
WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY ISSUES OF E-COMMERCE DELIVERY WORKERS IN INDIA: UNDERSTANDING FROM MARXIAN PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the working conditions and social security issues of delivery workers in Delhi, India and attempts to understand these issues from Marxian of perspectives of ‘alienation’ and ‘precariousness’. With the rise of e commerce business and the demand for doorstep delivery of products purchased online, the delivery workers have become the backbone of e commerce industry and play an important role in the last mile delivery. Mostly, the young and middle aged men work as delivery boys and are hired by third party. Job stability has become a concern as median period of working in the delivery job is around eighteen months. Many of them are inadequately covered with social security schemes and hence, they are into the informal form of employment. The nature of job force them to work extra hours, cause a lot of stress, and they become fatigue. The paper argues that, the home delivery workers who are into the consumption related service jobs become more vulnerable to precariousness and are also alienated in the delivery process.

Keywords: Alienation, Delivery worker, E commerce, Last mile, Precariousness

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Changing Economy and employment opportunities E commerce sectors in last mile delivery in India

Work has been the basis of economy in all cultures. It is defined by carrying out tasks with mental and physical effort that produces goods and services for human needs (Giddens, 2009, p. 886). The nature of work and activities has changed from hunting and gathering in the pre-modern period to farming, manufacturing and services in the late modern period (Edgell, 2012). Over the last decades, while manufacturing industries have declined, the service industries expanded (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman, & Moore, 2014,pp.39-40). This change of

economy in the age of global capitalism or information society has influenced the labour market. Now, working population in service sector has increased (Paul & Jean, 2007, p. 65).

In the service sector, 'the retail industry is a huge employer and has the largest share of employment in many countries' (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2015). In 2013, whereas half of the global workforce was employed in waged employment and retail sector has experienced greater diversification in waged employment than any other industries (ILO, 2015). The retail sector further influenced by the transportation and logistics industry and vice versa. The transport and logistic industry is a growing economic sector which has created value in the globalized economy coupled with the evolution of supply chain management has become an important source of employment in the world (ILO, 2015).

As the economy is changing globally, so also the employment patterns changing across the world. Whereas the economy has provided opportunities for some people, it has also created concerns for others. Workers now experience more job insecurity and apprehend about the future safety of their work position and role within the workplace (Giddens, 2009). The growth of subcontracting of worker has grown up. In this way, firms avoid direct employment of workers and reduce their employment responsibilities, costs, but at the same time provide less security to them (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman, & Moore, 2014). In the service sector, workers are given poor contracts, minimal training and kept under higher surveillance using technology, in the form of computerised tracking system and also through customer feedbacks (Paul & Jean, 2007, pp. 210-214).

In recent years, the digital technology has influenced the economics of business and work. Internet has revolutionized business via e-commerce. Now, a vast array of goods and services are available online from anywhere 24x7 hours a day. Consumers are using internet for their purchases and use online sellers to deliver the product directly to them (ILO, 2015).

The global online retail sales or e-commerce has reached GBP 632.8bn (USD839.8bn) in 2014, up to 20.9% from GBP 444.5bn (USD694.8bn) in 2013 (Insight Bee, 2016). In India, E-commerce industry has been rapidly growing since last two decades. The total e-commerce size in India is expected to grow US\$101.9 billion by 2020, from US\$2.9 billion in 2013 and it is the fastest growing e-commerce market in the world (Confederation of Indian Industry(CII), 2016).

The Indian e-commerce firms are focusing more on popular segments such as fashion, food, health, travel and consumer services etc. (National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), 2016). The E-commerce portals provide goods and services in a variety of categories that includes apparel and accessories for men and women, health and beauty products, books and magazines, computers and peripherals, vehicles, software, consumer

electronics, household appliances, jewellery, audio/video, entertainment, goods, gift articles, real estate and services. Some popular e-commerce sites in India are Flipcart, Myntra, Jabong, Amazon, Snapdeal, Ebay, Paytm, Shop Clues, peperfry, Zomato, Big basket etc. Mobile e-commerce (m-commerce) is also growing rapidly and supplement to the e-commerce industry.

