

Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)**A Qualitative Analysis of the Socio-Psychological Impacts of Unemployment on Youth in Mardan Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa****Muhammad Kamran¹, Zameen Nawaz², Hammad Azim Khan³**

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Abstract: Youth unemployment in Pakistan has evolved into a serious socio-psychological and economic challenge with far-reaching consequences. This study aims to analyze the socio-psychological impacts of unemployment on youth. The purposive sampling was used for the selection of sampling size through which data were collected purposively from 27 respondents (Those who are the fresh degree holders). An interview guide was used as a tool for conducting interviews with the study respondents. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The data revealed that unemployment leads to social marginalization, un-marriageability and drug addiction. Furthermore, they reported that unemployment negatively affects social status, marriage prospects, and family well-being, particularly among married men. Respondents also highlighted job insecurity, corruption, and weaknesses in the recruitment and education systems as major sources of frustration, contributing to growing socio-psychological issues among the young generation.

Introduction

This study aims to analyze the socio-psychological impacts of unemployment on the youth in Pakistan. Unemployment is an excess supply of labor resulting from a failure in the market economy (Maqbool et al., 2013). There are currently three key problems that third world nations typically deal with, including rising prices or depression- or comfortable economic instability, promoting income equality, insufficient growth in the economy, and prosperousness. The worst issue is joblessness, which is a result of one country's underutilization of its human resources. Economic misery is a result of high unemployment as well as resource waste. No matter if a state is underdeveloped, industrialized, or highly developed; unemployment is one of the major issues it faces. The main causes of unemployment are poverty, insufficient economic progress, and unstable income (Daly et al., 2017). In developing countries, unemployment is more noticeable and has a number of undesirable societal effects, including theft and burglary crimes, suicide, murder, etc. It has an impact on people's minds, producing anxieties and tension as well as long-term problems. It affects not just the individual but also an extensive social structure, which in turn affects the state of the nation's economy. Pakistan is an emerging state with a

population of 220.9 million. It is facing a lot of issues like joblessness, illiterateness, poverty, public security related issues, and huge number of debts. About 8.3 percent of labor force is jobless in Pakistan (Saleem& Hussain, 2018). Joblessness is a significant and growing socioeconomic issue in Pakistan. The population of Pakistan is approximately 177 million people, and the level of literacy there is 58 per cent, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2011–12. The growth rate of the gross domestic product in Pakistan in 2012 was about 3.7 percent, which has been declining over the past ten years, and international level Investments were roughly 532 million dollars. It is a growing country with many social problems, with unemployment as one of the main ones. (Kamran et al., 2014). Unemployment cannot be separated from other aspects that influence equally the mind stability of the citizens. Unemployment is inversely associated with mental health irrespectively of the economic context; unemployed individuals were more vulnerable to commit suicide and suffer from anxiety and mood disorders (Virgolino et al., 2022).

In addition to this, the fresh graduate individuals in the developing and under developed countries facing chronic stress regarding unemployment. The employment got highest status in the world culture and that is why it negatively influenced the mind of the individuals. The new competitors are easy to discourage in the race of jobs because of the high hope on one side and the overpopulation and joblessness on the other side. Although the government has developed some policies and programs to engage the fresh degree holder in temporary jobs or training. But the case of underdeveloped and developing countries is quite different. Most of their adults engage in the small-scale businesses to help their parents and some engage in the unwanted and unlawful activities (Mamun et al., 2020). However, this study specifically aims to analyze the socio-psychological impacts of unemployment on youth in Mardan Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the socio-psychological impacts of unemployment on youths' behavior
2. To examine the general attitudes of youths towards unemployment
3. To analyze how young generation deals with the socio-psychological challenges of unemployment

Research Questions

1. How do socio-psychological impacts influence the behavior of individuals?
2. What perceptions and attitudes are the individuals have towards the impacts of unemployment?
3. How do they handle the socio-psychological challenges caused by unemployment?

