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Analysing the Status of Rural Labour in Varanasi District of Eastern Uttar Pradesh



Anup K. Mishra
Assistant Professor
Deptt. of Economics,
DAV PG College,
BHU, Varanasi,

Abstract

Employment is critical for poverty reduction and for enhancing the status of men and women. However, it is potentially empowering and liberating only if it provides men and women an opportunity to improve their well-being and enhance their capabilities.

Rural economy has been largely stagnant over the years and employment opportunities have not grown.

Education is fundamental to all-round human, material and spiritual development, in our national perception. Workers are segmented in different sectors (agricultural-non-agricultural) and types of work depending upon their levels of education, their asset status, and social identity.

Does education propel women into employment? The gender differences in this respect are interesting and stark. For male workers, higher levels of education are indeed associated with higher WPR, both in rural and urban areas. But for women, WPR is higher for illiterate women than for women with higher levels of school education – a trend which reverses itself only for women with technical/vocational education or graduates.

The present study is based on both secondary as well as primary data. The secondary data is collected mainly from NSSO 66th round report (Informal Sector and Conditions of Employment in India). This will provide the overall countries as well as of state-level employment status in informal sector. In addition to these, we also incorporated a questionnaire based primary data survey of two villages 'Newada' and 'Karadhana' of 'Sewapuri Block' in 'Varanasi' district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh during the year 2010-11. These two villages have been taken from higher caste strata and from lower cast strata.

In the light of above background the present study is an attempt to evaluate the changing pattern of rural workers especially in context of education and employment at ground level.

Keywords: Wpr , NSSO, Informal Labour, AGE GC, Education Specific , Rural labour

Introduction

Employment is critical for poverty reduction and for enhancing the status of men and women. However, it is potentially empowering and liberating only if it provides men and women an opportunity to improve their well-being and enhance their capabilities.

Rural economy has been largely stagnant over the years and employment opportunities have not grown. Most men and women, therefore, are able to get work for only a few months in the year. This keeps them employed only in the "subsidiary status". The situation of women is worst than men. On the supply side, women's primary duties are supposed to be in the household. For economic reasons they have to work, but must do so in addition to their domestic responsibilities, and therefore, may be able to enter the labour force only as subsidiary workers. The recent economic changes appear to have enlarged work opportunities in urban areas, but have had a limited impact in rural areas. In rural areas a majority of men and women work in the primary sector (that is, agriculture and allied activities). The primary sector in India is almost totally informal by nature of organisation.

Education is fundamental to all-round human, material and spiritual development, in our national perception. Workers are segmented in different sectors (agricultural-non-agricultural) and types of work depending upon their levels of education, their asset status, and social identity. A higher level of education and skills increases the probability of a

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worker being engaged as a regular worker, and in the organized sector. In other words, it is expected regular workers in the organised sector get a premium on account of their education and skills, and this premium is considerably reduced due to their informal work status.

Does education propel women into employment? The gender differences in this respect are interesting and stark. For male workers, higher levels of education are indeed associated with higher WPR, both in rural and urban areas. But for women, WPR is higher for illiterate women than for women with higher levels of school education – a trend which reverses itself only for women with technical/vocational education or graduates.

In the light of above background the present study is an attempt to evaluate the changing pattern of rural workers especially in context of education and employment at ground level.

Data Methodology and Area of the Study

The present study is based on both secondary as well as primary data. The secondary data is collected mainly from NSSO 66th round report (Informal Sector and Conditions of Employment in India). This will provide the overall countries as well as of state-level employment status in informal sector. In addition to these, we also incorporated a questionnaire based primary data survey of two villages 'Newada' and 'Karadhana' of 'Sewapuri Block' in 'Varanasi' district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

These two villages have been taken from higher caste strata and from lower cast strata. Intensive data were collected with the help of (i) Interview schedule (ii) Observation and (iii) Group discussion. The total sample for the study is 388 households, which have collected on the basis of mixed method sampling, viz. 'stratified sample method' and 'random sample method'. The present paper has been divided into five sections and each section depicts some major observations.

Section 1

Literacy rate (Persons / All Age)

The present section (table 1) puts forward the literacy rate of persons as per our primary data. Subsequently the table 1 (A) shows the male-female distribution in this respect. Both the tables are also supplemented by the secondary data of NSSO for Uttar Pradesh and all-India for comparison.

