



Employment Generation and Labour Market Reforms: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Implications

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Open Access

Manuscript ID:
BIJ-SPL3-Dec25-ECO-043

Subject: Economics

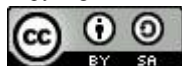
Received : 21.08.2025

Accepted : 20.09.2025

Published : 31.12.2025

DOI: 10.64938/bijsi.v10si3.25.Dec043

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Abstract

Employment generation has remained a critical challenge for emerging economies like India, where the demographic dividend requires effective utilization. Labour market reforms have been introduced to enhance flexibility, efficiency, and inclusiveness in employment opportunities. This paper examines the interplay between employment generation and labour market reforms in India from 2019 to 2024, focusing on government initiatives, labour codes, and post-pandemic recovery. Using secondary data from government reports, labour surveys, and international databases, this study highlights both progress and persistent challenges. The findings suggest that while reforms improved formalization and social security coverage, the informal sector continues to dominate. A balanced approach between worker protection and employer flexibility is essential for sustainable job creation.

Keywords: employment generation, labour market reforms, informal sector, labour codes, India, job creation

Introduction

Employment generation has long been one of the central objectives of economic policy in India. With a workforce exceeding 500 million, the country's ability to provide productive jobs is directly linked to poverty alleviation, inclusive growth, and social stability. However, employment patterns have often lagged behind economic growth, leading to concerns of "jobless growth."

Labour market reforms in India have historically been fragmented, with multiple laws creating complexities for employers and workers alike. In recent years, the government introduced four labour codes consolidating 29 labour laws, aiming to

simplify compliance and encourage formalization. These reforms are expected to increase flexibility for industries while ensuring workers' rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) created massive disruptions in the labour market, particularly for migrant and informal workers. Lockdowns, reverse migration, and job losses exposed systemic vulnerabilities. Post-pandemic recovery has been shaped by government employment programs such as MGNREGA, PM SVANidhi, and skill development missions.

This study analyses employment trends and labour market reforms during 2019–2024. It evaluates whether reforms have translated into



meaningful employment generation and discusses the challenges that remain. The analysis contributes to policy debates on balancing economic efficiency with social justice in labour markets.

Objectives

1. To study the trends in employment generation in India between 2019–2024.
2. To examine the impact of labour market reforms on job creation and worker welfare.
3. To assess the challenges in formalizing the informal sector.
4. To provide policy recommendations for sustainable and inclusive employment growth.

Material and Methods

This study is based on secondary data sources, including:

1. Government of India publications (Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment, NITI Aayog).
2. International Labour Organization (ILO) reports.
3. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data (2019–2024).
4. Academic journals and policy reports.

A descriptive and analytical method has been employed to examine employment generation and labour reforms. The data was tabulated and interpreted using comparative trend analysis.

Methodology

1. Scope: Employment and labour market reforms in India (2019–2024).
2. Type of Study: Descriptive and analytical.
3. Data Collection: Secondary data from government and international sources.
4. Tools of Analysis: Percentage growth, comparative analysis, and tabular representation.

Importance

Employment generation is vital for harnessing India's demographic dividend. Productive jobs not only reduce poverty but also enhance consumption and economic growth. Labour reforms play a critical

role in shaping employment conditions, wages, and security.

Labour codes aim to simplify compliance, promote industrial growth, and improve social security. This is significant in the context of India's high informal employment, which leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation and income insecurity.

Sustainable employment generation through reforms can ensure a balance between efficiency and equity, thereby strengthening the economy's resilience against shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment Trends in India (2019–2024)

Year	Employment Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Informal Sector Share (%)	Govt. Employment Initiatives
2019	45.9	5.3	82	Skill India, MGNREGA
2020	43.5	8.5	84	Atmanirbhar Bharat Package
2021	44.2	7.1	83	PM SVANidhi, Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana
2022	45.1	6.4	82	Labour Codes Implementation
2023	46.3	5.8	81	Digital India, Start-up India
2024	47.0	5.2	80	Skill Development Missions

Sources: PLFS, MoLE, ILO Reports (compiled by author)

Findings and Results

1. Employment generation has shown gradual recovery after the pandemic shock of 2020.
2. Labour market reforms have simplified compliance but full implementation remains pending in many states.
3. Informal employment continues to dominate, though social security coverage has expanded.



4. Government schemes contributed significantly to rural and urban self-employment.

Interpretation and Conclusion

The analysis reveals that India has made progress in employment generation between 2019–2024, with unemployment rates declining post-pandemic. Labour reforms, especially the four labour codes, represent a significant step towards rationalizing labour laws. However, their success depends on effective state-level implementation.

The persistence of informal employment highlights the challenge of creating high-quality, formal jobs. Skill development, investment in labour-intensive industries, and digital empowerment remain crucial. A balanced reform strategy that protects workers while encouraging entrepreneurship is essential for sustainable growth. In conclusion, employment generation and labour market reforms must go hand in hand. Policy coherence, institutional strengthening, and inclusive approaches are key to realizing India's demographic potential.

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