Literature review

Literature review is one of the indispensable pieces of any empirical study. The aim of the piece is to examine the socio-psychological effects of joblessness on the individuals in the light of previous studies. Unemployment is a global issue affecting both developed and developing nations; however, unemployment rates are higher in the developing world. Generally, unemployment rates have gradually declined particularly in developed countries despite the negative impact of the 2008 economic recession on the global economy (Weir-Smith, 2014). Europe has also seen a downward trend in this issue, with the exception of Greece, Spain, and Italy, which were severely affected by the 2008 global economic recession. In contrast, unemployment rates in the developing world especially among the youth are significantly high, and there are concerns that they will continue to rise (Skosana, 2019). Furthermore, with a startling 45% of people in Pakistan between the ages of 15 and 24 unemployed, youth unemployment is a serious issue for the nation's economy. Both rural and urban regions of the nation

are impacted by this unemployment. Pakistan is the country with the sixth-largest youth population in the world, with an estimated 62 million. Regretfully, up to 50% of young people in Pakistan are thought to be unemployed. The World Bank estimates that in 2018, Pakistan's unemployment rate for people aged 15 to 24 was roughly 24.4%. As a result, Pakistan has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world (Asif et al., 2023). There are several causes of unemployment in Pakistan. Iqbal and Khaliq (2013) identified rapid population growth, a lack of resources, and weak political and social institutions as the causes of unemployment. Since Pakistan is facing an acute electricity shortage a deficit that is devastating economic activities, businesses, and production which is, too a major cause of unemployment in the country. While, Khan (2024) found that, external debt and governance index have a positive association with unemployment.

Joblessness is a most challenging social issue in the world. High unemployment has been a well-known feature of the worldwide socio-economic landscape over the past 20 years, especially in the wake of the worldwide financial crisis in 2007 (Saleem & Hussain, 2018). Lack of resources is the primary factor in unemployment. Joblessness has a negative impact on a person's psyche and makes them feel alone in the crowd. Furthermore, joblessness lowers feelings of worth and increases anxiousness and psychological issues. Financial stress and the harmful correlation between inactivity and emotional wellness were also present. People without jobs have much worse mental well-being than those who do (Saleem & Hussain, 2018). Zeng (2012) examined how youth marginalization in society is affected by joblessness. The findings of the empirical research on unemployment indicated why there was less social connection, inadequate income, and pleasure and less human contact. A person without a job typically experiences greater social isolation.

Moreover, it is an empirical fact that unemployment influences very strongly the mind of the individuals. Kidwai and Sarwar (2015) did qualitative research and discovered a strong association between unfavorable mental health conditions and joblessness. Over time, joblessness leads to impoverishment and has a negative impact on people's mental wellbeing. According to Sharma's (2012) study, young people who are jobless experience higher levels of depressive disorders, desperation, stress, low self-worth, uncertainty about the future, dissatisfaction and failure, all of which have an irrefutable adverse effect on their physical well-being with escalating levels of pain. The overall and financial condition of youth is greatly impacted by unemployment.

The study fervently advocated that unemployment has a stunning impact on an individual's psychological function. It results in annoyance, hostility, and suicide. Ohtake (2012) revealed empirical evidence about the impact of unemployment on happiness.

Data were gathered using questionnaire surveys on the public and their way of life as well as a national poll on how people prefer to live. The key conclusion of the research is that joblessness is lowering people's levels of pleasure. Gallie (1999) examined that joblessness is come first to extreme loneliness and social isolation, rise psychological distress and hit financial stability. The study's main hypothesis was that sociability and social exclusion for specific positions in the home structure would be related. Social exclusion also highlighted another form of issue for jobless individuals. Using survey information from Canadian provinces, Jalles and Andrésen (2014) found a strong correlation between the number of suicides and joblessness.

