, they believed that the personal network effect was the most crucial factor in finding and getting work in Dhaka. They reported that labour recruitment through personal contacts was so widespread in Dhaka's construction projects that it could be very difficult, even impossible, for a newcomer to get work without having good references.

One worker reported:

> *I would have not been able to migrate to Dhaka had there been no subcontractors. I came through them. Otherwise, the main contractor would not have found me. Their engineers would have not brought me by locating me in villages. They just sit on chairs and do official routine work. A rural labourer would never be able to find this work directly if he had not come through a subcontractor. For example, a labourer from Noakhali[11] came here yesterday and approached our team leader to get a job. Our team leader told him that initially he must come with identity documents because he was unfamiliar to him. I did not need to give any identity documents in my case. Many subcontractors bring labourers from their own district only and retain them. Here we are all from Pabna[12] only. While staying with other district's people, they may treat us badly and we may also treat them badly, whereas living with people from the same district only, we are happy to endure each other even if someone does something unacceptable (Worker code: W7).*

[11] Noakhali is a south-eastern district in Bangladesh.

[12] Pabna is a north-western district in Bangladesh.

This is very strong evidence, confirming that indirect recruitment is the only option for the rural labourers to migrate to Dhaka for construction work. Without involvement of individual recruiters, it is impossible for them to get work on Dhaka's construction projects. For a newcomer, checking identity documents is one of the critical steps they need to pass. Background discussions with the workers revealed that many labourers in Bangladesh did not have such documents. Moreover, in spite of having identity documents some labourers were reluctant to present them to their recruiters fearing that they might be traced and charged in case of any unexpected circumstances such as theft. Trust was therefore a significant factor in recruiting new labourers. The individual recruiters preferred recruiting the labourers whose identification they could trust easily. In this context, labourers originating from the recruiters' own locality were preferred over others. It not only helped the recruiters minimise their security concerns but created a non-complaining team. As the worker quoted above indicated, their common locality made them considerate and caring about each other. Thus they were able to live together in harmony which eventually benefited their recruiters by seeking fewer interventions at the time of misunderstandings or disagreements. These factors are discussed further in section 7.2.5 conceptualising them as "same locality effects".

Interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters confirmed that trust was one of the important factors in recruiting new labourers. Many elements could confirm trust, having an identity document was one of them. When the recruiter and the labourer were both from the same locality, identity documents would not be an issue. However, there was a rampant and discretionary practice of checking identity documents if the labourer and the recruiter were unfamiliar to each other and not from the same locality. This practice characterised personal network-based individualised labour recruitment practices in Dhaka's construction projects. Many workers therefore believed that they would have not got work if they had approached their recruiters without having a strong reference from their own networks.

As one worker explained:

> *If my cousin had not helped me get this work, I doubt if I would be able to get this work directly. No one wants to give work to a labourer coming directly. He will not get work because anyone wishing to give him work is not sure of his residential address and identity. No one will give work readily without verifying these (Worker code: W10).*

For the individual recruiters, a new labourer's identity and address are the key matters to check. Due to this predominant practice of verification of identity, the rural labourers are actually forced to be part of the indirect recruitment process.

Because trust is an important component of the employment relationship between the workers and their recruiters (see section 7.2.5), it significantly resonates the assurance of continuous availability of the workers. The recruiters in Dhaka's construction projects reported that they preferred

labourers from their own locality because they believed that the labourers originating from their personal networks would be non-complaining and thus able to continue for a long term. This could minimise their risks to timely production due to labour shortage or unexpected absence of the workers. However, I realised that most of the workers were not aware of this dimension of the trust relationship. Their subjective narratives revealed that the rampant practice of network-based recruitment was to prevent unexpected circumstances (e.g. theft of equipment) only. As a result, the workers overlooked the assurance of continuous availability, the key benefit that their recruiters preferred. The workers accepted the network-based recruitment practices as common affairs in their work life and direct recruitment appeared to be an impossible event in their workplace.

As one worker stated:

> *For a newcomer, it will be impossible to get work if he comes alone directly. This is because no one knows him in the city. Who knows, he might have a motive to steal or do something bad. Therefore, no one will give him work. It is absolutely impossible to get work alone, without approaching a subcontractor (Worker code: W11).*

Indirect recruitment was so widespread and common that the concept of "employer" was illusive to the migrant construction workers. I asked them about their own perceptions on the concept of employer. In particular, I repeatedly asked them to identify the person that they perceived to be their employer (see Appendix F and G). For the term "employer", they generally pointed the person who employed them and paid their wages. The workers argued that the person responsible for the payment of wages should be their employer. Sharing their personal experiences, they specified that indirect recruitment practices did not allow them to contact the builder or contractor of projects. Therefore, they simply termed their payers, predominantly subcontractors, as employers.

One female worker stated:

> *We do not need to know who the builder or contractor is. Whoever pays my hirer, that's not my concern. I will take my wage from my hirer … So the person who hires and pays me is my employer (Worker code: W14).*

As this comment suggests, there are two key components associated with the term "employer": hire and payment for the female workers hired from the street labour markets. In Dhaka, I found that many workers preferred to identify their subcontractors as their employers. When asked further, they replied that their subcontractors not only helped them come to Dhaka and get work, but they were socially connected to each other. They thought that the term "employer" should be quite broad and founded in reciprocity. Therefore, for them the term "employer" referred to a person who extended support both in Dhaka and in the village where their families were living.

One worker commented:

> *I will say my subcontractor is my employer. Because he has brought me here and he pays my wage. He often visits my village [and my family members]. We are from the same village and my uncles and other relatives are his relatives too (Worker code: W8).*

A subcontractor recruited this worker and he prefers to identify his subcontractor as his employer. This is because of the subcontractor's role in recruitment process, payment of wages and the socially constructed relationship he shares with him. Detailed exploration of the common perceptions of the workers in Dhaka revealed that the workers perceived their subcontractors as employers because of their central role in the workers' work life and personal life. The workers were highly dependent on them in all respects.

7.2.3 Recruiters in upward career mobility

Interviews with the migrant construction workers and their recruiters revealed that the workers had strong aspirations and confidence in regards to their upward career mobility. Working with the recruiters onsite, they believed that they would be able to acquire on-the-job skills and get promotion in the near future. Much of their confidence was actually supported by their lived experience and personal real-world observation.

One worker reported:

> *Here I have seen people move upward and I believe that I will be able too. I am confident that if I continue doing this work for another five years, I will be able to prosper more. Here everything increases and nothing decreases … It is quite common that people started as a labourer and got promotion by acquiring skills. This way they became a foreman (Worker code: W7).*

The worker's personal belief on upward career mobility was developed through observing many other people around him. He considered becoming a foreman as a major development in his career. This is because foremen in Dhaka's construction projects are generally seen to be wealthier and more powerful than the general workers. Having the ability and power to manage and control a group of workers, a foreman is considered to be a lucrative position that the workers aspire to. The workers in Dhaka are quite aware of the process of getting promotion to become a foreman. Their daily experiences and personal observation help them believe that they are correctly placed to achieve necessary promotions.

When asked about upward career mobility, the workers frequently referred to a phrase "my foreman once was a worker like me" or "my subcontractor once was a worker like me". I realised that they were matching their personal expectations and career aspirations to their superiors' experiences. As a result, when asked about the opportunities for career mobility, they instantly referred to what they had already seen. Seeing daily activities performed by the foremen and subcontractors onsite, the workers aspired to these positions to earn more and have more power. Thus they viewed the life history of their foreman or subcontractor as an exemplary success and believed that a similar thing could happen to them.

One apprentice worker reported:

> *Our foreman once was a helper like me. Then he became a mason. He has been appointed as foreman now because he was a good mason earlier. One day he may become a subcontractor. I believe that it is possible to move upward. I do not bother what other workers think … My wage will increase when I will become a mason from being a helper. I am just waiting for that (Worker code: W2).*

When the workers were referring to their career aspirations, I noted that they were optimistic and prepared to take over more responsibilities and thus progress their career up to a subcontractor position. This is because they were aware that becoming a foreman or subcontractor would require them to perform a wider range of tasks than the workers usually do. They also referred to the capacity of retaining a large group of workers as an important career attribute.

As one worker explained:

> *Here I have joined this project as a labourer. I may get some extra responsibilities [as a foreman] if I move just one step upward. Thus I might move one by one step. Someday an opportunity might arise to become a subcontractor for a project. I understand fitting jobs well and after having some money I might contract a project where I should be asked to accomplish the project by employing some workers. This is very extensive in the sector. It is very common that a helper eventually becomes a subcontractor. Without working as a helper, no one has become a subcontractor. I do not think that is possible … Our subcontractor in this project was once a foreman and now he works as an independent subcontractor in another project too. At least 100 workers now work in his team. My future plan is to become a subcontractor. Then I will try to make a team of workers and employ them … I have personally seen many people progressing fast, why shouldn't I? One day the opportunity will arise for me. I am just waiting for that (Worker code: W6).*

Although the workers aspired to become subcontractors, as evident from the above quote, they were concerned about the additional responsibilities and hassles associated with the subcontractor position. Explaining the pressures of a subcontractor, they reported that career mobility up to the subcontractor position incurs many risks. Thus becoming a subcontractor will require them to deal with a range of daily issues in relation to onsite labour management.

One worker stated:

> *I am very hopeful and I believe that this work provides opportunities for occupational mobility. Many people like my uncle, who was a poor living herdsman in a farmer's house, came to Dhaka and learned masonry work. At present, he is a subcontractor. He is a millionaire now … Now he rides a motorcycle. He just pops in to see the progress of work done by the workers and pay their wages … I understand that his life is not hassle-free either. He has the responsibility to pay wages, take care of any sick and injured workers and to find out if someone is lost in the city. To say, if I am lost, certainly the pressure will go to him. My family members will pressure him saying 'he was working with you. You should know about his whereabouts well. You must trace him.' Like this (Worker code: W1).*

In spite of knowing the pressures associated with the subcontractor position, the workers in Dhaka's construction projects reported that they wanted to become a subcontractor not only for the sake of better income and more power but for the advantage of earning money without working with own hands. Since construction is physically demanding work, the workers reported that they wanted a life where they would not be required to work so hard. Therefore they perceived that becoming a subcontractor would allow them to earn money without such hard work.

One worker reported:

> *For this work, career mobility means becoming a subcontractor. It means I will not work using my own hands. I will just recruit some people from my own networks and they will work for me. It gives opportunity to earn without working hard (Worker code: W3).*

Becoming a subcontractor was in fact a common aspiration among the migrant workers. Although they referred to their personal observation and real examples, they indicated that the process of achieving upward career mobility was not always very straightforward. In absence of any official skill assessment system, such opportunities were largely influenced by the workers' personal relationships with their superiors and recruiters. In most cases, the recruiters' discretionary choice gave the workers suitable opportunities to move upward.

As the worker continued:

> *Promotions depend on acquiring skills. Moreover, if superior workmates [or trainers] are your own relatives, that could be very helpful. Therefore, even if the trainers are unknown, the learners should consider them close relatives. This is like a teacher-student relationship. A helper must obey the mason and follow his instructions. Then the mason might think, 'this helper is good. If I can make him skilled, he will remember me forever.' Actually it does not take too long (Worker code: W3).*

In addition to skills, an apprentice worker's personal relationship with his trainer could therefore be an important factor to get promotions. Thus the opportunities for upward career mobility could be influenced by simple factors such as a mason's interest to make someone a mason. The trainers could offer opportunities to the apprentice workers thinking that the latter would remember them for the rest of their life. This way the trainers' aspirations for getting gratitude could lead to the prospects for workers' promotions. In addition to this, some workers believed that a heaven-sent opportunity could be the only way to move their career upward. They believed that an appropriately generous offer could make a big change in their career by helping them become subcontractors. They reported this kind of offer might come anytime.

As one worker stated:

> *While working here, one day a contractor may come to me and approach me by saying, 'I can see that you are very skilled in this work and you deliver quality work. I want you to become a subcontractor for one of my projects.' If such opportunity comes to me, I will be able to subcontract the project and I think I am now capable enough to accomplish a project as a subcontractor. Working on that site, my contacts will increase then and thus I may get another project to contract (Worker code: W4).*

This worker perceived career mobility as an opportunity to become an independent subcontractor which he saw happening every now and then around him. Seeing others going through similar opportunities, he also believed that this kind of opportunity might come to him anytime. I asked the recruiters to reconfirm this fact and they reported that similar opportunities came to them and thus they became foremen and then subcontractors. However, as they explained, there were several other factors linked to the opportunities.

One recruiter explained:

> *Every worker cannot become a foreman. It depends on opportunities. Ultimately the subcontractor will give that opportunity. You have to have a good relationship with the subcontractor. You have to prove to him that you perform sincerely. Experience does not matter. It is only hard work that he likes. Workers have to consider working hard in order to enable the subcontractor to earn some profit (Recruiter code: R4).*

This recruiter considered that subcontractors are the only options to offer the long-cherished opportunity for promotions that the workers aspire to. Possibilities for such opportunity could be shaped by several factors such as the personal relationship with the subcontractor and the ability to work hard and perform extraordinarily. The subcontractors offer the opportunities to those workers who are perceived to have these qualifications. In fact, the subcontractors choose those workers only who have the abilities to show outstanding performance for timely completion of assigned tasks so that the subcontractors can earn profit.

7.2.4 Recruiters in offering personal support

The recruiters had a central role in terms of not only hunting for jobs and offering upward career mobility for the workers but also offering personal support to the workers. The interviews revealed that the recruiters had an extensive role in looking after the personal matters of the workers in Dhaka and their family members in their village. They extended personal support to help prevent the workers from worrying at their worksite. They offered financial assistance, purchased over-the-counter medicines and protected the workers from police arrest and outside chaos. This support was mainly intended to stop the workers and their family members from worrying in order to get maximum output from the workers. However, due to the social connections between the recruiters and the workers, the latter regarded these supports as integral to their employment relationships.

7.2.4.1 Financial assistance

The workers in Dhaka's construction projects reported that their recruiters offered financial assistance not only when they needed it but also when their family members needed it. Whenever the workers or their family members received some advance money, either the full or partial amount they needed, they considered this an important favour from their recruiters.

As one worker explained:

> *When my parents have financial problems, I tell him and ask his favour to get some money. Then he informs the contractor about that. If he has some money with him at that time, he will give that to me to send to my parents. He will adjust my Khoraki or I will repay the money when I get payment of my due wages (Worker code: W1).*

This statement makes it sound as though the recruiter lent money to help the worker, however, he actually paid the worker's due wages, when the worker needed money urgently, before the stipulated date of payment. Other workers in Dhaka's construction projects frequently reported similar circumstances. They viewed this as generous help, being part of the recruiters'

responsibilities to look after the interests of the workers' family members in their village. Even if the recruiters were not able to help with the full amount requested, the workers considered the positive attitude of their recruiters as a great favour to them.

As one worker stated:

> *If I tell him that my family is struggling and I will need some money urgently, he will try his best to solve that by giving at least half of the requested amount. He will say, 'please keep this amount. I do not have enough money to give you the full amount at this moment'. I will understand that (Worker code: W2).*

It was considered by the workers that this immediate financial support was part of the personal care that their recruiters offered to them.

7.2.4.2 Caregiving

In addition to urgent financial assistance, other support that the workers commonly mentioned was the recruiters' caregiving during their sickness. In particular, workers who worked and lived onsite with their recruiters frequently mentioned their recruiters' caregiving as integral to their employment relationship. Migrating and living without close family in Dhaka, the workers perceived themselves as helpless during sickness. Their recruiters offered a range of caregiving supports such as body massage, special diet, over-the-counter medicines, leave of absence, etc.

As the worker continued:

> *When I am sick [because of body aches], he massages my hands and feet. Even if I wish to eat something special during that time, he brings that for me. He takes me to a doctor or hospital, if needed. Although he adjusts the expenses later from my due wages (Worker code: W2).*

From this statement, it seems that the recruiter took extra care of the worker when he was unwell. This quote can be critically linked to another worker's (worker code: W1) statement above in section 7.2.3 where he indicated that the recruiter and he shared the same region of origin and therefore the former was under social pressure if he became affected by any unintended circumstances. The village-based social relationship between the workers and their recruiters was an important factor that could make the recruiters responsible for the physical well-being of the workers they recruited. The recruiters in Dhaka were aware of the potential social pressures they might face in case of any negligence to the workers.

As one recruiter stated:

> *In case of sickness, I take care of them. Otherwise, if the worker's family members know that I am not attending them well that will defame my image in the village (Recruiter code: R5).*

While the family members of both the recruiters and the workers were in the village, they were mutually acquainted. The recruiters' social position and prestige in the village could be affected in case of any negligence to the workers they had recruited and brought to Dhaka. The village-based

social relationship therefore made the recruiters compassionate to the workers in case of sickness. Section 7.2.5 will discuss in detail similar issues in regards to the effects of same locality on employment relationship.

Nevertheless, although the workers were generally very appreciative of the caregiving supports they received from their recruiters, informal discussions with the recruiters revealed an important dimension behind this. The recruiters explained that their projects had specific completion timelines and therefore they had to work through strict time pressures. The workers' sickness could severely affect the progress of their projects. In order to get the maximum labour turnout and thus meet the deadline, they helped the workers recover quickly. All their caregiving supports were related to this intention. To aid the workers' speedy recovery, the recruiters therefore purchased over-the-counter medicines for the unwell workers based on their own discretion. In many cases, the recruiters themselves determined the level of injury and the nature of treatment required, as if they were medical doctors.

One worker said:

> *In case of any injury, he takes care of me. This is because I work under his supervision and he must look after me. If I have an injury or severe pain, he brings medicines and tablets and I take them. If the pain is serious, he will allow me to rest for a day or two. If I get well by then, I will work. However, if I am not able to continue due to severe illness, he will send me to my family (Worker code: W13).*

While in this case the recruiter supplied medicine, his lack of expertise in choosing the right medicines, from the nearby pharmacy, could pose greater health risks to the worker. Informal discussions with the recruiter revealed that he usually purchased strong antibiotics for the workers. In spite of potential health risks, the worker viewed his recruiter's medicines as showing great care, however, I found that costs of medicines were adjusted from the workers' due wages.

As the worker continued:

> *He buys medicines for us and adjusts that later from our due wages. Sometimes I buy medicines myself after taking advance money from him. He adjusts that money by cutting my wage later (Worker code: W13).*

While the workers had no idea about what type of medicines they were given and how much they cost, a wage cut was common on the grounds of purchasing medicines during illness. In addition to that, there was no paid sick leave.

One worker told me:

> *During sickness such as flu for two-three days, I have to pay for the medicines I will be taking. I will not be paid at all for those days. I have to help myself at that time (Worker code: W11).*

Although there was no sickness leave in Dhaka's construction projects, the recruiters occasionally

practised forced unpaid leave due to sickness. They insisted that sick workers should leave Dhaka. The workers who did not leave in spite of sickness, had the challenge of curing themselves within a certain period of time, otherwise if they continued to be ill they were not allowed to stay onsite anymore.

One worker explained:

> *I have been feeling ill since yesterday. I have got flu. I am taking a rest now. I took the medicines that he [the recruiter] gave me. If I fail to recover in the next three-four days, he will ask me to go back to my family. I am staying here in spite of the illness because I have no other option as a poor worker. If someone is ill for a long period, he will ask them to leave the project and go home. Being ill, it is not possible to bear daily meal costs as I do not receive wages during illness. Therefore, we are forced to go home in such a situation (Worker code: W13).*

From this quote it can be seen that the migrant workers are under double pressures when they are unwell. On one hand, the sick workers take on time pressures to recover from illness and pay for the medicines. On the other hand, recruiters do not pay the workers on account of illness. Thus the workers are forced to leave Dhaka as they are unable to bear the costs of their daily meals. Any kind of sickness therefore increases the precariousness of the migrant workers in Dhaka's construction projects. In the absence of paid sick leave, their physical illness increases not only their financial pressures but the job uncertainties.

7.2.4.3 Protection from harassment

In addition to financial and medical support, the recruiters in Dhaka offered support to protect the workers from chaos and harassment in the city. The workers coming from villages generally viewed their surrounding urban environment as unsafe and chaotic. As a result, they wanted to keep themselves protected by their recruiters in order to avoid any unexpected situation outside their projects. Interviews with the workers and their recruiters revealed that in some cases, the recruiters had to intervene in resolving the chaotic situations the workers experienced in the city. In serious cases such as police arrest, the intervention from the builders and contractors was necessary; however, in those cases the main point of contact was a subcontractor who later involved the builder or contractor.

For example:

> *If in any case the police arrest us, he will free us. This is his policy. This happens frequently. Police arrest us so frequently … I have had a beard since my adolescence. Once police arrested me suspecting that I was an Islamic extremist. I was taken to the police station. The contractor went to the station and freed me … In case of any major incident such as police arrest, the subcontractor contacts the contractor first and then he contacts the local police station. If any bribe is needed, the contractor pays that … The bribes are not adjusted from us because we are arrested while working for a contractor, not for ourselves. It is his work (Worker code: W7).*

Clearly, migrant construction workers in Dhaka are vulnerable to police arrest on account of alleged suspicious activities. Interviews revealed that when they were arrested, they usually rang

and contacted their team leader and colleagues. If their team leader and subcontractors were away, they themselves tackled the situations keeping constant contact, over phone, with their subcontractors and contractors.

One worker told me:

> *The other day we four workers went to the market to buy groceries in the evening … In the market, there are some troublemakers who liaise with the police to target innocent shoppers to harass and arrest. After giving bribes, they can be freed. The troublemakers grabbed one of us and dishonestly accused him of stealing their mobile phones. He denied that and argued … Then the police arrested him. The police were not willing to release him … The police were saying that he would be sent to jail shortly. We were trying to negotiate with the police. Everyone was saying that we should pay 1,000 Taka as a bribe to the police and thus he could be freed. At that moment, we did not have that amount of money with us. Concealing all the money that I had with me, I just kept 350 Taka in my wallet and showed that to the police. We begged the police for mercy. At last, at midnight we managed to release him for 300 Taka (Worker code: W4).*

The workers reported that any kind of unintended circumstances they faced outside their project usually required their subcontractors' intervention. The majority of the workers reported that their subcontractor's intervention, including money to be paid as a bribe, was guaranteed in case of any chaotic situations outside the project boundary.

A worker confirmed:

> *In the case of police harassment, he helps us to get released … The police arrested me the other day. After showing his visiting card and mobile phone number to the police, I rang him to establish conversation between the police and him. He arrived and released me from the police. He has very good relationship with the police and other armed forces. If the police demand a bribe, he pays that on our behalf. He does not cut that money from our salary. This is because we work for him and we do not have any control of such incidents (Worker code: W5).*

The worker proudly outlined his recruiter's intervention in case of police harassment, as the above quote suggests. He believed that his subcontractor had good contacts to protect the workers in Dhaka. The common perception of the workers in regards to their recruiters' capacity to protect them was backed by the recruiters' commitment to them. The interviews with the recruiters suggested that they morally and socially felt obligated to look after the workers in critical situations. They believed that their failure to protect the workers in the city might lower their image in the village and thus put them under social pressures.

One recruiter explained:

> *For example, one worker has gone out into the city and the police have arrested him. In that situation, he will ring me and ask my favour. If needed, I will go to rescue him from the police or send some money through mobile transfer to pay the police bribe. I will need to manage all these because I have brought them from their village. All risks are mine. Their life is in my hands (Recruiter code: R5).*

Clearly, the recruiter was prepared to offer bribes to police in order to free the workers that he

recruited and managed. Because of his village-based social relationships with the workers, he was concerned to keep his personal goodwill and status back in the village where the workers also originated from. Given the widespread effects of this relationship, it is important to look into how the same locality influences the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects. The sections below discuss this dimension in detail.

7.2.5 Recruiters and the same locality effects

The employment relationship found in the construction projects revealed reciprocity among the recruiters and the workers. Their mutual interdependence contributed to their employment relationship by enabling them to look after each other's interests. The reciprocal relationship was based on trust and loyalty whereby the recruiters trusted the workers and the workers were loyal to their recruiters. Moreover, the sense of obligation surrounding the relationship made the recruiters duty-bound to pay the workers on time while the workers offered their maximum productivity to please their recruiters. In this context, the employment relationship is significantly attributed to social connections among the recruiters and workers who often share the same original locality.

7.2.5.1 Risks of non-payment

Interviews with the workers and their recruiters revealed that the most significant consideration in the same locality-based employment relationship was the payment of wages. Among many other factors, the workers viewed the same locality effects as highly influencing factors for timely payment of their wages.

One worker stated:

> *There are many advantages of coming from the same locality. Since he [the recruiter] is from the same village as me, I will never need to worry about my due wages. In any way [fearing his own prestige], he will pay my dues. On the contrary, if I work with someone unknown, I may need to fight for my due wages and eventually I may need to leave the money at the end (Worker code: W4).*

The migrant construction workers' concern in relation to wage payment was linked to the origin of the recruiters they worked for. They believed that the recruiters from the same locality would not deceive them in terms of wages. The social ties they commonly shared in their local areas supported their belief. The recruiters also had similar views suggesting that their social bonding with the workers pressurised them to be meticulous in terms of paying wage.

One recruiter outlined:

> *It is beneficial to have workers from my own locality. The recruiters from the same locality will have some kind of sympathy … If in any case I do not pay due wages on time, it is easy to pressurise me from the village. Therefore, recruiters from the same locality cannot deceive the workers in any way (Recruiter code: R3)*

Clearly, this suggests social pressures on the recruiters that make them socially accountable to

other people outside the workplace including their family members, neighbours and kin in their village. The recruiters in Dhaka were aware of the social relationship that could enable the workers to force them to pay their due wages. Considering the social accountability, they therefore dealt with payment matters with empathy.

7.2.5.2 Personal safety and protection

Interviews revealed that the same locality effects also impacted on the workers' moral strength and their feelings about personal safety. The workers believed that the recruiters from the same locality were more caring of their personal safety. Their mutually shared social bonding allowed them to believe that they would never need to confront any physical assault in the presence of their recruiter.

As one worker reported:

> *In case of people coming from another locality, they will not even protest if anyone hits me in front of them. On the other hand, here my uncle [the recruiter] will never allow anyone to hit me even if he himself is attacked (Worker code: W1).*

When asked further about the rationale of similar confidence, as the above quote suggests, other workers reported that the same locality effects helped minimise the potential chances of misunderstanding in the workplace. As a result, they thought they were able to work in a friendly relationship with their recruiters which would not be possible if recruiters were from other localities.

One worker explained this:

> *If the recruiter is from the same region as my origin, there are some advantages. This is like a friendly relationship. Friends are always different from other people. There is no chance of misunderstanding [even in case of serious issues] in our workplace (Worker code: W2).*

The friendly relationship between the workers and their recruiters was embedded in the peace of mind that came from both sides. From the workers' side, they offered maximum commitment and obedience for the financial support and flexibility they received from their recruiters. On the other hand, the recruiters were assured of the workers' identity in their locality and thus offered exceptional support to them.

