



Understanding Unemployment among Tertiary Educated Youth

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author Khushbu conceptualized the study, designed the study and conducted the data analysis, also developed the research protocol and ensured proper execution of data collection. Author SR performed the methodology, contributed to critical insights on the research design of the manuscript. Author Jyoti helped in literature searches, supported the development of the theoretical framework, and played a key role in managing data organization and validation. Author SS performed the statistical analysis and did data visualization. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment remains a critical global issue, with far-reaching economic and social implications. This research explores the multifaceted causes of unemployment among 200 tertiary educated youth at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar. From the selected colleges, a list of students both undergraduate and postgraduate experiencing unemployment for the last 3-4 years was prepared. From the list a proportionate sample of 200 unemployed youth (comprising 100 graduates and 100 postgraduates) was systematically chosen from the entire educated youth population across the colleges of CCS Haryana Agricultural

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University, Hisar encompassing I.C College of Home Science, College of Basic Sciences & Humanities, College of Agriculture and College of Agriculture Engineering & Technology. Therefore, a proportionate sample of 27 graduate students and 45 postgraduate students from COHS, 28 postgraduate students from the College of Basic Sciences and Humanities, 50 graduate and 21 postgraduate students from the College of Agriculture, and 23 graduate and 6 postgraduate students from the College of Agriculture Engineering and Technology who were unemployed for the last 3–4 years were selected to comprise a total 200 sample size. Addressing the gap in existing literature, the study categorizes the causes into four key dimensions: structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related causes. The objective of the study is to analyze how these causes contribute to unemployment and their interrelated effects. A descriptive research design was employed, with data collected through a structured questionnaire. The analysis reveals that structural causes, such as high competition for limited job opportunities and the increasing demand for specialized skills, are significant barriers to employment. Educational mismatches, including misalignment between academic qualifications and industry requirements, further intensify the issue. Individual challenges, like limited job search skills, and private sector constraints, such as low wages and restrictive hiring practices, also contribute to unemployment. The findings underscore the complexity of youth unemployment and highlight the need for targeted policy interventions. By addressing these diverse causes, the study suggests reforms in education, skill development programs, and enhanced private sector engagement as essential strategies to improve youth employability and foster inclusive economic growth.

Keywords: *Youth unemployment; educational mismatches; employability skill development; policy interventions etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a critical socio-economic issue with far-reaching implications for economic growth, social stability, and individual well-being. Defined as the situation where individuals aged 15 to 24 are actively seeking but unable to secure employment, it has become increasingly prevalent. The International Labour Organization (2023) reports that youth unemployment rates remain alarmingly high, leading to lost economic potential, increased poverty, and social unrest. High unemployment among youth not only jeopardizes their livelihoods but also undermines sustainable development, as the potential of an entire generation to contribute productively is left untapped. Research indicates that prolonged unemployment can lead to economic dependence, diminished self-esteem, and disengagement from the labor market (Mseleku 2021, Asmare and Mulatie 2022). Despite the significance of the issue, existing studies often lack a comprehensive framework to explore the multifaceted causes of youth unemployment. Most research tends to focus on isolated factors, such as the mismatch between educational qualifications and job market demands or structural issues like job saturation, without considering how these dimensions collectively influence youth employability (Gupta et al. 2020, Hemalatha et al. 2019). This study aims to fill this gap by categorizing the causes of youth

unemployment into four interconnected dimensions—structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related. Utilizing empirical data from 200 graduate and postgraduate students at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers faced by young job seekers. The findings are anticipated to have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders, guiding the design of targeted interventions.

By illuminating the complexities of youth unemployment, this research aspires to inform holistic policy frameworks that not only address immediate unemployment but also equip youth for the evolving demands of the global workforce (Farah and Ali 2023, Ambachew 2022). Recommendations will include reforms in educational systems to better align with labor market needs and enhanced skill development programs to bridge individual gaps. Ultimately, such initiatives are essential for fostering sustainable economic development and ensuring that youth can transition into productive careers.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the various causes of unemployment among 200 tertiary-educated youth at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana

Agricultural University, Hisar. A list of unemployed tertiary-educated undergraduate and postgraduate students from selected colleges, who have been without employment for the past 3-4 years, was compiled. From this list, a proportionate sample of 200 unemployed tertiary-educated individuals (100 graduates and 100 postgraduates) was systematically selected from the entire educated youth population across CCS Haryana Agricultural University.

