

Unpacking Labour Constraints in Rural India: A Micro-Level Analysis from the Agricultural Heartland of Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

Kailash Chandra Kabra^{1*} | Dr. Deepika Chaplot²

¹Research Scholar, PAHER University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

²Associate Professor, PAHER University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

*Corresponding Author: kckabra1963@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Despite the recognition of labour as important for productivity and sustainability in rural economies, its constraints have often been neglected in district studies. This paper has conducted labour-related challenges in agriculture and micro enterprises at the micro level for the district of Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. From a sample of 385 respondents, the primary data for this study has been gathered and seasonal unemployment, skill mismatches, wage insecurity, and weak “foundations” are highlighted as the key obstacles. The data discloses these obstacles are not homogenous in character, for they are differentiated by gender, occupational sectors, and education. EFA and reliability provide evidence for the multidimensionality of the labour challenges, and the integration of ANOVA and regression analyses answer the productivity decline and local economic recalcitrance. The paper ends by drawing attention to the need for more decentralized and targeted skill development, rural employment, and innovation to close the gaps identified. This study adds primary information to the literature of labour economics from one of India's neglected agricultural districts.

Keywords: Rural Labour, Chittorgarh, Agricultural Workforce, Micro-Enterprise, Labour Constraints, Rajasthan, Quantitative Analysis.

Introduction

Rural labour markets in India are intertwined with the agrarian structure, seasonal changes, and socio-economic structures for ages. As for the rural labour, it is crucial for maintaining agricultural productivity and the entire web of micro-enterprises, informal services and household livelihoods. However, the issues of rural labourers which include wage, unemployment, lack of skills, and lack of institutional recognition, are fundamental associated with rural economy, yet are less understood, especially at the district and block levels. The efforts to boost the rural economy with policies such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and rural skilling missions have failed to devise accurate and comprehensive policies due to the lack of micro-level data.

Considered with the mainstream labour economics literature, the agriculture and allied rural occupations in Chittorgarh district southern Rajasthan has always been left out with. Historically significant Chittorgarh is the prism through which the story of agrarian and industrial neglect, informal labour exploitation, vulnerability and low industrial penetration is told. The district's over 70% primary and informal employment (Census of India, 2011) demonstrates a perfect illustrative case to understand the rural labour bottlenecks. The agriculture in the region is adversely impacted by climate and infrastructure, productivity, and serious, even unique, human capital limitations like lack of sustained employment, lack of training, and lack of social security (Deshingkar & Start, 2003; Jodhka, 2014).

Reports like those from the International Labour Organization (2021) and NITI Aayog (2020), which are macroscale in nature, tend to miss the nuances and complexities of groundbreaking work in the grassroots. The rural workforce is diversified and does not follow a one-size-fits-all approach; it is fractured along the lines of gender, education, caste, and the field of work (Mehrotra & Parida, 2019). There exists a gap in the literature regarding local area policies and plan implementation—this gap can be closed with district-level quantitative research. In order to accomplish this, the current study uses primary data collected from 385 respondents in 22 panchayats in the district of Chittorgarh, employing stratified random sampling to derive subsets of farming families, landless rural laborers, and rural micro-entrepreneurs.

This research focuses on untangling the different aspects of labour constraints in Chittorgarh, especially the intersections between various demographic and occupational categories. In addition, the study seeks to establish the linkage between labour constraints and economic phenomena such as productivity, income instability, and the agility of the employment system. This study endeavors to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the major labour constraints encountered by Chittorgarh rural workers? (2) How do these constraints differ across the indicators of sex, education, and field of work? (3) What is the correlation between the documented labour constraints and productivity levels?

The researcher will use a quantitative approach combined with descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the research questions. The data collection instrument—a structured questionnaire—was first validated with a pilot study, and by external experts. Data reliability was tested with Cronbach's Alpha and the factor structure was determined by factor analysis (EFA). Furthermore, one-way ANOVA and regression analysis will be used to identify the level of the group difference and the nature of the predictive relationship.

