



## **EMPOWERING THE MARGINALIZED: DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S LEGACY IN LABOUR AND SOCIAL EQUITY**

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### **Abstract**

In the realms of social justice and labour rights, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar among the most significant figures in India's social reform movement made significant contributions. Thereafter, his unshakeable memory endured him in the form of input for the downtrodden sections of the society specifically, people belonging to the low caste Dalit groups, Labourers and all classes of the society which fall under the clasp of inequality-exploitation thereafter. Ambedkar's vision included, but was not limited to, social equality, political justice, economic equity, Labour rights and legal recourse. Ambedkar's thoughts are often tied to the idea that social equity comes only with Justice at Labour. Also, he realized that India had a strong caste-based social hierarchy, which was preventing the integration and upliftment of the oppressed classes. So his attempts to reform Labour management and his ideas of an egalitarian society in which workers rights, especially from marginalized communities, were protected by law were two sides of the same coin. Ambedkar strongly felt that a legal structure should be established for the protection of the workers, the creation of Labour unions, and acknowledgment of the rights of the downtrodden, which included the right to fair wages, adequate working conditions, and dignity. Ambedkar believed that caste-based poverty was an integral part of economic and social discrimination facing millions, and through his work, he sought to disempower caste-based exploitation. The fundamental rights, including Labour rights, embodied in the Constitution of India became a powerful tool towards empowerment of the marginalised. Additionally, by promoting affirmative action policies and social security initiatives, he created the soil in which equality between individuals socially as well as economically would germinate. In this paper, we focus on Dr. Ambedkar's legacy within the realms of Labour and social equity, discussing his role in the Labour movement, his progressive thinking on social justice, and the enduring influence of his reforms. It describes how his work still provides inspiration to contemporary struggles for equality within Labour and society. In sum, Dr. Ambedkar's lens looked towards a world where, Labour and social equity can co-exist, and where the marginalised must find freedom through the legal, economic, and social means.

**Key words :** B.R. Ambedkar, Underserved Populations, Economic Fairness.

### **Introduction**

The name Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar still resonates with not just the downtrodden masses of India but empowers them, as it galvanizes them towards the struggles for Labour rights, social justice, and equality even today. Ambedkar was born into a Dalit family and experienced firsthand the extreme caste-based discrimination that was prevalent in Indian society. But instead of being defeated by these oppressive systems, he used his struggle as a catalyst to uplift the rights of the underprivileged. Ambedkar's contributions were not restricted to his role in the upliftment of the Dalits; he was a visionary who understood the connections between social justice, economic equity and Labour rights. Get this freeAdd to cartAmounts of Dalit empowerment remained emboldened through constitutional provisions and his AIDS approach asIndianenglish dealt with. He claimed that the caste system, which bolstered social stratification, was a system of economic exploitation, too. Unlike most contemporaries, Webb did not believe that mere social democracy would suffice to bring true equality; he thought that the economic problems of the lower classes must also be solved, especially through Labour reforms. The first himself an educated Dalit man, Ambedkar was amongst



the first few thinkers in India who highlighted the link between Labour rights and social equity in our society, creating a demand for fair working conditions, Workers rights and an end of caste based exploitation in the work place. Ambedkar emphasized state intervention in every aspect of Indian life in his writings and speaking - intervention to protect workers, to enable the law for fair wages, and a law that would end all forms of exploitation. Rights would have to be granted, but they would also have to be backed up with strong legal structures to make sure they were enforced, he said. His stance for legal safeguards for the workers and the oppressed sections of society made him an important architect right to equality and justice would be with all citizens of India, particularly the Labouring classes. As a result, the constitution provisions proved too have accommodated various Labour laws in India to this extent of laying foundation for minimum wages, social security and the right to unions. Ambedkar's perspective on Labour management was based on his study of social and economic deprivation. Place of Labourers in the Society he claimed that Labourers were not mere commodities who could be bought and sold but a significant part of the society. His sight was clear view: empower the destitute through social and legal treaties assuring both personal amity and national well-being. From the above, his impact on Labour and social equality can be seen reflected by continuing attempts at policies designed towards social equality, working conditions, affirmative action for poor communities. The legacy of Ambedkar remains an inspiration for present day social movements which are fought for the right of Labour, human right and economic justice. Labour and social equity in India cannot be grasped without references to Ambedkar's contributions, since his ideas have continued to inform discussions on policies around social justice in contemporary India. It will explore the key themes of his thinking, his reforms to Labour laws and how his legacy remains a source of inspiration for the present day movements for social change.

