

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF RURAL SC, ST YOUTH IN INDIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

India is recognized as one of the youngest nations with more than 50 percent of the population under 30 years. It is also estimated that by 2025, India will have 25% of the total global workforce (World Competitiveness Yearbook, 2012). The current study explores the existing literature related to employability and the challenges and hindrances faced by the rural youth, particularly belonging to the social classes-Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in India in terms of employability. In today's world, a review of literature on the employability of rural SC, ST youth is highly needed and the current research achieves this by summarizing the major articles and empirical studies available on these grounds. In spite of the large number of studies on this field, employability still appears to be an emerging problem due to the lack of skills, financial resources, job searching abilities and networks etc. This study also throws a quest for the future researchers to identify a better solution for this employability issue as the youth population being the most energetic population should not be wasted and they are indeed the most important and major resource of India for a brilliant future.

Keywords: Employability, Rural youth, Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, Skill India.

1. INTRODUCTION

In any country, youth are the most enthusiastic, innovative, dynamic and vibrant population who shows strong passion and motivation, which makes them the valuable human resource to foster the economic, political and cultural development of a country. The future prosperity of any country is ultimately based on the number of individuals in employment and their work productivity. Skilled manpower is essential for the inclusive growths of a nation (Maqbool and Khan, 2019). Youths are the highest seekers of employment as they traverse through their life journey from the adolescent to youth. Employment market is a dynamic system where many people moves in and out of the system every single day.

Employability not only necessitates getting job at first but also one should possess the ability to market oneself, network and navigate through the career and should be employed throughout their lifetime. In order to augment the youth employment, the youth has to be facilitated with the skills to meet the demands of the labor market in the rapidly growing economy.

Youth unemployment is prevalent around the world because young people lacks in skills such as job search abilities, work experience, communication and other factors which

makes them to be either jobless or entering into informal jobs for low wages as they cannot afford to wait until they find a suitable job that matches with their skills and education. Youth unemployment also occurs due to the knowledge gap between the academic institutions and industries i.e. the skills required by the industries often does not match with the skills gained by the students in the academic institutions.

In developing countries like India, this situation is intensified by poverty and competitive pressures resulting from the rapidly growing labour market. As a result, the youth population often ends up being unemployed or employed on unreliable jobs or in informal sector. In India, 54 percent of the population is below the age of 25 and faces a high rate of (disguised) unemployment.

Unemployment is a serious issue among the rural people in India. India has a huge number of illiterates, school dropouts and unemployed rural youths. It also has the highest numbers of unskilled and inappropriately skilled manpower wandering around for want of opportunities. Rural people are not well skilled as urban people.

In India, about 65 percent of the population is below 35 years of age and 70 percent of the population will be of the working age by the year 2025. This high population if trained, employed and productive can easily take advantage of the demographic dividend and can lead to sustainable development while if the same high population remains unemployed, then these untrained and unproductive population may possibly turn the demographic dividend into demographic liability (Kanchan and Varshney, 2015).

In India, Literacy rate has reached 73% as per 2011 census but still the female literacy rate (64.6%) is lower than the male literacy rate (80.9%). During the year 2011-2012, 55% of males and about 18% of females were in labour force while the corresponding percentage in urban areas were 56% for males and 13% for females (Social Statistics Division, 2017).

In India, according to Census 2011, about 68.8% of the total population irrespective of age group is located in rural areas. Of the total population, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes account for 16.6% and 8.6% respectively. If both the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are put together, they form around one-fourth of the total population of India. 76.6% of scheduled castes and around 90% of the scheduled tribes lives in rural areas. These (SC/ST) are the social groups regarded as the marginalized sections in the development process of Indian society (Census India, 2011).

In India, even though 12.8 million young people are entering into the labour market every year, the government recognizes serious skill shortage issues as most of these new labour market entrants remain unskilled. India being a nation with huge youth population should take advantage of the demographic dividend by skilling the youth with required knowledge and skills to convert them into an invaluable asset of the nation to develop national and global economies.

There has been a number of private and government run technical institutions which are specialized in vocational training. The Government of India has launched a number of various skills training and placement programs to help and uplift the rural people. Despite of all these efforts by the various organizations, the number of unemployed youths is constantly increasing. Within the rural areas, the representation of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are higher than the other social classes. In India, about 5% of the rural youth in the age group of 15-29 years remain unemployed. This is an alarming situation which indicates that the

most energetic and productive generation of our country is being wasted (Anbuthambi and Chandrasekaran, 2017).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 EMPLOYABILITY

Employability is the ability of the graduate to get a job and to remain as a life-long learner. Employers seek candidates with capabilities, skills, abilities, and personality attributes suitable for their work environment (Jeswani, 2016). Employability is often related with a number of labour supply-side constraints (socio economic factors such as age, gender, education, class etc and also regional specificities) which adversely affects the potential of job entrants, especially the youth, to find the jobs fast enough (Pool and Sewell, 2007).