Moreover, e-commerce is growing in the food and restaurant service companies which is expected to reach \$2.7 billion by 2019. The major food service websites are food panda, zomato, fasoos, including quick service restaurants (QSR) like Mc Donald's, Pizza Hut and Dominos etc. (AIMS Institutes, 2017) . The government initiatives such as Digital India, Skill India, Start up India and Make in India are also contributing to the growth of e-commerce industry.

The robust growth of e-commerce industry has generated a new job opportunity in India. The electronic retailing (e-tailing) in India and allied divisions comprising logistics, IT/ITeS and warehousing are expected to create about 1.45 million direct jobs by the year 2021. Further, 80% to 90% of e-tails logistic workforce is engaged in the last mile (Jasper Infotech Pvt. Ltd, 2016). The last mile is the final stage in a delivery cycle when the product is delivered to the customer. With growing demand of home delivery of products purchased on line, the 'delivery workers' or the 'delivery boys' who deliver the product at customer's doorsteps have become the back bone of e-commerce industry (Maheswari & Mukerji, 2015). The delivery workers engaged to different e-commerce company have varying job titles such as Delivery boy, Delivery Executive, Field Executive, Rider, Runner, Field Associate etc.

Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) has become the largest e-commerce hub in India and consists of more than 30% of total e-commerce start-ups in the country (NASSCOM), 2016). As per Delhi Human Development report 2013, the delivery workers including shop workers, assistants, peons and waiters constitutes 18.4% of share of total employment and ranked top among ten other occupation groups in Delhi (Government of NCT of Delhi, 2013) .

Amidst growing job opportunity, a major worker conflict in 2015 came into notice in Mumbai city when around 400 delivery workers of Flipkart and Myntra, went on strike for better working conditions (Anand, 2015). They were demanding basic employee benefits, including toilets, fixed working time etc.(Anand, 2015) .This incident signals presence of sort of conflict in the workplace or in employment relationships. It is also important to mention that the logistic sector in India has poor or non-existent manpower policies and therefore experiences a poor working conditions and low pay scales in comparison to careers in other industries (Chhaphia, 2015).

1.2 Social security for service sector workers; how are they protected?

With the rise of employment in service sector, issues and concerns over social security for

workers gained prominence over the years. 'social security is the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner' (ILO, 2001). Every human being has the right to social security and it helps in maintaining a stable labour relations and increase labour productivity. Further, it contribute to country's overall growth by increasing living standards and also provides a positive approach towards globalisation (ILO,2001). Various types of social security measures relevant to labour productivity includes health care, pension, cash sickness, maternity insurance, work injury schemes, unemployment benefits etc.(ILO,2001).

Reality in this context is presented in ILO's recent world employment and social outlook report 2017 states that in emerging countries like India, almost half of the workers are in vulnerable forms of employment and subjected to high levels of precariousness, e.g. they have limited access to contributory social protection schemes (ILO, 2017). ILO's India labour market update mentioned that majority of Indian workers are into the informal jobs (even the jobs created in formal sectors are informal in nature), where workers do not have access to employment benefits or social security (ILO, 2016). In 2011-12, only 23.8% workers were eligible for social security benefits and 79% of non-agricultural labourers had no written contract. This increasing informalisation of workforce gives rise to a higher proportion of paid worker without any access to social security. Labour update also indicated that majority of Indian workers are still dependent on the agricultural sector (48.9 percent employment share in 2011-12), however service sector has a major share in employment (58.7 percent in urban area and 16.1% in rural areas in 2011-12) (ILO, 2016). In 2015-16, share of service sector in gross value add (GVA) was 53.4 percent whereas agriculture sector accounted for 15.4 per cent of GVA (ILO, 2016).

The National Commission for the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) has segregated the employment in India in two sectors, i.e. organized / formal sector and the unorganized / informal sector. The segregation has been made based on the criterion of enterprise type and employment size. Further, irrespective of size and type of establishment, the provisions of social security and employment protection have been the major decisive factors between formal and informal sector. Formal sector provides social security and employment protection to worker. Employments with no access to social security benefits or security of tenure are stated to be in informal employment. This type of informal employment is also treated as Non Standard form of Employment (NSFE) (Srivastava, 2016) . The legal regulation of employment and wages is not found in informal sector. Whereas the formal jobs use the structured labour market mechanisms (Jain & Sarda, 2014). The informal workers may have job contract or without job contract. Further, the workers in the unorganized sector in India experience large deficits in working conditions.

