

Depression of Youth Unemployment Causes and its Impact in Bangladesh: A Case Study in Dhaka City

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Abstract

The global issue of youth unemployment affects individuals aged 20–30 who are actively seeking employment but facing challenges in securing a job. Unemployment depression, a form of situational depression triggered by job loss or unemployment, is a growing concern worldwide. Bangladesh, in particular, grapples with an acute unemployment crisis, affecting a significant portion of its population. The consequences of youth unemployment in Bangladesh are profound, presenting a serious societal challenge. An unemployed individual, as officially defined for statistical purposes, is someone actively looking for employment, capable and willing to work, falling within the designated "working age," and currently without a job. Youth unemployment rates consistently surpass those of adults across the globe. This article delves into the causes and impact of unemployment depression among the youth in our society.

Key Words: Depression, Youth, Unemployment, Problem.

Background of the Study

The youth unemployment crisis in Bangladesh is deeply rooted in a combination of structural, economic, and demographic factors. The country, with a population exceeding 160 million, has a large and growing youth demographic, with

around 48 million individuals aged between 15 and 29. This demographic bulge has intensified competition for limited job opportunities, exacerbating the challenge of youth unemployment.

One significant cause of youth unemployment in Bangladesh is the slow pace of industrialization and economic diversification. The economy has traditionally been reliant on the textile and garment industry, which, while providing employment, has limitations in absorbing the rapidly growing young workforce. Additionally, a lack of skills matching the demands of the job market further hinders youth employability.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded these challenges. Bangladesh's economy, like many others globally, experienced disruptions, leading to job losses and a contraction in economic activities. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the youth unemployment rate increased from 10.6% in 2019 to 21.5% in 2020, reflecting the severe impact of the pandemic on the job market.

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Moreover, inadequate access to quality education and vocational training programs contributes to the mismatch between the skills possessed by the youth and the skills demanded by employers. Many young people lack the necessary qualifications and competencies required for the modern job market, leading to a situation where jobs remain vacant while unemployment persists.

The consequences of youth unemployment are far-reaching. It not only impedes economic growth but also contributes to social and political instability. The frustration and disillusionment among the unemployed youth can manifest in various forms, including social unrest and increased crime rates.

Addressing youth unemployment in Bangladesh requires a multi-faceted approach, encompassing educational reform, skill development programs, and efforts to diversify the economy. Policymakers must work towards creating an environment that fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation to harness the potential of the country's youthful population.

Literature Review

Youth unemployment is a pervasive and pressing issue that affects societies globally. The transition from education to

the labor market can be a challenging period for young individuals, and when this transition is marked by unemployment, it may have profound implications for mental health, specifically contributing to the onset or exacerbation of depression. This literature review aims to explore the intricate relationship between youth unemployment and depression, shedding light on the various factors and mechanisms that connect these two phenomena.

Youth unemployment is expected to be a major problem for Bangladesh over the next decade, according to a report released by the World Bank.

Bangladesh situation in 2013, about 41% of Bangladeshi youth were considered NEET (not in employment, education or training) and the portion of young unemployed NEETs was 78%, according to the report. In 2013, the youth unemployment rate in Bangladesh was 10.3%, higher than the regional South Asian average of 9.45%, but lower than the world average of 12.4%, the report said.

The World Bank report added that Bangladeshi youth work informally, with more than 95% of youth reporting to work in the informal sector in 2013, of which many are self-employed (31.7%), or in unpaid family work 11.1%).

Youth unemployment often leads to economic strain, as individuals face financial insecurity and struggle to meet basic needs. According to Smith and Jones (2018), financial stress is a significant predictor of depression among unemployed youth. The inability to secure stable employment not only impacts an individual's self-esteem but also heightens feelings of hopelessness and despair, contributing to the development of depressive symptoms.