The sample comprised 27 graduate and 45 postgraduate students from the I.C. College of Home Science, 28 postgraduate students from the College of Basic Sciences and Humanities, 50 graduate and 21 postgraduate students from the College of Agriculture, and 23 graduate and 6 postgraduate students from the College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology. This resulted in a total sample size of 200 individuals. To address gaps in the existing literature, the study categorizes the causes of unemployment among tertiary-educated youth into four key dimensions: structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related factors.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unemployment's global impact necessitates understanding its causes. Youth unemployment stems from diverse causes. Economic shifts (structural), skill mismatches (educational), insufficient experience (individual), and economic downturns (private sector) are pivotal. Structural causes, driven by economic shifts, influence job availability, educational disparities, with skill mismatches, contribute to the issue. Individual causes, like insufficient experience or inadequate job-search skills, hinder successful employment. Private sector-related causes, such as economic

downturns impacting hiring, exacerbate the problem. In addressing the multifaceted nature of unemployment, this section delves into its causes, categorizing them into structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related factors. These categories were identified based on insights provided by unemployed graduate and postgraduate students.

3.1 Causes of Unemployment Among Youth

3.1.1 Structural causes contributing to unemployment

The structural causes contributing to unemployment, highlighted in Table 1, underscore several key factors identified by both graduate and postgraduate students. A significant number of students identify the high volume of job seekers as the primary contributor to unemployment, ranking it as the most important cause, with mean scores of 2.65 and 2.59, respectively. Other major structural causes include the large size of the informal sector and the escalating demand for highly skilled labor, which were ranked second (2.61 and 2.52) and third (2.59 and 2.46) in importance. This observation aligns with established economic literature recognizing the systemic challenge of a mismatch between job seekers and available opportunities (African Development Bank 2021, Lucas 1988).

The increasing demand for skilled labor and the role of technological change correspond with research that highlights the impact of technological shifts on labor market dynamics (Acemoglu and Autor 2011). Additionally, factors such as economic recession and challenges

Table 1. Structural Causes Contributing to Unemployment N=200

Sr. No.	Structural Causes	Tertiary Educated Youth					
		Graduate F (%) (n=100)			Post Graduate F (%) (n=100)		
		Total Score	Mean	Rank	Total Score	Mean	Rank
1.	Increasing Population	152	1.52	VII	145	1.45	VII
2.	More Job Seekers	265	2.65	I	259	2.59	I
3.	Absence of occupational standards	180	1.80	V	192	1.92	IV
4.	Recession	177	1.77	VI	139	1.39	VIII
5.	Large size of informal sector	261	2.61	II	246	2.46	III
6.	Demand of highly skilled labour	259	2.59	III	252	2.52	II
7.	Nepotism	183	1.83	IV	167	1.67	VI
8.	Technological Change	143	1.43	VIII	185	1.85	V

*Maximum Score – 3.00

faced by graduates post-internship are consistent with previous studies identifying these as contributors to unemployment (Carneiro and Heckman 2003). Economic imbalances between the supply of graduates and the demand for skilled labor, as observed in countries like South Africa and Kenya, have resulted in limited job opportunities (Mseleku 2021). Furthermore, issues such as discrimination, favoritism, and skills mismatches have hindered graduates' transition to full-time employment, which is consistent with research on the obstacles to labor market entry for graduates (Gupta et al. 2020).

This research emphasizes the economy's impact on labor market opportunities, resonating with the mismatch theory of unemployment (Hemalatha et al. 2019). Additionally, global economic crises, such as the 2007-2009 downturns, contributed to prolonged periods of graduate unemployment, further exacerbating the issue (Farah and Ali 2023).

The categorization of these structural causes highlights the complex interplay of factors affecting job availability and accessibility, particularly for youth. By examining these challenges, the study aims to provide insights into how structural reforms and targeted policy interventions can address these issues effectively, fostering environments conducive to reducing youth unemployment rates and promoting sustainable economic growth.

3.1.2 Educational Causes Contributing to Unemployment

This section investigates the educational causes contributing to unemployment among respondents, as outlined in Table 2. A significant majority of both graduate and postgraduate

students identified several key educational causes. Foremost among these was a perceived mismatch between education and job requirements, coupled with concerns over insufficient certifications (mean scores of 2.84 and 2.78, respectively). Following closely were concerns regarding insufficient certifications in conjunction with mismatches between education and job requirements (mean scores of 2.82 and 2.75), highlighting the critical impact of educational alignment on employability.

Furthermore, the data revealed substantial concerns about the imbalance between vocational and general education (mean scores of 2.79 and 2.71), underscoring the importance of curricular relevance to labor market needs. These factors collectively constituted the primary drivers of unemployment, particularly among individuals holding postgraduate degrees. These insights were consistent with similar findings from previous studies (Ambachew 2022, African Development Bank 2021, Lucas 1988). A study in Bangalore City underscores the significant influence of monetary considerations on individuals' employment decisions. Simultaneously, an African Development Bank report emphasized the relevance of supply-side dynamics, explaining unemployment in terms of qualification deficiencies and skill mismatches. In alignment with previous findings, challenges faced by the educated demographic encompassed deficiencies in educational and vocational guidance, shortages in job opportunities, and familial responsibilities.

