



Full Length Research Paper

Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Graduated Unemployed Youth in Dessie City, ANRS, Ethiopia.

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Article Info

Article History

Received 8 Feb. 2021;
 Accepted 25 May 2021;
 Published 11 June 2021

Keywords:

Dessie City, Graduated youths, Livelihood, and Un-employment

Abstract

This article aims to examine the tragedies and coping mechanisms of unemployed youth in Dessie city. To conduct the study, mixed research approach was employed so that quantitative data were complemented with qualitative data. Hence, samples of 242 unemployed youth respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique. To collect qualitative data, five in-depth interview participants, five key informants and two FGD sessions were conducted from graduated unemployed youths, youth service centers, and sub city administration workers. Besides, secondary data were congregated from different published and unpublished materials. The finding of the study indicates that unemployed youth in Dessie city were financially unable to create their own jobs; and they were socially deprived and psychologically harmed. Furthermore, the result of the study revealed that unemployed youth are leading their life via asking for family support, waiting for government jobs, migration, engaging in a free service work, and drug use. Consequently, the study suggests that there is a need to extend youth employment opportunities through promoting technical vocational training programs, enhancing the capacity of micro and small enterprise. Overall, economic development and youth centers enhancement are relevant to ease the economic, psychological and social problems of graduated youth.

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Author agreed that this article remain permanently open access

Introduction

Youth unemployment is the unemployment of young people between 15 and 24 years old (World Bank, 2012). Youth are the corner stone for the future development of countries. In cognizant to this, the Great-20 countries make priorities for youth by the G20 OECD-ILO Conference on Quality Apprenticeships in April 2014 and declared the following statements:

“We are committed to quality apprenticeship and vocational training programs, finding innovative ways to encourage firms to hire youth where appropriate, reducing non-wage labor costs, moving towards early intervention measures and effective job-search assistance for different groups of youth, and motivating youth entrepreneurship and business start-ups” (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development International Labor Organization report, 2014).

Youth unemployment is common in every nation especially developing countries (World Bank, 2016). The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2017 estimated that 199.4 million young people are unemployed in the world. This number has been increased by the rate of 5.7 and that it arrived to 200.5 million and 202.4 million by the year 2017 and 2018 respectively (ILO, 2017 and 2018).

Youth unemployment causes for a waste of economic resources such as the productive labor force and affects the long run growth of an economy (UNDP, 2006 and UN 2003). Youth are more vulnerable to unfair, sometimes unacceptable practices in the labor market (ILO, 2017). Lack of education, in the previous time, was raised as a factor for unemployment (Nzinga and Tsegay, 2012). But, recently, the amount of unemployed educated people are getting to be increased (ILO, 2017). Although, education is valuable for employment opportunities, it is not sufficient for low-

income households to improve their labor market outcomes (World Bank, 2017). This is because of higher educational attainment had failed to practice education to improve labor market attachment (ILO 2015a, p. 19). Besides, many individuals who completed higher education may have had less motivation to integrate into the labor market (O’Higgins, 2001, cited on, Nzinga and Tsegay, 2012).

Today, youth unemployment is the problem of both rural and urban areas of Ethiopia. However, unemployment in urban places, especially higher education institution graduates, is more reported and being an obstacle in the development of cities. To cop up the problem, entrepreneurship training programs and orientations for graduate students are the common trends of government universities so as to encourage and incubate startup businesses. Ethiopian government has been promoting job creation and self-employment since decades ago (Revised Labor Proclamation, 2003). It could be an effective strategy for reducing youth unemployment when combined with encouragement of entrepreneurship, provision of coaching, information and training to youth, and removing perceived practical barriers to setting up a business (ILO, 2017).

Although researchers such as Zelalem (2014), Nzinga and Tsegay (2012) describe the prevalence, determinants and prospects of unemployed peoples, they gave less emphasis to specific tragedies of unemployed youths graduated from higher education institutions. Particularly, no recent study is found in Dessie city where the number of unemployed graduated youths is very high with the rapid growth of graduated students from multiple government and private higher education institutions (South Wollo zone social and labor affair office report, 2017). As Dessie City is located relatively at the center to various

regions of Ethiopia graduated unemployed youths prefer to live in. So, the city faces rapid growing of unemployed youths with complexity of challenges. Also, youth unemployment is a multidimensional concept that must be researched to show the dynamic challenges and ways of resiliencies and to draw a reasonable conclusion for policy directions. In cognizant to this fact, this study aimed to examine the challenges and coping mechanisms of unemployed youth in Dessie city, specifically in Hottie sub city.

