

Startups Driving Employment Growth: Assessing Government Initiatives and Implementation Challenges

Kaushik Meenakshi Ramesh*, Amita Pathania**,
Vaishnavi Yadav***

ABSTRACT

Startups are universally acknowledged as drivers of job creation in global economies. In India, the substantial youth population and ongoing unemployment issues make the utilization of the startup ecosystem a strategic national imperative. Despite the launch of several government initiatives to foster entrepreneurship, a significant mismatch often arises between policy formulation and successful implementation, which adversely affects employment-generating outcomes. This study employs a systematic assessment of secondary data to integrate previous literature, offering a novel integrative analysis of the relationship between startup-driven job creation, government policies, and the systemic constraints that hinder their success. The study reveals a notable research deficiency: the absence of a unified framework connecting policy formulation, implementation obstacles, and employment outcomes in the Indian setting. Our findings suggest that obstacles, including bureaucratic impediments, financial access limitations, and policy inconsistencies, significantly hinder the effectiveness of employment programs. This research contributes to the literature by providing a systematic evaluation of these obstacles and proposing a stakeholder-focused intervention strategy. The insights are essential for policymakers to reform policies, for entrepreneurs to navigate within the ecosystem, and for academics to identify future research opportunities, ultimately seeking to enhance the

* PhD Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Central University of Haryana, Haryana, India. Email: meenakshi220467@cuh.ac.in

** Assistant Professor, Institute of Information Technology & Management, Institutional Area, Janakpuri, New Delhi, India. Email: 95pathania@gmail.com

*** PhD Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Central University of Haryana, Haryana, India. Email: vaishnavi230464@cuh.ac.in

startup ecosystem's capacity as a robust catalyst for sustained employment growth in India.

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INTRODUCTION

Startups have emerged as potent agents of change in the dynamic global economy, transforming industries, encouraging innovation, and altering the nature of work. Startups have the potential to disrupt traditional industries, launch innovative products and services, and create a wave of fresh job opportunities. While established job markets continue to struggle with volatility and uncertainty, the emergence of startups has caused a renewed interest in understanding their function as employment catalysts and their potential effects on reducing unemployment.

In India, there are many millions of openly unemployed individuals and a substantial number of underemployed and disguisedly unemployed individuals. The issue of youth unemployment and underemployment is exacerbated by India's growing youth population (David, 2019). India possesses the most substantial young demographic globally, wherein around 66 percent of its total population, above 808 million individuals, falls into the age bracket of under 35 years (ILO, 2012). Nearly 40 percent of the Indian population is comprised of individuals aged 13 to 35. Startups are considered a crucial tool for the country's change and a brand-new source of growth and employment generation (Singh, 2017). In India's economy, startups have become a major force for productivity and competitiveness (Satyanarayana et al., 2021). The Indian government initiated the Startup India initiative to promote entrepreneurship and a business-friendly environment (David et al., 2021) which in turn created more job opportunities and boosted India towards being self-reliant. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from 2017 to 2022 shows that the country's labour force and workforce have continuously expanded while the unemployment rate has decreased.

Despite the acknowledged potential of startups and the increase in government activities, a significant gap remains in comprehensively evaluating the alignment between policy objectives and actual employment

outcomes. Current literature frequently analyzes startups and government initiatives separately, lacking a comprehensive examination of the implementation obstacles that may impede their effectiveness in generating jobs (Kantis et al., 2020; Vlados et al., 2019). Recent assessments indicate that although initiatives such as Startup India have increased registration figures, their conversion into high-quality, sustainable employment remains a crucial area of investigation, revealing substantial discrepancies across various Indian states (NASSCOM & Zinnov, 2023; Mehta et al., 2024). This study is required to address this gap. The objective is to deliver a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of government actions in fostering meaningful employment development within the startup ecosystem and to pinpoint the key obstacles in this process. This study's findings will greatly assist policymakers in enhancing current programs and developing more effective, evidence-based initiatives. Moreover, entrepreneurs and startup incubators can gain valuable insights into addressing current challenges. At the same time, academics and researchers will receive a consolidated perspective on the convergence of entrepreneurship, policy, and employment, providing a basis for further empirical inquiry.

