

**NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH
UNEMPLOYMENT IN BALOCHISTAN: AN EMPIRICAL
ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

The study findings reveal that the nature of unemployment primarily stems from the scarcity of job opportunities, especially for university graduates, leading to significant disparities between rural and urban employment prospects. Many young individuals from rural areas are compelled to migrate to cities in search of livelihoods, which further strains the urban job market and leaves rural regions with limited employment options. The causes of unemployment in the region encompass a mismatch between career aspirations and available jobs, a lack of employable skills due to the formal education system, cultural pressures prioritizing early marriages over career pursuits, limited financial opportunities for entrepreneurship, a substantial government footprint in the job market, and regional disparities in job concentration.

These factors have diverse consequences, including hindering economic growth, exacerbating gender inequalities, fostering social challenges, resulting in the loss of skilled human capital through migration, and fuelling animosity against the state, leading to insurgency. Addressing youth unemployment in Balochistan necessitates a comprehensive approach that promotes job creation, enhances education and technical skills training, encourages entrepreneurship, implements policy reforms, and challenges cultural norms that hinder workforce participation. By adopting evidence-based strategies, policymakers and stakeholders can effectively tackle this complex problem and pave the way for a brighter economic future for Balochistan.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background.....	1
1.2 Research Scope.....	2
1.2.1. Research objectives	2
1.2.1 Research questions.....	3
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
2.1 Introduction.....	3
2.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment.....	4
2.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment.....	4
2.4 Consequences of Youth Unemployment.....	5
2.5 Youth Unemployment in Pakistan.....	6
2.6 Youth Unemployment in Balochistan	7
2.7 Solutions to Address Youth Unemployment Issues	8
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	8
3.1 Introduction.....	8
3.2 Research Strategy, Process, and Data Collection Methods.....	8
3.3 Data Analysis.....	9
3.4 Research Quality.....	9
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS	10
4.1 Introduction.....	10
4.2 Youth Survey Findings	10
4.3 Employer Survey Findings	23
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS.....	31
5.1 Introduction.....	31
5.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment.....	32
5.3 Skills deficit/imbalance and labor market capacity in Balochistan	32
5.4 Under-employment in Balochistan.....	34
5.5 Causes of Youth Unemployment.....	37
5.6 Consequences of Youth Unemployment.....	46
DISCUSSION	48
6.1 Introduction.....	48
6.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment.....	48
6.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment.....	53
6.4 Consequences of Youth Unemployment.....	55

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	56
7.1 Introduction.....	56
7.2 Concluding Remarks and Analysis Recap	57
7.2 Recommendations	64
7.3 Limitations	64
REFERENCES.....	65

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Youth unemployment has emerged as a critical and multifaceted issue in Balochistan, presenting significant challenges to the province's socio-economic development and the well-being of its young population (Görlich et al., 2013; Olubusoye et al., 2022; PWC, 2022). Being the least populated yet largest province in Pakistan in terms of land area, Balochistan faces unique obstacles, including inadequate job opportunities, structural issues, and barriers hindering young people from actively participating in the labor market and contributing to the economic activities of the province. Thus, this situation not only affects the economic prospects and well-being of the youth and their families but also hampers the overall economic and social progress of the region (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020).

Recognizing the pivotal role of young people as human capital, progressive governments emphasize investments in youth development initiatives and effective labor market policies to enable the youth to contribute to economic activities (Görlich et al., 2013). However, compared to developed economies, developing regions like Balochistan face greater challenges in addressing youth unemployment due to limited social protection and inadequate labor market policies. As a result, young people often lack formal institutional or government support, relying mostly on their immediate families and friends (Mitra & Verick, 2013), rendering them vulnerable to engaging in precarious work arrangements.

The United Nations acknowledges the significance of creating decent work opportunities for young people and advocates for addressing the youth unemployment issue as a key priority in its 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Global estimates by the International Labour Organization – ILO (ILO, 2022b) indicate that around 71 million young workers were jobless in 2016, and approximately 156 million young workers in the developing world earned only US\$3.1 per day, which is a major contributing factor to youth poverty in developing countries. Additionally, the ILO's recent report reveals that the youth labor participation rate declined between 1999 and 2019, with only 497 million out of 1.3 billion young people (aged 15-24) contributing to the labor market. Despite a reduction in global extreme poverty during the same period, youth poverty remains a serious problem in certain regions and countries (ILO, 2020).

Addressing the issue of youth unemployment is intrinsically linked to the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially SDG-4 (Quality Education and Economic Growth), SDG-5 (Gender Equity), and SDG-8 (Decent Work), all of which have clear implications for fostering youth employment (e.g., ILOa, 2022). However, the recent pandemic has exacerbated the youth unemployment problem, particularly impacting young women's employment prospects and livelihood potential, leading to increased vulnerability and insecurity among young people. Factors such as unreliable employment interrupted learning opportunities, and ongoing mental health and well-being crises have contributed to widening existing inequalities for youth, especially those in developing regions (Barford et al., 2021; ILO, 2021).

In Pakistan, young people continue to face challenges in securing decent work, and youth unemployment is becoming an increasingly significant concern. Coherent public policy measures and consistent attention from successive provincial and federal governments are required to effectively tackle the issues faced by young people (Hou, 2010). The challenges include the difficult transition from school to the labor market, unpaid work commitments linked to voluntary family work or other contingent workforce arrangements, and cultural barriers limiting female work engagement (Hou, 2010). A recent study by Imtiaz et al. (2020) identified political stability, poor investment infrastructure, and rising population as the main contributing factors to youth unemployment in Pakistan. Moreover, the ILO (2019) emphasized the critical challenges faced by youth in Pakistan, particularly females, in educational attainment due to limited access to educational opportunities and inadequate-quality education. To achieve desired employment goals, it is crucial to expand the scope of skills provision and incorporate

technical skills with a diverse set of employment skills, competencies, and knowledge base that are universal in nature.

Balochistan, however, faces a more severe issue of youth unemployment compared to other provinces. Young people in Balochistan encounter multidimensional challenges, including structural problems, a lack of decent employment opportunities, and other barriers that hinder their effective participation in the labor market, affecting their economic well-being, livelihood, and contribution to the province's overall economic and social development (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020). Despite abundant natural resources, Balochistan lags other Pakistani provinces in terms of economic and social development, highlighting the persistent failure of both federal and provincial governments to effectively address unemployment, poverty, and related issues in the region.

The Pakistan Labour Force Survey (2020-21) reports that the young population aged between 15-24 in Pakistan is 41.77 million. However, in Balochistan, the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is significantly higher at 41.8%, with a notable gender disparity of 14.1% for males and 75.4% for females falling under the NEET category. This underrepresentation of females in education, employment, or training underscores the urgency of addressing youth unemployment in Balochistan (ILO, 2019). The overall youth unemployment rate in Balochistan, as reported in the 2017-18 survey, stands at 10.51%, necessitating immediate attention from public policymakers and the current government (ILO, 2019).

In conclusion, youth unemployment in Balochistan is a critical concern, presenting diverse challenges to the province's socio-economic development and the well-being of its young population. Addressing this issue requires targeted policy interventions focusing on improving economic and social development, creating decent work opportunities, and investing in education and skills development to empower the youth and enhance their participation in the labor market. By prioritizing youth employment, Balochistan can unlock the potential of its young population, contributing significantly to the province's overall growth and development (Görlich et al., 2013; Olubusoye et al., 2022; PWC, 2022).

1.2 Research Scope

1.2.1. Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the nature, causes, and consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan province. Additionally, the research aims to provide fresh insights into the youth unemployment phenomenon, with a specific focus on the challenges faced by marginalized young, educated individuals within the province. To this end, the present study collected data from a wide range of stakeholder groups, including unemployed youth, senior university staff, employers from the corporate sector, university students, policymakers, and other important contributors. By incorporating these diverse perspectives, we put forward several practical policy recommendations that can effectively address the issue of youth unemployment in Balochistan.

Furthermore, the study offers a strong foundation for developing a holistic response to tackle the youth unemployment problem in the province. By doing so, it seeks to promote the economic potential and social well-being of young people in Balochistan. Accordingly, the goal of the research is to propose viable and appropriate solutions that can be implemented to effectively combat youth unemployment and foster a positive environment for the province's young population. The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify the fundamental challenges that young people in the Balochistan province encounter while seeking decent employment opportunities in the labor market.
- Enhance the understanding of the specific skills, knowledge, and competencies that youth, especially fresh graduates, require to actively participate and make meaningful contributions in their potential roles.

- Highlight the significant role of government and public institutions in developing a comprehensive and integrated framework that fosters youth employment and well-being. Additionally, the study emphasizes their overall contribution to the sustainable development of the province.

1.2.1 Research questions

The study endeavors to explore and answer the following research questions related to youth unemployment in Balochistan:

- What are the root causes of youth unemployment in Balochistan?
- How is the phenomenon of youth unemployment conceptualized and framed in the context of Balochistan?
- Why do government interventions and policies concerning youth employment lack effectiveness in the Balochistan context?
- What effective measures can be implemented to address the youth unemployment crisis in Balochistan?

The study's findings hold the potential to play a pivotal role in the formulation of evidence-based policy interventions and labor market reforms, to empower youth in Balochistan to secure decent jobs within formal sectors, foster career growth, and ensure sustainable employability in the long run. By achieving these objectives, the youth's active participation in the labor market can contribute significantly to the sustainable development of the province, ultimately benefiting the overall well-being of the local community.

To ensure research quality, multiple sources of data are utilized, including semi-structured interviews and survey data. During the initial phase, young individuals (both undergraduate and postgraduate students, both male and female) and employers in Balochistan were surveyed to gather crucial insights. In the second phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with youth, as well as key informants such as senior university staff, government officials, and employers. This approach allowed for the examination of key issues, including the nature and quality of education, while critically assessing the job skills and knowledge required by the youth to succeed in existing and future work scenarios.

The implementation of data triangulation, involving the consolidation of evidence from semi-structured interviews and survey data, further strengthens the credibility and reliability of the study's findings. This approach enhances the robustness of the policy recommendations, making them more practical and insightful in effectively addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment in Balochistan. Ultimately, the study aspires to create a positive and sustainable impact, fostering economic growth and prosperity for the province's youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Youth employment is crucial for a nation's prosperity, as emphasized in the literature (Görlich et al., 2013; Msigwa & Kipesha, 2013). However, globally, youth face numerous challenges, particularly concerning job opportunities in the labor market. Developing economies, although having lower overall unemployment rates than developed economies, present more significant challenges for youth due to limited social protection and inadequate labor market policies, leaving young individuals with minimal formal institutional or government support beyond their immediate networks (Mitra & Verick, 2013). This situation exposes youth to greater vulnerability, often leading them to engage in precarious work within the informal sector (Mitra & Verick, 2013).

Addressing youth unemployment is closely tied to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizing it as a major concern (UN, 2015). The SDGs, specifically SDG-4 (Quality Education and Economic Growth), SDG-5 (Gender Equity), and SDG-8 (Decent Work), are directly relevant to fostering youth employment (ILOa, 2022). The overlapping of these goals directs youth from educational institutions to the job market, promoting education and employment opportunities and mitigating unemployment in the economy (Iduseri et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the youth unemployment crisis, disproportionately impacting young people, especially women, with employment losses and reduced incomes (Barford et al., 2021; ILO, 2021). This situation has amplified vulnerability and insecurity, and disrupted education and mental well-being, widening existing inequalities for youth, particularly in developing regions (Barford et al., 2021; ILO, 2021).

2.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment

The unemployment rate is one of the main indicators for realizing labor market conditions. According to the Reserve Bank of Australia (2023, p.1), “the unemployment rate can also provide insights into how the economy is performing more generally, making it an important factor in thinking about monetary policy”. Further, decent employment provision and economic empowerment of youth are critical elements enabling a flourishing society and are also linked to achieving sustainable development. In this regard, the United Nations (2019, p. 35) noted that “Decent work is crucial for young people and their future, but it also has a domino effect on local communities, countries, and the world as a whole.”

Youth unemployment is defined as the proportion of unemployed individuals aged 15-24 actively seeking work but unable to contribute to the labor market due to various reasons (OECD, 2022; ILO, 2020). Economic schools of thought offer different perspectives on the phenomenon, with neoclassical views considering involuntary unemployment due to wage rigidity and Keynesian perspectives focusing on demand-side factors influencing labor demand. Unemployment can be voluntary, as in frictional unemployment, occurring during job search or switching, or involuntary, such as structural unemployment resulting from a mismatch between labor demand and skills (Keynes, 1936; Shackleton, 1985). Other forms of unemployment include cyclical, under-employment, hidden unemployment, and seasonal unemployment (e.g., Porket & Porket, 1989; United Nations, 2019)

Globally, youth unemployment has seen a rise of 3.2% between 2000 and 2021, with the current number of unemployed youths standing at 75.1 million (ILO-2022). Young females face a higher rate of unemployment, with their employment-to-population ratio lower than that of young males (ILO-2022). Addressing this challenge is crucial to ensuring equitable and sustainable economic opportunities for youth, particularly young women, across the world.

2.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment

The prior research delves extensively into the multifaceted causes of youth unemployment, which can be broadly classified into macroeconomic, structural, demographic, and individual factors. Macroeconomic factors, such as GDP growth rate and fiscal tightening, have been shown to influence youth unemployment rates (Baah-Boateng, 2016). Structural factors, including public expenditure on employment services and labor laws, also play a crucial role in shaping youth unemployment trends (Görlich et al., 2013). Additionally, demographic factors, such as the gender employment gap, have been identified as significant contributors to youth unemployment (O'Higgins, 2001).

Further investigations have highlighted individual-level factors that impact youth unemployment. The lack of exposure to job markets, commonly referred to as the "experience trap," has been recognized as a barrier to youth employment (Mehmood et al., 2021). Moreover, inadequate technical skills and limited financial resources for business start-ups hinder young individuals from finding decent work (Mitra & Verick, 2013). Furthermore, higher entry barriers

to the labor market and a mismatch between skills and job requirements have been associated with youth unemployment (Peace Child International, 2015).

It is worth noting that the flexibility, mobility, and enthusiasm of young people can either positively or negatively affect their employment prospects. While youth have the potential to be an asset to the labor market (Ahmed & Azim, 2010), the absence of institutional support and guidance has been observed as a hindrance to their economic and career development (Qayyum & Rizwan, 2007).

At the individual level, various factors influence youth unemployment. Demographic characteristics, such as age and gender, are important determinants (O'Higgins, 2001). Human capital endowments, encompassing education levels, skills, and experience, significantly impact youth unemployment rates (Mincer, 1974; Becker, 1975; Visaria, 1998; Demidova & Signorelli, 2012; Baah-Boateng, 2013; Görlich et al., 2013; Baah-Boateng, 2016). Studies have highlighted the widening unemployment gap between highly educated and less educated young workers (Nickell, 1996; Hermannsson, 2021). However, this trend may differ between developed and developing economies (Dickens & Lang, 1995; Castillo et al., 2020).

The geographical location also influences youth unemployment, with rural areas generally experiencing lower unemployment rates due to prevailing informal employment opportunities (Msigwa & Kipasha, 2013). Family background, including parents' income and education, also plays a significant role in youth unemployment (Pozzoli, 2009). Individuals with strong family backgrounds tend to have better job market access, irrespective of merit-based selection (Iqbal & Khaleek, 2013; Ali et al., 2017).

Moreover, economic conditions and labor market characteristics contribute to youth unemployment. Demand-side issues, such as insufficient youth demand in the labor market, have been identified as key contributors (Biavaschi, 2012). Simultaneously, the supply side, characterized by a rising youth population and limited human capital endowment, also affects youth employment prospects (Perugini & Signorelli, 2010; Bell & Blanchflower, 2011). Furthermore, economic factors, including business cycles, GDP, foreign direct investment, and trade openness, impact youth employment opportunities (Contini, 2010; Dimitrov, 2012; Anyanwu, 2013; Ali & Almula-Dhanoon, 2021).

In conclusion, the issue of youth unemployment is complex and influenced by a combination of macroeconomic, structural, demographic, and individual factors. Understanding these factors and their interactions is crucial in formulating effective policies and interventions to address youth unemployment and foster economic prosperity. Further research in this area can provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders aiming to tackle the challenges associated with youth unemployment.

2.4 Consequences of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment presents a pressing concern with widespread negative impacts on economies and societies alike. Iduseri et al. (2022) highlight that unaddressed youth unemployment can undermine economies, threaten peace, and destabilize communities. The consequences of youth unemployment are far-reaching, encompassing extreme poverty, social exclusion, psychological distress, increased crime rates, violence, civil unrest, drug abuse, and extremism (Bell & Blanchflower, 2009; O'Higgins, 2001; ILO, 2022b). Moreover, the PWC report (2022) emphasizes that early unemployment experiences for young individuals can lead to long-term consequences, affecting their skills, confidence, and human capital over time.

Beyond its individual impacts, youth unemployment gives rise to broader societal challenges. Prolonged periods of high youth unemployment can have negative macro-economic consequences, including increased fiscal costs for governments due to lower tax collections and reduced overall labor productivity (PWC, 2022). At the individual level, long-term youth unemployment can lead to economic-driven issues, pushing individuals toward poverty and resulting in skill obsolescence (Ryan, 2000). Such situations further increase the likelihood of

future unemployment, wage penalties, and reduced career prospects (Arulampalam, 2001; Bell & Blanchflower, 2010). Additionally, educated youth may migrate in search of jobs, leading to a "brain drain," which results in a loss of human capital and decreased economic growth in their home country (Shakeel et al., 2019).

The economic costs of youth unemployment are substantial, impacting spending on goods and services, tax revenue, and overall income equality (Marks & Fleming, 1998; Rusanovskiy & Markov, 2016; Grinevica & Rivza 2017). Simultaneously, the social costs of youth unemployment are equally concerning. It can lead to social exclusion, psychological problems, low self-esteem, increased crime rates, domestic violence, suicide risk, and security issues (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Marks & Fleming, 1998; Choudhry et al., 2012; Imtiaz et al., 2020). Moreover, unemployed youth are more likely to engage in drug and alcohol abuse, exacerbating the social challenges (Henkel, 2011). The overall consequences of youth unemployment encompass an array of undesirable socio-economic implications for any nation. Addressing this issue comprehensively is crucial to mitigate its impacts and create opportunities for young individuals to contribute positively to society.

2.5 Youth Unemployment in Pakistan

Underutilization of young human capital poses a pressing global challenge, and Pakistan, as a developing economy, is no exception to this issue. With a current population of approximately 225 million and a population growth rate of 1.9% (The World Bank, 2021), Pakistan stands as the 5th most populated country in the world. Furthermore, it possesses the 9th largest labor force globally, with 159.8 million individuals belonging to the working-age group, of which 41.8 million are youths (LFS, 2020-2021). Despite the large young workforce, Pakistan grapples with significant unemployment issues, with approximately 4.51 million people unemployed, and youth job seekers comprising 44.9% of this figure (LFS, 2020-2021). Regrettably, the youth in Pakistan face challenges in securing their future due to employment concerns. The ILO (2019) reports a steady rise in youth unemployment rates in Pakistan, escalating from 1.1 percent in 2011 to 8.88 percent in 2019. Notably, there are considerable variations in youth unemployment rates among different provinces in Pakistan, influenced by factors such as gender differences, education levels, geographical location, and varying job opportunities across provinces (Ahmed & Azim, 2010; Qayyum & Rizwan, 2007). It is crucial to consider these disparities while formulating targeted policy responses.

Several studies have delved into the determinants of youth unemployment in Pakistan, drawing the attention of policymakers and researchers. Hou (2010) emphasizes the urgency of addressing the multidimensional and complex issue of youth unemployment, advocating for political measures. The author points out that the transition from school to the labor market is not seamless, with youth unemployment rates surpassing adult unemployment rates. Additionally, cultural factors and gender disparities further exacerbate employment challenges for female youth (Hou, 2010).

Imtiaz et al. (2020) highlighted various factors that adversely impact youth employment in Pakistan, including lack of investment, overpopulation, political instability, and an underdeveloped agriculture sector. Mehmood et al. (2021) focus on the Multan district and reveal that youth unemployment rates decrease with increasing age and education levels, while higher rates of youth unemployment are observed in rural areas compared to urban areas. Family restrictions due to religious factors also contribute to higher female youth unemployment in Pakistan (Bashir et al., 2013).

In a study conducted in rural areas of the district of Faisalabad, Pakistan, Khurram et al. (2014) identify social discrimination, lack of merit in public sectors, population growth, energy crises, poor governance, economic instability, and terrorism as causal factors of youth unemployment. Ahmad and Khan (2018) investigated factors affecting youth unemployment in Pakistan from 1991 to 2016 and found significant impacts of inflation, foreign direct investment (FDI), and government expenditure on youth unemployment.

Akhtar and Shahnaz (2005) analyzed time series data from 1991 to 2004 to study the causal factors of youth unemployment in Pakistan. Their findings confirm the role of low GDP and investment in contributing to higher youth unemployment rates. Hafeez et al. (2020) shed light on the factors causing unemployment among educated youth in the district of Muzaffargarh, demonstrating higher unemployment rates among educated individuals compared to less educated ones, with those lacking technical education facing more unemployment.

Existing literature also presents strong evidence of the relationship between macroeconomic policies and youth unemployment in Pakistan (Bari et al., 2021). Notably, money supply, trade liberalization, investment, and budget deficit have been found to impact youth unemployment rates. In conclusion, youth unemployment in Pakistan is influenced by a combination of microeconomic and macroeconomic factors, and addressing this issue requires targeted policy interventions tailored to specific regional and demographic characteristics.

2.6 Youth Unemployment in Balochistan

Balochistan, a resource-abundant province of Pakistan, encompasses 44% of the country's land and holds significant geostrategic importance as an industrial hub and trade crossroad. Despite its vast natural resources, Balochistan lags behind other provinces in economic and social development, attributed to political disorganization, economic backwardness, poor infrastructure, political instability, lack of democratic institutions, inadequate education, and security issues (Ahmed & Baloch, 2017).

Youth unemployment poses a major challenge in Balochistan, especially due to a scarcity of decent employment opportunities. Compared to other provinces, Balochistan faces critical issues in effectively addressing unemployment, poverty, and related matters, despite its abundance of natural resources (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020). The youth population in Pakistan is approximately 41.77 million, with 32.5% of them not in employment, education, or training (NEET). However, in Balochistan, the NEET rate is 41.8%, with 75.4% representing females, indicating their underrepresentation in education and employment (ILO, 2019).

Balochistan exhibits the lowest employment-to-population ratio (38.6) in Pakistan after Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly affecting female employment (11.3) compared to males (61.6). Additionally, Balochistan reports a youth NEET rate of 41.8%, higher than the national rate of 32.5%, with females being more affected (LFS, 2020-2021). The youth participation rate in formal and informal education and training in Balochistan is 24.5%, lower than in other provinces, particularly affecting females (14.4%) compared to males (32.8%). Moreover, rural youth in Balochistan are less engaged in educational activities than urban youth (LFS, 2020-2021).

Unemployment in Balochistan is predominantly a rural phenomenon, with higher rates among young females than males. Limited research suggests that despite a high youth labor force participation rate, employment opportunities are fewer in Balochistan compared to other provinces (Ahmad & Azim, 2010). Various factors contribute to unemployment in the Quetta region of Balochistan, including rising population growth, lack of skills, low education levels, and inadequate investment in traditional sectors (Haider & Tareen, 2021; Ahmad & Hassan, 2020). Additionally, female youth unemployment is affected by limited mobility and restricted opportunities for education and employment in certain regions of Pakistan (Naqvi & Shahnaz, 2002; Arain et al., 2013). The absence of industrial development and political instability further exacerbates unemployment in Balochistan (Ahmad & Hassan, 2020; Ahmed, 2018).

To address youth unemployment, it is crucial to match youth skills with labor market demands and promote entrepreneurship activities. Investing in human capital and enacting employment protection legislation are also vital steps to create job opportunities and uplift the financial well-being of the youth. The government should strategically invest in infrastructures and markets with a labor-intensive focus while encouraging part-time and rented work contracts to control youth unemployment.

