A Study on the Causes of Unemployment among University Graduates in Kenya: A Case of Garissa County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment is a major problem in Kenya. It has made many young university graduates demoralized. Unemployment rate has risen so high that in every 10 young people, close to 4 are jobless with requisite qualifications. Successive governments have done little to arrest the situation. This research was done to understand the causes of unemployment in Kenya and the solutions that can be put in place to mitigate the problem. The effects of unemployment and the relationship between creation of opportunities and the growth of economy.

The research found out that unemployment in Kenya is very high. This shows lack of confidence they have the system in place. The main effects of unemployment are crime, corruption, nepotism and favourism, high dependency and drug abuse. Being a job creator rather than a job seeker is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya. The research also found out that aligning the education curriculum in line with the demand of the market is paramount and should be hastened.

In conclusion, Unemployment has caused a lot of problems in Kenya. The research recommended a raft of measures to reduce the issue of unemployment in the country. Encourage the youth to be job creators and not job seekers only. Universities should play an important role in this case. Universities should develop courses that are relevant and demand driven.

Duplication of courses with less demands should be minimized as this will flood graduates with similar courses that are not needed at all. Technical education should be enhanced and proper mechanisms put in place to sponsor and encourage students to take up these courses. Strict regulations should be enacted to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism. Kenya needs a practical and proactive solution for this monster.

Keywords: unemployment, job creator, corruption, high dependency, course duplication

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment in Kenya has become a headache both for those in leadership and those seeking various opportunities. In as much as successive governments have tried to mitigate the already alarming situation, labour supply has been on the rise in relation to its demand. This has created a huge backlog. The major effects are felt by the youth who seek to get return for their investment in education. Though there are conflicting reports of Unemployment rate in Kenya, however, there is no doubt the rate is high if reports by various stakeholders is anything to go by.

Kenya recorded 39.1 percent unemployment rate according to recent report by United Nations; Human Development Index (HDI) 2017. It also shows that Kenya has the highest unemployment rate in East Africa.

Kenya has a long record of implementing employment policies. Over 40 years ago, for example, the 1970–74 Development Plan (Republic of Kenya, 1969) featured employment and unemployment as important policy matters. Recently, The Sector Plan for Labour, Youth and Human Resource Development Sector (2008–2012) looked into unemployment as a big issue. There has been considerable continuity, since 10 of the 17 policy areas have been a constant in the menu throughout the entire period.

The causes of unemployment could be many and could also be averted. Therefore, “A research on the causes of unemployment among university graduates in Kenya: a case study of Garissa County” was conducted to understand
what are the real causes of these unemployment among the deserving youth.

The research was conducted in Garissa county of Kenya. The county has the face of Kenya as most communities are represented. It has various institutions of high learning including Garissa University, Umma University and raft of middle level colleges. A well prepared questionnaire was presented to the respondents which were kept confidential. 75 respondents were engaged. Gender, level of education, age, position in society and other pertinent factors were considered in distributing the questionnaires. This was done to create high reliability rate and give a clear picture of the research objectives.

**Literature Review**

Employment creation policies in Kenya has been seen as greater factor for economic growth and development (ILO, 1995; Republic of Kenya, 1964). The underlying parameter, in this case, has been that faster economic growth would lead to employment creation and that income generation through employment would lead to improvement in the standards of living and eradication of poverty. Unemployment on the other hand affects the economic growth of any country, including Kenya. This is because unemployment of the people especially the youth.

The term “unemployment” has been defined by different scholars in different ways. According to Karl Pribam (1946), “unemployment” is when the supply of labor power is more than the number of available openings. In this regard, unemployment is realized when the market has excess supply of the required labor power. Karl says that to create market equilibrium, labor supply should match with the labor demand. If either of them is more, the market loses its equilibrium.

Madan’s (1965) defined “unemployment is the absence of opportunities of jobs for people willing to and actively looking for a job. The definition is based on the supply-demand phenomenon. He argues that this grossly ignores the aspect of value in employment. In as much as market equilibrium is emphasized, the labour value should be emphasized on.

Fairchild (1978) in his research, acknowledges the importance of the value in employment. He says unemployment is enforced and involuntary separation from remunerative work on the part of the normal working force during normal time, at normal wages and under normal conditions.

Beveridge (1931) supported the findings of Fairchild. He stated that when “unemployment is like a headache or a high temperature” which he says is unpleasant. This is philosophical claim that makes unemployment felt. The heat, he says, is felt economically through exhaustion of the country’s economy.

