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## A Tale of Youth Graduates Unemployment

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*Introduction-* The United Nations defines youth as all individuals aged between 15 and 24 (Bennell, 2007). There are 1.2 billion youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years that make up 18% of the world's population. Of these, about 87% of these young people live in developing countries. For example, Africa alone has some 200 million youth. Ethiopia has the largest youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa. More than half of its population is under the age of 25 and 20% are between 15 and 24 (Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010).

The problem of youth unemployment particularly in urban areas has been a persistent concern of politicians and policymakers since the 1960s. Nonetheless, youth development has remained at the margins of national development strategies in most countries though there exists some growing interest towards the youth. And still youth are suffering from many untold problems emanating from unemployment which many called it 'youth crisis' (Bennell, 2007). These authors added that the number of unemployed youth world-wide has reached 88 million and the number of young people looking for work in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase by 28% in the next 15 years – an additional 30 million people joining the pool of job seekers.

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# A Tale of Youth Graduates Unemployment

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations defines youth as all individuals aged between 15 and 24 (Bennell, 2007). There are 1.2 billion youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years that make up 18% of the world's population. Of these, about 87% of these young people live in developing countries. For example, Africa alone has some 200 million youth. Ethiopia has the largest youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa. More than half of its population is under the age of 25 and 20% are between 15 and 24 (Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010).

The problem of youth unemployment particularly in urban areas has been a persistent concern of politicians and policymakers since the 1960s. Nonetheless, youth development has remained at the margins of national development strategies in most countries though there exists some growing interest towards the youth. And still youth are suffering from many untold problems emanating from unemployment which many called it 'youth crisis' (Bennell, 2007). These authors added that the number of unemployed youth world-wide has reached 88 million and the number of young people looking for work in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase by 28% in the next 15 years – an additional 30 million people joining the pool of job seekers. In Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda, youth poverty exceeds 80%, whereas it is much lower in Ghana (Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi, 2013). In Ethiopia, in 2005, youth (15-24 years old) recorded a 7.8% unemployment rate, higher than any other age group (Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010).

In a nut shell, though youth graduates unemployment is a worldwide phenomenon, developing countries shoulder the lion's share of the negative consequences of the problem and Ethiopia cannot be exceptional to this horrible reality. Of course, this is what we actually observe in today's Ethiopia.

Hence, it is high time and imperative to systematically investigate factors, experiences, consequences of youth graduates unemployment and show implications for intervention.

Unemployment represents a drama in the lives of young individuals and amounts to a significant waste

of personal and social investments in higher education (Broecke, 2012).

Evidence has been accumulating for a decade that youth unemployment is following a different pattern than adult unemployment, is shaped by different factors, and is trending toward poorer outcomes. The problem persists in good economic times and further worsens in bad economic times. Youth participation rates are falling relative to adult participation rates and youth unemployment rates are consistently 2-4 times adult unemployment rates. ILO estimates that youth unemployment represents nearly 40% of total global unemployment (ManpowerGroup, 2011).

In Ethiopia, unemployment seems to be a serious problem and the country typical for the developing countries for failing to make effective use of its youth (Letenah, 2011). Unemployment is of a special concern for Ethiopians and has a wider implication for the youth in addition to leading their life are expected to help parents and extended families (Shumete, 2011). Youth graduates have very few opportunities for employment (Children and Youth Affairs Organization, 1995). According to a survey in 55 urban areas, unemployment was estimated at 41.3% and the incidence of youth unemployment was 45.5% and 35.7% for females and males respectively (MOLSA 1992 cited in Children and Youth Affairs Organization, 1995).

As a teacher in higher educational institute, I have my own lived experiences and those truly worrying experiences shared by my former/graduated students. The unemployment rate for urban youth is 37.5% as opposed to 7.2% for rural youth. While 20.6% of the urban population is unemployed, only 2.6% of the rural population are likewise. Comparing the unemployment rate in the six target cities, Dire Dawa records the highest with an unemployment rate of 37%, followed by Addis Ababa and Adama. According to Serneels (2007), the average duration of the unemployment period in urban Ethiopia was found to be more than one year. From the CSA Labour Force Survey (2005), large numbers of the unemployed urban population (38.1%) stay unemployed for 1-6 months. Almost 25% of the unemployed urban population has been jobless for more than a year (Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010).

