

## Youth Unemployment and Security in Hargeisa

*Muse Abdilahi Muhumed*

### ABSTRACT

*Youth represent a very vital organ in any society. They are not only the future of Somaliland, but also a major stakeholder and useful resource in the nation-building. However, it has been suggested that a large rate of youth unemployment makes more countries unstable in general, and thus more prone to armed conflict. The main purpose of this article is to analyze the nexus between youth unemployment and state security in Somaliland. Both primary and secondary data are used in the study. The study is purely qualitative and generated the required information in order to achieve its objectives. A non-probability sampling method was used which was relevant to the researcher's judgement to collect the required data since the list of the unemployed youth in Hargeisa is unknown. The main data collection instruments were key informant interviews and observation. The findings of this study found from 20 respondents selected on purposefully comprising of the unemployed, employed youth as well as the concerned institutions. Results show that corruption, nepotism and unfair job recruitment systems are the factors causing youth unemployment in Hargeisa. The study proposes the enforcement of meritocracy policy that could at least tackle the challenges of unemployment and can also be a solution to the predicament of youth unemployment in the Hargeisa.*

### INTRODUCTION

In many countries in the world, youth unemployment and security matters are being debated around the globe and has become a challenging policy issue for many countries since unemployment directly affects the security. The problems of youth unemployment are now a global issue and it is dealt with the states at any level of their development. A study in Nigeria shows that there is a negative relationship between youth unemployment and security. However, the pressing unemployment in Nigeria forced many of its youth to join the anti-government movements and later became an existing implication for the stability of the country. In this case, security could be the condition or feeling safe from harm or danger, protection and preservation of core values, and the absence of threat to acquire values.<sup>1</sup>

According to Somaliland Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2014)<sup>2</sup>, there are no official statistical data regarding the current youth population in Somaliland, but the latest assessment of unemployment rate indicates that 75% of Somaliland people are unemployed. According to this data, 30 % of the unemployed are females while 20% are young males, but the remaining rate of 15% are adults. The assessment noted that Hargeisa which is the capital city of Somaliland has been constrained by high levels of unemployed youth and especially university graduates.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hitoshi Nasu (2011). *The expanded Conception of Security & International Law: Challenges to the UN Collective Security System*. The Amsterdam Law Forum.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (2014). *Unemployment in Somaliland report supervised by SOMTRAC* Hargeisa.

According to (ILO, 2017)<sup>3</sup>, youth has been defined as approximately 40 percent of total unemployed persons worldwide, although they account for only one quarter of the total working age population. In Somaliland, the last labour force survey conducted in 2012<sup>4</sup> confirms that 13% of graduates in urban centers and 7% graduates in rural areas are unemployed both in Hargeisa, Borama and Burao. The survey underlined that there were the smallest number of graduates in this period as there had been few universities in place. At the moment, Somaliland universities have more than doubled with increasing numbers of graduates while the limited job opportunities causing frustration and hopeless for the graduates since they have no good practical skills. This has made them to take a decision of taking risky cross-border migrations.

The study on the nexus between youth unemployment and security was carried out using both primary and secondary sources. In the secondary data, literature reviews concerned with this topic were conducted and therefore relies on concrete and evidence-based facts. The most important data collection methods in this study were the primary data through key interviews and observation which have been analyzed qualitatively.

The study interviewed 20 participants selected on purpose because the locations of the participants were unknown. Describing the youth unemployment and security in Hargeisa, the researcher interviewed with 9 unemployed youth, 7 employed youth and 4 participants from the concerned institutions whose responsibility is to deal with unemployment matters. During this process, an interview schedule was used which contained open-ended questions that enabled the participants to share detailed information.

This study aims to bring the attention of the people and the government on the youth unemployment and security in Hargeisa. This has made the author to be motivated after being observed many youth detained for gang and robbery actions. The youth who mostly commit crimes against the state have been confirmed to be the unemployed in Hargeisa. For this purpose, the study endeavors to suggest the urgent interventions that need intentionally to be included by all sectors of the society and the government in order to come up with strategies to deal with youth unemployment.

