

Forum: The Arab League

Issue: Measures to use sustainable development to promote youth employment in the Middle East

Student Officer: Myesha Bangdiwala

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

Youth unemployment refers to those between the ages of 15-24 being unable to transition in a job or career. To be qualified as unemployed, one must be of the official working age of teenager to mid 60s and be able and actively seeking to work. Youth unemployment rates are higher than adult unemployment rates in almost every country in the world, with unemployment being a major issue as high unemployment rates signify a distressed economy and a population willing to take more drastic measures towards securing income out of desperation. This desperation often leads to illegal employment, inhumane working conditions and crime. There are many that suggest the youth are also more proactive to rebel and pose a larger threat to disrupt society, possibly due to the building frustration resulting from delayed milestones among other reasons, which is another reason that unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is an issue. Marriage, homeownership, and political engagement are just a few of the important life milestones that are impacted by delayed transition to the workplace. This postponement in the transition to maturity has been dubbed "waithood," a phrase that refers to the squandering of adolescent energy and potential, where young adults are not financially stable enough to move out and start their lives. This causes crippling effects on wellbeing & social cohesion as well as economic growth.

Unemployment has historically been a main catalyst for disruption to order, revolutions and political, economic and social unrest. This conflict and rebellion has the potential to lead to increased chaos, supply shortages, violence and more. Examples of this include the Arab Spring, French revolution and the Russian civil war. The Russian civil war resulted

in 7-12 million casualties and losses including civilians and non-combatants and the Arab Spring has an estimated 61000 deaths. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a major cause of conflict that costs lives and leads more youth to poverty.

For nearly 25 years, the MENA area has had the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, hitting 30% in 2017. While the MENA region is diverse, this issue is faced across the area. It frequently takes young people in the MENA region years to obtain employment. Underutilizing labour throughout a person's early career has long-term impacts, including fewer employment prospects and lower earning potential decades later in their careers.

Many people who are stateless and/or displaced as a result of political conflicts are unable to pursue education or continuously hold employment. The MENA region has seen a large amount of conflict, such as the wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen. Conflict frequently increases prejudice towards a particular group, making it more difficult for them to enrol in school and colleges or find employment.

Consider a flight, the travellers spend their time in peace with the knowledge of when their wait will be over - and in cases of delay, can be assured a rescheduling. MENA youth do not have a clear idea of when their flight towards their future will take off, if ever. Youth unemployment is a threat to all youth, even those who have been educated. This can also build frustration and stress to pay off the costs of education, especially university.

Definition of Key Terms

MENA

MENA is an acronym for 'Middle East and North Africa'. Some countries in the MENA region include Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and more.

Made Redundant

Someone who is made redundant is someone who was let go from their job because they are no longer required for their role

Waithood

A phrase that refers to the squandering of adolescent energy and potential, where young adults are not financially stable enough to move out and start their lives. This causes crippling effects on wellbeing & social cohesion as well as economic growth.

Youth Bulge

Often defined as a particularly substantial proportion of young people in a country's population.

Key Issues

Lack of Education

Employers require highly skilled labour, as all current educational and policy research highlights. Tech skills, English language proficiency, and soft skills such as basic business etiquette and the ability to deal with conflict productively aren't very hard skills to learn, but receiving this education can be hard for many due to cost and/or availability [Kabbani, Nader]. There is much discrimination in receiving education and further in receiving work, especially towards women. "Young women are twice as likely as young men to fall into this category and the gender gap is even more pronounced in the Middle East, where social and cultural norms have in the past limited women's education or career goals," says one source [WEForum]. Those who aren't able to learn the skills required to apply for jobs won't be able to find employment. Lack of education can lead to youth unemployment in several ways:

1. **Skills gap:** Young people without proper education may not have the skills and knowledge needed for many job opportunities in today's workforce. Employers often seek workers with specific training and education, making it difficult for those without education to compete for available jobs.

2. Limited job options: A lack of education often restricts job choices, limiting the potential for employment in certain industries.
3. Lower earning potential: Research has shown that those with higher levels of education tend to earn more over their lifetime. So, youth without education may have lower earning potential and face greater difficulty securing employment.
4. Difficulty adapting to new technology: As the job market becomes increasingly automated, workers without education may struggle to adapt and acquire new skills, leading to a higher risk of unemployment.
5. Negative perceptions: Finally, lack of education can lead to negative perceptions among employers, who may view uneducated workers as less capable or less motivated, making it harder for them to find employment.