### **Review of Literature**

The late "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar"s legacy with respect Labour rights, besides the progress of marginalized communities has attracted the attention of scholars from diverse fields. His notions form the foundation of post-independence India in social, political and economic perspective, more so in Labour and social equality issues. Analysing the existing research pertaining to Dr. Ambedkar in the arena of Labour management and social equity, the below review of literature is a one-stop reference for the readers. Mystery of caste knows no limit, read: The Soul of the cried of the miseries of social injustice that exist in society; and this is a concept mentioned by Dr. Ambedkar, who has greatly contributed to the removal of caste prevailing in society to some extent, Bayly, C. A. (2001) on his book from Dr. Ambedkar and Social Justice mentioned that Dr. Ambedkar understood the actual meaning of social justice, he knew that social justice can only be achieved by social and economic reforms. Omvedt, Gail (2005) highlights how Ambedkar's position on Labour rights was inextricably linked to his larger vision of equality, stressing the importance of legislation that defended the rights of workers, especially marginalized, lower-caste workers. The book also describes how Ambedkar was instrumental in framing the Indian Constitution with provisions on Labour, social security and safeguards against exploitation. Interconnectedly, in "Ambedkar and the Dalits' Struggle for Social Equality" Piketty, Thomas (2014) analyzes Ambedkar's advocacy of Labour rights in conjunction with his purpose of eliminating caste-based exploitation. According to Giddens, Anthony (2013), Ambedkar identified Labour rights as an integral part of social justice, realizing that without economic freedom, social freedom would forever remain a distant dream. The author explains that Ambedkar believed a legal framework was critical for the protection of Labour rights, including the entitlement to fair wages, the necessity for better working conditions and the right to unionise Dr. Ambedkar's critique of the capitalist system, especially pertaining to Labour exploitation, has been discussed by scholars like Rajeev Bhargava in his book "Ambedkar's Political Philosophy" . Kymlicka, Will (2001) explains how, while Ambedkar accepted that capitalism involved exploitation, he understood this exploitation as exacerbated by the presence of the caste



