



Youth Unemployment and its impacts; A study in Assela city Administration

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ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment is one of the most dominant socio-economic problems in Ethiopia. Particularly, youth unemployment is higher in urban areas of the country. This study explored the nature of youth unemployment; examine the living conditions, causes of youth unemployment, challenges, and impacts of unemployment on youth living in Assela city administration. A purposive sampling technique and a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach were used. As tools to collect data; interview, observation and focus group discussion were used. The primary Data were collected from the unemployed youth themselves. Similarly, secondary data were also collected through reviewing the documents obtained from Assela city administration, the city administration social affairs office. The study revealed that unemployed youths are facing many psycho-social and economic challenges while living in the community. Thus, disrespect, depression, and low self-esteem are common among unemployed youth of the study area.

Key words

Youth, unemployment, impacts, challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

One of the greatest threats facing youth in our time is chronic unemployment. Unemployment is perhaps one of the most serious social problems (Marie, 1982). In most cases the social, economic, emotional and health of the young and unemployed becomes at stake (Zelalem Bezabih 2014).

The problem of youth unemployment becomes even more challenging in developing country like Ethiopia. With a land area of 1.1 million square kilometer and a population of about 73.9 million (50.46 male and 49.54% female) in 2008/09, Ethiopia is the second populous country in Africa next to Nigeria (CSA, 2008). Owing to uncompromised population growth and weakly performing economy, the number of unemployed youth is alarming. The lack of employment opportunities for Ethiopian young people is among the critical developing challenges facing the country (Lorenzo & Furio, 2007).

But recently, there are some indications of improvement in human development. Through initiatives like “education for all”, young people and their families have invested their scarce resources on school education (Chuta and Crivello 2012) as mentioned in Bashir. Therefore, access to formal education has been improved. Despite millions of young people and their families placed their hope on school education the promise to overcome poverty and lead to a better life through formal education are not being achieved for many of young people (Murray 2012). Therefore, in a poor economic situation like Ethiopia, where quality of education is low and employment creation is limited, increased access to education creates the problem of educated unemployment (Broussar and Tekele selassie 2012).

With the two third of its population which are below 25 years, in Ethiopia youth employment is one of the pressing issues that demands development policy concerns (Denu et al 2005).

In Ethiopian development plan, youth employment policy has started to obtain attention since five year development plans of 2005-2010 called a “Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development

to End Poverty (PASDEP)” In this development plan addressing youth unemployment was much focused on education and training, particularly improving quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), providing skill training for unemployed youth, enhancing job creation through private sector participations, and Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) development (moved 2006). similarly, in the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), more policies of youth development, such as empowering women and youth to ensure their social, economic and political participation than directly focusing on issue of unemployment were in effected (MoFED 2011). Thus, in these two successive development plans the government has induced employment interventions for youth through integrating TVET.

However, despite these efforts youth unemployment in Ethiopia remain widespread, and urban youth unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world (Denu et al 2005).

In Ethiopia youth policy focuses more on human development aspects that largely targets handing diploma/degree/ to everyone which of course has a loose connection to the world of works. In fact national youth policies and programs should not be limited to only improving young people's access to education; rather, should equally give emphases to enabling schools to prepare young people for the world of work. In the current Ethiopian human capital development more emphasis was given to the quantity than the quality.

After some level of schooling in Ethiopia it is common for young people to move to urban areas for searching jobs. Accordingly, most youths are either self-employed or employed in the informal sector with very low payment, in unsecured jobs, and unprotected working conditions.

The study was conducted in Asela city administration. Assela, which is the Arsi administrative zone, located on 175 km from Finfine/Addis Abeba. The city has a latitude and longitude of 7°57' N 39° 7 E with an elevation of 2,430 meters.