One worker reported:

> *If I need and want some extra money, he will certainly help me. This is because he knows very well that his money will not be forfeited, as I am not going to escape from him … For example, earlier I told him that I would like to go to visit my family. He instantly gave permission. I was allowed to visit my family and I stayed three days in my village … It is always good for a worker if the subcontractor is from his known contacts and the same locality. It gives mental strength (Worker code: W4).*

In addition to the mental comfort in the workplace, another important dimension related to the workers' feelings about their personal safety and protection was familiarity in the city. The workers

believed that working with the recruiters from the same locality allowed them to be familiar about the areas near project locations. Quick familiarity offered them some advantages such as shopping on credit.

For example:

> *He [the recruiter] has been working here for a long time. With his reference, I can shop at local grocery shops on credit. In case of any problem [I make here], he will be made liable. If anything happens, he will take responsibility. If I do not pay the shop's dues, he must pay on my behalf. He has already introduced me to the shop (Worker code: W10).*

The workers reported that this kind of support was only available when the recruiters and they were from the same locality. They could not think of getting such benefits if someone from another locality recruited them.

7.2.5.3 Loyalty of workers

The notion of loyalty usually involves a desire to remain with an employer and feelings of attachment to him (Davis-Blake, Broschak, & George, 2003). Although the workers in Dhaka frequently reported that their recruiter's reference helped them become familiar with the city, I discovered that their familiarity in the city contributed to a challenge to their loyalty. In many cases, an extended network in the city helped the workers come in contact with outsiders and unknown people including potential recruiters. As a result, they were eventually offered the chance to switch to other projects with better wages. However, the workers' strong loyalty often prevented them from moving to other recruiters.

One worker explained:

> *When I work for him, I get familiarity in the city and thus I am able to switch to another recruiter. Some recruiters often come to us and offer better wages [up to 25 percent more than my current wage]. They attract us. However, we do not wish to move to them because it is our present subcontractor who has trained us. We once were laymen. He brought us from our village and made us skilled (Worker code: W7).*

It is evident from the above quote that the sense of loyalty among the migrant construction workers in Dhaka can be very strong. Although they migrate from their villages to earn better, they reject better offers from the recruiters from other localities. The relationship with their existing recruiters can be marked by a high level of loyalty allowing them to continue even though their wage is less than they are offered by outsiders.

7.2.6 Recruiters and their costs

Most of the construction workers expressed positive views supporting the indirect recruitment practices that enabled them to migrate and work in Dhaka, as discussed in section 7.2.2. Despite this, some workers were concerned with the multiple layers of individuals and their costs in the traditional practices of indirect employment. They pointed out wage cuts and underpayment as the

key problems of the multi-layered employment practices that deprived them from fair wage in Dhaka's construction projects.

For example:

> *The building company does not recruit us directly. If they had done so, we would have received a fair wage. I personally went to the building company and asked them why they were not interested in recruiting us directly and why they were recruiting us through subcontractors. They replied, 'look, you are a worker. There is no guarantee that you will turn up tomorrow. You may need leave, absences, etc. We subcontract the projects to the subcontractors and they are the best people to manage workers like you efficiently. Thus the projects can be completed quickly and on time. If we recruit you directly, we will see more losses.' I don't think direct recruitment means more losses. Direct recruitment will actually require the builders to pay a fair wage, that's understandable (Worker code: W6).*

In this example, the worker personally went to see the private building company executives with a hope of getting a position that was directly recruited and managed by the company. He believed that he was underpaid because of indirect recruitment. His conversation with the building company executives confirmed that the companies in Dhaka were not interested in recruiting construction workers directly because they considered subcontractors as the right persons to manage workers onsite on their behalf and ensure timely completion of projects. He also believed that labour recruitment and management through individual subcontractors actually deprived him of a fair wage, to ensure greater financial gains of the building companies.

As he continued:

> *We are actually sold many times. The building company sells us to the subcontractor, he then sells us to the foreman and the foreman makes a profit by underpaying us. The wage reaches us after cutting in a few tiers. They trade us in various tiers. For example, 700 Taka daily wage [as per current market rate] becomes 400 Taka in our case. The tiers are the result of the building company's interests … If the building company had recruited workers directly, the workers would have been interested to work even if the wage rate was lower than the market rate. For instance, [after direct recruitment] if they wish to pay 600 Taka that will still not be too bad compared to 700 Taka market rate. But now although the building company originally disburses our wage at 700 Taka rate, it reaches us as 300 Taka. It is the subcontractor who is getting benefits out of this practice (Worker code: W6).*

This worker provides important evidence explaining how indirect recruitment through individual recruiters such as subcontractors operationalises wage cuts in several layers. He personally described the practice of indirect recruitment as labour trading in several layers. Much of his frustration was related to his depressed wage. He personally aspired to be a directly recruited worker and for that he was prepared to accept a slightly lower wage rate than the market rate.

The workers' narratives revealed that their recruitment followed a layered recruitment practice that marked many scopes of exploitation such as wage cuts. I was convinced that the workers' perspectives on employment relationships were narrow. They considered their relations to the recruiters in terms of wages and payment only. Many of them believed that working hard in poor work conditions was traditionally embedded in their life and hence they were more cornered about

their payment than the workplace conditions. The workers' key concern was in relation to who would be recruiting them and who would pay their wages. Due to the nature of recruitment practices, in some cases it was very difficult for the workers to reach the responsible person to seek redress in the event of non-payment.

One female worker explained:

> *Earlier I worked somewhere for three days but the hirer did not pay my wages for one day. Now he is advising me to see the contractor and get my wages from him. Today I saw him in the street market. He was hiring another female worker today. He did the same thing [non-payment] to many female workers like me. One lady was saying that she had a similar experience and she went to chase him at his home but could not find him at home. Earlier one mason paid my wage partially. I informed the project owner about that but he refused to pay me as he did not hire me … I felt helpless and left without my dues (Worker code: W14).*

This comment suggests that the migrant construction workers hired from street labour markets often experience non-payment of their wages. Due to the nature of the verbal contract and the high flexibility of employment relationships, the female construction workers are unable to recover their dues. The prevalent structures of the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects actually favour the hirers or recruiters while intensifying the female workers' economic risks. In this context, gender relations are important. Since the recruiters in Dhaka are predominantly male, the female workers tend to think that they are unable to chase and win over their male recruiters. This belief is rooted in local cultural traditions where the males are seen to be more dynamic and powerful than the females (Ahsan, 1997; Choudhury, 2013).

The recruitment practices revealed that the project builders and owners never felt obligated to the workers. This is because they do not recruit the labourers themselves. The layered recruitment practices allowed them to distance themselves from labour-related issues while also keeping separate from any complaints from the workers. The individual recruiters situated between the workers and the builders are therefore able to exploit the workers through their own discretionary practices that the builders or owners might not be aware of.

As one female worker explained:

> *In some cases, cutting our wages the hirers keep a portion to themselves. The owner of the project will pay them 300 Taka but they will offer us 250 Taka. Thus they will cut 50 Taka from our wage. If it is a subcontracted work, the subcontractor hires us. If it is an owner's project, the owner may ask someone to hire a female worker. In that case, the owner will originally pay him 400 Taka to pass on to me but he will keep 100 Taka from that. This way he will earn 200 Taka just by hiring two female workers like me … In some cases, the hirers will instruct us not to tell the owner the actual wage he is paying us. For example, if the owner reimburses 350 Taka for each female worker, he may pay us 300 Taka and ask us not to reveal the real amount we are receiving. Thus he instructs us to tell the owner that we are receiving the same amount the owner reimburses … If we tell the owner the real amount, he may pressurise the hirer and eventually dismiss him. Thus both the hirer and we may lose work … This is so common for us … Arguing does not look good. I do not want to upset the hirer. I want to continue my work for promised days and therefore I do not protest cutting my wage as he does always. Everyone makes profit from female workers' wage. In this world, no one is honest actually (Worker code: W15).*

This shows the wage exploitation that the female workers experience. It is crucial evidence on how the female workers' wage is cut and underpaid through multi-layered recruitment. As the female worker explained, the hirers cut wages and pay less than the project owner originally reimbursed. Wage cuts, particularly in the case of the workers hired from street labour markets, were common in Dhaka's construction projects. The workers, both male and female, reported that they were well-aware of the wage cuts but they regarded this as normal fearing that any complaints might cause them to lose their job and discontinuation of their recruiters. Being financially stressed, the workers really wanted to continue their job despite their depressed wage. Taking advantage of the workers' fear of losing jobs, the recruiters were able to make profit.

One recruiter justified this:

> *When I need some [female] workers, I can ask a Sardar to supply a group. He then brings labourers for me. The advantage of using Sardar is to ensure that workers will be continuing their work and not leave me until the entire assignment finishes … He will tell me beforehand about how many workers he will be giving me and how much they should be paid … Thus I pay 340 Taka for each worker but the Sardar cuts 10 Taka and thus pays 330 Taka. He tells the workers that he manages and endures pressures from the subcontractor and organises equipment and tools for the workers. This way the workers accept such wage cuts because their Sardar guarantees getting continuous work … The workers are aware of this. They see this happening in front of them and accept this believing that he deserves the cut as he manages countless workplace pressures and chaos. Thus a Sardar earns a good amount of money if he manages 50 labourers. This is his profit (Recruiter code: R3).*

The justification provided by the subcontractor suggests that he engages another person, locally known as *Sardar*, to supply a group of labourers for the projects he subcontracts in Dhaka. The subcontractor in the above quote unveils how the individual hirers earn profit by cutting and underpaying the female workers' wage. When following up this issue with the workers, they reported that they accepted the wage cuts believing that their team leaders were working hard to find work for them and manage pressures at worksites. In addition to wage cuts, another issue I was told about by the subcontractor was irregular or non-payment of wages. In some cases, the individual hirers did not pay the workers in spite of receiving payment from the subcontractor. The discretionary payment practices followed by the *Sardars* led to irregular and non-payment of wage, particularly for the female workers hired from street labour markets.

As he continued:

> *There are some Sardars who do not pay the workers regularly in spite of receiving regular payments from the subcontractor. They lie to the workers that their subcontractor did not reimburse them yet. Sometimes, the subcontractor reimburses two days' due wages together but the Sardar pays one day's wage and lies that the subcontractor did not reimburse another day's wage yet. Moreover, sometimes the Sardars go to visit their village and do not return to Dhaka. They may stay in their village and not return anymore. As a result, the workers lose their due wages. This is how the Sardars deceive the workers … If a worker complains to me that the Sardar did not pay them, I will not take that responsibility. This is because I did not recruit them. It is the Sardar who recruited them for me and hence I should not bother with the complaint (Recruiter code: R3).*

This clearly shows the wage deception that occurs. As the subcontractor outlines, the *Sardars* in Dhaka deceive the workers by paying them irregularly. They not only cut the wages but keep the workers' wages unpaid in spite of receiving payments from their subcontractors. Moreover, sometimes they deceive the workers by going out of reach. As a result, the workers' due wages remain unpaid when their *Sardars* lie to them and leave the city. Because of indirect recruitment through an additional layer, the subcontractor, as quoted above, did not bother to find out if the *Sardar* was actually paying the workers or not. In case of any incidents of wage deception, he was unwilling to take any responsibility arguing that a *Sardar* recruited the workers and therefore he (the subcontractor) should not be responsible.

In spite of a wide range of malpractices, indirect recruitment was the norm in Dhaka's construction projects. During fieldwork, I had the chance to speak to a few builders, project owners and building companies. They reported that they were totally reluctant to recruit and mange workers onsite. They thought that labour management issues were too complex and cumbersome to be dealt with. Therefore, they supported indirect recruitment while mentioning that it helped them get the maximum labour output and complete projects taking into account intense time pressures. From the discussions, it appeared that subcontracting and indirect management of migrant labourers was so embedded in Dhaka's construction projects that every layer involved in subcontracting had a profit making intention. From top to bottom of the subcontracting process, workers' wages were cut at every layer and the actual wage they received was severely affected by this process.

One recruiter explained this:

> *For example, the contractor told me that he is contracting this project [from the building company] at 200 Taka per feet rate. But perhaps he is actually contracting at 180 Taka rate. This way he will earn 20 Taka per feet and thus he will earn a big amount of money just by subcontracting the work through me. He will show the building company one rate but pay me [the subcontractor] another rate … The building companies do not implement the projects directly because they do not want to endure the hassles related to labour recruitment and labour management. They just implement projects through contractors (Recruiter code: R5).*

Clearly, practices of profit making through underpaying the workers are fundamental to the structures of subcontracting in Dhaka's construction projects. The builders make their profit through engaging contractors; the contractors again make their profit by underpaying the subcontractors. Being recruited and managed by the subcontractors, the workers are in the bottom layer of the subcontracting process where the structural problem of underpayment affects them the most and they have no way to redress the issue.

7.3 Conclusion

Empirical evidence and contextual discussions presented above reveal an all-embracing role of the individual recruiters in mediating the migrant construction workers' employment relationships in Dhaka. The wider social context of the employment relationships makes the workers highly

dependent on their recruiters. Providing the migrant workers' own perspectives, the evidence explains the key roles of their recruiters in shaping individualised labour management practices that create various forms of pressures on the workers. Detailed exploration of the employment relationships and the role of the recruiters, and their extended layers now confirms that the structures of recruitment practices lead to various forms of precariousness in Dhaka's construction projects. The next chapter will build on and discuss this argument in detail.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on interpreting the research results in order to understand how recruitment practices mediate the employment relationships that generate different forms of precariousness for the migrant workers in Bangladesh's construction sector. It discusses the relevance of the empirical data in relation to the main theoretical concept of this study, i.e., precarious work. In the light of previous knowledge as outlined in the theoretical framework chapter, the chapter identifies new knowledge by examining and benchmarking this study's findings with others. It evaluates the in-depth meaning of the empirical findings and explains their theoretical and empirical significance.

8.2 Hyper-individualised employment and the precariat

This study discovers that indirect recruitment is fundamental to producing poor work conditions in Dhaka's construction projects. For the rural-urban migrant labourers, the prevalent structures of indirect recruitment offer easy access to construction work in Dhaka but create conditions of precarious work. The original evidence generated by this study confirms that recruitment and management of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka is a multi-layered process in which multiple individual agents predominate. Extending from selection to management, these individual agents and their extensive layers individualise migrant labour to suit their own interests. Their distinctive practices reveal a unique model of employment that represents the dominance of individual agents in recruitment and management of the migrant construction workers. This study conceptualises this unique model of employment as "hyper-individualised employment".

Hyper-individualised employment shows the oppression and struggles of the migrant construction workers in their workplace. It is a specific pathway into the employment relationship in which the individual recruiters dominate over the workers to create pressures and insecurities to force the workers to be highly dependent on them. Making the workers individually subordinate to their recruiters, it generates a despotic employment relationship that contributes heavily to precarious work conditions. Despite the national labour policy, labour regulations are not effective in Bangladesh's construction sector (Abrar & Reza, 2014; Reza, 2016). This has also been confirmed by the field findings, as discussed in chapter four and five. In the absence of any official regulations, the individual recruiters have the ultimate discretion in determining terms and conditions of employment and labour protection for the workers. Their discretionary authority over the workforce produces varying sources of control and exploitation and results in multiple forms of precariousness including all-time dependence, wage deception, unequal, irregular, underpayment and non-payment of wages, insecure and unstable jobs, occupational stress and risks, and lack of labour protection. The employment relationships built on hyper-individualised employment represent subordinated flexibility for the migrant construction workers but low cost labour for the

builders.

The conceptualisation of hyper-individualised employment in this study is originally built on the "employment configuration" developed by Swider (2015a). The employment configuration, as defined by Swider (2015a), is a "specific pathway into employment linked with a specific mechanism that regulates the employment relationship" (p. 8). It allows this study to analyse the dynamics that shape the migrant construction workers' employment relationships and individualised practices surrounding those relationships. Moreover, it focuses on how the rural-urban migrant labourers find the job, rather than how they enter the urban economy, and how their work lives are shaped. While the concept of precarious employment represents the growing diversity of employment arrangements in the contemporary world, its use has differed from country to country (Seymour, 2012; Vosko, MacDonald, & Campbell, 2009). Therefore, the original concept of employment configuration described by Swider (2015a), focussing on the construction sector in China, is inadequate to capture the full dimensions of precarious work in Bangladesh's construction sector where indirect recruitment is standardised, widespread and increasingly exploitative.

As the structures of recruitment and the extensive role of the individuals in labour recruitment and management in Dhaka are revealed through the findings presented in chapters four to seven, hyper-individualised employment emerges as a key aspect leading to precarious work conditions. Such employment is unique because the number of layers of individuals in labour recruitment and the management process is more than that found in traditional outsourcing and subcontracting practices. While contractors or subcontractors have a long history as recruiters in construction across many national contexts, the latest development of outsourcing practices is "secondary subcontracting" that engages additional layer(s) of subcontracting for sub-letting of work (Sözen & Küçük, 1999, p. 216). Bangladesh's individual recruiters heavily dominate recruitment and management of migrant construction workers in Dhaka by mobilising labour and determining the terms of employment. Because of their central role in recruitment and supply of labourers, they are often, though not always, referred to as "subcontractors" as they take contracts from the builders and head contractors. They operate in a multi-tiered contracting system and their overwhelming dominance in recruitment is embedded in the practices of subcontracting. The results of this study reveal that several layers of individual recruiters are involved in labour procurement, and their number is more than we see in the case of outsourcing, subcontracting or secondary subcontracting.

While traditional outsourcing or subcontracting practices in global construction projects generally involve three to four firms or entities preferably between a general contractor and special trade subcontractors (Costantino et al., 2001; Fellini et al., 2007), recruitment of migrant construction workers in Dhaka often involves five or more individual entities including subcontractors, foremen,

Sardars, masons, workers and their social networks. They operate in multiple combinations. Figure 8.1 shows their hierarchies and involvement in recruitment process. Although not all projects have all of them, they exist hierarchically and their hierarchical power impacts onsite labour management in construction projects. In the absence of a written contract, they can intervene in overseeing the progress of work and pressurise the workers to perform tasks that they discretionarily assign. The structures of recruitment practices, as presented in chapter six, reveal that the process of selection, recruitment and management of migrant labourers for construction work is conspicuous by the discretion of the individual recruiters. The discretionary practices and choosing vulnerable people as migrant labourers allow the recruiters to exert control over the workers and utilise them for maximum output. At the same time, in the absence of any state-sponsored formal recruitment opportunities, rural labourers are forced to depend on individual recruiters and hence it is literally impossible for a rural labourer to find construction work in the city without being part of the process that the individual recruiters predominantly control.

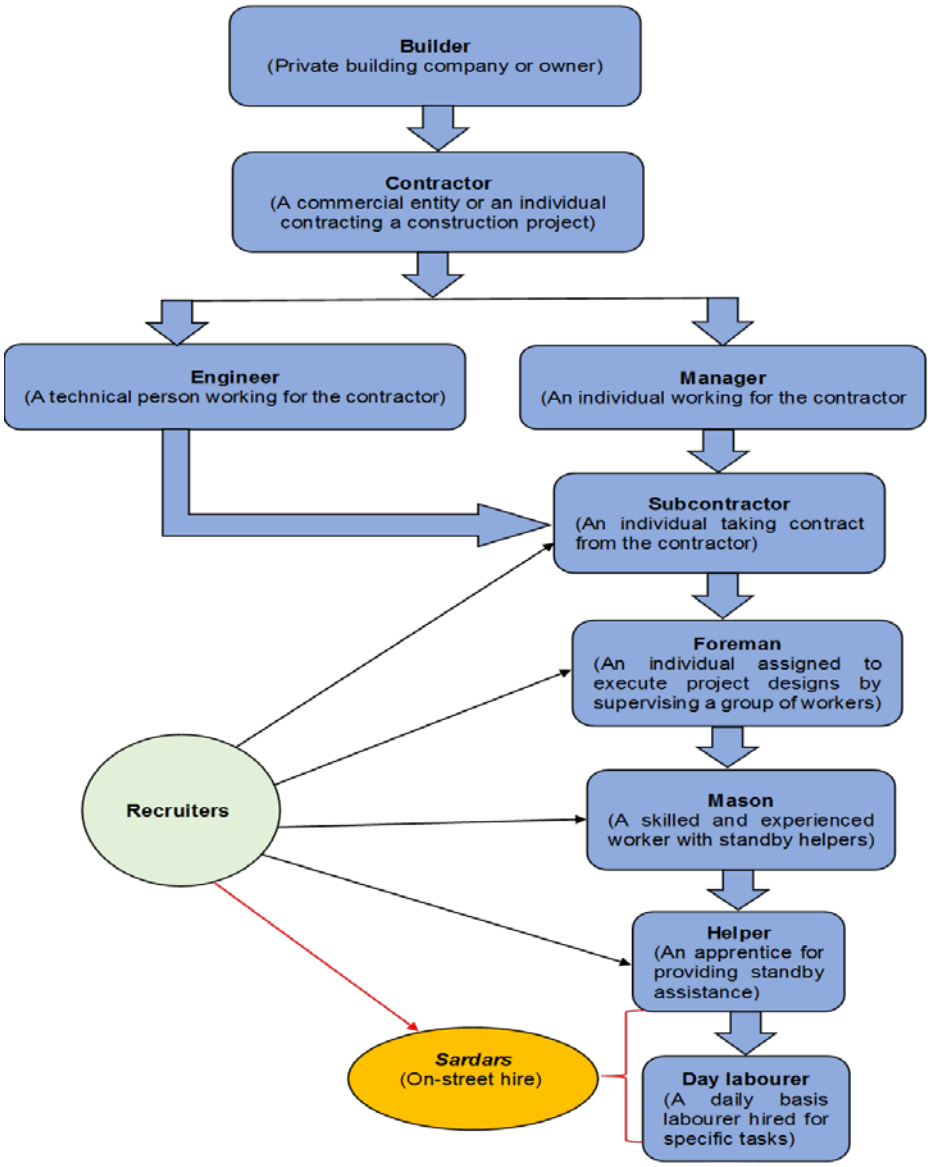

Figure 8.1: Hierarchies and involvement in recruitment process

However, the navigating and intersecting role of the individual recruiters creates conditions for the workers' high dependence on their recruiters. While the all-time dependence of the workers on their recruiters is a core element of precarious work (Anderson, 2010), it is also fundamental to unfree labour. The nature and extent of the individual recruiters' daily activities reveals that they perform three critical roles that substantially conform to the traditions of labour management practices under global capitalism. Firstly, by keeping a flexible labour force, they reduce urban builders' direct and indirect expenses related to labour (Standing, 1999); second they make the relationship between capital and labour indirect to the advantage of capital (Ball & Connolly, 1987; de Haan & Rogaly, 2002a; Firman, 1991; Standing, 2008; Vaid, 1999) and finally they generate their own profit through the power differentials between labour and capital (Standing, 2016a). Whilst hyper-individualised employment of migrant construction workers in Dhaka serves the interests of capital by ensuring a flexible labour supply at low costs, it is absolutely central to the precarious forms of employment under global capitalism. The overarching role of the individuals in this model of employment, and their control over the migrant workers, simplifies the task of minimising labour costs and shrinking the scope for labour protection while passing production risks on to the workers (Standing, 1999, 2016a). To shift the risks, their labour management functions produce various forms of pressures and insecurities in the workplace that precariatise the workers. While hyper-individualised employment is fundamental to production of the precariat, the results of this study contribute conceptual implications of such a distinctive form of employment to the general debates on how unfree labour, employment relationships and global capitalism are interconnected.

8.2.1 Construction: A *4D* job

The empirical results of this study, as presented in chapter four, reveal that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka regard their job as dirty, difficult and dangerous. The workers also consider that the work has low status. They perceive that their workplace conditions affect their social relations and status. Their perspectives on their work are shaped not only by a wide range of occupational risks and stresses experienced in the workplace, but a sense of lack of dignity outside the work. The workers believe that local society perceives their work as dirty and treats them in an unpleasant way; the dignity of the workers is compromised due to this. Lack of social status prevents them from passing their occupation on to the next generation. Moreover, the frequent use of bullying and personally abusive language in the workplace offends the workers and makes them feel intimidated and insulted. Dealing with dirt, dust, debris and abusive language in the workplace, the workers perceive that their work fails to convey human dignity in the society they live in.

Construction in Dhaka is primarily menial, labour-intensive hard work. The work is difficult not only because of the amount of physical labour it requires but the poor work conditions that severely strain the workers. The workers work long hours in a harsh and unhealthy work environment. Their

terms of employment include no provision for leave and therefore they endure excessive stress by working long hours. Working up to 18 hours a day without adequate breaks, they suffer from health and psychological issues. Moreover, construction work in Dhaka is dangerous. The work involves many risks of serious workplace accidents including death and many workers personally experience injuries and see their colleagues die in workplace accidents. They often work on high bamboo scaffolds and ladders, very close to overhead power cables and electric transformers that cause fatal accidents. Most of them do not have any PPE to wear, even while working on high scaffolds, operating electric machines and handling hot bituminous materials. Due to severe time pressure for accomplishing the contracted projects, their recruiters prefer speedy performance to their personal safety. However, experiencing injuries and seeing colleagues die in the workplace, the workers feel mentally overwhelmed with constant phobia of death. Persistent risks and death anxieties demotivate them to continue in their occupation for the longer term.

Lack of representation and labour protection is widespread in Dhaka's construction projects. Since the terms of employment are predominantly verbal, the workers are unable to access legal protection in case of any disagreement with their recruiters. They do not have a trade union or collective representation opportunity. A large proportion of the workers do not receive regular payment of their wages and overtime. Having a fear of losing their job, they do not seek intervention in spite of disagreements with their recruiters in this regard. Therefore, the workers continue their work as loyal and non-complaining "good workers" despite disagreements with their recruiters. While lack of representation security is an important element of "the precariat" (Standing, 2011), the employment of Dhaka's migrant construction workers in this context is clearly precarious. The workers' fear of losing their job is justified by the absence of employment security in their employment relationships which do not offer "protection against arbitrary dismissal" (Standing, 2011, p. 10).

The work conditions and the image of construction work in Dhaka represent not only a wide range of occupational risks and stresses experienced in the workplace but a sense of lack of dignity for the workers outside their work. The original contribution of this study therefore helps by adding a new dimension "disgraceful" to the predominant concept of *3D* jobs. Thus this study extends the concept by presenting the image of the construction work in Dhaka as a *4D* job: dirty, difficult, dangerous and disgraceful. In doing this, it argues that the risks, stresses and humiliation are structurally rooted in the poor work conditions determined by the terms of labour recruitment and management. Identifying indirect recruitment as fundamental to poor work conditions, it also argues that the *4D* job is an essential characteristic of the precariat in Dhaka's construction projects.

