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Educated but unemployed: A comparative analysis of Rural and Urban youth in Haryana

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Abstract

The paper titled "Educated but Unemployed: A Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban Youth in Haryana" explores the relationship between educational levels and employment patterns among rural and urban youth in Haryana, with a focus on gender disparities. The study reveals that labour force participation is higher among illiterate individuals, particularly females, although the trend varies significantly across educational categories. The paper highlights that as educational levels increase, there is a marked decline in the number of individuals engaged in agricultural and allied activities, especially among females. While the economic participation of males shows a shift towards non-agricultural wage labour and salaried employment with higher education, females, despite higher educational attainment, still dominate low-paid casual and informal sectors. The study also examines the diversification of employment opportunities, noting a significant rise in salaried positions among females with secondary and higher education. Ultimately, the paper concludes that education plays a crucial role in broadening employment prospects, though gender-based disparities remain, particularly for females in rural areas.

Keywords: Rural youth, urban youth, education, employment patterns, gender disparities

Introduction

Unemployment has emerged as a critical challenge across the globe, with educated unemployment being a pressing concern, particularly in developing economies like India. The World Employment Review (1999) by the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights that employment conditions have deteriorated significantly in recent years, leading to wage insecurity, jobless growth, and an expanding number of educated unemployed individuals. In India, this issue has been exacerbated since the liberalization era, as the organized sector-traditionally a significant employer of educated individuals-has struggled to grow adequately. The manufacturing sector, in particular, has experienced a sharp decline in employment generation, further aggravating the problem.

Scholars like Khan (1996) ^[5] have noted that India's long-standing focus on education and its perceived role in economic growth has resulted in an overabundance of educated manpower, which ironically contributes to the growing problem of educated unemployment. This dual challenge arises from two primary factors: a scarcity of quality jobs in the market and the reluctance of educated individuals to accept lower-quality employment, as noted by Mehta (1992) ^[8]. Education, while enhancing employability, also raises aspirations, leading to a mismatch between job availability and expectations.

This paper examines the dynamic changes in rural and urban Haryana, an agriculturally advanced state, to understand the factors contributing to educated unemployment and the disparities in employment preferences between rural and urban youth. It aims to shed light on the nuanced interplay of education, employment opportunities, and aspirations in this context.

Review of Literature

The issue of youth unemployment, particularly among the educated, has been a persistent challenge in Haryana, with various studies investigating its underlying causes and consequences. Chowdhry (2005) ^[2] explores the "crisis of masculinity" in Haryana, focusing on the struggles faced by unmarried, unemployed, and aged men in rural areas.

The study highlights that a significant portion of the educated and semi-educated rural youth under the age of 25 remains unemployed, partly due to their aversion to agricultural work and the unavailability of suitable jobs in the rural economy. This points to the complex nature of unemployment where education does not necessarily translate to employment opportunities in rural settings.

Mamgain (2017) ^[6] in his study on unemployment among educated youth in India addresses regional disparities, noting that states like Haryana exhibit a relatively high unemployment rate among educated youth, despite their economic development. He emphasizes the importance of interventions such as free coaching for competitive exams to tackle this issue, especially among Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/ST) youth, who face compounded disadvantages in the job market. Mamgain's work underscores the need for targeted policy measures to enhance employability and bridge the gap between education and employment.

Tripathi *et al.* (2018) ^[11] focus on the attitudes of rural youth in Haryana towards farming, revealing a growing disinterest in agriculture among the younger population, even though it remains the primary livelihood source. Their study found that many unemployed youths, particularly in rural areas, continue living with their parents, either seeking jobs or pursuing further education, indicating a disconnect between their educational aspirations and available employment opportunities.

Ishtiaque, Khan, and Jahan (2019) ^[3] examine the educational attainments of women in Haryana, noting significant gender disparities in educational access and outcomes. Their study highlights the progress made in improving female literacy rates but also points to the persistent challenges of unemployment among educated women, especially in rural areas. They argue that addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that combines educational advancements with economic opportunities.

Thomas (2021) ^[10] investigates the role of families in shaping the educational trajectories of undergraduate students in Haryana, emphasizing how family expectations and gender norms influence young people's access to higher education. The study finds that, despite a relatively high enrolment rate for higher education in Haryana, gender disparities persist, with women facing additional barriers to employment even after completing their education.

