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“YOUTH IN INDIA: DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND OR DEMOGRAPHIC DISASTER”

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Abstract

This paper provides vital insights into the challenges facing youth in terms of employment opportunities in India (Mitra and Verick, 2013). The main objective of this paper is to encourage discussion and further research for the promotion of decent work with respect to youth employment in Asia and the Pacific.

According to ILO's Global Trends Report 2012 on Youth, almost 75 million young people are unemployed across the globe, which represents an increase of more than 4 million since 2007 (ILO, 2012). These challenges are noticeable in India, which has the largest youth population in the world with around 66 per cent of the total population under the age of 35 (United Nations, 2003). In this environment, much is often said about a 'demographic dividend' (Ghosh et al. 2010). However, not being able to provide right match of employment opportunities for this lot of young people as they penetrate the labour market risks a 'demographic disaster' (Verick, 2009).

With this regard, governments are precisely concerned about increasing 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 mental health problems, violence, drug taking and other social outcomes (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009).

Against these conditions, this paper addresses the nature of employment profile of youth in India with focus on the suggestions for challenges with respect to youth unemployment in India. The research methodology used is qualitative with major focus on secondary data.

Keywords (up to 10): Youth, Employment, Unemployment, Underemployment, Social impact, Challenges, Demographic Dividend, Demographic disaster, Population, India.

Introduction

The youth population in any country is dynamic and vital for its long run development. The hidden power and demographic shift of the Indian youth population can improve our economy. In 2014, the Government of India devised a National Youth Policy covering eleven priority areas—Education, Employment and Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Health and Healthy Lifestyle, Sports, Promotion of Social Values, Community Engagement, Participation in Politics and Governance, Youth Engagement, Inclusion, and Social Justice—which provides youth a strong road map for realizing the projected goals throughout the consecutive 5 years with an appropriate framework. National Youth Policy (2014) aims to empower Indian youth to utilize their full potential. In accordance to this policy, youth in the age group, 15–29 years includes 27.5 per cent of the population. This important section of population can increase its labour participation and productivity for betterment of the economy. It is predicted to contribute about 34 per cent of the Gross National Income (National Youth Policy 2014).

The Census of India (2011) has unconfined a number of indicators on youth including other age groups, literacy, work status, total population and age wise population. Some vital socioeconomic and demographic indicators are to be released by the Census, which will facilitate researchers and academicians to explore youth development in detail for designing national plans and policies. Over consecutive five to six years the average age in China and the US would be 37, Western Europe—45, and in Japan it would be 48. In this scenario of demographic profile, India's average age would reflect a young 29 years. This demographic dividend could even facilitate the GDP of the country add two per cent each year.

Moreover, a considerable total (25 %) of the worldwide increase of the working age population of 15-64 years until 2040 is estimated to be witnessed in India. At present, more than half of India's population is under the age of 25, with 66 percent of the population under 35.

However it's vital to grasp that there will not be any dividend without investment, either in cash or kind. So time has come to think "What India has invested in youth? It doesn't follow that simply because India has large lot of young population there will be an automatic dividend. There is already so much unemployment; the young become a part of illegal activities as they cannot get jobs. They will become more violent. The main objective of this paper is to stimulate discussion and further research with reference to a crucial question "Whether greater percentage of young

population in India would lead to encashing on demographic dividend or prove to be a demographic disaster ?”

Against these conditions, this paper addresses the nature of development and employment profile of youth in India with focus on the suggestions for challenges with relevance to youth unemployment in India. The research methodology used is qualitative with major focus on secondary data.

Background of the Study

Global Scenario with respect to youth employment

Worldwide, the ILO predicts that the amount of jobless youth is on the increase once more since 2011, after declining somewhat from the peak it reached at the height of the worldwide monetary crisis. It is predicted to reach 73.4 million young people by 2013 (International Labor Organization 2012). The worldwide youth unemployment rate has also been increasing since 2011; it is currently predicted at 12.6 percent and is projected to rise to 12.8 percent by 2018. In contrast, the worldwide adult unemployment rate, while also increasing slightly, is much lower at 4.6 percent in 2013 (ILO 2012). Whereas we attempt to take a worldwide viewpoint on youth employment challenges, our focus in this paper is on the developing country India. This is the country where the great majority of youth in the globe currently reside and where youth employment challenges are presumably to be related with the demographic challenges posed by growing youth populations in upcoming decades.

