

# **Pattern of Seasonal Unemployment in Rural Areas of Dehradun District, Uttarakhand: A Micro Level Empirical Investigation**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The problem of seasonal unemployment is a universal phenomenon in agriculture, but its magnitude varied with the level of diversification of agriculture, technological and infrastructural advancement. Region where agricultural operations suffer from the inadequacies of infrastructure such as heavy dependence on rains and subsistence in nature seasonal unemployment is bound to be sever. Seasonal unemployment is supposed to be severe dimensions in the hill region of Uttarakhand and similar geographical locations. The seasonal unemployment studies are immensely valuable for employment planning, especially in rural areas where additional employment opportunities are to be provided during slack seasons under employment guarantee scheme for marginal and landless laborers. In case of these study areas, seasonal unemployment is more acute in winter. Therefore, it is more appropriate to launch the policies and programmes of resource based and skill based self employment micro enterprises in rural areas.

**Key Words :** Seasonal unemployment, Rural area, Empirical investigation

## **INTRODUCTION**

Unemployment has been a serious issue in India since independence. In India, the growth in labour force has been much higher than that of availability of employment opportunities. Moreover, even among those with some employment opportunities available to them in rural areas, there is widespread underemployment, for example many people get employed only during certain periods in a year during mainly ploughing and harvesting seasons. Thus, their employment is seasonal. Another fact that characterizes the socio-economic structure in the rural areas is that the bulk of the poor are unemployed and under - employed. Even those who can be gainfully employed are poor because their income is not sufficient to bring them above the poverty line. Though the government has taken steps for ensuring employment opportunities for the rural poor by devising employment generation programmes, these efforts are not enough to

tackle the situation prevailing in the rural areas (Kapila and Kapila, 2002). Problem of unemployment has always been a cause of worry to the planners and policy makers of the country. The population explosion in the developing country like India has compounded the problem of unemployment over last three or four decades. The government has made sincere efforts to tackle this issue of unemployment from time to time by launching programme like Rural Manpower Programme (RMP) with an objective to provide employment opportunities in 1000 Community Development Blocks by the end of third five year Plan. During the Fourth Five Year Plan, the government introduced a special scheme for generating employment called the Crash Scheme for the Rural Employment. As a part of the CSRE, a Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP) was also launched in the year 1977. A new programme Food for Work was started with the aim to provide employment for the rural poor through developing infrastructure and durable

community assets while utilizing surplus food stocks for payment as wages. In the year 1978 National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) replaced FFW with the aim of generation of additional gainful employment for unemployed and under employed persons in the rural areas. The success of NREP encouraged government to launch another programme called Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The objective of RLEGP was to improve and expand employment opportunities, particularly for the rural landless labour, with a view to provide guarantee of employment to at least one member of every landless household upto 100 days in a year, to create productive and durable assets and to improve the overall quality of life in rural areas. NREP and RLEGP were merged and a new programme called Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), which was launched in the year 1989 with an objective to generate additional gainful employment to solve the problem of unemployment and underemployment in the rural areas. In addition to the above programmes IRY, NRY etc. were also launched to solve the problem of unemployment in the rural as well as urban areas, however the desired results could not be achieved. Later on JRY was renamed as Jawahar Gram Samithi Yojana (JGSY) in 2000 and a new scheme known as Sampurn Gram Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) is in operation (Dimri *et al.*, 2002). In 2005 Indian legislation enacted Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREA). The act provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. This act was introduced with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India. It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in the country. Roughly one-third of the stipulated work force must be women (Edwards, 1974; Mrydal, 1968).

## METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the nature of unemployment and potentialities of employment in both farm and non farm sectors a micro level study of Sahaspur block of district Dehradun has been conducted in the year 2020. For this purpose stratified random sampling technique has been adopted to select the in each Nayapanchayat. A primary survey was conducted in 30 villages of 6 Nayapanchayats

of Sahaspur block. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose and administered in 5 villages in each Nayapanchayat. Selecting 20 households in each village 100 questionnaires were administered in each Nayapanchayat. Thus a total sample size of 600 households in 30 villages of 6 Nayapanchayats of the study area. An analysis has been carried out by making 11 working groups. These groups included agriculture, allied activities, agriculture labour, construction, shops, trades, transport and communication, household industry, services labour and others such as income from pension, rent etc. These working groups were put together and three sector of the economy viz-z-viz primary secondary and tertiary were formed. Technique of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) such as focus group discussion (FGD) was also conducted to assess the potential areas of rural labour employment which can play crucial role in reducing the unemployment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attempt has also been made to assess the position of workers by different occupational category. From the Table 1 it is evident to note that majority of workers in the block were engaged in agriculture and allied activities such as agriculture 17.99 per cent, forestry 9.73% and agriculture labour 12.09 per cent (Table 1). Relatively higher proportion of workers in forestry and fishier indicates that these activities play important role to provide subsistence to the people of region and this is from the fact that forest coverage in Uttaranchal is significantly higher than the other states of the country. It may be noted that proportion of people engaged in service sector constitute 23.30 per cent. On the other hand Uttaranchal has limited scope for employment opportunities in this sector as a large number of people have migrated to other parts of the country for employment. Looking at the literacy of the block it is revealed that literacy rate of working population is reported 89.90 per cent which is significantly higher.

Considering the higher proportion of literate working population an attempt has been made to analyse the level of literacy among the various category of workers which revealed that majority of workers have attained education level upto 5th standard only. Relatively higher proportion of literate among the pensioners was reported which can be attributed to the fact that for government job minimum prescribed qualification is required which has greatly influenced the over all literacy of the block. Since

**Table 1 : Distribution of Workers by Occupational Category**

Occupation Category	Total Workers	Literate Workers	Per cent to total	Literate Per cent
Agriculture	375	305	19.89	17.99
Allied such as forestry fisheries	175	165	9.28	9.73
Agriculture Labour	220	205	11.67	12.09
Construction	40	40	2.12	2.36
Shop	170	160	9.02	9.44
Trade	75	75	3.98	4.42
Transport and Communication	0	0	0.00	0.00
Household Industries	115	95	6.10	5.60
Services	395	395	20.95	23.30
Other labours	115	105	6.10	6.19
Pension/rent	205	150	10.88	8.85
Total	1885	1695	100.00	100.00

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

Sahaspur block is very near from Dehradun Urban Agglomeration, as a result large number of retired people have settled in the block as they get cheaper land in the rural areas. Therefore, the urban activities has influenced the block in terms of constitution of workers. An interesting picture has emerged while analyzing the literacy level with respect to different occupational categories. The Literate upto 5th standard are primarily engaged in agriculture and allied activities whereas workers with matric and above level are primarily engaged in secondary activities such as shop, trade etc. There are a large number of pensioners under this category and they constitute 32 per cent of the total workers in the block (Table 2).

Table 3 and 4 presents Work Participation Rates (WPRs). Two types of WPRs are estimated one based on usual status and other usual and subsidiary status. The later is for those whose usual status is domestic chores, students and non-workers which can be termed

subsidiary status work participation. It may be noted that usual status work participation rate is estimated by recording what normally individuals do for a living for at least half the year. When the reported activity is household duties or student for example, a further probe is conducted to find out if they have undertaken productive work at all even when the normal activity is considered unproductive. Such an activity is considered to be a subsidiary activity.

