



Digital Divide and Job Search Behaviour: An Empirical Study of Educated Urban Youth in Aizawl, Mizoram

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of digital access and skills on job search behaviour among educated youth in Aizawl, Mizoram. Using empirical data from 304 respondents, it examines the nature and frequency of job applications, utilization of online platforms like hnainpui.com, and preferred modes of application. Findings reveal that while nearly half of the respondents use online modes to apply for jobs, a significant proportion remains digitally excluded. Only 16.8% reported using the state-supported employment portal hnainpui.com. These patterns suggest a pressing need for digital literacy initiatives to improve employment outcomes and labour market efficiency in the region.

This study investigates the influence of the digital divide on the job search behaviour of educated urban youth in Aizawl, Mizoram. In a rapidly digitizing world, digital access and literacy are crucial in determining employability and access to job opportunities. Using primary data collected from 304 graduates and postgraduates who completed their degrees within the last three years, the research explores their preferred modes of application, frequency of job applications, and use of the state-run job portal hnainpui.com.

Findings reveal that while 49.3% of the respondents use online modes to apply for jobs, a substantial 43.4% still rely on offline applications. Only 16.8% had used hnainpui.com, highlighting low awareness and possibly usability challenges. Moreover, 52% had not applied for any jobs in the past six months, signalling a deeper issue of limited digital engagement and structural constraints. Key challenges identified include digital illiteracy, lack of awareness about online platforms, inadequate internet infrastructure, and a reliance on intermediaries. To address these gaps, the study recommends improving digital literacy through workshops, simplifying employment portal interfaces, and launching targeted awareness campaigns. A mobile-first approach, better portal integration with social media, and digital job fairs could further enhance engagement. Bridging this digital divide is essential to improving labour market participation and employment outcomes for Aizawl's youth.

Keywords: Digital divide, Educated urban youth, Job search behaviour, Urban labour market, Mizoram, Youth employment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital platforms has transformed job markets globally, yet the benefits remain unevenly distributed. In developing regions like Mizoram, digital literacy and access significantly impact job search behaviour. This paper investigates the extent to which the digital divide affects job-seeking efforts among educated urban youth in Aizawl, a rapidly urbanizing district and the capital of Mizoram.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the digital accessibility and skills of educated urban youth in Aizawl.
2. To examine the influence of digital tools on job search behaviour.
3. To evaluate the usage and effectiveness of the hnainpui.com portal.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs an empirical and descriptive research approach to examine how the digital divide influences job search behaviour among educated urban youth in Aizawl, Mizoram. The methodology is based on the necessity of gathering first-hand information that captures the challenges and real-world experiences of young job seekers in a labour market that is rapidly digitizing.

Given the focus on exploring individual behaviours, access to digital tools, and usage patterns of job portals such as hnainpui.com, primary data collection was essential. The study targets a specific demographic graduates and postgraduates aged 20–30 years who had completed their education within the past three years under the assumption that they represent the most active segment of urban job seekers. This time frame also allows for capturing post-graduation job-seeking patterns in the immediate years following formal education.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the nature and frequency of job applications, utilization of online platforms like hnainpui.com, and preferred modes of application. of youth in urban Aizawl, Mizoram. The main objective was to capture the job search behaviour among youth of aged between 20–30 years.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in **Aizawl**, the capital city of **Mizoram**, located in the northeastern region of India. As the political and administrative hub of the state, Aizawl is also the most urbanized and densely populated district, attracting a large number of educated youths seeking employment opportunities. Despite the city's relatively higher literacy rates and a growing number of graduates, digital disparities persist due to infrastructural limitations and uneven access to digital tools and platforms.

Aizawl represents a critical area for understanding the evolving dynamics of youth employment, especially in the context of digital transformation. The city's expanding urban landscape, combined with limited job opportunities in the public and private sectors, makes it a compelling site to explore how digital access or the lack thereof influences job search strategies.