Singh, Parida, and Awasthi (2020) ^[9] explore the employability and earning differentials among technically and vocationally trained youth in India, with a particular focus on Haryana and Punjab. Their findings suggest that while vocational training can improve employability, it often does not guarantee higher earnings, as youth in these states struggle to find appropriate jobs that match their skills. The study further emphasizes the role of targeted training programs in improving the employability of youth, particularly in states like Haryana, where the unemployment rate among the educated is notably high.

These studies collectively highlight the complexities of the education-employment relationship in Haryana, with a particular focus on youth unemployment and gendered educational outcomes. They underscore the need for targeted policies to address both the supply and demand sides of the labor market, particularly for the educated youth, and the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to enhance employment opportunities for women.

Objectives

The study aims to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by educated youth in Haryana concerning employment and unemployment. It seeks to examine the participation of the educated workforce in gainful engagements, the deprivations faced due to limited income and employment opportunities, and the impact of rising aspirations associated with higher education levels. Going beyond statistical data, the research aims to uncover the nuanced realities and untold stories of educated unemployment in the state.

Key objectives include

- Analyzing the structure and nature of employment among educated individuals.
- Investigating unemployment trends across various educational categories.
- Examining the employment structure, particularly the role and share of the non-farm sector.
- Understanding the gendered effects within the occupational structure of employment.
- Evaluating the scope for further employment in non-farm sectors for educated individuals.

The study hypothesizes that diversification into non-farm employment and the nature of such occupations at the household level are influenced by education levels. To test this hypothesis, the research addresses the following questions:

1. What proportion of the highly educated workforce diversifies into non-farm employment compared to those with lower educational qualifications?
2. How does the pattern of occupational diversification differ between the higher-educated and lower-educated workforce in non-farm sectors?
3. What impact does educational level have on the tendency for diversification among males versus females?
4. How does the pattern of occupational diversification vary among genders as educational levels change?

By leveraging micro-level data from Haryana, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the employment dynamics and occupational diversification among educated youth in both rural and urban settings.

The Case Region

Haryana serves as the case region for this study, offering a unique lens to examine the changing employment dynamics in an agriculturally advanced yet socio-economically diverse state. Secondary data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) highlights concerning trends in Haryana's employment scenario, necessitating urgent attention from policymakers and economic planners.

One striking feature is the low labor participation rates (LFPR) in Haryana's rural areas compared to the national average. Data from the NSS 50th to 55th rounds indicates a steady decline in participation rates, highlighting a worsening employment situation. The Labour Bureau's statistics further reveal that Haryana had the lowest earner-to-population ratio among major Indian states during the periods 1983 and 1987-88, with further deterioration noted in 1993-94.

In 1993-94, both the LFPR and work participation rates (WPR) in Haryana lagged behind the national average by approximately 10 percentage points. This gap widened further by 1999-2000, with female participation rates

witnessing a significant decline of about 7%. These trends underline the critical need to address employment challenges in Haryana, particularly among its educated youth, making it an ideal region for this comparative analysis.

Data Base

The present study utilizes existing data rather than conducting a separate survey. The primary data source is the information gathered by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research during the development of the Human Development Index (HDI) for Haryana. This dataset also includes additional information on various employment-related aspects that were not directly used in the HDI preparation.

While a dedicated study focusing exclusively on employment trends and resultant unemployment across different education levels, gender, and the aspirations tied to educational attainment would have been ideal, the constraints of cost and time made it impractical. Instead, the available data, despite its limitations, was utilized to provide an indicative analysis. This approach allows the study to offer valuable insights into employment patterns and challenges faced by the educated workforce in Haryana, even within the confines of the existing dataset.

General Findings

Educational Status of the Population

The educational landscape in Haryana highlights significant disparities across gender and age groups. As the saying goes, "A poor human capital base of India's rural economy is indeed its Achilles' heel," and this holds true in the

context of Haryana.

Among males aged 15 and above, nearly 39% have attained education at the secondary level or higher, with an almost equal proportion (38.4%) educated up to the middle level. Only 22.8% of males in this age group are illiterate. In contrast, the educational status of females in the same age category reveals a more concerning picture, with 53.5% being illiterate and only 17.4% achieving secondary-level education or higher.

