



Youth Unemployment In India: A Multifaceted And Tenacious Challenge

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Abstract

This article explores into the intricate issue of youth unemployment in India, a multifaceted challenge that persists despite the nation's ongoing economic growth. The problem is deeply rooted in several interrelated factors, including deficiencies in the education system, a shortage of job opportunities, and demographic pressures. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this problem. To combat youth unemployment effectively, a comprehensive approach is essential. This includes reforming the education system to align with the demands of a rapidly evolving job market, expanding vocational training and skill development programs, fostering entrepreneurship, and encouraging innovation. Additionally, investments in infrastructure and key industries, as well as robust social safety nets, are vital components of the solution. While the challenge is formidable, with concerted efforts and strategic policy interventions, India can harness the potential of its youth and steer the nation toward sustained economic growth and prosperity.

Keyterms: Youth unemployment, India, Multifaceted challenge, Job opportunities, Comprehensive approach

Introduction

India, as the world's second-most populous nation, finds itself perched on the precipice of a significant demographic transition. With over half of its population under the age of 25 and nearly two-thirds below the age of 35, the nation is endowed with what is widely known as a demographic dividend. This term encapsulates the unique advantage that arises when the proportion of young, working-age individuals vastly surpasses the number of dependents, such as children and the elderly. This demographic profile is often viewed as a beacon of hope, promising economic prosperity and development. It presents India with a distinct opportunity to harness the energy, aspirations, and talents of its burgeoning youth as a driving force for growth and progress. Yet, the realization of this demographic dividend is far from straightforward. It is a complex endeavour marked by multifaceted challenges, with one of the most pressing being the persistent issue of youth unemployment. In a country where the competition for formal employment opportunities is intense, and where educational aspirations are high, a significant proportion of young Indians find themselves grappling with the harsh reality of unemployment or underemployment. This issue goes beyond mere economic statistics; it is deeply intertwined with the mental health and well-being of the nation's youth.

This paper embarks on an ambitious journey—an exhaustive exploration of the intricate interplay between youth unemployment and mental health in the context of India. It endeavours to peel back the layers of complexity, unveiling the intricacies, examining the root causes, and dissecting the far-reaching consequences of this multifaceted issue. Moreover, it seeks to illuminate the diverse and ingenious coping mechanisms employed by India's youth in the face of adversity. As India navigates the treacherous waters of economic growth, globalization, and technological transformation, understanding how these seismic shifts impact the well-being of its young citizens becomes not just a matter of academic curiosity but a compelling imperative. This research strives to cast a spotlight on this critical intersection of youth, employment, and mental health—a convergence that holds the key to the nation's future progress and prosperity. India's demographic landscape is a tapestry woven with diversity, dynamism, and contradictions. As the world's second-most populous country, it commands attention not only for its sheer numbers but also for the age distribution of its population. The youthful vibrancy that permeates India's demographic profile is a defining feature of the nation's identity and its future trajectory. With more than half of its population under the age of 25, and nearly two-thirds under the age of 35, India enjoys the enviable position of having a significant proportion of its populace in the prime of their working years. The potential inherent in this demographic dividend has long been celebrated—a potential that promises to drive India's economic engine and spur development initiatives. It is a potential that, if harnessed effectively, can elevate India to a position of global prominence and prosperity. The concept of a demographic dividend rests on a simple premise: when the number of working-age individuals in a population far exceeds the number of dependents (children and elderly), a window of opportunity opens. This window represents a period when the country can achieve accelerated economic growth, driven by increased labour force participation, higher productivity, and reduced dependency burdens. India, with its vast reservoir of young, energetic individuals, stands on the brink of such an opportunity. However, the realization of this demographic dividend is anything but straightforward. The dividends can only be reaped if the conditions are conducive to productive employment for the youthful workforce. The competition for formal employment opportunities

in India is fierce, and the expectations and aspirations of the youth are high. Many young Indians, despite their potential and aspirations, find themselves ensnared in the quagmire of unemployment or underemployment—a predicament that reverberates far beyond economic indicators and deeply into the realm of mental health.