Table 1 :

Literacy rate for persons of all ages in percentage (per 1000 persons) for each State for Person (2009-10)

Area	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban
Newada	82.6	-	-
Karadhana	68.3	-	-
Newada + Karadhana	71.4	-	-
Uttar Pradesh	56.0	70.2	59.0
all- India	62.2	78.9	66.8

Source: NSS Report No. 551: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, pp-51

Table 1 (A) :
Literacy rate in percentage for persons of all ages of Male - Female (2009-10)

Area	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Newada	90.0	74.0	-	-	-	-
Karadhana	76.6	58.8	-	-	-	-
Newada + Karadhana	79.6	62.2	-	-	-	-
Uttar Pradesh	65.8	45.6	76.1	63.7	68	49.4
all- India	70.6	53.3	83.6	73.6	74.2	58.8

Source: NSS Report No. 551: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, pp-51

Our main considerations on the tables 1 and 1 (A) shows that the literacy rate of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' was 56 percent as against 70.6 percent of rural 'India'. Our 'Primary Data' of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana) scores even higher literacy rate of 71.4 per cent. Male-female wise distribution of the literacy rates assess that:

- The male literacy rate as revealed by our 'Primary Data' is 79.6 percent, which is higher than the rural male literacy rates of both 'Uttar Pradesh' (65.8 per cent) and 'all-India' (70.6 per cent).
- Likewise the female literacy rate as exposed by our 'Primary Data' is 62.2 per cent, which is also higher than the rural female literacy rates of both 'Uttar Pradesh' (45.6 per cent) and 'all-India' (53.3 per cent).

Section -2

Distribution of Persons by General Educational level

The present section (table 2) locates the distribution of persons as per the general educational level. Subsequently the table 2 (A) shows the male-female distribution in this respect. Both the tables are also supplemented by the secondary data of NSSO for Uttar Pradesh and 'all-India' for comparison.

Table 2:

Percentage distribution of persons by general educational level of Persons in rural sector (2009-10)

Area	General educational level				
	Not literate	Literate & up to primary	Middle	Secondary & above	All
Newada	14.1	28.2	14.1	43.6	100
Karadhana	26.6	29.92	18.01	25.47	100
Newada + Karadhana	23.8	29.5	17.12	29.6	100
Uttar Pradesh	44.0	32.3	12.1	11.7	100
all- India	37.8	33.8	13.6	14.7	100

Source: NSS Report No. 537: Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2009-10, pp. 56-58 and Primary data

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Table 2 (A) :
Percentage distribution of persons by general educational level of Male - Female in rural sector (2009-10)

Area	General educational level									
	Not literate		Literate & up to primary		Middle		Secondary & above		All	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Newada	5.3	24.1	25.3	31.3	16.5	11.5	53.0	33		
Karadhana	17.9	36.6	30.0	29.2	20.3	15.4	31.8	18.7	100	
Newada + Karadhana	15.01	33.8	29.4	29.8	19.4	14.5	36.3	22.0	100	
Uttar Pradesh	34.2	54.4	35.0	29.4	15.1	8.9	15.7	7.4	100	
all-India	29.4	46.7	35.7	31.8	16.0	11.1	18.8	10.3	100	

Source: NSS Report No. 537: Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2009-10, pp. 56-58 and Primary Data

Our main reflections of the tables 2 and 2 (A) indicates that the 'Illiteracy' (not literate) rate of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' was 44 percent as against 37.8 per cent of rural 'India'. Our 'Primary Data' of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana) scores even lower 'Illiteracy' rate of 23.8 percent. While 12.1 percent of the persons in the rural sector of 'Uttar Pradesh' had attained the educational level up to 'Middle' and 13.6 percent of them at 'all-India' level, our 'Primary Data' of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana) tally even higher at 17.12 percent. Even as 11.7 percent of the persons in the rural sector of 'Uttar Pradesh' had attained the educational level of 'Secondary and above' and 14.7 per cent of them at 'all-India' level, our 'Primary Data' of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana) tally much higher at 29.6 per cent. As per the male-female distribution is concerned:

- 'Not literate' male in rural sector of 'Uttar Pradesh' was as high as 34.2 percent as against 29.4 percent of 'all-India' average. This is marked to be quite low at 15.01 percent in our 'Primary Data' tally of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana).
- 'Not literate' female in rural 'Uttar Pradesh' was much higher (54.4 per cent) than the male (34.2 per cent). At 'all-India' level, 46.7 per cent of female were 'Not literate'. However this is scored to be quite low at 33.8 percent in our 'Primary Data' tally of both the villages.
- In our 'Primary Data' more male (19.4 per cent) are marked to be educated up to 'Middle' as against 15.1 per cent of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 16 percent of 'all-India' average. Likewise, in our 'Primary Data' more female (14.5 per cent) are marked to be educated up to 'Middle' as against 8.9 per cent of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 11.1 percent of 'all-India' average.
- In as much as those whose educational levels are 'Secondary and above', in our 'Primary Data' much more male (36.3 per cent) are marked as against only 15.7 percent in rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 18.8 percent 'all-India' level. Likewise, in our 'Primary Data' much

more female (22 per cent) are marked to have attained this educational level, as against only 7.4 percent of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 10.3 percent of 'all-India' average.