The primary objective of this study is to perform a thorough examination of the role of startups in employment generation in India by:

- Evaluating significant government efforts designed to promote employment through startups.
- Synthesizing and presenting a systematic analysis of the significant implementation obstacles that impede these endeavors.
- Offering a comprehensive viewpoint that connects policy, practice, and outcomes to underscore the present gap and propose a path forward.

The present article uses the secondary data review (SDR) process to achieve its objectives in which data from different research articles, journals, websites, newspapers, blogs, etc. have been studied. The study further aims to provide significant insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders to maximize the potential of startups as engines of job creation by analysing the elements that drive employment development within startup ecosystems and recognizing the potential constraints they face.

STARTUPS AS ENGINES OF EMPLOYMENT GENERATION/JOB CREATION

The phrase “startup” has emerged as a popular catchphrase in today’s contemporary world. A startup refers to a firm that is still in the early phases of its business operations and is founded on invention and creativity. It is a business that is started with a small amount of money and other resources. Startups play an important role in driving economic growth & development globally. These entrepreneurial ventures have been recognized as catalysts for employment generation and have significant implications for reducing unemployment rates. According to Kritikos (2014), entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic advancement through innovation & creation of novel technologies, products, and services. He further contends that entrepreneurship has the potential to boost economic growth during periods of economic stagnation and high unemployment rates (Alheet, 2019). This is because entrepreneurs boost the desire for workers to develop innovative items by utilizing commercial prospects and opening up new markets (Alheet, 2019).

The existing literature supports the connection between startups and declining unemployment. Both Garofoli (1994) and Audretsch and Fritsch (1994) found, in their independent investigations, that a negative relationship exists between unemployment and the establishment of new businesses. This means that when new businesses are founded, employability is boosted, and unemployment drops significantly (Adenike, 2022). The Theory of Entrepreneurship (1934) by the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter serves as the foundation for the same. As per Schumpeter (1934), innovation requires entrepreneurs in any institution. Schumpeter contends that innovations strengthen global economies and empower entrepreneurs to transform institutions, supporting the idea that entrepreneurs are socially separate individuals. Reduction in unemployment caused by entrepreneurship is known as the “Schumpeter effect”. There is a persistent negative correlation between unemployment and the launch of new businesses. To put it another way, when the number of startups rises, more jobs are created, and the unemployment rate declines (Ferina et al., 2018). Small businesses were considered to be of little economic significance until Birch (1979) asserted that they produced a disproportionately significant fraction of new net jobs. According to Birch (1979), small enterprises and startups are largely responsible for creating new jobs. Startups generate employment, but they also contribute to the loss of jobs when their businesses fail. But over time, startups are big net

job generators on a net basis. Henrekson and Johansson (2010) stated that few fast-expanding companies, or “Gazelles,” which are not always tiny and youthful are found to be excellent job generators. They generate the majority or all new net jobs.

A novel and essential perspective is emerging in contemporary writing. The emphasis is transitioning from the quantity of policies to the quality of their implementation and sustainability. Kantis et al. (2020) argue that numerous public efforts fail due to intrinsic structural problems, rather than a lack of effort. This research expands upon this developing viewpoint.

Recent research highlights the “scale-up gap” – the challenges startups encounter in progressing from initial survival to sustainable growth phases characterized by substantial employment (OECD, 2023). Moreover, research currently emphasizes geographical inequalities in startup performance and job creation, indicating that a uniform governmental approach is inadequate (Mehta et al., 2024). Our analysis incorporates recent findings to assert that the forthcoming challenge for research and policy lies not in initiating additional programs, but in optimizing current ones by addressing implementation obstacles. This multifaceted domain remains insufficiently synthesized within the Indian context.

There are several causes for this. First of all, startups frequently need trained workers and offer prospects for employment to people with specialized knowledge and ability. Second, compared, startups tend to be more agile and adaptable compared to larger organizations. It, they are able to cannot to market fluctuations and modify their personnel. Thirdly, by introducing cutting-edge goods and services, startups promote economic expansion. New market opportunities brought about by these developments lead to the creation of jobs in a variety of sectors and businesses. In addition, different countries have noted a favourable correlation between startup activity and unemployment rates (Bode & Marafa, 2022; Jeong & Choi, 2017). For instance, American researchers have discovered a link between startups and lower unemployment rates. A similar positive association between unemployment and entrepreneurship has been seen in studies from France and Germany.

