

Reasons of Unemployment among the Educated Youth in Pakistan: Some Strategies for Improvement

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Abstract

Like other countries of the region, Pakistan is also facing the problem of unemployment among educated youth. This research paper is based on the findings of a research carried out in Karachi to find out the reasons of unemployment among the educated youth in Pakistan. This research study is based on mixed methods of enquiry including both quantitative and qualitative methods. A sample of 100 educated individuals including 50 males and 50 females was taken. A questionnaire was distributed among the participants. Focused group discussion was also carried out.

Introduction and background

Pakistan is a developing South Asian country, having her own problems and strengths. Geo-strategically it is located at a point where it is surrounded by big and growing economies around it. China and India are situated in north and east of Pakistan, whereas its western borders are adjacent with Iran and Afghanistan. Pakistan can become a hub for economic development of the region which can, through proper planning and better utilization of its human and material resources, bring lots of developmental opportunities for the people of Pakistan.

Pakistan is the sixth among countries of the world in terms of population growth rate. The overall population was 191 Million for the year 2013. Moreover, Pakistan is a country with high population growth rate of 2.2% annually for the year 2012, which is the highest of average population growth rate among countries of South Asia¹. The problem of huge population can be considered as a blessing by converting this human force into a productive and socioeconomically active work force for the development of the country.

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¹ World Population Data Sheet, 2013, p.2

According to the Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2012-13² the estimated youth population is 48% of the total population in the age group between 15 to 49 years. Whereas, 56% population consists of people between the age group of 15 to 64 years, which is the highest figure among the countries of the world. According to Tejvan Pettinger (2010) “Unemployment is defined as a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full time employment’.³

In the past, policy makers and educationists used to believe that primary education and basic literacy is a key to development. Trends have been changed. Now societies are transformed into technology driven knowledge based societies. Now the need for higher education and its role in development has been admitted widely. Tilak⁴ proclaims that higher education with advanced skills and knowledge provides better employment opportunities. It is helpful in poverty reduction, enhances the earning through better salaries and improves other human development indicators directly and indirectly. However, in many developing countries including Pakistan, the benefits of higher education are yet to be achieved. Therefore, the problem of unemployment among educated youth is prevailing. The university degree holders are either unemployed due to unrealistic planning or other reasons.

The average unemployment rate from the year 1985 to 2013 was 5.43%;⁵ it reached its highest figure of 7.80% in the second quarter of 2002, the lowest rate of unemployment rate was recorded in 1987 at 3.10%. The unemployment rate in Pakistan for the years 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 are as follows:⁶

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Table 1
Unemployment Rates in Pakistan 2010-2011 and 2012-2013

Pakistan	Year 2010-2011	Year 2012-2013
Total	6.00%	6.2%
Male	5.1%	5.4%
Female	8.9%	9.0%

² Pakistan Economics Survey 2013-14, p. 180.

³ <http://www.economicshelp.org/blog/2247/unemployment/definition-of-unemployment/>

⁴ J.B.G. Tilak, *Post-elementary Education, Poverty and Development in India and Role of Post-basic Education in Alleviation of Poverty and Development*, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2003.

⁵ www.tradingeconomics.com

⁶ Labour Force Survey 2012-13, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad.

Rural		
Total	4.7%	5.1%
Male	4.0%	4.4%
Female	6.4%	6.9%
Urban		
Total	8.8%	8.8%
Male	7.1%	7.3%
Female	20.7%	19.2%

These official figures show high rate of unemployment among females of urban and rural areas. Moreover, the noticeable thing is that the ratio of unemployment is high for urban educated population. This means there are less employment opportunities for educated youth of Pakistan. There are so many factors that contribute to unemployment among the workforce, resulting in socio economic problems in Pakistan. This research paper attempts to find out these reasons and suggest some possible and workable solutions to improve the situation.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research paper is to find the reasons of unemployment among the educated youth in Pakistan. It also aims to give some suggestions that can help in improving the situation.

Methodology

Mixed method is being used to collect the relevant data from the field. Both the qualitative and quantitative method is used to collect the data.

Sampling

100 unemployed students including both male and females in equal number in Karachi were being used as a sample.

Instrument

100 questionnaires with 10 statements were distributed among males and females having college and university education in Karachi with the option of Yes and No. 50 questionnaires to males and 50 questionnaires to females were distributed through convince sampling technique. The results were interpreted by the statistical methods of simple percentage.