Research Methods

In this research, cross-sectional survey design was employed because the authors aim is to describe the lived challenges and coping strategies of unemployed youths in Dessie city. According to Creswell (2009), cross-sectional survey design is useful to obtain overall picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The study employed a mixed research approaches (both quantitative and qualitative approaches). So that, qualitative data were used to describe the phenomenon of unemployed graduated students who were seeking a job in Dessie city while quantitative data were employed to examine about the means of livelihood of unemployed youths. Both approaches were relevant to analyze variables through triangulation and to draw sound conclusion that would be valid for generalization. In the study area, the total numbers of registered unemployed youth during the time of this study were 613 of which 216 were males and 397 were females. Then, a sample was determined using Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N = the total population, n = the required sample size, e = the precision confidence level which is = (95%) at P = ± 5. Based on this, the

sample sizes of this study were 613/ (1+613(0.05)²) = 242. Then, the researcher selected graduated unemployed youth comprised of the age limit of 15-29 as categorized by CSA (2016) through simple random sampling technique from the lists found in the sub-city. The researcher has getting a sampling frame from sub city registered population so that all members of the sample were easily identified.

Field Work and Data Collection Instruments

Accordingly, the author gained the data from a sample of graduated unemployed youth in Dessie city through open and closed ended questionnaires (Newman 2008). The field work was carried out in the month of August 2018 for 10 days covering whole samples in the sub city. A self-administered questionnaire was prepared as they were educated respondents. In addition, the researcher purposively selected five in-depth interview informants and five key informants. In-depth interview participants were selected from graduated unemployed youths found in the Hotie sub city administration, while key informants were selected from sub-city workers, kebele administrations, and youth center coordinators. For this purpose, semi-structured interview was employed. Besides, two focus group discussion sessions with eight members of graduated but unemployed youth were carried out. The participants were categorized by their sex so that one session was conducted for male youth and the other for females. All the relevant responses were recorded through audio tape recorders and notes were taken by hand writing. Secondary data were collected from published and unpolished materials including books, thesis, journals, official reports and brushers to supplementing the data emanated from primary sources.

Method of Data Analysis

To analyze the quantitative data, the study employed descriptive statistics and computed the data using statistical software (SPSS version 20). Descriptive statistical technique was used to visualize data on the frequent challenges and resilience mechanisms of graduated youths. Specifically, the author of this research preferred descriptive statistics since it allows for data to be presented in a meaningful and understandable way (Marshall and Jonker (2010). And, thematic data analysis technique was used to analyze the data that generated from key informant interview. Finally, the data collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods were cross checked, processed and analyzed concurrently.

Research Findings

Background Characteristics of Respondents

For better understanding, this section presents the age, sex and marital statuses of unemployed respondents. As presented in table 1.1, among the respondents 45.7 % were female while the remaining 54.3% were male. The highest proportion of respondents were found in the age group is 18-24 (45.6%) followed by 25-29 (33.7%). The remaining number of respondents in the age group above 30 years accounted for (20.7%). Regarding marital statuses, 77 % of the respondents were never married, 18.47 % were married and the remaining 4.3 % were divorced. These demographic data revealed that most graduated unemployed youth were males, ranked on early young ages and have no marital involvement. This implies that graduated youth are highly in need of job to establish their family of procreation.

Table: 1.1. Demographic information of respondents

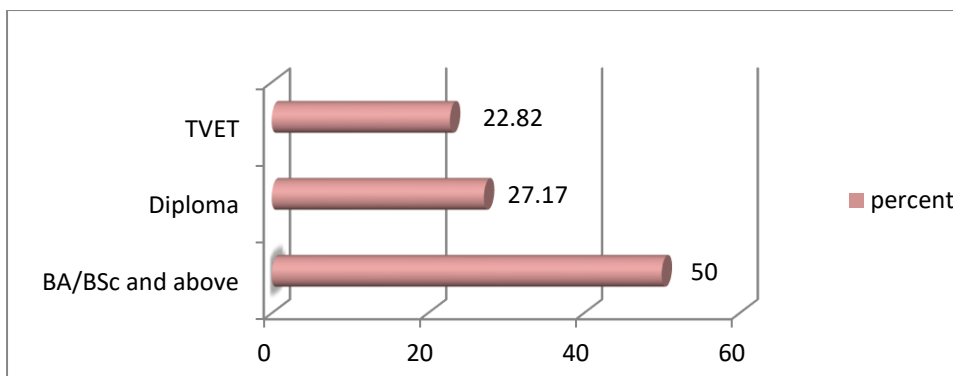
	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	131	54.3
	Female	111	45.7
Age	Total	242	100
	18-24	110	45.6
	25-29	82	33.7
	Above 30	50	20.66
Marital status	Married	45	18.5
	Unmarried	187	77.1
	Divorced	10	4.3
	Widowed	-	-
	Total	242	100

