



Small Enterprises, Local Jobs: Assessing the Contribution of MSMEs to Employment in West Champaran, Bihar

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Abstract

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs) are important sources of local employment, supporting rural economic activity and creating jobs. The contribution of MSMEs to employment in West Champaran, Bihar is examined by this study. The present study uses secondary data from the Udyam Registration records and Census of India 2011 to investigate the contribution of MSMEs. The district had **15,685 registered enterprises** with **32,262 reported workers** in the Udyam data. Micro enterprises formed **99.30%** of all enterprises and provided **95.70%** of reported employment. Small enterprises formed **0.66%** of enterprises but provided **4.00%** of employment. Medium enterprises formed **0.04%** of enterprises and provided **0.30%** of employment. The average employment was **2.06 workers per enterprise**. The findings reveal that micro enterprises constitute the principal component of the local enterprise base. Although small and medium enterprises account for a small proportion of registered units, they provide higher employment per enterprise. However, as compared with the district's wider workforce the total MSME employment remains small. According to the study, local enterprises can grow and create more jobs with better access to finance, skills, infrastructure, technology, and markets.

Keywords

MSMEs; small enterprises; employment; micro enterprises; rural employment; West Champaran; Bihar; local development.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are an important part of the Indian economy. They provide employment and support local economic activity. In rural areas, small enterprises can create work outside agriculture. They can also support trade, services, manufacturing, and household-based economic activities [1,2].

In rural Bihar, employment remains a major development issue, as a large part of the rural population depends on agriculture and related activities. However, agriculture does not always provide regular

employment throughout the year. Small enterprises can serve as an alternative source of employment and also help workers generate income within their local areas.

West Champaran is a largely rural district of Bihar, where agriculture continues to play an important role in the district. Alongside agricultural activities, the district has a number of small-scale manufacturing and service enterprises. Food processing, textiles, wood products, wearing apparel, repair activities, trade, and other local enterprises are parts of these small-scale manufacturing units. Such enterprises have the potential to generate employment opportunities close to where people live.

The contribution of MSMEs to employment generation is not limited to the number of enterprises. The level of employment created by each enterprise is equally important. Although a large number of micro enterprises may collectively account for only a small number of jobs per unit. In contrast, a relatively smaller number of small or medium enterprises may provide employment to more workers per enterprise. Therefore, both **enterprise numbers and employment intensity** need to be examined to obtain a clear understanding of the contribution of MSMEs.

Earlier studies have shown that non-farm activities can support rural households and reduce excessive dependence on agriculture [3,4]. Research on India has also shown that rural non-farm employment can contribute to income diversification and local economic development [5,6]. However, the contribution of MSMEs can differ across regions.

A useful district-level case is provided by West Champaran for this analysis and administrative information on registered enterprises and reported employment is also provided by the district industrial profile. Census data provide information on the workforce and to understand the scale of MSME employment in the district these sources can be used together.

This study therefore examines the contribution of MSMEs to employment in West Champaran. It focuses on three questions. First, how are enterprises distributed across micro, small, and medium categories? Second, how much employment is reported by each category? Third, how does reported MSME employment compare with the wider workforce of the district?

The study uses secondary data and does not claim that MSMEs have directly caused employment growth. Instead, it analyses the employment structure of registered MSMEs and considers their potential role in local employment generation. The analysis is primarily descriptive and employs simple indicators such as enterprise share, employment share, and employment per enterprise.

District-level evidence on MSME employment can contribute in understanding the local structure of non-farm employment, thus making the study significant. Furthermore, it can help identify areas in which improvements in finance, skills, infrastructure, technology, and market access may support enterprise growth.

2. Literature Review

MSMEs have been widely studied as sources of employment and income. They played an important role in developing economies where large industries are not evenly distributed. Employment with relatively limited capital can be created by small enterprises. They can also use local labour, local skills, and local resources [1].

Lewis [2] explained that a large traditional sector with surplus labour is present with developing economies. Economic development can be supported by the movement of labour towards more

productive non-traditional activities. This idea is relevant to rural areas where employment is heavily concentrated in agriculture.