The social security legislations in India comes under the Directive Principles of the State Policy and provides for mandatory social security benefits to the employees either solely at the cost of the employers or on the basis of joint contribution of the employers and the employees (Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India, 2017). Towards this, Indian Government has enacted many legislations and schemes to provide social security and welfare to the huge labour force in organised and unorganised sectors. Workers in the organised sector are covered through institutionalised social security provided under Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Employees State Insurance Corporations (ESIC). Further, to ensure welfare of unorganised workers, the Ministry of Labour and Employment enacted unorganised worker social security act (2008) and also welfare funds.

Mostly, the labour laws and related welfare provisions in India protect the workers in manufacturing, mining and plantation. However, none of the relevant laws seem to be applicable to the e-commerce which is of recent origin. The applicability of such laws depends on the structure of employment (Majumdar & Acharya, 2015). The delivery workers working in online shopping portals are governed by Shops and Establishment Act of respective State Government (Business Standard, 2016). Rajasthan has moved an amendment to bring e-commerce companies under Rajasthan Shops and Commercial Establishment Acts 1958. In order to take these 'delivery workers' out of the purview of the labour laws, the agencies designated them as 'executive' and a covert strategy to prevent workers from forming unions and collective presentation (Business Standard, 2016).

Given the above backdrop regarding the emergence of e-commerce as a major employment generating sector and social security issues revolving around the workers of this gigantic business, the subsequent sections delves deeper empirically into the employment and working conditions, access to social security benefits and field level challenges of delivery workers in e-commerce industry in Delhi National Capital Region(NCR). Efforts have been made to correlate the findings with the Marx's theory of 'alienation' & 'precariousness'.

1.3 Marx's 'alienation' and 'precariousness' in the context of Service Sector and it's relevance on e commerce delivery workers

In service economy, the E-commerce delivery workers are viewed as a wage labourer. For Marx, the very nature of waged labour was alienating (Paul & Jean, 2007,pp.11-13) . Marx identified four elements of alienation in industrial capitalism: '1. Alienation from the product of labour, 2. Alienation from the process of production, 3. Alienation of workers from their species - being, and 4. Alienation from others' (Paul & Jean, 2007). In explaining 'alienation' in service work, Langman (2000) argued that C. Wright Mills, the American Sociologist worked on the line of

Marx's alienation and shifted alienation from 'the factory floor to the sales floor and the office'. Langman cited Hochschild's work and stated that 'for Marx, alienation was based on the appropriation of the workers labour and the products they produce for others' (Langman,2000). Whereas, for Hochschild, alienation of today's service workers was based on the 'corporate demands for pleasant service and self-presentation', which are 'the required form of social interaction became commodified and feelings are commercialized'. The above conditions creates alienation among service sector worker and they are alienated from their 'emotional labour' (Langman, 2000).

Marx's notion of worker 'precariousness' is used in the current study to understand and explain the conditions of delivery workers. In analysing working class life, Marx developed the concept of 'Reserve Army of labour', 'general law of capitalist accumulation' and 'surplus production' (Joanna and Foster, 2016). Marx wrote:

'The higher the productivity of labour, the greater is the pressure of the workers on the means of employment, the more precarious therefore becomes the conditions for their existence, namely the sale of their own labour power for the increase of alien wealth' (p.4)

However, for most scholars, precariousness is;

'what workers lack, including such factor as: ready access to paid employment, protection from arbitrary firing, possibility for advancement, long term job stability, adequate safety, development of new skills, living wages and union representation'(Joanna and Foster, 2016).