Indian scenario with respect to youth employment

India has one of the highest adolescent (253 million) and youth populations in the globe. The Census of India (2011) has highlighted the profile and status of the adolescent and youth population, which comprises a vital segment of the total population of India. Socio-political, economic and demographic developments rely on them. The transition from education and training to economic activity marks a crucial phase in the lives of youth, who are the operative workforce of the country. The high level of unemployment among youth due to lack of skills and poverty is a long term challenge for India.

In 2010, it was projected that the population of the world was 6.91 billion and that adolescent population (10–19 years) constituted 1.19 billion and youth (15–24 years) 1.22 billion, which

together accounted for 26.3 per cent of the total population of the world (World Population Prospects: the 2012 Revision, June 2013). In India, the adolescent population is 253 million and the youth population is 231.9 million, which comprise 20.9 per cent and 19.2 per cent of the total population respectively and both adolescent and youth population comprise 40.1 per cent of the total population of India (Census of India 2011). The youth population of India is so large that it is equivalent to the total population of eighteen countries in western Asia in line with United Nations estimates (World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision 2013).

Youth is defined as those persons in the age group 15–24 years by the United Nations, though the age range for youth may vary in different countries due to different environments and needs of youth. During this transitional phase, physical, educational, psychological, social and economic changes occur in their lives. The India National Youth Policy (NYP) covers all youth in the age group 13–35 years, which is divided into two groups, that is, 13–19 years and 20–35 years (National Youth Policy 2003). The recent National Youth Policy has defined youth as those in the age group 15–29 years, who comprise 27.5 per cent of the population. Youth is a more dynamic segment than a fixed age-group. ‘Youth’ is commonly indicated as a person between the age where she/he departs from compulsory education, and the age at which she/he finds her/his first employment (National Youth Policy 2014) and this paper will consider this definition to define youth.

Every year, the Government of India assigned Rs. 2710/-per youth per annum for development in terms of employment, appropriate education, skill development and awareness about health (Union Budget, 2011–2012). State governments, institutions, other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) additionally assisted the development of youth, towards making them a productive workforce.

Various analyses have shown how socioeconomic factors determine the youth development pattern within the Indian context. There is proof that the young (16–24 years) are particularly more prone towards the negative effects of recession, which create a spell of unemployment (Bell and Blanchflower 2010). Global recession creates a hefty volume of temporary employment among them (O’Higgins and Niall’ 2012). Low literacy rate, poverty and health problems among youth are obstacles for the development of youth in India (Dreze et al. 2011).

Research Methodology

Research Objectives and Methodology

The broad objective of this research paper is to answer an important question “Whether the increasing population of youth in India will lead to be a demographic dividend or demographic disaster?” The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the nature of youth development and employment (appropriate education, skill development and awareness about health).
2. To suggest recommendations for challenges with respect to youth unemployment in India.

The research methodology used is qualitative with major focus on secondary data collected from various published and unpublished electronic and paper sources like international and national journals, government policies, reports, labor laws, acts, reforms, discussion and working papers, newspaper, etc.

Findings and Discussions

Nature of youth employment

Current Population of India as of 2013 was 1.27 billion, according to, the world population statistics. India had a population of 1.12 billion (as per census estimates in 2010). In 1995 - the population was 0.95 billion, which is expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2050, overtaking the Chinese population.

Incidentally nearly 50% of these, are below 25 years of age, and less than 10% are above 65 (Ministry of Finance 2007-8). Consequently India has the world’s second largest working class and a dynamic labour force comprising 509.3 million people, 60% of whom are employed in agriculture and related industries, 28% in services and related industries and 12% in manufacturing. These are the ones who contribute to the growing GDP and the economy prospers due to the contribution of this labour force. This concept was coined as “demographic dividend” by Rao and Verghese (2009), who believe that HRM in India can exploit the demographic dividend. Population projections also indicate that India will continue to have a larger share of working population for a sustained two to three decades, further boosting the growth of the economy (Manorama Yearbook 2008). In addition, with more people shifting from

agriculture to the manufacturing and services sectors, and migration from villages to towns continuing to rise, more and more workers are expected to join the growing service sector and contribute to the growth spiral (Rao and Verghese, 2009).

