

Afghans' General Perception of Major Causes of Unemployment and the Role of Entrepreneurship in Afghanistan- A Descriptive Study

***Hamayun Khan¹, Saed Mansoor Sadat², AimalAshrati³**

¹*Independent Researcher, and Freelance Writer, MBA from I.K. Gujral Punjab Technical University, India*

²*Independent Researcher and op-ed Writer for Magazines and News Agencies in Afghanistan*

³*Senior Financial Management Specialist At Afghanistan Land Administration system Project- At The Ministry of Urban Development and Land (MUDL), Afghanistan*

Corresponding Author: Hamayun Khan

Abstract: *The purpose of this research was to examine the opinions of Afghans about the main causes of the high rate of unemployment, the role of Entrepreneurship in Afghanistan, and the difference between the unemployment level during (i.e. 1990-2000) and post-civil war (i.e. 2001-2019). The research is both qualitative and descriptive in nature. The required data was collected using simple random sampling method through distributing a questionnaire to 121 respondents including all the age groups. Besides, in-depth interviews were conducted with the respondents to ascertain the role of the government and the private sector in overcoming the unemployment issue. The research relies on both the sources, first hand data was collected through personal interviews and survey. and secondary data was collected through the previously conducted research and various websites. In addition to investigating the major causes of unemployment, the unemployment level before and post-civil turmoil in Afghanistan were compared using t-test. The recommendations suggest policymakers the general perception of Afghans to know the major causes of Unemployment. and for Entrepreneurs to consider the investigated factors while starting a new venture and provide job opportunities while keeping in mind the main causes of unemployment. Findings reveal that four factors were perceived as the key reasons behind the unemployment in Afghanistan (e.g. Education and Economic crises that plot at 89 percent followed by Nepotism and Professional Skills that plot at percent). whereas, war was considered as a cause of unemployment by a very low percentage of the respondents.*

Keywords: *Afghans' Perception, Unemployment, Entrepreneurship, Self-Employment, Private Sector*

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I. Introduction

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines "Unemployment" as the number of economically active population who are jobless but available for seeking and doing work, including people who have lost job and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). according to (CFI, 2019) Unemployment is a term referring to individuals who are employable and seeking a job but are unable to find job, those people in the workforce or pool of people who are available for work that does not have an appropriate job. Further, (Adebayo, 1999) pointed out that unemployment exists when a member of labor force wills to work but cannot get a proper job. people may be compelled to engage in casual activities, or perhaps other illegitimate livelihood sources, hence, leading to unemployment (Onah, 2001). Unemployment is the macroeconomic problem affecting people both directly and indirectly (Karki, 2010).

Since, after security, unemployment is perceived as another detrimental challenge in Afghanistan; However, there is no exact data till date about the rate of unemployment in the country, some ground facts indicate that the approximate rate of unemployment plots at 60% in the country (Akbari, 2019). According to a report published by (CSRS, 2017) in 2014 The World Bank had released a report about poverty and unemployment which shows that poverty and unemployment rates have increased in the years 2013 and 2014, the data further shows that 1.3 million new Afghans were added up to peoples living under poverty line and were living on less than \$1.25 income a day. In 2014, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled announced, out of 10 million labor force in Afghanistan, 800,000 are utterly unemployed. some statistical data show that 23 percent of the Afghan population are unemployed and the National Union of Unemployed People has predicted this figure to be further increase over 50% (Eslaonline, 2016). In December

2018, a report published by (Economics, 2018), The International Labor Organization (ILB) announced that Afghanistan has the highest number of unemployed work force in the world which was measured 11.10 percent. Although, it has been two years, but the recent reports show that there is no significant change in unemployment rate and remained at 11.10 percent in 2019. Many youngsters have joined anti-government militants in order to find a livelihood, not because they follow religious fundamentalism, but many a time the militants are compelled to generate income to support the families, competitive advantage over their enemies generated through feudal or communal disputes (Ziar, 2014). According to The World Food Program (WFP); over half of the country's population lives below the poverty line, and food insecurity is on the rise, largely due to conflict and insecurity intercepting the whole communities from livelihood opportunities. In fact, 12.5 million people are identified as severely food insecure (Programme, 2018).

Increased rate of insurgency, retrospective economy, and devastated infrastructural system take the country into an economic disaster and ultimately giving birth to additional complications such as unemployment. Nonetheless, economists on the other hand are of the belief that entrepreneurship could be a suitable alternative to chase this issue off. As (A. Roy Thurik, Martin A. Carree & Andre van Stel, 2007) argue that, high rate of unemployment could probably be linked to a low degree of self-employment, which means shortage of entrepreneurial activities results in the rate of unemployment increase. Increased rate of unemployment may also be associated with the lower levels of individual affluence which also lead to the reduction of the likelihood of becoming self-employed (Johansson, 2002). Growing rate of entrepreneurial activities may affect country-wide economic operations (Stel, 2005). Previous study merely highlights the key causes of unemployment in Afghanistan. But till date, there has been no descriptive study on the general perception Afghans about the major causes of unemployment. Therefore, to fill the gap and find out how Afghans perceive the major causes behind the high rate of unemployment in Afghanistan. Hence, in the current study we aim at examining the opinions of Afghans about the core causes of unemployment and the role of Entrepreneurship in overcoming this issue. Also we ascertain the difference between the rate of unemployment during the civil war (1990-2000) and post-civil war (2001-2019).