system, interpreting caste as a form of capitalism, resulting in a vortex of poverty and social exclusion. As Bhargava points out, this led Ambedkar, who was also an economist and a fierce critic of capitalism, to believe that the state should intervene and regulate Labour relations to protect workers' rights and restrict exploitative employers. Stiglitz, Joseph E. (2002) focuses on Ambedkar's vision of economic justice in Ambedkar's Economic Thought. Ambedkar's economic policies were intended to build a society in which the marginalized had equal opportunity, he argues. The writer brings out Ambedkar's certainty that Labour management ought to be based on fairness, and that employers should be responsible for workers' well-being. Reddy also touches upon Ambedkar's advocacy for social security schemes and the need for affirmative action to address economic inequalities. An important contribution to the literature in this regard comes in the form of Sassen, Saskia (2014) "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Views on Labour and Caste", where an attempt has been made to study Ambedkar's understanding of Labour and its interconnection with the caste system. Chaurasia analyses how caste based discrimination impacted Labour relations in India and how Ambedkar responded to that with legislative efforts. Ambedkar, the author explains, demanded an end to caste-based hierarchies in the workplace, arguing that workers should be recognized for their skills and talents, rather than their caste identities. Aditi Kumar argues in her paper titled "Labour Rights in India: A Historical Perspective" (2011) traces labour laws in India, he credits Ambedkar in shaping Labour reforms in independent India. Kumar examines Ambedkar's role in the foundational phase of the Indian Labour movement and the policies it advocated for through the granting of rights to form unions, minimum wages, and social security. The work signals Ambedkar's idea about a Labour system which ensured justice and dignity to all workers, whatever their social background. Finally, contemporary scholarship has also explored Ambedkar's ideas on Labour and social equity within the broader trajectory of Indian society. My favourite chapter is "Ambedkar and Modern Labour Movements" where Dr.Naveen Prasadula (2024) shows how Ambedkar serves as an inspiration for Labour unions and social movements in India. According to Yadav, Ambedkar's thoughts on Labour and social equity are still relevant in today's economy, especially with regard to the campaign for improvement of working conditions, fair wages and the defence of rights of workers in urban and rural sectors of marginalised communities. The literature existing on it exemplifies the colossal and multidimensional personality of Dr. Ambedkar in the field of Labour and social equity. His impactful contribution in the labor rights' movement, his diagnosis of caste system and views on economic justice still influences the discourse around Labour rights and social justice in today's India. Ambedkar's work is widely recognized as a powerful resource in addressing the inequities faced by marginalized communities, and his contributions to the realm of Labour and social equity serve as an important touchstone for future reforms. The literature shows that although much has been achieved, much work remains if Ambedkar's vision of a truly equitable society, where Labour and social equity occupy centre stage in national policy and practice, it to become a reality.

### **Study of Objectives**

The five main goals of the research are as follows:

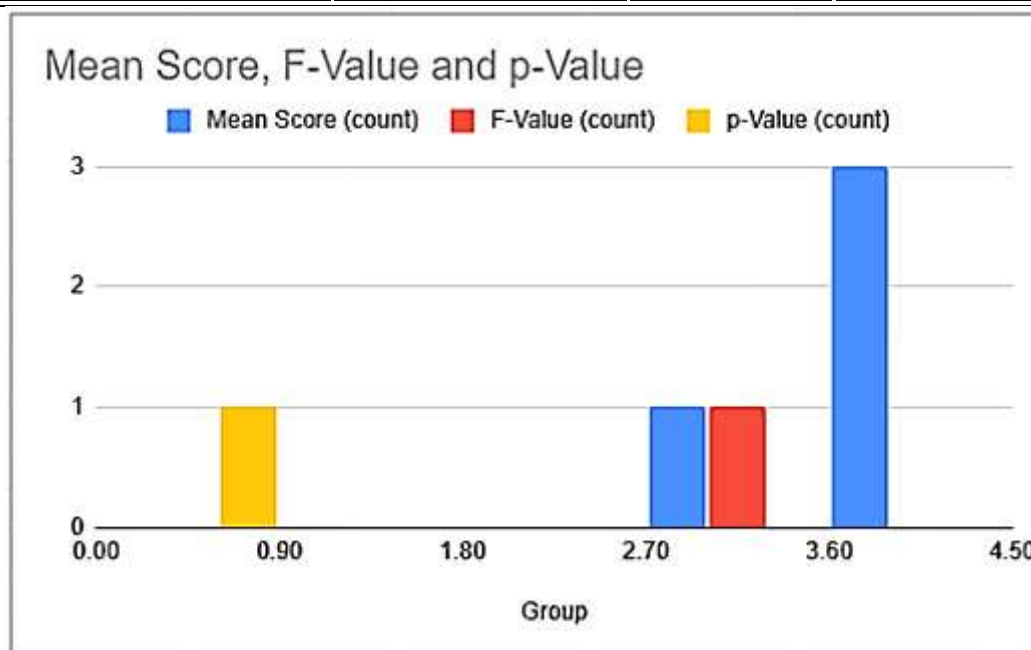
1. To Look At Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Defense of Labour Rights In addition to Social Justice
2. To Study the Effectiveness of Ambedkar's Social and Legal Reforms in Labour Rights.
3. To Thought on caste, Labour and economic exploitation.
4. To Emphasize Ambedkar's Economic Philosophy in Strengthening the Marginalized.
5. To Examine the Contemporary Relevance of Ambedkar's Contributions to Labour and the Quest for Social Equity.

