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"IMPACT OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON JOB PROSPECTS AMONG YOUTH IN THE BORDER DISTRICTS OF RAJOURI AND POONCH, JAMMU AND KASHMIR"

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This study examines the influence of higher education on employment opportunities for young people in the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir. These districts are affected by socio-political and economic difficulties that greatly affect career outcomes. These districts, which are defined by their isolated locations and restricted access to educational resources and career prospects, pose significant obstacles to employment for educated young people. The study investigates the impact of variables such as educational quality, infrastructure, and geographical circumstances on the capacity to find employment, emphasizing the discrepancies between the ambitions of young people and the actual job market conditions. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity for governmental measures to improve the efficiency of higher education in marginalized regions as a means of promoting socio-economic mobility

Introduction:

The significance of higher education in influencing professional paths is vital, particularly in the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, where there are notable socio-political and economic obstacles. These isolated regions, characterized by their distance from populated areas and their closeness to the international border, experience restricted availability of educational resources, infrastructure, and job prospects. As a result, local youngsters encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining meaningful employment. This study investigates the influence of higher education on employment opportunities in various districts, taking into account variables such as the quality of education, infrastructure, and regional socio-economic circumstances. It underscores the disparities between the ambitions of young people and the actual employment opportunities available, underscoring the necessity for governmental measures to enhance the efficacy of higher education as a means of advancing social and economic mobility in these disadvantaged regions.

Review of Literature

Higher education improves employability by equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and qualifications that employers in many fields look for. Research undertaken by the National Association of Colleges and Businesses (NACE) indicates that businesses prioritise candidates with higher academic qualifications, since they believe these individuals possess the necessary skills and abilities to meet the expectations of the employment market (NACE, 2021).[i]

Credentialing and qualifications pertain to the procedure of validating and evaluating an individual's educational accomplishments and expertise. Higher education credentials, such as degrees and certifications, serve as indicators to prospective employers of an individual's abilities and qualities. A study conducted by Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2013) demonstrates a direct relationship between higher levels of education and better wages, as well as a reduction in unemployment rates. This emphasises the importance of educational credentials in securing work[ii]. Higher education schools provide many professional development options, including internships, co-op programs, career counselling, and networking events, to help students progress in their professions. Hillage and Pollard's (1998) study suggests that participating in work-based learning experiences during higher education significantly enhances graduates' employability by providing them with practical skills and exposing them to the industry[iii].

Industry Relevance and Adaptability: Higher education programs are custom-designed to fulfil the needs of different industries and adjust to the evolving demands of the labour market. In 2015, the British Council performed a study that highlights the vital role of higher education institutions in fostering innovation and providing graduates with the essential skills needed for employment in emerging industries. This, in turn, enhances their prospects of securing jobs[iv]. Higher education provides students with the opportunity to get worldwide exposure and improve their professional possibilities beyond their home nations. Rajan's (2015) study suggests that participation in international education experiences, such as studying abroad or joining exchange programs, improves graduates' ability to navigate different cultures and makes them more attractive to employers in the global market[v].

Research and innovation play a vital role in driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities. Higher education institutions have a significant responsibility in fostering these processes. Florida's (2002) and Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) research offers proof of the advantageous impacts of university research and information dissemination on regional growth and employment opportunities[vi].

Area of Study

The study was carried out in the border districts of Poonch and Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir, which had populations of 476,820 and 642,415, respectively, as per the 2011 Census. Poonch has a substantial Scheduled Tribe population of 36.93%, whilst Rajouri has a slightly lower percentage of 36.24%. The literacy rates in Poonch and Rajouri are 66.74% and 68.54% respectively, indicating differences in literacy levels among genders and social categories. The selection of the districts was based on their combination of rural and urban areas, continuous warfare, presence of higher education institutions, and diverse climatic circumstances.

