

EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG M.PHIL. GRADUATES IN SAMBRIAL CITY OF SIALKOT, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the effects of unemployment, examining how being unemployed contributes to social and psychological burdens for graduates in Pakistan. Additionally, the research seeks to identify the factors leading to unemployment in the country. The study area was the unemployed graduates of M.Phil. education in the departments of the education, Social Science Faculty at the University of Gujrat. The study employed research methods aligned with the qualitative research paradigm. The research employed a case study approach for investigation. In choosing the sample of participants the researcher used a purposive sampling method. In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with six graduates who had completed their M.Phil. education in the departments of the education. A thematic approach was used to analyse the data. The information underwent analysis, categorization, and structuring into primary themes and subsequent sub-themes through the coding process. The results strongly indicate that MPhil graduates from lower and middle socioeconomic backgrounds are caught in a repetitive cycle of intense pursuit to secure employment, particularly in government positions. The research results suggest that unemployment can have an impact on an individual's psychological well-being, influencing mental health, family dynamics, relationships, and the various motivation strategies employed by individuals.

Keywords: Graduate unemployment, case study, University of Gujrat.

1.1)INTRODUCTION:

In any nation, unemployment is one of the main issues. It has been the most persistent issue that is challenging to handle and that affects both industrialized and developing nations equally. Unemployment is the state of lacking a job, commonly known as being unemployed or without work. It pertains to the percentage of people in the working and educated population who are not currently employed. In simpler terms, an individual is considered unemployed if they are actively seeking employment, willing and available to work for a fair salary, but are unable to secure a job (Waqar Ahmad, 2017).

Currently, unemployment poses a significant challenge in both developing and advanced nations. Pakistan is one such country where the issue of unemployment is a serious concern, affecting both urban and rural regions. Particularly noteworthy is the substantial disparity in unemployment rates among the youth in Pakistan. Between 1970 and the early 21st century, global universities doubled, and student numbers increased by over 300%. From 2007 to 2009, enrollment and graduates in higher education rose by 500%, reaching 22 million and 132 million, respectively. Despite this growth, the challenge lies in utilizing this skilled human capital, as the labor market in many developing countries

struggles to absorb the vast number of graduates, leading to increased unemployment rates (Mahmood et al., 2014; Qazi, Raza, & Sharif, 2017).

Young individuals experiencing unemployment often face heightened levels of depression, hopelessness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and uncertainty about their future. The emotional toll includes setbacks, feelings of inadequacy, and a sense of failure, significantly impacting their physical health due to escalating stress levels. Unemployment has extensive repercussions on both the overall well-being and financial stability of the youth. The researcher strongly suggests that joblessness profoundly affects an individual's psychological functioning, fostering frustration, aggression and frustration (Saleem & Hussain, 2018).

The primary factors contributing to unemployment in Pakistan among Faculty of education graduates include corruption, mismatched skills, outdated curricula, a limited job market, a flawed education system, and political interference in the recruitment process. These issues result in significant challenges for graduates, particularly in terms of job specialization. There exists a significant gap between the education provided and the economic demand to absorb these graduates. Secondly, a lack of robust connections between universities and industries means that the graduates being generated do not align with the specific requirements of the job market. Thirdly, the growing number of individuals seeking employment contributes to an expanded labor force. Lastly, the economic downturn and macroeconomic imbalances are further exacerbating this situation. The consequences of unemployment are multifaceted, encompassing social, economic, personal (such as self-esteem), chronic psychological, and health costs for those who remain unemployed. Psychological distress is a prevalent outcome, affecting both males and females, especially for those facing long-term unemployment exceeding two years (Ahsan & Khan, 2023).

This study seeks to explore the consequences of unemployment, specifically M.Phil. graduates specializing in social sciences from the University of Gujrat, Sambrial. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the research seeks to investigate the psychological and personal repercussions experienced by unemployed graduates, including

effects on self-esteem and inner turmoil, arising from their state of joblessness.

1.2) Statement of the problem

Unemployment is a global issue that not only impacts individuals but also has ripple effects on their dependents. Over time, it has become a significant concern for youth worldwide. Pakistan, being a developing country with a predominantly youthful population, faces elevated levels of youth unemployment, as indicated by the 2017-18 survey (Hafeez, Subhan, & Jamil). With time, the problem of unemployment has become a headache for the youth in Pakistan. The current socioeconomic framework within the country has led to a critical need for understanding the distinct psychological consequences of unemployment on M.Phil. graduates in this specific locale. Furthermore, there is a gap in knowledge regarding how unemployment influences the quality of life and standard of living among these graduates, highlighting the need for a comprehensive investigation. This research is an effort to comprehend the psychological impact that unemployment has on a person's personal life, the researcher has decided to focus on this specific area of unemployment.

