

CHANGING PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT: A STUDY OF INDIAN LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract

The latest employment reports from various agencies giving a sign of alarm of a job crunch in the economy. In recent times, jobs have dried up and the economy is not able to generate an adequate amount of employment opportunities in the economy. In the previous five years, the unemployment graph is rising and the existing workers are also not getting decent job conditions. Despite the high economic growth rate, the country is not experiencing the same growth in employment. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) has fallen in the last five years, especially after the step of demonetization and Goods and Service Tax (GST). The falling LFPR for women is also a reason for concern which is low in both rural and urban areas. This paper deals with the issue of unemployment in both rural and urban areas. The study examines the situation of rural-urban disparity in LFPR, Workforce participation rate (WPR) and also analyse the unemployment situation among the educated labour force in India. The data has been taken from various National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reports on Employment and Unemployment and Labour survey reports of Labour Bureau. The paper uses tabulation technique to analyse the trend of employment along with multinomial logistic model to examine the determining the factors of unemployment of an individual. The study will enhance the understanding related to the current dynamics of unemployment and employment in India.

Keywords: *employment, female labour participation, unemployment, demonetization*

INTRODUCTION

Historical experience has proved that capitalism concentrates the wealth at one end of the pole and the vast mass of laboring people at the other. Given the nature of predatory growth, it cannot create enough jobs. The story of India is no different from the rest of the world. International Labour Organization defines employment or employed population as all those of working age who, in a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. The employed population is measured in relation to a short reference period of one week or seven days, so as to produce a snap-shot picture of employment at a given point in time.

National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the most renowned and reliable employment data source in India has been conducting the quinquennial survey on employment and unemployment since 1972. In the 68th Round, 2011-12 the number of households surveyed was 1,01,724 (59,700 in rural areas and 42,024 in urban areas) and the number of persons surveyed was 4,56,999 (2,80,763 in rural areas and 1,76,236 in urban areas). After every five years, NSSO has to conduct the survey and publish a report on the current status of employment. After NSSO's 68th Round Employment and Unemployment in 2011-12, the survey was discontinued and an annual survey of households on jobs was started in 2017-18. PLFS is the first annual household survey of the NSSO, conducted for July 2017-June 2018. Despite the completion of data collection, there was no news regarding publishing the report. But on 30th January 2019, a report published in 'Business Standard' on PLFS confirmed that the country's unemployment rate stood at over a four-decade high of 6.1 percent during 2017-18, compared to 2.2 percent in 2011-12. The unemployment rate is higher in urban areas (7.8 percent) than in rural areas (5.3 percent). The whole agenda of generating sustainable employment opportunities seems to be at the bottom of the government's checklist. Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar gave the reference of a foreign private agency 'Mckinsey' which quoted that almost 2 crore jobs were created in India in the last four years. But immediately after demonetization in November 2016, India's labour participation rate fell to 45%; 2% of the working-age population, i.e. about 13 million, moved out of labour markets (M.Vyas, *The Hindu*, 2019). There has been a consistent decline in job opportunities in the economy. The ability of growth to create employment halved between the 1990s and 2000.

Economic Survey 2014-15 confesses, “Regardless of which data source is used it seems clear that employment growth is lagging behind growth in the labour force.” All this shows the current government’s inability to transform the economic growth into employment generation. Labour force is also on the decline from the starting of this decade. Labour force is persons who are either 'working' (or employed) or 'seeking or available for work' (or unemployed) whereas workforce is a number of persons who are 'working' (or employed). According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) the number of employed persons in India was estimated at 400 million in February compared with 406 million a year ago. The monthly labour participation rate series has been systematically lower than the corresponding levels a year ago. The continued annual fall in the labour participation rate even in 2018 and 2019 indicates a deeper or more sustained problem ailing India’s labour market. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) is falling both for males and females. Labour force participation rate (LFPR) accounts for the number of persons in the labour force (which includes both the employed and unemployed) per 100 or 1000 persons. The Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) measures the number of persons who are 'working' (or employed). As per the data by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the LFPR was 39.5 percent among all age groups in the 2011-12 survey. In 2019, the periodic labour force survey (PLFS), it came down to 36.9 percent. The unemployment rate is also soaring high at 6.1 percent in 2018 which was only 2.2 percent in 2012. According to a report published by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), almost 1.1 crore Indians lost their jobs during 2018. Roughly 12 million enter the labour force in India every year in search of employment and given the nature of predatory growth, the organized sector cannot create enough jobs, as a result, the majority of the workers are compelled to join the informal sector. This is the scenario of employment in the country when our current honorable Prime Minister in one of his speeches assured the youth of generating 2 crore jobs every year and ‘development’ (*Vikaas*) was the major agenda for the current government before the election.

