

Covid-19: Deepening Whirlpool of Youth Unemployment in India

Dr. Sheetal Mundra,
Associate Professor,

Institute of Management, JK LakshmiPat University,
Near Mahindra SEZ, Ajmer Road, Jaipur, 302026, Raj, India

Abstract - India has become the youngest country in an aging world with its increasing working-age population (62.5 percent), a demographic goldmine. The quality of youth of a country is the most important resource in accelerating its future economic growth. India is fortunate that this opportunity is available for the next five decades. India has become the powerhouse of the global workforce. But, the Indian economy is passing through a critical phase of mounting youth unemployment in the age group of 15 to 29. This biggest future risk may downturn the payback of its huge demographic dividend. Understanding the vulnerability of youth unemployment in the right perspective is the need of the hour to ensure the golden future of India.

This article is an attempt to review the status of youth employment and unemployment in India and to study the determinants causing rising youth unemployment. This study has found that mainly the rural women LFPR and WPR has been shrinking and contributing to raising the youth unemployment rate in India and Covid-19 has aggravated the situation by reducing the LFPR to 20.5 percent. The study also examines, whether the pre and post-pandemic government's initiatives are really addressing the root cause or not.

Key words: Youth unemployment; Covid-19; Active Rate; Employment Rate; Unemployment rate; LFPR

1. Introduction

India has become the youngest country in an aging world with its increasing working age population (62.5 per cent), a demographic goldmine. According to India Skills Report 2020, India is home of 600 million young population under the age of 25. The quality of youth of a country is the most important resource in accelerating its future economic growth. According to Lukov & Lapshin (2010), youth is the part of active workforce of the population in an economy. Their quality reflects the future human capital of a country. Many Studies concluded that rapid economic growth is the outcome of 'demographic dividend' across many Asian economies (PepleStrong, Wheebox & CII, 2020). India is fortunate that this opportunity is available for next five decades, longer phase than any other nation across the world. India has become the powerhouse of global workforce. But, Indian economy is passing through critical phase of mounting youth unemployment of the age group of 15 to 29.

This age group has become important in India due to its significant share in the working age group and which is going to remain for longer time. The demographic changes will more influence nature and creation of future jobs in India than the globalization and cutting-edge technologies (E&Y, 2017). Economist argued that the growth of working age population is one of the important inputs in the growth of the country. According to World Bank data, world's working age population increased by average of 2.05 per cent between the years of 1961 to 1990 against the average growth rate of 4.11 per cent. Similarly, the average growth rate of working age population was 1.53 per cent and 1.21 per cent during the period of 1991 to 2009 and post 2008 respectively. The growth rate was 2.83 per cent and 2.5 per cent corresponding to the same period.

This risk is deepening in India dominantly due to less generation of employment opportunities in comparison of entering youth population in labour force, unorganised nature of job, economic slowdown and the absence of potential or low competitiveness of youth labour force. Generation of employment for youth is the daunting challenge faced by all nations across the world (Matsumoto et al., 2012). India is ranked at the bottom on the parameter of vulnerable unemployment. Understanding the vulnerability of youth unemployment in the right perspective is the need of hour to ensure the golden future of India.

Thus, this article is an attempt to review the status of youth employment and unemployment and to analysis the major determinants of raising youth unemployment in India. The youth labour market statistics conclude that mainly the rural women LFPR and WPR have been shrinking and contributing to raising the youth unemployment rate and covid-19 has worsened the situation. Many studies have been focusing on women vulnerability and gender inequality due to pandemic but the focus is missing to connect it to the root cause of youth unemployment in India and missing out on the need to take initiative in this direction by keeping women at the core. The study further attempts to review whether the government's efforts pre and post-pandemic are really addressing the root cause or not.

2. Research Methodology

The government of India identifies a person as a Youth if he or she is in the age group of 15 to 29 years as mentioned by the National Youth Policy (NYP-2014). For the purpose of comparative analysis among different nations of the world, United Nation (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) consider a person as a youth if he or she falls in the age group of 15 to 24. The present study has considered the youth definition of NYP-2014. This age is a transition stage of youth between leaving his/her compulsory education and finding his/her first job/work.