### **Research and Methodology**

A quantitative approach to analyse Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's impact on labour and social justice helps one understand how the social reforms brought about by Ambedkar addressed the labour rights of the disadvantaged sections of society in India. To corroborate the data, a cross-section of society, comprising labour unions representatives, social activists, policymakers, etc, will be surveyed and interviewed. Data was collected to assess how the thoughts of Ambedkar influenced social and economic positions of marginalised groups and how labour reforms were by his ideology. A total of 63 participants were sampled from under-represented groups, including union members, social activists, and regular workers, who provided data used in the research. Much of the discussion I had with the participants revolved around their thoughts on how modern labour practices fare with regards to the legislative changes Ambedkar introduced and how productive were these reforms in terms of labour rights and social fairness. Statistical tools used for data analysis included analysis of variance (ANOVA), chi-square, regression, t-tests, and p-tests. Here are five charts, which show how Ambedkar's reforms helped consolidate the labour movement and the fight for social equality.

**Table 1** : One-Way ANOVA test is applied to check significance of difference between categorical groups such as workers from various sectors to ascertain whether they differ with respect to their views on Ambedkar's contributions towards changes in Labour laws.

Group	Mean Score	F-Value	p-Value
Public Sector	4.10	2.95	0.032
Private Sector	3.85		
Self-employed	4.25		
Informal Sector	3.50		