Qualitative results were acquired through four focused group discussions with six participants in each group.

Analysis of the data

The results were analyzed by using simple percentage methods.

Table 1
Percentage Responses by Sex

No.	Statements	Male		Female	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	There is lack of college/university-industry linkage behind unemployment in Pakistan	72	28	76	24
2	Unemployment is due to inadequate resources(energy crises, huge population, financial problems)	86	14	84	16
3	Corruption is the reason of unemployment in Pakistan	90	10	92	08
4	There is lack of employment opportunities	88	12	90	10
5	No Job without previous experience	96	04	94	06
6	Mismatch between course content and job market requirement	80	20	82	18
7	Political instability and lack of political will	96	04	94	06
8	System deficiencies are the reason behind unemployment (wastage, power concentration,)	96	04	96	04
9	Lack of proper planning is the cause of unemployment in Pakistan	94	06	92	08
10	Lack of industry and limited options due to poor law and order situation is the reason of unemployment in the country.	96	04	96	04

Reasons of unemployment

1. *Lack of college/university and industry linkage*: Results show that 72% males think that there is a lack of collaboration between educational institutions and industry whereas 28% males think otherwise. 76% females think there is no collaboration between educational institutions and industry whereas 24% females think otherwise. As Mohammad Bilal and Imran Khan, 2012⁷ proclaimed that in most of the cases the overall output and performance regarding job market of Pakistani universities

⁷ Mohammad Bilal and Imran Khan, 'Issues and Prospects behind the Repressed Higher Education in Pakistan', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4:7 (2012), p.160.

are not up to the requirement of job market. Therefore there is a need to bridge the gap between the degree awarding institutes/universities and industry through various interventions including regular interaction and sharing the results of research. Better results for socio-economic development can be achieved through changed university- industry linkage environment.⁸

2. *Inadequate resources*: Some 86% males think there are inadequate resources in the job market to provide jobs, 14% males think there are enough resources. While 84% females are of the opinion that became lack of resources the government is unable to provide jobs to all, 16% females think otherwise. During group discussion it is found that majority of students including males and females believe that there are inadequate material and financial resources to cater the needs of employment in the country. However, few of the responses reveal that there is mismanagement of available resources and planning and implementation laps also exist to make the situation problematic. Indeed, Pakistan has enormous amount of human as well as natural resources; however, these resources are not being used effectively. Unfortunately, the huge population is not being well organized resulting in spreading a thin sheet of resources over a huge population.

3. *Corruption*: People cannot get job without having any reference and link to influential people. Merit is usually ignored. Corruption is the basic reasons behind this situation also. Influential people or elites, majority of politicians want their relatives to get the jobs with more and better facilities, ignoring the talent. 90% male responses depicted corruption as the basic reason behind unemployment, only 10 % males rejected the statement. 92 % females answered in Yes whereas only 08 % females responded in No. Nepotism and favoritism are the most prevailing evils.

4. *Lack of employment opportunities*: There is lack of employment opportunities in every field, often organizations do not announce vacancies and opt for internal recruitments. Others fill the vacancies without announcing them. 88% males are of the opinion that there are

⁸ S. H. Ahmad & F.A. Junaid, 'A Conceptual Framework for Developing Strategic Partnership between University and Industry in Pakistan with Particular Reference to NWFP'. In *Proceeding of 2nd International Conference on Assessing Quality of Higher Education*, University of the Punjab, Lahore, from 1-3 December 2008.

fewer vacancies in the job market. Whereas 90% females said that there are less employment opportunities. For example every year so many graduates from colleges, universities and technical colleges get the degrees; however, very few of them get jobs. Each year so many graduates, doctors, engineers and other professionals get their degrees and start searching for jobs with their degrees in their hands. Many of them leave the country for better job opportunities abroad, leading to brain drain. Pakistani nationals are very talented and hard working. Those who leave the country play positive and effective role in the development of other nations instead of being a part of development of their own nation.

5. No job without experience: Most of the jobs require prior experience, which is very difficult to get. Unless a person is inducted for a job how it is possible for him or her to get the experience? 96% boys said it is difficult to get any job without having any previous experience, whereas, only 4% males disagreed with this idea. 94% females answered in Yes, 6% answered in No. During the focused group discussion this problem was also identified as one of the main reasons of unemployment in Pakistan. In fact this problem is mostly faced by the fresh graduates with no experience. Although, some organizations including banks offer internships in limited number, however, still there is a need to expand the experience gaining opportunities in every sector.