The study is conceptual in nature and is based on secondary data. The data on labour status are collected from National Statistics Office's (NSO) labour force surveys, CMIE and the Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19 (published in June 2020). The LFS is structured as per the concepts considered by Eurostat. The data on various labour force indicators are considered for the year 2017-18 and year 2018-19. The time series data from the year 2013-2019 has also been included to review the status of Indian youth as per UN youth definition.

The data of labour force are based on usual activity status on both usual principal activity status (ps) and subsidiary economic activity status (ss). The activity status of a person is considered during the reference time of 365 days going before the date of study under the usual activity status. In usual principal activity status, a person occupied in the significant part of the reference time is considered. Subsidiary economic activity status (ss) of the person is considered when a person is occupied for 30 days or more in an economic activity.

3. Youth Employment and Unemployment Status in India

NSSO, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India systematized five Yearly employment and unemployment survey till 2011-12. GOI now provides Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) on the basis of its quinquennial surveys and publish data on various indicators of employment and unemployment. Activity rate (Labour Force Participation Rate) is the ratio of working age group (15-64) out of the total population, who are employed and willing to be employed.

Age Group	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-29	58.8	15.8	37.8	58.6	17.1	38.7	58.8	16.2	38.1
15-59	80.6	28.3	54.5	79.6	22.5	51.6	80.3	26.5	53.6
15 years and above	76.4	26.4	51.5	73.7	20.4	47.5	75.5	24.5	50.2
All Ages (0+)	55.1	19.7	37.7	56.7	16.1	36.9	55.6	18.6	37.5

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

The table 1 depicts that the youth LFPR is substantially low than the age group of 15-59. And female LFPR is just 26.5 percent than the world average of 47.4 percent. The situation become worst when the youth female rural LFPR has been nearly 61 percent of the national average.

Table -2 Youth LFPR (in percent) acc. to usual states (PS+SS) for the person of age 15-29 years during PLFS (2017-18) and PLFS (2018-19)						
	LLFS (2018-19)			PLFS (2017-18)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Rural	58.8	15.8	37.8	58.9	15.9	38.1
Urban	58.6	17.1	38.7	58.5	17.5	38.5
Person	58.8	16.2	38.1	58.8	16.4	38.2

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

Table 2 presents that youth LFPR has declined in 2018-19 in comparison to 2017-18 due to decrease in female LFPR in both rural and urban areas.

Table-3 Activity Rate in different age groups during 2013-2019				
	15-24*	25-54	55-64	15-64
2013	53.5	79.5	39.1	66.3
2014	52.9	81	42.1	67.8
2015	51.6	81.7	44.6	68.8
2016	51.7	83.2	47.5	70.6
2017	52.9	84.5	48.4	72.2
2018	56	86.1	51.9	74.7
2018/ EU28	41.7	85.9	61.9	73.7
2019	55.8	87.6	52.2	75.9
*UN & ILO Youth Definition Source: NSO's PLFS				

Table 3 depicts that the labour force Participation Rate (Active Rate) is 55.8 percent in the age group of 15 to 24, which is lesser than the overall age group of 15 to 64 (75.9 percent). Even there is no significant increase since 2013 in the youth activity rate (LFPR).

To sum up the youth LFPR is low in India than the other age group mainly due to the low rural and urban female LFPR.

3.1 Employment Rate (WPR)

According the NSO's Labour Force Survey 2019, 74 persons are employed out of 100 persons in age bracket of 15 to 64 years/ labour force.

Table 4- Work Participation Rate (WPR) in percent acc. to usual states (PS+SS) for different age groups in PLFS (2018-19)									
Age Group	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-29	49.1	13.6	31.7	47.6	12.7	30.9	48.6	13.3	31.5
15-59	75.8	27.2	51.5	73.7	20.2	47.5	75.1	25	50.3
15 Years and Above	72.2	25.5	48.9	68.6	18.4	43.9	71	23	47.3
All Age Group	52.1	19	35.8	52.7	14.5	34.1	52.3	17.6	35.3

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

The table 4 highlights that the youth WPR is low than the age group of 15-59 years, same as LFPR. The female WPR is vulnerably low, lower than female LFPR, highlighting the lack of working opportunities for both rural and urban females. The long term existence of such gap converts the work force into the force not in education and training, are called depressed youth.

	LLFS (2018-19)			PLFS (2017-18)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Rural	49.1	13.6	31.7	48.6	13.8	31.8
Urban	47.6	12.7	30.9	47.6	12.8	30.6
Person	48.6	13.3	31.5	48.3	13.5	31.4

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

The table 5 presents The WPR is almost constant in the year 2018-19 against the year 2017-18 in spite of increase in male WPR showing again the disheartening female WPR.