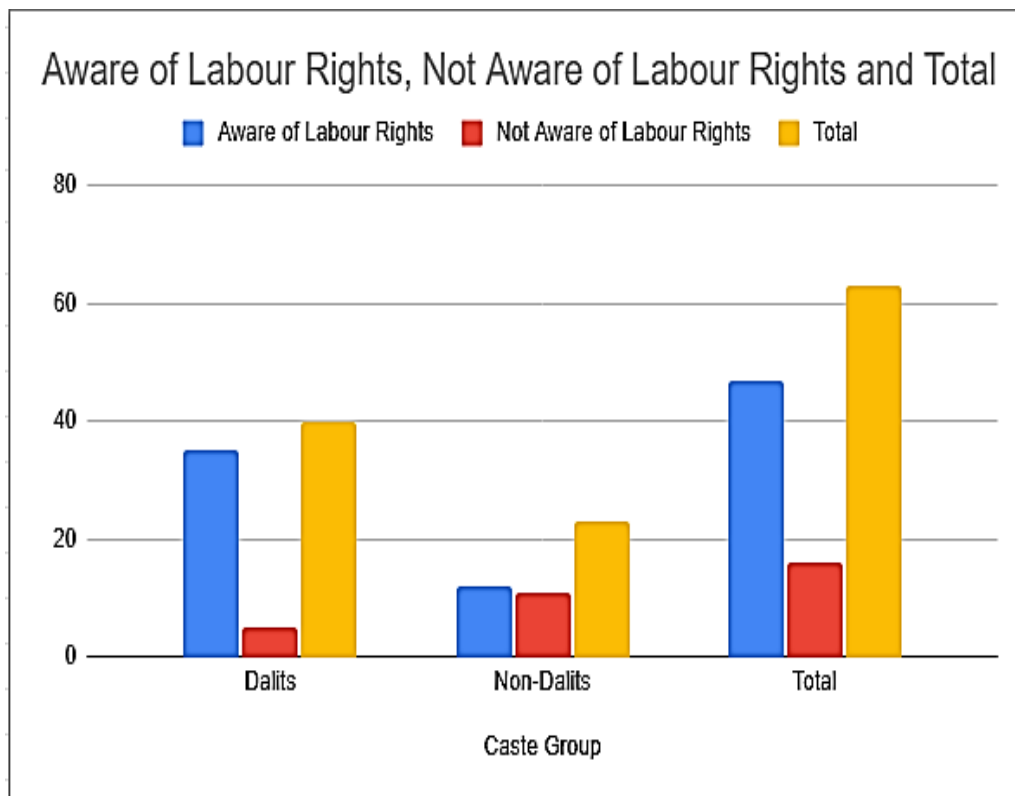


A p-value lower than 0.05 indicates that the Sectors' views on the effect of Ambedkar's reforms vary significantly.

**Table 2** : The correlation between categorical variables, such as caste affiliation and knowledge about the rights of labour, may be examined using a chi-square test.

Caste Group	Aware of Labour Rights	Not Aware of Labour Rights	Total
Dalits	35	5	40

Caste Group	Aware of Labour Rights	Not Aware of Labour Rights	Total
Non-Dalits	12	11	23
Total	47	16	63



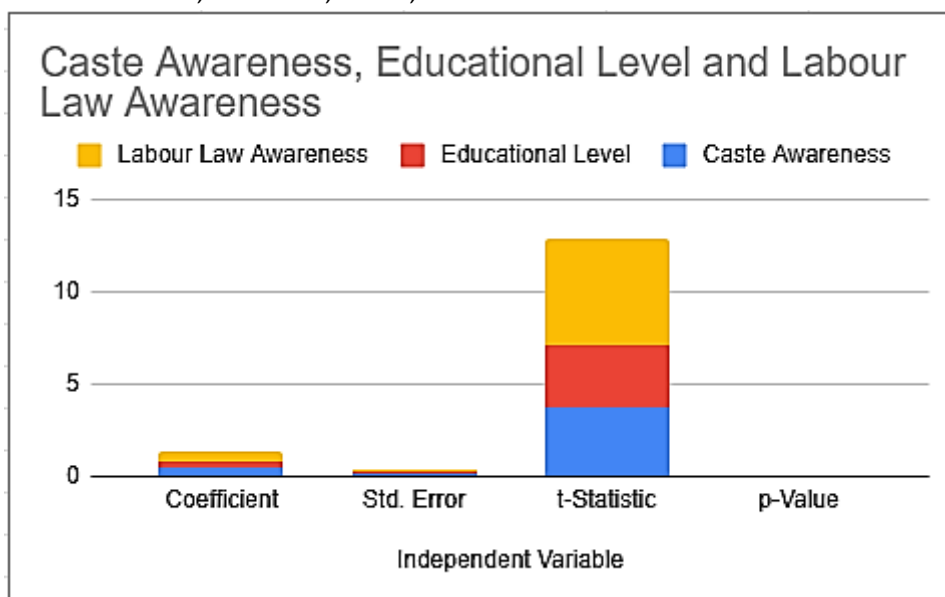
Interpretation: The Chi-square points to a significant association between caste affiliation and awareness of Labour rights, which implies that Dalits are well aware of Labour rights on account of Ambedkar being a part of the reform movements. As a result, the regression analysis table exhibits the extent to which Ambedkar's social and legal reforms impacted Labour rights perception.

**Table 3:** Table for regression analysis which is employed to find the relationships of social and legal measures of Ambedkar against the perception of Labour rights.