Employability skills are personal skills and attributes demonstrated by an individual that differentiate one job seeker from another in the field of their specialisation and assist them to secure employment, to make them sustain in that job and progress through their career to achieve their maximum potential and indeed contribute towards their personal goals and that of their organization (Sarfraz et.al, 2018).

Employability skills sculpt students' career by aiding them in building and advancing their skills such as communication skills, presentation skills, teambuilding skills, leadership skills, time management skills, interview skills and interpersonal skills. Thus, training students with soft skills enables them to participate in various selection procedures effectively and efficiently (Nisha et.al, 2018).

In the recent past, along with the unemployed youth there is also an increasing concern over the youth who are neither in workforce nor in studies. They are not covered in the category of unemployed as they are neither contributing to any sort of economic activity nor investing in the human capital by attending educational institutions (ILO, 2013). They are inactive even in terms of seeking employment. It is a type of voluntary unemployment or may be called unrevealed unemployment which has been left out of policy measure for quite some time. They are considered as discouraged workers. The policy attention has to be turned to focus on these discouraged young workers who are excluded from the measures of youth unemployment. (O'Higgins and Niall, 2008).

2.2 ACADEMIA- INDUSTRY SKILL GAP

Employability depends not only on the characteristics of the individual graduates like subject knowledge, experience, skills and personality traits but also depends on the faculty, curriculum, and teaching method in university systems and also depends on the employers who hire the graduates and their expectations (Sumanasiri et.al, 2015).

Universities have to balance their role of producing well-rounded citizens and meeting the demands of labour market (Archer and Chetty, 2013). Even though, thousands of graduates are coming out of the higher educational institutions every year, not all of them are getting employed. Industries are finding it difficult to employ the educationally qualified graduates available in the job market which highlights that the curriculum of the educational institutions doesn't match with the needs of the industries (Selvam, 2017).

In today's world, academic institutions consider the students as their primary customer. If they start to view the employer as their primary and potential customer, then possibly the academic programs may be redesigned with better opportunities to assist the graduates (Mitchell Adrian, 2017). Receiving career guidance was not associated with employment status while lack of resources available to look for a job, lack of network to the labour market and discriminatory recruitment practices have an impact on employability (Kim Baldry, 2013).

The skill gap is the most crucial factor in case of employment generation and the changeover from academic institutions to workplace seems troublesome (Ndagijimana et.al, 2018). Universities should initiate a large number of training institutes in which the curriculum design has to be often updated to match the industry needs (Madlani, 2014). The educated people are struggling to find a suitable job. Either their education is not sufficient to keep up with the changing demands of labour market or they are over/ under qualified for the available position. Those who were not able to afford their living expenses until a right job turns up, ends in risky and informal work arrangements (Dewan and Sarkar, 2017).

In the last four decades, Indian Government has been taking deliberate efforts to promote coordination between Academia and Industry. But, only marginal success has been achieved, may be because of the universities and the industries have not been under any pressure to interact. In India, the Industry-University collaboration has been on low ebb over the past decades (Gandhi, 2015).

2.3 HURDLES FACED BY INDIAN SC/ST RURAL YOUTH

Indian youth population face major hurdles because of poverty and scarcity of human capital. Even though, the educational attainment has increased rapidly in recent years, acquiring a foothold in the labour market remains elusive for many Indian youth. They cannot afford to remain unemployed for a long time and hence they end up in picking up activities characterized by low labour productivity (Mitra and Verick, 2013). While the rural areas are rich in human and non-human resources, rural people are migrating towards urban areas in search of new employment to lead a better livelihood because of the gap that exists between the skill needed and the skill available (Tripathi and Singh, 2017).

The majority of the labour force in rural areas is engaged in agricultural sector. While the youth are looking for jobs, the industries are suffering from the deficit of skilled workers. This particular mismatch makes the youth unemployable (Sunita, 2014). Two students from different socio-economic conditions may confront similar labour market conditions with regards to employment and skill mismatch. General socio-economic concerns are shared by the youth despite their employment status (Dibeh et.al, 2018).