Johnston and Mellor [3] highlighted the relationship between agriculture and the wider rural economy. Demand for goods and services produced by non-farm activities can be created with agriculture. At the same time, additional employment and income opportunities can be provided by non-farm activities.

Ellis [4] examined rural livelihood diversification. He argued that rather than a single source of income rural households often depend on several economic activities. Non-farm employment can therefore reduce the risks associated with dependence on agriculture.

Lanjouw and Lanjouw [5] showed that in employment and poverty reduction, the rural non-farm economy can play an important role. Opportunities for people who have limited access to agricultural land can be provided by small businesses and non-farm activities.

Haggblade, Hazell and Reardon [6] also emphasized the importance of the rural non-farm economy in developing countries. They found that employment, income diversification, and local economic development can be supported by the rural enterprises. However, the benefits depend on infrastructure, skills, finance, and market access.

In the Indian context, Lanjouw and Shariff [7] found that non-farm employment is an important part of rural livelihoods. Access to non-farm work differs across households and regions. Participation in non-farm activities can be influenced by education, location, assets, and access to economic opportunities.

Lanjouw and Murgai [8] examined changes in rural employment and poverty in India. The growth of non-farm activities can be important for reducing poverty was suggested by their work, although employment opportunities are not equally available in all regions.

Barrett, Reardon and Webb [9] discussed income diversification in rural economies. Because of both opportunity and necessity, they noted that rural households participate in different activities. Non-farm activities may therefore be an important part of rural employment strategies.

The role of MSMEs and rural enterprises was examined by the Indian studies. Kumar et al. [10] discussed the importance of small enterprises for employment and local economic activity. Opportunities for workers who may not find regular employment in agriculture can be created using such enterprises.

Dutta and Dhar [11] highlighted the importance of MSMEs in employment generation and economic development. The performance of small enterprises that depends on access to finance, technology, infrastructure, and markets was indicated by their findings.

Himanshu et al. [12] examined rural employment patterns in India. The changes in the rural labour market with increasing importance of non-farm employment in several areas were shown by their works. However, agriculture continues to employ a large share of the rural workforce.

Pattayat et al. [13] examined MSME-related development and employment issues. According to the study, MSMEs can support local employment, but their expansion can be limited with constraints related to finance, infrastructure, skills, and market access.

Recent policy documents also place strong emphasis on MSMEs as instruments of employment and local economic development. Government programmes have focused on enterprise creation, credit access, skill development, and support for micro and small businesses [14,15].

The Ministry of MSME's district industrial profile for West Champaran provides useful local evidence. It reports the number of registered enterprises and their reported employment across different enterprise categories. It also provides information on manufacturing activities in the district [16].

Overall, the literature shows that MSMEs and rural non-farm activities can contribute to employment diversification. However, there is a need for district-level analysis as the size of their contribution varies across locations.

2.1. Research Gap

Strong evidence on rural non-farm employment, livelihood diversification, and the role of MSMEs is provided by the present study. However, much of the existing literature focuses mainly on national or state-level patterns.

District-level evidence on how MSMEs are distributed across micro, small, and medium enterprise categories and the extent of employment reported by each category is limited.

As agriculture remains central to the local economy, West Champaran is an important case for investigation, while the district also has a base of manufacturing and other small enterprises. The employment scale of these enterprises can be shown using a focused analysis.

By using administrative MSME data for West Champaran and comparing the reported employment with the district's wider workforce, this study addresses this gap. It focuses on the **scale and structure of MSME employment** in the district rather than to attempt causality.

3. Objectives of the Study

To examine the contribution of MSMEs to employment in West Champaran, Bihar is the main objective of this study.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the distribution of MSMEs across micro, small, and medium categories in West Champaran.
2. To measure the share of employment reported by each MSME category.
3. To compare employment intensity across micro, small, and medium enterprises.
4. To examine the scale of reported MSME employment in relation to the wider workforce of West Champaran.
5. To identify the possible role of MSMEs in creating local non-farm employment.
6. To suggest measures that can help MSMEs expand their employment potential in the district.

3.1. Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the distribution of registered MSMEs across micro, small, and medium categories in West Champaran?

