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INDIAN YOUTH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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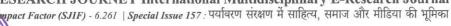
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Youth Unemployment and Opportunities in India

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Introduction:

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Youth unemployment and underemployment is prevalent around the world because young people lack skills, work experience, job search abilities and the financial resources to find employment. In developing countries, this situation is exacerbated by poverty and the competitive pressures that result from a rapidly growing labour force. Moreover, the inadequacy of social protection schemes and active labour market policies means that young people in such economies have little support outside their family and friends. Globally, young people are, therefore, more likely to be unemployed or employed on more precarious contracts or in the informal sector.

These challenges are evident in India, which has the largest youth population in the world with around 356 million of the total population under the age of 35. According to 2018 population figures, one in five young people in the world is an Indian. In this context, much is often said about a 'demographic dividend'; that is, the share of the working-age population increases resulting in a fall in the dependency ratio the number of children and elderly being supported by workers. This has been a feature of the development success stories of countries such as those in East Asia that grew rapidly in the latter half of the 20th century. However, failing to provide opportunities for this bulge of young people as they enter the labour market risks a 'demographic disaster'.

Governments are rightly concerned about rising levels of youth unemployment and underemployment because of not only the direct economic costs, but also due to the social impact of joblessness as manifested by increased crime, mental health problems, violence, drug taking and social exclusion. Many of whom were unemployed or in jobs that did not fully utilize their abilities. Spells of unemployment, particularly long spells, can lead to scarring effects and a higher likelihood of being unemployed later in life and a wage penalty.

Objectives of the research Paper:

- 1. To study the Youth unemployment rate usual and current daily status in India.
- 2. To study the Unemployment rates usual status among youth by social categories.

3. To study the labour force participation rate of vouth and adults.

Youth unemployment rate:

Overall rates of unemployment in developing countries are generally lower than observed in developed economies because most individuals cannot support themselves and their families through social protection schemes. However, at the same time, unemployment tends to be higher among youth. In this regard, the open unemployment rate in India, particularly in the age brackets 15-19 and 20-24, is extremely high among both males and females. In the next age group, it is lower with the exception of urban females. As expected, the unemployment rate on the basis of the current daily status is considerably higher reaching 22.07 per cent for urban women aged 20-24. It is also worth noting that the unemployment rate for youth aged 15-24 has persisted at around 10 per cent over the last decade 10.1 per cent in 1999-2000 and 10.2 per cent in 2009-10, while it had dropped for older cohorts.

Youth unemployment rate (%) usual current daily status

| Usual status (UPSS) | | | | Current daily status (CDS) | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Age group | Rural male | Rural female | Urban male | Urban female | Rural male | Rural female | Urban male | Urban female |
| 15-19 | 8.02 | 5.13 | 12.17 | 10.59 | 15.92 | 16.25 | 17.19 | 16.52 |
| 20-24 | 5.54 | 6.05 | 9.68 | 18.78 | 11.89 | 13.92 | 12.89 | 22.07 |
| 25-29 | 1.85 | 3.22 | 4.33 | 11.71 | 7.22 | 7.91 | 6.65 | 16.66 |
| 15-59 | 1.62 | 1.51 | 2.86 | 5.48 | 6.44 | 7.96 | 5.14 | 9.09 |

NSS 66th Round, Schedule Source: 10 Employment and Unemployment, 2009-10.

Such high unemployment rates reflect, at least partly, the mismatches between skills demand and supply. The skill levels of those who join the labour market early are low as they are often school drop-outs and haven't had the opportunity to undergo vocational training. Thus, it becomes difficult for them to find suitable employment, particularly in the early stages of their career when they lack adequate experience as well. However, with the dependency ratio expected to rise from 2040, India faces a pressing challenge to increase education and skill levels amongst its population to take advantage of this unique moment in its history.

As witnessed in many developing countries, the unemployment rate increases with the level of education, which substantiates the fact that youth(15-

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29) without education often belong to low income households and hence, cannot afford to remain unemployed for long. However, a high unemployment rate among educated youth may result in problems relating to insurgency, mentioned as Interestingly, it appears that a technical degree does pay off for males in the sense that these individuals have a lower unemployment rate than both general graduates and those with a diploma. This is only evident in the case of females in urban areas.

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Unemployment rates (%) usual status among youth by social categories

| Social | | Rural | | Urban | | | |
|----------|------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--|
| Category | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | |
| S.T. | 4.8 | 2.2 | 3.8 | 12.3 | 12.9 | 12.5 | |
| S.C. | 4.6 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 7.1 | 11.0 | 7.9 | |
| OBC | 4.0 | 4.4 | 4.1 | 7.3 | 16.8 | 9.2 | |
| General | 6.2 | 7.6 | 6.5 | 7.6 | 13.4 | 8.7 | |
| Total | 4.7 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 7.5 | 14.3 | 8.9 | |

Source: NSS 66th Round, Schedule Employment and Unemployment, 2009-10

The general category recorded the highest unemployment rate in rural areas but not so in the urban context. Possibly, rural youth in the general category are better educated and belong to higher economic background hence, can afford to remain unemployed for longer in order to search for better jobs. On the other hand, in the urban areas, the scheduled tribes among males and the other backward classes among females reported the highest unemployment rate. Otherwise, the urban unemployment rates in general have been higher than their rural counterparts.