In conclusion, tackling youth unemployment in Balochistan requires addressing the mismatch between education and market demands, fostering entrepreneurship, and investing in human capital. Effective policy measures and collaboration between the government, private sector, and educational institutions are necessary to empower the youth and promote economic growth in the province (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020; Ahmad & Azim, 2010).

2.7 Solutions to Address Youth Unemployment Issues

In addressing the critical issue of youth unemployment, one effective approach involves enhancing education and skills training among the youth. The connection between unemployment and inadequate education and skills highlights the importance of aligning employment policies with educational strategies. A historical example from the United Kingdom in the 1980s illustrates this approach, where the Department of Employment and the Department of Education and Science merged to form a new department – Employment and Education, aiming to tackle unemployment through education (Smith, 2003).

India's government also demonstrated a successful initiative to promote youth entrepreneurship and self-employment. The introduction of schemes like TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment) and SEEUY (Self Employment Scheme for Educated Unemployed Youth) transformed educational institutions by integrating vocational training programs, encouraging self-employment opportunities for the youth (Rao & Lahiri, 1993).

Investing in human capacity development is crucial for creating a skilled workforce. By providing training and skill-building programs, the government can equip young individuals with the capabilities demanded by the job market (Afridi et al., 2021). Furthermore, implementing employment protection legislation is essential to safeguard labor rights and create a stable working environment for the youth (Eichhorst et al., 2013).

Strategic investment in infrastructures and labor-intensive markets is another approach to tackling youth unemployment (Eurofound, 2015). Such investments can spur job creation, particularly in sectors that require a higher workforce, benefiting the youth in their job search (Dingel & Neiman, 2020). Encouraging part-time work and offering rented work contracts are practical steps to address youth unemployment. By providing flexible employment options, the labor market can accommodate a broader range of opportunities for young job seekers (Picchio & van Ours, 2017).

In conclusion, addressing youth unemployment requires a multifaceted approach that involves developing education and skills, promoting entrepreneurship, investing in human capital, enacting employment protection legislation, and strategically investing in labor-intensive infrastructures and markets. By implementing these strategies, governments can mitigate youth unemployment and foster economic growth (Eichhorst et al., 2013; Eurofound, 2015; Afridi et al., 2021; Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Picchio & van Ours, 2017; Smith, 2003; Rao & Lahiri, 1993).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the research paradigm, strategy, methods, and data analysis process adopted for this research. The purpose of this study is to examine the natural causes and consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan. The review of extant literature suggested that studies on the youth unemployment phenomenon are scarce in the developing world context. Further, the review suggested that there is a dearth of empirical research investigating youth unemployment in the context of Pakistan.

3.2 Research Strategy, Process, and Data Collection Methods

To develop more in-depth insights into the youth unemployment phenomenon, this study utilized multiple sources of data to develop a profound understanding of the subject matter. Against this

background, this study adopted a pragmatism paradigm and employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods (i.e., a mixed methods design) to investigate the youth unemployment problem in Balochistan (Bell et al., 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The research process consists of two phases. In the first phase, survey data were collected from youth (n=101) and employers (n=38) in Balochistan. The second phase involved qualitative data collection in two stages. Initially, short interviews were conducted with youth (n=31) and employers (n=8) from various districts in Balochistan, representing all ten universities in the province, including Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (Quetta), Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology (Khuzdar), Bolan University of Medical and Health Sciences (Quetta), Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (Uthal), Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (Quetta), University of Balochistan (Quetta), University of Loralai (Loralai), University of Gwadar (Gwadar), and University of Turbat (Turbat).

Following the interviews with youth and employers, the issues identified were further explored through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants (n=10) representing senior university staff, government of Balochistan officials and policymakers, and members of international development agencies. The purposive snowballing technique was used to recruit participants.

The interview guides were developed based on an extensive review of emerging literature on youth unemployment, focusing on policy debates and empirical work related to the causes and nature of the issue. Additionally, reports from international development agencies, government institutions, and peer-reviewed academic journal articles were reviewed and analyzed.

The research team collected qualitative data via semi-structured interviews and all interviewees were transcribed, while quantitative data were gathered using a survey technique. The survey for youth was adapted from the ILO's (2009) school-to-work transition survey (SWTS) and includes five main categories with a total of 54 questionnaire items. The employer survey contained two main categories with 32 survey items. Participants' consent was obtained to ensure ethical research conduct and 101 students, and 38 employers were surveyed.

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed on the survey data, and a thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the qualitative data, identifying key patterns, research themes, and overarching categories following guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interviews were analyzed in three sequential phases, exploring skill sets and technical knowledge requirements for promoting youth employment and improving labor market participation, as well as examining how these desired skills and knowledge can be nurtured at the university level and through government intervention. Workable policy recommendations to address youth unemployment in Balochistan were cross-examined based on the interview findings.

3.4 Research Quality

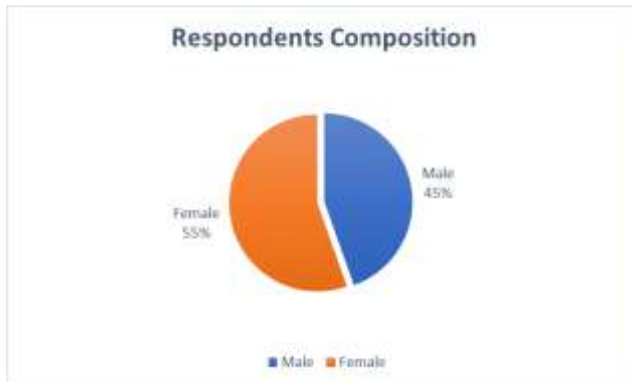
To ensure research quality, a triangulation approach was adopted, maintaining validity and reliability criteria in a mixed methods design. Several scholars emphasized employing a triangulation approach to enhance research quality (e.g., Bell et al., 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and to strengthen the validity of research findings. The notion of triangulation involves integrating the findings via multiple sources of data collection from various sources and ensuring consistency of findings. Accordingly, the findings were based on the triangulation of interview and survey data, enhancing the credibility, transferability, and overall value of the research outcomes in the real-world context.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the results and descriptive analysis of the survey findings. First, the results of the youth survey findings are presented demonstrating respondents' demographic characteristics, opinions and aspirations, job market perceptions, job-related migrations perceptions, and other important aspects concerning youth employment. Second, the findings of the employer survey focus on the demographic characteristics of respondents, their industrial affiliations, perceptions regarding employee job potential, organizational preferences on employees' qualifications and skills, and other salient issues.

4.2 Youth Survey Findings

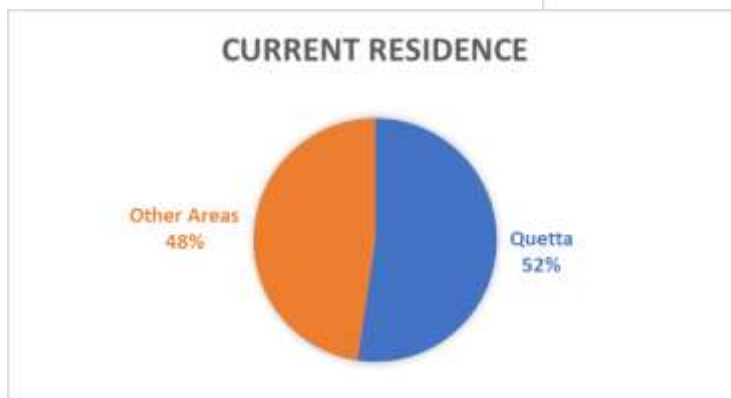
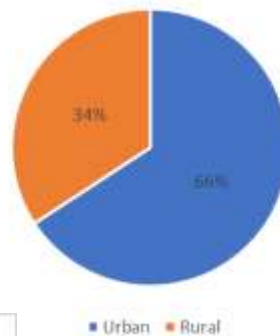


Total Respondents= 101

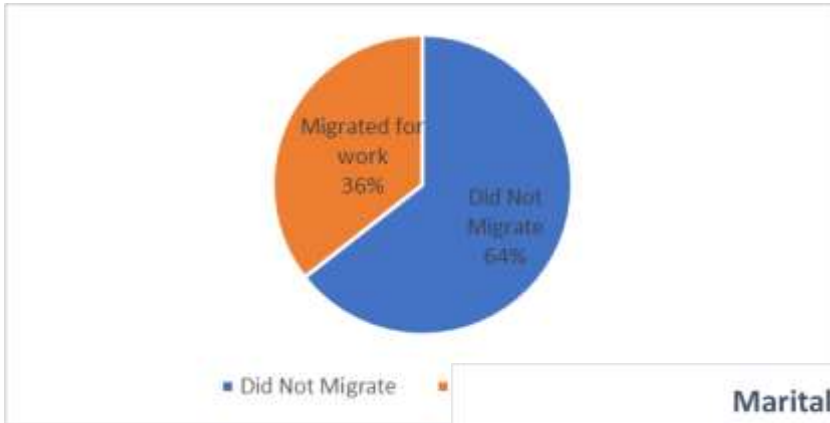
Females= 56

Males= 45

Two-thirds of respondents lived in cities and one-third belonged to rural areas or small towns.



78 youth respondents were residing in Quetta city, while 71 were living outside Quetta in other cities/ areas of Balochistan. Quetta city offers the majority of jobs in the public/ private sector and therefore youth from the rest of Balochistan migrate to Quetta in search of livelihood.

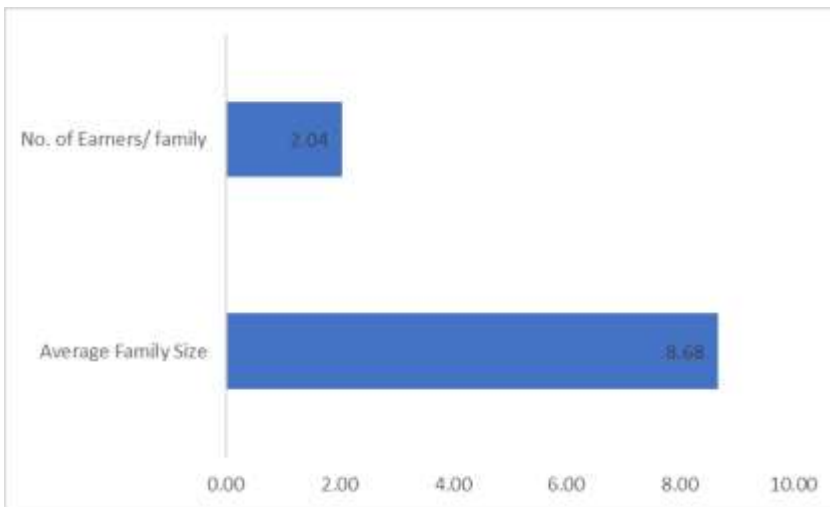


53 respondents reported that they work in different cities from where they grew up. Mostly residents of rural areas migrated to towns and larger cities for work. The migration trend is higher among females (39%) compared to males (32%).

Sixty-nine percent of engaged respondents are male. Likewise, 75 percent of male respondents are male. Culturally, it is believed that men's livelihood is associated with their better halves and therefore unemployed youth are often engaged/ married so that they become lucky and find livelihood.



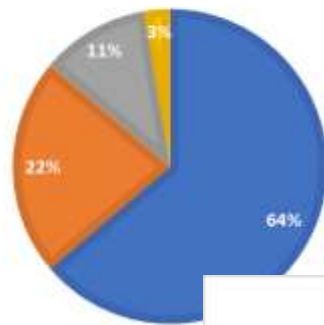
Likewise, 25 percent of married men reported that their spouse is attaining education. Fifty percent of married respondents reported that their spouse is self-employed, engages in family work, or looking actively for a job.



Most respondents reside in joint families. 25 respondents reported that they reside in extended families with 10-45 family members. If we exclude respondents living in extended families, the average family size reduces to 6.38 and the average earners/ family reduces to 1.73.

DECISION REGARDING EDUCATION

■ Myself ■ Parents ■ Family ■ Others



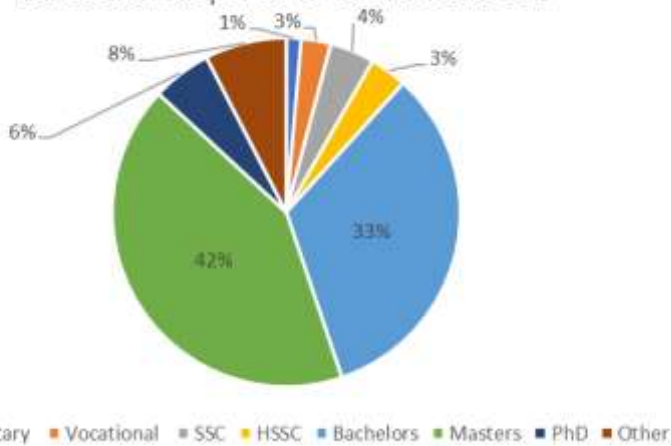
Responses reflect that field of education choices are made by individuals themselves, their parents, and their families. The results also reflect the performance of academic institutions—they provide minimal career counseling to students.

80 percent of the respondents reported that they were engaged in paid work and 20 percent did voluntary work. These results reflect that academic institutions in Balochistan are not connected with industry/market and do not provide work opportunities to students while they study. Those who worked were working at family enterprises, the public sector, and private companies.



Opinions and Aspirations

Education Required to Earn Decent Job



Eighty-one percent of respondents believe that a university degree is required to engage in a decent job. Almost 40 percent of unemployed graduates believe that they need to earn a higher degree to get a decent job.

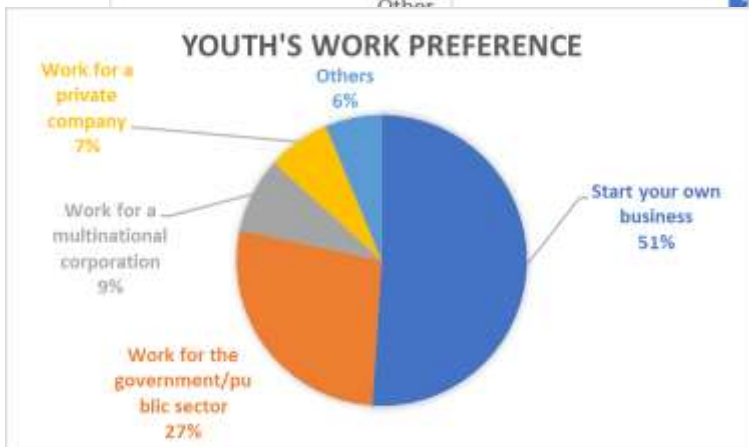


Responses reflect that the majority of youth wish to be professionally successful. One-fifth of youth wish to be very rich, and one-seventh of youth wish to positively contribute to society. Surprisingly, youth do not rate leisure and upholding religious beliefs as an important goal in their lives.



Youth skills

rates IT and



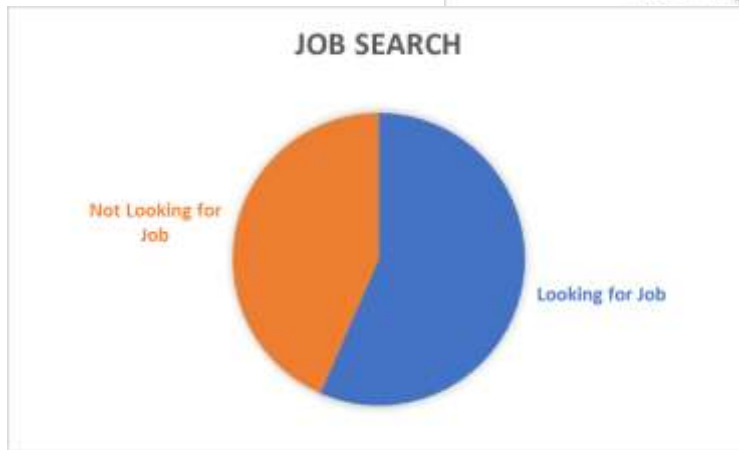
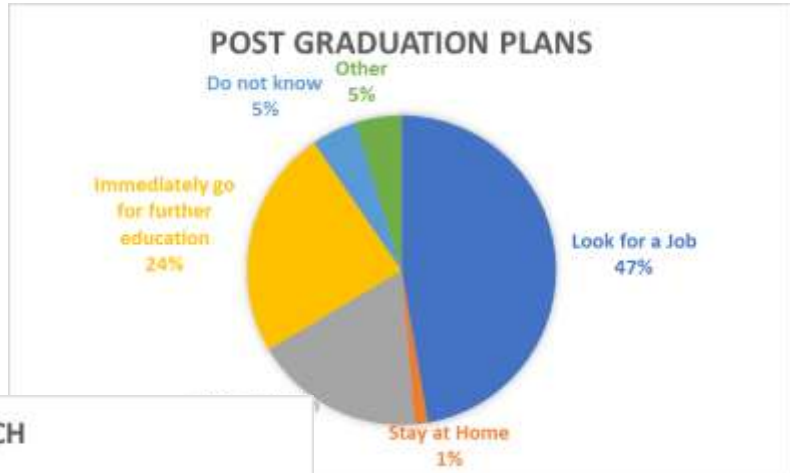
Communication skills as the most important employability skills, whereas good general education and apprenticeship are perceived as the least important skills.

Every second youth we interviewed wishes to start their own business, however, academia and policymakers believe that youth is specifically looking for government jobs. The inclination towards government

jobs could not be denied and 27% of youth wish to work in the public sector.

Youth in Education

Where 50 percent of graduates wished to start their own business in an ideal situation, only 18 percent want to be entrepreneurs. Every second youth plans to look for a job right after graduation. One percent of the youth all females, have no plans and prefer to stay at home after graduation.

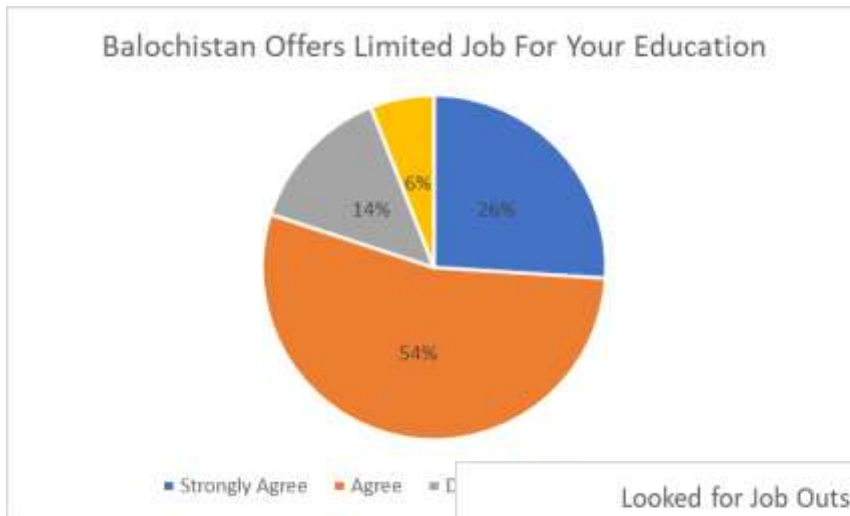


Fifty-seven percent of fresh university graduates had started searching for jobs in their final semester, while 43 percent said that they still needed to start the job search.

Youth mainly search for jobs through educational/ training institutions and job fairs. Furthermore, youth engaged in entrepreneurial activities search for financial assistance. Youth engaged in won business mainly generated resources through friends and family.



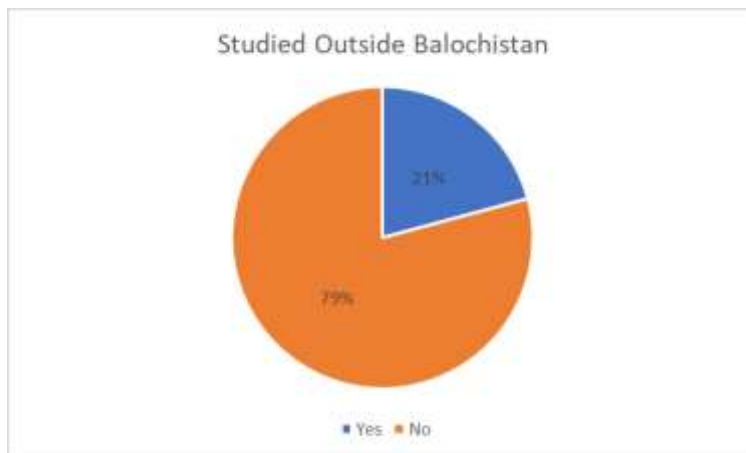
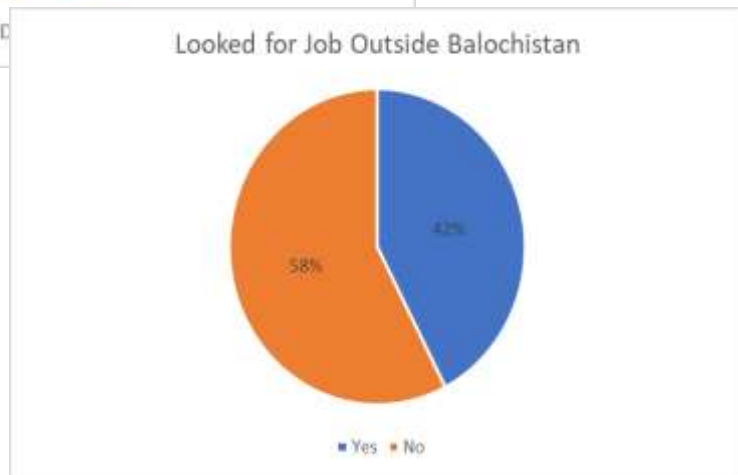
Balochistan Job Market



Eighty percent of youth believes that the Balochistan job market is limited and does not offer good jobs to university graduates that suits their qualification.

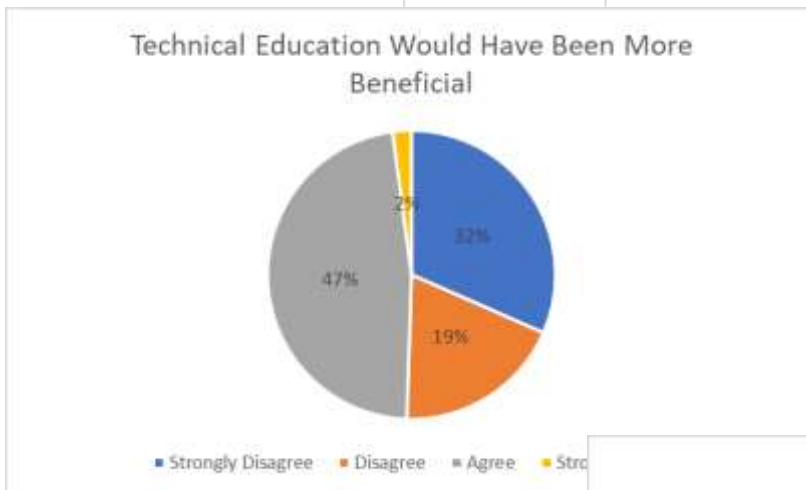
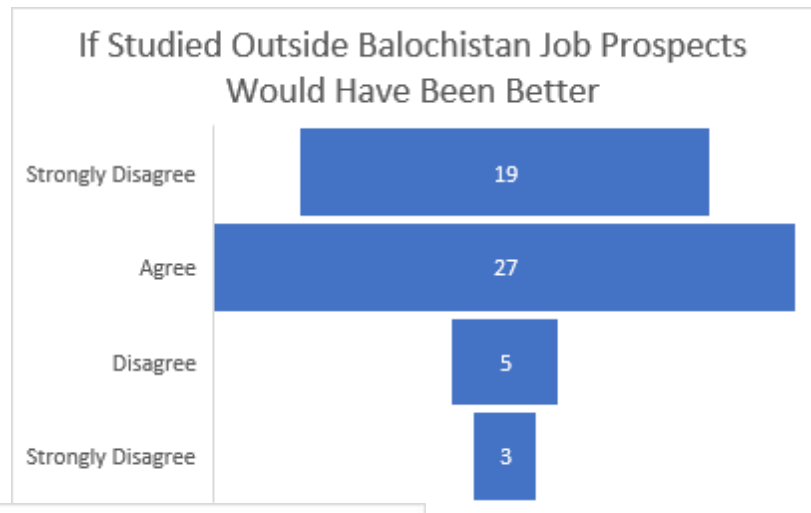
The majority of students

from Balochistan do not look for job opportunities outside Balochistan. Interestingly, the majority of youth who have looked for job opportunities outside Balochistan are female. The majority of males responded that they have family obligations and therefore want to work near family, whereas females wanted to leave Balochistan to enjoy an improved quality of life—mainly associated with independence and freedom of choice.