For the block as a whole the usual status of WPRs estimated was 46.8 per cent for male and 10.7 per cent for female. On the other hand usual and subsidiary status WPRs for male and female was estimated 48.2 and 18.8 per cent, respectively. As expected the WARs for female under this category is relatively higher which indicates that women are engaged mainly in usual and subsidiary status. Among the different occupational activities the work force participation rate of male and female were reported 60 and 40 per cent, respectively. The non involvement of women in the activities such as

**Table 2 : Distribution Workers by Literacy Level ( in % )**

Occupation Category	Up to 5th	Upto 8th	Matric	Above Matric
Agriculture	31.25	21.69	11.16	28.00
Allied such as Forestry Fisheries	19.23	10.84	5.58	12.00
Agriculture Labour	25.24	16.87	6.70	0.00
Construction	3.61	2.41	3.35	0.00
Shop	8.41	14.46	8.93	20.00
Transport and Communication	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Household Industries	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Services	6.20	8.93	8.33	0.00
Other Labours	3.61	7.23	13.39	0.00
Pension	8.65	14.46	11.16	32.00

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

**Table 3 : Employment Position and Work Force Participation Rate**

Occupation	Participation Rate				
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture	225	150	375	60.00	40.00
Forestry and Fisheries	105	70	175	60.00	40.00
Agriculture Labour	140	80	220	63.64	36.36
Construction	40	0	40	100.00	0.00
Shop	150	20	170	88.24	11.76
Trade	75	0	75	100.00	0.00
Household Industries	75	40	115	65.22	34.78
Services	254	130	384	66.15	33.85
Other Labours	85	30	115	73.91	26.09
Pension/Rent	125	80	205	60.98	39.02
Total	1274	600	1874	67.98	32.02

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

**Table 4 : Work Participation Rate (Percentage) by Sex**

Category	Sex	Work Force Participation Rate
Usual Status	Male	46.8
	Female	10.7
	F/M	0.23
Usual and Subsidiary Status	Male	48.2
	Female	18.8
	F/M	0.39

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

construction and transport is as expected. However surprisingly 33 per cent rural women were reported working in services (Table 5).

**Table 5 : Average Household Size, Number of Workers and Sex Ratio**

Particulars	Category	Rate
Average Household Size	Total	5.84
	Male	3.15
	Female	2.69
Usual Status Number of Workers	Total	1.76
	Male	1.47
	Female	0.29
	F/M	0.20
Non-Worker / Worker Ratio		2.16
Usual and Subsidiary Status Number of Workers	Total	2.02
	Male	1.52
	Female	0.51
	M/F	0.33
Non Worker/Worker Ratio		1.89

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

In Sahaspur, an average household consists of 5.79 members of which 3.13 are male 2.66 female. An average

household includes 1.76 persons engaged in usual status productive activities of which 1.47 are male and 0.29 are females. Thus the average households has 1.68 male and 2.49 female dependents. The male female non workers ratio was for usual status was 2.02 for the block as a whole. Work Participation among Children and Elderly: An attempt has been made to capture the work participation rate among children in the age group 6-14; it was computed 2.4 per cent for male and 2.1 per cent female children who were reported working on regular basis. The engagement of children in working on regular basis can be attributed to the state of poverty and to some extent lack of reasonable income of the adult earners of the households in the block. While investigating the causes for children engagement in the economic activities it is revealed that children are engaged in potato picking, to protect crops from birds, to chase monkeys etc. On the other hand female children are engaged in collection of firewood, fodder and taking cow dung to the fields, which is used as manure. Nevertheless the engagement of children was much lower as compared with the national average, however it is a cause of concern to the planners and policy makers as it is directly associated with absenteeism from school resulting in adverse effect on education programmes launched by government from time to time. On the other hand the work participation rate of elderly male persons with 60 years age and above is reported 61.5 per cent. For elderly female it was reported 8.4 per cent. Among the various population groups a wide variation has been observed in adult participation rate of both for male and female (Table 6).