Section 3:

Worker Population Ratio (WPR) (Education specific)

The table 3 provides the distribution 'Worker Population Ratio' (wpr) of persons of 'age 15 years & above' as per the general educational level as covered up by our 'Primary Data'. Subsequently the other observations shows the male and female distribution in this respect. All the three tables are also supplemented by the secondary data of NSSO for 'Uttar Pradesh' and 'all-India' for comparison.

Our focal evidences of the tables 3 and other observations regarding primary data illustrates that the 'Worker Population Ratio' (wpr) among 'not literate' persons of age 15 years and above of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' was 51.3 as against 58.6 wpr of rural 'India'. Our 'Primary Data' of both the villages (Newada and Karadhana) scores of wpr is 54.2 units. Among the literates, the highest wpr (72.2 at 'all-India' level and 76.2 in the rural sector of 'Uttar Pradesh') is marked among those who have done 'Post graduate & above'. In this respect, our 'Primary Data' scored quiet below level of 52.9 wpr. In fact, our 'Primary Data' kept a tally of quiet below level of wpr in all the education specific distribution than that of the respective wpr of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 'all-India'.

Table 3 :
Education-specific worker population ratio (wpr) for persons of age 15 years and above according to usual status (ps+ss) in rural sector (2009-10)

Area	General educational level								
	Not literate	Literate & up to primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher secondary	Diploma/certificate course	Graduate	Post graduate & above	All
Newada	27.5	43.9	47.4	44.9	42.5	35.4	66.7	41.8	42.7
Karadhana	58.4	62.8	57.4	47.9	47.5	42.9	42.1	54.8	43.2
Newada + Karadhana	54.2	58.5	55.4	47.2	45.7	38.6	42.9	52.9	51.7
Uttar Pradesh	51.3	59.7	56.1	56.3	52.0	41.0	62.8	76.2	54.7
all-India	58.6	66.4	59.2	52.9	48.1	62.0	62.6	72.2	59.5

Source: NSS Report No. 537: Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2009-10, pp. 59 to 61. And primary data survey

Male-female wise distribution of education specific wpr however yielded some more clarity such as:

- a) Among 'not literates', male wpr in our 'Primary Data' (89.6) is higher than the wpr of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' (88.8) and 'all-India' (87.4). On contrary, the female wpr is less in this respect.
- b) At the other extreme, among those who are 'Post graduate and above' yet again opposite situation is observed, with male wpr in our 'Primary Data' (75.4) is lesser than the wpr of rural 'Uttar Pradesh' (95.1) and 'all-India' (88.3). On contrary, the female wpr is more than rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and less than 'all-India'.

Section 4

Formal and Informal Workers (Education specific)

The present section provides the education specific distribution of percentage of workers of 'age 15 years and above' as in the 'Formal' and 'Informal' Sector of 'AGEGC and Non-agriculture' as disclosed by our 'Primary Data'. Subsequently the other observations regarding primary data shows the male and female distribution in the Informal sector only.

Our foremost considerations of the primary data observations shows that the 'Primary Data' of both the villages 'Newada' and 'Karadhana' taken together substantiates that, while on one hand only 5.4 per cent of the workers are 'not literate' in 'Formal' sector, on the other hand, quite high at 35.1 per cent of them are 'not literate' in 'Informal' sector. Clearly thus, the level of 'literacy' in the 'Formal' sector is as high as 94.6 per cent as against 64.9 per cent of literacy in the 'Informal' sector. It gets apparent that, almost double of the 'not literate' male workers are the 'not literate' women workers. On the contrary, literacy of male workers are double that of the female workers.