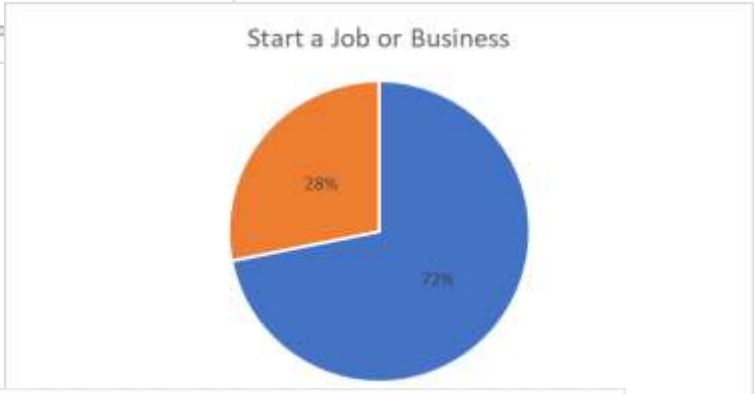
Among respondents, 21 percent had studied outside of Balochistan at some level. Of respondents who had studied outside Balochistan, seventy percent of them were willing to work outside Balochistan.

Youth who have never studied outside Balochistan believe that their job prospects would have been better if they had studied outside Balochistan at any stage of their careers. Moreover, individuals who have studied outside Balochistan (in other provinces) strongly agree that their job prospects are better compared to students who have never studied outside Balochistan.

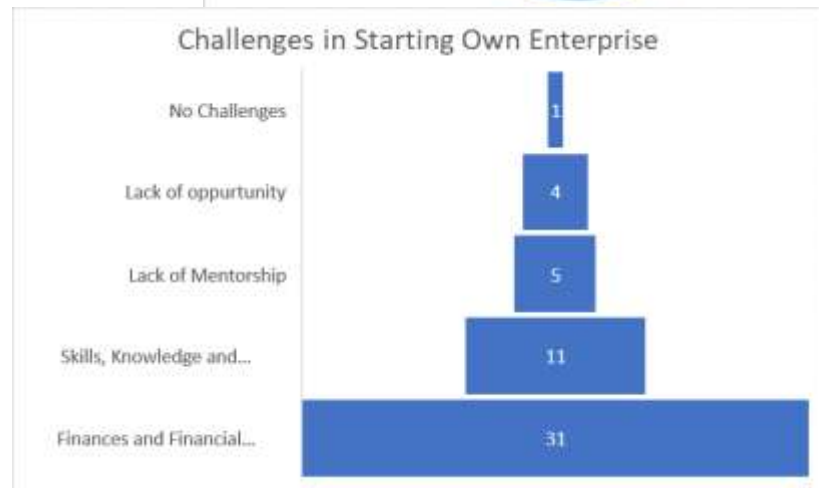


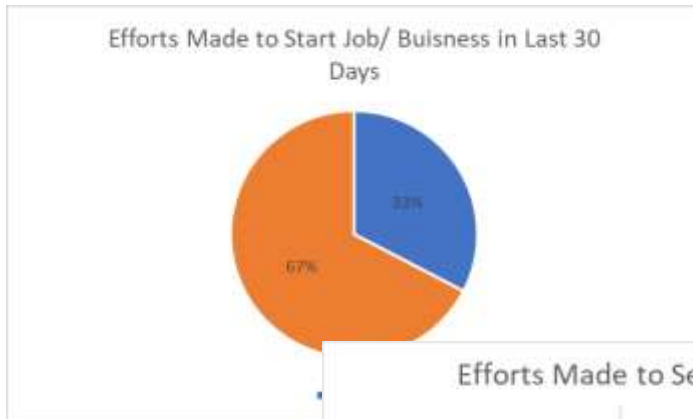
Every second respondent believes that they could have performed better in the job market with technical education and employable skills, as against formal education.

After graduation, 72 percent of respondents planned to start a job or their own business, whereas 28 percent of respondents were planning to further their education and or had other plans—like starting a family in the case of some females.



Availability of financial opportunities turns out to be a single major factor that youth face in starting their business/enterprise. Limited skills, knowledge, awareness, lack of mentorship, and lack of opportunity are other important factors. One respondent reported no challenges in starting his own enterprise.



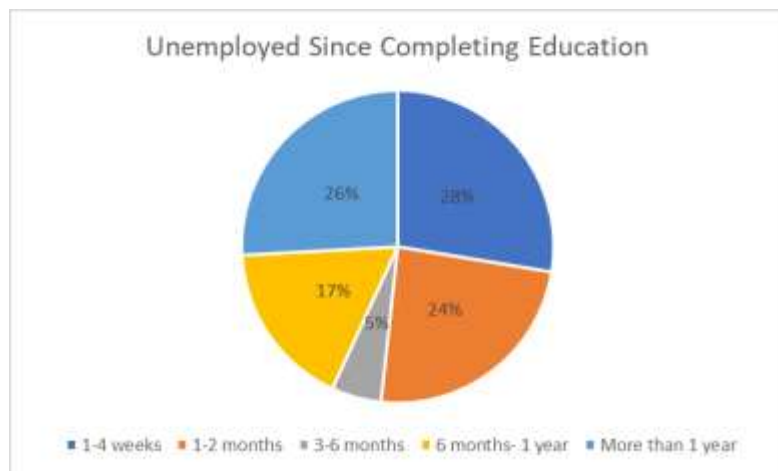


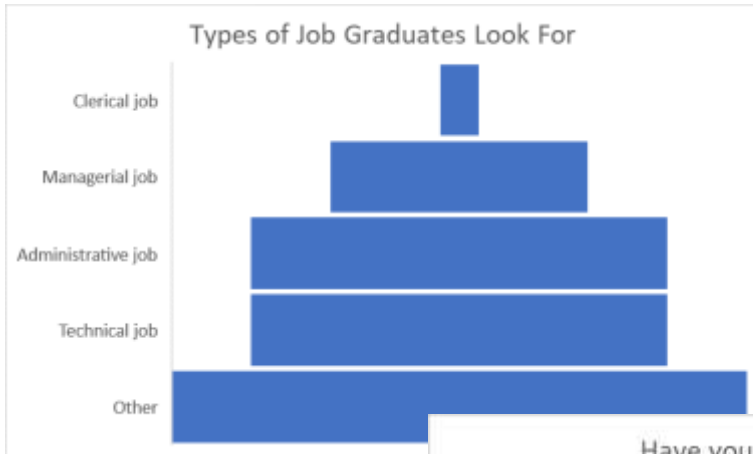
Only one third of respondents have made efforts to start their own business or find a job in the last 30 days. Reflecting that youth in Universities of Balochistan are in no rush to start a livelihood. One possible reason for this is the strong family structure and support.

Responses reflect that the majority of individuals expect to initially get employed through education/training institutes. While few try making financial arrangements. Therefore, educational institutions must make efforts to connect with industry for better job prospects for their graduates. Meanwhile, the response also reflects that most graduates lack direction regarding the kind of work they will undertake after graduation.



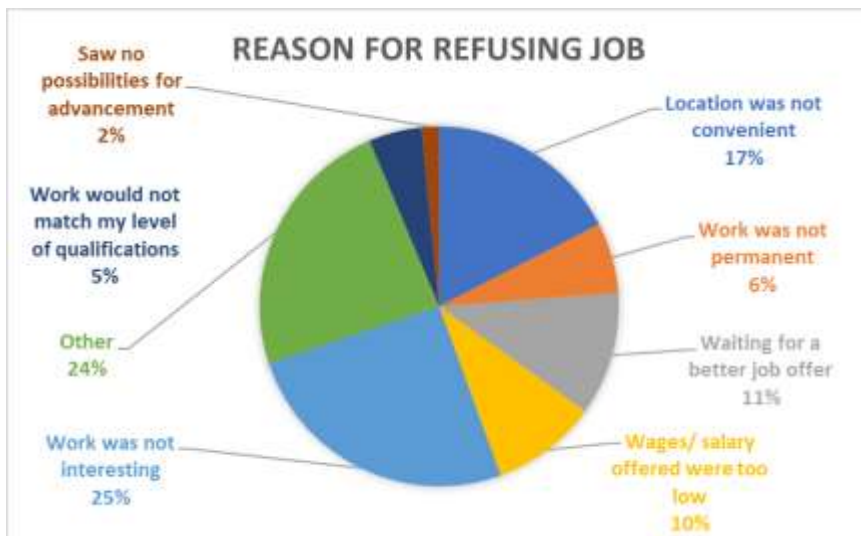
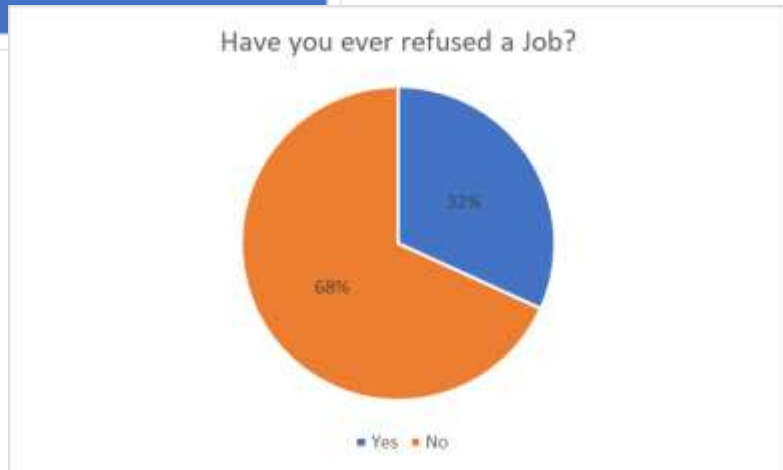
Responses reflect that a significant number of graduates (up to 45 percent) can find a job between 4-12 weeks or engage in some sort of work. However, those who are unable to find a job in 3 months, end up unemployed for a longer duration and 26 percent of graduates are unemployed even after a year of their graduation.





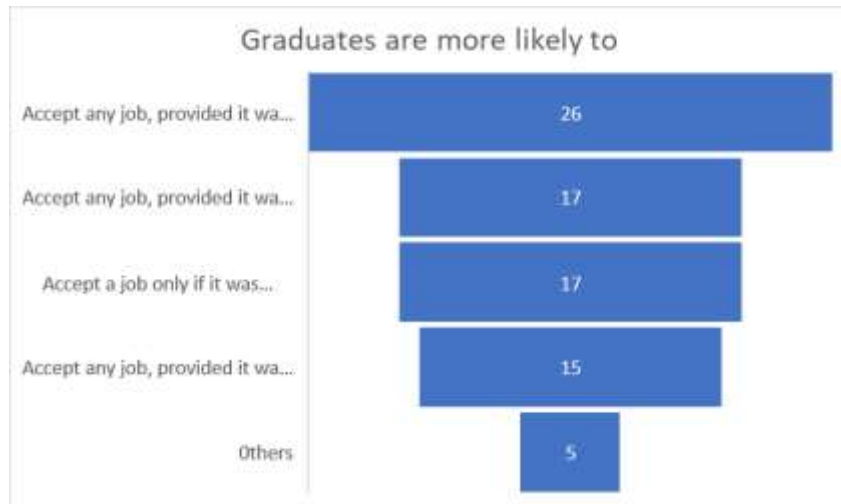
The Pyramid reflects that graduates expect to undertake technical jobs—where they can apply the education they have earned, followed by administrative and managerial jobs. Responses reflect that what graduates don't want is to undertake clerical jobs or menial work in offices.

Thirty percent of graduates have refused a job—a reflection of the fact that graduates who have worked hard at academic institutions have certain expectations regarding jobs and they are not willing to compromise. However, most graduates end up doing jobs offered to them due to limited opportunities.

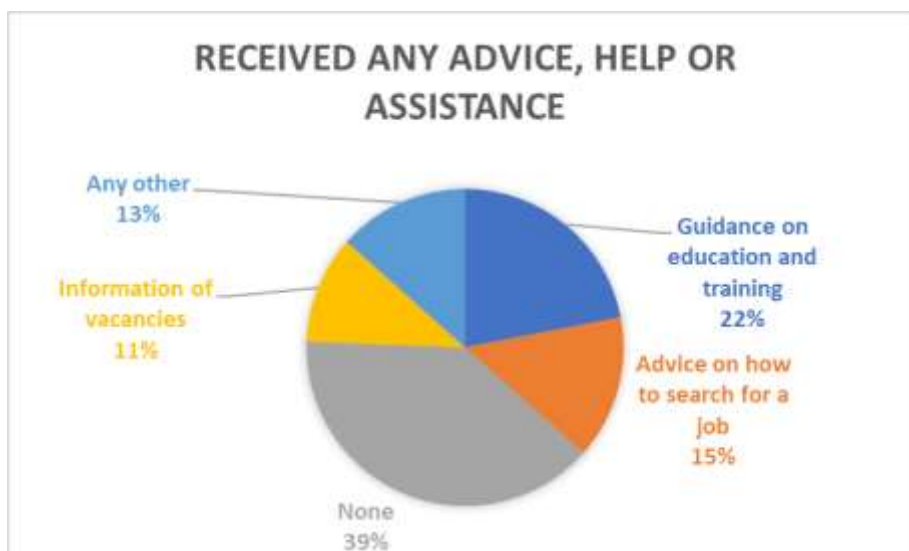


The top reason for refusing a job was that the kind of work offered was not interesting, followed by inconvenient location—which is also reflective of poor infrastructure in Balochistan and therefore youth do not want to work in rural areas. Other reasons include lower wages offered, irrelevant work, temporary work, and limited to no growth.

One-third of graduates are most likely to accept any job that is well-paid, no matter what. Job security is a major concern for twenty-one percent and an equal percentage of graduates look for stable jobs; however, jobs must be relevant. Likewise, 19 percent of respondents want to undertake jobs that are relevant to their education.



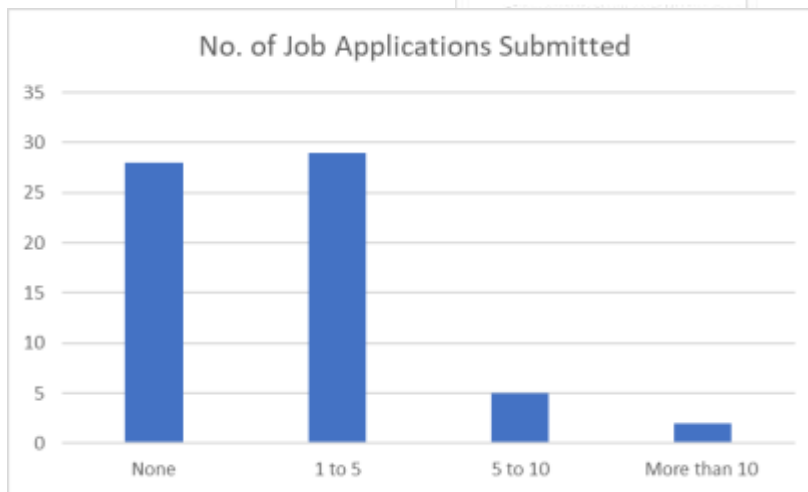
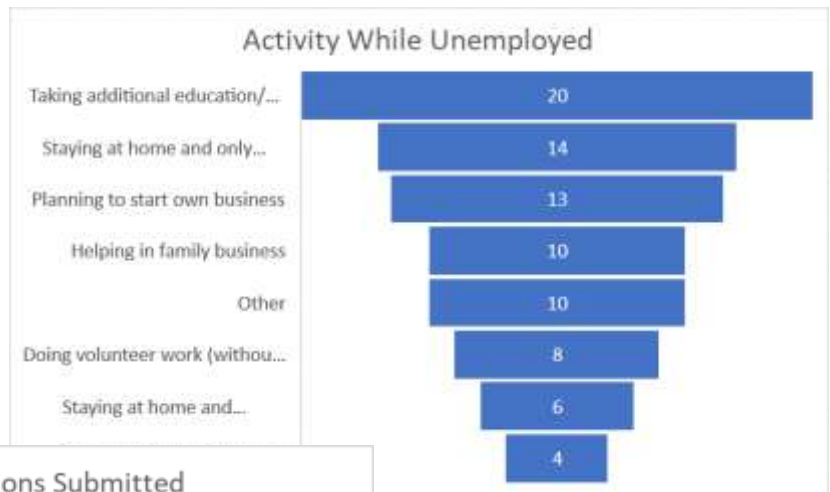
Twenty nine percent of respondents are willing to work under the minimum wage rates—these are mostly students who have migrated to cities for higher education, and they need this income for their survival in cities. Thirty-five percent of graduates are willing to work under PKR 50,000 per month. Whereas 14 percent of graduates expect a salary of PKR 100,000 plus per month.



Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported that they did not receive any advice, help, or assistance about employment/ jobs. Twenty-two percent reported guidance on education and training, whereas only 15 percent were assisted with ways to search for a job and 11 percent were informed about job vacancies.

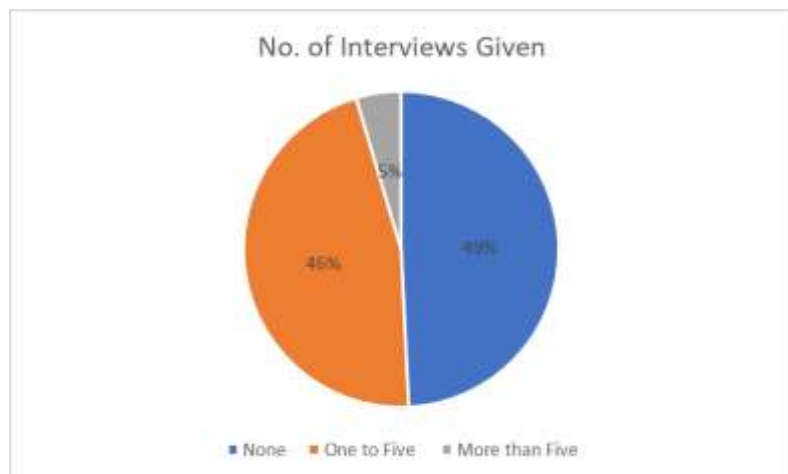
vacancies.

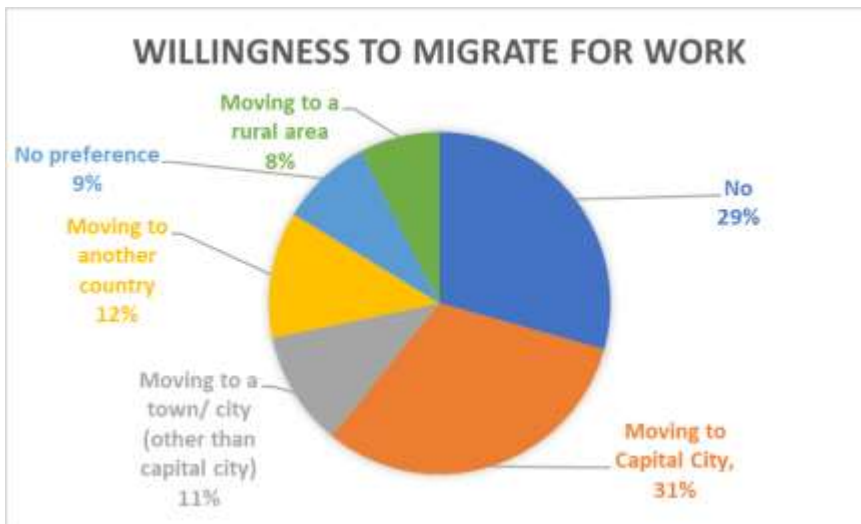
Every fourth of unemployed youth engage in acquiring additional education/ training while employed. Sixteen percent stay at home and continue their job search, while fifteen percent plan to start their own business/work. Nine percent engage in volunteer work and only five percent continue to spend time with friends.



Only two respondents have submitted more than ten applications. One-third of respondents have submitted 1-5 applications and 28 respondents have not submitted any job applications yet. Reflecting as a casual response of youth—reasons for which needs to be explored.

Almost 50 percent of respondents have not given any interviews yet. And another 46 percent have given 1-5 interviews. Only 5 percent of the respondents have appeared in more than 5 interviews—reflecting a casual response of youth. However, when questioned, a significant number of respondents said that they were preparing for a competitive exam of the Public Service Commission.

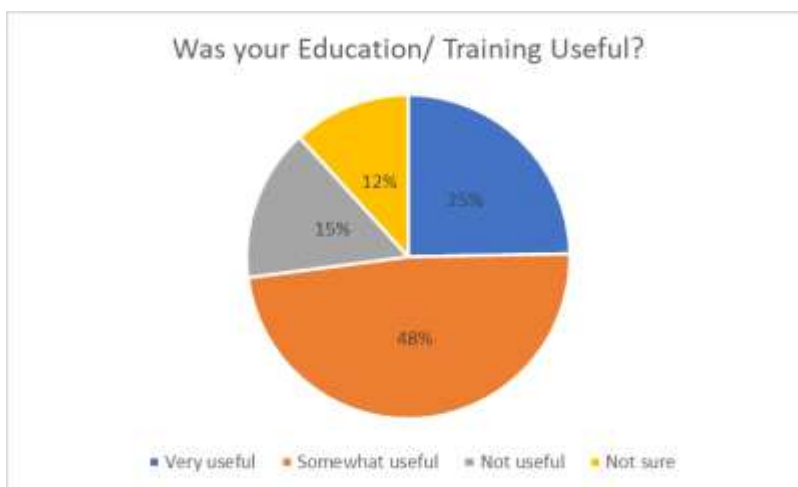
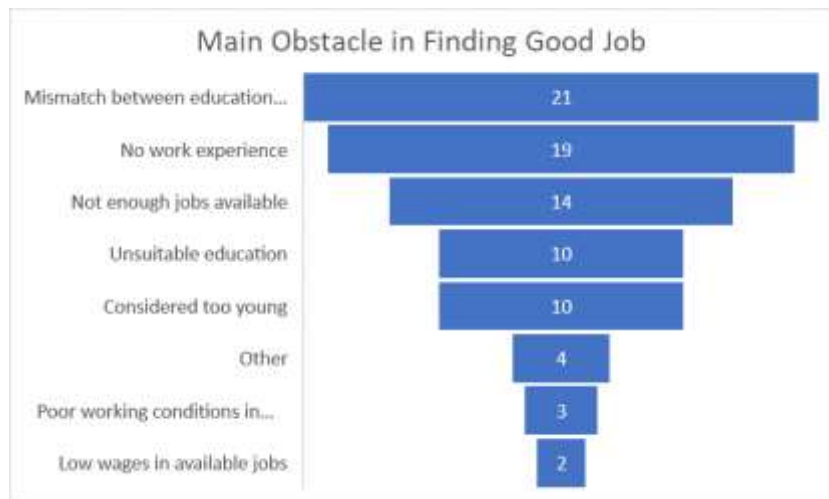




Twenty-nine percent of respondents are not willing to migrate for work and 9 percent have no preference. 31 percent are willing to move to Capital City and 12 percent are willing to move to any city/ town. Only 8 percent of respondents are willing to move to the rural areas of the country for work reasons—this is due to poor digital connectivity &

communication services in rural areas.

The mismatch between education requirements and that acquired turns out to be the major obstacle in finding good jobs for youth. Likewise, no work experience and not enough jobs are other important factors that youth identify as major obstacles. Only three respondents identified poor working conditions and two respondents identified low wages in available jobs as the main obstacles in obtaining employment.