1.3) Research objective

1. To Explore and Understand the Distinct Psychological Consequences of Unemployment on the Wellbeing of M. Phil Graduates in Sambrial City within the broader socioeconomic framework of the country.
2. To Investigate the Influence of Unemployment on the Quality of Life and Standard of Living Among M. Phil Graduates in Sambrial City:
3. To Examine the Coping Mechanisms and Motivational Strategies Utilized by M.Phil. Graduates in Sambrial City to Navigate Unemployment:

1.4) Research questions

1. What are the specific psychological consequences experienced by M.Phil graduates in Sambrial City as a result of unemployment?
2. How does unemployment affect the quality of life of M.Phil graduates in terms of social relationships, health, and overall life satisfaction?

3. What coping mechanisms do M.Phil graduates in Sambrial City commonly employ to deal with the challenges of unemployment?

1.5) Significance of the study

1. This research will provide valuable insights for policymakers to design and implement targeted employment policies and support services tailored to the psychological needs of unemployed graduates.
2. Educational institutions can use the research outcomes to enhance their curricula and support systems, better preparing students for the psychological aspects of the job market.
3. By highlighting the psychological impact of unemployment, the study contributes to raising awareness about mental health issues among unemployed graduates, reducing stigma, and fostering a supportive societal environment.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

This study specifically focuses on M.Phil graduates in Sambrial City. The distinct socioeconomic and cultural factors of this city may contribute to unique experiences that may not be fully representative of other regions.

2) Literature review

2.1) Pakistan current rate of unemployment and definitions:

Job loss leads to unemployment, a prevalent aspect in any society. Unemployment is an inherent feature influenced by factors such as workforce mobility, economic changes (whether growth or stagnation), and variations in the demand and supply of labor. Those who are unemployed are individuals without current work but actively seeking employment opportunities if they are available (Conroy, 2010).

Graduate unemployment in Pakistan poses a significant challenge, reaching nearly three times the country's overall unemployment rate. The historical data spanning from 2001-02 to 2020-21 indicates a varied trend in Pakistan's overall unemployment rate, fluctuating between 5% and 10%. However, during this period, the unemployment rate for graduates experienced a continuous increase, climbing from 9.2% in 2001-02 to a peak of 17.9% in 2014-15. Existing literature suggests a significant disparity between the supply and demand for graduates in

developing countries, leading to high levels of graduate unemployment. On the supply side, there is a continuous increase in the number of graduates, while the demand side struggles to generate sufficient job opportunities across various economic sectors. The misalignment between the growing number of recent university graduates and the limited job vacancies contributes to this issue. Moreover, a substantial proportion of individuals complete tertiary education in fields with minimal demand. In the case of Pakistan, 31% of educated youth are unemployed, with females constituting 51% of the total unemployed population (Ahsan & Khan, 2023).

2.2) Psychological impact of unemployment:

Unemployment poses a severe challenge for educated youth in Pakistan, leading to a decline in self-esteem, heightened anxiety, and mental health issues. This situation is compounded by financial stress, establishing a detrimental link between idleness and psychological well-being. Unemployed individuals exhibit notably weaker psychological health compared to their employed counterparts. The ramifications of unemployment extend to financial strain, anxiety-related health issues, and a diminished sense of happiness, contributing to increased social isolation for those without employment (Conroy, 2010).

Unemployment exerts various impactful effects on the lives of individuals without jobs, leading to financial strain, causing health issues linked to anxiety, and reducing overall happiness levels (Giugni & Lorenzini, 2010).

2.3) Psychological impact on individual life:

According to Fryer (1986), unemployment's economic strain diminishes an individual's control over their life circumstances, making it challenging to maintain the desired standard of living. This, in turn, hampers long-term life course control as financial difficulties impede effective planning. Additionally, low income has a comprehensible adverse impact on both happiness and life satisfaction (Fryer, 1986).

Moreover, unemployment is seen as a shift in social status, specifically a transformation in family responsibilities, and is commonly perceived as an exceedingly stressful life occurrence. Elements linked to unemployment, such as economic hardship, often trigger a sense of failure, subsequently giving rise to depression. Additionally, familial and societal

pressures tied to job seeking and elevated expectations for employment among college or university graduates serve as potential factors contributing to depression in unemployed young adults (Mokona, Yohannes, & Ayano, 2020).