## CONCEPTUALIZING TWO CONCEPTS: UNEMPLOYMENT AND SECURITY

Youth unemployment and state security are two important subjects that are debated today in the world. It is known that the concept of unemployment dates from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is closely associated with the rise of industrialized wage economies. Persons without work indiscriminately are described as unemployed regardless of any reason. However, the definition of youth, perhaps changes with circumstances, especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings. Currently, youth are one of the greatest resources any nation could be proud of, not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, young people are potentially and actually the vital resources worth of investment by a country as well as

---

<sup>3</sup> Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Labour Force Survey Somaliland (2012). *Report on Borama, Hargeisa & Burao, supported by UKaid.*

the valued possession for national development and they are the center of reconstruction and sustainable development of any nation.

The relationship between youth unemployment and security has been identified as a debatable issue in Hargeisa by the study respondents and this is the reason for Somaliland to have a tradition of prioritizing security over the other functions of the state in Somaliland. Unemployment in any form is a drag on the economy and society which undercuts productivity, spending, and investment, exploiting national growth and hence unemployment contributes to inequality and encourages social tension.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, ILO unemployment rate includes unemployed people, who are not searching for work because they are discouraged, that is, they have lost all hope of finding a job. In this case, the jobless youth is defined as the ratio, neither of those who are neither employed nor in the labour force. This includes all youth who are not in school and not looking for a job.

Another measure of joblessness is the ratios of youth who are not in school and do not hold jobs, whether or not they are looking for jobs. This ratio includes the ILO unemployed as well as discouraged workers who are not in the education system.<sup>6</sup> Hence, in the past two decades, the discussion and the debate on youth unemployment have increased more than ever before. Governments, the private sector and the international organizations continued to have major concerns towards the youth unemployment problem.<sup>7</sup>

Security can be economic security, social security, political security and territorial security. According to (Afolabi, 2013)<sup>8</sup>, security is generally based on fear of definite and potential attacks on public authorities, persons and properties. The nature and concept of national security may vary from one state to the other. Like other contested concepts, the term contains an ideological element which provides empirical irrelevant evidence as a means of resolving the debate.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the term security has demonstrated controversies in relation to its conceptualization; but its simplest explanation should be initially characterized as the freedom from threats, anxiety, danger or political coercion. But, the political thinkers have described the term as one of those common sense, pre-defined terms in the international relations orthodoxy that appears to be simple until examined with a critical eye.<sup>10</sup>

In most fragile situations, if not all, states face an apparent dilemma caused by youth unemployment and have an impact on the family unity, level of poverty and its results in

---

<sup>5</sup> Aruba Banerji (2015). *Toward Solutions for Youth Employment*, 2015 baseline report, Chair of the Board of Directors, Solutions for Youth Employment Senior Director, Social Protection, Labor and Jobs, World Bank.

<sup>6</sup> International Labour Organization (2010). *The Global Employment Trends for Youth*. Special issues on the impact of Global Economic crisis on Youth. International Labour Office, Geneva.

<sup>7</sup> Nadia D' Ippolito (2011). *Youth unemployment, the cases of Denmark and Italy*. Department of economics, Copenhagen Business School.

<sup>8</sup> Oluwaseun Olawale Afolabi (2013). *The Rate of Youth Unemployment and Its Effects on National Security*, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

<sup>9</sup> Ehi Oshio (2009). *The challenge of the national Security and Development*: Dean, Faculty of Law University of Benin, Benin city being a paper delivered at the delta state Christian professional league seminar on crisis management and nation building at grand hotel, casaba on Thursday, 19th November, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Nasir M. Ali (2014). *Somaliland Security at the Crossroads: Pitfalls and Potentials*, American International Journal of Contemporary Research Vol. 4, No. 7; July 2014.

different social problems like gangs, robbers, civil war, violence, breakup of families and alcoholism due to hopelessness. It is accompanied by bad occupational prospects and impending economic deprivation, placing the well-being of a future family at risk.<sup>11</sup> For this purpose, the rate of youth unemployment and its effects on security is a good example for the frustration theory which leads to aggression and be can be seen in the youth unemployment due to the youth population are feeling that they are getting less than what they deserve from the government, most of them resort to stealing, terrorism, kidnapping and other gang crimes.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND SECURITY IN HARGEISA

According to the interviewees, there was a high increase in crime rates in Hargeisa in the past months. Many youth are arrested for robbery and gang acts due to their involvement in crimes against the state. In 2016, many youth was detained by police for robbing the citizens during the night. Some of those youth have proved to be graduated from the local universities. Therefore, the high level of crime rate weakens the security of the city and poses threat to lives and properties.