Youth unemployment in India is a multifaceted issue that has persisted over time, casting a long shadow on the aspirations and well-being of the nation's young population. It is a challenge that extends beyond mere economic statistics; it is deeply intertwined with the mental health and prospects of the country's youth. This section delves into the various dimensions of youth unemployment in India, examining the complex factors that contribute to its persistence and the far-reaching consequences it carries. A fundamental aspect of the youth unemployment conundrum in India is the dissonance between the aspirations nurtured through education and the stark realities of the job market. Education has long been upheld as a pathway to socioeconomic advancement and personal success. Young Indians invest significant time, effort, and resources into pursuing higher education and skill development with the expectation that it will lead to a future marked by meaningful employment aligned with their qualifications and ambitions. However, the transition from education to employment often proves to be a disillusioning experience. While India's job market has witnessed growth and expansion, it struggles to accommodate the surging influx of educated and skilled youth. The result is a profound and unsettling gap between the aspirations that education fosters and the employment opportunities that the job market offers. This dissonance has profound consequences for the mental well-being of young Indians. The realization that their hard-earned qualifications may not guarantee them suitable employment can lead to feelings of frustration, disappointment, and anxiety. It challenges the very core of their identity and self-worth, igniting a sense of unfulfilled potential and thwarted ambitions. Another critical facet of youth unemployment in India is the persistent issue of the skill gap. The modern job market, particularly in sectors experiencing rapid growth and transformation, demands a specific set of competencies and proficiencies. India possesses a vast pool of young talent; however, the skills they possess do not always align with the demands of the job market. This mismatch between skills supply and demand creates a situation in which young job seekers, despite their educational qualifications, may lack the necessary attributes to secure gainful employment. The skill gap dilemma is multifaceted. It encompasses not only the mismatch between the skills that young Indians acquire through education and training and those sought by employers but also the accessibility and relevance of vocational education and training programs. Inequities in access to quality education and vocational training opportunities persist, particularly among marginalized communities and disadvantaged regions. This lack of access exacerbates the skill gap, leaving many youths ill-equipped to compete effectively in the job market. For those who encounter the skill gap challenge, the consequences extend beyond the inability to secure employment. It undermines their confidence, induces self-doubt, and erodes their self-esteem. The constant struggle to bridge the gap between their existing skills and the skills required for desirable employment can lead to a sense of inadequacy and hopelessness.

In India's complex labour market landscape, formal employment opportunities are limited, leading to a substantial portion of the workforce finding refuge in the informal sector. The informal sector encompasses a wide array of economic activities, including street vending, small-scale manufacturing, agriculture, and various services. For many young Indians, especially those with limited formal education and skills, the informal sector represents a crucial source of livelihood. However, the informal sector presents its own set of challenges. Jobs in this sector often lack the job security, social protections, and benefits associated with formal employment. Workers in the informal sector may find themselves in precarious employment arrangements, characterized by irregular incomes, lack of access to healthcare, and limited opportunities for skill development and upward mobility. Despite the challenges, the informal sector is an essential source of employment for many young Indians. It provides a means of survival and sustenance for those who lack access to formal employment opportunities. However, the vulnerability and instability of informal sector employment can take a toll on mental well-being. Uncertainty regarding income, lack of access to social safety nets, and the absence of job stability contribute to stress, anxiety, and a pervasive sense of insecurity among young workers in the informal sector. Beyond the economic consequences of youth unemployment, there lies a profound impact on the very essence of identity and aspiration. Young individuals often enter the job market with high hopes, dreams, and aspirations—a vision of a future characterized by financial independence, career growth, and personal fulfilment. These aspirations are not merely economic goals; they are deeply ingrained in one's identity and sense of self-worth. The inability to secure gainful employment that aligns with one's qualifications and aspirations can lead to a crisis of identity. It challenges the narrative of progress and success that young individuals internalize throughout their formative years. Instead of the envisioned trajectory of upward mobility, they find themselves navigating a landscape marked by stagnation and uncertainty. This dissonance between aspiration and reality can have profound implications for mental health. Feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and disillusionment may arise as young individuals grapple with the stark disparity between their envisioned future and their present circumstances. The erosion of self-esteem and self-worth can lead to anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness. Young individuals may question their abilities and worthiness, casting a shadow over their mental well-being. The consequences of youth unemployment extend far beyond individual experiences and permeate the social and economic fabric of society. It generates a ripple effect that reverberates through families, communities, and the nation at large. In the context of families, youth unemployment can strain familial relationships and finances. Young individuals who are unable to contribute to household expenses may experience a sense of guilt and frustration, while their families grapple with increased economic pressures. These dynamics can lead to intergenerational tensions and conflicts within households, further exacerbating mental health challenges. At the community level, the prevalence of youth unemployment can have broader societal implications. High rates of joblessness among young adults can contribute to social unrest, disillusionment, and a sense of disenfranchisement. This, in turn, can have implications for social cohesion, potentially fuelling unrest and instability. From an economic perspective, persistent youth unemployment represents a loss