Guy Standing, the former Economist of International Labour Organisation (ILO), refers 'precariate' to a 'new class of mostly young workers who experience all of the main aspects of precariousness' (Joanna and Foster, 2016). Harry Braverman studied Marx's labour process and precariousness in United States for both 'active labour army and reserved labour army'. Braverman argued that the rise of reserve army of labour in US and elsewhere, has created a 'sense of precariousness'. As a result, large number of workers fell into the 'low – paid service and retail sectors' (Joanna and Foster, 2016). Braverman also stated that a major portion of workforce in America including both active labour army and reserve labour army are found working as sales workers, service workers, clerical workers etc. The quality of employment has declined over the years and many workers work in low paid sectors and part-time, temporary, and contingent jobs. For Braverman, the above situations are 'the rise of precariousness of workforce' (Joanna & Foster, 2016) . Sargeant (2016) stated the characteristics of precarious work as 'job Instability, lack of benefits, low wages and degree of control over the processes.

This paper explores the conditions of delivery workers in India based on the above notions of workers Precariousness and alienation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses the data collected primarily from fifty male delivery workers engaged in different e-commerce sectors comprising both food and non-food items in Delhi in 2016-17. The data was collected through semi structured interview schedule and using the snow ball sampling technique. The interviews included questions about socio economic background, working and employment conditions and access to different social security provisions. For secondary literature, the published articles in leading newspapers, magazines, e paper, journals and websites were used to understand the e-commerce business, working conditions of delivery workers, problems and challenges. Univariate and bivariate tables are prepared for analysis and description.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 gives a brief overview about profile and employment related information of delivery workers.

Table I: Profile of delivery workers and forms of employment (n=50).

Age in Years			Educational Qualification		
Particular	Frequency	(%)	Particular	Frequency	(%)
<20	1	2	Graduate	13	26
20-30	31	62	Intermediate	19	38
31-40	13	26	Primary	1	2
41-50	3	6	Secondary	17	34
> 50	2	4			

<u>Employment history</u>			<u>Duration of work as delivery worker</u>		
Particular	Frequency	(%)	Particulars	Frequency	(%)
First job and not employed earlier	12	24	<1 year	17	34
Recent job and employed earlier	38	76	1-2 year	25	50
			> 2 year	8	16

Forms of Employment

Particulars	Full time (%)	Part time (%)	Total (%)
With contract	35(76.09)	1(25)	36(72)
No Contract	11(23.91)	3(75)	14(28)
Total	46(100)	4(100)	50(100)

3.1 Profile of delivery workers

The Table 1 shows that major proportion (62 %) of delivery workers were of 20-30 years of age which is the most productive age group in the society. More than a quarter of them belong to 31-40 years of age and some even more than 50 years of age. The median age is 28 years. This implies that persons of all ages are attracted to this job as there is no age bar to get into occupation. Education wise, majority of delivery workers (72%), studied up to intermediate and secondary level, a quarter (26%) of them completed graduation and joined the delivery work.

Further, most of the delivery workers (76%) have prior work experience of working in similar jobs like courier delivery or departmental/general stores, marketing jobs etc. and nearly a quarter (24%) are fresher and it is their first job.

Around 50% of delivery worker are working from last one to two years in the delivery work. The median duration of working in delivery jobs is 18 months. Even though delivery job has got a new momentum in the recent years, but working for small period of time or retention shows the concern for job security among the delivery worker.

3.2 Forms of Employment

Majority of respondents (92%) are engaged as fulltime workers as indicated in Table 1. Only a few (8%) of them are working as part timers. In any case, around 72% of respondents have signed service contract with the employer or the recruiting agency. Some of them said that even though they have signed the contracts, they have not read terms and conditions. The remaining 28% of workers do not have any contract with their employer. It is also important to mention that those working full time, among them around 23% of workers did not have any form of contract.

Recruitment has been through the recruiting agency or vendors. Recruitment agencies publish vacancies on website, but mostly the reference of friends, relatives and personal linkages with managers/supervisor play a major role in getting this job. As delivery work requires lot of travelling and physical work, recruiter prefers boys who are physically fit and possess valid driving license and two wheelers of their own.

3.3 Working Hours

On an average the full time workers work more than 10 hours a day from morning 7 am to 5 pm in the evening. Working hours increases during the sales times and seasons. The part time workers work for 5 to 6 hours a day. However, in case of food delivery, the working hours goes up to 12' o clock midnight.