In order to examine work conditions and the image of construction work that the migrant construction workers consider, this study applies the concept of *3D* jobs adopted from Connell

(1993) and the ILO (2001, 2015a). Using this concept, it identifies the physical, mental and social costs of doing construction work in Dhaka as migrant workers. While applying this popular concept to the scope of this study, it is evident that the studies conducted by Connell and the ILO do not clearly identify what factors produce the *3D* job conditions in the workplace. Thus the role of recruitment in producing such work conditions remained unexplored and to fill this gap, this study examines how the *3D* job concept clearly relates to recruitment practices and precarious work conditions with reference to the construction work. Although the studies from the ILO (2001, 2015a) characterise outsourcing practices as the contemporary trends of labour recruitment in the global construction industry, they do not focus on Bangladesh where the construction sector is predominantly organised through indirect recruitment practices. Moreover, they do not thoroughly examine how recruitment practices mediate employment relationships to support poor work conditions and thereby the *3D* image of the construction work. This study fills these gaps and contributes a new dimension to add to the *3D* image of construction work leading to the *4D* image.

In addition to the risks and stresses, lack of human dignity is an important dimension of the image of the construction work for migrant workers. Due to the lack of human dignity outside the workplace, they often feel demotivated to continue the work in the long term. Although they frequently refer to the dirt, dust and debris as the main reasons to perceive the work as “dirty”, the predominant perspectives on dignity of work reveal that dirt is not the essential part of a job being regarded as polluting or dirty. Many types of work commonly involving manual handling of dirt, dust and even blood are not predominantly considered to be dirty. Hodson (2001) identifies four challenges in workplace settings that contribute to lack of dignity for the workers: mismanagement and abuse, overwork, constraints on autonomy, and contradictions of employee involvement. These four challenges occur both separately and in every possible combination in the workplace. Comparing three occupations such as agricultural labouring, coal mining, and abattoir work in the UK, Ackroyd (2007) argues that the predominant social stigma of working with dirt primarily involves polluting work conditions. Despite this, not every type of polluting work is regarded as dirty. Poor work conditions, according to Ackroyd (2007), are the main factors that contribute to the social stigma of dirty work. While farming work, in the UK, involves regular handling of earth and dirt, the opportunities for skill development, autonomy, secure location, and the value of the results of the work help the work to be regarded as dignified and not at all polluting.

Examining the results of this study in the light of the theoretical scholarship developed by Hodson (2001) and Ackroyd (2007), it is clear that the image of construction work regarded by the migrant construction workers in Dhaka is related to the constant physical and mental stress that they experience in the workplace. Intense time pressures to deliver the assigned tasks, long work hours, bullying and personally abusive languages, constant anxiety, and fear of death are the key reasons for considering the construction as a *4D* (dirty, difficult, dangerous and disgraceful) job. All these work conditions are attributed to the terms of employment that the individual recruiters

determine. Indirect recruitment through the individual recruiters is fundamental to these poor work conditions. In Dhaka's construction projects, the workers do not have fixed work hours and thus their recruiters discretionally determine their shifts and work hours according to circumstances. The recruiters are dependent on the builders who create time pressures for ensuring timely completion of the tasks they subcontract to the recruiters. In order to pass on the time pressures to the workers, the recruiters create conditions that compel the workers to take on a huge workload and work long hours. As a result, they are required to work without any weekly days off or rest breaks and they endure intense time pressures to accomplish the assigned tasks for their builders who the recruiters subcontract for. These dimensions of labour management, undertaken by the individual recruiters, reveal that the core essence of indirect recruitment is profit by reducing the costs of production.

The structures of indirect recruitment and particularly the role of individual recruiters in labour management guarantees profit through maximising the performance of the labourers. The involvement of the recruiters reduces the cost of labour for the builders because for them "the advantages are that indirect labour costs are minimal" (Standing, 1999, p. 104). In reducing the costs of labour for the builders, the individual recruiters create intense time pressures and repressive work conditions to accomplish the subcontracted projects on time. They use bullying and personally abusive language for the purpose of overworking the workers that actually ensures their own profit and thus the builders' profit. However, their reluctance to invest in PPEs helps reduce the overall costs of production but increases the risks of injury and death of the labourers. These pressures and risks intensify the work insecurity of the workers by not protecting them against "accidents and illness at work, through, for example, safety and health regulations, limits on working time, unsociable hours, night work for women, as well as compensation for mishaps" (Standing, 2011, p. 10). Thus the predominant role of the individual recruiters in labour management guarantees the builders' profit at the cost of stresses and risks that contribute to the *4D* image of construction work in Dhaka and precariousness of the workers.

The recruiters in Dhaka prefer fast and quality performance from the workers and therefore they want to minimise the risks of complaints in the workplace. In doing this, they discretionally select and recruit the workers who are committed to be loyal and hardworking and capable enough to perform well with their good body structure. The recruiters' pursuit of "good workers" and their fast performance and loyalty has traditionally regarded physical strength and loyalty as the most important attributes that the recruiters in Dhaka's construction projects look for. However, this contributes to multiple forms of pressures onto the workers. The female and adolescent workers are particularly vulnerable to the harsh pressures in their workplace. Although the existing literature in the fields of employment relations offers extensive discussions on the dimensions of precarious work at various settings of global and local workplaces, employment of the female and adolescent migrant labourers has not yet been discussed as an emerging dimension of precarious

employment with reference to construction work. This is because most of the literature on the employment quality of the female labourers predominantly focuses on job security and contingent employment arrangements. The prominent work of Cranford and Vosko (2006), Cranford and Vosko (2006), Standing (2011, 2014b), and Vosko (2010) is mainly focussed on labour market inequalities and the job insecurities of the female workers. These studies are located in the discourse on international migration regimes and labour and work legislations and do not examine the inner dynamics of work conditions and the employment relationships experienced in the female workers' local workplace. The results of this study fill this specific gap by revealing that Bangladeshi female migrant construction workers experience more stressful work conditions than the male workers.

The social stigma and the perceived image of the construction work produce many challenges for the female workers in Dhaka. They experience greater stresses and risks than the male workers in regards to construction as a *4D* job for them. They experience various pressures such as lack of access to toilets and dining spaces, scarcity of drinking water and the sexually provocative indecent behaviour of their male recruiters and colleagues. In addition, their low skills and the recruiters' restrictions on them bringing their children to the workplace make the work hard and undignified for them. The element fundamental to the female construction workers' poor work conditions is indirect recruitment that is predominantly associated with the presence of male recruiters in Dhaka. The recruiters' traditional perceptions and masculine practices contribute to a structure of poor work conditions for the female workers. While the female workers regard their work as "disgraceful" due to these conditions, it is their indirect recruitment from street labour markets through male recruiters that it can be attributed to. Absence of gender-specific facilities and indecent behaviour from their male recruiters and colleagues compound their pressures making them insecure at work.

On the other hand, a significant proportion of the teenage workers in the world experience precarious work conditions (Burrows, 2013; Cohen, 2013). However, research on their recruitment practices and work conditions in developing countries, with reference to construction work, still remains limited. This is because teenage or adolescent employment has traditionally been perceived to be a positive phenomenon in developed countries. The existing literature on youth employment is mainly focussed on developed economies and explains how adolescent employment helps developing personal and social responsibility and eases the transition from adolescence to adulthood to adapt to labour market challenges in developed countries (Burrows, 2013; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2000; Frone, 1999; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Adolescent employment in developing countries such as Bangladesh is less researched, particularly with reference to rural-urban migration and construction work. Unlike the developed countries where adolescent employment is regularly promoted among high school students, the construction projects in Dhaka represent the presence of many adolescent labourers who originate

from poor rural households and relinquish their education upon employment in the city. They work in particularly strenuous conditions that create excessive pressures on their young body and mind. Considering this difference, evidence produced by this study on the work conditions of the adolescent migrant labourers in Dhaka's construction projects adds new knowledge on youth labour and precariatisation of adolescent workers.

Although occupational risks are argued to be integral to precarious employment (Quinlan et al., 2001; Underhill & Quinlan, 2011), the existing literature on labour and work does not examine the work conditions of the adolescent migrant labourers through the lens of precarious work. This study fills this important gap by presenting empirical evidence and exploring the significance of adolescent employment as a form of precarious work. The results of this study reveal that the adolescent migrant workers are more vulnerable to the stressful work conditions than the adult workers. While the assigned tasks are extremely hard for their young bodies, they accomplish similar workloads of adult workers. Their recruiters often use bullying and personally abusive language to overwork them. Excessive stress due to overwork exhausts them and causes health problems such as chest pain. Their long work hours potentially "increase the risk of stress, depression and diabetes; stress leads to social isolation, marital and sexual problems, and a cycle of despair" (Standing 2011, p.120). Thus the prevalent work conditions in Dhaka's construction projects reveal high risks of health and physical danger for the adolescent workers in particular. They regard their work as *4D* because of the constant occupational accidents experienced. The predominant practices of indirect recruitment and management through individual recruiters produce stressful work conditions for the adolescent workers but profit for the recruiters and the builders. Being treated as adults, their age-specific work experiences reveal that they are the young precariat.

8.2.2 Making the best of construction

In examining the nexus between construction work and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh, the results of this study, as presented in chapter five, confirm that despite being a *4D* job, construction in Dhaka is the best obtainable work for the labourers migrating from villages. The migrant labourers choose the work over other options because of some perceived benefits offered by the prevalent terms and conditions of employment. They consider the poor work conditions, causing their stress, with less importance. They regard their low social status, stress and risks tied to the *4D* image of the construction work as necessary costs in their quest for better livelihood or income. Their compromise between poor work conditions and better income in the city is facilitated by the terms and conditions of employment in Dhaka's construction projects.

The scope of the results of this study opposes the dominant neoclassical theories led by Harris and Todaro's (1970) work that considers rural-urban labour migration as a purely economic phenomenon. Thus the results of this study confirm the core propositions of the livelihood

perspective that the livelihood is more than just income and livelihoods are not only organised individually but within a wide social settings (de Haas, 2010a; Ellis, 2000). The magnitude of the results allows this study to look beyond wage differentials and thus discover how people strategise their movement from rural to urban areas in order to secure, improve or diversify their income through involving various social institutions. Extending beyond the economic rationale of rural-urban migration, the results of the study confirm socio-economic contexts of labour migration and how labour recruitment and management practices are subjective to those contexts.

Seasonal migrant labourers are very prevalent in Dhaka's construction projects. Seasonal unemployment related to the traditionally weather-conditioned and monsoon-based farming activities in village is one of the main factors that facilitate their migration to the capital city. Due to inadequate earning in the lean months, generally characterised by rainfall variations and the lull between harvest and the first planting of the following season when the rural people have very little or no harvest, the rural labourers slip deeper into hardship. Their migration and seasonal employment in the city help them diversify their income and thus enable their households to cope with seasonal financial stresses subject to inadequate income from farming. Similar economic benefits of rural-urban migration have already been confirmed by many studies on seasonal migration in Bangladesh (Afsar, 2000; Kuhn, 2003; Martin et al., 2014). However, measuring from the existing literature in the field of labour migration that has focussed on seasonal internal migration of labour, the results of this study confirm a unique and contemporary dimension of seasonal migration, adolescent migration. Seasonal financial hardships in Bangladesh's villages prompt migration of adolescent labourers to the construction projects in the capital city. The adolescent migrant construction workers embrace physically demanding work to support their households by securing income during seasonal financial hardship. While the existing literature in the fields of labour migration predominantly perceives rural-urban labour migration as an "adult" phenomenon, the results of this study are ground-breaking and show that the adolescent members migrate as an endeavour to reduce fluctuations in their household income.

The structures of seasonal employment in Dhaka's construction projects reveal an important feature of rural-urban labour migration, flexibility to connect to the primary occupation. The construction work in Dhaka offers flexibilities to the migrant workers to return to their village and remain connected to their original occupations and other supplementary income activities in villages. In the peak harvest months, they return to their village by abandoning construction work in the city and return to the city again in the lean months. Thus they swap between their village and the city to maximise their income, depending on the seasons. In this context, the construction work offers not only employment flexibility but an opportunity to work in "dual or multiple labour statuses" (Standing, 1999, p. 103). Focussing on the industrialising economies, Standing (1999) has theorised this as "flexible labour statuses" (p. 103). However, in the Bangladesh context similar issues have not yet been explored with reference to construction work. The results of this study

produce original evidence by discovering the flexible labour statuses of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka.

The traditional migration theories, such as the Harris and Todaro model, have postulated this specific form of seasonal migration as an equilibrating force between expected and actual wages or an adjustment mechanism by which the migrant labourers allocate themselves between different labour markets, some of which are located in urban areas and some in rural areas, as an attempt to maximise their expected incomes (Fields, 1975; Harris & Todaro, 1970). Among others, Connell, Dasgupta, Laishley, and Lipton (1976, p. 9) showed this particular pattern of migration as "dependent on the availability of short-term cash-earning opportunities, either in towns or on plantations". To extend this claim, de Haan (1997) found similar migration patterns elsewhere and explained it using the theoretical concept of "circular migration" that marked an interaction of urban and rural society through the investment of migrant labourers' income from work outside the village in agricultural production. However, de Haan (1997) denied the interrelations between employment arrangements and circular migration of the labourers. Therefore, the findings of this study contradict de Haan's argument and confirm that the flexibilities in employment arrangements and worker-recruiter relationships based on indirect recruitment, allow the migrant labourers to return to their village when they wish. Mutual understandings between the labourers and their recruiters, in relation to economic benefits of return to the village, normalise the flexibilities and thereby circulatory pattern of rural-urban migration in Dhaka's construction projects.

The results of this study also confirm that due to the wage rate differences the migrant construction workers earn adequate and in most cases higher wages than in their village. Their wage differentials reveal that the wage rate of the migrant construction workers in the city is higher than the construction workers in the villages. If compared to other rural sectors, the wage rate in Dhaka's construction projects is higher anyway. Moreover, the rate of wage increments in the city is faster than in the villages. Together higher rate and faster increment of wages contribute to better incomes for the migrant labourers in construction projects. These dimensions of better wage rate and income in the city are similar to the assumptions of many neoclassical studies including Fields (1975); Todaro (1969) and Mabogunje (1970). However, this study finds three unique factors contributing to the better income of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka: free onsite accommodation, confined urban life, and delayed payment practices. These three components and their interrelations to better income have not yet been adequately researched in the labour migration literature.

Free onsite accommodation in the temporary sheds and under-constructed buildings in Dhaka's construction projects is an important incentive to help the migrant construction workers save money. Regardless of the risks and poor living conditions in these free onsite accommodations, the migrant workers view them as a practical financial benefit largely absent in other competing

sectors in the city. However, living in free onsite accommodations actually makes them readily available for “direct control in fixed workplaces” and at the same time the flexibility tied to their all-time availability involves “more work-for-labour; a blurring of workplaces, home places and public places” (Standing, 2011, p. 38). Living onsite, the migrant construction workers have a confined urban life other than very limited movement and restrictive interactions within the project boundaries. They however regard their social isolation as a necessary cost to better savings by refraining themselves from unnecessary spending in the city. The young labourers in particular perceive this as a great advantage to help them save better in the city than in their villages but their urban life in Dhaka represents “isolation and a lack of networking” (Standing, 2011, p. 75), making them the young precariat.

Furthermore, the practices of delayed payment in Dhaka’s construction projects reveal a unique contribution of this study. Delayed payment is perceived by the workers to help them save money better. Although the workers’ wage is calculated at daily rate, they are not paid in full every day. The recruiters retain a large proportion, usually two-thirds or more, of the amount the workers earn daily. Paying a small portion of the daily income as *Khoraki,* the recruiters keep the rest amount noted as “due wages” to pay the cumulative amount later. The delayed payment practices are fundamentally a labour retention strategy favouring the recruiters and the builders. The structural features of payment practices in Dhaka’s construction projects reveal a complex dimension of precarious employment. The payment of the workers are reimbursed by the builders through the individual recruiters who are basically dependent on the builders for paying the workers attached to them and for their own income. The builders do not reimburse them on daily basis, rather they reimburse on the basis of completion of specific parts of the assigned tasks. The dependence of the individual recruiters on the builders, in terms of payment, passes on to the workers. In this context, delayed and irregular payment practices create conditions of “wage bondage” between the builders and the recruiters and the workers. This bondage keeps the workers bonded with their recruiters, who are again bonded with the builders, for the sake of due wages. The wage bondage therefore precariatises the workers, to allow the builders retain and control the workers and their coordination for their advantage. The delayed payment practices are fundamental to income insecurity, a core characteristic of the precariat, as theorised by (Standing, 2011, 2016a).

For the rural-urban migrant labourers, cash advances make construction the most accessible work in Dhaka. Considering the structural barriers they face to migrate from villages to the capital city, the easy availability of cash advances facilitates their endeavour to overcome the pre-migration challenges. Taking advance money from the potential recruiters, they clear household debts and meet travel costs to migrate to the city. Similar results in relation to the practice of offering advance money has been found in other parts of the world such as India (Mosse et al., 2002; Mosse et al., 2005; Pattenden, 2012; Vaid, 1999) and China (Swider, 2015a, 2015b). However, the huge size and diversity of economies in these geographical settings do not represent internal migration for

construction work in Bangladesh. While most of the studies in those countries generalise cash advance with bonded labour, the flexible employment relationships and the social bondage between the workers and their recruiters do not confirm any evidence of debt bondage in Dhaka's construction projects. Moreover, the practices of offering cash advance in other parts of the world, particularly in India, involve punitive interest rates which was not found in Dhaka. However, the original evidence produced by this study, for the first time, confirms the practice of offering cash advance in Bangladesh's construction sector. Earlier studies on this sector, including Abrar and Reza (2014), Ahsan (1997), BILS (2007), Chowdhury et al. (2012), Choudhury (2013), Farhana et al. (2012), and Uddin and Firoj (2013), have not found the practice at all. Therefore, the results of this study in relation to cash advance are unique in terms of not only empirical originality but also significance and contemporariness of the phenomenon.

Precariousness is fundamentally based in the trust relationship between the workers and their recruiters, as discussed in chapter five and six, which has epistemological roots in Bangladeshi society which is quite different to other countries. The cases of debt bondage associated with the practices of cash advance payments to the rural labourers were particularly prevalent in India, a giant country with multicultural population, diverse economy and ethnic diversity of labour, where the migrant construction labourers are disproportionately drawn from the lower castes and tribes having the poorest socio-economic background. To compare with Indian context where debt bondage is historically prevalent through the relations of "rights and obligations between the masters and their dependents … system of hierarchy and interdependence between castes, while reflecting the very strong concentration of land in the hands of the higher castes" (Marius-Gnanou, 2008, p. 129). The debt bondage situation in the Indian context is therefore linked to social untouchability and the indigenous, marginal and landless farmers working as seasonal migrant construction workers are exploited through advance payment system that involves punitive interest rates and multi-tiered credit system. In sharp contrast, similar caste or tribe relations do not exist in Bangladesh's construction sector, as the empirical data for this study confirms. The participants for this study reported no case of debt bondage tied to the cash advance they received, as discussed in chapter five and eight. Moreover, the Chinese context of advance money, as Swider (2015b, p. 47) shows, "contractors agree to pay migrants a set amount of money for one year of work. In addition, contractors pay upfront costs of migration, which will later be subtracted from the worker's salary. Contractors also provide shelter and food. In some cases, these are 'free' and in other cases there is a daily charge subtracted from the salary", is also different to what this study found. None of the construction workers interviewed for this study reported receiving a set amount of money for one year of work or so.

Theoretically a bonded labourer is "one who cannot choose freely between alternate employers, and who cannot, in fact, work for any person other than his or her current employer" (Marius-Gnanou, 2008, p. 129). The field findings of this study do not support similar situation in

Bangladesh's construction sector. As reported by the workers and their recruiters (see section 4.2.5, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.7, 7.2.1, and 7.2.5), the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects are characterised by high flexibility for the workers to choose freely between alternate employers.

Moreover, the aspiring construction workers in Bangladesh often had long established social relations with their recruiters that contributed to a unique employment relationship conditioned by social and cultural factors like trust, empathy, respect and loyalty. The relationship had a certain amount of mutual obligation too. The job seeker claimed support from the recruiter not merely as a service provider but more so as a social obligation. Vice versa, the recruiter was also implicitly pledge-bound to make job placement not for a mere client but for a brother, a cousin, a nephew, a neighbour, a friend or an acquaintance, so on and so forth. It is often assumed by the job seeker that his recruiter will act in his interest also not just in self-interest while offering advance money and determining the wages. This is manifested in the comments made by the recruiters and the workers, as discussed in chapter six.

However, the cultural aspects of trust relationships surrounding labour migration are often complex to measure as "profit, trust and empathy run hand-in-hand" in such relationships, and distinctions between them are often impossible to sustain in practice (Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 9). Interviews with the workers and their recruiters showed a complex cultural reality where recruitment is based on trust, loyalty and respect-oriented social network and kinship relations where profit making and reciprocity or altruism were difficult to separate. Since rural-urban migration of labour involves many social norms, religious and cultural factors (Rogaly et al., 2001), further research involving ethnographic investigation of the relationship between them could delve deeper into ethical qualities, social bonds of trust and how these are forged.

8.2.3 The key actors in recruitment

The empirical results of this study, as presented in chapter six, confirm that rural-urban migration for construction work in Dhaka is intimately connected to indirect recruitment practices which are premised on social networks and relations. For the rural labourers, the prevalent structures of indirect recruitment offer easy access, through their social networks, to construction work in Dhaka. Their experiences of recruitment reveal a range of individuals, located in their social networks and relations, as recruiters. Among them, subcontractors, foremen, *Sardars*, masons, workers themselves and their extensive social networks such as relatives, friends, and neighbours are the key individuals who function as recruiters.

Existing literature on internal labour migration and construction employment has generalised similar individuals into three categories. They are merely "middlemen" in collecting and supplying a team of rural labourers, or "subcontractors" in taking responsibility for labour management and

accomplishment of subcontracted tasks, or “team leaders” who work onsite with a group of workers attached to them. However, the literature, on the extensive role of these individuals, is predominantly focussed in India (Mathew, 2005; Mosse et al., 2005; Pattenden, 2012; Picherit, 2012; Vaid, 1999), Brazil (Saboia, 1997; Zylberstajn, 1992), China (Suresh, 2010; Swider, 2015a, 2015b; You-Jie & Fox, 2001), Indonesia (Firman, 1991), Kenya (Mitullah & Wachira, 2003), Korea (Yoon & Kang, 2000), Mexico (Connolly, 2001), Nepal (Jha, 2002), and Tanzania (Jason, 2007). Benchmarking with these studies, the results of this study on the characteristics of the individual recruiters may appear to be overlapping and common. The backgrounds and functions of the individual recruiters in Bangladesh thus may appear similar to what has already been found in other countries in relation to the role of middlemen, subcontractors, and team leaders in construction employment. What is unique about the results of this study is the discovery of extensive layers of these individuals, their origin in social networks and relations, and the distinctive role of the migrant workers as labour recruiters.

The potential problem of categorising the individuals, involved in recruitment of rural labourers for construction work in Dhaka, as “recruiters” is based on the extent of dependence that their role reveals. In fact, their role in the labour recruitment process is very navigating and intersecting, and thereby overlapping. For example, the individual who recruits a labourer for his subcontractor may appear as a foreman or team leader later in the management process. Similarly, a mason hiring female labourers from the street labour markets may appear to be a subcontractor in the process. Given this perplexity, the traditional understanding of middlemen, labour intermediaries or labour brokers in this regard will be inadequate because the individual recruiters in Dhaka’s construction projects work directly, in different capacities, with the workers they recruit. As such the individual recruiters themselves are workers anyway. They are dependent on other parties, such as builders or head contractors, to get work for themselves and thus for the workers. In this context, Standing’s concept of “dependent contractors” is an appropriate guide to understand the role of the individual recruiters.

As he outlines:

> *There have been interminable debates over how to distinguish between those who provide services and those who provide service labour, and between those dependent on some intermediary and those who are concealed employees. Ultimately, distinctions are arbitrary, hinging on notions of control, subordination and dependence on other ‘parties’. Nevertheless, those who are dependent on others for allocating them to tasks over which they have little control are at greater risk of falling into the precariat (Standing, 2011, p. 16).*

Taking this important point of analysis, the individual recruiters in Dhaka are actually concealed workers who are subordinate to the builders or head contractors and the workers they recruit are dependent on them. Since the recruitment of migrant labourers for construction work in Dhaka is primarily indirect, neither the builders nor the head contractors are involved in labour-related matters. Through the traditional practices of extensive subcontracting, they engage various

individuals for accomplishing specific tasks in construction projects. The task-specific subcontractors are the individuals who supply labourers, manage them, and work with them onsite to accomplish the subcontracted tasks by the agreed timeline. They are “really indirect workers, concealed as such to avoid coverage by regulations or social contributions, or to make an undertaking look smaller so as to fall beneath some regulatory threshold” (Standing, 1999, p. 104). Their role may be limited to supervision and management of the workers onsite but they work themselves. Thus they are occasionally foremen and team leaders who retain their own teams of workers and move from one project to another. Because of their direct contact with the workers, they dominate in all respects to discretionally determine the terms and conditions of employment. They follow a multi-tiered selection and recruitment process to recruit rural labourers for their teams.

As the results of this study confirm above, the four predominant modes of labour recruitment for construction work in Dhaka represent the task-specific individual subcontractors and their extensive layers as the key actors who navigate through various layers of recruitment and management of the migrant construction workers. Their navigating role further involves other individuals and their extensive social networks located in cities and villages. The migrant construction workers also become recruiters by participating in the recruitment process and thus they recruit for their recruiters. The overall intersecting role of all these individuals and their layers reveals a unique model of employment, conceptualised above as hyper-individualised employment, which represents the dominance of extensive layers of individual agents in indirect recruitment of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka.

Among many other things, the most interesting feature of the indirect recruitment practices that the results of this study explore is the mechanism through which the migrant construction workers themselves become “recruiters for their recruiters”. The “within project” mode of recruitment in section 6.2.1 confirms recruitment through the migrant construction workers already working in Dhaka. Being physically located in city, the migrant construction workers help collect and recruit new labourers for their ongoing projects. In order to help their recruiters recruit new labourers, they take help from their personal networks and contacts to find and bring new labourers from the villages. In recruiting new labourers for their projects and thus for their recruiters, they mediate between the aspirant rural labourers in villages and their subcontractors in the city. Their direct involvement in the recruitment process confirms that they share their subcontractors’ responsibility by helping them minimise the risks of non-completion due to labour shortage. Doing this, they establish a reciprocal relationship with the new labourers. They train them on-the-job which eventually opens up opportunities for them to get promotion or leading roles. For the subcontractors, the workers’ direct involvement in the recruitment process guarantees low risks of their investment e.g. advance money and high assurance of obligation through extraordinary work commitment of the new workers. Similar involvement of the migrant construction workers as

“recruiters for their recruiters” is also evident in the “in village” mode of recruitment (section 6.2.2) that represents the presence of the migrant construction workers in their village where they come into contact with the aspirant migrant labourers willing to migrate to Dhaka. Meeting the aspirant migrant labourers in village, they mediate the recruitment process upon their subcontractors’ approval.