2.4) Coping resources of individuals

Conroy (2020) depicted that the impact of unemployment depends on individuals' coping resources, encompassing both internal (individual characteristics) and external (environmental conditions) factors that help individuals deal with involuntary job loss. These coping resources, categorized into personal, social, financial, and time structure aspects, play a crucial role in managing job displacement. Engaging in the leisure environment is highlighted as an alternative means to access latent benefits and serves as a psychologically healthy coping strategy for dealing with unemployment.

3) Research methodology:

The study employs research methods aligned with the qualitative research paradigm. The research employed a case study approach for investigation.

3.1) Sampling and selection:

In choosing the sample of participants the researcher used a purposive sampling method. The selection of six cases was purposeful, chosen for the convenience of obtaining the necessary information from the respondents.

3.2) Data gathering tool:

In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight graduates who had completed their M.Phil. education in the departments of the education, Social Science Faculty at the University of Gujrat. These individuals experienced unemployment for at least 3 years following their graduation. In conducting this study, the researcher opted to interview individuals in the age range of 26 to 30. This decision was based on the understanding that, for many in this age group, their professional careers would likely coincide with a period of positive economic growth, leading to associated benefits.

3.3) Data collection procedure

On December 25, 2023, data collection occurred using an Oppo Reno 6 phone for recording

interviews, with all interviews being transcribed verbatim. The researcher personally knew all six participants, and they were contacted through telephone with details about the research. Each participant opted to have the interviews conducted in the comfort of their homes, fostering a relaxed environment that encouraged open and candid discussions on the research topic. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, involving a set of questions presented in the general form of an interview schedule, though the sequence of questions could vary. The questions predominantly took the form of open-ended inquiries, with a few closed questions seeking specific information such as age and duration of unemployment. An instance of an open-ended question featured in the interview schedule is, 'What are the primary sentiments and emotions you associate with the process of adjusting to unemployment?'

The interview schedule was organized into four main sections:

1. Demographics of the participants
2. Assessment of their psychological and emotional well-being in socio economic context of Pakistan
3. Examination of the impact on an individual's quality of life
4. Exploration of the resource's individuals employ to cope with unemployment.

4) Data analysis

A thematic approach was used to present the findings of the study. The information underwent analysis, categorization, and structuring into primary themes and subsequent sub-themes through the coding process. Specific codes were assigned to the identified themes. Following this, the data was interpreted by recognizing recurring patterns and noting similarities and distinctions. The last phase encompassed data verification, wherein the validity of comprehension was ensured by revisiting transcripts and codes.

5) Findings:

Participants

The first participant hails from Sambrial and has been without employment for more than two and a half years. The initial participant is from Sambrial and has experienced a period of unemployment exceeding two and a half years. Despite being

currently jobless, she engages in home-based teaching for children. The second participant originates from Gujrat and has a two-year work history in a private institution. At present, she has been unemployed for slightly over a year. She is married but does not have children. During her period of unemployment, she has been occupied with domestic activities and actively pursuing opportunities for government employment.

Participant three, residing in Daska, is currently employed as a part-time tutor at AIOU and is actively

seeking a government job. Participant four, based in Gujrat, previously served as an administrator for over a year before facing unemployment. Now, she is in search of a government lecturer position. Participant five, from Sambrial, has been unemployed for three years. Presently, she works part-time as a lecturer, but the income is insufficient. Lastly, participant six, also from Gujrat, have been unemployed for three years and are patiently awaiting new job opportunities, having not secured employment yet.

Participant	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Job title	Unemployment Length
1	Female	29	single	Home teach	1.5 years
2	Female	30	married	No	2 years
3	Female	29	single	Tu tour	2 years
4	Female	28	single	No	3 years
5	Female	29	single	No	2 years
6	Female	30	single	No	3 years

5.1) Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents

The individuals sharing their perspectives on unemployment all come from middle to lower-middle-class families, with a predominant representation from the lower-middle class. Notably, most of these families are well-educated and have a strong awareness of the importance of education. Economic limitations are causing challenges for families of unemployed graduates, making it difficult to meet monthly expenses, especially with the additional costs of education for the graduates' siblings. Many families of the graduates were engaged in small-scale jobs or businesses, such as school teaching and 2nd and 3rd class government jobs. This situation mirrors the socio-economic status of the graduates' families, highlighting their position in the societal class structure. This segment of society strives for a better future, recognizing education as the primary means to secure employment.

5.2) Respondents' Views on the Reasons of Graduate Unemployment:

Inconsistencies in course outlines and a lack of practical components fail to align with job market demands. As a result, subject knowledge alone may not yield optimal results in job exams. Participant 1, a graduate from the education department, expressed,

"I believe I didn't succeed in the exam due to the fact that the curriculum in most universities is antiquated and doesn't align well with the demands of the current job market."