RQ2: What share of reported MSME employment is provided by each category?

RQ3: How does employment per enterprise differ between micro, small, and medium enterprises?

RQ4: How large is reported MSME employment compared with the wider workforce of the district?

RQ5: What policy measures can help local MSMEs create more employment?

3.2. Analytical Proposition

The study uses the following analytical proposition:

An important source of local employment can be provided by the MSMEs, but the number of enterprises and the number of workers employed per enterprise are the areas on which their employment contribution depends.

Descriptive indicators are used to examine this proposition. The available district-level data do not provide enough independent observations for formal hypothesis testing and, hence, it is not treated as a statistically tested hypothesis.

4. Data and Methodology

4.1. Nature of the Study

No primary survey was conducted. This study is based on secondary data. The analysis uses available administrative and census data for West Champaran district was used for the analysis.

The main MSME data are taken from the **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM)** records reported in the district industrial profile. The data relate to the period **18 September 2015 to 31 March 2016** [16].

Census of India 2011 data are used to provide a broader workforce benchmark for the district [17]. The two datasets cover different periods and have different purposes. Therefore, their comparison is treated as **indicative rather than a direct contemporaneous employment share**.

4.2. Study Area

West Champaran district of Bihar is the main focus of the study. It is a district mainly dependent on rural economy, where agriculture is an important source of livelihood. At the same time, some other activities such as local manufacturing, trade, services, and other small economic activities are also present.

The district industrial profile identifies several manufacturing activities. Food products, other manufacturing activities, textiles, wood products, and wearing apparel are among the reported activities [16].

4.3. Data Sources

The study uses three main sources:

1. **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM) data** for registered enterprises and reported employment in West Champaran [16].
2. **Census of India 2011** data for the district's main workers and total workers [17].
3. **Government MSME and policy documents** for understanding the wider role of MSMEs and the policy environment [14,15].

The UAM data are administrative registration data and should not be considered a complete census of all enterprises operating in the district.

4.4. Indicators Used

The study uses simple descriptive indicators.

Enterprise Share (%)

$$\text{Enterprise Share} = \frac{\text{Enterprises in a category}}{\text{Total MSME enterprises}} \times 100$$

Employment Share (%)

$$\text{Employment Share} = \frac{\text{Employment in a category}}{\text{Total MSME employment}} \times 100$$

Employment Intensity

$$\text{Employment Intensity} = \frac{\text{Reported Employment}}{\text{Number of Enterprises}}$$

This indicator shows the average number of reported workers per enterprise.

4.5. Benchmark Comparison

Reported MSME employment is also compared with the Census 2011 workforce.

The comparison is calculated as:

$$\text{MSME Employment Benchmark (\%)} = \frac{\text{Reported MSME Employment}}{\text{Census Workforce}} \times 100$$

Two benchmarks are used:

- Main workers
- Total workers

An indication of the scale of registered MSME employment relative to the district workforce is provided by this comparison.

4.6. Analytical Approach

Descriptive analysis is used by the study. Firstly, enterprise size examines the number of enterprises and workers, followed by the calculation of enterprise share and employment share.

To compare the average employment capacity of different enterprise categories, employment intensity is used.

No regression or other causal econometric methods are used by the analysis. The available data are district-level aggregates and do not provide sufficient independent observations for such analysis.

Therefore, the **structure and scale of reported MSME employment** is described by the findings, rather than estimating the causal effect of MSMEs on employment.

