

Periodic Research

Changes in Quality of Employment in Rural India Since Liberalization



Rupinder Kaur
Assistant Professor,
Deptt. of Economics,
Punjabi University,
Patiala

Abstract

The transformation of rural employment is complex and multidimensional and more deteriorating. Employment opportunities in rural areas are increased in unorganized sector. The quality of employment in unorganized sector is, normally inferior to that of organized sector. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the quantitative as well as qualitative changes in employment of workers in rural India. The labour force participation rate and the work force participation rates among women has always remained much below than that of the men in rural India. But the gap in these two indicators which was being reduced after liberalization seems to be widening during the period of crisis. Unemployment rate increases during the period 1993-94 to 2011-12 for all workers in rural India. The most disturbing feature is the high unemployment rate among youths. Unemployment rate among youths has been increasing continuously in rural areas. The rate was higher for males than females. The higher unemployment rate among youths forces them to enter into poor quality job. The workers are still engaged in primary sectors particular female workers in rural areas because the entry barriers for these jobs are very low and their home based locations and flexible working hours fit well with domestic work. In the rural areas more than half of the workers were engaged in self employment followed by casual workers, regular wage workers. The workers are shifted to the sectors other than agriculture. But with the decline of employment in agriculture sector the share of self employment also decreases and the share of casual workers increases. The share of casual workers in total employment increases in rural areas. The earnings of casual workers are lower than the regular workers. We also observe the gender differences in earnings

Keywords: Employment, Participation Rate, Status of Employment, Earnings, Occupational Pattern.

Introduction

The contribution of agriculture sector as a percentage of GDP has a declining trend especially since 1991. In 1991, its share was 32.4 percent and in 2012-13, it came down to 12.4 percent. But the percentage of population depending upon agriculture reduced marginally and still today 58 percent population depend on agriculture sector for its livelihood (Srivastava and Saumya, 2013). Agriculture despite a sharp decline in its importance in gross domestic product, continues to be largest employer as the non-agricultural sector have not generated enough employment to effect a shift of workforce (Papla and Sahu, 2008).

Moreover, there is also growing concern about the nature of transition, as employment generation is taking place in informal sector but shrinking in the formal sector (Behera, 2012). The existence of large number of landless or near-landless families for whom labour is important for survival forces employment diversification (Macrosan, 2003). The aims of diversification in such cases is the achievement of an income portfolio with low Covariate risk between its components and reduce seasonal income variability through a switch of labour time from lower to higher return activities (Mehta, 2013).

While in aggregate urban areas have experienced a much faster growth than the rural areas, employment has been significantly high growth in rural areas in non-farm activities. The rural non-farm sector has emerged as the major source of rural employment growth. With rural non-farm self employment and incomes growing especially fast. But employment opportunities in the non-farm sector considerably better than for young men than for young women. The limited absorption employment capacity of the urban economy has led to the non-farm sector to become the main destination of growing labour force (Binswanser, 2011).

Periodic Research

The transformation of rural employment is complex and multidimensional and more deteriorating. Employment opportunities in rural areas are increased in unorganized sector. The quality of employment in unorganized sector is, normally inferior to that of organized sector. The unorganized sector is characterized by low level of earning, poor working conditions and lack of job security without any social security provision (Anupama and Kaur, 2013). The issue of employment expansion has at last landed agenda of the government in recent years. It is increasingly being realised that the goals establishing the regime of inclusive growth and attaining a significant reduction in poverty could not be fulfilled without addressing the employment question (Bhaumik, 2013). In this perspective present paper is an attempt to analyze the quantitative as well as qualitative changes in employment of workers in rural India. For examining the growth and structure of employment in rural India, data has been taken from the compiled reports of 50th, 55th, 61st, 66th and 68th NSSO round surveys pertaining to the year 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2004-05, 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively.

Dimensions of Quality of Employment Employment Opportunity

Opportunity of employment is the key dimension of quality of employment. This includes

labour force participation, work force participation, unemployment rate and employment by industry of work.