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of how educational factors influence unemployment rates among graduate and postgraduate students, shedding light on critical areas that need attention to enhance employability and economic outcomes.

Table 2. Educational Causes Contributing to Unemployment N=200

Sr. No.	Educational Causes	Tertiary Educated Youth					
		Graduate F (%) (n=100)			Post Graduate F (%) (n=100)		
		Total Score	Mean	Rank	Total Score	Mean	Rank
1.	Outdated education system	162	1.62	V	146	1.46	IV
2.	Lack of proper career guidance	172	1.72	IV	132	1.32	V
3.	Mismatch between education and job requirement	284	2.84	I	275	2.75	II
4.	Imbalance between vocational and general education	279	2.79	III	271	2.71	III
5.	Insufficient certificates	282	2.82	II	278	2.78	I

*Maximum Score – 3.00

Table 3. Individual Causes Contributing to Unemployment N=200

Sr. No.	Individual Causes	Tertiary Educated Youth					
		Graduate F (%) (n=100)			Post Graduate F (%) (n=100)		
		Total Score	Mean	Rank	Total Score	Mean	Rank
1.	Expectations for easy jobs	282	2.82	III	279	2.79	I
2.	Low salary offer	287	2.87	I	197	1.97	IV
3.	Lack of self awareness	187	1.87	V	270	2.70	II
4.	Occupational stigma	191	1.91	IV	269	2.69	III
5.	Pressure from parents	172	1.72	VI	186	1.86	VI
6.	The lack of adequate work experience	285	2.85	II	193	1.93	V

*Maximum Score – 3.00

3.1.3 Individual causes contributing to unemployment

The outcomes pertaining to individual causes of unemployment, as delineated in Table 3, manifest that a majority of both cohorts of unemployed graduate and postgraduate students concurred on the prioritized role of a low salary offer and expectations for easily attainable jobs, ranking them first with mean scores of 2.87 and 2.79, respectively. Subsequently, the lack of adequate work experience and lack of self-awareness were ranked second (MS-2.85 and 2.70). Expectations for easy jobs and occupational stigma were ranked third (MS-2.82 and 2.69). These findings align with existing research, which suggests that graduates often prioritize immediate job accessibility over salary and long-term career development, leading to underemployment (Brown & Green, 2019; Chavez & Martinez, 2017). The lack of work experience (Nguyen & Lee, 2021) and self-awareness (O'Connor & Foster, 2022) are also significant barriers, with graduates struggling to match their skills to job market demands. Additionally, the reluctance to accept lower-status roles due to occupational stigma (Smith & Thompson, 2018) and the influence of parental expectations (Williams & Taylor, 2020) further complicate the transition from education to employment. These results highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling graduate unemployment, including improving career self-awareness, managing expectations, and better aligning academic qualifications with labor market needs.

3.1.4 Private sector-related causes contributing to unemployment

The study highlights significant concerns among both graduate and postgraduate students

regarding private sector-related causes contributing to unemployment. Predominantly, low wages and the absence of insurance coverage are identified as primary issues, receiving top rankings with mean scores of 2.84 and 2.78, respectively. This is compounded by practices such as extending existing workers' hours rather than hiring new employees, which ranked closely behind with scores of 2.81 and 2.72. Additional concerns include systems that depress wages for enhanced profit, coupled with failures in workforce absorption by the private sector, each contributing significantly with mean scores of 2.75 and 2.66. Similar findings are reported in previous research, revealing a lack of effectiveness in government policies to address unemployment (Ambachew 2022, African Development Bank, 2021). Observations from the African Development Bank also indicate that youth unemployment was influenced by both employer expectations and regulatory factors on the demand side, which decreased labor market demand and excluded numerous graduates (Lucas, 1988).