The involvement of the migrant construction workers as “recruiters” is integrated, not an isolated part, of social networks-based recruitment in Dhaka’s construction projects. Thus the social networks of the migrant construction workers continue operating as a tool of recruitment that underlies various stresses for them. In this context, the ground-breaking evidence on the involvement of the migrant construction workers in the recruitment process as “recruiters for their recruiters” confirms that such involvement of the migrant workers actually minimises the labour recruitment costs for the subcontractors. The core essence of such flexible recruitment practices is to reduce the subcontractors’ travel expenses and secure the guarantee of their advance money. Thus the mediating role of the migrant construction workers, as recruiters, serves the interests of their subcontractors who are wealthier than the workers. However, although recruitment of new labourers from villages through the migrant construction workers helps the subcontractors reduce the risks and pressures of recruitment, it creates stresses on to the “recruiter” workers as they mediate the entire selection and recruitment process on behalf of their recruiters. The migrant workers’ combined statuses as workers and recruiters in such practices contribute to their precariousness. The effects of such duality trickle down to the new migrant workers recruited by them. Creating conditions for control, subordination and dependence of the new migrant workers, the “recruiter” workers actually help produce precarious employment relationships in which their subcontractors exploit the migrant workers and their social networks for their own advantage. The practice of recruiting rural labourers through migrant construction workers therefore reflects the recruiters’ aspirations for subordination and contingent loyalty by exploiting the trust relationships. Such practices guarantee maximum labour productivity for the builders but represent a structure of producing the precariat in Dhaka’s construction projects.

8.2.4 Recruiters beyond the boundary of work

The results of this study, as presented in chapter seven, confirm a unique employment relationship in which the individual recruiters have an all-embracing role to manage and support the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Their onsite labour management practices show that they have extraordinary commitment to oversee the migrant workers’ work and personal life. Thus the recruiters’ engagement spans through both the city where the workers work and live, and the village where the workers’ family members live. The degree of commitment and the extent of the support they offer are fundamentally embedded in the social networks-based recruitment and employment relationships. Social bondage between the workers and their recruiters helps determine the practicality of their mutual interests and thereby guide their employment

relationships.

Some important features of the employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects share similarities with other studies conducted in different geographical locations, particularly in China (Suresh, 2010; Swider, 2015a, 2015b; You-Jie & Fox, 2001) and India (Mathew, 2005; Mosse et al., 2005; Pattenden, 2012; Picherit, 2012; Vaid, 1999). The individual recruiters' commitment in finding job opportunities, offering financial assistance and protecting the migrant workers from police harassment in the city has already been explored in these studies. However, the patterns and structures of migration and employment relationships in these geographical settings cannot be comparable to what this study has discovered in Bangladesh. This is mainly because of the variations in the size of economy, diversity of populations and culture, and the controversies of regulations of internal migration in these geographical settings. For example, Swider's (2015a, 2015b) important work on rural-urban migration and recruitment of migrant labourers in China's construction sector primarily focusses on the labour politics and regulation of the informal economy with reference to the construction work. It does not examine the role of recruiters in workers' personal and social life. Although the studies on the Indian construction sector do this quite adequately, they purposefully generalise the individual recruiters as labour brokers or intermediaries and thus categorise their functions as labour intermediation. The received knowedge from these studies neglects the social relationships between the recruiters and the migrant workers. Therefore, the effects of social bondage on employmnet relationships with reference to construction work remain unexplored. The results of this study fills gap in this important area. The uniqueness of the results of this study is the discovery of social effects on employment relationships and the exploitative payment practices of the recruiters.

This is the first study ever, in the fields of employment relations, which discovers an extraordinary caregiving commitment of the individual recruiters to the migrant workers. The recruiters' personalised support during the workers' illness, as presented in section 7.2.4, is a ground-breaking discovery. The individual recruiters in Dhaka's construction projects offer body massage, provide nutritious foods and purchase over-the-counter medicines for the unwell workers that they employ and manage. Such caregiving commitment of the recruiters is built upon the village-based social ties and mutual commonality that they share with the workers through indirect recruitment practices. The same locality effects on the employment relationships between the recruiters and the workers reveal strong reciprocity. The mutual relationship based on their shared social ties helps them look after each other's interests. In order to evade potential social pressures and image crisis in the place of origin, the recruiters obligate themselves to personally look after the workers and their health.

However, the core essence of such "apparently compassionate" personal caregiving support of the recruiters reveals precariousness of the migrant workers. Due to strict time pressures for

completing the subcontracted tasks, the recruiters want speedy recovery of the sick workers and therefore they ignorantly purchase over-the-counter medicines, usually strong antibiotics, on the basis of their own discretion. Although the migrant workers regard this practice as generous because of their helplessness and lonely life in the city, the recruiters' knowledge in selecting genres of medicines imposes serious health risks of the workers. The recruiters discretionally determine the dosage of the medicines. An important concern in this regard is the drug expiration dates that the recruiters and workers are unaware of. Because of their illiteracy to read the expiration date, which are usually printed or stamped on in English, the recruiters are at risk of purchasing out of date medicines and the workers are at critical risk of having them. Despite all these risks, the workers pay the costs of the medicines through wage cuts, without having any idea about the type of medicines, the actual market price and expiration dates. The extent of risks involved in this practice represents the migrant construction workers in Dhaka as the precariat who have no protection against illness, other than risking their health and life through subordination and loyalty to their recruiters.

Another important contribution of this study is the discovery of a unique mechanism through which the indirect recruitment practices produce conditions for depressed wage of the migrant construction workers. Unlike many other studies on intermediated and subcontracted labour that predominantly conceptualise commission earning role of the labour intermediaries, the results of this study reveal a corruptive practice of "creaming off" and "wage deception", as evident in the section 7.2.6. The multiple layers of individuals involved in the labour recruitment and management process earn their own overheads from the workers' wage which is already low. Wage cuts in indirect employment heavily depress the workers' wage. The migrant construction workers are deprived of a fair wage and they receive around 40 percent less than the actual market wage rate. The predominant labour recruitment process through extensive subcontracting practices has contributed a "rigged" system that gives advantage to the wealthy builders but deprives the poor workers of their rights, as theorised by Standing (2016a). In producing such a rigged system, the structural corruption of global capitalism has normalised various corruptive practices in the global and local workplaces. By weakening the security of the poor migrant workers, these corruptive practices actually strengthen the position of the builders through the intermediation of the recruiters.

Non-payment of wages is a distinctive characteristic of this rigged system that represents the recruiters' payment corruption. The migrant construction workers in Dhaka, the female workers in particular, often leave their due wages unpaid by their recruiters. Moreover, the creaming off practice is another dimension of corruption that heavily exploits them. The recruiters cream off up to one-quarter of the workers' wage. The female workers, who are usually hired and employed on a daily basis, are particularly vulnerable to this corruptive practice of underpayment. Absence of employment security coupled with their recruiters' coercion creates barriers to their protection

against such exploitative practices. As a result, the structural barriers to labour protection force them to work as the precariat in such exploitative conditions. Standing (2016a) has theorised a similar phenomenon of creaming off wage as “platform capitalism” that represents vulnerability of the working class in a regime of the intermediaries. According to him, such corruptive practices of capitalism help keep the precariat in its place, trapped in financial coercions that they cannot easily escape.

Furthermore, wage deception is a distinctive practice of exploiting the migrant construction workers’ wage in Dhaka. The recruiters, particularly the *Sardars*, often deceive the migrant workers by paying them partially and occasionally not paying at all. They flee from worksites and stay out of contact without paying due wages of the workers who are eventually forced to leave their due wages with their recruiters. The incidences in relation to wage deception produce severe financial stresses on to the workers. The female workers are particularly vulnerable to such exploitation. While the workers in Dhaka’s construction projects generally lack labour market security such as “adequate income-earning opportunities”, such exploitation is integral to their precariatisation because these exploitative practices severely intensify their income insecurity without “assurance of an adequate stable income” (Standing, 2011, p. 10).

Despite widespread corruption and exploitation, there is a potential setback in identifying the migrant construction workers in Dhaka as the precariat. The results of this study, as presented in section 7.2.3, reveal that the workers have confidence and aspirations in having the opportunities to gain skills and thus having the scope for upward career mobility. While there is no official skill assessment system for the construction workers in Bangladesh, these opportunities are mainly dependent on the social location of the workers and thus their personal networks and employment relationships. The prospects for upward career mobility and skill acquisition are therefore determined by the discretion of the recruiters. Measuring this evidence through Standing’s theoretical framework of the precariat, however, confirms that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are the precariat because of lack of their job security and skill reproduction security.

Standing (2011) defines job security as “ability and opportunity to retain a niche in employment, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for ‘upward’ mobility in terms of status and income” (p. 10). Taking this point, the upward career mobility opportunities of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka reveal an interesting point. The workers have potential opportunities to get promotions and earn better but they do not consider their status in line with career mobility. For them, the work they are involved in has a poor image in society and thus the status of their job is always low, irrespective of their upward mobility in terms of their niche in employment and income. When this important dimension of job security is combined with the poor work conditions, presented in chapter four, the construction work in Dhaka is fundamentally seen as a low status job. Therefore, upward mobility of the workers merely in terms of role and income does not prevent

their precariatisation.

Similarly, the migrant workers also lack skill reproduction security that is defined by Standing (2011) as “opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies” (p. 10). The skill acquisition process of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka is predominantly on-the-job. Their social relationship with the recruiters is an important factor that influences the opportunities for gaining on-the-job skills. When combined with evidence on the process of gaining skills by following the superiors and colleagues only, as presented in section 5.2.6, it confirms that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka do not have the opportunity to gain skills through apprenticeships or employment training. In addition, their opportunity to make use of their competencies is primarily dependent on the predominant structures of recruitment and social networks-based employment relationships that they predominantly experience. Considering the extent and pervasiveness of the insecurities in relation to skill reproduction, the migrant construction workers in Dhaka can be classified as the precariat.

8.3 Conclusion

The interpretation of results in this chapter informs new knowledge in understanding precarious work conditions among the migrant labourers. Conceptualising hyper-individualised employment as fundamental to precarious work conditions, the chapter benchmarks the original contribution of this PhD. It identifies the construction work in Dhaka as a *4D* job confirming the human indignity dimensions associated with the image of the work. It analyses labour recruitment through the lens of precarious work and confirms that indirect recruitment, embedded in the social relations of the recruiters and the migrant labourers, produces precarious work conditions in migrant construction workers’ workplaces. The arguments presented in the chapter clarify the theoretical position of the dissertation, signify the empirical rigour, and highlight its unique contribution to the literature on labour and work in the fields of employment relations. The new knowledge offered by this PhD study can be utilised for further analyses of structural changes of employment relationships in local and global workplaces. The next chapter will conclude this thesis by presenting a research agenda for future study of migration and labour in the fields of employment relations.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents conclusion to this thesis. It outlines the original contribution and significance of the study and summarises the major findings and arguments. In doing this, it refers to the unique conceptualisation of hyper-individualised employment that represents the dominant role of the individual recruiters and subordination of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Considering hyper-individualised employment as an emerging form of employment relationships for the precariat in Dhaka's construction projects, it offers some recommendations to the policy makers in their efforts towards improving recruitment practices and workplace conditions for the migrant construction workers. The chapter endorses the individual recruiters as the key actors in recruitment and management of migrant labourers and presents this as an important research agenda for future study of migration and labour.

9.2 Original contribution and significance of the study

The global construction industry represents a significant proportion of precarious workers. The changes in work in this industry are representative of many of the broader trends evident in employment under neoliberalism. Therefore, this study is situated in scholarly literature on precarious work and neoliberalism that offers a way of understanding how the neoliberal developments have contributed multiple forms of insecurities to the lives of working people. The theoretical framework for this study is derived from Marxian interpretations of the contemporary changes in employment arrangements and struggles of the working class people under global capitalism. Integrating eminent scholar Guy Standing's theoretical contributions on precariatisation of working class people, it proposes that precarious employment of migrant labourers is a consequence of flexible labour practices such as outsourcing and casualisation. Thus it attributes precariousness of migrant labourers to a new phase of global capitalism that aims to make labour temporary and flexible. Claiming the rise of precarious employment as a new development under global capitalism, it focuses on the changing nature of employment relationships through which the migrant workers are flexibilised to be subordinate to their employers. In the absence of state regulations of the labour markets, the workers, through individualisation of work, are subject to dominance and control by employers who create pressures and insecurities to force the workers to be highly dependent on them. This theoretical understanding of employment relationships under global capitalism, as conceptualised predominantly by Standing (1997, 1999, 2008, 2011, 2014b, 2014d, 2016a), set the scope of this study to explore global labour flexibility and its repercussions on work conditions of the migrant labourers.

Taking the case of migrant construction workers in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, this study set out to examine the role of recruitment in producing precarious work conditions. The aim

was to examine the structures of labour recruitment practices and employment relationships contributing to the precariousness of migrant labourers in Bangladesh's construction sector. One original contribution of this study is the empirical work conducted which reveals that indirect recruitment is fundamental to the production of poor work conditions and thus precariousness for the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. This study, for the first time, unravels the extensive individualised layers in labour recruitment and management that contribute greatly to conditions of precariousness through subordination, control and exploitation of Bangladeshi migrant construction workers. Empirical evidence generated and analysed by the study helps understand how recruitment practices and the prevailing conditions of employment in Bangladesh's urban construction projects attract the labourers from villages. It argues that the predominant role of the individual recruiters offers the rural labourers easy access to construction work in cities but this work is stressful and can be characterised as *4D*: dirty, difficult, dangerous and disgraceful. The empirical results reveal that rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Dhaka involves a multi-tiered labour recruitment and management process in which the individual recruiters dominate in all respects through the discretion they have in determining the terms and conditions of employment. This study identifies them as the key actors in recruitment and management of the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. It argues that the central role of the individual recruiters in indirect labour recruitment and management practices produces precarious work conditions through exploitative employment relationships that contribute to various pressures and insecurities amongst the rural-urban migrant labourers and limit scope for labour protection.

This study uniquely conceptualises the dominance of individual recruiters as producing "hyper-individualised employment", a specific pathway into employment relationship in which the individual recruiters dominate over the workers to create pressures and insecurities to force the workers to be highly dependent on them. Making the migrant workers individually subordinate to their recruiters, it generates a despotic employment relationship that contributes heavily to precarious conditions for rural-urban migrant labourers in Bangladesh. Through conceptualisation of hyper-individualised employment as a mode of dominance in the workplace, it produces new knowledge that improves the theoretical understanding of precarious work with reference to the migrant construction workers in Bangladesh. The new knowledge produced by this study complements theoretical conceptualisations of precarious work produced in the fields of employment relations by examining the connections between recruitment practices and precarious work conditions. It contributes new insights to the fields of employment relations by unpacking the inter-connections between rural-urban labour migration, recruitment and precarious employment with reference to the migrant workers in the construction sector of Bangladesh. The original contribution of this study is to shine a light on the structure of recruitment practices to enhance understandings of employment relationships in Bangladesh's construction sector. The new knowledge produced by this study can be beneficial to other global contexts where recruitment

may also be key to precarious work conditions.

9.3 Major findings

The results of this study confirm that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are the precariat. As theorised by Standing (2011), they have all the characteristics of the precariat because they lack all seven forms of labour-related security: labour market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security. Importantly this thesis attributes hyper-individualised employment to these insecurities. In doing this, it discovers the predominant engagement of multiple tiers of individuals and their intersecting and navigating role in the labour recruitment and management process that creates conditions for these insecurities.

The study discovers the physical, mental and social costs of doing construction work in the capital city of Bangladesh. It identifies the individual recruiters and their dominating role in labour recruitment and management process as fundamental to poor work conditions for which the migrant construction workers regard their job as low status. The results of this study confirm that construction is regarded as hard and undignified work. It represents a wide range of occupational risks and stresses in the workplace and human indignity outside the work.

The traditional way of performing construction jobs requires the labourers to handle huge amounts of debris, including earth, dust and construction materials, that often spreads over their clothes and body, signifying that construction work in Dhaka is dirty. Although debris is an integral part of the construction work in Dhaka, use of dirty language is very common in the construction projects. The individual recruiters often use bullying and personally abusive language to keep the workers disciplined and attentive to their assigned tasks helping them maximise the workers' performance and thus productivity. While the recruiters support the practice of using coarse language in workplaces as traditional and normal, it has negative impacts on the migrant workers' psychology. This study reveals that coarse language is highly detrimental to their self-respect and motivation. Using bullying and personally abusive language in the workplace, the individual recruiters offend them and make them feel intimidated and insulted to work hard. The practices of using coarse language enable the recruiters to pressurise and overwork the workers for extended hours. Because of debris and offensive language in the workplace, the workers regard their job as dirty and believe that they receive unpleasant treatment from the local society they live in. Lack of social status and human dignity demotivates them to carry their occupation forward to their next generation. Taking this dimension as an important structural condition tied to the construction work in Dhaka, this study adds "disgraceful" as a new feature to the predominant concept of *3D* job elaborated by Connell (1993) and ILO (2001, 2015a). It presents a *4D* (dirty, difficult, dangerous and disgraceful) image of the construction work in Dhaka.

The construction work in Dhaka is traditionally difficult work for the rural-urban migrant labourers because of the amount of physical labour it requires and the poor work conditions they experience in the construction projects. In absence of written contracts, the employment relationship between the migrant construction workers and their recruiters is determined by verbal commitment and mutual trust and obligation. The verbal terms and conditions of employment are guided by their social relationships based on common locality and personal networks. The scope of their social relationship and its connection to work pressurises the workers to work for long hours without any designated breaks or leave. According to empirical evidence produced in chapter four, the majority of the workers have no control over their work shifts and work hours. Their recruiters are dominant in determining the pace of work and thus they discretionally determine the shifts and work hours depending on circumstances. To comply with their arbitrary instructions, the workers often work for long hours, extending up to 18 hours a day, without overtime. The traditional practices of subcontracting shift the production risks onto the individual recruiters who again pass on the risks to workers they recruit. The production risks contribute to extreme time pressure to ensure assignment-based progress in the construction projects. As a result, the workers are often assigned a huge workload without allowing adequate breaks or leave. They work for several months at a stretch without having a day off. These stressful work conditions confirm the organisational dimension of precarious work as theorised by Rodgers (1989). Having no limits on working time, the workers lack work security and thus they become the precariat (Standing, 2011).

As presented in section 4.2.5, work conditions in Dhaka's construction projects are characterised by lack of representation and labour protection. The workers lack legal protection due to their verbal job contract. They do not have a trade union or collective representation opportunity to intervene in case of any disagreement with their recruiters. Because of insecurities related to their collective representation, the fear of losing their job is widespread among the workers. Lack of protection against arbitrary dismissal increases their employment insecurity. Many workers have disappointments with payment of their wages and overtime but they still continue their jobs as loyal and non-complaining "good workers". In order to minimise the risks of complaints, the recruiters prefer engaging the workers in a manner that ensures fast and quality performance. For this reasons, they usually select and recruit the workers who appear to be loyal, hardworking, and physically strong having a good body structure. As theorised by Rodgers (1989), these workplace conditions confirm the social dimension of precarious work. The insecurities related to representation and employment are fundamental characteristics of the precariat (Standing, 2011). In this context, the results of this study confirm that the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are the precariat.

Risks of workplace accidents, often leading to death, are integral to the pressures and insecurities amongst the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Lack of protection against accidents and injuries at work precariatise them by intensifying their work insecurity, as theorised by Standing

(2011). The majority of the participants included in this study have personal experience of accidents and injuries in their workplace. Moreover, many have experience of seeing their colleagues seriously injured and becoming disabled. Fatalities and accidents in the construction projects are generally attributed to the recruiters who do not offer any PPE to the workers. They are reluctant to invest in personal safety. Due to this, nearly two-thirds of the participants included in this study do not wear PPE while working onsite. They work by taking risks of their life. Although very few workers have access to PPEs, they are dependent on their recruiters who discretionally assess the necessity for using PPEs. Thus the recruiters, who often perceive PPEs to be distracting to speedy performance, decide when to use PPEs and when not. While the lack of safety accessories is an important concern for workplace security, this study finds that the workers receive distracting phone calls during work that increases the chance of workplace accidents. However, the phone calls are indirectly linked to the overall insecurity and instability of work because of which the workers are constantly required to look for new work opportunities. This study also finds that due to personal experience of frequent workplace accidents, the migrant workers in Dhaka suffer from death anxiety. Absence of social security benefits to cover workplace accidents and health risks confirms the social dimension of precarious work conditions, as theorised by Rodgers (1989), in Dhaka's construction projects.

The pressures and risks are particularly more intense for the female and adolescent workers than the male adult workers. Working in a poor work environment, the female workers cannot access a dining space with an adequate supply of drinking water. Moreover, they do not have access to a toilet during work. Although a few construction projects have temporary toilet facilities, they are often male toilets which do not have an adequate water supply and drainage. While the use of coarse language is a common practice in Dhaka's construction projects, female workers often experience indecent gestures and behaviour of a sexual nature from their male colleagues and recruiters. On the other hand, the adolescent workers endure extra pressure on their young body doing construction work. This is because they are required to take workloads like adults, although their bodies are too immature and malnourished to permit that. Excessive pressures on their young body contribute to their health problems and mental stress. While the recruiters treat them as adults to overwork, their stressful wok conditions and *4D* characteristics of their work heavily precariatise them. This thesis identifies them as the young precariat in Dhaka's construction projects.

However, these pressures and insecurities amongst the migrant construction workers fundamentally emanate from the labour management practices and the predominant role of the individual recruiters in managing the workers onsite. Involvement of the individual recruiters reduces the cost of labour to ensure profit for the builders in Dhaka. Thus the builders get advantages of indirect labour recruitment and management practices (Standing, 1999). The stresses and insecurities of the workers are fundamental to these practices that mainly aim to

increase production by exploiting the labour. In these indirect labour management practices, the workers lack representation and employment security. Profit maximisation through optimum labour productivity is the core proposition of such practices where protection of the workers against accidents and illness at work is insignificant and therefore safety and health of the workers are of less importance.

While the pressures and risks in workplaces, as discussed above, originate from the indirect recruitment practices and the way the individual recruiters manage the workers onsite, the informal process of recruitment helps construction to be the best obtainable work in the Dhaka. This study finds that the rural labourers are recruited through extensive layers of individuals, located in social networks and relations, as discussed in chapter six. It, for the first time, finds a distinctive role of the migrant workers as labour recruiters for construction work in Dhaka. Their direct involvement in the recruitment process as “recruiters for their recruiters” minimises the costs of recruitment by reducing the subcontractors’ travel expense and securing the subcontractors’ investments such as advance money. The dual role of the workers, as recruiters and workers, however produces stress for them. It also contributes control, subordination and dependence for the new migrant labourers they recruit. Thus the multi-layered recruitment practices and the role of migrant construction workers as recruiters characterise a structure of precariatisation.

Moreover, social networks-based recruitment practices contribute to a unique employment relationship in which the individual recruiters have an all-embracing role to manage and support the migrant construction workers in Dhaka. Operating in such relationships, the workers consider that their employment has scope for upward career mobility, as revealed in section 7.2.3. However, detailed exploration of such scope reveals that there is no skill reproduction security and the workers are therefore dependent on the discretion of the recruiters for skill acquisition and career mobility. They gain their skills on-the-job, not through apprenticeships or employment training. Moreover, their job conveys a poor image and low status, irrespective of upward career mobility. Measuring these characteristics with Standing’s (2011) concepts of skill reproduction security and job security tied to the precariat, the migrant construction workers in Dhaka are the precariat.

Considering the pressures and risks as necessary costs in their quest for better livelihoods or incomes, the Bangladeshi rural-urban migrant labourers find the construction work comparatively better than other work options in the capital city. This study finds that seasonal migrant labourers are very prevalent in Dhaka’s construction projects, migrating from villages during the lean months when the construction jobs are available in cities. Their seasonal migration helps their households cope with seasonal financial stresses subject to inadequate income from monsoon-based farming. Indirect recruitment processes not only help them find construction jobs through their personal networks but also allow them flexibilities of leave. The flexibilities in employment arrangements and worker-recruiter relationships based on indirect recruitment often allow the workers to return to

their village and remain connected to their original occupations and other supplementary income activities in villages during the peak harvest months. Thus flexibility of employment in Dhaka's construction projects is reflective of flexible labour statuses of the migrant workers who work in dual or multiple labour statuses (Standing, 1999). Taking this theoretical understanding, the results of this study contradict predominant claims, such as de Haan (1997), in relation to interconnections between circular migration and flexible employment arrangements. It argues that the predominant structures of employment relationships in Dhaka's construction projects permeate flexibilities, and as such the circulatory pattern of migration, to allow the workers to return to their villages when the chances of economic gains are high.

The results of this study also reveal a unique and contemporary dimension of seasonal migration in Bangladesh, adolescent migration. The discovery of adolescent migration for physically demanding construction work in Dhaka adds to the literature in the fields of labour migration that predominantly considers rural-urban labour migration as an "adult" phenomenon. Moreover, providing the adolescent migrant construction workers' own accounts, this study unravels the confined urban life and social isolation of the adolescent workers as necessary costs to better savings in Dhaka. While seasonal financial hardships in their rural households coerce them to migrate, employment arrangements in Dhaka's construction projects are socially restrictive for them. Such employment arrangements represent their social isolation and lack of networking which creates pressures and makes them the young precariat (Standing, 2011).

Higher income is one of the main reasons that attract the rural labourers to construction work in Dhaka. The results of this study reveal three unique factors, such as free onsite accommodation, confined urban life and delayed payment practices, contributing to better incomes for them. These factors represent risks and poor living conditions in free onsite accommodations that are mainly temporary sheds and under-constructed buildings. Living onsite in such vulnerable arrangements, the migrant construction workers become subject to direct control in their workplace due to their standby availability and blurring of their workplaces, home places and public places. Such living conditions therefore represent their precariatisation (Standing, 2011).

Moreover, the practices of delayed payment represent a labour retention strategy for the advantages of the recruiters and the builders. The verbal contract of the workers mentions daily wage, however, their wage is not paid in full daily. As presented in section 5.2.4, every day their recruiters pay *Khoraki* or survival money which is usually a small portion of their daily wage amount. The rest of the amount remains unpaid and noted as "due wages" to be paid cumulatively later. The structural features of such delayed payment practices, as discovered by this study, explore a complex mechanism of dependence. The builders' discretionary control on wage payment creates conditions of "wage bondage" between the recruiters and the workers, which can be attributed to confirm the economic dimension of precarious work (Rodgers, 1989). Such

practices precariatise the workers through the recruiters, ultimately allowing the builders to retain and control the workers and their coordination for the builders' own advantage. These practices intensify the workers' income insecurity, a core characteristic of the precariat theorised by Standing (2011, 2016a). The structures of wage bondage tied to delayed and irregular payment practices necessitate the workers' dependency on their recruiters and solicit their favour in case of urgent need of money. Based on their personal relationship to the individual recruiters, the workers often get payment of their due wages in the name of advance money. These conditions represent their subordination and lack of rights to confirm their precariousness. As Standing (2017) notes the conceptual relevance of similar conditions to precariousness:

> *The etymological root of precarious is to 'beg by prayer'. In other words, it refers to a person's status and a lack of rights within the state. Someone in the precariat is above all else a supplicant, dependent on others doing them favours, in response to requests (p. 166).*

In this context, another important feature of employment, uncertainty, can be related to the temporal dimension of precarious work conceptualised by Rodgers (1989). As discussed in chapter six, this study finds that the degree of uncertainty might vary depending on the modes of recruitment in Dhaka's construction projects. While the labourers in the street labour market have no work up to 28 days in a month, the hyper-individualised employment practices represent lack of labour market security for the migrant construction workers. The verbal job contracts of the workers do not specify the duration of their employment. As such, the individual recruiters do not guarantee certainty and availability of work (section 7.2.1). Although the workers perceive their recruiters to have the abilities to offer continuous employment, the individual recruiters depend on real circumstances and thus they do not take the responsibility to offer continuous employment to the workers they recruit. As a result, it is ultimately the responsibility of the migrant workers to find new work opportunities once their current job ends. Persistent uncertainty of employment therefore creates conditions for the workers' dependence on their recruiters, making them supplicant.