The problem of youth unemployment is very pressing, paradoxical and invites for scientific research for youth constitutes significant proportion of the population, huge resources are spend on the youth, youths are resources and failure to use them leads to vicious circle of poverty, and youth unemployment has too many undesirable consequences (Shumete, 2011).

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Analysis of studies made in the area and accessed by the current researcher unveiled that most are obsessed with the economic deemphasizing social, psychological, health, political antecedents and consequences of the unemployment of the youth. Such an effort and approach will definitely not give full picture of the problem and measures to be taken. It follows from this that effective youth employment policies and interventions require a thorough understanding of who the unemployed youth are, where they are located and the types of jobs youth are engaged in (Broussar and Tsegay, 2012). In this connection, studying contributing factors and consequences of the problem, and lived experiences of the unemployed will significantly contribute to efforts in reducing the unemployment crisis. Nonetheless, researches conducted on these aspects are worryingly scarce so far as my knowledge goes.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to assess contributing factors and consequences of the problem, and experiences of the unemployed graduate youth thereby contributing its share to the solution of this paradoxical problem.

## II. METHOD AND MATERIALS

### a) *Participants of the Study and Study Area*

The study was conducted among youth graduates who look for jobs and are accessed around Arat Killo area in Addis Ababa.

### b) *Study Design*

This study employed quantitative and qualitative type of design.

### c) *Samples, Sampling Technique and Sampling Procedures*

The study was made on 30 people. Participants were selected using available sampling taking into account the inclusion and exclusion criteria (a youth graduate from government institutions in the last few years unable to secure for employment in his/her field of graduation). In addition, three participants were used for the interview.

### d) *Data Gathering Instruments and Data Gathering Procedures.*

Two instruments of data collection were used: questionnaire and interview. The instruments were

content validated by relevant professionals. Data was collected in the Arat Killo area where many people who seek jobs come there to read vacancies and newspapers. Those who meet the criteria are used as participants and made to give their responses to the two instruments. The response rate for the questionnaire was 90 %.

### e) *Data Analysis Techniques*

Data was analyzed by using quantitative mainly descriptive and qualitative mainly narration and thematic analysis methods.

## III. RESULTS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Specifically, the research was intended to answer the following research questions.

- What are the factors perceived to be contributing factors for youth graduates unemployment?
- What are the experiences and consequences of youth graduates unemployment/effects on the jobless and others?
- What are the possible implications and solutions of the problem for intervention by concerned others?

For this purpose, data was collected, cleaned and analyzed using SPSS version-16. The results of the study are presented, interpreted and discussed as follows in upcoming parts.

*Table 1 : Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristics	yes		no	
	N	%	N	%
Employed	15	57.7	11	42.3
Employment by profession	13	86.7	2	13.3

As can be seen from Table-1, 57.7% and 42% of the participants are employed and unemployed respectively. Of those who are employed, 86% of the participants are employed in their profession where as 13.3% not.

It can be inferred that significant proportion of the participants (42.3%) were unemployed. And of those who are employed, 13.3% of them were employed not in their profession. This shows how serious the problem is and is in agreement with findings by other studies (Manpowergroup, 2011; MOLSA cited in Children and Youth Affairs Organization, 1995).

*Table 2 : Factors Contributing for Youth Graduates Unemployment*

sn	Contributing factors for my being unemployed are:	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Lack of relevant information, skills and experience	53.8	46.2
2	Lack of connections and social networks	66.7	33.3
3	Mismatch between training and requirements of jobs	44	56
4	Misguided and low quality educational policy and system	60	40
5	Nepotism and corruption	84.6	15.4
6	Ethnic and political bias and discrimination	73.1	26.9

7	Lack of culture of work ethic and job creation	57.7	42.3
8	Lack of confidence and motivation to work	24	76
9	Absence of career advice and/or counseling	52	48
10	Mismatch between skills and the labour market	60	40
11	Aspire to 'white collar'/high paying jobs and Job selectivity	44	56

Nepotism and corruption (84.6%), Ethnic and political bias and discrimination (73.1%), Lack of connections and social networks (66.7%), Mismatch between skills and the labour market (60%), and Misguided and low quality educational policy and system (60%) are mentioned respectively as factors contributing to youth graduates unemployment.