Overall, the lack of education can contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment for young people, making it difficult for them to escape poverty and improve their economic prospects.

Youth Unemployment Effects Regardless of Social Class

However youth unemployment affects all. Unemployment affects both higher and lower education and income levels equally. Furthermore, social security coverage, including unemployment and pension plans, is often limited to government personnel. If you are unemployed, you will swiftly fall into poverty. Even if young people have employment, working conditions are typically very bad, according to an ILO expert: low earnings, limited social protection, a lack of stable contracts and career opportunities, and weak or non-existent trade unions to offer them a voice. "So it is no wonder that many young people are angry,"

The Impacts of Unemployment

Unemployment indicates that an economy is not making full use of its available labour force, as well as signifying growing unhappiness and unrest within a population.

Impact on Economy and Business

The economy will not develop as quickly and effectively as it would like and may even begin to decline as not enou. This economic crisis will have a direct impact on companies.

With higher unemployment, many households will have less money. This will result in fewer sales for many firms as customers spend less. However, when unemployment rises, demand for certain goods and services rises. This is due to people switching to less expensive alternatives. Such goods and services are frequently supermarket own-brand items and are sometimes seen as of lower quality. Businesses that supply them may benefit from rising unemployment rates.

Impact on Mental Health

Unemployment creates stress, which has long-term bodily health impacts and can have a detrimental impact on people's mental health, such as depression, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem. Stress, sadness, mental difficulty, anxiety, and suicidal conduct are all common symptoms. Unemployment robs and damages the self image of the unemployed, making many believe they are not worthy or capable enough to find employment. After even many years of studying and effort,

Poverty

Youth unemployment can lead to poverty in a number of ways:

1. Loss of income: When young people are unemployed, they are not earning a regular income, which can make it difficult to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare. This can lead to poverty, especially in the long term.
2. Decreased future earning potential: Young people who are unemployed for extended periods of time may miss out on opportunities to gain work experience and develop their skills, which can have long-term consequences for their earning potential.

3. Increased reliance on government support: Unemployment can lead to an increased reliance on government support, such as unemployment benefits or other forms of social assistance. While these programs can help to mitigate the immediate effects of unemployment, they are not a sustainable solution in the long term.
4. Psychological effects: Unemployment can also have psychological effects, such as low self-esteem and increased stress, which can further contribute to poverty and social exclusion.
5. Decreased economic activity: High levels of youth unemployment can lead to a decrease in economic activity, as fewer young people are able to contribute to the workforce and generate economic growth. This can have a negative impact on the overall economy, making it more difficult for everyone, including the unemployed, to escape poverty.

In short, youth unemployment can have a cascading effect on an individual's life and the economy, leading to poverty and social exclusion.

Violence and crime

Samuel Huntington argues that “above a 20 per cent share of youth, the resulting ‘youth bulge’ would lead to competition for scarce resources and inevitable violence and crime” [Chaaban, Jad] social scientist and genocide researcher at the University of Bremen, Gunnar Heinsohn, says “when 15 to 29 year olds make up more than 30 per cent of the population, violence tends to happen, *regardless* of economic conditions.” [Chaaban, Jad] And especially with unfavourable economic conditions, and the knowledge that “unemployment tends to propel persons into crime to enable them to survive economically” [R Tarling] it leads us to conclude that youth unemployment and instability breeds unrest, violence and crime.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Djibouti

Djibouti's youth unemployment rate was 79.91% in both 2020 and 2021, standing as the country with the most youth unemployment. The country's financial status and economy is one among many reasons why the country is considered one of the least developed countries in the world, and with a weak education system and the inability for many businesses to pay their employees - many of the youth don't get work easily. With such a weak economy, it is in Djibouti's best interests to employ the youth as it could signify a recovering market.

Yemen

Yemen is one of the only Arab countries to have a dedicated youth strategy (2006-2015). Yemen understands the importance of the youth's potential to contribute and demographic significance, pushes the need for a comprehensive, multi sectoral approach to youth protection and development, relates their statement's relationship to other plans such as "Third National Development Plan" and "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper", and wishes and calls for ministers, NGO's and to ensure the effective implementation of their strategy. According to their youth strategy statement, they mention plans to create a national youth employment environment and plan.