The migrant construction workers in Dhaka are supplicant and dependent on their recruiters in terms of not only wage payment and employment security, but also health protection. The ground-breaking discovery presented in section 7.2.4 reveals that the workers are dependent on their recruiters' personalised support during illness. Their recruiters ignorantly purchase over-the-counter medicines, usually strong antibiotics, on the basis of their own discretion for the ill workers on site. Due to lack of heath protection, the workers are generally appreciative of such a caregiving role of their recruiters. However, their dependence on the recruiters' personalised support poses serious risks to their health and life.

The results of this study reveal a unique mechanism through which the indirect recruitment practices produce conditions for depressed wages of the migrant construction workers. Corruptive payment practices of the recruiters, as in section 7.2.6, precariatise the workers by creaming off their wages. Due to the multi-layered recruitment and management process, various persons earn

their own overheads by creaming off the workers' wage. The structural conditions of extensive subcontracting practices deprive the workers of fair wages and help growth of the marginalised workers as the precariat. With increasing presence of intermediaries, such structures are representative of the "rigged" system that gives advantage to the wealthy builders but deprives the poor workers of their rights (Standing, 2016a). The recruiters in Dhaka steal up to one-quarter of the female workers' wage which is already low, and much lower than the male workers. Along with persistent employment insecurity, the corruptive payment practices of the recruiters trap the female workers in exploitative conditions and financial coercions. Similar phenomena have recently been theorised by Standing (2016a) as "platform capitalism". Like wage creaming off, this study also finds a distinctively exploitative payment practice of wage deception. It finds that the recruiters in Dhaka often deceive the workers by fleeing from worksites and staying out of contact without paying their due wages. In the absence of protection against such exploitative practices, the workers leave their due wages and endure severe financial stresses. Undermining the labour market security of the workers, such exploitative practices precariatise them by severely intensifying their income insecurity (Standing, 2011).

9.4 Limitations of the research

This study contributes original knowledge by examining the structures of indirect labour recruitment practices and employment relationships contributing to precarious work conditions for the migrant labourers in Bangladesh. However, in addition to the methodological limitations outlined in chapter three, the study has two further limitations:

First, this study is focussed on the construction projects in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. While rural-urban labour migration involves many other internal migration flows to regional urban centres, the scope of the study is limited to one metropolitan city of the country. However, the survey of the study grasped the participants' history of internal migration and they were asked about their migration and work experiences in regional towns, as opposed to the capital city. This helped the study minimise the risks of understanding and generalising rural-urban labour migration in Bangladesh's construction sector.

Second, the female participants included in this study were surveyed and interviewed by me. My gender identity, as a male, was a limitation in establishing conversation with them. The female participants were initially reluctant to talk to me and disclose their terms and conditions of employment. They were also reluctant to articulate their personal workplace experiences. However, I was aware of this challenge and I was able to minimise this limitation by visiting them repeatedly with their approval. I was able to build their trust in me by adequately explaining the purpose of this study. Reiterated assurance to their confidentiality eventually helped me minimise the limitations of interviewing the female workers as a male interviewer.

9.5 Recommendations for policy and practice

The evidence produced by this study can be used to inform the policy makers and practitioners to bring in policy changes and effective interventions to improve work conditions for the migrant construction workers. Bangladesh's national economic growth policy acknowledges labour migration as "a driver of development" (GoB, 2015b, p. 249). The national labour policy of Bangladesh aims to "ensure productive, indiscriminatory, fair, decent, safe and healthy work environment and establish the rights and dignity of labourers in all respects" (GoB, 2012, p. 76458). Despite this, improving the work conditions for the rural-urban migrant labourers in the country's construction sector is yet to be realised. The sector has regularly been valued for its enormous economic contribution in terms of GDP and employment capacity only.

In a labour market characterised by huge power asymmetry between organised capital and disorganised labour, and state apparatus subservient to capital, labour rights and labour regulations in Bangladesh are visibly not among policy priorities for any government irrespective of their political identities. Thus the labour regulations in Bangladesh took a long time to be guided by any labour law and policy (Kabeer, 2004). Even when it did, in the export-oriented garments manufacturing for instance, it was more at the insistence of labour rights non-government organisations (NGOs) backed by international donors than due to agitation or lobbying of the trade unions.

After the collapse of Rana Plaza factory building that killed at least 1,129 garment workers, the government of Bangladesh faced intense international pressures from the United States of America and Europe to improve labour conditions and hence amended the labour law in 2013 (Greenhouse, 2013). While under the old law the country's workers had many legal and practical obstacles to unionisation, the new law took numerous steps backward that undercut trade unions. After the new law, the government publicly criticised efforts to increase regulation and unionisation and thus denied trade union registrations without stating proper reasons or delayed the registrations through adopting various kind of restrictive procedures. For example, nearly 73 percent of applications, submitted in 2015 for new trade union registrations, were rejected without detailed explanation (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018).

While the trade unions in Bangladesh have grown erratically, they have been criticised for their structural weaknesses. They have "proliferated but are organisationally weak, highly factionalised, and have traditionally played only a limited role in the political process" (Kochanek, 1996, p. 715). The Bangladeshi trade unions have historically been allowed and active only in parts of the formal sector such as large public sector corporations and nationalised banks, railways, telephone and postal services, public works, public health engineering, government printing press, and state owned oil and gas companies, water supply, transport sector, etc. (Faruque, 2009). They are either absent or ineffective in large numbers of manufacturing and service industries in the private sector.

The informal sector of which the construction sector is a substantial part in terms of its recruitment practices and employment arrangements has hardly had any trade union presence historically. This was largely due to structural constraints like high mobility of labour, dispersed nature of the construction sites, informal employment contract, extensive subcontracting, flexible and contractual job arrangements, and individualised labour recruitment practices dominated by the individual subcontractors. Hence, unlike their formal sector counterparts, the construction workers in Bangladesh enjoyed lesser opportunities for them to come together, get organised and develop solidarity leading to a working class identity and common class interests. So, while trade unions in formal sectors were ineffective due to organisational and political weaknesses, they were virtually non-existent in the construction sector. My interviews with the recruiters and the workers confirmed this (see section 4.2.5).

In addition to this, while the trade unions in Bangladesh traditionally function as extensions of political parties and are therefore limited in their effectiveness as representative of workers' interests (Kabeer, 2004), the Bangladeshi business leaders regularly complain that the unions are highly political and sometimes stage disruptive strikes as a complementary tactic to political blocs' lobbying and infighting (Greenhouse, 2013). The unions are therefore limited in their effectiveness as representative of workers' interests and they in general are not viable to be a social protection provider due to their structural weaknesses with reference to the construction sector.

Furthermore, as I was informed during fieldwork in Dhaka, the construction sector does not have trade unions, unlike the readymade garments (RMG) sector that has received a fair degree of international attention on compliance issues in the last few years, particularly since the Tazreen and Rana Plaza tragedies in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Following these tragic incidents, national and international pressures have resulted in redirecting all the allocated resources for inspection to the readymade garments sector only. As a result, irregularities in the construction sector still remain unattended on the part of the state. However, the findings of this thesis indicate that further work is needed to improve the work environment in line with the policy documents. This study identifies the following recommendations for consideration for improving the work conditions in Bangladesh's construction sector:

Formalisation of the recruitment process: Although the construction sector of Bangladesh is covered under the national labour laws, it is marked by various sets of informal practices that originate from the traditional selection and recruitment process. The construction workers do not have written letters of appointment or job contracts and identity cards. A written job contract with clear mention of entitlements including provisions for work hours, minimum wages, overtime, payment schedule, leisure and leave could be a very important step towards the process of formalisation of recruitment. Moreover, institutional measures could be taken to formalise recruitment through the process of registration of the workers as well as individual recruiters.

Registration could be on the basis of a span of working years, level of experiences and skills, etc. Since the subcontractors are predominant in the sector, they should be included in the registration process.

Ensuring fair practice of wage payment: The traditional wage payment practices in Bangladesh's construction sector characterise labour retention through wage bondage. The practice of paying wages in fractions, such as *Khoraki,* creates financial pressures on the labourers. Following a specific schedule of payment is key to ensure fair practice of wage payment, while payment of the full amount of wages is also important. Therefore every construction site should have a payment register to record the amount and date of payment. Calculation and payment of overtime should also be considered with utmost importance. While the practice of paying unequal wages to the female workers has been normalised in Bangladesh's construction sector, the recruiters should be officially instructed and monitored to ensure equal wages for the female construction workers.

Ensuring PPEs for all workers: This study finds that the recruiters are reluctant to invest in PPEs for the workers they recruit and manage. Their negligence of workers' personal safety contributes to occupational accidents and injuries in the workplace. In this context, specialised PPE shops should be set up where the individual recruiters could purchase PPEs for the workers. The project management, including the individual recruiters, should be made responsible to ensure PPEs for all workers onsite. To ensure this happens, regular inspection of the construction projects by the relevant government authority will be necessary.

Workplace environment: The findings of this study confirm that the construction workers in Bangladesh work in a poor work environment marked by an inadequate supply of water, lack of dining space and toilets, and unhygienic and risky living spaces. The project management should consider establishing basic facilities for the workers and the government authorities should verify these before approving commencement of a project. Moreover, regular inspections could help maintain the facilities in the best working condition.

Trade union: This study finds that the migrant construction workers in Bangladesh do not have options for collective bargaining. While collective bargaining and trade unions are important steps to enable the workers to seek intervention to improve their work conditions, the establishment of an association of migrant construction workers is necessary. The government should encourage and facilitate forming of collective bargaining agents in the construction sector. For the best outcomes of trade unions, the individual recruiters should be consulted to be involved in the collective bargaining mechanisms. Effective inspection and monitoring systems can also ensure the basic rights of construction workers to unite and work together for the best of their interests.

Training and skill development: With a view to ensuring proper training and skills of the construction workers, there is an urgent need to set up specialised training schools so that the

workers can achieve training and skills in respective trades. Since most of construction workers in the capital city originate from villages, some training centres and skill development colleges can be established in rural areas so that the workers can get orientation for construction work in their origin areas. The existing public technical training centres should be encouraged to offer courses in trades that are currently in demand in the local as well as global construction markets. Moreover, the workers are highly dependent on their recruiter's discretionary assessment of skill level that causes delay and difficulty for them to move upward. The absence of any skill accreditation board has created scope for such discretion of the recruiters. Therefore, an official board of skill accreditation should be established to assess and certify the skills of the workers for their on-the-job upward mobility.

Social protection: The migrant construction workers in Bangladesh are deprived of any kind of social protection schemes. All stakeholders including the government authority, the private real estate companies and their association such as REHAB, subcontractors and the trade unions should engage in dialogue to devise appropriate social protection measures including health, accidents and life insurance schemes for the construction workers. Considering the temporal and spatial challenges in organising the migrant construction workers in cities, the trade union offices should be located within the reach of the workers.

9.6 Directions for future research

Precarious employment is a reality and not a myth, for the migrant workers. The key problem in researching the precarious employment of the migrant workers is perhaps the proposition that precariousness has always been there, as a permanent feature, for the migrant workers. This thesis does not deny this. However, it argues that the current features of employment for the migrant workers are much more precarious than before. To put it another way, previously migrant employment was less precarious.

Precariousness has increased because profitable labour is fundamental to the rise of the construction sector in Bangladesh (Afsar, 1999; Ahmed, Siddiquee, & Khan, 2012). The demand for labour in the profit-driven construction sector is not determined by equitable wages. The rapid growth of the construction sector can be attributed to the availability of cheap construction labour in the local market. In Bangladesh, construction labourers are easily available and their wage rate is low (Ahsan, 1997; Chowdhury et al., 2012; Farhana et al., 2012; Uddin & Firoj, 2013). Moreover, due to lack of official formalities, anyone can hire labourers anytime for building properties without having any formal commitments of employer. Whenever the builders wish, they can discontinue the hired labourers without giving notice in advance. Often private builders accomplish their projects step by step and thus employ labourers only on demand, as discussed in chapter five. This informality in labour recruitment practices has led to an increasing number of construction projects in the country. While easy availability of construction labourers is related to employment

uncertainty and job precariousness, Bangladesh's local construction labourers' technical expertise gives their recruiters many advantages. One of the main advantages is related to the builders' cost of production. The local labourers' technical knowledge and expertise allow the builders accomplish their tasks without consulting costly professional engineers, designers or landscapers. Thus the builders in Bangladesh are highly dependent on the labourers' expertise that minimises their overall cost of production by avoiding involvement of professional experts in construction projects. This has made building activities easily manageable and affordable and thus profitable to the builders, contributing to overall growth of the construction sector in the country.

Global ideological push for neoliberal economy introduced in 1970s contributed to the development of the profit-driven construction sector since Bangladesh's birth (Afsar, 2003; GoB, 2011a). Neoliberal flexibilisation in the country's construction sector occurred as part of broader flexibilisation and informalisation in the economy in conjunction with neoliberal globalisation. Although some neoliberal reforms began to take root in Bangladesh during the middle to late 1970s, immediately after the birth of the country, the real push came in the mid-1980s in the form of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). These orchestrated changes in the country's macroeconomic directions and social policy priorities like reduced public spending in health, education and public services, marketisation of agricultural inputs, privatisation of large public corporations, and market liberalisation leading to decline in many traditional manufacturing industries like jute, textiles and steel faced with stiff competition from foreign and multinational firms (Muhammad, 2015). Privatisation and liberalisation led to reduced employment opportunities on the one hand and increased flexibilisation on the other in the forms of contractual, part-time and casual employments in the formal sector. Such manufacturing decline disproportionately affected semi-skilled and unskilled employment seekers. Reduced public spending in social and public services contributed to higher cost of living and marketisation of agricultural inputs contributed to rising cost of agricultural production, the burden of which mostly fell on poor and lower middle class populations of rural areas and urban peripheries.

The above shifts in political economy played major roles behind rural-urban and international labour migrations that exacerbated since the 1980s (Afsar, 1999). Much of the rural-urban migrants who constituted unemployed agricultural labourers, small farmers, climate-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs), unemployed or laid off labourers of privatised public corporations, and unemployed labourers of traditional manufacturing industries could find informal employment in construction sector jobs. There was greater availability of these informal and casual jobs from the late 1980s amid construction boom particularly in the capital city Dhaka, the largest urban concentration in the country, and in other major urban areas. The privatisation and deindustrialisation resulting from neoliberal reforms also led to a service-sector led economic growth thriving on foreign aid fuelled infrastructure development, urban expansion and NGO projects (Muhammad, 2015). These contributed to new accumulation opportunities in construction,

transport and other service industries for a new class who were politically connected and thus many politicians turned businesspeople to make profit throughout prevalent irregularities.

For example, the average cost of construction of highways in Bangladesh is high, compared to many developed and developing countries in the world. Despite low cost labour and competitive price of the construction materials, overall cost of construction of highways in Bangladesh is higher than Europe, China or India (Mamun, 2016). While the average cost of constructing one kilometre four-lane highway is USD3.50 million in Europe, USD1.63 million in China and USD1.25 million in India, the cost is as high as USD7.38 million in Bangladesh; while the highest of all is the recently approved Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga four-lane highway where the cost per kilometre has been approved as USD11.88 million (Ali, 2015). The abnormal hike in construction costs is due to illegal commission trading, bribes and speed money associated with the contracting process. It has been reported that in Bangladesh, private companies paid government officials up to 15 percent of the contract value in exchange for award of the contract (Collier, Kirchberger, & Söderbom, 2015). Commission and bribes are related to every sphere of a project starting from land surveying. Another recent dimension of cost-intensive transport infrastructure is the construction of expressways and overpasses. The recently approved costs of 217 kilometre-long Dhaka-Chittagong expressway reveal that USD40.25 million will be spent per kiliometre whereas the cost of one kiliometre expressway is USD11.03 million in India (Das, 2016). Construction of overpasses in Bangladesh also involves higher costs than in India, China or Malaysia. In spite of extreme high costs of transport infrastructure, the quality of construction always remains poor (Das, 2017). Most of the roads and highways built in Bangladesh are bitumen-sealed. Because of the use of cheap and low quality grade bitumen, the road surfaces melt in summer and potholes develop in rainy season. Thus the newly built costly roads become unfit for transport within short time (Ahmed, 2016). As a result, resurfacing and upgrading tasks are considered to be a part of routine maintenance which costs further. Lack of transparency and widespread corruption in road infrastructure construction involves many actors and business enterprises and their profit. This has led to growth of the construction sector where road infrastructure development involves year-long tasks and many actors and business enterprises are involved throughout the lifetime of these projects.

In spite of this, neoliberal developments such as privatisation have helped the growth of Bangladesh's construction sector by flourishing many private industries, factories and services since early 1980s (Afsar, 1999; GoB, 2011a). A large portion of the country's production and service activities became privatised since then. This led to emergence of private business enterprises and service organisations including banks and insurance companies. Therefore, many buildings were built while the demand for commercial and industrial buildings and corporate office space was increasing. Buildings for industrial and corporate use still have high demand due to economic growth and expansion of trade activities throughout the country (GoB, 2015b). While

land is scarce in the country, increasing industrialisation has created pressures on land leading to overall growth of construction activities. Private trade activities are rapidly spreading in both rural and urban areas. For example, all mobile phone operators in Bangladesh are private companies who have drastically spread their branches and operations at district level over the past few years. As a result, the demand for space for setting up the mobile operators' local offices has gone up and a significant proportion of Bangladesh's commercial space is now being used for mobile phone and accessories related trade activities, as I observed during fieldwork in Bangladesh. Moreover, the country's grocery retailers have distribution offices throughout all districts and they have rented many buildings and houses to run their operations. At the same time, the number of NGOs, private schools, hospitals, and diagnostic centres has also increased and many private buildings have been built to lease for operating these services. All these circumstances have been initiated by privatisation and rapid growth of the construction sector is largely attributed to these circumstances.

In this context, the worst victims of precarious employment are those working in the relatively new countries such as Bangladesh. Born in the neoliberal era, Bangladesh has inherently adopted free market trade policies and flexible labour policies for competitive production. Precarious employment has been a fundamental characteristic of employment in the country. With the increasing expansion of neoliberal policies and flexibilisation of labour, the employment quality in Bangladesh has gradually deteriorated. In particular, employment has increasingly become indirect and informalised with growing layers of agents in recruitment process.

The latest phase of this trend is the notable presence of individual agents who subcontract, mediate, facilitate and recruit the workers as employers. Their layers are too many, and at the same time too overlapping, to identify the distinctiveness of each layer. Involvement of multiple layers of these individuals in the recruitment process has severely worsened the terms and conditions of employment. For the rural-urban migrant labourers, they are the key actors because of their overarching involvement not only in the migration journey, but employment and thus the work life of the migrant labourers. When the individual agents and the migrant workers are from the same locality, there is ample opportunity for the former to circumnavigate their involvement to the personal life of the workers. Given the increasing changes in the structure of employment arrangements for the migrant labourers, the extent of the role of the individual agents, as both recruiters and employers, is therefore of vital importance. In the context of this important understanding, the results of this study yield four important areas that warrant further research:

Firstly, precariatisation of migrant workers in hyper-individualised employment practices requires further investigation with special attention to internal migration. Most of the literature on precarious employment is focussed on industrialised countries, particularly the non-citizens and their employment in these countries. Research is needed on internal migrant workers and their

employment conditions to explore the dynamics of contemporary changes in employment arrangements where the individual recruiters are increasingly growing, in terms of their layers as well as capacities. Research focussing on the individual agents in the internal migrant workers' recruitment process will help better understand the specific conditions of migrant labour exploitation in both local and global workplaces.

Secondly, the national labour policies of Bangladesh commit to ensure decent workplace environment for all workers. Rural-urban migrant workers are different from the general categories of workers due to their exceptional personal experiences of work and living in urban spaces. While migration of rural labourers to the capital city of the country involves a complex journey, further investigation is now needed on the impact of these policies on the workplace conditions for the migrant workers in the construction sector. It will help the migration and labour scholars understand whether the policies create barriers or offer solutions to better employment conditions for the migrant construction workers in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, further investigation is required into recruitment practices and employment conditions of the rural-urban migrant labourers on construction sites in other geographical contexts. Considering the extent of hyper-individualised employment practices as emerging dimension of precarious work, research in other countries and regions of similar socio-economic characteristics of Bangladesh will help migration and labour scholars critically analyse the structure of employment relationships in the global workplaces. In many contexts, precarious work conditions are permanent and not specific to migrant workers only. Comparative research in other contexts will therefore be helpful to understand the wide magnitude of precarious employment for the migrant workers.

Fourthly, the structure of social networks-based indirect recruitment practices in Bangladesh reveals extensive connections to international labour migration. There is very little research on informal recruitment process in relation to the selectivity of rural labourers for international migration. In this context, there is a need for more evidence on how the migrant labourers in cities capitalise their social networks toward recruitment for international migration. Original evidence in this area will help the migration researchers explore the role of individual recruiters in international labour migration and its outcomes.

Finally, migration of female and adolescent labourers for physically demanding work such as urban construction work reveals various forms of vulnerabilities in the workplace. However, there is very little research on gender and age dimensions of construction work. Further investigation is therefore needed to understand the variability of migration and workplace experiences determined by age and gender of the workers. This will help the migration and labour researchers examine the structure of the gender relations and masculinities in work relationships with reference to the global

construction industry. Additionally, this will help them comprehend the greater extent of youth migration for precarious work in the contemporary world.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Human ethics approval

From: Human Research Ethics
Date:09/02/2016 11:49 AM (GMT+06:00)
To: "'reza0022@flinders.edu.au'" ,Maria Giannacopoulos ,Marinella Marmo
Subject: 6761 Modification No.1 approval notice (9 February 2016)

Dear Md Selim

The Deputy Chairperson of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University has reviewed and approved the modification request that was submitted for project 6761. A modification ethics approval notice can be found below.

MODIFICATION (No.1) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**6761**
Project Title:	Rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment: the case of construction workers in Bangladesh
Principal Researcher:	Mr Md Selim Reza
Email:	reza0022@flinders.edu.au
Modification Approval Date:	9 February 2016
Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**15 December 2018**

I am pleased to inform you that the modification request submitted for project 6761 on the 3 February 2016 has been reviewed and approved by the SBREC Chairperson. A summary of the approved modifications are listed below. Any additional information that may be required from you will be listed in the second table shown below called 'Additional Information Required'.

Approved Modifications	
Extension of ethics approval expiry date	
Project title change	
Personnel change	
Research objectives change	
Research method change	
Participants – addition +/- change	X
Consent process change	
Recruitment process change	
Research tools change	
Document / Information Changes	X
Other (if yes, please specify)	

Additional Information Required
None.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

  This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

Please be reminded that in order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress report must be submitted each year on **30 March** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval.

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects

The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data.

Your next report is due on **30 March 2016** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. The report template is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, principal researcher or supervisor change);
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes / additions to information and/or documentation to be provided to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., questionnaire, interview questions, focus group questions);
- extensions of time.

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Executive Officer if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer immediately on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind regards
Andrea

Mrs Andrea Fiegert and Ms Rae Tyler

Ethics Officers and Executive Officer, Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee

Andrea - Telephone: +61 8 8201-3116 | Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

Rae – Telephone: +61 8 8201-7938 | ½ day Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Web: Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC)

Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity – Dr Peter Wigley

Telephone: +61 8 8201-5466 | email: peter.wigley@flinders.edu.au

Research Services Office |Union Building Basement

Flinders University

Sturt Road, Bedford Park | South Australia | 5042

GPO Box 2100 | Adelaide SA 5001

From: Human Research Ethics <human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au>
Sent: 30 March 2015 11:21
To: Md Selim Reza (reza0022@flinders.edu.au); Maria Giannacopoulos; Marinella Marmo
Subject: 6761 Final ethics approval notice (30 March 2015)

Dear Md Selim,

The Chair of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. This means that you now have approval to commence your research. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**6761**
Project Title:	Rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious employment: the case of construction workers in Bangladesh
Principal Researcher:	Mr Md Selim Reza
Email:	reza0022@flinders.edu.au
Approval Date:	30 March 2015
Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**15 December 2018**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

In order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical*

Conduct in Human Research (March 2007) an annual progress report must be submitted each year on the **30 March** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval using the annual / final report pro forma available from Annual / Final Reports SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects
The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data.

Your first report is due on **30 March 2016** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest.

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such matters include:

- proposed changes to the research protocol;
- proposed changes to participant recruitment methods;
- amendments to participant documentation and/or research tools;
- change of project title;
- extension of ethics approval expiry date; and
- changes to the research team (addition, removals, supervisor changes).

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please submit a Modification Request Form to the Executive Officer. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Committee if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au immediately if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind regards
Andrea

Mrs Andrea Fiegert and Ms Rae Tyler

Ethics Officers and Executive Officer, Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee

Andrea - Telephone: +61 8 8201-3116 | Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning

Rae – Telephone: +61 8 8201-7938 | ½ day Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Web: Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC)

Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity – Dr Peter Wigley

Telephone: +61 8 8201-5466 | email: peter.wigley@flinders.edu.au

Research Services Office |Union Building Basement

Flinders University

Sturt Road, Bedford Park | South Australia | 5042

GPO Box 2100 | Adelaide SA 5001

Appendix B: Verbal script

Mr Md Selim Reza
School of Law
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law
Rm 3.11a, Education Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042

T:+61 8 8201 5469; +618 8201 3911 (EXT: 15567)
F: +61 8 8201 3630
M: +61 (0) 424 828 633
Email: reza0022@flinders.edu.au
W: http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/law/research-activities/postgraduate-research-students.cfm

Verbal Script

Title: 'Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh'

Hi! This is Md Selim Reza, a postgraduate research student at Flinders University, Australia. I am conducting a research on migrant construction workers in Dhaka city. My research will look at various conditions of rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious labour in the construction sector of Bangladesh. I want to find out how recruitment practices are associated with different conditions of precarious labour in the construction sector. I will get to understand this by questionnaire-based interviews with migrant construction workers. The research outcomes may indirectly support efforts to improve the experiences of rural-urban migrant labourers like you in the construction industry. However, I am not able to directly assist you with any work problems. I promise to protect anonymity, maintain confidentiality and not share this information with anyone else. Any information that you provide will be managed in the strictest confidence. However, disclosure of illegal activities during the course of the research must be reported to relevant authorities or cannot be safe from legal search and seizure. The reporting of my findings will not refer to the names of the persons being interviewed. In case you wish, I will also not refer by name to the employers. Participation in the study is voluntary and refusal to participate will have no effect on your work. Interview will take place only during breaks. Interview will not take place at your worksite. So, you can nominate an adequately private meeting space off your worksite convenient for you. Moreover, if you indicate that you would like to complete the survey at a later time, I can come to you at a suitable time with the questionnaire. I will read the questionnaire to you and fill in the relevant sections of the questionnaire in front of you. You can see the process in front of you. If you wish to be interviewed, please let me know. The interview will take no more than one hour. I will be very happy to have your consent to participate in this interview and thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix C: Letter of introduction

Flinders
UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA

Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
Lecturer
School of Law

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: +61 82013738
Fax: +61 82013630
Maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam:

I hold the position of Lecturer in the School of Law at Flinders University. I am the principal supervisor of Md Selim Reza who is a Masters student here at the School of Law. I am writing to introduce Selim and his research.