Research Questions

This research answers the three main questions:

1. According to the Afghans, what are the major causes of unemployment in Afghanistan?
2. How do people in Afghanistan perceive the role of Entrepreneurship in overcoming the unemployment issue?
3. What is the comparison between the rate of unemployment during (1991-2000) and post-civil war (2001-2019).

Significance of the Research

This research proposes the policymakers a research-based perspective on the perception of Afghans about the major causes of Unemployment. Also for Entrepreneurs, we provide insights on to capitalize those factors while starting a new venture and provide job opportunities to the people while keeping in mind the discovered causes of Unemployment. Moreover, the study also aims at investigating the role of Entrepreneurship in the derailment of unemployment, which will help the policymakers in framing strategies to help the economy of the country move. Further, the research studies the difference between the level of unemployment during and post-civil war. Discovering the aforesaid objectives will help the scholars, policymakers, and researchers in further relevant research in the future. Since the current study relies heavily on descriptions, therefore, the research will add to the existing body of qualitative knowledge by adding a descriptive based insights.

Research Methodology

Qualitative in nature partially descriptive. the current research for data collection, uses a simple random sampling technique and giving out a questionnaire to 121 respondents including all the age groups starting from 20 to 30 and above. besides, in depth interviews were conducted with the respondent to know how the government and the private sector play their part to help get rid of this issue. The research relies on both the sources, first hand data was collected through personal interviews, and survey. While, second hand data was collected through the previously conducted researches and various websites. In addition to investigating the major causes of unemployment, in the current study, the researchers compare the unemployment level before

(during the civil turmoil) and after the USA war of Afghanistan using t-test and descriptively examines the role of Entrepreneurship in alleviating unemployment by qualitatively analyzing the data.

Role of Entrepreneurship

In this section, the researcher has ascertained the role of entrepreneurship in Afghanistan. The figure below illustrates the World Bank ease of doing business index, which Afghanistan's worldwide top rank in the year 2019.