According to the 2007 national census report, a total population of Asella city administration is 67,269 of whom 36,628 were men and 30,641 were women. The majority of the inhabitants are followers of Ethiopian orthodox Christianity with 67.43% of the population, while 22.65% of the population is Muslim and 9.92% of the populations are protestant Christian. Assela is categorized as having a sub-tropical high land climate. The city administration has eight (8) kebeles among which Halila is one. Halila is a Kebele up on which the study was conducted. It is located along

side of the tarmaic roads that runs to Bale zone. Halila kebele is surrounded by four other kebeles such as kombolcha to the North, Duna farmers Association to the south, chilalo to the North east and Burka chilalo in the east. According to the data obtained from the kebele administration, the total population of halila kebele is estimated to be 11000 from which 5960 were men and 5040 were women. From these more than 25% are youth, and most of them are un employed. Therefore, the study attempted to explore the unemployment conditions, causes and consequences of the unemployment among the youths.

1.2 Concepts and Definitions

Definition of youth perhaps changes with circumstances, especially with a changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio- cultural settings; however, the definition that uses 15-24 cohort as youth fairly serves its statistical purposes for assessing the need of the young people and providing guidelines for youth development.

Youth: The United Nations, defines ‘youth’, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Youth is often indicated as a person between the age where one may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he or she finds his or her first employment.

Unemployment: According to Fajana (2000), unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998).

Unemployment is the number of people in the work force who want to work but do not have a job. For the purpose of this study un employment is employable people in a country’s work force who are over the age of 16 and actively seeking work.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Most studies conducted so far on youth unemployment were much focused on macro analysis that generate incidences, durations and trend of unemployment and testing other related variables quantitatively. So far there has been few studies attempt to examine how young people negotiate unemployment and what it means being unemployed for young people. Studies reveal that in developing countries due to limited opportunities, youth life phase for some young people is so prolonged (Mains 2012).

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objective

The main objective of the study is to explore the condition of youth unemployment in Asela city administration in an effort to identify the causes and socio-economic consequences of unemployment on the youth.

1.4.2 Specific objectives;

- To identify causes of youth unemployment in Asela city administration.
- To identify the impacts of unemployment on unemployed youths in the city.
- To explore alternative ways that may help to reduce youth unemployment in Asela city.

1.5 Research Question

Using a qualitative research approach, this study revealed the nature, cause and consequences of youth unemployment in the study area. Thus, it answered the following research questions.

- What youth unemployment looks like in Assela city?
- What are contributing factors for youth unemployment?
- What are the consequences of unemployment on the youth?
- How unemployment affected youths in the study area?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is of paramount importance in understanding the nature of youth unemployment. It examines the causes and challenges of youth unemployment in Assela city administration. This study tried to uncover the socio-economic realities in relation to the impacts and challenge of youth unemployment on the youth in particular and community at large. To this end, it made use of the data collection tools such as observation, in-depth interview, and FGD.

It is true that the ultimate goal of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and

empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 2005) as cited in Zelalem 2014. Therefore, this study tried to assess and explore the nature of youth unemployment in halila kebele and came up with possible ways of minimizing youth unemployment and create smooth living environment for the youth as it is one of the concerns of social work practice. The study may also make contribution for policy makers and interested researchers by providing information concerning the causes and consequences of youth unemployment.

1.7 Scope of the study

It is true that this study is planned to be conducted in Halila kebele, one of the kebeles in Assela city administration. It is probable that the finding may not represent the reality of the unemployment conditions in Assela city. As the concept of employment is wide and can be studied from different perspectives. Therefore, for the sake of time and emphasis as well, the study will only be limited to exploring the condition of youth unemployment, examining the cause and consequences of youth unemployment in the study area.

1.8. Ethical consideration

Research ethics deals primarily with the interaction between researchers and the people they study. Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study. Therefore, before the beginning of actual data collection, the researcher collected letter of cooperation from Arsi University research and community service directorate that shows the researchers' legality to conduct the study in selected kebele of Assela Town. Thus, letter was presented to Kebele's administration of Social Affairs Office and respective youth offices to get permission for collecting the data from unemployed youths in the study area.