This steep jump in the unemployment rate in the last five years is the majorly caused by two steps taken by the government in the form of demonetization followed by goods and services tax. This shows a clear failure of public policy in tackling unemployment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jha (2003); Kundu and Sarangi (2007); Kannan & Raveendran (2009); Himanshu (2011) analysed the unemployment situation in the era of globalization which is still a huge challenge for the government. The study found a very low rise in employment in the organized sector in India after economic reforms under the reign of capitalism and globalization. The efforts should be on the development of the unorganized sector of the country rather than just concentrating on the organized manufacturing sector. They found some set of firms that grew and also generated net jobs in the economy while other sets of firms grew largely by reducing employment, resulting in ‘jobless growth’. Bhaduri (2007); Bhaduri and Patkar (2009); Kumar and Prakash (2017) explained the current pattern of growth and observed high growth is anti-development in nature causing fewer job generation in the economy and reducing the living standards of the poor section of the society. Bhaduri termed the strategy of state of collaborating with corporate houses to dispossess the people of their livelihood as ‘developmental terrorism’. Hence there is a need to chart out an alternative path. The study considered this situation of jobless growth a matter of deep concern. Mazumdar and N Neetha (2011) investigated the explicit and non-explicit trends of female work participation in between 1993-94 to 2009-10. They argued that there is a steep fall in female labour participation after the advent of liberalization in the country and apart from the employment share the problem of a large number of females doing unpaid work is also high in India. The study concluded that females in India still have the subordinate status in employment and the financial dependence of females is the major factor for this situation. Abraham (2016) studied the different types of informality and Multinomial probit model was used to correct sample selection biasedness. The author analysed that informal employment in the informal sector has young and uneducated workers. Mitra and Verick (2013); Kumar and Prakash (2017); Bairagya (2018) studied the employment condition among socially marginalized groups, primarily among schedule caste and schedule tribes. The major chunk of youth is being employed in casual jobs in India while female counter parts choose to be self-employed. Bairagya examined the level of unemployment among the educated youth in India. The study compared the unemployment rate between the educated and uneducated youth of India and found the unemployment rate higher among the educated labour force.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on the unit level data of NSS 61st round (2004-05) and periodic labour force survey (PLFS) for the period 2017-18. The tabulation has been done to capture the change in the employment and unemployment pattern across gender and rural-urban sector for two decades. Multinomial logistic regression has been used to determining the factors of unemployment of an individual.

KEY INDICATORS OF EMPLOYMENT

The situation of employment in India can be observed by the data on the key indicators of employment. In 2011-12, the LFPR was 55.9 percent which dropped to 49.8 percent in 2017-18. This is contradictory and hard to digest because the population of India is rising annually and the LFPR is falling. At the most, it must have to remain constant but there is a fall of almost 6 percent between two survey rounds. This data can have multiple interpretations but the chief reason for this is the loss of hope to get a job in the labour market. People have stopped looking for the job because either they won't get the job or the working conditions will be worse.

Sr. No.	Key Indicators	Definition	2011-12	2017-18
1	Labour Force participation rate (LFPR)	LFPR is the number of persons in the labour force (which includes both the employed and unemployed) per 100 or 1000 persons (for 15+ age)	55.9	49.8
2	Workforce Participation Rate (WPR)	WPR is the number of persons employed per 100 or 1000 persons (for 15+ age)	54.7	46.8
3	Unemployment Rate	Unemployment rate (UR) is the number of persons unemployed per 100 or 1000 persons in the labour force	2.3	6.1

Source: As per NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey 2011-12 and PLFS, 2019

The rising unemployment (from 2.3 percent to 6.0 percent) poses a question on the type of economic growth in the country. Despite the rise in the population of the country, there is a fall in LFPR instead of rising. This is a worrying factor for the economy as well as for policymakers. There is a tendency of escapism whenever the government is being asked about the employment situation in the country. The reason for this escapism from answering the question lies in the above statistics. The huge amount of investments and flagship programmes of government didn't able to generate enough jobs for the people. There is a tendency among people to join the informal sector when they fail to get employed in the formal sector. Still, the government is not ready to admit the failure at the front of the employment generation.

