

**Forum:** Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

**Issue:** Addressing the Issue of Youth Unemployment

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## Introduction

“The youth unemployment crisis, specifically – in the context of the global employment situation – is, along with climate change, the great challenge of our time,” the head of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Office in Spain stated. One of the most prevalent issues worldwide is the unemployment of youth. It is an unfortunate fact that the youth unemployment rate is 3 times greater than the adult rate, and this number will continue to ascend unless appropriate steps are taken to find a solution.

Each year more and more students are graduating from university yet many of them will be unable to find jobs for many reasons. The main being work experience as this shows the employer a sense of maturity as well as dedication, which many young people do not have. An accumulation of work experience also provides employees with key development skills such as problem-solving, teamwork and management. It is important to combat youth unemployment as it gives opportunities for young people to gain experience in a work environment. This issue has devastating long term effects, for example, it leads to a slackened and slowed down rate of economies and less consumer spending's, which as a result not only affects companies, but also contributing to a slump in country's GDPs. Youth unemployment comes with many devastating and scarring effects, not only economically, but can also have a toll on mental health. Extensive research has been conducted by the Institute of Work and Health and has discovered that unemployment may lead to depression, anxiety, stress, an unsatisfactory life, as well as many other mental-health related issues.

Thankfully, there are many programmes and services being implemented worldwide to help not only stabilise the youth unemployment rates but in hopes to one day see them descend. In 2015, the United Nations created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), goal 8 specifically focused on combating youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is a serious form of workplace discrimination which may also be referred to as ageism.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment refers to the worldwide issue where the youth, individuals specifically between the ages of 15 to 24, remain jobless but are keenly looking for employment. These youth unemployment rates tend to be greater than adult unemployment rates worldwide for a number of economic reasons.

### More Economically Developed Country (MEDC)

A country who has a high per capita income although it can also be based on other common attributes possessed by the majority of developed countries such as long-life expectancies, high standards of living and the amount of services that the country has to offer. Examples of this are the USA, Japan and England.

### Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC)

An economically insecure country with an underdeveloped industrial base as well as a low Human Development Index (HDI) in comparison to other countries. This country seeks to become more advanced economically and socially.

### Internship

Internships denote to a trainee, usually a student, that works for a company, typically without pay in order to obtain some form of work experience or to acquire requirements for a qualification. It can also be referred to as voluntary work, and internships with a salary can be referred to as paid internships.

## Mentorship

A relationship in which a more knowledgeable ‘mentor’ assists a less experienced individual, these mentors have usually specialised in an area of expertise which they tutor in. examples of this are career guidance and role modelling.

## Background Information

The issue of youth unemployment has previously come up numerous times in United Nation conferences and is furthermore also a part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 as previously mentioned. All these consultations evidently show the extreme importance of this topic. It is a dreadful fact that there are just over 500,000 young people (ages 15 – 24) unemployed in the UK alone, and despite that this is a decrease from the year before, this is still a substantial ‘chunk’ of unemployed youth.