Selim has been a Masters Student with the School of Law since the beginning of 2014. He carries with him a photo student card which confirms his identity as a Flinders University student.

He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of "Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh".

He would like to invite you to assist in this project, by taking part in a questionaire which he will administer in spoken form at your place of work or another place of your choosing. This process will take no more than one hour of your time. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +618 82013738 or by fax on +618 82013630 or by email maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.
Yours sincerely

Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
Lecturer in Socio-Legal Studies
School of Law

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au..

inspiring achievement

Flinders
UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA

Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
Lecturer
School of Law

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: +61 82013738
Fax: +61 82013630
Maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam:

I hold the position of Lecturer in the School of Law at Flinders University. I am the principal supervisor of Md Selim Reza who is a Masters student here at the School of Law. I am writing to introduce Selim and his research.

Selim has been a Masters Student with the School of Law since the beginning of 2014. He carries with him a photo student card which confirms his identity as a Flinders University student.

He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of "Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh".

He would like to invite you to assist in this project, by taking part in an in depth interview which he will administer in spoken form at your place of work or another place of your choosing. This interview will take no more than two hours of your time. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +618 82013738 or by fax on +618 82013630 or by email maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.
Yours sincerely

Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
Lecturer in Socio-Legal Studies
School of Law

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au..

inspiring achievement

Appendix D: Information sheet for participants

Mr Md Selim Reza
School of Law
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law
Rm 3.11a, Education Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042

T:+61 8 8201 5469; +618 8201 3911 (EXT: 15567)
F: +61 8 8201 3630
M: +61 (0) 424 828 633
Email: reza0022@flinders.edu.au
W: http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/law/research-activities/postgraduate-research-students.cfm

INFORMATION SHEET
(Survey)

Title: 'Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh'

Investigator:
Mr Md Selim Reza
School of Law
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law
Rm 3.11a, Education Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park South Australia 5042
T:+61 8 8201 5469; +618 8201 3911 (EXT: 15567)
M: +61 (0) 424 828 633
Email: reza0022@flinders.edu.au

Supervisor(s):
Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
School of Law
Room 3.40, Law and Commerce Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042
Ph: +61 8 8201 3738
Email: maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

Dr Marinella Marmo School of Law
Room 3.34, Law and Commerce Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042
Ph: +61 8 82012861
Email: marinella.marmo@flinders.edu.au

inspiring achievement

Description of the study:
This study is part of the project entitled **'Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh'**. This project will investigate the connections between rural-urban labour migration and different conditions of labour recruitment in Bangladesh's construction industry through the lens of precariousness. Therefore, this project aims to uncover the different conditions of labour insecurities and job uncertainties tied to labour recruitment practices that contribute to precarious employment conditions for the rural-urban migrant labourers in the construction sector of Bangladesh. This project is supported by Flinders University School of Law.

Purpose of the study:
This project aims to find out:

- how recruitment practices are associated with the precariousness of construction labour; and
- the possible connections and intersections between recruitment practices, rural-urban labour migration and precarious employment in the construction industry of Bangladesh.

What will I be asked to do?
You are invited to verbally fill in a survey questionnaire with me. I will ask you some questions about your demographic background, decisions for migration, employment, work conditions and remittances. I will read the survey questionnaire to you and fill in the relevant sections of the questionnaire in front of you here. This will take no more than **one hour**. This is voluntary.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?
Information shared by you will provide a reliable and valid measure of the factors that mediate the decisions as well as outcomes of rural-urban labour migration for construction work in Dhaka city. Moreover, your participation will help to identify important trends and issues concerning the decisions and outcomes of rural-urban labour migration as well as employment amongst construction workers in Dhaka city by identifying demographic, motivational, situational and causal determinants. All these information will be contributing to research that aims to inform public policies and enable the relevant stakeholders that can benefit you and your community.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?
I do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Any information that identifies you will not be transcribed. You can withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence. You can ask for any part of your interview to be omitted from the study. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file will be stored on a password-protected computer at Flinders University of Australia in writing. Your comments will not be linked directly to you. Thus you will not be identifiable in the resulting report or subsequent publications relating to the information you will provide me. Any information that you provide will be managed in the strictest confidence. However, disclosure of illegal activities during the course of the research must be reported to relevant authorities or cannot be safe from legal search and seizure.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

I anticipate no risks from your involvement in this study. However, some possible complications are identified such as:

1. You may feel burdened by the donation of your time;
2. You may experience difficult emotions during or following the recounting of challenges faced during efforts to migrate from rural areas and secure employment in Dhaka city;
3. You may assume that their participation will be identifiable.
4. You may realise that (or feel helpless because) you may be subjected to unethical treatment by your employer;
5. You may hesitate about having your comments misinterpreted or misrepresented in published material in a way that reflects poorly on the group or community to which you belong;
6. Employers at construction sites may feel that they are being investigated by someone connected with media and/or government regulatory agencies; and
7. You may believe that I could act as a mediator or that I am a labour inspector.

If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with me.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation in the study is voluntary and refusal to participate will have no effect on your work. The interview will be conducted in a secured and private place off your worksite. You can also nominate an adequately private and convenient meeting space off worksite. If you indicate that you would like to complete the survey at a later time, I can come at your suitable time with the questionnaire. I will read the questionnaire to you and fill in the relevant sections of the questionnaire in front of you here. You can see the process in a confidential manner. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from interview at any time without effect or consequences on your work. You do not have to give a reason why.

How will I receive feedback?

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and verbally conveyed to you if you would like to be informed of them. If you are interested to be told about the findings of this project, you can provide me your mobile phone number so that this can happen.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (**Project number: 6761**). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Mr Md Selim Reza
School of Law
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law
Rm 3.11a, Education Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042

T:+61 8 8201 5469; +618 8201 3911 (EXT: 15567)
F: +61 8 8201 3630
M: +61 (0) 424 828 633
Email: reza0022@flinders.edu.au
W: http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/law/research-activities/postgraduate-research-students.cfm

INFORMATION SHEET
(In-depth interview)

Title: 'Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh'

Investigator:
Mr Md Selim Reza
School of Law
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law
Rm 3.11a, Education Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park South Australia 5042
T:+61 8 8201 5469; +618 8201 3911 (EXT: 15567)
M: +61 (0) 424 828 633
Email: reza0022@flinders.edu.au

Supervisor(s):
Dr Maria Giannacopoulos
School of Law
Room 3.40, Law and Commerce Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042
Ph: +61 8 8201 3738
Email: maria.giannacopoulos@flinders.edu.au

Dr Marinella Marmo
School of Law
Room 3.34, Law and Commerce Building
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park
South Australia 5042
Ph: +61 8 82012861
Email: marinella.marmo@flinders.edu.au

Description of the study:
This study part of the project entitled **'Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh'**. This project will investigate the connections between rural-urban labour migration and different conditions of labour recruitment in Bangladesh's construction industry through the lens of precariousness. Therefore, this project aims to uncover the different conditions of labour insecurities and job uncertainties tied to labour recruitment practices that contribute to precarious employment conditions for the rural-urban migrant labourers in the construction sector of Bangladesh. This project is supported by Flinders University School of Law.

Purpose of the study:
This project aims to find out:

- how recruitment practices are associated with the precariousness of construction labour; and
- the possible connections and intersections between recruitment practices, rural-urban labour migration and precarious employment in the construction industry of Bangladesh.

What will I be asked to do?
You are invited to attend a one-on-one interview with me. I will ask you a few questions about your views and understanding about rural-urban labour migration and employment in the construction sector of Dhaka city. The interview will take no more than **two hours**. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with looking at the results. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and stored as a computer file and then destroyed once the results have been finalised. This is voluntary.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?
The sharing of your experiences will improve understanding the critical connections between rural-urban labour migration, recruitment practices and precarious labour in the construction sector of Bangladesh. Your shared experiences will also be contributing to research that aims to inform public policies and practices that can benefit you and your community.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?
I do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Any information that identifies you will not be transcribed. You can withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence. You can ask for any part of your interview to be omitted from the study. Once the interview has been typed-up and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password-protected computer at Flinders University of Australia in writing. Your comments will not be linked directly to you. Thus you will not be identifiable in the resulting report or subsequent publications relating to the information you will provide me. Any information that you provide will be managed in the strictest confidence. However, disclosure of illegal activities during the course of the research must be reported to relevant authorities or cannot be safe from legal search and seizure.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

I anticipate no risks from your involvement in this study. However, some possible complications are identified such as:

1. You may feel burdened by the donation of their time;

2. You may experience difficult emotions during or following the recounting of challenges faced during efforts to migrate from rural areas and secure employment in Dhaka city;

3. You may assume that their participation will be identifiable.

4. You may realise that (or feel helpless because) they may be subjected to unethical treatment by their employer;

5. You may hesitate about having their comments misinterpreted or misrepresented in published material in a way that reflects poorly on the group or community to which you belong;

6. Employers at construction sites may feel that they are being investigated by someone connected with media and/or government regulatory agencies; and

7. You may believe that I could act as a mediator or that I am a labour inspector.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation in the study is voluntary and refusal to participate will have no effect on your work. The interview will be conducted in a secured and private place off your worksite. You can also nominate an adequately private and convenient meeting space. If you indicate that you would like to complete the interview at a later time, I can come at your suitable time with the questionnaire. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from interview at any time without effect or consequences on your work. You do not have to give a reason why. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate I will read the consent form to you and have your consent to start the interview.

How will I receive feedback?

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and verbally conveyed to you if you would like to be informed of them. If you are interested to be told about the findings of this project, you can provide me your mobile phone number so that this can happen.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (**Project number: 6761**). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix E: Consent form for participation in research

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(by questionnaire based survey)

"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh"

I …..

being over the age of 15 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Information Sheet and Letter of Introduction for the research project on *"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh".*

1. The researcher has clearly read all information to me.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I understand that:
    - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
    - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
    - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
    - I may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
5. I agree/do not agree to the tape/transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.
6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature……Date……..

I certify that I have explained the study to the interviewee and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: MD SELIM REZA

Researcher's signature……..Date…….

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(by in-depth interviews)

"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh"

I ….....

being over the age of 15 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Information Sheet and Letter of Introduction for the research project on *"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh".*

1. The researcher has clearly read all information to me.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I understand that:
    - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
    - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
    - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
    - I may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
5. I agree/do not agree to the tape/transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.
6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature……Date……...

I certify that I have explained the study to the interviewee and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: MD SELIM REZA

Researcher's signature……..Date……

Appendix F: Survey questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire

"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh"

Md Selim Reza
PhD Student
Flinders Law School

The purpose of this survey is only academic and will not be used for any other purposes. Each respondent will be assured that any response provided will not be publicised in the future. All the information will be treated anonymously and confidentially so that it cannot be traced back to the respondent.

Questionnaire no.: | | | | Date of interview: | | | |

Region in the city map: | North | South | East | West |

Type of project:

Residential	**Non-residential**	**Civil**
	Industrial/Commercial/ Other non-residential	

A) Demographic profile of interviewee

A100	Gender	1	Male	
		2	Female (section **F** applicable)	
A101	Age	1	Below 20 years (Additional section **I** applicable, if 15-17 years)	
		2	21-30 years	
		3	31-40 years	
		4	41-50 years	
A102	Marital status	1	Unmarried (skip to **A104**)	
		2	Married	
		3	Divorced (skip to **A104**)	
		4	Widow (skip to **A104**)	
A103	If married, what does your spouse do?	1	Works with me in Dhaka city	
		2	Works as domestic carer in Dhaka city	
		3	Stays at home in Dhaka city	
		4	Works in the village	
		5	Takes care of household works in village	
		6	Stays at home in the village	
		7	Works occasionally	
		8	Other:_____	
A104	Education	1	No basic education	
		2	Primary (1-5)	
		3	Secondary (6-10)	
		4	Higher secondary (11-12)	
		5	Graduation	
		6	Post-graduation	
		7	Technical education	
A105	Religion	1	Muslim	
		2	Non-Muslim	
A106	Which part of the country do you originate from?		District:_____	
			Division:_____	
A107	Where did you live in	1	House on own land	

	village?	2	House on other's land	
		3	Had no fixed accommodation	
		4	Other: _____	

A1: Personal details

A2: Family and household details

A201	Where do your family members live?	1	All with me in Dhaka city	
		2	All in the village	
		3	Some in Dhaka city & some in the village	
		4	Another place	
		5	Other:_____	
A202	What is the size of your household?	1	1 to 3	
		2	4 to 6	
		3	More than 6	
A203	If married, how many children do you have?	1	None (skip to **B001**)	
		2	1 to 3	
		3	More than 3	
A204	If married and have children, what does/do your child/children do?	1	Minor	
		2	Goes to school	
		3	Looks after household works	
		4	Helps mother at work	
		5	Works with me	
		6	Works independently	
		7	Accompanies father/mother at work place	
		8	Other: _____	

B) Migration process and decisions

B001	When did you first leave your home for work?	1	I can't recall	
		2	This was the first migration in my life	
		3	_____ years ago	
B002	What was the main reason for the move?	1	I can't recall	
		2	Family member died	
		3	I got married	
		4	I faced climate shocks	
		5	I was offered a work outside my village	
		6	I had financial hurdles and/or loans	
		7	Lean season for agriculture	
		8	Joined a group of labourers out of curiosity	
		9	Accompanied family member/relative	
		10	Socio-political reasons	
		11	Household matters, i.e., tensions among brothers	
		12	Other reason: _____	
B003	Where did you go then?	1	Village in own district	
		2	Village in another district	
		3	Urban area in own district	

		4	Urban area in another district	
		5	Metropolitan city other than Dhaka	
		6	Peri-urban area near Dhaka city	
		7	Dhaka city	
B004	After that, where did you go?	1	Went back to own village	
		2	Went to another village	
		3	Went to another urban area	
		4	Went to another metropolitan city other than Dhaka	
		5	Went to Dhaka city	
		6	Other: _____	
B005	How many years ago did you migrate to Dhaka city?	1	_____years ago	
		2	This was the first time	
B006	What was your family's main source of livelihood in your village then?	1	No source of livelihood	
		2	Seasonal employment	
		3	Agriculture in own land	
		4	Agriculture in leased land	
		5	Agricultural labour	
		6	Non-agricultural labour	
		7	Trade activities	
		8	Other: _____	
B007	Was it sufficient to fulfil your household requirements then?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **B008**)	
B007_1	If yes, why did you leave your village and choose Dhaka for work?	1	For employment with better wages	
		2	For regular employment	
		3	For better wages and regular employment	
		4	Agriculture was not profitable	
		5	To pay off loans/debts	
		6	Household decision	
		7	Better future for family	
		8	Inspired by neighbours, friends and/or relatives	
		9	Socio-political tensions in village	
		10	Individual decision	
		11	Inspired by contractor	
		12	Other reason: _____	
B008	How do you relate/compare your previous occupation with the current one?	1	Current one brings more income/wage	
		2	Current one requires more hard work	
		3	Current one has a better future	
		4	Current one has more advantages	
		5	Current one is more unstable in terms of work availability	
		6	Current one is more insecure in terms of earning	
		7	Other:_____	
B009	Do you regularly visit your home in village?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **B009_2**)	

B009_1	If yes, what is the purpose of your visit?	1	To look after the family living there	
		2	To support household work	
		3	To work in peak harvest season	
		4	Occasional visit on the eve of festivals	
		5	When someone is sick	
		6	Other: _____	
B009_2	If no, why?	1	I will lose my job	
		2	I will not lose my job but wage will be cut	
		3	My family lives with me in Dhaka city	
		4	I do not have anything to look after in village	
		5	Other: _____	
B010	What changes have you experienced after being involved in the construction sector as a migrant worker in Dhaka city?	1	Better wages	
		2	Better earning	
		3	More savings	
		4	Better household consumption	
		5	Better education for children	
		6	Better financial status	
		7	Poor wages	
		8	Worse earning (compared to previous occupation)	
		9	Less savings	
		10	Less occupational mobility	
		11	More occupational health risks	
		12	Poor economic condition	
		13	Tension in family	
		14	No change at all	
		15	Other: _____	

C) Recruitment

C001	How did you know about work opportunities in Dhaka city?	1	From neighbour	
		2	From relative/friend	
		3	From unknown person	
		4	From a group of people (i.e., who are going to migrate in city and/or already have migration experiences)	
		5	From a labour contractor	
		6	From a migrant construction worker in same village	
		7	From a migrant construction worker in another village	
		8	From no one	
		9	Other: _____	
C002	Who played the most important role in your decision to migrate for construction work in Dhaka city?	1	Self	
		2	Spouse	
		3	Family member(s)	
		4	Friend/relative	
		5	Labour contractor	
		6	Someone from same village	
		7	Someone from another village	
		8	Unknown person	
		9	No one	
		10	Other: _____	

C003	How long did/do you work in the construction sector in a year/over the last year?	1	Whole year (skip to **C004**)	
		2	Only in lean season for harvest	
		3	I work and go back to village when I can save some money	
		4	I work only a few months in a year	
		5	I work only on the eve of festivals	
		6	I work on fixed term contracts and go to village when the term ends	
		7	Other: _____	
C003_1	If seasonal, why do/did you opt for construction work in city?	1	Easily available work for people like me	
		2	Very similar to agricultural work in terms of hard work	
		3	Better wages	
		4	Easy to save money	
		5	No training is required	
		6	Someone offered me work	
		7	I came in a group	
		8	No cost for accommodation	
		9	All production risks are borne by contractor and/or *Sardar*	
		10	Other: _____	
C004	Do you have any previous work experiences in construction work?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **C005**)	
C004_1	If yes, what are those?	1	I have worked as a helper/associate	
		2	I have worked as a construction worker in my district	
		3	I have professional training	
		4	I have on-the-job training	
		5	Other:_____	
C005	Did you take any cash advances from your current employer before joining?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **C006**)	
C005_1_1	If yes, why?	1	To meet travel costs of migration	
		2	To meet family expenses	
		3	To pay off debts	
		4	To pay medical costs	
		5	I had financial hurdles	
		6	To support family members and/or kids	
		7	To get some extra money only	
		8	Other: _____	
C005_1_2	If yes, have you been able to pay the money back?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **C005_2**)	
C005-1_3	If yes, how did you pay the money?	1	My wage had been cut	
		2	I worked extra hours without overtime	
		3	Other: _____	
C005_2	If no, why?	1	The employer did not want the money	

		2	I have to pay if I leave the current employer	
		3	That was a grant	
		4	Other: _____	
C006	Did anyone promise you construction work in Dhaka city before you left your village?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **C006_5**)	
C006_1	If yes, who is that person?	1	My current team leader (*Sardar*)	
		2	A contractor/subcontractor	
		3	A fellow worker	
		4	Neighbour	
		5	Relative/friend	
		6	Unknown person	
		7	Other: _____	
C006_2	If yes, did that person have any role in finding work for you?	1	Yes	
		2	No	
C006_2_1	If yes, how did that person help you to find work in Dhaka city?	1	The person is a subcontractor	
		2	The person is a team leader (*Sardar*) and works with me	
		3	The person took me in a spot labour market	
		4	The person contacted a team leader (*Sardar*)	
		5	The person had contacts with labour contractors and/or companies	
		6	The person introduced me with my current employer	
		7	Other: _____	
C006_3	If yes, since being in Dhaka city, how do you categorise that person now?	1	The person is a labour contractor	
		2	The person is a team leader (*Sardar*) who recruits labourers from village	
		3	The person is a subcontractor and he has contacts with employers/companies	
		4	The person is a migrant construction worker	
		5	The person does not work with us but supervises us	
		6	Other: _____	
C006_4	If yes, how long have you been working with that person?	1	This is the first time	
		2	For one year	
		3	For two years	
		4	More than two years	
		5	I work only with that person	
		6	I do not work with that person	
C006_5	Did you change the person whom you first came in Dhaka city with?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **C006_5_2**)	
		3	Not applicable (Skip to C007)	
C006_5_1	If yes, why?	1	The person did not pay regularly	
		2	The person did not have regular work	
		3	The person did not paid large amount of my wage	

			that fell due	
		4	The person was very harsh and did not listen my complaints	
		5	Other: _____	
C006_5_2	If no, why?	1	Except that person, I did not know anyone	
		2	Because that person is my neighbour/relative/friend	
		3	Because that person takes extra care of my family	
		4	Because that person can assure regular works	
		5	Because I can't pay the advance that he has given me	
		6	Because that person gives me freedom	
		7	Because I can borrow money from him when I need	
		8	Because that person is sincere to protect me from any problems	
		9	Other: _____	
C007	In your opinion, what are the benefits of working with same person for long time?		1…… 2…… 3……	
C008	In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of working with that person for long time?		1…… 2……... 3……	

D) Work Conditions

D001	Do you know what kind of construction work is going on at the site?	1	Residential	
		2	Non-residential	
		3	Civil engineering	
		4	Don't know	
D002	At this site, what kind of work are you currently engaged in?	1	Helper/Associate	
		2	Manual labour	
		3	Piling labour	
		4	Carpenter	
		5	Rod/steel binder	
		6	Concrete worker	
		7	Mason	
		8	Scaffold	
		9	Welder	
		10	Electrician	
		11	Painter	
		12	Plumber	
		13	Machine operator	
		14	Stone/brick crasher	
		15	Stone/brick crushing machine operator	
		16	Other: _____	
D003	How did you acquire your skills for this work?	1	On-the-job	
		2	I got professional training	
		3	Other: _____	

D004	At the time of starting, did you have any knowledge about construction work?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D004_2**)	
D004_1	If yes, were you able to determine your wage?	1	Yes	
		2	No	
D004_2	If no, how was your wage determined then?	1	The contractor observed my work first and then determined the wage accordingly	
		2	I could know about my wage only at the end of month	
		3	Other: _____	
D005	Who is your current employer?	1	Contractor/subcontractor	
		2	Team leader (*Sardar*)	
		3	Company manager	
		4	Owner of the project	
		5	Don't know	
		6	Other: _____	
D006	Including you, how many people are currently working at this worksite?	1	Don't know	
		2	_____ persons	
D007	How long have you been in continuous employment with the present employer?		_____years _____ months ____ days	
D008	How did you obtain the present employment?	1	I came from village directly to join this particular work	
		2	I was hired from street spot market	
		3	Through a labour contractor	
		4	Through a team leader (*Sardar*)	
		5	Through a neighbour	
		6	Through relative/friend	
		7	I approached the employer/manager directly	
		8	I was approached by employer/manager	
		9	Someone took me here but I don't know him	
		10	Other: _____	
D009	Do you have a written contract?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D009_2**)	
D009_1	If yes, what are the conditions of that contract?	1	I have no idea	
		2	The conditions are: …….	
D009_2	If no, what is the nature of your work contract?	1	Verbal contract for specific time/days	
		2	Verbal contract for particular project	
		3	Verbal contract for continuous employment	
		4	Other: _____	

D010	Who controls/supervises your daily work schedule?	1	Contractor/Subcontractor	
		2	Team leader (*Sardar*)	
		3	Project manager/Site manager	
		4	Project owner	
		5	None	
		6	Other: _____	
D011	How is your payment calculated?	1	Daily rate	
		2	Hourly rate	
		3	Monthly/weekly salary	
		4	Piece rate	
		5	At running feet or square feet rate	
		6	Other: _____	
D012	In general, do you work all 30 days regularly in a month?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D012_2** then **D012_2_1**)	
D012_1	If yes, how do you get work around the whole month?	1	My contractor finds new work once needed	
		2	My team leader retains me and moves to another project	
		3	I look for new sources every time	
		4	I sit in the street market when my work finishes	
		5	Other: _____	
D012_2	If no, how many days do you work in a month?		_____ days	
D012_2_1	If no, why don't you work all 30 days in a month?	1	I prefer working casually	
		2	Health does not permit	
		3	Weather does not permit	
		4	I want to work but don't get work	
		5	My contractor/subcontractor does not get continuous work	
		6	Other: _____	
D013	What are your normal working hours?	1	_____ hours	
		2	No certain work hours	
D014	What much do you earn per day?	1	BDT_____; AUD ____	
		2	Nothing	
D015	How often is your payment made?	1	Daily	
		2	Weekly	
		3	Monthly	
		4	At the end of project	
		5	There is no certain time	
		6	Other: _____	

D016	If you work more than 8 hours, do you get overtime?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D016_2**)	
D016_1	If yes, at what rate?		…… ……	
D016_2	If no, why?	1	Overtime is not counted	
		2	Overtime is counted but not paid	
		3	Other: _____	
D017	Who disburses your payment?	1	Contractor/Subcontractor	
		2	Team leader (*Sardar*)	
		3	Manager	
		4	Project owner	
		5	Other: _____	
D018	Do you often borrow money?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D019**)	
D018_1	If yes, whom do you borrow money from?	1	Contractor/Subcontractor	
		2	Team leader (*Sardar*)	
		3	Manager	
		4	Project owner	
		5	Co-worker	
		6	Other: _____	
D018_1_1	If yes, why do you borrow money?	1	My contractor/subcontractor does not pay me regularly	
		2	I need to send money to my family regularly	
		3	I need some money every day for daily spending	
		4	Other: _____	
D018_1_2	If yes, how often do you borrow money?	1	Once in a week	
		2	Once in a fortnight	
		3	Once in a month	
		4	When I feel the need	
		5	Other: _____	
D019	Does your employer pay you regularly?	1	Yes (skip to **D020**)	
		2	No	
D019_1	If no, how do you get your payment?	1	My contractor/subcontractor/team leader/project owner pays me *Khoraki* before final payment	
		2	My payment is disbursed in fractions without giving *Khoraki*	
		3	My payment is disbursed according to the project owner's wish	
		4	My payment is disbursed when I wish to visit my family	