When focusing on the youth population (ages 15-29), the data paints a more optimistic picture for males, with 52% attaining secondary education or above and only 8.9% classified as illiterate. Among females in the same age group, 33.3% have achieved secondary-level education or higher, while 27.1% remain illiterate, and 39.6% have education up to the middle level.

These findings underline persistent gender disparities in education, particularly in the 15+ age group, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to enhance female education and reduce illiteracy in the state. The better educational attainment among the younger male population signals progress but also emphasizes the gap in opportunities and access to quality education for females.

Table 1: Educational Status of Population

Educational Status	Male	Male	Female	Female
	15+	15-29	15+	15-29
Illiterate	22.8	8.9	53.5	27.1
Upto Middle	38.4	39.1	29.3	39.6
Secondary and above	38.7	52.0	17.4	33.3

Source: Computed Survey Results

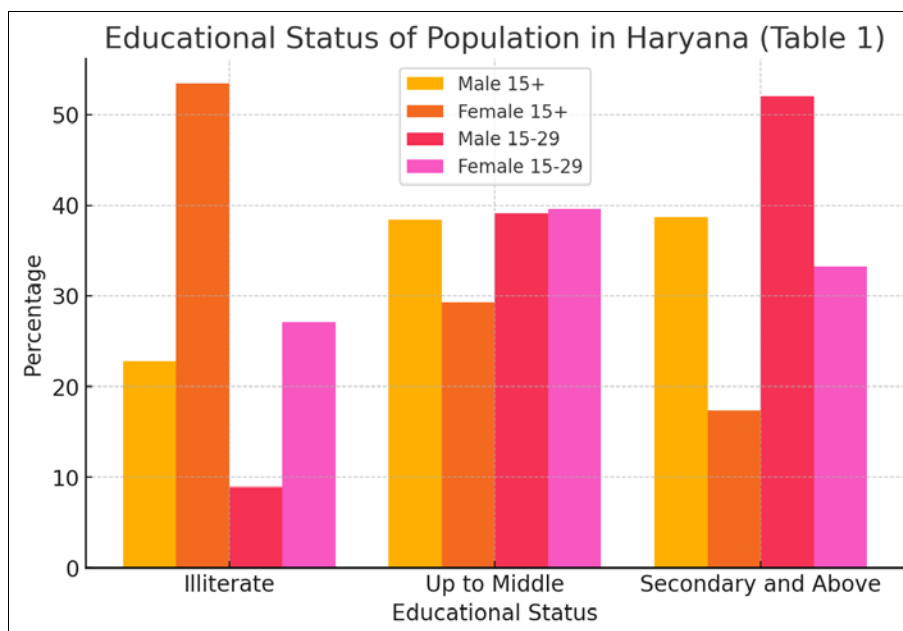


Fig 1 Table 1: Educational Status of Population in Haryana. It visualizes the percentage distribution of educational attainment among different gender and age groups. Now, I will create graphs for the other tables.

General Findings

Educational Status of the Population

The educational status of the population in Haryana reveals stark differences across gender and age groups, reflecting a critical challenge for human capital development in the state. As aptly stated, "A poor human capital base of India's rural economy is indeed its Achilles' heel," and this

observation resonates with the findings from the study.

Among the 15+ male population, approximately 39% have attained education at the secondary level or higher, while a similar proportion (38.4%) have education up to the middle level. Only 22.8% of males in this age group are illiterate. However, the scenario is more concerning for females aged 15 and above, where 53.5% are illiterate, and only 17.4%

have achieved secondary-level education or higher. Focusing on the youth population (ages 15-29), the findings are comparatively better. Among males in this age group, 52% have attained secondary-level education or more, with a minimal 8.9% illiteracy rate. On the other hand, for females aged 15-29, 33.3% have secondary-level education or higher, while 27.1% remain illiterate, and 39.6% are educated up to the middle level.

These findings highlight significant gender disparities in education, particularly among the 15+ population. While the younger male population shows promising educational attainment, the progress for females remains uneven. Addressing these gaps is essential for building a more equitable and skilled workforce in Haryana. (Refer to Table 1).