This research aims to advocate for the regionalized and micro-level understanding of the rural labour market in India. Other studies have offered the National Employment Crisis and Informalisation in the Economy (Papola, 2012; Kannan and Raveendran, 2019), but to this study, understanding the patterns of life woven within a particular agrarian geography are of primary importance. This research intends to provide a flexible template for rural districts within the same socio-economic context.

Literature Review and Contextual Background

To appreciate the rural labour constraints faced in India is to engage with a diverse array of literature in the fields of labour economics, agrarian studies, and the development policy literature. Changes in the structure of agriculture, diminishing profitability per farm, informalisation of work, and the more or less integrated but skewed welfare policies of the state in the agrarian sector, shape the evolution of rural labour dynamics. While studies at the national level offer valuable summaries, there is a dearth of region-based studies which situate such macro in the micro, as in the case of Chittorgarh.

Rural Labour Market Transitions in India

Considerable change has occurred in the rural workforce of India over the last twenty years. As the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2020-21) indicates, the share of the population engaged in agriculture as a main activity has consistently declined, from more than 60 percent in 1991 to less than 50 percent in 2020. This deceleration, however, has not been accompanied by a corresponding expansion of high quality non-farm employment opportunities. Rather, rural workers have been integrated in the more or less informal, low-productive, and socially unprotected informal sector (Himanshu, 2011). The rural labour market in India is characteristically described by a “missing middle” (Papola, 2012; Mehrotra et al, 2014). This is a rural dynamic where there is an absence of sufficient agricultural employment and a lack of adequate manufacturing work available to the rural youth.

Labour Constraint in Agriculture Informal Sector

The constraints as regards rural labour in India tend to be seen as both supply and demand sides of the issue. Supply side issues are lack of adequate skills, low levels of education, rural disease, and illness (Desai et al. 2010) and, on the demand side, farmers and small rural enterprises lack the capital to employ, face uncertain markets, and are structurally underemployed (Radhakrishna and Reddy 2015). The seasonality of agricultural work leads to periods of heavy demand for labour, which is then followed by months of inactivity and in some cases, total disguised unemployment. These issues are particularly severe in the case of Rajasthan, where there is a combination of low and erratic rainfall, fragmented land, and a low level of mechanization (Chand et al. 2011).

Constraints on Labour with Respect to Gender

There is a considerable amount of literature on the division of rural labour that recognizes the additional obstacles women face pertaining to work, mobility, wage, and recognition of work done. Agarwal (2018) argues that a large number of women work in the agricultural sector, however, their labour continues to be poorly compensated and undervalued. The gender wage gap is a common phenomenon and is present even in MGNREGA works, where women are actively participating but are paid only a fraction of what their male counterparts are paid (Khera & Nayak, 2009). Relating to the context of Chittorgarh, primary field reports indicate that women are mainly engaged in subsistence agriculture, some animal husbandry, and small-scale home-based production, but are largely denied access to appropriate training and credit.

Regional Context: Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

The economy of Chittorgarh remains predominantly agrarian, supplemented by rudimentary animal husbandry enterprises. According to the Observer of the District Statistical Handbook (2020), primary activities (agriculture, fishing, etc.) account for the employment of over 65% of the working population, while organized manufacturing remains negligible. The district is beset by poor monsoons, insufficient irrigation (only 31% of the cultivable area is irrigated), and periodic drought. All these combined with the high rural school dropout rate, shortage of vocational training centers, and low levels of government scheme outreach and awareness, have created significant agro-climatic and human resource challenges. A NABARD (2021) study conducted in the southern part of Rajasthan found that rural youth continue to migrate to cities in search of better opportunities as the villages are perceived to lack adequate and available opportunities.

Moreover, in the study area, caste and community ties play an important role in the acquisition of employment. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which constitute a large part of the population of Chittorgarh, are disproportionately located in the most vulnerable and casual employment (Kumar & Murgai, 2019). These obstacles to employment which are determined by one's social status, greatly restrict movement and the ability to negotiate working terms, and open avenues for exploitation and endless cycle of work and poverty.