DISPARITY AT RURAL-URBAN AND GENDER LEVEL

The effect of falling LFPR is more severe when one looks at the gender and rural-urban level. At the aggregate level, there is minimal difference between the LFPR in rural and urban areas but if the data is disintegrated the reality is different. LFPR among the rural and urban males is almost stagnant from the last two decades. In 2004-05, 85.9 percent of rural males were part of the labour force which fell to just 76.4 percent in 2017-18. Urban male have a similar level of participation rate in the corresponding period.

Years	Rural			Urban			Rural +Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2004-05	85.9	49.4	67.7	79.2	24.4	53.0	84.0	42.7	63.7
2011-12	81.3	35.8	58.7	76.4	20.5	49.3	79.8	31.2	55.9
2017-18	76.4	24.6	50.7	74.5	20.4	47.6	75.8	23.3	49.8

Source: As per various rounds of NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey

Surprisingly, rural females have a higher share (24.6 percent in 2017-18) in the LFPR compared to urban females (20.4 percent). Overall, both rural and urban females have a lower share than rural and urban males. The worrying factor is that the LFPR is falling steeply in the case of females despite rising literacy rates. The exact reason is difficult to find but there are reasons like Firstly, changes in individual attributes (like increasing education levels and changing age distributions) and household factors (like increases in household wealth and improvements in men's level of education) fully account for the fall in women's labour force participation.

Secondly, Increasing levels of education among rural married women and the men in their households are the most prominent attributes contributing to the decline in LFPR in both decades. There is a U-shaped relation between females' education and LFPR. As women move from being illiterate to having primary and middle levels of schooling, LFPR falls. LFPR only rises as education increases to completed secondary schooling and to the graduate level. Over the last three decades, women in rural India have gained enough education to move younger cohorts from illiteracy to low and middle levels of education. But, in contrast to

urban areas, schooling in rural areas has not yet expanded enough to pull most women through completed high school or further, into graduate education (Klasen and Pieters, 2015). Overall, rural and urban both are witnessing a falling labour force participation in the study period.

Years	Rural			Urban			Rural +Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2004-05	84.6	48.5	66.6	76.3	22.7	50.6	82.2	41.6	62.2
2011-12	80.0	35.2	57.8	74.1	19.5	47.6	78.1	30.5	54.7
2017-18	72.0	23.7	48.1	69.3	18.2	43.9	71.2	22.0	46.8

Source: As per various rounds of NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey

A similar situation has been experienced in the case of the workforce labour participation rate. Both rural and urban males have higher WPR than rural and urban females. The situation of urban females is worse than the rural females as it has decreased from 22.7 percent in 2004-05 to 18.2 percent in 2017-18. Among the rural females, the fall in WPR is from 48.5 percent to 23.7 percent in the same period which is a not a good sign for the rural economy.

According to Economic Survey, 2016-17, three-fourths of women are in agriculture; most strikingly the percentage of working-age women in the labour force is less than one- a third of the percentage of working age men in the labour force. 'Missing half or de-feminization' of labour force needs to be studied in the context of a structural change in labour participation wherein the share of women in the labour force as well as labour participation rate of women has been declining for the last quarter of a century (Abraham, 2016). The problem of 'missing half' clearly asks the question of the so-called agenda of empowering the women.

The trend data from 2000 to 2018 shows the change in the unemployment rate. It is important to know that from the last 5 years the total unemployment rate has started to rise again. It is the female unemployment rate rising more than the male unemployment rate which also causing the rise in total unemployment too. Moreover, the data shows a decline in the male unemployment rate since 2000 but the female unemployment rate is showing the rising trend in the same period. Hence, there is a need for strict policy measures to raise female participation in labour.

PROBLEM OF EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED

A high level of unemployment is being registered for the educated youth both rural and urban. During 2012 to 2016, the unemployment rate rose for graduates from 6.9% to 11%, for post-graduates from 5.7% to 7.7%, and for the vocationally trained from 4.9% to 7.9% (Mehrotra, The Hindu, 2019). The tertiary education enrolment rate (for those in the 18-23 age group) rose from 11% in 2006 to 26% in 2016. The gross secondary (classes 9-10) enrolment rate for those in the 15-16 age group rose up from 58% in 2010 to 90% in 2016 (*ibid*). The goal of harnessing the demographic dividend cannot be accomplished without employing them to productive activities.