S.A Farah, Hussein A. Ali, (2018) on their research “a study on the perception of business students on the future job market” observes that employers’ quality perception on university graduates in Kenya today is low. A research done in Garissa, Kenya and published on international journal of scientific Research and Management (IJSRM) finds that one major factor of unemployment in Kenya is the lack creation of opportunities that can absorb the high number of graduates. Tribalism, nepotism and favourism were also major factors that have locked many deserving young Kenyans seeking jobs. The study concludes that the government should step in to avert the problem.

**Methodology**

**Sampling**

Sampling, which is an important aspect of data collection, is a statistical practice concerned with the selection of subset of individual observation from a given universe with the view of drawing conclusions. In this study a sample of 75 respondents were interviewed.

**Sources of Data Collection**

**Primary sources**

Primary data was collected by administering structured and relevant questionnaire to the sample population.

**Secondary sources**

Secondary was studied from relevant information available at the company in the form of past records, company website and booklets, newspapers, articles and journals.

**Tools and Techniques for data Collection**

The information was obtained through observation, administering of the structured questionnaire and interviews with the selected sample population. Data available in various
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reports, articles, books, periodicals was also be used.

Plan of Analysis

The data collected was analyzed and interpreted using various statistical tools. It was tabulated against the number of respondents and percentages favoring them. Bar and pie charts was used to present and interpretation was deduced. Wrong inferences like incomplete and dishonest answers was eliminated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis

When respondents were asked about “how do you rate unemployment level in Kenya?” 61% of them of them rated to be very high, 27% said the rate is high. Cumulatively, close to 90% of all the respondents rated the level of unemployment to be either high or very high. Only 1% rated the level of unemployment to be very low while 4% said its low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 1

INTERPRETATION:

Corruption is the major cause of unemployment in Kenya. Corruption has become a cancer in the body of Kenya. It has neutralized and reformatted It has denied young and deserving Kenyans opportunities. If this is solved,
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Kenyans will regain trust on the systems and structures in place. The education system is also to blame on the woes of young Kenyans. It should respond to the market needs so that university graduates stay relevant and hence get placements.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK COULD BE THE MAIN EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN KENYA?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leads to high dependency</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug abuse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption, nepotism and favourism.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANALYSIS**

Being a job creator rather than a job seeker is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya. Aligning the education in line with the demand of the market, strengthening the economy attracted 15 percent and 16 percent respondents, while 15 percent and 12 percent said we have to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism and use of proper and relevant technology.

**WHAT IS THE MAJOR SOLUTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN KENYA?**

![Graph 5]

**INTERPRETATION**

The best and most effective way to solve the perennial unemployment is self-employment. Many of our youths seek white color jobs. This has become a nightmare for many. Fighting Corruption, nepotism, tribalism and favourism should also be enhanced in order for the deserving people to get employment without looking at their ethnic background. The government should also reconstruct the current education system to make sure it answers the call of the market. Static education has ruined lives of many graduates in Kenya.

**CONCLUSION**

Unemployment in Africa in general and Kenya in particular has become a thorn in a flesh. University graduates have become demoralized due to high unemployment levels. They are investing heavily in education yet securing gainful employment has become an uphill task. The government and other stakeholders are supposed to put practical solution on the table. Institutions of higher learning should work out a flexible and more marketable courses so that graduates are absorbed in to the dynamic market. Causes of unemployment including corruption, nepotism and favourism should be
discouraged and proper mechanisms put in place. Knee-jerk reactions won’t help in solving a problem of such magnitude. If lasting solution is not found on these issues, the problem of unemployment in Kenya will never be won.

RECOMMENDATION

Unemployment has caused a lot of problems in Kenya, including young people committing suicide. The research found out that the issue of unemployment can be at least solved or at worst reduced if the following recommendations are followed.

- Encourage the youth to be job creators and not job seekers only. Universities should play an important role in this case.
- Universities should develop courses that are relevant and demand driven. Duplication of courses with less demands should be minimized as this will flood graduates with similar courses that are not needed at all.
- Technical education should be enhanced and proper mechanisms put in place to sponsor and encourage students to take up these courses.
- Patriotism, ethics and citizenship should be encouraged. Strict regulations should be enacted to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism.

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A Study on the Causes of Unemployment among University Graduates in Kenya: A Case of Garissa County, Kenya

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