

Impact of Educational Attainment on Employment Outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between educational attainment and employment outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir, drawing on Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data. Given the high rates of educated yet unemployed individuals in the region, the study explores how education levels influence the likelihood of being employed, unemployed, or inactive. The analysis reveals a complex interaction between education and employment, where higher educational attainment does not straightforwardly lead to better employment outcomes. While more educated individuals exhibit lower inactivity rates but face higher unemployment, suggesting a significant skill mismatch.

The occupation-wise analysis provides additional insights, showing that highly educated individuals are concentrated in managerial, educational, and creative professions, yet competition in these fields results in limited employment opportunities. Conversely, lower-educated individuals are absorbed mainly in agriculture, trade, and elementary occupations, which remain accessible but offer limited economic mobility. Industry-wise, the findings show that agriculture is a primary employer for lower-educated individuals. In contrast, higher-educated individuals aim for positions in the public and service sectors, where opportunities are constrained.

Keywords: Employment outcomes, Unemployment, Occupation, Probit.

JEL Classification: I23, I24, J21, J24.

Introduction

Unemployment is one of the most significant societal and economic challenges worldwide, with youth unemployment constituting a substantial portion of the overall rate. The share of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) exceeds 22% and has shown slight improvement since 2005 (ILO, 2020). Some researchers argue that higher education schooling contributes to elevated levels of youth unemployment (ILO, 2020), and NEET rates

highlight a potential risk to economic growth (Sinan et al., 2021). Besides economic factors, school-to-work transition issues and socio-demographic factors, such as gender and education, play roles in unemployment and may exacerbate the problem.

Education is a crucial socioeconomic variable because investing in it drives human capital formation, which is vital for sustainable economic growth (Danacica, 2022). Education has been shown to improve the quality of life (Lazic et al., 2021), reduce economic inequalities, and influence labour market outcomes (Ram, 1990). Human capital investment boosts labour productivity and contributes to efficient economic development. Although higher education has sometimes been critiqued for perpetuating social and economic inequalities, rapid technological advancements have renewed focus on its importance (Pillay, 2011).

Today, higher education is increasingly viewed as an engine of economic competitiveness, essential for the sustainable development of knowledge economies. Rapid technological transformations and the demand for skilled labour have prompted societies to invest more in higher education, expanding the number of individuals with advanced education and higher education institutions (Danacica, 2023). Higher education has thus become widespread, and for societies to benefit fully, graduates need to be effectively integrated into the labour market (Erdem, 2012). Unemployment impacts highly educated individuals differently from other groups due to their unique qualifications, higher expectations, and the financial investments already made in their development. Studies show that unemployment severely affects highly educated individuals (Bai, 2006).

The increase in unemployment rates among highly educated individuals and the mismatch between graduates' acquired skills and employers' requirements have recently attracted considerable research interest. Economic literature shows that higher education enhances the likelihood of employment or re-employment and can shorten periods of unemployment (Pastore, 2004).

Understanding the impact of educational attainment on employment outcomes is especially important in Jammu and Kashmir because of the region's distinct socio-economic constraints. With a young population confronting economic and political issues, education's role in moulding career outcomes becomes even more complex. High unemployment rates, along with limited employment prospects and varied regional dynamics, need to determine how educational attainment affects labour market involvement and whether the skills obtained via school are compatible with existing occupations. This study will look into these issues, contributing to a better understanding of the socio-economic significance of education in Jammu and Kashmir's changing labour market landscape.

Literature Review

The human capital theory, propounded by Gray Becker (Becker, 1964), establishes that “education is the key to improving chances of being employable. The theory maintains that

individuals and society benefit economically from investing in people. Here, investment significantly differentiates human capital expenditures from consumption expenditures.” “The human capital theory rests on two fundamental assumptions. The first is that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the productive capacity of a population. Human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. Second, earned income reflects the marginal productivity of different categories of workers. Thus, the more educated one is, the more employable one will be (Becker, 1964).

Empirical studies have examined the complex relationship between education, human capital, and unemployment, revealing mixed findings on how educational attainment impacts employment outcomes across different contexts. Research by Sweeten et al., Rees and Mocan, Sinha et al., and Micklewright et al. explored the influence of educational factors on unemployment, such as high school dropout rates, college enrolment, and early school leaving. These studies found varied effects on employment, illustrating the multi-faceted nature of this relationship (Sinha, 2022, 2023). Similarly, (Izedonmi & Urhie, 2015) analyzed the connection between education and unemployment in Nigeria between 1988 and 2012. Using Granger causality tests, they found independent relationships between primary education enrolment and unemployment, a bi-directional relationship between secondary education enrolment and unemployment, and a one-way causality from tertiary education enrolment to unemployment. Tertiary education had the most substantial impact on unemployment, explaining about 95% of changes in the unemployment rate in Nigeria, though real GDP had a minimal impact.