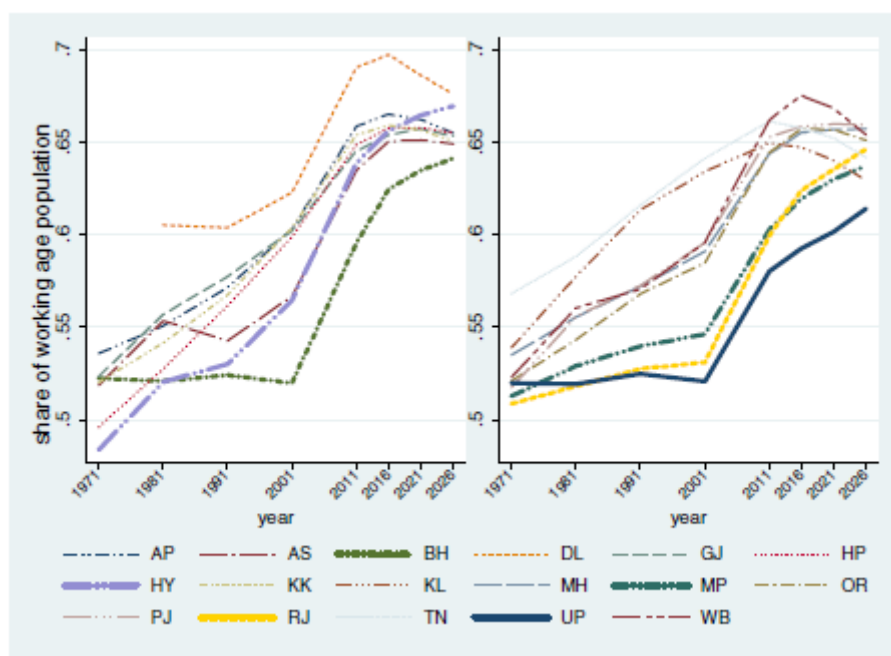


Figure 1: *STATE WISE SHARE OF WORKING POPULATION IN INDIA*

Source : Registrar General of India

Figure 1 shows the share of the working-age population in total population for 17 major Indian states. A few things stand out in relation to the differences in the evolution of the age structure across states. First, the share of the working-age population, varies across states. It was 64 per cent in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in 2001, and only 52 per cent in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in 2001.

Second, over the 30-year period from 197, to 2001, the four southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu saw an increase in the share of the working age population by 6.7, 8.4, 9.5, and 7.3 percentage points, respectively. This is a reflection of the decline in the share of the dependent age groups (0–14 and 59-plus). Though not shown here, this change is accompanied by a decline in fertility rates, birth and growth rates, and an increase in life expectancy in these states. The other states that saw an increase in the share of the working-age population are Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, and West Bengal. At the same time, the above mentioned states saw a smaller increase in the share of the

working-age population states, which together account for 40 per cent of India's population, are projected to contribute 52.5 per cent of the increase in India's total population, and 58 per cent of the increase in India's working-age population. These four states are the slowest in their pace of transition to low birth rates and low death rates. Using data for 1971–2001, we have shown that the states with a higher growth in the share of the working-age population tend to grow faster.

In order to reap the “demographic dividend”, state policies with respect to education, public health and skill development is a matter of regional state government. Thus, regional state governments mentioned above, perform better on various indicators of infrastructure, health, education, and investment climate seem to be the ones that not only fully exploited the demographic dividend but also generated additional growth on top of it. Kochhar et al. (2006) argue that policy reforms implemented since the 1980s have given way to ‘multiple Indias’. They argue that in the post-1980s period, the performance across states has varied with state characteristics such as institutional quality, investment climate, labour laws, and product market regulations.

As further noted by Rao and Verghese (2009), there is a difference in the concept of HRD. In India there is a HRD ministry at the centre, and the state takes care of the public sector undertakings and also defines policy measures. On the other hand there are HR departments in various organisations. Their main contribution is in sourcing, training and retaining the knowledge workers for the sector. Rao and Verghese (2009) further argue that India has strict laws regarding employee protection.

Demographic dividend

There is a concept of demographic dividend which is elaborated by Rao and Verghese (2009). In many countries, demographic shift is reached after the huge segment of adolescent and youth population joins the total population. This occurrence happens only when there is a conversion of its population from a high to a low situation for both mortality and fertility over a particular period, which also known as the demographic window of opportunity. Demographic dividend can be accomplished when economic growth accelerates. This occurs when the working age group population, having acquired technical and vocational skills, is productive by getting involved in economic activities. The timely implementation of national policies chains the process. This significant shifting of age structure in the Indian population, can increase economic participation and cut back dependency, which will in turn support economic growth. Many demographers and

economists have predicted that India will reap the demographic dividend through its operating population, that features large hidden potential and productivity (Chandrasekhar et al.2006). Literacy rate among youth increased from 36 per cent in 1962 to 86.1 per cent in 2011. There is some distinction between male literacy (90 %) and female literacy (81.8 %), and that of rural youth (83.7 %) and urban youth (91.4 %) youth according to Census, 2011. Many countries within the globe now a days are grappling with an aging population. Over the following five to six years the average age in China and the US would be 37, Western Europe—45, and in Japan it would be 48. In this scenario of demographic profile, India's average age would comprise of young 29 years. This demographic dividend could even assist the GDP of the country add two per cent each year. Moreover, a considerable total (25 %) of the world wide increase of the working age population of 15-64 years till 2040 is projected to occur in India.