Algeria

In 2011, during Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution, protests in Algeria erupted around the same time as Algeria also faced the issue of unemployed youth. The protests didn't gain as much momentum as the government had increased food subsidies, increased pay for court clerks and municipal civil servants, and aided young entrepreneurs by providing interest-free loans to start businesses, granting them a three-year tax exemption, and most likely reserving a quota of local public contracts for them. In addition, the president pledged financial transfers and furnishings to needy families in 14 remote locations. After 19 years, the government ended the state of emergency.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates aims to cut down youth unemployment, with efforts such as the Emirati Youth Initiative to cut down youth unemployment in the Arab Region. The UAE has a very low youth unemployment rate (7.5% in May 2021) compared to, for example, Palestine and Egypt. They have measures to help fellow Arab countries, as they themselves do not greatly face the issue of youth unemployment.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR has many projects in various countries with issues of youth unemployment. Such an example would be by Syrian refugees in Jordan, or the projects in Uganda. The UNHCR’s view would be to help as many of the unemployed youth as possible.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
<p>1960s and 1970s</p>	<p>The issue of youth unemployment gains attention as large numbers of young people enter the labour market but face limited job opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic recession: This was due to factors such as increased competition in the job market and declining industries, such as manufacturing. ● Protests and social unrest: The high levels of youth unemployment led to 	<p>This leads to increased social and political pressure to address the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic recession: During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many developed countries experienced economic recession, which led to a significant increase in unemployment rates, particularly among young people. ● Protests and social unrest: This led to a sense of disillusionment among young people, who felt that they had

	<p>widespread social unrest, with young people protesting against the lack of job opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Decreased enrollment in higher education: Many young people saw no point in investing in their education if they believed that they would not be able to find employment after graduation.	<p>been excluded from the economic benefits of society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increase in crime and substance abuse: The high levels of youth unemployment also led to an increase in crime and substance abuse. Many young people who could not find employment turned to criminal activities to make a living, while others became involved in substance abuse as a means of coping with the stress and frustration of their situation.● Decreased enrollment in higher education: The high levels of youth unemployment also led to a decrease in enrollment in higher education.● Government intervention: In response to the rising levels of youth unemployment, many governments introduced programs aimed at helping young people find employment. These programs included job training, apprenticeships, and public works projects, among others.
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<p>1983</p>	<p>The youth unemployment rate reaches an all-time high in the United States, reaching nearly 17%. The 1983 youth unemployment crisis was a significant event that had far-reaching impacts on society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High unemployment rates: In 1983, youth unemployment rates reached unprecedented levels. This was largely due to the economic recession of the early 1980s. ● The high levels of youth unemployment led to widespread social unrest, with young people protesting against the lack of job opportunities. This included large-scale demonstrations, marches, and occupations of public spaces. 	<p>This leads to increased public and political awareness of the issue and the need for solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nearly one in four young people in the United Kingdom out of work ● The high levels of youth unemployment also led to an increase in poverty and homelessness among young people. Many young people who could not find employment were forced to rely on welfare benefits or to live on the streets.
<p>1992</p>	<p>The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Right to Development, which recognizes the right of young people to decent work and to participate in</p>	<p>It helped to bring attention to the importance of economic and social rights in the realisation of the right to development, and encouraged greater participation and empowerment of individuals and</p>

	<p>the development of their communities. The 1992 Declaration on the Right to Development was a significant event in the field of human rights and development. Adoption by the United Nations General Assembly: The Declaration on the Right to Development was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 December 1992. The Declaration recognized the right to development as a universal and inalienable human right.</p>	<p>communities in the development process.</p> <p>Recognition of economic and social rights: The Declaration emphasised the importance of economic and social rights, such as the right to work, the right to education, and the right to health, in the realisation of the right to development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Emphasis on participation and empowerment: The Declaration stressed the importance of the participation of individuals and communities in the development process, and the need to empower them to exercise their right to development.● Encouragement of international cooperation: The Declaration encouraged international cooperation in support of the right to development, including the transfer of resources and technology from developed to developing countries.● Establishment of the United Nations Commission on the Right to Development: The Declaration also led to the establishment of the United Nations Commission on the Right to Development, which was
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		tasked with promoting and monitoring the implementation of the right to development.
1998	The International Labor Organization (ILO) launches the Global Employment Agenda, which aims to promote decent work for all, including young people. The Global Employment Agenda was launched with a focus on employment, recognizing that decent work was essential to economic and social progress. The Agenda aimed to promote policies and programs that would create decent work opportunities for all. The Agenda recognized that unemployment was a global problem and that a global response was needed to address it.	The Agenda encouraged international cooperation to tackle unemployment, and provided a framework for countries to work together to create decent work opportunities. The Global Employment Agenda emphasized the need to integrate employment into development strategies, recognizing that economic growth and employment creation were interdependent. The Global Employment Agenda encouraged social dialogue between governments, workers, and employers, recognizing that cooperation was essential to creating decent work opportunities.
2000	The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Millennium Declaration, which includes a commitment to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. The 2000 Millennium Declaration was a seminal event in which world leaders	The 2000 Millennium Declaration placed a significant emphasis on reducing youth unemployment and addressing the challenges faced by young people in accessing decent work. Since the Declaration, various initiatives have been launched to address this issue, and while progress has been made, the challenge of