Further research (Adebayo, 2017) on Nigeria from 1970 to 2015 showed that education expenditure negatively but significantly affected the unemployment rate, as demonstrated through an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) approach. Similarly, (Abdalali and Abolfazi, 2017) investigated educational attainment and unemployment in Indonesia from 2005 to 2013, using literacy rate and expected years of schooling as proxies. They discovered a negative relationship between literacy rate and unemployment; however, an increase in expected or mean years of schooling positively affected unemployment.

(Adejumo, 2017) An autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model was used to examine the effect of educational attainment on employment between 1970 and 2014. Despite using primary and secondary enrolment rates as indicators of educational attainment, the study found that education levels alone were insufficient to stimulate employment or significantly reduce unemployment. (Adakoya, 2018), Focusing on the period from 1995 to 2017, a vector error correction mechanism and Granger causality test were employed to explore the impact of tertiary graduation rates on unemployment in Nigeria, finding no causal relationship between graduation rates and unemployment.

Several studies used diverse methodologies to capture the complex effects of education on unemployment. For example, (Kenny, 2019) employed the Error Correction Method to study secondary school attainment rates and their influence on unemployment volatility in Nigeria

(1981-2015), revealing a negative yet statistically insignificant relationship. (Afolayan et al., 2019), They highlighted the combined roles of electricity consumption and tertiary enrolment in curbing unemployment in Nigeria (1981-2017), with results indicating a negative impact of electricity consumption on both unemployment and enrolment rates, employing Johansen co-integration and OLS techniques. Lastly, (Ekeh, 2020) analysed the effects of literacy rate, school enrolment rate, and graduation rate on unemployment in Nigeria (1990-2018), finding counterintuitive positive effects of these variables on unemployment, with only the graduation rate proving statistically significant.

Although the findings demonstrate that education and human capital investments can influence employment outcomes, the effects appear inconsistent across contexts and education levels. While many studies show tertiary education's potential to reduce unemployment, others reveal no significant effect or positive association between education and unemployment. There remains limited exploration of education's impact on employment in regions experiencing socio-economic complexities, where youth face distinct challenges related to political instability and limited economic opportunities. This study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating how various educational attainment levels influence employment outcomes in Kashmir, accounting for the unique socio-economic context of the region.

Methodology and Data:

This study employs a multinomial probit model, generalizing probit regression to allow for multiple discrete outcomes. The outcome variable categorizes individuals into one of four labour market statuses: employed, unemployed, currently in education, and inactive in the labour market. As the study does not focus on those currently in education, the analysis includes only three categories in the multinomial probit model: employed, unemployed, and inactive.

To control for factors influencing educational enrolment rather than labour force participation, the study excludes individuals presently in education from the primary analysis. Employment, unemployment, and inactivity statuses are defined per the Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status (UPSS) approach, where an unemployed individual is actively seeking work but is currently without a job. The inactive group represents 'inactive NEETs,' those not in the labour force, education, or training and not actively seeking employment.

Explanatory variable

General educational levels: There are six educational dummies up to primary level, secondary level, higher secondary level, diploma/certificate course, graduate, postgraduate, and above. Illiterate has been made the reference category. Youth unemployment in India is higher among educated youth than uneducated ones (Mohan, 2014). Unemployment rates in India are highly concentrated among educated youths (Basole, 2019). We expect, in our analysis, that youth at higher levels of education will have higher chances of being unemployed and lower chances of being inactive.

Estimation Techniques

The multinomial probit model has been used to estimate how different factors influence the possibility of a particular labour market outcome. Using the multinomial probit model gives an advantage over the multinomial logit model in this analysis. The independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) restriction built into the multinomial logit model is relaxed in the multinomial probit model (Greene, 2003). The IIA property infers that the probability of one status that the outcome variable takes is independent of other alternatives available. However, in the case of young people, labour market decisions are not independent but are mostly interdependent (Domadenik & Pastore, 2004). A person may continue further education if better jobs are unavailable in the labour market. Some people choosing to be out of the labour force may also be driven by poor employment prospects in the market. Thus, IIA property is satisfactory if choices of labour market status are not purely independent. Moreover, the calculated marginal effects in probit estimates are straightforward and more accessible to interpret and understand than the odd ratio given in logit estimates (Verdu, 2008).