In Britain, suicides among men surged in the 1990s in comparison to women suicides, which declined in that time frame. The main reason for the rise was joblessness. According to the research, low adolescent girls' job prospects and joblessness contribute to a higher rate of suicide (Ahmad 2019). Gillani et al., (2011) conducted research regarding the connection between joblessness and offences

from 1975 - 2008. They demonstrated a long-term relationship, and the Granger causality test demonstrates that joblessness contributes to stealing, dacoity, robberies, and livestock theft but has no bearing on burglaries. Furthermore, in Pakistani context, rural unemployment and urban unemployment are the two main categories used to describe Pakistan's unemployment situation. Approximately 68% of the population lives in agrarian regions. In Pakistan, villages are more likely to have unemployment than cities. As opposed to cities, which have been often more work options, villages tend to have higher unemployment rates. While there are numerous employment options in cities as a result of industrial development. People look for employment in industrialized areas since there are no suitable sources of earnings. This way, joblessness is increasing. Pakistan is an agriculturally oriented nation, with 70% of the populace working in the uninteresting and unfavorable agriculture industry. People in rural areas struggle to find employment (Ahmad, 2019). The inequality among the quality of education is the most important factor that unable the rural people to be employed. As we move from the center of the cities toward the remote areas, the illiteracy rate grows. Furthermore, Pakistan's schooling system is responsible for joblessness due to the unavailability of institution that offers knowledge and skills necessary for the profession. In Pakistan, there are 63.9% of educated individuals without jobs, of which 63.59% have official schooling and 0.31% have informal education. 28.43% of people receive elementary and secondary schooling, 16.4% have matriculated, and 9.29%, 9.38% have received middle, postgraduate, or PhD (Tahir et al., 2014).

Formally, several research findings (i.e. Durkan et al., 2011; Asif et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2019) clarify the unemployment's impacts on individuals. However, they have primarily outlined the causes that give rise to unemployment without highlighting the problems from it. Furthermore, the context of most studies differs, making it impossible to compare them directly with the issues facing by the people of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa specifically. However, this study envisages on both socio-psychological factors at the same time as a result of unemployment focusing literate youth. According to this research young educated people are more depressed from unemployment due the fact that they confront it in the initial stages after as they complete their education.

Methodology

Research design

This research uses a qualitative methodology. The reason for using the qualitative methodology is to have an in-depth understanding of how the socio-psychological impacts of unemployment influence the behavior of young individuals in Pakistan.

Sampling

The unemployed youth (fresh degree holders) were the subjects and unit of analysis. The purposive sampling is used for selecting sample size. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is selected on the basis of the characteristics of population and the objective of the study. To gain in-depth information about the phenomenon, the method of in-depth interviews of 15 to 20 respondents were used.

The sampling continued till its point of saturation where the same responses repeated again and again from the respondents

Tools for data collection

Interview guide was used as a tool for data collection. The interview guide consisted of a list of questions and points that kept the researcher on track during questioning the respondents about the study.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within descriptive data (Delahunt & Maguire, 2017). All the responses in the interview were ordered, and then the similar responses were coded and combined into a meaningful theme. Finally, themes were created from the identical replies.

Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration is considered as the significant piece of the research. In this regard; I strictly followed all the rules and regulations in the area of my research and followed all the guiding principles about ethical consideration. Following laws and regulations, I was much careful about sensitive information.

Results and Discussion

Unemployment and social marginalization

In populations throughout the world, social isolation (defined as an objective lack of interactions with others or the wider community) and loneliness (defined as the subjective feeling of the absence of a social network or a companion) are common. Surveys in Europe and the USA estimate the prevalence of loneliness ranges from 5% to 43% in the elderly, 1, 2, 3, 4 with similar figures for China.⁵ While loneliness may be more common in the elderly, it also affects younger age groups (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017). Unemployment greatly affects the importance of a person in society. People often refuse to recognize unemployed people and often do not include them in the discussions and decisions. This causes many psychological and social problems for them. In this regard one of the respondents told that

When I sit in a meeting and talk, people don't pay any attention to what I say. I feel like I am crazy or everything I say is wrong

Another respondent told that

When I am with rich friends, no one ask me how I am or give me your suggestion. What is your opinion? What do you think about it? Most often people don't agree with my suggestions and even make fun of me

The Population in Pakistan is growing very rapidly. The IMF debt is also increasing. On the other hand, our social system is such that the poor have no value. On one hand there are economic issues and, on the hand, there are socio-psychological issues