The National Crime Rate Report, published by Somaliland police in 2016 highlighted that crime rate increased 2% compared to the previous years. The police stated that 18,559 cases were recorded this year, whereas in 2015 it was 18,089. The police underlined that this has been greatly contributed by the youth unemployment in Somaliland, which has damaged the security integrity of the nation.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to that, youth violence is the most visible on youth based urban crimes and violence in Somaliland. Youth violence was stated as the most prevalent and feared criminal activity in Hargeisa. The majority of violent incidents being witnessed were the crimes committed by the unemployed youth who then faced apprehensions. Moreover, the youth aged between the age of 18 and 25 are also perceived to be responsible for committing the crimes of robbery, gang rapes and looting the materials from the people walking in the streets during the night, which forced many people to leave the market before the sunset as it has been a security challenge for them.<sup>13</sup>

The study found out that some of the most visible crimes that have affected the security of Somaliland are included by the gang crimes, illegal migration, robbery and burglary. The study found that youth violence can be committed by individuals or groups, but most of the respondents stated that youth crimes are committed by gang groups. The participants have shown serious concern over recent gang rape incidents in Hargeisa. This was followed by a huge illegal migration where many youth are departing the country to abroad seeking a better living condition.

---

<sup>11</sup> Wubante Ayalew Dessie (2015). Women and Unemployment in Bahir Darcity, Ethiopia: Determinants and Consequences. American Scientific Research for Engineering, technology and Sciences (ASREJS, volume 8. No. IPP.

<sup>12</sup> M. A. Egge (2016). National Crime Rate Up 2% in 2016-police report ([www.somalilandsun.com](http://www.somalilandsun.com)).

<sup>13</sup> Observatory violence Prevention (OCVP, 2014). Briefing on Youth Based Urban Crimes and Violence in Somaliland.

One perceived reason that came up quite often is that when youth are addicted to Khat and other drugs and are unemployed, they would do everything possible to get money to support their habit, even committing crimes. Last but not least, the participants in the study concluded that youth unemployment is a current concern to the Somaliland government due to the high increase of the crime rates and confrontations among the citizens and the police, which is completely a negative relationship to the state security and if not addressed well, the situation would be worsened.

## THE FACTORS THAT CAUSE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN HARGEISA

Hargeisa is facing a worsening youth unemployment crisis. Young graduates in Hargeisa are three times more likely to be unemployed than those get jobs by nepotism. The respondents stated that factors causing youth unemployment in Hargeisa included: nepotism, tribalism poor educational system, depending on foreign products, lack of transparent recruitment process, lack of good governance and high population of youth. Youth unemployment is generally viewed as important policy issues in many countries, regardless of their stage and development. Failing to successfully integrate youth into the labor market has broader consequences for Somaliland at large.

Generally, nepotism is believed to be one of the major contributors of the youth unemployment in Somaliland. This was the most frequent response overall, though bearing in mind that it was emphasized much more in the key interviews and observations reflected from the participants. Accordingly, respondents frequently pointed out that they see a strong relationship between nepotism and youth unemployment, which aggravates the situation of state security in the country. It has also been observed that poor education has itself been a considerable dynamic in the advancement of youth unemployment. Mostly, the education system at the lower levels in Somaliland is mostly theoretical and do not adequately prepare the youth to earn a living and offer solutions for employment. Education is supposed to substantially increase skills that would help young people gain employment and support younger ones to generate economic growth.

Tribalism was stated as one of the serious challenges to many youth and other society in the employment opportunities. It has mainly affected the job opportunities and the recruitment process. Despite the fact that many believed that communities in Somaliland are, in general, a homogeneous people with one religion, culture and language, but the serious social decay that impacted them is the tribalism. The respondents identified that tribalism has been a selfish exercise intended to deny or deprive others who are not of the same tribe of their rights and access to opportunities for many youth. But tribalism is still a major problem in the country, particularly for the youth who are benefitted by politicians seeking a support through clan identity, nepotism and clan favoritism which are common during the times of elections where the tribalism goes to its peak.

In the meantime, lack of transparency in the recruitment process is said to be one of the current causes of youth unemployment, however, the system of employment in Somaliland particularly government and private sectors is mostly based on nepotism, clan based, and favoritism and there is no system that provides for youth employment, fresh job seeker and this discourages

more youth to give up searching for work. According to the ground stories from various stakeholders in the fight against youth unemployment all blamed the government for lack of political will to address this economic disease.

