



Magnitude of Educated Unemployment among Rural Youth of Jammu and Kashmir: A Case Study of Pulwama District

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ABSTRACT

Rural problems particularly of Educated Unemployment are one of the burning problems that India has been facing since a long. Its magnitude has increased in the post reform period. There are wide inter-state variations regarding magnitude of unemployment in India. Though J&K State figures at the lowest level, yet the actual figure is far from reality due to declining importance of employment exchanges of the state for providing data regarding educated unemployment. It is the lopsided educational system, lack of industrialization in rural areas which are often being cited as main causes of rural unemployment. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the rates and causes of unemployment among educated youth of rural Kashmir and to find out as to how for employment exchanges of the state are authentic for providing data regarding educated unemployed youth.

Keywords: Unemployment, magnitude, educated youth, J&K

INTRODUCTION

The size of employment in any country depends considerably on the level of development. When a country makes progress and production expands, the employment opportunities often grow. In India, during the past three decades or so production has expanded in all sectors of the economy. In response to these developments the absolute level of employment has also grown. However, during the planning period unemployment in absolute terms has increased. The main objective of our economic policies, right from the First Five Year Plan has been the provision of gainful employment opportunities. Every plan ends up with a greater backlog of unemployed people. That is, at the end of each five year plan period, this country has more unemployed than at the beginning. This has happened because during the planning period trend rate of growth was considerably lower than the targeted growth. Therefore, jobs were not created in adequate number. The Youth, particularly the educated lot of rural India are the worst victims of unemployment. The defective educational system, lack of entrepreneurship culture in rural areas and the mismatch in skills between those demanded by employers and those acquired in schools are the main causes of unemployment facing the youth of rural India. Though a number of Rural Development schemes have been implemented for the overall development of backward areas, tribal and hilly regions, no special schemes were exclusively proposed for the poor educated youth in rural areas. Life is very tough for the rural unemployed. Whatever be the schemes or contract, the labour has to compromise on various front. He has to bribe in every step- be it grant, loan stipend or assistance for self-employment. Unemployed, underemployment and lack of measures compel him to find short- cuts. He migrates to the cities and sometimes tries his luck in petty or serious crime for quick money. Frustrated by joblessness, unemployed educated youth take place in toxic substances to overcome stress and anxiety. Thus he is alienated from both the village and the town. Since the beginning of planning in India, the youth have been recognized as 'the most vital section of the community'. However, not much action has been initiated to implement the objective of removing or even alleviating unemployment among the youth. Patil-V (1998) writes, "we need to recognise the true value of our rural youth". Today our Bharat Sanskriti is kept alive by the villagers and not the city folk". Since the researchers, policy planners, professionals or economists while framing policies and solutions regarding unemployment focus the issue mostly at the national/state level. Taking the same issue at the District/Block level play a significant role in generating employment opportunities. This is the main reason why the need for present study is felt which is undertaken to study the unemployment among rural educated youths at the block level. Moreover, the literature survey made by the researchers suggests that there is no comprehensive work done at micro level, which can act as a policy guideline for the Government. An attempt is made in the present study to study the phenomena

of educated unemployment in rural areas at the micro level, taking the block Pampore in district Pulwama of Jammu and Kashmir state as a case study.