Every individual obtains utility from each alternative in the multinomial probit model (Abdullah, 2023). following (Bairagya, 2018), (Jepsen, 2008), and (Vairagya, 2018), the model can be described as follows:

$$y_i = f(X_i)$$

Dependent variable

Where $y_i=0$ if employed (Reference category)

$y_i=1$ if Unemployed

$y_i=2$ if Inactive

Independent variables

Educational levels (X1): Dummy Variable where X_{11} represents Primary and 0 otherwise, X_{12} represents Secondary and 0 otherwise, X_{13} represents Higher Secondary and 0 otherwise, X_{14} represents Diploma and 0 otherwise, X_{15} represents Graduate and 0 otherwise, X_{16} represents P.G and above and 0 otherwise.

The multinomial probit model estimates the probability of each labour market status given the values of the independent variables. The utility for each alternative status (employed, unemployed, inactive) can be modelled as follows:

$$U_{ij} = \beta_{j0} + \beta_{j1}X_{i1} + \epsilon_{ij}$$

Where U_{ij} is the utility that individual i gets from the labour market status j

β_{j0} , β_{j1} are the coefficients to be estimated

ϵ_{ij} is the error term.

Results and Discussions:

The result of the Multinomial probit model determining youth labour market outcome in Jammu and Kashmir has been presented. Table 1 presents the marginal effects of variables obtained from the multinomial probit model for the entire population sample in 2022-23. The model estimates the role of different factors in affecting the probability of a particular labour market outcome among youth in Jammu and Kashmir.

Table 1 Marginal Effects from Multinomial Probit Model for Unemployment in 2022-23

Variables	Marginal Effects PLFS		
	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive
Educational Attainments (Ref: Illiterate)			
Primary	-0.136***	0.001***	0.135***
	(0.010)	(0.000)	(0.010)
Secondary	0.176***	0.012***	-0.188***
	(0.010)	(0.001)	(0.010)
Higher Secondary	0.120***	0.038***	-0.158***
	(0.015)	(0.005)	(0.015)
Diploma	0.252***	0.094***	-0.347***
	(0.106)	(0.064)	(0.098)
Graduate	0.204***	0.147***	-0.351***
	(0.018)	(0.012)	(0.017)
P.G. and above	0.264***	0.217***	-0.482***
	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.018)

Source: Calculated from PLFS 2022-23

Standard errors are given in parentheses *, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively (*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$)

The study estimates a multinomial probit model for round 2022-23 to compare the educational attainments of youth labour market outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir. Comparing these results reveals significant insights into the evolving educational attainments influencing youth employment, unemployment, and inactivity. Notably, the youth labour force participation increased from 40.8% in 2017-18 to 47.7% in 2022-23, while youth unemployment (UPSS) declined from 15% to 13.7%.

Higher education levels are paradoxically associated with increased unemployment rates. For instance, youth with a diploma or certificate had a 9.4% higher probability of unemployment in 2022-23. This trend continues as qualifications increase; graduates are 14.7% more likely to be unemployed than their illiterate counterparts. The situation worsens for those with postgraduate degrees, who face a 21.7% higher likelihood of unemployment. Despite their higher educational attainment, these individuals encounter difficulties in securing suitable employment, indicating a

significant skills mismatch in the labour market aligned with the transition from school to work. However, it is noteworthy that individuals with higher education are less likely to be inactive, suggesting that while they remain actively engaged in the labour market, they struggle to find employment. These findings highlight the urgent need for better alignment between educational programs and labour market demands to ensure that higher education effectively translates into viable employment opportunities.

Industry-Wise Distribution of Individuals by Educational Attainment Levels

Educational attainment is a pivotal determinant of labour market outcomes, influencing an individual's likelihood of employment and shaping workforce dynamics across regions. The link between education and employment is particularly complex in Jammu and Kashmir, where economic conditions and socio-political factors create distinct challenges (Rasool et al., 2016). While higher education levels are generally expected to improve employment prospects, Jammu and Kashmir has seen a paradoxical trend where highly educated youth face elevated unemployment rates (Qadri & Kasab, 2017). This phenomenon suggests a possible misalignment between the skills imparted by the education system and the needs of the labour market, leading to the underutilization of talent and skill mismatch (Singh et al., 2024). By examining how various levels of educational attainment, ranging from primary to postgraduate, affect employment, unemployment, and inactivity rates, this study aims to clarify these dynamics. Understanding the impact of educational attainment on employment outcomes in Kashmir can offer insights into policy needs and strategies for enhancing job opportunities and aligning education with labour market demands.