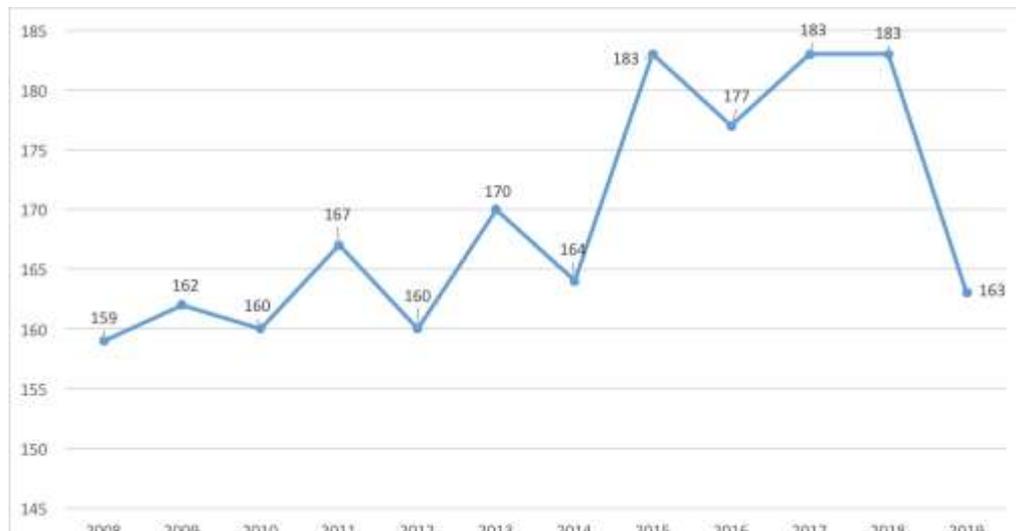


Figure .1World Bank, Ease of doing business Index

In the last few years; Afghanistan has been envisioned as the pivot for inter - regional trade hub between south, east and central Asia and from there to Europe. In Afghanistan, shift to market economy after the US invasion in 2001, 85 percent of the private sector is made up of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)(Mashal, 2014). while Entrepreneurship has been a much debated topic since very long number of scholars have defined it in different terms while showcasing the same meaning. (Ferreira, 2020) defines Entrepreneurship as the act of initiating a business while establishing a mechanism for it to generate a profit. Apart from generating profit Entrepreneurship also helps promote an economic and employment growth of a country (Begona Cueto, 2012). Increased rate of unemployment paves away for entrepreneurial activities that reversely help foster employment opportunities and ultimately leads to the employment growth (A. Roy Thurik, 2008). Nonetheless (Thurik, 2004)has conducted a research and is at the counterargument, claims that in Portugal Entrepreneurship does not have a substantial impact on employment growth. The issue is further debated and grabbed more attention of a number of other scholars.As (Karki, 2010) argues that rising demand for taking up entrepreneurial activities can help in the growth of small scale industries and eradicate unemployment. Entrepreneurship plays a positive role in the employment growth(Josep-Maria Arzauro Carod, 2006). Unemployment in any country can be positively connected with the willingness to start a new venture(Garofoli, 2006). The relationship between entrepreneurship and unemployment varies across various regions. For instance in high-density areas the impact will be positive, i.e. those areas that have a large share of medium-skilled workers and a high level of innovative operations(Anil Rupasingha, 2011).The Afghan Government in the recent years had a number of remarkable success stories. In July 2016, Afghanistan was accepted as a full member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and topped the rank of being the easiest country in doing business(Group, 2017). Gains in Business has resulted in Afghanistan's ranking in doing business, the measurement shows Afghanistan's jump from 183 in 2018 to 167 in the 2019 in global business improves, this the first upshot for the country in improving the business climate for entrepreneurs (Chaudary, 2018).

Role of Private Sector

The role of Private sector in Afghanistan is perceived negatively. because a comparatively high percentage of the respondents think that the private sector does not play a significant role in eradicating the unemployment. The results are shown in the (figure 2.)

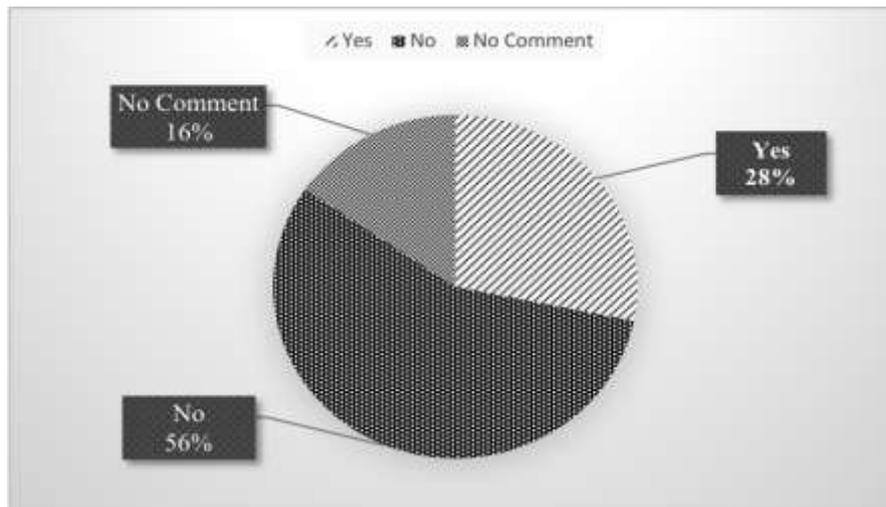


Figure 2.General perception about Role of Private sector in Afghanistan

The figure .2 shows the Afghans' general perception of role of private sector in eradicating unemployment and provision of job opportunities in Afghanistan. Based on the collected data from the respondents, 56.40% are of the belief that the private sector has failed to provide job opportunities to the people, followed by 28.20% others who claim that the private sector is doing enough in this sector, while 15.4% have remained neutral. On the basis of the collected data, this research thus highlights the shaky strategies that have so far been framed by the government with regard to the private sector to undertake investments, which would therefore have been beneficial otherwise in providing job opportunities to the people.

Table 1. perception about the role of Private Sector

Perception About Role of Private Sector in Afghanistan	Yes/No	Number	Percentage
	Yes	33	28.2%
	No	66	56.4%
	No Comment	18	15.4%

Linkage between Self-Employment with Unemployment

This paper attempts to find out if Self-Employment, in other words Entrepreneurship has a connection with unemployment. Since, Afghanistan's economy is largely dependent on sole proprietorship, almost 90 percent of the outlets in far-flung and semi-urban areas of the country are self-owned outlets (Naithani, 2007). there is a probability of opportunity and importance of entrepreneurship linkage to personal capability for start-up (Deli, 2011). The relationship between self-employment and unemployment is riddled with the complexity resulting in the cynicism and vagueness for both the research scholars and policy makers (A. Roy Thurik, 2008). In another study conducted by (Thurik, 2004), He contradicts this concept and argues that entrepreneurship does not act as an instrument for a country's economic growth. The higher is the self-employment rates that are linked with statistically huge increases over time in rising employment growth, and mitigation in poverty level in non-metro counties (e.g. Afghanistan) (Anil Rupasingha, 2011). In countries like Afghanistan, where the national economic infrastructure is not up to the mark to be counted on, the need for private sector and self-employment, according to the anecdotes, is highly demanded. Similarly, in some of the European countries like Czech Republic, Self-employment is one of the most important element of entrepreneurship that is required to demolish the unemployment (H. Chladkova, 2010). Self-employment acts as a source of chasing off unemployment (Dvoulety, 2017). Nonetheless (begona Cueto, 2012) is on counter argument, claiming that, if the rate of unemployment increases self-employment decreases, means there is an indirect opposite relationship between these two.