Recent studies (Henkel, 1997; Iversen and Sabroe, 1998; Kieselbach and Svensson, 1998; Kieselbach and Wacker, 1985; Rani, 1993; L.B. Singh, 1990; Singh, Kumari and Singh, 1992; Verkleij, 1989; Warr, 1985; Winefield and Tiggemann, 1985) have indicated that unemployment affects a man not only physically and psychologically, but also cause a sharp decline in him of human values. Researches into the adjustment patterns of unemployed, especially of educated once have indicated them of having relatively poor adjustment patterns. For example, Dumont (1997) has reported that joblessness is sensitively related to mental illness, sexual importance, crime alcoholism and suicide. It is said to exert a damaging influence on human health by generating coronary artery disease, hypertension, peptic-ulcer and infectious diseases. Further, migration, divorce, late marriage and child abuse, resulting in personal and financial pathology, are some other repercussions of unemployment. Platt (1985) Henkel (1985, 1987) has also arrived at a similar conclusion. However, Aho (1981) is of the view that unemployment as such does not directly lead to alcoholism, asocially or somatic or psychic illness. Yet, the findings of a good number of studies like that of Brenner and Starrin (1988), O'Brein and Kabanoff (1997), L.B Sing (1990), Kieselbach and Svensson (1988), Kieselbach and Wacker (1985), Tiggemann and Winefield (1984) and Webster (1984) have indicated that unemployed are relatively more vulnerable to psychological illness and are generally less well-adjusted than the employed. Hagen (1983), Liem and Reymond (1984) and Oddy et al. (1984) have found that prolonged unemployment commonly generates a serious threat to the physical and emotional well-being of those who experience it. Singh L.B (1994) indicated that educated job-seeker, as compared to person in jobs, had significantly more adjustment problems on every front – be it home, health, social and emotional fronts as well as in their totality. Raphael and Ebmer (2001) found a significantly positive effects of unemployment on property crime rates and came to the conclusion that closer analysis of the violent crime of rape yields some evidence that the employment prospects of males are weekly related with rape rates. Strom (2003) also suggested that unemployed individuals and their families are exposed to many adverse events and circumstances. Rozada and Menendez (2006) found that unemployment accounts for a large part of the increase in income inequality and poverty. Varma et al. (2007) found that as compared to 19% of the general population, 58% of the persons with epilepsy were unemployed. The unemployed perceived fear of having seizures and seizure related falls in the workplace, inadequate education, antiepileptic drug-induced fatigue as reasons for unemployment and concluded that unemployment is a major concern of people with epilepsy in developing regions. Roberts et al. (1982) have found that unemployed youth generally find themselves unable to devise their own coping strategies. Unemployment brings a shock and carries with it a range of stressors (psychological, social and economic) which adversely affects our well-being (Jackson and Warr 1984). Rawal (2006) also analysed that wage laborers particularly women faced extremely high level of unemployment – as employment in agriculture was limited and new forms of labour hiring contracts had emerged under conditions of high unemployment which resulted low earnings of manual workers and greater gender disparities. Thus, it appears that unemployment especially of educated youth is a snag in adjustment in different spheres of life. It is not only an economic waste but pose a threat to the existing socio, economic and political fabric of the society, which does not provide them any place under the sun. However, these findings, though conclusive to a certain extent does not have so much reference with regard to socio-cultural context of India, where the problem of rural educated unemployment, despite the concrete efforts of the government and non-government agencies to eradicate it once and for all, has taken a higher proportion particularly among educated females as unemployment rates were 26.7% 20.8% for females in rural and urban areas and 13.3% and 9.1% for males in rural and urban areas (2004-05).

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To asses and examine the pattern and rate of unemployment among the educated youth of rural Kashmir by various criteria's;
- To evaluate the main causes responsible for unemployment among educated youth of the state;
- To work out the role of employment exchanges of the state as a tool for providing data regarding educated unemployed of the state.