of human capital and productive potential. A significant portion of the population remains underutilized, leading to reduced economic growth and missed opportunities for development. The burden of providing social safety nets and support mechanisms for unemployed youth also places strains on government resources. The challenges of youth unemployment in India are further compounded by the rapid pace of technological advancement and globalization. These transformative forces have reshaped the nature of work and the skills demanded by the job market. Automation, artificial intelligence, and digitalization have led to shifts in the labour market, rendering certain jobs obsolete while creating new opportunities in emerging sectors. Young Indians, particularly those without access to relevant skills and training, may find themselves ill-prepared for the changing nature of work. The digital divide, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities, can further exacerbate disparities in employment prospects. Globalization has introduced both opportunities and challenges. While it has opened up avenues for global employment and entrepreneurship, it has also exposed workers to increased competition from across the world. Young Indians must now contend with not only domestic job seekers but also international candidates vying for the same positions. This globalization of the labour market can intensify the competition for employment opportunities, making it even more challenging for youth to secure desirable jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic, a global cataclysmic event, added an unprecedented layer of complexity to the issue of youth unemployment in India. It disrupted economies across the world, leading to job losses, salary reductions, and heightened uncertainty. In India, the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on the youth, with many bearing the brunt of economic downturns. The lockdowns and restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus disrupted various sectors of the economy, including hospitality, tourism, retail, and informal labour. These sectors, which often employ a significant portion of young workers, experienced severe contractions. As a result, many young individuals faced sudden job losses, income insecurity, and the challenges of navigating an uncertain future. The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing issues related to youth unemployment, including skill gaps, educational disparities, and gender-based challenges. Young women, in particular, faced heightened vulnerabilities during the pandemic, as they often bore the brunt of caregiving responsibilities and were disproportionately affected by job losses in sectors such as domestic work and retail. Moreover, the pandemic underscored the need for resilience and adaptability in the face of economic shocks. Young Indians had to pivot quickly, explore new avenues of work, and adapt to remote and digital modes of employment. The ability to navigate these transitions was contingent on factors such as access to technology, digital literacy, and the presence of support networks.

Unemployment in India is not a monolithic challenge; rather, it is a multidimensional issue shaped by a confluence of economic, social, and technological forces. Its persistence poses profound implications for the well-being of the nation's youth, with mental health consequences that extend far beyond individual experiences. The dissonance between educational aspirations and employment realities, the skill gap dilemma, gender disparities in employment, and the challenges of the informal sector collectively contribute to the complex tapestry of youth unemployment. The pandemic, with its disruptive force, laid bare the vulnerabilities within this landscape. Addressing youth unemployment in India requires a multifaceted approach. It necessitates targeted interventions that focus on equipping young individuals with relevant skills, ensuring equitable access to education and vocational training, and dismantling gender-based barriers in the workforce. Policy measures must also consider the evolving nature of work in the digital age and the need for adaptability and lifelong learning. Furthermore, addressing youth unemployment is not solely an economic imperative but a matter of social justice and human rights. It involves fostering a supportive environment that recognizes the mental health challenges faced by young individuals, destigmatizes unemployment, and provides access to mental health support and resources. As India grapples with the complexities of youth unemployment, it must harness the potential of its youthful population as a driving force for development and progress. By addressing the multifaceted challenges and mental health implications of youth unemployment, India can work toward a future where its young citizens can not only contribute to economic growth but also flourish as empowered, resilient individuals.