Demographic disaster

Till date however, India's ability to reap the rewards of its large demographic advantage is uncertain. In line with a survey released on the occasion of World Men's Health Week, lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes and high cholesterol, are currently striking more young Indian men in metropolitan cities. In line with a large-scale government study over 40 million people from across the country screened under the Government's National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, cardio-vascular Diseases and stroke (NPCDCS) has discovered that 6.34 per cent of the population is suspected to be suffering from diabetes and over 6 per cent are hypertensive. Health being one of the factor there are other challenges like employment rights, poverty, education and training which raise the question whether the increasing youth population will lead to be demographic dividend or demographic disaster.

Challenges for youth employment

Employment rights

In a context of ever-increasing costs of living and non-existent social protection, a young worker is destined to earn for him- or herself and also to provide for dependents. In extreme anxiety, they accept any job with any conditions that are offered to them. Most of these jobs are without any rights. Sometimes they are made to work for longer hours, paid much less and can be fired from their job without any notice. As a consequence, India is faced with increasing numbers of working poor.

The other challenge that young people are confronting is insecurity at the workplace. Regular and continuous forms of employment have been replaced with non-permanent job contracts that involve a specific project or activity for a defined period of time. In this scenario, employees not only lack employment-related benefits but also the capacity to plan their own life.

Education and training

The majority of youngsters have either limited or no skills. In addition to this the present education system does not prepare them for employment as it is far from meeting market demands. The avenues of good education and training are not many and extremely costly.

Technical institutions in the private sector have been drawing undue benefits from the imbalance by exploiting youngsters and their folks. Also the flow of data on the supply of training and/or job opportunities is delayed. There is also inadequacy in the operating of employment exchange, primarily due to the insignificant attention paid to trends in market and sharing knowledge. The working of Industrial Training Institutes has also been repeatedly questioned as they have been delivering training that has no market value (Dev S. et al. 2011, 2012).

As a result, young people in India confront situation that is not rendering the desired support. The current scenario provides neither reasonably priced opportunities to acquire and/or upgrade skills nor sufficient knowledge on apt employment opportunities. In the absence of such support and any sort of social security, young people, in desperation, settle for exploitative employment conditions (World Bank, 2010).

Implications

Organizational implications

The BJP-led government came to power in 2014 with a directive to repair a wavering Indian economy. Though bold campaigns like ‘Make in India’ and ‘Digital India’ have been initiated, the final yardstick with which the success of these initiatives will be assessed is the level of employment they generate. And, if statistics are a signal, it’s a difficult task. Consistent with experts, only 10 percent of the Indian workforce is in the organized sector; just 2.5 percent of the country’s operating population has any professional training, compared to the average of 60 to 70 percent in developed countries (O’ Higgins and Niall, 2010). Of the 11 million students graduating from different faculties each year, only 20 percent get jobs in line with their skill sets.

And though women include 49 percent of India's population, they form solely 21 percent of the workforce.

Dichotomous situation

A dichotomous situation exists in India with respect to youth employment. On one hand, not enough people are getting jobs and on the other, there isn't enough skilled labour in the country. From perspective of the technology industry, a huge portion of the population has been excluded from employment due to lack of availability of skilled employees. Unlike in manufacturing, where a number of low-skilled jobs exist, the technology industry has completely stayed away from generating such jobs. Over a period of time, this has to change. Some organizations have started de-skilling certain functions to a precise level of automation to assist usher in more inclusive growth when it comes to employment generation and faucet the lower end of the skill-set spectrum. India is usually seen as a labour surplus economy with a majority of workers having restricted or negligible marketable skills. Furthermore, on investigating the situation more closely one finds that India has a asymmetrical skills stock. On one hand, a huge section of the workforce are not able to get even minimum wages, as made compulsory by the government; on the other hand, there are a few people with marketable skills who are able to demand higher rewards. Recently, there has been inflated activity in the area of acquiring and updating of skills. Young people are attending various technical institutes in large numbers. This can be seen in the information and communication technology sector, which has experienced a large influx of IT-skilled workers. Additionally it has caused issues due to the unregulated growth of technical institutions in the private sector and a lack of guidance for youth in selecting career paths. As a consequence, an imbalance within the Indian labour market has created a surplus in some skills and shortages in others.