Unemployment and drug addiction

The relationship between unemployment and health problems has been investigated for decades. losing one's job and becoming unemployed led to loss of income and, thus, psychosocial stress, all of which worsen the parameters of good health and may lead to (short-term) coping strategies, including substance use (Nolte-Troha et al., 2023). The main cause of drug addiction is not only failing to find a job but also joining related friend circle. In this regard one of the respondents told that

I used to study a lot. After getting my degree, I applied a lot for different jobs and also sent CVs but failed and my courage broken down. I was often told my friends that you are very selfish. Then I dropped everything and started giving them time and started using drug for pleasure with them.

Another respondent in this regard told

I often stole money from my father's pocket and fulfilled my wishes. I used to steal grain from the house and sell it to make money and with that money I used to buy drugs. I never tried seriously. I gave some tests but failed in all of them. Here there is are no suitable jobs for poor according to their qualification

Pakistan is facing a massive rise in drug abuse. According to recent estimates, there are 6.7 million drug abusers, of which 4.25 million are drug dependents who need long-term treatments in residential setups.¹ Despite these shocking statistics, there is severe lack of preventive measures and drug indictment policies. Consequently, the number of drug dependents continues to increase at an alarming rate of 40,000 per year, making Pakistan one of the most drug-affected countries in the world (Ghazal, 2019).

Temporary job and unsecure future

Temporary and contract basis jobs are increasing in Pakistan. Temporary jobs are also an unemployment in a sense in which someone cannot do long term planning. Every moment a person worries that he or she will suddenly become unemployed. Latner (2022) found that between 2013 and 2019, the risk of experiencing at least one temporary employment contract rose 36%. Over time, the temporary employment rate stagnated, but the temporary employment risk rose. One of the respondents of the study told that;

I am a private school teacher but I consider myself jobless because hardly four days pass from the salary. I afraid if they want to fire me, they can do it easily. In private jobs there is no concept of pension. Even while teaching I am immersed in my financial situation

Temporary hiring is a kind of exploitation of the degrees and skills. Another respondent told that;

To avoid overload, institutions hire people temporarily and also charge thousands in application fees. For example, if even I become temporary lecturer at a university here, my salary will be much lower than that of a permanent lecturer, and on the other hand, I will also worry about what I will do if I am fired tomorrow

Institutions are wasting the time of young graduates. The reason for this the financial crises in the country. The education sector is not being given importance and secondly there is no value for skills. The reason for this is economic and political.

Unemployment and unsuitable system of education

Skilled and trained teachers are essential to uplift the performance of students in order to acquire institutional and national educational goals. Several studies have identified the significant importance of teacher's learning in student's achievements Therefore; teachers' professional development should be given spherical attention to updating their knowledge and skills according to the needs of the time. However, the government has taken several initiatives to raise teachers' quality and planned several in-service training programs. Yet, the government is unable to train teachers adequately due to a number of problems such as managing poorly and the lack of sufficient resources (Akram, 2020).

The quality of education is not what it should be. We were forced to cram the chapters that are why we did not understand the concepts properly. Moreover, there was no practical work in the institution. We are never shown the lab.

Another respondent told that

The job's test conducting team does not show the specific syllabus. In this way knowledge is a big ocean, how far is it enough to go?

On the other hand, some respondents also express concern regarding the awarding of grades. In this regard one of the respondents told that

Some teachers mentally torture students by giving them C and D grades due to some personal issues that students cannot overcome for the rest of their lives

Furthermore, they added that;

The authority of such grades should be taken from teachers, failing someone is far better

than awarding C and D grades

Our education system does not fully reflect our society. Because on the one hand, we do not study many complex subjects in our national language, while on the other hand, practical work is not practiced. After graduation, problem arise at different stages in different fields. Furthermore, the unfair treatment with the students which severely effect their personalities and overall future.