METHODOLOGY

Since the present study has been undertaken to assess the configuration of unemployment among the rural educated youth, therefore, Pampore block in district Pulwama of Jammu and Kashmir state has been selected purposely as: (a) almost 90% of population of the block is rural and (b) the block has the highest literacy rate i.e. (57.57%) compared to other five blocks of the district. Among the 34 villages of the block, 20% sample i.e. 07 villages having highest literacy rate namely Dusoo, Meej, Bathen, Gondbal, Nagandar, Krencho, & Letapora with total number of 1181 households were chosen for the present study. In order to make our results more consistent and representative, this 20 % sample has been divided into two strata's in terms of literacy level i.e. four highest literate villages(12%) & three lowest literate villages (8%). The highest literate villages (literacy rate > 55%) being Meej, Bathen, Nagander and krencho and the lowest literate villages (literacy rate < 55%) happen to be Dusoo, Gondbal, and Letapora respectively. Out of 1181 households, 25% households (292 in total) in each village were selected through random sampling method. A well designed questionnaire was prepared for these 25% households so as to collect correct and complete information about educated unemployed youth of rural areas. The respondents were contacted in their respective homes and the whole survey was conducted during the period of three months i.e. from April 01 to 31st June 2009. Information collected from different types of respondents was analysed, classified and tabulated for making further analysis in consonance with the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Broadly, there are two distinct categories of unemployment – the short-term and the long-term (chronic joblessness). In India, the problem of short-term unemployment, as can be commonly observed, is not as acute and serious as that of long-term unemployment. Surprisingly, the educated youth are the worst sufferers of long term unemployment. In India estimates of the rates of unemployment are provided by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on the basis of its quinquennial surveys. It uses three different criteria's of unemployment: (i) number of persons unemployed based on Usual Principle Status (ii) number of persons unemployed based on the Current Weekly Status and (iii) number of person-days unemployed based on the Current Daily Status. These estimates suffer from a few limitations. First, studies conducted at the national mostly employ only (UPS) criterion for educated and secondly they lack accuracy as they collect data regarding educated unemployment from secondary sources i.e. from employment exchanges which as discussed in table 2 does not possess wider importance as for as Jammu and Kashmir State is concerned. The present study assumes importance because the whole data is collected through primary studies and unemployment rate is measured by employing all the three criteria's adopted by National Sample Surveys.

Table 1: Unemployment Rates¹ among Sample Educated² Youth (17-37 years) according to UPS, CWS & CDS of during 2009

(as percent of labour force)

Measurement criteria	Unemployment Rate		
	Male	Female	Combined
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UPS	2.8	4.9	3.8
CWS	4.9	5.6	5.3
CDS	6.0	7.4	6.7

¹Unemployment Rate has been worked out as the number of unemployed per 000 persons in the labour force.

² persons who have attained an educational level of Secondary and above including those who have completed diploma/certificate courses.

Table 1 provides information about unemployment rates among educated youth from the study area according to all the three alternative concepts used by NSSO namely Usual Principal Status (UPS), Currently Weekly Status (CWS)& Current Daily Status (CDS) preceding the date of survey. The first estimate (UPS) is measured in number of persons i.e. persons who remain unemployed for a major part of the year. This measure is more appropriate to those in search of regular employment i.e. educated and skilled persons who may not accept casual or contractual type of work. This is also referred to as 'open unemployment'. The second estimate (CWS) measured in number of persons i.e. persons who did not find even an hour of work during the period of one week. The third estimate

(CDS) is measured in person days or person years i.e. persons who did not find work on a day or some days during the survey week. It is pertinent to mention here that unemployment rates according to all the three estimates are higher in case of females than in case of males. The study area witnessed several reasons for this male-female difference: First, because of conflict situation which the state witnessed over the years, most educated women from rural background particularly from Kashmir valley feel insecure and are reluctant to move outside the state for better and well paid jobs. Second, Jammu & Kashmir being a closed economy, people are wholly and solely dependent up on government jobs. Self employment schemes launched by the government from time to time have got very poor response from rural areas. . Getting jobs in the private sector within J&K is still a distant dream for the rural educated youth. Thus who so ever is educated keeps on waiting for government jobs with the result unemployment level increases day by day. Third, because of weak returns from the private sector, most educated women because of their higher education levels and social status do not want to go for low paid jobs. Fourth, due to low level of vocationalisation of in J&K state particularly in rural areas, the absorption capacity of the economy to provide jobs to technically educated manpower is low. Last and not the least reason is that although facilities of micro-financing are available, still educated rural unemployed youth of J&K are reluctant to go for self-employment schemes launched by government because of weak entrepreneurship culture ,lack of proper guidance and lack of counseling centers at micro level. It is very unfortunate to say that till date the whole Pampore block had only 04 Handicraft and 01 Handloom centers. These centers are meant to provide training to youth so that they can start their own business and generate self-employment.