II. Results and Discussion

We have initially analyzed the demographic profile of the respondents, because it is necessary to study the demography of the respondents, to have a more knowledge of the research. the following table represents the demographic profile of the respondents, that has been categorized into three aspects such as; Age of the respondents, Marital Status, and Gender.

Table 2.Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Age of the Respondents	15-20	9	7.5
	21-25	50	43.3
	26-31	40	33.3
	32-onwards	19	15.8
	Total	121	100.0
Marital Status	Single	64	53.3
	Married	56	46.7
	Total	121	100.0
Gender	Female	17	14.3
	Male	102	85.7
	Total	121	100.0

The table 2. Shows the demographic profile of the respondents for the current research. most of the respondents are aged between 21 to 25 with 43.3 percent, followed by 33.3 percent. others aged between 26 to 31, and age group of 32 and onwards are 15.8 percent and quite less percentage of the respondents are aged between 15to 20 with 7.5 percent.

Table 3. Current Status of the Respondents

Particulars	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Nature of Employment If Employed	Government	52	43.3
	Private-Sector	29	24.2
	Self-Employed	3	2.5
	Unemployed	36	30
	Total	121	100.0
Level of Education	Uneducated	2	1.7
	Intermediate	6	5
	Graduate	41	58.8
	Post-Graduate	70	34.5
	Total	121	100.0
Duration of being Jobless	0-1 years	51	47.7
	1-2 years	29	27.1
	2-4 years	9	8.4
	5-years or more	18	16.8
	Total	121	100.0

The current status of the respondents is represented by the (table 3.). it can be observed that, 43.3 percent of the respondents are into the government sector. While 24.2 percent are into private sector. The lesser percentage of respondents being in the private sector shows the low involvement of the private sector. The data also shows that, Self-Employed are at 2.5 percent, this means people in Afghanistan are mostly try to find a government job. Therefore, they are less likely to rely on self-employment. On the other hand, the results show that, the level of education of the respondents is largely graduation with 58.8 percent. Followed by the post graduates who are at 34.5 percent. Intermediate level is 5 percent and the percentage of the uneducated respondents is 1.7, which is the least.

Family Source of Income

The source of family income of the respondents is represented by the following (figure 4.). there are three main factors that we categorized in order to ascertain the source of income of the respondents.

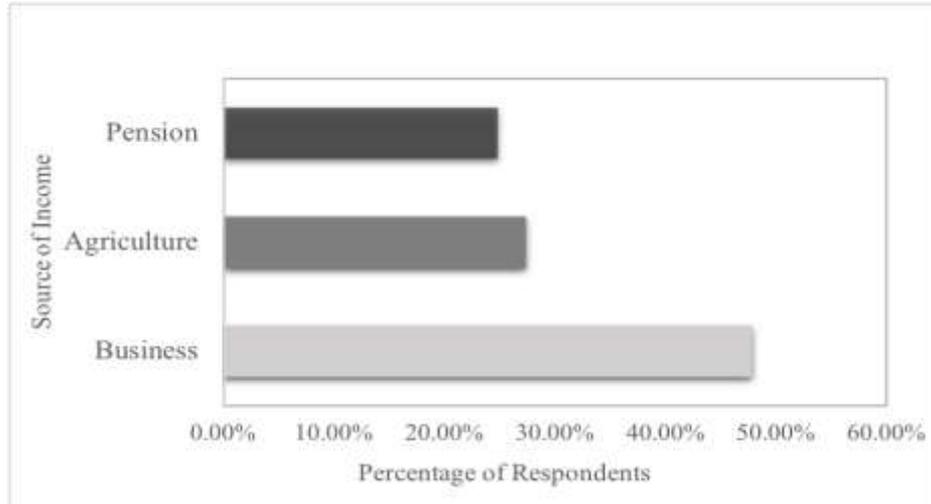


Figure 3. Family source of Income

Family source of income of a large percentage of the respondents is business at 47.8 percent, whereas, 27.4 percent others live on agricultural means and agriculture is said to be the main source of their family income, on the other hand, a very low percentage 24.8 percent live on pension. The figure 4. Represents the numerical illustration of the respondents and their sources of income.