When there is no delivery work, they work in the distribution centres or assist others in work like reshuffling of packs, attending calls or receiving order(in case of food delivery work) etc. Even though provision of rest breaks are there, they are not able to enjoy the same as they stay in the field by that time and also have to wait for customers for delivery. Sometimes they have to rush back to the distribution centre for taking second slot of delivery packages.

3.4 Monthly Income

Monthly income varies based on types and nature of contract made with the vendor. On an

average, a monthly income for full time worker ranges between rupees 12000 - 16000 per month. The part timer earn between 6000 or above per month. In addition to the salary, they receive incentives for each delivery particularly during festive season like Diwali (October or November of the year), Dushera (October), Rakhsa Bandhan (August), Christmas & New Year (last week of December). This extra income goes up to Rs 10000 during that period. Further, some companies pay extra to the delivery workers for additional hours of work.

Some of them are into a contract of per packet delivery (piece rate) where they get a fixed amount for total packets being delivered. In addition to above, all receive a fixed mobile bill reimbursement on monthly basis. In certain cases especially in food delivery business, payments are made on weekly basis in their account.

3.5 Provision of leave

In majority of cases, delivery workers avail four days paid leave in a month, some of them reported the provision of sick leave and earned leave. In case of food delivery, they can avail leave any day between Mondays to Thursday but not on weekends due to the high business demand, except in case of emergency. The same happens during the sales and festive season where leave is permissible only on roaster basis. The provision of leave is insignificant for delivery workers working on piece rate basis.

3.6 Access to Social Security Benefits

The major social security schemes accessed by them are the provident fund (PF) or employee's state insurance facilities (ESIC). In case of social security benefit being received by them, they do not have information about its details like the type of benefit received by them, details of their PF accounts or awareness whether the money has been deposited in their PF account or how much money has been deposited so far against their contribution. Further, recruitment agency hasn't delivered the ESIC card to them, despite depositing the required documents.

Table 2 depicts access to social security benefits by delivery workers in Delhi.

Table 2: Provisions of Social Security Benefits (PF/ESI)

Provision of Provident fund(PF)			Provision of ESI facility		
Particulars	Frequency	(%)	Particular	Frequency	(%)
Accorded PF	31	62	Availing ESI	27	54
No PF	19	38	No ESI	23	46
Total	50	100	Total	50	100

Table 2 states that more than three fifth of delivery workers (62 percent) are availing provident fund. However, a considerable proportion, close to two thirds is yet to be given the PF facilities. As reported, the delivery workers deposit a monthly contribution that ranges from 800 INR to 1200 INRs per month, towards provident funds (PF).

Further, all delivery workers are yet to be covered under ESI facility. A close to half of them (46%) do not avail ESI facility. Even though they have ESI card, but never been to any ESI hospital for medical care. They cited the reasons as the hospital being too far from their locality or inadequate facilities in the hospital, so mostly depend on the local hospitals or nearby pharmacy for general ailments. Further, they are ignorant regarding the kind of sickness /cash benefits they are likely to receive being a recipient of the ESIC card.

Besides above, it is revealed that some agencies reimburse medical expenditures after submission of medical bills, other agencies provide coverage under the group insurance scheme, and give accidental insurance up to five lakhs.

3.7 Capacity Building Initiative for delivery workers

After joining the work, delivery boys undergo induction trainings and sometimes on sight training is also given in the field. The training are basically given by the e-commerce company regarding operation of machines like card swiping, handling cash, use of smart phone or android version, grooming for self, communicate with customers etc. In some cases, the E-commerce companies send the newly recruited delivery workers with a senior/experienced colleague to learn the ability of delivery in the field. Some companies also provide mid-course training and during weekly meeting /monthly meeting the matters related to field are also discussed.

3.8 Challenges in delivery work

The delivery related challenges are placed at Table 3. The goods or foods ordered online are delivered in the places as desired by the customer and as per the address given. It is reported that, mostly goods are delivered at home, office premises or any land mark given by the customer like nearer to bus stop, particular shop, lane or ATM counters. Delivery of the package at the reception or handing over to the security guard /neighbours of the house is not done unless consented or confirmed by the customer.