Labour Force Participation of Youth in India:

Different labour market indicators provide various insights into the overall situation facing young people in a country like India that, despite the strong economic growth rate, continues to be dominated by the unorganized sector. In defining youth for this analysis, this paper considers the following three age groups to highlight heterogeneity in labour market outcomes among young people: 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29.

Labour Force Participation Rate (%) Of Youth and Adults

| | Age Catego ry | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Particul ar | | Mal e | Fema le | Perso n | Mal e | Fema le | Perso n |
| | 15-19 | 39.0 | 19.5 | 30.4 | 26.3 | 8.5 | 18.3 |
| | 20-24 | 81.3 | 31.4 | 55.7 | 68.2 | 19.7 | 45.0 |
| Youth | 25-29 | 97.5 | 40.4 | 67.5 | 94.7 | 22.2 | 59.1 |
| | 15-29 | 68.0 | 30.2 | 49.6 | 61.0 | 16.8 | 40.1 |
| Non- Youth | 30-59 | 98.2 | 47.2 | 72.8 | 96.9 | 24.4 | 62.0 |
| Total | 15-59 | 84.8 | 39.9 | 62.6 | 80.9 | 21.0 | 52.3 |

Source: NSS 66th Round 2009-10, Schedule 10 -**Employment and Unemployment**

A sizeable percentage of male populations in these age brackets are in the labour market. Even in the lowest age group among young men aged 15-19, nearly 40 and 26% are participating in the labour market in rural and urban areas, respectively. Though the labour force participation rate among the females is considerably lower than their male counterparts across all age groups, the differences across age-groups in the case of females is much smaller in magnitude than for males 17 and 7.6 percentage points for women in rural and urban areas versus 30.2 and 35.9 points for men in rural and urban areas. This suggests that social attitudes and norms tend to suppress the female labour force participation rate across all age groups, in addition to the effect of education enrolment on the participation rate of younger age categories.

Conclusion:

A major long-term challenge in India is that many youth, because of poverty and poor human capital endowment, participate in the labour market at an early stage. They cannot afford to remain unemployed for long and, hence, pick up activities characterized by low labour productivity. In rural and urban areas, among the early labour market entrants, males are usually in casual wage employment, while their female counterparts tend to be self-employed.

Self-employment and casual wage employment comprise a large majority of youth employment. Agriculture employment is more prevalent for women in the rural areas, though rural males are increasingly turning to the non-farm sector as the possibility of gainful employment in the farm sector has been shrinking.

However, how many non-farm jobs in rural areas are demand-induced is an important issue that needs further research. Given the macro evidence on the rural non-farm sector, expanding largely due to supply-side factors, it is difficult to suggest that rural youth are able to access sustainable livelihoods. On the other hand, in urban areas they are largely in the services sector in comparison to the secondary sector. Among young women, social conditions and norms play an important role in determining their labour market status. Labour market participation, for example, tends to vary across social groups. Among educated youth, the problem of unemployment can have serious repercussions in terms of social instability which, in turn, may affect governance and growth adversely. Thus, the challenge

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is to ensure that more opportunities are created in the formal economy, allowing for a smooth transition from school to work for India's youth.

In order to tackle the challenges of participation and job quality for the youth of India, policy interventions should promote a better quality education, on-the-job training, skill formation on the one hand and productive job creation on the other. For those who are in self-employment, credit assistance and marketing assistance can be of enormous help. Overall, however, experiences around the world have shown that comprehensive policies tend to work the best.

Recommendations:

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- 1. Encourage Entrepreneurship:
 Entrepreneurs are pivotal to creating wealth and driving economic growth, innovation and employment. Teaching children the skills to start, manage and operate their own businesses would be the first step in creating a more independent and driven generation of youth in Australia.
- 2. Reassessing the Value of Unpaid Internships: While internships can help lay the foundation for a career, unpaid placements can also leave interns embittered towards the concept of work. Interns must receive high standards of training and supervision, and organizations should offer some form of minimal pay to engage young adults.
- 3. Reevaluating the distribution of welfare:
 Care must be taken to avoid promotion of
 welfare as a viable alternative to work. Youth
 allowances can set a dangerous precedent by
 encouraging the view that welfare is a
 necessity to fund their lifestyle. There needs
 to be a review of the length of time that
 young job seekers can claim unemployment

- benefits, or at least ensure that they are exploring all avenues for work.
- Earlier Career Guidance: Students need to be provided with a sense of direction regarding career pathways and be made aware of the vast opportunities out there for them.
- 5. A new standard for work experience:

 There needs to be an increase in work experience opportunities for students across a variety of industries. Students should engage in a number of different workplace environments to get a real feel of what the workforce will be like.
- 6. Increased uptake of work-related learning and qualifications in the senior phase of school: Even before entering an apprenticeship, schools need to take responsibility for developing the skills students need to enter the workforce. It's all about making the transition of the world of school to the world of work easier.

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