3.3 Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents within the target age group of 20 to 30 years. The sample included both employed and unemployed job seekers, ensuring diversity in employment status and educational background. The study determined a sample size of 304 of the respondents using Slovin's sample size formula focusing on the urban youth actively seeking employment or currently employed who are in the age group of 20-30 years.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The study relies on primary data collected from 304 educated youth (graduates and postgraduates) who completed their degrees within the past three years. Data were collected through structured surveys conducted across urban households in Aizawl. The collected data was compiled and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cumulative distribution to identify the nature and frequency of job applications, utilization of online platforms like hnainpui.com, and preferred modes of application. The analysis was intentionally kept simple to reflect the nature of the data and the scope of the study, as the primary objective was to provide useful information rather than statistical generalizations.

4. MODE OF APPLICATION

The development and adoption of new technologies have accelerated considerably over the past few decades. This rapid technological change has been affecting almost every sector of the economy. A growing digital platform is one such kind of development that has led to significant socio-economic transformations in all aspects of our society and livelihoods. The use of digital platforms has had a significant impact on how we work, the types of jobs available, how they are advertised, how job applications are filled and submitted.

Table-1: Mode of Job Application

Mode	Frequency	Percent
Online	150	49.3
1, 2 (Low exposure)	22	7.2
Offline	132	43.4
Total	304	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2020-2021

As seen in table-1, nearly 49.3% of respondents are using online mode for applying various jobs while another half are not familiar with online application and its related matters indicating lack of technological knowledge or inaccessibility to the fast-changing technologies. Even the respondents who used online mode for job application, some respondents paid fees to a middleman to process their applications. This middleman does business by compiling and submitting job applications. So, it can be argued that there is either very little technology understanding or a strong aversion to learning how to fill out forms in the study area. This illustrates that the young generation's demand for technological improvement along with the awareness on IT sphere.

5. FREQUENCY OF JOB APPLICATIONS

The frequency of job application depends upon the availability of jobs opportunities and the qualities and skills of the respondents. If the respondents do not have the required skills and knowledge, the frequency of job application could not be very high. At the same time, if the respondent has a set of skills and capacities, still the frequency of job application could not be high unless there are no demand which basically means no job opportunities. The obvious condition where the frequency of job application can be high is where the job seekers have required skills, and the job opportunities are abundantly available. However, since job seekers always apply any job available in the labour market regardless of their skills and qualities, the possible condition for high frequency of job application is where jobs demands are high. Table-2 shows the frequency of job applications by the respondents.

Table-2: Frequency of job Applications

No. of Applications	Frequency	Percent
0	158	52.0
1	78	25.7
2	43	14.1
3	17	5.6
>4	8	2.6
Total	304	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2020-2021

The distribution of responses in Table-2 reveals a concerning trend in the employment-seeking behaviour of educated urban youth in Aizawl. More than half of the respondents (52%) reported that they had not applied for any jobs in the past six months, which points to a combination of structural and personal barriers that hinder active engagement with the labour market. Also suggesting limited awareness or opportunities. Only 8.2% applied for more than two jobs in the same period.

The next segment, 25.7% of respondents, had applied for only one job, and 14.1% had applied for two in the past six months. This infrequent activity reflects passive or occasional engagement rather than a robust and ongoing job search. It further suggests that digital disengagement and lack of proactive career guidance could be limiting more assertive participation in the labour market.

6. UTILIZATION OF WEB APP (hnainpui.com)

Due to technological advancements, there are now many online job posting sites where employers and recruiters can post job vacancies. Candidates can then explore the job openings and apply for those that fit their credentials and preferences. The primary advantage of an online recruitment portal is that a large pool of individuals can apply for job vacancies rather than just a small number of applicants. Everyone can apply for jobs anywhere, regardless of their physical location. In developed countries, online job portals have replaced traditional talent scouting methods as recruiters move their operations to an online mode. Since online portals are cost effective, time saving and wider coverage, the utilization of such portals is a sign of progress in some ways. Knowing the benefits of such portal, the Government of Mizoram has also created one such kind of job portal called hnainpui.com where different jobs vacancies ranging from manual labour to professional positions are posted for job seekers. Digital deprivation, however, has been one of the state's persistent issues, posing several digital barriers such as digital illiteracy, internet accessibility issues, and a lack of information regarding the internet of things. The usage of job portal by the respondents is shown in table-3.