		5	Other: _____	
D020	If another employment opportunity arises soon, what do you need to do to take it up?	1	I can join readily without giving notice to present employer	
		2	I will need to give notice to present employer	
		3	I will need to clear debt and advances before moving on	
		4	I can't easily join because of my high debt	
		5	Other: _____	
D021	If any dispute arises, can you seek protection?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **D022**)	
D021_1	If yes, whom do you approach?	1	Contractor/subcontractor	
		2	Team leader	
		3	Site manager	
		4	Project owner	
		5	Other: _____	
D022	Can you bargain about your wage, overtime, work schedule, etc.?	1	Yes (skip to **E001**)	
		2	No	
D0022_1	If no, why?	1	Employer is not accessible	
		2	There is a risk to lose job	
		3	There is a risk to get the wage reduced	
		4	There is a risk to be physically assaulted	
		5	Other: _____	

E) Occupational safety

E001	Do you use any safety gadget?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **E001_2**)	
E001_1	If yes, what kind of gadgets do you use?	1	Helmet	
		2	Mask	
		3	Gloves	
		4	Gumboots	
		5	Ear muff	
		6	Sunglass	
		7	Other: _____	
E001_2	If no, why don't you use?	1	The employer does not provide	
		2	The employer provides but I am not interested	
		3	Other: _____	
E002	Have you ever experienced any accident?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **E003**)	
E002_1	If yes, what kind of accident?	1	Falling from height	
		2	Electrocution	

		3	Wall/brick falling	
		4	Severe fracture/injury	
		5	Other: _____	
E003	Have you ever seen anyone dying of accident?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **E004**)	
		3	No, but I have seen someone got seriously injured	
		4	No, but I have seen someone become disabled	
E003_1	If yes, did the employer pay any assistance/penalty to that person/family?	1	Yes	
		2	No	
E004	Do you receive phone calls while working?	1	Yes	
		2	No	
		3	I don't have mobile phone	

F) Female workers only

F001	Where does your husband work?	1	At the same worksite (go to **F001_1**)		
		2	Another site		
		3	He does not work in construction sector		
		4	Unemployed		
		5	He lives in village		
		6	Other: _____		
F001_1	If husband works at the same worksite, what are the benefits?	1	I feel physically secured		
		2	No one can tease me		
		3	I get favour from my husband in work		
		4	Other: _____		
F002	Do you get wage equal to your male counter parts?	1	Yes (skip to **F003**)		
		2	No		
F002_1	If no, how different is your wage?	1	Less	BDT_____; AUD_____	
		2	More	BDT_____; AUD_____	
F002_2	If no and less, why do you think you get less than male workers?	1	I have no idea		
		2	Male workers work harder than me		
		3	The employer has contracted me at the less wage		
		4	I work harder than male workers and still I get less than what they get		
		5	Other: _____		
F003	Who receives your payment?	1	Myself		
		2	Husband		
		3	Team leader (*Sardar*)		
		4	Other: _____		

F004	Whom do you keep/save your money with?	1	Myself	
		2	Husband	
		3	Contractor/Subcontractor	
		4	Team leader (*Sardar*)	
		5	Other: _____	
F005	Can you access a separate toilet in workplace?	1	Yes	
		2	No	
F006	Do you face any harassment from your employer or co-workers?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **F007**)	
F006_1	If yes, what kind of harassment do you face the most?	1	Verbal teasing	
		2	Unnecessary talk	
		3	Order to do a different work that I am not contracted for	
		4	Finding fault in work	
		5	Making liable for equipment damage	
		6	Arguing for paying less	
		7	Other: _____	
F007	Did you experience any discrimination in finding work?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **G001**)	
F007_1	If yes, what kind of discrimination?	1	The employer does want to contract me because I am female	
		2	The employer offered me wage less than what male workers get	
		3	The employer does not assign me good work	
		4	The employer wants me do some additional work such as cooking, etc.	
		5	Other: _____	

G) Remittances

G001	Are you able to save money to take or send (remit) home?	1	Yes	
		2	No (skip to **G001_2**)	
G001_1	If yes, how much were you able to save to take home or remit in the last month?		BDT_____; AUD _____	
G001_1_1	If yes, how do you send your savings?	1	Mobile transfer	
		2	I carry while I visit village	
		3	I give it to someone visiting my village	
		4	My colleague bears the money to my family	
		5	Contractor/team leader bears the money to my family	

		6	Bank	
		7	Post office	
		8	Other: _____	
G001_1_2	If yes, what have you used the savings for both at origin and destination?	1	Purchased land	
		2	Mortgaged in land	
		3	Home renovation	
		4	Purchased farm assets	
		5	Purchased consumer durables	
		6	Payment of debt	
		7	High consumption in lean season	
		8	Expenditure on children's education	
		9	Marriage of children/family members	
		10	Establish own business in village	
		11	Help family members to set up small business/enterprise	
		12	Other: _____	
G001_2	If no, why?	1	The wage is not sufficient to save	
		2	The wage is paid in fractions	
		3	The wage is all spent for my living here	
		4	The wage is used to pay debts	
		5	Other: _____	
G002	What would your family have done if you did not have this opportunity to migrate for construction work in Dhaka city?	1	Stay in village as agricultural labour	
		2	Look after own farm and family	
		3	Start doing business	
		4	Migrate in other areas in Bangladesh	
		5	Migrate overseas	
		6	Other: _____	
G003	What would you say about your family's situation compared to five years ago?	1	Better now	
		2	Same now	
		3	Worse now	

H) Living conditions in Dhaka city

H001	In general, what are your living arrangements in Dhaka?	1	Structure in under-constructed building	
		2	Room/shed provided by employer/contractor in the worksite	
		3	Room/shed provided by employer/contractor away from worksite	
		4	Privately rented room	
		5	Privately rented house/unit	
		6	Room in slum	
		7	No fixed accommodation	
		8	Mess	
		9	Other: _____	
H002		1	_____ persons	

	How many people do you live with at the moment?	2	Don't know	
H003	Where do you/other workers normally go if you/they are ill?	1	Nearby pharmacy	
		2	Traditional healer	
		3	Unregistered medical practitioner	
		4	Private doctor	
		5	Government dispensary/doctor	
		6	Have no access to medical practitioner	
		7	Other: _____	

I) Adolescent workers only

I001	How do you work?	1	Directly under team contractor/subcontractor/team leader	
		2	With father/mother	
		3	With friend/relative	
		4	Other: _____	
I002	Do you always tell your actual age while looking for work?	1	Yes	
		2	No (Skip to **I002_2**)	
I002_1	If yes, what type of problem do you face from your employer?	1	Get less wage	
		2	Get more hard work	
		3	Do not get continuous work	
		4	Other: _____	
I002_2	If no, why?	1	To get equal wage	
		2	To get more work	
		3	To get continuous work	
		4	To avoid legal complications	
		5	Other: _____	
I003	What kind of general problems do you face because of being adolescent?	1	Co-workers tease	
		2	Compel to abide by unnecessary instructions	
		3	Physical assault	
		4	Less wage	
		5	Other: _____	

Additional question (for participation in in-depth interview)

X-1	Would you be willing to meet with the researcher to discuss these points further?	1	Yes	
		2	No	

Appendix G: In-depth interview questionnaire for workers

In-depth interview questionnaire

"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh"

Md Selim Reza
PhD Student
Flinders Law School

The purpose of this in-depth interview is only academic and will not be used for any other purposes. Each respondent will be assured that any response provided will not be publicised in the future. All the information will be treated anonymously and confidentially so that it cannot be traced back to the respondent.

A) Nature of construction work and its relation to migration

A01. What is your family background in terms of land, education and earning persons in household?

A02. Why did you migrate in Dhaka city? Please describe.

A03. Who played the most important role in your migration decision? Please explain his/her role.

A04. Can you please describe the process of your migration?

a. How much time was spent after you decided to migrate and the actual movement?
b. What were the monetary costs involved for migration?
c. What were the non-monetary costs involved?
d. Who bore the travel costs for you to reach your destination?

A05. Was any third party such as informal intermediary (*Dalal*) or labour contractor involved in the process? If so, how?

A06. Why did you choose construction work in Dhaka city? Why not other occupations?

A07. Have you always worked in construction or did you switch from other work? Why?

B) Structures of recruitment practices and the key actors in recruitment

B01. How did you get the current work? Please describe.

B02. How did you get to know about the work that you are currently engaged in?

B03. Has anyone helped you in securing this work? Please explain.

B04. What are the terms and conditions that were promised to you by the person? What were your expectations when you first approached?

B05. Please tell about how your wage was determined. Who determined that?

B06. How do you see the role of labour subcontractors and team leaders (*Sardar*) in construction work? Please describe.

B07. Please describe the advantages of being recruited through labour subcontractors.

B08. Are there any disadvantages of being recruited through labour subcontractors? Please explain.

B09. Have you or your workmates been able to secure employment for another person where you work? If yes, were there any monetary transaction involved between you or the site management, or between you and the person who was recruited on your nomination? Please explain.

C) Migrant construction workers' view and negotiation of recruitment

C01. Does your employer offer regular work and leave?

C02. In your opinion, what are the main qualities that employers look for?

C03. What do you think a “good worker” is in the eyes of the employer? Do the attributes such as hard working, physical fitness, ethnicity, male/female, relationship, region of origin, etc. have any role?

C04. Do you think that construction work provides opportunities for occupational mobility? Please describe.

C05. If there is any dispute with your employer, how do you secure intermediation or redress?

C06. Are you able to bargain with your employer? If yes, what are the issues in general?

C07. Have you ever been recruited from spot market/streets? Please tell your experience about that.

D) Recruitment practices, employment relationships and associated precariousness

D01. What are the conditions (features) of your current employment? Please describe.

D02. Who is your employer? Please explain.

D03. Please explain your relationship with your employer.

D04. Please tell about how your work schedule is determined.

D05. Please tell how your payment is calculated and disbursed.

D06. Does your employer give *Khoraki* (survival money)? Please explain why and how.

D07. Is the wage you get enough for living?

D08. Does your employer have any role in personal living and looking after your family back at home?

D09. Are you aware of the laws and regulations that cover the construction workers sector in Bangladesh? Please elaborate:

a) What role does your employer play in implementing or breaking laws? How does your employer work with the workers in implementing laws?
b) What happens if someone gets injured in workplace?
c) What happens if a worker gets sick in workplace?
d) What is the attitude of your employer towards your participation in Unions?

D10. What help does your employer offer you generally? Does your employer control your access to credit, protection against police, other harassment, etc.?

D11. How do you feel working in Dhaka city away from your home? Please share your experiences.

D12. Do you now think that the construction work in Dhaka city was a good option to choose? Please explain your expectations and realities.

D13. Do you think that you have been able to change your socio-economic conditions by working in Dhaka city? Please explain.

D14. How does your present location compare with your village in terms of work opportunities?

Please explain.

D15. What would your family have done if you did not have this opportunity to migrate in Dhaka city? Do you want your next generation to continue this work?

D16. What are your long-term goals for your family? Has migration helped you achieve them?

Appendix H: Interview questionnaire for recruiters

Interview questionnaire

(For recruiters)

"Rural-Urban Labour Migration, Recruitment Practices and Precarious Employment: The Case of Construction Workers in Bangladesh"

Md Selim Reza

PhD Student

Flinders Law School

The purpose of this interview is only academic and will not be used for any other purposes. Each respondent will be assured that any response provided will not be publicised in the future. All the information will be treated anonymously and confidentially so that it cannot be traced back to the respondent.

1. How do you find work opportunities in Dhaka?
2. How do you recruit the workers?
3. What is the demographic background of the workers that you have recruited?
4. What are the factors that you consider while recruiting workers?
5. Do you always recruit workers from your own locality? If yes, why?
6. Do you offer cash advances? If yes, why?
7. How do you determine the wage of workers?
8. How do you pay the workers' wage?
9. How do workers learn their work?
10. How do you assess the performance of workers?
11. What are the requirements for becoming a 'good worker'?
12. How do the workers spend their money?
13. Do you always give safety instructions to the workers? If yes, what are they?
14. What are the additional services that you offer to the workers?
15. What are the problems that you face in managing the workers onsite?

REFERENCES

Abdul-Aziz, A. R. (1995). *Foreign labour in the Malaysian construction industry* (Working Paper No. SAP 2-49/WP.95). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1995/95B09_364_engl.pdf

Abrar, C. R., & Reza, M. S. (2014). *Internal migrant workers and the construction sector in Bangladesh: Tackling informality and exploitative labour practices* (RMMRU Policy Brief No. 11). Retrieved from UK Department for International Development website: http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/MigratingOutOfPov/RMMRU_Brief11.pdf

Ackroyd, S. (2007). Dirt, work and dignity. In S. C. Bolton (Ed.), *Dimensions of dignity at work* (pp. 30-50). Oxford: Elsevier.

Afsar, R. (1999). Rural-urban dichotomy and convergence: Emerging realities in Bangladesh. *Environment and Urbanization, 11*(1), 235-246.

Afsar, R. (2000). *Rural-urban migration in Bangladesh: Causes, consequences and challenges*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Afsar, R. (2002). Migration and rural livelihoods. In K. A. Toufique & C. Turton (Eds.), *Hands not land: How livelihoods are changing in rural Bangladesh* (pp. 89-96). Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

Afsar, R. (2003, June 22-24). *Internal migration and the development nexus: The case of Bangladesh.* Paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Agarwala, R. (2014). Informal workers' struggles in eight countries. *Brown Journal of World Affairs, 20*(2), 251-263.

Ahmed, F. (2016, 15 November). Bitumen industry: Shortage of quality product posing problems. *The Independent*. Retrieved from http://www.theindependentbd.com/arcprint/details/23085/2015-11-15.

Ahmed, M. Z., Siddiquee, M. S. A., & Khan, M. S. (2012, July 4-6). *Reliability and construction practices in building construction industry of Bangladesh.* Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Construction In Developing Countries (ICCIDC–III), Bankok, Thailand.

Ahmed, S. U. (2014). Dhaka City Corporation. In *Banglapedia: The national encyclopedia of Bangladesh*. Retrieved from http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Dhaka_City_Corporation

Ahsan, R. M. (1997). Migration of female construction labourers to Dhaka City, Bangladesh. *International Journal of Population Geography, 3*(1), 49-61.

Akter, T. (2009). *Climate change and flow of environmental displacement in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from Unnayan Onneshan-The Innovators website: http://unnayan.org/documents/Climatechange/climate_change_flow_environmental_displacement.pdf

Alam, N., & Barkat-e-Khuda. (2011). Out-migration from Matlab—a rural area of Bangladesh: Directions, levels and differentials. *Asian Population Studies, 7*(1), 35-50.

Ali, I. (2015, October 6). The cost of contruction of highways is the highest in Bangladesh (Translated from Bangla). *Bonik Barta*. Retrieved from http://bonikbarta.net/bangla/news/2015-10-06/51702.

Allen, K. (2014). The precariat: New class or bogus concept? *Irish Marxist Review, 3*(9), 43-53.

Amin, A. T. M. N. (1987). The role of the informal sector in economic development: Some evidence from Dhaka, Bangladesh. *International Labour Review, 126*(5), 611-623.

Anand, H. S. (2001). *Nature of informal economy and three sectoral studies*. New Delhi: International Labour Organization.

Anderson, B. (2010). Migration, immigration controls and the fashioning of precarious workers. *Work, Employment and Society, 24*(2), 300-317.

Arnold, D., & Bongiovi, J. R. (2013). Precarious, informalizing, and flexible work: Transforming concepts and understandings. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(3), 289-308.

Bahn, S., Barratt-Pugh, L., & Yap, G. (2012). The employment of skilled migrants on temporary 457 visas in Australia: Emerging issues. *Labour and Industry, 22*(4), 379-398.

Ball, M., & Connolly, P. (1987). Capital accumulation in the Mexican construction industry, 1930-82. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 11*(2), 153-171.

Bartel, A. P. (1979). The migration decision: What role does job mobility play? *American Economic Review, 69*(5), 775-786.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (M. Ritter, Trans.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Beck, U. (2000). *The brave new world of work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bélanger, D., & Linh, T. G. (2013). Precarity, gender and work: Vietnamese migrant workers in Asia. *Diversities, 15*(1), 5-20.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.

Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Lanham: Altamira Press.

Bernard, H. R. (2012). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

BILS. (2007). *Workers human rights in the construction sector of Bangladesh* (Status Report). Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

Bilsborrow, R. E., Oberai, A. S., & Standing, G. (1984). *Migration surveys in low income countries: Guidelines for survey and questionnaire design*. London: Croom Helm.

Birbili, M. (2000). Translating from one language to another. *Social Research Update* (Issue No. 31). Retrieved from http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU31.html

Bird, C. M. (2005). How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(2), 226-248.

Bloch, A. (2007). Methodological challenges for national and multi-sited comparative survey research. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(2), 230-247.

Bloemraad, I. (2007). Of puzzles and serendipity: Doing research with cross-national comparisons and mixed methods. In L. DeSipio, M. G. y. Griego, & S. Kossoudji (Eds.), *Researching migration: Stories from the field* (pp. 34-49). New York: The Social Science Research Council.

Bosch, G., & Philips, P. (2003). Introduction. In G. Bosch & P. Philips (Eds.), *Building chaos: An international comparison of deregulation in the construction industry* (pp. 1-23). London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of resistance: Against the tyranny of the market* (R. Nice, Trans.). New York: The New Press.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Boyd, M. (1989). Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and new agendas. *International Migration Review, 23*(3), 638-670.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Breman, J. (1996). *Footloose labour: Working in India's informal economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Breman, J. (2003). *The labouring poor in India: Patterns of exploitation, subordination, and exclusion*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Breman, J. (2013). A bogus concept? [Review of the book *The precariat: The new dangerous class*, by G. Standing]. *New Left Review* (84), 130-138.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buckley, M. (2014). On the work of urbanization: Migration, construction labor, and the commodity moment. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 104*(2), 338-347.

Buckley, M., Zendel, A., Biggar, J., Frederiksen, L., & Wells, J. (2016). *Migrant work & employment in the construction sector*. Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_538487.pdf

Burrows, S. (2013). Precarious work, neoliberalism and young people's experiences of employment in the Illawarra region. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 24*(3), 380-396.

BWI. (2006). *Defending workers rights in construction*. Retrieved from Building and Woodworkers International website: http://connect.bwint.org/pdfs/WCProcurementFiona.pdf

Byerlee, D. (1974). Rural-urban migration in Africa: Theory, policy and research implications. *The International Migration Review, 8*(4), 543-566.

Campbell, I., & Price, R. (2016). Precarious work and precarious workers: Towards an improved conceptualisation. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 27*(3), 314-332.

Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2014). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world* (5th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chambers, R., & Conway, G. R. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century* (IDS Discussion Paper No. 296). Retrieved from Institute of Development Studies website: https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/775/Dp296.pdf?sequence=1

Chang, D. (2009). Informalising labour in Asia's global factory. *Journal of Contemporary Asia 39*(2), 161-179.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Choudhury, T. (2013). Experiences of women as workers: A study of construction workers in Bangladesh. *Construction Management and Economics, 31*(8), 883-898.

Chowdhury, I. A., Haque, N., Kamal, M. M., Islam, T., Khan, M. M., Islam, M. N., & Uddin, I. (2012). Internal migration and socio-economic status of migrants: A study in Sylhet city, Bangladesh. *American Journal of Human Ecology, 1*(4), 123-133.

Chowdhury, R. A. R. (2010, May). Improving OSH at construction sites through a participatory training approach: Experience of Bangladesh. *Asia-Pacific Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety, 17*(1)*,* 4-8.

Clark, W. A. V. (1982). Recent research on migration and mobility: A review and interpretation. *Progress in Planning, 18*, 1-56.

Cohen, M. G. (2013). Teenage work: Its precarious and gendered nature. *Revue Interventions économiques Papers in Political Economy,* (Issue No. 47, Emploi et inégalités sociales, pp. 1-24). Retrieved from Revue Interventions économiques Papers in Political Economy website: http://interventionseconomiques.revues.org/1895

Collier, P., Kirchberger, M., & Söderbom, M. (2015). *The cost of road infrastructure in low and middle income countries* (7408). Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/124814681853546 69/pdf/WPS7408.pdf

Connell, J. (1993). *Kitanai, kitsui, and kiken: The rise of labour migration to Japan*. Sydney: Economic and Regional Restructuring Research Unit, University of Sydney.

Connell, J., Dasgupta, B., Laishley, R., & Lipton, M. (1976). *Migration from rural areas: The evidence from village studies*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Connolly, P. (2001). *Recent trends in the Mexican construction industry and outlook for the 21st century: Its image, employment prospects and skill requirements* (Research Report). Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Costantino, N., Pietroforte, R., & Hamill, P. (2001). Subcontracting in commercial and residential construction: An empirical investigation. *Construction Management and Economics, 19*(4), 439-447.

Cranford, C. J., & Vosko, L. F. (2006). Conceptualizing precarious employment: Mapping wage work across social location and occupational context. In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada* (pp. 43-66). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Cross, J. (2010). Neoliberalism as unexceptional: Economic zones and the everyday precariousness of working life in South India. *Critique of Anthropology, 30*(4), 355-373.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: SAGE Publications London.

Cwerner, S. B. (2001). The times of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 27*(1), 7-36.

Das, P. S. (2016, May 31). The cost of construction of flyovers highest in Bangladesh (Translated from Bangla). *Kaler Kantho*. Retrieved from http://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/first-page/2016/05/31/364233

Das, S. B. (2017, 17 May). Gross irregularities in Naikkhyangchhari road repair work. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/05/17/irregularities-naikhongchhari-sonaichhari-road

DaVanzo, J. (1978). Does unemployment affect migration? Evidence from micro data. *The Review of Economics and Statistics, 60*(4), 504-514.

Davis-Blake, A., Broschak, J. P., & George, E. (2003). Happy together? How using nonstandard workers affects exit, voice, and loyalty among standard employees. *Academy of Management Journal, 46*(4), 475-485.

de Haan, A. (1997). Rural-urban migration and poverty: The case of India. *IDS Bulletin, 28*(2), 35-47.

de Haan, A. (1999). Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration-a critical review of the migration literature. *The Journal of Development Studies, 36*(2), 1-47.

de Haan, A., & Rogaly, B. (2002a). Introduction: Migrant workers and their role in rural change. *The Journal of Development Studies, 38*(5), 1-14.

de Haan, A., & Rogaly, B. (Eds.). (2002b). *Labour mobility and rural society*. Cornwall: Frank Cass Publishers.

de Haas, H. (2010a). The internal dynamics of migration processes: A theoretical inquiry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(10), 1587-1617.

de Haas, H. (2010b). Migration and development: A theoretical perspective. *International Migration Review, 44*(1), 227-264.

De Neve, G. (2014). Fordism, flexible specialization and CSR: How Indian garment workers critique neoliberal labour regimes. *Ethnography, 15*(2), 184-207.

de Vaus, D. (2014). *Surveys in social research* (6th ed.). Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Deshingkar, P. (2006). Internal migration, poverty and development in Asia: Including the excluded. *IDS Bulletin, 37*(3), 88-100.

Deshingkar, P., & Farrington, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Circular migration and multilocational livelihood strategies in rural India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Donaghey, J., & Reinecke, J. (2018). When industrial democracy meets corporate social responsibility -A a comparison of the Bangladesh accord and alliance as responses to the Rana Plaza disaster. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 56*(1), 14-42.

Doogan, K. (2009). *New capitalism?: The transformation of work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Eide, P., & Allen, C. B. (2005). Recruiting transcultural qualitative research participants: A conceptual model. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 4*(2), 44-56.

Elam, G., & Fenton, K. A. (2003). Researching sensitive issues and ethnicity: Lessons from sexual health. *Ethnicity and Health, 8*(1), 15-27.

Elizaga, J. C. (1972). Internal migration: An overview. *International Migration Review, 6*(2), 121-146.

Ellis, F. (1998). Household strategies and rural livelihood diversification. *The Journal of Development Studies, 35*(1), 1-38.

Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Entwisle, D. R., Alexander, K. L., & Olson, L. S. (2000). Early work histories of urban youth. *American Sociological Review, 65*(2), 279-297.

Farhana, K. M., Rahman, S. A., & Rahman, M. (2012). Factors of migration in urban Bangladesh: An empirical study of poor migrants in Rajshahi city. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology, 9*(1), 105-117.

Faruque, A. A. (2009). *Current status and evolution of industrial relations system in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from ILO office, India: https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/intl/78/

Fawcett, J. T., & Arnold, F. (1987). The role of surveys in the study of international migration: An appraisal. *International Migration Review, 21*(4), 1523-1540.

Fellini, I., Ferro, A., & Fullin, G. (2007). Recruitment processes and labour mobility: The construction industry in Europe. *Work, Employment and Society, 21*(2), 277-298.

Fernandez, B. (2013). Traffickers, brokers, employment agents, and social networks: The regulation of intermediaries in the migration of Ethiopian domestic workers to the Middle East. *International Migration Review, 47*(4), 814-843.

Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step* (3rd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Fielden, S. L., Davidson, M. J., Gale, A. W., & Davey, C. L. (2000). Women in construction: The untapped resource. *Construction Management and Economics, 18*(1), 113-121.

Fielden, S. L., Davidson, M. J., Gale, A. W., & Davey, C. L. (2001). Women, equality and construction. *Journal of Management Development, 20*(4), 293-305.

Fields, G. S. (1975). Rural-urban migration, urban unemployment and underemployment, and job-search activity in LDCs. *Journal of Development Economics, 2*(2), 165-187.

Filep, B. (2009). Interview and translation strategies: Coping with multilingual settings and data. *Social Geography, 4*(1), 59-70.

Firman, T. (1991). Rural households, labor flows and the housing construction industry in Bandung, Indonesia. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, 82*(2), 94-105.

Fowler, F. J. (2009). *Survey research methods* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Fracchia, J. (2008). The capitalist labour-process and the body in pain: The corporeal depths of Marx's concept of immiseration. *Historical Materialism, 16*(4), 35-66.

Frone, M. R. (1999). Developmental consequences of youth employment. In J. Barling & E. K. Kelloway (Eds.), *Young workers: Varieties of experience* (pp. 89-128). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

GoB. (2011a). *6th five year plan*. Dhaka: General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB. (2011b). *Report on labour force survey 2010*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistcs Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB. (2012). *National labour policy*. Dhaka: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB. (2015a). *Labour force survey Bangladesh 2013*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB. (2015b). *Seventh five year plan FY2016-FY2020: Accelerating growth, empowering citizens*. Dhaka: General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB. (2017). *Overseas employment and remittances from 1976-2017 (Up to December)*. Retrieved 16 February 2018, from Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh website: http://www.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=17

Grant, E. K., & Vanderkamp, J. (1980). The effects of migration on income: A micro study with Canadian data 1965-71. *Canadian Journal of Economics, 13*(3), 381-406.

Greenberger, E., & Steinberg, L. D. (1986). *When teenagers work: The psychological and social costs of adolescent employment*. New York: Basic Books.

Greenhouse, S. (2013, July 16). Under pressure, Bangladesh adopts new labor law. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/under-pressure-bangladesh-adopts-new-labor-law.html

Guarte, J. M., & Barrios, E. B. (2006). Estimation under purposive sampling. *Communications in Statistics—Simulation and Computation, 35*(2), 277-284.