Table 3: Delivery related challenges experienced in the field

Challenges in interfacing customers

- Heterogeneous customers with diverse profile (with respect to gender, age, language, education, living standards etc.) and they exhibits different behaviour; sometimes good and sometimes bad
- Customer expect delivery workers to open their packet before receipt of the item which is not their job and sometimes , customer refuse to receive the packet after opening
- Customers abuse verbally for not getting the right product ordered online or when there is a billing problem to the items delivered, instead of talking to customer care
- Customer's repeated request to wait for some more time, that leads to overall delay in delivering products and sometimes customer even do not wait for a while for them and lodge complains for delay delivery/show improper behaviour

Challenges in delivering at doorstep of customers

- Locating address of the customers where location is not properly mentioned or address is too complicated to reach
- Low/No mobile connectivity creates problem during delivery and sometimes customers do not receive the call or switch off the mobile deliberately
- In case of cash on delivery (COD), customers delay payments as they do not keep the exact change for payments and sometimes the payment receipt machine too do not work
- Making repeated attempts for single delivery

- Delay due to traffic jams and congestion on the road
-

Table 3 above describes different challenges faced by delivery boys in the field that affects the working conditions of delivery workers. These challenges put an extra pressure and increases stress/risks in the job.

3.9 Health related challenges

The process of delivery gives a lot of stress in an effort to meet the number of delivery targets per day, ensuring to deliver the goods/ products to the right person, in the right area and at the right time. They have to climb top floor, carrying the entire bag as there are chances of theft or missing of goods if kept unattended. While moving from one place to other on motor bike, they have to give a close eye to their backpack. For any missing items, company deduct the cost from their salary and they have to bear the price. Apart from delivering goods/foods, they also carry cash and ensure that amount collected is deposited safely and securely.

They face health related risks which are due to carrying heavy load bag pack in the back, long hours of motorcycle riding, experiencing heavy traffic, sometimes riding on poor roads, and face road hazards including accidents, injuries and fatigue etc.

3.10 Psychological challenges

The process of delivery work is directly supervised by the E- commerce companies. In the occupational hierarchy, delivery workers reports to the supervisor /team leader /district supervisor about their daily activities. The supervisors monitor the work of delivery workers mostly through telephone, physical verification at the field and through reviews held daily/ weekly/monthly basis. Delivery workers update supervisors on daily basis about the number of parcel delivered/ target achieved or any field level issues. In some companies, daily delivery target are given which have to be fulfilled by them. If company receives any complaint from customers against any delivery worker, the supervisor seeks explanation from them. In certain cases, they have been asked to leave the job. However, some managers are very cooperative and help delivery boys to resolve delivery related issues.

4. DISCUSSION

The delivery workers or the blue collar workers of e-commerce industry enter into the delivery job irrespective age or education. The third parties or vendors have a major role in the recruitment process that keeps aside the E-commerce industry from being directly accountable to these workers. E commerce agencies are not involved in micromanagement aspects of

recruitment or retrenchment but only monitor the service standards. Both full time and part time engagement is found in the delivery work, where as a considerable portion of workers not having any form of contract with the employer. All delivery workers are not covered by social security schemes or any medical benefits provisioned by the government. Further, delivery workers have low level of knowledge and awareness on social security schemes. They are the low paid workers and placed in the lower segment of employment pyramid in e commerce sector. Their working conditions including extended working hours, delivery related challenges expose them to stress and health related risks. Majority of workers are not found working in the delivery jobs for more than two years. As the length of job tenure leads to job security, the retention in delivery job may draw attention of the e-commerce industry. Even though workers turnover is not assessed in the present study, there were instances of changing job from one e-commerce Company to other for better prospects. Besides meeting the daily delivery targets, customer's feedback also plays a major role in continuation of their jobs.