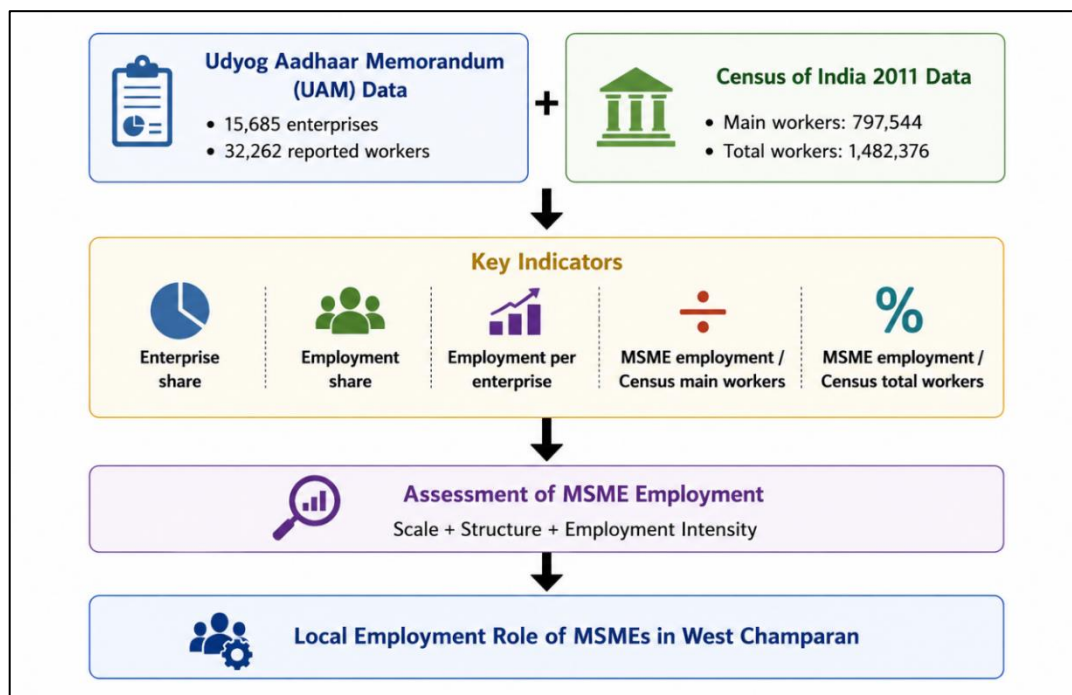


Figure 1. Measurement Framework

4.7. Conceptual Framework

By creating opportunities outside agriculture, MSMEs can support local employment. Local demand, skills, and agricultural resources can encourage enterprise development. On expanding enterprises,

more direct employment and increased local economic activity may be created. Finance, infrastructure, technology, market access, and business support can further strengthen this process. Figure 1 presents this possible pathway from MSME development to local employment and rural economic diversification. The framework is conceptual and does not imply a direct causal relationship.