Section 5:

Informal Sector Workers (Education specific)

The present section provides the education specific percentage of employment of workers of age '15 years and above' as in the 'Informal' Sector of 'AGEGC and Non-agriculture' as disclosed by our 'Primary Data'. Our observations for the primary data regarding this section indicate the education specific status of employment of percentage of workers in the 'Informal' sector of 'AGEGC and non-agriculture' which shows that in the case of 'Self employed' workers, 32.5 per cent are 'not literate' and in the case of 'Casual' workers 38.9 per cent are 'not literate' whereas in the case of 'Regular employees', 24 per cent are 'not literate'.

Alternatively, 76 per cent of 'Regular employees', 67.5 per cent of 'Self employed' and 61.1 per cent of 'Casual' workers are literate. Among the literate 'Self employed', the highest concentration of them is marked to be on the educational level of 'Middle' (18.3 per cent); among the 'Casual' workers it is also at 'Middle' (16.5 per cent); and among the 'Regular employees' it is maximum in the level of 'Higher Secondary' (24 per cent). With regard to education specific status of employment of 'male workers', 18.75 per cent of 'Regular employees', 27.7 per cent of 'Self employed' and 26.94 per cent of 'Casual workers' are 'not literate'. To put it in the other way round, as high as 81.25 per cent of the male 'Regular employees', 72.3 per cent of male 'Self

employed' and 73.06 per cent of male 'Casual workers' are found to be literate.

Among the literate male 'Self employed', the highest concentration of them is marked to be on the educational level of 'Middle' (19.26 per cent); among the male 'Casual' workers it is also highest at 'Middle' (20.55 per cent); and among the male 'Regular employees' it is highest at 'Higher Secondary' (18.75 per cent). With regard to education specific status of employment of female workers, 33.3 per cent of female 'Regular employees', 66.7 per cent of female 'Self employed' and 70.2 per cent of female 'Casual workers' are 'not literate'.

To put it in the other way round, 66.7 per cent of the female 'Regular employees', 33.3 per cent of female 'Self employed' and 29.8 per cent of female 'Casual workers' are found to be literate. Among the literate female 'Self employed', the highest concentration of them is marked to be on the educational level of 'Literate & up to primary' (14.3 per cent); among the female 'Casual' workers it is also highest at 'Literate & up to primary' (15.5 per cent); and among the female 'Regular employees' it is highest at 'Higher Secondary' as well as at 'Graduate' (22.2 per cent).

Conclusion

The present study concludes that although the literacy rate of rural sector of 'Uttar Pradesh' is lower than 'all-India' literacy rate, but our 'Primary Data' scored higher literacy rate than both rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and rural 'India'. Male-female wise distribution revealed that the literacy rate of both male and female in our 'Primary Data' is considerably higher in this respect.

The comparative scenario of the male-female wise distribution also marked with not only lower percentage of 'Not literates' of both male and female in our 'Primary Data', but also more educated over the levels of 'Middle' and 'Secondary & above'. The assessment of education specific wpr of persons of age '15 years & above' as evaluated in the present study concludes that the worker population ratio (wpr) of 'not literate' persons of age '15 years and above' is higher in our primary survey area. This means that as compared to rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 'all-India', the workers in the villages of Varanasi district in Uttar Pradesh are higher illiterate. However, as we go up the ladder of educational levels, we marked lower wpr in our 'Primary Data' exposing lower level of education as measured up to rural 'Uttar Pradesh' and 'all-India'. Even male female distribution unveiled the same fact with female wpr being lesser than the male.

Further, our study shows that the level of literacy in the 'Formal' sector is much higher than the literacy in the 'Informal' sector. It gets apparent that, almost double of the 'not literate' male workers are the 'not literate' women workers. On the contrary, we affirm that, literacy of male workers is double that of the female workers in the 'informal' sector of 'AGEGC and non-agricultural' sector.

Observing the status of informal sector we find that in the 'Informal' sector the maximum 'not

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literate' are the 'Casual workers', followed by the 'Self employed' and the 'Regular employees'. Reverse is thus for the literacy levels. In as much as the literacy level of male in the 'Informal' sector is concerned, it is maximum among the 'Regular employees', followed by 'Casual workers' and the 'Self employed'. However in the case of female workers it is though again among the 'Regular employees', but it is followed by the 'Self employed' and the 'Casual workers'.

With regard to the distribution of education specific employment, in the case of both male and female quite uniquely the 'Self employed' and the 'Casual workers' are maximum at the educational level of 'Literate & up to Primary' and in the case of 'Regular employees' both male and female are marked to be maximum at the educational levels of 'Higher secondary' and 'Graduate'.

Finally we may suggest that the literates men and women participation in work should be ensured in the rural areas in form of increasing opportunity in the formal sector.

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