Labour Force Participation Rate

Table 1 shows that labour force participation rate remains almost same for rural male workers during 1993-94-05 to 2011-12. But the labor force participation rate for rural female workers increases during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05 and decreases during the period 2004-05 to 2011-12. Himanshu (2011) interprets the movement of women into the labor force between 1999-00 and 2004-05 as a response to the agrarian crisis of the period. The subsequent sharp drop in labor participation to 2009-10 is then interpreted as a withdrawal from the labor markets as economic conditions improved again. Others have pointed to the very large increase in participation in education as a major reason for withdrawal from the labor market. Labour force participation rates for all rural workers also decrease during the period. The data also shows that the labour force participation rate among women has always remained much below than that of the men in rural India. But the gap in these two indicators which was being reduced after liberalization seems to be widening during the period of crisis.

**Table -1
Labour Force Participation Rate in Rural India**

Labour Force Participation	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Usual(PS)	54.9	53.3	54.6	54.8	54.7	23.4	23.5	24.9	20.8	18.1
Usual(PS+SS)	56.1	54.1	55.5	55.6	55.3	33.0	30.2	33.3	26.5	25.3
Current Weekly Status	54.7	53.1	54.5	54.8	54.5	27.6	26.3	28.3	23.1	21.5
Current Daily Status	53.4	51.5	53.1	53.6	53.4	23.2	22.0	23.7	19.7	18.0

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014)

Work force Participation Rate

**Table - 2
Work Force Participation Rate in Rural India**

Work Force Participation	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Usual(PS)	53.8	52.2	53.5	53.7	53.5	23.4	23.1	24.2	20.2	17.6
Usual(PS+SS)	55.3	53.1	54.6	54.7	54.3	32.8	29.9	32.7	26.1	24.8
Current Weekly Status	53.1	51.0	52.4	53.1	52.6	26.7	25.3	27.5	22.3	20.7
Current Daily Status	50.4	47.8	48.8	53.6	50.4	21.9	20.4	21.6	18.2	16.9

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014)

Table 2 points out that the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000 has observed a decline in work force participation rate both for men and women, showing an era of jobless growth, but during the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05, an increase in work force participation rate both for men and women. Interestingly, the period 2004-05 to 2009-10 seems to be discriminating among the male and female workers in rural areas, for every type of status of employment, the work force participation rate among men has increased while for women it has declined considerably. The analysis shows that the job losses by women workers have been much higher than that

of the job gains by the male workers. The overall decline in the job market has taken whole of its brunt on the female labour force. The period 1993-94 to 2011-2012 has observed a decline in work force participation rate both for men and women, showing an era of jobless growth.

Work Force Participation Rate Across Age Groups

Workers are divided into four age groups – child workers (5-14 years), youth workers (15-29 years), middle aged workers (30-59 years), and old age workers (60 years & above). Table 3 shows that the participation rate of middle age workers was higher than others. This may be due to late entry to

the labour market, which is clearer by the sharp fall in participation rates of youth workers. Workforce participation rate among youth workers falls considerably. However, the fall in youth participation may be the result of education attainment of youths

and it may be due to lack of experience. On the other hand, the incidence of child labour was declining. The decline in child labour may be due to the ban on child labour and also may be the positive effects of mid day meals and various other government schemes.

Table - 3
Workforce Participation Rate across Age Groups in Rural India

	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Child Workers (5-14 years)	7.5	4.9	3.6	2.4	1.3	7.8	5.2	3.9	2.0	1.4
Youth workers (15-29 years)	79.8	74.1	74.2	64.8	61.6	44.8	40.1	41.4	28.8	25.8
Middle aged workers (30-59 years)	97.6	96.8	97.1	97.6	97.5	56.7	54.2	58.9	46.9	45.2
Old aged workers (60 years & above)	72.2	63.9	64.4	64.6	64.9	26.1	21.8	25.3	22.6	21.3

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Work Force Participation Rate by Different Levels of Education (15 Years and Above)

Table 4 describes work force participation rate according to different levels of education. The table shows that the participation rate was the highest for those who were not literate, followed by those who were literate up to primary and those who had education level graduate and above. Overtime trend

was mixed for all levels. However the participation rate among the graduate and above had decreased by a lower rate than the illiterates. The higher participation rate among less educated raises question about the employment quality, as the opportunity of getting formal sector employment or quality jobs are lower among less educated.