Deficiencies in Current Literature

Despite the value provided by national datasets such as the NSSO and the PLFS, the micro disaggregation level remains unfulfilled, a critical element in design for zone specification policies. Labour economics has a dearth of district-focused investigations, especially those employing factor analytic, ANOVA, and regression quantitative methodologies. This paper intends to fulfill this methodological gap by relying on primary data from Chittorgarh to construct empirical models of labour constraints and analyze their socioeconomic correlates.

Research Design and Methodology

While rooted within the realities of cross-sectional surveys design within the social paradigm and offering vivid insights backed by robust quantitative evidence on the complexities of the micro dimensions of the world of work, the research also attempts to comprehend the rural worker's socio-economic condition within a polar metric framework. The research will employ a comprehensive framework that merges descriptive parative multivariate approaches to create a robust and valuable overview of the core issues and engage in a core deep descriptive examination of the core micro issues, offering core insights and comprehensive contextual analyses.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The work in question is built around the three objectives stated below:

- Identify the key labour-related issues in the rural domain surrounding Chittorgarh.
- Understanding the relationship of the above issues with the gender, educational, and industrial structures.
- Understanding the correlation between the above-mentioned obstacles and productivity.

From these objectives, the following hypotheses emerged:

- H₁:** There is a significant difference in perceived labour constraints across different occupational categories.
- H₂:** There is a difference in the level of labour constraints between male and female workers.

H₃: There is a negative correlation between productivity and income stability with the level of constraints imposed.

Sampling Design and Data Collection

The population frame consisted of rural dwellers involved in agriculture, micro, and casual level work in the panchayats of Chittorgarh district. In order to guarantee equal representation of gender, landholding, and occupation, a stratified random sampling design was applied.

Sample size: 385 respondents

Sampling units: Individual employees (aged 18-60)

Strata: Male/female, Sector: agriculture/livestock/micro-enterprises/labour, Education: illiterate, primary, secondary, and graduate

Respondents were randomly chosen from 22 gram panchayats within three tehsils (Chittorgarh, Bhopalsagar and Gangrar) using random household listing. The sampled respondents were statistically adequate to perform factor analysis and ANOVA (Hair et al, 2010).

The primary data was collected using a self-administered survey that was pretested via a pilot survey of 30 respondents. The final instrument consisted of:

- 8 demographic questions
- 15 Likert questions (on constraints of labour)
- 5 questions centered on productivity, income, and employment

An enumerator speaking Mewari/Hindi dialects (the vernacular) and trained in direct questions, interviewed the respondents, and the data was collected from July 2025 to August 2025.

Development and Validation of the Instrument

The constraints regarding labor scale were developed after analyzing the literature (Desai et al., 2010, Mehrotra et al., 2014, Agarwal, 2018) and incorporating context specific indicators derived from key informant interviews with farmers, NGO personnel, and staff from rural skilling centers. Draft items identified the following constraints:

- Seasonal unemployment
- Irregular wage payments
- Skill mismatch
- Lack of local job opportunities
- Gender-based work discrimination
- Absence of childcare facilities
- Limited access to training and credit

Content validity was ensured through multiple experts and their evaluations, with the CVR method (Lawshe, 1975) being employed, and items with $CVR \geq 0.60$ retained.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data have been entered and cleaned using SPSS v26 and were analyzed using the following techniques:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Means, frequencies, and cross-tabulations
- **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA):** Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the varimax method to identify underlying factors among the constraint items
- **Reliability Analysis:** Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the scale
- **One-Way ANOVA:** To examine differences between groups by gender and by occupation
- **Multiple Linear Regression:** To examine the impact of labour constraints on self-reported productivity and on the regularity of income received

Ethical Considerations

From all participants, informed consent was received and collected in advance of the data gathering process. Their anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed. Participation was voluntary and

no financial rewards were offered. Ethical clearance was obtained from a local research advisory group, affiliated to an academic institution in Udaipur.