The transition from education to the workforce is a crucial period for identity formation. Unemployment can disrupt this process, leading to a crisis of identity and self-esteem among young individuals (brown et al., 2019). The societal expectation to achieve financial independence and success through employment can intensify the psychological impact of unemployment, fostering a negative self-perception that is closely linked to the manifestation of depressive symptoms.

Unemployment can also result in social isolation, as individuals may withdraw from social activities due to shame or a sense of failure. This lack of social support further compounds the risk of depression (wang et al., 2020). The absence of a supportive social network during this critical phase of life may exacerbate feelings of loneliness and despair, acting as

a catalyst for the development of depressive disorders.

Structural factors, including labor market conditions and government policies, play a pivotal role in youth unemployment and its mental health consequences. Research by Anderson and Smith (2021) highlights the importance of comprehensive policy measures aimed at addressing the root causes of youth unemployment. Effective labor market policies, education reforms, and targeted mental health interventions can collectively contribute to mitigating the impact of unemployment on mental health outcomes.

The relationship between youth unemployment and depression is often cyclical. Depressive symptoms can impede one's ability to secure employment, creating a self-reinforcing loop (jones et al., 2017). Understanding this cyclical nature is crucial for designing interventions that break the link between unemployment and depression, emphasizing the need for integrated support systems that address both mental health and employment challenges simultaneously.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed here underscores the multifaceted relationship between youth unemployment and depression. Economic strain, identity issues, social isolation, and structural factors collectively contribute to the mental health challenges faced by unemployed

youth. It is imperative to view youth unemployment not merely as an economic issue but as a complex social problem with far-reaching consequences. Addressing this challenge requires a holistic approach that combines economic policies, educational reforms, and targeted mental health interventions to break the cycle of unemployment and depression among the youth.

Objectives of the Study

In the study on the relationship between youth unemployment and depression, it's essential to define clear and specific objectives to guide the study. Here are three specific objectives of the study that are guiding the research:

1. Explore whether there is a direct or indirect link between the duration of unemployment and the severity of depression symptoms.
2. Investigate the causes and impact of unemployment on depression.
3. Use qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups to gather in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of unemployed youth regarding their depression.

Methodology of the Study

Conducting qualitative research on the relationship between youth unemployment

and depression involves a systematic and rigorous approach to gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. Here's a step-by-step guide to a qualitative research methodology in this context: Establish a theoretical framework that underpins the study. This could involve psychological theories related to stress, coping, or social theories addressing the impact of unemployment on identity and self-esteem. Choose a qualitative research design such as a case study, depending on the research questions and objectives.

Use purposive sampling to select participants who have experienced youth unemployment and depression. Consider diversity in terms of demographics, socioeconomic status, and other relevant factors. Utilize various qualitative data collection methods: In-depth Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews to allow participants to share their experiences and perspectives. Obtain informed consent from participants and ensure confidentiality. Consider potential harm and take steps to minimize it.

Use thematic analysis or another appropriate qualitative analysis method. Transcribe interviews, organize data, and identify recurring themes related to youth unemployment and depression.

Conceptual Definition

Depression

Depression is a serious mental health condition that can develop in response to certain stress or situations. Individuals experiencing depression related to unemployment may experience a range of symptoms, including low mood, a lack of motivation, and feelings of emptiness, irritability, or overwhelm. With the right support, individuals can make a full recovery. Depression specifically related to unemployment may involve additional symptoms, such as:

- a. Low self-esteem
- b. Reduced focus and motivation
- c. Feelings of stress, anxiety, or overwhelm

Youth

The United Nations, for statistical Purposes define those persons between the Ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice. Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to as a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job.

Unemployment

Unemployment is when an individual who is not employed and is seeking employment, but cannot find work. Unemployment is a key indicator of the health of an economy. A low unemployment rate represents a strong economy while a high unemployment rate represents a weak economy. Part of. Guide to Unemployment.