Gender Differentials in Educational Levels

The data highlights significant gender disparities in educational attainment among the population aged 15 and above in Haryana. Among males in this age group, 38.75% have attained education at the secondary level or above, while a nearly equal proportion, 37.26%, have education up to the middle level. Only 22.82% of males are illiterate.

In stark contrast, more than half (53.38%) of 15+ females are illiterate, and only 17.34% have achieved education at the secondary level or higher. A smaller percentage,

29.28%, of females in this age group are educated up to the middle level.

Focusing on the youth population (ages 15-29), the data shows a more optimistic trend for males, with 51.96% attaining secondary education or above and only 8.90% classified as illiterate. Among females in the same age group, 33.25% have attained secondary-level education or higher, while 27.10% are illiterate, and 39.64% have education up to the middle level.

These findings underscore the persistent gender gaps in educational attainment, particularly in the older age group. While younger males show significant progress in education levels, the disparity for females, even among the youth, highlights the need for targeted interventions to address gender inequality in educational access and attainment in Haryana. (Refer to Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Population in Broad Educational Categories

	15+	15-29 (youth)
	Male	Female
Population	5982	5144
Illiterate (%)	1365 (22.82)	2746 (53.38)
Up to Middle (%)	2229 (37.26)	1506 (29.28)
Secondary and Above (%)	2318 (38.75)	892 (17.34)

Source: Computed Sample Survey Results

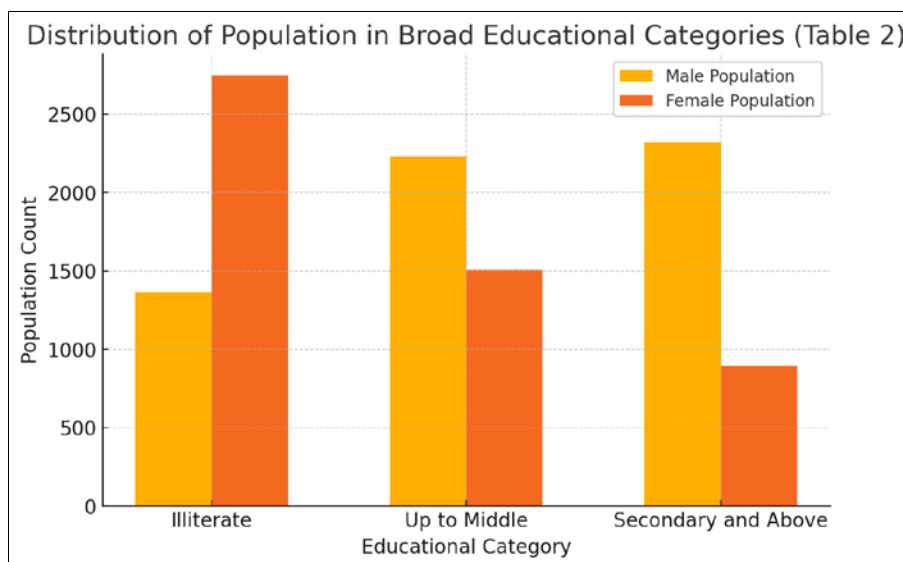


Fig 2 Table 2: Distribution of Population in Broad Educational Categories. It represents the number of males and females in different educational categories. Next, I will create graphs for the remaining tables.

Educated vs. Uneducated LFPR Differentials in Males and Females

Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) in Haryana reveal notable disparities across educational levels for both males and females, highlighting the correlation between education and workforce engagement.

Among males, LFPR is highest for those with middle-level education, followed by illiterates. However, only about two-thirds of males with education at the secondary level or above participate in the labour force. For females, LFPR remains low across all educational categories. Illiterate females exhibit the highest participation, followed by those with secondary education and above, and lastly, those with middle-level education.

Youth (15-29 years) show a sharper decline in LFPR with

increasing education levels compared to the overall 15+ population. Among illiterate males, LFPR remains consistent between youth and older males. However, for middle-educated males, LFPR decreases significantly from 80.38% for overall males to 64.15% for youth males, a reduction to approximately three-fourths of the overall rate. For males with secondary education and above, LFPR drops from 67.82% to 48.09%, reflecting a decline to two-thirds of the overall rate.