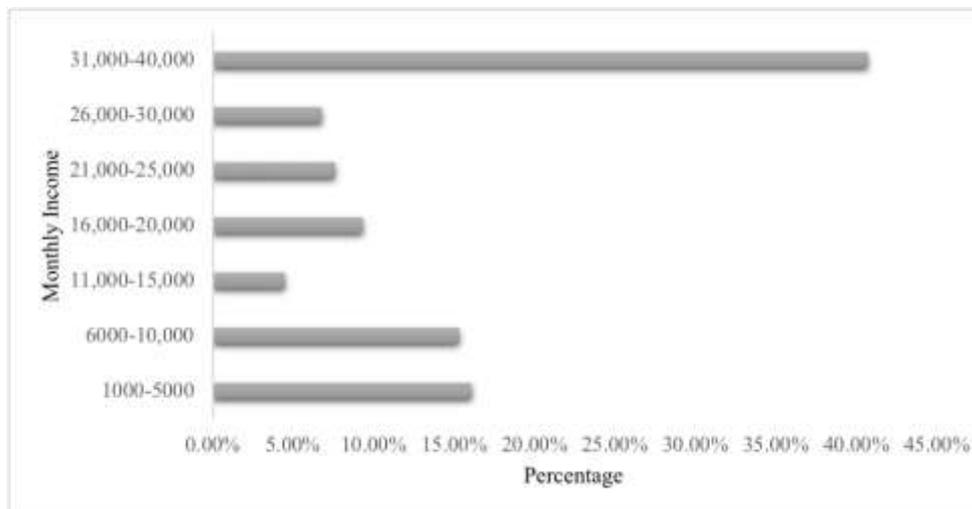


Figure 4. Monthly Income of Respondents

The (figure 5.) Represents the monthly income of the respondents for this research, 40 percent of the respondents have a monthly come of Afs31,000 to Afs40,000, followed by 16.1% others whose income is from Afs1000 to Afs5000, 15.3percent whose income is 6000 to 10,000, the results show that 6.8 percent live on 26,000 to 30,000, 7.6percent live on Afs21,000 to Afs25,000, and 9.3percentlive on Afs11,000 to Afs15,000.

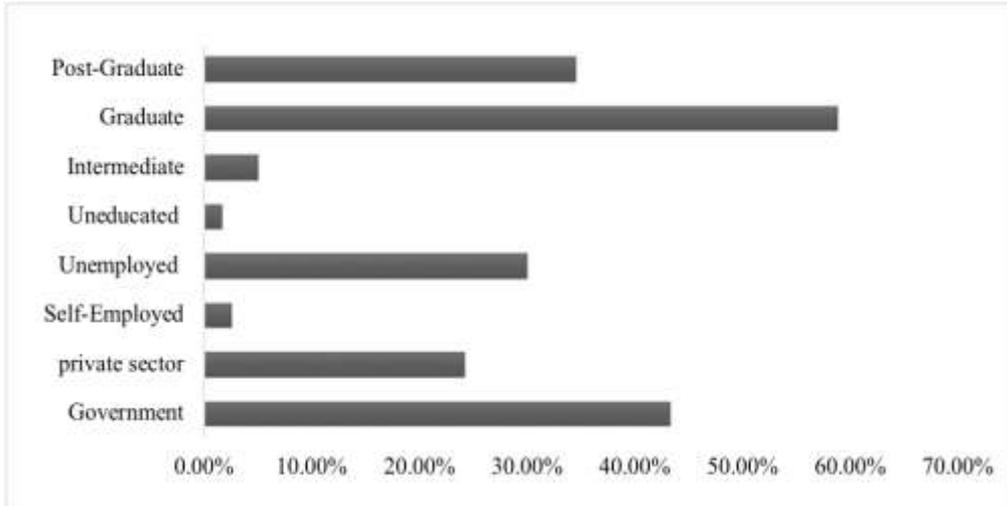


Figure 5. Current Status of Respondents

The figure 6. Illustrates that, 43.3 percent of the respondents are having government jobs, while 24.2 percent are living on private sector, 2.5 percent are self-employed , whereas, 30 percent others are unemployed. About the education of the respondents, a large percentage of them are graduates that is 58.8 percent, the percentage of post graduates is 34.5 percent and intermediate level is 5 percent.