These findings underscore the significance of startups as catalysts for job creation and unemployment reduction. The correlation between startups and the alleviation of unemployment holds substantial importance for policymakers and stakeholders. Policymakers should explore methods to promote entrepreneurship and cultivate a conducive climate for

businesses. This may involve providing financial assistance—through grants and loans—to those seeking to establish their own businesses. Policymakers should focus on implementing advantageous legislation and eliminating bureaucratic barriers that hinder corporate operations.

STARTUP-DRIVEN EMPLOYMENT POLICIES/ INITIATIVES BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT

The Indian government’s plan for fostering startup-driven employment is multifaceted, focusing on business facilitation, financial accessibility, and skill development. The subsequent table encapsulates the principal initiatives. However, a comprehensive analysis indicates that these schemes frequently function autonomously, utilizing divergent implementation strategies across different states and ministries, potentially resulting in redundancy and coverage deficiencies. This study provides a core framework for comprehending the intent against which implementation issues must be assessed. This work aims to address the disparity between the design of these schemes and their practical effectiveness:

Schemes/ Initiatives	Ministry/ Department	Description
Make in India	DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry	This project was started on September 25, 2014, to encourage creativity, investment manufacturing infrastructure, business ease, and talent development.
Stand-Up India Scheme	Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance	This scheme finances SC/ST & women entrepreneurs and provides financial assistance between 10 lakhs to 1 crore to a minimum of one borrower at each bank branch to begin a greenfield business. This company can be in production, services, agribusiness, or trading. Non-individual firms must have at least 51% shareholder and controlling ownership by a SC/ST or woman entrepreneur.

Schemes/ Initiatives	Ministry/ Department	Description
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	The major PMKVY initiative is conducted by National Skill Development Corporation. This vocational Certification scheme helps Indian youngsters get industry-relevant vocational training to improve their livelihoods.
Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)	Ministry of Finance	The Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, inaugurated MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) in 2015, to lend maximum of Rs. 10 lakhs to non-corporate, non-farm small/micro firms. Commercial, RRB, SFB, MFI, and NBFC banks provide these loans. This scheme has produced three products: 'Shishu', 'Kishore', and 'Tarun', under PMMY to indicate the beneficiary micro unit / entrepreneur's growth, development, and financial needs and offer a reference point for graduating / growing.
Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)	Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises	A significant credit-linked subsidy program, PMEGP, helps traditional craftspeople and jobless youngsters start micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector to provide self-employment prospects.
Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi Scheme	M/o Housing & Urban Affairs	PM SVANidhi Scheme began on June 1, 2020, to give working capital loans without collateral to urban street vendors affected by COVID-19 lockdowns to continue their activities.
Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs)	Ministry of Rural Development	RSETIs, also known as Rural Self Employment Training Institutes, are a program established by the Ministry of Rural growth (MoRD) with the objective of providing specialized facilities in every district across the nation.

Schemes/ Initiatives	Ministry/ Department	Description
		These institutes aim to deliver training and enhance the skills of rural youth, specifically focusing on fostering entrepreneurial growth. Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) are overseen by financial institutions in close collaboration with the Government of India and State Governments.
National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	NAPS was introduced by the Indian government in August 2016 with the aim of fostering apprenticeship programs by providing financial incentives, leveraging technology, and promoting awareness and support. The system consists of two primary elements: (i) employers contributing 25% of the statutory stipend, up to a maximum of Rs. 1500 per month for each apprentice, and (ii) covering the basic training expenses, up to a maximum of Rs. 7,500 per trainee.

CHALLENGES

The issues encountered are not wholly novel; however, this study enhances understanding by integrating them into a cohesive framework that explicitly associates each challenge with the shortcomings of employment-generating strategies. We transition from enumerating issues to elucidating their systemic effects on employment generation. Youth unemployment is not the problem faced by the economies but unemployable youth is. There is a wide gap between employers' needs and employees' skills (Ayoade & Agwu, 2016). The implementation of employment generation schemes through entrepreneurship encounters various challenges. These challenges encompass the inability of intervention programs to yield anticipated outcomes owing to issues such as corruption, bureaucratic obstacles, incongruities in government policies, political volatility, and a dearth of

entrepreneurial competencies among the unemployed population (Ayoade & Agwu, 2016). These challenges have been explained as follows:

