

YOUTH LABOUR IN THE PANDEMIC SITUATION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *The sudden outbreak of the global pandemic has caused a huge economic setback in almost all the nations. The effects of COVID-19 were more on the developing countries than the developed ones. Millions of labourers have lost their jobs because of lockdowns. It affected the youth, the education system, etc. This paper mainly focuses on the youth labour and how the large scale of unemployment affected the youth and the way they dealt with it, and lastly how this COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on their career. The paper mainly studies the youth in the MENA region. The analysis mainly based on the reports of global unemployment, UN and OECD reports, case studies of MENA region and the steps to overcome it in the future areas.*

Key words: youth; labour; COVID-19; case studies; MENA.

1. Introduction

The outbreak of global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of our daily social and economic lives; with the ongoing challenge in our daily lives, the youth seems to have a long-lasting effect from the pandemic. The global survey aimed to capture the immediate effects on the life of the young people with the range of rights, activism, social well-being, education, employment and mental health. (ILO, 2020a). The global pandemic had led to a severe effect on the global market that had directly affected the young people on their quality of jobs, and it has resulted in mass scale unemployment. The workers during this period faced financial debts such as loans, tax deferrals, salary cut, etc. During the COVID period, it hits the young workers in recessions, and research suggests that entering the labour market during a recession has a negative impact on future earnings and job prospects. The education system has further been pierced by the COVID-19 global pandemic interrupting and disrupting the process of education the situation resulted in dropouts, lack of access to remote learning tools, comprising nutrition and lessening employment opportunities.

The young migrants affected and the refugees around 70 percent of all international migrants are below 30 years of age globally in 2019, 38 million international migrants who are below the age of 20 years (UN, 2019; IOM, 2020a). About 100 countries affected by COVID-19 have a refugee population of over 20,000 they are living at remarkably high risk and precarious living conditions. In some countries this have again resulted the death of the young migrant workers the loss of a job sometimes have resulted to suicide, in a few cases the migrant workers have died because of the precarious living or travelling conditions, The group gets left behind in the provision of healthcare when national systems' capacities are overstretched due to COVID-19. A risk is still involved that COVID 19 may further stigmatize migrants and refugees or increase xenophobia and racism, which in turn may further affect the ability of young migrants and refugees who are to receive proper healthcare and maintain their livelihoods. (UN, 2020)

Economic Political and social transformations have led to the change in global markets regarding jobs and career opportunities. The sudden outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic has given rise to structural changes in the global market, which had led to a severe economic crisis and

ultimately resulting large-scale unemployment among the youth. In Asian countries, it was still seen that professionals are turning to roadside vendors because of the lack of employment during the pandemic. (Kalleberg, 2020)

2.Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to severe setback in the economic and labour market, the estimated rise was between 5.3 and 24.7 million in the number of those unemployed globally, the impact on youth employment among the age group 15-24 are already three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Moreover, COVID-19-related shocks to the labour market are likely to affect the quality of jobs for young people in forms of zero-hour contracts, informal employment, etc. These forms of employment are more common among youth, as 77 percent of employed young people hold informal jobs while 126 million are extreme and moderate poor working worldwide. The impact on the quality and quantity of jobs will probably disproportionately affect young people engaged in the service sector and/or performing manual routine jobs. Young people's jobs are at risk for experiencing excessive health-related hazards, as they cannot work remotely, which resulted in financial debts, mental illness (UN, 2020).

The social entrepreneurship can contribute sustainable and inclusive job creation. Unemployment among youth has been one of the greatest global challenges. Recent estimates suggest that 60million jobs would have to be created over the next 15years to meet youth employment needs. It is estimated that 96.8 percent of all young workers in developing countries are in the informal economy and lagging behind descent work. In developing countries, the low youth unemployment rates mask poor job quality. The proportion of the youth who are not in employment, education or training (the youth NEET rate) has remained high over the past 15 years and now stands at thirty percent for young women and thirteen percent for young men worldwide. Until structural barriers are removed, implementing employment-based interventions targeting young people may just fuel greater frustration in the future. The proper conditions, social entrepreneurship can offer youth an avenue to explore in their quest for sustainable employment. As social entrepreneurship leverages the talent of young people and capacities, it can support individual development and efforts to effect change. Young people, though frequently being excluded from policy and political decisions, which is affecting their lives and social entrepreneurship, offer them an avenue to express their views and have an impact on society. Youth are progressively more engagement in taking action to address development challenges themselves, including through social entrepreneurship. The creation and maintenance of a successful social enterprise often present obvious challenges; social entrepreneurship is appealing to youth, as it offers the unique combination of income generation and social impact. Entrepreneurs face many obstacles, but there are significant differences among the entrepreneurs in terms of contexts and needs. The youth social entrepreneurship has been successful, as it highly depends on the confluence of enabling factors such as conditions and settings or the entrepreneurship eco system. The extent to which the youth social entrepreneurship can reach is dependent, in large part, of this ecosystem (UN,2020).