	<p>from 189 countries committed to work together to achieve a set of global goals, including the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development. One of the key areas of focus was the reduction of youth unemployment.</p>	<p>youth unemployment remains a critical concern.</p> <p>In the aftermath of the Millennium Declaration, a number of initiatives were launched to address the issue of youth unemployment. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the Global Employment Agenda, which aimed to create decent and productive work for all, including young people. The ILO also launched the Youth Employment Programme, which aimed to promote the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities of young people.</p> <p>Additionally, the World Bank and other international development organizations increased their support for programs aimed at creating employment opportunities for young people, particularly in developing countries. This included support for skills training and job creation programs, as well as initiatives to promote entrepreneurship and access to finance for young people.</p>
<p>2005</p>	<p>The ILO launches the World Youth Report, which highlights the need for</p>	<p>The ILO World Youth Report has been significant in increasing public awareness</p>

	<p>comprehensive policies to address the challenges faced by young people in the labour market.</p> <p>The ILO World Youth Report is an annual publication by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that provides a comprehensive overview of the situation of young people in the labour market. The Report examines the challenges facing young people in accessing decent work and provides recommendations for improving their employment prospects.</p>	<p>of the difficulties young people face in the job market and in guiding practice and policy aimed at enhancing those possibilities. The Report's recommendations for evidence-based policy and programmatic intervention have assisted in promoting action by governments, employers, and workers organisations to address teenage unemployment.</p> <p>For instance, the implementation of policies aiming at enhancing the caliber of education and training, as well as the establishment of employment and entrepreneurship prospects for young people, has been advised by the ILO World Youth Report. Additionally, the Report has advocated for the introduction of policies that assist young workers and make sure they are paid fairly, have safe and healthy working conditions, and are shielded from exploitation and discrimination at work.</p>
<p>2007-2008</p>	<p>Due to the financial crisis of 2008 (Global Financial Crisis or GFC), in December of 2008 the unemployment rate rose by 7.2%, from 623,000 to 11.1 million people.</p>	<p>The collapse of the housing bubble in 2007 and 2008 caused a deep economic depression, which further sent the unemployment rate to 10.0% in October of the following year of 2009 as companies</p>

	<p>The crisis was the housing market's downfall, spurred by low interest rates, easy borrowing, inadequate regulation, and toxic mortgage lending. The global financial crisis leads to increased youth unemployment rates in many countries, particularly in Europe.</p>	<p>couldn't pay their employees since interest rates were greatly increasing. This led to increased pressure on governments to address the issue and implement policies to support young people in the labour market.</p>
<p>January 14, 2011</p>	<p>Sparked by the Tunisian or Jasmine Revolution, the Arab Spring Movement protested and fought against unemployment and other issues. One revolution during the Arab Spring was the 2011 Egyptian revolution (also called the Youth Revolution) which soon spread across Egypt. Police brutality, a lack of political freedom, civil liberty, freedom of expression, corruption, high unemployment, food-price inflation, and poor pay were among the criticisms raised by Egyptian demonstrators.</p>	<p>This resulted in the toppling of the governments and resignation of Prime Ministers. This further inspired Spain's unemployed to rally for change as well</p>
<p>2011</p>	<p>The ILO adopts the Youth Employment Recommendation, which provides guidance to governments on how to address the</p>	<p>The ILO Youth Employment Recommendation has been widely adopted by governments and other stakeholders, and has had a positive impact on youth</p>