Data Analysis and Factor Structure

This segment delineates the core analytical outcomes drawn from the primary dataset which consisted of 385 respondents. The measurements were aimed primarily at describing the various dimensions of labour constraints, determining internal consistency as well as construct validity of the measurement tool. The analysis began with the application of descriptive statistics in order to capture the key demographic and occupational aspects of the respondents, which was then followed by Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in order to identify underlying latent construct(s), as well as the application Cronbach's Alpha in order to assess the reliability of the scale.

Descriptive Statistics: Respondent Profile

From the total of 385 respondents, 61.3% were males and 38.7% were females. The largest proportion (52.2%) classified themselves as primary agricultural workers (landowners and sharecroppers), followed by micro-enterprises operators (18.2%), casual rural workers (17.4%) and livestock keepers (12.2%). Concerning educational achievements, 35% were primary school leavers, 27% were secondary school completers, 18% were tertiary graduates and 20% were illiterate. The mean age of respondents was 38.4 years and the minimum and maximum ages were 19 and 60 years, respectively.

Most respondents (46%) self-reported having encountered at least three distinct labour constraints: seasonal unemployment, unstable payment, and the unavailability of employment opportunities. Casual and women workers were the most affected as nearly 70% of women reported irregular payment as a common issue.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA served in analyzing the construct of labour constraints for which 15 of the items were measured using a Likert scale. The dataset was proven meritorious by means of the tests below.

- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy - Row 4: 0.824 (above 0.7 threshold)
- Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Statistical significance) - $\chi^2(105) = 1136.27, p < 0.001$

The results indeed suggest that a factor analysis was valid for the data set.

The EFA utilized Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation, retaining components with eigenvalues > 1 . From the analysis, EFA resulted in 4 factors cumulatively accounting for 63.9% of the total variance. The factors were interpreted and labelled as:

- Wage and Employment Insecurity (27.4% variance)
 - **Includes:** delayed wage payment, job uncertainty, lack of long-term contracts
- Skill and Access Mismatch (16.2% variance)
 - **Includes:** inadequate training, mismatch between skills and job demand, absence of skilling centres
- Gender and Social Barriers (11.3% variance)
 - **Includes:** mobility constraints for women, lack of childcare, gender-based job discrimination
- Institutional Gaps and Information Deficit (9.0% variance)
 - **Includes:** lack of awareness of schemes, bureaucratic delays, absence of local support networks

Every single factor had at least 3 items with factor loadings > 0.60 , indicating a high level of correlation between items constituting each dimension.

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the scale and the individual sub-scales constructed from the EFA was measured using Cronbach's Alpha:

- Total labour constraints scale: $\alpha = 0.847$
- Wage and employment insecurity: $\alpha = 0.812$

- Skill and access mismatch: $\alpha = 0.789$
- Gender and social barriers: $\alpha = 0.752$
- Institutional gaps: $\alpha = 0.738$

Sub-scales reliability is confirmed since all alpha values passed the suggested minimum level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Inter-item correlation also fell into a reasonable range ($r = 0.31-0.58$) indicating a lack of redundancy or collinearity.

Interpretation of Factor Dimensions

The emergence of four robust factors suggests complexity regarding rural limitations on labour. Wage insecurity has mostly been regarded as the central concern in the problem, but this research demonstrates that access to training and institutional gaps, particularly for youth and women, are also profoundly constraining. The separation of the gender/social barriers factor confirms the necessity for broader policy frameworks that are tailored for specific concerns other than the conventional skill development and employment guarantee.

Inferential Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

After identifying the latent dimensions of labour constraints using exploratory factor analysis, the next step was to employ inferential statistical methods to identify and analyze variations within groups and test the relationships based on prediction. The major methods used were One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Independent Sample T-Tests, and multiple regression techniques as per the hypotheses of the study.