Year\ Age Group	15-24*	25-54	55-64	15-64
2013	46.7	75.6	37	62.1
2014	46.7	77.2	39.6	63.9
2015	45.6	78.2	42.3	65.1
2016	46.2	79.9	45.8	67.2
2017	47.3	81.8	47.2	69.2
2018	50.9	83.6	50.2	71.9
2018/ EU28	35.4	80.4	58.7	68.6
2019	50.7	85.2	57.5	73.3

*UN & ILO Youth Definition
Source: NSO's PLFS

Table 6 describes that the employment rate is the lowest in the age group of 15 to 24 (50.7 per cent) than in other age groups in the Year 2018-19, though 4 per cent increase since 2013.

The tertiary sector is the major contributor (around 80 percent) in employment generation in the last few years in India. As per the working paper titled, 'India's Employment Crises' at the Centre of Sustainable Employment, estimated that there was fall of 9 million jobs between the 2011-12 and 2017-18 in India with decline of 11.5 per cent of agricultural employment and 5.7 per cent in manufacturing employment. The employment increased only in service sector by 13.4 per cent in the same time period. This is an important concern as it reflects the ineffectiveness of GOI initiatives such as Make in India and Skill India.

Table 7- Distribution of Employment in different sectors in different years

Sector	2005	2010	2019
Employment: Agriculture (per cent of employed)	56	51.5	40.5
Employment: Industry (per cent of employed)	18.8	21.8	24.1
Employment: Service (per cent of employed)	25.2	26.7	35.4

Source: UN Data- Economic Indicators

The table 7 depicts that there is fall of employment in agriculture 15.5 percent in the year 2019 since 2005 and major increase of employment 10.2 percent in service sector during the same period.

Informal sector in India has been creating the major employment opportunities for Indian Youth. According to economic survey 2019-20, economy has more formalised as Regular wage/salaried employment has increased 22.8 percent in 2017-18 from 17.9 percent in 2011-12.

This increase has replaced 5 percent decrease in casual workers. On usual status category, 12.1 million and 13.9 million new jobs were created in rural and urban areas respectively, thus creating total new jobs to the tune of 26.2 million in absolute terms. Women share is just 7 million in the total. This is mainly due to urbanisation and shift of workers from farm job to non-farm jobs.

3.2 Unemployment Rate

Unemployed person who is looking for and accessible for work under the given conditions of work and remuneration. According to the CMIE (Nov, 2019) report, India's current unemployment rate is 8.5 per cent, has hit three years high since 2016.

Table -8 Unemployment Rate (UR) in percent acc. to usual states (PS+SS) for different age groups in PLFS (2018-19)									
Age Group	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-29	16.6	13.8	16	18.7	25.7	20.2	17.2	17.7	17.3
15-59	6	3.8	5.4	7.4	10.3	8	6.5	5.5	6.2
15 years and above	5.5	3.5	5	7	9.8	7.6	6	5.1	5.8
All Ages (0+)	5.6	3.5	5	7.1	9.9	7.7	6	5.2	5.8

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

Table 8 highlights that youth unemployment rate is thrice than the age group of 15-59 years. Urban female unemployment is high among the various categories.

Table -9 Youth UR (in percent) according to usual states (PS+SS) for the person of age 15-29 years during PLFS (2017-18) and PLFS (2018-19)						
	LLFS (2018-19)			PLFS (2017-18)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Rural	16.6	13.8	16	17.4	13.6	16.6
Urban	18.7	25.7	20.2	18.7	27.2	20.6
Rural + Urban	17.2	17.7	17.3	17.8	19.9	17.8

Source: Annual Report of PLFS, 2018-19

Table 9 shows that there is decline in rural male and urban female unemployment rate, eventually fall in total unemployment rate in 2018-19 from the last year.

	15-24*	25-74	15-74
2013	12.7	4.9	6.1
2014	11.7	4.7	5.7
2015	11.6	4.4	5.4
2016	10.7	3.8	4.7
2017	10.6	3.1	4
2018	9.1	2.9	3.7
2018/ EU28	15.2	6	6.8
2019	9.2	2.6	3.4
*UN & ILO Youth Definition Source: NSO's PLFS			

Table 10 depicts that the youth unemployment rate is around three fold than the other age group.