Objectives

1. Discover the challenges faced by young individuals in obtaining higher education in Rajouri and Poonch districts.
2. To explore the degree to which job prospects for young individuals increase after completion of their higher education**.**

The Impact of Higher Education on the Job Prospects of Young individuals

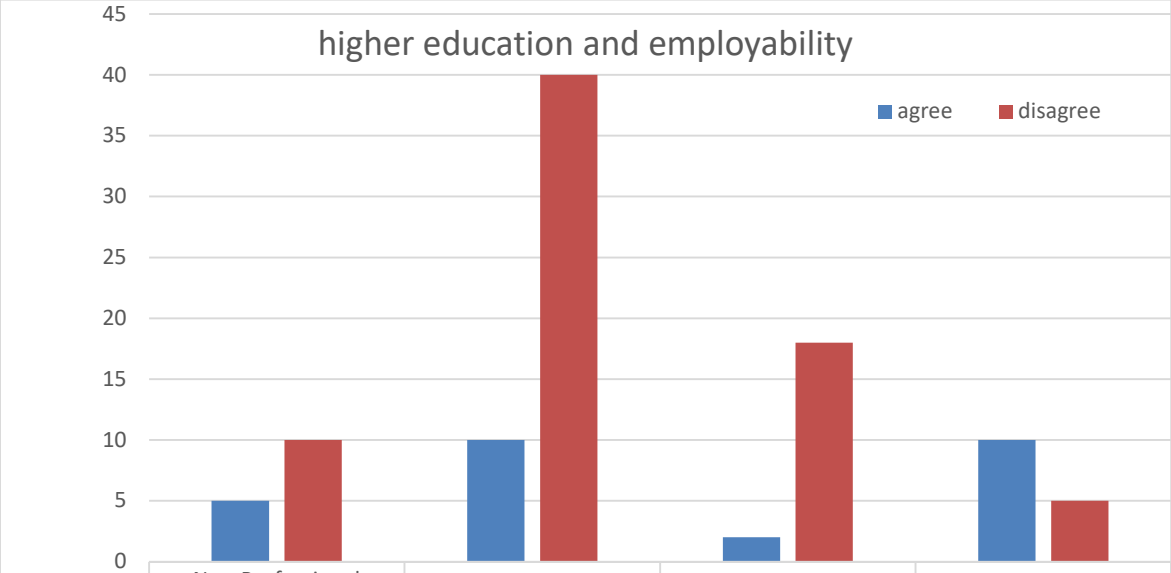
Higher education has a profound impact on the job prospects of young individuals, as it offers them the possibility to grow and advance in their personal, intellectual, and professional development.

The relationship between higher education and job prospects is intricate and varied, as higher education plays a crucial part in determining individuals' ability to secure employment and pursue career progression. Here is an explanation of this relationship, supported by references to strengthen the arguments:

A study conducted in the Rajouri district including 240 participants indicates that 220 of them strongly link higher education, namely a PhD, with obtaining esteemed gazetted posts such as assistant professorships. This association is mostly based on the perceived advantages of job security, financial stability, and social advancement that these roles provide. The conviction is strengthened by exemplary figures who have achieved success following the acquisition of higher academic qualifications. Nonetheless, a group of 20 individuals are unable to access this link, primarily because of factors such as limited job prospects, financial limitations, the allure of other career options, or the belief that higher education is not relevant to their objectives. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these contrasting viewpoints is essential in order to effectively tackle obstacles and improve the perceived worth of higher education in the area.

Survey on the Perception of Higher Education's Influence on Employability Among Youth in Rajouri and Poonch

A survey was undertaken to evaluate the perception of young individuals from Rajouri and Poonch regarding the influence of higher education on job prospects. The study consisted of 100 participants, with 50 individuals from Rajouri and 50 individuals from Poonch. The participants included MBBS students, PhD students, postgraduate (PG) students, and graduates. The aim was to assess the degree to which higher education is seen as a way to improve job prospects, while simultaneously examining the obstacles that may impede this potential.



	Non-Professional graduates	Post-Graduates	Ph.D	MBBS & PG Doctors
agree	5	10	2	10
disagree	10	40	18	5

Results of the survey:

Overall Impression:

All 100 participants, including youth from Rajouri and Poonch, unanimously agreed that higher education has a positive impact on one's capacity to find employment. Medical students pursuing a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS): **Agree :** specifically 10 out of 15, i.e**.** 66.67% of the MBBS students , agreed that pursuing higher education improves one's chances of finding employment. **Disagreement** was expressed by 33.33% of the MBBS students, namely 5 out of 15, who cited the rise in contractual job positions as a cause for concern. **Doctoral students pursuing a PhD**: **Agree:** 10% of the surveyed PhD students (18 out of 20) concurred that higher education improves one's chances of finding employment. **Disagreement** was expressed by 90% of the PhD students, with 2 out of 20 attributing their viewpoint to the high unemployment rate. **Post- Graduate students** **Agree** : 10 out of 60 (16.67%) Postgraduate students unanimously concurred that pursuing further education significantly improves one's employability. **Disagreement rate: 83.33%** (40 out of 60) Postgraduate students expressed their disagreement, asserting that they are focussing on preparing for competitive tests such as JKAS and JKSSB because there is a scarcity of direct work prospects. **Graduate students:**