Differences Within the Group on Labour Constraints

Variation Within Occupations (H1)

In order to determine the labour constraint of the individuals within the working class, a One-Way ANOVA for the following class: Agriculture workers, Casual labourers, Micro-entrepreneurs and Livestock based workers. The dependent variable was the composite labour constraint score (Mean off 15 items) whereas the independent variable was the class of work the individual is engaging in.

$$F(3, 381) = 5.74, p = 0.001$$

Tukey, $p = 0.004$. Micro-entrepreneurs spent the least amount of time reporting physical constraints, probably because of greater autonomy and wider sources of income.

H1 is supported: Occupations have a significant impact on the degree of labour constraints experienced.

Differences In Gender (H2)

An independent t test was used to analyze the constraints scores for male and female individuals.

$$t(383) = 3.46, p = 0.001$$

Across all four dimensions of constraint, women had higher average scores than men, particularly on the Gender and Social Barriers subscale (mean difference = 0.81, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates the gendered nature of labour constraints in rural areas and provides support for H2.

Regression Analysis: Evolving Resource Constraints Against Productivity (H3).

To test H3, self-reported productivity, constrained within a range defined by a 5-point Likert Scale, was regressed against a set of self-identified constraints in a multiple linear regression framework.

Dependent variable:

Productivity rating (1 = very low, 5 = very high)

Independent variables:

- Wage and employment insecurity
- Skill and access mismatch
- Gender and social barriers

Institutional gaps

Control variables:

- Gender, education level, occupation, land ownership

Regression Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.372$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.359$
- $F(8, 376) = 27.43$, $p < 0.001$
- Three of the four constraint dimensions had significant negative influences:
 - Wage and employment insecurity: $\beta = -0.39$, $p < 0.001$
 - Skill and access mismatch: $\beta = -0.27$, $p = 0.003$
 - Institutional gaps: $\beta = -0.18$, $p = 0.019$
 - Gender and social barriers: $\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.072$ (not significant at 0.05 level)

The control variables supported existing hypotheses by demonstrating that education was positively associated with productivity ($\beta = +0.21$, $p = 0.012$), and females associated with lower productivity ($\beta = -0.26$, $p = 0.006$).

H3 is supported that observable labour constraints do decrease self-reported productivity, even after controlling for the demographic variables.

Discussion of Hypothesis Testing Results

Rural female heads of households face multiple barriers to accessing economic opportunities, which are unique to their identities and socio-professional standings. These barriers include their high representation in casual and low-skill employment, which demonstrates the inequitable unfair barriers to access and opportunities even in the most foundational positions of the informal economy. The productivity restraints of income volatility, lack of proper skilling, and productivity cloister on income and economic resilience are structural in nature, and fail to cross the threshold of self-sustenance. These structural barriers are likely the most significant restraints to income generation, materially impairing self-sustenance.

T sang's (2020) research on the structural barriers to self-sustaining income in emerging shelters demonstrates a gap in cross-referenced data. Instead of relying on the descriptive, uncritical accounts that are prevalent in rural discourse labor, the analysis is framed around the dynamics of income and economic resilience. These findings are greatly advanced of the research in rural settings which tends to overwhelmingly emphasize descriptive patterns.

Discussion and Policy Implications

The results of this micro level study in the Chittorgarh district confirms the rural labor constraints in India are multifaceted and contextually nuanced. Although the existing national data indicates macro trends of underemployment and informalisation, the current analysis provides district level evidence on how these trends are playing out. The emergence of four statistically validated dimensions—employment and wage insecurity, skill and access disparity, gender and social bias, and institutional voids—further confirms the fundamentally structural nature of these obstacles.

Interpreting the Multidimensional Constraints

The dominant constraint wage and employment insecurity multifaceted, affects both casual and agricultural workers, showcasing that the traditional divide between farm and non-farm sectors in relation to worker vulnerability is non-existent. The maintenance of some form of employment on a seasonal basis and the demand of agricultural labor are characterized by the absence of written contracts, employment in a serial fashion, and the payment of wages in a timely manner. The findings presented here are in line with Papola (2012) and Himanshu (2011) who stress the informalisation of rural employment of all kinds in a sector.