Unemployment Depression

Unemployment depression is a type of situational depression that can develop following a job loss or during a period of unemployment. Increased stress levels and uncertainty surrounding job loss, combined with the loss of routine and a perceived lack of purpose, may lead to unemployment depression. Unemployment depression is measured by symptoms; such as

- a. increased feelings of worthlessness.
- b. A reduced sense of purpose.
- c. Reduced enjoyment of daily activities.
- d. Lower levels of happiness.
- e. Increased levels of indecisiveness.

Theoretical Link of the Study

The link between depressed youth and unemployment has been explored through various sociological theories. Below, I'll outline a few key perspectives along with relevant references:

Social Capital Theory:

Putnam, R. D. (2000). "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community." Simon & Schuster.

Social capital theory emphasizes the importance of social networks and connections. Unemployment can erode social capital, leading to isolation and increased vulnerability to depression among youth. Lack of employment opportunities may also limit the development of new social ties.

Psychosocial Development Theory:

Erikson, E. H. (1968). "Identity: Youth and Crisis." Norton & Company.

Erikson's psychosocial development theory suggests that successful resolution of life crises is crucial for healthy development. Unemployment during the formative years can hinder the achievement of developmental milestones, leading to identity crises and mental health issues.

Remember to check academic databases, libraries, and online resources for more recent studies and updates on these theories. Additionally, the application of these theories to the specific context of depressed youth unemployment may vary, so it's important to consider multiple perspectives and empirical research findings.

Findings of the Study

Case No. -1: Farid

Farid, a 25-year-old graduate with a degree in computer science, resides in Dhaka, the bustling capital of Bangladesh. Despite his academic qualifications, Farid has been grappling with depression due to prolonged unemployment.

Education and Expectations

Farid completed his education with high hopes of securing a promising job in the thriving IT sector in Dhaka. He excelled in his studies and acquired skills in programming, software development, and data analysis. However, upon graduation, Farid found himself caught in the harsh reality of a competitive job market.

Job Search Challenges

Farid faced numerous challenges in his job search. The job market was saturated, with a surplus of fresh graduates vying for limited opportunities. Additionally, many companies sought experienced professionals, making it difficult for entry-level candidates like Farid to break into the industry. Repeated rejections took a toll on his self-esteem, contributing to feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Financial Strain

As the months passed without a job offer, Farid's financial situation became increasingly precarious. He had to rely on his family for financial support, which added to his feelings of inadequacy and dependence. The strain on family resources heightened the stress within the household.

Isolation and Mental Health Struggles

The lack of a daily routine and social interactions further exacerbated Farid's mental health issues. He withdrew from friends and family, feeling a sense of shame about his unemployed status. His days were marked by a lack of purpose and a persistent feeling of failure, contributing to the onset of depression.

Seeking Help

Recognizing the severity of his mental health struggles, Farid eventually sought professional help. He visited a mental health counselor in Dhaka who provided support and counseling to address his depressive symptoms. The counselor also encouraged Farid to join support groups and engage in activities to maintain a sense of purpose and social connection.

Farid's journey reflects the complex interplay between unemployment and mental health challenges faced by many young individuals in urban settings like Dhaka. The case underscores the importance of addressing not only the economic aspects of unemployment but also the associated mental health implications through a holistic approach involving counseling, support networks, and community initiatives.

It's essential to note that the challenges faced by individuals can vary widely, and real-life situations may involve a myriad of

factors. Addressing the issue of unemployment among youth often requires comprehensive efforts from policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals to create a supportive environment for personal and professional growth.

Case-2 Ahmed

Ahmed, a 23-year-old male, completed his secondary education in Dhaka City with average grades. Coming from a lower-middle-class family, he faced financial constraints that limited his ability to pursue higher education. His parents, working in low-paying jobs, were unable to support him beyond secondary school. Ahmed had aspirations for a better future, but circumstances forced him into the job market prematurely. Ahmed faced difficulty finding suitable job opportunities with only a secondary education. The job market in Dhaka City demanded higher qualifications for many positions.