Agree: 5 out of 15 (33.33%) individuals who completed their education acknowledged that higher education improves the likelihood of finding employment.
Disagree: 66.67% of the graduates, which is equivalent to 10 out of 15, did not believe the present unemployment rate to be a serious hindrance.
Agreement View: While there is a widespread belief that higher education should improve job prospects, the majority of respondents argue that in Rajouri and Poonch, it does not have a significant impact on employability. This is attributed to various obstacles such as institutional deficiencies, concerns about educational quality, border disputes, geographical remoteness, and political instability.

The survey findings indicate that although higher education is theoretically associated with enhanced employability, real challenges in the Rajouri and Poonch regions reduce its effectiveness. To fully unlock the promise of higher education in improving employability for young people in these regions, it is crucial to tackle these problems.

Credentialing and qualifications

Study on the Influence of Credentials and Qualifications: A Survey Conducted Among 50 Students from Rajouri and Poonch

A survey was performed among 50 students from Rajouri and Poonch to assess their perspectives on how study culture impacts credentials and qualifications. The findings indicated that 80% of the student population (40 out of 50) hold the belief that universities located outside their region, such as Jammu University, IIT Delhi, JNU, and IIMs, provide more conducive conditions for enhancing their qualifications. The main variables that contribute to this view include elevated academic standards, superior resources, seasoned faculty, and improved networking chances. In contrast, 20% of the kids (10 out of 50) expressed disagreement, stating that their academic achievements were adequately supported by prestigious local schools such as Christ School Poonch and Navodaya Vidyalaya Koteranka and Surankote. The survey emphasises that although external schools are frequently seen as superior, a strong local education can nevertheless offer substantial qualifications.

Career advancement prospects in higher education institutions in Rajouri and Poonch

Serial number	category	number of Youth	Response
1	Doctors (MBBS and PG) (GMC Rajouri)	10/10	Got professional development
2	Doctors (MBBS and PG) Career Counselling	10/10	Parental and familial counselling
3	Master of Business Administration	3/4	Limited prospects for professional advancement

4	Undergraduate and postgraduate students	8/10	Scarce opportunities resulting from societal factors

The survey conducted among students from Rajouri and Poonch unveiled several insights regarding job advancement prospects in higher education institutions. All ten MBBS and postgraduate students from GMC Rajouri have indicated that they have received professional development opportunities, including as internships. Nevertheless, they observed that parents and relatives predominantly provided career counselling, as there is a lack of professional job counselling facilities in the districts. Out of the MBA graduates from Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU), 75% expressed worries regarding limited career advancement prospects, with only 25% currently employed as an assistant professor. Moreover, a significant majority of postgraduate and undergraduate students from Rajouri and Poonch emphasized the scarcity of employment prospects resulting from diverse social factors. These factors encompass the underdevelopment of the region, absence of a private industry, subpar educational standards, high rates of teacher absence in tribal villages, and the weakened educational framework stemming from these systemic problems. The lack of institutional career counselling worsens these difficulties, forcing students to rely on informal guidance from family members, which may not necessarily correlate with wider professional prospects.

Sociological Factors and Diagram:

The dearth of job advancement prospects in Rajouri and Poonch can be ascribed to various socioeconomic causes, encompassing:

Underdevelopment: The region's inadequate infrastructure and economic circumstances restrict the ability to generate employment opportunities and hinder professional advancement.

The dearth of a strong private sector: The dearth of a strong private sector diminishes job prospects and confines students to a narrow range of career choices primarily in government services.

Poor Quality Education: Insufficient educational standards, particularly in tribal regions, impede students' acquisition of fundamental skills, hence impacting their preparedness for advanced education and competitive employment opportunities.

Teacher absenteeism: Teacher absenteeism in native communities undermines the educational foundation, resulting in enduring drawbacks for professional advancement.

Lack of official career counselling Lack of official career counselling services results in students depending on informal counselling, primarily from family members. However, this kind of assistance may not adequately equip students with the essential skills to navigate intricate professional routes.

Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir: Low Industry Relevance and Adaptability

The higher education system in Jammu and Kashmir experiences a notable disparity between the academic preparation provided and the requirements of industries, resulting in a large number of

students opting for jobs unrelated to their areas of study. PhD applicants and graduates of BDS programmes are increasingly choosing different career paths because of a scarcity of suitable work prospects. A survey done among 120 students, consisting of 100 postgraduates, 10 BDS graduates, and 10 PhD applicants, indicated that 80% of them had to change their professional trajectories due to a lack of alignment between their education and the requirements of the market. The primary factors mentioned were the scarcity of employment prospects, obsolete educational programmes, weak connections with the sector, and insufficient infrastructure. Many students were compelled to choose alternate work due to economic hardship. Moreover, the scarcity of research possibilities and the prevailing social and political instability in the region intensify these difficulties. The disparity between education and employment underscores the pressing necessity for a holistic approach that encompasses curricular enhancements, enhanced industrial linkages, upgraded infrastructure, and regional stability. It is crucial to tackle these problems in order to offer significant professional growth prospects to the young people of Jammu and Kashmir. This would help close the divide between higher education and industrial applicability.

Higher Education and Global Opportunities

The survey conducted among a group of 20 researchers, sought to provide insight into the global opportunities that are accessible to scholars in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. The data depict a clear and striking image of the restricted global opportunities available to pupils in the region. Only a small number of students, often one or two every batch, from the University of Jammu were able to gain opportunities for international study visits during their PhD programs. Similarly, at Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU), only two out of the 30 postgraduate students showed any optimism about being able to take part in such chances while pursuing their PhD studies.

Main findings:

Among the 20 PhD scholars surveyed, only two had the opportunity to participate in international educational trips.

Out of the 30 postgraduate students surveyed, just two expressed optimism regarding the opportunity to acquire foreign exposure during their PhD studies.

These findings emphasize a notable discrepancy between the ambitions of students and the actuality of their educational encounters.

Identified predicaments:

Limited research opportunities: Numerous students face difficulties in finding research topics that conform to global industry requirements. Their contribution to global academic debate is limited due to the absence of suitable research opportunities.

Lack of proper funding: Insufficient financial resources for research is a significant obstacle that hinders students from engaging in high-Caliber and influential initiatives. The limitation in financial resources hampers the development of new ideas and inhibits scholars from striving for global acclaim.

Lack of sufficient infrastructure: The absence of state-of-the-art research facilities and resources impedes students' capacity to carry out innovative research. The lack of infrastructure puts researchers at a disadvantage, hindering their ability to compete internationally. **Sociological Implications**: The survey results highlight the wider difficulties encountered by researchers in Jammu and Kashmir. The low foreign exposure is a result of underlying systemic problems, such as the region's educational isolation, which leads to the academic community being marginalized. The disparity between students' desires for international involvement and the actual conditions of their educational setting underscores the pressing necessity for specific adjustments. It is essential to tackle these difficulties by providing better funding, improving infrastructure, and creating more research opportunities. This will help to develop a more interconnected and competitive academic environment in the region. In the absence of these modifications, the untapped potential of Jammu and Kashmir's intellectuals will persist, hence continuing the cycle of educational and economic inferiority.

The Impact of Research and Innovation on Career Opportunities for PhD Scholars

Career Outcomes of Research Scholars

Assistant Professor Positions as Permanent Faculty

Three academics obtained tenured seats as assistant professors. Academic institutions highly value their exceptional research skills and groundbreaking achievements, which provide them with career stability and the chance to pursue their research interests.

Scientific Research Positions

Two researchers have collaborated on impactful scientific endeavours, utilizing their experience in research. These positions frequently entail pioneering research, utilization of state-of-the-art technologies, and cooperation with scholars from around the world, offering important experience and expanding possibilities for future academic and professional prospects.

Contractual lecturers in Higher Education

Five scholars are employed as contractual lecturers at the college. Although these jobs are temporary, they offer valuable teaching experience and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the academic community, which can serve as a foundation for future professional growth.

Teachers employed by private schools

Three individuals with doctoral degrees have chosen to work as educators at private schools. While these professions may lack the prestige associated with academic responsibilities, they provide a reliable source of income and the chance to share expertise with younger pupils. The high demand for proficient educators in the private school sector renders it a feasible career option for numerous academicians.