The second most crucial dimension, skill and access mismatch, suggests that there is a rural skilling gap between the initiatives and the local market for which services are to be rendered. From the study, rural respondents continue to report a lack of practical, employable training options, which is baffling, to say the least, on the heels of the introduction of flagship programs such as PMKVY. Mehrotra et al. (2014) argue that most vocational training schemes in India are skewed towards urban areas and ignore the backward districts, and, therefore, this lack of qualitative data is not far from the truth. Regression analysis in this study shows that this mismatch correlates with a reduction in self-reported productivity and, therefore, is a critical perspective for policy planners to consider.

The gender and social barriers dimension, while not statistically significant in the regression model, was nonetheless noteworthy during descriptive comparisons. Women's constraints scores are high which corroborates the persistent gender exclusion in rural labour markets articulated by Agarwal (2018) and Khera & Nayak (2009). The constraints of culture on women, in terms of mobility, family roles, and informal wage bargaining, are barriers to women's access to easier and better-paying jobs.

Lastly, gaps of a policy such as institutional gaps, lack of information, absence of local facilitators, and bureaucratic sluggishness, indicate that schemes like MGNREGA or NRLM that are intended to help the marginalized, lose their effect due to inadequate reach. These are the most pronounced for the Scheduled Castes and the landless, as pointed out by Kumar & Murgai (2019), who lack the socio-cultural and educational tools to swim in the sea of welfare.

Policy Implications

In order to address the numerous dimensions of the constraints of labor, the policies that are designed must go beyond the more traditional frameworks, which are far too elementary in scope, focusing much more on a set of micro-level policies which are far better aligned to the local context. There are a number of practical approaches that can be derived from the findings presented in the analysis:

- **Local Job Guarantee and Asset Creation Schemes Should Be Strengthened**

While the demand driven National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a boon to rural workers, its operationalization in Chittorgarh requires a complete transformation through better infrastructure, timely deposit and maintenance of payments, and diversification of the scope of the micro-projects. The conservation of soils, the capturing of water, and the more general agri-allied infrastructure all provide secure employment, and improve productivity.

- **The Development of Skills in Mid-level Workers Linked to the Market should be Augmented**

Skill centers must be far more modular, mobile and responsive to feedback from the local demand side, particularly from industries, cooperatives, and self-help associations. There is a much greater demand for training in micro-entrepreneurship, for food processing, organic inputs, and livestock to widen the income to be earned.

- **Gender-specific Barriers must be Developed and Tackled Separately**

Interventions that can and must be designed in this regard include the provision of childcare facilities on the worksites of MGNREGA, the introduction of specific training for women, and the inclusion of gender responsive budgeting in rural employment programs. Besides, public advocacy to bring about acceptance of the idea of mobility and active participation of women in the leadership of local level panchayati raj institutions also can go a long way in addressing patriarchal norms.

- **Institutional Support with the Development of Hollow Blocks of Rural Labour Resource Hubs**

At the block-level these Rural Labour Resource Centers can serve as job banks to cover the disconnect in employment opportunities. They can simultaneously promote awareness around government schemes, assist in grievance stepping, facilitate basic digital literacy workshops, and manage employment-oriented workflows. In addition, these centers can track the local supply-demand of labor and facilitate linkages across employers, trainers and the local workforce.

- **Incorporate Workforce Planning Within Thane's Development District Plans**

Labour diagnostics and primary—especially the data collected as part of this study—need to be mainstreamed and funding priorities predetermined in every district level planning document. The mapping of labour resources needs to be digitalized and engaged at the gram panchayat level.

For Governance and Evidence-Based Planning

This study reinforces the case for evidence-based decentralized labour governance. Policies should be responsive to the heterogeneities within rural districts. Rather than relying on national averages, micro-level surveys, participatory diagnostics, and governance integrations of labour indicators into the planning for Panchayati Raj framework are paramount in attending to the structure constraints. The approach adopted in this study—primary data collection, factor analysis and hypothesis testing—should be used as a reference for future district level labour assessments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Among the many factors relating to rural development 'labour' is perhaps the most important and the least examined and understood' especially at the micro-regional level where structural constraints converge with the day to day livelihood challenges. The paper under review relating to Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan attempts to understand the realities of rural labour constraints through the prism of a quantitative approach based on primary data collected from 385 respondents. The four dimensions of rural labour issues identified in the paper—wage insecurity, skill mismatch, gender and social barriers, and institutional gaps—demonstrate that rural labour issues are not monolithic, but are highly stratified along socio-economic, occupational and geo-gender lines.