	Non Lit	Upto primary	Middle	Secondary	High. Secondary	Diploma Certificate Course	Graduate	PG	Secondary and Above	All
Rural Female	0	0.6	1.7	3.7	11.9	31.3	33.9	36.8	16.6	3.5
Rural Male	1.4	2.7	5.3	5.6	8.7	19.9	17	16.3	10.1	5.5
Rural Person	0.8	2.2	4.7	5.3	9.2	22.1	19.8	21.4	11.2	5
Urban Female	0.9	1.5	4.3	8.7	16	20.9	20.5	18.6	17.6	9.8
Urban Male	3.4	3.4	5.4	5.5	8	11.5	12.9	7.3	9.2	7
Urban Person	2.4	3	5.3	5.9	9.1	12.9	14.6	10.9	10.8	7.6
Male	1.8	2.9	5.3	5.6	8.5	15.3	14.8	10.5	9.7	6
Female	0.1	0.8	2.4	5.1	13.3	26.3	25.4	23.6	17.1	5.1
Person	1.1	2.4	4.8	5.5	9.2	17.2	16.9	14.4	11	5.8

The table 11 presents a common tendency of rising unemployment with rising education level. It indicates that the youth is not employable but on the contrary the data on WPR are also revealing that enough jobs are not available in the market. Thus, the crisis is deepening due to both sides of demand and supply of labour market.

The youth labour market statistics depicts that mainly the rural women LFPR and WPR have been shrinking and contributing in raising the youth unemployment rate. The rural women employment opportunities continue to be primarily dependent on primary sector, where the employment has decreased drastically and female immobility is not giving them opportunities to work in other sectors. Thus, rural women remain unemployed or withdraw

from the labour market. Urban female unemployment rate has also increased, showing incapability of labour market to absorb them. Thus there is further need to understand and analysis the various forces working behind the issue and also evaluate the impact of Covid -19. The study further attempts to review whether the government's efforts pre and post-pandemic are really addressing the root cause or not.

4. Determinants of Youth Unemployment in India

Youth unemployment in India is determined by the factors found within demand and supply side of the labour market. The imbalances between these two sides eventually increase unemployment in the countries with a major dependence on human capital in absence of other resources (Gonzalez et al., 2008). Mailti (2015) found Indian employment had been threatened by factors such as mismatch between Academia and industry demand, economic fluctuation and jobless growth on the basis of her study on the variables such as economic growth, education and labour force, using Behaviour over Time Graph (BOT).

4.1 Less job creation/ Net Job Loss

According to Economic Survey 2017, 12 million people will be adding to labour force every year till 2030. 26 million are already job seekers in labour market. Thus, creating jobs is the focal problem in India.

Farm jobs were the main source of livelihood of half of Indian population. This sector has been marked with 'Openly Unemployed People' due to family support. But insufficient remuneration and unfavourable monsoon conditions have pushed people now to non-farm jobs. Himanshu (2019) summarized that agrarian crisis due to fall of prices of agricultural commodities and double drought during 2014-15 and curtailed real investment in agriculture, caused the fall in rural economy and real wages. According the report of NITI Ayog (2015), there is the urgent need for disruptive change and bold reforms. 115 million non-farm jobs need to be generated to capitalise its demographic dividend in next ten years in India. But Demonetization, GST and continuous falling growth rate has soaked the jobs even in most absorbing non -farm sector.

CARE Ratings (2019) pointed out in a study that employment growth rate slowed in last two years from 3.9 per cent job creation in 2017-18 to 2.8 per cent in 2018-19. This study also concluded inelastic employment elasticity as employment growth at a CAGR of 3.3 per cent against the CAGR of 7.5 per cent of GDP during the period of 2014 -15 to 2018-19. CMIE and BSE study has projected that there was increase of 12 million workforces a year in India against that only 2 million jobs were created in the Year 2016-17.

Kannan & Raveendran (2019) shared the job loss growth story in India and found that there was net job loss of 6.18 million workers in between the year 2011-12 and 2017-18, mainly due to lack of employment opportunities for rural women and majorly the losers were below the secondary level of education. Thus, neither gender nor area but education starts playing important role in labour market ever before. Mahesh Vyas (2019), the MD of CMIE stated the job loss of 11 million in the year 2018.