Unemployment and corrupt system

Qadar & Muhammad (2013) presented the association results of corruption and unemployment shows highly significant relationship between unemployment and payment of bribe ($P=0.000$), nepotism ($P=0.000$), favoritism ($P=0.000$), eye washing techniques ($P=0.000$), cronyism ($P=0.05$), and rule of selection for a job ($P=0.047$). The results help to establish wide spread existence of corruption in the government organizations in the form of bribe payment, favoritism and cronyism in selection process. Political affiliation is tool for ensuring a job through use of political pressure. The rules for selection are vague and seldom implemented, the selection process is not more than eyewashes and the government is part of this corruption in employment as it does not ensure fair recruitment for government jobs. In this regard one of the respondents told that;

The system is so corrupt that it is predetermined who will get the job and who will return disappointed. Competence and ability are no longer a thing

Another respondent criticized the examination system as

The situation with the test and examination system is such that most of the time, the exam paper ends up in the hands of some influential people ahead of time. I have seen it myself used to sell the answer keys.

The hopes of degree holding youth end here. The exploitation of talent and ability is pushing the young generation toward the worst socio-psychological issues

Unemployment and marriage

Marriage is becoming a problem for men, especially in a developing country like Pakistan, where the economic crises has become a serious issue. One of the respondents told that;

I am married and have children. I have often borrowed money from my father to meet their needs. It feels very bad. The burden of debt is also increasing.

Sending a marriage proposal to someone without a job is disrespecting yourself. A woman not only demand a job from you but a better job. In this regard one of the respondents told that;

I have children and wife and there is a lot of burden on me. I told my parents that I will not get married. But some customs and some words of elder forced me. When I go home, I feel that this burden has been put on me by my mother and sister. Most of the time. Mostly I feel angry at home. It has been many years since I completed my 16 years education. I worked in a private bank where my officer's attitude toward me was not good. He forced me to quit this job. I also worked in an NGO project. Including this experience, I gave many tests and interviews but my luck did not favor me. Those who are eligible for the job are not hired but are influenced by marks not by experience

Conclusion

This research is qualitative in nature. The research aims to analyze the psycho-social impacts of unemployment on the youth, especially those who newly received degrees and searching for jobs. Pakistan is facing a chronic issue of unemployment in the current era due to national economic instability and population growth. The unemployment badly impacts the mentality of youth in the form of depression, anxiety and other mental disorders as identified by the previous literature. The data of the current study reveal that unemployment leads to social marginalization, causing many people to fall

victim to drug addiction in search of mental peace. The reason is simply that an unemployed person is looked down upon in social circles; no one attaches any importance to their words or advice. Furthermore, they are considered unmarriageable. No one ready to accept his marriage proposal. In Pakistan, contract and visiting positions have replaced permanent jobs where the future is entirely insecure. While there may be a temporary improvement in status, it suddenly plummets when the employment abruptly ends. This shock is extremely distressing for a married man; he falls prey to severe psychological pressure. He feels ashamed to ask his parents for money for his children. This shock is extremely distressing for a married man; he falls prey to severe psychological pressure. He feels ashamed to ask his parents for money for his children. Respondents have expressed concern regarding test-recruiting agencies and the entire education system. They revealed that the job test syllabus should be aligned with the degrees. Teachers should avoid giving students borderline grades such as C or D that leave them unable to improve their academic standing. In such cases, it may be better to fail the student, allowing them to retake the course and have another opportunity to improve their grade, so that, in the future, he might be deemed ineligible for any job because of it. Respondents have become deeply disillusioned due to the corruption and mismanagement within the system. In most cases, it is already predetermined who will get the job and who will return empty-handed. Meanwhile, certain influential individuals manage to obtain the solved exam papers in advance. Such exploitation of talent and ability is pushing the young generation toward the worst socio-psychological issues.

Recommendations

This study is recommended to the policy makers, educational institutions and employment sectors to handle the issues identified by this research. The new training and programs should be recommended either to give temporary opportunities to the youth for the purpose to polish their skills and keep them hopeful. Educational institutions and relevant employment agencies should also strengthen vocational training, career counseling, and job-placement opportunities for unemployed youth. Furthermore, students should be educated about business ideas and encouraged in this regard as well. The government should also provide them with financial support during the initial stages.

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