Table - 4
Work Force Participation Rate by Different Levels of Education (15 Years and Above)

Educational Status	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Not Literate	91.8	89.5	89.2	87.4	88.0	54.0	51.3	55.0	43.2	41.8
Literate and up to Primary	90.9	88.0	89.5	90.0	89.2	41.6	40.3	44.9	38.4	36.1
Middle Secondary	77.0	76.8	80.2	78.4	77.0	29.0	29.0	37.1	29.4	27.6
Secondary	72.8	73.7	73.2	69.7	66.8	25.8	25.7	30.5	22.2	22.2
Higher Secondary	68.6	71.3	70.9	63.4	61.8	23.4	20.6	25.2	18.3	17.6
Graduate & above	83.4	83.6	85.1	79.3	78.1	36.6	31.0	34.5	29.7	29.7

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate is defined as percentage of the number of persons unemployed to the persons in the labour force (NSSO). This provides information about the lack of employment opportunities among those who are willing to do work. Data shows deficit of employment opportunities among all workers. Unemployment rate increases during the period 1993-94 to 2011-12 for all workers in rural India. But unemployment rate marginally increases for male workers. For female workers, unemployment rate increases during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05 and marginally decreases during the period 2004-05 to 2011-12. This shows excessive supply of labour which result in poor remunerations and poor working conditions.

The most disturbing feature is the high unemployment rate among youths. Unemployment rate among youths has been increasing continuously during time period 1993-04 to 2011-12 in rural areas. The rate was higher for males than females. The higher unemployment rate among youths forces them to enter into poor quality job. The employment quality among educated do not seem to be encouraging. Unemployment rate among educated is higher than total unemployment rate. The unemployment rate among educated was higher for females than male workers. It had declined continuously for males but for females it decreased from 1993-94 to 1999-00 and increased to 2004-05 and again decreased.

Table 5
Unemployment Rate in Rural India

Years	Unemployment rate among the persons of age 15 years and above			Unemployment rate among Youths			Unemployment rate for educated		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
1993-94	1.4	0.8	1.2	3.5	1.9	2.9	6.5	16	7.5
1999-00	1.7	1	1.5	4.3	2.7	3.7	5.6	14.6	6.7
2004-05	1.6	1.8	1.7	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.4	15.2	6.5
2009-10	1.6	1.6	1.6	4.7	4.6	4.7	3.5	11.8	4.8
2011-12	1.7	1.7	1.7	5.0	4.8	4.9	3.6	9.7	4.7

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014)

Employment by Industry of Work

Percentage distribution of usual status workers by Industry of work shows that in rural India workers are shifting from primary sector to secondary sector and tertiary sector. In the year 1993-94, 74.1 percent male and 86.2 percent female workers were engaged in primary sector. This proportion decreases to 62.8 percent and 79.3 percent for rural male and female workers respectively in the year 2009-10. It further decreased to 59.4 and 74.9 percent for rural male and female workers respectively. Majority of the workers were engaged in primary sector in the rural areas. The percentage of female workers employed in primary sector is greater than that of the male workers. The share of male and female workers in

secondary sector is significantly increased in rural areas. In 1993-94, 8.4 per cent female workers and 11.2 per cent of male workers were engaged in secondary sector. This proportion increased to 17 per cent and 22 percent respectively for the female workers and male workers. The share of tertiary sector in total employment in rural areas marginally increases during the period 1993-94 to 2011-12. The share of female workers in tertiary sector increased more than the male workers in rural areas. The workers are still engaged in primary sectors particular female workers because the entry barriers for these jobs are very low and their home based locations and flexible working hours fit well with domestic work.

Table - 6
Percentage Distribution of Usual Status Workers by Industry of Work in Rural India

Sectors	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Primary	74.1	71.1	66.5	62.8	59.4	86.2	85.4	83.3	79.4	74.9
Secondary	11.2	12.6	15.5	19.3	22.0	8.40	9.0	10.2	13.0	16.7
Tertiary	14.3	16.1	18	17.8	18.7	5.6	5.8	6.6	7.6	8.3

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

The theories of structural change have argued that as an economy grows the share of agriculture in total employment falls and that of the other sectors increases (Kuznets, 1966; Chenery, 1979). These trends can be observed even during the period 1993-94 to 2011-12 (Table 7). The table showed that during this period in rural areas, about 13 per cent of total male as well as female workforce had shifted itself from agriculture to be occupied in other occupations. But still the percentage of female workers employed in agriculture was greater than that of the males. Currently, 74.94 per cent of the female work force in rural areas is employed in agriculture,

while this percentage is 59.36 per cent in case of males. In rural areas, outside agriculture, male workers are mainly employed in manufacturing, construction, trade, hotels and business etc., while females are mainly employed in manufacturing, construction and services. During the period of crisis, we can observe the decline in the share of workers employed in manufacturing in rural areas. The sector of construction seems to be the largest absorber of the workers. Besides, service sector has also shown increasing trends as far as the sectoral distribution of the workforce is concerned, yet its gains are higher for the male workers as compared to the female workers.

