

UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH: CAUSES AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

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Abstract: With the world's major economies slowing down and threatening the growth prospects of developing countries, the unemployment of youth – those between the ages 15 and 24 – who account for 41 percent of the world's unemployed, is becoming a focus for United Nations concerted action. Youth unemployment rates are typically two to three times higher than the adult rates, and are alarmingly high in many countries. The paper looks at the global issue of unemployment but focuses on unemployment among youth. Causes of unemployment are multifactorial. However, the study will look in depth to the character and attitudes of the young and employers, the higher skill and educational requirements for many occupations and the fact that general downturns in the overall demand for labor have a disproportionate influence on new entrants to the workforce, so that cyclical fluctuations in youth unemployment are marked. Effects and consequences of unemployment will cover in term of psychological effects which are severe in younger group. Cross sectional and longitudinal studies (including longitudinal studies of young Australians) have consistently found poorer psychological health in unemployed compared with employed people. How the unemployment affects youth's self esteem, locus of control and mood states will be discussed. Besides, if it does not being dealt successfully, it will leads to depression and helplessness. Survey among unemployed youth was conducted among 100 unemployed youth in Kuala Terengganu. It also discusses on how counseling deals with unemployment as the whole and the effectiveness of career counseling in helping unemployed youth in Malaysia and other countries will be previewed and compared. The findings of the study have numerous implications that give understanding to the unemployment phenomenon and can be used for policy recommendations.

Keywords: Unemployment, Youth, Causes of Unemployment, Psychological Implications

INTRODUCTION

As global population is rapid expanding, each nation faces a difficult task of creating additional job. Though an unemployment rate in develop country are relatively low, unemployment in the rest of the world is increasingly high. The United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates about one third of global work force are unemployed or underemployed. According to the Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2000), unemployment is a condition of person who is able to work but unable to find the work. It is known that unemployment arises from factors that is beyond individuals' control. Casson (1979) defined unemployed person as an individual without employment who are actively searching for the full time job. Whereas the youth are categorised as the age group of young people between fourteen (14) to twenty-four (24). This classification is related to those used by the Statistical Office of the European Communities. ILO Geneva 2000 report that among developed country, Italy has a high rate of youth unemployment that is 33.6%, followed by France 28.1%. youth unemployment rate in other countries like Germany, Australia, Canada, Sweden and United Kingdom are ranging from 10% to 16%. Japan has the lowest youth unemployment rate, it is only 6.6%. In Malaysia, youth population constitutes of 4,327,000 and youth population ages 15-24 years old are 18.8% in 2000 Source: World Poupulation Prospect (United Nation, New York 2002).

DISCUSSION

The Causes Of Youth Unemployment

Since the youth unemployment is a crucial problem, it is beneficial for this study to highlight several important causes. Reasons of youth unemployment can not be explain simply by reference to a single factor. Unemployed youth are believed to face multifactorial disadvantage in the labour market that has reduced the chances of getting jobs. Few factors have been recognized as causes of youth unemployment. However, this paper only focused on the followings:

i. The Character and Attitudes of the Young

This is one of the claims used to describe high rate of unemployment among youth so that they are not among aimed group of recruitment. Jackson (1985) [8] found several elements made up the above claim:

- Youth do not demonstrate the appropriate attitudes of working such as disciplinary acceptance, poor time management and little enthusiasm.
- Statistics supports this claim where there are 27,000 unemployed youth from high institutions in Malaysia due to inappropriate skills and qualifications and do not fit the jobs requirements. Besides, the involvement of youth in Labour Force contains 21% of males and 27% females in year 2000.
- It is argued that this age group does not have adequate educational qualification and have poor necessary skills.
- There is less awareness of personal appearance among the youngster. Such attitudes imply poorer impression to work compared to older people.