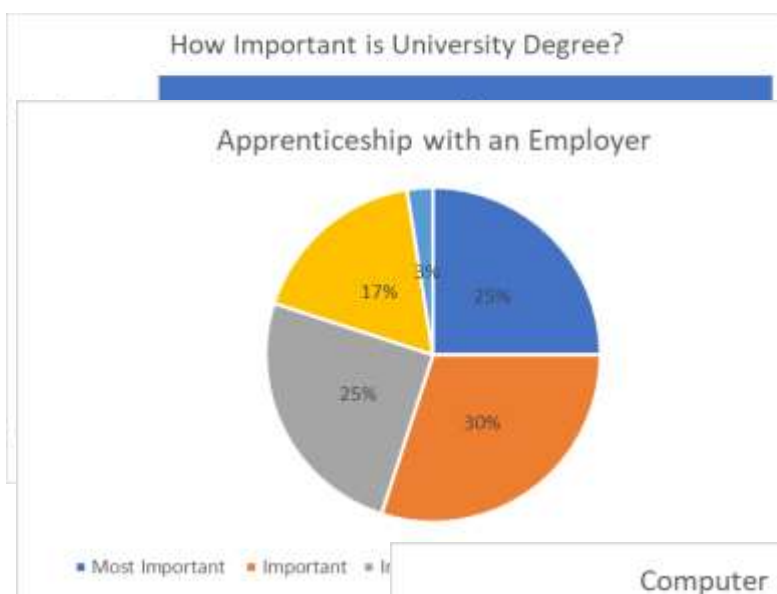


Every fourth respondent found his education/ training very useful in finding a job, while 15 percent of respondents believe that their education/ training was not useful. Every second respondent believes that his education/ training was somewhat useful in getting a job.

Even though youth classified professional training and skills as crucial for employability, they still feel that university qualification is the most important training for acquiring a job, followed by Computer/ IT skills, and knowing a foreign language—which is English in the case of Pakistan.

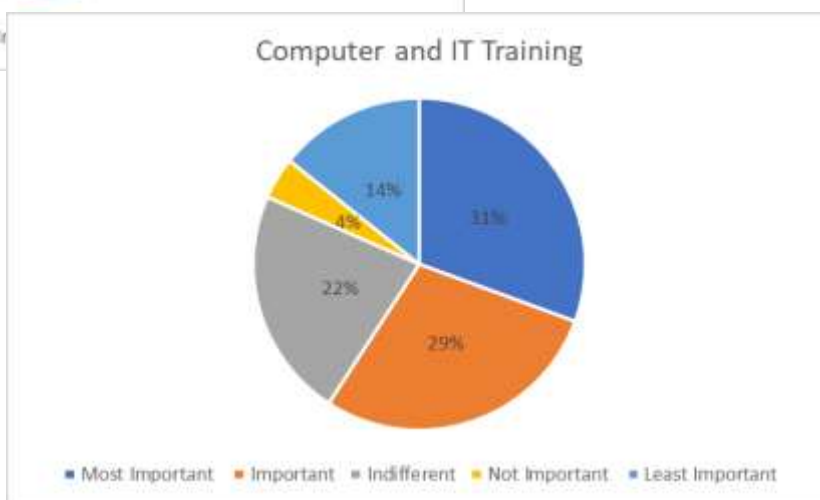


Most of the youth believe that a university degree helps them the most in acquiring a good job.



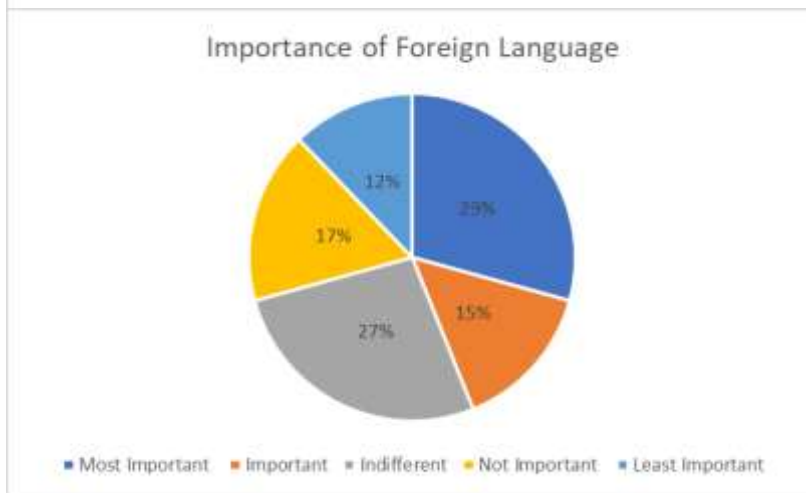
Apprenticeship with an employer is an important factor for every second respondent, however, at the same time, every fourth respondent is indifferent about apprenticeship with an employer regarding helping him in securing a job.

Sixty percent of respondents believe computer and IT skills to be important for securing a desired job, whereas 22 percent of respondents are indifferent about the role of computer and IT skills in earning a good job.



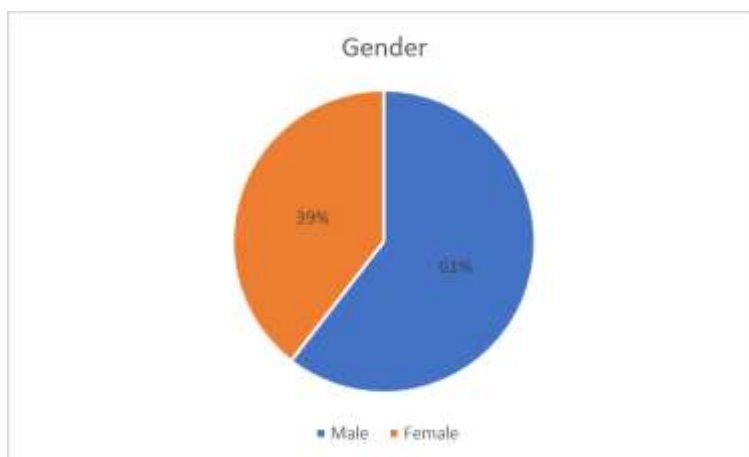


Fifty-three percent regard professional training as very important to important for earning jobs. Twenty-one percent are indifferent, and every fourth respondent felt that professional training is not important in securing a good job.



The majority of respondents feel that knowing a foreign language does not play an important role in earning a job. On the contrary, twenty-nine percent of respondents feel that a foreign language (especially English) is the most important factor in securing a good job.

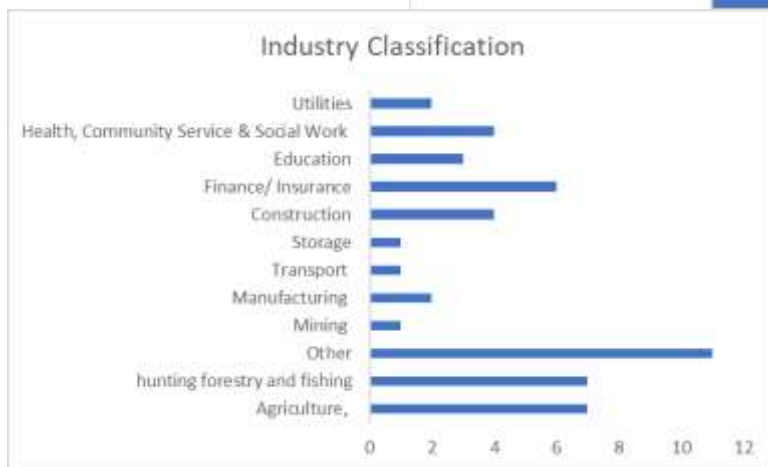
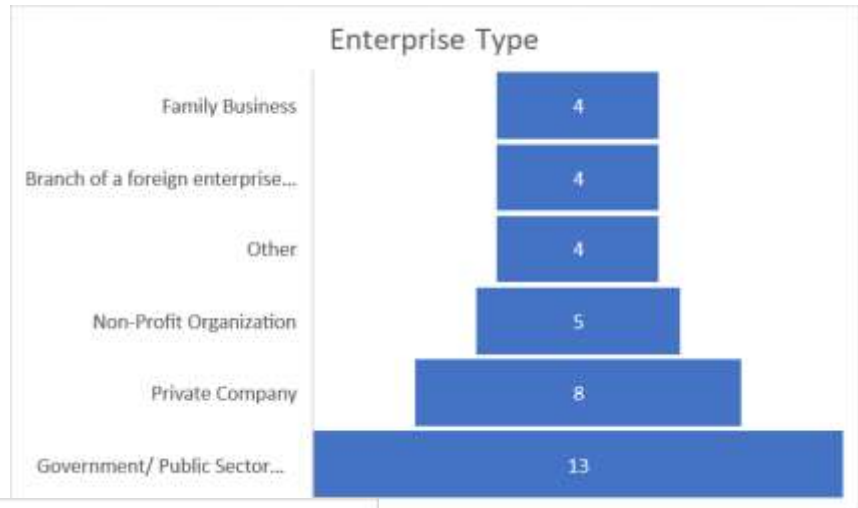
4.3 Employer Survey Findings



Thirty-eight employers or their representatives were surveyed. Most of them were mid-professionals in their organization--mainly from the HR Department. The average age of respondents is 33 years and surprisingly 15 out of 38 respondents were females. Reflecting that females have reached mid-career positions in organizations in Quetta and next few years they will be leading some of these organizations. The

average age of the enterprise is 23 years—mainly because of the representation of the banking industry and government institutions. Without them, the private sector enterprise average is 10 years.

The government footprint in Balochistan is dominant, followed by private local enterprises. Family businesses, foreign enterprises, and other types have equal representation. Non-Profit Organizations too have a significant presence in Balochistan.

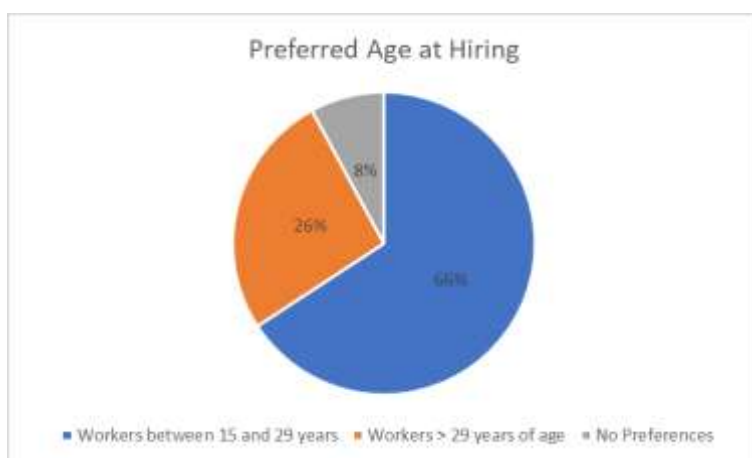
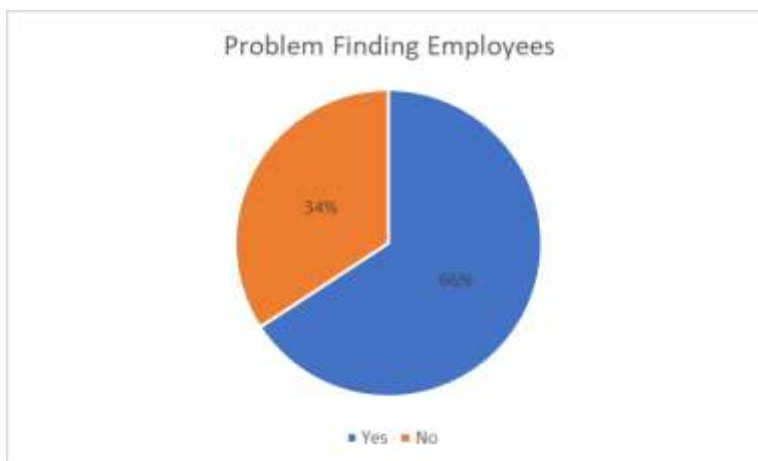


Data reflects Balochistan's poor industrial base and meager mining, utility, and services sector. On the contrary, Agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing have a significant presence. Moreover, the banking sector and construction are doing significantly better along with Telecommunications, captured in others in our data.



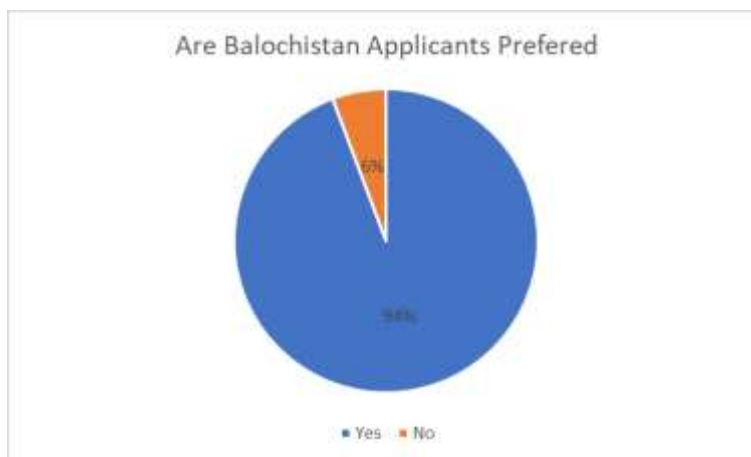
Lack of motivation and quality of labor force turns out to be major employee-related issues. Poor employee productivity, labor costs, and labor shortages are not major issues for most firms operating in Balochistan. Low employee turnover can be due to limited options for switching jobs in Balochistan, along with the large influence of the government.

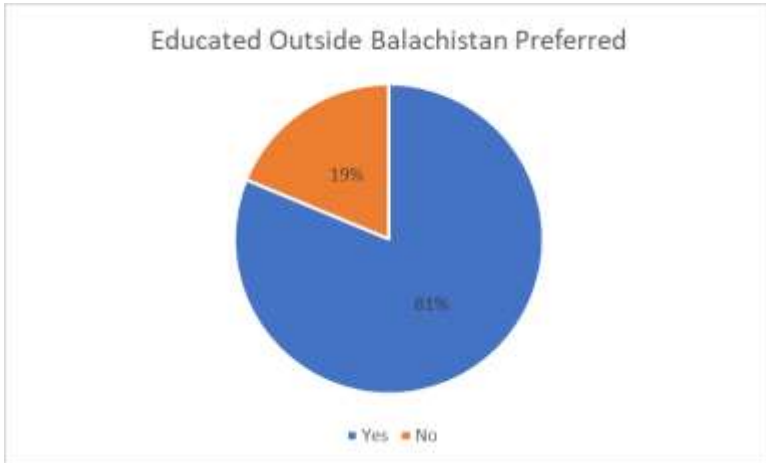
Sixty-six percent of organizations' representatives report that they face problems in finding the right labor force. The average number of employees is reported at 1751. If Government, Banking, and National Level organizations are excluded from calculations, the average number of employees is 82, reflecting that most enterprises in Balochistan are small-scale.



Two-thirds of Enterprises prefer to hire youth, 26 percent prefer adults and 8 percent of enterprises have no age preferences. Moreover, at the time of hiring 76 percent of enterprises reported no gender preference, 19 percent preferred male workers (most private enterprises), and 5 percent preferred female workers—mainly NGOs and education/health sector organizations.

Ninety-six percent of enterprises said that they prefer to hire applicants from Balochistan for reasons like limited opportunities for them, giving them a chance, understanding the society and culture better, organizations (e.g., NGOs) operate in rural areas and outsiders are not comfortable working there, youth from Balochistan have the right to be preferred, youth have limited opportunities at the national level, and only if they are equally competent.

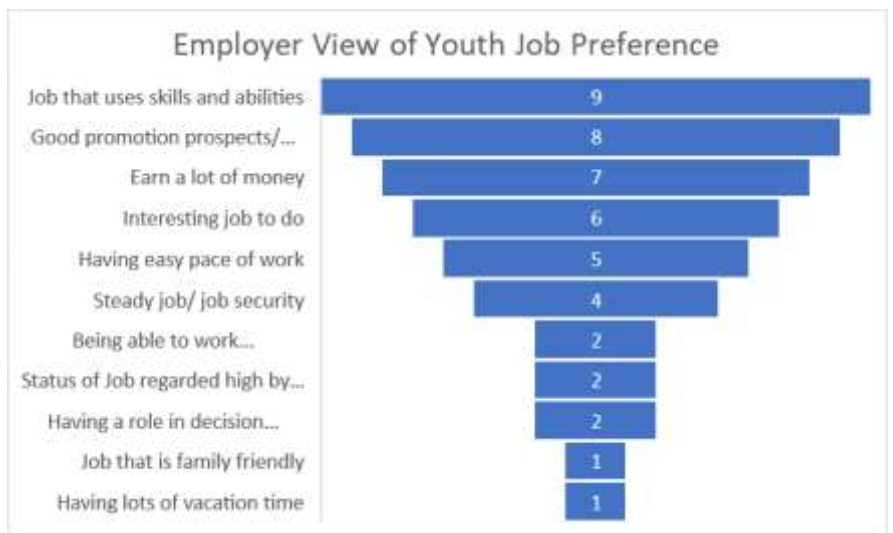




Eight one percent employers preferred youth from Balochistan who have studied outside Balochistan for reasons like being better educated, more exposed, well groomed, energetic, confident, and motivated. Almost one-fifth of employers said that they prefer more capable and skilled individuals from Balochistan—the location of their educational institution does not matter. Moreover, only 5 percent of employers said that they prefer

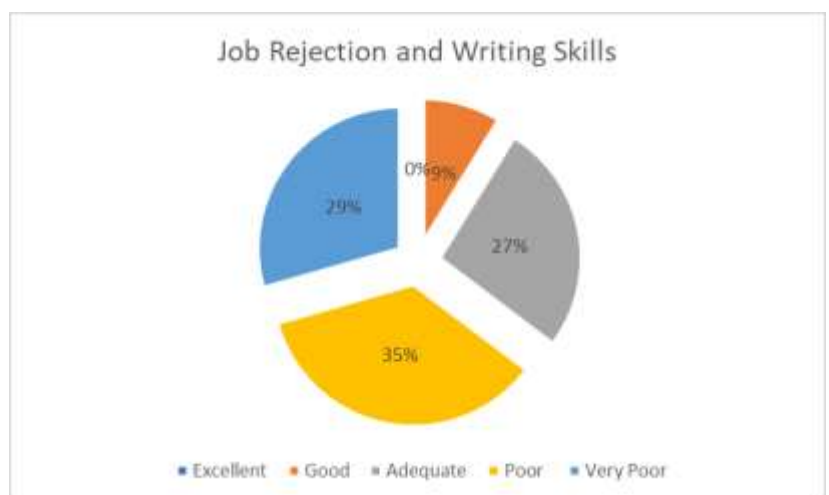
to hire youth who can speak local languages.

Employers believe that youth prefer jobs that use their skills, offer good career paths, are well paid and interesting to do. Next, youth is moved by secured jobs that are easy to perform. Limited youth prefer higher-order preferences like independence and role in decision-making. Finally, youth do not prefer jobs that are family-friendly and offer good vacations.

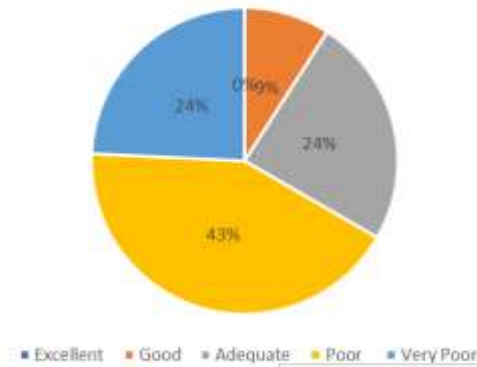


Job Rejection and Applicants Skills

Employers reflect that 64 percent of candidates refused jobs have very poor to poor adequate writing skills. Moreover, employers believe that applicants with excellent writing skills are not refused a job. However, 36 percent of applicants denied a job have good to adequate writing skills.



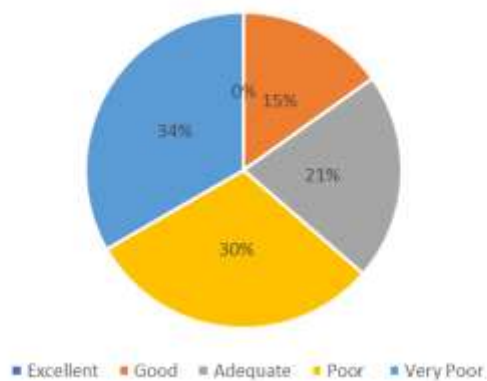
Job Rejection and Technical Skills



Employers believe that 67 percent of applications that are refused a job have very poor to poor technical skills. Moreover, individuals with excellent technical skills are not denied jobs. However, 33 percent of applicants denied a job have good to adequate technical skills.

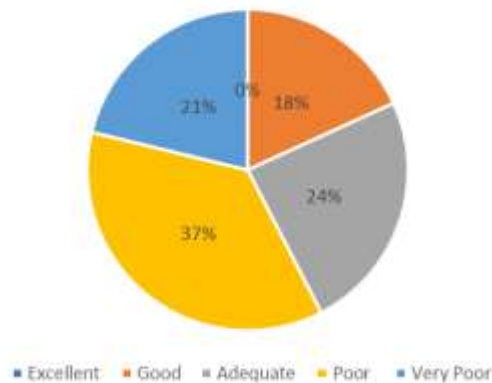
Employers reflect that 64 percent of candidates who refused a job have very poor to poor oral communication. They believe that job applicants with excellent oral communication are never denied a job. However, 36 percent of applicants with good to adequate oral communication may be denied a job.

Job Rejection and Oral Communication



Employers reflect that 58 percent of candidates denied a job have very poor to poor breadth of educational training. Moreover, no applicant with an excellent breadth of educational training is denied a job. However, employers believe that 42 percent of candidates denied a job have good to adequate breadth of educational training.

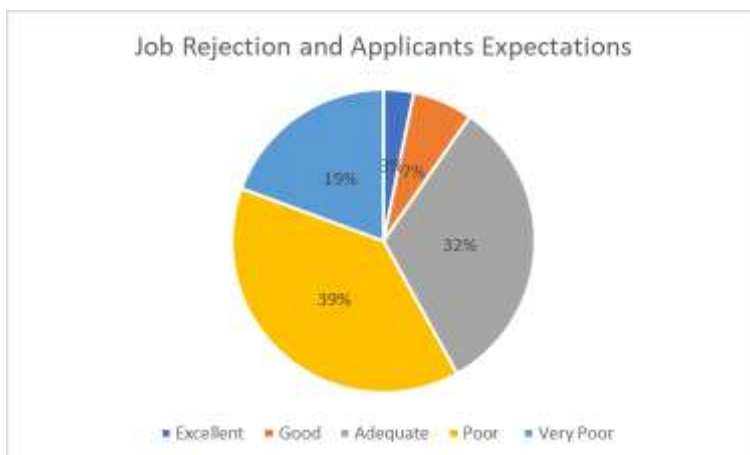
Job Rejection and Breadth of Educational Training





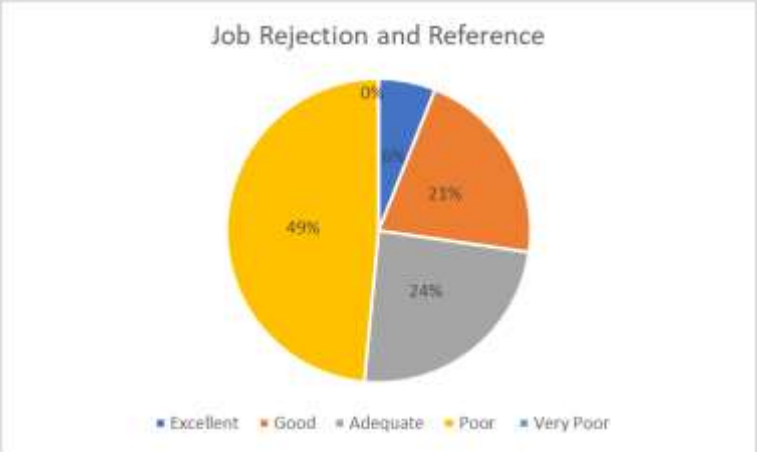
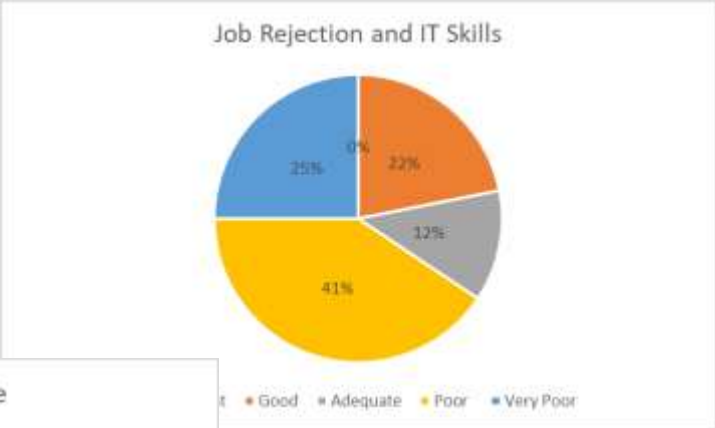
Employer responses reflect that 70 percent of applicants denied a job have very poor to poor ability to apply knowledge. Moreover, no applicant with an excellent ability to apply knowledge is denied a job. However, 30 percent of applicants denied a job have adequate to good ability to apply knowledge.