Table - 7
Distribution of Usually Employed Persons by Broad Industry Division

Sectors	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Agriculture	74.1	71.4	66.5	62.8	59.36	86.2	85.4	83.3	79.4	74.94
Mining and Quarrying	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.54	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	.29
Manufacturing	7.0	7.3	7.9	7.0	8.13	7.0	7.6	8.4	7.5	9.79
Electricity, Water etc.	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.20	0.31	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.07
Construction	3.2	4.5	6.8	11.3	13.1	0.9	1.1	1.5	5.2	6.59
Trade, Hotel and Restaurant	5.5	6.8	8.3	8.2	8.3	2.1	2.0	2.5	2.8	2.95
Transport, Storage and Communications	2.2	3.2	3.8	4.1	4.23	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.16
Other Services	7.0	6.1	5.9	5.6	6.41	3.4	3.7	3.9	4.6	6.04

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Employment by Status

After looking at the quantitative trends of employment in rural India, it would be interesting to look at the qualitative aspects, i.e., how different types of jobs were divided among males and females when the economy grew at faster rate and conversely, when it was shrinking. The changes in labour force participation rate and work participation rate have a significant impact on the quality of employment. Table 8 shows that in the rural areas more than half of the workers were engaged in self employment followed by casual workers, regular wage workers .The percentage share of self employment and casual female workers was higher than the male workers in rural areas .But the proportion of female regular salaried/wage workers was lower than male workers. The decline in share of agriculture in usual status

employment in rural areas has also led to decline in self employment in rural areas a big part of which constitutes unpaid family labour in case of females and employers and own account workers in case of males . The female workers in rural areas has registered a greater increase in regular employment as compared to the male worker during the period 2004-05 to 2011-12. The share of casual workers in total employment increases in rural areas. Casualisation of work force may be due to lack of opportunities in organized sector.

Above analysis shows that the majority of the workforce has been employed as self-employed workers. This is true for both the females as well as the males. However, the share of women as self-employed workers had always remained higher than that of the male workers.

Table - 8

Percentage Distribution of Usual Status Workers by Status In Employment in Rural India

Status of Employment	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Self Employment	57.5	55.0	58.1	53.5	54.5	58.6	57.3	63.7	55.7	59.3
Regular Wage/Salaried Employees	8.5	8.8	9.0	8.5	10.0	2.7	3.1	3.7	4.4	5.6
Casual Labour	33.8	36.20	32.9	38.0	35.5	33.8	36.2	32.6	39.9	35.1
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Educational Status of Persons of Age 15 Years and above

The differences in attainment of jobs as well as the wages/earnings may occur due to differences in education/ skill level etc. Therefore, here, an attempt has been made to find out if any differences in attainment of education exist among the males and females. The table 9 shows that the gender differences have declined for the illiterates and those educated up to middle standard as more of the females are joining the education institutions. But, at the same time, we can see that the gender differences in attainment of higher education have increased, in rural areas The table shows that in 1993-94, about 16 per cent of males in rural areas

have attained education above secondary level, the corresponding figure for females were about 5 per cent. However, in 2009-10, the share of rural males in this education category increased to 28 per cent and that of the females increased to 15 per cent. Thus, the table shows that not only the share of females in higher education category had remained much lower than that of the males but at the same time the male-female differences in attainment of higher education have accentuated in rural areas .These differences in educational attainment may result into differential labour market outcomes. The status of education may also affect the distribution of workers according to the type of occupation which may further affect the level of wages/earnings of the workforce.