Table 11 Additional Jobs Created/Lost between 2011–12 and 2017–18 (in millions)

	Rural	Urban	Persons
Men	3.67	11.97	15.64
Women	-24.71	2.89	-21.82
Total	-21.04	14.86	-6.18

Source: Kannan & Raveendran (2019)

The unemployment crisis has been deepening in India due to less job creation, inelastic employment elasticity and now going backward with job loss situation. In such background generating youth employment has been a herculean task for any country.

According to the report of Mckinsey Global Institute (2020), 90 million more non-farm jobs are required in Indian economy to absorb the fresher and backlog workers in between the year 2023 to 2030 (12 million every year). The need of job creation becomes more significant with addition of 55 million women to labour force in India.

4.2 Increasing force not transforming into Work Force and Education Force

A comparative study between India and European Nations highlighted that German NEET (Not in Employment, Education and Training) rate was corresponds to its unemployment rate but not true with India's NEET rate, which was 28 per cent though highest in the G20 countries (Gunther Schmid, 2015).

Kannan & Raveendran (2019) highlighted that the Indian economy was incapable to absorb the increasing adult population into workforce, had declined 15 per cent during the period of 2004-05 and became negative to -4.8 per cent in the next six years, period ending 2017-18 (table 12). Even the combine share of workforce and education force has decreased 17 per cent during 2012-18 from 45 per cent during 2005-12. It indicates that the potential demographic dividend has not been converted into actual demographic dividend. Eventually it has translated into the force not in education, employment and training. The negative growth in work force has pushed backward multiplier effect and decreasing the consumer demand.

Table -12 The addition and distribution of working age group 15 years and above for men and women

Period	Addition to WAP(in million)	LF (per cent)	WF(per cent)	EF(per cent)	Out of WFand EF (per cent)
1983-94	140.68	58.2	56.9	13.0	30.1
1994-2005	152.05	60.2	57.9	12.4	29.7
2005-12	137.63	14.5	14.7	30.3	55.0
2012-18	128.34	10.3	-4.8	22.1	82.7

WAP = working age population, LF = labour force, WF = workforce, EF =educational force.

Source: Kannan & Raveendran (2019)

Scholars used to argue that the main reason of being inactive persons in the young generation is exploring more opportunities of education and training and they join back after accomplishing/ completing a desired level of education. So high rate of youth unemployment has been the reflection more enrolled of youth in education and training. Abraham (2013) stated that the withdrawals of youth from labour market indicated increasing participation of youth in education for enhance their skills. But now no longer this argument can be supported. This increasing disheartened has posed a threat to Indian economy.

The vulnerability of youth unemployment become serious with looking at the ratio of open unemployment rate many folds higher than the NLET ratio across the states of India, which is constantly increasing (table 13)

Table 13: Youth (age 15 to 29 years) unemployment and NLET in Indian states, 2005-2018

Name of the States	Open Unemployed (million)			Not in Labour Force, Education and Training (million)		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
Andhra Pradesh*	0.5	0.7	2.2	4.2	5.3	5.8
Assam	0.3	0.5	0.8	2.0	2.5	2.6
Bihar	0.4	0.8	1.8	6.7	8.9	10.9
Gujarat	0.2	0.1	1.0	3.2	4.2	5.2
Haryana	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.6	2.1	2.4
Himachal Pradesh	0.06	0.04	0.17	0.1	0.2	0.3
Jammu & Kashmir	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.5
Karnataka	0.3	0.3	1.2	3.3	4.3	5.0
Kerala	1.3	0.7	1.0	1.7	1.8	1.3
Madhya Pradesh	0.2	0.2	1.3	3.9	4.8	5.9
Maharashtra	0.8	0.6	1.9	5.5	6.6	7.2
Odisha	0.9	0.3	1.1	2.9	3.2	3.8
Punjab	0.4	0.2	0.7	1.6	2.0	2.0
Rajasthan	0.3	0.3	1.2	3.1	4.0	5.6

Tamil Nadu	0.5	0.7	2.2	3.3	4.5	4.1
Uttar Pradesh	0.6	1.0	3.6	13.8	16.2	20.7
West Bengal	0.9	1.0	1.5	7.5	6.9	8.8
Delhi	0.2	0.2	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.6
Chhattisgarh	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.9	1.1	1.5
Jharkhand	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.7	2.4	3.0
Uttarakhand	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.7
NE states excl. Assam	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.0
All India	8.9	9.0	25.1	69.5	83.7	100.2