For female youth, LFPR is higher among illiterate females compared to overall females but similar for those with middle education. Among females with secondary-level education and above, LFPR declines significantly, dropping to about two-thirds of the rate for overall females.

The educational composition of the labour force also

highlights disparities. Among 15+ males, 41.3% have middle-level education, and 35.1% have secondary-level education or above. For 15+ females, approximately 90% of the labour force is educated, evenly split between middle-level and secondary-level education. However, for youth, only 23% of the female labour force has secondary-level education or above, and nearly two-fifths are illiterate. In contrast, 44% of male youth labour force have secondary-

level education or above, with only 11.7% illiterate. These findings point to a concerning gap in human capital, particularly among females. The disproportionately low LFPR among educated youth and females reflects broader structural issues, including societal and economic barriers. Addressing these disparities is critical for enhancing workforce participation and leveraging the state's educational progress for economic development. (Refer 3).

Table 3: Economic Participation of Population with Varying Education Levels

Educational Status	Population (15+)	Labour Force (LFPR)	Employed Workforce (WPR)	Unemployed (UR)	Population (15-29 youth)	Labour Force (LFPR)	Employed Workforce (WPR)	Unemployed (UR)
Illiterate								
Male	1365	1055 (77.29%)	1030 (97.63%)	25 (2.37%)	229	171 (74.67%)	157 (91.81%)	14 (8.19%)
Female	2746	461 (16.79%)	457 (99.13%)	4 (0.87%)	564	118 (20.92%)	116 (98.31%)	2 (1.69%)
Up to Middle								
Male	2229	1848 (82.91%)	1761 (95.29%)	87 (4.71%)	1007	646 (64.15%)	561 (86.84%)	85 (8.41%)
Female	1506	217 (14.41%)	209 (96.31%)	8 (3.69%)	825	114 (13.82%)	109 (95.61%)	5 (6.05%)
Secondary and Above								
Male	2318	1572 (67.82%)	1435 (91.28%)	137 (8.72%)	1337	643 (48.09%)	517 (80.40%)	126 (19.60%)
Female	892	135 (15.13%)	123 (91.28%)	12 (8.89%)	692	71 (10.26%)	60 (84.51%)	11 (15.49%)

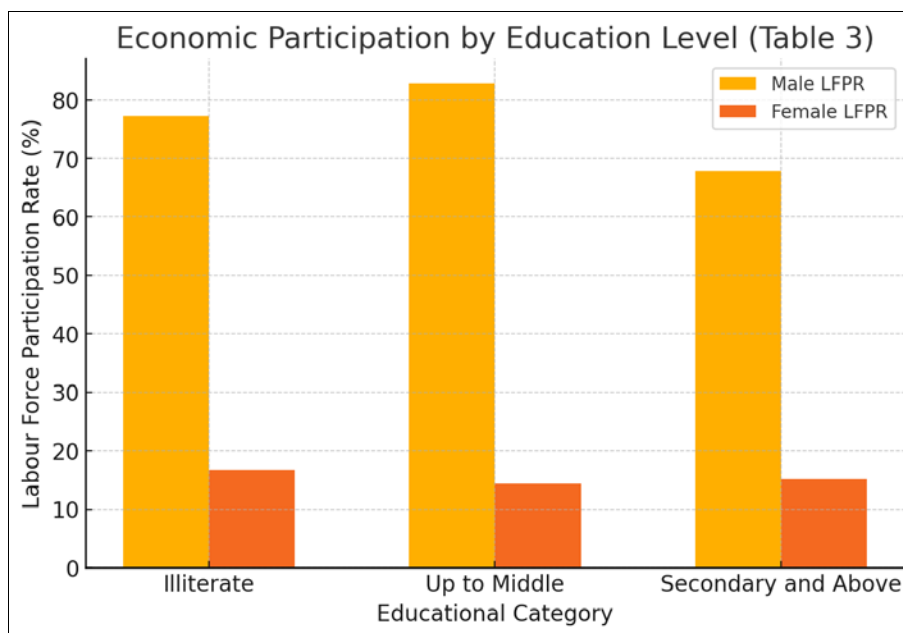


Fig 3 Table 3: Economic Participation of Population with Varying Education Levels. It illustrates the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for males

Education and Employment Diversification Tendencies

An analysis of employment trends based on education levels reveals that a significant proportion of both illiterates and those with middle-level education, as well as individuals with secondary and higher education, continue to engage in agricultural and allied activities. However, there is a noticeable decline in the percentage of individuals working in agriculture as the level of education increases from 'uneducated' to 'secondary and above' education. This reduction is evident across various groups: for males 15+, it decreases from approximately 58% to 46%; for females 15+, it drops from about 58% to 26%; and for female youths, it declines from around 59% to 33%. In the case of male youths, the reduction is less significant, from about 53% to 50% (refer to Table 4).