Table - 9

Distribution of Persons of Age 15 Years and above, according to Education Status

Educational Status	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Not Literate	41.1	37.2	32.0	26.0	25.3	70.8	65.2	58.5	49.8	47.5
Literate and up to Primary	27.6	26.2	27.7	25.3	24.7	16.6	17.4	19.9	21.9	21.3
Middle	15.4	17.8	19.1	20.5	19.7	7.3	9.6	11.3	13.5	13.8
Secondary and above	15.7	18.9	21.1	28.1	21.1	5.3	7.7	10.2	14.8	17.4

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Earnings of Workers

The estimated number of persons in the labour force and workforce increases for rural male workers and drastically decreases for rural female workers during the period 2004-05 to 2011-12. The

unemployed persons has increased during 2004-05 to 2010-11 from 4.7 million to 5 million for males This means excessive supply of labour than demand. This results in poor remunerations and poor working conditions.

Periodic Research

Table - 10

Daily Wage Rates of Regular Wage/Salaried Employees and Casual Labour in Rural India (Constant Prices)

Status of Employment	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Regular Wage/Salaried Employees	58.48	127.32	144.53	249.15	322.28	34.89	114.01	85.5	155.87	201.56
Casual Labour in Other Than Public Work	23.18	45.48	55.03	101.53	149.32	15.33	29.39	34.94	68.94	103.28

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

Average earnings of male and female workers in rural areas has increased both for the regular and casual workers during the period 1993-94 to 2011-12. The increase in the wages of casual workers was higher than the increase in the salaries of regular workers. Even then the earnings of casual workers were lower than the regular workers. We also observe the gender differences in earnings. We observe that the earnings of female workers increase more than the earnings of male workers. In spite of this earnings of female workers are less than the male workers.

Occupational Pattern

As it has already been mentioned that the differences in occupational pattern is an important determinant of wage disparity, here an attempt has been made to find out the percentage share of males and females workers occupation wise. Using single digit classification of NCO-1968, we can observe from the table (Table 11) that in 2004-05, 83 per cent women workers in rural areas was working in farming. In later years, the share of women in the farming fell

considerably to 47.8 per cent in 2011-12. The proportion of female workers was increased considerably in craft related trade workers and labourers. Interestingly, the relative share of women was increasing in production related activities with home based production being a predominant part within it. In rest of the occupations (other than farming, services, administration, professional workers and technical workers), the share of the female workers is much below. The table further revealed that the percentage of male workers in skilled agricultural and fishery workers decreased from 66.08 per cent in 2004-05 to 38.88 per cent in 2011-12. The proportion of male workers increased in others occupations like administration, professional workers and technical workers. The educational level of males is higher than females so male workers are engaged in those occupations where more educational skills are required. We can easily find the association between occupational differences and the wage differences.

Table - 11

Percentage Distribution of Usual Status Workers by Occupation Division

Category of Occupations	Male			Female		
	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
Legislators, Seniors officials and managers	1.92	3.37	4.16	.97	1.72	2.02
Professionals Technicians and related workers	2.49	3.43	3.14	1.76	2.52	2.07
Clerk	1.62	.88	.99	.34	.23	.30
Service workers and shop/market sales workers	8.56	5.47	5.63	4.26	2.26	2.68
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	66.08	38.44	38.80	83.00	46.78	47.8
Craft related trade workers	2.82	9.64	11.02	3.45	6.53	10.00
Plant & mechanical operators and assemblers	2.70	3.24	4.05	.49	.48	.63
Labourers etc.	13.48	34.95	31.42	5.45	39.17	33.30
Workers not classified by occupation	3.0	.21	.12	.21	.05	.05

Source: NSSO (2011 and 2014).

The above analysis reveals that these two decades did not generate the expected level of employment in rural areas, in view of the economic growth experienced in rural areas yet some very distinct changes could be noticed. Firstly, the persistence of gender stereotypes in the labour market, which is reflected as labour force participation of women has been seen to decline, labour force participation of males has remained unaffected even in the crises period. Secondly, in rural areas workers are shifted to the sectors other than agriculture. The gains in employment in construction and services, especially in the low-end, informal jobs, may be

absorbing a section of rural workers. But with the decline of employment in agriculture sector the share of self employment also decreases and the share of casual workers increases. But the workers conditions for casual worker are not very good. Therefore serious steps are needed to be taken so that pressure on unorganized sector can be reduced. It should be done only by creating more and more job opportunities, diverting public expenditure towards rural infrastructure, supporting expansion of non- farm activities.

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