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Title: Déjà vu: rewriting identity scripts of tea plantation employees in post-colonial era

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This paper examines critical factors that may infiltrate the identity scripts of managers and workers. By comparing the workplace behaviour and employee relations in traditional (in eastern region) and modern (in northern region) tea plantations in Bangladesh, this paper will contribute to our understanding of the identity construction and reconstruction in a developing country with weak labour protection and history of workers' exploitations. The existing literature focus on the role of identity scripts and how it contributes to constructing identity of individuals or organisation. Ybema et al. (2009) argue that the identity scripts are not only a 'reflexivity' of social actors but also their active role in constantly 're-authoring' them. Anderson-Gough et al. (2022) highlight how the identity scripts are shaped by individuals' demarcation in different situations. Raghuram (2013) explains how the cultural differences between customers and agents connected through a phone in an Indian call centre demanded agents to recreate identity scripts that stood a stark contrast to agents' own non-work identities. As Stewart and Lucio (2011) call for research that would be closely engaged with labour in work to better understand the employee relations, our study aims to bridge this literature gap by studying why and how the managers reconstruct identity scripts both for labourers and themselves in traditional and modern plantations.

To achieve the above, we conducted a non-participative observation, semi-structured interviews of 38 participants which include plantation managers, field officers, tea workers, NGO workers, labour union leaders and coordinators, physician, accounts officers and managers of research institutions and documentary analysis.

*Historical construction of identity script:* To recover the lost monopoly of tea trading and meet the demand of tea leaves in colonies, the British colonial lords inaugurate tea plantations in Bangladesh around 200 years ago in the Eastern region of Bangladesh. Shortages of local labourers drove the plantation managers to recruit labourers from distant regions of India by deception and abducted labourers in slavery condition. After the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) observed a rapid departure of British owners and managers. Since tea workers actively contributed to the freedom movement before 1947 and later in 1971, they hoped an end to slavery conditions and wider societal inclusivity. The wealthy West Pakistanis and later, Bangladeshi managers who eventually acceded the throne dashed workers' hope of ending coercive regime of labour management

Farmers, peasants, fishermen, day labourers, construction workers displaced by draught, flood or landslides make their way to the northern tea plantation labour line in quest of a permanent residence. Despite the influx of ethnic majority in labour line and the second/third generations of immigrant workers, the inclusivity question of tea workers remains distant and their salient citizenship rights are often trimmed. Managers still identify Eastern regional tea workers as 'lazy', immigrant, illiterate and 'donkey' reflect how the latter's identity engrave into the formers' consciousness while both groups shared a substantial period of their lives in tea plantations in various capacities. Even some experienced labourers and supervisors informally provide on-job training to tea plantation managers and field officers, there is no history or potentials of any tea workers to make any career progression above the supervisor grade. On the other hand, labourers with one of the lowest-paid jobs in the country, a handful of rations and a house of one room for 6-8 family members, view managers as their 'God' or 'Protector'.

*Rewriting identity scripts in postcolonial era:* Northern plantations have been operating for 20 years and the workforce mainly comprises of local villagers, day labourers and a few permanent labourers. As soon as the managers move from the Eastern region to the Northern region for better career prospects, their behaviour dramatically change towards tea plantation workers. Managers thrive to become worker-friendly, dedicate to train not only labourers of their own but also outside farmers and peasants, experience with the plantations and apply their knowledge. Slow and aged workers account for a significant part of the workforce and instead of firing them, field officers placed them in tasks

matched their speed. Managers find solace to become a 'trainer' or 'teacher', rather than a 'God'. However, they held the same demurring identity scripts for eastern plantation workers.

Our findings suggest that managerial workplace behaviour changes due to the reconstitution of the identity scripts of managers and workers. Engaging the lens of social identity theory (SIT), we seek to understand how the space and ownership rights capture identity differences and deflate managers' frivolous behaviour and redesign the labour recruitment, retain, and control strategy. This study finds that the time, space, and exposure to uncertainties may demarcate the identity scripts of managers and workers. This findings may contribute to articulate labour policy to achieve better employment terms, working conditions and better treatment from managers.

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