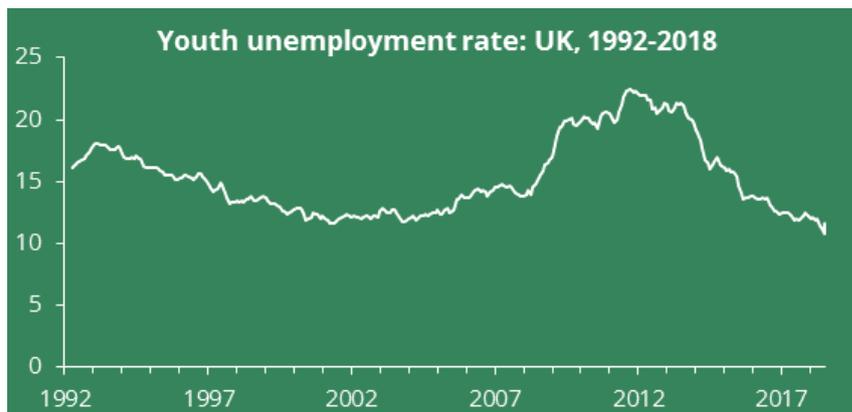


Figure 1 Youth unemployment rate in %

It is of the utmost importance that everyone has an equal and fair chance at getting employed and not getting discriminated against due to their personal characteristics such as race, gender, religion, colour, beliefs and especially age. This is because equality in a workplace promotes a more positive and healthier lifestyle, on top of this, researchers from the University of East Anglia have also revealed that people who feel fairly treated are more motivated in their workplace. The Age Discrimination Act 1975 implemented a commandment which ‘prohibits discrimination based on age in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance’. However, this unmistakably is not the case as seen by the following statistics: The youth are approximately 3 times more likely to be

unemployed as opposed to adults and worldwide. Moreover, there are currently around 71 million unemployed youth globally, and this number will continue to ascend, as stated by Plan International.

### Reasons for youth unemployment

As previously mentioned, there is a clear distinction between youth unemployment rates and adult unemployment rates; the youth unemployment rate is significantly higher. As well as this, the youth unemployment rates tend to be more unstable and therefore fluctuate more violently than those of adult unemployment rates. There are several reasons as to why the rates are extremely high:

#### Work experience

Firstly, young people are always the most affected when there is a financial instability in a company or an economic crisis. This is simply because they are the workers with the least work experience. This means that their work place/ company has invested a lot less training and working time with them as opposed to the more senior workers and are therefore the least fought-over and valuable employees. Furthermore, they are most likely working on a short-term contract which henceforth gives them very little seniority in the company.

#### Financial responsibilities

Moreover, younger people also tend to have fewer financial obligations in contrast to older employees who are much more dependent on their companies. These are responsibilities such as providing for their family. Younger people are more reliant on their parents at this portion of their life, and this therefore allows them to take employment less seriously as they have someone to look to if things go wrong. Older people however often do not live with their parents or any guardians and therefore have to pay for other necessities that the youth generally do not have to worry about.

#### Academic inflation

Another reason why youth unemployment is so high is because, in today's world, especially this era, students are expected to have more academia in order to compete for work. This is due to the high supply and low demand, more often referred to as 'academic inflation.' In order for employers to decide whether young applicants will be good potential employees, they use external credentials and qualifications as usual bachelor's degrees are not sufficient. This has

subsequently led to youth having to spend more time in school to achieve their desired profession, thus raising the average age when their full-time employment begins.

### **Economical Consequence of youth unemployment**

The economic impact that youth unemployment can have is substantial. The majority of students worldwide do not attend university due to the high tuition fees, therefore, governments commonly tend to provide 'study loans' or 'student loans' to help and encourage young people to go to university. The general scheme for these loans is once the student has graduated, they are expected to repay the loan as well as a specified percentage of the amount funded to them. However, majority of the time this is typically not achievable without the individual having a somewhat large source of income as the amount required to pay back is quite bulky. This is where the trouble lies. Seeing as more and more students are unable to repay their debts, the governments need to find finances to continue to help put students through university. As a result, money that would have otherwise been used in the government-funded projects for developing the country and economic development are used. Consequently, this slows down the economic growth and is a major setback, especially for LEDCs.

### **Refugee youth unemployment**

There are actively around 69 million people worldwide who are from a war or post conflict zone, of these, approximately 25 million have been displaced from their homes and are refugees. These are people who are looking for a better future and higher standard of living, causing them to flee to other countries. Of these 25 million, over half of them being young people under the age of 18, as stated by 'Financial Times.'

Generally, these refugees tend to face many difficulties trying to 'fit in' whilst adjusting and altering to their new homes, majority of time being in new countries they may have not been to before. As a result, they tend to be alienated and socially quarantined from the rest of the general population due to their cultural differences, lower standards of living and the language barrier. Due to all these differences, they find it extremely difficult to fit in and are consequently socially and economically excluded from society. This forces them to live in poverty and survive off government aid and in refugee camps. As well as this, it is incredibly more challenging for them to find jobs – especially the youth. This is simply due to the fact that they are not only foreigners, but also typically uneducated foreigners with no previous experience in a working environment. 70% of young refugees worldwide

are left unemployed and the waiting list for jobs can span out for as long as 3 years, according to 'Breaking Barriers UK'.