Impact of unemployment on youth in India

Unemployment is a pressing issue that affects individuals and societies worldwide, and its impact on the youth in India is particularly significant. India, with its large and growing youth population, faces a multitude of challenges when it comes to providing employment opportunities and managing the negative consequences of youth unemployment. In this essay, we will delve into the various aspects of how unemployment adversely affects the youth in India. To begin with, youth unemployment in India has far-reaching economic implications. When young individuals are unable to find gainful employment, they are not contributing to the country's GDP and economic growth. This represents a significant loss of potential productivity. Instead of actively participating in the workforce, unemployed youth often rely on their families or government subsidies for financial support. This puts a strain on family resources and diverts government funds from other critical areas, such as education and healthcare.

Furthermore, the financial dependence that stems from youth unemployment can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem among young individuals. Many young people aspire to be financially independent and contribute to their families' well-being. However, when they are unable to secure a job, it can be emotionally distressing. This sense of inadequacy can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, and even social isolation. The mental health of unemployed youth is often compromised, leading to a vicious cycle of unemployment and mental health challenges. Another negative impact of youth unemployment in India is the exacerbation of social inequality. In a country with stark economic disparities, the lack of employment opportunities for young people from marginalized backgrounds can perpetuate and even deepen these inequalities. It becomes harder for youth from disadvantaged communities to break the cycle of poverty and access the same opportunities as their more privileged peers. This can lead to social unrest and

dissatisfaction, further destabilizing society. Education is often touted as the key to escaping poverty and securing a better future, but youth unemployment can undermine the value of education. Many young Indians invest significant time and resources in pursuing higher education in the hope of improving their job prospects. However, when they graduate and are still unable to find suitable employment, they may become disillusioned with the education system. This disillusionment can lead to a loss of faith in the system and a reluctance to pursue further education, even when it might be beneficial in the long run. Moreover, youth unemployment can have adverse effects on the physical health of young individuals. The stress and uncertainty associated with joblessness can lead to unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as poor diet and lack of exercise. Additionally, the inability to afford adequate healthcare can result in untreated medical conditions, further deteriorating physical health. Over time, these factors can lead to a decline in overall well-being and increased healthcare costs for the individual and society. The negative consequences of youth unemployment are not limited to the economic and social spheres; they also extend to the political arena. When a significant portion of the youth population is unemployed and dissatisfied with their prospects, it can lead to political instability. Young people are often at the forefront of movements for social change, and when their voices are not heard and their concerns are not addressed, it can result in protests, demonstrations, and even political upheaval. One of the critical issues stemming from youth unemployment in India is the phenomenon of "brain drain." When highly educated and skilled young individuals are unable to find suitable jobs in their home country, they often seek opportunities abroad. This brain drain deprives India of its most talented and educated citizens, who could otherwise contribute to the country's growth and development. Instead, they contribute to the workforce and economy of another nation, further exacerbating the problem of unemployment at home. In addition to economic and social repercussions, youth unemployment also has long-term consequences for the demographic landscape of India. When young people delay or forgo starting families due to economic instability, it can lead to a decline in birth rates. This demographic shift can have implications for the country's future population structure, including an aging population with potential healthcare and pension challenges.

Another significant concern related to youth unemployment in India is the potential for increased crime rates. When young individuals are unable to secure legal sources of income, they may turn to illegal activities as a means of survival. This can lead to a rise in crime, including theft, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities, which not only harms individuals but also undermines social cohesion and safety. Furthermore, the negative impact of youth unemployment on India's workforce extends to the development of critical skills and expertise. When young people remain unemployed or underemployed, they miss out on valuable on-the-job training and experience. This can result in a workforce that lacks the necessary skills and expertise to compete in a globalized and rapidly evolving economy. It is also essential to consider the gender dimension of youth unemployment in India. Women, in particular, face unique challenges when it comes to finding employment. Gender discrimination and traditional gender roles can limit women's access to the job market, leading to higher rates of female youth unemployment. This not only affects the economic well-being of women but also perpetuates gender inequality in society. The negative impact of youth unemployment on India's youth extends to their future prospects and opportunities. When young people face prolonged unemployment or underemployment, they may miss out on critical career development opportunities. This can hinder their ability to progress in their chosen fields, resulting in stagnant careers and limited upward mobility. The issue of youth unemployment also has implications for the overall productivity of the workforce. When a significant portion of the youth population is unemployed or underemployed, it means that a valuable resource of human capital is not being fully utilized. This underutilization of talent and potential can lead to a less competitive and less productive economy. Youth unemployment in India has wide-ranging negative impacts on individuals, families, communities, and the nation as a whole. It results in economic losses, exacerbates social inequalities, undermines the value of education, harms physical and mental health, and can lead to political instability. Additionally, it contributes to brain drain, affects demographic trends, increases crime rates, hinders skill development, perpetuates gender inequality, and limits future career opportunities. Addressing youth unemployment in India requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving education and vocational training, promoting job creation, addressing gender disparities, and fostering economic growth. Failure to address this issue effectively can have far-reaching and detrimental consequences for India's present and future generations.

