

Attitudes of Upcoming Graduates towards Unemployment Benefit A Practical Study on a Sample of Master's Students in Sociology

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the attitudes of students about to graduate towards the unemployment grant, which was introduced in recent years by the President of the Republic, as a precautionary measure to mitigate the effects of the phenomenon of unemployment in Algerian society

The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are: that unemployment is a negative phenomenon that has affected society. In general, and university graduates in particular, it negatively affected the individual and society, and the attitudes of students about to graduate towards the unemployment

Keywords : Attitudes, unemployment, unemployment benefit, upcoming graduates, Likert scale.

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I- Introduction :

Higher education, in its different specializations, has attracted significant attention in all countries of the world, and research programs have significantly expanded, especially after World War II. As university is a place that cultivates individuals capable of taking responsibility and facing challenges in the future, supporting new ideas and ambitions among learners. One of the main goals of university is creating and producing elite individuals that participate in the development and prosperity of society. Each university student's ambitions are reflected in the goals they set to make the most of their abilities and skills, whether on a personal or collective level. One of the primary goals that every student and graduate thinks about and seeks to achieve is finding a job, as you know, employment is a right for every student and university graduate, as it plays a significant role in the life of individuals and society as a whole. Employment is considered a cornerstone for every social and economic development. It is a source of wealth in every country, and is the only means that can satisfy the material and moral needs of individuals, providing them with a sense security and stability. Being deprived from work negatively impacts the psychological, social, and economic life of individuals. Unemployment is an economic problem that many countries of the world, whether developed or developing, have suffered from.

Like other countries, Algeria has suffered from the problem of unemployment and experienced its negative effects on individual and societal levels, which made it resort to implementing several preventive and remedial measures, attempting to find solutions to this issue. Among the new procedures adopted by Algeria to address unemployment is introducing a monthly grant for university graduates, with legal criteria and conditions, as an attempt to reduce the severe effects of unemployment, especially for an important segment of the society: young university graduates.

From this standpoint, and based on the aforementioned, we will attempt to answer the following question in this research:

- What are the attitudes of upcoming graduates towards unemployment benefit in Algeria?

To answer this question, the following hypothesis was formulated:

- Upcoming graduates have a negative attitude towards unemployment benefit in Algeria.
- Not achieving material stability for graduates.

- Not achieving self satisfaction.
- Killing the ambitions of university graduates.
- Making university graduates dependent.

Measuring the attitudes of upcoming graduates towards unemployment benefit achieves a set of goals, including highlighting unemployment benefit that has become a right of university graduates since the past two years, as well as attempting to understand its benefits for university graduates.

I.1. Defining the Study Concepts :

Unemployment Definition:

Defining the study concepts is considered an important step in any scientific research, it is the starting point and the foundation of the research. The following is a definition of the study's concepts.

Linguistically, Al Bitala (referred to as unemployment in this research) comes from the root word (batala), which means something that went to waste, lost, or failed, and thus is invalid. (tabatul) is the act of unemployment, involving idleness and ignorance. (batala al-ajiru) means to become unemployed, idling, or not working, thus he is called (battal), the one who does not find work. (Ibn Manzur, 1388, p. 19)

Contextually, from a sociological perspective, every individual has a unique social status, especially when this individual finds themselves without work despite being capable and actively seeking it. The unemployed individual could be someone who lost their job and is looking for another one, or someone who has never had a job previously and is looking to sell their labor power in exchange for a certain wage. (Roukaya Kheyari, 2014, pp: 195,196)

Operationally, unemployment is defined as individuals who are jobless, available and capable of working, and actively seeking work but unable to find it.

University Student Definition:

Linguistically, Talib (student) comes from the word (talaba), meaning the pursuit of something in order to obtain it (Raouf Jabiri, from the website: frscrib.com).

Contextually, a university student is defined as someone whose academic level allowed them to shift from secondary education, both scientific and technical tracks, to university, pursuing a major that enables them to obtain a degree. Students have the right to choose majors that align with their preferences and passions. (Samiha Younes, 2016-2017, p. 25)

Operationally, a university student is an individual that completed their secondary education and obtained a baccalaureate degree, in order to be admitted to a university or an institute, choose a major for study and research, and eventually obtain a university degree.

Attitude Definition:

Linguistically, the word Ittajaha (to direct), is defined in dictionaries as: anything towards which a person turns their face or moves with intent, whether the direction is physical or abstract. (Mourad Kemoumia, October 2018, p. 51)

Contextually, Campbell defines social attitude as: the alignment and agreement between an individual's responses to social situations.