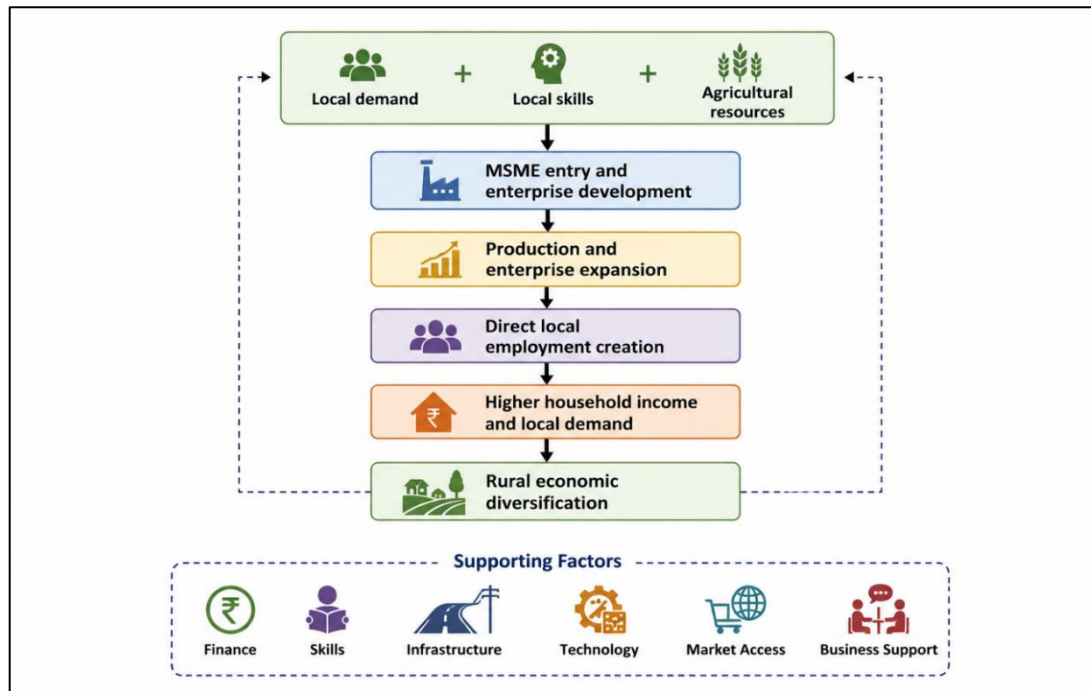


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

5. MSME Structure and Employment in West Champaran

The UAM data show that micro enterprises dominate the registered MSME base of West Champaran. Small and medium enterprises are much fewer in number. However, their employment intensity is higher.

Table 1. MSME Enterprises and Reported Employment by Size

Enterprise Category	Number of Enterprises	Enterprise Share (%)	Reported Employment	Employment Share (%)	Employment per Enterprise
Micro	15,575	99.30	30,875	95.70	1.98
Small	104	0.66	1,289	4.00	12.39
Medium	6	0.04	98	0.30	16.33
Total	15,685	100.00	32,262	100.00	2.06

Source: Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum data reported in the Brief Industrial Profile of West Champaran, 2016 [16].

The table shows a clear difference between the number of enterprises and the employment they provide.

Micro enterprises account for **99.30%** of all registered enterprises. They also account for **95.70%** of reported MSME employment. This shows that micro enterprises are the main part of the registered MSME sector in the district.

Small enterprises represent only **0.66%** of registered enterprises. However, they account for **4.00%** of reported employment. Their average employment is **12.39 workers per enterprise**.

Medium enterprises are very limited in number. Only six medium enterprises are reported. They account for **0.04%** of enterprises and **0.30%** of reported employment. Their average employment is **16.33 workers per enterprise**.

The overall employment intensity is **2.06 workers per enterprise**. This relatively low average is mainly because the district's MSME base is overwhelmingly composed of micro enterprises.