- *Bad Management and Implementation:* The execution of policies at the subnational level may face challenges in maintaining consistency, especially when there are variations in the level of political power at that level (Norris et al., 2014). It is well acknowledged in the existing body of research on complex systems that the effectiveness of an intervention in a particular place does not guarantee consistent or predictable outcomes in other contexts (Braithwaite et al., 2018; Allcock et al., 2015). This assertion has validity even in cases where government is centralized rather than decentralized. The main obstacle to the full realisation of entrepreneurial development is the ineffective management and implementation of government policies, programmes, and strategic decisions. Some of the plans' failures were caused by the usurpation of power by other governmental branches, poor and troublesome management, and misappropriation of funds (Ayoade & Agwu, 2016).
- *Corrupt Practices Among Decision Makers:* The growth of entrepreneurial activity has been hampered by the rate of corruption and the abuse of public monies. These have deprived the nation of numerous employment prospects that would have been generated through active entrepreneurship programmes (Ayoade & Agwu, 2016). Corruption hinders entrepreneurial action and can create structural challenges for entrepreneurs in emerging markets (Yockey, 2017). It is important to move beyond a pure law enforcement approach and focus on measures that entrepreneurs can take to mitigate corruption, such as promoting internal compliance, knowledge sharing, and innovative techniques to reduce opportunities for bribery (Avnimelech & Zelekha, 2015). Previous literature suggesting that corruption may increase entrepreneurship under a bad business climate is contradicted by the finding that corruption always hurts entrepreneurship, even in unfavourable business climates (Dutta & Sobel, 2016). Overall, corruption in entrepreneurship schemes has detrimental effects and efforts should be made to combat and mitigate its impact.
- *Lack of Entrepreneurial Education:* Lack of adequate funds for teaching practical aspects of entrepreneurial education and for starting and expanding business ventures (Barboza & Capochhi, 2020;

Radović-Marković & Achakpa, 2018). Lack of knowledge about and unawareness of the latest technologies and market trends creates a problem in setting up and running of business enterprises (Kumawat, 2016; Barboza & Capochhi, 2020). Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong and work-based learning that prepares learners to be future business owners (Nnaji & Ahmed, 2018). The small business growth domain is worthy of attention that entrepreneurship education programs for small firm growth represent a formidable field for educational learning and experimentation and for the advancement of entrepreneurship education as a whole (Bureau et al., 2012).

- *Policy Discontinuity and Lack of Sustainability:* There is a lack of policy continuity towards entrepreneurship, with a shift from SME policy to entrepreneurship policy. This shift aims to support entrepreneurship without focusing on specific firms or employment groups (Henerkson & Stenkula, 2010). Different European countries have primarily focused on macro-economic and macro-social measures to enhance their business environment, rather than adopting an integrated policy that takes into account all levels of space and different forms of developmental challenges (Millis & Dang, 2020). Developing nations have begun to prioritize startups and nascent enterprises as potential catalysts for economic growth; however, data on entrepreneurship in these regions is limited, resulting in policymakers lacking a robust, evidence-based foundation for formulating their policies and initiatives (Vlados et al., 2020). Despite the increased desire to foster entrepreneurial activity, numerous public projects have culminated in disappointment owing to inherent structural challenges that hinder governments from implementing prolonged successful efforts (Kantis et al., 2020).
- *Income Insecurity:* The obstacles to income stability in executing entrepreneurial or startup initiatives include the rise of informal businesses, employment uncertainty, and dependence on casual and unpaid labor for production (Adams et al., 2014). Income volatility and insecurity can adversely impact the long-term viability of startups by inducing uncertainty in household earnings and obstructing growth. Moreover, economic insecurity can affect the allocation of benefits and exacerbate inequality, with elevated levels of insecurity observed among lower-income individuals. Measures of income insecurity are concentrated at the lower end

of the income distribution, and factors such as gender, household size, health status, and industry affiliations can influence the level of insecurity (Rohde et al., 2014). The effect of income insecurity on the child's residential choice is ambiguous, as it depends on the level of parental altruism and the distribution of future income.