It is also defined as: a learned readiness to respond in a coordinated and specific manner, whether positively or negatively, to certain people, objects, or concepts. (Hassan Sadik, 2012, pp: 302-303)

Operationally, attitude is when an individual expresses their opinion on a certain topic, whether positively or negatively.

Unemployment Benefit Definition:

Unemployment benefit is a program to accompany first time job seekers, encourage them, and assist them during their job search phase. (National Employment Agency, accessed on 15/03/2023 at 10:49 AM).

Operationally, unemployment benefit is a financial amount granted to individuals who hold a university degree and have never had an official job. These individuals must be registered with the National Employment Agency, meaning they are among the job seekers, and this benefit has recently been introduced in Algeria for the first time.

I.2. The Methodological Framework of the Study:

Method and Tools:

Given the nature of the study's topic, which addressed the attitudes of upcoming graduates towards unemployment benefit in Algeria, and considering that this study belongs to practical research where the researcher suggests hypotheses based on their previous readings and verifies them in practicality, the descriptive method was employed and applied in this study through the following steps:

- Exploration and Formulation Stage: In this stage, previous studies on the topic were examined. These readings contributed to forming a general understanding of the subject, which aided in developing the research problem, formulating the questions, and defining the study's concepts.
- Identifying the general and detailed indicators to build the practical study, with the aim of choosing the posed questions and reach at general results that monitor the impact of unemployment in Algeria.

The primary objective of employing this method is to gather information about the phenomenon under study by describing it in a translated and articulated manner.

Any research method, regardless of its type, relies on tools and means to collect data and information that the researcher uses in answering the questions raised and verifying the formulated hypotheses, in order to reach at the results related to the study problem.

In order to answer the questions that determined the study problem, and since our study explores the attitudes of upcoming graduates towards unemployment benefit, and because attitudes differ with the various situations we encounter, they can be viewed in light of a number of dimensions, such as: intensity (strong or weak) and direction (positive or negative)

In order to describe an attitude of an individual and use it to understand their behavior, we need to measure this attitude using one of the measurement tools, all of which have the same goal of placing the individual –according to their response- on a continuous line extending from complete acceptance to absolute rejection, this can be imagined as a straight line that connects two points, one of them represents the highest degree of acceptance of the subject, while the other reflect the strongest degree of rejection. The midpoint between the two points indicates neutral positions towards the subject. (Abdellatif Khalifa, Abdel Moneim Shehata, 1994, p. 65)

The "Likert" method is widely used for measuring attitudes because of its ease of application and the simplicity of data collection and analysis, as well as its high accuracy and reliability. This method features a neutral point in the center, with agreement options on the right, ranging from slight to strong agreement, and disagreement options on the left, which follow a similar scale. Consequently, the response alternatives are graded individually. (Ben Safi Abderrahmane, p. 138).

Table 1. Illustrates the possible response alternatives:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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If the	5	4	3	2	
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statement					
is					1
positive					
If the					
statement	1	2	3	4	5
is					
negative					

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on theoretical data

□ The questionnaire was designed based on a set of statements that are related to the indicators of the hypothesis, it was then presented on a group of reviewers (02) to ensure its validity. Following this, the study was conducted in practicality, and the questionnaire was tested on a group of the original sample population. The questionnaire included two main axes:

The first axis: General information, which included 5 questions covering gender, age, marital status, place of residence, and finally, specialization.

The second axis: Focused on the area of attitudes of upcoming graduates towards unemployment benefit, related to the hypothesis of the study, and included statistical methods in 19 statements.

At the end of the questionnaire, there was an open-ended question to allow the sample members to freely express their opinion.

Statistical Methods Used in the Study:

To achieve the study's objectives and analyze the collected data, manual data dump was used, and the following statistical methods were employed:

- 1. Calculating frequencies and percentages
Percentage = (Frequency × 100) / Sample size
- 2. Calculating the arithmetic mean of the sample's responses to the statements in the five-point "Likert" scale, which is considered the best measure for attitudes, as the arithmetic mean is one of the most widely used social sciences.

$$x = \frac{\sum f \times i}{n}$$

The scope of the study was set at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi, Bordj Bou Arreridj, particularly in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Social Sciences.

Study Sample:

Selecting the sample is considered a cornerstone in scientific research. Given that it is difficult to reach out to all the members of the study population (because of high costs and time constraints), it is necessary to select a sample or a subset of the study population to help understand the patterns and dynamics of the population under study. (Rima Majed, Research Methodology, 2016, p. 29)

The study population consists of 90 students who are about to graduate with a master's degree from the Department of Social Sciences in its three specializations: Sociology of Organization and Work, Sociology of Communication, and Sociology of Education. They are divided as follows: 56 students (15 males and 41 females) in Sociology of Organization and Work, 13 students (4 males and 9 females) in Sociology of Communication, and 21 female students in Sociology of Education.