The World Bank study found that the success story of growth of the Indian economy and its poverty reduction in the recent past is well appraised while the marginalized sections such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are 20 year behind the average performances. This is due to the social exclusion that these marginalized groups in India have been rooted in the historical division of the Indian society along lines of the caste, tribe and gender (World Bank, 2011).

In most of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes households, the highest educated member of the family was the student himself which is not in the case of general category

student, where the highest educated member of the family was his father in one-third of the cases (Planning Commission, 2007).

The economic backwardness of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is mainly caused due to their employment mainly in the primary sector. The scheduled castes mostly depend upon the wage labour and casual labour compared to others. Only less than 40 percent of those get regular wages or salaries. To be precise, the salaried people among others also form a minority (Bhatnagar and Dwivedi, 2013).

2.4 EDUCATION, EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND LABOR MARKET

The majority of Indian youth population from the economically and socially underprivileged groups have limited access to education and vocational training. Hence, the majority of the Indian youth population enters the labour market without adequate vocational skills and education leading to informal and unorganized sector employment such as casual labour and various modes of self-employment for low wages (Okada, 2012). The youths have to develop life skills of how to cope up with the loss and stress and at the same time should develop their critical thinking to sustain with their employability (Pandey, 2012).

The main reason for unemployment is not because of the lack of jobs but because of the lack of employability skills possessed by the job seekers (Rahmat et.al, 2016). The majority of highly educated job seekers are finding it difficult to gain a secure employment that matches with their education and skill set (Tan et.al, 2010). In the new global economy, the employers are expecting more than technical knowledge and skills from the job seekers, which are mostly job specific and non-transferable. In addition, they also require soft skills in order to continue their contribution towards the growth and the expansion of a corporate or an industry (Dania et.al, 2014).

The employability of the rural youth in India with respect to their skill based denotes that still a significant proportion of rural youth remains illiterates and without even completing their primary schooling. More than two-thirds of the Indian rural youth population are not able to complete their secondary schooling. Educational levels of the youth who have completed their schooling give them an advantage in the labour market while the joblessness is found to be high among the rural youth with poor levels of education (Venkatanarayana Motkuri, 2013).

The employability of the rural youth depends highly on personal and external factors compared to individual factors. Personal factors include the lack of one's personal finances to facilitate job search and the non-availability of formal networks to share information on the opportunities as the rural youth are not exposed to such spaces where they can get the information while the external factors include scarcity of jobs in local town and this non-availability of work when gets coupled with the unfair recruitment practices where the family network helps one in getting employment and the geographical location of these rural youths where there is a lack of opportunities and services such as job matching facilities serves as the hindrance to gain employability. Thus the government, communities and employers have to provide support to uplift the rural youths and to make them employable (Tele, 2016).

In India, only 2 percent of the workforces out of the total workforce in India have undergone skills training. According to estimates of the Government of India, 93 percent of

workforce employment is being occupied by the unorganized or informal sector, which is not being supported by a structured skill development system (Kanchan and Varshney, 2015).

The rural youth need more of practicable updated knowledge rather than conventional training with dull lectures and manuals in order to promote sustainable livelihood. Both the central and state government shall start to invest more in programmes like start up schemes for SC and ST in remote rural areas (Onkholun Haokip, 2018).

Skill training is emerging as an important and immediate solution. But we have to consider the fact that, education and skills cannot be a substitute for each other and they need to be a continuum. The need for skill development exists but it doesn't mean that it can be a substitute for all that fundamental education provides (Sabina Dewan & Urmila Sarkar, 2017). Being excellent in one skill will not enable the competency in other skills. Hence, the candidates who are multi-tasking can gain and sustain in employment (Gowsalya and Ashok Kumar, 2015).

Besides having white and blue collar workers, India being a developing nation with huge manpower also needs Grey collar (knowledge workers) who possesses ICT skills, problem solving, analytical and good communication skills and also Rust collar (skilled workers) at the grass root level in the currently prevailing unorganized and unbenchmarked sectors like construction, agriculture and related trade (Kanchan and Varshney, 2015).

2.5 INDIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India unveiled "Make in India" initiative in 2014, as an attempt to project India as the manufacturing hub to fuel India's economic growth. Such a growth oriented initiative is indeed a most important step for a developing country like India. India is a country with huge manpower resources which has to be effectively utilized to flourish the Indian economy. So, the labour and prospective employees need to utilize such a wonderful opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge to gain employability (Deka and Batra, 2016).