	<p>issue of youth unemployment and promote decent work for young people. The ILO Youth Employment Recommendation is a policy instrument adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2013, which provides guidelines for governments, employers, and workers organisations to promote the employment prospects of young people. The Recommendation is designed to be flexible and to take into account the diverse needs and circumstances of different countries and regions.</p>	<p>employment in many countries. For example, some countries have introduced policies and programs to improve the quality of education and training, to create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people, and to address the specific challenges faced by disadvantaged and marginalised youth. Additionally, the Recommendation has helped to raise awareness of the importance of investing in the employment prospects of young people and to mobilise action by governments, employers, and workers organisations to address youth unemployment. This has included the development of programs and initiatives aimed at creating job opportunities, improving access to finance, and supporting the transition of young people from education to work.</p>
<p>2015</p>	<p>The United Nations adopts the Sustainable Development Goals, which include a goal to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for</p>	<p>The SDGs have had a positive impact on efforts to address youth unemployment by raising awareness of the issue and mobilizing action by governments, civil society, and the private sector. For example, the SDGs have led to the development of</p>

	all." The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interrelated global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, with the aim of ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all by 2030.	policies and programs aimed at improving the quality of education and training, creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people, and addressing the specific challenges faced by disadvantaged and marginalized youth.
2020-2021	The COVID-19 pandemic forced all to quarantine and as a cause many businesses were closed, and many employers had to let go employees as they couldn't pay them.	Youth employment dropped by 8.7% in 2020 around the world. The overall worldwide number of unemployed youth is expected to reach 73 million in 2022, up from 75 million in 2021 but still six million more than the pre-pandemic level of 2019.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

National Youth Strategies, 2001

Several countries produced national youth policies that addressed various aspects of youth policy, such as migration, health, education, employment, culture, and civic and political involvement. Lebanon (2012), Morocco (2003), and Yemen all have national youth plans in place (2006). In Jordan (2005-2009) and Palestine (2011-2013), they were previously adopted

Youth Surveys, 2004 onwards

The lack of information or analysis on adolescents in the MENA region was one of the difficulties researchers faced at the time of the World Bank's flagship study in 2004. The next ten years saw the collection of a sizable volume of youth-related data. The

International Labour Organisation (ILO) carried out studies on the transition from education to employment in Egypt, Iran, and Syria in 2005. In 2012, the ILO conducted further surveys in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia. In 2009, national youth polls were conducted in Tunisia, Morocco, and Iraq (2012). Egypt carried out the region's first long-term youth survey (2009-2014). Even the corporate sector joined in: Since 2008, the communications firm ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller has surveyed the views of Arab youth.

Middle East Youth Initiative (MEYI), 2007

The Middle East Youth Initiative involved an active, multinational network of researchers between 2006 and 2012 to enhance results for the region's youth. The Initiative served as a knowledge and idea hub, providing research targeted at informing and allowing effective policy making and program creation focused on adolescent social and economic inclusion throughout the area. Through strategic partnerships with politicians, youth-serving groups, and the commercial sector, the Initiative assisted in translating research into action.

ILO and World Bank initiatives, 2008 onwards

The Global Partnership for Youth Employment, which lasted from 2008 to 2014 in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation and the Arab Urban Development Institute, was primarily concerned with the Middle East and Africa. Another World Bank and ILO effort, the Youth Employment Network, created the Taqueem Initiative in 2009 to help strengthen program assessment capacity in the region. The program "Youth in the Arab World" was launched in 2009 by UNICEF and the American University of Beirut.

Possible Solutions

- 1) Encouraging Access to Decent Work and Careers:
 - a) Promoting the development of employment possibilities in industries with significant growth and development potential.

- b) Improving young people's employability through specialised education and training initiatives.
 - c) Giving firms incentives to hire and keep young people.
 - d) Supporting the creation of inclusive, flexible labour markets that cater to the requirements of young employees.
- 2) Strengthening Systems for Education and Training:
- a) Promoting the development of employment possibilities in industries with significant growth and development potential.
 - b) Improving young people's employability through specialised education and training initiatives.
 - c) Giving firms incentives to hire and keep young people.
 - d) Supporting the creation of inclusive, flexible labour markets that cater to the requirements of young employees.
- 3) Promoting Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment:
- a) Providing access to finance, training, and mentorship opportunities for young entrepreneurs.
 - b) Encouraging the creation of favourable business environments that support the growth of young enterprises.
 - c) Promoting innovation and the development of new technologies to support the growth of young enterprises.
- 4) Addressing and overcoming the obstacles facing marginalised and disadvantaged young People:
- a) Providing targeted support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome barriers to employment.
 - b) Promoting equal access to opportunities for all young people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other social or economic factors.

- c) Providing support for young people with disabilities to participate in the labor market.

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