While the share of individuals participating in non-farm activities does not significantly increase with higher education, the nature of employment diversifies according

to educational levels (refer to Table 8).

Regarding diversification, it is observed that illiterates primarily work in 'non-agricultural wage labour,' with approximately 25-27% of males and 30-35% of females in the 15+ category and youth engaged in this sector. Individuals with up to middle-level education tend to either take up 'artisan/independent work' (around 7-9% for both males and females in the 15+ and youth categories) or remain in 'non-agricultural wage labour' (approximately 20-28% for both males and females). For both illiterates and those with middle-level education, there are no significant shifts in employment diversification between genders.

However, for individuals with secondary and higher education, a noticeable shift occurs toward 'salaried employment.' Among males, approximately 29-36% of both 15+ and youth groups opt for salaried jobs. A distinct gender difference is observed among females, where a significantly higher proportion, around 54%, in the 15+ age

group with secondary and above education choose salaried employment. In contrast, a smaller percentage of females (around 7%) opt for 'non-agricultural wage labour,'

compared to 9% in males 15+, and 10% compared to 12% in male youths.

Table 4: Detailed Classification of Population according to Literacy Level and Workforce Participation: Category-wise Employment

State as a Whole			Category-wise Employment									
			01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Illiterate	15+	M	42.4	1.5	14.0	25.0	7.1	2.5	0.2	4.2	0.1	3.1
		F	14.2	9.6	33.9	26.5	4.6	0.9	0.0	4.6	0.2	5.5
	15-29	M	31.8	0.6	20.4	35.7	7.0	1.3	0.6	1.3	0.6	0.6
		F	13.8	9.5	35.3	28.4	5.2	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	5.2
Up to Middle	15+	M	44.1	1.1	9.2	19.3	8.3	7.7	0.2	8.9	0.5	0.6
		F	12.4	11.5	20.6	27.8	6.7	3.3	0.0	12.0	1.0	4.8
	15-29	M	37.4	0.9	11.8	25.7	9.3	8.0	0.2	5.0	0.7	1.1
		F	9.2	13.8	24.8	28.4	6.4	3.7	0.0	8.3	0.9	4.6
Secondary & above	15+	M	41.4	0.6	3.8	9.1	6.6	7.2	0.5	29.2	1.0	0.6
		F	17.9	4.1	4.1	7.3	4.1	4.1	2.4	53.7	0.8	1.6
	15-29	M	43.5	1.0	5.4	9.9	9.9	6.4	0.2	21.3	1.5	1.0
		F	20.0	5.0	8.3	11.7	5.0	5.0	3.3	36.7	1.7	3.3
Total	15+	M	42.8	1.0	8.5	17.2	7.4	6.3	0.3	14.6	0.6	1.2
		F	14.3	9.3	25.7	23.8	5.1	2.0	0.4	14.2	0.5	4.7
	15-29	M	39.3	0.9	10.2	20.3	9.2	6.5	0.2	11.3	1.1	1.0
		F	13.3	10.2	25.6	24.9	5.6	2.5	0.7	11.9	0.7	4.6