## Youth Unemployment in LEDCs

Youth unemployment is one of the most prevalent issues in LEDCs today, predominantly due to the staggeringly low rates when compared to MEDCs. It is understandable why the rates are so low; the country and government has more critical issues to resolve before the employment of its citizens as most LEDCs are countries which are actively ongoing a war or is a post- conflict zone. However, these are not justifications for the astonishingly low rates and solutions are essential. One of the leading causes of unemployment in these developing countries is due to the lack of technology and funding for the education. As a consequence, the students will have to suffer as their education will obviously be at a much lower standard and progress at a far slower rate when compared to the rest of the world. This is because MEDC countries such as the UK already have an adequate amount of funding for their education and are heavily investing it in the development of technology for students. This inadequate education will be instantly noticed by employers and they will subsequently be far less likely to get hired.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been previously mentioned various times in this report, this is due to their huge role and many attempts to solve the issue of youth unemployment. The organisation was founded in 1919 and is a United Nations agency, their goal, regarding youth unemployment, is to 'promote social protection and work opportunities for all'. The ILO refers to this generation of youth as a 'lost generation' and is mainly due to the violent fluctuation of the unemployment rates. The organisation is actively working on a solution for youth employment, called the Youth Employment Programme (YEP).

### United States of America (USA)

The USA is a country that has suffered from severe youth unemployment rates in the past. On the report of 'Statista', it stated that at one point in 2010, it peaked at 19.5% which was an all-time high. Fortunately, the rates have dramatically descended and are currently at a 52-year low, 9.1%. The country is taking on various solutions in order to combat this, for example, many cities have adopted programmes specifically to do with youth employment. These are programmes which are

recognised by companies and operate by supplying students with work experience hours, internships etc.

### European Union (EU)

Since 2011, the amount of unemployed youths in the EU have risen significantly, and in 2013 the youth unemployment rates across all member states reached extremely high levels of 12.2%. This was around the time that the economic crisis affected the continent, particularly the southern countries such as Spain and Greece. The majority of these youth are concentrated in the 'Euro zone' (members of the European Union that use the Euro as their currency). This can be seen in the following statistics, the total number of unemployed youths in the 'Euro Zone' is 19.2 million, as opposed to the EU as a whole which was 26.7 million.

### Plan International

Plan International is an independent humanitarian organisation. It was founded in 1937 and presently works in 71 countries worldwide. Their aspiration is to 'advance children's rights' and they are already engaging in countless movements to achieve this; this includes advancing rights to education, health work etc. Plan International's proposal for combatting the 71 million unemployed youth worldwide involves working with other organisations as well as governments to enhance young people's services and skills.

### Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1919	Creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)
1937	Creation of Plan International
1992	Global youth unemployment rate reaches an all-time low (11.7%)
2002	Global youth unemployment rate reaches an all-time high (13.9%)
2007-2008	Many of the world's most developed countries collapsed economically due to the nadir youth unemployment rates

2015	Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 was created which focused on employment and economic growth
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## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment, 19th July 2005, **(A/60/133)**
- General Assembly Resolution on Policies and Programmes involving Youth, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018, **(A/RES/72/146)**
- General Assembly Resolution on the Organization of the High-level Meeting on Youth, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011, **(A/RES/65/267)**
- General Assembly resolution on Promoting Youth Employment, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2003, **(A/RES/57/165)**
- United Nations Initiative on Youth Employment, March 2003, **(GB.286/ESP/5)**
- Promoting Youth Employment, 26 July 2006 **(A/RES/57/304)**

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Due to the issue of youth unemployment existing and causing despoliation to economies for almost 50 years, there have certainly been some attempts to solve the matter by organisations as well as governments. The majority of these solutions are ones which are being actively implemented and are understandably reasons why the youth unemployment rate is not only stabilising, but also gradually descending.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations (UN) have been jointly conducting comprehensive research into this devastating issue. Auspiciously, the organisations have finally come up with their own solution called the ‘Youth Employment Program’ (YEP). This is an extremely beneficial program which assists countries in many ways and unlike various other programs, YEP not only attempts to overcome the issue, but also finds the motives instigating it. The Youth Employment Program concentrates and works in 6 simple yet effective steps: data collection, analysis which tests the countries effectiveness of their policies and programmes helping youth unemployment, policy advice, technical assistance which focuses on youth entrepreneurship and access to finance, advocacies and awareness-raising activities, then finally, strategic partnerships

with global networks which works regionally, nationally and internationally depending on the assistance necessary. This program is actively being operated in over 60 countries worldwide.