The rural-urban migration has also been highlighted to have increased in Somaliland due to the youth unemployment. Rural-urban migration during the study was mentioned as a major cause for youth unemployment in particular as all people are continually moving into major cities, for instance, Hargeisa which accommodates over thousands of youth graduates coming the regional cities since Somaliland has obtained a peaceful situation for the past 25 years which became an opportunity for many people to migrate to urban centers of Somaliland.

### CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN HARGEISA

There are a lot of consequences of youth unemployment in Somaliland in general and Hargeisa in particular. Illegal migration and brain drain of country's young educated people, tribalism creation of urban gangsters; reduced level of confidence and self-esteem and Health problems including mental health problems were all identified as consequences of youth unemployment in Hargeisa. The study revealed that gangs and those addicted drugs are increasing in Hargeisa due to the discouraging level of youth unemployment. The high rate of youth unemployment in Hargeisa is considered the main factor that encourages youth to commit crimes against the state.

The consequences of youth violence and the burden on the social and cultural spheres, and security sector in Hargeisa remain significant. Additionally, youth crime is the second most prevalent factor causing physical harm to young people in Hargeisa aged 15 to 30 years. However, the number of young men engaging in violence increases every year.<sup>14</sup> Gangs of young men in Hargeisa are far more likely than youth not involved in gangs being both victims and perpetrators of violence, the dangers of gang membership go far beyond crime and violence. Gang-involved youth are more likely to engage in substance abuse and high-risk group sexual behavior and consequentially to experience a wide range of potential long-term health and social consequences, which in turn also adversely affect their local communities in Hargeisa.

The unemployment among the youth in Hargeisa leads to reduced levels of happiness and mental health problems as well as economic, cultural and social isolation where by many youth could be seen to have faced depression and mental problem as underlined by the respondents.

### OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Despite the development made by Somaliland, there are many challenges facing the unemployed youth in Hargeisa as viewed by the interviewed participants and officials from the concerned institutions. The study revealed that youth make up the majority of the society, but they are completely excluded from the state opportunities and the processes of decision making even though these very decisions determine their future. It is important to note that the absence of basic economic infrastructure and the lack of social services which exacerbates the existing unemployment among the young generation, 70 % of youth in Somaliland are unemployed.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16.

The major challenges being faced by the youth currently can be stated as the high unemployment and limited career opportunities, limited funding for youth empowerment, inadequate productive engagement, for example, limited facilities and spaces for sports and recreation, cultural barriers leading to poor political participation and representation, legal barriers limiting youth democratic participation in the political parties, illegal migration (tahriib), and addiction to drugs including Khat and other habitual actions which are negatively destroying the values of the youth in Hargeisa. On the other hand, the study has made emphasis that youth graduates have the opportunity to establish their own businesses instead of waiting to be hired by a company or other offices, but establishing entrepreneurship or small business, by the youth requires to be invested by the government or by the private business, while many have said that the only opportunity for them is to create job opportunities rather than relying on the private sectors in collaboration with government of Somaliland.

## CONCLUSION

Unemployment is still an enormous dilemma in Somaliland in general and Hargeisa in particular, which accommodates the largest number of unemployed youth from all the regions of the country. Thus the study found out that youth unemployment is still persisting in Hargeisa. The study discussed the relationship between youth unemployment and state security. It examined some of the major factors which contributed to youth unemployment, its consequences, challenges and opportunities for the unemployed youth in Hargeisa. It has also been underlined that there is a gap between the available opportunities in the market and the qualification which mismatch in higher institutions. Most of the young graduates have general or theoretical knowledge that have little relevance in the actual tasks they encounter in the market.

The government should set up youth employment strategy and substantially increase funding for technical resources for youth empowerment that can be used to develop youth skills and experience that enable them to match with available jobs in the market. Corruption, nepotism and tribalism should be eliminated in order to prevent youth unemployment. Additionally, more employment should be created in rural areas for the seasonal unemployment people. However, the development of the rural areas may stop the migration of the rural people in the urban areas which puts burden on the urban centers.

Reducing the level of youth unemployment in Hargeisa, the study counsels that there is a need to of rehabilitation and establishment of Vocational Training centers in Hargeisa. Finally, the article recommends that encouragement of local and foreign investments; nationalism, youth encouragement and behavior change initiatives are required. Regarding the issue of unemployed youth, the study calls for further research on the existing gaps of vocational training and other relevant skills in the country.