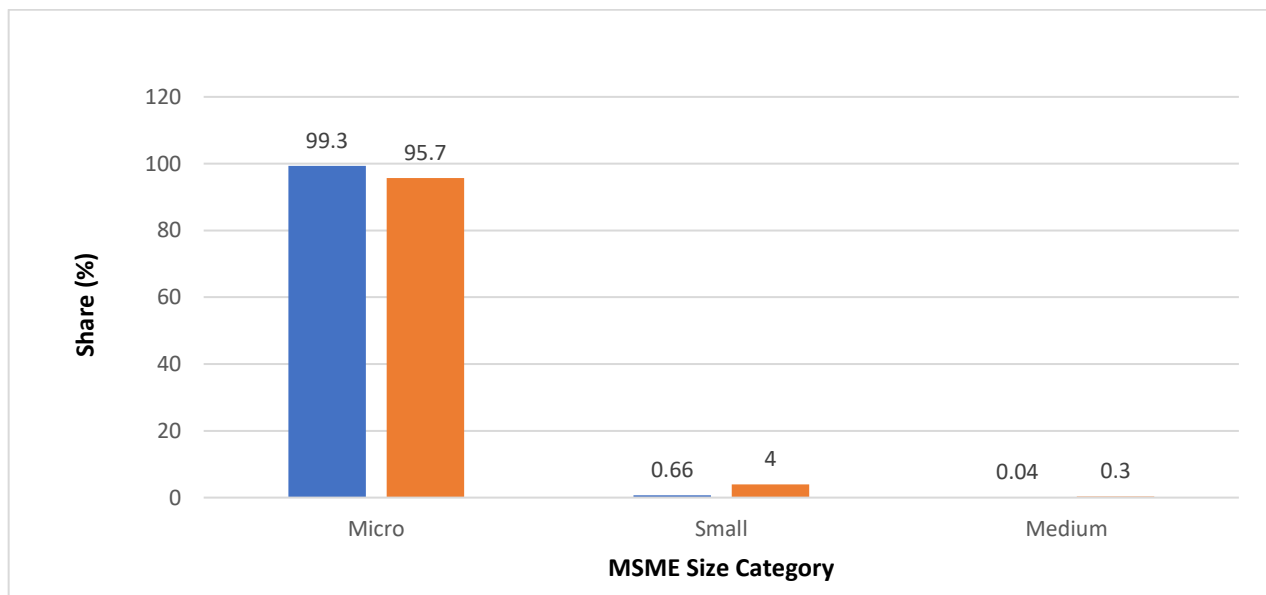


Chart 1. Enterprise Share and Employment Share by MSME Size

5.1. Difference in Employment Intensity

Difference between the employment intensity of small and medium enterprises is much higher than that of micro enterprises.

A small enterprise reports an average of **12.39 workers**, compared with **1.98 workers** for a micro enterprise. Thus, employment intensity in small enterprises is about **6.25 times** that of micro enterprises.

The difference is even larger for medium enterprises. Their average employment is **16.33 workers per enterprise**, which is about **8.24 times** the micro-enterprise average.

UAM employment is the basis of employment intensity and does not measure the quality, stability, wages, or duration of the jobs.

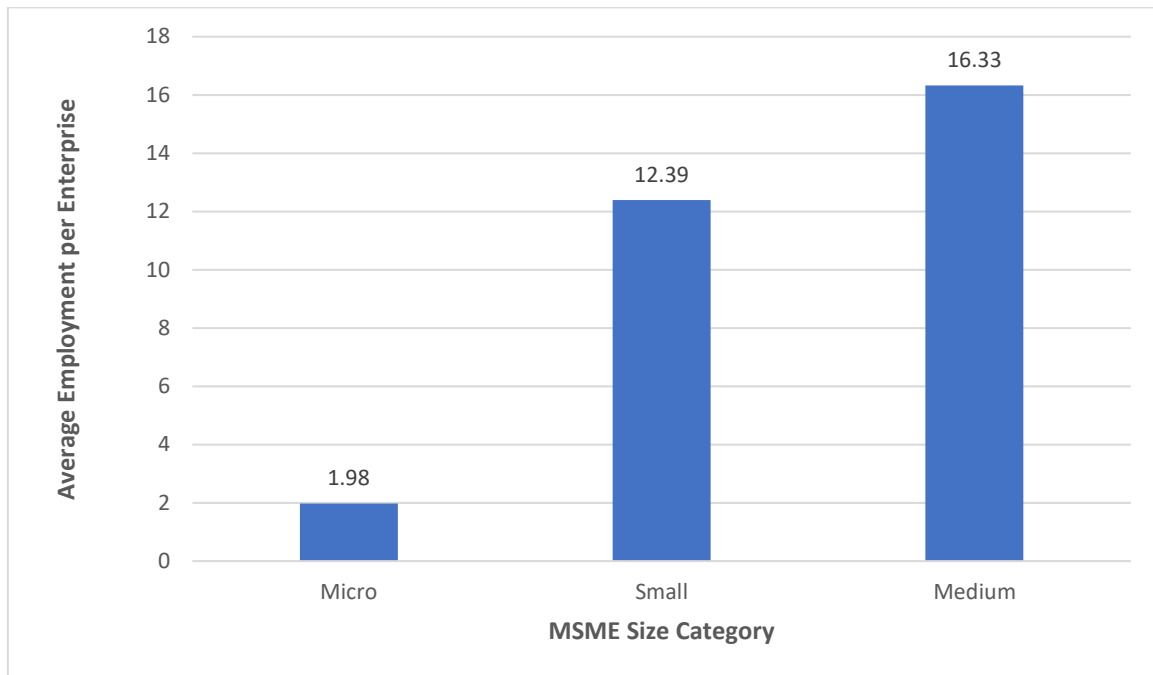


Chart 2. Employment Intensity by MSME Size

5.2. Enterprise Size and Employment

Therefore, two different aspects of the MSME sector are presented by the data.

First, **micro enterprises provide scale**. They are widespread and make up almost the entire registered enterprise base.

Second, **small and medium enterprises provide greater employment per unit**. Their numbers are small, but each enterprise reports more workers on average.