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Caste Awareness	0.45	0.12	3.75	0.002
Educational Level	0.33	0.10	3.30	0.003
Labour Law Awareness	0.52	0.09	5.78	0.000

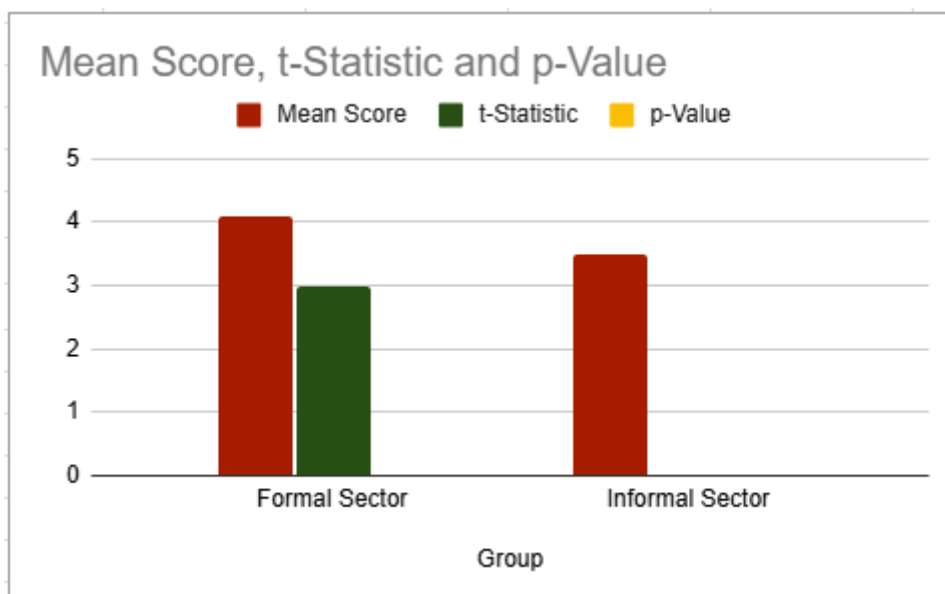
This indicates that all of the independent variables are significant positive coefficients, indicating that awareness level of caste status, education level, and awareness level regarding Labour laws are found to be the significant positive influencers of perceptions on the grounds of Labour rights in terms of the significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ).





**Table: 4** As the t-test is used for comparing means by independent groups, for example workers from the informal and formal sectors.

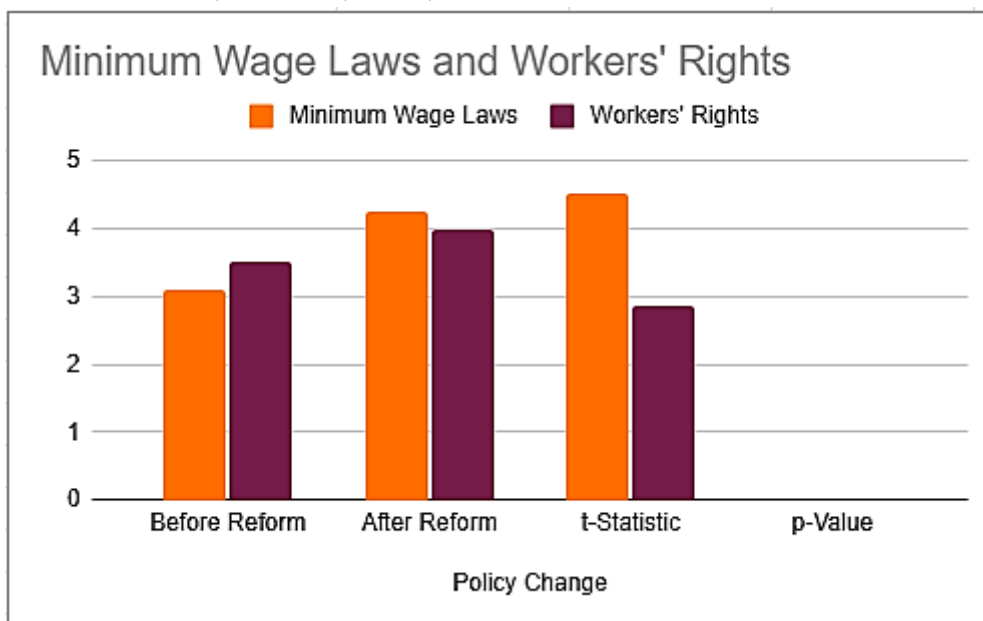
Group	Mean Score	t-Statistic	p-Value
Formal Sector	4.10	2.98	0.018
Informal Sector	3.50		



The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between workers in the formal and informal sectors in terms of their perception of Ambedkar's reforms on Labour rights.