Homemakers

Five female PhD scholars in the humanities and arts have chosen to become homemakers, thus emphasizing the societal and gender-specific obstacles that can impede their professional advancement. These women have encountered challenges in obtaining local associate professor posts, with cultural norms and a dearth of appropriate academic prospects playing a substantial part in their present situation.

Discussion

The varied professional trajectories of the eighteen research researchers from Rajouri district exemplify the substantial influence that research and innovation may exert on career outcomes. While several scholars have attained prestigious academic posts or conducted influential scientific research, others have encountered societal and institutional obstacles that restrict their career prospects. This discrepancy highlights the significance of ongoing investment in research, the allocation of sufficient financing, and the establishment of inclusive work environments that acknowledge and use the advanced abilities of PhD scholars.

Research and innovation play a vital role in offering a diverse array of professional prospects for PhD academics. Nevertheless, there are still notable challenges that persist, especially for women and individuals in non-STEM disciplines. In order to facilitate the realization of academics' professional ambitions, it is imperative to sustain financing for research, provide sufficient support, and foster cultures that appreciate and exploit their outstanding abilities.

Main Findings

1. The survey findings indicate that the youth in Rajouri and Poonch generally believe that higher education should improve their chances of finding employment. However, a majority of the respondents feel that higher education has limited effectiveness in these regions due to challenges such as inadequate institutions, low educational standards, and political instability. More precisely, 66.67% of students pursuing an MBBS degree, 10% of students pursuing a PhD, 16.67% of postgraduate students, and 33.33% of graduates hold the belief that higher education enhances work chances. However, notable proportions of each group have expressed apprehensions regarding increasing unemployment rates and the scarcity of direct job options.
2. The survey conducted among students from Rajouri and Poonch reveals that 80% of the participants believe that outside Rajouri and Poonch universities provide greater options for increasing qualifications because of their superior resources and networking. On the other hand, 20% of the respondents found local colleges to be sufficient. The study also indicates that job promotion opportunities are constrained by factors such as underdevelopment, absence of a robust private sector, subpar educational standards, and teacher absenteeism. The lack of structured career counselling worsens these difficulties,

causing students to depend on informal guidance that may not adequately foster their professional development.

3. The survey indicates that 80% of students hold the belief that external universities provide more favourable conditions for improving qualifications, attributing this to higher academic standards and resources. By comparison, a mere 20% of individuals believe that local institutions adequately facilitate their academic accomplishments. This disparity underscores the diverse perspectives of educational prospects between external and local schools.
4. The survey indicates a notable disparity in worldwide prospects for researchers in Jammu and Kashmir, as only 2 out of 20 PhD students and 2 out of 30 postgraduate students' express optimism regarding foreign exposure. This underscores the difficulties posed by a lack of research opportunities, poor funding, and insufficient infrastructure, which impede students' capacity to participate on a global scale and emphasize the necessity for focused interventions to enhance their academic and professional prospects.
5. The survey results suggest that certain PhD academics have obtained esteemed positions, such as tenured professors or influential scientific responsibilities. However, others encounter difficulties such as temporary teaching agreements or societal obstacles, particularly for women in non-STEM subjects. These differences highlight the necessity for greater funding for research and improved work conditions that promote and utilize the promise of research and innovation for advancing careers.

Conclusion

The districts of Poonch and Rajouri encounter substantial obstacles in terms of employment and career advancement as a result of several variables arising from their geographical and socio-political circumstances. Border disputes exacerbate instability, which has a detrimental impact on local economy and discourages investment in skilled personnel and international ventures. The region's underdevelopment, exacerbated by chronic teacher absenteeism, especially in indigenous schools, further undermines the educational infrastructure. The substandard infrastructure, lack of institutional attention, and financial limitations diminish the quality of education, impeding the progress of research and innovation. The presence of these systemic concerns hampers career opportunities and the capacity to find employment, effectively trapping the population in a cycle of poverty and hindered progress. Additionally, these issues pose challenges for the region's integration into larger national and global economies. In the absence of focused initiatives, these difficulties will persist in impeding the progress of these areas.

[i] National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). "Job Outlook 2021: Employer Perspectives on College Hiring." 2021.

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[iii] Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis. Department for Education and Employment

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[vi] Mazzarol, Tim, and Geoffrey N. Soutar. ""Push-Pull" Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice." *International Journal of Educational Management*, 2002.