6. Mismatch between courses and job market requirement: Many of the graduates believe that there is a mismatch between the courses offered in educational institutions and job market requirements. Practical application of the courses in the society is missing; 80 % male students and 82% female students believe that there is a mismatch between the course contents and the job market requirements. On the other hand, 20% males and 18% females answered differently. Technical and scientific education along with social sciences courses are not in line with the development needs of the country linking educational outcomes to socio-economic endeavors.

7. Political reasons: Political instability and lack of political will is another reason of unemployment. Politicians have no concern with the problems of country so have little interest in solving them. Many political parties have employment in their manifesto. However, like other commitments this commitment is also seldom fulfilled. Political unrest and instability within the country in the last few decades have come up with enormous problems including unemployment. Employment reform,

if any, taken by previous governments are disrupted normally by the succeeding governments, resulting in a more complex situation. Most of the time people are in and at of jobs on political bases. Results show that 96% males and 94% females answered that political instability and lack of political will are the reasons behind unemployment among educated youth in Pakistan.

8. *Systemic deficiencies*: Ineffective and inefficient system is another reason of unemployment. The inputs of system are not being processed properly to convert into useful outputs through the system. Different components within this social system are not in collaboration with each other resulting in wasting human and material resources. System wastage is high with more power concentration in the hands of privileged class and the elites. In fact the system lacks visionary leadership. Deficiency of the system leads to deprivation of individual's right in the society. Reasonably respectful employment and righteous means of earning are some one of the rights that a proficient system can offer to its individuals. 96% males and 96% females answered that system deficiencies are the reasons behind unemployment. Only 4% males and 4% females rejected this statement.

9. *Lack of proper planning*: Unrealistic and poor planning in society to provide jobs to educated youth and even uneducated people is also another reason of unemployment in Pakistan. Lack of reliable and realistic data on demographical facts, enrollment and dropouts, needs of different sectors of economy and social sector employment, lack of planners and planning machinery are the obstacles in achieving the desirable results to eradicate unemployment in the country. Results show that 94% males and 92% females are of the opinion that unrealistic and poor planning is one of the causes of unemployment among educated youth in Pakistan. On the other hand just 06% males and 08% females think otherwise.

10. *Poor law and order situation*: There is poor law and order situation in the country which leads to instability. This situation results in very little investment in the industrial sector. Investors hesitate to invest in the country because of terrorist activities thus decreasing the employment opportunities. As per results 96% males and 96% females agree with this statement that lack of industry and limited options due to poor law and order situation is the reason of unemployment in the country whereas, 4% males 4% females do not agree with this statement.

Conclusion and recommendations

As a conclusion it can be found that education must be considered as an investment in human beings in the form of human capital and bring about positive change through socio-economic development at individual and national level. Employment opportunities and getting the employment after receiving education in a given society can be taken as a tool for measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of an education system. There are various reasons of unemployment among educated youth in Pakistan including lack of university industry collaboration, irrelevant curricula, corruption, inefficient system, lack of political will and political instability, lack of accountability, unrest in the country, poor policies etc. Following are some of the recommendations to improve the situation:

- Restructuring and reframing of the overall system of education and employment sector. Accountability at every stage must be ensured to bring out the excellence through merit in every field.
- Better and relevant curricula must be introduced based on industrial and job market needs.
- Proper educational planning with economic consideration to generate more employment opportunities and make education a tool for development.
- Theme based research in universities based on practical needs of the society and economy of the country must be carried out.
- University – industry collaboration should be developed through better communication and result driven interventions.
- More opportunities must be provided for entrepreneurship for more and better job opportunities.
- Providing and conducting job fairs at every university to provide access to job market.
- Establishing effective and fully resourced job and employment offices in the country having the database of each and every graduate. These employment offices must be linked with updated jobs nationally or internationally.
- More allocation of resources to education and generating the alternative resources for quality education.
- Educational, industrial and social reforms must be introduced through elaborated policies and implementations with proper system of follow up.
- Improving the law and order situation through good governance and social reforms to provide opportunities of investment in the country.