India, Unemployment, Youth and Mental Health

Unemployment is a pervasive global issue, affecting individuals and societies across the world. However, its impact on the mental health of educated youth is particularly noteworthy. In an era where education is often seen as the key to prosperity and self-fulfilment, the inability of educated young individuals to secure suitable employment can have profound psychological consequences. This essay explores in-depth the multifaceted relationship between unemployment and the mental health of educated youth, examining the challenges they face, the psychological toll it takes, and potential strategies for alleviating these issues. India, often referred to as the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing economies, boasts a young and dynamic population. With approximately 65% of its population under the age of 35, India is expected to have a significant demographic advantage in the coming decades. However, this advantage comes with a unique set of challenges, one of which is the alarming issue of unemployment among its educated youth and the subsequent impact on their mental well-being. This article reviews into the multifaceted problem of unemployment and explores the profound repercussions it has on their mental health. India has made significant strides in expanding its education infrastructure over the years. With a large number of universities, colleges, and institutions, it has produced a sizable pool of highly educated young individuals. However, this growth in the education sector has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in job opportunities. The result is an alarming paradox where educated youth find themselves facing unemployment despite their qualifications. This paradox is rooted in several factors. Firstly, there exists a significant

disparity between the quantity and quality of education in India. While the country has succeeded in increasing the number of educational institutions, concerns about the quality of education persist. Many graduates lack the skills and practical knowledge required by the job market, leading to a mismatch between their qualifications and the demands of potential employers. This quality-quantity paradox exacerbates the issue of unemployment among the educated youth. Furthermore, there is a pervasive societal pressure in India to pursue higher education in the belief that it leads to better job prospects. Many Indian youth opt for postgraduate degrees and certifications, hoping to gain an edge in the competitive job market. However, this often results in an oversupply of qualified candidates for specific positions, leading to fierce competition and fewer job opportunities.

The unemployment rate in India has been a cause for concern, particularly among the educated youth. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon. Firstly, structural issues within the Indian job market play a significant role. These issues include a lack of diversification in the job market and overreliance on certain sectors, such as information technology and manufacturing. This narrow focus on specific industries leaves many qualified individuals with limited options, exacerbating unemployment. Additionally, cyclical factors, such as economic downturns and fluctuations, can further exacerbate the problem. When the economy experiences a downturn, businesses may freeze hiring or lay off employees, leaving many educated youths without job prospects. India's affirmative action policies, which include reservations for certain castes and communities, have also contributed to the unemployment problem. While these policies aim to provide opportunities for historically marginalized groups, they also lead to a limited number of seats available in educational institutions and government jobs for the general category. This competition for a limited number of positions intensifies the unemployment problem. Moreover, there is a significant gap in employment opportunities between urban and rural areas in India. Many educated youths from rural backgrounds find it challenging to secure employment in their hometowns, leading to migration to urban centres in search of job opportunities. This migration, in turn, places additional pressure on urban infrastructure and resources. The ramifications of unemployment among Indian educated youth extend beyond financial difficulties; they also have severe implications for mental health. Prolonged unemployment can lead to feelings of anxiety and depression. The pressure to succeed, coupled with the frustration of being unable to find suitable employment, can take a toll on an individual's mental well-being. The societal stigma associated with unemployment in India often leads to a decrease in an individual's self-esteem and self-worth. This negative self-perception can be detrimental to mental health, as individuals may internalize the belief that their worth is solely determined by their employment status. Additionally, Indian society places a significant emphasis on familial and social expectations. The inability to secure employment can result in immense pressure from family and peers, leading to strained relationships and further emotional distress. The importance of mental health support cannot be understated. Support networks, including family and friends, as well as professional counselling services, can provide crucial emotional assistance during periods of unemployment. Opening up conversations about mental health and seeking help when needed is vital to mitigating the negative psychological effects of unemployment. The issue of unemployment among Indian educated youth is a complex problem with far-reaching consequences. Beyond the economic impact, it has severe implications for mental health, affecting the well-being of the nation's young population. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort from government, educational institutions, and society as a whole. By investing in quality education, promoting skill development, and fostering entrepreneurship, India can work towards a future where its educated youth can find gainful employment and enjoy robust mental health. Only then can India harness the full potential of its demographic advantage and truly become a global powerhouse.