The researcher developed the informed consent to be signed by the participants with the existence of witnesses before they take part in the study. This means study participants were received a written form that describes the purpose of the research, the fact that participation is voluntary and that participants can withdraw at any time with no negative repercussions. Information and privacy of issues that researcher may come across as a result of this study were kept confidential. Meaning, the researcher included the issues of confidentiality in the letter of consent that all information remains with the researcher or will never pass over the information to the third party without the

knowledge and willingness of the study participants. Besides, the names and personal identity of the study participants were not exposed as the researcher employed the use of codes in interpretation and presentation of the study findings.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design is selected to guide this study. The underlying reason for the selection of this design is the need to perform an exploratory enquiry on the unemployed youth in halila kebele. Previous studies as indicated on the problem statement are either country wide studies or are quantitative enquiries. Thus, Using qualitative data collection instruments like interviews and observation, this research tried to uncover condition of youth unemployment and assess its impacts on the life of the youths of the study area.

3.2 Study population and Sampling Technique

The study population includes unemployed educated youth living in Assela city Administration. Unemployment (or joblessness) occurs when people are without work and actively seeking work (ILO,1982).

Hence, the sample and the units of analysis are selected based on the country youth age category used in this paper. This means, respondents are those people whose age ranges from 15-29 years old and who are without a job as well as available to work and living in the area under study.

3.3 Sample Size

A purposive sampling technique was employed in the study. Purposive sampling is virtually synonymous with qualitative research (Lisa, 2008) and (Patton, 1990) as cited in (Zelalem 2014). Accordingly, with the help of key informants, 12 unemployed youth from both sexes were selected and interviewed.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

The instrument used to gather the information includes, semi-structured interview, observation, and Focus Group Discussions. Besides these data collection methods, document analysis was also employed.

4. Data Presentation and Discussion

The data have been collected by employing observation, interview and FGD. Thus, the analysis and interpretation of collected data were based on the response of the respondents and data obtained through observation.

Ethiopia has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. This reality is also common in most of the urban centers of the country as it was evident in the study area. This study indicated that there is a greater impact of unemployment on the unemployed person. With regards to the place of origin of respondents, majority of them are inhabitants of Assela city administration, and most of them belong to the age group of 19-29. It is clear that unemployment is directly related with poverty situation of the family. Majority of respondents have educational status of secondary school complete, whereas, the rests are graduates of TVT and higher institutions. Hence, have certificates, Diploma, and degree.

4.1 Causes of Unemployment as perceived by respondents

- ✓ Lack of Experience; The FGD discussants stressed the work experience requirement of most employers as critical problems that youths are facing. They expressed that

"In the case of jobs requiring profession, most fresh graduates from TVT and Universities remain unemployed for more than a year since most vacancies require work experiences".

- ✓ Corruption; To get employed in public institutions; giving money and other benefits for these who are in government office position are becoming mandatory and normal practice. As per the words of UY (1) *"To be employed in any of public institution is unthinkable either without giving money or be an ethnic group or relatives of the employing officers or managers in an institution"*.

4.2 Impacts/ consequences of unemployment of the youth as Perceived by respondents

- Psychological Impact of Youth Unemployment

As per the words of UY (2), “Unemployment creates a huge burden in your mind”. The psychological impact of unemployment is so discouraging. Unemployment also poses a significant challenge on the psyche of an individual (Nancy & Anthony 2007).

The data obtained from FGD discussants also confirmed the experience of depression, inferiority, lower self-esteem, embarrassment among people as the consequence of their employment status. Makes youth drug addicted; it exposes the youth to local drink and gambling. It was reported that unemployment among other things exposes the youth to psychological depression or hopelessness. i.e moral failure of the youth. A statement obtained from the FGD participant consolidated the argument. They said that “*Unemployment is stressful life, it made us mentally depressed and get hopeless, that is why I appear in a manner you are looking*”.

- Socio-economic, political and moral consequences.

As clearly indicated in the data presentation, youths in the study area experienced multiple challenges as the result of their unemployment. The difficulties range from psychological pressure to social and economic challenges. The interrelated impact of youth unemployment is also depicted by UNDP (2006) that youth unemployment; poverty and social isolation are interrelated to create a vicious circle of influence.