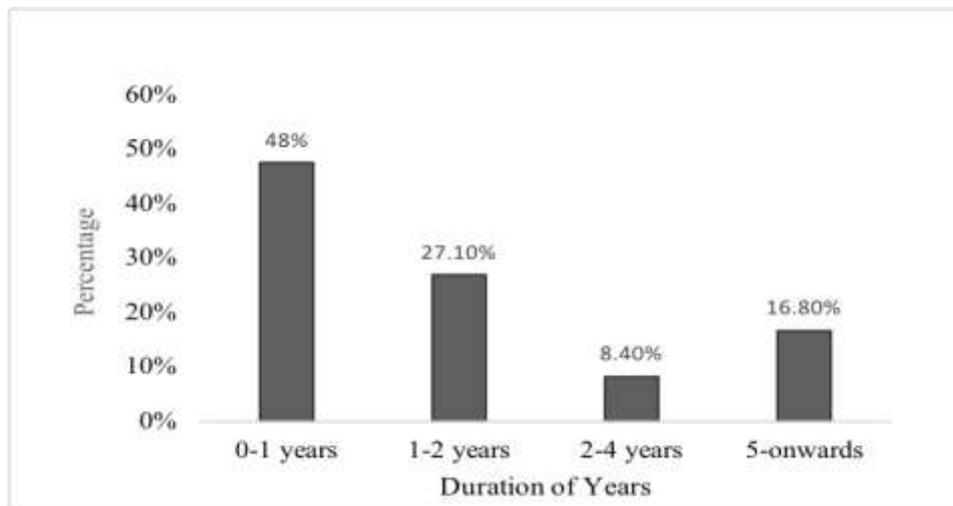


Figure 6. Duration of Respondents being jobless

The (figure 7.) Represents that, 48 percent of the respondents are jobless for one year, followed by 27.10 percent who are jobless for 1 to 2 years, 8.4 percent for 2 to 4 years and 16.8 percent others for 5 years and onwards. Inferences drawn from the above data is that, the duration for most of the jobless people in Afghanistan is for 1 year. Which means, in Afghanistan people face no difficulty while applying for or finding a job.

Perception about Role of Government in providing Job opportunities

The general Afghans' perception of the role of the government in providing job opportunities is illustrated in the (figure 8).

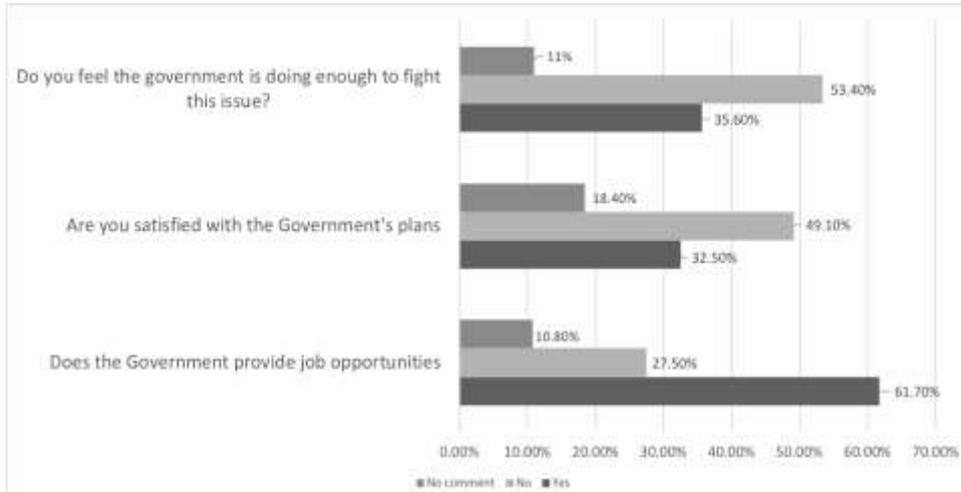


Figure 7. General perception of Government's role in providing jobs

By far, the government plays a significant role in achieving a stable position to help provide job opportunities; as per the results shown in the (table. 4.) 61 percent of the respondents have accepted that the government's policies are remarkable and the government is doing enough in providing jobs. the results further illustrates the positive perception of the people towards the government in providing job opportunities. On the contrary,49.1 percent of the respondents are not in a position to support the government's policies and 53.4 percent others think that government is unable to fight the overcome the unemployment issue which is going upward. Our findings show a large percentage of the respondents favoring the government in providing job opportunities, however, a huge number of respondents are not satisfied with the policies and plans framed by the government concerning to provision of jobs, in addition to this, the people are happy solely with the efforts made by the government to fight the unemployment issue.

Unemployment Rate in Afghanistan from 1991-2000 to 2001-2019

The (figure 3.) represents the comparison of the rate of unemployment during the civil war (1990s) and the after the USA invasion of Afghanistan (2001-2019).