Table 2 Sector-wise distribution of employment in Jammu and Kashmir

Educational Levels	Agriculture	Industry	Service	Total
Illiterate	786	59	9	854
Up to Primary	307	37	5	349
Secondary	989	74	29	1092
Higher Secondary	244	11	11	266
Diploma	4	0	1	5
Graduate	103	5	9	117
P.G and above	35	4	5	44
Total	2468	190	69	2727

Source: PLFS 2022-23

The data identifies significant trends in educational attainment and industry engagement. A considerable proportion of agricultural workers are illiterate, indicating a significant lack of formal education. However, as educational levels rise, the number of people working in agriculture declines, with more shifting into industry and services, particularly those with secondary and graduate degrees. Secondary education looks to open doors to both industry and services, while higher education levels continue to encourage engagement in these sectors, albeit

in lower numbers. The comparatively low participation rate among individuals with diplomas may indicate a need for more vocational training. At the same time, the limited workforce representation of graduates and postgraduates shows potential shortages in employment prospects suitable for these higher degrees.

Educational Attainment and Occupational Structure

Jammu and Kashmir's education and occupational structure reflect significant challenges and transformations. The region's economy is predominantly agrarian, with about 75% of the population engaged in agriculture, indicating a backward economic structure (Khan, 2014). However, there has been a notable shift towards the service sector, absorbing labour from agriculture, while the secondary sector remains underdeveloped (Mir & Nengroo, 2019). In education, particularly teacher training, institutions face infrastructural deficiencies and a lack of standardized monitoring, although recent policy changes may improve the situation (Khan & Chahal, 2024).

The relationship between educational attainment and occupational structure offers critical insights into workforce dynamics and how individuals navigate employment sectors. Education is a foundational determinant of an individual's occupational opportunities, influencing the type of work they pursue and their potential for upward mobility. Higher levels of education are often associated with roles that demand specialized skills, analytical thinking, and leadership capacities. At the same time, lower educational attainment may restrict individuals to sectors with fewer skill requirements or more labour-intensive roles. We can better understand how education shapes economic participation and labour market outcomes by analyzing how educational qualifications correspond with employment across various occupational sectors, including leadership, education, service, agriculture, technical trades, and elementary occupations.

Table 3 Occupational Structure of educational attainments in J&K

Educational levels	Leadership & manager	Education & creative profession	Service and sales workers	Agriculture & horticulture	Technical & skills	Plant operators	Transport	Elementary occupation	Total
Illiterate	1	0	4	797	19	1	0	32	854
Primary	0	1	1	306	24	0	1	16	349
Secondary	4	1	20	993	35	5	1	33	1092
HH Sec	1	1	8	244	6	2	0	4	266
Diploma	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
Graduate	2	1	5	103	2	2	0	2	117
P. G	1	2	2	35	3	0	0	1	44
Total	9	6	41	2482	89	10	2	88	2727

Source: PLFS 2022-23

The data reveals a strong relationship between educational attainment and occupational distribution across various fields. Individuals with no formal education or only primary education are predominantly employed in agriculture and animal-related roles, suggesting limited access to diverse job opportunities. Specifically, 797 work in agriculture among illiterate individuals, reflecting the traditional reliance on this sector for those with minimal educational backgrounds. Employment patterns show increased diversity as educational levels rise to secondary and higher secondary. While agriculture still holds a significant portion of individuals with secondary education, with 993 individuals, there is a shift toward service, sales, and technical roles, indicating that higher education opens pathways beyond basic labour-intensive fields.

Graduates and postgraduates are notably less concentrated in agriculture, demonstrating an even broader occupational spread. These individuals are more likely to occupy leadership positions or roles in educational and creative professions, with a smaller yet notable presence in technical and specialized occupations. This trend underscores that higher education facilitates access to more specialized or higher-status jobs, such as managerial and technical roles, often requiring specific skills or advanced knowledge.