The youth is experiencing difficulty regarding the inferior quality jobs reflect the broader rise in polarized and precarious work in several countries. The polarization of jobs is growing into good, well-paying jobs, and bad, low-wage, rather dead-end jobs in many countries. There is a general increase in the uncertainty and insecurity associated with all jobs, largely temporary and involuntary part-time work, but jobs that were formerly relatively permanent and part of job ladders which is offering wage growth and training opportunities. Young people have endured this expansion of low-quality work, specially the ones with less education. (Kalleberg, 2020).

3. Analysis in relation to Asia and MENA region

The case study analysis mainly focused on the Asian and MENA region because these regions, perhaps, are more affected with the youth labour situation. As these nations are the developing ones, quite a number of youth labourers are settled in foreign countries for better job and education opportunities. In countries like Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh these countries already experienced a negative scale on their employment status, COVID-19 have shattered their economy. The Asian countries have several students and working professionals settled in other countries who have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their loss of job not only affected the financial or the career growth of the workers but the economies of their respective countries have also experienced setback. The MENA regions have also a low scale of employment status due to gender issues (OECD, 2017) and education issues, it has remained the highest since last 25 years and because of pandemic, the situation of youth labour has worsened in these regions. Not just talking about the economy and financial status, it also affects the mental health conditions among the youth, resulting in suicides, debts, etc.

However, it is fully known that; the situation is definitely not the same for the full region, there is a significant difference in the wealthiest states of the Gulf. (OECD, 2020).

The economy in the present stage is not only passing the work, but it depends on political leanings, observers, which blame the financial market or the government state for any failures. (Dörre et al, 2018). In south Asian countries like India, Pakistan among these countries, it was seen that Bangladesh has the highest level of youth employment. Generation of youth employment is a key policy priority for the countries of South Asia (UNESCAP, 2018). The result of the overpopulation among youth, these countries are well poised to reap the dividends from a demographic dividend. (Navaneetham and Dharmalingam, 2012). The Conventional economic theory suggests that transfer of surplus labour from the rural agriculture sector to the urban industry sector gives rise to the structural and economic change in an economy, which may be conducive of the state (Lewis, 1954). The overpopulated youth among the South Asian countries have also resulted in the growth of migration of youth to different countries. Unfortunately, the structural employment in the South Asian countries are shaped in such a way that they have to share the youth with the agricultural economy as well. (Khatun and Sadat, 2020).

The Youth unemployment rates in MENA region have remained highest in the world for mostly 25 years. The youth employment in this region is facing problem because of the substantial social and political differences across the MENA countries. The MENA countries also have an issue of gender-based segregation of labour, the male professionals are tend to work more than woman which also leads to the root of its problem education, in short these countries are facing long existent issues regarding employment (Kabbani, 2019).

Recently, during March- April areas especially in mining, trading, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and other services sectors. These work fields are similar to Unemployment among young workers during COVID-19 recession. Employers are more interested to choose old workers because of various reasons, which depend on the culture of the industry, the nature of the work, and the cost structure. There may have been policies of ring the most recent hires at first as a way to keep the morale and support of long-time workers. Industries requiring significant firm-specific knowledge can be suitably employed with young workers with lower tenure, which would separate them from the firm with less loss.

As per the International Labour Organization, in which the participation rate of young people (aged 15–24) in labour force has continued to decline and also young people are three times than adults are likely to be unemployed.

The ILO in a recently published report entitled “Global Employment Trends for youth” (ILO, 2020b), which highlights that are some major structural barriers preventing the youth from entering the labour market, apart from their limited work experience which is against them when they are applying for entry-level jobs. One-fifth of the young people in the world

currently have NEET status, which mainly refers to the stagnation of their growth, means they are not gaining experience in the labour market, not receiving an income from work and not even enhancing their education and skills in various ways.

Young women have to more because of the gender gap, which is even more prevalent in the Middle East where the social, cultural norms and “security situation” have limited women’s education and career goals.

As per the reports of ILO (ILO, 2019), Sustainable Development Goals, which is targeted to be 8.6, has a substantial reduction in the proportion of NEET youth by 2020 and is being missed. Even at good times, in the early stages of a young person’s career labour underutilization affected the co-workers for a long-term including reduction in employment opportunities and reduction in earning potentiality in the future.

After the COVID-19 pandemic into the mix, and the impact become more dramatic. “Everyone is facing change, but an entire generation of young people will bear the brunt of COVID-19’s economic fallout for decades to come”. (Jafar and Dakkak, 2020). The university and school students started missing months of schooling due to the global lock downs, absence from education for months will have an impact on their employment sources for decades, few are even missing out on their jobs.

COVID-19 has given us massive challenges, which require involvement, mainly of business. We all must collaborate and ensure efforts so as to retrain and retool young people to succeed and have a growth for the better next generation in our region and to ensure the future growth of the world. income loses has been incurred partially which led to the total decline in the working hours, even in some cases it was seen that the working hour has increased but the payment regarding the working hours have declined even some people did not received the payments for months.