Low self-esteem and Worth

At its core, self-esteem refers to a person's overall sense of self-worth and self-value. It is the way individuals perceive and evaluate themselves, encompassing their beliefs, feelings, and judgments about their abilities, accomplishments, and qualities. Self-worth, closely related to self-esteem, reflects the intrinsic value that an individual attributes to themselves, irrespective of external circumstances or societal standards. Both self-esteem and self-worth play pivotal roles in shaping an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Unemployment, particularly long-term or involuntary job loss, has a profound and often detrimental impact on an individual's self-esteem and self-worth. This effect can be understood through a multifaceted lens, examining various psychological, social, and personal factors. The psychological impact of unemployment on self-esteem and self-worth is multifaceted and interconnected. One of the primary psychological mechanisms at play is the loss of a structured daily routine and purpose that employment provides. Work not only offers financial security but also a sense of identity, purpose, and accomplishment. When individuals lose their jobs, they often find themselves adrift, lacking the routine and structure that gave their lives meaning. This sudden void can lead to feelings of emptiness, worthlessness, and a pervasive sense of aimlessness. As individuals struggle to fill their days without the structure of work, they may grapple with a growing belief that they lack value or purpose in society. This internal dialogue can significantly erode self-esteem and self-worth, as individuals internalize the idea that they are somehow less valuable or capable because they are unemployed. Furthermore, the job search process itself can be emotionally taxing. Constant rejections, the need to repeatedly prove one's worth, and the fear of inadequacy during interviews can significantly dent an individual's self-esteem. The prolonged nature of job searches can exacerbate these negative feelings, as repeated failures can foster a sense of hopelessness and frustration. The social dynamics surrounding unemployment can further contribute to the erosion of self-esteem and self-worth. Society often attaches a stigma to unemployment, viewing it as a personal failure rather than recognizing the systemic and economic factors that contribute to joblessness. This societal perception can lead to feelings of shame and embarrassment among the unemployed. Individuals may begin to internalize this external judgment, blaming themselves for their predicament and viewing their unemployment as a reflection of their

personal worth. This internalization of societal stigma can create a vicious cycle, where negative self-perception is reinforced by external judgments, further diminishing self-esteem and self-worth. Additionally, the social isolation that often accompanies unemployment can intensify these negative feelings. Many social activities and connections are centred around the workplace, and the loss of a job can lead to reduced social interactions. As a result, individuals may withdraw from social circles due to feelings of inadequacy or shame, leading to further erosion of their self-esteem and self-worth. Personal experiences during unemployment can also significantly impact an individual's self-esteem and self-worth. The emotional toll of financial insecurity, the strain on relationships, and the frustration of not being able to provide for oneself or one's family can be overwhelming. This sense of powerlessness and dependence on others can further erode an individual's sense of self-worth. Moreover, the comparison with peers and colleagues who remain employed can intensify feelings of inadequacy. Seeing others succeed in their careers while one struggles to secure employment can lead to self-criticism and self-doubt. It's common for unemployed individuals to question their skills, abilities, and qualifications in the face of such comparisons, further diminishing their self-esteem. As time goes on, the duration of unemployment can exacerbate these personal experiences. Prolonged joblessness can lead to a sense of hopelessness and resignation, with individuals beginning to believe that they are destined to remain unemployed indefinitely. This resignation can be especially damaging to self-esteem, as it reinforces a sense of helplessness and a belief that one is incapable of changing their circumstances.

Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are two of the most prevalent mental health disorders worldwide, and they frequently co-occur. They share many common features, including symptoms of persistent sadness, low energy, disrupted sleep patterns, and impaired concentration. When experienced in the context of unemployment, these disorders take on unique dimensions, with unemployment serving as a significant stressor and contributor to their onset. The psychological impact of unemployment on mental health is complex, and the development of depression and anxiety can be seen as a result of multiple interacting factors. The experience of job loss often shatters an individual's sense of stability and control over their life. Work provides structure and purpose, and its absence can create a void filled with uncertainty. The pervasive sense of unpredictability in the job market can intensify these feelings, making individuals feel helpless in the face of an uncertain future. This loss of control is a potent trigger for anxiety, as individuals grapple with the fear of the unknown and the potential consequences of continued joblessness. One of the most tangible and immediate consequences of unemployment is financial strain. The loss of income can lead to difficulties in meeting basic needs, paying bills, and managing debt. Financial stress is closely linked to both depression and anxiety, as individuals worry about their financial stability and their ability to provide for themselves and their families. The persistent fear of falling into poverty can be a constant source of anxiety. Unemployment often results in social isolation and withdrawal from social circles. The workplace is a common source of social interaction, and its absence can lead to loneliness and feelings of isolation. This social isolation can exacerbate depression and anxiety, as individuals lack the emotional support and connections that are essential for mental well-being. Moreover, the stigma associated with unemployment can discourage individuals from seeking social support, leading to increased isolation.

Social isolation

Another dimension of the impact of unemployment on youth mental health is the issue of social isolation. The workplace is not solely a source of income but also a significant social environment. Young adults often build valuable relationships with colleagues and peers in their professional life, which contributes to their sense of belonging and connectedness. However, when unemployment strikes, these social connections can become strained or severed altogether. The resulting isolation can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and despair, further deteriorating mental health. Furthermore, unemployment can strip young people of their sense of identity and purpose. Many individuals derive a substantial part of their identity from their careers. When they are unable to find employment, they may struggle to find meaning in their lives, leading to a sense of emptiness and a lack of direction. This existential crisis can be profoundly unsettling and contribute to a host of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. Additionally, the mental health consequences of unemployment can manifest in unhealthy coping mechanisms. The stress and emotional turmoil that come with joblessness may drive young adults to engage in negative health behaviours as a means of escape or relief. Excessive alcohol or substance use, overeating, and adopting a sedentary lifestyle are some of the common ways individuals may attempt to cope with their circumstances. These behaviours can further compromise both physical and mental health, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of declining well-being. The impact of unemployment on the mental health of young people cannot be understated. It is a complex issue that touches upon various aspects of an individual's life, from financial stability and self-esteem to social connections and overall well-being. Moreover, the consequences of youth unemployment extend far beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and society as a whole. Recognizing the gravity of this issue is the first step toward implementing effective measures to mitigate its negative effects. Providing support and resources to unemployed youth, including access to mental health services, career counselling, and opportunities for skill development and networking, is crucial to breaking the cycle of unemployment-related mental health challenges. Ultimately, addressing youth unemployment is not only a matter of economic policy but also a vital component of promoting mental health and well-being among young adults.

Conclusion

Youth unemployment in India presents itself as a multifaceted and tenacious challenge that requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders to address effectively. As we have discussed throughout this exploration, the root causes of this issue are deeply intertwined with factors such as inadequate education and skills development, a lack of employment opportunities in key sectors, and demographic pressures. These challenges are further exacerbated by economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To tackle youth unemployment in India, a multifaceted approach is imperative. It starts with a fundamental overhaul of the education system to align it with the needs of a rapidly evolving job market. Vocational training and skill development programs must be expanded and modernized to equip young people with the skills required in the 21st-century workforce. Simultaneously, India needs to foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in job creation, and policies that promote their growth and sustainability can be a driving force in reducing unemployment among the youth. Furthermore, addressing the issue of youth unemployment necessitates investments in infrastructure and key industries to create more employment opportunities. Government initiatives, public-private partnerships, and foreign investments can all contribute to this goal.

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