Source: Sample survey, 2018

The educational background of participants and respondents were assessed to show how much the type of education was related with the probability of unemployment. According to the data presented in figure 1.1, the educational distribution of respondents reveal that the highest proportion (50 %) respondents were completed bachelor degree and followed by diploma (27.17 %) and technical and vocational

education training (22.82%). This may indicate that unemployment is positively related to educational status of graduated youths. In this regard, key informants and FGD participants disclosed that government sectors are relatively interested to hire diploma or TVET graduates than university degree holders in order to minimize salary costs.

Figure 1.1. Education level of respondents



Source: Sample Survey by the researcher

Living Condition of Unemployed Youth

Graduated youths could be unemployed due several reasons. Bimal (2014) noted the principal factors like poor economic performance, rescission, inflation, disability, corruption and bad governance, lack of entrepreneurship, and mismatching education and training skills. These negative factors of youth employment are also stated by key informants and FGD participants of this study. However, the author was emphasized examining on the living conditions and challenges of unemployed youths. The participant's response in terms of means of livelihood and social relation was presented to show the current situations of unemployed youths in the city. As the discussion with participants of interview and FGD sessions, unemployed youths were used various means of livelihoods to survive. Mainly, most unemployed youths were living through family dependency which is the common livelihood choice of jobless youth (Zelalem, 2014). That means every expense in their day to day moments was covered by their family members who may be either parents or siblings.

One of the interview informants described the means of living after he graduated from a university as follows:

“After completing a college diploma in human resource management in 2015, I moved to various places to find a job, but nothing was open to me. Even if some vacant were posting, the

selection of candidate for employment conducts through lottery method due to the fact that a huge amount of graduates are registered for few positions. Hence, I am forced to live with my family since I had no other choices. I remained at home helping my parents for 2 years. During that time, I felt depressed and unhappy” (A 23 years youth interviewed on august 25/2018).

According to Beshir (2014), the incidence and long duration of unemployment is burden to household wellbeing. The dependency of unemployed youth costs the household earning and degrades its living standards. The study indicated that unemployed youth used another means of income when they worried about dependency or lacks of support. They involve in daily wage, request money from other relatives, volunteer subsidy or compensation, contract work and informal broking (Nzinga and Tsegay, 2012).

A 26 years old interviewee said that:

“... I understand that unemployment can lead to addiction and substance abuse. Since we unemployed youth don't have to do anything throughout the day, we feel wasted and hence tend to practice things which helps to forget such emotions. In the meantime, I myself find short term jobs even for daily wages. Now I

am working at private construction as a laborer". (Interviewed on August 25/2018)

Most FGD participants answered to the question where unemployed youth did spend their time that most unemployed graduates prevail around centers of crossing roads, youth centers, and cinemas. Key informants also disclosed that jobless youth want to be alone since they don't afford to go out to the cafeteria with their friends. They believe that they don't equally participate in the family and community affairs, and they are not important as long as they have nothing to contribute to their families and communities.

Challenges of unemployed graduated youth

A study conducted by Zelalem (2014) indicates that unemployed youth are challenged from economic, social and psychological complications. They

subjected to lead subsistence and dependent life. As of Nancy & Anthony (2007), unemployment increases susceptibility to illness, mental stress, and helplessness, and loss of self-esteem leading to depression. Thus, unemployment is a headache to youths from different grounds. It has costs for the unemployed youth and to the society. The societal cost is the cumulative result of private costs (Feldstein, 1997). In this study, the cost of unemployment was understood from the point of private challenges of the unemployed youth. This leads to financial problems which restrained them from social engagement, recognition in the family, and the community (Beshir, 2014). As shown from table 1.2, the challenges of unemployed youth were classified by five categories including the feeling of distress, social isolation, financial difficulties, addiction and the feeling of inferiority (Nancey and Anthony,2007).

Table 1.2 Percentage of respondents facing different challenges.