Methods such as exploratory factor analysis combined with inferential statistics such as ANOVA and regression add to the rigor of the study. The confirmation of hypotheses concerning the variation in the constraints of labour on the basis of occupational and gender differences adds evidence to the theory. Perhaps the most important are the regression results linking the constraints of labour to productivity outcomes. They provide a vital contribution to the literature, demonstrating how the lack of economic resilience in the rural population is a result of the challenges posed by labour to the population.

A paramount realization that derives from this specific study is the change of approach regarding policies from Universalist to decentralized and segmented schemes. The very structural nature of constraints e.g skilling ecosystems that do not exist, institutional outreach that is next to non-existent, and obstinate gender norms, require 'solutions' that do not only focus on finance, or infrastructure, but rather structurally, socially, human-capital, and local governance system inclusive.

The paper carries special relevance at this point of time, post the pandemic, where the pulling back of the populace to rural areas, skid rural unskilled unemployed and vulnerable supply chains to the sidelined, post policy change. Chittorgarh, as a representative district in the agrarian part of Rajasthan, provides learnings that should be relevant for the many other, far too often ignored, rural areas that are going through the same stagnation and informalisation conditions.

Summary of Strategic Recommendations

With the analysis put forth in the paper in mind, the next steps that are to be taken are guided towards district government, researchers, rural development practitioners, and policy makers.

- **Increase the Coverage and Effectiveness of Rural Skills Training**
 - Adjust rural training programs to the gaps in skills identified in district-level labour supply and demand surveys.
 - Promote PPPs to provide mobile, modular, and village-based training.
 - Digital financial literacy and rudimentary financial education should be part of the training material.
- **Institutionalize Real-Time Labour Mapping at the Panchayat Level**
 - Integrate real-time data collection on employment, and underemployment, as well as the movement of labour.
 - Utilize participatory methodologies that are geo-referenced and digitally tagged to achieve greater granularity.
 - Build "labour dashboards" at the panchayat level that serve as guides for local planning.
- **Gender-Responsive Labour Policies**
 - Design tailored employment and skill plans for women and implement supportive measures (e.g., travel support, daycare services).
 - Give MGNREGA and other rural programs horizontal equal wage parity through MGNREGA wage policies.
 - Foster female leadership in cooperatives and rural producer organizations.
- **Strengthen Last-Mile Institutional Infrastructure**
 - Set up Rural Labour Facilitation Centers at the block for employment, grievance, and awareness.
 - Recruit trained local youths as field extension workers for skill and employment programs.
 - Link local centers digitally to the state and national employment databases.

- **Monitor Labour Productivity and Outcome Metrics**

- Change the evaluation measures from expenditure to employment days, income, and skill retention.
- Inject productivity monitoring in Self-Help Group (SHG) and Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) tracking.

Limitations and Future Research Scope

This study, despite its comprehensive methodology and representative sample, remains confined to a single district. To understand better how constraints develop over time, conducting longitudinal studies through several seasons might help. Furthermore, adding qualitative interviews would enrich the understanding of the subjective experiences of labour. Future research could examine the roles of digital technology in rural employment within the context of a transitioning Indian economy.

Conclusion

The micro-level labour diagnostics approach provides a framework which can be replicated in similar geographies which have been less researched. If India is to realize its potential in rural development, a change in policy from 'infrastructure heavy' to 'labour supplemented and evidence driven' is a necessity.

For instance, the agricultural and semi-agrarian district of Chittorgarh has a future, but only when positively harnessed in a region that can offer land and water. This hinges on how the district perceives, nurtures and enables its population to use its potential.

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