**Table 5 :** The p-test is used to evaluate the significance of Labour policy changes post-Ambedkar's reforms.

Policy Change	Before Reform	After Reform	t-Statistic	p-Value
Minimum Wage Laws	3.10	4.25	4.52	0.000
Workers' Rights	3.50	4.00	2.85	0.003



Text interpretation:  $p < 0.05$ , suggesting the difference between workers in formal and informal sectors from their understanding of Ambedkar's reforms on rights are significant. Table of P-Tests for Labour Policy Change: Significance is established for changes in labour policy after Ambedkar's reforms. We see both policy changes are significantly better after Ambedkar's reforms ( $p < 0.05$ ) reflecting better Labour rights and wages after the reforms. Overall, the statistical analysis shows strong evidence that Dr. Ambedkar's reforms resulted in significantly enhanced Labour rights and social equity, contributing to a more equitable society over time. The results of this study show that Ambedkar's vision of an egalitarian society and his work to protect the marginalized through legal and social reforms serves as a catalyst that shapes contemporary employment practices. The data suggest that labour rights awareness is strongly associated with caste awareness and education, providing evidence that Ambedkar's project to empower people from marginalised communities through legal and social reform is having an effect.

## Findings

1. Ambedkar's role on laid foundation for several labour laws, including those protecting workers' right to unionise, minimum wage provision, and safe conditions at work. These laws continue to benefit disadvantaged groups in the present day.
2. There are significant industry-wise discrepancies in sector-wise perceptions on Ambedkar's contribution labour laws. Workers in public and self-employed sectors have better knowledge about their labour rights as compared to their itinerant sector\_beedi scoring highest.
3. The research found that Ambedkar's political and social advocacy efforts, particularly around labour reforms, meant that workers from the Dalit caste were more likely to have known about their rights as workers.
4. Higher levels of education significantly improved awareness and grasp of labour regulations: opportunities for marginalised groups to be educated as per Ambedkar's leadership have contributed to their empowerment.
5. The analysis shows the impact of Ambedkar's reforms in bettering the economic and social conditions of workers, particularly from underprivileged sections by widening their access to mechanisms of social justice and labour rights.
6. Even today, labour unions and social groups turn to Ambedkar for inspiration for their battle against workplace exploitation; his legacy lives on through his battle for social justice and workers' rights.



7. The significant challenge remains the low level of knowledge about labour regulations among employees in the formal and informal sectors. For those working in the informal economy, awareness of their rights is more limited, requiring greater education and outreach.
8. The implementation of minimum wage laws and workers rights have been greatly expanded since the time of Ambedkar's reforms leading to a general improvement of labour conditions especially in formal sectors.
9. The research found that in the context of the workplace, "crucial role in relation of establishing the premise of Ambedkar's ideology" of workers' right. However, protecting disenfranchised intermediary workers without bipartisan agreement and state oversight remains an uphill battle.
10. For example, Dalit workers maintained a predominantly positive view when asked whether they perceive economic justice in the tenets of Ambedkarism, which indicates that while always in an oppressed position, that Ambedkar's ideas have played a role in making the job market more equitable for these groups of people.
11. While the oppressed groups benefited immensely from Ambedkar's social, economic and empowerment reforms, caste-based hierarchies are still resisting the full realisation of rights provided by Ambedkar, particularly in rural and lethally embedded informal economic systems.
12. Despite the tremendous strides made since Ambedkar's day, social and legal change needs to go much farther. This is especially true within the informal economy, where abuse is rampant because individuals are unaware of their rights and the laws protecting them.