Challenges	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I frequently feel distress	0	13%	32%	54%	100%
I usually isolated from friends	10.8%	14.1%	45%	29.3%	100%
I faced financial problem to achieve my needs	0	9.7%	44.5%	45.6%	100%
I am addicted to one or more drugs	2.17%	15.2%	47.8%	34.7%	100%
I have inferiority feeling due to my unemployed status	3.2%	11.9%	40.2%	44.5%	100%

Source: Sample Survey, 2018

As presented in table 1.2, 86% of respondents were agreed that they were feeling of frequent distress, 90.1% faced economic complications for survival. Regarding social isolation, 74.3% of respondents were used to isolate themselves from friendships and community relations. So that, inferiority feeling was the problem for unemployed youth that 44.5% of respondents were strongly agreed and 40.2% were agreed that they were exposed to feeling of lowliness. This is consistent with Muhidn (2016) who revealed that unemployed youth are suffered from loss of self-

confidence, self-worth, self-respect and feeling of inferiority. From this, we can deduce that most of the respondents had faced psychological, social and financial difficulties which, in turn, may lead them to be abused on substances and engage in criminal activities.

The qualitative data were also indicated that the social relation of unemployed youth in the study area looks poor and neglected. An interviewee from Hottie sub city presented that:

“...my friends frequently asked me to relax at recreation areas. However, I am not happy to avail myself on such places and to have any social relations. I used to hide myself or switch down my phone several times so that no one can reach me. Since, at this time, I don't want any kind of group recreation, rather I need to have a job or I want to do my business.....”(25 youth interviewed on August 26/2018)

This indicated that most graduated unemployed youth deliberately excluded themselves from their friends in particular and the society in general. According to Burchardt et al (2002), an individual is said to be socially excluded, if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society, in which, he or she lives such as common goal works, community development activities or group recreations. Unemployed youth are perceived as socially excluded since they are denied to participate in the normal relationships with family, friends and communities in the socioeconomic and political arena due to prolonged unemployment (Belete, 2016 and Burckhardt, et al, 2002). Besides, jobless youths are exposed to loss of self-esteem, self-respect and develop inferior feeling as they compare themselves with others who are either employed or created their jobs (Mafiri, 2002). The FGDs participants confirmed that unemployed youth suffer from social exclusion due to the fear of critics, depression, feeling of inferiority, lower self-esteem, and other psychological impacts. Several literatures indicated that, depression, inferiority complex and low self-esteem are common among unemployed youth (Diraditsile and Ontetse, 2017).

Therefore, youth graduates have the likelihood to engage in drug abuses or addictions which consequently

triggers them to involve in criminal activities. Drug addiction and involvement on crime is the worst and common experiences among unemployed youth (UN, 2003, Chigunta, 2002) and Haji, (2007). This is mainly due to the fact that they feel negative to their present lives and future fates (Belete, 2016). One of interviewee explained the cost of unemployment that:

“... I tried to search more but still, there is no job. I sometimes wish my death not to see any kind of life I am leading now. I used to have many friends back in the years, yet, now I am alone since I have hiding myself from them” (a 21 year TVET graduate youth interviewed on August 26/2018)

This narration here above indicated that unemployed youths developed negative feeling as a result of extreme joblessness which was also confirmed by other studies (Muhdin, 2016). For instance, Byrne (1999) revealed that unemployed youth are facing more difficult challenges on their economic, social and psychological wellbeing. The lack of income intermingled with increased social isolation and psychological pressure worsening their living condition (Feldstein, 1997).

Coping Mechanisms used by Unemployed youths

To cop up with the challenges, unemployed youths used various mechanisms that may positively or negatively affect their social and economic status. Questions were posed to participants in order to indicate the problem solving mechanisms which were used by unemployed youths. As presented on table 1.4, request the families for financial support, migration, additional education, voluntary work and drug use were identified among the important coping mechanisms of unemployed youth in Dessie city.

Table 1.3: Coping Mechanisms of Respondents

Coping Mechanisms	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage

Ask to family for financial support	31	54.3	111	45.6	242	100
Migrate to other places	146	60.8	96	39.1	242	100
further education in other profession	84	34.7	158	65.2	242	100
Engaged in volunteerism	97	40.2	145	59.7	242	100
Drug use	163	67.3	79	32.6	242	100

Source: Sample Survey, 2018

Table 1.3 shows that 54.3 % of respondents asked their families for financial support; 60.8% of respondents experienced migration; and 67.3% have been engaged in one or more drug uses. Further, respondents also used additional education to change their profession, and voluntary work as a means of resolving challenges of unemployment that were measures as 34.7% and 40.2% respectively. From this figure, we can understand that once youths are completed their education, they lead to other options of employment or means of getting their own income.