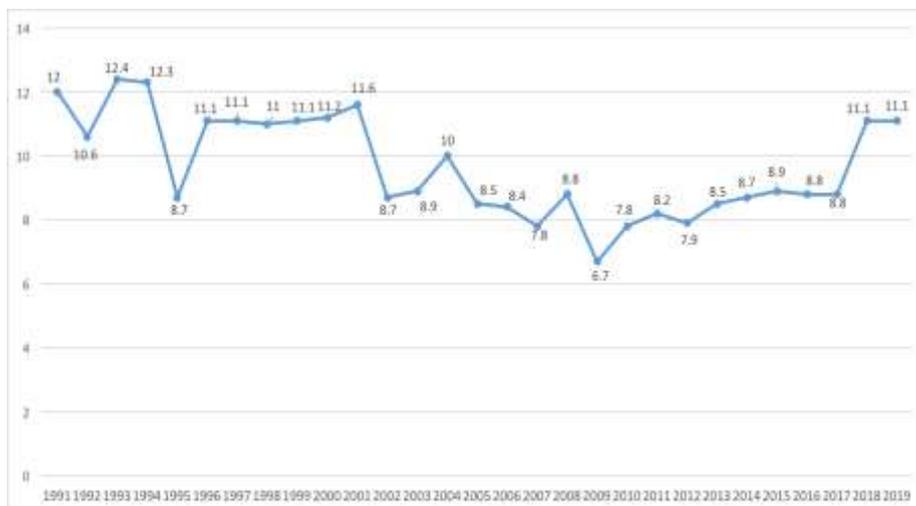


Figure 8. Unemployment rate in (%) in Afghanistan from 1991 to 2019

The (figure3.) shows the percentage of the unemployment rate in Afghanistan for each year starting from 1991 to 2019. the trend line has gone wardite year 1991. this is perceived to be due to outbreak of the civil disturbance intensified in the same year and continued thereafter until the year 2000. besides several other socio-economic crises, the rate of unemployment went sky-high, succeeded by 12.4 and 12.3 percent in the years 1993 and 1994 respectively. in those years the unemployment rate again bounced back which is considered to be the highest so far. In the current research the researcher has used t-test for ascertaining the difference between the unemployment rate during and post-civil war (i.e. 1991-2019). the results show that the mean when calculated for the years 1991-2000 is 11.15 percent, significantly higher than the mean of 2001-2019 which is 9.905 percent, meaning during the civil turmoil the unemployment rate was higher than that of post 2000. after testing the difference between the two data sets using the two tailed test, we got the value (P=0.982) which plots at the right side and therefore, is significant. from this calculation it could be concluded that macro factors such as political disturbance has largely affected the unemployment in Afghanistan.

General Perception of Major Causes of Unemployment

For the current study, we have taken three parameters based on what, we analyze the general opinions of the Afghans about the causes of unemployment in the country.

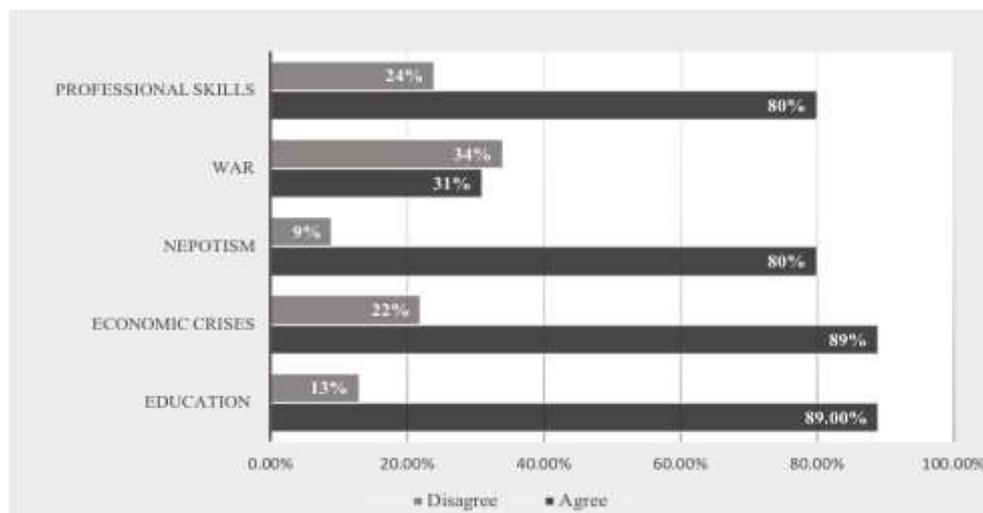


Figure 4. Perception of Major Causes of Unemployment in Afghanistan

Education and Economic Crises:

The previous researches show that, economic slowdown causes unemployment, for instance, due to the drastic fall in the economic activities in the United States the rate of unemployment reached 6.5 percent in October and the rate of job losses in consecutive months hit a seven-year high(Oecd, 2005).As the (figure 4.) Shows that 89 percent of the respondents believe that the economic crises and education are the core factors behind the high rate of unemployment in Afghanistan.The educational system of the country being nascent, has been sidelined given the obscure political and other macro complications. Because the macro factors have diverged the attention of the government from the education sector. therefore, 58 percent of the unemployed respondents are university graduates. followed by 34 percent post graduates. The main reason of the generally worse unemployment is the shaky market performance, claimed by(Signorelli, 2012). This claim of (Signorelli, 2012) supports our research analysis. because, Economic crises, in Afghanistan has sought to be another significant issue behind the unemployment as per the findings. due to the economic issues, the private sector has failed to provide job opportunities because of the country's high dependence on foreign aids.