A 50% sample was selected from the original population, considering the study population is homogeneous. Additionally, the students were not present at the faculty during the study period because there are no classes for second-year master's students in the second semester.

II- Results and discussion :

Presenting and discussing the study results in considered a significant part in any scientific research, and we cannot imagine any research without this step. After conducting our practical study, we reached several results, summarized as follows:

Table 2: Illustrates the distribution of the sample members by variables: gender, age, marital status, place of residence, and specialization

Variable	Probabilities	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	9	20
	Female	36	80
	Total	45	100

Age	23-28	45	100
Place of residence	Urban	28	62,22
	Peri-urban	11	24,44
	Rural	06	13,33
	Total	45	100
Specialization	Sociology of Organization and Work	27	60
	Sociology of Education	13	28,88
	Sociology of Communication	05	11,11
	Total	45	100

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on practical data

Table 2 shows that the percentage of females is 80% and the percentage of males is 20%. This is because the education rate among females has increased in order to secure employment and participate on equal footing with men.

Regarding the age variable, the group aged between 23 and 28 makes up 100% of the sample. This is because all participants fall within the youth category.

As for marital status, the largest percentage was single individuals at 75.55%, followed by married individuals at 22.22%, and the smallest percentage was widowed at 2.22%. The high percentage of singles is related to their age and the dynamics of being a university student.

Regarding place of residence, more than half of the sample resided in urban areas at 62.22%, followed by peri-urban areas at 24.44%, with the lowest percentage being in rural areas at 13.33%.

As for specialization, it varied between Sociology of Organization and Work at 60%, Sociology of Communication at 11.11%, and Sociology of Education at 28.88%. The highest percentage was for the specialization in Sociology of Organization and Work because most students prefer to study this specialization as it is more in demand when in the job market.

Table 3: Illustrates the general arithmetic mean for the main hypothesis:

Statement number	Statement Frequencies	Arithmetic mean
Statement No. 01	It provides me with a monthly income that spares me from looking for a permanent job	3.57 %
Statement No. 02	It relieves me of some daily needs	4.04%
Statement No. 03	The unemployment benefit aims to reduce unemployment, even if temporarily	3.44%
Statement No. 04	It contributes to reducing students' financial dependency on their parents.	3.62%
Statement No. 05	It gives me a positive feeling and a sense of effectiveness in the society	3.08%
Statement No. 06	Relieves me of the psychological pressure generated by financial dependence on parents	3.75%
Statement No. 07	The unemployment benefit encourages graduates to rely on themselves	3.26%
Statement No. 08	It makes me feel at ease and a sense of belonging to the society	3.26%
Statement No. 09	I have seen in advance the terms and conditions of the unemployment benefit	2.75%
Statement No. 10	I agree to the terms and conditions of the unemployment benefit	2.88%
Statement No. 11	The job position provided to me by the employment agency aligns with my academic specialization	3.6%
Statement No. 12	Job positions will be created to give university graduates better opportunities for securing permanent employment	3.73%

Statement No. 13	The unemployment benefits secures a decent living for me	3.37 %
Statement No. 14	Unemployment benefit makes young graduates dependent	2.84%
Statement No. 15	Unemployment benefit demoralizes individuals.	2.2%
Statement No. 16	Unemployment benefit makes young people settle for less and kill their ambition	2.08%
Statement No. 17	With the presence of unemployment benefit, I don't have the desire to look for job.	2.60%
Statement No. 18	Lack of efforts to get a job	2.37%
Statement No. 19	Postpones the pursuit of permanent employment	2.60
Total		3.10%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on practical data

The results from Table (3) show that upcoming graduates believe unemployment benefit relieves them from some of their daily needs, with this statement ranking first with an arithmetic mean of 4.04 among all the statements. The second highest-ranking statement is "it relieves me of the psychological pressure generated by financial dependence on parents," with an arithmetic mean of 3.75. On the other hand, the statements "unemployment benefit demoralizes individuals," with an arithmetic mean of 2.2, and "it makes young people settle for less," particularly among those with limited ambitions, with an arithmetic mean of 2.08, were ranked the lowest.

The overall arithmetic mean for this hypothesis indicated that the respondents' attitudes towards the unemployment benefit were neither negative nor positive but rather neutral.

Thus, the hypothesis stating that the students' attitudes towards the unemployment benefit are negative was not confirmed.