Table - 3: Usage of hnainpui.com Portal

Usage Status	Frequency	Percent
Yes	51	16.8
No	253	83.2
Total	304	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2020-2021

As seen from table 3, only 16.8% of the respondents had used hnainpui.com, a portal developed by the Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC) to match labour supply with demand. This indicates a considerable gap in awareness and usability of government employment initiatives. The low usage reflects not just a lack of awareness but potentially indicates issues with user interface design, mobile optimization, and lack of guidance for first-time users. Given the state's youth-centric demographic, there is an opportunity to integrate such platforms with popular social media channels to increase visibility and user engagement. Additionally, integrating job readiness resources like resume building tools and interview preparation within the portal could improve both adoption and utility.

7. KEY FINDINGS

The study found that almost half of the respondents (i.e., 49.3 per cent) are using online mode for applying various jobs while another half are not familiar with online application and its related matters indicating lack of technological knowledge or inaccessibility to the fast-changing technologies. Even the respondents who used online modes for job application, some respondents paid fees to a middleman to process their applications. This shows the young generation's demand for technological improvement along with an awareness on IT sphere. As such, the government should be concerned about these digital gaps to maintain growth in line with that of other states.

In terms of job applications, the study also found that only 16.8 per cent of the respondents utilized the MYC's job portal indicating the low level of utilization of job portal in the State. This could be due to the high degree of digital divide or digital illiteracy among the respondents. More than 82 per cent of the 304 respondents are not utilizing the job portal which is a concern for the government. This matter must be given a special attention since the portal has been offering different kinds of jobs for the job seekers while the job seekers are very much in number. If the cause is due to digital deprivation, then the government must find a solution. It is the duty of the government to chalk out the issue such as whether it is because of digital divide, or the job offers in the portal are not matching the preference of the job seekers or, the job seekers do not possess the required skills, or if there is a fraud or scam activities through this portal.

8. CHALLENGES

8.1 Digital Illiteracy and Reliance on Intermediaries

A significant portion of respondents lacked the digital literacy necessary to independently navigate job application processes. Many resorted to paying intermediaries to submit online applications on their behalf. This not only exposes youth to potential exploitation but also indicates a fundamental gap in technological empowerment and self-sufficiency.

8.2 Low Awareness and Utilization of Government Portals

Despite the availability of state-supported platforms like hnainpui.com, only 16.8% of respondents reported using it. This low adoption rate highlights not only limited awareness but also potential issues related to user interface complexity, mobile compatibility, and language barriers that may discourage first-time users from engaging with the platform.

8.3 Poor Digital Infrastructure

Several respondents reported unstable internet connections and lack of access to personal digital devices. This infrastructural limitation disproportionately affects youth from lower-income households and undermines the ability to regularly browse or apply for jobs online.

9. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the digital divide as a key barrier to effective job search among educated urban youth in Aizawl. While nearly half of them used online modes to apply for jobs, many remained reliant on offline methods or intermediaries indicating limited digital literacy and confidence. The low usage of hnainpui.com, despite being a state-supported portal, points to gaps in awareness, accessibility, and user-friendliness. Structural issues like poor internet infrastructure, limited outreach, and lack of digital education further compound the problem. The fact that over half of the respondents had not applied for any jobs in the past six months point out both limited opportunities and digital disengagement. Bridging this divide requires urgent attention through improved digital infrastructure, user-friendly employment platforms, and digital skill-building initiatives. These steps are essential to enhance youth employability and ensure inclusive labour market participation in Mizoram.

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