Nepotism and Professional Skills:

Individuals with lack of professionals skills are more prone to long term unemployment(Oecd, 2005). Nepotism and Professional skills are yet another core factors proven to be the key causes behind high rate of unemployment in Afghanistan. 80 percent of the respondents are of the belief that they do not find jobs because of lack of professional skills and nepotism and absence of recommendation from influential people. Since Afghanistan is among the countries more prone to politicalskirmishes, therefore, political influence from

high rank parties which serves as a source of nepotism, plays an important role in finding jobs. and having no political network usually causes difficulties in finding in a job. The biggest con of nepotism is that most of the time unqualified candidates are hired and qualified ones are sidelined. as a result, the Afghans face two grave issues; The first one being the mental illness and psychological anguish, and the second one is the absence of decrease in the number of skilled employee at the work place which ultimately results in inefficiency of the operations and the slowdown the national economy.

War:

However, lack of security and war are the common and generally accepted threats that is thought to be preventing any business activity from growth and reduce the economic growth. also considered to be leading to a high rate unemployment. surprisingly, the data in the (figure 4.) shows that 34 percent of the respondents, basically a low number, deny the fact that war is a major cause for unemployment. while 31 percent claim that war serves as a major factor behind the high rate of unemployment. The main reason behind the denial of the respondent is deemed to believe in the fact that Afghanistan has been in war for approximately four to five decades and the nation have become familiar with and have understood how to cope with conflicts and live a normal life amidst war which is why the respondents in the current research do not accept war as a major causes of unemployment.

III. Conclusion

The current research was aimed at analyzing the Afghans' perception of major causes of unemployment and the role of Entrepreneurship in Afghanistan. Based on the results and analysis, it was found that, a large percentage of the unemployed people were university graduates, followed by post graduates. Also a majority of the Afghans depend upon business, or government jobs to support their livelihood. According to the data analysis, a large percentage of the respondents expressed that, they have remained jobless for 1 year and many other for 1 to 2 years. Based on the findings, four major factors were examined, since those were perceived as major reasons behind unemployment in Afghanistan. Those factors are; (1) the economic crises facing the country for decades that is thought to be engendered by the civil turmoil and the prolonged war. and (2) lack of standardized education system having been devastated by the long war, ultimately causing the rate of unemployment escalate. (3) professional skills is another issue causing the trend line of unemployment go high. and finally (4) nepotism is one of the biggest problems in Afghanistan that prevents many qualified candidates from applying to the desired jobs. The Government needs to bring the required innovations and changes in their plans and policies to eradicate the unemployment issue. also the Afghan Government should streamline the strategies to facilitate a funnel for the private sector to enter into the market and make more investments to be able to provide more job opportunities. Entrepreneurship is perceived as a productive mechanism in reducing the unemployment in Afghanistan. Since, the country has become a business hub (Mashal, 2014). Therefore, priority should be given to small scale industries and Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to start their own business. On the other hand, it is quite fascinating to observe that, a very less percentage of the respondents are of the belief that war is not among the major reasons behind the unemployment. Because, denial of war as a challenge to find jobs is due to the fact that, people in Afghanistan have used to the decades of conflicts. and people are also familiar with how to adjust to the dynamic situations and contingencies that take place. It was also found that, during the civil war (i.e. 1990s) the unemployment rate was higher when compared to the era between 2001 and 2019. That is mainly because of the concerted infrastructural endeavors of the Afghan Government and its International partners and donors.

IV. Recommendations

Based on the findings discovered and facts studied, the current study proposes the following recommendations, that the Government and the people in Afghanistan are required to consider while fighting the unemployment issue:

1. A considerable attention should be paid to the platforms offering employment opportunities, and the imperatives of entrepreneurship should be mainstreamed in the country. Because, while the industrial development plays a key role in the economic growth of the war-hit countries, the Afghan Government has to pay a dire attention to this sector.
2. Since, Afghanistan is an agricultural country, about 85% livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan is dependent either direct or indirect upon agriculture and its production (Savage, Dougherty, Hamza, Butterfield, & Bharwani, 2009). If the Afghan government facilitates transit facilities for the agricultural productions to find appropriate markets for these productions to help improve the producibility of the Afghan farmers and support

the domestic products, this way the agriculture sector will enhanced and will a significant role in the country's economic growth and in the reduction of unemployment.

3. As (Karki, 2010) argues that rising demand for taking up entrepreneurial activities can help in the growth of small scale industries, therefore, Entrepreneurial activities should be mainstreamed in the country to help provide job opportunities for the jobless people and help the private sector grow which will serve as a source of economic growth as well as avoid the young generation from illegal activities.

4. The education system should be paid a substantial attention to, because most of the jobless people are university graduates, yet they are not able to find jobs due to the lack of professional skills. Hence, developing of professional skills in education system should be a paramount.

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