Based on the results obtained from the data of the practical study, it became evident that the unemployment benefit adopted by the government is an attempt to reduce the severity of unemployment, especially among young university graduates, aiming to secure job positions for them in different national public and private institutions, which means that the Algerian state is making efforts to reduce the phenomenon of unemployment among university graduates. The study concluded that this hypothesis didn't achieve the required result. This can be due to the students' lack of knowledge and understanding of the objectives and conditions of the benefit, as they have not experienced it yet, which made their answers overall neutral.

The issue of unemployment is considered one of the most serious problems that threaten societies in different countries around the world, whether developed or developing. It is one of the challenges that must be addressed and promptly provided with solutions.

Despite the measures and procedures that have been implemented through establishing a set of employment related systems, the process of professional integration, and recently unemployment benefit, the unemployment rate is still high, especially among an important segment of society that represents its producing force and drives the development process: young university graduates. This hinders the potential of youngsters and limits their aspirations for achieving self-sufficiency and effective contribution to society. Moreover, it delays their transition from academic life to professional life, establishing a family, and achieving self-fulfillment. It may also lead them to fail in navigating this crucial stage of life. Therefore, the state has to expedite efforts to reduce the negative impacts of unemployment and find solutions for it.

Based on the aforementioned, we recommend the following:

- Encouraging university students to embrace entrepreneurial thinking and to start medium and small enterprises, also known as startups.
- Encouraging and activating the role of the private sector as a contributor in providing job positions.
- Training and upskilling unemployed individuals to align with the needs of the job market.

- Reevaluating the unemployment benefit and its conditions to ensure the dignity of university graduates.
- Reconsidering the higher education system and its conditions to ensure it meets the needs of the job market, focusing on a demand-driven education policy. This means creating new academic specializations and limiting their numbers based on the job market demands.
- Reconsidering the university education programs for fields that are oversaturated in the job market, such as humanities, social sciences, and law.
- Encouraging university students to pursue fields that are in high demand in the global job market, such as artificial intelligence, mathematics, and computer science...etc

III- Conclusion:

The unemployment benefit that was introduced is a political decision that was put in place to mitigate the social and economic impacts, such as the spread of poverty, illegal immigration, and crime resulting from high unemployment, especially among young university and institute graduates. This is due to the failure of employment policies that did not achieve the desired goal. Unemployment rates remained high in the face of the increasing demand for work. It is also an attempt to ensure social peace (Massoud Qrimes & Mohamed Amioua, 30/06/2023, p 86)

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- Appendices:

Firstly, General Data:

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- 23-28
- 29-33
- 34-38
- 39 and above

3. Marital Status:

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

4. Place of Residence:

- Urban
- Peri-Urban
- Rural

5. Specialization:

- Sociology of Organization and Work
- Sociology of Education
- Sociology of Communication

6. Are you currently employed (working)?

- Yes
- No

Secondly, the data of the first question: The unemployment benefit is Positive:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7-Providing a decent living for graduates					
8-Granting graduates an income to look for permanent work					
9-Reducing some of the daily needs					
10- The unemployment benefit aims to alleviate unemployment, even if temporarily					
11. Contributing to the separation of students' financial dependence on their parents					
12-Giving a positive feeling and sense of effectiveness in the society					
13-Reducing the psychological pressure generated by financial dependence on their parents					
14-The unemployment benefit					

encourages graduates to rely on themselves					
15-Feeling comfortable and having a sense of belonging to the society					
16-I have seen the terms and conditions of the unemployment benefit					
17-I agree to the terms and conditions of the unemployment benefit					
18- The job position provided to me by the employment agency is aligned with my academic specialization					
19-Job positions will be created to give university graduates better opportunities for securing permanent employment					
<u>Thirdly: The data of the second question: the unemployment benefit is negative</u>					
20-Unemployment benefit makes young graduates dependent					
21-Unemployment benefit demoralizes individuals					
22-Unemployment benefit makes young people settle for less and kill their ambition, especially among those with limited ambitions					
23-With the presence of unemployment benefit, not having the desire to look for job					
24-Lack of efforts to get a job					
25-Postponing the pursuit of permanent employment					
<u>Fourthly: Question 3 Data: The Phenomenon of Unemployment</u>					
26-The most affected group by unemployment is young people					
27. The most affected group by the phenomenon of unemployment are university					

graduates					
28. The most affected group by the phenomenon of unemployment is males					
29- Unemployment among university graduates leads to a lack of sense of responsibility					
30- Unemployment among university graduates is leads to a lack of vision for future prospects					
31-Unemployment leads to the inability to establish a family in the absence of work					
32-Moral deviation due to unemployment					
33-Unemployment leads to violence against rulers					
34- The unemployed person views the rulers as the cause of the unemployment problem					