The combined unemployment rates of the study area reveal that it is the unemployment rates according to CDS approach (which is the most prominent measure) which is on a higher side than unemployment rates measured on the basis of UPS or CWS, thereby indicating a high degree of intermittent unemployment. This is mainly due to the absence of regular employment for many workers. These unemployment rates among the educated manpower are not only an economic waste, but pose a threat to the existing socio-economic and political fabric of the society, which does not provide them any place under the sun. They have the bad consequences attached with them as they are giving birth to a large number of anti-social evils like social unrest, tensions, drug abuse, suicides, crime rates, burglaries, thefts, makes to feel isolated from their family and rest of the society & makes their life more and more miserable. As per the survey conducted by Kashmir chapter of Action Aid International (2008) (www.greaterkashmir.com) - in Srinagar, Budgam and Pulwama districts of the valley over a period of four months , the survey resulted that 29% of the unemployed youth (male) surveyed smoke cigarettes in order to relax themselves and reduce anxiety and tension. As many as 12% of the respondents, which includes females take sleeping pills to overcome the stress, 2% of the respondents admitted that they resort to drinking alcohol to relieve their anxiety. Another 2% take anti-cough syrups because of alcohol contents in them. Similarly 4% of the respondents take drugs to reduce mental stress. The survey was based on 400 respondents with 63% male and 37% females taking part in the interview – based study. Overall the situation in J&K is almost in tune with the scene at the national level, the educational system, particularly the secondary & higher education in the state has been developed in a lopsided manner. No worthwhile link has ever been created between educational planning and manpower planning in the state., with the result that in spite of an unflinching government support to education during the last 55 years, the state is ranked 4th from below in terms of the literacy rate. On the other hand, the output at the secondary and higher secondary stages have grown at a very high rate, and with low employability. Our education system is not generating sufficiently trained and skilled manpower that are in demand within and outside the state. Most of the educated workers in the state have not obtained vocational skills. Such ‘skilled’ workers lack the certificates required to get job in a competitive world. In a globalised world, the technological changes provide both challenges and growing opportunities for economic expansion and job creation. In a rapidly changing environment the people who work must possess the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for seizing opportunities inherent in globalization and technical progress.

Normally the figures of job-seekers on the live register of employment exchanges give us information about the unemployment scenario in a particular state or for a particular district. But the employment exchange data suffers from the limitations and constraints and do not give a reliable picture of unemployment of a state or a district.

Table 3: Percentage of Educated Unemployed Youth registered with employment exchange during 2009

Education Level	Actual (percentage)	Registered (percentage)	Non-registered (percentage)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
not literate	4.95	2.5	2.45
Literate & up to primary	4.95	-	4.95
Middle	6.93	3.8	3.13
Secondary	15.84	4.0	11.84
higher secondary	20.79	5.8	14.99
diploma/certificate	25.74	6.9	18.84
graduate & above	20.79	8.4	12.39
All	100	28.9	71.1