Favoritism, corruption and bias and discrimination in different forms are indicated as factors responsible for youth graduates unemployment. More worse, participants seem to attribute their problems on to others. This finding is consistent with findings of other studies (ManpowerGroup, 2011; Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010; Hiruy, 2012). This also seems very true and holds water for the Government has recently detained many people including higher officials (an action which is referred to as 'only tip of the iceberg' by many) for corruption and related allegations.

*In supporting data obtained through questionnaires interviews were conducted. And regarding factors influencing youth unemployment, one interviewee has the following to say:*

*You know I am reared in a rural area. My father is a farmer. He send me to school and seriously follows me up after he was labeled as "bureaucrat" (a term to refer to someone who served at any level of the former government) and his land was taken over and given for others. When I was a student in the university I always remember his words and advice. After three years stay I graduated and was eager to get a job and make my father happy. However, days come and go and it is about a year since I graduated I could not get a job in my field of study. With friends we asked/checked almost every governmental office that has relations with our field but they could not give us any solution. What is worse and saddening is that they laughed at us!*

*Sometimes we see very few individuals getting employed and we informally investigate the issue we hear that s/he has a relative there. (Interviewee-1)*

*Another interviewee added that:*

*In the university student representatives of the EPRDF political party told us that our education is meaningless unless we get registered as a member and be active participants. We thought that this is true because our seniors and people we know in our area who were members of the party were given jobs automatically up on their graduation. And we almost all became party members. But because we are same in terms of membership and they faced difficulties to identify who is who, they said there are no jobs for the large majority and informed us to seek for jobs on our own. Even when we see some vacancies and apply for them they tell us "you have no experience". Nine months elapsed since I completed my study when am I going to have the experience? I think they are systematically playing with our life. (Interviewee-2)*

*Sharing her share about factors contributing for graduates' unemployment a female interviewee said that:*

*Lack of work experience and skills may be one factor. But it is clear that everybody in Ethiopia begins with no experience. If they think that experience is important, why they (government and universities) did not give us the chance to get some work experience in the community. It is not clear for me with what is special with us and they made us suffer a lot. I think there are a policy as well as planning problems. (Interviewee-3)*

Participants consider most of the contributing factors for their unemployment is out of them and seem to point their fingers on to others mainly on the government. The implication of all these is that lots of work has to be done in making the youth think inwardly.

*Table 3 : Consequences of Youth Graduates Unemployment*

sn	Consequences/effects that I and my friends encounter are:	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Poverty and unable to get the basic needs	81	19
2	Drug addiction and abuse	42.9	57.1
3	Crime, violence, aggression and juvenile delinquency	40	60
4	Migration( within and out of the country)	66.7	33.3
5	Social exclusion, stigma and discrimination	76.2	23.8
6	Destroys moral and breaks social relationships	71.4	28.6
7	Feelings of inferiority and hopelessness	61.9	38.1

Poverty and unable to get the basic needs (81%), Social exclusion, stigma and discrimination (76.2%), Destroys moral and breaks social relationships (71.4%), Migration within and out of the country (66.7%),

and Feelings of inferiority and hopelessness (61.9%) were indicated as consequences of unemployment.

It can be learnt that apart from economical and physiological consequences, social and psychological



which are missed and deemphasized in most cases are found to be dominant experiences following the graduate's unemployment. This finding is in line with results of other studies (Nebil, Gezahegn and Hayat, 2010; Hiruy, 2012; Sum, 2002 cited in Manpower Group, 2011; Coenjaerts, Ernst, Fortuny and Rei, 2009; Children and Youth Affairs Organization, 1995; Hiruy, 2012).