According to NSSO reports from various, the unemployment among the educated is more than the illiterates. As the population is becoming more educated, the unemployment rate among the educated section is rising. In 2004-05, the rural male unemployment was highest (4.4 percent) among the secondary and above and lowest among the illiterates (0.3 percent). A similar trend was there in 2017-18 among rural males, as 10.5 percent of secondary and above was unemployed whereas it was 1.7 percent among those who are illiterates. This calls for urgent action against the unemployment issue among the highly educated labour force. The high unemployment among the youth shows the sign that industrial and service sector is not able to generate the jobs for the educated labour force. Moreover, the educated youth is also not interested in doing menial jobs after devoting years of study. This is also a factor of high unemployment among the youth. Less educated labour is ready for the small and menial jobs for livelihood. There is an issue from both demand and supply side in the case of young educated youth. The employer is not able to generate jobs for educated workers and moreover, these educated workers ask for high salaries that these employers are not reluctant to pay. All these reasons are responsible for the high rate of unemployment among the educated class. The problem is more severe for rural and urban females. Despite the educational qualification, they are not able to enter the labour market.

Education level	rural male			rural female			urban male			urban female		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
Not literate	0.3	0.5	1.7	0.2	0.2	0.1	1	0.7	2.1	0.3	0.4	0.8
Literate & upto primary	1	1	3.1	1.1	0.3	0.6	2.1	1.9	3.6	2.9	1.3	1.3
Middle	1.6	1.8	5.7	3.4	2.5	3.7	4.2	2.2	6	8	3	5.1
Secondary & above	4.4	3.6	10.5	15.2	9.7	17.3	5.1	4	9.2	15.6	10.3	19.8
All	1.6	1.7	5.7	1.8	1.6	3.8	3.7	3.0	6.9	6.9	5.3	10.8

Source: As per various Rounds on NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey

The unemployment among rural female in all categories was found to be very higher than the rural males. The educated urban females were also among the unemployed. Their situation is found to be worse than urban males. This shows the paradoxical situation among the females where even the educational empowerment is not able to raise their share in the labour force.

RESULTS OF ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS

The results show that as the household size raises the probability of being unemployed of an urban male rises. In the case of urban female the same probability of being unemployed reduces in medium and large size households and increases in the small households compared to the reference group. The rural males have more chances of remaining unemployed in all household categories than rural females. Contrary to that, the rural female has reduced chances of being unemployed compared to the larger household group. Results show that all people (both rural and urban) following Islam and Christianity were having a higher probability of being unemployed compared to Hinduism. Rural females from the Sikhism faith have a lower probability of being unemployed. Among the social groups, rural females, urban males and urban females (schedule tribe, schedule caste and other backward class) have more chances of being unemployed compared to the reference groups. Rural males from schedule tribe and other backward classes have a lesser probability of being unemployed than the reference group. An individual (both male-female) from the rural and urban sectors, belonging to the age groups of 35-44, 45-54 and 55 to 64 have a lesser probability of being unemployed than the person in the age group of 15-24. Among the unmarried rural males and females, the chances of unemployment are more than the reference group and lesser for the married male female in the rural sector. In the urban sector, males are having low chances of remaining unemployed falls for both unmarried and married. Unmarried urban females have low but more chances of being unemployed whereas the chances for married females are lesser than the reference group.

	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
Household Size	Larger household size (Reference Group)			
Small household size	0.0065***	-0.0005***	0.0156***	0.0036***
Medium household size	0.0205***	-0.006***	0.0168***	-0.0113***
Large household size	0.0056***	-0.0032	0.0259***	-0.0104*
Religion	Hindu (Reference Group)			
Islam	0.0039***	0.0037***	0.0113***	0.0107***
Christianity	0.0135***	0.0102***	0.0143***	0.015***
Sikhism	0.0077***	-0.0053***	0.0042***	0.0074***
Others	-0.0076***	0.0066***	-0.0068***	-0.0024***
Social Group	Others (Reference Group)			