Employer responses reflect that 61 percent of applicants denied jobs have very poor to poor job commitment and discipline. Moreover, they believe that applicants with excellent job commitment and discipline are never denied a job. However, 39 percent of candidates refused a job that reflect good to adequate commitment and discipline.



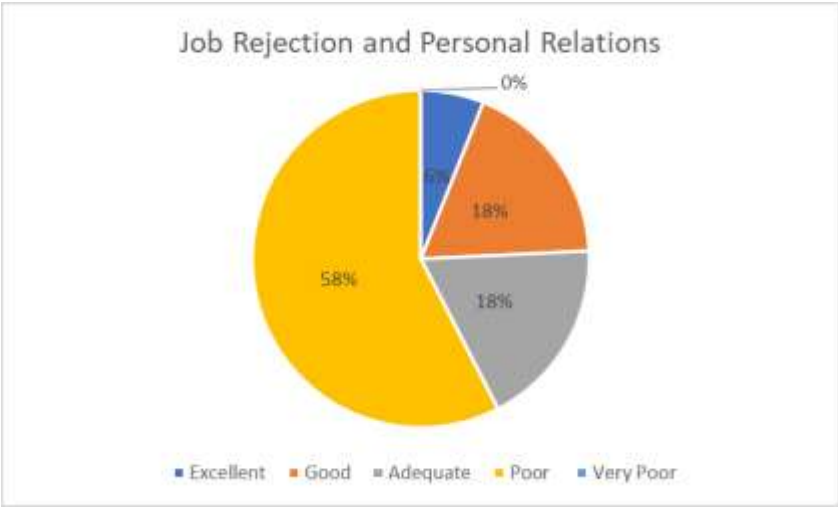
Employer responses reflect that 58 percent of applicants denied a job have very poor to poor realistic expectations regarding their work. On the contrary, 10 percent of denied jobs have excellent to good expectations and 32 percent of applicants denied a job have adequate realistic expectations about their work.

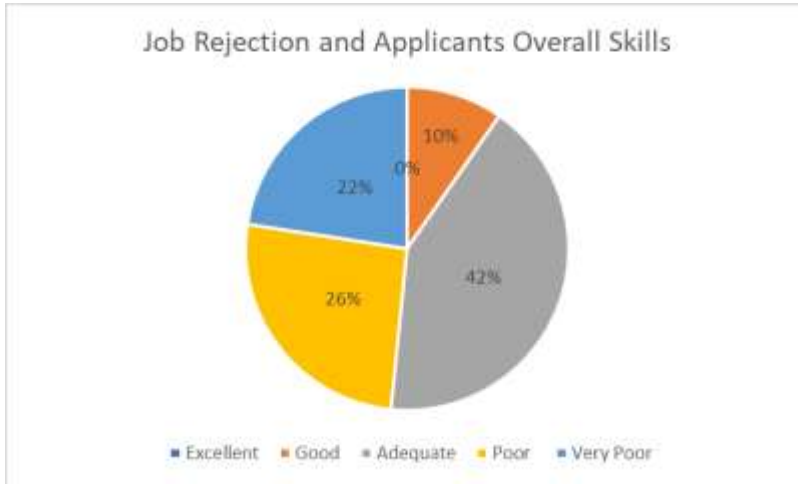
Employers reflect that 66 percent of applicants are denied jobs because of Very poor to poor IT skills. Moreover, no applicant with excellent IT skills is denied a job. However, 34 percent of applicants denied a job have good to adequate IT skills.



Employer responses reflect that 49 percent of applicants denied jobs have poor references. Moreover, 6 percent of applicants with excellent references are denied a job. Interestingly, 45 percent of individuals denied jobs have good to adequate references.

Employer responses reflect that 58 percent of individuals with poor personal relations are denied jobs. On the contrary, only 6 percent with excellent personal relations are denied a job. However, 36 percent of applicants denied a job have good to adequate personal relations.

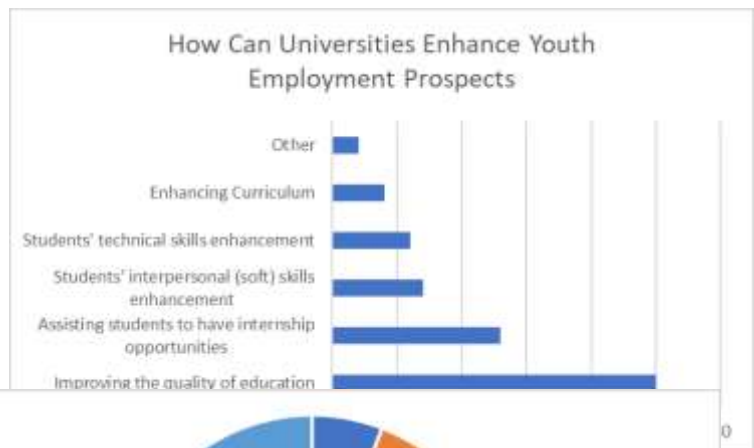




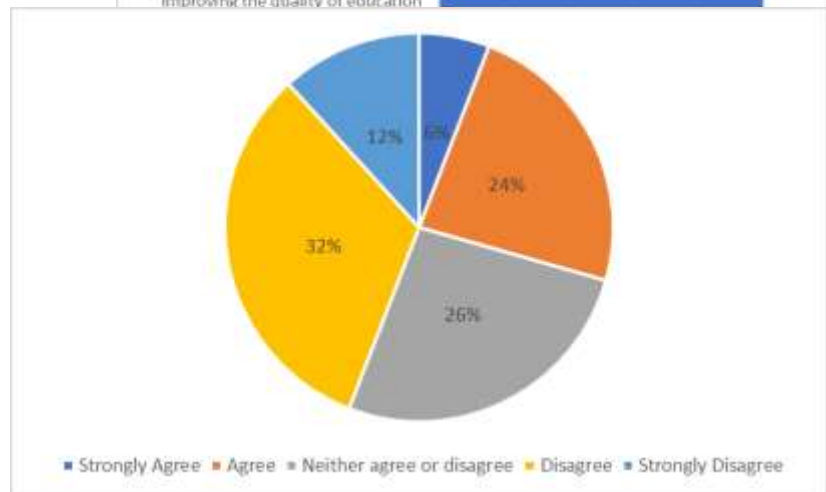
Employer responses reflect that employee’s 48 percent of applicants denied a job have very poor to poor overall skill sets. Likewise, 42 percent of applicants denied jobs have an adequate overall skill set. On the contrary, only 10 percent of applicants denied jobs have a good overall skill set. Importantly, employers reflect that “Zero Percent” applicants with excellent overall skill sets are denied a job.

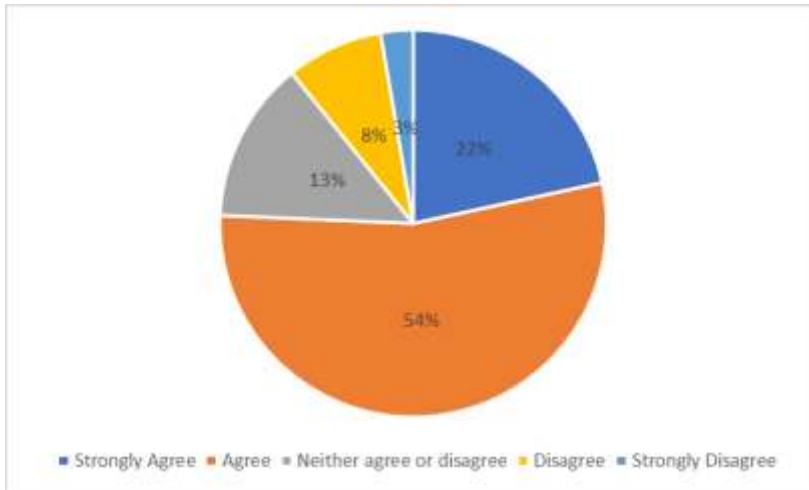
Educational Institutions and Youth Employment Prospects

Employers opined that universities should focus on improving the quality of education the most, followed by assisting students with internship opportunities. Next, the suggest that universities must focus on students’ soft skills and enhancement of technical skills. Curriculum enhancement turns out to be of least concern for employers—a factor significantly focused on by academia.



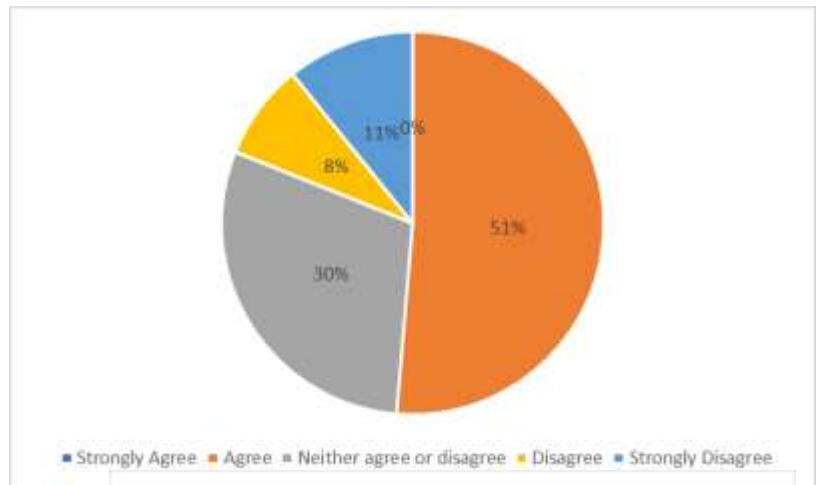
When inquired, “if Universities and Colleges in Balochistan are delivering quality education and training”: 44 percent of employers strongly disagreed to disagree, and 30 percent of employers strongly agreed to agree with the statement. 26 percent of employers remained neutral about the statement.





When inquired, “if Universities and Colleges outside Balochistan are comparatively delivering better quality education and training”: only 11 percent of employers strongly disagree to disagree with the statement. 76 Percent of employers strongly agree to agree and 13 percent of employers remained neutral.

When inquired, “if youth with technical education perform better than university graduates”: Fifty-one percent of employers agreed with the statement, 30 percent were indifferent, 8 percent disagreed, and 11 percent strongly disagreed. Overall, employers’ responses suggest that focusing on technical education is more important in the job market.



A major issue identified by employers in the labor market is the low-level skill or lack of technical skills among the labor force. Moreover, employers believe that the wage rate is low. Organizations do not offer capacity building/ human resource development opportunities. Furthermore, employers reflect that the workplace environment is compromised, employee appraisal systems are poor and job timings are not preferable. Employers also report that the workers are not motivated and trustworthy/ responsible.



QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the qualitative findings of the study focusing on the nature, causes, and consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan. The findings revealed diverse aspects of the nature, causes, and consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan, which are analyzed

and explicated in the following sub-sections. The coding scheme used to identify participants' illustrative quotes in the qualitative analysis is as follows:

- KI – Key informant
- EMP – Employer
- STD – Student

5.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment in Balochistan is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, involving characteristics of structural unemployment, under-employment, and seasonal unemployment. Additionally, critical impediments such as the lack of productive resources, efficient and effective utilization of natural and economic resources, as well as the absence of vibrant industrial infrastructure in Balochistan are exacerbating the existing youth vulnerability and making it difficult to obtain suitable employment. Thus, Balochistan has remained a traditional economy and most people rely on livestock and the agriculture sector. Some are engaged in trade with neighboring countries. These sources have dried up and the youth bulge has limited opportunities. Overall, most participants noted that youth unemployment is chronic and long-term in nature owing to the dysfunctional education structure in Balochistan and the inadequate industrial sector.

5.3 Skills deficit/imbalance and labor market capacity in Balochistan

Misalignment between the demand and supply of job-related skills and insufficient labor (i.e., supply-demand anomaly or labor market mismatch) are key determinants of long-term structural unemployment. The participants refer to varied structural unemployment challenges that are inhibiting youth from obtaining employment. A senior United Nations representative stated:

“The quality of our graduates is questionable. We are producing mediocre graduates. There are some very lucrative job opportunities out there but unfortunately, we don't have qualified people available to take those roles” (KI-1)

EMP-7 noted that:

“We are providing very good theoretical education, however, unfortunately, this is not relevant to practice. I believe that if there should be a blend [subtle balance] between these two then there lies a lot of opportunities in the job market. Organizations have jobs for youth but there is a missing link between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice.”

Further, KI-1 questioned the inappropriate spending of the provincial budget, and the way financial resources are diverted away from the development of social capital and spent on the construction of buildings.

“The PSDP [Public Sector Development Program] must be HR-centric, 98 percent of PSDP is going into construction, and we do not focus on skill enhancement and training, etc. Even the money allocated for social development, we spend that money on school construction, constructing boundary walls, repairs, and all that. So, we need to seriously review and revisit PSDP to understand why human development is not happening. We need to bring skills enhancement to the forefront. I understand that university level we focus more on specializations, but I believe that we need to pick something at the polytechnic level and job placement centers need to be more focused.” (KI-1)

One of the Vice Chancellor commented on the relationship between youth unemployment and the prevailing economic circumstances of the province. The participant remarked:

“The size of Balochistan's economy is too small to absorb the youth bulge into jobs. We are producing lots of graduates, but the market cannot absorb it.”

KI-2 remarked on the education quality and a lack of focus on soft (interpersonal) skills development in the higher education sector:

“Institutions’ [academic] quality is not good. Our youth lacks soft skills in Balochistan—Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are doing a good job with hard skills. Nonetheless, HEIs’ focus on soft skills is limited. For example, in interviews, applicants have subject skills but fail to present themselves and their work. In the market, it is not only important to have some important skills but also how to sell those skills. Similarly, youth have no practical knowledge, unfortunately, the world is talking about metaverse or whatnot, but we are teaching dated courses to our students, which are not very useful in the practical world. For example, mining students have never gone to the mine; petroleum students have never visited a Petro-chemical industry.”

KI-3 – a senior administrative official of one of the universities argued that:

“Education is improving in Balochistan e.g., Marine Science is being introduced, similarly, textile and chemical engineering degrees are introduced, and universities are doing a good job. However, if you check newspaper adverts, these jobs are not demanded by the market... supply is in surplus because the demand side could not generate enough opportunities. Therefore, our youth migrate to other cities and other countries.”

KI-4 referred to the skills deficit problem. The interviewee asserted:

“The majority of Labor in Balochistan can hardly work in technical positions and they cannot be employed in industries, even if the industry is established in Balochistan.”

KI-4 further suggested that public sector educational institutes are lagging in imparting needed skills to young people and making it difficult for them to obtain employment:

“The education sector is not performing well. Technical & vocational skills are missing. Public sector schools for non-performing. Private schools are doing better but everyone cannot afford to study there. Public service delivery in education and skill development needs to be improved in Balochistan.”

KI-5 expressed his views as:

Relevant skills and training in Balochistan are not available. GIZ – [German Development Agency] has done a skill-based training program in coordination with TCC – technical training centers. GIZ programs too were extending conventional training, like computer programs—none of the programs were good enough to introduce new skills that are industry-based. GIZ even offered tailored (customized) programs. Likewise, carpet weaving skill provision was not available in GIZ training—which made sense in Balochistan. The government can only offer jobs to 10 %, the remaining youth must be employed by the market. Nonetheless, the market in Balochistan cannot absorb youth. In this scenario, government support is instrumental in terms of providing relevant training programs but that is not happening as most of the current training programs are not focusing on building relevant skills.

Additionally, KI-5 suggested that:

GIZ has a job placement training program. Interestingly, the program trained 500,000 people, however, only 10 percent were able to find jobs and those too got jobs from personal efforts, not through obtaining skills via training programs. In most areas, people were unable to find skill-based jobs in most districts of Balochistan.

KI-6 commented on the mismatch between skills demanded by the labor market and the supply of skills youth hold to perform their roles (i.e., supply-demand anomaly). The KI-6 asserted:

“Education is not demand-driven—it is supply-driven—as a result, we are producing graduates, who are unable to earn jobs. In fact, universities are starting disciplines that are not demand-driven—rather departments are opened to adjust certain individuals. The public is naïve and engages in these programs—feeling that it’s a new field—however, once they graduate—they are unable to find jobs.”

The KI-6 further argued:

“Universities have become teaching colleges—and therefore only focus on teaching with limited to no research.”

KI-9 commented that:

“Well, lack of skills is a major problem — our youth is not employable. On the supply side, we are producing too many graduates compared to what is demanded by the labor market ... Similarly, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor – CPEC also failed to deliver thus far—who can we hire in Gwadar as the youth is not skilled”.

Similarly, students and employers noted that youth lack job-related skills, and the job market cannot absorb the youth bulge. STD-3, STD-26, and STD-27 pointed out that universities’ curricula and learning pedagogies are old-fashioned causing an acute skills deficit, which reduces the likelihood for youth to obtain desired employment:

“The current circumstances are daunting... the graduates lack skills and competencies – universities impart education where students are not trained or lack the required skills set needed to do the job.” (STD-3)

“Students lack skills, we don’t focus on creativity, and we follow traditional learning techniques ...if you have skills, you can get opportunities in other provinces and countries.” (STD-26)

“We produce more graduates than the market can absorb. The private sector barely exists in Balochistan.” (STD-27)

One of the employers stated that youth are eager to develop their skills, however, they must study in other provinces to acquire the required skill set.

“I have also noticed that students want to improve their skills and competencies by going to other provinces and cities. At the same time, youth is committed to returning to their province after completing their education and obtaining the right skill set and serving their province.” (EMP-1)

“We are producing more graduates than what the market can accommodate or absorb. Unfortunately, students must leave Quetta to find jobs in other provinces.” (EMP-4)

EMP-6 advised that holding the right skills is a key enabler to secure employment.

“Youth should focus on developing their skills and strengthening their academic profile. If they are well educated, securing a job is not a big deal.”

One of the employers highlighted the importance of technology-related skills enhancement as:

“One thing I have noticed is that we don’t focus on emerging trends. It is imperative to learn and develop expertise in digital technologies, digital marketing, big data analytics, and e-commerce. We need to offer degrees in these areas too.” (EMP-8)

5.4 Under-employment in Balochistan

Youth in Balochistan are also confronted with **under-employment** issues as qualified youth are working in either low-level jobs or are employed in temporary or part-time roles. Thus, the potential of youth is not fully utilized, and their economic contributions remain insignificant. The KI-2 recalled:

“For a few dozen positions in the Service & General Administration Department, Government of Balochistan, I was told that 33,000 people applied for a basic level clerical position (Grade 14) and master’s degree holders had applied for the job. Similarly, at [name of the university], we advertised for 2 lecturer positions in law, and against that 200 plus applicants applied. While Law is a technical subject that is why not many people applied, we still received 200 applications.”

Similarly, KI-3 posited:

“Highly qualified people are applying for low-level jobs in government.... Students mostly migrate to other cities in Pakistan who have earned technical degrees and work with small private firms for very low wages.”

KI-6 suggested: *“Most youth are unable to find suitable jobs and qualified youth engage in low-level jobs. Internships are limited and practical exposure is not seen.”*

Likewise, KI-9 stated:

“Engineers are working as drivers—smuggling Iranian petrol from Iran—due to limited opportunities.”

Table 1 presents a summary of qualitative findings on the nature of youth unemployment in Balochistan.

Table 1: A summary of qualitative findings on the nature of youth unemployment in Balochistan

Type of Unemployment	Findings
Frictional	<p>Lack of industrial operations and weak private sector: Youth seeking employment may face frictional unemployment as they take time to search for suitable job opportunities in the limited industrial and private sector activities.</p> <p>Moreover, unemployed youth in Balochistan face emotional and psychological issues such as low morale, dissatisfaction, stress, and reduced self-confidence. The combination of frictional unemployment (temporary unemployment during job transitions) and structural unemployment contributes to these undesirable consequences.</p>
Structural	<p>The mismatch between the demand and supply of job-related skills in the labor market, as well as the lack of vibrant industrial infrastructure in Balochistan, contributes to long-term structural unemployment. This is evident from the inadequate training and education that fail to equip graduates with relevant skills, leading to a situation where qualified individuals struggle to find suitable employment in the region.</p> <p>Moreover, Absence of industrial operations and weak private sector: The lack of industrialization and significant private sector activities in Balochistan can lead to structural unemployment as the economy does not have enough diversified sectors to absorb the labor force adequately.</p> <p>Furthermore, youth Frustration and Disillusionment: The lack of suitable employment opportunities has led to frustration and disillusionment among the youth in Balochistan. There is a mismatch between the skills and aspirations of the young population and the available job options, contributing to structural unemployment.</p> <p>Additionally, structural unemployment's mismatch between skills and job opportunities leads to reduced productivity among the youth. During economic downturns (cyclical unemployment), overall demand decreases, further impacting the economic contributions of unemployed individuals.</p>

<p>Cyclical</p>	<p>Macro-economic instability and political crisis: Economic instability and political issues in the province may contribute to cyclical unemployment as the economic conditions fluctuate, leading to fluctuations in the demand for labor.</p> <p>Moreover, youth unemployment in Balochistan has been linked to increased crime rates and social unrest. Structural unemployment, with its long-term mismatch between skills and job opportunities, is compounded by cyclical unemployment during economic downturns, creating an environment where frustrated and disillusioned youth may turn to counterproductive activities.</p> <p>Furthermore, the lack of suitable job opportunities and economic downturns contribute to social welfare challenges in Balochistan. Structural unemployment leads to a segment of the population struggling to meet their basic needs, while cyclical unemployment during economic crises exacerbates the situation.</p>
<p>Seasonal</p>	<p>While not explicitly stated in the findings, it can be inferred that seasonal unemployment may be present in Balochistan due to the reliance on traditional sectors such as agriculture, where employment opportunities may fluctuate depending on seasonal factors.</p>
<p>Technological</p>	<p>There is a mention of inadequate focus on technology-related skills and outdated courses, indicating that the education system may not be adequately preparing students for the demands of the modern job market. This aligns with the concept of technological unemployment, where advances in technology render certain skills obsolete and create a gap between available jobs and the skills possessed by the workforce.</p> <p>Moreover, it can be inferred that limited industrialization and lack of technological advancements may lead to some degree of technological unemployment as industries may not adopt new technologies that could create additional job opportunities.</p>
<p>Voluntary</p>	<p>There is no direct indication of voluntary unemployment in the findings. However, the reference to youth migrating to other provinces and countries to seek better job opportunities suggests that some may voluntarily choose to leave Balochistan in search of more favorable employment prospects.</p> <p>Moreover, perceptions concerning corruption and lack of equal employment opportunities: Some young people may choose to remain voluntarily unemployed due to the belief that employment opportunities are limited, and the hiring process is corrupt or biased.</p> <p>Furthermore, talented youth voluntarily leave Balochistan in search of better opportunities elsewhere due to the lack of suitable employment options, resulting in brain drain. Structural unemployment, with its mismatch of skills and available jobs,</p>

	exacerbates the situation, driving youth to seek employment in other cities or countries.
Underemployment	<p>The mention of highly qualified individuals working in low-level jobs or jobs that do not fully utilize their skills points to underemployment, where individuals are working in roles below their educational qualifications and potential.</p> <p>Moreover, mushroom growth of higher education institutes (HEIs) and poor education quality: The rapid growth of HEIs and the lack of relevant educational programs can lead to underemployment, where graduates are overqualified for the jobs available to them.</p> <p>Furthermore, some unemployed youth compromise on their career aspirations and settle for lower-skilled jobs that do not fully utilize their expertise, leading to underemployment. The mismatch between their qualifications and available opportunities contributes to this issue.</p>

5.5 Causes of Youth Unemployment

The findings suggest that a wide range of factors contribute to youth unemployment in Balochistan including a lack of industrial development and a weak private sector, inadequate support for females, youth perception of corruption and lack of equal employment, ineffective provincial leadership, failure in policy development and implementation, the mushroom growth of higher education institutes (HEIs) and poor education quality, insufficient career counseling, apprenticeship opportunities, and industry-academia linkages, and issues related to macro-economic stability and political crisis.