Hamilton, C. H. (1961). Some problems of method in internal migration research. *Population Index, 27*(4), 297-307.

Harkness, J. A. (2006). *Round 3 ESS translation strategies and procedures*. Retrieved from European Social Survey website: http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round3/methods/ESS3_translation_guidelines.pdf

Harris, J. R., & Todaro, M. P. (1970). Migration, unemployment and development: A two-sector analysis. *The American Economic Review, 60*(1), 126-142.

Herrmann, M., & Svarin, D. (2009). *Environmental pressures and rural-urban migration: The case of Bangladesh* (MPRA Paper No. 12879). Retrieved from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich website: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/12879/1/MPRA_paper_12879.pdf

Hewison, K., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2012). Precarious work and flexibilization in South and Southeast Asia. *American Behavioral Scientist 57*(4), 395-402.

Hicks, J. R. (1963). *The theory of wages* (2nd ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hodgkin, S. (2008). Telling it all: A story of women's social capital using a mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2*(4), 296-316.

Hodson, R. (2001). *Dignity at work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Homan, R. (2001). The principle of assumed consent: The ethics of gatekeeping. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 35*(3), 329-343.

Honig, H. G. (1997). Positions, power and practice: Functionalist approaches and translation quality assessment. *Current Issues in Language & Society, 4*(1), 6-34.

Hossain, J., Ahmed, M., & Akter, A. (2010). *Decent work and Bangladesh labour law: Provisions, status and future direction* (Research Report). Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

Hugo, G. (2003, June 4-7). *Urbanisation in Asia: An overview.* Paper presented at the Conference on African Migration in Comparative Perspective, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Hugo, G. (2013). *What we know about circular migration and enhanced mobility* (MPI Policy Brief No. 7). Retrieved from Migration Policy Institute website: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Circular-Migration.pdf

Hymer, S. (1970). The efficiency (contradictions) of multinational corporations. *The American Economic Review, 60*(2), 441-448.

ILO. (1992). *Safety and health in construction: An ILO code of practice* (Report No. 08.10.1). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_107826.pdf

ILO. (2001). *The construction industry in the twenty-first century: Its image, employment prospects and skill requirements* (Report No. TMCIT/2001). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_publ_9221126226_en.pdf

ILO. (2012). *From precarious work to decent work: Outcome document to the workers' symposium on policies and regulations to combat precarious employment* (Report Identification No. 13.01.3). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_179787.pdf

ILO. (2015a, 23 March). Construction: A hazardous work. Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/hazardous-work/WCMS_356576/lang--en/index.htm

ILO. (2015b). *Non-standard forms of employment: Report for discussion at the meeting of experts on non-standard forms of employment (Geneva, 16-19 February 2015)* (Report No. MENSFE/2015). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@travail/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_336934.pdf

IOM. (2005). *Migration, development and poverty reduction in Asia: Proceedings of Regional Conference on Migration and Development in Asia, 14-16 March, Lanzhou, China*. Retrieved from International Organization for Migration website: http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_dev_pov_asia.pdf

IOM. (2013). *Migration and the United Nations: Post-2015 development agenda* (Report No. 45_13). Retrieved from International Organization for Migration website: http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_the_un_post2015_agenda.pdf

Jason, A. (2007). *Informal construction workers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania* (Working Paper No. WP.226). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_160790.pdf

Jha, K. K. (2002). *Informal labour in the construction industry in Nepal* (ILO Working Paper No. 187). Retrieved from Cornell University Library website: http://ilo-mirror.library.cornell.edu/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/construction/wp187.pdf

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2014). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (5th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Johnson, B., & Turner, L. A. (2003). Data collection strategies in mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 297-319). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jones, G., Mahbub, A. Q. M., & Haq, M. I. (2016). *Urbanization and migration in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from United Nations Population Fund website: http://unfpabgd.org/images/files/pdf/Urbanization-Migration-Study-in-Bangladesh-2016.pdf

Jonna, R. J., & Foster, J. B. (2016). Marx's theory of working-class precariousness: Its relevance today. *Monthly Review, 67*(11), 1-19.

Kabeer, N. (2004). Globalization, labor standards, and women's rights: Dilemmas of collective (in)action in an interdependent world. *Feminist Economics, 10*(1), 3-35.

Kabir, M. A. (2016, December 18). Infrastructural development is the need of the hour. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/infrastructural-development-the-need-the-hour-1331374

Kabir, S. M. H. (2015). Rice. In *Banglapedia: The national encyclopedia of Bangladesh.* Retrieved from http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Rice

Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review, 74*(1), 1-22.

Kalleberg, A. L. (2011). *Good jobs, bad jobs: The rise of polarized and precarious employment systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kalleberg, A. L. (2012). Job quality and precarious work: Clarifications, controversies, and challenges. *Work and Occupations, 39*(4), 427-448.

Kalleberg, A. L., & Hewison, K. (2013). Precarious work and the challenge for Asia. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(3), 271-288.

Kalleberg, A. L., & Vallas, S. P. (2017). Probing precarious work: Theory, research, and politics. In A. L. Kalleberg & S. P. Vallas (Eds.), *Precarious work* (Vol. 31, Research in the Sociology of Work, pp. 1-30). Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Kawulich, B. B. (2011). Gatekeeping: An ongoing adventure in research. *Field Methods, 23*(1), 57-76.

Keppel, G. (1991). *Design and analysis: A researcher's handbook* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Khan, M. H. (2007). *Lalan samagro*. Dhaka: Rafiquzzaman Humayun, Geetanjoli.

King, R., & Skeldon, R. (2010). 'Mind the Gap!' Integrating approaches to internal and international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(10), 1619-1646.

Kitchin, R., & Tate, N. J. (2000). *Conducting research in human geography: Theory, methodology and practice*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Kochanek, S. A. (1996). The rise of interest politics in Bangladesh. *Asian Survey, 36*(7), 704-722.

Krings, T., Bobek, A., Moriarty, E., Salamon´ska, J., & Wickham, J. (2011). From boom to bust: Migrant labour and employers in the Irish construction sector. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 32*(3), 459-476.

Kuhn, R. (2003). Identities in motion: Social exchange networks and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. *Contributions to Indian Sociology, 37*(1-2), 311-337.

Kumar, S., & Fernández, M. (2015). *Urbanisation-construction-migration nexus | 5 cities | South Asia*. Retrieved from London School of Economics website: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64169/1/Kumar_Urbanisation-construction-migration.pdf

Lansbury, R. D., Kitay, J., & Wailes, N. (2003). The impact of globalisation on employment relations: Some research propositions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources 41*(1), 62-74.

Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*(1), 64-86.

Lawrence, R., & Werna, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Labour conditions for construction: Building cities, decent work and the role of local authorities*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography, 3*(1), 47-57.

Lee, Y. (2015). Labor after neoliberalism: The birth of the insecure class in South Korea. *Globalizations, 12*(2), 184-202.

Leech, N. L., Barrett, K. C., Morgan, G. A., Clay, J. N., & Quick, D. (2009). *SPSS for intermediate statistics: Use and interpretation* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.

Lewis, D. (2011). *Bangladesh: Politics, economy and civil society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, H., Dwyer, P., Hodkinson, S., & Waite, L. (2015a). Hyper-precarious lives: Migrants, work and forced labour in the Global North. *Progress in Human Geography, 39*(5), 580-600.

Lewis, H., Dwyer, P., Hodkinson, S., & Waite, L. (2015b). *Precarious lives: Forced labour, exploitation and asylum*. Bristol: Policy Process.

Lewis, W. A. (1954). Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour. *The Manchester School, 22*(2), 139-191.

Liempt, I. V., & Bilger, V. (Eds.). (2009). *The ethics of migration research methodology: Dealing with vulnerable immigrants*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.

Lindquist, J., Xiang, B., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2012). Opening the black box of migration: Brokers, the organization of transnational mobility and the changing political economy in Asia. *Pacific Affairs, 85*(1), 7-19.

Lipton, M. (1980). Migration from rural areas of poor countries: The impact on rural productivity and income distribution. *World Development, 8*(1), 1-24.

Mabogunje, A. L. (1970). Systems approach to a theory of rural-urban migration. *Geographical analysis, 2*(1), 1-18.

MacKenzie, R., & Forde, C. (2009). The rhetoric of the 'good worker' versus the realities of employers' use and the experiences of migrant workers. *Work, Employment and Society, 23*(1), 142-159.

Mamun, S. (2016, 30 June). Highway costs exorbitant. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/06/30/highway-costs-exorbitant

Marius-Gnanou, K. (2008). Debt bondage, seasonal migration and alternatives issues: Lessons from Tamil Nadu (India). *Autrepart*(46), 127-142.

Martin, M., Billah, M., Siddiqui, T., Abrar, C., Black, R., & Kniveton, D. (2014). Climate-related migration in rural Bangladesh: A behavioural model. *Population and Environment, 36*(1), 85-110.

Marx, K. (1887). *Capital: A critique of political economy* (Vol. 1, Book One: The process of production of capital). Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2008). *The communist manifesto*. London: Pluto Press.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3), [Article No. 8].

Massey, D. S. (1987). The ethnosurvey in theory and practice. *International Migration Review, 21*(4), 1498-1522.

Massey, D. S. (1990). Social structure, household strategies, and the cumulative causation of migration. *Population Index, 56*(1), 3-26.

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review, 19*(3), 431-466.

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1998). *Worlds in motion: Understanding international migration at the end of the millennium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mathew, A. (2005). Awareness of social issues among Indian women construction workers. *International Social Work, 48*(1), 99-107.

McDowell, L., Batnitzky, A., & Dyer, S. (2009). Precarious work and economic migration: Emerging immigrant divisions of labour in greater London's service sector. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 33*(1), 3-25.

Mitullah, W. V., & Wachira, I. N. (2003). *Informal labour in the construction industry in Kenya: A case study of Nairobi* (Sectoral Activities Programme Working Paper). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/---invest/documents/publication/wcms_asist_8175.pdf

Morgan, D. L. (1998). Practical strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative methods: Applications to health research. *Qualitative Health Research, 8*(3), 362-376.

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 48-76.

Morse, J. M. (1991). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research, 40*(2), 120-123.

Mosse, D., Gupta, S., Mehta, M., Shah, V., Rees, J. f., & Team, K. P. (2002). Brokered livelihoods: Debt, labour migration and development in tribal Western India. *Journal of Development Studies, 38*(5), 59-88.

Mosse, D., Gupta, S., & Shah, V. (2005). On the margins in the city: Adivasi seasonal labour migration in Western India. *Economic and Political Weekly, 40*(28), 3025-3038.

Muhammad, A. (2015). Bangladesh-A model of neoliberalism: The case of microfinance and NGOs. *Monthly Review, 66*(10), 35-46.

Multiple Light Bricks & Blocks. (2017). *Multiple light bricks: More profit in building construction*. Retrieved from Multiple Light Bricks & Blocks website: http://www.multiplelightbricks.com/uploads/3/4/9/3/34935070/mlbb_presentation.pdf

Munck, R. (2013). The Precariat: A view from the South. *Third World Quarterly, 34*(5), 747-762.

Nabi, A. K. M. N. (1992). Dynamics of internal migration in Bangladesh. *Canadian Studies in Population, 19*(1), 81-98.

Ness, K. (2012). Constructing masculinity in the building trades: 'Most jobs in the construction industry can be done by women'. *Gender, Work and Organization, 19*(6), 654-676.

Odediran, S. J., & Babalola, M. O. (2013). Employment structure of informal construction workers/artisans in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 13*(11), 24-40.

Ofreneo, R. E. (2010, November 20-21). *Labor law reforms in globalizing East Asia.* Paper presented at the 2010 Manila Biennial Conference of the Asian Society of Labour Law, University of the Philippines College of Law, Quezon City, the Philippines.

Oliver, P. (2006). Purposive sampling. In V. Jupp (Ed.), *The SAGE dictionary of social research methods* (pp. 244-245). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Collins, K. M. T. (2007). A typology of mixed methods sampling designs in social science research. *The Qualitative Report, 12*(2), 281-316.

Pattanaik, B. K. (2009). Young migrant construction workers in the unorganised urban sector. *South Asia Research, 29*(1), 19-40.

Pattenden, J. (2012). Migrating between rural Raichur and boomtown Bangalore: Class relations and the circulation of labour in South India. *Global Labour Journal, 3*(1), 163-190.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Peck, J. (2010). *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1990). Longitudinal field research on change: Theory and practice. *Organization Science, 1*(3), 267-292.

Phillips, H. (1959). Problems of translation and meaning in field work. *Human Organization, 18*(4), 184-192.

Picherit, D. (2012). Migrant labourers' struggles between village and urban migration sites: Labour standards, rural development and politics in South India. *Global Labour Journal, 3*(1), 143-162.

Pijpers, R., & Velde, M. V. D. (2007). Mobility across borders: Contextualizing local strategies to circumvent visa and work permit requirements. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 31*(4), 819-835.

Przeworski, A., & Teune, H. (1970). *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Quinlan, M., Mayhew, C., & Bohle, P. (2001). The global expansion of precarious employment, work disorganization, and consequences for occupational health: A review of recent research. *International Journal of Health Services, 31*(2), 335-414.

Raftery, J., Pasadilla, B., Chiang, Y. H., Hui, E. C. M., & Tang, B.-S. (1998). Globalization and construction industry development: Implications of recent developments in the construction sector in Asia. *Construction Management and Economics, 16*(6), 729-737.

Rahman, R. I., & Islam, R. (2013). *Female labour force participation in Bangladesh: Trends, drivers and barriers* (ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper Series No. 14.04.2). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_250112.pdf

RAJUK. (1997). *DMDP: Structure plan 1995-2015*. Retrieved from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha website: http://www.rajukdhaka.gov.bd/rajuk/image/planning/structure_plan2.jpg

REHAB. (n.d.). *REHAB at a glance*. Retrieved from Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh website: https://www.rehab-bd.org/index.php?page=rehab_at_a_glance

Reinecke, J., & Donaghey, J. (2015). After Rana Plaza: Building coalitional power for labour rights between unions and (consumption-based) social movement organisations. *Organization, 22*(5), 720-740.

Reza, S. (2016). Hyper-individualized recruitment: Rural-urban labour migration and precarious construction work in Bangladesh. *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement, 2*(2), 40-61.

Rodgers, G. (1989). Precarious work in Western Europe: The state of the debate. In G. Rodgers & J. Rodgers (Eds.), *Precarious jobs in labour market regulation: The growth of atypical employment in Western Europe* (pp. 1-16). Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.

Rodriguez, J. K., & Mearns, L. (2012). Problematising the interplay between employment relations, migration and mobility. *Employee Relations, 34*(6), 580-593.

Rogaly, B., Biswas, J., Coppard, D., Rafique, A., Rana, K., & Sengupta, A. (2001). Seasonal migration, social change and migrants' rights: Lessons from West Bengal. *Economic and Political Weekly, 36*(49), 4547-4559.

Ross, A. (2008). The new geography of work: Power to the precarious? *Theory, Culture & Society, 25*(7-8), 31-49.

Ross, A. (2009). *Nice work if you can get it: Life and labor in precarious times*. New York: New York University Press.

Roy, S. C., Jahan, I., & Asaduzzaman, M. (2011). DMDP as a tool to safeguard the flood flow zones from unrestrained development. *Journal of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, 4*(December), 71-79.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Saboia, J. (1997). *Contract labour in the Brazilian construction industry* (In *Contract labour: Looking at issues,* Labour Education Report No. 06/107). Retrieved from Geneva: International labour Organization.

Saha, B. K. (2002). Rural development trends: What the statistics say. In K. A. Toufique & C. Turton (Eds.), *Hands not land: How livelihoods are changing in rural Bangladesh* (pp. 47-55). Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

Sanderson, D. (2012). Building livelihoods to reduce risk among the most marginalized in urban areas: Strategic approaches from Dhaka. *Environmental Hazards, 11*(2), 112-122.

Sechrest, L., Fay, T. L., & Zaidi, S. M. H. (1972). Problems of translation in cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 3*(1), 41-56.

Seidler, J. (1974). On using informants: A technique for collecting quantitative data and controlling measurement error in organization analysis. *American Sociological Review, 39*(6), 816-831.

Sejuti, M. (2015, December 19). The real estate sector in big crisis: Nearly 13,000 flats still not sold. *Bhorer Kagoj*. Retrieved from http://www.bhorerkagoj.net/print-edition/2015/12/19/66618.php

Sepehrdoust, H. (2013). The impact of migrant labor force on housing construction of Iran. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 28*(1), 67-78.

Seymour, R. (2012). *We are all precarious: On the concept of the 'precariat' and its misuses*. Retrieved from New Left Project website: http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/we_are_all_precarious_on_the_concept_of_the_precariat_and_its_misuses

Siddiqui, T., & Billah, M. (2014). Adaptation to climate change in Bangladesh: Migration, the missing link. In S. Vachani & J. Usmani (Eds.), *Adaptation to climate change in Asia* (pp. 117-141). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Sikder, M. J. U., Higgins, V., & Ballis, P. H. (2017). *Remittance income and social resilience among migrant households in rural Bangladesh*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sjaastad, L. A. (1962). The costs and returns of human migration. *Journal of Political Economy, 70*(5), 80-93.

Skeldon, R. (2014). *Migration and development: A global perspective*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Smith, O. (2017, August 31). Mapped: The world's most overcrowded cities. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/lists/most-overcrowded-cities-in-the-world/

Smith, T. M. F. (1983). On the validity of inferences from non-random sample. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General), 146*(4), 394-403.

Sözen, Z., & Küçük, M. A. (1999). Secondary subcontracting in the Turkish construction industry. *Construction Management and Economics, 17*(2), 215-220.

Sporton, D. (2013). 'They control my life': The role of local recruitment agencies in East European migration to the UK. *Population, Space and Place, 19*(5), 443-458.

Standing, G. (1981). Migration and modes of exploitation: Social origins of immobility and mobility. *The Journal of Peasant Studies, 8*(2), 173-211.

Standing, G. (1997). Globalization, labour flexibility and insecurity: The era of market regulation. *European Journal of Industrial Relations, 3*(1), 7-37.

Standing, G. (1999). *Global labour flexibility: Seeking distributive justice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Standing, G. (2008). Economic insecurity and global casualisation: Threat or promise? *Social Indicators Research, 88*(1), 15-30.

Standing, G. (2010). *Work after globalization: Building occupational citizenship*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Standing, G. (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Standing, G. (2013). Tertiary time: The precariat's dilemma. *Public Culture, 25*(1), 5-23.

Standing, G. (2014a). The precariat. *Contexts, 13*(4), 10-12.

Standing, G. (2014b). *A precariat charter: From denizens to citizens*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Standing, G. (2014c). The precariat: An evolving class. *Minerva Medicolegale, 134*(3), 149-154.

Standing, G. (2014d). Understanding the precariat through labour and work. *Development and Change, 45*(5), 963-980.

Standing, G. (2015a). From denizens to citizens: Forging a precariat charter. In C.-U. Schierup, R. Munck, B. Likic-Brboric, & A. Neergaard (Eds.), *Migration, precarity, and global governance: Challenges and opportunities for labour* (pp. 83-100). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Standing, G. (2015b). The precariat and class struggle. *RCCS Annual Review,* (7), 3-16.

Standing, G. (2016a). *The corruption of capitalism: Why rentiers thrive and work does not pay*. London: Biteback Publishing.

Standing, G. (2016b). The precariat dilemma. In Y. Cooper (Ed.), *Changing work: Progressive ideas for the modern world of work* (pp. 25-31). London: Fabian Society.

Standing, G. (2016c). The precariat, class and progressive politics: A response. *Global Labour Journal, 7*(2), 189-200.

Standing, G. (2017). The precariat in China: A comment on conceptual confusion. *Rural China, 14*(1), 165-170.

Stark, O. (1978). *Economic-demographic interactions in agricultural development: The case of rural-to-urban migration*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Stark, O. (1991). *The migration of labor*. Camridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Stark, O., & Bloom, D. E. (1985). The new economics of labor migration. *The American Economic Review, 75*(2), 173-178.

Stark, O., & Levhari, D. (1982). On migration and risk in LDCs. *Economic Development and Cultural Change, 31*(1), 191-196.

Stebbins, R. A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Strauss, K., & Fudge, J. (2014). Temporary work, agencies and unfree labour: Insecurity in the new world of work. In J. Fudge & K. Strauss (Eds.), *Temporary work, agencies and unfree labour: Insecurity in the new world of work* (pp. 1-25). New York: Routledge.

Suresh, T. G. (2010). Contract labour in urban constructions: The making of new labour regimes in India and China. *China Report, 46*(4), 431-454.

Swider, S. (2015a). *Building China: Informal work and the new precariat*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Swider, S. (2015b). Building China: Precarious employment among migrant construction workers. *Work, Employment and Society, 29*(1), 41-59.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Vol. 46, Applied Social Research Methods Series). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Taylor, E. J. (1986). Differential migration, networks, information and risk. In O. Stark (Ed.), *Migration theory, human capital and development* (Vol. 4, Research in Human Capital and Development, pp. 141-173). Greenwich: JAI Press.

Taylor, E. J. (1999). The new economics of labour migration and the role of remittances in the migration process. *International Migration, 37*(1), 63-88.

Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling a typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 77-100.

Temple, B. (1997). Watch your tongue: Issues in translation and cross-cultural research. *Sociology, 31*(3), 607-618.

Todaro, M. P. (1969). A model of labor migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries. *The American Economic Review, 59*(1), 138-148.

Uddin, M. N., & Firoj, M. (2013). Causes and consequences of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh: An empirical study in Chittagong city. *International Journal of Ethics in Social Sciences, 1*(1), 89-104.

UN. (2002a). *Central Product Classification (CPC) Version 2.1* (Statistical Paper No. ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/77/VER.1.1). Retrieved from United Nations website: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_77ver1_1E.pdf

UN. (2002b). *Detailed structure and explanatory notes: CPCprov code 51*. Retrieved from United Nations website: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/CR/Registry/regcs.asp?Cl=9&Co=51&Lg=1&prn=yes

UN. (2016a). *Country profile: Bangladesh*. Retrieved 14 February 2017, from Statistics Division, United Nations website: http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=bangladesh

UN. (2016b). *The world's cities in 2016: Data booklet* (Report No. ST/ESA/ SER.A/392). Retrieved from Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations website: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/urbanization/the_worlds_cities_in_2016_data_booklet.pdf

UN. (2017). *List of least developed countries (as of June 2017)*. Retrieved 14 September 2017, from United Nations Committee for Development Policy, Development Policy and Analysis Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations website: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/ldc/ldc_list.pdf

Underhill, E., & Quinlan, M. (2011). How precarious employment affects health and safety at work: The case of temporary agency workers. *Relations industrielles, 66*(3), 397-421.

Vaid, K. N. (1999). Contract labour in the construction industry in India. In D. P. A. Naidu (Ed.), *Contract labour in South Asia* (pp. 4-65). Geneva: Bureau for Workers' Activities, International Labour Organization.

Vosko, L. F. (2006). Precarious employment: Towards an improved understanding of labour market insecurity. In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada* (pp. 3-39). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vosko, L. F. (2010). *Managing the margins: Gender, citizenship, and the international regulation of precarious employment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vosko, L. F., MacDonald, M., & Campbell, I. (2009). Introduction: Gender and the concept of precarious employment. In L. F. Vosko, M. MacDonald, & I. Campbell (Eds.), *Gender and the contours of precarious employment* (pp. 1-25). Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Vulliamy, G. (1990). Research outcomes: Postscript. In G. Vulliamy, K. Lewin, & D. Stephens (Eds.), *Doing educational research in developing countries: Qualitative strategies* (pp. 228-233). London: Falmer Press.

WB. (2016). GDP per capita (current US$). Retrieved 14 February 2017, from The World Bank DataBank website: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=BD

WB. (2017). Country poverty brief South Asia: Bangladesh (October 2017). Retrieved 14 December 2017, from The World Bank Poverty & Equity Data Portal website:

http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/B2A3A7F5-706A-4522-AF99-5B1800FA3357/9FE8B43A-5EAE-4F36-8838-E9F58200CF49/60C691C8-EAD0-47BE-9C8A-B56D672A29F7/Global_POV_SP_CPB_BGD.pdf

Webster, E., Lambert, R., & Beziudenhout, A. (2008). *Grounding globalization: Labour in the age of insecurity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Weine, S., Knafl, K., Feetham, S., Kulauzovic, Y., Klebic, A., Sclove, S., Besic, S., Mujagic, M., Muzurovic, J., & Spahovic, D. (2005). A mixed methods study of refugee families engaging in multiple-family groups. *Family Relations, 54*(4), 558–568.

Wells, J. (2006, January 18-20). *Labour mobilisation in the construction industry.* Paper presented at the CIB W107 Construction in Developing Countries International Symposium "Construction in Developing Economies: New Issues and Challenges", Santiago, Chile.

Wells, J. (2007). Informality in the construction sector in developing countries. *Construction Management and Economics, 25*(1), 87-93.

Wells, J., & Wall, D. (2001). The role of structural adjustment policies in the expansion of employment in the building construction sector in Kenya and Tanzania. *Urban Forum, 12*(3-4), 297-313.

Wilson, S., & Ebert, N. (2013). Precarious work: Economic, sociological and political perspectives. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 24*(3), 263-278.

Wolkowitz, C. (2006). *Bodies at work*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Yoke-Lian, L., Hassim, S., Muniandy, R., & Teik-Hua, L. (2012). Review of subcontracting practice in construction industry. *IACSIT International Journal of Engineering and Technology, 4*(4), 442-445.

Yoon, J. H., & Kang, B. G. (2000, October 19-20). *The structure of employment in Korean construction industry.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Structural Change in the Building Industry's Labour Market, Working Relations and Challenges in the Coming Years, Institut Arbeit und Technik, Gelsenkirchen, Germany.

You-Jie, L., & Fox, P. W. (2001). *The construction industry in China: Its image, employment prospects and skill requirements* (Working Paper No. WP.180). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2001/481146.pdf

Zachariah, K. C., Mathew, E. T., & Rajan, S. I. (2001a). Impact of migration on Kerala's economy and society. *International Migration, 39*(1), 63-87.

Zachariah, K. C., Mathew, E. T., & Rajan, S. I. (2001b). Social, economic and demographic consequences of migration on Kerala. *International Migration, 39*(2), 43-71.

Zeitlyn, B., Deshingkar, P., & Holtom, B. (2014). *Internal and regional migration for construction work: A research agenda* (Working Paper No. 14). Retrieved from Migrating out of Poverty, University of Sussex website: http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/documents/wp-14---zeitlyn-deshingkar-internal-and-regional-migration-for-construction-work.pdf

Zylberstajn, H. (1992). *The construction industry in Brazil: Surviving the transition to a more competitive market* (Working Paper No. SAP 2.29/WP.52). Retrieved from International Labour Organization website: http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1992/92B09_274_engl.pdf