Source: CSE working Paper 2019-04

4.3 Not employable

Founder Wheebox, Nirmal Singh stated that India's skill landscape situation is alarming as hardly 2 out of 5 fresh entrants in job market satisfy employers on their employability criteria (India Skill Report, 2017). According to the India Skills Report (2018), only India's 4.7 per cent workforce is formally trained, which is very low as compared to 75 per cent of Germany and 96 per cent of Korea. The number of Universities raised up 993 and college to 39,931 in the year 2018-19, has built one of largest networks of higher education institution in India and second largest market place for e- learning in the world. Nevertheless there is a big dearth of great talent within the job marketplace on Indian economy.

Youth employability has become more threatening issue than the youth unemployment. The competitive advantage of youth is related with level of education, health, quality of training and development, professional experience, entrepreneurial skills and investment in human capital, underlined a paradoxical situation of labour market (Pukhova, Belyaev, Tolkunova, & Kurbatova, 2018). Where employers were rejecting the application due to lack of competitiveness in present youth causing from lack of experience, motivation and professional skills. Unreasonably demand of high salaries and good working condition were making the situation worse. Su and Zhang (2015) summarized that contemporary companies look at five predominant skills to examine the employability levels among youth graduates such as communication and interpersonal skills, private attributes, professionalism, sensible studies and problem fixing ability, and attitude closer to their career. The maximum graduates are lacking in these skills and not ready to enter the world of work. The vital reason is the gap between education system and Industry requirements, resulting in increasing youth unemployment.

5 Covid-19: Pushing Economic Slowdown and Deepening Whirlpool of Youth Unemployment

The tsunami of recent economic slowdown has converted India from Jobless regime to Job loss regime. The real growth rate estimated 5 percent in the year 2019-20, fall from 8.2 percent in the year 2016. The lower output level has failed in creating new jobs, rather translated into job losses. According to NSO the youth (15-29 Age groups) unemployment rate was 22.5 per cent in the month January- March 2019 in current weekly status, higher than the other age groups. The Labour Force participation Rate was 36 per cent during the same period, 15 per cent of women against 56.2 per cent of men. The slowdown impact was more on youth in both the segment. In spite of having low participation rate, the women unemployment rate is 29 per cent higher than the men unemployment rate (20.9 per cent).

Himanshu (2019) summarized that recent slowdown resulted due to missteps of last five years. Agrarian crises, fall in real investment in agriculture, failure of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), demonetization, Good and Service Tax, fiscal mismanagement and mistrust among stakeholders eventually led the deepening of the crisis.

Many sectors of Indian economy have been witnessing slowdown since the fourth quarter of the calendar year 2019-20. Since February 2020, the outbreak of Covid-19 in India has worsened the labour Market situation. The national shutdown bottomed the Labour Participation Rate to 41.9 per cent in March 2020 due to 9 million falls in labour force. It remained around 36 percent in next month. This sudden exit happened due to informal nature of employment. The unemployment was estimated to 8.7 percent in the same period, highest in the last three years which has increased three folds in the next month around 23.5 percent. The longevity of this seasonal event turned it into cyclical event. The unemployment rate reduced to 11.1 per cent (12.4 per cent urban and 10.6 per cent rural) in June 2020 after unlocking the economy in different phases in current weekly status.

According to the CMIE the employment of young population below 30 years has mainly impacted during this lockdown and faced significant job loss, significantly the rural young women. Four working women out of ten working women have lost their job during lockdown according to a survey. The agriculture sector has already lost its capacity to absorb workforce due to reducing economic activities in the sector and this pandemic has added to this crisis. The jobless growth has been constantly increasing during this period too. A study by Ashwini Deshpande (2020) concluded that even post pandemic the women's specifically rural women's economic recovery is far behind than men.

6 Pre and Post Covid-19 Initiatives

Indian government has launched many schemes for employment generation and women empowerment. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) aims to create self-employment opportunities for youth and artisans. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) also focuses to generate self-employment for rural poor. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) ensures the guaranteed 100 days employment in rural areas. Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana caters to create opportunities for urban unemployed people. National Employment policy encompasses the multidimensional approach to enhance the employment for youth and facilitate the transition of informal to formal employment. Women Empowerment Schemes in India empowers marginal women through their socio economic development. Social schemes safeguards for their health, hygiene, safety and social welfare. Economic schemes support them in their skill development, training and micro finance support. In spite of all government initiative the youth unemployment has been increasing. Generating the employment for rural women is part of these schemes but no scheme focuses the segment exclusively.