Absence of industrial operations and inadequate private sector activities

Industrialization and a vibrant private sector foster sustained economic development and create employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the findings revealed inadequate industrialization and insignificant private sector activities in Balochistan are major issues constraining youth from securing employment and actively participating in formal economic activities. There seems to be a consensus among key informants, employers, and students that the absence of industrial operations and insufficient private sector activities are major drivers for youth unemployment. Accordingly, young people are primarily focusing on seeking government jobs. The KI-1 argued:

“One thing we need to understand is that government cannot accommodate everyone in government jobs.”

KI-2 referred to youth being inspired by relaxed work settings in government institutions and preferring to work in such environments.

“People in Balochistan work to live and not live to work—everyone wants a government job because the work is relaxed in government jobs.”

KI-3 asserted there is a perception among youth that government jobs are ideal and the family drives young people to look for government positions.

“Government jobs are idolized, and the applicants are pushed to apply for government jobs and government can hardly absorb 10-15 percent of youth. The mindset is an issue, and this training is done at home.”

KI-4 expressed views as:

“Private sector is minimal, and youth looks up to government jobs—however public sector cannot employ the youth bulge ... there is a stereotype that we have an ongoing law-and-order situation,

which is often blamed for low industrialization in Balochistan, but that is not true. Security was never a problem in Northern Balochistan and Eastern Balochistan, however, industries never flourished there either.”

KI-5 posited that:

“The existing industries are all small and not more than 1000 units. These units are all small-scale, even a medium-level enterprise could not be found. These industries in Balochistan have on average 10-15 employees (mostly cottage industry), and employing more people is beyond their capacity. The industrial base is missing and that is causing the youth unemployment crisis in Balochistan.”

KI-8 pointed out that young people are obsessed with public sector employment:

“People of Balochistan have a cultural issue—they just want to end up doing a government job. Educational Institutions must advocate entrepreneurship and have to promote it and create an environment where youth can engage in job creation.”

KI-8 suggested that:

“Another issue is behavioral—most people want to be free riders—they treat government jobs as security of income that too without doing much work.”

KI-9 commented that:

“Mindset among society is that the best HR must engage in Government Jobs....no trend of engaging in private sector jobs...If opportunities are made available—students do not take much interest—mainly because they want to end up doing a government job—therefore they are not interested.”

KI-10 noted that:

“Well, we don’t have a considerable industrial base in the province. Employable opportunities are limited. Reko Diq and Saindak were outsourced to foreign companies— [unfortunately] limited locals are employed in these projects.”

Students also noted similar concerns regarding the lack of industries in the province. STD-1, STD-7, STD-11, STD-14, STD-18, SDT-26, and STD-30 noted that due to limited job opportunities young people are migrating to other places, nonetheless, relocating to other areas is not feasible for everyone because of family commitments and other reasons:

“Graduates must move out to other provinces and cities. However, some graduates can’t leave (migrate) due to family commitments – can’t leave the city or province”.

“We have limited job opportunities due to inadequate private companies and industrial sector, in the case where industries are present such as mining then such industries can only offer jobs to specialized graduates.” (STD-7)

“There is a lack of enabling environment for industrial growth and new start-ups” (STD-11)

“There is limited support available and very few opportunities for entrepreneurship. We need free tax areas, we need good infrastructure, we need electricity. All these issues are important for boosting investment in the province. Once these issues are addressed, people will be able to find decent jobs in Balochistan.” (STD-18)

In a similar vein, employers referred to the issue of a weak industrial base and the presence of the private sector in the province. Employers including EMP-1, EMP-3, EMP-4, EMP-6, and EMP-8, attributed youth unemployment to poor industrial development in the province.

“The private sector did not flourish due to the ongoing security situation in the province.” (EMP-1)

“The fundamental issue is the lack of industries in Balochistan, and limited employment opportunities in the private sector compared to other provinces.” (EMP-3)

“We don’t have industries, the private sector is not active except for the banking sector, and there are limited government jobs.” (EMP-8)

Cultural taboos and tribal setup – female participation in and contributions to formal economic activities

Balochistan is predominantly a tribal and conservative society with limited female labor force participation in formal economic activities. Most females are engaged in unpaid care and domestic work supporting families and their male counterparts; however, as such their economic contributions are acknowledged. The participants shared different perspectives regarding female education, empowerment, and employment contributions. While some participants argued that cultural norms are changing and families are supportive of female education and employment, others highlighted a range of issues encountered by females regarding equity in education and employment opportunities.

KI-1 noted that while in the past females were not supported in education and employment domains, currently female participation in the labor market is encouraged and gender disparity is gradually declining. Accordingly, things are improving but there remain numerous challenges inhibiting females from effectively contributing to economic activities in the province.

“One very encouraging thing is that the myth is broken, which is positive that even tribal families now allow their girls to go out and earn money. However, we don’t see any proactive measures on the part of the government to facilitate girls... no incubation centers can be seen for females... we don’t have daycare centers and washrooms for the female staff.”

Similarly, KI-1 argued that females are not preferred by employers due to varied issues such as maternity leave.

“Females are not preferred by employers mainly because they have more leaves and there is a cost attached to hiring females, and there is stigma as well in our society... Government rules are very clear, however, it is very unfortunate that women must give bribes to get maternity leave. Additionally, there is an element of patronization. Some male counterparts ask females to go home and tell them they can take care of work responsibilities on their behalf but at the same time, they are blamed for inefficiency and lack of responsibility.”

In addition, KI-1 pointed out shortcomings in the budgeting aspects supporting the female workforce in their respective employment:

“We do not see gender-responsive budgets. We still construct gender-blind budgets. For instance, we don’t have ramps for disabled people. We don’t have washrooms for disabled people and females. All these issues are important other than salaries.”

KI-2 asserted that:

In the formal economy role of females is very limited. Conversely, in the informal economy role of females is massive, but it is not recognized such as raising kids, working at home or farm, contributing to the family, etc. Unfortunately, such a role is not recognized at the international forum, and we don’t value such contributions. To recognize that role and contributions, we need to work hard and provide an enabling environment. For instance, we are not doing anything special for girls ... we need to support and facilitate girls coming from remote areas of Balochistan.

KI-2 further noted that:

“Families too are not very supportive of the females (e.g., a conducive working environment for females should be provided, no harassment at the workplace, day-care centers, good hostels, good transportation – these hurdles must be removed)”

KI-6 posited that females have a critical role in the informal economy and their contributions are multi-dimensional in the Balochistan context, nonetheless, such contributions are not regarded and recognized.

“Females do contribute to the economy—in Baloch areas, women do most of the work whether in fields or at home. Informally women are doing significant work in Balochistan; however, their exposure to formal jobs is limited. Even in Pashtun areas—women perform a significant amount of

work at home and in the field. In the formal sector, women cannot work due to tribal and cultural Taboos. However, things are changing now. The public in far-flung areas always demanded quality girls' primary schools."

KI-8 argued that:

"Females have a crucial role in society. Intellectually girls are equally competent or even better—however, girls are not given equal value at home—and girls are not given priority... [Hence], a suppressed female—who is also responsible for raising a generation—passes on the negativity to the next generations."

Additionally, KI-8 pointed out that:

"Limited options for girls, families want to become either teachers or doctors. Other avenues are not explored...culturally, families do not prefer to work in a combined environment with men."

Some students, particularly, females pointed out a lack of support from families for females to study in HEIs. Social/cultural norms act as a key barrier for females to obtain higher education and engage in paid employment. In this regard, STD-4 and STD-15 asserted:

"Family support is imperative for females to acquire education and job. Social norms, as well as conventional/orthodox thinking and culture in Balochistan, sometimes create barriers for females to obtain education and avail job opportunities." (STD-4)

"I belong to a place where girls are not encouraged to study. Generally, in backward areas, families support and encourage boys to obtain higher education. It is important that families should believe in equality and encourage females to enroll in higher education". (STD-15)

Youth perceptions concerning corruption and lack of equal employment opportunities.

Most interviewees were concerned about corruption and discrimination, as well as a lack of fairness and undue political influence in the recruitment and selection process followed by government institutions. There is a perception among young people that malpractices practices such as nepotism and favoritism are common phenomena and employment is granted to close friends and family members. Government jobs are often awarded based on bribes and patronage, thus undermining equal employment opportunities for qualified and competent youth. Such practices contradict the principles of performance/merit-based systems and lead to the hiring of low-quality government workers. KI-2 stated:

"Government is politicized; appointment in public jobs is on an ad-hoc basis".

KI-7 noted that:

"In the public sector, people are employed through bribes. People acquire jobs through reference plus bribes."

KI-10 noted that:

"Generally, people want to do government jobs. 10,000 plus (11,000) applicants apply for 60 jobs. In the past BPSC – Balochistan Public Service Commission staff was engaged in corrupt practices and 3 staff members were penalized for malpractice."

Many students contended that lack of merit and equal employment opportunities, corruption, favoritism, and nepotism as common problems causing frustration among young people. STD-4, STD-6, STD-8, STD-9, STD-10, STD-12, STD-21, STD-22, STD-23, STD-26, STD-29, and STD-30 raised concerns about the prevalent corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, and bad governance in Balochistan.

"We are a bit pessimist about job opportunities, you need a source [i.e., political reference/influence or other illicit means] to obtain a job, and I think you are well aware of job discrimination in Balochistan. Unfortunately, you need to bribe officials to secure employment... If you see the current

situation, incompetent people are holding important positions which is kind of causing dissatisfaction among youth ... about the credibility and fairness of the system” (STD-6)

“Well, corruption and bad governance are the main issues contributing to youth unemployment.” (STD-22)

“If you are working in the government sector, you will help your family members to secure jobs. Political interference is also an issue as leading parties in the province manipulate the recruitment process and this raises questions about the fairness of the overall socio-political system in the province.” (STD-29)

“Corruption must be controlled, and nepotism and favoritism issues must be addressed. Political leadership is the main culprit as they sell jobs to incompetent people or prefer to employ/support their family members to secure relevant jobs.” (STD-30)

Dissatisfaction with the provincial leadership

The findings demonstrated that key informants were mostly dissatisfied with the political leadership regarding the delivery of sustainable outcomes for youth in the province. In most cases, key informants were critical of the will and competence of policymakers to effectively address problems faced by youth in Balochistan. The participants raised concerns about policy development and ownership, as well as poor policy implementation as inhibiting factors for youth unemployment. KI-1 stated:

“Political leadership is disappointing. For instance, Kamyab Jawan criteria are made at the National level, Balochistan is ignored and Balochistan political leadership fails to raise its voice ... such programs are not inclusive. We often lose based on population criteria...[further] we lack both political will and competence in Balochistan...our leadership is not working on and talking about climate change and flood response at the national level. The government of Balochistan has a gender equality and women empowerment policy—but the government themselves do not follow it. Girls and women are out of the radar.”

KI-6 remarked:

“Balochistan is marginalized in terms of professionals and the government is incompetent. Bureaucrats believe that they are masters of every field and as a result, fail to deliver in any sector. Moreover, Balochistan never focused on [developing] the industrial base. Hub the largest industrial area is controlled by the businessmen of Karachi—who prefer hiring professionals from Karachi. Balochistan youth cannot even compete with them... Likewise, fisheries and mining are also ignored in Balochistan. Balochistan could not capitalize due to limited resources...Fisheries, for example, these days is controlled by the Chinese, and mining is controlled by Chileans and Chinese now”.

KI-6 further argued that:

“Politicians say that they have limited funds and therefore cannot make good policy programs. Parliamentarians have no idea about the policymaking and development agenda—they are only interested in getting jobs for the people from their constituencies.”

KI-7 noted that:

“In recent years, no one is worried about the youth bulge, and we have failed to channel them and use their energy for the development of the province and economy.”

KI-7 further argued that leadership crisis is the primary issue contributing to effective policymaking and resolving youth issues in the province:

“Artificial leadership is created by the state—those leaders know that they are here for a limited time and therefore they are engaged in the plundering of human resource.”

KI-8 raised concerns regarding political leadership attitude and lack of seriousness about the issues faced by young people:

“Leadership is not interested and lacks seriousness.”

Policy failure, policy-implementation gap, and continuity of policy

The findings indicated that a one-size-fits-all approach is used to address complex issues. The participants argued that ground realities such as contextual complexities, local norms, and regional differences are often disregarded by consultants, and key stakeholders including local communities, youth, and provincial experts are excluded from the policymaking process.

KI-2 commented on the lack of customized, Balochistan-specific policies:

“[we] do not tailor policies [and align them to ground realities]; we adopt one size fits all sort formulas in policymaking, which always fail. Hence, our policymakers lack the will and never analyze the cultural and social aspects of policy... and I believe that involvement of key stakeholders in policymaking including young people is imperative”.

KI-3 suggested:

“We can generate enough jobs, however, the government never explored opportunities for innovation that could benefit the region.”

STD-18 referred to the government's failure to promote new ways of doing business and technology adoption:

Nowadays e-commerce is growing, and the world is moving towards digitalization. While Panjab and Sindh are relatively better at embracing new ways of doing business and overall progressing well, our province failed to adopt these new business trends. (STD-18)

KI-4 stated that the issues with policy development:

“We lack policy ownership. Further, policies are made by consultants, and they make policies for Balochistan in Islamabad or Foreign countries—these consultants hardly know Balochistan—therefore their policy buy-in is limited.”

KI-4 pointed out that while public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives are central to creating opportunities for youth, the potential socio-economic benefits are not realized yet. KI-4 further argued that there is scope for enhancing technical and vocational education and developing border markets with neighboring countries, however, so far, these opportunities are not exploited due to a lack of clear policy direction.

“To engage the private sector, the PPP Act has been passed but its implementation has failed. Unless you involve the private sector, you can't even think of resolving the unemployment issue. We need to strengthen technical and vocational education to address the unemployment issue in Balochistan. Further, border markets need to be developed in the poorest districts of Balochistan. Iran has made border markets at three locations, but Pakistan has failed to establish its markets ... we shall have a clear policy for districts alongside the Afghan and Iran Border for border markets and cross-border trade”.

Similarly, KI-5 referred to a wide range of issues including the importance of a systems thinking perspective, collaboration, financial decentralization, youth skills enhancement programs, and an updated industrial policy to effectively address the chronic youth unemployment in Balochistan.

“We need to consider the systems' thinking perspective and cannot blame one institution or party for the youth unemployment issue. Financial decentralization is imperative. Departments shall work collaboratively on youth-related policies. Universities must focus on employable skills for their graduates. Training programs/ on-job training/ internships need to be introduced and credits should be given to such programs so that the students take them seriously. Entrepreneurial skills are very important and must be given to students. Also, academia shall not prepare students for government jobs—rather give them market-based skills.”

KI-5 further argued that it is imperative to revisit Balochistan's industrial policy and support should be provided for boosting investment and industrial development.

"Industrial policy needs to be revisited. For instance, subsidies should be given to 700-800 industries based in Balochistan—and it will not be very costly for the government. SEZ rules are being increased by the government recently, such practices shall be avoided. Rather, the government should deregulate the SEZs to promote private-sector engagement."

Likewise, KI-6 noted:

"Technocrats are not given space in policymaking. In modern times, sectors are interconnected, and government needs to develop policies keeping on board".

KI-7 showed discontent with the existing policies and the way policies are devised and enforced to address key issues. The interviewee argued in favor of decentralized policymaking and provincial autonomy:

"Industry is missing, and mega projects are kicked off, but they face difficulties and are unable to operate ... policy in Pakistan is made around GT Road—the further you move from GT the footprint of national policy reduces. Therefore, far-flung areas of Pakistan could not progress".

KI-9 suggested that owing to the perception of Balochistan's current deprivation among local communities and persistent neglect by the national/federal government, certain forces are extending their personal agenda against the state. The same issue was raised by several students during the interviews.

"Certain corners have also polluted the minds of the youth—it's inculcated in their minds that Federal Government do treat us correctly."

Additionally, KI-9 posited that policy continuity is a major challenge:

"Continuation of Policies is a problem. Once leadership changes—policies are abandoned, and efforts made in the past are wasted."

Mushroom growth of higher education institutes (HEIs) and education quality

Some interviewees suggested the rapid growth in the degree-awarding institutes in the province is counterproductive to imparting quality education. Some interviews questioned the efficacy of mushroom growth in higher education providers and linked this with political planning. According to some interviewees, HEIs are delivering substandard education and training programs, which, in turn, is contributing to producing low-quality graduates and skills-deficient manpower in Balochistan. For instance, KI-6 attributed youth unemployment to the mushroom growth of universities in the province and the lack of relevant educational programs offered by HEIs.

"Mushroom growth of universities has also failed the youth. Universities today are offering degree programs in vast disciplines—and graduates, therefore, are unable to find jobs."

KI-7 was critical of current program offerings by HEIs in Balochistan. The interviewee argued that existing programs offered by universities hold weak potential for youth to secure employment.

"Public money is spent in disciplines like International Relations, Political Science, etc.—the same money should be used in other technical disciplines that produce the most employable youth/labor".

In a similar vein, KI-9 argued:

"Educational institutions lack capacity—they are not performing to produce quality students that can compete at a global/ international standard."

On the contrary, some participants supported the idea of establishing more HEIs and training centers in remote areas of Balochistan.

KI-10 noted that “During [job] interviews, I have seen people from marginalized backgrounds in BPSC – Balochistan Public Service Commission. Access to education was a problem, but now things are improving”.

KI-10 further argued that:

“Balochistan had 1 Technical Training Center—we need to expand the setup to all districts of Balochistan—to enhance employment in Balochistan. 50 years ago—all public schools had technical education—and over the years they were abandoned.”

Education provision to youth

Education has a central role in improving youth's academic potential and skills development, which in turn, fosters the likelihood of securing desired employment. However, many students suggested that illiteracy and lack of quality education are primary drivers for youth unemployment.

STD-5 argued that education is a critical issue but Balochistan laggard in this regard, which in turn, leads to limited employment opportunities.

“Education has a key role in addressing youth unemployment issues. However, we have a very low literacy rate in Balochistan compared to other provinces.”

Similarly, STD-8 argued that:

“We need a strong educational system. Not only at the university level but also school and college education need improvement.”

STD-13 commented:

“Lack of quality education and poor education system are main issues. Even at the university level, students are expected to focus on memorization of concepts rather than developing an in-depth understanding of the key concepts”.

Career counseling, apprenticeship opportunities, and industry-academia linkages

The findings demonstrated that youth in Balochistan largely lack career counseling (e.g., open days at educational institutions, online resources concerning education, employment, entrepreneurship, and income) support. Additionally, apprenticeship opportunities are scarce as HEIs failed to establish long-term industry-academia linkages. Accordingly, youth are facing challenges to secure employment due to the lack of practical experience and industrial exposure.

KI-8 suggested that:

“Counseling is limited. Youth has no idea of how to choose a career path. They just end up earning degrees where they get admission. [At the same time], not much is work done at any level for the placement of girls ... we can expand opportunities of online work for females, internships, and industry experience.”

“There is a lack of entrepreneurial opportunities and [government] support is not available” (STD-1)

STD-11 referred to the lack of an enabling environment for industrial growth and new start-ups (STD-11)

“There is limited support available and very few opportunities for entrepreneurship. We need free tax areas, we need good infrastructure, we need electricity. All these issues are important for boosting investment in the province. Once these issues are addressed, people will be able to find decent jobs in Balochistan.” (STD-18)

“We don't have guidance available to us. Youth lack awareness.” (STD-19)

“Lack of counseling and guidance. We don’t know the scope of the field. We are not introduced to various disciplines. Most students don’t know which study programs to choose and career paths to pursue.” (STD-20)

“Unemployment is continually growing in Balochistan, which is having diverse negative impacts on our youth. Students often lack confidence. We don’t get any counseling or support.” (STD-25)

One of the students commented on the disconnect between HEIs and the business sector, as well as the lack of apprenticeship opportunities provided by HEIs:

“We have a weak educational system compared to other provinces such as Panjab. While opportunities can be offered to our students such as internship programs and industry tours, these options are not provided to our students. That is why they lack the industrial experience and exposure that is necessary to secure relevant jobs. I believe that there should be a quota for Balochistan in other provinces, especially, public sector companies operating at the National level. I am against the quota system, however, if the child is handicapped or disabled then the father might not drag him but rather would help him when he wants to go somewhere. If there is deprivation and our province is deprived in certain ways, then the government needs to play its part to eliminate such frustration.” (SD-7)

EMP-7 argued that:

“Youth often ask how they be hired when they don’t have practical experience. For that, it is important that academia and industry (private sector) need to collaborate”. (EMP-7)

EMP-6 posited that industry-academia collaboration is imperative, however, a partnership-based approach is currently lacking in the province. The disconnect between what is taught at the university level and its application in the real-world context is one of the main issues. Accordingly, lack of practical experience and exposure among youth is making young people vulnerable to obtaining suitable employment.

“It is very important to understand the link between universities and the industrial sector. It is imperative to produce graduates that are required in the labor market and that can only be done once universities and the private sector work in collaboration. Unfortunately, we have a deficit here and the lack of collaboration is causing youth unemployment.” (EMP-6)

Macro-economic instability and political crisis

The interviewees considered diverse economic and political issues as inhibiting factors for youth unemployment. STD-5 and STD-18 posited that political instability and security issues are related to the economic situation and the lack of opportunities.

“Our security situation is not good, and our province suffered a lot in recent years and the government is still struggling to maintain law and order in the province” (STD-18).

“Youth unemployment largely depends on government policies and the economic situation of the country. As I understand, the economic condition has a key role in youth employment. When the economic situation of the nation becomes stable, this would have a positive impact on improving the youth unemployment crisis in Balochistan.” (EMP-3)

KI-9 remarked about poverty and resource inadequacy:

“The majority of the population is poor with limited exposure. During online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic universities realized that even university faculty did not have any kind of computer operating system.”

On the other hand, STD-5, STD-7, and STD-10 considered low literacy rates (STD-5), discrimination against the province (STD-7), and fake domicile issue (STD-10) as contributing factors to scarce employment opportunities.

5.6 Consequences of Youth Unemployment

The findings suggested varied individual and societal level impacts of unemployment in Balochistan. Youth continue to feel neglected, and unemployment has frustrated and disillusioned the youth, which manifested itself in the form of violence, and in some cases drifting away the youth from the mainstream economy and society – thus, creating certain challenges for the state. At the same time, a trust deficit continues to rise between the unemployed youth and the state (federation). There is a perception among young people that the state has contributed little in terms of creating a flourishing environment where young people can be accommodated in employment. Therefore, youth are engaging in counterproductive activities and are becoming disillusioned with violence and militancy and falling out of the mainstream. Additionally, the respondents referred to other impacts of youth unemployment such as brain drain, and a range of detrimental psychological and behavioral effects faced by unemployed youth.

Crime and social unrest

The findings indicated the relationship between youth unemployment and crime. The interviewees stated that a lack of tolerance in society, social unrest (i.e., law and order situation crisis), and high crime rates are linked to youth unemployment in the province. It can be argued that frustrated and disillusioned young people can easily be distracted from productive activities and motivated to engage in crime and other social ills.

KI-2 noted that:

“Youth unemployment creates a vacuum due to which youth can be very easily engaged in miscreant activities... political unrest will exist, families get more stressed, youth themselves are suppressed and mental health issues [would continue to rise]”

KI-4 suggested that:

“Street crime and road crimes have increased. The strategic location of Balochistan is critical and the unemployed youth of Balochistan is exploited by different forces. Balochistan's vulnerability needs to be understood by the federal government—as unemployed youth can be easily exploited. Trust deficit exists between Balochistan and the Federation.”