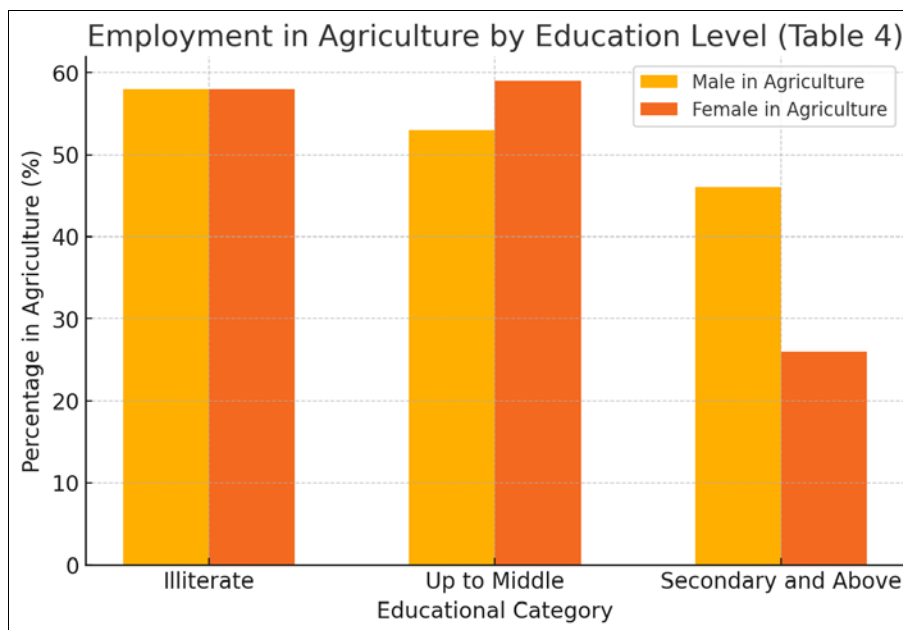


Fig 4 Table 4: Employment in Agriculture by Education Level. It visualizes the percentage of males and females engaged in agricultural activities across different educational levels. I will now proceed with the final table.

Conclusions: Educational Levels and Employment Correlates

Labour Force Participation: The economic participation rate is higher among the illiterate population, particularly among females. While 74.81% of the overall male population (15+) engages in economic activities, 77.29% of illiterate males join the labour force. Among females, only 15.84% of the overall 15+ population participates in economic activities, but this increases to 16.79% for illiterate females. Interestingly, illiterates make up about 23.1% of the total male population but account for 23.6% of those in the labour force. For females, illiterates constitute 53.4% of the total 15+ female population, but they represent a higher 56.7% of the female labour force, indicating a significant higher participation rate among illiterate women.

Impact of Education on Employment: The educational level has a noticeable impact on employment trends, especially

regarding agricultural and allied activities. Even among the educated, a substantial number of individuals with up to middle school education, as well as those with secondary or higher education, still participate in agriculture and related sectors. However, the percentage of individuals in agricultural employment significantly drops as education levels rise. In the case of males, this reduction is from 58% (illiterate) to 46% (secondary and above), while in females, the reduction is sharper—from 58% to 26%. For youth, the decline is even more pronounced among females, with 59% of illiterate female youth working in agriculture, dropping to 33% among those with secondary education. In contrast, male youth show only a marginal reduction from 53% to 50%.

Female Economic Participation: The types of economic activities women engage in are predominantly low-paid, casual, or conventional jobs. The majority of female

workers are illiterate, with few attaining an education beyond middle school. Analysis of employment patterns reveals that illiterate males often work as artisans or in independent occupations, while illiterate females are mostly involved in household chores. Those with up to middle education also show similar trends: males take up non-agricultural wage labour, artisan work, and small businesses, while females are predominantly engaged in non-agricultural wage labour and artisan work, with some also entering salaried employment.

Diversification in Employment: The shift from traditional agricultural work towards non-agricultural employment becomes evident as education levels rise. For males and females with secondary education and above, there is a clear transition away from informal, unorganized labour to more formal and diversified employment. Among males, approximately 29-36% of both 15+ and youth populations with secondary education or higher opt for salaried jobs. However, the trend is even more pronounced among females, with 54% of female 15+ workers with secondary education or higher pursuing salaried employment. This represents a significant shift in employment patterns, particularly for females, indicating that education plays a key role in broadening employment opportunities and transitioning to more stable, higher-order economic activities.

Higher Education and Employment Trends: As educational levels increase, the range and nature of employment expand. Individuals with secondary or higher education are more likely to seek salaried, regular employment, rather than engaging in casual or informal jobs. This trend is particularly notable among educated females, who, in comparison to males, show a much higher preference for salaried positions. The data reflects a clear correlation between higher education and the diversification of employment, indicating that education fosters economic mobility and stability.

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