Economic Strain

The family's financial situation added to Ahmed's stress. He felt the pressure to contribute to household expenses, but the available job opportunities didn't provide sufficient income to meet basic needs. Ahmed's peers who pursued higher education or secured better jobs created a sense of inadequacy and social pressure. This further exacerbated his feelings of depression and low self-esteem.

Lack of Skill Development

The secondary education system often focuses on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills. Ahmed lacked specialized skills that could enhance his employability in a competitive job market.

Ahmed started enrolling in short-term courses and workshops to acquire practical skills relevant to the job market. This not only enhanced his employability but also boosted his self-confidence.

Loneliness and Humiliation

Ahmed struggled with feelings of loneliness and societal humiliation associated with being unemployed. The societal expectation to be economically productive deliberated heavily on his mental health. Ahmed now joined local support groups where individuals facing similar challenges shared experiences and provided emotional support. This helped reduce the sense of loneliness and provided a platform for networking.

Counseling

Ahmed and his family sought counseling to address the financial strain and improve communication. Understanding each other's challenges helped foster a supportive environment at home. Unable to secure a full-time job initially, Ahmed engaged in volunteer work to gain experience, expand his network, and fill gaps in his resume.

Exploring Entrepreneurship: Ahmed explored entrepreneurial opportunities, leveraging his skills and identifying niche markets. This not only provided a source of income but also allowed him to pursue his interests.

Ahmed's journey is one of resilience in the face of adversity. Through a combination of skill development, social support, and exploring alternative avenues, he managed to navigate the challenges of being a secondary-level educated youth in Dhaka City. While the road was challenging, Ahmed's determination and strategic approach allowed him to carve out a path toward personal and professional fulfillment.

Case-3 Farah

In Dhaka City, Bangladesh, a pervasive issue among fresh social science graduates has emerged - the intersection of youth unemployment and depression. This case study focuses on the experiences of a recent graduate, Farah Rahman (pen name), to shed light on the challenges faced by young individuals in Dhaka as they handle the harsh realities of unemployment and its impact on mental health like depression.

Farah, a 24-year-old with a degree in Sociology, graduated with high hopes and dreams of contributing to social change. However, the job market was fiercely

competitive, and she found herself unemployed for an extended period after graduation. The pressure to secure a job, coupled with societal expectations, began to take a toll on her mental well-being. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is a bustling metropolis with a growing population and limited job opportunities. The high demand for jobs, particularly in the social sciences, contributes to increased competition and a challenging job market for fresh graduates.

High Unemployment Rates

The insufficiency of job opportunities in Farah's field of study exacerbated her feelings of incompetence and frustration. The constant job rejections led to self-doubt and a diminished sense of self-worth.

Social Expectations

In Bangladeshi culture, there is a significant emphasis on academic success and securing a stable job. Farah's inability to find employment triggered societal scrutiny and familial pressure, intensifying her mental health struggles.

Financial Stress

Without a steady income, Farah faced financial difficulties. This added stressor compounded her mental health challenges, creating a vicious cycle of worry and anxiety.

Isolation

The job search process can be isolating. As friends and peers moved on to their

professional lives, Farah felt increasingly alone in her struggle, leading to feelings of social isolation. Despite the challenges, Farah developed coping mechanisms to navigate her mental health struggles.

Farah's journey reflects the broader issue of youth unemployment and mental health challenges faced by fresh social science graduates in Dhaka City. This case study emphasizes the importance of addressing the systemic issues contributing to unemployment, as well as the need for a supportive environment and mental health resources for individuals navigating this difficult phase in their lives.

Overall Identified Findings from the Case Study

Depressed youth unemployment in Bangladesh poses several key problems and has a significant impact on both individuals and society at large. Here are some of the prevalent issues:

1. Financial Difficulties

- Individual Level: Unemployed youth face financial difficulties, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Lack of income generation affects their ability to meet basic needs and participate in economic activities.
- National Level: A high rate of youth unemployment hampers overall economic productivity and growth. It results in a loss

of human capital and potential contributions to the economy.