Schedule Tribe	-0.0035***	0.0049***	0.0105***	0.0074***
Scheduled Caste	0.0089***	0.0018***	0.0208***	0.007***
Other Backward Class	-0.0001***	0.0025***	0.0066***	0.0067***
Age	15-24 (Reference Group)			
25-34	-0.0087***	0.0076***	-0.0082***	0.0183***
35-44	-0.0588***	-0.0053***	-0.0529***	-0.0086***
45-54	-0.0662***	-0.0105***	-0.0682***	-0.0243***
55-64	-0.0708***	-0.0118**	-0.0818***	-0.0283**
Marital Status	divorced/ separated(Reference Group)			
Never Married	0.0189***	0.0067***	-0.0064***	0.0071***
currently married	-0.0359***	-0.0134***	-0.0695***	-0.03***
widowed	-0.0464**	-0.0081***	-0.0061***	-0.018***
General Education Level	not literate (Reference Group)			
EGS/NFEC/AEC	0.1192**	-0.0019	-0.0447	-0.0053
TLC	0.0103	-0.0019	-0.0447	-0.0053
Others	-0.0486	-0.0019	0.0361**	-0.0053
Below Primary	-0.0106***	0.0019***	0.0082***	-0.0014**
primary	-0.0005***	0.0032***	0.0055***	0.0018***
middle	-0.0043***	0.0062***	0.0074***	0.0063***
secondary	-0.0138***	0.0064***	-0.0023***	0.0099***
higher secondary	0.0023***	0.0174***	0.0065***	0.016***
diploma/certificate course	0.0908***	0.0766***	0.0504***	0.0607***
graduate	0.0818***	0.073***	0.0665***	0.0694***
postgraduate and above	0.1132***	0.1346***	0.0712***	0.0955***
Technical Education Level	No technical education (Reference Group)			
with technical education	0.0367***	0.014***	0.0388***	0.0162***
Below graduation	0.0027***	0.0078***	0.0113***	0.0295***
above graduation	0.0122***	0.0227***	-0.0045***	0.0119***

Note: 'not in labour force' is the base outcome. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively TLC: Total Literacy Campaign; AEC: Adult Education Centres; NFEC: Non-formal Education Courses; Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS). Source: Author's Calculation from Unit level data of PLFS, 2019

FINDINGS, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Policies of Neoliberal regime have led to declining employment and increasing income inequality in the backward region and replenished the reserve army of labour. It is interesting to see that in both rural and urban sectors, a person's (male and female) chances of being unemployed rises as the educational level significantly rise from higher secondary to post graduate and above compared to illiterate. In the urban sector, even the person having the above primary education finds it hard to get a job. A rural male (3.6%) with technical education has a higher probability of being unemployed than a rural female (1.4%). Similarly, the urban male (3.9%) also have a higher probability of being unemployed than an urban female (1.6%).

The study finds a high level of illiteracy among the workers in schedule tribes, schedule castes and other backward castes. Moreover, the employment rate is high among illiterates and fewer literates. This shows the nature of work which has been generated for these workers. The jobs which require less skill are being generated in the economy and these jobs are done by a less educated workforce. Fewer jobs are being generated which requires better skills and educated persons than jobs with fewer skills and less educated persons. The other main issue which is quite evident is the growing unemployment rate among the labour force. The unemployment rate is higher in males compared to females in both rural and urban sectors. Though, the unemployment rate of rural females is much lesser than the urban females.

All these issues cry for strong and effective policy measures on the part of policy makers. An adequate focus should be given to the problem of illiteracy among workers and efforts should be made to enhance the educational level among the workers. This will not only raise their understanding of work but also help them to better their living conditions by getting a wage hike due to their enhanced educational level. The other issue of unemployment among the labour force is a worrying factor, especially in the last five years the employment generation capacity has really deteriorated. The industries which require more labour must be given subsidies and tax exemptions rather than giving it to large, capital intensive firms. The employability capacities of small units are higher than the large industrial units. The problem of "missing half" (low female work participation) is also there in the work force participation. The trend results hardly show a substantial rise in female employment

for all social groups. Female centric work units like 'Bharatiya Mahila Bank' should be boosted to promote female work participation.

The state needs to focus its energies on bringing about a social order that is addressed to meeting people's needs, generating employment that absorbs the large potential labour force and develops people's true creative potential; protecting its future. Overall, the situation of not able to generate jobs for the literates is a clear mark of the government's inability to create jobs for the young literate class. This is nothing more than wastage of human resources.

An ample amount of emphasis is required to be given to female labour participation. There should be more female employment oriented policies that can boost female LFPR. Females face time constraints most of the time due to which they have to leave the job. Jobs with time flexibility should be offered to females so that they do not have to leave the job. The young employable population is required to be absorbed by the industry. Otherwise, the growing reserve army will keep on expanding. New types of jobs should be created along with traditional jobs. This will absorb the growing young labour force which will check the unemployment in the young age cohort.

CONCLUSION

In the context of employment generation, there is a need to change the approach towards framing the policies for the people. The government has primarily failed in three domains; in generating employment opportunities, raising the female labour force participation and employing the young educated labour force. Serious introspection is required on the part of the government to counter these issues in the near future. There is a need for some strict short term measures followed by long term planning. The government has to focus not only on getting the cash inflow in the economy but also on employment generation.

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