In the light of Marx's notion of alienation, the present study confirms that delivery workers face some level of alienation in work. In the delivery process they face stress and strain, customer's anguish but adhere to the norms of company paving way for alienation. The present study reveals that, in return for a wage, the delivery workers are only involved in distribution of products for the employer. They produce profit, business for e-commerce companies and create branding for the company, but the distribution of products is controlled by markets and the managers. The delivery workers are given certain job to be performed and are controlled by others like supervisor/ managers who are above them in job vertical or job ranking. Delivery workers remain on the margin due their low job ranking and hence, labour is imposed on worker and work becomes to an end rather than end in itself. In this context, we can say that the output is appropriated by others and they receive mere wages only. Secondly, they do not have the power to determine the fate of product. Which product delivered by them will be popular in the market depends on several factors, like quality, advertisement, customer preference etc. As a result they are alienated from the products of labour. Further, the repetitive nature of work is not satisfying for the worker. This is how the delivery workers are alienated from the process of production. Thirdly, customer dealing like their ability to communicate, driving and reporting back to the office seems to be mechanical. They spend maximum hours in work voluntarily or involuntarily due to the very nature of outdoor work and remain away from the creative aspects of work and the productive activity. This detaches delivery workers from his species being, from what makes the life of human species distinct from that of animals. They may seem to be alienated from their 'species being'. Fourth, as a consequence of preceding three aspects, delivery workers remain estranged from self and others. The market influences the social relationships between delivery workers and others such as supervisor, customers. They become commodity by selling their labour power and skills in the e-commerce labour market.

Relating to Marx's notion of 'Precariousness' the present study suggests that the delivery workers become vulnerable to precarious work based on conditions and social security accorded to them. Delivery workers perceived job insecurity as the work is based on market requirements which could lead to involuntary terminations. At times of peak business demand or more delivery orders, there can be more recruitments for a certain period of time that does not give guarantee for a long term job. Further temporary, sometimes part time and job without contracts makes them vulnerable in the job market. As hiring is made by third party vendors, the direct employer-employee relationship does not exist between the E-commerce company and the delivery worker. In that circumstances, they become potentially replaceable at any point of time. Limited social security provisions (only Provident Fund and ESIC) are provided and delivery workers give more contribution towards provident fund than the employer that jeopardize the concept of social security. The job related health risks also add to their vulnerability. In the above scenario, the conditions of delivery workers becomes more vulnerable and precarious.

In view of the above, the study suggests that the conditions of delivery workers is combined with the opportunities, a certain level of alienation and some sense of precariousness. Therefore, it is important to improve their working conditions. Provision of social security would reduce economic burden, risks like sickness, invalidity, accidents etc. It would lead to betterment of their working conditions, satisfaction, rights as worker, and last but not least will increase their loyalty to the agency and work.

Based on the findings, few recommendations for improving conditions of delivery workers in India are as follows;

- Increase level of awareness and information on provisions of social security schemes and other benefits through orientation or awareness programmes.
- E-commerce companies or third party agencies should try to build capacity of delivery workers on a regular basis with sufficient training on communication, interpersonal skills, team work and technology use to develop their skills for interfacing customer and competitive edge.
- State need to act to protect the interest of workers and ensure wage, job security, and employee benefits etc. All delivery workers and their dependants must be covered with social security benefits and health insurance as per the entitlements.
- The labour department can play a more effective role in regulating the employment and service conditions of delivery workers and ensure that they are protected under provision of law.

5. CONCLUSION

Delivery workers are the active participant in the capitalist growth or the new market based E-commerce growth. They shoulder a lot of responsibility to value of consignment, customers interface and growth of business. Despite delivery related challenges and not so favourable working conditions, they continue to provide good experiences at customer's door and are behind the success of e commerce growth. The improvement in working conditions, job security and access to social security benefits will make their work more fulfilling and satisfying for self and lead to human development.

Studying critically the various aspects of nature of employment, conditions of delivery workers, and access to social security measures would enrich the scope and to assess the degree of precariousness. Further, role of trade unions or any other workers associations which are not in the picture in the delivery business and the agency that delivery workers exercised in their work could be researched. Special attention of labour department, state governments, employers or employers' organisation, academia are required to work collectively to improve conditions of delivery workers and human capital of this emerging working class.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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