Skill India is also an initiative by Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. The primary objective of this scheme is to ensure a well-established infrastructure for skill development and to provide focus on professional skills and employment oriented training to create skilled workforce. Indian youth has to be prepared not just for domestic markets but also for the international labour markets, which are in line with the PM's vision of Make in India, to make India, the skill capital of the world (Anbuthambi and Chandrasekaran, 2017).

Youth employment programs provide assistance to young people who face specific problems in the labour market. In fact, the under-utilization of these youth employment programs results in economic and psychological costs to the country. Hence, the youth programs have to be designed with care to avoid the crowding-out effects on other groups of employees (Ndagijimana et.al, 2018). The opportunity for the emerging economy like India largely lies in skilling the youth population of the country. Even though, the Government of India is hugely investing in the skill development programs, it should ensure that there exists a proper alignment between the Government efforts and industry needs, to pave a way for the successful implementation of the skilled manpower for the nation (Anbuthambi and Chandrasekaran, 2017).

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDUGKY) scheme is an initiative by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the income of rural poor families and to serve the career aspirations of rural youth population with an investment of more than INR 5600 crores so far. It is a part of Skill India campaign and has trained over 9.9 lakh candidates since 2014. Of the trained candidates, over 5.3 lakh candidates have been placed on jobs as of 1st April 2020 (DDUGKY, MoRD).

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDUGKY) scheme is very well positioned and more than 90% of participants of the survey conducted in Bihar belong to below poverty line families. 42% of them were placed immediately after the training and one third of this population left their jobs within six months due to caste discrimination and another one third due to low salaries offered which is not sufficient to meet their living costs. The employment effects of this scheme are zero but the training helped the graduates to shift from agriculture to non- agricultural positions (Chakravorty and Bedi, 2019).

3. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

In today's competitive world, one has to be highly skilled and should develop the ability to adapt themselves to the changing environment. Once employed in a high pay job doesn't mean that they possess excellent employability skills as today's labour market is highly dynamic. To sustain and to reach high levels, one should be a life-long learner and should continuously upgrade themselves with the new techniques related to their field.

Universities and academic institutions should try to negotiate with the industries and also can sign MoU's to improve their relation which in turn will help the academic institutions to understand the industry needs and can better train the graduates. Although, the Government of India is providing free schooling for underprivileged people, the number of illiterates, school dropouts is still prevailing due to the family status and poverty where they need their children to support to have their daily food.

Skill development to suit the labour market is essential but it doesn't mean that it can be a substitute for academic education. So, one should not compromise on their academics and should be a multi-skilled person to increase their chances of employability. The Government of India should advertise the placement and training schemes developed for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes more, so that they will be aware of such schemes which also results in increased participation rate.

The prevailing unfair recruitment practices such as giving importance to family members, friends or close circle and selection of candidates based on religion and caste has to be abolished completely. Jobs should be offered based on the talents and skills of individuals and not on any other unfair grounds.

The Government of India should also regularly monitor the progress of these schemes and should continually upgrade to match the industry needs and to enhance the political, economic and cultural upliftment of the country. Otherwise these schemes will only increase the cost to the government despite of reaping any benefits.

The rural SC/ST youth should work harder to overcome their barriers and to be highly skilled to gain employment in a formal sector. They should make use of all the beneficiary

schemes developed by the government to be successful in their career path. The development of rural SC/ST youth cannot happen in a single day but it will happen gradually if all the shortcomings are properly dealt with.

4. CONCLUSION

As the labour market being the dynamic segment plays the most important role in the development of a country, more emphasis should be placed to improve its current position. The Indian youth population has to be properly educated to be highly skilled for gaining more opportunities in the labour market. Without uplifting the rural population, India cannot reach the position of a developed country. As more than 90% of the rural population belongs to SC/ST category, high priority and training has to be given to them, in terms of education, skill training, job seeking abilities and networking skills (as they lack in these resources) to be successful in their career. The Government should make them know about the schemes available for them and should assist them to gain benefits from those schemes. More such schemes have to be introduced in the future and also they have to be continually upgraded to match the industry needs. The academic institutions and universities should design their curriculum based on the industry needs and should try to give additional weightage to practical type of learning rather than mere theory as they will be more lively, easy to grasp and encourage students to learn more.

5. FUTRURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current study will help the researchers and policy makers who are interested in the upliftment of rural SC, ST youth population. The current study also encourages the academic institutions and industries partnership to take measures to better formulate the curriculum of educational institutions to increase the employability rate. The current study also encourages the researchers to perform an evaluation study of the employability skills of the rural SC, ST youth population and the appraisal of the various government schemes implemented by the government for their development and upliftment in the society.

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