The United Nations has also enacted on many other of their solutions with the attempt to overcome youth unemployment. For instance, the ECOSOC forum has hosted 5 conferences which were unambiguously targeted on this issue. During the fifth summit which was held in February 2016, Mr. Oh Joon, the president of ECOSOC stated, “Many of the biggest challenges we are facing are especially daunting for young people, youth unemployment continues to be on the rise. Young people all over the world face a world where inequalities are high, where destinies too often depend on gender, race, social status or religion.” The discussion specifically revolved around how young people play a major part in the ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’.

As well as this, the United States of America has proposed 2 main solutions to tackle this issue, ones which have shown great improvement in the world, particularly in European countries. The first of the two is the creation of ‘Youth Guarantee’, this essentially ensures rights for youth all around the world. The aspiration for this program is that “all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education”. Secondly, the United States of America has worked on solving the youth unemployment catastrophe through ensuring high school programs quickly and seriously improve their work place and company ties. This subsequently gives their students more opportunities to internships and less hassle when looking for jobs.

Moreover, large and successful companies such as McDonalds have implemented Youth Employment Programmes. The companies are sponsoring job training as well as providing apprenticeships to millions of young people, currently McDonalds have opened up approximately 64 million opportunities which are targeted for the youth. These jobs offer the youth work experience and job readiness for their future, but the core purpose is to impede the current youth unemployment rates which stood at 13.6% last year according to the World Bank. This is a very simple yet highly effective solution which is statistically making progress. In Europe, McDonald's as well as other large franchises are aiming to offer 43,000 apprenticeships by 2025. Fortunately, the company isn't alone in its mission to provide opportunities for unemployed young people. Other big companies including Starbucks, FedEx and Walmart are all participating in hopes to tackle youth unemployment globally.

## Possible Solutions

Due to this issue being so complex, there could be a wide variety of different, unique solutions that would be able to tackle this issue from many aspects. Most solutions for developing countries may require assistance from NGOs and allies as they evidently may not be able to tackle the issue independently. Even so, presented to you is some of my own possible solutions that could be implemented in order to improve the youth unemployment rates:

Primarily, the main reason for youth unemployment is due to other employees with more work experience; employers and companies will evidently favour a more mature applicant with longer and more work experience. Hence, governments should either oblige companies in their countries to have a specific, set percentage of youth employees or formulate a new law stating so. Not only will this ensure that the youth have a chance to get employed, but the job opportunities will constantly be replacing due to the youth age group (15 – 24). If these conditions are not met, governments may impose sanctions to the companies.

In elaboration and enhancement to the previous attempts to solve the issue, another proposal is to prompt higher level educational institutes such as universities and secondary schools to encourage their students to perform work experience. This could be easier done if such institutes interconnect with other large franchises who are willing to take on students for internships. To ensure many students apply and attend these programmes, their institutes could educate them on the usefulness and advantageousness of this via seminars, posters, social media etc.

Also, institutes should be advised to hire career advisors and be meeting students earlier in their secondary education in order to connect with them and direct them onto a suitable career path based on their skills. This will not only provide these students with a sense of direction in terms of their future pathway but will also render them to become more aware of the many opportunities for them. As well as this, this will hopefully give them a stepping stone to research around their chosen career and possibly gain some experience in the field beforehand. This early research may also push students to gain extra, non-academic attainments, such as research in their chosen field, which will unquestionably be in their favour whilst applying for jobs

It is obvious that all nations need to work together to find effective solutions to quickly implement, because young people are discriminated against and are unable to find a job which consequently may lead to the predicament of their future, just for belonging to a specific age group.

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