KI-7 suggested:

“Crime rates have increased. Mobile snatching has increased in major cities of Balochistan... Youth is misdirected more than ever... Frustration and anger have increased in society...Drug use has increased. Natural calamity further deteriorates the situation”.

Similar views were also expressed by students and employers. For instance, STD-2, STD-5, STD-18, STD-19, STD-21, STD-24, STD-26, STD-29, and STD-31, EMP-2, EMP-3, EMP-5, and EMP-6 considered unemployment as one of the primary drivers of higher crime rates, civil conflicts, and societal upheaval.

Rising youth unemployment would cause more crime and social unrest. When young people are unable to find relevant jobs then this would have devastating (negative) impacts on society. (STD-5)

“Unemployed youth is not only a burden on the nation's economy and society but also the productivity of the country declines because of rising youth unemployment. Unemployed people are mostly unproductive and make limited contributions to the economic well-being of the country. Such young people play a negative role in society as they can be easily exploited, especially, in terms of being misused in criminal activities.” (STD-18)

“If one has to support their family's livelihood and when legitimate options are not available then naturally people look for illegal means to earn money.” (STD-21)

“As we speak, crime rates are high, illiteracy is common, and people have little tolerance.” (STD-24)

“Poor and even the middle class are struggling for their basic survival. It is hard for them to fulfill their basic needs. This would create a law-and-order crisis and social unrest.” (STD-29)

“[Unemployment] leads to an increase in the crime rate. One needs to earn a living and support family and if you don’t have a job that would cause a livelihood crisis.” (STD-31)

“Youth will be misguided, go astray, and lose focus. Issues such as robbery, stealing, and social unrest will be rampant ...it is obvious that when people will not have reasonable financial means to earn a living, they will disturb others.” (EMP-3)

“Injustice in society leads to a crime that in turn causes more disruption to the societal welfare.” (EMP-6)

“High social expectations [i.e., young people are under pressure] ... this pressure is one of the factors which somehow push youth to go into the wrong hands.” (EMP-6)

Adverse psychological and behavioral implications

Some interviewees reported undesirable psychological and behavioral impacts of unemployment on youth’s health and well-being. The findings showed that some young people are facing emotional and psychological issues such as low morale, dissatisfaction, frustration, stress, and reduced self-confidence due to unemployment. STD-2, STD-3, STD-25, STD-27, and EMP-7 reported various issues.

“Well, the framework of society will be heavily disrupted, family life gets disturbed, and youth unemployment may cause behavioral issues and social ills and difficulties”. (STD-2)

“Naturally youth will be disheartened and disappointed. That would cause frustration.” (STD-22)

“There are diverse consequences. This emotional implications, ongoing anxiety, as well as lots of pressure from society – as a result, some students even attempt suicide due to the ongoing social pressure.” (STD-25)

“We have noticed that suicide rates are increasing, youth get addicted to harmful substances, mental illness, etc. Due to limited opportunities, young graduates are pushed to engage in daily wage work. If we get opportunities, then this issue can be resolved as we have talented youth in Balochistan.” (STD-27)

“It is obvious that when students invest 15 years of their time in education but when they are unable to find jobs that eventually leads to frustration. Additionally, when they specialize in a particular field, they would like to pursue their career in that field, which is a big challenge. This situation creates lots of negative impacts on youth.” (EMP-7)

Brain Drain

Migration and brain drain are intertwined with youth unemployment. Young people continually look for higher salaries, improved standards of living, and quality of life. Nonetheless, if prospects for employment are lacking within countries, talented youth leave their countries in search of better opportunities abroad. The findings reported owing to deprivation and lack of opportunities, some young people are increasingly migrating to other cities and nations to seek better job opportunities and quality of life.

KI-6, KI-8 and KI-10 stated that:

“Well, frustration in youth is increasing ... some youth in Balochistan have taken arms, out of frustration, also brain drain is rampant ... the country is going in reverse.” (KI-6)

“Unemployment is resulting in brain drain from Balochistan.” (KI-8)

“Youth migrates to other cities and countries [due to the lack of employment opportunities]” (KI-10)

One of the students noted that youth compromise their passion and career aspirations due to a lack of opportunities and naturally search for options that could enable them to achieve their personal goals.

“Students must compromise on their passion due to a lack of opportunities and pursue jobs that are not aligned with their professional expertise.” (STD-

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This section critically examines the findings concerning the nature, causes, and consequences of youth unemployment in the context of Balochistan. Further, this section integrates the empirical findings of this study with extant literature on youth unemployment. The purpose is to develop in-depth insights regarding key aspects of the study, which in turn, provides a strong basis for developing robust policy implications to address youth unemployment in Balochistan.

6.2 Nature of Youth Unemployment

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the youth unemployment phenomenon in Balochistan, drawing on a mixed-methods approach using quantitative and qualitative strategies. According to the survey results, there is a significant level of youth unemployment in Balochistan, with a considerable number of respondents facing extended periods of joblessness even after a year of graduation. This aligns with the global concern highlighted in the literature, which emphasizes the critical impact of youth unemployment on socio-economic development (Görlich et al., 2013; Olubusoye et al., 2022; PWC, 2022).

The quantitative analysis further reveals that rural-urban migration is a prominent trend among the youth in Balochistan, as many individuals from rural areas seek better employment opportunities in towns and larger cities such as Quetta. However, they perceive the job market in Balochistan as limited, with insufficient decent jobs that match their qualifications. This resonates with the challenges faced by youth in developing economies, where limited social protection and inadequate labor market policies leave young individuals with minimal formal institutional or government support beyond their immediate networks (Mitra & Verick, 2013). Table 2 provides a summary of quantitative findings concerning demand-supply analysis.

Table 2: A summary of quantitative findings (demand-supply analysis)

Demand Side	Supply Side
Preference for Local Employees: 66% of employers in Balochistan prefer to hire youth from the province, indicating a strong inclination towards local talent.	Migration and Mobility: A significant number of respondents from rural areas and small towns migrated to larger cities in search of livelihood and better job opportunities. Specifically, 71% of respondents reported living outside Quetta, with 39% of females and 32% of males migrating to other cities for work.
Minimal Gender Preference: 76% of employers reported having no gender preference during the hiring process, indicating a relatively equitable approach to gender representation in the workforce.	Engagement and Marriage: Unemployment among youth, especially males, often leads to engagement or marriage, as it is culturally believed to improve their luck and chances of finding a livelihood. Notably, 75% of male respondents were engaged or married.

<p>Reasons for Hiring Local Applicants: Employers cite various reasons for preferring applicants from Balochistan, including limited opportunities for them (96%), a better understanding of local society and culture (96%), and the need to provide opportunities to youth in the region (80%).</p>	<p>Family Structure: Most respondents resided in joint families, with 25% reporting living in extended families with 10-45 family members. The average family size reduced to 6.38 when excluding respondents living in extended families, with an average of 1.73 earners per family.</p>
<p>Applicant Skill Rejections: Employers highlighted key reasons for job rejections, including poor writing skills (64%), inadequate technical skills (67%), and insufficient oral communication abilities (64%).</p>	<p>Educational Choices: The decision-making process regarding the field of education is influenced by individuals themselves, their parents, and family members. Surprisingly, academic institutions were found to provide minimal career counseling to students.</p>
<p>Educational Institutions and Employment: When asked about the quality of education and training provided by universities and colleges in Balochistan, 44% of employers disagreed to strongly disagreed, while only 30% agreed to strongly agreed, indicating a concern over the employability of graduates.</p>	<p>Employability Skills: The most important employability skills as rated by the youth were IT skills and communication skills, while good general education and apprenticeships were perceived as the least important skills.</p>
<p>Preference for Technical Education: 51% of employers agreed that youth with technical education perform better in the job market compared to university graduates, suggesting a demand for skill-specific qualifications.</p>	<p>Career Aspirations: Contrary to popular belief, around 50% of the youth expressed a desire to start their own business, whereas only 27% aimed for government jobs. Interestingly, academia and policymakers still believed that the majority of youth preferred government jobs.</p>
<p>Labor Market Skill Gap: 66% of enterprises reported facing challenges in finding the right labor force, reflecting a skill gap in the available talent pool.</p>	<p>Job Search Patterns: Approximately 57% of fresh university graduates began their job search during their final semester, while 43% were yet to start. Educational institutions and job fairs were the primary sources for job searching.</p>
<p>Low Employee Productivity: Employers identified poor employee productivity as a major issue, impacting overall organizational performance and efficiency.</p>	<p>Preference for Local Jobs: Most students from Balochistan prefer to look for job opportunities within the province (96%), with females being more inclined to seek job opportunities outside Balochistan for improved quality of life and independence.</p>
<p>Limited Capacity Building Opportunities: According to 56% of employers, organizations in Balochistan do not offer adequate capacity</p>	<p>Importance of Studying Outside Balochistan: Out of the respondents who studied outside Balochistan, 70% believed it had a positive impact on their job</p>

building or human resource development opportunities for their employees.	prospects. In contrast, those who never studied outside felt their job prospects would have been better if they had (100%).
Workplace Environment Concerns: Employers reported compromised workplace environments, possibly indicating issues with workplace culture and management.	Obstacles in Finding Jobs: The main obstacles identified by youth in finding good jobs were a mismatch between education requirements and acquired skills (70%), lack of work experience (53%), and limited job availability (80%).
Job Timings and Labor Motivation: Employers expressed concerns over job timings not being preferable and a lack of motivation among the labor force, suggesting potential challenges in retaining skilled employees.	Expectations from Employers: Youth expect jobs that utilize their skills (100%), offer good career paths (98%), are well-paid (92%), and interesting (89%). Job security and independence were also important considerations.

Additionally, Table 3 illustrates a summary of quantitative findings on the nature of unemployment.

Table 3: A summary of quantitative findings on the nature of unemployment

Type of Unemployment	Findings
Frictional	Frictional unemployment is evident in the survey results, 20% of the respondents reported engaging in voluntary work, indicating that some individuals are temporarily unemployed while actively searching for paid employment. 15% of the respondents said they still need to start their job search, suggesting that they are currently experiencing frictional unemployment as they seek new job opportunities.
Structural	Structural unemployment is highlighted by the fact that 67% of job applicants were denied positions due to very poor to poor technical skills. This reveals a mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the requirements of available jobs
Cyclical	The perception of 80% of youth is that the Balochistan job market is limited and does not offer good jobs for university graduates, which might be indicative of cyclical unemployment during economic slowdowns.
Seasonal	Seasonal unemployment may be occurring, as reflected by youth engaged in entrepreneurial activities seeking financial assistance, which could indicate certain businesses' seasonal nature and the need for support during specific periods.
Technological	Technological unemployment's impact is evident in employers' concern over low-level skills or lack of technical skills among the labor force. Advances in technology might be reducing the demand for certain types of labor.
Voluntary	The survey revealed voluntary unemployment, with 20% of respondents engaged in voluntary work, suggesting they choose not to participate in paid employment for various reasons.
Underemployment	Underemployment is a concern as 72% of respondents planned to start a job or their own business after graduation, while 28% planned to further their education or had other plans. This

	suggests a lack of suitable full-time employment opportunities for some graduates.
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The qualitative analysis demonstrates the presence of a skills deficit among Balochistan's youth, with graduates lacking relevant and marketable skills required by employers (KI-1, KI-4, KI-5, STD-3, STD-26, STD-27). This finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of addressing the skills mismatch to improve youth employability (Görlich et al., 2013; Mehmood et al., 2021; Mitra & Verick, 2013). Improving vocational training and aligning educational curricula with industry demands are recommended strategies to bridge this gap.

Similarly, the lack of a robust industrial sector and limited job opportunities in Balochistan contribute to youth unemployment (KI-2, KI-5, EMP-1, EMP-4). This finding is consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of promoting private sector growth and investment in the traditional sector to create more job opportunities (Mitra & Verick, 2013; Ali & Almula-Dhanoon, 2021). Additionally, the impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on generating employment needs further examination (KI-9).

Likewise, the under-employment is prevalent among Balochistan's youth (KI-2, KI-3, KI-6, KI-9). This finding concurs with the literature, which emphasizes the issue of under-utilization of human resources and the need for productive employment for young people (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; O'Higgins, 2001). Addressing this aspect is essential for maximizing youth potential and productivity.

Additionally, migration for employment due to limited job opportunities in Balochistan is common and drives many young people to migrate in search of employment (EMP-4, EMP-6). This finding is consistent with the literature on the "brain drain" phenomenon, wherein skilled youth leave their home regions for better opportunities elsewhere (Shakeel et al., 2019). Addressing youth unemployment should consider retaining local talent through improved job prospects.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis highlights the importance of developing a vibrant industrial infrastructure in Balochistan (KI-1, KI-4). This finding resonates with the literature, which emphasizes the role of industrial development in creating employment opportunities for the youth (Chaudhry & Hamid, 1998; Kamga et al., 2022). Government initiatives should focus on promoting industries to stimulate job creation.

Moreover, the dominance of the public sector in Balochistan contributes to the high demand for government jobs (KI-2, KI-3). This finding aligns with the literature, which underscores the need for a balanced economy with opportunities in both public and private sectors to absorb the youth labor force (Mitra & Verick, 2013; O'Higgins, 2001).

Finally, the lack of focus on emerging technologies results in not equipping youth with skills in emerging technologies (EMP-8). This finding corresponds with the literature, which emphasizes the significance of digital skills and technical expertise in the modern job market (ILO, 2022b; Görlich et al., 2013). Introducing courses in emerging technologies can enhance youth employability.

Building on the above discussion, Table 4 demonstrates the comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings on the nature of unemployment in the Balochistan context.

Table 4: Comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings on the nature of unemployment

Quantitative	Qualitative
Nature of Youth Unemployment	
The quantitative data confirms that youth unemployment in Balochistan is a significant issue, with 80% of respondents reporting engagement in paid work and 20% being involved in voluntary work. Most	The qualitative interviews reinforce the complex and multidimensional nature of youth unemployment in Balochistan. The interviews highlight structural unemployment, underemployment, and

respondents believe that a university degree is required to secure a decent job, and around 40% of unemployed graduates feel the need to earn a higher degree to improve their job prospects.	seasonal unemployment as prevailing challenges. Lack of productive resources, inefficient utilization of economic resources, and the absence of a robust industrial infrastructure exacerbate the situation. The dysfunctional education system and inadequate industrial sector are identified as contributing factors to long-term unemployment among youth.
Skills Deficit and Labor Market Capacity	
The quantitative data reveals that 64% of applicants denied jobs have poor writing skills, and 67% have poor technical skills. Moreover, 58% of denied applicants have poor oral communication skills and 58% have inadequate breadth of educational training.	The qualitative interviews also highlight the skills deficit among youth, with participants emphasizing the mismatch between demand and supply of job-related skills. Employers express concerns about the quality of graduates and their lack of practical, industry-relevant skills. The interviews point to a need for improved technical and soft skills training to enhance youth employability.
Youth Aspirations and Job Preferences	
The quantitative data indicates that 50% of graduates wish to start their own business in an ideal situation, while 18% plan to become entrepreneurs. Around 72% of respondents plan to start a job or their own business after graduation, and 28% plan to pursue further education.	The qualitative interviews reveal that many youth aspire to be professionally successful and wish to start their own businesses. However, the inclination towards government jobs cannot be denied, with 27% of youth expressing a desire to work in the public sector. The interviews highlight the importance of improving job opportunities and industry connections to align with youth aspirations.
Balochistan Job Market and Migration	
The quantitative data indicates that 80% of youth believe the Balochistan job market is limited and does not offer good jobs that match their qualifications. Interestingly, most students from Balochistan do not seek job opportunities outside the province, but the majority of those who do are female.	The qualitative interviews reinforce the perception of a limited job market in Balochistan, leading many youths to migrate to other cities or countries in search of better job opportunities. The reasons for migration vary between males and females, with males citing family obligations, while females seek improved quality of life and greater independence.
Employer Perspectives	
The quantitative data reveals that employers face challenges in finding the right labor force, with 66% reporting problems in this area. Most employers prefer to hire youth, and 76% of them do not have a gender preference when hiring.	The qualitative interviews shed light on employer perspectives, highlighting the lack of motivation and quality of the labor force as key issues. Employers stress the importance of relevant skills and technical education for employability, and some express concern about the limited options for job switching in Balochistan.
Education and Youth Employment Prospects	

The quantitative data indicates that 44% of employers disagree with the notion that universities and colleges in Balochistan are delivering quality education and training.

The qualitative interviews echo concerns about the quality of education in Balochistan. Employers emphasize the need for universities to focus on improving the quality of education and providing more internship opportunities. They also suggest that universities should pay attention to students' soft skills and enhancement of technical skills to enhance youth employability.

6.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment

The quantitative analysis suggests diverse factors contributing to youth unemployment. The limited job market in the region presents a significant challenge for graduates seeking employment opportunities. Additionally, rural-urban migration, driven by aspirations for better livelihoods, intensifies competition for limited jobs as young individuals move to urban areas. The mismatch between education choices and job market requirements leads to underutilization of skills among educated youth, resulting in higher unemployment rates. Furthermore, inadequate financial opportunities hinder the entrepreneurial ambitions of young individuals.

These quantitative factors coincide with prior research on youth unemployment (e.g., Baah-Boateng, 2016; Görlich et al., 2013). Studies have emphasized the impact of macroeconomic factors, such as GDP growth rate and fiscal tightening, on youth unemployment rates (Baah-Boateng, 2016). Moreover, research has explored how structural factors, like public expenditure on employment services and labor laws, play a crucial role in shaping youth unemployment trends (Görlich et al., 2013). These findings are consistent with the impact of limited job market opportunities and rural-urban migration on youth unemployment identified in the analysis.

Conversely, the qualitative analysis sheds light on critical factors contributing to youth unemployment in Balochistan beyond the quantitative scope. The lack of industrial development and a weak private sector create a dearth of employment opportunities, leading youth to seek government jobs. Additionally, inadequate support for females in employment, influenced by cultural norms and conservative beliefs, restricts their participation in the formal economy, further exacerbating youth unemployment. The perception of corruption and unequal employment opportunities also fosters distrust in the recruitment process among qualified youth.

These qualitative factors align with prior literature on youth unemployment. Studies have explored how cultural beliefs and societal norms can hinder employment opportunities for females, impacting their participation in formal economic activities (O'Higgins, 2001). This finding resonates with the qualitative analysis, which identifies inadequate support for females in employment as a contributing factor to youth unemployment in Balochistan. Furthermore, literature has emphasized the role of corruption and nepotism in the recruitment process, leading to unequal employment opportunities (O'Higgins, 2001), consistent with the analysis's findings on the perception of corruption and its impact on youth unemployment.

The causes of youth unemployment in Balochistan are multifaceted, involving both quantitative and qualitative factors. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that considers the interactions between these factors. Policymakers and stakeholders must implement evidence-based policies that encompass both the challenges identified through quantitative analysis, such as the limited job market and education mismatches, and the issues that emerge as a result of qualitative analysis including inadequate support for females and corruption perceptions. By adopting a holistic strategy, Balochistan can foster economic prosperity and provide better prospects for its youth in the job market. Further research in this area can provide valuable insights to develop targeted interventions to effectively tackle youth unemployment in the region.

Table 5 assimilates and compares the key aspects of quantitative and qualitative issues discussed regarding the causes of unemployment in Balochistan.

Table 5: Comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings on causes of unemployment

Quantitative	Qualitative
Migration for Livelihood	
The quantitative findings confirm that 53 respondents reported working in a different city from where they grew up, with migration being higher among females (39%) compared to males (32%).	The qualitative findings mentioned that migration to Quetta for better job opportunities is common among youth from rural areas and small towns.
Employment and Aspirations	
The quantitative findings show that 81% of respondents believe that a university degree is required to engage in a decent job, and 50% of graduates wish to start their own business. Additionally, 27% of youth wish to work in the public sector.	The qualitative findings indicated that youth aspire for professional success, starting their own businesses, and getting government jobs.
Job Market Perception	
The quantitative findings support this perception, with 80% of youth believing that the Balochistan job market is limited and not offering good jobs that match their qualifications.	The qualitative findings highlighted that the Balochistan job market is perceived to be limited and does not offer suitable jobs for university graduates.
Employability Skills	
The quantitative findings reinforce this, as 60% of respondents believe that computer and IT skills are important for securing a good job.	The qualitative findings mentioned that youth rate IT skills and communication skills as the most important employability skills.
Challenges in Finding Jobs	
The quantitative findings support this, as employers mentioned that 67% of applicants denied a job have very poor to poor technical skills, indicating a lack of relevant skills in the labor force.	The qualitative findings identified that graduates face obstacles in finding jobs, including a mismatch between education requirements, and acquired skills.
Quality of Education	
The quantitative findings align with this concern, as 44% of employers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that universities and colleges in Balochistan are delivering quality education and training.	The qualitative findings indicated concerns about the quality of education in Balochistan's universities and colleges.
Preference for Local Talent	
The quantitative findings confirm this preference, as 96% of employers said they prefer to hire applicants from Balochistan,	The qualitative findings mentioned that employers prefer to hire youth from Balochistan and those who have studied outside the region.

and 81% preferred youth from Balochistan who have studied outside the region.	
Reasons for Job Rejection	
The quantitative findings support this, as employers reflected that 64% of applicants denied a job have very poor to poor writing skills, and 67% have very poor to poor technical skills.	The qualitative findings highlighted that job applicants are often rejected due to poor writing skills, technical skills, and communication abilities.

6.4 Consequences of Youth Unemployment

The consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan, as revealed by both quantitative and qualitative analyses, align with existing literature on the subject. The quantitative analysis highlights a higher NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) in Balochistan compared to the national average, indicating a lack of access to education and employment opportunities for a substantial portion of the youth (LFS, 2020-2021). This finding is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the impact of youth unemployment on educational and labor market outcomes (Iduseri et al., 2022; ILO, 2022b).

Moreover, the study's identification of gender disparities in employment opportunities is also in line with prior research (Hou, 2010; Bashir et al., 2013). The employment-to-population ratio in Balochistan stands at 38.6, with an even lower ratio of 11.3 for females, highlighting the challenges female youth face in accessing employment (LFS, 2020-2021).

The qualitative analysis provides valuable insights into the psychological and behavioral consequences of unemployment on youth in Balochistan. The study reveals that unemployment leads to negative impacts, such as low morale, dissatisfaction, stress, and reduced self-confidence (STD-2, STD-3, STD-25, STD-27, EMP-7). These findings correspond with prior research that associates youth unemployment with adverse mental health outcomes and reduced well-being (Bell & Blanchflower, 2009; O'Higgins, 2001).

Additionally, the qualitative analysis highlights the role of youth unemployment in contributing to rising crime rates and social unrest in Balochistan. Frustrated and disillusioned youth may resort to criminal activities, leading to law-and-order crises in the province (STD-2, STD-3, STD-25, STD-27, EMP-7). This observation corresponds with existing literature that links youth unemployment to increased crime rates and social instability (Bell & Blanchflower, 2009; O'Higgins, 2001).

Another significant consequence identified in the study is brain drain, where talented youth from Balochistan migrate to other cities and countries in search of better job opportunities and living standards (STD-2, STD-3, STD-25, STD-27, EMP-7). This phenomenon aligns with previous research that highlights brain drain because of limited local employment opportunities and prospects (Iduseri et al., 2022; Bell & Blanchflower, 2009).

The trust deficit between unemployed youth and the government, as highlighted in the qualitative analysis, is a crucial observation that resonates with existing literature (STD-2, STD-3, STD-25, STD-27, EMP-7). Prior research emphasizes the importance of effective policy measures and government initiatives in addressing youth unemployment and restoring trust in the system (Hou, 2010; ILO, 2022b).

In conclusion, the findings of the study on the consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan are consistent with existing literature on the subject. The quantitative analysis provides statistical evidence of the challenges faced by youth in accessing education and employment opportunities, while the qualitative insights offer a deeper understanding of the psychological, behavioral, and societal impacts of unemployment on youth. By aligning its efforts with existing literature and recommendations, Balochistan can work towards implementing

targeted policy interventions to mitigate the consequences of youth unemployment and foster economic growth and social stability in the province.