*An interviewee s*

*hared the following asked about the consequences unemployment brought on her and her friends;*

*It should have been a time to help my parents but I am dependent on them and other family members. It is morally touching and unfair! Let me tell you one story that I personally experienced. One day, I was going to home a friend whom I know called me from a back and 'asked me where have you been?' And I replied I have been looking for job. Laughing ear to ear he said to me "it would have been better to spend the years you invested in the forest as a warrior than in a university". Entering into my sisters rented house I felt hopeless and burst into tears and cried a lot alone. That time on, I consider that boy as an enemy and never talked to him. (Interviewee-3)*

*He also added that:*

*Imagine what it means to dependent on our poor families during this hard time. You know what I want to say is that we are suffering even from getting the basics. When I was in the university I was smoking occasionally. Now because I have nowhere to go I do smoke and chew chat with some people. I do not actually know from where they get money but they invite me all the time these different drugs. My family members are not really be able to understand me. They thought that work is available and it is me who is not willing to work. As a result of this we quarrel with each other. (Interviewee-2)*

*Furthermore, an interviewee reported that:*

*I feel very sad when I pass this much amount of time with my family who are leading a hand-to-mouth life. I came to Addis Ababa (that means I am in-country migrant!) hoping that there are better job opportunities. I am living with my aunt. I get out of home early in the morning, spend the whole day looking for vacancies and go home late at night. I totally lost my freedom and with the passage of time I lost appetite in all things and meaning of life as well. Now am planning to escape out of my aunts home but do not know where to go. In near future I may be one who abuses different drugs like what most of my friends are doing (Interviewee-1).*

*In general, let alone others, the youth reported that they are suffering from lots of problems due to their unemployment. This implies that an immediate and integrated action should be taken by concerned by other before things get worse.*

#### *a) Solutions Suggested So far and Implications*

The following were suggested as a solution in reducing the youth unemployment problem.

- fight corruption
- match fields with needs of the country
- awareness creation
- build confidence
- quality education
- policy change
- revise education policy
- avoid political bias and discrimination
- enhancing creativity
- avoid bias based on ethnicity

Interviewees also have the following to share regarding measures to be taken in reducing the problem of unemployment.

*I think things should start from the government. It should plan strategically and give direction for its institutions like universities. (Interviewee-2)*

*Offering jobs for existing graduates in the country is mandatory and gradually improving things so that graduates and the community will think about alternative choices ahead. In addition, the concerned bodies should arrange conditions for students to get necessary work experience while they are studying. (Interviewee-1)*

*There is high corruption in different forms so far as employment is concerned. So the government should control these evil deeds and create jobs for graduates. The government has to take the initiative in creating jobs and make everybody ready for it. (Interviewee-3)*

In sum, a number of solutions are suggested by participants of this study taking into consideration the perceived contributing factors and their experiences. All the suggestions require the government to at least take the initiative to create jobs in the mean time trying to cultivate the culture of work in the public.

## IV. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

### *a) Conclusion*

The major factors perceived to be contributing factors for urban youth graduates unemployment were: nepotism and corruption, ethnic and political bias and discrimination, lack of connections and social networks, mismatch between skills and the labor market and misguided and low quality educational policy and system.

The experiences and consequences of youth graduates unemployment/effects on the jobless and others include: poverty and unable to get the basic needs, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination, destroys moral and breaks social relationships,

mobility/migration, and feelings of inferiority and hopelessness.

The suggested solutions include the following: fight corruption, match fields with needs of the country, awareness creation and building confidence for youth during study years, providing quality education and revise education policy, policy change, and avoid bias and discrimination based on ethnicity and political.

#### *b) Implication*

The magnitude of the problem is worryingly high and if timely intervention measures are not taken the problem will continue to adversely affect the youth on which the future of the country depends on in many respects. In addition, failure to respond to the problem timely and effectively will leave a black scar and irreversible message on the education, health, social and soon aspects of the society at large.

#### *c) Recommendations*

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations were forwarded.

- Ministry of Education and Universities should honestly work in revisiting the existing education policy and curricula so that it will be in line with the felt needs of the society and development plans of the country.
- On-study community service should be arranged for trainees in higher institutions for them get necessary practical knowledge and experience and also make smooth study-work transition.
- Continuous training and work-organizational counseling and consulting should be provided to make youth graduates ready and build their confidence.
- A national employment related information center should be established by the government for availing information and guiding youth graduates up on graduation.
- The government should commit itself and take the initiation to make employment based on merit and fight malpractices such as corruption, favoritism and discrimination based on politics and ethnicity.
- Concerned bodies including potential employers should plan carefully so that admission to higher education and demand in the labor market (formal or informal) will operate in equilibrium.

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