UY (3) is a 24-year-old young man; According to him, the major reason to immerse in substance abuse including cigars and chat is lack of job in absence of anything to do; anybody will tend to feel bored. The nearest possible way in order to clear such feeling seems to smoke, drink or chew chat.

It is surprising to find from observation that majority of the respondents pass their time by chewing chat, drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling and other related activities. The study has also shown that half of respondents depend on their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives for their livelihood. The economic challenge of youth unemployment is for both the individual and the society at large. According to Pieter (2004) besides its power in shaping individuals’ reality, youth unemployment has strong influence on household economy. In absence of their own means of income, the youth become economically dependent on the family in particular and the society at large. With regard to economic impact of unemployment Getinet (2003) argues that, youth

unemployment not only results in loss of income to the unemployed youth and the immediate family, but it is also a loss to the society that fails to utilize its scarce resources.

5. CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDTION

5.1 Conclusion

Ethiopia has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. This reality is also common in most of the urban centers of the country as it was evident in the study area. This study indicated that there is a greater impact of unemployment on the unemployed person. With regards to the place of origin of respondents that the majority of them are in habitants of Assela city, kebele 12 (Halila), and most of them belong to the age group of 19-29. It is clear that unemployment is directly related with poverty situation of the family. Majority of respondents have educational status of secondary school complete, whereas, the rests are graduates of TVT and higher institutions. Hence, have certificates, Diploma, and degree. As the finding indicates youth unemployment in the kebele is due to, lack of work experience, corruption, and absence of justice as reported by respondents and conclusion from observation.

This study explored the nature of youth unemployment making Halila kebele of Assela city administration as its focus area of study. In doing so, it revealed the condition, challenges, cause, and consequences of youth unemployment focusing on the youth themselves. It can be understood that the issue of youth unemployment can and should be studied from several angles including the issue of beneficence, inclusiveness, stress coping and the role of personal motivation for a better future.

As one of the major area of concern, the issue of beneficence and fair treatment is repeatedly raised in the course of developing this study. Respondents confirmed for the lack of fairness in the service they get and in their attempt to get a job in both the government and the private sectors. Most of them feel they are left of the development activities. Hence, as the key area of social work intervention, an advocacy can be administered to minimize these problems. People who read this study document will have a better understanding on the perception of youth and their reaction to the problem of unemployment. It will enrich the knowledge base of youth unemployment by reflecting on the problem from the perspective of the youth as primary victims.

5.2. Recommendation

1. It is true that the socio economic consequences of unemployment cannot be solved in one way and by government only. The problem is multi-dimensional.
Therefore, integrated and collective measure has to be taken by concerned government sectors of all levels.
2. To alleviate social, economic psychological and political problem resulted by unemployment the government should create job opportunities for the youth being free from corruption, problem of transparency, and good governance.
3. Government and non-governmental bodies need to design awareness creation programs about the positive benefits of work in cooperatives. This will initiate more unemployed youth to get involved in the job and work according to the basic principle of cooperative. The government should strongly organize and support the unemployed youth and give them adequate credit service to work under micro enterprise in a success full manners.
4. Measures has to be taken by local government bodies such as the city administration youth affairs, the *kebele* administration with other stakeholders to connect trained youth with private employers.
5. Government is expected to do more on the designing policies and strategies to benefit the youth and local people from local development so that youth engaged in the development efforts of their environment for a sustainable and all benefiting result.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guiding Questions for Unemployed Youth

Background Information

Age_____ Sex_____ Place of Birth_____ ethnic group____ Religion_____

Marital status_____ Educational status_____

Probing questions

1. Life experience: Please describe your overall life experience

- Have you ever had a job before?
- How long have you been unemployed?
- What do you think about your unemployment?
- How do you feel about your situation?

2. Living condition: tell me about your living condition

- How do you describe your living condition?
- whom do you live with?
- What is your means of earning?

3.Challenges faced due to unemployment:

- Tell me about difficulties you faced due to unemployment?
- Do you think unemployment has affected you?
- What challenges have you faced due to your unemployment?