For instance, a large number of applicants registered with the employment exchanges might be employed but continue to be on the live registers. Further, an applicant may be registered with more than one exchange. But the important point to note is that the number of applicants on the live register of different employment exchanges shows a declining trend year after year. Does it mean that unemployment rate has decreased? Certainly not, because decline in the registration level is possible due to the fact that all unemployed do not get registered themselves. Keeping this point in view, an attempt has been taken in block Pampore (Table 2) to work out this difference between the actual number of unemployed youth and the number of them registered in the district employment exchange. It is evident from the Table 1 that in the sample population of block Pampore glaring difference occur by the level of education between the actual number of unemployed youths and the applicants of job seekers on the live register of district employment exchange. Taking the whole figure of sample population of block Pampore into consideration, it has been found that out of total educated unemployed youth only 28.9 % unemployed youths have made registration in the district employment exchanges. It means that 71.1 % unemployed youths of the study area are those who are not on the list of job seekers in the said employment exchange. So for the percentage of unemployment is concerned, J&K state comes at the lowest level compared to other states of India. The registered unemployed youth of the state is around 1 Lakh (i.e. 4% unemployment rate). But as per the report released by the present Omer Abdullah government¹, the number of educated unemployment youth of the state is more than 4.5 Lakh if all the educated youth register themselves with their respective employment exchanges. The Sample study witnessed two fold reasons for this non- registration of unemployed youths as (i) all unemployed do not get registered themselves because of the non- applicability of the Compulsory Notification of the Vacancies Act & (ii) in view of no placement effected by the employment exchanges over the previous year's might have discouraged youth in registering them in the ranks of unemployment. It is pity to say that during 2001-2003 less than 1% placements has been done by the respective state employment exchange and after 2003 onwards no such placement took place. Therefore to conclude, data regarding unemployment on the live register at employment exchanges in the state or district cannot be taken as an accurate estimate of the magnitude of unemployment. Even the Finance Minister of present coalition government of Jammu and Kashmir A.R. Rather have doubts about the authenticity of the data provided by employment exchanges. In his 2009-10 budget speech he said, " it is a biggest challenge for the government to know what kind of unemployment exists in the state and what is the number of

¹Greater Kashmir (May 12, 2009, local daily)

educationally qualified , professional and academic unemployed youth". In order to have a comprehensive employment package for educated youth, it is important to have complete information about the magnitude of unemployment, i.e. exact number of unemployed youth. This is possible only if the government makes it mandatory for all to get registered with employment exchanges. The Service Selection Board and Public Service Commission should not entertain any application which is not routed through employment exchanges. These reforms and rules can make employment exchanges important and relevant.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion one can say that while most of India moves towards greater openness in the world arena, Jammu and Kashmir region is closed. The educational system is yet in a lopsided position where main focus is given on theory rather than on practical knowledge. As a result educated youth of the state have failed to keep pace with the changing market demands of the present day economy. Further political instability, rough terrain and lack of infrastructure has been a constant hurdle in the industrial development of the state, particularly Kashmir region. The industrial structure whether public or private is in shambles thereby failing to absorb a big chunk of educated youth of the state. Due to weak or no private sector, the educated unemployed youth of the state have cloned themselves only towards government sector which is already disguised and seems to have reached a point of saturation in terms of absorption of educated manpower. On the one hand, there is a large army of secondary school leavers, graduates and post graduates who are unemployed for long duration and on the other hand, most of the educated youth because of conflict situation of the state are reluctant to move outside state for opportunities, and better jobs thereby putting pressure to already paralyzed economic activity of the state. Self-employment schemes launched by the government have got poor response particularly from rural educated unemployed youth of the state due to cumbersome procedure of getting finance for such schemes and lack of orientation and entrepreneurship training among them. We need to change our mind set to cope with knowledge driven -economy of the 21st century which is defined by the entrepreneurship and innovation and not by the subsidies, hand-outs and the government jobs. Instead of establishing new employment exchanges, the government needs to encourage entrepreneurship to help young people become masters of their destiny. We need to go for a "Digital State" to give boost to information, technology and knowledge based industries in state to address joblessness of lakhs of middle class students passing out of state's colleges and universities. It can offer a ray of hope for a safe, self-reliant and modern J&K. The Government at central, state, local level and the civil society should take effective steps in collaboration with one another to solve the problem of widespread unemployment in the state and make full utilization of idle resources and idle manpower for better and prosperous future of the state.

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