Education, training and development

With reference to skills front, in India, as in other OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries, the lack of essential skills among the youth and the resultant lack of employability is an outcome of the education system. From organization's point of view, they are trying to see how they can interact more with the universities and devise training programmes for students, so that the essential skills can be imparted at an early stage, as opposed to industries running an expensive training programme at the customer's expense at the later stage.

The corporate is in the process of hiring. But if employment in the formal sector is considered, it is only 10 percent of the total working population of the country. In case of professional training, only 2.5 percent of the people in the country are vocationally trained. In any other developed country, 60 to 70 percent of the working population has received professional training. The common section of the Indian population which can be counted as being the poorest of poor, from the backward classes and with low levels of attainment, is around 306 million people. So, the problem is less to do with whether a company is hiring or not. There is a larger responsibility on India as a nation to ensure that the under-utilized potential across the country gets tapped. If immediate action is not taken in this direction reaping benefits out of demographic dividend would be difficult. Corporations can play a vital role in the process of creating employment, but it is largely a function of the way in which the economy is progressing and generating youth who are ready with required skills to get employed in India.

Societal implications

Poverty and health

Poverty index is a predominant indicator for youth development in India, which may be considered the first pillar of youth development. In every context, the poverty index clearly shows that the lower the economic condition of the household, the more disadvantaged the youth. Poverty definitely leaves its mark on youth development in India along with the negative impact on their health and nourishment affecting the productivity of the youth (Dreze et al.2011).

Women – security and social restrictions

The opening up of the Indian economy has created increased employment opportunities for female workers, particularly in technology, retail, travel and tourism. Their full engagement, however, remains constrained due to problems of personal security, biased attitudes of co-workers and social traditions and customs (Hudson,2005; Druskat & Wheeler 2003). Various studies have indicated marriage and child and elderly care as major causes of women workers withdrawing from the labour market.

Social Nuisance

With regards to social nuisance, governments are precisely concerned about increasing 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 physical and mental health problems ,violence, drug taking and other social outcomes (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009; Urdal and Henrik,2006).

Conclusion

Despite its demographic dividend and increased literacy levels, India faces youth unemployment as a significant challenge for labour market policy. Young job seekers comprise 49 per cent of the total unemployed in India. With only 10 per cent of the accessible work provided by the formal sector, a significant number of well-educated youth in India are either unemployed, underemployed, seeking employment or between jobs, or addressing insecure work arrangements. India's main challenge concerning youth unemployment is the lack of any form of social security system, as well as proper and adequate avenues for professional training. In an context of vast opportunities for economic growth, India requires more national as well as international cooperation among different labour market actors (trade unions, vocational training organisations, committees at the national level) to sustain it (Visara,1998). India should have a one-point agenda that is to educate the new generation and improve school curriculum.

The country is so focused on IIMs and IITs that it has no time for the concentration on basic school education. Financial aids have to be put into basic and further education, poverty eradication and health related initiatives.

In the Indian context, major emphasis has been placed on skills development. In this regard, the National Skills Development Policy (2009) sets a target of training 500 million skilled individuals by 2022, which will be reached by expanding public institutions in rural areas; using innovative delivery models; using skill development centres in rural areas to provide training information, guidance and delivery; involving panchayats and local government in skill delivery; improving entrance to apprenticeships and raising female participation in training (Ministry of Labour and Employment 2009). Moreover, the role of the Industrial Training Institutions (ITIs) is important in delivering technical skills to the youth and helping them access better sources of livelihood. Also, a quality education can counteract the social factors that hinder women's labour market participation.

“Besides education, health is key to nation-building” Dr. Terrence Hermon from Mumbai who spoke to The American Bazaar, said. The success mantra of transforming the demographic dividend into an economic growth lies not just in having more people, but generating large numbers of better trained, healthier and more productive people. India must connect the advantage of its youth to fulfill its economic potential, and in turn must generate growth in order

to continue to support its growing population. India must act fast on health, education and unemployment to do so. Overall, the challenge is both in terms of job creation and the preparation of young people for the labour market to guarantee that India's demographic dividend does not become the often quoted 'demographic disaster'.

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