**Table 6 : Work Participation Rate (Usual Status) (percentage)**

Category	Rate
Child (6 - 14 years)	
Male	2.4
Female	2.0
F/M	0.85
Elderly ( 60 Years and above)	
Male	61.5
Female	8.4
F/M	0.14

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

**Employment Stability:**

Average days worked per adult wage earners in agriculture wage work and non-agriculture wage work is presented in following table. As evident from the table the average days worked per adult wage earner in agriculture wage work was reported 72 days for block. For non-agriculture wage work it was reported 161 days. All work days for Sahaspur was reported 113 days which is significantly low. It is surprising to note that in Sahaspur, agrarian activities provides less employment opportunities. The average days worked per adult wage earners for all wage work for female was reported 81 days as compared 126 days to their counterparts. The variation is higher in non-agriculture wage work. This also indicates those female gets less employment opportunities in agriculture as compared to their counterparts. The table given below clearly indicates that in different age group, the percentage of workers engaged in main activity in much higher as compare to their per cent in subsidiary activities. Of the 365 days in the reference year the people in the

**Table 7 : Average Days Work**

Category	No. of days
<b>Agriculture Wage Work</b>	
Male Days	84
Female Days	61
Total Days	72
<b>Non Agriculture Wage Work</b>	
Male Days	175
Female Days	125
Total Days	161
<b>All Wage Work</b>	
Male Days	126
Female Days	81
Total Days	113

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

age group 16-30 manage to get employment on 188.08 days (51.35 %) only. Out of 188.08 days this age group manage to get 167.86 days employment in their main occupation and rest 20.22 per cent days in subsidiary occupation. (Table 7).

It is interesting to note that the position of unemployment is less in the age group 31-45. This group manages to get 46.40 per cent days employment in main occupation. It would be noted that the per cent of unemployment in the age group 61 and above is much higher, the group managed to get employment only on 112.60 days (Table 8). Considering the per cent of employment in main occupation it can be said that in the study area the role of subsidiary occupation in supporting the living standard of people is not upto the expectation as it is the case in most of the developing countries.

**Table 8 : Per cent of Workers Engaged in Main and Subsidiary Occupation**

Age groups	Main Occupation	Subsidiary Occupation	% of Days
16-30	89.25	10.75	51.62
31-45	46.40	13.60	76.62
46-60	86.12	13.88	67.57
60 and above	80.05	19.95	30.58

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

Overall average daily wage rate for agricultural and non-agricultural work has been computed Rs. 474 and for male and female it was estimated as Rs. 594 and Rs 360, respectively. Female gets higher wages in agriculture than non-agriculture whereas male gets higher wage in non-agricultural wage work. It may be noted that in Uttarakhand both male and females are getting higher wages than the minimum national wages suggested by the government to carry out wage employment. The female male ratio of total wage work was estimated 0.60 for block as a whole. In agricultural wage work it was estimated 0.84 whereas it was 0.79 for non-agricultural wage work. The wages are more equitable in agriculture than non-agricultural wage work (Table 9).

From the Table 10 it is quite clear that during reference period in the age group 31-45, highest 24.55 per cent people were employed in all the 7 days in the week followed by 22.10 per cent in age group 16-30. Whereas in the age group 60 and above only 2.28 per cent people managed to get employment in all 7 days. The per cent of people getting employment 3 to 4 days in a week is highest in the age group 16-30 followed by 31-

Table 9 : Average Wage Rate	
Particulars	Average Wage Rate (in Rs)
<b>Agricultural Wage Work</b>	
All	530
Male Rate	477
Female Rate	566
F/M	0.84
<b>Non-Agricultural Wage Work</b>	
All	615
Male Rate	680
Female Rate	540
F/M	0.79
<b>Total Wage Work</b>	
All	474
Male Rate	594
Female Rate	360
F/M	0.60

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

45 age group. From the table it is also revealed that only 59.37 per cent are in a position to get employment during all the days in a week followed by 16.97 per cent people 3-4 days. From the table it can be concluded that more

than 40 per cent people in the rural areas of the block are unemployed or underemployed.