Some job applicants admitted that they are not well-prepared, particularly in the areas of general knowledge and English, which are crucial for securing a job. Second, a candidate expressed that he lacks proficiency in general knowledge. "I am not good enough at mathematics (second participant)." Individuals who have experienced discomfort during the recruitment process claim that corruption is a factor in obtaining government jobs. "I did not have any political ties, and I lacked the financial influence to guarantee my qualification (third participant). Fourth and fifth participants echoed the same voice. A lack of effective career counseling and a limited job market were compounding the struggles of the unemployed. "Struggling to adapt to the current job market and limited job opportunities for graduates with a social science background."

5.3) Psychological well-being

Each participant expressed that being unemployed had a detrimental impact on their psychological and emotional well-being. One participant conveyed the sentiment of feeling a lack of value or worth. Participant two clearly depicted that: "I experienced a sense of worthlessness, feeling detached from

society. I felt ashamed to admit my unemployment, going to great lengths to hide it from people I knew". Participant 3 echoed the same voice: "Certainly, as the duration of my unemployment extended, I started questioning if there was something amiss with me since I couldn't secure employment"..

Participant 4 clearly described that: "While I was without a job, I consistently claimed to be on vacation whenever I ran into someone. However, I was aware that I couldn't sustain this excuse indefinitely; eventually, people would catch on".

Participant 5 clearly mentioned: "Psychologically, the longer you remain unemployed, you start to sense a deepening of worthlessness".

Participant 6 echoed the same voice: "The fear of never finding work again creeps in, and you begin to question if this will be your perpetual reality. It becomes evident why individuals may contemplate suicide in such circumstances".

5.4) Health

First participants recognized that their health declined due to unemployment. They no longer prioritized maintaining their appearance, resulting in weight gain and minimal exercise for overall fitness and health. "My health deteriorated compared to when I had a job. I indulged in more unhealthy eating habits, slept longer, and adopted a routine where I wouldn't wake up until 11 in the morning, consuming significantly more food".

The second participant acknowledged that although she gained weight, her overall health has improved. "My diet has significantly improved. Fast-food options like McDonald's, which used to be convenient and affordable, are no longer part of my choices. In a way, it's a positive change".

As unemployment is not a deliberate lifestyle choice, it can leave individuals feeling powerless, causing significant stress and adversely affecting their health. "My overall well-being suffered. Employment-related stress caused me to lose my appetite, making it difficult for me to eat (third participant)". Fourth and fifth participants echoed the same voice. "I often pondered why securing a job remained elusive. I perceived myself as less intelligent, and this had a tangible impact on my physical health".

The sixth participant reveals that, "the stress of unemployment has taken a toll on my mental health,

leading me to doubt my ability to achieve anything in the future"..

5.5) Effects on relationships with friends & family

Financial strain, increased stress, and changes in routine associated with unemployment can lead to tension and challenges in maintaining healthy relationships. First and second participant echoed the same voice: "Being unemployed strained my relationships; I felt distant from friends, unable to share the struggle." while second participant depicted "Friends didn't get why I couldn't join them, and family tensions rose with the financial stress."

Third and fourth participant mentioned that "It's tough to maintain connections when you're unemployed; social invitations become awkward."

While fifth and sixth echoed the same voice. "Family gatherings became stressful; everyone had opinions on my job search, adding to the strain. "Unemployment strained friendships; the dynamic changed, and I often felt left out or misunderstood."

5.6) Motivation and coping resources.

Most participants emphasized the difficulty of self-motivation, noting variations in their motivation levels from day to day. First and second participant depicted "Staying motivated during unemployment is tough, but we find solace in networking and skill-building."

The remaining participants stressed the challenge of motivating themselves, acknowledging fluctuations in their motivation levels daily. While third and fourth participant depicted that "we rely on support groups; sharing experiences with others in the same boat keeps me motivated. "Setting small goals helps me stay focused and motivated despite the challenges of job hunting." Fifth and sixth participants revealed that, "we've tapped into online courses; acquiring new skills boosts our confidence and coping abilities."

6) Conclusion:

The research findings reveal that unemployment can have a detrimental impact on an individual's psychological well-being. Whether it's due to a small job market, lack of job specialization, outdated curriculum, or corruption, the effects on graduates are consistently mental depression, socio-economic potential, personality degradation, and frustration.

The study indicates that Sambrial graduates from lower and middle socioeconomic backgrounds often lack entrepreneurial spirit, remaining caught in a cycle of pursuing primarily government jobs. This highlights the socio-economic context and psychological patterns, contributing to increased vulnerability during periods of unemployment.

6.1) Future study

Other researchers can replicate the study to confirm its applicability and generalizability.

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