Interview informants and FGD participants confirmed that, during unemployment, some graduated students have engaged in family businesses, while others are idle and waiting for wage employment. For instance, one interview participant was narrated his problem as follows:

“... While I am waiting for employment in my profession, I couldn’t find any jobs for almost 3 years and remained dependent on my family. Few jobs are available but I cannot apply due to the transportation and accommodation costs. Hence, I am looking for daily wage employment.” (Interviewed on August 27/2018)

Another female graduated girl stated that;

“... I feel dreadful and heartbreaking to my dependent experiences. This is due to the fact that my family paid lots of sacrifice for me during the long time completion of my education. Besides, they organized a

very warm graduation ceremony at my graduation time. As my families are rural dwellers, they were expecting me to be civil servants at one of the government sectors. that is why I felt very breaking when I become jobless.” (A 22 years old youth interviewed on August 27/2018).

Second, choosing migration as a coping strategy of unemployment is common by most jobless youths. Particularly, female unemployed youth are interested migrating to Arabian countries (Brousar, & Tekelessie, 2012). A female interviewee narrated her experience as follows.

“After completing 10+1 certificate program in 2015 from a private college, I was not able to find jobs for more than one year. Then, in 2016, I proposed to my family to go to Saudi Arabia. With the help of my family’s full financial support, I went to Saudi Arabia and stayed there for two years contractual employee for domestic work. Then, I returned back to home country after the completion of my contractual employment at Saudi..... Now, I am living with my relatives...” (Interviewed on August 27/2018)

Another resilience mechanism used by families to cop up female unemployment is marriage. According to FGD participants, there are many families of unemployed girls who were chosen marriage when their daughters cannot find any kind of job. They also suggest that female household members should

establish their own family and lead independent lives. In this regard, informant from in-depth interview described the situation as:

“After I tried to search my own job for long time, I got married to a man working in a private college as clerk. This was the choice of my family. Yet, I am still looking for a job because I always feel dissatisfied by my jobless status and I looked forward I must do by my profession than just being a dependent housewife...” (A 21 year female youth interviewed on august 27/2018)

Regarding education, FGD participants stated that there are a lot of youths who are changing their profession. Especially, graduates from social sciences and natural sciences were started further education to have another profession like management, accounting, computer science and related disciplines. Youths also interested to learn vocational education such as wood work, metal work, garment fashion design and other skill based education which they assumed are better to find jobs.

The above stories indicated that unemployed youths were used many types of mechanisms to manage the problem of unemployment. They search for potential options to their financial and material problems to recover from social isolation, depression, inferiority complex and low self-esteem that are common among unemployed youth.

Conclusion

The study makes clear that there is a greater challenge of unemployment on the unemployed graduated individuals. Unemployed youths preferred to be dependent on their family due to various reasons. Besides, they request financial support from other relatives, engage in daily work and other informal works like

broker as alternative survival mechanisms. From the finding of this study, the author concluded that living as unemployed is challenging to youth that can be described as psychological, social, and economic challenges. To mitigate challenges, unemployed youths are used several coping mechanisms including ask family for financial support, migration, attend further education, engagement in a free service work. However, there are also other unemployed youths who used drug to forget the challenges of unemployment. In conclusion, unemployment of graduated students is not merely the problem of students; rather, it is also the scarcity of jobs and shortage of government budgets so that a multi aspect of solution is needed to mitigate the problem.

Recommendations

Based on the finding from this study, recommendations are forwarded so as to reduce tragedies of graduated unemployed youths. First, the local government sectors and business companies should give attention to graduated youths and ought to avoid bureaucratic restrictions during employment. Higher education institutions also need to assess disciplines which are fascinated by labor market and revise their curriculum to make it demanded by the market. To alleviate social, economic and psychological problem, the Dessie city administration need to create jobs with avoiding any type of corruption, and making the employment process transparent.

It should conduct awareness creation programs about the benefits of work cooperatives to initiate unemployed graduated youths to get involved in the private jobs. To this effect, there should extensively organize the unemployed youth and give them adequate credit service to work under micro enterprises and other development activities. The stake holders should also be concerned in expanding industries and micro and

small industries as well as youth centers and consultations that are relevant to mitigate psycho- social and economic problems of jobless youths.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Acknowledgment

Author of the research wants to express his thanks to all participants of this study for their cooperative and honest support.

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