While conducting FGD in the villages the villagers were asked to identify the potential areas of employment considering the three important factors such as resource based, demand based and skill based industries. So far as demand based industries are concerned the potential areas of employment include agro processing units such as small grain processing units, fruits processing, forest based, mineral based and animal byproducts based industries. Demand based industries identified by the villagers are tailoring automobiles etc. and skill based industries include handloom, pottery etc. It may also be noted that the industries identified by the villagers are mainly based on the feasibility assessed by them during the discussion (Table 11).

It may be noted that the primary sector, the main pursuit of occupation in developing economies has crucial role to play in the process of development by increasing its own efficiency and releasing resources for other sectors. Due to this overwhelming importance, exhaustive and multi-dimensional studies on primary sector vis-a-vis agricultural and allied sectors have been carried out by various scholars. Nevertheless, these studies are

Table 10 : Per cent of People Getting Job in a Week					
Age Group	1-2 days	3-4 days	5 days	6 days	Full week
16-30	1.63	6.20	2.37	2.45	22.10
31-45	0.65	5.63	2.20	1.96	24.55
46-60	0.82	3.92	1.71	1.63	10.44
60 & above	0.16	1.22	0.49	0.33	2.28
Total	3.26	16.97	6.77	6.37	59.37

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

Table 11 : Priority Areas at a Glance		
Resource based Industries	Demand Based Industries	Skill based Industries
<b>Agro processing industries:</b> Such as Mini Rice Mills, Mini, Dal Mills, Mushroom production, Jam Jelly, Ketchup Pickles, etc. Vegetable packing, Non edible oil, cocoon etc.	Mobile repairing, generator- Electric points, Welding, Automobile repairing/servicing, Heavy Vehicle body making, Agarbatti, Bakery items, confectionery, Plastic Bags, Tyre Rethreading Steel Trunk/ Boxes, Agriculture Implements	Handloom Weaving, Pottery, Brass Utensils Wooden decoration Aluminum utensils etc... construction trade and commerce
<b>Forest Based Industries:</b> Patta Plate, rope making furniture, Bamboo,		
<b>Mineral Based Industries:</b> Stone chips, soft coke, bricks, firebricks, cement bricks		
<b>Animal based Industries:</b> Shoe, chappals, leather bags, dairying and dairy products.		

Source : Survey conducted for the study (2020)

mainly regarding region based and relatively better endowed with agronomic resources and are traditionally surplus producing. But the problem of agriculture as an economic sector in the study area has been investigated marginally despite the fact that agriculture with other primary sector activities, provide sustenance to majority of people in the block in general and region in particular) (Juyal *et al.*, 1994). Primary sector being a household venture in developing economics is a shelter against economic distress in which the condition of employment is affected by variety of factors. The magnitude of employment in primary sector varies with the level of diversification, and agriculture, technology and infrastructural advancement. Regions where agricultural operations suffer from the inadequacies of infrastructures such as heavy dependence on rains and subsistence on nature. In primary sector seasonal unemployment is bound to be severe Ragnar Nurkse has noted that "seasonal unemployment is likely to be significant where annual crop cycle (e.g. of cereals food crops) dominates farm activities and where this activity has not developed into a more advanced form such as dairy farming". Therefore identification of employment opportunities in secondary and tertiary sectors is inevitable as it may not only provide alternative pursuit to employment but also reduce the instant burden on primary sector (Rao, 1976).

#### **Policy Implication:**

From our analysis, it is evident to note that block has been placed in relatively better position in terms of opportunities of employment. However concentrated efforts are required to harness the resource base of the area in order to increase the employment opportunities. As the block has proximity to Dehradun urban

agglomeration and the impact of the same has also been witnessed in our finding. Though, we could notice the sectoral shift from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors, however primary sector still plays important role in shaping the economics of the block and can be termed as a lead sector. On the other hand the employment growth rate in secondary and tertiary sectors changes as the economy develops and diversifies and this phenomenon has been noticed in our analysis which is a good indication for the overall development.

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