Furthermore, the data shows that technical and plant operator roles have fewer individuals across all education levels, highlighting the specialized nature of these fields, which may demand additional vocational training or technical education beyond general schooling. Overall, this analysis suggests that educational advancement in this population is associated with occupational mobility and access to diverse employment sectors, underscoring the critical role of education in enabling entry into specialized and leadership positions.

Structural Barriers and Policy Solutions

A key weakness in Jammu and Kashmir's current labour market structure is the concentration of educated individuals in a few sectors. At the same time, specific industries fail to absorb skilled workers. The following factors contribute to these constraints. Many highly educated individuals prefer government jobs, leading to stiff competition and prolonged unemployment. The private sector remains underdeveloped, particularly in high-skilled industries like IT, manufacturing, and finance, limiting employment opportunities for graduates. Political uncertainty and infrastructural deficits discourage large-scale investments, affecting job creation. Existing industries, such as tourism and agriculture, predominantly offer low-skill jobs, leading to underemployment among highly educated youth. Although agriculture is a significant employer, it primarily absorbs low-educated workers, offering limited career growth. The region lacks large manufacturing units, restricting engineering, production, and industrial management jobs. While the service industry (education, healthcare, IT) is growing, it cannot absorb all educated youth, leading to an oversupply of skilled workers.

Encouraging investment in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, IT services, and e-commerce to create high-skilled jobs. Strengthening infrastructure development, particularly in

industrial corridors, to attract private-sector growth. Expanding tech-based start-ups and IT-enabled services (ITES) with government-backed incentives. Promoting export-oriented industries in handicrafts, horticulture, and agro-processing to boost skilled employment. Providing financial support and mentorship to educated youth willing to start their businesses. Developing entrepreneurship incubation centres in collaboration with universities to nurture job creators rather than job seekers.

Conclusion

This study looks at the effect of educational attainment on employment outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir, utilising PLFS data to see how different education levels affect people's chances of being employed, jobless, or inactive. The data demonstrate a mixed relationship: more education reduces inactivity while increasing unemployment, indicating a severe skill mismatch in the region's labour market. This mismatch indicates a disparity between the abilities acquired via education and those required by existing career prospects, with higher-educated persons struggling to find acceptable work.

The industry-specific research also reveals that employment results vary significantly between sectors, indicating that specific industries have a limited potential to absorb educated individuals. Agriculture, for example, continues to employ a higher proportion of lower-educated people. In contrast, highly educated people prefer to work in the service and public sectors, where prospects may be limited.

The occupation-based study throws more light on these employment trends. Individuals with higher education are more likely to work in occupations that need specialised abilities, such as management, education, and creativity. However, chances in these industries are restricted, resulting in oversaturation and increased competition for competent personnel. Lower-educated individuals, on the other hand, are more likely to work in agricultural, trade, and elementary occupations, which are nonetheless relatively accessible but provide fewer opportunities for economic progress.

With these findings, resolving the skill gap in the region is critical to improving employment prospects among the educated workforce. Based on emerging industry needs, policymakers should examine efforts that link educational programs to market demands, such as vocational training and skill development. Furthermore, encouraging entrepreneurship and expanding industries with high employment potential may assist to reduce the mismatch and provide job prospects for educated youth.

Future Implications

One of the significant challenges in Jammu and Kashmir's labour market is the mismatch between educational attainment and employment opportunities. To address this issue, targeted

policy interventions are necessary to align education with labour market needs. The following strategies could significantly enhance employment outcomes:

Vocational Training and Skill Development

Introducing industry-relevant vocational training programs can help reduce skill mismatches and improve employability. Expanding National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) initiatives and establishing more Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) tailored to local industries (e.g., handicrafts, tourism, IT, and agro-processing). Providing on-the-job training through collaborations with private companies ensures graduates acquire practical skills.

Curriculum Reforms for Market-Oriented Education

Updating higher education curricula to incorporate emerging job market demands, particularly in technology, finance, entrepreneurship, and healthcare. Schools and colleges should introduce soft skills training to improve communication, problem-solving, and leadership abilities, making graduates more adaptable and strengthening internship programs and mandatory industry-linked university projects to bridge the education-practical experience gap.

Industry-Academic Collaborations

Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) where universities collaborate with businesses to develop job-oriented courses. Establishing incubation centres and start-up hubs within universities to promote entrepreneurship among educated youth and facilitating government incentives for industries that hire fresh graduates and provide skill-enhancement training. The region can improve employment prospects for educated youth by implementing these policy measures, ensuring that higher education translates into meaningful workforce participation.

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