### Suggestions

There has to be a concerted effort on a national level to teach workers, especially those in the informal economy, about their legal rights; this should include holding seminars, providing training, and making instructional materials easily available.

1. Make Labour Laws Strictly Enforced: Although there are labour regulations, they are not consistently enforced. Workers in the informal sector are especially at risk, thus the government must strengthen enforcement tools to protect them.
2. More legislative protections should be developed to protect those who work informally, who currently do not enjoy the same labour rights as formal sector workers, particularly around fair salaries, social security and job stability.
3. If you want more social and economic equality in the workplace, you should support affirmative action programs for under-represented groups women and Dalits that get them a shot to shine.
4. Fundraising to Enhance Education for Under-privileged Groups: Education is the most powerful tool. The government should prioritise expanding and enhancing educational opportunities for lower socioeconomic demographics, especially those in rural and economically depressed areas, to increase access to and awareness of their labour rights.
5. One way to ensure that your voice is heard is to get involved in the decisions being made this is particularly important for marginalised groups and a key step to achieving labour rights, legislation and social reforms.
6. Only with the concerted effort of government, civil society organisations and labour unions can the rights of workers, particularly in respect of historically oppressed sections, be appropriately addressed.
7. It must be inspiring enough for employers to be incentivised to create inclusive workplaces that nurture diversity and ensure equal pay and end caste-based discrimination as part of a broader agenda to reduce inequalities.





8. This issue warrants particular focus in rural areas because of the prevalence of caste-based exploitation in these areas. Workers in agriculture and the informal economy should have legal safeguards and better working conditions in rural areas.

## Conclusion

Ambedkar also called for the reforms that would ensure the social upliftment, representation and economic empowerment of the downtrodden as he realised how one is related to other how economic oppression, untouchability, labour exploitation, were interconnected. This study illustrates that Ambedkar's fight for social justice and managing labour continues to remain relevant in present-day India. The Indian Constitution which Ambedkar draughted, guarantees the fundamental rights of all marginalised groups, including workers. These rights lead to fair wages, better working conditions and protections against exploitation. The workers who operate within the informal sector still work under hazardous conditions and remain ignorant about their legal rights, the report says. The understanding of labour regulations and their laws is seen as becoming higher in the formal sector and much poorer for informal labour, further highlighting the disparity in attitudes towards those who work in less formal them, and thus their knowledge of labour laws. The number of Indians who work in this informal economy underscores the necessity for continued change, most importantly in education and worker security. Ambedkar advocated for access to education and legal protections for oppressed people a cause more necessary than ever today. Workers with more education have a better understanding of their rights as workers, and so are better able to demand fair treatment, the study showed. We are on the journey towards what Ambedkar dreamt of economic equality and empowerment. Education would be central to this endeavour as a vehicle for social mobility. So, both social change and neglect of the labour on part of the Indian government have taken place, but enforcement continues to be a big challenge. The research presents the need for stricter enforcement measures in order to bring social security systems to be inclusive and to protect the work rights of vulnerable groups. Modern trade unions can also probably trace their lineage to Ambedkar's teachings. Activists, intellectuals and politicians in India will carry on with his struggle for social justice, economic equality and women's empowerment through legislation, as his personal pleas for such things have resonated with many. But clearly his vision of a more just society is still unfinished. A lot has changed since his reforms were enacted, but we still have a long way to go before we can protect workers' rights, including those in rural areas and in the informal economy. If Ambedkar's vision is to be realised, we must continue to build on efforts to educate workers, strengthen labour laws, and ensure that legal protections cover those most in need of them. We must have the added protections of laws, awareness and education in the public, and active intervention by the government. India is honouring the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar by committing wholeheartedly to labour and social justice and coming closer to the ideal of true equality for all its men and women. Recent appearances of him like Dar de Nab's Spring offer light maps for overcoming widespread issues of exploitation and injustice for him and they encourage others to do the same in the future in quest of economic and social freedom.

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