In the MENA countries are always being unprepared for a modern world of work and in the post COVID world that will be even more significant. But some societies of the Middle East have undertaken three steps to give young people an opportunity to remove large-scale unemployment young people (OCDE, 2020), as follows:

- **Tech/digital skills**

The graduates need to be proficient enough so that they can use basic computer programmes, tools in everyday work and make life more flexible so that they can switch between them.

- **English language proficiency**

English proficiency is the number one skill for employability in the modern economy in places like BPOs, etc.

- **Soft skills**

The soft skills have been overlooked, in post COVID world soft skills are very important such as basic business etiquette, emotional intelligence and the ability to deal with conflict productively.

None of these three skills is difficult to learn, but the training for them remains out of reach for many other skills. A suitable example, Crescent Petroleum recently announced a partnership with Edraak, which is in Arab and World’s leading platform for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), it helps to develop a series of open / free online career readiness courses, to boost the employability skills of young people across the Middle East region. It was seen that the private sector intervention is becoming more common as companies find that without direct action; it is harder to recruit young people with the skills their companies need.

The above course specialization is an example of how we can impact young people and give them much needed skills amid the momentous changes that are taking place under way. It relies on many other factors to succeed, as part of a regional ecosystem to support, young people as they enter the job market.

The empowerment of young people across the world for building a better future, and to tackle the challenge of youth unemployment, that not only implies to societal imperative, but it is also the means by which we will lift the economy out of the corona virus recession by filling skills gaps, wage gaps and promoting growth.

4. Recommendations

Clarisse Kouame, who is a pearl craftswoman, lost her job, as she had to close her store in Ivory Coste because of COVID-19. She had been a pearl artisan since last five years previously she used to work at home but later she opened a store quoting her words.

She is not there waiting, doing nothing. With her association of women, they had a raining on producing oyster mushrooms. She keeps on telling herself besides crafts she can always have another skill, which would be helpful in the future. Though today, she has n financial means, later she intends to make the marketing of mushrooms her another source of income According to her she still has hope. This empowering and motivating her every day that better days are yet to come. Clarisse faces not only this scenario, but there are millions of people who are going through this situation post pandemic.

Communities around the world, entrepreneurs like Clarisse, employers in various groups, corporate staff, and local partners, are coming up with solutions to help people find jobs, create jobs, and cope with unemployment. Here are a few recommendations that need to be undertaken to tackle the large-scale unemployment that occurred during COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping markets open. Zimbabwe and Philippines are working with UN agency and the government in order to keep the markets open. Various UN Agencies are opening safe markets for both producers and consumers. These countries are also working with local partners and communities to set up mobile markets so traders can safely keep their jobs and prevent the level of unemployment and economic degradation.

Supporting farmers. Many people across the world have the job of growing food. In India, people are trying to is help migrants who are stuck in different parts of the country to return to their homes and getting small-scale farmers' efficient production out of their farms, and have markets where they can sell their production.

Helping entrepreneurs to market themselves, Iraq and Mali is being helped by the various UN agencies such as CARE partners is training women on how to market masks and make better sales. In Mali, they are helping distinct groups to connect to buyers in the UN system to buy the masks that Mali women make.

Adapting businesses to the new economy: Egypt has set up a virtual job fair for four companies under the project funded by Microsoft "Tawar w Ghayar" (www.tawarwghayar.com). Over 5,000 youth applies and 396 attended the virtual interviews, which is helping to create an engagement among the youth. Many other agencies are helping people find jobs making masks with local supplies. Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Mali, Egypt, and Benin are all help small traders shift their products, which includes masks, bags, soap, hand sanitizer, and other equipment that are in high demand for COVID-19.

Fight for the rights of the workers: In Ecuador and Mexico, CARE and the partners of UN are holding virtual advocacy campaigns to support domestic workers' rights and continue to push governments and employers to protect the domestic workers who are losing their jobs and is forced to live with their employers to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Supporting people who are losing their jobs. Over 44,000 countries are getting help from the UN agency named CARE, cash help is also being provided in over 35 countries. These agencies are also providing food help and cash transfers to the people who have lost their jobs in countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. United States have launched their own domestic package program to create jobs and provide food to people who need it. (IOM, 2020b; Bailey, 2013)

5. Conclusion

The spread of COVID-19 has reduced employment across all sectors, especially the services which is the principal employer in the Arab region. According to International Labour Organisation 13.2 percent of working hours were lost across the entire Arab region in the second quarter of 2020, compared to the final quarter of 2019, which is equivalent to 8 million full-time jobs, based on 48 hours of working in a week. The proportion of unemployment among people among the active population is forecasted to rise significantly in 2020, with a variation ranging from 6.6 percent in Kyrgyzstan to 25.7 percent in Jordan. As per various research and studies, the rate of economic growth and worldwide unemployment are to be improved in 2021.

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