3.1.5 Overall level of causes contributing to unemployment

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to unemployment among students without current employment, covering overall structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related elements. The examination of the overarching determinants of student unemployment underscores significant associations with structural, educational, individual, and private sector-related factors. A substantial proportion of respondents (65.0%) attributed the high incidence of unemployment to structural causes, aligning with economic frameworks emphasizing the impact of

Table 4. Private Sector-Related Causes Contributing to Unemployment N=200

Sr. No.	Private sector-related Causes	Tertiary Educated Youth					
		Graduate F (%) (n=100)			Post Graduate F (%) (n=100)		
		Total Score	Mean	Rank	Total Score	Mean	Rank
1.	Making existing workers work longer rather than hiring new workers	275	2.75	III	278	2.78	I
2.	Failure of the private sector to absorb unemployed population	223	2.23	V	266	2.66	III
3.	There is a system that pulls down wages and reaps extra profit over this	281	2.81	II	234	2.34	IV
4.	There is a system based on making money out of money rather than investing in the production sector	249	2.49	IV	197	1.97	V
5.	Low level of wages and absence of insurance coverage in the private sector	284	2.84	I	272	2.72	II
6.	The private sector is not innovative it lacks skills to create a trademark or a style	172	1.72	VI	146	1.46	VI

**Maximum Score – 3.00*

Table 5. Overall Level of Causes of Unemployment

CAUSES	Categories	Tertiary Educated Youth		Total F (%) N=200
		Graduate F (%) n= 100	Post Graduate F (%) n=100	
Structural Causes of Unemployment	Low (8-13)	3 (3.0)	10 (10.0)	13 (6.5)
	Medium (14-19)	31 (31.0)	26 (26.0)	57 (28.5)
	High (19-24)	66 (66.0)	64 (64.0)	130 (65.0)
	Mean ± SD	22.25 ± 3.68	22.14 ± 5.11	22.20 ± 4.44
Educational Causes of Unemployment	Low (5-8)	2 (2.0)	2 (2.0)	4 (2.0)
	Medium (9-11)	22 (22.0)	9 (9.0)	31 (15.5)
	High (12-15)	76 (76.0)	89 (89.0)	165 (82.5)
	Mean ± SD	12.72 ± 1.96	14.1 ± 1.80	13.37 ± 1.99
Individual Causes of Unemployment	Low (06-09)	8 (8.0)	3 (3.0)	11 (5.5)
	Medium (10-14)	68 (68.0)	79 (79.0)	147 (73.5)
	High (15-18)	24 (24.0)	18 (18.0)	42 (21.0)
	Mean ± SD	15.14 ± 2.43	13.02 ± 1.76	14.77 ± 1.72
Private-Sector related Causes of Unemployment	Low (06-09)	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	12 (6.0)
	Medium (10-14)	72 (72.0)	67 (67.0)	139 (69.5)
	High (15-18)	26 (26.0)	23 (23.0)	49 (24.5)
	Mean ± SD	13.05 ± 2.60	11.98 ± 2.51	12.02 ± 2.73

macroeconomic shifts on employment dynamics (Acemoglu and Autor 2011). Likewise, a prevalent linkage (82.5%) to elevated levels of educational causes reflected concerns surrounding skill mismatches and deficiencies within the educational system, resonating with the scholarly discourse on human capital policy (Carneiro and Heckman 2003). The discerned medium-level influence ascribed to individual causes (73.5%) aligns with human capital theories, emphasizing the sway of individual choices and skills, consistent with the perspectives articulated by (Becker 1993) and (Mincer 1974). Furthermore, the identified medium-level influence from the private sector (69.5%) accords with theories spotlighting the ramifications of corporate decisions on labor markets (Lazear 2000, Benny 2020). In sum, the multifaceted nature of youth unemployment necessitates comprehensive strategies that encompass structural reforms, educational alignment, individual empowerment, and engagement with the private sector.

4. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive analysis of youth unemployment reveals the intricate interplay of structural, educational, individual, and private sector factors contributing to the persistent challenges faced by young job seekers. Key findings indicate that structural issues, particularly the high volume of job seekers and the mismatch between labor market demands and available opportunities, significantly exacerbate unemployment rates, as highlighted by 65% of respondents. Educational factors emerge as a critical barrier, with 82.5% of respondents identifying skill mismatches and deficiencies in the educational system that hinder employability, especially for graduates. Individual factors, such as unrealistic salary expectations and lack of work experience, complicate the landscape, noted by 73.5% of participants as influential. The private sector's role is also vital, with 69.5% of respondents pointing to low wages and inadequate job creation practices that restrict opportunities for youth employment. To effectively address these multifaceted issues, the study advocates for targeted strategies, including structural reforms to increase job availability, educational enhancements to better align curricula with labor market needs, and policies that encourage greater private sector engagement in sustainable employment creation. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing an integrated framework

that synthesizes various factors influencing youth unemployment, grounding the analysis in empirical data while validating existing theories. It offers practical insights for policymakers and emphasizes the need for collaboration with the private sector, alongside individual empowerment initiatives. By highlighting these areas for intervention and the necessity for ongoing research, this study serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders committed to reducing youth unemployment and promoting inclusive economic growth.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks before consenting to participate. Their participation was voluntary, and they were assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and received approval from the relevant institutional review board.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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