Jackson (1985) [8] point out that two thirds of the employers who respond to the survey reported that the young who came for the job interview had shown no change or improvement in the past five years. In addition, it is claim that young people have less conscious to get a job after they finish their studies. Jackson (1985) [8] notes that they are unwillingly to accept a kind of repetitive job with low paid. It seems that unemployment is not a frightening phenomenal since most of young people still depend on their families for financial needs. Therefore, due to these circumstances, the unemployment rate among youth arises.

ii. Attitude of Employer

Some employers are very demanding in recruiting new employee. They set a high standard of qualifications that difficult for people to achieve. Furthermore, they have tendency to ask previous relevant experience which young people hardly have. This rigid and difficult selection definitely reduced opportunity of young people to get a job.

The Effect of Youth Unemployment

The discussion goes further on the issues relating to the effects of youth unemployment. Hepworth (1980), found that there is adverse consequence of unemployment upon psychological well being in young people who fail to get job that is regarded by Warr (1983) [12] as a reduction in psychological well being. In addition, study by Stafford, Jackson & Banks (1980) reported that after seven month left school, unemployed young British people had more psychological symptom than employed. Although there are several effects of youth unemployment, this study will cover the psychological effects as structured below.

a. Self Esteem

The aspect of self-esteem is a crucial element since it is the adolescent's satisfaction with his or her identity that must be achieved in the transferable period to adulthood. High self-esteem means that the individual has self respect and considers him or herself worthy. In contrast, low self-esteem shows a kind of self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction and self-contempt. Here, the unemployment experience gives negative impact of young people self-esteem. Furthermore, failure to get a satisfactory work also prevent individuals to experience developmental career that lead to increase self-esteem. The study by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth which measures the self esteem of young people in 1980 while they are in school and in 1987 found that employed school

leavers enjoyed higher self esteem than unemployed. As by possessing high self esteem, an individual can feel of independence, autonomy and recognize personal identity. This kind of feeling is cultivated through employment.

A survey conducted to 100 unemployed youth in Kuala Terengganu to measure their self esteem. Among the answers are as Table 1.

Table 1 : A Survey on Unemployment Youth

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I do not much of which to be proud	-	50%	30%	20%
I wish I could have more respect for myself	60%	20%	10%	10%
On the whole I am satisfied with my self	-	20%	40%	40%

b. Locus of Control

O'Brien & Kabanoff (1979) [2] stated that people who are unemployed for long time seems to make external causal attributions. They tend to focus on external factors such as economics recession, government policies and employers as the main factors of their unemployment. On the other hand, Furham (1982) noted that an employed youth used to blame the unemployed themselves for the result of unemployment. For example, lack of efforts, lack of ability, less incentive and less motivation. According to 'Expectancy-valence Theory' studied by Feather and barber (1983) [5] and Feather and Davenport (1981) [6] found that unemployed individuals who see their unemployment condition as external factors also tend to feel more depressed. The adverse effect of unemployment among youth is also consistent with recent Australian findings reported by Patton & Noller (1984) on study of school leavers that unemployed group increased their scores in term of external locus of control.

c. Depression

There are several studies that measured the depression as the outcome of youth unemployment. For instance, the studies by Donovan and Oddy (1982) [4] and Oddy, Donovan and Rardoe (1984) [10] that used Leeds Depression Scale showed that unemployed youth are more depressed compared to employ youth. Similarly, Pattern and Noller (1984) revealed the depression among unemployed youngster by using the Beck Depression Inventory in their studies. The motivation to get a job is determine aspect of depression. It is because those who are highly motivated to get a job will face more depression compared to those who are less motivated. According to Feather & Barber (1983) [5], depressed unemployed youth seems to feel that their circumstances are beyond their control. Banks and Jackson (1982) investigated the effect of unemployment among two groups of youth found that depression increased for those who are unemployed and decrease for those who get employed. In addition, higher level of work commitment tends to increase the level of depression among young people. It may occur when the youth can not develop a sense of personal competence and skills.

d. Mood States

There were significant differences between employed and unemployed young in term of mood states. An unemployed youth express them as easily get bored, lonely, angry with self, angry at society and helpless. For instance, the study by Kosky (1980) about twelve school leavers who fail to get a job, tend to get angry. They felt unfairly treated, let down and powerless to do anything to change the condition of their lives. Tiggermann and Winefield (1980) [11] found that the unemployed youth simply feel lonely as a consequence of their unemployment. Furthermore, feeling of anger towards society and loneliness could be regarded as predisposing elements to unemployment. However, some effects focus to one sex. In the aspects of boredom and helplessness, unemployed young females tend to express these feelings compared to males. In addition, females also showed the feeling of sadness due to the unemployment.