Government has taken various measures to overcome joblessness challenges due to economic fallout caused by Covid-19. The food distribution under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, bare minimum income help to farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme, increasing wages rate under MNREGA, ex-gratia cash transfer to senior citizen and widows, Cash Benefit Transfer through Jan Dhan accounts etc. were launched to bring about immediate relief to poor and vulnerable segment of society. To sustain and improve employment in formal and informal sectors of the economy, government has taken short term and long term measures. EPFO launched measures to give some comfort for person employed in organized sector. Economic stimulus measures were placed like loan moratorium, debt repayment. Some sector specific measures were taken to improve liquidity for MSME, power discom, NBFC etc. special measures to increase employment in organized sector through contribution of PF amount were taken. For long term economy revival measures focused on self-sufficiency of economy under Atmanirbhar Bharat like Production Linked Incentive (PLI), infrastructure development focus, sector specific measures to increase production in manufacturing, automobile, telecom, solar photo voltaic cell etc. were introduced.

Short-term measures were more directed towards sustenance and provide immediate relief. They don't have any impact on employment generation. The long-term measure is more directed to boost the economy but it lacks the component of employment generation, especially for women and upliftment of their social welfare.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

The statistical data indicates that mainly the rural women LFPR and WPR have been shrinking and contributing in raising the youth unemployment rate. The slowdown of economic activities in the agricultural sector, less job creation in formal sector, lack of skills, Job loss growth, increasing NEET ratio, have caused increasing unemployment. Further Covid-19 has aggravated the whirlpool of overall youth unemployment. The government employment generation schemes pre and post Covid-19 are broad-based and sustaining the short term livelihood, and not directed towards solving the real cause of the issue.

7.2 Managerial Implications and Further Research Scope

The study further unlocks to find out the social factors contributing to women unemployment and furthermore gives a strategic input to policymaker to plan localized, area-specific policies and arrangements to overcome the issues.

7.3 Limitation of the Study

The investigation has its constraints due to non-availability of time series data of the variables. Along these lines, the discoveries of the examination ought to be summed up with caution and extraordinary alert and further required bigger information investigation with a large data size.

7.4 Way Forward

Youth unemployment has become a whirlpool in Indian economy. There is an immense need of increasing women's work participation rate to solve the issue and robust sector-specific schemes. The recent data has pushed the FLPR to a historical low at 20.5% (World Bank) just half of FLPR in 1990, the lowest in South Asia, further deepening the whirlpool. India also ranked 112th out of 153 countries at Global Gender Gap Index. Even the post Covid -19 the V shape recovery is more applicable for men in getting back their jobs than women. There is a high need to strategies women participation in economic development at various levels by keeping women in the center of all.

- Good governance is required in the formulation of schemes, implementation and measuring outcomes. Outcomes should be quantifiable in terms of women's participation in economic activity.
- Women unpaid household work (9.8 times than men) should be redefined and redistributed to show their contribution in economic activity as they are into production of goods and service which are marketable.
- MNERGA schemes effective implementation help in generating work opportunities for rural women.
- There are many barriers at the level of factors of production in India. It becomes more challenging for women, who have already poor access to these inputs. Reform in the labour laws, land reforms and extension of social security and safety benefits need to be reframed to empower women.
- Creating more jobs in the formal sector will automatically ensure their financial security and participation in decision-making process.
- The government should collaborate with the private sector and NGO's for skill mapping and development of women workforce not only to make them employable and identify the job opportunities for them but also to start their own. Undoubtedly, Atmanirbhar Bharat can be enforced at the grassroots level by encouraging them to build the ventures on their traditional skills.
- One-stop solution should be created to extend support to women to start their own. Start-up eco-system should help in identifying potential and women-friendly opportunities to start her venture.
- There is a strong need to connect academia to government policy initiatives. Academia can help in finding out the impact of the government policies and further help in corrective measures, result in achieving the desired goals. Students' projects can be designed around women empowerment initiatives and helping rural women in identifying the opportunities and improving confidence.

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