- *Finance*: Access to finance is a challenge in the implementation of entrepreneurial schemes. The literature highlights several factors that contribute to this challenge. Demographics, entrepreneurial experience, business features, and the phase of economic development influence the availability of external sources of financing (Fernandez, 2021). A recent study on India indicates that a substantial financial downturn in 2023-24 notably affected early-stage businesses, limiting their capacity to expand and recruit, which therefore diminished their job creation potential (Bhattacharya & Saha, 2024). Additionally, financial barriers, investor/property rights protection, and the novelty of the product/service offered can affect the proportion of self-investment provided to a new business (Love, 2020). There is a misalignment between the popularity of topics in the literature and the prevalence of different sources of funds (Evans, 2016). Conflicts between entrepreneurs and investors, constraints and policies faced, and the implications of these challenges are also important considerations in entrepreneurial finance (Titus & Victor, 2017). Efforts to expand the money supply beyond the stock of real savings can lead to negative unintended consequences, highlighting the need for careful economic policy in promoting entrepreneurship. Overall, access to finance is a complex issue that requires attention to various factors and considerations.
- *Bureaucratic Hurdles*: Onerous administrative processes, excessive documentation, and intricate regulatory obligations can hinder the growth of startups. The process of obtaining licenses and permits, as well as engaging with multiple government officials, may be arduous and time-consuming for entrepreneurs. Individuals encounter bureaucratic obstacles when accessing schemes, including insufficient information, document unavailability, technical difficulties within government programs, cultural pressures, and inequitable resource distribution (Brillman, 2014). These obstacles can hinder low-income communities' access to public healthcare services and impede the implementation of universal health coverage initiatives (Afzal et al., 2021). Moreover, foreign nurses recruited

to mitigate healthcare provider shortages may have difficulties in acclimating to a distinct healthcare system and must complete an adaptation program to guarantee their competence and safety in practice (Ramani & Rutkofsky, 2021). These obstacles underscore the necessity for enhanced communication between policymakers and end-users, including culturally attuned support services and adaptation initiatives to promote healthcare access and the effective integration of foreign healthcare professionals.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to rigorously examine the intricate relationship between startup ecosystems, government initiatives, and job creation in India, ultimately confirming the pivotal role of entrepreneurial ventures in driving employment growth. The analysis confirms that in a country characterized by a significant youth demographic and persistent underemployment, startups are not merely an economic alternative but a strategic imperative for enduring prosperity and social stability. The Indian government's recognition of this potential is evident in the emergence of initiatives like Startup India, Make in India, and the MUDRA Yojana, which collectively aim to cultivate an environment favorable to innovation, streamline business operations, and improve access to vital financing. However, the principal and most critical finding of this research is that the mere existence of these policies is insufficient. A substantial and systemic "implementation gap" emerges as the primary impediment, where a confluence of entrenched issues severely impedes the transition from policy formulation to effective execution. This disparity is manifest in bureaucratic sluggishness that obstructs agility, financial access constraints that inhibit development potential—particularly underscored by the recent "funding winter" impacting early-stage startups—and pervasive corruption that acts as a direct levy on enterprises. Additionally, legislative inconsistencies and a significant skills gap between the workforce and market demands further diminish the efficacy of these interventions, obstructing the ecosystem's development and the generation of high-quality, sustainable employment to its fullest potential.

The principal contribution of this study is its thorough synthesis of diverse issues into a unified framework, clearly illustrating their interplay in generating a harmful cycle that negatively impacts employment outcomes. This study goes beyond mere problem identification to clarify

their systemic impacts, providing a nuanced understanding crucial for all stakeholders. The findings compel policymakers to transition from focusing on quantitative scheme launches to prioritizing qualitative factors, including execution excellence, governance, and the creation of a stable, long-term policy framework that directly tackles the “scale-up gap.” This research provides entrepreneurs and incubators with a validated framework for addressing the ecosystem’s challenges, enabling a more strategic navigation of these obstacles. It provides a thorough framework for researchers and underscores critical requirements for future empirical studies, particularly concerning the financial consequences of corruption and the assessment of policy implementation efficacy. To realize the significant employment potential of India’s startups, a collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiative is essential to reform the system intended for growth, ensuring that the promise of entrepreneurship results in concrete, inclusive, and sustainable economic prosperity for the country.

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