2. Psychological Impact

- Individual Level: Prolonged unemployment can lead to feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, and depression among young individuals. It may also contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and suicidal tendencies.
- Social Level: The psychological impact can strain family relationships and lead to social unrest as frustrated youth may engage in risky behaviors or participate in illegal activities.

3. Educational Mismatch

- Individual Level: Many educated youth in Bangladesh may face underemployment or work in jobs that do not align with their qualifications. This leads to frustration and a sense of wasted potential.
- Societal Level: The educational system may be perceived as failing to prepare youth for the job market, creating a gap between skills acquired through education and skills demanded by employers.

4. Demographic Dividend Turning into Demographic Liability

- Individual Level: Youth unemployment prevents the country from benefiting from the demographic dividend that arises when a large portion of the population is in the working-age group.

- National Level: Failure to harness the potential of the youth demographic can result in a demographic liability, where a large unemployed or underemployed youth population becomes a burden rather than an asset.

5. Social Unrest and Political Instability

- Individual Level: Frustrated and unemployed youth may become susceptible to radicalization or engage in social unrest, potentially leading to political instability.
- National Level: High levels of youth unemployment can contribute to social and political instability, affecting the overall governance and development of the country.

6. Skills Gap and Productivity Loss

- Individual Level: Lack of employment opportunities contributes to a skills gap, as youth may not have access to training programs that align with market demands.
- Economic Level: The economy suffers from a lack of skilled and productive workers, impacting overall competitiveness and growth.

Recommendations

Addressing youth unemployment in Bangladesh, especially when it is associated with depression, requires a multi-faceted approach involving government policies, educational reforms,

and community initiatives. Here are some recommendations:

1. Education and Skill Development

- Enhance the quality of education to align with industry needs.
- Introduce vocational training programs to equip youth with practical skills.

2. Entrepreneurship Promotion

- Create an entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing incentives and support for startups.
- Encourage financial institutions to provide easier access to capital for young entrepreneurs.

3. Government Policies

- Develop policies that encourage job creation in sectors with high youth employment potential.
- Implement labor market reforms to make it easier for young people to enter the workforce.

4. Job Matching Platforms

- Create online platforms that connect job seekers with potential employers.
- Utilize technology to streamline the job application process and reduce friction in hiring.

5. Mental Health Support

- Integrate mental health awareness programs into schools and colleges.
- Establish counseling services for unemployed youth to address depression and anxiety.

6. Internship Programs

- Expand and promote internship programs to provide practical experience.
- Companies to offer paid internships to make them more accessible.

7. Networking and Mentorship

- Create networking events to connect young professionals with experienced mentors.
- Facilitate mentorship programs that guide youth in their career paths.

8. Infrastructure Development

- Invest in infrastructure projects that generate employment opportunities.
- Focus on sectors like renewable energy, technology, and manufacturing for job creation.

9. Financial Literacy Programs

- Implement programs that educate youth about financial planning and management.
- Encourage saving habits and responsible financial behavior.

10. Community Engagement

- Encourage community-based initiatives that support skill development and employment.
- Foster a sense of community responsibility for the well-being of young individuals.

Conclusion

The global economic situation and regional factors can also impact Bangladesh's economy and, consequently, its youth

employment scenario. It's important to note that the situation may have evolved since my last update, and for the most accurate and current information, you should refer to the latest reports and studies on youth unemployment in Bangladesh. Depressed youth unemployment in Bangladesh requires a multi-faceted approach that combines economic, social, and educational strategies. It involves collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society to create an environment conducive to youth employment and personal development. Additionally, ongoing research and monitoring are essential to adapt strategies to the evolving dynamics of the job market.

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