Donovan and Oddy (1982) [4] found that unemployed young male often spent their times with interests and hobbies but only a few females appeared to do so. They choose to stay at home, live apart from peers and spent their time with housework and take care of their younger siblings.

e. Helplessness

According to the learned helplessness theory proposed by Abramson et al (1978) [1] noted that unemployment could produce learned helplessness in the case where the unemployed individuals who have worked previously, failed continually to find a new one. In this situation, they inspired a belief that it is not the consequence of their own behaviour that the reason they got employed before. Universal helplessness occurs when an unemployed youth attribute causes of unemployment as external causes such as economic recession, labour market and employer discrimination. The attribution to external factor among unemployed youth produced hostile and aggressive behaviour towards society. They tend to blame society because of their unemployment. In addition, unemployed youth have low expectation of getting success, low level of motivation, less committed to work and high level of depressive affect. They are suffered from motivational, cognitive and emotional disturbance. Lack of motivation prevents them from taking appropriate action to resolve the situation. Cognitive deficit will lead them to refuse in learning new knowledge or skill that has possibility of success. Where as, emotional disturbance will influence unemployed youth to have depressive affect.

f. Career Counselling for Unemployed Youth

Career counseling plays an important role in assisting the unemployed people dealing with their problem. Donohue, R & Patton, W (1998) [3] in their studies found that after the career guidance interventions, 67% participants admitted the effectiveness of career guidance process and 91% believed that they had developed realistic expectation pertaining career opportunities. Holland, Magoon & Spokane (1981) stated that an essential element in ensuring the effectiveness of career counseling is dealing with the support that the counselor give. It involves affect, affirmation and aid. Supportive career counseling in dealing with unemployed youth will be discussed within the framework of 3 types of support:

- i. *Emotional Support* - It involves in providing a sense of caring, trust and empathy to clients. In this context, counselors are trying to understand clients' perspectives and subjective experiences. On the other hand, it is difficult to build effective emotional support. Leong (1993) [9] mentioned the successful of achieving an emotional support relationship in career counseling will help unemployed in determining goal clarification and leads to the appropriate and career development.
- ii. *Informational Support* - It helps unemployed clients in their career development. The examples of informative support given to the unemployed clients are teaching clients job search strategies, providing clients with access to list of job openings and decision making skills. Providing emotional support and informational supports in the very beginning phase of counseling helps in establishing of working alliance and indirectly leads to the successful of counseling process as the whole.
- iii. *Appraisal Support* - Career counselor offers the appraisal support to the unemployed people by helping them acquiring useful information in making accurate self evaluation. In this case, counselors play an important role in exploring clients' pattern of career concerns. It is because it was determine by various personal and situational factors. Ibrahim, Ohnishi & Wilson [7] (1994) highlighted the need to assess unemployed individuals in the areas of cultural identity, gender identity and worldview in order to provide them with culturally sensitive appraisal support. Traditionally, career guidance counseling has been limited to specific event when young people complete their schools. Since unemployment among youth arises, the need for this counseling should be provided through out their lives.

CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, the study upon youth unemployment is very important since they are very precious assets for the society as well as for the country. The impact of unemployment among them will not only affect themselves but the development of the country as the whole. As reasons of unemployment are multifactorial, an attempt should be made to recognize as many as possible. These will ensure that remedy action can be taken accordingly. Roles of counselors are very important in helping unemployed youth to get away from affect to unemployment, guiding them to face difficult time and prepared themselves to combat every challenge ahead. Beside counselors, it is necessary for every individual to take part and contribute for ensuring that youth will undergo the transition period from their childhood to adulthood period in every positive and smooth manner. Having said that, inner strength, hard work and constant effort from unemployed themselves are an important factors in overcoming their problems. Without these values, help from others might be waste of time and efforts.

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