This suggests that MSME employment policy should not focus only on creating new micro enterprises but should also support the **survival and expansion of viable enterprises** that have the potential to employ more workers.

6. Manufacturing Activities and Local Enterprise Base

The information on the manufacturing activities reported in West Champaran is also provided by the UAM data. Manufacturing is important because employment can be created through production, processing, packaging, and related activities.

The district industrial profile reports **6,276 manufacturing enterprises**, representing about **40.01%** of the enterprises covered in the relevant UAM manufacturing table [16]. The main size-wise data are reported separately from the manufacturing data. Therefore, this figure should be used as a descriptive indicator and not treated as an exact measure of the manufacturing share of the entire MSME stock.

Table 3. Selected Manufacturing Activities in West Champaran

Manufacturing Activity	Number of Enterprises
Food products	3,132
Other manufacturing	1,514
Textiles	337
Wood and wood products	169
Wearing apparel	140

Source: *Brief Industrial Profile of West Champaran*, MSME Development Institute, Government of India [16].

The largest reported manufacturing categories are the food- product categories. There are **3,132 enterprises** in this category. Food processing can create links between agricultural production and local non-farm activities and therefore, this is consistent with the importance of agriculture in the district.

The **other manufacturing** category accounts for another 1,514 enterprises. Textiles, wood products, and wearing apparel are smaller categories but also provide opportunities for local production and employment.

6.1. Link with the Rural Economy

Links can be created between agriculture and the non-farm economy with presence of food-processing and other manufacturing activities. Through local enterprises agricultural products can be processed, packaged, stored, transported, and marketed.

Such linkages can increase the economic value generated within the district. Employment in activities can also be created that are connected to agriculture but are not agricultural work itself.

However, the exact numbers of workers employed in each manufacturing category are not provided by the available data. Therefore, this study does not estimate the employment contribution of individual manufacturing activities.

The evidence instead suggests that West Champaran has a diversified local enterprise base. Strengthening these activities may provide additional opportunities for non-farm employment.

6.2. Importance for Employment Policy

The manufacturing structure has implications for local development policy.

The large enterprise base of the food processing appears to make it potentially strong. These enterprises can be expanded with support from processing equipment, storage, packaging, quality standards, transport, and market access.

Textile, apparel, and wood-based activities may also benefit from skill development and improved access to technology.

Therefore, the creation of more enterprises is not simply the main employment challenge. It is also the development of conditions that allow existing enterprises to survive, expand, and employ more workers.

This supports the earlier finding that **enterprise size and employment intensity matter together** when assessing the employment role of MSMEs.

7. Discussion

MSMEs have a clear presence in the local economy of West Champaran according to the findings. However, their employment contribution is concentrated mainly in micro enterprises.

Micro enterprises account for **99.30% of registered enterprises** and **95.70% of reported employment**. This shows that the MSME structure of the district is strongly based on very small business units.

At the same time, the employment intensity of small and medium enterprises is much higher. Small enterprises report an average of **12.39 workers per enterprise**, while medium enterprises report **16.33 workers**. The corresponding figure for micro enterprises is only **1.98 workers**.

For understanding the employment potential of MSMEs, the difference is of great importance. Widespread economic opportunities can be provided by a large number of micro enterprises.

The findings are consistent with the literature on rural non-farm employment. Rural enterprises can provide work outside agriculture and support income diversification [4,5,6].

The benchmark comparison provides another important finding. Reported UAM employment is equivalent to about **4.05% of Census 2011 main workers**. This indicates that registered MSMEs form a relatively small part of the district's wider employment base.

Therefore, MSMEs should be viewed as **one component of the local employment structure**, rather than the main source of employment in the district.

The quality of enterprise growth matters as suggested by the findings of the study. Increasing registrations may not lead to a large increase in employment. Greater attention is needed to help viable enterprises increase production, access markets, use better technology, and employ additional workers.

The manufacturing data provide some support for this approach. Food products form the largest reported manufacturing category. This suggests that agriculture-linked processing may be an important area for local enterprise development [16].