Table 6 provides a comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings on the consequences of unemployment in Balochistan.

Table 6: Comparisons between quantitative and qualitative findings on the consequences of unemployment

Quantitative	Qualitative
Crime and Social Unrest	
The quantitative data shows that 80% of employers believe that youth unemployment in Balochistan contributes to social unrest, and 66% of them reported facing challenges in finding the right labor force. This aligns with the qualitative findings of crime and social unrest being associated with youth unemployment.	The qualitative findings suggest that youth unemployment is linked to an increase in crime rates, social unrest, and law and order issues in Balochistan. There is a perception that frustrated and disillusioned youth may engage in miscreant activities due to the lack of productive opportunities.
Trust Deficit	
The quantitative data does not directly capture the trust deficit perception. However, the finding that 80% of youth believe that the job market in Balochistan is limited and does not offer good jobs aligns with the sentiment of feeling neglected and the state's insufficient efforts in job creation.	The qualitative findings indicate a growing trust deficit between unemployed youth and the state (federation). Young people feel neglected, and there is a perception that the state has not done enough to create an enabling environment for employment.
Adverse Psychological and Behavioral Implications	
The quantitative data does not directly measure the psychological impacts, but it does show that 26% of graduates have been unemployed even after a year of their graduation. This suggests a prolonged job search period, which could contribute to the reported adverse psychological effects.	The qualitative findings highlight the adverse psychological impacts of unemployment on youth, including low morale, dissatisfaction, frustration, stress, and reduced self-confidence. There are also reports of suicide attempts and mental health issues among young graduates due to limited opportunities.
Brain Drain	
The quantitative data shows that 53% of graduates wish to start their own business, and only 18% want to be entrepreneurs. Additionally, 29% of respondents are not willing to migrate for work, while 31% are willing to move to the Capital City, and only 8% are willing to move to rural areas. This suggests that many graduates are seeking better opportunities outside Balochistan, which aligns with the qualitative findings on brain drain.	The qualitative findings indicate that talented youth are increasingly migrating to other cities and countries in search of better job prospects and quality of life, contributing to brain drain from Balochistan.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The present study on youth unemployment in Balochistan has explicated the underlying challenges faced by young people in obtaining decent jobs in the labor market. This research offers workable and appropriate policy recommendations to the government, policymakers, and

stakeholders, focusing on three perspectives: youth, employers, and public policy. By identifying the factors contributing to youth unemployment and highlighting the significance of skills development, job creation, and gender inclusivity, this study contributes to enhancing the role of youth employment in the sustainable development of the province.

The nature of youth unemployment in Balochistan is complex, as indicated by the in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The study confirms a significant level of youth unemployment in the region, aligning with global concerns about its impact on socio-economic development. The migration of youth from rural to urban areas seeking better opportunities, the skills deficit among graduates, the limited industrial infrastructure, and the dominance of the public sector are identified as key factors contributing to the problem. The analysis further underscores the importance of digital skills and emerging technologies in enhancing youth employability.

The causes of unemployment in Balochistan are multifaceted, encompassing diverse factors. From the perspective of quantitative analysis, the limited job market poses a significant challenge for graduates seeking employment, while rural-urban migration intensifies competition for scarce jobs as young individuals move to urban areas in pursuit of better livelihoods. The mismatch between education choices and job market requirements results in the underutilization of educated youth's skills, leading to higher unemployment rates. Moreover, inadequate financial opportunities curtail the entrepreneurial aspirations of the young population. Conversely, qualitative analysis revealed that the lack of industrial development and a weak private sector creates a scarcity of employment opportunities, prompting youth to turn towards government jobs. Additionally, cultural norms and conservative beliefs hinder females' support in employment, exacerbating youth unemployment and the perceived corruption in recruitment processes fosters distrust among qualified youth. Addressing this issue necessitates a comprehensive approach that tackles both quantitative challenges, such as the limited job market and education-employment mismatch, and qualitative issues like inadequate support for females and corruption perceptions. By implementing evidence-based policies and adopting a holistic strategy, Balochistan can effectively combat youth unemployment, fostering economic prosperity and better prospects for its young workforce in the job market.

The consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan, as revealed by both quantitative and qualitative analyses, align with existing literature. The study highlights the adverse effects on education and mental health, the exacerbation of social issues, and brain drain as young talent seeks opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, the trust deficit between unemployed youth and the government is recognized as a crucial factor that needs to be addressed through effective policy measures.

By understanding the inherent nature and addressing the multifaceted causes and consequences of youth unemployment in Balochistan, the government and stakeholders can adopt a comprehensive approach to tackle the issue. The implementation of evidence-based policies, fostering industrial development, promoting private sector growth, and enhancing skills development are crucial steps in improving youth employability and overall well-being. Through such concerted efforts, Balochistan can harness the potential of its youth and contribute to the sustainable development of the province.

7.2 Concluding Remarks and Analysis Recap

This section integrates and summarizes the key takeaways of the study and explicates how the research objectives and research questions are addressed in the report. In essence, a summary of important findings on youth unemployment in Balochistan is imperative for readers to understand the key issues presented and analyzed in the report and focus on important aspects of the topic. In this regard, objectives and questions are listed in *italics* and a concise summary of salient findings concerning each research objective or question is presented.

RO-1. *Identify the fundamental challenges that young people in the Balochistan province encounter while seeking decent employment opportunities in the labor market.*

Young people in the Balochistan province confront a multitude of formidable challenges as they strive to secure meaningful employment opportunities in the labor market. These challenges, as revealed through both quantitative and qualitative findings, paint a complex picture of the barriers faced by youth in their pursuit of decent jobs.

One of the overarching challenges is the limited availability of job options. The province's relatively small economy struggles to accommodate the influx of graduates, resulting in a scarcity of opportunities. This situation is exacerbated by a mismatch between the education provided and the actual demands of the job market. The education system has been criticized for producing graduates who lack the essential skills and competencies sought by employers. The prevailing focus on theoretical knowledge without practical application leaves graduates ill-equipped for the workforce.

Furthermore, the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) allocates a significant portion of resources to infrastructure construction, neglecting the critical need for skill enhancement and training. This exacerbates the gap between education and employment and contributes to the unavailability of skilled workers. The absence of a robust industrial base and the limited presence of a diverse private sector also contributes to the dearth of suitable job opportunities.

Gender disparities play a significant role in compounding the challenges faced by youth. Women encounter societal norms, biases, and inadequate facilities that impede their access to employment. The preference for government jobs, despite their scarcity, further strains the situation. Political interference, corruption, and favoritism in the recruitment process undermine the merit-based hiring system, eroding trust in the fairness of job allocation.

Lack of career counseling and guidance perpetuates uninformed career choices, while deficiencies in soft skills lead to job rejections. Brain drain remains a concern, as talented individuals seek better prospects beyond the province's borders. Despite these obstacles, aspirations for entrepreneurship persist, hindered by limited resources, mentorship, and an enabling environment.

In the digital age, poor digital infrastructure in rural areas limits job choices and opportunities for remote work. Negative perceptions about the job market and job dissatisfaction contribute to an overall sense of frustration and disillusionment among young job seekers. There is also a noted lack of urgency in job search efforts after graduation, which further contributes to the unemployment challenge.

RO-2. *Enhance the understanding of the specific skills, knowledge, and competencies that youth, especially fresh graduates, require to actively participate and make meaningful contributions in their potential roles.*

Certainly, the combined findings from both quantitative and qualitative research shed light on the specific skills, knowledge, and competencies that are crucial for young individuals, especially recent graduates, to actively engage and make meaningful contributions in their potential roles. This comprehensive understanding encompasses a diverse spectrum of attributes that extend beyond traditional academic qualifications.

Technical Skills emerge as a foundational requirement, tailored to the distinct fields graduates venture into. These skills empower them to apply specialized knowledge effectively, whether it involves programming languages, data analysis tools, or industry-specific applications. Problem-solving abilities are highlighted as vital, fostering critical thinking and logical reasoning to navigate complex scenarios and devise practical solutions.

The importance of Communication Skills, both written and oral, cannot be understated. Graduates need to convey their ideas persuasively, collaborate seamlessly within teams, and engage stakeholders convincingly. Equally significant are Soft Skills, encompassing Adaptability,

Teamwork, Time Management, and Conflict Resolution. These competencies facilitate effective navigation of diverse work environments, adeptly managing pressure, and harmonious collaboration.

In the digital era, Digital Literacy stands as an indispensable competence. Proficiency in digital tools, software, and platforms for communication and project management is paramount. Analytical and Research Skills are underscored for their role in gathering and interpreting information, enabling evidence-based decision-making and innovative problem-solving.

An Entrepreneurial Mindset surfaces as a valuable trait, fostering creativity, innovation, and proactive identification of growth avenues. Networking Skills assume importance in cultivating professional relationships, offering mentorship, guidance, and potential career advancements.

Ethical and Professional Conduct are deemed essential, emphasizing integrity and professionalism in all interactions. Leadership Skills, even in entry-level roles, are seen as advantageous, enabling graduates to initiate, motivate, and exhibit leadership qualities.

Cultural Competency gains prominence in our globalized world, stressing the significance of intercultural sensitivity and effective communication across diverse perspectives. Continual Learning is positioned as a cornerstone, showcasing the commitment to ongoing development, industry trends, and acquisition of new skills.

Foundational Industry Knowledge is pivotal, allowing graduates to comprehend sector-specific dynamics swiftly and contribute effectively. Finally, the ability to create and deliver engaging presentations is recognized as a vital tool for effective communication of ideas and project outcomes.

RO-3. Highlight the significant role of government and public institutions in developing a comprehensive and integrated framework that fosters youth employment and well-being. Additionally, the study emphasizes their overall contribution to the sustainable development of the province.

The study highlights the crucial role of government and public institutions in developing a comprehensive and integrated framework to foster youth employment and enhance their overall well-being in the context of Balochistan. This role is pivotal for driving sustainable development within the province. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings collectively emphasize the diverse contributions that these entities make in this endeavor.

First and foremost, government and public institutions play a central role in establishing a conducive environment for youth employment and welfare through the formulation of forward-looking policies. By identifying sectors with high potential for job creation, facilitating private sector engagement, and implementing targeted programs, these entities lay a robust foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Moreover, these institutions are instrumental in bridging the gap between education and employability. Through collaboration with educational institutions and industries, they facilitate skill development that equips fresh graduates with practical skills, enhancing their employability and expanding their career prospects.

The establishment of vocational training centers under government purview further bolsters this effort, providing specialized skills that align with industry demands. This empowers young individuals not only with job-specific proficiencies but also nurtures their entrepreneurial aspirations.

The study underscores the role of government-backed initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship, fostering an ecosystem that encourages youth-led startups. By providing training, financial support, mentorship, and regulatory guidance, public institutions create a foundation for innovation and self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, government institutions serve as intermediaries between employers and young job seekers, simplifying the transition from academia to professional employment through dedicated placement centers.

Collaborating with industries, these entities facilitate internship and apprenticeship programs, providing invaluable experiential learning opportunities that prepare youth for the complexities of the workforce.

Through strategic policy interventions, government and public institutions incentivize private sector participation in youth employment initiatives, acting as catalysts for job market growth.

Of paramount importance is the commitment of these institutions to promoting gender equality, enabling female youth to participate actively in the workforce by curbing discrimination, ensuring safety, and offering family-centric benefits.

Investments in critical infrastructure, data-driven decision-making, enforcement of decent work practices, and the establishment of social safety nets collectively contribute to a comprehensive framework that not only supports youth employment but also elevates their overall well-being.

In conclusion, the study underscores the instrumental role of government and public institutions in crafting an inclusive ecosystem that nurtures youth employment and enhances their quality of life. Through visionary policies, collaborative skill development, entrepreneurship promotion, industry engagement, and a steadfast commitment to equality and well-being, these institutions underpin the sustainable development narrative of Balochistan. This multifaceted approach ensures a prosperous and equitable future for the province's young population and the broader community. Next, the key takeaways of the study regarding the research questions are as follows:

RQ-1. What are the root causes of youth unemployment in Balochistan?

The root causes of youth unemployment in Balochistan are multifaceted and deeply intertwined, as revealed by both quantitative and qualitative findings. These causes encompass a range of socio-economic, educational, and structural factors that collectively contribute to the prevalent issue.

One significant contributing factor identified in the quantitative findings is rural-urban migration. The pursuit of better opportunities prompts rural residents to move to larger cities like Quetta, leading to urban unemployment and income disparities. This is exacerbated by the prevalence of joint and extended family structures that can strain available resources and limit income-sharing.

A key factor driving youth towards unemployment is the limited job prospects within the region. The quantitative findings emphasize the attractiveness of secure government jobs, which are often preferred due to their stability. This preference for the public sector is linked to the scarcity of opportunities in other sectors, further contributing to unemployment.

The quality of education emerges as a critical determinant in both quantitative and qualitative findings. Graduates frequently lack the practical skills demanded by the job market, highlighting a gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. The disconnect between education and industry requirements renders graduates ill-equipped for available positions.

The allocation of resources, as illuminated by the quantitative findings, plays a role in exacerbating unemployment. The emphasis on construction in the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) neglects skill enhancement and training initiatives. This misallocation perpetuates the dearth of qualified individuals for various industries.

The province's small economy faces challenges in absorbing its growing youth population, resulting in an excess of graduates without sufficient employment opportunities. The private sector, primarily consisting of small-scale industries, cannot generate the requisite number of jobs. This structural limitation further contributes to the unemployment problem.

The absence of emphasis on soft skills and demand-driven education also compounds the issue. The qualitative findings highlight the importance of well-rounded skills such as communication, adaptability, and teamwork, which are often overlooked in formal education systems.

Gender disparities and the security situation are additional barriers identified in both sets of findings. Cultural norms and biases limit opportunities for female youth, exacerbating the unemployment gender gap. The security situation also plays a role in hindering economic growth and discouraging investments, further constraining job opportunities.

Corruption, political interference, and favoritism in government appointments undermine fair employment opportunities and contribute to a sense of injustice among the youth. This sentiment erodes trust in the system and exacerbates unemployment challenges.

The absence of an enabling environment for industrial growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation also features prominently in the findings. Limited access to resources, lack of mentorship, and regulatory hurdles deter aspiring entrepreneurs from creating their own opportunities.

The qualitative findings additionally underscore the mismatch between educational institutions and the industrial sector. The lack of collaboration between academia and the private sector leads to a shortage of graduates with skills aligned with industry demands.

Balochistan's marginalized status and lack of policy ownership exacerbate youth unemployment, hindering the implementation of effective solutions.

RQ-2. How is the phenomenon of youth unemployment conceptualized and framed in the context of Balochistan?

The conceptualization and framing of youth unemployment in the context of Balochistan reflect a multifaceted understanding influenced by migration trends, family dynamics, and educational decisions. Quantitative findings highlight that urbanization, particularly in cities like Quetta, is driven by a significant migration of rural youth seeking employment prospects. Marital choices often intertwine with livelihood considerations, while educational pathways are shaped by personal preferences and family decisions. However, educational institutions offer limited career guidance, leading to mismatches between aspirations and available opportunities. Entrepreneurship is a prominent aspiration among the youth, although the perception of Balochistan's job market is marked by constraints, especially for university graduates who face challenges in skill alignment and workplace conditions.

Qualitative insights delve into the various facets contributing to youth unemployment. The quality of education emerges as a central concern, generating graduates well-versed in theory but lacking practical skills crucial for job readiness. The subsequent mismatch between academic knowledge and industry requirements results in a workforce ill-prepared for the professional world. Government jobs remain a favored choice, intensifying competition for limited positions, while issues of corruption and political influence further taint the fairness of employment processes. Gender disparities compound the challenge, with cultural norms and discrimination disproportionately affecting female job seekers.

Economic factors play a pivotal role, as inadequate industrial development and economic instability contribute to the scarcity of job opportunities. The ramifications of youth unemployment are far-reaching, spanning increased crime rates, social unrest, mental health concerns, and pervasive disillusionment among the youth. Moreover, the phenomenon drives brain drain as talented individuals seek better prospects outside the region. Addressing this intricate issue necessitates a comprehensive strategy encompassing educational reforms prioritizing practical skills, fostering collaboration between academia and the private sector, promoting vocational training and entrepreneurship, and bolstering relevant industries through policy reforms. Ultimately, tackling youth unemployment in Balochistan demands a coordinated effort across sectors to mitigate its profound and wide-ranging impacts.

RQ-3. *Why do government interventions and policies concerning youth employment lack effectiveness in the Balochistan context?*

Government interventions and policies aimed at addressing youth unemployment in Balochistan lack effectiveness due to a complex interplay of factors, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative findings. One critical factor is the migration of rural youth to urban centers like Quetta in search of better job opportunities. This migration trend leads to an imbalance between job supply and demand, exacerbating the unemployment challenge. Additionally, cultural norms that link men's ability to marry with their employment status can drive early unions among unemployed youth, creating social pressures that influence career choices.

The education landscape further contributes to the issue. Limited career counseling services in educational institutions hinder informed career decisions. Furthermore, there's an overemphasis on formal education, neglecting the development of practical skills that are in demand by employers. The perception of a confined job market within Balochistan discourages youth from exploring opportunities beyond the province, fostering a sense of constraint that limits their horizons.

The mismatch between education and practical skills, coupled with inadequate work experience, further diminishes the employability of young individuals. Employers consistently highlight the need for improved education quality and relevant skills that align with industry needs. The lack of an ecosystem that supports practical skill development and work readiness hampers the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at tackling youth unemployment.

Moreover, the size of Balochistan's economy poses a challenge, as it struggles to absorb the substantial youth population into available job opportunities. The dearth of substantial industrial development contributes to limited private sector growth and employment prospects. The dominance of government jobs as the preferred career path intensifies competition for limited positions, leading to issues of favoritism, corruption, and political influence in the recruitment process.

Furthermore, gender disparities play a role in exacerbating the problem. Societal norms and discrimination limit the job prospects of female youth, adding to the complexity of the unemployment crisis. The absence of an entrepreneurial ecosystem and an enabling environment for private sector growth constrains job creation efforts. Balochistan's security situation, political interference, and nepotism further hinder economic growth and job opportunities.

The consequences of youth unemployment are far-reaching, encompassing rising crime rates, social unrest, mental health issues, and a sense of frustration among the youth. Brain drain becomes a concern as talented individuals seek better opportunities elsewhere. The reliance on government jobs and the lack of private sector growth intensifies the unemployment challenge.

RQ-4. *What effective measures can be implemented to address the youth unemployment crisis in Balochistan?*

Addressing the youth unemployment crisis in Balochistan requires a concerted effort and a multifaceted approach. The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings highlights several effective measures that can be implemented to mitigate the challenges faced by the youth in the region:

1. **Enhance Technical Education and Vocational Training:** Prioritize technical and vocational education that aligns with the demands of the job market. Collaborations between educational institutions and industries can ensure that training is relevant and equips youth with practical skills.
2. **Career Counselling and Entrepreneurship Support:** Strengthen career counseling services in educational institutions to guide students towards suitable career paths. Encourage

entrepreneurship through training, mentorship, and access to funding to create job opportunities.

3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaborations between the government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop skill development programs tailored to the local job market. These initiatives can offer internships, apprenticeships, and job placements to bridge the gap between education and employment.

4. **Industry-Academia Linkages:** Strengthen the connection between universities and industries to ensure that educational curriculum remains relevant to industry needs. Regular industry feedback can guide updates to curriculum content.

5. **Supportive Business Environment:** Create an environment conducive to business growth by streamlining regulations, providing incentives, and ensuring access to credit. This can stimulate job creation in the private sector.

6. **Rural Development and Agriculture:** Invest in rural development and agriculture to generate employment opportunities in non-urban areas. Supporting agribusinesses, modernizing farming practices, and promoting value addition can enhance employment prospects.

7. **Infrastructure Development:** Focus on infrastructure projects that provide short-term employment opportunities while fostering long-term economic growth. Improving road networks, utilities, and digital connectivity can generate jobs and enhance overall development.

8. **Skill Upgradation for Existing Workforce:** Develop programs to upskill the existing workforce, helping them adapt to changing industry demands and reducing job displacement.

9. **Job Matching Platforms:** Establish online platforms that connect job seekers with potential employers, improving the efficiency of job matching and reducing information gaps.

10. **Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Implement policies that promote gender equality and encourage female participation in the workforce. Safe and supportive work environments, along with flexible work arrangements, can facilitate women's entry into the job market.

11. **Promote Remote Work:** Embrace the rise of remote work opportunities, allowing youth in Balochistan to access job opportunities beyond geographical constraints.

12. **Youth Empowerment Programs:** Develop programs that empower youth with life skills, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. These skills complement technical abilities and improve overall employability.

13. **Microfinance and Entrepreneurial Support:** Facilitate access to microfinance and grants for aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas. This can stimulate the growth of small businesses and create employment opportunities.

14. **Government Procurement Preferences:** Introduce preferences for local goods and services in government procurement, encouraging the growth of local industries and boosting job creation.

15. **Data-Driven Policies:** Continuously monitor and analyze labor market trends to inform evidence-based policies and interventions. Regular feedback loops can ensure that strategies remain effective and adaptable.

Implementing a combination of these measures, tailored to the specific needs of Balochistan's youth and labor market, can play a pivotal role in addressing the youth unemployment crisis. A collaborative effort involving educational institutions, the private sector, government entities, and civil society is essential to create a sustainable and inclusive solution.

7.2 Recommendations

Finally, addressing youth unemployment in Balochistan requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving policymakers, educational institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations. By implementing the following recommendations, the region can unlock its potential and provide better prospects for its young workforce, leading to economic prosperity and social well-being:

1. **Promote Private Sector Engagement:** Encourage public-private partnerships to boost private investment and create job opportunities. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) can be established to attract private businesses and stimulate industrial growth.
2. **Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Facilitate female participation in the workforce by providing daycare centers, washrooms, and other support systems for female employees. Introduce gender-responsive budgeting and quota systems to enhance female representation in various sectors.
3. **Career Counselling and Guidance:** Strengthen career counseling services at educational institutions to help students make informed career choices. Job fairs and industry exposure can play a vital role in connecting students with potential employers.
4. **Entrepreneurship and Soft Skills:** Foster entrepreneurship among the youth and impart soft skills training, including communication, presentation, and critical thinking, to improve employability.
5. **Industry-Academia Linkages:** Establish strong industry-academia linkages by inviting business practitioners as guest speakers and organizing seminars to enhance practical knowledge and research culture.
6. **Decentralization and Inclusive Policies:** Decentralize funds to cater to youth-related programs and introduce inclusive policies that prioritize youth development, particularly in underprivileged areas.
7. **Development of Border Markets:** Develop border markets in strategically located regions to capitalize on cross-border trade opportunities, leading to job creation and economic growth.
8. **Revise Education System:** Focus on providing relevant and market-driven education, incorporating both technical and vocational skills to address the employability gap.
9. **Encourage Local Industry Development:** Promote local industry development and provide support to small and medium enterprises, which can create more job opportunities for the youth.
10. **Strengthen Policy-Making Process:** Involve key stakeholders, including the youth, in the policy-making process to ensure comprehensive and effective solutions. Think tanks should be established to contribute to evidence-based policy development.
11. **Address Brain Drain:** Implement measures to prevent brain drain by creating attractive opportunities within the region and encouraging talent retention.
12. **Public-Private Initiatives:** Encourage public-private initiatives and explore opportunities for innovation to capitalize on the strategic coastal area of Balochistan.
13. **Enhance Financial Literacy:** Impart financial literacy skills to empower the youth to explore entrepreneurship and access micro-credit for starting their businesses.
14. **Promote Skill-based Education:** Introduce skill-based education at the secondary level and focus on practical training, allowing youth to acquire employable skills from an early stage.

7.3 Limitations

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. The data collected may be subject to biases, and some factors contributing to youth unemployment may not have been fully explored. Additionally, the dynamic nature of the labor market and economic conditions necessitates continuous monitoring and adaptation of policies. Further research and ongoing collaboration

among researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders are essential to refine strategies and effectively address youth unemployment in Balochistan.

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