Overall, the evidence points towards a **two-part MSME strategy** for West Champaran. The large base of micro enterprises is supported by the first part. The productive enterprises can be expanded into larger and more employment-intensive units by the second.

8. Policy Implications

The findings have several policy implications for West Champaran.

First, **MSME policy should focus on enterprise growth and productivity**, not only on increasing the number of registrations. The entire registered MSME base is formed by micro enterprises. Therefore, helping viable units increase production and employment can have a larger effect.

Second, **access to finance should be improved**. Small enterprises often require working capital for raw materials, equipment, storage, and expansion. Easier access to formal credit and government-supported finance can help productive enterprises grow [14,16].

Third, **skill development should be linked with local industries**. Training should focus on activities that already exist in the district, such as food processing, textiles, apparel, wood products, repair work, and other local manufacturing activities [12].

Fourth, **agro-processing should receive greater attention**. Agriculture is the main economic base of the district. Agriculture can be connected with local industry by processing, grading, packaging, storage, and marketing. This can create additional non-farm employment.

Fifth, **market access and infrastructure are important**. Better roads, electricity, digital connectivity, storage facilities, and access to larger markets can help enterprises move beyond very small-scale production [5,7].

Sixth, **women should receive greater support in enterprise development**. The available data show that women account for 29.81% of household-industry workers while representing 21.35% of all main workers. This suggests that household-based economic activities can be relevant to women's employment.

Finally, **MSME development should complement agricultural development**. Rural development should not treat agriculture and industry as competing sectors, as agriculture remains a major source of employment.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations.

First, **UAM administrative records for 2015–16** present the main MSME data. UAM registration does not cover every enterprise operating in the district. Therefore, informal and unregistered enterprises may be excluded.

Second, the Census workforce benchmark is from **2011**, while the UAM data relate to **2015–16**. The comparison is therefore indicative and should not be treated as a direct measure of the employment share in the same year.

Third, the study uses reported employment. Any detailed information on wages, working hours, job security, employment duration, or job quality is not provided by the data.

Fourth, the study is based on district-level aggregate data. It cannot determine whether MSME employment caused workers to leave agriculture.

Fifth, household-level information is not provided by the analysis. Further, changes in household income, poverty, migration, or living standards cannot be directly measured.

These limitations define the scope of the findings. A **simple descriptive assessment of the scale and structure of MSME employment** is provided by the study, rather than a causal estimate of their impact.

10. Conclusion

The contribution of MSMEs to employment in West Champaran, Bihar is examined by the study.

The dominance of micro enterprises over district's registered MSME sector is presented by the findings of the study. Out of **15,685 registered enterprises**, **15,575 were micro enterprises**. They accounted for **99.30% of enterprises** and **95.70% of reported employment**.

Small enterprises were very few in number. They represented only **0.66% of enterprises**, but they accounted for **4.00% of reported employment**. Their average employment was **12.39 workers per enterprise**, compared with **1.98 workers per micro enterprise**.

Medium enterprises were even fewer. Only **six medium enterprises** were reported. However, with an average of **16.33 workers per enterprise**, they had the highest employment intensity.

The overall reported MSME employment was **32,262 workers**, or about **2.06 workers per enterprise**. When compared with the Census 2011 workforce, this represents about **4.05% of main workers** and **2.18% of total workers**.

The results therefore provide a clear but balanced conclusion. **MSMEs are an important part of the local economic structure, but their current recorded employment scale is not large enough to represent the main source of employment in West Champaran**. The broadest base is provided by the micro enterprises, while small and medium enterprises have greater employment capacity per unit.

Enterprise survival, productivity, expansion, finance, skills, infrastructure, technology, and market access should be provided with more attention.

For West Champaran, agro-processing and other agriculture-linked enterprises may have particular potential. Additional non-farm employment can be created using stronger links between agriculture and local enterprises while also increasing the value generated within the district.

Future research should use more recent enterprise and household data. Employment quality, income, migration, poverty, and the movement of workers between agriculture and non-agricultural activities could be examined using village- level and household- level studies.

Overall, the evidence suggests that **MSMEs can contribute to local job creation, but their employment potential depends strongly on enterprise growth and productivity**.

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